Community Engagement

Summary Report and Strategy

Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County

Hazardous Waste Management Program

GOVERNMENTS WORKING TOGETHER FOR A HEALTHIER AND CLEANER KING COUNTY

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Foreword

When we first envisioned the Haz Waste Community-Led Taskforce, we knew we wanted to curate a space that was radically different from other community dialogues, focus group discussions, or outreach spaces we'd been in. We wanted it to feel relational, focusing on community above outputs or outcomes; organic with the freedom to pursue conversation wherever it followed; and hopeful, with an effort to find solutions and opportunities.

Above all, we knew Haz Waste staff needed to take a seat at the back of the room and listen. The taskforce brought together ten individuals from across King County — representing grad students, parents, community activists, and NGO leaders — and gave them the space to bring their lived experiences to the table to create real change.

Together, with the taskforce, we set out to create a Community Engagement Strategy piece by piece. Instead of using conventional methods or conversation, we took an arts-based approach. We wrote poetry together. We told stories that brought complicated topics to life. And we talked about the terrifying headlines — ICE raids, massive cuts to environmental protections, and the uncertainty of it all. Thanks to the remarkable members of this taskforce, we were able to create a space of optimism and change.

Creating a space where taskforce members felt comfortable sharing their own experiences meant that Haz Waste staff also needed to open up about what makes this work meaningful to us. When we launched the taskforce in November 2025, my daughter had just turned one, and I often think about the type of community I want to raise her in.

For me, the community I want to protect for her looks like Jefferson Park — just a few blocks from home. It's a place where neighbors of all ages and backgrounds come together — learning to ride bikes for the first time, exercising with friends–even paragliding on the occasional windy, clear day. It's a uniquely King County greenspace — with urban life and nature in the same panoramic view. I do this work to protect places like Jefferson Park, where our community's life happens.

The final taskforce meeting sums up what happens when we create a space that prioritizes community experiences. Everyone was asked to bring a potluck dish or memento that helped to introduce them on a more personal level. Folks brought dishes of rice pudding, Irish soda bread, favorite earrings, and knit baby blankets. At one point, one of the taskforce members pulled out a speaker and began dancing to a traditional Colombian vallenato. It was a burst of heart and energy that perfectly bookended that last meeting.

This Community Engagement Strategy is the result of six intensive months of doing things differently. It's a blueprint for how we communicate and deliver our services better in community. In the coming months, we hope to deepen and put into action the feedback and insights shared here.

Warmly,
Celina Kareiva
Communications and Outreach Lead
Hazardous Waste Management Program

Part 1

Summary Report

Introduction



Overview to Taskforce: The Purpose of the Taskforce

The Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County (Haz Waste Program) is a coalition of local governments in King County that works to protect people and the environment from exposure to hazardous materials. These include everyday chemicals and common products, such as cleaning supplies, varnish, motor oil, oil-based paints, and pesticides, which have toxic, corrosive, flammable, and reactive ingredients.

The Haz Waste Program works at three levels on policy, prevention, and collection. It aims to make its services more accessible to residents, especially King County's most underserved communities. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and South King County residents are disproportionately affected by environmental hazards. These communities are more likely to live near superfund sites, have poor air quality, and to generally live and work in areas of high pollution. Long-term exposure to pollutants doesn't just cause lifelong health problems, but pervasive generational health issues.

For the past four years the Haz Waste Program has been conducting audience research to understand how it can address some of these health disparities and better reach the region's most underserved communities. In particular, the Program has been striving to better understand how King County residents access services, the barriers they face, and their current knowledge levels on hazardous waste.

This community-led project takes that research a step further and is meant to better understand how folks understand and prioritize environmental health issues, so that the Haz Waste Program can do better outreach in communities.

Photovoice:
Through the Lens of the Camera



In 2024, the Haz Waste Program partnered with eight community members to collaboratively collect and analyze data to better understand how the public relates to hazardous waste and prioritizes environmental stewardship using an approach called Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR). CBPR is a research approach that centers empowerment, community strengths, and priorities.



Using a methodology called Photovoice, the Haz Waste Program applied a community-engaged research method that connects the power of photography with social action by advocating for community partners to share their perspectives and lived experiences —through the camera lens. Community partners were asked to take pictures in response to several defined research questions.



Haz Waste staff and community members then met to do a "gallery walk" of the images collected, with captions written by each participant to describe the photos they took. Photos included images of polluted streams, oil leaks under cars, community centers, and neighborhood parks. Afterward, community partners talked about the photos they'd seen and how each resonated with them. Their findings formed the basis of four main research themes that the Program set out to explore more deeply through a Community-Led Taskforce.

A Community-Led Taskforce

At its core, the Taskforce aimed to answer the question–How can we motivate community members to use and dispose of hazardous products safely? Building on our Photovoice learnings, the members dove deeper into the community values that surfaced from our CBPR study to inform how the Haz Waste Comms team can better engage community.

Together, Taskforce and Program staff co-created a Community Engagement and Outreach Strategy, aimed at better reaching King County's most underserved audiences–with a messaging framework, tactics, activities, and community insights. The six-month initiative represents an earnest example of community partnership, in which community members shared decision-making, responsibility, and influence on the resulting strategy. In the coming months, the strategy will be translated into an Action Plan, with additional contributions from community.

Within King County, community engagement is understood as a spectrum, defined by how power, influence, and decision-making are shared.

The spectrum encompasses **Inform, Consult, Collaborate, Partner, and Community-Led** – each reflecting a different tier of engagement.

This initiative represents an earnest effort at community partnership, with shared decision-making, influence, and responsibility.



Convening the Taskforce

The Haz Waste Program set out to convene a 10-member taskforce with community leaders representing the following qualities:

- Understanding and/or interest in equity and environmental justice;
- Lived experience using and/or being impacted by hazardous products;
- Involvement in the local community; and an
- Inclination towards problem-solving and generating new ideas.

Taskforce members were recruited through two different pathways:

Prior Relationship

In the fall of 2024, the Haz Waste Program conducted a Photovoice study. Community members who participated in the study were invited to join the taskforce. Five of the taskforce members expressed an interest in continuing to work with the Haz Waste Program on this second phase of efforts. These members provided important continuity across the project.

Application Process

To recruit for the remaining five positions, the team created an online application process in the summer of 2025. The application included the following questions that aligned with the desired qualities of taskforce members:

- Why are you interested in joining the taskforce?
- What hazardous products do you use in your daily life? (select from a list of examples)
- What identities, perspectives, and experiences would you bring to the taskforce?
- How are you involved in your local community? (for example, through social activities, events, clubs, volunteering, work, or other activities)
- What does a successful community event look like to you?

All application and outreach materials were created in English and Spanish, since some of the channels used to reach potential applicants were geared toward Spanish speakers.

Application Process (cont.)

The application was shared through the following channels:

- Direct emails to community members who had participated in community advisory groups facilitated by the project team;
- Group email to community members who had applied to join community advisory groups facilitated by the project team (via project managers for those advisory groups);
- Group emails to community members who had participated in workshops facilitated by the project team (via project managers for those workshops);
- Posts in social media groups for Families of Color Seattle and Environmental Professionals of Color - Seattle.

The team received 44 applications for the taskforce. To evaluate responses, they created an evaluation criteria that weighed applicants' understanding and interest in equity and environmental justice; how their lived experience aligned with taskforce needs; their involvement in local community; their ability to demonstrate problem-solving and ideation skills; and their involvement with past taskforces or related opportunities. General availability was also taken into consideration. The selection process included two dimensions:

- **Desired qualities:** The project team read each applicant's responses to the application questions and used a scale of 1-4 on each of the desired qualities (1= little to no demonstration of this quality; 4 = demonstrates this quality exceptionally well). Applicants were associated with a number and remained anonymous to avoid reviewer bias.
- **Priority audience:** In the past, the Haz Waste Program had identified gaps in engagement from Black communities and South King County residents. Applications from community members with these identities were marked as being part of a priority audience.

The project team took the average desired quality scores and priority audience representation to select five taskforce members.





Arts-Based Activities

This project incorporated a series of arts-based methods and activities to support collaborative meaning-making, message development, and campaign planning. Taskforce meetings were anchored by an arts-based activity to facilitate conversation and generate ideas toward different segments of the Outreach Strategy. The project team decided on this creative approach because:

Using arts-based methods can be more accessible and culturally responsive.[1][2]

Taskforce members had diverse identities, professional backgrounds, and lived experiences, and many did not have knowledge or experience in developing or implementing a marketing strategy. Using art as a data collection and facilitation tool can present complex topics in ways that are more accessible to community members, giving each participant a common starting point and enabling them to provide meaningful input.

Instead of education and knowledge extraction, it focuses on trust-building.

Past Haz Waste Program community engagement efforts have focused on traditional evaluation and research methods, as well as technical assistance and education for residents and businesses. Though these approaches can bring great value to a marketing strategy, they can be limiting given the history of harm to historically excluded communities. For this project, the Haz Waste Program chose to lean into a more participatory approach. Arts-based approaches often prioritize moving at the speed of trust and focus on values and lived experience during design and implementation.

