

Acknowledgements

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BSCP Center Strategic Communications Toolbox for State Education Agencies

Introduction

This Strategic Communications Toolbox provides state education agencies (SEAs) a framework for planning and implementing effective communication strategies. The Toolbox provides guidance for moving beyond traditional communication approaches, which can often be piecemeal and externally facing, to building a centralized approach across divisions and involving internal and external stakeholders. The result is clear, aligned, proactive, and effective communication tied to SEA vision, mission, goals, and strategies. Lessons gathered from SEAs that participated in the BSCP Center 2014 and 2016 Strategic Communications Benchmarking Projects illustrate that strategic communication differs from traditional communication approaches in that it uses a centralized approach to disseminate key messages around SEA goals and strategies across the agency and to external stakeholders through a thoughtful and coordinated process. For the purposes of this Toolbox, the term "centralize" means to coordinate communication through one point of contact or a team that has access to executive leaders who create and manage the SEA strategic plan.

Critical elements of this centralized approach include involvement and support from executive-level leaders; strong agency-wide commitment to well-planned, clear, and aligned communication; and processes to support effective communication practices. One way to bring these elements together is to create a strategic communications plan that will: (1) identify various roles and responsibilities for members of a managing communication team, (2) create a set of processes to communicate effectively to internal and external audiences, and (3) outline a continuous review and refinement process to ensure agency communication yields desired clarity for stakeholders to implement and support SEA strategies toward its stated goals.

This Toolbox will help SEAs develop communication strategies or processes that can be integrated into an existing communications plan or used to create a new strategic communications plan if you don't already have one. The processes described can guide dissemination of key messages around SEA goals or for a specific communication campaign. Ideally, a communications plan will be used on an ongoing basis, with only the message content needing to shift as SEA needs change, particularly during policy changes like the adoption of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). By working in teams to discuss key questions, studying examples from SEAs, and using sample tools and resources, the Toolbox guides you through the development of a communications plan that can be tailored to meet your agency's specific needs and help ensure effective communication.

Ensuring that everyone at your SEA, as well as partners and external stakeholders, has the information and tools to clearly communicate about SEA/local education agency (LEA) initiatives via approved channels is vital to the effectiveness of your organization's mission. This Toolbox aims to provide you the tools to create a communications plan that will help you achieve this goal.

How to Use the Toolbox

The Toolbox is based on the BSCP Strategic Communication Framework and informed by the 2014 and 2016 BSCP Strategic Communications Benchmarking Projects with seven SEAs. Many examples and discussion questions included in the Toolbox came directly from SEAs, as well as from experts in education and other industries. The Toolbox is designed to be used with SEA teams involved with communication, ideally in partnership with their Regional Comprehensive Center leadership, to engage in a collaborative process that can use any or all of the following Modules:

- 1. It's All About the Plan: Centralizing and Planning Strategic Communication
- 2. It's All About Goals: Translating Goals into Key Messages
- 3. Getting Your Messages Right
- 4. Talking to Ourselves: Creating Effective Internal Communications
- 5. Talking to Others: Creating Effective External Communications
- 6. Making It Work: Implementing Your Strategic Communications Plan

As was the case with our SEAs that participated in the benchmarking projects, we understand that organizations may be at various stages in developing their communications plans, skills, and competencies. The Toolbox is designed to provide guidance and examples for every SEA—no matter where you are in the communications planning process. Each section can be used sequentially or independently. For example, if you are just starting your planning process and want to assemble the ideal team for, start with **Module 1, It's All About the Plan: Centralizing and Planning Strategic Communication** and move through the other Modules sequentially. If you have already developed a communications plan and have started implementing your strategy and are looking for tools to help you track progress and evaluate efforts, you may want to jump to **Module 6, Making It Work: Implementing Your Strategic Communications Plan.** Or, you may want to add processes to your existing plan from **Modules 4 and 5**. Each Module includes appendices with sample tools to help your team progress through the suggested steps within each section. The Toolbox also includes resources that provide additional background information and guidance. Do not be afraid to select tools and information that meet your specific needs.

About Strategic Communications

SEAs are central players in initiating and leading reform efforts to improve academic achievement for all students. With the adoption of ESSA, SEA leaders have the opportunity to rethink how to best educate students. To be effective, SEAs of the future must now incorporate communication into their overall organizational strategy to ensure that both internal and external stakeholders can and will support implementation of new state plans.

BSCP has been focusing on helping SEAs shift to more systemic communication practices tied to agency goals through a process called strategic communications. This approach marks a departure from traditional SEA communication strategies in that it employs a holistic agency-wide process tied to agency goals; addresses the needs of both internal and external stakeholders; focuses on clarity, alignment, and coordination; proactively controls key agency messages; and employs a continuous feedback process (see Figure 1). We want to see SEAs shift from viewing communication as solely focused on communicating with external audiences to an internally-driven approach that is grounded in your organization's mission/vision/values/goals, uses standard processes to deliver coordinated messages to internal and external audiences, and is continually refined based on feedback from those audiences.

Ideally, the SEA will engage the entire agency in developing a strategic performance management system.¹ Your SEA may not be ready to create and implement an agency-wide plan; therefore, this Toolbox offers a process for the SEA's Chief Communications Officer or a communications division to build a standalone strategic communications plan that can later be rolled into an agency-wide approach to performance management. Several of the tools from the *Strategic Performance Management: Organizing People and Their Work in the SEA of the Future* manual have been adopted for applying such strategies.

BSCP Strategic Communication Framework

The BSCP Strategic Communication Framework, adapted from an approach used by the U.S. Department of Defense, illustrates a connected process in which the SEA vision and goals serve as the central driver of communication activities. The process begins with top-level leadership working with a centralized division or point of contact, who manages and coordinates internal and external communications. Communication can and should flow reciprocally among policymakers, leadership, and internal and external stakeholders. The Framework emphasizes the importance of evaluating the SEA communication efforts as part of a holistic strategic approach.

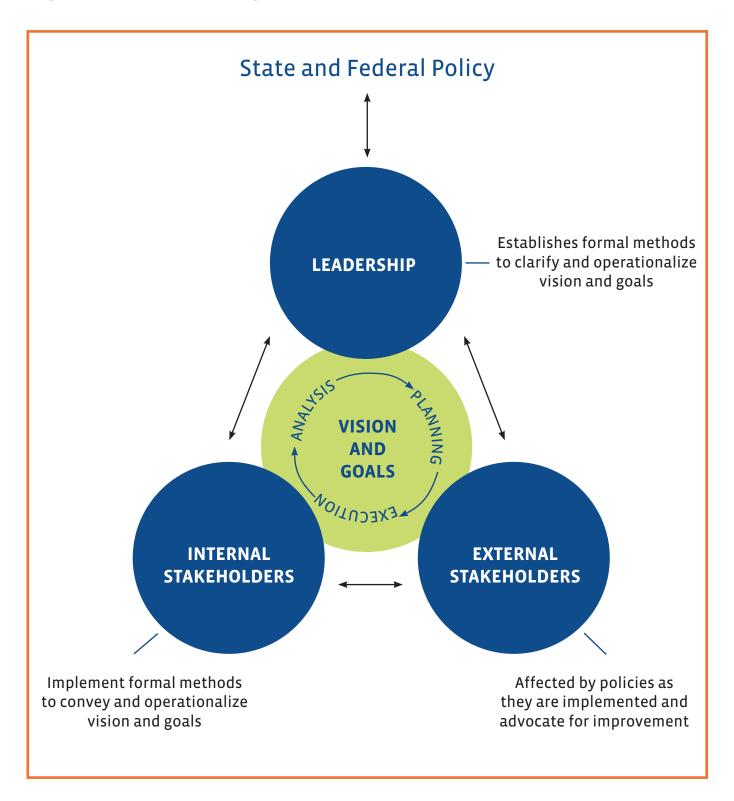
Sam Redding and Allison Layland (2015). Strategic Performance Management: Organizing People and Their Work in the SEA of the Future. http://www.bscpcenter.org/pmt/assets/spm.pdf.

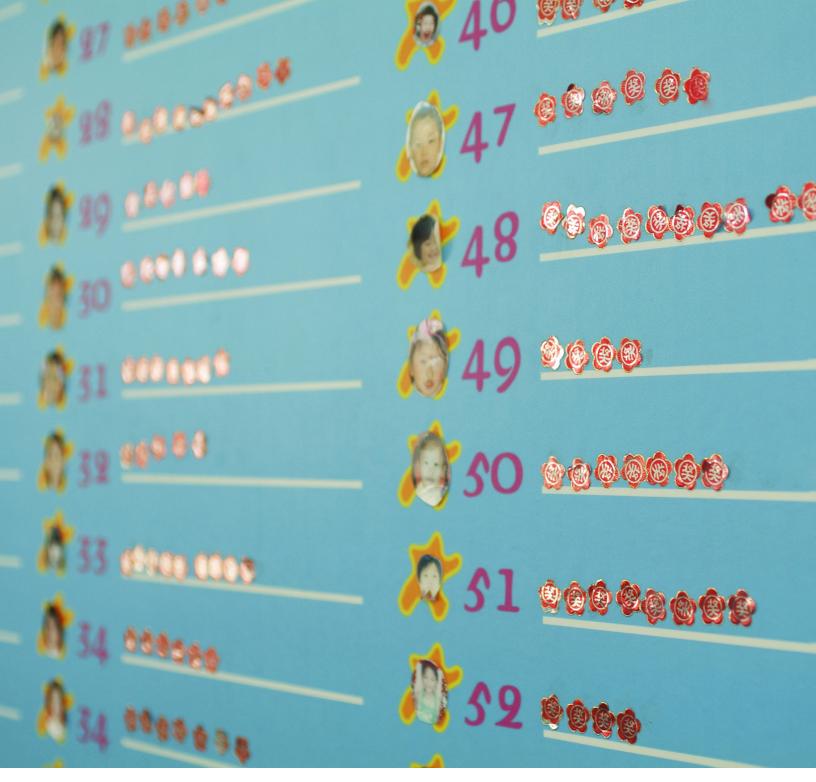
The critical elements in the Framework include:

- **Leadership:** Leading and crafting major message points to be used for integrated communications efforts (by top leadership).
- **Communication on Agency Vision/Goals:** Developing carefully worded messages about agency vision, goals, and major initiatives.
- ➤ *Internal Communication:* Disseminating information about policies and strategies toward agency goal achievement.
- **External Communication and Stakeholder Engagement:** Identifying appropriate dissemination methods for external stakeholders.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Refining and monitoring the success of communications processes through a continuous feedback loop.

A key element of the Framework is its holistic approach, which helps SEAs create and clarify messages about agency goals and strategies for communicating those messages effectively to audiences with diverse communication needs and purposes. For internal audiences, messages focus on making, interpreting, and supporting policies. External stakeholders need information on how to implement policies and how policies will affect them, and local education agencies (LEAs, often referred to as districts) need processes for communicating their needs to the SEA and policymakers. The final critical piece, which is often missing, is creating a process for continuous improvement. Ensuring the continued success of an SEA's internal and external communication includes needs assessment, refining strategies and processes, monitoring implementation of communication strategies, and assessing their success.

Figure 1. BSCP Strategic Communication Framework





MODULE

MODULE 1.

It's All About the Plan: Centralizing and Planning Strategic Communication



Appendix A:

Identifying a Strategic Communications Oversight Team

Appendix B:

Personnel Assignment Chart

An important first step in creating an effective strategic communications plan is to assemble an oversight team that includes communication experts, an executive leader with access to the Chief State School Officer (CSSO), and an academic leader who provides direction to the academic department(s). Having an oversight team with members outside of the communications division is key to creating processes that can work across divisions and throughout the organization to ensure key messages about agency goals and important policy and strategy information are clear and reach all relevant stakeholders. As we learned through our benchmarking projects, it is important to connect staff with communications expertise to staff with academic content expertise in order to translate SEA goals into clear and concise messages and effective communications tactics.

