

CREATING A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

An effective communications strategy can be a powerful tool to help you launch your Climate for Health Path to Positive commitment into action. With consistent, creative and compelling messages delivered in a variety of ways, you can welcome your network to join you on your Path to Positive and encourage them to share their enthusiasm with others. Your well-crafted purpose or vision statement (guidance and resources provided separately at climateforhealth.org/engage) should serve as the foundation for all of your communications and will help you create a successful strategy.

STAGE 1: GETTING STARTED

- Determine your audience: Deciding who you want to engage and how you'll reach them is an essential first step in designing an effective communications strategy. Once you decide which audiences you wish to communicate with, you can build your strategy around them and keep their perspectives in mind as you develop your communications.
- Get to know your audience: Take some time to reflect on your audience(s) to understand their personal priorities and ask staff to share their current connection to climate change. Understanding what is important to your stakeholders and what they respond to is essential to developing content that moves, inspires and empowers them to join you in your efforts. You can use free tools like SurveyMonkey.com to get information on how they think and feel about climate issues and what they are most interested in getting involved in. The results can serve as a foundation for developing communications goals in addition to gaining input.



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- Build on the success of others: Check out what others are doing to communicate on climate. Not all of your communications need to be generated by you. Climate for Health and its partners have regular communications and events that you can share and repost through your own channels. Get connected with these groups through social media and at climateforhealth.org, and learn about messages and resources that might supplement your own.
 - Assess your resources: Assessing how much time your staff and governance can commit to communications projects is an important first step as you plan your outreach strategy. You may also consider inviting members of your green team (existing or prospective) with communications experience, marketing, journalism, communication, or graphic design, to participate in communications activities. Additionally, explore costs and resources for engaging vendors in the event you need additional support.
 - Appoint a communications coordinator: Managing and producing communications materials will take some time and thought. It is important to have someone who will champion day-to-day communications and make sure your team stays on track with its communications goals.

STAGE 2: ON YOUR PATH

Develop a consistent message: Work with your team to create a set of messages that is carried across all of the communications you deliver. For inspiration, check out Climate for Health's talking points, tips on crafting your purpose statement, and pages on the connection between health and climate on climateforhealth.org. Try creating a messaging catalog that any of your team's communicators can access. This may include sample messages they can use, a frequently asked questions document (FAQ), key message points and a style guide. This will help you maintain a consistent voice, no matter who is delivering the message.

- Provide a clear call to action: Communications are about motivating people to act. When someone receives something you have produced (a postcard, an invitation, a tweet), what do you want him or her to do? Take a specific action? Share it with others? Register for an event? Every communication should start with this in mind.

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- Communication is a two-way street: We often think of communications as a way to deliver information to others, but it's also important to listen to your audience to learn about their motivations. This will provide insight into what they do and don't like or may or may not respond to. Track and monitor what your followers are "liking," "retweeting," and commenting on, and get them involved in conversations by responding to, "liking" and "retweeting" what they're saying about your organization online and on their personal social media pages. Remember, the goal here is to get your audience to go beyond simply listening to your message. You want them to engage in a discussion with you and participate in your goals.

STAGE 3: MOVING FORWARD

- Set S.M.A.R.T. goals: It may be difficult to imagine what you'd like to see happen with your climate solutions commitment when you're just getting started, but it is important to have a long term vision. What would you like to accomplish in six months, a year or three years? Your answer should help guide your messages and the activities you plan to execute. Your goals should be SMART—Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound. For example, you may want to get 30% of your patients or clients to attend at least one climate solutions event by the end of the year. With all of your goals, you will want to continually monitor your progress, share your successes, and if necessary, adjust your objectives.
- Create a communications calendar: A calendar is an effective way to keep track of communications and help turn existing events throughout the year into opportunities to infuse your climate solutions message. Start by identifying which methods you will use to deliver climate messages or spread the word about your Climate for Health activities. It is helpful to create a timeline in advance to plan when your communications will be sent so your team can prepare and approve content to meet publication deadlines. Once you have identified your timeline, you can begin appointing people on your team to take the lead.
- Engage through events: If you're looking for events to add to your calendar, think about meaningful moments or activities that would be appropriate to engage others in your climate goals. Start by embedding your climate themes into all of your regular activities. Later on, you can expand on them to create original moments for your Path to Positive participation and progress (like celebrating the completion of one of your action items, etc.).

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- **Appropriate placement:** Consider carefully what type of information should be communicated through which channels. It is important to understand the pros and cons of various communications channels and which audiences they will likely reach. For example, younger audiences may be more likely to use Instagram or Twitter, so promoting events there could be especially fruitful. Staff may be more accustomed to email, making it a more impactful method to keep them informed, while later generations may be most connected to your organization or clinic through more traditional media such as print publications.
 - **Think big:** There are many more ways to communicate with your health community. Think about all of the ways your organization already communicates with its stakeholders and brainstorm additional opportunities. Identify if and how you can use different vehicles to help inspire your audiences. For example, integrate the importance of climate solutions into signage to welcome new patients and their families. Consider small giveaways, handouts to prospective clients, and tables at community events.
 - **Connect with the press:** Media can be a great way to engage people in your community beyond your institution. For example, you may want to call the local newspaper or radio station when you reach major milestones on your Path to Positive commitment so that others in your area can be inspired by your leadership. If you're going to connect with the press, it is also important to prepare for a variety of media scenarios and potential questions. Make sure to provide training to those who will serve as spokespeople for the media.

REMEMBER...

Your communications should be uplifting, energizing, and hopeful. Stay true to your values and those of your community. Have fun and don't be afraid to infuse humor and creativity. This will make your team's efforts more attractive and compelling for your community.