Table 1: Summary of Arts-Based Methods

The following arts-based methods were used throughout the taskforce:

Arts-Based Activity	Description	Why this method?
Collage 	Participants created visual artworks by selecting magazine images, photos, textured papers, and other materials, assembled into a new composition. Collage invites participants to rethink language, reimagine images, and visually convey meaning through evocative mixed-media art.	• An approachable method that feels less vulnerable than creating something from scratch. • Well suited to generating new ideas and themes. • Option to use project-relevant materials to source images.
Found Poetry 	Participants reviewed pre-selected materials, selected words or phrases that resonated with them, and then used the highlighted sections to create their own poems.	• Well suited for conversations about emotions, experiences, and perceptions. • Helps gain a deeper understanding of themes. • Option to use project-relevant materials to source words.
Storyboard 	Participants developed a story scene by scene, by pairing visual elements with a few sentences of description for context.	• Well suited to visual storytelling, including marketing campaigns. • Can help translate complex technical topics into storylines. • Can inform creative concepts for different marketing and communications materials.
Creative Brief 	Participants used a template and question prompts to describe the audiences, key messages, tone, related activities and assets, and calls to action of a campaign idea.	• Adds detail to high-level story ideas. • Can help align audience information with creative concepts, tactics, and activities.
Activities Calendar 	Participants brainstormed event ideas and then sequenced them into a calendar.	• Helps prioritize ideas by narrowing down which ones to place on the calendar. • Elicits additional nuances of what could make activities more relevant depending on when they are scheduled.

Taskforce Approach and Findings



Between November 2025 and March 2026, the taskforce met six times (four in-person and two virtual). This section describes the arts-based methods used throughout the process, why they were chosen, the outcomes and outputs from each method, and how each activity and facilitation strategy built off each other.

The taskforce prioritized members' lived experiences over their subject matter expertise. The project team did not spend significant time talking about the technical nuances of hazardous waste management. Instead, the team focused on providing real-life examples and conducting arts-based activities that drew on taskforce members' lived experiences.

Over the course of the taskforce, the project team followed the guiding principle of meeting members wherever they were at with their ideas, knowledge levels of hazardous waste, and understandings of outreach and engagement. Sometimes, ideas emerged that were outside the scope of hazardous waste or communications, or that the Haz Waste Program has previously found to be unfeasible. These ideas were still captured to be shared with the appropriate decision-makers and appear in the findings summary. However, depending on the flow of the conversation, the project team did not always pursue additional details about ideas that were outside the scope of each activity or of the project in general.

Developing Messaging Themes and a Message Map: Using Collage and Poetry

The team used arts-based methods (ABMs) to identify the core messaging themes that would guide future communication materials. This approach centered taskforce members' lived experiences, values, and personal motivations, over technical information. The activities allowed for a gentle point of entry for complex topic areas, while also dedicating time to relationship-building.

Participants first explored themes visually through collage, then deepened those ideas through found poetry. This allowed the group to move from images and lived experiences to emotional, relational, and values-based reflection.

Participants used photographs from Phase I (Photovoice), magazines, newspapers, and other mixed-media materials (Appendix A) to create collages. This method was selected because it encourages participants to rethink language, reinterpret images, and communicate meaning through visual creative expression. It also serves as an accessible method for initial thematic analysis.

Participants selected one of the major themes identified during Phase I:

- Environmental Health and Connection;
- Human Health;
- Community, Culture and Social Justice; or
- Food Sovereignty.

They then created collages that represented what the theme meant to them personally. This activity allowed taskforce members to introduce themselves to the group while also generating initial ideas for messaging themes, values, and motivators that shaped our future message framework.

Found poetry is an arts-based method that involves reviewing pre-selected texts, identifying words or phrases that resonate, and rearranging them into poetic form.

Building on the themes that emerged through collage, participants then engaged in a Found Poetry activity (Appendix B). Using the initial messaging ideas generated during the collage exercise, excerpts from Robin Wall Kimmerer's Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants, and other participant-selected texts or media, taskforce members created poems about how communities can protect families, neighborhoods, and the environment from hazardous products.

The poems helped participants explore their emotions, lived experiences, and perceptions. The project team also conducted a written analysis to review the language and terminology participants used when discussing hazardous waste related issues. These activities ultimately surfaced key messages that informed the first draft of a message map. In the third taskforce meeting, participants reviewed a draft of the message map and further reflected, discussed, and refined it (Appendix C).

The following are the four key messaging themes that emerged, their accompanying descriptions, and what was learned through the arts-based exercises.

Messaging Theme 1: Interconnection

Taking care of nature is taking care of ourselves. If we take care of nature, we take care of our communities and own well-being. If we pollute it, we harm ourselves.

Two subthemes also emerged:

1. **Protecting nature protects our ability to eat healthy, culturally relevant, natural foods; and**
2. **Protecting waterways keeps our families and communities safe.**

Taskforce member collages visually emphasized the cyclical nature of pollution—how contamination in water, soil, and air returns to the body through food systems and daily life. They frequently depicted rivers, food, and the human body as interconnected systems, reinforcing the idea that environmental harm is personal and immediate.

The taskforce's poetry also explored the idea of "interconnection" as relational, spiritual, and reciprocal. Participants described a "symbiosis with nature" and emphasized mutual care, "if we take care of it, it will take care of us." Thus, expanding the theme beyond physical health to include cultural, emotional, and spiritual well-being.



Taskforce member's collage

> **"The earth is nurturing us mentally, spiritually, and physically. And if we take care of it, it will take care of us. ... If we pollute it, we only pollute ourselves."**
> *— Taskforce member*

> **"We form a symbiosis with nature, our intimate relationship and interconnection is more than just business."**
> *— Taskforce member*

Messaging Theme 2:
Protecting nature is our responsibility

We all share one home, the Earth. We have a responsibility to protect the Earth from harm.

Taskforce members highlighted community-based responsibility through imagery of collective action—storytelling, community gardens, and cultural gatherings. These visuals emphasized that protecting the environment is something we do together, not individually.

Poetry reframed responsibility as both a moral obligation and a cultural value. The taskforce described environmental protection as "our job" and emphasized honoring the Earth, connecting responsibility to identity, ancestry, and stewardship, rather than obligation alone. Participants described this responsibility as an exercise in community and care-taking—a form of nurturing and civic engagement.



Taskforce member's collage

"Safeguarding the land through stories, through food, through culture, through ecosystems, from harmful products and extraction from corporations."
— Taskforce member

"Protecting these sacred waters shouldn't feel like an imposed execution of tasks. It should simply be my job, our job, all our jobs. … Honor what the Earth has produced, and guard the land before the damage becomes forever."
— Excerpt from taskforce member's poem

Messaging Theme 3:
We all suffer from the consequences of pollution

When we do not uphold our responsibility to protect nature, we suffer. Pollution threatens our families, communities, food systems, waterways, and our mental and physical well-being.

Taskforce members visually illustrated the tangible impacts of pollution on health and daily life, such as contaminated food, unsafe water, air pollution, and other threats to family well-being. These visual narratives grounded the theme in concrete, observable consequences.

Poetry expanded this theme by emphasizing long-term and systemic consequences. Taskforce members described pollution as something that becomes embedded in ecosystems and communities, threatening individuals both physically and emotionally. This affects not only our current peace of mind but also the future of cultural practices and future generations. The emergence of "there are consequences" as a theme reinforced the urgency and inevitability of these impacts.





Taskforce members' collages

> **"Such pollution becomes an embeddedness in our ecosystem. Staining places we call home. Threatening our families, our fishing, our peace of mind, our mental and emotional balance."**
> *— Excerpt from taskforce member's poem*

> **"The world is full of plastic wrap, hiding hard and simple truths. It's just business to the faceless corporation."**
> *— Excerpt from taskforce member's poem*

Messaging Theme 4:
Speak up, resist, and shift mindsets

Protecting nature takes more than changing our individual behaviors. It takes activism to change the way our society works.

The taskforce members' collages prominently featured themes of activism and collective voice, such as protests, raised fists, signage, voting, and community organizing. These images reflected a strong desire for visible, collective resistance and empowerment.

Poetry added the need to shift dominant narratives and challenge systems of power. The taskforce highlighted the roles of corporations, false narratives, and mindset change, emphasizing that true environmental protection requires both internal (personal mindset) and external (systems-level) transformations that go beyond the reach of individual citizens.

Most importantly, protecting nature takes more than changing our individual behaviors. This theme highlighted the limits of individual action and emphasized that it takes activism to change the way our society works, underscoring the critical role of policy reform government programs like the Haz Waste Program.



Taskforce member's collage

> **"Revolution Begins in the Mind. They printed it up. They printed shirts. They printed signs. They were real serious about getting the message out."**
> *— Excerpt from taskforce member's poem*

> **"How to change the narrative, and how the false narratives take us away from the reality and responsibility of the environment. ... It is the biggest companies (plastic) who blame individuals. ... Recycling is good, but they say the waste issue is 'your fault' because YOU don't recycle, but actually the plastic manufacturers are responsible."**
> *— Taskforce member*

Messaging Considerations

Following the collage and found poetry exercises, the project team drafted a message map based on the visual and messaging themes surfaced in these arts-based activities, which they then brought to the taskforce to refine (see "Part 2: Key Messages").

