



*"Home of the World's Largest Cherry Pie"*

# City of George

Climate Change and Resiliency Sub-Element

Engagement Strategy

November 3, 2025



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# 1. Introduction

## Background

This Engagement Strategy is a guide for how the project team will work with interested and affected parties on the City of George’s climate change and resiliency sub-element. The strategy outlines the purpose, engagement objectives and techniques, roles and responsibilities of the engagement.

The City of George is a small, majority-Hispanic community (92–95% Spanish-speaking households). Stakeholders emphasized both the vulnerabilities (limited city resources, aging infrastructure, air quality issues, drought, dust/wind events, flooding from rain, lack of snow equipment) and strengths (school district drills and facilities, city-led water projects, emergency preparedness practices, community hall and library as gathering spaces). This strategy builds from these realities to ensure engagement is practical, inclusive, and effective.

The City of George is deeply shaped by the agricultural economy of Central Washington. While the city itself is small, it sits at the heart of one of Washington’s most productive farming regions. Major crops include potatoes, onions, corn, wheat, and alfalfa, with nearby orchards and vineyards contributing to the county’s reputation as a national leader in specialty crops. The Columbia Basin Project and the Quincy–Columbia Basin Irrigation District are essential to sustaining this economy, delivering irrigation water from the Columbia River through an extensive canal and pumping system. This infrastructure not only underpins agricultural livelihoods but also intersects with broader concerns about water reliability, energy use, and long-term climate resilience.

Local growers range from large-scale operations serving national and international markets to family farms with deep roots in the region. As weather patterns shift, producers are grappling with challenges such as unpredictable precipitation, increasing irrigation costs, soil erosion from wind, and crop losses from extreme heat or cold. Many growers are already experimenting with conservation practices, new crop varieties, and technology-driven efficiency, offering a base of local knowledge that can inform climate adaptation strategies.

The farmworker community plays an equally critical role in George’s identity and resilience. A large percentage of residents are farmworkers or have family ties to farm labor, with seasonal employment cycles shaping household income, school attendance, and community life. Workers and their families face particular vulnerabilities to climate impacts, including exposure to extreme heat and wildfire smoke, transportation barriers, crowded or temporary housing, and limited access to healthcare. Their lived experience is central to understanding how climate hazards affect daily life and how the city can best prepare.

The City of George, while not a large industrial hub, also supports small businesses, a hotel, and service-oriented employers that depend on both local residents and visitors drawn to the Gorge Amphitheatre and nearby recreation. The mix of agriculture, service, and tourism creates a unique local economy where climate impacts can ripple across multiple sectors. Strengthening resiliency therefore requires engagement that acknowledges and connects these diverse perspectives—growers, farmworkers, city staff, educators, and families—all of whom have a stake in shaping a safer and more sustainable future.



Community perspectives in George reflect a range of political leanings, with some residents more comfortable talking about “weather” than “climate change.” Seasonal patterns are accepted, and phenomena such as drought, dust, or smoke are sometimes viewed as temporary rather than part of a long-term shift. Because of this context, engagement efforts could emphasize preparedness, community safety, and stewardship of local resources rather than politicized climate language. By focusing on visible, practical concerns—such as air quality during smoke events, water reliability, and emergency preparedness—the City can build broad participation across political perspectives and ensure residents feel included in shaping George’s long-term resilience.

### **Decision Statement**

By June 2027 the City of George will finalize a Climate Hazard and Social Vulnerability report to be integrated into the City’s 2027 Comprehensive Plan. The focus of these reports will be identifying risks and vulnerabilities, lifting up community priorities, and guiding hazard-mitigation strategies.

### **Vision Statement**

Helping neighbors, businesses, institutions, and the most vulnerable members of our George community adapt to climate challenges for a healthy future.

## **2. Approach**

### **Guiding Principles**

- Accessibility: Engagement should be bilingual (Spanish/English), family-friendly, and scheduled outside farm work and school hours.
- Trusted Messengers: Partner with schools, library, Catholic Charities housing, community hall, and local events.
- Transparency: Clearly frame the process as “emergency preparedness and community resilience,” avoiding politicized climate language.
- Practicality: Provide childcare, food, and hands-on activities to encourage family participation.
- Respect for Time: Leverage existing events and spaces to meet people where they already gather.

