



GUIDANCE FOR ENGAGING COMMUNITIES DURING DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY ACTION PLANS

Central Valley Nitrate Control Program

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Contents

- Key Terms and Acronyms ii
- Introduction 1
 - Background 1
 - Purpose 2
 - Benefits of Community Engagement 3
 - Risks 3
- Guidance for Community Engagement 4
 - Communicating in Times of Crisis 4
 - Overarching Principles for Successful Community Engagement..... 4
 - I. Communicate effectively 5
 - II. Protect personal information 7
 - III. Acknowledge diverse interests that exist in the community 8
 - IV. Evaluate and revise your community engagement strategy..... 8
- Key Elements for Successful Community Engagement..... 9
 - 1. Learning about the Community 9
 - 2. Educating the Community 10
 - 3. Collaborating with the Community..... 12
 - 4. Maintaining Community Involvement 13
- Engaging with California Native American Tribes..... 14
- Next Steps..... 15
- Summary of Guidance..... 17
- Appendix A: Resources for Developing a Community Profile..... 18
- Appendix B: Resources for Using Plain Language..... 20
- Appendix C: Resources for Ensuring Language Access..... 21
- Appendix D: Communication Platforms..... 24
- Appendix E: Guidance for Successful Community Meetings..... 29
- Appendix F: Community Engagement Resources..... 30
- Appendix G: Resources for Evaluating Engagement 31

Figure 1. Timeline for community engagement during Early Action Plan development. 16

Key Terms and Acronyms

List of terms contained throughout this document. The meaning of these terms is specific to this document unless otherwise noted.

Affected communities means residents or a community of residents that rely on public water supply or domestic wells with nitrate levels exceeding the water quality objective.

Permittees means facilities or operations permitted to discharge nitrates within the jurisdiction of the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Central Valley Water Board or Board means the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Community engagement means the process of working collaboratively with and alongside affected communities to ensure a safe drinking water supply.

CV-SALTS means Central Valley Salinity Alternatives for Long-term Sustainability.

CV-SALTS Program means the collaborative program to develop sustainable salinity and nitrate management for the Central Valley.

Early Action Plan means a plan with specific actions and a timeline to address drinking water needs for those that rely on public water supply or domestic wells with nitrate levels in water exceeding the water quality objective as required by the Central Valley Water Board.

Engagement campaign means a period of time a community is being engaged for a specific purpose.

Management Zone means a discrete and generally hydrologically contiguous area for which permitted discharger(s) participating in the Management Zone collectively work to meet the goals of the Nitrate Control Program and for which regulatory compliance is evaluated based on the permittees collective impact, including any alternative compliance programs, on a defined portion of the aquifer.

Management Zone Implementation Plan means the final deliverable required by a Management Zone detailing both the short-term and long-term actions that will be taken by the Management Zone to meet the goals of the Nitrate Control Program, along with their associated timelines and milestones. The plan must be approved by the Central Valley Water Board through a public hearing process and will serve as the basis for modifications to Management Zone participants' existing Waste Discharge Requirements.

Nitrate Control Program: A Program for the control and permitting of nitrate discharges to groundwater in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Basins and in the Tulare Lake Basin and applies to all groundwater basins that are designated with the municipal and domestic supply (MUN) beneficial use.

State Water Board means the State Water Resource Control Board

Introduction

Background

In May 2018, the Central Valley Water Board approved new Salt and Nitrate Control Programs. The Nitrate Control Program establishes a long-term management strategy for addressing nitrate pollution in the Central Valley's drinking water aquifers, with priority given to areas where nitrate is affecting drinking water supplies. Nitrate can reduce the blood's ability to carry oxygen, which can result in brain damage and death. Infants and pregnant women are most at risk of nitrate toxicity.

Under the Nitrate Control Program, permittees who discharge nitrate may choose to either be permitted individually (Path A) or collaborate with other permittees to form Management Zones that will collectively work to reduce nitrate pollution (Path B). Both the individual permitting option and the Management Zone permitting option require permittees whose discharges have impacted drinking water wells (public or domestic) to implement plans to provide short-term (or "interim") and long-term replacement drinking water for people that depend on nitrate-impacted wells for drinking water. Providing replacement drinking water to affected communities is the highest and most immediate priority of the Nitrate Control Program.

The Central Valley Water Board requires that all efforts to provide interim replacement drinking water be described in Early Action Plans, which permittees must submit to the Central Valley Water Board according to timelines set by the Nitrate Control Program. The preparation of Early Action Plans requires community outreach and engagement to help develop interim drinking water replacement alternatives (or "interim safe drinking water solutions"). The deadlines for Early Action Plan submittal are 270 days (from receipt of Notice to Comply for Priority 1 Basins) to one year (after receipt of Notice to Comply for Priority 2 and non-prioritized Basins). These short timelines are important to remember when considering when and how to engage affected communities.

The replacement drinking water plans will then be revised and incorporated into Management Zone Implementation Plans or individual permits. The Nitrate Control Program requires community participation in both the development of the Early Action Plans and the development of Management Zone Implementation Plans. An Early Action Plan must include all the following:

- A process to identify affected residents and an outreach strategy utilized to ensure that impacted groundwater users are informed of and given the opportunity to participate in the development of proposed solutions.
- A process for coordinating with others that are not permittees to address drinking water issues, which must include meaningfully consulting affected communities, domestic well users and their representatives, affected water systems, representatives of environmental justice organizations, the State Water Board's Division of Drinking Water, Local Planning Departments, Local County Health Officials, Groundwater Sustainability Agencies and others as appropriate.

Guidance for Engaging Communities During Development of Early Action Plans

- Specific actions and a schedule of implementation that is as short as practicable to address the immediate drinking water needs of those initially identified within the Management Zone for Path B permittees, or area of contribution for a Path A permittee, who are drinking groundwater that exceeds nitrate standards and who do not otherwise have interim replacement water that meets drinking water standards.
- A funding mechanism for implementing the Early Action Plan, which may include seeking funding from Management Zone participants, and/or local, state and federal funds that are available for such purposes.

Activities proposed under the Early Action Plan must be initiated within 60 days of submitting the Early Action Plan to the Central Valley Water Board, unless the Central Valley Water Board's Executive Officer deems the Early Action Plan to be incomplete. The Executive Office will direct new timelines for amending, re-submitting, and implementing the revised Early Action Plans.

