STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION II: MESSAGES (SC5L)

Module
Strategic Communication (SC)

Format
Presentation

Purpose
This presentation contributes to the module learning objectives by describing steps 4-8 of a communications strategy: messages, formats, pretesting, implementation, and evaluation. The main focus is on how to craft good policy messages by identifying policy-relevant findings, explaining their implications, and finally, creating actionable recommendations.

Time Required
• 45 min.

Activity Description
PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes. This presentation picks up from step 4 of the communication strategy introduced in the earlier presentation entitled Strategic Communication I: Policy Goal, Audiences, and Objectives (SC1L).

The majority of time will be spent on messages, helping participants understand three key components of a good policy message: data, implications, and recommendations. The majority of the presentation is lecture style, but participants should be encouraged to ask questions to ensure they have a good understanding of these core concepts. In addition, there is one section where the facilitator will walk through examples so that participants can practice as a group, drawing out the implications and recommendations of data. The facilitator will show the findings, and then ask participants to determine the implications and recommendations before showing the pre-written suggestions on screen.

Typically, participants see the data element as straightforward, and struggle more with implications and recommendations. As researchers writing journal articles (or the like), participants have often been encouraged to include broad, vague recommendations at the end of their work. This type of recommendation is really more of an implication, indicating needs. It can be hard for participants to accept that statements such as “there is a need for greater investment in maternal health services” are not true recommendations. At the same time, as researchers and “unbiased observers,” they may be hesitant to make such specific recommendations for action. They also may not know much about the programs and resource allocations relevant to their topic to
formulate strong recommendations. Acknowledge these challenges, and push them to try their best; questions like this will be ongoing throughout their career if they choose to break out of academia and try to influence policies or programs.

While these concepts might seem easy to them during the presentation, they may still have difficulty applying them to their own work.

This presentation is an essential companion to a presentation entitled Strategic Communication I: Policy Goal, Audiences, and Objectives (SC1L). Both presentations are fundamental to the workshop curriculum and should always be included.

**Key Learning Concept(s)**

- Understanding the importance of selecting policy-relevant findings.
- Understanding that implications help explain why the findings are important to address, and also build logical connections between findings and recommendations.
- Understanding that recommendations must build on findings and implications, and be actionable and SMART to the extent possible.

**Materials Needed**

- Laptop and projector

**Associated Exercises**

- Crafting Evidence-Based Policy Messages
- Elevator Speech
- Evidence-Based Policy Messages: Individual work
- 60-Second Soundbite