

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

**RACIAL EQUITY
COMMISSION**

**MASTER
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
CROSS-SITE COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT INSIGHTS**

Prepared as a unified narrative synthesis
of the attached site executive summaries.



MASTER EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Across the ten regional executive summaries, consistent message emerges: effective community engagement is less about increasing outreach volume and more about building durable credibility through equity-centered design, barrier removal, trusted partnerships, and visible follow-through. Each region faces distinct histories, geographies, and pressures—urban displacement and political sophistication in Oakland; rural isolation and tribal sovereignty in the Klamath region of Del Norte County; agricultural labor dynamics and immigration fear in Salinas and the Central Valley; high-desert distance and infrastructure gaps in the Antelope Valley; and cumulative environmental justice burdens and housing pressures in San Diego. Yet the practical implications converge: traditional, centralized meetings and generic surveys routinely miss the residents most impacted by inequities, and repeated “listening” without visible action deepens distrust and participation fatigue.

A shared theme across sites is access as a structural condition. Transportation barriers, long distances, shift work, caregiving responsibilities, disability and aging needs, and uneven broadband shape who can participate more than their interests do. In the Antelope Valley, rapid growth combined with long travel distances and limited transit makes a single central venue a poor fit for daily life, especially for youth, seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income households without reliable transportation. In Fresno and Madera counties, dispersed unincorporated communities and infrastructure gaps create similar constraints, necessitating decentralized hubs, mobile outreach, and low-bandwidth tools such as phone, text, and paper. In the Klamath region, winding highways that are vulnerable to storms and closures underscore the importance of daylight scheduling, coordinated rides, and accessibility supports to enable elders and high-need households to participate safely.

A second shared theme is trust, safety, and historical harm. Skepticism is rational: it reflects lived experience with over-policing, uneven service delivery, underinvestment, displacement, and processes that collect input without producing visible or affective change. Oakland residents are often highly engaged and organized, but quick to detect symbolic processes that lack real decision space or

accountability. Antelope Valley residents describe distrust shaped by perceived neglect and enforcement, and they often evaluate credibility by watching who is invited, who is compensated, what is on the table for discussion, and whether prior commitments were kept. In Salinas and other agricultural communities, mixed-status households may avoid public processes unless immigration safety is explicitly communicated, practical, and reinforced by trusted partners who can attest to the space’s safety.

Third, core needs repeatedly cluster around housing stability, cost of living, and cumulative burdens on health and safety. Housing insecurity and displacement risk shape how residents interpret planning, investment, and enforcement decisions. Oakland’s displacement, homelessness, and safety concerns sit at the center of daily life and define what residents view as equity in practice. Sonoma and Santa Barbara highlight housing affordability pressures and long commutes that strain household stability and reduce time available for participation. In San Diego, the executive summary emphasizes that housing and cost of living dominate residents’ lived experience across neighborhoods and should be expected to surface in nearly every engagement conversation, regardless of the nominal topic.

Environmental and health burdens appear across the summaries as central equity concerns rather than special topics. Fresno foregrounds ecological and health justice, including exposure to air pollution, pesticides, and extreme heat, and calls for engagement that uses maps and lived experience to set priorities for environmental investment. Sonoma frames wildfire, smoke, and heat waves as equity risks that renters and low-income residents are least equipped to prepare for or recover from, and recommends pairing engagement with climate preparedness resources. San Diego highlights cumulative impacts in port-adjacent and freeway-adjacent neighborhoods and the Tijuana River Valley sewage crisis as a credibility test for institutions, reinforcing that engagement must acknowledge harms directly and connect community input to concrete action pathways.

The summaries also highlight significant regional and site-level differences that should inform engagement

design. Urban contexts such as Oakland and San Diego require engagement capable of addressing politically complex and emotionally charged issues (displacement, land use, policing, cumulative pollution) while offering culturally specific spaces, multilingual support, and transparent decision pathways that maintain community at the center. Rural and mixed rural-urban counties such as Fresno, Madera, Santa Barbara, and Sonoma require decentralized engagement hubs organized by subregion, as well as mobile approaches to reach remote or underserved communities. Agricultural regions such as Salinas and parts of Santa Barbara and Fresno counties require engagement embedded into existing community spaces and schedules, with promoters, worker-serving organizations, and youth leaders positioned as co-designers. The Klamath region requires an additional foundation: engagement must recognize Yurok sovereignty and treat tribal partners as co-governors, align timing with cultural calendars, and design processes through trusted Yurok facilities and leadership.

Taken together, the cross-cutting needs point to engagement infrastructure, not one-off events. Effective strategies should be distributed and place-based; reduce the real costs of participation through

stipends, childcare, food, and transportation supports; deliver robust language access and culturally rooted facilitation; create trauma-informed and immigration-safe spaces; and, where relevant, operate through sovereignty-centered co-governance. Across sites, pairing engagement with tangible services and problem-solving demonstrates immediate value, while a visible feedback-and-accountability loop (what we heard, what we are doing, by when, and who is responsible) is the primary mechanism for rebuilding trust over time.

