Justin Knighten: Hello, I'm Justin Knighten, Director of External Affairs at FEMA. Since 2015, the Resilient Nation Partnership Network has strived to build partnerships that expand capacity and achieve collaborative outcomes. Now more than never investing in partnerships is critical to increasing the nation's resiliency. In April, the network with support from NOAA released the Building Alliances for Equitable Resilience resource. This resource is the result of a significant collaboration by 26 partners across the fields of equity and resilience. Together, we inspire communities to advance equitable and resilient practices.

The story you're about to hear is from an extraordinary leader, who we are honored to call a partner. You will hear from Anna Marandi of the National League of Cities.

Anna Marandi: For many years, it was only the early adopters in local government and often just larger blue cities that were integrating equity and sustainability climate and resilience plans. They codified practices within their respective departments, designed tool kits and presented their innovative ideas of climate conferences. Yet it was still very much a niche topic and really the majority of staff and elected officials and cities wondered, so what is this whole racial equity thing about? Does it involve me? Is it mandatory? Then over the summer, the Black Lives Matter protests transpired and really in nothing short of a momentous shift, we began to hear of elected officials who had attended a racial equity workshop, and wanted to share what they learned with colleagues at the city. Or communities that were reexamining policing practices and staff were beginning to make changes to longstanding programs to incorporate racial equity. Many local leaders and officials began to realize how budgetary changes and more inclusive planning processes could quickly impact people's lives.

The change in attitude and eagerness to get at the root of cities' complex challenges triggered by the events of 2020 has frankly been remarkable to witness. However, not all communities, elected officials and staff are on board, and we have a long way to go in providing the training and funding needed for local governments to realize their full potential as leaders in resilience and equity. We also have a long way to go culturally and socially in encouraging individuals to engage in deep inward reflection so that we can all better understand our respective roles in a racist system, not as a personal flaw, but as something we were born into and have the power to change. America's cities and suburbs, they were designed with race in mind, and the funding to do so came from state and federal governments.

Now in the age of climate change and with an urgent need for investments and resilience, we must redesign with race in mind. But cities can't do this alone. And in fact, it will be impossible for smaller cities to plan and protect for the future without collaborating with their neighbors. By their design, metro regions are fragmented by race and class, and it is ultimately at this scale that we can address challenges around infrastructure, ecosystems, social systems, and local economies. Indeed, working across jurisdictions at the metro regional scale is difficult but it's essential. Funding and technical support from state and federal agencies to support regional collaboration could ensure that smaller communities, particularly those with a lower tax base are not left behind. Cities, though they're already proving to be pivotal leaders in resilience and equity, they need this critical support to address challenges that are really just beyond their scale and scope. Things like climate induced migration and buyouts. I hope we continue to generate and foster more of these inter-scaler partnerships and programs in the years to come.

Justin Knighten: Anna's story represents a unique perspective on the role resiliency plays. Her story reminds us that we are truly in this together because every action moves our country forward to build resilience. We thank Anna for sharing her story, and we hope it inspires you to work towards meaningful change to make equitable resilience possible for all.