Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) for the Town of Mansfield, MA

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Tess Clark, Program Manager, Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center
Katelyn Gonyer, Conservation and Environmental Planner, Town of Mansfield
Shaun Burke, Director of Planning, Town of Mansfield

What to Expect from Our Talk:

1. *Why Capacity Assessment?*
2. *Mansfield's Climate Needs and Resilience Goals*
3. *Project Goals, Methods, and Process*
4. *Final Results and Recommendations*
5. ***Questions***

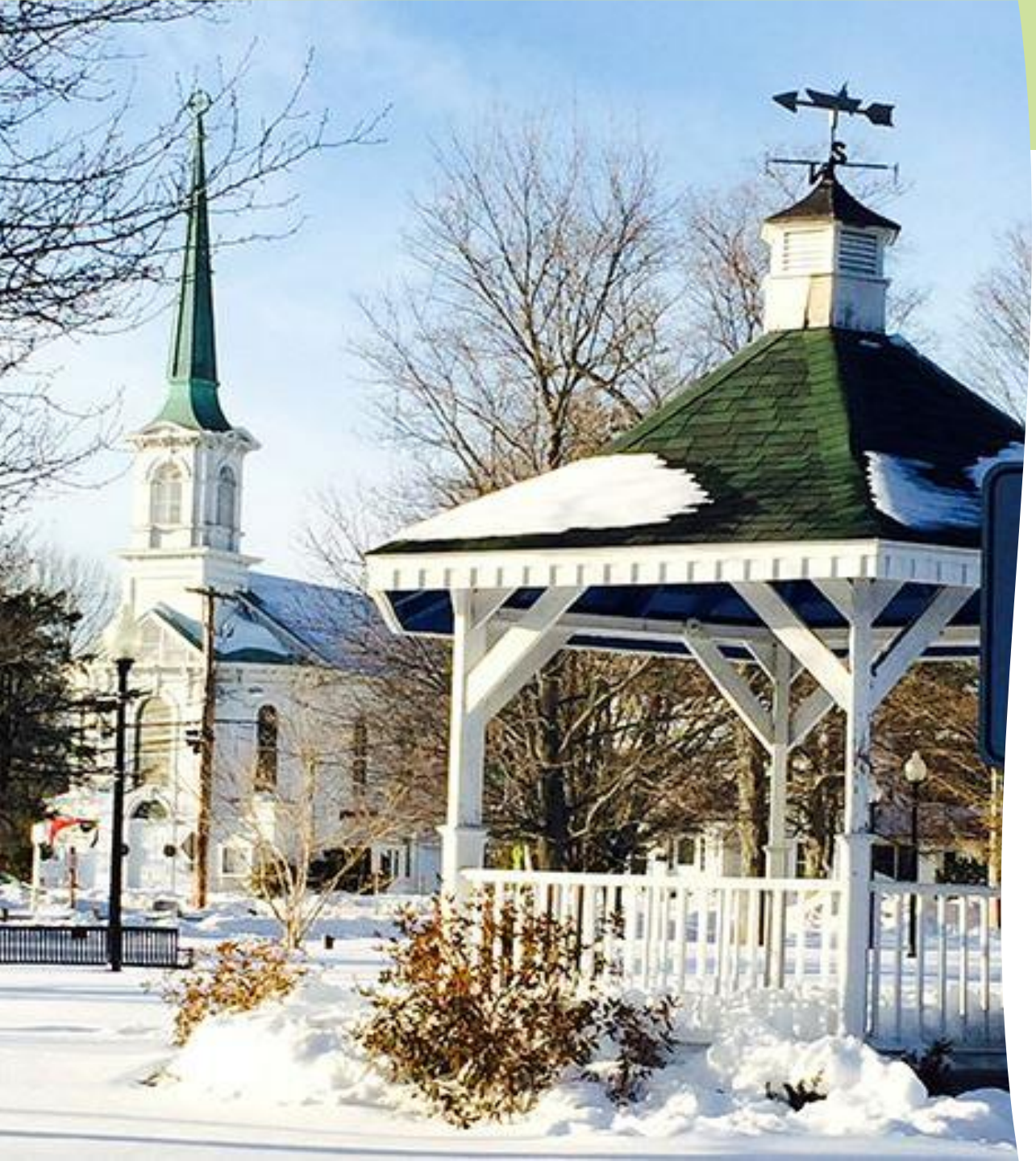


Who is the SNEP Network?

