

Recover Delaware Resilience Planning Guide

December 2021

Prepared by

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Biden School of Public Policy & Administration
University of Delaware

In coordination with

The Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA)



UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
**BIDEN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC
POLICY & ADMINISTRATION**

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Preface

As the director of the Institute for Public Administration (IPA) at the University of Delaware, I am pleased to provide the *Recover Delaware Resilience Planning Guide*. IPA collaborated with the Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA) and other state and local stakeholders to initiate and complete this report as Delaware and its communities coped with both the immediate operational challenges and uncertain long-run implications presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

While this report offers several snapshot analyses of contemporary economic, social, and public administration trends, impacts, and needs, the pandemic has made it clear that flexibility is a key attribute of response and recovery. As such, this report focuses more on outlining and illustrating a framework for ongoing community consideration of recovery and resilience planning topics than it does on detailing conditions, trends, and policy recommendations.

The *Recover Delaware* initiative seeks to leverage IPA's public policy expertise and partnerships with public and private sector stakeholders to stimulate conversation, planning, and action for Delaware's recovery from the economic and community impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. As we move forward in recovery, I hope that the guidance in this report provides organizations, governments, and community stakeholders with a useful framework for considering, deliberating, and acting on recovery and resilience planning priorities.

Jerome R. Lewis, Ph.D.

Director, Institute for Public Administration

Acknowledgements

The *Recover Delaware* team at IPA is greatly appreciative of the opportunity to engage with Delaware’s recovery stakeholders—residents, elected officials, state, local, and federal government professionals, content experts, volunteers, and nonprofit leaders—as they worked tirelessly to respond to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and chart an equitable and competitive recovery for Delaware and its communities. Without the engagement of countless individuals and organizations, *Recover Delaware* would have remained a concept on paper. In particular, our sincere thanks go to staff and leaders at the Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA) for supporting and partnering on the development of *Recover Delaware*.

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Introduction

There is never a comfortable time to start conversations about recovery. Conversations initiated soon after a disaster may be criticized as a distraction from critical response efforts. Conversations initiated in the waning days of disaster response may be greeted with “we’re over it” sentiments as fatigued responders and essential workers seek a comfortable return to normal. This discomfort with recovery conversations is natural. Change is difficult even in times not marked by crisis, and effective recovery planning often demands the consideration and implementation of substantial changes to reduce community vulnerability to future shocks.

The *Recover Delaware* answer to discomfort with recovery conversations and planning activities is to lean in rather than shy away. Launched by the University of Delaware’s Institute for Public Administration (IPA) in June 2020, the *Recover Delaware* initiative seeks to provide Delaware’s recovery stakeholders with an ongoing forum for identifying, analyzing, deliberating, and engaging in collaborative action on recovery and resilience planning topics. For the *Recover Delaware* team, the question is not “when should we start talking about recovery?” but “what topic should we consider next in our continual community conversation about recovery and resilience planning?”

The *Recover Delaware* initiative operates with two basic premises in mind: 1) Shocks are inevitable, and they result in periodic and substantial disruptions to economic, social, and organizational prosperity and practices; and 2) Collaboration is difficult, especially difficult in times of crisis, and made even more difficult if there is not a common vocabulary and history of collaboration and trust to build upon. Through *Recover Delaware*, IPA seeks to keep a continual focus on shocks and the likelihood of future disruptions while providing recovery stakeholders with the opportunity to network and practice collaboration as they identify and design recovery and resilience planning initiatives and projects for their communities.

Eighteen months removed from the launch of *Recover Delaware*, this report documents progress on pilot efforts under the *Recover Delaware* umbrella. To date, these efforts have focused on identifying, analyzing, and engaging community stakeholders in reflective conversations on topics important to both response and recovery from the pandemic and the long-run resilience of Delaware’s communities and households to future disruptions. In the following six sections, this report documents the status of recovery in Delaware while outlining a framework for continued and enhanced resilience planning:

- Background – A consideration of the COVID-19 pandemic in the context of disruptive events, shocks, and recovery and resilience, including a snapshot analysis of Delaware’s recovery status and emerging opportunities in recovery

- Overview of the *Recover Delaware* Framework – An overview of the *Recover Delaware* initiative focused on defining and describing the four component elements of the *Recover Delaware* framework: 1) conversations about uncertainty, 2) networking and resource connection, 3) assistance with recovery planning, and 4) resources for resilience and competitiveness
- *Recover Delaware Roundtables: Approach* – A summary of the four-step approach used to organize and facilitate *Recover Delaware Roundtables* aimed at meaningful analysis and stakeholder consideration of topics important to recovery and resilience planning in Delaware
- *Recover Delaware Roundtables: Example Applications* – A further illustration of the *Recover Delaware Roundtable* approach based on three applications of the approach, including analysis of recovery challenges and opportunities for Delaware
- Dimensions of Resilient Recovery for Delaware – A summary of four key dimensions for resilience and recovery planning in Delaware—economy, built environment, community health, and governance—with a framework for planning and action briefly outlined for each
- Toward an Open Source *Recover Delaware* – A concluding call to action that outlines necessary steps to continue and enhance the *Recover Delaware* approach by developing a comprehensive set of ongoing forums and programs that allow stakeholders to initiate and engage in deliberative conversations and action planning activities on a diversity of topics for operational response, short- and long-term recovery and resilience planning, and scenario planning purposes

Background

COVID-19 in Context

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have been severe, multi-faceted, and enduring. The global health crisis prompted the adoption of practices that restricted mobility and necessitated social distancing. These considerations rendered certain economic activities impossible, resulting in substantial economic impacts at all scales. The U.S. entered a recession in March 2020. While economic expansion returned in May 2020—marking this period as the shortest economic recession in U.S. history—the severity of the retraction was pronounced (Business Cycle Dating Committee, 2021). The unemployment rate peaked at 14.8 percent nationally and 13.4 percent in Delaware—rates approximately 50 percent higher than those reached during the 2008–2009 recession (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). While official levels of unemployment did not descend to Great Depression depths, historic impacts included a record drop in retail sales and an all-time spike in temporary layoffs (Iacurci, 2020).

The pandemic has surely been a *disruptive event* that has resulted in widespread, significant impacts on individuals, households, and communities. While one might take comfort in the fact that events like the COVID-19 pandemic have been historically infrequent, *shocks* are an inevitable and regular reality faced by countries, regions, and communities. Shocks may vary considerably in terms of their geographic scope and duration, severity, and nature of impacts, but they occur frequently and result in economic and social disruptions that necessitate recovery. Wolman et al. (2017) defined *economic shocks* as follows:

...exogenous events that have a sudden and immediate impact. They can be of various kinds and can be caused by a variety of factors, including national recessions that play out differentially on regional economies; sudden declines, either nationally or regionally in an export industry critical to a specific region's economy; the closure or relocation outside of the region of a major employer; natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, or hurricanes; or other nonnatural disasters such as terrorist attacks, chemical spills, or nuclear plant accidents. (p. 2)

In Delaware, recent shocks include the record-breaking 2020 tornado associated with Tropical Storm Isaias, increasingly persistent coastal flooding, and shuttered manufacturing plants (Cappucci, 2020; Rouse & Lattanzio, 2009; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2021). Viewed as a particularly disruptive shock in a long, unending line of shocks, the pandemic serves as a useful opportunity to reconsider and reimagine how Delaware and other communities might better plan for, adapt to, and recover from future shocks.

What is Recovery?

Formally, *economic recovery* is the business cycle stage that follows a recession (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2021). Economic recovery is characterized by a sustained period of improving business activity—gross domestic product (GDP) grows, incomes rise, and unemployment falls as the economy rebounds. During a recovery, the economy undergoes a process of economic adaptation and adjustment to new conditions, including the factors that triggered the recession in the first place and the new policies and rules initiated by governments and central banks in response to the recession (The Investopedia Team, 2021). The labor, capital goods, and other productive resources that were lost due to business failures during the recession are then re-employed in new activities as unemployed workers find new employment and the resources of failed firms are bought up or divided up by others (The Investopedia Team, 2021).

Wolman et al. (2017) defined *recovery* as the ability of a region to return to a prior growth path or otherwise reverse an economic downturn. Importantly, recovery is dependent on the pre-existing characteristics of a region, the type and severity of shock(s) experienced, and the relationship between these factors. For this reason, there are a multitude of factors that can contribute to the successful recovery of a region.

While recovery is typically considered through an economic lens, there are other key dimensions to the recovery process that are influenced by the type of disruptive event. For example, a severe weather event can put significant stress on a community's infrastructure and built environment. COVID-19 also brought disparities in the built environment to the forefront, as communities with ample resources and services tended to find life easier amid the pandemic than did less prosperous communities. The health of the community is another key aspect of recovery for which the pandemic has provided important lessons. Disruptive events take a toll on the community and understanding how the community handles the recovery process is crucial. The quality and form of governance also drastically affects the recovery trajectory, as the ability to effectively understand and act on dynamic community conditions during disruption can stress the capacity of ill-prepared or under-resourced public, private, and nonprofit recovery stakeholders.

Ultimately, the recovery period is not just about bouncing back. Uncertainty is a consistent theme, and it is an important time for reflective consideration of the barriers to widespread prosperity present in each community. In this fashion, communities can use the recovery period to become more *resilient* to future disruptive events, rather than reflexively aim for a restoration of what proved to be a vulnerable status quo.

Why Focus on Resilience?

The COVID-19 pandemic is not the first time a large-scale disruptive event has sent communities around the country into a period of economic downturn. As government representatives and community leaders look for ways to alleviate the negative economic repercussions of these types of events—and look to anticipate and reduce the impacts of future crises—the concept of building resilience deserves increased attention. A community’s capacity to be “resilient” is what makes it less susceptible to shocks, while also potentially shortening the period of recovery from these shocks. These characteristics of resilience enable communities to move past disruptions and advance on a path toward prosperity. Put simply, a focus on supporting resilience can improve recovery trajectories from all types of shocks. As community leaders make investments and policy decisions intended to facilitate recovery from the various negative economic ramifications of the pandemic, these recovery efforts can also be treated as an opportunity to plan for a more resilient future. Through the enhancement of safety standards and the integration of comprehensive risk reduction measures in reconstruction and policy development, communities can avoid embedding legacy risks in recovery plans and implementation efforts (United Nations Development Programme, 2005).

State of Recovery in Delaware

As of late 2021, communities across Delaware remain in the process of recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on the local economy. Over the last year, Delaware has been subject to economic repercussions like the rest of the country. Since March 2020, Delaware has experienced an unprecedented 7.5 percent decrease in consumer spending, and manufacturing output fell to levels not seen since 2011. Meanwhile the number of unemployment applications in Delaware skyrocketed, with nearly 100,000 filers between March 21 and May 2, 2020 (Harker, 2020).

Since the early days of the pandemic, communities and industries have begun to bounce back and consumer demand is generally high. However, this has caused surges in goods processed at ports, creating bottlenecks and other supply issues (Fairless, 2021). Delaware industries like those engaged in food service face supply chain issues (Megginson, 2021). Inflated prices also pose issues for U.S. consumers, as equilibrium price points adjust after a year of downturn (Desilver, 2021).

As this report was being finalized, Delaware’s communities were still facing an active global pandemic, with the latest surge in infections fueled by the Omicron variant of COVID-19. The pandemic’s ongoing state has shrouded recovery efforts in significant uncertainty, with communities left to ponder how long the pandemic will continue, how to decipher short-term

shifts in behavior from new, enduring societal changes, and how to best plan and prepare for the eventual, long-promised “new normal.”

Emergent Opportunities

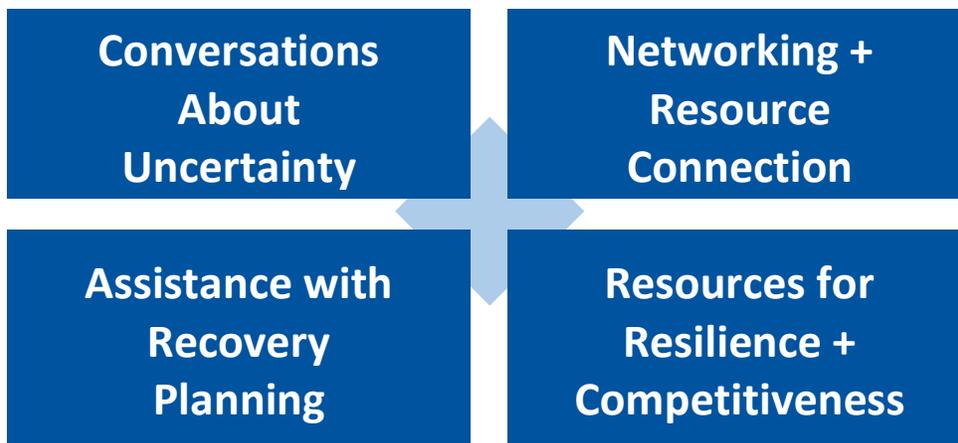
While there have been many negative repercussions of the pandemic, it has served to highlight and facilitate opportunities for improved resilience. For example, the pandemic has created opportunities for states, municipalities, and nonprofit organizations to make considerable investments using proceeds of the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act (117th U.S. Congress, 2021). Though states continue to struggle with ongoing impacts, this legislation has provided state and local governments with increased flexibility to aid disproportionately impacted communities. Additional federal funding in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act plans for \$550 billion in new infrastructure spending over the next decade (The White House, 2021b). As of the drafting of this report, the federal government is also still engaged in discussions around the “Build Back Better” framework, which plans for substantial social spending for families, as well as climate resilience projects that may present state and local governments with investment opportunities (The White House, 2021a).

