



# Creating Compelling Messages to Communicate to Policymakers

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# Today's topics



Develop a strategy for creating engagement with policymakers.



Identify how policymakers like to be communicated to.



Creating effective communication messages for policymakers:

**Your points**

**Your message**

**Your story**

# *Can you communicate with* **polycymakers?**

- “Reaching out” vs. “responding”
- Check your organization’s policy about *who* can approach elected officials.
- Some organizations do not allow employees to initiate communication.
- Just about everyone, though, allows employees to respond to information requests.



# Educating vs. advocating: What's the difference?

- **Educating:**
  - Providing science-based results.
    - Benefits (water reduction, cost savings)
    - Explanation of how increased funding could enhance benefits
- **Advocating:**
  - Vote or support a certain way on a topic/issue



# Strategy for communicating to policymakers

- Develop a rapport/relationship.
- Identify policymakers' values and key issues.
- Prep and tell your story.
- Incorporate visits.



# Develop a rapport/relationship

- Become a credible, trustworthy, and dependable information source.
- Questions to consider:
  - Are you in their district/area?
  - Who do you know that they know?
  - Do you have anything in common?
- Connect, not just during a crisis/negative time.
  - “Bank goodwill.”
- Talk to them regularly.



# Identify values and key issues

- **Questions:**
  - What issues matter to them?
  - What are you doing to respond to or address the issues that matter to them?
- **Committee membership (state, federal):** Legislators define themselves by the committees they serve on. Go to the ones that focus on what you are doing.



# Prep and tell your story

- Identify and tell success stories.
- Include aggregate data (how much saved, how many participated).
- Be selective. Use only a few key statistics.
- Tell the local story. What's the local impact?
- “Elevator message”: You never know when you may need it.





# Incorporate visits

- Makes immediate impact. Long-lasting impression.
- **Time:** 30 minutes may be all you have. Count on less than 15 minutes.



# Preparing for the visit

- Schedule the visit. **Time** is limited.
- Prepare yourself; you may not see the policymaker.
  - Staff (state, federal) play a key role in advising policymakers.
- Know all “sides” of the issue.
- Develop a **one-pager**.




# During a visit

- Keep it **brief** and **simple**.
- **Find common ground:** Don't be partisan.
- Focus: Get to **“the ask”** quickly.
- **Listen.** Answer questions.
- Know your role in **groups/delegations.**
- Be ready with your **elevator message**
- Look for **photo opportunities.** Post on **social media.**
- **Business cards:** ALWAYS bring lots of business cards. Give to staffers.
- **One-pagers:** “Leave behind.”




# One-pagers

- Place “the ask” in a place that’s easy to find.
- Verbalize “the ask” during the meeting.
- One page (either one side or front/back)



Southeastern Coastal Center  
for Agricultural Health and Safety



Learn more about SCCAHS by scanning the QR code or visiting [SCCAHS.ORG](https://SCCAHS.ORG)

### Southeastern Coastal Center for Agricultural Health and Safety (SCCAHS)

Continued funding from the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) will support a **strong, healthy agricultural workforce is vital to national security in the United States.** SCCAHS is conducting and disseminating research to help agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers be safer and healthier. Specifically, SCCAHS researchers are working to identify ways to **prevent injury within the areas of heat stress, kidney disease, respiratory health, and musculoskeletal health.**

SCCAHS research has identified nearly **one-third** of all Florida farmworkers suffer from acute kidney injury. One SCCAHS researcher is developing pre-symptomatic screening tests for chronic kidney disease to enable effective detection of early stages of the disease and enable appropriate action.

Preventing injuries can also save lives. Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations had the **highest fatality rate** (23.5 fatalities per 100,000 FTE) of all occupational groups in 2022 (Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries).

SCCAHS works to support a healthy workforce through the following efforts:

- Annual State of the Science Meetings
- Monthly Educational Webinars
- Mental Health First-Aid Training
- Farmworker Health Clinics

*Based at the University of Florida, a national leader in agricultural and public health science, SCCAHS addresses unique occupational safety and health challenges for populations working in agriculture, fishing, and forestry in the following states and territories: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands.*

**7X** The farming, fishing and forestry occupational fatality rate is more than 7 times higher than the overall occupational fatality rate.

**530** 530 stakeholders have signed up to receive monthly SCCAHS newsletters, which include research updates and training activities.

**33%** Thirty-three percent of Florida farmworkers were found to suffer from acute kidney injury.

**14** Fourteen investigators awarded seed funding to stimulate research and support the generation of new data and discovery.

