



Guide to Expanding Mitigation

MAKING THE CONNECTION TO THE WHOLE COMMUNITY



FEMA



Photo: Firefighters rush towards a fire
Cover Photo: Row of old homes in Chicago, Ill.

Communities are unique, multidimensional and complex. Their varied demographics, geographies, and histories shape and influence the ways people relate to each other and the ways groups and institutions are connected. Exploring how a community functions, both socially and institutionally, reveals new sources for collective action and decision making.

When it comes to reducing natural hazard risk, a realistic understanding of the community's daily life helps community officials and emergency managers determine the best ways to collaborate with and support other members of the community. This understanding helps them tailor engagement strategies, develop partnerships, identify solutions with co benefits, leverage diverse funding sources, and shape programs to meet the diverse needs of the "Whole Community."

The concept of a Whole Community is distinct from individual definitions of "community." In this context, it refers to the groups and organizations that should share the responsibility for emergency preparedness and mitigation. This includes:

- Individuals.
- Families.
- Businesses.
- Faith-based and community organizations.
- Nonprofit groups.
- Schools and academia.
- Media.
- Local and state government.
- Artists and arts organizations.
- Tribal governments and associations.
- Territories.
- Other federal agencies.

This guide provides recommendations for working across the Whole Community to support hazard mitigation, especially in planning and project development. It is designed to help community officials initiate conversations about mitigation investments that can engage communities in becoming more resilient. This guide provides details on four key FEMA initiatives:

- **Expanding Mitigation Series:** Resources that highlight innovative and emerging partnerships for mitigation.
- **Community Lifelines:** A framework communities can use to identify and address vulnerabilities across seven critical services.
- **National Mitigation Investment Strategy:** Best practices and recommendations for identifying, supporting, influencing, and aligning Whole Community mitigation investments.
- **Hazard Mitigation Assistance:** Funding for mitigation plans and projects focused on reducing or eliminating risk to people and property from future disasters.



The term "community" is broad. It encompasses neighborhoods, districts, municipalities, counties, regions, and everything in between.



This *Guide to Expanding Mitigation* is part of a [series](#) highlighting innovative and emerging partnerships for mitigation.

EXPANDING MITIGATION SERIES

Anyone interested in reducing their community's risk from hazards can benefit from insights found in the *Guides to Expanding Mitigation*. These guides are a resource for communities that are investing in mitigation planning, projects and programs. They are designed to:

- Help engage parts of the community that may not yet be actively involved in mitigation efforts.
- Help expand the number and type of organizations involved in mitigation planning and implementation, increasing efficiency and bandwidth.
- Bring in partners who help increase the quality of mitigation plans and projects by making them more representative of the Whole Community, and its inhabitants and businesses.
- Foster relationships to bring underrepresented populations and partners to the hazard mitigation process.
- Establish credibility with the Whole Community through inclusive planning and project development.
- Encourage efficiency and creative thinking around mitigation projects to better meet the many needs and interests of communities.
- Provide information on potential funding streams and other resources.

Within each guide, you can expect to find:

1. Insights into the sector or topic.
2. Potential vulnerabilities to hazards.
3. Ideas for mitigation projects with co-benefits.
4. Examples of successful collaboration.
5. Additional resources.

Considered together, the guides are an invaluable introductory resource that highlight community connections. When used to spark conversations, the guides can help community officials work toward incorporating new and strategic ideas into their mitigation program to ensure that investments benefit the Whole Community. The guides can also help representatives from less engaged sectors and organizations better understand opportunities to get involved in hazard mitigation and advocate for inclusion in the hazard mitigation process.

COMMUNITY LIFELINES

When disaster strikes, critical government and business functions—like communication, energy and medical care—must keep going to keep communities safe and secure. To help identify and coordinate planning, FEMA established the Community Lifelines framework to help local officials increase their effectiveness and responsiveness during disaster incidents. To do this, leaders must be empowered to:

- Rapidly determine the scale and complexity of a disaster's potential impact to critical lifesaving and life-sustaining services.
- Prioritize and determine the most effective way to continue delivering key services in impacted areas.
- Communicate disaster-related information across the Whole Community so everyone understands the potential impact and actions to take.

The description of each lifeline includes the general scope of services and more specific functions communities may want to explore to ensure continuity and access to these critical functions during a disaster.



