

Communication and Engagement Plan

For Implementation of the Tribal Communities and Underrepresented Communities under the Proposition 68 Technical Assistance Program



California Department of Water Resources

SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER
MANAGEMENT (SGM) GRANT PROGRAM

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Purpose

The purpose of the Technical Assistance Program (Program) is to assist the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) in implementing Proposition 68–eligible needs, risk, and vulnerability assessments, and other technical assistance services, to Tribes, Tribal Communities, and Underrepresented Communities. Tribes, Tribal Communities, and Underrepresented Communities have not historically been included in decision-making processes. For the purposes of this Program, Tribes and Tribal Communities include federally recognized Native American Tribes and California State Native Tribes listed on the Native American Heritage Commission’s (NAHC) California Tribal Consultation List, and are collectively referred to herein as “Tribe” or “Tribes.” There is further discussion of these definitions below. Underrepresented Communities include disadvantaged communities (DACs) where median household income (MHI) is less than 80% of the statewide MHI, severely disadvantaged communities (SDACs) where the MHI is less than 60% of the statewide MHI, private domestic well owners, small farmers and/or small growers, and members of fringe communities. DACs, SDACs, economically distressed areas, Tribes, environmentally disadvantaged communities, and fringe areas will collectively be referred to as Underrepresented Communities and are discussed in the following text.

Disadvantaged Community

A community with an annual median household income that is less than 80% of the Statewide annual median household income (Public Resources Code Section 80002[e]).

Severely Disadvantaged Community

A community with a median household income of less than 60% of the Statewide average (Public Resources Code Section 80002[n]).

Economically Distressed Area

- A municipality with a population of 20,000 persons or less
- A rural county
- A reasonably isolated and divisible segment of a larger municipality where the segment of the population is 20,000 persons or less, with an annual MHI that is less than 85% of the statewide MHI, and with one or more of the following conditions:
 1. Financial hardship
 2. Unemployment rate at least 2% higher than the Statewide average
 3. Low population density (Water Code Section 79702[k])

TRIBES: Federally recognized Native American Tribes and California State Native Tribes listed on the NAHC’s California Tribal Consultation List are collectively referred to as “Tribe” or “Tribes.”

California Native American Tribe

The term “state Indian tribes” (Water Code Section 79712[a]) means Indigenous Communities of California, which are on the contact list maintained by the NAHC, including those

that are federally non-recognized, federally recognized, and those with allotment lands, regardless of whether they own those lands. Additionally, because some water bodies and Tribal boundaries cross state borders, this term may include Indigenous Communities in Oregon, Nevada, and Arizona that are impacted by water in California.

Federally Recognized Indian Tribes

A federally recognized Tribe is an American Indian or Alaska Native Tribal entity that is recognized as having a government-to-government relationship with the United States, with the responsibilities, powers, limitations, and obligations attached to that designation, and is eligible for funding and services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

EnvDACs

The California Environmental Protection Agency designates the top 25% scoring census tracts as DACs. Census tracts that score the highest 5% of Pollution Burden scores, but do not have an overall CalEnviroScreen score because of unreliable socioeconomic or health data, are also designated as DACs.

Fringe Areas

Fringe Communities are those communities that do not meet the established DAC, SDAC, or economically distressed area definitions, but can show that they score in the top 25% of either the Pollution Burden or Population Characteristics score using the most recent version of CalEnviroScreen.

This Program has the specific aim of increasing outreach to, engagement with, and support of these communities in opportunities for decision-making and the amelioration of groundwater-related needs.

Table of Contents

SECTION	PAGE NO.
1. Background.....	4
2. Geographic Boundaries.....	4
3. Purpose of the Project	5
4. Objectives and Outcomes of Community Engagement	6
5. Initial Outreach to Tribes and Tribal Communities Outreach	6
6. Initial Outreach to Underrepresented Communities	7
7. Ongoing Outreach Communication Tools and Venues for Engaging	9
8. Evaluation and Assessment	10

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1. Background

Within the State of California, Tribes, Tribal Communities, and Underrepresented Communities face multiple challenges regarding access to clean, affordable, and sustainable groundwater and water resources. Underrepresented and Tribal Communities are disproportionately impacted by water supply and water quality challenges, such as overdraft in basins and contamination, that is either anthropogenic or naturally occurring. Moreover, the Tribal cultural significance of water and water bodies is not often recognized by local, state, or federal governments, which presents challenges.

