

Communication Guidelines

Coastal Hazard Adaptation

April 2014





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1. Introduction

1.1 Why prepare guidelines for coastal adaptation communication?

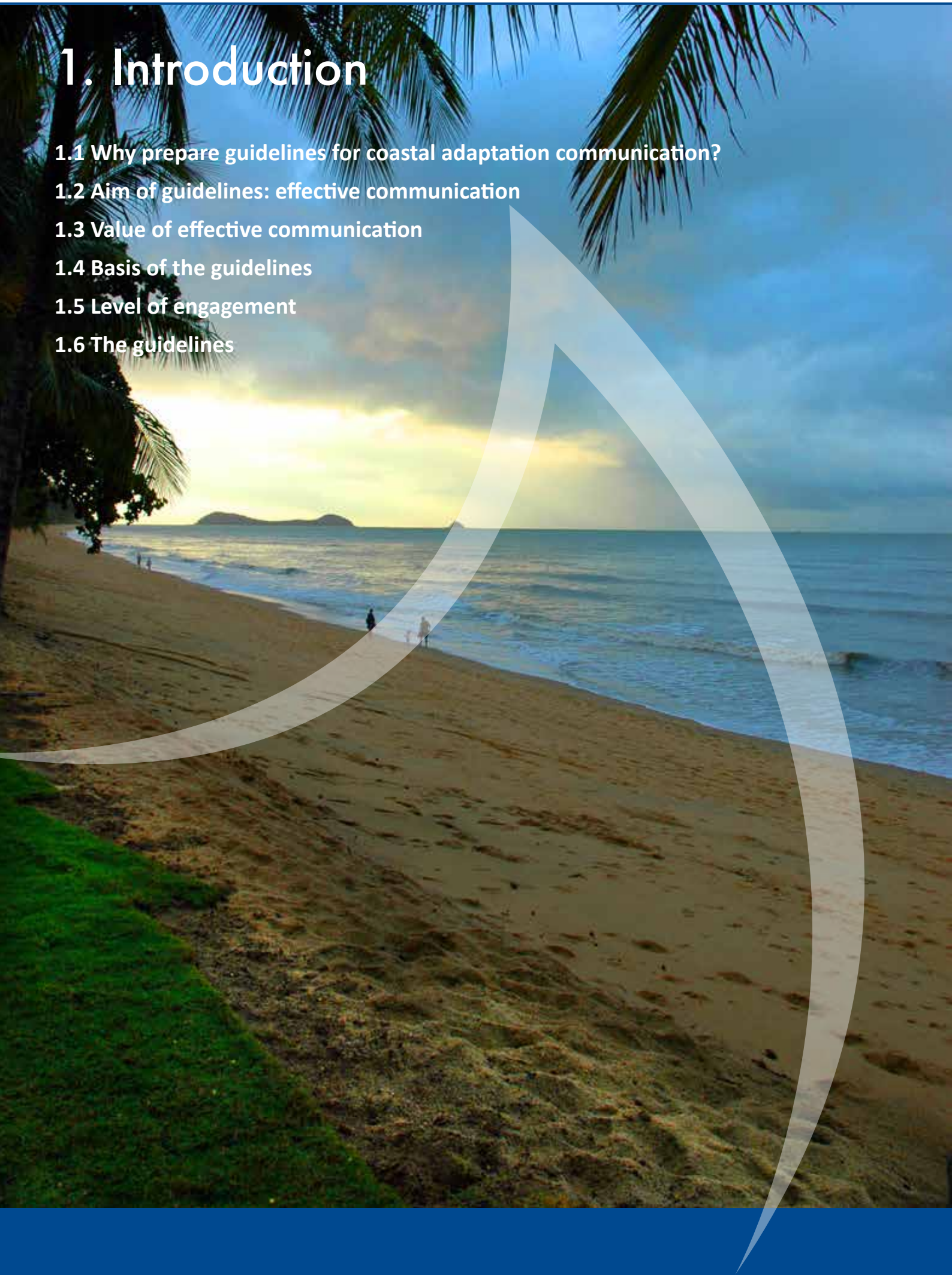
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1.1 Why prepare guidelines for coastal adaptation communication?

Local governments located on or near a coastline must make decisions about managing and responding to unavoidable coastal hazards. This involves responding and adapting to climate change impacts on the coast – specifically sea level rise and storm surge – that lead to inundation of low-lying coastal land and increased erosion. Decisions councils must make include those related to:

- planning, zoning, development and building approvals in present day and expected future hazard areas
- managing council assets in present day and expected future hazard areas, including roads, stormwater outfalls, foreshore amenities and access
- managing foreshore areas for nature conservation, recreation or other public uses that are affected by changing conditions
- emergency management during disasters such as flooding and cyclones.

Councils may also play a leading role in enabling the community to respond by raising awareness of coastal hazards and response options, or providing a framework for joint action by asset owners.

While communication and engagement in relation to coastal adaptation is, in theory, not different from communication for other types of projects, it does require specific attention and a well thought through process. Key reasons for this include:

- Coastal adaptation responds not only to present day coastal risks, but also to risks that develop over time as a result of climate change. Climate change is a subject that remains contentious. It is not easy to comprehend how these impacts may affect our daily lives. While the science of climate change agrees about the direction of change, there is and will remain uncertainty about the rate of change.
- Coastal adaptation may pose significant threats to public and private assets. Homes are often the most significant material possession people have, and are often intended to provide for security at retirement. It is understandable that communities may feel threatened and express themselves strongly about how they think adaptation should be done, how it is governed and who should pay. The often strong views of directly affected stakeholders may or may not be supported by the wider community and ratepayers.

- Somewhat understandably, many governments have been reticent to communicate boldly on the matter. Bold communication can often be lost amid conflicting views of stakeholders and community groups. Despite this, local governments are required to make decisions that factor in coastal adaptation issues and concerns, while continuing to remain the focal point for lobbying around action for present day risk. These are difficult decisions to make, and they will not go away. By showing strong leadership and adopting a transparent approach to communication, councils have an opportunity to enhance their role as a trusted community partner.

Each coastal hazard assessment and adaptation project involving council should have a **communication or engagement plan** designed to be appropriate to the intricacy and geographical scale of the project, the complexity of the local issues, the ownership of assets affected and the availability of council resources.

1.2 Aim of guidelines: *effective communication*

These guidelines aim to support local government staff and elected members in preparing and adopting public participation processes around coastal adaptation and to increase engagement and participation by the community and other stakeholders in these processes.

Effective communication is essential in developing supported risk management and adaptation responses in the local government sphere.

- Effective communication builds trust as well as understanding.
- Communication should take advantage of the available channels, understand their effectiveness, and frame the message clearly and in a way that can be heard by the recipient. It should be developed for a range of audiences – with the broad message widely available and more detail accessible to those that need or request it.
- Communication should provide opportunities for community and stakeholders to easily respond to engagement opportunities and be heard on a continuing basis.

Communication is most effective, and arguably *only* effective, if the key messages are clear and unambiguous. The communicator must be satisfied with their understanding of, and involvement with, the project.

1.3 Value of effective communication

Effective communicating and engaging with the owners, managers and users of built, cultural and natural assets of value to the community will help foster support for coastal management and adaptation.

Often a council's responsibilities are affected by other agencies' actions. Communication and engagement with other land management agencies active in coastal areas can help coordinate actions in a way that improves outcomes, reduces costs and develops a consistent approach to issues.

Effective communication and engagement by council about coastal hazard assessment and adaptation projects can:

- educate the community about coastal hazards and the associated risks, including increasing awareness and understanding of normal coastal dynamics, which many coastal residents do not understand well
- provide information and mapping about the location and severity of the hazards, allowing community members to make informed decisions about property investments in the area
- broaden community awareness of possible adaptation responses, including understanding of options, implications, effectiveness and costs; improved awareness can also reduce anxiety and enable positive responses
- clarify roles and responsibilities, specifically making clear what responsibility council does or does not have in regard to adaptation, including for assets that it does not own
- demonstrate leadership in terms of adaptation
- engage the community in decision-making.

Engaging with the community can make decision-makers more aware of:

- the community's values and priorities
- the concerns and issues that need to be addressed
- gaps in information and understanding that need to be dealt with
- new options not previously considered that may have merit.

Where residents feel they have been heard and their concerns acknowledged, they are more likely to support the plans and responses that come out of the process. Engagement and communication also enhance the community's ability to adapt by enabling them to make

informed choices about where and what to invest in. Public participation processes can help people better understand the sometimes conflicting views of groups within the community. Part of the engagement should be communicating about how conflicting interests will be managed and decisions and policies determined.

1.4 Basis of the guidelines

The guidelines have been developed to be consistent with the IAP² **Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation** (International Association for Public Participation – IAP²) that state public participation:

- is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process
- includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision
- promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-makers
- seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those affected by or interested in a decision
- seeks input from participants in designing how they participate
- provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way
- communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

1.5 Level of engagement

In any coastal adaptation project, the level of communication and engagement will vary, from informing those concerned about the project and findings to empowering the community to make their own decisions.

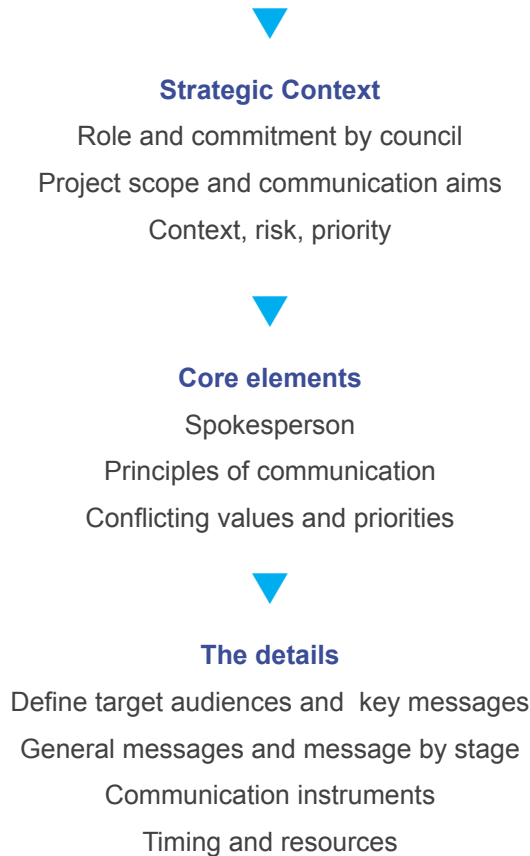
There are broadly five levels of community engagement (IAP²) as is illustrated in the figure below. Any given all engagement activities occur at one of these levels. The level selected should most suit the aims and context of the engagement, as shown in figure 2 on page 7. The higher levels of engagement typically employ elements of the lower levels as part of the overall process.

The communication plan will describe the appropriate engagement process based on the strategic context. This is determined by considering the role and commitment of council; the scope and aim of the project; and context, risk and priority of the work, as described in more detail in the guidelines.

1.6 The guidelines

The guidelines for communication are detailed in the following sections. The order of the sections can be used to provide the structure of a communication plan.

FIGURE 1 DIAGRAM OF COMMUNICATION PLAN



The first three items – the *strategic context* – put the plan into perspective, so that it gets an appropriate amount of attention and resources without being overblown.

