



The following comprises our recommendations to help Fresno COG achieve the goals and objectives laid forth in the RFP. These recommendations include tried and true best practices for public outreach for an RTP/SCS, in addition to some emerging technologies that we are poised to implement on Fresno COG’s behalf. A particular focus throughout this work plan is ensuring equitable, inclusive and multilingual outreach and working to ensure all Fresno County residents can make their voices heard through an exhaustive, multipronged grassroots, digital, media and community-based outreach campaign. The following is subject to change based on ongoing feedback and information garnered during the kickoff session.

A. Project Initiation

The project launch lays the foundation for a comprehensive, exhaustive public outreach and engagement process. Our team will coordinate a kickoff with Fresno COG and any other project partners, as noted below. This will occur within two weeks of the notice of intent to award.

- **Kickoff session (May/June 2024):** As a first step, our team will convene a kickoff session to launch the project officially. This will serve as an opportunity for our team to meet with the Fresno COG team to gain a deeper understanding of goals, outreach conducted to date, stakeholders to be engaged, lessons learned from prior RTP outreach cycles and more. Our team will coordinate meeting logistics, lead the meeting, take action notes and provide a summary of the meeting to distribute to attendees.

Deliverables

- Kickoff session agenda
- Action notes

B. Community Engagement Program

Developing a robust community engagement program is a critical first step in an equitable outreach process, which will ultimately help develop the best possible RTP/SCS for the region. Our team will work with Fresno COG to ensure our community engagement program is in keeping with the critical outreach and engagement strategies outlined by the RTP Public Outreach Strategy that is slated for adoption later this year. From there, we will work to develop messaging that is readily understood by the general public; collateral materials that handily convey technical planning concepts in simple, readily understood language; and multipronged, innovative engagement strategies with stakeholders across the County that will enable our team to gather ample feedback from the region’s diverse audiences. The following represents our high-level approach, which is subject to change based on ongoing feedback. Further, we will modify our outreach and engagement approach in real time based on performance measures.

- **Communications plan:** We will work closely with Fresno COG to develop a strategic communications plan centered around RTP/SCS phases and key milestones. The plan will include effective tactics identified during the lessons learned analysis, traditional outreach activities such as briefings and presentations, and innovative digital and grassroots outreach designed to reach target communities. Although our plan will outline a comprehensive approach to engaging with every community member, we know that things can change at the drop of a hat.

Our team can proactively anticipate narratives and potential media headlines, preemptively prepare for them, and react rapidly to situations that unfold in real time. We’re the kind of people who have backup plans for our backup plans. Our staff record for drafting a full press release is 16 minutes while facilitating community engagement at an event.

- **Message platform:** An overarching message platform will be developed explaining the comprehensive nature of the RTP/SCS while conveying complex information in simple, easy-to-understand terms and linking overarching ideas of importance to the community, such as quality of life. Messages will be incorporated into Fresno COG-branded collateral materials and may be adjusted in response to stakeholder feedback as outreach moves forward.

- **Key stakeholder list:** We recommend creating a comprehensive key stakeholder list, if not already developed, with a special focus on communities that have been traditionally underreached, underserved, and/or may lack access to the internet to help drive outreach planning. Further, the stakeholder list can be refined based on ongoing feedback to include the following recommendations:

- **Identify spokespeople:** If desired, we will work closely with Fresno COG to identify at least five to ten Fresno COG staff, board members, community-based organization leaders, member agency leaders, interested stakeholders, and other trusted community leaders who may serve as spokespeople on the RTP/SCS, with a focus on ensuring a diversity of backgrounds, perspectives, and areas of expertise. These spokespeople will also partner with our noted community liaisons and ambassadors to maximize our unique approaches to engaging each subregion. It will also be important to engage bilingual spokespeople with proficiency in the following languages to conduct media interviews with in-language outlets: Spanish, Hmong and Punjabi, among others.

- **High-level virtual reality planning concepts:** We appreciate that sometimes it is easier to see something and experience it via a rendering, video or other visual means. With this in mind, we recommend developing some prototypical VR renderings of various planning concepts. These can help people engage and better understand how various planning concepts would work in real time, helping us further obtain feedback and cut through the technical jargon to reach people.

- **Public Input web page:** If needed, we will develop infographics and provide design support for the RTP/SCS Public Input page on Fresno COG's website to disseminate relevant, timely project information and updates and ensure transparency throughout the process.

