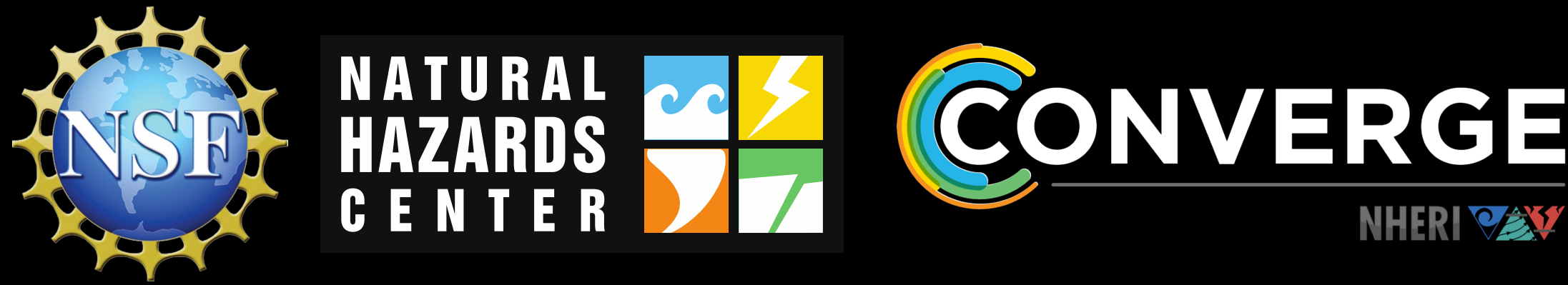


Risk Communication and Social Vulnerability: Guidance for Practitioners



Carson MacPherson-Krutsky, Nnenia Campbell, Mary Angelica Painter, and Lori Peek

Natural Hazards Center, University of Colorado Boulder



Project Motivation

- Socially vulnerable populations—those that face disproportionate risk due to a variety of historical, social, economic, and political conditions—often do not receive practical and actionable communications about hazards.
- Despite a body of research on risk communication best practices for different populations, the guidance does not always reach practitioners who could apply these lessons to reduce harm.