Throughout this process, taskforce members shared the following key considerations that were embedded into the message map:

- **Explain what makes something a hazardous product.** Early discussions revealed some confusion about how hazardous waste is defined, and how the public can identify what products are hazardous. Because there is no single ingredient or product label for hazardous waste, taskforce members asked for examples of some of the most commonly used household hazards.
- **Explain at a high level why these products can't go in the garbage.** Taskforce members felt it was important to understand the implications of throwing hazardous waste in the landfill or down the drain. Understanding the downstream effects of throwing waste away helped reinforce program services–and helped to visualize the lifecycle of a product.
- **Emphasize that putting hazardous waste in the environment is hurting everyone.** Taskforce members wanted to better understand the long-term consequences of everyday choices and actions (ex., an action may not have an immediate impact, but over time it will have a severe impact on air quality). This helped them understand the cumulative effects of their choices and they thought this understanding would be a powerful motivator for behavior change.
- **Explain the concept of having companies be responsible for the entire lifecycle of the product.** Participants wanted to better understand the systems-level change that could be influenced–such as the Program's work on extended producer responsibility (EPR) legislation.

Through this process, the taskforce also shared feedback to be considered in the development of communications materials:

- Include specifics in communications materials. For example:
  - Provide detailed instructions about how to use household items like vinegar and baking soda for cleaning, instead of brand-name products containing more toxic ingredients.
  - Explain the lifecycle of products (like electronics) and what the different impacts are of putting them in the garbage instead of disposing of them properly.
- Share information in small, digestible sound bites to prevent community members from feeling overwhelmed.
- Incorporate local examples of how hazardous waste is hurting our community.
- Use terms like "Mother Nature" and "Mother Earth" that have emotional resonance.

Reviewing the message map also prompted discussions around tone, which are summarized in the next section.

Drafting Campaign Concepts: Using Storyboarding

The project incorporated storyboarding as a participatory planning and communication tool, allowing taskforce members to transform the themes into concrete campaign concepts. Storyboarding involves visually mapping out a story using images paired with short narrative descriptions and is commonly used in the development of marketing and visual storytelling campaigns.

Through group discussion and voting, two concepts were selected for further development. This process resulted in story ideas, a list of possible community engagement activities, and two marketing campaign creative briefs.

Exploring Tone

Before storyboarding, taskforce members explored the role of tone in marketing campaigns. Tone helps convey the emotions the messages are intended to evoke in the audience. The facilitation team introduced this topic by having taskforce members rotate through three different stations, demonstrating different types of tone: (1) fear, (2) emotional plea or pulling at heartstrings, and (3) edgy.

At each station, participants watched two commercials that exemplified each tone (Table 2) and then reflected on the question: "Would I use this tone for the hazardous waste messages we have been developing? Why or why not?"

Below is a summary of key findings in order of preference.

Table 2: Examples of Tone in Marketing Campaigns

Tone	Description	Commercial
Fear	Messages that convey a sense of urgency and move people to action because they are afraid of the consequences of inaction.	• VW Jetta - Safe Happens • D.A.R.E - This Is Your Brain
Emotional Plea/Pulling at Heartstrings	Messages that evoke warm and nurturing feelings and move people to action because they are driven by care and protection.	• Dawn Saves Lives • Nike's Just Do It
Edgy	Messages with an unexpected twist that pique the audience's interest to keep them engaged. These can also include humor or provocative messaging.	• Washington State Department of Health: Vaccinate WA "Ready for Summer" • Apple's 1985

Taskforce Input on Marketing Tones

Emotional Plea/Pulling at Heartstrings

Taskforce members showed a strong preference for the "Pulling at the Heartstrings" category. They were drawn in by the hopeful, inspiring, and empowering tones. They also mentioned that this tone creates a sense of shared purpose, a feeling that you're part of something meaningful, and encourages action through care, connection, and collective responsibility.

One taskforce member shared that they would not use this tone because they perceived this tone as undermining the seriousness of hazardous waste.

Fear

Taskforce members were divided on whether to use fear as the messaging tone. Some felt that fear could be appropriate and in alignment with the issue, especially if balanced with a supportive, solution-oriented message at the end. Others described fear-based content as too graphic and stressful, and as a potential cause of audience disengagement, resulting in the core message being lost. Several taskforce members expressed that even though they didn't agree with fear tactics, they were effective at making messages stick.

Edgy

Taskforce members were not drawn to the edgy tone for the topic of hazardous waste.

Crafting Initial Story Ideas

After discussing tone preferences, participants began developing campaign concepts. Participants brainstormed ideas focused on five key elements: (1) key messages, (2) audience, (3) tone, (4) materials and activities, and (5) the desired call to action.

To help ground the activity in real-world environmental health examples, the project team wrote short case studies illustrating two different types of services offered by the Haz Waste Program—Washington State's PaintCare Program as an example of EPR policymaking, and educational workshops on lead in cookware and safer product choices (Appendix D). This approach balanced the need to provide taskforce members with essential technical information while also creating space for participants to draw on their lived experience, values, and knowledge.

Using these case studies as a starting point, individuals wrote down story ideas they thought would motivate community members to learn more about hazardous household products and choose safer everyday products. Taskforce members were then split into two groups to pitch their story ideas to one another, and then each group chose one concept to further develop into a storyboard.

Some of the ideas generated were about environmental protection in general or examples of activities or tactics—not stories. This section captures all ideas that emerged from the brainstorm. However, not all ideas were discussed in detail.

Crafting Initial Story Ideas (cont.)

Below are the initial story ideas. The bolded concepts are the ones that the taskforce moved forward, ultimately developing into full storyboards.

Prompt #1: Write down as many ideas as you can for stories that would motivate community members to learn more about what household products are hazardous and how to use and get rid of them safely.

1. **"Unsafe Water, Unsafe Health" – The impacts of unsafe practices on water, with provocative visuals like the use of old chemical containers to water plants (see Table 3).**
2. "Food Safety" – Explain how pathogens in food lead to illness when consumed.
3. "Toxin Exposure" – Explain how exposure to toxins and chemicals in food influence hormonal imbalances.
4. "Product Exchange" – Designate days and locations where people can bring their hazardous products to exchange for safer options.
5. "DIY Days" – Host workshops for people to make their own safer options of hazardous products.
6. "Collection Drives" – Designate days and locations for people to drop off specific types of hazardous products (ex: paint, tires).
7. **"**Makeup Giveaway" – Make and give out bags of safe cosmetics with information on the Toxic-Free Cosmetics Act.
8. "Point System" – Develop a campaign to encourage youth to drop off batteries and/or medications in exchange for points that can be collected to win prizes, like a free coffee or a game.

Prompt #2: Write down as many ideas as you can for stories that would motivate community members to choose safer everyday products to limit their exposure and keep harmful chemicals out of the environment.

1. **"Paint a Brighter Future" – A story of a newlywed couple buying their first home and remodeling it—painting each room in the house and learning about the environmental implications of improperly disposing of leftover paint (see Table 4).**
2. "Saving the Princess" – A video game that gamifies responsible hazardous waste management by personifying waste as a "sludge monster" chasing after a princess. The educational game promotes safer practices.
3. "Around the Table" – A story of friends and family gathering for a big celebratory meal. The narrative underscores links between adverse health outcomes and lead found in many imported cookware.
4. "Teaching Kids to Compost" – A story about the benefits of composting and the importance of responsible waste management to keep our gardens and soil healthy.
5. "DIY Makeup" – An educational campaign about the toxic ingredients found in many makeup and personal care products. A possible campaign video would follow a group of women getting ready for a night on the town, but instead of using brand-name products they are seen making DIY makeup that is cleaner and greener than store-bought options.
6. "Haz Waste Point System" – Build on behavior change learnings that indicate people are motivated by rewards systems. Residents receive points every time they visit a Collection site that add toward customer privileges, such as swag or discounts.
7. "The Life Choosing Club" – Establish online forums for people to share their experiences trying to live a greener, healthier life.

Crafting Concepts

The two ideas taskforce members moved forward were: (1) "Unsafe Water, Unsafe Health" and (2) "Paint a Brighter Future." The project team used storyboarding and creative briefs to develop campaign concepts for these two ideas.

Each group developed a storyboard of their chosen idea with the following prompts and format:

- **Title:** *One sentence summary of the idea.*
- **Scene 1 – Beginning:** *One sentence summary of the scene.*
  - What actions are happening? What keywords are said or displayed?
  - Draw or write a visual description of what is going on during the scene.
- **Scene 2 - Middle:** *One sentence summary of the scene.*
- **Scene 3 - End:** *One sentence summary of the scene.*
- **Call to Action:** *Desired effect when audience members engage with this story.*

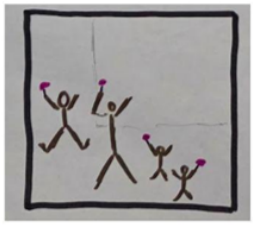
The finalized storyboards can be seen below (Tables 3-4):

Table 3: Unsafe Water, Unsafe Health Storyboard

Beginning	**Show examples of the things that harm water.**
	Almost everything we use can end up in water. Residue from tires and from shoes, dog poop that isn't picked up, medication like birth control, makeup, and pesticides all end up back in our water sources.
Middle	**Give an example of an action that leads to chemicals in the water.**
	Have you used an old bleach container to water your garden? There can be different examples for different communities depending on the common behaviors.
End	**Show the contrast between safe and unsafe use of products.**
	Using hazardous products safely leads to good outcomes. Happy music and birds/salmon appear on screen when people do the right thing. Using hazardous products unsafely leads to bad consequences. Dead birds/salmon appear on screen when people do the wrong thing. The words "Your choice!" appear to emphasize that people have agency on what path they take.
Call to Action	**(1) Protect what you love; (2) Health is wealth. Get wealthy; (3) Water is life.**

Crafting Concepts (cont.)

