

Position Description - Research Assistant

Position Details

Position Title	Research Assistant
Organisation	Northern Rivers Community Resilience Alliance (Resilience Alliance)
Employment Organisation	Resilient Lismore, as the Contracted Delivery Partner for the Disaster Ready Fund Round Three funded by the Australian Government.
Project Partners and Collaborators	Community Resilience Groups and Organisations across the Northern Rivers (Alliance Network) Northern Rivers Community Foundation University Centre for Rural Health Plan C
Remuneration	SCHADS 4.1 [0.39 FTE]
Hours Per Week	15 hours per week
Employment Type	Fixed Term Contract - August 2026 - January 2028
Location	Lismore NSW – hybrid with some in-person attendance
Operational Reporting	Network Lead - Resilience Alliance
Project Partners and Collaborators	Community Resilience Groups and Organisations across the Northern Rivers (Alliance Network) Northern Rivers Community Foundation University Centre for Rural Health Plan C Collaborator: Monash University (Resourcing Community Resilience Project Partner)
	UCRH Specialist Research Support, Network Lead, Monitoring Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Alliance Working Party, Project Team.

About the Northern Rivers Community Resilience Alliance (Resilience Alliance)

The Resilience Alliance was established in March 2024 in response to an increasing recognition of the need for regional grassroots collaboration. Following the catastrophic floods and landslides in 2022, local community organisers have played a crucial role in disaster response, recovery, and adaptation. They have dedicated thousands of volunteer hours to developing sophisticated community-based systems, enhancing skills, building knowledge bases, and increasing organisational capacity at the local level.

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Despite minimal formal support, these organisers have amassed significant expertise in community-led disaster recovery and have expressed a growing need for a peer support network, which the Alliance aims to provide.

The Alliance provides organisational strengthening, peer support and advocacy to independent grassroots, place-based community-led resilience groups across the Northern Rivers.

Vision: Connected, collaborative Northern Rivers communities that are empowered to care for themselves and each other before, during and after disasters.

Purpose: To develop a self-sustaining, trusted Alliance of place-based, community-led resilience groups and organisations. The Alliance will share knowledge and resources; provide mutual support and wellbeing; take collective action, and advocate for identified community needs.

Our Five Pillars:

Growing the Alliance	Training & Resource Sharing	Peer Support & Self Care
Funding Collective Projects	Advocacy	

About the Team

You will be joining a small, dedicated team of 6 (including this role). The team is collaborative, community-focused and passionate about building resilience and disaster preparedness across the Northern Rivers.

About UCRH Research

Research has been an integral part of the emergence of the Resilience Alliance. To date research has been led by a team of 3 embedded researchers based at the University of Sydney's *University Centre for Rural Health* (UCRH) in Lismore, and has included: reviewing the evidence base on community alliance building; following and documenting the emergence of the Alliance including documentary analyses and qualitative primary data collection with Resilience Alliance groups; in-person exchanges with other groups outside of the Northern Rivers to share experiences and learn from other regions. This research has informed and contributed to the development of the Resilience Alliance.

About the MEAL Framework

The Resilience Alliance's approach to Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) is central to its work as a genuine tool for learning, reflection and continuous improvement across the

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network. The Resilience Alliance has developed a participatory, community-informed approach to MEAL that is designed to:

- Monitor progress towards the Resilience Alliance's overarching vision and objectives, including knowledge sharing, mutual support, collective action and advocacy.
- Support ongoing learning, reflection and improvement — including monitoring the health of the Resilience Alliance as a partnership.
- Enable the Resilience Alliance to be accountable to its members, donors and the broader Northern Rivers community.

The MEAL approach moves beyond traditional log frame and theory of change models, instead drawing on participatory methods including outcomes harvesting, Resilience Alliance health checks and community-led reflection processes.

About the Role

The Research Assistant will provide dedicated coordination and research to the Resilience Alliance's MEAL activities, working in close collaboration with the UCRH's Specialist Research Support and the Resilience Alliance's Network Lead.

This role is central to ensuring that the Resilience Alliance's MEAL framework is implemented consistently and meaningfully — supporting data collection at events and workshops, maintaining the Resilience Alliance's outcomes bank, contributing to health check processes, and preparing reports and learning materials.

