

1. What is Discovery?

Are your Discovery collaborative members able to articulate clearly the group's goals and how it works?

YES.

Go to worksheet 1, page 2 and document your work.

NO.

Get clear first inside the collaborative group:

Go to worksheet 1 "Stating Your Case"

2. Do others know who you are?

Do the Discovery group and its work have public visibility and credibility with potential partners?

YES.

Go to worksheet 2, page 2 and document your work.

NO.

Help others to know who you are and what your goals are:

Go to worksheet 2 "Building Your Group's Identity"

3. Are you clear about the one or two things you want to achieve next?

YES.

Match your goal with communications tools:

Go to worksheet 3 "Being Strategic About Communications"

worksheet 1: Stating Your Case

A case statement tells your group's story —

who you are, what you do, why you do the work you do, and what you expect to accomplish. It is very useful for

- Getting everyone already involved in the group on the same page
- Introducing your group to others in the community
- Enlisting others to join your group or your board
- As background information for the media
- Providing contact information for those who want to know more or get involved
- Keeping the basic information consistent as you add other communications pieces and as your group adds members
- Raising funds to support your work

You may call it a fact sheet, the organization's informational brochure or other names, but the document needs to answer some basic questions very concisely. A case statement is typically no longer than 2 pages. Answers to questions like these are often included:

What is your mission (vision, purpose)?

Describe the "big picture" of what you would like to accomplish.

What are you trying to accomplish or change?

Describe what you are currently working to change.

Describe your issue and why it is important.

Use data that documents the importance.

Use stories that make the issue real.

Describe your group (committees, governance, activities)

Include accomplishments that help to distinguish your group from others.

List events or other ways that people will know your group.

Who is involved?

Include board, staff, volunteers, partners, funders, collaborative members, etc.

What is the group's history?

What does the group bring to the community?

Include enough detail to distinguish your group from others.

Future plans or Action steps

Provide contact information (including website and email addresses).

Provide information for taking action or getting involved.

worksheet 2: Building Your Group's Identity

Some people call this kind of communications activity "building name recognition" or "positioning the organization." Others call it "branding."

And while it is clear why commercial brands like "Coke" and "Pepsi" spend millions of dollars to ensure that people recognize their names, it is often harder to understand why nonprofit groups or collaborative groups spend time on these activities. Building a group identity is useful for:

- Establishing credibility or trust for your group
- Providing a quick way to identify your group or issue
- Offering group members a way to identify themselves with an issue
- Strengthening support for your issue by evoking a connection to emotions, values, or personal experiences
- Reflecting the values of your group or issue

Organizations and groups can build an identity in many ways, both intentionally and as a by-product of all the activities and achievements that are a part of their work. Here are some questions to consider:

What is your name?

If the answer is not a simple one, get clear about how you want to be identified. If there are multiple initiatives in your community working on children's issues, how do you relate to the other groups? Is there one umbrella that all groups can fit under? At times, groups can seem to be competing even when they are not. And it is easy to confuse the public so be as clear as possible.

Do you consistently display and use the group's name in the same way?

Do you use the same typeface and colors in printed materials? ...or a logo?

Have you agreed on how to list members of the collaborative?

Is there a tagline that adds a bit of information and zip to your name?

Do you have agreement among the collaborative members about how the name and logo get used? Using the same graphic elements can make it easier for others to identify who you are and give your group credit for the work you do.

Do the name and "brand" match your actions?

When what you say conflicts with what you do, your group may confuse the public or lose trust. For example, if your name says that you are an "advisory" group is it okay to act independently? Or, if your group's focus is children's nutrition, do you serve donuts at the meetings?

How visible is your group?

At events do you use signs, balloons or fun elements to get noticed?

Do your members participate in meetings or events on your behalf and identify themselves with your group?

Is the organization mentioned in the newspapers, radio, or other media? If not, could a media strategy become part of your work plan?

worksheet 3: Being Strategic About Communications

Start now!

Start now! Think of practicing communications just like any other skill – like carpentry, for example. You have a toolbox full of implements. In this case, there are newsletters, messages and events instead of saws, hammers and files. And if you pick up the tools without first considering what it is that you want to build, you could end up with a birdhouse when what you really needed was a table. Start with your goals. Practice using the tools. Stay focused on your goals and make adjustments. Learn along the way – and don't mind the sawdust.

The following chart will walk you through the questions, considerations and action steps for thinking strategically about communications.

Communications are most effective when you think strategically and focus on a *specific change you want to see and the people who can make that change happen*. Communications aimed at the general public for the purpose of increasing general awareness about an issue require tremendous resources over a long time period. And even then the effect is not often very deep or lasting. Communications that are successful are very clear about the purpose and have sufficient resources to reach the intended audience multiple times, and then help people to make the desired change.