The oversight team will be responsible for creating, implementing, and evaluating the SEA's strategic communications plan. In addition to selecting the team and defining their roles, the oversight team will determine the number and type of staff needed to support specific communication functions and implement the plan.



Step 1: Select Staff to Manage Process

- ➤ Identify team members.
- ➤ Define their roles.
- ➤ Identify processes to develop and manage the plan.
- ➤ Identify processes for interfacing with executive leadership.

The oversight team should be led by a communications expert who can work collaboratively with other SEA staff to establish communication processes that will work for both internal and external stakeholders. If your SEA has a communications division with a Chief Communications Officer (CCO) or a similar leader at the executive level, it would make sense to appoint the CCO to lead communications planning efforts. Another alternative is to include an executive leader like a Chief of Staff or Chief Information Officer to connect the planning process to a staff member who has authority to make decisions or can easily access the Chief to approve the plan. Other team members might include academic division leaders and staff with expertise in internal communications, government relations, school-community partnerships, and evaluation and reporting. Team members should have creative energy and a willingness to explore new ideas. They must also have time available to work on the plan.

You may also want to ask key staff from all SEA departments to provide guidance and feedback during the plan development process. By including internal SEA stakeholders, you will generate buy-in and help ensure the success of implementation efforts. The roles of each team member may evolve as the plan is developed and implemented. Therefore, it makes sense to create a flexible plan that allows the roles of team members to change as different needs arise. Overall, it is important for all agency staff to understand their role as a communicator in the agency.

Finally, the team should consider how it will interface with the top-level leadership and the executive team to ensure messages about key initiatives are aligned and clear and can serve as the driver for all internal and external communication activities.



Step 2: Identify Core Competencies of the Implementation Team

- ➤ Identify team members by division/unit.
- ➤ Identify responsibilities and required competencies.
- ➤ Consider if the implementation team has the capacity to implement the plan.

To help ensure the SEA has adequate staff to implement your strategic communications process plan, the oversight team will want to identify the staff members needed to carry out specific communication activities and describe their role and desired competencies—which might include writing/editing; multimedia design/video production; web development/programming; social media; and media relations. You might also need to tap staff who lead divisions that will help implement communication strategies. The oversight team should also take into consideration the possibility that team members' roles and responsibilities may change and make it challenging for them to participate as planned in implementation activities. To ensure implementation is not slowed or stalled because of staffing issues, the oversight team may want to designate staff who can serve as backups. If possible, these backups should be kept informed throughout the planning process so they can quickly step in.



Use Appendix A: Identifying a Strategic Communications Oversight Team to document potential team members and their roles for managing the development and oversight of a strategic communications process plan. Complete the questions on the second page to plan processes for the oversight team to follow.

Strategic Communications in Practice #1 provides an example of the positions and roles of the communications team in the Arkansas Department of Education.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS IN PRACTICE #1 - ARKANSAS

Building a Communications Team: Arkansas Department of Education

The Arkansas Department of Education's (ADE) Communications Unit serves as the primary source of information regarding the agency's goals and services. The unit disseminates information internally and externally and assists the agency's divisions with identifying audiences, developing messages, determining the best communication channels for those messages, and disseminating the information. The unit consists of eight employees with a range of skills and experience in state government, school districts, and the private sector.

Following is an overview of ADE's Communication Unit and their individual roles and responsibilities:

- ✔ Director of Communications: Serves as the media spokesperson for the agency; coordinates communications tools and messages for agency staff and the public; coordinates all communications activities for the unit.
- ✓ Communications Manager: Provides information support for the media; assists with the production of agency videos; develops brochures and marketing materials; updates the intranet.
- ✓ Webmaster: Posts new information to the agency's website; coordinates with all units to ensure the site is updated regularly.
- ✔ Photographer/Videographer: Films agency promotional videos; takes photos at agency events; assists with editing and posting.
- ✓ Special Projects Coordinator: Coordinates special recognition events, including the Milken Educator Awards and Arkansas Teacher of the Year Award.
- ✓ **Administrative Assistant:** Ensures the unit's purchasing requests and annual/sick leave requests are processed; logs photo/video release forms; answers calls and e-mails.
- ✓ Two Front Desk Administrative Assistants: Provide friendly customer service at the front desk and administrative assistance to the unit



Use **Appendix B: Personnel Assignment Chart** to identify staff who will help implement the plan and list their core competencies. Use the questions on the second page to consider staff capacity to implement the plan.



As you prepare to create your agency's strategic communications process plan, make sure to:

- ✓ Build a multi-faceted oversight team that can assist with connecting the plan across the agency and across internal and external stakeholders.
- ✓ Work collaboratively with other SEA departments, divisions, and staff who can provide guidance and feedback.
- ✓ Identify ways the team will interface with executive-level staff.
- ✓ Identify staff/teams who will be responsible for three key roles: (1) review and approval; (2) implementation; and (3) evaluation and reporting.
- ✓ Consider the capacity of staff members who will implement the plan.

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Coordinating Teams				
Team Member Name	Division/Unit	Role	Mechanisms to Interface w/Team & Executive Leaders	
Leadership				
Division/Unit				
Other				
Other				

Procedure for Proposing and Approving the Formation or Termination of the Strategic Communication Process Team			
Proposed by			
Date			
To Include Representatives from (Divisions/Units)			
Purpose/Rationale			
Duration (or Ongoing)			
Approved by			
Date			

1.	How often will the team meet?
2.	How will the team include other divisions in the planning process?
3.	What process will the team use to have the CCSSO and the executive team approve the strategic communication process plan?
4.	Once the plan is written, how will the team communicate the plan to other staff members in the SEA?
5.	Where will the plan "live"? Who will "own" it? How can it be updated?
6.	How will plan implementation be managed and monitored?
7.	How will the plan be evaluated?
8.	What challenges does the team see in creating and implementing a strategic communication process plan?



Adopted from: BSCP Strategic Performance Management Tool, 2015.

Use the chart below to assign personnel needed to implement specific communication activities and identify training or professional development needs. Use the discussions on the second page to consider staff capacity for implementing the strategic communications process plan.

Communication Role	Responsibilities	Competencies Required	Staffing Notes	Training Notes

Group Discussion Questions on Capacity

- 1. Is your communication staff located in one division or in multiple divisions? If multiple divisions, how can they interface to ensure that they can effectively implement the strategic communications plan?
- 2. List any other activities or responsibilities that your communications staff cover (public information requests, award ceremonies, management of survey software, etc.).
- 3. Does the staff selected to provide communication support for the strategic communications process plan have capacity to implement the plan given their current duties? If not, what are possible solutions?
- 4. Do you have any skill gaps that need to be filled by an additional position? If so, what are possible solutions for finding resources to fill the position?



MODULE

MODULE 2:

It's All About Goals: Translating Goals into Key Messages



Appendix C:

SEA's Vision, Mission, Values, and Goals Tool

Appendix D:

Sample "Kansans CAN" collateral material

To centralize and align communication across internal and external stakeholders, the oversight team should consider how to translate agency vision, mission, values, and goals into messages that stakeholders understand and want to support. Although details around strategies and actions may be tailored for different stakeholder groups (see **Module 3**), the basic key messages should largely remain the same for each group. To ensure consistency in messaging, the oversight team should spend time gaining a shared understanding of the SEA's vision, mission, values, and goals; identify agency priorities; consider stakeholder questions and concerns; and discuss how to disseminate key messages to internal and external stakeholders.



Step 1: Understand your SEA Vision/Mission/Values/Goals

➤ Identify and gain shared understanding about the agency's vision/mission/values/goals.

An effective communications effort starts with an analysis of your SEA's current organizational vision, mission, and goals. Examine what the SEA stands for—its values and beliefs. If your plan does not have explicit goals, they may be stated as focus areas or embedded in the vision. Are the goals or focus areas clear to your team? Are there any goals that might need further clarification as to why the goal is important? In addition to discussing the meaning behind your agency vision/mission/values/goals, possible discussion questions might include:

- 1. What issue is most important to the SEA now? Who is most affected by this issue and how?
- 2. Are there any goals that will seem new or different to any of your stakeholders?
- 3. Who makes decisions about the issue?

- 4. What is the role of leadership in reinforcing key messages around SEA goals and strategies?
- 5. How would a communications plan fit or be related to the SEA's strategic plan?
- 6. What tangible outcomes would you like to achieve through a communications effort to explain and support these goals (i.e., what does success look like)? Be specific.



Use **Appendix C: SEA's Vision, Mission, Values, and Goals Tool** to discuss what the vison/mission/values/goals mean to the agency and other stakeholders.



A BSCP consultant facilitates discussion at an SEA about agency goals.

The following example shows how an SEA might consider messaging around their ESSA state plan.

EXAMPLE

Primary Goals

- Explain ESSA (what it is and how it differs from No Child Left Behind) and create a state ESSA plan.
- Promote the SEA's efforts to implement ESSA through the stated SEA goals.
- ✓ Emphasize the impact of the SEA's work on ensuring educational quality.

Secondary Goals

- Raise awareness of the SEA's ESSA-related activities and programs.
- ✓ Explain how the SEA will implement the ESSA plan to achieve organizational goals.
- ✓ Demonstrate how SEA programs support LEA initiatives and programs.
- Acknowledge the importance of internal and external partnerships.
- ✓ Illustrate the value of continued public support for public education.
- Make a connection between the SEA's program policy needs and policymakers.

In some cases, as with the **Strategic Communications in Practice #2**, an SEA may choose to embark in an extensive community-wide engagement process prior to the adoption of ESSA—in order to reimagine the state's mission/vision/values/goals. This process reaped great benefits for the state of Kansas. The vision statement that resulted from the process represented the diverse communities across the state, garnered powerful stakeholder engagement and support for the vision, and created a clear roadmap for implementing activities to support the vision.



Resources and Tools

See Appendix D, Sample Kansans CAN collateral material, for examples of products developed to support the Kansans CAN campaign. Consider examining the goals presented as a team and select one or two to discuss. For example, your oversight team can look at the fifth goal and consider if students and families know what "social and emotional growth" means and why it is important. The agency's "Talking Points" answer those questions with the goal of gaining support for goal-related activities like adopting social, emotional, and character development standards. These messages may help staff and parents understand why social and emotional growth is important to incorporate into students' educational programs.

Quality Check

As you prepare to consider messages to prioritize and communicate, make sure to:

- Work with your oversight team to identify and gain common understanding around your SEA's mission/vision/values/goals.
- Work collaboratively to prioritize messaging around goals.
- Understand the key agency staff who lead and implement the goals.
- Understand the impact of the goals on various stakeholders.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS IN PRACTICE #2 – KANSAS

Creating Clarity from a Strategic Vision Campaign

Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) Commissioner Randy Watson helped create a clear agency vision with stakeholder buy-in by engaging in a 20-city state-wide listening tour shortly after arriving in office. The result was a clear mission and vision for Kansas education that became a well-formed campaign called "Kansans CAN."

The Kansans CAN strategic plan provided clarity to the agency's vision and goals to both internal and external stakeholders and remains highly visible through a consistent branding process. KSDE leaders are continuing to focus on their strategic direction and have formed several cross-divisional groups to address their 11 initiatives that fall under five overall goals that address: (1) kindergarten readiness, (2) individual plan of study focused on career interest, (3) high school graduation rates, (4) postsecondary completion/attendance, and (5) social/emotional growth measured locally.

Materials created by KSDE explain the vision and outcomes, as well as talking points about how the outcomes fit together to work toward the vision and why activities under those outcomes are important.

Source: Kansas Department of Education (http://www.ksde.org/ Agency/Fiscal-and-Administrative-Services/Communications-and-Recognition-Programs/Vision-Kansans-Can? accessed February 2017)

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Adopted from: BSCP Strategic Performance Management Tool, 2015.

PART I: SEA MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES	
Mission:	
Vision:	
Values:	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

PART II: SEA GOALS				
Goal	What does it mean for students?	What does it mean for families?		
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

PART II: GOAL OWNERSHIP				
Goal	Division or Organizational Lead	Additional Actors/ Collaborators		
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

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Vision:

Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.

