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Designing Your Wilderness Education Action Plan

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A Challenge Cost Share Project Between
Wilderness Watch and the US Forest Service

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This paper is the result of a challenge cost share project between the Forest Service and Wilderness Watch. Wilderness Watch is a non-profit organization based in Missoula, Montana. The main mission of Wilderness Watch is to preserve wilderness quality in areas already designated as wilderness.

Both Wilderness Watch and the Forest Service recognize the importance and value of education in preserving wilderness quality. A two-person team, Kristen Meyer and Susan Thomas, was hired to develop a wilderness education training program for Forest Service employees. Anyone with interest or responsibilities in wilderness education can benefit from this program.

The team presented two workshops during the development of the program. The Jefferson and George Washington National Forests hosted a workshop in Natural Bridge, Virginia and the team worked with the Monongahela National Forest in Elkins, West Virginia. Both workshops were well received and generated a lot of energy and enthusiasm for designing and implementing wilderness education action plans.

Wilderness Watch and the team hope to make this program available to Forests next year.

HOW TO USE THIS PROCESS

This paper presents general information and guidelines for writing a wilderness education action plan. This is not meant to be a cookbook and we hope that each person or group will use what is relevant to their individual needs.

First the paper outlines some reasons to use education as a wilderness management tool. A few basic communication principles are included before the actual steps of the process. The steps of the process can be accomplished as a group or by individuals.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

Our goals in presenting this process to people involved in caring for wilderness are to:

1. Provide you with a useful process for planning and incorporating public relations, education, and communications into management solutions
2. Encourage you to build relationships with groups and individuals following sound public relations and communications principles
3. Aid you in facilitating group interaction among individuals for the purpose of discussing relevant wilderness problems, solutions, and evaluation techniques
4. Offer you a forum for developing a public relations, education, communication strategy for improving conditions in wilderness and building a wilderness constituency
5. Stress the value of communication/education/public relations in preventing conflicts/problems related to wilderness management

We hope that everyone who participates in this process will:

1. Brainstorm and discuss the factors important to a unique problem
2. Identify the various publics relevant to a particular issue
3. Analyze target audiences and write answers to difficult questions
4. Write goals and objectives of a communication/education action plan
5. Write/design messages using effective communication principles
6. Select appropriate communication channels based on an understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of each
7. Establish, record, and distribute a list of actions designed to accomplish goals and objectives (will include personnel responsible, timelines, and evaluation measures)
8. Create an overall program evaluation schedule which includes a detailed description of activities, timelines, and constraints

WHY USE EDUCATION/COMMUNICATION AS A MANAGEMENT TOOL?

Often education efforts are not quantified or made tangible. Here is a brief list of benefits to be gained by using education as a primary tool for wilderness management.

1. Consistent with freedom, spontaneity, and escape sought in wilderness
2. Positive, "user friendly" approach
3. Enlivens sense of responsibility and pride within users
4. Increases work force needed to accomplish education goals/Cost-effective
5. Reduces the need for direct management approaches
6. Prevents/reduces physical and social impacts
7. Prevents/resolves conflict
8. Builds and strengthens a land ethic within those reached
9. Broadens constituency supportive of wilderness preservation
10. Consistent with Forest Service policy
11. Increases agency's credibility, trust, and positive image
12. Provides flexible and adaptable approach

WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

Communication is the basic tool fundamental to all of our education and public relations efforts. Effective education programs rely on successful transmission, translation, and reception of ideas. Feedback is critical to the evaluation of any interaction. Whether it is a face-to-face encounter with a wilderness ranger or a video program on minimum impact philosophy, an understanding of communication principles is essential to any education effort we make. Refer to Communication Process graphic on page 4.

COMMUNICATION = UNDERSTANDING

Communication is the successful transmission of messages without distortion.

POTENTIAL OBSTACLES TO THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Communication is a process. At each step in the process certain obstacles may limit the degree of understanding. Awareness of potential obstacles can improve our ability to understand and be understood. Here are some examples of barriers and blinders which may interfere with our attempts to communicate.