When you start thinking strategically about communications, you will need to decide which of three broad purposes you are pursuing:

Communications can aim to change personal behavior.

Such communications encourage people to "buckle up" their seat belts, or, to encourage parents to immunize their children. The purpose is to influence personal choices in ways that have social, health or safety benefits. (See "ABCs of School Readiness" Channel 8 television spots.)

Communications can aim to change policies or practices.

Communications have been used to help change local, state or national laws and regulations that effect how we live our lives. Such strategies have had an impact, for example, on the safety and availability of handguns at the local level, or, on the quality of the air and water at the national level. (See "Is it good for kids?" Kansas City campaign.)

Communications can influence both personal behavior and policy.

Communications strategies may attempt to reach enough individuals in order to change personal behavior as a means towards eventually changing policy, or the other way around. For example, an anti-litter campaign in Texas started by reaching out to young males with a "Don't Mess With Texas" message. By changing the behavior of this critical group first, the strategy attempts to change the norm about littering and to change, eventually, the public's willingness to do something about the problem using local or state laws. (See "Ask me about preschool" buttons in New Britain.)

The more clearly you can define the change you want to see happen and your expectations about how to make that change happen, the more strategic you can be with your communications resources.

worksheet 3: Being Strategic About Communications

continued

QUESTIONS

CONSIDERATIONS

ACTION STEPS

1
What changes are necessary for success?

Review Discovery Action Plan:
Are you clear about what you want to change?
Make a list and consider which ones are top priorities? Which ones are good prospects given what's going on in your community?

Choose one item on the list.

State your goal as concisely and clearly as possible.



2
How will you know you have succeeded?

What benefits will your community realize if this change is achieved? Is the goal measurable?
How will you measure or describe the change?
What can you document about the quality or quantity of the change?

Refine the goal to state clearly what you want to change and by how much (for example, increase the number of accredited programs by 50 %)



worksheet 3: Being Strategic About Communications

continued

QUESTIONS

CONSIDERATIONS

ACTION STEPS

Who needs to do something differently?

Whom must you reach to achieve your goal? Who has the power to make changes? What groups of people are closest to the changes you want made?

Make a list of target audiences – all those groups and people that need to do something. Put those who are most critical at the top of the list and work down.

3



What do you know about the opinions and values of your target audience?

What values are shared with each audience? What does national opinion research show? What have you learned from community conversations or focus groups to help you understand each group? If a group's opinions differ from yours, are there any shared values or common ground?

List the existing beliefs of each stakeholder group that match the values of your issue.

4



worksheet 3: Being Strategic About Communications

continued

QUESTIONS

CONSIDERATIONS

ACTION STEPS

Who can best deliver the message?

7

Whom does the target group trust? If people in the group trust their peers, can you enlist a few individuals to speak for your issue?

List the messengers for each target audience.



How will you deliver the messages?

8

Think big picture first: Will you reach business through professional organizations? Will you reach parents by providing something fun for families to do? Will you educate policymakers using those most affected by the policies?

List your objectives for each target audience.



“Stating Your Case” Online Resources

1) *Making Your Case to Supporters, the Public and Elected Officials* from the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits Advocacy/Lobbying Toolkit, created by Ron Cretaro, CAN Executive Director and Marcia Avner, Director of Public Policy, Minnesota Council of Nonprofits

A resource that describes strategies for telling your story and ensuring that your organization is well understood. Lists information that should be included and how the completed case statement might be used to support the work of the organization.

http://www.ctnonprofits.org/ExternalLink.asp?linkto=http://www.ctnonprofits.org/Content/NonProfitResources/FlexibleContent/7MakingYourCase_1.doc

2) *Preparing to Tell Your Story During the Legislative Session* from the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits

A guide to developing a case statement and delivering the message. Provides tips for writing a case statement and a list of questions that the case statement should answer.

<http://www.mncn.org/doc/casestatement.pdf>

3) *Writing Your Case for Support* from the Cause & Effect Toolbox for Change

A one page tool that describes why a written case statement is needed and different types of case statements along with questions to ask when developing a case statement.

http://www.ceffect.com/resources/WRITING_YOUR_CASE_SUPPORT.pdf

4) *Fundraising – The Case Statement* from the Center for Nonprofit Excellence

A brief description of why you need a case statement to raise dollars in support of your cause.

