

COMMUNICATIONS GUIDANCE AND QUICK TIPS

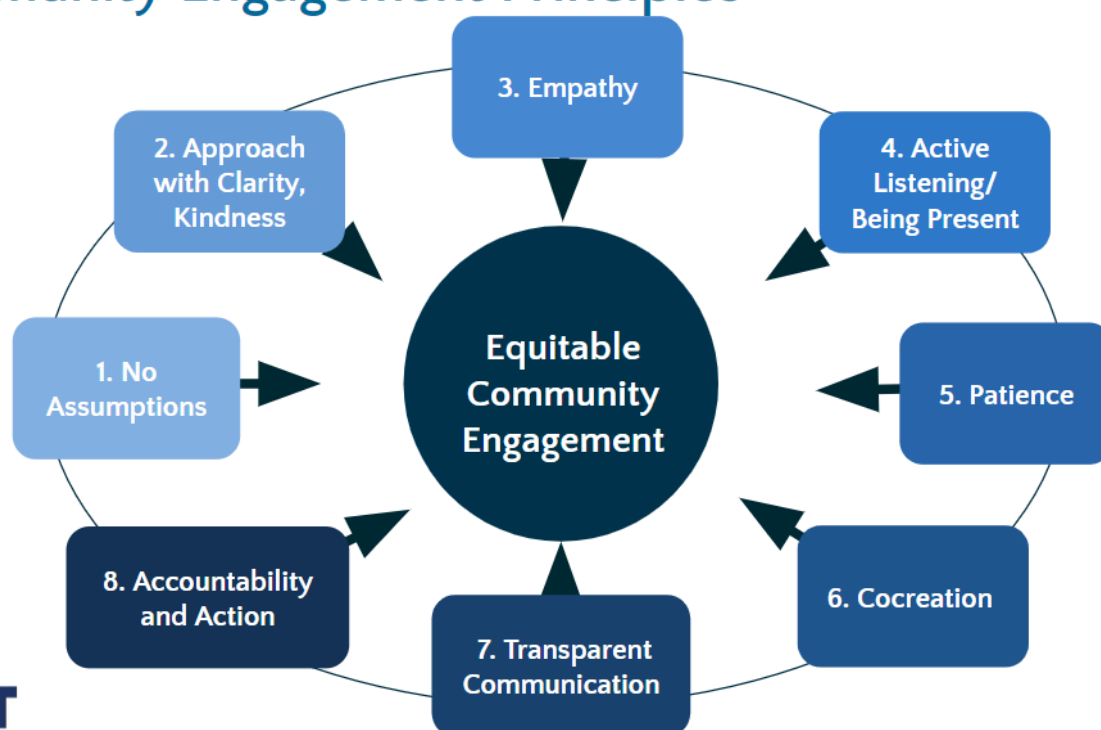
The following communications guidance intends to support LADOT staff in daily interactions within bureaus, across the agency, and with the community. While this is not an exhaustive list, these tips support the Department's Community First Engagement Framework and Principles.

Keep in mind that effective communication is a continuous process of improvement. Regularly seek feedback, reflect on your communication style, and adapt to your audiences' needs for an optimal experience. It's recommended that you discuss your internal communication styles and expectations at the start of any initial partnership meetings and inter-department projects.

The following Community Engagement Principles were presented in Module 2. The core goal of communication is to build a connection with a person, a team, and any audience you encounter in your day. Success relies on putting into practice many, if not all, of the principles listed below. It does require practice and a choice to integrate these into any conversation.

Reflection question: *How is communication a core practice in the success of your team, department or project? How can you continue to build inclusive communication skills with your team?*

Community Engagement Principles



TIPS FOR IMPROVING COMMUNICATION

1. Implement LADOT's Community First Engagement Approach

This approach prioritizes impacted communities, targeting historically underserved and communities of color, in creating and providing engagement strategies as a core City service. The approach was developed to intentionally and holistically incorporate the viewpoints, lived experiences, and perspectives of those most impacted by a planning project. Refer to the [LADOT Community Engagement Guide](#) for detailed information.

2. Active Listening

Practice attentive listening by focusing on the speaker, whether a colleague or audience member, without interruptions. Show engagement through nods and verbal affirmations to demonstrate understanding.

3. Clarity and Conciseness

Clearly articulate your message, avoiding jargon or unnecessary complexity. Be concise, conveying your point efficiently so it is easier to understand, opening the way to more dialogue and clarifying questions.

4. Non-Verbal Cues

Pay attention to body language, facial expressions, and gestures. Align your non-verbal cues with your message for deeper understanding and connection. Also, notice the body language of your audience to pause and adjust or open space for questions.

5. Practice Empathy

Understand and acknowledge others' perspectives. Cultivate empathy to build trust and strengthen relationships through genuine understanding. Empathy creates an opportunity to acknowledge each other's experiences and feelings, not to compare or judge one another.

6. Use "I" Statements

Express your thoughts and feelings using "I" statements. It helps you communicate your concerns, feelings, and needs. It helps to build trust through vulnerability and openness. Minimizing coming across as blaming, threatening, or defensive.

