Project Communications Plan

U.S. Census Bureau

Document Issue

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Distribution List

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1. Executive Summary

The Communications Plan provides an overall framework for managing and coordinating the wide variety of communications that will directly or indirectly take place as part of the project. It addresses communicators, audiences, messages, communication channels, feedback mechanisms, and message timing. Such a framework will ensure the project provides relevant, accurate, consistent information for all stakeholders at all times.

Communications planning involves determining the information and communications needs of the stakeholders: who needs what information, when will they need it, and how will it be given to them. While all projects share the need to communicate project information, the informational needs and the methods of distribution vary widely. Identifying the informational needs of the project's stakeholders and determining a suitable means of meeting those needs is an important factor for project success. The Communications Plan outlines the roles and responsibilities of project participants in the review, approval, and dissemination of information about key project processes, events, documents, and milestones.

A significant number of project stakeholders are involved in this project. By effectively communicating with the intended audience by preparing and conducting presentations as required covering the training development for StEPS II, the project will accomplish its work with support and cooperation of each stakeholder group to meet the intended outcomes.

2. Purpose, Goal & Objectives

The *purpose* is to define all parties with an interest in the project and to provide the means and frequency of communication between them and the project.

The *goal* is to ensure all stakeholders involved in the project understand the overall vision and intended outcomes to cover the training development for StEPS II, how and when changes will be implemented to enable staff participation as required.

Implementing a Communications Plan will achieve the following *objectives*:
- Prepare and conduct presentations, as required, covering the training development for StEPS II.
- Identify and describe all project stakeholders and the information to be exchanged between the project team and stakeholders.
- Describe the communication needs of the project stakeholders.
- Define how project stakeholders will be kept informed about the project.
- Help manage expectations regarding the project.
- Ensure communication methods will be most effective; that is, communications will be reliable, consistent, timely, open, straightforward, and jargon-free.
- Assure appropriate levels of communication with internal and external project stakeholders.
- Customized wherever possible to the specific needs of the target audience.
- Provide relevant, accurate, consistent information at all times by establishing a consistent method for communication planning and management.
- Document the methods and activities to ensure timely and appropriate collection, generation, dissemination, storage, and ultimate disposition of project information among the project team and stakeholders.
- Generate and sustain enthusiasm and support for the project.

A variety of methods may be used to communicate with project stakeholders. Common methods include status reports, correspondence, meetings, and formal presentations. To effectively communicate with project stakeholders, the Project Manager will need to develop a good understanding of the unique needs of each stakeholder group. This is accomplished with several tools that are included in the Communication Plan; including the Chart of Stakeholders and the Communication Events schedule. These tools describe all project stakeholders, providing a clear understanding of the specific interests of each stakeholder group, their vested interest in the project, and their expectations. The communication methods are correlated to the specific needs of each stakeholder group, and specific individuals are assigned the responsibility of providing the communication described in the Communication Plan.

Governance and Scope

The Project Manager has ultimate responsibility for ensuring the Communication Plan is developed in conjunction with the Project Plan. A key responsibility of the Project Manager is to ensure the Communication Plan and learning strategy is integrated into the overall planning as outlined by the Project Plan.

3. Communication Methods

This section identifies and defines communication methods that will be used throughout this project. The communications include:

- Presentations
- Project Planning and Control Documents
- E-mail
- Meetings
- Status Reports:
    - Assessment,
    - Weekly, and
    - Monthly.

3.1   Presentations

Formal presentations to will be prepared and conducted, as required, covering the training development for StEPS II and will be shared throughout the Economic Directorate.

The presentations will also ensure effective communication of major milestones, project accomplishments, and issues depending on the nature and complexity of the project, as well as the training development for StEPS II.