### **Interested and Affected Parties**

Key groups include:

- Education sector: George Elementary, high school students.
- City government: Council members, clerk/treasurer, water/well project staff.
- Community spaces: Library, Community Hall, local hotel.
- Nonprofit/faith-based: Catholic Charities apartments, Georgettes (garden group).
- Residents: Long-term residents, newer arrivals, youth, Spanish-speaking households, farmworkers, mobile home/travel trailer residents.
- Businesses: Local hotel, small shops, Dollar General
- Economic Development: Quincy Port District

### **Tribal Engagement**

#### **Context**



The City of George lies within the broader traditional territories of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. The Colville Confederation is composed of twelve bands, including Moses-Columbia, San Poil, Nespelem, Methow, Entiat, Colville, Lakes, Wenatchi, Palus, Chelan, Okanogan, and a band associated with Chief Joseph's Nez Perce. The ancestral lands of these bands extended across large portions of eastern Washington and into parts of southern British Columbia. The Colville Reservation itself (about 1.4 million acres) includes parts of Okanogan and Ferry counties and is divided into multiple administrative districts (Nespelem, Omak, Inchelium, Keller).

The Colville Tribal government's central operations are headquartered in Nespelem, at the Lucy F. Covington Government Center. The presence of a sovereign tribal government nearby means that formal government-to-government consultation and coordination are both appropriate and necessary—even if George's city limits themselves do not fully overlap with tribal lands. Because tribal interests often span upstream watersheds, land-use policies, habitat, and rural infrastructure, engagement must be respectful, early, and aligned with the protocols and priorities of the Colville Tribes.

Given George's agricultural base and its reliance on irrigation and groundwater, there may be useful points of collaboration with tribal natural resource departments, the Colville Tribes' environmental or conservation programs, or cross-jurisdictional initiatives such as the Okanogan County Food Policy Council. Recognizing sovereignty, the city cannot assume tribal participation will align neatly with municipal boundaries—but strong relationships with tribal governments can enrich climate resilience planning, open new funding or technical partnerships, and foster regional coordination across ecological systems rather than just municipal ones.

### **Pre-Engagement**

- Map and research existing connections. Before formal outreach, the project team should map any existing collaborations or relationships between the City of George (or nearby towns) and the Colville Tribes (for example, in land use, watershed management, conservation, or cultural heritage).
- Cultural/Protocol preparation. The team should familiarize themselves with tribal protocols for consultation, including contacts, cultural norms, elder protocols, and decision-making processes.
- Preliminary outreach. A respectful introductory letter or meeting request should be made to Colville tribal leadership (e.g. Chair's office, natural resources division, environmental services), sharing the scope of the climate & resiliency planning effort, proposed timelines, and interest in collaboration. Emphasize that the city anticipates learning from tribal perspectives and approaches.
- Invitation to co-design. Invite a tribal representative to the project's advisory body (Technical or Policy Advisory Team) early on, with the option to co-host workshops or listening sessions in tribal areas or facilities.

### **Actions**



## Formal Consultation/Coordination

- Request formal government-to-government consultation with Colville leadership to introduce the climate & resiliency sub-element, share data/inventories, and request input on vulnerable areas of tribal interest (watersheds, lands, trails, cultural sites).
- Use signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or intergovernmental agreements where appropriate (e.g. for data sharing, joint workshops).

## Interviews

- Conduct one-on-one interview with tribal government staff to gather perspectives about climate stressors, local historical observations, and resilience priorities.
- Focus on building trust and listening, ensuring that interviews are voluntary, culturally respectful, and documented in a way that reflects tribal perspectives accurately.
- Where appropriate, invite tribal resource programs (forestry, fisheries, watershed, environmental planning) to share insights on climate concerns, adaptive strategies, and available data (e.g. hydrology, habitat, fire regime).

## Ongoing Communication and Meeting Invitations

- Keep tribal representatives informed throughout the process with timely updates and invitations to review key milestones.
- Extend an open invitation for a tribal representative to attend all major project meetings (e.g., advisory team workshops, council briefings, community sessions).
- Allow flexibility for the Tribes to determine if, how, and when they want to participate, honoring their sovereignty and capacity.

