

City of Visalia Policy:

Reasonable Efforts to Encourage Public Participation in City Council Meetings Required by SB 707

Policy: Reasonable Efforts to Encourage Public Participation in City Council Meetings

1. Background

Senate Bill 707 (2025) amended the Ralph M. Brown Act to require eligible legislative bodies to determine and make reasonable efforts to encourage participation in public meetings, particularly among underrepresented communities and non-English-speaking communities. Government Code § 54953.4(b)(3)(C) authorizes legislative bodies to determine what constitutes “reasonable efforts” and clarifies that failure to provide notice to any specific group does not create a basis for legal action.

The Visalia City Council desires to establish a flexible outreach framework to encourage broader public awareness of and participation in City Council meetings.

2. Purpose

This policy establishes the City’s general approach for conducting reasonable outreach efforts intended to encourage participation in City Council meetings, particularly among underrepresented communities, non-English-speaking communities, and individuals with accessibility needs, consistent with Government Code § 54953.4.

3. Applicability

This policy applies to meetings of the Visalia City Council, the City’s eligible legislative body under SB 707.

4. Outreach Strategies

The City may utilize a variety of outreach and communication methods to encourage public awareness of and participation in City Council meetings. Outreach efforts may include, but are not limited to, the following:

4.1. Community-Based Outreach

The City may coordinate with community organizations, neighborhood groups, churches, civic organizations, and agencies serving the public to share information regarding City Council meetings and participation opportunities.

4.2. Outreach to Underrepresented and Non-English-Speaking Communities

The City may provide outreach through organizations and programs serving underrepresented populations and non-English-speaking communities, including healthcare providers, educational organizations, community resource agencies, and agricultural worker organizations or events.

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4.3. Accessibility and Disability Outreach

The City may explore outreach opportunities and accessibility measures intended to improve awareness of and participation in City Council meetings among the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. Such efforts may include researching available accessibility tools and services, including closed captioning and other communication accommodations, as resources and technology allow.

4.4. Public Notice Distribution

The City may distribute meeting information through available communication methods, including but not limited to:

- The City website
- Social media platforms
- Posting agendas at City facilities, including the Community Center and Senior Center
- Mailers or informational handouts, as resources allow

4.5. Media and Multilingual Communication

The City may share meeting information with media organizations serving the community, including organizations serving non-English-speaking audiences, and may provide multilingual communication materials when feasible and appropriate.

5. Flexibility of Outreach Efforts

The Visalia City Council recognizes that outreach methods, communication platforms, community needs, and available resources may evolve over time. Accordingly, the City may utilize additional reasonable outreach methods not specifically identified in this policy when deemed appropriate.

6. Limitation

Consistent with Government Code § 54953.4(b)(3)(C)(ii), the Visalia City Council retains broad discretion in determining appropriate reasonable efforts under this policy, and failure to provide notice or outreach to any specific individual or organization shall not create a basis for legal action.

7. Review and Updates

This policy may be reviewed and updated by the Visalia City Council at a noticed public meeting in open session, consistent with applicable law.