



Stronger Economies Together

Doing Better Together

Communication

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ARTICULATING THE VISION: A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY FOR A SET REGION

OVERVIEW

Purpose: During this session, participants will:

- Define the components of a communications strategy
- Conduct a stakeholder analysis to better understand the different communications needs for each audience
- Inventory internal and external audiences and indicate what SET components are relevant to each audience
- Conduct a SWOT analysis as part of an environmental scan to help craft the message
- Determine which channels will be used to reach each target audience
- Create messages that support the regional SET initiative

Estimated Time to Complete: 2 hours

Materials Needed:

- Flip charts
- Markers

Handouts:

- Communication Audience Matrix
- Communications Channel Matrix
- Communications Message Development
- Communications Stakeholder Analysis
- Communications SWOT Analysis

SLIDE 1**INSTRUCTIONS**

Have this slide up when participants enter the room.

This module is designed to be completed in approximately 2 hours including the time needed to *begin* working through the worksheets. Additional time should be devoted to completing the worksheets and finalizing the communications strategy for the regional SET initiative. It is recommended that the teams continue to meet after this session to complete the worksheets and meet collectively as a group to share results among the teams. A communications “team” could be formed by recruiting members from each of the working teams to work on finalizing the communications strategy by pulling everything together.



SLIDE: 1

TIME: 1 MIN

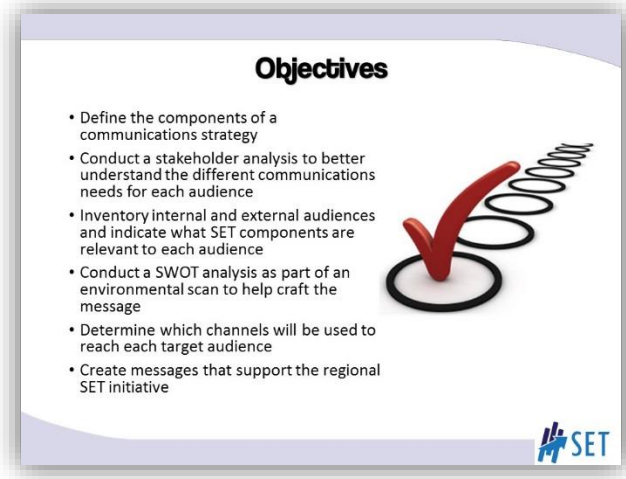
SUPPLIES:

HANDOUTS:

SLIDE 2

INSTRUCTIONS

Objectives of this module are listed. While this module is not designed to make the SET team public relations and communications experts, it will help strengthen their community relations work in regards to SET. The module consists of several worksheets that will help the SET team prepare a communications strategy for the SET regional plan.



SLIDE: 2

TIME: 2 MIN

SUPPLIES:

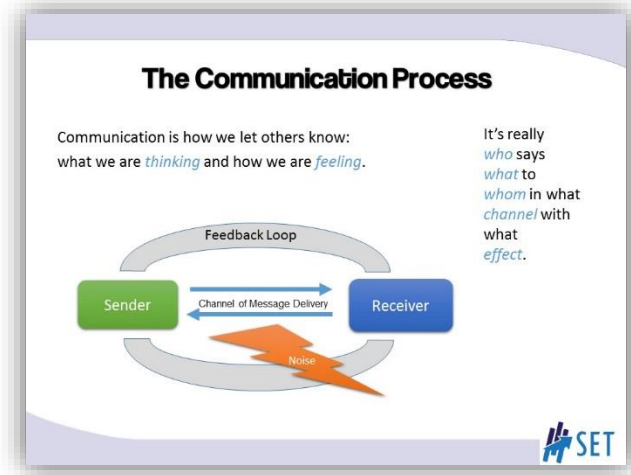
HANDOUTS:

SLIDE 3

INSTRUCTIONS

In order to understand how to develop a communication strategy, it is important for people to first understand the communication process.

A brief overview of the communications process shows the various components that explains why communication is not easy. It involves a sender of information and a receiver. This information, or message, is conveyed through some type of channel. A feedback loop is necessary to know that the message was actually received by the receiver. Noise is anything that breaks the feedback loop preventing communication from occurring. Many types of interruptions and distractions can break this feedback loop resulting in miscommunication or no communication at all.



