

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Partnership Pains and Gains Developing the Levee Safety Program Guidance

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Today's journey

Who I am and what I do

What the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers does

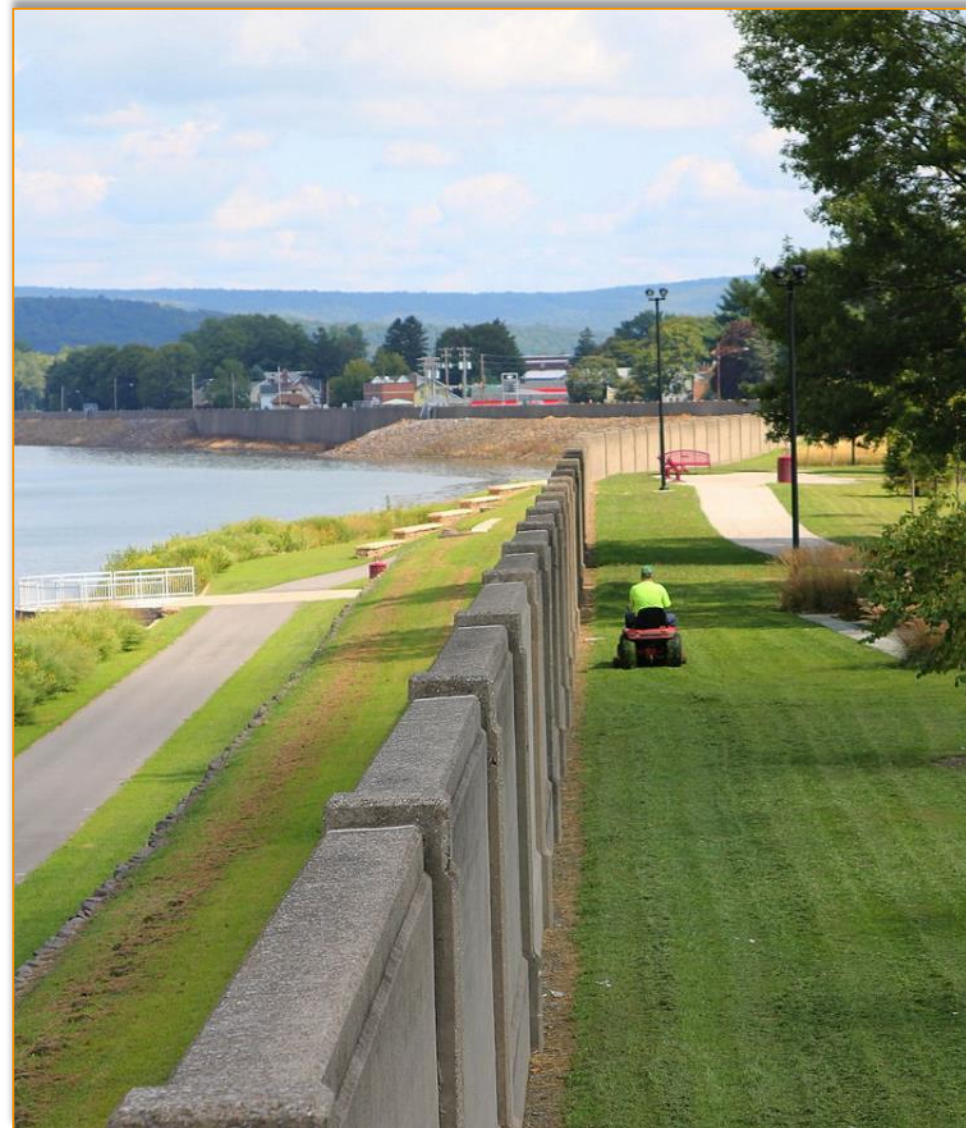
Roles and responsibilities with levees

A philosophical shift

A disconnect with our partners

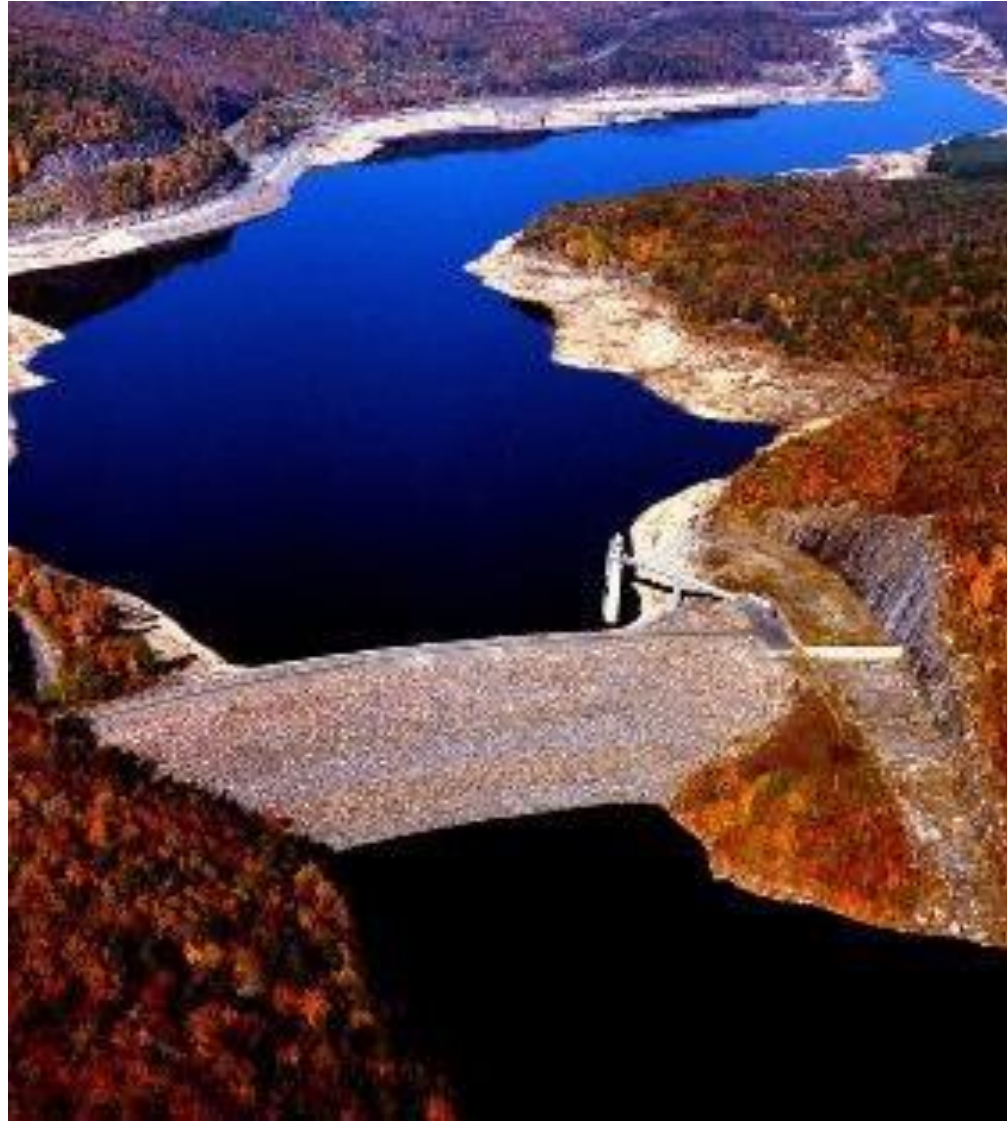
Bringing our partners back into the narrative

Seeking additional ideas to create
transformational relationships



Who I am and what I do

- Risk communication support to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Dam and Levee Safety
- Strategic communication and engagement opportunities
- Improving partnerships



What the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) does

Military
Programs

Homeland
Security

Real Estate

Interagency
Support

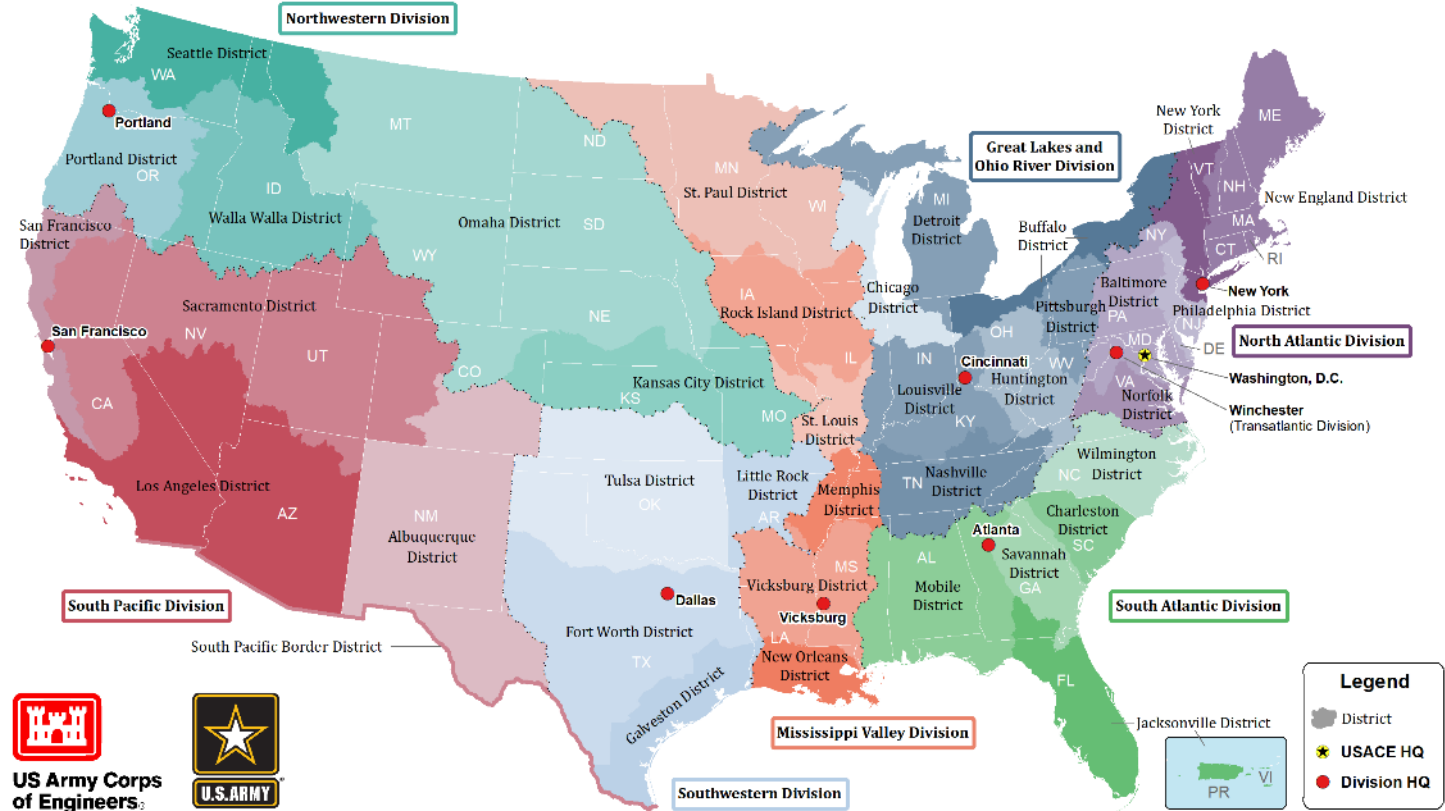
Research and
Development

Geospatial
Support

Civil Works

- Navigation and hydropower
- Flood control, shore protection
- Water supply, regulatory
- Recreation, disaster response
- Environmental restoration

Where we are

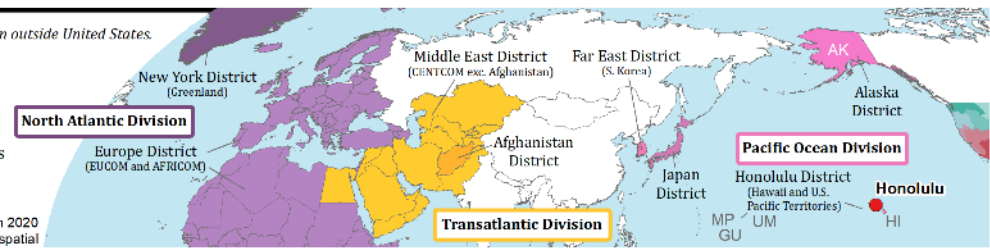


Civil Works Districts shown in United States. Military Districts shown outside United States.

Other Organizations

- 249th Engineer Battalion
- Army Geospatial Center
- Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville
- Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC), 7 labs
- Institute for Water Resources
- Marine Design Center
- USACE Finance Center
- USACE Logistics Activity

Date: March 2020
USACE Pittsburgh Geospatial





Share in the chat

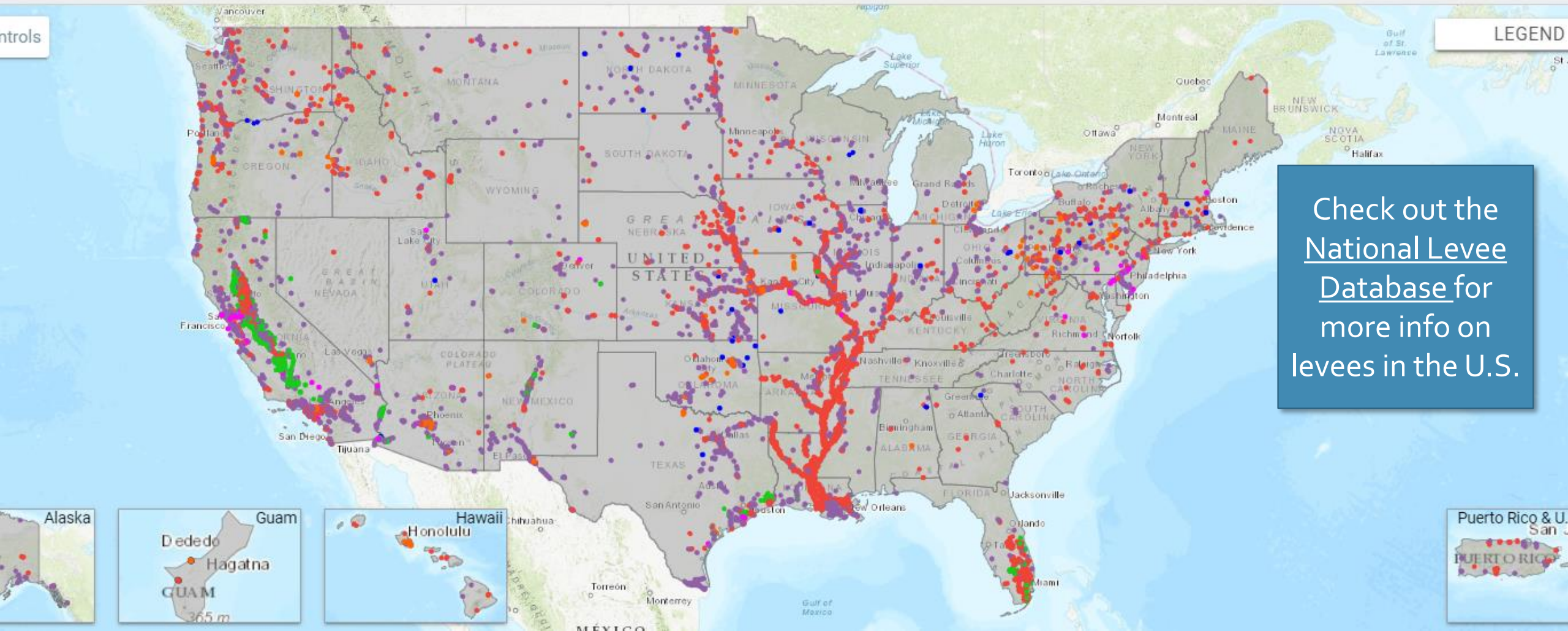
What work are
you doing with
the Army Corps
of Engineers?

Levees of The Nation

 **7,052** Levee Systems  **24,915** Miles of Levees  **44,042** Levee Structures  **57 years** Average Levee Age

2,037 USACE 14,962 USACE
5,015 Non-USACE 9,952 Non-USACE

 **BROWSE THESE LEVEES**



Some of
USACE's
authorized
responsibilities
related to
levees

Plan, design, and
build levees

Provide technical
assistance and support on
levee related issues

Monitor and assess
existing levees

Share levee information
with others

USACE partners with non-federal levee sponsors to design,
build, operate, and maintain federally authorized levees

Seventy percent of levees within USACE's portfolio are operated and maintained by non-federal sponsors via a project partnership agreement



The terms of the “partnership”

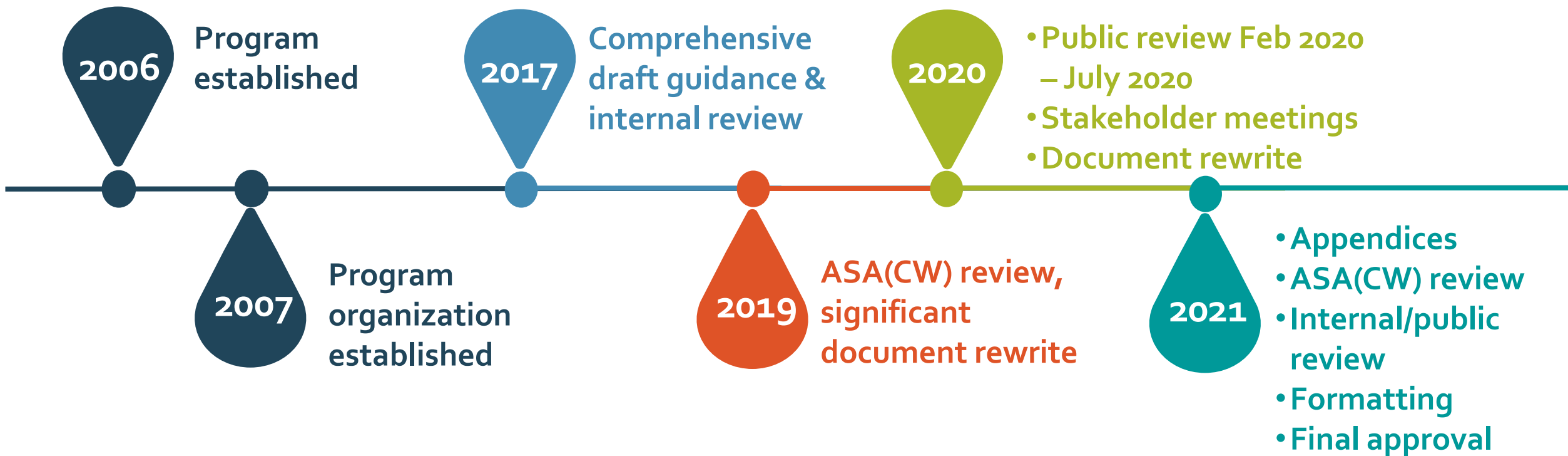
- **A project partnership agreement** is a legally binding agreement between the government and a non-federal sponsor for construction of a water resources project. It describes the project and the responsibilities of the government and the non-federal sponsor in the cost sharing and execution of work.
- Levee sponsors are responsible for operating and maintaining levees consistent with the operations and maintenance manual provided by USACE
- 33 CFR § 208.10 details additional operations and maintenance requirements for levee sponsors (<https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/33/208.10>)

A shift in
approach – the
aftermath of
Katrina



The language of risk – how levees can fail





How we got to where we are today

 Share in chat or join us on the line

Tell us about a time
you put something
out and didn't get
what you expected
in return.

2020 version of the Levee Safety Program guidance



Four volumes for two audiences organized around four areas of flood risk management



54 responses received during Feb to July comment period – 514 individual comments organized into 18 topics



Hosted 2 internal webinar, 2 external webinar, supported regionally-led webinars, delayed in-person meetings due to COVID-19

Feedback Expectations

- Feedback will help us identify areas that are unclear
- No one will be surprised – “we’ve been doing this for ten years”
- They’ll appreciate the volume focused on them and their needs
- They won’t care about our volume
- They’ll focus on the words in the document and getting those right

- Confusion
- Rules of the agreement changed
- Discomfort with risk
- Unclear roles and responsibilities
- Use of a one-size-fits-all approach
- Concern about added burden and liabilities
- “That’s the floodplain manager’s job”
- The black box of risk
- Supporting sponsors
- Impacting other programs

What really happened



Hosted ~28 small group meetings from August 2020 to February 2021



Focused on what sponsors wanted to talk about



If they didn't know where to start, we would focus on feedback and how we planned to adjust

Small group meetings

Rewriting the guidance

Streamlined to focus on the core policies of the program

Clarified applicability – who's in or out of the program

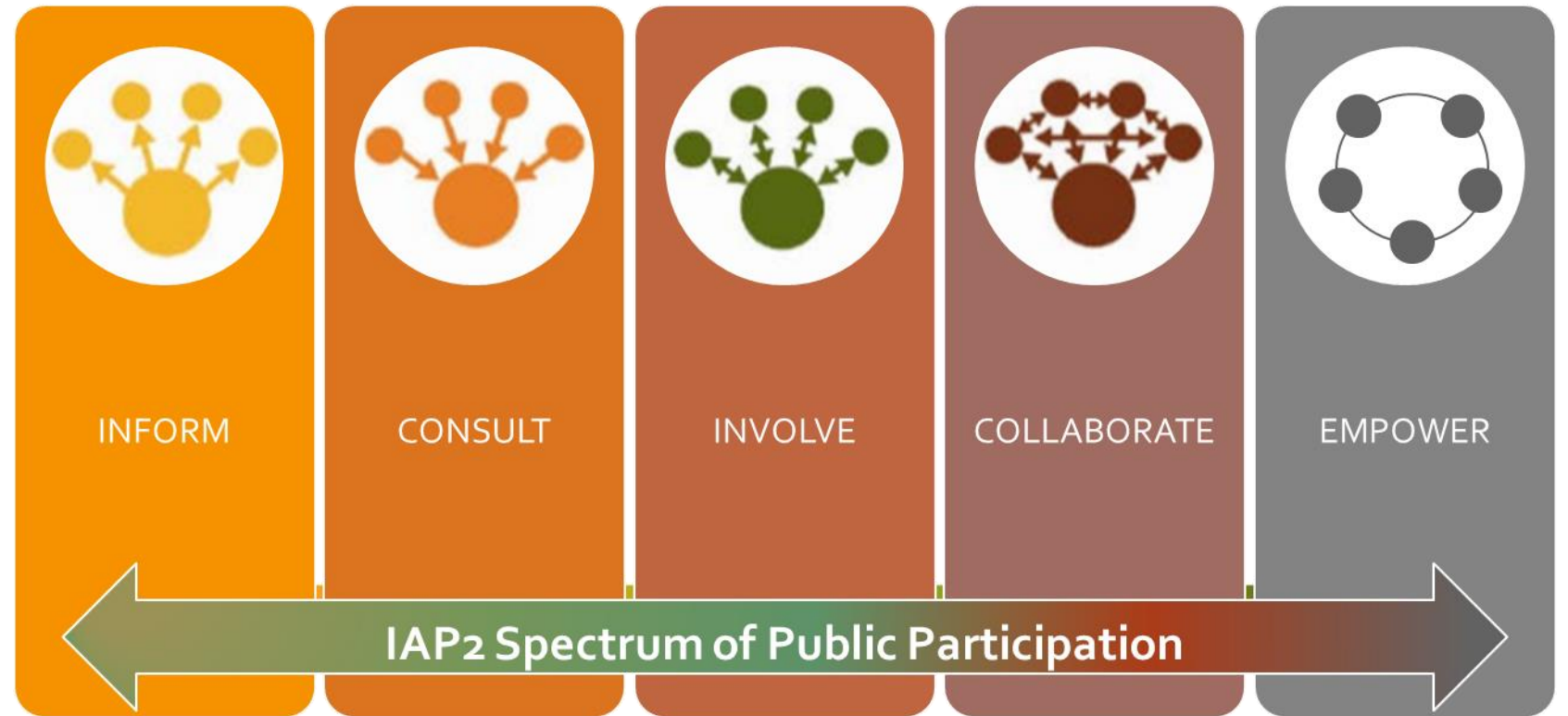
Roles and responsibilities – required and optional activities

Left out detailed procedures – intent to cover elsewhere

Changed our language – acronyms, risk speak, benefits

Highlighted opportunities for sponsor involvement

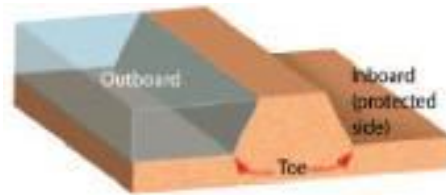
USACE and
sponsor
expectations
were not
aligned



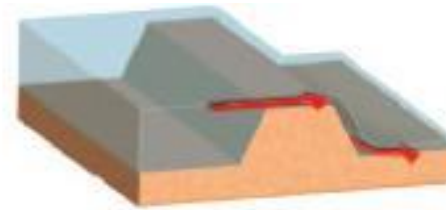
The terms of the
agreement
changed



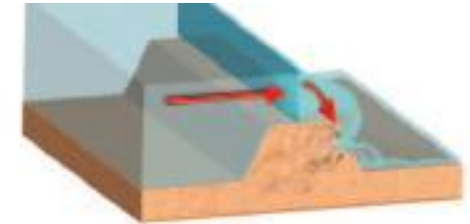
The only voice
telling the
story is
USACE's



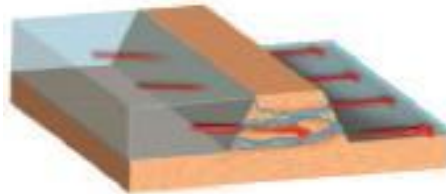
Anatomy of a levee



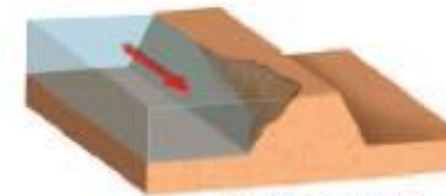
1a. Overtopping



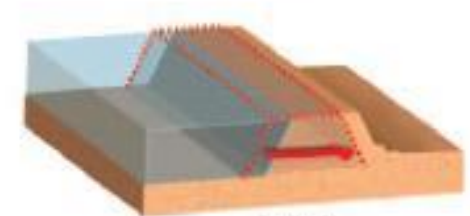
1b. Overtopping/Jetting



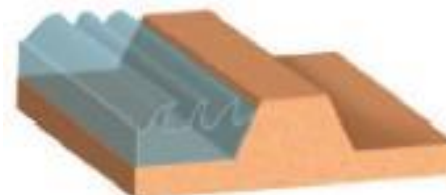
2. Internal Erosion/Piping



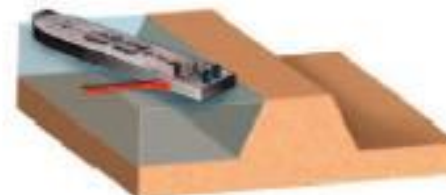
3. Surface Erosion



4. Sliding



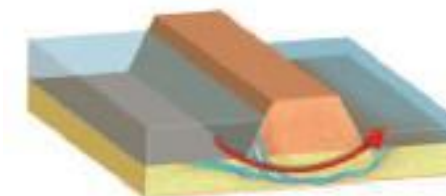
5. Wave Impacts



6. Structural Impacts



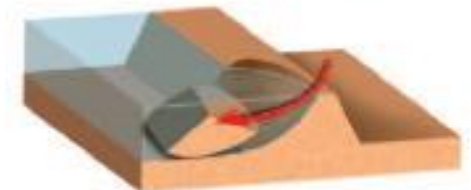
7. Liquefaction



8. Piping of substratum



9. Tree damage



10. Slope failure



Designed to inform USACE
and levee sponsor actions on
federal levees



Guidance supports consistent
implementation and time to
learn by doing



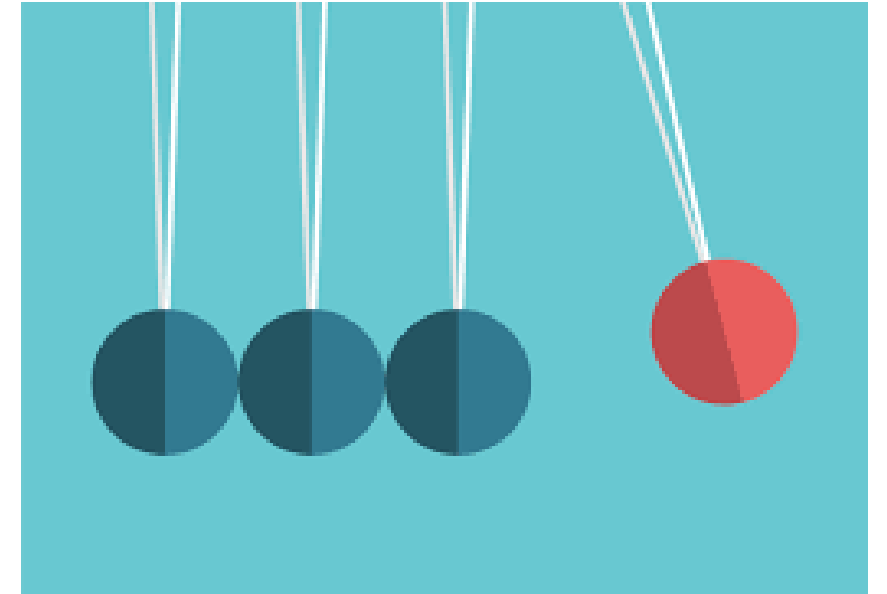
Informed by risk and what is
unique about each levee



Open conversations about
what is and is not working will
support safer levees

Adjusting the narrative

Rebalancing the conversation – levee risks and benefits



Opportunities to improve

Set clear expectations for engaging and partnering with levee sponsors

Create avenues to elevate challenges and opportunities

Continue conversations about what is and is not working

Clearly advertise options to engage in USACE Levee Safety Program activities

Find opportunities to highlight levees and USACE and sponsor successes

 Share in chat or join us on the line

How can USACE
create space for a
shared narrative
with sponsors?

 Share in chat or join us on the line

What lessons have
you learned in trying
to create a shared
narrative with your
partners?