Collectively, these recent and potential federal legislative actions could translate to substantial new opportunities for state and local governments capacity to prioritize programs aimed at addressing both short-term recovery needs and long-term systemic challenges. With this opportunity comes increased demands on state and local governments to both make the tough decisions about which recovery topics to prioritize and to engage in the hard work and analysis necessary to design and implement policy options that will best meet the needs of their communities.

Overview of the *Recover Delaware* Framework

The Institute for Public Administration (IPA), a research and public service center in the University of Delaware's Joseph R. Biden, Jr. School for Public Policy and Administration, launched the *Recover Delaware* initiative in June 2020. Through *Recover Delaware*, IPA seeks to leverage public policy expertise and partnerships with public and private sector stakeholders to stimulate conversation, planning, and action for Delaware's recovery from the economic, public health, and social impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. Initial efforts have been piloted in collaboration with the Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA) and focused on informing recovery and resilience planning efforts by municipal and community stakeholders in Delaware. IPA has facilitated activities, research, and analysis aligned with a four-element *Recover Delaware* framework: 1) Conversations About Uncertainty, 2) Networking + Resource Connection, 3) Assistance with Recovery Planning, and 4) Resources for Resilience + Competitiveness. While none of these elements are mutually exclusive, the substantial portion of pilot efforts have focused on facilitating conversations about uncertainty to better understand the state of recovery challenges and opportunities for Delaware. The remainder of this section outlines the activities implemented or envisioned for each element in the *Recover Delaware* framework.

Figure 1. *Recover Delaware* Framework for Facilitation and Research



Conversations about Uncertainty

The *Recover Delaware* framework acknowledges that there are few straightforward answers for resilience and recovery planning. Most important decisions about community futures present tradeoffs. While quick, unilateral decisions about the future are always an option, leaders and organizations that choose this path may miss out on opportunities to fully explore these tradeoffs by surfacing a diversity of perspectives on issues and policy options. Further, even

more deliberate decision-making processes may suffer from participation by the “usual suspects”—a situation that may embed existing blind spots and inequalities in community designs for the future.

Recognizing the need to diversify both the perspectives considered and individuals and organizations engaged in resilience planning, IPA’s *Recover Delaware* team designed and implemented two pilot initiatives to facilitate conversations about uncertainty in Delaware—monthly *Recover Delaware Roundtables* and periodic podcast episodes on a variety of resilience and recovery topics.

During 2021, IPA organized seven *Recover Delaware Roundtable* sessions featuring conversations on economic trends, community needs, and opportunities impacting Delaware’s ongoing recovery from the pandemic. The approach used to facilitate these sessions via Zoom is explored in detail in the next section of this report. Table 1 provides summary information on these *Roundtable* sessions, including the topics examined, featured content presenters, number of participants, and supplementary resources prepared.

Table 1. *Recover Delaware Roundtable Summary (2021)*

| Date | Topic | Content Presenters | Participants | Resources |
|-------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 6/9 | Recover Delaware Intro | Morgan Cohen, Troy Mix & Collin Willard (IPA) | 31 | |
| 7/14 | Digitization | Cohen & Willard (IPA) | 36 | Brief |
| 8/11 | Food Security | Nikko Brady (Delaware Department of Agriculture) | 38 | Brief |
| 9/8 | Networks for Resilience + Recovery | Danielle Swallow (Delaware Sea Grant) & Joshua Kelly (DEMA) | 39 | Brief |
| 10/13 | Infrastructure Resilience | Joseph Kane (The Brookings Institution) | 31 | |
| 11/10 | Mental and Civic Health | Michelle Singletary-Twyman, RN (Delaware Department of Health and Social Services) and Cohen & Willard (IPA) | 27 | |
| 12/8 | Inclusive Downtown Revitalization | Ilana Preuss (Recast City) | 31 | |

IPA's podcast [First State Insights](#) features conversations with regional and national professionals, stakeholders, and content experts on a variety of topics that may be relevant for resilience and recovery planning. As part of the *Recover Delaware* initiative, IPA produced a [Visions of Recovery](#) series of podcast episodes that seeks to shed light on opportunities for community, economic, and social recovery from the pandemic by engaging experts and advocates in conversations on five questions:

1. What's one thing you think will be changed for good after the pandemic?
2. What's one thing you hope will change?
3. What needs to happen for this change to occur?
4. What are you doing to make it happen?
5. How can folks get involved?

Table 2. *Visions of Recovery* Podcast Series Episodes Recorded in 2021

| <i>Title and Summary</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Reimagining Long-Term Care – Katelyn Andrews, Director of Public Policy at LiveOn NY, speaks about public policy priorities for aging and older adults and her vision for the future of long-term care. |
| Bridging the Digital Divide – Monica Sanders, Managing Director of the Georgetown Environmental Justice Program, speaks about addressing the digital divide in recovery. |
| Leveraging Libraries for Vital Communities – Betsey Suchanic, Senior Program Manager with the Urban Libraries Council, speaks about libraries' critical community economic development roles, including the essential local government services provided by libraries during the pandemic and the need to reinvest in public libraries during recovery. |
| Advancing Emergency Management – Erin Norris, Natural Hazards Planner with the Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA), speaks about the value of community partnerships for disaster response and recovery and opportunities to diversify the field of emergency management moving forward. |
| Community Philanthropy for Resilience – Stuart Comstock-Gay, President and CEO of the Delaware Community Foundation, speaks about existing and potential roles for philanthropy in ensuring resilient communities and households across Delaware. |
| Advancing Racial Justice – Tierra Fair, Senior Director of Community Engagement at United Way of Delaware, speaks about the ongoing need to advance racial justice. |
| A Sociological Perspective – Dr. Victor Perez, Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Delaware, speaks about pandemic recovery from a sociological perspective, including childcare's critical role in supporting workers and families and how the pandemic exacerbated the disproportionate health outcomes experienced in historically marginalized communities. |

The *Roundtables* and podcast series represent pilot attempts by the *Recover Delaware* team to nurture the capacity for diverse stakeholders across Delaware to engage in meaningful, policy-oriented conversations about current and future uncertainty.

Networking and Resource Connection

The *Recover Delaware* framework acknowledges that effective recovery requires cooperation among organizations, businesses, and stakeholders at various levels of government. Through the monthly *Roundtables*, pilot *Recover Delaware* efforts provided government officials and community stakeholders with opportunities to network with peers, learn about what other communities are experiencing and doing, and engage in conversation about policy and partnership opportunities and needs. Additionally, IPA launched and facilitated a public [Recover Delaware Slack](#) network to provide a forum for information and resource-sharing and direct peer communication. Generally, engagement in the Slack network has been limited to date and networking, more generally, has been hampered by the necessity of virtual meetings. However, opportunities to engage in conversation and information sharing across agency, jurisdictional, and sectoral boundaries have been key during pandemic response, and they should be emphasized as a crucial for recovery and resilience planning efforts that move beyond the limits of established siloes.

Assistance with Recovery Planning

Through its ongoing public service programs, IPA provides direct planning, policy analysis, and implementation support to a wide variety of Delaware's local governments and state agencies. IPA's intent is to use *Recover Delaware* as a platform for advancing support to Delaware's governments on the topics of disaster response and recovery and resilience planning. IPA's public service projects are typically responsive to specific requests for assistance by partner agencies and governments. However, specific requests on recovery and resilience planning topics have been limited so far. In part, the lack of requests may be driven by the necessary intense focus on immediate response to the pandemic, as well as IPA's corresponding lack of experience in and capacity for providing direct, hands-on support for disaster response efforts. Further, many of Delaware's governments lack significant experience in and capacity for more forward-looking recovery efforts, such as hazard mitigation and resilience planning. This lack of experience and capacity may require more proactive approaches on the part of the *Recover Delaware* team and state agencies to both seed and lead potential recovery planning initiatives in municipalities and other community and organizational settings.

Despite limited activity to date on this element of the *Recover Delaware* framework, two efforts point to potential ongoing roles for IPA and other resource providers. First, the *Recover Delaware* team organized a virtual ["Focus on Funding"](#) session on September 30, 2021, which

featured remarks from Claire DeMatteis, Special Assistant to Delaware’s Governor, on the State’s American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) investment priorities and opportunities for state-local partnerships on investments and compliance. Forty-eight participants joined the session, and the discussion highlighted opportunities for municipalities to access shared legal and accounting counsel to support investment compliance. Additionally, the *Recover Delaware* team generated and distributed a [brief on recovery investment guidance](#).

Second, the *Recover Delaware* team organized several informal discussions with local government officials in preparation for the “Focus on Funding” session. These unstructured conversations about priorities and open questions regarding ARPA funds yielded useful, generic insights that framed the larger session with municipalities. Further, the quality of engagement in these conversations with individual officials revealed a potential demand for the provision of ongoing counsel and advice on resilience planning topics. While these demands are unlikely to rise to the level of formal consulting arrangements for most municipalities in Delaware, the provision of ongoing, programmatic outreach to municipalities—potentially organized as organizational coaching conversations—could serve to assist with individualized recovery planning needs while identifying widespread gaps in knowledge and capacity.

Resources for Resilience & Competitiveness

The *Recover Delaware* team seeks to provide up-to-date information and data on emerging challenges so that local leaders are equipped with an understanding of how recent and ongoing trends might affect their community. As outlined earlier in this section, IPA prepared policy briefs in support of three of the *Recover Delaware Roundtable* sessions. These documents aimed to both frame the conversations for these sessions and provide resources and considerations for advancing policy initiatives on these topics.

IPA also curated *Recover Delaware* editions of DEMA’s Community Support & Recovery Task Force Newsletter, with analysis and resources provided on the following recovery and resilience topics:

- [Economic Recovery](#) (6/10/2021)
- [Digitization](#) (7/15/21)
- [Food Security](#) (8/12/21)
- [Networks for Resilience and Recovery](#) (9/9/21)
- [Infrastructure Resilience](#) (10/14/21)
- [Mental Health](#) (11/11/21)
- [Small Businesses + Downtown Revitalization](#) (12/9/21)

Finally, this guidebook is intended to offer Delaware’s recovery stakeholders with insight on tools and approaches that may prove useful for building resilience planning capacity.

Recover Delaware Roundtables: Approach

The *Recover Delaware* team designed, piloted, and refined a practical approach to tackling individual policy issues in a resilience context using applied research culminating in virtual *Roundtable* settings. The *Recover Delaware Roundtable Approach* is a four-part process that outlines steps individuals, organizations, and agencies may model in designing and hosting their own *Roundtable* sessions or similar resilience planning events. The following outlined approach is intended to be a step-by-step guide outlining the process of identifying a recovery issue, framing it in the context of resilience, conducting meaningful exploration of the current response landscape, and engaging stakeholders in reflective conversation that points to potential actions.

1. Identify Recovery Challenge

The first step of the *Recover Delaware Roundtable* approach is to identify a single specific challenge or impediment to recovery trajectories that is currently impacting the target audience. This problem is explored first from the macro level, considering what the larger-level scope of the problem might be across the United States. Next, research is conducted using available data at state and local scales to provide additional context that is specifically relevant to Delaware and its communities.

Questions to consider for this step:

- What detrimental impacts can be attributed to the issue?
- Which types of communities are hardest hit by the issue?
- Are there explanations for uneven distribution of impacts?
- Are there data to support a connection between the issue and recovery trajectories?

2. Frame in the Context of Resilience

After determining the scope and impact of the outlined recovery problem, the next step is to explore what a resilient response to this policy issue might look like. This exercise is informed by the research conducted while identifying the recovery challenge, along with additional examination of existing state-of-practice research in the resilience space. The intention of this step is to devise potential solutions for ongoing and future mitigation of the outlined recovery issue, as well as consideration of how tackling the issue in question can make a community more resilient.

Questions to consider for this step:

- What is needed to resolve this issue?

- What are the long-term repercussions if the issue is left unresolved?
- Have there been successful mitigation efforts of similar events?
- What are the cost-benefit considerations of addressing the issue (or choosing not to) in the short- or long-term?