A successful Kansas High School graduate has the academic preparation, cognitive preparation, technical skills, employability skills and civic engagement to be successful in postsecondary education, in the attainment of an industry recognized certification or in the workforce, without the need for remediation.

Outcomes for measuring progress:



Kindergarten readiness



Individual Plan of Study focused on career interest



High school graduation rates



Postsecondary completion/ attendance



Social/emotional growth measured locally



Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.

- This won't happen overnight, but it will happen because Kansans never back down from a challenge, especially when it comes to our children.
- Kansas has great leadership throughout its schools, we have top educators, and we have a robust business community. The pieces are there, we just have to get them all working together.

Flexibility:

Kansas education must be flexible to meet the needs of today's students and the future workforce.

- Kansans have said that while academics are important, schools needs to place equal focus on helping students attain nonacademic skills in order to be successful in the workforce.
- By 2020, it is estimated that 71 percent of all jobs in Kansas will require some postsecondary education. Today, only 52 percent of Kansans have "some" postsecondary education. We need to close that gap.

While academics are and will remain important, students who lack nonacademic skills, such as conscientiousness,

perseverance and the ability to collaborate and communicate, will struggle both in the pursuit of postsecondary education and in the workforce.

 Schools, parents, communities and businesses need to work together to make sure our kids are well prepared.

Perspective:

We can rethink how our schools are asked to operate. From a state perspective, we will look at every requirement to determine if and how we are supporting or impeding our schools' abilities to address the needs of each child.

To achieve this bold vision for Kansas education:

- Kansas children need quality preschool, including all-day kindergarten.
- Changes need to be made to address school culture. We have to value and support the student who chooses to pursue a technical education or a two-year college as much as we do the student pursuing a four-year college degree.
- New dynamic roles are needed for counselors and social workers. We have to provide opportunities for school counselors and social workers to focus on helping individual students explore career paths and develop individual plans of study.
- Collaboration between schools and businesses is critical. We must find a way to get businesses into the classroom and the classroom into the businesses through internships and job shadowing.
- Schools need to be reorganized around the student, not the systems. We must find a way for equity and common sense to coexist.
- Community service should play a bigger role in education

This new direction requires us to focus on new outcomes:

- Kindergarten readiness.
- Increasing graduation rates.
- Increasing the percent of students completing a credential or pursuing postsecondary education
- Each student will have an individual plan of study focused on career interest.
- Social/emotional factors relative to student success are to be measured locally

For more information contact:



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Five Outcomes

The Kansas State Board of Education (KSBE) has selected five outcomes that will help measure the progress of their vision:

Kindergarten Reading

Kindergarten readiness is an important building block for a student's future achievement and An Ages & Stages kindergarten

- readiness screener will provide educators with data to help determine where extra resources and supports should be delivered to students. It will be used to provide information to families provide information to families, teachers and administrators about how many kindergarten students are developing at a rate that is appropriate for their age and where supports need to be provided if they arent developing at the same rates. This information will support data-driven, decision-making by school, district and state policymakers who can consider policymakers who can consider targeted ways to increase
- The screener won't be used to keep a child from entering kindergarten, and it won't measure a teacher's abilities. It measure a teachers abilities, it will measure a kindergartner's development in motor, literacy/ language, math and social-emotional development.

Individual Plan of Study Focused on Career Interest:

- An Individual Plan of Study (IPS) begins in middle school. It is:
- developed cooperatively between the student, the student's school and family
- members; based upon the student's interests and talents; and reviewed and updated at least twice per year.
- KSDE identified Career Cruising as the state-preferred IPS vendor.
- Each IPS will include results of a series of career-interest inventories; coursework aligned with the student's educational and career goals; a general postsecondary plan; and a comprehensive plan; and a comprehensive personal portfolio.
- An IPS can help all Kansas students obtain a suitable vision of their path toward college and career readiness. It also can help address the gap between the percentage of students enrolling at postsecondary schools and the percentage of students completing a credential from two- and fouryear postsecondary institutions.
- An IPS can provide exploration of all forms of postsecondary education; help a student and their family members plan a more cost-effective education pathway including dual-credit courses; and allow a student to select courses based upon his or her career

High School Graduation Rates

- Kansas' 2014-2015 overall high school graduation rate was 85.7 percent. While this is above the national average, it sin't enough.
 We need to make sure every student graduates with the skills needed to be successful as they enter college or the workforce.
- It is imperative to increase the percentage of students who earn at least a high school diploma so we can meet the projected education requirements for our future workforce.
- By 2020, 71 percent of all jobs in Kansas will require postsecondary education and training.
- People without a high school diploma qualify for only 17 percent of all jobs, primarily sales and office support, food and personal service and blue-collar jobs, many of which may not provide a living wage or health care benefits.
- The graduation rate goal in Kansas is 100 percent

Postsecondary Completion/Attendance:

- Not every career requires a four-year degree. Technical colleges, community colleges and the military all play a critical role in preparing students for the workforce.
- The state will need more students not just enrolling in postsecondary programs, but completing a credential to meet the workforce needs in Kansas.
- continually trending toward a higher set of skills, students will need to pursue higher levels of postsecondary education in order to remain competitive for
- Most new jobs or job openings will be "middle skill" jobs those requiring a diploma, but less than a four-year degree.
- In 2020, the education demand for jobs in Kansas will be:
- 11 percent master's
- 25 percent bachelor's
- 35 percent associate's degree; and
- 29 percent high school diploma or less.

Social-Emotional Growth Measured Locally:

- Academics alone won't guarantee a student's success after high school. Students who lack nonacademic skills, such as conscientiousness, perseverance and the ability to communicate effectively. to communicate effectively, may find it more difficult to succeed in postsecondary education and the workforce
- Social-Emotional learning is the process through which students and adults acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions; set and achieve positive goals; feel and show empathy for others; establish and maintain positive relationships; and make responsible decisions.
- KSDE is working with Research Collaboration at the University of Kansas to provide implementation of a statewide, integrated tiered approach for social-emotional



MODULE 3:

Getting Your Messages Right



Appendix E:

Sample PEST Analysis Worksheet

Appendix F:

Sample SWOT Analysis Worksheet

All SEAs try to ensure students in the state receive the best education possible. However, they operate within context of different political, historical, financial, organizational, and human capacity constraints and challenges. Communication can ensure that an SEA's stakeholders receive clear, accessible information about the agency's mission/vision/values/goals, which, in turn, helps each of them— whether they are a curriculum director, superintendent, teacher, or parent—understand their role in supporting those goals. It is also important to involve influential stakeholders in supporting any changes that may be needed. A one-size-fits-all messaging and dissemination approach will not adequately address diverse stakeholder needs, so SEAs will benefit from gathering and understanding as much information as possible about stakeholder needs and challenges.

To ensure key messages are strategic, centralized, and aligned, they must be crafted from "the inside out"—meaning the message developers (the oversight team) are guided by the SEA's mission, vision, values, and goals; incorporate input from external stakeholders; and seek and receive buy-in from internal audiences. The process for crafting key messages is described in the following section.



Step 1: Identify Influencing Factors through a Situational Analysis

- ➤ Conduct a PEST analysis.
- ➤ Conduct a SWOT analysis.

A situation analysis should describe both internal and external factors that may impact your communication efforts. Begin by describing the role of your SEA, its main functions, the environment in which it operates (i.e., state demographics, political environment, and budget priorities), as well as its communications experience and resources.

Situation analysis tools include a *PEST analysis* (the political, economic, socio-cultural, and technological factors that can impact communications efforts) and a *SWOT analysis* (strengths and weaknesses [internal to your organization] and opportunities and threats [external to your organization]). Templates for these tools appear in **Appendices E–F**. These tools can help the oversight team consider existing internal and external factors that can be leveraged or addressed to consider how to craft key messages around goals. If you believe ESSA will provide the flexibility and opportunity for the state to create an innovative accountability system for schools, messaging around your state's ESSA implementation plan should emphasize innovation if that is important to many of your key audiences.



Photo by Heather Zavadsky. Regional Comprehensive Centers and Content Centers work together at a Joint Center Planning meeting to identify ways to collaboratively support State Education Agencies.

The following example shows an internal analysis and how it can help guide an SEA's communications about ESSA.

EXAMPLE

Internal Analysis

Organization. The State Board of Education (SBE) has general control and supervision over public schools and the educational interests of the state. It sets curriculum standards, establishes graduation requirements, determines qualifications for professional personnel, establishes accreditation standards and accountability and assessment programs, and oversees implementation of ESSA. Appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the State Senate, the SBE consists of community members, education advocates, and a student representative. The SBE appoints the Superintendent (Chief State School Officer), who leads the SEA.

The SEA has four offices: The Office of the Superintendent (Chief State School Officer), Office of the Deputy for School Effectiveness, Office of the Deputy for Teaching and Learning, and Office of the Deputy for Finance and Administration. These offices report to the Superintendent. The Office of Communications and Partnerships reports to the Chief of Staff in the Office of the Superintendent.

Responsibilities. The Office of Communications and Partnerships is responsible for providing timely information about state educational initiatives to schools, school districts, policymakers, the media, and the public. The SEA communicates with its various stakeholders through a variety of communication channels and products, including websites and videos. The Office of Communications and Partnerships works closely with the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendents to develop timely, accurate information about educational progress and initiatives related to implementation of ESSA in the state. The Chief of Staff within the Office of the Superintendent approves press releases, legislative briefings, and other new content related to the SEA's priorities prior to dissemination.

Staffing. The Office of Communications and Partnerships is headed by the Chief Communications Officer (CCO), who was a reporter for a local news organization. Other staff include a writer/editor with plain language expertise, a multimedia designer/video producer, and a web developer. The CCO serves as the official SEA spokesperson.

External Analysis

Many members of our target audience do not know what ESSA is and, therefore, do not know how it can benefit schools, teachers, and students. Those who are familiar, such as some educators and policymakers, are skeptical about yet another attempt at education reform.



To better understand the conditions that might help or hinder accomplishment of strategies toward SEA goals, use:

- ✓ Appendix E as a sample PEST Analysis Worksheet
- Appendix F as a sample SWOT Analysis Worksheet.



Step 2: Draft Key Messages

These messages should explain and motivate support for the SEA's goals and objectives. They deliver important information about the issue and compel target audiences to think, feel, or act. They can:

- > Show the importance, urgency, or magnitude of the issue.
- > Show the relevance of the issue.
- ➤ Put a "face" on the issue.
- ➤ Be tied to specific values, beliefs, or interests of the audience.
- > Reflect an understanding of what would motivate the audience to think, feel, or act.
- Be culturally relevant and sensitive.
- ➤ Be memorable.

The messages are a set of statements that convey the key information about your initiative or program. They will not include all the detail and supporting ideas and data that should be used in printed materials or other forms of communication. The messages become the underlying themes for your materials and activities, including taglines, talking points, PSAs, op-eds, newsletters, e-mails, and social media content.

See **Modules 4 and 5** for more information on how to craft messages for various internal (**Module 4**) and external (**Module 5**) stakeholders.

Quality Check

As you prepare to assess internal and external factors that can have an impact on your agency's strategic communications plan, make sure to:

- ✓ Identify the analysis tool(s) that will meet your current needs:
 - > Complete a PEST analysis to examine political, economic, social, and technological factors your agency may face.
 - > Complete a SWOT analysis to review strength and weaknesses internal to your agency, and opportunities and threats external to your agency, which may include those groups and organizations that may oppose your agency's policies or initiatives.

As you prepare to create messaging to support your agency's strategic communications plan, make sure:

- ✓ The messages align with the goal and objectives outlined in your strategic communications plan.
- ✓ The team responsible for review and approving the plan has coordinated with key decisionmakers and other divisions in creating and obtaining approval for key messages.
- ✓ Your key messages are mapped to the appropriate and most efficient delivery channels.
- ✓ Your messaging is clear and serves a strategic purpose.

