



Government of Ireland
Emigrant Support Programme



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Global Irish Communication Handbook





Government of Ireland Emigrant Support Programme



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Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

‘The Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage’

Bunreacht na hÉireann | Constitution of Ireland

The purpose of this Handbook is to help Irish Diaspora organisations improve their communications with their communities, with each other and with Ireland. The Handbook will also advise organisations how to maximise the impact of their communications, with a particular focus on social media and digital resources, peer learning and communications to improve funding opportunities.

‘Our vision is a vibrant, diverse Global Irish community, connected to Ireland and to each other’

***Éireannaigh an Domhain: Beartas Diaspóra na hÉireann
Global Irish: Ireland’s Diaspora Policy***

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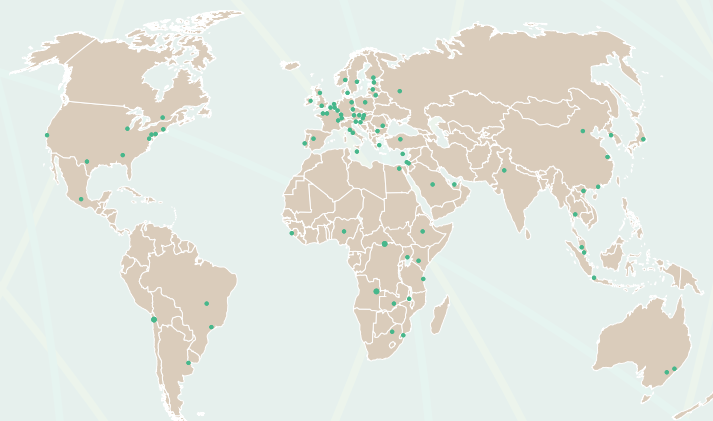
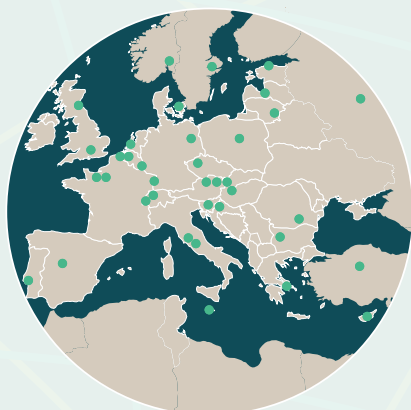
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Communications

The Department and Ireland's Missions

With over 80 Missions around the world and with a global team that works in more than 50 languages, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is here to work with the Irish diaspora and Irish organisations.

The Embassies, Missions and Representative Offices that make up our Mission network support Irish communities by advocating on their behalf, by organising events and activities that Irish communities need or are interested in, and by providing consular and administrative assistance to thousands of citizens every year.

If you want to find out more about your nearest Irish Mission or about the work of the Department please visit our website <https://www.dfa.ie/>. On this site not only will you find information on travel, passports and citizenship, but you can also find out more about all the work and developments of the Department's Divisions and our Ministers.



Social Media and Digital Communications

The Department and our Missions are also greatly developing our social media and digital communications work. We want to connect with you on the go and also deliver services and information tailored to you.

Many of our Missions maintain Twitter and Facebook accounts and you can find them by visiting a Mission's webpage or checking out the lists section on the Global Irish Twitter account. The Department's Twitter account [@dfatirl](https://twitter.com/dfatirl) is also updated daily and is a great way to hear about all the latest developments and the work of our Ministers and Missions.



You can also download our dedicated and award winning *TravelWise* app which provides security ratings and information for over 200 countries. The app can notify you in the event of security situations in your country and provides you with all the links and information you need to contact your nearest Irish Mission or the Department’s consular assistance team.

For more information check out:

<https://www.dfa.ie/travelwise/> or on Twitter search for [@dfatravelwise](https://twitter.com/dfatravelwise)

Global Irish Content

The Global Irish Hub (<https://www.dfa.ie/global-irish/>) is the best location to get all the information you need on the range of *Global Irish* initiatives and the work of the Minister for the Diaspora. The hub reflects the goals of the ‘*Global Irish: Ireland’s Diaspora Policy*’ and seeks to help the Irish diaspora under five headings:



On the Hub's pages you'll therefore find all the information you need on applying for the Emigrant Support Programme or nominating someone for a Presidential Distinguished Service Award. You'll also find pages offering practical advice on returning to Ireland and maintaining connections with Irish people, both at home and abroad.

For the day to day news and engagement we also have the Global Irish Twitter account **@Globalirish**. With more and more followers every day, the Global Irish Twitter account is a great way to hear about the work of many of Ireland's Missions and of the work of many of the organisations that we support.

Finally we also have the Global Irish Newsletter which goes directly to your email inbox and provides you with interesting stories written by Irish Missions and members of the diaspora from around the world. You can sign up to the newsletter and also find out more about Irish news for the diaspora by visiting <https://www.dfa.ie/global-irish/staying-in-touch/>.

Part One:

Developing a Workable Communications Strategy

Why Focus on Communications?