The passage of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) has highlighted marginalization and lack of participation by these interested parties (Tribes, Tribal Communities, and Underrepresented Communities), particularly as it relates to communities that either principally or heavily depend on local water supplies and are isolated and within areas of the state that are not served by municipal services or water districts. In recognition of this challenge, DWR has launched this Technical Assistance Program (Program) to expand education, outreach, and service delivery to Tribes, Tribal Communities, and Underrepresented Communities. Further, the Program supports implementation of the Human Right to Water legislation (Assembly Bill 685), which declares, “it is the established policy of the state that every human being has the right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking, and sanitary purposes.”

Barriers to inclusion of Tribes, Tribal Communities, and Underrepresented Communities may be due to language barriers, cultural perceptions about governance structures, and understanding of groundwater, as well as agencies’ inability to effectively assess and engage communities due to lack of institutional knowledge. Therefore, the goals of the Program are to identify communities that need support and outreach, to engage communities to assess their water needs, and to provide technical assistance based on the identified needs.

2. Geographic Boundaries

The geographic boundaries of this Project include four regions of the State of California as defined by DWR including:

- The Northern California Region, which includes the areas with the DWR Northern Regional Office and North Central Regional Office boundaries
- The Central California region, including the areas within the boundaries of San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare, and Kern Counties
- The Central Coast region, which includes the boundaries of Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties.
- The Tribal region, which will span all land within the State of California that is owned or subject to an ownership of possessory interest of the Tribe, land defined as “Indian Lands” by 25 United States Code Section 81 (a)(1), and Land that is owned by a Tribal entity, or Tribe, within the external border of such Indian Lands

Figure 1. Project Figure



3. Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the Program is to assist DWR in implementing Proposition 68–eligible needs, risk, and vulnerability assessments, and other technical assistance services to Tribes, Tribal Communities, and Underrepresented Communities. Tribes, Tribal Communities, and Underrepresented Communities have not historically been included in decision-making processes. For the purposes of this Program, Tribes and Tribal Communities include federally recognized Native American Tribes and California State Native Tribes listed on the Native American Heritage Commission’s (NAHC) California Tribal Consultation List, and are collectively referred to herein as “Tribe” or “Tribes.” There is further discussion of these definitions below. Underrepresented Communities include disadvantaged communities (DACs) where median household income (MHI) is less than 80% of the statewide MHI, severely disadvantaged communities (SDACs) where the MHI is less than 60% of the statewide MHI, private domestic well owners, small farmers and/or small growers, and members of fringe communities. DACs, SDACs, economically distressed areas, Tribes, environmentally disadvantaged communities, and fringe areas will collectively be referred to as Underrepresented Communities and are discussed in the following text.

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EnvDACs

CalEPA designates the top 25% scoring census tracts as DACs. Census tracts that score the highest 5% of Pollution Burden scores, but do not have an overall CalEnviroScreen score because of unreliable socioeconomic or health data, are also designated as DACs.

Fringe Areas

A Fringe Community are those communities that do not meet the established DAC, SDAC, and EDA definitions, but can show that they score in the top 25% of either the Pollution Burden or Population Characteristics score using the most recent version of CalEnviroScreen.

This Program has the specific aim of increasing outreach to, engagement with, and supporting these communities in opportunities for decision-making and the amelioration of groundwater-related needs.

4. Objectives and Outcomes of Community Engagement

This Communication and Engagement Plan is one part of the community engagement process, and is a living document. It will be updated throughout the course of the Program.

Objectives and Outcomes

Inclusive and effective public participation is vital to successful Program processes and implementation. The objective of the outreach for this Program is to provide culturally sensitive, language-appropriate communication, outreach, and engagement to Underrepresented and Tribal Communities in the Program area to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Identify and prioritize Tribes, Tribal Communities, and Underrepresented Communities that need support and conduct needs assessments.
2. Outreach and engage Tribes, Tribal Communities, and Underrepresented Communities to educate them on the basics of the SGMA and the role and responsibilities of the Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) governing their geographic area. This would include information about the role of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan or an approved alternative to a Groundwater Sustainability Plan in planning for sustainable groundwater in their geographic area.
3. Outreach to and engage Underrepresented and Tribal Communities to assess their water needs within SGMA-designated basins.
4. Provide efficient, effective, and responsive services to Underrepresented and Tribal Communities based on the outcomes of the needs assessments, site visits, extant information, and relevant data from DWR and other state and local agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

5. Initial Outreach to Tribes and Tribal Communities

Tribal Communities

Website

DWR's website is <https://www.water.ca.gov/sgmgrants>. This is the main hub for information and materials related to this Program. The DWR website will include a Tribal Tab for contact with DWR's Office of Tribal Policy Advisor in the event that a Tribal Government or Tribal Community elects to engage in government-to-government consultation at any point in their communication with DWR. DWR will also be using its Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM), SGM Grant Program, and various email subscription lists to send out updates and information.

