

9 Steps for Reaching the Community

1. *Research community values and attitudes*
2. *Develop a community education strategy*
3. *Develop an education campaign theme*
4. *Develop introductory educational materials*
5. *Develop a distribution strategy*
6. *Create workshop opportunities*
7. *Develop community relations*
8. *Get publicity*
9. *Develop demonstration sites*

STEP 1: Research community values and attitudes

Research is the foundation from which the remaining steps evolve.

STEP 2: Develop a Community Education Strategy

Write a community education strategy - an outline describing the scope and anticipated outcomes of the campaign. It should be a road map for the local action committee and is based on the things that are important to motivate the community. It should include both short and long term goals.

STEP 3: Develop a Campaign Theme

Develop a community education campaign theme that provides a positive image that can be embraced by the community. It should have visual impact, and doesn't have to include images of fire. It should include those elements that are important to the community. One example is: "Your Land - Your Community - Your Decision."

STEP 4: Develop Introductory Materials

Develop "Stage 1" literature, documents and media to encourage involvement and to increase the desire in community members to learn more about the program. Examples include:

Introduction Letters: A letter can be sent in a direct mail campaign to community leaders and members. The letter can accompany a brochure and an invitation to workshops.

Flyers: Flyers can be produced to invite community members to demonstration sites or other activities.

Brochures: Stress benefits of reader involvement, and promotes curiosity to learn more. A brochure should be light on text with strong visuals and graphics. Project a positive image. Avoid images of burning homes and trees. Focus on the things that are valued by the community.

Counter Displays: A display can be produced to announce FIREWISE Community concepts. It can be used in post offices, government offices, businesses, libraries and schools.

STEP 5: Develop a Distribution Strategy

Develop distribution strategies to be sure information is given to all community members and leaders. Some strategies include:

Develop a name, address and phone list of community members in the targeted areas.

Choose how you will distribute literature or displays, whether mailing, door-to-door, at public locations and/or at community events.

STEP 6: Create Workshop Opportunities

Develop workshop opportunities for community leaders and members to learn more about FIREWISE Communities. For example, host a Firewise Communities Workshop for those who influence the interface development process locally.

STEP 7: Develop Community Relations

Use a “Stage 1” type of communication style. Introduce ideas and relate them to what is valued by community members.

Focus on peer-to-peer presentations.

Focus on the benefits of community participation.

Avoid authority figures as presenters.

Conduct follow-up activities, such as, letters or phone calls to workshop attendees.

Develop a community relations campaign that informs influential community leaders and other constituencies of the importance of FIREWISE Communities. Emphasize the benefits to the community.

Community relations can be used to recognize participants in the local community group, action committee and other volunteers.

Give presentations to community groups that include or have influence over community members.

STEP 8: Get Publicity

Develop and implement a publicity program. Use media to inform public about FIREWISE Communities. The media can provide the program with credibility and notoriety, help to recognize participants, provide peer-to-peer incentives and reach reluctant landowners. Some ways to get publicity:

Media Kit: Develop a media kit of background materials, and news releases that position various story angles. Have accompanying photographs available that can be used in newspaper and magazine articles. Also include talking points to insure consistent messages.

Distribute information to media and lobby for coverage regarding your FIREWISE Community program.

Respond to articles and “editorials” with letters to the editors in support of the program and the importance of local involvement.



Lobby media to attend events, and provide success story coverage. Success stories can take the form of positive recognition of landowners who participate in FIREWISE Community projects.

It is important for community members evaluating a new concept or practice to be able to visualize how it might work on their own property or in their neighborhood before they make a commitment. This is where demonstration sites and field trips can be invaluable.

STEP 9: Develop Demonstration Sites

Develop demonstration sites or projects that capture community spirit and show step-by-step processes. Secure sites in highly visible areas.

Plan demonstration activities with resource agencies and local experts.

Gain involvement from local community organizations, such as homeowners associations; volunteer fire departments, PTA, scouts, fraternal organizations, etc.

Coordinate activities at the site to give the event a “festive” feel including food and refreshments, music and exhibits with additional information for community members and leaders.

Gain commitments from community members to implement FIREWISE Community concepts. Provide support and resource materials with specific “how-to” information.

