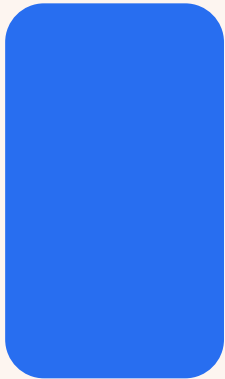


# ASPIRE

to Change



A Model for Effective  
Public Health Communication

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# Introduction

A great health communication campaign is like any powerful health intervention. Just as a doctor prescribes the right medicine, at the correct dosage, for a set duration to treat a condition, a well-crafted campaign must deliver the right message, through the right channels, and at the right frequency and intensity to create real impact. Without that fine tuning, even the most well-intentioned campaign risks missing the mark.

ASPIRE is a six-step framework developed to guide the process of creating, implementing and evaluating strategic communication campaigns that drive meaningful change. Rooted in evidence and experience, ASPIRE helps governments, public health professionals, civil society organizations, and communication experts design campaigns that are fit for purpose, whether the goal is to change behavior, build public support or political will, or promote a critical policy change.

The ASPIRE model was developed by Vital Strategies, a leading global public health organization and a trusted partner of governments and civil society organizations. We partner with governments, communities and organizations around the world to reimagine public health so that health is supported in all the places we live, work, and play. The result is millions of people living longer, healthier lives.

“

The ASPIRE model is a comprehensive framework for strategic communication that starts with building a coalition, understanding a problem, and working together to develop a strategy to effect change. It works best when diverse partners come together to engage in long-term collaboration and strategic planning, budgeting and cost-sharing, research and evaluation, and campaign management.”

**Dr. Mary-Ann Etiebet, President and CEO,  
Vital Strategies**



# ASPIRE in Action

## How Media Helped Build the Case for Front-of-Package Food Warning Labels in Brazil (2021)

The rapid transition from traditional diets to diets high in ultra-processed foods and beverages has been responsible for a massive increase in obesity rates in Brazil. Almost one in five Brazilians have been affected, with obesity rates up from 11.8% in 2006 to 19.8% in 2018.<sup>1</sup> Against this backdrop—and the corresponding rise in diabetes and heart disease burdening the nation’s health systems—Brazil’s Health Surveillance Agency (ANVISA) convened stakeholders from civil society and the food industry, among others, to be part of a working group to develop a new food labeling system. This initiative was carried out in response to the results of research by the Brazilian Institute of Consumer Rights (IDEC) highlighting consumers’ needs for clearer information to help them make healthier food choices.

IDEC, in collaboration with partners from the Brazilian Alliance for Healthy and Adequate Food, led a series of communication campaigns—with Vital Strategies support—to promote effective front-of-package labels and maintain the momentum for ANVISA’s initiative.

The partners’ communication efforts paid off in October 2020, when ANVISA finally approved a model for front-of-package labels. Before that victory, however, IDEC’s communication efforts, under the banner of the Alliance, paved the way for a successful public consultation to determine which packaging models would most likely lead to healthier eating habits. In order to drive consumers to the ANVISA website and urge them to participate in the 2019 public consultation, partners conducted targeted digital media campaigns, resulting in an unprecedented volume of responses, and, ultimately, the selection of a warning label model.

IDEC and Alliance partners managed not only to attract 27,400 people to its “Right to Know” website, but they were responsible for the majority of the 23,400 participants who completed ANVISA’s public consultation—a national record. Notably, 63% of those contributions showed a preference for the Alliance’s black triangle model.



[Read the full case study here](#)

Other positive metrics of the campaign include:

**741.4M**

Campaign materials were seen 741.4 million times.

**153**

153 news stories were generated about the campaign, equivalent to approximately R\$2.2 million in earned media (around US\$ 550,000 at that period’s currency exchange rate).

**95%**

Digital media has delivered 95% of the campaign results, that is, it was responsible for the vast majority of our website accesses and, therefore, contributions in the consultation.

