

How can the municipality succeed with climate communication?



Guidelines



INTRODUCTION

Time is running out if we want to uphold our end of the Paris Agreement by keeping the global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius (preferably below 1.5 degrees). The time for the *green shift* is now. Much of the technology and political willingness is already in place. One important step is to get people to use the technology that is available right now. Climate communication can play an important role in this process. These guidelines provide specific advice and guidance on how we, as a municipality, can improve all aspects of communication about climate work to succeed in our endeavours. Communication does not only occur in-house. It involves the community as a whole; which includes business and industry, the media, other levels of government and the municipality's inhabitants. The booklet contains great tips to make climate communication more effective in how we design our climate plan and how to communicate our plans.

10 TIPS

for successful and effective climate communication

1. Envision the dream

Visions bring us hope. They are necessary and provide energy for our daily life. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and other long-term goals help us create a common vision to strive for. A common vision for sustainable development in the future empowers us to make changes in the here and now.

2. Ask questions to understand

We need to take our point of departure in the needs and assumptions of the target groups, not on our need to inform. Avoid finger-pointing during a conversation. Ask questions to stimulate curiosity and LISTEN. We can learn more about the values and interests of the different target groups that way. This can help us adapt our message to the different target groups.

3. Involve others

It is therefore wise to communicate through pre-established networks such as the workplace, clubs, associations, special interest groups, housing cooperatives, sports associations etc. This is a way to signal our intention of facilitating eco-friendly choices and that we are many who stand united in those intentions.

4. Create good meeting places

It is easier to create common visions and develop specific activities for climate change if we work as a group.

5. Take advantage of the conflict between what we know and what we do

We know that automobiles are environmental time-bombs, but we always find a good reason to drive to work. We know that exercise is healthy, but we often find an excuse to be lazy. There is great potential out there to change our behaviours and become climate-smart. People really want to do what is right, but we also need to realise that there are opportunities for making good changes in our everyday lives. Our basic needs are basically sustainable. We have acquired much knowledge on how climate change came about, and how we can limit emissions.

6. Make it easy to make the right choice!

Even if our attitudes are climate-friendly, we still hang on to old habits. Forget the attitudes; make it easier to make the right choice! Go straight to behaviour!

Use nudging and behavioural design to create situations where people can change their behaviour more or less subconsciously. As they gradually change their

behaviour their attitudes and values will change, which starts an upward spiral. A little less meat ... A little more cycling ... A holiday without flying ...

7. Talk to the heart and the brain

We need to talk to the rational side in us about what we know, about what we do not know and about what is probable. We need to talk to the brain about greenhouse gas emissions and climate change and their impact. But we need to speak to the heart as well. What feels difficult? What feels hopeless? Are our efforts helping? We need to focus on what we can do together to reduce fear and increase desire, and we need to simplify without sounding stupid.

8. Help people see the future in a positive light, using good examples

We need to re-establish faith in the future by showing that good opportunities exist. Life is full of good examples of how humans can live with less fossil fuel. It is even possible to live without fossil fuels. Give examples that are close to home, which people can relate to. Show people that what seems impossible is easy.

9. Find the right messenger for the message

The person chosen to send the message will have an impact on our willingness to listen to the message. It is thus a good idea to find suitable persons who can

convey our message. The target group needs to trust the messenger and be able to identify with that person. Who is best suited to reach decision-makers at the biggest engineering companies? Who is best suited to talk to housing cooperatives? Maybe someone living at a housing cooperative already knows a lot about the environment and is interested in environmental protection?

10. Dare to win!

We can achieve many goals by moving society in a more climate-friendly direction. Science and technology have advanced to a point where it seems silly not to try. But achieving real change and learning eco-friendly behaviours is difficult. People must be made aware of the apparent benefits of such changes.







A climate plan communicates through on four ideas

1 Positive vision

2 Choices

3 The Plan

4 Actions

1. A positive vision that catches the attention

A climate and energy plan that communicates successfully always starts with a positive vision for the future. Try not to describe the *misery* that surrounds us or the challenges or trends that most climate plans present. Many climate plans start with status and development trends – avoid too many descriptions when writing the introduction.

- Visualise your vision.
Draw a mental and literal image of the vision. Tell a story about what your Low-Emission Municipality will look like, and what life will be like for the inhabitants.
- Refer to places and areas to which the vision applies.
- Spice up the vision!
- Avoid health statistics and diagrams. These belong in the section about the plan itself, not the vision.



