Communication Plan Workbook

Summary: Please review this Communication Plan Workbook to guide your health department in planning and implementing your vaccine communications campaign.

Deliverable Instructions: Please fill out and submit Appendix A to satisfy this deliverable. Please note the information requested in Appendix A aligns with how the workbook introduces each topic.

Why do you need a communications plan?

A plan will make it possible to target your communication accurately. It gives you a structure to determine whom you need to reach and how. It can be long-term, helping you map out how to raise your profile and refine your image in the community over time. A plan will make your communication efforts more efficient, effective, and lasting. If you spend time planning at the beginning of an effort, you can save a great deal of time later, because you know what you planned to do at each step in the process.

The five steps involved in creating a communications plan are:
1. Establishing goals
2. Defining key audiences
3. Identifying key messages
4. Creating a tactical outreach plan
5. Channels of communication
6. Specifying a timeline for moving forward

Establishing Goals

The first step to producing a successful communications plan is to establish a set of clear and measurable goals. These goals highlight the desired outcome of the proportional resources. Common social media communications plan goals include but are not limited to increasing an organization's awareness, managing an organization's reputation, a call to action, promoting an event or resource, improving community engagement, generating leads, delivering a service, attracting candidates for open positions, etc.

Guidelines for Creating Goals for Your Communications Plan:

Your communications goals should be realistic and action oriented. Goals should be specific and measurable. Keep to a minimal number of goals (e.g., one to three). You cannot achieve everything with one initiative. Know your audience (e.g., parents, stakeholders, media). Who will be receiving the messages you will be communicating?

Campaign Goal: What are you trying to communicate to your target population? Think about what you want each person who encounters this messaging to do or walk away knowing or thinking about.

> **Campaign Goal(s) Example:** *Example: Promote an upcoming vaccination event at the Herndon Community Center, January 7, 2022, at 9:00am -5:00pm to increase vaccine uptake. (For an event like this build on this goal by reviewing past events numbers of vaccinations or attendees. Set realistic goals based off your organization's reach.)*

Identifying and Defining Your Target Audience

Next you will need to identify who you are trying to reach. The target audience for your communication needs is likely to be comprised of individuals from different demographics. Think about the characteristics of those you are hoping to reach. To help you identify target audiences, consider these questions:

- Who is the primary audience? "I am trying to reach who?" (Ex. I am trying to reach older adults in a rural community.)
- Who will or should care about or need to know about your message?
- Who is talking about this topic (for example, teachers, parents, media, policymakers)?
- Who cares about your target audience? (Adult children, parents, grandparents)

During this process, start to think about methods that will be useful in reaching this population. How does this population get information and news? When and where do they consume news?

Guidelines for Identifying and Defining a Key Audience for Your Communications Plan:

There are multiple ways to think about your audience and the best ways to contact them. First, there is the question of what group(s) you will focus on. You can group people based on shared characteristics. See examples below.

- **Demographics.** Statistical information about people, such as gender, age, ethnic and racial background, income, etc.
- **Geography.** You might want to focus on a whole town or region, on one or more neighborhoods, or on people who live near a particular geographic or man-made feature.

- **Employment.** You may be interested in people in a particular industry or employment status.
- **Health.** Your concern might be with people at risk for or experiencing a particular condition – high blood pressure or diabetes – or you might be leveling a health promotion effort – "Eat healthy, exercise regularly" – at the whole community.
- **Behavior.** You may be interested in focusing on behavioral factors certain individuals engage in. For example, smoking, engaging in physical activity, etc.
- **Attitudes.** Focusing on individuals with certain beliefs/attitudes that you are seeking to further understand and address.

Another aspect of the audience to consider is whether you should direct your communication to those whose behavior, knowledge, or condition you hope to affect, or whether your communication needs to be indirect. Sometimes, to influence a population, you must aim your message at those to whom they listen – clergy, community leaders, politicians, etc. These individuals are also known as trusted messengers.

Key Audience: Who are you trying to reach? Knowing your audience makes it possible to logically plan your communication. You will need different messages for different groups, and you'll need different channels and methods to reach each of those groups. It is possible to pair similar target audiences, such as parents and children.

