IMPOWER

Rate your resilience
## A framework for assessing organisational resilience

July 2021

Overview

In partnership with the County Councils Network, and based on leading academic theory around complex system resilience, IMPOWER has developed a framework to ascertain a council's organisational resilience levels, which has been tested and refined with eight county councils.

Organisational resilience is the ability to anticipate, adapt to and bounce forward from disruption. The framework looks at resilience across three capabilities…

- **Absorbative capabilities** – the ability to undertake rapid change to be able to persist and keep going during a shock

- **Adaptive capabilities** – the ability to make incremental changes to be able to move forward

- **Anticipatory capabilities** – the ability ensure positive changes are sustained and optimised, and to prepare for future shocks

Building the three capabilities for the six characteristics will enable councils to be resilient by using both adrenaline, through a surge of energy to get through the initial shock and stress, and core strength, to keep riding the waves, recover quicker between each event and bounce back stronger.

Absorbative capabilities

Adaptive capabilities

Anticipatory capabilities

Characteristics

Strong leadership and decision-making

Staff engagement, empowerment and wellbeing

Learning driven improvement and innovation

Leveraging finance and performance intelligence

Resource flexibility

Effective and collaborative relationships

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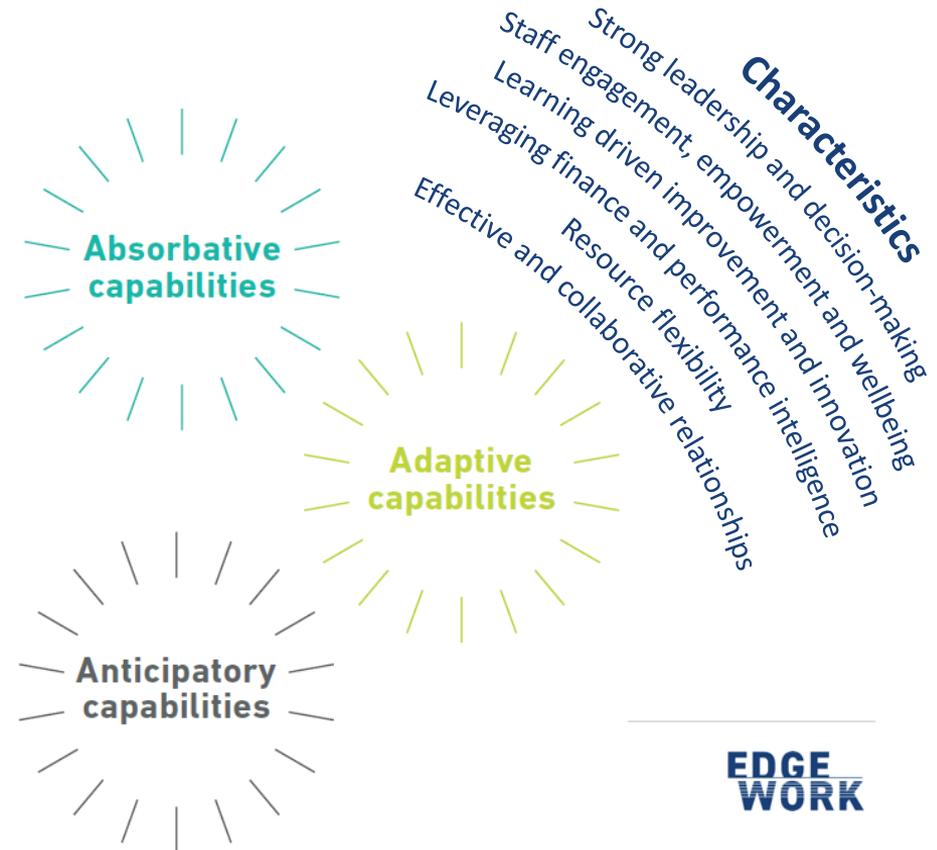
Instructions for using the scoring sheet

This scoring sheet allows you to judge your own resilience using the indicators we have defined for each of the six characteristics at the three capability levels. The results will help inform which characteristics and / or capability levels require most focus to develop, and to check and challenge the different perspectives people have.

Self-scoring your organisational resilience using this scoring sheet is very simple.

