



Create Your Climate Engagement Strategy

An effective communications and engagement strategy can be a powerful tool to help you launch your Path to Positive commitment into action. With consistent, creative, and compelling messages delivered in a variety of ways, you can welcome fellow local leaders, members of your community, and your peers to join you on your Path to Positive and encourage them to share their enthusiasm with others. Your well-crafted purpose or vision statement (guidance and resources provided separately at www.pathtopositive.org) should serve as the foundation for all of your communications, and will help you create a successful strategy.

Stage 1: Getting Started

- ❑ Determine your audience: Deciding who you want to engage in your community and how you'll reach them is an essential first step in designing an effective engagement strategy. Once you decide which audiences you wish to communicate with, you can build your strategy around them, and keep their perspectives in mind as you develop your communications.
- ❑ Get to know your audience: Take some time to reflect on the variety of your audience(s) within your community, to understand their personal priorities and their current connection to climate change. Understanding what is important to your citizens and stakeholders—and what they respond to—is essential to developing content that moves, inspires, and empowers them to join you in your efforts. Members of your staff, including in the energy, environment and preparedness agencies, community outreach office, and press staff, can provide great insights into the core concerns of your community, and the best ways to communicate your solutions. Bringing these staff together to query them and to coordinate their efforts on your behalf will form a foundation for developing communications goals and gaining ongoing input.



- ❑ Build on the success of others: Check out what other local leaders are doing to communicate on climate within their communities. Not all of your communications need to be generated by you. Path to Positive Communities and its partners have regular communications and events that you can share and repost through your own channels. Get connected with these groups through social media and at www.pathtopositive.org, and learn about messages and resources that might supplement your own.
- ❑ Assess your resources: Assessing how much time you and your staff can commit to communications projects is an important first step as you plan your engagement strategy. You may also consider inviting members of your team with communications responsibilities, or experience in marketing, journalism, communication, or graphic design, to participate in your coordinated outreach activities. Additionally, explore costs and resources for engaging vendors in the event you need additional support.
- ❑ Appoint a communications coordinator: Managing and producing communications materials will take some time and thought. It is important to have someone who will champion day-to-day communications and make sure your team stays on track with its goals.
- ❑ Leverage the communications and engagement efforts of other community leaders. Leaders in your community from the business, faith, higher education, health and other sectors are ready, willing, and able to lead on climate solutions. Reach out to them, share your vision for local progress, and get them to join you in engaging their members and stakeholders—your citizens—to join the community-wide efforts underway in your area.
- ❑ Make a communication calendar. Determine the frequency of your communications: Begin to think about your overall timeline and frequency of your communications.

Stage 2: On Your Path

- ❑ Develop a consistent message: Work with your team to create a set of messages that is carried across all of the communications you deliver. For inspiration, check out Path to Positive Communities' talking points, tips on creating your vision statement, and pages on the connection between local communities and climate on www.pathtopositive.org. Try creating a messaging catalog that any of your team's communicators can access. This may include sample messages they can use, a frequently asked questions document (FAQ), key message points and a style guide. This will help you maintain a consistent voice, no matter who is delivering the message.
- ❑ Provide a clear call to action: Communications are about motivating people to act. When someone receives something you have produced (a postcard, an invitation, a tweet), what do you want him or her to do? Take a specific action? Share it with others? Attend an event? Every communication should start with this in mind.

- ❑ Communication is a two-way street: We often think of communications as a way to deliver information to others, but it's also important to listen to your audience to learn about their motivations. This will provide insight into what they do and don't like or may or may not respond to. Track and monitor what your followers are "liking," "retweeting," and commenting on, and get them involved in conversations by responding to, "liking" and "retweeting" what they're saying about your organization online and on their personal social media pages. Remember, the goal here is to get your audience to go beyond simply listening to your message. You want them to engage in a discussion with you and participate in your goals.

Stage 3: Moving Forward

- ❑ Set S.M.A.R.T. goals: It may be difficult to imagine what you'd like to see happen with your climate solutions commitment when you're just getting started, but it is important to have a long term vision. What would you like to accomplish in six months, a year or three years? Your answer should help guide your messages and the activities you plan to execute. Your goals should be SMART—Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound. For example, you may want your constituents—or leaders in your community's key sectors such as higher education, healthcare, business, or faith—to attend at least one climate solutions event by the end of the year. With all of your goals, you will want to continually monitor your progress, share your successes, and if necessary, adjust your objectives.
- ❑ Create a communications calendar: A calendar is an effective way to keep track of communications and help turn existing events throughout the year into opportunities to infuse your climate solutions message. Start by identifying which methods you will use to deliver climate messages or spread the word about your Path to Positive Communities activities. It is helpful to create a timeline in advance to plan when your communications will be sent so your team can prepare and approve content to meet publication deadlines. Once you have identified your timeline, you can begin appointing people on your team to take the lead.
- ❑ Engage through events: If you're looking for events to add to your calendar, think about meaningful moments, activities or seasons that would be appropriate to engage others in your climate goals. Start by embedding your climate themes into all of your regular activities. Later on, you can expand on them to create original moments for your Path to Positive participation and progress (like celebrating the completion of one of your action items, etc.).
- ❑ Appropriate placement: Consider carefully what type of information should be communicated through which channels. It is important to understand the pros and cons of various communications channels and which audiences they will likely reach. For example, younger audiences may be more likely to use Instagram or Twitter, so promoting events there could be especially

fruitful. Staff may be more accustomed to email, making it a more impactful method to keep them informed, while later generations may be most connected to your organization or agency through more traditional media such as print publications.

- ❑ Think big: There are many more ways to communicate with your community. Think about all of the ways your organization already communicates with its stakeholders and brainstorm additional opportunities. Identify if and how you can use different vehicles to help inspire your audiences. For example, integrate the importance of climate solutions into signage in community areas to welcome visitors. Consider small giveaways, handouts to business owners, and tables at community events.
- ❑ Connect with the press: Media can be a great way to engage people in your community beyond your institution. For example, you may want to call the local newspaper or radio station when you reach major milestones on your Path to Positive commitment so that others in your area can be inspired by your leadership. If you're going to connect with the press, it is also important to prepare for a variety of media scenarios and potential questions. Make sure to provide training to those who will serve as spokespeople for the media.

Remember...

Your communications should be uplifting, energizing, hopeful, and solutions and benefits oriented. Stay true to your values and those of your community. Have fun and don't be afraid to infuse humor and creativity. This will make your team's efforts more attractive and compelling for your community.