

Toward Inclusive Emergency Alerting: A Conceptual Framework for Accessibility and Equity in AI-Driven Public Safety Systems

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Abstract- Emergency alerting in the United States has historically assumed a recipient who reads English, perceives both sound and image, processes dense information under stress, owns a capable connected device, and trusts the issuing authority. Tens of millions of residents fall outside that profile, and they are disproportionately exposed to preventable harm. Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly proposed to close the gap, but technology does not produce equity on its own; deployed uncritically, AI can entrench exclusion behind the authority of automation. This article develops a conceptual framework that treats accessibility and equity as first-order design principles rather than accommodations added to a finished system. Grounded in universal design, the social model of disability, intersectionality, and a health-equity and capability orientation, the framework specifies six dimensions an AI-driven alerting system must satisfy to reach every resident: multimodal delivery; linguistic inclusion; cognitive and literacy accessibility; digital equity and reach; algorithmic fairness and anti-discrimination governance; and participatory design and community trust. Each dimension is defined, theorized, and connected to design practice. The framework is translated into six design principles and a maturity-based evaluation model that assesses systems dimension by dimension against an outcome standard drawn from the capability approach: not that alerts are sent to all, but that all residents can genuinely receive, understand, and act on them. Applied to the U.S. alerting landscape, the framework functions as both diagnosis and design specification, and it frames an agenda for research, governance, and implementation centered on the populations current systems most often fail.

Keywords: *accessibility, equity, emergency alerts, universal design, disability, intersectionality, artificial intelligence, public safety, inclusive design*

I. INTRODUCTION

Every emergency alert makes an implicit assumption about who will receive it. In the United States, that assumption has historically described a narrow slice of the population: a person who reads English fluently, who can see a screen and hear an alert tone, who processes dense information quickly under stress, who owns a current smartphone with a reliable signal, and who trusts the authority behind the warning. Residents who fall outside this profile, and there are tens of millions of them, encounter warning systems that were not designed with them in mind. They receive alerts they cannot read, in a modality they cannot perceive, at a reading level they cannot parse in the moment, on channels they cannot access, from sources they have reason to distrust. For these residents, the gap between an alert being sent and an alert being usable is where preventable harm accumulates.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly proposed as the means to close that gap, because it can translate across many languages, generate content at multiple reading levels, render text as speech and speech as text, and tailor messages to audiences at scale. Yet technology alone does not produce equity, and AI can as easily entrench exclusion as remedy it. An alerting system that translates fluently but only into high-resource languages, that captions but does not simplify, that personalizes using data it processes without consent, or that targets using models trained on biased data, will reproduce the very inequities it was meant to solve, now with the false authority of automation. Accessibility and equity, in other words, do not emerge automatically from adding AI to warning systems. They must be designed in, deliberately, as first-order requirements.

This article develops a conceptual framework for accessibility and equity in AI-driven public-safety alerting. In contrast to approaches that treat accessibility as a set of accommodations bolted onto a finished system, the framework positions inclusion as a design principle that governs the system from the outset. It specifies six dimensions an AI-driven alerting system must satisfy to reach every resident, grounds each dimension in relevant theory and evidence, and translates the dimensions into design principles and evaluation criteria. The framework is intended to guide the design and assessment of AI-driven alerting so that the residents current systems most often fail become the residents the next generation of systems is built to serve.

The argument proceeds in five moves. It first characterizes the equity problem in emergency alerting and why AI does not resolve it automatically. It then establishes the theoretical foundations, universal design, the social model of disability, intersectionality, and health-equity and capability perspectives, that justify treating accessibility and equity as design principles. It develops the six-dimension framework, with each dimension defined, theorized, and connected to design practice. It advances design principles and a maturity-based evaluation model for assessing systems against the framework. Finally, it applies the framework to the U.S. alerting landscape and outlines an agenda for research and implementation.

II. THE EQUITY PROBLEM IN EMERGENCY ALERTING

The populations underserved by current alerting are large, diverse, and overlapping. They include residents with limited English proficiency, spread across dozens of language communities; residents who are deaf or hard of hearing, blind or low-vision, or who have cognitive or intellectual disabilities; older adults experiencing sensory and cognitive change; and residents on the far side of the digital divide, without current devices, reliable connectivity, or the digital literacy that alerting increasingly presumes. Crucially, these categories intersect. A single resident may be an older, low-vision, limited-English-proficiency person on a basic phone with a weak signal, and no single-axis accommodation, translation alone, or captioning

alone, reaches such a person. The evidence base on inclusive service delivery consistently finds that designing for an average user leaves those at the margins unserved, and that inclusion is achieved only when the full diversity of the population is treated as the design target (Oloto & Yeboah, 2022; Yeboah, Bobga, Boakye, & Ogbona, 2024). The exclusion of linguistic minorities in particular has been documented as a recurring and consequential failure of U.S. emergency communication (Sadiq, Dougherty, Tyler, & Entress, 2023; Uekusa, 2019). More broadly, disaster research has shown for decades that warning and recovery outcomes track lines of race, ethnicity, language, and socioeconomic position, and that vulnerable populations are systematically underserved by conventional risk communication (Cutter, Boruff, & Shirley, 2003; Fothergill, Maestas, & Darlington, 1999; Vaughan & Tinker, 2009).

AI does not automatically resolve this problem for four reasons. First, its linguistic capabilities are unevenly distributed: machine translation is strong for high-resource languages and weak for the low-resource languages many underserved communities speak, so an uncritical deployment can serve some language communities well and others poorly (Kpoka, 2023, 2024). Second, accessibility features such as audio rendering, captioning, and simplification are frequently treated as optional outputs rather than mandatory ones, so systems can be marketed as accessible while defaulting to text. Third, personalization and targeting depend on data and models that can encode bias and can process sensitive attributes without adequate consent or governance, raising both fairness and privacy concerns (Afrihyia, Ojukwu, & Akinse, 2024; Annan, 2024, 2025). Fourth, digital-divide constraints mean that the most sophisticated AI features reach only residents whose devices and connections can render them, potentially widening the gap between the digitally included and excluded. Equity is therefore not a byproduct of AI but a property that must be engineered against these tendencies.

III. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Four theoretical traditions justify and shape the framework. Each contributes a principle that reframes accessibility from accommodation to design.

3.0.1 Universal Design

Universal design holds that products and environments should be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design (Story, Mueller, & Mace, 1998). Applied to alerting, universal design implies that a single alert should be constructed so that it is perceivable and understandable across sensory, cognitive, and linguistic differences, rather than issued in a default form that is then retrofitted for particular groups. The principle reframes multimodal and multilingual delivery not as add-ons for special populations but as the ordinary form every alert should take. Evidence from inclusive instructional design supports the practical payoff: building for diverse users from the start improves access and engagement for everyone, not only for those with identified needs (Yeboah & Oloto, 2024; Yeboah et al., 2024). In the digital domain, this principle is codified in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, which specify how information should be made perceivable, operable, and understandable across abilities (World Wide Web Consortium, 2018).