3.2   Project Planning and Control Documents

The project includes several documents used to control or plan certain activities. These documents can also be used for communicating with project stakeholders:

- **Project Plan** - Defines the project scope, project goals and objectives, assumptions and constraints, methodology and deliverables, resources, roles and responsibilities.
- **Project Schedule** - The schedule shows a breakdown of tasks by phase, phase deliverables, completion timeframes, and resource assignments.
- **Risk Management Plan** - Identifies potential project risks and their impact, mitigating actions that can be used to minimize or prevent those risks and contingency actions that can be taken in the event the mitigating actions are not successful.
- **Scope Change Plan** – Documents the process and provide the tools to change the scope of work identified in the Technical Proposal.
- **Technical Proposal** – Details the implementation strategy and contract deliverables for the project.
- **Support Plan** - Details the terms for service and addresses service level definitions, measurements, and minimum service standards.

- **Evaluation Plan** - Defines the evaluation approach, types of evaluation to be performed, key measures of success, resources needed, evaluation requirements, problem tracking approach, and the associated schedule.
- **Training Plan** - Defines the training approach, training resources needed, types of training to be provided, and a training schedule for participants and supporters of the training programs.
- **Surveillance Plan** - Provides a standard of surveillance for monitoring the contract for the Training program and provides the approach the Government will use to conduct surveillance over the performance aspects of the effort.

3.3   E-mail

E-mail is an indispensable method of quickly communicating with project stakeholders. It also allows the Project Manager to exchange various project documents electronically for review. Final versions of important documents may be followed up with an official hard-copy document.

3.4   Meetings

Along with ad-hoc meetings, regularly scheduled project team meetings allow the Project Manager to effectively communicate project status with the team. Meetings may be used to communicate many aspects including project accomplishments, milestones, planned tasks, and issues.

3.5   Status Reports

Reporting the status of the project to the project stakeholders on a reoccurring basis is critical to the success of the project. The status reports will include progress of the project, issues/concerns, risks, key milestones and key deliverables.

Further, project management will be performed continuously throughout the term of the contract / task order and will provide updates through the life of the Order. An implementation plan for the development of the Training of the StEPS for the Economic Directorate to assure effective communication methods are deployed; specifically, a focus on three specific types of reporting: 1) Assessment Reporting, 2) Weekly Status Reporting, and 3) Monthly Status reporting, will be developed to achieve the following intended outcomes:

- *Assessment Reporting:*
    - Create an Assessment Report based on the findings of the infrastructure assessment and documentation review pertaining to StEPS Training procedures / materials by identifying weaknesses and strengths and providing a list of necessary documents to be either developed and/or enhanced.

- o Produce StEPS training procedures and associated materials to support the personnel and training questions, issues, problems and others, including system issues.
- o Produce weekly and monthly StEPS management reports that describe the status of the project and deliver the reports on the due dates to management.

- *Weekly Status Reporting:*
  - o Weekly written status reports and verbal status at the weekly team meetings on activities covered in this contract will be provided. The reports will include accomplishments during the reporting period, both completed items and work in progress; accomplishments planned for the next reporting period, and identifications of issues requiring management attention, including notification of any potential schedule slippage for deliverables and causes and proposed solutions. Potential problems in meeting activity milestone dates in the schedule will be brought to Census' attention immediately and will not be help until a team meeting. The progress report will be submitted to the Census Bureau through the COTR. The weekly status report will be delivered the Friday of each week.

- *Monthly Status Reports:*
  - o Monthly status reports that will include activities performed, activities planned, issues encountered, and risks anticipated with suggestions for mitigating will be provided. A progress report will be submitted to the Census Bureau through the COTR by the 5th workday following the end of the previous month and will include costs and metrics.

All report deliverables will be written in clear precise language that follows structured writing techniques to the maximum extent practicable. The reports will conform to an EPCD-approved standard format and content; for any report deliverable that does not have an established template, a mutually agreed-upon format will be used.

4. Communication Plan Scope

4.1   Requirements

Communications requirements are the sum of the information requirements of the project stakeholders. Information that is communicated will be that which contributes to success, or where lack of communication can lead to failure.

There are different types of information and documentation needed by each project stakeholder. The Stakeholder documents this information and it is categorized by the project roles.

Stakeholder Profile

Stakeholders will be affected by the actions and activities of the project, have influence or power over the project, and have an interest in the project's success.

Roles and responsibilities are dictated in terms of the stakeholder's specific area of interest and expectations for the project and project communications.