San Diego's summary illustrates how these principles scale in a large city: it notes that the City of San Diego is home to roughly 1.39 million residents and that approximately 40% of residents ages 5+ speak a language other than English at home, with about one-quarter of residents foreign-born. These conditions reinforce the need for multilingual engagement, hybrid access, and neighborhood-anchored partnerships through institutions residents already use. While most other summaries in this set are primarily qualitative rather than metric-heavy, they converge on the same operational conclusion: to be equitable and effective, engagement must be designed around residents' lived constraints and strengths, and it must reliably convert participation into visible, locally meaningful change.

Key Cross-Cutting Findings

- **Access is structural:** distance, transit gaps, shift work, caregiving demands, disability and aging needs, and uneven broadband predict participation more than “interest.”
- **Trust is earned through action:** communities assess credibility by decision space, transparency, follow-through, and whether engagement changes policies, practices, and resource allocation.
- **Language access is a baseline requirement:** multilingual materials, culturally rooted facilitation, and language-specific spaces are essential in diverse communities.
- **Housing stability and cost pressure** recur across sites and frequently dominate what residents raise, even when the official topic is different.
- **Environmental and health burdens** are core equity issues (air quality, pesticides, heat, wildfire smoke, industrial and port emissions) that shape participation and priorities.
- **Trusted intermediaries matter:** CBOs, faith anchors, community health workers, youth networks, tribal facilities, campuses, and libraries often provide the most credible pathways to sustained engagement.
- **One-size-fits-all approaches fail:** urban and rural contexts require different engagement formats, venues, and timelines, while sharing common equity principles.
- **Feedback loops are the primary trust test:** “what we heard, what we are doing, by when” must be communicated repeatedly through trusted channels.



Region/Site Highlights



Antelope Valley

- High-desert geography, rapid growth, and long distances make centralized meetings impractical; distributed pop-ups and mobile engagement are essential.
- Limited public transit increases participation costs, particularly for youth, seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income households.
- Historical and ongoing harms (over-policing, perceived neglect, and enforcement-related fear) contribute to distrust and input fatigue.
- A resilient civic ecosystem exists (CBOs, faith anchors, youth networks) and should be compensated and engaged as co-designers.

Fresno County

- A pronounced metro–rural divide requires parallel but connected engagement tracks for South Fresno and rural/unincorporated communities.
- Environmental and health justice (air pollution, pesticides, extreme heat) should be treated as central engagement content and priority-setting.
- High linguistic diversity requires robust language access beyond English and Spanish, with culturally rooted facilitators.
- Transportation and broadband gaps require low-bandwidth and mobile engagement tools (phone, text, paper, and rotating field teams).



Klamath Region (Del Norte County)

- Engagement must begin with Yurok sovereignty and be co-designed with tribal leadership; tribal partners are co-governors, not stakeholders.
- Geographic isolation and road vulnerability make transportation planning and daylight scheduling core engagement design elements.
- Digital access remains uneven despite broadband initiatives; layered phone, paper, and on-site options are required.
- Pair engagement with concrete supports and repeated follow-through to overcome long-standing consultation fatigue.



Madera County

- Dispersed rural and unincorporated communities require decentralized hubs hosted through schools, churches, clinics, and community centers.
- Bilingual, culturally grounded facilitation is essential for Latino and mixed-status households that may be cautious of public systems.
- Farmworker schedules limit participation during standard hours; evenings/weekends and support (food, childcare, stipends) increase feasibility.
- Promoters and local leaders are trusted bridges and should be engaged and compensated as ongoing partners.

Oakland

- Displacement, homelessness, and public safety are central to equity conversations and must be addressed directly in engagement.
- Stark spatial inequities between hills and flats require targeted, neighborhood-specific engagement investments in flatland communities.
- Oakland's dense civic infrastructure enables partnership, but symbolic processes without decision space rapidly erode trust.
- Multilingual and culturally specific spaces are necessary to include immigrant communities and avoid one-size-fits-all formats.



Salinas & Salinas Valley

- Agricultural work realities shape time availability and perceived risk; engagement should be embedded into existing community spaces and schedules.
- Immigration safety must be explicit and operational (confidentiality, no status questions, trusted co-hosts).
- Youth are heavily impacted yet often under-engaged; establish paid youth roles and peer-led engagement methods.
- Use layered communication channels (Spanish-language media, flyers, WhatsApp, and community messengers) and include indigenous language access where needed.

