

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION		NUMBER: 4360-001
SUBJECT: Communicating With Under-served Communities	DATE: January 14, 1998	
	OPI: Office of Outreach	

1 PURPOSE

To establish Departmental policy to ensure that educational and technical assistance services and communications materials are available to all customers in languages appropriate to the community being served, and that USDA offices use appropriate media outlets to distribute information to under-served communities.

2 REPONSIBILITIES

a Communicating USDA Programs. Agency heads shall develop and implement communications plans that include an outreach component. Agency heads shall adequately fund these plans to meet all civil rights obligations pertaining to developing publications and documents in alternative formats (i.e., Braille, large print, cassette, open or closed captioning), and in languages other than English, as deemed appropriate for the agency mission.

When developing a communication strategy for the program or service area, the plan must include media outreach to under-served customers such as women, racial and ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities. Plans should also include providing information in other languages, public service announcements in publications, and outreach to radio and TV stations serving persons in other languages,

b Employee Training. Managers and supervisors shall ensure that all employees are aware of policies, practices, and procedures guaranteeing effective communication to all customers and others, and that each employee holding a "public contact position" is aware of USDA's civil rights obligation and commitment to ensuring equal opportunity to access information and services. Managers and supervisors are responsible for effectively implementing this requirement and will be held accountable in their performance standards for their actions.

3 CROSS REFERENCE

Further information on communicating with persons with disabilities may be found in the Department's section 504 Handbook.

4 INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

To reach limited resource customers and under-served communities, wherever possible, agencies shall collaborate and cooperate in producing information items and when conducting communication activities.

5 NON-TRADITIONAL OUTREACH

To reach limited resource customers and under-served communities more effectively, agency heads will ensure that communications plans include informal communication outlets such as community leaders, schools, and associations.

6 AIDS AND SERVICES

Agencies shall provide appropriate auxiliary aids or services to people with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills, where reasonably necessary, such that agencies assure that these persons have an equal opportunity to benefit from the agency's services.

It is USDA's intent to meet all such reasonable requests for aids and services. Alternative formats include, but are not limited to, the provision of information in the language of the community being served; formats such as Braille, large print, and cassette tape; use of a sign language interpreter; use of a language translator; room seating arrangements to accommodate lip-reading, visual impairments, and other special needs; verbal descriptions of flipcharts, transparencies, and so forth, for people who have visual impairments; and sites that are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

7 USE OF THE INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGIES

All national publications shall be accessible on the Internet or available in other forms of electronic technology. At a minimum, agencies are required to post a notice on their homepage which:

a States the availability of the publication in other electronic formats (i.e., ASCII);

b States the availability of the publication in alternative formats (i.e., Braille, large print, cassette, and/or other languages); and;

c Provides ordering information for those requesting documents, which includes an agency mailing address, facsimile, Telecommunications Device for the Deaf, and voice telephone number.