The best communications are underpinned by a communications strategy. This strategy need not be complicated and in fact the simpler it is the better. An effective communications strategy can greatly assist diaspora organisations in a number of key ways, such as:

- Highlighting the hard work of your organisation and the positive changes brought about by your work.
- Improving connections with Irish communities and individuals, in your location and further afield.
- Increasing prospects for fundraising and funding diversification.
- Allowing other Irish diaspora organisations to connect with you and learn from your work and successes.

When beginning to design your strategy you should start by taking the time to ask and answer some basic questions. What follows is a general guide to how you may do this, but keep in mind that every organisation will be different and so you may need to adapt this guide to your specific circumstances.

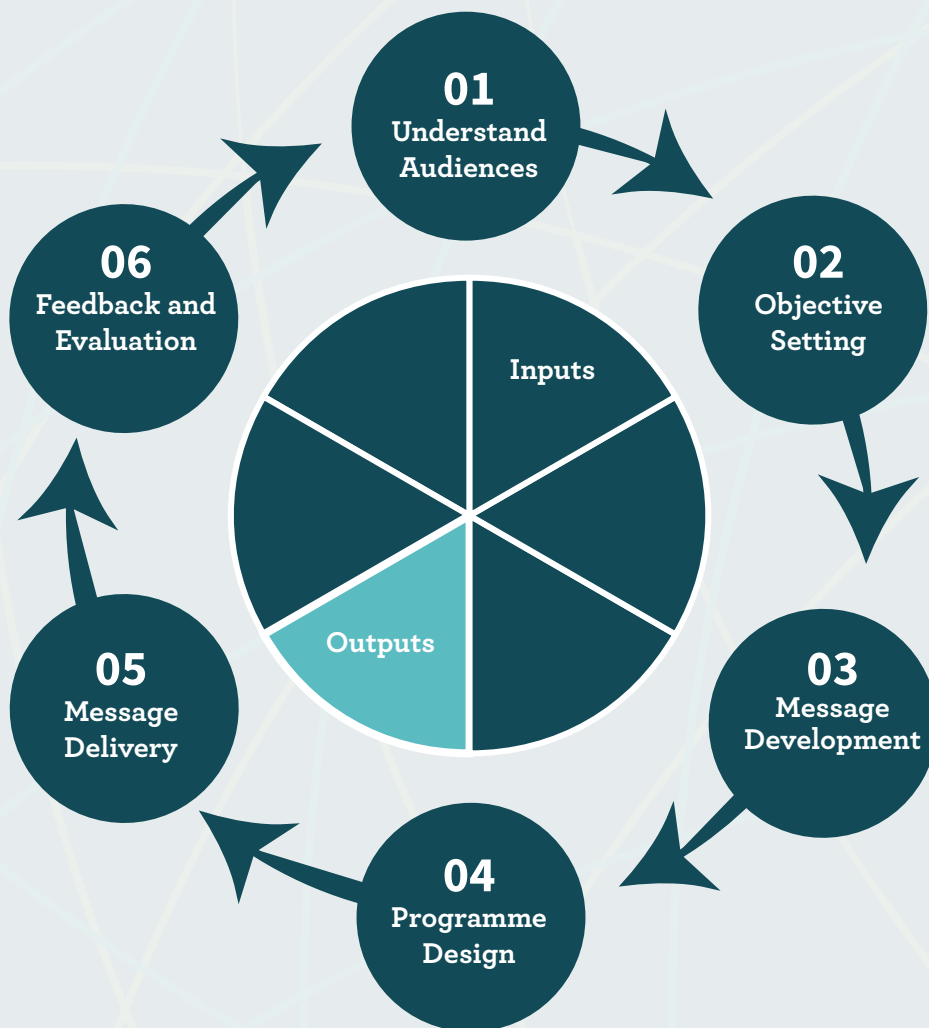
What you want to end up with is a workable communications strategy which will help you achieve your organisation's overall objectives and which will help you understand what staff and resources are needed to meet these objectives. A workable communications strategy can contribute to your overall objectives by helping you:



6 Steps to a Workable Diaspora Communications Strategy

Overview

While no two organisations are alike and no two communications strategies will be developed in the same way, you can identify six steps that are crucial for the development of a workable strategy.



The focus on the idea of a “workable” strategy reflects the resource constraints that many organisations face, whether that be in time, technology, skills or experience. As such, a step by step approach can help you develop your strategy at your own pace and tailor the work to your specific circumstances.

	Successful projects... ¹	Disappointing projects...
Objectives	Communicate with a clearly stated goal in mind	Communicate too broadly with un defined or unclear objectives
Audiences	Communicate to clearly defined groups of people	Communicate without first defining and understanding the people who should listen
Messages	Communicate a small number of clear, concise, consistent and memorable ideas	Communicate a large number of different ideas, without sufficient focus, and inconsistently

Similarly a huge amount of work is preparation and “inputs,” only by doing this work well will your actual communication “outputs” be effective.

Step 1: Understand Your Audiences

As a first step, you should list your audiences and identify the most important ones (priority audiences). For each of the priority audiences you should try and identify:

- Their characteristics (i.e. number, location, education, language, background etc...)
- Their knowledge and attitude towards your organisation and work.
- Their existing information sources.
- Their interests and information needs.

