

Take Action | Communications Plan

WHO

Guidance for the practitioner and core team in the Take Action step.

WHAT

Guidance from [Moving from faith-based to tested adaptation process and approach: how will we know we're adapting](#) includes elements to consider in a communications plan and a sample template.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Use the following ([Climate Adaptation Communications Plan Guidance](#)) to help develop a communications plan (see [sample template](#)), updating and changing language as necessary for the community.

IMPLEMENTATION EXAMPLES

Example 1. Identify and seek opportunities for funding

Chapter six in [Resilience Rhody: An Actionable Vision for Addressing the Impacts of Climate Change in Rhodes Island](#) provides an overview of barriers to funding and strategies for overcoming and various existing and future funding mechanisms.

Example 2. Create a plan to monitor and share lessons learned

Each year, the City of Tallahassee provides an [annual report on the progress](#) of goals and strategies outlined in their [original resilience plan](#). This report provides a “progress bar” and actions that were taken to make progress.

Example 3. Implementation of Nature-based Solutions

The following example is from [Incorporating Nature-based Solutions into Community Climate Adaptation Planning](#), where you'll find additional examples in Chapter 8. The Take Action step's objectives can be seen throughout this example.

Using Living Shorelines to Protect Alabama's Gulf Coast

Oyster reefs have disappeared from large areas of the Gulf Coast due to overfishing, pollution, disease, and storm-related damage. Because oyster reefs absorb wave energy, they protect shorelines from coastal erosion during storms. They also provide habitat for fish, crabs, and birds, and improve water quality by filtering nutrients and sediment. Over the coming century, rising sea levels and storm surge are likely to increase rates of coastal erosion and shoreline change, particularly in areas where natural buffers such as nearshore reefs and coastal vegetation have disappeared. In many areas, natural buffers have been replaced by hardening measures such as bulkheads, seawalls, and jetties that stabilize the

immediate area, but these may have detrimental impacts on adjacent shorelines by changing the movement of sediment. The shoreline is no further threatened by rising sea levels and elevated storm surge.

Project Goals

The goal of this project was to create a natural buffer (e.g., “living shoreline”) by restoring oyster reefs, protecting the shoreline from storm surge and sea level rise while also providing wildlife habitat and water filtration services. Project activities were focused on:

- Restoring oyster habitat and associated ecosystem services on two tracts in Mobile County;
- Stabilizing and restoring 0.3 miles of shoreline; and
- Creating jobs for residents of Mobile County, primarily related to fisheries and ecosystem restoration.

Implementation and Outcomes

To implement this project The Nature Conservancy in Alabama obtained a \$2.9 million grant from NOAA through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The funds were designated for oyster restoration efforts, and to accomplish this TNC partnered with the Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL), Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources State Lands Division, and the National Wildlife Federation, as well as many community volunteers. The project was conducted between November 2009 and September 2012, when TNC utilized three different restoration techniques at two locations (Mobile Bay and Portersville Bay). These techniques included placing bagged shells, reef balls, and ReefBLK (SM) cages each along 500 meters of shoreline (1,500 in total in total) to see which technique was most successful for oyster seeding and reef building. There was a 4-month delay during the course of the project, when the April 2010 Deepwater Horizon accident occurred. However, a number of local fishermen and other people whose jobs were displaced by the oil spill contributed to the project.

The Nature Conservancy conducted post-restoration monitoring of the sites to determine whether the techniques were successful and created several outreach initiatives including K-12 lesson plan development and teacher training workshops, an outdoor display, and signage near the restoration sites. Overall, The Nature Conservancy project team created 3 acres of oyster reefs along two miles of shoreline, as well as 30 acres of tidal marsh and seagrass habitats. The project created a total of 30 full-time jobs and contributed to the jobs of over 100 others including scientists, engineers, laborers, and project coordinators.

The success of this project has facilitated the creation of a longer-term program called the 100-1000: Restore Coastal Alabama Partnership. The goal of the program, which includes over 40 public and private partners, is to build 100 miles of oyster reefs and restore 1,000 acres of marsh and seagrass to promote coastal resilience and economic growth in the region. Specifically, they are focused on providing habitat for oyster larvae, restoring nursery habitat for commercial and recreational fish, reducing wave energy and shoreline erosion, and stabilizing sediments.

Upon completion of this project, TNC continues to maintain and monitor 10 other living shoreline projects along the Alabama Gulf Coast.

Climate Adaptation Communications Plan Guidance

An essential element of successful adaptation and of measuring success is to have a means by which that effort is understood by all interested parties not only in the development of the adaptation strategies and their implementation, but also in relation to how well the process and actions worked or are working to reduce community risk. To that end, communication with those interested parties needs to be undertaken in a manner that shares metric outcomes in as close to real time as possible, so they can also be part of any decision adjustments that are necessary. Additionally it has been noted (Moser 2019) that communicating about the results of measuring adaptation success can provide a sense of optimism for a community around climate change challenges. This section offers guidance and a template for a Climate Adaptation Communications Plan.

Audience

Who needs to be a part of your adaptation planning, implementation, and monitoring process? The more inclusive this group is, the more likely you are to develop an adaptation plan that is more broadly effective and better received, ideally also addressing more than a single hazard and reducing multiple risks across the community. Consider including and committing to communicate with departments across local government, adjacent jurisdictions, local interest and community groups, businesses, educational institutions, and other stakeholders in community success.

Message

What information do the people who are essential to the success of the process need to be informed and active participants? This is not limited to the first steps of the resilience process wherein you identify the challenges and solutions, but must continue through the implementation and monitoring so that decisions can be made going forward as new challenges arise or efforts need to be modified.

Sharing metrics monitoring results

What information do you need to share and when do you need to share it? Monitoring results is some of the most important information to share with process participants. They are the results of the effort and can be cause for celebration or a reminder that additional action is needed. This information should be shared regularly (as it is collected at a predetermined time), with ready access (through an online portal or newsletter type communications) and in an easy to understand manner (such as through graphic representation against targets).

Engaging

A communications plan should not be viewed as a dissemination plan at only the beginning or end of an adaptation process. Rather it should be a way to understand the questions and interests of the community, share the relevant information you have to address those questions and interests, and foster dialogue to explore ideas for subsequent iterations of action.

Sample Plan Template (Quick Start)

----- is undertaking a climate change adaptation planning process with
Community name

Participating entities (local and neighboring government agencies, community groups, academia, business)

Adaptation actions are designed to ensure the persistence or success of -----
Focal community assets

The primarily climate hazards identified through review of information resources and a
community engagement process (-----) are -----
Date or link to event Primary climate hazards

Key vulnerabilities of concern were -----
identified vulnerabilities

An adaptation plan was developed with the following actions and metrics to assess their effectiveness
(-----):
Insert link or citation for full plan

Action	Metric (what, how and by whom will it be measured)
-----	-----
-----	-----
-----	-----
-----	-----

Metrics can be monitored by local government staff, partners, consultants, or community members. In all
cases, results will be shared on a ----- basis through local outlets
Timeline (monthly, quarterly, annually)
including -----
Websites, newsletters, other communications outlets used by the community

Results of the monitoring results will lead to review and possible modification of adaptation actions
following consultation with the original participants in scoping and development of the adaptation actions,
as well as additional stakeholders identified over the course of implementation and monitoring.