- **Eblasts and newsletters:** To ensure all stakeholders remain informed and up to date with all public information related to the RTP/SCS, we will work with the Fresno COG team to develop unique eblasts for different audiences based on their interests. This could be done through a subscription survey in which people select the other parts of the RTP/SCS that interest them. The eblasts will be kept short, punchy, and provide new and exciting information. We will offer editions in any applicable languages to maximize our engagement with the community.

- **Equitable writing elements:** A key consideration for all outreach strategies is ensuring we are using equitable writing across materials. Having an understanding that each audience is unique and that it is important to cater outreach materials and messaging to each audience is critical to a successful outreach model. It ensures that all can be engaged throughout Fresno COG's efforts. Furthermore, in developing any collateral, our team will ensure the language used can be widely understood and digestible by all audiences.



- **Communications materials:** To support all external, community, media, and internal communications, we will work with Fresno COG to develop a variety of communications materials and resources that connect to people on a personal level and engage key audiences in the plan development process. All materials will use simple, easy-to-understand language and will be developed in English, Spanish, and other languages, as appropriate, to support outreach efforts. These materials could include, but are not limited to:

Collateral materials:

- Fact sheets
- One-pagers
- Fliers
- Brochures
- Maps
- Event programs
- FAQs
- Exhibits
- Public comment forms
- Talking points
- Briefing presentations
- Display boards and signage
- Infographics
- Print advertising

Digital communications:

- E-toolkits
- Eblast and newsletters
- Public Input page design and content
- Digital advertising
- Social media content, graphics and animations
- Shareable Graphics Interchange Format (GIFs)
- Carousel posts
- Photography
- News releases
- Media advisories

Deliverables

- Community engagement plan
- Message platform
- Stakeholder list
- Stakeholder briefing packet
- Public Input web content (if needed)
- High-level virtual reality concepts
- Additional collateral materials

C. Manage Fresno COG's RTP/SCS Mini Grant Outreach Program

Fresno COG's mini-grant program is a long-standing tool for working with various community-based organizations to conduct further outreach throughout Fresno County. Working with trusted community partners in this way is a vital tool to ensuring hard-to-reach populations are engaged, particularly multilingual community members outside of the greater Fresno area. Our team has a unique insight into Fresno COG's mini-grant program because it includes staff who previously conducted mini-grant outreach as staff at the Fresno State Office of Community and Economic Development. This insider knowledge enables us to know both how the program is administered and what the expectations are for awardees. We are prepared to leverage this expertise to manage the program for Fresno COG from start to finish, including working with CBOs to ensure all their outreach and feedback is documented for inclusion in the RTP/SCS. The following is a high-level overview of what we anticipate this management will look like, which we will refine as we learn more from the Fresno COG team during the kickoff session.

- **Coordinate proposal scoring and notification:** If needed, our team will work with Fresno COG to identify and recruit a panel of proposal scorers to review the proposals received from CBO groups. These will be scored using a rubric, with the top-scored proposals receiving funding. Our team can help Fresno COG notify awardees and communicate the next steps in the process.
- **Convene mini-grant awardee training:** Our team will conduct a virtual and/or in-person awardee training to review best practices, review collateral materials developed for outreach, answer questions and outline reporting expectations for each organization. This could include developing soundbite messaging sheets and other reference guides for spokespeople to have on hand and available as a reference, including A-B-C (Answer-Bridge-Communicate) cheat sheets and other useful quick references for teams to have on hand. In addition, we are prepared to support Fresno COG with all meeting materials, including but not limited to presentations, FAQs, messaging documents, timelines, and other resources for awardees and other CBO partners.
- **Track awardee outreach:** Our team will conduct recurring check-ins with awardees to monitor the outreach conducted to date and track overall progress on this work. If desired, this could include recurring follow-up calls or coordinating recurring reporting to Fresno COG as part of the grant terms. We will also conduct follow-ups as needed to ensure awardees stay on schedule and meet overall program deadlines.
- **Additional awardee engagement:** In addition to approaches outlined by CBOs via the mini-grant program, further outreach can be conducted among CBO stakeholder groups via streamlined, simplified outreach processes to maximize reach. This could be provided to CBOs as an optional enhancement to their activities and to further generate feedback through the outreach and engagement work they are already doing. This could include strategies like the following:
 - **CBO network coordination:** We will work with Fresno COG to build upon its existing CBO network to maximize reach and engagement in the RTP/SCS. The CBO network will include a wide range of groups with varying interests throughout the region who can help further spread the word about key RTP/SCS phases and milestones, as well as encourage the public to provide feedback.
 - **External CBO event tabling:** We recommend partnering with community-based organizations to conduct further outreach at various community events. This could include a "pop-up community engagement in a box" suite of materials that can be shared across the region. We will create a schedule of events that the team can table to conduct and engage with different audiences throughout the region. We recommend working closely with the Environmental Justice Subcommittee to assist in CBO outreach and communications.
- **Coordinate final outreach memo submittal:** As the final deliverable, our team will make sure each mini-grant awardee completes an outreach summary memo and submits it to Fresno COG for inclusion in the RTP/SCS. This will include all pertinent outreach details and feedback received for inclusion. If desired, our team can create a template and share it with all awardees to

