

# Resiliency Academy 2020-2022

Summary Report | December 2022



## OVERVIEW

Resiliency planning is happening in New Hampshire with small businesses and local communities planning for challenges and the future by implementing concepts of resiliency including innovation, building networks, practicing inclusion, implementing cyber security, and enhancing quality of life.

In response to the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, and its impact on small business and communities, the 2020 – 2022 Resiliency Academy was developed. In a 2020 NH SBDC state-wide survey, only 19% of businesses had resiliency plans in place pre-Covid and 73% thought it would be important to their business in the future. Fast forward 2.5 years, just under half of respondents in the 2022 Small Business Survey say that their business has a resiliency or continuity plan. Among those who do, a majority say they created their plan in the past three years. Larger businesses tend to be more likely to have a plan at all and for their plans to have a greater number of components.

This educational programming brought training and resources to 640 participants through live webinars, regional meetings, online content, and community visits. 32 hours of live, newly developed content and discussion was had featuring over one hundred local, regional, and national speakers on resiliency topics. Ninety-five percent of Resiliency Academy participants found the topics to be valuable to their understanding and planning for small business and community resiliency. Funding was provided by the CARES Act.

**Building resiliency in our small businesses and community together is leading to a stronger economy, network of leaders and vibrant communities, resulting in a high quality of life.**

NH SBDC has led the way in gathering and curating information relative to NH small business needs and challenges. See the survey results from more than 5,300 small businesses financial well-being, workforce development, resiliency planning, cyber-security preparedness, supply chain issues, and other factors affecting businesses' recovery efforts through the pandemic.

[NH SBDC state-wide survey report](#)

## SMALL BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCY ACADEMY IS UNIQUE

**University Partnership:** In a unique University of New Hampshire partnership, the NH Small Business Development Center and Cooperative Extension Community and Economic Development developed this academy which has served small businesses, community leaders, local nonprofits and institutions and local volunteers throughout the state. The partnership developed content and supported their target audience in participation and resiliency plan efforts.

**Bringing together Business and Community:** The Resiliency Academy model is also unique. It brings together small businesses and communities to explore their interests and connections at the community level and address resiliency in partnership. It was the first time ever businesses and communities were brought together in this way to explore the issue of resiliency.

**Place-based Model of Teaching and Training:** The academy embraces place-based learning, moving our teaching from the theoretical to exploring resiliency topics from specific examples and experiences within a NH city or town. The academy brought in local, regional, state, and national experts and practitioners to teach a wide variety of topics.

**National SBDC Collaboration:** Content shared with participants in academy sessions included [America's SBDC](#) training materials including the [Small Business Resiliency Guide Keeping the Lights On](#) for resiliency planning. Noted speakers and expertise content on cybersecurity from [Washington State SBDC](#) were used in the training.

## Immediate outcomes

- SBDC and UNH Extension are seen in NH as the leading resources for resiliency practice and support to small businesses and communities on development of resiliency plans.
- A high number of program participants and class engagement indicates an interest in this topic and program evaluation indicate satisfaction with the practical training and meeting of learning objectives in topic areas of resiliency.
- Small businesses are working to implement aspects of resiliency and make plans for the future. Local communities are practicing resilience and incorporating features in their municipal planning. (See case studies – Meals on Wheels, North Country Council and Studley’s Florist)
- Small businesses and communities became connected through Resiliency Academy creating a stronger network across NH. There is a new understanding and exploration of the interconnectedness and links between businesses, municipalities, and community organizations.
- There is a greater understanding of the needs of small businesses and the impact from pandemic disruptions and an ability to capture responses and plan for future disruptions.

## Participant quotes about the impact of Resiliency Academy training

*“Networking was critical to access information, guidance, resources, etc. as the pandemic was unfolding last year. This program highlighted that there was an opportunity lost by not reaching out more to our clients to create a support structure and how we could have been a stronger resource.”*

*“Resiliency Academy opened my eyes to all the preparation we should be doing.”*

*“I’d say the best part was diving in beyond the theory and hearing specific, real-life examples in each topic from people who’ve actually implemented them.”*

*“I learned about the resources available to me as I try to make my business more resilient and who to reach out to for more information in my community and the importance of updating my plan routinely.”*

## Who participated and benefited

Over three years, Resiliency Academy attracted 640 participants with the majority being small businesses. Community leaders, local organizations, and volunteers were also present. All evaluations indicate a high satisfaction with the content delivered and learning about resiliency concepts. Each session was well



attended, and participants actively engaged through discussions, polling and downloading content. The goals of Resiliency Academy were met by introducing resiliency concepts, learning directly from those practicing resiliency and connecting community leaders and local small businesses.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### 2022 Resiliency Academy Training

There was wide geographic representation in the 2022 Resiliency Academy with 250 total participants. The majority were from Hillsborough and Strafford counties followed by Grafton, Rockingham, Cheshire, Merrimack, Coos, Carroll, Belknap, and Sullivan. Since it was once again safe to be in person in communities, we added three community visit days to learn about and celebrate resiliency in action. We had a very high engagement rate in the webinar sessions and strong networking at our community visit days. Each tour included discussion with local businesses and community leaders about their adoption of resiliency best practices and how those are leading to a stronger economy and civic life.

### 2021 Resiliency Academy Training

262 small businesses and community leaders attended at least one session of the 2021 Resiliency Academy. There was a high participation rate in each session and forty-two participants attending all five sessions. Participants were actively engaged through online polling, regional meetings, and discussion boards. This is one of the highest attended trainings for UNH Extension during the pandemic.

