

OUR COMMUNITY

These cards assist community members who want to:

- **Understand their community more deeply,**
- **Prepare their community for current and future hazards, emergencies and disasters, and**
- **Support the development of community resilience.**

Our Community - Questions is designed to support people to build strong, vibrant, connected, and resilient communities.

The cards have been inspired by emergency management and disaster related research and by work with communities across Australia. They are based on the experiences of communities and reflect the growing body of evidence about community resilience.

The cards also reflect the value of conversation. It is through conversation that we are able to learn from one another; improve our skills and knowledge; consider new ways of planning and preparing for an emergency; and improve our adaptability and resilience.

Our Community - Questions is designed to promote conversation; to strengthen individual and community resilience; to enhance preparedness for emergencies and disasters; and to improve the likelihood of a strong recovery afterwards.

Each card poses a question to assist people to have a conversation and to support a planning and action process across any community.

Our Community - Questions can be used to:

1. Promote social and community connection between individuals, within groups and communities
2. Promote and strengthen connection to place and history
3. Encourage preparation and planning for emergencies
4. Enhance recovery if an emergency affects a community.

Things to know before using this set of cards

These cards are based on extensive research and work with communities who have experienced large emergency events. They reflect the key findings of this research and have been designed to reflect the experience gained by those who have lived through these events.

The cards are designed to foster collaboration and engagement across your community. They reflect an underlying set of beliefs, including that:

- 1. Each person in your community is of value**
- 2. Each person in your community has a voice and a perspective to contribute**

3. Each perspective is valid and reflects the life and experience of the person who holds it

4. Relationships are built on listening and trust and these then reinforce those relationships

5. A connected and inclusive community will be a more resilient and adaptable community.

Some questions are quite personal and answers will vary between people e.g. exploring why people live where they live and what they love in their life.

Other questions will have preferred answers and may require some research before they can be answered fully or well e.g. whether someone is well prepared for an emergency.

The cards will be useful for individuals and groups to use to get to know one another and to identify areas where some additional information and guidance is necessary to be well prepared.

The cards have been designed for use by experienced group facilitators and novices alike. There are simple processes that will work in less experienced groups e.g. it is easy to choose a card and share your reflections and responses with a friend, family member or colleague. It is also relatively simple for groups to do this together, learning about one another as they share their responses.

The cards can also be used in more complex settings. Using the cards can inform community development or disaster planning, to establish or improve relationships between key stakeholders and partners in an educational setting, or to engage with individuals and groups who do not normally feel included or easily engaged in learning or community processes.

It is important to know that using these cards may ‘trigger’ strong feelings in some participants. We are not always aware of the personal histories or circumstances of the people we meet. It is essential that facilitators and others who use these cards have some awareness or training in psychological first aid and are respectful of people who use these cards.

Card Categories

Our Community - Questions includes 50 cards, each of which asks a question designed to prompt the reader to think about an aspect of their own resilience or the resilience of their community.

Each card belongs to one of seven categories that represent essential elements of community resilience. The categories are indicated by the colour of the cards.

1. Community leadership (purple)
2. Social and community connections (blue)

3. Connection to history and place (green)
4. Personal and household resilience (yellow)
5. Ability to take action (orange)
6. Knowledge and wisdom (red)
7. The need to address challenges and opportunities (grey)

Active words

The words on the reverse of each card provide another mechanism to begin or engage in conversations. They reflect one way of thinking about the question on the front of the card. These key words focus on an action or a thought process that relates to the question, and they provide an additional level of flexibility in using the cards to engage with individuals and groups.

These words reflect the kinds of actions or values that community members bring to their community – during good times and during challenges.

They are:

CARING	HOPING	KNOWING
PREPARING	CONNECTING	IMAGINING
PARTICIPATING	VALUING	REMEMBERING
ENJOYING	INCLUDING	PLANNING
TRUSTING	UNDERSTANDING	

Using the cards

The cards can be used in a variety of ways with groups and individuals, and are ideal for emergency management practitioners, community leaders, local council workers, case-workers, counsellors and therapists, teachers and trainers, and consultants.