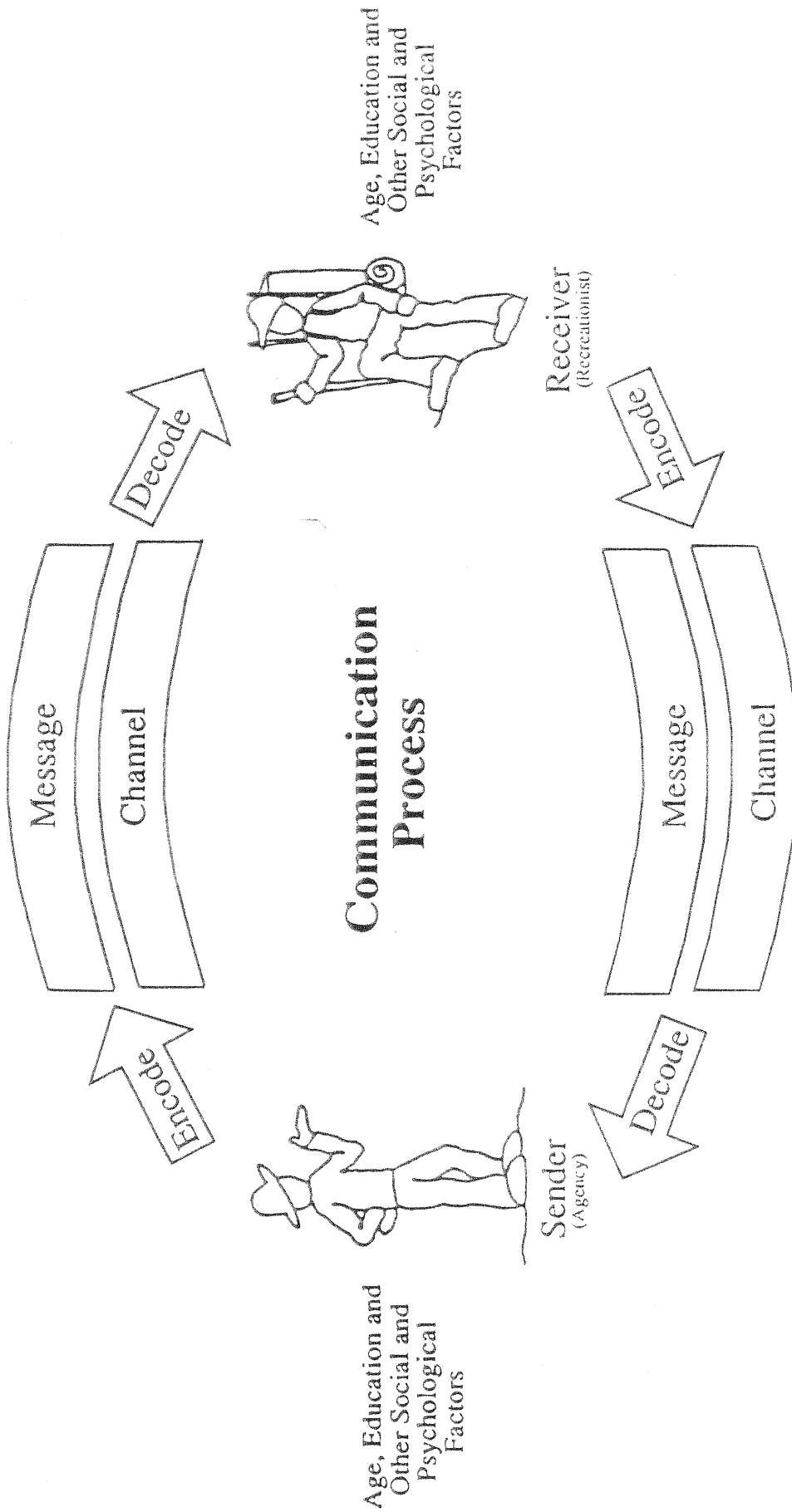
Barriers

1. Physical Environment - noise, visibility, discomfort, temperature, odors, etc.
2. Personal Appearance - cleanliness/grooming, dress/uniform, sunglasses, neatness, etc.
3. Non-Verbal/Body Language - facial expression, eye contact, gesturing, posture, personal space, method of travel (i.e. horseback, walking, skiing, etc.)
4. Social - traditions, values, status, stereotypes, race, sex, level of education, religion, appearance, geographical origins, etc.
5. Language - semantics, swearing, slang, buzz words, complexity, different languages/dialect, poor word usage, terminology, jargon, use of acronyms, bureaucratic words, etc.

Blinders

Blinders represent parts of ourselves which make it difficult for us to see certain individuals or situations clearly. We all have blinders of one form or another. Examples of blinders include: our past experiences, stereotypes we might have, our own agendas for specific outcomes we are interested in, our expectations, preconceived ideas and unacknowledged emotions. The list goes on and on.

It is important to remember that our blinders may interfere with the communication process. Becoming aware of our limitations is the first step in overcoming them.