The next three items – the *core elements* – centre the process around an agreed spokesperson or persons, an accepted approach and the consideration of how to deal with conflicts that arise.

The final items – the *details* of the communication plan – cover ‘the who’, ‘the what’ and ‘the how’ of the communication.

The next 10 sections of this document describe these key elements in more detail, discussing why these elements are important, and providing ideas on how to do them well and, in some cases, examples of what can go wrong if they are ignored or done badly.

This document is not meant to be a prescriptive, step-by-step plan. It is a guide to an overall approach that captures the main elements to be taken into account, with examples and tips from experience elsewhere to help guide implementation.

Effective communication should not be treated as a mechanical, step-by-step process but requires a flow of ideas between participants, responsiveness, and awareness of context and meaning. It should be flexible when required. Not responding suggests you are not listening. At the same time, **clarity about the strategic context – role, intent and priority – means that when responding, the project and communication activities are not deflected away from what matters and why the project exists.**

FIGURE 2 LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Inform ▶	Consult ▶	Involve ▶	Collaborate ▶	Empower
Public participation goal:				
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public

Source: IAP²

The 10 elements can be expressed as questions to be answered (numbers indicate the section where each element is elaborated):

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- 2.1 What is council's agreed role and commitment?

- 2.2 What are the scope and objectives of the project and of communication, by stage?

- 2.3 Has the context been understood, project and communication risk analysed and the priority and significance of the project for council and the community articulated?

CORE ELEMENTS

- 3.1 Is there an identified, spokesperson(s) who is regularly briefed?

- 3.2 Have clear, agreed principles for communication been adopted and shared with the project team?

- 3.3 Have principles been adopted to help frame discussions in a constructive manner and assist in addressing conflicting values and priorities?

THE DETAILS

- 4.1 Have target audiences and specific messages been identified?

- 4.2 Have the messages for each stage of the project been considered?

- 4.3 Have communication instruments been selected for each audience and stage consistent with the intended level of engagement?

- 4.4 Has a timeline and allocation of adequate resources been set?

The 10 elements listed should be developed in sequence in preparing the plan. However, the delivery of the plan should fit in with the project stages the communication relates to, not necessarily in the above chronological order.

For larger projects that last over periods of, say, four months or more, the plan should be reviewed at key project milestones or after major external events (storms, elections, media attention), reviewing each of these elements as a checklist to ensure the plan is still valid.

Even in a simple, low budget plan these elements should be considered and addressed, at least in a modest way.

In the sections that follow, blue boxes contain tips, examples and quotes that illustrate some of the concepts presented.

The 'quotes' presented are taken from actual public consultation processes for coastal hazards and adaptation planning. In many cases, these are not literal quotes from an individual but a synthesis of many comments and feedback received that encapsulate the words of respondents. A few are literal quotes from specific respondents.

2. Strategic Context

- 2.1 Agree on council's role and commitment
- 2.2 Clarity about scope and objectives
- 2.3 Understand the context, risks and priority

2.1 Agree on council's role and commitment

As the initiator of a coastal adaptation project, council should state its role and commitment to the project and to coastal adaptation in general. If council does not yet know or agree on its position, then the project may include making progress toward an agreed position.

Council's role and commitment may range from:

- engaging with the community at an appropriate level: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower
- raising awareness among affected communities or the broader community about coastal risks, now and in the future, particularly when new or updated information becomes available
- enhancing community resilience by showing how the community and individuals can adapt to identified hazards (without actually deciding on adaptation options)
- raising awareness about the implications of living in, moving into and/or trying to develop/build in an area with identified coastal hazards (planning scheme provisions, development limitations)
- committing to provide project information in a timely, open and transparent manner
- developing adaptation plans for their community, including a framework on funding and governance (who pays, who decides).

Council needs to communicate its role and commitment when releasing information related to the project. This needs to be specifically incorporated in the communication plan. All internal stakeholders need to be aware of and understand council's role and commitment early in the project.

By undertaking a project, council may raise expectations among members of the community and other stakeholders. For instance, by initiating a project to investigate the coastal risks from erosion and inundation at present and in the future, the community involved may expect council will take on responsibility to protect private and other properties against these risks, although this is not necessarily so. The entire coastal zone and areas subject to other natural hazards may then come to have the same expectation of council. In these instances, councils should make strong, clear statements about what is committed to and what is not and repeat them regularly in communication.

If council does not know or agree on its own position on some issues, then this too should be made clear as part of the communication. If council's role and commitment are not yet agreed, it needs to be clear how this will be resolved and communicated during the project.

Many adaptation projects are conducted jointly with state government agencies or others. Where there are project partners, ideally they should also be able to articulate their commitment to the process.

In planning communication for the Tasmanian Coastal Adaptation Pathways projects, participating state government agencies committed to:

- work with the local community to identify a balance between realising the values of living in and occupying coastal areas while managing risk to acceptable levels
- help identify effective adaptation responses to future coastal hazards arising from climate change
- identify factors that may inhibit the community's ability to respond and to develop approaches that address these factors
- identify factors that may inhibit the government's ability to respond and to develop strategies that address these factors.

2.2 Clarity about scope and objectives

The communication plan should clearly list the project aims, the overall engagement aims and the aims at each stage of the project.

2.2.1 Project aims

To enable concise and factual communication, it is **important that the scope of the coastal adaptation project and its objectives are clear**. There needs to be a clear statement of the issues to be addressed, geographic area and time horizon being dealt with by the project or process and a rationale about why these have been chosen.

Is this:

- a particular project (e.g. release of hazard mapping – with possible amendments to the planning scheme, selection of a short-term hazard management response, etc.)
- an ongoing process (e.g. pursuit of a long-term adaptation pathway), or
- a project about adaptation actions by the wider community rather than council or other spheres of government?

In general, those who are affected by the hazards and the responses, and those who pay for these responses, should be involved in the decision-making process. Council may then implement a decision, either alone or in conjunction with other asset owners and managers on behalf of those involved, while taking all (potentially conflicting) views into consideration.

2.2.2 Communication aims

On the basis of the project scope and objectives, it is then possible to determine the scope and objectives of communication or engagement. The aims of communication should reflect council's role and commitment to the project and coastal adaptation in general.

Communication aims refer to the intent and expected outcomes of communication. Communication may be used as part of a process to inform, consult, involve, collaborate or empower as shown in Figure 1 and reproduced below.

The overall communication goal will be somewhere on the above spectrum of public participation. In most cases, coastal adaptation projects are restricted to informing, consulting, involving and collaborating.

Informing would be regarded as a minimum where hazard information is being developed for a coastal area. **Consulting** would be considered the minimum desirable outcome for the development of any policy response or proposed regulatory changes or physical works, allowing for feedback on proposed actions.

Moving from consulting to **involving** allows a greater scope for participants to offer ideas, critique options that don't address their needs or values, and have an iterative role in refining solutions. It uses many of the same tools as consulting but would have more 'rounds' of contact as the project proceeds. Increased input has the potential to produce a more 'refined' and widely supported solution.

LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Inform ▶	Consult ▶	Involve ▶	Collaborate ▶	Empower
Public participation goal:				
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public

Source: IAP²

Collaborating offers a deeper level of participation, including giving the stakeholders a greater role in problem definition and framing, information gathering and problem solving. Active involvement would need to start earlier in the project and be sustained with repeated contact and discussion up to the final decision. In addition to workshops and meetings, participants might sit on committees with specific assignments or be represented on information gathering working groups.

Collaborating demands much more time and attention from the community participants and council. Fewer community members will have the level of commitment and capacity to maintain this and there is a risk it will start to narrow the scope of involvement to those with a lot at stake or a strong agenda to push. The additional involvement may not greatly enhance the result where technical issues are major determinants of practical options.

Empowerment permits participants to determine the preferred solution. The extent to which this is achievable or desirable needs to be considered with care. Coastal adaptation management decision-making needs to consider a wide range of interests, beyond just the immediately affected coastal community. Statutory requirements, legal liability and similar considerations mean this may not be a practical option for coastal adaptation involving a wide range of asset owners and interests.

Full empowerment may permit ‘the community’ to resolve the issue independently where the participants can adapt their own assets without impacts on others, subject to normal statutory approvals. In this instance, they may obtain and allocate resources, resolve conflicts and accept responsibilities for outcomes. Full empowerment may require establishing new formal governance structures, partnerships or joint ventures, contracts, and legal responsibilities.

The Guideline for Preparing a Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy (DEHP, 2013) indicates there is the need for a systematic approach to communication and consultation involving a process with a number of communication and engagement milestones. A consistent interactive approach to communication around a project for coastal adaptation is most effective if it involves:

- a number of moments of engagement and communication
- communication with a range of stakeholders, including the community (section 3.3)
- communication to enhance the awareness of coastal risks, and how they may change over time
- identifying and recognising tangible and intangible values of significance to the community

- communication to engage the community and other stakeholders to explore levels of acceptable, tolerable and unacceptable risk and ways to adapt.

2.2.3 Communication aims by project stage

In general, the communication aims will vary by each stage of the project. In the early stages, up to the risk assessments and the exploration of adaptation options, the aim of communication tends to be on *informing* about:

- why this project is undertaken
- what the key risks and their implications are
- what can be done to address the risks
- how and when the community can have a say
- who can answer questions not covered by the information provided.

Once the risks are analysed, implications (trade-offs, costs and benefits) understood and possible ways to adapt have been identified, there is an opportunity to *consult, get involved and collaborate* with the community, about:

- how the community prefers to adapt to the identified risks
- how council can support them to adapt, including who will be responsible to pay and who will make decisions about, and maintain, any adaptation works.

Later in the project, communication is mostly aimed at informing the community and other stakeholders about the outcomes of this process.

Sustainable funding

Discussions about who should decide and who should pay remain unresolved in many cases. Within this policy vacuum, councils may take on the responsibility to make decisions, fund the costs and provide for governance. Where no protective action is taken, recovery of damage from coastal storms is significantly borne by all three spheres of government. All other things remaining equal, risks and related adaptation costs are set to rise due to climate change.

Currently, where those who benefit from adaptation works do not contribute in an equitable way, it will become unsustainable in the medium to long-term for government to continue to fund adaptation actions. The wider community that ultimately bears the costs will, at some stage, not be willing to continue to subsidise

people who choose to occupy hazardous locations. There needs to be incentives in place for people to make informed decisions about occupying hazardous locations and the risks and costs associated with doing so.

If there is a stage to develop governance and funding arrangements of adaptation, it should involve collaboration with the community and other stakeholders, especially if they are expected to contribute to the costs of adaptation.

During the implementation stage, communities and stakeholders need to be informed about works, their purpose, relevant timelines, and how they may affect daily routines. With adaptation that does not involve physical works, such as planning scheme amendments or changes to the rating system, the community and stakeholders need to be informed when the changes take effect and how this may affect them.

All outcomes must then be communicated once plans are in place and adaptation options have been implemented.

2.3 Understand the context, risks and priority

For communication to be effective, council must have a proper understanding of the project context, risks and priority relative to other issues. An appraisal of this should be included in the communication plan.

2.3.1 Understanding the context

Communication never occurs in a vacuum. There are usually prior statements and commitments. There will be past precedents and current practices, legal constraints, contractual obligations and other factors to be taken into account. There may have been past experience of coastal hazards including storm damage, previous protective works or coastal modifications with varying degrees of success.

