



soilSHOP Communication Planning Guide



Screening, Health, Outreach, and Partnership



National Center
for Environmental Health
Agency for Toxic Substances
and Disease Registry



Communication Planning Guide

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Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to provide public health officials and organizations with resources to plan and promote soilSHOP events. These resources, which can be adapted to meet the needs of your targeted audience, highlight the importance of engaging communities and partners through various communication efforts. Everyone has a role to play, so we encourage you to personalize this toolkit.

soilSHOP Overview

The name soilSHOP (soil, screening, health, outreach and partnership) is a community health education event where people can learn more about potential lead contamination in their soil and how to prevent or reduce exposures to lead in soil. The event offers free soil screening

services to attract residents to attend the event—it is not meant to determine the extent of soil contamination in the community.

Why is communication and outreach important in soilSHOP?

Effective communication and outreach efforts with the target audience can increase public awareness of soilSHOP events and access to event information. The more individuals are informed and aware of your soilSHOP event, the greater the attendance and opportunities to educate the community are.



soil**S**creening**H**ealth**O**utreach**P**artnership

Communication Planning

What is a communication plan?

A communication plan outlines the approach that a program will use to communicate with their community, in this case for soilSHOPs. It helps ensure systematic information sharing and two-way communication throughout the planning process.

soilSHOP events are often conducted by people from different agencies and groups. Event planners may choose to take the lead in developing a communication plan,

or they may work with their soilSHOP team and health educators to establish one. When conducting a soilSHOP with partners, staff may support partners to develop a communication plan by providing this guide as a resource, or scheduling meetings to develop the plan. Developing a communication plan together ensures that each agency is able to clearly convey their message, and that everyone is on the same page.

Why develop a communication plan?

A communication plan creates a clear framework for successful communication activities. It serves as a guiding document to help you establish objectives, audiences, messages, tools, and timelines in communicating soilSHOP events. A well-defined communication plan for soilSHOP events can improve community participation outcomes, increase event awareness, and involve the people you are serving. Good communication planning helps you in the following ways:

- **It builds trust** between soilSHOP staff, partners, and the community.
- **It helps manage expectations** so that people are aware of their role as participants and what to expect from the soilSHOP.
- **It encourages participation and outreach** to other partners such as local universities, master gardeners, cooperative extension programs, and health departments.

Communication Methods

There are two methods for communication, written and oral. Each involve different forms of communicating messages.