The CV-SALTS Program is a collaborative stakeholder driven and managed program to develop sustainable salinity and nitrate management planning for the Central Valley. This program is the foundation of the Nitrate Control Program. To learn more about the Nitrate Control Program and Early Action Plans, visit cvsalts.info where information is available to assist permittees.

Purpose

Identifying and engaging affected communities is essential to the successful development and implementation of Early Action Plans. As directed by the Central Valley Water Board, Early Action Plans must include, "outreach utilized to ensure that impacted groundwater users are informed of and given the opportunity to participate in the development of proposed solutions."

The opportunity to participate means a process for meaningful community engagement that includes community education and collaborative decision-making processes that provides affected communities the ability to influence how they receive interim drinking water.

This document provides State Water Board Office of Public Participation staff recommendations for community engagement that ensures affected communities are informed of and given the opportunity to participate in the development of Early Action Plans.

Because this document focuses on community engagement during Early Action Plan development it is important to note the following:

- Permittees must also meaningfully consult affected water systems, representatives of environmental justice organizations, and other stakeholders.

- Community engagement does not end with Early Action Plans. Robust community engagement must continue through the implementation of Early Action Plans and is expected to expand during the development and implementation of Management Zone Implementation Plans.

Successful community engagement during the Early Action Plan process lays the groundwork for successful development and implementation of the entire Nitrate Control Program.

Benefits of Community Engagement

There are many benefits to conducting effective and meaningful community engagement during Early Action Plan development:

Better decisions: Community members can provide specialized local knowledge and expertise to help craft interim and long-term strategies for the provision of safe drinking water.

Reduces delays: Delays will arise if community members do not understand or object to proposed interim safe drinking water solutions. Engaging in meaningful discussions about proposed solutions during development of Early Action Plans reduces the potential for delays.

Improves credibility and develops community support: Providing opportunities for community members to get to know and interact with those developing and implementing Early Action Plans helps establish and maintain credibility within the community for Early Action Plans and future nitrate control projects.

A conduit to other programs and resources: Communities involved in the Early Action Plan process provide important cross-connections and relationships with other regulatory programs such as the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

Regulatory compliance: Early Action Plans are the beginning of a decades-long process to ensure safe drinking water supplies to affected communities. Community engagement during the development of Early Action Plans establishes the foundation for the community participation required during the implementation of Early Action Plans and helps increase community capacity that is critical to the long term community engagement required for Management Zone Implementation Plans.

Risks

Early Action Plans that do not include meaningful community engagement can lead to solutions that do not address community needs, encourage community distrust and resistance, and do not meet Basin Plan amendment requirements. This may cause delays of the implementation schedule, lack of compliance, heightened costs, and Central Valley Water Board rejection of Early Action Plans.

Guidance for Community Engagement

The guidance detailed in this section is intended as a starting point to encourage participation by affected communities during development of Early Action Plans. Community engagement is a dynamic process that is tailored to each individual community. A one-size fits all approach will not be effective because each community has different needs, concerns, and culture. If your Management Zone includes multiple affected communities, you will need to adapt your engagement strategy to each community. Successful community engagement for Early Action Plan development has four overarching principles and four key elements, which work together to support a robust engagement strategy that ensures community participation.

Communicating in Times of Crisis

The global spread of COVID-19 has impacted everything—including the way we communicate and connect with one another. Low-income communities are more likely to be impacted by COVID-19 and are likely to be the same communities with unsafe drinking water. When communicating with communities that are navigating a crisis, it is important to develop clear and compassionate messaging; strengthen relationships with community leaders who can help share your message; and listen and adapt strategies based on feedback you are receiving.

During this time of required social distancing, Management Zones can begin developing a community profile, identifying community leaders to interview via phone, and developing community outreach strategies. Depending on how social distancing requirements shift, engagement can first begin digitally and then gradually transition to in person outreach strategies. When social distancing restrictions are reduced or lifted and in-person outreach and engagement can begin, communities may still be cautious and hesitant to interact with strangers or in large groups—a combination of digital and in-person strategies will continue to be critical. Review the guidance in this document and adapt based on the real-time needs of each community.

Overarching Principles for Successful Community Engagement

The following four principles (I through IV) are incorporated throughout a successful engagement strategy.

- I. Communicate effectively
- II. Protect personal information
- III. Acknowledge diverse interests that exist in the community
- IV. Evaluate and revise your community engagement strategy

I. Communicate effectively

How you communicate with a community will impact the success of your project. For example, many affected communities in the Central Valley are non- or limited-English speaking. Speaking to communities in a language they do not understand prolongs decision-making processes; but providing meeting materials in a community's primary language and providing interpreters at community meetings makes communication possible. Open and accurate communication builds trust and helps set the stage for information sharing, collaborative solutions, and reaching agreements.

A. Communicate with affected communities remotely. As technology changes the way the world works, remote community engagement is growing in importance. In light of the COVID-19 emergency, remote engagement has become a necessity rather than a leading-edge option. Remote engagement is challenging because it eliminates physical engagement channels like in-person canvassing and community meetings, but the purpose and concepts of traditional engagement remain the same in the virtual world. The main difference is the channels you use to engage community members. Key considerations for engaging communities remotely:

Community-based Organizations

Reach out to community-based organizations, including representatives of environmental justice organizations, and other community groups who may be in direct communication with residents early on. These groups can provide insight on what communication platforms are most effective for the community and can assist with distributing information community wide.

Digital Divides

Technology may not be available or affordable in a community and there may be low digital awareness and literacy, or an inability to use technology altogether. Use both digital and non-digital platforms to communicate information and collect feedback.

Attention Spans

Attention spans are shorter when using digital platforms, such as social media and webinars. There are often character limits when communicating messages digitally, particularly with social media. Use concise, plain language to deliver messages and thoughtfully design your virtual community meetings.

Webcasts and Webinars

Webcasts and webinars are great ways to host a virtual community meeting. Provide a phone number and phone comment queue for your webcast to ensure equitable participation for those with limited internet access. Practice using your webcasting software before you go live. Run-throughs will help you learn the software, identify potential technological failures, and develop a contingency plan for possible glitches.

Having a trained third-party facilitator to lead the virtual discussion is extremely helpful to the success of your webinar.

Be Flexible

Evaluate and adjust your communication approaches as they are implemented. Technological difficulties are opportunities to improve your approach so that you are successful.

To assist you, tips for remote engagement are highlighted in the following sections, **Appendix F** includes a brief list of community-based organizations, and **Appendix D** includes communication resources.