Individual communities may need different functions for each lifeline, so mitigation planning and projects should be based on each community's specific needs for maintaining and strengthening lifelines.



Photo: Flooded houses in central Texas

NATIONAL MITIGATION INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Communities benefit most when federal agencies and non-federal partners work together to identify, support, influence, and align Whole Community mitigation investments. To help achieve this goal, the National Mitigation Investment Strategy seeks to empower communities to identify and measure the effectiveness of their mitigation investments, so they can make more informed decisions about when and where to make future investments.

In particular, the Investment Strategy encourages the Whole Community to invest in pre- and post-disaster mitigation, and to adopt the Investment Strategy's three shared goals:

- Showing how mitigation investments reduce risk.
- Coordinating mitigation investments to be more effective at reducing risk.
- Making mitigation investment standard practice.



IDENTIFYING THE ROOT CAUSES OF VULNERABILITY: AN EXAMPLE FROM THE ENERGY LIFELINE

During a disaster, keeping power on can be one of the most important tasks for maintaining critical, life-saving equipment during the periods of response and immediate recovery. Community leaders who are assessing the risks and vulnerabilities related to their power grid should consider the potential reasons for power outages and how to prevent or minimize them.

Here are a few examples of actions a community might take after identifying the root causes of power instability during a disaster:

- If overhead lines are repeatedly knocked out, the community can consider moving utility lines underground or using composite power poles.
- If transmission stations are in a floodplain, the community should consider whether it could move or elevate the transmission station.
- If the power generation system is in a known earthquake liquefaction zone, the community should consider seismic retrofits to the power generation system. A good vulnerability assessment will work backward through lifelines to determine the root causes of disaster impacts.





Photo: Couple riding bicycles by river bank

FEMA'S HAZARD MITIGATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

FEMA provides funding for eligible mitigation plans and projects that reduce or eliminate risk to people and property from future disasters. The Hazard Mitigation Assistance grant programs focus on long-term solutions to break the cycle of disaster damage.

While each program has its own unique requirements, the funds are awarded to reduce losses, promote individual and community resilience, and result in safer communities. For example, launched in 2020, the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) is a pre-disaster hazard mitigation program with the following guiding principles:

- Support communities through building their capability and capacity.
- Encourage and enable innovation.
- Promote partnerships.
- Enable large projects.
- Maintain flexibility.
- Provide consistency.

The *Guides to Expanding Mitigation* support the guiding principles of BRIC and other mitigation grant programs by highlighting opportunities for innovative partnerships that build community capability and capacity while meeting multiple community benefits. The guides can help community officials take the first step toward building new partnerships and more effective projects. The guides also provide information about funding sources outside of FEMA, such as federal grants (e.g., Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery funds) and state, local, philanthropic or private opportunities.

EMERGENCY MANAGERS AS RISK AMBASSADORS

Emergency managers are uniquely positioned to collaborate with new partners on mitigation projects and serve as risk ambassadors to the Whole Community.

While resilient communities rely on a diverse array of highly technical professionals, local emergency managers often know more about local risk information that could influence others' decisions. For example, a scientific report or periodic engineering study may not capture critical areas of interest that experience repetitive flooding, frequent rockslides or seasonal ice jams. Emergency managers are aware of these details and are able to share this collective disaster knowledge with community partners to facilitate more sustainable investments. When emergency managers engage the Whole Community early and often, residents can grow into partners in response and emergency managers can grow into community allies.



Photo: Smiling friends in discussion

RESOURCES

Guides to Expanding Mitigation

<https://www.fema.gov/mitigation-risk-reduction>

Link to all available Guides to Expanding Mitigation.

FEMA Hazard Mitigation Planning

<https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/risk-management/hazard-mitigation-planning>

Review standards and guidance for the planning process.

FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance

<https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation>

Learn about currently available mitigation grant programs.

Mitigation Action Portfolio

https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-08/fema_mitigation-action-portfolio-support-document_08-01-2020_0.pdf

Showcases mitigation projects to provide practitioners with examples of activities.

A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, Themes, and Pathways for Action

https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema_whole-community_120211.pdf

Review strategic guidance around Whole Community concepts.

