

The webinar ***Communication Strategies to Advance PSE Change*** aired on August 23, 2022, and was the second webinar in the PSE webinar series. The webinar discussed the four phases in the *National Cancer Institute* health communications model, including building a group of key stakeholders, developing a communications plan, creating materials, implementing the plan, and assessing and refining communications on successive cycles. The webinar also described many helpful resources and templates that could be adapted to save coalitions time and effort.

This document summarizes key takeaways and resources from the webinar, which can be viewed at the following link: <https://youtu.be/6mHY5Bys5qg>.

The *American Cancer Society* **Comprehensive Cancer Control (ACS CCC)** team hosted the webinar. The ACS CCC team seeks to build the capacity of grant recipients in the *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* **National Comprehensive Cancer Control Program** to implement policy, systems, and environmental change approaches and evidence-based promising practices in cancer prevention, screening, diagnostic follow-up, and survivorship.

## Presenter



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## Communication Strategies to Advance PSE Change

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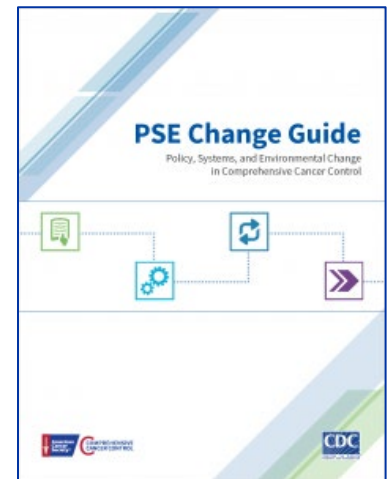
The goals of the webinar were to:

- Discuss communication strategies that coalitions can use internally or externally for PSE work
- Teach coalitions to identify effective communication strategies for their PSE work
- Develop coalition capacity to implement communication strategies
- Develop coalition awareness about resources for communicating PSE interventions

## The PSE Change Guide

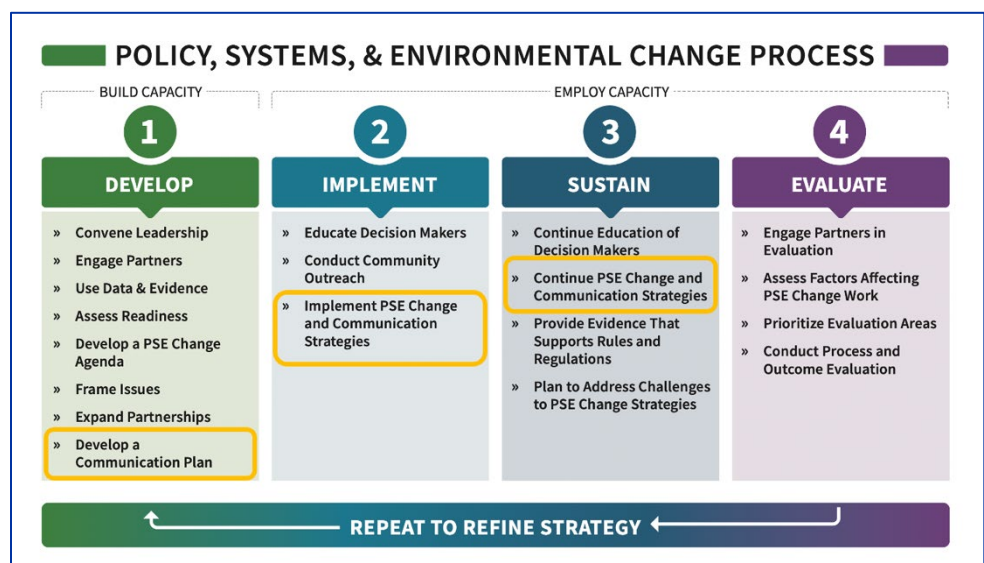
The *PSE Change Guide*, created by a partnership between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the *American Cancer Society (ACS)*, was designed to be a practical tool for cancer coalition staff and partners to use for implementing PSE changes.