Suggestions for remote engagement

Community members may have little to no experience with online platforms, need technical help before and during the meeting, and may not have access to equipment or a high-speed internet connection. It is important to consider what you can do to accommodate and engage stakeholders who are unable to use online meeting features to participate. Remote meetings should always include a telephone call-in option to help bridge digital divides. Providing meetings materials in advance ensures participants have access to information with or without access to the internet.

B. Communicate with residents in their primary language. Complete the following if at least five percent of the population’s primary language is a language other than English:

- **Translate materials** into Spanish and other language(s) identified.
- **Provide a point of contact** who speaks Spanish and other language(s) identified.
- **Ensure one-on-one communications have personnel that are fluent** in the primary language.
- **Offer live interpretation** at community meetings or alternative meeting format.

To help you assess language needs, resources for ensuring language access are included in **Appendix C**.

Suggestions for remote engagement

Some webcast software (such as Zoom) includes an option to designate live interpreters and allows attendees to select their language channel(s). Automatic transcription, closed captioning, or real-time text may be available in webcast software and are tools for bridging language divides. There are also virtual remote interpretation and over-the-phone interpretation services.

- C. **Use plain language** by avoiding acronyms and jargon and explaining technical concepts. Communicating to communities in the language they are most comfortable speaking and in words already in their vocabulary promotes transparency and reduces confusion about the purpose of your project and the role of the community.

Using plain language also facilitates the language translation process:

- **Provide written materials in plain language.**
- **Speak in plain language** when giving presentations and during verbal communication.
- **Consult with community leaders and community-based organizations** prior to distributing materials to determine if your materials are understandable to the community.
- **Solicit feedback** after meetings to ask whether participants fully understood the materials presented to them.

To assist you, resources for using plain language are included in **Appendix B**.

- D. **Be factual and transparent** when informing the community of your proposed project:

- **Present information without bias**, especially interim safe drinking water solutions that are being considered.
- **Know and communicate your constraints.** It is counter-productive for members of the community to be asked for feedback on elements of the plan that are not flexible or able to change.
- **Be transparent** with decision-making processes and timelines and let the community know what was done with the input they provided you.

II. Protect personal information

Community members need to know that their personal information is protected and will not be shared without their consent. Ensuring personal information will be held confidentially prevents privacy becoming a barrier to receiving community participation.

- E. **Mitigate concerns about information collection** by assuring community members their information will not be shared with parties not associated with this program. If needed, work with your legal team to determine how best to mitigate or address concerns regarding information collection. Below is sample language you can use:

In English: *Information provided will only be used for this program. Personal information will not be shared with any third-party not associated with this program.*

In Spanish: *La información que nos dé, solo se usará para este programa. No se compartirá la información personal con terceras personas que no estén asociadas con este programa.*

- F. **Minimize collection of personal information** when engaging with communities. Personal information is often collected during community outreach. You can save yourself time and mitigate community concerns by only collecting the information you need. When personal information is collected, clearly explain how information will be used and who it will and will not be going to.

III. Acknowledge diverse interests that exist in the community

Ensuring diverse voices (such as cultural, linguistic, socio-economic, and ethnic diversities) provide input in the decision-making process will help you be successful in determining an interim safe drinking water solution that meets community needs and will be used by the community.

- **Be inclusive of all groups** within a community from the beginning of your engagement strategy. This helps avoid a group showing up towards the end of the decision-making process frustrated with the lack of inclusion, which could delay the completion of your project.
- **Provide “balanced access”** to groups that you are engaging with. “Balanced access” means spending enough time with each party for a meaningful exchange of information and ideas; it does not necessarily require spending the same amount of time with all parties. Providing balanced access may in fact require spending more time with particular parties than others, especially when those parties have historically lacked access to the same meaningful exchange that others enjoy.

Community-based organizations can help identify interest groups within a community. **Appendix F** includes a brief list of community-based organizations.

IV. Evaluate and revise your community engagement strategy

It is important to evaluate your engagement strategy throughout Early Action Plan development so you can optimize your resources and measure your progress. The ability to course-correct allows you to spend time and money on engagement methods that will help meet your goals. Evaluations are also a way to document your engagement efforts during Early Action Plan development.

- G. **Evaluate your community engagement strategy** to ensure successful community participation during Early Action Plan development:
- **Create evaluations for community members** to complete at critical points of your engagement strategy, such as after your initial community meeting. Evaluations are an immediate assessment of community member experiences and opinions about the community engagement process.
 - **Create internal evaluations** to assess your team’s experience and opinions on the effectiveness of the community engagement process. Internal

evaluations should match the evaluations used by community members so you can make direct comparisons.

- **Compare results** from community and internal evaluations to identify areas of engagement that are working well and those that need improvement.

H. **Make modifications** to your community engagement strategy based on evaluations and other community feedback. If your engagement strategy is not working well, consider potential barriers to community participation and solutions to overcome those barriers. Being flexible with your engagement strategy will help to build community relationships and prevent you from spending time and money on engagement methods that may not help meet your goals.

To help assist you, **Appendix G** includes resources for evaluating your community engagement strategy.

Suggestions for remote engagement

Most webcast software packages have question and answer, surveys, and polling function you can use to get instant feedback. There are other meeting facilitation applications that have the same functions, like MeetingSift and Slido. You can also embed quick survey boxes on your website.

Key Elements for Successful Community Engagement

A successful community engagement strategy includes the following four elements (1 through 4) and incorporates the four overarching principles discussed above:

1. Learning about the community
2. Educating the community
3. Collaborating with the community
4. Maintaining community involvement

1. Learning about the Community

Learning about who affected community members are, what they care about, and the way they communicate is critical to successful engagement. What works for one community may not work for another. Getting to know a community allows you to adapt your activities to the community and effectively allocate resources.

For example, engaging with a rural community of 100 individuals that lack reliable internet access is much different than engaging with a larger town of 3,000 residents. For the rural community, local radio or television announcements about upcoming community meetings will likely be more effective than a website. It is important to understand how communities receive information before spending time and money on outreach platforms.

Guidance for Learning about the Community

- I. **Develop a Community Profile** to understand the community demographics, modes of communication, drinking water needs, local awareness and interest in the Nitrate Control Program, and key community issues and concerns:
 - 1. **Conduct preliminary research on** the community. Determine the population, socioeconomic level, ethnic composition, language(s) spoken, local agencies, community leaders, community-based organizations, what drinking water options have been explored in the past, source(s) of drinking water, any known water contamination issues, and possible technology barriers.
 - 2. **Interview Community Leaders** that represent diverse community groups to understand the level of awareness of the Nitrate Control Program, level of media and local government interest, how residents are currently receiving drinking water, key community issues, concerns about the Nitrate Control Program, initial thoughts on interim and long-term drinking water solutions, best communication platforms, and language services needed.