> *Example: The target audience for the communication plan is African Americans who are 65 years and older and live in a rural community. (For an event like this think of additional characteristics of your target population. Are you aiming to reach a specific gender identity, workforce, insurance coverage type, etc.)*

Identifying Key Messages

Next you will need to identify the key messaging that will be used. Think of your key messaging as the overall point of the communication plan. It is important that your key messaging is consistent throughout all the messages you develop. During emergency events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and MPX outbreak, messaging can be adapted from larger organizations, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: CDC's COVID-19 Toolkits, MPX Social Media Toolkit.

Guidelines for Identifying Key Messaging for Your Communications Plan:
When creating your message, consider content, mood, language, and design.

- **Content.** You should craft your message with your audience in mind; planning the content of your message is necessary to make it effective.

  For example, during the national adult literacy campaign in the 1980s, educators learned that TV ads that profiled proud, excited, successful adult learners attracted new learners to literacy programs. Ads that described the difficulties of adults with poor reading, writing, and math skills attracted potential volunteers. Both ads were designed to make the same points – the importance of foundational skills and the need for literacy efforts – but they spoke to different groups.

- **Mood.** Consider what emotions you want to appeal to. The mood of your message will do a good deal to determine how people react to it. In general, if the mood is too extreme – too negative, too frightening, trying to make your audience feel too guilty – people will not pay much attention to it. It may take more than one approach to learn how to strike the right balance. Keeping your tone positive will usually reach more people than evoking negative feelings such as fear or anger.

- **Language.** There are two aspects to language. One is the actual language – English, Spanish, Korean, Arabic, etc. – that your intended audience speaks. The other is the style of language you use – formal or informal, simple, or complex, referring to popular figures and ideas.

  You can address the language people speak by presenting any printed material in the language(s) of the population(s) you are hoping to reach, and by providing translation for spoken or broadcasted messages.

  The style of the language used is more complicated. If your message is too informal, your audience might feel you are talking down to them, or worse, that you are making an insincere attempt to get close to them by communicating in a way that is clearly not normal for you. If your message is too formal, your audience might feel you are not really talking to them at all. You should use plain, straightforward language that expresses what you want to say simply and clearly.

Identifying Key Messages: Who are you trying to reach? Knowing your audience makes it possible to plan your communication logically. You'll need different messages for different groups, and you'll need different channels and methods to reach each of those groups.

> *Example: Vaccines are the backbone of public health, they save lives. Vaccines are safe and effective at preventing potentially life-threatening diseases in children and adults. Come to our vaccination clinic, November 17, 2022, at 10:00am – 5:00pm, at the Herndon Community Center, [Address, etc.].*

> *(This is everything you want your target population to know after they have been exposed to your messaging.)*

Creating a Tactical Outreach Plan and Channels of Communication

What does your intended audience read, listen to, watch, or engage in? You must reach them by placing your message where they will see it. Today, in the social media world we live in, think about what social media platform your population uses, or if they are even on social media.

Guidelines for Creating a Tactical Outreach Plan and Channels of Communication for Your Communications Plan:

- **Internet Sites** - In addition to your organization's website, interactive sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are effective mediums for communication.
- **Posters, Flyers, and Brochures** - These can be more compelling in places where the issue is already in people's minds (doctors' offices for health issues, supermarkets for nutrition, etc.).
- **Newsletters** – Weekly and monthly newsletters can be a steady method of informing your audience. Newsletters can also be a great way to share information about what you are promoting or communicating.
- **Promotional Materials** - Items such as caps, T-shirts, and mugs can serve as effective channels for your message.
- **Comic Books or Other Reading Material** - Reading material that is interesting to the target audience can be used to deliver a message through a story that readers are eager to follow, or through the compelling nature of the medium and its design.

- **Letters to the Editor, News Stories, Columns, and Reports** – This can include press releases, press conferences, presentations, presence at local events and national conferences, fairs, and other gatherings.
- **Community Outreach or National Events** - Community events can serve to convey a message and highlight an issue.
- **Television** - TV can both carry straightforward messages – ads and Public Service Announcements (PSAs) – and present news and entertainment programs that deal with your issue or profile your organization.

