

Meeting Summary

Drought Resilience Interagency & Partners (DRIP) Collaborative

Cross-Cutting Themes Workgroup Meeting

California Natural Resources Agency, 715 P St, Sacramento, Room 06-212

March 28, 2025 | 1:00PM to 2:30PM

The meeting recording is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgaW0vBVJBU>.

Meeting materials, including the presentation, are available at: <http://www.water.ca.gov/drip>

Meeting Objective: Define what cross-cutting themes mean for this group and discuss the current set of cross-cutting themes (1) further refine their purpose statements and (2) consider whether they should continue to be labeled as a cross-cutting theme.

Workgroup members in attendance:

- Kyle Jones, Community Water Center
- Elea Becker Lowe, Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation
- Virginia Jameson, Department of Food and Agriculture
- Tami McVay, Self Help Enterprises

Absent

- Catherine Freeman, California State Association of Counties
- Suzanne Pecci, South American Sub-Basin GSA

Vision Setting Exercise

To ground the discussion and align on long-term goals, the workgroup participated in a visioning exercise, responding to the prompt: **What do cross-cutting themes mean to you?**

Key themes that emerged include:

- **Relevance Across All Work:** Cross-cutting themes are issues that influence multiple aspects of the DRIP Collaborative's work and apply across focus areas.
- **Framing and Perspective:** They provide a lens to guide conservations and decision-making, ensuring consistent consideration of key priorities, such as climate change or the Human Right To Water.
- **Supporting Common Priorities:** They help uplift shared goals across the Collaborative without overwhelming the primary objectives of each focus area, many of which already address complex and wide-ranging topics.

Determine Purpose of Cross-Cutting Themes

The workgroup clarified what cross-cutting themes should mean for the DRIP Collaborative and identified practical ways to integrate them into its work.

Cross-Cutting Themes Definition:

Cross-cutting themes serve as general themes, providing a consistent lens for the DRIP Collaborative's work to ensure that key topics are thoughtfully considered and incorporated throughout the development process.

The following points capture key ideas shared throughout the discussion. These insights informed the development of the final definition of cross-cutting themes and how they could be integrated into the DRIP Collaborative's work:

Purpose of Cross-Cutting Themes

- Provide a shared lens or framing tool to guide DRIP Collaborative discussions and decision-making.
- Elevate broad priorities that are relevant across multiple focus areas.
- Reflect widely applicable considerations that may not warrant their own workgroup but are still essential to integrate across the Collaborative's work.

Integration into the DRIP Collaborative's Work

- Cross-cutting themes can be used as **prompts during problem statement scoping**, helping ensure key considerations are surfaced early.
- They may be **referenced in the recommendation template**, where applicable, through open-ended questions.
- Themes can serve as a **discussion tool**, helping facilitators prompt reflection during meetings.
- They may inform **presentations by subject matter experts**, guiding topic selection to align with shared values.
- Themes could also support **end-of-year reflection**, helping the Collaborative assess how key priorities were addressed across its recommendations.

Cross-Cutting Themes in Other State Initiatives

Two efforts were referenced as useful models for how cross-cutting themes can be defined and applied in practice:

- **Fifth Climate Change Assessment**
Cross-cutting themes are treated as recurring **considerations** addressed across multiple reports. Rather than setting goals, these themes guide the scoping process and streamline coordination across author teams. They serve as checkpoints to ensure consistency in how shared priorities are addressed. This model supports coherence across diverse products and could be adapted to help align DRIP's evolving focus areas.
- **Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resilience Program (ICARP)**
ICARP defines cross-cutting themes as **guiding principles** that are broadly applicable to the development of new initiatives. Rather than being tied to specific outputs, they are used to assess whether work aligns with core values. ICARP incorporates these themes into annual impact reports, reflecting on how well their work addressed them and identifying opportunities for deeper integration.

Next Steps for Use and Future Process

- The group agreed to develop a **draft list of cross-cutting themes** to present at the May 16 DRIP Collaborative meeting. This list will serve as a starting point for discussion, allowing the full group to provide input and determine whether these themes should continue to be recognized as cross-cutting.
- For adding themes in the future, the group agreed that it would not be necessary to reconvene the workgroup. Instead, the full Collaborative could discuss proposed additions and **decide through a group vote** whether to adopt them.

Review Existing Cross-Cutting Themes & Purpose Statements

The workgroup reviewed the two existing cross-cutting themes—**climate change adaptation** and **nature-based solutions**—to confirm their relevance and refine their purpose statements. Below are summaries of each discussion and the revised language.

