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Subtask 1.3: Outreach and Engagement Plan for the North Carolina Flood Resiliency Blueprint

North Carolina Flood Resiliency Blueprint

Prepared for the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality by AECOM

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Definitions

A comprehensive list of definitions applicable to multiple Flood Resiliency Blueprint documents is provided in a separate document.

Acronyms

CORE - NCDEQ Core Advisory Group

EJ – Environmental justice

GIS – Geographic Information System

NC – North Carolina

NCDEQ – North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality

NCDOT – North Carolina Department of Transportation

NGO - non-governmental organization

NCIDR - North Carolina Inclusive Disaster Recovery Network

PAG – Principal Advisory Group

Q&A – Questions and answers

SMART - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound

SME – Subject matter expert

TAG – Technical Advisory Group

USGS – United States Geological Survey

1 Introduction

In the last decade, North Carolina (NC) has experienced several catastrophic flood events that have resulted in billions of dollars of damage and tragic loss of lives. The 2020 North Carolina Climate Science Report concluded that it is highly likely that the state receives more intense rain events more often in the future. In addition, the state's population has grown dramatically over the last two decades and its population is projected to continue to grow. Population growth increases the amount of impervious surfaces. Increased impervious surfaces result in more water washing off the landscape more quickly. This increases the amount and rate of stream and river flooding. To help the state and its communities address the current and projected impact of flooding, in 2021 the North Carolina General Assembly, per session law 2021-180 SB105, directed the Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ), Division of Mitigation Services to contract with an organization to develop a Statewide Flood Resiliency Blueprint (Blueprint).

The Blueprint's purpose is to be a standardized, basin-wide flood resiliency approach applicable to all 17 NC river basins along with an actionable, decision-support tool that will form the backbone of the state flood planning process. Such a process will inform how and where resources should be allocated and identify flood resiliency projects and strategies that should be implemented to increase community resiliency to flooding. The Blueprint will be applied within all NC river basins affected by past flood events and those anticipated to be impacted by future flood-related losses. It is not intended to be a static report or set of reports, but rather a dynamic tool that can be iterative and flexible to incorporate new data and information as they become available based on identified gaps and advances in science and technology. The Blueprint's outcomes will meet the requirements of the legislation based on the best available science, stakeholder engagement, and sound decision making. A key objective is to produce products that will be implementable, understandable, sustainable, and close the technical resource gaps among local planners, project developers, and communities. It will result in decision-support tools for targeted audiences that are interactive, easy to understand and use, and dynamic over time.

The Blueprint will accomplish several key goals, including:

- Develop community and basin-specific risk management processes to identify and address flooding in NC communities.
- Develop an online decision support tool to seamlessly guide state, county, municipal, tribal, and other jurisdictions in identification and selection of flood mitigation strategies responsibly, systematically, equitably, and transparently.
- Establish a repeatable statewide methodology for prioritizing and selecting flood mitigation strategies for future implementation.

The Blueprint resiliency planning framework and actionable tool will lead to a set of actionable projects and funding strategies that the state and other government entities can implement to reduce flooding, mitigate the impacts of flooding when it does occur, and increase community resilience.

As part of the Blueprint, NCDEQ developed an Outreach and Engagement Plan to coordinate stakeholder engagement in accordance with the overall NCDEQ Public Participation Plan. The goals are to implement engagement strategies across a diverse range of stakeholders and governments, and to develop and implement communication and outreach strategies that demonstrate audience-appropriate communication approaches/tools to ensure the NC Flood Resiliency Blueprint meets the needs of all North Carolina. The Outreach and Engagement Plan was developed for the participants in the NC Flood Resiliency Blueprint development process, will be approved by NCDEQ, and will document how and when various stakeholder and government representatives will be engaged. The Principal Advisory Group (PAG) and Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs) will be engaged throughout the contract period to ensure successful development of the Blueprint. By following the steps outlined in this Outreach and Engagement Plan, NCDEQ and its consultants will have mechanisms to manage stakeholder engagement requirements through specified tasks.

This Outreach and Engagement Plan was created based on past experiences with multiple state initiatives, feedback from key stakeholder groups, knowledge and skills of staff, and research into stakeholder engagement best practices. This includes the International Association for Public Participation and knowledge gleaned from other states and local government endeavors. Specifically referenced are materials from the following plans and documents: North Carolina Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan, North Carolina Enhanced Hazard Mitigation Plan, North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Resiliency Strategy Report, Collaboratory 2021 Flood Resilience Study, North Carolina Climate Science Report, Natural and Working Lands Action Plan, North Carolina Coastal Habitat Protection Plan – 2021 Amendment, Regions Innovating for Strong Economies and Environment Program, North Carolina Resilient Coastal Communities Program, North Carolina Resilience Clearinghouse, Action Plan for Nature-based Stormwater Strategies: Promoting Natural Designs that Reduce Flooding and Improve Water Quality, and Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool.

1.1 What is Outreach and Engagement?

Outreach and Engagement, sometimes referred to as stakeholder engagement, broadly refers to a planned process whereby project owners, governments, and stakeholders exchange information through different methods, take actions to solve common problems, deliver services, or make decisions. In this Outreach and Engagement plan, a stakeholder is referred to as a person, group of persons, or non-governmental organization(s) that has an interest or could be affected by the Blueprint. Governments include any Federal, state, county, municipal, or tribal government that has an interest or could be affected by the Blueprint.

The 6 Steps for this Outreach and Engagement Plan (see Figure 1-1)are:

1. **Understand the Scope** – defined purpose, clear procedure.
2. **Build the Stakeholder and Government Groups** –shared roles and responsibilities; collective interests; recognize diversity in communications, and foster inclusiveness in stakeholder audiences.
3. **Engagement Methodology/ Activities -** methods to exchange information throughout the various groups.
4. **Determine Strategies and Tools** – identify mechanisms necessary to participate effectively with the Blueprint process.
5. **Analyze Responses** – inform the actions and decisions of the NCDEQ for Blueprint through response data.
6. **Stakeholder and Government Feedback Loop** - provide and receive information between groups (defined below) and NCDEQ.

Figure 1-1: 6 step process for stakeholder engagement

2 Guiding Principles for Engagement

The outreach and engagement practices are value-based and guided by three principles: Collaboration and Engagement, Holistic and Forward-looking , Action and Outcome-oriented.

