



MINNESOTA STATE
Office of Equity and Inclusion

Equity by Design:

A Guide for Campus Communication

Equity by Design Campus Communication Guide

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Overview:

Communication is one of the most important *and* most challenging aspects for this work. The process for undertaking systemic transformational change is complex and will require ongoing engagement and communication. *How* you talk about Equity by Design can have a profound impact on the level of engagement, involvement, and commitment from all levels of your organization. Communication can, at its best - garner excitement; and at its worst - erode trust and stymie progress.

Your campus team will need to spend time ensuring you've developed a thorough communication plan for engaging all key audiences throughout the lifecycle of Equity by Design. You will want to keep your key audiences informed and up to date with all activities and opportunities associated with Equity by Design. There are many factors to consider when developing your communication plan and this guide serves as a tool to help your campus team work through some of the complexity and considerations for this work.

First, we recommend beginning with conducting a stakeholder analysis using the template on page 2 of this guide. From there, your team can outline your communication plan and put it into action accordingly.



Figure 1: Communication Plan Stages

Stakeholder Analysis

Key Objectives

- ✓ Brainstorm and prioritize key stakeholder groups
- ✓ Identify and create an inclusive and representative list of all stakeholders within the college/university and/or surrounding community
- ✓ Document and assess stakeholder needs and interests

Stakeholder Analysis Worksheet

- ✓ Consider those who have a vested interest or “stake” in the process/outcome
- ✓ Stakeholders can be offices, groups, organizations, or individuals

Equity by Design Stakeholder Examples:

- Faculty
- Deans
- Students and Student Leaders
- Bargaining Units
- Campus Leadership (President, Provost, Senior Academic and Student Affairs Leaders)
- Campus Diversity Officer
- Institutional Research / Institutional Effectiveness
- Student Affairs and/or Academic Affairs Professionals
- Surrounding Community

Stakeholder Analysis Tips:

- *Stay Focused: Consider what areas your team will focus on in this iteration of EbD and determine your stakeholders from there.*
- *Ask the stakeholder groups if there is anyone missing from list.*
- *Conduct a new analysis with every EbD iteration or each time you expand the areas of focus.*

Stakeholder	Primary Contact	Priority Level (for engagement) High/Medium/Low	Who do they trust the most?

Stakeholder Analysis Planning Rubric

Complete this form for each stakeholder group identified on the previous page.

Stakeholder Group:
What is their stake? How might they be impacted?
What is needed from the identified stakeholder; and/or what does the stakeholder need?
Perceived Attitudes: Risks/Rewards
How can this stakeholder be engaged throughout the process?

Developing a Communication Plan

Below you will find some key elements to consider when drafting your communication plan. This is meant to serve as a starting point for building your messaging and ensuring that you have spent time reflecting on the components your campus needs for its communication about Equity by Design.

Communication Plan Essentials

We recommend that your Equity by Design Campus Communication Plan contain the following elements. You can build off each of these and determine what will best meet your campus and stakeholder needs. The subsequent pages contain additional details for each area.

