# Adapting to a Changed World

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National VOAD Conference
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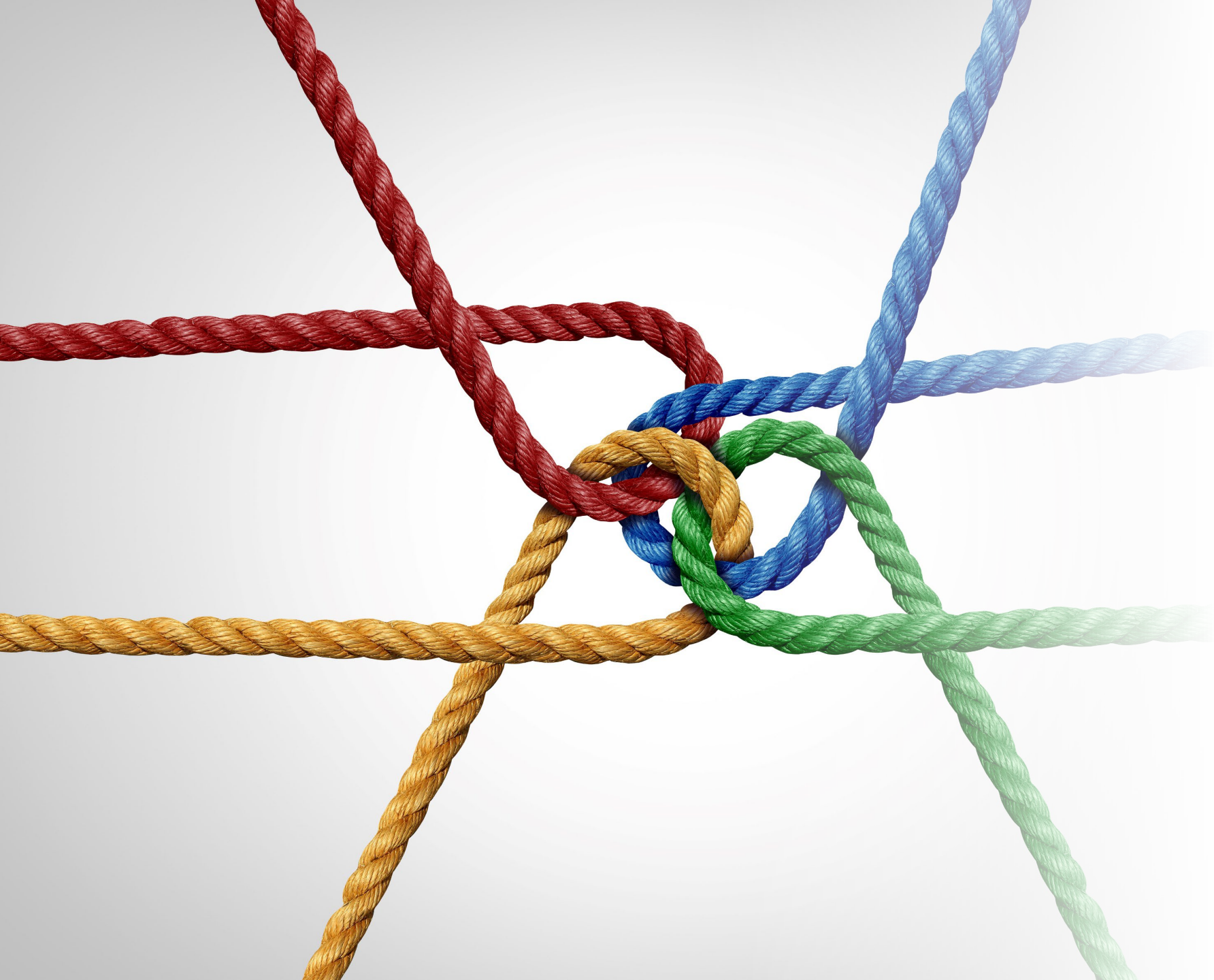
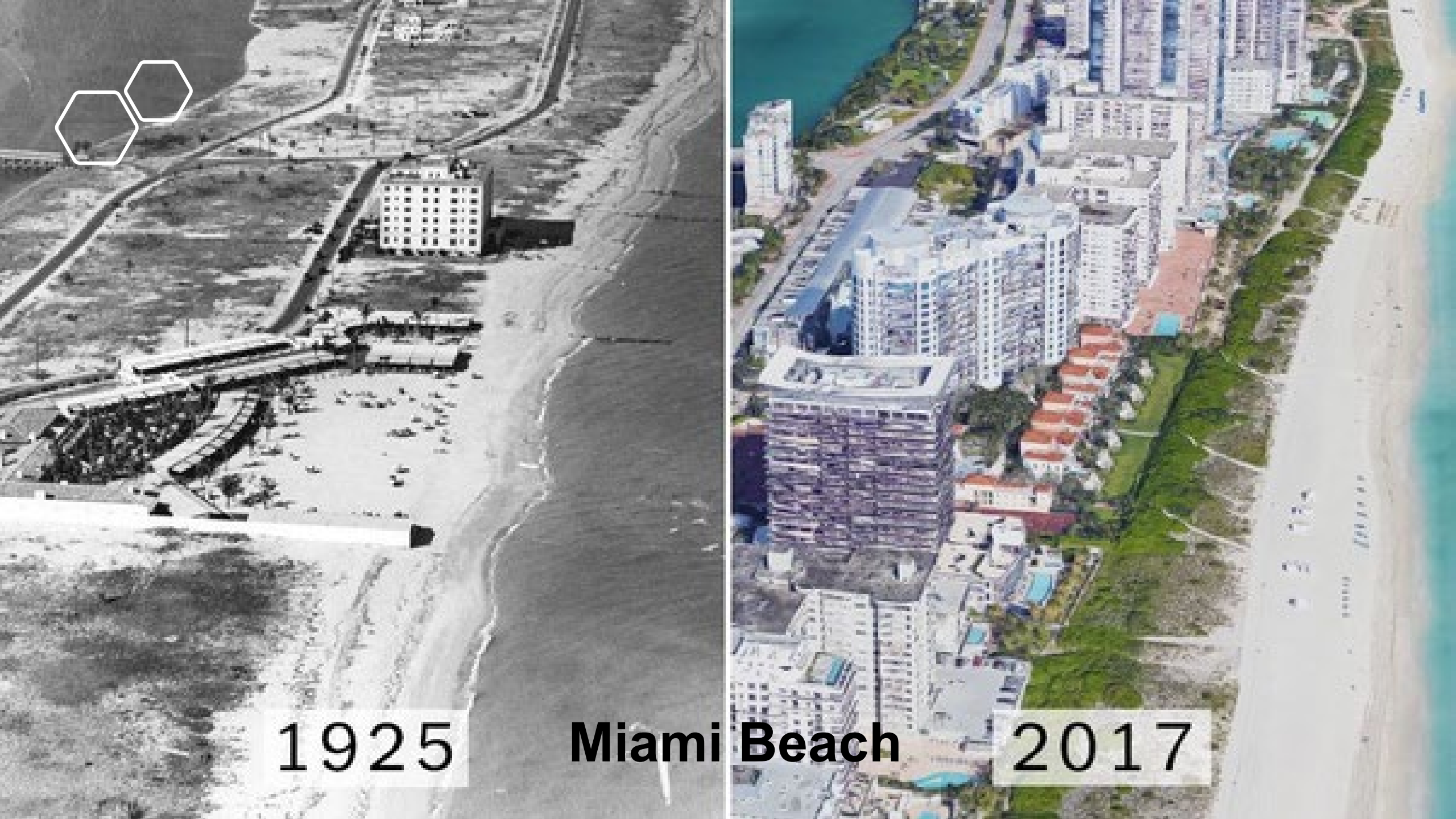
University of Colorado **Boulder**

