# MULTICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS: BEST PRACTICES

## Initial Critical Questions

**1. Trust**: What relationship have you cultivated with the affected communities to build trust?

**2. Expertise**: Do you have the knowledge, skill set and lived experience to lead the project?

**3. Narrative**: What current narratives exist that are damaging to marginalized communities, and what are some ways to counter or scramble those narratives?

**4. Power dynamics:** Are you the most appropriate person to manage the project?

**5. Representation**: How are communities affected by the project represented in the project? What steps will you take to ensure that their voices are included, heard, and incorporated?

**6. Decision-making:** In addition to brainstorming, vetting, and edits, are the communities affected by the project represented in all levels of the decision making process?

**7. Compensation**: Is funding available for the consultants providing feedback? Are they fairly compensated for their services?

**8. Sustainability**: What work is being done to ensure a sustainable growth?

**9. Measuring success** takes different shapes and forms, and is not always quantitative, but rather, qualitative. What steps are you taking to effectively communicate the success of your project, and how are you managing expectations?

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## Goal Setting

1. Multicultural communications works in unison with existing work, not replacing. Aspire to incorporate a multicultural lens even in your most conservative and traditional projects.
2. Multicultural communications can help evaluate storytelling projects' approach and/or refine the scope to strengthen impact.

## Development

3. Provide value to CBOs (community-based organizations) by connecting them with funders who will support them.
4. Be straightforward with potential partners when it comes to funding prospects--let them know up front how much is available, how much time they'd need to put in and what they'd get out of it.
5. Be aware of funding dynamics and when your organization's involvement is a value-add vs. a budget-suck for lower resourced groups.

## Partnerships

6. Ensure partners and funders are walking the talk through caring but tough conversations with constructive feedback from trusted messengers.

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## Partnerships (Cont.)

7. Create relationships and partner with CBOs from the start and listen to them on what their communities need. (Reject the one size fits all approach)

8. Understand power dynamics--punch up not punch down, acknowledge who you're speaking with and who you're attempting to speaking for.

9. Solicit and incorporate feedback. This helps build trust, and shows commitment to equity and inclusion.

10. Beware of outreach/input fatigue. Pace yourselves.

11. Do no harm—rather, seek to heal.

12. Stop being transactional and treating people/communities as commodities. Bring people from target communities in at the start of a campaign or project.

13. Staffing makes a difference--you may not be the best person to do the work given how your identity impacts your ability to connect with the intended audience (taking into account your race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, citizenship status, linguistic background, ability, socio-economic background, etc.) Find ways to build trust through face-time, phone and video calls, attending events, etc.

14. Beware of throwing around the word "equity" to only mean "working with POCs." Be intentional and specific since there are many intersectionalities and nuances of this work other than simply race.

## Research

15. Audience research and engagement is based on data and relationships (ideally both).

16. Beware that data can be biased--avoid looking at averages when the goal is to address deep disparities.

17. When using focus groups, ensure they are accessible to all and provide conveniences and incentives (child care, food, transportation, parking payments, gift cards, etc.).

18. Diversity exists in every community, rural, suburban and urban--the fact is that white communities are often socialized to not see marginalized groups living in their midst. Do the research to truly represent communities. If a region is homogeneous, ask why. Often genocide, segregation, gentrification, or redlining are factors that need to be addressed.

## Execution

19. Storytelling projects need to work hand- in- hand with community organizing. If a campaign wants to do storytelling or story banking with no connections to the community or no funding planned for community organizing, this is *not* a good project to pursue.

20. See and appreciate differences among audiences and coalition members, don't try to change them. Support difference rather than expecting conformity, including perspectives, behaviors, priorities, and communications mediums; media usage, mobile-online, public transit, etc.

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## Execution (cont.)

21. Find ways to multipurpose strategies, e.g. storybanking + message testing, image testing + influencer campaigns, supporting local journalism with sponsored content + storytelling. Campaigns should be efficient and build off each other.

22. If deciding which language to translate into, find out what the goal of the comms piece is. Is it to meet compliance? Tell a specific story? Make inroads with a specific community? Don't assume that the most commonly spoken language other than English is the way to go.

23. When seeking subcontractors, caterers, event venues, consultants and other services, consultants and other services, etc., support local businesses *and* make a statement. Hire local POC, LGBTQ, and other historically marginalized people, groups or businesses.

24. Assign value to people's time and information (paying for focus groups/listening sessions, photo shoots, etc.) .

25. Avoid extractive, commodities and economy-oriented language when referring to communities of color.

26. Avoid assumptions of resources (e.g. Salsa accounts, e-newsletter platform, Facebook boosts etc.). Assess needs and add capacity, if possible.

## Creative

27. Transcreation, not just translation, means adapting the content and medium to maintain the style, intent, tone and context of multiple cultures and/or communities. In cases where the original English language material is wonky to begin with, this may require a two-step process.

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## Creative (cont.)

28. Print transcreation goes through several filters, which include: a. The tone is matched with the brand (casual vs. formal will dictate which terms to use) b. The English language is vetted for sensitivity and readability; c. In-house cultural expertise flags terms or ideas that are problematic or could be clearer; d. Translation e. In-house expertise approves or provides edits/tweaks.

29. Representation is important--in spokespeople, staffing, creative, etc. to resonate with diverse audiences, but it's only the first step. Go beyond representation by building power and creating self-sustaining programs for community needs.

30. If you are looking for diverse representation in photos, be clear and upfront with clients about the value of diversity and create a process that provides you with more control over who subjects are.

31. Know the implication of association--yes, find imagery that represents diverse communities, and take the responsibility to provide concrete support.

32. Avoid the perception of a quid pro quo--e.g. Exchanging participation in a photo or video shoot for a necessary public service.

33. Fill the capacity void through creative assets. Templatize things, allow partner groups to repurpose creative tools and materials for the benefit of their own organizations through unbranded and open-access material releases.

34. Releases for photo or video subjects should be accessible and readable-- offer bilingual releases if working with a population for whom English is not their first language. Beyond the legal rights of a release, also question subjects on their comfort level and clearly articulate where this content might show up. Think through all the ways your client could possibly use the imagery, even if not for your specific project, e.g. advertisements or PSAs (public service announcements) for non-relevant topics and adjust your release accordingly.

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