7. Feedback Loop

Create an environment where individuals feel comfortable sharing thoughts and ideas. Encourage feedback to foster open dialogue. Establish clear practices and communications guidelines for providing feedback to share with your teams. Preparing some questions in advance for meetings and working sessions will help promote discussion.

8. Be Mindful of Tone

Pay attention to the tone of your voice. A warm and respectful tone can enhance the receptivity of your message. Be mindful but always be authentic; some conversations will be difficult, some will be collaborative, and some will be warm.

9. Be Thoughtful in Choosing the Communication Channel

What is the best way to communicate, in person, by phone, or via email? Select communication channels based on the nature of your message and your audience. For example, use face-to-face communication for more sensitive matters.

10. Cultural Sensitivity

Be aware of cultural nuances to avoid misunderstandings. Respect diverse perspectives and adapt your communication style accordingly. Refer to Racial Equity training modules for background and context. You can access them here. [INSERT link to trainings and recordings]

11. Use of Pronouns

Using pronouns is a way to build inclusivity, understanding, and respect for people's identities. Normalizing the practice of using pronouns can support a more open communication culture. Some may prefer not to use this practice, and that is ok, too.

12. Intergenerational Conversations

Diverse workplaces like LADOT include people from various lived experiences, cultures, ethnicities, and ages or generations. Learning to create space for and understand the different communication styles of different generations is a good practice. Here are two examples:

- Invest in learning about communication styles and generational differences instead of following stereotypes. Create opportunities for teams to learn together as well.
- Create small group or mentorship opportunities for generations to share experiences and learn from each other.
- For more tips and additional reading, [The Executive's Guide to Leading Millennials, GenXer's and Baby Boomers](#) and [Harvard Business Review article](#)

13. Gender Inclusive Language

As we learn to create a more profound sense of belonging and inclusivity, being mindful of language's role is key. Additional reading resource: For more detailed information and tools about gender-inclusive language practices, see the [UN Guidelines for Gender Inclusive Language](#) and the American [Psychological Association Inclusive Language Guide](#).

14. Follow Up

Conclude conversations by summarizing key points and proposing the next steps and action items. Follow up to ensure clarity and address any lingering questions or concerns. Use tools like calendars or project management platforms to set reminders and deadlines.

Reflection question: *What other tips are essential to this list?*

TOOLS FOR BUILDING INCLUSIVE MEETINGS AND PARTNERSHIPS

LADOT Racial Equity Core Team Mission Statement and Core Principles

The LADOT Racial Equity Core Team's Mission is to advance equity within our Department's work and share knowledge with our peers on how to serve our communities better. *Our Core Principles are:*

- Advance Equity
- Fostering Leadership
- Valuing Both Lived Experiences and Research
- Advancing Systemic Change
- Creating Space for Meaningful Reflections

Understanding Community First Engagement

LADOT's Community First Engagement approach prioritizes impacted communities, targeting historically underserved and communities of color, in creating and providing engagement strategies as a core City service. The approach was developed to intentionally and holistically incorporate the viewpoints, lived experiences, and perspectives of those most impacted by a planning project. Language is a powerful tool. It can create connections and collaboration when we consider all. Here are some examples of People First Language.

Use these words	Don't Use these words
People with disabilities	The handicapped, the disabled, the impaired
An individual or person with a disability	Disabled person
Access and functional need	Special needs, vulnerable
Deaf, hard of hearing, hearing loss, sensory disability	Deaf and dumb, the deaf, mute
Accessible communication, effective communication	Special communication
She has a mobility disability	She's mobility impaired, wheelchair bound, physically challenged, crippled, an invalid, lame, differently-abled, bedridden, house-bound, a shut-in

*There are more examples like this in the [Psychological Association Inclusive Language Guide](#).

Land Acknowledgement Statement

If appropriate, collaborate with the Equity team to prepare a statement describing why LADOT includes a land acknowledgment in their community engagement practices. While these statements are increasingly used, some audience participants may need to be more familiar with the purpose and intention of land acknowledgment. LADOT's statement.

We acknowledge that we are meeting on the Indigenous lands of Turtle Island, the ancestral name for what now is called North America. We acknowledge the Chumash and Tongva Peoples, whose land we are on is now called Los Angeles.

Communications Guidelines

Creating a set of communication agreements for meetings is a good way to create a safe environment for everyone in the group to participate. Inviting the group to add or edit agreements is good practice to increase inclusivity and engagement. The guidelines should be adaptable to changing circumstances, and regular review and updates are essential to keep them relevant and effective. These are the agreements that were used in the Employee Capacity Building Project:

1. Be curious, open, and respectful
2. Use "I" statements
3. Take space, make space
4. Be aware of your intent and the impact of your words
5. Take care of your needs.
6. Practice, "Yes, and ..."
7. Invite meeting participants to add to this list.

Icebreakers

If appropriate to the setting and audience, prepare a short icebreaker exercise. These exercises help focus participants who may arrive at meetings with other things on their minds (deadlines, traffic, etc.) and also provide a chance to connect through personal insights or experiences. It can be as simple as these examples: Describe with one word how you are feeling today or what's your favorite candybar. There are many free question generators available online to help with this practice. Here is [one](#).