

Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority Disadvantaged  
Community Involvement Project  
FINAL REPORT FOR SAWPA

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## Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority Disadvantaged Community Involvement Project

The Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) Disadvantaged Communities Involvement (DCI) program was started as an initiative to bridge the gap between the community and the policy makers in an effort to address community needs related to water resources management. The Department of Water Resources (DWR) joined in agreement with SAWPA to partner with watershed focused organizations to identify and determine the strengths and needs of disadvantaged communities within the Santa Ana River (SAR) watershed. The DCI program comprised of three core elements, each of which were contingent upon the successful outcome of the others:

- I. A strength and needs based assessment
- II. The education programs
- III. The project development program

An important element of this project was to ensure that policymakers understood the needs, capacities and perspectives of their constituents in order to create and implement policies that would meet the needs of the community. This report is going to be divided into five subcategories of the three core elements mentioned above.

### The Disadvantaged Community (DAC) Mapping Tool:

The DAC mapping tool, developed by the GIS teams, were used to locate disadvantaged regions within respective counties. We used the mapping tool to locate two types of communities: severely disadvantaged communities and disadvantaged communities. We included all the nonprofit based organizations operating within these communities. Our rationale

behind choosing these nonprofit organizations were not only because it fell within the DAC boundaries but also because of their outreach to a diverse population which included: vulnerable groups, underrepresented groups, mentally disabled groups, the elderly, homeless population, victims of hunger and poverty etc. We wanted to make sure that the needs and strengths assessments that we were gathering were representative of the population that we wanted to focus on.

### Non-Profit Outreach

For the non-profit outreach part, two teams were assigned to divide the regions/counties that were covered under this project. Team 1 outreached to all the nonprofits within the San Bernardino and Riverside counties, and team 2 did outreach to LA and Orange counties- these counties fell within the DAC boundaries. We began our respective outreach by first listing all the nonprofits within our respective counties and then reaching out to them via email and phone calls. We introduced our institution and our project goals and expressed our interest in partnering with them to reach out to the communities. We did not have all positive responses or just responses at our first outreach, so we followed up with each of them and progressed as we proceeded.

### Community Listening Session Training

Once we had a list of nonprofit organizations that were willing to participate and partner with us on our project, we began to prepare for our next step, which was acquiring training for facilitating these listening sessions. Our teams were trained by two key research personnel on how to conduct these listening sessions, what questions or comments to use in order to guide

conversations or prompt responses from the community members, informed consent and other regulations and formalities related to recording the sessions, asking permissions to record, keeping the identity of the participants protected and anonymous etc.

### Community Listening Sessions

Following the training of facilitating listening sessions, the two teams were asked to schedule listening sessions with the respective counties/nonprofits that they were responsible for. We created flyers for each of the listening sessions and mailed them out a month ahead in order for the respective nonprofit organization to pass them out to their community members. The flyers contained our contact information as well as our social media platforms for inquiry purposes. We also posted information about these sessions on our social media platforms to make sure we were thorough. For the listening sessions, one principal researcher/investigator was present along with two team members. The principal researcher would usually take the lead in facilitating the first couple of listening sessions after which the team members had an option to lead a session as well. Usually if the researcher would lead the conversations then the team members would take notes and vice versa. The listening sessions were conducted at a time that best worked for the community members to be present and participate. Refreshments and water tool kits were provided during the sessions as an indication of our appreciation for their time, willingness and participation.

### SAWPA DACIP technical report process

Once we had completed our listening sessions, all of our collected notes and data was sent over to the research team to be analyzed. Once analyzed, they were sent back to us to

constitute the technical report that would entail all of our procedures and findings that was associated with the entire process. The technical report itself consisted of several different components, each of which were run by different members of the project who were responsible for those parts of the project. Our job was to reach out to all these team members, who were responsible for different pieces of the project, and ask them to send over their portion of data so we could weave it into the larger structure of the technical report and arrange the report piece by piece as we scaffolded the information consecutively. This process took time and a lot of communication and coordination with our other team members.

Some of the other responsibilities that have been a part of my work with SAWPA are listed below.

#### GLIP Report

GLIP reporting was an essential part of the project that we worked on, with SAWPA. GLIP is a task management application that allows us to record all of the project's activities, schedules and tasks. All members of the project are able to see these tasks, what is being done by other team members, plans, calendar schedules, posts etc. to collaborate better on the project. My job was to update and maintain information on GLIP once a week, so that all members were up to date about the projects' progress.

Working with SAWPA on the DCI project has truly been a learning experience not just in terms of research but also in terms of collaborative work done on a larger scale. What I have learnt from my time working on this project has not just strictly been research or academic alone,

but also skills that are practical and necessary in a project which is highly data driven and also ethnographic in nature. I am grateful for having given this opportunity to work alongside highly motivated and driven group of people.