

Communications Planning Template

A Tool for *in motion* Communities

communities
in motion

im *in motion*[™]
Physical Activity - do it for life!

Why plan?

As an *in motion* community, you have a lot on your plate. A communication plan is just one more thing to do, but it can go a long way in setting you up for success. Here's what a communications plan can do for your *in motion* community action team:

- **Clear messages** – A documented plan will ensure your messages are clear, consistent, memorable, and effective.
- **Defined audiences** – Going through the process will help you identify who you need to reach, what they need to know and how best to communicate with them.
- **Focused effort** – A plan will help you determine which communication activities will help you achieve your *in motion* goals.
- **Co-ordinated approach** – We're all responsible for communicating. A plan will clarify roles and responsibilities in the communication process.

Step 1: Establish need to communicate

Let your current situation guide your communication plans. Taking stock of where you are will give you important clues about who, what, where, why and how you need to communicate.

Sources of information for your situation inventory include:

- relevant research done by you or others
- demographics and other statistics for your community
- your experience
- focus groups

Reviewing your overall *in motion* action plan will help you complete the worksheet on the next page.

Communications need worksheet

What are your long-term goals?

What are your *in motion* priorities at this point?

Why do you need a communication plan?

What steps have been taken already by you or others (e.g. surveys, promotions, programs) to address the issue?

What issues are most important to your community action team in this phase?

Who is most affected by this issue?

Who in your community would be involved in bringing about change?

Communications need worksheet continued...

What opportunities and benefits will your *in motion* activity provide for your community?

Why do you need to communicate?

Step 2: Set communication objectives

Identify three to five measurable communication objectives. They should support your key *in motion* priorities.

Objectives describe how communications will move your audience to **think, feel or do** something specific. They describe how you'll know if your communication efforts are successful. For example:

Instead of this	Try something like this
To raise awareness	Have someone from education join our action team by <i>[date]</i>
To increase understanding of the benefits of physical activity	Be invited to present to three potential partner organizations Increase participation by girls aged 14-17 by 25%
To provide information on <i>in motion</i> activities	<i>In motion</i> partners are distributing information to their networks on a regular basis

Your objectives will likely change over time. Review them as you progress through the six phases of the *in motion* community engagement model.

Smart objectives – Put your objectives to the test. Make sure they're SMART:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Time specific

When setting your objectives, consider how you will track progress and evaluate your success (see page 21). Set up any mechanisms required for tracking or evaluation before you implement your plan.

Step 3: Define audiences

Make a detailed list of all the individuals and groups who need to know about your activities and plans. Brainstorm what you know about each audience. What are their opinions and attitudes about the issues you'll address? How can they help you reach your objectives? This information will help you choose the most effective ways to communicate with each audience. Your audiences will likely include:

- Town, city or RM council
- City or town recreation department
- Parks & recreation associations in your area
- Health practitioners
- Schools, school boards, community school councils
- Community members

Audience profile worksheet

Use this worksheet to guide your discussion about each audience.

Audience	
Level of interest in your plans	
Level/type of participation required (be specific)	
Knowledge, attitudes and behaviours related to <i>in motion</i> and physical activity	
Anticipated reaction to <i>in motion</i> activities and messages	
Any barriers to this group's support or participation?	
What or who could motivate change or action in this group?	
Does this audience care about health, environmental, social or economic benefits?	
What are the best ways to communicate with this audience?	

Audience definition worksheet

Not all audience will require the same level of attention. Use this worksheet to decide which audiences are most important to achieving your *in motion* priorities and communication objectives right now.

Whose knowledge, attitudes and behaviour must be changed for you to meet your objectives? These groups are your **primary audiences**.

Who else is affected if you succeed in your goals? These groups are your **secondary audiences**.

Are there others who can influence your primary and secondary audiences? These groups may become *in motion* partners and **key communicators** – people who can help you get your message out.

Step 5: Determine key messages

Key messages are the most important points you want your audiences to remember. They should be **short and repeated often**. Key messages are not the sum total of the detail, supporting ideas and data you'll use in your communication.

Keep the following in mind as you develop your key messages:

Clear – Keep it simple to make sure people can understand and retain your messages.

Consistent – Make sure everyone on your action team delivers the same messages.

How many?

Keep it to between **three and five** messages per audience. Any more and they'll never remember.

Credible – Think about your audiences. Who do they look to for information? What will make your messages believable and trustworthy for them?

Repetition – People need to hear the same message several times – and often several ways – before it cuts through the clutter. Repeat, repeat, repeat.

Tone – What tone will move people to action? Should your message be reassuring, alarming, challenging? Keep in mind that people are more likely to remember and act on messages that are framed positively.

Interest – Speak to what matters to your audiences. Do they care about the environment? Health? The economy? Speak to **their interests** not your own.

Remember, people are the most important part of the communication process – talk to them, not about them

Think about your **audiences**
and what you want them to do, think or say.

What are the **three most compelling sentences** you could use to get that result?

Provincial *in motion* messages

Saskatchewan *in motion* provides the following key messages about the provincial movement. Use them as a starting point for developing your own messages tailored to your situation.

