

RESOLUTION NO. SCV-295

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE SANTA CLARITA VALLEY WATER AGENCY IN SUPPORT OF INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

WHEREAS, the Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency is an integrated regional water agency which demonstrates excellent communication and engagement with water customers or users in the Santa Clarita Valley, and

WHEREAS, it is crucial for SCV Water to understand the needs, priorities, and goals of diverse communities in the service area, inform customers of issues and opportunities that may affect their service, especially service disruptions, and meaningfully engage customers and water users in agency decision-making processes in order to achieve its mission of providing responsible water stewardship to ensure the Santa Clarita Valley has reliable supplies of high-quality water at a reasonable cost, and

WHEREAS, the shared values identified in the 5-Year Strategic Plan directly inform communication and engagement efforts, including *Innovation* to continually learn and grow, *Excellence* to exceed customer expectations, *Trust* to partner with community stakeholders, *Integrity* to have the highest ethical standards, exhibiting honesty, transparency, and respect for customers within the community, and

WHEREAS, the communities, households, and individuals served by the Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency have diverse backgrounds – related to their race and ethnicity, spoken languages, socio-economic status, and/or identities mentioned in the Board Policy on Fair Treatment and the Use of Authority ([Government Code §12940](#)). These qualities shape customer's unique needs and priorities as well as how they experience and interact with their water service and the Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency, and

WHEREAS, the California State Water Resources Control Board¹ and the Department of Water Resources² have undertaken efforts to better communicate with and engage diverse California communities, especially those which are communities of color, socio-economically disadvantaged, or environmentally burdened in order to address inequities and injustices related to water quality, access, delivery, and involvement, and

WHEREAS, the Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency will endeavor to:

1. Provide “best in class” service by learning more about the experiences, needs, and priorities of diverse communities, households, and individuals which rely on the water provided by the Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency
2. Foster trust and ongoing partnerships by deepening or forming new relationships with these communities, households, individuals, and the organizations which serve them
3. Develop ways to reach and inform *all* water users about issues of interest or that may be relevant to them — such as emergencies involving water quality or supply disruptions

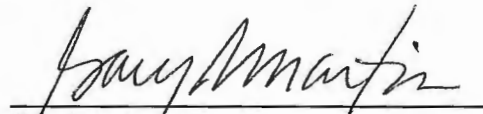
¹ California State Water Resources Control Board, [Racial Equity Resolution](#), 2021

² CA Department of Water Resources, [DAC Involvement Program](#), 2021; DWR [Stakeholder Communication and Engagement](#), 2018

4. Strengthen engagement opportunities for all communities, households, or individuals to assure meaningful involvement in the decisions which could affect them in a regular, accessible, and inclusive manner
5. Innovate and continually learn by evaluating communication and engagement efforts in an ongoing way based on water customer or user feedback and priorities

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency will seek to reach and involve all water users and develop policies and efforts which strive to achieve tangible progress towards the objectives listed above, and

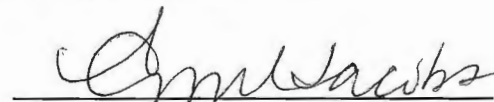
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the SCV Water Board of Directors, hereby adopts this Resolution to strengthen inclusive communication and engagement.



President

I, the undersigned, hereby certify: That I am the duly appointed and acting Secretary of the Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency, and that at a regular meeting of the Board of Directors of said Agency held on August 2, 2022 the foregoing Resolution No. SCV-295 was duly and regularly adopted by said Board, and that said resolution has not been rescinded or amended since the date of its adoption, and that it is now in full force and effect.

DATED: August 2, 2022



Secretary



DRAFT POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

SCV Water Communication and Engagement Gap Analysis

The potential implementation actions shared below are designed to address the unique needs, priorities, and interests of community leaders and SCV Water program managers while directly contributing to SCV Water’s overall mission and reflecting the guidance of regulatory agencies and water industry groups.

The draft board resolution guides the agency in strengthening communication and engagement across the diverse communities of SCV Water’s service area, especially in communities of color, socio-economically disadvantaged communities, or environmentally burdened communities. The actions offer an avenue to demonstrate SCV Water’s continued commitment to excellence.