# ASPIRE

## A Framework for Strategic Communication

### Analyze

the nature and scope of the problem



### Strategize

the communication plan and steps to create change



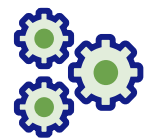
### Prepare

the resources needed to execute the strategy



### Implement

the communication strategy



### Review

and revise campaign using monitoring tools



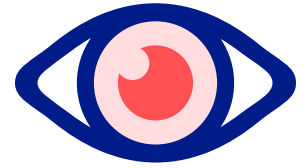
### Evaluate

the campaign



## STEP 1

# Analyze the nature and scope of the problem



The first step of strategic communication planning is identifying and understanding the problem. Bringing together a coalition of partners and stakeholders is a good way to begin exploring the issue, its scope, and the context within which it will be addressed (including factors like the political environment, geography, language and educational barriers, and more).

This planning and research stage should also include finding gaps in current knowledge and capacity, identifying target audiences, and understanding the potential opposition to change.

**In the Analyze stage, we identify and examine the nature and scope of the problem and the context within which it will be addressed.**

### Questions to answer

- What is the overall public health issue we want to address?
- What is the specific problem we are trying to solve? Why is it important?
- What are the underlying causes of this problem?
- What (or who) can change it?
- Who is affected by the problem? Who/what do they listen to most?
- What has already been done to address the problem and how can we avoid duplication of effort?
- What additional information do we need to know?

### Importance of the research stage

The amount of information we can collect about the problem and our target audiences before designing a strategic communication campaign is directly related to our success. This “formative” research enables us to learn more about the problem and its history, the outside influences affecting it, the diverse audiences affected by it and their current knowledge, social norms and behaviors, the channels we can use to communicate our message, and the stakeholders we can rely on. This information allows us to strengthen our understanding of the problem and enhance our proposed solutions, while targeting our information campaign to reach the right people, at the right time, using the right methods to effect change.

**See below for suggestions of research frameworks and tools that can be used.**

### How building a coalition of engaged partners can help

Common challenges that can reduce the impact of public health campaigns include the availability of funding, the implementation timeline available, and the skills and resources the organization(s) leading the effort can contribute. Bringing together government and community stakeholders can help reduce challenges like these by splitting up the budget, labor, and expertise required for success. Expanding this coalition to include diverse groups affected by the problem can also help to improve our overall understanding of its scope and encourage the development of creative solutions to solve it.



The “Support Harm Reduction Campaign” included mobile billboards driven around the Washington D.C. area.

## Key Takeaways

- Bring together a coalition of campaign partners.
- Research the scope of the problem and create an Analysis Report that includes the following components:
  - + **Problem Statement:** Clearly define the issue and explain its significance.
  - + **Key Research Findings:** Summarize the political, economic, social, and behavioral factors that influence the problem.
  - + **Knowledge Gaps:** Identify additional information needed to solve the problem and how this information can be obtained.

- + **Target audience(s):** Specify the recipients who could make a difference toward the desired outcome; include their current knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, media habits, and engagement levels.
  - **Primary audience(s)**—people you want to influence
  - **Secondary audience(s)**—people who can influence them
- + **Stakeholders**
  - **Supporters**—people who care about the problem and/or can influence it
  - **Opposition**—people who want to keep the status quo
- + **Media environment**—broadcast, print, and digital media capacity; trusted/popular communication channels; community events and partner communication methods (i.e., newsletters, speaking opportunities)

## Available Resources [↗](#)

Find these resources to help you implement the ASPIRE model, and more:

### Formative research

- [Case Study on PESTLE \(Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, and Environmental analysis\)—Coca-Cola Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning](#)
- Formative research: [Understanding Motorcyclists' Risk Perceptions, Knowledge, Attitudes And Norms on Road Safety, Argentina, Colombia and Vietnam.](#)

### Target Audiences

- [Guide to Target Audience Analysis—Strategic Communication for Road Safety](#)

## STEP 2

# Strategize the communication plan and steps to create change



Building a strategic communication plan that sparks change requires agreement on the objective(s) we want to achieve and how we will measure our success. Before we can create a comprehensive communication plan, we must choose a strategy based on our research, the knowledge and experience our partners bring, and the outside influences we have identified.