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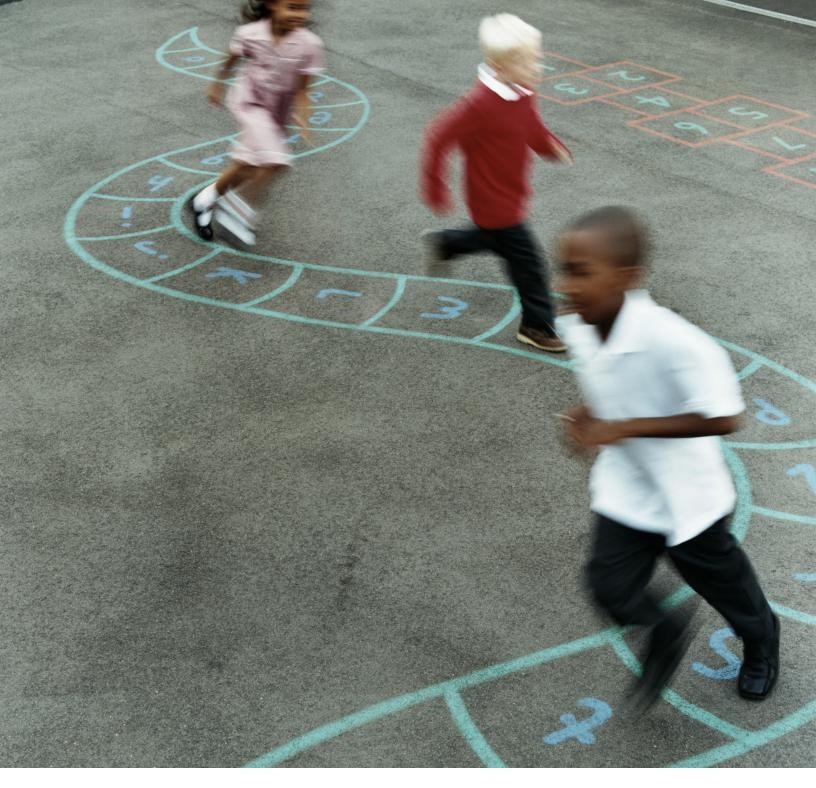
Changes in your agency environment can create opportunities and threats for your organization. For example, opportunities can come from new technologies that help you reach new stakeholders; threats can include opposition to a new policy or program. The PEST (Political, Economic, Socio-Cultural, Technological) Analysis tool helps you analyze changes in the environment in which your organization operates. It helps you understand the "big picture" forces of change that impact your organization, identify opportunities arising from each of these changes, brainstorm threats or issues that could be caused by them, and take appropriate action.

	Factor	Opportunity	Threat
Political			
Economic			
Socio-Cultural			
Technological			



What makes SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) a powerful tool is that, with a little thought, it can help uncover opportunities that your organization can leverage to achieve your communication objectives. By understanding the internal strengths and weaknesses of your organization, you can manage and eliminate obstacles that would otherwise catch you unawares. Understanding external opportunities and threats that are linked to your organization's strengths and weaknesses is also an important part of an effective communications strategy. As part of your analysis of the external factors that can impact your efforts, carefully consider the strategies being used by those individuals and organizations that might not support your organization's goals. This analysis of potential opponents will help you monitor their actions and develop strategies to gain their support. By looking at your organization and your opponent using the SWOT framework, you can start to craft a strategy that helps you gain stakeholder support for implementing strategies toward your goals.

Internal to Your Organization			
Strengths	Weaknesses		
What do you do well? What unique resources can you draw on? What do others see as your strengths?	What could you improve? Where do you have fewer resources than others? What are others likely to see as weaknesses?		
External to You	ır Organization		
Opportunities	Threats		
What opportunities are open to you? What trends could you take advantage of? How can you turn your strengths into opportunities?	What threats could harm you? What is your opposition doing? What are their objectives? What are their capabilities? What threats do your weaknesses expose you to?		



MODULE

MODULE 4:

Talking to Ourselves: Creating Effective Internal Communications



Appendix G:

Connecting Across Divisions for Goal Achievement

Appendix H:

Internal Communication Process Strategy Development Tool

The goal of the internal communications component within your strategic communications plan is to help employees:

- ➤ Understand key messages around the SEA's vision, mission, goals, values, and strategies.
- Create mutual understanding and information-sharing across and between organizational levels and divisions.
- ➤ Involve and inform appropriate division staff on SEA strategies and activities.
- ➤ Outline communication expectations across the SEA.
- ➤ Foster open communication across the organization.

In both the 2014 and 2016 BSCP Strategic Communications Benchmarking Projects, many communication challenges cited by SEA leaders and other staff were related to internal communication activities. Some of those challenges included the ineffective or overuse of e-mail, lack of processes for how or when to use the communications department or division; ineffective use of face-to-face meetings; and failure to filter important information from executive-level meetings throughout the organization. Another common complaint from agency leaders was that some staff did not take responsibility for staying informed about agency activities.

Many SEAs cite internal communications as a barrier to clear, aligned, and timely communication with external audiences. However SEAs, like many other organizations, often focus on external communications such as responding to media requests and do not ensure internal communication processes are well-defined and widely understood by internal audiences. Yet coordinated internal communications are vital to effective external communications. Before an SEA can develop robust internal communication processes, it is important to understand their organization's structure and functions. Where is the communications division in the organizational structure? Where are key academic divisions? If academics fall under different divisions, what processes exist to share information across divisions? In addition to organizational structure, the oversight team should have information about how well current internal communication processes are working and for whom.



Step 1: Examine Conditions Needed for Effective Internal Communication

- ➤ Identify contextual and organizational assets and gaps through discussion and an examination of agency information.
- ➤ Identify agency staff members who need to collaborate on activities related to each SEA goal.
- Consider what processes are needed to create effective and consistent internal communication across the agency, particularly for supporting cross-divisional work.

Internal communication is an area where many SEAs rely on informal processes that rest in people, which can be unpredictable, particularly with staff turnover. In the 2014 benchmarking project, we found that the Idaho State Department of Education had strong but informal processes for connecting the Directors of Communications and Governmental Relations. Close physical proximity and a close working relationship meant the two met weekly to discuss education policy issues. When the benchmarking project was completed, there was extensive staff turnover at the executive level. The turnover ended the informal information-sharing sessions between the Directors of Communications and Governmental Relations, which in turn, may impact the SEA's ability to ensure consistency in messaging. Strong well-established internal communication processes are critical for increasing role clarity and reducing unnecessary duplication and gaps in strategy implementation.

Other than the lack of formal internal communication processes, we found that organizational structure and physical location greatly impacted internal communication. SEAs with staff members located in different buildings or on different floors reported feeling less connected to divisions critical to their work. Staff who are just one level below the CSSO seemed to have more accessibility to the Chief and key division leaders than those who were further down the chain of command. While the strategic communications oversight team may not have the ability to change the organizational structure or the physical location of staff, they can establish clear processes to circumvent these barriers, such as scheduling regular meetings between leaders and the staff who need to collaborate around particular SEA goals.

The following questions and the activity in **Appendix G** are designed to help your team examine your agency's goals, consider who in your organization needs to collaborate around each goal, and then examine how the organizational structure fosters or impedes cross-agency collaboration. Understanding this information is critical for identifying internal communication gaps.

Use the general discussion questions below to gather information about your SEA organization and basic internal communication approach:

- 1. *Organization:* How is your SEA organized? How do executive leaders and academic divisions connect to one another?
- 2. *Organizational Culture and Communication:* How would you describe your organizational culture? What are the obstacles to cross-division collaboration (e.g., physical limitations, organizational structure, formal and informal policies, and politics)?
- 3. *Communications Function:* Where is the communications division located (i.e., briefly described the reporting structure and indicate which division or SEA leader the communications team reports to)? Who or in what position could help connect communication between different agency levels and/ or agency divisions? What is this person's position? (Who needs what information)? How does the communications division connect with academic division leaders? How does information from the executive level flow down to SEA staff?
- 4. *Key Decisionmakers:* Who makes decisions about the information communicated to employees? Are there multiple decisionmakers (e.g., one for each division)? Do they decide the timing and format for sharing information? Do these decisions differ across divisions?
- 5. *Employee Attitudes:* What do employees think/how do they feel about your SEA? How and when are employee attitudes measured?
- 6. *Current Communication Efforts:* How does your SEA share information with employees (i.e., what communication tools and channels are being used)? Do most SEA employees view these efforts as effective/adequate?

In the benchmarking report, we provided organizational charts for the four participating SEAs and highlighted where the communication and academic divisions were on the charts. In most cases, the academic division was divided horizontally. For example, in one SEA the Offices of Educator Effectiveness, Federal Programs, School Improvement Planning, Curriculum and Instruction, and Assessment were dispersed across three different divisions. In others, those functions are organized under one division leader. Additionally, the communications division on some charts was located a level or two below the Chief, while in others it was located on the same level or one level below the Chief. While there is no correct way to organize an SEA, we did find that SEAs with more streamlined structures tended to engage in more cross-divisional work than did others; however, structure alone does not dictate practice.

Because all benchmarking participants cited that cross-division collaboration and information sharing was important to their work, we believe that the strategic communications oversight team will benefit from considering who should be involved and informed about the communication strategies connected to each SEA goal, and then examine that list of staff against the existing organizational structure, physical arrangements, and current internal communication practices.



Use **Appendix G** to complete an activity to identify potential processes and challenges to connecting staff members in different divisions to agency goals and strategies.



A regional center state representative leads a cross-division meeting at the Kansas Department of Education.

During the 2016 benchmarking project, we found that the Arkansas Department of Education reviewed the responsibilities of each agency division and documented current communication methods (see the following example). SEAs could build on this approach by identifying the communications needs of each division to make sure the strategic communications plan includes processes that address those needs.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS IN PRACTICE #3—ARKANSAS

Documenting Communication Goals and Tools in SEA Divisions

As part of a draft communication planning process, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) collected information on each division to better understand communication needs across divisions.

ADE Division of Learning Services

The Division of Learning Services is the largest ADE division. Its mission is to support Arkansas schools by providing training and education to teachers and administrators, monitoring the progress of the learning environment, and giving feedback on this progress.

The division consists of multiple units that accomplish the following:

- ✔ Agency Goal 1: Learning standards, next generation assessments, and accountability
- ✓ Agency Goal 2: Supporting persistently struggling schools
- 1. Curriculum and Instruction: The Curriculum and Instruction Unit oversees the development and implementation of the state's educational standards. In addition to subject matter standards (social studies, etc.), standards include the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and science standards modeled after the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).

Communication Tools: The unit communicates via e-mail, phone calls, listservs, Commissioner's memos, website, and social media.

Special Focus 1: The CCSS serves as the English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics education standards that were adopted by the State Board of Education in 2010. The CCSS defines the knowledge and skills students should have to be ready for college and careers. ADE is currently working with a local marketing firm to develop and implement a communications plan for the standards.

2. **Student Assessment:** The Student Assessment Unit coordinates the various student assessments, to include testing dates and implementation, for grades K-12. There are two main types of assessments used in Arkansas: Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs) and Norm-Referenced Tests (NRTs). Multiple assessments are used in Arkansas, including end-of-course assessments, The Iowa Tests, and Qualls Early Learning Inventory.

Communication Tools: The unit communicates via listserves, e-mails, phone calls, Commissioner's memos, website, press releases, and social media.



Step 2: Establish Internal Communication Processes

- Examine and discuss data collected in Step 1 (see p. 38).
- ➤ Draft internal communication processes.