3.0.2 The Social Model of Disability

The social model of disability locates disability not in the individual's impairment but in the mismatch between the person and an environment designed without them in mind (Oliver, 2013). On this view, a deaf resident is not disabled by deafness but by an alert that carries critical information only as sound; a resident with a cognitive disability is not failed by their cognition but by a message written in dense, technical prose. The social model shifts responsibility from the individual to the system, and it implies that accessibility is a property of the alert's design, not a deficit in the recipient to be accommodated. Special-education scholarship grounded in this orientation demonstrates that removing environmental barriers, through pedagogical and technological design, is what produces access for people with diverse abilities (Bobga, Boakye, Ogbona, & Yeboah, 2018; Oloto & Yeboah, 2022). In emergency management

specifically, this reorientation appears as the shift from a categorical "special needs" label to a function-based account of access and functional needs, which specifies the capabilities an inclusive system must support rather than the diagnoses it must accommodate (Kailes & Enders, 2007).

3.0.3 Intersectionality

Intersectionality holds that dimensions of identity and disadvantage, language, disability, age, race, and socioeconomic position, are not additive but interact to produce distinctive experiences that single-axis analysis misses (Crenshaw, 1989). For alerting, intersectionality explains why designing separately for language, hearing, vision, and cognition fails the residents who sit at the intersections, and why the framework must treat the compounding of needs as central rather than exceptional (Lilian, Liadi, & Yeboah, 2025; Lilian, Liadi, Yeboah, & Apelehin, 2020). Work applying intersectional analysis to equity in other infrastructural domains shows that universal programs can deepen inequality when they ignore how disadvantages combine, a caution that applies directly to one-size-fits-all alerting (Komi & Ganiu, 2025).

3.0.4 Health Equity and the Capability Approach

Health-equity scholarship and the capability approach supply the normative standard against which alerting should be judged. Equity, in this tradition, is not identical treatment but the arrangement of systems so that everyone has a genuine opportunity to achieve the relevant outcome, here, safety, given their circumstances. The capability approach directs attention to what a person is actually able to do with a resource, not merely whether the resource was provided (Sen, 1999): an alert that is technically delivered but that the recipient cannot perceive, understand, or act upon has not expanded their capability to be safe, a distinction consistent with how models of protective decision-making treat comprehension and feasibility as prerequisites for action (Lindell & Perry, 2012). Integrated models of population health that combine digital innovation with an explicit equity commitment provide a template for this outcome-oriented, capability-sensitive standard (Akinse, Ekechi, & Ohanebo, 2023). The standard the framework adopts, accordingly, is not that alerts are sent to all but that all residents are genuinely able to receive, understand, and act on them.

IV. A FRAMEWORK FOR ACCESSIBILITY AND EQUITY IN AI-DRIVEN ALERTING

The framework specifies six dimensions, each a necessary condition for equitable alerting and each translatable into concrete design and evaluation

criteria. The dimensions rest on the four foundations above and are oriented toward a single outcome: that every resident can receive, understand, and act on the alert. Figure 1 presents the framework.

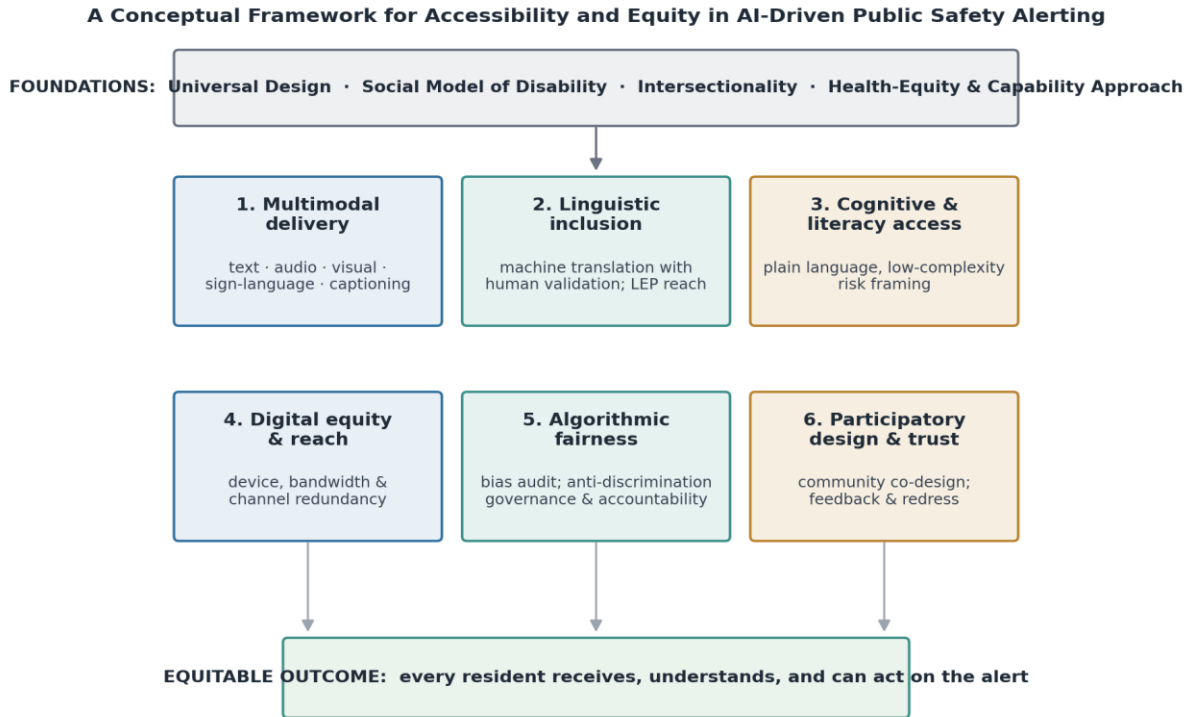


Figure 1. A conceptual framework for accessibility and equity in AI-driven public-safety alerting. Four foundations (universal design, the social model of disability, intersectionality, and a health-equity and capability orientation) inform six design dimensions, which jointly produce the equitable outcome that every resident can receive, understand, and act on the alert.

4.1 Dimension 1: Multimodal Delivery

Multimodal delivery requires that every alert be constructed to convey its critical content through multiple sensory channels simultaneously, so that no single sensory difference excludes a recipient. Concretely, an alert should be available as plain-language text, as synthesized or recorded audio, as clear visual iconography, and, where feasible, as sign-language rendering, with captioning of any audio. Multimodality operationalizes universal design and the social model: rather than issuing a sound-based alert and later accommodating deaf users, the system issues a single alert perceivable across hearing, vision, and reading differences. AI makes this feasible at scale

through speech synthesis, automated captioning, and, increasingly, sign-language generation. On-device multimodal models allow several of these renderings to be produced locally and at low power, so that accessibility does not depend on the connectivity that emergencies degrade (Nwakamma, Ojukwu, & Oyesiji, 2025). The design requirement is that these renderings be mandatory outputs of every alert rather than optional features, and that they be validated for intelligibility rather than merely generated (Yeboah et al., 2024).

