

Tools for Community Volunteers

Hard work and planning are needed to manage change in your community. In some cases, a town-wide vote is needed for a plan to come to fruition. Here is a guide to help you succeed.

WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?

WHAT IS THE OUTCOME YOU WANT? WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Offer a brief summary of your proposal. What does it do and why should people care? Offer more than one benefit and perhaps briefly address concerns you've heard.

WHAT ARE YOU ASKING PEOPLE TO DO?

WHAT ACTION ARE YOU PROMOTING IN YOUR OUTREACH?

This may be as simple as asking them to vote, in which case you'll want to include information on when/where to do that. You may ask them to spread the word as well, or contact you if they want to help. But be sure you make a clear ask as well as provide information!

WHO ARE YOUR AUDIENCES?

WHAT SORTS OF PEOPLE WILL YOU NEED TO TALK TO?

Though your target audience is voters in town, there are many types of residents who are likely to vote.

- > Those who will directly benefit from your proposal
- > Homeowners/property owners
- > Residents who are renters
- > Business owners (they can't vote if they don't reside in your town, but their business can support your effort in other ways)
- > School population: students and parents, teachers, administrators
- > Outdoor enthusiasts: snowmobile clubs, hunting/fish & game clubs
- > Cultural and civic clubs
- > Business associations, chambers of commerce
- > Faith-based organizations

FOR EACH OF THESE AUDIENCES:

WHAT MESSAGE WILL WORK FOR THESE GROUPS?

ADDRESS POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

Each audience will likely view your proposal differently and from their own immediate perspective at first, that's just human nature. You'll want to appeal to their interests and address their concerns while remaining true to the overall message. Clearly, you always want to be truthful.

WHICH MESSENGER WILL BE EFFECTIVE WITH EACH AUDIENCE?

SOMEONE THEY TRUST AND RELATE TO

Each audience will respond to different messengers. Who are they most likely to relate to?

- > Those who directly benefit from your proposal
- > Those who are not the direct beneficiary but might also benefit
- > Those who may be damaged by your proposal
- > Unexpected voices; those who support your proposal for unexpected reasons

WHAT COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS WORK FOR EACH AUDIENCE?

WHERE DO THEY GET TRUSTED INFORMATION?

Your plan should include a variety of tools as you consider the various audiences you want to reach.

- > Social media
- > Email
- > Newspaper stories, earned media
- > Letters to the editor and op-eds
- > Meetings: go to theirs, invite them to yours
- > Personal visits
- > Paid advertising; print or online

WHO HAS BEEN WHERE YOU ARE?

WHOM CAN YOU GET ADVICE FROM?

WHAT DID THEY LEARN OR WHAT WOULD THEY DO DIFFERENTLY?

Reach out to your peers in other towns and ask what advice they might offer.