Program for Public Information

Adapted from *Developing a Program for Public Information for Credit under the Community Rating System of the National Flood Insurance Program* (Insurance Services Office, Inc., 2021).

The Community Rating System (CRS) awards points to communities that go above and beyond minimum National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) requirements to inform residents about flood risks and safety. A Program for Public Information (PPI) is a coordinated, ongoing effort to share clear, helpful messages about flooding, flood insurance, and ways to reduce risk. The PPI is Activity 330 in the *CRS Coordinator's Manual.*

It is important to note that your community must be enrolled in the CRS prior to creating a PPI to get points. Consider your community's specific needs to decide if creating a PPI is right for you.

While creating the plan itself does not earn points, CRS offers bonus credit when outreach projects in the PPI are implemented.

How to Create a PPI

1 Form a PPI Committee

- The committee must have **at least 5 people**
  - Staff from the floodplain management office and the public information office (if one exists) must be included.
- The committee **must meet at least twice**: once to review public information needs and once to approve the plan. Meetings may be conducted virtually or in-person.
- At least **half of the members must be from outside the local government,** such as:
  - Residents in flood prone areas
  - Local insurance agents (Required for Activity 370 Flood Insurance Promotion)
  - Business leaders

2 Assess Public Information Needs

- **Map priority areas**: identify neighborhoods or locations with flood risks (e.g., repetitive loss areas, levee-protected zones, different types of flooding).
- **Identify priority audiences:** groups who need specific messages (e.g., homeowners, renters, contractors, tourists, non-English speakers).
- **Identify flood-related public information activities** other organizations are already doing, including efforts by the city, region, non-profit organizations, or utilities.

3 Create Specific Messages for Each Priority Audience

- Messages must either:
  - state what the audience should do, or
  - provide basic information and direct readers to additional information.
- The PPI Committee must **determine outcomes** they would like to see for each message.
- At least **one message must be about flood insurance**.
- **Priority topics for CRS credit:**
  1. Know your flood hazard.
  2. Insure your property for your flood hazards.
  3. Protect people from the hazard.
  4. Protect your property from the hazard.
  5. Build responsibly.
  6. Protect natural floodplain functions.

4 Identify Outreach Projects

- **Choose how to deliver each message**:
  - Informational (e.g., brochures in public places)
  - General outreach (e.g., newsletters, social media, presentations)
  - Targeted outreach (e.g., letters or emails to specific at-risk groups)
- **Include who will do it and when**. Projects done by an outside stakeholder (like a utility or insurance company) can earn extra CRS points.

5 Consider Other Public Information Efforts

- The PPI **can also coordinate related efforts for additional CRS credit**, such as:
- **Map information services** (helping residents find their flood zone) - Activity 320
- **Hazard disclosure** (describing real estate disclosure practices) - Activity 340
- **Repetitive loss area outreach** (informing residents of repetitive loss areas) - Section 504

6 Prepare and Adopt the Plan

The **formal PPI document must include**:

- **List of committee members**, their affiliations, and meeting dates
- **Summary of flood risks and existing activities**. The PPI has many commonalties with your parish's required Hazard Mitigation Plan. This information may be used in the PPI.
- **List of priority audiences**, messages, and desired outcomes.
- **List of projects**, who will do them, and timelines (anticipated to be annual).
- **List of flood response preparation (FRP) projects** if the community aims to earn bonus PPI credit for FRP.
- **Documentation of all other activities** for which PPI bonus credit is desired.
- **Description of success** monitoring and evaluation.

*The plan **must be formally adopted by the community's governing body** (e.g., city council).*

7 Implement, Monitor, and Evaluate the Program

- Committee **reviews progress annually and creates an evaluation** report detailing:
  - which projects were implemented,
  - successes and challenges, and
  - needed changes or new ideas.
- The PPI must be **updated every 5 years** at a minimum.
- The 5-year update can qualify as the annual evaluation for that year.
- The **update will be reviewed for CRS credit** according to the current Coordinator's Manual. The draft of the update should be sent to the FEMA Regional Office's Insurance Specialist.
- **All activities are expected to be implemented annually.**

Multi-Jurisdiction PPI

Multi-jurisdiction PPIs are made of multiple CRS communities or members of a CRS Users Group that want to create a joint PPI.

Additional requirements to consider for a multi-jurisdictional PPI include:

- Completing an inventory of the existing public information efforts each community has and the audiences they reach.
- Documenting which community benefits from each project.
- Separating scoring for each community depending on which projects and messages apply.
- Choosing committee members.

Committee Members

- At least 2 representatives from each community
  - 1 local government representative
  - 1 community stakeholder representative
- At least half of the representatives must be outside the local government
- At least half of the representatives must attend all the meetings

Advantages

- Sharing resources
- Not duplicating efforts
- Using common regional media
  - Newspapers, television stations, radio
- Using an existing regional organization

Disadvantages

- Challenging to ensure all communities agree with, adopt, and implement all aspects of the the PPI, may result in a lengthier process
- Individual community needs can be lost within the larger PPI

Important Information

- Communities only earn PPI bonus credit for projects listed in the official public information project document.
- Projects implemented by stakeholders earn extra points.
- Documentation of PPI activities is critical and should include committee meeting minutes, sign-in sheets, and copies of materials.

Contact Information

- Contact your state's NFIP Coordinator, your local or nearby CRS Users Group, or visit *crsresources.org* for more information.
- For a detailed guide to PPI for CRS, visit *Developing a Program for Public Information for Credit under the Community Rating System*

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE CENTER AT THE WATER INSTITUTE
thewaterinstitute.org/crc

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laseagrant.org

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