All of this history will influence community expectations and assumptions and affect the way people respond to any new messages, especially if there is a change or conflict between the past, current and future messages. Council should acknowledge any change in message or policy, and clearly articulate the reasons why. To not do so will undermine community trust.

Historical events and precedents can also be a powerful 'hook' from which to demonstrate the need for change or the consequences of poor past practices, and can provide a basis for some of the message content. It is also helpful to put the current activity in the context of any longer-term actions, policies and commitments that the current work will reinforce and help to progress.

If there is a long or contentious history around the project area, more care and attention may need to be paid to how communication is delivered than if it is a relatively fresh start.

The number and types of asset owners involved in the project area will influence the approach to communication. For example, if the assets affected are mostly infrastructure held by a few agencies, with adaptation options having limited off-site impacts, communication would be targeted to a small group.

Getting a balanced perspective

Council will have a powerful advantage if it has a broad and balanced understanding of the needs, concerns and perceptions of the community and stakeholders early in the project. This is particularly important where there is likely to be significant community interest and/or strong lobbying by narrow interest groups.

Random sample surveys can provide a much clearer statement of community sentiment than feedback at public meetings or other self-selected contributions. Results may be useful in scoping both the project and communication plans. This is discussed in more detail in Section 4.3 Communication instruments.

2.3.2 Assessing the communication risks

A risk analysis for a communication plan includes assessing possible risks, the likelihood of the risks actually occurring, the likely impacts, and the likely responses by the community and other stakeholders. The latter would consider how good or bad this would be for the project and what it aims to achieve. The risks analysis helps set up contingency plans. Contingency planning helps to prepare for possible risks.

This enables council to be prepared and to respond effectively if a situation arises. A communication risk management plan would be set up in accordance with council's procedures for project risk management which usually involves:

- identifying risks
- assessing likelihood of risks
- appraising consequences of risks in case they occur
- developing mitigation strategies to prevent risks or reduce their impact
- appreciating residual risk
- developing contingency measures for particularly significant risks.

Examples of communication risks include:

- inconsistent and contradictory messages from different members/parts of council
- release of incomplete or inaccurate information (e.g. draft reports with significant errors)
- giving some groups preferred access to information while excluding others with comparable levels of interest or concern
- having project findings hijacked or misrepresented to support a narrow sectional view
- failure to provide relevant or accurate information to elected representatives who will be questioned by the community
- failure to address misinformation or rumours promptly and clearly
- poor choice of language or content that is offensive to particular interests, disrespectful or summarily discounts a particular point of view without due consideration, leading to a breakdown in communication
- leaking information by one project group or faction to gain advantage through surprise or advance lobbying of sectional interests.

While these risks listed are fairly general, there may also be specific risks arising from local circumstances that need to be considered. These should be identified in considering the context of the project, as described above.

The structure and content of this communication planning document, if followed, is designed to take into account most of the commonly identified risks.

Thinking ahead to respond to risks

Situation: Elections. Communication prior to or during elections may need to be treated differently both for legal and practical reasons. During these periods it is important to manage communication strictly and to make clear that any electoral promises being made do not necessarily affect the agreed role and commitment by council.

Situation: Storm damage. If an extreme event causes significant damage, the sense of urgency of coastal hazard management is likely to peak within the affected community, the wider community and in the media. It is possible that stakeholders particularly affected by coastal hazards may seek to influence decision-making away from the stated role and commitment – to demand council action now. This is especially likely where a council articulates it will not subsidise people to occupy hazardous locations, i.e. will not take sole responsibility for the costs of protective works. It is important that council confirms and repeats its role and commitment and the aims of the projects in its communication.

Appropriate levels of engagement help mitigate risks.

Failure to inform, consult and involve the community may result in members seeking other means to express their concerns or undermine the project and its intended outcomes. Proper involvement and collaboration with the community may help raise awareness and support for the project and prevent it from being undermined. It is important for council to specifically address the high impact, high probability risks by formulating appropriate mitigating measures. Failure to do so may require contingency plans to take effect, and the costs and resources of these plans may far exceed the costs of mitigation measures.

2.3.3 What is the priority?

Complementary to context and risk is the degree to which a coastal climate adaptation project is prioritised. The scale and intensity of the communication effort should reflect the relative importance of adaptation among other issues being addressed by council. There is little merit in a strong and effective communication effort for adaptation if other issues are really more significant but become overshadowed as a result.

The following questions will help determine the priority and significance of climate adaptation within council's overall communication:

- **What is the priority of adaptation compared to other issues?** This is a question for council, but importantly also for the communities and stakeholders involved.
- **Are the coastal hazards relevant to the present day or only in the long term?** If there are significant present day risks, the urgency of coastal risk management is relatively higher than when risks are not expected for 10 to 20 years or so. If present day risks are significant, the community and other stakeholders generally have a high level of interest in being involved in exploring potential pathways for adaptation.
- **Does it affect the community broadly or a few isolated locations?** The way in which communication is set up depends, among other things, on whether the project affects the community broadly or a few assets or locations within the community.

When a few specific locations are mainly affected, the communication should first focus on the community and stakeholders affected, such as letters and information sessions targeted at those involved. This could then be followed with more broad communication for the wider community such as via newsletters and local newspapers.

- **Is it primarily about protecting council assets or is it about assisting the development of a community that is robust and sustainable in the face of changing coastal hazards?** If private properties are at risk, there will generally be a significant level of interest and sense of urgency among the community and affected stakeholders.

There may be a lot at stake for some community members and the communication plan should acknowledge this and ensure those most affected are engaged accordingly. For instance, sharing information on the levels of risk, present day and in the future, would generally be shared with the community affected before information is disseminated more broadly. When assets at risk are council or government owned, community interests would focus on whether services will continue to be provided, or on whether there will still be a beach to enjoy in the future. Generally, coastal adaptation is of less priority to the community when it involves mostly government assets as opposed to private assets.

If the priority is low, either because the coastal risk is minimal or not expected to be significant until the long term, or there are simply other, far more pressing matters, the community will have less interest in being involved and having a say. However, if the project is of high priority to the community and stakeholders, with significant present or future impacts, there is generally a stronger need to consult and involve throughout the process.

These considerations will not only help determine the priority level of the project, but it will also help council frame the communication plan in terms of frequency, tone, target audiences and modes of communication.

Tip:

Ensure an appropriate level of response given the priority of the issue

Example: Hazard areas in Kingston Beach, Tasmania are likely to have a significant impact on only a few houses both in the short term and for sea level rise of up to about 0.9m, potentially occurring by the end of this century. For a sea level rise of over 1.5m, virtually the entire suburb will be affected but this may not occur for well over 100 years. Although council was shown maps for the higher sea level, hazard maps for sea level rise of up to 0.9m were released and the few residents affected were invited to an open house evening to discuss the implications for their properties. There was no widespread engagement of the broader community.

2.3.4 Summary of first three elements

The first three elements of the communication plan provide the strategic context for the plan. By knowing council's role and commitment, being clear about the project and communication scope and objectives, and having an understanding of the context, risks and priority of the project, informed decisions can be made about the degree of engagement and the level of resources appropriate.

This strategic context will inform decisions made in the next three elements:

- spokesperson
- communication principles
- managing conflicts.

3. Core Elements

- 3.1 Establish a spokesperson or representative
- 3.2 Establish clear, agreed communication principles
- 3.3 Address conflict or different priorities and values



3.1 Establish a spokesperson or representative

The project needs a clearly identifiable spokesperson who is well briefed on all matters and able to respond to questions with appropriate authority. The communication plan should describe the role and involvement of the spokesperson.

A clearly identified well briefed spokesperson ensures all communication, including responding to questions, is consistent and up-to-date. The person assigned also reflects the level of significance council attributes to the project.

The level of priority council gives to the project will determine the level of authority chosen for the council spokesperson and the prominence of the message in council communication. It will determine who will speak for council on the matter with stakeholders: Mayor, Chief Executive Officer, Head Planner, Manager of Assets and Engineering, National Resource Management Manager, Economic Development Manager or other council representative, potentially including consultants. If the issue is seen as a significant one for council, it is important that it be given prominence by involving the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer. Of course, to be effective, any spokesperson must be very well briefed and engaged in the project as it develops.

Consultants may play an important role in communicating technical matters to any of the audiences and target groups discussed below. Where they are employed in this way, it is important they are clear about the **overall message** to be conveyed and not put forward views not supported by the project team and client local government. Information should be in a form that is understandable, clear and relevant, not technically dense and hard to understand. It is also important council staff or elected members introduce and wrap up any presentations and be available to answer non-technical questions about the project to demonstrate council ownership and authority.

Most important, the spokesperson(s) needs to be fully informed about the project's progress and any pending issues or opportunities. The spokesperson(s) should:

- be available to respond to inquiries from the public and be briefed on the feedback received from all sources
- be respectful in all commentary and responses, and ensure messages are succinct and clear

ideally have had some media training or prior experience, especially if the project is a high priority and deals with issues known to be contentious. If not, then the services of a media advisor may be a good investment. However, avoid using an external media advisor as the spokesperson.

Tip:

The spokesperson may be several people.

Example: One council divided the spokesperson task into three distinct parts:

- The Mayor would speak to any policy decisions and governance issues that were raised.
- The Chief Executive Officer would speak to operational issues about works, application of the planning scheme etc.
- Technical questions about mapping, modelling or engineering solutions would be referred to relevant consultants to respond at public meetings, or in correspondence via a designated council officer.

3.2 Establish clear, agreed communication principles

The communication plan should be based on agreed principles and all relevant stakeholders should adhere to them. Communication needs to be clear and consistent. Effective communication builds trust as well as understanding. All participants in the communication process should be briefed and held to these principles whether or not they have a formal communication role.

The principles of communication describe **how** you communicate with the community and other stakeholders. Building trust is an important factor. The principles should align with the objectives of communication and should refer to:

- when to communicate, and when not to communicate
- the quality of information provided
- the tone of communication
- consistency in the communication around the project
- the use of sources of information that are widely trusted
- recognising and resolving conflicts between stakeholders with different interests and values.

Tip:

Example: Communication principles adopted by the Tasmanian Coastal Adaptation Pathways in Kingborough, Break O'Day and Latrobe councils' communication strategies have included:

- Ensure the message is appropriate and relevant to the target audience (focus groups or a community survey can be very useful to inform this).
- Keep information succinct, relevant, and in a format suitable for the audience.
- Act and communicate in a way that builds trust in the process for generating information and decision-making.
- Provide best available information (not speculation) early in the process.
- Provide information at several 'depths' according to the level of interest/need to know basis of the audience while having more detailed information readily accessible to those who want to see it.
- Ensure wide canvassing of options, not narrow, early decisions.
- Ensure consistency in 'branding' and associate with strong brands where relevant/appropriate – e.g. CSIRO, university, etc.
- Never talk in public unless you know the facts of the matter. If you do not know, say so and defer to someone who does.
- Speak only when you have something new to say or to reinforce existing messages where necessary.
- Don't say or email anything you don't want reported on the front page of the local paper or the evening TV news or that could be taken the wrong way.
- Ensure all comments and responses are respectful, even to critics of the project or those sceptical of climate science.

