

Transportation Outreach Planner

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Public Outreach Strategies

Underserved Populations - Tailored Outreach and Cross Cultural Training

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Recommended Target Groups

Education

College Education
High School Diploma
No High School Diploma

Language

Creole
Other
Spanish

Disability

Hearing Impaired
Other
Physically Challenged
Sight Impaired

Income

Low Income
Middle to Affluent

Vehicle Ownership

Non-vehicle Owner
Vehicle Owner

Race and Ethnicity

Race and Ethnicity

Age

Seniors
Working Age Adults
Youth

Strategy Class

- General

Strategy Types

- Civic Engagement
- Educational
- Promotional

Description

Underserved populations, in the context of transportation planning, refer to populations who have traditionally experienced limited access to conventional public participation and outreach efforts. These populations include:

- Persons in low-income communities
- Persons with low literacy and/or limited English proficiency
- Persons who live in remote or hard to reach places
- Persons who may have experienced cultural or physical barriers that may prevent them from expressing their concerns regarding projects or policies that may affect them.

In order to have more informed decision-making, agencies need to identify the underserved populations in their community and develop outreach and communication strategies that allow for more equitable access. Tailored Outreach and cross cultural training can help agencies improve public participation among underserved populations.¹

- Tailored outreach refers to a process of identifying a community or target demographic and selecting the public involvement techniques that are most effective for connecting with that group.
- Cross cultural training is intended to provide individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to be more aware and sensitive to different cultural practices.

Special Uses

Several federal regulations require public transportation agencies to include underserved populations in the planning and assessment of transportation projects in order to ensure that they are not excluded from the process or negatively impacted by proposed projects or plans.²

- **Sections 450.210 and 450.316 of the Statewide Transportation Planning, Metropolitan Transportation Planning Final Rule (Effective March 2007)**, requires "a process for seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households."
- **Presidential Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (August 2000)**, requires Federal agencies to create a system that enables individuals with limited English-proficiency to access agency services and participatory programs.
- **Presidential Executive Order 12898, the Environmental Justice Order of 1994**, requires Federal agencies to identify programs, policies, and regulations that may have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on minority and low income populations.
- **Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI (as amended)**, prohibits any federally funded program, service or activity to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, disability, or religious affiliation. Specifically, the law states that no person shall be excluded from participation, denied benefits, or subjected to discrimination. Other relevant laws and rulings are listed below:³
 - Highway Act of 1973 (23 USC 324) prohibits discrimination based on sex
 - Age Discrimination Act of 1975 prohibits discrimination based on age
 - Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits discrimination based on disability
 - National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA) called for balance between population needs and resources
 - US Highway Act of 1973 (23 USC 109 (h)) required social, economic, and environmental impacts be considered
 - Order 5680.1 (April 1997) required environmental justice in Department of Transportation programs

Through the use of Tailored Outreach agencies can comply with the above regulations.⁴

When to Use

Tailoring outreach efforts to underserved populations should start early. Such efforts set the tone for subsequent project activities, encourage participation, and promote a sense of inclusion. Tailored outreach techniques can also be used to maintain continuous communication with underserved communities. This can be achieved by informing key stakeholders and organizations of events, status reports, and any other information that may be relevant to the community.⁵

Cost

*** High (\$10000 to \$50000)

Significant resources may be needed to implement a comprehensive outreach effort for underserved populations. Tailored outreach to specific groups requires substantial staff time and may require the contracting of consultants. Costs include staff time for research, meetings, monitoring and creating outreach material. Other expenses include advertising, translation, and interpreter costs, as well as printing expenses.

Low (up to \$999)	*	<i>Disclaimer:</i> The cost estimates provided are intended to be a guide. Project costs will vary depending on the size and nature of the project.
Moderate (\$1,000 to \$9,999)	**	
High (\$10,000 to \$50,000)	***	
Very High (Above \$50,000)	****	

Time

*** Multiyear

Administering an outreach program involves a significant amount of time. It is an on-going effort that involves monitoring outreach activities, relationship building, as well as documenting and answering numerous inquiries and requests for meetings or information. Establishing communication and building trust and respect among community members takes time.