thank you

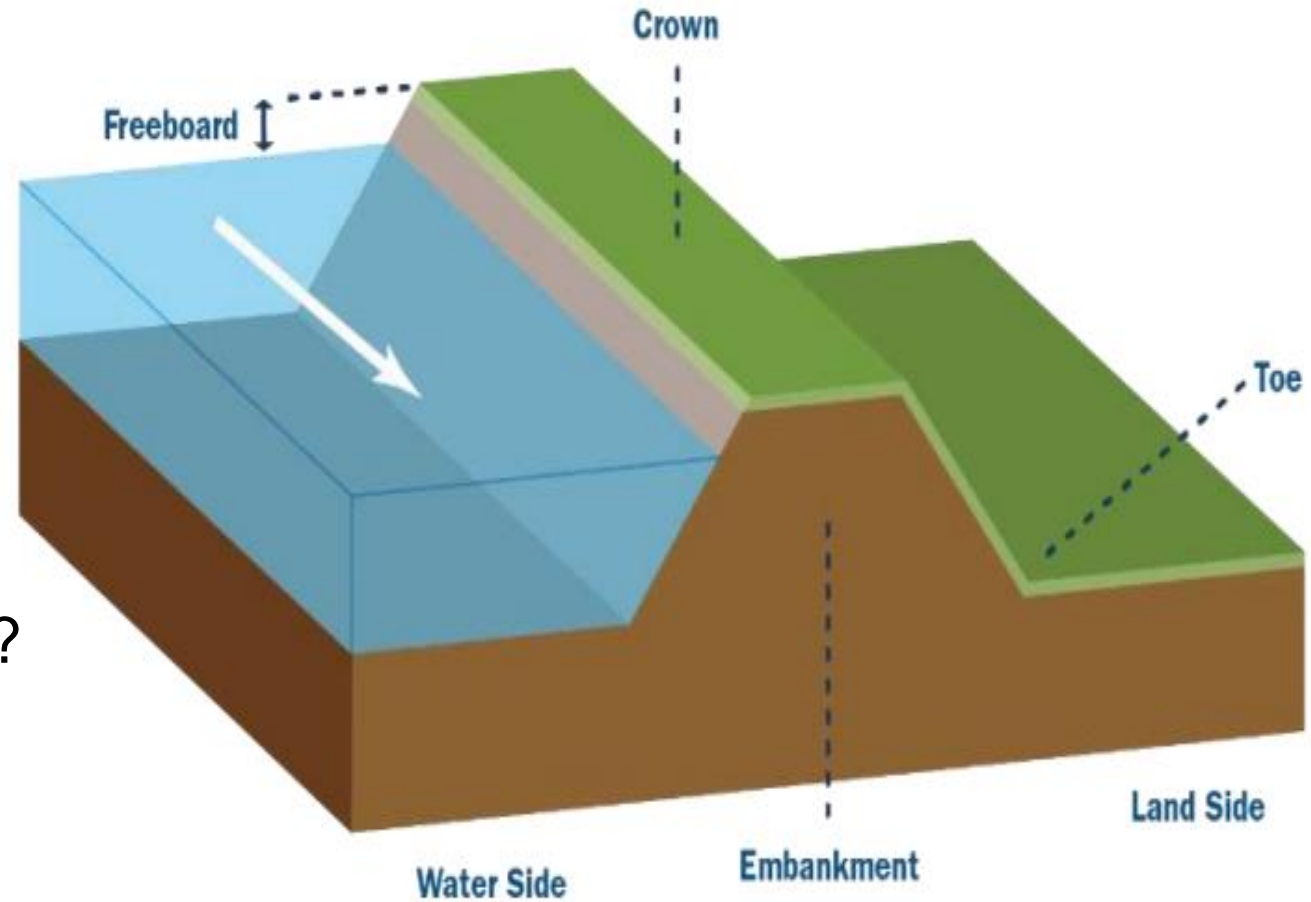
katelyn.m.noland@usace.army.mil

The slide features a white background with two large, solid blue geometric shapes. On the left, a blue triangle points towards the center. On the right, a blue trapezoid is positioned, also pointing towards the center. The text 'Reference Slides' is centered between these two shapes.

Reference Slides

What Does it Mean to Share Levee Information

- Why the levee is there?
- What's behind it?
- How does it work?
- What's its condition?
- How will it react during floods?
- What/who might flood?
- Will flood risk change over time?
- Are there opportunities to preserve levee benefits?
- Are there options to manage flood risks?

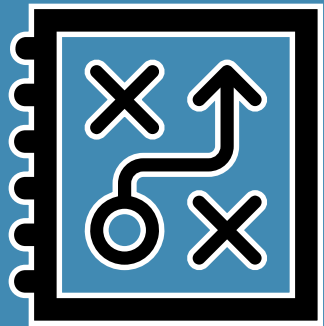


OPTIONS TO IMPROVE TRUST & RELATIONSHIPS



- Set clear expectations for engaging and partnering with levee sponsors
- Create avenues to elevate challenges and opportunities
- Continue conversations about what is and is not working
- Clearly advertise options to engage in USACE Levee Safety Program activities
- Find opportunities to highlight levees and USACE and sponsor successes

TACTICS TO IMPROVE RELATIONSHIPS



- Add a standing agenda topic to the Levee Safety Steering Committee for partnerships
- Support development of communication resources and opportunities to spotlight levees and USACE and sponsor activities
- Introduce regional meetings with levee sponsors
- Assign a point of contact from the national team to support actions to improve relationships

CONCEPT:
**REGIONAL
LEVEE SAFETY
MEETINGS
WITH THE
NATIONAL
TEAM**



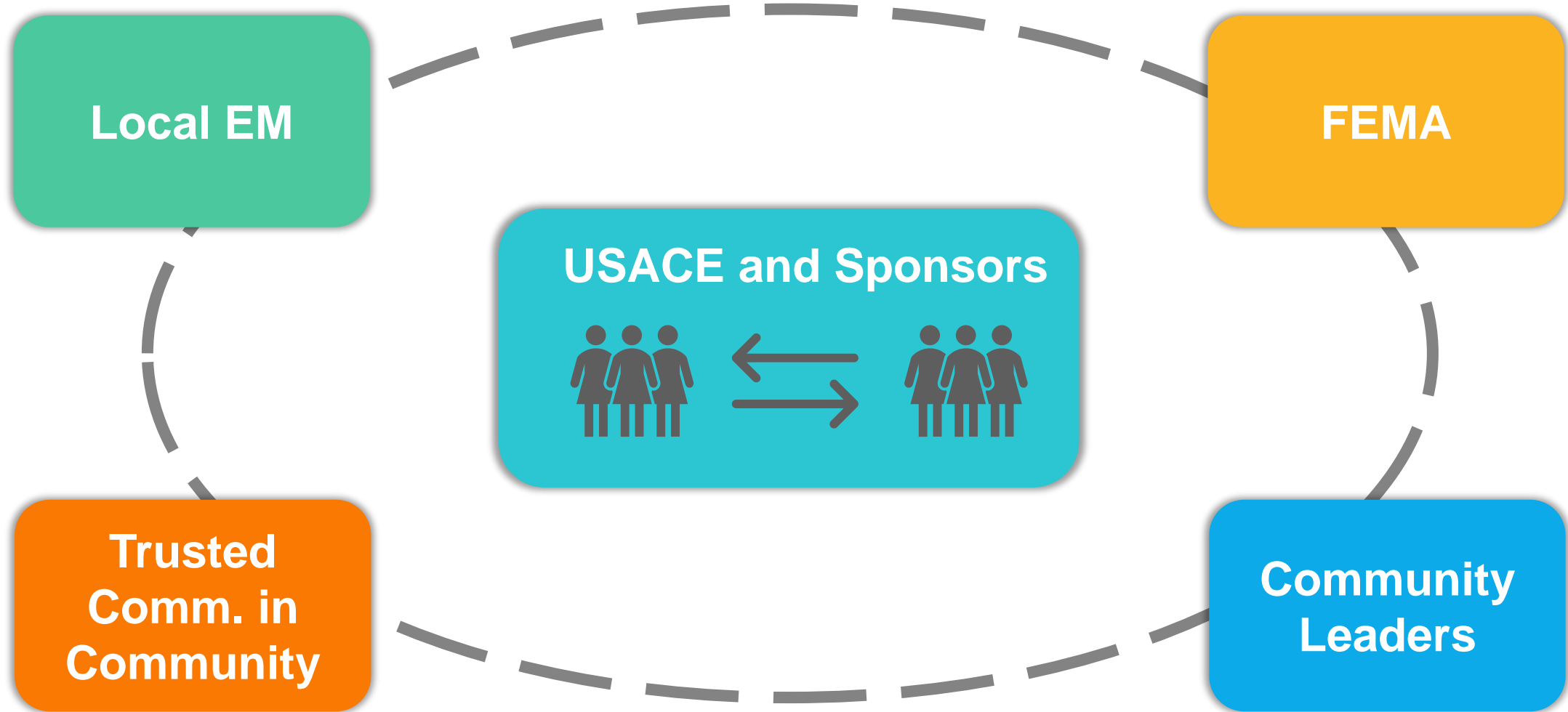
- Hosted by division and district team
- Includes members of the national team
- Opportunity for national team and divisions and districts to discuss regional and local topics
- Includes levee sponsor in the area
- Opportunity to be open and honest about what is working well, what could be better, and exploring ways to improve relationships over time