2.1 Collaboration and Engagement

- Ensure process is collaborative with federal agencies, other state agencies, local governments, communities, tribes, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities, and other interested parties.
- Consider, consult, and meaningfully involve vulnerable, traditionally underserved, and impacted communities in providing recommendations for Blueprint implementation.
- Be mindful that the Blueprint development is a foundation with anticipated long-term maintenance, administration, multi-partner collaboration, and updates.

2.2 Holistic and Forward-Looking

- Incorporate future risk using best available data, including climate change, population growth, land use change, and other relevant risks.
- Focus on creating long-term, generational benefits for the state in terms of loss avoidance and supporting smart growth and economic development.
- Deliver a solution that supports the establishment of a sustainable, long-term funding mechanism.

2.3 Action and Outcome Oriented

- Leverage existing resources and build on momentum of planning and resiliency efforts underway across North Carolina.
- Incentivize solutions with multiple benefits, and factor in life-cycle cost when appropriate.
- Strive for decisions and outcomes that facilitate near-term action.

3 Process Cycle

3.1 Understand the Scope of the Project

NCDEQ's NC Flood Resiliency Blueprint website identifies goals, objectives, and strategies to help reduce the impact of flooding events and increase the resiliency of communities to flooding in North Carolina.

https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/mitigation-services/flood-resiliency-blueprint

Outreach and engagement with each of the identified Groups (Step 02) includes a NCDEQ-led overview of the NC Flood Resiliency Blueprint, questions and answers (Q and A) regarding Group understanding of timeline, and key deliverables.

3.1.1 Key Deliverables for Flood Resiliency Blueprint

- **Online Decision Support Tool**: Develop an online decision support tool to allow end users to seamlessly visualize flood vulnerability for communities and to choose from a suite of flood mitigation/resiliency strategies based on the quality of the data and models available. The tool is expected to produce outputs including planning-level cost estimates and potential funding sources and help with evaluating costs/benefits across basin and sub-basin scales throughout the state.
- **Blueprint Process Document**: Develop a documented process for conducting flood resiliency planning at multiple scales applicable anywhere in the state, while recognizing that NC basins have different flood exposure, data and modeling needs, and/or local implementation capacity.
  - **Long-term Administration of Blueprint:** Design a program that allows for long-term reproducibility and adaptability of the decision-support tool and other Blueprint elements including, but not limited to, capacity building for municipal and state government end users, updating key data and modeling inputs, and long-term basin planning.
  - **Governance and Decision Making:** Recommendations for a governing body to evaluate/prioritize flood mitigation/resiliency projects and/or additional modeling/data needs for funding (e.g., NCDOT, NCDEQ, municipal)
- **Basin-specific Action Strategies**: Develop River Basin Specific Action Strategies for prioritized major river basins in NC to validate the decision support tool, identify priority geographic areas for additional modeling efforts, and develop basin-specific flood strategies. The pilot basin for 2023 is the Neuse River Basin.

3.2 Identify Outreach and Engagement Groups

Table 3-1 lists the Groups and Responsibilities of the Outreach and Engagement Groups. All groups will provide input and recommendations to the Core Advisory. Figure 3-2 covers the interaction of each of the groups and the direction of information flow.

Table 3-1: Groups and Responsibilities of the Outreach and Engagement Groups

Group	Responsibility
NCDEQ Executive Leadership	NCDEQ leadership will work with the Core Advisory Group to evaluate recommendations provided by the TAGs and other Groups. NCDEQ Executive Leadership will provide direction to the NCDEQ Core Advisory Group and ensure legislative directives are met.
NCDEQ Core Advisory Group (Core)	The Core will determine how/whether to include recommendations provided by the TAGs and other Groups related to technical requirements, policies, economics, environmental and human health, project funding, etc., into Blueprint project tasks. The Core will be the final decision maker with respect to approving vendor-developed deliverables, with direction from NCDEQ Executive Leadership.
Principal Advisory Group (PAG)	The PAG will provide advisory input and feedback to the NCDEQ Core Advisory Group on the policy, process, engagement, modeling, tools, support utilized, etc. to develop the Blueprint. This group will need a clear understanding of the Blueprint's needs and how it will be integrated into further state prioritization and floodplain management needs. The contractor will assist with documentation and administration for the group.
PAG participant	Members will attend the PAG meetings to provide advisory input and feedback on pertinent tasks and review documentation. Principal participants include TAG chairs and other participants at the discretion of the NCDEQ Core.
Technical Advisory Group (TAG)	The TAGs will help identify Blueprint tasks concerning a range of issues, including technical requirements, federal/state/local/tribal policies, economics, environmental and human health impacts, project funding, adaptation strategies, etc.
TAG Chair	Facilitates the specific TAG meetings and is a PAG participant. The TAG chair is responsible for approving an agenda driving coordination of the subject matter experts (SMEs) associated with each TAG's review of Blueprint tasks.
TAG participant	TAG members will attend four meetings to learn about the associated tasks of the Blueprint process and provide input on pertinent recommendations associated with specific tasks. TAG participants will help define the need for sub-TAGs on specific issues. Invited TAG participants are technical experts from government entities at the local, state, tribal, and federal levels, as well as academia, non-governmental organizations, private businesses, and other sectors that provide expert representation, as determined by the NCDEQ Core. The contractor will assist with documentation and administration for the Group.

Group	Responsibility
Sub-TAG	The purpose of the sub-TAGs is to tackle specific information that the coordinating TAG is responsible for but needs more in-depth discussion. The sub-TAGs will be a division of the larger TAG and will function as sub-committees for topics that need to be discussed in more detail for resolution. SMEs will be identified from within TAGs or as specialists to participate in sub-TAGs. These will be created ad hoc and will not be a standing group unless deemed necessary by the TAG.
Sub-TAG participant	Sub-TAGs will be created ad hoc for specialty items as needed within each task. Participants will work with TAG members to learn about the associated issue and provide input on pertinent recommendations associated with the specific question.
Regional Advisory Group	Each of the NC basins will have a regional advisory group that discusses specific data requirements for the basin. This data may include anything relevant from the number of cities, local implementation capacity, to the types of flooding that could impact the basin. The pilot basin is Neuse which is happening in tandem with the Phase I planning of Blueprint.
General Assembly	There are several reporting requirements for the General Assembly from Blueprint. There is a legislative status report that is provided to the General assembly each July.
Contractor	Contractors will assist NCDEQ in recruiting participants on all levels of the Blueprint, provide administration, create reporting, and develop presentations. The contractor will present information, facilitate meetings, and contact stakeholders for issues and clarification as requested. The contractors will work as needed.
Public Participation	Participants includes public stakeholders who are interested in the Blueprint outcomes. Could include local government, interested members of the public, real estate organizations, community groups, etc. Three meetings in coordination with Phase I of blueprint will be held to gather feedback from coastal, central, and western participants where information about flooding impacts in their area will be gathered to provide input to the Blueprint. There will also be a community outreach meeting held for each basin. The pilot basin is the Neuse. These participants will have access to goals and objectives of Blueprint as well as final reports and final outputs of the Blueprint project through associated websites. Some communities may be visited and asked for input on Blueprint deliverables.