After the oversight team has completed an assessment of the organizational structure, placement of communications staff, and existing internal communications protocols and processes, it is time to draft the internal communications section of your strategic communications plan. This section should: (1) define SEA goals and objectives, (2) describe your target audience (employees), including where they are located, physically and organizationally, (3) craft key messages to support SEA goals and objectives, (4) identify communication channels, (5) determine clear processes, activities, and materials to help deliver key messages throughout the organization; (6) describe implementation roles, responsibilities, and timeline, and (7) include an evaluation. This portion of the strategic communications plan should outline clear processes, including the most effective strategies for delivering information and updates, how to conduct effective meetings, and guidance on e-mail communications. These processes and procedures should be formalized across divisions within the agency so internal messaging is consistent throughout the organization.

The following example lists sample internal communication processes that need to be further detailed to ensure effective implementation.

EXAMPLE

As part of the SEA's strategic communications plan focused on internal communications, the communications team and staff will:

- ✔ Provide a summary of major discussion topics from all leadership team meetings to all SEA employees within 2-3 business days.
- Include all staff members on the distribution list for agency press releases.
- ✓ Verbally share information for sensitive media announcements with relevant staff members at least 4 hours prior to dissemination to the media.
- ✓ Require each division to prepare a brief monthly update highlighting the division's work supporting the agency vision. These updates will be shared either verbally at agency-wide meetings or through an agency-wide e-newsletter.
- Establish expectations and processes for effective use of meetings.

In the 2016 benchmarking project, we found that the Indiana Department of Education did a good job of leveraging their well-aligned organizational structure with set processes to connect communications with academic content experts.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS IN PRACTICE #4—Indiana

Connecting Communications Expertise with Academic Content

To connect communications expertise with accurate content information that can be understood by various stakeholders, the Indiana Department of Education, led by Superintendent Glenda Ritz, implemented the following strategies in 2016:

- ✓ Located the communications division at same level as other divisions directly below the Superintendent.
- Organized all divisions related to academics under one divisional leader, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, resulting in better alignment across all academic areas.
- ✓ Appointed the next-level academic leaders to represent school supports and outreach (instruction).
- ✓ Ensured close collaboration between the Director of Communications and the Superintendent of Public Instruction. On at least a weekly basis:
 - > The Communications Director reviewed messaging for clarity and to plan dissemination strategies.
 - **>** The Superintendent of Public Instruction reviewed messaging for accurate academic content.

Source: BSCP Center Benchmark and Best Practices Project Report #2 http://www.bscpcenter.org/communications/resources/CommunicationReport.pdf

Because there are not many internal communication process tools available for SEAs, we have adapted a BSCP Strategic Performance Management tool to help the oversight team plan internal communication processes. An important consideration for the oversight team is how to explain and consistently implement these processes in the SEA. For example, will they be included in an employee handbook? Will division leaders ensure staff members understand and use the processes? The tool described in the following section will help the oversight team connect their internal communication processes to the SEA goals outlined in **Module 2** and key messages outlined in **Module 3**, and leverage or address organizational conditions detailed in Step 1 of this Module (**Module 4**).



For planning and outlining specific internal communication processes, see **Appendix H, Internal Communication Process Strategy Development Tool.** The first page serves as a starting point, and the second page helps you select processes and consider choices through a productivity lens.

Quality Check

As your team works to create internal communication processes, be sure to:

- ✓ Invest ample time in understanding organizational assets and barriers to internal communication:
 - > Consider where divisions are located on the organization chart to determine agency layers and to understand who has supervisory/decision-making authority over key divisions.
 - **>** Consider where divisions are physically located for ease of access.
- ✔ Have a clear understanding of the effectiveness of current communication processes.
- ✓ Use SEA goals and key messages to support those goals as a focus for internal communication.
- ✓ Develop clear processes around each specific type of internal communication.
- Consider how internal communication processes will be made known across the agency and monitored for consistent implementation.
- ✓ Include measures for internal communication processes in your evaluation of your Strategic Communications Process Plan (**Module 6**).

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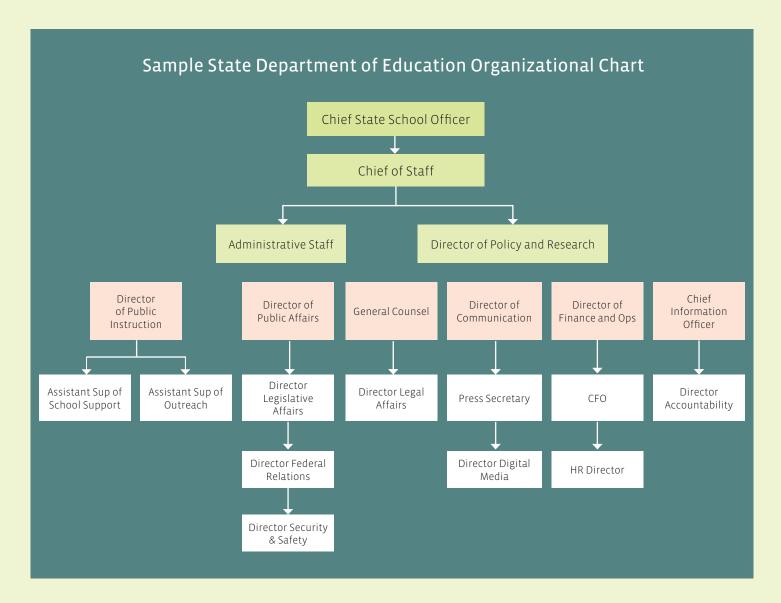


Appendix G:

Connecting Across Divisions for Goal Achievement

Materials Needed:

- ✓ SEA Organizational Chart
- SEA Strategic Plan or document delineating SEA goals and strategies
- State Department of Education (SDOE) example



Example:

Goal 1 in SDOE's strategic plan is "Ensure that all students in State learn. Objective 1.1 addresses the need to increase achievement results and decrease non-proficient students in all sub-groups. A strategy toward that goal under Strategies & Leading Indicators 1.1.2 is for the SEA to communicate about and deliver support to educators on the new State assessments. Answer the questions below.

1. Looking at the SDOE organization chart, what departments need information about the state assessments in order to provide information about them to educators in the state? How about to provide support to educators in the state?

A: Director of Public Instruction, Assistant Sup of School Support, Assistant Sup of Outreach, Director of Communications, Chief Information Officer, Director of Policy and Research, Director Accountability.

2. Are each of these staff members in separate departments are is there someone who can serve as a coordinator between them?

A: The Director of Public Instruction can coordinate with the Assistant Sups of School Support and Outreach; the Chief Information Officer can coordinate with the Director of Policy and Research and Accountability; and the Director of Communications can coordinate with the Director of Public Instruction and Chief Information Officer.

3. Where is the Communications Division located on the organizational chart? In the building? Where are the other agency leaders that can serve as coordinators located on the organizational chart? In the building?

A: The Communications Division is located directly below the Chief of Staff, who reports directly to the Chief State School Officer (CSSO). The Communications Director, Director of Public Instruction and Chief Information Officer are all located directly below the Chief of Staff and the CSSO. The Chief of Staff typically is the main communicator with agency staff.

4. What are some suggested processes for the executive-level leaders to follow that would provide consistent and timely to the agency leaders listed in #1 about the state assessments?

A: The executive leaders listed in #2 could convene weekly meetings to plan communication about the new assessments. Each leader would then meet with their division staff to inform them about updates, activities, and key messages around the assessments. Meeting minutes could be posted in an agreed upon area on the agency intranet.

5. Who are the external stakeholders that need to know about the new assessments?

A: Superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, and possibly the general public.

6. What are some suggested processes for agency leaders to communicate clear and aligned messages to the stakeholders listed in #5 about new assessments?

A: Based on messages created in the weekly assessment meetings, the communications team creates FAQ documents about the new assessments. The FAQ documents are provided to appropriate agency staff who interface with the stakeholders listed in #5 so they are informed of what information was received. The Director of Public Instruction provides the FAQs to the staff members in her division who convene the Superintendents in monthly meetings. The Superintendents are provided with additional FAQ documents to share with school leaders and teachers. Information about the assessments is also pushed out to the agency listserv of Local Education Agency (LEA) leaders and teachers. Additionally, the SEA communications division team creates a link on the agency webpage about the new assessments and provides a contact number of a designed agency staff member who can answer questions about the assessments.

7. How can agency leaders ensure the same basic messages (tailored by stakeholder audience) about the new assessments are aligned across internal and external stakeholders?

A: All materials about the assessments will be created by the communications team. The FAQs will be used by agency staff to answer questions about the assessments.

8. How can the agency apprise internal agency stakeholders about what information goes out to whom and when to external stakeholders about the new assessments?

A: Provide copies of FAQs and any other printed or e-mailed information about the assessments to relevant agency staff prior to or simultaneously to when information is released externally.

9. What are your other ideas or concerns?

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Questions:

- 1. Looking at your agency organization chart, what departments need information about the goal and strategy?
- 2. Are each of these staff members in separate departments are is there someone who can serve as a coordinator between them?
- 3. Where is the Communications Division located on the organizational chart? In the building? Where are the other agency leaders that can serve as coordinators located on the organizational chart? In the building?
- 4. What are the structural or organizational challenges in connecting key division leaders around specific agency goals and strategies?
- 5. What are some suggested processes to overcome organizational challenges for the agency leaders and staff to collaborate on your identified goal?
- 6. Who are the external stakeholders that need to know about the goal and strategy?
- 7. What are some suggested processes for the agency leaders and staff to communicate clear and aligned messages to the stakeholders listed in #5 about the goal and strategy?
- 8. How can the agency leaders and staff ensure the same basic messages (tailored by stakeholder audience) about the goal and strategy are aligned across internal and external stakeholders?
- 9. How can the agency apprise internal agency stakeholders about what information goes out to whom and when to external stakeholders about the goal and strategy?
- 10. What are your other ideas or concerns?



Adopted from: BSCP Strategic Performance Management Tool, 2015.

Using a possibilities approach, identify possible strategies for each process. For each possible strategy, list the conditions that must occur for the strategy to be accepted, supported, and implemented, and the barriers for the strategy to become a process implemented with fidelity and consistency across the agency. A strategy may appear for more than one process. Processes you might address include holding effective meetings, creating consistent communication between executive and division levels, internal e-mail use, and providing agency updates.

Internal Communication Process	Possible Strategies	Must Have Conditions	Barriers
1.	1.		
	2.		
	3.		
2.	1.		
	2.		
	3.		
3.	1.		
	2.		
	3.		

Discuss the conditions and barriers and determine which strategies will have the most significant impact on creating an effective process, have conditions that are right for implementation, and have the fewest barriers that cannot be removed. Selected strategies are then written in **if we...then...and...** statements to articulate the impact each will have on creating an effective process. Conduct a productivity analysis before finalizing the strategies by applying productivity concepts to the strategy: Is this strategy the best way to achieving the goal? Does the strategy raise efficiency and effectiveness levels of the organization? Will the cumulative effect of the strategies move us closer to creating strategic communication?

Internal Communication Processes	Strategies (State as if wethenandstatements)	Productivity Analysis
Goal 1:	1.	
	2.	
Goal 2:	1.	
	2.	
Goal 3:	1.	
	2.	
	3.	



MODULE 5:

Talking to Others: Creating Effective External Communications



Identifying Key Stakeholders

Appendix J:

Identifying Effective Communication Channels

Appendix K:

External Communication Process Strategy Development Tool

Appendix L:

Arkansas Department of Education Communication Processes

Communicating clearly and frequently with external stakeholders is key to garnering support for and clarity around implementation of the SEA strategic plan. In education, the support of external stakeholders is critical. Educators at all LEA levels, from superintendents to teachers, must implement policy requirements and are accountable for outcomes. Additionally, parents and communities want their children to be successful and safe in schools, and business and civic leaders want to build a pipeline of individuals who can contribute positively to the economy. These diverse external stakeholders all have different information needs and can provide important support for helping SEAs achieve their goals. As you work through **Module 5**, it is important to note that external communication should begin with internal communication strategies and messages and not be developed separately. Once the SEA staff understand and can support the SEA agenda, then communications can be moved to external audiences.