Over forty content resources were made available to participants including blogs, articles, and videos. The SBDC Business Resiliency Guide had the largest number of downloads from presented materials.

Ninety-three percent of participants rated Resiliency Academy as excellent or good. Ninety-five percent found the resiliency topics to be valuable.

Evaluation survey respondents shared the most important thing they learned in Resiliency Academy.

- Importance of networking and community
- Business Resiliency Planning
- Learning from businesses and communities



- Resources
- Defining Resilience
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Cybersecurity

Impact of Resiliency Academy: small businesses and community organizations are developing their own resiliency plans to ensure they are prepared for the next disruption. This will ensure a strong economy and community preparedness in the face of challenges.

Examples of resiliency in action:

- [Studley's Flowers in Rochester NH](#)
- [Hillsborough County NH Meals on Wheels](#)
- [North Country Rising: Recovering and Resilience](#)
- [Toward a Resilient Nashua NH](#)

## 2020 Resiliency Academy Training

There were 128 participants total: sixty-five participants on 10/21/20 and 63 participants on 10/27/20. Ten participants attended both webinars.

Webinar participants represented each of the NH regions and there were some participants located out of state (9). The greatest represented region was the Seacoast (33). Other regions where participants were located: Merrimack Valley (18), Monadnock (8), Dartmouth-Lake Sunapee (8), Lakes (5), and White Mountains (5).

## Business/Community Resiliency Plan

The learning outcomes were strong with 95% of participants indicating that they understand the concepts of resiliency and the intersection of small business and community resiliency.

## Interest in Resiliency Planning

At the end of the webinar, participants were asked to share their interest in learning more about resiliency planning. Of the responses, 75% of participants (43) were very interested in learning more about resiliency planning. There is a need and a desire from participants to explore this topic.

## Key Resources

- [NH SBDC Guide to Small Business Resiliency Planning Guide](#)
- [Planning Template](#)
- [UNH Extension Radius: Helping Granite Staters Develop Business and Community Resiliency Plans](#)





## RESILIENCY ACADEMY MODEL

### *Teaching*

The overarching goal of Resiliency Academy was to teach concepts that increased an understanding of small business and community resiliency which would lead to the development of resiliency planning. Thirty-two hours of live content was presented from fall 2020 to spring 2022. This included nine live webinars, four NH regional online meetings and three in-person community tours. This format allowed the content to be available to a state-wide audience during the pandemic.

### *Speakers*

Over one hundred speakers representing small businesses and community initiatives with UNH Cooperative Extension and NH Small Business Development Center experts. Most speakers represented a local perspective and experience. Regional and New Hampshire state leaders provided content. National experts on resiliency shared their knowledge with each cohort.

### *Community Visits*

We were prevented from visiting local communities for place-based education in the first two years due to Covid-19 restrictions. In 2022 we were able to host

our academy classes in three different NH locations – Littleton, Keene, and Somersworth – to successfully explore efforts at small business and community-wide resilience.

## RESILIENCY FRAMEWORK ADAPTED

The pandemic had disrupted the economy, employment, and community vibrancy. Communities and small businesses began to see the benefit of working together for economic recovery from the pandemic.

Bringing business and community together allows for the exploration of mutual topics of interest. Community leaders can engage with and better understand the needs of businesses. Communities gain a better understanding of workforce needs and related quality-of-life characteristics such as recreation, childcare, transportation, and education. Community leaders can foster stronger relationships for supply chain, finance, regulation, and workforce. It allowed businesses to understand what support is available at the community level and interact directly with community leaders. A stronger local network was created.

There are some important guiding questions from a 2015 research paper that Resiliency Academy adapted to frame the work in the academy.

## Guiding Questions for Community Economic Resilience

- Resilience of what? Are you considering your business or community or both?
- Resilience to what? What is the threat or shock? Is it just the pandemic or other threats you should be planning for such as natural disasters or changes to workforce?
- Resilience for whom? Who are the beneficiaries? This evolving description of resiliency calls us to consider and include everyone.
- Resilience for what? What is your goal - better bottom line, impact, jobs, social benefits, community vibrancy?

(Australian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society AARES 2015)  
(source: Dinh and Pearson, 2015)

The goal in introducing concepts of resiliency was for small businesses and communities to develop written resiliency plans to guide them in the future. Key Components of a Business Resiliency Plan include:

1. Identify key resources, employees, business functions, goals, and threats.
2. Plan for the threats and impacts to the business functions.
3. Implement the necessary steps in the plan.
4. Recover with strategies to return to normal business operations.

## Topics areas that were presented in Resiliency Academy

- Importance of networks and value chains
- Identifying and measuring resilience
- Innovation
- Quality of Life
- Inclusion
- Action Planning
- Developing a small business resiliency plan
- Community resiliency planning
- Cybersecurity
- Business Retention

## WHAT'S NEXT

Small business and community resiliency work will continue in New Hampshire. The content developed for Resiliency Academy will continue to be available and presented in conferences and online. Long-term evaluation will be conducted to capture the businesses and communities moving through the process to develop their resiliency plans. NH SBDC will continue to provide support to small businesses on an individual and regional basis. UNH Cooperative Extension will work directly with cities and towns on resiliency planning.





## RESOURCES TO SHARE

### *Readings developed for Resiliency Academy*

- [Practicing Resiliency](#)
- [Pandemic and Downtown Resiliency](#)
- [What Resiliency Means to Communities and Businesses](#)
- [Communities and Small Businesses Working on Resilience](#)
- [Business Sustainability](#)
- [Cybersecurity](#)
- [Inclusivity Commitment](#)

## FOR INFORMATION

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