Climate Change Adaptation

- The group agreed to keep climate change adaptation as a cross-cutting theme.
- Emphasized that the focus is on ensuring recommendations are **durable in the face of climate change**, even if they do not directly address adaptation strategies.
- Recommended **removing the reference to the California Climate Adaptation Strategy** from the purpose statement. Supported creating a **living set of resources** that can be updated over time to reflect relevant adaptation policies, research, and implementation efforts.
- Expressed interest in **inviting subject matter experts** to provide additional context on state adaptation initiatives, when appropriate.

Climate Change Adaptation Purpose Statement – Revised Considering Workgroup Feedback

Climate change adaptation refers to proactive measures taken to build resilience and reduce risks and vulnerabilities to climate change impacts by preparing systems to cope with specific threats such as extreme weather, rising sea levels, and increasing temperatures. In California, this means adjusting water management, land use practices, and environmental policies to withstand climate stressors like changing precipitation and hydrologic patterns, sea level rise, and more frequent flooding. Unlike resilience, which is a state of readiness, adaptation involves the concrete steps needed to achieve that readiness. It is also distinct from climate change mitigation, which focuses on reducing or preventing greenhouse gas emissions to limit the severity of future climate change. Examples of adaptation strategies include enhancing water use efficiency, increasing conservation efforts, expanding new water sources such as desalination and recycled water, implementing integrated water management plans, upgrading infrastructure resiliency and flexibility to withstand extreme weather, and restoring ecosystems that provide essential services such as clean water and healthy soils. Adaptation also requires improving decision-making and planning processes, such as developing land use policies that account for drought resilience and long-term environmental sustainability.

Nature Based Solutions

- The group agreed to keep nature-based solutions as a cross-cutting theme.
- Recommended asking the **Infrastructure** and **Land Use Planning** workgroups to include nature-based solutions as a **sub-topic in their problem statements**.
- Suggested **removing the reference to CNRA's Priority Nature-Based Climate Solutions** from the purpose statement. Proposed developing a **supporting document** with relevant case studies and the **seven priority actions** from CNRA's strategy as a resource for the Collaborative.
- Agreed to **retain practical examples** of nature-based solutions relevant to DRIP's work, while clarifying that the list is **illustrative, not exhaustive**.

Nature Based Solutions Purpose Statement – Revised Considering Workgroup Feedback

Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) refer to strategies that use natural processes and ecosystems to address societal challenges while enhancing environmental and community resilience. In the context of drought and water shortage resilience, NBS play a critical role by supporting landscapes' ability to retain water, sustain ecosystem health, and buffer against climate impacts. Key approaches include wetland restoration, which reconnects aquatic habitats and improves water storage; Flood-MAR (Managed Aquifer Recharge), which utilizes floodwaters for groundwater replenishment and habitat enhancement; headwaters protection, which restores river, meadow, and forest ecosystems to support hydrologic function and biodiversity; and soil health practices that increase water retention, reduce emissions, and improve agricultural and ecological resilience. These solutions offer co-benefits for water, climate, and communities and should be integrated into drought resilience strategies.

Additional Cross-Cutting Themes

As part of the discussion, the workgroup considered additional topics that could be recognized as cross-cutting themes. Members agreed that **equity** – including racial equity, climate justice, the human right to water, and Tribal engagement – should be prioritized for immediate inclusion. While emphasizing the importance of keeping the list focused, the group also identified several other high-priority areas that reflect recurring challenges and shared values across the DRIP

Collaborative's work:

- **Equity** (including racial equity, climate justice, the human right to water, and Tribal engagement)
- **Governance**
- **Emergency Management**
- **Public Health & Mental Health**
- **Economic Resilience and Workforce** (including economic impacts, financing mechanisms, labor, and workforce considerations)

Equity Purpose Statement – Drafted Considering Workgroup Discussion

Equity refers to the fair and just inclusion of all people in processes, decisions, and outcomes related to drought and water shortage resilience. In California, equity requires acknowledging and addressing the disproportionate impacts of water scarcity, climate change, and environmental degradation on historically marginalized communities, including low-income households, communities of color, and Tribal Nations. This includes advancing the human right to water, integrating Tribal perspectives and leadership, and prioritizing community voices in planning and implementation efforts. Equity in drought resilience planning involves evaluating systemic barriers to water access, strengthening procedural fairness in decision-making, and ensuring that investments, policies, and programs do not perpetuate or exacerbate existing inequities. Examples include supporting community-led planning, improving access to safe and affordable drinking water, incorporating culturally appropriate outreach and engagement, and directing resources to areas with the greatest need and fewest existing protections.