3. Analyze Response Landscape

The next step is to consider what actions are presently being taken at various levels of government, and by individuals, private sector, and nonprofit organizations. The efficacy of these approaches is considered and compared to the outcomes from step 2. Through the exploration of the status of the issue and what actionable steps have already been taken, the issue can be viewed through a state-of-practice lens.

Questions to consider for this step:

- How have communities outside of Delaware approached the issue?
- Are grants and funding opportunities available?
- Are existing opportunities being capitalized on?
- Are existing policies sufficient or are updates warranted?
- What are experts or professionals in the field recommending?
- What non-governmental organizations in your community work to address this issue?

4. Engage Stakeholders in Reflective Conversation

To explore how local governments and organizations are experiencing the problem in Delaware, the target audience is engaged in meaningful conversations surrounding the issue. This reflective stakeholder engagement simultaneously allows for an on-the-ground assessment of the research conducted in earlier steps, colored by varying perspectives at the state and local levels, as well as providing timely operational response guidance to those individuals who are actively navigating the problem. This is the final step in the Recover Delaware Approach. The feedback provided through stakeholder engagement in this step is essential to determine which approaches may be most effective to mitigate context-specific issues, and what steps could be taken to further optimize responses. Though follow up steps could result in the identification of specific recommendations for implementation, the diversity of perspectives on issues generally suggests that a thematic summary of research and conversation is an appropriate output of the process. As appropriate, further conversations may be held with different or targeted sub-groups of stakeholders to define more specific pathways for action.

While the exact tools and approaches used to facilitate these conversations may vary, the key is that thought-provoking, broadly applicable questions are asked of all participants, and that participants have opportunities to provide feedback without having their voices drowned out

by dominant participants. The *Recover Delaware* team has used Zoom and [Jamboard](#)—Google’s collaborative digital whiteboard platform—to invite feedback from diverse participants. *Roundtable* sessions have generally been structured as one-hour events, with participants invited to offer their perspective on a series of topical questions by typing out and submitting digital “sticky notes.” While some may choose or be invited to unmute and vocalize their comments, all are able to contribute to the conversation. The collaborative whiteboard allows for viewing responses in real-time. Sessions are recorded and made available, along with Jamboard slides with participant feedback, to enable asynchronous participation and further review and consideration of feedback.

Questions to consider for this step:

- Do stakeholders have a space to converse about the problem and communicate ongoing or projected needs?
- Are there identifiable emergent themes based on stakeholder feedback?
- Do stakeholders have efficient and reliable access to information about this issue?
- Do stakeholders need planning or practical assistance in tackling this issue?

Recover Delaware Roundtables: Example Applications

Recover Delaware Roundtables aim to empower recovery stakeholders in Delaware to become informed about and resilient to a range of challenges they may encounter in their communities. For the purposes of showcasing the *Roundtable* approach, this section of the report outlines how three topics—digitization, mental and civic health, and inclusive downtown revitalization—were considered by the *Recover Delaware* team and recovery stakeholders using the *Roundtable* format. The report appendix includes copies of the Jamboard slides used for these *Roundtables* so that the typical form of guided engagement questions and feedback can be referenced.

Digitization

Identifying the Recovery Challenge

“Digitization” refers to the integration of digital technology into the day-to-day functions of peoples’ lives. COVID-19 served as a catalyst for the increased reliance upon digital technologies, and many of the innovations that occurred during the pandemic are likely to have long-lasting societal impacts. For example, millions of Americans worked remotely for extended stretches of time during the pandemic, and nearly 57 percent of the American workforce worked remotely at least part of the time during the pandemic’s peak from December 2020 to January 2021 (Ozimek, 2021a). Despite the availability of vaccines, PwC’s U.S. Pulse Survey from August 2021 showed that employers planned to continue remote work through Fall 2021, with 33 percent of business executives reporting a mix of in-person, hybrid, and fully remote work, and another 18 percent reporting an all-hybrid approach (Ozimek, 2021b). Even pre-pandemic, flexible work policies that allowed for remote work proved to be a critical tool for retaining employees (Maurer, 2019). As of June 2021, high quit rates in largely in-person sectors, such as accommodation and food services and leisure and hospitality, point to a heightened value for workplace flexibility during the pandemic—though analysts note that quit rates also reflect the inability or unwillingness of many employers to meet heightened compensation demands (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2021). In the long run, the prevalence of remote work is an important issue because of its potential impact on commuting patterns, economic development, commercial real estate, and the nature of work and personal relationships, among many potential effects.

Digitization also introduced changes to household consumption patterns. E-commerce increased dramatically during the pandemic, reflecting a shift in how people make purchases (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2021). Niche digital sectors, like food delivery services, have also grown tremendously (Perri, 2021). As digital retailers become more and more prevalent, the demand for increasingly sophisticated and digitized logistics services is

expected to increase—a demand that may translate to shifts in land use and transportation patterns and labor markets at local and regional scales.

Digitization has also changed how people receive and engage with information. According to a 2020 survey, 60 percent of Americans often use digital devices to get news and digital devices are far and away the primary source of news for Americans under 50 (Shearer, 2021). Since more and more people receive news and information from social media platforms, it is also now even more important for governments and organizations to have an active digital presence. With the pandemic limiting the possibility for in-person events, governments and organizations had to quickly adapt their approach to public meetings by relying on social media and streaming technology that allowed people to participate from home.

Frame in the Context of Resilience

If a given community hopes to become more resilient to future events, they must first understand the current context of the economic landscape. Digitization has been deployed in numerous forms over the course of the pandemic, making the phenomenon an even more integral part of our society. These pandemic-era shifts have occurred abruptly, drastically altering daily life for millions. Therefore, it is important for communities to understand how the shifts caused by digitization have played a role in their community, and how they may continue to play a role moving forward.

Digitization can also be leveraged by governments to optimize services, facilitate more public engagement, and better understand the outcomes of various policies. Therefore, the digitization of government represents a key shift in responding to the needs and demands of citizens—if local governments are not responsive to these needs, then they risk being disconnected from a major portion of the population. If preserved post-pandemic, these developments and future adaptations support a digital government model that can enable a more informed recovery from disruptive events.

Public health requirements forced the hand of many government-led digitization efforts during the pandemic, but a more balanced and nuanced approach will be advisable for future implementation efforts. While many residents and community stakeholders may have welcomed the move toward virtual public meetings and digitized government services increasingly aligned with commercial offerings, a sizable minority of residents may find these shifts to be unwelcome (Bertrand, 2021). Governments and organizations that unilaterally embrace digitization threaten to alienate and disconnect those residents that are unwilling or unable to readily access digital services. A resilient approach to digitization requires acknowledging and designing for individual- and group-level obstacles to accessing digital services, including security and privacy concerns, digital skills deficits, lack of trust in government generally, or inability to afford or connect to appropriate digital infrastructure.

Table 3 outlines considerations for digitally resilient governments.

Table 3. Aspects of Digitized Governments in the Context of Resilience

| Aspect of Digitized Government | Why does it matter in the context of resilience? |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Digital Government Outreach | Allows governments to cultivate collaborative work, streamline communication of ideas between external partners, and gather information from traditionally hard-to-reach demographics |
| Online Accessibility | Enables a greater number of people to be engaged in local government and use available resources through developments such as digital public meetings and digitized services |
| Optimized Government | Streamlining government processes, frameworks, and metrics to make government faster and more responsive to citizen needs, and to help agencies provide concrete data for planning |
| Data-Driven Policy and Assessment | Allows governments to collect higher quality data on the implementation of specific policy initiatives to better evaluate and understand policy outcomes |
| Human-Centered | Ensures that digitized services and processes respond to and anticipate the needs of residents and stakeholders while accounting for substantial within-community differences in comfort with, desire for, and ability to access digital services |

Analyzing Response Landscape

One of the key steps that communities and regions are taking to understand the impacts of digitization is simply gathering data. For instance, the Greater Washington Partnership's *Remote Work in the Capital Region* provides analysis behind how remote work shifts might affect the D.C. metro area (Ernst & Young LLP, 2021). This report examines potential impacts on real estate, transportation, and economic development to evaluate the changes that may result from the remote work aspect of digitization. This approach serves as a compelling example for how a region's leaders might approach analyzing digitization to make informed decisions.

Governments are also taking action to promote continued digitization. The American Rescue Plan Act included several funding sources that are being used by state and local governments to

fund broadband expansions (Read & Wert, 2021). For example, Delaware plans to invest \$110 million on broadband expansion efforts (Tabeling, 2021). Other regions are attempting to lean into remote work by offering benefits to remote workers who relocate, such as the privately-funded West Virginia Ascend Program (West Virginia University Foundation, 2021).

Engage Stakeholders in Reflective Conversation

The July 2021 *Recover Delaware Roundtable* focused on the topic of digitization. The team engaged with over 30 representatives from municipalities, state agencies, and other stakeholder groups in Delaware to discuss the scope of the issue and how digitization has played out statewide and in individual communities. The *Recover Delaware* team also hosted a follow-up session several weeks after the event to allow interested participants to consider the issue in greater detail. These sessions allowed local leaders to discuss how digitization efforts are being handled in Delaware, and what the wider societal impacts of digitization may look like.

Key themes from the discussions included:

- *Digital Community Engagement* – This aspect of digitization reflects changes in how governments connect with their communities. *Roundtable* participants reflected upon and shared information about the use of digital platforms for community engagement. Notably, several comments pointed to increased community participation in virtual public meetings. Comments reflected uncertainty about implementing hybrid public meetings, with incompatible public meeting laws and limited technological infrastructure and appropriate staffing capacity cited as challenges to overcome. Some participants also referenced the need for program licenses and secure platforms to share information with community members.
- *Supporting Digital Government* – Local governments need resources to make digital government effective. Generally, participant comments mentioned the need for greater collaboration on equipping local governments with the skills and resources to facilitate digital government approaches. Roundtable participants commented that local governments require support on IT administration, including cybersecurity, and could benefit from employee training programs. Some participants also emphasized the need for technology infrastructure and policies to support hybrid meetings.
- *Digitization Effects on Land Use* – Roundtable participants offered context on how digitization plays a role in local economic development. Some comments reflected increased demand for logistics-related commercial activity, presenting issues for traffic patterns and land use. Participants also mentioned the potential effects of remote work on their community, with others reflecting an interest in learning more about the potential for flexible coworking spaces in their communities.

Mental and Civic Health

Identifying the Recovery Challenge

The pandemic has taken a major toll on our collective mental well-being. With the wide array of stressors created or exacerbated by the pandemic, the rate of adults experiencing depression and anxiety symptoms increased from roughly 11 percent in the first half of 2019 to over 40 percent at the pandemic's peak in January 2021. Indicators of poor mental health are particularly prevalent among essential workers and young adults. Historically, job loss resulting from disruptive events has also proven to be a key indicator for poor mental health (Panchal et al., 2021). The pandemic's detrimental effects on mental health have contributed to increases in drug use. While drug overdoses have been largely driving the increase in deaths of despair in the 21st century, the 12-month period from March 2020 to March 2021 saw nearly 100,000 drug overdose deaths—an increase of nearly 30,000 from the 12 months prior (National Center for Health Statistics, 2021; United States Congress Joint Economic Committee - Republicans, 2021).

The mental health crisis during COVID-19 has been exacerbated by social isolation, as many struggle with being alone. This coincides with ongoing challenges in civic health. Broadly defined by the National Conference on Citizenship as “the way that communities are organized to define and address public problems,” civic health reflects how well-equipped communities are to respond to collective challenges (Atwell et al., 2021). Social isolation has been a major challenge in civic health in America even prior to the pandemic. The less connected community members are, the less capable they are of organizing to solve problems. The pandemic also exacerbated existing trends of low public trust in government and increased political polarization—conditions that represent significant challenges for local governments to overcome (Atwell et al., 2021).

As a disruptive event, COVID-19 also generated wholly new issues in the context of civic health. COVID-19 put a tremendous strain on how government bodies meet to craft public policy, as the pandemic forced the switch to virtual formats in many instances. It also constrained how people receive information, with increased digital viewership and less in-person interaction and information-sharing. While digital sources can democratize and speed access to information, misinformation has been an unfortunate hallmark of the pandemic era and skepticism of public health measures has sometimes resulted (World Health Organization, 2021).

Frame in the Context of Resilience

Mental and civic health are key components of a successful recovery that set up a community for long-term resilience. Expansive and accessible mental health care and resources are a key component in a community's recovery process from a disruptive event such as COVID-19, as

members of the community can be confident in their ability to access necessary support in times of crisis. Therefore, a focus on supporting mental health in the long-term makes a given community more resilient to future disruptions overall.

Civic health is also an important component to a resilient recovery because it reflects the health of a community's policymaking process. How do community members identify and organize around common issues? Are policymakers informed about public problems, and do they adequately respond to community aspirations? Does the implementation of the policy reflect citizen sentiments? These questions are always important, but even more important when considering recovery from a disruptive event. Responsive policymaking, fueled by strong civic health, is of the utmost importance, and enables communities to prioritize resilience during recovery.