3.3 Address conflict or different priorities and values

Where a project or process involves the selection of a particular adaptation response, as opposed to simply providing factual information, it will almost always have to deal with the differences in values and priorities as well as a range of expectations about who is responsible for funding and managing any action. The ways in which these conflicts are acknowledged and resolved – or not – are typically critical points in reaching a decision to act.

While effective communication alone does not resolve conflicts, it can help make dealing with conflicts more tractable and equitable, by:

- ensuring as many as possible perspectives with different values and priorities are heard
- reflecting and articulating the different perspectives and values in a clear and balanced way – avoiding being seen as an advocate for any one position (except perhaps as a devil's advocate in discussion, but if so, make that clear)
- acknowledging that many different perspectives can be legitimate
- being transparent about the framing chosen for the problem and why
- acknowledging that some differences can be reconciled by negotiation or thoughtful solutions but some simply cannot, and that this may result in trade-offs or compromises
- informing about constraints (legal obligations, compliance requirements or limits on capacity to fund or undertake work that may affect the choice of options, or that a final decision on some matters may need to be approved or adjudicated by a statutory process or authority outside of the project, or may be challenged in such a forum)
- communicating how council proposes to address making decisions and deal with conflicts that remain.

3.3.1 Representing different values and priorities

A common difference in values arises between property owners directly threatened by coastal hazards and the wider community more interested in other values. Property owners tend to prefer adaptation options that protect private property, for example hard protection options such as seawalls or groynes. The wider community and other stakeholders may prefer other adaptation options that allow more natural and amenity values (e.g. beaches) to be protected, such as soft protection measures like dune nourishment and beach replenishment.

Local consultation processes almost always under-represent the wider community interests if the local community is the main focus of consultation. A random sample survey of the whole community is one way to bring balance into this discussion. If done well, there should be some confidence that the results present a representative view of the wider community.

This alone may not be sufficient to represent some interests and values. For example, important natural values may not be widely known or recognised.

Tip:

Natural values may not be well understood by the community

Example: In a workshop that considered planned retreat as an approach to sea level rise for a relatively undeveloped area, a participant asked: 'Are there any environmental values in this area?'

The wetland and mudflats in the area are a major feeding ground for migratory birds, a nursery area for sharks and home to a number of threatened species. The water filtration benefits from the wetlands, particularly from an old tip site, are important for maintaining water quality in the surrounding waters. Most participants had at best a vague knowledge of these values. In general, the environmental services provided by natural areas are poorly known and understood by most of the community.

There are statutory obligations to protect certain natural values, notably threatened species under the federal *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999*. There will commonly be other state legislation that may constrain council and community options. These statutory obligations have been established at least in part to recognise the imbalance described above. It is important that all interests are considered and that a balanced strategy for responding is developed.

Another commonly under-represented group may be low-income households that lack the capacity or confidence to attend engagement activities and state their case or whose interests may be under-represented on surveys where their issues are not even addressed. Lower value flood-prone land back from the actual waterfront sometimes houses lower income groups that may not have the persuasive lobbying ability of wealthier waterfront residents. In some cases, advocacy groups for these interests may be invited to participate in consultations, though these groups may also have stretched resources.

There is no ready formula for resolving these differences. At a minimum it is desirable that these other perspectives be given a voice in the discussion and representation in deliberations and decision-making.

3.3.2 Framing the issues

Effective communication that clearly frames the issues can help avoid distracting or fruitless discussions about things that do not bear on the decisions that need to be made. There are many ways to frame a coastal management or adaptation problem. Many people may respond to consultation opportunities or initially attend meetings with a relatively narrow or one-sided framing such as:

- **Preserve the status quo** to: occupancy, of the environment, economic activity...
- **Maximise the opportunities** for: economic development, recreation, nature conservation, access to the coast by the community...
- **You** (the government) **have an obligation** to: act, protect, compensate...
- **We have a right** to: use our property as we wish, have our property values protected, have access to the beach...

It is sometimes useful or necessary to directly discount some forms of framing. While the things that people value need to be accepted and respected, the way of framing the issues for resolution need not. Taking some of the above examples:

- With expected future climate/erosion/coastal inundation, the future will be different. We may choose from a number of options but the status quo is most likely not one of them.
- A range of people use or enjoy the coast for different purposes. As a government process, we have to balance the interests of all users.
- There is no general government obligation to protect existing private property from natural hazards.
- Property rights are constrained. For example, uses cannot bring harm to neighbouring properties.

The most widely used framing is usually expressed in terms of risk management. This framing is often done unconsciously, or used because that is how it is done by others, but it is not the only option. If the subject of framing is raised, it is good to acknowledge the framing used, the rationale for it and why other framing has not been used.

3.3.3 Framing to maximise future benefits

While a risk management approach is widely used and effective, an alternative is to explore a range of scenarios to explore options that provide greatest future benefits, after allowing for future risk. Rather than focusing on risk management, which tends to focus on managing risks to existing assets and generally reducing risks to new assets through avoidance, actively imagining futures can include taking advantage of coastal benefits while responding to the expected changes. For example:

- Existing natural areas will change, with different species mix at the same latitude with higher temperatures and changes in rainfall. Coastal vegetation will not be the same and wetlands will move inland – but only if permitted. What future coastal ecosystems will be sustainable, where will they move and how can we shape them to our benefit?
- New development in hazard areas can provide benefits and value to the community but needs to be designed with coastal hazards in mind to ensure benefits exceed costs. What uses gain significant benefit from being in hazard areas? How can we ensure they contribute to the costs of protection, recovery or eventual retreat and not rely on subsidy from the wider community?

Such an approach can be seen as a more positive take on adaptation and can appeal to those who favour investment, economic development and modifications to the environment. It is particularly appropriate in heavily modified, urban coastal areas but may also have benefits where natural environments will degrade without active interventions to ensure their future wellbeing.

Tip:

Dealing with climate scepticism

Where adaptation seeks to address long-term changes from increased erosion and inundation caused by sea level rise, it may also need to deal with climate scepticism, often both within and outside council.

Framing the issue in terms of risk management can provide a way to engage with sceptical participants. While future change is not certain, approaches adopted should be designed to manage the risk even with uncertainty. Such an approach works particularly well where it reveals that present day risk is not well managed, demonstrating the value in taking coastal hazards into account.

Risk management includes risks to the environment such as species extinction or loss of environmental services that may have very long-term consequences. Thus there is a much stronger argument for application of the precautionary principle when considering what may be irreversible or major environmental risks. As mentioned above, environmental values are not always well understood by the community, and, as a result, sometimes remain undervalued.

3.3.4 *Conflicting expectations about roles and responsibilities*

There is often a general expectation that council or other spheres of government are responsible for addressing issues arising from coastal hazards or action. It is important not to make commitments to undertake coastal adaptation actions to protect specific private property without legal advice and detailed consideration of implications such as creating obligations that may have substantial long-term costs and consequences.

To respond to such expectations, council can take on a leadership role in determining the consequences of increasing coastal hazards in the local government area and developing an adaptation plan.

This should be presented as a 'leadership and enabling' role, undertaken in partnership with the community and private asset owners to develop a coordinated response. In practical terms, many adaptation options require joint action and individual asset owners could not effectively implement them on their own. Where such joint action is required, there is a need to determine 'who decides' and 'who pays'.

3.3.5 *Conflict resolution through good governance*

Conflicts of values and priorities are quite common in local government decisions relating to land use, statutory planning and major investments of council resources.

From the perspective of communication planning for climate adaptation, there should be reassurances that good governance practice will be followed in making the final decision. Ideally, the steps to be taken by council to make a final decision should be laid out. The community should be assured that an appropriate governance approach:

- applies to decisions made by council and other government agencies
- includes compliance with statutory obligations, regard for the public interest, equity, due process and rights to appeal or seek compensation if private interests have been unfairly damaged.

Pre-empt unfounded expectations with clear principles

Sometimes it is more effective to lay out some 'ground rules' up front that may support framing the discussion in a useful way. In the Tasmanian Coastal Adaptation Pathway projects, two principles about funding and risk management were put forward from the beginning of the project to help this framing:

- Risk that increases over time needs to be actively managed.
- There can be no subsidy to occupy or use hazardous areas.

4. The details

4.1 Define target audiences and key messages

4.2 General messages and message by stage

4.3 Identify communication instruments and their use



4.1 Define target audiences and key messages

The communication plan identifies target audiences, their respective interests in the project, the communication aims and messages. The communication plan also identifies the relevant stages of communication of the project, the aims and the messages for each stage.

Target audiences consist of different groups and stakeholders with varying degrees of interest and influence on the project and related decision-making. Each target audience, both internally and externally, needs to be identified. For each group, it is important to understand:

- its interests and involvement
- what you aim to achieve by communicating
- when to involve them in the project and the timing of communication
- the expected key messages and intended results, by stage, of the project
- any risks of not communicating or communicating in the wrong way
- how to best approach and communicate, including considering the means of communication, by stage of the project
- the tone of communication.

4.1.1 Internal audiences

Internally for the project, the following target groups can be identified.

Council projects:

- Project steering group and project team
- Other council staff, affected departments
- Council elected members

Joint project:

- Partner executive groups
- Partner operational groups

PROJECT TEAM AND PROJECT STEERING GROUP

The project team is responsible for progressing the project and coordinating communication. The project team usually includes a project manager and a project spokesperson. The project manager liaises with council's manager of communication regarding coordinating and approving message content.

It needs to be clear who will be the sender of communication, which in many cases will be council. The messages sent out to the community need to be accurate and correctly reflect council's position. The communication plan needs to include a description of the **communication approval process**.

The most effective way for the project team and steering group to communicate is through regular project meetings and project updates. It is beneficial if the steering group has representatives from any joint project stakeholders. In some cases, representatives from affected state agencies may also be included in the project steering group.

OTHER COUNCIL STAFF AND AFFECTED DEPARTMENTS

For many projects, most council staff should be aware about the project and its aims and who the key project contacts are. Most, if not all, communication should be undertaken by the project team and its spokesperson. However, the public may pose questions to other internal stakeholders. Typically, these internal stakeholders should refer the inquirer to the project spokesperson for more information. Where they choose to communicate about the project, they should do so in a way consistent with the intentions of the project team and the agreed communication principles.

Staff and those responsible for implementation need to be informed so that their day-to-day activities support the directions that will be or have been adopted. They can also advise on the issues arising from proposed options and the implementation and ongoing management of these options.

Often the project will be led by one part of council (planning, asset management or other) but the results will have significant implications for other council departments. The affected areas should be identified early in the project and kept informed of relevant issues as the project unfolds. In particular, council's legal office and insurers need to be informed and consulted. As knowledge and awareness of climate change grows in the future, it may become reasonable for councils to be obliged to undertake a growing number of actions and precautions in relation to climate change effects.

COUNCIL ELECTED MEMBERS

It is especially relevant that council elected members communicate in a way that is consistent with the project team's intentions and the agreed communication principles. Council's elected members need to be informed:

- as decision-makers who will be making decisions based on the project findings
- as respondents to public inquiries, lobbying, and resident concerns.

Local government decision-makers need to understand the coastal hazards and the risks to assets, the scope of possible responses and their implications, and the costs and benefits of choosing particular options or combinations of options. Decision-makers should be informed early about the issues and options but should be aware of the range of interests and concerns among their constituents before making choices about responding. They also need to clearly understand their legal responsibilities and the implications of acting – or not acting.