The information about each stakeholder is collected to provide communicators with the stakeholder's interests and perspective. This perspective is provided to promote an understanding of how the communications or interactions stakeholders are involved in, as individuals, affect other stakeholders and the project as a whole. As a result, it is important to understand the project's stakeholders, their vested interests, and expectations.

The following table presents the key stakeholders for the project.

Stakeholder	Roles & Responsibilities of Stakeholder	Vested Interest	Expectations
Director, Acquisition Management Division	Project Sponsor.	Ensure success of the project overall.	Successfully achieve business results, business goals and priorities.
COTR	Lead and manage the contract. Assess whether TLS is effectively and efficiently complying with all terms and conditions of the contract.	Ensure TLS meets contractual obligations.	Manage the performance requirements to ensure TLS provides the expected outcomes within the performance standards.

Stakeholder	Roles & Responsibilities of Stakeholder	Vested Interest	Expectations
TLS Project Manager	Manage the program implementation, operation, and follow-up activities to ensure the intended outcomes are met. Perform program reporting and administration. Mange client interface and quality service.	Effective, efficient and cost-effective implementation / deployment.	Provide project management for the overall contract, ensuring managed projects remain on schedule and deliverable dates are met.
Instructional Designer / Instructional Developer	Perform the instructional design and development for all the courses. Design and develop presentations that cover the training development for StEPS II. Manage program evaluations and quality assurance to make quality adjustments as required.	Create highest quality program designs and development for both classroom, hands-on and web-based e-learning programs.	Provide expert advice and guidance to help develop the instructional designs for two types of StEPS training courses: 1. Classroom, hands-on; and 2. Web-based e-learning.
Senior Facilitator	Deliver classroom, hands-on training. Deliver knowledge transfer sessions. Deliver presentations. Manage instructor preparation (train-the-trainer sessions) and training delivery assignments per the Training Plan.	Qualified facilitators to deliver presentations and classroom, hands-on programs. Highest quality program administration. Timely evaluation results.	Prepare and conduct presentations as required covering the training development for StEPS II. Educate staff regarding processes for training and mentor staff in EPCD to successfully take over these responsibilities.

Stakeholder	Roles & Responsibilities of Stakeholder	Vested Interest	Expectations
Senior Learning Consultant	Provide learning expertise and advice and guidance to achieve the intended outcomes.		Provide expert advice and guidance to help to develop a comprehensive StEPS Training Plan that covers the legacy system and the transition to StEPS II. Provide expert advice to help develop a communications and learning strategy for StEPS II.

- The Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholder column describes the stakeholder's role and obligations to the project.
- The Vested Interest column indicates what the stakeholder will be held accountable for with respect to their roles in this project.
- The Expectations column identifies what the stakeholder anticipates from others involved in this project.

Stakeholder Contact Information

Stakeholder Name	Title	Telephone / E-mail

Communication Events

The following table outlines a sample of representative communication events that may occur to support the project.

Event	Communicator	Audience	Channel	Timing	Feedback Mechanism
StEPS II Communication Strategy	Senior Learning Consultant and Senior Facilitator	Throughout the Economic Directorate	Presentations	As Required	Face-to-Face Sessions
Knowledge Transfer Sessions	Senior Facilitator	Throughout the Economic Directorate	Presentations One-on-One Sessions	As Required	Face-to-Face Sessions
Classroom, Hands-On Sessions	Senior Facilitator	Throughout the Economic Directorate	Presentations One-on-One Sessions	As Required	Face-to-Face classroom-based sessions
Project Plan	Project Manager	All Stakeholders	Project Plan Document	Before Project Start Date	Meeting
Project Kickoff	All Stakeholders	All Stakeholders	Meeting	Before Project Start Date	Face-to-Face Meeting
Reports	Project Manager	Executive Sponsors, COTR	Written Report	Assessment, Weekly and Monthly	E-Mail Comments on Reports
Team Meetings	Project Manager	All Stakeholders	Conference Call	Regularly Scheduled	Conference Call Minutes of Meeting
Client Meetings	Project Manager	Client Stakeholders	Meeting	Biweekly	Conference Call & Face-to-Face Meetings as requested
Performance Reviews	COTR	TLS Stakeholders	Written Report	Biweekly	E-Mail Meeting
Contingency / Mitigation Reviews	Project Manager	All Stakeholders	Written Report	Weekly	E-Mail Meeting
Surveillance Reviews	COTRY	TLS Stakeholders	Written Report	Regularly Scheduled	E-Mail Meeting
Quality / Best Practices Meetings	Senior Learning Consultant	Internal Stakeholders	Oral Briefing and Briefing Notes	Bi-Monthly	E-Mail Meeting
Evaluation Plan	Instructional Designer	All Stakeholders	Evaluation Plan	July 25, 2007	E-Mail Conference Call

