



SURFACE WATER QUALITY STEWARDSHIP TOOLBOX

Communication Tips

Clear and effective communication can build capacity in a stewardship group (e.g., gaining and retaining members) and help to meet the group's objectives. It is important to look at how and when to communicate and to have a plan when communicating. Below are tips for communicating:

- Set clear communication goals
- Address your audience and adapt communication to them
- Keep it positive
- Keep it simple
- Maintain key contact information and keep a record of communication

Communicating within the Group

Communication with members should align with the goals of the group. When there are clear goals and objectives it can be easy to get excited and see progress in what is being achieved. Remember to communicate not only the goals and objectives, but also the results when a step is completed. This will help keep members engaged. Emphasize open two-way dialogue in communication approaches. No question is a dumb question!

Communicating with Partners

The group communication plan should include communication objectives that build relationships with external partners. When communicating with partners it is important to track communication. Clear communication of roles, responsibilities, and timelines of when progress reports are expected are important to maintain partner relationships. Communicating with partners includes communicating results through progress reports, updates or other methods (one-way), as well as conversation and feedback (two-way). Two-way communication and actively soliciting feedback (between partners, potential new partners or volunteers, intended audience, funders, or users of the data) can be used to improve the work, expand the scope of a program and improve its desired effect on many audiences.

Promotional Communication

It is important that the communication plan includes promotion of what the group is doing and, if applicable, encourages action on the part of the reader or listener. Promotional communication includes media interviews/events, news releases, web-based information, social media, videos, and other tools. Be sure to always credit any partners (e.g., funders, volunteers, in-kind contributors) in the communication. Including "Calls to Action" (i.e., next steps, solutions, recommendations, expectations) can stimulate the intended reader or listener to act.

Communication Records

Keeping a record of communication is important. Records prevent duplication, help with keeping consistency, allow others to pick up the work more easily when there is staff turnover, and can act as a prompt when communication is needed (e.g., follow up). See separate communication tracking forms (“records” and “frequency and results”) that are part of this Surface Water Quality Stewardship Toolbox.