1 to 3 months	*	<i>Disclaimer:</i> The time estimates are approximations. The duration of a project may vary depending on various factors, including size and budget.
6 months to a year	**	
Multiyear	***	

Implementation Guidelines and Suggestions

The following serve as recommended guidelines and suggestions for tailoring outreach efforts to underserved populations:

- Identify the underserved groups within the agency's jurisdiction and assess past outreach efforts. Agencies need to conduct a thorough analysis to identify the underserved groups in their communities and the possible barriers that these groups may encounter in public participation efforts. The analysis should include the following:⁶
 - A demographic assessment of the number of underserved groups in the community and their composition
 - An inventory of the communities with limited English proficiency and the languages spoken
 - An overview of how transportation issues have affected the various groups and continue to affect them
 - A review of past outreach efforts and assessment of how well those efforts reached underserved populations
 - An analysis of possible barriers that may affect participation
 - An assessment of agency resources available to conduct outreach among underserved groups
- Identify community leaders and stakeholders for each underserved community. A contact list of community leaders and stakeholders should be developed prior to any outreach effort. Such a list will prove to be a valuable resource for working with the community. The list can be completed by contacting local leaders, community-based organizations, and business owners in the community. Human service coalitions, such as the United Way, colleges, and universities can also provide valuable information as they often maintain similar contact lists.
- Develop a public involvement strategy for each underserved community based on the needs of the target community. In addition to the research discussed above, agencies need to determine the outreach activities that are most effective for each underserved group. Media outlets, elected officials, and community stakeholders are generally knowledgeable regarding the best way to communicate with community members.⁷
- Work with community organizations to establish communication and encourage participation. Community organizations and their leaders are important resources in building communication between agencies and underrepresented groups. Working such organizations increases the credibility of the participatory planning process. Organizations can be used as forums for participation and outreach. Below is a list of suggested organizations that agencies can partner with to carry out outreach activities:⁸
 - Faith based and community organizations
 - Newspaper, radio, internet, and other media outlets
 - Civic, homeowners, and tenant associations
 - Senior citizens organizations
 - Hospitals, clinics, and other health care providers
 - Shopping malls, stores, and restaurants
 - Fairs, festivals, and flea markets
 - Government service providers (police, fire rescue, social services)
 - Universities, colleges, vocational and local schools, and libraries
- Research the community's traditions, patterns of behavior, and ways of communicating. Prior to engaging a community with a full outreach campaign, it is important to understand the cultural norms of the community. This will inform staff of what the community deems to be acceptable and non-acceptable behavior. For example, in some cultures, it is considered improper to disagree with authority. As a result, agency staff will find it difficult to obtain feedback on improvements. To avoid such issues, agencies should work closely with key community leaders who are familiar with mainstream culture and can alert staff of any issues that may arise.⁹
- Determine the best times to hold public participation activities. Agencies should make certain that meetings and activities are scheduled in a manner that does not restrict access. Issues related to work schedule, child care, limited transportation access, and other such barriers should be considered. Holding events during evening and weekend hours, as well as expanding the hours of operation for public meetings, open house events, and other functions will help to improve access.
- Hold the meetings and activities within the target community in places where the residents are comfortable getting together. When conducting outreach among underserved populations, it is best to hold the activities within the community in order to facilitate participation. Agencies should also seek to hold meetings and events in venues where people congregate or locations that are familiar to residents, such as shopping malls, senior centers, and community centers.
- Use small groups to better engage underserved populations. Small meetings may be more attractive and comfortable to people who are new to the public involvement process. They are

less intimidating and more conducive to interaction.

- Make announcements in minority or ethnic news media to heighten interest in the process. Agencies should advertise in community and minority newspapers in order to generate increased awareness. Because non-English-speaking populations tend to obtain their information from radio programs aired in their language, agencies should also consider advertising on this medium or sponsoring a call-in show. It may be possible to get free public interest coverage by establishing personal contacts with minority media outlets.
- When dealing with limited English proficiency populations (LEP), agencies need to implement reasonable strategies to ensure "meaningful access" to programs, services, and activities, as per Title VI. LEP individuals include persons who do not speak English as their primary language, as well as persons who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English. The following are recommended strategies:¹⁰
 - Conduct the "four factor analysis" to ensure compliance with Title VI requirements regarding access for LEP individuals:
 1. Determine the number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served by the program, service, or activity
 2. Determine the frequency with which LEP individuals come into contact with the program, service, or activity
 3. Assess the nature and importance of the program, service, or activity
 4. Determine the resources available and the costs for making the program accessible to LEP individuals
 - Based on the four factor analysis described above, develop a policy that clearly states the types of language assistance to be provided. Although services are not required in every language, agencies are still responsible for providing individual service.
 - Determine the documents that will be translated. Agencies should use qualified translators to ensure the documents are accurately translated. It is also important to ensure that translations are clear, easy to understand, and in a dialect native to the target groups.
 - Develop procedures for providing interpreters at public meetings and events, as well as a process for responding to non-English telephone, written, or in-person inquiries.
 - At public events identify staff and volunteers who speak different languages by giving them special pins to indicate they are bilingual. In addition, agencies can provide their staff with "I Speak Cards" used by the US Census. The cards can be used to help people identify the language they speak so that they may obtain interpretive services. The cards can be obtained at <http://www.lep.gov/ISpeakCards2004.pdf>
 - Prepare presentations that emphasize verbal and visual explanations so that participants do not need to read or write.
 - If conducting outreach with a specific target group, agencies should first determine if the group is literate in English, in their native language, or neither. This will help to determine the types of services that can be provided.
- Ensure representation of underserved groups in advisory committees, task forces, and the transportation planning process. By assigning stakeholders from underserved groups to serve in committees and other planning related activities, agencies can help to ensure that the interests of these populations are represented.¹¹
- Provide cross cultural training to staff to ensure they have the appropriate skills to conduct outreach activities with underserved populations. To be successful, staff needs to have the necessary skills and sensitivity to deal with cultural differences.¹² At a minimum, such training should include:
 - Review of legal and statutory requirements
 - Assessment of cultural stereotypes
 - Discussion of differences and similarities among cultural groups
 - Overview of multi-cultural communication and interpersonal skills
 - Discussion of ways to deal with linguistic diversity and LEP individuals
- Monitor and evaluate outreach efforts to determine the success of the public involvement efforts among underserved populations. In order to monitor and evaluate outreach efforts, agencies need to maintain updated performance data on outreach activities, including attendance at events, meetings and other public participation functions. This information will help agencies to document their activities and assess progress over time.