Mission and Expertise

- The SNEP (Southeast New England Program) Network is a project of the New England Environmental Finance Center and is funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- In facing potential adverse impacts from climate change, SNEP provides training and assists communities to achieve healthy watersheds, sustainable financing and long-term climate resilience through management of stormwater and restoration projects.
- Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center is a technical assistance provider with the SNEP Network that has been serving local communities since 1991.

SNEP NETWORK



Why Does Mansfield need an Organizational Capacity Assessment?

In the last few years, the Town of Mansfield's responsibilities have increased directly related to increased climate-related threats (heat, drought, precipitation, storm events, etc). New responsibilities include:

- Municipal Vulnerability and Preparedness Program
- MS4 permit
- Open space planning, land use, and development
- New stormwater management regulations
- Regional collaborations (i.e. SNEP Canoe River Aquifer Resilience Project).
- Increased community interest in recreation and natural areas

Project Goals, Methods, and Process

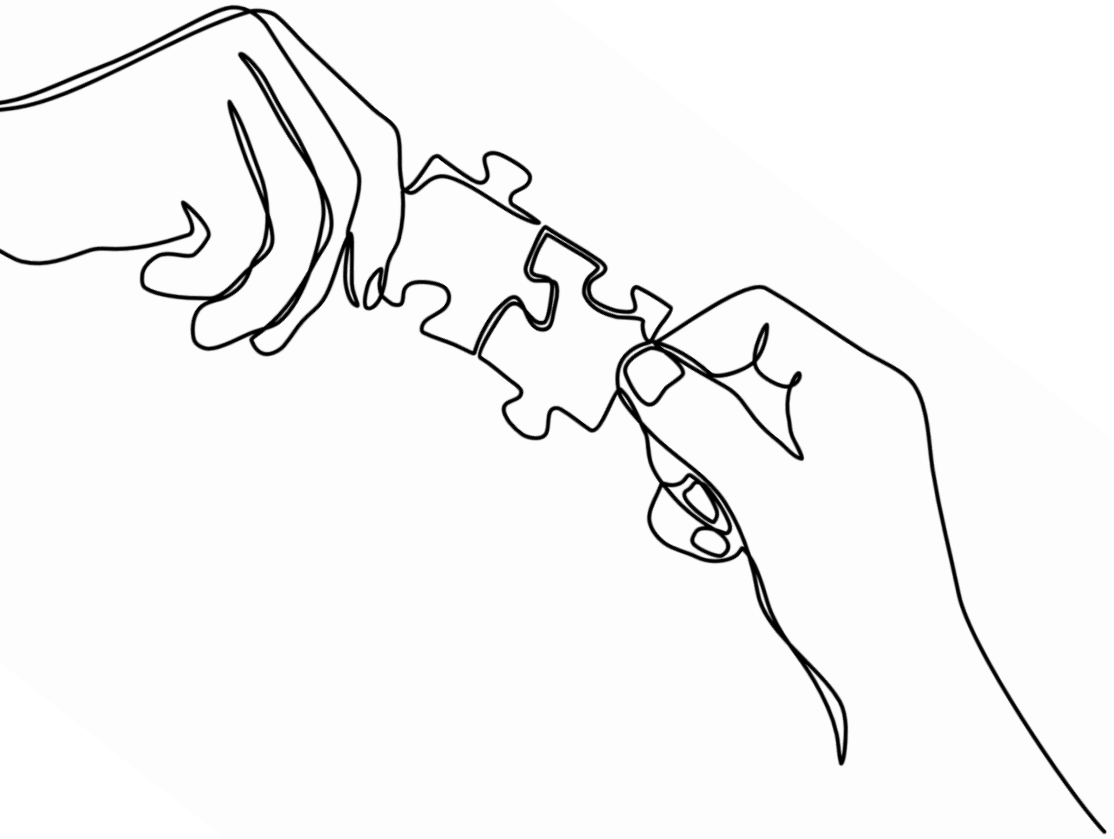
Capacity Building is both a process and an outcome.

- Capacity Assessment Goal: through a limited-scope capacity assessment, identify processes and actions that will serve as a roadmap for the Town's next steps in climate resilience and lead to improved stormwater management and enhanced climate resilience.
- Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center (SU-EFC) completed an inventory of stormwater and resilience planning activities along with a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis of each initiative and the challenges, responsibilities, and progress made in terms of climate resiliency.

