

NDS Quality and Safeguards Sector Readiness Project

Communication Policies, Procedures, Strategies and Plans

This resource has been developed to assist providers to meet the requirements of the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission and to develop or evaluate their existing framework for Internal and External Communications.

This resource includes:

- **Communication Policies, Procedures, Strategies and Plans.**
- **Developing internal and external communications policies and procedures.**
- **Developing a communication plan.**
- **How to identify key stakeholders for your organisation?**



Communication Policies, Procedures, Strategies and Plans

Using a framework of communication policies and procedures, strategies and plans can assist you to communicate with team members, workers across the organisation, people who access services and other external stakeholders consistently and effectively.

The following terms can often be used interchangeably, so it's important to review what each of these things are and what is right for you and your organisation.

Communication policies provide the expectations an organisation has of its workers in communicating. They aim to establish the principles and 'rules' that guide the organisation's decisions when it comes to communication.

Communication procedures provide detailed information for workers in how to act and communicate in anticipated situations. They should be clear, accessible to all workers and provide consistent processes for workers to follow. Having a separate policy and procedure for internal and external communications might be something you need to consider and can assist with keeping your policies clear.

Communication strategies are usually developed in response to a required improvement or area of need. The purpose of the document is to provide direction around why the change is taking place. It will usually include broad information such as the communication goals or desired end results, who the key stakeholders are and the reason for the proposed change.

Communication plans clearly set out the steps that will be taken to achieve the goals in the strategy. The aim of the plan is to give a clear understanding of what will be done, by who and in what timeframe. Other information typically included is communication method, a clearly defined target audience, what content will be developed and by who, what formats will be used and timeframes.

Developing internal and external communications policies and procedures

Internal communications policy and procedures

What do they cover: They address the communications which happen, either online or offline, within an organisation. This includes how and when the organisation will provide information to workers. Internal Communication policy and procedures documents generally include:

- use of email communications
- internal sharing of information including verbal information sharing
- social media use (such as private work groups) used for information sharing
- communicating using company property such as on laptops and phones
- use of an organisation's intranet.

External communications policy and procedures

What do they cover: They provide guidance on how to handle incoming and outgoing communications to people or groups outside of your organisation.

External Communication policy and procedure documents generally include:

- one to one communication with people or groups (phone, email, letters, text)
- engaging with media
- social media use
- managing complaints received through media / social media
- websites / webpages.

Common areas which appear in both internal and external communications procedures

- Privacy and confidentiality
- Record keeping
- How to manage potential and actual privacy / data breaches
- Delegated authorities / roles and responsibilities
- How to manage and escalate incidents and issues

Developing a communication plan

There are key questions to answer when developing and implementing a communication plan. Communication planning is a collaborative process and a shared responsibility. When developing a plan consider:

? WHY do you need to communicate?

Why is this communication important?

What is the purpose and how will you keep this at the core of your communication?

? WHAT will you communicate?

What is the subject?

Are you staying on message? Are you trying to communicate too many things at once?

? WHO do you need to communicate with?

Are there different internal departments that will receive this communication?

Is it organisation wide or to external stakeholders?

? HOW will you communicate?

Are you using the best communication channel? Is the communication appropriate for your audience?

Why are you choosing to communicate in this way? Has the method been effective in the past?

? HOW OFTEN will you communicate?

What will the schedule of communications be? Is this a one-off communication or a regular update?

What will you do if something changes with the information provided?

? WHO will be communicating or carrying out specific tasks?



For an example of a communication plan template see [NDS Communication Plan template](#) developed as part of NDS Risk Incident and Complaints Management Resources.

How to identify key stakeholders for your organisation?

Having a clear understanding of who the key stakeholders are for your organisation is integral in developing your approach to communications. It can help to break this down into categories of such as internal, external and connected.

Internal: Think about the people who are employed by your organisation. Remember to consider how important information will be distributed to people who might be employed casually, on a contract or volunteering. Consider what will change in your communication plan/s, for different departments within the organisation.

External: These are likely to be a diverse range of people, organisations and bodies. Examples include government bodies or not for profit organisations, peak bodies, other disability providers, mainstream or community providers not in your participant networks.

Connected: These are still external stakeholders but who are connected to your organisation through a contract or other obligations. People with disability, their families and support networks, your suppliers or providers of services and your regulators such as the NDIS Commission or WorkSafe.



Stakeholder mapping can be a useful tool to develop a list of stakeholders and establishing your approach for each stakeholder. Consider gathering key roles within your organisation to map out who your stakeholders are and where they fit within your organisation. Learn more about stakeholder mapping and access free templates from the Australian Government here: [Getting stakeholder engagement right - Australian Public Service Commission \(apsc.gov.au\)](#).





Looking for ideas to assist you to review and develop your organisational communications?
Take a look at the next resource in this group: **Organisational Communications - Review and Improvement Action Plan.**

References and Resources

Writing Policies and Procedures

NDS - [Policy-Development-Checklist.pdf \(nds.org.au\)](#)

26 Ten - [Communicate Clearly - A Guide to Plain English - 26 TEN](#)

Communication planning

NDS Risks Incidents and Complaints - [NDS Communication Plan Handout](#)

Australian Government, Australian Public Service Commission - [Getting stakeholder engagement right](#)

NDS Safer Services Toolkit - [Change Communication Plan](#)

Government of South Australia - [Developing a communications plan](#)

Supporting the workforce

NDS - [Employee Engagement Fact Sheet](#)

Communication and Engagement videos - [NDS Optimising your workforce](#)

Australian Federation of Disability Organisations - [Communication with people with disabilities](#)

Fairwork Ombudsman - [Communication in the workplace](#) and

[Consultation and cooperation in the workplace](#)

Australian Human Rights Commission, IncludeAbility - [Creating accessible and inclusive communications](#)



Please note: This resource was reviewed in May 2023 by the NDS Quality and Safeguards Sector Readiness Project. The resource is general in nature and is provided as a guide only. NDS believes that the information contained in this publication is correct at the time of publishing, however, NDS reserves the right to vary any of this publication without further notice. The information provided in this publication should not be relied upon instead of other legal, medical, financial, or professional advice. Please always refer to online documents for the latest versions including the NDIS Practice Standards and advice to providers on the Code of Conduct.