Targeted workshops with elected members about the project aim, intended outcomes, and – importantly – the project's implications will help raise awareness of the project and possible implications of decision-making or electoral promises. Ideally, workshops or briefings should be provided early in the project as issues and options are identified, and at the end when the results are available. Elected representatives should be encouraged to participate in meetings with key stakeholders and the community as observers, listeners and participants, but not necessarily to have a lead role in these sessions. Elected members should be encouraged to speak about the project, but in doing so should abide by the agreed communication principles and defer to others if they do not know specific technical or other details to avoid circulating misinformation.

PROJECT PARTNERS

For projects that are a joint initiative, the partners, their management and staff should also be aware of the project, its aims and the objectives of communication. Representatives of joint stakeholders would be expected to be part of the project steering group.

4.1.2 External audiences

Depending on the project, external stakeholders may include:

- directly-affected community, residents, businesses and community groups (Coastcare/Landcare, ratepayers associations, business associations, key active groups in the area)
- affected state agencies (other than partners)
- authoritative bodies (emergency response, catchment management, natural resource management)
- state political representatives (local members, relevant ministers)
- potential groups of concern: banks (re mortgages in affected areas), insurance
- residents outside of the hazard zone but within the communities affected
- wider community within the local government area
- wider community beyond the local government
- other councils and representative organisations.

Knowledgeable local interest groups with interest in or concerns about the issues being addressed will want assurance that their special interests are addressed. Communication with this group provides an opportunity to gain from their particular knowledge and insight into the issues affecting them.

Finding contacts

Identifying key stakeholder contacts can best be done by contacting organisations known to be active or concerned: ratepayers groups, natural resource management groups, developer or property development organisation active in the area, surf lifesavers club, etc. and then asking for their appropriate representative. Then ask the representative for at least two other names of people they think should be contacted about the issues in the project. Continue this chain until the same names mostly keep reappearing and make sure those mentioned most are included in some way.

This approach is meant to identify knowledgeable and articulate spokespeople for particular interests to ensure the scope of the issues is fully uncovered and to act as a channel of communicating to their group. It should not be mistaken as being representative of the balance of views across the community, something better determined by a properly structured random sample survey, or of communicating to the community as a whole.

State agencies with responsibilities for asset management in affected areas or policy responsibilities that affect the selection of adaptation options need to be engaged. This will provide opportunities for greater policy alignment and consistency of implementation. The general public is particularly scathing of inconsistent approaches by and between governments or failure to agree on who is responsible for action (buck-passing).

For effective coastal adaptation, it is important that stakeholders and land managers in an area work collaboratively. If different approaches to coastal adaptation are adopted by different land managers within one area, this may:

- undermine the adaptation approach of other land managers and stakeholders in the area
- negatively impact on the levels of risk (inundation and erosion) to which other land managers and stakeholders are exposed
- be less cost-effective than a collective approach to adaptation – for example, individual land owners building separate seawalls of varying standards and technologies will generally be more expensive per stakeholder than a collective seawall.

DIRECTLY AFFECTED COMMUNITY

In many coastal adaptation projects, the directly affected community is a very important target group. Private properties and businesses are often people's most significant possessions, and may also be used to support retirement incomes. These people want their assets protected and access to them maintained. The threat to their most important possession, possible financial implications and the level of uncertainty about the future, can all contribute to significant levels of anxiety and sometimes anger. Council should acknowledge that coastal hazards may be important threats to these assets, but it should make clear that this does not mean that council takes on any obligation to protect private properties.

Council is often seen as the most trusted party by communities to represent and act on their behalf for coastal adaptation. It should be noted that this may vary from one place to another. It is therefore important to understand the level of trust the community has in its council. A community survey early in the project may help to establish this.

Partnerships with, or support from, other levels of government and independent research institutions may help council's position as a trusted party in developing responses to coastal threats.

Informing residents about the risks of changing coastal hazards, the implications, and possible responses will enable them to better understand and anticipate the problem and make informed decisions. If the community helps define policy responses, it will increase the level of community acceptance and support. Most projects benefit from an interactive communication approach.

Communication with the community is most effective when it is about issues that affect or matter to them in a concrete way. It is not easy to engage the community about changes in a distant future even if these changes are both likely and dramatic. In many cases, however, coastal hazards have been experienced in the past. Present day risks and past events are a good way to start the conversation.

Tip:

Teach from history

Photos of past floods and erosion events in the study area make the reality of coastal hazards more apparent in publicity and workshop materials, especially to recent residents. These can be supplemented by inviting stories and photos to be submitted by the community.

Example: At one site, aerial photos of floods that had occurred about every 10 years showed the extent of flooding occurring in one in 10 years or about 10% annual exceedance probability (AEP) events. This made maps showing present day expected 1% AEP events look very credible.

Example: One long-term resident related that they had seen the highway flood four times in 60 years, with three of those events in the last five years. 'I think there may be something in this sea level rising.'

Some members of the community may not be informed about, or accept, the body of evidence about climate change and reject the notion of impacts such as sea level rise. Communicating about past and present day risks will help engage these community members too. The message could start with the following:

- There are present day coastal risks and the area has a history that shows the impacts of extreme events.
- Even without climate change, there are issues that need to be addressed.
- Climate changes (warmer temperatures) and sea level rise has been observed and measured and evidence shows trends may be accelerating.
- With climate change (or even use 'increased climate variability') and sea level rise, coastal flooding and erosion are expected to occur more often and to become more severe.

Tip:

Respect your critics

It is important to give a respectful hearing even to hostile or argumentative participants who may be sceptical of climate change without allowing them to disrupt or dominate a meeting. If necessary, invite them to have input outside of the public forum and provide an appropriate reply. The investment in hearing them out will often diffuse some of the ongoing antagonism and even lead to more constructive engagement.

Example: A vocal self-described creationist and climate sceptic thanked the facilitator after one workshop for his respectful approach and acknowledgement of different points of view. 'While we still disagree on many things, after this session I can better understand why you take the approach you do to this project.'

Quite often, community members, and especially those with significant property interests, will argue that because council is publishing hazard data and maps, their property prices will drop. However, it is not the publication of hazard maps that significantly affects property prices.

Property prices are most strongly affected by:

- the occurrence of extreme events that damage property in these areas
- development restrictions placed on areas identified as subject to the hazard.

Recognising and addressing the hazards by appropriate adaptation is the first step to avoiding real damages to property and property values.

Tip:

Hazard information presented in a balanced way is usually well received.

Councils are often concerned about releasing hazard maps to the wider community because of complaints that it will devalue property. Experience shows that if done within a proper process and context, most residents appreciate the improved information.

Example: Written and verbal feedback from residents in coastal adaptation projects has often been along the lines: 'We knew there were issues in this area because we see how low-lying it is and the evidence of erosion, but now we have a much better idea of the risks.'

Similar comments have come from people who are shown to be in and out of the designated hazard areas.

If council is aware of risks and does not communicate them, it may attract liability for failing to share information. For instance, this may occur if investments are made (that would not have occurred if the investor had been informed) and subsequently damaged - and council was already aware of the expected (future) risk.

Tip:

Good information is usually valued

The importance of good information is revealed by comments from participants in a number of coastal hazard and adaptation projects. It is essential to allow people to make good adaptation choices.

Example: In several workshops where maps of coastal hazards have been reviewed and the implications discussed, a number of participants have said: 'If I had known that before we bought here we would have chosen a different location.'

Example: One person waited for hazard maps to be published before buying: 'I am in my 80s and want to live my final years by the sea, but don't want to be flooded out in my lifetime. As long as I am safe for the next 20 years, after that I do not care what happens as I have no heirs to worry about.'

Communication with the community is not just about informing but also about listening. In particular, council should use the opportunity to gain a better understanding of community values and priorities. A random phone survey of the community will give a more representative response than that gained by only listening to those who attend public meetings or workshops, phone in, or otherwise contact council.

A picture is worth a thousand words

One way to encourage people to share thoughts on what is important to them is by asking them to bring pictures of places they value with a brief statement of what they value and why it is important to them.

Example: A community survey identified how important the coast was to many in the community, but in particular identified that it was the beach that mattered most. In the words of one respondent: 'I moved here to be near the beach. If the beach is lost as the result of erosion or protection works, I am out of here.'

Example: Coastal values are not just about built property. One couple whose house was at risk from erosion said: 'Whatever happens to the house we are not leaving. The place is so special we will stay here even if we have to live in a tepee.'

AFFECTED STATE AGENCIES AND AUTHORITATIVE BODIES

State agencies may have interests as land managers within a project's study area. The way in which state agencies respond to coastal hazards may vary as a result of policy positions or regulatory requirements. It is important for all parties to have a proper understanding of the likely positions of the agencies involved, and of any activities around coastal adaptation.

For council, it is important to communicate its information on risks, areas affected and policy responses and establish lines of communication.

Council should inform authoritative bodies such as emergency response services, natural resource managers and catchment managers in a similar manner.

POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES

State and federal political representatives should be briefed about the project and its intentions. This may happen in the form of a letter by the mayor to the relevant ministers, premier and local state representatives.

BANKS, INSURANCE COMPANIES AND REAL ESTATE AGENCIES

The findings of the scientific, social and economic analysis may affect the decisions made by banks and insurance companies for accepting and rejecting home loans, house insurance and other financial services to residents of affected areas. Other relevant stakeholders include industry and commerce groups and other stakeholders with commercial or other interests in the project area. Investment and other decisions may be influenced by information from the project. It is important that the stakeholders are well informed so they can make balanced decisions.

Examples elsewhere have shown that these stakeholders may respond with entirely inappropriate restrictions on affected areas when the first publicity is released if they are not properly informed about the nature of risks (see tip below).

Tip:

Poorly briefed organisations can overreact

Example: In New Zealand, a study of earthquake risk included mapping of affected areas. The press publicity of the report findings spooked some insurance companies into cancelling policies in affected areas, not only for earthquakes but for all other risks including burglary, flood and fire.

The responses of banks and insurance companies are relevant to current residents (applying for additional services or to update existing policies) and to potential future residents. Communication can focus on peak bodies and major players in the local market.

The results of the project may have legal implications as well. As the field of law and climate change is still evolving, a workshop with representatives from the legal community (especially property law, planning law and environmental law) may bring forward valuable new insights.

The aim of the communication would be to inform about project findings, especially projected risks and possible implications. Interactive modes of communication, such as a workshop, forum or discussion, will enable stakeholders to ask questions and seek clarification to inform the stakeholders' policies, pricing and decision-making. Such communication can help reduce the risk of over-reactions when information is picked up by the general news media.

BROADER COMMUNITY IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

The wider community, as ratepayers, may have concerns about cost impacts of coastal adaptation and the fairness of subsidies from the ratepayer base. Their interest would be that the issue is managed in an appropriate, equitable and sustainable way.

Also, the wider community needs to be aware of risks as potential buyers of property in affected coastal areas.

Importantly, the wider community benefits from the recreational and amenity values that coastal areas offer. The wider community has an interest in the recreational and other aspects (environment, infrastructure and services) being managed well.

Communication to the wider community should aim to inform and raise awareness about coastal adaptation and the project in particular. The communication can be used to confirm that council is taking the interest of all stakeholders, including the wider community, seriously.

