Equitable Evaluation Series: Principles of Equitable Communication

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) enhances the health and well-being of all Americans by advancing equity, addressing social determinants of health, and supporting underserved communities. To support evidence-based policymaking, HHS is committed to ensuring, protecting, and institutionalizing the collection, dissemination, and use of high-quality evaluation findings in a way that is informed by and accurately reflective of diverse viewpoints. The language and communication approaches used in all HHS' program evaluation work should be responsive to diverse and intersecting identities,[1] and should minimize misconceptions, biases, and distortions.[2] This requires that evaluators produce work that is representative and respectful of all those who may affect or be affected by the programs and policies which they evaluate.

In this document, the Addressing Bias in Language (ABL) Workgroup of the HHS Evidence and Evaluation (E&E) Council describes principles for equitable communication within the context of program evaluation and other forms of evidence building.

> **The Addressing Bias in Language (ABL) Workgroup of HHS' Evidence and Evaluation Policy Council**
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> The HHS Evidence and Evaluation Policy Council supports implementation of Title I of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018. The Council consists of evaluation staff from across HHS and is led by the HHS Evaluation Officer.
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> The ABL Workgroup was created to build HHS evidence building capacity specifically related to the Presidential Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government. The Workgroup built upon other federal resources related to equitable communication to help evaluators, staff, and researchers within HHS ensure their work reflects the specific cultural, linguistic, environmental, and historical contexts of each population or audience of focus.

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[1] Ghanbarpour, S., Noguez Mercado, A. P., & Palotai, A. (2020). A language justice framework for culturally responsive and equitable evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation*, *2020*(166), 37–47. https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.20412

[2] Yarbrough, D. B., Shula, L. M., Hopson, R. K., & Caruthers, F. A. (2010). The program evaluation standards: A guide for evaluators and evaluation users (3rd. ed). Corwin Press.

The *Equitable Evaluation Series* will provide department-wide principles for conducting program evaluation in a way that reduces bias toward any particular group of people, reflects the broad range of identities and perspectives among those served by HHS programs and policies.

Why is equitable communication important?

Applying an equity lens to all aspects of the evaluation lifecycle increases the likelihood that the information produced will be accessible, easily understood, and usable. Fair, just, and equitable treatment of all individuals is improved when evaluators understand the range of perspectives and interests of the individuals and groups involved in the policy under evaluation, including those not usually represented or excluded due to structural and systematic barriers.[3] This includes accounting for cultural and contextual factors (e.g., languages spoken, political and social climate, power and privilege, economic conditions) that could influence an evaluation's planning, implementation, findings, and the use of such findings.[4] Evaluators should communicate in ways that facilitate constructive and culturally responsive interaction. This allows for building trust and positive relationships that enable evaluators to gather accurate data.[5] Using language that reduces bias both shows respect for and acknowledgment of the diversity of the evaluation participants and audiences.[6,7] Data collected using such approaches are typically more valid, leading ultimately to findings that are more useful.[8]

How is equitable communication promoted within an evaluation and evidence-building context?

In all communications, it is important to be mindful of the meanings of words, how they change over time, and the norms of those that use them (individuals, communities, and organizations).[9] Engagement of diverse populations and perspectives is foundational for building and maintaining an equity lens in communication and should be infused into all phases of evaluation work.[10,11] Effective and culturally responsive communication requires:

- Incorporation of the experiences and perspectives of people with lived experience, including their input on preferred terminology
- Appropriate identification of and reference to individuals and population groups
- Sustained and meaningful inclusion of diverse perspectives throughout the evaluation lifecycle

[3] American Evaluation Association. (2011). American Evaluation Association Statement On Cultural Competence In Evaluation.
[4] U.S. Office of Management and Budget. (2020). Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies. Phase 4 Implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018: Program Evaluation Standards and Practices.
[5] American Evaluation Association. (2018). The 2018 AEA Evaluator Competencies.
[6] U.S. General Services Administration. (2021). 18F Content Guide: Inclusive Language.
[7] Linguistic Society of America. (2016). Guidelines for Inclusive Language.
[8] American Psychological Association. (2020). General principles for reducing bias.
[9] U.S. Office of Management and Budget. (2020). Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies. Phase 4 Implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018: Program Evaluation Standards and Practices.
[10] American Evaluation Association. (2018). The 2018 AEA Evaluator Competencies.
[11] U.S. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (ASPE). (2021). Methods and Emerging Strategies to Engage People with Lived Experience.

