Community Resilience Challenge

SAVE water | GROW food | CONSERVE energy | BUILD community

Community Toolkit
A guide to help you make the most of the Challenge
**THE CHALLENGE IS A CALL TO ACTION**

This Spring, thousands of people across the country (and around the world) will rise to the challenge of creating more healthy, just and resilient lives, homes, neighborhoods and communities. The Community Resilience Challenge (the Challenge) is entering its 5th year of inspiring and mobilizing individuals, schools, organizations, municipalities and businesses to take practical actions that Save Water, Grow Food, Conserve Energy and Build Community.

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**WHY RESILIENCE?**

In short, when faced with adversity, resilience is the ability to adapt and spring back, be it a person, a community, an economy or an ecosystem. Given the issues of our time, and a growing confluence of social and environmental challenges, now is the time to act. Communities are at risk of running out of water, farms have had water allocations cut off and ten times the normal number of wildfires were recorded in the US in January. But together we can adapt and spring forward, by catalyzing significant action towards becoming more food, water and energy independent. We can build our communities stronger, healthier, more beautiful and resilient through the Challenge!

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**HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS**

To measure our success, we’ll report back on the number of people engaged in the Challenge and the total number of actions, but we’ll also be digging deeper to quantify the significance of people’s actions in relation to each theme such as gallons of water saved, amount of energy conserved, etc.

While the annual Challenge and its outcomes alone are inspiring, our dream is that the Challenge becomes a positive catalyst that will transform participants’ relationship to water, energy, food and community throughout the year!

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**ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT**

This toolkit was created just for YOU so that you can engage with your friends, family and neighbors in creating more resilient communities at this pivotal moment for our people and planet. The need for increased awareness and community-based, local solutions has never been greater.

After reading this toolkit you’ll be ready to:

1. Decide your level of involvement beyond individual actions (get on over to register your individual actions at www.transitionus.org if you haven’t yet!);
2. Create your plan of action; and
3. Get started!

We hope that you’ll join us in making the Challenge exceed our expectations!
To ensure your project’s success, you may want to develop an action plan and pull together a small organizing team (many hands make light work!).

We are happy to provide you with planning support via our website and this toolkit, as well as outreach materials (posters, fliers, and web). However, building materials (soil, lumber, plants, etc.), coordination of volunteers and anything else you’ll need to make your event a success, will be up to you. Consider getting materials donated from local businesses as incentives for participation in the Challenge.

2. Get the Word Out
Make some ripples by distributing Challenge outreach materials, making announcements at community gatherings, tabling at events, and generally getting the word out. With our posters, fliers and other materials in hand, you can help get people registered on your website and in-person.

3. Tell the Challenge Story
Are you a writer, photographer, or videographer, or do you want to be? If so, we want to hear from you. We need folks across the country to capture the amazing stories that manifest. If you’re interested in traveling to sites and submitting write-ups, photos and videos for the Challenge, please contact us.

4. Got Other Ideas?
If you have other great ideas on how to get involved, please let us know. Whether it’s hosting a house party to get people registered, offering your graphic design skills or mentoring other organizers on project management, there’s room for everyone at the table!

RESILIENCE ACTION EVENT IDEAS
Here is a list of different actions that you might choose to implement in your home, neighborhood, school, church, or in collaboration with a local nonprofit.

The following are just suggestions. Feel free to develop your own plan of action based on one or more of our four themes:

**Save Water**
- Install drip irrigation
- Plant native, drought-tolerant plants
- Install a greywater system
- Install rainwater-harvesting barrels
- Sheet mulch a lawn
- Retain water with mulch and earthworks (think swales)
- Conduct a DIY water audit for you and your neighbors
- Distribute water-saving reminders for others to use (i.e. “water is precious”)

**Grow Food**
- Start or join a school/community garden
- Plant or expand an edible garden
- Start a compost pile and/or worm bin for your neighborhood or school
- Plant a food forest throughout your neighborhood
- Host a plant or seed swap in your neighborhood

**Conserve Energy**
- Replace all incandescent with fluorescent or LED bulbs or hand out free bulbs to others
- Organize or join a carpool
- Get people in your neighborhood to sign up for a community supported agriculture box (CSA) or become a drop site
- Perform a DIY energy audit for yourself and your neighbors
- Distribute energy conservation reminders for others to use (i.e. “unplug me”)

**Build Community**
- Work to get others to move their money to a local bank or credit union
- Organize a clean-up day in your community
- Organize a neighborhood potluck
- Get your workplace or school to join the Community Resilience Challenge
- Start a Garden Wheel in your neighborhood to share knowledge and bounty

*The Challenge was wonderful - it really got me thinking outside the box and doing things I didn’t normally do.*

- Angel

2013 Challenge participant
RESILIENCE CATALYST CHECKLIST

We’re so thrilled that you're interested in planning a Challenge event for others! The first step is to register your event by going to the Transition US website – www.transitionus.org. Next, review the checklist below and get started planning your event.