Tip:

The community outside of the affected area also has a view

Example: 'I don't see why other ratepayers should spend money to protect private property on the coast.'

BROADER COMMUNITY OUTSIDE OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

Communication with the wider community (outside the local government area) should focus on possible interests those people may have as potential buyers, and as current or future users of recreational and other aspects of the area. The communication should aim to establish:

- awareness of the risks in coastal areas for would-be buyers
- assurance that access to recreational and other aspects is managed well
- council is involved and taking the issue seriously.

OTHER LOCAL COUNCILS AND REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATIONS

Climate change is affecting communities now and will, in the long term, affect all communities in one way or the other. Some councils are starting to address the issue of coastal adaptation in a comprehensive and detailed way and could learn from each other and share knowledge and experiences.

The aim of communicating with other councils and representative organisations should be to share project experiences and learnings. Council could also demonstrate leadership and gain recognition for initiatives.

4.2 General messages and message by stage

4.2.1 General messages about adaptation

Key messages for coastal adaptation projects that apply to most target groups are:

- what climate change is and why we need to adapt
- the background and aim of the project
- the issue(s) the project aims to address, the relevance of the project (for the community and council)
- the role council plays
- what council aims to achieve with the project
- how council intends to involve the community and other stakeholders in the process.

While information about most of the above points is quite project specific, the first point is not. Explaining the issue of climate change and coastal adaptation is an important task. Key messages that are recommended to be included are:

- Coastal risks such as inundation and erosion occur at present, occurred in the past and will continue to occur in the future. With climate change, the severity and the frequency of extreme events will increase over time.
- Government/council is not obliged to protect private properties against natural hazards except where there may be some specific previously agreed commitment.
- Government/council is obliged to communicate information in an accurate way.
- Adaptive measures are only effective for a certain timeframe because climate change and related impacts are ongoing processes.

- Coastal adaptation is not a one-off operation, but an ongoing process of responding in an appropriate manner to manage/reduce risks to acceptable levels.
- While the process of climate change is widely confirmed by the scientific community, uncertainty exists and will continue to exist about the future rate of change. There will continue to be a level of uncertainty about the impacts of climate change too, in terms of both severity and timing.
- Decisions may need to be made early to prevent unsustainable and unwanted situations from developing over time. These decisions need to be made within a context of uncertainty.

In regard to more project-specific communication, it is important to understand the type of information the community and stakeholders are interested in. The type of information people would be looking for are, in order of priority (IPO, 2006):

- How exposed are they to the risk?
- What are the consequences (of disaster **and** policy measures)?
- What does the risk mean specifically?
- What is the likelihood of negative implications?
- What can be done to manage the risk (is it manageable)?
- What experiences have other people had with the risk?
- Who is responsible for the negative implications of the risk?
- What potential benefits are there to the risk?
- Is the risk comparable to other, well known risks?

Where possible, the communication would benefit from framing the discussion along lines such as: 'Even without climate change, there are present day risks that need to be addressed'. This makes the discussion more relevant to stakeholders who may be sceptical about climate change.

Ensure the above questions are addressed in formulating the key messages for an adaptation project.

Information should be in a form that is understandable, clear and relevant and without obscure technical jargon.

4.2.2 Messages by stage

Most projects will go through a number of stages, starting with hazard assessment, identification of possible responses, selection of responses and then decision-making and implementation. As was illustrated earlier, the communication objectives are likely to vary by stage. Early in the project, communication is likely to be aimed at raising awareness of climate change impacts in the study area and what council is doing to address the issue. The messages will vary by stage accordingly.

Messages in the early stage (before or during hazard assessment) might be framed by the following narrative for example:

- Council recognises the coast is an attractive place to live, work and play and that this is valued by the local residents as well as the wider community.
- With climate change, things will be different (describe how in broad terms).
- We **can** adapt (describe how – range of responses potentially available for local area).
- What this means for you...
- What council is doing (describe hazard assessment process).
- Once the results from the scientific analysis are ready council will seek input from affected stakeholders to guide the choice of preferred responses.

The key message is that climate change-induced impacts, such as sea level rise, will have implications for the coastal areas and is expected to affect residents and businesses in the identified areas and the public using and enjoying the coast in general. The exact effects are still to be determined, as are council's responses to these changes. It is desirable to communicate that council is seeking stakeholder and community comments and input and takes responses seriously if widespread support for the chosen approach is to be gained.

Once the impacts of climate change and possible ways to adapt are known in more detail, council will consult with the community and stakeholders to gain their input to inform the selection of responses.

Messages in the consultative stage might use a narrative such as:

- With climate change, the risks will be as follows... (from technical findings of hazard analysis).
- The possible responses are ... (range of relevant responses given assessment of local conditions).
- Some of the implications of these responses are... (change of amenity, environmental impacts, potential risks to other assets, indicative costs).
- Council seeks input from the affected community and stakeholders in selecting appropriate measures.
- The input will be collated as follows....

Council will consider the interest of all of the community, not just those directly affected.

Council will present its findings and intended responses/measures to the community and stakeholders for comment.

To effectively engage with the community, it is important that present day and future risks are made clear. In regard to adaptation options it is important to clearly illustrate how things may change. This can be achieved by using examples, illustrations and developing scenarios showing how things may gradually change over time.

Messages in the finalisation stage would typically include:

- Council's intended policy position and measures to address the issue are as follows...

The community and stakeholders are invited to comment.

Council will determine its policy position and measures and communicate these including a response to stakeholders' comments.

Example key messages

The Tasmanian Climate Adaptation Pathways project key messages were:

- People are drawn to living and working in coastal areas, which have many attractions but also pose risks.
- Climate change is likely to worsen the present-day risks of coastal hazards.
- Foreseeable risks should not be allowed to develop without an appropriate risk management strategy in place.
- While accepting people's right to choose where they live and work, governments should not subsidise people to occupy a hazardous location.
- Coastal risk affects much of the community, and it is vital for residents and business owners to take part in planning for their own climate future.
- Local governments will continue to work with their local community, and state and federal government bodies to plan for coastal risks.
- Coastal risk management plans must be flexible to deal with an uncertain future.
- Council will provide guidance, advocacy and some assistance but is cautious to avoid creating expectations which may not be able to be maintained in the future.

4.3 Identify communication instruments and their use

A range of instruments is available for various target audiences and different communication objectives. The communication plan should describe how and when the various instruments can or will be used throughout the project.

This section provides an overview of these instruments and how they can be applied effectively.

4.3.1 Local government communication instruments

Local government has a number of instruments or tools of communication at its disposal. Through the use of these tools, council is the direct and principal messenger and has more control over the content, format and timing of communication than information distributed via general media (radio, TV or press). Different communication instruments and media can be used for different purposes and different target audiences.

For ease of reference, a summary table on page 42 lists the target audiences, communication goals and resource requirements for each instrument discussed in this section.

The most common tools of communication directly under the control of council include:

- **Surveys and focus groups:** These measures can be used to inform the communication approach of the project. Surveys (random sample) and focus groups can be used to explore what a representative sample of people think about climate change, coastal hazards, responsibilities and funding, attitude and trust towards council and other project partners, and what information respondents are after.

This will help the project team to understand target audiences, their interests and what role is expected of council. If used early in the process, the communication plan and approach can benefit from this.

Surveys can also be used to gauge how views change over the duration of the project (before and after surveys) and to gauge community support for various adaptation options (mostly towards the end of the project).

Surveys are best designed by experienced staff or with the support of an external expert.

- **Briefings or meetings (face-to-face/teleconference) for elected members, council staff and joint project partners:** Face-to-face meetings are for direct interactive communication. These briefings are mainly intended for specific internal stakeholders.

Meetings can be used to communicate in quite a thorough and detailed manner.

Briefings or meetings may be required at any stage of the project to inform or consult with targeted stakeholders.

- **Briefings via mail, email or otherwise for members, council staff and project partners:** Interactive communication is possible, but less direct than with face-to-face meetings. The briefings are generally targeted at specific groups, such as those directly affected by the project/hazards.

This instrument can be used to inform, raise awareness and to invite people to participate in meetings or workshops that provide a more direct and interactive way of communicating.

This instrument is especially to inform target audiences and may be applied at any stage.

- **Notices or letters specifically aimed at a community, such as all residents and businesses in the study area or identified hazard areas:** The letters can be used to inform the community about coastal hazards, the project, study findings and to invite community members to information sessions, workshops or to provide submissions. Remember to allow time to prepare, sign-off on content and print to fit in with the timing of any other initiatives (e.g. media releases).

Mail-out letters: Announcements and information can be sent by mail to all ratepayers with property in an affected area. Mail-outs to ratepayers will generally not reach tenants renting in the area. Direct mail can be highly targeted. While generally reliable, delivery on a particular day may not be guaranteed.

Letterbox drops: Letterbox drops may be cheaper than postal delivery for many areas and, for smaller scale areas, may be undertaken by council staff. They can be highly targeted, which increases the likelihood the recipients have received the message, have a higher likelihood of being seen and read and can be limited to the affected areas. They are not quite as personal as addressed letters but do provide a sense that council is speaking directly to an affected area. Letterbox drops have the advantage of reaching tenants as well as ratepayers but do not reach non-resident owners and investors with property in the

affected area. These may be reached by direct mail as described above. Letterbox delivery should be coordinated well in advance.

Newsletters and notices: These are generally aimed at the entire local government's community. Information provided to the wider community should occur after those directly affected have been briefed. Information is more general, with references to sources such as the council website where more detailed information can be obtained.

Newsletters and notices may be used in various stages of the project, and are specifically suited to inform (not to consult).

- **Contact information:** For a proper interactive process, it is important that community members and stakeholders have the ability to contact council to raise questions and concerns. The spokesperson responds to questions about content. Many questions about project aim, process and opportunities to provide input can likely be answered by a well briefed officer.

The contact details of the officer should ideally be included in all communication. Where applicable, the officer may liaise with the project manager or others before responding, as well as keeping them informed of the number and nature of enquiries received.

- **Release of reports and project documentation:** Project technical reports, maps and documentation of alternatives, cost estimates etc. are often generated by the hazard assessment and option evaluation processes. Provided they are produced to a good standard and are balanced in their approach, it is generally desirable to release this information as soon as possible for public access. This may be done by allowing access to written documents from the council office or public library or other community venues, and by posting them online for electronic access.

Where a report may be considered controversial, it may still be desirable to release it but with a statement from council indicating its status (i.e. that it is a report to council that is being reviewed or considered but does not represent council policy). Once adopted or rejected, this should also be made clear.

- **Community and stakeholder information sessions:** Provides an opportunity for interested stakeholders to be informed of project findings and ask questions. These sessions are generally supported by display material showing the results of technical studies, maps, etc. Feedback can be generated by a question and answer time or through feedback forms for attendees to fill out.

These sessions may be held at any stage of the project, but especially after reports have been released. While the main purpose is to inform, these sessions can also be used to gain feedback on the findings.

- **Community and stakeholder workshops or interactive sessions:** Workshops provide the opportunity to gain detailed feedback on specific matters, such as options for adaptation, and how the look and feel of specific areas may change with specific adaptation options. They allow participants to share and hear each other's views and to explore ideas and options they contribute, not just those of council or consultants. These interactive sessions can be used to explore possible future ways of adaptation and to identify preferred adaptation pathway(s).