- Use of evaluation participants' and intended audience's primary or preferred communication formats (e.g., text, audio, video, braille)
- Use of appropriate graphics and images
- Responsiveness to the communication needs, perspectives, and preferences of evaluation participants and other interested parties
- Careful vetting of evaluation materials, including findings and recommendations, with the populations participating in and affected by an evaluation
- Periodic assessment of terms, graphics, and images

What principles underlie equitable communication?

The following are a set of overarching principles for oral, written, and visual communication.[12] In keeping with these principles, the HHS Evidence and Evaluation Policy Council will periodically review and update this guidance.

Principles for Oral and Written Communication

1. Use person-first or identity-first language to describe people and groups based on the norms of the people or groups described.

Use person-first language to emphasize that people have a condition or are experiencing a circumstance, versus *being* the condition or circumstance. For example, instead of *the homeless*, use *people experiencing homelessness*. Use identity-first language to describe people who consider a condition as a part of their identity. For example, many people prefer the term *Deaf people to* "people with hearing loss".[13] However, it is important to recognize that communities are not monoliths, and people who consider themselves part of the same group may prefer to refer to themselves in varying ways (as elaborated in Principle #5, #9, and #12 below). Consulting with the people or groups in question is recommended to determine the preferred approach.

2. Be as specific as possible about the group or groups being referred to.

Limit the use of general terms such as *minority* or *minorities* and use *people in [a specific] set of circumstances/people who are of* [*a specific demographic group*]. Rather than using a general term such as *at-risk household*, specify the risk by saying, for example, *members of households facing economic insecurity*. Similarly, broad catchall terms like *people/communities of color* should only be used if included groups are defined upon first use and if a more specific group descriptor is not feasible. Be especially mindful to refer to a specific group(s) instead of using a collective term in cases where the experience is different across subgroups. Similarly, the nonspecific group label *other* is uninformative and may be considered pejorative.

3. If a descriptor is used for one group, use descriptors for all groups.

The selective use of descriptors can imply that the group without the descriptor is the normative group. For example, a comparison of *parents* with *parents of color* could be interpreted as suggesting that

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[12] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). Health equity guiding principles for inclusive communication.
[13] American Psychological Association. (2021). Inclusive language guidelines.

parents are one group and *parents of color* are a second group. This reenforces stereotypes that there is a standard (e.g., White parents) against which others (e.g., parents of color) are compared. If the comparison is actually between *parents of color* and *all parents* (including parents of color) that should be stated explicitly.

4. Use inclusionary language.

Generally, terms that start with *non-* suggest that the group referred to is deficient. For example, rather than using *nonvoters*, specify that these individuals did not vote in a particular election, recognizing that this might be a temporary status that does not preclude voting in previous elections or in future elections.

5. Acknowledge that people have intersecting identities.[14]

Aspects of identity such as race, gender, and religion interact dynamically to shape individuals' self-definition as well as their experiences, opportunities or barriers. For instance, numerous research studies show that experiences of Black LGBTQI individuals are distinct from those experienced by White LGBTQI individuals, with multiple levels of inequities and discrimination.[15] Disaggregate estimates by identity group when feasible and appropriate. For example, when describing participants in terms of their race and gender, a more complete description would be "participants included 20 Black women, 15 White women, 23 Black men, and 18 White men (all participants were cisgender)" rather than "35 participants were women and 41 were men; 43 were Black and 33 were White."

