



**Subject: Tips for Conducting Successful Outreach to Diverse Communities**

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**Major points about outreach**

- Maximizing the effectiveness of your organization's interactions with the general public as well as with specific populations involves four overarching elements: planning, partnering, marketing and outreach.
- Outreach at its core is about people and building relationships. Consequently, it's critical to focus on the human, even touchy feely side of your information.
- Emphasize person-to-person outreach as much as possible—it's still the most effective tool for building relationships and engaging people.
- Invest substantial resources and planning to ensure that the populations you're trying to reach know about your events and activities as far ahead of time as possible.
- Always localize your goals, information and talking points to make them as relevant and appealing as possible. This is particularly important for large organizations that operate beyond the local area.
- Partnering with other organizations is vital to successful outreach since partners can leverage their client relationships to increase the likelihood your events and activities will succeed. This is particularly important since your partners' clients already have established relationships and are more likely to trust them than you.

**Specific tools and strategies to ensure your outreach is effective**

- Ensure everyone on your staff who interacts with the public knows the information your organization wants to convey. This means training your staff thoroughly as well as any partners that are providing information. This is a two-way street—if you're distributing information on behalf of your partner organizations you should also have them come in to train your staff.
- When planning outreach events consider:
  - What's your end goal or outcome, and what would you like to accomplish?
  - Who's your audience and how can you best reach them?
  - When's the best time to reach your audience?
  - Rather than planning a new event, is it possible to achieve what you want by adding on information at another event?
- Once you've determined who your audience is, analyze which mediums are most effective for your organization to effectively convey as much information as possible to

- Construct outreach materials from the perspective of “how does this affect me [the client]” to maximize their use and effectiveness. This means localizing and personalizing them as much as possible. For electronic mediums this may mean personalizing the templates. For handouts you may want to consider using photos, diagrams, hyperlinks and other graphics (e.g., infographs).
- Similarly, provide on your materials and when asked the contact information for the specific individual(s) in your organization who can help people with the issues you’re addressing. It’s particularly important to have staff who understand and can assist with issues related to veterans, minorities and women.
- Cut through government speak. Summarize key points in normal language, and focus on what clients “need to know” and how it relates to them. One way to do this is to summarize the knowledge related to your clients’ interests that you want to convey into questions. From there, only provide the information needed to answer them.
- If possible, communicate using the languages of the populations you’re trying to reach.
- To build a connection with your clients, tailor your interactions by determining what will increase their interest and ability to hear you. This could include:
  - Clearing the air concerning issues to which you're organization is connected in order to reduce negative feelings,
  - Actively listening to your clients and asking them questions, even about things off-topic about which they care.
- Utilize success stories to reach specific audiences, localize national information and generate media coverage (particularly if they relate to calendar milestones like Hispanic Heritage or African American Month). This could involve presenting awards and creating videos that can be used frequently. Additionally, try and get the subjects of awards and videos to tell their own stories as it increases the likelihood of having your clients feel connected.
- Multiply the efforts of your staff by building and using partnerships. Form partnerships by developing good working relationships or even partially funding them (if appropriate). Use partner organizations by:
  - Participating in their successful events and activities. This could include putting information in their monthly newsletters, or attending meetings at which you can present.
  - Having them present your information to their own clients in order to take advantage of the trust that’s already been established. This increases the likelihood the information will be better received and understood, and also helps reach people that you otherwise wouldn’t. Of course, this necessitates training your partners adequately so they present accurate information.