



## Communicating Future Conditions and Evolving Risks

### Evaluating Best Practices for Risk Communications

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## Future Conditions Study Scope

The study assessed community needs, as well as the strengths and limitations of existing resources meant to frame communication around future conditions and empower local stakeholders to make well-informed decisions, with seven focus areas:

- 1 Audiences for future conditions products
- 2 Strengths and limitations of existing tools and resources
- 3 Data considerations and challenges
- 4 Data presentation and product types
- 5 Product delivery platforms
- 6 Best practices for communicating future conditions

The study comprised an analysis of online existing tools and resources; a literature review focused on identifying existing future conditions information, products, and risk communication tactics that are most useful to communities; and informal internal interviews with community engagement and hazard mitigation professionals.




## Community-Level Needs: Data

<p><b>Diverse information to support diverse audiences</b></p>  <p><b>WHAT IS IT?</b> The incorporation of information on future conditions and future risks into hazard mitigation and community resilience planning typically takes place at the local level, which means that audiences for this information—as well as their needs—are extraordinarily diverse. Given the diverse needs of end users, it is impossible for a single dataset or product to meet all of those needs.</p>	<p><b>High-resolution data for detailed assessments to support decision making</b></p>  <p><b>WHAT IS IT?</b> The most common limitation of national and regional datasets is the coarse resolution of the available data, which makes it inappropriate for use at the parcel or structure level. As a result, communities often commission studies to develop high-resolution products that can be utilized in local vulnerability and economic impact assessments to inform planning and decision-making processes or regulatory requirements.</p>	<p><b>Sea level rise impacts tied to frequencies</b></p>  <p><b>WHAT IS IT?</b> Sea level rise is one of the principal concerns about information. For future conditions information, and specifically sea level rise information, to be useful for risk, vulnerability, and economic analyses, it must be presented within the context of event frequency. Both high frequency (e.g. 100-year) and lower frequencies (e.g. 1-percent annual chance) are needed.</p>	<p><b>Vulnerability and economic impacts</b></p>  <p><b>WHAT IS IT?</b> Map products are the most common form of information produced for communicating future conditions hazards. For communities to make the decision to reduce losses, maps are not enough. Vulnerability assessments and economic impact analyses are important to answer the questions "So what?" and "How what?" Completing these analyses helps to garner attention from decision makers, prioritize mitigation actions, and gain political will for resilience efforts.</p>	<p><b>Clarity on best available data for local needs and the know-how to use it</b></p>  <p><b>WHAT IS IT?</b> Future conditions and particularly sea level rise information is available from a host of reputable sources, which leads to "analysis paralysis"—confusion as to what the data really means for individual communities and which dataset they should be using. Communities need clarity on how to identify the best available data or their various local efforts.</p>
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## Community-Level Needs: Risk Communications

<p><b>Preference for Online Platforms &amp; Resources</b></p>  <p><b>WHAT IS IT?</b> As society continues to place a high value on instant access resources like online products or mobile applications, it is no surprise that digital resources are the preferred option. However, lower capacity communities may still desire paper maps or, at a minimum, PDFs.</p>	<p><b>Relevance in data delivery and facilitating use</b></p>  <p><b>WHAT IS IT?</b> Data must be supplemented with information that better communicates why the data is important for local communities and how the data could/should be used to support local resiliency initiatives.</p>	<p><b>Decision Support Resources</b></p>  <p><b>WHAT IS IT?</b> To make well-informed decisions, communities must not only be fully aware of their risk, but also understand how to interpret, prioritize, integrate, and implement solutions. Without comprehensive decision support tools, compiling, interpreting, and applying future conditions and flood risk information may overwhelm a community.</p>	<p><b>Make it LOCAL and speak their language</b></p>  <p><b>WHAT IS IT?</b> For data platforms, the ability to supplement national datasets with local information is necessary. Effective engagement requires an understanding of audience, an ability to tailor language to meet the audience at their level of understanding, and the use of local visual aids to help people connect with complex concepts and terms.</p>	<p><b>Don't go at it alone!</b></p>  <p><b>WHAT IS IT?</b> FEMA is not alone in its efforts to promote coastal resilience, and other Federal agencies, including NOAA, USACE, and the USGS, serve essential roles. Given the synergies among agency programs, well-designed collaborative partnerships can leverage platforms, data, products, and engagement opportunities to provide valuable benefits to communities as they work to improve community resilience.</p>
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## Community-Level Needs: Communicating Risk and Uncertainty

Uncertainty can make people feel helpless  
— unless they are given the tools to act

- ▶ Know your audience – start with what matters to them.
- ▶ Avoid jargon. Simplify.
- ▶ Use visualization and storytelling.
- ▶ Don't overwhelm with data – facts can backfire!
- ▶ Use trusted voices as your partners.
- ▶ Be consistent – and repeat!

WE NEED SOME NEW JARGON,  
THE PUBLIC ARE STARTING TO  
UNDERSTAND WHAT WE'RE  
TALKING ABOUT!



## Risk and Uncertainty: Communications Best Practices

### Virtual Reality



### Participatory Mapping



### Storytelling