The following are some ideas to inspire conversations (each of these can be adapted to suit the purpose of the conversation and the individuals or groups involved):

A. Spread the cards face down on a table or the floor.

Ask participants to follow these steps:

1. Choose a card displaying an active word.
2. Find someone with the same or a related word OR someone with a card of the same colour.
3. Share your reasons for choosing your card, with that person.
4. Turn over your cards and consider the questions on the reverse of the cards.
5. Take turns to speak and listen, discussing your answers to each of your questions.

B. Distribute the cards so that everyone present chooses or receives one card.

Ask participants to follow these steps:

1. Think about your answer to the question on your card.
2. Find someone who has a card of the same colour.
3. Share your responses to your questions.
4. Find another pair of participants who have the same colour card and share your questions and answers as a group of four.
5. Form groups with the same colour cards and have a group conversation.
6. Identify the key elements of what you have discussed – feel free to add new ideas as the group discusses their responses.
7. Record the most important discussion points (using butcher's paper is useful).
8. Label your group's conversation – if asked to describe or label the common thread in your conversation, what would you call it?
9. Share the main points from your discussion with the larger group.
10. Listen to each group as they share the main points in their discussions.
11. Have a large group discussion about what you have learned about one another, community resilience, the common themes in your questions, and what you have learned about your community.

C. The previous process could inform a larger process to further develop these responses - potentially even becoming a community planning discussion.

By conducting an inclusive and sequential discussion process, participants can increase their understanding of the key elements of community resilience.

Follow these steps:

1. Review all of the butcher's paper from the previous group activity – this will mean considering the issues discussed in each category included in the cards.
2. Add thoughts or ideas to each existing record to build on what is already recorded.
3. Use small 'dot' stickers or 'ticks' to indicate any points on the resulting record that you think require action or response. Limit each person to a set number of 'votes' e.g. 3 per record. In this way those present are setting priorities for action.
4. When participants have contributed to each record, ask everyone to return to the original record they helped to create.
5. Each group then reviews the new information that has been added to the record – both the additional points and the 'dots' or 'ticks', and discusses the implications of this additional input.

6. The group may need to create a new butchers' paper record of the key points in their discussion.
7. Each group reports back to the whole group about the revised record.
8. Have a general (whole group) discussion about what matters to the group (as indicated by clusters of 'dots'), what the group has learned about community resilience in general, and what they have learned about their community in particular.

D. Explore these aspects of community resilience through creative process.

Participants can choose the best way to express this, including;

1. Create a video or other creative presentation about an aspect of community resilience.
2. Create an artwork, a performance, or another representation of any aspect of community resilience.
3. Collect a series of stories from your own community, expressing each aspect of your community's resilience.

E. Build on previous discussions by conducting an action planning process.

To ensure that these processes lead to action, follow these additional steps:

1. Ask participants (individually, in the groups by category, or in some other combination) to discuss the questions posed in each category – including what is strong in their own community, and what could be stronger.
2. Ask participants to make two lists – those things that are strong and those things that require action and improvement.
3. Ask participants to identify the most important areas for action to strengthen their community (participants can use a limited number of small ‘dots’ or ‘ticks’ to indicate priority).
4. Undertake an action planning process to develop actions to address each of the highest rated priorities, rate the most important actions to be undertaken, identify who will be responsible for driving the action, and begin a discussion about resources and requirements to support the required action.
5. Produce an action plan and use it to drive action across the community, monitoring results and outcomes over time.

F. Introduce a research (or homework) element to explore community resilience.

Following on from one of the processes above, individuals or groups can choose an element of community resilience that interests them: They may develop a question that they would like to answer, or an aspect of resilience that they would like to research and understand in more depth.

Participants may:

1. Find out about the current literature or guidance on community resilience (and in particular on the aspect that they have chosen) and make a presentation to the larger group.
2. Research some case studies or examples of this aspect of community resilience and share with the group.

These cards are designed as a companion set for *Our Community – Images*, a set of cards with images to trigger conversations.