6. Use nonviolent language.

Avoid saying *target*, *tackle*, *combat*, or other terms with violent connotation when referring to people, groups, or communities. For example, the commonly used term *stakeholder* has historical roots in colonization. Whenever possible, be explicit to better describe specific groups or individuals with interest in the activity using relevant names, categories, or descriptions of the nature of their influence or involvement (e.g., collaborators, informers, advisors, consultants, collaborators, co-owners).

7. Use objectively descriptive terms to describe people's behavior instead of evaluative or judgmental terms.

Avoid language that explicitly or implicitly blames or stigmatizes people by considering whether the language reflects historically negative assumptions or could promote continued negative assumptions, stereotyping, stigmatization, or blame. For example, instead of *people who refuse vaccination*, try using *people who are unvaccinated*.

8. Be cautious about using associating adjectives such as *vulnerable* or *marginalized* with a particular group, and always provide appropriate context

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[14] Intersectionality is a paradigm that addresses the multiple dimensions of identity and social systems as they intersect with one another and relate to inequality, such as racism, genderism, heterosexism, ageism, and classism, among other variables (APA, 2020).

[15] McConnell, E. A., Janulis, P., Phillips, G., 2nd, Truong, R., & Birkett, M. (2018). Multiple Minority Stress and LGBT Community Resilience among Sexual Minority Men. Psychology of sexual orientation and gender diversity, 5(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000265

These adjectives, when used without proper explanation, can imply that the condition is inherent to the group and minimizes the systemic barriers and decisions that were set up (often intentionally) to marginalize those groups. For example, instead of *vulnerable groups* or *marginalized groups*, try using *disproportionately affected groups* or *historically under-resourced communities*.

9. Respect and adopt the language people use to describe themselves.

Call people what they call themselves. Accept that language changes with time and that individuals within groups sometimes disagree about the designations they use. For example, people may use Hispanic, Latino/Latina, or Latinx depending on different contexts and for different audiences. Furthermore, *older adults* is a preferred term that has largely replaced *senior citizens* or *the elderly.* Again, when in doubt about how to refer to someone, the best approach is to ask them how they identify themselves.

10. Allow flexibility in self-reporting racial and ethnic identity.

People may identify with more than one race and ethnicity. This should be reflected in both the data-collection categories and in how individuals or groups are described (e.g., people of more than one race, persons of multiple races). Respondent self-identification should be facilitated to the greatest extent possible.[16]

11. Be explicit about the rationale for choice of terms used to refer to individuals, groups, and communities.

One way to be explicit about the terms used is to add a footnote explaining how or why they were selected. In some cases, the selection may have been part of the study process, which could be included in the method section of an evaluation report. Report the specific categories used and, if appropriate, indicate that they may differ based on data sources, the requirements of funders, and the geographic location of data collection or study participants.

12. Continually learn about the meanings, historical contexts, and social norms associated with words and phrases and consult with people with lived experience in term selection.

Language is constantly evolving. At the start of a data-collection or evaluation effort, work with the people, communities, and organizations affected by the program or policy being evaluated – particularly those with lived experience with it – to confirm their preferred terms. For longer projects, periodic check-ins regarding appropriate terminology may be necessary. It is also important to recognize that terms may not have same meanings for everyone. Evaluators can conduct discussions with members of the groups affected by the evaluation to explore the various associations with words, concepts, and contexts in English or in the groups' native language(s) and culture(s). This information should inform evaluation questions, data collection tools and analyses, as well as dissemination activities.

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[16] U.S. Office of Management and Budget. (2020). Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies. Phase 4 Implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018: Program Evaluation Standards and Practices.

Principles for Visual Communication

1. Include diverse visual representations.

Visual representations of people and their activities and contexts should reflect the diversity of the population. It is inappropriate to portray specific population groups consistently in stereotypical roles (e.g., people of color receiving income assistance). Additionally, depictions of families should reflect not only different racial and ethnic groups but also a variety of family structures and compositions.

