

CT Recovery Research Themes for Regions 1 – 5

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Region 1 Research Themes

In RRSC Region 1, the GRI research team proposes the following 4 core resilience research themes around which to structure small group interviews:

Research Theme 1. Assess major disruptions to local businesses and employment in Region 1 caused by the COVID-19 crisis and explore potential new business development opportunities.

While large corporations heavily fuel the complex and unique business environment in the major cities, small businesses also contribute significantly to the urban population’s livelihood. The GRI research team seeks to interview groups of stakeholders from various industries/sectors in Region 1 to understand the immediate and consequential impacts of the COVID-19 economic crisis.

Potential Interview Subjects

<p>Interview Group 1. Local Economy and Economic Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local business association representatives • Regional economic development agencies (agencies/organizations that authored CEDS) • Local/regional Opportunity Zone development organization representatives (Stamford, Norwalk, Bridgeport) • Residential/commercial real estate agent or property manager with regional perspective
<p>Interview Group 2. Hospitality, Tourism, Entertainment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local/regional restaurant, hospitality, and services business council representatives • Local small business owners or local/regional small business association representatives • Chambers of Commerce (Bridgeport, Norwalk, Stratford)
<p>Interview Group 3. Unemployment and Workforce Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Department of Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) (Bridgeport, Stratford, Stamford, Norwalk) • Local/regional labor association/organization representatives • CT technical education and career school representative (located in Fairfield County or Region 1) • Regional/local workforce development board representatives

Research Theme 2. Understand challenges in Region 1’s education sector, support systems for children and families, and associated impacts on economic recovery.

The GRI research team seeks to interview representatives from different types of educational institutions to gather qualitative information on how they responded to meet the state guidelines throughout various stages of the pandemic. Education is an essential topic of discussion for economic recovery as any abrupt changes in the education sector can affect many households’ finances, as well as long-term opportunities for learning, social cohesion, and economic mobility. For Region 1, a particular topic of interest is understanding the challenges derived from needing additional childcare support for low-income families and how these challenges are impacting working parents’ ability to earn income.

Potential Interview Subjects

<p>Interview Group 4. K-12 Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public K-12 education administrator – school superintendents, school board members • Private school representatives • Teachers Association members, Union representatives • Parent Teacher Association members, representatives
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Interview Group 5. Higher Education Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher education institution representatives (Sacred Heart University, Norwalk Community College, University of Bridgeport, Housatonic Community College, Fairfield University) • Regional/local college/university association representatives
Interview Group 6. Childcare Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childhood education providers • Private/public childcare providers • Connecticut Office of Early Childcare representatives

Research Theme 3. Learn how diverse communities’ well-being has been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

The GRI research team seeks to interview stakeholders who can speak about community strengths as well as priority social concerns including food and housing security, access to healthcare, including mental health services, and social inclusion for diverse communities in Region 1. The aim is to understand if there are underlying social issues that limit opportunities for equitable development in the region and explore ways to address existing social problems through economic development.

Potential Interview Subjects

Interview Group 7. Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major hospital representatives • Regional/city public health department
Interview Group 8. Community/Social Inclusion and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness prevention NGOs • Regional housing authorities • Food assistance NGOs • NGOs serving immigrants, limited English-speaking communities • NGOs serving low-income residents • Youth development organization representatives • Religious group leaders

Research Theme 4. Assess the current condition of critical infrastructure systems serving Region 1 to understand the challenges and potential impacts of investments in improved reliability and sustainability.

For the most part, major infrastructure systems in Region 1 are stable and reliable, however, some areas – including major cities of Stamford, Norwalk, Bridgeport, and Stratford – have in the past been vulnerable to prolonged power outages and floods in harsh weather conditions. Furthermore, Region 1’s transportation systems are vital to the region’s economy, serving as a gateway to the New York Metro area. The GRI research team seeks to interview representatives familiar with the region’s major infrastructure systems to assess their current condition, potential limitations, and opportunities to catalyze economic development through investment in infrastructure systems.

Potential Interview Subjects

Interview Group 9. Water, Power and Telecommunications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City/regional emergency managers from Stamford, Norwalk, Bridgeport, and Stratford (high flood risks) • Eversource representatives or regional/local public works department officials (power supply disruptions due to adverse weather) • Public/private water supply agencies/companies (Still River, Housatonic River pollution challenges) • Telecommunications services providers, regional broadband management authorities
Interview Group 10.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MTA representatives

Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State Department of Transportation – Bridgeport/Stamford Transportation Management Area Office
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Region 2 Research Themes

In RRSC Region 2, the GRI research team proposes the following 4 core resilience research themes around which to structure small group interviews:

Research Theme 1. Assess major disruptions to local businesses and employment in Region 2 caused by the COVID-19 crisis and explore potential new business development opportunities.