There are several important questions to answer when planning external communication: (1) What are the proper channels for your identified stakeholders? (2) What are the repeatable communication processes for activities like posting on SEA websites, using social media, and communicating with the media? (3) What processes can you use to ensure internal stakeholders are aware of messages and contacts made to external stakeholders? The answers to these questions can help you develop plans that will avoid situations arising like having two different SEA technical assistance providers in the same school without their knowledge, or discovering that a stakeholder received conflicting messages from different divisions in the SEA.

Note that stakeholder engagement (which we define as creating meaningful reciprocal opportunities for stakeholders to discuss their ideas, questions, and concerns) is critical in gaining their support. Because stakeholder engagement is an important part of implementing the SEA agenda, we address it in more detail in **Module 6**.





Step 1: Identify External Stakeholders and Their Needs

- ➤ Identify who will be impacted by the SEA goals and agenda.
- ➤ Identify who will be expected to carry out the SEA agenda.
- ➤ Identify the needs of the stakeholder groups.

One important lesson we learned from the 2014 Strategic Communications Benchmarking Project was the importance of considering the different communication approaches required for different stakeholders. In 2014, leaders from the Idaho Department of Education reported that one reason their entire education agenda was voted down by a public referendum was—despite doing a good job of communicating with legislators—they did not communicate adequately with parents and the general public. Another lesson was that communicating with legislators, who prefer short messages focused on facts, was quite different from the messages that resonated with parents and the general public, who tend to focus more on emotions when thinking about the education of their children.





Step 2: Identify External Communication Channels

- ➤ Consider who is in your target audience.
- ➤ Identify the best method for reaching them.

Communication channels carry messages to your target audiences. The target audience profiles created in Step 1 will help you determine which channels will be most effective in helping you reach them. Common communication channels include:

- > Television
- > Radio
- ➤ Print (newspapers, magazines, newsletters)
- ➤ Websites
- ➤ Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat)
- ➤ Media events (e.g., press conference, media briefings)
- Community events (e.g., community gatherings, PTSA meetings, and other public forums)
- ➤ Partner channels (e.g., state officials such as the Governor and legislators, State Education Commission/State Department of Education, Council of Chief State School Officers).

EXAMPLE

The most effective communication channels for reaching teachers could include:

- ✓ School/district intranet
- ✓ E-mail blasts (note that teacher e-mails are not always available to an SEA)
- ✓ E-newsletters (with updates on your LEAs and your school's progress toward goals)
- ✓ Staff meetings
- ✔ Union meetings
- ✓ Union messages (which could be adapted and used in your plan)
 - **>** AFT fact sheets and other ESSA resources for members (https://www.aft.org/position/every-student-succeeds-act)
 - NEA fact sheets and other ESSA resources for members (http://www.nea.org/home/66977.htm)

During the BSCP Strategic Benchmarking Communications Projects, we often heard SEA leaders identify areas in which they did well communicating externally (e.g., with superintendents) and areas where leaders felt they could do better (e.g., with teachers). Because teachers represent a direct link to students, they are a critical but sometimes overlooked stakeholder group. Challenges for SEAs to consider for reaching teachers include: (1) difficulty obtaining teacher e-mail addresses, (2) lack of availability during SEA office hours, (3) policies restricting use of social media such as Facebook, and (4) inconsistent delivery of information from district superintendents or principals. There are many factors that impact the effectiveness of communication channels, which is why it is important to consider the best way to reach each stakeholder group.





Step 3: Establish External Communication Processes

➤ Create a process to centralize, manage, and monitor key communication activities such as those described in the following section.

As with many organizations and businesses, a variety of external communication methods are used to communicate information to the public. In addition to identifying effective ways of reaching stakeholders, it is also important to have **well-defined processes around external communication vehicles and strategies** to ensure messages are clear and aligned, and represent the SEA's mission, vision, values, and goals. These processes work best when they are coordinated from one point of contact who consistently follows established processes. This is particularly important to ensure the external stakeholders, such as LEAs, responsible for implementation of SEA policy receive clear and aligned messages, and to ensure internal staff that work with external stakeholders are not caught off guard by information being disseminated by various agency divisions.

An example would be to identify effective procedures on website posting, such as who can post information, how information from different divisions can be posted, who monitors and manages website updates, and who ensures postings are aligned with key SEA messages and provide consistent and clear information. At one SEA we visited in 2014, we heard that the SEA website was so difficult to navigate that it resulted in more questions from the public, rather than answering those questions. In 2016, that same SEA adopted a clear process for posting information to the SEA website, and it appeared to be greatly improved.

Areas to consider for establishing clear processes include:

- > SEA website
- > Social media
- ➤ Videos/photography
- ➤ E-mail
- > Press releases and conferences
- Legislative requests
- > Presentations

The following example, on page 56 from Arkansas Department of Education, shows how a SEA can identify external communication processes.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS IN PRACTICE #5—ARKANSAS

Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) External Communication Processes

The ADE Communications Unit has processes for securing assistance with each of the tools mentioned above.

1. Website: The ArkansasEd.org website is the central portal for education information in Arkansas. It is essential that all employees know how to access information on the website and that all divisions regularly update their information.

How To: The process for posting information involves the completion of an Internet Submission Form (ISF), located on the ADE intranet. In addition to contact information, the ISF requires posting instructions and final formatting requirements. Staff must ensure that the content for posting has been checked for spelling, grammar, and formatting. The requested posting date is included. Once the ISF is approved via division protocols, it is e-mailed to ade.webrequest@arkansas.gov.

2. Social Media: The Communications Unit manages the agency's social media sites: Facebook, Twitter, ADE Blog, Pinterest, Google+, Instagram, and YouTube. Links to Facebook, Twitter, and the Blog appear on the website homepage. Because Twitter limits posts to 140 characters, the amount of information in a tweet is minimal. The other sites are conducive to posting more information. Facebook and Twitter posts generally link back to the ADE Blog and/or ADE web page.

How To: ADE employees, as well as other agencies, can contact the ADE Director of Communications to request that messages be posted to the ADE social media sites. The Director reviews the proposed content to ensure accuracy, credibility, and timeliness and posts them if approved.

E-mail: The Communications Unit uses ADE e-mail to inform employees about internal events and important information such as inclement weather days, State Board of Education meetings, Charter Authorizing Panel meetings, and other events.

How To: The Director of Communications sends messages to all employees as needed. Unit/division messages deemed necessary for mass internal distribution are done at the unit/division level.

See **Appendix L**, the document provided by ADE outlining external communication processes.

The following example from North Carolina describes a process for creating opportunities for conversation with external stakeholders.

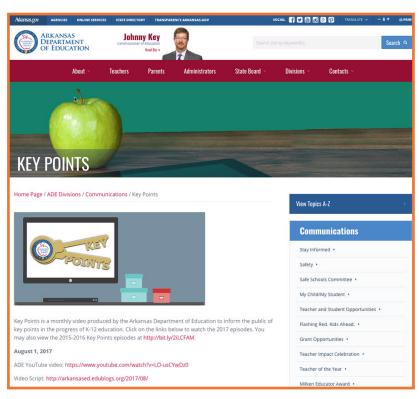
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS IN PRACTICE #6—NORTH CAROLINA

Creating Reciprocal Communication Opportunities with External Audiences

In 2016 the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) website is managed by one webmaster, working with three web developers and a web marketing specialist/publication lead. The NCDPI has a process for submitting information for posting on the agency website and is working toward moving to a knowledge management system. The website is easy to navigate and has several mechanisms for communicating with the public.

An interactive feature—Let's Talk!—allows external stakeholders to share their "thoughts, suggestions, and questions." The Let's Talk! page has a menu of 24 SEA divisions and 9 topics, allowing to click on one of the menu items to submit suggestions or questions. For example, visitors clicking on the "Read to Achieve" link will be directed to a form that allows them to ask a question, share a concern, and provide their contact information for follow-up communication.

Source: BSCP Center Benchmark and Best Practices Project Report #2 http://www.bscpcenter.org/communications/resources/CommunicationReport.pdf



The Arkansas Department of Education communicates important news and updates to the community through their Key Points monthly video.

Referring back to the statement earlier that many SEAs in the benchmarking projects found communicating with teachers and parents a challenge, during the 2016 benchmarking project we found some interesting strategies being implemented by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) to communicate with teachers and families.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS IN PRACTICE #7—INDIANA

Communicating with Teachers

✓ IDOE has improved communication by sending information (provided to LEA superintendents) from the Commissioner to teachers in an e-newsletter called *Teacher Dialogue*. The agency website includes a link for teachers to share and learn about promising practices from other teachers. See https:// content.govdelivery.com/accounts/INDOE/bulletins/13f9f8c.

Communicating with Families

✓ To increase communication with families, leaders in IDOE worked with AT&T to develop a free mobile app available on the Apple App Store and Google Play that provides users with easy access to information from the SEA. The app allows IDOE to send messages to targeted stakeholder groups. See http://www.n2nservices.com/IDOE/.

Source: BSCP Center Benchmark and Best Practices Project Report #2 http://www.bscpcenter.org/communications/resources/ CommunicationReport.pdf

The oversight team would benefit from having a collaborative discussion about existing external communication strategies, focusing on which are well-established, which are not, and if there are strategies that are missing or need updating. The team might also discuss how the processes will be communicated across the SEA, implemented consistently, and monitored for effectiveness.



Use **Appendix K, External Communication Process Strategy Development Tool**, to brainstorm and select appropriate external communication processes.

See **Appendix L** for the complete ADE example of external communication processes.



As your team works to create external communication processes, be sure to:

- ✓ Invest ample time in understanding the different communication needs of external stakeholders:
 - > Consider what educators need to know and what supports they may provide for your SEA goals.
 - **>** Consider what parents, community members, and business leaders need to know and the types of supports they can provide.
 - **>** Consider the best method or vehicle for reaching each external stakeholder group.
- ✓ Have a clear understanding of the effectiveness of current external communication processes.
- ✓ Develop clear processes around each specific type of external communication.
- Consider how external communication processes will be made known across the agency and monitored for consistent implementation.
- ✓ Include measures for external communication processes in your evaluation of your strategic communications process plan (**Module 6**).

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Adopted from: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Office of the Director, Office of Strategy and Innovation. Introduction to program evaluation for public health programs: A self-study guide. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, October 2011.

Worksheet IA - Identifying Key Stakeholders

Ca	tegory	Stakeholders
I	Who is affected by the program?	
2	Who is involved in program operations?	
3	Who will use evaluation results?	

Which of these are key stakeholders we need to engage:			
Increase <u>credibility</u> of our evaluation	Implement the interventions that are central to this evaluation	Advocate for changes to institutionalize the evaluation findings	Fund/authorize the continuation or expansion of the program

Introduction to Program Evaluation for Public Health Programs

Page 19

Worksheet IB - What Matters to Stakeholders

Sta	keholders	What activities and/or outcomes of this program matter most to them?
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		

Introduction to Program Evaluation for Public Health Programs

Page 20



To identify effective communication channels:

- a) List your different external target audiences, and any specific segments within those target audiences that are particularly important for the success of your target message. You may want to refer back to Tools used in **Module 3** to identify and understand the needs to external stakeholders.
- b) Where, in which types of places do typical representatives of the audience (or audience segments) spend most of their time throughout an average day? Are there policies that might impact a communication vehicle, like teachers not being allowed to access Facebook in their building?
- c) Where does your message have the best chance of catching their attention? Consider both "life" venues, such as public transport, markets and shopping malls, and "virtual" spaces such as radio channels, TV programs and web-based social networks.
- d) Based on this analysis, determine which of the communication channels identified you can afford, or gain external support for.

Questions you may also consider include:

- ✔ Who, in your organization or alliance, has experience working with which types of media?
- What community organizations could pass on the message?
- ✓ What additional resources can be mobilized, e.g. by enlarging the alliance, hiring specialists or contracting out parts of the communication work?



Regional Comprehensive Center guides state education agency's monthly discussion on their strategic performance management work.



Adopted from: BSCP Strategic Performance Management Tool, 2015.

Using a possibilities approach, identify possible strategies for each process. For each possible strategy, list the conditions that must occur for the strategy to be accepted, supported, and implemented, and the barriers for the strategy to become a process implemented with fidelity and consistency across the agency. A strategy may appear for more than one process. Processes you may to address include website management, social media, external brochures and print materials, creating presentations, and media requests.

External Communication Process	Possible Strategies	Must Have Conditions	Barriers
1.	1.		
	2.		
	3.		
	4.		
	5.		
2.	1.		
	2.		
	3.		
	4.		
	5.		
3.	1.		
	2.		
	3.		
	4.		
	5.		
4.	1.		
	2.		
	3.		
	4.		
	5.		

Discuss the conditions and barriers and determine which strategies will have the most significant impact on creating an effective process, have conditions that are right for implementation, and have the fewest barriers that cannot be removed. Selected strategies are then written in **if we...then...and**... statements to articulate the impact each will have on creating an effective process. Conduct a productivity analysis before finalizing the strategies by applying productivity concepts to the strategy: Is this strategy the best way to achieving the goal? Does the strategy raise efficiency and effectiveness levels of the organization? Will the cumulative effect of the strategies move us closer to creating strategic communication?

External Communication Processes	Strategies (State as if wethenand statements)	Productivity Analysis
Goal 1:	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
Goal 2:	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
Goal 3:	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
Goal 4:	1.	
	2.	
	3.	



Arkansas Department of Education Communication Processes



Appendix L: Arkansas Department of Education Communication Processes

The unit has processes for securing assistance with each of the tools mentioned above.

- 1.) Website: The ArkansasEd.org website is the central focus of education information in Arkansas. It is essential that all employees know how to access information on the website and that all divisions regularly update information.
 - a. How To: The process for posting information involves the completion of an Internet Submission Form, which is located on the ADE Intranet. In addition to contact information, the ISF requires posting instructions and final formatting requirements. Staff must ensure that the content for posting has been checked for spelling, grammar, and formatting. The requested posting date is included. Once the ISF is approved via division protocols, it is emailed to ade.webrequest@arkansas.gov.
- 2.) Social Media: The Communications Unit manages the agency's social media sites: Facebook, Twitter, ADE Blog, Pinterest, Google+, Instagram, and YouTube. Links to all Facebook, Twitter, and the Blog are on the website homepage. Because Twitter limits posts to 140 characters, the amount of information posted must be kept to a minimum. The other sites are conducive to posting more information. Facebook and Twitter posts generally link back to the ADE Blog and/or ADE webpage.
 - a. How To: ADE employees, as well as other agencies, can contact the ADE director of communications to request that messages be posted to the ADE social media sites. The director will review the proposed messages to ensure accuracy, credibility, and timeliness and will post them if approved.
- 3.) E-mail: The Communications Unit uses ADE e-mail to inform employees about internal events and important information, such as inclement weather days, State Board of Education meetings, Charter Authorizing Panel meetings, and other events.
 - a. How To: The director of communications sends message to all employees as needed. Unit/division messages deemed necessary for mass internal distribution are done at the unit/division level.
- 4.) Press Releases/Media Advisories: Information about programs, data results, State Board of Education meetings, Charter Authorizing Panel meetings, and other areas of interest is distributed to the media and public via press releases or media advisories. Press releases and media advisories are forwarded to ADE staff. Press releases are posted under the Education News section on the homepage.
 - a. How To: Units that need information distributed should contact the director of communications, who will assist the units with developing the press release or media advisory announcements. Once the release is approved by the chief of staff and commissioner, it is released via the Emma distribution system.

- 5.) Press Conferences: For very important announcements, ADE will hold press conferences with the commissioner. Press conferences are reserved for major announcements. An example is the Elementary Secondary Education Act news conference.
 - a. **How To:** Units/divisions that deem a press conference is necessary should contact the director of communications, who will coordinate with the chief of staff and commissioner to determine the necessity and time frame.
- 6.) **Commissioner's Memos**: Commissioner's Memos communicate policy to school district administrators and educators. The memos are titled, numbered, and dated. The memo number represents the division, school year, and memo number.
 - a. How To: Memos are created at the unit level in the SharePoint system. Once they are approved at the division level, the chief of staff approves and posts the memos on the ADE website.
- 7.) ArkansasEd.org Newsletter: The Communications Unit publishes a one-page newsletter every two weeks to inform staff about changes made to the ADE website. The newsletter, which is distributed via e-mail to ADE staff, lists updates that include Commissioner's Memos and changes to the major divisions' pages on the website.
 - a. How To: The director of communications prepares the newsletter and coordinates with the webmaster to determine updates.
- 8.) **Communications Connection Sessions**: The Communications Unit holds monthly sessions in the Auditorium. The sessions' purpose is to inform staff about topics that are pertinent to their job duties. The sessions last an hour and feature informational topics, such as tips on how to use the website and social media.
 - a. How To: The Communications Unit determines the focus of information each month.

 Units/division are encouraged to contact the director of communications with suggestions.



MODULE 6

MODULE 6:

Making It Work: Implementing Your Strategic Communications Plan

Appendix M:

Sample Stakeholder Mapping Template



Sample Implementation Tracking Tool

Appendix O:

Sample Evaluation Tool

Appendix P:

Colorado Department of Education Communications Scorecard

Once your strategic communications plan is complete, the next step is to ensure consistent and effective implementation. Implementation effectiveness depends on gaining clarity, support, and ownership from both internal and external stakeholders; leveraging external partners to serve as advocates, experts, and points of connection; creating a clear plan that will be reviewed regularly and revised as needed; and identifying where adjustments should be made. While stakeholder mapping is addressed in **Module 5** (external communication) and mentioned in **Module 4** (internal communication), **stakeholder engagement** is included in this Module to help you focus on *engaging* stakeholders through effective and ongoing reciprocal communication approaches.

The 2014 Strategic Communications Benchmarking Project found that certain SEA strategies, like adopting new state standards, is a topic of high interest to many stakeholders who often hold different opinions, which can create confusion and opposition in the absence of proactive and clear communication. Several states addressed that opposition by holding meetings that provided stakeholders the opportunity to ask questions and hear why SEA leaders believed the new standards represented an improvement over current standards. The meetings also allowed SEA leaders to debunk some of the myths surrounding the standards.

Stakeholder engagement is an important component of states' plans for the Every Student Succeeds Acts (ESSA). This Module includes some resources and directs you to others you may find useful (see the "Additional Resources" section at the end of the Toolbox). In addition to stakeholder engagement, **Module 6** addresses other critical implementation components, including external partners, plan implementation, evaluation, and adjustment.





Step 1: Create Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities

- ➤ Discuss the relevance of various internal and external stakeholders.
- ➤ Consider the role of various stakeholders and the best way to leverage their engagement.

A stakeholder is a person, group, or organization that has an interest or concern in the work of the SEA. SEA stakeholders include state policymakers, school districts and staff, and families and communities. By taking time to identify, engage, and sustain stakeholder relationships, SEAs have an opportunity to connect with new and existing education advocates.²

For stakeholder engagement to be successful, communication must be reciprocal. As noted in *Principles of Community Engagement*:³

"Positive change is more likely to occur when [stakeholders] are an integral part of a program's development and implementation... For example, meeting with key community leaders and groups in their surroundings helps to build trust for a true partnership. Such meetings provide the organizers of engagement activities more information about the community, its concern and the factors that will facilitate or constrain participation. In addition, community members need to see and experience 'real' benefits for the extra time, effort, and involvement they are asked to give. Once successful rapport is established, meetings and exchanges with community members can build into an ongoing and substantive partnership."

Questions to consider in planning stakeholder engagement activities:

- 1. What are the activities, events, and/or materials—to be used in your selected channels—that will most effectively carry your message to the stakeholders? Activities might include town hall meetings, roundtable meetings, social media, press conferences, radio call-in shows, conferences, and one-on-one meetings.
- 2. How do stakeholder activities and messages align with messages planned in Module 2?

²Council of Chief State School Officers (2016). Let's Get This Conversation Started: Strategies, Tools, Examples and Resources to Help States Engage with Stakeholders to Develop and Implement their ESSA Plans. http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2016/ESSA/CCSSO%20Stakeholder%20Engagement%20Guide%20 FINAL.pdf.

³CTSA Community Engagement Key Function Committee Task Force, Department of Health and Human Services (2011). Principles of Community Engagement (Second Edition). https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/communityengagement/pdf/PCE_Report_508_FINAL.pdf.

- 3. To what extent do stakeholder engagement activities provide opportunities for reciprocal discussion and feedback?
- 4. What processes can be used to ensure internal stakeholders are aware of external stakeholder engagement activities and messages? Are those processes captured in **Modules 4 and 5**?

In choosing activities, you should consider:

- ➤ Appropriateness to audience, goal, and message
- ➤ Ability for stakeholders to be authentically engaged
- ➤ Relevance to desired outcomes
- > Timing
- ➤ Costs/resources
- ➤ Climate of community toward the issue/activity
- Cultural appropriateness (including language)
- ➤ Environment and accessibility—geographic considerations

The following example describes how Arkansas created interactive opportunities to gather stakeholder input on the state's education vision.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS IN PRACTICE #8—ARKANSAS

Engaging Stakeholders around State Vision

Leaders in the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) place a high premium on stakeholder engagement. To gain feedback on the state's vision in preparation for crafting a new state plan, ADE:

- ✓ Held meetings with education associations and teachers of the year, and convened roundtable discussions with charter directors and teachers to allow stakeholders to speak to the commissioner about the agency's direction
- ✓ Engaged with students through surveys and student summits
- Collected community feedback online



Use **Appendix M** for a stakeholder mapping tool that can identify a stakeholder group's influence, level of interest, and anticipated reaction to your communications and outreach efforts.

For videos of Chief State School Officers discussing stakeholder engagement see: http://www.bscpcenter.org/.

Additional guidance on engaging and sustaining stakeholders is available in a resource developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO): Let's Get This Conversation Started: Strategies, Tools, Examples and Resources to Help States Engage with Stakeholders to Develop and Implement their ESSA Plans. http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2016/ESSA/CCSSO%20 Stakeholder%20Engagement%20Guide%20 FINAL.pdf.

EXAMPLE

Activities and materials for reaching teachers could include:

- ✓ School staff meetings to discuss ESSA (how it differs from No Child Left Behind, state plans for implementation, impact on teachers and students).
- ✓ Linking on SEA website to allow stakeholders to ask question and provide feedback on ESSA.
- ✓ Workshop sessions at state education conferences to discuss ESSA and gather input from the teachers who are helping to implement it.
- Continuing education sessions focused on key elements of ESSA and its application to the classroom.
- Community town hall meetings to discuss what community members want out of their education system for their children.



There are likely to be groups, organizations, or businesses that can help you achieve your communication goals and objectives by providing funds, expertise, use of their communication channels, or other resources—such as state educator associations, regional service centers or cooperatives, district leaders, teachers, civic organizations, ministerial alliances, or industry leaders. To successfully engage partners/ stakeholders in your communications efforts, you must:

- 1. **Determine the need.** Before asking for help, it's important to identify what you need most. This list will help set your priorities and guide who you need to contact.
- 2. *Identify potential partners*. There may be hundreds of organizations to approach in your community—where do you start? By identifying categories of need, you can narrow the types of organizations you approach. Sample categories could include state educator associations, regional service centers and/or cooperatives, school districts, non-profit organizations, private industry, and civic organizations.
- 3. *Prioritize your contacts.* When you have a list of possible contacts, begin making your partnership circle. This circle will help further identify your most important contacts so you can prioritize your efforts. Start with organizations you have worked with in the past. Then talk to employees. The final step before preparing your outreach is finding the correct contact. You may have this information if you've used an up-to-date directory or have a personal contact, but if you're not sure, make a phone call. Ask to whom you would send a partnership proposal; be sure to get the person's name, title, street address, email address, and phone number. And finally, don't overlook the importance of using the Internet to research target organizations.
- 4. *Make your partnership approach strategically.* Most organizations get involved in an issue strategically, meaning they focus their efforts in areas where they have an interest, want to influence someone or something, or stand to gain something. Make your "ask" mutually beneficial. Just as you have asked for something, be prepared to offer something in return. Try to at least reward the organization with positive community exposure and recognition for its efforts.