2. List the choices available to us

The vision shows the direction we want to go. You can now describe the current situation, and which challenges lie ahead.

- Show some alternatives: Describe the alternatives of failing to act, of doing too little and show what could happen if we do a lot.
- Make it clear that climate change is a fact and the choice/changes need to happen now.
- Connect challenges to solutions, and be specific and clear.
It may seem hackneyed to show that: Greenhouse gases – reducing emissions is the solution.
- Show how this concerns you and me.
Climate change not only affects people on the other side of the planet. Describe the changes that are occurring in our town and country. The stronger and more compelling our visions are, the more force you can use to describe the challenges we face as the climate changes. Avoid preaching about the end of the world.

3. Create the climatic plan itself

The climate plan shows what goals we have set when we work in the right direction, which means having the right vision. The climate plan will also show how we face the challenges ahead of us, and what strategies would be wise to implement if we want to reach our goals? The goals



need to be formulated in a way that allows the recipient to remember them. This is possibly our greatest challenge. Try the following exercise: When you present the climate and energy plan to a group of people, ask them afterwards if they remember what goals were laid out in the plan. Do not be surprised if they fail to remember them – there are too many. Maybe three goals is enough, in a language they understand? If no one remembers the goals, the odds for succeeding with the plan are rather low.

It is important to get people committed to the plan and involved. We want people to know the content of the plan when it is approved. Use a time frame that most people can relate to. Be clear on what needs to be done within this time frame.

4. What we need to aim for – from vision to action

The ACTION step of our work consists of knowing what needs to be done, by whom, when, and what it will cost. The most important point to get across here is whether the action will lead us closer to our municipal vision.

- Show how the action is linked directly to the vision. Show how every action brings us closer to the vision/goal?
- Numbers do not inspire us towards a vision, but they are an essential *spice* when we present our actions and what we aim to achieve through them. Use figures, numbers and calculations to show what we need to aim for (change the order if necessary) How much will energy cost? What does the existing energy source cost? When will a district heating system begin to pay for itself? When did the district heating system begin to pay for itself?
- Show the money. What will it cost? How will pay for the measures? The inhabitants may feel they are being fooled if the costs for the *action plan* are not clearly stated. Feel free to show the socio-economic benefits that the efforts will have. For example, more people using bike lanes will lessen greenhouse gases and improve public health – and probably lower the state health budget.

Ten obstacles and ten challenges

We want to influence, we want commitment, and we want change. This will not be an easy task; change is hard for many people. Yet, climate change and the

environment are perhaps the most pressing issue of our century. What could be more inspiring?

HINDRANCES

Environmental problems are diffuse
Habits die slowly
We play the victim
Our needs harm the environment
Information jungle
Information is confusing
It is easy to be a sceptic
Herd mentality
We are powerless to change things
Change takes time

CHALLENGES

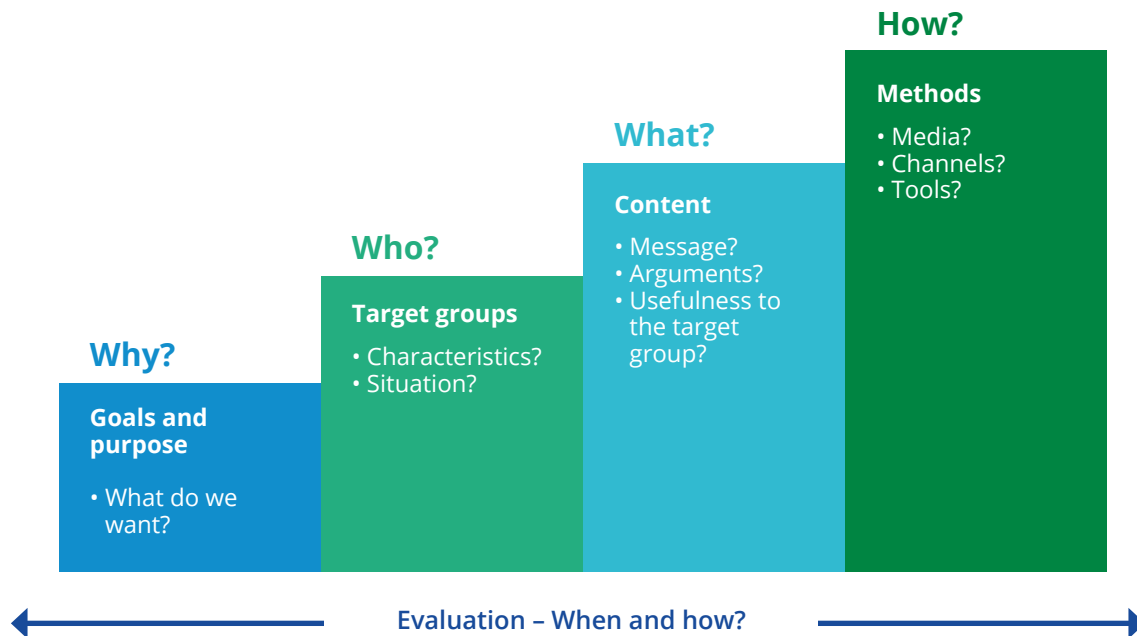
Make the invisible visible
Increase awareness! Support sustainability
Help people to participate
Talk about life
The art of influencing
Create an image of wholeness
Distinguish between faith and knowledge. Be humble
Change your outlook on life! Change your point of view!
Show choices at our disposal
Open your ears