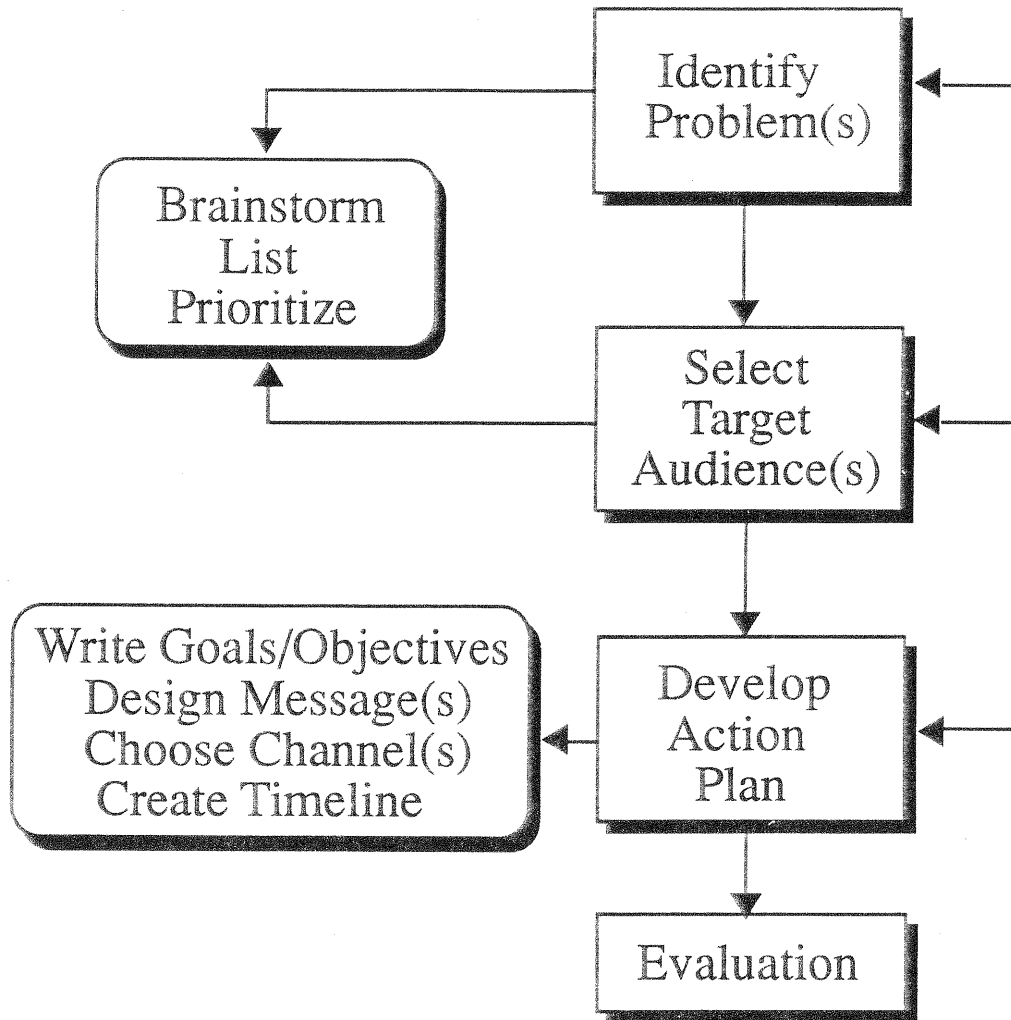


The Source → Message → Channel → Receiver Model

Source: Fazio and Cilbert 1986 p.22

Wilderness Education Process

The Process



Constraints



SOME IMPORTANT FACTORS TO CONSIDER ABOUT YOURSELF/AGENCY AS A SOURCE

Understanding ourselves as communicators is the first step toward establishing credibility, trust and understanding. In representing the agency, we also have to be aware of our agency's image and how our efforts affect our relationships with various publics. Use the following list to examine yourself and the agency.

Are you a good listener? Are you comfortable receiving as well as giving? Do you foster a response?

Are you comfortable learning as well as teaching?

Do you know what you don't know? Do you admit what you don't know?

If you are not knowledgeable on a subject, do you know who can provide accurate information on the topic?

Do others view you as a credible source?

Do you enjoy what you do?

Are you honest? Sincere? Genuine?

Are you friendly? Empathetic? Understanding?

Are you professional? Non-Judgmental?

Do you try to put yourself into other peoples' shoes?

When you are uncomfortable with a situation how do you deal with it?

Do you get defensive? Withdraw? Blame others? Ask for help?

How reliable are you? Can others depend on you?

THE PROCESS

The goal of this paper is to facilitate group discussion and interaction to come up with a wilderness communication/education action plan. Trust, openness, cooperation, respect, and commitment are the basic ingredients you need to make this process work with your group.

You can establish a creative environment by allowing each person the time they need to fully express their concerns/views. Brainstorming is an excellent tool for generating lots of ideas. The more ideas you come up with, the more likely you are to find one that will work for you. Refer to The Process graphic on page 5.

Brainstorming Guidelines (Source: S.M. Brandborg)

1. State your ideas quickly
2. Never interrupt
3. Ignore details (those come later if the idea is good)
4. No idea is too wild, Humor is encouraged

5. Everyone is an expert,
all ideas are equally received

6. Build upon each others ideas

7. No arguing, No judgments

8. Record every idea

STEP ONE: IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM(S)

What are the problems, issues, concerns you are facing? What makes a problem a problem? Examples of wilderness related issues include physical impacts, social conflicts, historical uses, non-wilderness dependent uses, etc. The goal of this step is to:

1. Brainstorm all of the problems you can think of.
2. List all of the problems where everyone can see them.
3. Prioritize one problem to deal with during this entire process.
4. Write a clearly defined problem statement.

Note: Repeat remaining steps for each problem identified

Identifying and defining the problem is often the hardest part. Accurate diagnosis leads to proper treatment. We want to cure the cause, not just the symptoms. Take time during the prioritization process to discuss the roots of problems identified. Refer to Problem Identification graphics on pages 8 and 9.

STEP TWO: SELECT TARGET AUDIENCE(S)

There is no such thing as the "general public." Aiming specific messages at relevant groups is more effective than a shotgun approach. Understanding different audiences is the key to effective communication. When designing a message about a specific issue, it is most effective to target the message at a particular group. Therefore it is essential to thoroughly understand the nature of a group - their values, standards, expectations, knowledge, etc. - before designing your message.