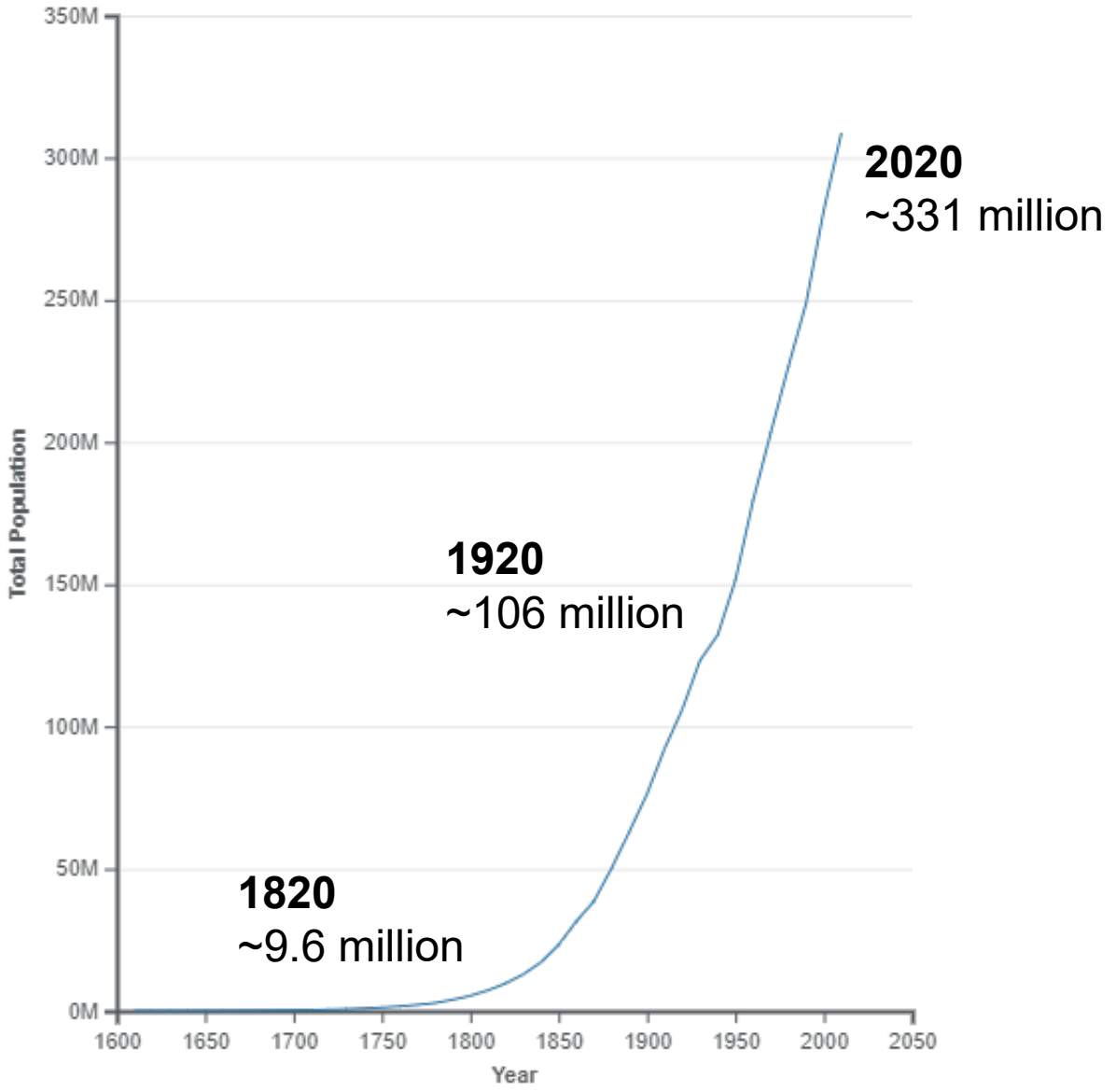
NATURAL HAZARDS CENTER



**What holds society together during times of rapid change?**

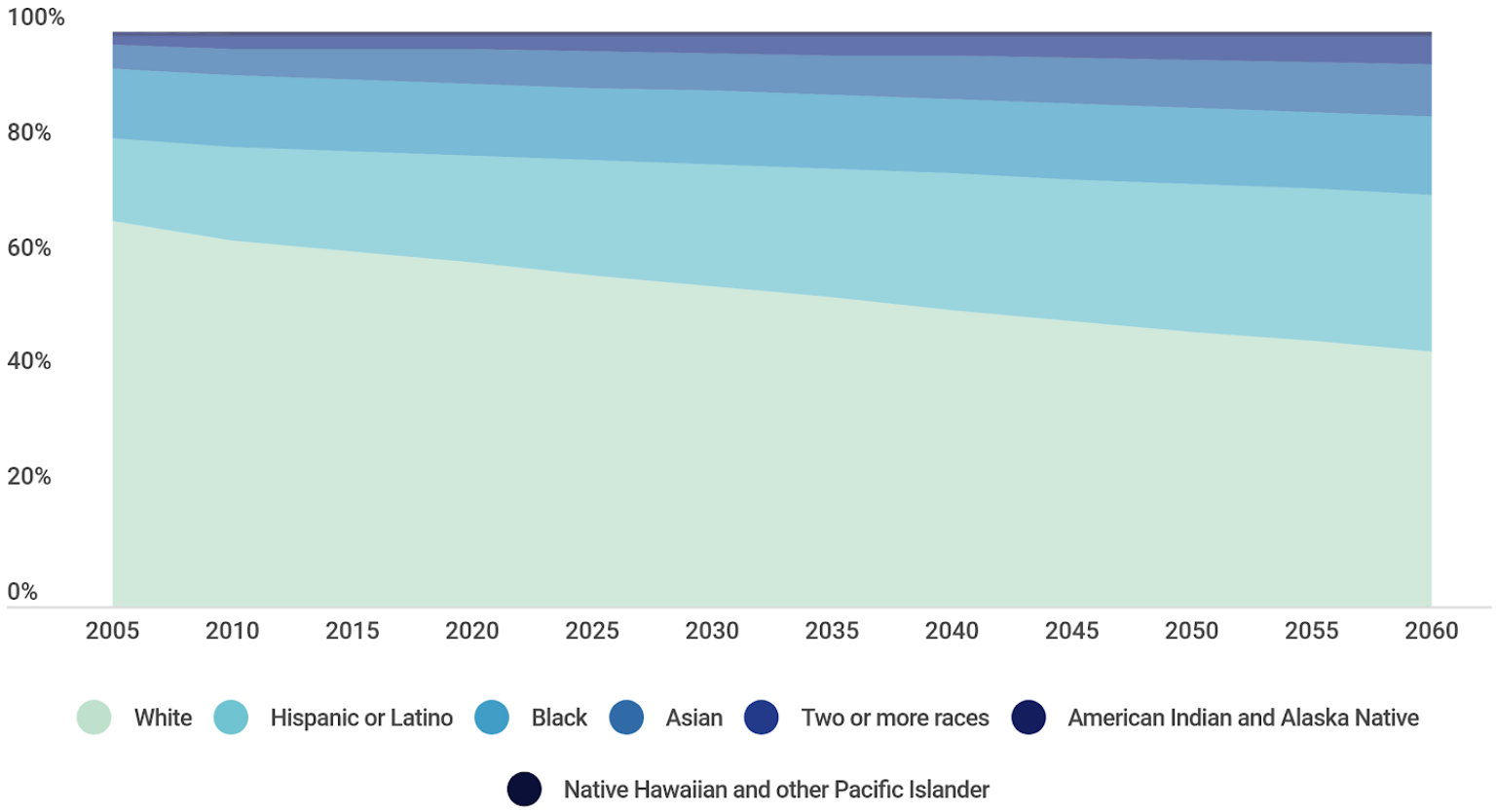

1925
Miami Beach
2017

# U.S. Population

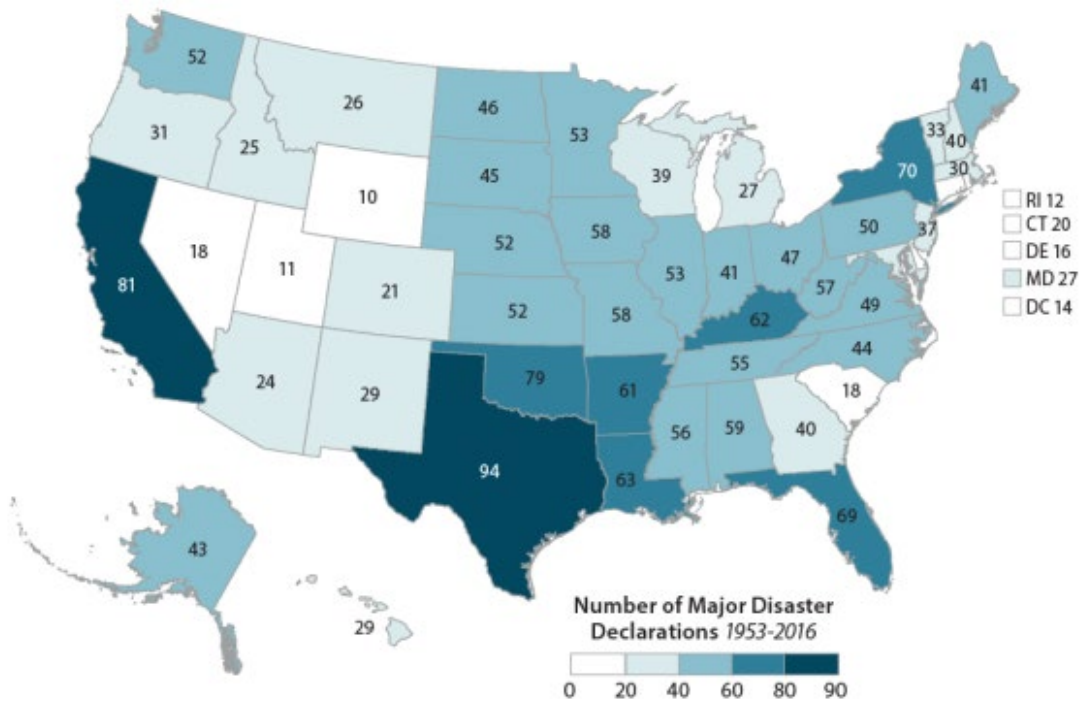


