

## Abstract

While research has focused on interprofessional collaboration among stakeholders in the health field, little research has studied community partnerships regarding emergency management and business continuity planning. This community-based participatory research project took place in Peterborough, Ontario. Qualitative content analysis of focus group data revealed emergent themes focused on the importance of transformative leadership to prompt initiation of collaborative activities, the need for awareness and common ground between organizations, and how upstream investment supports training and collaborative practice. This research aims to inform policy makers about the importance of community partnerships in promoting community resilience in emergency situations, as well as the role partnerships play in the creation and implementation of business continuity plans.

**Keywords:** *Interorganizational collaboration; readiness to collaborate; community partnerships; non-governmental organization (NGO); private sector; public sector; policy; community resilience; disaster management; business continuity; emergency preparedness*

## Introduction

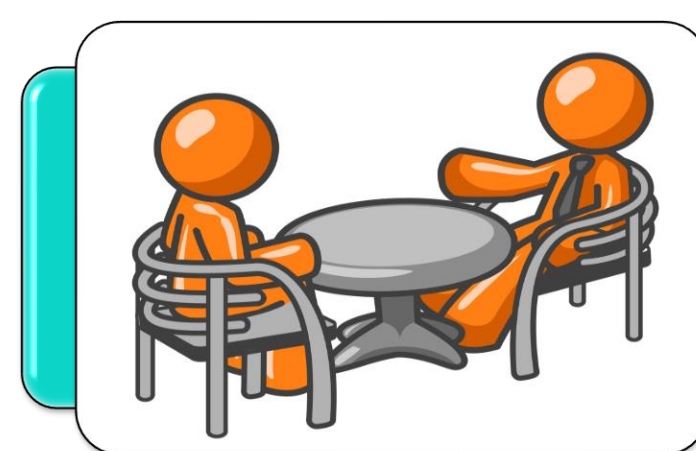
While research has focused on interprofessional collaboration among stakeholders in areas such as health care service provision, little research has studied community partnerships regarding emergency planning (EP), organizational resilience (OR), and business continuity planning (BCP). An important aspect of collaboration among community organizations is the community's readiness to participate in partnerships when faced with issues, and efforts to collaborate should align with the community's broad health and wellness goals (Edwards et al., 2000). Collaboration within communities, then, could be described as "a process of joint decision-making by the key stakeholders involved in a problem domain, about the future of that domain" (Gray, 1989; Loisel, 2005).

The purpose of this community-based, participatory research is to explore the barriers and facilitators affecting community partnerships and readiness to collaborate. Specifically, we explored emergency preparedness, organizational resilience, and business continuity planning with essential service organizations in Peterborough, Ontario.

## Methods



**Location:**  
Peterborough



**Data Sources:**  
Semi-Structured Interviews



**Questions Asked:**

- What services does the organization provide?
- How do you define resilience? Do you believe your organization is resilient?
- What are key assets or resources that contribute to organizational resilience?
- Have you ever participated in business continuity planning?
- How can we get organizations more involved in business continuity planning activities?



**Data Analysis Procedures:**

- Descriptive Coding
- Building Categories
- Thematic Analysis

## Results and Discussion

### Transformative leadership prompts the initiation of collaborative activities.

❖ *Leaders taking on an intermediary bridging role.* A leader in a mediating role between organizations enables collaboration by managing access to finances and other resources like networking and training opportunities.

❖ *Leaders formalizing or legislating agreements and requirements.* Formally requiring organizations to develop, implement, and maintain BCPs helps ensure that any partnerships formed for the purposes of that plan will be sustained in order to preserve the organization's functioning during an emergency situation.

### Attitudes toward interdependency in EM, BCP, and OR affect an organization's readiness to build and maintain partnerships.

❖ Positive attitudes toward organizational interdependency include openness to networking opportunities, a disposition towards communicating needs and assets to other entities, and adopting a holistic emergency planning and preparation perspective that enables the organization to be part of the community during the response.

❖ Generally, an organization open to creating relationships with other entities will also strive to make these networks known and to maintain these partnerships over time.

### Upstream investment supports BCP and collaborative practice.

❖ *Presence of upstream investments facilitates BCP and collaborative practice.* Upstream investments allow organizations and companies to transform funds into valuable assets for BCP and community partnerships.

❖ *Lack of upstream investments hampers BCP and collaborative practice.* In some cases, rising costs associated with running not-for-profit organizations are not being offset by funding or any other types of investments. In turn, these organizations must forgo additional resources in the form of staff – which also compromises their capacity to create and maintain a BCP as well as community partnerships. This is especially true for smaller organizations or companies that may have limited resources to begin with.

## Policy Implications

This research can inform policy makers about the importance of community partnerships in promoting community resilience in emergency situations, as well as the role partnerships play in the creation and implementation of BCPs.

The creation of BCPs is facilitated by positive attitudes towards partnerships and interdependency among organizations in the community. A willingness to network with others and to participate in joint exercises can help organizations identify partners, which would in turn help organizations share resources.

Indeed, BCPs should be created with partners in mind. These partners can be mobilized to assist one another during emergencies and can support their continued operations in the community. Functionality can be maintained through legislating the presence of BCPs in organizations, especially when organizations seem resistant to working with one another.

Policy makers should consider using such measures to ensure these organizations remain functional during emergencies. When organizations remain functional during emergencies, they contribute to the overall community's resilience and capacity for response.

## Future Research

This research focused on identifying barriers and facilitators to interorganizational collaboration but it would be useful to know exactly how these barriers and facilitators function in the context of BCP.

Research is needed to determine how the development of these identified facilitators can be brought about in organizations. In doing so, we can explore how BCPs catalyze the creation of community partnerships and bring together key stakeholders.

Future research could also focus on an exploration of campus-community collaboration toward disaster preparedness in at-risk communities and determine whether or not campus-community partnerships have unique components to collaboration.

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