



IMPROVING EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS WITH LIMITED-ENGLISH-PROFICIENCY (LEP) CHINESE- AND RUSSIAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES

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TOP LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME OTHER THAN ENGLISH, 2011–2015

Language	Bellevue Citywide		Speak English less than "very well"	
	Estimate	Percentage of Pop 5 and Over	Estimate	Percentage speaking specific language
Chinese	11,983	9%	5,945	50%
Spanish or Spanish Creole	7,121	6%	3,451	48%
Other Asian languages	5,204	4%	1,329	26%
Korean	4,260	3%	2,180	51%
Hindi	3,818	3%	838	22%
Russian	2,900	2%	1,305	45%
Japanese	1,862	1%	795	43%
Other Indic languages	1,612	1%	456	35%
Vietnamese	1,431	1%	776	54%
French (incl. Patois, Cajun)	1,340	1%	122	9%
Other Indo-European Language	1,001	1%	379	38%
Tagalog	879	1%	335	38%
Persian	831	1%	414	50%

Top languages spoken at home other than English in Bellevue have changed significantly from the years portrayed in this table (2011–2015). New data elevates both Korean- and Russian-speaking residents above 4%—the threshold for significant population segments. US CENSUS BUREAU, 2011–2015, AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

THE CHALLENGE

An essential aspect of emergency management is communicating information to the public during an emergency or disaster. In the United States, as a result of growing limited English populations (LEP), multiple language access policies have emerged at federal and state levels. The purpose of these policies is to address inadequate approaches to emergency communications which have proven deadly for LEP populations. Research reveals that Chinese-speaking communities of King County lack awareness of the emergency resources available to them, as well as confidence in their ability to understand public communications in English. Moreover, the practice of broadcasting emergency alerts to the public in English yields

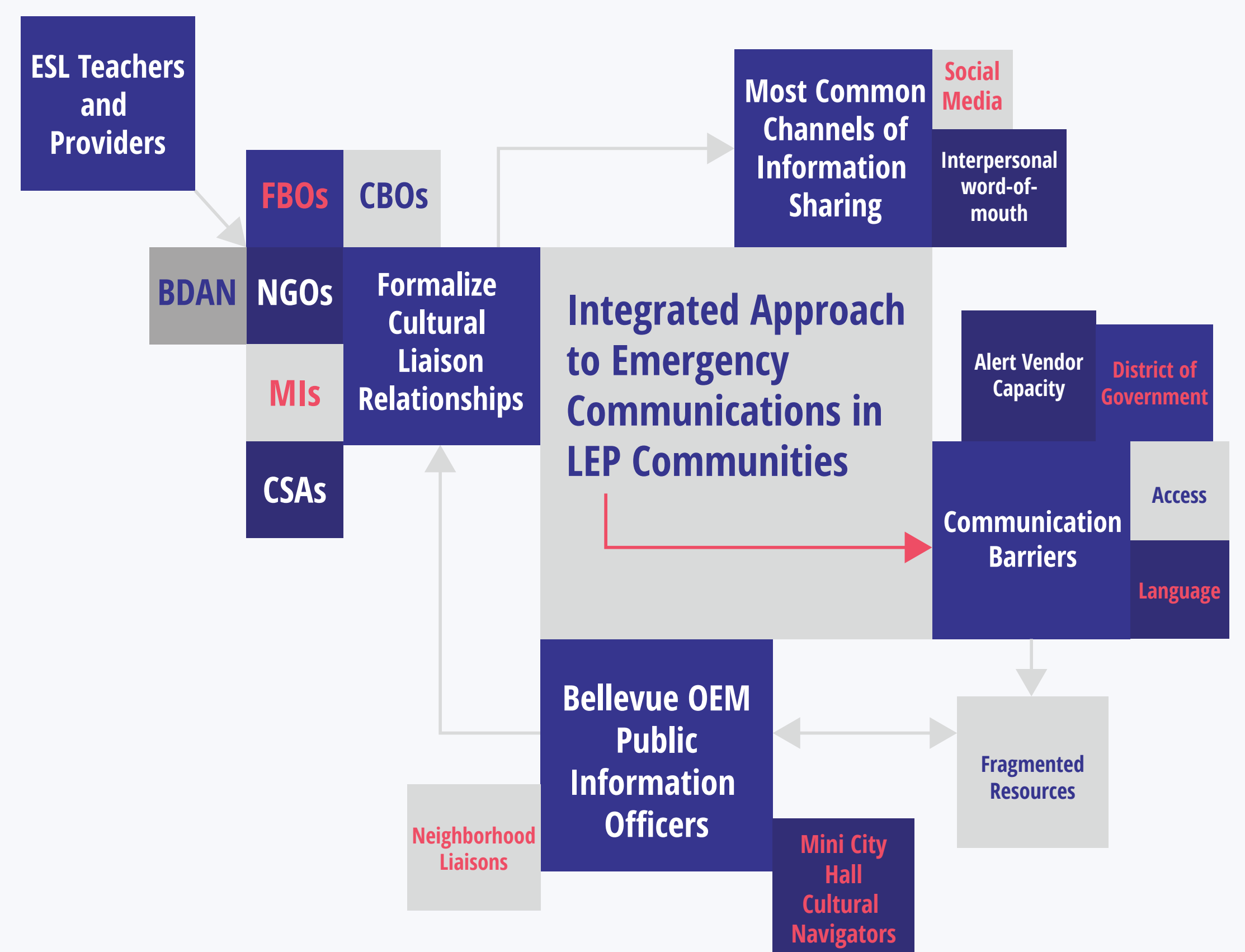
disparate access to emergency communications. These factors compound to adversely impact LEP communities.

Further research regarding how to identify and use trusted advocates of Bellevue's LEP residents is essential for connecting these communities with available emergency management resources. This project considers two language communities of Bellevue (Chinese and Russian) and the methods the City could use to reach these communities during and after an emergency or disaster.

METHODS

Based on findings from my literature review, I chose to interview representatives of community-based organizations (CBOs), faith-based organizations (FBOs), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of Bellevue. I noted that the employees with the most direct contact with LEP persons are English as a second language (ESL) teachers. Therefore, I focused my recruitment efforts on ESL teachers and providers.

In addition to reaching out to organizations in Bellevue, I approached City staff and I contacted members of departments that work on behalf of LEP populations: the Communications Office, the Diversity Advantage Team, and the Office of Emergency Management. In order to gain broader understanding of relevant government efforts in place to serve LEP populations, I also interviewed staff from the City of Seattle. I conducted a total of 14 interviews, with distinct guides tailored for ESL teachers and providers of CBOs, FBOs, and NGOs; and for city government employees. I also generated four internet surveys and captured the responses of 34 individuals who work with LEP communities.



Integrated approach to emergency communications in limited-English-proficient communities. KATE TAYLOR

FINDINGS

From interviews and survey responses, significant themes surrounding emergency communications with LEP populations centered around:

- Group access
- Trust
- Efficiency

I observed these themes to be interdependent. Group access could be made possible through formalizing and integrating a collection of cultural liaisons. These cultural liaisons must be trusted advocates of LEP communities. Interpersonal communication between cultural liaisons and LEP groups emerged as one of the most prevalent and efficient forms of communication with and among LEP persons. The most efficient channels appear to be word-of-mouth and social media.