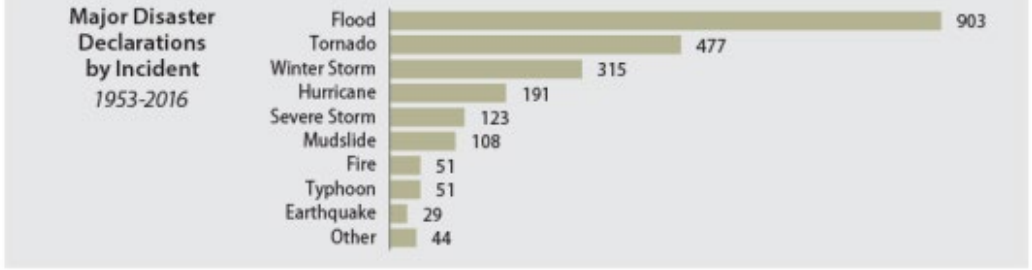
# Increasing racial diversity in the U.S.

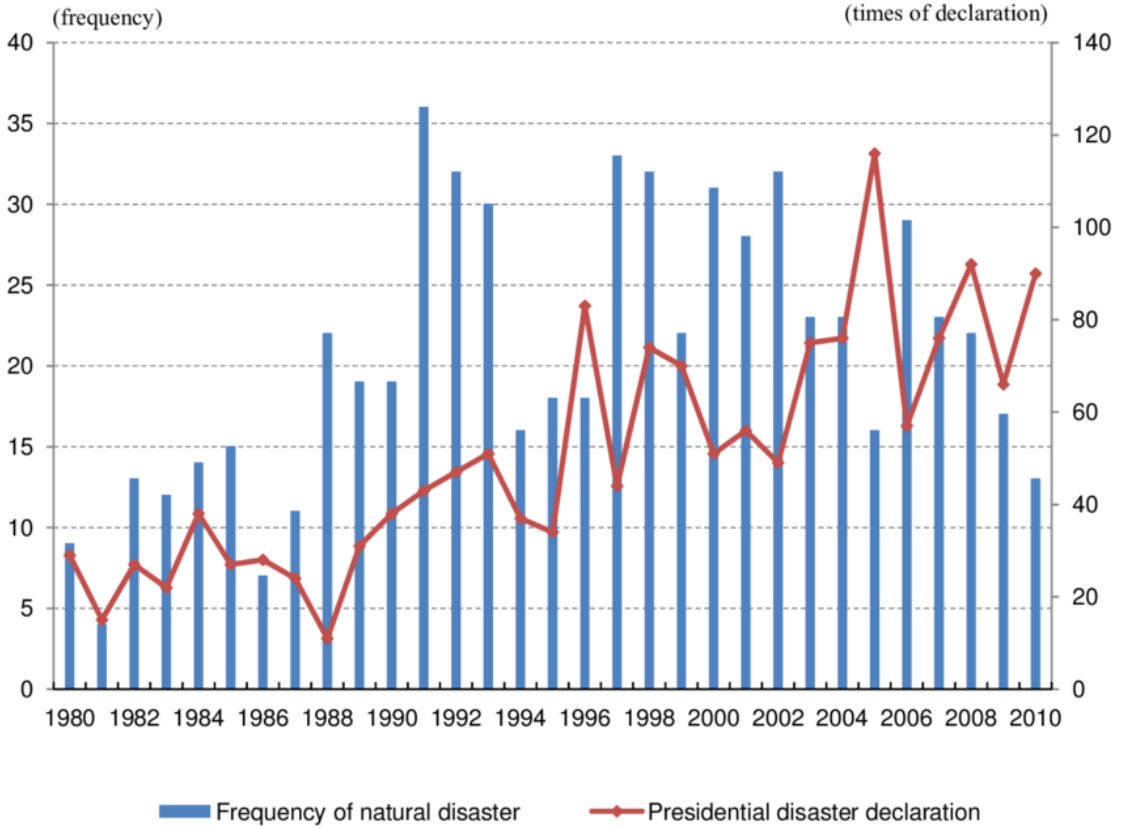
*Past and projected percentage of the resident population*




*Source: HeyTutor analysis of U.S. Census Bureau Main Projection Series for the United States 2017-2060*




