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Engaging and Communicating with Diverse Communities Toolkit

Sample Style guide

Improving the way in which you engage and communicate with diverse members of your community includes ensuring language and imagery in your communications are inclusive and sensitive to cultural norms and diverse perspectives. The following are a few examples that you might include when developing an internal style guide for your agency.

Inclusive language

It is important to use inclusive language, especially with diverse communities that may have been excluded or marginalized historically. The intention behind inclusive language is not political correctness, but rather a way to acknowledge diversity and convey respect to your community. It's important to note that language is fluid and the appropriateness of specific phrases may change over time.

Gender neutrality

Replace gender-exclusive language with gender-inclusive or neutral language. Below are some examples of common terms and the preferred term.

chairman/chairwoman	chairperson or chair
ladies and gentlemen	everyone or distinguished guests
layman	layperson
man-made disaster	human-induced disaster
Assemblyman/assemblywoman	Assemblymember
City Councilman/Councilwoman	City Councilmember

Chief: Using the term outside its original use as a respected title among Indigenous people can be offensive to Indigenous people. Unless part of someone's official title, use a different description, such as leader, manager or supervisor to describe someone who is the leader of a department, organization or effort. Consider removing the term from agency titles.

Race and ethnicity: Referring to an individual's race or ethnic background is rarely, if ever, necessary. When appropriate, reference race or ethnicity according to how individuals self-identify and don't make assumptions.

Stakeholder: Use alternative terms, such as interested parties/individuals/groups, communities of interest, people or the public when referring to those affected by or following the outcome of policy decision. "Stakeholder" originally referred to the practice of settlers establishing



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property ownership by driving a stake in the ground, on land appropriated from indigenous people.

Tribe/Tribes/Tribal: Capitalize when writing about Indigenous people, whether in reference to a specific Tribe or as an adjective.

Graphic/visual guidelines

These guidelines address accessibility issues in graphic design, where tactics can enhance readability and overcome limitations faced by people who are visually impaired.

Fonts: [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#) include extensive instructions on font selection and size, which can also be applicable to graphic design projects. Some of the high-level guidelines include:

- Select a font that is easy to read when resized or presented with different styling or spacing.
- Ensure your text size works well on various devices, such as smartphones, desktop devices, and screen readers. Visitors should be able to reduce and increase text size without affecting other user interface components.
- Minimum font size: Body text should be at least 12 points (pt) or around 16 pixels (px), and no text should be smaller than 9pt (12 px).

Colors: [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#) include extensive instructions for selecting appropriate colors for websites, which can also be applicable to some graphic design projects. Some of the high-level guidelines include:

- Select a color contrast between text and its background that ensures each element is properly visible.
- Select a color contrast between certain meaningful non-text items that ensures optimal visibility.
- Don't use color as the only visual means of conveying information, indicating an action, prompting a response, or distinguishing a visual element.
- Ensure that content that relies on color to convey information is also available in a non-color format, such as through text, patterns, or other visual cues