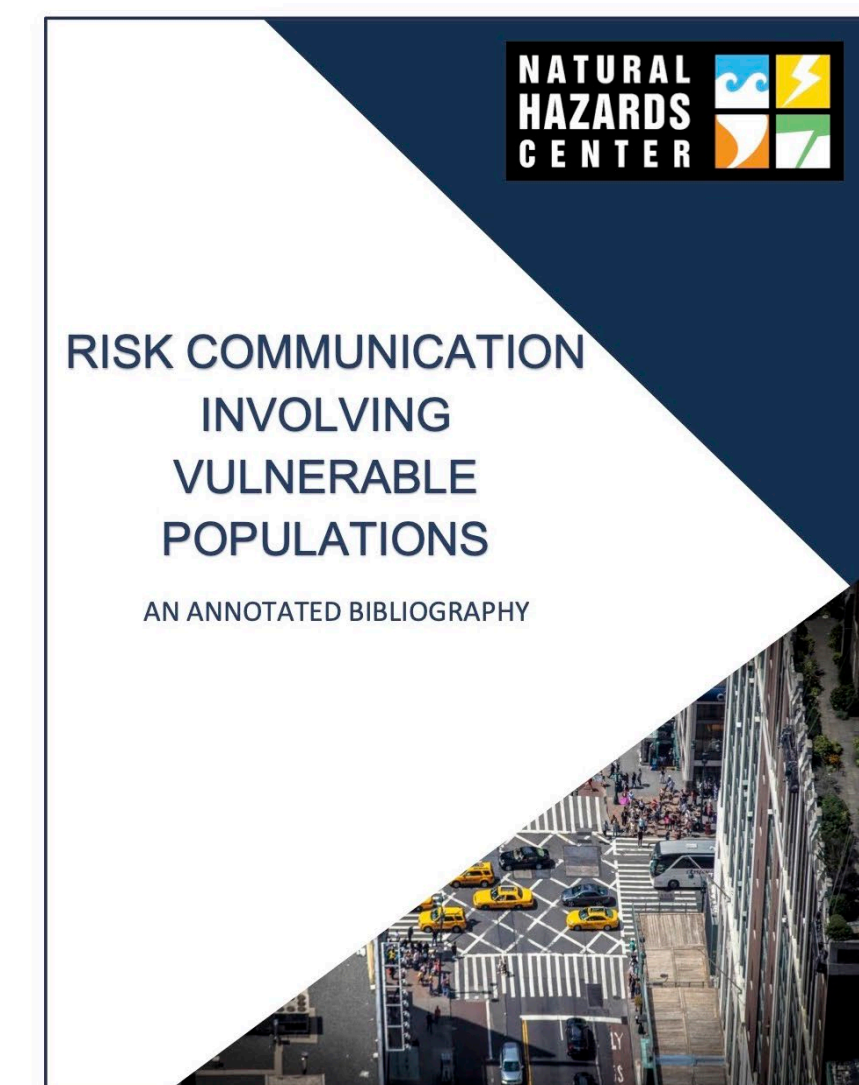
Project Purpose

- This project bridges the research to practice gap by empowering a new generation of risk communication leaders.
- In this multi-year (2019 to Present) partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), we synthesized the state of knowledge on risk communication, with a particular focus on the needs of the most exposed and socially vulnerable populations.
- Using this partnership as the foundation, we developed resources that translate understanding of risk communication into practice.



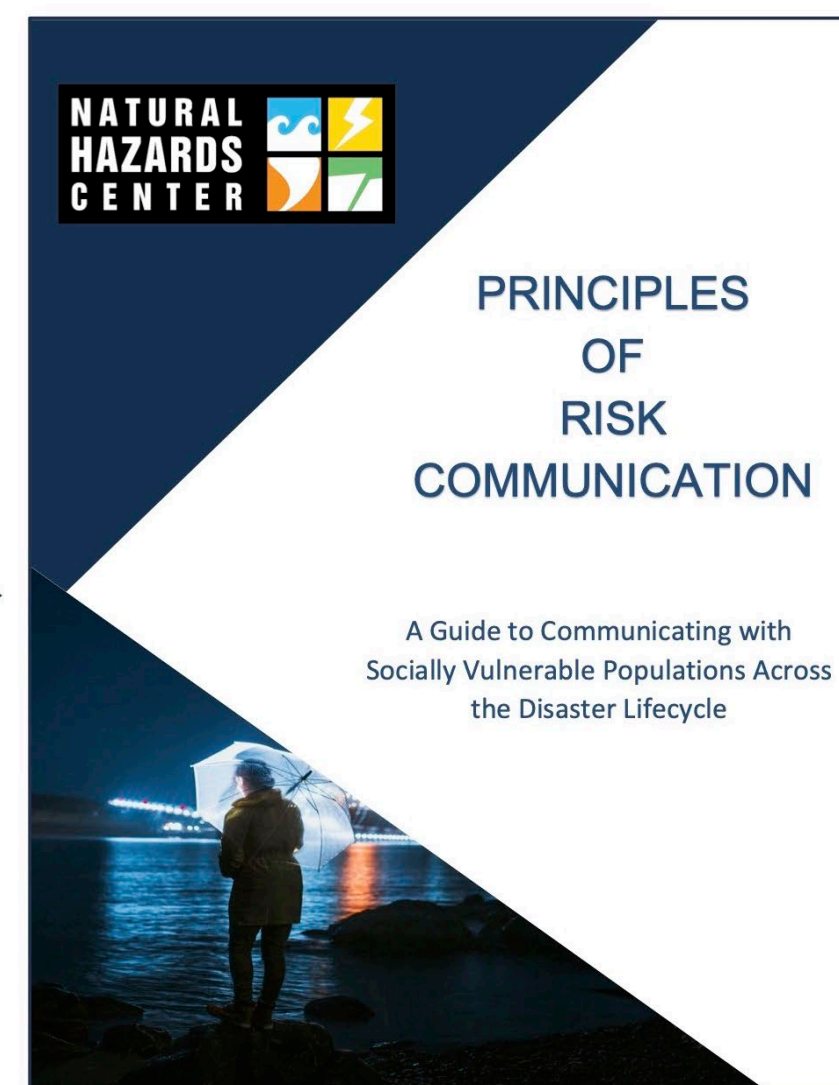
Figure 1. USACE employees discuss prompts during interactive activity at a 2023 risk communication training.