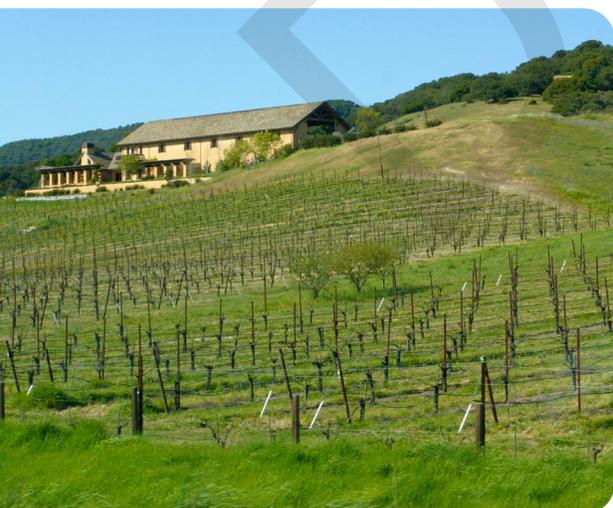


City of San Diego

- North–South and coastal–inland divides structure opportunity and trust; prioritize central, portside, and South Bay neighborhoods.
- Environmental justice burdens in port- and freeway-adjacent communities and the Tijuana River Valley crisis are credibility tests for institutions.
- The summary reports roughly 1.39 million residents, with approximately 40% speaking a non-English language at home and about one-quarter foreign-born.
- SDCCE campuses, libraries, and neighborhood civic ecosystems are strategic anchors for sustained, multilingual engagement.

Santa Barbara County

- A clear North–South divide requires separate but connected engagement tracks and cross-regional learning.
- North County farmworker and mixed-status immigrant communities need multilingual, immigration-safe engagement in trusted venues.
- Housing affordability, overcrowding, and commuting burdens should be central agenda items in both regions.
- Transportation and regional mobility are both logistics constraints and equity issues to address in engagement content.



Sonoma County

- ‘Wine country’ branding can obscure worker hardship; engagement should explicitly center renters, workers, and low-income residents.
- Climate and wildfire resilience should be integrated into equity agendas, with attention to renters’ and workers’ constraints.
- Geographic variety requires regional hubs and mobile approaches to reach coast, valleys, towns, and urban centers.
- Pair engagement with housing and climate resources (tenant rights, preparedness, navigation) to increase relevance and trust.



Priority Recommendations

- 1** | Build a distributed engagement infrastructure (hubs, pop-ups, and mobile outreach, supported by low-bandwidth options).
Rationale: This addresses recurring constraints related to distance, transit, broadband gaps, and work schedules across urban, rural, and mixed regions.
- 2** | Formalize co-governance with trusted partners (CBOs, promotoras, youth networks, tribal leadership, campuses, and libraries).
Rationale: Trusted institutions provide reach and credibility; treating them as co-designers and paying for their expertise improves relevance and trust.
- 3** | Budget for barrier removal as standard practice (stipends/honoraria, childcare, food, transportation supports, accessibility).
Rationale: Participation has real opportunity costs; reducing those costs is a practical equity strategy and improves representation.
- 4** | Make language access and cultural specificity non-negotiable (translation, interpretation, language-specific spaces, culturally rooted facilitation).
Rationale: Multilingual communities cannot engage fully without clear communication and culturally safe spaces; this is foundational, not optional.
- 5** | Design for safety and dignity (trauma-informed practice, immigration-safe protocols, and explicit confidentiality protections).
Rationale: Fear of enforcement or retaliation suppresses participation; safety protocols expand who can engage and improve the quality of input.
- 6** | Center the issues residents raise most consistently (housing stability, cost of living, and cumulative environmental and health burdens) and connect them to decisions.
Rationale: Engagement gains legitimacy when it aligns with lived priorities and clearly explains what is on the table, who decides, and how input will shape action.
- 7** | Institutionalize a visible feedback and accountability loop (what we heard, what we are doing, who is responsible, and by when).
Rationale: Follow-through is the dominant trust test across sites; frequent, plain-language updates through trusted channels reduce input fatigue.



Data Notes / Assumptions



Quantitative data points in this set of executive summaries are limited. The San Diego summary includes explicit citywide figures (roughly 1.39 million residents; approximately 40% speaking a language other than English at home; about one-quarter foreign-born). Other summaries describe conditions qualitatively (e.g., “higher poverty,” “aging population,” “high rates of asthma”) without specific numeric values.



The Antelope Valley charts/visual highlights are described as illustrative and note that “actual data should be updated using the most current information available.” Treat visuals as placeholders unless validated against the current data brief or an agreed data source.



If later versions include conflicting values for the same indicator, resolve by standardizing (a) geography (city vs county vs tract), (b) dataset and year, and (c) the reporting frame (e.g., ACS 5-year). When a metric varies by subregion (e.g., hills vs. flats; North vs. South County), preserve both and label the subregion and its source. This Master Summary assumes that “engagement success” is defined consistently as inclusive participation, credible decision influence, and sustained feedback loops. If the intended outcome varies by site (e.g., commission meeting attendance vs. policy co-design), align evaluation measures accordingly.

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