Table 4: Let's Paint a Brighter Future Storyboard

Beginning	**Show an example of an everyday product that harms humans and the environment.**
	Newlyweds buy a new home, a fixer-upper that they're excited to make their own. They start painting their house—room by room—a new color in each space.
Middle	**Show an example of an action that leads to exposure to humans and the environment.**
	But are they only painting the walls? As the couple keeps painting, they get carried away and start painting beyond the walls of their house. We see the couple comically painting half their dog, part of their fence, and the neighborhood around them. Paint seeps into the lawn, garden, drains, soil, driveway, road, highway, Mt. Rainier, and into our waterways.
End	**Show the contrast between choosing safer everyday products to limit exposure and keep harmful chemicals out of the environment.**
	Somehow, the camera freezes or reverses, and we see the couple pausing to make the "right choice." Before purchasing, please read your labels for safer product choices and disposal options. "We can paint a brighter future."
Call to Action	**Safely dispose of your paint and opt for healthier, greener options where possible.**

Crafting Concepts (cont.)

After the storyboards were created, the facilitation team used the Creative Brief Template (Appendix E) to help the taskforce expand on the audiences, tone, and materials and activities for their campaign concepts. Below is a synopsis of the creative brief developed for each story idea (Table 5 and 6)

Table 5: "Unsafe Water, Unsafe Health" Creative Brief

Creative Brief Prompts	Synopsis
Key message	Our health and well-being is intertwined with nature.
Audience	• Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in King County. • People with a lower income who may be looking to save money through homemade alternatives to hazardous products. • Teenagers (11-18) and young adults (18-24) who can adopt desired behaviors at an early age.
Supporting messages	• When hazardous products are thrown in the garbage or down the drain, they pollute the water and soil and harm our health and well-being. • Safely disposing of these products keeps the environment, our families, and our communities safe and healthy.
Tone	• Use vivid, attention-grabbing visuals and sensory elements, such as outdoor imagery, bird sounds, and flowing water, to create an emotional connection. • Shock the audience by showing before-and-after imagery of how pollution can affect local water sources. • End with positive, health- and action-focused messaging that reinforces the importance of hydration and highlights the relationship between environmental health and human well-being.
Materials and activities	• Create visually engaging and interactive materials, such as posters with QR codes, digital stories, infographics, and infused water recipes, which have Indigenous and other cultural roots. • Place educational materials in everyday community spaces where people already access or think about water (e.g. playfields, parks).
Outcomes	• Increase awareness about which household products are hazardous and how to safely use, store, and dispose of them. • Educate about water runoff and how everyday items (tires, paint cans, car parts, etc.) can unintentionally pollute waterways.

Crafting Concepts (cont.)

Table 6: "Paint a Brighter Future" Creative Brief

Creative Brief Prompts	Synopsis
Key message	Everyday choices and actions can help protect the environment and our health.
Audience	• Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in King County. • Developers building low-income housing or house flippers. • Families and first-time homeowners. • People with a lower income. • Young people (high schoolers) and adults.
Supporting messages	• The Earth is our home. It is our job to protect it and take care of it. • You can do your part by choosing safer alternatives for household products.
Tone	• Warm and reassuring • Protective • Comedic, funny, joyful, inspiring happiness and hope

Materials and activities	• Clear, accessible educational materials, such as a sticker (like Mister Yuck) or a magnet/postcard with a QR code linking to disposal instructions and safety information.
	• Enforce stronger product transparency and accountability measures, such as clearer labeling of ingredients, health impacts, and disposal instructions.
	• Partner in outreach efforts with local businesses, social media influencers, workshops, and health fairs.
	• Engage the community with fun events or personification campaigns, like a Spotify Wrapped campaign, but with the types of hazardous products you dispose of most. Tie to messaging, such as "what does your hazardous waste say about you?"
	  ◦ Paint? You're creative.
	  ◦ Car liquids? You're a mechanic
	  ◦ Cooking oil? You're a frying fiend!

Outcomes	Choose safer everyday products to limit your exposure and keep harmful chemicals out of the environment.



Engagement Activity Ideas: Using Activity Calendars

At the final taskforce meeting, participants developed an activities calendar to organize and prioritize potential campaign engagement strategies. Activity calendars are commonly used in visual marketing and campaign planning to map out events and outreach efforts over time.

Participants first reviewed a list of proposed campaign activities (including workshops, events, media outreach, and material distribution), nearly all of which were developed through the creative brief exercise, and selected two to three ideas they were most excited about. After reflecting on and discussing their selections, participants collaborated to organize these ideas into two different 12-month activity calendars (Appendix F). In the end, this activity generated a set of engagement activity ideas that helped participants collectively envision how campaign activities could be implemented in practice and a prioritized list of communications materials and outreach activities.

Priority materials and activities were selected by the taskforce to include in the 12-month engagement calendar. These represent the ideas that the taskforce recommends that the Haz Waste Program implement first because they would be the most effective at getting community members to take action.

Supplemental materials and activities were not selected by the taskforce to include in the engagement calendar. They thought these ideas would not be as effective at getting community members to take action. The Haz Waste Program should consider implementing this activity if additional resources are available, after implementing the ideas in the priority category.

Priority Materials and Activities

Materials and Media

Calendar mailer
What: Create and distribute a calendar that encourages people to take small actions to keep their families and communities safe from hazardous waste, with one action proposed each month (ex., bring your batteries to the pop-up collection event in January, replace your cleaning supplies in February). This activity promotes individual agency and the small changes we can all make on a regular basis for a greener environment.
Where: Direct mail
When: Fall/Winter

Posters
What: Create posters with QR codes that link to a website, explaining the connection between safely disposing of hazardous waste and keeping the environment and our families safe. Posters offer an opportunity to reach people directly about the health and personal decisions they make. It's also a chance for sustained, repeated exposure to hazardous waste messaging.
Where: Display them at locations where people use water like water fountains, handwashing stations, and swimming spots.
When: Summer

Small giveaway items
What: Collaborate with local artists to create and distribute stickers, magnets, postcards, and other giveaway items with a QR code leading to information about the safe use and disposal of hazardous products.
Where: Event handout
When: Year-round

Social media influencer campaign
What: Collaborate with social media influencers to share information about how to safely use and dispose of different hazardous products. Pair influencers with different types of items depending on the type of content they create. For example, collaborate with a DIY home renovations influencer about PaintCare, or with a beauty influencer about the Toxic-Free Cosmetics Act.
Where: Digital
When: Year-round

Social media video campaign
What: Produce videos focusing on the campaign concepts that emerged from the taskforce (see "Part 2 - Campaign Concepts" for more). Incorporate copy about relevant seasonal events when applicable (for example, reminding people that Haz Waste Program collection sites do not accept fireworks around the 4th of July).
Where: Digital
When: Year-round

Priority Materials and Activities (cont.)

Outreach Activities

Community-led workshops

What: Partner with community groups to host workshops educating the public about the importance of the safe use of hazardous products. Link content back to cultural practices, recipes, traditions, and more that are meaningful to the communities involved. For example:

- A Native teas and infusions workshop focused on reaching Indigenous communities to highlight the importance of keeping water clean.
- A cooking workshop featuring culturally relevant recipes with a focus on using safe, lead-free cookware, similar to a series of cooking videos developed by the Haz Waste Program and the Afghan Health Initiative.

Where: At community-based organizations or community centers
When: Spring/Fall

Pop-up collection events

What: Place pop-up collection sites at existing community events to reach the public at more convenient locations and events. For example, bring your unused paint to a farmer's market, health fair, summer festival, and more.
Where: Existing community events
When: Summer

Community art

What: Collaboratively create an art installation with community members that communicates the importance of safely disposing of hazardous waste, using found, recycled, and salvaged materials to encourage reuse and sustainability.
Where: Park or other public space
When: Summer

DIY workshops

What: Host workshops to learn how to make your own household products as a safer alternative to brand-name products with harmful ingredients. DIY workshops might include product swaps and recipes for makeup and cleaning supplies.
Where: Community centers or libraries
When: Winter

Supplemental Materials and Activities

Materials and Media

One-pager

What: Create and distribute a printed or digital one-pager that explains how to safely use and dispose of the ten most commonly used household hazardous products. Hazardous waste is a broad category without an obvious unifying label or ingredient to signal to the public that it's hazardous. Existing materials that cover all types of hazardous waste can be overwhelming to community members since it is a lot of information. Therefore, materials that narrow down to commonly used items offer an easier point of entry for residents wanting to better understand what hazardous waste is.
Where: Direct mail, event handout

Materials and Media (cont.)

App
What: Create an app for people to track their hazardous waste-related actions to motivate, track, and educate users about safer use and disposal practices. Create a "Spotify Wrapped" style recap at the end of the year (ex. "you collected 37 batteries!"). Framing these behaviors as accomplishments encourages behavior change. To further draw on principles of a rewards system for behavior change, people could earn points when they log their behavior on the app that they could then exchange for small prizes.
Where: Digital

Zine
What: Design a zine to tell a story about hazardous waste disposal. Community members remember stories more easily than facts, so materials like zines that lend themselves to storytelling are effective tools.
Where: Event handout

Local news
What: Pitch stories about hazardous waste to local TV, radio, and print news outlets to share information through local media that priority communities may trust more than mainstream outlets. Local media outlets also offer deeper reach, in-language stories, and more culturally nuanced storytelling.
Where: Local media outlets

Online community forums
What: Create moderated groups on messaging apps like WhatsApp and Discord for community members to ask questions about hazardous waste and share the types of products they most commonly use. Messaging forums offer virtual support and community.
Where: Messaging apps

Outreach Activities

Educational events
What: Host educational events explaining the connection between safely disposing of hazardous waste and keeping our waters clean.
Where: Outdoor spaces such as parks and swimming spots
When: Summer

Lifestage workshops
What: Host workshops to share information about the types of hazardous waste that might be most relevant to people depending on their lifestage (ex. PaintCare programming for first-time homeowners, safer alternatives to cleaners for new parents babyproofing their households).
Where: Community centers and libraries
When: Fall/Winter

Key Learnings about Convening a Taskforce

After completing the six taskforce meetings, the project team reflected on the things that worked well for the taskforce and areas for improvement. Below are several learnings about convening advisory groups such as this one.



