

# STARTING THE CONVERSATION: EARLY-STAGE APPROACHES FOR BUILDING COMMUNITY

## Engagement with Communities in Southwest Louisiana & Central Acadiana

**Authors** Briana DeGrate, Simone Domingue & Sharon Hausam

**Affiliations** Texas A&M University, Tulane University, and University of Oklahoma

### Background

Southwest Louisiana and Central Acadiana face increasing climate-related challenges, including flooding, hurricanes, extreme heat, and other environmental hazards across the Sabine, Calcasieu, Mermentau, Vermilion-Teche, and Atchafalaya watersheds. This project supports a regional vision for climate resilience by working with community members to understand local experiences, priorities, and knowledge. Community engagement helps inform future planning, projects, programs, and policies that strengthen resilience across the region.

### Project Vision

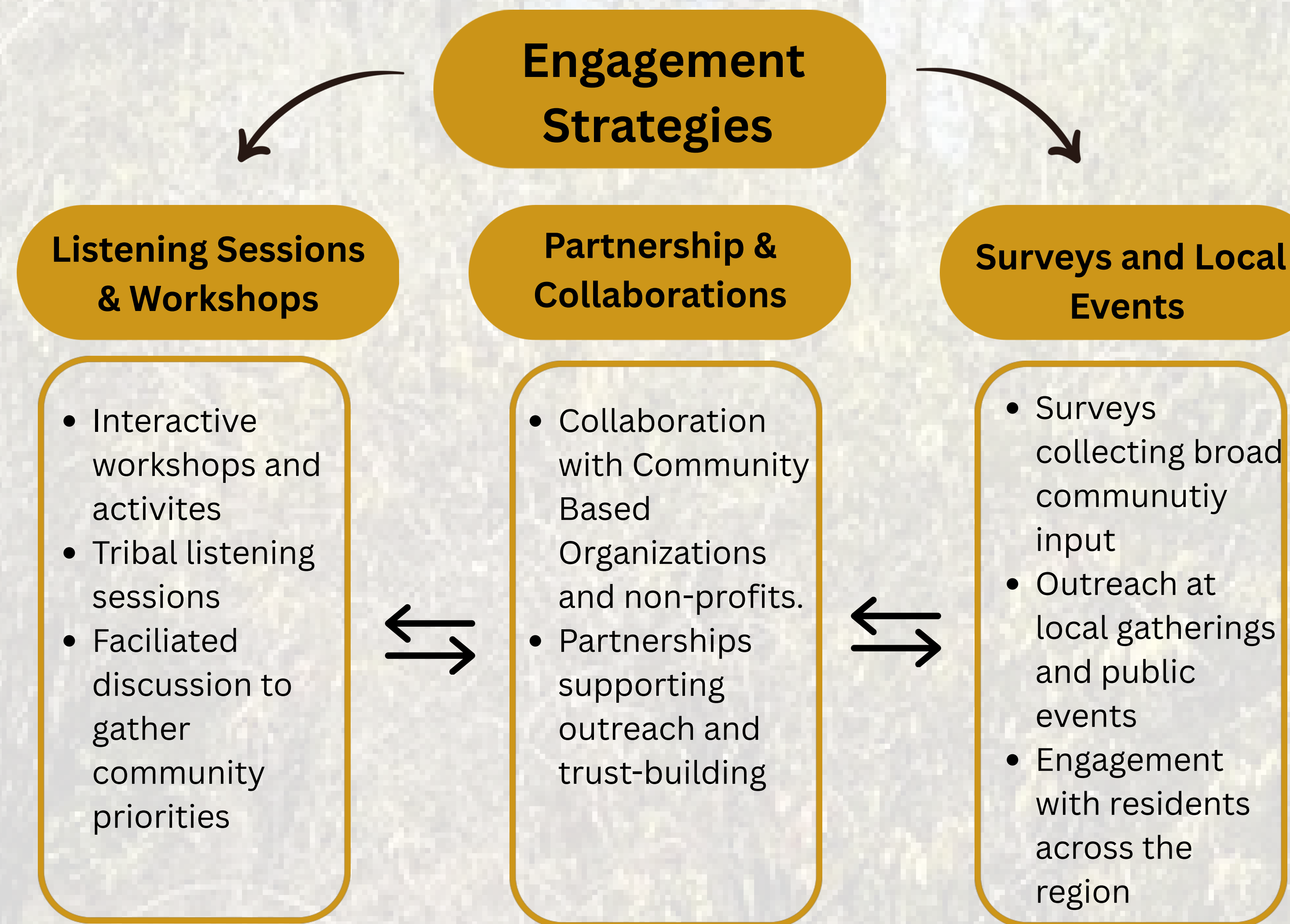
This project envisions a resilient future for Southwest Louisiana and Central Acadiana in which communities understand and address changing climate conditions through:

- Planning
- Projects, programs, and policies
- Equitable decision making
- Community driven projects

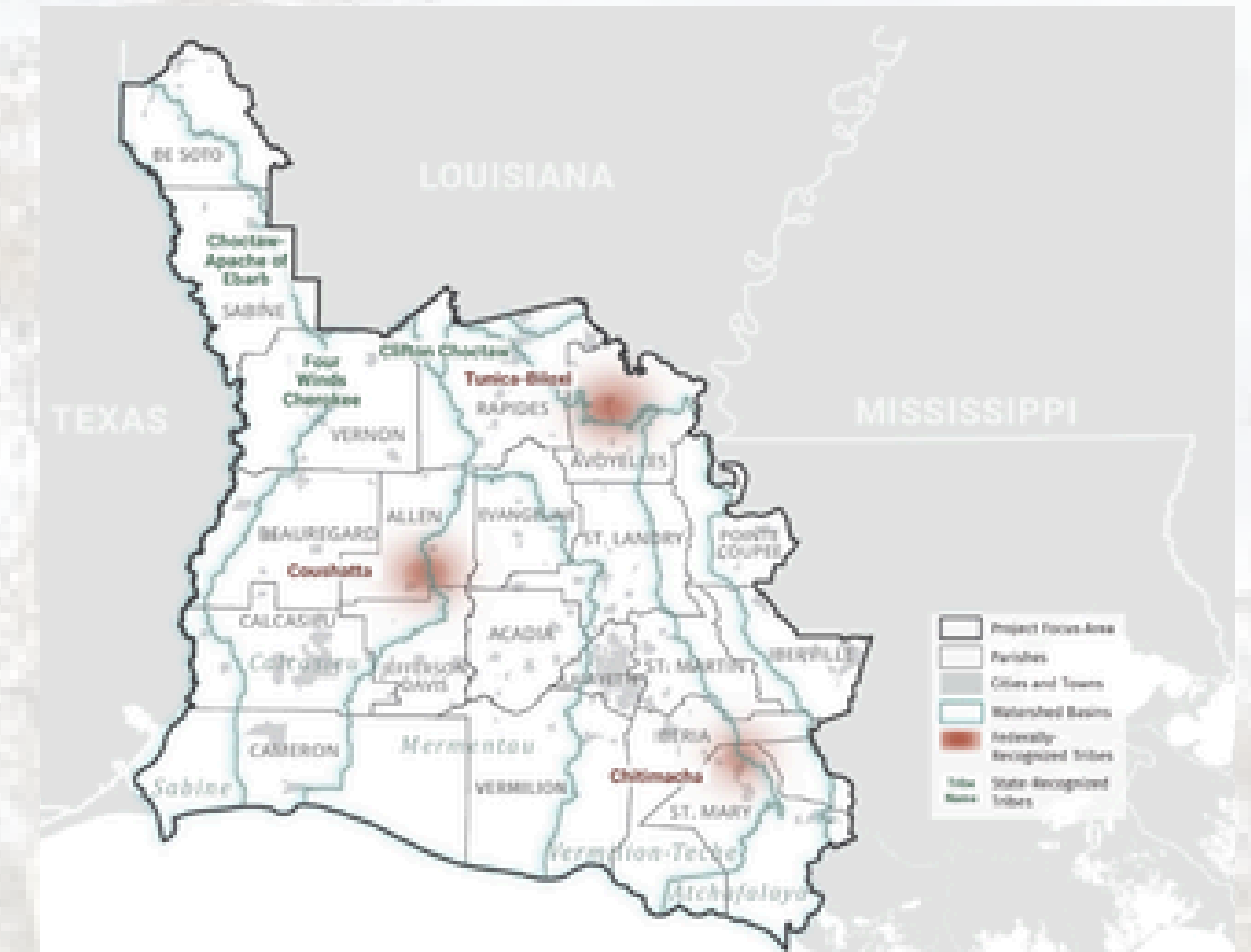


### Community Engagement Strategies

This project employs multiple community engagement strategies to collect input across Southwest Louisiana and Central Acadiana, ensuring that regional resilience planning reflects local priorities. Engagement occurs through partnerships with community-based organizations, surveys, workshops, local events, and Tribal listening sessions. The process is guided by Community and Governance Committees to support inclusive and equitable participation.