3.3 Engagement Methodology/Activities

The Engagement Methodology/Activities process defines the engagement process for all groups. The Engagement Methodology/Activities will coordinate stakeholder engagement in accordance with the NCDEQ Public Participation Plan.

The development of the Blueprint will incorporate engagement methods such as community outreach meetings to reach underserved communities to increase their understanding of practices that may assist vulnerable areas. These locations will be determined by comparing flooding across NC to the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool showing underserved communities.

3.3.1 Method Descriptions

To accomplish the plan's goals, there are three primary outreach and engagement methods by which the NCDEQ Core Advisory Group received recommendations for Blueprint tasks (see Figure 3-1). Each of the Groups is defined in more detail in the following sections.

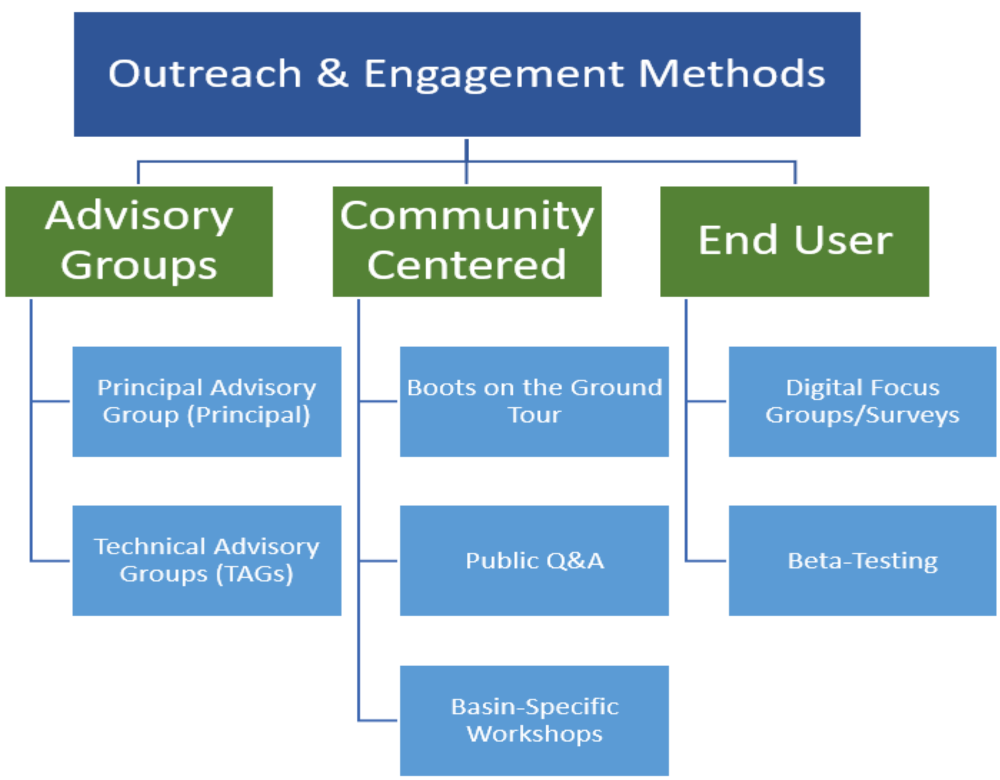

Figure 3-1: Engagement Methods

- **Advisory groups:** During development of Blueprint, TAGs, Neuse Regional Advisory Group, and PAGs will provide structured input and recommendations for the Blueprint.
- **Community-centered:** NCDEQ and Contractor Teams will conduct in-person meetings in selected communities across the state of NC to hear discussion on impacts from flooding and identify how communities might prioritize flood mitigation actions and strategies. These meetings will occur in

conjunction with a review of regional plans and studies that will include flooding impacts. Finally, at least four workshops in the Neuse River Basin will be conducted with the Council of Governments, municipal and county leaders, private interest groups, non-governmental entities, and representatives of under-resourced and underserved populations to gather, inform, and disseminate information for the basin.

- **End user groups**: To understand requirements, functionality, and capacity limitations for using a decision support tool and applying for grants, outreach and engagement will also target a range of end-users, such as state, county, tribal, and municipal agency representatives. The TAGs will be involved in the determination of these end users through the recommendations to NCDEQ throughout the Blueprint process. By engaging potential users during development, and beta-testing after initial development allows a feedback loop for improvement.

3.4 Determine Strategies and Tools

Many strategies and tools to facilitate effective stakeholder engagement are available to the Groups to encourage participation. This information will help determine how the Groups will function, process information, and interact with one another.

Tools used to facilitate outreach and engagement include a web presence, SharePoint, Teams sites, and other communication mechanisms. The contractor will consider all levels of technical access and understanding of the projects.

There is a Flood Resiliency Blueprint Document Management Site available to advisory group participants that will store the project's reference materials, including Phase I deliverables and meeting materials (agendas, meeting summaries, and presentation slides). This site is available for Technical Advisory Group (TAG), PAG, CORE, and contractors to provide documentation for workflows, communications and comments from the groups.

There will also be a website devoted to the Blueprint process that will provide information on the Blueprint to the general public. https://ncfloodblueprint.com/

3.5 Advisory Groups

3.5.1 Technical Advisory Group

Table 3-2 provides a list of the TAGs, their definitions, and what their input and feedback will cover within the Blueprint.

The goal in the Blueprint TAG review process is to work SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound).

