

Social Marketing for Behavior Change

Critical Elements for Project LAUNCH Grantees at All Stages, Part 4: Hallmarks of Sustainable Social Marketing Interventions



By Rebecca Brookes

This tool has been developed for Project LAUNCH Grantees and it is intended to be used in conjunction with a webinar titled *Social Marketing for Behavior Change: Hallmarks of Sustainable Social Marketing Interventions, Part 4*.

This tool and the associated webinar are designed to support Project LAUNCH grantee social marketing efforts, regardless of the project's stage.



This abbreviated tool is the fourth in the Social Marketing series (see archived webinar listing and associated tools in the box below). Other tools provide background information on social marketing theories and concepts, as well as concrete steps for grantees to follow when thinking through and planning social marketing efforts. The steps provided are based on the systematic model for social marketing. This tool summarizes key concepts from the webinar series and provides tips for success in developing social marketing campaigns, utilizing a lens of sustainability.

Project LAUNCH Social Marketing Series

Archived Webinars:

- [Social Marketing for Behavior Change: Critical Elements for Project LAUNCH Grantees at All Stages, Part 1](#)
- [Social Marketing for Behavior Change: Critical Elements for Project LAUNCH Grantees at All Stages, Part 2](#)
- [Social Marketing for Behavior Change: Critical Elements for Project LAUNCH Grantees at All Stages, Part 3](#)

Associated Tools:

- [Social Marketing for Behavior Change: Critical Elements for Project LAUNCH Grantees at all Stages, Part 1](#)
- [Social Marketing for Behavior Change: Critical Elements for Project LAUNCH Grantees at All Stages, Part 2](#)
- [Social Marketing for Behavior Change: Critical Elements for Project LAUNCH Grantees at All Stages, Part 3](#)

12 Tips for Success and a Sustainable Social Marketing Campaign

Some content taken from the book *Social Marketing: Influencing Behaviors for Good*
Authors Nancy R. Lee, Philip Kotler

1 - Take advantage of prior and existing successful (and failed!) campaigns from everywhere

Learning the successes and failures of others is one of the best investments you can make in your program. Get access to existing research, information on market segmentation and audience profiles, and find cost-effective strategies for creative executions.

The examples we've shared during the LAUNCH Webinar series, while not all related to early childhood campaigns, have valuable lessons about engaging parents, providers, and partners.



2 - Start with Target Audiences most ready for action

You can't create an effective campaign for "the general public." Campaigns increase their chances of success when they start with market segments most ready for action, with these characteristics:

- A want or need the proposed behavior will satisfy or a problem the behavior can solve
- Belief that they can perform the behavior (easy); they will get positive outcomes from it (fun); and they won't be a social outlier if they try it (popular). This is the *Theory of Diffusion of Innovations* we emphasized in Webinar #1.

3 - Support and promote single, doable behaviors with significant potential impact

A simple, clear, action-oriented message is most likely to persuade in this world of message clutter.

The ["Save the Crabs" campaign](#) shared in Webinar #1 is a good example. The campaign didn't expect homeowners to stop fertilizing their lawns completely; they asked them to "hold off on the fertilizer until fall." That was a doable single behavior that was realistic, that the audience believed they could do, and that had the potential impact of saving the crabs so that there would be more to eat.

4 - Identify and remove barriers to behavior change

Knowing the reasons why your audience perceive that can't or don't want to attempt your desired behavior is a gift. And you can't do an effective campaign without understanding this. Once you know, you can address the factors that most influence their behavior.

The social norms marketing campaigns we shared in Webinar #2 are good examples. At Northern Illinois University, the perception of the students was that 70% of fellow students were binge drinking, when in reality 43% were binge drinking. In this case, the barrier to behavior change was a misperception of the social norm. Previous attempts to reduce binge drinking through campaigns didn't work because the perception of the social norm was more powerful and trumped all other efforts. As soon as the misperception was identified, the college could address a campaign to reveal the truth, and binge drinking rates fell dramatically.

5 - Offer benefits from your audience POV (not yours) and make it in the present

Too often in public health, we think what we perceive as a benefit will be attractive to our audience. We talked in Webinar #1 about how this Exchange can often be a complete surprise to us. One of the major keys for success/sustainability is to make sure that the benefits you select are real for your audience – ones they see as truly valuable. Highlight benefits that your audience are likely to realize sooner than later. Benefits you promise are worth less in the future and costs are perceived as less of a problem in the future.

