

Tailored Messaging Checklist: A Tool for Refining Your Tactics

Depending on your tactics, the “ideas” you want to get across may be produced in different ways—e.g., a short video that you will ask supporters to share on their social page, a 30-second radio ad that asks supporters to visit a website, or a door cling that encourages supporters to attend a town hall meeting. An important first step in executing narrative change work and preparing those ideas to live in the real world, is identifying your message and specific language.

The first questions to explore are those relating to how to talk about your issue overall.

- **What** is the problem you want to name or the story you want to tell?
- **How** do you want to lift it up to audiences such that it has the impact you want?
- **Which** specific words will you use?
- **How** do you name solutions to problems or call people to particular actions?
- **How** does your messaging directly fit into your broader strategic plan?

It’s important to craft messages that are aligned with the format you’ve chosen through your tactics, appropriate for the platform or channel you’ve chosen for distribution, and compelling for the audience. Use the following checklist to get started:

- If working with stories gathered from impacted communities, **look for themes among the stories** that align with your narrative change goal. If starting with your own key messages, pick two or three that are most important to deliver to your audience. Prioritization is key to keeping your message focused.
- Then simply **write a message in your own words**. Keep in mind that if you’re working with stories gathered from an impacted community, you should not change direct

quotes without permission. Collaborating with community members on messaging is a great way to develop messaging that fits your goal without misrepresenting their intent or experience.

- Next, **consider the values of your audience and what language resonates** with or deters them. Rewrite your message, doing your best to tailor the framing of that message to your audience. Again, ensure impacted community members are given the opportunity to provide feedback.
- Add your call to action.** Articulate what your audience should do. Be concise and clear, ensuring your audience knows not only what to do next, but how.
- Lastly, **adjust the length and format of your message** to make sure it's the right fit for your distribution plans (e.g. a 30 second script, a short social media caption, a sentence for a billboard, an article for a publication). The same message can and should be adapted to fit various channels or formats.
- Lastly consider, what **testing and measurement methods** you might employ to gauge if your content will be effective. Through simple message testing, you can gather information by testing a small-scale version of your work.

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