

DEVELOPING A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

A strategic communications plan complements and enhances your organizational goals. The communications plan outlines and identifies:

- Communications Objectives and Goals
- Target Audiences
- Key Messages
- Tactics and Tools
- Evaluation

Ideally, a strategic communications plan is developed in concert with and as a component of an organizational strategy. Why? Often the environment in which an organization is operating and the factors that influence an organization's approach will also impact who to communicate with and how and when to do it.

Communications Objectives and Goals

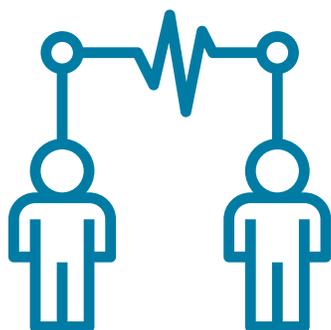
Goal- broad, desired outcome, long-term, could be the same as organizational goals.

Objective- specific, measurable, short-term, a step to achieve overall goals.

Target Audience

Who do you want to reach? How are they important and helpful to achieving your goals? Target audiences can include:

- Elected officials- External
- Patients- External
- Community members- External
- Other similar organizations- External
- Volunteers- Internal
- Employees- Internal
- Other neighborhood businesses- External
- Board members- Internal
- Advocates- External
- Media-External



S.M.A.R.T.I.E. CRITERIA FOR DEFINING AND MEASURING GOALS/OBJECTIVES:

SPECIFIC

USE NUMBERS AND DEADLINES. EXAMPLE: "HOLD TWO HEALTH CENTER ADVOCACY PRESENTATIONS FOR STAFF BY DECEMBER 31."

MEASURABLE

MAKE SURE YOU CAN ACTUALLY MEASURE YOUR SUCCESS. HOW WILL YOU MEASURE THE GOAL/ OBJECTIVE?

ATTAINABLE

OBJECTIVES ARE SHORT-TERM BECAUSE THEY ARE STEPS TOWARDS ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS. ROME WASN'T BUILT IN A DAY.

REALISTIC

BE HONEST ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE CAPABLE OF ACHIEVING GIVEN YOUR RESOURCES AND TIME.

TIME BOUND

DEADLINES ARE IMPORTANT. SINCE THESE ARE JUST STEPS TO ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS YOU NEED TO SET DEADLINES.

INCLUSIVE

INCLUSIVE GOALS/ OBJECTIVES ARE NECESSARY. ARE YOU "BRINGING TRADITIONALLY EXCLUDED INDIVIDUALS AND/OR GROUPS INTO PROCESSES, ACTIVITIES, AND DECISION/POLICY MAKING IN A WAY THAT SHARES POWER"?

EQUITABLE

DO YOUR GOALS/OBJECTIVES INCLUDE "AN ELEMENT OF FAIRNESS OR JUSTICE THAT SEEKS TO ADDRESS SYSTEMIC INJUSTICE, INEQUITY, OR OPPRESSION"?

Learn more about SMARTIE Goals:

www.managementcenter.org/resources/smartie-goals-worksheet/

Key Messages

Key messages support your goals. They are:

- The main points of information you want to communicate to your audience
- What you want your audience to understand and remember
- The who, what, and how
- The foundation of your branding, communications, and marketing efforts

Attributes of great key messages

- Clear. Avoid complex sentences. Use transitions when writing longer pieces.
- Concise.
- Believable.
- Purposeful.
- Positive.
- Simple. Say "no" to jargon.
- Compelling.
- Memorable.
- Relevant.
- Tailored to each audience.

Developing Key Messages

- Brainstorm. Bring internal stakeholders together to identify your communications goals and what messages, keywords, phrases will best support those roles. Identify messaging needs.
- Long-term, short-term, barriers, challenges?
- Who is your target audience and how can you tailor those messages to them?
- Why is this important to your audience?
- Why should they care?
- What are your audience's needs to receive these messages? Barriers to receiving this information?
- What are your supporting facts, data, etc., that will add credibility to your key messages?
- Refine your messages. Edit for conciseness and simplicity. Are they communicating what you're trying to get across? Will your message inspire action?
- Evaluate. Test those key messages. Notice any difference in the way people react to one message versus the other on social media? Take note, edit if necessary and try again.

Tools

- Capacity/Skills
- Social Media
- Website
- Your people- employees, board members, partner organizations (and their communications tools)
- Writer
- Stories
- Opportunities—speaking at public forums
- Google Alert
- Audio equipment/smart phone
- Research
- And You

Tactics

- Letters to the editor
- Op-eds
- Social media campaigns
- Storytelling—public share story
- Media outreach
- Email
- Blogs
- Public speaking
- Booths in public spaces
- Hosting a gathering
- Friendraising—word of mouth
- Paid advertising
- Problem solving tools—calculators
- Infographics

Evaluate. Adjust. Repeat.

Questions?

communications@nachc.org