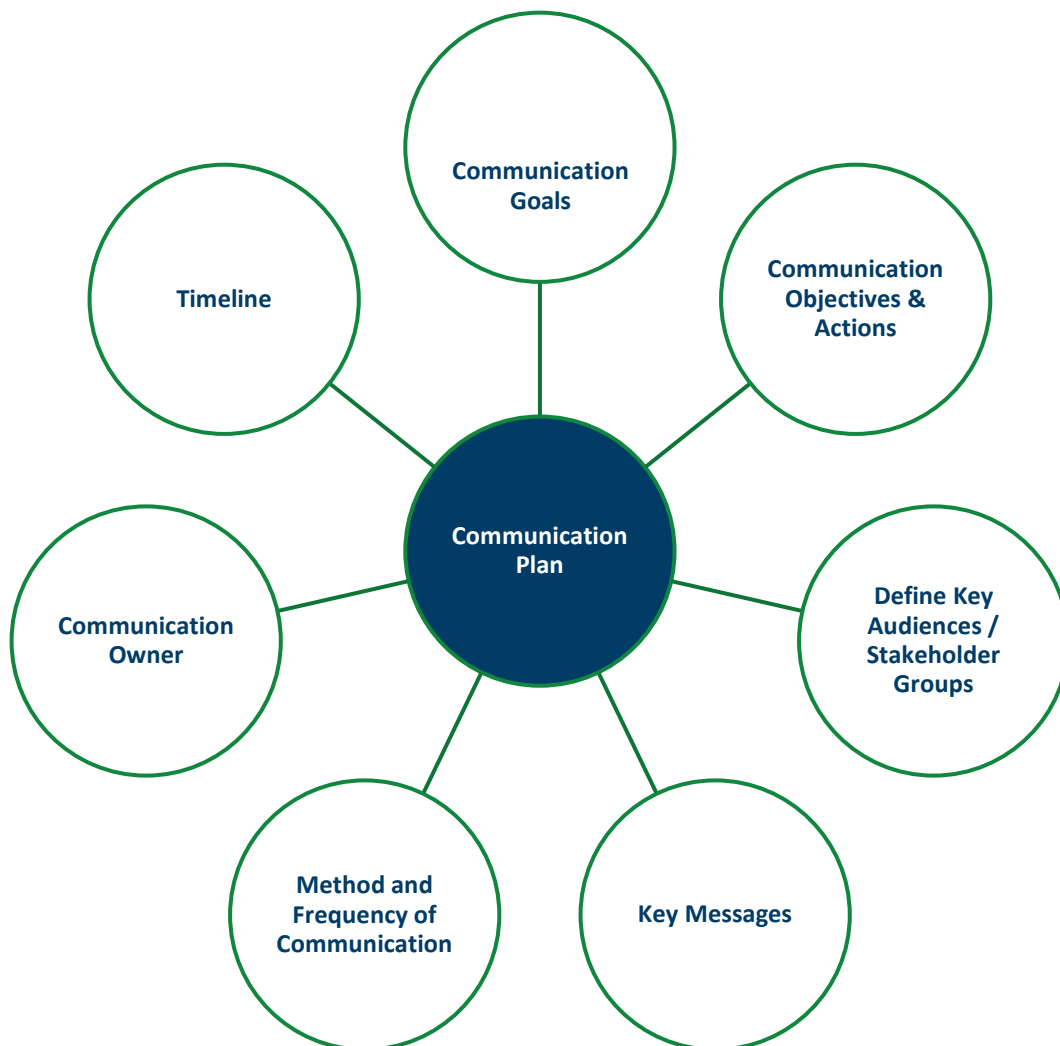


Figure 2: Elements of a Communication Plan

Communication Goals

Communication Goals include what you hope to achieve by communicating to your various key audiences. Think about what impact, message, or information you are trying to convey. Your goals help shape the ‘why’ for this work and enables your constituents to understand their role and/or your leadership’s intended outcomes.

Keep in mind that you will not achieve all of your goals with a single communication or message. Your communication around this work should follow the lifecycle of Equity by Design.

A few examples of EbD campus communication goals can include:

- Clearly articulating what EbD is and outlining the connection to, and differences of this work and Equity 2030.
- Ensure stakeholders understand the purpose of implementing EbD at your college/university
- Center student voices and experiences
- Clearly communicate the goals and desired outcomes of the work
- Provide relevant updates to the status of the work and an associated timeline
- Provide opportunities for engagement and feedback
- Ensure audiences understand who is leading the work, why they are involved
- Increase transparency and intent for using data in EbD
- Ensure audiences understand how to get involved

Communication Actions

Once you have identified goals for your communication plan, spend time identifying what actions are necessary to help your campus achieve your communication goals. Each action should be specific and measurable in order to ensure it helps your team meet the communication goals. Your communication actions are the mechanism that highlights ‘how’ you will meet your communication goals.

Examples of communication actions:

- Officially announce the Equity by Design work, scope, purpose, and vision
- Outline linkages to Equity 2030 and differences between EbD and Equity 2030
- Develop and define roles, responsibilities, and expectations
 - This includes (but not limited to) how this work will be used/incorporated; integration into strategic planning priorities; campus data rendering expectations and report generation; and stakeholder responsibilities. For example, what is the role/expectation of IR, Deans, Faculty, Students, Student Affairs, etc.
- Provide information on training and/or associated professional development opportunities
- Develop opportunities and mechanisms for feedback
- Develop and communicate your campus EbD timeline

GOALS Communicate “Why”



ACTIONS Demonstrate “How”

Key Audiences / Stakeholder Groups:

Key audiences and stakeholder groups will vary from campus to campus. These groups are 'who' you are trying to reach with your messaging. You can use the stakeholder analysis in this guide as a starting point to identify who the key audiences are. You may or may not need different messaging for different groups. Reference back to your stakeholder analysis to help you analyze how to engage different audiences.

Key Messages:

Key Messages are the consistent main points that you want to communicate, and you want your audience to remember. Key messages should be clear and concise to ensure that the message is not lost or easily forgotten. Your key messages should be reflected in all communications (spoken or written) to ensure consistency, accuracy, and continuity. A best practice involves reaching out to various colleagues/constituents who have already been immersed in equity work to assist in crafting messaging and reaching out to their respective peer groups.

Effective key messages are those that are:

- **Relevant** – what does your audience need to know?
- **Concise** – no more than five (5) key messages per communication. Each message should be one to three sentences in length.
- **Simple** – avoid acronyms and use common language.
- **Strategic** – articulate the benefits of doing the work and connections to larger strategic goals.
- **Compelling** – craft the message to motivate action.
- **Tailored** – ensure your messaging is adaptable to different audiences or stakeholder groups.

