

# Implementing a Communications Strategy

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MAY 12, 2023

# What is a communications strategy?

A communications strategy should answer these questions:

- What audience(s) should I reach?
- Why do I need to communicate to these specific audiences?
- What do I want my audience(s) to learn, or what action do I want them to take?
- What should my messages say?
- How will I deliver these messages?

## What does a communications strategy include?

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Background of issue, product, report, etc.

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Communications objectives. Why you are talking to them.

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Audience(s).

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Key messages tailored for each audience.

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List of available communications channels.

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Detailed schedule as to when each message should be delivered to each audience by what mechanism.

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List of trusted sources to communicate the message(s).

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Potential challenges to be aware of.

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Include performance measures to ensure your message(s) are being heard and/or action is being taken.



Your audience is more likely to respond when the message is personalized.



Ensures your target audience understands what you are telling them/want them to do.



Utilize your trusted sources in understanding how your audience receives information and what they care about.



Frame messages in the context of what the audience cares about, not what you want them to do or know.



You will need to adapt your messages for each audience in order to be successful.

# Why is it important to tailor messages to different audiences?

## Your Turn-- Audiences to Target

A neighborhood association in an urban region that represents a diverse, lower-income community.

Local government for a suburban community that does not regularly interact with the Chesapeake Bay.

Private landowners whose land touches the Chesapeake Bay.

A policy-maker whose district does not regularly interact with the Chesapeake Bay.

## Your Turn— Questions to Answer

- Answer these questions for each audience:
  - What about the work of the Chesapeake Bay Program do you want to make sure these audiences understand so they begin—or continue to be—invested in our work? Invested could mean funding, advocating or becoming a steward of the Bay.
  - What about the work of the Chesapeake Bay Program do you suspect they don't understand? Why do you feel they don't?
  - Craft one sentence for each audience that tells them (in a manner that will resonate with them) how we are reaching the goals of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.

# Why should we communicate to the general public?

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Just communicate about what actions are relevant for people to take and what our successes are, don't communicate about the CBP.

We need to make sure the public understands who the CBP is and what we do before anything is.

We don't need to communicate to the public. People need to know about the work, the take-home messages and what they can do to help. It's too confusing for them to understand what the CBP does and who we are. That is not critical to our success.

The public needs to know who we are; we are spending their money. We need to show tangible results.

People don't know who the CBP is; they've only heard of CBF.

# Why should we communicate to the general public?

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People want to identify with actions, not programs.

The public needs to see the efforts and teamwork of the many agencies and institutions, that our work is inclusive and there is room to grow for achieving greater success.

We need to share the work of all partners around the table.

CBP needs to rely on and support partners to engage their own constituents.

Messages should add value to what the public cares about.

Different jurisdictions have different focus areas—messages should be tailored.

We need to differentiate between the science and management accomplishments of CBP versus the advocacy of other organizations.





# Menti Exercise

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