

# Quick Help

Use Quick Help to find answers and tools to frequently asked questions, which have been arranged by topic—Planning Benefits and Value, Spokespeople, Controversy, Networking, Public Involvement, and Media.

## Planning Benefits and Value

If you face the challenge of explaining the benefits of capital improvement planning to skeptical elected officials, or talking to business leaders about how planning and implementation increase property values, Sections 2, 3, and 4 will be particularly useful. Sections 5, 7, and 9 also contain information about these topics.

*What parts of the Guide can help me create messages and talking points about the economic value and benefits of good planning and implementation?*

- Section 2    **Message Basics**
  - 2.3    Tailoring messages to motivate audiences
- Section 4    **Everyday Encounters**
  - 4.3    Dollar value of planning
- Section 5    **Contentious Situations**
  - 5.5    Frame your issue

*What can I do to improve communications with other departments in my organization or government?*

- Section 2    **Message Basics**
  - 2.2    Connecting with target audiences
- Section 3    **Politics and Planning**
  - 3.5    Developing a winning message
- Section 4    **Everyday Encounters**
  - 4.1    Day-to-day communications plan
  - 4.2    Inter-department communications

## KEY TOOLS

- 10.1    Messages, talking points, and speeches
- 10.2    Resources for elected official communications
- 10.3    Communications planning and plans

*Where do I find communication strategies and suggestions for gaining more support for planning from selected audiences?*

- Section 2**    **Message Basics**
  - 2.3    Tailoring messages to motivate audiences
- Section 4**    **Everyday Encounters**
  - 4.1    Day-to-day communications plan
  - 4.4    Dispelling myths, misinformation
- Section 6**    **Allies and Partnerships**
  - 6.2    Engaging all stakeholders
- Section 7**    **Public Participation**
  - 7.4    Reaching out
- Section 9**    **E-communications**
  - 9.2    Being "media savvy" on the web (See 9.2.3, 9.2.6)
  - 9.3    Accuracy, appropriateness, and innovation (See 9.3.2, 9.3.3, 9.4.1)

*Where can I find strategies and ideas to help me build political support for larger planning budgets?*

- Section 3**    **Politics and Planning**
  - 3.2    Local political context
  - 3.3    Local officials' perspectives, views, and platforms
  - 3.4    Finding common ground, building relationships and trust
- Section 4**    **Everyday Encounters**
  - 4.3    Dollar value of planning
- Section 6**    **Allies and Partnerships**
  - 6.4    Strategic alliances
  - 6.5    Public-private partnerships

## Spokespeople

Information about spokespersons is found primarily in Section 2.4 (Identifying, cultivating, and preparing spokespersons), Section 3.5 (Developing and delivering a winning message), and Section 8.2 (How it works: "breaking through"). Information in Sections 4 and 6 also may be useful.

It is important to cultivate a number of spokespersons so you can tap a spokesperson whose strengths, knowledge, and contacts match the opportunity.

*I work in a community where the mayor and other elected officials speak for the planning department and its staff. How do I make sure they are saying the right things about planning?*

- Section 2**    **Message Basics**
  - 2.1    APA messages
  - 2.4    Identifying, cultivating, and preparing spokespersons (See 2.4.1)
- Section 3**    **Politics and Planning**
  - 3.3    Local officials' policy perspectives, views, and platforms (See 3.3.6)
  - 3.4    Finding common ground, building relationships and trust (See 3.4.5)
  - 3.5    Developing and delivering a winning message

*How can I encourage organizations supportive of planning to speak out for good planning in our community?*

- Section 6**    **Allies and Partnerships**
  - 6.4    Strategic alliances
  - 6.5    Public-private partnerships

*The mayor or city manager is the principal spokesperson for planning where I work. How do I get that person to better understand the importance of planning and to talk about it more?*

- Section 2**    **Message Basics**
  - 2.1    APA messages
  - 2.4    Identifying, cultivating, and preparing spokespersons (See 2.4.1)
- Section 3**    **Politics and Planning**
  - 3.2    Local political context
  - 3.3    Local officials' policy perspectives, views, and platforms
  - 3.4    Finding common ground, building trust (See 3.4.5)
  - 3.5    Developing and delivering a winning message (See 3.5.2)
  - 3.6    Using persistence and repetition

## KEY TOOLS

- 10.1    Messages, talking points, and speeches
- 10.2    Resources for elected official communications
- 10.5    Media interview preparation materials

*How do I get the mayor or city manager's press office to work planning messages into more of our city's news releases and story pitches to the media?*

- Section 4**    **Everyday Encounters**
- 4.2    Inter-department communications
- 4.3    Dollar value of planning
- 4.4    Dispelling myths, misinformation
  
- Section 8**    **Media Relations**
- 8.2    How it works: “breaking through”

## Controversy

Roughly half of the chapters in the Guide address different aspects of communications involving difficult situations. In addition to Section 5, you'll find useful information in Sections 2, 3, 4, and 7.

### *How can I help stakeholders find common ground in a controversial situation?*

- Section 3**    **Politics and Planning**
  - 3.3    Local officials' policy and perspectives, and platforms (See 3.3.2 and 3.3.7)
  - 3.4    Finding common ground, building relationships and trust (See 3.4.1)
- Section 5**    **Contentious Situations**
  - 5.5    Frame your issues
  - 5.6    Focus on values (See 5.6.1)
- Section 7**    **Public Participation**
  - 7.5    Participation and controversy

### *How can I diffuse tension and encourage understanding among parties in contentious situations?*

- Section 4**    **Everyday Encounters**
  - 4.4    Dispelling myths, misinformation
- Section 5**    **Contentious Situations**
  - 5.4    Facilitate dialogue
- Section 7**    **Public Participation**
  - 7.4    Reaching out

### *What's the best way to handle backlash reactions?*

- Section 2**    **Message Basics**
  - 2.2    Connecting with target audiences (See 2.2.3 and 2.2.6)
- Section 5**    **Contentious Situations**
  - 5.1    Plan in advance (See 5.1.1)
  - 5.8    Use honesty and sensitivity to build trust
- Section 7**    **Public Participation**
  - 7.3    Target your audiences (See 7.3.2)

## KEY TOOLS

- 10.1 Messages, talking points, and speeches
- 10.2 Resources for elected official communications

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- 10.1 Messages, talking points, and speeches
- 10.2 Resources for elected official communications
- 10.3 Communications planning and plans

## Networking

Whether you are beginning to create a network of supporters for planning or expanding an existing network, first identify your audiences and then develop messages that appeal to your targeted groups' needs and interests. These steps are discussed in Section 2. Depending on your situation and the audiences you want to reach, also consult Sections 3, 4, and 6.

### *How do I get my community's influential leaders and decision makers involved with and committed to planning?*

- Section 2**    **Message Basics**
  - 2.2    Connecting with target audiences (See 2.2.1)
  - 2.3    Tailoring messages to motivate audiences
- Section 3**    **Politics and Planning**
  - 3.1    Where to begin (See 3.1.1)
  - 3.4    Finding common ground, building relationships and trust (See 3.4.5)
  - 3.5    Developing and delivering a winning message (See 3.5.2 and 3.5.6)
  - 3.6    Using persistence and repetition
- Section 4**    **Everyday Encounters**
  - 4.2    Inter-department communications (See 4.2.1)
- Section 10**    **Appendices**
  - 10.2    Resources for elected official communications

### *How do I foster networks and cultivate partnerships that lead to greater support for planning in the community I serve?*

- Section 6**    **Allies and Partnerships**
  - 6.1    Receptive audiences
  - 6.4    Strategic alliances
  - 6.5    Public-private partnerships

### *I've been asked to speak about planning before a local audience. Public speaking gives me the jitters. What should I do and how can the Guide help?*

- Section 2**    **Message Basics**
  - 2.4    Identifying, cultivating, and preparing spokespeople
- Section 10**    **Appendices**
  - 10.1    Messages, talking points, and speeches
  - 10.2    Resources for elected official communications

## Public Involvement

There are many paths to and techniques for engaging citizens and stakeholders in planning. Sherry Arnstein's ladder of public participation (See 7.1, Planning and participation) can help you plan communications whether you work in a community where meaningful public participation is encouraged or is given only lip service.

Other tactics include tailoring messages to appeal to audience needs and self-interests (See 2.3, Tailoring messages to motivate audiences) and taking time to listen to and develop rapport with target audiences (See 5.3, Engage your audiences on emotional as well as factual levels, and 7.2, Feedback essential).

### KEY TOOLS

- 10.1 Messages, talking points, and speeches
- 10.3 Communications planning and plans

*How can the Guide help me reframe planning discussions so residents will focus more on what planning can do to help solve community-wide issues?*

- Section 2**    **Message Basics**
  - 2.3    Tailoring messages to motivate audiences (See 2.3.4)
- Section 3**    **Politics and Planning**
  - 3.4    Finding common ground, building relationships and trust
- Section 4**    **Everyday Encounters**
  - 4.1    Day-to-day communications plan (See 4.1.1)
  - 4.4    Dispelling myths, misinformation
- Section 5**    **Contentious Situations**
  - 5.1    Plan in advance
  - 5.8    Use honesty and sensitivity to build trust
- Section 7**    **Public Participation**
  - 7.1    Planning and participation
  - 7.3    Target your audiences (See 7.3.2)
  - 7.4    Reaching out

*How do I get more stakeholders involved in the planning process, whether it's attending a public meeting or workshop, responding to survey, or participating in something else we sponsor?*

- Section 2**    **Message Basics**
  - 2.3    Tailoring messages to motivate audiences
- Section 6**    **Allies and Partnerships**
  - 6.2    Engaging all stakeholders
  - 6.3    Keeping parties engaged
- Section 7**    **Public Participation**
  - 7.1    Planning and participation
  - 7.3    Targeting your audiences (See 7.3.1)
  - 7.4    Reaching out (See 7.4.4)

*How do I discuss issues or present information so people will hear and understand what I say, not misinterpret it?*

- Section 2**    **Message Basics**
  - 2.1    APA messages (See 2.1.1)
- Section 3**    **Politics and Planning**
  - 3.5    Developing and delivering a winning message (See 3.5.1)
- Section 4**    **Everyday Encounters**
  - 4.4    Dispelling myths, misinformation
- Section 5**    **Contentious Situations**
  - 5.1    Plan in advance (See 5.1.1)

## Media

Reaching out to the media is similar to communicating with any other audience group. Reporters, editors, and broadcasters have specific information needs that, when met, can result in media coverage about planning. See 8.3 (Preliminary steps) and 8.4 (Basic tools) for getting a media outreach effort started.

*I have a media interview in 30 minutes and I'm not prepared. What do you suggest?*

- Section 2**    **Message Basics**
  - 2.1    APA messages (See 2.1.1)
- Section 4**    **Everyday Encounters**
  - 4.1    Day-to-day communications plan (See 4.1.1)
- Section 8**    **Media Relations**
  - 8.6    Interview basics

*I need talking points and facts for a media interview. Do you have sound bites I can use?*

- Section 2**    **Message Basics**
  - 2.1    APA messages (See 2.1.1)
  - 2.3    Tailoring messages to motivate audiences (See 2.3.1)

*I want to talk to the media, but they aren't interested in what I have to say. How can I get the local newspaper to publish more stories about planning?*

- Section 8**    **Media Relations**
  - 8.2    How it works: “breaking through”
  - 8.3    Preliminary steps (See 8.3.1)
  - 8.4    Basic tools

### KEY TOOLS

- 10.4    Sample media kit materials and op-eds
- 10.5    Media interview preparation materials