

5. STRATEGISING FOR COMMUNICATION

5.1. Guidelines on developing a communication strategy

- Check external perceptions of your programme among potential target audiences before you start. Think about how you fit into the external horizon. This will help you develop a communication strategy that gives you a distinct and credible voice.
- Be clear on the principles underpinning your strategy. Some may be self-evident, like producing honest, succinct, credible and cost-effective communication.
- Develop some simple messages and model how these might work in different contexts – a press release, report, newspaper article, website, etc. Make sure your project is branded in line with your communication objectives.
- Be clear about your target audiences and user groups and prioritise them according to importance and influence relative to your objectives. Do not just only think about the “usual” ones that are known by all.
- Think about both the actual and preferred channels your target audiences might use and challenge yourself about whether you are planning to use the right ones for maximum impact.
- Include a full list of all the relevant communication activities, developed into a working project plan with deadlines and responsibilities.
- Keep the communication programme simple and include key deadlines, milestones and review points.
- Communication should be allocated enough budgetary resources to carry out its activities. At least 5% of the total funded budget in the department should be allocated to communication.
- Evaluate the implementation and impact of the strategy and the implementation process that has taken place.

5.2. Why strategise for communication?

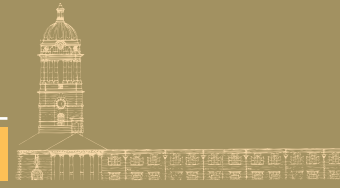
A thousand voices speaking without a common message and single purpose will in the end just make an indistinct noise that few will hear.

We communicate in a noisy world, competing for attention with voices that have objectives that are different and often opposing. And we do so in a world made up of a vast array of interests and concerns, and a world in which everyday concerns weigh heavily on most people.

5.3. Communication strategy outline

There are many ways of approaching this challenge – what follows is a process that has emerged out of GCIS’ own experience in strategising for communication and has served us well. However, this is not a mechanical process that yields automatic results – it needs hard work and lots of thought. Each step is of critical importance, and interlinked.

It is important that research should inform a communication strategy because it gives insight to the dynamism of the environment and the challenges it brings.



INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The strategy aims to deliver an effective and efficient communication approach for the GCP. The strategy provides a framework to ensure that the department manages communication in a planned and coordinated way and maintains the commitment to effective and timely communication. It also provides for the strategic alignment with the national communication framework of government and the government priorities linked to the five-year electoral mandate.

- this part also deals with pre-history
- why do we need a strategy?
- facts that locate it within a broader and longer term development
- information on a particular programme or campaign.

REVIEW OF COMMUNICATION OF THE PREVIOUS YEAR

- Before developing the next year's communication strategy, it is important to reflect briefly on the experiences and the lessons of the past year/programmes/campaigns.
- An assessment of the implementation of the communication strategy (How did we do in relating communication messages to the public?).
- Deal with all the weaknesses identified over the past year.

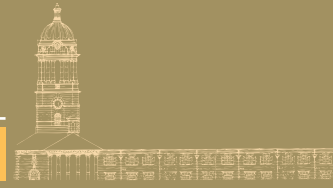
CONTEXT AND SCOPE

Within the context of government's electoral mandate and pursuant to government's vision of contributing to and promoting the creation of a better life for all – communication is important and central to all key decisions of government.

- Scope – mandate of government.
- Scope – mandate of the particular department.
- Scope – the period which the strategy will serve (one year, two years or five years). (The communication strategy is for five years, linked to the electoral cycle and updated annually to be relevant in dealing with issues within the environment).

What informs communication during a particular period?

- The department's mandate.
- The SoNA, State of the Province Address and provincial Exco makgotla for provinces), the National Communication Strategy, government's PoA as identified by both the Cabinet Lekgotla of January, departmental strategic plans and objectives, and the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF).



ENVIRONMENT

This will define the terrain and environment in which you choose to communicate. It should deal with issues such as the public mood, the media agenda, concerns and attitudes of varying sectors and forces, potential for improving environment, etc. It is critical to understand the environment before implementing the communication strategy. In fact, the exercise of scanning the environment contributes greatly to the kind of programme you end up developing for your department. Such a scan may require a number of areas that we may not clearly understand and needs further research.

- The environment is impacted upon by changes and developments within which communication is taking place.
- The communication environment is to be informed by research.

Understanding our environment requires thinking about the particular matters we need to deal with:

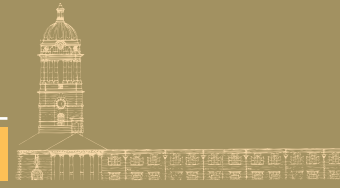
- mandate
- public mood
- political issues
- media agenda
- demography
- forces at play
- attitudes and concerns.

