

Prepare to Vaxx!

Tips to Prepare for Advocacy and Action

The purpose of this document is to help state and territorial health departments prepare for leadership transitions and educate new leaders on immunization and vaccination programs and activities.

Tips for engaging newly elected and appointed leaders in immunization and vaccination activities.



Message Points

Create a list of the most important messages you would like to communicate. Be clear and concise about the main messages you want to convey. The core messages will serve as your talking points for all meetings and conversations related to immunization and vaccination programs and activities. The message points can be used to develop talking points, policy briefs, case studies and other communication tools.

- Use plain language to make it easier for others to read and understand.
- Use reliable data that can be easily understood. Cite sources that are familiar to broad audiences.
- Tailor your messages to your audience. Place heavy emphasis on messages that are germane to the audience you are speaking to and provide specific data points to the audience.



Research and Social Listening

Consult with your community leaders. As you build your messages, be sure to have a clear understanding of the needs of your state and local communities – specifically with marginalized groups and parents and families.

- Research the level of awareness and the impact of immunization and vaccination on various communities.
- Meet with your trusted community members to gather additional feedback.
- Conduct social listening by monitoring and scanning social media for feedback and direct mentions of immunization and vaccination or discussions regarding keywords, topics, or advocacy groups to see what is being said online, followed by an analysis to gain insights.
- Determine if your message points should be altered based on feedback.



Learn who they are and what they care about

Once you know who your elected and appointed leaders will be, start developing a strategy to build strong relationships at the local, state and federal levels.

- Learn who they are – develop a contact list of key elected and appointed officials.
- Learn what they know about immunization and vaccination and what they care about – read past statements, meeting minutes, election material for position statements, media mentions/coverage, talk with them or their staff members.
- Determine how they receive their information – email, regular mail, social media, listservs, participation in community groups, public meetings, etc.



Communication Activities

Prepare a welcome letter that includes key message points and a request to meet.



Follow-up Activities

Make follow-up phone calls or send follow-up emails to ensure they received your welcome letter.



Meetings

Schedule meetings to brief elected and appointed leaders and their decision-making staff members on immunization and vaccination programs and activities.

- Establish the objectives and results you hope to achieve during the meeting.
- Create an agenda, presentation and leave-behind material and resources based on your objectives.



Host Meetings

Host in person briefing meetings to discuss immunization and vaccination programs and activities. The meetings could serve as opportunities for photos and positive media coverage as well as social media.

- Be yourself and stay calm. Let your data, message points, and passion motivate others during the meeting.
- Make good use of your time by staying on message. Do not stray from your main messages.
- Respect the feedback you receive during the meetings. Be aware that others may not be fully on board with your goals and objectives. Do not get discouraged.
- After the meeting, reflect on what was discussed during the meeting. Highlight areas of support and opposition and determine what is negotiable. Restructure your message points to reflect your conversations (if possible).
- Elected and appointed leaders will likely meet with many groups during the transition. It is important that you send follow-up emails within 24 hours of your meeting thanking them for meeting, summarizing what was discussed and the next steps.



Schedule Follow-Up Meetings

Decide on the new message points you want to communicate, proposed solutions to issues raised in your previous discussions and answer key questions.





Meeting Best Practices

Running an effective meeting can help organizations work more efficiently. This resource outlines best practices for organizing and leading meetings, particularly meetings with decisionmakers.

- Defining a meeting: While there are numerous types of meetings, the primary focus will be on two types of meetings: Routine Meetings (ex: Monday morning recap and projections, Friday team meetings, etc.) and Strategic Meetings (ex: task force meetings, problem-solving, creating a plan, etc.). While they can be run differently here is a base outline for running a routine or strategic meeting:
 - Define Meeting Objectives
 - Define and communicate meeting objectives in advance of the meeting.
 - Ensure meeting objectives are actionable, framed in results-oriented terms.
 - Differentiate between the need for essential communications (which can be done through email, Teams, etc.) versus the need to call a strategic meeting to accomplish an important goal (like project planning, solving a problem, setting a goal, making a decision, etc.).
 - If you can't describe why you're holding a meeting in a sentence or two, you probably don't need to have the meeting.
 - Plan the Meeting in Advance
 - Make sure to have the people that are needed in the meeting. If a critical member is unable to come, consider rescheduling the meeting.
 - Format matters.
 - Should there be a single lengthy meeting with everyone in attendance?
 - Would smaller groups meeting asynchronously, or asking attendees to only attend the parts pertinent to them, be a better use of people's time?
 - Clearly communicate decision points.
 - For strategic meetings, consider framing the discussion in terms of 'where we are'; "where we need to go" and 'what we need from you to get there'
 - Succinct or Sink – edit, edit, edit
 - In any communication (document or email) create it, then challenge yourself to cut it in half.
 - Hold Yourself and Participants Accountable to Start the Meeting Strong:
 - Start the meeting on time and end it on time.
 - Provide pre-work if necessary or send information before the meeting if you'll be reviewing a specific document.
 - Follow your meeting plan. Consider creating a meeting facilitator guide, which clearly assigns tasks and timeframes for the meeting agenda items.
 - Clarify and Follow-up on Action Items
 - End the meeting with clear actions, owner of those tasks, and timeline expectations.
 - Leave the last few minutes of every meeting to discuss these next steps.