The *PSE Change Guide* defines a change framework consisting of four phases: Develop, Implement, Sustain, and Evaluate. The material in this webinar on communication strategies fits into the first three phases of the *PSE Change Guide* framework model (see the yellow rectangles in the image below).



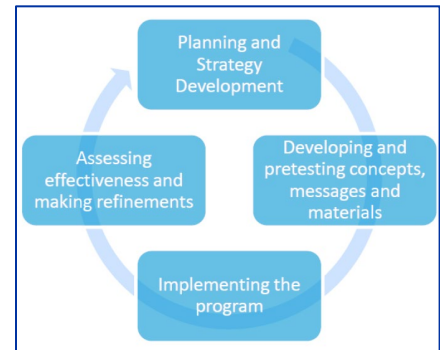
## The PSE Change Process

Communication is a critical component throughout the PSE change process. The PSE change process is not linear; instead, it involves a cyclical process that moves back and forth among the four steps of the PSE process.



## Health Communication Program Cycle

The cycle shown to the right is adapted from the National Cancer Institute *Making Health Communication Programs Work: A Planner's Guide (2004)* and illustrates the cyclical nature of the health communication program cycle: planning, developing messages, implementing the program, and assessing the effectiveness of the communications.



A communication plan is critical for PSE change because it provides clarity and helps to break down large changes into smaller, more manageable pieces. The communication plan helps coalitions to think broadly about their PSE projects and to help share responsibility and ownership of PSE intervention components among all important stakeholders.

This webinar used paid time off for cancer screening as an example of PSE intervention.

## Planning and Strategy Development

The first stage in any PSE intervention is to develop a plan for identifying, engaging, and convening stakeholders. It can be helpful to include your local Broadcaster Association to explore their support for non-commercial announcements and public education programs.

Once you have identified key stakeholders, it is important to convene them and bring up the resource planning conversation early in the planning process. The conversation will help to identify all the resources that your stakeholders can contribute and what coalition activities will be feasible as part of your plan.

Develop SMARTIE objectives to advance PSE change evidence-based interventions. SMARTIE objectives include the usual set of specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely goals but also add inclusion and equity as two additional criteria. Consider looking at your CDC work plan to avoid reinventing the wheel.

Here is a “small p” SMARTIE example that creates change at the organizational level. It focuses the intervention on areas with a high Socially Vulnerable Index (SVI), an index defined by the CDC to help characterize areas with low levels of social determinants of health. The index uses socioeconomic status, household composition and disability, minority status and language, and housing type and transportation accessibility. Here are the three components of the example.

- Communication objective: By the end of 2024, provide messages to the top five largest employers in each high-SVI area regarding paid time off for cancer screening.
- Behavioral objective: By the end of 2025, increase the number of employers in high-SVI areas that offer paid time off for cancer screening by a factor of 2.
- Health objective: Reduce invasive CRC cancer rates from 46.9 per 100,000 people to 39.2 by 2027.

If you decide to change the intervention scope to the legislative level, the communication and behavioral objectives will change to metrics at the state level (e.g., reach 75% of state legislators).

### The GW Communication Plan Template

The George Washington University [communication plan template](#) available on the GW website includes components for timeline, tactics/channels/activities, budget and resources, persons responsible, and output/outcome measures. This tested template can be useful to guide your planning efforts and can also help your coalition to develop a realistic communication plan based on the previous experience of others.

### The Importance of Your Audience and Messages of Interest to Them

It is important to determine the audience of your communication plan early on. This is because the audience determines the messengers, the message, and the channel or media used for the communication.

In the paid time off example, the audience is likely to include the decision-makers within the employer organizations, such as executive leaders, human resource leaders, and insurance providers. Employee representatives would also be part of the audience.

