

Communication Plan Template

This template is designed to help an organization think about how to plan and implement effective communication, both internal and external to the organization. The template contains key areas that the organization should think through when developing a communication plan.

This template can be used in multiple ways:

First, a leader of an organization may use the template to think independently about the organization when planning for a communication. The leader can use the template to ensure they have thought through all aspects of the message to be communicated prior to moving forward. In situations where leaders want to think through the communication effort independently, leaders must ensure a sound diagnosis by including senior staff and stakeholders prior to delivering the communication whether it is written and/or verbal.

Second, the leader of an organization may use the template with their leadership team, allowing the leadership of the organization to think together when planning for the communication.

Regardless of which of the above methods is utilized, the template can help an organization develop an understanding of all of the things that must be thought through prior to communicating to internal and external stakeholders.

Taking time to think about the organization, whether independently or as a team, is the work of leading any organization.

The objectives of the template are to help agency leaders prepare and deliver communication messages that inform stakeholders about the direction the organization will take to maintain high-quality core service delivery. Effective communication informs everyone about the actions being taken within the organization and how they support the organization's strategy. Being transparent as an agency to both internal and external stakeholders through effective communication planning will assist in building trusting relationships with all stakeholders.

When planning improvements, leaders should keep in mind that stakeholders, both internal and external, could have a negative reaction to the improvements. Therefore, leaders should be sure to include the following in their communication:

- A clear vision for where the improvements will take the agency and how it is related to the desired outcomes;
- What resources will be available to staff to develop new skills that might be required to implement the improvements;
- The incentives to both internal and external stakeholders for supporting the improvements;
- What resources are needed to support the improvements and how leadership will obtain the resources; and,
- A clear plan of action on how the improvements will be implemented and monitored along with an expected timeline.

The communication planning template is a shell format that includes elements contained in most sound communication plans. Users are, however, encouraged to modify this template to meet their unique needs. The following are the minimum elements of a sound communication plan:

- Background/Situation Analysis;
- Key Messages and Goals;
- Method of Communication; and,
- Evaluation and Monitoring.

Communication Plan Template

Complete this template only after completing a thorough assessment of the current situation and the message to be communicated. Remember to always include senior leaders and key stakeholders in the communication planning process.

Background/Situation Analysis (What is the background of the organization with relationship to the message to be communicated? What is the current situation and how will the change and/or decisions to be implemented impact the organization?)

Key Communication Messages and Goal (What messages will be communicated about decision made and to be implemented? What are the goals and anticipated outcomes for implementing the decisions? How does the decision impact the strategy of the organization?)

For the following sections, make sure to address communications with both internal and external audiences:

Content of Communication (What message is being communicated and why?)

Method of Communication (How should the message be communicated—verbal and/or written?)

Audience to Receive the Communication (Who needs to be communicated with about the decisions and goals? What does each level of the organization need to know and why? What does each external stakeholder need to know?)

Who will be Responsible for doing the Communication (Who should deliver the communication?)

Barriers to Communication Plan (What barriers are anticipated in delivering the communication and how will we plan to overcome these barriers?)

Anticipated Outcome of the Communication (What will happen as a result of our communication internally and/or externally?)

Evaluation and Monitoring (How will the effectiveness of the communication effort be monitored? How will feedback be obtained internally and externally to ensure understanding of the message communicated? How will feedback be used to evaluate, monitor and adjust your initiative and goals? How will adjustments and changes to the decision, based on the feedback, be communicated?)