4.2 Dimension 2: Linguistic Inclusion

Linguistic inclusion requires that alerts reach residents in the languages they actually use, with fidelity adequate to the stakes. This is more than running text through machine translation. It requires knowing which languages a given area's residents speak, prioritizing them, and, critically, validating translations for the emergency register, where a subtle error can invert an instruction. Because machine translation is weakest for the low-resource languages many communities speak, linguistic inclusion demands a hybrid approach: AI translation for speed and breadth, paired with human validation for high-stakes messages and pre-translated, community-reviewed templates for common warning types (Kpoka, 2023, 2024). The characteristic weaknesses of neural machine translation on rare words and low-resource language pairs make this hybrid posture a technical necessity rather than mere caution (KoeHN & Knowles, 2017), and parameter-efficient multilingual adaptation offers one route to extending high-quality coverage to under-served languages on the devices residents actually carry (Oyesiji, Nwamma, & Ojukwu, 2023). United States work on inclusive, dialectally consistent watch and warning translations for Spanish speakers offers a concrete model for how such validation and cultural design can be done well and at scale (Trujillo-Falcón et al., 2022). The stakes are high because language-technology performance is deeply unequal across the world's languages, so an unexamined deployment risks serving well-resourced language communities while neglecting the rest (Blasi, Anastasopoulos, & Neubig, 2022; Joshi, Santy, Budhiraja, Bali, & Choudhury, 2020). Cultural adaptation belongs here as well, since faithful communication requires framing risk and action in terms a community understands, not only rendering words in its language (Lilian et al., 2020; Monday et al., 2025). Personalization and localization techniques demonstrated in adjacent domains show that such adaptation is achievable at scale (Seun et al., 2024).

4.3 Dimension 3: Cognitive and Literacy Accessibility

Cognitive and literacy accessibility requires that alerts be understandable to residents with cognitive or intellectual disabilities, with low literacy, and to anyone whose comprehension is degraded by the stress of an emergency. This dimension calls for plain-language construction, low-complexity sentence

structure, concrete and specific instructions, and the avoidance of jargon and abstraction. It is distinct from translation and from modality: a message can be delivered in the right language and the right modality yet remain incomprehensible because it is written for an expert reader. AI supports this dimension through the generation of content at controlled reading levels and through simplification of technical hazard information, capabilities demonstrated in educational applications that adapt material to learner needs (Yeboah & Oloto, 2024). The design requirement is that plain-language rendering be the default, with technical detail available but not obligatory for understanding the core instruction.

4.4 Dimension 4: Digital Equity and Reach

Digital equity and reach requires that alerts arrive despite differences in devices, connectivity, and digital literacy, and despite the network degradation that emergencies cause. Because the most sophisticated AI features reach only capable devices and connections, equitable design demands graceful degradation: a core alert that reaches basic phones and low-bandwidth conditions, enriched with additional modalities where the channel allows, rather than a rich alert that fails entirely on constrained channels. It also demands channel redundancy, so that residents who cannot access one channel are reached by another, and attention to the residents reached only through non-digital means or trusted intermediaries. Research on resilient, localized delivery and on low-power, intermittently powered communication points toward architectures that sustain reach when centralized systems fail (Anene & Clement, 2022, 2024; Asiedu & Quainoo, 2023, 2025). Model-compression techniques that fit capable models onto constrained edge devices make graceful degradation technically achievable, extending the system's richest capabilities toward basic hardware rather than reserving them for the digitally advantaged (Oyesiji, Nwamma, & Ojukwu, 2025). Digital equity thus links the content of the alert to the resilience of its delivery, treating reach as an equity dimension rather than a purely technical one.

4.5 Dimension 5: Algorithmic Fairness and Anti-Discrimination Governance

Algorithmic fairness and anti-discrimination governance requires that the AI components of the

system, translation, generation, targeting, and personalization, do not produce or entrench discriminatory outcomes, and that the system is governed for accountability. Targeting models can under-serve communities whose data are sparse or biased; translation quality can vary systematically by language community; personalization can process sensitive attributes without adequate consent. This dimension therefore calls for bias auditing across language and demographic groups, for privacy-protective handling of the attributes used in targeting, and for governance arrangements, transparency, human oversight, and accountability for errors, adequate to the risk. Technology-law scholarship makes clear that opaque automated decision-making raises both ethical and legal concerns, particularly under anti-discrimination law, and that accountability requires legibility of the system's logic (Annan, 2024, 2025; Afrihyia, Akinse, & Ojukwu, 2024). Privacy-preserving governance models offer mechanisms for using sensitive attributes responsibly (Afrihyia, Ojukwu, & Akinse, 2024; Orise & Niniola, 2023). Because model behavior is shaped by the data used to build and adapt it, disciplined, context-aware data curation is a practical lever for fairness in translation and targeting (Oyesiji, Nwakamma, & Ojukwu, 2024), and securing the AI pipeline against manipulation is itself an equity concern, since a compromised system fails the communities least able to absorb the harm (Nwakamma, Ojukwu, & Oyesiji, 2024; Ojukwu, Oyesiji, & Nwakamma, 2023). The machine-learning fairness literature specifies how bias enters models and how it can be measured and mitigated, while AI risk-management frameworks and the wider AI-ethics landscape provide the governance structure through which a deployed system can be held accountable, and legal scholarship situates these harms within anti-discrimination doctrine (Barocas & Selbst, 2016; Bender, Gebru, McMillan-Major, & Shmitchell, 2021; Jobin, Ienca, & Vayena, 2019; Mehrabi, Morstatter, Saxena, Lerman, & Galstyan, 2021; National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2023). Fairness, in this framework, is not a constraint on the system but a condition of its equity.

4.6 Dimension 6: Participatory Design and Community Trust

Participatory design and community trust requires that the communities the system is meant to serve,

particularly LEP, disabled, and historically underserved communities, participate in its design, testing, and governance, and that the system be built to earn and sustain their trust. This dimension follows from intersectionality and health equity: the residents at the intersections understand their own needs better than any designer, and systems designed without them predictably miss those needs. Participatory design includes community review of translations and cultural framing, involvement of disability communities in specifying modalities, and mechanisms for feedback and redress when the system fails a community. It connects to trust because trust is unevenly distributed and is built through relationship and accountability rather than assumed; systems that involve communities and respond to their feedback earn the trust on which alert effectiveness depends, whereas institutions perceived as unaccountable forfeit it (Komi, 2024; Komi & Adeniji, 2024; Nwachukwu, Adeyemo, Asije, Odejide, & Uwaila, 2024). Community intermediaries, engaged before emergencies, extend reach to residents whom formal channels do not serve and lend the system credibility it cannot generate on its own (Odejide, Owolabi, Ikeokwu, & Nwachukwu, 2024). Because a community's social capital determines much of who actually receives and acts on a warning, cultivating it is a design activity in its own right rather than a soft supplement to the technical system (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015).

V. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The six dimensions imply a set of design principles that distinguish an equity-centered alerting system from one that treats accessibility as an accommodation.

Principle 1: Inclusion by default. Multimodal, multilingual, and plain-language renderings are mandatory outputs of every alert, not optional features enabled for particular users. The default alert is the inclusive alert.

Principle 2: Design for the intersections. The system is designed and tested against the compounded needs of residents at the intersections of language, disability,

age, and digital access, not against single-axis profiles that no real person fully occupies.

Principle 3: Fidelity over fluency. For high-stakes content, verified accuracy takes precedence over speed and breadth; AI translation and generation are paired with human validation and community-reviewed templates where the stakes warrant.

Principle 4: Graceful degradation. A core alert reaches basic devices and degraded networks, enriched where channels allow; the system never fails a resident entirely because their device or connection cannot render its richest form.