Unemployment, along with business closures, is the most significant impact of the COVID-19 crisis. Region 2’s increase in unemployment was concentrated in urban communities and the surrounding dense suburban areas. National statistics show that regional businesses are generally in industries resilient against the disruptions caused by COVID-19, except for retail and hospitality. A goal for this research theme is to determine if this pattern holds true in Region 2. Furthermore, the GRI research team seeks to interview key stakeholders who can attest to the higher education institutions' economic prominence in Region 2.

Potential Interview Subjects

Interview Group 1. Local Economy, Workforce Development, Unemployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Township leaders Regional/local economic development agencies State, local, and regional unemployment services coordinators Workforce specialists
Interview Group 2. Higher Education Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher education institution administrators and representatives (Yale University, Southern Connecticut State University, Quinnipiac University, Gateway Community College, University of New Haven) Local/regional businesses that provide services to universities
Interview Group 3. Professional Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representatives from key employers in the professional, scientific, and technical services sectors (United Health Care)
Interview Group 4. Hospitality, Tourism, Entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local, regional, and state Chambers of Commerce Local, regional, and state restaurant, hospitality, and services business councils

Research Theme 2. Understand challenges in Region 2’s education sector, support systems for children and families, and other associated impacts on economic recovery.

The GRI research team seeks to interview representatives from different types of educational institutions to gather qualitative information on how they responded to meet the state guidelines throughout various stages of the pandemic. Education is an essential topic of discussion for economic recovery as any abrupt changes in the education sector can affect many households’ finances, as well as long-term opportunities for learning, social cohesion, and economic mobility.

Potential Interview Subjects

<p>Interview Group 5. K-12 Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public K-12 education administrator – school superintendents, school board members • Private school representatives • Teachers Association members, Union representatives • Parent-Teacher Association members, representatives • Early childhood education providers • Public/private childcare providers
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Research Theme 3. Learn how diverse communities’ well-being has been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

The GRI research team seeks to interview stakeholders who can speak about community strengths, as well as priority social concerns such as food and housing security, access to healthcare including mental health services, and social inclusion for diverse communities in Region 2. For instance, higher unemployment and lower income are closely correlated with high home-rental rates in Region 2. Chronic unemployment in these areas can create a cascading effect of eviction, homelessness, and increased reliance on public assistance, slowing economic recovery of the region as a whole. The aim is to understand if there are underlying social issues that limit opportunities for equitable development in the region and explore ways to address existing social problems through economic development.

Potential Interview Subjects

<p>Interview Group 6. Healthcare</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major hospital representatives • Regional/city public health department • Community health NGOs
<p>Interview Group 7. Community/Social Inclusion and Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food assistance NGOs • NGOs serving immigrants, limited English-speaking communities • NGOs serving low-income residents • Youth development organization representatives • Religious group leaders • Local/regional public assistance advocacy agencies or groups
<p>Interview Group 8. Housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness prevention NGOs • Regional housing authorities • Housing property owners/developers • Mortgage lenders

Research Theme 4. Assess the current condition of critical infrastructure systems serving Region 2 to understand the challenges and potential impacts of investments in improved reliability and sustainability.

The GRI research team’s assessment indicates that the critical infrastructure systems in Region 2 serve the general public adequately. While infrastructure vulnerabilities were not identified as a central concern for economic recovery, it is important to assess the current condition of the infrastructure systems serving Region 2 to explore the potential for new employment opportunities and new industries. The GRI research team seeks to interview representatives familiar with the region’s major infrastructure systems to assess their current condition, potential limitations, and opportunities to catalyze economic development through investment in infrastructure systems.