Analyzing Response Landscape

The November 2021 *Recover Delaware Roundtable* focused on Civic and Mental Health. The team invited Michelle Singletary-Twyman, Chief of Community and Behavioral Health at the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), who spoke on the agency's response to mental health issues during the pandemic. In this manner, we analyzed the response landscape with our audience by hearing directly from the agency. DHSS's operations were complicated by being unable to engage with clients face-to-face, but they adapted by devoting additional attention to tracking data on clients. In turn, this information could also be used as a tool to analyze how needs changed over time. DHSS's Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health also launched a food bank and collaborated on community support trainings with police departments. In addition, its services prioritize access; clinics are placed in accessible locations across the state and its HopeLine provides access to assistance for anyone who calls. Ultimately, these approaches that prioritize access have made DHSS's operations resilient during the pandemic and provided crucial support to struggling community members.

Engage Stakeholders in Reflective Conversation

Throughout the session, participants were asked to reflect on questions regarding mental and civic health in their community. When encouraged to consider emergent challenges in their community since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, respondents pointed to significant increases in depression and anxiety. Some comments pointed toward specific age groups as particularly vulnerable, including the K–12 and older populations. Comments also pointed to burnout due to crisis situations in various lines of work, such as essential workers and first responders. This observation is also reflective of data that suggest essential workers, and in particular essential health care workers, have been vulnerable to mental health problems during the COVID-19 pandemic (American Psychological Association, 2021). In a more positive light, respondents also noted that there was a significant capacity for communities to improve

access to mental health resources to meet the increased demand for services brought on by the pandemic. This opportunity was attributed largely to additional funding made available through ARPA.

When participants were asked how their organizations support mental health, many comments pointed toward behavioral health co-response units for emergency situations. Normalizing mental health was a significant theme, including ensuring its inclusion in company benefits. There was also significant interest in forming more well-developed resilience networks with regards to mental health. Other resources identified as crucial for supporting mental health include additional providers (particularly for the uninsured), joint response to emergency calls, and affordable housing.

Identified civic health challenges were related to barriers to public engagement. Many participants, including those involved in local government, indicated a perception of low public trust within their communities. The pandemic era has been characterized by often rapidly changing scientific information (and interpretation) and unconventional virtual meetings, factors which were thought to have negatively influenced levels of public trust in many instances.

Increased engagement with the public was advanced as a potential positive path forward by many of our participants. Examples such as newsletters, streaming services, dedicated outreach professionals, and planned events were being used by some communities to bridge communication gaps exacerbated by the disruptions of COVID-19.

Inclusive Downtown Revitalization

Identifying Recovery Challenge

Municipalities rely upon downtown networks of local small businesses to fuel economic growth and create a sense of place in their communities. However, the pandemic caused major disruptions in the economy, and this has been particularly the case for small businesses. In the Northeast region of the United States, the number of self-employed individuals declined nearly 30 percent in March–April 2020 when compared to the year prior (Wilmoth, 2021). The economic outlook has since improved significantly, though the effects are still being felt. More than 60 percent of small businesses in Delaware reported experiencing a moderate or large negative effect on their operations as recently as early December 2021 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).

Many of the small businesses that small towns and cities rely upon are restaurants, which serve a key role in place-making and attracting consumers to downtown areas. However, the restaurant industry has experienced unique difficulties in recovery. The persistence of the

pandemic has proven difficult to handle as restaurants have had to reduce indoor dining and, in many cases, adapt to a focus on take-out. Recently, the Delaware Restaurant Association has also reported widespread supply chain issues and difficulty adjusting to higher rates of pay that reflect the value of their essential workers (Megginson, 2021).

Frame in the Context of Resilience

Downtown corridors function to draw in consumers with access to a density of unique businesses. While the pandemic took a toll on small businesses across the board, businesses in downtown areas had key place-based advantages. Businesses in traditional downtown corridors could leverage their location into resilience because of aspects like their proximity to residential areas and the ability to form partnerships and collaborate with other businesses (Powe & Love, 2020). In essence, the concentration of businesses in downtowns creates opportunity and increases the resilience of the community by providing a strong foundation for its businesses. However, a diversity of businesses is also key, as sector-specific disruptions could send an unbalanced downtown into a spiraling decline. It is also important for businesses to truly cater to the local population, so that the entire community reaps the benefits of its downtown. Therefore, inclusive revitalization is of the utmost priority to work toward a resilient recovery.

Analyze Response Landscape

Responses to patterns of economic downturn in downtown areas have taken a variety of shapes. From Paycheck Protection Program loans to statewide programs, relief options have been made available to support small businesses in pandemic response. Delaware's Relief Grants Program allocated nearly \$200 million toward small business relief during the pandemic (Office of the State of Delaware Governor John Carney, 2021). Cities in Delaware have also taken creative approaches to assist small businesses. For instance, the City of Newark's AI Fresco nights celebrated outdoor dining opportunities during the summer months in 2020 and 2021 (Schmidt, 2021).

The response landscape reflects a wider array of action than just responding to the pandemic. Some are using the recovery period to innovate approaches to downtown revitalization. The December 2021 *Recover Delaware Roundtable* featured Ilana Preuss, author of *Recast Your City: How to Save Your Downtown with Small-Scale Manufacturing* (Preuss, 2021). Preuss's firm works with local governments across the country to design action plans aimed at developing small-scale manufacturers in downtown areas with the goals of diversifying economic development, driving investments in the community, and encouraging inclusive growth. These efforts are illustrative of how communities can and are responding to the need for recovery by refocusing on downtown revitalization.

Engage Stakeholders in Reflective Conversation

Preuss' *Roundtable* presentation integrated segments of reflective participation from the audience. Early in the presentation, the *Recover Delaware* team invited participants to share their views on the biggest challenges facing their local economies. Several comments highlighted issues with finding space for businesses, including “red tape” associated with transitioning vacant properties to productive uses, high costs for restoration, and high costs to secure a lease. Other comments focused on the difficulties associated with small business retention and development, including competition with larger, chain operations and the need to adapt to new economic trends, such as digitization.

When asked to engage about the role that individual identity plays in the local economy, comments reflected challenges in dealing with class and cultural barriers in the community. One comment suggested that divides in the community create a divide in demand for resources, as different groups prioritize different goods. However, another participant noted that more recent influxes of Hispanic-owned businesses have greatly benefited the local economy.

The team also asked participants to identify their largest asset in the context of economic development. In addition to proximity to transportation networks (e.g., I-95) and environmental assets (e.g., Nanticoke River in Seaford), participants referenced anchor institutions, like cultural landmarks, a new Amazon facility, and nonprofit organizations. These responses illustrate an important point for recovery and resilience planning—while governments are often responsible for formal planning efforts these initiatives can be of limited value if they do not recognize key assets and engage key stakeholders. For discussions of economic recovery and resilience, engagement with the private sector is particularly critical.

Dimensions of Resilient Recovery for Delaware

After research and reflective engagement sessions, the *Recover Delaware* team has identified four key dimensions of focus for considering and designing a resilient recovery for Delaware and its communities:

- Economy
- Built Environment
- Community Health
- Governance

While these dimensions will and should be operationalized in different ways according to the scale and scope of planning and implementation efforts, this section provides a brief overview of each dimension and outlines a basic framework of potential activities.

Economy

The economy is already a standard priority during recovery, as economic shocks typically accompany a disruptive event, and they can also be the root cause of disruptions (e.g., the housing market crisis that precipitated the 2008–2009 recession). Local economic downturn during disruptive events drives poverty and hardship, so its importance and influence is clear. However, a focus on building resilience during the economic recovery process can mitigate the effects of the next disruptive event and enable a faster recovery period. This implies more than just a restoration of the way things were prior to the disruptive event. A resilient economic recovery involves critical analysis of the local economic landscape to understand which groups are most vulnerable and which economic sectors have struggled the most. While local governments cannot dictate national economic trends, they can analyze the effects of the economic trends at the local level while pinpointing hard-hit groups and sectors. An approach to economic recovery that is reflective of community members' needs is key.

The U.S. Economic Development Administration [EDA] (2021a) offers guidance on how to plan for economic resilience. For Delaware and its communities, several approaches and activities may prove useful:

- *Analyze economic data to benchmark economic resilience at state and local scales* – Basic measures of economic diversity and income inequality, regularly updated, can serve as a straightforward assessment of a region's (over)reliance on specific industries and the presence of significant resource disparities.
- *Maintain an updated and comprehensive resource database of business and economic development service providers* – The State of Delaware Division of Small Business

maintains a *Business Resource Connection* that provides a searchable database of organizations supporting business development in Delaware (Division of Small Business - State of Delaware, 2021). While the extent of the Division's *Business Resource Connection* database could be more than is needed for most local applications, community efforts to link to and augment this list for the local economic context could provide a useful start for both steady-state and recovery-stage economic development efforts.

- *Establish economic development information networks that can be activated in times of crisis* – Even small communities can begin making a point of developing an “economic development rolodex” of local businesses and support organizations and making periodic “house calls” to assess the status of sustained and emerging issues. Over time, these house calls should yield increasingly sophisticated understandings of local pressures and opportunities. In times of crisis, this informed “rolodex” can be activated to connect businesses with resource providers (or vice versa) or hasten the development and implementation of investment proposals to address articulated community economic development needs.
- *Engage in ongoing economic development planning efforts characterized by diverse perspectives and guarded optimism* – Ongoing comprehensive planning for economic development with a diverse set of stakeholders is crucial for highlighting gaps in current approaches and ensuring economic development priorities both align with other planning efforts (e.g., hazard mitigation plans and municipal comprehensive plans) and clearly identify project and investment opportunities that might be pursued when grant funding is available.
 - *Reinvigorate the Delaware Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) Process with Resilience in Mind* – EDA's CEDs process provides a venue for regions to develop strategies for economic development and compete for federal funding to implement these strategies. Economic resilience is a required component of the CEDs, but Delaware's most recent CEDs does not explicitly address resilience (Division of Small Business - State of Delaware, 2020). As such, Delaware's recovery from the pandemic is a fortuitous time to reengage the CEDs planning process with resilience in mind. This might entail elements such as those outlined above—engaging a more diverse set of perspectives in strategy development and performing benchmark analysis to identify gaps and vulnerabilities, for instance. Further, with an eye toward balancing healthy boosterism and critical analysis of economic gaps and vulnerabilities, it is worth reconsidering the diversity of organizations engaged in CEDs development As a

CEDS process is reconvened for Delaware, a lead role might be envisioned for the Office of State Planning Coordination—a unit charged with “effective coordination of state, county and local planning efforts” (Office of State Planning Coordination - State of Delaware, 2021). Third-party organizations engaged with *Recover Delaware* or Delaware’s Resilient and Sustainable Communities League (RASCL) might also be considered for a lead role in facilitating CEDS preparation (Delaware Resilient and Sustainable Communities League, 2021). Finally, to institutionalize a diverse, interjurisdictional approach to economic development, Delaware might seek to create or join a government- or nonprofit-led Economic Development District (EDD):

[a multi-jurisdictional entity], commonly composed of multiple counties and in certain cases even cross-state borders...[that helps] lead the locally-based, regionally driven economic development planning process that leverages the involvement of the public, private and non-profit sectors to establish a strategic blueprint (i.e., an economic development roadmap) for regional collaboration. (U.S. Economic Development Administration, 2021b)

Built Environment

The built environment is another key dimension of a resilient recovery. Recovery trajectories will undoubtedly be different depending on the configuration of the built environment, as disparities in amenities and resources differ across geography. The pandemic aptly highlighted some of these disparities, which has created difficulties with regards to access of resources; some individuals simply must travel farther to get what they need. Local infrastructure needs also play a role in recovery and opportunities arise to address them during the recovery period to enable future resilience. For example, a place’s built environment is often what makes it appealing, even when the built environment is meant to emphasize the natural environment, such as in Delaware’s beach communities. Taking these factors into consideration, communities can think strategically about how their existing or emergent built environment can influence overall community resilience. This is especially important when considering Delaware’s risks associated with climate change.

While COVID-19 was a disruptive event related to public health, it is likely that future disruptive events will be centered around climate. Decision making around infrastructure choices and investment in developing climate resilient infrastructure can help enable communities to both mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts, which will be even more of a threat in the future for Delaware.

For communities in Delaware, considering the built environment from a resilience perspective in recovery might entail approaches such as:

- *Evaluating comprehensive development plans through the lenses of hazards and scenarios* – Local comprehensive development plans are typically crafted with 10–30-year time horizons in mind. While this timeframe is generally a practical horizon for informing land use and infrastructure investment decisions, considering these plans through hazard and scenario perspectives may help to identify vulnerabilities that may be reinforced by plans and policies. For example, adopting a hazards perspective on the planning process may involve consideration of how more frequent flooding and storms could affect the viability of land uses and areas within a community. Scenario considerations might involve engaging in thought experiments that stress test the viability of overall development patterns and economic and settlement structures in a community’s current built environment and comprehensive plan.

