# Engaging Key Stakeholders in the Release of Your Public Report: Strategic Considerations

## Purpose

When preparing to release your public report, working with organizations and individuals involved in your Collaborative can extend your communication reach to important audiences. This is essential when releasing your first public report, as you only have one chance to make a good first impression.

## Considerations

* **Remember that not all sources of information are equal.** Hard as it might be to admit, some local audiences may be more familiar with and trust certain stakeholders more than they know or trust your Collaborative. Hearing about the upcoming report from a trusted source can be particularly important for those who may be wary about the potential impact of the release of a public report.
* **Connect the dots.** Who appears to be worried about your report being released to the public and how it might be interpreted? For example, if physicians (or other clinicians) have expressed concern about the upcoming report, work with trusted physician leaders, associations, or leaders of hospitals or clinics in your Collaborative. Invite these stakeholders directly into your communication planning and work with them as partners as you plan the public report release.
* **Reduce the element of surprise.** By working in advance with stakeholders who have a finger on the pulse of important audiences, you will reduce the likelihood of surprise. Unfortunately, being caught off guard or feeling left out of the process can be an underlying reason for a stakeholder to react negatively to the public report. As you include key stakeholders in your communication planning, you will likely discover new questions or perspectives from them. This improves your ability to be ready to address such issues either before or after your report is released to the public.
* **Treat organizations like partners.** An organization that is treated like a partner is more likely to act like a partner. This is especially important when members of the media contact community leaders to get their views on the public report. By involving the most likely targets of reporters’ calls in the communication planning process before the report is released, your efforts at coordinated messaging and approaches will more likely result in favorable media coverage. Providing template materials that they can customize will ease their workload while improving the chances of your partners using your messages. ***Note:*** *Any materials you provide to stakeholders, even for internal use, might become public. Only include content that would be acceptable to see in the newspaper.*

Coordinated communication activities with targeted stakeholders might include:

* Including communication experts from a range of stakeholders in your communication planning.
* Sharing draft key messages about the report rollout with representatives of key stakeholder groups to get their reactions and ideas, then providing the final key messages for stakeholder partners to use as they communicate about the report. (See Toolkit Resource 4b).
* Providing template materials such as a short article they can include in their newsletter just before the report is rolled out to the public (see Toolkit Resources 3c, 3d, and 3e).
* Gathering a list of supportive quotes from key organizations in the community, with the name of the person being quoted, the organization, and contact information. Then include that list with your media release about the public report (see Toolkit Resources 5a and 5b). Depending on whose quote is used, this list can show support by all types of stakeholders from all points along the political spectrum.

With some planning and preparation of materials useful to your stakeholders, your Collaborative staff can make it easy for stakeholder organizations to be effective partners in the release of your public report. Working with partners in your community should start early in the process of report development. Then, before the public report is released, remember to remind stakeholders of actions they can take to help increase awareness and use of the public report across the community. See Toolkit Resource 3b for template text for an email to customize and send to stakeholder partners before the rollout of your public report.