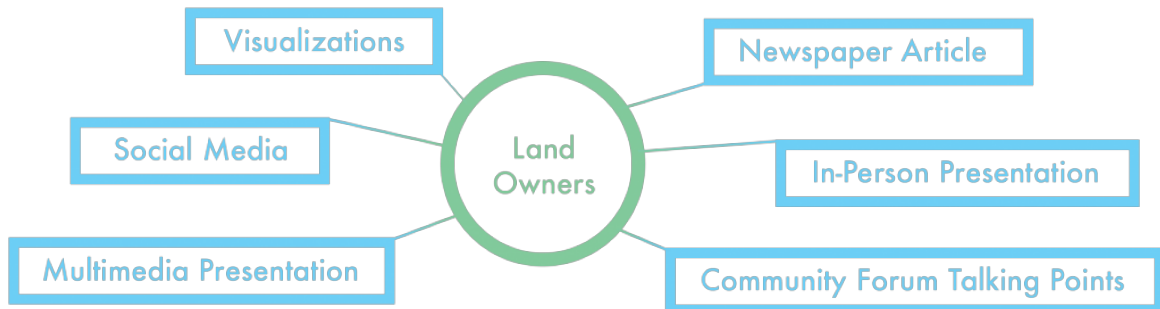


## How to Reach Your Audiences

What's the best method to reach each audience?



**Understand your audience(s).** Each audience may require a different message, or you may need to vary your message to appeal to each audience. Then, determine the form of communication most effective to convey your ideas.

- For example, maybe you have determined that your audience is a small community on the verge of deciding whether to let a powerplant expand development and they are having a public forum. Your most effective communication strategy might be to develop a one-pager with pertinent facts about your research that will aim to inform their decision-making process.

**Clearly communicate research results to audiences.** One of the most difficult things you will do is distill your complex research results into evidence-driven communication products that are accessible and practical for your audience(s). However, in order to support evidence-driven public discourse your audience needs to understand the key components of your research and why it matters to them.

Below we provide a little information on different ways to communicate your work and, for each, we also provide links to some useful sites or articles others have developed. If you have additional examples and sources, please email [communications@sesync.org](mailto:communications@sesync.org) [1] and this page will be updated periodically.

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- [Fact Sheet or One-Pager](#)

## Communication Products

The best form of communication for your audience may be restricted by your access. If you are meeting with policy-makers, they may limit you to a short phone call or in-person meeting with no presentation. Researching how other groups have reached this audience may also provide insight into effective modes of communication. Below is a list of common communication products and typical audiences you can reach. (The following are guidelines and resources for creating your strategy. Your message strategy will be multi-faceted and will need a diverse portfolio of communication methods to be successful):

### Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)

SESYNC researchers are experts in their fields, and we encourage broadly sharing research findings on social media. We support the myriad voices and expert opinions. Your home institution may have social media guidelines. We encourage you to review ours under the [University of Maryland](#) [2].

Social media is a network of feedbacks and conversations: You build a network and audience before you can effectively use social media as a platform for wide distribution.

- Before thinking about social media audience, consider your communication goals and your capacity. Would your research merit from having a broad audience converse and share your research? Or would a specific audience active on social media find your research important and informative? These are two great reasons to invest time and effort into finding and building an audience on social media.
- The concept of “going viral” should not be a part of your communication strategy unless you have already built the network and can allocate resources to it.

#### Resources:

<https://medium.com/communicating-science-with-social-media> [3]

<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2018/08/scientists-do-you-want-succeed-twitter-here-s-how-many-followers-you-need> [4]

<https://www.aaas.org/programs/center-public-engagement-science-and-technology/communicating-science-online> [5]

<http://acsmediakit.org/blog/rethinking-social-media-for-scientists/> [6]

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## Multimedia (Video, photos, mixed media, charts, graphs, visualizations, etc.)

Is multimedia the best option for your communication? If you are presenting material or posting to the web, multimedia can increase engagement and understanding of your research. Visual images have advantages. They can create an empathetic or tangible connection to your communication, therefore connecting the audience with your research efforts.

### Resources:

<https://thefisheriesblog.com/2018/04/09/communicating-science-through-digital-media/> [7]

<http://science.sciencemag.org/content/339/6115/40> [8]

<https://www.aaas.org/resources/communication-toolkit/using-multimedia-visuals> [9]

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## Websites

Many SESYNC teams create websites. Your audience may be difficult to define for a website that is publicly available, however, you can share a lot of information. Effectively designed websites can become a tool in your communication strategy while cluttered websites can become a barrier. Below are a couple of examples from research teams who have created effective websites:

PollardBase: <https://www.pollardbase.org/> [10]

Dams: <http://agwaguide.org/about/EEDS/> [11]

SHEAF: <http://soilhealthfeedback.org/> [12]

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## Press Release

**Consider publications that have audiences that align with your work.** A press release can be a simple way to generate attention for a recent publication or book release, however, consider your key points. In a well-written press release you will have about a page to communicate the “so what” to your audience.

