

# How to Run a Message Mapping Session

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## **What is a Message Map?**

A Message Map is a Matrix that brings together information about:

- your stakeholder groups
- the messages you wish each Stakeholder should take away
- each group's current position/perception
- what content you need to create
- the channels you need to utilise
- the precise targets for each group most likely to effect change.

## **Why run a Message Mapping Session?**

Such sessions provide excellent ground work and opportunity for

- identifying and prioritising all stakeholder groups
- preparing a Dissemination Strategy
- shaping your budget and prioritising allocation of time and spend
- bringing partners together and encouraging them to 'download' their expertise and contacts
- spending 'quality time' on dissemination

## **When should I hold a Message Mapping session?**

- Ideally when the application is being created so that Dissemination planning is given appropriate attention and budget!
- Early in the project so that it can be used as a resource for detailed planning of activity, deliverables and milestones and also creating a 'benchmark' for further refinement
- Annually – in preparation for Reporting and creation of the new Work Plan
- On the back of an existing meeting so that you guarantee better attendance
- Consider a Skype or Go-To meeting as an alternative where the screen and Matrix document is shared and worked on together

## **What do I need to do in advance?**

- Decide where, when and who
- Send material in advance – a blank Message Matrix form and document setting out objectives, tasks in advance and expectations of the day
- Do your own homework so that you can guide colleagues through the day
- Send a reminder to attend

**What do I need for the day?**

- Your brain – and those of colleagues!
- Your own preparation notes on Stakeholders and messages as you will need to fill in the knowledge gaps for colleagues
- Blank Message Map forms for delegates to make notes
- Refreshments
- Flip-charts, pens, blank paper
- Blu-tack or similar to hang paper sheets around the room
- Send a reminder to attend
- Make arrangements for reporting /recording on the day

**What do I need to do on the day?**

- Drive and facilitate the day!
- Arrange refreshments – small treats to keep brains working!
- Encourage all to be clear in what they are saying and contributing
- Record clearly so that expectations/outcomes of the resultant activity are managed
- Capture all the feedback – all input is good!

**What do I need to do to follow-up?**

- Thank everyone
- Polish up your notes promptly and circulate
- Request feedback/amends and adjust as appropriate
- Set in motion any action points arising e.g. undertake a survey to ascertain views of identified stakeholder groups on which you have limited intelligence
- Build your Dissemination Strategy and Activity Plan around this validated Matrix
- Plan your next Message Mapping session well in advance together with mechanisms for identifying and recording shifts in opinion

**OUTCOMES**

1. Validated reference document
2. Sound base for dissemination strategy and activity
3. Engaged partners and contributors in dissemination process
4. A benchmark at the start of the project on which to 'map' change
5. 'Evidence base' to impress scientists and EC!