Audience	Messages	Supporting points
All	<p>Saskatchewan <i>in motion</i> is a province-wide movement aimed at increasing physical activity for health, social, economic and environmental benefits.</p>	<p>Our vision is that Saskatchewan people will be the healthiest, most physically active in Canada.</p>
		<p><i>In motion</i> blends provincial, regional and local resources with strong community leaders, schools, workplaces and health professionals to create the conditions for people to be physically active in their daily lives.</p>
Individuals	<p>You can be a leader.</p>	<p>No matter who you are, you can take the lead in providing, or advocating for, the conditions or opportunities that help people incorporate physical activity into their day.</p>
	<p>There are lots of easy, safe and fun ways to be active – many of them are right in your neighborhood or community.</p>	<p>Give specific examples.</p>
	<p>At least thirty minutes of physical activity, five days a week can have lasting health social, economic and environmental benefits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced risk of premature death caused by high blood pressure, obesity, depression, heart disease and stroke, Type II diabetes, colon cancer and osteoporosis. • You'll feel more energetic, sleep better and feel more relaxed, have stronger muscles and bones, improved fitness, better posture and balance, better health and healthy body weight.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased physical activity reduces stress, improves self-esteem and leads to more independence in later life. • What's good for your body is generally good for environment too. Activities like walking improve air quality and help protect our environment.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased physical activity reduces health care costs. • Activities like biking and walking can reduce costs to maintain our roadways.
	Join the movement. Try incorporating physical activity into your daily life and ask those you care about to join you.	
Partners and potential partners	We all have a role to play.	Give specific examples.
	Healthy people create a healthy community.	
	By working together, we can create change that is sustainable.	

Key message worksheet

Complete the following worksheet to design messages for specific audiences. Consider the information captured in your audience definition.

Audience	Messages

Step 6: Lay out your approach

What overall approach will you take? The best strategies support your *in motion* objectives and help you to meet the issues and sensitivities you know you'll face. It's important to ensure everyone involved in implementing your communications plan understands and agrees with your approach.

Here are some common approaches you may want to consider. Pick a few that meet your needs or come up with your own.

Capturing hearts & minds – People are better ambassadors if they have a sense of ownership in your activities. Win their hearts and minds, and you'll have allies in your *in motion* quest.

What's in it for me? – Different people will be attracted to different benefits of increased physical activity – social, environmental, economic, health. Find out what matters to various audiences and focus your efforts.

Receiver-oriented – One size does not fit all. Use different messages and methods to reach different audiences. The worksheets you completed on pages 7 and 8 will help you make the right choices.

Incremental approach – Don't try to share too much at once. Try to build awareness, understanding and support in stages, providing small bite-sized pieces of information along the way. Keep *in motion* on the radar in your community. Create as many opportunities as possible for getting your message out.

Positive approach – Try to present solutions rather than simply issues or problems.

Work through and with others – Don't try to go it alone. Look for opportunities to coordinate communication efforts with others. This will help you maximize your budget and your effectiveness

Step 7: Choose actions

Tactics describe how you'll carry out your strategies. This includes making choices about what tools you'll use and considering questions of timing, budget and resources.

Here are some tools to consider. Choose those that meet your needs at this stage. You'll find templates for most in the appendices of this document.

Events – Hold events to declare your community *in motion*, celebrate success, launch new programs or draw attention to specific issues in your community. Design the event to achieve your objectives and make it attractive enough to bring people in. Don't forget to invite the media.

Challenges – Community challenges are a great way to get people moving. Rally around existing provincial challenges or create one of your own. Take advantage of friendly community rivalries by challenging another community.

Newsletters articles – You might not have your own newsletter, but some of your partners might. And like most organizations, they likely scramble for content. Provide well-written, focused content (stories or ad fillers) for use in partner newsletters on a regular basis or as needed. Be sure you incorporate your key messages.

Media – Develop a relationship with the local media. Let them know who you are and what you're up to. If you're doing something that affects the community, they'll be interested. Media tools include:

- news releases
- media advisories
- media kits
- media challenges

Read more about engaging the media on page 21.

Paid (or unpaid) advertising – Advertise in your local newspaper, on radio, TV or community web sites. No budget? Ask the media to partner with you or use public service announcements (PSAs). There is no cost to run a PSA.

Presentations – Make presentations to community groups and organizations. Don't forget to include a call to action. What do you want from your audience?

Letters – Personalized letters are a good way to introduce your team and its plans to potential *in motion* partners, invite key stakeholders to events or solicit support.

Posters – Use posters to promote events, challenges and contests. Use high quality graphics and keep text to a minimum. Keep it simple. A poster that’s packed with text won’t be read.

Flyers and brochures – Think hard about this one. Brochures or flyers often come to mind, but aren’t always necessary. Before you do a brochure, consider its purpose and what you want people to do with it.

Arm key communicators – Make sure your key communicators (your committee and key partners) have the information they need to do their job. Provide key messages, talking points and other key information key communicators need to deliver your message. You’ll also want to:

- obtain their support for your plan
- make sure they understand their pivotal role as key communicators
- keep them up to date with the latest information throughout the process

Web sites – If you don’t have your own web site, find out which of your partners do. Provide regular content for their web sites.