SLIDE: 3

TIME: 3 MIN

SUPPLIES:

HANDOUTS:

SLIDE 4

INSTRUCTIONS

Use this slide to generate reasons why it is important to be intentional about developing a communications strategy.

Creates linkages...It's important to stay connected to each other so the "right hand knows what the left hand is doing." It's also critical that everyone internal to the project speaks with one voice and is consistent with the message.

Builds external awareness...The majority of folks in the region may have never heard of SET; therefore, getting people to know about the project is critical to generating support.

Generates external support...The more support there is the greater likelihood the project will be successful.

Eases engagement...Getting key groups and individuals on board is easier with a well-defined strategy.

Identifies ways to reach audiences...It's vital to spend some time identifying and analyzing them. Participants need to understand that simply running a news release in the paper or posting something on Facebook is not enough.

Aids in crafting messages...One size doesn't fit all, as different audiences may require messages that are crafted differently.

Showcases achievements...Recognizing achievements and successes along the way keeps the project relevant and stakeholders supportive



SLIDE: 4

TIME: 3 MIN

SUPPLIES:

HANDOUTS:

SLIDE 5

INSTRUCTIONS

The list provides the basic sections of a communications strategy. Each one will be explored in detail in the slides that follow. Be sure participants understand that although this strategy lists components (such as goals) that are also found in the regional SET plan, this process will help guide them build awareness and support for the regional SET plan.



SLIDE: 5

TIME: 3 MIN

SUPPLIES:

HANDOUTS:

SLIDE 6

INSTRUCTIONS

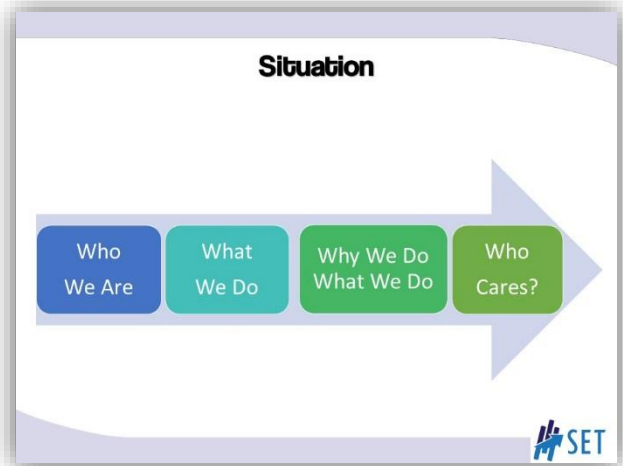
It is important for participants to keep these guiding principles in mind when thinking about ways to “sell” SET to the stakeholders in the region. Encourage them to think about each of these points:

We must first understand “us.” Why do we exist? Who do we represent?

Next, we must understand our purpose. What is it that we do? What do we hope to accomplish?

Then, we need to validate why we do what we do. How do we justify it? Comparing the current situation to where we want to be (the desired situation) helps to explain the importance of our work.

Finally, we have to answer the question, “Who cares?” Why should others support what we are doing? How does it affect them?



SLIDE: 6

TIME: 5 MIN

SUPPLIES:

HANDOUTS:

SLIDE 7

INSTRUCTIONS

Help the participants understand that stakeholder groups can be inside and outside the organization. Stakeholders are groups of people who have a stake or interest in the initiative. These groups become the target audiences. They can be internal or external. Internal stakeholders are closer to the cause and have a vested interest in seeing the project succeed. They often require a more thorough understanding of all the moving parts of the project and communication should be more frequent. External stakeholders are also critical to the project's success, and their interests can vary widely.

Two important variables when considering stakeholder groups are power and interest. Both variables are used to define four types of stakeholder groups, which will be discussed later.

Communicating with different audiences requires greater adaptation (framing) of the message because of the varied interests of the groups.



SLIDE: 7

TIME: 5 MIN

SUPPLIES:

HANDOUTS:

SLIDE 8

INSTRUCTIONS

Use these questions as “food for thought” as participants think about internal and external audiences.

It’s critical that internal communication is consistent and accurate. Everyone needs to speak the same language or a weaker and less credible message can result.

From an external perspective, you have to really “know your audiences” all the way around and investigate the preferred method(s) to communicate with each one.

It’s also important to consider what exactly is hoped for in return once the message is delivered to the respective audience. Do you wish for greater awareness and understanding or do you wish for more tangible actions such as active engagement in SET activities, financial support, etc.?