STRATEGIC EMPHASIS

- What is the strategic emphasis of your strategy? (e.g. safeguarding the country against external threats).
- Core issues – in support of the government objectives as contained in the MTSF document and the strategic plan of the department.

Communication should put more emphasis on the key priorities of the department.

- Defence Update 2025. The Defence Update must provide a cogent argument on the levels of defence required to respond to the strategic environment, and the requirements posed by the foreign and security policy of government to meet the strategic defence objectives.
- Progress made in peace-support operations (PSOs). South Africa continues to be perceived as an honest broker and a reliable partner in international affairs. Continuous attention must be given to popularising the country's participation in peacekeeping efforts on the continent. Vigorous communication is required regarding the progress made in PSOs in Africa with regard to post-conflict reconstruction (disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration, repatriation and resettlement) and development.



COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

All strategising is about how to achieve our communication objectives. However, if we are unclear about our objective or get it wrong, then the rest will be of little or no value.

What are we trying to do: Build support for a policy proposal? Reassure people? Dispel misleading information? Halt or reverse the acceptance of misleading information by others? Persuade opponents of a policy to change their minds? Change dangerous behaviour? Encourage participation in a campaign or election?

We can also:

- popularise
- mobilise
- ensure
- educate
- raise awareness
- reassure
- ensure.

COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

Our broad objectives considered in the context of the communication environment will lead us to identify specific challenges that we will face and which we will have to meet successfully to achieve our broad objectives. Challenges could be developments which we must expect and take full advantage of, and obstacles which we need to overcome.

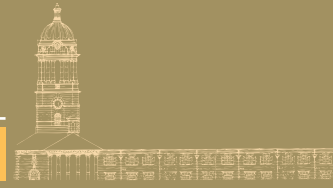
The key communication challenge could be to sustain the generally positive mood around the PoA of the departments by maintaining the momentum and ensuring that people see benefits from the implementation.

MESSAGE AND THEMES

It is critical to indicate the themes and concepts that are associated with the communication effort being undertaken.

- It is important to avoid making a simple list of messages.
- When adopting a core message, it is critical to integrate it with the government's core message for the year.

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CORE MESSAGE

EXAMPLE: *TOGETHER WE MOVE SOUTH AFRICA FORWARD.*

Give an explanation as to what the message aims to achieve and what does it inspire people to do and why).

EXAMPLE THEMES: departmental specific

- An economy that benefits all
- Social services for all
- *Batho Pele* – Serving all the people
- Safety and security for all
- Working for the renewal of Africa and the creation of a better world.

MESSENGRS

A campaign must have its own voice. Who is to speak for it? To whom? And in what ways?

The strategy proceeds from the premise that messages have more impact if they are delivered by our principals rather than public servants. As such, there is a need to increase public appearances by the principals.

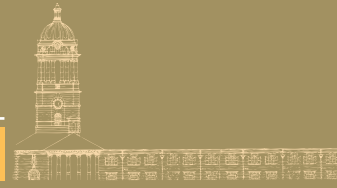
- **Political principals are the chief spokespersons of government:**
 - President/Deputy President
 - Minister and Deputy Minister
 - Directors-General and senior members of the department, etc.
- **Other messengers can include third-party endorsers.**

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

In most cases, this is complex as different target audiences are best reached in different ways.

Internal:

- notice boards
- Internet
- internal newsletters
- meetings
- briefings
- intranet



- plasma screens
- CD-Roms and other promotional material.

External:

- Web-page on *www.gov.za* and *www.thepresidency.gov.za*
- training of public liaison officers
- print and electronic media
- community development workers (CDWs)
- billboards
- loud hailers.

STAKEHOLDER SEGMENTATION

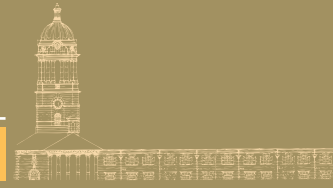
Purpose: To know your stakeholders/partners.

Internal:

- public servants
- national departments
- parastatals
- municipalities
- provinces.

External:

- private sector
- civil society
- organised labour
- sectoral groups
- faith-based organisations
- the media
- farmers
- consumers
- academics
- international audiences.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

EXAMPLE

Priority issue	Desired outcome	Target audience of communication strategy	Key message to be communicated	Tools
Increasing sustainability of agricultural practices by enhancing crop diversity and moving away from intensive practices.	Raise awareness about the importance of agricultural biodiversity on environmental and human health, leading to changed behaviour patterns.	Farmers	The value of changed cultivation practices for increased long-term crop yields and thus increased outcome.	Meetings
		Consumers	The value of eating a diverse diet for good health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print and electronic media • CDWs • billboards • loud hailers.