A planning tool for climate communication

The county municipality is using a planning tool to refine our communicative efforts, known as the *communication ladder*.

A communication ladder is a great tool for planning communication for a whole project or for specific

activities. One must be prepared to go both up and down the rungs during the planning phase since the different rungs are interdependent.





Why?

What do we want? What are the goals for communication? What communication measures and communicative activities are needed to reach the goals. Responding to those questions will help you identify relevant target groups, and which methods are best suited. Ask yourself if you want to change attitudes, provide knowledge or change behaviour.

Who?

The target group has needs and expectations. These must be the bull's eye for the communicative activity. Stay open to the possibility of discovering new target groups. Remember that target groups can vary from activity to activity. Map out which target groups you want to reach and what characterises your target groups in order to adapt content and select the best method.

Sometimes, we find out that it is best to reach out to a target group that was not the initial target of our *communication efforts*. We do this partly to find key stakeholders within the different groups where the potential communication outcome is particularly high

– but partly also to find stakeholders who, due to their position at an organization, have the ability to convey information in a credible manner to the target groups we want to influence.

What?

Communication work depends on our objectives, goals and choice of target groups. The objective can be to acquire information, knowledge, recommendations, reasons and ideas from different stakeholders or to initiate interaction between the various stakeholders.

If the objective however is to spread information, create or increase knowledge, raise people's awareness or the like, it is important to take our point of departure in the essence of what we want to communicate. How will the target group benefit from an action?

How?

The choice of communication methods depends entirely on the previous rungs on our communication ladder. The channels of communication we choose and the communication concept itself depend on the objectives and purpose of our communication efforts, who the target group is, and what our message is. Do we have any powerful and effective arguments?

EVALUATION

Evaluations are important to check our methods and gain feedback, but above all to learn more and gain experience. Follow-up and evaluation of our communication efforts can help us learn how to do the right things and to learn how we can make those things even righter.

Plan evaluations at the very beginning of a project or evaluation, and take notes along the way to avoid deprioritising an evaluation. This also helps us to formulate our communicative goals in a way that makes them easy to evaluate.

Nudging – a small push in the right direction

A nudge is a push in the *right* direction. It involves influencing people, to get them to make new choices without having to think too much about it. This can be useful in climate change work to help people make more climate-friendly choices. For example, we can add checkboxes to electricity contracts to help consumers make eco-friendly choices, or we can pre-set copiers and printers to print double-sided copies, and we can install bicycle racks next to the entrance to buildings.

There are four different types of nudges:

1. Information
2. Preselected standard alternative
3. Change the physical environment
4. Feedback and social norms



8 tips for communicating clearly, in simple language

1

Try to say it out loud before you write it

2

We write for the readers, not ourselves

3

Start with what you know and write quickly

4

Read the text aloud

5

Write actively to make the text easier to understand

6

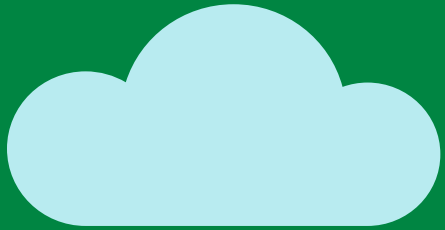
Avoid long sentences

7

Avoid substantivisations

8

Tell the reader when you intend to change topics



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