



**United Way of the
Columbia-Willamette**

November 8, 2022

Oregon Seismic Safety Policy Advisory Commission

Agenda

- Report Overview
- Methodology
- Findings
- Recommendations

Recommendations

Our recommendations are actionable practices that all stakeholders committed to equitable and inclusive disaster preparedness materials and messaging can adapt.

JULY 2022

Preparing Oregon's Communities of Color for Disasters

Where we are and where we need to go



Take Action

- 1 Identify a primary statewide convenor(s)
- 2 Support community-based organizations
- 3 Expand cross-sector partnerships

Take Action

- 1 Build trust
- 2 Identify and engage champions
- 3 Hire representative staff

Take Action

- 1 Move beyond translation
- 2 Develop new funding streams

Project Leads

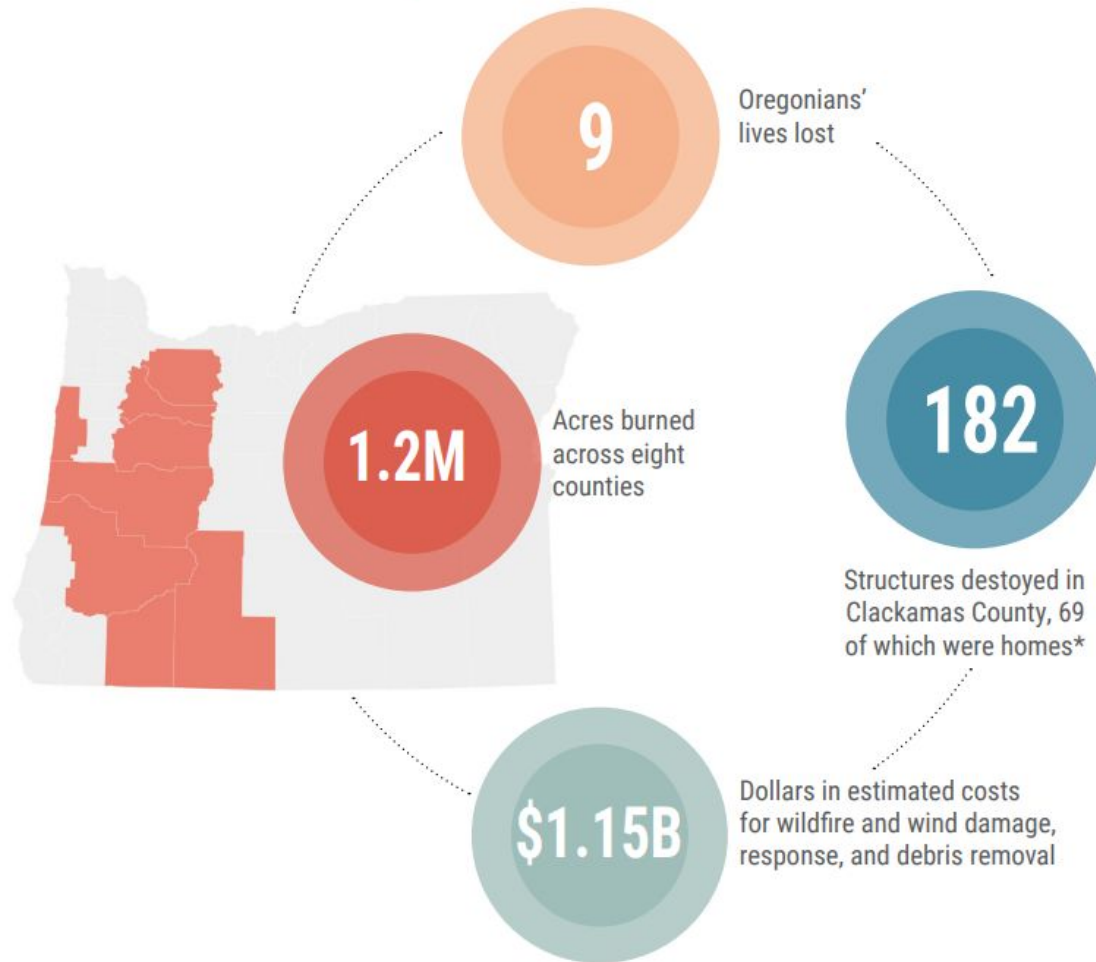


Dahnesh Medora
United Way of the Columbia-Willamette



Nikka Tahan
Tahan Consulting

2020 Oregon Wildfires



I feel like our lives have been split into before and after September 8 [the 2020 wildfires]. ... I know people who had really terrible experiences, and I don't want to see it happen again.

