



COMMUNICATION

Section Overview

Effective communication strategies are critical to advance the APSE mission, values, and positions at all levels of public policy advocacy. To effectively communicate for legislative change, it is necessary to have a targeted message, aimed at influencing a specific audience, with instructions on what they can do to influence the outcomes. This section provides information, advice, and resources to assist in considering different communication strategies, developing a communications plan, and implementing specific communication approaches.

Practical Tips

1. Articulate a positive message.
2. Develop a communication plan.
3. Understand the strengths and weaknesses of different communication strategies.

Different Communication Mediums

There are many ways the APSE message can be shared including print, electronic and social media. Each medium has different strengths and weaknesses. You will need to choose the effective medium which will depend on the message you are sharing, the audience you hope to touch, and the purpose for communicating.

For more information about different strategies and the strengths and weakness, see the section titled, “Communication Strategies” and refer to pages 42 to 44 in the following resource:

Website: <http://bit.ly/1J5Uvga>

Messaging

As an APSE leader advocating for policy changes, it is important to have a clearly articulated message about the problem and proposed solution. Written information helps keep a coalition on message. Creating and agreeing on a message allows you and your allies to use the same language to describe and promote your position. Consistency will provide policymakers with a more consistent message from advocates. Not only does this help policymakers understand the issue as framed by APSE and its allies, it also makes the message more meaningful by showing the broader appeal as other constituency groups use the same message.

For more information on how to develop a message using the “Five W’s;” who, what when, where, and why, refer to page 30 in the following resource:

MT Non Profit: <http://bit.ly/LPtVbU> (page 30)



Communication Plan

Having a communication plan can provide an effective structure to design and implement communication strategies. There are many ways a plan can be structured. Specific areas to address in a communication plan may include:

- **Target audience:** Identify the primary target for the message.
 - For example, you may be targeting communication to APSE chapter members to advocate for Employment First policy. The target audience would be APSE chapter members.
- **Concrete actions for the audience:** Identify what you are asking the target audience to do.
 - For example, you may be asking APSE chapter members to contact their legislator to pass a specific bill.
- **Mode(s) of communication:** Identify how the target audience will be reached.
 - For example, you may opt to use email and social media to reach out with APSE chapter members on a matter that requires immediate attention.
- **Allies and supporters:** Identify other advocacy groups, people, and allies with overlapping missions and beliefs that might support your advocacy efforts.
 - For example, an APSE chapter seeking to advance employment policy might benefit from teaming up with a poverty advocacy organization. Often times, more support is better.
- **Responsibilities and tasks:** Identify specific tasks that need to be completed to achieve the communication plan, with deadlines and people responsible for completing them.
 - Specific tasks may include writing/developing the communication, disseminating the message, fielding questions, soliciting help from allies, etc.
- **Schedule of communication:** Identify when communication will be initiated and frequency.

Tips for Working with the Media

Communicating with media outlets is one way to reach a wide audience with a focused message. Television news stations, local newspapers, and news related websites may be worth considering. The following resources provide good insights and suggestions about how to work with the media.

How to write a News Release: <http://bit.ly/1doMcZf>



Communication Strategies

There are many different communication strategies that you can use as an APSE leader. Choosing the most effective strategy or strategies will be important as you pursue your advocacy work. Below is a list of approaches and resources to assist you in developing your communications.

Email & Social Media

Electronic communications can be efficient mechanisms to connect and rally advocacy allies in short time. More information about effectively using electronic mediums and social media can be found here:

Using Social Media for Advocacy: <http://bit.ly/1aS8We2>

Press-release

A press-release can provide your allies and general public a brief synopsis of important information. Since press-releases are intended for a wide audience, it is important to avoid jargon and prioritize information. Press-releases can be distributed widely to media outlets, as well as your allies for distribution within their networks.

For a detailed tip sheet and template press-releases, see pages 31 to 34 in this resource

MT Non Profit: <http://bit.ly/LPtVbU>, p. 31-34

Newsletters, opinion pieces, interviews, and white papers

Other strategies to spread the APSE message and vision are through newsletters, opinion and editorial pieces (also known as op-ed), and white papers. Interviews by interested media outlets or groups are also possible. Together, these mechanisms provide avenues to challenge the status quo, draw attention to important topics, and suggest solutions to present day issues. See the following resource for more information about these strategies.

Op-ed MT Non Profit: <http://bit.ly/LPtVbU> (pages 40-42)

Questions from the Media: MT Non Profit: <http://bit.ly/LPtVbU> (pages 43-46)