



**BRIEF 5**

# HOW: BUILD CAPACITY

Throughout this toolkit, you’ve read tips and best practices for building inclusive communications to foster trust and meaningful connections with local residents. Following every step may not always be possible, especially given the tight timeframes and capacity constraints common in emergency management, public health, nonprofit, and government settings. This brief offers practical guidance to help you create space for successful, inclusive outreach even when time, budgets, and staff are limited.

## PLAN AHEAD

Many communications teams proactively plan for annual campaigns or crisis communications scenarios, ensuring that infrastructure will exist for this work when needed. Consider approaching inclusive communications in the same way: Invest time, when available, in understanding and connecting with your community—and in identifying external partners, such as translation providers and members of local ethnic media, that can support your work when needed. Proactively building this infrastructure will offer significant returns in ensuring success when you’re ready to launch inclusive communications efforts.

## ENGAGE PARTNERS

Communication staff at government agencies and nonprofit organizations are often well-positioned to lead inclusive communications



*Credit: Stefan Petrmichl*

efforts, but they need not work alone. Other briefs in this toolkit have offered multiple tips on engaging partners to lighten the load:

- Tap local universities or immigrant-serving nonprofits for information on the newcomers in your community, focusing on data like language preferences that can inform your inclusive communications strategy.
- Engage local networks in getting recommendations for translation resources or introductions to local ethnic media sources.
- Connect with other departments in your organization—community relations teams or outreach liaisons—for connections to local leaders that can serve as a sounding board for your work, confirming the accuracy of translations and helping to disseminate information.

## USE STRATEGIC SHORTCUTS

A core tenant of successful communications is to tailor content, creating separate content for distinct audiences. Yet in communities with very diverse or multilingual audiences, separate communications may not always be feasible.

When multiple languages are spoken in your community, consider creating multilingual materials—for example, a poster that has the same message repeated in five different languages—as a tool to reach several multilingual audiences in one place. (It’s important not to take shortcuts with translations—follow the tips in [Brief 3](#) to ensure high quality, accurate multilingual materials.) By having information in English as well as in other languages, you can make your message accessible across multiple language groups, all while producing content in a more cost- and capacity-friendly way.

## EMBRACE PROGRESS OVER PERFECTION

Inclusive communicators are committed to producing representative, accessible communications for all community members. In the spirit of equity, it may be tempting to hold on engaging in any form of outreach until you’ve ensured that you’re able to reach all audiences. Yet many communicators find that launching an initial effort to connect with one group—for example, Spanish speakers—helps to build capacity to repeat the process with other groups in other languages.

Creating strategies to monitor and evaluate the impact of your work—such as number of newcomer residents served by a particular program, or number of new visits to a website or social media channel—can help demonstrate the value of inclusive communications in your organization and make the case for additional budget and capacity to expand your efforts.

## PUTTING STRATEGY INTO PRACTICE

Smaller communities don’t have to have small capacity when it comes to building infrastructure for inclusive communications. Champaign, IL has leveraged a robust, cross-sector network of partners to create a strong, scalable system that effectively meets the needs of its rapidly growing newcomer population. [Read how](#) strategic partnerships can help even smaller cities deliver powerful, community-centered solutions that scale.



**Read Case Study:  
Champaign, IL**



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