

Using a Message Wheel to Keep Your Messaging on Track

A **message wheel** is simply a visual format for organizing the messages that are key to your issue. Your most important message – that one thing you always want to share – is placed in the middle of the wheel. Supporting statements – which would likely include the problem, solution, and one or two other key statements - are placed around the wheel like spokes. Points that explain or expound on your supporting statements are added under each heading.

You will want to use the central message every time you communicate about your issue, whether you are writing a letter to the editor or Op-Ed, speaking to a neighborhood group about your issue, answering questions about your cause, or being interviewed in the media. Sounds simple, right? When you are the one in control of the message, like writing a letter to the editor or preparing a presentation, it should be. You don't have to use every point every time. Just select the supporting messages that are most likely to resonate with your audience, add examples, stories and descriptive language to paint the picture for the audience. Make it your own!

However, in situations where you are responding to questions, such as during an interview, following a presentation, or when meeting with a decision maker about your issue, making sure you are coming back to your central message can become a little more tricky. This is when the visual layout of the message wheel can be an especially helpful tool for you and your spokespeople. **The message wheel helps show the connections between your supporting messages and your central message.** When you are asked a question, find that thread that can take you back to a point under a supporting statement and bridge to that. Once you have made it to your supporting statement, you can link back to your central message.

To use this tool most effectively, spend some time digging into it and thinking about examples from your school, your neighborhood, or your family that you could share to personalize your messages. When you are writing, use those examples to make your cause more relatable to others. When you are preparing for an interview, think about the arguments that those who disagree with your position might bring up and plan a response that can bring you back to your central message – and then practice your response.

By bringing the most important points for your issue into one place and using it, you'll be sure to keep your messaging on track.

{ WHAT'S IN STORE FOR US? }

The Challenge:

- Grocery stores don't exist in many low-income neighborhoods, leaving people in communities across America without a reliable source of nutritious food.
- **Children and their families* live in communities with little to no access to healthy foods.
- Families want to be healthy, but too many simply have nowhere to buy affordable lean meats, whole grains, fruits and vegetables.
- Without access to affordable healthy foods, a nutritious diet and good health are out of reach, and as a result, diet-related diseases – especially among children – are on the rise.

Healthy Food Financing Programs are good for health:

- Improves public health, encourages proper nutrition and promotes a healthy diet.
- Decreases risk of diet-related diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and stroke.
- An opportunity to help families establish healthier lifestyles.
- Provides options. Living close to retailers that offer healthy and affordable foods is associated with better eating habits.

**Nearly 30 million people in communities across America don't have stores that offer healthy foods in their community. These same communities often struggle with high rates of unemployment and diet-related chronic disease.*

Improving access to healthy food through healthy food financing brings a triple benefit to communities: **revitalized economy, job creation, and better health.**

The Solution: Healthy Food Financing

- Healthy Food Financing programs are an effective, viable and economically sustainable policy-based solution to bring food and jobs into communities without access to affordable, healthy foods.
- Provides the necessary support to local grocers to open, expand and improve grocery stores and corner stores in underserved areas.
- Is a combination of public and private funds and requires very minimal investments from government. In {STATE}, an investment of \$XXX would support this effort.

Healthy Food Financing Programs are good for the economy:

- Grocery stores are cornerstones of a community.
- Boost the local economy and create jobs – grocery stores employ people from the communities they serve, creating jobs in the communities that need them most.
- Expanding access to healthy foods creates new markets for local farmers
- Potential to lower healthcare costs in the long run.

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*Replace with local numbers (ex. More than one million Alabamians, including 245,000 children, don't have stores... live in communities with little to no access to fresh, healthy foods.