**REL West’s GUIDANCE FOR COMMUNICATION OF SURVEY RESULTS**

**Purpose:** Develop a communication plan to share findings and engage stakeholders in decision-making regarding recent/forthcoming surveys.

**Framework:**

Often “communication” of survey findings is synonymous with “reporting” and is a one-way activity in which we deliver information to specific audiences. However, to promote inquiry about and ownership of survey findings, communication needs to be two-way and may include getting input or feedback from stakeholders or engaging stakeholders as partners in the design, implementation, and monitoring of changes.

The widely used [communication plan framework](https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/implementation-support-unit/tech-assist/framework-communications-engagement.pdf)[[1]](#footnote-2) developed by the Reform Support Network identifies four useful ways to utilize survey results as you communicate with and engage key audiences:

1. **Inform:** Communication includes timely, accurate, and actionable information to ensure stakeholders know the purpose and goals of the survey, survey findings, and if appropriate, the timeline and how a response to the findings will be addressed. Tools for informing may include postings on websites, newsletters, presentations, and memos.
2. **Inquire:** Communication includes gathering input from stakeholders about survey findings and to learn about their experiences and their views so these can be used prior to or throughout the inquiry process or to obtain feedback once a response to survey findings is determined. Formats for sharing survey results for this level of communication might include discussion protocols, focus groups, and interviews.
3. **Involve:** Communication includes proactively involving stakeholders in interpreting results and shaping any resulting policies, programs, and practices. Stakeholders use advocacy, collaboration, and decision-making skills as they contribute to the development process. Structures to promote involvement may include advisory committees, task forces, or leadership teams.
4. **Inspire/Engage:** Communication includes proactively engaging stakeholders in the inquiry process to interpret survey results, and collaboratively design, implement, and monitor any resulting policies, programs, and practices. Similar to *Involve*, structures that engage stakeholder at this level may include advisory committees, task forces, or leadership teams.

PART 1: IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS AND LEVEL OF Communication

**Step 1.** Identify all the relevant stakeholder groups that will need to be aware of the survey findings at any level and list these in the stakeholder column in the table under Step 2. Add additional rows if needed. Stakeholders might include the following:

* Internal audiences (e.g., staff within your organization/agency/school district/program)
* External audiences (e.g., staff from partner agencies/organizations, local and/or state policymakers, parents/families)

**Step 2.** For each stakeholder group, decide what level of communication is needed (i.e., inform, inquire, involve, and/or inspire/engage; for some groups, it might be multiple levels). Make a checkmark or brief notes in the appropriate box(es).

**Survey: Date:**

**LEVEL OF COMMUNICATION PLAN WORKSHEET[[2]](#footnote-3)**

| **Stakeholder Group** | **Inform**  Provide information | **Inquire**  Get input and feedback | **Involve**  Interpreting results and shape any resulting policies, programs, or practices | **Inspire/Engage**  Interpret results and design, implement, and monitor any new policies, programs, or practices |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

PART 2: Complete a COMMUNICATION Plan

For each of the stakeholder groups, develop a communication plan[[3]](#footnote-4) using the template below. Depending on the levels of communication (i.e., inform, inquire, involve, inspire/engage), discuss the communication needed using the questions below. Refer to the description of the framework for more information about each level of communication to inform your conversation. Write your answers in the Communication Plan table below.

For stakeholder groups that you will **inform**, consider the following questions:

1. What information will you provide to inform them?
   * Purpose of the survey
   * Details about the survey (administration dates, sample, respondents)
   * Findings (should be clear, actionable, factually correct) and implications
   * Robustness of findings (based upon response rates, degree to which the sample reflects populations of interest)
     1. You may wish to draw on resources such as the following to assess and communicate the strength of the evidence from your survey findings:
        1. REL Midwest *Workshop on Survey Methods in Education Research: Facilitator’s guide and resources* (see pages 96–99, which discuss assessing nonresponse bias in your respondent group)[[[4]](#footnote-5)](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/pdf/REL_2017214.pdf)
        2. REL Northeast *Survey methods for educators: Analysis and reporting of survey data* (see printed pages 8–10, which discuss assessing your response rate)[[[5]](#footnote-6)](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=4482)
2. How will you craft the message so it addresses the specific needs of that stakeholder group?
   * Detailed findings and/or broad takeaways/lessons learned
   * Explanatory text and/or graphs/tables
3. How will you provide that information?
   * Memos
   * Briefs
   * Reports
   * Infographic(s)
   * Social media
4. When and where will you provide that information?
   * Regularly scheduled meetings
   * Trainings
   * Workshops or conferences