Source: https://fas.org/sgp/crs/homesec/R42702.pdf

**How can diversity help strengthen disaster planning and response efforts?**

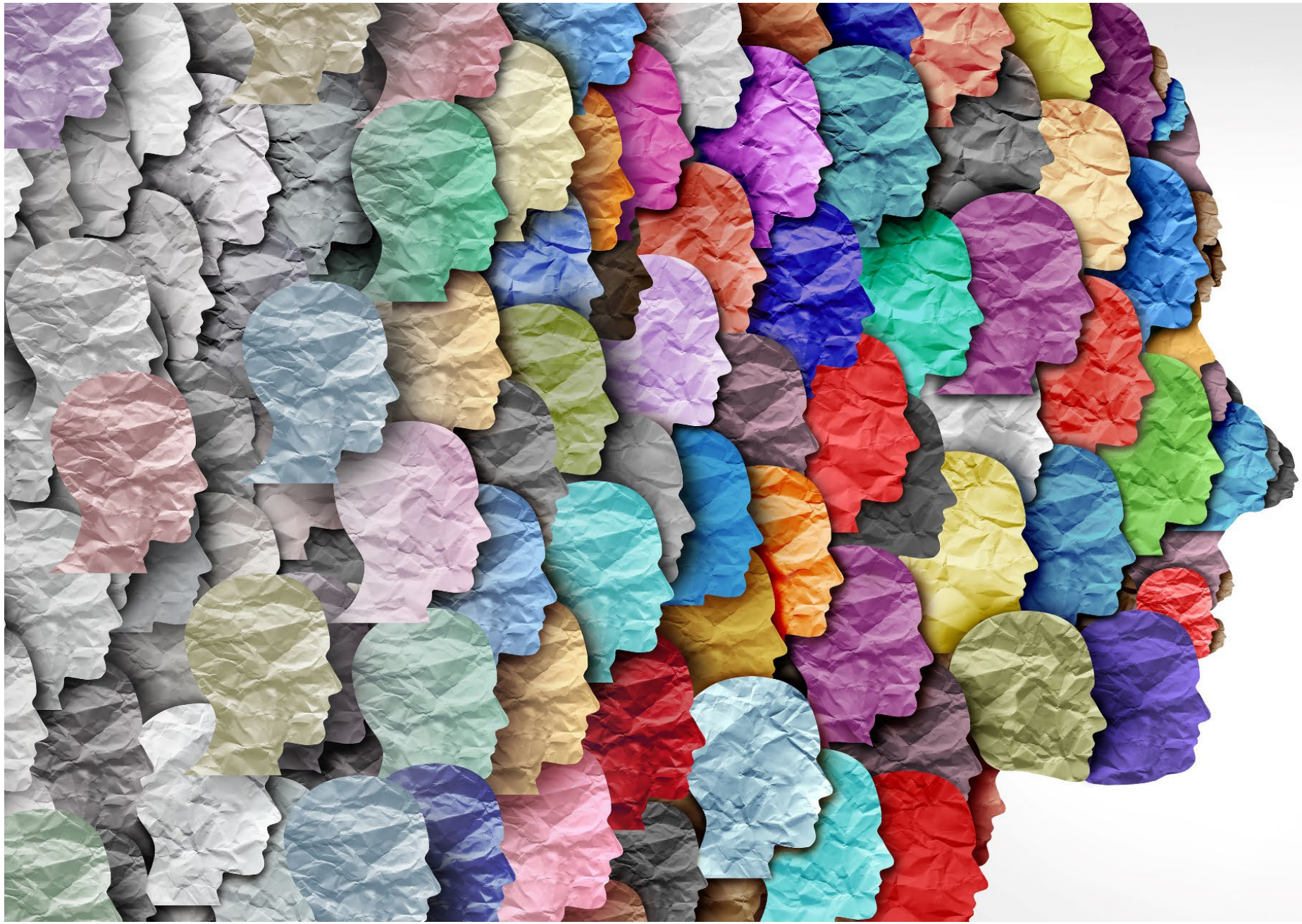
# Diversity

# Diversity

**Diversity** [dih-vur-si-tee]
*Noun*

1. ***Demographic or social category diversity:*** differences in terms of often readily identifiable attributes of team members such as gender, age, (dis)ability, ethnicity, and race

Brenda D. Phillips
DISASTER VOLUNTEERS
Recruiting and Managing People Who Want to Help
BH



**Do your volunteers or staff reflect the *demographic diversity* of the places and people you serve?**

# Diversity

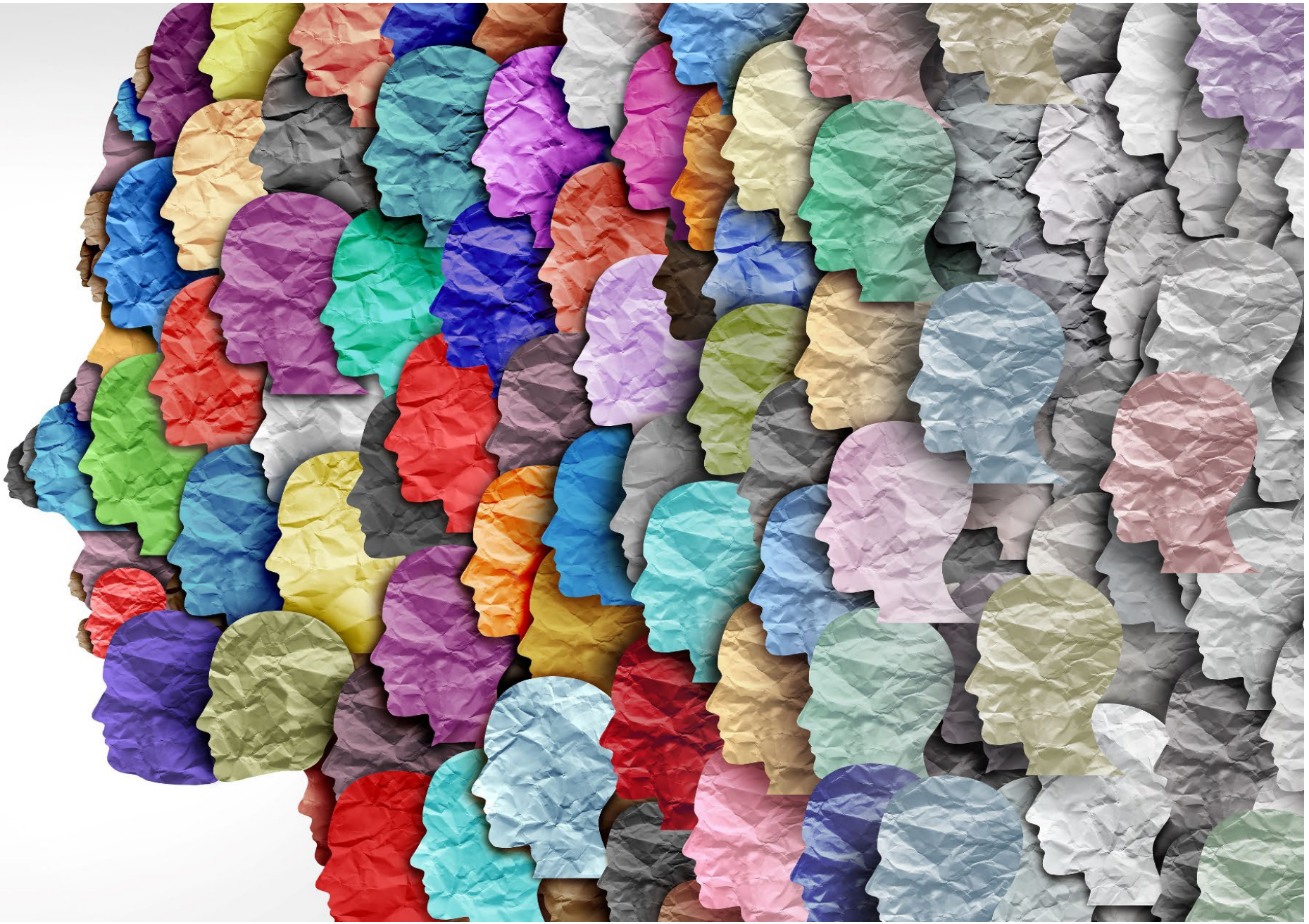
**Diversity** [dih-vur-si-tee]
*Noun*

1. ***Demographic or social category diversity:*** differences in terms of often readily identifiable attributes of team members such as gender, age, (dis)ability, ethnicity, and race
2. ***Functional diversity:*** differences associated with less visible underlying attributes such as skill-sets and informational, cultural, and educational background

**2009:** Boeing 787 involved many experts representing 30 different disciplines just to design the engines!

**1903:** Wilbur and Orville Wright invent, build, and ultimately fly the world's first successful motor-operated airplane.