2. Use an overall balanced visual approach.

A balance in representation need not be struck in every image, slide, or film segment, but the total publication, slide presentation, or video should be examined, as should the entire communication effort across its body of work to ensure the consistency and diversity of depictions.

3. Depict features realistically.

People are varied in shape, size, and appearance. Show this diversity, especially when selecting depictions of humans, whether photographic or drawn. Ideally, image selection should be informed by members of the relevant population groups including those with relevant lived experience.

4. Be sensitive to the use or depiction of cultural artifacts, products, colors, and other objects associated with a particular population.

Limit the use of culturally associated objects to occasions when they have appropriate meaning for the communication. It is important to ensure that the representations convey the intended message. Consider whether depicting people in ceremonial or traditional garments is necessary and whether such depictions are used uniformly or only for certain population groups.

Key Principle for All Forms of Communication

All forms of communication (e.g., oral, written, and visual) should be culturally and linguistically appropriate and evaluators may want to consider HHS' *National Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards*[17] as relevant guidance for their operations. All forms of communication should also be available in accessible formats for people with different vision, hearing, cognitive, processing abilities and preferences. Examples include plain language and universal design.

The goal of plain language (also called plain writing or plain English) is that the intended audience can understand the first time they read or hear it. The Plain Writing Act of 2010 defines plain language as "Writing that is clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience."[18]

Universal design is a concept in which products and environments are intentionally created to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.[19]

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[17] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2016). National Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services Standards.
[18] Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN). (2011). What is plain language?
[19] U.S. General Services Administration. (2022). Universal Design and Accessibility. Section508.gov.

Universal design considers the broadest range of users and goes beyond the prescriptive approach of accessibility legislation.[20]

Examples of universal design strategies that support equity in evaluation and other evidence building include using large print and plain language, providing braille and/or audio narrations, providing closed captioning and/or American Sign Language translators for oral presentations, and presenting information in in multiple formats (e.g., images, charts, infographics, figures).

Overall, communication can be a powerful tool of inclusion or exclusion, and we should identify the best way possible to build and share our information in an accessible, respectful, and culturally appropriate way.

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[20] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). (2022). Section 508 Accessibility Compliance Checklists.

Resources & References

18F Content Guide

"Talk like a person. Tell the truth. Use positive language and concrete examples."

Author	18F Content Guide
Org	U.S. General Services Administration (GSA)
Title	[18F Content Guide](#)
Brief	This guide shows an approach based on user-centered principles, acknowledging the broad audience that government content is often addressing.
Citation	18F. (2021). *18F content guide*. https://content-guide.18f.gov/

American Evaluation Association (AEA)

"To ensure recognition, accurate interpretation, and respect for diversity, evaluators should ensure that the members of the evaluation team collectively demonstrate cultural competence."

Author	American Evaluation Association (AEA)
Org	American Evaluation Association (AEA)
Title	[American Evaluation Association Statement On Cultural Competence In Evaluation](#)
Brief	This statement of the American Evaluation Association (AEA) affirms the significance of cultural competence in evaluation. It also informs the public of AEA's expectations concerning cultural competence in the conduct of evaluation.
Citation	American Evaluation Association. (2018). American Evaluation Association Statement On Cultural Competence In Evaluation. https://www.eval.org/About/Competencies-Standards/Cutural-Competence-Statement

American Evaluation Association (AEA)

"This document is a way to make clear to everyone the important characteristics of professional evaluation practice & to challenge us to create pathways for engaging all types of people in becoming evaluators. "

Author	American Evaluation Association (AEA)
Org	American Evaluation Association (AEA)
Title	[The 2018 AEA Evaluator Competencies](#)
Brief	The AEA Evaluator Competencies are a common language and set of criteria to clarify what it means to be included in the definition of evaluator. The competencies serve as a roadmap for guiding evaluator education and training and encourages critical self-reflection about the strengths and limitations of evaluators.
Citation	American Evaluation Association. (2018). The 2018 AEA Evaluator Competencies. https://www.eval.org/Portals/0/Docs/AEA%20Evaluator%20Competencies.pdf

Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP)

"As railroads and highways both developed and decimated communities, so too can data infrastructure. We can co-create data infrastructure to promote racial equity and the public good, or we can invest in data infrastructure that disregards the historical, social, and political context—reinforcing racial inequity that continues to harm communities."

