

Engagement from all stakeholders helps a STIC thrive. These dynamic partnerships rely on effective collaboration so that members of the transportation community in each State can brainstorm, exchange information, and generate new ideas that benefit their organizations and communities. Strategically aimed communication can help reach this goal.



DEFINE OBJECTIVES. Consider the STIC's goals and the more specific communication objectives that can help accomplish them. These could include improving internal collaboration among STIC members, raising awareness among the transportation community about innovations implemented in their State, or growing public interest by sharing innovation success stories.

What is the desired outcome? What should the message accomplish?



IDENTIFY TARGET AUDIENCES. Good communication can help accomplish a STIC's objectives, but to be most effective, it needs to be targeted. For each objective, identify the key audience or stakeholder groups—both internal and external—that must be reached and consider their level of information needs and interests.

Who are the stakeholders and at what level should they be involved? What is each group's interest in innovation?

The internal audience includes members of the STIC itself. External audiences may consist of staff from the State's Department of Transportation and other government offices, Federal and local agencies, project sponsors, elected officials, universities, contractor associations, and other transportation community members, as well as the traveling public.



FINE-TUNE THE MESSAGE. Because they serve as platforms for transportation innovation within a State, STICs must engage a wide spectrum of stakeholders. Effective communication can strengthen these relationships through messaging that is customized to specific audiences and, whenever possible, points out its benefit to them.

How will the message be tailored to gain the attention and meet the needs of each audience? What details will need to be included?



DETERMINE TIMEFRAME. Decide when the communication will be shared and how frequently. This will vary based on the objective, the message, and the audience.

When must the message reach its audience and will it need to be repeated?

Some objectives may require weekly messaging to some stakeholders, while others may only need passive communication every few months. However, in today's web-enabled society, some stakeholders may prefer to receive a constant flow of project information fed directly from tracking and analytics tools.



EXPLORE COMMUNICATION OUTLETS. Many options are available to get the word out. Internal communications might include a weekly email from the STIC's leadership, face-to-face brainstorming sessions, or posts in a private social media group. External communication activities may also include tailored emails and social media posts, as well as website and video development, public events, and webinar outreach.

Where and how will stakeholders receive their communication?

Consider the following:

- ▶ Some audiences connect more strongly with certain communication channels than others. Consider demographics when choosing between mediums such as social media, online video, email, webinars, and face-to-face meetings.
- ▶ Using multiple outlets for each audience may be most effective. Research has shown that people tend to remember information better if they receive it in various forms.
- ▶ Small communication budgets can benefit from cost-effective options such as email and social media and, if the STIC has media contacts in place elsewhere, partnering with those offices can help leverage resources.
- ▶ Different STIC members may need to be tasked with communicating with different stakeholders. For instance, a project coordinator may have the responsibility of moving key information across all channels. In other cases, a State DOT's public information office may retain oversight of the STIC's communications through multiple team members.
- ▶ Communication plans should be discussed and cleared with the public information office. They can bring new perspectives and ideas that may have not yet been considered, and they have experience communicating messages to a broad audience.



IDENTIFY WAYS TO GET FEEDBACK. STICs rely on suggestions and ideas from their members and stakeholders to keep innovation moving. Feedback from these audiences is important throughout the entire communication process. Create a space for communication that is a two-way street. This will help verify that the STIC's messaging was received clearly and there were no misunderstandings. It also helps determine the effectiveness of the delivery method and timing.

How can constructive feedback be gathered from stakeholders?

How can stakeholders provide new innovation ideas to the STIC?

SOURCES:

<https://www.brighthubpm.com/project-planning/15148-elements-of-a-stakeholder-communication-plan>

<https://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Strategic-Communications-Plan>

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