

Section 1

SETTING COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES: a template



Your communications strategy and communications plan should focus on delivering the communications objectives you set.

Principles of good communications objectives are:

- They derive from your wider project objectives. The two key questions in this process are “what is our project trying to do?” and “how can our communications help do it?”
- They focus not just on outputs (how many leaflets, posters or pieces of media coverage are produced) but also on outcomes (the behaviour or action you wish to see in your colleagues, funders, patients, etc).
- They focus your activity, so there should not be too many of them. Aim for five or less.
- The more specific and measurable you make them, the more focused and efficient your communications can be.

Be realistic about what communications can achieve. Below are some examples of what communications can help with in a health care setting:

- Increase the intended audience’s knowledge and awareness of a health issue, problem or solution.
- Increase the intended audience’s awareness of a project, department or organisation.
- Influence perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes that may change social norms.
- Prompt action.
- Demonstrate or illustrate skills or best practice.
- Reinforce knowledge, attitudes or behaviour.
- Show the benefit of behaviour change.
- Advocate a position on a health issue or policy.
- Increase demand or support for health services.
- Refute myths and misconceptions.

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Use the following prompt questions to help draft your communications objectives

Which of your project's objectives need communications input to succeed?

- X
- Y
- Z

Taking each one of these project objectives in turn, use the following prompt questions to help draft your communications objectives. You can record these objectives in the [Communications strategy template](#).

Broadly, what will your communications need to do to deliver this objective?	Raise awareness? Prompt action? Impart knowledge? Win support for different ways of working? Stimulate a want or desire?
Who will you need to engage to achieve this objective?	Even at this early stage, before you have identified or prioritised audiences , try to be as specific as possible. Avoid very broad categories like 'the public' or 'health care professionals'.
What will you want that audience to do?	Awareness Prompt knowledge, build understanding, gain recognition. Action Join, visit, sign up to, attend, disseminate, accept, support. Engagement Create information exchange, change practice, change behaviour or beliefs.
How will you know you have succeeded?	What targets or indicators can show that we have achieved the above?
Within what timeframe will we do it?	When will we do this by?



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Example objectives

- 1 We will raise awareness in audience A of the risk of dispensing (sample medication) to (type of audience) by building understanding of (a specific issue). Leading to an X% drop in (medical condition) cases between 2016 and 2018.
- 2 We will gain and demonstrate recognition of the X issue among Y audience by recruiting X network members between December 2015 and September 2016.

Remember: Developing objectives is an iterative process: at this stage you will be able to establish your objectives in broad terms. As you work through the detail of your communications strategy, it may be possible to be more specific about audiences, targets you wish to meet, etc.