Potential Interview Subjects

<p>Interview Group 9. Water, Power and Telecommunications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City/regional emergency managers from Stamford, Norwalk, Bridgeport, and Stratford (high flood risks) • Eversource representatives or regional/local public works department officials (power supply disruptions due to adverse weather) • Public/private water supply agencies/companies (Still River, Housatonic River pollution challenges) • Telecommunications services providers, regional broadband management authorities
<p>Interview Group 10. Transportation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MTA representatives • State Department of Transportation – New Haven, Hartford • Public transit officials

Region 3 Research Themes

In RRSC Region 3, the GRI research team proposes the following 4 core resilience research themes around which to structure small group interviews:

Research Theme 1. Understand the characteristics of unemployment increases and business closures in Region 3 as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

Business closures and the related rising unemployment rate are the two largest economic recovery challenges nationwide. In Region 3, the increase in unemployment was concentrated in already low-income urban communities surrounding Hartford and New Britain. The GRI research team seeks to interview stakeholders in Region 3 to gather information about the most heavily impacted sectors of the economy and the impacts of increased unemployment as a result of COVID-19 for specific populations.

Potential Interview Subjects

<p>Interview Group 1. Hospitality and Tourism, Entertainment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional/local Chambers of Commerce • Regional/local restaurant, hospitality, and services business councils • Workforce development specialists
<p>Interview Group 2. Economic Development, Real Estate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Township CEOs • Regional/local stakeholders with insight into unemployment related issues • Regional economic development agencies • Residential and commercial real estate agent or property manager with regional perspective
<p>Interview Group 3. Small, micro, and minority-owned businesses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small and micro-business owners • Minority business owners • First-time entrepreneurs
<p>Interview Group 4. Workforce Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional workforce development board representatives • Key industries/employers in the region who can speak to short- and long-term workforce development needs

Research Theme 2. Assess challenges in Region 3’s education sector and their impacts on economic recovery.

The GRI research team seeks to interview representatives from different types of educational institutions to gather qualitative information on how they responded to meet the state guidelines throughout various stages of the pandemic. Education is an important topic of discussion for economic recovery as any abrupt changes in the education sector can affect many households' finances, as well as long-term opportunities for learning, social cohesion, and economic mobility.

Potential Interview Subjects

Interview Group 5. Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher education institution administrator, including community colleges – Central Connecticut State University, Manchester Community College, University of Hartford, etc.
Interview Group 6. K-12 Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public K-12 education administrator – school superintendents, school board members Private school representatives Teachers Association members, Union representatives Parent Teacher Association members, representatives

Research Theme 3. Learn how diverse communities' well-being have been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

In Region 3, unemployment and business closures are concentrated in densely populated urban areas. These areas also have the highest population of minorities. A correlation between urban unemployment and reliance on public assistance is, too, prevalent in these areas. The GRI research team seeks to interview those who can speak to social issues that can hinder the economic recovery and resilience of Region 3.

Potential Interview Subjects

Interview Group 7. Community/Social Inclusion and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homelessness prevention NGOs Regional housing authorities Food assistance NGOs NGOs serving immigrants, limited English-speaking communities Other relevant local public assistance advocacy agencies and groups
Interview Group 8. Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major healthcare providers Public health department leaders Community health NGOs

Research Theme 4. Understand the current condition of critical infrastructure systems serving Region 3 to assess the potential infrastructure investments to catalyze new employment opportunities and new industries in the region.

The GRI research team's assessment indicates that the critical infrastructure systems in Region 3 serve the general public adequately. While infrastructure vulnerabilities were not identified as a central concern for economic recovery, it is important to assess the current condition of the infrastructure systems serving Region 3 to explore the potential for new employment opportunities and new industries.

Potential Interview Subjects

Interview Group 9. Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation planners, public transit officials Utility managers – water, power Telecommunication service providers, regional agencies overseeing broadband development
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Region 4 Research Themes

In RRSC Region 4, the GRI research team proposes the following 4 core resilience research themes around which to structure small group interviews:

Research Theme 1. Understand the characteristics of unemployment increases and business closures in Region 4 as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

Business closures and the related rising unemployment rate are the two largest economic recovery challenges nationwide. In Region 4, the increase in unemployment was concentrated in already low-income urban communities in Norwich and New London. The GRI research team seeks to interview stakeholders in Region 4 to gather information about the most heavily impacted sectors of the economy and the impacts of increased unemployment as a result of COVID-19 for specific populations.

