

Message Mapping Template, Worksheet, and Checklist

A message map is a useful tool for developing messages about key questions before meeting with community stakeholders. It can help you to respond to potential questions accurately and articulately.

Experts in message mapping recommend developing three main messages and three supporting messages for each of those main messages. Following the message map template are a worksheet and checklist that you can use to ensure that your messages incorporate risk communication principles and are as clear as they can be.

Message Map Template

Communications Scenario or Issue:	
Stakeholders (Interested or Affected Individuals or Groups):	
Question or Concern:	
Key Message 1:	
Supporting Information 1:	
Supporting Information 2:	
Supporting Information 3:	
Key Message 2:	
Supporting Information 1:	
Supporting Information 2:	
Supporting Information 3:	
Key Message 3:	
Supporting Information 1:	
Supporting Information 2:	

Message Review Worksheet and Checklist

When you need to develop new messages or evaluate existing ones, work through the following steps to ensure that messages are well crafted and effective.

Step 1: What is the overall topic/situation/question that you want to address (consider who, what, when, where, and how)?

Step 2: Consider the following general factors:

1. Who is the target audience(s) (e.g., general public, people living and working in the area of contamination)? What is the lowest literacy level of your target audience?

2. What is the purpose of the messages (e.g., talking points for a community meeting, a fact sheet, social media messaging, media session)?

3. What is the anticipated method of delivery (e.g., public meeting, document, one-on-one)?

Step 3: Consider what you are asking the target audience to do. Is there a specific action you are asking the target audience to perform? What is it?

Step 4: Check your messages for the following and revise them if you check “no” in any of the boxes below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Is the message clear (i.e., easy to understand and free from undefined jargon or acronyms)?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Is the message focused (i.e., covers only important points and avoids extraneous information, clauses, and caveats)?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Is the message responsive to audience concerns (i.e., information is relevant and important)?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Are the sentences short (i.e., be no longer than 10–12 words on average)?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Does the message map provide the most important information first and last (i.e., Primacy/Recency effects: people are more likely to accurately remember information that is presented at the beginning and end)?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Is a negative statement or a piece of bad news balanced with at least three positive, solution-oriented, or constructive statements (1N = 3P rule: One negative equals three positives)?

Sample Message Map Worksheet

Communications Scenario or Issue:	Is the soil in our neighborhood harmful to me and my family?
Stakeholders (Interested or Affected Individuals or Groups):	Public/media
Question or Concern:	Human health, trust in government
Key Message 1:	ATSDR is concerned about the soil in which you and your loved ones live, work, and play.
Supporting Information 1:	We are working closely with public health authorities and others to minimize any potential harm.
Supporting Information 2:	We are collecting samples and testing the soil from several places in the area for the presence of {insert chemical name, such as arsenic, lead, etc.}
Supporting Information 3:	Our scientists will determine whether touching or breathing the soil could be harmful to human health.
Key Message 2:	ATSDR will let you know what it finds and advise you on how you can stay safe.
Supporting Information 1:	People should call {insert phone number} or go to {insert Web site} for information and updates.
Supporting Information 2:	People should stay tuned to local television, the newspaper, or {name of social media channel}.
Supporting Information 3:	Until we know more, people in the impacted area {insert area} should limit their direct contact with the soil and not allow children to play in it.
Key Message 3:	You can limit your direct contact and exposure to the soil now through some simple behavior changes.
Supporting Information 1:	Wash your hands after touching soil and before preparing food, smoking, eating, or drinking.
Supporting Information 2:	Try to reduce soil dust in the house by leaving your shoes at the door so less soil and sediment enters your home.
Supporting Information 3:	Reduce outside activities that stir up dust such as digging or moving soil.