

This guide provides an overview of strategies for outreach and engagement with individuals for whom their First Language is Not English (FLNE), and those from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. It lists strategies to contact, inform, and recruit target populations, tips to navigate language barriers, and strategies to communicate and engage people effectively to get meaningful feedback.

## OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

- Understand who is in your community and whom you want to reach. This will help you determine and accommodate language and cultural issues that can affect participation.
- Build relationships and coordinate efforts with people and organizations connected to under-represented groups and voices, including FLNE populations, in order to develop an effective outreach strategy, and gather information or feedback. Ask leaders of target communities to help you out in soliciting their group members and to follow-up and support those interested in participating.
- Tailor your outreach efforts to each specific culture because one size does not fit all.
  - » The demographic background of your participants can be learned from census data, representative organizations, houses of worship, media, school administrators, and even the local business community.
  - » Many people depend on ethnic media for information about their community. Use local and ethnic media including radio, television, and newspapers, as well as social media, to reach out to diverse cultural communities.
  - » Post notices, ads and press releases for recruitment in public places commonly accessed by FLNE and ethnic minorities in targeted neighborhoods. These include ethnic grocery and convenience stores, religious settings such as churches and mosques, post offices, transit centers, community bulletin boards, schools and social service agencies.

## LANGUAGE-APPROPRIATE OUTREACH AND MATERIALS

- Outreach advertising, meeting or flyer materials, signage, postings, placards and other notices should all be translated into the appropriate languages for your communities.
- Ensure that there is an option available to all for translation assistance, including sign language interpreters if needed. Have a translator available if needed and include a telephone number on the notice of the meeting to request a translator, and not just email.
- Advertising materials should advise people that they are welcome to bring a friend or a family member with them to help them understand the discussion, if appropriate.
- Conduct polls and surveys in the participants' first language.
- Thorough understanding of cultural norms and nuances is essential for effective outreach. While translation is important, advertising should be written in a way that maintains cultural contexts. Simply translating a message or using the same imagery across cultures might not be effective. If individuals can relate to the images, the message is much more likely to be positively responded to.

## EFFECTIVE MEDIA STRATEGIES FOR OUTREACH (TV, NEWSPAPERS AND RADIO)

- Use non-English radio and television outlets to inform the public of upcoming events.
- Run ads, press releases, and notices in non-English newspapers, websites, and social media that serve your local communities.
- Consider the use of qualified community volunteers to provide interpretive services.
- Ensure the availability of a Telephone Interpreter or "Language Lines" and Language Identification cards.

## ACCESSIBLE AND RELAXED MEETING LOCATION

- Make public meetings accessible by holding them in neighborhoods where residents live, close to public transportation, or provide transportation assistance if possible.
- Avoid unsafe or uncomfortable locations. For example, meeting proximity to the police zone may prevent undocumented immigrants or people with criminal issues from attending the meeting out of fear of being arrested. Safe and welcoming locations may include public schools, community centers, houses of worship, and residences of their community leaders.
- In scheduling meeting times, consider work, family, cultural and religious obligations. It works best to ask the participants to choose the time and place for the meeting, rather than assuming for them.
- Make the meeting enjoyable, by providing onsite childcare and culturally appropriate food, refreshment, and entertainment.

## ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND APPROPRIATE MATERIALS

### *Appropriate Presentation Materials (and Visual Materials):*

- All materials presented should be straightforward, customized in contents, and appropriately translated so that FLNE can understand and effectively participate in discussions and activities.
- When giving examples, consider including examples from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This includes presenting statistics and demographic data or trends with information across racial, ethnic, and language differences when appropriate.
- As much as possible, use images, graphics and visual aids reflective of culturally and ethnically diverse groups and the communities in which they live. Use photographs, 3D animations, and videos to simplify complex concepts.
- At public hearings, use video to provide participants with background information before they proceed into the next part of the public hearing, with the viewing of aerial photographs, cross-section views, and the alternatives.

## *Strategies for Communicating and Navigating Relationships:*

- During the meeting, be aware that relationships and perceived relative status and roles among those in the room may, in some cases, have an impact on their readiness and confidence to participate. Working in small groups may often be the best approach.
- Adopt a formal communication approach until you develop a rapport with your group. A casual, informal approach may be offensive to people from different cultures, especially when you have just met them.
- Maintain respect and courtesy for people who come from different cultures. Make sure no participants disrespect others as well. Do basic research on strategies to understand norms around respect and roles to optimize your interaction with diverse communities.
- Avoid using negative questions or answers. Double negatives can be confusing for those whom English is not their native language. In a cross-cultural situation, double negatives are easily misunderstood.
- Slow down and occasionally pause when you speak to allow people who are not English proficient to understand. This will allow listeners to interpret what you have said.
- Pay attention to your audience and be an active speaker and listener. You can tell if your group grasps what you communicate to them by their response to your words.
- Be mindful of non-verbal communication. Use relaxed body language. Smile, be open, and let your body language communicate your acceptance and respect. Avoid large gestures with your hands, as this can be intimidating to people who might misunderstand your meaning. Also, avoid keeping your arms crossed as this often makes people think you are not open to what they have to say.
- Ask members of the cross-cultural group to interact and ask questions. Fostering dialogue helps prevent misunderstandings and clears up questions people might have.
- Summarize what you have said to verify that everyone is on the same page. Don't assume what you have said is understood by everyone. Consider rephrasing your statements when repeating what you have said.
- Employ universal design for learning strategies. Verbal discussions should be paired with written materials/presentations and vice versa. Incorporating visuals will also help illustrate key points.

## References

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Transit Planning 4 All is an inclusive and coordinated transportation-planning project that has funded a series of pilot projects across the nation, each seeking to increase inclusion in transportation planning and services for people with disabilities and older adults.

The project is a partnership of the Administration for Community Living (ACL), the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston, and DJB Evaluation Consulting Group.

The project is sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Community Living.



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