**600** Nearly 600 farmworkers received COVID-19 vaccines through an initiative in partnership with Walgreens.

[sccahs.org](https://sccahs.org)

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# What's the “right” message?

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- **Frame** the message/topic so that it is “connects” with your target audience.
- What do they want to know more about?
- What are they passionate about? What “charge” do you give them with your message/topic?



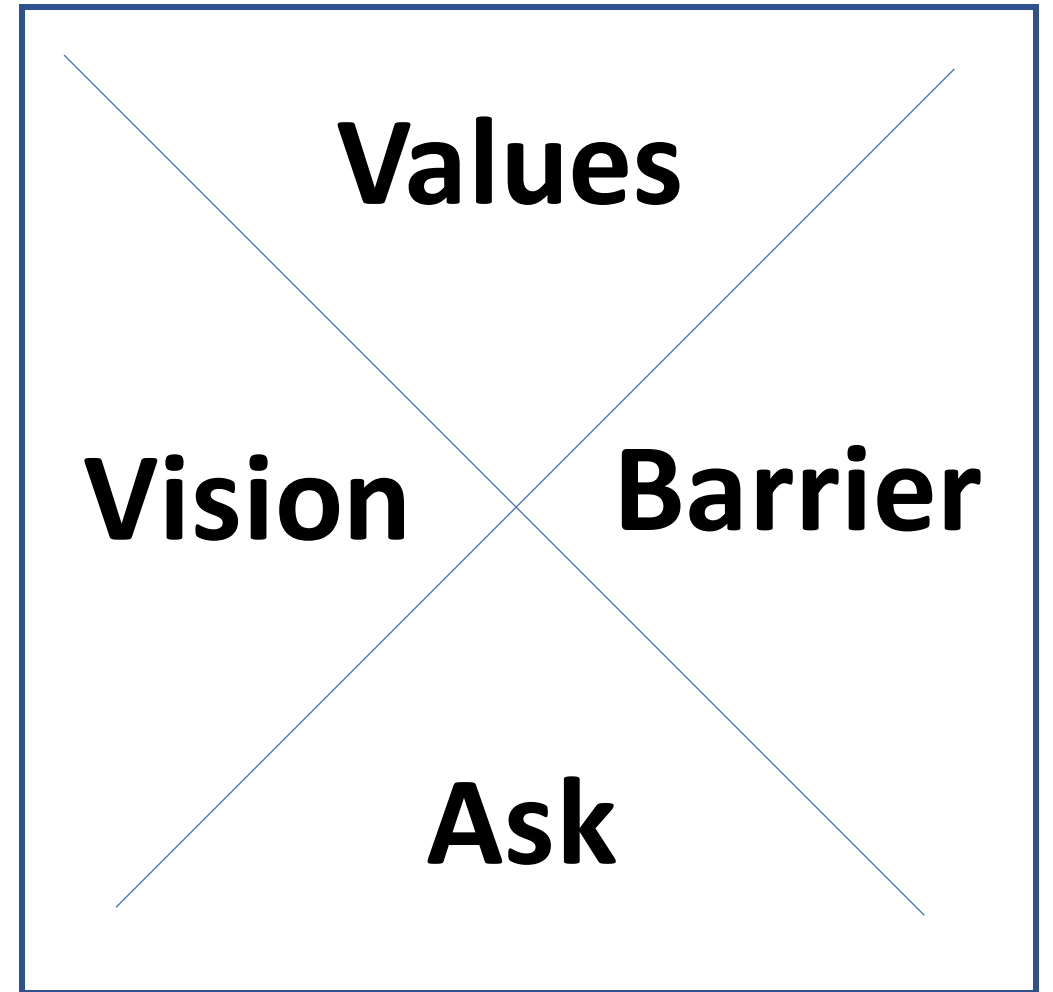
# Communication points

- Develop a **communication main point** and two or three sub-points.
- Put most important information first, followed by less important details.
- Identify possible questions that could be asked, and be ready to respond.

Communication Points	
Main Communication Point	
<hr/> <hr/>	
Your Communication "Sub-Points"	
1	<hr/> <hr/>
2	<hr/> <hr/>
3	<hr/> <hr/>
Possible Question	Your Response
1	<u>1</u>
	<hr/> <hr/>
2	<u>2</u>
	<hr/> <hr/>
3	<u>3</u>
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# Message Box

- Who is your audience?
- What does your audience care about?
- What messages reach your audience?
- Can jump into the **Message Box** at any quadrant.
- Stick with the overall message.



