



# Public Libraries Advancing Community Engagement (PLACE): Final Report

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Libraries Advancing Community Engagement (PLACE) project (NOAA #NA15SEC0080008) provided librarians in rural and under-resourced urban areas with professional development and paired them with NOAA/NWS scientists to provide adult programming on adaptation planning and climate resilience. Programs used popular books and human-interest videos to stimulate discussion and critical thinking, and attendees were introduced to NOAA's Climate Resilience Toolkit, with the aim of enhancing environmental literacy specific to the local geography, vulnerabilities, and threats.

### Findings:

- PLACE librarians were quite experienced with adult programming, programming with partners, and participating in professional development.
- PLACE programs drew audiences differing somewhat from those at typical adult programs, including drawing more men, younger people, and people interested in science or climate.
- About a third of libraries held additional PLACE-related events beyond the Change, Community, and Strategy events.
- The most presented Climate Resilience Toolkit resources were the State of the Climate report, the Sea Level Rise Viewer, and the Seasonal Time Series tool.
- Librarians found the PLACE PD very effective, including in helping them understand enough about adaptation planning and climate resilience to implement PLACE programming.
- Three-quarters of librarians rated their NOAA/NWS scientist partnerships as very or extremely successful, and just over a quarter plan to work with the scientists again.
- A third of librarians also involved community-level risk planners, resilience coordinators, or the like in their PLACE programming.
- Librarians rated the PLACE programming as successful, particularly in engaging attendees.
- Three-quarters of attendees rated PLACE programs as very good or excellent; those who had attended more PLACE events were especially favorably disposed.
- The majority of librarians felt *very* or *extremely* successful in engaging audiences, supporting audience learning, and coordinating/planning programs.
- Smaller numbers of librarians felt *very* or *extremely* successful in supporting Resilience Toolkit use and helping patrons find information about adaptation and resilience.
- Librarians reported extremely large gains in awareness, knowledge, and understanding, particularly in knowledge of — and ability to support patrons in using — climate resilience tools, awareness of local resilience efforts, and likelihood of involving their libraries in those efforts.
- Librarian gains in understanding climate change effects on families and communities were smaller, but these were areas where librarians had the greatest pre-existing knowledge.
- Three-quarters of librarians planned future climate-related events or activities beyond PLACE.
- Most attendees reported that after attending PLACE events, they were more knowledgeable about adaptation planning, climate resilience, the Resilience Toolkit, and local community resilience efforts.
- Audience knowledge ratings were modest after PLACE, but compared to baseline knowledge levels, the gains were striking.

- Audiences gave high ratings to Resilience Toolkit resources, particularly in terms of their usefulness and ease of use.
- Most attendees reported increased concern about climate threats and their community's resilience planning as a result of attending PLACE events.
- About half of attendees reported gains in self- and community efficacy around climate resilience as a result of attending PLACE events, though a very small number reported *lowered* efficacy.
- Most PLACE attendees reported greater intentions to act individually or collectively to build climate resilience in their communities as a result of attending PLACE events.

## Recommendations

- The PLACE programming model has a number of components that are challenging to fit into 90 minutes. GRG recommends considering including a brief overview of the NOAA tools, with a more in-depth, hands-on workshop as a follow-up for interested participants
- GRG recommends that the PLACE team consider involving local science partners instead of faraway NOAA/NWS science partners. Librarians could be provided additional training in how to locate and establish ongoing partnerships with local scientists
- GRG recommends providing some brief training and orientation to scientist partners in order to engage them and to clarify their role and the expectations of the team.
- GRG recommends that the PLACE team provide additional training for librarians in building ongoing relationships with local groups, organizations, and advocates who are doing adaptation planning and resilience work to sustain the momentum created by the programming.