## Pre-Engagement Findings

- Concerns: Drought and water reliability; dust/wind storms; tumbleweed cleanup; sewer back-ups; crop loss from extreme weather; nitrate levels in aquifers.
- Strengths: School drills and facilities; fire department preparedness; ongoing well and water projects; community hall/library as hubs.
- Opportunities: Use family nights and STEAM nights; emphasize emergency preparedness; connect through trusted institutions; provide bilingual outreach.
- Barriers: Lack of translation; inconvenient timing (farm work schedules); limited turnout except for festivals.
- Community Identity: Residents value family-oriented events and long-term stability; some leaders skeptical of “climate resiliency” framing, prefer “preparedness.”

## 3. Objectives and Techniques



<b>Objective (“Why”)</b>	<b>Interested &amp; Affected Parties (“Who”)</b>	<b>Outcome (“Results”)</b>	<b>Output (“Activities”)</b>	<b>Techniques (“How”)</b>
Involve representatives from George’s key sectors in shaping engagement design.	School leaders, city staff, council, library, long-term and new residents.	Effective, culturally relevant engagement methods are identified.	Pre-engagement interviews; Engagement Strategy draft.	Pre-engagement interviews, internal discussions, mailing list.
Inform Council and staff about the process and its integration into the Comp Plan.	Council members, city staff.	Shared understanding of process, timeline, and role in Comp Plan.	2 presentations (kickoff and final).	Council presentations with materials and Q&A.
Consult and involve Community Advisory Team on technical issues and hazards.	City staff, emergency/fire, farm representatives, business, and organizations that serve affected populations	Validation of risks; prioritization of adaptation actions.	3 workshops, 1 technical activity, ongoing email updates.	Workshops, spatial risk mapping, MCA prioritization.
Consult and involve community members with lived experience and vulnerabilities.	Spanish-speaking families, renters, parents	Community perspectives inform vulnerability assessment and adaptation priorities.	1 listening session, summary notes,	Family Night listening sessions, bilingual facilitation, listening session at library/apartments.
Inform broader community and provide	General public, families, festival-goers.	Broader community is aware, informed,	Ongoing communications , online/bilingual	Community survey, flyers, social media, booths at community



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opportunities to engage.		and able to share input.	questionnaire, outreach booths.	events such as STEAM Night

#### 4. Implementation & Timeline

<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Establish Public & Tribal Engagement Strategy	August -October, 2025
Public Outreach Night at George Elementary	October 2025
Kick-Off Meeting	November 2025
G-CAT Feedback Session on Data (Community Assets & Climate Hazards)	December, 2025
Community Listening Session	Winter, 2026
Public Workshop on Data (Risk Assessment & Existing Policy Audit)	August, 2026
Workshop on Final Goals and Policies	December, 2026
Draft Participation Document	February -April, 2027

#### 5. Communications

- Bilingual materials (Spanish and English).
- Trusted venues: School, library, Catholic Charities apartments, community hall.

- Channels: Flyers, school newsletters, social media, council/library announcements.
- Messaging: Emphasize emergency preparedness, family safety, and practical actions.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum defines levels of engagement:

- Inform: Provide balanced and objective information.
- Consult: Obtain feedback on analysis, alternatives, and decisions.
- Involve: Work directly with the public to ensure concerns are understood.
- Collaborate: Partner in decision-making processes.
- Empower: Place decision-making in the hands of the public.

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advise and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
EXAMPLE TOOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fact sheets</li> <li>• Websites</li> <li>• Open houses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public comment</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Public meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Deliberate polling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen Advisory committees</li> <li>• Consensus building</li> <li>• Participatory</li> <li>• Decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen juries</li> <li>• Ballots</li> <li>• Delegated</li> <li>• Decisions</li> </ul>

### Appendix B: Glossary of Engagement Techniques

- Advisory Teams: Groups of experts and community representatives convened to provide structured input.



- Listening Sessions: Facilitated discussions to understand lived experiences of priority populations.
- Workshops: Structured, interactive sessions to explore risks, vulnerabilities, and solutions.
- Questionnaires/Surveys: Tools to gather broader input from community members.
- Outreach at Events: Presence at existing gatherings (festivals, family nights, etc.) to meet people where they are.
- Webinars: Online sessions to share updates and collect input.

### **Appendix C: Community Advisory Team**

The Community Advisory Team (CAT) will include representatives from:

- Organizations that serve farmworker families
- Library groups and trusted messengers (e.g., Gina Rushton)
- City staff
- Fire department / emergency management
- Local farmers
- City Council representatives
- Local business representatives (e.g., hotel owner)