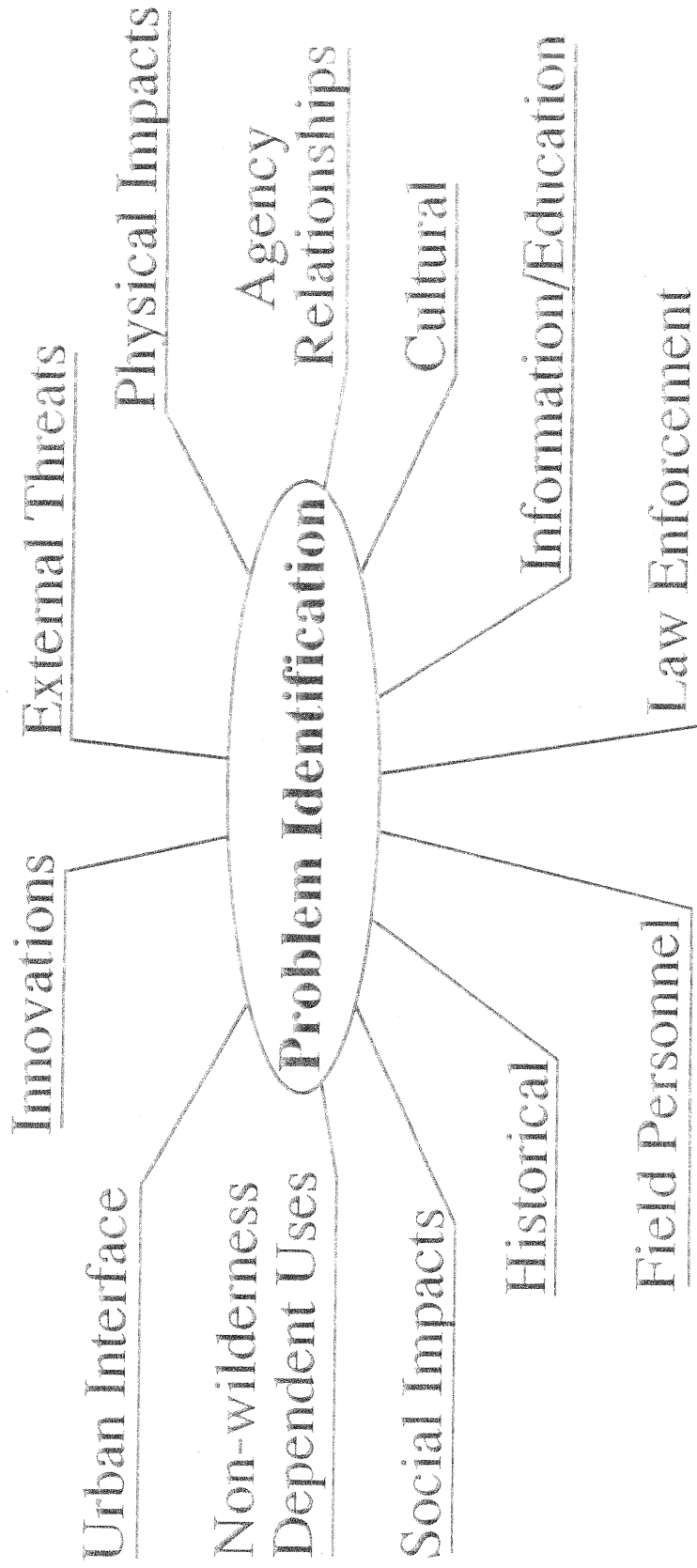
Refer to the Target Audience graphics on pages 10 and 11 for a range of factors to consider when deciding which groups relate to a particular wilderness issue.

Not all of these factors will apply to every group and some factors will be more significant than others. Determine which aspects are relevant to specific groups in relation to an issue.

When you decide which groups to involve in the solution of a specific wilderness challenge, both internal and external publics should be considered. Internal publics are the agency itself. Groups which represent the agency but are not actually employed by the agency are also considered internal (i.e. concessionaires, retirees, volunteers, etc.). By focusing on external publics as part of the solution rather than as part of the problem, you can develop understanding, prevent conflict, and learn to work on solutions together. Refer to List of Potential Target Audiences on page 12.

Brainstorming: Food For Thought

What problems are you facing?



Brainstorming: Food For Thought

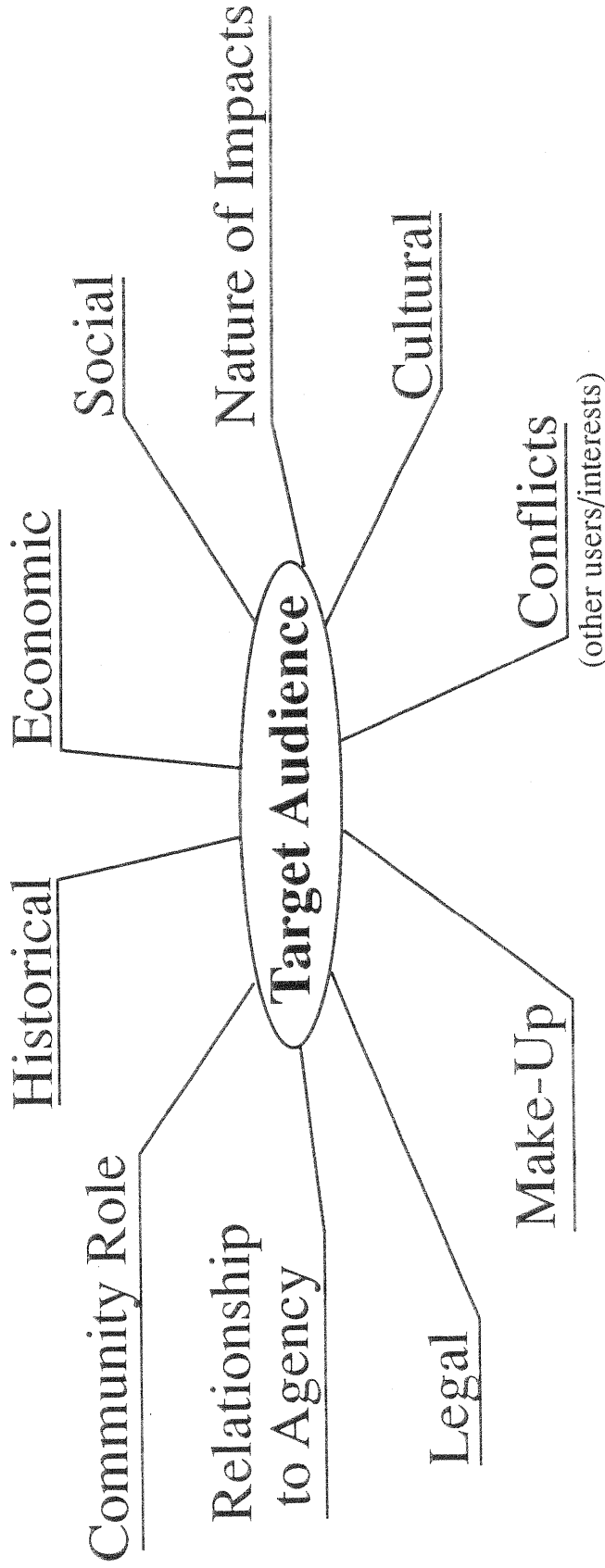
What problems are you facing?

