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North American Alliance of Hazards and Disaster Research Institutes

Promoting Research, Education, Policy, and Action

Preamble

We are now living in an era where, on average, a disaster occurs somewhere in the world each day. These events destroy built and ecological environments and greatly impact local communities. And although disaster-related deaths have declined substantially in high-income countries over the last century, monetary damages and social disruption from natural and technological hazards have been on a sharp incline. Moreover, the threat of pandemics and other public health emergencies as well as terrorism and other forms of willful human-caused violence remains high globally.

Escalating disaster losses demand new, boundary spanning approaches to science, education, policy, and action. Hazards mitigation and disaster risk reduction efforts require the commitment of substantial intellectual and financial resources over a long period, which should be guided by constantly improving disaster science with advanced research and a commitment to collaboration with vulnerability-bearers, solution-providers, and each other.

To move toward the goal of reducing hazards losses through evidence-based action, the directors of the hazards and disaster research centers and institutes of North America have formed an alliance to advance and marshal disaster research and to inform policy and education. Creation of a North American Alliance of Hazards and Disaster Research Institutes is part of a larger Global Alliance of Disaster Research Institutes (GADRI).

Article 1: Name, Scope, Vision, and Mission

1.1 Name

The North American Alliance of Hazards and Disaster Research Institutes – hereinafter referred to as “The North American Alliance” or simply “the Alliance.” The subtitle for the Alliance is “Promoting Research, Education, Policy, and Action.”

1.2 Geographic Scope

While the North American region is defined in varying ways, here this is meant to include research centers and institutes located in Canada, the Caribbean, Mexico, the United States, as well as tribal and indigenous areas throughout the region. A listing of those centers and institutes is here:

<https://hazards.colorado.edu/resources/research-centers>

In the future, this Alliance may expand in scope to include all centers and institutes throughout the Americas region, as defined here: <https://hazards.colorado.edu/resources/research-centers/americas>. This potential recognizes that the fates of North American peoples and the policies of the continent’s nations are strongly interconnected. In addition, this opens up the possibility for more heavily resourced centers and institutes to enhance the scholarly output and impact of disaster science undertaken by low

and middle-income countries, diminishing the disparity in knowledge production that now exists with well-resourced, research-intensive nations.

1.3 Vision

The vision for the North American Alliance is for the leaders of hazards and disaster research centers to work together to engage in transformative activities that span traditional disciplinary, institutional, and geopolitical boundaries—and expand beyond them—to achieve outcomes that are only possible through the collective action of the larger group. We believe that the most pressing challenges of our time—including mitigating hazards losses, reducing social vulnerability, transforming the built environment, and engaging individuals and communities in sustainability initiatives and disaster risk reduction activities—will be achieved through partnerships that encourage the application of knowledge generated through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary scientific investigation.

1.4 Mission

The Alliance will foster communication, connections, and cooperation between hazards and disaster research centers and institutes across North America to encourage (1) new frontiers for **research** and novel areas for **scientific inquiry**; (2) evidence-informed **policy** to improve mitigation, emergency response, and long-term recovery efforts; (3) effective **advocacy** for a better understanding and overcoming the root causes and consequences of disasters; (4) improved **translation and transfer** of key findings and associated recommendations within the field and to the public, service providers, the private sector, and policymakers; and (5) **education** and **mentoring** of a diverse next generation of hazards and disaster researchers who are reflective of the communities they study and serve.

Article 2: Purpose, Objectives, and Activities

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the North American Alliance is to provide a forum and structure for academic hazards and disaster research centers and institutes to communicate and cooperate to further research and its application. The Alliance will articulate and share the value and importance of science and research for public and private sector decision making and action. The Alliance will promote education and policy in order to encourage knowledge transfer that leads to reduced risk, increased safety and security, and improved social wellbeing.

2.2 Objectives and Activities

To achieve the vision and purpose defined in this Charter, the Alliance will seek to achieve the following objectives through engaging in specific activities as briefly detailed below.

- Network Building
 - Establish and maintain a network of North American hazards and disaster research centers and institutes.
 - Connect to other regional networks and the Global Alliance of Disaster Research Institutes.
 - Create networks that foster research-practitioner teams that identify and explore critical questions related to risk and resilience, and frame results in ways that can be readily translated to practice.

