RISK COMMUNICATIONS AND RISK MAP
PLAYBOOK

FEMA
Agenda

- What is the Playbook?
- Who is the Playbook for?
- How to use the Playbook
- Tools and Templates
- When to use the Playbook
- What’s Next?
What is the Playbook?
Why Do We Need the Playbook?

- Changing behavior and the mental biases in which it is rooted is a difficult task.

- We need communities to believe they are at risk and care about their risk. By linking risk to everyday community issues and concerns, we can engage in a conversation that is timely and relatable.

- The Playbook will help ensure that the tenets of risk communications are woven throughout all materials and activities, each Risk MAP phase, and each tool and resource. This will create consistency and be more effective in making the case for mitigation action across the country.
What is the Playbook?

The Playbook is a resource for those tasked with leading or participating in communication outreach or community engagement during any phase of Risk MAP.

The Playbook can help decision makers think strategically, yet consistently, about how to adapt and apply available tools, resources, and best practices most effectively.

As a resource, the Playbook provides its users with “tools, not rules.”
Goals of the Playbook

- To demonstrate the impact of outreach and community engagement on a community’s understanding of the value of mitigation, and on their willingness to commit to actions that make them more resilient and sustainable.

- To reinforce tenets of behavior change and risk communications in ways that are engaging and accessible.

- To refresh or reuse existing resources, develop and create new tools, or leverage best practices that provide consistency across Regions in how we think about impactful communications and community engagement strategies throughout the Risk MAP lifecycle.
Who is the Playbook for?
Core Users

The teams and individuals who consult the Playbook to inform decisions about communications and outreach strategies as they relate to Risk MAP and mitigation.

- FEMA staff
- Providers
- CTP partners
End Users

Non-technical decision-makers involved in community resilience and mitigation, but who are not focused on Risk MAP on a day-to-day basis. We do not expect these users to pick up and use the Playbook.

- Local elected officials
- Residents
- Community leaders
Specialty Audiences

Stakeholders, such as insurance agents, realtors, and others who may communicate Risk MAP messages and flood risk information.

As there are already several existing resources tailored for specialty audiences (FloodSmart.gov, etc.), we do not envision creating Playbook materials for them in the near-term.
How to Use the Playbook
What’s in the Playbook?

The Playbook is designed to be iterative, and will grow and evolve over time. The first phase of the Playbook offers three introductory sections and two appendices:

Section 1: Risk Communications and Risk MAP
Section 2: Ensuring Engagement Through Risk MAP
Section 3: Engaging Local Elected Officials
Appendix A: Samples and Examples
Appendix B: Tools and Templates
① RISK COMMUNICATIONS AND RISK MAP

This Playbook is intended to be used by a variety of individuals and audiences and is organized as follows:

Section 1: Introduction to the Playbook and the Case for Change
- Our Intended Audience
- Making the Case for Mitigation Actions
- Telling the Risk MAP Story

Section 2: Ensuring Engagement throughout Risk MAP

Section 3: Engaging Local Elected Officials

Appendix A: Samples and Examples
Appendix B: Tools and Templates
WHAT DOES “DRIVING ACTION” MEAN?

- It doesn’t necessarily mean residents elevating their homes or the adoption of maps or ordinances; it means helping make mitigation a routine consideration in community planning and decision making.
- It does indicate a community’s willingness to partner with FEMA to identify, prioritize, and take the necessary steps to reduce risk.
- It is also a desire to help residents understand the Risk MAP process and its potential impacts.
- The process will not be simple or quick, but we will build partnerships with communities to increase awareness and understanding.

TELLING THE RISK MAP STORY

- The success of Risk MAP often comes down to whether we can make a strong case for the overall benefit of the program to the community and the public at large.
- Risk MAP must align with a community’s wants and needs. Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), as well as other regulatory or flood risk products, should be tools that answer a community’s questions and address their concerns.
- The Community Journey and Message Platform are actionable tools to evaluate and address the critical factors that contribute to a community’s ultimate support, or rejection of, a Risk MAP project.

A note about audience: While the ability to hold technical discussions with floodplain managers and city managers will always be an important component of executing Risk MAP projects, communicating and interacting with key non-technical stakeholders, such as county commissioners, city council members, and mayors is also important to success. The Community Journey process prioritizes this audience to help fill this need.