This strategy includes the approach needed to effect change, who we want to reach, how we are going to reach them, and what we want them to do as a result. It also includes measurable campaign outcomes and key performance indicators (KPIs), a plan to monitor and measure the impact of the campaign, a draft implementation timeline, and proposed coalition member responsibilities.

In the STRATEGIZE stage of the strategic communication process we decide on our strategy and build an outline of our strategic communication plan and timeline.

### A communication strategy should include:

- A well-defined problem statement
- Achievable and measurable campaign objective(s)
- Target audiences and how to reach them
- What changes we want our target audience to make and how these changes will help achieve the objectives.
- Performance indicators identifying how we will measure success

### Questions to answer:

- What are the primary and secondary audience(s) we want to reach and influence?
- What outcome(s) do we want to achieve (i.e., policy change, individual behavior change, shifting the narrative, social norms or attitudes, managing communication in a crisis)?
- What behavior changes will have an impact on the problem?
- What types of messages, communication channels, and spokespersons are needed?
- How will we measure success? What research tools and resources are needed to meet these objectives (i.e., baseline research, formative research, pre-testing of materials, monitoring and evaluation)?
- What budget and external resources will we need to be successful (i.e., human/labor, financial, technology, pro-bono support)?



Multi-outlet campaign exposes people to tobacco control ads, stressing the urgent need for robust tobacco control laws.

### Building an effective campaign monitoring and measurement plan includes:

- **Measurable objectives**—define campaign objectives in measurable terms
- **Benchmarks**—set campaign targets in advance, report progress, and alter campaign strategy in response to data as needed
- **Establish a baseline at the start**—understanding and measuring the current scope of the problem is essential to measuring change (Use information gathered during the “Analyze” step as needed.)
- **Segment audiences**—identify and define different target audiences to improve campaign measurement
- **Key performance indicators (KPIs)**—set campaign measurement metrics, priorities, and reporting timelines (both quantitative and qualitative data can be considered; be selective—you can’t measure everything!)

### Key Takeaways

- Draft Strategic Communication Plan with proposed strategy and timeline
- Set campaign measurement goals
- Build a campaign monitoring and evaluation plan

### Available Resources [↗](#)

Find these resources to help you implement the ASPIRE model, and more:

#### Strategic Communication Planning

- [Strategic Communication Plan Framework](#)
- Guide to Building a Campaign Strategy—Strategy Communication for Tobacco Control ([Session 1 Strategic Communication Planning Mode](#))
- Example of Creative Agency Brief and Worksheet ([Creative Agency Brief](#) and [Creative Brief Worksheet](#))
- Strategic Communication Plan ([Strategic Communication Plan Outline—For Specific Alcohol Policy Goals](#))
- Example of Project Timeline(s)—the team requested this

#### Research and Analysis

- [Post-campaign evaluation report template](#)
- Evaluation report example
- [Research Needs Form](#)

**STEP 3**

# Prepare the resources needed to execute the strategy



Bringing together the building blocks of an effective, evidence-based communication strategy requires partner organizations to work together to develop and evaluate campaign messages and materials to reach specific audiences. Based on the research and information we collected on the problem, we now have a better understanding of our target audiences, important stakeholders, relevant communication channels, and campaign evaluation tools—information we will use to help improve the outcome of our initiative.

In the PREPARE stage of the strategic communication process, we work together to finalize the communication plan and prepare the resources and materials needed to implement it.