### Focus Area



**Parishes:** De Soto, Sabine, Vernon, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, Rapides, Allen, Jefferson Davis, Vermilion, Avoyelles, Evangeline, St. Landry, Acadia, Lafayette, Pointe Coupee, St. Martin, Iberville, Iberia, St. Mary

**Watersheds:** Sabine, Calcasieu, Mermentau, Vermilion-Teche, Atchafalaya

**Federally recognized Tribes:** Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana, and Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana.

**This project is also working with state-recognized and non-recognized Tribes.**

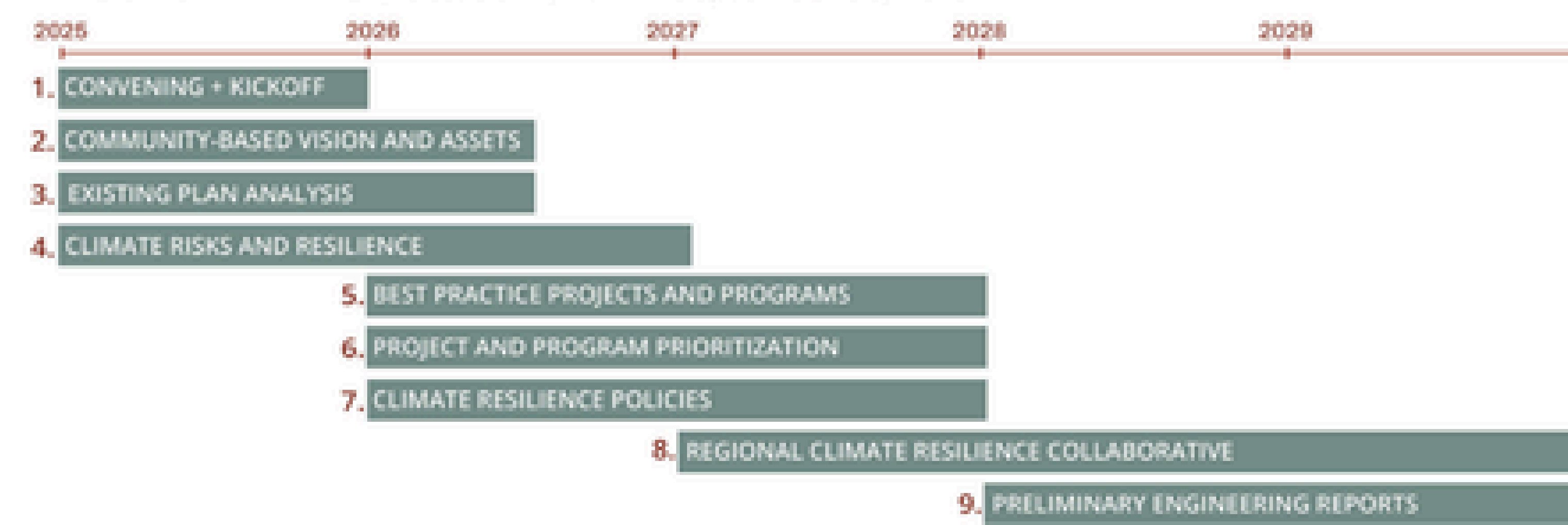
### Expected Outcomes

- Increased coordination and collaboration
- Community engagement that listens to and documents the range of needs, goals, and ideas related to resilience
- Increased understanding of possible impacts and prioritization of actions to reduce them

### Next Steps

- Expanding outreach efforts to enhance engagement throughout the whole region
- Evaluating climate risks and resilience strategies through an equity lens
- Establishing policies for a regional collaborative structure

### PROJECT DATES | October 1, 2024 - September 30, 2029



### Partners

