
Harnessing Philanthropic Partnerships for Robust Disaster Planning

June 14, 2026

Natural Hazards Workshop

Purpose

1. Align philanthropy programming and research priorities
2. Model strong and strategic funder-research partnerships



Session Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will...

1. Articulate what **effective philanthropy-research partnerships** look like, and why they matter
2. Identify key strategies for **aligning funding cycles with research timelines and community needs**
3. Identify how program evaluation can be used as a **tool for adaptive, evidence-based decision making**
4. Leave with **ideas and resources for partnership-building** within their organizations

Panelists



Judanne Lennox-Morrison
Texas A&M University
The Bill Anderson Fund



Nnenia Campbell
The Bill Anderson Fund



Maggie León-Corwin,
Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis
The Bill Anderson Fund



Erin Coryell
Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies



Yajaira Ayala
The Bill Anderson Fund

Philanthropy Perspective

- Philanthropy captures data on programs and communities from grant reports
- No shared ethics or training on evaluation practices
- No shared data systems
- Translation or the toggle between community and improved practices... who owns responsibility?



**What is the biggest
opportunity for synergy
between philanthropy and
disaster research right now?**



**What is the biggest unmet
need in the communities
you work with?**



A Comparison of Vulnerability Maps Used by Federal Agencies to Allocate Climate Resilience Resources

 CEJST Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool	 FEMA CDRZ Community Disaster Resilience Zones	 HEADWATERS ECONOMICS Rural Capacity Index
Purpose Created by Executive Order to identify disadvantaged communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution for the purposes of Justice40 Initiative.	Purpose Congress (in the Community Disaster Resilience Zones Act of 2022) directed FEMA to identify communities most at-risk to climate change for increased access to financial and technical assistance.	Purpose Created with support from NOAA to help identify communities where investments in staffing and expertise are needed to support infrastructure and climate resilience projects.
Scale Census tracts	Scale Census tracts	Scale Local government jurisdictions: towns, cities, townships, counties
Overview of variables • Climate change • Energy • Health • Housing • Legacy pollution • Transportation • Water and wastewater • Workforce development • Tribes	Overview of variables • National Risk Index (expected annual loss, social vulnerability, community resilience) • Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool designations	Overview of variables Indicators of capacity grouped into four categories: • Local government staff and expertise • Institutional capacity • Economic opportunity • Education and engagement



Low-capacity communities are underrepresented in federal designations that allocate billions for climate resilience.

Places identified for assistance by CEJST*



*CEJST: The Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool

Project Outcomes

Strengthening Hazard Mitigation in Under-Resourced Communities



Tiffany Cousins
Virginia Tech

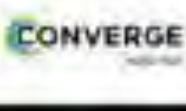


Joseph Karanja
Arizona State University



Patty Hernandez
Headwaters Economics

This webinar features speakers from **Headwaters Economics** and the **Bill Anderson Fund** who will discuss their study comparing the Council on Environmental Quality Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool and the Federal Emergency Management Agency Community Disaster Resilience Zones with Headwaters Economics Rural Capacity Index.





ABOUT USPROJECTSTRAININGWORKSHOPAWARD PROGRAMSPUBLICATIONSRESOURCES



Research Counts

May 4, 2026

Overlooked Communities: Incorporating Capacity Into Climate Vulnerability Mapping



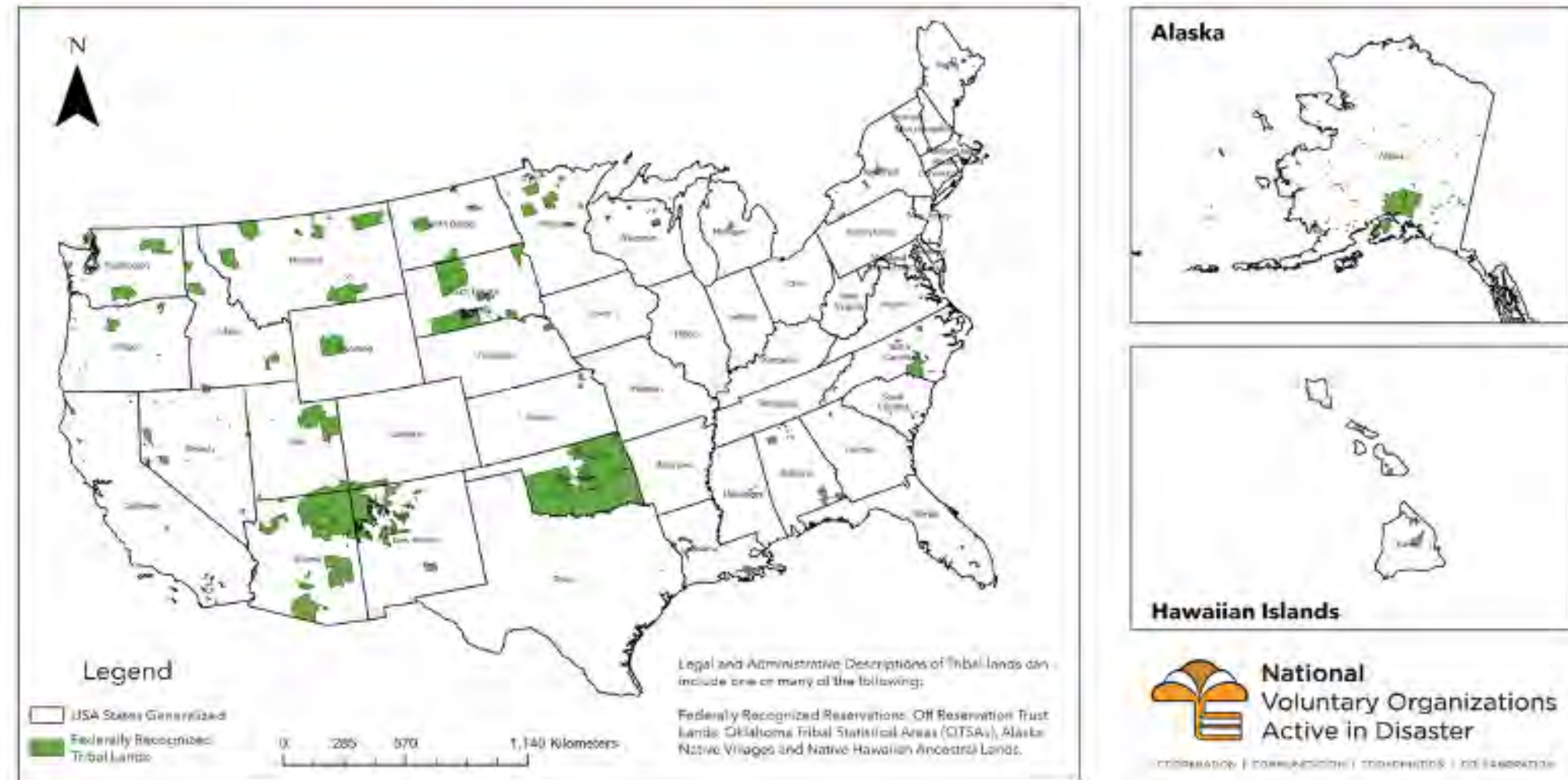
A rural landscape in the western U.S. Across the country, rural communities have the potential to miss out on investments in climate resilience and hazard mitigation. Source: lampaease /Shutterstock.com