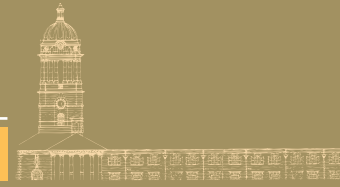
COMMUNICATION PROGRAMME AND MILESTONES

The communication programme will be the guide for all future action, the standard against which the success or failure of communication is measured, and the most critical means for keeping the campaign on track.

There are two parts: communicators can decide to do a programme in phases or just broad and general without phases. This will depend on the type of activity or why the strategy is being put together:

- ensuring government's effectiveness to deliver messages
- strengthening relationships with the media
- third-party endorsements
- commissioning TV or radio documentaries around the impact of government's programmes
- regular feature articles, guest editorials and opinion pieces
- one-on-one interviews (these are more effective than media conferences and rather reserve the latter for breaking news)
- using radio and the community media more as primary channels to disseminate information to communities.

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EXAMPLE

Programme	Targeted milestone	Communication approach	Budget	Responsibility	Time frame
Progress made in peace and security operations.	Lowering the flag in Burundi.	A multipronged approach: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using the Department of Defence and Military Veterans' internal magazine • media briefings • print and electronic media. 	R200 000	HoC	8 August 2009

ACTION PLAN

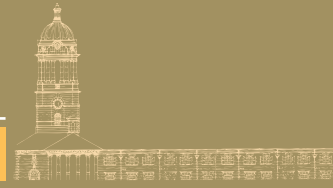
To put into practice the ideas resulting from strategising requires an **Action Plan** that spells out in detail what is to be done for each event in the programme.

EXAMPLE

Event/Opportunity	Activity	Action	Channels	Budget	Time frame
Recognising improved service delivery.	Female Farmer of the Year Competition.	Popularising 2009 competition and thus raising awareness on the importance of farming for the country.	Electronic and print media adverts.	R450 000	November 2009

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT PLAN

The Media Engagement Plan consists of a detailed plan of interviews, press briefings, media/journalists to be targeted, opinion pieces, and most importantly, a statement of key messages, and questions and answers (frequently asked questions) for communicators and writers to use.



STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES

Highlight all the structures involved and the processes to be followed. This will include:

- consultations with stakeholders
- approval by management.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROCESS

How will you know if you have succeeded? When thinking about initial objectives and activities, it is worth building in some simple performance indicators and evaluation measures at the start.

These could include:

- “Before and after” research to track awareness of your communication messages among important target audiences
- evidence of translation of research findings into policy or practice
- evaluation of participation in and feedback from events and other activities of government (public participation events, etc)
- tracking media coverage, including volume and nature of coverage
- tracking parliamentary discussion of your programme or project
- tracking expenditure and also assist in sharing costs where the need arises with other departments
- helping to deal with all unforeseen issues
- monitoring website usage.

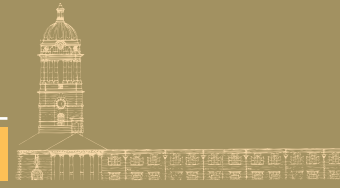
Building the discipline of evaluation into your strategy from the start allows you to use the information to review and refine your strategy and keep it as a living, flexible document that supports the implementation of the PoA.

5.4. Developing key messages

Key messages are simply key messages and not something else:

- Key messages are not statements. They are also not briefings or comprehensive statements of information.
- They articulate the essentials of government’s position on critical issues.
- They should inform all communication on the issue: interviews, statements, articles, posters, pamphlets, etc.

Developing a communication strategy does not, on its own, lead to more effective and integrated communication. What is more critical is the capacity to ensure concrete implementation.



The 4X4 format reflects their character:

- four propositions encapsulating government’s position, which any spokesperson should get across, whatever else they say
- for each of the four, another four to elaborate and explain and use in response to further questions.

Key messages generate and develop a government discourse

- Key messages over time generate a body of discourse that consistently reflects government’s position.
- Consistency of style and terminology is therefore critical.
- Consistency of positions is critical – drafters should always check previous messages on related topics.
- Consistency in formulation on key issues helps communication, but formulations should also be sensitive to the current environment.

Key messages communicate strategic directions

- Key messages are informed by the strategic directions of government policy.
- Therefore, when drafting them, don’t rely on desk research only; we need the guidance of those informed with strategic perspectives.
- While HoCs should be informed accordingly, other senior officials and policy-makers are often best placed – behind every successful drafter is a good network.
- Drafts will always reflect the brief given. A good drafter must be a good briefer.

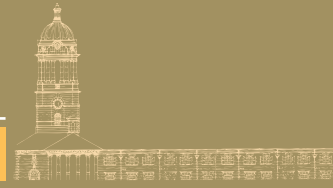
Key messages are time bound

- Good communication is on time: a proactive step ahead or an instant response.
- Therefore, key messages must be available without delay.