Project Steps and Deliverables



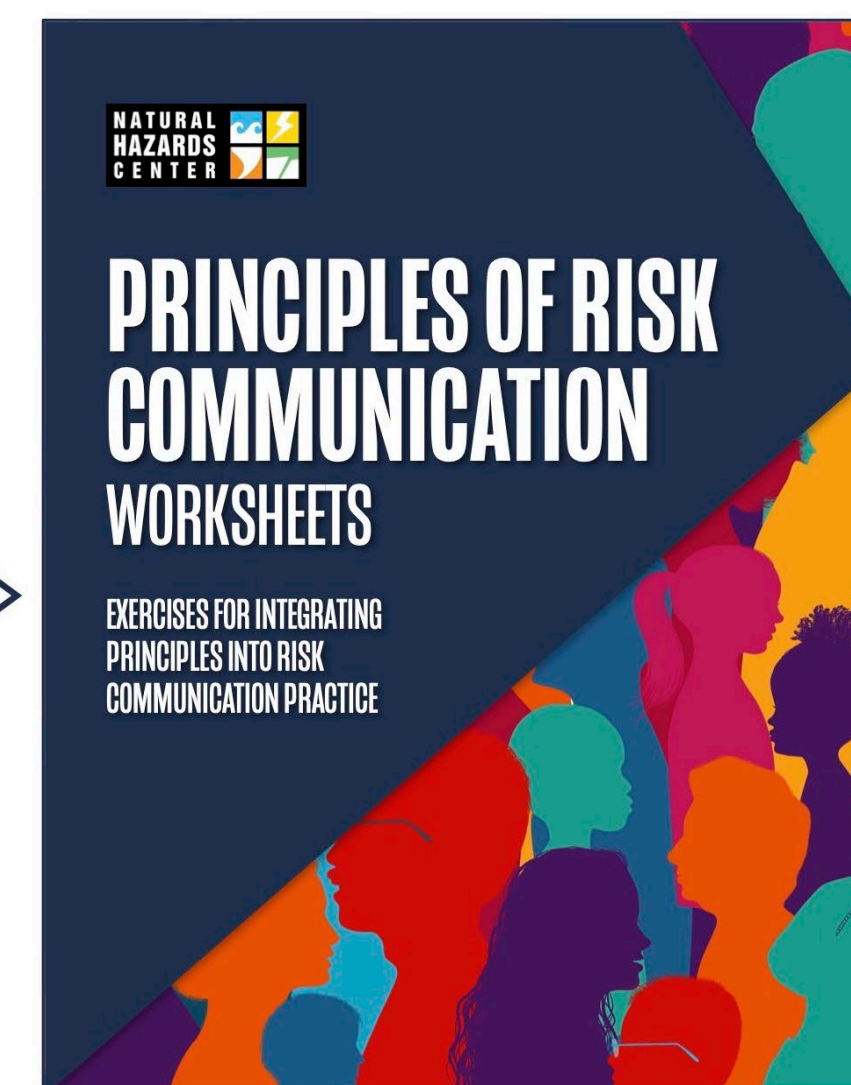
Step 1: Knowledge Summary

The **annotated bibliography** summarizes academic research and practical guidance on risk communication, with a focus on socially vulnerable populations.