DESIRED END-STATE



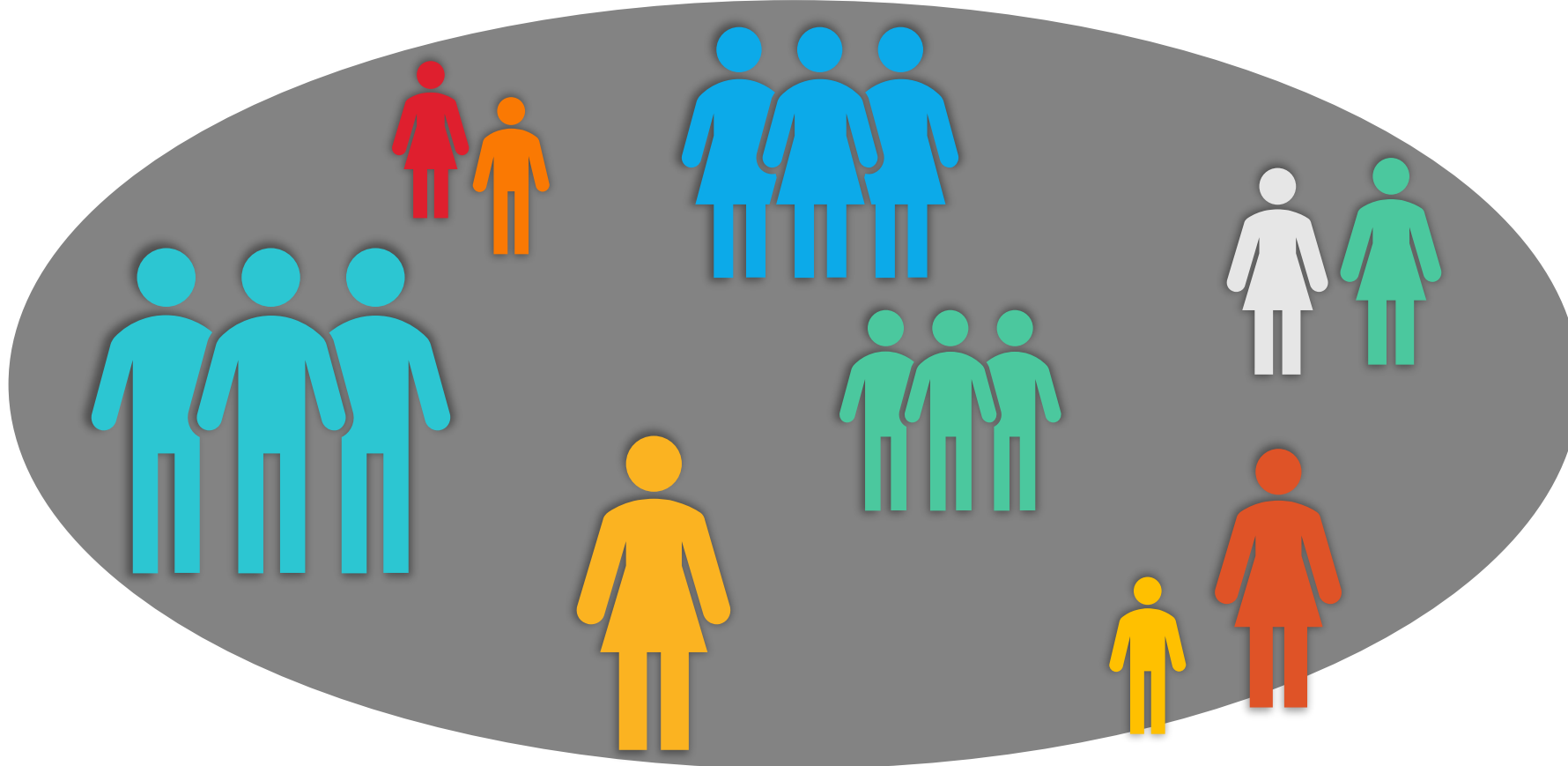
- Stronger pulse on levee sponsor and stakeholder issues and concerns across the country
- Ability to implement policy and program activities informed by regional needs and priorities
- More opportunities for HQ, divisions, and districts to collaborate
- HQ support engaging and improving relationships with sponsors
- Option to customize the approach consistent with regional needs

Whose Role is it to Share Levee Information



One Size Doesn't Fit All

Each levee, sponsor, and community is unique.
Strategies to share levee information should match the
communication need.



USACE and Levee Sponsors

Levee Safety Program Managers are the lead for working with levee sponsors

Invite sponsors to
all program
activities



Work together to
keep levee
info updated



Review risk
information
together



Develop strategy
to share
levee info



Regularly
coordinate
and problem
solve



Share levee
info with
others