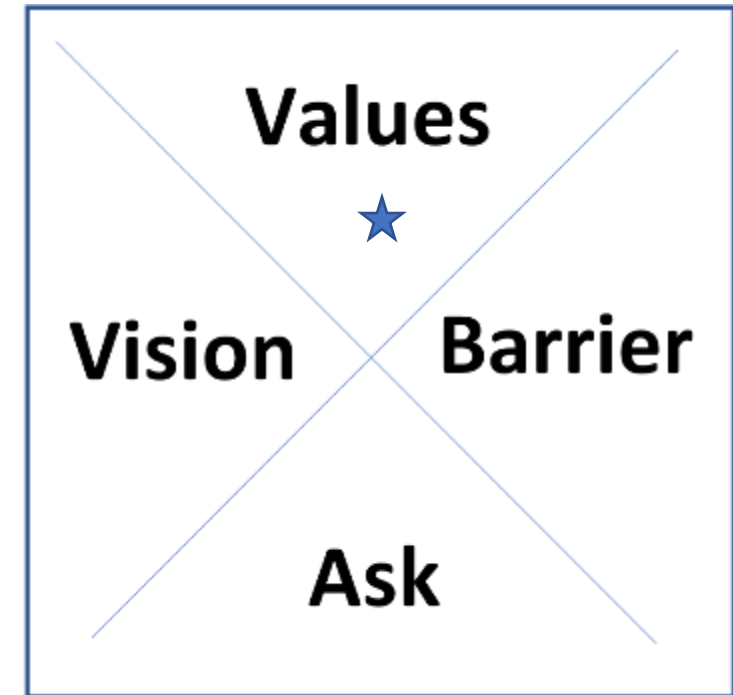
Adapted from P. Bebo & J. McCaffrey (2018). *Beyond the aisle: Crafting compelling advocacy messages for use throughout the year.*

Based on Spitfire Strategies (2016). *Spitfire strategies messaging 101: Create compelling messages.*

Retrieved from <http://static1.squarespace.com/static/574607a245bf217f5ca2d0a3/t/57e20371579fb3910f44c780/1474429810390/Messaging+Tip+Sheet+-+Create+compelling+messages.pdf>.

# Message Box

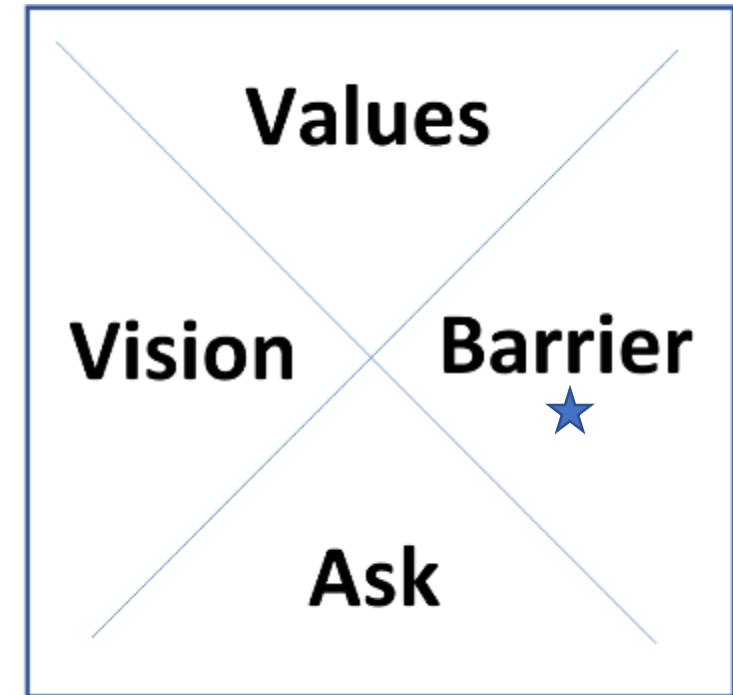
- **Values message:** Connect with your audience by “tapping into” a specific value your audience has.
  - Reminder of common ground.
  - Something that the audience agrees to.
  - **Example value:** Anti-smoking campaign aimed at children. “We want what is best for children.”





