TEXAS STATE
TRANSLATIONAL HEALTH RESEARCH CENTER

HEALTHY + RESILIENT
PEOPLE + PLACES

LEVERAGING THE COPEWELL FRAMEWORK TO FOSTER COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND RESEARCH NETWORKS

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Introduction

The Translational Health Research Center (THRC) at Texas State University fosters healthy and resilient people and places through innovative and actionable research. We fulfill our mission by building partnerships and networks to facilitate the translation of research being conducted at Texas State University and beyond. Through dissemination and implementation of evidence-based programs, we help bring applied research to communities that need it.

These efforts are exemplified in THRC's work to extend awareness and application of the Composite of Post Event Well-Being (COPEWELL) model. Designed by researchers at Johns Hopkins University and the University of Delaware with funding by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, COPEWELL aims to strengthen community resilience through a comprehensive approach to disaster preparation, response, and recovery. The model is currently being stewarded by a team of researchers at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security (JHCHS).

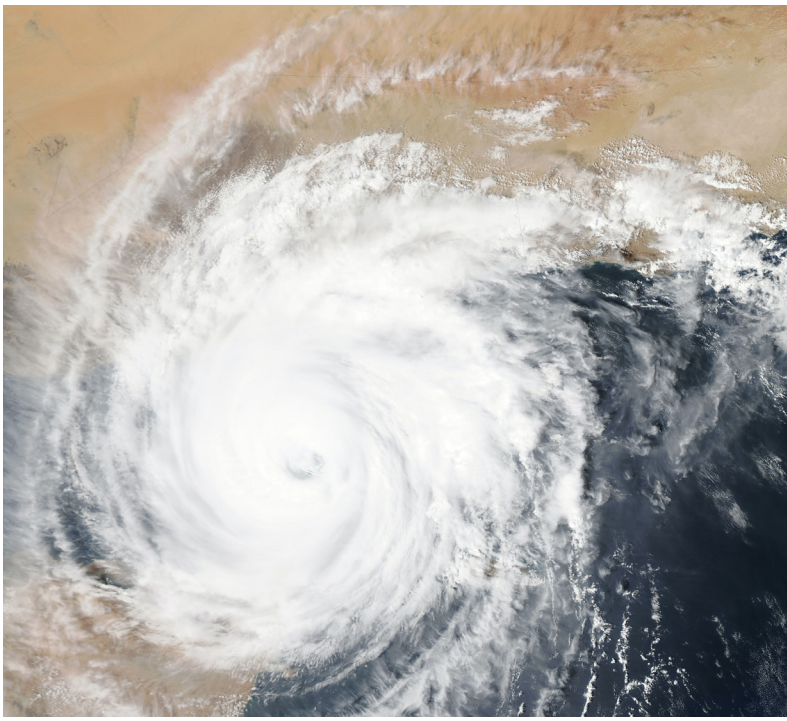
COPEWELL embodies a whole-of-community approach to disaster preparation, response, and recovery. Therefore, a primary goal of the model is to bring together community, local-government, non-profit, and other stakeholders to engage in planning at a holistic level. To fulfill this goal, COPEWELL offers an evidence-based suite of tools, including a robust county-level computational model, adaptable rubrics for self-assessment, and a repository of resources to increase community resilience.

During Summer and Fall 2022, THRC partnered with JHCHS to introduce COPEWELL to a Texas audience and identify organizations who would be interested in implementing the model in their communities. THRC organized and sponsored a two-day virtual town hall to introduce COPEWELL and followed up with a post-town hall survey to identify organizations for COPEWELL implementation.

The town hall, entitled COPEWELL: Improving Community Resilience in the Face of Disaster, launched new efforts to implement the model in two Texas communities. As of Spring 2023, implementation efforts are ongoing with plans to extend our understanding of COPEWELL implementation as a process and lay the groundwork for future implementation efforts spearheaded by our community partners.

Ultimately, these research and community-based partnerships have the potential to improve community resilience across the state of Texas.

Background



Our partnership with JHCHS began in 2022 as a result of THRC's newly established Center of Excellence for Community Health and Economic Resilience Research (CHERR).

CHERR expanded THRC's translational health mission to include a focus on resilience. THRC executive director, Dr. Melinda Villagran, sought collaborators at Texas State University (TXST) to create new research programs reflecting this mission. Through her outreach, Dr. Villagran began discussions with TXST-affiliated research professor and medial anthropologist, Dr. Monica Schoch-Spana. Dr. Schoch-Spana is a senior scientist with the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security (JHCHS) with expertise in community resilience to disasters and public health emergency preparedness.