Problems

External Threats	Air/Water Quality Adjacent Landowners	Noise Visual	
Agency Relationships	Within the Agency With Other Agencies		
Physical Impacts	Irreversibility Resource Damage Seasonal Factors		
Social Impacts	User Conflicts Crowding/Solitude		
Information/Education	Needs Analysis Planning/Preparation Materials	Budget Personnel Channels	Evaluation
Law Enforcement	Appropriateness Approach		
Field Personnel	Presence Qualifications Training	Style Quantity	
Historical	Grandfathered Uses Mining Structures	Inholdings Grazing	
Cultural	Native Americans Archeological Values Differences		
Urban Interface	Population Pressure Definition of Wilderness Expectations/Behaviors		
Non-Wilderness Dependent Uses	Expectations Information Redistribution		
Innovations	Mountain Bikes Parasailing Power Drills		

Brainstorming: Food For Thought

What makes a group important to target?



Brainstorming: Food For Thought

What makes a group important to target?

Target Audience (Internal / External)

Historical	Tradition Grandfathered Use	
Economic	Source of Income Commerical Interest	
Social	Values Expectations Stereotypes	Norms Beliefs Opinions
Cultural	Language Perceptions Rituals	Traditions Subsistence Spiritual Values
Conflicts ~ other users ~ other interests	Timing Location	Season Type of Use
Make-up	Age, Race, Sex, etc..	
Legal	Rights Licenses Appeals	Permits Mandate
Nature of Impacts	Physical Social Irreversible	
Relationship to Agency	Cooperative Anatagonistic Communication Channels	
Community Role	Civic Business Level of Respect Involvement	Political Clout Economic Support Services Information Source

A LIST OF POTENTIAL TARGET AUDIENCES

INTERNAL:

USFS Employees - wilderness rangers, recreation staff, wildlife/fisheries biologists, botanists, ecologists, cultural specialists, archeologists, fire personnel, trail crews, receptionists, line officers, engineers, landscape architects, campground personnel, forest supervisors, regional foresters, volunteers, researchers, public affairs officers, visual specialists, retirees, etc.

Other Land Management Agencies - National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, State Agencies, private organizations, etc...

Researchers - Forest Service field stations, private institutions, etc.

Governing and Advisory Bodies - Federal (i.e. EPA), State (i.e. Governor, Water Quality Control Boards), County, etc.

Legislators

Catalyst Publics - (individuals/groups which represent the agency but are not part of it) concessionaires, license agents, etc.

EXTERNAL:

Communities (local/regional)
Landowners
Educational Groups
Hunting/Fishing Clubs
Climbing Organizations
Stock Groups
Outfitters/Guides
Mining/Grazing Permitees
Native Americans
Spiritual/Cultural Groups
NOLS/Outward Bound
Youth Groups

Media
Non-users
Scouts
Universities
Schools
Outing Clubs
Business Community
Church Groups
Pilots
Military
Physically Challenged
Boaters

Source: Fazio and Gilbert 1986 pp.84-108

ANALYZING YOUR AUDIENCE: A WORKSHEET

The goal of this process is to "get in their shoes", understand where they are coming from, and develop answers to potentially difficult questions they might have.

1. In order to understand a particular group or individual better here are some questions to consider:

What is their **specific stance**?

What is their **vested interest**? Why do they care?

What is their **level of influence**? How much clout do they have?

What is their **level of knowledge**? How much do they know?

What is the **likelihood of their involvement**?

What is their **level of organization**?

2. Describe **areas of agreement or common ground** between this group and your agency.

3. Define **areas of potential compromise** acceptable to this group and your agency.

4. Outline **areas of irreconcilable differences** - "the bottom line"

5. Write down potential **difficult to answer questions** this group might have.

6. Design **potential answers** to those questions.

Source: Dr. Jon Hooper, California State University, Chico, CA

The goal of this step is to:

1. Brainstorm all of the audiences related to the problem identified.
2. List all of the audiences where everyone can see them
3. Select one audience to target at a time

Note: Repeat the remaining steps for each audience considered important to the problem.

In order to effectively communicate with a particular individual or group you must get into their shoes. Refer to the Analyzing Your Audience Worksheet on page 13.

STEP THREE: DEVELOPING YOUR ACTION PLAN

The goal of this step is to:

- A) Define goals and objectives of your wilderness education approach
- B) Design messages to effectively reach your target audiences
- C) Select appropriate channels for disseminating your messages
- D) Decide on evaluation strategies for assessing the success of your efforts
- E) Record all of these steps in your action plan

A) DEFINING EDUCATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Deciding on goals and objectives is one of the most important steps in designing any communication/education strategy. Goals describe the overall results desired from an education/communication program. Performance objectives state, in observable terms, exactly what effect you want your education/communication efforts to have. Well written objectives tell precisely who will do what, how well, and under what conditions.

It is usually easier to reach agreement on goals (the broad overall results desired) than on objectives (how and what is expected or desired). Common ground can often be found by focusing on desired results before deciding how to go about accomplishing those results. There are many paths to the top of the mountain!

Objectives play an important role in evaluating the success of your education/communication efforts. Well written objectives provide an essential link between planning and evaluation. Observable behaviors included in performance objectives will be used to evaluate your communication/education effectiveness.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A GOAL AND AN OBJECTIVE?

GOALS: Goals describe general outcomes (i.e. thinking, attitudes, understanding, etc.) which are not readily measurable. Goals describe intended consequences without including the methods or the "hows".