Organisations working in support of the Irish diaspora have to communicate with a large number of different audiences for different reasons. Each audience will have their own needs. Some of the most common include:

- **Clients:** actual or potential project beneficiaries of your organisations. They may span age, gender and socio-economic spectra. Clients may also have different levels of information and understanding of their own needs and/or of what your organisation does.
- **Peers:** other organisations engaged in the same area or in similar work. It is important to note that your peers may not necessarily be in your location and organisations working on different sides of the world can still learn much from each other.

¹Pinnacle Public Relations (2009) Central Europe Programme: Communications Guide Book.

- **Funders and donors:** organisations, groups or individuals who provide funding (or who might potentially do so now or in the future).
- **Policymakers:** people and organisations making decisions that affect your clients, your organisation or your projects. Examples: local and national government officials (Ministers, Parliament Members and senior civil servants) abroad or in Ireland.
- **The public:** other people not directly affected by you, but who may be interested in your work or the Irish diaspora. They may be in your country or elsewhere.
- **The media:** newspapers, magazines, television, radio, websites. They are not really an audience in themselves, but they are an important means for reaching other audiences by showcasing your work and successes.
- **Internal audiences:** board members, managers, staff and volunteers of the organisation.
- **Intermediaries:** organisations or individuals who provide information or services to you or your clients. Examples would include: wider social services, trainers or educators, healthcare professionals or any other contracted service provider.

After identifying your audiences it is very important to try and understand their interests and information needs. This will determine what communication activities you need to undertake and what impact and outcomes you can reasonably expect to attain.

Step 2: Set Your Communications Objectives

The more defined your communication objectives are, the better. This will help you to:

- Focus your communication activities.
- Design messages relevant to the particular audience.
- Design messages that are right for different communication channels.

This will also help you monitor and evaluate your activities, as clear objectives enable you to check the effectiveness of communication activities and adjust them if necessary. Similarly, well-developed objectives can be used to justify spending resources on your communication activities.

In order to define your communication objectives your organisation or project objectives should be linked with your audiences' interests and needs. Sometimes, the match will be good (if your audience says they want to know more about local Irish diaspora activities, and one of your project's objectives is to provide them with some activities, then it will be very easy to match their interests and needs). However, the match can be less obvious in which case you need to find creative of engaging and relating your project objectives to the audience's interests and needs. Remember to take the audience's current knowledge, attitudes and practice into account.

Examples of some communications objectives might include:

- Fundraising (for a specific event or just long term and active).
- Raising awareness of issues affecting your clients.
- Promoting your events to increase attendance or raise awareness of your activities.
- Showcasing your work to increase your client base or demonstrate best practice and successes.
- Sharing ideas to start a conversation, highlight an issue or to engage a group.
- Supporting a topic, issue or event to build awareness, partnerships or show your involvement and values.

No matter what the objective is always remember to be **SMART**

- **S**pecific – target a specific area for improvement.
- **M**easurable – quantify or at least suggest an indicator of progress.
- **A**ppropriate – to wider objectives and the needs of the audience/organisation
- **R**ealistic – state what results can realistically be achieved, given available, realistic resources.
- **T**ime bound – specify when the result(s) can be achieved.

Step 3: Develop the Right Messages

Messages have a special meaning in communications and public outreach for diaspora organisations. A message is not the same as an advertising slogan or a marketing line. Instead it is more of a simple and clear idea that acts as a guiding principle for all kinds of communications, from the content of leaflets, social media posts and websites to the key point you want to get across in media interviews or funding applications.

What does a message look like?

A message can be a statement, idea, or assertion on a given issue that you want your audiences to know. Generally your messages will have one of three purposes, all of which usually reinforce each other:

1. To inform your audience about an issue or situation.
2. To generate understanding of your work or to demonstrate the value of it.
3. To prompt some sort of action (e.g. attend event, give funding, volunteer, spread the message).

Messages are based on facts and information and should not be confused with marketing, advertising, or “sound bites.” Instead messages are the input that go into developing these outputs. Messages are a constant and should be based on your fundamental values, concerns and work.

As such messages must align with your organisation’s objectives (see Step Two) and the messages that you develop will be specific to your organisation and the resources at your disposal. As a general rule though you should make sure that your message matches your audience and your objectives. The following pointers should help you in developing your messages (and also overlap with the other steps in developing a workable communications strategy).

