Communicating for Policy Change

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GOAL FOR THIS SESSION

- To discuss the elements of a communication strategy so that you can decide how such a strategy would benefit you in your work

- To provide an opportunity to share ideas and examples of how to reach your designated intended audience(s) with appropriate persuasive messages

- To review internal communication best practices

OVERVIEW

How can communication support a food policy council's work?

▷ **External Communication (advocacy)**

⬦ Framing

⬦ Using Diffusion of Innovations and Persuasion theories to generate messages

⬦ Understanding the elements of a communication strategy

▷ **Internal Communication (efficiency)**

▷ Intragroup communication (e.g. educational activities, building relationships)

▷ Process - facilitation, committees, etc.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION:

Communicating with constituents/stakeholders outside of your FPC or sphere of influence

YOUR CHALLENGES

- Current communication efforts?

- What are the key external communication challenges you have encountered in your work?

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

1. List the external audience(s) that you want to reach with persuasive messages

2. Write down a key food policy related OBJECTIVE(S) you are currently working on OR may be working on in the future

3. List the key activities/tasks you are working on OR intend to do in order to achieve your objective(s)

Things to think about when developing your communication strategy…

WHAT IS FRAMING?

- Framing involves social construction of a social phenomenon by media sources, political or social movements, political leaders, actors in organizations, or influential individuals

- It is a process of selective influence over an individual's PERCEPTION of the meanings attributed to words; a way of focusing attention or creating a mental shortcut for how to view something (may simplify reality)

- Can be positive or negative

TV Reporting

FRAMING

The Case of the Urban Farming

FRAMING URBAN AG

PRO URBAN AG

- Contributes to improved food access/security

- Community/economic development

- Landscape beautification

- Recreation and leisure

- Environmental restoration

- Linked to reduced crime rates

ANTI URBAN AG

- Attracts animals/pests

- Soil contamination

- Food safety

- Loss of tax revenue

- Aesthetics of neighborhood

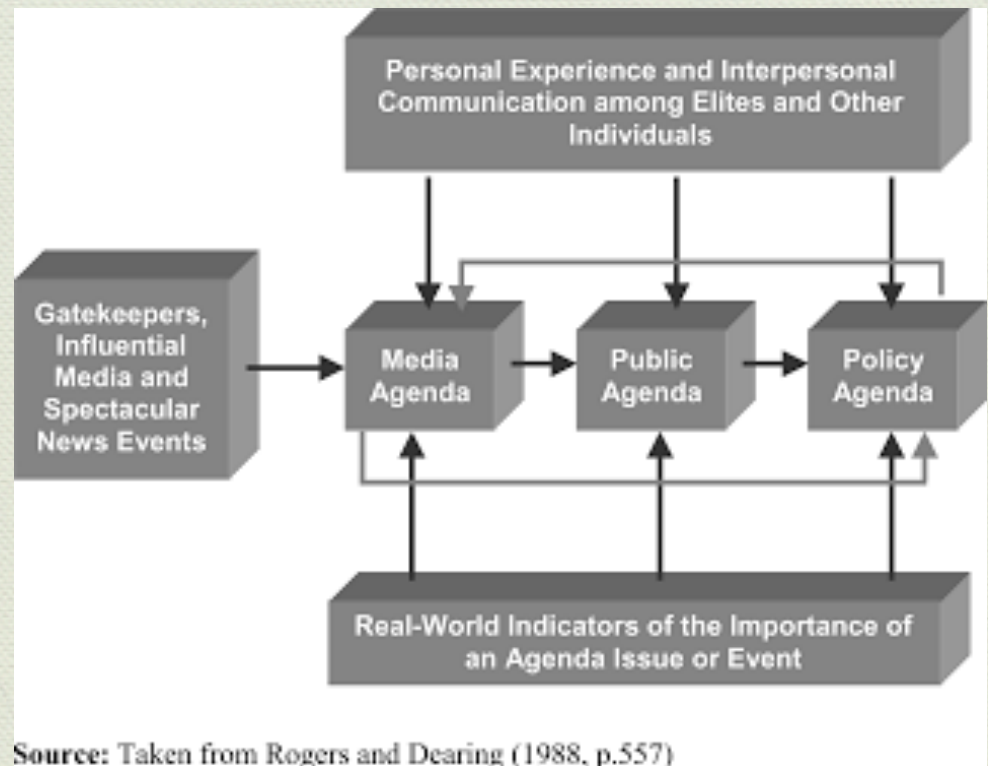- Neighborhood doesn't benefit, done by outsiders

