



Mitigation Guiding Principles

The guiding principles below are the foundation upon which an effective action-focused mitigation program can be built.

One size does not fit all: Wildfire mitigation is not a cookie-cutter effort. Mitigation must reflect the unique demographics, values, terrain, and hazards of each community. Understand how a “best practice” may or may not apply to your community’s unique situation.

Engagement is a two-way process: Trust-based relationships are the basis for success. It is neither completely top-down (experts providing instruction) or bottom-up (residents seeking help). Listen to understand first before speaking. Build solutions *with* people, not for them.

Prioritize in-person communication: The most effective way to build trust and change behavior is through active, in-person communication. Messaging (emails, advertisements, newspaper campaigns) has a place, but should not be used in lieu of face-to-face communication.

Focus on return on investment: When capacity and resources are limited, prioritize work where wildfire risk is highest, or visible areas that create a social norm of mitigation. If an activity doesn’t result in wildfire risk reduction, reconsider the investment.

Build partnerships: Mitigation is not a solo mission, working together shares the load. Work collaboratively across boundaries and jurisdictions, and consider who is missing from the table.

Make mitigation support accessible to all: Communities are composed of diverse residents which include different languages, socio-economic backgrounds, access ability, cultural backgrounds, and more – many of whom have been excluded historically, despite bearing a disproportionate share of risks. To do better, plan and act inclusively from the beginning. Equity must be embedded, not added as an afterthought.



Leverage resources: Successful mitigation programs are like a potluck – they work best when everyone brings something to the table. Partners may have access to different funding sources or equipment; bundling funding makes large-scale projects sustainable. Homeowners may be able to contribute labor, time, or money. Local volunteers, church groups, youth programs, or national service organizations can provide labor and momentum to complete mitigation work.

Focus on outcomes over outputs: Don't get caught up in the numbers. An "output" is how much you produce. An "outcome" is what changes as a result. Always focus on the outcome. Our north star is resilient communities, healthy ecosystems, and safe, effective response.

Be knowledgeable: Wildfire risk reduction can be complex. Strive to understand your community's risk, its barriers to action, and the strategies that can overcome them. If you don't know something, know who does. Build a team of experts and trusted voices you can call on.

Stay strategic, selective and focused: Review your programs with a critical eye; if something isn't working, stop doing it. Don't keep doing the same thing and expecting a different result. Be flexible and adjust your strategy when conditions or community needs shift.

Check your assumptions: Barriers to mitigation vary widely. Be curious; do not assume you know why someone has not taken action – they may be doing more than you think. Commonly held perceptions often do not hold up to deeper scrutiny, which is why listening and active communication are so important.

Questions for discussion:

1. What guiding principle do you use every day?
2. Which one would you like to focus on using more?
3. Think of a project that didn't go as planned – could a guiding principle have helped?