For many communities, integrating hazard and scenario perspectives with comprehensive planning may require access to external consulting and facilitation assistance. Considered across Delaware communities, it may be beneficial to develop a collaborative network of hazard and scenario planning practitioners that can engage communities in conversations about potential vulnerabilities and mitigation policies that might be cultivated through the planning process. Such a collaborative network could serve to harness a diversity of perspectives that cannot be easily simulated in a single community, while also spreading the monetary and time costs of these services across multiple communities and planning processes.

- *Articulating infrastructure needs that lie beyond local funding capabilities* – Historically large federal recovery, stimulus, and infrastructure funding programs were initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic. For communities of all sizes, the amount of funds available could easily outstrip local capacity to develop and prioritize projects. Two features of Delaware’s municipalities suggests that they may experience this situation even more acutely than localities did in other states. First, even Delaware’s largest municipality would be considered no more than a small- or medium-sized city in many other states, suggesting relatively limited experience in pursuing and managing large grants. Second, the provision of services and infrastructure like public health and transportation is relatively centralized in Delaware, suggesting that local capacity for project and program development on these topics may be limited.

While the pandemic represents a particularly large and enduring shock relative to those more typically experienced in Delaware, even smaller scale shocks tend to outstrip the ability of individual municipalities to respond and recover with only their own

resources. As such, communities should seek to develop and institutionalize approaches to identifying and prioritizing a pipeline of projects to be funded by non-municipal sources (e.g., state or federal funds). For some municipalities, these projects will represent a logical extension of capital improvement plans that rely on locally generated revenues. For others, this could require the development of wholly new capacities. In all cases, such a focus recognizes that future shocks may result in the need for recovery investments that outstrip local capacity, and that particularly large-scale shocks may result in funding opportunities that localities can only pursue if they have articulated project ideas in advance of these shocks.

Community Health

Disruptive events have major implications for the well-being of community members. Research indicates that regardless of the type of disruptive event experienced, community mental health is sure to be affected in some capacity. Mental health normalization and resource access are key to ensuring that community members are cared for, and as a result, can be situated to participate in and contribute to the recovery process. Civic health is also important within this dimension. Community organizations serve an important role in the local safety net, meaning they are key to the health of others. Communities need networks and connections through organizations because these connections facilitate action. When the community is involved in the policymaking process by identifying key community issues, the government can make more informed decisions.

Adopting a resilient stance to considering community health in recovery might entail approaches such as:

- *Institutionalizing “no wrong door” policies relative to the delivery of health services in Delaware’s communities* – For many residents in Delaware and other states, the “government” is understood as an amorphous entity with no clear distinctions necessarily made between the responsibilities of various jurisdictions and levels of government. Government officials may practically experience this by being blamed for the perceived shortcomings of response efforts by other agencies or jurisdictions. “No wrong door” policies recognize that bureaucratic distinctions can sometimes stand in the way of individuals and households from receiving the assistance they need on a variety of social service and health dimensions (Connecticut State Department of Aging and Disability Services, 2022). While Delaware’s state and local government agencies may not have the capacity to assume new official roles relative to the provision of health services, they should seek to adopt a positive and proactive stance toward providing information on the services available from other agencies and, as appropriate, referring individuals to these services.

- *Hosting and engaging in regular dialogues about local and national issues* – Just as an infrequent runner may fail when tasked with running a marathon, communities unaccustomed to dialogue on important issues may suffer civic health breakdowns when confronted with cascading challenges like pandemics and national political strife. Though there are no easy prescriptions for improving civic health, models for practicing dialogue in and across communities do exist. Nationally, the Kettering Foundation (2022) sponsors collaborative research to inform the facilitation of dialogues on pressing issues in communities across the United States. Regionally, the Delaware Community Foundation (2022) seeks to “bring together key players from the private and public sectors to participate in important conversations about issues affecting...quality of life.” Hosting dialogues in individual communities may unnecessarily limit perspectives and may challenge the capacity of small communities, but all communities can certainly promote and participate in regional and statewide events. The launch of a civic discourse pilot program at the University of Delaware’s Biden School of Public Policy and Administration—the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Ithaca Initiative—may provide Delaware and its communities with an enhanced opportunity to exercise the muscles necessary for robust civic health (University of Delaware Biden School of Public Policy and Administration, 2022).

Governance

The COVID-19 pandemic emphasized just how important coordinated government, private, and nonprofit sector responses and resources are for recovery. The preparedness of government ultimately dictates how efficiently a community can respond to and recover from a disruptive event. Governance during recovery should be collaborative; recovery happens across a region, not just in individual communities, and no single level or agency of government is likely to possess the requisite information and capacity to tackle response and recovery on their own. Collaboration across agency, topic, and sectoral boundaries is just as crucial as taking a regional approach. During disruptive events, government entities should aspire to work together collaboratively to mitigate disruption and help to facilitate important partnerships that benefit the community. Governments should also be mindful of messaging during disruptive events to be clear, concise, and as consistent as possible as the situation evolves.

The quality and structure of steady-state governance is important for resilience as response and recovery efforts will tend to be most effective when they build on existing frameworks rather than tread on wholly new ground. The pandemic has been such a disruptive and longstanding shock that it demanded new partners and modes for collaboration and coordination across sectors and jurisdictions—significant effort should be made to institutionalize these relationships and practices so that they can be called upon to respond to future shocks. These

relationships may also enable partners to explore large-scale, collaborative projects during recovery.

Finally, governance should be responsive to diverse community needs and emerging practices. Governments need to make informed and responsive decisions for recovery to be resilient. Therefore, taking proactive approaches to data collection and information gathering is critical for managing through disruptive events and the recovery period. Organizational and jurisdictional policies and practices should be informed by evidence of policy effectiveness, but also reflective of what stakeholders identify as the crux of issues. Crucially, this aspect of governance involves identifying hardest hit populations and industries, convening and listening to stakeholders, and analyzing potential mitigation efforts.

Governance considerations for resilient recovery in and across Delaware's communities may include:

- *Prioritizing the development of local rainy-day funds to weather shocks* – While the fiscal consequences of the pandemic have not been as negative for Delaware governments as some analysts feared, the pandemic has resulted in severe disruption across Delaware and other states, with federal aid helpful in staving off more dire circumstances (Leachman & McNichol, 2020; Sheiner & Campbell, 2020; U. S. Government Accountability Office, 2021). Regardless of the net fiscal impact of the pandemic on revenues and expenditures, this disaster did create an acute need for local, unplanned expenditures. As with other disaster events, federal and state funding assistance was often not available in advance of the need for local expenditures. So-called “rainy day” funds can help communities to better weather shocks by allowing for the budgetary leeway needed to make unanticipated expenditures (McFarland & Pagano, 2020; Triest, 2020). While the exact size and parameters of these funds may vary according to factors such as the volatility of local revenues and degree of exposure to disasters, the Government Finance Officers Association (2015) advises that governments establish a “formal policy on the level of unrestricted fund balance that should be maintained in the general fund.”
- *Developing the capacity to locally identify, prioritize, and seek funding for hazard mitigation needs* – As a complement to efforts to set aside funds for unpredictable shocks, Delaware's governments should seek to identify, design, and prioritize projects and programs that mitigate the incidence and impacts of hazards in their communities. Whether communities choose to develop hazard mitigation plans of their own or participate more robustly in the planning efforts of larger, overlapping jurisdictions, all of Delaware's governments should look to the pandemic as an example of the value of proactive identification of hazards and mitigation activities. In alignment with the

recommendations outlined in the preceding built environment sub-section, these capacity development efforts should be considered as part of broader initiatives to enhance local and regional capabilities to pursue and manage external grants.

- *Building and engaging in multipurpose and topic-neutral resilience and recovery networks at local and regional scales* – Unfortunately, siloed response and recovery efforts tend to be the norm. In many ways, this is an expected outcome as individuals and organizations tend to retrench in networks they are most comfortable with during times of stress. If there were quick and easy solutions to overcoming the tendency for siloed responses, they would have been implemented. Any “solutions” are likely to be hard-earned and tested during multiple periods of shock, response, and recovery. One general approach that should be encouraged is the creation and nurturing of steady-state resilience and recovery networks that address a variety of topics from neutral vantage points. These topic-neutral networks may serve as umbrellas that tie together more focused networks, such as those devoted to resilience from environmental, economic, or disaster perspectives. This umbrella arrangement recognizes the necessity of broad, overlapping networks for resilience, while also acknowledging the tendency for individuals to engage according to more narrow interest areas. The pandemic’s length, and the evident breadth of response and recovery resources required, may provide an opportunity to institutionalize and model umbrella networks such as Cape Community Coordination for COVID-19 (2022). Further, the *Recover Delaware* initiative described in this report aims to serve as connective tissue in the recovery and resilience space, and it may be worthy of extension and modeling in the future.

Toward an Open Source *Recover Delaware*

Writing the next chapter of the *Recover Delaware* story and resilience planning in Delaware will require more engaged partners working in collaborative fashion for the long-term. In the long-run, proprietary, sole source resilience and recovery planning is a losing proposition for Delaware and its communities. If communities and agencies choose to “go it alone” in guarding against future threats and planning for recovery, wasted effort and foregone opportunities are likely to result. Similarly, if the existing *Recover Delaware* team becomes the lone “go-to source” for recovery planning assistance, capacity will quickly be outstripped and the diversity of perspectives applied to resilience planning could be unnecessarily narrow.

Ultimately, communities must develop their own context-sensitive capacity for recovery and resilience planning. For some organizations and governments, this may mean investing in full-time staff positions, such as chief resilience officers, charged with facilitating their own versions of *Recover Delaware* to cope with and plan for near- and long-term uncertainties. For others, resilience is likely to be layered on to the responsibilities of already overtaxed leaders and professionals. In either case, “go it alone” doesn’t make sense. Resilience planning that stops at the border—state, county, jurisdictional, agency, department, or otherwise—will be sure to embed vulnerabilities. While some organizations can and should invest in new resilience planning programs and structures, all organizations should ensure that basic hazard mitigation plans for their communities are in place and up to date—even if they do not manage the entire planning process themselves (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2021).

To advance the efforts piloted through *Recover Delaware*, recovery stakeholders should seek to routinize and democratize conversations about the future and create and refine pathways and forums for resilience-oriented collaboration, ideation, and implementation. To ensure a diverse and enduring approach to resilience planning in Delaware, the *Recover Delaware* team recommends efforts to institutionalize increasingly open-source approaches characterized by:

- *Templates for reflective community and stakeholder engagement* – Using the *Recover Delaware Roundtable* approach outlined in this report as a starting point, recovery stakeholders should work to document promising facilitation, engagement, and action planning processes and communicate procedures for broad, public use.
- *Active networks of Recover Delaware practitioners* – Using the participants in *Recover Delaware* efforts and RASCL activities as a starting point, a broader network of resilience and recovery planning practitioners should be established and nurtured in Delaware. These practitioners would organize reflective community and stakeholder engagement activities, reflect on and refine the approaches used for these sessions, and aim to

advance the practice and outcomes of resilience planning across Delaware's communities and the region.

- *Tools and approaches that address a range of operational and visionary needs* – While pilot *Recover Delaware* efforts have emphasized analysis of and deliberation on broad recovery and resilience planning topics, a broader set of tools and approaches will be needed to institutionalize and enhance *Recover Delaware* approaches. These approaches should address short-term operational needs in response, while also developing the vocabulary and venues necessary to engage in more long-run exercises such as scenario planning (Scoblic, 2020; Volkery & Ribeiro, 2009; Wilkinson & Kupers, 2013). Similarly, the *Recover Delaware* approach should seek to facilitate collaborative project development and implementation efforts, using approaches such as *Strategic Doing* to quickly form and establish meaningful collaborations that yield trust and tangible outcomes (Morrison & Hutcheson, 2014). Further, capacity development programs should be developed and strengthened to enable communities of all types and sizes in Delaware to plan for, design, and seek funding for resilience projects and programs that require funds beyond local capabilities. While *Recover Delaware* might serve as an umbrella initiative to knit together efforts into a cohesive whole, capacity development and deliberation activities will necessarily rely on the coordination of actions by allied organizations such as Delaware Sea Grant and RASCL.
- *Guarded optimism* – Effective resilience planning requires a healthy degree of realism and pessimism to identify and work to address existing gaps and potential vulnerabilities. Such a stance can be challenging to maintain in government settings as inherently political environments often dictate a healthy dose of optimism. To ensure balanced and long-term perspectives on existing and potential vulnerabilities for resilience planning in Delaware, *Recover Delaware* and allied initiatives should generally be organized or facilitated by third-party, nonprofit organizations independent from individual public agencies and elected officials.