Discussion

What are the ways in which your key issue can be framed?

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN DEVELOPING YOUR ADVOCACY MESSAGES...

AGENDA-SETTING

- Occurs when a problem is identified that creates a perceived need for an innovation that initiates the sequence of the innovation process (e.g., obesity epidemic...need for better nutrition, new zoning for farmers markets, urban/community gardens, built environments for exercise, food policies for labeling)

Personal Experience and Interpersonal Communication among Elites and Other Individuals

Gatekeepers, Influential Media and Spectacular News Events → Media Agenda → Public Agenda → Policy Agenda

Real-World Indicators of the Importance of an Agenda Issue or Event

Source: Taken from Rogers and Dearing (1988, p.557)

TYPES OF ADVOCACY/PERSUASION

- **Direct**: Persuading decision-makers on public policy

- **Public Engagement**: Building awareness and support

- **Media Engagement**: Getting your message out to the public

CONTEXT IS KEY FOR EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

- **Political Climate**: Do you have political will? Can you build political will? Are you interested in building awareness for future activities?

- **Economic Climate**: What are the competing strains on the budget? What are the priorities? Are you interesting in expanding on existing ideas/actions, new initiatives, both? What is the vision/agenda?

- **Social Climate**: Do you have public will? Have you made your issue known with support from an array of potential stakeholders? (NETWORKS)

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY/PERSUASION REQUIRES:

- Knowing your audience

- Supporting your position

- Knowing the various sides of your issue

- Respectfully addressing other points of view

- Finding common ground with your audience

- Establishing your credibility

PERSUASIVE TECHNIQUES

- Bandwagon

- Testimonial/stories

- Snob appeal

- Repetition (dose-response)

- Scientific data

- Plain-folks

- Positive/negative consequences ("if this, then that")

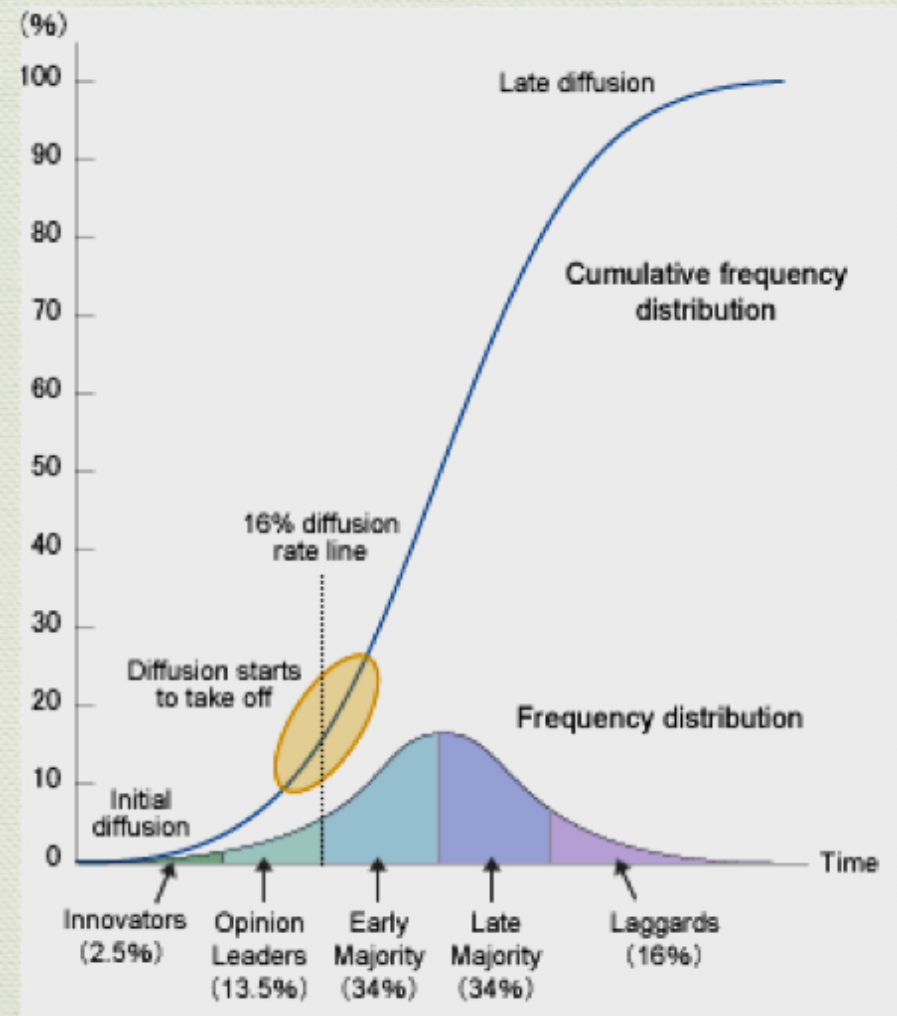- Emotional appeal ("do it for your kids")