Community Lifelines Implementation Toolkit

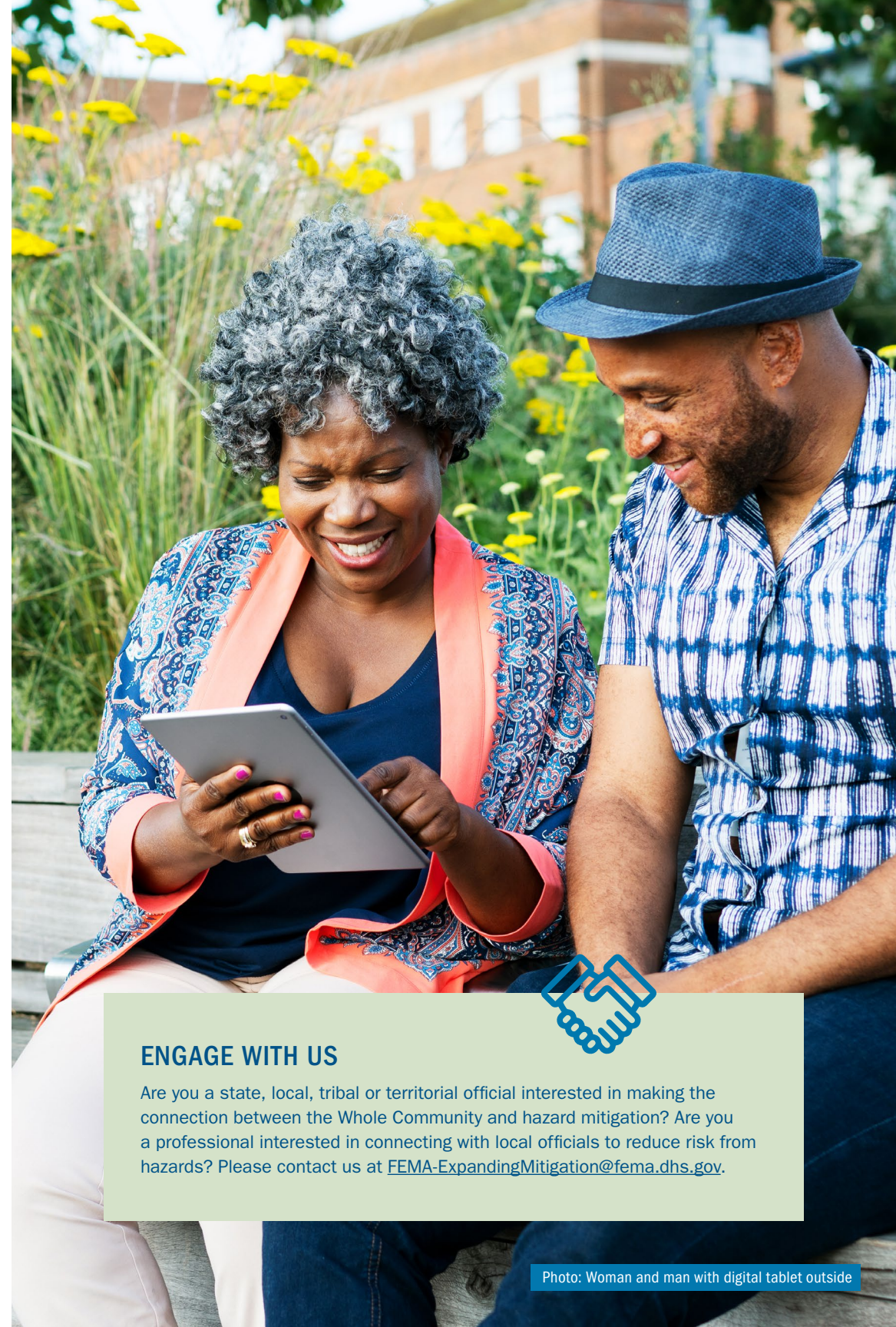
<https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-05/CommunityLifelinesToolkit2.0v2.pdf>

Comprehensive information and resources for implementing lifelines during incident response.

National Mitigation Investment Strategy

https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-10/fema_national-mitigation-investment-strategy.pdf

National strategy for advancing mitigation investment.



ENGAGE WITH US

Are you a state, local, tribal or territorial official interested in making the connection between the Whole Community and hazard mitigation? Are you a professional interested in connecting with local officials to reduce risk from hazards? Please contact us at FEMA-ExpandingMitigation@fema.dhs.gov.

Photo: Woman and man with digital tablet outside