What Worked Well

Overall, the project team felt the taskforce was a transformative experience for the Haz Waste Program and a positive opportunity for the members themselves.

- **Apply arts-based facilitation to spark difficult conversations.** Using arts-based methods helped taskforce members think creatively about a topic that could be otherwise technical and complex. Whether through activities such as found poetry or creating collages, arts-based facilitation allowed for a common point of entry for members with different backgrounds, values, and subject matter expertise. It also helped unearth values, motivators, and concepts that could be difficult to articulate and ask about directly.
- **Balance technical information with people's lived experiences.** Providing only the necessary technical information and then framing discussions around lived experiences and observations helped taskforce members remain engaged in dialogue rather than being bogged down by complicated details. This approach also centered taskforce members for their expertise, letting go of a well-intentioned but often misplaced need to use these spaces for educating the public.
- **Embrace a flexible approach to meeting planning.** The project team followed an iterative process, where each meeting built on the outcomes of the prior one and allowed for the natural progression of conversation. This was a new approach for the Haz Waste Program. The program's culture tends towards rigid planning because there is the sense that being less detailed in planning could risk wasting people's time. While this iterative approach feltchallenging—it went against typical processes—it allowed facilitators to respond to the specific needs of taskforce members and to right-size activities for the people in the room. But for this approach to be successful, it is important to still have strong, adaptable facilitators and a clear understanding of the desired outputs and purpose of the taskforce. This includes defining the "building blocks" or key decision points in the taskforce timeline, as well as the outcomes or specific deliverables taskforce members contribute to.

What Worked Well (cont.)

- **Create authentic spaces to connect outside of the taskforce agenda.** It's important to take time to be present with taskforce members and to create organic spaces for connection. As an extension of this, taskforce meetings should feel safe and responsive to members. This includes modeling conversation, ideas, and meeting materials that are "works-in-progress" and imperfect. Doing so, created a space where people felt comfortable sharing candidly. Examples of how this showed up include:
  - Taking time to talk about world events that were on people's minds, without rushing or trying to force a connection to hazardous waste. During several meetings, we paused conversation to check in with taskforce members about the other items weighing on their hearts and minds. This helped to reinforce that we were community members first, and taskforce representatives second.
  - Drawing some of the meeting materials by hand (like the storyboard template) helped the taskforce feel comfortable sharing ideas that did not have to be fully formed. This contributed to activities that were meant to be "blue-sky brainstorms," and freed taskforce members from overthinking their contributions, or feeling like they had to be an expert to speak up.

Areas for Improvement

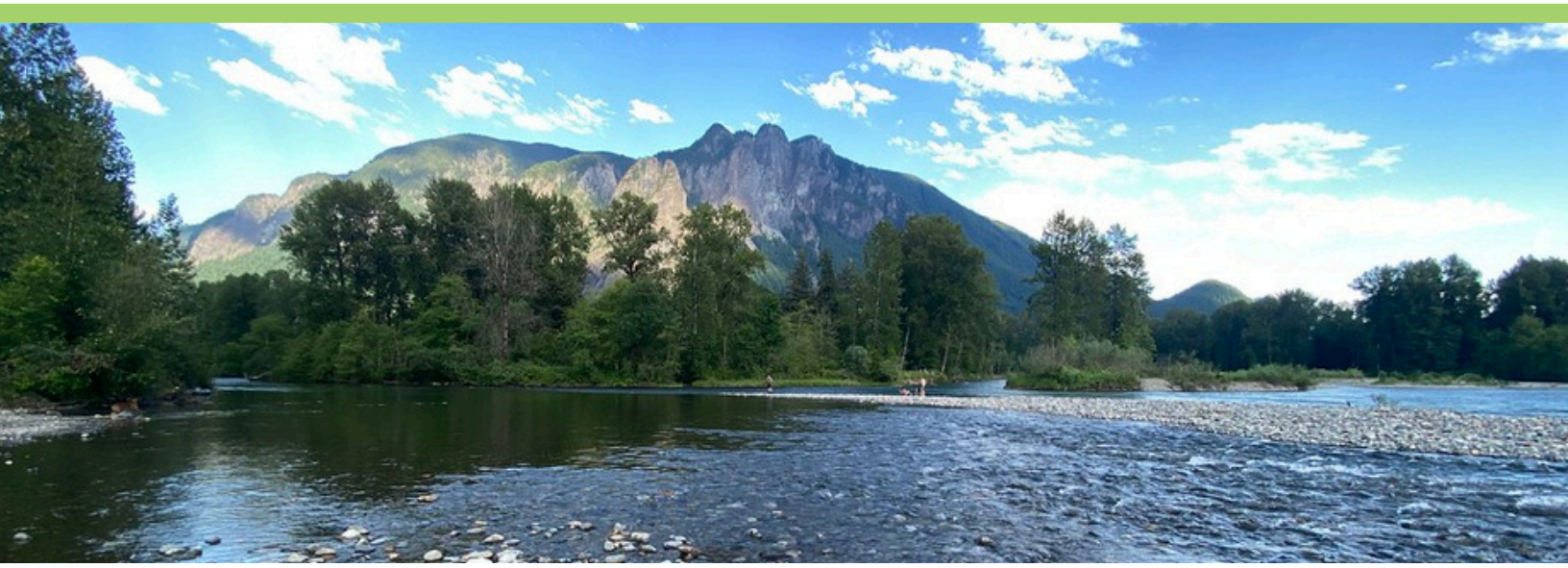
The taskforce also presented many opportunities for growth within the project team. In the future, the Haz Waste Program will fine-tune the following details:

- **Plan for unstructured connection.** While this taskforce had many small moments of connection woven throughout, it was squeezed into an already full agenda. In the future, project teams should ensure that the number of meetings includes enough space for an initial meeting that is purely about building relationships and a final meeting that is purely about celebration, with all content covered in between. This helps to build enduring relationships, trust, and rapport.
- **Develop realistic timelines.** The iterative nature of this taskforce, while critical to the group's success, created very aggressive turnaround times for meeting materials, agenda setting, and translation. In the future, create timelines with more breathing room between meetings.
- **Recognize the limitations of an advisory body.** It's important to balance desired outcomes with the lived experiences and areas of expertise of taskforce members. The taskforce did as much as they could without having a background in communications or hazardous waste. As participants were pushed closer to the edge of their areas of expertise, conversations became more off-topic. The Haz Waste Program should be realistic about what can be accomplished by a community-based taskforce and what may require more specialized recruitment, introducing subject matter experts for short educational lessons, and contracting for specialized skills. Incorporating more educational content while maintaining the same level of building trust and rapport would require a longer taskforce duration.
- **Allow for moments of playfulness and celebration.** At the final taskforce meeting, the project team hosted a potluck-style dinner and invited members to bring a personal memento or dish that introduced individuals outside of their professional selves. The last meeting was also used to film taskforce members in short, on-camera interviews to profile their contributions to the space, and speak to their roles as community leaders. In the future, the project team should plan more opportunities to celebrate the dynamic individuals in the room. They should also intentionally set aside time for playfulness to create candid spaces for connection.

Part 2

Community Engagement Strategy

Introduction



This community engagement strategy was created to help the Haz Waste Program better reach Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and South King County residents, as the Program strives to strengthen its community engagement. These communities are disproportionately impacted by exposure to hazardous waste and have had low levels of participation in prior Haz Waste Program services.

This strategy was developed through findings from a taskforce made up of community members for these priority audiences. The strategy includes key messages, campaign concepts, outreach strategy, and program recommendations designed to improve the relevance of Haz Waste Program engagement for these communities.

This Strategy reflects the collective insights of our taskforce and the priority communities they represent. However, executing on these concepts will require transcreation and refining messaging, storylines, and tactics to best suite our specific campaign audiences.

To reach the desired audience, the Haz Waste Program will need to ensure that the implementation of this strategy is **multilingual and multicultura**l. Multiple versions of communications materials will need to be created in different languages, representing people of different races, and depicting different cultural traditions. Activities will need to be implemented with partners who have ties to different communities, and the ability to deliver an end-to-end experience in-language.

Key Messages



The key messages are organized into three overarching themes that resonate with community members and motivate them to safely use and dispose of hazardous waste. Each key message has supporting points that help community members understand why the theme is important, and a single, concise call to action that community members can apply. Calls to action were generated based on community insights about the reasons why safely using and disposing of hazardous waste matters to community members: reducing the impacts of pollution on human and environmental health, taking individual action to mitigate harmful impacts, and speaking up to achieve systemic change.