To assist you, resources for developing a community profile and a list of communication platforms are included in **Appendix A** and **Appendix D**.

Suggestions for remote engagement

When interviewing community-based organizations, community leaders, and local government, inquire what communications platforms are used by the community. This is also an opportunity to test social media approaches like sponsored posts to communicate information or survey the community.

- J. **Develop a Contact List** of interested parties, including affected residents, media contacts, community leaders, local agencies, city officials, community-based organizations, and other groups identified in the Community Profile. When developing the contact list, it is important to identify the preferred communication platform and language for each interested party. Update your contact list at every outreach and engagement event.

2. Educating the Community

Building a foundational understanding of the issue is important for successful engagement. Informing affected communities and answering their questions at the beginning of the process encourages participation and expedites decision making. Before they can decide what interim safe drinking water solutions will work best for their community, affected community members need to (1) understand the basics of the Nitrate Control Program, Early Action Plans, and Management Zone Implementation Plans and (2) the benefits and risks of each potential interim drinking water solution.

This education should be provided using multiple platforms, including community forums, facilitated by a neutral third-party, where informational materials are provided and explained, and community members are given an opportunity to ask questions.

Guidance for Educating the Community

- K. **Develop educational materials** to inform communities on the Nitrate Control Program, the process for Early Action Plan development and implementation, types of interim safe drinking water solutions, and when and how community members will be engaged.
- L. **Establish contact(s)** and a process for receiving and responding to inquiries and comments. Provide multiple platforms for submitting inquiries and comments that include digital and non-digital options.
- M. **Establish locations where information is publicly accessible.** Partner with local institutions that can act as an Information Repository. Information Repositories are publicly accessible buildings where community members can access materials. Some examples include libraries, public schools, community colleges, community centers, and churches.
- N. **Distribute materials**, announcements, and updates through multiple platforms used by the community. A list of communication platforms is included in **Appendix D**.
- O. **Hold community meetings** to educate the community on the Nitrate Control Program and your proposed project, including the program's purpose in the community and the process for project collaboration:
- Include a range of options for interim safe drinking water solutions that were identified after learning about the community.
 - Discuss actionable items, schedule of implementation, possible outcomes, anticipated barriers, and potential methods for reducing barriers.
 - Receive input from community on the options at and after meetings.
 - Allow community members to propose additional options.

To help assist you, a list of communication platforms and resources for successful community meetings are included in **Appendix D** and **Appendix E**.

Suggestions for remote engagement

Use multiple digital and non-digital platforms for communicating information and collecting comments. Live streaming and webcasting are digital platforms that have been used in conjunction with in-person meetings to educate communities and can be combined with other platforms, such as phone, video, chat boxes, and email, to provide opportunities for attendees to comment. Allow comments to be submitted before a meeting and after the meeting to minimize traffic during your meeting and ensure community members can participate. Work with community-based organizations and community leaders to determine the most effective communication platforms and to distribute information.

3. Collaborating with the Community

Collaborating with affected communities and allowing community members to shape decisions will lead to interim safe drinking water solutions that meet community needs, will be used by community members, and meet regulatory deadlines.

Collaboration requires two-way communication that allows the community to participate in the decision-making process and a feedback loop to address community input. This involves holding public meetings to facilitate a dialogue on the proposed interim drinking water options, communicating why a proposed option was selected, and receiving input from community members on how to adapt the selected option to best address community needs.

As part of the regulatory process, the Central Valley Water Board will release Early Action Plans for public comment before considering approval. Allowing community members to comment on an Early Action Plan before it is submitted to the Central Valley Water Board will mitigate potential delays during their public comment period.

Including community members in decision-making processes promotes community trust of your project and will facilitate community support of future processes, like Management Zone Implementation Plan development and implementation.

Guidance for Collaborating with the Community

- P. Create a process for collaborative decision-making** that allows affected communities to evaluate potential interim safe drinking water solutions and determine which option(s) works best for their community.
1. **Present a timeline** with decision points and opportunities for community input, as early as possible in the process of developing your Early Action Plan.
 2. **Distribute materials** noticing community meetings through multiple platforms used by the community.

3. **Hold community meetings** to receive feedback and support a two-way dialogue that informs decision making during Early Action Plan development and accomplishes the following:
 - Communicate community-specific options for interim drinking water. Each option must include actionable items, schedule of implementation, possible outcomes, anticipated barriers, and potential methods for reducing barriers. Receive input from community on the options. Allow community to propose additional options.
 - Present the selected community-specific option and reasoning for why the option was selected. Receive input from community on how to best adapt the selected option to address community needs.
4. **Hold public comment periods** with response to comments from project leads where possible. Provide the community opportunities to comment on the draft Early Action Plan. Respond to community comments and communicate if a comment was a catalyst for change and if not, why. Responses to comments may be done within a single Response to Comment document rather than individually.

To assist you, a list of communication platforms and resources for successful community meetings are included in **Appendix D** and **Appendix E**.

Suggestions for remote engagement

The purpose of collaboration is to receive input from the community that will inform and improve your project. There are many ways to facilitate a virtual conversation to share and receive information or input. Whether using a webcast, conference call, or live Facebook event, ensure you have multiple ways of receiving community input, and a process for documenting and responding to the input received.

4. Maintaining Community Involvement

The engagement activities you undertake when developing an Early Action Plan are the building blocks for future community participation and decision-making. Maintaining community involvement after deciding on interim safe drinking water solutions will continue your path towards a successful Nitrate Control Program that ensures long-term safe drinking water supplies for affected communities in the Central Valley.

After Early Action Plans are submitted to the Central Valley Water Board, it is important to keep community members informed of project timelines, status, changes, effectiveness, and other related information.

The following guidance is specific to keeping communities informed on the next steps after an Early Action Plan is submitted to the Central Valley Water Board. It is not guidance on how to engage communities during implementation of Early Action Plans.

Guidance for Maintaining Community Involvement

- Q. **Provide updates** on project timelines, status, and changes through the communication platforms identified in the Community Profile. To assist you, resources for notifying the community are included in **Appendix D**.
- R. **Maintain contact and process for responding to community inquiries** that were established during the educating the community and collaborating with the community phases of community engagement.