Mansfield's Adopted Plans ☑	Not Current or Not Available: ✕
2020 Master Plan	Hazard Mitigation Plan
2016 Open Space and Recreation Plan	Climate Adaptation Plan/ Resilience Plan
Mansfield MVP Report	
Mansfield Stormwater Management Plan	



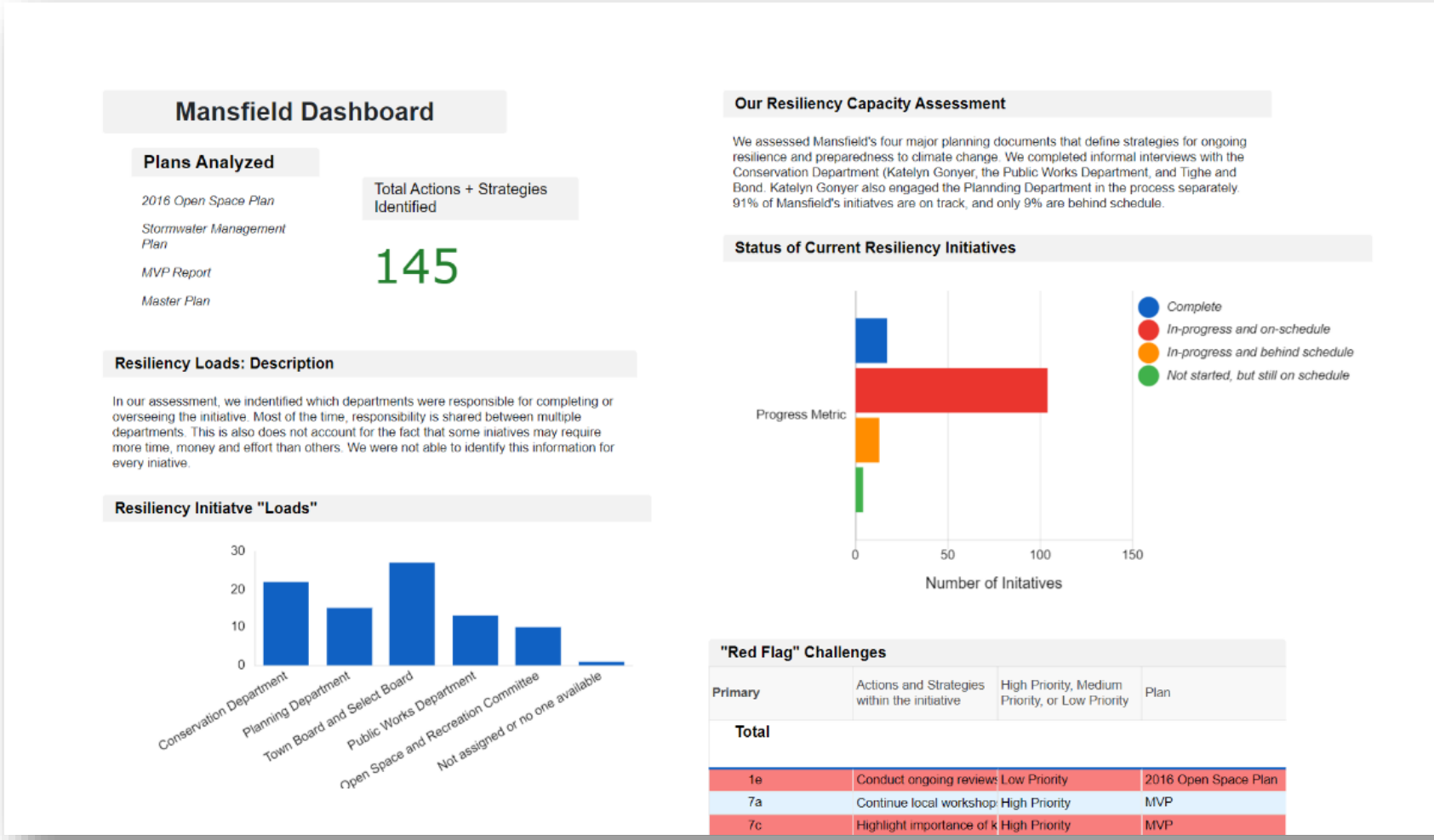
Taking everything apart; and then putting it back together: Inventory Development