OBJECTIVES: Objectives define what we will be able to measure as a result of our education/communication efforts (i.e. actions, behaviors, comprehension). Clearly written objectives define tangible, observable outcomes.

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF GOALS AND ACTION VERBS USED TO WRITE THEM?

Following are examples of five types of goals (awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills, and participation). Two examples are presented for each type of goal. The first example deals with a physical impact, the second relates to a social impact.

1. Awareness: to become aware, to realize, to see, to recognize, to acknowledge

a) Visitors/potential visitors will **become aware** of ecological impacts resulting from the use recreational wood fires in wilderness.

b) Visitors/potential visitors will **recognize** social impacts which can be associated with large groups travelling together in wilderness.

2. Knowledge: to know, to understand, to comprehend

a) Visitors/potential visitors will **understand** that dead and down wood plays an important role in forest ecosystems.

b) Visitors /potential visitors will **comprehend** the importance some wilderness visitors attach to solitude, peacefulness, and escape in wilderness.

3. Attitudes: to feel, to believe

a) Visitors/potential visitors will **feel** a need to limit the impacts of wood fires and fire wood collection in wilderness.

b) Visitors/potential visitors will **believe** in the importance of protecting solitude in wilderness.

4. Skills: to determine, to use, to demonstrate, to select, to find, to show

a) Visitors/potential visitors will be able to **determine** when and where it is inappropriate to use wood fires in wilderness.

b) Visitors/potential visitors will **use** group size as a factor in **selecting** the appropriate outdoor recreation opportunity (ex. some large groups may not have wilderness dependent expectations for their recreation experiences).

5. Participation: to act, to interact, to be involved, to share responsibility

a) Visitors/potential visitors will **share responsibility** for alternative approaches to the use of wood fires in wilderness.

b) Visitors/potential visitors will **be involved** in disseminating information about the range of outdoor recreation opportunities available for the needs/expectations of different groups.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN COMPONENTS OF A PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE?

1. Conditions: the circumstances under which the desired behavior will be observed.
Example: After reading a wilderness information packet provided by the agency...
2. Criteria: the minimum acceptable performance quantity or quality desired (the level at which audience members must perform to be considered acceptable).
Example: 85%...
3. Performer(s): the person(s) expected to perform the desired behavior.
Example: of overnight wilderness visitors...
4. Measurable Behavior: what the visitors will do in observable actions as a result of the communication/ education process.
Example: will use stoves instead of wood fires.

Completed Objective: After reading a wilderness information packet provided by the agency, 85% of overnight wilderness visitors will use stoves instead of wood fires.

MORE EXAMPLES OF PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES:

Upon reading an agency brochure, 90% of organized hiking groups visiting wilderness will limit group size to 10 people.

After a phone conversation with a receptionist, 80% of overnight wilderness visitors will obtain a wilderness permit.

After viewing a slide-tape program on no-trace camping skills, 60% of the audience will be able to list four minimum impact practices.

As a result of a small group workshop, all participants will return in two weeks with five suggestions for improving agency/public relations.

During a task force meeting, members will reach consensus about how many days each season a ranger will be present at Echo Lake.

After the first meeting of a citizens' advisory group, all members will vote on the format for future meetings.

After meeting with all of the receptionists, the wilderness ranger will agree to write and post weekly trail reports.

ACTION VERBS FOR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Read through this list of action verbs.

Decide whether each verb is best used as a goal or an objective.

REMEMBER: Objectives include observable behaviors...

consider	select	understand
comprehend	cease	illustrate
report	carry	measure
feel	believe	demonstrate
revise	create	translate
appreciate	collect	obtain
answer	recognize	operate
value	locate	encourage
motivate	calculate	prepare
remember	be aware	list
draw	support	acknowledge
tell	record	practice
know	mark	arrange
realize	schedule	accept
recall	repeat	set up
define	inventory	limit
use	return	excite

Some can be *both*. It all depends on how you plan to measure!
Here is a checklist.

GOALS

accept	acknowledge	appreciate
be aware	believe	comprehend
consider	encourage	excite
feel	know	motivate
realize	recognize	remember
support	understand	value

OBJECTIVES

answer	arrange	calculate
carry	cease	collect
create	define	demonstrate
draw	illustrate	inventory
limit	list	locate
mark	measure	obtain
operate	practice	prepare
recall	record	repeat
report	return	revise
schedule	select	set up
tell	translate	use

SETTING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: A WORKSHEET

GOAL: _____

OBJECTIVE 1:

Measurable Behavior (desired result):

Conditions (the communication event which results in the desired behavior):

Who will perform the behavior:

Minimum percentage or number of people who will perform the behavior:

Time frame within which the behavior will occur (if appropriate):

OBJECTIVE 2:

Measurable Behavior (desired result):

Conditions (the communication event which results in the desired behavior):

Who will perform the behavior:

Minimum percentage or number of people who will perform the behavior:

Time frame within which the behavior will occur (if appropriate):

REPEAT THIS PROCESS FOR EACH GOAL
THERE MAY BE SEVERAL OBJECTIVES FOR EACH GOAL

Source: Hodgson 1984

B) SOME THOUGHTS ON DESIGNING YOUR MESSAGE

Is the message useful? relevant to your audience??

Does it evoke emotion? Does the message relate to the audience's personal experience?

Does the message take more than one approach to reach different types of learners?

Does the message convey the "why" or "the big picture" behind it?

What about the timing of the message - is it too late? Is it occurring before their trip so that they have time to incorporate the information?

Does the message refer to a particular point in time (i.e. season) or is it general enough to be used at all times?

Is the message overused or "tired"? Can it be restated in another way to reinforce it?

Is the message detailed enough to convey information? Is it too general and therefore not useful?

Does the message explain **why** so that individuals can learn to make decisions for themselves?