Principle 5: Fairness and accountability by construction. Bias auditing, privacy protection, transparency, human oversight, and redress are built into the system, because an unfair or unaccountable system cannot be equitable regardless of its features.

Principle 6: Nothing about us without us. The communities served participate in design, testing, and governance, and the system is built to earn and sustain their trust through relationship and responsiveness.

VI. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND A MATURITY MODEL

To make the framework usable for assessment, each dimension can be evaluated along a maturity progression from absent to embedded. At the lowest level, a dimension is absent: the system provides English text only, with no multimodal, multilingual, or plain-language rendering, no fairness auditing, and no community involvement. At an intermediate level, the dimension is present but partial: some languages and modalities are supported, plain-language versions exist for some message types, some auditing occurs, and community input is solicited occasionally. At the highest level, the dimension is embedded: inclusive rendering is the default across languages, modalities, and reading levels; delivery degrades gracefully across devices and networks; fairness auditing, privacy protection, and accountability are routine; and communities participate continuously in design and governance. Assessing a system dimension by dimension against this progression yields a profile that identifies where it is strong and where it excludes, and

it converts the framework's principles into an actionable audit.

The evaluation is deliberately outcome-oriented, consistent with the capability standard. The decisive criterion for each dimension is not whether a feature exists but whether the residents it is meant to serve can, in practice, receive, understand, and act on the alert. This requires evaluation with the underserved populations themselves, through comprehension and usability testing across language, disability, age, and access groups, rather than through technical delivery metrics that count messages sent. Natural-language-processing methods can complement such evaluation by assessing how alerts are received and discussed within target-language communities at scale (Atakpa, Abolaji, & Akeju, 2023), and data-governance and readiness considerations from adjacent AI deployments should inform the assessment infrastructure (Ilodigwe & Adesemoye, 2021).

VII. APPLICATION TO THE UNITED STATES ALERTING LANDSCAPE

Applied to the U.S. layered warning architecture, the framework functions both as a diagnostic and as a design specification. As a diagnostic, it directs attention to where the current system sits on each maturity progression. Historically, mobile and broadcast alerting has been strongest for English text delivered to capable devices and weakest across the other dimensions: multilingual support has been limited and uneven; multimodal rendering has not been the default; plain-language construction has been inconsistent; reach has depended on device and network capability; algorithmic fairness has been largely unexamined because AI components were minimal; and community participation has been episodic. The framework names these as the gaps to close, and it does so in terms that map onto design decisions rather than aspirations.

As a design specification for the AI-driven system this program of work envisions, the framework sets the requirements the system must meet to count as equitable. It requires that inclusive rendering be the default output of the alerting pipeline; that linguistic inclusion pair AI translation with validation and community-reviewed templates for the languages

residents actually speak; that plain-language generation be standard; that delivery degrade gracefully and redundantly across channels, drawing on resilient and low-power delivery research (Anene & Clement, 2022; Asiedu & Quainoo, 2025); that fairness auditing and privacy-protective, accountable governance be built in (Annan, 2025; Afrihyia et al., 2024); and that affected communities participate throughout. In this way the framework connects the diagnosis of the review that precedes it and the trust mechanisms of its companion model to a concrete specification for building alerting that serves the whole population.

VIII. IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The framework implies a research agenda oriented to validation with the populations it centers. Each dimension generates empirical questions: how faithfully do AI translations perform for the specific low-resource languages of U.S. communities, and does human validation measurably improve comprehension? Which combinations of modalities most effectively reach residents at the intersections of disability, age, and language? How much does plain-language generation improve comprehension and action under emergency stress? How can graceful degradation be engineered so that basic-device users are genuinely reached? What auditing methods detect and correct bias in targeting and translation across communities? And what participatory arrangements most effectively build the community trust on which the whole enterprise depends (Komi, 2024; Komi & Ganiu, 2025)? Answering these questions requires studies designed to include LEP, disabled, and older residents as participants rather than as afterthoughts, and measured by comprehension and protective action rather than by delivery counts.

The framework also has implications for policy and institutional design. Because equitable alerting depends on data about community languages and needs, on interoperable systems, and on organizational readiness, its realization is as much an institutional achievement as a technical one. Because it processes sensitive attributes and can produce discriminatory outcomes, it requires governance adequate to the risk, including privacy protection, transparency, human

oversight, and accountability (Afrihyia, Ojukwu, & Akinse, 2024; Annan, 2025; Orise & Niniola, 2023). And because trust is earned rather than assumed, it requires sustained investment in relationships with the communities served. These implications position the framework not as a technical checklist but as an agenda for building alerting systems, and the institutions around them, that are equitable by design.

IX. AN ILLUSTRATIVE APPLICATION: A WILDFIRE EVACUATION ORDER

The framework is best understood through application. Consider a fast-moving wildfire that forces an evacuation order for a mixed community: long-time English-speaking residents, a large limited-English-proficiency population speaking several languages, deaf and blind residents, older adults, and households with only basic phones or intermittent connectivity. A conventional alert, English text pushed to mobile devices, reaches the well-served default and misses much of the rest. The framework specifies what an equitable AI-driven alert must do instead, and the six dimensions supply the checklist. Multimodal delivery requires that the order arrive simultaneously as plain-language text, synthesized and recorded audio, clear visual iconography of the evacuation zone and route, and, where feasible, sign-language rendering with captioning, so that no sensory difference excludes a recipient (Kailes & Enders, 2007; World Wide Web Consortium, 2018).

Linguistic inclusion requires that the order reach residents in the languages they actually use, with fidelity adequate to a life-or-death instruction. Because machine translation is strong for some languages and weak for others, and because performance is systematically unequal across the world's languages, the system must pair automated translation with human validation for this high-stakes message and draw on pre-translated, community-reviewed evacuation templates rather than trusting default output (Blasi, Anastasopoulos, & Neubig, 2022; Joshi, Santy, Budhiraja, Bali, & Choudhury, 2020; Trujillo-Falcón et al., 2022). Cognitive and literacy accessibility requires that the core instruction, leave now, by this route, to this place, be expressed in concrete, low-complexity language that a frightened

person can parse, with technical detail available but not required for action. Together these dimensions determine whether the message is perceivable and understandable; the remaining three determine whether it arrives and whether it is trusted.

Digital equity and reach requires that the order survive the degraded conditions a wildfire imposes. Power and cell service may be failing, and the richest multimodal, multilingual rendering is useless to a resident on a basic phone with one bar of signal. The framework therefore demands graceful degradation, a guaranteed compact core alert enriched as the channel permits, and channel redundancy so that residents unreachable by one path are reached by another, including through non-digital means and trusted intermediaries (Anene & Clement, 2022; Asiedu & Quainoo, 2023, 2025). Algorithmic fairness and anti-discrimination governance requires that the targeting model which decides who is inside the evacuation zone, and the translation and generation models that compose the message, not systematically under-serve any community, and that the system be auditable and accountable for its decisions (Barocas & Selbst, 2016; Mehrabi, Morstatter, Saxena, Lerman, & Galstyan, 2021; National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2023).