For stakeholder groups with which you will **inquire**, consider the following questions:

1. What information or feedback from these stakeholders about the findings and possible next steps will be most helpful?
2. How will you obtain this information or feedback from these stakeholders?
3. When and where in the process of sharing and interpreting will you get this information or feedback?

For stakeholders whom you will **involve**, consider the following questions:

1. How will these stakeholders be engaged in interpreting the survey results?
2. How will these stakeholders contribute to shaping the policies, programs, or practices?
3. When and where will you engage these stakeholders in shaping policies, programs, or practices?

For stakeholders whom you will **inspire and engage**, consider the following questions:

1. At which points in the inquiry process (e.g., the interpretation of results; the design, implementation, and monitoring of any new policies, programs, or practices suggested by the survey findings) will you inspire and engage these stakeholders?
2. How will you inspire and engage these stakeholders to interpret the results and design, implement, and monitor the resulting policies, programs, or practices?
3. When and where will you inspire and engage these stakeholders to interpret the results and design, implement, and monitor the new policies, programs, or practices?

**COMMUNICATION PLAN**

**Survey: Date:**

| **Stakeholder Group and Level of Communication** | **Inform:** Key messages and information, method of communicating, next steps  **Inquire:** Input and feedback to obtain, mechanism for gathering information  **Involve:** Contribution to inquiry process and shaping any resulting policy, program, or practices based on survey findings  **Inspire/Engage:** Contribution to interpreting survey findings and designing, implementing, and monitoring any new policies, programs, or practices  *(Note: Based on level of communication, answer questions on pages 4-5 in the boxes below).* | **Timeline** | **Person  Responsible for Coordinating** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Example: Staff from Partner Agency*   * *Inform* * *Inquire* * *Involve* * *Inspire/Engage* | ***Will provide survey findings in a brief memo, addressing the following key information:***   * ***Purpose of the survey:*** *Identify participation in professional development opportunities* * ***Details about the survey:*** *Administered from August 1, 2021-August 31, 2021; Link to electronic survey emailed to 100 participants; 85 participants completed the survey .* * ***Findings:*** *Most (52%) participated in all professional development events.* * ***Robustness of findings:*** *15% of participants did not complete the survey, so not all participants represented.* | *Email 3-page memo to staff of partner agency by December 31, 2021* | *Project Director, with support from project team* |
| \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   * Inform * Inquire * Involve * Inspire/Engage |  |  |  |
| \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   * Inform * Inquire * Involve * Inspire/Engage |  |  |  |
| \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   * Inform * Inquire * Involve * Inspire/Engage |  |  |  |
| \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   * Inform * Inquire * Involve * Inspire/Engage |  |  |  |
| \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   * Inform * Inquire * Involve * Inspire/Engage |  |  |  |

1. This communication plan builds on and is adapted from Reform Support Network. (n.d.). *From “inform” to “inspire”: A framework for communications and engagement*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/implementation-support-unit/tech-assist/framework-communications-engagement.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Adapted from the Comprehensive School Assistance Program at WestEd. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Adapted from the Comprehensive School Assistance Program at WestEd. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Walston, J., Redford, J., & Bhatt, M. P. (2017). *Workshop on survey methods in education research: Facilitator’s guide and resources* (REL 2017–2014). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/pdf/REL_2017214.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Pazzaglia, A. M., Stafford, E. T., & Rodriguez, S. M. (2016). *Survey methods for educators: Analysis and reporting of survey data (part 3 of 3)*.Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)