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Appendix. Recover Delaware Roundtable Jamboard Slides

Digitization

Recover Delaware

Roundtable #2

July 14, 2021

Institute for Public Administration

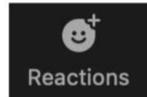
Troy Mix, Morgan Cohen, & Collin Willard



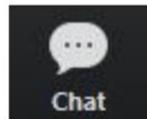
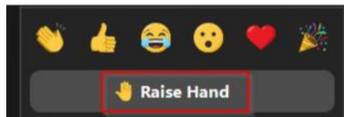
Welcome to this Online Meeting!



- You are **automatically muted**. On a computer, unmute your audio by clicking the “Unmute” button in the bottom left corner of the Zoom window or hold down the space bar to talk and re-mute. On a phone, use *6 to toggle the mute on and off.



- **Raise your hand:** Click on the “Reactions” button and then choose the yellow “Raise Hand” button. Use this button to indicate that you have a question.

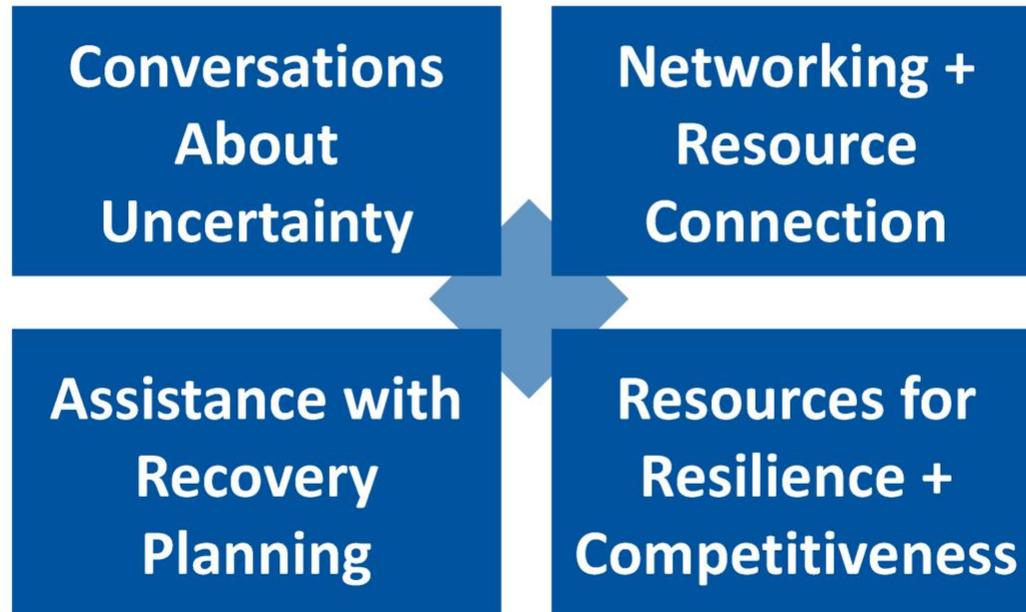


- **Use the chat window** to type and submit questions.



- **We are recording this meeting** to share online.

What is Recover Delaware?



Recover Delaware Initiatives

- 1 Workshop**
Recovery Roundtables
- 2 Newsletter**
With DEMA
- 3 Whitepaper**
Guidebook for
Local Recovery +
Resilience Planning

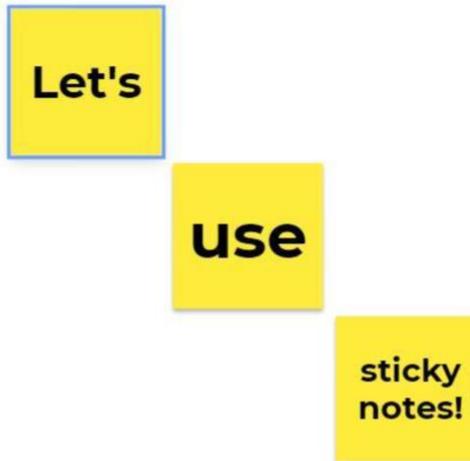


Recover Delaware

Institute for Public Administration
www.ipa.udel.edu

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- <-- **Sticky notes**
- <-- Add image
- <-- Text boxes
- <-- Laser pointer



Resilience and Recovery Topics In Focus: Digitization

- Why is this important?
- What's the status of digitization in Delaware?
- What could local actors do?
- What resources are necessary to bridge existing gaps?

Context for Digitization

Remote Work

- Popular among workers, and employers show signs of being flexible with offering remote options

E-Commerce

- Consumers are ordering more products online using digital payment services

Digital Healthcare

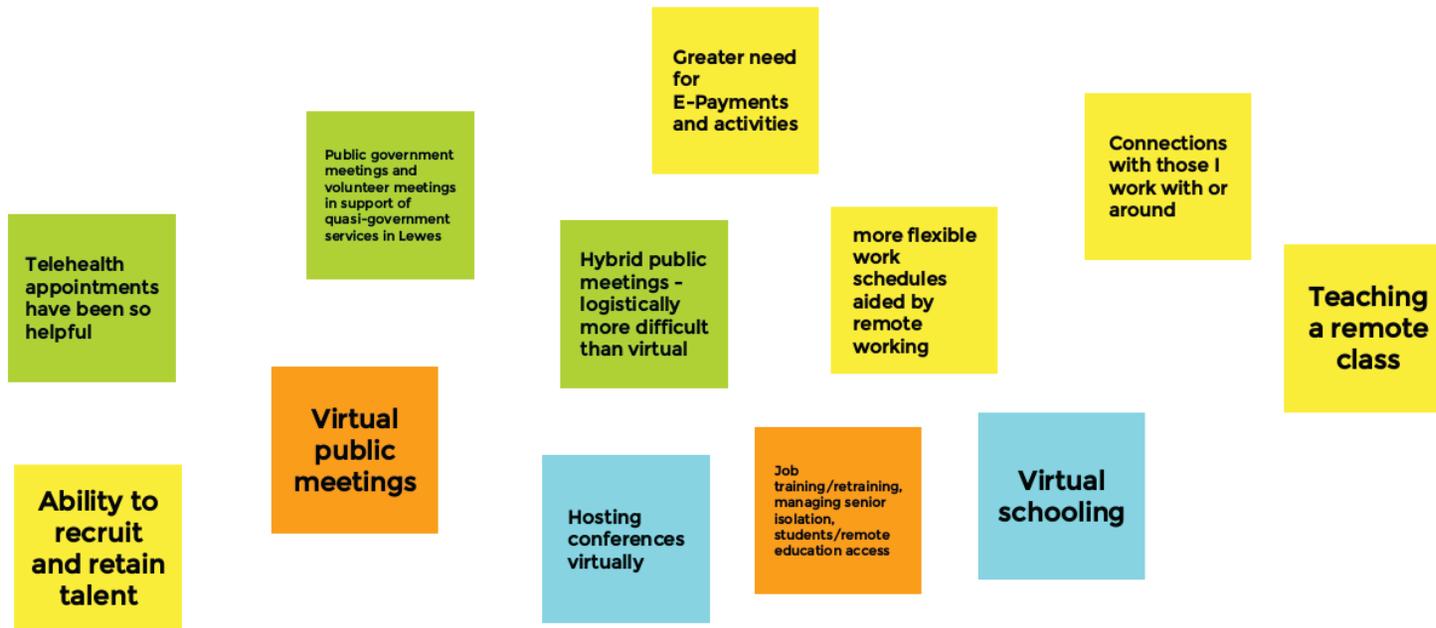
- 20x as many telehealth appointment claims during the pandemic as opposed to pre-pandemic

Digital Government

- Governments utilized virtual meetings, digital outreach efforts, and other contactless services throughout the pandemic



What aspects of digitization have had the greatest impact on you?



Why are these changes important to consider from a recovery perspective?

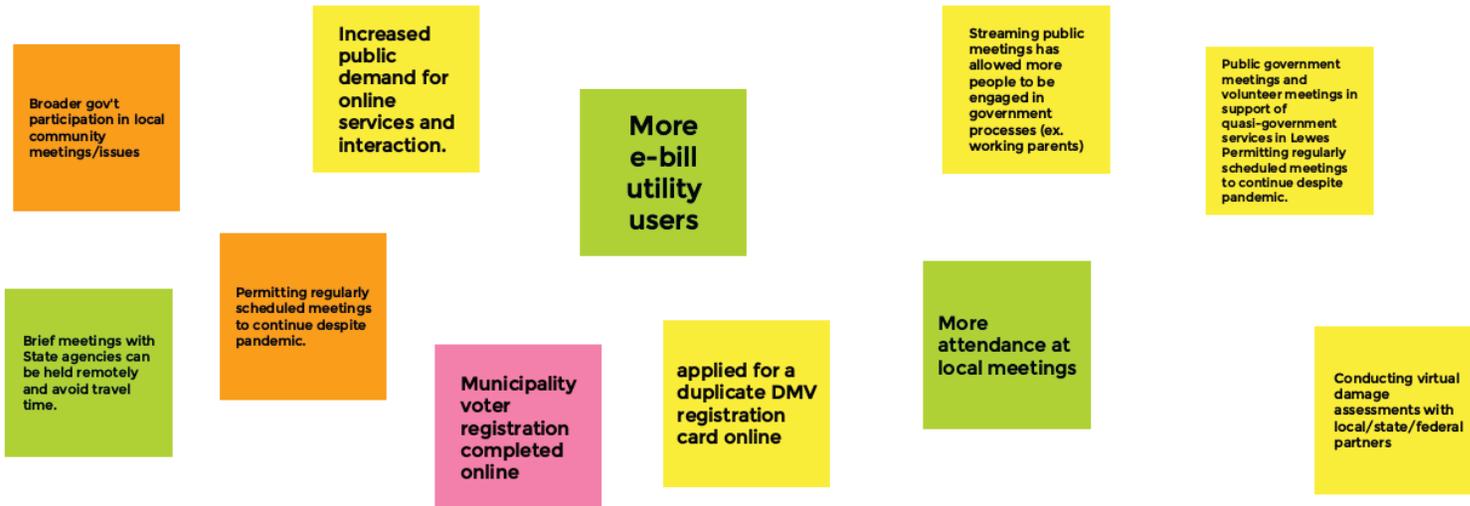


Digital Resiliency in Government

- Digital Government Outreach
- Online Accessibility
- Optimized Government
- Data-Driven Policy and Assessment



What are some examples of successful implementation of digital government functions that you've observed over the past year?



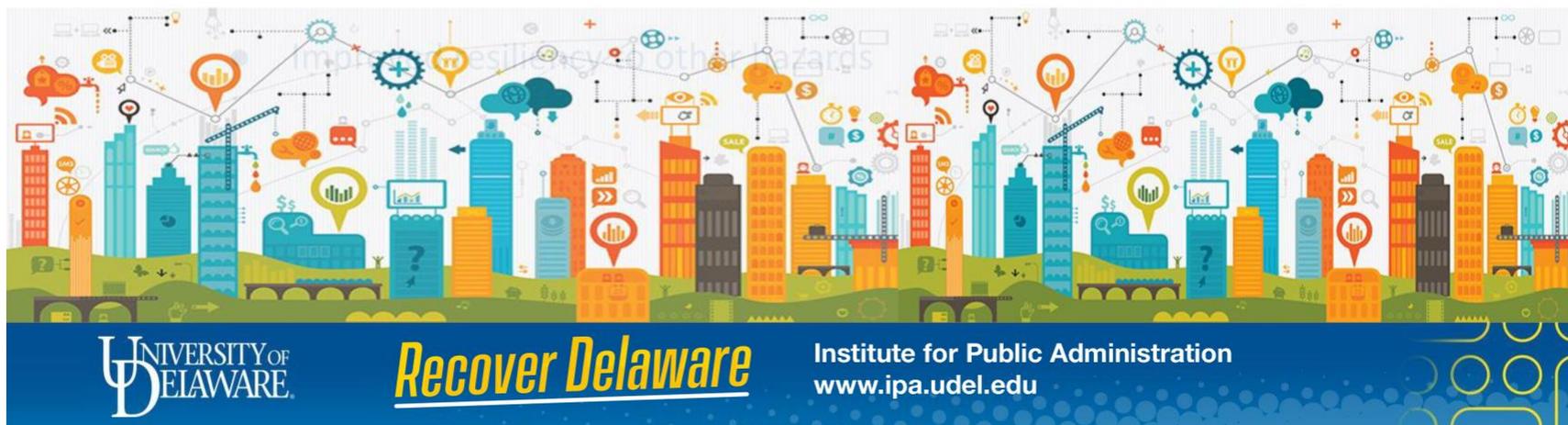
Digitization in Delaware

- **Widespread broadband availability**, with pockets of inadequate connectivity and **issues of affordability**
- Regional location, cost of living, and a variety of quality of life amenities stand out as **remote work advantages for Delaware**
- **Future Investments**
 - Broadband expansion to narrow connectivity gaps
 - Prioritizing cybersecurity for continued digitization of government