Resources:

<https://blogs.agu.org/sciencecommunication/2016/10/13/writing-press-release/> [13]

Examples of Press Releases from SESYNC Research:

[Letting lawns go brown can preserve water for others during drought](#) [14]

[New decision-making tool helps align investment with objectives in biodiversity conservation](#) [15]

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## Memo to Policymakers

A memo to local, regional or national legislators provides analysis and recommendations to make decisions on your topic. When writing your memo, be concise with your message. State the problem. Link your knowledge to their concerns and consider what your audience may already know or believe about the topic. Include a clear recommendation for how policy makers should act and why they would benefit.

### Resources:

[https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/hks-communications-program/files/lb\\_how\\_to\\_write\\_pol\\_mem\\_9\\_08\\_17.pdf](https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/hks-communications-program/files/lb_how_to_write_pol_mem_9_08_17.pdf) [16]

[https://educationalequity.org/sites/default/files/documents/best\\_practices\\_-\\_policy\\_memo.pdf](https://educationalequity.org/sites/default/files/documents/best_practices_-_policy_memo.pdf) [17]

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## Blog Post

Science blogging builds an audience and community for commentary on a range of topics. Blogs can break smaller news stories, impart personal insight or experience on a topic, or provide criticism on a larger scale topic or published research. First, consider why you are blogging and how it meets communication goals. (It can take a long time to build an audience and develop a niche perspective and brand, so make sure it is worth the time investment and is something you enjoy). Blogs can also be an effective way to impart a personal story and engage an audience through your first-hand account.

### Resources:

<http://www.fromthelabbench.com/from-the-lab-bench-science-blog/blogging-tips-for-science-bloggers-from-science-bloggers> [18]

<https://www.americanscientist.org/blog/macroscope/the-world-of-science-blogging> [19]

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-01414-6> [20]

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## Pitching to Journalists

Similarly, when reaching out to journalists you need to consider the audience that they reach through their writing. Are they typically writing about your type of research and are they effectively engaging the audience you wish to engage? Tailor your pitch specifically to the journalist and publication they represent and communicate how your story is important, unique and timely. Establish your credibility and why you are a strong voice for this story.

<https://esajournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/bes2.1430> [21]

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## Commentary or Opinion Pieces

Commentary or opinion pieces are an opportunity to get information and ideas to leaders and the public so they can make the best decisions. The articles are intended to be agenda-setting, authoritative and informed, and can be provocative articles calling for action on timely issues. Successfully published commentaries road-map a proposed solution in detail and do not simply snapshot a problem.

Where to submit? Match your commentary or opinion to the publication's audience. It is important to understand that audience when approaching the editor or the publication. Below is a list of several publications, descriptions of how they define commentary or opinion pieces, and guidelines for submitting.

### Journal

- Science [Perspectives](#) [22] or [Policy Forum](#) [23]

Here are [guidelines](#) [24] for submission. *Perspectives* are 1,000 words; *Policy Forum* articles are 1,000-2,000 words and have a political implication.

- A [Comment](#) [25] in *Nature*
- A [Comment](#) [26] in *Nature Sustainability*

*Comment* articles are opinionated pieces that focus on a topical issue in sustainability research, or in relevant policy and societal debates.

### "Academic rigor, journalistic flair."

The Conversation: [www.TheConversation.org](http://www.TheConversation.org) [27]

The Conversation can help raise the profile of you and your team's work. It also provides readers with a better understanding of current affairs and the complex issues the world faces.

The Conversation is an independent, non-profit media organization that works exclusively with academia to publish news analysis and commentary written by academics, edited by journalists, and aimed at the general public. It is reputable, academic and influential. Pitch [guidelines here](#)

[28].

Time, Newsweek, Quartz, The Washington Post and Fortune are among their regular republishers.

### **General audience / region specific:**

- The Op-Ed Project offers resources on writing op-ed articles [here](#) [29].
- The Guardian [US guidelines](#) [30].
- Los Angeles Times submission [guidelines here](#). [31]
- Washington Post Opinion [guidelines](#) [32].
- WaPo Health & Science: [health-science@washpost.com](mailto:health-science@washpost.com) [33]
- New York Times [submission guidelines](#) [34].
- Scientific American [submission guidelines](#) [35].
- [Submission information](#) [36] for the top 100 online and print publications in the US.

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## **Meeting with Decision Makers**

As you prepare for a meeting with a decision-maker or stakeholder, consider the key messages from your research. Keep your key points short, focused, and on-topic for your main communication goal. Determine whether your strategy needs to be informative/educational, persuasive/influential, or an introduction for future collaboration, and craft your message. A meeting with a decision-maker can be a mutually beneficial experience. You may walk away with a better understanding of the policy landscape that can inform your own research or the political context. Below are key areas:

- **Introductions:** Thank the decision maker or staff for their time and acknowledge their connection to the topic, past voting record on the topic, or current stance on the topic. Contextualize yourself and your credibility with the topic.
- **Context:** It is important to recognize the overall context of the issue you are addressing but may be difficult to relay all the information. Focus on 2 to 3 key facts that will help support your main goal. Some context to consider: Is the issue timely, are actions needed now? Is this a controversial issue or is there a high consensus among scientists?
- **Key Point(s):** Limit your key points to 2 to 3 critical issues relevant to the decision-makers interests. This may be an effective time to relate a personal connection to the topic or to relay messages from constituents of the decision-maker.
- **Ask:** Be clear on what you are asking the decision maker to do. Know exactly how the decision maker has acted on the issue in the past and where they stand now.
- **Thank:** Express your gratitude again for their time and consideration of your perspective. You can also restate your hope for them to consider your "Ask," or reiterate your key point/take-away.

