Building a Strategic Communications Plan for Implementation Proposals

Presented by Douglas Gould and Company

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Welcome! We will be starting momentarily.

If you dialed into the webinar before logging in to the Webex site, please hang up and call back in – otherwise you will not be able to ask questions. Thank you!
Why Communications?

Strategic communications will allow you to make the case on why Accelerating Opportunity is important and different.

Strategically deployed communications tools and tactics will help you:

• **Recruit Adult Learners**
• **Set a Policy Agenda**
• **Secure Funding**
• **Build Long-Lasting Partnerships**
How We Will Help You

Over the next few months the DG&Co. team will provide the following technical assistance:

• Distribute a communications toolkit with templates and materials to help you create plans

• Schedule one-on-one calls with state leads and/or coordinators to give tailored advice and feedback on proposals

• In-person training opportunities
In-Person Trainings
Save the Date!

Full-day Communications Bootcamp
Oct. 5th in Lexington KY
Will include hands-on training in:
- Using Values-Based Messages to Gain Support
- Becoming an Effective Spokesperson in the Media
- Making a Strong Case for Adult Education
- Navigating the World of Online Communications
- Developing a Compelling Elevator Speech

Accelerating Opportunity Peer Learning Academy
Oct. 22-23rd in St. Louis, MO
DG&Co will be available as content experts
About Strategic Communications Plans

Should be approximately 4-8 pages and cover:

- Communications Goals
- Key Audiences
- Message Platform
- Tactics
- Timetable
- Budget
- Staffing
What Are Communications Goals?

A set of 3-4 clearly-defined expectations that guide communications activities.

What can be achieved through communications?

Good communications goals are:
- Strategic
- Transparent
- Realistic
- Incremental
Clarifying Goals

Consider creating a list of draft goals. Simplify and clarify these goals by:

- Mapping them to your practice and policy goals
- Establishing benchmarks for activity and visibility
- Evaluating current and projected capacity
- Tracking current levels of participation
- Identifying and leveraging resources
Sample Communications Goals

1. Build will and encourage participation among education stakeholders (CC Presidents, ABE leaders, faculty, et. al.)

2. Convince policymakers to drive funding streams for adult education in the state

3. Recruit adult learners for programs in key communities
Identifying Key Audiences

Who are your audiences?

- Specific groups of people able to help your work

- Be careful not to lump audiences together (e.g. ‘voters’ or ‘the public’)
Know Your Audiences

- Really get to know them.
- Find out what resonates with them.
- Know what you want them to do and make sure you ask them!
Finding Local Audiences

• Identify audiences by isolating what you want each group to do:
  ▪ Specific actions (drive policy, sign up, make connections, donate)
  ▪ Actions must be critical to the success of your implementation plans and/or policy work

• If you can’t figure out an action, they’re not an audience!
Accelerating Opportunity’s Key National Audiences

- Internal Stakeholders and Leaders
- State Elected Officials and Policymakers
- Funders
- State Community College Leadership
- State Business Leaders
- Community College Faculty and Key Staff
- Adult Learners
What is an Audience Map?

A graphic representation of audiences that:

• Shows the group’s level of familiarity with your work
• Contains each audience as well as subgroups
• Shows how each audience will be reached
• Puts your work clearly on one page
Accelerating Opportunity’s National Audience Map

**ZONE I Inner Circle** *Includes:*
- Internal Stakeholders
- State Leads & other staff
- Other State Leadership

*Reached by:*
- Evaluations and Reports
- Strategic Planning Documents
- Meetings and Collaborations
- Messaging Platform

**ZONE II External Stakeholders & Partners** *Includes:*
- New & Current Funders
- Grantmakers
- State & Local Policymakers
- Community College Leadership

*Reached by:*
- Meetings / Conferences
- Case Statements
- Grant Proposals
- Partner and Community Profiles
- Philanthropic and Trade Media
- Eblasts

**ZONE III Potential Collaborators & Constituents** *Includes:*
- State Business Leaders
- Community College Faculty & Staff
  - Adult Learners

*Reached by:*
- Website
- Mass Media (newspapers, TV, radio)
  - Online media (blogs, social media, eblasts)

Information and recruitment vehicles
Zone III: Inner Circle
What We Want Them To Do:

- Embrace Accelerating Opportunity and the IBEST/IBEST-like model and see it as an innovative opportunity to deliver better results for low skilled adults and the college programs that serve them.

- Work with state leadership, national coaches and Accelerating Opportunity leadership team to best prepare their state's program for success.

- Report out important data and findings to be repackaged and distributed nationally.

- Include Accelerating Opportunity-funded programs in recommendations and reports to the state government and policymakers.

- Find ways to leverage the initiative’s investment and think long term about an agenda for adult learning in their post secondary system.
Frames are durable models that include stories, metaphors and images that are etched into people’s brains.

