Sharing the right information with the right people in the right way is the best way to make sure your findings are useful! As you create your communication plan, review this checklist to ensure that you have covered these key steps and standards.

Did you develop recommendations?

Recommendations describe the actions you think should be taken based on what you learned. They should align with the reasons you did the evaluation in the first place. For example:

If your goal is to improve the program's ability to reach its outcomes →	Recommendations may include different approaches to make the program more successful or highlight areas where training is needed.
If your goal is to determine the future of the program →	Recommendations may suggest expanding a successful program by adding services or locations.

✔ **Useful and feasible.** Keep in mind that recommendations are written as "action items" and must be supported by the evidence that you uncovered. They also must be realistic and suggest actions that are possible and within the control of decision-makers. Engaging stakeholders can be very helpful when formulating recommendations.

Did you review your list of stakeholders and figure out WHOM you should share results with?

Share the results with stakeholders both inside and outside of the program—those who have an interest and those who can take action on your findings and recommendations.

- Look back at your initial list of stakeholders and use that as a starting point.
- Consider expanding that list to include those who you would like to know more about your program and those who might be interested in your findings or lessons learned.

Did you decide WHAT information you want to share back to each audience?

What you communicate will probably be different for each audience, because not everyone will be interested in the same thing. Tailor the information to each set of stakeholders and interested parties in terms of detail, technical complexity, and area of focus. Ask yourself:

- What general issues does this stakeholder care about?
- What specific information will this group want to know?
- What, if any, other information will resonate with them?

✔ **Accurate.** Don't bias your reporting by eliminating negative results—report both negative and positive findings. And be sure to include a discussion of the limitations of your evaluation so that audiences can decide for themselves how to interpret the findings.

Did you decide HOW you will share the information? What is the right format for stakeholders?

Just as different audiences will be interested in different information, the same format might not be best for every stakeholder on your list. For example:

- A comprehensive written report might be the best way to meet funder requirements.
- Program participants might prefer a personal conversation or meeting where findings are presented in a simple manner and the goal is to talk about the results.
- You might best reach the broader community with a news release or through social media.

In general, people are moving away from lengthy evaluation reports to presenting findings and recommendations in a way that emphasizes what matters most. Your stakeholders can help you decide on format and how much detail is suitable for the people they represent.

✔ **Useful.** It is also important to think about the language you will use. Complex analysis and technical terms may be appropriate for some audiences, but not for others. For maximum impact, people need to understand what you're saying!

Did you decide WHEN is the right time to share information with your stakeholders was?

The last thing in developing your communication plan is deciding when to share results with your stakeholders. Consider the following as you make your decision:

- Focus on timeliness and relevance by sharing findings while the data still matter and those who participated will see the results of their participation.
- Maximize impact by knowing when the information will be of use. Can you coordinate the release of your results with other upcoming events in the community?
- Sequence how you share findings and take care inform your stakeholders of the results before sharing with the general public.
- Frequency is key. Typically, if you want your evaluation findings to be useful, one written report is not enough. Plan to get the message out several times in a variety of ways.

Did you follow-up to ensure that your evaluation findings are used for decisions and actions?

The final step in the evaluation process is to follow up with stakeholders to make sure that 1) they have had an opportunity to review the information you provided, 2) they received the information they needed, and 3) there is a plan for next steps, if appropriate. The timing of follow-up may be related to funding cycles or other factors, but it is better to do so sooner rather than later, while the information is fresh and on stakeholders' minds.

Take a look at the Case Study Example to see the communication plan that the *Health Connect* program team created to use and share their findings. Once you have thought through the "who", "what", "how" and "when" of using and sharing your findings, you are ready to put it together into the communication plan template!

For more information about sharing evaluation findings, please see the toolkit **Resources** page.

The Cottage Health Evaluation Toolkit was prepared by the Center for Community Health and Evaluation
www.cche.org

Template: Communication Plan

Use this template to develop a plan for communicating the results of your evaluation.

Who is your audience? (List your stakeholders)	What information do you need to share with them?	Why? (What is your purpose for communicating with them?)	How will you share the information? (e.g., report, presentation, personal discussion, media release)	When should the information be shared?
Example: Board members	*Progress toward goals*	*To inform strategic planning*	*Written and oral report at board meeting*	*Before/during strategic planning meeting*

Adapted from University of Wisconsin–Extension: Program Development and Evaluation. http://fyi.uwex.edu/programdevelopment/