Communication Standards and Recommendations

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH TRACKING NETWORK

SEPTEMBER 2014

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INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

Establishing guidelines, providing recommendations, and having mechanisms to identify best practices for communication, outreach, training, and evaluation are essential to maintaining a strong and well-organized multiple-partner network.

This document provides guidance for the communication and training standards, as outlined in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network Funding Opportunity Announcements CDC-RFA-EH14-1403 and CDC-RFA-EH14-1405. Included in this document are the communication- and training-specific passages excerpted directly from the funding opportunity announcements (FOAs). Recommendations, templates, and a list of resources for successfully addressing these standards also are included.

If you have any questions about this document, contact Holly Wilson at HWilson@cdc.gov or 770-488-3841.

Communication Plan Standards and Recommendations

The following standards and recommendations cover the two current FOAs for the Tracking Program.

Communications Standards (Source: FOA p. 12-13)

Establish, maintain and evaluate a state and/or local level communication plan for delivering Tracking Program messages and information to key audiences identified by CDC. The plan should also include audiences and messages important to the grantee and activities necessary to address community concerns. The plan also must include a risk communication section. The plan will be updated annually and evaluation results will be submitted annually. The plan should include traditional communication strategies and incorporate new and emerging communication technology as appropriate. This may include Web 2.0 tools, social media (e.g., Facebook and Twitter), and other technologies or channels that emerge during the course of this cooperative agreement.

Communications Recommendations

1. Communication plans can follow any format, but all plans should include
   - target audiences,
   - activities,
   - a timeline, and
   - evaluation measures.

Two templates are provided to assist you with drafting communication plans (See Appendices A and B).

2. Key audiences should include
   - state/local health department staff and leadership,
   - other state/local government agencies,
   - data stewards,
   - policymakers,
   - technical advisory group members,
   - local (county, parish, district, etc.) public health professionals,
   - appropriate community groups or non-governmental organizations, and
   - other potential end-users identified by the grantee.

3. Key activities should include
   - identifying and recruiting members for the technical advisory group,
   - identifying and establishing relationships with stakeholders,
   - gatekeepers, and decision makers,
   - building support for the tracking program through ongoing communication,
   - presenting at conferences and meetings ,
   - developing a tracking program e-newsletter/e-mail distribution list or some other mechanism to keep key stakeholders informed of progress and opportunities to provide feedback on plans,

- creating a tracking program Web site,
- creating a fact sheet, brochure, or other communication materials, and
- contributing to technical documentation for the grantee network (e.g., frequently asked questions, user guide, tutorial, etc.).

4. The risk communication section should focus on preventing and avoiding crisis, largely through relationship-building and engagement of diverse audiences. Grantees should ensure that all risk communication efforts support the idea that the Network and its data are accessible, understandable, and useful to key stakeholders.

5. Evaluation activities should include
   - a systematic method for capturing feedback on network development,
   - process measurements, such as number of presentations, materials distributed, number of people on the newsletter/distribution list,
   - formal or informal focus groups concerning network development,
   - key informant interviews.

6. Copies of promotional, outreach, and communication products developed by grantees should be submitted to CDC. Examples of these items include, but are not limited to, e-newsletters, fliers, bookmarks, press releases, fact sheets, infographics, and presentations.

Communication Plan Timeline: Grantees should submit a complete communication plan for Phase One, including a risk communication component, to CDC by the end of the first quarter of the funding cycle (end of October). Communication plans should be updated annually for the remainder of the funding period. Communication plans should be revised and re-send to CDC communication liaisons when significant changes have been made to the plan.

Training Standards and Recommendations (Source: FOA p. 13)

1. Facilitate training of the state and local health department workforce and their partners on basic Tracking principles that will establish a common understanding of the Tracking Program. At a minimum, this will include completing the CDC training course *Tracking in Action* that is available online at http://ephtracking.cdc.gov/training.action. Other trainings are available on this site. Awardees can choose the most appropriate additional courses to fit training needs.
2. The awardee must provide appropriate training to the workforce to ensure proper use of data by attending the grantee meetings or other professional training academies.
3. Attend Tracking workshops (up to two per year) and conference (once every other year).

Training Recommendations

1. Key audiences should include
   - tracking program staff,
   - tracking partners, and
   - audiences who can be cultivated as users of the network.

2. Key activities should include
   - conducting a training needs assessment to guide development of training content
     - Training topics may include basic tracking principles; the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network; and key or unique features of the state/local tracking network.
   - developing a training plan (can be included as a section in the communications plan) to include proposed training topic, audience, timeline, and evaluation measures
     - Grantees are free to use and adapt content from the Tracking 101 course.
     - Format of the trainings may include in-person training, Webinars, self-study, and demonstrations.
   - submitting copies of needs assessments and training materials to CDC
   - attendance at annual tracking workshops and conferences by communications staff
   - participating in tracking-related communications training opportunities.

3. Evaluation activities should include
   - recording the number of trainings and participants
   - conducting learner assessments (e.g., pre-/post-test knowledge checks, skills assessment, follow-up questionnaires to determine changes in practice)
   - obtaining customer satisfaction feedback

Evaluation Standards and Recommendations for Partnership, Outreach, and Communication Activities (source: FOA, p. 14-16)

The evaluation activities outlined in both FOAs should include partnership, outreach, and communication components.

1. Assist CDC in conducting program evaluation activities including, but not limited to... training activities [and...] partnership, outreach and communication activities.
2. Recipients should develop written action plans to address any issues identified as a result of the program evaluation process.
3. Awardees will report out on the following process measures related to communications and outreach
   a. Robust surveillance system with tools, guides, and best practices to assess health effects related to environmental exposures and develop interventions/actions
   b. Inventory of standardized tools, resources, and messages
   c. Strong group of environmental health partners
   d. Evidence-based environmental health and public health interventions in grantee jurisdictions

4. The evaluation will focus on some of the following key questions related to communications and outreach
   a. Collaborations: What are essential collaborations? Tracking was established to bridge the information gap between environmental hazard, exposure, and health. Identifying key collaborations to accomplish this and how the program is successfully leveraging these relationships are a vital component to Tracking.
   b. Communication: What communication activities are most successfully used to educate audiences on the value of the Tracking Program and how it has been used to impact public health? Communicating the environmental burden on health and successful actions to improve the public's health is an essential requirement for Tracking.

Evaluation Recommendations
1. A logic model focused on communication activities should be created to complement the communication plan. Communication activities can be incorporated into a larger program logic model. It should be reviewed at least once per year and revised as needed.

2. A copy of the evaluation plan, or portion which highlights communication and training activities should be submitted to CDC along with the communication plan. If the communication plan includes evaluation activities, a separate document does not need to be submitted for communication and training activities.

3. Any evaluation tools (e.g., training evaluation, customer satisfaction survey, logs for tracking presentations or materials distributed) developed by the program should be submitted as well.

Workgroup and Meeting Participation Standards and Recommendations (Source: FOA, p.13-14)

1. Actively participate in Tracking projects and workgroups. The recipient may select one individual to join these workgroups. Participation in these workgroups and projects is vital to the success of the program.
2. Attend grantee meetings and program reviews (no more than two per year) and a conference (every other year).

Workgroup Participation Recommendation
1. Every grantee program should provide at least one qualified person to participate in Program Marketing and Outreach Workgroup activities.
2. Grantees should send communications staff to grantee meetings, program reviews, and conferences as feasible.

More information about PMO is available on SharePoint.
http://ephtn.sharepointsite.net/default.aspx

Staffing Standards and Recommendations (Source: FOA, p. 33)

1. Does the team include someone with communication training and experience?

Staffing Recommendations
1. The communication position should be at least .5 FTE. Staff selected to fill this position should have education and/or equivalent experience in one or more of the following fields: communication, education/training, outreach, marketing, public relations.
2. The position should be filled as soon as possible following award.

RESOURCES

Communication Planning
- [New Grantee Resources](#) (Network launch resources, outreach plan development)
- [Grantee Communications Inventory](#) (Communication plans, articles, fact sheets, etc.)
- [Communication Toolkits](#) by health topic
- [Porter Novelli Health Styles Survey 2010 presentation](#)
- [Audience Tip Sheets](#) (nurses, health educators, librarians,
- [User Feedback](#) (focus groups, key informant interviews, etc.)
- [CDC Communication Tools](#)

Training
- [Online Training from the National Environmental Health Association](#) (NEHA)
  - Environmental Public Health Tracking 101 (Tracking 101)
  - Tracking in Action: Workforce Development
- [Training Materials from Tracking Workshops](#)

Evaluation
- [Communication Project Evaluation](#): Includes PowerPoint presentation, example logic model, return-on-investment calculator, and notes about the training session
- [Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health,](#) *MMWR*
- [Updated Guidelines for Evaluating Public Health Surveillance Systems,](#) *MMWR*
- [Common Web Stats and Software](#)
- [Developing a Logic Model or Theory of Change](#). University of Kansas, Work Group for Community Health and Development, Community Tool Box
- [Logic Model Training Manual, Activities, and PowerPoint](#). University of Wisconsin-Extension

Communication Liaison

Each grantee has an assigned communication liaison at CDC available to provide technical assistance as needed. The liaison can guide communication and evaluation plan development and work iteratively with grantees on content and design for materials and other activities. Grantees should contact their project officer or Holly Wilson (HWilson@cdc.gov) for their communication liaison, if needed.

Appendix A

Sample Communication Plan Template I

I. Purpose or Goal Statement

II. Communication Objectives

III. Target Audiences

IV. Activities

1) Activity name
   a) Description
   b) Audience
   c) Timeline
   d) Evaluation Measure(s)
2) Activity name
   a) Description
   b) Audience
   c) Timeline
   d) Evaluation Measure(s)
3) Etc.

V. Risk Communication Plan

VI. Training Plan (optional—can be a stand-alone document)

Appendix B

Sample Communication Plan Template II

I. Purpose or Goal Statement

II. Objectives

Audience	Activities	Timeline	Notes	Evaluation

Appendix C[*]

Technical Assistance Record

Grantee: _____

Point of Contact: _____ **%FTE:** _____

Deliverables

	Due date	Date received	Notes (revisions suggested, issues encountered, TA provided, etc.)
Communication plan			
Evaluation plan			
Training plan			

PMO participation
Participation in PMO calls:

Notes: (indicate if grantee PMO representative volunteers to present at meetings or conferences, takes leadership roles, etc.)

*This is a sample of the record that CDC's Communication Team will be keeping to track grantees' progress on standards and recommendations outlined in this document.