

A GUIDE TO

**COMMUNICATIONS
PLANNING**

FOR THE FPP-G GRANT (2018-19)

A QUICK NOTE

This guide is split into three sections, and each section guide is accompanied by three customizable planning templates, which you can [download here](#).

Each section will walk you through the important steps in creating a **communications plan**.

As you go through the guide, you'll learn how to create a comprehensive plan that will help you plan for the coming year, make smart budgeting decisions, and, most importantly, get fully reimbursed by IHDA on the first try.

If you have questions, want me to check your work, or want help creating your plan, feel free to [email](#) or call me! Think of me as your Communications Coach - here to support you and your agency, so you can continue to serve your community.

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01 | ENVISION

According to the Project Management Institute, ineffective communication is the cause of failure for a project **33 percent** of the time.

Marketing and communications help support all of your program goals. Taking the time to create a communications plan with your team will help set clear expectations and create accountability. It also lets you see how you're progressing toward your goals, and if there are any changes you need to make in order to get there.

Planning also helps ensure your organization has the time, money, and resources to promote your services to the members of your community who need it most.

You can increase your chances of success and open the lines of communication at your agency by outlining your goals and creating SMART objectives.

By outlining goals and SMART objectives, you will open the lines of communication in your agency, create accountability on your team, and, most importantly, can track your progress toward your goal. A strong internal strategy can help increase your chances of success!

In this section, we'll prepare you to use the **SMART Objectives Worksheet**, which you can [download here](#).

01 | ENVISION

Start by figuring out what you want to accomplish—that’s your **goal**. Then, make it **SMART*** by adding measurables and giving it a timeline. Finally, list out the activities you’ll need to do to achieve it.

Below, you’ll see this process in action, first with a *life example* in italics, followed by a **housing counseling** example in red.



***What does SMART mean?**

It’s an acronym meaning: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant, **T**imebound.

[Click here to download the SMART Objectives Worksheet!](#)

02 | PLAN

According to the [Harvard Business Review](#), 60 percent of all organizations don't link their strategic plan to their budget. Let's ensure you're part of the 40 percent that **do**.

*In this section, we'll prepare you to use the **SMART Objectives to Budget Worksheet**, which you can [download here](#).*

Once you've used your goals and SMART objectives to create a plan, it's time to identify the details. Let's start by making a big picture timeline—a road map of **every** event, program, or any other time you'll want content created for the following year. There's no template for this—we recommend using a calendar.

For each dot on the timeline, you should also determine:

- **How much you need**
- **When you need it** (*if your event is on Friday, you might want the finished product a few days before*)
- **How you can keep track of it** (*this is especially useful for flyers or other print materials*)

Why track?

We might think one of our projects is doing great when in reality, it's not doing much at all. By tracking, you can easily determine how close you are to your goal and if you need redistribute your resources.

02 | PLAN

Now that you've identified the logistics, it's time to figure out how much this is all going to cost. To do that, we first need to change what we think of when we hear "marketing."

Marketing is an umbrella term that includes many activities. At its most basic level, marketing is any activity you use to promote your organization and the services you offer. Advertising, social media, flyers—even your website - are common marketing tools.

Many of the projects we associate with marketing cannot be budgeted or reimbursed through the **Marketing Category** in this grant. Even if they're being used to market your housing counseling program, they may not meet the definition of what is or is not allowed in each category.

In two pages, we'll clearly define the activities allowed in each budget category and show how they work together to contribute to your communications plan.

But before we get to that, let's take a quick break and answer some questions you may have.

02 | F.A.Q.

What's new with the FPP-G grant this round?

A third budget category, **Consulting Services**, was added to the grant, and certain aspects of marketing, such as content creation, now fall into the **Consulting Services** and **Technical Assistance** categories.

How does it relate to marketing?

Some of the activities in your SMART Objectives worksheet may involve one or all of the categories, depending on the scope of the project.

Does that mean I have less marketing money than I thought?

Not at all! The activities in your SMART Objectives worksheet are how you'll market your services - the categories are simply how they'll be reimbursed. You will, however, probably have to change your budget a little bit.

What's the most important thing I should know?

We'll go into more detail on the next page, but think about it like this:

- If you hire someone to do something for you, it goes to Consulting Services—unless it has anything to do with your website
- If your staff uses money on **any** advertising, printing, or buying things with your logo on it, that goes to marketing

Below you can see the relationship between your goals, objectives, and activities, and the grant's budget categories.



02 | PLAN

As I mentioned, some activities may involve multiple budget categories. Here's an example of how you can identify which categories you'll need for a project.

One of the hypothetical steps we outlined in section 01 was to *"Create and distribute 1,200 brochures through the end of 2019."* If you're going to hire an outside consultant/freelancer to create the brochure for you, then your budget will look like this:

ACTIVITY	Quantity	Purpose	IHDA Budget Category	Cost
Brochure - design	1	Rental Assistance	Consulting Services	\$XXX.XX
Brochure - printing	1,200	Rental Assistance	Marketing	\$XXX.XX

Why are there no numbers in the "Cost" column?

Design and print costs may vary. To determine the cost of these items, you'll need to contact your graphic designer and printer to get a quote for this project.

If you have a set budget for brochures, you can fill those numbers in! However, your budget may impact the amount of brochures you're able to print, which may require you to change your SMART Objective, or to find other funding sources to help make up the difference.

03 | BUDGET

Did you know that **26 percent** of nonprofits have no communications budget, or just find money when they need it, according to the 2017 Nonprofit Communications Trends Report. This will help you dedicate resources **before it's too late**.

We're in the home stretch! Now that you've identified your objectives, gotten quotes for all your activities, and figured out when you'll need your content, all you have to do is plug it into your budget!

In this section, we'll prepare you to use the **SMART Objectives Spreadsheet**, which you can [download here](#).



You are only allowed two budget revisions

Creating a thorough plan now will help you in the long run!



T.A. cannot exceed 10 percent of your quarterly budget

If you're planning on making a big equipment purchase *and* getting a new website, you may want to spread those out, or ask your vendors to invoice you multiple times.



25 percent each quarter

Remember: you can only seek reimbursement for 1/4th of your each quarter—the plan you created with this guide will help you stay on track!

NEED HELP?

I'm a resource for you to use year-round—if you have questions on planning, budgeting, how to use your money, or anything else, just send me an email or give me a call!

I'm really excited to help you create and execute these communications plans so that more of your community can benefit from the great work you're doing.

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