To launch this partnership, THRC agreed to fund two students from TXST's anthropology department during Summer 2022, including doctoral student, Rex Long, and recent TXST MA graduate, Emily Repasky. This investment in our students ensured dedicated support to develop our partnership with JHCHS while also supporting Rex's dissertation research at TXST. Rex and Emily liaised between THRC and JHCHS and provided support for two initiatives: 1) COPEWELL, which had been funded by the CDC and was entering its sustainability phase, and 2) PAN-Remedy, a similar project that aimed to increase community resilience with a focus on pandemic recovery.

In Fall 2022, THRC hosted a COPEWELL town hall to help JHCHS disseminate the model and move into their sustainability phase. After a well-attended event, our team followed up with a post-town hall survey to gauge community interest and identify partners for COPEWELL implementation. These efforts represent the first collaboration between THRC and JHCHS and our efforts to introduce the framework to a Texas audience, promote its application, and pilot its use in Texas communities.

Dissemination: COPEWELL Town Hall

Outreach

THRC conducted extensive outreach to promote the town hall to potential COPEWELL users across a range of sectors and geographic areas in Texas. Our team collated contact information for over 400 individuals at organizations representing emergency management, public health, higher education, and community engagement. We further defined the sector of community engagement to include non-profit, advocacy, environmental, library, or other community-serving organizations.

We distributed targeted invites to the individuals and organizations identified through this process. One such organization, the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC), advertised the event through its network, adding over 1,000 people to our outreach efforts. Finally, JHCHS advertised the event through their long-standing newsletters, which further added over 100,000 people to our reach.

Attendee Demographics

Our extensive outreach efforts resulted in 101 registrants.

Registrants largely reflected a Texas-based audience, and most registrants identified as belonging to the community engagement sector (Table 1.1).

Importantly, when viewing the breakdown of registrants as demonstrated in Table 1.1, certain factors should be considered:
- Some registrants left registration fields blank
- Some registrants provided more than one area for their identified sector

Of the 101 individuals who registered for the event, a total of 66 attended the town hall, accounting for 65 percent of overall registrants. Like the registrant profiles, the breakdown of attendees (Table 1.2) indicated a largely Texas-based audience, with community engagement organizations comprising the bulk of attendees. Table 1.2 also reports the distribution of identified email domains (.gov/.us, .edu, or .org) to provide further evidence of audience variation.

Table 1.1 Registrant Information Breakout

TOTAL REGISTERED: 101

LOCATION	
Texas	**69** (68.3%)
Outside of Texas	**31** (30.6%)
COMMUNITY LEVEL	
City	**6** (5.9%)
County	**7** (6.9%)
State	**0** (0.0%)
Federal	**3** (2.9%)
SECTOR	
Community Engagement	**37** (36.6%)
Public Health	**27** (26.7%)
Emergency Management	**15** (14.9%)
Higher Education	**16** (15.8%)

Source: Registration information from Zoom, 2022.

Table 1.2 Attendee Information Breakout

TOTAL ATTENDED: 66

LOCATION	
Texas	**45** (68.2%)
Outside of Texas	**21** (31.8%)
COMMUNITY LEVEL	
City	**5** (7.6%)
County	**4** (6.1%)
State	**0** (0.0%)
Federal	**3** (4.5%)
SECTOR	
Community Engagement	**27** (40.9%)
Public Health	**18** (27.3%)
Emergency Management	**10** (15.2%)
Higher Education	**9** (13.6%)
EMAIL DOMAIN	
.gov/.us	**19** (28.8%)
.edu	**10** (15.2%)
.org	**16** (24.2%)

Source: Attendee report from Zoom, 2022.

Event Summary

The town hall occurred over two days on October 11 and 13, 2022, and featured speakers from both THRC and JHCHS.

DAY ONE

Dr. Melinda Villagran, THRC executive director, began the event on October 11 by welcoming attendees and highlighting the two centers' collaborative goal to disseminate COPEWELL as a tool to foster community resilience. Jessica Schneider, THRC Research Director, then asked the audience to share a definition of resilience in one or two words. This question would be repeated at the end of day one to gauge a change in perspective pre- and post-town hall.