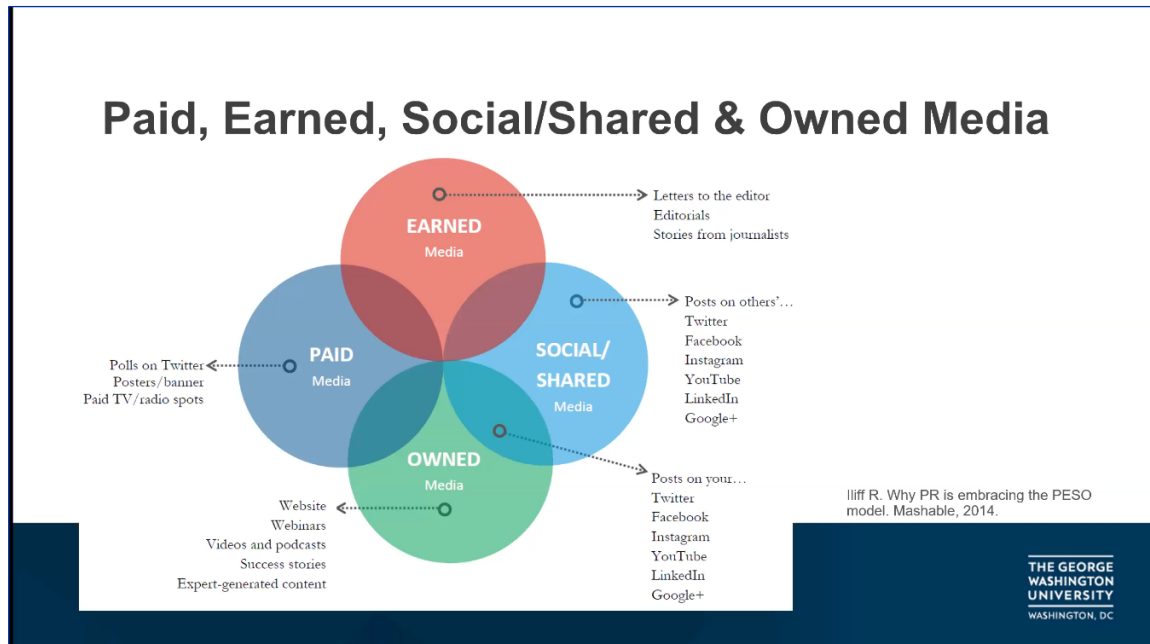
The messages should include topics around the intervention that are of interest to the audience. For example, leaders are usually interested in financial arguments, saving money in the long run by helping staff to prevent cancer or detect cancer earlier, and to increase staff morale and retention.

In contrast, the audience for “big P” interventions would include elected officials, staff of the elected officials, and constituents. They might be interested in messages around constituent health, reducing financial burdens on payers, decreasing spending on advanced cancer treatments, and paying for time off work to promote screening.

### Media Channels and Strategies

Here are some media channel strategies that your coalition might consider:

- Public relations – messaging with mass media
- Advertising – paid or public messages in public media channels
- Education entertainment – embedded health messages in the entertainment industry
- Individual and group instruction – counsel viewers to increase their desirable behaviors
- Paid, earned, and social media – organic publicity - letters to the editor, news stories, etc.
- Owned media – channels that you control, such as a coalition website or media channel



## Choosing Your Messengers

It is important to identify the most helpful messengers for your message. You can find the most effective messengers by engaging with your stakeholders and community partners in the areas that are critical to your communication objective. Search for people who have good relationships with the decision-makers that have influence over your intervention outcome.

In the paid time off example, effective “small p” messengers might be the human resources leader, the business owner or investors, or the financial managers of the business. In the “big P” context, effective messengers might be legislators sitting on health or finance committees. Having a good relationship with a strategic messenger can help you to reach your coalition communication goals.

Because rural populations are smaller and more closely connected, it can sometimes be easier to find people in rural areas who are closely connected to decision-makers than to find similar people in large urban areas. Personal connections are critical.

## Developing and Pretesting Messages

The next step in your communication strategy is to develop and test messages for your audience. Your coalition can develop its own materials, use existing materials from other sources, or mix and adapt materials from all sources.