Example: *To reach our target populations we plan to utilize Facebook and Instagram. We will also develop a street team to reach the target populations in churches and other places of gathering. We currently plan to attend the South Tony Baptist Church service, and Herndon Community Center's Family weekend event on November 19, 10:00am – 7:00pm.*

Specifying a Timeline for Moving Forward

Now it is time to put everything together into a plan that you can act on. When will each activity take place? Build a timeline to manage your communication efforts, including planning, production, and dissemination. This timeline should include not only when each activity will take place, but also who is responsible.

Consider how you want to time your activities. For example, to promote a new program or product, you may want to start with a big push across all your channels and then follow up with staggered releases on a set schedule. Or, to promote an event, you may want to release content in an increasing flow to build momentum. Another approach is to tie your communication activities to a related event or news story to leverage public interest.

Remember to identify important dates such as deadlines. Highlight the dates you need your audience needs to be aware of. Keep your audience informed.

Guidelines for Specifying a Timeline for Moving Forward for Your Communications Plan:

By the time you reach this point, your plan is already done, for the most part. You know what your purpose is and whom you need to reach to accomplish it, what your message should contain and look like, what channels can best be used to reach your intended target population, and how to gain access to those channels. Now it's just a matter of putting the

details together – composing and designing your message (or messages, if using multiple channels), contacting the people who can help you and getting everything in place to start your communication effort.

Specifying a Timeline: There are two timelines to be mindful of. The timeline of your communication plan and the timeline of your messaging tactics. Start by mapping out the timeline of your communication plan. Start by identifying deadlines and other dates that are related to your campaign. Also identify other big events in your community and national holidays, these events can potentially affect an event you plan to host or social media messaging you plan to post. It is important to think about what else is happening in your target populations lives. Identify dates, times, location, and support on your timeline.

From here you can start your messaging timeline. Plan out the cadence of your promotional messaging. If this is on social media, then you will want to start planning out social media post that you can schedule ahead of time. Craft each message as you would like it to appear online. Also identify the images or graphic you would like to include in the post.

Other methods, such as street teams, and posting flyers, will require doing research in the community to identify where to engage with your target population. Brainstorm different locations to target. Take advantage of local events and locations where people gather. These are great opportunities to engage with people face to face, as well as places to post your messaging.

When specifying a timeline, it is good to make note of the metrics of your social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, etc. You can do this my pulling your accounts' metrics or making note of what day you would like to use as a reference point to compare the metrics following the completion of your communication plan.

Here are some additional resources for consideration:
- [Create Customized Graphics](#)
- [MAKESPACE: Make Your Campaign](#)
- [Social Media Post Making Kit](#)

Social Media Platforms 101

Today, getting people to hear your story on social media, and then act on it, requires using a platform's native language, paying attention to context, understanding the nuances and subtle differences that make each platform unique, and adapting your content to match. It's about integrating your content into the stream, where people can consume it along with all their other pop culture. Content will be specifically adapted to each platform rather than

using identical content across all sites. Please see below to learn more about posting to Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Facebook:

Purpose: To connect, socialize and catch up on what the people you know and presumably care about are doing

Criteria for Facebook Content:
- Don't use too much text. Link to more information if there is more to share.
- Keep the content interesting, entertaining, or surprising.
- Use striking and high-quality photos and video. Choose the best 3-5 photos rather than photo dumping.
- Include the logo.
- Put the call to action in the right place.
- Don't ask too much of the person consuming the content.
- Include closed captioning/subtitles on videos.

Note: Despite having similar names, Facebook Insights and Facebook Audience Insights have completely different functions.
- **Facebook Insights** - visualizes incoming data from your business page so you can learn how users are behaving on your page, what content they're engaging with, and how your page matches up to competitors. You can get a snapshot of your page's performance and adjust your strategy accordingly. Key metrics include:
  - **Page Views** – The number of times your page has been viewed by Facebook and non-Facebook users.
  - **Page Likes** – How many Facebook users like your business page.
  - **Actions on Page** – How many actions users take on your business page, such as to click on a website link or ask for directions to your store.
  - **Post Reach** – The number of users on Facebook who saw your post.
  - **Post Engagement** – How many people liked, shared, reacted, or commented on your post.