Representatives from JHCHS, including former and current COPEWELL principal investigators, then presented an overview of the model and its various tools and applications. Dr. Jon Links explained COPEWELL's ability to uncover gaps in community resilience and how communities might work with their partners to address those gaps before new hazard events occur. Dr. Tara Kirk Sell, shared a live demonstration of the COPEWELL site, introducing key resources and a detailed explanation of the model. Dr. Monica Schoch-Spana concluded by walking the audience through COPEWELL's self-assessment rubrics, which can be used by communities themselves or in partnership with researchers to provide a qualitative lens to the challenges and next steps for a community. Day one concluded with an audience-guided Q&A with the Johns Hopkins team.

DAY TWO

On day two, the session continued with case use examples from organizations who had implemented COPEWELL in their communities. Our audience heard examples from practitioners Sydney Clark and Jennifer Johnson with the Tennessee Health Department, Michelle Morris with the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation, and THRC doctoral research assistant, Rex Long, who shared his experience working with the Capital Area Council of Governments. Importantly, these practitioners explained how their organizations adapted COPEWELL to address specific needs in their communities.

After another Q&A with our practitioners, Jessica Schneider concluded the town hall by sharing the results of our pre- and post-town hall inquiry. After learning about COPEWELL, our audience's perceptions about resilience shifted from a variety of disparate, yet relevant, definitions to two single words: 1) community and 2) communication. The results of this interactive activity solidified a core message we hoped our audience would take from the town hall—resilience is fostered through community.

Post-Event Survey

THRC distributed a post-town hall survey to attendees on October 14, 2022, to assess whether the town hall had fulfilled the overarching goal to extend awareness of COPEWELL and introduce the model to a Texas audience. The survey asked participants about their understanding of COPEWELL after attending the webinar as well as their plans to use of COPEWELL in the future. Finally, the survey asked Texas-based participants if they wanted to partner with THRC to pilot COPEWELL in their communities. The results provided insight into next steps for the THRC/JHCHS partnership, opportunities for COPEWELL implementation in Texas, and overall success of the town hall.

61 attendees received the survey (we removed five attendees who were affiliated with either THRC or JHCHS and were, therefore, considered an internal audience). The survey had 7 responses, or an 11% response rate. Of these 7 responses, 5 were Texas-based. Respondents represented local government, emergency management, non-profit, public library, state agency, and climate related sectors.

The survey attempted to gauge whether attendees understood the information that was presented and if/how they intended to use that information in the future. Generally, respondents agreed that they understood the COPEWELL framework as a result of the event and that their organization or jurisdiction would benefit from implementing COPEWELL (Table 2.1). Roughly half the respondents indicated they intend to work with their organization or jurisdiction to implement COPEWELL.

Table 2.1. Responses to Understanding and Future Use of COPEWELL

Please answer the following questions based on your experience with the town hall:

	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	AGREE
After the town hall, I understand the COPEWELL framework	0	1	5
My jurisdiction/organization would benefit from implementing the COPEWELL framework and suite of tools.	0	2	5
I intend to work with my jurisdiction/organization to implement COPEWELL.	0	3	3

Source: CHERR post-town hall survey, 2022. Some respondents did not provide an answer for all questions.

Post-Event Survey, *continued*

The survey also collected information to inform future THRC efforts to disseminate and implement this research in our Texas communities. These data helped define next steps by identifying specific organizations who might partner with THRC for COPEWELL implementation in the immediate future.

First, the survey asked respondents if they were interested in joining a community resilience network, which would connect resilience practitioners in Texas and beyond and encourage information sharing between practitioners and researchers. 5 respondents indicated they would join such a network and provided relevant contact information for future communications.

Next, because THRC's Center of Excellence for Community Health and Economic Resilience Research (CHERR) focuses on fostering resilient communities in Texas, respondents who selected "Texas" as their state received additional questions to gauge their interest in specific aspects of COPEWELL.

These questions asked respondents to identify the COPEWELL tools they were most interested in using, needs that COPEWELL could help their organization or jurisdiction address, and the types of resources that their organization or jurisdiction would need to implement COPEWELL.

The survey results helped us gauge next steps for THRC's work with COPEWELL and provided insight into potential partnerships and opportunities for implementation in our Texas communities.

Though one Texas respondent was unsure of the COPEWELL tool they were most interested in using, the majority indicated they were interested in using the self-assessment rubrics (n=4), followed by COPEWELL's resources for change (n=3) and computational model and data (n=2).