01 Brainstorm	Bring together everyone involved in your work to contribute to an open discussion about what you want to communicate and to whom. Together, list your target audiences and for each audience, state your objectives – what you want to achieve by communicating with them – and also what ideas and information you need to convey to achieve those goals. All contributions and ideas in this exercise should be welcome and what you will end up with is unfiltered material that you can build upon.
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02 Look for themes	Multiple brainstorming sessions may be necessary to identify common themes and you can break them down to deal with specific projects, issues or audiences. Similarly you might have brainstorming sessions with different groups e.g. project staff, senior management, organisation clients, peers. From these sessions you will be able to identify the best and most common themes which can form the basis of key messages.
03 Rank and select	<p>List your draft messages and decide which are the most important. If you could only say one thing, what would it be? What is your one minute “<i>elevator pitch</i>” to your key audience?</p> <p>You will be limited in how many messages you can convey by your resources but at a minimum you would need three key messages that can cover the spectrum of your work and also the audiences you wish to reach.</p>
04 Make sure your selected messages cover all your work and reinforce each other	If you find the same basic ideas repeated in more than one of your messages, shift the ideas around between messages so that nothing is repeated. This will make space to say more but will also allow you to develop a number of messages that reinforce each other rather than simply repeating each other.
05 Refine the language	Can you say the same thing in fewer words? Can you say the same thing using simpler words? Make your messages simple and concise. Similarly tailor your language to your different audiences and to the medium by which you will communicate e.g. social media, newsletters, website, emails etc...
06 Think media	<p>What media will reach your key audiences? What would be the best possible reflection of your work that could be published in media? On social media what would you want shared or commented on about you? These answers are a good pointer towards a key message and the best way to deliver them. Remember that things can be written about you that you have had no direct input into. If someone came across your organisation and wrote something, what information would you like them to have and what (ideally) would you like them to say?</p> <p>It is also incredibly useful to have content tailored to different modes of delivery. For example text suitable for a long newspaper article would not be suitable for social media.</p>

07	Test them out	Show your messages to people outside your project. Friends and family will do, but peers or people close to your target audiences are better. Do they understand? Are they interested? Can they see how communications actions (below) will flow from them? If not, try again.
08	Put them to work	Circulate and promote your messages proactively within your organisation and be sure that everyone is familiar with how to use them. All communications activities should be planned and executed in line with your key messages. These actions could be marketing, advertising, tweets, soundbites, infographics, newsletter articles, submissions to funders, your annual report, or indeed for any communication activity that you engage in.
09	Monitor your messages	Monitor output to be sure that your entire organisation is using them, and to the best effect. Monitor how they are being received by actively seeking feedback and also by looking at your own analytics (very important) e.g. increased visits to websites or social media pages, “likes” and “shares” on you social media posts, increased funding etc...
10	Refine and amend as necessary	You will need to be persistent and should generally not change messages very often, but where you see strengths and weaknesses emerging you should try and take this feedback on board. Similarly outside events may alter your messages and work or indeed maybe a message has a defined time limit or goal that has now been surpassed e.g. fundraising target. Where appropriate make changes to your messages but if it isn't broken, don't fix it.

Problem: ²	Solution: Make your messages...	Objective: Ensure that people...
INFORMATION OVERLOAD		
People are frequently faced with more information than we can handle.	Distinctive Few in number	Notice
OBJECTIVE LIMITS		
People can only take on a limited amount of information at once	Clear Concise Simple Consistent	Understand Remember
SUBJECTIVE LIMITS		
People only take on new information when they are interested and motivated	Interesting Relevant Personal	Care Act

² Pinnacle Public Relations (2009) Central Europe Programme: Communications Guide Book.

Step 4: Design a Workable Programme of Communications

A workable strategy is one that falls within the profile of Specific, Measurable, Appropriate, Realistic and Time bound. Crucially, a workable strategy also has to be resourced properly so that it can succeed and can have the impact you desire. Time is a critical factor in communications and it can be time consuming to develop, deliver and follow up on messages.

In fact what you say and how you say it is only one part of your communications work but without the background work and good organisation your messages, your core outputs, will lack impact. Done badly, your messages could reflect negatively on your organisation.

Be prepared to adapt your strategy as you undertake your communications work. You may find that certain strengths or weaknesses may develop and incorporating that feedback into your work is essential for sustainable and impactful messaging.

Develop your strategy with clear milestones linking in to activities you have planned for the coming year. You may wish to build upon events such as St Patrick's Day, a major event, a day of commemoration or even just your own organisation's birthday. Likewise you may seek to focus on specific themes or projects at different points in the year. This can help break up your communications work into smaller, easier to handle, pieces. It can also help you keep your activities "fresh," as you focus on different aspects of your work.

A useful and simple tool to assist this work is a "Communications Calendar." This will allow you to map out events and milestones over the year and help keep you on top of what you need to be doing when.

Some of the best communications strategies also factor in collaborating and coordinating with peer organisations, events or partners. By sharing resources and messaging you can have a far greater reach than working alone. For example St Patrick's Day is great for getting your message out there and raising your profile but are there other events you can build on such as International Women's Day, or national events in support of the elderly, mental health or fundraising.

Finally, don't forget to periodically analyse your work and incorporate feedback so you can see success and failures and increase the benefit of your communications to you and your audiences.

Step 5: Deliver Your Messages

Delivering your messages through communications activities is the tip of the iceberg of your work but for anyone outside your organisation that may be all they will ever see and may be the first and only impression of you and your work.

All diaspora organisations are already engaged in communications activities in some form or another but you need to ensure that your communications now reflect the messages that you have developed so that they become more effective and more targeted.

Targeted

- Match the language and style to your audience.
- Match the language and style to your communication medium (Facebook vs. annual report).
- Certain messages should be highly targeted to impact a particular group, even when delivered to wider audience.

