



Leadership Lab #2: Messaging for DD Councils

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Messaging is what brings your council's work to the outside world. It's about communicating to others about what your work on the council means.

A successful message helps...

- Grow the Council's network and influence
- Build public trust
- Grow public awareness of the council and its work

When thinking about your messaging and how to tell the story of your council, it is important to communicate three things:

- 1. The council's values**
- 2. The council's work**
- 3. The council's impact**

These three things connect with each other to tell your council's story. What your council values, informs your work. Your work creates your impact.

One strategy you can use to ensure your council members are using consistent messaging, is to set aside some time at your next council meeting for your members to discuss the following questions together:

- *What do we stand for as an organization?* This will help identify shared values. You also may already have values, like self-determination for people with developmental disabilities, listed in your mission statement.
- *What are three important decisions we've made in the past year?* This will help identify your most important work.
- *What happens in our community when we do our best work?* This will help identify your impact.

It is important to focus on positives over negatives when developing your message.

For example, instead of saying, "Our council is committed to fighting against exclusion," try, "Our council is committed to promoting inclusion." Essentially, talk about what you want instead of what you do not want or disagree with.

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This information is intended for everyone. Reading level: 8.5

It is also important to balance both the “macro” and “micro” in your messaging.

What your work means on a council level, is going to be different than what it means on an individual level. Become familiar with how your big council goals and programs (macro) impact the individual (micro) – because are relevant to your messaging. Including both allows your audience to see the entire picture of your work, from start to finish.

Example: The council’s goal of self-determination is achieved through our Partners in Policymaking program (big macro goal.) Because of Partners, Jess was able to learn how to advocate for the developmental disability community at the Capitol (micro, individual impact.)

Idea: When discussing state plans, challenge your members to brainstorm how your program will impact people on an individual (micro) level.

The Elevator Pitch

One of the key strategies that both you and your council members can use to communicate your council’s message is the Elevator Pitch. An elevator pitch is a short, pre-planned spiel about your council.

1. Introduce yourself.
2. Value statement - “At the council, we believe in...”
3. Explain your work - “The council does ... The council helps ... The council funds...”
4. Explain the impact - “Because of our work [this impact] happens in our community.”
5. Invite them to learn more - “Would you like to hear more?”

It is a good idea to shift your Elevator Pitch based on your audience. Ask yourself, How is our work on the council important to the person I’m speaking to? For example, if it’s a parent of a youth with a developmental disability, maybe highlight the council’s work in education.