- **S**pecific- e.g., TAGs will be asked for input based on their subject matter expertise.
- **M**easurable – e.g., Goals will be set for the TAG accomplishments during the project's life.
- **A**chievable - All recommendations for Phase I of the Blueprint will need to be delivered by December 2023.
- **R**elevant - Information included as part of the recommendations will be applicable based on the 2021 General Assembly Session Law 2021-180 Section 5.9(c) around the Blueprint.
- **T**ime-bound - All tasks for Phase I of Blueprint will be completed by December 2023.

A process flowchart shows how different Groups interact and participate with one another, who will require information, and who they provide information to (see Figure 3-2).

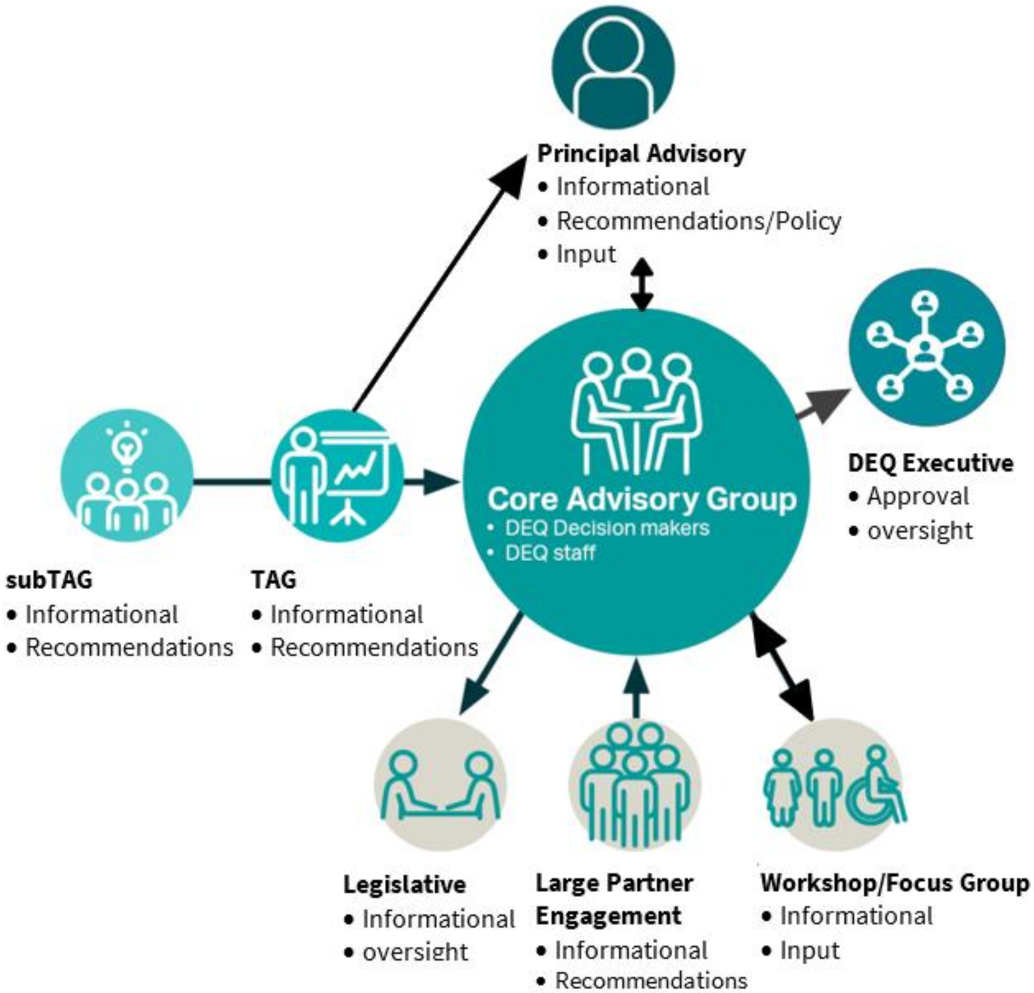

Figure 3-2: Engagement process

Table 3-2: Technical Advisory Group Definitions

Category	TAG Name	TAG Description
Government	Governance	The Governance Group will provide advisory input and feedback on existing and proposed policies, processes, and programs at a Federal, state, Tribal, County, city, historically marginalized community, and/or other local level that will impact the rollout, implementation and operations of Blueprint.
	Partnership/ Funding	The Partnership/Funding Group will provide advisory input and feedback on the inventory of funding and financial partnership opportunities present or anticipated to support implementation of Blueprint projects. The group will also provide input and feedback on criteria and modeling used to calculate benefit and prioritization. Special consideration will be given to funding needs to assist with the implementation of actions associated with historically marginalized communities.
Environmental	Hazard Identification	The Hazard Identification Group will provide advisory input and feedback on data and modeling used to best calculate and display present and future flood probability and extent. This work will include consideration of deterministic and probabilistic riverine, lacustrine, dam and levee induced, urban, stormwater, and coastal and/or riverine confluence flooding.
	Vulnerability/ Risk/ Impact	The Vulnerability/Risk/Impact Group will provide advisory input and feedback on data and modeling to best calculate and display present and future vulnerabilities and impacts to people and other receptors. These receptors will include, but not be limited to population, historically marginalized communities, tribes, environment, structures, infrastructure, and commerce. The group will also provide input and feedback on criteria and modeling utilized for risk and equity ranking and rating.
Social	Resilience/ Mitigation/ Reduction	The Resilience/Mitigation/Reduction Group will provide advisory input and feedback on data and modeling to best calculate and display present and future loss avoidance to people (including specifically to historically marginalized communities) and other receptors including but not limited to population, historically marginalized communities, tribes, environment, structures, infrastructure, and commerce. The group will also provide input and feedback on criteria and modeling utilized for ranking and prioritizing mitigation strategies and projects.
	Tool Development/ Acceptance	The Tool Development/Acceptance Group will provide advisory input and feedback on the business case and functional requirements of Blueprint tools, websites, and applications to ensure efficient engagement and decision making. There will be a focus on the usability of tools for end users incorporating a weighted understanding of receptors that include, but are not limited to population, historically marginalized communities, tribes, environment, structures, infrastructure, and commerce.