1. For each of the characteristics on the next six pages, read the indicators listed at each capability level and reflect on the extent to which those indicators exist within your organisation

2. For each characteristic, score yourself between 1 and 4 for each capability level. Score 1 where there is limited evidence of the stated indicators, up to 4 where this is strong evidence that those indicators exist. There is scoring guidance at the bottom of each page

3. On page 10, copy in the scores that you have awarded for each capability level for each characteristic

4. Add up the scores for each characteristic (total of the row scores) and each capability level (total of the column scores)

5. Compare the scores in each column and row to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to help inform which characteristics and / or capability levels require most focus to develop

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1. Strong leadership and decision-making

Indicators of absorbative capabilities	Indicators of adaptive capabilities	Indicators of anticipatory capabilities
• Competence in quick execution of contingency and business continuity plans to respond to disruptions • Governance processes are able to be flexed to enable a shock response, with people being confident in making rapid and difficult decisions and accurately judging the level of escalation required • Accepting that some BAU will be put on hold and some services not delivered in order to focus on responding to the disruption	• Competence in execution of contingency and recovery plans, balancing short and long-term priorities to circumvent disruptions in the longer term and aligning these with organisational goals • Ability to ascertain and make a decision on when to restart different BAU activity and when to stop disruption specific activity given the rapidly changing context and capacity, and being alert to when this needs revisiting • Ability to maintain supportive and constructive challenge at the senior leadership level	• Shared ownership, review and testing of contingency and business continuity planning and procedures, with an agreed understanding of the organisation's minimum operating requirements (planning strategies and stress testing) • Organisation-wide shared and owned understanding of strategic priorities (unity of purpose) • Governance processes use decision-making time effectively so high-quality decisions are made fast, at the right level, with empowered decision making, commitment to execution, and ownership of its impact • Ability to mitigate anticipated and predictable surprises / minimise potential negative consequences • Trust and respect has been built between officers and members • Leaders build truly collaborative leadership, and there is a sense of teamwork across the organisation, working together at all levels regardless of departmental boundaries (breaking silos)
out of 4	out of 4	out of 4

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1 Limited	**3** Good
2 Mixed	**4** Strong

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2. Staff engagement, empowerment and wellbeing

Indicators of absorbative capabilities

- Ability to have regular 2-way engagement with staff being transparent about the disruption and showing gratitude to staff
- Staff have a clear understanding of organisational priorities during a disruption
- Ability to understand levels of well-being and well-being need
- Ability to support staff experiencing physical and mental health problems or trauma as a result of a disruption

out of 4

Indicators of adaptive capabilities

- Frontline staff are empowered to make decisions related to their work
- Staff are encouraged to keep an eye of what is going on on the frontline, and this insight is valued (situational awareness)
- Ability to tackle the causes of work-place related wellbeing issues, identifying specific staff groups who may need additional support in response to their individual circumstances

out of 4

Indicators of anticipatory capabilities

- Organisation wide understanding of the link between own practice, the organisation's resilience, and organisation's priorities
- Staff from various levels across the council are able to contribute to continuous improvement and transformational change
- Staff empowerment is encouraged, promoted and rewarded and staff have the psychological safety to speak their minds, take positive risks, or admit an error
- The workforce is diverse so staff feel included, bringing a range of experiences and perspectives to challenge group-think when anticipating disruptions, problem solving and innovating
- A corporate wellbeing culture exists where the staff's physical and mental wellbeing is nurtured

out of 4

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1 Limited	**3** Good
2 Mixed	**4** Strong

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3. Learning driven improvement and innovation

Indicators of absorbative capabilities

- Ability to draw upon and use collective knowledge to develop crisis- specific solutions
- Capacity to pause and reflect as well as to act

out of 4

Indicators of adaptive capabilities

- Capacity to reflect on the crisis situation and to incorporate the gained insight into the existing knowledge base and to act
- Practice is reflected upon and improved through regular review
- Staff are encouraged and rewarded for using their knowledge in novel ways to solve new and existing problems.

out of 4

Indicators of anticipatory capabilities

- Ability to foster creative problem solving and innovation with proactive exploration and experimentation to test and iterate new ideas, nurturing a culture that emphasises learning from what has not worked
- Ability to plan to bounce forward, and agility to act on the collective insight gained from BAU, change activity and disruptions to identify and exploit unexpected opportunities to accelerate transformational change
- Capacity to continuously enhance resilience potential

out of 4

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| **1** Limited | **3** Good |
| **2** Mixed | **4** Strong |

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4. Leveraging finance and performance intelligence

Indicators of absorbative capabilities

- Ability to maintain a financial grip during a disruption e.g. by monitoring spend and income generation against budget
- Ability to monitor and use disruption specific finance and performance information close to real-time and turn it into actionable insights
- Ability to ascertain how different communities and groups are immediately affected by the disruption

out of 4

Indicators of adaptive capabilities

- Ability to understand how demand is changing as the result of a disruption and the implications of this on usual service delivery, including the impact on in-year budget and savings plans
- Ability to balance the budget at the end of the year, pulling on unallocated reserves and government grants as required
- Ability to ascertain how different communities and groups will be continue to be impacted by the disruption in the future

out of 4

Indicators of anticipatory capabilities

- Instil an intelligence driven culture where people ask the right questions, have skills to interpret data, and use it
- Accurate, timely and integrated financial and performance information used to inform strategic and operational decision making at all levels
- Ability to understand local communities and groups, their strengths and needs
- Effective forecasting and scenario analysis of demand and spend to inform strategic and contingency planning
- Horizon scanning to determine future trends and to identify early signals of an encroaching disruption in order to anticipate and prevent disruptions or take advantages of emerging opportunities
- Clear view of return on investment afforded by the transformation agenda and trajectory towards achieving it
- Shared ownership, review and scenario testing of the council's medium term financial strategy to enable the Council to effectively allocate its available financial resources to achieve its priority outcomes

out of 4

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| 1 Limited | 3 Good |
| 2 Mixed | 4 Strong |