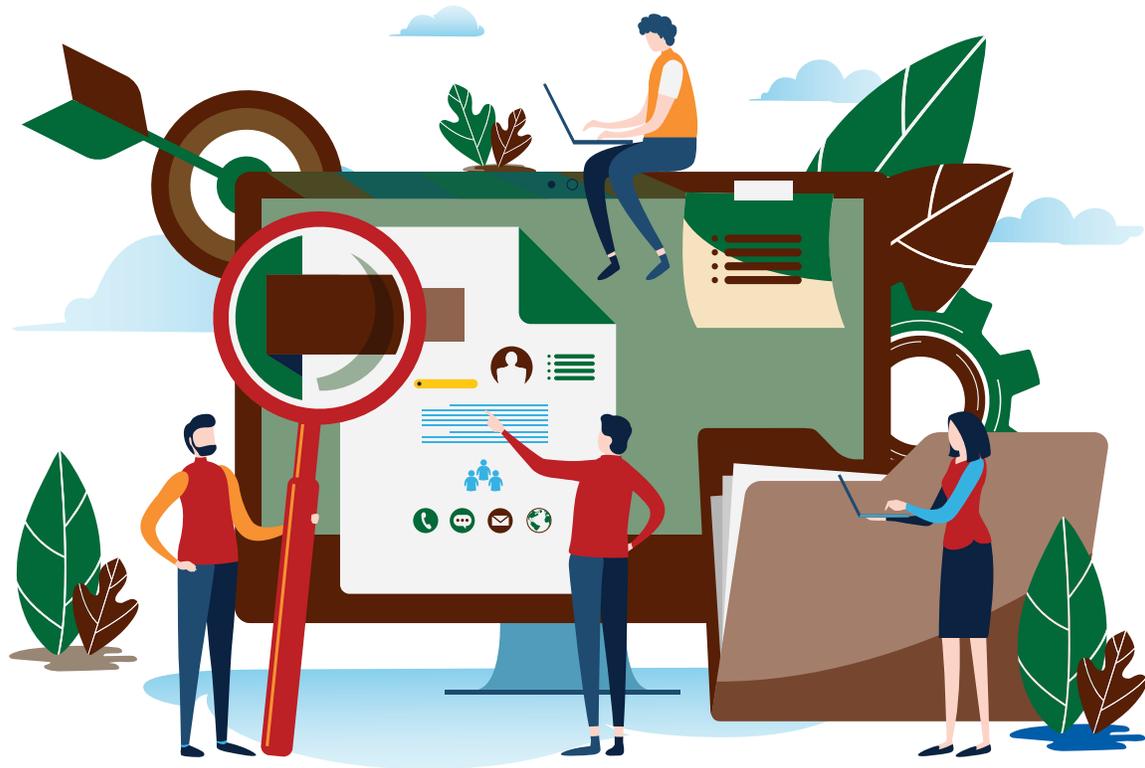
Written

- Brochures and flyers
- Online social media efforts
- Postcards or participant handouts
- Newspapers
- Bulletin boards



Oral

- Media outlets (radio, newspaper, TV)
- Community meetings
- Community organizations or groups that share information on behalf of soilSHOP
- Community mobilizers (e.g., door-to-door visits)



Steps to developing a communication plan

There are six steps to developing a communication plan. These steps help ensure systematic information sharing and communication of soilSHOP events ([please see page 9 for examples](#)).

Step 1: Identify your communication objectives.

Stating your objectives will keep the communication plan focused.

- What is your purpose for communicating a soilSHOP event? What do you want to accomplish?

Step 2: Choose your target audience. Communities are made up of different groups of people, who range in age, social and economic backgrounds, and education levels. You may need to use different communication methods to reach each different group.

- Who needs to know about soilSHOP? Be as specific as possible.
- What are the unique needs (language barriers/needs) of this community?
- Which geographic areas should receive your messages?

Step 3: Design your key messages. Identifying your key messages will help you provide the information that is necessary for achieving your objectives.

- What are the key messages you want to communicate to each audience?
- What questions will people have about your event?
- What do people need to understand in order for the event to succeed?

- What would you want to know about the soilSHOP event if you lived in the community?

Step 4: Select your communication strategy. Identify how you will communicate your message.

- What method(s) will you use to communicate your message to your target audience? Refer to the forms of communication listed on page 4 for ideas.

Step 5: Establish a time frame.

- Review the soilSHOP planning timeline on the toolkit website. This tool may help you plan for the development of communication materials and releases at multiple stages. For example, months before the event you may want to provide people with information on the soilSHOP date and general information. However, closer to the event you may want to remind people about the soil sample collection process and how to bring their samples to the event.

Step 6: Monitor the results and look for ways to improve. Review your communication plan during and after your soilSHOP event. By reviewing your approach, you reduce time wasted on ineffective methods, and a review helps you look for ways to improve.

- Did people receive your message?
- How did they respond?
- What communication methods will you use again? Which will you consider using next time?

Key Messages and Talking Points

Key messages for soilSHOP

The following key messages and talking points were developed to help communicate the impact of exposure to lead in soil and the benefits of soilSHOP events to the community. These messages can be tailored for use with a variety of audiences, including other public health professionals.

- There is no known safe level of exposure to lead.
- Lead is common in urban and rural settings.
- Lead poisoning is a preventable disease.
- Avoid exposures to all sources of lead.
- Use safe gardening methods (e.g., raised bed gardening).

How to effectively communicate about soilSHOP and lead prevention

Take advantage of opportunities to communicate lead prevention strategies and benefits of soilSHOP events. Use these tips to develop a communication strategy to engage with the community, share messages on social media, and plan activities within your community throughout the year.

Leverage relevant events: Use recognized public health events and awareness days, such as Earth Day and National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, to provide timely opportunities to share key messages about soilSHOP.

Share success stories: If you have already hosted a soilSHOP, share your successes. If this is your first soilSHOP,

highlight the importance of soilSHOP events and how they will benefit your community. Sharing stories can help others make decisions about attending events in the future.

Identify a need from data or facts: Share data and facts about blood lead levels and/or lead in soil contamination in your area to identify a potential need for exposure reduction and health education. Data may be obtained from your local health department, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), or EPA.

Calendar of national and international events

The events below are great opportunities to consider planning a soilSHOP as part of your communication strategy. Use these events as relevant touch points to talk about soilSHOP, lead and other heavy metals, and ways

everyone can get involved. Also, consider looking for local events that relate to earth day, science, gardening, children's health, and lead poisoning when planning for your event.

March	April	May	June	September	October	November
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ National Nutrition Month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ National Public Health Week ■ World Health Day ■ Earth Day ■ National Minority Health Month ■ National Gardening Day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ National Public Gardens Day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ World Environmental Day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ World Environmental Health Day ■ National Food Safety Education Month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ National Health Education Week ■ National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week ■ Children's Health Month ■ World Food Day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ National Tree Planting Day
						

Social Networking Sites Overview and Sample Content

Social networking sites are online communities where people can interact with friends, family, co-workers, and others with similar interests. Most sites provide multiple ways for their users to interact such as chat, email, video, voice chat, file-sharing, blogging and discussion groups.

The use of social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, continues to grow. Sites are used by millions of people every day to interact and engage with other users.

Social networking sites provide an immediate and personal way to deliver program, products and information. Using sites like Facebook and Twitter to promote soilSHOP events can be an effective way to expand your reach and increase engagement and access to information.

Below you will find general information on two social networking sites (Facebook and Twitter), best practice tips, and sample content created for soilSHOP promotion.



Facebook

Facebook is a social networking site with more than 901 million active users. Facebook is best used for community building and engagement, asking questions, promoting events, and sharing information in a longer layout. You can use Facebook to educate others on soilSHOP, as well as raise awareness of potential hazards that may be found in soil like lead and other heavy metals.

Facebook Best Practices

1. **Become familiar with other Facebook sites.** There are several public health related sites available with different targets, purposes and functions. Visiting other sites will help you gain an understanding of the participants, the culture and the functionality.
2. **Consider overall communications strategy and objectives.** Before creating a page, make sure Facebook activities match your overall communication strategy. Once your target audience has been identified, it is important to determine if using a social networking site such as Facebook is an appropriate channel. Facebook is a public platform and, in most cases, reaches the general public. Specifically targeted Facebook pages can be developed to address healthcare providers, public health professionals and others.
3. **Develop a promotion plan.** Create a promotion plan before launching the page; encourage fans to share and cross-promote using other social media channels and web pages.
4. **Provide engaging posts and communication material on the site.** Incorporate videos, quizzes, widgets, games, applications, images and other materials to actively and repeatedly engage users.

Sample Facebook Posts

soilSHOP stands for Soil Screening, Health, Outreach, and Partnership. It is a health education event where we offer free soil screenings for lead and teach you ways to avoid them while gardening or playing in yards.

How does soilSHOP work?

5. Collect soil samples from yard or gardening areas (follow the directions on the flyer).
6. Bring your sample to our soilSHOP event and have it screened for FREE!
7. Meet with our health educators and learn about your soil results and ways to reduce exposure to lead and other contaminants in soil.



Figure 1: Example Sample Collection Cartoon to attach with Facebook post available in soilSHOP Toolkit.

Screen and learn about your soil! Grab a bag of your soil before you come to City Park next Saturday, May 3rd, 2016. The State Department of Public Health will be hosting a soilSHOP to help City Park residents learn if their soil is contaminated with lead and how to prevent exposure to contaminated soil and produce. You will receive free soil screening for lead, information on safe gardening, and one-on-one health education about the hazards of lead!

Parents protect your children and make plans to attend the free soilSHOP lead screening at City Park. Bring your soil sample and visit our health educators to learn more about how you can keep your children safe while they play. For more information visit: www.Website.org.



Twitter

Twitter is an information network made up of 140-character messages called tweets. It is used by millions of people, organizations, and businesses to discover and share new information. Twitter users subscribe to receive tweets by following an account. Followers receive messages in their timeline that includes a feed of all the accounts they have subscribed to. These short, easy to read, public messages make Twitter a powerful, real-time way of communicating. These messages can be submitted by a variety of means, including text messages, mobile websites, or the website hosting the micro-blog.

Twitter has become an important tool for connecting people interested in specific health and safety information. This information network can be a great platform for sharing soilSHOP flyers, helpful resources and links, and general messaging to encourage the public to take action.

Twitter Best Practice

1. **Keep messages brief.** Effective tweets are often shorter than the 140-character limit.
2. **Lead with a strong hook.** It is important to grab users' attention right at the start. For example, test language like "Did you know?" or "3 steps to screen your soil for free..."
3. **Use active language.** When sharing a link, choose language like "Check out..." or "Learn more about..." to encourage users to click your link.
4. **Show your personality.** Use a friendly and informal tone so users will get to know you.
5. **Use visuals and multimedia.** Photos, graphics, and videos make tweets more attractive and engaging. When possible include a relevant image or video to complement your tweet.
6. **Use hashtags wisely.** Hashtag only key words or phrases in tweets and try not to include more than 2 hashtags in a tweet. If you post on a National Health Observance Day include relevant hashtag.

Sample Tweets

Calling all gardeners! Collect a soil sample from your garden and have it screened for FREE at City Park on May 3rd! #soilSHOP.



Figure 2: Example Outreach Flyer to attach with Twitter post available in soilSHOP Toolkit.

Join us in protecting your health and your community gardens by participating in #soilSHOP! Learn what we are doing to prevent #lead from harming you: www.website.org.

Do you know what is in your soil? Bring soil from your yard and have it screened for FREE at our #soilSHOP on May 3rd, 2016. For more information visit: www.website.gov.

ATSDR has used the following hashtags to promote soilSHOP: #soilSHOP #SafeGardening #Lead #ATSDR #Gardening

To see more CDC/ATSDR soilSHOP tweets visit: [@CDCEEnvironment](https://twitter.com/CDCEEnvironment)

Sample soilSHOP Communication Plan

2016 City Park soilSHOP

Community outreach event, Saturday, May 3, 2016

Background

The City Park soilSHOP team is planning a one-day soilSHOP event to raise awareness about the hazards of lead and arsenic in soils, to share ways to avoid exposures to these metals, and to garden safely. The event will take place on May 3, 2018 in City Park. The team will offer free soil screenings for lead and arsenic, and help explain soil screening results and share information on ways to reduce potential exposures to these metals.

The name soilSHOP stands for soil Screening, Health, Outreach and Partnership. The soilSHOP approach is a tool for implementing a unique type of environmental health education and outreach. The event offers free soil screening services to attract residents to attend the event, yet, the main intent of these events is to provide health education and other related support services to raise awareness

about environmental hazards like lead and arsenic in their specific community. The emphasis of a soilSHOP event is on education; it is not meant to characterize the extent of soil contamination in the community.

Communications Objectives

- To raise awareness among City Park community members of the hazards of lead and arsenic by offering free soil screenings.
- To impart knowledge to City Park community members and stakeholders about how to avoid exposures to lead and arsenic in the environment by providing on-site health education consultations.
- To encourage safe gardening by sharing resources and materials.

Audiences

Category	External Audience(s)	Internal Partner Audience(s)
Non-governmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Persons who live in the city of City Park ■ American Community Gardening Association ■ Garden Clubs of City Park ■ Local Community Center ■ Press (TBD): ■ Local newspapers, TV stations, radio stations, and local news websites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Local Community Garden ■ County Cooperative Extension ■ Resiliency Non-Profit ■ Local University
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Interested state and local elected officials ■ Others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ State Health Department ■ City Park County Health ■ City Brownfield Program

Strategy

The City Park soilSHOP team will use a multi-pronged approach to communicate the 2016 City Park soilSHOP event and key messages.

Methods

- Send a press release about the event.
- Engage partners in sharing information with audiences.
- Spread message by word-of-mouth.
- Use website postings and/or social media to share event announcements and updates.
- Post flyers at local shops and community bulletins.

Tools

- Key messages
- Outreach Flyer
- Soil sampling kit (Soil Sampling Cartoon, Log In Form, and Plastic Bag)
- Partners' emails, listserv, and/or website postings

Key Messages

1. There is no known safe level of lead.
2. Lead is common in urban settings.
3. Lead poisoning is a preventable disease.
4. Avoid exposures to all sources of lead.

Timeline

Dates	Action Items and Notes	Toolkit Resources
EXAMPLE* January, 2018 3-4 months before event	Example:* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Kick off meeting with core planning team ■ Identify stakeholders and partners ■ Draft list of educational resources – use input from partners to update ■ Determine venue, event date and duration, and name ■ Develop and initiate communications plan *Distribute save-the-date announcements when event details are confirmed.	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Example soilSHOP Planning Timeline ■ Example Initial Outreach Emails ■ Example Resources Sheet for Further Information

*Note: Refer to the Example soilSHOP Planning Timeline toolkit resource and populate this table as appropriate for your event.

Worksheet: Communication Planning

1. Define your event. Give a brief summary.
2. Determine your communication objectives. What do you want to achieve?
3. Establish your target audience. Who will receive your message?
4. Define your key messages. What are the most important messages you want to convey?

5. Outline your communication strategy. How will you communicate your message?

Which method will you use?

Which tools will you use?

6. Set a timeline. Use a timeline to stay on schedule, identify staff, and track progress. Include:

Date	Action Items	Responsible Party	Status

Resources

soilSHOP Toolkit:

www.atsdr.cdc.gov/soilSHOP

Communication Resources:

- soilSHOP Planning Time Line
- Soil Sample Collection Cartoon—Color
- Soil Sample Collection Cartoon—Black and White
- soilSHOP Outreach Flyer—English
- soilSHOP Outreach Flyer—Spanish

Email Box:

Reach representatives who can help you with soil screening planning questions at: soilSHOP@cdc.gov.

Regional soilSHOP Point of Contacts

Locate your ATSDR regional office here: [ATSDR Regional Offices | ATSDR](#)