

SANDAG FHWA Title VI Program Plan 2023-2024 Accomplishments and Goals Report

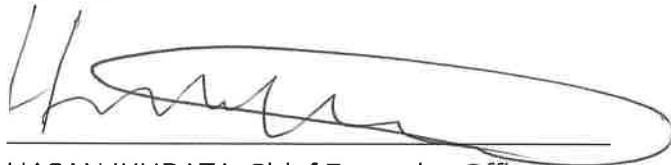
Executive Summary

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) prohibits discrimination based upon race, color, and national origin. Specifically, 42 USC 2000d states, "No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." The SANDAG Executive Director has directed all agency employees, contractors, and agents to develop programs, policies, and activities which help SANDAG be fully compliant with these requirements. The Director of the Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE) is the Title VI Coordinator, authorized to ensure compliance with this policy.

In accordance with Federal Highway Administration civil rights regulations, SANDAG must develop an annual Accomplishments and Goals Report, submit it to the SANDAG Chief Executive Officer, and keep it on record for possible review.

This report covers accomplishments for the 2023 calendar year and goals for the 2024 calendar year.

Signed,



HASAN IKHRATA, Chief Executive Officer

12.12.23

Date

Introduction

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) prohibits discrimination based upon race, color, and national origin. Specifically, 42 USC 2000d states, "No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." In 2022, SANDAG staff developed a Title VI Program Plan compliant with FHWA requirements; in accordance with those requirements and Caltrans regulations, SANDAG must also develop an annual Accomplishments and Goals Report, submitted to the SANDAG Chief Executive Officer and kept on record for possible review.

This report covers accomplishments for the 2023 calendar year and goals for the 2024 calendar year.

The Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE)

ODE is responsible for developing, implementing, and monitoring SANDAG's Title VI programs. The ODE capacity expanded in 2023, with the hire of a full-time staff dedicated to initiatives related to Title VI, environmental justice and social equity. This capacity will be further strengthened in 2024 with the hiring of a full-time resource to support the language assistance program.

In 2023, ODE's accomplishments included:

- Onboarding of a new full-time resource specifically dedicated to Title VI compliance, social equity and environmental justice.
- Update and posting of Title VI "Know your Rights" brochure in SANDAG's public areas. The brochure was translated into the agency's tier 1 and tier 2 harbor languages as well as provided in large print.
- Update and deliver targeted Social Equity trainings for specific departments (Planning, Public Affairs and Engineering and Construction).
- Participate in SANDAG activities intended to advance the Board of Directors' Commitment to Equity, including leading the development of the Equity Action Plan.
- Implement and expand the reach of SANDAG's Language Assistance Plan; reviewing standard scopes of work and contractual narrative to include references to the Plan, creating tools and processes to support understanding and application of the four-factor analysis, and dissemination of information regarding the plan.
- Review and provide guidance for regional transit agencies' CIPs.
- Review and provide guidance to Grants Department and equity analysis of subrecipient funding.
- Prepare a Title VI analysis of a new fare medium for NCTD COASTER service.
- Collaboration with staff across the agency and review of many projects and activities to ensure program areas work is compliant with SANDAG's Title VI program and follows best practices regarding social equity and environmental justice.

No discrimination complaint was received, nor corrective action plan required.

Program Review Areas

As noted above, in addition to oversight and compliance efforts carried out by ODE directly, ODE worked with staff throughout the year to ensure the Title VI mandate was included and

expanded throughout the program areas. The following areas form the foundation of SANDAG's programs.

Regional Planning

Regional Planning staff are responsible for the Regional Plan and a wide range of programs and projects related to climate, digital equity, environmental compliance, intergovernmental coordination, integrated transportation, mobility, strategic partnerships, sustainable communities, and technology. Planning staff manage and coordinate SANDAG's Social Equity and Environmental Justice Initiative: conducting social equity analyses for regional plans, programs, and projects; leading public outreach and engagement strategies, partnering with Community Based Organizations (CBOs); and developing and implementing plans and policies that advance social equity and environmental justice.

ODE staff provided technical support for Regional Planning's equity analyses. Recurrent training on social equity, including Title VI and language assistance requirements, was provided for all Regional Planning staff.

In 2023, ODE staff worked with Regional Planning staff on the following specific accomplishments:

- Support development of RTIP social equity analysis process.
- Create guidance on appropriate language to use in reference to communities who are underserved, underrepresented and subject to discrimination.
- Support social equity analysis of SANDAG's flexible fleet pilot program.
- Consult on equity considerations in various planning projects.
- Initiate the development of a White Paper on Social Equity considerations for the future Otay Mesa East port of entry.

Data Science

Data Science staff collect, analyze, and model demographic data on an ongoing basis to better understand the populations being served by SANDAG's activities and inform the delivery of SANDAG services; promote best practices in the use and distribution of open data and "big" data. Data Science staff provide guidance and support to SANDAG staff to analyze the benefits and burdens of a wide array of policies, programs, and projects and ensure such activities do not have discriminatory effects on populations protected by civil rights laws and regulations. They develop charts and maps to illustrate data findings; and they help regional stakeholders and members of the public transform data into intelligent actions to attain the greatest economic and social benefits.