- Celebrity spokesperson

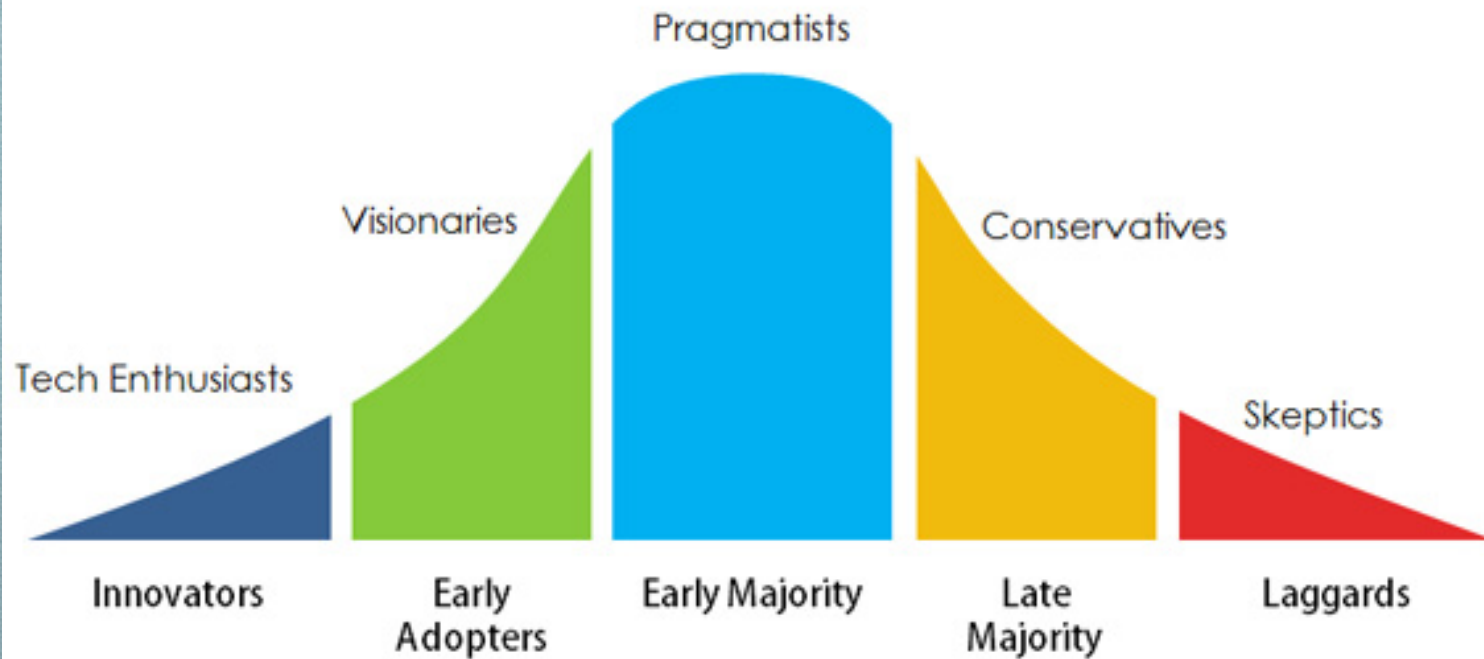# THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN DEVELOPING YOUR ADVOCACY MESSAGES...
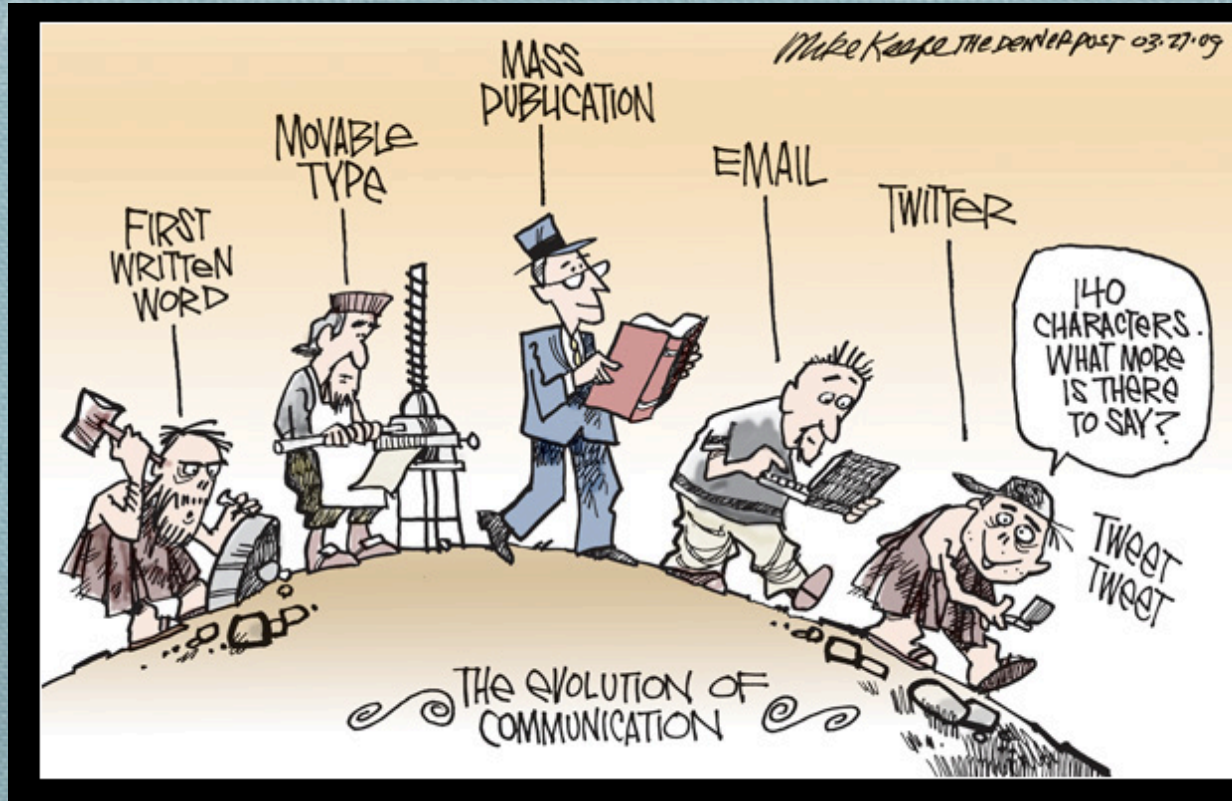
IT'S COMPLICATED…

