

## Crafting a Clear Message

### How to craft an effective message for each audience?

**Craft a message that will meet your communication goal(s).** Each communication product may require a variation of your message. Below are a few key points to consider when you begin to craft your message:



### Describe the problem and how it relates to your audience:

**Why should anyone care about your research?** This is a harsh question but an important one for you to answer in all your communication products.

- You may not answer this directly, however, you need to connect the dots for why your audience should care. Knowing what matters to your audience is a great place to start. It might be your goal to persuade your audience to care about your research, therefore appealing to their values might be effective. If your goal is to help your audience understand your work, build their knowledge. Funders may be another audience, and the challenge in reaching them is making your work relevant to their programmatic interests.

## Talk about an overall solution (“We found that...”)

**Talk about your successes at every step of the way.** You may have successfully pulled together an international team of top researchers who can tackle this complex problem. Or, your team has solved this one aspect of the problem that will help unlock further research and inform decision-makers. By knowing who your audience is and what is important to them, you can select what successful aspect of your research to focus on.

## Other specific actions that could be taken (“What next?”):

**What specific actions should people or organizations take?** What do you want your audience to think, feel and do? You may ask for outside funders to invest in your group or you may inform policy-makers about a specific outcome you found in your research that can inform policy they are drafting. Having a concise action for your audience gives them direction to follow. The more specific you can be about the action the more likely the audience will take part.

## Consequences of Actions

**What are the consequences of action or inaction?** This message comes from your “What’s in It For Them” (WIFT) from Step 2 the Audience Analysis. When a stakeholder audience knows there is something in it for them, providing a clear purpose for the communication will lead them to understand consequences of actions or inactions, for example.

- If you take the time to learn about who you are communicating with, ideally you will understand what motivates them and their decision-making landscape. If you can align your communication goals with their underlying motivations, they are more likely to see the benefits to themselves as well as society at large.
- Policymakers cannot take advice from academics directly. One effective approach is to describe the consequences of not taking certain actions, particularly if those consequences affect what the policy maker values (this could be concerns about losing voters or funders, public perception, timeliness of the issue and whether there are better options to solve this issue).
  - Be aware of federal limitations for lawmakers to meet directly with academics. For instance, [The Federal Advisory Committee Act](#) <sup>[1]</sup> (FACA) is a Federal law that governs the establishment and operation of advisory committees. We encourage you to learn more about what limitations you may face federally as well as locally.

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[Next Step in the Toolkit: "And, But, Therefore" Statement](#) [2]

**Links**

[1] <https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/policy/federal-advisory-committee-act-faca-management-overview>

[2] <https://www.sesync.org/for-you/communications/toolkit/and-but-therefore-statement>