Suggestions for remote engagement

The same digital and non-digital platforms can be used to communicate updates, initiate surveys, and respond to inquiries. Social media posts, emails, and postcards are examples of digital and non-digital options for maintaining community involvement.

Engaging with California Native American Tribes

California is home to the largest population of Native Americans in the nation, including over 140 Native American Tribes (Tribes) who have ancestral ties to the lands within our State. As government entities, private operators and residents, we all share a range of common interests with Tribes, Native American, and indigenous communities. These interests include using natural resources efficiently and with appropriate environmental and human health protections; protecting communities and their resources from the effects of climate change, pollution, and health burdens; and ensuring access to clean air, clean water, and equitable benefits for all Californians.

There are 11 federally recognized Tribes and around 56 total Tribes located in the Central Valley.

Tribes are sovereign entities so engagement will be different than engagement with affected communities. However, the principle and key elements previously discussed are still applicable to Tribal engagement. The following are general suggestions for engaging with Tribes:

- Consult the Native American Heritage Commission and search through county records to identify Tribes in your Management Zone. Identify the appropriate Tribal officials and agency designees that you should coordinate with.
- Communicate and consult with Tribes early in the decision-making process.
- Be aware of the Tribe's history and current issues related to impacted drinking water supplies, the CV-SALTS program, and Nitrate Control Program.
- Meet with Tribes on Tribal lands if inviting them to an in-person meeting.
- Avoid meeting with multiple Tribes at once. Meetings should be with a single Tribe unless otherwise agreed upon.

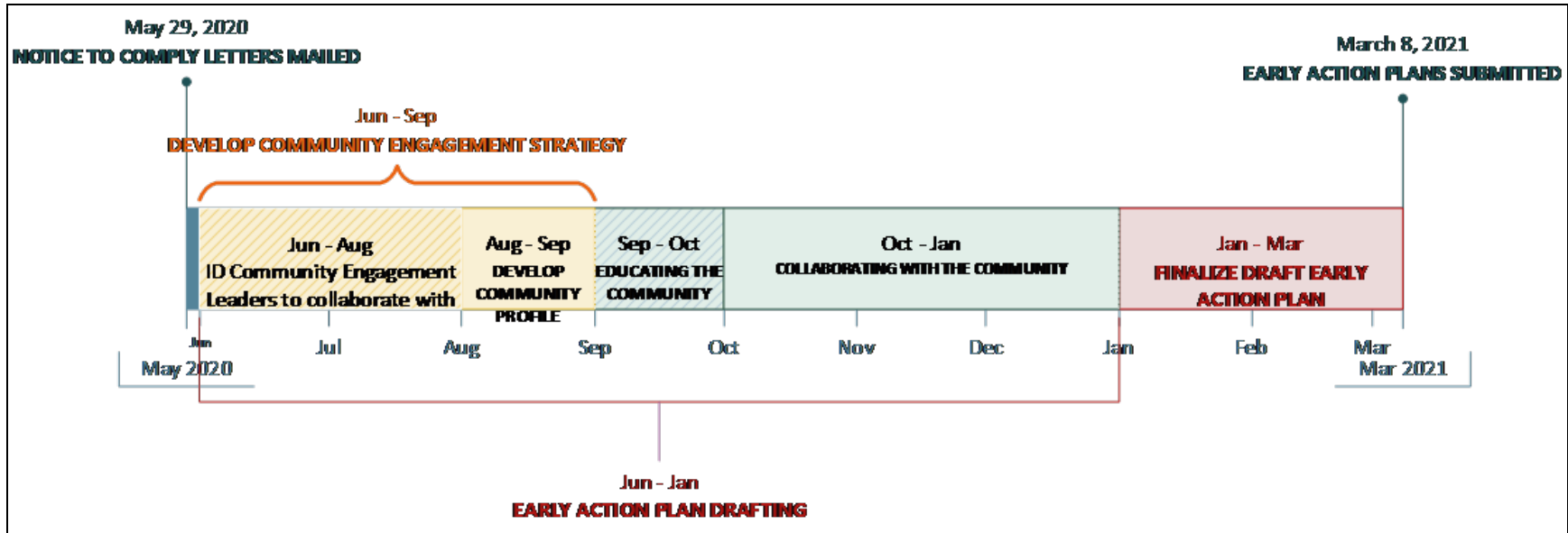
The Tribal Coordinator at the Central Valley Water Board can be a resource for communicating with Tribes within your Management Zone: Tribal-Liaison@waterboards.ca.gov.

Next Steps

Ensuring affected communities can participate during the development of Early Action Plans will take time and resources. Permittees in Priority 1 groundwater basins and sub-basins have 270 days to complete a community engagement campaign and submit an Early Action Plan to the Central Valley Water Board. **Figure 1** shows an approximate timeline for engaging communities during Early Action Plan development.

Office of Public Participation staff recommend collaborating with community engagement leaders that already work within your Management Zone or region to create and implement a community engagement strategy. Working with organizations that are already established within the affected communities can help you to leverage existing networks and expedite learning about the community and other engagement processes. **Appendix D** includes a brief list of community engagement leaders and community-based organizations.

Figure 1. Timeline for community engagement during Early Action Plan development



Summary of Guidance

There are many ways to engage communities because each community has their own history, culture, and needs. The table below summarizes the standard guidance found in this document. Comparing your proposed strategy to this table may help you assess if your community engagement strategy includes the key elements of successful community engagement.

Section	Guidance	Where or how was this implemented?
Communicate Effectively	Communicate with affected communities remotely during the COVID-19 crisis	
	Translate materials into Spanish and other language(s) identified	
	Provide a point of contact who speaks residents' primary language	
	Ensure planned one-on-one communications have personnel fluent in the primary language	
	Offer live interpretation at community meetings	
	Provide written materials in plain language	
	Speak in plain language	
	Consult community groups if your materials are understandable to the community	
	Ask participants if materials are understandable	
	Present information without bias	
	Know and communicate your constraints	
	Be transparent with decision-making processes	
Protect Personal Info.	Mitigate concerns about information collection	
	Minimize collection of personal information	
Acknowledge diverse interests	Be inclusive of all groups within a community	
	Provide "balanced access" to groups you are engaging with	
Evaluate and Revise	Evaluate your community engagement strategy	
	Make modifications	
Learning about the community	Develop a Community Profile	
	Develop a Contact List	
Educating the community	Develop educational materials	
	Establish contact(s)	
	Establish locations where information is publicly accessible	
	Distribute materials using multiple communication platforms	
	Hold community meetings to educate the community	
Collaborating with the community	Create a process for collaborative decision-making	
Maintaining involvement	Provide updates	
	Maintain contact and process for responding to community inquiries that	

Appendix A: Resources for Developing a Community Profile

Developing a Community Profile is an opportunity to identify community leaders and groups that could support your engagement strategy. Developing a Community Profile also helps you understand the community demographics, best communication platforms, language service needs, drinking water needs, local awareness and interest in the Nitrate Control Program, initial thoughts on interim and long-term drinking water solutions, and key community issues and concerns.