Author	Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP)
Org	Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP)
Title	[A Toolkit for Centering Racial Equity Throughout Data Integration](#)

Brief   This toolkit is designed to help guide partnerships, collaboratives, agencies, and community initiatives seeking to center racial equity while using, sharing, and integrating administrative data.

Citation   Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy. (2020). Centering racial equity throughout data integration. University of Pennsylvania. https://aisp.upenn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/AISP-Toolkit_5.27.20.pdf

American Medical Association (AMA)

"We share this document with humility. We recognize that language evolves, and we are mindful that context always matters."

Author   American Medical Association (AMA)

Org   American Medical Association (AMA)

Title   [Advancing Health Equity: Guide to Language, Narrative and Concepts](#)

Brief   This work offers guidance on language for promoting health equity, contrasting traditional/outdated terms with equity-focused alternatives, and also explores how narratives (the power behind words) matter.

Quote   We share this document with humility. We recognize that language evolves, and we are mindful that context always matters.

Citation   American Medical Association. (2020). Advancing health equity: Guide to language, narrative and concepts. https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/ama-aamc-equity-guide.pdf.

American Psychological Association (APA)

"Just as you have learned to check what you write for spelling, grammar, and wordiness, practice reading your work for bias."

Author   American Psychological Association (APA)

Org   American Psychological Association (APA)

Title   [Bias-Free Language](#)

Brief   The guidelines for bias-free language contain both general guidelines for writing about people without bias across a range of topics and specific guidelines that address the individual characteristics of age, disability, gender, participation in research, racial and ethnic identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and intersectionality.

Citation   American Psychological Association. (2020). Bias-free language. https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language.

American Psychological Association (APA)

"Respect the language people use to describe themselves; that is, call people what they call themselves."

Author   American Psychological Association (APA)

Org   American Psychological Association (APA)

Title   [General Principles for Reducing Bias](#)

Brief   These guidelines describe two principles for reducing bias in language: describe people at the appropriate level of specificity and be sensitive to labels.

Citation   American Psychological Association. (2020). General principles for reducing bias. https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/general-principles.

American Psychological Association (APA)

"[These guidelines] explain the origins for problematic terms and phrases and offer suitable alternatives or more contemporary replacements."

Author	American Psychological Association (APA)
Org	American Psychological Association (APA)
Title	[Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: Inclusive Language Guidelines](#)
Brief	This work covers topics such as general terms related to equity and power, person-first and identity-first language, and avoiding microaggressions in language.
Citation	American Psychological Association. (2021). Inclusive language guidelines. [https://www.apa.org/about/apa/equity-diversity-inclusion/language-guidelines.pdf.](https://www.apa.org/about/apa/equity-diversity-inclusion/language-guidelines.pdf)

American Psychological Association (APA)

"We recognize that the inclusion of diverse people, viewpoints and experiences are key to our success."

Author	American Psychological Association (APA)
Org	American Psychological Association (APA)
Title	[Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Framework](#)
Brief	APA's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Framework reflects their view that equity, diversity, and inclusion are vital to the progress of the Association, the field of psychology, and broader society.
Citation	American Psychological Association. (2021). Equity, diversity, and inclusion framework. https://www.apa.org/about/apa/equity-diversity-inclusion/framework.pdf.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

"These principles are intended to help public health professionals, particularly health communicators, within and outside of CDC ensure their communication products and strategies adapt to the specific cultural, linguistic, environmental, and historical situation of each population or audience of focus."

