

High Performance Communications: A Georgia Family Connection Toolkit

High Performance Communications

Participant Guide



*Developed by: Georgia Family Connection Partnership
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About the Toolkit

The High Performance Communications Toolkit was created as a resource for Georgia Family Connection coordinators. It is based on research and best practices developed by experts in the field, such as the Communications Consortium Media Center and Spitfire Strategies, with tools, tips, and tricks developed specifically for coordinators by Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP).

The Toolkit contains six modules designed to be facilitated by GaFCP community facilitators to small groups. Its flexible format is ideal for a 90-minute workshop at regional collaborative meetings or a 60-minute Web conference.

Modules

Module 1: High Performance Communications begins with an overview of the Toolkit and then introduces strategy, implementation, and support – the three building blocks of strategic communications.

Module 2: Building the Foundation introduces four strategies that help you define your vision, choose goals, set SMART objectives, and identify your target and target audience.

Module 3: Message Development continues with strategies that help you create focused and targeted core messages, including an elevator speech about your collaborative.

Module 4: Creating Effective Materials provides resources and tips for selecting appropriate templates, integrating your message, and creating a publications portfolio.

Module 5: Engaging Others shows you how to build valuable partnerships, conduct outreach, evaluate your communications, and integrate your communications.

Module 6: Speaking for Success provides tips for improving your public speaking skills and for training the messengers who will deliver your message.

Toolkit Contact

The *High Performance Communications Toolkit* was developed by Georgia Family Connection Partnership. For more information about the toolkit, contact:

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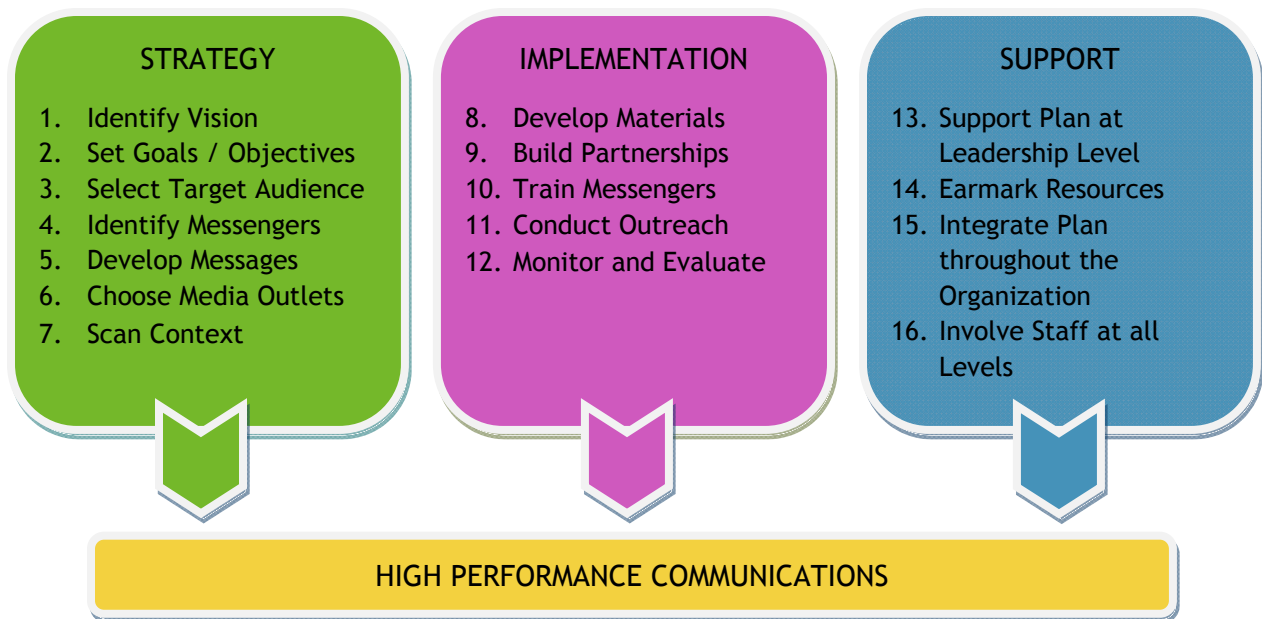
Why High Performance Communications?

If you have both eyes focused on the goal to improve outcomes for Georgia’s children, families, and communities, chances are you’re a Georgia Family Connection coordinator well on your way to creating a high performance collaborative. So why would you need High Performance Communications?

While you understand the work of Family Connection and the positive impact it has in Georgia, others may not. A lack of effective communications could mean missed opportunities for those who need Family Connection the most – Georgia’s children and families – or missed opportunities to leverage resources or participate in partner initiatives.