Program Team

The Program team will conduct outreach in a variety of ways, and the team has compiled a variety of contact lists for initial emails, calls, and/or conventional mail. These lists are composed of the following:

1. All city and county health department contacts
2. All city and county planning and community development departments
3. CBOs and NGOs that work with Underrepresented Communities, including farmworker communities, migrant communities, labor organizations
4. Environmental CBOs/NGOs
5. CBOs/NGOs working on water supply and water quality issues and concerns
6. All IRWM contacts in the Program area
7. All GSA lead contacts (executive directors, elected officials, appointed leads) in the Program area
8. All school district contacts in the Program area
9. All school board contacts in the Program area
10. Elected officials in the Program area
11. Tribal list serves to connect with Tribes, Tribal Communities, and Tribal NGOs

Initial Written Outreach

DWR has established a Native American Tribal outreach process that is in alignment with its Tribal Engagement Policy that allows for government-to-government communication and consultation with Tribal governments and Tribal communities. Pursuant to Assembly Bill 52, DWR maintains a list of all Tribes that have requested to be notified of projects within their traditional geographic cultural area. DWR then completes consultation with any Tribe(s), as requested, on a project-by-project basis. Additionally, DWR has a defined Tribal engagement process, which includes project notification of traditionally culturally affiliate Tribes listed on the general NAHC contact list for specific geographic areas. This list is generally consistent with that list used for Senate Bill 18. The DWR Tribal engagement process is intended to ensure that all NAHC-listed traditionally culturally affiliated Tribes are provided the opportunity to provide input with regard to resources of Native American importance, which may include cultural and environmental resource considerations.

The outreach, communication, and engagement approach to this Program is threefold. First, the Program team will initiate contact with leaders in relevant IRWM regions to ascertain if there are active Tribal representatives the team is working with and compile a list of Tribal contacts for purposes of outreach and engagement. Second, the Program team will reach out to GSAs and similarly ascertain if there are active Tribal representatives the team is working with and compile a list of Tribal contacts for purposes of outreach and engagement. Third, the Program team will take existing relationships with Tribal communities and build on the communication work accomplished to date.

At the inception of this Program, the Program team initiated a request for the NAHC contact list of Tribal individuals and organizations that may have information concerning Native American resources throughout California. Although limited detail is typically provided by the NAHC with regard to the traditional geographic area of individual contacts, it is understood that the requested list can be provided such that contacts will be organized by county, which will allow the team to conduct tailored outreach. The NAHC list and the two other lists compiled

via IRWM and GSA outreach will be audited, coordinated, and used as the baseline geographic area for organizing contacts, and for preparing a primary contact list in Microsoft Excel. This list will include the pertinent contact details for each individual/organization at a county level, corroborated with the lists compiled through the IRWM and GSA outreach. The primary contact list will be used to facilitate the initial mailing of outreach materials and surveys, as well as initial and follow-up emails and phone calls. The Program team will initiate contact with Tribes using the primary list within the geographic areas of the Program. Contact will include three types of outreach: a letter, an email, and a call. These will actively notify the Tribal communities about the Program (website address, contact phone number and email: SGM_TA@water.ca.gov, contact persons) and the process. Tribes will be provided the opportunity to request a formal consultation in person or via Zoom or discuss with the Program team the Water Needs Survey (included in the letter, linked via email, and provided verbally via a phone call) and/or provide information, identification of needs, opportunities, and recommendation for their traditionally associated areas.

The Program team will track and maintain a record of comments provided by the people responding and the Tribes that respond. Once the outreach and communication have been initiated, the Program team will provide ample time for the Tribal community representative to respond; the Program team will follow up with a second letter, email, and call to the same representative after a period of 3 to 4 weeks. After the second contact, the Program team will allow 2 weeks to elapse, and if there is still no response, the Program team will identify a secondary contact, as obtained to the extent possible, from the NAHC, IRWM regions, GSAs, and any NGOs. The team will commence the process of sending a letter, an email, and a call with the same information and opportunity for a discussion, or, if it is preferred, a formal consultation. After this third round of contact (two to the immediate contact and one to a potential secondary contact or three to the same contact), the Program team anticipates 3 weeks elapsing before the fourth follow-up via call and email. For Tribal communities that do choose a formal consultation process, it is anticipated that some of this record of consultation may be considered confidential.