- Capacity Building and Information Sharing
 - Build the capacity of hazards and disaster research centers and institutes through exchange and sharing of best practices for disaster research.
 - Use the North American Alliance to ensure the timely communication of opportunities related to research, education, and policy. Share information, publications, reports, data, and other research outputs.
 - Share teaching and mentoring best practices for engaging diverse groups in hazards and disaster research.
 - Cultivate partnerships to build community capacity to translate knowledge to action that meet needs defined by local communities.
 - Support the development and integration of indigenous knowledge and practices for building and sustaining resilient communities.
- Standards, Guidance, and Cultural Transformation
 - Promote excellence in hazards research and disaster science.
 - Promote ethical and just practices in research across all disciplines and across the disaster lifecycle.
- Advance Hazards and Disaster Science
 - Encourage new research methodologies.
 - Increase access to data and promote information and data sharing, exchange, and archiving processes.
 - Support and promote cutting-edge research.
 - Develop consensus statements on the critical information needs of disaster risk management decision makers via a collaborative and ongoing process that involves researchers, practitioners, and private and public stakeholders.
- Knowledge Translation and Public Communication
 - Provide a unified and strong voice to champion the importance and value of evidence-based research as a foundation for effective and just hazards mitigation and disaster risk reduction management.
 - Provide a consensus voice for hazards and disaster researchers on public policy, via statements in the media, and membership in policy and science councils. Prepare news releases, policy recommendations, news bulletins, and other outward-facing publications.
 - Encourage policy applications and other actions to reduce the risk of loss and damage from disasters and promote resilience that have a good chance of being implemented.
- Convening Activities and Collaborations
 - Convene an annual meeting of the Alliance.
 - Plan and organize collaborative hazard and disaster research initiatives.
 - Form research, education, and policy advocacy groups to investigate and act on issues across the hazards lifecycle, from prevention to preparedness to response to recovery.
- Establish and Enhance Funding Support
 - Encourage targeted research funding for special projects and areas in need of greater scientific advancement.

- Strengthen relations between funding agencies and member disaster research centers, through ongoing discussion and collaboration, including a focus on emerging issues in disaster science, policy applications, and training and mentoring of the next generation.

Article 3: Membership

Membership in the Alliance will consist of several categories, which will be applied for by submission of a completed application to the Secretariat. The Board of Directors will develop membership requirements and criteria and will deem members in active standing.

The membership categories are:

Category A Members: Organized non-profit, academic disaster research laboratories, centers, and institutes which aim to contribute to the understanding of hazards, the roots of risk, and the reduction of disasters.

Category B Associates: Non-affiliated individuals involved in disaster studies, disaster prevention, response, and recovery, and other stakeholders.

Category C Affiliates: Agencies, organizations, and private and public enterprises with activities related to disaster research or risk reduction.

If necessary, membership fees will be determined by the Board of Directors.

Article 4: Organization, Governance, and Elections

4.1 Organization

The organization of the Alliance will consist of:

- A volunteer Organizing Subcommittee dedicated to standing up the North American Alliance during the first year after adoption of the Charter.
- Members, Associates, and Affiliates as defined in Article 3.
- A Board of Directors that shall serve as the governing board of the Alliance.
- A Chair elected by members of the Board of Directors.
- A Secretariat with a Director selected by the Board of Directors.
- Committees as determined by the Board of Directors

4.2 Governance

The Alliance will be governed by a Board of Directors (hereinafter referred to as “the Board” or “BoD”) elected by the Members. The BoD will oversee all Alliance activities, as detailed in Article 2. Selection of candidates for the BoD will seek to achieve a balance of national, geographic, disciplinary, and hazards and disaster research interests. In addition, consideration will be given to ensure that a range of centers of different disciplines and types are represented, including, for example, more newly established as well as mature centers.

4.3 Elections

Each Member center or institute will have one vote for each Board of Director position. The Board will be composed of individuals drawn from member institutes and centers. If centers or institutes have multiple directors or persons in positions of leadership, only one member from each organization can serve on the Board at any one time. Voting will take place via electronic ballot that will be emailed to all active Members. The Board of Director positions will be decided by majority vote.

Associates and Affiliates shall not participate in the voting.

As the Alliance expands, candidates for the Board will be accepted by self-nomination and/or nominated by a Nominating Committee selected from Members. Nominating Committee members may not be members of the BoD or candidates for election to the BoD.

Article 5: Board of Directors and Chair

There shall be a Board of Directors to represent the Member centers and institutes. The Board shall consist of 7 Directors serving in their individual capacity.