Workshops need to be well moderated with proper instructions and guidelines. Workshops are most effective with smaller groups (under 20 and preferably under 15). If there is a large response, multiple sessions or breaking a large audience into smaller groups will make it more effective.

The main purpose of interactive sessions is to consult, and are mostly provided well into the project once the issues and possible responses are analysed and better understood. If they are held early in the process, there is a risk that discussions will be based too much on speculation and not on enough good information, potentially leading to escalating anxiety and energy wasted on issues that may not exist or solutions that are not relevant or effective.

Tip:

Build on past efforts

Past initiatives by council often lay the groundwork for future consultation. Recent consultation processes for rezoning, facilities planning, strategic planning and other activities can provide a rich source of contacts when starting the consultation process.

Even if the previous process had not always gone as well as hoped, the willingness to reengage can be seen as a sign of genuine effort to consult. In these cases, council can learn from previous efforts and improve the process.

- **Information and reference pages on council's website:** This makes information available for a wide audience. It can provide several layers and depth of information that suit different levels of interest for different audiences. The web pages can be used to offer:

- reference to other general sources of information
- access to relevant reports and mapping
- detailed case studies of response options from elsewhere and their outcomes
- expected timing on future research/reports and how to access
- expected timing on decision-making process and how to participate.

- **Accepting submissions:** As part of an interactive approach, it is important to provide the community and stakeholders with the opportunity to provide feedback, verbally during meetings or written via submissions. In offering the opportunity for submissions, it is important to set up and communicate a clear process:

- Council is requesting feedback and takes the input from its stakeholders seriously.
- Submissions will be considered, comments will be added and communicated (either one-on-one or collectively).
- There must be a clear timeframe and address for submissions. Forms can be designed to enhance ease of response.

- **Hotlines, contact numbers:** Often callers may not know who or what to ask for if they have a concern or question about something they read in the media or on a council flyer. Getting past the switchboard/customer service staff to the right contact can be daunting. Providing a specific phone number can aid feedback, for example, a direct line to the spokesperson. Switchboard staff also need to be briefed about how to direct calls that do not go to the direct number.

This form of contact can be made available throughout the project, and continue afterwards.

- **Social media:** The use of social media is becoming more widespread but should not automatically be used. Social media needs to be used with due consideration. It enables a wider debate about certain subjects to occur in parts of the community.

Social media needs continuous and ongoing moderation to ensure contributors are respectful to other users, do not unnecessarily compromise people's privacy and are not used as a means to spread unfounded allegations or misinformation. In considering social media, it is important to determine what it would add that other means of communication do not yet cover.

Social media can be used throughout the project, and can be used to both inform and consult.

- **Tracking and evaluation:** It is recommended that all communication is tracked to record the number of responses, attendances, submissions, site visits, report downloads etc. The tracking should include the type of responses, where applicable (i.e. positive/negative, high/low).

The tracking and evaluation of communication may provide a better understanding of the level of interest, key issues and concerns, and may provide lessons for future projects.

Tracking communication

One council tracked all incoming calls related to coastal issues, ensuring they went to the correct respondent depending on content. The number and nature of each call was logged to track resident response and issues raised as the project unfolded. This helped ensure project and staff responses were targeted effectively.

4.3.2 Broadcast and press media

When dealing with the general media, guidance from someone well experienced in media matters such as media daily cycles of deadlines, how to write newsworthy stories of suitable wording and length, key reporters to inform and regular local programs to contact is important. For councils that do not have experienced individuals on staff, engaging a media advisor to undertake the work and advise staff may be worth the cost for larger projects.

- **Media releases** are used to inform the wider public through newspapers, radio and television. Media releases can be used to announce significant findings and to promote council's approach to the project. The messages need to be clear and succinct and there needs to be a newsworthy 'hook' for it to be taken up by the media. Hooks could include announcement of a public meeting, the release of hazard maps, a beachside or coastal celebration or sports event, or a report on recent flooding or erosion events and council's response.

Staff members need to be well briefed so they know how to respond if approached by reporters. The project spokesperson needs to be very well informed and briefed in order to respond to any questions.

If the general media is to be used to 'announce' report findings, it is generally desirable that the affected residents are informed by council directly at the same time or slightly before, rather than just learning via media reports.

Council should be on the front foot, regardless of whether or not the media is pursuing a story. Council should be prepared and issue media releases about any significant events, reports, public meetings etc. so that if these are reported, council's perspective is clearly stated and available in advance. By taking a proactive approach, there will be less likelihood of suspicion that council is trying to hide something. A media release prepared by council provides an opportunity for council to frame the issue in a more appropriate way than the sensational or adversarial framing commonly adopted by media outlets. While a media release does not guarantee how the story will be framed, it significantly improves the likelihood of positive framing, as the reporters will have readily-prepared material to use.

- **Media interviews and responses to questions:** These will often follow or be accompanied by media releases. Background information needs to be well documented and the staff, especially the spokesperson, needs to be well briefed. Copies of relevant documents referred to should be readily available to reporters. Interviews and responses to questions need to be well prepared and adhere to the principles of communication adopted for the project.

4.3.3 Other channels

- **Articles** in various magazines, publications and electronic newsletters, such as the LGAQ news, professional bodies (Planning Institute of Australia, Professional Engineers, Institute of Public Works Engineers, etc.) are targeted at a specific audience, often those with a professional interest in the project. The focus, scope and level of detail should be commensurate with the targeted audience.

TABLE 1. COMMUNICATION MEASURES SUMMARY TABLE

Measure	Target audience	Purpose	Resources*	Comment
1 Surveys	Community	Consulting	High	Gaining understanding of views and information needs
2 Focus groups	Community, stakeholder groups	Consulting Involving Collaborating	High	Interactive method to explore in-depth views, options or solutions
3 Briefings/meetings	Internal stakeholders, joint project partners	Informing Consulting Involving Collaborating	Medium	Widely applicable. Allows for detailed communication
4 Briefings via mail, email	Internal stakeholders, joint project partners	Informing	Low	Mostly one direction communication
5 Letterbox drop	Directly affected community	Informing	Medium	Informing with a limited level of detail
6 Newsletter and notices	Community, internal and external stakeholders	Informing	Medium	To inform wider audience with a limited level of detail
7 Contact information	All	Informing	Low	Provides a point of contact for people with questions or comments in general
8 Information sessions	Directly affected community, external stakeholders	Informing Consulting	Medium	Mostly informative, with the opportunity for audiences to ask questions
9 Workshops/interactive sessions	Directly affected community, external stakeholders	Consulting Involving Collaborating	High	Important instrument to engage communities in adaptive process
10 Web pages	All	Informing Some consulting	Low	Provision of various levels of information
11 Accepting submissions	All external stakeholders	Consulting	Medium	Important element of engagement process, in addition to workshops
12 Social media	All	Informing Consulting Involving	Medium	Not easy to control
13 Tracking and evaluation	All	Tracking levels of interest	Low	To enhance understanding of issues and concerns, and to learn for future reference
14 Media and press releases	All	Informing	Low	Best guided by someone with significant media experience
15 Media interviews	All	Informing	Low	Best guided by someone with significant media experience
16 Articles	Targeted audiences, other councils and government	Informing	Medium	To share experience, and build rapport professionally or otherwise

Source: SGS, 2013

* Resources levels are relative to each other for a given scale and scope of project. **Low** typically means a few hours to one or two weeks of time and minimal direct costs; **medium**, a few days to a few weeks of time and some direct costs for materials or contractors; and **high** means a minimum of one week of time but possibly a month or more and potentially significant expenses.

4.4 Timeframes and resourcing

Engagement processes may be very resource intensive, especially if the communication aims to have a high level of public participation. It is important to make sufficient resources available for the communication plan consistent with the project's priority and any risks associated with engagement, or lack of.

The communication plan should include a detailed plan with resource allocations. The resource allocations identify the budget, time and other resources that are required to complete each task. A contingency budget for unforeseen events should also be included. This may be from 10% to 20% of the total budget.

4.4.1 Preparing a timetable

To ensure sufficient resources and preparation time, the communication plan needs to include a detailed timetable for the project. The timetable identifies the communication measures by target group and point in time, resources required and any direct costs.

In laying out the timetable consideration should consider:

- public holidays
- major events that may compete for attention
- regularly scheduled dates for council meetings and workshops and lead times to get on agendas and submit briefing papers
- key staff (e.g. spokesperson) leave dates, or availability for the project if also committed to other duties
- availability of venues for public meetings and forums
- publication dates for periodical community newsletters
- dates for complementary events that may happen during the project (e.g. Coastcare week, surf carnival)
- timing of key project milestones (e.g. receipt of reports) and links to specific communication tasks.

The timetable should also consider expected lead times to develop and approve content, prepare page layout and printing, and booking times for direct mail or postal mail delivery where applicable, to ensure timeframes can be met.

4.4.2 Guide to requirements for each communication and engagement level

As noted earlier (section 2.3), adequate engagement processes can reduce risks and long-term costs, and effective consultation and involvement can increase support for decision-making and/or prevent the project being undermined.

In terms of engagement, there are certain 'must haves' and 'nice to have' communication instruments and actions, depending on the aims of communication.

Informing

As a rule of thumb, effectively *informing* the community and stakeholders about a coastal adaptation project involves:

Must have	Nice to have
Mail-out or letterbox targeted information about the project, project intent and outcomes to those most affected	One or more information sessions, posters, displays, leaflets in shops
Publication of technical reports on council websites	Easy to read summaries and frequently asked questions (FAQ) page
Specified contact information for further information and questions	
Briefing of internal and external stakeholders by email or letters	Meetings with stakeholders
In person briefings with elected members with follow up project reports	

Consulting

In regards to exploring adaptation options and funding and governance of adaptation, effective *consultation* is required as a minimum.

One big change in moving from *informing* to *consulting* is the greater complexity in the information to be conveyed and discussed, with a resulting increase in effort and resources required to communicate this clearly.

The second big change is the enhanced opportunity to receive feedback and to encourage a discussion *within* the community, not just between individuals and council.

Consultation would include:

Must have	Nice to have
Distribute information about project process and timing, and opportunities for engagement using the methods listed above under <i>inform</i>	Community random sample surveys to enable understanding of both wider community and affected community views and enable both to be represented in discussions
Call for submissions in response to contents of technical documents, usually with some guidance on key aspects (e.g. completeness of list of values) or issues to be resolved	Multiple channels for response (written, phone contact, web response form, attendance at information session Q&A/ workshops) Workshop about possible adaptation options, implications of adaptation costs and equitable distribution of costs (who pays), effectiveness of adaptation options and impacts to coastal area character and amenity
Technical findings to be distributed or made accessible which may include: hazard assessment, risk assessments, local area assets and values, list of adaptation options, future scenarios for the area, approach to short-listing and selection, funding and decision-making options	Where there are several reports, or they are long or complex, provide a summary synthesis document summarising the key points

Involving

Steps to move beyond *consulting* to *involving* include steps listed above but the points listed as ‘nice to have’ above become the minimum. In addition:

Must have	Nice to have
Additional briefings of council, staff and project partners on results of surveys, workshops and other feedback received	Council elected members and staff in attendance at workshops as observers Multiple rounds of workshops as options are refined, possibly after further technical investigations of short listed options

Collaborating

As noted in the discussion in Section 2.3, *collaboration* involves much earlier engagement and repeated *consultation* through all of the points listed at each stage of the project. In addition, options not listed in the summary table may be employed:

- Community participants might sit on committees with specific assignments or be represented on information-gathering working groups.
- If the community is represented on such groups, these participants would need to have their own channels of communication to the wider community or sector they represent.

