



FEMA



# Community Engagement

Achieving Risk MAP’s goal of reducing the Nation’s vulnerability to risk requires a partnership with local officials built upon clear, consistent communication. The partnership must work to raise local official understanding of their flood risk while building their capability to communicate that risk to the people they serve.



Risk MAP’s community engagement approach outlines a series of important “touchpoints” that occur during each Risk MAP project from the time the Federal Emergency Management

Agency (FEMA) sequences a project through the final community meeting. To make each of these community touchpoints as consistent and valuable as they can be, FEMA created a set of supporting, customizable tools and templates to assist Risk MAP Project Teams in communicating with their local partners.

## Guiding Principles

Risk MAP’s community engagement approach is guided by the following principles.

- **Engage communities early and often.** Communities that are aware of their Risk MAP project’s progress will be more likely to become a partner in the effort, be comfortable with project progress, and communicate accurately about it to Congress and the media. To inform communities of impending Risk MAP projects as soon as possible and keep them apprised of the project’s status, Risk MAP contacts communities as soon as they have been sequenced, holds a minimum of three meetings with a wide range of members of the community and Federal and state partners, and provides monthly status reports.

## Foundation in National Outreach Strategy

FEMA’s Risk MAP National Outreach Strategy from December 2009 provided the groundwork for the community engagement approach. The National Outreach Strategy built upon best practices from the previous Map Modernization Program, feedback from all 10 FEMA Regions, as well as social marketing principles and findings from the latest risk communications research.

The National Outreach Strategy provides:

- A priority list of target audiences for the program, from State, local, and Tribal officials through the public
- Core key messages to be used across audiences, and messages per audience
- Specific tactics for reaching each audience, including traditional and innovative approaches
- Evaluation factors to track the efficacy of each recommended tactic, as well as a quantitative survey

The National Outreach Strategy also includes a detailed description of Risk MAP program outreach efforts that will provide an understanding of and encourage support for the program. Program outreach strategies include conference support, briefings, and trade association outreach and engagement.

# RiskMAP

Increasing Resilience Together

- **Agree upon and document project outcomes and responsibilities.** Turnover at the community level over the course of projects has led to unclear expectations and unintended surprise. To set and document clear project objectives at the beginning of each project, Risk MAP works with communities to create a Project Charter following the initial project meeting that provides details about the project's objective, the final flood risk products FEMA will deliver, the type of mitigation planning support to be provided, and the communities' role in outreach to their citizens.
- **Coordinate with other programs operating within the same community.** FEMA understands that Risk MAP projects do not happen in a vacuum. Risk MAP coordinates with other programs that may be hard at work within the same communities before, during, or following each Risk MAP project. This coordination with other FEMA, Federal, and State programs prior to the initial meeting with each community helps identify ways to work together, eliminate duplication of effort or contradictory guidance, and avoid contacting the same people multiple times to the extent possible.
- **Engage associations to provide a third-party perspective.** Local and regional chapters of key associations can provide critical context, support, and guidance to their members regarding local Risk MAP projects. Risk MAP builds upon its national relationships with associations by seeking the support of local chapters to proactively engage their members that work within the watersheds studied by Risk MAP. These associations represent audiences such as floodplain managers, emergency managers, planners, real estate agents, and insurance agents.



- **Leverage local media and use language that people understand.** Proactive media outreach is important to the success of Risk MAP projects, as local media are able to quickly provide information across a community from a trusted source. Risk MAP provides communities with easy to use media kits and customizable advertisements to help them quickly and accurately provide media with the information they need to



develop accurate and compelling stories. Risk MAP uses plain language in all materials and templates to reinforce the use of terminology that people can understand. Ultimately, that will help make it easier for people to take steps to protect themselves and their property.

Community engagement is critical to Risk MAP's success. Through targeted, consistent outreach throughout the Risk MAP timeline, FEMA works to make it easier for people and communities to reduce their vulnerability to risk.