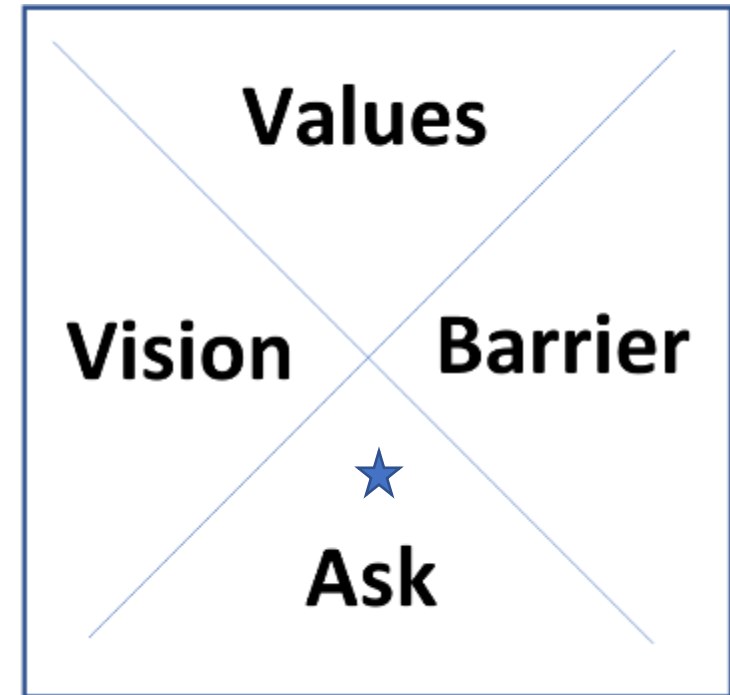
# Message Box

- **Barrier message:** Addressing misconceptions about an issue. Many times, this is based on incomplete or inaccurate information.
  - Avoid repeating the audience's misconception. Provide new and fact-based information to overcome the barrier.
  - Remind the audience of the value and reputation of your organization.
  - **Example barrier:** A parent's smoking has no impact on their children. "Second-hand smoke causes 150,000 cases of bronchitis and pneumonia in children annually."



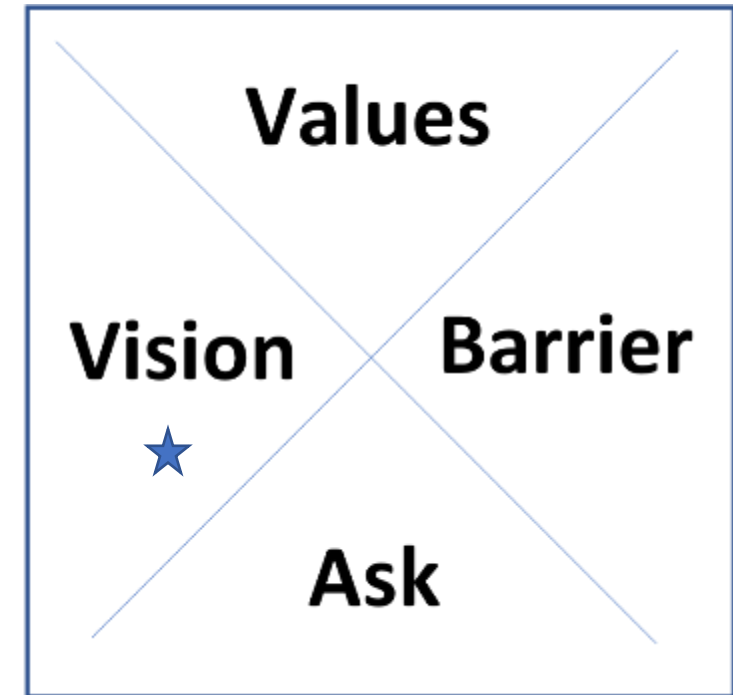
# Message Box

- **Ask message:** One message should focus on getting the audience to act.
  - Make the “ask” doable.
  - Make the “ask” reachable.
  - **Example ask:** Instead of getting smokers to quit, ask them to do it elsewhere. “If you smoke, go outside.”



# Message Box

- **Vision message:** Echoes the Value Message. This is what the audience gets (based on the audience's values).
  - **Example vision:** We all want healthy children. "Taking smoking outside, can protect your children's health."



# Why “story” is important

- Crafting your story and being able to share it successfully will help you make an **emotional connection**.
- If you can elicit a **positive emotional response** from individuals, they will be more likely to **remember** you and how you **made them feel**.



# Putting it all together (summary)

- Keep in mind what matters to policymakers.
- Direct interaction has influence.
- Develop a rapport/relationship.
- Identify policymakers' values and key issues.
- Focus on impact.
- Incorporate visits.
- Communication points
  - Identify the main point and 2-3 subpoints.
- Message development
  - Create the “right” message.
  - Identify the values, barriers, the “ask,” and the vision.
- Storytelling
  - Create an emotional connection.





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