



CREATING YOUR SOCIAL MARKETING PLAN



S O C I A L M A R K E T I N G T A T E A M

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One of your RFA requirements is to develop a social marketing plan that will serve as your road map to communications and outreach.

Social marketing is the practice of using commercial marketing strategies to drive behavior change around a social issue. Developing a social marketing plan can help an organization be more strategic and audience-focused in its communications efforts—and achieve better results.

Answering the following questions will ensure you create a plan that clearly identifies the steps required to develop partnerships that will strengthen and expand your system of care and lead to sustainability.

While these questions are straightforward, this process has many layers, so be sure to include representatives from the audiences you want to reach, as well as your Social Marketing TA Provider, along the way.

1. What Is My Social Marketing Goal?

For organizations and government agencies, goals can focus on foundational activities such as sustainability and membership growth, or on programmatic activities, such as increasing access to services. Often the social marketing goal(s) support an overall organizational goal. For most system of care communities, one of the primary goals is obtaining tangible support for expanding the program. No matter the goal(s), it's important to obtain buy-in on them early on so everyone involved in the planning process is aligned. How you use social marketing to achieve your goals will be unique to your organization and based on your answers to the questions in this worksheet.

2. Who Is the Primary Audience?

Systems of care engage multiple groups for the benefit of children, youth, and families, but reaching all of these groups—particularly within a one-year period—is not practical or realistic. Think about the one or two key audiences that you need to get on board to obtain the support necessary to facilitate state, tribal, or region-wide implementation. Although there are multiple audiences that would be helpful in this endeavor, it's important to select the top few to determine which might be most likely to partner with you and move forward on the behavior change continuum. Don't forget to include internal audiences in this mix.

3. Who Are the Most Influential People Within This Audience?

As the saying goes, it's not what you know, it's *who* you know. Who are the key people within your audience(s) that can open doors and create new opportunities or strengthen existing relationships to help you reach your goal? Who are the early adopters that are already up-to-speed and on board with systems of care? These are key allies who can help you bring others into the mix.

4. What Do You Want This Audience to Do?

Now that you know whom you want to reach, what exactly do you want them to do? It is important to keep this as simple and easy to accomplish as possible. You should think about how the audience can benefit from this behavior change, as well as why they aren't already doing what you want them to do. What are the barriers to their receiving and acting on information? What, if any, are the cultural implications of adopting this behavior? What beliefs already exist in the community about the issue? When you develop messages in the next step, incorporate information or data that address these realities, addressing benefits and barriers.

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5. What Are the Three Most Compelling Messages for This Audience and These Individuals?

If you were in an elevator with the individuals listed in Question 3 and had time to share only three sentences, what would they be? Keep them short, simple, and compelling. Make sure they address what your audience cares about and show the relevance of the issue. What can you say that will overcome the barriers mentioned in Question 4? If the barrier, for instance, is funding, then your message should incorporate data about the cost effectiveness of systems of care. You should ensure that your messages are effective by informally soliciting input from members of your audience to determine language that will resonate with them.

6. What Are the Best Ways to Reach This Audience (Channels) and Its Influential Members?

Since you are not likely to be in an elevator with all of the people listed in Question 3, you need to find out where they are and how to reach them. What are the best ways to reach your audience—particularly, the individuals whom you have identified as being the most influential members of that audience? These are your channels. Channels may include other partners, important community members, and media, including traditional and digital.

7. How Will You Use These Channels to Reach Your Audience and Its Influential Members?

Now that you have identified which channels are best for reaching your audience, how will you use those channels to do it? Will you coordinate a community event, conduct media outreach, host a press conference, or assemble thought leaders at a roundtable?

8. What Are the Activities, Events, and Materials That Will Support Your Outreach?

What are the activities, events, and/or materials—to be used by your selected channels—that will most effectively carry your message to the intended audiences? The activity might be a community event to raise awareness, or it might be a one-on-one meeting with a policymaker, depending on your social marketing goal. The event might be raising awareness in celebration of National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day. The material could be a fact sheet or infographic on cost savings that engages and conveys your messages to this audience and addresses benefits and barriers of what you are asking them to do.

Consider:

- Appropriateness to audience, goal, and message
- Relevance to desired outcomes
- Climate of community toward the issue/activity
- Cultural competence (including language)

Before you commit to activities, events, or materials, plan to pre-test them with the intended audiences and, in some cases, with people who manage message channels—elders, community leaders, and communications professionals in key stakeholder organizations. This will ensure the message is both effective and conveyed in a culturally competent way.

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9. How Will You Evaluate Your Plan?

Your social marketing plan is a living document and, once you begin implementation, it's likely to evolve. Be sure to account for this process evaluation in your original plan to quantify your social marketing by assessing what was done; when, where, and how it was done; and who was reached. Process evaluation is also a good time to make mid-course corrections.

Ongoing evaluation and mid-course corrections also allow you to:

- Identify milestones
- Determine strengths and weaknesses
- Identify obstacles
- Create and implement new approaches for success
- Consult with social marketing and communications technical assistance providers

Questions? Need more information? Reach out to your social marketing technical assistance provider at any time at SOCmarketingTA@vancomm.com.