Participatory design and community trust determines whether all of this produces action. An evacuation order is only as effective as the willingness of residents to abandon their homes on the strength of it, and that willingness is a function of trust that predates the fire. Communities whose members helped design and test the system, whose languages and cultural framings were validated by their own organizations, and whose trusted intermediaries carry and confirm the order, are far more likely to comply than communities to whom the system is an unfamiliar and unaccountable voice (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; Odejide, Owolabi, Ikeokwu, & Nwachukwu, 2024). The illustration makes the framework's central claim concrete: an alert that satisfies only some dimensions fails the residents who depend on the others, and only a system designed across all six reaches, informs, and moves the whole community rather than its best-served fraction.

X. TENSIONS AND TRADE-OFFS IN INCLUSIVE DESIGN

Designing across six dimensions is not a matter of maximizing each independently, because the dimensions pull against one another and against the hard constraints of an emergency. The most consequential tension is between speed and fidelity. Automated translation and generation are fast, but the human validation and community review that guarantee fidelity for high-stakes content take time, and the interval before a hazard arrives is finite (Lindell & Perry, 2012). Resolving this tension requires triage rather than a blanket rule: the highest-stakes, most widely distributed messages, such as evacuation orders, warrant pre-translated, pre-validated templates so that fidelity is banked in advance and speed is preserved at the moment of crisis, while lower-stakes updates can rely more on real-time automation. A framework that treats fidelity and speed as a simple either-or misunderstands the design problem; the craft lies in deciding, per message type, where verification is banked ahead of time and where it is performed live.

A second tension runs between richness and reach. Each additional modality and language enlarges the message and the resources needed to deliver it, and emergencies degrade exactly the bandwidth, power, and connectivity that richer alerts consume. A system optimized for inclusiveness under ideal conditions can therefore fail the digitally marginalized residents whom the equity commitment most centrally concerns, delivering an elaborate alert that never arrives. The resolution is architectural, graceful degradation with a guaranteed core, so that inclusiveness is layered rather than all-or-nothing, and the residents on the weakest channels still receive an actionable message (Anene & Clement, 2024; Asiedu & Quainoo, 2025). This tension explains why digital equity cannot be treated as a delivery detail separate from content: the two must be co-designed, because a content decision that ignores the channel is an equity decision made by default.

A third tension is between personalization and privacy. Tailoring an alert by language, location, disability, and access need requires processing exactly the sensitive attributes whose misuse the fairness and

privacy dimensions guard against, and a system that personalizes aggressively without disciplined data governance can harm the communities it aims to serve, while a system that refuses to process such attributes cannot personalize at all (Afrihyia, Ojukwu, & Akinse, 2024; Orise & Niniola, 2023). The resolution lies in privacy-preserving design, minimizing collection, handling attributes on the device where possible, and constraining use to the alerting purpose, so that personalization is achieved without accumulating a sensitive profile that becomes a liability (Nwakamma, Ojukwu, & Oyesiji, 2025). A fourth tension, between standardization and local adaptation, pits the consistency and auditability of a national system against the cultural and linguistic specificity that faithful communication demands; the framework resolves it by standardizing the process, the guarantee of inclusive rendering, validation, and governance, while localizing the content through community participation (Lilian, Liadi, & Yeboah, 2025).

XI. INDICATORS AND METRICS FOR THE SIX DIMENSIONS

The maturity model becomes actionable only when each dimension is paired with indicators that can be observed and, ideally, measured with the populations the system is meant to serve. For multimodal delivery, the decisive indicators are whether text, audio, visual, and sign-language renderings are produced for every alert by default and whether each is validated for intelligibility by users who rely on it, rather than merely generated; a system that emits an audio track no blind user has confirmed is legible has produced a feature, not access (World Wide Web Consortium, 2018). Coverage counts, the proportion of alerts issued with each modality, are necessary but not sufficient; the outcome indicator is comprehension among sensory-disabled recipients.

For linguistic inclusion, the indicators are the match between the languages the system supports and the languages residents actually speak, the fidelity of translations as judged by expert and community evaluation, and, ultimately, comprehension and protective-action rates within each language community (Trujillo-Falcón et al., 2022). Because machine-translation quality is uneven, a mature

program documents, per language, whether it is served by validated automation, by human verification, or not yet safely at all, so that gaps are known rather than discovered in a crisis (Kpoka, 2024). For cognitive and literacy accessibility, the indicators concern reading level and structure, whether the core instruction is expressed in concrete, low-complexity language, and comprehension among residents with cognitive disabilities and low literacy, measured through recall and scenario-response rather than assumed from readability formulas alone.

For digital equity and reach, the indicators are the guarantee and measured delivery of a compact core alert to basic devices and degraded networks, the redundancy of channels, and the estimated reach among residents on the far side of the digital divide, including those reached only through intermediaries (Anene & Clement, 2022). For algorithmic fairness and anti-discrimination governance, the indicators are the presence and results of bias audits across language and demographic groups, the privacy properties of the data pipeline, and the existence of transparent oversight, accountability, and redress mechanisms adequate to the risk (Barocas & Selbst, 2016; Jobin, Ienca, & Vayena, 2019; Mehrabi, Morstatter, Saxena, Lerman, & Galstyan, 2021; National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2023). For participatory design and community trust, the indicators are the depth and continuity of community involvement in design, testing, and governance, the existence of feedback and redress pathways, and measured trust and compliance within the communities served (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015).

Across all six dimensions the framework insists on an outcome standard drawn from the capability approach: the decisive question is not whether a feature exists but whether the residents it is meant to serve can, in practice, receive, understand, and act on the alert (Sen, 1999). This reorients measurement away from delivery counts, which record transmission, and toward comprehension and protective behavior among the underserved populations at the intersections of language, disability, age, and socioeconomic position, precisely the populations that delivery metrics render invisible (Cutter, Boruff, & Shirley, 2003; Fothergill, Maestas, & Darlington, 1999). A dashboard of coverage numbers can look excellent while the

residents most exposed to harm remain unreachable, and the metrics the framework recommends are designed to detect exactly that failure.

XII. A GOVERNANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

Realizing the framework is as much an institutional undertaking as a technical one, and it can be staged. An initial phase establishes the foundations: a language-access assessment that maps the languages and access needs of the population, the assembly of community-validated templates for common hazards, the data-governance and interoperability substrate on which personalization depends, and the first relationships with the community organizations that anchor local trust (Ilodigwe & Adesemoye, 2021; Odejide, Owolabi, Ikeokwu, & Nwachukwu, 2024). This phase treats participation and governance as prerequisites rather than as later refinements, because a system architected without them will have to be rebuilt to accommodate them.

A second phase builds and validates the inclusive rendering pipeline, ensuring that multimodal, multilingual, and plain-language outputs are default and verified, that delivery degrades gracefully across devices and networks, and that fairness auditing and privacy protection are engineered in rather than added afterward (Asiedu & Quainoo, 2025; Mehrabi, Morstatter, Saxena, Lerman, & Galstyan, 2021). Because the components of accessible alerting are individually feasible but rarely integrated or validated as a whole under emergency conditions, this phase emphasizes testing under stress, degraded connectivity, time pressure, and the compounded needs of residents at the intersections, rather than demonstration under ideal conditions.

A third phase deploys the system in a staged, monitored fashion, prioritizing the avoidance of salient failures over the maximization of coverage, and instrumenting the deployment so that comprehension and protective-action outcomes, not merely delivery counts, are measured with the underserved populations at issue. Governance frameworks for artificial intelligence emphasize continuous monitoring, transparency, and accountability rather than one-time validation, and an alerting program should adopt the

same posture, treating each event as an occasion to detect and correct inequities (Jobin, Ienca, & Vayena, 2019; National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2023). A fourth, continuing phase institutionalizes the participatory relationship, so that communities review translations and cultural framing, disability communities inform modality decisions, and feedback and redress operate as standing functions rather than episodic consultations.