Below are five potential implementation actions. The actions were selected based on how they address identified gaps and contribute meaningfully to the Board resolution points, as identified in the table below. We look forward to discussing these actions with you to ensure their appropriateness, authenticity, and feasibility.

Table 1: Matrix displaying what Board resolution points the potential implementation actions address.

Points from the draft board resolution on inclusive communication & engagement	Potential Actions				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Learn more about the experiences, needs, and priorities of diverse communities, households, and individuals that rely on the water provided by the Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency to provide “best in class” service		X	X		
2. Deepen and form new relationships with these communities, households, and individuals as well as the organizations that serve them to foster trust and ongoing partnership		X	X		X
3. Develop ways to reach and inform <i>all</i> water users about issues that are of interest and relevant to them —such as emergencies involving water supply and quality disruptions	X	X	X	X	X
4. Strengthen engagement opportunities for all communities, households, and individuals to be meaningfully involved in the decisions that could affect them in a regular, accessible, and inclusive manner	X	X	X	X	X
5. Evaluate communication and engagement efforts based on feedback and priorities in an ongoing way to better innovate and continually learn and grow		X	X	X	

1. Establish communication and engagement in languages other than English, especially in Spanish.

- For urgent communications, provide information in English, Spanish, and in the language spoken by any non-English-speaking group that exceeds 10 percent of persons in the service area. For each non-English-speaking group that speaks a language other than Spanish and that exceeds 1,000 residents but is less than 10 percent of the persons in the service area, provide information regarding the importance of the communication and a telephone number or address where the public water system will provide either a translated copy of the material or assistance in the appropriate language. SCV Water can explore if there are service providers who could help with

translations. This proposal is based upon a broader application current public notice requirements for public water systems in the California Code related to elevated contaminant levels.¹

- For non-urgent communication and engagement, conduct a basic analysis to determine what translation and/or interpretation services might be valuable for outreach for a program, service, or activity and if underserved communities may be impacted. When underserved water users or customers could be impacted, or when the program, service, or activity involves addressing a specific equity issue, then a more targeted effort to offer translation and/or interpretation should be pursued. The following metrics can be used as a basic analysis to assess if additional translation and/or interpretation services may be valuable to pursue:
 - The number or proportion of people with limited English proficiency to be affected (e.g., if this is greater than 10 percent of people in the service area that are likely to be affected).
 - The frequency with which people with limited English proficiency come in contact with or are affected by the program or activity.
 - The nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided.
 - The resources available and the costs of interpretation/translation services.

This proposal for non-urgent communications draws upon translation guidance from the Department of Health and Human Services.

- Translate resources that are both digital (e.g., PDFs, embedded flyers, meeting information) and hard copy (e.g., brochures, flyers, handouts).
 - Deepen outreach on public television channels and radio stations on Spanish-speaking stations like Telemundo (Channel 52), Univision (Channel 34), Azteca (Channel 54), and TeleFutura (46).²
 - Continue with the plan to offer language translation in a widget on SCV Water's redesigned website so people can translate resources into their preferred language.
 - Continue offering call-in customer care support in other languages.
- 2. Make additional connections with community partners to better understand other diverse communities and potential communication and engagement needs and opportunities.**
- Consider hosting (2-5) more one-on-one interviews with community leaders that support, represent, and/or work with individuals that have identities or statuses listed in the SCV Water Board Policy on Fair Treatment and the Use of Authority, prioritizing those identities and statuses not represented in the interviews already conducted. Use the interviews to better understand how identities and statuses affect experiences and interactions with water service and SCV Water. These conversations could build on the interviews already conducted, using the same interview guide and questions.
 - Collect and memorialize information including:
 - Avenues to learn from and listen to community partners, such as by attending community-based organization meetings to better understand their priorities and concerns.³

¹ See the *Community Characteristics Assessment Memo*, "Languages Spoken" section for more information. A data set of U.S. Census American Community Survey language data can be built to support translation/interpretation decision-making.

² See the *Community Characteristics Assessment Memo*, "Reaching and informing customers and their communities about water-related issues and opportunities" section for more potential media outlets.

³ See *Community Leader Interview Summary Memo*, "Connecting with diverse communities and understanding their needs, priorities, and goals" section for example organizations.