- We assessed: each planning document by their major stated initiatives- or the major building blocks of the planning document that describe a desired end state, and that enumerate specific actions and strategies.
- We asked: what actions and strategies on this list pose a major challenge, currently or in the future? What actions and strategies on this list represent a high priority for climate preparedness?
- We engaged: The Town Manager, the Conservation Department, The Department of Public Works, the Planning Department, and the Town's stormwater consulting firm Tighe & Bond

Preliminary Findings

- Our analysis identified 38 unique initiatives that together enumerate 145 strategies and actions.
- We published an interactive dashboard with our data inputs and live inventory.
- 91% of Mansfield's actions across the four planning documents are complete or on-schedule
- Low-priority actions that are behind schedule may pose a greater stress on capacity, as they may be important to operations but not integral to the process of preparing for climate related risks



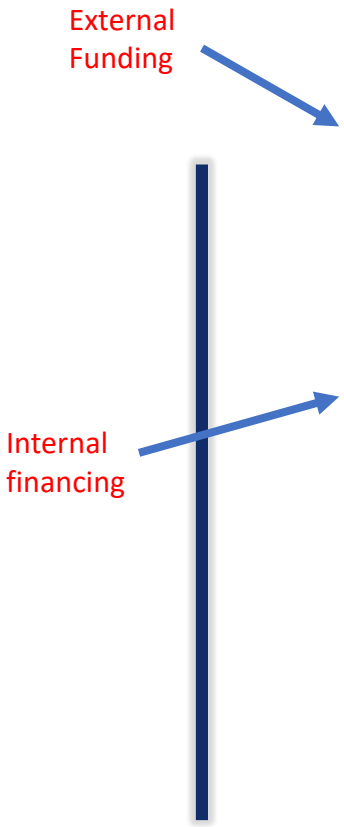
Preliminary Findings

- Outreach-oriented tasks make up a significant component of behind-schedule tasks, including outreach related to developing signage and way-finding on trails, hosting on-site events, and drawing attention to watershed connections between Mansfield's critical waterways.
- Many of Mansfield's "red flag" challenges— actions that staff believe may be challenging to complete—are related to quickly evolving regional initiatives, outreach, and in some technical assessments related to the Massachusetts Vulnerability Preparedness process.
- Even some actions that are still proceeding in a timely manner can pose challenges- 2 of the 7 "red flag" actions are on schedule.



"Flagged" Actions and Strategies	Priority	Plan	Progress
• Conduct ongoing reviews of existing open space parcels, including trail conditions, parking and equipment safety.	Low Priority	2016 Open Space Plan	In-progress and behind schedule
• Continue local workshops with Canoe River Aquifer Advisory Committee (CRAAC) to increase outreach, tax payer education through local cable and other outreach	High Priority	MVP	In-progress and on-schedule
• Highlight importance of keeping local water local for better water quality and increased quantity	High Priority	MVP	In-progress and behind schedule
• Draw attention to the connection between the Three Mile River and the Taunton River through public education, special focus on middle school aged students	High Priority	MVP	In-progress and behind schedule
• Complete a baseline assessment of dams and bridges; fill in gaps of existing assessments done at different frequencies around town	High Priority	MVP	In-progress and on-schedule
• Create a more consistent methodology for monitoring and maintaining critical infrastructure	High Priority	MVP	In-progress and behind schedule
• Install wayfinding signs throughout town to direct people to open spaces, athletic fields, and conservation areas.	Medium Priority	Master Plan	In-progress and behind schedule

Notable Recommendations- an ongoing dialogue



Develop and refine community planning to address the diverse nature of resilience

- Although adding yet another plan may have drawbacks, these processes are valuable, and come with potential implementation funds that the Town can access. Potential funding sources include solicitations from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as well as grants from the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) for a District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) projects.

In the next 5 years, the Town should integrate resiliency projects into the Town's already robust CIP process.

- In addition to pursuing funding, the Conservation Department and Planning Department should provide phased projects, based on needs identified in the MVP plan, Open Space Plan, and others, to the Finance Committee and Town Manager and participate in CIP meetings.

Prepare to expand the Conservation Department within in the next 5 years.

- Within the next 3 years, the Town should re-assess the needs of the Conservation Department and determine whether additional outreach skillsets are needed to expand the Department's capacity.

Notable Recommendations- an ongoing dialogue



Engage inter-departmental outreach expertise, other technical assistance services, or volunteer board members to develop key messages, share success stories, and bolster stakeholder engagement around climate resiliency planning.