Examples of Equity by Design Key Messages

- **Equity by Design is an academic equity strategy and continuous improve teaching tool.**
- **Equity by Design provides a pragmatic approach to close equity gaps and a means to help campuses achieve Equity 2030.**
- **Equity by Design is a journey which requires intentionality, commitment, and a willingness to look inward. In order to understand our equity gaps, we must shift our thinking from a deficit-minded approach to that of an equity-minded approach and deliberately examine how our institution's structures, practices, policies, and pedagogy shape disparate outcomes.**
- **Equity by Design is outcome-based, and it is only the beginning of equity-minded inquiry, which entails being willing to understand the teaching & learning process as well as resource levels and inputs.**
- **Equity by Design is better implemented in communities of practice and equity-minded coaching.**
- **The Equity by Design framework can be applied to multiple facets of campus operations. For example, the methodology can be applied to the examination of: student success; registration, advising, and orientation practices; pedagogy/andragogy; financial aid; employee recruitment and retention; and other key operational facets.**

Method and Frequency of Communication

Once you have identified some key messages, you will need to spend time determining how (method) you will communicate the messages, goals, and timeline, as well as how often (frequency) to communicate to your stakeholder groups.

Some examples of communication methods include:

- Campus Website and/or Social Media
- Media / Press Releases
- Email
- Virtual and/or In-Person meetings or town halls
- Posters
- Campus Newsletters
- Online Collaboration Groups

The frequency of communication will depend on how Equity by Design is progressing on your campus, as well as the needs of the various stakeholder groups. The communication matrix in this guide is another tool to assist in determining your respective communication frequency and timeline.

Communication Owner

Identifying and assigning ownership is one of the most important aspects of any communication plan. This will ensure that the messaging reaches all intended audiences and that there is accountability in the communication process. You will likely find that there may be several communication owners for a given plan, depending on who the audience is and at what level the communication needs to occur (leadership-level or other).

A few guiding questions to help determine who the communication owners should be include:

- What is the level of “buy-in” that an owner has?
- Are there any issues of trust or mistrust that may impact the messaging or message saturation?
- Who will have the largest impact or reach?

Sample Communication Plan Matrix Template

Complete one row for each major theme or audience.

Theme / Opportunity	Audience	Communication Purpose / Goal	Frequency	Method	Development Owner	Distribution Owner
What is the overarching theme? For example: Project Update; Opportunity for Feedback; Training or professional development	Who is the message intended for?	What is the main purpose of the communication? For example: Increase understanding or awareness; communicate milestones and status; receive feedback; communicate training and/or PD opportunities; etc.	How often does communication need to occur? Some examples include: Major Milestones; monthly; quarterly; bi-annually; etc.	What mode of delivery will be utilized for communication? Examples include: Emails, town hall, press release, etc.	Who is responsible for crafting the messaging and/or setting up the communication?	Who is responsible for delivering or distributing the messaging?

Sample Equity by Design Campus Communication Template

On page 10 of this guide, you will find a template for inviting members of the campus community to participate and learn more about Equity by Design. ***It is essential to contextualize the template to fit the communities and identities that are most salient for your college or university***, but also to consider that a one-size, fits all approach may not be the most appropriate.

As you consider the audience for the communication, please also consider the following guiding questions:

1. Who is best positioned send the communication? What is their role on the campus? **How might others perceive this communication?**
2. **Who do the various stakeholder groups trust?** If the stakeholder groups are from a historically underserved community, who do they most closely identify with on the campus? Are there any issues of mistrust that need to be resolved or addressed before meaningful work can take place?
3. Who are students, faculty and staff more receptive to on the campus community? Is this person or group in a position to support your invitation and follow-up with constituents? Who can “vouch” or add validity to your messaging?

Message Outline Tips

A few elements to consider including as part of your messaging include:

- Goals for pursuing EbD and the larger leadership vision
- Defining involvement / commitment
- Highlighting opportunities for involvement / information
- Outlining desired outcomes
- Associated timelines and updates

Message Template

[Insert College/University] plays a critical role in contributing to the effort of closing opportunity gaps across Minnesota State, and our campus needs to move forward embracing the institutional accountability for ensuring no students are left at the margins. To do so, **[Insert College/University]** has developed a campus coalition to guide the work of Minnesota State's Equity by Design methodology.

The best way to solve the opportunity gap is to know the truth and reality of our academic outcomes. The Equity by Design framework facilitates a process for educators to understand the reality of student success by disaggregating data by students' varying sociodemographic characteristics, with a particular focus on race. It will require an authentic effort, which includes all of us, to build trust and to have the courage of recognizing the opportunities to create meaningful change.

We must be intentional on looking inward and examining the institutional factors, policies, practices, and pedagogy that impact student outcomes. Indeed, equity-mindedness is the ultimate goal that would foster an environment with the authentic desire to improve institutional capacity towards creating the campus culture that sustains student-ready spaces.

If we are going to reach our goal of Equity 2030, we cannot continue business as usual. We must all work to become equity-minded practitioners both inside and outside of the classroom.

Please join our upcoming information sessions and virtual town halls taking place on **[insert information]** to learn more.