Resources for preliminary research

- census.gov
- dof.ca.gov
- School District websites
- Other local city or county websites
- Field Representatives for the County Supervisor Office
- Local officials
- Local community-based organizations and community engagement leaders
- County Public Health Clinics

Resources for effective meetings with community leaders

- The following are some examples of individuals to interview. Inclusion on this list does not indicate endorsement by the State Water Board:
 1. Residents
 2. Businesses
 3. Local chapter of the League of Women Voters
 4. Parent-Teachers Associations and school principals
 5. Chamber of Commerce Civic groups (e.g., Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, minister councils, Rotary groups, Kiwanis)
 6. Appropriate City Council Member(s)
 7. City Planning Department
 8. County Supervisor(s)
 9. Statewide environmental groups
 10. University or community college leaders
 11. Representatives of the local Public or Environmental Health Department
 12. State legislators
 13. Local/Regional community or environmental groups
 14. Community leadership programs sponsored by local/regional community or environmental groups
 15. Sensitive receptors (e.g., Hospitals, Schools, Parks, Day Care Centers)

Guidance for Engaging Communities During Development of Early Action Plans

- Provide Community Leaders educational materials to provide context for the discussion.
- Ask who in the community you can reach out to that could potentially support your community engagement (e.g., Latino Roundtable, Minister's council, and other religious organizations).
- Ask targeted questions to understand how you can communicate with the community effectively (e.g., language needs and communication platforms)
- Ask targeted questions to further understand the level of awareness of the Nitrate Control Program, level of media and local government interest, how residents are currently receiving drinking water, key community issues, concerns about the Nitrate Control Program, and initial thoughts on interim and long-term drinking water solutions.

Exhibit 6-6 of the [Department of Toxic Substances Control Public Participation Manual](#) includes Standard Community Interview Questions that can be modified to fit your project's needs

- Five to seven interviews can be enough if the interviewees represent the diversity of a community.

Appendix B: Resources for Using Plain Language

Using plain language facilitates better understanding of your message and materials and will help facilitate accurate and quick document translation. Avoiding acronyms and technical jargon is one of many plain language concepts that should be used when developing materials.

Plain Language Action and Information Network

The federal Plain Language Action and Information Network website includes resources for using plain language. These resources include the following:

1. Federal Plain Language Guidelines: [plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/](https://www.plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/)
2. Checklist to see if your document meets plain language standards: [plainlanguage.gov/resources/checklists/checklist/](https://www.plainlanguage.gov/resources/checklists/checklist/)
3. Checklist to see if your website meets plain language standards: [plainlanguage.gov/resources/checklists/web-checklist/](https://www.plainlanguage.gov/resources/checklists/web-checklist/)

These resources may be written for federal and state agencies, but they include the key concepts of plain language and are valuable resources that could be adapted to your engagement strategy.

Appendix C: Resources for Ensuring Language Access

Generally, if five percent of the population’s primary language is a language other than English, language services may be needed to ensure community participation. This Appendix includes resources for identifying languages spoken in a community and providing language services. These listed resources should be a starting point. You should also consult community leaders and community groups to determine how to provide language access.

Resources for assessing language needs

- California Office of Environmental Health Hazard and Assessment
CalEnviroScreen 3.0 Linguistic Isolation Map:
oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/indicator/linguistic-isolation
- Census 2020 Language and Communication Access Plan: [census.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2019/06/LACAP.pdf](https://www.census.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2019/06/LACAP.pdf)
- California Secretary of State- Language Minority Determinations:
elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/ccrov/pdf/2017/december/17148sr.pdf
- US Census Bureau database-Limited English Speaking Household dataset:
data.census.gov/cedsci/
- County Language Access Advisory Committee sites

List of language service contractors

The California Department of General Services compiled a list of language service contractors that provide language translation and language interpretation services. Inclusion on this list of contractors does not indicate endorsement by the State Water Board. It is your responsibility to ensure your contractor provides component and certified language translation and interpretation that addresses the language needs of the community.

When selecting a language service provider, you may want to ask if they offer virtual or over-the-phone interpretation. Some webcast software packages offer separate channels for language interpretation.

Name	Contact	Phone	Email	Area
ACCENT ON LANGUAGES INC	EDUARDO PUYOL-MARTINEZ	(510) 655-9470	EDUARDO@ACCENTONLANGUAGES.COM	BERKELEY
AUERBACH INTERNATIONAL INC	PHILIP AUERBACH	(415) 592-0042	PHILIP@AUERBACH-INTL.COM	ALAMEDA
AVANTPAGE INC	LUIS MIGUEL	(530) 750-2040	LUIS@AVANTPAGE.COM	DAVIS

