Sustainability Basics:
How to Develop a Communications Strategy for Your Reentry Program

An effective sustainability strategy can increase your program recognition, expand your program partners and champions, and help secure reliable and consistent funding. Achieving program sustainability is an ever-evolving process. It includes developing a strategy about how you will build and maintain program capacity through effective **communications**, **branding**, and efforts to secure **funding**. This tip sheet focuses on **communication**. Please see the companion tip sheets for branding and efforts to secure funding.

Communications

A key component of any sustainability strategy is a detailed communications plan that answers the following questions:

Key Components

Who

Who needs to know about your program?

What

What do they need to know about your program?

When

When do they need to be informed and with what frequency?

How

How will you share information about your program?

Audience

Who do you need to engage about your program? This will depend on what you hope to achieve through any communication. Potential audiences include funders, policy makers, elected officials, community partners, and program participants. Knowing your audience allows you to plan for the type of communication that will be most effective.

Message

What does each audience need to know about your program? Consider what format will most effectively convey the information you need to share.

Elevator Pitch

30-60 seconds to describe your program and why it's important.

Spotlight

A paragraph or so in a partner's newsletter or on social media.

One Pager

This conveys the most important aspects of your program using stories, pictures, graphics, and data.

Brief Report

This provides more formal, detailed information about your program model and results.

What you say about your program may change depending on the current phase of your program.

Early

Describe your program, partnerships, and target population. Describe why your program exists and what gap your program will fill.

In Progress

When your program is up and running, you can include anecdotal individual success stories and early data collected.

Mature

When your program has results to share, it is compelling to tell a story with your data by including success stories to demonstrate your program's impact.

Frequency & Channel

Once you have identified your audience and message, think about when and how you will share. Be creative and varied with your dissemination. Options include: website updates, social media posts, emails, meetings, annual events, and community or neighborhood gatherings. Both audience and channel will inform frequency. For example, effective social media use requires regular engagement while daily emails may be too much.

Websites

Social Media

Emails

Community Events

Communications Plan Template

Tips: A communications plan is a great way to formalize your planning and specify each type of communication in which you will be engaging. When developing a communications plan, think about what **objectives** you hope to accomplish with your plan. Also, think about how you will measure if your plan is getting you the **results** you want.

Audience	Messaging	Timing & Frequency	Channels	Team member responsible	Milestones
Who needs to know about your program?	*What do they need to know about your program? Phases (e.g., early, in progress, mature) and formats (e.g., elevator pitch, spotlight, one pager, brief).*	*When do they need to be informed? At what frequency? (e.g., weekly, quarterly, annually).*	*How will you inform them? (e.g., social media, email, flyer, presentations).*	*Who will be responsible for planning the communications?*	*What specific measurements do you want to track? (e.g., number of presentations given, number of 'likes' on social media).*
Example: City Counselors	- Newsletter: 1st issue will include early program content and one staff profile	- January 2021 & quarterly moving forward	- Email	- Mary brown	- Four newsletters sent in 2021

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