[The Truth anti-smoking campaign example](#) shared in Webinar #1 is a good example of this. Instead of continuing to preach about the dangers of tobacco to the individual, research showed that smokers with pets could be moved to action if they realized their second-hand smoke caused cancer in their pets. This turned out to be a real benefit to quitting for a segment of smokers who previously didn't take action.

In Webinar #3, we discussed recognition as a reward. Acknowledging individuals or organizations for participation can be something of value to your audience. One example mentioned was a simple window poster for parents in the Dominican Republic who participated in a program to increase self-esteem in children.

6 - Promote tangible goods or services to help audiences perform the behavior

Sometimes tangible goods (enrolling in a workshop; calling a quitline) are exactly what the audience needs to take action. Be sure whatever it is you offer is perceived as valuable to the audience and that you can handle the coordination of the program (see #7 “Make access easy”)

We had several examples of using tangible goods in our Webinars. Colorado LAUNCH offers parent workshops; [Real Life. Real Talk](#) created “Sex Ed for Parents;” [Text4Baby](#) co-created a free texting service with the moms who were the audience.

In Webinar #3, we discussed how the coordination of an online sign-up for a workshop created problems for participants, resulting in dismal results. The problem wasn't in the communication to the audience; it worked well, sending lots of parents to register. It was the “back end” operation of the registration that failed because attention wasn't focused on creating an easy process. This derailed an otherwise successful communications campaign.

7 - Make access easy

Don't put barriers in front of your audience to take action! Unfortunately, we see this a lot in public health. Make it easy to sign up (reduce the amount of clicks necessary to sign up online); easy to get a service (flu shots at grocery stores; child care during a parent workshop); provide hours convenient for your audience, not you.

In Webinar #1, we looked at the national parent engagement program Real Life. Real Talk. We shared how brief, fun parent workshops were piggybacked onto existing parent meetings like church services or school events so that access was easier for parents.

8 - Research and pre-test

Understanding your audience can't be emphasized enough! Knowing their barriers, their motivations, what factors will most influence their adoption of behavior, and what they see as their Exchange is critical to success. Audience research needs to be part of every campaign. When it comes to message development, pre-testing potential materials is important. You will learn insights and avoid going down the wrong road.

In Webinar #3, we discussed mistakes uncovered in campaigns for providers and parents (including [Learn the Signs; Act Early](#)) by pre-testing messages and materials. Without correcting those mistakes, each of those campaigns could have had far different outcomes.

In Webinar #3, a grantee shared that language we use on a regular basis (like "screening") can be interpreted by the audience in ways we don't anticipate. Pre-testing can help you understand what language is appropriate for the people you're talking to.

9 - Follow the principles for creating effective messages

Webinar #3 shared tips for and examples of effective message development, including the use of Plain Language techniques.

One of the examples was the [Naturally Curious campaign from the Inuit Women of Canada](#). Very simple execution using Plain Language with a clear call to action, employing humor in an effective way, and using graphics of animals native to northern Canada as message carriers.

10 - Environmental and policy change is often necessary to influence behavior change

CPT codes for provider practices to be reimbursed for counseling; mandatory screening for Adverse Childhood Experiences; EBT and SNAP benefits accepted at Farmer's Markets. These all represent environmental or policy changes that accelerate behavior change and create sustainability of that change. While outside the sphere of influence of "health communications," working on policy/regulation changes can be a critical element of a social marketing initiative. And it can take time!

11 - Interconnectivity across sectors is essential

Partners obviously contribute enormously in community-wide social marketing. They bring expertise, resources, and credibility to the program. Remember that partners need to be treated as “an audience” in terms of understanding their needs/wants and their benefits for participating, and by making participation easy, fun, and popular (easy to do; positive consequences for them; socially acceptable).

12 - Strategies (and tactics) are to be continuously evaluated

There is no “one and done!” in social marketing – or in any good marketing. Things change, and strategies and tactics that worked well in 2018 may fall flat in 2020. In addition to the requisite program evaluation, plan methods to stay in touch with your changing environment through partners, program champions, or an informal panel of audience members.

**And remember, everyone changes on the installment plan.
Effective change takes time.**

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