Efficient

- Develop messages that can be used across different platforms (Twitter, Facebook, newsletters).
- Develop messages that with only a little extra work can be repurposed for use with different audiences events, projects etc...
- Don't tell your audience something they already know.
- Make some of your messages action oriented.

Style

- Develop a style that you are comfortable with and that reflects your organisation.
- Reflect your core values and that of your audience.
- Make sure your message is consistent across audiences and platforms as well as over time.

Delivery

- Avoid gimmicks or "clickbait" or spamming your audience. Quality is better than quantity.
- Give the audience information they can use. Don't ask people to do something impossible (like "save the world"). Instead, tell them something they can do (like "join our event" or "donate").
- Time your communications delivery for maximum impact.

There are a huge number of ways that you can get your message out. A few of these are listed below, and illustrate how having a communications strategy in place and messages already developed can greatly help maximise the impact of whatever activities you are engaged in.

Social media is examined separately. While social media is the fastest growing means of communication and can be one of the most effective, it is important not to neglect other forms of communication which ensure that you reach as wide an audience as possible.

<p>01 Organise your Own Public Events</p>	<p>Any public event that invites interest and attendance beyond your usual clients can greatly assist in increasing your profile and in attracting new volunteers, funders and media interest. Hosting events like lunch time talks, evening receptions, debates, project launches, annual report launches, fundraising nights, annual celebrations, or “first-Friday” style meet ups are a great way to get people interested and to attend. Hosting events will not only give you an opportunity to get people in the door but also to showcase your wider work.</p>
<p>02 Publish Annual Reports</p>	<p>Annual reports are a great way to satisfy a wide range of audiences, from your funders to the media to your clients. People can see what you have done throughout the year and can use the report as a reference. It is also a great excuse for a mini communications campaign on social media and for holding a launch event. Great pictures are essential and it doesn’t have to be all that elaborate. Great examples are already available online and many diaspora organisations make it a feature of their yearly calendar of events. A strong annual report is also a very important element that funders consider when assessing organisations.</p>
<p>03 Develop Multi-use Promotional Materials</p>	<p>Have a ready supply of materials for your organisation that are easy to read and understand. It doesn’t have to be done by a professional company; what is more important is that they contain the right information about your work and the issues you and your clients face. Similarly it is useful to develop materials that have a consistent look and feel and which best represent the image and personal professionalism you want to project.</p> <p>In everything you do cut down on jargon and keep it simple so that you get to the point and ensure each item emphasises the same consistent core messages. If you don’t have budget for bulk printing, you can opt for online marketing materials that can be downloaded from your website in a PDF format</p>

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|---|--|
| 04 Publish a Newsletter | <p>Newsletters that go out once a month or once a quarter are a good medium to write about your organisation, let readers know about recent changes, new initiatives, events in which you have participated, or even to get across interesting case studies. They also provide a written record of your activities. Encourage all your colleagues to contribute articles. You could also ask local politicians, peer organisations or sponsors to contribute articles or editorials.</p> |
| | <p>If you prepare a regular newsletter, develop a new theme for every issue and focus a number of your articles on this theme. Again, if you don't have budget to print, consider creating an electronic newsletter that can be available on your website, social media account and/or in an email version. Inexpensive software is available that can help you to develop good looking electronic publications.</p> |
| 05 Take Part in Other's Events | <p>Exhibitions, conferences, trade shows or round-table discussions are a great way to raise awareness of your organisation and the issues you work on. Having a speaking spot at such events offers a personal connection but even just having a stand with well-designed information materials, press kit and posters could have a big impact. For any public event practice your delivery and focus on who your audience is and how you can connect with them. For this it is important that all your materials and any speeches are of a high quality.</p> |
| | <p>You can also actively seek out opportunities to talk at schools, universities, local business groups, local government discussions or events organised by other organisations. This helps to raise the profile of your project and to share information about your good work. Make it interesting for your audience, provide lots of examples, use high quality materials and integrate your key messaging into whatever you are saying.</p> |
| 06 Build Relationships with Other Local Groups or Community groups | <p>Other groups in your community or city that have synergies or common values with your project can make great partners for fundraising, peer learning, or hosting joint communications activities. This could boost your image and expand your range of contacts. But remember to choose carefully and make sure that your involvement is genuine and not seen as a publicity stunt.</p> |
| 07 Build Relationships with Other Diaspora Organisations | <p>Other diaspora groups in your country or somewhere else can offer a huge peer learning opportunity for fundraising, project design, good governance practice and communications. Other organisations can share their experience of what works, and just as importantly, what doesn't. On a one to one basis consider developing designated "partner" or "sister" organisations and where multiple organisations are involved considered forming networks or likeminded groups.</p> |

