

FEMA Region 3: State Hazard Mitigation Plan Engagement Strategy

FEMA Region 3 recommends that states develop an engagement strategy before starting the state hazard mitigation plan (HMP) update. This strategy will guide your planning process. It outlines when and how information is exchanged with all plan participants. This worksheet walks through key considerations for developing this strategy.

Getting Started: Identifying Plan Participants

Developing an engagement strategy before kicking off your state's HMP update will help make sure the right partners share the right information at the right time. Working with diverse partners and resources can greatly improve statewide resilience while also building a comprehensive state mitigation program. It will also help the state better understand the level of effort needed for the HMP update. This starts with identifying who should be involved.

Who Should Be Involved?

Plan participants include the following:

- **Plan Owner:** state's hazard mitigation planning authority.
- **Plan Stakeholders:** federal, state, regional, local and tribal agencies; colleges and universities; private entities, including private nonprofit organizations; or quasi-governmental authorities and special districts like port authorities or utility districts that perform critical functions.

The plan must describe how these agencies and stakeholders were given the opportunity to provide meaningful input during plan development. At a minimum, the plan must describe how the state coordinated with other agencies and interested groups in the following sectors: emergency management; economic development; land use and development; housing; health and social services; infrastructure; and natural and cultural resources.

*The state should also coordinate with agencies and organizations with **climate change** and climate adaptation expertise; state agencies with programs, policies and assistance that support **underserved communities**; and other representatives serving these communities in the mitigation planning process.*

- **Plan Developer:** entity responsible for pulling together all information and analyses to prepare the plan. This can be the state hazard mitigation planner or a planning consultant.



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Recommendations: Your state’s plan stakeholders should not be limited to state agencies. Your state’s planning process should continuously improve and become more inclusive and comprehensive over time with each plan update. Consider how to bring in new partners such as philanthropic, nongovernmental, academic or professional organizations. Explore [FEMA’s Guides to Expanding Mitigation](#) for more ideas about who should be involved. Also, think about including partners who support [Community Lifelines](#).

Consider having your **state leadership (e.g., governor) invite agencies and other stakeholders to participate** in the planning process. This can help establish the plan as a priority and demonstrate commitment the leadership’s commitment to statewide resilience.

Considerations: Developing an Engagement Strategy

A plan based on an equitable engagement strategy and inclusive risk communication helps guide statewide mitigation investments that reduce risk. A wide range of public and private resources can be used effectively when there is an understanding of statewide needs and capabilities. The following questions and considerations will help you create a robust and interactive engagement strategy for four key components of a state HMP update: Planning Process, Risk Assessment, Capabilities Assessment and Mitigation Strategy.

Planning Process

1. What are the state’s expectations for plan participation for each phase of the plan update?

2. How do plan participants see their role in the update process? Will this be discussed with plan participants? How could a discussion at the start of the process set expectations?

3. How can each plan participant support the planning process? Provide examples of how they participated in the previous plan update. What improvements would the state like to see in this update?

4. List how many meetings you will hold during the planning process, how they will be delivered, and who will be invited. Will there be meetings for each sector, focusing on sector-specific questions?

Reminder: The plan must describe how the state coordinated with other agencies and interested groups representing the following sectors: emergency management; economic development; land use and development; housing; health and social services; infrastructure; and natural and cultural resources.

5. Are there upcoming meetings or events the state can use to engage plan participants?

6. How will data requests be made to plan participants (e.g., electronically, in-person hard copy at meetings, etc.)? What is the desired timeframe for response?

7. When and how does the state expect plan participants to give input?

8. What data, plans, reports and projects should plan participants expect to review or provide? Research what information is available through existing efforts (e.g., climate adaption plans, capital improvement plans, ongoing Hazard Mitigation Assistance grant projects, etc.). Also provide the opportunity for open exploration by the other agencies.

9. Has the state identified a plan developer? If so, what is their role within your engagement strategy?

Recommendation: Use the kickoff meeting for the state HMP update to bring all partners to the table. There, you can use your engagement strategy to set expectations for participation and information sharing. The kickoff meeting should lay out the planning process for all participants. It should clearly explain their important role in completing the plan update.

Risk Assessment

1. How will risk data be shared with plan participants prior to completing the risk assessment?

2. How will plan participants provide new risk information?

3. What types of forms will be used to collect data? Are they hard copies or electronic?

4. How will plan participants provide information on assets (e.g., structures, infrastructure, vulnerable populations, etc.)? What type of assets should be provided?

Reminder: *The plan must consider state-owned and operated assets. Also consider critical facilities as they relate to the sectors and community lifelines.*

5. How will [Community Lifelines](#) be included in the risk assessment? How will plan participants help identify these lifelines?

6. How will the asset information be included in the plan?

7. How will risk assessment results be shared with plan participants (e.g., a group meeting or one-on-one sessions)? How will their feedback be used in the plan?

8. Will the plan prioritize at-risk community assets? If so, what are the criteria and how will plan participants be involved in prioritization?

9. Will plan participants be asked to develop problem statements? Problem statements are concise statements that identify key issues or problems with vulnerable assets. The more specific the problem statement, the easier it is to find solutions.

Capabilities Assessment

1. How will plan participants work together to review all mitigation capabilities?

2. What criteria will plan participants use to evaluate their mitigation capabilities? What specific questions should they ask themselves?

3. How will the state include updated capabilities in the plan?

4. How will plan participants consider actions and opportunities to address identified needs and improvements?

Recommendations: Host a workshop to walk through and assess statewide capabilities. Ensure that all plan stakeholders are part of this workshop. This should be an opportunity to align mitigation efforts and identify needs and barriers to enhanced resilience.

Mitigation Strategy

1. What considerations will the state provide to plan participants for developing actions that mitigate the impact to risks?

2. How will plan participants be asked to review previously identified mitigation actions? How will their input be reflected in the plan?

3. How will plan participants be asked to use risk assessment findings to develop mitigation actions? How will their input be used in the plan?

4. How will plan participants be asked to use capabilities assessment findings to develop mitigation actions that improve coordination, data development, funding opportunities, etc.? How will their input be used in the plan?

5. Will plan participants be asked to solve for specific problem statements and focused areas of concern? If so, how?

6. How will plan participants help prioritize actions that mitigate risks?

7. Will engagement during mitigation strategy development be one-on-one with each plan participant, or in a group setting? What forms will be given out, and will they be electronic or hard copy?

Recommendations: Host a mitigation action strategy workshop. Ask participants to come prepared with at-risk assets or problem statements included in the risk assessment. At the workshop, talk about various ways to resolve each problem statement. Be sure to discuss funding opportunities. Also, emphasize the importance of considering the four types of mitigation actions: (1) Local Planning and Regulations; (2) Structure and Infrastructure Projects; (3) Natural Systems Protection; and (4) Education and Awareness Programs. This will help identify a wide range of actions and project types to address specific risks and vulnerabilities. Results of the Capabilities Assessment should be introduced during this workshop to better understand opportunities to strengthen your state’s capability to implement mitigation action.

For more information, contact your FEMA Region 3 planner.