4.2   Constraints

- New requirements added to the Communications and Learning Strategy Plan.
- Changes to existing Communications and Learning Strategy Plan.
- Increase or decrease in the scope of the Communications and Learning Strategy Plan.

4.3   Assumptions

- Impact of learning is measurable.
- Participants will provide their feedback for evaluation purposes.
- Timely access to and assistance from assigned subject matter experts and other project team members for feedback and content input to ensure training is relevant and will achieve the business goals and objectives.
- Access to any relevant training materials for content development.
- Access to decision-makers throughout the entire project as required.
- Established project management, reporting, and communication processes between the client and TLS.
- Defined and documented responsibilities for the TLS project staff.
- Defined measures of success from the client prior to the start of the project.
- Availability of technology tools / applications for web-based course development and delivery.

5. Communication Plan Conventions

The basic elements used to identify information or documents for this project include:

Documents/Information	Details
Glossary of Terms	Refer to Appendix A
Nomenclature	▪ All documents require a new version number each time any revision is made. Major revisions require a full integer change (e.g. from 1.0 to 2.0) while minor revisions require only a decimal change (e.g. from 1.0 to 1.1). Update version information the "Document Issue" section. ▪ Distribution list should be updated for each document.
Document Formats	▪ All documents should adhere to the TLS established formats; e.g., Bio's, training materials, presentations, etc. ▪ Word2000 Version of Software for Documentation
Project documentation management process	▪ Document changes require approval from parties listed on the Distribution List. ▪ Distribution of all documentation to be sent to identified stakeholders via email. ▪ Final copies to be sent hard copy for client signature. ▪ Signed copies to be returned and filed by the Project Manager.

6. Communication Principles

Based upon program team experience and communications best practices, several common principles emerge which should be followed to ensure successful communication. They are described in the following table.

Principle	Reason
Credibility	Without a credible communication approach or credible communicators, individuals will simply not believe in the end goal.
To involve not inform	Promotes ownership of the program, feeling a necessary part of the program.
Communicators whom people trust/respect	If the staff does not trust or respect the communicators, the messages 'fall on deaf ears'.
Visible management support	Active management commitment gives credibility to communication. Must be seen to demonstrate support.
Face-to-face communication	Audience is involved; communication is two-way and provides a feedback mechanism.
To avoid information 'overload'	Too much information leads to confusion and irritation. Accurate and timely information is key.
Consistent messages	Inconsistency decreases the credibility of the program. Without consistency, audiences are confused and frustrated about what to expect.
To repeat messages and vary mechanisms	The more ways a message can be communicated, the more likely it is to be internalized. Using different mechanisms ensures repetition without individuals 'switching off'.
To create demand: Encouraging team to pull for information, rather than management pushing it at them	Ensures buy-in to the change.
Tailor communication to audience needs: Give information audience wants, not what you want to tell	Makes information 'real' to the audience. The audience is more likely to listen if the information is pertinent to their current frame of reference.
Central coordination	Ensures consistent approach.
Manage expectations	Encourages audience to believe in what you to tell them. Preparing shows you understand their needs.
Listen and act on feedback	Encourages support in the approach by being responsive to the needs of the audience. Ensure approach meets changing audience needs.

7. Approvals

Client Name	Total Learning Solutions
By:	By:
Print:	Print:
Title:	Title:
Date:	Date:

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms