



November 2024

Engaging and Communicating with Diverse Communities Toolkit

An Introduction

The Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) encourages member agencies to engage and communicate with the diverse members of their community in a clear, timely and culturally sensitive way that makes important information accessible to all customers.

The following toolkit is designed to help member agencies analyze, evaluate and take steps to improve engagement and communication.

In some instances, this might include translating important documents into multiple languages, ensuring that website, videos and other multimedia meet state and federal accessibility requirements, or using readable font sizes and colors on digital and printed materials. It can also include eliminating the use of terminology that may be offensive to some members of your community and finding new ways to reach previously disenfranchised populations.

A Business Case for More Diverse and Inclusive External Communications

There are many benefits to engaging and communicating in a way that is inclusive of all members of the community. Among some of the benefits are:

- It enhances an organization's mission by helping the agency understand the needs of everyone in the community.
- It lowers organizational risk of litigation over perceived discrimination.
- It fosters trust, enhances relationships and improves your reputation among previously disenfranchised groups, which in turn, can:
 - Give you a better pulse on the customer base and help identify challenges, trends and new opportunities.
 - Ensure equitable access to services.
 - Establish new alliances and community partnerships.
 - Provide an expanded pool of applicants for recruitment.



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Resources

This toolkit is intended to help agencies start the process of analyzing, evaluating and improving engagement and communication with diverse members of the community. Below are some of the resources used in development of this toolkit that agencies might find helpful in taking the next steps.

California Urban Water Agency's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Toolkit

<https://www.cuwa.org/pubs/dei-toolkit>

The Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism's Diversity Style Guide

<https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/>

Federal government style guide for graphic design

<https://digital.gov/guides/accessibility-for-teams/visual-design/>

State of California's visual design style guide

<https://designsystem.webstandards.ca.gov/style/design/index.html>

American Psychological Association's Inclusive Language Guide (2nd ed., 2023)

<https://www.apa.org/about/apa/equity-diversity-inclusion/language-guidelines.pdf>