Throughout, the roadmap treats the framework's dimensions as jointly necessary and sequentially buildable rather than as a menu from which agencies select the convenient items. The temptation in practice is to implement the dimensions that are cheap and visible, more languages, more channels, and defer the ones that are demanding and diffuse, fairness auditing, privacy governance, and genuine community participation. The framework's maturity model exists precisely to resist that temptation by making the deferred dimensions legible as gaps, and by holding the whole system to the outcome standard that all residents, not merely the well-served, can receive, understand, and act on the alert (Sen, 1999).

XIII. POSITIONING RELATIVE TO THE REVIEW AND THE TRUST MODEL

This framework is one of three connected contributions. A scoping review of AI-driven multilingual and accessible alerting maps the evidence and identifies the gaps, chief among them the mismatch between mature component capabilities and their unintegrated, unvalidated state for equitable emergency use. A trust-centered model explains the mechanism by which the design features of an AI-mediated alert produce, or fail to produce, the credibility and comprehension on which protective action depends. The present framework supplies the third piece, the structural specification of what an alerting system must satisfy across its dimensions to reach every resident. The review diagnoses, the trust model explains, and the framework prescribes; together they move from evidence to mechanism to design.

The three are mutually reinforcing. The framework's participatory and fairness dimensions operationalize

the trust the model treats as decisive, since community involvement and accountable governance are how a system earns credibility with populations that have reason to withhold it. The trust model, in turn, supplies the causal argument for why the framework's dimensions matter, that they are not a compliance checklist but the levers through which an alert becomes believed and acted upon. And both rest on the review's central reframing: language, accessibility, trust, and resilience are not features to be added to an alerting system after its core is built but the design constraints from which the core must be constructed. The framework is the constructive expression of that reframing, converting a diagnosis and a mechanism into a program for building alerting that serves the whole population.

XIV. BROADER IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC-SAFETY EQUITY

Although developed for emergency alerting, the framework speaks to a broader question about how public-safety systems distribute their protection. The recurring pattern across hazards is that harm concentrates among populations already marginalized by language, disability, age, race, and socioeconomic position, and that conventional systems, built around a default recipient who does not resemble the whole public, reproduce those disparities (Cutter, Boruff, & Shirley, 2003; Fothergill, Maestas, & Darlington, 1999; Vaughan & Tinker, 2009). Treating inclusion as a design principle rather than an accommodation is a stance applicable well beyond alerting, to any public-serving system whose failures fall hardest on those least able to absorb them, and the six dimensions, with local translation, generalize into a template for equitable sociotechnical design in the public sector.

The framework also carries a caution about the politics of automation. Artificial intelligence lends its outputs an appearance of neutrality and authority that can obscure the choices embedded in them, and an inequitable alerting system built on AI may be harder to challenge precisely because its disparities are laundered through an algorithm (Barocas & Selbst, 2016; Bender, Gebru, McMillan-Major, & Shmitchell, 2021). The framework's insistence on transparency, auditability, accountability, and community

participation is therefore not only a technical safeguard but a democratic one, a means of keeping a life-safety system answerable to the public it serves. The social model of disability and the tradition of intersectional analysis remind us that the barriers at issue are properties of systems and their design, not deficits in the people those systems fail (Crenshaw, 1989; Oliver, 2013), and that responsibility for removing them lies with the designers and institutions rather than with the residents at the margins.

Finally, the framework reframes the measure of success for public-safety communication. The right question is not how many messages a system sent, nor how advanced its technology is, but whether every resident, in the language they use, through a channel they can access, in a form they can perceive and understand, and from a source they have reason to trust, was genuinely able to protect themselves. That capability standard, demanding as it is, is the appropriate one for a public good whose entire purpose is to keep people safe, and it is the standard against which the AI-driven alerting systems now being built should be judged (Sen, 1999). Building to it is the work of making public safety, at last, a public good that includes everyone.

XV. DESIGN PATTERNS ACROSS THE DIMENSIONS

The six dimensions can be translated into recurring design patterns that make the framework usable by teams rather than only by analysts. The first is inclusion by default: multimodal, multilingual, and plain-language renderings are produced as the ordinary output of every alert and validated for intelligibility, so that access is the baseline rather than a feature toggled on for particular users. This pattern is the direct expression of universal design and its codification in accessibility standards, and evidence from inclusive instructional design indicates that building for the full range of users from the start benefits everyone, not only those with identified needs (Story, Mueller, & Mace, 1998; World Wide Web Consortium, 2018; Yeboah & Oloto, 2024). Implemented well, the pattern removes the point of failure at which accessibility is forgotten under pressure, because there is no separate accessibility step to forget.

The second pattern is hybrid translation: automated translation for speed and breadth, paired with human validation for high-stakes content and with pre-translated, community-reviewed templates for common hazards. Because language-technology performance is systematically uneven and weakest for many of the languages spoken by immigrant communities, this pattern makes the division of labor explicit, documenting which languages are served by validated automation, which require human verification, and which are not yet safely supported (Blasi, Anastasopoulos, & Neubig, 2022; Joshi, Santy, Budhiraja, Bali, & Choudhury, 2020; Koehn & Knowles, 2017; Trujillo-Falcón et al., 2022). The third pattern is graceful degradation: a guaranteed compact core alert that reaches basic devices and degraded networks, enriched with additional languages and modalities as the channel permits, so that inclusiveness is layered rather than all-or-nothing and the residents on the weakest channels are never left with nothing (Anene & Clement, 2022; Asiedu & Quainoo, 2025).

The fourth pattern is fairness by construction: bias auditing across language and demographic groups, privacy-preserving handling of the attributes used to target and personalize, and transparent oversight and redress built into the pipeline rather than bolted on. Because model behavior is shaped by the data used to build and adapt it, disciplined data practices are a practical lever for fairness, and because unexamined automation can launder disparity behind an appearance of neutrality, auditability and accountability are as important as accuracy (Barocas & Selbst, 2016; Bender, Gebru, McMillan-Major, & Shmitchell, 2021; Mehrabi, Morstatter, Saxena, Lerman, & Galstyan, 2021; National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2023). The fifth pattern is participatory localization, treated in its own right below, in which the content that the other patterns deliver is validated and adapted by the communities the system serves. Together the patterns convert the framework's dimensions into repeatable engineering and organizational practices, and they make explicit the trade-offs, banked versus live validation, richness versus reach, personalization versus privacy, that inclusive design must continually manage.

XVI. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AS METHOD, NOT CONSULTATION

Participatory design occupies a distinctive place in the framework because it is the dimension through which the others are made genuinely inclusive rather than inclusive by the designers' assumption. The residents at the intersections of language, disability, age, and digital access understand their own needs more accurately than any external designer, and systems built without them predictably miss those needs, however well-intentioned. Meaningful participation is therefore a method rather than a courtesy: communities co-define requirements, review translations and cultural framings, evaluate whether particular modalities actually work for those who rely on them, and hold the system accountable when it fails (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; Lilian, Liadi, & Yeboah, 2025; Odejide, Owolabi, Ikeokwu, & Nwachukwu, 2024). The difference between consultation and participation is the difference between soliciting reactions to a finished design and sharing authority over the design itself, and only the latter reliably surfaces the compounded needs that single-axis design overlooks.

