

# Sharing your story

a workbook



## Introduction

Welcome to our *Sharing your story* workbook. Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi developed this resource as part of a workshop series for arts organisations, commissioned by Auckland Council. We are now sharing the workshop resources more widely. You can find other workbooks from the series, *Developing strategy for your organisation* and *Demonstrating impact*, on our [website](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented arts organisations with a variety of challenges. Lockdowns and other restrictions have meant fewer opportunities to get together, with each other, within our organisations, with our audiences, and with our communities. This has heightened the impact of long-standing pressures in the arts sector around issues such as wellbeing and financial sustainability. Now in the third year of the pandemic, arts organisations are looking at long-term adaptation to a world that is different to the world we knew in 2019.

The strategy workshop series aimed to help arts organisations think through how to build organisational resilience and sustainability. The series was funded by Creative New Zealand and was delivered in mid-2022 for Auckland Council Arts Partners.

Each workshop was accompanied with one of these workbooks – now more widely available for sector organisations.

This section presents some key concepts to help you build a communication plan that supports your organisation's strategy.

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## Why have a communications plan?

A communications plan helps you work out how to communicate to help your organisation achieve its overall strategic goals — or to address a specific need.

Depending on scale, you might have an overall communications plan for your organisation, and smaller plans for individual campaigns.

A communications plan maps out:

- What you need to communicate
- Who you need to communicate with
- What outcomes you want from your communications

The process of developing a communications plan gives you an organising framework to decide which steps to take to connect to your audiences — the people you want to inform, or influence to take action.



**The universe of communications options is big.**

**A communications plan helps you figure out which things to do (and not do).**

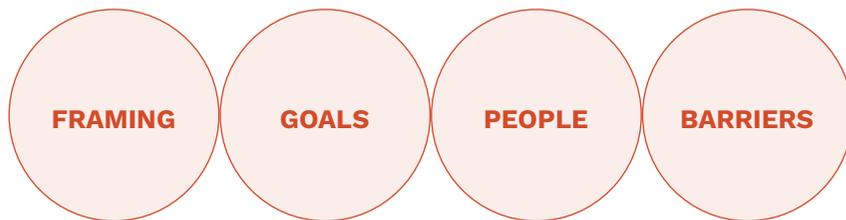
# A framework for communicating your work and impact

There are many different frameworks available to help you think through your communications plan.

We have adapted this framework from Tracey Bridges to guide our thinking for this resource.



The thinking process is the most important part of this work — not filling out the template.



# Framing

Framing is about answering the question; what are we doing here?

Be clear about your communication goal or goals — and what is out of scope. Ask, what are we **not** trying to solve here?

You can focus your discussion by asking:

**What do we want our audience to say or do as a result of our communications?**

If, for example, our goal is to explain our organisation's strategy to our key stakeholders, what specific messages would we want them to remember?

# Goals

What does success look like?

**Your goals should align to organisational or business objectives.**

If an organisational goal is to increase your volunteer base by 10 percent, a communications goal could focus on communicating to potential volunteers that the opportunity to volunteer is available, what volunteering will entail, what the benefits are, and how to get involved.

**Your goals should be as measurable as possible. You want to know who heard your messages, and what they know, think, feel and do as a result of your communications. For example:**

If the goal of your communication was to attract volunteers, how many suitable people put themselves forward to be considered for volunteering?

## Barriers and enablers

### What could stop or help us in reaching our goals?

For a simple communications issue (such as recruiting more volunteers) it may be easy to quickly identify what will get in the way of your communications and what will help. For example:

- Barriers could be budget, timeframe, competitors, or opponents.
- Enablers could be key champions (such as existing volunteers, partner organisations) or organisational assets such as a strong social media presence or a large database.

If your communications issue is complex (advocacy around an equity issue, for example,) there may be multiple barriers and enablers to consider.

- Start big, narrow down and group.
- Analytical tools such as SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) can help.

# People

## Who are our audiences?

Audiences may include core supporters, funders, community, partners, news media, volunteers, staff.

- Which audiences are our priority?
- What do they care about?
- What would they want to know about us?
- Are they just looking for information? Or do they want to engage with us in some way?
- Who else might engage?

Start wide, then narrow down and prioritise.

Use research to validate (if you can).

A stakeholder interest / influence matrix can be helpful. [This is a good intro on stakeholder management from MindTools.](#)



**Don't spend time and energy trying to convince people who are firmly opposed or simply not interested.**

## Communications plan

You now have the foundations for your communications plan:

- You know what you want to achieve — and what your specific goals are
- You know what could help or get in the way of your communications
- You know who your priority audiences are and what you want to say to them.

You're now ready to build your plan and identify:

- An overarching strategy or vision for your communications plan
- What tactics you will use
- Which channels you will use
- How you will tell your story
- The outcomes you want to achieve and how you will measure them.

## Strategy

This is the vision statement for your communications plan — the overall big picture purpose.

It comes from a deep understanding of your circumstances and your environment, and is often closely related to your organisation's purpose/vision/mission.

The statement should be encapsulated in one or two simple sentences that sum up what's most important to you. The simpler the better!

Once this is clear it can be a lens through which you view all opportunities — an anchor point that shapes what and how you roll out your communications plan.

Examples:

- Become the storyteller of storytellers
- Uphold indigenous knowledge
- Be clear, simple and transparent.



When developing this statement, think about whether it will help you make decisions about what to do and what not to do.

# Tactics

## How do we reach our audiences?

- You might consider a range of communications tools and activities ranging from a social media campaign, to an open day, to web content, to marketing activity, to kanohi ki te kanohi meetings with key stakeholders.

## Be aware of your resource and timeframe.

## What realistically can you achieve?

- An overarching strategy or vision for your comms plan.
- Think about impact of tactic versus investment required. (The bang for bucks question.)
- Does this link back to our overall organisational strategy? If not, do we really need to do it?
- Keep distilling!

# Channels

Which channels should you use?

## Internal

- Website
- Updates
- Resources
- Stories
- Interview
- Reports
- Announcements
- Social channels  
to amplify the above

## External

- Media releases
- Media coverage
- Partnerships
- Networks
- Events
- Webinars
- Paid media
- Social channels  
to amplify the above

# Narratives

What's the right story for our organisation, for this issue, for this time?

- Your story should sit at the heart of all your communications activity.
- Be honest, concise, compelling — and give your audience/s a clear call to action.
- Empower people to tell your story. You want your team and your wider group of stakeholders to understand what your organisational narrative is and be able to tell your story.

## Outcomes

How will we know if our communications were effective?

- Did you manage to deliver the communications activities you had planned?
- Did they reach the right audiences?
- Did people hear the messages you wanted them to hear?
- Did they take the action you wanted them to take?

The answers you get will help you learn what you can achieve with the resources you have, and what works best for your organisation and its audiences.

## Summary

### Key things to keep in mind when putting a plan together

- Be patient. Thought and analysis = most important.
- Iterate. Don't be satisfied with your first thought.
- Be creative. Imagine possible solutions, even if they seem like a stretch.  
What if?

### And when you have executed your plan

- Note what you have learnt so that you can build on your successes with your next communications plan.

## Links to further resources

<https://communitycomms.org.nz/>

— a good source of support and resources

<https://www.theworkshop.org.nz/>

<https://commoncausefoundation.org/>

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