

Preparing Oregon's Communities of Color for Disasters

Where we are and where we need to go



United Way of the Columbia-Willamette

Every person should have an equal opportunity to survive a disaster. As we prepare Oregon's communities to respond to increasingly frequent and severe climate disasters, communities of color deserve equitable access to linguistically and culturally relevant, lifesaving disaster preparedness resources. We must understand what we are doing to support these communities, what we are missing, and how to ensure we are all prepared for the next disaster.

This report combines ten months of data collection, analysis, and sense-making. We primarily used qualitative research methods and relied on our project values to understand Oregon's inclusive messaging landscape.

Our project values



Empowerment

Every individual involved in the process feels supported by their interaction with our team, and each participant is viewed as an expert.



Representation

Our research processes and findings center the feedback and experiences of communities, organizations, and individuals represented in this report.



Collaboration

At every step, stakeholders from across sectors and communities were invited to provide insight into the direction of the work.



Accuracy

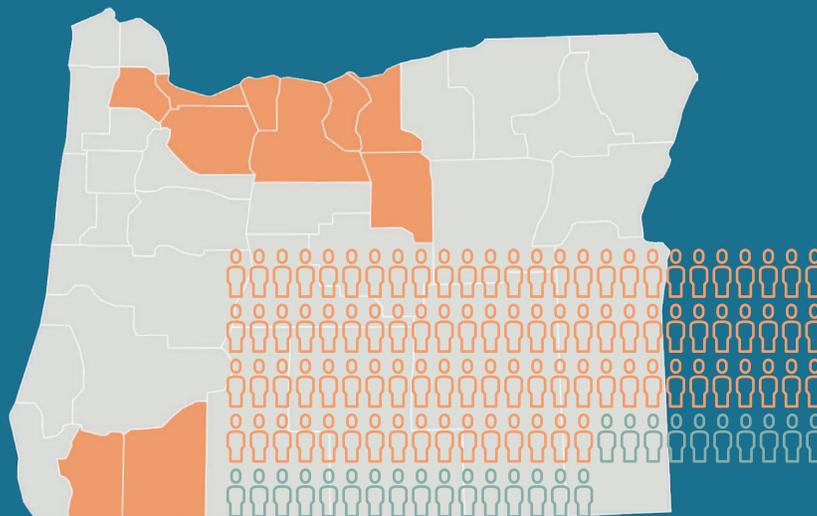
Our methods and findings are rooted in qualitative practices, supported by research, and thoroughly analyzed.

Our comprehensive participant sampling approach ensured individuals and organizations involved in the funding, planning, decision-making, and receiving of inclusive disaster preparedness materials were represented in this project. With guidance from community-based organization and public sector partners, we engaged 120 participants.

120 participants

94 people in 13 focus groups

26 individual interviews



Findings

Momentum is Building

We found evidence of emerging inclusive disaster preparedness messaging, with signs of strong momentum and increasing commitment to this work. Our findings are organized into three sections:



Barriers to Inclusivity

We identified eight barriers to inclusive messaging initiatives. Our findings are organized into eight barriers.

Lack of Statewide Convenor

Without a statewide convenor, participants identified difficulties creating standards across Oregon and understanding the current landscape of program and initiatives. [Nearly 98% of our interviews, focus groups, and surveys identified this barrier.](#)

Confusing Communications

Participants identified challenges related to lack of agreement on terms and finding the right pace for communications.

Incomplete Translation

Direct translation is not complete translation but many materials still do not reflect the needs, experiences, and strengths of communities.

Low Technology Access and Literacy

Lack of technology access and low technology literacy were barriers expressed across all sectors.

Limited Staff Capacity

Nearly every community-based organization we spoke to indicated that they were understaffed.

Restricted Funding

Participants identified challenges related to the ways funders award grants and the limitations community-based organizations experience seeking funds they need.

Widespread Distrust

Communities don't trust the government—and organizations don't always trust each other.

Special Focus

Outreach does not equal representation. Community engagement must be meaningful and must not stop at outreach.

Recommendations

Our recommendations are actionable practices that all stakeholders committed to equitable and inclusive disaster preparedness materials and messaging can adapt.

Work Together Differently

We need to situate inclusive disaster preparedness messaging and materials in comprehensive, equitable initiatives to meet community-identified needs. This means working together differently: sharing information and coordinating efforts to ensure cross-sector projects are complementary, not duplicative.

Take Action

- 1 Identify a primary statewide convener(s)
- 2 Support community-based organizations
- 3 Expand cross-sector partnerships

Embrace Meaningful Community Engagement

Our community members are context experts, with deep wisdom and lived experience. Meaningful engagement means listening to and learning from communities, ensuring processes are open and accessible, and centering the needs of people most impacted by disasters.

Take Action

- 1 Build trust
- 2 Identify and engage champions
- 3 Hire representative staff

Invest in Innovation

Disaster preparedness leaders have designed important and essential systems. By building on what we know works and changing what we know doesn't, we can experiment, learn, and innovate together. We need to ensure inclusive disaster preparedness messaging and materials meet the needs of all Oregon communities—and we need the funding to do it.

Take Action

- 1 Move beyond translation
- 2 Develop new funding streams

Explore more at www.unitedway-pdx.org/building-resilience-together

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