

Building my public forum participation strategy: A step-by-step outline

Goals

Your Public Forum Participation Strategy begins here by succinctly stating your personal communications goals and target audiences. You identified these in the worksheet, “Defining My Public Communications Goals.”

Goals(s):

Target Audience(s): (List them in priority order, with the most important first.)

Target audiences

Next, Examine each Target Audience individually, in priority order. In turn, list the ways members of each audience receive their information about health care topics.

(For example, physician members of a particular medical society receive news through newsletters, other publications, meetings and conferences sponsored by that society. State lawmakers receive information from their staff, members of their party, lobbyists and associations, news media, social media and directly through public meetings, correspondence and visits.)

Target Audience	Primary Information sources
A.	1. 2. 3.
B.	1. 2. 3.
C.	1. 2. 3.

Inventory of communications tactics

Using the chart above, think about the most effective ways you could voice your viewpoints and recommendations to reach your most important audiences. List as many as you can. You’ll make decisions later about which activities to pursue.

Examples of communications tactics:

- Direct outreach: meetings, letters, emails, phone conversations
- Letters to the editor or opinion pieces in professional journals or news outlets
- Public speech: testify at public hearings, speak at town hall meetings
- Professional appearances: Speak at professional conferences, participate in community educational forums
- Social media activity: Post information on selected social media outlets, offer commentary on others' social media posts, publish a blog or be a guest blogger
- Media interviews: Become a source or spokesperson for media stories about topics on which you have special expertise

Ways You Could Voice Your Viewpoints:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Making a tactical plan

Review Your Key Messages. You solidified them in the worksheet, "How to Tailor My Health Care Key Messages." If you haven't done so already, write your key messages using the tips in that Key Messages worksheet.

Go back to your Goals. Choose one. With that goal in mind, choose the highest-priority target audience related to that goal. Now, look at your inventory of communications tactics, and match a tactic to the target audience you chose, including a time frame for implementing that tactic. (Example: The goal is to use communications to help persuade your state medical society to take a public stand on a Medicaid-related public policy issue. Audience is the board and members of the medical society. Your tactic is to write an opinion piece for the medical society's online publication, so it appears before the state legislature goes back into session.)

Continue this process of matching actions you can take to achieve your communications goals and to reach your most important target audiences. Different goals may have different priority audiences. The number and types of tactics will vary from goal to goal and audience to audience. It is likely that different audiences will relate to different goals. The timing and number of tactics will depend upon how much time you choose to devote to your public forum strategy.

Create a plan that is organized something like the one below. You want to tie any activity directly to one of your communications goals and make sure you are effectively reaching the target audiences you have defined. You can tailor the format of your plan and use an Excel spreadsheet, if you like.

Example:

Goal #1:			
Audience A	Tactic 1	Timing	
	Tactic 2	Timing	
	Tactic 3	Timing	
Audience B	Tactic 1	Timing	
	Tactic 2	Timing	
Audience C	Tactic 1	Timing	
	Tactic 2	Timing	
	Tactic 3	Timing	
	Tactic 4	Timing	
Goal #2:			
Audience B	Tactic 1	Timing	
	Tactic 2	Timing	
Audience D	Tactic 1	Timing	
	Tactic 2	Timing	
	Tactic 3	Timing	
	Tactic 4	Timing	
	Tactic 5	Timing	
Audience E	Tactic 1	Timing	
	Tactic 2	Timing	
	Tactic 3	Timing	

Measuring success

Set up a schedule to review how you are doing on your plan. Evaluate what went well, and what didn't. Keep track of your tactical progress in your plan, as well as the results you see.