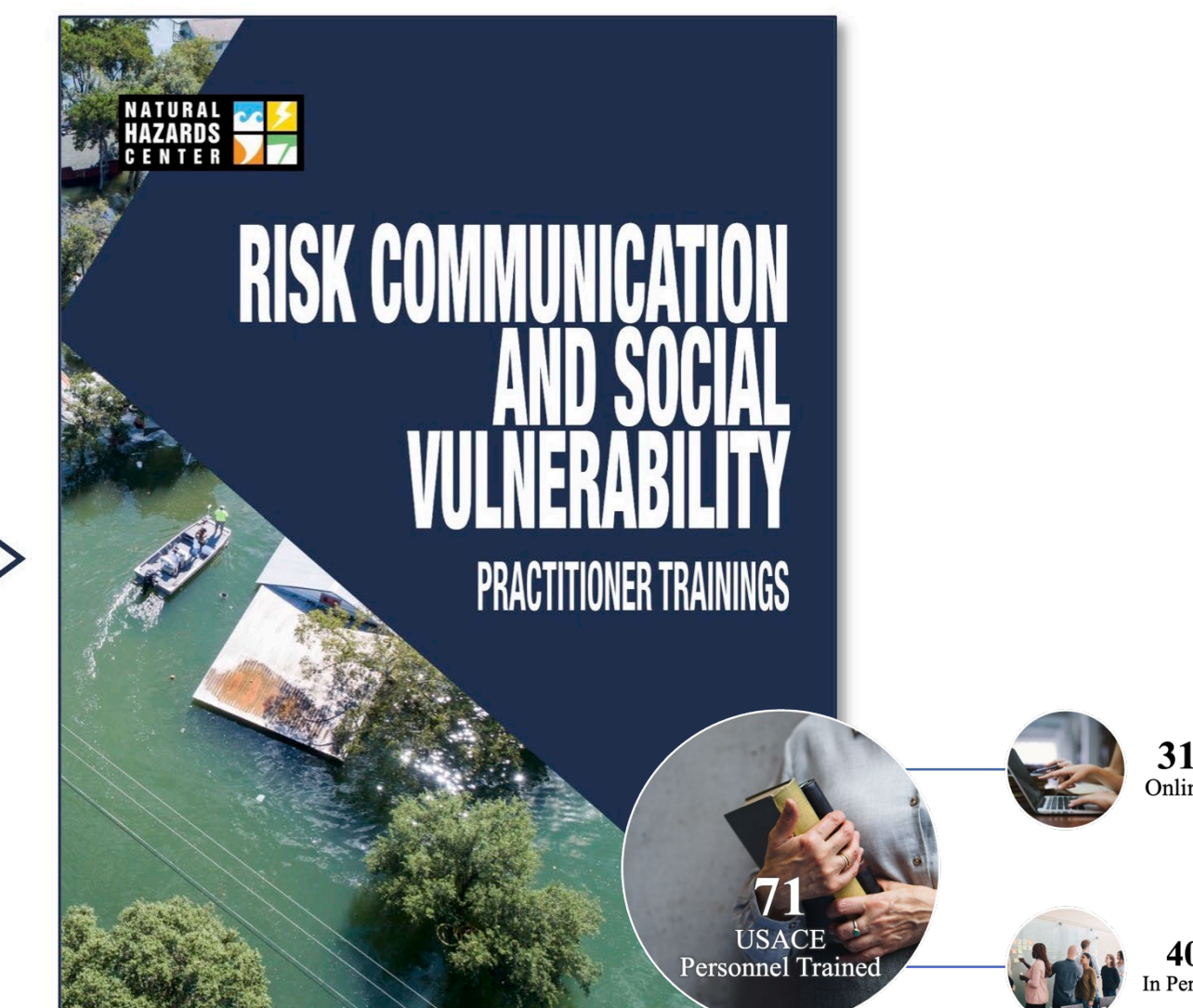
Step 2: Key Principles Guidebook

The **practitioner-oriented guidebook** synthesizes insights from the published literature into three overarching principles.



Step 3: Applied Worksheets

The **worksheet booklet** delves deeply into each core principle, with questions and considerations that guide users in applying the principles to their own work and context.



Step 4: Practitioner Trainings

Practitioner trainings expand the foundational resources by including interactive group activities and case studies to help participants apply these concepts in their respective contexts.

Conclusions

Research-informed risk communication resources and trainings can help practitioners apply best practices to reduce flood and other hazard risks.



Figure 3. 2023 Risk Communication and Social Vulnerability Training Course attendees and planning team.

Next Steps

We are working with USACE to continue sharing these resources and to expand the trainings to maximize their impact. In 2025 and 2026 we will:

- Facilitate a convening with agency partners.
- Revise and develop new online training materials based on previous feedback.
- Offer a revised training to practitioners.
- Provide ongoing contextually-specific support to flood risk managers.

Acknowledgements

The success of this project has emanated from a true collaboration between university and government partners and is made possible through funding from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE Award #W912HQ24P0066 and NSF Award #1635593). We thank the many students, staff, guest speakers, and training participants who have supported and been a part of these efforts. We also gratefully acknowledge our current project directors, Stephanie Bray, Jennifer Dunn, and Katherine Rowden.

