

Strategic Communication Tools: What and When to Use with Decision-Makers



For any and every communication tool used and strategic contact made, it's important to include data on the impacts made by MSU Extension work. Use the data featured in MSU Extension annual reports and impact reports to highlight the difference MSU Extension is making in communities throughout the state.

Newsletters

What: Newsletters provide opportunities to share details on program reach and impact as well as to share constituent stories that illustrate impact.

When: Send your newsletter to all key decision-makers and stakeholders to keep them abreast of Michigan State University (MSU) Extension current events and issues. Because of their public positions, you can add the public office of key stakeholders to your newsletter mailing list without an opt-in.

Social media

What: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media outlets all provide opportunities for quick and timely communications with stakeholders provided they agree to your engaging them through this form of media. In many cases, you can join the pages of key stakeholders. Unfortunately, there may be times when messages on social media overwhelm and yours may get lost in the process.

When: A good time to post on a stakeholder's social media account is when MSU Extension has a key product or service that meets the need of a hot or trending topic. If the decision-maker or stakeholder is a public official, they will have staff members monitoring their social media sites for key inputs they can use in their policy making.

Phone calls

What: Phone calls provide a direct and unfiltered method of communication with key decision-makers.

When: Pick up the phone and call a key decision-maker's office for introductory meetings or conversations. You can also call if you can provide a service or program that can help a decision-maker address or respond to a key issue.





Use the “[Knowing Your Policymakers and Stakeholders](#)” form in the *Expect to Connect Toolkit* to document key information learned in your visit with a policymaker or their staff members.

Remember to document your contact and communication with policymakers by completing the [MSU Extension policymaker contact form](#).



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Meetings

What: Meetings are the best way to get to know a key stakeholder and to provide important information to guide decision-making. You can learn much from a meeting that other forms of contact can’t provide. And likewise, the stakeholder can learn much about you in a face-to-face meeting that other forms of contact can’t or don’t provide.

When: Introductory meetings are important when you or your stakeholder are new to professional roles and positions. Meetings are the best form of communication when there is action needed on a particular issue or topic and background information needs to be shared in a manner that provides for questions and answers.

Emails

What: Use emails when information needs to be shared quickly and with some detail. But, they may only be effective if you, as emailer, are already established as a known source or contact. Otherwise, an email on an important topic may get overlooked or deleted among other messages.

When: Emails can be a timely way to contact key decision-makers on important issues and topics and to provide important details and background. They are best sent in response to a specific request for information or following a conversation where the recipient is expecting the email as follow-up to a phone or face-to-face conversation.