ensure consistency across summary documents and/or so they can be readily combined into a single document summarizing this work.

Deliverables

- Training presentation
- Multilingual stakeholder presentation, talking points and FAQ
- Pop up event-in-a-box materials
- Outreach summary template

D. Transportation Needs Outreach and Sustainable Communities Strategy Development

Once the community engagement plan is reviewed and approved by the Fresno COG team, we will begin implementation. The following recommended strategies we propose to obtain extensive community feedback for the RTP/SCS process. This includes conducting the 2024 Transportation Needs outreach effort in the fall of 2024 and the subsequent vetting of the SCS in spring 2025. Further, we appreciate how sustained, recurring check-ins with the public during an outreach process of this nature are vital to ensuring the public remains consistently engaged. With this in mind, we have included recommendations for continued outreach via eblasts and other methods for the period between the Transportation Needs outreach process and the vetting of the SCS scenarios in 2025.

- **Library partnership:** We will coordinate with libraries across the region to hold workshops, host exhibits, and build RTP/SCS education centers readily available for members of the public to learn about the Plan and submit their feedback. We will emphasize working with libraries in low-broadband adoption and underreached communities to ensure we reach all audiences through outreach efforts. Additionally, we will identify communities throughout the county that could benefit from lending libraries and coordinate with said neighborhoods to provide lending libraries equipped with information on the RTP/SCS and feedback mailers to send to Fresno COG.
- **Media engagement:** As part of efforts to ensure widespread awareness and understanding of the RTP/SCS process and encourage public feedback, we will work closely with Fresno COG to implement robust media engagement. Under the direction of Fresno COG, we will develop a variety of materials in alternative language formats, where appropriate, to support the implementation of the media engagement plan, which may include, but are not limited to the following:
 - **Media messaging:** Based on research findings, we will work closely with Fresno COG PIO to develop a media-focused message platform that clearly communicates the mission, vision and values of Fresno COG and the RTP/SCS to the community.

This message platform will also lay the foundation for communicating the future of transportation throughout the region. These messages will highlight the opportunity to address critical issues like transportation, housing, protecting the environment, connectivity, and ensuring equal access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. By developing a comprehensive, forward-looking message, Fresno COG will position itself as a regional leader, paving the way for a brighter future.

- **Media materials:** We will develop media kits, talking points, press releases, media advisories, op-eds/columns, speeches, newsletters, and website content, in addition to any other needed media materials.



- **Media coordination:** We will support Fresno COG with media coordination and engagement as needed, including but not limited to, coordinating and facilitating press conferences, media interviews, and other media events; ensuring message inclusion in reporting; development and distribution of media kits to include b-roll footage, key resources, and engaging imagery.
- **Standby media statements:** Using the messaging developed in earlier phases, as well as through media monitoring and anticipation of coverage around key events, we will develop standby media statements to ensure rapid response to emerging coverage.
- **Media placements:** To ensure robust awareness and understanding of the RTP/SCS process and to highlight opportunities for the public to get involved, we will work with Fresno COG to identify, facilitate, and coordinate media placement opportunities that will maximize reach and engagement.

