

EXPANDING COVID-19 VACCINATION ACCESS IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

A Communication Strategy Plan Guide for Public Health Projects





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Toolkit for Public Health: 5 Simple Steps to Create a Communication Strategy Plan

A **Communication Strategy Plan** is often created to help guide community health workers (CHW) in their work to effectively reach the **intended audience** and measure their success. Communication Strategy Plans could be sometimes considered complex, because they engage several levels of stakeholders. A good road map can make the process more transparent.



Step 1: Identify the purpose of your communication plan. Why do you need to create this communication plan? What is/are your expected outcome(s)?

Step 2: Identify who needs to receive your public health messages. Who is your **intended audience** and what do they need to hear from you?

Step 3: Identify the Point of Contact. Who will be responsible for the implementation and feedback of the communication plan?

Step 4: Determine your project timeline. When should the communication happen...now or later? How often do you need to deliver your message to achieve your expected outcome(s)?

Step 5: Determine your communication tools and resources. How will you effectively communicate to your **intended audience**? Is it a postcard? A flyer?

- What are the **key messages** that you want to deliver to the **intended audience**?
- How will you tailor your key messages to each **intended audience(s)**?
- Which **channels or platforms** will you use to deliver your messages?
- What tactics can you use to effectively deliver your messages?

KEY POINT: STRATEGY VS. PLAN

A **STRATEGY** broadly outlines goals and objectives, whereas a **PLAN** is more detailed and focuses on specific actions and deliverables.

As you create a plan for your communication strategy, think about the following process.

Understand your intended audience...the consumer.

- What are their cultural attitudes and behaviors towards the message(s) that you are trying to deliver? What languages (verbal and non-verbal) do they speak? How do they get their information — websites, pamphlets, radio, television)? What types of events and activities would they want to attend?

Analyze the market or community that you are trying to reach.

- Who are the major influencers? How do you build trust within this community?

Analyze your competition.

- Who else is trying to provide the same service within your intended population? Are there opportunities for collaboration?

Research geographic distribution.

- What are your boundaries for service? Where are the services that you have to offer most needed? Are your service locations accessible to the population you are attempting to engage?

Define your marketing/communication tools.

- What are the key messages that you want to deliver to the **intended audience**?
- How will you tailor your key messages to each **intended audience**?
- What channels or platforms will you use to deliver your messages?
- What types of activities and events do you need to plan to effectively deliver your message?

Analyze your financial situation.

- What is your budget for implementing your strategic plan? How many people can you serve with the budget that you have been provided? Consider your (indirect) operational costs, as well as the direct costs for services.
 - a. **Direct costs** may be time and labor of those who have direct interaction with the intended population.
 - b. **Indirect costs** may include technology used for service delivery and support, transportation/travel costs for service delivery, administrative support staff, etc.

Implement quality control, assurance, and implementation measures.

- How will you monitor and measure quality control among your team members? You may need to pilot your strategy and assess its effectiveness before you can adjust your plan.

Execute the plan and follow appropriate quality-control measures.

Assess Your Success and Sustainability

- Refer to your expected project outcomes.
- Track your progress weekly and report monthly outcomes.
- How often do you need to interact with the intended population before they demonstrate changes in attitude and behavior?

Remember:

- Avoid “one-time sales.”
- No one enjoys the presence of a “pushy salesperson.”
- Did you achieve your goals and objectives at the expense of losing trust with the intended audience?

1

AFRICAN AMERICAN/ BLACK COMMUNITIES

Top 5 Tips for Building Trust with the African American/ Black Communities in DC for Effective Public Health Service Delivery

“Don’t be fake.”

- Be genuine... be recognized as a member of the community. Employ members of the neighborhood or community that you want to serve.

Be a familiar face in the community. Meet people “where they’re at.”

- Giving to the community helps give them hope. Come every week.

Create casual and inviting environments for conversation.

- Activities and events with music and food are always great for conversation-starters. People are hungry for food *and* information. Meet the community's needs on different levels, by delivering food, along with appropriate incentives of value.

“Information is powerful!”

- Show that you care. Share the statistics with community members, and explain “why it's spreading again.” The evidence is convincing.

“When you save yourself, you save the next person.”

- For many people, their health is not a top priority. When they see that the people who deliver the service practice what they preach, that can be a game-changer. It increases overall credibility and can make them more receptive.



2

PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Top 5 Tips for Building Trust with People Who Are Experiencing Homelessness in DC for Effective Public Health Service Delivery

Provide consistent case management services “where they are.”

- Showing your face often can build trust. Do weekly check-ins at the homeless shelters to work with old, as well as, new clients.

Pair clients with peers, as opposed to referrals.

- “Peer Navigators” sharing their stories of faith and trust is more effective than “outsiders” offering help.

Offer appropriate incentives.

- Examples include something of value, such as gift cards or food. Note that food may be less useful to them, since they may also have SNAP benefits (food stamps). The community members you are serving are aware of and interested in grant opportunities and gift card incentives. This is especially true for those who struggle financially at the end of the month, which is a majority of the population being served. You may also offer promotional items that are useful, such as t-shirts, water bottles, flashlights, etc.

Offer something they need.

- For example, value added services like housing resources, detox information, etc.

Explain the infectious disease burden.

- Specifically, explain how this "public health threat" might affect them personally and those they care about if not urgently addressed.



3

NEWLY-ARRIVED
IMMIGRANTS
AND/OR
UNDOCUMENTED
INDIVIDUALS

Top 5 Tips for Building Trust with Newly-arrived Immigrants and/or Undocumented Individuals in DC for Effective Public Health Service Delivery

Offer the population you are serving a sense of security.

