Engaging communities
in natural hazard and
climate change conversations

Moving natural hazard and climate risk engagement forward

Report on a brief practitioner survey

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Let's Talk About Risk (LTAR) team

We are a small interdisciplinary group working to improve New Zealand's understanding of the challenges, needs, and options for better public engagement around natural hazard and climate risk.

The team consists of Dr Charlotte Brown (Joint Managing Director, Resilient Organisations Ltd), Dr Chrys Horn (CH & Associates Ltd), Sophie Horsfall (Resilient Organisations), Dr Margaret Kilvington (Independent Social Research, Evaluation and Facilitation (ISREF).

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LET'S talk about RISK
Resilient ORGANISATIONS
Dr Margaret Kilvington Social Research Evaluation Facilitation
CH&Associates Ltd
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1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the current capacity and capability challenges for practitioners involved in public engagement on natural hazard and climate risk. It is based on a short practitioner survey released as part of the Let's Talk about Risk project in October 2023. It reviews key areas of concern and need, and how networking could be improved and supported.

1.1. Let's talk about risk

Over the last decade, there has been a steady increase in community engagement on natural hazard and climate change risk. Some of the conversations, particularly where communities are facing or have already sustained significant losses, have proven to be highly emotive and adversarial. In other contexts, engagement is stalled because of uncertainties in the decision-making process. There have also been successful experiences where both communities and agencies have shared information and utilised feedback to plan the next steps. While there is substantial literature and guidance on community engagement in general, there is very little advice for practitioners dealing with conversations about natural hazard or climate change risk.

The Let's Talk About Risk (LTAR) Project (Funded by the Toka Tū Ake EQC Biennial Grant) project has investigated current and developing practice in public engagement on natural hazard and climate risk.

Throughout 2022 – 2023, the LTAR project has:

- run an expert elicitation process to identify gaps and needs as well as key learnings from the experiences of practitioners across Aotearoa NZ.
    - released a framework to aid practitioners in engagement design, resorgs.org.nz/our-projects/risk-and-resilience-decision-making/lets-talk-about-risk/.
- run a series of workshops for practitioners to explore some of the challenges they faced when working with communities to manage risks, and to help build networks between practitioners.

This work has attracted a lot of interest. The workshops were highly subscribed and clearly offered a rare opportunity for practitioners to interact with one another over shared experiences. Throughout the work, there were calls for greater support for capacity and capability in public engagement on risk.

With additional support from Toka Tū Ake EQC, the LTAR team released a survey to explore the capacity and capability needs of practitioners in New Zealand related to natural hazard and climate risk engagement.

1.2. Practitioners' survey

The practitioners' survey was developed to investigate the ongoing support needs for natural hazard and climate change risk practitioners and potential options for permanent support for practitioners (e.g., a professional practitioners' network). The survey was sent via email to those involved in the framework expert elicitation process, those who registered for the LTAR workshops, the project reference group, and various professional networks for placement in network newsletters (including ACAN, NEMA, QuakeCoRE, Taitaurā, NZPI, Risk NZ). The survey was also shared through Resilient Organisations' LinkedIn page.

The survey explored:

- current capacity and capability challenges for those undertaking community engagement,
- interest in a network to support those involved in natural hazard and climate risk engagement,

- feedback and interest on LTAR past and future workshops (these results are not covered in this report but were used to inform the design of two LTAR workshops run in December 2023).

A full overview of the survey questions can be found in Appendix 1.

Overall, there were a total of 51 participants in the survey, predominantly from regional and local councils in New Zealand. There were also some respondents from private practitioners and members of community organisations.

2. Survey findings

2.1. Current capability and capacity

CAPACITY CHALLENGES

The most common challenges for practitioners in building capacity are lack of access to financial resources (62%), lack of established/documented methodologies to use (58%), lack of engagement guidance (50%), and lack of access to skilled practitioners (46%), (*Figure 1*).

The most significant capacity challenge was the lack of access to skilled practitioners to augment existing teams (*Table 1*). This included both the ability to hire skilled practitioners and the lack of skills and/or experience in some of the teams currently having to do the work. The second biggest challenge is the lack of financial resources to support engagements, whether this is for running the engagement itself (staffing, timelines etc), for community engagement initiatives, or funding streams/national support. The third biggest challenge was lack of engagement guidance, in particular guidance that would allow for best practice around New Zealand.

Competing priorities was also another key theme that emerged when respondents discussed capacity challenges. This included not having dedicated teams or resources for these projects, so resources were spread across a wide range of projects, leaving them with limited time to meaningfully engage with communities and mana whenua on natural hazard and climate change risk.

The most frequently suggested ways to improve capacity include creating dedicated roles/teams for natural hazard and climate risk engagement; development of clear, standardised engagement guidance and methodologies; and dedicated training and professional development opportunities for professionals working in this space (

Table 2).

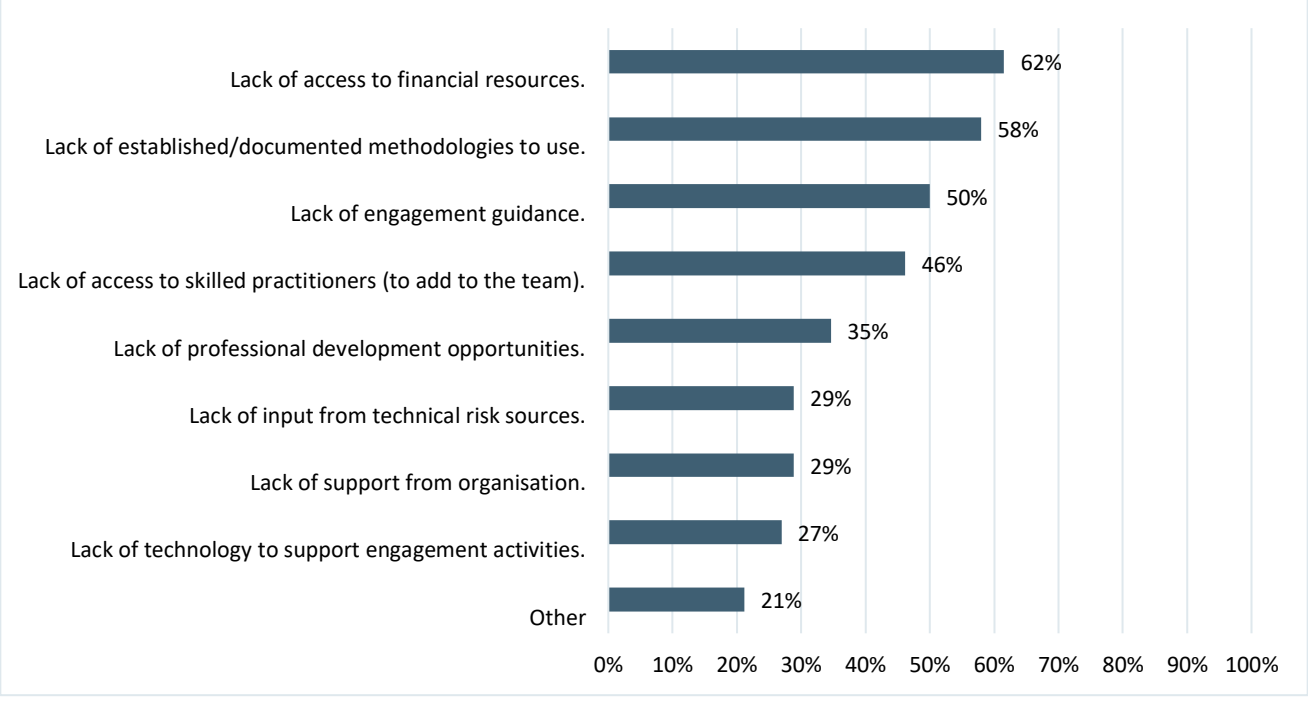

Figure 1: The most common challenges for capacity building (n=52)

Table 1: The most significant capacity challenges for practitioners (from most significant to least significant). Thematic analysis from 47 responses.

Lack of skilled practitioners	There is a lack of skilled practitioners available to undertake engagements. The lack of skills is varied, but are all necessary for natural hazard and risk engagement, but include: • community engagement skills, in particular natural hazard and climate change risk engagement, • knowledge of natural hazard and climate change, including general knowledge and technical experts, • risk literacy (e.g., understanding risk profiles, undertaking risk assessments), • Te Ao Māori understanding and focus, • communications skills, and • community knowledge and connections. Due to the lack of skilled practitioners, organisations are finding it hard to recruit people, staff are learning on the job, or organisations are having to hire consultants to undertake the work.
Lack of access to financial resources	Capacity is limited due to lack of access to financial resources, whether this is access to funding streams to undertake engagement or for implementing engagement initiatives.
Lack of engagement guidance	There is a lack of engagement guidance for practitioners to use. Practitioners would like guidance that covers engagement best practice, when engagement should occur, how to achieve an outcome from engagement, and engagement techniques (including how to navigate hard conversations) to enable capability building within teams (and in turn build capacity).
Competing priorities	Natural hazard and climate risk engagement often do not have a dedicated role or team in organisations. This means that practitioners are pulled in several directions, inhibiting their ability to give engagement or a specific project their full attention (time and focus). Some of the competing priorities currently placed on practitioners and/or organisations include immediate, post disaster issues, delivery of BAU council services, RMA system reform, and political pressures to focus on alternative issues.
Lack of support from the organisation	Currently, practitioners find the lack of support from organisations challenging due to the lack of: • leadership and decision making, • financial commitment, • integration of engagement at an organisational level, • commitment to best practice engagement activities by project leads, • prioritisation of meaningful engagement over technical studies, • political support, and • connectivity between all council operations (i.e., all operations that involve natural hazard/risk management) and with wider stakeholders (i.e., working with other councils and regional authorities, iwi).

Lack of established methodologies	Lack of established/documented methodologies to use. Practitioners would like more case studies to understand others' learnings to enhance the capability (and in turn capacity) of their teams.
Lack of technical risk literacy and support	Practitioners currently find there is a lack of technical risk literacy and support for interpreting risk information, particularly when discussing: • adaptation (the current language and complexity of adaptation work make conversations difficult; simpler concepts for use in conversations would be beneficial), • modelling and uncertainty (practitioners would like help/training in explaining data, modelling, and uncertainty to inform pathways), • GIS and spatial analysis, and • general risk and hazard technical advice. There is also a lack of knowledge of who is doing what research which leads to duplication, contradiction, and lack of transferability.
Lack of trust and connection with communities	There is a lack of connection and trust between engagement teams and communities that leads to lack of community preparation, lack of participation and representation (in particular, ensuring marginalised and vulnerable voices are included). This is particularly a challenge in large metropolitan areas. Engagement works best when there are connections between community members and agency staff; building trust between communities, councils, central government and Māori should be a priority.
Lack of resources for mana whenua engagement	There is a lack of resourcing/capacity both within engagement teams (e.g., lack of practitioners with Te Ao Māori focus) and on the rūnanga side to meaningfully engage with mana whenua as partners (e.g., lack of people and time to engage, being pulled in all directions).
Lack of clarity around local government role and mandate	There is currently a lack of clarity and guidance around the role of local government in natural hazard and climate risk conversations and management. There is no clear national direction, funding support or legislative mandate. This can lead to these conversations being deprioritised. There needs to be clear guidance about roles and responsibilities between different levels of government.
Lack of access to technology and tools	There is a lack of access to technology and tools to support practitioners. This can include tools to develop risk assessments, central repositories for GIS information, access to mapping tools and data, tools for regional, diverse, dense urban landscapes (e.g., Auckland), and greater centralised data management systems (one practitioner mentioned that some government departments are still asking for spreadsheets to be filled out, rather than being able to use a central online site to enter information into).
Lack of professional development opportunities	There is currently a lack of professional development opportunities, in particular, training options around technical and engagement subject matters.
Risk aversion	Some respondents find that the industry is risk-averse, lacking the courage to talk about issues openly.

Table 2: Suggestions from respondents on how to improve capacity. Thematic analysis from 38 responses.

Dedicated resources	**Dedicated roles/teams for disaster risk engagement** Creating dedicated roles and teams for natural hazard and climate risk engagement that have authority. This would mean there are in-house roles for ongoing programmes of work rather than relying on ad hoc projects supported by consultancies. This team should include full-time engagement staff, as well as skilled facilitators, and those with multidisciplined and social science skills, and be able to influence all the council. **Dedicated funding** Creating dedicated funding for risk engagement outside of TLA financing streams. This funding should be aimed at funding local governments to build teams focused on natural hazard and climate risk engagement; this will aid in building resilience rather than just responding to impacts after events.
Guidance	Development of clear, standardised engagement guidance that could include: • appropriate methodologies and/or methods development, • risk communication, • materials to translate concepts like AEPs and ARIs, • info and resources for engaging with diverse community members such as young people, elderly, and people with disabilities, • engagement with mana whenua, • aid for understanding and communicating clear reasons on why engagement needs to be done and how it will support the outcome(s) that the community wants (examples of *why* and how to do it as part of common council processes/requirements would be useful), and • case studies (including for different types of communities – i.e., large settings like Auckland or small-town communities). This guidance was suggested to be made either council-wide or centralised, and being standardised would allow for improved capacity as well, as it is easier to train/develop in-house roles for ongoing programmes of work.
Professional development	There is a need to develop engagement capability in all levels of professionals (i.e., all staff and additional resourcing), involved in the hazard and climate field, so that engagements don't solely rely on engagement professionals. Respondents noted that there are plenty of people in related fields (technical and social science) with the technical knowledge to step into risk engagement roles, however they lack the background in engagement to be able to effectively communicate risk at a community level. There also needs to be more established courses and opportunities for professionals to upskill (incl. adaptation/Dynamic Adaptive Policy Pathways, facilitation, engagement, risk and resilience, etc). Currently, there are only a few ad hoc programs. Free online, recorded webinars, case studies (for different types of communities – i.e., large settings like Auckland or small-town communities), formalised engagement opportunities, and workshop and presentation roadshow opportunities were suggested.

Central government direction and support	Clear direction and system changes are required from the Central Government, including: • clear national direction on risk engagement to improve local political buy-in, • centralised and standardised approach to how councils communicate and engage on risk, including guidance on appropriate methodologies, • national lead on education/messaging to communities, • legislation changes that take the fear away from scientists and politicians from getting information wrong, • spelling out what support will be provided to those affected and what the long-term implications are, and • creating a shared group of specialists that can be assigned to districts for use for a set amount of time.
Buy-in from organisations	Aid in helping build organisations'/councils' understanding of natural hazard and climate change risk and the value of prioritising hazard/climate risk and community engagement work. Often, a lack of organisational support leads to a lack of financial resources, commitment and prioritisation of risk reduction and engagement. Clear national direction on climate adaptation can help improve local political buy-in.
Technical information input/support	Support from the technical risk community through translating/developing simpler language for providing clear messages to communities around risk. Timely interpretations of climate change scenarios would also be useful.
Community education/preparation	Investing time and funding into improving community education and preparation for natural hazard and climate risk conversations. This could include running public education workshops with experts across a range of disciplines to give factual advice to the public about the full impact of various choices, including financial. Having messaging/education run nationally to communities on the benefits of engaging would also save the council's time and budget in having to invent things locally.
Shared resources	**National/regional pool of skilled professionals** Create national or regional pools of skilled personnel that councils can tap into for facilitation, science, engagement, etc., for a set amount of time. One suggestion was for this to be managed by the central government, which can assign specialists to districts for a set amount of time. **Information sources** Establish shared resources within and between organisations such as open hazard/risk portals that can be used for communicating risks.
Networking opportunities	Establish a practitioner network for peer-to-peer support and to learn from other teams in the engagement space and about the communities' practitioners work with.

PERSONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The most common challenges for personal skills development are how to deal with different views and distrust (74%); how to build a process that leads to successful implementation (68%), communicating technical risk information (68%); and understanding how natural hazard and climate risk engagement different to other engagement and how to manage these differences (64%) (*Figure 2*).

The most significant challenges for personal skills development are communicating technical risk information, understanding community risk tolerance, risk literacy, and knowing how to run an effective engagement process (*Table 3)*.

The most frequently suggested ways to enhance personal skills development included creating formalised targeted engagement training courses; creating opportunities for collaboration and peer-to-peer contact between practitioners so they can support and learn off each other; ensure new industry development and research findings are easy to access, digest, and implement as many practitioners are time poor; and develop free resources for practitioners to use before and during engagements such as templates and engagement collateral (*Table 4*).

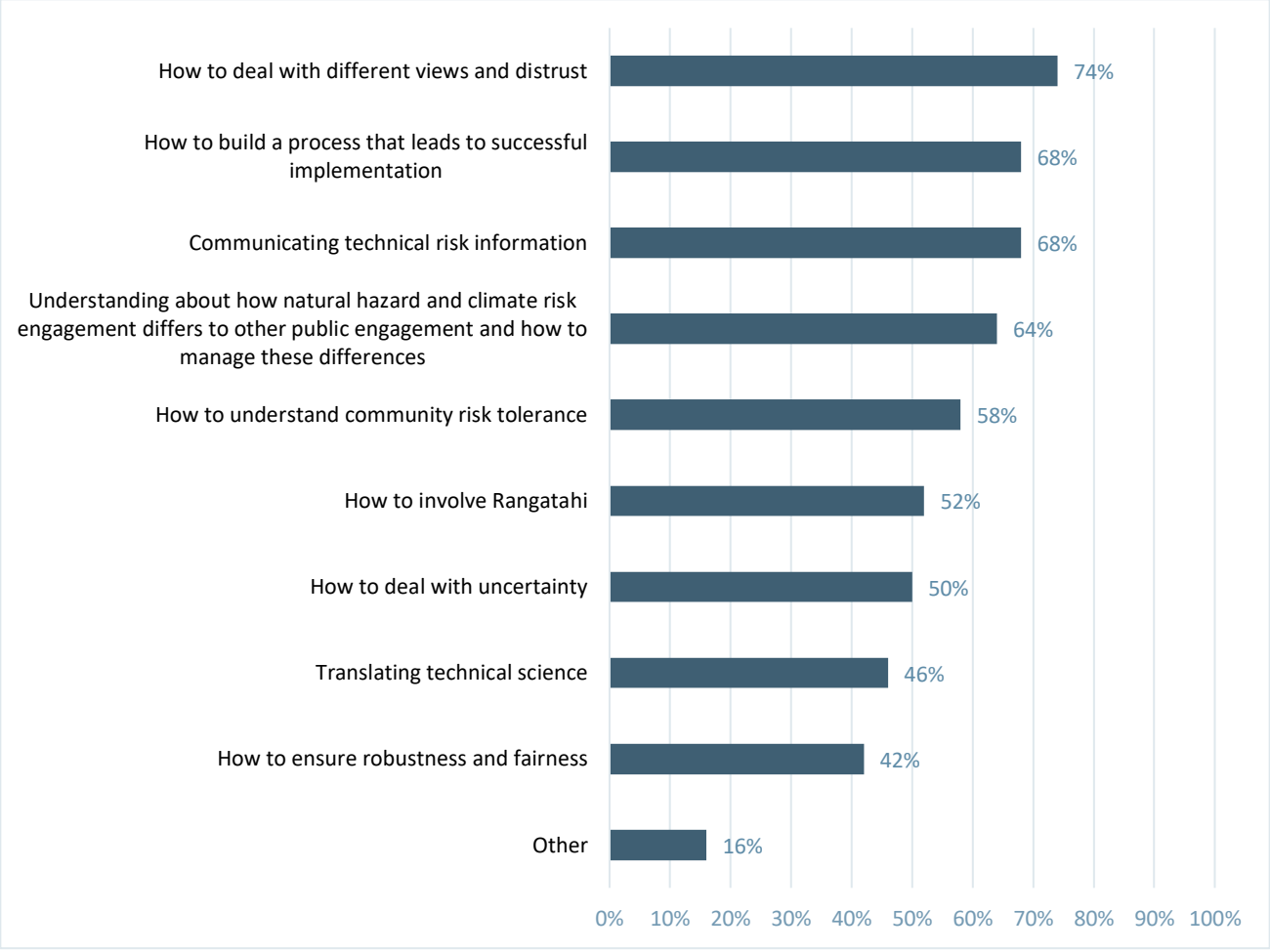

Figure 2: Personal skill development needs for practitioners that engage with communities on natural hazard and climate risk (n=50).

Table 3: The most significant personal skill development challenges for practitioners (from most significant to least significant). Thematic analysis of 42 responses.

Communicating technical risk information	Practitioners' biggest challenge is communicating technical risk information to non-technical people in a way that helps them understand what it means for them.
How to understand community risk tolerance	Building the skills to understand community risk tolerance is important for solution development and explaining trade-offs during option analysis.
Risk literacy	Practitioners would like to enhance their risk literacy. This includes better understanding of all the inputs to understand the risk (e.g., 'the science'), risk methodologies (e.g., risk assessments), how to use risk information for effective engagements.
How to run an effective engagement process	Further skill development in running effective engagements would be beneficial for engagement practitioners to understand: • engagement process (from decision upon a project, to getting buy-in, to implementation, monitoring to evaluating), • council roles and responsibilities, • skills/specialists required for good engagement (e.g., communications, technical etc), • engagement timelines, • how to utilise communication teams/skills, • how to build a robust programme, especially to withstand election cycles, • finances (including financial implications on individuals, councils, central government, insurance), • engagement methodologies, and • relationship and trust building.
How to deal with different views and distrust	Practitioners would like to develop their facilitation and mediation skills to deal with different views and distrust. These skills can include understanding how to facilitate a constructive debate, how to deal with misinformation, and how to understand cognitive biases (including inherent bias).
How to build a process that supports decision making	Practitioners want a better understanding of how to build a process that can lead to successful integration with decision making processes.
Understanding how natural hazard & climate risk engagement differs from other public engagement	Natural hazard and climate risk engagement differs from other public engagement; practitioners want to understand these differences so that they can manage them.

How to involve rangatahi	Practitioners need to build their rangatahi engagement techniques; some find it particularly challenging due to the age gap (e.g., practitioners in their 60s).
How to deal with uncertainty	Practitioners want to be able to understand how to deal with uncertainty and learn how they can engage with communities in the face of deep uncertainty and in the absence of 'answers'.
Translating technical science	Translating technical science is a challenge; practitioners would like to further develop their skills in translating technical information into plain English for use in engagements. Understanding and communicating modelling uncertainty is a particular challenge.
Building relationships and trust	Ensuring that practitioners can build trust and relationships with communities, mana whenua partners, and the wider public enables a better understanding of community needs and wants, which leads to better use of engagement techniques and risk solutions.
How to ensure robustness and fairness	Ensuring practitioners know how to design and run engagements that ensure robustness and fairness is important for equitability. Practitioners mentioned that it is important to design an environment that is suitable and accessible for differing communication styles.
Engagement with Māori	Ensuring practitioners have the skills to effectively communicate and engage with mana whenua partners is vital. This includes ensuring practitioners understand tikanga and have an interest in learning, understanding and incorporating Te Ao Māori world view and mātauranga Māori into engagements and risk approaches.
Engaging with empathy	Learning how to engage with empathy, especially when dealing with tricky and high stakes discussion is a key skill required.
Managing conflict	Having the skills to manage conflict and resolve disputes is a skill practitioners would like to develop. Particularly in situations where practitioners need to manage challenging residents.

Table 4: Suggestions for enhancing personal skills development. Thematic analysis from 27 responses.

Education	Practitioners want more formalised engagement training courses and practical workshops. This could include targeted education and training from CRIs.
Collaboration	Collaboration and peer support with others in similar roles or those with more experience.
Accessible resources	Practitioners are time poor. Information needs to be accessible (easy to access, easy to digest, easy to implement etc). Some of the knowledge practitioners would like include: • know how to track changes in communities' risk tolerance over time, • greater understanding of processes, including knowledge of how past engagements went and what the outcomes were, • adaptation pathway case studies (what were the key learnings, how to apply lessons learnt), • how to incorporate knowledge into their own engagement and communication, and • how to understand and deal with power dynamics, including how to address power imbalances (cultural, intergenerational and socio-economic). Resources could come in many forms, including: templates, engagement collateral, example presentation materials, and online, recorded webinars that include case studies.
Better understanding and use of technical risk information	Engagement and policy professionals need to have a better understanding of technical information/technical science such as risk assessments and financial information. Having a better understanding would allow for a better use of this information to get the desired outcomes. An example given was how practitioners often get trapped in the detail of the risk assessment itself rather than using the information to help deliver adaptation.
Guidance	Educational guidance with detailed methods and case study examples, specifically where it goes wrong and gets difficult. Making sure guidance is available for free.
Practitioners Network	Create a professional network/body for upskilling and sharing of knowledge. Respondents noted that there is currently an adaptation network that may cover some engagement (Aotearoa Climate Adaptation Network, soon to be Aotearoa Society of Adaptation Professionals - currently only for local government professionals working on climate change adaptation, however membership is set to expand).
Engaging with mana whenua	Training in engaging with mana whenua.

Personal resilience	More information on how to manage personal resilience, given these topics are quite heavy. Workshops/trainings that involve roleplay and dealing with irreconcilable differences, probably best delivered as block courses designed with engagement specialists and psychologists.
Connection with communities	More opportunities to get involved in the community.
Career pathways	Clear outline and communication of potential career pathways in this area.
Feeder degrees including engagement skills	Postgraduate qualifications in Disaster Risk Management and Emergency Management should include community engagement and resilience models. AUT has a module on Community Resilience Building.

OTHER CHALLENGES OR SOLUTIONS

Other major challenges or solutions suggested by respondents in the open answer question provided include: the need for better solutions and training for engaging with diverse groups within a community; and mana whenua (Table 5). The elderly, those with disabilities, communities away from urban centres, and those with various socio-economic status are all groups that require specific engagement methods to ensure their voices are heard. Practitioners also want support in developing the knowledge and skills to design engagements that ensure iwi and hapu are partners and allow for greater capacity for marae and kaumatua to engage.

Table 5: Other challenges or solutions. Thematic analysis from 14 responses.

Engaging with diverse groups within a community	There needs to be good engagement for all. There is often a disconnect between affected residents who are engaged with this topic and those waiting to hear how they will be affected. Support is needed to enable better engagement with diverse groups within the community, including people with disabilities, elderly, communities further away from urban centres, and those of various socio-economic status.
Engaging with mana whenua	There needs to be a better understanding of the differences in working with iwi/hapu in partnership compared to engagement with the wider community. Engagements also must make greater allowances for marae and kaumatua to engage within given time frame – currently too few are asked to do too much.
Timeliness of engagement	Communities are experiencing growing anxiety due to the perceived speeding up of events and impacts through climate change. Agencies need to move faster. However, solutions need to be grounded in the reality of resources, time, and political processes.
Differentiating between engagement and communication	There is a difference between a communication issue and a stakeholder management issue. It is important the people understand what community engagement requires, - i.e., integrity and trust.
Direction from central government	There is a lack of central government direction on adaptation and managed retreat, which is making these activities harder. There is also the uncertainty of how the government may choose to act in future.
Involving insurance companies	Involvement of insurance companies and indications of their level of risk assessment would be helpful to support these conversations.
Getting the right people	There is a need to get the right people in positions to do the work, and not just getting people in the positions to do the work (it was noted that this may go against personal development, but while we develop people, there are many cases of poor research and data being produced).
Community of practice	Building a community of practice in this space would help enable interested people to connect and share knowledge/get mentorship/exchange ideas.
Dealing with power dynamics	There is a need to understand and know how to better deal with power dynamics, including how to address power imbalances (cultural, intergenerational, and socioeconomic).
Differentiating between systemic and organisational issues	There is a need to differentiate what issues are within organisations (i.e., the structure of a team) and which issues are systemic.
Connect with other risk engagement	Include issues such as contaminated land in risk conversations as they are likely to be directly affected by hazards.

2.2. Practice network

CURRENT NETWORK OFFERINGS

Respondents to the survey reported involvement in, or awareness of, a wide range of groups and networks. Respondents listed everything from regional working groups to research initiatives (such as the National Science Challenges) and national practitioners' networks such as ACAN (the Aotearoa Climate Adaptation Network, soon to be the Aotearoa Society of Adaptation Practitioners). 38% of respondents (n=42) were aware of or were involved with the ACAN, 7% with Climate Adaptation Te Tai Tokerau (CATT) and 2% of respondents respectively were involved with QuakeCoRE, Taituarā, and the New Zealand Planning Institute (NZPI) (see *Figure 3* for an overview of mentioned networks).

Figure 3: Word cloud generated from responses to "what networks are you currently involved in or aware of?".

Respondents noted that the key benefits from these networks are that they provide practitioners with ability to share knowledge; they are at a local government level; they enable connection with others; and they are places where you can get support and advice (*Table 6*). However, practitioners would like more frequent events, greater access to experts/expert knowledge (i.e., technical information, current research, social psychologists), and more shared resources (i.e., tools, templates, methodologies, case studies) *(Table 7*).

There are a wide range of entities, identified by respondents, that are offering some form of capacity or capability support for risky conversations. Some are focused on climate change, others on natural hazards. Some are providing practitioners with links to resources, some are providing forums for practitioners to interact. Some are for local government practitioners only. It is clear that this is a busy space, but it is also evident that existing networks are not meeting all the needs of all the practitioner groups (public and private), and few are spanning across both climate change and natural hazards.

Table 6: Perceived benefits of existing networks. Thematic analysis from 33 responses.

Knowledge sharing	The ability to share knowledge and learn from others, particularly around what has or hasn't been useful, and new insights from practitioners in similar situations.
Local government focus	Networks, like ACAN and CATT, are local government practitioner focused. They understand the issues practitioners are facing operating in local government, and information is broken down for use in a local government context. They also allow for those in local government to connect, learn, and share with other council practitioners.
Connection with others	Provides opportunities for connection with others, sharing of experiences and ideas, networking, and building support systems. In particular, the connection with people who have more experience. This allows for a network of people to approach when you need advice.
Accessible information	Ensures information is accessible for members. For example: • information is broken down to local levels, • work programmes release information to practitioners, • resources are targeted, • regular webinars/seminars, and • case studies.
Situational awareness	Provides opportunities to find out what other sectors and councils are up to, what has been tried, what the outcomes are, etc. This is particularly helpful when other councils are further ahead in the engagement journey than members' own councils.
Trust and openness	Networks provide an environment where members can create connections where there is trust and openness. They know they can have free and frank discussions with one another in a supportive environment. This allows ongoing projects to be discussed, allowing for honest discussions on possible improvement opportunities.
Allows for feedback	Networks like ACAN, CATT, and NPI openly seek input and feedback from their members.
Regularity	Provides regular presentations and/or opportunities to meet and catch up.
Relevant	Networks such as NZPI, ACAN, and CATT ensure the provisions they supply are highly relevant to practitioners.
Inclusive membership	Multi-disciplinary memberships allow for issues to be seen through multiple different lenses.
Focus on delivery	A focus on the delivery of outcomes rather than the theory is useful (e.g., the use of risk assessments). Networks such as ACAN and TAGS.
Connecting industry and research	The National Science Challenges help to bring together research and academic networks. This helps drive capability across the sector. Professional networks tend to self-organise in the space, and research and academic networks don't often engage without the National Science Network.
Industry focused	A focus on how the industry/sector can move forward (SIGs).
Active	Networks like NZPI are active, always staying on top of things.

Table 7: What more could networks offer? Thematic analysis from 29 responses.

More frequent events	More frequent and regular catchups, workshops, focus groups, and presentations.
Access to expert knowledge	Greater access to experts and/or expert knowledge including: • social psychologists, • change management experts, • technical information, • insurance, • mortgages, • development and use decisions, • current and past research in the sector, and • research and academia. In particular, the ability to connect and learn from experts and develop a greater understanding of the impacts of natural hazards and climate change on the above topics.
Shared resources	Resourcing and development of shared resources such as tools, templates, methodologies, project examples/stories, learnings, formalised database of current and past research.
Personal development	Opportunities for practitioners to upskill and take part in focused training opportunities. This is currently not within the scope of some of the networks practitioners are involved in.
Business case development	General feeling of the need for more support for both developing and receiving the right resources to undertake engagement (e.g., financial skills or expertise) but also support in ensuring that practitioners have adequate time to undertake effective engagement.
Greater focus on current issues	Current focus is on future planning, but practitioners want more real-life examples of practical options and solutions for the community on issues that are occurring now. One example was a focus on current erosion risks and community situations that need help now.
Networking/ connection	Some practitioners are not involved in a network and would like to have a home. Natural hazard practitioners, in particular, would like to have an organised body that brought them together – while those involved in climate adaptation were more likely to regard themselves as having a range of network options.
More time to access network	Practitioners would like to have more time to give to their current networks; some don't feel like they can join more than one network as they are time poor.
Greater focus on engagement	Greater engagement focus, including focusing on the importance of purpose and outcomes rather than risk assessments for risk assessments sake.

Open to non-council staff	Currently, some networks are not open to non-council staff (e.g., ACAN). By opening networks to practitioners beyond council staff, it could allow for targeted exchanges on key issues. This could also include more targeted merging of professional networks and research and academic networks.
Strong advocacy at local government level	A continuation of strong advocacy at local government level.
Free and frank discussions	More opportunities for practitioners to have free and frank discussions of the current risk environment, allowing for collaborative problem solving.
Tangible opportunities	More tangible opportunities to help each other on the ground, such as secondment programmes, shared resources model etc.
Bridge between natural hazards and climate change	Natural hazards and climate change can often be seen as separate challenges. However, there are a lot of crossovers; bridging of knowledge would be beneficial.
Early career practitioner support	Support for young/early career practitioners.
Strategic direction	More focus on strategic direction.
Access to skilled staff	Access to staff resources in climate change roles.
Central government support	More central government support, to drive this sector. Current networks are trying to work together but find it difficult without support.

PRACTICE NETWORK FOR NATURAL HAZARD AND CLIMATE RISK ENGAGEMENT

88% of survey respondents were interested in a practice network for natural hazard and climate risk engagement (Figure 4). Practitioners would like this network to provide (*Figure 5*):

- opportunities to discuss problems or ask questions (90%),
- access to professional development opportunities and upskilling events (83%),
- guidance materials (e.g., frameworks) (79%), and
- opportunities to connect with peers (76%)

The most popular method for interaction between practitioners in a network was (*Figure 6*):

- virtual (98%),
- in-person (small-scale events) (83%), and
- in-person (conferences) (68%)

While the many respondents said they would be willing to pay a fee for a practice network (39% yes, 39% other), it would be based on whether the organisations practitioners worked for would be willing to cover the cost/could afford it, and if there was going to be value added (*Figure 7*).

There were comments from respondents about how this network would be different from ACAN and whether it would be more effective to better resource existing networks than create a new network. However, it was clear through the comments that while practitioners in the climate change space felt that ACAN was a great start towards a practitioners' network, those that dealt in natural hazard engagement were lacking a network that suited their needs (40% of respondents said they were not aware of an existing network that would be a good home for a practice network). There were also a number of responses that highlighted that while ACAN was a great network, those who were not public sector staff were not able to join.

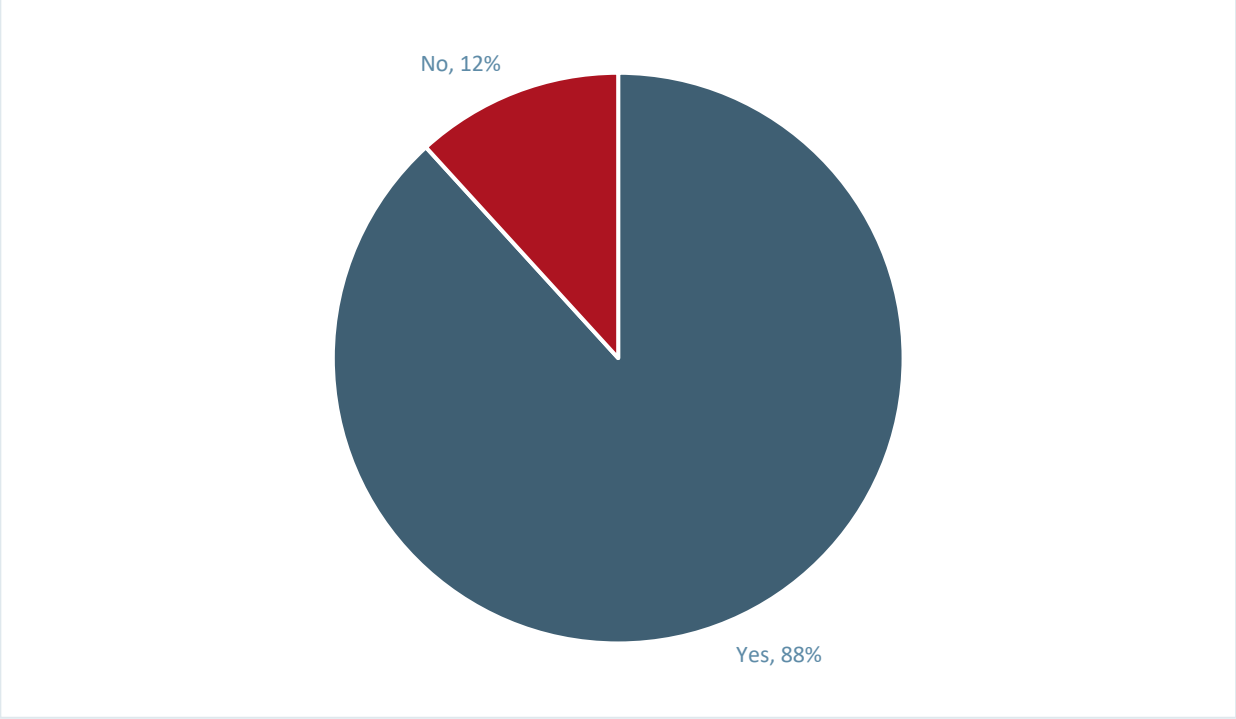

Figure 4: Interest in a practice network supporting those involved in natural hazard and climate risk engagement (n=51).

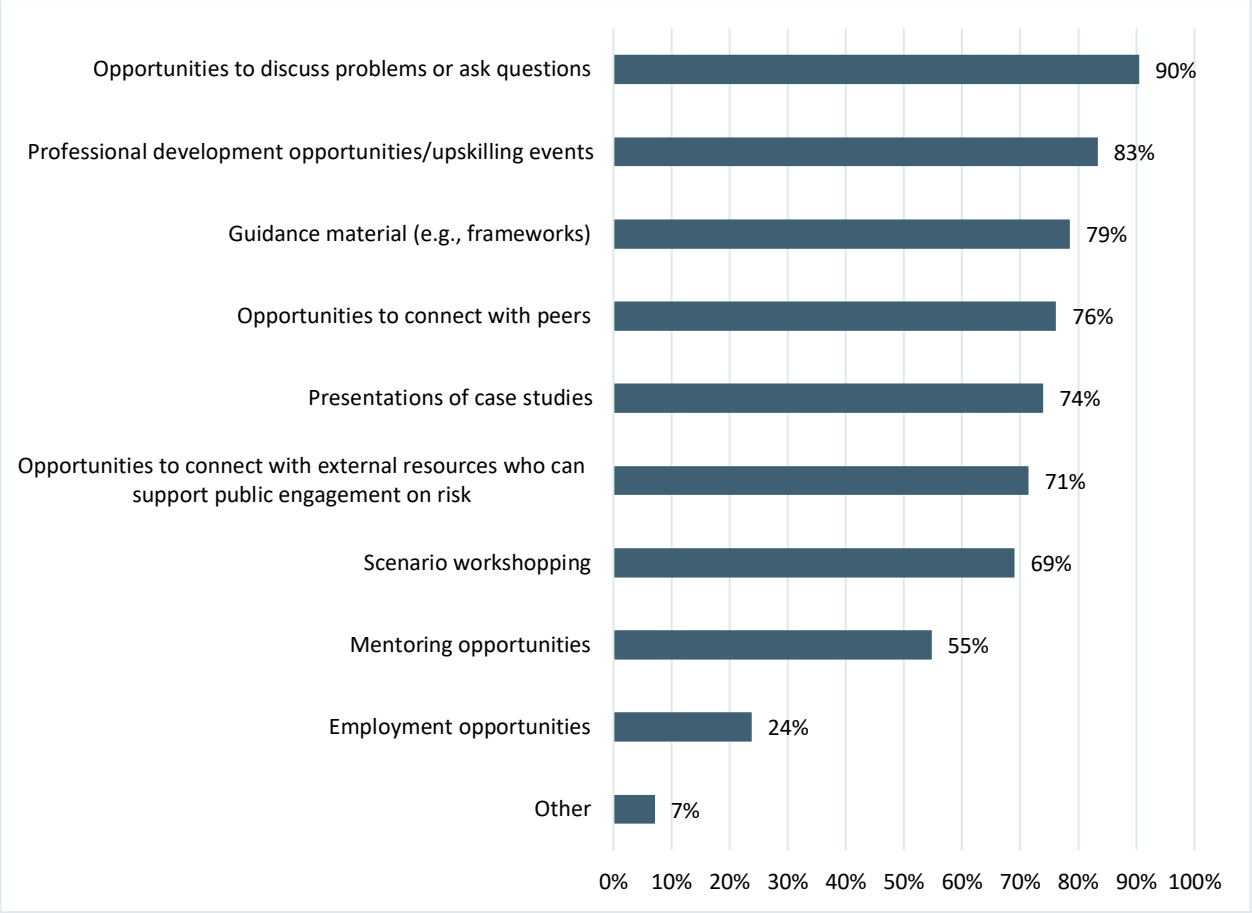

Figure 5: Key provisions for a practice network supporting those involved in natural hazard and climate risk engagement (n=42).

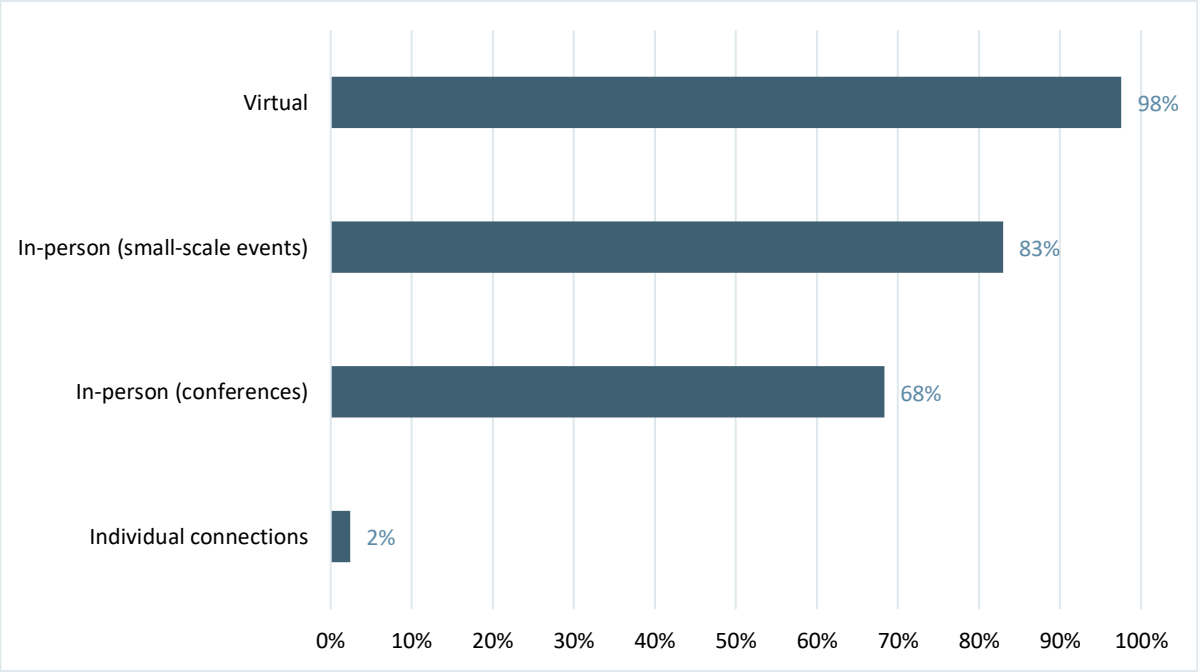

Figure 6: How practitioners would want to interact with a practice network (n=41).

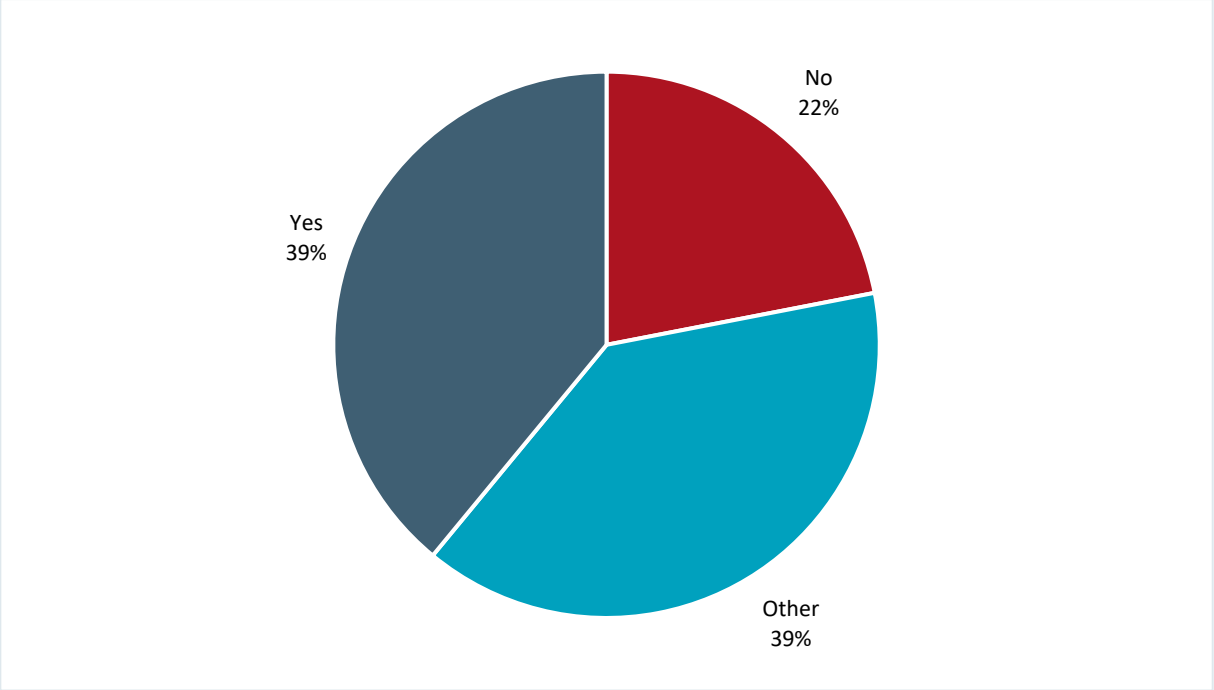

Figure 7: Practitioners that would be willing to pay a fee for a practice network (n=41).

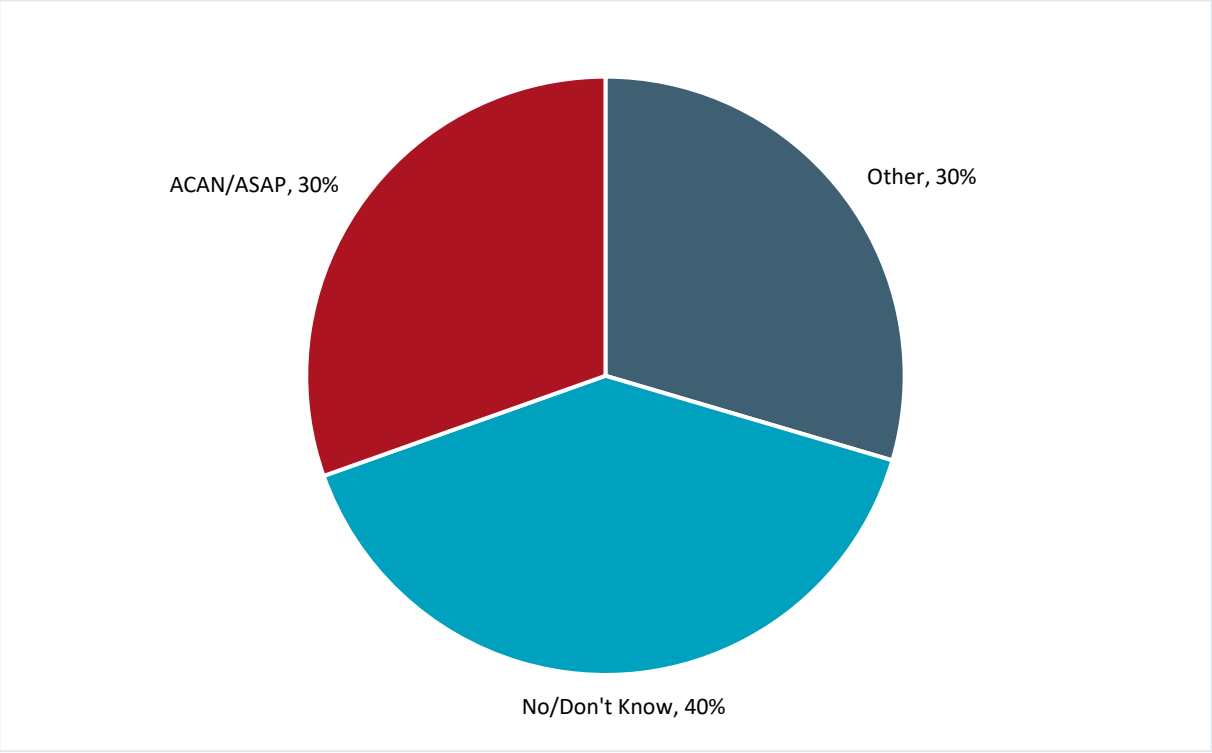

Figure 8: Potential home for a natural hazards and climate risk engagement network (n=23)

3. Exploring options with existing networks

As part of this project we shared the survey findings with leaders of existing networks and agencies where there is already work underway, or there is potential, to support practitioners in natural hazard and climate change risk engagement. We spoke with individuals from Taituarā, NZPI, NEMA and organisers involved in the Natural Hazards SIG, and ACAN.

Everyone we spoke to indicated that the survey results resonated with them and/or the needs of their membership. All also recognised the significant upsurge in demand for, and pressures imposed by, carrying out public engagement on hazard and climate risk. There was common interest in finding a way to provide =support for practitioners. There was also a common interest in how capacity and capability for 'risky conversations' connected with other aspects of capacity and capability for hazard and climate change risk they themselves were involved in, or about to initiate. For instance there is an opportunity to integrate engagement within training initiatives and micro-credential development being developed through partnerships between ACAN and Taituarā, and NZPI and Toka Tū Ake respectively.

Willingness and interest aside, the current support for building capacity and capability for hazard and climate risk engagement is patchy and uncoordinated. There are limited opportunities to learn across disciplinary or other silos (e.g., hazard risk and climate risk; reduction and readiness) and some practitioners groups are not able to connect with some networks (for example networks for local government only, as is the case for ACAN currently and the SIG groups).

No single organisation currently links across all those interested and involved in hazard and climate risk engagement. Similarly, no organisation we spoke to currently has a concentrated focus on building capacity and capability for hazard and climate risk engagement. The range of organisations/entities with 'some interest' in different aspects of hazard and climate risk, capacity building or engagement is substantive and even potentially confusing (one LTAR project steering group member raised this issue with us). Practitioners, too, are time poor and have limited capacity to engage in multiple networks.

The general consensus from these discussions was that support for risk engagement practitioners is best done through existing networks rather than building anew. We agree with this. However, we identified that there is a need for some form of coordination or oversight to ensure the unique and specific capacity and capability demands for risk engagement are adequately provided for.

The LTAR project online workshops, and the survey responses about these, highlight that, alongside formal professional development opportunities and access to guidance and resources, practitioners continue to be interested in living cases. These cases provide active learning opportunities so that people can workshop challenges and gain support from their peers. This is a specific form of capacity and capability building that has the potential to support networking in and of itself.