ODE staff communicated with Project Managers and Data Science staff to ensure data collection and use met federal and local guidelines. ODE staff also maintained and shared additional data acquired during the development of Title VI, environmental justice, and language assistance efforts.

In 2023, ODE staff worked with Data Science staff on the following specific accomplishments:

- Review and update of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) data in support of project-based four-factor analysis.
- Preparation and review of maps and data for the social equity analysis of SANDAG's flexible fleet pilot projects.
- Preparation and review of data related to unemployment among native populations in support of the Community-Benefits Agreement program.

Engineering & Construction

Engineering and Construction staff lead and manage active transportation programs, corridor studies, and capital projects, from planning through the environmental, design, and construction phases of project development. They provide insight and best practice-based recommendations and engineering technical assistance to SANDAG leadership, elected officials, outside organizations, stakeholders, and the public.

ODE staff reviewed scopes of work and other in-progress documents as capital projects were being developed, to ensure meaningful public engagement was conducted for populations with populations historically underserved, underrepresented and subject to discrimination. Attention was focused on ensuring persons with LEP can access program/project information. In addition, engineering and construction projects are subject to civil rights review and analyses as part of national and state environmental review processes.

In 2023, ODE staff worked with Engineering & Construction staff on the following specific accomplishments:

- Review of the Contractor Manual to update guidance and information pertaining to Title VI requirements.
- Provide training on social equity analyses and responsibilities of Project Managers working with contractors, subrecipients and the public.
- Review contract templates for contractors.

Public Affairs

Public Affairs staff is responsible for disseminating information and providing opportunities for members of the public to participate in decision-making activities, through government relations and outreach activities. This department is also responsible for the development of a wide range of materials, including documents, visual communications, and web content, and by providing editorial support, social media strategies, and marketing.

This program is charged with ensuring all members of the community, including those from Title VI-protected populations and those with limited English proficiency, can access information and participate in decision-making activities. ODE staff supported the Public Affairs team in their interpretation and application of SANDAG's Language Assistance Plan (LAP), providing training about language assistance resources and tools and technical assistance to ensure public materials conform to LAP guidelines.

Over the last calendar year, the Public Affairs team interacted with the public through a variety of events and using a multitude of formats. Table 1 shows the type of assistance that was provided as part of our public affairs and community engagement efforts:

Table 1: Language assistance provided during calendar year 2023 (as of December 1, 2023)

Type of assistance	Estimated amount
Translated e-blasts	60
Translated print or online materials*	46
Translated website features*	3
Translated materials at public events	14
Interpretation at public events	8

* Most of SANDAG's web content is already translated through a Google Translate plugin

In 2023, ODE staff worked with Public Affairs staff on the following specific accomplishments:

- Provide training on social equity as it pertains to meaningful engagement.
 - Develop a debrief survey to be distributed to participants following public engagement activities.
 - Streamline and update the information about language and accessibility accommodations offered by SANDAG to encourage participation by all.
 - Provide technical support to Outreach team on application of the four-factor analysis.
 - Process requests related to translation and interpretation at public events.
 - Conduct a new procurement for as-needed interpretation services.
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Board of Directors, Policy Advisory Committees and Working Groups

In addition to the planning, engineering and construction work that SANDAG conducts, the agency holds recurring Board of Directors, Policy Advisory Committee and Working Group meetings to discuss and provide guidance over various components of its work.

In 2023, ODE worked with the Clerk of the Board on the following accomplishment:

- Continue to provide systematic Spanish simultaneous interpretation at all the agency's Board of Director meetings and Public Advisory Committee meetings, as well as for at most of its working group meetings. Interpretation in other languages was also made available upon request. Over 90 meetings were held with Spanish interpretation.

Title VI Program Goals for 2024

SANDAG's Title VI program goals for 2024 include:

- Update SANDAG's Triennial Title VI Program for FTA.
- Update, deliver, and make training pertaining to Title VI, language assistance and social equity available to all SANDAG staff on the employee intranet.
- Expand professional capacity in the Office of Diversity and Equity to help the agency develop and implement best practices for advancing civil rights.
- Cultivate relationships across agency Project Managers, and provide social equity analysis training to ensure projects and program areas advance and comply with Title VI requirements.
- Provide ongoing review and provision of Title VI support to regional transit agencies and other subrecipients.
- Review and provide recommendations for amendments to non-discrimination policies.
- Assist in developing data collection and methodology standards for equity analyses.
- Finalize the development of the Equity Action Plan and develop an implementation strategy for the short, medium and longer terms.
- Expand systematic simultaneous interpretation in Spanish to include all of SANDAG's working groups.
- Update SANDAG's Social Equity Handbook to present updated information about Title VI, environmental justice, social equity and how to apply these principles and requirements to the diverse components of SANDAG's external and internal work initiatives.
- Conduct a mid-term review of SANDAG's Language Assistance Plan and determine corrections and revisions to the Plan as needed.

- Formally combine ADA Effective Communications requirements with language assistance requirements.
 - Strengthen and expand relationships with other public entities to share best practices and identify opportunities for collaboration.
 - Expand the agency's technical and strategic capacity in the DEI field through ongoing learning.
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