The Haz Waste Program may draw from the key messages to create communications materials. Each communication material should focus on a single theme and call to action, and may draw from one or more of the corresponding supporting messages. The materials do not need to include every supporting message under each theme, and they do not need to use the exact verbiage in the message map.

Specific examples were added to the message map to help taskforce members better grasp concepts, based on feedback that concepts would benefit from local examples and the real world implications when hazardous waste isn't responsibly disposed of. Communication materials do not need to use the same examples included in the message map. However, whenever possible, communication materials should use the approach of including concrete examples to illustrate broad statements. For example, "Unsafely disposing of hazardous waste harms the environment" feels too abstract to community members. "Batteries can cause fires in the landfill" is a specific example that helps them see the consequences of putting this type of waste in the garbage.

The below messages also reflect important simplifications to some of the technical jargon favored by the Haz Waste Program. Taskforce members preferred simple terminology, such as "throw away" instead of "dispose," and "safer products," instead of "safer alternatives." This simplified language should be carried over into future communications materials as much as possible.

Message 1:
Our health and well-being is intertwined with nature.

Call to Action

Learn more about what household products are hazardous and how to use and get rid of them safely.

Supporting Messages

Some products that we use at home can hurt the environment and our health if they are thrown in the garbage or dumped down the drain. They're considered hazardous waste.

When we use and throw away these products safely, we take care of nature and keep our families and communities healthy.

Hazardous waste is different from other garbage. It can spread into the surrounding environment and have dangerous consequences.

- For instance, lithium batteries in toys, household appliances, and some technology can cause devastating fires in the landfill.
- Hazardous waste may also expose workers who unknowingly handle the garbage to dangerous substances.

Hazardous waste pollutes the soil and contributes to air pollution.

- Chemicals that get poured down the drain get into our local streams, rivers, lakes, and other waterways.
- For instance, old tires that accumulate in home garages or backyards have been known to degrade, leaching chemicals and heavy metals into the soil and rainwater runoff.
- This makes this water unsafe for people and animals to drink.
- It is also unsafe to use for watering farms and gardens.

Using products with hazardous ingredients is bad for our health and the environment.

- The "forever chemicals" found in some cosmetics, food packaging, and cookware can accumulate in our bodies and the environment over time, leading to higher rates of cancer in adults and developmental delays in children.
- The pesticides and herbicides used in our yards and gardens can wash into streams and rivers, hurting fish and other animals.

Message 2:

Everyday choices and actions can help protect our health and the environment.

Call to Action

Choose safer everyday products to protect your health and keep harmful chemicals out of the environment.

Supporting Messages

The Earth is our home. It is our job to protect it and take care of it.

Many everyday products include chemicals toxic to the environment. Over time, these can build up and cause serious damage.

- Tires contain a chemical, called 6PPD, that is especially deadly to salmon. As tires wear down or get thrown away, the chemical mixes with rainwater and gets into the streams where salmon lay eggs. It has been found to be the leading cause of death for spawning coho salmon.

Some household products contain harmful chemicals that can accumulate in our bodies and lead to higher risk of cancer, reproductive issues, and developmental delays for children.

Choose safer options for some household products to help keep toxic chemicals out of the environment.

- Switch your bathroom cleaners for homemade ones using simple, affordable ingredients like vinegar and baking soda to clean toilets, bathtubs and sinks.
- Make your own yard care products. Mild dish detergent can be just as effective as store-bought products against garden pests, like aphids.
- Using ingredients already found in your pantry can save money.

Throw away hazardous products at a King County collection site so they don't get into waterways and soil.

Look at the ingredients in the products you buy and avoid products with harmful ingredients.

- For instance, avoid makeup with formaldehyde, which is known to cause cancer.



Message 3:
Protecting the Earth requires changes to our society.

Call to Action

Get involved with efforts to change laws and stop companies from harming the Earth.

Supporting Messages

Protecting nature goes beyond our individual choices and behaviors. It requires changes to our laws and the way companies work.

The average household produces 20 pounds of hazardous waste each year. Businesses often manage millions of tons annually.

Businesses that produce and handle hazardous waste need to be educated and held accountable for the damage they may cause.

The Hazardous Waste Program is working with legislatures, developing new policies, and collaborating with local cities and Tribes to change the larger, systemic impacts of hazardous waste.

- For instance, the Hazardous Waste Program helped develop a new state law prohibiting the sale of cookware that contains lead since it was leading to serious health concerns in immigrant communities.
- The Hazardous Waste Program also helped pass legislation to put the responsibility of safe disposal on distributors and manufacturers of products, like cosmetics that can contain harmful ingredients.
- Every year, the Hazardous Waste Program works with cities and Tribes on educational programs for the public about the importance of being careful when they use products with harmful ingredients.

Campaign Concepts



The taskforce recommended applying a storytelling lens to deliver key messages. Storytelling helps make complicated concepts more relatable because community members can better understand how they apply to everyday life. For example, telling people to use hazardous products carefully can feel abstract. On the other hand, telling a story about how chemicals reach streams and hurt salmon illustrates what can happen when we don't use hazardous products responsibly.

The campaign concepts are angles that the Haz Waste Program may use to share information about the key messages in a way that feels more narrative. For each concept, this strategy includes:

- The key message that it relates to;
- A general story arc that can be applied to various hazardous products;
- An example of what that story may look like for a specific type of hazardous product;
- Tone and style considerations;
- Community relevance considerations;
- And considerations for the call to action.

The concepts are best suited to focus on a single type of hazardous waste, rather than being used to share information about hazardous waste universally.

This section also includes taskforce guidance on the tone and style of communications, as well as considerations for messaging to priority communities, and calls to action. However, it's important to note that as these strategies are implemented, concepts will need to be further refined and adapted to specific audiences. This may include translating for multiple languages, creating tiers of messaging for different demographics, representing different communities in visual imagery, and refining storylines to resonate with multiple audiences. This work will take place in a Phase 3 of action planning.

Concept 1: Safe Waters



Key Message

Our health and well-being is intertwined with nature.

Campaign Concept

This campaign concept focuses on ways that hazardous waste impacts our waterways and systems. The proposed story focuses on an example of a hazardous product that can end up in local waterways. The purpose is to illustrate the connection between people's individual actions and the environment–focusing on the cumulative effects of the choices we make, and actions we take.

This concept contrasts the proper way to dispose of products with unsafe practices. It relies on strong visuals to illustrate how we can protect our environment and community health when we know how to, and are enabled to get rid of waste responsibly. It also empowers the public to see the impact of their individual, everyday habits.

Story Example

Using the example of tires as a hazardous product, demonstrate what happens when tires are left to disintegrate in a resident's backyard. There, they can leach into the ground and the local streams where salmon return to spawn.

Contrast that imagery, using a split-screen or successive stories, with someone bringing their used tires to a collection site. This represents the responsible way to keep the chemicals tires are manufactured with out of the environment. The story explains the positive downstream effects of these actions, including a healthy, thriving stream with salmon wriggling.

Tone and Style Considerations

The campaign employs the contrast between safely disposing of hazardous products for people and nature, with the harm that can be done to our environment if products enter our waterways and ecosystems. When displaying improper disposal, the style should be bleak. In contrast, when displaying the protective, healing benefits of managing hazardous waste responsibly, the tone should be hopeful, using strong visual and audio cues like birdsong and flowing water. The story should end on a hopeful note–leaving viewers empowered as agents of change.

Concept 1: Safe Waters (cont.)

Community Relevance Considerations

- Focus on products or disposal practices that are common in the community. Examples brought up by the taskforce include:
  - Flushing medication down the toilet;
  - Using empty containers of hazardous products like bleach or other cleaners as jugs to hold drinking water or for watering plants;
  - Collecting used batteries but not knowing where to take them;
  - Holding onto used electronics and avoiding placing them in the garbage, but not knowing what to do with them instead.
- Show the impact of these actions on animal habitats (like birds and fish, especially salmon) to motivate people to change their behavior.
- Use images of local streams, beaches, parks, and greenways to reinforce the link between individual actions and our communities and ecosystems. Marketing materials should also direct audiences to local resources as much as possible–such as South King County collection sites or takeback programs for residents in a certain zip code.
- Present the contrasting storylines responsibly, ensuring that language and visuals don't shame viewers for improper disposal. A lack of information, accessibility challenges, language barriers, and other factors can contribute to people's disposal practices and it's important to acknowledge these structural barriers.
- Test the use of environmental terms that may have more emotional resonance with the community, such as "Mother Earth" and "Mother Nature."

Considerations for the Call to Action

The Haz Waste Program should develop materials that explain how to dispose of the specific hazardous product featured in the story–for instance, a landing page specifically about the safe disposal of tires–rather than communicating an entire category of products. The landing page should have the option to navigate to more information about other related hazardous products, such as motor oil, antifreeze, or other materials that home mechanics may come into contact with.

Concept 2: Bright Future



Key Message

Everyday choices and actions can help protect our health and the environment.

Campaign Concept

This campaign concept focuses on how using hazardous products can have far-reaching consequences that we can reverse by choosing safer alternatives. It also uses specific life stages and shared experiences, to target different age and cultural demographics.

Story Example

Use the familiar experience of home improvement projects—painting, refinishing, and cleaning a new home—to educate the public about safer product choices and their role in building a healthy home

Focus on a newlywed couple in their late 20s through early 40s who've just received the keys to their first home. They are eager to make it their own and promptly start painting each room in the house a different color. As they gain momentum, they get carried away and start painting beyond the walls of the house—to include the yard, surrounding neighborhood, and broader environment. When they catch themselves, they read the back of their paint can, realizing its many toxic ingredients and decide to switch to a safer alternative.