DIFFUSION OF INNOVATIONS

- The process by which an INNOVATION is COMMUNICATED through certain CHANNELS over TIME among members of a SOCIAL SYSTEM.
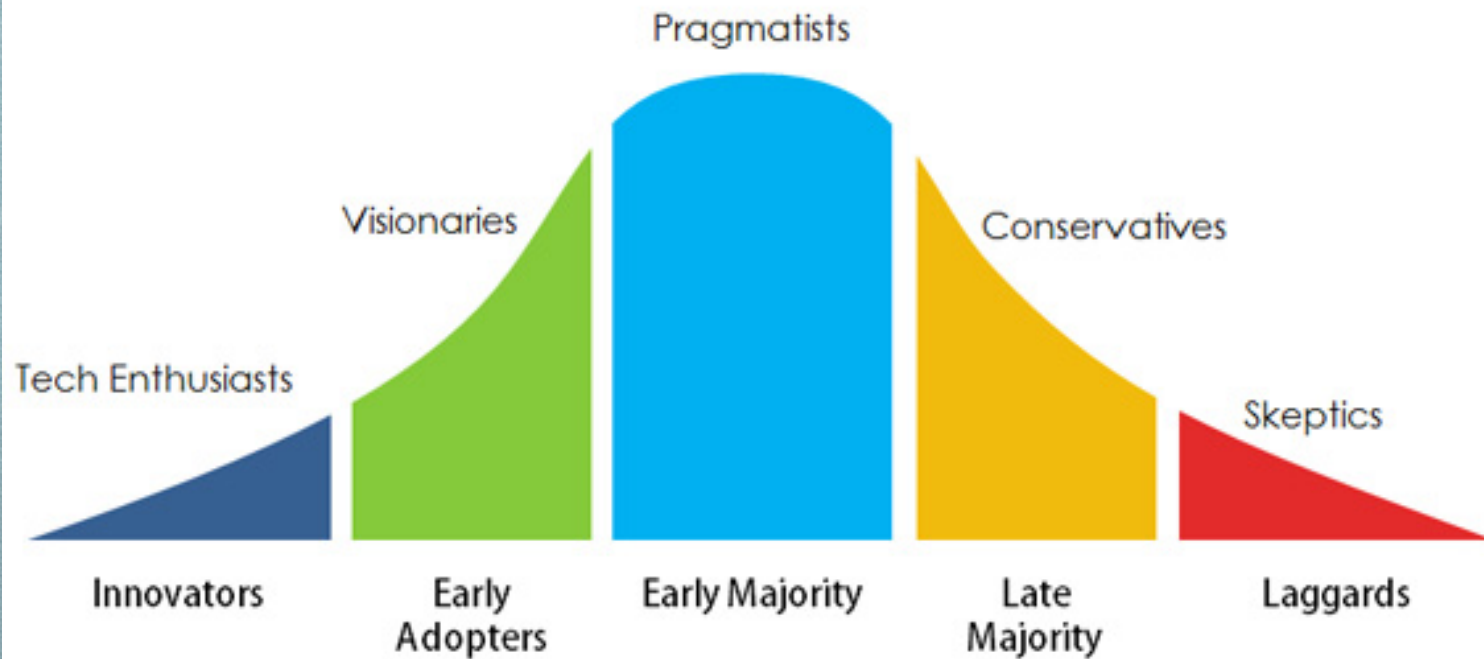
Product Adoption Curve

ADOPTER CATEGORIES

INNOVATORS

- Venturesome: Pursue new things (ideas, products, practices) aggressively / obsessively

- "Nerds", "techies", "dreamers"

ADOPTER CATEGORIES

EARLY AND LATE MAJORITY

- Early majority = deliberate

- Later majority = skeptical

- Larger number of adopters; provide interconnectedness in the system's interpersonal networks ("they tell two friends...")