Once you have some message candidates, it is important to test them with your audience to see how well they are received and if they have the desired effect. You might be able to refine and improve your messages by doing pilot tests with small portions of your audience to determine which messages resonate most with them.

- Developing your own material is resource intensive in time and money
- Using existing materials might be possible by aligning with [existing partner campaigns](#), utilizing national resources such as the [CDC public health media library](#) and [image library](#), the [NCCRT 2022 Messaging Guidebook for Black and African-American People](#), or the [GW social media materials](#).

A good strategy for testing messages and materials is to collaborate with stakeholders to create focus groups and input surveys to evaluate the impact of your communications.

## Compile Your Message Materials into an Accessible Online Newsroom

To make it convenient for people to access your messages and materials, it's a good practice to compile your materials into a single online location such as a website. Your online newsroom would be most helpful if it contained the following types of information:

- Contact information for your coalition
- An About description for your coalition
- A list of trustworthy experts (trustworthy in the eyes of your audience)
- A gallery of high-resolution images
- Infographics, fact sheets, and relevant documents and materials
- Templates for press releases and letters to the editor

Be sure that it is easy for people to get to your newsroom through a prominent button or link on the homepage of the website. And ensure that your website and materials are mobile-friendly.

## Implementing Your Communication Program

It can take a long time to build a coalition, engage stakeholders, and develop a communication plan with materials. But once that up-front work has been done, the implementation and launch can proceed fairly quickly.

Here are some tips to smooth the internal side of the implementation of your program.

- Create processes for routine check-ins for individuals and organizations that are responsible for communication activities. You can establish new meetings or integrate agenda items into existing meetings.
- Create reminder systems such as weekly group emails and calendar appointments.
- Set realistic deadlines for your activities; doing so can help you to avoid possible feelings of failure if you create a repeated pattern of not meeting unrealistic deadlines.

## Assessing Effectiveness and Making Refinements

It is likely that refinements to your implementation plan will be required along the way. Various kinds of delays can get in the way of your plans – life can happen, stakeholders might need to focus on other issues longer than expected, legislators may not be available, and so on.

Here are some tips for assessing the effectiveness of your communication activities.

- Ensure that your communication plan is realistic.
- Ensure that your commission plan stays within the timeline.
- Create a tracking sheet for media impressions to understand your reach.
- Consider a simple shared spreadsheet for coalition members to update.
- Recruit a student to help track messaging.
- Create Google alerts for key campaign messages.
- Collect media coverage of events, including clips, videos, articles, or other coverage.
- Collect metrics from vendors and reassess the timing and placement of ads.
- Check your placement of print ads, reorder materials and distribute as needed.
- Create unique hashtags for easy social media tracking.

Communication programs often require multiple cycles of the steps discussed above. Your coalition will make things better and more effective on each successive cycle.

## Q&A

When working with legislators and policies, it is best to stay within the education lane and present only educational information to legislators to avoid issues with lobbying rules. If your coalition has members such as the *American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network* or large health systems that are allowed to lobby legislators, work with them to carry your coalition messages into “big P” environments. The power of a coalition is as good as each individual member.

## GW Cancer Center Resources

[Action4PSEChange website](#)

[Action4PSE Change: A Training](#)

[Communications 101 Training](#)

[Communications 102 Training](#)

[Communications 101 and 102 Guides & Templates](#)

[Health Awareness Social Media Campaigns](#)

## ACS4CCC PSE Resources

[Digital Storytelling for Cancer Coalitions](#)

[Effectively Engaging Your Coalition When Working With the Media](#)

[Copywriting for Cancer Coalitions](#)

[Branding and Marketing Webinar](#)

## Other Resources

[National Association of Broadcasters](#)

[CDC Public Health Media Library](#)

[CDC Public Health Image Library](#)

[CDC Media Campaign Resource Center](#)

[NCCRT 2022 Messaging Guidebook For Black & African American People: Messages To Motivate For Colorectal Cancer Screening](#)