If facts don’t fit the frames, the facts are discarded and the frames stay.

Frames can be contradictory.

Some frames support your goals and others don’t.
From Frame to Action

• Link values to action

• Something to care about

• Ways to get involved
What Makes A Good Message?

- True
- Believable
- Connected to people’s core values
- Supported by facts
- Spoken by the right person
- Is about “you”
- Repeated
- Framed to win
Accelerating Opportunity is supporting states across the country to ensure more workers have the skills they need for today’s good jobs through innovative adult education that provides a valuable credential.
Creating Local Messages

• Messages are intended to inspire, give the big picture, be emotional, and provide a call to action.

• Must be consistently repeated but never used all at once or simply strung together.

• Should be peppered throughout all communications and repeated frequently!

• Use frames to link to deeply held cultural values.
Developing Tactics

Tactics operationalize goals through discrete, achievable activities. They should:

- Translate communications goals into action.
- Target each key audience using vehicles tailored to the group’s needs and values.
- Contain realistic, manageable benchmarks.
- Have a measurement component.
Common Tactics

Media
* Newspapers, TV, Radio, blogs and external websites
  - Placing stories
  - Submitting opinion pieces, op-eds, letters to the editor

Online
* Website, email, social media
  - Creating local website
  - Sending monthly newsletter
  - Managing social media profiles on Twitter, Facebook

Materials/Copy Creation
* Designing brochures, fact sheets, reports
* Writing reports, proposals, articles
* Creating advertising

Events and Meetings
* Attending conferences
* Presenting findings
* Meeting with stakeholders
Example Goal Paired with Tactics

**Goal:** Build will and encourage participation among education stakeholders

**Tactics:**
- Hold at least 10 meetings with community college, ABE and faculty leadership
- Develop an informational packet to leave behind at meetings
- Place an op-ed supporting Accelerating Opportunity in state education publication
- Create a webpage outlining key facts
A timetable should map to each communications goal and tactics. For each one it should:

- Show when each tactic will begin
- Plot phases of tactic activities
- Include clear deadlines for each tactic
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Month 1</th>
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<td><strong>Goal: Build Will for Adult Education</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Tactic 1: Meetings</strong></td>
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<td>Identify and Secure Venues</td>
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<td>Secure Caterer</td>
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<td>Create Invitation</td>
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<td>Send Invitation</td>
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<td>Send Follow-up Email(s)</td>
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<td><strong>Tactic 2: Develop Informational Packet</strong></td>
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<td>Write Copy</td>
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<td>Secure Designer</td>
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<td>Design Review</td>
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<td>Final Proof</td>
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<td><strong>Tactic 3: Op-Ed Placed</strong></td>
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<td>Identify Target Outlets</td>
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<td>Recruit Spokesperson</td>
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<td>Outreach to Key Outlets</td>
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<td>Send Copy to Web Developer</td>
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A budget for communications efforts will include realistic estimates for each expense associated with a tactic.

Will also include salary and fringe for staff tasked with communications activities.

A communications program for a large projects such as Accelerating Opportunity should be approximately 10% of the administrative budget.
Typical Budget Expenses

- Personnel salary and fringe
- Consultant fees
- Printing and design fees
- Website hosting
- Stock photography
- Videography
- Catering and event reservations
- Media monitoring/clipping services
- Standard Office Expenses
# Sample Expenses

## Goal 1: Build Will & Participation

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<th>Tactics</th>
<th>Expenses</th>
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| • Hold at least 10 meetings with community college, ABE and faculty leadership | **Meeting Venue:** Free  
**Lunch/Food:** $2,000  
• 50 people @ $40 per plate |
| • Develop an informational packet to leave behind at meetings | **Design:** $5,500  
• 40 hours @ $125 per hour  
• 10 Stock photos @ $50 each |
| • Place an op-ed supporting Accelerating Opportunity in state education publication | **Printing:** $625  
• 500 pages @ $1.25 per page |
| • Create a webpage outlining key facts | **Media Consultant:** $9,000  
• 60 hours @ $150 per hour |
| | **Web Development:** $200  
• 2 hours @ $100 per hour |
How to Staff Communications

Think creatively about what’s already being done and leverage existing staff including:

- Communications staff at the state system level
- Recruitment/marketing/external affairs staff at community colleges

Plan realistically about what can be done given limited budgets and staff time

Repurpose some local efforts and support with pre-branded materials
Resources

• **Salary.com** – Job description and salary information for many different communications jobs, able to be customized based on job market.

• **Vistaprint.com** – Online Printer with customizable design templates for business cards, brochures, leave-behinds.

• **Accelerating Opportunity Virtual Academy** – coming soon!

• **Accelerating Opportunity Communications Toolkit** – Coming soon!
Questions?

We’re here to help! Contact us at:

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