- Peer pressure usually plays a role

- Likely to be lower SES

LAGGARDS

- Most "localite" (don't get out much!)

- Limited resources

- Tend to be suspicious of innovations and change agents

PERCEIVED ATTRIBUTES OF AN INNOVATION

ATTRIBUTES OF AN INNOVATION

- RELATIVE ADVANTAGE

- COMPATIBILITY

- COMPLEXITY

- TRIALABILITY

- OBSERVABILITY

DEVELOPING A COMMUNICATION/ ADVOCACY STRATEGY

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Who is your audience (adopters in the identified social system)? What do you know about them? What don't you know about them?

- What is the current context/environment for your issue? What are the existing trends, policies? How can you frame your issue(s)?

- What are the perceived attributes of your innovation? How will you use these to frame your issue(s)?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER (cont'd)

- What channels/activities/tasks are best suited to moving your intended audience through the innovation-decision process?

- ANSWERING THESE TYPES OF QUESTIONS WILL GIVE YOU YOUR **STRATEGY FOR ACHIEVING YOUR OBJECTIVES/GOAL(S)**

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

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STEP 1: DATA COLLECTION

- Review/inventory existing policies, initiatives, organizations (potential collaborators)

- Identify barriers and facilitating factors in the environment

- Understand the needs, perceptions, knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, motivators, efficacy, social norms, terminology, and priorities of the intended audience(s)

- *"Where or from whom, and how, do they want information about...?"*

DATA COLLECTION: HOW

PRIMARY SOURCES

- Surveys
- In-depth interviews
- FGDs/listening sessions
- Direct observation
- Community mapping/social mapping
- Content analyses
- Expert opinion/key informant interviews

SECONDARY SOURCES

- Literature review
- Maps
- Reports (gov't/non-gov't)
- Community records
- National data
- Tracking reports (e.g., media)
- Audits
- Meeting notes

How do policy-/decision-makers like to receive information?

- **Succinct and in lay terms:** Define the problem and the solution, and provide sound-bites and examples that they can use; provide simple data visuals as necessary (e.g., policy briefs that address the "so what" question)

- **With framed justifications:** Provide persuasive responses to the questions or push-back that your intended audience may face from others

- **As compelling stories/narratives:** Humanize the issue(s), emphasize how the solution addresses disparities and helps constituents

- **Through observation:** Invite them to meetings, events, demonstration projects

STEP 2: COMMUNICATION APPROACHES

- Community engagement/mobilization/outreach/empowerment

- Social networks

- School-based

- Agenda-setting

★ Always include a call-to-action

IPC + SM/MM = CHANGE

"Let's begin our meeting. . . everybody talk, nobody listen."

INTERNAL/INTRA-GROUP COMMUNICATION

Intra-group communication

- Collaboration is a communicative enterprise.

- How do you create a learning environment where members want to participate, contribute and achieve shared goals?

- "Effective leaders create an internal work environment that is simultaneously empowering, efficient, and task oriented, fostering member satisfaction and commitment, and coalition effectiveness" Foster-Fishman et al, 2001

Communication procedures: Best Practices

- Create processes and procedures that clarify members roles and responsibilities for all the processes involved in coalition's work.

- Decision making

- Conflict resolution

- Meeting facilitation

"We are communicating better but we are still not out of the woods."

Decision making

- How will group make decisions? i.e. Roberts Rules, consensus, etc.

- Are members given an agenda before the meeting?

- How can you make sure everyone's opinion is heard?

- What happens after the meeting? Notes distributed, action items, who follows up?

- Does the process reflect the culture of the group?

Conflict resolution

- How will you manage conflict among group members?

- Do they already have history of conflict? Are they in competition with one another?

- How can you build relationships among members? Social events, informal gatherings, changing meeting venue, etc.

- Vision/mission creates a foundation for working together and is a critical component for councils

Meeting facilitation

- Send confirmations/agenda

- Follow an agenda

- Intervene when off point

- Summarize agenda items

- Assign action items

- End on time

Questions?