Alameda County Climate & Health Communications Project
October 2023 – March 2024
Alameda County General Services Agency Office of Sustainability

Contents

Climate Action Context

In May 2023, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors adopted the Climate Action Plan for Government Services and Operations Through 2026 (GOCAP). The Community Resilience (CR) section of the GOCAP outlines actions the County will take to increase the resilience and preparedness of the communities we serve to protect from climate shocks like heat waves, wildfires, or flooding. In the first phase of implementation, two priority actions relate to climate and health communications:

- CR2a: Reach people with information about climate-related events, protective actions, and County-provided climate resources who have not historically been reached by County communication channels… Partner with trusted community-based and faith-based organizations…to communicate.
- CR2b: Expand sharing of disaster preparedness, protective actions, and resilience and response information.

Project Funding and Goals

The Alameda County General Services Agency (GSA) Office of Sustainability led this project with the support of a small grant from the Urban Sustainability Directors Network's Emergent Learning Fund. This grant program is designed for short projects that address new needs and strengthen community and government partnerships.

The need we aimed to address was availability of suitable materials for non-profit organizations to help their communities be prepared to reduce the likelihood of negative health impacts from climate shocks. The goals of the project included producing useful materials that community groups could use to

support priority populations to be prepared for climate-linked disasters and building relationships between community-based groups and the County.

Project Partners

The County Climate & Health Communications Project recruited five community-based organizations (CBOs) from across Alameda County to serve as "Advisors" and two to serve as "Creators" during the project. The Advisors would be reimbursed for spending up to 10 project hours to attend meetings, provide feedback on County materials, and create and share materials. Creators would be reimbursed for up to 39 project hours, allowing them time to create community resilience materials tailored to their audiences.

Creators:

- Centers for Elders' Independence Foundation, serving older adults
- Community Resources for Independent Living, serving people with disabilities

Advisors:

- Abode Services, serving low-income and unhoused residents
- Street Level Health Project, serving outdoor workers
- Mycelium Youth Network, serving youth
- St. Mary's Center, serving elders and preschool families
- Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center, serving low-income and low English proficiency residents

Feedback on Existing Materials

A varied sample of existing County community resilience materials was provided to CBOs for feedback:

- Wildfire & Heat Season Training for Community-Based Organizations (General Services Agency Office of Sustainability)
- Air Pollution Poster (Library)
- Selection of Facebook Posts about emergency preparedness and other services (Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services)
- Heat & Health Guide (Health Care Services Agency)
- HeatReadyCA.com (a state resource)
- Ready.acgov.org, Alameda County's Emergency Preparedness website

These materials are all in active use and available for update following the grant period.

The seven CBOs provided feedback, with 13 reviewers who reviewed 1-3 resources each, providing 33 total responses.

The following recommendations constitute a snapshot of a small number of relevant opinions and perspectives that were possible to gather with limited time and budget. The below feedback will be balanced with input from other stakeholders and program mandates as materials are updated.

Overall recommendations

The CBOs emphasized the importance of having multiple platforms and versions of the content, such as graphics, text, or videos, to reach those who absorb information differently. They recommended providing clear, concise, simple, but also detailed information, so the populations they serve can receive the necessary content.

Useful aspects of the existing resources

The CBOs appreciated graphics, images, and infographics, explaining that these elements were very useful to the populations they serve. They appreciated the information about human health impacts. They liked the "learn more" sections which linked to additional resources.

Suggestions for existing or new resources

The CBOs recommended providing more population-specific information in County resources. Many CBOs wanted to see more information about what people should do following climate events (such as how to handle extended sheltering-in-place), how the populations they serve will be affected, and resources for what to do after emergencies.

How CBOs would use County resources

Many CBOs said that flyers are a main way they distribute information. Some CBOs post information on social media. Others distribute materials at outreach events, make materials available at their offices, , equip their staff with materials, organize workshops with demonstrations, or work with schools to share information.

Suggestions to increase material accessibility

CBOs recommended that the County translate materials, increase the text font size and include accommodations such as narrations or captions when creating and updating content. They recommended that barriers to accessing technology or County communication channels be addressed by sharing information in a variety of media and settings including low-tech and community-imbedded locations such as via refrigerator magnets, schools, libraries and neighborhood meetings.

Recommendations for Resources, Do's and Don'ts

At one meeting, CBO representatives provided guidance on materials in a do's and don'ts format

Content

DO

- Prioritize using conversational language over technical language when translating to other languages
- Use concise wording

- Use fewer words and more graphics
- Make resources accessible and population-specific
- Provide resources/tips for medically vulnerable seniors and disabled

DON'T

- Don't forget the perspective of unsheltered people and what they might need
- Don't send alert messages that require visiting a website to learn what actions are recommended

Format

DO

- Use font size 14 or larger
- Include the website URL when using QR codes
- Make content easy to view on a smartphone
- Provide physical documents with appealing colors
- Provide PDF versions
- Keep in mind those with low vision and use the correct color scales and contrast
- Make sure the materials pass community standards for the hearing and visually impaired

DON'T

- Don't use complex graphics that are hard to see and understand
- Provide paper or other tangible documents so they are accessible in power outages
- Don't use too many words on a slide

Channels

DO

- Work with organizations serving vulnerable communities
- Meet with school districts to help set up workshops for families to learn about emergency planning and preparedness
- Work with churches to pass along information and support
- Provide information on items that are easy to carry or keep in sight, such as a keychain or a fridge magnet
- Follow existing distribution channels for other community resources

DON'T

- [No "don'ts" were identified here.]

Project Outcomes

Under the project, the following resources were created:

- [Caregiver web resources](#) developed specifically for the needs of caregivers of older adults, *Center for Elders' Independence Foundation*
- [Winter Storm Season Preparedness Training video](#), *Community Resources for Independent Living*
- [Climate Disasters Preparedness Training,](#) *Alameda County Office of Sustainability*
- Curated preparedness web pages on ready.acgov.org for [older adults](#) and [people with disabilities](#), *Alameda County Office of Sustainability*

County agencies that created climate health preparedness materials have been briefed on the CBO feedback and will keep these recommendations in mind when creating and updating materials.

The project equipped partners with new disaster preparedness information in multiple formats. They have shared this important information with their staff through trainings, with external collaboratives and councils, and with those they serve.

The CBOs filled out a pre- and post-survey about their views. They reported that this project increased their awareness and use of County community resilience resources and their interest in responding and reaching out to the County. We look forward to continuing our work together.