

Communication Plan [Step 6](#): Select Communication and Engagement Tools

Tool: Social Factors Vision Board (PFAS example)

Target Audience: An established community advisory group or a periodic outreach meeting, focus groups, or decision maker stakeholder group. The vision boards can also be used as starting materials for an engagement survey and interview.

Relevance/Importance to PFAS Sites: The success of public outreach in terms of exerting a positive influence on community stakeholders, in preventing and mitigating their exposure to a risk, is based on site-specific physical, psychological, sociological, and demographic characteristics or “social factors.” Identification of these social factors among individual stakeholder groups can assist practitioners in refining engagement methods and outreach material to maximize benefits to the community and meet specific needs of the targeted public sector. The vision boards developed for this toolkit incorporate social factors identified from presentations by public and community stakeholders during the USEPA PFAS [community meetings](https://www.epa.gov/pfas/pfas-community-engagement) (https://www.epa.gov/pfas/pfas-community-engagement) held in 2018. Thus, the social factors represent one set of community meetings and concerns. Broadly applicable conclusions cannot be derived from this information. The information presented should be considered an example and provides a starting point for practitioners to understand the stakeholder context of a PFAS-affected community. This example provides a guide for performing engagement on site-specific community concerns.

Social Factors Vision Board

Stakeholder risk perception and associated social factors, shapes individuals’ attitudes toward management of hazards that affect personal safety and public health, and play an important roles in supporting legitimacy and compliance with policies and protection measures. Due to the evolving state of the science of PFAS, including appropriate risk management strategies and relevant public policy, the present public attitude toward legitimacy and acceptance of proposed policies and strategies is hindered. Therefore, it is essential for practitioners to identify site-specific social factors within an affected community to effectively communicate risk and the proposed management strategy, as well as address misperceptions and respond to stakeholder needs.

Social science methodologies, provided under Resources below, can help practitioners to understand and identify (1) the social factors that may work in favor of or hinder risk management strategies; and (2) the social factors and stakeholders that are affected by cleanup actions. A vision board can be used as a medium for stakeholders to rate their level of importance and/or interest on applicable social factors. Identified factors can then be used to further develop SMART goals and key messages, develop public outreach materials, and select engagement methods. The overall objective is to gain deeper insight into stakeholder concerns, values, and preferred communication method to facilitate a two-way street knowledge transfer and capacity building toward a successful risk management strategy.

The vision boards, ITRC RC Social Factors Vision Board attachment, ([ITRC_RC_Social Factors Vision Board AttachmentApr2020.pdf](#)), present a series of boards, each focused on a specific topic of concern and associated social factors identified from presentations by public and community stakeholders during the USEPA PFAS community meetings held in 2018.

Note that vision boards for a specific project are living documents. The statements/questions and social factors should be updated to represent project-specific conditions and stakeholder concerns. Social factors presented on the toolkit vision boards are representative of affected communities’ perceptions as opposed to expert opinion based on scientific studies. The attachment was prepared as an example to provide a starting point for practitioners to understand the present needs and concerns of a PFAS affected community. In addition, the rating system presented in each board is interchangeable to any social factor topic.

Instructions for Vision Boarding

1. Review findings from Steps 1 through 4 of the risk communication planning process to determine board topic(s) applicable for the engagement event.
2. Revise question/statement wording and update social factors to represent site-specific findings and conditions.
3. Display the board on a sturdy structure, such as an easel, cork/white board, or wall.
4. Provide a handout explaining the exercise and definition for the social factors. Include the following:
 - a. *Purpose of exercise* - The purpose of the vision board exercise is to identify factors that represent the community values pertaining to your neighborhood (place and loyalty), ability to bring about change (agency and power), and role of information (trust and communication) about managing risk of PFAS at the site. The feedback will assist the cleanup team with developing a risk management

strategy and outreach activities that best meet the community's needs and values.

- b. *Feedback method* – see list items 6 – 8 below
 - c. *Define topics and social factors* displayed on the vision boards to ensure each participant and the practitioner has a common understanding of the factors being evaluated.
5. Describe the purpose of the exercise and review each question/statement and social factor with the participants.
 6. Provide sticky notes, stickers or writing implements (markers preferred) for participants to provide their feedback on each board. Common methods to capture feedback include:
 1. Participants rate each category based on level of importance/severity.
 2. Participants have a set number of factors on which they can provide feedback. For example, they may each have three stickers to post under a set of factors to communicate their preference of prioritization/importance.
 3. Participants have one sticky note per factor to write feedback.
 7. Color coding of sticky notes, sticker, and writing implements can be used to categorize stakeholder groups, level of prioritization/importance, and subcategories.
 8. Provide a medium for participants to provide feedback on additional social factors not listed. For example, an open/blank category or a feedback form.

Collect stakeholder role and demographic data from the participants to record who provided feedback.