## To build out and finalize the strategic communication plan, follow these steps:

### 1. Outline key messages and materials:

Materials may include talking points and media pitches, narratives and success stories, policy briefs, branding and design elements (e.g., logo or color scheme), and creative materials (i.e., ads, videos and social media content).

### 2. Pre-test communication materials:

Design and implement a testing strategy to share draft messaging and creatives with target audiences and evaluate how they resonate (testing methods include A-B testing, focus groups, key informant interviews, etc.).

### 3. Create a message distribution plan:

Develop a media and messaging plan that identifies platforms and communication channels, related activities and timelines, vendors needed to produce and implement paid marketing and

advertising campaigns, earned-media contacts, and those responsible for the completion of activities.

### 4. Develop a stakeholder engagement and opposition management plan:

Build a detailed plan to engage supporters in sharing campaign messages and encourage new partners to join, including materials and toolkits designed for partners (i.e., template emails, newsletter content, social media messaging, and handouts). Develop counter measures for opponents, including responding to opposition narratives and identifying the right spokesperson to do so.

### 5. Set up monitoring and evaluation tools:

Develop the tools and methodology to measure campaign implementation and success. Align with campaign milestones and include methods and a timeline to share data with coalition leaders and integrate changes in response. Conduct baseline measures.

## Questions to answer:

- What research tools and methods fit within our campaign budget?
- How often can we gather and analyze campaign measurement data, share it with coalition partners, and update our campaign in response to what we've learned?
- How do we best utilize the resources and expertise of each partner organization when assigning roles and responsibilities?
- What are the best paid and earned media channels to use to reach our target audiences, within our budget and timeline? What calendar opportunities are available to amplify our message (i.e., Women's Health Month, Safe Driving Month)?
- What vendors and partners do we need to implement our media plan (i.e., creative agencies, social media influencers, or advertising buying firms)?



Drinking and driving enforcement strategic communication campaign, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

- How can we encourage our stakeholders to join our campaign and amplify our message?
- Who are the best spokespersons and personal narratives to reach our target audiences?

## Key Takeaways

### Final Strategic Communication Plan, including:

- Messaging and materials
- Timeline and responsibilities
- Earned and paid media plan, digital media plan
- Stakeholder engagement and opposition management plan
- Formative research, framework, methodology, tools, and timeline
- Monitoring and evaluation plan, tools and timeline

## Available Resources [↗](#)

Find these resources to help you implement the ASPIRE model, and more:

### Messaging

- [Toolkit—Guidelines on Developing Messages for Food Policy Strategic Communication](#)
- [Toolkit—Using AB Testing for Campaigns on Digital Media](#)
- [Case Study on Formative Research—Effective Road Safety Campaigns](#)
- [A guide to conducting online focus group discussion](#)
- [Pretesting Tobacco control campaigns](#)

### Media Planning

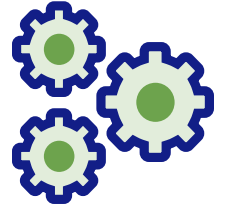
- [Guidelines for Media Planning](#)
- [Media Planning Checklist](#)
- [Example of External Agency Creative Brief—Nutrition Awareness in Ethiopia](#)

## Digital Media

- [Toolkit—Guide on Using Search Engine Optimization for Industry Interference Campaigns](#)
- [Case Study on Developing WhatsApp Campaigns—COVID-19 Campaigns](#)
- [Toolkit—The Digital Organizing Handbook](#)
- [The Power of Storytelling: Guidance for the Creation of Testimonials](#)

## STEP 4

# Implement the communication strategy



Use the timeline and workplan with assigned responsibilities to execute the strategic communication campaign, starting with a campaign launch event or activity. This includes distributing messages and materials to the communication channels identified to reach target audiences. Don't forget to activate stakeholders and supporters and utilize spokespersons who resonate with key audiences. Host a campaign launch event designed to engage target media outlets, thank coalition members, and persuade new supporters and partners to join.