Empowering

Empowerment requires careful consideration of the governance for the project. As noted in earlier discussion in Section 3.3, there would be statutory and other constraints on the practical extent to which decision-making could be devolved to a community participation process or at least to the scope of decisions that could be made through the process. At a minimum, empowerment would require a well defined governance structure and may require legal agreements or other arrangements to be negotiated.

4.4.3 Estimating resources needed

It is very difficult to provide a clear statement of how many resources (hours, dollars) would be needed to execute each task in a communication plan. The potential range is massive, from a few hours and a few hundred dollars for council staff to send out an information leaflet, up to a full-time job for months and tens of thousands of dollars in fees for external service providers – market survey firms, media advisors, graphic design and printing, direct mail delivery, meeting facilitators and project managers.

Even for a given level of engagement (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower) the amount of effort varies greatly depending on:

- the numbers of people affected in the project area
- the degree of uniformity of impacts across the project area
- the scope of the project – hazard assessment, shorter-term protection works, or long-term adaptation planning for the community
- the number and complexity of possible adaptation options and their potential impacts

- the numbers of potential conflicts of interests between stakeholders and the intensity of these
- the history of the area, including extent and effectiveness of previous work done
- the strength of the relationship and level of trust between the council and the community (and outside agencies, including state government)
- the degree to which council has a clear and consistent internal view on adaptation, the role and communication principles adopted, etc.

The time and resources required also depend heavily on the skills and experience of those doing the work. Experienced people can design and run surveys, prepare information for leaflets, update websites, write media releases, give presentations and run workshops in less time than if doing it for the first time.

In short nearly all of the items listed in the previous sections affect the degree of ease or difficulty and the resulting resources required.

Time and budget allowance

Experience from a range of consultations that *involved* the community provide some estimate of resources needed. The cases can be characterised as:

- relatively small, well-defined cases with some erosion and inundation risk
- communities with about 100 to 500 dwellings plus some other infrastructure in the community, but only part in the hazard area
- using a scenario approach to envisage the preferred future outcome based on analysis of hazards, cost of risk, values of the area and possible options grouped in three scenarios (retreat, accommodate and protect)
- projects that were joint state and local initiatives using an experienced consultant.

Indicative range of time spent in days in communication related activity for each site:

Activity	Consultant	Council staff	State staff
Project team meetings	1.0 – 2.0	1.0 – 2.0	1.0 – 2.0
Communication plans	0.5 – 1.0	0.2 – 0.5	0.2 – 0.5
Summary reports for distribution	1.5 – 3.0	0.3 – 0.8	0.3 – 0.8
Council briefings	0.5 – 1.0	0.5 – 1.0	0.5 – 1.0
Staff briefings	0.5 – 1.0	0.5 – 1.0	0.5 – 1.0
Public information forums	1.5 – 2.5	1.0 – 1.5	0.7 – 1.5
Workshops	2.0 – 3.0	1.0 – 3.0	1.0 – 1.5
Mail-outs, publicity, website		0.5 – 2.5	
Total time in days	7.5 – 12.0	6.0 – 12.0	4.5 – 8.0
Expenses	\$11,000 - \$16,000	\$1,500 - \$2,000	\$300 - \$1,000
	Fees + expenses	Print, post, catering	Travel, accommodation

In summary:

- Greater depth of engagement takes more time and has increased costs, but in some contexts **not** engaging enough may cost more.
- The more you do, the better and more efficient you get.
- Use outside providers where required but build up internal skills for tasks that are likely to recur in other projects if council has the capacity to do so.
- Using outside providers may provide some budget certainty if they are committed to providing specified services under a fixed price contract, but may also make substantial demands on staff resources.

Tip:

Resources required? Complexity is the key

Example – Contact officer: Providing a contact number for a council officer on a leaflet, website or news article takes a trivial amount of time. Keeping the officer well informed takes more time, especially if the project is large or complex. The biggest cost will depend on the response, which may range from a few short phone calls, to the officer being occupied for weeks, nearly full-time handling anxious or irate calls, especially if other parts of the communication have been handled poorly or there happens to be a storm event.

Example – Preparing written communication – easy: A simple A4 single-sided information and Q&A sheet is drafted by the project manager in two hours for residents of a small area included in a hazard mapping project. Review by the steering group and revision requires two more hours of staff time. It is straightforward and not contentious, so is approved by the authorised officer after a few minutes of review. The result is formatted with graphics in-house and 100 copies printed on council's photocopier for inclusion to residents in the affected area with another council mail-out. Total staff time to prepare and print: five to six hours over a few days and nominal overhead costs.

Example – Preparing written communication –

hard: In a complex and contentious situation, the first draft of an A4 information brochure requires several days of preparation after review of complex technical assessments, discussions with the consultants and review of past council resolutions, previous works in the area and prior community comments.

Review by the steering group raises a number of issues resulting in two more drafts before a draft of the final layout and graphics with the text is prepared (by an external graphic design firm), in accordance with the requirements that near print-ready documents be presented for approval. This is then forwarded to the General Manager/Chief Executive Officer, Mayor and legal officer for final review and approval.

The legal officer raises objections that need further external review, and both the Mayor and General Manager/Chief Executive Officer request significant – and conflicting – changes. Further discussions resolve the agreed changes and the results of the external review provide a longer and more complex document.

The additional text means the layout no longer works effectively, so the graphics must be revised by the external firm before the document is resubmitted. The resubmitted document is approved with minor additional changes. Delays in preparation meant having to change printers at the last minute to meet deadlines for distribution before a public meeting, taking more staff time.

Total staff time to prepare for printing: Five to six days staff time over three weeks. External supplier costs: \$7,500.

Appendix 1 Case study

Tasmanian Coastal Adaptation Pathways (TCAP) project in Clarence City Council and other Tasmanian councils

Clarence City Council included an extensive community communication and consultation process for its hazard assessment for 17 coastal areas in the city. When the hazard maps for Lauderdale (Clarence) were about to be communicated to the community, council expressed significant concern about the consequences of showing 'lines on maps' that affected large numbers of houses. However, council ultimately agreed to publish the maps. During the community information session that followed, there was a spontaneous standing ovation by the public for council for taking such an honest and transparent approach.

It was important for council to determine and clearly state its role. Clarence City Council described its role and commitment in the following statements:

- Council's role is to actively involve and consult with the community regarding the implications of climate change, including possible responses to risks identified.
- Council will be an advocate for the community and work with other levels of government and relevant bodies to implement identified policy options.
- Council will keep the community informed and will be honest in its communication.
- Council will respect, listen and respond to the community's concerns.

For the TCAP project, the participating Tasmanian Government agencies committed to:

- work with the local community to identify a balance between realising the values of living in and occupying coastal areas while managing risk to acceptable levels
- help identify effective adaptation responses to future coastal hazards arising from climate change
- identify factors that may inhibit the community's ability to respond and to develop approaches that address these factors
- identify factors that may inhibit the government's ability to respond and to develop strategies that address these factors.

Communication objectives need to be well defined. For example, Clarence City Council adopted these objectives:

1. To inform the Clarence community, government agencies and other stakeholders that Council considers its responsibility to keep informed on the issue and act accordingly and to inform and consult with the community now and in the future (in case of new findings, concerns or situations).
2. To provide the public and affected residents with the best available objective estimate of likely future impacts and options in an accessible way to enable them to make informed decisions about their future plans.
3. To increase awareness in the general community of the implications of climate change for coastal areas so that these become a factor in their future plans.
4. To consult with the community to stimulate practical, creative and constructive responses that recognise and respond to risks without loss of the amenity, use and enjoyment of coastal areas, both public and private, while allowing appropriate adaptation to future conditions.
5. To create community awareness of the risks and community support for possible policy responses. Allowing the public to participate in the process of how to respond to the risks of sea level rise may improve acceptance and the community's ability to cope with the risks and its implications.
6. To address misinformation and speculation.

Focus on relevant objectives for different stages

The first stage of the Clarence project focused communication on objectives 1, 3 and 5 listed above.

During the second stage of the project, all six communication objectives were addressed.

Know your audience

For the Clarence project, focus groups were held and a random community telephone survey was undertaken at the inception of the project to gauge the community's perception on level of risk, priority and attitude towards climate change and responsibilities for adaptation.

Key findings of the focus groups and survey included:

- The coast was important for those living in hazard areas and for those living away from the coast, with a focus on beaches as the most significant coastal value.
- Coastal residents were generally aware that there were risks from flooding and erosion and were aware of past events – they were not unduly concerned by being aware of the risk, but lacked certainty about the severity or extent of these hazards.
- In spite of this general awareness, there was a high level of emotional commitment to living in coastal areas even if there was significant risk.
- The majority of the community accepted that climate change and sea level rise were occurring.
- The community had a high level of trust in the local government, much higher than state or federal government at the time, and saw local government as the best entity to lead a response to coastal hazards.

These findings helped shaped messages and identify target audiences. In particular, communication stressed that council understood the high value people placed on coastal living and beaches, and that adaptation responses would seek to manage risk while maintaining beaches and amenity. It also emphasised that while council would lead efforts, it could not achieve all that was required by acting alone.

The findings also built confidence that it was both desirable and necessary to release detailed flood and erosion hazard maps, and that the result would not be unmanageable as some were predicting.

Make media and information material robust

Subsequently, Clarence City Council was preparing to undertake beach nourishment on a beach that had lost a significant volume of sand in storms earlier in the year. A leaflet had been prepared for distribution to residents in the adjacent area describing the intended works, effects on residents and expected benefits, including making clear that the works were not a permanent solution. The leaflet emphasised that while the works would reduce risk, they were not any guarantee against damage to property.

The night after the leaflets were printed ready for delivery, another storm struck, making the intended works no longer the most appropriate approach. As a result, the leaflets were never delivered and the works were modified. A later review of the leaflets concluded that had they been delivered the day before the storm, the wording would still have been appropriate (even though works had to be revised) and there would have been no embarrassment for Council. (*Leaflet shown as Attachment 1*).

Act quickly to diffuse misinformation

When hazard maps and preliminary impact assessments were released for 17 local areas within Clarence City Council, one of the sites included an area that had been targeted for a contentious development. The state government issued a media release interpreting the report as providing support for the development, an issue that the report did not address.

While the state government media release had not been anticipated, the project team had discussed the need to keep the adaptation project distinct in the public perception from the proposed development and the risk of distraction and confusion if they were coupled in reporting and debate. The team had agreed to act quickly and decisively if they should become entangled, making it straight forward to act when the situation arose.

Within hours, the project team consulted among itself and, with the General Manager and the lead consultant, contacted both the developers and those lobbying against the development. They were able to reach agreement that the report was dealing with a separate issue and did not address the development – either in support or opposition. Both sides agreed not to confound the issues raised in the climate change adaptation report with those of the development. All parties made their own statements to the press to this effect. As a result, what could have been a very messy and distracting (and fruitless) debate was avoided by taking quick action.

