



INVOLVING COLLEAGUES IN COMMUNICATING YOUR PROJECT: a guide



It is important to think about who will lead and deliver your communications at the beginning of a health care improvement project.

Feedback from those that have led projects in health care improvement indicates that the projects that plan and consider their communications at the outset are more easily able to sustain and spread their work at the end.

Also, uptake of health improvement work appears to be better when those affected by any change have been involved in shaping it.

Therefore, the following principles are important when identifying and engaging colleagues to help with communicating your project:

- 1 If you are likely to need their skills and time, involve people early in the process.
- 2 Where possible, give key colleagues a stake in the project's communications strategy and planning – recruiting them to steering groups, etc.
- 3 Identify and engage with the change champions in your organisation. In every context there are clinical and managerial people who have the position, personality and motivation to influence others. Recruiting these people may be key to your success.

Section
1

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The following questions and prompts have been designed to help you think objectively about who to bring on board at the project’s outset to help with its communications. It is worth noting that these are likely to be the people you will need to keep involved as the project progresses, for example, by sharing initial outcomes data, sharing success stories and demonstrating that positive change is underway.

PROMPT QUESTIONS	NOTES
Which colleagues will gain from the work, whose jobs will be affected and whose budget will have to pay for it?	Who do you need to engage to ensure the project gets off the ground? Who do you need to engage to ensure work is sustained, funded and spread in the longer term?
What existing initiatives are there that you can link to?	There may be existing networks that are already engaged with issues related to your project.
What communications skills do you have within your project team and which might you need to second/buy in?	Many health care professionals have access to colleagues with communications skills. If you have an in-house communications team, it is worth engaging them to see if and how they are able to support you.
What information do I need when making the first approach to colleagues?	A good starting point is a simple, short verbal and written overview of the project, its objectives and, in particular, any benefits that align with particular interests or challenges. The simpler, and more direct and consistent you are able to be in your messages about the project, even at this stage, the easier it will be for people to engage with it.
How can these people be included in shaping the project?	Could you offer places on planning, advisory, steering or governance groups?

“Talk to your in-house communications team as early as you can. It takes time and skill to do this properly, and they may be able to help.”

Dr Carol Peden, Health Foundation Quality Improvement Fellow