



Partner Communication Strategy Guide

A partner communication strategy is critical for successfully managing partner relationships over the long term. This document provides guidance on the key elements of an effective partner communication strategy for your community.

This guide describes five key elements of an effective partner communication strategy:

1. **Standards and Guiding Principles**
2. **Communication Objectives**
3. **Establishing Partners' Communications Roles**
4. **Communication Methods and Channels**
5. **Communication Frequency**



Element 1: **Standards and Guiding Principles**

Communication standards and guiding principles help frame the partner communication strategy as well as the tone of communication among the partners. Standards represent any agreed-upon expectations such as frequency of communication. Guiding principles speak to the collective values of the group that will govern the tone and nature of partner communication.

For example, guiding principles for partner communication may include the following:

- Partner communication will demonstrate mutual respect
- Partner communication will be inclusive of all key partners
- Partner communication will demonstrate a value for diversity of perspectives
- Communication among partners will be candid and constructive in nature

Ultimately, the standards and guiding principles in your partner communication strategy should reflect the collective expectations and values of the partnering organizations.



Element 2: **Communication Objectives**

Your partner communication strategy should articulate the primary objectives of communication among the partners. Communication objectives may include but are not limited to:

- Monitoring progress of joint initiatives
- Identifying and addressing challenges
- Identifying and celebrating successes
- Exploring new opportunities
- Making key decisions



Element 3: **Establishing Partners' Communications Roles**

Your partner communication strategy should clearly identify key points of contact within your partner organizations and each of their roles regarding communication activities. **The "RACI" framework** is useful for defining the roles of key participants in an activity or decision. The framework is described in the table below:

R - Responsible	These individuals are directly responsible for a particular activity or decision
A - Accountable	These individuals may or may not be directly responsible for an activity or decision, but they are ultimately accountable for the outcomes of that activity or decision
C - Consulted	These individuals should be consulted regarding a particular activity or decision
I - Informed	These individuals should be informed of a particular activity or decision





Element 4: Communication Methods

Your partner communication strategy should define the various communication methods that will be used by partners and when each one would generally be used. Examples of communication methods and best practices are, as follows:

- **In-person meetings:** Face-to-face meetings among partners require greater effort in coordination and facilitation than other communication methods, but this method of communication is extremely valuable for building rapport and strengthening relationships. If possible, it is preferable to have in-person meetings among all key partners at the initiation of the program, and at least twice a year after that.
- **Conference calls/virtual meetings:** Virtual meetings can allow partners to maintain “live” communication when in-person meetings are not possible. This method of communication is preferred when the topic or objective or the communication would be best addressed through dialogue or a real-time exchange of ideas and perspectives. Examples include problem-solving or collaborative decision-making.
- **Push communication:** Push communication refers to one-way communication through which information is actively “pushed” from a sender to a recipient. E-mail is considered a form of push communication. This method of communication is useful for sharing time-sensitive information that does not require dialogue or the exchange of ideas. If used appropriately, this method can allow for more efficient communication between partners.
- **Pull communication:** Pull communication refers to one-way communication through which the recipient must actively retrieve or “pull” information from a commonly accessible location, such as a website or a shared server. This method of communication is useful for sharing information that many partners may need to repeatedly refer to.



Element 5: Communication Frequency

Your partner communication strategy should include information on the anticipated frequency of communication regarding program implementation and updates. Regular communication is critical for maintaining strong partnerships. Articulation of the communication frequency demonstrates a commitment to the CHUSA initiative, overall partnership, transparency and helps partners understand the expectations around their levels of engagement.

In addition, a decision about the desired frequency for in-person meetings should be established. **In general, partners should plan to engage with one another at least every six months, but quarterly is preferable.** In-person meetings are the perfect vehicle to provide and receive updates on progress, challenges, celebrate accomplishments, and jointly explore new opportunities.



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