A TAG is appointed as subject matter experts (SME)s to provide recommendations to the NCDEQ's development of the statewide approach for the Flood Resiliency Blueprint. As SMEs, TAG members will review Flood Resiliency Blueprint deliverables and provide technical comments and recommendations to the NCDEQ. There are six TAGs described in Table 3-2 of this document. Governance, Partnership/Funding, Hazard Identification (When/Where), Vulnerability/Risk/Impact (Who/What), Resilience/Mitigation/Reduction (How), Tool Development/Acceptance. NCDEQ has determined TAG members based on participants' experience with existing plans and/or expertise in applicable fields related to flood resiliency. The NCDEQ strives to be inclusive in the Blueprint development process including federal, state, county, municipal, academic, and tribal governments; NGOs; historically marginalized communities; and commercial partners, as well as interested public parties across the state. Subject matter experts were invited to participate in NCDEQ's Technical Advisory Groups to review and provide recommendations regarding vendor deliverables. **Each TAG has a named Chair that will review agendas and facilitate TAG meetings. Chairs are also the liaisons between NCDEQ and TAG members. Chairs are also invited to participate and brief the PAG.** Attached is a TAG listing with organization.

Table 3-3 is the basis for all TAG communications. These actions help set clear priorities for communication with all groups. Communication is key for a collective outcome that benefits the state. TAGs will be asked to follow the actions below to ensure that engagement is inclusive and considerate of all participants. Each of these actions will shape group participation.

Table 3-3: TAG Communication Goals

Communication Actions	Description
inclusivity	• TAG members will seek to consider a broad spectrum of input of their co-participants interested or affected by an issue or topic. Strategies specific to clarity are encouraged to overcome barriers to participation. These strategies could include but are not limited to clear and concise language on technical issues, clear access systems, and assistance on access should there be issues or confusion.
Timeliness	• Participants will be kept informed by systems and consultants to assist with involvement throughout the process. • Participants will understand timelines for review. Pertinent reviews will have strict timelines to meet the needs of project deliverables.
Partnership	• TAGs will, by their actions, seek to build relationships and consensus to promote mutual understanding through the engagement processes. Activities will be encouraged that are constructive and drive open conversation.

Communication Actions	Description
Respect	• TAG members will actively listen to and value the ideas, feelings, and opinions expressed during the engagement processes. • TAGs will respect the diverse views expressed by participants and give due regard to the ideas, feelings, and opinions in the engagement process. • While it may not be possible to satisfy all the views expressed, all views will be considered as relevant.
Access to information	• TAGs will provide appropriate information to participants to help them form sound opinions and judgments. • Consultants will provide schedule of reporting needs to TAGs with the expectation that reviews will be done in advance of in-person meetings to help with the engagement process. • TAGs will provide information in plain English. Where information is technical in nature, supporting explanatory information will be provided.
Transparency	• TAGs will be honest and open-minded in their engagement processes. TAGs will not engage with hidden agendas or promote a pre-determined outcome. The rationale for engagement should be clearly stated, including information on the recommendation to be made, who will make the recommendation, how the recommendation will be made, how feedback can be provided, and what is negotiable versus non-negotiable. • NCDEQ Core Advisory Group will clearly communicate their views on any issue that is up for engagement.
Responsiveness	• Regular updates to TAGs will occur at predefined intervals during the engagement process. At the end of the process, Core Advisory Group will provide information to TAGs on the outcome of the engagement process and decisions made. Schedule of reports produced will be provided containing explanations for decisions or recommendations made through the engagement process.
Continuous Improvement	• Engagement activities carried out by TAGs will be evaluated where possible and appropriate. • Adequate resourcing will be available to enable each engagement process to fulfill its objectives.

Additional SME's can be added to the Blueprint for specific needs. TAG Chairs can submit additional recommended SMEs to NCDEQ for solicitation of invitations, at NCDEQ's discretion.

There will be four TAG meetings that are in person and/or virtual. The first is on March 15th in Goldsboro, NC. This is the kickoff and all TAG participants will be invited. The second and third are May 3rd and June 30th in Raleigh at the NCDEQ Green Square building. The final meeting will be held at the end of the year to review the final document and tools that are created through this process.

TAG responsibilities will have the following level of effort:

- TAG Meetings: 12 hours

  - Four 2-hour meetings in 2023 with an hour of preparation for each meeting. All meetings have a virtual and in person option.
  - Discuss deliverables that have been developed and provide feedback
  - Discuss the status of ongoing work and next steps

- Deliverable Review and Meeting Preparation: 8-24 hours

  - Provide subject matter expertise in the review of vendor deliverables. The amount of time required for review will vary based on level of participation and topic covered.
  - Some topics such as modeling and scientific data may warrant more detailed review based on content.

- Additional Effort Required of Chairs: 8-10 hours

  - Chair would have additional time for facilitation, agenda review, content approval for meetings, etc.

The Flood Resiliency Blueprint Document Management site is a SharePoint site that holds all of the information associated with the TAG and PAG interactions. This holds a proposed schedule of when documents will be released, and the TAG to review the information per the schedule on the SharePoint site. This is being updated through the life of the project. All TAG members have the opportunity to comment. When a document goes out for review the TAG members will receive an email from the system to let them know this is ready for review. All deliverables will be available on the Flood Resiliency Blueprint Document Management site (see Figure 3-3), https://ncconnect.sharepoint.com/sites/FRBDM.

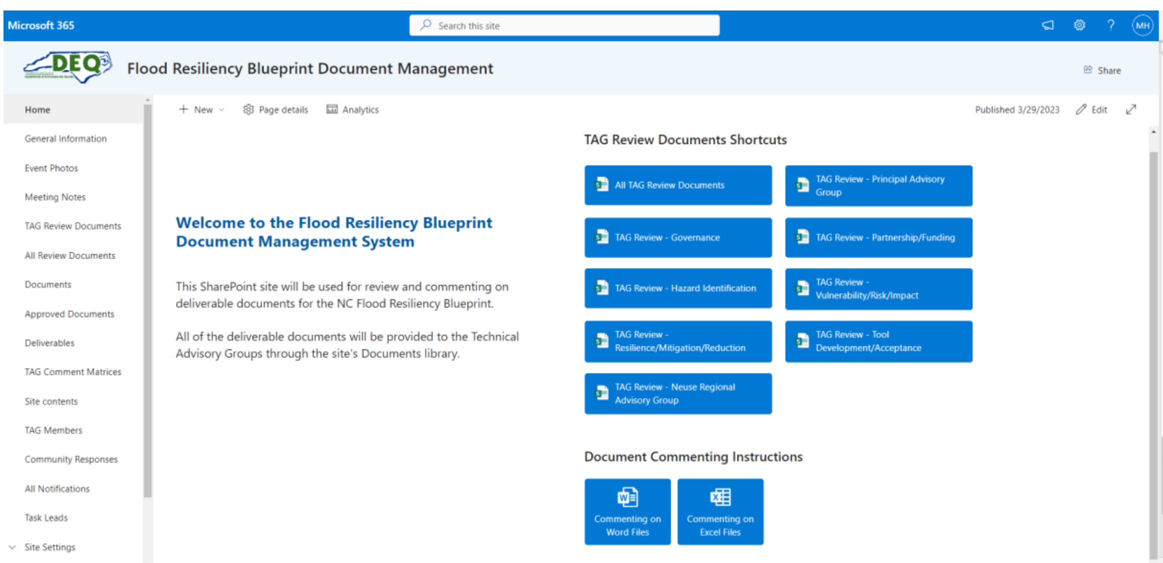

Figure 3-3: SharePoint Site for Blueprint Process

Once a TAG review document is released for review, it can be found using one of the following methods:

- The **TAG Review Documents Shortcuts** buttons on the homepage
- The **TAG Review Documents** menu link on the left side of the site

- In the **Documents** library, in the **2_TAG_Review** folder

An Instructions folder under General information is the link with information on how TAG members should provide comments on deliverables. TAG members review the document and provide comments within the document**.** Track changes is not available To comment in Word or Excel, click on the Review menu to show Comments tools. Detailed commenting instructions can be found on the Flood Resiliency Blueprint Document Management site. In order to meet the required project delivery schedule, the TAG Review period will be limited to 14-days from release of the document. Once the review period has ended, the document will be moved into the 3_Completed_TAG_Review folder, where TAG members may still view the document, but will no longer be able to comment. The process for Document review is :

- **TAG members will receive an email notification when a deliverable associated with their group is ready for review.**
- **After the 14-day review period, AECOM will track all comments received in a comment-response matrix.**
- **AECOM will have subject matter experts address comments in the matrix and provide recommendations on next steps.**
- **The completed matrix and synthesis will be provided to NCDEQ.**
- **AECOM will edit the deliverable and provide a revised version to NCDEQ.**
- **NCDEQ will review and approve.**

A primary and, in some cases, a secondary TAG have been identified to review deliverables and provide comments. In some cases, deliverables are assigned to all TAGs.

After TAG members have completed review of their assigned deliverables, they may review and submit comments on deliverables assigned to other TAGs. However, all comments must be completed within that deliverable's 14-day review period. As well as Documents, a full list of participants is provided on the Flood Resiliency Blueprint Document Management site. Contact information will only be shared with each TAG.

If a member thinks they are better suited to serve on a different TAG, please reach out to AECOM with justification for the switch. TAG members were selected to provide a diverse understanding within each of the TAGs. Multiple perspectives will help drive more complete answers.

3.5.2 Advisory Groups: Regional Advisory Groups

The Neuse Regional Advisory Group will encompass members from the entire Neuse basin. This group will provide input, feedback, and advice on Neuse River Basin specific needs, including from historically marginalized communities, and how to engage and use the information from Blueprint at a river basin level most effectively and efficiently. This advisory group will be asked to help define the specific needs of the Neuse basin as it applies to flooding, impacts, mitigation, and vulnerability using the work coming from the TAGs to implement actions at the basin level. This group should be representative of the basin and is intended as a pilot that will help define how future basins are incorporated into the Blueprint process.

The Neuse Regional Advisory Group, while not a TAG, follows similar processes as the TAGs and meets concurrently with TAGs. The Regional Advisory Group has a Chair, who participates in the PAG. The Neuse Regional Advisory Group represents the first pilot river basin associated with the Blueprint and will focus on the needs of the Neuse River Basin and will determine best practices and lessons learned for Basin Regional Advisory Groups in 2024. These definitions may be modified throughout the project's life as needed for adjustments required to fill the needs for Blueprint.

3.5.3 Advisory Groups: Principal Advisory Group

The Principal Advisory Group's purpose is to provide feedback on the development of the Blueprint and receive regular updates from NCDEQ. While TAGs provide technical and in-depth review of Blueprint tasks, PAG members receive a synthesis of concerns from TAG chairs and provide additional considerations and recommendations to NCDEQ given the TAG chair feedback.

Three meetings are scheduled for the PAG:

- March 22, 2023
- July 18, 2023
- November 16, 2023

3.6 Community Outreach Activities

With the assistance of NCDEQ leadership, four communities that represent different regions of North Carolina have been identified to host workshops. The goal is Blueprint information sessions to provide introductory information about the Blueprint, the goals and objectives of the Blueprint and how communities could find more information in the future. Those communities include Lumberton June 8th, Wilmington June 9th, Haywood County June 22nd, and New Bern June 1st.

Outreach to those in historically underrepresented populations is important to inform how the Blueprint will be engaged for future flood resilience projects and how the Blueprint considers communities in the decision-making process. Hearing the stories and first-hand accounts of flood planning and resilience from those who live through it will help inform the Blueprint development as an equitable decision-making tool.

Basin-specific workshops allow a focused exploration of priorities for flood risk mitigation actions and strategies in the basin. Stakeholders are chosen for their proximity, involvement in, and knowledge of the basin.

The following sections outline the initial plan for each of the workshops.

3.6.1 Workshop Tour

Across four day-long workshops, the morning portion of the workshop will entail members of the NCDEQ Core Advisory Group and AECOM Team meeting with local officials and community leaders to discuss the purpose of the Blueprint and gather input on what flood resiliency actions and strategies they would like to see implemented in their region and which online decision support tools would help them to plan more efficiently. Government or community leaders will then take the project team on a tour of the community to show areas that have been impacted by flooding, ongoing or completed flood resiliency projects, or other areas of interest. The subject of the tour will be dependent on what local leadership would like the Core Advisory Group to see and consider.

The contractor will work through community leader and elected leader contacts to help draft a potential agenda.

3.6.2 Community Workshop-Open House

The second half of the workshop will involve hosting an open house-style public meeting. This meeting will include different stations at which the community can interact with different aspects of the Blueprint development and provide feedback. Some of these stations may include oral history recording, envisioning the future of resilience, education on the purpose of the Blueprint, education on flooding types, activities for children, etc. Feedback collected during this meeting will be summarized and funneled into the Blueprint. Information will be applied back to the basin level understanding, provided to the receptor IDs to understand impacts to communities. Feedback and questions have been provided where applicable to other state agencies that have specific resources or missions to handle commented issues.