Speed up the process. Do not overlook the map or the data—it is critical, but it is not the end game. We need to make the case for the time in-between.

Risk MAP’s success has less to do with what mapping experts want or need from the process. Rather, it is dependent on whether the community gets on board or not.

To put it another way, it is NOT all about us.
## Concept and Mindset

### Awareness of Risk: Understanding that floods happen.

“I understand that a flood event is possible.”

Define risk, and heighten risk perception if it is too low.

**Examples:**
- Community officials discuss flood risk with their constituents. Local news outlets cover local flood risks.
- School curriculum includes discussion of flooding.
- Local businesses host flood awareness sessions for employees during Flood Awareness Week, the Great Shake Out, or other relevant observances.

### Belief in Risk: Belief that a flood could happen in my community.

“I believe that a flood event is possible in my community.”

Help people understand that not only do floods and other hazard events happen, but they can happen where your family lives, works, and plays. Personalize the risk by using data and risk visualization techniques to make it more “real” and imaginable.

**Examples:**
- Invite residents or community officials who have experienced a flood event to discuss with other members of your community.
- Highlight anniversaries of prior local hurricanes to elevate concern. Host a High Water Mark event.
- Use social media or local paid advertising to share examples of past storms or other damaging events.

### Perception of Severity: Belief that there are consequences to a flooding event.

“It can flood here and the consequences are too high.”

Convey the consequences of flood events by demonstrating the impact, including economic, property, and emotional loss by literally showing them either through other communities’ experiences or their own past experience.

**Examples:**
- Create a map viewer to highlight risk changes in specific areas.
- Develop and share testimonials of communities that have experienced flood losses.
-Invite a respected local expert to speak with community groups about the consequences of flooding.
- Create a photo gallery of impacts of past flooding events.
ENSURING ENGAGEMENT THROUGHOUT RISK MAP

This section addresses the following:

- Engaging communities early and often throughout three phases of the Risk MAP process:
  - Project Planning and Discovery
  - Resilience
  - Preliminary FIRM Release
- Ensuring that resilience is not just the title of a single meeting or step, but an ongoing focus of meetings, communications, outreach and engagement
- Evolving the conversation from “am I mapped in or out?” to include the importance of how the FIRM, along with tools and data can support ongoing local risk assessment and planning efforts
Section 2: Ensuring Engagement Throughout Risk MAP

In short, we want communities to understand and appreciate that FEMA is listening and is committed to a productive partnership.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH THE RISK MAP LIFECYCLE

Considering community engagement across the Risk MAP lifecycle is less about what happens at a particular meeting—though the importance of those events cannot be understated—and more about the role of engagement in building initial relationships and learning how we continue to engage communities between major meetings.

Resilience should be a community-driven effort, with the goals of garnering local support and building local capacity for implementing priority mitigation activities.
ENGAGING LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS

This section addresses the following:

- Overarching Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning (Risk MAP) communications objectives
- Critical strategies and tips for communicating with local elected officials
- Communicating with local elected officials during each Risk MAP Phase:
  1. Project Planning and Discovery
  2. Risk Identification and Assessment
  3. Preliminary FIRM Release/Public Comment and Appeal Phase
  4. Letter of Final Determination (LFD)/Compliance
Section 3: Engaging Local Elected Officials

Local elected officials are important because they can greatly support, encourage, and facilitate mitigation actions, or they can effectively close the door on them. Similarly, they can be strong advocates for FIRM adoption or fight it tooth and nail. Because of their pivotal role in whether a community invests in resilience, they are a crucial audience for Risk MAP initiatives.

The term “local elected officials” encompasses a wide variety of positions, including mayors, town council members, county commissioners, parish presidents, town managers (elected or professional), and Tribal officials. Basically, they include anyone who was voted or appointed into office to represent the interests of the community.

At the end of the discovery process, our goal is for the officials to feel, “This process builds on what we’re already doing; it’s a great opportunity to improve our community and protect what’s important. Let’s go!”

Remember that there is usually more than one elected official in each community. Make a list of officials and communicate with all of them.
Strategies for Engagement

CRITICAL STRATEGIES AND TIPS FOR SUCCESS WITH LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS

1. Always use language for a general audience and lay terms, and avoid jargon.
2. Keep communications short and to the point. Time is in short supply.
3. Anticipate officials’ questions and answer them quickly—before they ask. This will serve the dual purpose of addressing their concerns and assuring them that we understand their perspective.
4. Always approach the officials first, and remain present throughout the lifecycle of the project to reinforce messaging.
5. Never surprise a local elected official in public.
6. Provide context for everything. For example, start the conversation with an overview of past losses in the community caused by existing hazards, and why mitigation and resilience are so important.
7. Keep in mind that the word “mitigation” can mean different things to different people. We need to be sure to explain what we mean so there is no miscommunication. Try talking about “becoming a more resilient community by reducing flood risks.”
8. Explain what mitigation is and sell its value. Explain it in terms of economic, public health, and storm recovery. Try to connect mitigation strategies with other work the community is already engaged in or is mandated to do.
9. Position Risk MAP as a gateway to community resilience, rather than a process to be endured and resisted. Explain that mitigation is a road to reducing risk, and therefore, reducing flood insurance rates. The FIRM is not only an indicator of who is required to buy flood insurance.
10. Keep key messages and details consistent in all communications so that officials are hearing the same information.
11. Keep communication continuous over the course of the project. Do not limit communication to one or two touch points every few years.
12. Build coalitions to advocate or support mitigation activities, and bring them and those that already exist together to meet with officials. If councils or other decision-making groups are aware that the small business community is supportive of taking action, they will be less likely to avoid the discussion.
Tools and Templates
Tools and Templates

While the Playbook itself offers critical guidance for community engagement, the tools and templates provide resources that can be used for execution.

These include meeting checklists, invitation templates, guidelines for social media engagement, meeting signage, call scripts, post cards, talking points, and much more. Like the Playbook, the tools and templates are evolving, meaning that new ones will be added on a regular basis.
When to Use the Playbook
Scenario 1
Making the Case for Pre-Discovery

• **Background:** Discovery is planned in a community where Regional staff does not have strong existing relationships. The current effective FIRMs are outdated, and it is expected that preliminary maps will show significant changes to the SFHA.

• **Challenges:** Without relationships in the community, officials and residents may not be as receptive to FEMA’s presence, and we will not have advocates if the news is perceived as bad. We do not know what community members are expecting to hear at the Discovery meeting, or have access to their knowledge of the area.

• **Opportunities:** By conducting pre-Discovery outreach in the community, we can begin to build relationships and gather information about local priorities and mitigation actions taken.
Scenario 1
Making the Case for Pre-Discovery

• **How to use the Playbook:** Turn to the Discovery portion of Section 2 of the Playbook, where you will find more on the benefit of pre-Discovery engagement, first steps, tips about identifying both traditional and non-traditional stakeholders, guidelines for engaging with local officials, and much more.

Additionally, the Playbook offers an invitation template for a pre-Discovery webinar.
Scenario 2
Engaging Local Elected Officials

- **Background**: Preliminary FIRMs are to be released in the coming months, and some residents may learn they are now at a higher risk of flooding. It is likely that local elected officials will receive calls and questions from residents and reporters, and will need to be prepared to answer them.

- **Opportunities**: The CCO meeting presents an opportunity to engage in conversation with local elected officials on topics they may not be regularly tuned into.

- **Challenges**: Refocusing the dialogue from what flood zone homes are mapped into to one that centers around the value of flood risk data in increasing a community’s resilience is challenging.
Scenario 2
Engaging Local Elected Officials

- How to use the Playbook: Section 3 of the Playbook focuses specifically on engaging with local elected officials, an audience that is critical to decision-making, but does not always possess a lot of technical knowledge. By referring to the portion about the Prelim and Appeals process, users can review goals for communication with these officials, and get quick and critical strategies for successful engagement, as well as effective messages to rely on through the appeals period.
What’s Next?
Continuing to Build the Playbook

The Playbook will continue to evolve and grow, with new content sections, as well as tools and templates to be added on a regular basis.
Section 4: Coastal Communication

The Coastal section of the Playbook covers special considerations in coastal communities, and how those impact stakeholder engagement throughout the Risk MAP lifecycle.
Questions?
Email: Sarah.Devaney-ice@fema.dhs.gov