
COMMUNITY PRIMER

This outline is a sample outline. Feel free to adapt this or create a different structure for your primer so that it is specific to your community's resources and location.

Primer Outline

A. Executive Summary/Handout

Create an Executive Summary that provides a quick overview of the entire report, and can also be used as a stand alone handout for outreach. The Executive Summary should highlight some of the more meaningful trends, covering both natural and socioeconomic systems of the community. Provide a short written overview of the project and why this information is needed. It is often easiest to write this last by pulling information from each of the following sections.

B. Introduction

The introduction to the Community Primer should describe the seriousness of climate impacts and how they manifest at the local level, depending on the current status of natural and socioeconomic systems. The introduction needs to create a positive vision for how your community can develop climate resilience. Emphasize that all sectors and populations will need to coordinate and collaborate in order to succeed. Describe how having a sound understanding of ongoing trends and climate stressors across the different sectors is vital for developing resilience strategies that protect the entire community.

C. Overview of climate trends and impacts

The section on climate trends and impacts should be short (about a page) and focus on the trends that matter most for the region. A bulleted list or table with simple and intuitive reporting of the trends is most useful. An overview of historical changes is important, so that readers understand that changes are already occurring and documented. This also helps them accept the model projections as a continuation of those historical trajectories. Be sure and refer the reader back to the Climate Trends Primer for more information.

D. Natural Systems of the region

Your overview does not have to be exhaustive, but it can be helpful to ask a local ecologist to do a quick review of the scientific literature and share with you what types of changes and impacts are expected to natural systems in your area. A local university or state agency office may already have this information compiled. Regardless of who does the work, the

natural systems overview should be relatively short (5 pages or less), so limit it to the most relevant features. Some features to consider include:

- ▶ Overview of the dominant types of systems (forests, marshes, prairies, mountain ranges, major rivers, beaches, etc.) and vegetation (a map is helpful)
- ▶ Important ecosystems of state, county, or national parks, other natural areas, and rare ecosystems.
- ▶ Ecosystem function, such as habitat connectivity for wildlife movement; wetlands and riparian zones as biodiversity hotspots; climate refuges associated with cool microclimates, mature forests, and north-facing slopes; carbon storage in forests and grasslands; connectivity and fish passage in rivers and streams, etc.
- ▶ Important species of the area, including iconic species, game species or species protected under the Endangered Species Act
- ▶ Ongoing and future potential coastal impacts, including loss of coastal marsh, mangroves, beaches, key wildlife habitats, and nearshore marine areas
- ▶ Non-native and invasive species that are already an issue, or that are expected to invade the area as the climate changes
- ▶ Effects of ocean acidification on shellfish and other marine organisms
- ▶ Other relevant natural resources and the associated climate impacts
- ▶ Relevant climate change research:
 - Predicted changes in dominant vegetation or wildlife species ranges based on modeling such as “climate envelope” models or functional vegetation models.
 - Vulnerability assessments for important species of wildlife
 - Information on locally-important species, such as salmon, game species, subsistence resources, or others. Look for research and stories on climate change and ocean acidification (and impacts to shellfish), loss of high elevation species (such as pika), tick outbreaks in moose, or other locally-relevant case studies. These can be told in story form, but it is good to back them up with published research and references

E. Socioeconomic Systems

Similar to the natural systems overview, the socioeconomic overview provides information on many important features, stressors, and trends in the community. It is not meant to be exhaustive, and will act as a supplement to the expert knowledge at the workshop in Step 3.

The socioeconomic overview should be relatively short (no more than 8 pages), so choose which components are most relevant for your community. Provide a short overview of current conditions, ongoing stressors, and potential future trends related to your community.

Consider some of the following:

1. People and the Economy

- ▶ **Employment and the Economy** - It is important to have a common understanding of what the major economic drivers are for the region (Headwater Economics has an online tool you can use for this, but most Counties can also provide this information). Identify growing industries, what types of jobs are available, and what some of the needs for those industries are (such as seasonal workers, clean water, major transportation routes, or energy). Agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and tourism are especially affected by climate impacts.
- ▶ **Population growth** - Summarize population growth, immigration, and emigration trends. This information can often be found through state or county governments.
- ▶ **Tourism, Recreation, and Quality of Life** – Many of the features that draw tourists also provide local residents with recreation, quality of life, and economic opportunities. Oftentimes these come from natural features such as rivers, lakes, or coastlines. Other times they come from cultural attributes such as theaters or music, or infrastructure attributes such as museums or racetracks. Assess these for your community, not only based on economic value, but also on the value they provide for residents' well-being and quality of life.
- ▶ **Health trends and vulnerabilities** - Provide a short overview of some of the major health stressors for the region and identify any specific populations more at risk. Also, identify any new or emerging diseases and/or disease vectors, such as ticks or water-borne infections. Be sure and outline any identified inequities in health, such as people without access to health care, food deserts, or air and water quality issues in specific neighborhoods.
- ▶ **Underrepresented populations** – Identify any socioeconomic inequities among groups, including the historic legacy of racial inequities that have played out in the community. It is also important to determine which populations are currently vulnerable and why. Reports from city or county staff, NGOs, and/or social services agencies should be provide this information. Often, populations particularly vulnerable to climate impacts include outdoor workers, elders, infants, non-English speaking households, trailer park residents (often in flood zones or without air conditioning), people with compromised mental or physical health, incarcerated populations and other high density population (Universities, assisted care facilities, hospitals, etc).
- ▶ **Emergency preparedness and response** – Include any maps of high risk areas for flooding (available through FEMA), wildfire (sources vary) or other natural disasters. Check for redundancy of escape routes during extreme events (check the state department of transportation and/or county or other local emergency response agency). Determine what the current planning process is to address increasing risk of floods, wildfires, heat waves, storm surge, severe storms, and other extreme events.

2. Infrastructure

Summarize the primary sources for water for the community, as well as the current and projected future status for those resources (usually available through the city, county, or water utility). Also, investigate the results from safety inspections for local dams and other flood control infrastructure (regulated by federal and state agencies). Assess the major sources of electricity as well as their sustainability over time (the utility should have a report on source mix and sustainability). Describe the development trends for the community, as well as the surrounding region, if relevant. Be sure and cover the following:

- ▶ **Water supply and flood control**
 - i. Surface and groundwater supply
 - ii. Flood control structures and barriers
 - iii. Dam stability and maintenance
 - iv. Wastewater/stormwater management
- ▶ **Energy**
 - i. Energy supply
 - ii. Energy distribution
 - iii. Energy trends

3. Cultural Resources

Work with local Tribes to identify indigenous peoples, their traditional lands, and important cultural resources and practices. Tribal customs and livelihoods are often highly dependent on continued access to lands and natural resources that could become threatened by climate change. Because of the close relationship with nature, indigenous people are often able to track and report on climate impacts already occurring. Some topics to cover include:

- ▶ History
- ▶ Traditional Knowledge
- ▶ Subsistence Resources

F. Conclusion

The conclusion brings together many of these disparate topics and paints a picture of the community, in all its complexity. The conclusion should highlight some of the more striking trends, especially those that could be affected by climate change. For example, climate change is expected to affect water quality and availability in many areas. Water intensive industries such as brewing or agricultural production could be at risk and should be highlighted as something to look for during the workshops.

G. References

Be sure and cite all of your references so that the reader can go back to the original source for clarification and additional information.