

# Using Community Surveys in the Climate Ready Communities Framework

## Why use surveys?

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There are two primary reasons to conduct community surveys during your Climate Ready Communities process. First, they serve an important role in community engagement and education. Surveys inform residents about the expected climate changes for the area and increase awareness of the planning effort. Second, the results provide important information you will bring into each of the two stakeholder workshops.

It is important to recognize that these are not going to be, and they do not need to be, statistically significant surveys. There is not a threshold of participation you need to reach, or a set distribution of representation.

## Who to survey?

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Your goal should be to reach as wide as possible across your community. These surveys are an important opportunity to connect with residents who do not normally engage with local planning efforts, as well as a critical way to collect information about populations not usually represented in these conversations. Because the surveys are short and easy to fill out, it is a convenient way for your residents to participate and share their concerns without having to make a large time commitment.

Some specific groups you should outreach to include low-income residents, those experiencing homelessness, those with chronic illness, elders, youth, non-English speaking communities, immigrant populations, undocumented populations, and neighborhoods with a history of disinvestment. Consider accessibility concerns regarding language and familiarity/ease with using technology. You may need to engage the services of a translator and/or provide printed copies of the survey.

The information you collect for your Community Trends Primer will help identify some of these groups for your community, but your Task Force and stakeholder list will be an important source of information as well. You want to ask these people who should get the surveys and if they have ideas for partnerships or other avenues for distributing the surveys.

## When to survey?

You will want to plan for at least two surveys. The first should be distributed after you have collected the information about your climate projections, but at least a few weeks before your first stakeholder workshop. The second should be distributed after you have processed the results from the first workshop, and at least a few weeks before your second stakeholder workshop.



## How to create surveys?

There are many online survey platforms available, with both free and paid versions. A simple internet search should provide a list of options to consider. You may have access to a survey tool that has been used in your department, or by another department, so ask colleagues or a communications office if you have one. If you have a Google account, you may consider using Google Forms. Likewise, if your team uses the Microsoft Office suite of tools you may have access to Microsoft Forms.

In addition to online surveys, consider creating hard copy surveys that can be passed out or left in a public location. Some people are not comfortable using technology, and others may prefer to complete the survey on paper. This can also be an important way to reach populations that are wary of government, especially if you partner with a local community organization to help distribute forms and collect responses.

Be sure to consider accessibility in your survey design by providing surveys in English and any other languages spoken in your community. Try to keep your survey design as easy to use as possible, which includes using high contrast colors, providing alt text for images, and using plain language.

## How to distribute surveys?

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Share the survey via all the official channels available to your department. Use email newsletters, webpage banners, social media, and any other news/media outlets accessible. Your Task Force should also share the surveys with their networks. And ask stakeholders who support the project but are not members of your Task Force to share the survey. Provide text and links for them to easily send the survey out by email and encourage them to share your official social media posts with their networks.

Other options may include:

- Partner with the local library to post signs and paper copies that can be returned to the librarians
- Work with providers at supportive and assisted living facilities to share the survey with residents
- If your community has a public health department, they can help reach out to their patients
- Local faith communities may be able to list information in bulletins and newsletters
- Social service organizations often have email newsletters and may be willing to add a survey link
- Tabling at local in-person events like farmer's markets, art fairs, and other community events

Remember that for some residents a survey that comes directly from the local government may be disregarded. But if a trusted source of information shares the survey and the reasons why it is important to participate, you will have a better chance of reaching more people.

## What questions to ask?

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The general structure for both surveys should include information you want to share with the community and questions to collect information. The first survey is focused on understanding what climate change impacts community members are already experiencing and how they see projected changes affecting their daily lives. The second survey is focused on understanding what types of solutions the community wants to see implemented.

### **Survey #1: Climate Change Vulnerabilities**

Start with a brief introduction of the purpose of the survey and overview of the planning process, then provide a summary of the local climate change trends. The questions you ask in this survey should be focused on what these changes mean for the person taking the survey – how climate change affects their health, safety, homes, jobs, friends, and family members.

A sample survey is provided below. You will need to customize the information so it is relevant for your community.

A note about collecting demographic information. You should collect meaningful demographic information that will help you understand any differences between members of the community. Be selective in what you ask. Often questions related to gender identity, income levels, race, ethnicity, and other personal information can feel intrusive. Be mindful of how many of these types of questions you ask and pay attention to the language of the questions. All demographic questions should be optional, or if required provide an option that says “Choose to not provide a response” so that people can self-select what information they want to share. It may also be useful to provide a brief explanation of why you are asking demographic questions.

