

DRIP Collaborative Cross-Cutting Themes

In 2025, The DRIP Collaborative established a framework to bring a shared direction to its work by identifying cross-cutting themes: broad considerations that apply across all focus areas and guide Collaborative discussions. This document includes the defining purpose statements for the themes adopted to date and will be continuously updated as the Collaborative refines existing themes or incorporates others.

Contents

Cross-Cutting Themes Definition & Purpose	1
Cross-Cutting Theme Purpose Statements	1
Climate Change Adaptation.....	1
Nature-Based Solutions.....	2
Equity	2

Cross-Cutting Themes Definition & Purpose

Cross-cutting themes serve as general themes, providing a consistent lens for the Collaborative's work to ensure that key topics are thoughtfully considered and incorporated throughout the development process. They provide a shared framing tool to guide discussions and decision-making, elevate broad priorities that are relevant across multiple focus areas, and reflect widely applicable considerations that may not warrant their own focus area but are still essential to integrate across the Collaborative's work.

Cross-Cutting Theme Purpose Statements

Each cross-cutting theme is defined by a purpose statement, which describes its intent and how it should guide the Collaborative's work. The following purpose statements outline the themes adopted to date and provide clarity on how they should inform discussions, scoping, and recommendation development across all DRIP Collaborative focus areas.

Climate Change Adaptation

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

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.

Equity

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.