Why This Report is Important

United Way's Wildfire Response & Recovery Fund grantees shared again and again that Oregon's communities of color do not have the support they need during a crisis.

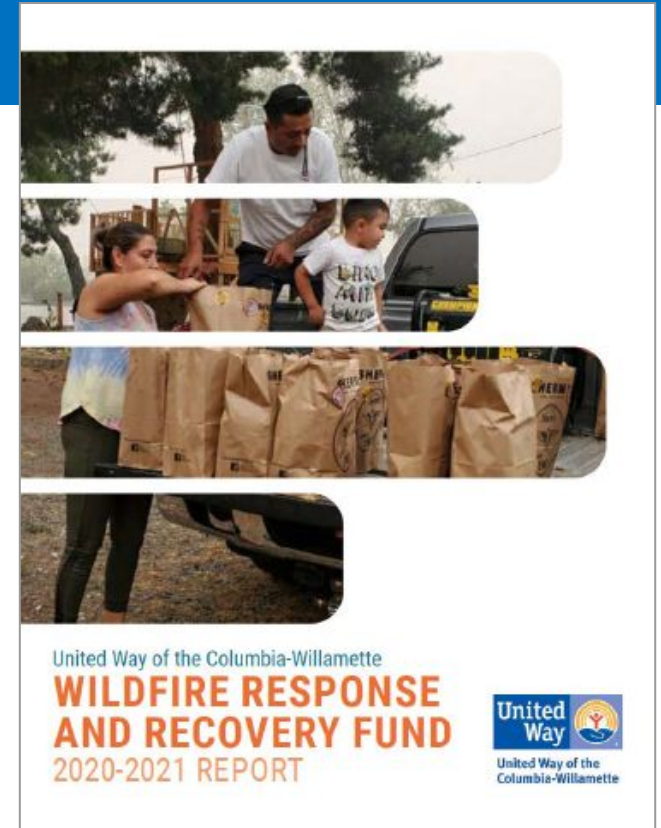
This report seeks to clarify the **current gaps** and **urgent needs** for preparedness messaging, materials, and resources for communities of color.



Defining Inclusive Messaging

Inclusive disaster preparedness materials and messages are:

- Linguistically and culturally accessible
- Easy for community members to find, understand, and use
- Culturally appropriate images, language, and references are woven throughout materials and messages
- Co-created with community members



Project Values



Empowerment: Every individual involved in the process feels supported by their interaction with our team, and each participant is viewed as an expert.



Collaboration: At every step, stakeholders from across sectors and communities were invited to provide insight into the direction of this work.



Representation: Our research processes and findings center the feedback and experiences of communities, organization, and individuals represented in this report.



Accuracy: Our methods and findings are rooted in qualitative practices, supported by research, and thoroughly analyzed.

Methodology

Participant Sampling

- Community-based organizations
- Public sector representatives
- Philanthropic partners

Methods

- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Surveys



120 participants

94 people in 13 focus groups

26 individual interviews

Findings

Momentum is Building

- Initiatives are already happening across sectors
- Organizations are increasing capacity
- Oregon is changing its emergency management structure

Barriers to Inclusivity

- Lack of statewide convenor
- Confusing communications
- Incomplete translations
- Low technology access and literacy
- Limited staff capacity
- Restricted funding
- Widespread distrust
- **Special Focus: Outreach does not equal representation**

Momentum is Building

We found evidence of emerging inclusive disaster preparedness messaging, with signs of strong momentum and increasing commitment to this work. Our findings are organized into three sections:





Barriers to Inclusivity

We identified eight barriers to inclusive messaging initiatives. Our findings are organized into eight barriers.

Lack of Statewide Convenor

Without a statewide convenor, participants identified difficulties creating standards across Oregon and understanding the current landscape of program and initiatives. *Nearly 98% of our interviews, focus groups, and surveys identified this barrier.*

Confusing Communications

Participants identified challenges related to lack of agreement on terms and finding the right pace for communications.

Incomplete Translation

Direct translation is not complete translation but many materials still do not reflect the needs, experiences, and strengths of communities.

Low Technology Access and Literacy

Lack of technology access and low technology literacy were barriers expressed across all sectors.

Limited Staff Capacity

Nearly every community-based organization we spoke to indicated that they were understaffed.

Restricted Funding

Participants identified challenges related to the ways funders award grants and the limitations community-based organizations experience seeking funds they need.

Widespread Distrust

Communities don't trust the government—and organizations don't always trust each other.

Special Focus

Outreach does not equal representation. Community engagement must be meaningful and must not stop at outreach.