Opportunities for Digitization in Resilient Communities

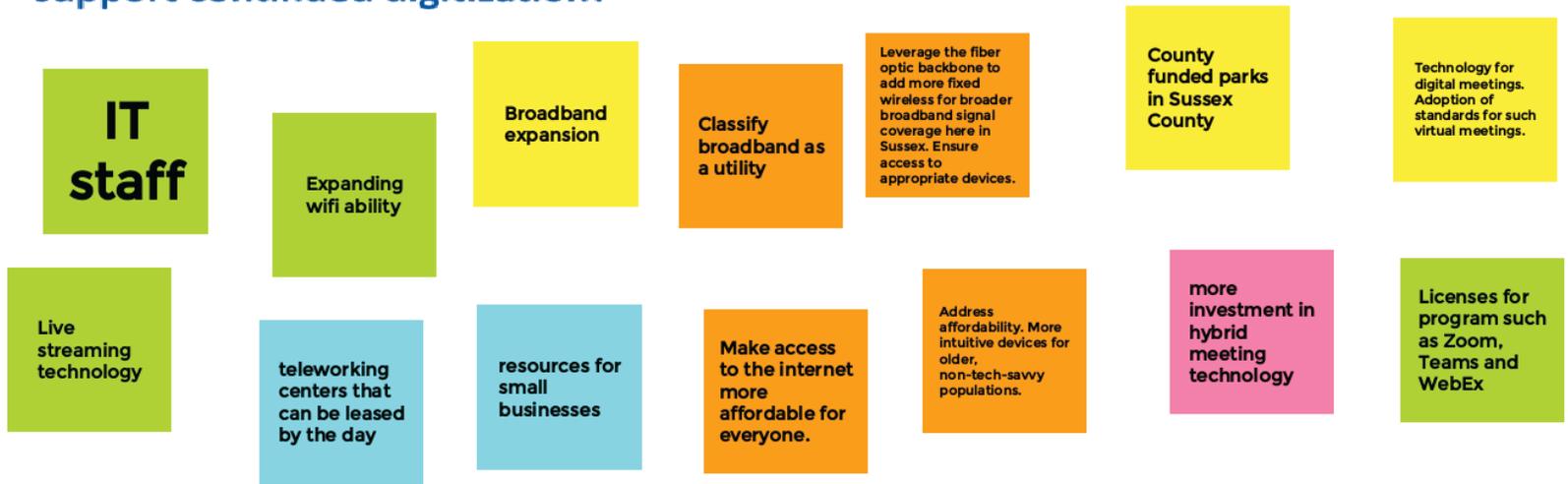
- Improved Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity
- Increased Digital Capacity and Awareness
- Reinventing Processes and Policies
- Rethinking Physical Space and Place



Improved Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity

Make access to the internet more affordable for everyone.

What infrastructure investments does your community/organization need to support continued digitization?



Increased Digital Capacity and Awareness

What knowledge and skills are needed for your community to best leverage digital advancements?



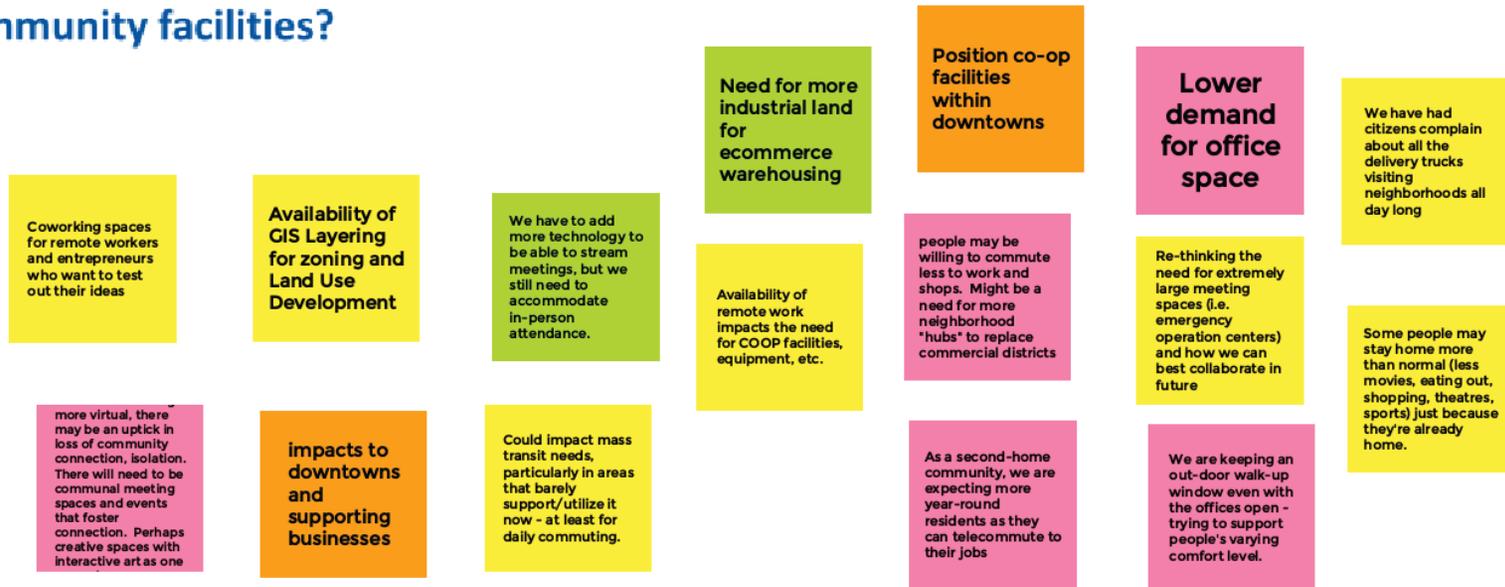
Reinventing Processes and Policies

What procedures need to be developed or revisited to support digitization?



Rethinking Physical Space and Place

How might increased digitization impact the need for certain land uses and community facilities?



What additional information and resources do you need to plan for or take action on digitization?



Thank you for participating!

- Please evaluate this session
- Subscribe to the DEMA Community Support and Recovery Task Force Newsletter
- Recover Delaware Roundtable #3 - A Focus on Food Security
 - August 11 at Noon
- Comments or questions? Contact Troy Mix (mix@udel.edu)

Mental and Civic Health

Recover Delaware

Roundtable #6 - Mental and Civic Health

November 10, 2021

Institute for Public Administration

Today's Presenter: Michelle Singletary-Twyman, RN

Chief of Community/Behavioral Health,
Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS)

Recover Delaware Team: Troy Mix, Morgan Cohen, & Collin Willard

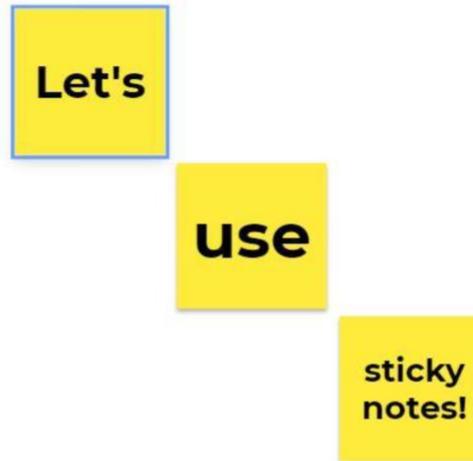


What is Recover Delaware?



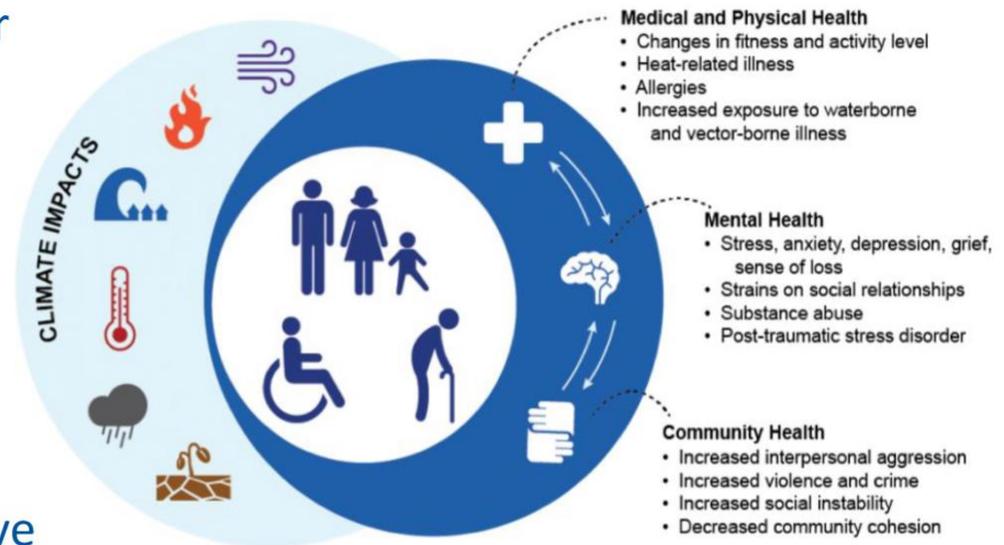
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Disruptive Events and Mental Health

- Disruptive events can trigger mental health conditions
- Interventions given pre, during, and post disaster period can improve adverse mental health effects
- Mental Health initiatives have been chronically underfunded

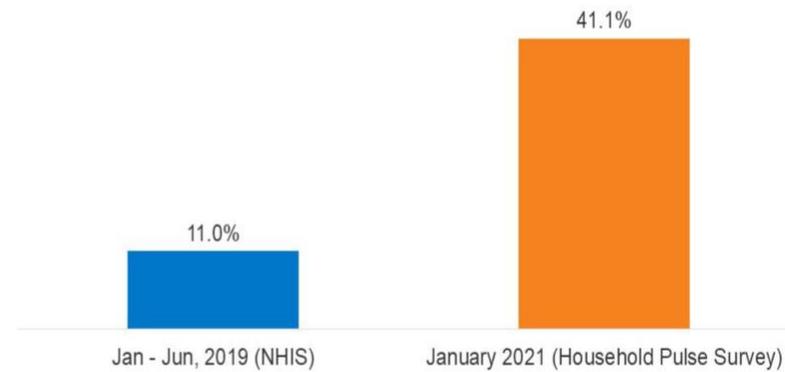


U.S. Global Change Research Program

Mental Health and COVID-19

- The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted or halted critical mental health services in 93% of countries
- Numerous trends related to mental health have emerged
- Brought attention to underlying gaps and vulnerabilities

Average Share of Adults Reporting Symptoms of Anxiety Disorder and/or Depressive Disorder, January-June 2019 vs. January 2021



Data sourced from Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey

Access and Equity

- Demographic factors (age, sex, race and ethnicity)
- Geographic factors
- Financial factors

Emergent efforts to address these gaps include...

- Telehealth and telemedicine
- Community engagement
- Work of organizations such as DHSS

Michelle Singletary-Twyman, DHSS

COVID-19 and Mental Health

How DSAMH responds to COVID-19 Pandemic:

- COVID trackers
- Start-up telehealth
- Weekly provider calls
- Supplies to providers
- Support public health with COVID Vaccination Clinics
- Housing options for homeless clients requiring quarantine

Michelle Singletary-Twyman, DHSS

Efforts to Reduce Social Alienation

- Results of COVID trackers require increase client contacts
- Cell phones to clients
- Start-up of the HopeLine
- Mobile Food Bank
- Partnerships with HeroHelp, NCCPD and WPD for community support during height of community shut down

Michelle Singletary-Twyman, DHSS

Resources for Mental Health

- HopeLine
- Hope Center
- COVID Provider Website
- Mobile Food Bank

In what ways have mental health challenges affected your community throughout the pandemic?



What are some ways your organization supports (or could be supporting) community mental health?



What resources are needed in your community to support mental health services?



Civic Health: What is it?

NCoC’s definition: “the way that communities are organized to define and address public problems.”

How effectively is the policymaking process functioning?