Refer to Examples of Messages on page 20.

C) DECIDE WHICH CHANNELS ARE APPROPRIATE FOR DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

Mediums are selected on the basis of their ability to reach the intended audience and to make messages understandable. Much research has been done in this area to determine how best to get messages to various user and non-user groups related to wilderness. Several channels may be needed to adequately reach a particular group or type of user.

The range of channels available is limitless. Personnel channels offer an opportunity for immediate feedback and a chance to tailor a message to a specific person, group, place, and time. Managers surveyed by Martin and Taylor (1981) considered wilderness rangers to be the most effective information and education channel.

Media channels can be used when mass distribution is desired and personal contacts will not be possible. The tables included outline some of the advantages and disadvantages of various information and education channels.

Refer to Media and Personnel Tables on pages 21 and 22.

EXAMPLES OF MESSAGES:

MESSAGE	PRINCIPLE
Highline your horse	missing the "why"
Highline your horse to reduce soil compaction and root exposure around trees.	explains "why"
Camp 263 feet from water	hard to measure
Camp 90 paces from lakes, streams, and springs	more tangible measure
DO NOT have fires, DO NOT camp by the lake, DO NOT walk across the meadow, DO NOT...	negative approach
Large groups should walk single file while travelling cross-country	incorrect information
All groups can reduce impacts by spreading out while travelling cross-country	accurate information, positive
When selecting a campsite, consider the following: percent barren core solitude/privacy factor, and the root exposure/soil compaction ratio	choose words your audience will understand!
"According to 36 CFR 261.51(a), no campfires are allowed"	legalistic approach, unfamiliar terms
Smokey says...	tired, overused
Pack it in - Pack it out	catchy, easy to remember
Hang all food 10 feet above ground, 5 feet from tree, and 5 feet below branch	missing "how", complex, ambiguous
"IF YOU DON'T HANG YOUR FOOD, THE BEARS WILL RIP YOU APART!"	excessive emotion
"Remember to wash away from water, and stay on the trail, and leave animals alone, and camp 200 feet from the lake, and...and...and..."	does the message make a point? is the visitor overwhelmed?

MEDIA CHANNELS FOR INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

(Source: Martin and Taylor 1981)

CHANNEL	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Articles	mass distribution, reach wilderness users during planning stages, detailed information	may miss target audience, no feedback, no lasting impression
Brochures	reach wide audience; target specific user groups; clear, accurate coverage of topics	many people do not read or ignore advice, can become litter, may not be understood, no feedback
Displays	easily maintained, visually attractive, provide information when personnel are unavailable	impersonal, may not attract visitors attention, relatively expensive, no feedback
Guidebooks	usually comprehensive, useful both in planning stages and during trip	become outdated quickly, require revision, advertise areas
Maps	useful prior to and during wilderness visit, carried into the backcountry, reinforce messages presented prior to trip, identify landowners, promote agency presence, mass distribution, non-intrusive	impersonal, text often ignored
Radio	information can be aired quickly and changed easily, interviews attract and hold listeners attention, mass distribution, low cost technique	may not reach target audience, may be impersonal, short messages are sometimes misinterpreted
Signs	convey message, reinforce rules and ethics, relatively inexpensive, can be unobtrusive	are not read, impersonal, limited information, intrusive
Slide Shows	strong visual impact; reach large numbers; illustrate points effectively without taking people outdoors; easy to use, revise and update	may not reach target audience, effectiveness may be based on presenter
Television	familiar, attention-attracting medium, diverse audience, variety of visual material	may not reach target audience, production costly, difficult to convey important messages in brief time available
Videos	wide spread distribution, clear presentation of ideas, can target audience with specific message	require expertise, often lack a point, may not be relevant, may not reach target audience, not able to modify, become outdated, limited feedback, limited attention by viewers

PERSONNEL CHANNELS FOR INFORMATION AND EDUCATION
(Source: Martin and Taylor 1981)

CHANNEL	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Wilderness Rangers	Considered effective, credible source, immediate feedback, up-to-date information, "hands on" approach personal contact, tailored approach, focuses on visitors' interests, makes visitors more conscientious	Costly, can be intrusive, requires effective communication skills, timing too late for some issues (i.e. equipment needs)
Trailhead Contacts	Targets user audience, current information, personal, indirect, non-intrusive, relevant	May lack experience, not familiar with entire area, timing too late for some issues, high burnout
Receptionists	Personal, many visitors reached, timing may allow for pre-trip planning, may provide access to other information sources, provide non-wilderness dependent users with alternative recreation options	May lack accurate information, cannot provide detailed information, often do not know area first hand, time constraints/busy, other responsibilities
Frontcountry/Campground	Personal, may redirect non-wilderness dependent users, may provide information prior to arrival in wilderness, may provide current information, potential for feedback, may carry written materials	May lack first hand experience, cannot provide detailed information, miss the target audience
Volunteers	Enthusiastic, contacts may occur on-site, potential for feedback, may carry written materials, positive agency image, personal, hard working	Require supervision/direction, may not be familiar with the area, may not have accurate information, negative agency image (i.e. disgruntled volunteer)
Interpreters	Expert communicators, creative and knowledgeable, personal interaction, target message to specific audience, can present a wide range of topics	Often miss wilderness users, focus on natural history rather than human/resource conflicts, may be too formal
Seminars/Schools	Can target audiences/specialized groups, reach large numbers, high degree of interaction and feedback, personalized experience, experienced instructors, excellent source for low impact skills training, wilderness philosophy	May not reach wilderness visitors; require time, organization, and money; may advertise areas, may conflict with other users, large groups

D) CONSIDER YOUR EVALUATION STRATEGY

The primary goal of any evaluation process is to determine the effectiveness of education/communication efforts. This process includes an understanding of what made the program successful or not and how the program might be changed/improved to make it more effective in the future.