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5. Resource planning and flexibility

Indicators of absorbative capabilities

- Understanding of BAU critical and emergency-specific tasks and competencies and ability to mobilise and share workforce across the organisation and create the extra capacity needed during a disruption
- Ability to rapidly implement training and support so that staff are able fill critical roles / complete critical tasks
- Ability to switch to spare capacity or backups in regards to infrastructure eg buildings, IT
- Ability to maintain safe services, and legislative compliance when under crisis

out of 4

Indicators of adaptive capabilities

- Ability to mobilise and share workforce from and with wider networks of partners, suppliers and stakeholders including volunteers
- Ability to leverage knowledge: critical information is stored in an accessible way and staff have access to expert opinions when needed
- Ability to adapt businesses processes to continue service delivery when the council's infrastructure becomes inaccessible eg buildings, IT

out of 4

Indicators of anticipatory capabilities

- Strong understanding of workforce competencies and capabilities required during BAU and for a disruption
- Staff are skilled in transferable capabilities that are useful no matter how their role may evolve eg digital, problem solving, numeracy skills, personal motivation, leadership, personal resilience, liaising with the public
- Practice specialism is widely distributed and staff are trained in inter-professional development so that someone will always be able to fill key roles
- Infrastructure is kept up to date and in a good condition to operate adequately across a range of conditions, and proactively look for advances that make it easier to deliver services flexibly
- Ability to maintain quality services, and legislative compliance

out of 4

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| **1** Limited | **3** Good |
| **2** Mixed | **4** Strong |

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6. Effective and collaborative relationships

Indicators of absorbative capabilities

- Ability to leverage relationships to agree and access information that needs to be drawn upon from each other during a disruption
- Place based decisions during a disruption are owned by partnerships, responding effectively together

out of 4

Indicators of adaptive capabilities

- Ability to maintain an equal partnership and open and constructive dialogue with system players
- Understanding how system player actions affect the council's ability to respond and recover from a disruption

out of 4

Indicators of anticipatory capabilities

- Understanding of the system players, their objectives, and how they are connected – including partners, providers, and the community
- System-wide shared and owned understanding of common goals and outcomes to serve the community, and priorities (short and longer term)
- Proactively encouraging and creating time for relationship building and collaboration at all levels with system players

out of 4

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| **1** Limited | **3** Good |
| **2** Mixed | **4** Strong |

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Score sheet

Copy your scores from the previous sheets into the grid below then add up each row and column to give overall scores for each characteristic and capability level.

	Absorbative capability	Adaptive capability	Anticipatory capability	Total for characteristic
1. Strong leadership and decision-making				out of 12
2. Staff engagement, empowerment and wellbeing				out of 12
3. Learning driven improvement and innovation				out of 12
4. Leveraging finance and performance intelligence				out of 12
5. Resource planning and flexibility				out of 12
6. Effective and collaborative relationships				out of 12
Total for capability	out of 24	out of 24	out of 24	

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Next steps in your resilience journey

This is a key moment. Councils cannot keep going running on adrenaline alone. Investing in resilience is not a statutory requirement, it is a deliberate leadership choice to enable the council to deal more effectively with the continuous disruptions and to be in a better position to operate within complexity.

A first step is to consider how the insight from this work fits in with your current challenges.

You are able to continue developing your organisational resilience in different ways:

1

Use the framework and your self-assessment as the basis of a discussion with your top team

2

Read the resilience report IMPOWER published in conjunction with the County Councils Network to see how other councils have responded to doing an assessment

3

Contact us at IMPOWER to talk about potential next steps

To help you on this journey, we are happy for you to use the full framework under the Creative Commons licence.

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IMPOWER's Resilience Framework enables you to understand your council's ability to deal with disruption, and how to strengthen organisational resilience. We are offering the Framework under an 'Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike' Creative Commons licence.

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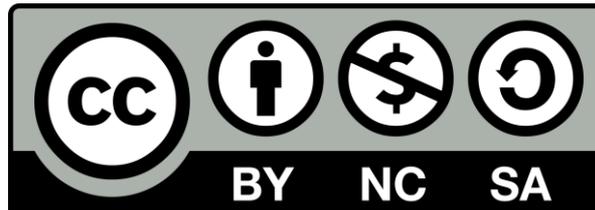
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