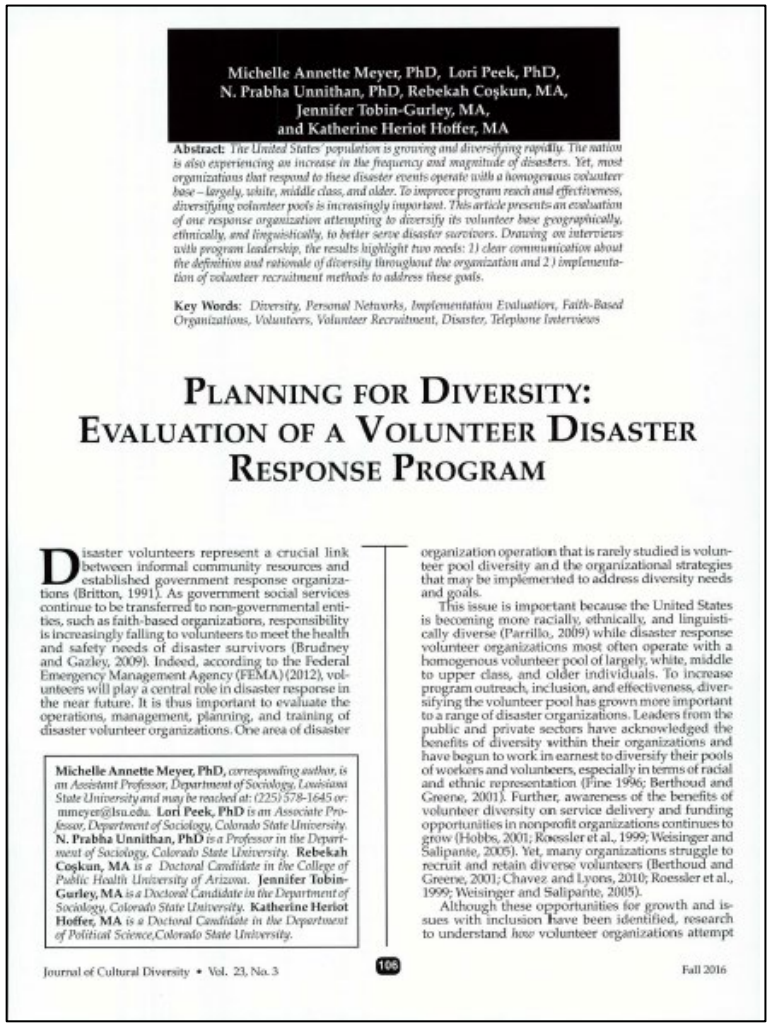
**Do your volunteers or staff have the *functional diversity* required in this rapidly changing and ever more complex world?**



# Diversity Works

*We often learn the most from those we have the least in common with.*

# Diversity Takes Work



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N. Prabha Unnithan, PhD, Rebekah Coşkun, MA,
Jennifer Tobin-Gurley, MA,
and Katherine Heriot Hoffer, MA

**Abstract:** *The United States' population is growing and diversifying rapidly. The nation is also experiencing an increase in the frequency and magnitude of disasters. Yet, most organizations that respond to these disaster events operate with a homogenous volunteer base – largely, white, middle class, and older. To improve program reach and effectiveness, diversifying volunteer pools is increasingly important. This article presents an evaluation of one response organization attempting to diversify its volunteer base geographically, ethnically, and linguistically, to better serve disaster survivors. Drawing on interviews with program leadership, the results highlight two needs: 1) clear communication about the definition and rationale of diversity throughout the organization and 2) implementation of volunteer recruitment methods to address these goals.*

**Key Words:** *Diversity, Personal Networks, Implementation Evaluation, Faith-Based Organizations, Volunteers, Volunteer Recruitment, Disaster, Telephone Interviews*

# Planning for Diversity: Evaluation of a Volunteer Disaster Response Program

Disaster volunteers represent a crucial link between informal community resources and established government response organizations (Britton, 1991). As government social services continue to be transferred to non-governmental entities, such as faith-based organizations, responsibility is increasingly falling to volunteers to meet the health and safety needs of disaster survivors (Brudney and Gazley, 2009). Indeed, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) (2012), volunteers will play a central role in disaster response in the near future. It is thus important to evaluate the operations, management, planning, and training of disaster volunteer organizations. One area of disaster organization operation that is rarely studied is volunteer pool diversity and the organizational strategies that may be implemented to address diversity needs and goals.

This issue is important because the United States is becoming more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse (Parrillo, 2009) while disaster response volunteer organizations most often operate with a homogenous volunteer pool of largely, white, middle to upper class, and older individuals. To increase program outreach, inclusion, and effectiveness, diversifying the volunteer pool has grown more important to a range of disaster organizations. Leaders from the public and private sectors have acknowledged the benefits of diversity within their organizations and have begun to work in earnest to diversify their pools of workers and volunteers, especially in terms of racial and ethnic representation (Fine 1996; Berthoud and Greene, 2001). Further, awareness of the benefits of volunteer diversity on service delivery and funding opportunities in nonprofit organizations continues to grow (Hobbs, 2001; Roessler et al., 1999; Weisinger and Salipante, 2005). Yet, many organizations struggle to recruit and retain diverse volunteers (Berthoud and Greene, 2001; Chavez and Lyons, 2010; Roessler et al., 1999; Weisinger and Salipante, 2005).

Although these opportunities for growth and issues with inclusion have been identified, research to understand how volunteer organizations attempt

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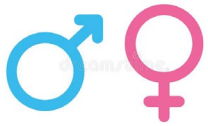
**1. Defining Diversity**

Clear communication regarding the *definition, rationale,* and *goals* for diversity within the organization

**2. Recruiting Volunteers**

Intentional vs. ad hoc volunteer recruitment methods = possibility for tapping into *heterogeneous* vs. *homogenous* networks



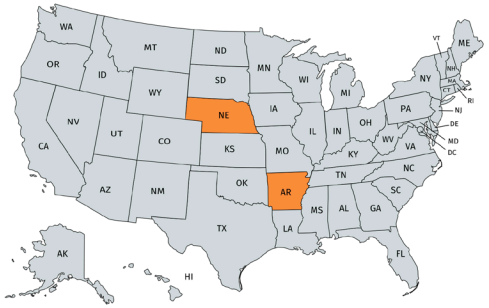
**3. Incorporating Volunteers**

Thoughtful strategies to acknowledge and act on the *power imbalances, complexity, difficulties,* and *strengths* associated with difference

Article available at: hazards.colorado.edu/biography/lori-peek/publications

Why building capacity and strengthening diversity matters so much in disaster contexts.

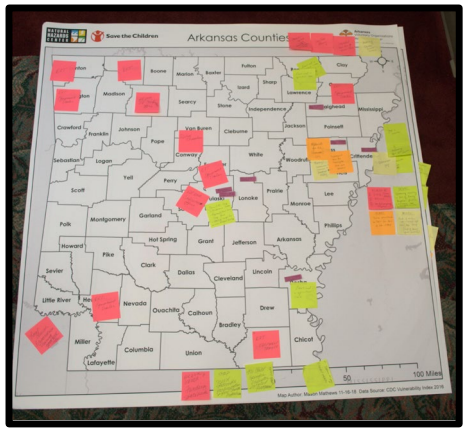
This project assessed how state-level VOAD's can build capacity to address children's needs before, during, and after disaster.