Audience	
Questions for Consideration	
Internal Audiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we stay connected with each other? • How do we stay informed and cross communicate our committee work across the larger group? 	External Audiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you need to know about them? • What do you want them to know about you? • What is the best way(s) to communicate with them? • What do you expect in return?

SLIDE: 8

TIME: 3 MIN

SUPPLIES:

HANDOUTS:

SLIDE 9

INSTRUCTIONS

The stakeholder matrix is a useful tool that describes how power and interest help to categorize stakeholder groups. The main point for participants to understand is that communicating with various audiences does depend on these factors.

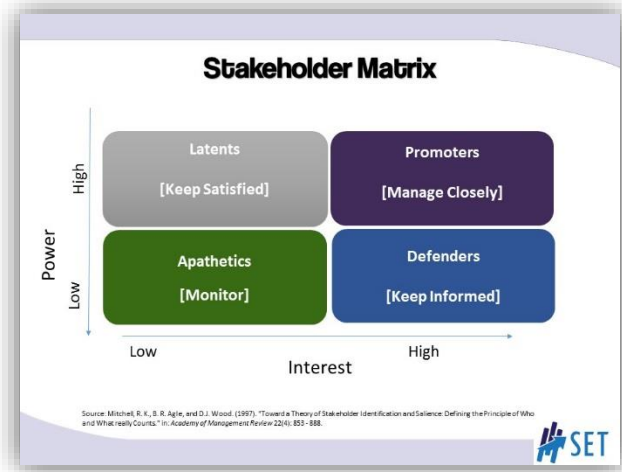
Powerful, highly interested stakeholders (Promoters) are the ones that require the most engagement and interaction. They should be managed closely.

Powerful, less interested stakeholders (Latents) require a substantial amount of engagement to keep them satisfied but not so much that they become tired of the message.

Less powerful, highly interested stakeholders (Defenders) should be well informed and kept abreast of progress. Even though they do not have a lot of power over the project, they can be useful allies and be quite helpful at times.

Less powerful, less interested stakeholders (Apathetics) require minimum effort. They hold little interest or power, but they should be monitored occasionally but not bored with communication.

Activity: Distribute the Communications Stakeholder Analysis worksheet. Divide participants into four teams and have each team take one quadrant each and begin defining the latents, promoters, apathetics, and defenders. Some teams may identify the same stakeholder groups but place them in separate categories. That's okay. This exercise is designed to help them know how to differentiate the groups and think more carefully about each one. Consensus can be reached later regarding the exact placement of each audience type. This worksheet will be useful when deciding on appropriate channels to use in a later exercise.



SLIDE: 9

TIME: 15 MIN

SUPPLIES:

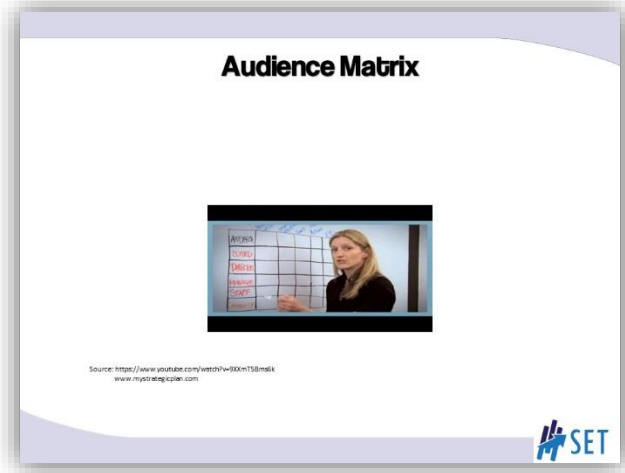
HANDOUTS: COMMUNICATIONS
STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

SLIDE 10

INSTRUCTIONS

This short video clip provides information on how messages should be adapted to various audiences.

Activity: After participants watch the video, distribute the Communications Audience Matrix worksheet. Have participants remain in their teams and decide what components of the SET initiative are relevant to whichever stakeholder type (latents, promoters, apathetics, defenders) their team identified. This will help tailor the message to the appropriate audiences in a later exercise.