## Sample Climate Vulnerability Survey

*We are developing a climate adaptation plan to help our community adapt to climate change impacts that are underway and expected to increase over time.*

*We need your help to understand how climate change will affect our community and the people who live here.*

*Your responses will become part of a larger report that will identify ways to prepare our community for these changes.*

*Please take a few minutes to answer our brief survey.*

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Climate Change Impacts in [Community Name]

- Our area has warmed 2 degrees and is expected to warm 7 to 11 degrees more during the next 60 years.
- We get less snow than we used to and could lose about 75% of our April snowpack by the 2050s.
- We could even have 26-43 days over 90 degrees by the 2050s.
- Both drought and wildfire risk will increase throughout the region.

**Question 1:** How concerned are you about climate change for our community? Choose one (required)

- I am extremely concerned
- I am a little bit concerned
- I am not concerned at all
- I do not know

Comments:

**Question 2:** How much do each of the following potential climate impacts concern you? Select one for each: Not concerned; Some concern, or Very concerned (required)

	Not Concerned	Some Concern	Very Concerned
Impacts to nature (fish, wildlife, forests, and meadows) from heat, flooding, and drought			
Health impacts from heat and smoke			
Loss of homes due to flooding, wildfires			
Loss of jobs and employment opportunities due to climate change			

More people moving here to escape heat and drought elsewhere			
Evacuation and response during events like wildfire and floods			
Food access and security due to flooding, heat, drought, and shipping disruptions			
Impacts to local agriculture from heat, precipitation, flooding, etc.			

**Question 3:** Are there climate impacts not listed above that you are particularly concerned about? Please share them here. (optional)

**Question 4:** What is your favorite thing about our community? What do you love the most about living here? (optional)

Please tell us more about yourself. These questions are optional but will help us understand the needs and concerns of specific populations within our community.

**Question 5:** What is your housing situation? Select one (optional)

- I/We own our home
- I/We are renters
- I/We live with friends or family
- I/We do not have a permanent home
- Visitor
- Other

**Question 6:** Please select the zip code where you live or spend most of your time in the community

[dropdown list of zip codes]

**Question 7:** What is your household income level? (optional)

[dropdown list of income ranges meaningful to your community]

**Question 8:** How do you identify? Select all that apply (optional)

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native

- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Other (fill-in)

**Question 9:** Please provide your name and email address if you would like to learn about more opportunities to be engaged in this climate resilience planning process: (optional)

Name:

Email:

## Survey #2: Climate Resilience Solutions

Start with a brief introduction of the purpose of the survey and overview of the planning process, then provide a summary of the local climate change trends and impacts to the community. The questions you ask will focus on collecting feedback on various climate resilience strategies. Refer to your research into existing plans and documents for what strategies are already in process or being considered in the community.

A sample survey is provided below. You will need to customize the information, so it is relevant for your community.

Please see the previous note under Survey #1 regarding any demographic questions you may ask in this survey.

### Sample Climate Solutions Survey

[Community Name] is working to meet the challenge of climate change by preparing our community for the impacts of climate change, which we are already experiencing.

Thank you for completing this short survey to let us know what you think of the climate change strategies we are considering.

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[Community Name] is already experiencing climate impacts. Many impacts will continue to worsen for some time, even if we reduce emissions. Climate change impacts to our community include:

- Declining snowpack
- Wildfire and smoke
- Loss of species and ecosystems
- Larger storms
- More flooding
- Increasing pests and disease
- Severe heat

These impacts are affecting our economy, infrastructure, natural systems, health, and small-town culture we cherish.

**Question 1:** Please rank the following strategies to prepare for the impacts of climate change from 1-5 based on whether you strongly support it (5), strongly oppose it (1), or fall somewhere in between (2-4). (required)

	1 Strongly Oppose	2	3	4	5 Strongly Support
Protect and connect native habitats so plants and wildlife can move as the climate changes					
Create affordable housing to support local workforce					
Increase public and alternative transportation, walkability, and car-free areas					
Create programs or policies that protect outdoor workers from heat and smoke exposure					
Provide emergency relief services and shelters during extreme events such as heat waves, floods, wildfires, smoke, and others					
Increase outreach to the Latin(x) community around wildfire safety, heat and smoke, and employment opportunities					
Create and expand youth programs/activities that build emotional health					
Ensure ongoing stability of insurance coverage for homeowners and businesses					
Develop programs and policies to help businesses quickly recover from disasters					

**Question 2:** Are there any other strategies we should consider to prepare our community for the impacts of climate change? (optional)

**Question 3:** Is there anything else you would like us to know? (optional)

**Question 4:** To stay informed about this process with periodic updates, please share your name and email address (optional)