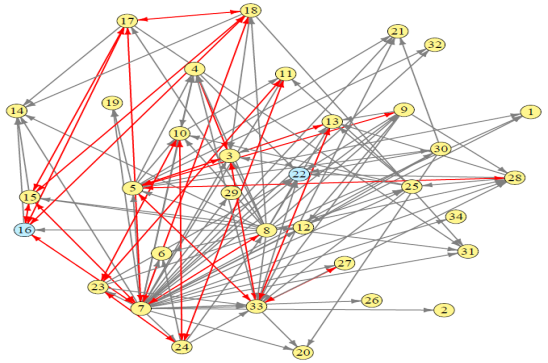

# Evaluation Methods

Mar 2018

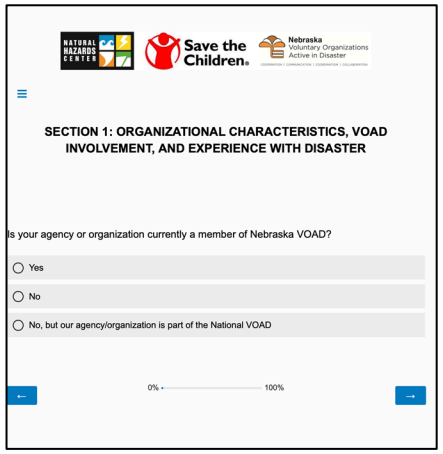
**Baseline Surveys**
Nov - Dec 2018



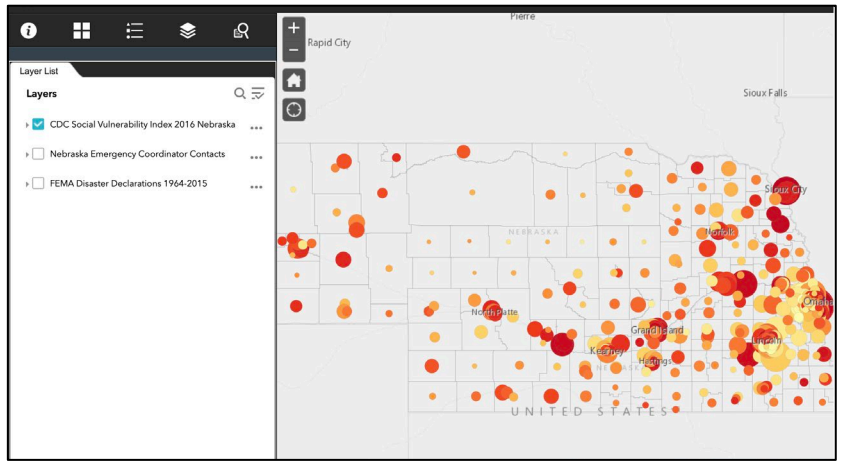

**GIS Mapping**
Feb 2019 – Jun 2019



Aug 2020



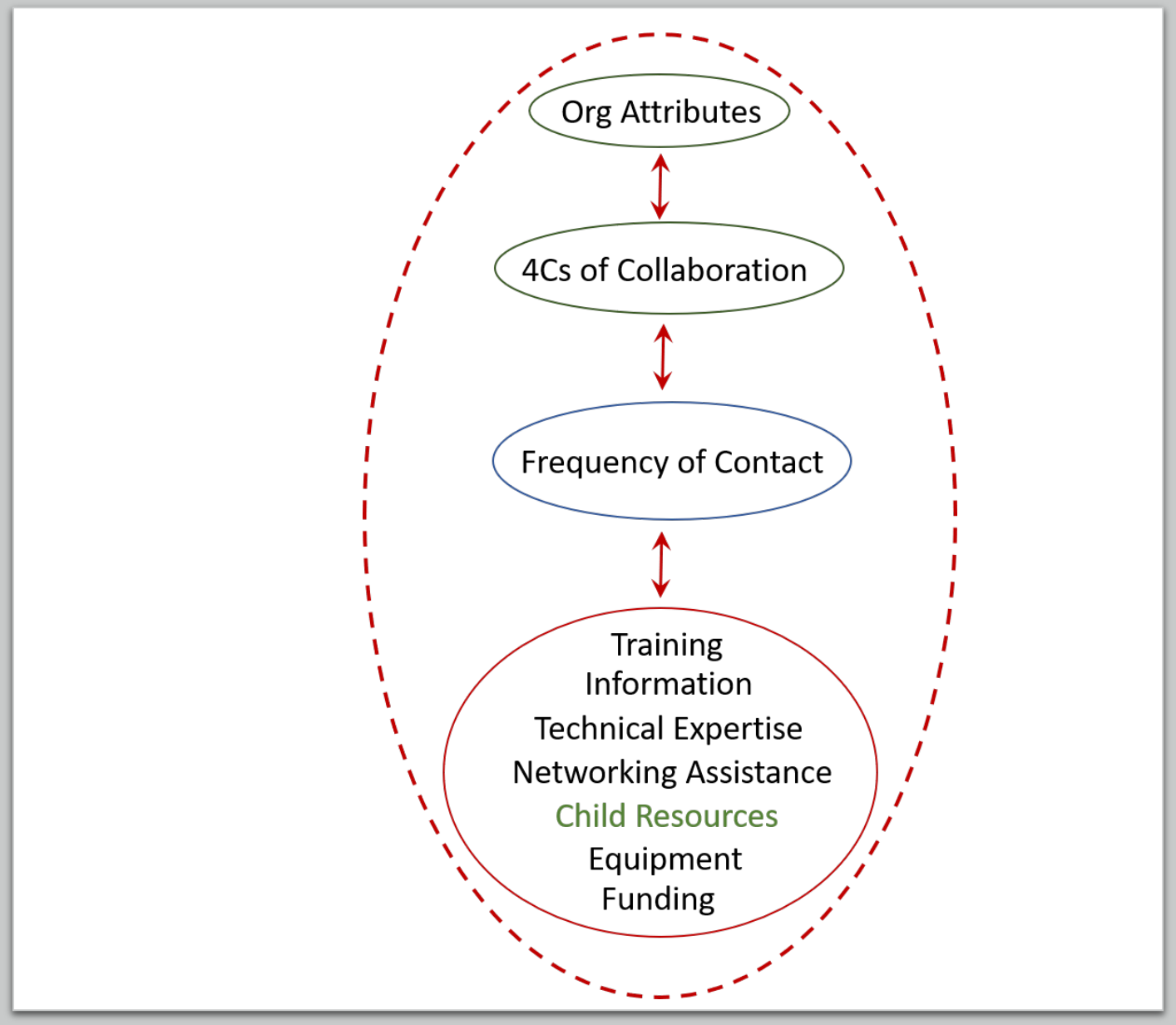

**Participatory Asset Mapping Activities**
Dec 2018




**Social Network Analysis Surveys**
Nov 2019 – Feb 2020

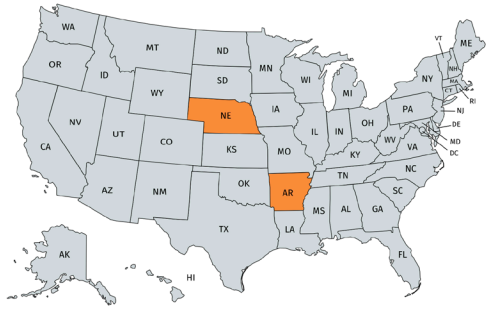
# Research Questions

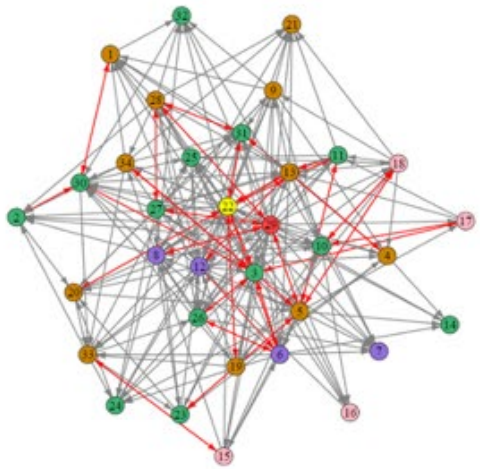
- What explains deeper levels of integration across the “4Cs” of **C**ommunication, **C**ooperation, **C**oordination, and **C**ollaboration?