- The Town should take advantage of inter-departmental expertise and social media channels, particularly the “Discover Mansfield" initiative led by Mansfield’s Economic Development team, to communicate messages about the Town’s ever-growing focus on climate resiliency and the benefits of proactive planning.

Create a dedicated park maintenance staff position.

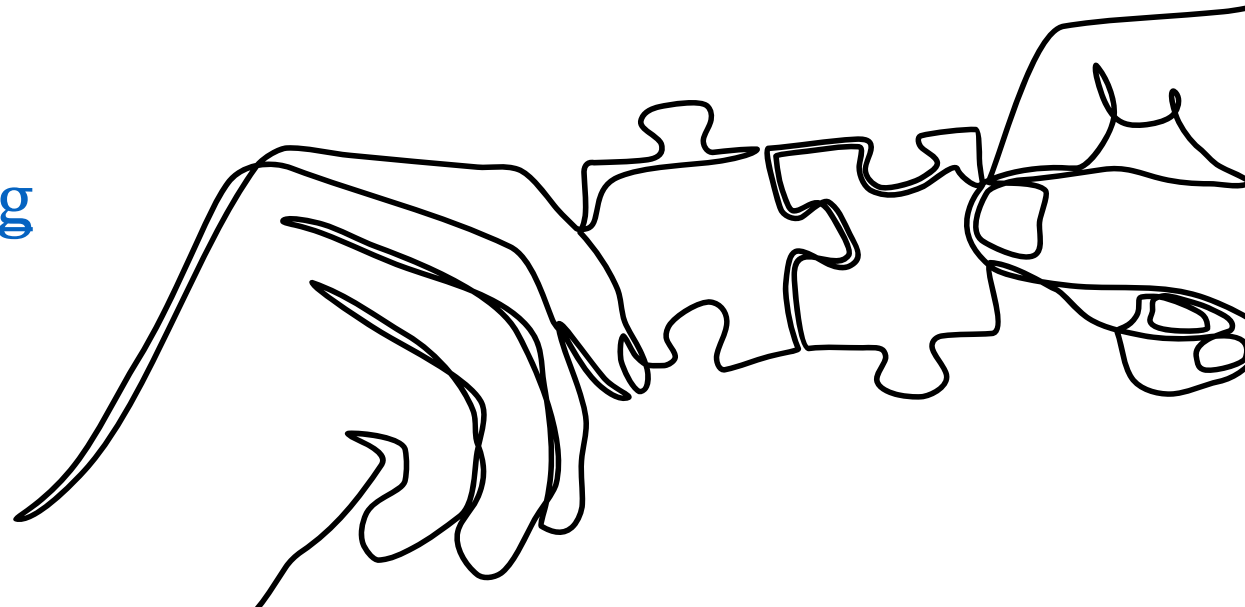
- The findings of this analysis confirm that Mansfield’s land management needs are expanding and will benefit from increased maintenance activities. This need is echoed in the 2020 Master Plan, under Goal 2C (Preserve Mansfield’s natural resources, wildlife habitats and remaining agricultural lands), Strategy IV, which aspires to “establish a robust maintenance and land management plan for Mansfield’s conservation sites overseen by a dedicated conservation and parks maintenance staff position”.

Review of Mansfield Master Plan Update 2020. 2020. Mansfield Department of Planning. Accessed June 12, 2022. https://www.mansfieldma.com/DocumentCenter/View/2408/2020-Master-Plan-FINAL.

Contact Us

- Tess Clark, Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center | pclark@syr.edu
- Katelyn Gonyer, Town of Mansfield, Massachusetts | kgonyer@mansfieldma.com

www.snepnetwork.org



Resources



- Learn about the SNEP Network
- Review the Dashboard created for this project:
- Review the Open Space Plan
- Visit the Conservation Department's Website
- Review the 2020 Master Plan
- Visit the Canoe River Story Map
- Check out other Organizational Capacity Assessment Tools
- Review the Memorandum of Agreement for this technical assistance project
- Review the SNEP Network's competitive technical assistance process that supported this project



*“It strikes me that the **only** real reason to take apart a pocket watch, or a car engine, aside from the simple delight of disassembly, is to find out how it works. To understand it, so you can put it back together again better than before, or build a new one that goes beyond what the old one could do.”*

- Kurt Busiek