

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

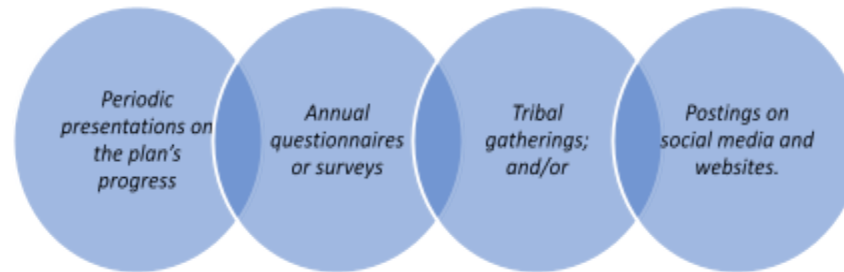
## AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN TRIBAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLANS

*One of the most critical elements of a successful hazard mitigation plan is public participation. Tribal Hazard Mitigation Plans are community driven, therefore it is key to have robust community engagement strategies in place. These community engagement strategies can include both internal and external stakeholders.*

### **WHY DOES COMMUNITY/PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

Public and community engagement helps to ensure the Hazard Mitigation Plan reflects community values, experience with disaster and climate change, and community input on suggested mitigation projects.<sup>1</sup> It is required to present the public with the opportunity to participate in the process, as the plan's intention is to protect their community, life, property, cultural resources, and enhance future resilience to threats such as climate change. A good public outreach effort informs the public of the plans development and educates and motivates people to take action.<sup>2</sup> Although the public may not be experts on the topics, they can help in identifying assets, problem areas, issues of concern, and mitigation options. The public can provide feedback on the prioritization of mitigation projects, hazard identification, and hazard ranking.

Examples of public engagement include, but are not limited to:



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<sup>1</sup> [Tribal Mitigation Planning Handbook](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Beyond the Basics | Outreach Strategy](#)

## COMMON METHODS FOR COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Giving the public and external stakeholders the opportunity to be involved in the Hazard Mitigation Plan process can come in a variety of forms<sup>3</sup>:

- **Public notice of mitigation meetings**
- **Align with how the Tribe comes together and interacts, and how the public gets information**
  - What venues does the Tribe use for outreach activities? Examples could include gatherings, festivals, celebrations, meetings, and public safety days.
  - How does the Tribe communicate new Tribal policies with Tribal members? Examples include word of mouth, meetings, emails, newsletters, bulletins.
- **Summarizing the impacts that hazards can have on community in a personal, perceptible way**
- **Invite interested parties to contribute views for mitigation**
- **Identifying conflicts early in the process**
- **Increasing transparency and building trust**
- **Climate change related survey dissemination**
- **Using Tribal FIRE/EMS operations to enhance dialogue**

**and engage external stakeholders**

- **Public can review plan drafts, ask questions, and provide input**
- **Frequent village meetings to demonstrate the features of the plan, and to get important information from the community**
- **Inviting neighboring tribal interests, such as neighboring tribal departments and staff**
- **Question and answer sessions during public meetings**
- **Ongoing public education or information program**
  - Responsible water use, fire safety, household preparedness, environmental education
  - Implementation of educational programs for children and in schools
  - Integrating disaster resistance education into public school curriculum
  - Sponsoring a “Multi-Hazards” awareness week in order to educate public on all hazards

## MAINTAINING CONTINUOUS ENGAGEMENT THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS

Involving the community as the plan evolves and changes is crucial. Maintaining momentum throughout the process can include regular outreach internally, to Tribal leaders and members,

as well as externally to other interested stakeholders. Stakeholders can include:<sup>4</sup>

- Elected officials
- Business leaders and employers
- Regional, state, and federal agencies
- Cultural institutions
- Colleges and universities
- Non profit organizations
- Neighborhood groups
- Neighboring communities not part of planning area

In each mitigation plan, there should be discussion on how to seek public participation throughout the life of the plan. This can be active participation, such as through presentations to Tribal officials or school groups, or passive, like posting about the plan on social media or websites. One of the key ways to generate support and implementation of a plan is to integrate actions from the mitigation plan with other Tribal initiatives and existing planning efforts. Incorporating a mitigation plan into other planning activities promotes consistency between plans, as well as increases overall awareness of mitigation strategies. Another tactic is to brief newly elected officials on efforts during leadership changes to ensure continuity.

## HOLDING WORKSHOPS

Partners and the public are involved throughout the planning process, and often this inclusion is through a planning team holding a series of meetings and workshops. These are events where there is an ability for the public to share information, resources, perspectives, and stories. Meetings provide an opportunity

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<sup>3</sup> [Beyond the Basics | Outreach Strategy](#)

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<sup>4</sup> [Beyond the Basics | Outreach Strategy](#)

for the planning team to discuss the plan and findings with the public and gather feedback. Meetings that include the public should also ideally include the planning team, Tribal members, Tribal government, and partners.

*Potential workshop public involvement examples:*

**Workshop 1:**

- A kickoff meeting formally starts the planning process. During this workshop, public outreach ideas should be addressed, list of options created and finalized, and inserted into schedule

**Workshop 2:**

- Can use a Climate Vulnerability Experiences and Priorities Survey in order to assess public perception of risk and prioritization of hazards
- Have public help to examine existing conditions and threat of hazard events
- Have public help to develop preliminary mitigation strategies

**Workshop 3:**

- Draft plan review meetings.

## **FOSTERING PUBLIC COMMUNICATION**

Below are some good practices for putting your outreach efforts into action, before going into your communities keep in mind the following<sup>5</sup>:

- Decide which specific strategies are most likely to work for your goal, with your target population and are realistic within your resources (people, time and money)
- Ensure sufficient time to both effectively plan for engagement and to analyze results
- Have a plan around barriers – cultural barriers, mistrust, lack of time.
- What is your staffing strategy for the outreach – paid people, volunteers, other organizations or a mix?
- Recruit and train according to the purpose of the outreach.
- Train the people who will do the outreach on the skills and sensitivities they will need.
- Be clear on what “done” looks like.
- Consider who else could help. Can you work through existing channels (e.g. schools, clubs, other agencies, cultural groups, community leaders) to reach your desired audience?
- Be sure to evaluate if you accomplished what you wanted to. Did you move toward or reach your outreach goal? If so, what made it successful? If not, what

could you do differently? What next steps do you want to take?

Good Practice methods for consulting (getting opinions) are:

- Surveys (can be with people when they are at a program or event, on-line, by phone, or door-to-door)
- Focus groups
- Public events or meetings
- Advisory committees
- A variety of participatory evaluation or research Strategies

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<sup>5</sup>[Community Outreach Lessons Learned and Good Practices](#)