One-on-one meetings – Face-to-face communication can often get more notice than written pieces. Don’t overlook their importance.

Do you need your own web site?

The answer is no, especially if you can’t maintain it properly. You’re better off not to have a web site if you can’t keep it current and relevant.

Keep in mind that every *in motion* community will soon have its own easy to maintain page on www.saskatchewaninmotion.ca.

Trade shows – Tradeshows provide an opportunity for you to engage the public. As with everything else, make sure you understand exactly why you’re at the show and what you hope to achieve. Like brochures, trade show booths aren’t often given enough thought.

Email – Email is a cost-effective way to reach a wide audience. It’s especially useful for time-sensitive information and reminders. Emails are often used in conjunction with web sites (e.g. send out a short email blurb and link to more information on a web site). The trick with email is to keep it short. Be careful about using attachments. Many corporate firewalls screen them out.

Communication activity worksheet

Refer back to your audience analysis on pages 7 & 8 as you complete these worksheets.

	Audience
Where does this group get its information?	
Who do they find credible?	
Where do they spend their time?	
Where are they likely to give you their attention?	
Tactics you want to use to reach this audience	

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Communication opportunities worksheet

Develop an inventory of “built in” opportunities for getting your message out. Think about existing events, milestones, work done by other groups and existing communication tools. How can you incorporate these opportunities into your communication plans?

Opportunity	How we can use the opportunity
Commuter challenge	
SummerActive	
Moving Together Symposiums	
WinterActive	

Step 10: Monitor and evaluate

Monitor the progress of your plan. This will help you stay on track, adjust your approach along the way and evaluate your success.

How you evaluate depends on what you're evaluating. Refer back to your communication objectives and decide ahead of time how you'll evaluate communication success. Some common evaluation methods are:

- **Participation** – Did you get the number of registrations or entries you aimed for? Did you find those new partners you were looking for?
- **Survey** – Conduct surveys before and after to find out whether you've changed how people think, feel or act. Consider using a free online tool like [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) if your audience has access to email and the internet.
- **Qualitative results** – While it's not a great idea to rely on qualitative results alone, don't ignore what you see and hear in the community.

Visit our online Leaders Section at www.saskatchewaninmotion.ca for sample surveys and tracking tools.

Appendix A – Media relations 101

According to the Frameworks Institute (www.frameworksinstitute.com), the news media is the main source of information about public affairs for most of us. This means “the media dramatically influences what issues the public and their policymakers will address.” News coverage influences:

- What issues people government should address (agenda-setting)
- The lens through which people interpret issues (framing)
- What information will prove relevant for social and political judgements (priming)

Whether you’re in a large city or small town, you’ll want to include the media in your communication plans.

Media considerations

Here are some things you’ll need to consider in your media relations plan:

1. Choose a spokesperson and refer all media calls to that person.
2. Be newsworthy. What makes news? Things that are:
 - current
 - relevant to your community
 - interesting
 - controversial
3. Know your media. Get to know who covers your area, who has what beat and who has an interest in topics related to your *in motion* agenda.
4. Know and respect media deadlines. Always ask about deadlines and do what you can do meet them.

Media relations tools

Use the following tools to engage the media:

Challenges – Involve local media in a challenge. They’ll be more likely to talk about something they’re directly involved with. Make sure you take opportunities to position the challenge as part of your local *in motion* activities. Approach them with a plan in mind, but let them have a hand in shaping the challenge. Work with the media to promote the challenge and report results.

Types of challenges:

- include a media challenge as part of a public event
- pit members of the media against other local celebrities

Write a column – Offer to write a regular column for the local newspaper. Focus on topics that will help you achieve your *in motion* objectives (e.g. active transportation). Need topic ideas? Visit www.saskatchewaninmotion.ca regularly for inspiration.

Letters to the editor – Write occasional letters to the editor to raise issues or draw attention to successes in your community. Pay special attention to the tone of your letters. Keep it positive. If you're drawing attention to a problem in your community, don't forget to commend people for the good things you see.

You'll also want to keep it short and simple. Restrict yourself to one, well-defined issue, rather than rambling on about a long list of concerns.

Media releases – In many communities, news releases are printed word for word. Use them to announce new partnerships, launch programs, promote events and publicize major decisions. Make sure your media release is news worthy, brief and professional looking. We've provided a template to use as a guide.

Media advisories – Use media advisories to invite media to an event. They're generally sent out a day or two in advance and provide high level details only.

Media kits – Provide media kits at events. Include:

- media release
- *in motion* backgrounder (provincial and local)
- event backgrounder

Story pitches – This involves calling a reporter with a specific story in mind. This approach works best when you understand a specific reporter's beat or personal interests. Examples include stories about:

- a community member who has successfully incorporated physical activity into their busy life
- a local workplace that has put in place progressive policies that support increased physical activity
- a local program that increases physical activity opportunities in the community

Visit our online Leaders Section for tools to help you incorporate media relations into your communication plans.

References

W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Framing Public Issues, the Frameworks Institute www.frameworksinstitute.com