Introduction

A communications plan can be very helpful for maintaining partner engagement, sharing successes, and fostering dialogue. Establishing a written plan will help you commit to communicating with interest holders in ways that respond to their needs and the overarching goals. This Worksheet offers guidance and a template for creating a Communications Plan.

Key Elements of a Communications Plan

Goals

What do you hope to achieve through your communications efforts? Potential goals may include increasing or maintaining partner engagement, supporting implementation, improving coordination, or establishing trust and accountability. Be clear about your goals and adapt your methods, audiences, and messages accordingly.

Audience

Who is your audience or audiences? Who needs to be part of the process? Is the plan focused on communicating only with your partners or with the community as a whole? More inclusivity should translate into more effective and better received action.

Messages

What information is essential to the creation and success of the project that needs to be communicated to partners? Think through the previous BRACE steps. What is essential for monitoring and evaluation? For identifying new partners or new opportunities? What other goals do you have that can be supported through communication?

Methods

How will you communicate the key messages? What channels will you use? Email, presentations, workshops, reports, or social media? The methods should correspond to the audience preference and needs.

Frequency

How often do partners, officials, and the public need to hear from you? This will likely depend on the goal and the level of engagement. It may also depend on the maturity of the initiative and your staff capacity. Establish a plan for the frequency of outreach to help keep the team accountable.

Owner

Designate the staff or the person responsible for managing the communications plan to increase accountability.

Priority

In some situations, it may be helpful to designate a level of priority (e.g., low, medium, high) to help the team prioritize limited staff capacity or resources. It is important to have conversations about why certain communications goals and strategies are assigned different priority rankings.

Sharing Metrics and Monitoring Results

Monitoring your project and sharing those metrics with your participants can be an important element of a communications plan. Regularly sharing results, both positive and negative, can create optimism in your partners or recommit them to the challenge. Also, you can foster a sense of trust and accountability by disseminating this kind of information.

Sample Template

Table 1. Communications Goals and Audience

Write three key communications goals you hope to achieve and the primary audiences for each.

Communications Goal	Primary Audience

Table 2. Communications Plan Elements
Ensure that all communications goals outlined above are supported through the plan. Don't forget to include sharing monitoring and evaluation results in your communications plan.

	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3
Audience			
Message			
Methods			
Frequency			
Owner			
Priority			
Evaluation and Monitoring Results			