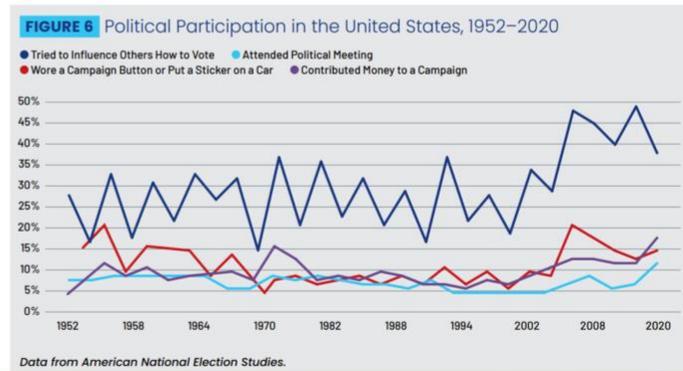
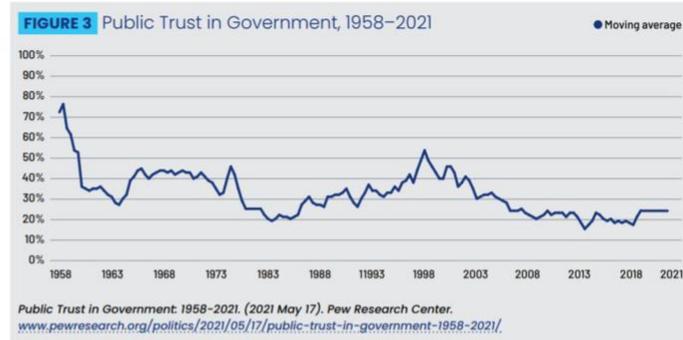
Image retrieved from CDC’s Polaris database

Civic Health Landscape

Public Trust in Government



Civic Engagement



Recover Delaware

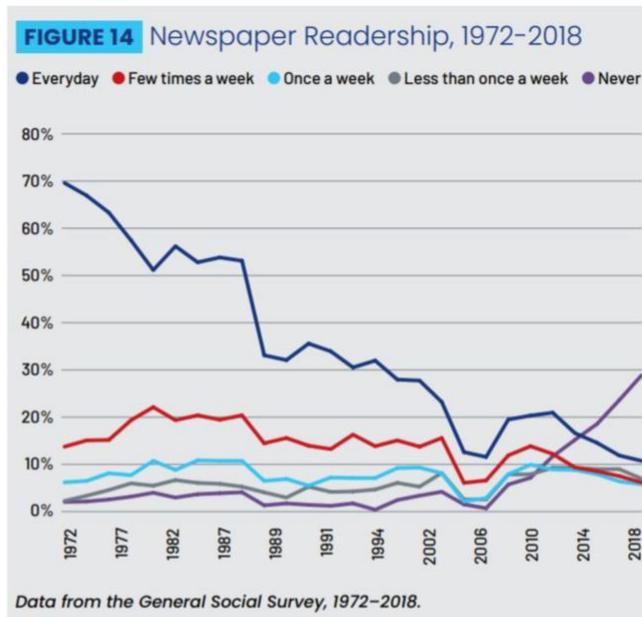
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Civic Health Landscape

Social Isolation

- Declining membership rates
- Increasing rates of living alone
- Increasing “deaths of despair” rates

Changes to how news is received



What emerging challenges in civic health have affected your community over the course of the pandemic?



What approaches does your organization take to engage with the public?



What do you think is the role of local government/state agencies in fostering civic health?

I think a pertinent question is what is the role of county government? There are many unincorporated parts

reducing the spread of misinformation and keeping information shared as consistent and reliable as possible

To improve the lives, safety and overall health of the residents who live in the community

Making it easier to vote in local elections

Thank you for participating!

- Respond now to evaluate this session on [Poll Everywhere](#)
- [Subscribe](#) to DEMA's Community Support + Recovery Task Force Newsletter
- [Register](#) for Recover Delaware Roundtable #7 on Inclusive Downtown Revitalization (12/8)

Comments or questions? Contact Troy Mix (mix@udel.edu)



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Inclusive Downtown Revitalization

Recover Delaware

Roundtable #7 - Inclusive Downtown Revitalization

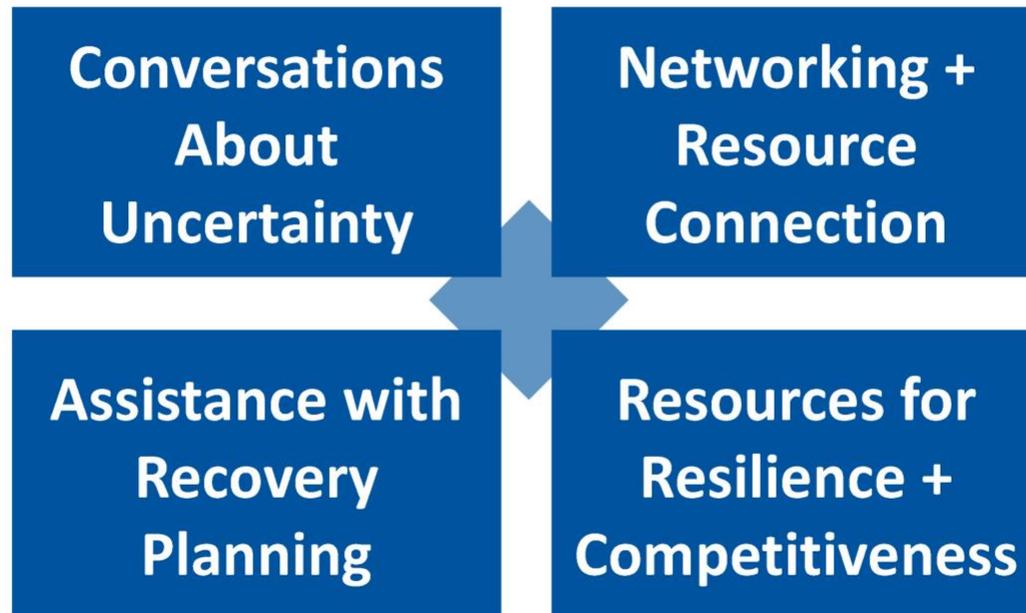
December 8, 2021
Institute for Public Administration

Today's Presenter: Ilana Preuss, Founder & CEO, Recast City

Recover Delaware Team: Troy Mix, Morgan Cohen, & Collin Willard

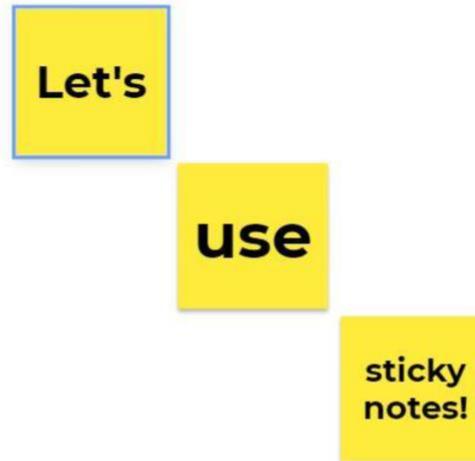


What is Recover Delaware?

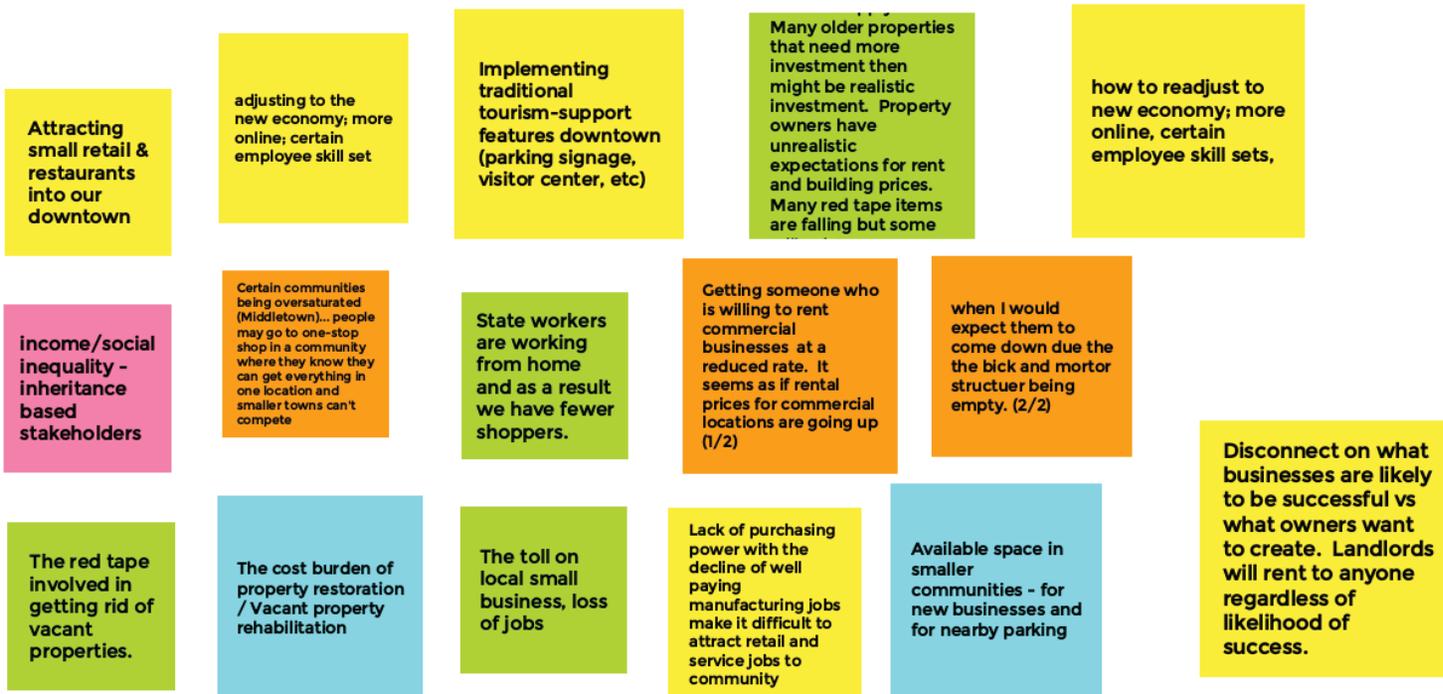


Use the tools on the left to contribute

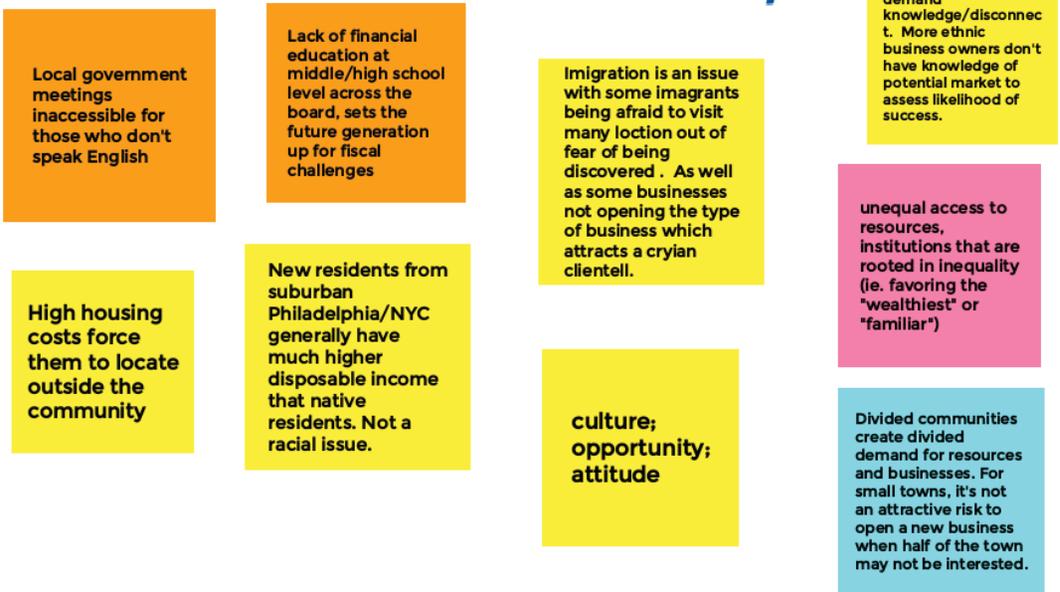
- <-- Pen
- <-- Eraser
- <-- Pointer (good way to stop using pen)
- <-- **Sticky notes**
- <-- Add image
- <-- Text boxes
- <-- Laser pointer



What are the biggest challenges for the economy in your community?



What barriers do factors like race, household income, and immigration status present to people's success in your local economy?



What is the greatest asset your community can build on for the local economy?



Name one small business in your community that is a small-scale manufacturer.

We have a beachball business! He does worldwide business.

Brewery in old bank building

Cookie's Paper Petals, Milford, DE (paper flowers). Store front opened in one of the historic buildings off of Walnut Street.

Lots of home based businesses but only manufacturing is distillery, so far.

Herbal Apothecary with a retail facility and just expanded to a larger warehouse for growing online distribution

Shore Seasonings

What is the role of the downtown in your community's economy and its success?

Milford's Downtown is very good at promoting small businesses with events, walks, celebrating holidays.

Providing a space where people can use a wide array of modes of transportation to access, not just cars

The economic future is at our two business parks, but downtown is our front porch for the community to gather and interact

Of the 5 potential actions presented, what is the one your community is most ready/able to take on in the next 3 months?

Creating affordable spaces, and/or shared spaces. Focus on developing low-overhead and supporting community around growing these businesses.

Thank you for participating!

- Please evaluate this session
- Subscribe to the DEMA Recovery Task Force Newsletter
- Recover Delaware Roundtable #8 - 2022 Resilience Resolutions
 - January 12 at Noon
- Comments or questions? Contact Troy Mix (mix@udel.edu)



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