You also have video insights, which can tell you how your videos are performing. Key metrics include:
  - **Minutes Viewed** – The total amount of time users have spent watching your videos.
  - **Video Views** – The number of users who watched your video for three seconds or more.
  - **Audience Retention** – How long you maintained your video's audience.

- **Facebook Audience Insights** - utilized for ad campaigns and helps marketers understand Facebook audiences in general (which can also include those who follow your page). Facebook Audience Insights dashboard includes information on user demographics, such as location and relationship status as well as user behavior, including average ad clicks and comments.

Twitter:
Purpose: News and information wrapped in a story (provide context to the conversation)
Criteria for Twitter Content:
- Keep it to the point.
- Use unique and memorable hashtags.
- Use high quality images and video.
- Use an authentic voice.
- Tag media (for hometown stories) and interagency partners when appropriate.
- Stay relevant by following Twitter trends/using trending hashtags.

Instagram:
Purpose: Visual-centric social network; authentic (not commercial) content
Criteria for Instagram Content:
- Use artsy imagery that is appropriate for the Instagram crowd (no stock photos.)
- Use 5-10 descriptive hashtags with each post.
- Make stories appealing to the young generation.
- Tag media (for LHDs stories) and interagency partners when appropriate.

Hashtags
Hashtags should be used strategically, not every conversation needs one and they should not be created "just because." Research the conversations surrounding certain topics and make a knowledgeable recommendation. Hashtags will change as more people start talking about the inauguration and the conversation around it changes.

Metrics for Evaluation
After your communication plan is complete it is important to do an evaluation of your plan. Before you start analyzing your data, make sure you know what questions you want answered. This will help you narrow down which key metrics to focus on.

Before you initiate your plan, it is important to identify the areas that you think will be of interest. Once you know that, start looking through the data to identify patterns.

For instance, let's say you notice that your COVID-19 vaccine uptake post is shared at a much higher rate than your other content. This may indicate that this type of content resonates more with your audience and adds value to them and their community. As such, you may want to double down on these posts if your goal is to get higher engagement or use this engagement to generate maximum attendees at a vaccination site.

Analyzing the data is one thing, but what's more important is what you do next. As you notice trends, take note of them, and engage in activities to learn more about what your audience wants. This will help you learn more about your audience and develop content that meets their needs.

Your social media insights dashboard holds so much information about your page's performance and your audience. If you leverage that data, you can create better content and generate more revenue for your brand.

To get a basic understanding on metrics check out this this [video](#).

Evaluating Organizational Awareness: Building organizational awareness means increasing the number of people who know about your organization. This goal is best when launching a new product or changes in your organization. You can measure organizational awareness on social media with specific metrics like:

- **Post Reach:** How many people have seen a post since it went live.
- **Audience Growth Rate:** The rate at which you gain followers over time.
- **Potential Reach:** The number of people who might see a post during a reporting period.
- **Social Share of Voice:** How many people mention your brand on social media compared to your competitors.

Compare the current metrics to the metrics before the communication plan was initiated. It is always important to track the growth of your organization's awareness. Take note of tactics that increase your audience. Use this information to your benefit in future communication plans.

Specialized social media management tools like [Hootsuite](#) can help. [Hootsuite Analytics](#) makes measuring brand awareness metrics easier by allowing you to track metrics from multiple social networks, all in one place. You can even export the information or create

custom reports to share with colleagues and stakeholders. The tool collects data from Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Watch this 2-minute video to learn more about how to use Hootsuite Analytics.

Appendix A

Directions: Please provide information for the following topics below and submit this document to satisfy the Vaccine Communications Plan deliverable. Please note the information requested aligns with the topics discussed in the Communications Plan Workbook.

Health Department Name:

Campaign Name:

Campaign Goal(s): *(1-3 maximum)*

Key Audience(s):

Identifying Key Messages:

Tactical Outreach Plan and Channels of Communication:

Specifying a Timeline for Communication:

Evaluation Metrics: *Please describe how you plan to evaluate your communications campaign.*

Outcomes of Vaccination Communications Campaign: ***This section will be completed later and will be submitted with invoice #4.***
Directions: *Please use this space to describe the outcomes of your vaccination campaign. Describe how the evaluation metrics you identified informed your outcomes, lessons learned, etc.*