Guidance for Engaging Communities During Development of Early Action Plans

BETWEEN THE LINES TRANSLATIONS INC	NOEMI VIERA	(213) 842-6767	VIERALIDEN@GMAIL.COM	CULVER CITY
CALIFORNIA CERTIFIED INTERPRETERS	ALEJANDRO FRANCO	(626) 272-9441	AFRANCO@AOL.COM	LOS ANGELES
CARMAZZI GLOBAL SOLUTIONS	ANGELA CARMAZZI	(888) 452-6543	SALES@CARMAZZI.COM	SACRAMENTO
DS INTERPRETATION, INC.	NAOMI BOWMAN	(650) 544-7970	NWB@DS-INTERPRETATION.COM	SAN FRANCISCO
EXCEL INTERPRETING LLC	KOY SAEPHAN	(800) 915-0638	KOY@EXCELINTERPRETING.COM	SACRAMENTO
FOCUS LANGUAGE INTERNATIONAL INC	SELIN CACAO	(800) 374-5444	SELIN@FOCUSINTERPRETING.COM	VICTORVILLE
GLOBAL INTERPRETING NETWORK INC	JILL SMITH	(866) 397-9288	JSMITH@GLOBALINTERPRETING.COM	PANORAMA CITY
J RIVERA ASSOCIATES INC	JOSE R RIVERA	(209) 405-0951	MRR@JRIVA.COM	LODI
JUNGLE COMMUNICATIONS INC	JUAN SANTANA	(415) 956-2556	JUAN@WEBJUNGLE.COM	SAN FRANCISCO
KRAMER TRANSLATIONS	KEITH ENSMINGER	(209) 385-0425	KEITH@KRAMERTRANSLATIONS.COM	SAN FRANCISCO AND MERCED
LANDO & ASSOCIATES LLC	LANDO & ASSOCIATES LLC	(510) 748-9200	LAURENDO@LANDOASSOCIATES.COM	ALAMEDA
LANGUAGE LINE SERVICES	GREG HOLT	(831) 648-7108	GHOLT@LANGUAGELINE.COM	MONTEREY
LANGUAGE WORLD SERVICES INC	ANGELICA MENDOZA	(916) 333-5247	AMENDOZA@LANGUAGEWORLDSERVICE.COM	CARMICHAEL

Guidance for Engaging Communities During Development of Early Action Plans

LAZAR TRANSLATING & INTERPRETING	LISA LAZAR	(310) 453- 3302	LISA@LAZAR.COM	LOS ANGELES
LEAP TRANSLATIONS	JULIETA GARCIA QUEROL	(858) 342- 8549	JQUEROL@LEAPTRANSLATIONS.COM	SAN DIEGO
TRANSCEND TRANSLATIONS	MARIA MINDLIN	(530) 756- 5834	END@TRANSCEND.NET	DAVIS
TRANS-LANG	ANDREW MONROY	(619) 233- 7547	ANDREW@TRANS-LANG.NET	SAN DIEGO
TRANSPERFECT TRANSLATIONS INTERNATIONAL INC	MICHAEL J DONNELLY	(202) 347- 2300	MDONNELLY@TRANSPERFECT.COM	SAN FRANCISCO

Appendix D: Communication Platforms

Each community has its own modes for distributing and receiving information. Below are some approaches to engaging communities based on the Key Elements of Successful Community Engagement discussed in the main document:

Communication approaches using digital platforms		
Approach	How	Potential Application
Social media advertisement	Pay for a post that targets a specific audience. This post leads the audience to the content you would like them to interact with, such as a survey, fact sheet, webinar registration, or website.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about the community • Educating the community • Noticing events
Online forums	Identify and post on forums like Facebook pages or Reddit to distribute information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about the community • Maintaining community involvement • Noticing events
Social media activity	Create a social media account where you can post updates and links to interactive content like surveys or websites. This content can also be posted by community leaders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about the community • Educating the community • Maintaining community involvement • Noticing events
Management Zone Website	Create a website for your Management Zone that centralizes all materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educating the community • Collaborating with the community • Maintaining community involvement • Noticing events
CV-SALTS Salt and Nitrate Control Program Website	Coordinate with the Central Valley Salinity Coalition to post materials on cvsalts.info.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educating the community • Collaborating with the community • Noticing events
Broadcast question and answer sessions using Live streaming applications	Use social media like Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter to host live question and answer sessions using the live streaming functions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educating the community • Collaborating with the community

Guidance for Engaging Communities During Development of Early Action Plans

Video messages	Film a trusted messenger, like a community leader, or a third-party facilitator conveying your message. This can be posted on social media, websites, and other media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educating the community • Noticing events
Podcasts	Record a presentation or discussion in advance or live. Live podcasts can also be used to host a Question & Answer segment. This platform can be used to inform the audience of your project and ways they can be engaged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educating the community • Noticing events
Use webcast software to host community meetings	Host a virtual meeting that allows the community to join your meeting remotely. There are many webcast software packages to choose from. It is important to know the capacity of your webcast platform. Consider multiple sessions to prevent streaming malfunctions caused by overloading the system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educating the community • Collaborating with the community
Email	Contact interested parties through electronic mail. Emails work well for distributing information, noticing events, following-up on an event, and providing updates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about the community • Educating the community • Collaborating with the community • Maintaining community involvement • Noticing events

Communication approaches using non-digital platforms		
Approach	How	Potential Application
Conference Calls	Host a meeting using a conference call service. This format works best for small group discussions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about the community
Text messaging systems	Use a text messaging system to send out short message service text to interested parties. These texts can provide updates or links to interactive content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about the community • Educating the community • Collaborating with the community • Maintaining community involvement • Noticing events

Guidance for Engaging Communities During Development of Early Action Plans

Phone calls	Collect contact information, for example through voter engagement software like Political Data Inc., and call community members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about the community • Educating the community • Noticing events
Post cards	Send postcards to the affected community. Useful postcards provide succinct background information and have a clear purpose. Postcards can be used to distribute and collect information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about the community • Educating the community • Noticing events
Newspaper	Coordinate with local newspapers to distribute information. This could be used to collect information by providing a point of contact, notice an event, or allow community members to request materials through mail.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about the community • Educating the community • Noticing events
Local newsletters	Work with the administrator of local newsletters to include your message. These newsletters may be electronic or mail delivered depending on the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educating the community • Maintaining community involvement • Noticing events
Mailers	Mail materials to the affected communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educating the community • Collaborating with the community • Maintaining community involvement • Noticing events
Community Spaces	Leave materials in community spaces like churches, schools, post offices, community centers, and even at residences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educating the community • Collaborating with the community • Maintaining community involvement • Noticing events
Radio stations	Coordinate with local radio stations to distribute information. This platform can be used to inform the audience of your proposed project and ways they can be engaged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educating the community • Noticing events
TV stations	Coordinate with local TV stations to make announcements. This platform can be used to inform the audience of your project and ways they can be engaged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noticing events

In-person communication approaches		
Approach	How	Potential Application
In-person door-to-door canvassing or canvassing popular local businesses (e.g., grocery stores)	Individuals have one-on-one conversations at resident's homes or at local businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about the community • Educating the community • Noticing events
Information repositories	Publicly accessible buildings where community members can access materials. Some examples include libraries, public schools, community colleges, community centers, and churches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educating the community • Collaborating with the community • Maintaining community involvement
In-person community meetings	Invite community members to attend a meeting in-person. The purpose of these meetings is to share and receive information or input about your project. Provide a call-in number, webcast, or other alternative to participating in-person.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educating the community • Collaborating with the community

The following lists include some options for live streaming, webcasting meetings, text message services, meeting facilitation applications, and managing digital engagement. There are many more options you can choose from. You are encouraged to research available software and consult community engagement leaders to identify which options work best for the community. Inclusion on these **lists does not indicate** endorsement by the State Water Board.