Author	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Org	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
Title	[Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication](#)
Brief	Discusses using a health equity lens, key principles, using preferred terms, and developing inclusive health communication products.
Citation	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). Health equity guiding principles for inclusive communication. [https://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/Health_Equity.html.](https://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/Health_Equity.html)

Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation

"[The] thirty standards [in this book] support the core attributes of evaluation quality: utility, feasibility, propriety, accuracy, and accountability, and provide guidance to anyone interested in planning, implementing, or using program evaluations."

Author	Yarbrough, D. B., Shula, L. M., Hopson, R. K., & Caruthers, F. A.
Org	Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation
Title	The Program Evaluation Standards: A Guide for Evaluators and Evaluation Users (3rd. ed)
Brief	The book discusses program evaluation standards in five areas: utility standards, feasibility standards, propriety standards, accuracy standards, and evaluation accountability standards.

Citation	Yarbrough, D. B., Shula, L. M., Hopson, R. K., & Caruthers, F. A. (2010). *The program evaluation standards: A guide for evaluators and evaluation users* (3rd. ed). Corwin Press.

Journal of American Medical Association
"Researchers should aim for inclusivity by providing comprehensive categories and subcategories where applicable."

Author	Flanagin, A., Frey, T., & Christiansen, S.
Org	American Medical Association (AMA)
Title	[Updated Guidance on the Reporting of Race and Ethnicity in Medical and Science Journals](#)
Brief	This work includes recommendations and suggestions that encourage fairness, equity, consistency, and clarity in use and reporting of race and ethnicity in medical and science journals.
Quote	Researchers should aim for inclusivity by providing comprehensive categories and subcategories where applicable.
Citation	Flanagin, A., Frey, T., Christiansen, S. L., & AMA Manual of Style Committee. (2021). Updated guidance on the reporting of race and ethnicity in medical and science journals. *JAMA*, *326*(7), 621–627. https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2021.13304.

Journal of Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity
"Results showed that Black sexual minority men reported the highest levels of racial/ethnic stigma in LGBT spaces and White sexual minority men reported the lowest levels, with Asian and Hispanic/Latino men falling in between."

Author	McConnell, E. A., Janulis, P., Phillips, G., 2nd, Truong, R., & Birkett, M.
Org	American Psychological Association (APA)
Title	[Multiple Minority Stress and LGBT Community Resilience among Sexual Minority Men](#)
Brief	The article discusses the minority stress theory and intersectionality theory to examine multiple minority stress (i.e., racial/ethnic stigma in LGBT spaces and LGBT stigma in one's neighborhood) and community resilience (i.e., connection to LGBT community) among sexual minority men of different racial/ethnic groups who use a geosocial networking application for meeting sexual partners.
Citation	McConnell, E. A., Janulis, P., Phillips, G., 2nd, Truong, R., & Birkett, M. (2018). Multiple Minority Stress and LGBT Community Resilience among Sexual Minority Men. Psychology of sexual orientation and gender diversity, 5(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000265.

Journal of New Directions for Evaluation
"Evaluation interconnects with myriad social needs and must be responsive to diverse, intersecting identities and experiences, including language."

Author	Ghanbarpour, S., Noguez Mercado, A. P., & Palotai, A.
Org	American Evaluations Association (AEA)
Title	[A Language Justice Framework for Culturally Responsive and Equitable Evaluation](#)
Brief	The article discusses language equity and oppression and distinguishes between language access and language justice. The authors also explore definitions and principles of language justice and assert its special salience for practitioners of culturally responsive and equitable evaluation. The authors provide guidance on integrating a language justice

framework into common evaluation practices, with a particular emphasis on participatory methodologies.

Citation   Ghanbarpour, S., Noguez Mercado, A. P., & Palotai, A. (2020). A language justice framework for culturally responsive and equitable evaluation. New Directions for Evaluation, *2020*(166), 37–47. https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.20412.

