



November 2024

Engaging and Communicating with Diverse Communities Toolkit

Tips for Improvement

Improving the way in which you engage and communicate with the diverse members of your community includes steps such as: reaching out to non-English speakers; being sensitive to language and photos that are potentially culturally sensitive or offensive; and accommodating those who are visually or hearing impaired.

Here are a few tips to start the process.

1. Consider establishing a committee or board to lead the evaluation, planning and implementation processes. This might be an internal group of employees or include members of the community, depending on your ultimate goals.
2. Adopt a policy of commitment
 - An agency's leadership must support the process and commit to making it a priority across departments.
 - Some changes will be easy to implement immediately while others will require funds or new resources. Only with leadership support, can an ongoing process of implementation and evaluation be successful.
3. Audit current engagement and communications efforts to identify areas of improvement. For example:
 - Review language of your agency's documents with special focus on sensitivity around words and phrases that relate to age, ability, culture, race, gender. Don't forget:
 - educational fliers and handouts, newsletters, customer service letters/notifications, door hangers, etc
 - website, videos, on-hold messaging and other audio-visual communications
 - office signage in the parking lot and lobbies.
 - materials used during community events
 - Review job titles, job postings, recruitment brochures and places in which you post recruitment announcements.
 - Review photos and videos with special focus on whether the image appropriately represents the diversity of your workforce or community. Ensure visuals don't portray subliminal messaging around a power dynamic.
 - Review Board meeting procedures, including whether there are audio-visual options to make the meeting more accessible to hearing or visually impaired visitors.



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- Research the latest data on the most common languages used in your service area. Review how many external documents and notices to the public are available in other languages.
- 4. Create a plan for change
 - Identify specific changes that can be implemented short-term.
 - Identify changes to be considered at a later date.
 - Some ideas will require a budget or outside resources to implement. Rather than discarding these suggestions, identify them for possible future implementation.
 - Consider the plan to be a “living document” that will be updated periodically.
- 5. Implement and evaluate
 - Get multiple departments involved from the beginning, including the audit and implementation.
 - Consider seeking community feedback from diverse groups – including non-native speakers, individuals with disabilities and different age demographics – on changes that will affect them, especially if you need to prioritize implementation.
 - Make a commitment to monitor your agency’s progress implementing the plan and evaluate the implementation, community feedback and other benefits after a set period of time.

Other steps to consider:

- Confer with legal counsel to ensure your agency website complies with state and federal accessibility regulations for visually impaired.
- Consider limiting graphic design elements to colors and font sizes that ensure readability among colorblind and visually impaired.
- Consider closed captioning on videos for hearing impaired.
- Consider translated captioning on previously recorded English-language videos for non-English speaking audiences.
- Participate in community events targeted to diverse segments of your community.