Live streaming applications

- Facebook Live: facebook.com/facebookmedia/solutions/facebook-live
- Instagram Live (in-app feature)
- Periscope (Twitter): twitter.com/explore
- YouTube Live: youtube.com/live

Webcast software

- Zoom: zoom.us/
- GoToMeeting: gotomeeting.com/
- Skype for Business: skype.com/en/business/
- BlueJeans: bluejeans.com/
- Adobe Connect: adobe.com/products/adobeconnect.html
- Business Hangouts: business-hangouts.com/

Guidance for Engaging Communities During Development of Early Action Plans

- BigMarker: bigmarker.com/
- ON24: on24.com/
- Vimeo: vimeo.com/
- WebEx: webex.com/

Text messaging systems

- Relay: withrelay.com/
- ThruText: thrutext.io/
- Textizen: textizen.com/
- TextTalkAct: texttalkact.com/

Meeting facilitation applications

- MeetingSift: meetingsift.com/
- PollEverywhere: polleverywhere.com/
- Slido: sli.do/

Engagement suites

- Engagement HQ Platform: bangthetable.com/engagementhq-community-software
- Konveio: konve.io/

Resources for digital connection

- Xfinity WiFi hotspots (free for everyone during the COVID-19 emergency): wifi.xfinity.com/
- Reduced rate internet services for qualifying low-income households: broadbandnow.com/guides/low-income-internet
- California Public Utilities Commission telecommunication and broadband programs: cpuc.ca.gov/Communications/

Appendix E: Guidance for Successful Community Meetings

This appendix provides guidance for structuring your community meetings and notifying communities of the location, duration, and design of your meetings.

Structuring meetings

- Hold meetings at times and locations most convenient to the community:
 1. Meetings are not held during working hours.
 2. Meetings held in the evening provide food.
 3. Meeting locations are centrally located for the community or near accessible public transportation stops.
 4. Meetings include childcare when necessary for community participation.
- Provide telephone call-in or webinar options for participants who are unable to attend in person.
- Limit presentations to 20 minutes or less to allow community members enough time to provide input. Alternatively, record and transcribe longer presentations ahead of time.
- Address questions and actively listen to community concerns and needs.
- Offer live interpretation at community meetings.
- Write meeting summaries for each meeting and make them publicly available online and at information repositories.

Meeting notices

- Begin noticing a meeting 20 days before the meeting and provide notice at least two or three times to maximize meeting turnout.
- Distribute meeting notices through multiple communications platforms.
- Translate meeting notices into Spanish other identified languages appropriate for the community when necessary.
- Be concise with background information.
- Be clear when, where, and what time the meeting will be located; the purpose of the meeting; and when and how the community can provide input.
- Include a map of where the meeting will be held and near-by public transit stops.
- Include directions for where to find supplemental meeting materials that support meeting understanding and community participation.

Appendix F: Community Engagement Resources

Community-based organizations and community engagement leaders are critical resources for your community engagement strategy. The tables below include some community engagement leaders and community-based organizations who have expertise in water and water justice and are potential resources. These tables are intended to be a starting point. You are encouraged to identify other organizations. Inclusion on these lists does not guarantee these organizations will provide services for your project. Inclusion on these lists does not indicate endorsement by the State Water Board.

Community Engagement Leaders	
Organization	Website
Central California Environmental Justice Network (CCEJN)	ccejn.org/
California Rural Legal Assistance	crla.org/
The California Endowment- Building Healthy Communities	calendow.org/
Catholic Charities Diocese	ccdof.org/
Central Valley Partnership	centralvalleypartnership.org/
Clean Water Action- California	cleanwateraction.org/states/california
Community Water Center	communitywatercenter.org/
Environmental Justice Coalition for Water (EJCW)	ejcw.org/
Fresno Metro Ministry	fresnometmin.org/
Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability	leadershipcounsel.org/
Pueblo Unido Community Development Corporation	Pucdc.org/
Self-Help Enterprises	selfhelpenterprises.org/
Third City Coalition	thirdcity.co (<i>not com</i>)
Valley Latino Environmental Advancement & Policy (LEAP)	sjvleap.wordpress.com/
Community Based Organizations	
Organization	Website
Center for Race, Poverty, and the Environment (CRPE)	crpe-ej.org/
Dolores Huerta Foundation	doloreshuerta.org/
Keep California Beautiful	keepcabeautiful.org/
Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC)	rcac.org/
Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)	rccrcnet.org/
United Farm Workers	ufw.org/

Appendix G: Resources for Evaluating Engagement

This appendix includes general evaluation timelines and resources. Your evaluations should prompt feedback that can help measure how effective your engagement strategy is at meeting your goals. Additional evaluation methods may better benefit your engagement strategy.

If your engagement strategy is not working, consider consulting community leaders to collaboratively identify barriers and potential improvements that could be adopted.

When to evaluate your community engagement strategy

After interviews with community leaders

Asking community leaders to evaluate your educational materials and messaging would give you early feedback on your strategy and can set you up for future success.

After each community meeting

Evaluation after each meeting is critical to understanding if your engagement strategy is working and how to make modifications if it is not working.

During a public comment period

Your Early Action Plan should reflect your community engagement and community input. Getting feedback from communities on if your plan reflects their input will help you revise the draft before it is submitted to the Central Valley Water Board.

After Early Action Plan is submitted

Feedback from community members on the entire community engagement strategy will inform your engagement strategy for developing and implementing Management Zone Implementation Plans.

Evaluation Methods

1. Distribute evaluation forms with targeted questions and complete a companion internal evaluation form, as mentioned in the Evaluate and Revise Your Community Engagement Strategy section.
 - The Institute for Local Government developed rapid review worksheets that can be used for evaluating your community engagement strategy: [ca-ilg.org/post/assessing-public-engagement-effectiveness-rapid-review-worksheets](https://www.ilg.org/post/assessing-public-engagement-effectiveness-rapid-review-worksheets)
2. Provide a point of contact people can reach out to with suggestions and invite suggestions and feedback.
3. Make follow-up calls to key people.
4. Include a feedback feature on the project web page.
5. Provide a physical location or mailing address where comments can be mailed or dropped off.