SLIDE: 10

TIME: 15 MIN

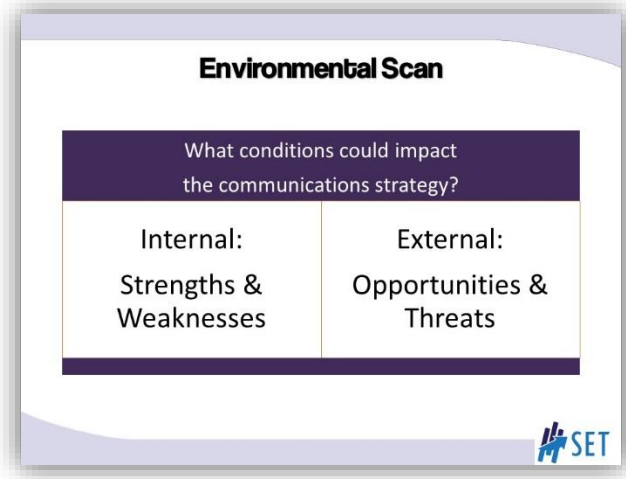
SUPPLIES:

HANDOUTS: COMMUNICATIONS AUDIENCE MATRIX

SLIDE 11

INSTRUCTIONS

Participants may already be familiar with the concept of a SWOT analysis. It is a useful tool when developing a communications strategy just as it can be useful in strategic planning. Conducting an environmental scan such as this is an important step in developing the communications plan. This scan is useful to understand the internal and external conditions that can impact how the message is received by the various stakeholder groups/target audiences.



SLIDE: 11

TIME: 2 MIN

SUPPLIES:

HANDOUTS:

SLIDE 12

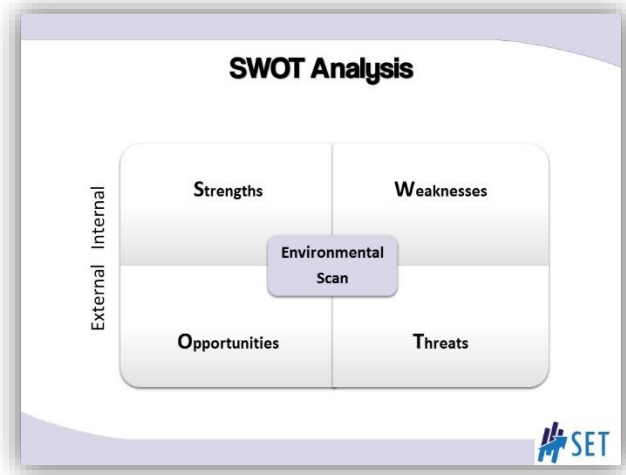
INSTRUCTIONS

A SWOT analysis is a useful part of the environmental scan that can identify internal and external factors that can affect the communication process both positively and negatively.

Internally, it's important to consider the strengths and weaknesses that exist within the initiative itself that could impact the way the message is developed and perceived. Can strengths (assets) be leveraged to overcome weaknesses (challenges)?

Externally, it's important to consider the opportunities and threats that exist outside the initiative that could impact the way the message is developed and perceived. Can opportunities (assets) be leveraged to overcome threats (barriers)?

Activity: Distribute the Communications SWOT Analysis worksheet. Have each team take one quadrant each and begin listing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.



SLIDE: 12

TIME: 15 MIN

SUPPLIES:

HANDOUTS: COMMUNICATIONS SWOT ANALYSIS

SLIDE 13


INSTRUCTIONS


Explain to participants that the communications strategy should be used to support the overall goals of SET and assist the regional team in reaching them by making it easier for stakeholder groups to understand the initiative and, perhaps, even become champions of it.

It's important to note that we are bombarded with literally thousands of messages every day. Have participants realize that the more thought that goes into this process will ultimately help drive success. It boils down to conveying a message that resonates and "hits home" with people. A successful message will include components that cause stakeholders to identify with the sheer importance of such an effort that causes them to perceive SET as a necessary and invaluable piece of the region's economic development puzzle.

Goals: Questions to Consider

- How can the communication process help support the goals of the SET region?
- What is the primary message that must be conveyed to key stakeholders (internal and external audiences) to help the SET region achieve its goals?





SLIDE: 13

TIME: 2 MIN

SUPPLIES:

HANDOUTS:

SLIDE 14

INSTRUCTIONS

Here are some key points to make in regards to message framing:



- Messages are derived from the goals and objectives of the project and delivered through appropriate channels to reach the target audience(s).
- Messages should be clear, concise, and originate from a credible source.
- Messages can cause people to think, feel, and act a certain way if crafted appropriately. It is important that messages are interpreted correctly. Remember, perception is reality in the communication process.
- Different audiences require different channels for message delivery. It's important to scan target audiences to know how they receive their information. Putting an article in the newspaper isn't good enough anymore. Strategic delivery is crucial to successfully getting the word out.