By [Joseph Karanja](#) and [Tiffany Cousins](#)

Communities across the United States will require significant investments to prepare for and adapt to floods, wildfires, extreme heat, and other climate change-driven hazards. At the federal level, decision makers have historically used climate vulnerability maps to identify the places that will benefit most from federal funds and technical assistance for climate resilience. Yet these maps overlook some of the most constrained and high-need communities.

Social Vulnerability in Midwest Communities: Resources for Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

Spatially Designated Tribal Geographies of the United States



Key Questions:

1. How does the VOAD network **serve communities** that are disproportionately impacted by disasters?
2. How has the network **established partnerships** with Tribal Nations and other organizations representing vulnerable groups?
3. What do we need to know/ do to **foster respectful and reciprocal partnerships** with Tribal Nations and other diverse communities?

Cultural Competence in Practice

“I think just coming together in different settings with all kinds of partners and then having conversations, I think was probably the biggest thing. It’s like, oh, I knew you existed but I didn’t know who you were. I think that was probably the best thing. That’s how I got to know [a particular Tribal Nation]. There’s another one that I had met at one of those situations as well.”

Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies Midwest Disaster Relief and Recovery Program Impact Evaluation 2013- 2025

Key Questions:

1. How does **organizational readiness and disaster preparedness** by MACP grantees benefit communities and individuals?
2. How, if at all, has MACP support strengthened the **capacity of nonprofit grantees** to work effectively within disasters; and what have been the factors that contributed to the **sustainability of increased capacity**?

Project Outcomes

- Strategic organizational diversity
- Collaborative preparedness
- Cross-sector connections

- “Blue skies” and “Gray skies” benefits for grantees and communities



- Flexible, multi-year grants
- Preparedness funding

- Organizational capacity
- Networks and ecosystem capacity
- Adaptive knowledge

- Reduced disaster vulnerability
- Improved service quality and reach
- Resilient communities over time

Common Thread

What have we learned from these partnerships?

1. Multidisciplinary partnerships are needed to fill important information gaps
2. Philanthropy prioritizes asset based strategies in a way that research often does not.
3. Evidence-based/ informed decision making matters for those most vulnerable.
 - a. Tailored information with users in mind
4. There's still much we don't know!

World Café

Group Activity

Table 1. Funding & Strategic Alignment

- What does strong alignment between funder priorities and research/practitioner needs actually look like?
- What alternative or diversified funding streams are emerging? How do we access them?
- How can we match funding priorities to what communities actually need? Share concrete examples or mechanisms that have been piloted.
- Where does the funder-researcher relationship break down? What could fix it?

Table 2. Disaster Preparedness & Response

- What is the distinctive role of philanthropy in preparedness and response?
- What would a coalition between philanthropy, disaster practitioners, and researchers look like in your field?
- How can we leverage coalitions to enhance preparedness?
- What's the one thing philanthropy/practitioners/researchers could do differently that would change outcomes?

Table 3. Program Evaluation & Applied Research

- What is the right role for research in this space? How should we set a research agenda in this space that serves communities?
- How can evaluation be genuinely useful for communities and practitioners?
- What are meaningful 'end products' from applied research that actually shift practice or policy? Food for thought: It might not be a peer-reviewed paper.
- How do we design research so that communities are partners?

Table 4. Open Topic

Backup Prompts:

- What's the collaboration or coalition this field most needs right now? What would you do if a funder gave you full flexibility?
- What are we not talking about that we should be?



We aligned on... (Shared themes)	We're Wrestling with... (Tensions, open questions)	We need more of... (Gaps: asks of philanthropy, research, field of practice)

“After completing this training session, I believe harnessing philanthropic partnerships for robust disaster planning can result in _____ and _____.”