6. Initial Outreach to Underrepresented Communities

Underrepresented Communities

Underrepresented Communities are often not part of an incorporated city, but are part of a county area and a GSA, and are most likely part of an IRWM region. Underrepresented Communities may not use English as a language of communication. To reach Underrepresented Communities, the Program team will produce outreach materials, including social media posts, videos (YouTube and other social media channels), radio spots, and written materials, in various languages, including Spanish, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Tagalog, Mixteco, Hmong, and Hmong-Mien. Some languages, like Mixteco, Hmong, and Hmong-Mien, will not be used for written communication, such as emails and letters, because the Program team has determined that the Mixteco, Hmong, and Hmong-Mien communities are best served via other methods, like radio, social media, and YouTube videos (among other social sharing platforms), along with working with CBOs/NGOs and faith-based organizations for verbal announcements at regular meetings or at community and outreach events that take place in the Underrepresented Communities.

The Program team will conduct outreach in a variety of ways, depending on the community that is being contacted, the primary and/or secondary language of that community, and the community's levels of education and literacy. To methodically and comprehensively address these communities and use the systems already in place, the Program team has compiled a variety of contact lists for the Program area that contain contacts for initial emails, initial calls, and/or conventional mail. These lists are composed of the following:

1. All city and county health department contacts
2. All city and county planning and community development departments
3. CBOs and NGOs that work with Underrepresented Communities, including farmworker communities, migrant communities, and labor organizations
4. Environmental CBOs/NGOs
5. CBOs/NGOs working on water supply and water quality issues and concerns
6. All IRWM contacts in the Program area
7. All GSA lead contacts (executive directors, elected officials, appointed leads) in the Program area
8. All school district contacts in the Program area
9. All school board contacts in the Program area
10. Elected officials in the Program area

Website

DWR's website is <https://www.water.ca.gov/sgmgrants>. This is the main hub for information and materials related to the Program. DWR will also be using its IRWM, SGMA Grant Program, and SGMA email subscription lists to send out updates and information.

Initial Phone Calls

Verbal communication will precede written material dissemination via phone calls to all aforementioned lists (1–9, above). Information imparted via calls will be related to the purpose of the Program and to share contact information. The Program team will track and record via a spreadsheet the following information: the date the contact was made via phone, whether or not a person was spoken to, the content of the discussion, the language preference, interest in the Program, and whether or not questions were asked and answered. The call will also be used to gauge the relevance of the Program to the community, and to provide information about the website, an email contact (SGM_TA@water.ca.gov), a phone number, and information on the survey. To the extent there is a desire to have more tailored interviews to gather data and refine and inform the outreach and engagement, the Program team will arrange dedicated Zoom interviews.

Initial Written Outreach

After initial calls, written materials will be sent to all lists (1–9). Initial written outreach will entail the following information:

- Branded logos, banner, colors, and iconography for each email, flyer, and social media post.
- The substance contained within the email/flyer (English, Spanish, Tagalog, and Traditional and Simplified Chinese) targeted for each Underrepresented Community; coloration and iconography will be culturally sensitive and clear.
- Language-appropriate social media posts with culturally sensitive coloration and iconography.

All initial outreach will include announcement about the purpose of the Program, link to the website, email contact, phone number, and link to the appropriate language survey.

Initial Video and Radio Outreach

Videos will be produced to announce the Program (English, Spanish, Tagalog, Traditional and Simplified Chinese, Mixteco, Hmong, and Hmong-Mien) and posted on appropriate and relevant social media sites (including YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Instagram). The Program team will also contact appropriate radio stations in the Program area, particularly for the Spanish, Tagalog, Traditional and Simplified Chinese, Hmong, and Hmong-Mien communities, to discuss and place public service announcements (PSAs) during key programming times. The initial PSAs will occur over a period of 2 months.