3 Texas respondents provided an answer for the needs that COPEWELL could address in their organization/jurisdiction. These responses include:

- "Measuring and identifying community needs and resilience while proposing changes to increase resilience."
- "Creating a structured approach to response and recovery planning."
- "Visibility as a valuable potential partner to even begin having a discussion about the benefits of forming an alliance and incorporating the COPEWELL model into operational policies and actions."

2 respondents shared information about the resources and support that their organization or jurisdiction would need to implement COPEWELL. For one respondent, time was an immediate concern; however, they could foresee the model as part of their ongoing mitigation plan and future updates: "COPEWELL processes will be applied to our overall Hazard Vulnerability/Community Vulnerability Risk Assessment." The second respondent shared that implementation of COPEWELL would depend on their city's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

Finally, Texas respondents were asked if they would like to meet with THRC to discuss COPEWELL implementation. One respondent said that they would be interested in meeting to discuss opportunities for support. A second respondent shared that, while they are not prepared to meet with CHERR now, they may be ready in the future and are working to become more involved with their city's emergency management department.

Implementation: COPEWELL in Texas

THRC has now moved into the implementation stage of the COPEWELL project in collaboration with a Texas-based organization. As a result of the COPEWELL town hall and follow-up efforts to connect with town hall participants, we identified the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) as a partner to implement COPEWELL in the immediate future.

During Spring 2023, THRC began working closely with TSLAC to pilot COPEWELL in two affiliated libraries in Texas. The project will assess COPEWELL implementation as a process and inform future efforts to promote COPEWELL as a tool that can be used by community stakeholders to foster local resilience. Such efforts might include customized training materials or similar resources to guide organizations through COPEWELL implementation and empower them to spearhead these efforts in their communities. Since we have launched the implementation project, at least two additional organizations have expressed interested in participating in future COPEWELL initiatives with THRC.

Our Spring 2023 implementation project also represents a new collaboration between THRC and Dr. Elizabeth K. Eger, assistant professor in the Department of Communication Studies at TXST. Dr. Eger is the lead researcher on THRC's COPEWELL implementation project and brings expertise in organizational communication and qualitative methods to this project. Dr. Eger works closely with Rex Long, doctoral research assistant and original contributor to THRC's COPEWELL partnership with JHCHS and resulting projects. Dr. Eger has also involved students from her qualitative methods master's course to help facilitate the project's focus groups and interviews with community stakeholders. Finally, anthropology master's student, Britney Treviño, joined the COPEWELL team to help with literature reviews and interviews, as part of an internship and graduate assistantship with THRC.

We include these details to highlight how THRC's initial investment in the dissemination and implementation of the COPEWELL model has grown to include an interdisciplinary team of TXST faculty, doctoral students, and master's students in an evidence-based, applied, community-based project that aims to foster resilience in the state of Texas.

Conclusion

THRC is committed to continuing our efforts to extend awareness and application of the COPEWELL model to foster more resilient communities in Texas.

As a result of our outreach and promotion of the COPEWELL town hall, over 1,400 Texas-based individuals and organizations were introduced to the model. As a result of the town hall itself, over 60 individuals/organizations in a variety of sectors are now familiar with the model, its application, and its potential to improve community functioning and resilience.

The post-town hall survey confirmed these efforts by demonstrating a general sense of interest in COPEWELL and its value to organizations involved in disaster response.

Through this project and similar efforts, THRC is actively building a resilience research network in Texas to represent the various sectors affected by disasters or similarly disruptive events. This network may include disaster response and recovery practitioners, first responders, small business owners, city planners, and other community stakeholders who are invested in fostering resilience in their local communities.

A critical feature of this network includes dissemination of resources to foster local resilience. The COPEWELL model will be shared as a resilience resource within this network, and THRC will continue its efforts to extend awareness and support implementation of COPEWELL through our ongoing dissemination activities.

Finally, beyond the immediate impacts of disseminating this model to Texas communities, we believe the COPEWELL project stands as an example of our center's efforts to foster partnerships, both within the research community, at TXST, and beyond by fostering relationships with community organizations that can benefit from and help us extend the impact of our research.

The COPEWELL project began as an investment in a small student team with the goal to foster a partnership with JHCHS and help disseminate an evidence-based tool to Texas communities. Through this partnership, we have built a network of organizations interested in learning more about COPEWELL, we have laid plans to improve community functioning and resilience in at least two Texas communities, and we have introduced numerous students to applied research with relevance.

We look forward to continuing this work in other sectors and expanding the impact of our health and resilience research, while continuing to share applied research opportunities with the next generation of TXST researchers.

Acknowledgments

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