In the IMPLEMENT stage of the strategic communication process, we launch the campaign and execute each component of the communication strategy.

### Key Takeaways

- Campaign launch event or activity
- Track progress towards key milestones and share partner updates
- Conduct ongoing stakeholder engagement and opposition response efforts

### Available Resources [↗](#)

Find these resources to help you implement the ASPIRE model, and more:

#### Digital Media

- [Guide to Social Media Implementation—Road Safety Campaigns](#)

#### PR and Earned Media

- [Guide to Legal Considerations and Media Campaigns](#)



## STEP 5

# Review and revise campaign using monitoring tools

One of the most important steps in delivering an effective communication strategy is ongoing campaign monitoring and measurement. Throughout the implementation phase, continuously monitor progress using the monitoring and evaluation framework developed earlier. Be prepared to update and refresh campaign materials and strategy as needed, based on the ongoing collection and analysis of KPI data. Implementing responsive changes aligned with the goals of your initiative can help improve results. Don't forget to celebrate milestones reached with campaign partners, and keep track of success stories, lessons learned, and updates to campaign strategy, messaging, and materials to support final reporting efforts.

In the REVIEW stage, we monitor the implementation of the communication strategy in real time using progress indicators, measurement tools, and assessment of the current situation.

### Questions to Answer

- Have all campaign activities and strategies been executed as planned?
- Is the campaign on the right track to achieve success? What can be improved?
- How did each of the target audiences respond?
- What changes to the strategy, messaging, or materials were made? What was the impact?
- What situational changes could be affecting the campaign's success?
- Is the campaign budget being used efficiently and according to plan?

### Key Takeaway

Monitoring and Assessment Review Report

### Available Resources [↗](#)

Find these resources to help you implement the ASPIRE model, and more:

#### Campaign Monitoring and Assessment

- Example of Monitoring and Assessment Review Report—the team asked for more information on monitoring
- Case Study/Example of Responsive Changes
- Templates for earned and paid media performance updates

**STEP 6**

# Evaluate the campaign



A strong effort to evaluate the campaign's process, outcome and impact based on the original monitoring and evaluation plan helps to inform future efforts. To assess the effectiveness of the campaign, we must review the full process—from bringing together a coalition, to defining the problem, developing a strategy, implementing the plan and measuring its outcomes. If formal baseline and endline studies are out of scope or budget for the initiative, it is still possible to conduct less formal evaluation methods—quantitative or qualitative—including interviews with

key stakeholders and target audiences, supplemented by surveys and information from other sources. Evaluation preparation should be integrated with the campaign implementation strategy, with the methodology and scope defined during the preparatory stage. Engage partners in campaign evaluation early in the process, including identifying lessons learned, collecting success stories, outlining gaps and problems, and evaluating the effectiveness of the budget, timeline, and strategy, and disseminating results to stakeholders as appropriate.

In the **EVALUATE** stage, we assess the effectiveness of the communication strategy in achieving its communication and behavioral objectives among its target audiences, and the degree of achievement of its designated goal.

## Questions to Answer:

- Did the campaign achieve its objectives?
- What parts of the campaign strategy worked well? Where were improvements needed?
- What strategies, messaging, or materials had the biggest impact?
- What campaign partners, supporters, or stakeholders had the greatest impact?
- What success stories showcase the impact of the campaign?
- What gaps and problems were identified during implementation, plus changes made, and impacts measured?
- What other challenges were encountered?
- What additional efforts are needed to enhance results, or to meet the goal if it wasn't achieved?

## Key Takeaways

### Campaign Evaluation Report

- Lessons learned
- Success stories
- Suggestions for improvement to future campaigns

### Available Resources [↗](#)

Find these resources to help you implement the ASPIRE model, and more:

- Example of Campaign Evaluation Report
- Example of Partner Evaluation Collection Form

Discover toolkits and case studies here

