

HOW THE MESSAGE FRAMEWORK CAN HELP YOU

What is a message framework?

A message framework captures the essence of what an organization or initiative is and how it describes itself in one concise document. It's a tool for getting everyone on the same page and building a shared understanding among key players and partners of who you are, what you do and why you matter. It also provides a framework for communications and ensures consistency in all spoken and written communications.

What's included in the Food & Fitness message framework?

The first page of the message framework offers descriptions of the Food & Fitness Initiative from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's perspective, with space allotted for your collaborative's vision, mission, values, personality, elevator statement and key audiences.

The second page includes key high-level messages intended as a baseline for all spoken and written communications. Messages are segmented into three sections that address the what, why and how of the initiative, offering language for your collaborative to lift directly and/or customize. These messages reflect initial findings and recommendations from the FrameWorks Institute.

The message framework includes the following elements:

Vision: This is the statement identifying your collaborative's or community's desired future reality. It inspires and articulates a greater purpose.

Mission: This statement identifies what your collaborative does, how it does it and how it intends to serve its stakeholders.

Values: These are the directing principles that define your collaborative/community's work.

Personality: These traits identify the tone, attitude and style in which your messages are delivered. Is your collaborative's personality uplifting and vibrant or serious and focused? Consider the tone you want to convey.

Elevator statement: This is the short statement of about three sentences describing your collaborative. In 10 seconds or less, it educates and engages those who know little or nothing about your efforts by presenting the key information and making them want to know more. It should grab attention and say a lot in the few words you might be able to share with someone in a ride up the elevator.

Audiences: This is your market—the key people you want your message to reach. Remember: The general public is too broad to be an audience.

High-level messages: Messages tell the story of the initiative—what it does and, more importantly, why its work is important. Strong messages should be memorable, clear and compelling. The messages included in this framework can be tailored to resonate with your collaborative’s target audiences.

How should I use the message framework?

The message framework and supporting messages are designed to help you tie the Food & Fitness Initiative concepts together and provide a framework on which to build. Effective, consistent messaging will allow collaborative members to speak confidently about the initiative and your community’s efforts. Anyone affiliated with your collaborative can be a messenger for the initiative, so creating a common language allows staff members, partners and others to be powerful voices for change.

There are many ways you can utilize the message framework to clarify your top-level messages and get everyone on the same page. First, fill in the blank sections on page one with content that reflects the key components of your local collaborative. You can then distribute the message framework among collaborative members and stakeholders and use it to help describe the initiative and your collaborative or as a starting point in tailoring messages for your unique audiences.

How should I use the messages?

The message framework messages can provide the narrative thread for the Food & Fitness Initiative and your collaborative. They will help you tell the story. Like the telling of any good story, sometimes you tell the whole story, sometimes you change the story, and sometimes you only tell part of the story. If you are short for time or space, stick with the bolded messages; if you have more time or space, you can use the bulleted messages to elaborate. These messages are a tool to help tell your story to the broadest possible audience.

Here’s how you might use them:

- Talking to prospective partners
- Drafting brochures, flyers or other print materials
- Creating website content
- Describing your work in both formal and informal settings—from meetings with stakeholders to gatherings with community members or youth

This is a living document

These messages are not set in stone; messaging will evolve throughout the initiative as we—and you—learn more about what works and what doesn’t. As you use them, you may find that certain words and phrases are more powerful than others or that particular language isn’t effective with certain audiences. While it’s important to establish clear, consistent messages so your collaborative members are “on message,” it is useful to test messages and make small adjustments over time. As you do, please share what you’re learning with us so we can refine messages and share learning with the other communities. And the same goes for

us—as findings emerge from the FrameWorks Institute, we will make adjustments and share new messages with you.