<http://www.cfnpe.org/site.cfm/comp-bene-plans.cfm>

“Building Your Group’s Identity” Online Resources

1) *Birthing the Brand*, by DK Holland, from The Foundation Center’s Philanthropy News Digest

A series of articles covers what it takes for an organization to develop a brand or identify, who should be involved, and how the process works.

<http://Foundationcenter.org/pnd/npodesign/npodesign.jhtml?id=44800019>

2) *Nonprofit Branding: Unveiling the Essentials*, by Bill Nissim, from GuideStar Articles.

This brand-management professional describes four steps to defining and living a brand.

http://www.guidestar.org/news/features/npo_branding.jsp

3) *The Tricky Business of Nonprofit Brands*, by Manda Salls, from the Harvard Business School’s Working Knowledge newsletter

The writer reviews the book, “The New Global Brands: Managing Non-Government Organizations in the 21st Century,” by John Quelch and Nathalie Laidler-Kylander, and includes a question and answer session with the book’s authors.

<http://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/4686.html>

4) *Nonprofits Need to Consider Branding*, by Tim Penning, APR, from the Nonprofit Leader newsletter

This one-page article describes the Look, Lore and Life of a brand and why is it important for nonprofit groups and efforts to consider.

<http://www.npgoodpractice.org/Marketing/Training/PDF/Article13.pdf>

“Being Strategic About Communications” Online Resources

1) *Making the Case for Early Care and Education: A Message Development Guide for Advocates*, by Berkeley Media Studies

Based on recent public opinion research, this guide offers useful information about media advocacy: how to develop strategies, influence policy, talk about early childhood issues, and get journalists’ attention. When visiting the site (www.bmsg.org), take a look at the other resources made available by the Berkeley Media Studies Group.

<http://www.bmsg.org/pdfs/YellowBook.pdf>

2) *Media Tips & Training: A guide to placing op-eds and letters to the editor; A guide to working with families and the media; and A guide to moving messages with public service advertising*, from the Communications Consortium Media Center

The 3 guides provide 1) useful tips on how to write an op-ed, along with details on the top 100 U.S. newspapers, including the Hartford Courant, 2) advice on how to help families tell their stories to the press, and 3) how to use public service announcements or PSAs.

<http://www.ccmc.org/oped.htm>

3) *The Jossey-Bass Guide to Strategic Communications for Nonprofits: A Step-by-Step Guide to working with the Media*, by Kathy Bonk, Henry Griggs, and Emily Tynes of the Communications Consortium Media Center

This book is a complete how-to for using the media to promote your cause. The book can be previewed and purchased from the website below.

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0787943738/qid=929128721/103-1908236-7519049>

4) *What the Polling Tells Us and Sample Message Memos*, by the Early Childhood Education Collaborative, a project of the Communications Consortium Media Center

The website is full of information gleaned from a seven-state initiative, including Connecticut, that supports the use of communications to promote early childhood education. The polling information includes a summary analysis of 36 polls and focus group projects over the past 5 years.

<http://www.earlycare.org/ccpa.htm> (Childcare Analysis polling)

<http://www.earlycare.org/pollingtellsus2.htm> (What Polling Tells Us)

<http://www.earlycare.org/messagememo2.htm> (Message Memos)

5) *Publications and Products on Early Childhood Development by FrameWorks Institute*

FrameWorks Institute's research offers cutting-edge insights about what people think and how they communicate about young children and school readiness. The list of resources at on the webpage below is full of information on framing the issues. A document called "Hearts Souls and Minds" gives us a picture of how the public understands a young child's ages and stages of development.

<http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/products/ecdreports.shtml>

6) *Storytelling as Best Practices and other publications by Andy Goodman of A Goodman: Good Ideas for Good Causes*

Looking for inspiration and a sense of humor? Andy Goodman is using what he learned from founding the American Comedy Network and writing for television to promote good causes. His publications and newsletter are clear, concise and, well, funny. The publications can be downloaded for free at the webpage below.

<http://www.agoodmanonline.com/publications/index.html>

7) *The Spitfire Strategies Smart Chart 2.0 and Blogs Part I and II: Promoting Nonprofit Blogs and other publications from Spitfire Strategies*

Spitfire Strategies offers several hands-on tools for getting started and improving your communications. The *Smart Chart* is a planning tool and the information about Blogs will help you to reach new audiences, particularly among the younger generations. *Breaking Through to Great: Smart Strategies for Developing Winning Communications Campaigns* will help even the professional communicators within your group and yet it is easy to read for beginners too.

<http://www.spitfirestrategies.com>

http://www.smartchart.org/content/smart_chart_2_0_final.pdf

<http://www.spitfirestrategies.com/recommends/12>