Tone and Style Considerations

The tone for the campaign should be joyful, inspiring hope and happiness. The activities depicted in the campaign should reflect important, happy moments in people's lives—for example, purchasing their first home, getting the house ready for a family gathering, getting ready for a milestone event like a wedding, or bringing a baby home. Using safe alternatives during these moments protects the bright future that follows these occasions.

When the hazardous products begin to seep into the surrounding area, the tone of the story shifts from idyllic to edgy, off-the-rails, even humorous, to convey how at odds with these idyllic moments it is to use harmful products. As the young couple paints beyond the walls of their new home, the campaign may use animation to show the impacts of chemicals on the broader environment–illuminating the surrounding parks, greenspaces, and waterways to show the cumulative and ripple effects of our individual actions.

Concept 2: Bright Future (cont.)

Community Relevance Considerations

The people shown in the stories represent a variety of races, genders, life stages, and types of families. This representation should include a diversity of ages, languages spoken, immigrant and refugee experiences, and household structures.

The visuals should include local imagery as much as possible–such as Mt. Rainier, popular local parks, and visuals of Lake Washington–to ground the story in reality.

Representation shouldn't be limited to visuals. Community members should contribute to creative development and storylines to ensure authenticity and an accurate reflection of their lived experiences.

Examples of meaningful occasions and relevant hazardous products include:

Table 7: Meaningful Occasions and Related Hazardous Products

Meaningful occasion	Related hazardous product
A young couple moving into their first home	• Paint • Yardcare products
A family preparing their home for their first child	• Paint • Cleaning products • Personal care products
A wedding	• Cosmetics
A coming-of-age celebration (ex: quinceañera)	• Cosmetics
A family gathering for a special meal	• Cookware
Starting a new business in an industry that uses hazardous products (car mechanic, beauty salon, etc.)	• Motor oil • Cosmetics • Yardcare products • Cleaning products
Retirement and pursuing new hobbies (ex: gardening, classic cars)	• Yardcare products

Concept 2: Bright Future (cont.)

Considerations for the Call to Action

Instead of just communicating what's hazardous about these different categories of products, materials should link to or include a list of safer alternatives for the particular type of product shown in the material. Where possible, the affordability and accessibility of safer alternatives should be considered. This may include presenting safer products that are more affordable than others, or offering price comparisons. At a minimum, marketing materials should acknowledge cost and access as barriers to choosing product alternatives.

It should be possible to navigate from the list of safer alternatives for the particular type of products featured in the story, to safer alternatives for other product categories.



Outreach Strategy

These campaign concepts can be applied to a variety of communications materials and outreach activities recommended by the taskforce. This suite of materials and activities proposed below makes up the outreach strategy recommended by the taskforce.

From the outset of the taskforce, the overarching question the group set out to answer was "How can we motivate community members to use and dispose of hazardous products safely?" Using and disposing of hazardous products safely is a behavior, and as a result, the outreach strategy is focused on providing information and incentives to result in behavior change. This type of campaign falls under the Inform level of community engagement (see Page 6 for more).

The outreach strategy overall is informed by community insights that emerged from the taskforce. These insights can also apply to the way the Haz Waste Program delivers programs and services.

- **Show, don't tell.** Art activities and problem-based learning helps complex topics feel more grounded in people's lived experiences. Structuring engagement activities as workshops where people can learn concrete skills rather than tabling events where they passively receive information helps community members retain the information.
- **Storytelling resonates.** Storytelling helps make complicated concepts more relatable because community members can see how they apply to everyday life.
- **Local stories make a bigger impact.** Local examples of hazardous waste impacting human and environmental health help the topic feel tangible.
- **Collective purpose motivates people.** Community members are motivated to take small actions when there is a sense that everyone is taking the same small action to achieve a bigger impact.
- **Systemic change matters to people.** Community members want to see institutions and businesses held accountable for the impacts of hazardous waste on human and environmental health.
- **Avoid overwhelming people with unattainable changes.** Community members are motivated by the importance of small, cumulative actions that fit into their daily lives, rather than huge unattainable changes.
- **Natural cycles emotionally resonate with people.** Messages about the cycles of nature–like salmon returning to the creek where they were born to spawn–emotionally resonate with community members and encourage them to take action.
- **Help people understand the impacts of small actions.** Understanding the larger repercussions that a small action can have–like pouring a chemical down the drain that then impacts water quality–encourages community members to take action.
- **Share information a little at a time.** Focus communications material on a single hazardous product and a single action to help community members feel that changing their behavior is manageable.
- **Compensate partnerships with community-based organizations.** Community-based organizations should be treated as long-term implementation partners, and their expertise and relationship-building work should be compensated. These organizations can help identify emerging community needs, culturally adapt messages, provide language access, recruit trusted messengers, test materials before launch, gather feedback, and help evaluate what is and is not working.

Digital Strategy

Community members are captivated by stories. They may not recall specifics about chemical names or scientific concepts, but they will recall stories that explain the impact of these substances on things that they care about. A digital strategy can cater to this orientation towards storytelling. The strategy will prioritize stories that feel true to day-to-day life, which can have a greater impact on behavior than stories about broader impacts that may not be as visible to community members.

Assets and partnerships for the digital strategy will focus on specific types of hazardous products and the simple changes people can make in their everyday lives. Community members are inundated with messages about things that they could be doing differently to lead a healthy life. Messages that encompass a broad range of products and actions are too daunting. On the other hand, a focus on specific products and small actions will feel more manageable.

To support the digital strategy, the Haz Waste program will explore the possibility of a campaign landing page. Rather than offering a comprehensive list of all types of hazardous waste, as is currently available on the Haz Waste Program website, this landing page would focus exclusively on the types of hazardous waste featured in digital content.

Each social media video and influencer post would lead community members to a page that focuses on the specific type of hazardous waste shown in the content. From that page, community members would be able to navigate to learn about other types of hazardous wasteThe digital strategy will consist of:

Social Media Video Campaign

Create a series of 30-60 second social media videos using the Bright Futures campaign concept. Each video should focus on a specific meaningful occasion or life milestone (see Table 7) when a community member may have the choice of using a hazardous product or a safer alternative. This focus on significant moments in people's lives will deliver community stories that feel personally meaningful, and that contribute to sustained behavior change over time.

Social Media Influencer Campaign

Work with influencers on a variety of topics to share messages about how to safely use and dispose of different hazardous products that are related to the brand and content they already share with their social networks. Influencers who are part of the campaign should have a local connection to King County and be representative of the communities that the Haz Waste Program wants to reach through this engagement strategy. Examples of topics and related hazardous products are included in Table 8.

Digital Strategy (cont.)

Table 8: Topics and Related Hazardous Products

Influencer communities	Related hazardous product
DIY Home Renovation/Decor	• Paint
Parenting	• Paint • Cleaning supplies • Personal care
Beauty	• Cosmetics
Lifestyle	• Cleaning supplies • Personal care • Cosmetics
Food	• Cookware

Print Strategy

A print strategy presents an opportunity to incorporate art into Haz Waste Program materials. Art helps reach community members on a more emotional and relational level, and it helps complex topics feel warmer and more connected to community experiences. It also presents the opportunity to share messages that resonate emotionally, such as depictions of the cycles of nature.

The poetry, mixed media, and stories already shared by taskforce members can serve as inspiration for the communications materials created for this strategy. The Haz Waste Program may also collaborate with local artists to create illustrations for these assets.

Assets for the print strategy will focus on specific types of hazardous products and individual actions to share information a little at a time. Demonstrating that people can have a big impact with small changes is important for reaching people where they are at. This concept also recognizes that communities have many higher priority issues commanding their attention. Community members are overwhelmed by the volume of actions they could take to keep their families and the environment healthy, so breaking down possible actions into manageable pieces is key to behavior change. The print strategy will consist of a calendar for change and posters.

Print Strategy (cont.)

Calendar for Change

Create a 12-month calendar that associates each month with one simple action community members can take to keep their families and communities safe from the negative impacts of hazardous waste exposure. The calendar may also include useful information about Haz Waste programming, such as the Wastemobile schedule or other event dates. An example schedule for the first quarter of the year could be:

Table 9: Example Calendar Content

Month	Action
January	Collect burned out lightbulbs and bring them to a collection site.
February	Try a DIY cleaning product.
March	Collect old batteries and bring them to a collection site.

The calendar may include an insert that has more information about how to complete the action for each month. It may also be paired with a website, accessible via a QR code printed on the calendar, that is updated each month or quarter to provide this information online. The calendar may be distributed via mail, at Haz Waste Program collection sites, through Haz Waste Program events, and at trusted community locations like community-based organizations, libraries, community centers, faith communities, clinics, schools, and culturally specific businesses.

Many people are motivated by concepts of "leaderboard" behavior change. This activity could also incentivize people to log their actions toward a reward or Program acknowledgement for their many good behaviors. For instance, the Washington Department of Health hosts a green business program called EnviroStars, that certifies and acknowledges businesses for their environmentally-friendly practices. A similar initiative, tied to a campaign call to action, social media hashtags, or small giveaways, could have the public log their green habits.

Posters

Create posters that follow the Safe Waters campaign concept. Each poster should focus on a single hazardous product and include a QR code that leads to more information about the safe disposal of that product. To increase the relevance of the message, these posters should be displayed at locations where people are drinking water or recreating in water, such as water fountains and swimming spots.