The Program team presumes that the initial outreach will occur over 1 month. This initial outreach will include the following:

1. One round of initial calls and one round of follow-up calls
2. Two follow-up emails
3. Social media posts refreshed weekly over 2 months
4. Video posts refreshed twice per week over 2 months
5. Radio ads run 30 times over 2 months

7. Ongoing Outreach Communication Tools and Venues for Engaging



Outreach and Communication Workshops

Outreach and communication will persist throughout the entirety of the Program, and the venues for engagement and tools will change over time depending on a series of factors and the outcome of the survey, which will be open for 2 months, but can be reopened and/or restructured based on evaluation and feedback. Factors that influence the types and timelines for communication and engagement opportunities (e.g., Zoom versus in-person workshops) may also be dependent on the timing and substance of the survey responses, the need to include other languages or target more communities, feedback received from community members on the type and urgency of need, and feedback from agencies and/or CBOs/NGOs related to differential or preferential needs.

At the close of the surveys, the Program team will assess the outcomes and prioritize in-person and Zoom workshops in each of the Program areas. It is possible that some Program areas will not have responded to the survey, and in these cases, the Program team will work with the appropriate Tribal contact, GSA, and/or other governmental representative (i.e., county government, water district, community service district, and/or NGOs/CBOs) to schedule in-person and Zoom workshops at times and locations that will garner the most community input for the dissemination of information and to hear community feedback, and to conduct site visits.

In areas where surveys have been received, the Program team will prepare a priority screening and will then work with the appropriate contact within the Underrepresented and/or Tribal Community to schedule in-person and Zoom workshops, times, and locations that will garner the most community input for the dissemination of information and to hear community feedback, and to conduct site visits.

Depending on the size and geographic location, there may be up to three Zoom and/or in-person workshops in a particular Underrepresented and/or Tribal Community. All workshops will include language- and culturally sensitive handouts and materials, as well as simultaneous translation for the languages spoken in the communities. All in-person and Zoom workshops will be recorded and posted on the DWR website.

Contemporaneous with the workshops, the Program team will coordinate site visits to better collect information and evaluate the need and the extent of the need for technical support.

Communication Tools

PUBLIC NOTICES

Working with city and county departments and GSAs, the Program team will prepare Public Notices for all workshops that are held via Zoom and in person. The Public Notices will be published in language-appropriate publications in print, online, and on the DWR website. The Public Notices for in print/online publication will occur twice, with the first notice being published 1 week prior to the workshop. Depending on the community, public notices will be in English, Spanish, Tagalog, and/or Traditional and Simplified Chinese.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND POSTS

Social media sites will be used throughout the Program. Posts will include video content and information related to the Program, the survey, and the announcement of workshops. When social media sites are used for the announcement of Zoom or in-person workshops, video and posts will commence 10 days prior to the workshop and be refreshed at the following intervals: 1 week prior to the workshop, 3 days prior to the workshop, 1 day before the workshop, and the day of the workshop. Video posts on social media sites will be in English, Spanish, Tagalog, Traditional and Simplified Chinese, Mixteco, Hmong, and Hmong-Mien. Social media posts on Twitter will be in the following languages: Spanish, Tagalog, and Traditional and Simplified Chinese.

Informational Materials

Informational materials for the Program will accompany all public workshops, including presentations, Frequently Asked Questions, brochures, flow charts, illustrative materials, public notices, flyers, and printed items that are mostly iconography and targeted at communities where literacy levels are differential. All materials will follow the standard style guide, coloration, banner, and logo agreed upon for the Program, and all logos and colors will be used in a culturally sensitive manner. All informational materials will be translated in the appropriate language: Spanish, Tagalog, and Traditional and Simplified Chinese. It has been agreed upon by the Program team that the Mixteco, Hmong, and Hmong-Mien communities will best be served by videos and pictograph materials, as well as radio PSAs.

Radio Advertising

Radio will be used at the initial stages of outreach to message the purpose of the Program and to impart contact information, information on the survey, and opportunities to engage. Initial PSAs will occur over 2 months on stations that serve Spanish, Tagalog, Traditional and Simplified Chinese, Hmong, and Hmong-Mien communities. PSAs will be used throughout the Program to announce public workshop opportunities, either in person or via Zoom, and potentially at other key milestones. Announcements will be made during key programming/listening times.

Iconography

The Program team has prepared iconography to be used to easily identify the Program and the concepts that need to be conveyed without the use of words. Icons/symbology will be used in social media posts, emails, flyers, informational brochures, Frequently Asked Questions, presentation materials, handouts, and other relevant materials.

8. Evaluation and Assessment

Formal and informal evaluation and assessment tools, such as surveys, discussions at workshops, emails, and phone calls, are all part of effective communication; these tools will be used throughout the course of the Program. Communication and engagement will be a standing item for discussion at each in-person workshop, and will be included in communications that the Program team sends out to Tribes, Tribal Communities, and Underrepresented Communities.