Step 3: Manage Plan Implementation

There are many tools for organizing around time, dollars, and staff needed to implement an initiative. One approach is given here as an example.

- 1. Designate a staff member to manage and report on implementation.
- 2. List all activities.
- 3. Under each activity, outline the steps, in order, that will lead to its completion.
- 4. Assign a budget estimate to each step.
- 5. Assign a staffing needs estimate to each step.
- 6. Working backward from the activity completion point, assign a date for each step in the activity.
- 7. Set regular times, perhaps monthly, to revisit the plan.

Whatever approach is selected, it is important to select something to ensure implementation of the processes are managed and monitored for consistency, are revisited on a regular basis, are efficient and effective in terms of time and budget, and are timely and well-paced.



Use **Appendix N** as a possible implementation tracking tool.



Community members provide input to leaders from the Kansas Department of Education on the state's plan, Kansans Can.



Step 4: Evaluate and Adjust

What does success look like and how will you know when your communication goals and objectives have been achieved? Monitor and evaluate the implementation of your communication strategy on a regular basis (e.g., monthly, quarterly) and adjust as needed. Suggested areas of focus might be the effectiveness of specific communication processes such as: communication between executive-level and division leaders (if they are different levels), internal agency e-mail use, effectiveness of website management, communication to teachers, business leader roundtable meetings, etc.

To monitor and evaluate your communication efforts, determine early on what tools you will use to measure your process. These tools might include:

- ➤ Requests for information/materials
- ➤ Website visits
- ➤ Participant surveys at events (e.g., attendees, press coverage)
- Media mentions
- Social media metrics (e.g., likes, shares, retweets)
- ➤ Internal agency surveys



An SEA team reviews goals and activities as part of a broader strategic performance management process facilitated by a BSCP consultant.

For high-level information on communication activities, you can use the implementation tracking tool in Appendix N to monitor each activity's metrics.

For more detailed information about the success of the communication processes in creating clarity, alignment, and support for the agency's agenda toward its goals, including any changes in knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors, more in-depth evaluation techniques should be implemented, such as:

- Surveys and questionnaires
- Focus groups
- Intercept interviews
- ➤ In-depth interviews
- ➤ Analysis of media coverage and social media sentiment
- ➤ Analysis of feedback from staff reviews and/or employee surveys.

As mentioned earlier, the oversight team should consider how often the plan and metrics around the plan will be revised to make mid-course corrections, and might want to elicit support from any division in the SEA involved in the development of evaluation tools.



Use **Appendix O**, a sample evaluation tool adapted from one used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

See **Appendix P**, the Colorado Department of Education Communications Scorecard—an example of another way to evaluate SEA communication activities.

Quality Check

As your team works to create implementation and refinement processes, make sure to:

- Create ample opportunities to engage your different stakeholder groups in authentic and reciprocal discussion opportunities:
 - > Consider which groups can be powerful advocates and messengers
 - > Include groups with differing opinions in engagement opportunities
 - > Consider the best method or vehicle for reaching each external stakeholder group
- ✓ Consider engaging partners in your communication efforts
- ✓ Develop clear processes to manage implementation of the strategic communications process plan
 - > Identify at least one resource for oversight
 - **>** Revisit the plan often to ensure the processes are implemented consistently and correctly
- ✓ Invest ample time in developing a thorough evaluation of the strategic communications process plan and its components
 - > Consider engaging research and evaluation experts in your SEA
 - > Set aside time to continuously monitor process and make adjustments as needed

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Effective stakeholder mapping considers a stakeholder group's influence, level of interest, and anticipated reaction to your communications and outreach efforts. Where a stakeholder falls in terms of interest and attitude will inform the messages you develop. For example, if an influential stakeholder group has a high level of interest and a resistant attitude, your messages will focus on presenting robust evidence that will stand up to scrutiny. Alternatively, if an influential stakeholder group has a low level of interest and a positive attitude, make your messages succinct and engaging, and carefully consider how you want to share information in a way that grabs their attention (e.g., infographics). As you map your stakeholders, consider the following:

- 1. How do you want stakeholders to react to your work?
- 2. How do stakeholders respond to different types of intelligence?
- 3. How can you get stakeholders attention and engage them?
- 4. How influential are the stakeholders in this area of interest?
- 5. How likely are the stakeholders in this area of interest to take action from your work?

Stakeholder Mapping Tool • They will engage with the message, • They will engage with the message, • They will engage with the message, even if it isn't aimed directly at even if it isn't aimed directly at even if it isn't aimed directly at Interest them them them • They are likely to take action and • They are less likely to take action • They are likely to resist any action will also share your message with and will probably share your unless the evidence is convincing likeminded colleagues/friends message with likeminded colleagues/friends • They will engage with the message, • They will engage with the message • They will engage with the message **Neutral Interest** if it is relevant to their work if it relates closely to their if it relates closely to their work/interests work/interests • They may take action and share with likeminded colleagues/friends • They are more likely share with • They are rarely take action and are colleagues/friends who have a unlikely to share your message higher interest than they are to with likeminded colleagues/friends take action • They will engage with the message • They are most likely to engage with They are likely to engage with the if they have the time message if it directly relates to the message if directly relates to Low Interest their work/interests and is seen as their work/interests and is seen as • They are more likely to share with likeminded colleagues/friends than a necessity a necessity • They are more likely share with • They will rarely take action and are to take action colleagues/friends who have a unlikely to share with higher interest than they are to colleagues/friends take action **Positive Attitude Neutral Attitude Negative Attitude**

KEY:

- Messages should focus on theory and innovative ideas
- Messages should focus on a mixture of theory and evidence
- Messages should feature a robust evidence base



External Communications					
Tactic	Target Audience	Timing	Cost	Responsibility	Results
Press release					
Article or op-ed in local newspaper(s)					
 Events Workshops Community meetings (e.g., PTSA, BOE meetings) Stakeholder meetings 					
Our organization's website					
Partner organizations' websites					
Direct marketing to stakeholders • Newsletter (print or electronic) • Letter or email updates					
Social media channels (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)					
Advertising • Television • Print • Radio • Online					
Radio talk shows					
Marketing collateral • Fact sheets • Infographics • Brochures • Issue/white papers • Op-ed articles					

Internal Communications					
Activity	Staff Targeted	Timing	Cost	Responsibility	Results
Intranet					
Employee newsletter • Electronic newsletter • Print newsletter					
Email updates • Regularly scheduled email updates • Ad hoc/as needed email updates					
Staff meetings/ briefings • Communication team meetings • Senior staff briefings • All-staff meetings					
Memorandums • Director letters • Policy updates					
Trainings • Spokesperson trainings • Message workshops					



Adopted from: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Office of the Director, Office of Strategy and Innovation. Introduction to program evaluation for public health programs: A self-study guide. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, October 2011.

) or Evaluation estions Data Method(s)/Source(s)

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS TOOLBOX

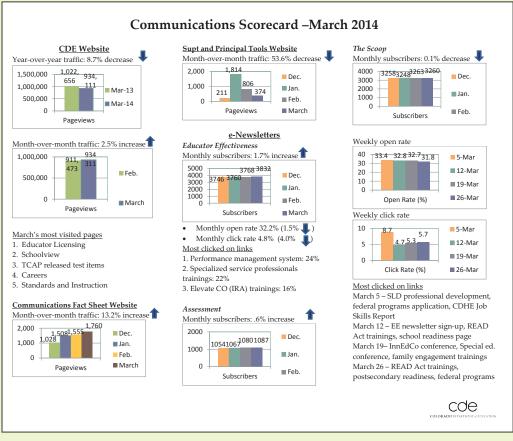
84

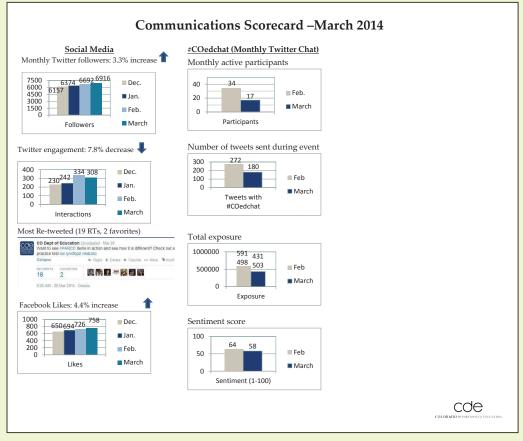


Communications Scorecard - March 2014

CDE Goals: Start strong, read by third grade, meet or exceed standards, and graduate ready

Strategy	Tactic	Metrics	Trends
General CDE Communications Support districts as they communicate about	→Create communications tools	→ 53.6% decrease in traffic to superintendent toolkit page this month; most accessed tools on assessment → Fourth month of increase to fact sheet page; most accessed fact sheets on assessment and standards	→ While traffic to the superintendent and principal tool page varies from month to month, traffic to fact sheet page continue to have a steady increase each month
·	→Publish relevant, useful and timely articles in The Scoop and CDE Update	→ The Scoop's weekly open rates are above the industry standard of 25.69%; weekly click rates vary greatly → The Scoop's subscription rates saw a slight decrease this month	→ The Scoop's open rates remain steady each week while the click rates vary greatly depending on content; most clicked on content continues to be trainings, conferences and professional development opportunities
Social Media Engage in two-way conversations, build brand awareness and increase outreach efforts	→Leverage social media ambassadors to create more positive, online voice around education in Colorado	→Second highest month of engagement rates on social media due to activating CDE social media ambassadors, COSPRA social media group and other partners by emailing suggested tweets to elevate the online conversation	→ Compared to one year ago, the social media engagement rates have increased by more than 113%; we continue to see at upward trend in engagement, followers and likes each month
	→Increase opportunities for teachers to talk among peers about education reform	→Hosted second #COedchat (monthly education chat on Twitter) on the topic of digital literacy. 180 tweets were sent by 17 participants during the live event.	→ The #COedchat is trending similar to a very successful statewide education Twitter chat in Ohio. Once more chats an held, we will have more trends to report.
ducator Effectiveness ncrease educator support f educator evaluation equirements	→Publish relevant, useful and timely articles in Educator Effectiveness e- Newsletter	→ Monthly subscription rates increased this month → Monthly open and click rates decreased slightly	→ The Educator Effectiveness click rates and open rates have remained relatively stable over the past several months
tandards ncrease educator nowledge of standards	→Increase teacher voice in supporting standards	→ Added all of the educator involved in the District Sample Curriculum Project to teacher voice database	→ While we continue to encourage educators to talk about ho standards are supporting learning in the classroom, the sentiment of the online conversation has decreased dramatically in the last few months and now trends negative
ssessment acrease educator nowledge of assessments	→Provide timely, targeted information and tools	→ Additional assessment resources on PARCC field tests were added to communications tools this month	→ For the third month in a row, the assessment fact sheets an superintendent tools were the most accessed







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Although written for public health professionals, this publication provides practical guidance for engaging partners and stakeholders in projects. It can be used by people in a range of roles and provides valuable insights for those leading community and stakeholder engagement efforts.

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This report answers the question on how best to use limited communication resources to productively engage diverse stakeholder groups to support education reforms. It provides a more detailed approach to analyzing and classifying audiences and stakeholder groups.

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AFT resources on ESSA include fact sheets for educators such as: *Fundamentals on ESSA*, *Developing Your State Plan, and Leveraging* ESSA to Move Toward New Accountability. They include FAQs, presentations, and fact sheets in English and Spanish that can be used with stakeholders.

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NEA resources are part of a series of informational flyers intended to help educators understand how ESSA impacts their students, classrooms, schools and communities.

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