- **Promote Transportation Needs Assessment Survey:** Our team will help disseminate surveys in a variety of innovative manners. This will help inform the planning process as well as create opportunities to interact with stakeholders in places they already visit, including buses, Park & Ride lots, sporting events, major retail centers, large employers, libraries, community centers, and colleges and universities. This also could be loaded onto a tablet or other mobile device and then visit a variety of locations with informational materials and complete the surveys with members of the public. A pop-up booth could also be set up in these locations, as well as at community events.
- **Social media:** In addition to distributing regular eblasts throughout the planning process and providing updated website content, we would recommend deploying a robust social media program with engaging posts and visuals to reach tech-savvy millennials, Gen Z, and individual communities. Specific activities could include but are not limited to, driving traffic to the RTP/SCS webpage on Fresno COG's website and creating a Public Input map interface that allows visitors to comment during the planning process.
- **Written comments:** Comment cards can be utilized at public workshops to ensure that all attendees, not just those who participate in public comment sessions, provide their feedback on the Draft RTP/SCS.
- **Listening sessions:** To reach as many people as possible, we recommend implementing listening sessions, where we can hear new perspectives on topical subjects relevant to Fresno COG's initiatives and provide information on how the RTP/SCS transforms each subject.
- **Spotify/Pandora XM radio:** We will coordinate a media partnership with programs such as Spotify, Pandora, and XM radio channels, using their software to identify where Fresnoans are commuting to and from and during what time of the day to target our audiences through a series of media placements most accurately.



- **Open houses:** We will plan and implement a series of in-person public open houses focused on specific elements in the Draft RTP/SCS to gather meaningful feedback from target audiences and stakeholders. These

open houses will be held in central locations within each subregion. They will create opportunities for Fresno County residents to engage directly with Fresno COG staff and representatives, learn about specific projects and programs outlined in the RTP/SCS, and provide formal public comments.

- **Virtual public meetings:** For those who may not be able to attend a public open house/workshop/meeting in person, we will plan and help implement one or more virtual public meetings via Zoom in each subregion, depending on needs. The virtual public meetings will feature an interactive educational presentation, live surveys/polling, and a formal Q&A session where residents can ask Fresno COG staff and representatives questions in real-time.
- **Community pop-up events:** A key part of any successful public outreach and engagement program is meeting people where they are. As a result, we will work with Fresno COG to identify, coordinate, and staff prominent community pop-up events throughout the region that will maximize attendance and participation. In any given month, our staff regularly attend many events for personal and professional growth, giving us unmatched visibility to the different transitions and events within each community.
- **Roadshow presentations:** We will work closely with Fresno COG to plan and conduct regular roadshow presentations to community and business organizations throughout the Fresno County region around key plan development milestones. These presentations will prioritize traditionally underserved communities wherever possible to ensure they have the opportunity to provide feedback.
- **Digital engagement:** As part of efforts to keep the public engaged throughout the plan development process, we will create digital engagement opportunities such as live broadcasts, social media Q&As, digital hub opportunities, interactive surveys, and more to help people ask questions and share input on the RTP/SCS development.
- **Individualized outreach:** Fresno is a diverse collection of people, cultures, and languages. Each community is unique, with specific needs and perspectives. We know Fresno County's unique communities. We have worked with a broad range of diverse populations throughout the region and enjoy strong relationships with community leaders. Our diverse staff includes bilingual practitioners who have experience developing diverse messaging, building community support, and securing in-language media coverage in multicultural television markets and newspaper outlets statewide. Additionally, it is important to consider the Environmental Justice Subcommittee when developing strategies involving multicultural outreach.

- **Facilitated discussions:** At key points in the planning process, we will work with Fresno COG to host a facilitated discussion with 10–15 opinion leaders across a wide variety of stakeholder categories in each subregion. The purpose of these meetings is to gather feedback on the effectiveness of the outreach conducted and suggestions that could be incorporated into the strategy moving forward. We will prepare a report that provides key findings from the meetings, along with recommendations for future outreach.
- **Event partnerships:** We recommend partnering with local agencies throughout the region to hold joint community events during key milestones of the RTP/SCS process. By partnering with agencies, we will help expand our reach, build trust, and amplify media opportunities. We will support all event-related logistics, which could include, but are not limited to, venue logistics, permitting, site plan development, vendor coordination, and materials preparations.
- **External activations:** We recommend partnering with frequented places of entertainment and public gatherings to bring RTP/SCS outreach to various audiences. This may include farmers markets, Grizzlies Fuego games, CBO events, the Fresno Zoo, and more.
- **CBO “event in a box”:** To help further expand reach and engagement, we will create “event-in-a-box” style kits with everything organizations need to plan, promote, and conduct an in-language RTP/SCS outreach event, including ways to record and collect public input and comments. By leaning on our trusted third-party partners who have broad networks of their own, we will help maximize awareness of and engagement in the Regional Transportation Plan process. This will also help us reach the harder-to-reach populations, including communities on the West Side, Sierra foothills, unincorporated Fresno County and more.
- **Community outreach:** We will work with Fresno COG to identify community outreach opportunities throughout the region to ensure robust engagement among a wide variety of audiences. This could include, but is not limited to, the following:
 - **Neighborhood/association meetings:** We will work alongside the Environmental Justice Subcommittee to coordinate with CBOs throughout the region to schedule presentations to allow for question-and-answer sessions. Each meeting can be specifically catered to the community that is hosting the team and can be centered around the proposed transportation solutions in that city. The team can also spend time explaining the plan development process and how the team considers public feedback as it pertains to the final RTP/SCS.
- **GIS story map:** If desired, our team can work with Fresno COG to develop a GIS story map that easily conveys proposed transportation solutions and their anticipated construction years. This can include multiple story maps emphasizing multimodal improvements, cycling infrastructure, trails, and more.
- **Faith-based organizations:** To continue meeting our audiences where they are and ensure equity and inclusion throughout the process, we recommend coordinating with faith-based organizations of all religions to hold informational sessions and Q&A activities.
- **Practicing language justice:** Beyond utilizing translation and interpretation services in outreach for the RTP/SCS, it is important to build upon Fresno COG’s commitment to language justice by creating opportunities for audiences to learn and speak about the RTP/SCS in the languages and vernacular that they feel comfortable using. To implement this, we will develop collateral and informative materials in various languages. We will ensure that any digital engagement platforms used include options to translate into multiple languages and utilize simplified language to reach as many demographics as possible.