- Avenues to answer questions and listen to the water service interests, priorities, and concerns of community partners, such as through hosting coffee hours or informal conversations with SCV Water staff and/or Board members to hear information and ask questions related to SCV Water.
 - Methods for SCV Water to distribute information about updates, service disruptions, programs, and opportunities for customers to provide feedback and get involved. ⁴
 - Work with SCV Water program managers and staff to incorporate findings and new understanding from community partners into their work.
- 3. Advance and refine outreach and engagement with community partners, especially those that serve and work with underserved or vulnerable communities, households, and individuals.**
- Identify community partners to work with, including service providers (NGOs and City/ County agencies) that work with individuals and households that are vulnerable, such as those experiencing homelessness, food insecurity, and the elderly. ⁵
 - Review SCV Water’s existing engagement and communication efforts internally and with partners and identify best engagement and communication channels for community members. Conversations with partners could take place through via one-on-one talks, focus groups, stakeholder advisory groups, or other means that are convenient for SCV Water and its partners. In conversation, and based on partner feedback:
 - Identify opportunities to adjust content, language, rhetoric, and overall outreach techniques so all water users can engage with and benefit from SCV Water’s programs.
 - Check in with service providers and, as relevant, cross-share content to ensure individuals and households through Santa Clarita Valley have equitable access to the resources that could support them (e.g., with rebates and bill support).
 - Assess opportunities to do in-person outreach at events (e.g., church events, neighborhood and cultural celebrations, parades, etc.) in and for communities that are especially harder-to-reach (e.g., those that speak Spanish, are older, have limited internet access). ⁶
 - Promote connections with family and youth through participation in family-friendly events and outreach with and for school communities.
 - Identify modes of communication that work best for immediate attention and emergency outreach for different water users and customers as specific populations may use different modes. Develop an approach for how to use these modes of communication during an emergency and ensure they are used only when needed. ⁷

⁴ See *Community Leader Interview Summary Memo*, for numerous examples of suggested methods from organizations interviewed. These form an initial base of ideas. This action will help build that database by reaching more organizations that serve different populations and communities.

⁵ See *Community Characteristics Assessment Memo*, “Reaching and informing customers and their communities about water-related issues and opportunities” section for specific service providers.

⁶ The *Community Leader Interview Summary Memo* contains numerous potential places for in-person events that will be utilized.

⁷ See *Community Characteristics Assessment Memo*, “Reaching and informing customers and their communities about water-related issues and opportunities” section for specific modes of communications.

4. Create a SCV Water guide and provide internal training for public engagement to be used across SCV Water programs and engagement efforts.

- Develop a consistent process for how SCV Water staff can assess, design, and conduct engagement with water users and customers. A brief guide can include prompts like the following:
 - Outline how input from engagement will be used and how this input will inform SCV Water decisions.
 - Set clear goals for engagement that could be shared internally and with engagement participants.
 - Identify how engagement can be made relevant to the unique needs, interests, and priorities of communities in the service area.
 - Identify appropriate avenues for feedback – including less burdensome methods like surveys or questionnaires by phone, text, or email that would be especially beneficial for audiences with limited time or resources to attend meetings.
 - Assess how the chosen engagement effort would be relevant to underserved communities. Refine as necessary to make sure it is accessible and relevant for communities that have historically been marginalized from decision-making.
- Offer internal staff training on inclusive communication and engagement to help them effectively and respectfully engage with water users and customers and communicate in effective, accessible terms.

5. Proactively engage new customers to help them understand SCV Water, their water bills, and water conservation opportunities.⁸

- Identify opportunities to inform new water customers and users and the groups that support them so they can better understand 1) components of their bills and what they mean, 2) how to better manage costs through water conservation practices, and 3) where their water comes from. Potential avenues to inform customers could be through tabling, partnering at events, holding trainings, and providing written info materials to service providers and other organizations.
- Create new written and online outreach materials to share with new water customers/users about how to understand and manage their bills and reduce costs through water conservation.
- Identify opportunities to share these materials with first-time homeowners and renters, new water customers, and the organizations that support them (including rental property managers and organizations that help house people).

⁸ See Community Leader Interview Summary Memo, “Connecting with diverse communities and understanding their needs, priorities, and goals” section for more information and suggestions. Some organizations interviewed are potential partners for this action.