08 Develop Endorsement or “Patron” Programmes	Formal backing from opinion leaders, high-profile business people, academics, politicians, NGOs, etc... can help boost your organisation’s image and reputation and also help with funding. These supporters can amplify your communications and reach a wider audience. Supporters can also act as ambassadors for your organisation giving a personal connection that can open doors. Using messages you have developed, supporters can reflect your work in their promotion and lend credence to what you are doing.
09 Blog	Blogs are an easily created and regularly updated website that works a bit like an online diary, discussion board and news forum. A blog can contain personal or project information and facts or opinions on any topic. An author will usually write about something topical and allow other users to post comments or rebuttals to the person’s comments. Creating a blog is a great way to showcase a project, and can be a way to get people involved dynamically in its development. Your blog can be hosted on your website’s server or you can set one up for free or a very small charge with a blog hosting service.
10 Develop and Maintain a Website	<p>Developing and maintaining a good website need not require a huge amount of time or money. Use material that doesn’t easily go out of date and where possible link your website to your social media account or whatever communication tool you use most often. The use of good quality images can also be very useful. If your website is not your primary means of communication than use it as a sign post to your social media accounts, contact information, opening times, or location.</p> <p>If you are seeking to expand your website you can do so relatively easily by adding picture galleries, writing interesting posts on frequently asked questions or common issues that your clients face. You can get great inspiration from other diaspora organisations’ websites and you should make contact with peers to learn how they manage the resources of maintaining a good website.</p>

What Communications are Donors and Funders looking for?

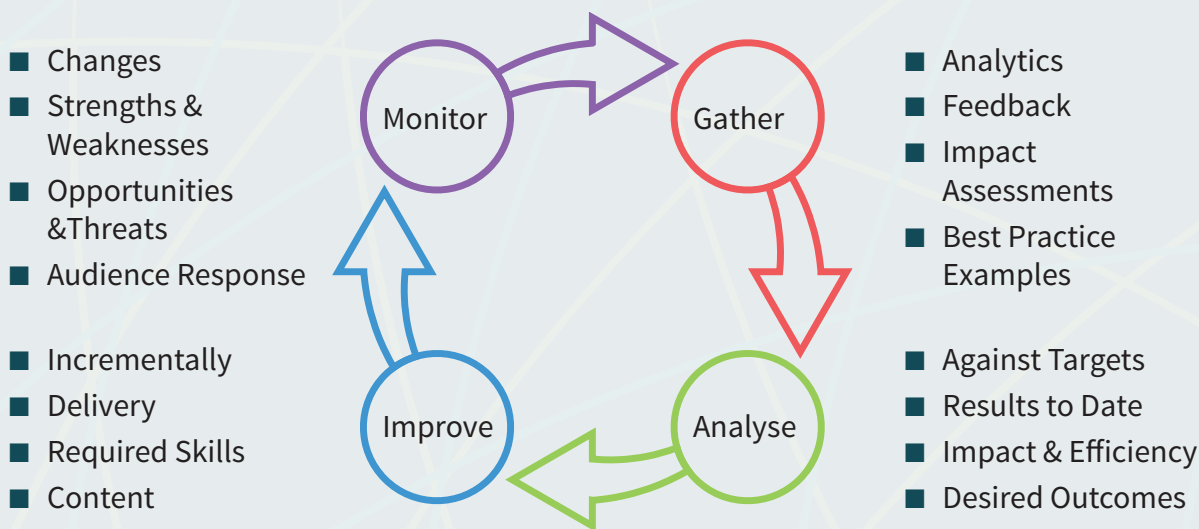
From a communications perspective donors and funders look at many things when assessing organisations. You should have specific communication activities that showcase your work and attract new and diversified sources of funding. In general Donors and Funders would look for:

- A clear vision.
- A compelling mission that engages them and demonstrates a commitment to assisting others.
- A solid track record backed up with metrics and demonstrable results.
- Showcasing of professional staff who demonstrate commitment to constantly improving the delivery of their service and to assisting their clients.
- Some donors may wish to remain anonymous, others will want you to credit their involvement e.g. by including their logo on your website.
- The potential for matched funding (a real plus), so always show your funding sources and do so consistently across all your work.
- Evidence of successful activities that they can build upon and/or support.

Step 6: Gather Feedback and Evaluate

Be prepared to adapt your strategy as you undertake your communications work. You may find that certain strengths or weaknesses may develop and incorporating that feedback into your work is essential for sustainable and impactful messaging.

You will however likely need to be persistent in your messaging and should generally not change messages very often or too drastically, except in cases where you see particular strengths and weaknesses emerging. Consistency is important for good messaging and over time you will naturally refine the delivery of your messaging as you gain more experience and improve your skills.



It is possible that outside events may alter your messages and work or indeed maybe a message has a defined time limit or goal that has now been surpassed e.g. fundraising target. Where appropriate make changes to your messages but if it isn't broken, don't fix it.

You should also actively seek to gather feedback on your messaging and communications activities. Input from all your audiences and also from within your organisation should be welcome and sought. Analysis can simply be looking for common themes to conducting a fuller Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats exercise. Numbers speak for themselves and all social media and webpages that you operate will easily be able to tell you how many visits, clicks, shares and likes you are getting. You can use this information to alter your messaging and activities to maximise impact.

One of the best sources of feedback and evaluation can come from other Irish diaspora organisations, regardless of where they are in the world. People going through the same things as you can offer invaluable advice and support.