Whose expertise counts is itself a design decision. The social model of disability and the tradition of intersectional analysis insist that the barriers at issue are properties of systems and their design rather than deficits in the people those systems fail, which means that disability communities, language communities, and other affected groups hold the knowledge required to identify and remove those barriers (Crenshaw, 1989; Oliver, 2013). The framework's function-based orientation to access and functional needs operationalizes this by directing attention to the capabilities an inclusive system must support, capabilities that the people who depend on them are best positioned to specify (Kailes & Enders, 2007). Participation, on this account, is not a stage in the process but a redistribution of design authority toward those the system exists to protect.

Sustaining participation is harder than initiating it, and the framework treats continuity as an indicator of maturity. One-time consultation during development, followed by silence, produces a system that drifts

away from the communities it was meant to serve as populations, languages, and needs change. Standing feedback and redress mechanisms, ongoing relationships with community organizations, and the treatment of each event as an occasion to learn from the communities affected are what keep a system aligned with its public over time. This continuity is also the practical route by which the capability standard is met, because only the residents a system serves can report whether they were, in fact, able to receive, understand, and act on its alerts, and their sustained involvement is how a program discovers where it still falls short (Sen, 1999).

XVII. EVALUATION IN PRACTICE: FROM AUDIT TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The maturity model provides a snapshot, but equitable alerting requires evaluation as a continuous function rather than a one-time certification. Governance frameworks for artificial intelligence emphasize ongoing monitoring, transparency, and accountability across a system's life rather than validation at a single moment, and an alerting program should adopt the same posture, auditing each dimension on a regular cadence and after significant events (Jobin, Ienca, & Vayena, 2019; National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2023). The audit asks, dimension by dimension, not merely whether a capability exists but whether it functions for the residents it is meant to serve, and it treats gaps as work items rather than as findings to be filed. Because the temptation in practice is to implement the cheap and visible dimensions and defer the demanding and diffuse ones, a recurring audit is the mechanism that keeps the deferred dimensions from disappearing from view.

Evaluation must be outcome-oriented and must reach the underserved populations at issue, because delivery metrics that count transmission can look excellent while the residents most exposed to harm remain unreached. The decisive measures are comprehension and protective action among limited-English-proficiency, disabled, older, and digitally marginalized residents, assessed through methods, recall, scenario response, usability testing under realistic stress, that capture whether people actually understood and could act rather than merely whether a

message was sent (Cutter, Boruff, & Shirley, 2003; Fothergill, Maestas, & Darlington, 1999; Sen, 1999; Vaughan & Tinker, 2009). This is demanding, but it is the only form of evaluation consistent with the framework's capability standard, and its expense is small against the cost of discovering, during an emergency, that a system believed to be inclusive was not.

Finally, evaluation should close the loop, so that what each event reveals feeds back into design, governance, and community relationships. Lessons from data-driven approaches to system performance indicate that real-world evidence and continuous measurement, when institutionalized, drive improvement that periodic review does not (Ilodigwe & Adesemoye, 2024). An alerting program that treats every activation as a source of evidence about who was reached, who understood, and who acted, and that channels that evidence into the next iteration of its translation templates, modality choices, fairness audits, and community partnerships, becomes a learning system rather than a static artifact. That learning posture, sustained across events and years, is what allows an inclusive alerting system to keep pace with a changing population and to move, incrementally and accountably, toward the standard that every resident can protect themselves.

XVIII. STANDARDS, PROCUREMENT, AND THE POLICY LEVERS OF INCLUSION

A framework has practical force only if there are levers through which it can be made real, and in the United States alerting context the most powerful of these are standards and procurement. Agencies obtain the systems they specify, so acceptance criteria that require inclusive rendering, demonstrated comprehension, and conformance to recognized accessibility standards will yield systems built to satisfy them, whereas criteria that treat these as optional enhancements will predictably yield systems that default to English text (Story, Mueller, & Mace, 1998; World Wide Web Consortium, 2018). Procurement is thus a design instrument in disguise: the choice of what to require of a vendor is a choice about which residents the resulting system will serve. Embedding the framework's dimensions into procurement language, mandatory multimodal and

multilingual output, validated fidelity, graceful degradation, fairness auditing, privacy protection, and community participation, converts the framework from an aspiration into a contractual expectation.

Language access is the second policy lever, and it is most effective when treated as an ongoing planning obligation rather than a crisis-time improvisation. A jurisdiction that maintains a current map of the languages and access needs of its residents, a library of community-validated templates for common hazards, and an explicit account of which languages it can serve automatically, which require human validation, and which it cannot yet serve safely, has converted language access from a hope into a managed capability (Kailes & Enders, 2007; Trujillo-Falcón et al., 2022). Because machine-translation quality is systematically uneven across languages, such planning is what prevents the silent substitution of an unreliable automated translation for a genuine one, and it is the difference between knowing a gap in advance and discovering it during an emergency (Blasi, Anastasopoulos, & Neubig, 2022; Kpoka, 2024).

The third policy lever is accountability, exercised through auditing and oversight mandates that hold deployed systems answerable for their equity performance. Governance frameworks for artificial intelligence and the fairness literature converge on the need for bias auditing, transparency, and redress, and legal scholarship situates algorithmic harms within anti-discrimination doctrine, together supplying both the rationale and the mechanisms for such mandates (Barocas & Selbst, 2016; Jobin, Ienca, & Vayena, 2019; Mehrabi, Morstatter, Saxena, Lerman, & Galstyan, 2021; National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2023). Requiring that alerting systems be audited across language and demographic groups, that their data practices be privacy-preserving, and that communities have a standing channel for redress, gives the framework's fairness and participation dimensions the institutional teeth without which they remain voluntary. Standards, language-access planning, and accountability mandates thus form a coherent policy program that operationalizes the framework at the level where public-safety systems are actually funded and governed.

XIX. TOWARD A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR INCLUSIVE ALERTING

The framework opens an agenda whose organizing principle is that inclusion must be demonstrated with the populations it centers rather than assumed from the presence of features. Each dimension generates empirical questions. For multimodal delivery, which combinations of text, audio, visual, and sign-language rendering most effectively reach residents at the intersections of disability, age, and language, and how do those combinations perform under the stress and degraded attention of a real emergency rather than in calm testing? For linguistic inclusion, how faithful are automated translations of warning content for the specific low-resource languages of United States communities, and does human validation measurably improve comprehension and action (Blasi, Anastasopoulos, & Neubig, 2022; Joshi, Santy, Budhiraja, Bali, & Choudhury, 2020; Trujillo-Falcón et al., 2022)? These are answerable questions, and the framework's contribution is to make clear that they must be answered with the underserved populations as participants rather than with convenience samples that reproduce the well-served default.