Linguistic Society of America

"These guidelines grew out of the Guidelines for Nonsexist Usage, originally developed by the LSA's Committee on the Status of Women in Linguistics (COSWL), and formally approved by the Executive Committee in 1996."

Author   Linguistic Society of America (LSA)

Org   Linguistic Society of America (LSA)

Title   Guidelines for Inclusive Language

Brief   These guidelines highlight ways in which linguists can both lead the way in proactively writing inclusively and avoid past pitfalls or habits that may unintentionally lead to marginalization, offense, misrepresentation, or the perpetuation of stereotypes.

Citation   Linguistic Society of America. (2016). Guidelines for inclusive language. https://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/guidelines-inclusive-language.

Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

"This page features resources on evaluation, including evaluation principles and standards, toolkits and tools, methodological resources, building capacity and a culture of evaluation, cultural competence and stakeholder engagement, and many others."

Author   Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

Org   Executive Office of the President of the United States

Title   Equity in Evaluation Workshop Series

Brief   Building from the Equity in Evaluation Workshop Series, the resources shared on this page include articles, toolkits and tools, methodological resources, and links to subject matter experts or organizations to strengthen the ability of federal evaluators to integrate equity in all phases of the evaluation lifecycle. You can use the resources on this page to help you as you undertake evaluation activities within your agency.

Citation   Office of Management and Budget. (2021). Equity in evaluation workshop series. https://community.max.gov/display/OMB/Evidence+and+Evaluation+Community.

Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

"An ethical commitment to fairness and equity for stakeholders requires the intentional effort of evaluators to produce work that is valid, honest, respectful of stakeholders, and considerate of the general public welfare."

Author   Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

Org   Executive Office of the President of the United States

Title   Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies. Phase 4 Implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018: Program Evaluation Standards and Practices

Brief   This memorandum describes the high-level consensus standards and practices currently recognized for their value in supporting a variety of federal evaluation needs. These standards are relevance and utility, rigor, independence and objectivity, transparency,

and ethics. The practices described herein were selected for their potential high usefulness in supporting agencies' implementation of the standards.

Citation   U.S. Office of Management and Budget. (2020). Memorandum for heads of executive departments and agencies. Phase 4 implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018: Program evaluation standards and practices. https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/M-20-12.pdf.

Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN)

"Plain language means readers understand your documents more quickly. Readers call less often for explanations. They make fewer errors filling out forms. They comply more accurately and quickly with requirements."

Author	Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN)
Org	U.S. Federal Government
Title	What is plain language?
Brief	The guidelines discuss writing principles, starting at the word level and moving up through paragraphs and sections. The guideline follows principles of writing documents with principles of writing for the web. It concludes with a short discussion of testing techniques.
Citation	Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN). (2011). *Federal Plain Language Guidelines.* https://www.plainlanguage.gov/media/FederalPLGuidelines.pdf.

United Nations (UN)

"These Guidelines include a number of strategies to help United Nations staff use gender-inclusive language. They may be applied to any type of communication, whether it is oral or written, formal or informal, or addressed to an internal or external audience."

Author	United Nations (UN)
Org	United Nations (UN)
Title	Guidelines for Gender-Inclusive Language in English
Brief	This work shows a number of strategies that can be applied, when speaking or writing in English, to be more gender-inclusive: 1) use nondiscriminatory language, 2) make gender visible when it is relevant for communication, and 3) do not make gender visible when it is not relevant for communication.
Citation	United Nations. (2017). *Guidelines for gender-inclusive language in English*. https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/guidelines.shtml

Urban Institute

"Data communicators should ground data analysis and communication in empathy."