There are many ways to perform evaluations. Agency experiment stations, universities and private research firms have the personnel best equipped to conduct or assist in these efforts. Any one can do this to some degree.

Well written goals and objectives are fundamental to the evaluation process. In addition, monitoring existing conditions prior to the implementation of an education/communication program is essential to program evaluation.

The main purpose of evaluation is to measure for desired results. This process must occur throughout the project as well as after completion. The evaluation process enables the manager to make necessary changes when certain aspects of the program are found to be inadequate or ineffective. Evaluation is an ongoing process. It is a complex and challenging task which may be taken on at varying degrees of thoroughness and usefulness. There are no guarantees as to the validity of results obtained.

WHY?

Offers us a guide toward achieving our goals

Provides feedback for the purpose of improvement, revision, and change

Allows for an objective measure of the effectiveness of indirect methods in solving management challenges

Legitimizes something often considered intangible

Creates a track record for education/communication efforts

Provides a basis for future funding

Justifies budgets and personnel

Monitors effectiveness of Forest Plan implementation

HOW?

This is the difficult part and may be best accomplished by those who are trained and qualified to do it. While it may be easy to recognize the need for evaluation it is not as easy to accomplish it in a comprehensive satisfactory way. Measuring our influence on visitors' attitudes and behaviors requires skills based on social research principles and guidelines.

The easiest approach for wilderness managers is to measure specific behaviors. The design of performance objectives must be based on observable behaviors if any form of evaluation is to take place. When trying to measure attitudes, for instance, there is no readily observable outcome of our efforts. These must be addressed by such measurement techniques as questionnaires, surveys, and interviews. These techniques

are complicated and steeped in research formalities, bureaucratic regulations, and costs in terms of time, money, and personnel.

So what can we accomplish on a day-to-day basis in order to move closer to an effective evaluation strategy? The first step involves a systematic, planned approach based on measurable behavior objectives. The next step involves identifying how these behaviors will be measured, when, and by whom.

EXAMPLE:

Objective: 75% of overnight visitors to Echo Lake will use existing campsites.

Strategy:

A wilderness ranger will camp at Echo Lake every weekend between May 15th and September 15th.

The ranger will record the number of overnight parties using existing campsites and the number not using existing campsites.

When possible, the ranger will ask the parties why they chose to use the campsite they did and record responses.

Any information collected can be useful as long as it remains within the context of how it was gathered. It is important to recognize the limitations of any approach we choose when making decisions based on such information.

Some Limitations:

This approach is not random. It does not represent an accurate cross-section of all visitors to Echo Lake. What about off season visitors? Or visitors who arrive mid-week? What about visitors who avoid ranger contacts whenever possible? Do some visitors provide answers they think the ranger would like to hear? Will visitors respond differently depending on which ranger is making the contact or how the ranger phrases the question?

This approach provides information about a specific set of conditions (i.e. weekends when there was a ranger present at the lake between the months of May and September in a specific year). For example, during a wet summer, visitors might not want to use existing campsites which are full of water. A magazine article describing the great fishing at Echo Lake might cause a surge of newcomers one year but not the next.

There are no controls to see if education efforts were the reason that visitors chose existing campsites. Even though the ranger may ask people why they chose a particular campsite, there is no way to tell what specific factors motivated the visitors. Did they camp in existing sites because they knew the ranger was going to be there? Are summer weekend visitors more likely to comply with regulations than fall hunters? Did they camp there because there was extra fire wood from the previous party?

We cannot measure everything (and probably do not want to even try) but we can at least try to learn from our attempts. We need to strike a balance between getting the job done and measuring what we are trying to accomplish. If anything, evaluation can keep us moving in the right direction through the process of analyzing and revising our focus.

E) WRITING YOUR ACTION PLAN

The goal of your action plan is to establish, record, and distribute a list of actions designed to accomplish your goals and objectives (including personnel responsible, timelines, and evaluation measures)

WHAT? A list of agreed upon actions will be created to carry out the stated goals and objectives.

WHO? The plan will identify who is primarily responsible for carrying out each action and who else will be involved within and outside the agency. Specific duties/roles will be specified.

HOW? Each action will be described in detail to clarify exactly how it will be accomplished (i.e. The wilderness ranger will write one article for the local hiking club newsletter every month). Necessary materials, training, and resources will also be included.

WHEN? A timeline will establish when each action will begin and end (this includes the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages). Some actions will be ongoing (i.e. relationship building). Periodic evaluations will be needed to make sure that long term actions are staying on track.

What else do you need to consider when developing your action plan?

Personnel:

List actions which can be accomplished by existing staff

Match peoples' interest, availability, capability, and work schedule with duties assigned.

Give each person a specific part of the program to take responsibility for. This is likely to produce a sense of involvement and motivation.

Determine other sources of assistance/expertise for "essential" actions which cannot be accomplished with existing staff

Budget:

Plan costs for all actions. Include specific projects as well as ongoing/day-to-day activities related to education/communication.

Write future needs and long-term projects into your budget. Anticipate now so that you will have the money later.

Constraints:

Recognize/admit your limitations. Make realistic action plans.

Balance efforts between easy, tangible steps and those which require more time and effort but may be extremely rewarding in the long run.

Anticipate unplanned events/conditions.

Refer to Action Plan Worksheet on page 26.

ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

Goal:

Objective (Measurable Behavior):

Audience:

Channel(s)	Message(s)	Personnel Who?	Start/End When?	How Often?	Materials/ Cost	Evaluation Strategy Who? When? How? Frequency?

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