To increase outreach to underserved communities, the contractor will refer to the NC Participation Plan's Enhanced Engagement Strategies section:

- NCDEQ distributing media releases timelines for events to provide public notice and gather public comments.
- NCDEQ and Contractor crafting social media and email messages to raise awareness for public notice and public comment events.
- Communicating with interested parties, such as community members, local and tribal governments, community organizations, and non-profit organizations. The contractor will also attempt to reach other organizations that may have an interest but may not be aware of the Blueprint. For the four outreach meetings in June, the TAGs and PAG were informed of all meetings and asked to reach out to their members to attend meetings.
- Meeting in-person or virtually with interested parties to address issues of concern.
- Updating, maintaining, and improving the use of the stakeholder contact databases.
- Scheduling meetings at times and locations that are convenient, accessible, and culturally appropriate for potentially impacted communities. Any information gleaned from community outreach were provided to agencies either state or local for further assistance. All of this information can be found in the comments provided at the meetings.
    - All outreach meetings were held as open houses with floating times to provide the ability to attend after work hours. The team worked with local Councils of Government and local jurisdictions to have meetings in an accessible location.

To improve potential public participation, open-house times are prioritized for Saturday afternoons or a weekday evening (prioritizing days other than Wednesday), with preference for a Saturday afternoon. The contractor will work through community leader and elected leader contacts to help identify additional attendees.

3.6.3 Basin-specific Workshops

To inform the development of the Neuse Basin Action Strategy, at least four workshops will be conducted in the Neuse River Basin. Workshops must include council of governments, municipal and county leaders, private interest, non-governmental entities, tribal representatives, and representatives of under-resourced and underserved populations, including populations protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. The Neuse was selected as the pilot basin to develop an action strategy because the Neuse Basin likely has the most existing data available. NCDEQ plans to develop Action Strategies for five additional basins in North Carolina the following year. These include Cape Fear, Tar

Pamlico, White Oak, Lumber, and French Broad. NCDEQ will be conducting additional workshops in basins relevant to each action strategy and applying lessons learned from workshops in the Neuse River Basin.

The TAGs and Boots on the Ground Tour in New Bern can provide additional input on content and locations for the additional basin-specific workshops in the Neuse River Basin.

3.7 End User Outreach Activity

As part of tool development, it is important to make sure the tool's functionality meets the needs of the end users. While the Tool Development TAG will be tasked with monitoring the development process, having a larger group of representative end users weigh in on the intended use of the tool will help create a stronger tool that is more likely to be used.

3.7.1 Virtual Focus Group/Survey

End User outreach will take place in two stages. The first pieces will involve at least one focus group virtual meeting (additional meetings will be scheduled if possible) which will educate potential end users across the state on what the Blueprint is, focusing on the development of requirements for the decision support tool and the capacity needs of local governments. This meeting will have structured questions to ask the end users what they would like to see in the tool and how they would like the tool to function. This meeting will take place prior to the tool development phase. In addition, the contractor will circulate a survey through councils of government and NC League of Municipalities to understand needs of county and municipal governments relevant to decision support tool functionality, funding, and capacity needs.

3.7.2 Beta-Tool Testing

After the decision support tool development phase, the Blueprint decision support tool will be tested as a beta-version among different sets of users to troubleshoot the tool. Feedback provided by participants will help the tool development team fix any bugs within the tool and provide prioritized recommendations for additional features.

3.8 Other Engagement Activities

3.8.1 Legislative Engagement

There are two requirements for legislative reporting occurring July 2023 and July 2024. A small cohesive group chosen by the Core Advisory Group will work to provide the proper information to inform the legislature of scope, requirements, needs, issues, progress and interaction for the Blueprint project. This reporting is in addition to the Blueprint draft and the Neuse River Basin Strategy Draft due in December.

3.8.2 Other

The Blueprint team strives to be as inclusive and efficient as possible coordinating across multiple engagements to stay well informed and reduce duplication of effort. Working with TAG member organizations, existing technical organizations, pertinent conferences, and regularly scheduled meetings will allow us to bring Blueprint information to as many groups as possible. Working with existing groups will allow for coordination and understanding of the corresponding needs of the organizations and Blueprint. Several activities and interactions are occurring through Phase I of the Blueprint to encourage coordination across existing resiliency initiatives and interested organizations.

- **Stoney Creek:** On February 8th, 2023, the Blueprint team attended the Stoney Creek Stakeholder Project Kickoff Meeting held in Goldsboro and hosted by the contract team and representatives from NCDEQ. The goal of the meeting was to present to a select group of stakeholders in the pilot basin to review the objectives and get feedback on the process for identifying and implementing flood resilience projects. As the Neuse River Basin is identified as the pilot basin to support the development of the Blueprint, close coordination between project teams and stakeholders will be important as the Draft Neuse Basin Flood Resiliency Action Strategy is developed as part of Phase I. Feedback from the teams included the goal of coordination throughout the two processes to correlate work from each project into the other.

- **NCDEQ Environmental Justice (EJ)and Equity Advisory Board (EJ Board):** On February 9th, the NCDEQ Blueprint team presented the goals and purpose of the NC Flood Resiliency Blueprint Project to the NCDEQ Secretary's Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Board with the goal of adding equitable decision making as a focus of the Blueprint deliverable. There were discussions on the Neuse River Basin as the area of focus for Phase I of the Blueprint and how Phase 3 would include all basins in the state with the clarification that five basins would be the next in the process of basin strategies. We discussed how to include unincorporated areas that are often left out of the conversation and often have little ability to recover to pre-event levels. The inclusion of local flooding response volunteer organizations was suggested to help understand how flooding impacts the local communities and the assistance that is needed outside of government emergency response. The Blueprint team requested feedback on possible participants in the Blueprint process who could contribute an EJ perspective to the conversations. In response to the presentation the Board created a subcommittee to be liaisons to the Blueprint process. The project website will hold information on the participants and organizations that are participating in Blueprint. TAG meeting notes and final deliverables will be available on the Blueprint website when complete. The website will be available to interested parties and the public. Another presenter during the EJ Board was the North Carolina Inclusive Disaster Recovery Network (NCIDR) which is a collaborative of public, private, non-profit, and faith organizations seeking avenues for community voice and equitable access to resources in a disaster recovery system. In response to their presentation, we have asked several members to participate in the NC Blueprint project allowing for a focus on community, equity, and inclusion. Feedback from the EJ Board included:
    - The need to meet with local community leaders with assistance from the EJ Board to help us work with these groups.
    - An invitation to several events working with community leaders at the Alpha Life Enrichment Center in Beaufort to share the goals of the Blueprint and the need to bring in community leaders to the Blueprint process.
    - Inclusion of NCIDR in the Blueprint TAG process
    - Coordination with the Subcommittee withing the EJ Board with the Blueprint
    - Goal moving forward to include a means to pay TAG participants for work related to Blueprint.