Part Two:
**Using Social Media to
Aid Your Work**

A Quick Guide to Social Media

Regular media is largely a one-way street – you can read a newspaper or listen to a report on television, but have very limited opportunity to give your thoughts on the matter. Social media, on the other hand, is a mobile and web-based two-way street that gives people the opportunity to communicate and get into contact with others they know or who share some of their interests. Whether interacting on the go, or at work or home, people are able to keep a conversation live and to feel engaged rather than passively receiving a message.

Many diaspora organisations already have some sort of social media presence, and for some this has already been identified as the best way to stay connected with their communities. Your virtual community is not only a place to find information, but also a place to organise events, express opinions, share photos, meet new people, promote your work, participate in campaigns and much more.

Contribute

- Start discussions and add to them
- Share content you produce that can be useful to others.
- Comment and/or build on what others are saying and doing.
- Seek to integrate your day-to-day work into social media: a picture or even just a quick line can suffice.

Converse

- Listen and respond, it’s about engaging people not just talking to or at them.
- Don’t be afraid to make strong points and represent your values.
- Good conversations can expand your influence by showcasing your good work and expertise.

Connect

- Target influencers who can spread your message.
- Prioritise sharing and working with peers on social media.
- Link your social media work with other means of connection; your website, events you are hosting, newsletters, media pieces etc...

Community

- Build online relations with people all over the world; you learn from them, they learn from you.
- Actively seek out new audiences and demographics that you’re not yet reaching.
- Be open to diverse opinion and feedback.
- Work to be a community influencer.

Be aware however that social media are not self-sustaining. In order to take advantage of them, you need to dedicate some time and thought to what you're doing and how it works to achieve your overall communication and organisational objectives.

Your Social Media Presence

Your social media profile is your image, so regardless of which platforms you use (discussed below) the basics are the same and you need to develop a baseline presence to give the best initial impression for whoever comes across you. Getting the basics right can go a long way, so follow these simple rules:

- Use the best quality pictures and videos as possible.
- Formatting of images and text is important: people use social media on PCs and phones so make all your material accessible and usable.
- Avoid using acronyms or uncommon words, likewise correct spelling and good grammar is important.
- Provide the most up to date information and make it concise.
- Make good use of hyperlinks and tags in your text and photos.
- Personalise your profiles and have good placeholder and background images.

Writing for Social Media

For social media, more than any other form of communication, it is most effective to write in a fast and engaging way so that your message comes across loud and clearly and reaches your audience immediately.

What you write for social media should...

- Be easy to understand and share.
- Include hyperlinks so people can find out more.
- Prompt action, asking your audience to do or think of something.
- Come across as relevant so people think this matters to them.
- Be useful or interesting to your target audience.

How you write for social media...

- Relevant and intriguing information at the beginning of your post.
- Ask a question, prompt an action, try and create engagement.
- Keep messages short but relevant.

- For tweets you want shared make them less than the 140 characters so people don't have to cut when re-tweeting.
- Test your message to be sure your readers pick it up instantly.
- Provide enough context so your message can stand alone.
- Avoid acronyms that people may not know and use simple words.
- Write in first or second person (I, we, you).
- Tone should be natural and casual, but still professional.
- Use action verbs such as learn, watch, join.

Be aware of the importance of length: too long and they won't read it, too short and they might miss it. Always tailor your content to different platforms, media and audiences.

Making the Best of Your Online Profile

Your social media profile is your image, how you appear in the public sphere. Having in mind the increased time spent on the Internet and the intensified interactions we experience on social media every day, social media profiles are becoming increasingly more important.

Photos

Quality photos are very important, both for representing the professionalism of your communications activity and also for catching people's eye and sparking engagement. Poor quality photos are a poor reflection and can send out the wrong message.

Top Tips

Make sure you have good lighting.

- Use the autofocus feature
- Avoid using digital zoom.
- Avoid distant shots.
- Keep still to reduce blur.
- Look for tips and tricks online that help in getting the best out of photography.
- Use phone or digital software to improve image quality.
- Ensure the lens is clean.
- No one likes images that are full of the backs of people's heads
- Practice makes perfect!

Tag

Tags are used to notify another user of something you have sent out on Twitter or shared on Facebook. Also they inform users of another user's existence or address a comment to a particular user. Before clicking 'post', always ask yourself: have I tagged everyone?

Sustainability

Avoid designing social media pages or websites that quickly go out of date. Develop your content within the resources you have now but with a clear eye to the resources that you will have in future.

Aim to develop a body of good quality material that can be reused for multiple purposes and that can easily be augmented or "freshened up" when you generate new content from your events and activities. Similarly develop a pipeline of material, whether that be weekly, monthly or yearly so that you can predict when new material will be available. This will help you plan to develop it and use it most effectively.

Use Analytics Provided

All social media software and websites will come with analytics that help you track activity and engagement on your pages. Use this information to identify which parts, or which types of posts are most popular. This will help you communicate better and reduce the burdens on you in developing the material that your audiences want.

Useful Social Media Platforms for Diaspora Engagement

Twitter

An online social networking and microblogging service that enables users to send and read "tweets", which are text messages limited to 140 characters. Registered users can read and post tweets, but unregistered users can only read them. Twitter is meant for people you want to communicate with, but there is no need for mutual friendship as on Facebook. You can follow as many strangers as you want. Anyone can follow you and you can follow anyone. Sometimes people decide to make their profile private, which means they must approve you before you can access their content.

