

Road Safety Advocacy Toolkit

DEVELOPING KEY MESSAGES



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save millions
of lives.

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Developing Key Messages

Why it is important?

A critical component of your advocacy campaign is the development and delivery of the messages to communicate your policy goals to the people who can make the changes that will help you meet your objectives. This includes the media and other key stakeholders you've identified as those who can help move you towards your advocacy goals.

Identifying your target audiences, formulating key messages, and choosing the most effective spokesperson and channel to communicate those messages are all important elements of your advocacy campaign. Once you know your target audiences, your next step will be developing convincing messages specific to each. Depending on your audience and the action you want them to take, your message may change slightly. Your method of delivering the message will also vary, based on the most effective means of reaching your audience.

To formulate your key messages, you'll need to answer the following questions:

- What is the problem?
- Why does it matter?
- What is the action that needs to be taken?
- When does this action need to be taken by?

What needs to be done?

First, develop a top-line, or overall, message. The top-line message sums up what policy needs to change, outlines the campaign's objective, and describes why it's important. All other secondary messages focused on specific audiences should be developed from this one.

For example, if you were working on passing a road safety helmet law in Thailand, your key message could be:

- 50,000 people die on the roads every year in Thailand. Strengthening Article 17 of the Traffic Law now, making helmet wearing compulsory, will save lives by preventing head injuries. This law will ensure everyone, including small children, are covered.

After the overall key message is formulated, more specific secondary key messages can follow. For example, if focusing on the compulsory use of children's helmets, you could use the following secondary message:

- Children under six are the most vulnerable to accidents and death, yet they are currently not required to wear helmets. Article 17 of the Traffic Law needs to also protect Thailand's children. The future of Thailand is dying on our roads.

HELPFUL HINT: Using one convincing fact or figure in a key message can be very powerful. But including more than one statistic can cause a message to become confusing and lose its effectiveness.

Messages for different audiences

Your campaign will most likely have multiple audiences, each of whom can influence the final decision in a different way. In order to make a message appealing to the group that you are targeting, you need to consider "what's in it for me" (WIIFM) from the perspective of each target audience.

When communicating to policymakers and other influencers, your message needs to convey exactly what you want them to do and why they would want to do it. To create this part of the message, put yourself in their position and establish their reasons and motivations for championing your campaign's policy change.

If we were to again focus on a Thailand helmet law as an example, the Minister of Transport WIIFM could be:

Minister of Transport - WIIFM	
Lowering the number of deaths on the roads	Bring Thailand up to speed with global best practice in road safety
Had a young nephew that died in a motorcycle crash	Getting a popular law passed that can be used as political leverage by the Minister's political party

To construct a message for this Minister you should clearly describe the action you need him or her to take, why this action is needed, and why he or she would want to champion your cause based on “what’s in it for me.”

- “50,000 people die on the roads every year in Thailand. Changing Article 17 of the Traffic Law now to make helmet wearing compulsory will save lives. Thailand citizens overwhelmingly support a stronger road safety law that follows international best practice and helps protect children on the road. This change will help establish Thailand as a global leader in road safety.”

You should create a variation of the main message for each audience, tailored to its needs and motivations. You can include these key messages in your media interviews, outreach to journalists and media

materials, such as press releases and leave behinds. Keep in mind that every message, regardless of audience, should include your advocacy ask. It is also important to ensure consistency between primary and secondary messages. For example:

- When speaking to mothers, communicate how the law can save their children’s lives, why it is important and how their support can influence decision makers
- When speaking to journalists, provide evidence-based information in a format that is easy to read and understand. Be sure to include a news hook such as new data, a human interest story, or an update on where the legislation stands

CONSTRUCTING YOUR MESSAGE
ADVOCACY OBJECTIVE:
CONSTRUCTING YOUR MESSAGE:
WIIFM RESULTS:
CORE MESSAGE 1 - What is the problem?
CORE MESSAGE 2 - Why does it matter?
CORE MESSAGE 3 - What is the action that needs to be taken? When does this action need to be taken by?



Delivering your message

Once you have developed your messages, the next step is to decide on the most effective delivery method. There are three different categories of communication channels: earned, paid, and owned. Each category has its benefits and challenges, and careful consideration should be given to which channel will be most effective in reaching your target audience. The chart below will help you decide which category will best suit your needs.

Once you have the category identified, you will then need to decide which specific channel will be most effective. For example, if earned media is the best way to influence a policymaker, should you reach out to reporters with a press release, an op-ed or a press conference? Think not only through the best way to reach your audience, but also the time and resources that each channel will require. The GRSP Selecting your Media Advocacy Tactics tool provides further guidance.

Media Type	Examples	Role	Benefits	Potential Challenges
Earned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articles generated by a news event, or by pitching a newsworthy story to a journalist through a press release, press conference, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To generate debate in public dialog To raise awareness of the issue, causes and solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High credibility; earned media seen as unbiased. High impact. Potential for wide reach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No control over the story. Can be negative. Hard to measure response or impact.
Paid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public service announcements Display ads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reach a specific audience at a specific time and place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be timed and planned to your schedule. Total control of contents. Can measure reach and frequency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lacking credibility. Many view paid media as they do a commercial or ad. Expensive.
Owned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Websites Email (Newsletter) Blog Twitter account Facebook page YouTube Mobile text message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To raise awareness To engage and mobilize your audience to take action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability for two-way relationship with audience Cost effective. Potential to go viral. Messages are shared peer-to-peer, authentic messengers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Takes time to scale and cultivate an audience. Conversation is not controlled but rather facilitated Needs dedicated staff to post and respond on daily basis.

Once a channel has been chosen, the message should be tailored for that particular communication channel. Each channel has a format that is generally used and the message needs to be tailored for that format. For example:

- For social media you'll need to modify your message to fit the format, as platforms such as Twitter only allow for 140 characters. Helpful hint: Choose hashtags that communicate key element of your message, such as #helmetssavelives or #passroadsafetybill
- A press release targeted at media needs to be timely, include a newshook, and be no longer than two pages
- A paid print ad should include compelling visuals to attract attention and be no larger than one page

When the message changes

During the campaign, you'll want to review your message at various times, based on changing circumstances. For example, there may be times when a law is being debated but does not include the non-negotiable provisions that make up a strong and effective public health law. In response, you may consider revisiting your messages and tailoring them to that situation. The following are times when you may want to consider a proactive, tailored response:

Which Unanticipated Events Warrant a Tailored Response?

- Threatens to weaken or stop enactment of an effective policy
- Discredits a strong supporter or advocacy group
- Provides new and counter arguments that might be accepted by the public or decision makers
- Violates an existing law
- Publicly overwhelms your messages, e.g., a billboard campaign
- Reveals corruption, lack of transparency in the policy process
- Reveals close ties between a policymaker and the opposition that could derail your campaign

Target Audience	Communication Channel	Example Key Message for Specific Channel



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