☐ Create your vision. Come up with your own fabulous Challenge event that you’ll implement this spring. Will you plant a community garden? Create a composting system at your school? Set up a CSA drop site? Host a potluck or community party? Refer to the list of Action Ideas in this toolkit for suggestions. Then, decide what motivates you and start developing the list of items that you’ll need to get it done.

☐ Build your team. We can’t solve drought, climate change, a lack of local food or community disconnectedness alone! Besides, organizing is WAY more fun with others. Build a team that you can work with from start to finish. If you don’t have a solid vision yet, get others involved. It will only increase their commitment to seeing the plan through to the finish line.

Your potential team might include folks in your neighborhood, workplace, community garden or school. The more people you involve, the less overall work it will be and the bigger ripple you’ll make!

☐ Define your project. Next, you’ll need to create a plan for the event. Get creative and have fun! This is the time for all hands on deck. Set your timeline and the who, the when, the what and the how.

☐ Set goals. Once you have a plan, set some achievable goals. Setting metrics for success is important to feel good about what you’re doing. Success may mean getting 10 volunteers for a park cleanup or 100 volunteers to install a garden. Set your goals, and then work to meet and exceed them.

☐ Work out logistics. Secure a location, determine the time and date, and plan out the program schedule. Envision the end result that you’re dreaming of and then work backwards to figure out the steps that you need to make it a reality.

☐ Broaden your team. Reach out to neighbors, friends of friends, co-workers and others. Help will come from the ripest fruit on the tree as well as from the least expected branch.

☐ Fundraise. You might need to raise some funds to actualize your plan. What about hosting a fundraising dinner, selling expensive chocolate, or just simply asking for cash from the planning team to support your vision? Get your team involved and set a realistic fundraising goal given the amount of time that you have.

☐ Recruit and organize volunteers. Beyond your organizing team you might need additional volunteers. Start thinking about how many you’ll need and line them up. Can someone on your team be the point person for volunteers? Don’t make yourself the point person for everything happening on your event day unless you need 10 volunteers or less.

☐ Start your outreach engine. This is when you’re ready to tell everyone you know about your project! Let us know if you’re planning to reach out to more than just your friends and family so that we can help promote your project. Challenge outreach materials are available online for you to download. Also, be sure to use social media to share information about your event, to help spread the word and to mobilize volunteers.

☐ Collaborative documentation. How will you communicate as a team? Will you use Google Docs or some other document sharing application like Dropbox? Get organized with your documents and information so that others can access it on the fly but make sure that they can’t delete it on the fly too!

☐ Run a successful event. Make sure the event stays on schedule and be prepared for any problems that may arise (rain, or otherwise). If it’s going to be hot out, organize snacks and refreshments; you don’t want anyone to get dehydrated. Speaking of which, send out a list of items for your volunteers and other collaborators to bring on the big day (work gloves, sun hats, close-toed shoes, sunblock, water and water bottle, snacks, sunglasses, etc.).

☐ Celebrate! How will you celebrate completion of the project? With a potluck? With cupcakes? Determine the best way to celebrate with the people who made the plan a reality. Make sure to also seek feedback from your team and project participants to find out what worked well and how you can improve for next time. That’s right! Your NEXT project. Now that you’ve got the resilience-

“The Challenge went really well….the idea that there was a community of others working toward this goal helped me along.” - John
2013 Challenge participant
HISTORY OF THE CHALLENGE

In 2010, Daily Acts Organization was inspired by the Santa Monica 100 Garden Challenge, 350.org and Portland’s Village Building Convergence and consequently the first 350 Garden Challenge for Sonoma County was launched. The first year they had a goal of creating 350 gardens in a single weekend. The 350 Garden Challenge (as it was initially called) was an overwhelming success and resulted in hundreds of individuals and over 40 partner organizations registering the planting, expansion or revival of 628 gardens! In 2011, the Challenge was expanded to include home actions and a whopping 1,044 home and garden actions were registered. That year the Challenge was replicated by the Marin Garden Challenge, the Victory Garden Foundation and nationally through Transition U.S. In 2012 and 2013 the number of actions grew exponentially (2,300 and 3,558 actions respectively) and other groups such as Sustainable Contra Costa successfully replicated it in other communities.

For 2014, the name was changed to the Community Resilience Challenge to more accurately reflect the spirit of the event. In addition, the Challenge is being replicated on a regional and national level in collaboration with many partner organizations.

www.transitionus.org