Policy Communication Training Toolkit
FACILITATOR GUIDE

EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY MESSAGES: INDIVIDUAL WORK (SC8A)

Module
Strategic Communication (SC)

Format
Worksheet

Purpose
This session contributes to the module learning objectives by giving participants an opportunity to practically apply lessons learned in the Strategic Communication II presentation. Here they will use their own research or data to create evidence-based messages with key findings, implications, and recommendations for a policy audience.

Time Required
- 45-60 mins.

Activity Description
This worksheet can be completed by participants during workshop time or can be assigned as homework so that participants have ample opportunity to think through the key concepts. Before they leave for the day, explain each part of the worksheet and give examples of the type of content and level of detail that are required.

The first page repeats the worksheet from exercise SC2A, where participants identified their policy goal, target audiences, communication objectives, and anticipated outcomes. Participants may simply build on the work they did for that worksheet previously, or may choose to further refine elements of the worksheet given the feedback they’ve received and additional learning they’ve completed.

The second page of the worksheet is the main focus: Messages. This part of the worksheet asks participants to apply what they learned in session SC5L, Strategic Communication II: Messages; and session SC6E, Crafting Evidence-Based Policy Messages, in which they applied the concepts from the presentation through small group work.

- Data: Participants need to identify the most important policy-relevant data from their research or for the topic they are focusing on. They may choose to identify more than three, but should keep the number of key findings manageable for the type of product they are moving toward (such as a policy brief, policy presentation, blog, or social media content).
• **Implications**: Based on the key data, participants explain the implications of each finding. Remember that implications answer the “so what?” question for each key finding. Participants may write implications that tie several of the key findings together, or may have an implication for each finding.

• **Recommendations**: Building on the key data, the implications, and the policy goal, audiences, and communications objectives identified on page 1, participants write SMART recommendations. It is challenging to meet all five SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Action-Oriented, Realistic, Time-Bound), but encourage participants to be intentional about why they are unable to meet any of the criteria. Recommendations may build on one or more implications, or participants might have multiple recommendations based on the data and implications. Participants often struggle with making concrete recommendations that are clearly linked to the audience, key findings, and implications.

The most important part of the worksheet is the Messages section on data, implications, and recommendations, which participants should complete fully and thoughtfully. In addition, ask them to spend a few minutes considering the following sections and noting their ideas.

• **Formats**: Given the audiences identified and messages they have developed, participants should consider what formats of materials would be most appropriate to convey the messages.

• **Implementation**: Considering implementation is artificial for many participants, but is an important exercise to think through what they might do if given the opportunity. Ask them to share some ideas for the activities they would conduct to communicate their messages, and to think about what types of financial and human resources would be required to implement those activities.

• **Monitoring and Evaluation**: Participants do not need to develop a full monitoring and evaluation plan, but should note some ideas for how they might measure the implementation activities.

Participants initially struggle with these concepts and they will likely not be able to fully develop their ideas in this time period. That is okay. Encourage them to do as much as possible and to push themselves to at least think critically about what information they might need to know before they can fill this out completely and accurately.

**Key Learning Concept(s):**

• Creating an evidence-based message with research findings, implications, and
action-oriented recommendations for a specific audience.

**Materials Needed:** Strategic Communication Worksheet II

**Associated Exercises:**
- Strategic Communication Worksheet I (SC2A)

**Required Preparation:**
- View Strategic Communication I and II Presentations