- It is **vital** for them to feel safe. Where do they feel safe? Identify the support network, e.g., the consulates or trusted community and/or faith-based organizations, and work with them.

“Have the right people deliver the right story in the right way.”

- People are empowered when they are engaged in an informative way by “people who look like them.” Community clinics need to employ multilingual individuals who are also culturally sensitive people. Health literacy is best delivered by a “trusted broker.”

Use educational materials in the language familiar to the population you are serving.

Engage family members since health decisions by members of this community are usually family decisions.

- Cultural sensitivity is so important, especially if they have undocumented family members. Also, because this population may be transient, their family members may be the best way for you to get to them. Remember to stay within HIPAA guidelines; get written approval from the patient for health information to be shared. Always get a 2nd phone number because they might not have a stable home address for receiving communication.

Use a communication tool/platform that the intended population may have already used in their home country, such as WhatsApp.



4

UNDER-VACCINATED RACIAL/ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

Top 5 Tips for Building Trust with Under-vaccinated Racial/Ethnic Communities in DC for Effective Public Health Service Delivery

Understand that the intended population is part of a larger community and network that is not bound by state borders.

Tap into ethnic media networks, such as television, radio, and newspapers in the intended audiences' native languages.

- Be aware of the social media platforms that are most popular among intended populations. Each community has different preferences. Learn what they are.

Engage trusted community leaders or influencers.

- They can assist with sharing your message through their established communication channels, i.e., social media platforms, email listservs, direct communication, etc.

Meet the community members in their neighborhoods.

- Or specific places they frequent like grocery stores, markets, places of worship, etc.

Offer appropriate incentives or free giveaways.

- This attracts attention as a good conversation-starter.



5

LOW VACCINATION RATE NEIGHBORHOOD

Top 5 Tips for Building Trust with Residents in Neighborhoods with Particularly Low Vaccination Rates in DC for Effective Public Health Service Delivery

Be a good listener.

- Understand the intended audiences' needs and connect them to useful resources that they may need (if possible), such as food, employment opportunities, health resources, etc. .

Engage in casual and genuine conversations.

- Do not try to “sell” your message.

Share your story.

- Allow your audience to connect with the story, while gradually introducing the key messages. Share facts after you have established trust. It will reinforce your credibility.

Hold events with food, music, and appropriate free promotional items in the neighborhoods where you are trying to engage community members.

Dress appropriately for the community engagement.

- Do not intentionally stand out. Review safety tips for community outreach and engagement.



6

RESIDENTS
OVER THE AGE
OF 65

Top 5 Tips for Building Trust with Residents Over the Age 65 in DC for Effective Public Health Service Delivery

Be patient.

- Adjust how you communicate to make it easier for older adults, who may have hearing problems or need longer time to process information. Speak more slowly, reiterate information as much as needed, and make sure font size is enlarged on printed materials.

Show respect through the way you dress and talk to your audience.

- Demonstrate good manners and etiquette. Some older people like to be addressed formally as Mr./Mrs. followed by their last name. Others use Mr./Mrs. followed by their first names, especially when dealing with younger people. In some cultures, "Uncle" or "Auntie" is used. Maintain this formality until they tell you to call them by their first name.

Demonstrate cultural sensitivity among those who are not proficient in English.

Hold events with food and appropriate free promotional items at senior housing communities.

- Make sure your events are ADA-accessible.

Try to engage the older adult's caregivers or family members.

- Share your educational materials and resources with the family members who are most influential in the lives of the older adults you want to reach. These people can influence them and are often the decision-makers for their older relative. These individuals may also be decision makers for the intended population.



7

SAFETY TIPS IN DC

Top 5 Safety Tips for Community Engagement in DC

"Know before you go."

- Find out ahead of time what the dress code is like for your activity/event. Dress in comfortable shoes and appropriate clothes.

Avoid carrying a purse or anything valuable that could be easily snatched.

- Backpacks may be a better option, but it's best to limit carrying valuable items with you.

Carry your ID, health insurance card, credit cards, and money securely in your pants pockets.

- Alternatively, you could also wear a small crossbody sling bag.

Don't hold your cell phones visibly on the streets or outdoors to avoid attracting unnecessary attention.

- Keep them securely located in a jacket pocket or another safe place.

Avoid working alone in areas you're not familiar with.

- Do community outreach together with another team member.



Safety Tips: House/Car Keys

- Separate your house key from your car key.
- Keep one key in your backpack and another in your pocket. Keeping both keys together sets you up for home burglary if you are robbed.
- Remember: If you have a visible car garage opener, they can enter your home through the garage.

GLOSSARY OF MARKETING TERMS

What is a Communication Strategy Plan?

A communications strategy is a plan for communicating with your intended audience. It includes who you are talking to; why you are talking to them; how and when you will talk to them; what form of communication the content should take; and which channels should be used to communicate.

What is the Purpose of a Communication Strategy Plan?

Making sure the right people hear your message when they are ready and in a way that you want them to hear it. Your communication objectives should be to answer these questions: Who do I need to reach? Why do I need to reach them? What will my communications say? How will I deliver this message strategically at a time when the message will be best received? Which channels should be used for message delivery?

What is an Intended Audience?

Your Intended Audience defines who needs to hear your messages. An Intended Audience is the specific group of people that you want to reach in your communications. You want to make sure all your communications will appeal to the group you want to reach. Culturally appropriate sensitivities are most important.

What are Key Messages?

Key messages are carefully selected words that are compelling, sincere, and have the power to move people to action. They are the main points of information you want to communicate.

What is a Point of Contact and why is it important?

Identify who will be the one person responsible for a project. This will avoid potential confusion and help to make a smooth experience.

What are Channels or Platforms?

Examples are print and digital options such as social media, emails, videos, printed postcards or brochures.