Potential Interview Subjects

Interview Group 1. Hospitality and Tourism, Entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional/local Chambers of Commerce • Tribal-owned businesses • Regional/local restaurant, hospitality, and services business councils
Interview Group 2. Economic Development, Real Estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Township CEOs • Regional/local stakeholders with insight into unemployment related issues • Regional economic development agencies • Residential and commercial real estate agent or property manager with regional perspective
Interview Group 3. Small, micro, and minority-owned businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small and micro-business owners • Small agriculture industry business owner • Minority business owners • First-time entrepreneurs
Interview Group 4. Workforce Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional workforce development board representatives • Major employers in the region who can speak to short- and long-term workforce development needs (General Dynamics Electric Boat, Pfizer)

Research Theme 2. Assess challenges in Region 4’s education sector and their impacts on economic recovery.

The GRI research team seeks to interview representatives from different types of educational institutions to gather qualitative information on how they responded to meet the state guidelines throughout various stages of the pandemic. Education is an important topic of discussion for economic recovery as any abrupt changes in the education sector can affect many households’ finances, as well as long-term opportunities for learning, social cohesion, and economic mobility.

Potential Interview Subjects

Interview Group 5. Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher education institution administrator (University of Connecticut, Eastern Connecticut State University, United States Coast Guard Academy, Connecticut College, Mitchell College, Three Rivers Community College, Quinebaug Valley Community College) • Vocational/technical skill training institution representative
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Interview Group 6. Early childhood and K-12 Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childhood education provider • Public K-12 education administrator – school superintendents, school board members • Private school representatives • Teachers Association members, Union representatives • Parent Teacher Association members, representatives
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Research Theme 3. Learn how diverse communities’ well-being have been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

The overall well-being of community members, encompassing fiscal, physical and mental health, is a crucial element in a resilient society. Active members of a community contribute economically and socially by participating in their economy. Unfortunately, some demographic or social groups with limited ability to earn money – such as single-parent households and the elderly – are more vulnerable to economic disruptions like COVID-19 than others. The GRI research team will interview stakeholders who can speak for critical social issues such as *food and housing security, senior care,* and *social inclusion*. Community leaders need to be aware of what those economically vulnerable groups may require in a truly challenging time to alleviate the financial burden on the overall economy and promote societal resilience against major disruptions.

Potential Interview Subjects

Interview Group 7. Community/Social Inclusion and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness prevention NGOs • Regional housing authorities • Food assistance NGOs • NGOs serving older adults • NGOs serving immigrants, limited English-speaking communities • Private/public senior services providers • Other relevant local public assistance advocacy agencies and groups
Interview Group 8. Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major healthcare providers, including Pequot Healthcare • Public health department leaders • Community health NGOs

Research Theme 4. Understand the current condition of critical infrastructure systems serving Region 4 to assess the potential infrastructure investments to catalyze new employment opportunities and new industries in the region.

The GRI research team’s assessment indicates that the critical infrastructure systems in Region 4 serve the general public adequately. While infrastructure vulnerabilities were not identified as a central concern for economic recovery, it is important to assess the current condition of the infrastructure systems serving Region 4 to explore the potential for new employment opportunities and new industries.

Potential Interview Subjects

Interview Group 9. Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation planners, public transit officials • Utility managers – water, power • Telecommunication service providers, regional agencies overseeing broadband development
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Region 5 Research Themes

In RRSC Region 5, the GRI research team proposes the following 4 core resilience research themes around which to structure small group interviews:

Research Theme 1. Assess the current condition of critical infrastructure systems serving Region 5 to understand the challenges and potential impacts of investments in improved reliability and sustainability.

In Region 5, the GRI research team has identified *water, power, transportation, and telecommunications* as key infrastructure systems. The information gathered through key stakeholder interviews will allow GRI researchers to uncover potential limitations to economic development tied to infrastructure and examine if there are gaps in residents’ access to critical infrastructure system services. Interview questions will be designed to better understand the perceived system vulnerabilities and challenges and priorities for improving infrastructure systems.

Potential Interview Subjects

Interview Group 1. Infrastructure	Water/Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danbury Public Utilities • Waterbury Water Department • Connecticut River Conservancy • Utility manager – hydropower, municipal or regional • Energy justice and sustainability organizations • Manufacturing or scientific/technical industry perspective on power infrastructure
	Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Western Connecticut Council of Government (WestCOG) Transportation Department • Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NHCOG) Transportation Planner • Connecticut Department of Transportation District 4
	Telecommunications/Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Western Connecticut Council of Government 5G Task Force • Telecommunication Industry service providers—especially individuals focusing on public-private partnerships to increase access to broadband

Research Theme 2. Examine successes and challenges in Region 5’s transition to remote education since the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown and consider the implications of these changes for long-term economic recovery.