Event Strategy

Events bring community members together and help foster a sense of **belonging and shared purpose**. Activities where community members can interact with each other and feel they are working together towards a common goal can motivate community members to take action and safely dispose of hazardous waste. They also deliver opportunities for **experiential learning**, which is an effective approach to focus on tangible actions rather than technical information that may feel overwhelming.

Small giveaway items and incentives can motivate community members to engage with events. The Haz Waste can incorporate art into giveaway items by collaborating with local artists to design stickers, postcards, and/or magnets to distribute at events. Creating artistic giveaways will draw people to events and will be more likely to be used by community members than items with a more utilitarian design. Stickers could also have a practical use to help people label hazardous products already in their household. This can prompt them to avoid throwing these items in the garbage, and instead taking them to collection sites.

The event strategy will be implemented in partnership with trusted community messengers. These are people with established credibility in the community who may be community-based workers, faith leaders, cultural leaders, youth leaders, elders, small-business owners, or community organizers.

To help community members choose safe alternatives to hazardous products, the Haz Waste Program will create a handout that includes the ten most common hazardous products used in households and safer alternatives. To avoid naming brands, the handout will focus on the chemicals that make the products harmful. The event strategy will consist of:

Workshops

Establish compensated partnerships with community-based organizations to co-design and host workshops. Community partners can help determine which topics, examples, language, foods, products, and activities will feel most relevant to their communities. Each workshop will be a 45-60 minute gathering where community members participate in a hands-on activity (see Table 10). The Haz Waste Program will collaborate with community-based organizations to invite community members to the workshop, design the content, and facilitate it.

To ensure workshop topics are relevant to community members, the themes of workshops should center on culturally relevant interest areas or lifestages. Examples are included in Table 10.

Event Strategy (cont.)

Table 10: Possible Workshop Themes

Theme	Activity	Giveaway ideas
Safe water	Make water infusions with simple supplies.	Ingredients to make at home
Safe cooking	Cook a traditional recipe with safe cookware.	Raffle of a safe cookware set
Safe cleaning	Make homemade cleaning products.	Ingredients to make at home
Safe self-care	Make homemade personal care products.	Ingredients to make at home
First-time homeowners	Create checklist of ways to keep your new home safe from hazardous waste.	Discounts on safe options for products you may need for your new home (ex: paint, lightbulbs)
First-time parents	Create checklist to babyproof from hazardous products.	Baby-safe alternatives to common hazardous products

Pop-Up Events

Partner with existing community events to table and share information about how to protect your family and community from the negative impacts of hazardous products. To avoid overwhelming community members with too much information, create event displays or handouts that focus on the top 3-5 actions that community members can take to make an impact. These handouts should make it easy for community members to understand where to go, what to expect when they get there (including any language assistance available), and how they can get help if they need it.

Community Art

Partner with community-based organizations and local artists to host events where community members create art related to protecting their family and community from the negative impact of hazardous products. Community members will be provided with art supplies and instructions to create either a craft that they may take home or collaborate on creating art that will be publicly displayed. Examples of activities include:

- Partnering with an artist to paint a mural.
- Partnering with an artist to create a sculpture using salvaged materials.
- A poetry workshop.
- Designing a zine.

These events will give community members the opportunity to reflect on why safely using and disposing of hazardous waste matters, creating consciousness that will encourage them to engage in simple actions. They will also provide the opportunity for community members to interact with each other and feel a sense of shared purpose around this topic.

Program Recommendations

Keeping community members safe from hazardous waste requires both individual action and systemic change. A communications and engagement strategy is only one piece of the puzzle to accomplishing change on both the individual and systemic scale. To enhance the impact of this strategy, the Haz Waste Program should consider pairing communication and engagement activities with program changes that emerged from community insights.

Individual Action

Achieving behavior change requires more than raising awareness through communication. It requires understanding the barriers that community members face to engaging in the desired behaviors and finding ways to reduce these barriers. The following programmatic activities may help reduce barriers:

Youth Programs

To date, the Haz Waste Program has partnered with schools on a limited basis, due to a belief that young people typically do not handle hazardous waste such as motor oils, harsh cleaners, and oil-based paint. However, this may not be true across all communities, as taskforce members reported hearing from young people that they are asked to use harsh cleaners at home. Furthermore, there are types of hazardous products that children and adolescents may come across more frequently, such as batteries, cosmetics, and personal care products. Creating a curriculum to teach children and adolescents about the importance of safe hazardous waste practices can help solidify desired behaviors from an early age. The Haz Waste Program can identify populations where frequent exposure to hazardous products happens at an earlier age and then identify schools and youth programs with higher proportions of these populations to prioritize expanding youth programming.

Partnerships with schools and youth programs may also enable the Haz Waste Program to work directly with youth as the co-creators of the curriculum and as peer educators. This approach will help messages resonate more deeply.

Incentives

Community members are motivated by incentive programs such as:

- Cashback or discounts for bringing hazardous products such as electronics to collection sites at the end of their lifecycle.
- General cashback programs for bringing hazardous products to collection sites.
- A point-based reward system.

To date, the Haz Waste Program has only been able to provide small giveaway items to community members in educational workshops or at tabling events, since the program does not have the capacity to plan and operate a large-scale incentive program. The cost of disposing of hazardous waste may also be a barrier for community members to do so safely. Though disposal is a free service offered to the public, the time and costs of transit may influence peoples' decision to use collection services. Providing free and low-cost product alternatives, vouchers, and takeback services that are more accessible to the public, should all be considered for future programming.

Systemic Change

Individual actions have a limited impact on the overall health and environmental impacts of hazardous waste, since the amount of hazardous waste produced by individuals pales in comparison with the amount of hazardous waste produced by corporations. To truly make an impact on the wide-scale impact of hazardous waste, changes need to be made at the systemic level, through policies that hold corporations accountable for the waste they produce.

Community members do not trust corporations to make the right decisions on their own. They recognize the need for regulations that obligate corporations to act responsibly. Much of this policy work has been held internally by the Haz Waste Program. However, community members feel a civic responsibility to speak up and push for change, and they welcome opportunities to get involved at the systemic change level. These types of activities have the potential to more deeply engage community members and reach the Involve and/or Collaborate levels of engagement.

Any effort to engage community members in changes to the Haz Waste Program or to the waste management system must be paired with a strong community feedback loop. This means reporting back on what the Haz Waste Program heard, what changes resulted from the feedback, and what the outcomes were from implementing those changes. Feedback loops build trust and help community members see that their participation had tangible value.

The following programmatic activities may help the Haz Waste Program engage community members in systemic change:

Policy Change

Community members are interested in the idea of speaking up to advocate for change. The Haz Waste Program has helped design and advocate policies that regulate what ingredients can be included in products, that create programs for the safe disposal of different hazardous products, and that hold corporations accountable for the hazardous waste that they produce. However, there have not been any pathways for community members to collaborate on these efforts. The Haz Waste Program could create ways for community members to be involved in policy change, such as community advisory groups, or partner with organizations that provide pathways for community members to do so.



Evaluation Considerations

A key part of any strategy is developing an evaluation process to assess whether programmatic goals and outcomes are being met. Because community members want to know what success looks like for this strategy, developing an evaluation plan is recommended. An evaluation plan is a document that outlines a systematic approach to assessing a program's effectiveness and impact.

Below are taskforce-recommended data collection categories, as well as potential indicators and metrics, to include in the Community Engagement Strategy evaluation plan (Table 5):

Table 11: Possible Evaluation Measures and Indicators

Category	Indicator	Definition / Metric
Outreach and Engagement	Social media engagement	Total number of online likes, shares, comments, and direct responses
	Event attendance	Total number of attendees across events
	QR scans	Total count of unique QR code scans
	Community reach	Total individuals who engaged in in-person activities, social media posts, or other messaging campaigns
Learning and Accessibility	Information comprehension	Percentage of participants reporting clear understanding of key information shared
	Accessibility to program services	Percentage of participants able to successfully obtain recommended services
	Accessibility to preferred product alternatives	Percentage of participants able to successfully obtain recommended safer alternatives
Behavior Change	Adopt a new behavior	Percentage of participants reporting adoption of new or modified habits following engagement
Community Trust and Representation	Cultural representation	Percentage of participants who felt their background and culture were respectfully reflected
	Community trust	Level of community trust in the Haz Waste Program as a reliable and aligned partner
	Feedback influence	Percentage of community members who feel their input actively shapes program strategies

Evaluation Considerations (cont.)

Lastly, to keep building trust with the taskforce members (and the broader community), it is important to communicate the evaluation results. Consider adding dissemination of evaluation findings to the Haz Waste Program's overall communication plan. This could be an annual newsletter with key findings, a brief report, or even a pamphlet or zine with data highlights sent to community members.



Appendix

Appendix A: Participant collages
Appendix B: Participant poems
Appendix C: Message map
Appendix D: Haz Waste scenarios and case studies
Appendix E: Creative brief template
Appendix F: Activity calendars

Citations

[1] Dadich, A., Watfern, C., Doran, B., & Boydell, K. (2025). Thinking and Caring With Arts-Based Research: An Assemblage of Methods to Promote Public Health. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 24.

[2] Davis, C. (2021). Sampling Poetry, Pedagogy, and Protest to Build Methodology: Critical Poetic Inquiry as Culturally Relevant Method. Qualitative Inquiry, 27(1), 114-124.