

Time planning

Once you have identified your audiences, messages and routes, you need to assess the most suitable date(s) to start promoting your messages. Producing a timeline enables you to plan your activity effectively and ensure you build in enough time to organise, produce and design any material required.

Additionally, if media coverage or photo opportunities are involved, you will need to check copy deadlines and work back from these to identify the dates you need to contact local journalists. See How To Guide Four for more information on working with the media.

Indicate the month/date of the activity and include a status column so you can see what still needs to be done.

A sample timeline for producing a jointly branded leaflet might look something like this:

Sample timeline

Aims	Activity	Status
w/c 7 July	Send letters to key community groups to ascertain interest in joint working	Done
w/c 14 July	Set up meetings with community groups to discuss joint activity	To do
w/c 28 July	Draft leaflet copy including partner logos if appropriate. NB. Consider whether you need to employ a copywriter to produce the leaflets and the impact of this on your budget	To do
	Circulate copy to all parties who need to approve it, including partners	To do
w/c 4 August	Design a template for the leaflet and insert copy	To do
	Decide on your distribution method. If you are intending to do a door drop, identify who is going to do this	To do
w/c 11 August	Obtain final approval from all parties and send leaflet to print. Allow one week for printing	To do
w/c 18 August	Compile mailing list for leaflet recipients or identify areas for door dropping	To do
w/c 25 August	Receive leaflets from the printers. Distribute to target audience	To do
Approx 2 weeks later	Consider asking a representative sample of the local community to feedback their thoughts and comments on the suitability of the leaflet and its content. This will help you plan future activities	To do

Budgeting

Producing a timeline will also enable you to budget for production costs and additional resources that may need to be brought in to cover the work. For example, existing team members have the ability and capacity to plan and run the event but you may need a professional designer and copywriter to produce the information leaflet.

When you obtain costs for services make sure there are no hidden costs, for example find out if the quote includes copy amendments and delivery charges etc.

You should also include some contingency money to cover any unforeseen developments, such as the opportunity to take advantage of an unexpected publicity deal or to address any 'hot topics' that might emerge. You might also like to consider obtaining sponsorship from a local organisation to help keep costs down.

Tip

If you need your finance department to give the go ahead on your costs before starting to put your communications plan into practice, make sure you set up a meeting or send them your plan in good time.