Ask participants to always keep in mind these guiding questions when crafting messages for the regional SET initiative. It's important to stay focused on the initiative, explain why you are doing it, and why it should matter to your constituents.

Message

Great messages:

- Are framed around project goals and objectives.
- Are conveyed clearly and initiated by a credible source.
- Cause people to think, feel, and act in such a way that supports the cause.
- Use different delivery channels for different audiences.
- Keep guiding questions at the forefront:
 - What is SET?
 - Why are we doing SET?
 - Why should it matter to your stakeholders?

SLIDE: 14

TIME: 5 MIN

SUPPLIES:

HANDOUTS:

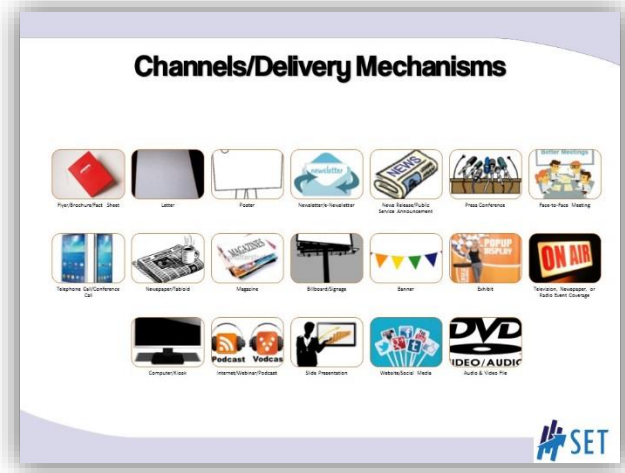
SLIDE 15
INSTRUCTIONS

Take a few minutes to gather feedback from participants about this list. Usually, people naturally want to start here when thinking about a communications strategy. It's important to stress to the group that without first considering everything else that has been discussed, the chosen delivery methods may or may not work. It takes careful planning.

There are many different channels and delivery mechanisms for relaying the message. Print media usually comes to mind, but today electronic media is very popular and effective. Sometimes called "new" media, electronic media such as social media platforms, podcasts, and webinars can be useful and less expensive than traditional media.

Again, it's important to stress that knowing your audiences(s) is the first step to determining which media are most appropriate to use.

Activity: Distribute the Communications Channel Matrix worksheet. Have each team take the audiences they listed on the Communications Audience Matrix worksheet and identify the appropriate channel, delivery mechanism, and number of times they expect to communicate with each audience.



SLIDE: 15

TIME: 15 MIN

SUPPLIES:

HANDOUTS: COMMUNICATIONS CHANNEL MATRIX

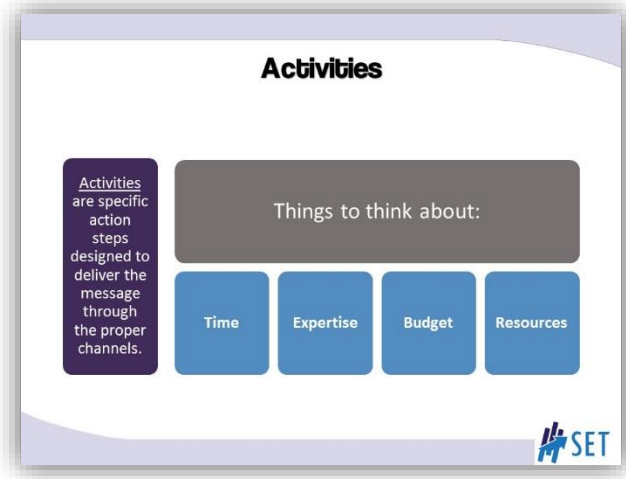
SLIDE 16

INSTRUCTIONS

This is the real “nuts and bolts” of the plan where participants apply things they have learned in order to create tangible activities that will communicate the “right messages to the right audiences.” Specific steps must take place to move a message through a channel to the receiver (target audience). It can be as simple as writing a news release and submitting it to the local newspaper’s assignment editor or as complex as arranging a press conference for multiple media outlets.

