

Community Engagement Strategy Guide:

To better involve community leaders to achieve long-term and sustainable outcomes, processes, relationships, decision-making, and implementation of disaster response programs.

This strategy is the process of building relationships with Church leaders, stakeholders, citizens and interest groups to work side-by-side as long-term partners - building a coalition support on a range of disaster response in the community. The end of community engagement is to assist and serve the people of the community in time of disaster.

The approach to community engagement is guided by the following principles:

- **Integrity:** Community engagement should be transparent and clear in scope and purpose.
- **Inclusiveness:** Community engagement should be accessible and balanced and capture a full range of values and perspectives.
- **Dialogue:** Community engagement should promote dialogue and open genuine discussion. It should be supported by timely and accurate information, be used to weigh options, and develop common understandings.
- **Influence:** Community engagement should be reflected in outcomes. The community should be able to see and understand the impact of their involvement.

Thinking through the following questions and issues will assist in the planning and design of a community engagement plan:

- What is the need for community engagement?
- What resources are available?
- Who will be part of the decision-making process?
- What are the goals and objectives of the engagement?
- How to identify the stakeholders?
- What level of participation is hoped to achieve?
- What engagement techniques and methods will be used?
- How will the engagement plan be implemented?
- How will feedback and next steps be determined?

Steps to Community Engagement Strategy:

Step 1: Determine the Need (desire outcomes) for Community Engagement

- Evaluate the current status of Disaster response/relief in the community
- Determine gaps and areas that need to be addressed
- Church Readiness
 1. Preparing churches for relief and recovery efforts
 2. Train and maintain readiness
 3. Building relationships with LRGs, NGOs, FEMA
 4. Churches collaborate
 - Shared community vision, maximize resources, coordinated efforts

Step 2: Develop a Coalition of Church leaders - Advisory Group

- Establish goals of the group
 - Group realistic roles and responsibilities,
 - Group timeframes and decision-making processes.
 - Establish whether the group is representing a broader group (i.e., community liaison) or participating as individuals.

Step 3: Define the Relief, Rebuild, and Recovery Scope

- Establish goals
- Anticipated outcomes
- Identify and/or prioritize what the needs and priorities for relief and recovery efforts should be.

A general spectrum of community engagement goals may include the following:

1. Increase awareness of issues, services and opportunities
2. Increase the number of church volunteers in recovery efforts
3. Educate residents on issues and/or involve them in decision-making
4. Motivate a change in behavior
5. Empower communities to identify and address their own issues and opportunities

Step 4: Identify and Analyze Stakeholders/Community Served

- Who are your community Stakeholders?
 - A. A stakeholder is anyone who:
 1. Will be affected by the program or project
 2. Has knowledge related to the program or project
 3. Has some authority related to the program or project
 4. Has an interest in the program or project
 - B. Potential Stakeholders
 1. Disaster resource organizations
 2. County/City health departments

3. Neighborhood HOA Leaders
4. Neighborhood watch groups
5. Utility companies
6. Health care Systems/providers
7. Public safety - Law Enforcement /First responders
8. Emergency management
9. Businesses and business groups
10. Schools and universities
11. Children and youth groups
12. Elders and elder associations
13. Local sports teams
14. Religious/faith-based groups (Denominational)
15. State agencies
16. Federal agencies

Step 5: Consider Engagement Techniques/Methods:

- Use various techniques to engage community and Stakeholders; no single approach will engage every issue
 - A. Technique should be:
 1. **Inform** – Decisions have already been made or action is required, with a need to ensure that the affected community is aware of the information or facts.
 2. **Consult** – Requires some input, feedback or advice before part of the project or decision is finalized.
 3. **Active Involvement**– Collaborates with specific stakeholder groups or the community to work through the issues and develop solutions.
- Methods to inform the community:
 - A. Public displays
 - B. Community Forums
 - C. News articles/stories
 - D. Website
 - E. Social Media
 - F. Public Meetings
 - G. Community Fairs/events
 - H. School Visits
 - I. Workshops

Step 6: Create and Implement an Implementation/Operational Plan

- Engage partners in existing community initiatives
- Determine recovery schedule with communication and public involvement timeframes
- Determine Church involvement goals and anticipated outcomes
- Determine geographic scope of outreach
- List of major opportunities for church participation or engagement

Step 7: Monitor progress, evaluate the plan, modify

- 3 key purpose of engagement evaluation

- A. Was the activity successful?
 - 1. Report the achievements and progress of the program
- B. What have we learned?
 - 1. Examine the engagement process against objectives and goals
 - 2. What can we do better?
 - 3. Explore ways to better meet objectives and goals

Resources and Templates: Examples, resources, and templates