

Public Engagement Ideas for Regional Flood Planning Groups

Community Outreach

1. Encourage each of the group members to tap into their personal or organization's social media platforms to help share information and meeting announcements.
 - a. To ensure consistent messaging, create a template for posts where group members can plug in the meeting or deadline details.
 - b. Social media posts tend to perform best when there is a visual component—not just a post with text. When people scroll through social media feeds, text on a graphic may catch their attention more than the text within a post.
 - c. Canva.com is a free platform that offers templates for social media posts, presentations, letters, and more; graphics; and photos. It is easy to customize a graphic for social media, such as one that has brief text on it.
2. Connect with local utilities and MUDs to include upcoming regional flood planning meetings on their water utility statements that are printed and mailed to customers.
3. Create an annual or quarterly list of community events in the region. Contact the event organizers to inquire about participating, such as through a table or by providing a flyer or other materials for attendees.
 - a. For example, National Night Out occurs the first Tuesday of each October (10/4/22) in Texas. Regional flood planning group members could divide and conquer to attend as many neighborhood events as possible to distribute literature and encourage others to become active participants in the flood planning process.
4. Reach out to HOAs and local elected officials' offices in the region to ask if they will include meeting announcements and/or ads in their newsletters.
5. Partner with local chambers of commerce to sponsor or seek a community sponsor who will purchase promotional items or ads in local newspapers, radio spots, billboards, and chamber printed materials.
6. Contact local or conglomerate radio stations to advertise at a reduced rate or for free.
7. Post meeting dates on public event calendars.
8. Create a list of community groups, like Rotary clubs and Lions Clubs, that may have speaking opportunities and/or newsletters. Start the list by asking planning group members for their affiliations. Identify group member/s that would be appropriate speakers to offer.
9. Collect meeting attendees' email addresses and contact info for future correspondence and meeting follow-up.
 - a. A short follow-up email to each attendee would be a thoughtful, quick way to engage and keep open the line of communication.
10. Print buttons or stickers that say something such as, "Ask me about flood planning," that group members can wear to events.

Media Relations (*see attached sample materials*)

1. Create a media list that includes key media contacts in the region. Group media contacts by media market/metro area. Include TV stations that have news programs (ABC, NBC, FOX, CBS, CW, Spectrum, Telemundo, etc.) and online/print publications. Local radio stations, such as NPR affiliates, should also be included.
 - a. If unsure of specific contacts, call the news outlet. Most TV stations prefer story ideas to go through a dedicated news desk email address.
2. Prior to each meeting or other planning group event, email a media advisory to local media (typically broadcast TV and print/online outlets) to invite them to the meeting and/or announce it to their audiences.

- a. Most TV stations don't make a decision on what they're covering until the day of, unless it is a very early morning meeting or event.
 - b. When sending a media advisory to a TV station, a best practice is to send it one week before the event, and then follow up via email or phone 1–2 days before the event.
 - c. Identify in advance your media spokesperson/interviewee (for example, the region's chair), and include that person's name and title in the media advisory.
 - d. Smaller newspapers that only publish once per week or twice monthly may require longer notice than a daily paper.
3. To announce public comment periods and other big milestones or activities, consider posting a press release to the planning group website and distributing it to media in the planning region.