



DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION CASE STUDY

**INCREASING PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION THROUGH
MINI GRANT PARTNERSHIPS**

With the Coastal Range to the west and the Sierra Nevada to the east, Fresno County- at the center of the San Joaquin Valley- spans a wide geography that is home to a diverse population. Though these characteristics are often cited as beloved features of the County, they can also present challenges when conducting outreach efforts for planning activities, as already hard-to-access technical documents are layered with geographic and linguistic barriers.

When the Fresno Council of Governments (Fresno COG), a regional planning agency, initiated its 2011 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), it sought to overcome these barriers by enlisting the help of established community organizations through a newly devised Mini-Grant Outreach Program. The Program provides between \$2,500-\$5,000 per each selected community organization to conduct public workshops, with a focus on individuals and

The Central APA Section is committed to featuring local projects that showcase innovative programs that help promote equity and advance diversity and inclusion in the planning profession. Our case studies serve as a resource for our members, and we encourage our members to share them broadly as a learning tool for all.

communities that are historically underserved, hard to reach, or which have not traditionally been involved in the RTP planning process. The grant recipients leverage their existing relationships to communities to amplify the importance of (and provide a more tangible connection to) the planning process, but they also undertake the logistical work of inviting attendees, translating materials, marketing the workshops, and arranging for transportation, interpretation, child care, and food.

For the 2017-18 RTP/Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) process, seven organizations were selected for the mini-grant program. The organizations included academic and community development entities along with health and legal advocacy groups. Each helped encourage outreach, provided staff for booths at events, and scheduled 20 transportation needs workshops, which had more than 500 people in cumulative attendance.

CONCLUSION

Fresno COG's innovative use of the Mini-Grant Outreach Program has had a number of positive impacts for both the agency and Fresno County residents. It has solidified partnerships and increased participation from community members that the agency would not be able to reach on its own.