

Regional Resiliency Assessment Program Successes and Goals

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As acknowledged by several recent publications, a lack of shared awareness of critical infrastructure resilience issues, practices, resources, and opportunities to act persists among much of the homeland security community. Dissimilarly to addressing security concerns, mitigating resilience issues—especially regarding the complex dependencies and interdependencies connecting infrastructure across cities, counties, states, regions, and the world—requires planning and coordination which exceed the limits of any single entity’s direct control or influence; even improvements implemented by facility owners or operators are rarely standalone solutions. For example, maintaining emergency power generation capabilities to sustain core operations is a commendable resilience practice; however, these capabilities are dependent upon available fuel supplies, which in turn rely on other factors and entities outside the facility’s direct control. Building resilience thus necessitates establishing and maintaining effective partnerships among industries, State and local officials, utilities, and others.

Evolving from previous asset-based methodologies, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) initiated the Regional Resiliency Assessment Program (RRAP) in 2009 to address infrastructure resilience from a regional perspective. In addition to identifying vulnerabilities and capability gaps, the RRAP quickly revealed that efforts to increase awareness of security and resilience gaps hinged on the ability to convene discussions among disparate but inherently linked entities—and that often such efforts were lacking. The RRAP has since proven an effective model for creating and empowering regional partnerships, animated by RRAP findings and analysis, to enhance community resilience. For example: having identified the lack of an animal disease outbreak operational contingency plan in an agriculture-dependent region, one RRAP provided a forum and specific actions for the regional planning council to cooperatively address issues of animal quarantine, business continuity, and transportation dependency. Another RRAP convened homeland security and emergency management personnel, utility companies, and major industry representatives to address RRAP-identified consequences of a city’s aging transportation infrastructure.

The RRAP is not exclusively responsible for forming these partnerships; many projects draw attention to ongoing efforts, attracting additional partners who can address critical infrastructure issues while they are relevant and timely. However, RRAPs aid in assembling these additional parties and infuse resilience and security considerations into such efforts. For example, an RRAP in one major US city documented security and interdependency concerns that participating personnel have since integrated into a previously-established long-range local planning initiative.

On a national level, the National Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIPP 2013) establishes an integrated, partnership-driven approach for identifying and managing risk to critical infrastructure. The NIPP Vision is as follows: *“A Nation in which physical and cyber critical infrastructure remain secure and resilient, with vulnerabilities reduced, consequences minimized, threats identified and disrupted, and response and recovery hastened.”* The achievement of this vision must entail the identification not only of resilience gaps but also of relevant stakeholder partnerships to take action in closing those gaps. A

vehicle is therefore required both for the application of assessment and analytical tools as well as partnership building aspects of resilience enhancement.

An RRAP project serves as such a vehicle by 1) enabling the identification of basic dependencies and a common understanding of the consequences of disrupting a region's lifeline infrastructure; and 2) convening appropriate partners to act on this information. The RRAP achieves these goals through a coordinated approach which includes the use of assessments, interviews, facilitated discussions, models, simulations, and expert analysis. The RRAP is uniquely poised to collect data to inform such tools, gain traction for their results, and provide a forum for collaboration and the employment of enabling resources. An integrator of varied capabilities and inputs from affiliated program and individual project partners, the RRAP approach embodies the partnership ideal promulgated by the NIPP.

The RRAP's regional approach has been identified as a successful and desirable model for institutionalizing the concepts of national critical infrastructure security and resilience strategies and plans; the ongoing challenge remains linking the analysis produced as part of each RRAP project with broader efforts to foster actionable and achievable resilience practices among the national critical infrastructure community. Currently, RRAP results are limited to influencing the participants of the given project; however, the overarching Program has the potential to compile and depict interdependencies among key lifeline systems over time, better supporting regional prioritization and national-level decision-making efforts. The RRAP's full potential exists in this end state, and Program growth should be geared toward this goal.