***Create messages for your project and target audiences***

***by using this simple template.***

Developing and maintaining a set of key messages is one of the most important communications tasks you will undertake. Good messages provide:

• focus and consistency to your communications

• clarity and reinforcement for your audiences.

**Some principles of effective message creation are:**

 Good messages consider your objectives (what do we need this audience to do?), but are

written to appeal to your audience’s interests and concerns. Among professionals in a

 health care setting, these often include improving patient experience and reducing

 workload.

 Keep it simple. Effective messages are able to distil the key points and phrase them in a

way that your audiences can understand quickly. Even a complex issue can be ‘broken

 down’ into smaller, easier to understand messages.

 You may need to vary messages to appeal to [different audiences](http://www.health.org.uk/commskit-2-2).

 Use the language that your audiences use. Always avoid jargon.

 Test your messages:those involved in the process of developing messages become too

close to them. Always [test messages](http://www.health.org.uk/commskit-2-2) with at least a small sample from the target

 audience.

 **Message creation templates**

Most projects have a need for two different kinds of messaging. The first is around the project itself: how to describe it in a concise, engaging way? The second is for messages that appeal directly to the target audiences’ interests.

Most audiences do not need to understand the details of your project to engage with it.

They do need to see how it relates to them; their passions, concerns and needs.

The following two templates can assist in both forms of message creation.

**Project messages**

Use this template and prompt questions to think about and distil some messages for your
project.

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| --- |
| WHO ARE YOU? (the project initiators or team) |
| A single sentence: who are the team? |
|  |
| WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO AND WHO ARE YOU DOING IT FOR? |
| One or two sentences on what you will do and who will benefit from your work. |
|  |
| CONTEXT? |
| Something about the political, economic or social environment you are operating in that makes your project particularly relevant. |
|  |
| WHAT IS DIFFERENT? |
| What is new or different about the approach that you are taking? |
|  |
| HOW WILL THIS MAKE THINGS BETTER? |
| What problems or barriers will your work help your priority audiences overcome? How will your project make their lives easier/better? |
|  |
| WHAT ABOUT THE MONEY? |
| How could this add value and improve efficiency? |
|  |
| YOUR SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS? |
| Who supports you/who are you partnering with? |
|  |

**Audience focused messages**

Now you have considered what may be the key pieces of information about your project, you can create more audience focused messages.

The template that follows provides a framework for the creation of your audience messages. It also provides space to add key facts, statistics or stories that reinforce these messages and can be used in your communications.

It may be necessary to complete more than one of these if some of your audiences have different needs, interests or levels of knowledge.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Message | Proof points |
| **Issue?**A simple articulation of the problem or issue your project is trying to meet. | Statistics/facts that help prove or support what you are saying about the issue. |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| **Why does it matter now?**What is the particular relevance, urgency or reason to engage for your audience/s? | Facts or stories that reinforce the urgency/severity of the issue. |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| **What are we doing?**How you will contribute to the issue/the potential solution your project offers? | Distilled, key points about the project and its goals. |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| **What do we want you to do?**The action/s you would like your audience/s to take. | Facts or stories that reinforce the urgency/severity of the issue. |
|  |  |

**Writing into your communications strategy**

Record your messages as concisely as you can and enter into your [communications strategy and plan](http://www.health.org.uk/commskit-1-4).

**Note:** The templates are not intended to be public documents, because they are not presented in a form that is likely to appeal to audiences. Instead, they are intended to act as a guide for you and your colleagues as you communicate during the project.