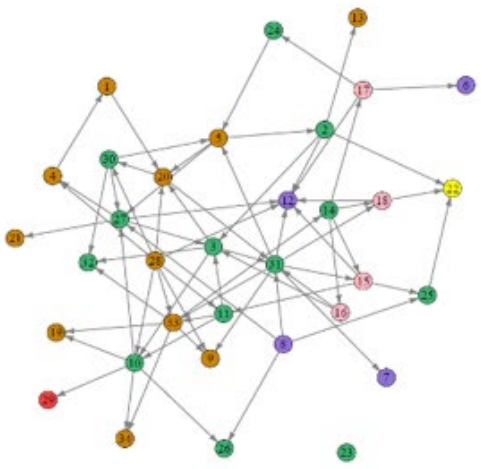
# Defining and Measuring the 4Cs of Interaction

| | |
|---|---|
| **Communication** | ***Communication*** represents a short-term, informal relationship focused on the act of sending a message across a channel to another organization. This relationship does not involve resource sharing other than information exchange, and the purpose of this relationship is focused on emergent, short-term goals. Examples: informal and formal meetings; conference calls. |
| **Cooperation** | ***Cooperation*** also refers to a short-term, informal interorganizational relationship. However, when organizations cooperate they combine communication with an effort to align their services and resources with those of other organizations or jointly address specific needs or problems. Example: responding jointly to provide disaster services (e.g., sheltering, disaster case management). |
| **Coordination** | ***Coordination*** represents a longer-term relationship defined by particular goal(s) or effort(s). This relationship is associated with higher levels of interorganizational trust than the previous two relationships and moves beyond information sharing to resource sharing. Examples: joint exercises; working to share resources instead of duplicating resources/efforts; developing partnerships. |
| **Collaboration** | ***Collaboration*** refers to a long-term, stable relationship consisting of high levels of trust between organizations, frequent communication, and information and resource sharing. Organizations defined by this relationship combine resources to work toward predetermined goal(s) and objectives. Examples: participating in interorganizational exercises; developing interorganizational plans. |