- **Community pop-ups:** To further our reach, we will coordinate and staff external public outreach events at local community events, focusing on events that draw Spanish speakers. These pop-up events could include locations such as Arte Americas’ Dia de los Muertos Celebration, FresYes Fest, the Caruthers Fair, Reedley Fiesta, and Big Hat Days, among others.
- **In-language media coordination:** We recommend engaging in-language media outlets to help spread the word about the RTP/SCS and to promote outreach events and opportunities for those who are more comfortable speaking languages other than English.

- **Eblasts and newsletters:** We will develop a comprehensive email campaign featuring strategically timed eblasts to stakeholders sharing project information, educational articles, fun facts, relevant project updates, and any public outreach and/or design milestones. By providing the public with regular updates during the RTP/SCS development process, we will help increase transparency and encourage engagement in the plan. At key phases of plan development, feedback “roundup” eblasts could also be shared to help inform the public about comments received to date and encourage additional feedback.
- **Website updates:** We will prepare recommendations for updating and improving existing Fresno COG website and Public Input page content, including revised copy and graphics. Webpages will be reviewed regularly to ensure the latest and greatest information is presented.
- **Public meetings and stakeholder briefings:** We will continue to support the project team, Fresno COG Government Relations staff, and the Environmental Justice Subcommittee with a series of informational presentations and briefings to stakeholders, relevant groups, and organizations, as needed. Our team will coordinate and facilitate the event, including the procurement of venues, equipment, food and beverage, translation and interpretation services, ADA services, and a court reporter to note the comments.
- **Stakeholder feedback and continued engagement:** Stakeholders must understand and feel that their voice is a critical component of the RTP/SCS update. To help accomplish this, we recommend communicating with stakeholders at each step in the process. Every effort will be made to capture contact information to educate and invite stakeholders to participate in the next step. Feedback will also be collected via meeting exit surveys, eblasts, and/or social media.
- **Feedback tracker:** A comprehensive feedback tracker will be developed to keep all feedback received in one space for the project team to reference. The tracker will hold any and all pertinent information, including whether the team has responded to the comment and whether it has been considered in the plan yet. Additionally, an FAQ response template document can be developed that will contain drafted responses to commonly received inquiries, expediting the team’s inquiry response process.
- **Quarterly reports:** We will prepare quarterly metrics reports to ensure that we are meeting outreach goals, identifying areas of success and improvements, and documenting all outreach efforts. These reports will cover all outreach statistics, from social media metrics to the number of comments received, and a map of where outreach was executed throughout the region.

The reports would also allow Southwest Strategies and the Fresno COG team to review and adapt our outreach efforts to measure our success and ensure resources are being used efficiently and responsibly.

- **Presentations to committees and Board:** Our team will prepare presentations and agenda items for Fresno COG’s committees and the Board. This will include relevant outreach metrics, milestones, and engagements conducted to date to ensure COG stakeholders are apprised of outreach as it occurs in real-time.

Deliverables

- Media outreach
- Community outreach coordination and collateral materials development
- Recurring eblasts and informational updates
- Documented engagement and feedback received
- Ongoing reporting
- Presentations to committees and Board