Visit our project page to learn more



Training Participant Feedback and Outcomes

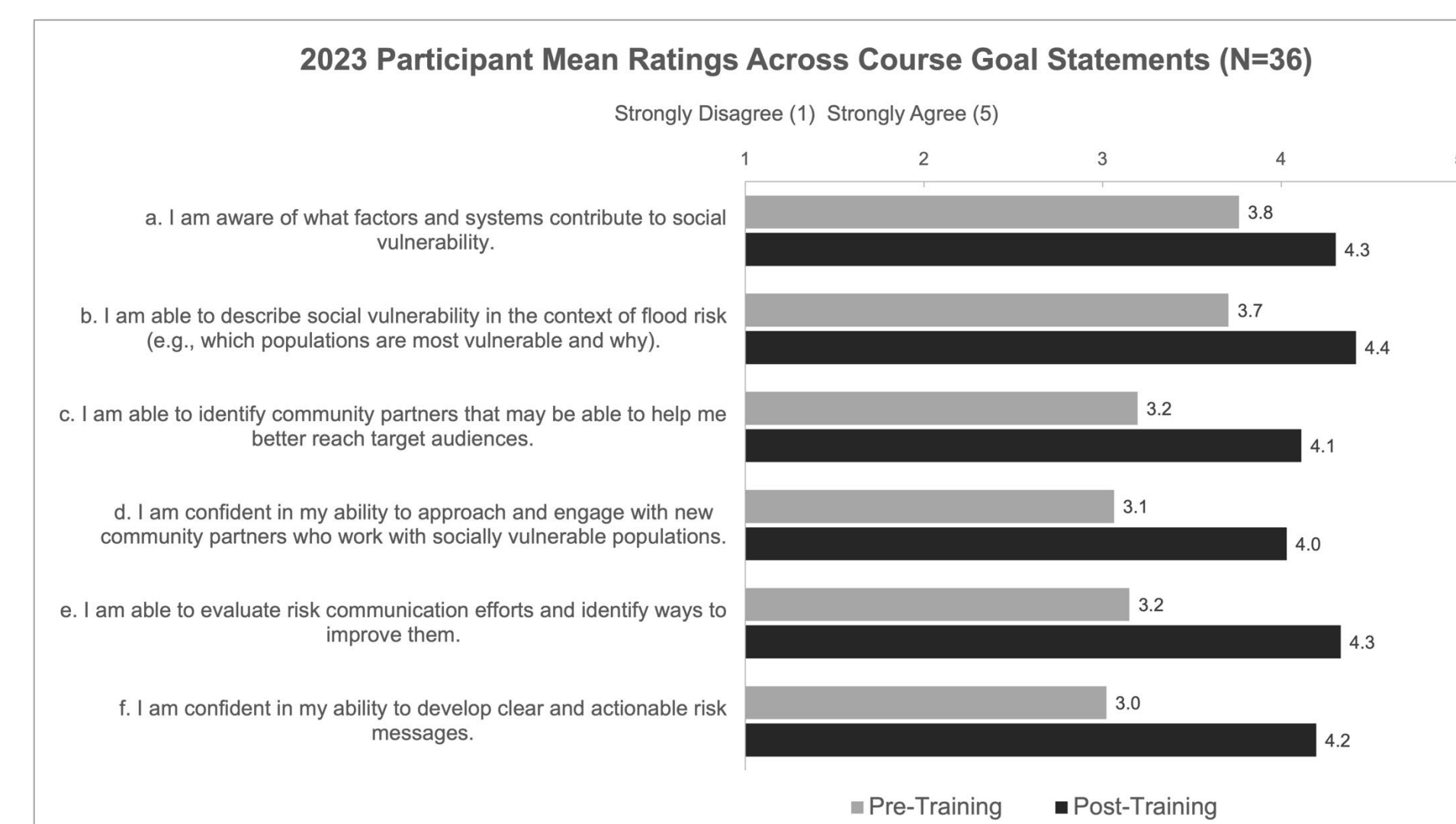


Figure 2. 2023 training course attendees present their solution to risk communication scenarios.

"This will **help me craft the risk message** before I set up meetings and go into meetings with vulnerable populations **and be an active listener** during initial meetings." (Spring 2023 In-Person Participant)

"The training, materials, and insight I received during the training **will allow me to better understand and communicate** with [underserved] communities." (Spring 2023 In-Person Participant)

"The **Principles worksheets were very useful in providing helpful questions** that gear the user to research further to identify effective strategies in risk communication, target audience characterization, and partner selection." (Spring 2022 Virtual Participant)