For cognitive and literacy accessibility, how much does plain-language generation improve comprehension and protective action under emergency stress, and for which populations; and how should the core instruction be structured so that it is graspable by a frightened person with low literacy or a cognitive disability? For digital equity and reach, how can graceful degradation be engineered so that basic-device users on failing networks are genuinely reached, and how can reach among the digitally marginalized be estimated rather than assumed (Anene & Clement, 2022; Asiedu & Quainoo, 2025)? For algorithmic fairness, what auditing methods most reliably detect and correct bias in targeting and translation across communities, and how should privacy-preserving personalization be implemented so that sensitive attributes serve inclusion without becoming a liability (Barocas & Selbst, 2016; Mehrabi, Morstatter, Saxena, Lerman, & Galstyan, 2021)?

For participatory design and community trust, which arrangements most effectively build and sustain the

trust on which compliance depends, and how can community authority over design be structured so that it is genuine rather than nominal (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; Odejide, Owolabi, Ikeokwu, & Nwachukwu, 2024)? Cutting across all six dimensions is the question of outcomes: the field needs studies that measure comprehension and protective behavior among limited-English-proficiency, disabled, older, and digitally marginalized residents, rather than the delivery counts that render these populations invisible, because warning and recovery outcomes are known to fall unequally along exactly these lines (Cutter, Boruff, & Shirley, 2003; Fothergill, Maestas, & Darlington, 1999; Sen, 1999; Vaughan & Tinker, 2009).

The agenda has an institutional as well as an empirical face. Realizing inclusive alerting depends on the data infrastructure, interoperability, and organizational readiness that make personalization and evaluation feasible at all, and lessons from health-system transformation indicate that these substrates are as decisive as any analytic capability built upon them (Ilodigwe & Adesemoye, 2021, 2024). Research is therefore needed not only on the components of inclusive alerting but on the organizational and governance conditions under which they can be assembled, funded, and sustained. Pursued together, the empirical and institutional strands would convert the framework from a normative proposal into a validated and implementable program, and would supply the evidence that the design and evaluation of AI-driven alerting now largely lack, so that the systems being built are known to serve the whole population rather than merely hoped to.

XX. THE COST OF INACTION AND THE CASE FOR DESIGN

It is worth stating plainly what is at stake when alerting systems are not built to the framework's standard, because the costs are neither abstract nor evenly distributed. When a warning fails to reach or to move a resident, the consequence is not an inconvenience but exposure to the full force of a hazard that others were warned away from, and decades of evidence show that these failures concentrate among populations already marginalized by language, disability, age, and socioeconomic position (Cutter,

Boruff, & Shirley, 2003; Fothergill, Maestas, & Darlington, 1999; Vaughan & Tinker, 2009). An alerting system that performs well for the well-served and poorly for everyone else does not merely underperform; it converts existing social disadvantage into differential physical risk, and it does so at the precise moments when the stakes are highest. The case for designing to the framework is therefore not a case for polish or completeness but a case for preventing avoidable, unequal harm.

Against this cost, the investment the framework requires is modest and, more importantly, tractable. The component capabilities, multimodal rendering, multilingual generation with validation, plain-language construction, resilient delivery, fairness auditing, and participatory design, are individually feasible with current technology and current knowledge; what has been missing is their integration, their validation with the populations that matter, and the institutional will to require them (Anene & Clement, 2022; Kailes & Enders, 2007; Trujillo-Falcón et al., 2022). The framework's contribution is to make that integration legible and its absence visible, so that the choice to build inclusively becomes a deliberate, accountable decision rather than a default quietly settled by whichever features were cheapest to implement. Framed this way, inclusive alerting is not a burden imposed on public-safety systems but the fulfillment of their basic purpose, and the framework is the means by which that purpose is specified, measured, and met.

XXI. SYNTHESIS: THE FRAMEWORK AS A DESIGN CONTRACT

Read as a whole, the framework functions less like a checklist and more like a contract between an alerting system and the public it serves, specifying what the public is entitled to expect and what the system must therefore be built to provide. The contract's terms are the six dimensions, and its consideration is the capability standard: in exchange for the authority to issue warnings on which lives depend, the system commits that every resident, in a language they use, through a channel they can access, in a form they can perceive and understand, and from a source they have reason to trust, will be genuinely able to protect themselves (Sen, 1999; World Wide Web Consortium,

2018). Framing inclusion as a contract clarifies why partial compliance is not partial success: a contract satisfied for some parties and breached for others is breached, and an alert that reaches the well-served while failing the residents at the margins has not met its obligation, however impressive its coverage statistics.

The contract is also a statement about responsibility. The social model of disability and the tradition of intersectional analysis locate the barriers that exclude residents in the design of systems rather than in the residents themselves, which means that the duty to remove those barriers falls on the designers and institutions that build and operate alerting, not on the people those systems have failed (Crenshaw, 1989; Oliver, 2013). By making that duty explicit and by specifying the dimensions along which it must be discharged, the framework shifts the default: the question is no longer whether a system chose to accommodate particular groups but whether it satisfied its obligation to the whole public, and the burden of justification moves from the excluded resident to the system that excluded them.

Finally, the framework offers a durable answer to a question that intensifies as artificial intelligence enters public warning: how to ensure that a technology capable of reaching everyone is actually built to do so. The answer is not to trust that capability will translate into equity on its own, because the evidence and the logic both indicate that it will not, but to bind the system to a design contract whose terms are inclusion by default, demonstrated across all six dimensions and measured with the populations that matter most (Cutter, Boruff, & Shirley, 2003; Fothergill, Maestas, & Darlington, 1999). Held to that contract, AI-driven alerting can become the instrument through which public safety finally includes the residents it has long left behind; released from it, the same technology risks entrenching old exclusions behind a new appearance of neutrality. The framework exists to hold the systems now being built to the former path.

XXII. LIMITATIONS

This framework is conceptual and awaits empirical validation of both its dimensions and their relative weight in producing equitable outcomes. Several of its

constructs and much of its supporting evidence are transferred from adjacent domains, education, digital health, public communication, and infrastructure, and the strength of that transfer to the compressed, high-stakes emergency context is an assumption to be tested. The framework is deliberately general, specifying dimensions and principles rather than implementation detail, and the translation of its principles into particular technical and organizational designs will surface trade-offs, between speed and fidelity, richness and reach, personalization and privacy, that the framework identifies but does not resolve. Its scope is the U.S. context, and its transferability to other national systems, while plausible given the generality of its foundations, is not established here. These limitations mark the framework as a starting point for design and evaluation rather than a finished blueprint.

XXIII. CONCLUSION

Emergency alerting has too often assumed a recipient who does not exist in the diversity of the actual population, and the residents who fall outside that assumption, by language, disability, age, or digital access, are precisely those most exposed to preventable harm. Artificial intelligence offers the means to reach them, but only if accessibility and equity are treated as design principles rather than accommodations added after the fact. This article has developed a framework that does so, grounding six design dimensions, multimodal delivery, linguistic inclusion, cognitive and literacy accessibility, digital equity and reach, algorithmic fairness and anti-discrimination governance, and participatory design and community trust, in universal design, the social model of disability, intersectionality, and a health-equity and capability orientation. It has translated those dimensions into design principles and a maturity-based evaluation model, and it has applied them to the U.S. alerting landscape as both diagnosis and specification. The framework's central commitment is a shift in the standard by which alerting is judged: not that messages are sent to all, but that all residents are genuinely able to receive, understand, and act on them. Building alerting to that standard is the work of making public safety, at last, a public good that includes everyone.

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