4. Conclusion

Increasingly, there is both a community desire and a regulatory need for communities and agencies to come together to talk about natural hazard and climate change risk. The complex and dynamic hazards we face stretch the resources our communities have. Now, more than ever, it is important that agencies work alongside communities to build our collective understanding of the hazards we face, enhance the capacity and preparedness of communities to cope with these events, and enable them to prioritise actions to manage these. The findings from our practitioners' survey show there is also a need for capacity and capability building to support those undertaking this complex and challenging type of community engagement.

PRIORITISATION OF RISK ENGAGEMENT

The survey results highlighted the need for engagement to be prioritised in organisations if engagement is to be done effectively. Many practitioners find they are spread across a wide range of projects, with a lack of funding, time, or skilled resource to be able to engage meaningfully with communities and mana whenua. Getting organisations to see the value in creating and resourcing dedicated roles and/or teams for risk engagement would be a good start towards better-equipped engagement teams and projects.

PERSONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

To ensure skilled personnel are available to make up these engagement teams, there needs to be targeted and relevant professional development opportunities for practitioners. When it comes to personal skills development, practitioners would like opportunities to develop their community engagement skills and knowledge (e.g., how to run an effective engagement process, deal with different views and distrust, understand community risk tolerance, inform decision making); technical knowledge and communication skills; and Te Ao Māori knowledge and mana whenua engagement skills.

Developing clear, standardised engagement guidance and methodologies, running targeted and relevant training courses, and providing opportunities for collaboration and peer-to-peer contact between practitioners were highlighted as key ways to upskill practitioners. When done right at a national level these opportunities could aid in the development of best practice for natural hazard and climate risk community engagement in New Zealand.

PRACTITIONERS NETWORK

This survey looked into the value of a practitioners' network for those involved in natural hazard and climate risk engagement, as one avenue to provide practitioners with upskilling events and peer to peer contact. It was clear from survey respondents that there is a strong interest in having a network in this space. There are currently several networks providing benefits to practitioners but none reach across the full spectrum of those involved in hazard and climate risk engagement, and there is currently limited scope to address the specific challenges of risk engagement. However, there is good potential to build off these existing networks to provide community engagement focused resources, learning opportunities, and peer to peer networking events that bring practitioners together. A crucial aspect will be addressing the existing silos within natural hazards and climate change, fostering connections across reduction, response, readiness and recovery; and bridging the gap between the private and public sector. Achieving this requires coordinated effort and more work is needed to determine the best agency or means to coordinate support for natural hazard and climate risk engagement.

5. Appendix – survey questions

Capability and capacity

The high interest in the recent Let's Talk About Risk online workshops [held May - July 2023] demonstrated a need for better capacity and capability support for those undertaking community engagement on natural hazard and climate change risk.

The next set of questions aims to understand what ongoing support and guidance would be useful.

1. As someone interested in/or active in community engagement on hazard and climate risk - what are some of the biggest challenges in building capacity? Choose all that apply.
    - Lack of established/documented methodologies to use. Lack of professional development opportunities.
    - Lack of engagement guidance.
    - Lack of technology to support engagement activities. Lack of support from organisation.
    - Lack of access to financial resources.
    - Lack of access to skilled practitioners (to add to the team). Lack of input from technical risk sources.
    - Other (please specify)

2. What are your top 3 capacity challenges in order of priority.

3. What could be done to improve capacity?

Personal skills development

4. What personal skills development do you think would help you or others you work with? Choose all that apply.
    - How to understand community risk tolerance
    - Translating technical science
    - Understanding about how natural hazard and climate risk engagement differs to other public engagement and how to manage these differences
    - How to ensure robustness and fairness Communicating technical risk information
    - How to involve Rangatahi
    - How to build a process that leads to successful implementation
    - How to deal with uncertainty
    - How to deal with different views and distrust
    - Other (please specify)

5. List the top three skills, in order of priority, that you think would be the most helpful for you or others you work with.

6. What else could be done to improve personal skills development?

7. Is there anything missing from the above challenges or solutions that you would like us to know?

Practice network

We would like to hear your thoughts on the value of a network to support practitioners in natural hazard and climate change risk engagement and what you would want from that network.

8. What networks are you currently aware of or are using (related to natural hazard and climate change risk engagement)?

9. What do you like about these networks and why?

10. What more would you like from the current networks you are a part of?

11. Would you have interest in being part of a practice network supporting those involved in natural hazard and climate risk engagement?
    - Yes
    - No

12. What would you like this network to provide? (Tick all that apply)
    - Professional development opportunities/upskilling events
    - Mentoring opportunities
    - Opportunities to connect with peers
    - Opportunities to discuss problems or ask questions
    - Presentations of case studies
    - Scenario workshopping
    - Guidance material (e.g., frameworks) Employment opportunities
    - Opportunities to connect with external resources who can support public engagement on risk (e.g., contractors, consultants, mental health professionals)
    - Other (please specify)

13. How would you like to interact with this network? (Tick all that apply)
    - In-person (small-scale events)
    - In-person (conferences)
    - Virtual
    - Other (please specify)

14. Would you be willing to pay a fee for this network?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Other (please specify)

15. Are there any existing networks or organisations that you think would be a good home for this practice network?

Workshops

16. Were you able to participate in the Let's Talk about Risk workshops in May/June 2023?
    - Yes, I participated in one or more workshop sessions.
    - I signed up for a session but was unable to attend.
    - I signed up for a session but was put on the waitlist.
    - I did not sign up for the workshop sessions.

17. Which sessions were you interested in attending? Tick all that apply.
    - Nine challenges of risk engagement
    - Managing difference in communities
    - Building teams/relationships for risk engagement

18. What were you seeking when you signed up for these sessions?

19. Which session/s did you attend? Tick all that apply.
    - Nine challenges of risk engagement
    - Managing difference in communities
    - Building teams/relationships for risk engagement

20. What were you seeking out when you signed up for these sessions?

21. What worked well for you during each session? Tick all that apply (if you did not attend a session, please leave the column blank)
    - Nine challenges of risk engagement
    - Managing difference in communities
    - Building teams/relationships for risk engagement
    - Speakers
    - Breakout sessions
    - General discussion with everyone
    - Format (workshop/panel)
    - Registration
    - Hearing from people working in the field
    - Being able to ask questions
    - Use of polls
    - Share documents/whiteboards for note taking

22. Do you have any other comments on what worked well?

23. What did not work so well for you during each session? Tick all that apply (if you did not attend a session, please leave the column blank)
    - Nine challenges of risk engagement
    - Managing difference in communities
    - Building teams/relationships for risk engagement
    - Speakers
    - Breakout sessions
    - General discussion with everyone
    - Format (workshop/panel)
    - Registration
    - Hearing from people working in the field
    - Being able to ask questions
    - Use of polls
    - Share documents/whiteboards for note taking

24. Do you have any other comments on what did not work so well for you?

25. What did you find was the biggest benefit from attending these sessions?

We have secured funding to run a couple more virtual workshops on community engagement on natural hazard and climate risk.

26. Would you be interested in attending/being involved in future workshops held by the Let's Talk About Risk team?
    - Yes
    - No

27. What topic/s would most appeal to you? Tick all that apply.
    - Nine challenges of risk engagement
    - Managing difference in communities
    - Building teams/relationships for risk engagement
    - Using the outcomes of engagement in implementation
    - Working with communities facing multiple hazards
    - Other (please specify)

28. What form of virtual workshop would most appeal to you? Tick all that apply.
    - Hear from others –case study.
    - Hear from others – panel.
    - Discuss specific project challenges with peers
    - Other (please specify)