### **Resources:**

<https://aslo.org/page/communicating-with-decision-makers> [37]

## Congressional Visit Days:

<https://sciencepolicy.agu.org/cvd/> [38]

<https://www.soils.org/science-policy/get-involved/cvd> [39]

<https://www.americangeosciences.org/policy/geo-cvd> [40]

<https://www.esa.org/esa/public-affairs/esa-policy/congressional-visits/> [41]

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## Fact Sheets or One Pagers

Fact sheets or a page of explanatory text and graphics directly engage an audience with a tangible representation of your research. For instance, you may present your findings to a stakeholder group and leave fact sheets for further information.

- When crafting a fact sheet or one pager, consider and answer the questions your audience may commonly ask and provide credible, sited information that will help inform and encourage your own communication goal.

## Resources:

<https://ruralhealth.und.edu/communication/factsheets> [42]

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[Next Step in the Toolkit: Crafting a Clear Message](#) [43]

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**Source URL:** <https://www.sesync.org/for-you/communications/toolkit/how-to-reach-your-audience>

### Links

[1] <mailto:communications@sesync.org>

[2] <https://brand.umd.edu/socialmedia-guidelines.html>

[3] <https://medium.com/communicating-science-with-social-media>

[4]

<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2018/08/scientists-do-you-want-succeed-twitter-here-s-how-many-followers-you-need>

[5] <https://www.aaas.org/programs/center-public-engagement-science-and-technology/communicating-science-online>

[6] <http://acsmediakit.org/blog/rethinking-social-media-for-scientists/>

[7] <https://thefisheriesblog.com/2018/04/09/communicating-science-through-digital-media/>

[8] <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/339/6115/40>

[9] <https://www.aaas.org/resources/communication-toolkit/using-multimedia-visuals>

[10] <https://www.pollardbase.org/>

[11] <http://agwaguide.org/about/EEDS/>

[12] <http://soilhealthfeedback.org/>

[13] <https://blogs.agu.org/sciencecommunication/2016/10/13/writing-press-release/>

[14] <https://drought.unl.edu/Publications/News.aspx?id=319>

[15] <https://asunow.asu.edu/20181018-solutions-new-tool-helps-align-investment-objectives-biodiversity-conservation>

[16] [https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/hks-communications-program/files/lb\\_how\\_to\\_write\\_pol\\_mem\\_9\\_08\\_17.pdf](https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/hks-communications-program/files/lb_how_to_write_pol_mem_9_08_17.pdf)

[17] [https://educationalequity.org/sites/default/files/documents/best\\_practices\\_-\\_policy\\_memo.pdf](https://educationalequity.org/sites/default/files/documents/best_practices_-_policy_memo.pdf)

[18] <http://www.fromthelabbench.com/from-the-lab-bench-science-blog/blogging-tips-for-science-bloggers-from-science-bloggers>

[19] <https://www.americanscientist.org/blog/macroscope/the-world-of-science-blogging>

[20] <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-01414-6>

[21] <https://esajournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/bes2.1430>

[22] <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/358/6368/1252>

[23] <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/358/6368/1259.full>

[24] <http://www.sciencemag.org/authors/science-information-authors>

[25] <https://www.nature.com/others.html>

[26] <https://www.nature.com/natsustain/about/content>

[27] <http://www.theconversation.org/>

[28] <https://theconversation.com/us/pitches>

[29] <https://www.theopedproject.org/oped-basics/>

[30] <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jun/24/guardian-us-opinion-pitch-guidelines>

[31] <http://beta.latimes.com/oe-howtosubmitoped-story.html>

[32] [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/submit-an-op-ed/?utm\\_term=.c961cbcb2381](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/submit-an-op-ed/?utm_term=.c961cbcb2381)

[33] <mailto:health-science@washpost.com>

[34] <https://help.nytimes.com/hc/en-us/articles/115014809107-How-to-submit-an-Op-Ed-essay>

[35] <https://www.scientificamerican.com/page/submission-instructions/>

[36] <https://www.theopedproject.org/submission-information/>

[37] <https://aslo.org/page/communicating-with-decision-makers>

[38] <https://sciencepolicy.agu.org/cvd/>

[39] <https://www.soils.org/science-policy/get-involved/cvd>

[40] <https://www.americangeosciences.org/policy/geo-cvd>

[41] <https://www.esa.org/esa/public-affairs/esa-policy/congressional-visits/>

[42] <https://ruralhealth.und.edu/communication/factsheets>

[43] <https://www.sesync.org/for-you/communications/toolkit/crafting-a-clear-message>