5.5. Government’s communication cycle

In any democracy, government is elected by its people and is therefore an institution for the people by the people. It is essential that ordinary citizens are constantly informed about government work and empowered to take active part in it. To ensure legitimacy and effectiveness, all government communication must have its origin and coordination from the highest office in the government’s structure.

Government should ensure integration of messages by strategising for communication. This will assist in working towards an ideal of a government speaking in one voice. The success of communication depends on the accurate diagnosis of the environment that will inform, among other things, the selection of appropriate messages, target audiences and media platforms.



5.5.1. Strategising process

- The communication cycle lasts from October/November up to March of the following year.
- Communication-strategy implementation lasts from April until March of the following year.
- This means that between October and March, the cycle will run concurrently with the implementation of the current communication strategy.

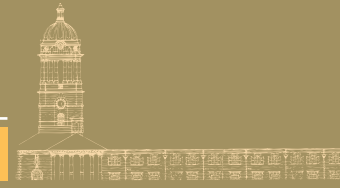
5.5.1.1. Application of the communication cycle

- This cycle applies only to the national and provincial spheres of government. Local government has its own cycle in terms of the budget and planning.
- In implementing the communication cycle, communicators should bear in mind that there are communication activities being implemented at the local sphere of government and this might have a bearing on the implementation of their communication strategies.
- In implementing the communication strategies in line with the communication cycle, communicators should bear in mind the government activities that are taking place throughout the year (Women's Day, Youth Day, Freedom Day, Heritage Day, etc.)

THE COMMUNICATION CYCLE

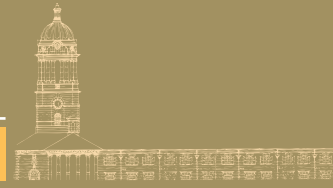
	Calendar month/s	Process	Process explanation
1 st phase	October/ November	Pre-Cabinet Lekgotla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directors-General (DGs) prepare for the January Cabinet Lekgotla. • DGs meet to look at the implementation plans in preparation for the January Lekgotla. • Based on the implementation plans from the DGs meeting, the HoCs will draft communication strategies. • Clusters and departments review the implementation of their communication strategies and submit their report to the GCIS for inputting into the January Lekgotla. • The GCIS will continue to provide advice to government communicators where necessary. • The last Government Communicators' Forum (GCF) of the year is held where the rest of government looks at how they implemented their programmes.

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2 nd phase	January	Cabinet Lekgotla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clusters begin to plan for post-SoNA briefing based on the outcomes of the Cabinet Lekgotla. • Plans approved by the Forum of South African Directors-General (FOSAD) will be tabled at the Lekgotla for input and approval. • The Lekgotla agrees on the priorities for the year. • The GCIS to update the existing Government Communication Framework and table it at the January Cabinet Lekgotla. Presentation of DG cluster plans to the Cabinet Lekgotla. • The GCIS will emphasise the message that communicators should start working. • Departments will work on second draft communication strategies based on the outcomes of the Lekgotla. • The GCIS will continue to provide advice to government communicators where necessary.
3 rd phase	February/ March	Opening of Parliament GCF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SoNA will cover the priorities and key themes and messages for the year. • Preparations for media briefings will reach the pinnacle and clusters will brief the media during which ministers will outline the PoA from the SoNA. • Key programmes are identified and strategic issues will be communicated as high impact programmes. • Further strengthening of communication strategies. • HoCs will go through the process to approve the communication strategies and submit them to the GCIS. • Upon receipt of the communication strategies, the GCIS issues a note to acknowledge receipt and advice if required. • The GCF is held where further guidance will be given to communicators and the communication approach is agreed upon. • The GCIS will continue providing advice to government communicators where necessary.

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4 th phase	April	Communication strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the communication strategies begins. • Continuous monitoring and evaluation as the implementation of the communication strategies unfolds. • All strategies should be approved with the budget before the financial year begins. • When implementing the communication programme, clear key messages should also be completed for every activity in consultation with the GCIS. This will assist with more integration and coordination and working towards the ideal of government speaking in one voice. • Departments and provinces should come up with a monitoring and evaluation mechanism. • The GCIS will continue to provide advice to government communicators where necessary.
5 th phase	May, June, July, August	GCF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation continuous. • Departments will send their implementation/monitoring and evaluation reports to the GCIS ahead of the GCF held post the mid-year Cabinet Lekgotla. • This report will assist government to assess how far they are in terms of implementation and see if there are challenges to be dealt with. • The GCIS will provide advice to departments on the way forward. • The GCIS will continue providing advice to government communicators where necessary.
6 th phase	September, October, November	Pre-Cabinet Lekgotla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation continuous. • Cluster departments and provinces review the implementation of their communication strategies and submit their reports to the GCIS for inputting into the January Lekgotla. • The GCIS will continue providing advice to government communicators where necessary.
7 th phase	December	Government Communicators' Awards (GCA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GCA is held to reward communicators who have excelled during the year.