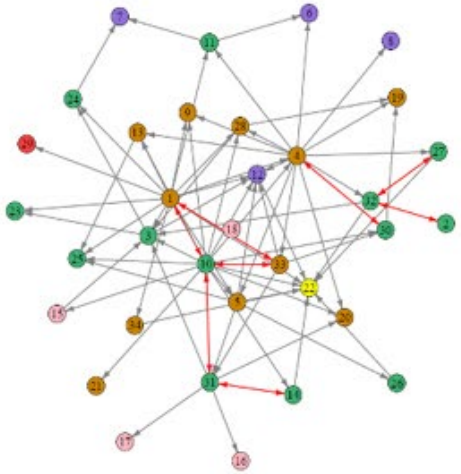


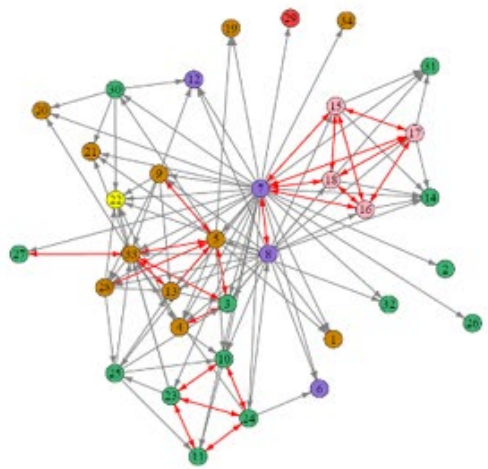
**Communication**



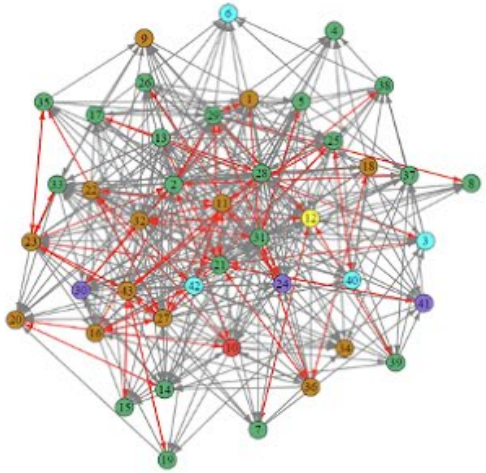
**Cooperation**



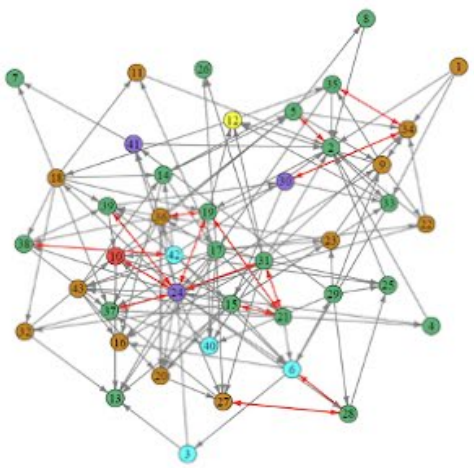
**Coordination**



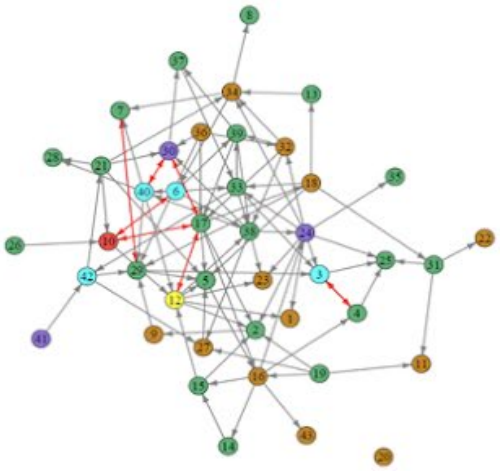
**Collaboration**



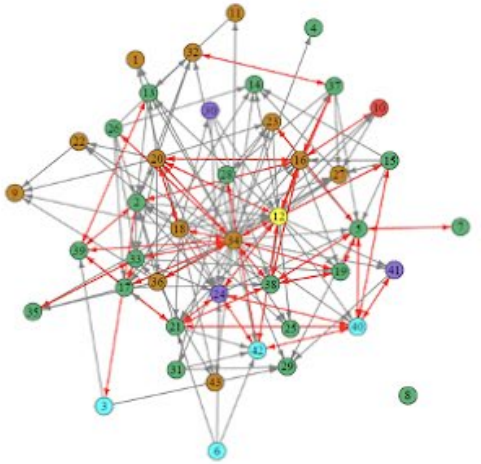
**Communication**



**Cooperation**



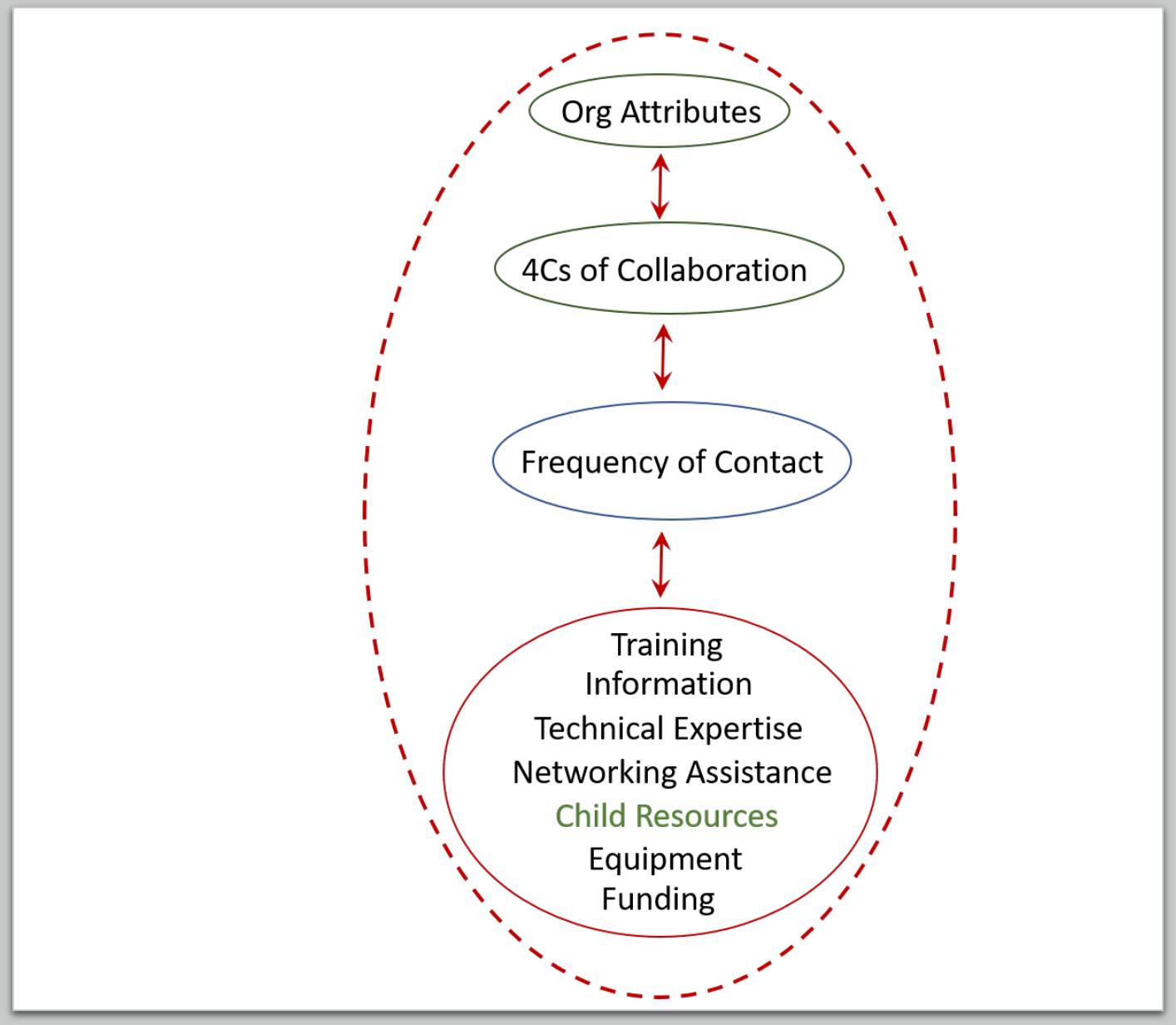
**Coordination**



**Collaboration**

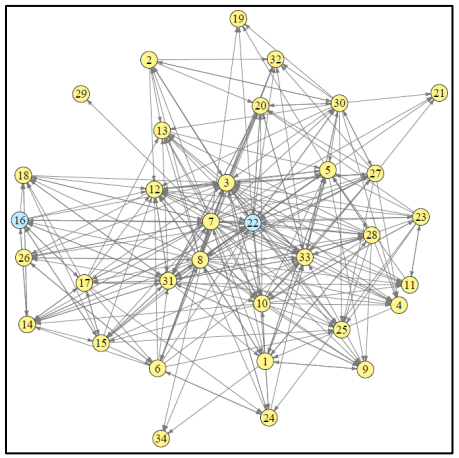
# Research Questions

- What explains deeper levels of integration across the “4Cs” of **C**ommunication, **C**ooperation, **C**oordination, and **C**ollaboration?
- To what degree are **non-member child-serving organizations** currently engaged with VOAD member organizations?
- How do **child-specific resource exchanges** between VOAD member organizations compare to their other resource exchanges?

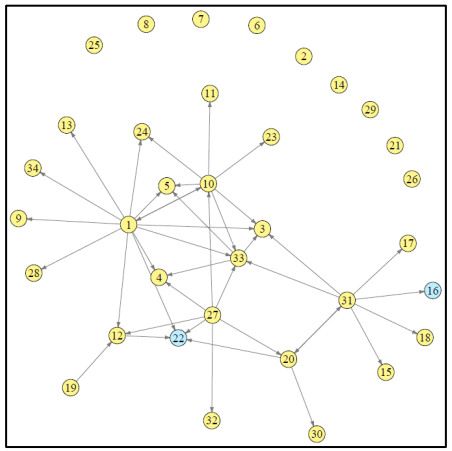


# Resource Exchange Networks: *Which networks are the most and least connected?*

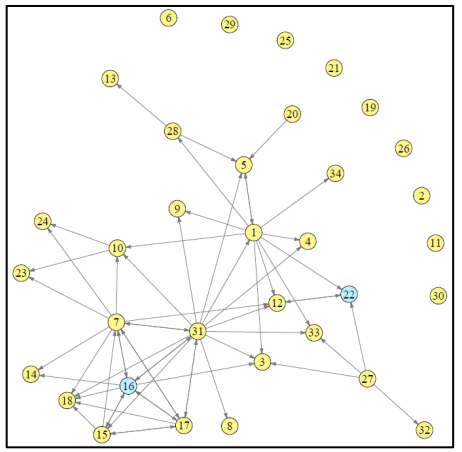
**They Seek Information**



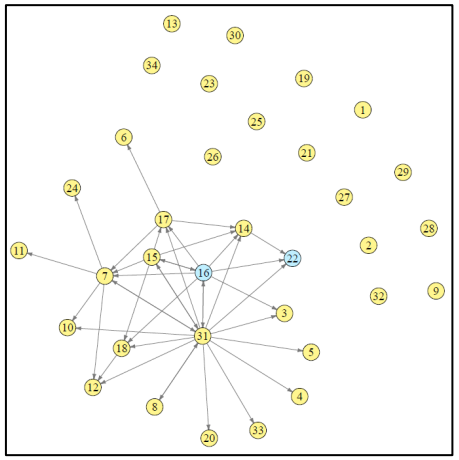
**They Seek Equipment**



**They Seek Training**



**They Seek Child Resources**



| | Density | Average Degree | Components |
|---|---|---|---|
| Information | 0.26 | 17.41 | 1 |
| Equipment | 0.04 | 2.41 | 10 |
| Training | 0.05 | 3.59 | 10 |
| Child Resources | 0.04 | 2.35 | 16 |

They Seek Information is the ***most*** cohesive and connected of these networks.

They Seek Child Resources is the ***least*** cohesive and connected of these networks.

## Research Takeaways:

(1) Some VOAD's are seeking no child-specific resources (even though children make up 25% of the potentially affected population).

(2) When they do seek the resources, there is only one primary "node" available to them.

(3) Increase the child expert nodes, increase resources, increase resource seeking capabilities = help more children in disaster.

# Recommendations:

1. At least **two child-serving organizations** are involved and active participants in the state-level VOAD.
2. At least one state VOAD member has received **formal training in child-specific needs** in disaster and that member is regularly invited to speak about children's needs at VOAD meetings.
3. The state-level VOAD has a **plan to identify and address the specific needs of children** during disaster.
4. The state-level VOAD has collected **child-specific data** to identify the number of children within the state, their geographic location, their hazard exposure, and potential vulnerabilities.
5. The state-level VOAD holds **semi-annual meetings** that assess available **child-focused assets** and identify **areas for improvement** within the VOAD.

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CONVERGE NHERI

hazards.colorado.edu/signup

converge.colorado.edu/signup

NATURAL HAZARDS CENTER

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