Social Media Explained (Diaspora Event version)

Twitter: *I'm at a diaspora event*

Facebook: *I like diaspora events*

YouTube: *Here's a video of a great diaspora event*

Instagram: *Here's a great photo of a diaspora event*

LinkedIn: *My interests include attending diaspora events*

Launching a Twitter account can be a good self-promotion activity but Twitter is more immediate than other social media platforms and needs to be constantly updated and engaging.

Twitter is ever increasingly being described as a personal news-wire. It makes you approachable and helps you to find new clients and audiences, and it reveals their tastes and interests, expands audiences, provides feedback and lets you share.

Top Tips:

- Give your followers useful, interesting, “retweetable,” content i.e. content they can easily share
- Curate good content through retweets of peer organisations, relevant information and high quality material.
- Tweet regularly and watch the timing of the tweets as this can have significant effect.
- Use relevant account names (@), hashtags (#), links and high quality photos in your tweets.
- Use the analytics provided to improve your communications.

To set up a Twitter account and for helpful tips in using Twitter see:
<https://support.twitter.com/>

Facebook

A platform designed for people to share and communicate directly with each other, so it is personal. Users register to use the site, they create a profile, add other users as friends, exchange messages and join groups or ‘like’ pages for which they have a special interest.

Having a Facebook page for your organisation gives you a way to talk to and get direct feedback from different audiences. A good Facebook presence can be engaging for everyone involved and can act as a useful and ongoing focus group for you. While your audiences are certainly expecting to receive useful information from your Facebook page, you can also be collecting useful information from them through their participation. This can help you understand what they need and want, and help you communicate better in all of your work.

Facebook has a number of useful tools that you can use:

- **Pages:** Give your organisation a voice and presence on Facebook.
- **Groups:** Let you create communities of people who interact directly with each other.
- **Events:** Use Facebook events to organize supporters around specific activities.
- **Fundraising Tools:** Help you raise money for your cause on Facebook

Top Tips:

- Give your followers useful and interesting content they can share.
- Curate good content through sharing posts from peer organisations, as well as sharing relevant information and high quality material.
- Converse and engage with you audience to facilitate discussion and action.
- Use the analytics provided to improve your communications.
- Use Facebook's special help section <https://nonprofits.fb.com/>

To set up a Facebook account and for helpful tips in using Facebook see:
<https://www.facebook.com/help/>

Facebook page or group?

Facebook Pages enable public figures, businesses, organisations and other entities to create an authentic and public presence on Facebook. Unlike your profile, Facebook Pages are visible to everyone on the Internet by default. You, and every person on Facebook, can connect with these Pages by becoming a fan and then receive their updates in your News Feed and interact with them.

Facebook Groups are for small group communication and for people to share their common interests. Groups allow people to come together around a common cause, issue or activity, to organise, express objectives, discuss issues, post photos and share related content. When you create a group, you can decide whether to make it publicly available to anyone, require administrator approval for members to join or keep it private and by invitation only. Like with Pages, new posts are included in News Feeds and members can interact and share.

LinkedIn

This is a professional network, where you create a detailed profile of yourself and connect with people and groups that have similar interests. It is increasingly becoming a place for job seekers and those looking to hire people. If someone wants to know more about your professional path, they can visit your LinkedIn profile. There are also LinkedIn groups with special interests that you can join and follow.

Top Tips

- Develop a good quality organisation page that is low maintenance and sign posts to your website or whatever communications medium you use most frequently.
- Encourage Staff to create profiles and showcase the range of work that they do and that the organisation does.

- Link with peer organisations or with persons working in similar organisations.
- Use your personal and professional profiles to connect with appropriate and/or new audiences so that you can develop your professional relationships.

To set up a LinkedIn account and for helpful tips in using LinkedIn see:
<https://www.linkedin.com/help/linkedin>

Instagram

A fast and free way to share instances of your life through a photo or a video, Instagram is extremely popular with younger people. You register with the app first, take a picture or a video, use filters to transform it and then post to Instagram and even share to Facebook, Twitter, etc. It also has a feature named Instagram Direct that allows users to send photos only to a specific user or group of users, rather than having it be viewable by all.

Top Tips:

- High quality and striking photos are a must.
- Make best use of the filters and features that the software offers.
- Use hastags (#) fully.
- Link pictures to your other social media accounts and website.

To set up an Instagram account and for helpful tips in using Instagram see:
<https://help.instagram.com/>

YouTube

A video-sharing website on which users can upload, view and share videos. It uses Adobe flash video to display video content including clips, TV clips, music video, educational videos etc. It is used mainly by individuals but also companies and news organisations like RTÉ. Unregistered users can watch videos, and registered users can upload an unlimited number of videos.

Top Tips:

- Only use if you have the capability of uploading good quality, interesting or engaging videos.

To set up a YouTube account and for helpful tips in using YouTube see:
<https://www.youtube.com/yt/creators/support.html>



Government of Ireland Emigrant Support Programme



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- European Neighbourhood Info Centre (2014) *Using social media: A handbook for EU-funded projects*.
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