3.8.3 Planned events for NC Blueprint Coordination

- October 11th,2023, North Carolina Association of Floodplain Managers Fall Floodplain Institute, NCDEQ will provide information to local floodplain administrators on the decision support tool updates and Blueprint next steps.
- September 28th, 2023, North Carolina ArcGIS annual conference. NCDEQ will present on status of blueprint and share with local geographic information system (GIS) managers and users the goals and next steps of the Blueprint process.
- March 9, 2023, North Carolina GIS Conference through NC Department of Information Technology - NCDEQ presented on the Blueprint. This conference was attended by every level of government and GIS users in North Carolina. This allowed us to share the Blueprint with other agencies and organizations that may not know of this project.
- March 23, 2023, NC Water Resources Research Institute - partners attended this conference to help with coordination for water issues in NC.
- April 11-12, 2023, Pew Western NC Resilience Symposium - This meeting would allow for resilience coordination with the western areas of the state. The Pew Charitable Trust is a part of the Advisory Groups.
- May 7-11, 2023 is the American Society of Floodplain Management national conference that will be held in Raleigh, NC. We are coordinating for either a presentation or a workshop that would allow for feedback from local and national floodplain experts.
- October 10-13, 2023 is the North Carolina Association of Floodplain Managers. Our goal is to have a workshop that would allow for beta testing of the online decision support tool to get feedback from potential users of the tools.
- November 6-8, 2023 is the North Carolina Water Resources Association. The Blueprint team would look to either present or participate in this conference to share the progress of the tool as well as gather feedback from potential users of the tool.
- Others to be determined and coordinated with NCDEQ.

3.9 Analyze Responses

The contractor will gather answers and feedback from a Group into a template that is saved within a database. Each set of information from a Group will be categorized as to the type of answer being provided. All individual responses will be recorded, and information associated with the same question will be organized into like categories. Once all data is gathered and compared the data can be visualized to provide feedback to the NCDEQ Core Advisory Group.

For advisory group meetings, community outreach activities, and end user outreach activities, the contractor will provide facilitation, note-taking, and provide notes and synthesis to NCDEQ.

3.10 Stakeholder Feedback

There are many methods of engaging Groups at every level. There is information and recommendations that will need feedback from multiple groups and will drive the need for interaction between TAGs; the contractor will document all feedback, store comments and responses, and provide them to the Core for final review and potential integration into Blueprint tasks. Feedback from all participants will be stored in the Blueprint Document Management System and can be queried or reported from as needed.

TAGs have formal meeting times which are set by NCDEQ and will have review facilitation in place. Should the TAGs wish to communicate outside of meeting times they will have access to the NCDEQ team's site. The Blueprint will have locations for communicating with all team members or with specific TAGs. The NCDEQ SharePoint site will hold all documentation for review, the NCDEQ teams' site will allow the TAGs to work with one another as needed throughout the life of Blueprint Phase I. Each TAG has a channel for specific coordination and there is a general channel to allow all TAG members to communicate as needed.

There are several types of feedback to consider. Feedback types include:

- Executive Leadership feedback - executive leadership will provide feedback to the Core advisory group for incorporation into process and documentation.
- Principal Advisory Group - Principal Advisory Group will hear and review comments and content from the Technical Advisory Groups. The Principal Advisory Group will provide feedback during strategic meetings occurring in July and November. Comments will be documented and tracked in the Blueprint Document Management System to be reviewed by the Core for potential integration into final documentation.
- TAG feedback - TAGs will have the means to review documentation produced by the Blueprint. Each document will have the ability to comment and respond to comments within each deliverable. This information will be provided to NCDEQ for potential incorporation into final deliverables. Internal feedback within a team will be documented and handled through the Blueprint Document Management System either with teams or within emails.
- SubTAG feedback - subTAGs will provide specific feedback as requested by TAG Chairs. This will be provided to the TAG for potential integration into comments in the reviewed documents.
- Community Feedback - will be collected at community events and will be documented and provided to NCDEQ for potential inclusion in the Blueprint process.
- End User Feedback - specific end user coordination will define requirements for the Tools. This will be done with the Tool Development and Acceptance TAG. End users will also be able to provide input during the testing phase of the tool.
- Workshop feedback – all information collected from workshops will be documented and provided to NCDEQ for review and potential inclusion into the final deliverables.
- Parking Lot feedback - information that is not pertinent to the Blueprint or a final determination of the Blueprint will be stored in a "Parking Lot" this will be a document that holds ideas and information brought up during Blueprint events that may not impact the requested task or review.
- Risk Log - This will be stored with stakeholder engagement documentation in the Blueprint database and will be coordinated between the TAGs. Information that will cause a risk to the Blueprint integration or creation will be stored in an ongoing risk log with potential solutions or actions that will reduce risk if viable.

- External feedback - provided from outside entities and will be discussed either with the appropriate TAG or with NCDEQ with the goal of providing a coordinated response to the provider or incorporated into further results that will then be shared with all.

4 Closing

In summary, the goals of the Outreach and Engagement Plan are to implement engagement strategies across a diverse range of stakeholders and governments, and to develop and implement communication and outreach strategies that demonstrate audience-appropriate communication approaches/tools to ensure the NC Flood Resiliency Blueprint meets the needs of all North Carolina. This plan aims to clarify the needs of the Blueprint process with the participants. The plan will be referenced and updated on an as needed basis throughout the development of Phase I of the Blueprint. Should questions arise during the process they will be documented in the Q&A document available on the project's SharePoint site. TAGs will be asked to provide input and feedback on the ongoing process at every touch point of the engagement process. Refinements will be made as needed. All TAG participants have access to the full list of participants, engagements, and documents produced. This process has a short timeline which leads to strategic inclusion of members. There will be additional information created in association with this document such as the TAG Q&A, list of participants, and schedule of deliverables.