Lessons Learned/Challenges

Below are key points to keep in mind when conducting outreach with underserved populations:¹³

- **Identify potential barriers that can affect people's ability to engage in public involvement efforts and develop ways to overcome the barriers.** For example, meeting times and locations can be established to address the transportation and child care needs of the constituency.
- **Match outreach efforts to the characteristics of the community and the issue or project.**
- **Establish trust among community members by listening to their feedback and providing prompt responses to inquiries.**
- **Conduct periodic reviews of outreach efforts to identify areas of improvement and ways to mitigate potential barriers.**

Case Studies

The City of Austin, Texas provides a Spanish-language section in its "Imagine Austin" website. The section allows Spanish-speaking residents to learn about the City's Comprehensive Plan and enables them to provide input. (<http://imagineaustin.net/espanol>).¹⁴

The Southern California Regional Transportation Plan shows how performance measures were used to quantify transportation and social policy objectives. The plan shows how income levels can be used to measure "benefits and burdens" among users. It also demonstrates how transportation data can be used to show accessibility issues encountered by low-income and minority populations, including access to jobs (http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/environmental_justice/case_studies/case4.cfm).¹⁵

The Fruitvale Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) project shows how planners were able to work with a diverse community of Latinos, African-Americans and Asian populations to address community concerns over the proposed construction of a parking facility. BART abandoned the controversial parking facility project and worked with the community to create a pedestrian plaza connecting the transit station and the nearby commercial district. This project illustrates how BART was able to effectively use public involvement to establish partnerships and develop solutions for revitalizing the community (http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/environmental_justice/case_studies/case6.cfm).¹⁶

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) developed a comprehensive public involvement guide to help transportation planners and project managers conduct outreach for underserved communities. Two documents were created, *Hear Every Voice: a Guide to Public Involvement at Mn/DOT (Hear Every Voice)*, and *Methods and Approaches to Enhance Involvement in Non-Traditional Transportation Stakeholder Communities and Neighborhoods*. Both documents provide information on effective public involvement practices and decision-making processes (http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/public_involvement/case_studies/minnesota/index.cfm).¹⁷

For Further Information

Community Outreach: The site provides a brief guide and tools for conducting community outreach (http://www.italladdsup.gov/tools/resourcetoolkit/resourcetoolkit_j_outreach.asp).¹⁸

How to Engage Low-Literacy and Limited-English-Proficiency Populations in Transportation Decisionmaking: This document serves as a guidebook for engaging limited English proficiency populations.¹⁹

The Importance of Outreach to Underserved Populations: Provides a discussion on the barriers that face underserved communities and recommendations for outreach, with a special focus on outreach to Spanish-speaking populations (<http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1212&context=edicollect>).²⁰

Training on Title VI Regulations and Reporting Requirements: This document provides an overview of federal laws, reporting requirements, and training recommendations. The training was part of the Washington State Department of Transportation Quarterly Title VI Coordinators Meeting (http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/nr/rdonlyres/8f2d6d8f-0b27-41d6-924b-56348a87376f/0/t6_coordinatorsmeetingslides.pdf).²¹

Simple Justice: Sub-recipient Title VI and Non-Discriminatory Programming: Provides an overview of federal laws and regulations, as well as recommendations for improving compliance (<http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=5&ved=0cdkqfj&url=http%3a%2f%2fwww.dot.state.fl.us%2fconstruction%2fdistrictoffices%2fd5web%2ffiles%2fcompliance%2fitleivroundtable2011gew>).²²

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