The role will also collect and analyse data linked with the *Connecting for Impact: building and learning from a community resilience Alliance across the Northern Rivers* research project, in line with an existing approved University of Sydney ethics application (2024/HE001882) contributing to the further development of the Resilience Alliance and to the evidence base on building community alliances in Australia.

This is a community-facing research role suited to someone with a background or strong interest in community development, social research and evaluation, who is comfortable working in a flexible, relationship-based and learning-oriented environment.

Key Responsibilities

1. Data Collection and Monitoring Support (Disaster Ready Fund MEAL)

- Support the implementation of the MEAL framework across all projects and activities, including the Connected and Prepared and Resourcing Community Resilience projects.

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- Co-design and implement data collection tools which may include surveys, feedback forms and pre/post workshop evaluations. Manage and analyse data and report to the Network Lead, MEAL Working Party and Steering Committee.
- Maintain accurate and up-to-date records of outputs including workshop attendance, participant numbers and activity logs.

2. Alliance-level MEAL

In collaboration with the Resilience Alliance's Steering Committee's MEAL Working Party:

- Implement the Resilience Alliance's outcomes harvesting process, documenting outcome statements in the Resilience Alliance's outcomes bank following events and working party meetings.
- Co-design, plan and facilitate annual or bi-annual health checks.
- Document and synthesise findings from health check processes and prepare accessible summaries for the Steering Committee and groups in order to support the evolution of the Resilience Alliance.
- Maintain records of health check findings over time to enable trend analysis and reflection.

3. Way of Working

- Contribute to the co-design and development and adaptation of Resilience Alliance 'Ways of Working' governance structures, processes and documents.

4. Broader Alliance research

- Work closely with the UCRH Specialist Research Support to align Resilience Alliance MEAL activities with the broader embedded research project.
- Lead on reviews of the literature as requested, including theory and/or frameworks relevant to alliance and partnership models.
- Document the Resilience Alliance's story as a learning case study.
- Contribute to academic publications, presentations and other research outputs

5. Reporting and Communication

- Contribute to MEAL updates, data summaries and progress reports for the MEAL Working Party, Steering Committee, groups and funders.
- Develop accessible data visualisations, summaries and infographics to communicate findings to Resilience Alliance groups and other stakeholders.
- Provide relevant data, evidence and outcome statements for grant acquittal reports.
- Attend and take notes at MEAL Working Party meetings and Resilience Alliance meetings as required.

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6. Capacity Building Support

- Contribute to capacity building activities that support groups in applying MEAL principles within their own groups and projects e.g. developing plain-language MEAL resources and tools for groups
- Share emerging MEAL learnings with groups through newsletters, gatherings and other communications channels.
- Contribute to other capacity-building activities as required, e.g. Advocacy, Ways of Working

Selection Criteria

Essential

- Masters-level or above qualification in a related topic area e.g. community development, public health, social work including demonstrated research competence.
- Knowledge of the Northern Rivers region and community networks.
- Strong data collection, data management and organisational skills, with high attention to detail.
- Excellent written and spoken communication skills, including the ability to synthesise and present information in accessible formats for diverse audiences.
- Ability to work collaboratively within a small team and with external partners.
- Confidence working in flexible, community-led and relationship-based environments.
- Proficiency in standard digital tools.

Desirable

- Experience with participatory evaluation methods including outcomes harvesting, most significant change or similar approaches.
- Familiarity with partnership or alliance health frameworks.
- Understanding of disaster resilience, emergency management or community preparedness contexts.
- Experience working within or alongside a university or research institution.

Working Conditions

- Flexible working arrangements; hybrid remote and in-person attendance at gatherings, workshops, events and Resilience Alliance meetings.
- Some travel across the Northern Rivers region may be required.
- Occasional after-hours attendance at community events or meetings may be required with Time in Lieu for any overtime.
- This role works in close collaboration with the UCRH Specialist Research Support — a genuine partnership approach to research and evaluation is central to the role.

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- Access to a personal vehicle is required for travel across the Northern Rivers region, a vehicle allowance is payable.
- Use of a personal mobile phone is required.
- Use of a personal laptop is required.