Author	Urban Institute
Org	Urban Institute
Title	Do No Harm Guide: Applying Equity Awareness in Data Visualization
Brief	This guide explores ways to help data scientists, researchers, and data communicators take a more purposeful diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) approach to their work. Also, this guide and the associated checklists and toolkits focus on the often hidden or subtle ways that data analysts and communicators fail to incorporate equitable awareness in the data they use and the products they create

Citation   Schwabish, J., & Feng, A. (2021). *Do no harm guide: Applying equity awareness in data visualization*. Urban Institute Research Report. https://www.urban.org/research/publication/do-no-harm-guide-applying-equity-awareness-data-visualization

U.S. General Services Administration (GSA)
"Accessibility is about more than compliance with standards. It's about developing solutions to meet the needs of all users, with and without disabilities. Universal design, a concept now widely used in the private sector, provides a path for federal agencies to shift to this broader focus."

Author   U.S. General Services Administration (GSA)

Org   U.S. General Services Administration (GSA)

Title   Universal Design and Accessibility

Brief   This page has several types of resources, including a four-part training video series, infographic, and white paper that includes resources, tips, and tricks for designing products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

Citation   U.S. General Services Administration. (2022). Universal design and accessibility. Section508.gov. https://www.section508.gov/develop/universal-design/

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
"CLAS is about respect and responsiveness: Respect the whole individual and Respond to the individual's health needs and preferences."

Author   U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Org   U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Title   National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) in Health and Health Care

Brief   The National CLAS Standards are intended to advance health equity, improve quality, and help eliminate health care disparities by establishing a blueprint for health and health care organizations.

Citation   U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2016). National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) in Health and Health Care. https://thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/assets/pdfs/EnhancedNationalCLASStandards.pdf.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
"It is important to ask people how they want their experience reflected as part of an engagement, particularly since the term may be stigmatizing in some cases when used as a label."

Author   U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Org   U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Title   Methods and Emerging Strategies to Engage People with Lived Experience

Brief   This brief identifies methods and emerging strategies to engage people with lived experience in federal research, programming, and policymaking. It draws on lessons learned from federal initiatives across a range of human services areas to identify ways that federal staff can meaningfully and effectively engage people with lived experience.

Citation   U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2022). Methods and Emerging Strategies to Engage People with Lived Experience. https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/lived-experience-brief.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

"Communications and plain writing are especially important in the context of health care and human services. Plain writing helps people understand health information better because it results in documents which are less complex and more clear, concise, and jargon-free."

Author	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
Org	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
Title	[Plain Writing Act Compliance Report](#)
Brief	HHS's 2021 report demonstrates HHS's continued compliance with the requirements of the Act. The report is organized into sections on accomplishments, best practices, innovations, continuous improvements, and for the first time includes a new focus section on promoting equity.
Citation	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2021). Plain Writing Act compliance report. https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/hhs-2021-plain-writing-act-compliance-rpt.pdf.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

"The purpose of this Policy is to implement uniformity and conformity of accessibility compliance across all of HHS."

Author	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
Org	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
Title	[Section 508 Accessibility Compliance Checklists](#)
Brief	The accessibility checklists provide the evaluation criteria that must be met to ensure content is accessible to all users. Section 508 requires that all external public facing content and non-public-facing official agency communications be accessible.
Citation	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2021). Section 508 accessibility compliance checklists. https://www.hhs.gov/web/section-508/accessibility-checklists/index.html.

U.S. Department of Labor (DoL)

"Writers should prioritize self-identification and call people what they wish to be called."

Author	Chief Evaluation Office (CEO)
Org	U.S. Department of Labor (DoL)
Title	[Standards on Reducing Language Bias in CEO Products](#)
Brief	This work provides general DoL standards with examples, a short discussion about how to apply principles to reduce bias in language throughout the evaluation lifecycle, and links to additional resources from which this document was adapted.
Citation	Chief Evaluation Office. (2021). *Standards on reducing language bias in CEO products*. U.S. Department of Labor. https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OASP/evaluation/pdf/Standards_on_Reducing_Language_Bias_in_CEO_Products_May_2021_508c.pdf.

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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation

200 Independence Avenue SW, Mailstop 434E
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