High Performance Communications uses a strategic approach to help collaboratives be more deliberate, innovative, savvy, and less reactive in their communications practice.

Similar to the Family Connection strategic planning process, this approach uses strategy, implementation, and support components to make measurable improvements in your work. So even if you’ve never worked on a communications plan before, this process may seem quite familiar, and you may already recognize several of the 16 strategic communication practices listed below.



INFORMATION SHEET

16 Essential Strategic Communications Practices

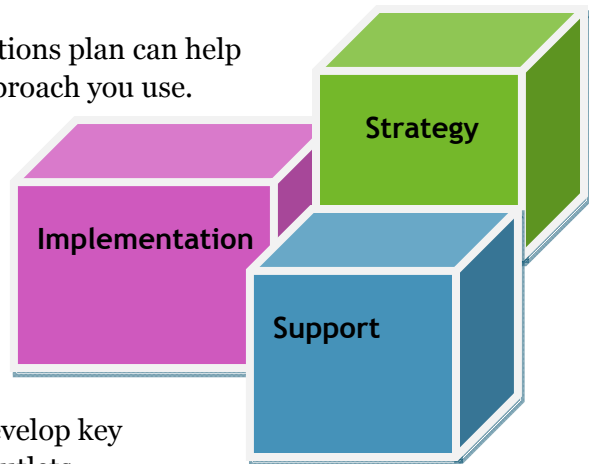
The Building Blocks of a Communications Plan

When you want to motivate supporters, inform policymakers, announce an event, or deliver information, how do you plan your communications? Do you use the intuitive approach and go with what comes to mind? Do you use the frantic approach and quickly jot a first draft, ask anyone you can find to review it, and then go with it? Or do you carefully plan your communications, but sometimes get the feeling that you might be missing something important?

Understanding the building blocks of a communications plan can help improve your communications no matter which approach you use.

Strategy

Lewis Carroll said, “If you don’t know where you are going, every road leads you there.” The good news is that the first building block – Strategy – will help you map a plan to accomplish your communications objective. A good strategy includes communications practices that help you identify your vision, choose goals and objectives, develop key messages, identify messengers, and choose media outlets.



Implementation

The second building block – Implementation – goes beyond showing you how to develop effective materials. It includes communication practices that help you build partnership, train messengers to carry your key messages, conduct outreach, and evaluate your communications.

Support

The third building block – Support and Integration – takes your communications to the next level by allocating resources for communications practices and integrating those practices throughout your organization.

Putting it All Together

The three building blocks of a communications plan include the 16 essential strategic communications practices on the following page, as defined in a resource prepared for the Communications Consortium Media Center, [Strategic Communications Audit](#).

After the introduction, review the case study on page 5 and use the worksheet on page 6 to list the number of communications practices you can identify.

Essential Strategic Communications Practices

Strategic Communications Practices	Quality Criteria/Standards	
Strategy	1. Identify vision	The communications vision is aligned with, but distinct from, the organization's overall mission.
	2. Choose goals	Goals and outcomes are well defined, measurable, and help guide a defined plan of action.
	3. Select target audiences	Audiences are specific (not the general public) and include key decision makers or individuals with influence on the issue.
	4. Develop messages	Messages are specific, clear, and persuasive, reflect audience values, and include a solution or course of action.
	5. Identify messengers	Messengers are seen as credible by the target audiences, and can be recruited and available to the cause.
	6. Choose Media Outlets	Outlets (e.g. both in the air (media) and on the ground) are chosen for their access and availability to target audiences.
	7. Scan the context	Risks and contextual variables that can affect communications success are identified and factored into planning possible.
Implementation	8. Develop effective materials	Materials are developed in attractive, accessible, and varied formats for maximum exposure and visibility.
	9. Build valuable partnerships	Linkages exist with internal and external stakeholders who can help align with and carry the message.
	10. Train messengers	Internal and external messengers are trained in key messages and are consistent in their delivery.
	11. Conduct steady outreach	Outreach and dissemination to audiences through multiple outlets is regular and sustained.
	12. Monitor and evaluate	Activities and outcomes are regularly monitored and evaluated for accountability and continuous improvement.
Support and Integration	13. Support communications at the leadership level	Management understands and supports communications as an integral part of organizational viability and success.
	14. Earmark sufficient resources	Fundraising regularly includes dedicated resources for communications practice.
	15. Integrate communications	Communications is seen as an integral part of every organizational project or strategy.
	16. Involve staff at all levels	Communications is not seen as an isolated function; most if not all staff members have some knowledge and/or participation in communications efforts.

The source of *Essential Strategic Communications Practices* is *Strategic Communications Audits*, prepared for the Communications Consortium Media Center. The audit is available at: www.mediaevaluationproject.org/WorkingPaper1.pdf.

CASE STUDY

Environmental Institute of Georgia (EIOG)

About EIOG

Environmental Institute of Georgia (EIOG) is a nonprofit that provides education, advocacy, advice, and action on a full range of environmental issues for communities across Georgia.

Its vision is to establish an institute that will educate, stimulate, and motivate Georgians to protect and sustain a healthy, rich, and diverse environment for present and future generations.

Its mission is to provide environmental education and legislative support to communities across Georgia by:

- Protecting the state's diverse and sustainable natural environment
- Establishing a state-of-the-art green space to serve the community
- Providing conduits for environmental science and interdisciplinary studies and research
- Impacting the legislative and political process through statewide training
- Communicating to inform and educate through statewide publications

Communications Plan

As a new organization, EIOG set a 12-month goal of establishing its organization as an environmental resource. It developed a Web site and factsheet to establish its overall mission, and set a goal to coordinate or host at least two educational events in 2009.

EIOG was offered the opportunity to coordinate the 2009 Fayette County Earth Day Festival, sponsored by all of the municipalities in Fayette County, and hosted by Peachtree City.

An Earth Day event team was formed that included volunteers from each city, representing their governments, schools, businesses, and nonprofits. The team met, formed committees, and collaborated on creating separate but integrated brochures about the event including a flyer, sponsorship packet, exhibitor packet, volunteer opportunities, and guidelines for an art contest. All of the brochures were added to the EIOG Web site under a separate Earth Day URL.

Next, the team developed a kick-off plan for the event to inform and solicit exhibitors, educations, sponsors, and volunteers. They combined their brochures into an information packet, created a PowerPoint presentation, and scheduled a kick-off event at City Hall in Peachtree City.

At the Earth Day kick-off, participants received information packets and a short presentation given by the EIOG executive director, Earth Day committee chairs, and the Peachtree City mayor. The presentation was televised, recorded, and later added to the EIOG and partner Web sites.

WORK SHEET

Strategy, Implementation & Support Plan

Strategy

1. What is the communications vision for this work?
 - a. _____

2. What are the measurable goals and outcomes that will help guide the plan of action?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

3. Who is the audience that will receive the message and the key decision makers who can influence the issue?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____

4. What are the key messages that reflect audience values and include a course of action?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____

5. Who will be recruited to help deliver the message and reach the target audience?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____

6. What media outlets will be used based on their access and availability to the audience?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____

7. What risks and contextual variables might affect the success of this communications?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____

Implementation

8. What materials will be developed for this communications plan?
- a. _____
- b. _____
9. Which partners can help carry the message?
- a. _____
- b. _____
10. What is the plan for training internal and external messengers?
- a. _____
- b. _____
11. What outreach is planned to disseminate the communications through multiple outlets?
- a. _____
- b. _____
12. How will the activities and outcomes be regularly monitored and evaluated?
- a. _____
- b. _____

Support

13. How will the communications be supported at the leadership level?
- a. _____
- b. _____
14. What funds and resources have been allocated for this work?
- a. _____
- b. _____
15. How will this communications be integrated throughout the organization?
- a. _____
16. How can staff at all levels get involved?
- a. _____
- b. _____

WORKSHOP EVALUATION FORM

High Performance Communications - Toolkit Introduction

Your feedback is critical to GaFCP to ensure we are meeting your educational needs. We would appreciate it if you would take a few minutes to share your opinions with us so we can serve you better.

Date: _____

Facilitator(s): _____

	Strongly Agree			Strongly Disagree		
1. The content was as described in the announcement.	1	2	3	4	5	
2. The workshop was applicable to my job.	1	2	3	4	5	
3. I will recommend this workshop to other partners.	1	2	3	4	5	
4. The workshop was well paced within the allotted time.	1	2	3	4	5	
5. The facilitator was a good communicator.	1	2	3	4	5	
6. The facilitator was knowledgeable on the topic.	1	2	3	4	5	
7. The material was presented in an organized manner.	1	2	3	4	5	
8. I would be interested in attending additional modules in the High Performance Communications Toolkit.	1	2	3	4	5	

9. Given the topic, this workshop was: a. Too Short b. Right Length c. Too Long

10. In your opinion, was this workshop: a. Introductory b. Intermediate c. Advanced

11. Which of the following best describes your position?

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Connection coordinator | <input type="checkbox"/> Partner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Connection staff | <input type="checkbox"/> Policymaker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Connection board | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

12. How could this workshop be improved? _____

Thank you. Please return to the form to the facilitator.