Because the SET initiative is largely dependent upon local volunteer efforts, it is important to consider four factors (time, expertise, budget, and resources) when embarking upon a communications strategy. Utilizing the talents and skills of local public relations, communications, and marketing professionals can greatly enhance the communications strategy and help ensure that activities are successful.

Activity: Distribute the Communications Message Development worksheet. Have each team begin crafting a message for the target audiences that have been identified keeping in mind the considerations above.



SLIDE: 16

TIME: 20 MIN

SUPPLIES:

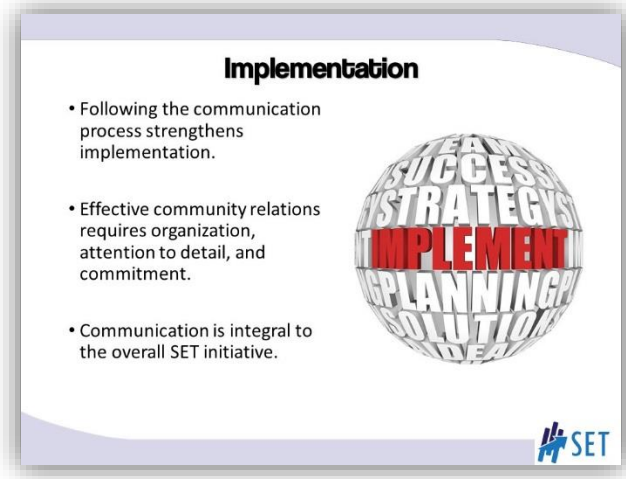
HANDOUTS: COMMUNICATIONS MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT

SLIDE 17

INSTRUCTIONS

Again, it is important to not underestimate the importance of thinking through effective ways to disseminate the important work that has been accomplished through the SET process. It is also important for the regional team to remember that just like the SET plan, a communications strategy is no good unless it is implemented. While it takes time and effort to develop such a strategy, the benefits will be well worth the investment.

Community relations is an integral part of helping the SET initiative succeed. Without proper buy-in from key stakeholders, the process will likely undergo a slow demise with little to no positive impact.



SLIDE: 17

TIME: 2 MIN

SUPPLIES:

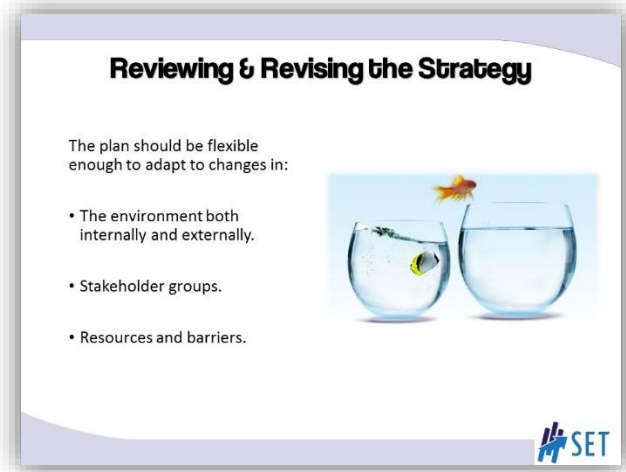
HANDOUTS:

SLIDE 18

INSTRUCTIONS

A communications strategy like any plan should be fluid, dynamic, and adaptable to the changing environment. Stress to the participants that this strategy should be reviewed when the regional SET plan is reviewed to make sure they both align well.

Stakeholder groups/target audiences should be reviewed periodically and adjusted as needed. The stakeholder, audience, and channel worksheets can assist with helping planning team members understand groups that may emerge, decline, or change over time.



SLIDE: 18

TIME: 2 MIN

SUPPLIES:

HANDOUTS:

SLIDE 19

INSTRUCTIONS

These are “take home” messages that can serve as concluding remarks to the communications module.

Final Thoughts

- Media relations is an important component of a communications strategy, but it isn't the only one.
- You are competing for people's increasingly shorter attention span. Make your messages matter.
- Tap into local resources to help you master your communications goals, and celebrate (and communicate!) success along the way.





SLIDE: 19

TIME: 1 MIN

SUPPLIES:

HANDOUTS:

SLIDE 20

INSTRUCTIONS

Allow time for any remaining questions.



SLIDE: 20

TIME: 5 MIN

SUPPLIES:

HANDOUTS:

SLIDE 21
INSTRUCTIONS

Be sure to include your contact information prior to beginning the session.



SLIDE: 21

TIME:

SUPPLIES:

HANDOUTS: