

GUIDEBOOK: HOW TO DESIGN A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Step 1: Identify your objectives

What do you want your communications activities to achieve?

Stating your objectives will keep the communication plan focused. Written objectives can be shared with other staff, so they understand why the communication plan is important to the program's success.

By communicating about who you are and what you are doing, you make it more likely that the program will succeed. Sharing information about your project helps do the following things:

- Establish trust between the government, EIF partners and the community.
- Manage expectations so that people know what EIF projects are seeking to achieve.
- Encourage participation and collaboration. Informed stakeholders are better able to participate in projects, provide feedback and engage in meaningful dialogue.

The questions below will help you identify your objectives:

1. What is your purpose for communicating key program messages?
2. What do you want your communications activities to achieve?
3. What would success look like?

Ideally, you should identify an overall communications goal and a set of three or four practical objectives, with one or two measurable results attached to each.

Example:

Overall communication goal: Raise the profile of EIF trade projects in Comoros

Specific objective: Raise awareness on the impact of inclusive trade on the fragrance market in Comoros.

Step 2: Choose your target audiences

Who do you want to talk to?

When designing your communications plan, it is important to identify the groups of individuals or institutions you want your communication products to reach. Knowing this will allow you to tailor your messages and the format of your communications for maximum reach.

For example, you would not speak in the same way to a minister than to a youth leader; different groups need different communications methods and different level of information.

The questions below will help you identify your key audiences:

1. Which group of individuals do you want to reach?
2. What are the information needs of this group?
3. Which audience will help you reach your communications objectives?
4. What advocates and supporters might strengthen our communications?

There are two ways you could identify your target audiences:

- Audience mapping: this helps you understand who the key players are in the environment you are trying to reach
- List of contacts and supporters that you need to involve from an early stage

The EIF secretariat is a great supporter of your communications efforts! Therefore, can include it in your target audience.

Step 3: Design your key messages

Identifying key messages to describe EIF's work in your country will help you distil the information that is critical for achieving your objectives.

What are the three or four most important things you need to say to your audience?

It may help to ask yourself:

1. What questions do people ask the most about EIF?

2. What do people need to understand in order for the project to succeed?
3. Why should your key audiences care about your project?

Facts should be used to support key messages. When drafting key messages, you should be able to identify two or three key facts to support each message.

Example:

Message: EIF strengthens the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Trade to design a coherent domestic trade development agenda.

Fact: EIF conducted 3 workshops last year to build the capacity of ministers in establishing a trade policy framework.

Step 4: Establish project milestones

Identify projects milestones that deserve communications and outreach activities

Communication at all stages of the project is important. Your audience needs to be informed about key developments so they will be able to follow the progress you are making.

When designing your communication plan, it is important to identify ahead of time the project milestones that will need to be communicated as well as clear deadlines related to producing the related communication material or activities.

Typical EIF project milestones include:

- DTIS/DTIS Update releases
- Events (project launch, trade conference, etc.)
- Donor meetings
- Project results confirmed
- Field visits
- Success stories

Step 5: Select your communication methods

What format will you use to convey your messages?

Your context, objectives and target audience will determine what communication methods will be most suitable. Ideally, you should aim to

prioritize two to four key methods, with a combination of written and oral methods.

First, you need to determine what information you are planning to disseminate (See Step 4 above). This will help you identify the most suitable channels or tools to reach our audiences.

Written and oral options

Written options:

- Flyers and brochures
- Web page
- Social media posts
- blog posts
- Newspaper articles
- Infographics

Oral options:

- Press conferences
- Events
- Workshops

The following questions can help you decide which method is the most suitable:

1. What methods of communication does your target audience prefer?
2. What staff and budget are available to produce communications material?
3. Does the project want to gather feedback while sharing information?
Are people likely to have questions?

Step 6: Draft a budget

Remember that you can include a communication line in your project budget.

The idea here is to assess what additional resources you will need to deliver your communications plan in addition to the time dedicated by staff on communications activities. The first questions you need to ask are:

1. What resources do we need to deliver the communication plan?
2. What skills and resources do we already have and what do we need?

3. What can we do for free?

Usually, extra costs for communications activities are the following:

- Designers
- Printing
- Photographers
- Videographers

Step 7: Establish a workplan with clear deliverables and deadlines

You may need to use a variety of activities in order to roll out your communication plan. The activities might be one-time, periodic or ongoing. When developing your workplan, you need to identify the key activities you will need to complete in order to roll out this communication plan.

Consider the different steps that will need to be achieved to produce a certain deliverable. There might be several and they need to be accounted for in your workplan.

Example:

Production of a brochure:

1. Draft content
2. Approve content by supervisor
3. Translate content (if needed)
4. Design brochure (this might involve hiring a designer and several rounds of review)
5. Final approval

Build in more time than you think you need, especially if you know you require the approval and involvement of senior people. Doing things at the last minute, such as printing, or booking venues, almost costs more – and brings in more stress!

Below is an example of what a workplan could look like:

Activity	Responsible staff	Supporting staff	Start date	Deadline
Promotional brochure	Mrs. A	Mr. V	1/05/20	1/10/20
Social media presence	Mr. V	Mrs. A & Mr. B	Ongoing	Ongoing

Launch event	Mrs. A	EIF team	1/07/20	4/11/20
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Step 8: Monitor the results and performance of your communications activities

Review your communication plan during and after its implementation. Look for ways to improve. Did you reach your audiences? How did they respond?

The review can be either a stand-alone activity or one part of an overall program review. Before you implement the plan, you should decide with your team how and when to review the plan. This reminds staff that it's important to learn and improve over time.

Examples of indicators you could use to monitor and evaluate your performance:

- number of social media followers
- media coverage following an event
- number of views on videos
- number of sessions on website