Education is an important topic of discussion for economic recovery as any abrupt changes in the education sector can affect many households’ finances, as well as long-term opportunities for learning, social cohesion, and economic mobility. In Region 5, schools of all levels have adopted a range of approaches to online learning in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. The GRI research team seeks to interview representatives from different types and levels of education institutions to gather qualitative

information on how they responded to meet the state guidelines throughout various stages of the pandemic. Possible interview question topics include technical, interpersonal, and financial challenges, as well as the provision of alternative childcare services for working parents.

Potential Interview Subjects

<p>Interview Group 2. Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public k-12 education administrator – school superintendents, school board members • Private and boarding schools • Higher education institution administrator, including community colleges • Parent Teacher Association members, representatives • Teachers Association members, Union representatives
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Research Theme 3. Recognize major disruptions in Region 5’s economy caused by the COVID- 19 crisis and evaluate the possibility of long-lasting changes.

Nationally, small and large businesses alike have been severely disrupted by the necessary shutdowns that have been put in place to control the COVID-19 public health emergency. Businesses of all types across multiple sectors have struggled to remain viable since the COVID outbreak. While each business, depending on its size and type, has faced and will face an economic crisis differently, obtaining an understanding of all-encompassing trends across the region’s private sector can be pivotal for responding to the hardships felt by the general public.

The GRI research team will benefit from conducting a group interview with prominent individuals from the top industries that employ a large portion of Region 5’s workforce. The major employment sectors include *healthcare services, hospitality and tourism, and manufacturing.*

In addition, GRI will look to explore the disruptions in Region 5’s overall *economic development* activities. The pandemic has had a significant effect on municipalities’ revenue, and viable economic development options can restore the local governments’ ability to provide basic services essential to the local community and its businesses. An interview with representatives in the *real estate* sector will offer a meaningful overview of the region’s economic vitality.

These interviews will be conducted with an aim to recognize major disruptions in each interview group caused by the COVID-19 crisis and evaluate the possibility of long-lasting changes. Possible interview questions include challenges associated with opening businesses in the region, financial solutions available to entrepreneurs, and the region’s capacity and willingness to attract new businesses to Opportunity Zones and the surrounding neighborhoods. Finally, interview questions will be refined to assess each industry’s *workforce development* priorities moving forward.

Potential Interview Subjects

<p>Interview Group 3. Healthcare</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waterbury Hospital • St. Mary’s Hospital • Western CT Health Network • Boehringer Ingelheim (pharmaceutical industry/research) • Public health department leader • Community health NGO
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Interview Group 4. Hospitality and Tourism, Entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry representatives – small, large business owners • Local economic development agencies • Chambers of commerce • Regional tourism authorities • Arts and culture organization representatives • Prominent arts and culture institution administrator (theatres, museums, etc.)
Interview Group 5. Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry association representatives • Union members, representatives • Major employers - General Dynamics Electric Boat, Duracell
Interview Group 6. Economic Development, Workforce Development, Real Estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naugatuck Valley Inland Port & Shipping Center project leader/champions • Regional economic development agencies • Regional Opportunity Zone board representatives • Regional workforce development board representative • Residential and commercial real estate agent or property manager with regional perspective

Research Theme 4. Learn how diverse **communities’ well-being** have been impacted by the **COVID-19 crisis.**

The overall well-being of community members is a crucial element in a resilient society. The fiscal, physical, and mental health of people all carry a significant impact on society. Active members of a community contribute economically and socially by participating in their economy that engages a broad spectrum of demographics. Unfortunately, some demographic or social groups with limited ability to earn money – such as single-parent households and the elderly – are more vulnerable to economic disruptions like COVID-19 than others.

The GRI research team will interview stakeholders who can speak for critical social issues such as *food and housing security, elderly care, and social inclusion*. Community leaders need to be aware of what those economically vulnerable groups may require in a truly challenging time to alleviate the financial burden on the overall economy and promote societal resilience against major disruptions.

Potential Interview Subjects

Interview Group 7. Food and Housing Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness prevention NGO • Regional housing authorities • Food assistance NGO
Interview Group 8. Community/Social Inclusion, Services for Older Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious leaders • Youth sports/youth development organizations • Outdoor recreation/conservation NGO • NGOs serving immigrants, or limited English-speaking communities • Senior care facilities – nursing homes, senior centers