There is no real standard or common goal across the entire state of Oregon when it comes to BIPOC-targeted disaster preparedness. Because of this, our communities are really hurting.



Unite Oregon

Momentum is Building: Collaboration

Themes

- Translating Materials
- Creating Inclusive Messages and Alerts
- Gathering and Sharing Resources
- Leveraging Complementary Expertise

*The approach isn't creating something for every community but rather **creating networks** so that people can learn from each other and collaborate in each other's efforts.*

Momentum is Building: Capacity

Themes

- Developing New Teams
- Establishing Funding

We realized that to save lives we needed to invest in disaster preparedness. Especially if we wanted to engage Black and Brown communities. It's been pretty incredible to have staff devoted to inclusive initiatives, without them we wouldn't be able to get this work done.

Momentum is Building: Structure

*The disaster world is really traditional and people are set in their ways. I hope that with this [Office of Emergency Management] change there will also be room to make other changes and to bring new initiatives to the table. I think **the time to act on targeted BIPOC preparedness is now**, when people are already getting used to new things. We need to use this moment to progress this kind of preparedness forward.*

Barriers to Inclusivity: Lack of Statewide Convenor

- Our most resounding challenge: the lack of a statewide convenor.
- Nearly 98% of our interviews, focus groups, and surveys identified this barrier.

*The toughest thing right now is that we don't have someone looking at the whole state's approach. ... Without that kind of **central convenor**, we can't be super strategic in working with other organizations and local governments.*

Barriers to Inclusivity: Communications

Themes

- Confusing Communications
 - Lack of agreement on terms
 - Speed: Getting it right
- Incomplete Translation
- Low Technology Access and Literacy

When I talk about vulnerability I don't mean communities have some kind of weakness. I mean the system, as a racist institution, has created an environment and society where Black and Brown and Native people are more likely to die in disasters. The BIPOC community has been forced into a state of vulnerability.

Barriers to Inclusivity: Resources

Themes

- Limited Staff Capacity
- Restricted Funding

"I sometimes wonder if [money-giving entities] are more interested in giving during a disaster because it's newsworthy. Maybe preparedness and long-term recovery is just less flashy. I also think it gets even harder with BIPOC-specific asks because a lot of times people don't want to be seen as getting too political or losing supporters by making any racially centered stands."

Barriers to Inclusivity: Relationships

Themes

- Widespread Distrust
 - Communities don't trust government
 - Organization don't trust each other

"Our people are scared and untrusting of government programs and the police. I have to say it—they're very racist. They're dominated by white people, and our people are scared of them because we don't speak the language and the police/sheriffs don't speak Spanish. When something happens in their community, they won't reach out."

Special Focus: Outreach does not equal representation

Community voice, power, expertise, and collaboration are keys to successful and effective inclusive disaster preparedness initiatives for communities of color.

Community engagement must be meaningful and must not stop at outreach.

- Integrate community members into decision-making processes
- Engage community leaders and public sector champions
- Hire and retain representative staff

93% of participants want to increase community representation and participation in developing and administering disaster preparedness resources

Recommendations: Work Together Differently

We need to situate inclusive disaster preparedness messaging and materials in comprehensive, equitable initiatives to meet community-identified needs. This means working together differently: sharing information and coordinating efforts to ensure cross-sector projects are complementary, not duplicative.

Take action by:

1. Identifying a primary statewide convenor(s)
2. Supporting community-based organizations
3. Expanding cross-sector partnerships

Recommendations: Embrace Meaningful Community Engagement

Our community members are context experts, with deep wisdom and lived experience. Meaningful engagement means listening to and learning from communities, ensuring processes are open and accessible, and centering the needs of people most impacted by disasters.

Take action by:

1. Building trust
2. Identifying and engagement champions
3. Hiring representative staff



Recommendations: Invest in Innovation

Disaster preparedness leaders have designed important and essential systems. By building on what we know works and changing what doesn't, we can experiment, learn, and innovate together. We need to ensure inclusive disaster preparedness messaging and materials meet the needs of all Oregon communities—and we need the funding to do it.

Take action by:

1. Moving beyond translation
2. Developing new funding streams



Acknowledgements

Thank you to community members, community-based organization leaders, and public sector representatives for participating in this research project. Your insights, perspectives, and experiences will strengthen Oregon's approach to inclusive and equitable disaster preparedness.

Thank you to Adrian McCarthy, Dahnes Medora, and Emily Wilson for your feedback and support.

Support for this report was provided by the Oregon Community Foundation and United Way of the Columbia-Willamette.



Thank you!

<https://www.unitedway-pdx.org/>