# State of Vermont Communications Plan Template

Planning is essential for any public outreach or marketing campaign. Having a plan helps you reach your goals. It also allows you to be more proactive rather than reactive.

A communications or marketing plan will help you:

* Define your overarching goal.
* Identify the target audiences.
* Establish your key messages.
* Determine how to distribute these messages.
* Develop a timeline to track the rollout.

Evaluate success.

Goal

**Desired impact:** What do you want to accomplish with this plan? What outcomes do you want to see? Here are a few examples.

Improving or strengthening your reputation or brand.

Educating/informing people.

Recruiting people or proposals.

Increasing public support and buy-in.

Announcing events, projects, or programs.

Celebrating a topic or achievement.

Countering or correcting false information.

Communicating accurate information during a crisis.

Gathering feedback or ideas.

Audience(s)

Define your primary audiences.

**Specific people**: Who do you want to reach?

* + Who supports this work?
  + Who is opposed to it?
  + Who is most affected by it?

**Values**: What does your audience value? What do they need? What problems are they facing?

**Alignment**: How does what you want to share with them align with their needs and values?

**Changing beliefs or behavior**: What do you need your audience to do differently? (Attitudes, behaviors)

**Revisit your goal**: After defining your audiences, make sure your goal is still relevant.

Messages

Now, based on what you want your audience to think, feel or do, what are two or three compelling messages you could use to connect with your audience?

Each message should have a supporting story (to illustrate the message) or statistics (to make the message memorable).

Message one + supporting story or statistic.

Message two + supporting story or statistic.

Message three + supporting story or statistic.

Messenger

Rely on trusted messengers to get the word out. Think about who your audience trusts and frequently communicates with. Partner with those groups to deliver key messages.

Medium

Figure out what creative materials you need to develop and which communication channels you need to use to get your messages out. Select channels based on how your audience prefers to receive their information.

Listservs

Traditional news outlets (radio, broadcast TV, newspapers)

Social media channels

Websites

Newsletters

Events (focus groups, celebrations, local town gatherings, tabling, school meetings, tours, virtual meetings, legislative session)

Signage: posting printed materials posted in high-traffic areas

Direct: in-person or virtual meetings, mailers, brown bag lunches, townhalls, community forums, coffee hour, partner events, field tour, press conferences, chamber meeting, legislative info session, agency-sponsored event, partner-sponsored event

**Tip**: After you decide on your channels and messages, create a rollout timeline that includes the dates and deadlines of your activities.

Evaluate

Debrief with your team to gauge success and shortcomings.

What were we trying to accomplish? Revisit your goal.

What worked well?

What didn’t work?

What should we change for next time?

Any other observations the team has.

If you need sample metrics to evaluate the campaign, here are a few to get you started.

* Media coverage: quality, quantity, reach of earned media.
* Digital communications metrics such as website traffic, email open rates, social media post engagement/reach.

Event metrics such as number of attendees or number of events held.