The Board shall elect a Chair of the Board to facilitate discussions and present reports to the Annual General Meeting described in Article 10.

The term for Board members shall be four years. Half of the initial Board will serve for two years. Member centers and institutes can serve no more than two consecutive terms. Vacancies will be filled by special election.

Activities of the Board shall include:

- Formulate principles and policies which shall guide the activities and operations of the Board and the Alliance.
- Approve membership of centers and institutes to encourage cooperation and sharing of knowledge.
- Formulate the work program and budget.
- Review and approve strategic planning documents and project proposals.
- Issue directives and recommendations necessary for the effective functioning of the Alliance.
- Report to member centers on its activities each year at the Annual General Meeting.
- Select and support the Director and the Secretariat.

The Board shall meet quarterly, with special meetings as called by the Chair.

Article 6: Secretariat

The location of the Secretariat will be determined by the Board of Directors. Initially it will be located at the Natural Hazards Center, Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado, 1440 15th Street, Boulder, CO 80309-0483, USA.

The roles and responsibilities of the Secretariat are:

- The Secretariat shall be responsible for the direction, administration—fiscal and otherwise, programming, and coordination of the Alliance.
- The Secretariat shall be led by a Director.
- The Director will propose specific activities to the Board of Directors and the Chair of the Board.
- The Director will facilitate the formulation and implementation, with the approval of the Board, of policies, programs, and priorities identified by the member centers.
- In order to accomplish its goals, the Secretariat may organize internationally coordinated research initiatives, policy initiatives, or educational activities, with appropriate institutions and centers.
- To maintain and update the list of Members, Associates, and Affiliates with the Alliance.
- To organize the Annual Meeting and the meeting of the Board of Directors.
- To coordinate communication and disseminate information among members.
- To provide services to members and other organizations as authorized by the Board.
- To maintain a website and update the information contained therein.
- To develop publications and outreach materials; and
- To promote the membership of the Alliance.

Article 7: Committees

The Board shall create committees, working groups, and task forces to carry out necessary functions of the Alliance or undertake activities on specific issues. Committees can be formed in response to needs of the hazards and disaster research community. The mandate, authority, and responsibilities of the committees shall be set by the Board of Directors.

Article 8: Representation of the Views of Alliance

The Board shall determine the manner and procedure for establishing the collective views and position statements of the Alliance pertaining to any matter within its functions, scope, or activities. These collective views may be presented to governments or private groups, without impairing the rights of individual members to present their own views.

Article 9: Annual General Meeting

An Annual General Meeting will be held at a date and location determined by the Board of Directors. All categories of membership may participate in the Annual General Meeting.

Article 10: Resources

The Alliance may seek support for its work through direct or indirect contributions, donations, grants, and legacies, provided these are in line with the vision, purpose, and objectives of the Alliance.

The Secretariat will prepare a budget for approval by the Board of Directors.

Article 11: Amendments

The Charter shall be amended with the following procedures:

- A request for amendments to the Charter shall be a written submission to the Board of Directors by a Member center or institute not later than two months prior to the Annual General Meeting.
- The Board of Directors is responsible for deciding if the proposal should be brought before the Members for consideration.
- Any proposals to amend the Charter must be circulated to the Members at least one month prior to the Annual General Meeting.
- Amendments to the Charter require approval by two-thirds of the Members present in person or absentee voting by proxy at the Annual Meeting.
- The approved amendments enter into effect at the closing of the Annual Meeting.

Adoption Timeline

June 26, 2018: This Charter was emailed for consideration and review to the directors of North American Hazards and Disaster Research Centers as identified here:

<https://hazards.colorado.edu/resources/research-centers>

July 8, 2018: This Charter was discussed, voted on, and ultimately adopted by 52 directors of academic hazards and disaster research centers who were in attendance at annual meeting of hazard and disaster research center directors, which was scheduled to coincide with the 43rd Annual Natural Hazards Research and Applications Workshop in Broomfield, Colorado.

Contact Information

Questions or comments about the North American Alliance should be emailed to:

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This Charter was drafted in 2018 by: Karl Kim, Thomas Kirsch, Paul Kovacs, Richard Olson, Lori Peek, and Charles Scawthorn.

This Charter was developed with input and feedback from a multi-disciplinary Ad Hoc Steering Committee, formed after the 2017 Natural Hazards Research and Applications Workshop. Volunteer Steering Committee members included:

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