Communications Overview

2014 Legislative Session
Purpose of Communications

- Provide the framework and messages to pass Homes for All 2014 Legislative Agenda
- Reach primary and secondary targets (decision makers, media, messengers)

Pro tip: A bonding bill needs a supermajority to pass- 3/5 of legislators must vote for the bill. Communications should reach policymakers who **always** agree with us and those who **sometimes** agree with us.
What are the values and concerns of legislators?

- Bipartisan and geographic diversity
- Election year. Winning and keeping seats.
- Trusted messengers
- Fiscal responsibility
- Middle class voters
- Fulfilling duty and responsibility to constituents and caucus
Elements of Strategic Communications

- S (Simple)
- U (Unexpectedness)
- C (Credibility)
- C (Concreteness)
- E (Emotional)
- S (Stories)
The Basics
Homes for All supports $100 million in bonds for affordable housing.

Home is the foundation.

→ Home is the foundation for balanced families, communities, and the region.

→ When homes are affordable: schools educate kids better; health care keeps people healthier; economic development is stronger, parents can take better care of families, etc.... (tailor for audience)
Elevator Message

Minnesota lacks affordable housing options for people with very low incomes, including seniors, low-wage workers, and people with disabilities.

The lack of affordable housing drains individual and community resources. We pay for homelessness in our schools, criminal justice system, and health care systems.

Homes for All supports $100 million to develop affordable housing and preserve economic investments across the state.
How to describe the need & context:

• Housing options affordable to our most vulnerable populations: low-income seniors, people with disabilities, homeless youth, and families earning minimum wage are inadequate, while need is growing.

• **BUT** we risk losing our most important safety net housing -- federally assisted public housing and Section 8 -- if it’s not preserved.

• Building and rehabbing housing creates jobs.

• About 6,000 affordable units are in the pipeline, waiting for funding to be developed.*
What is bonding used for?

1. DEVELOPING affordable and supportive housing across the state

2. PRESERVING federally subsidized housing (Section 8, public housing)

3. REHABILITATING public and supportive housing for very low-income Minnesotans
Be prepared to give specific examples of housing developments in the pipeline, like Prior Crossing in St. Paul, for homeless youth.
Using Facts and Data
How to use Data

Use data to help convey:

• Urgency

• Impact

• Appeal across the political spectrum
How to use Data

Data should be

• Easy to understand
• Accurate
• Used *sparingly* - one or two facts at a time
• Paired with concrete examples
• Paired with emotional case
• Localized to the specific district/area
Key facts: Housing Need

● 1 in 8 Minnesota households pays more than half of their income for housing.
● Renter incomes in Minnesota have fallen 14% while rents have gone up 8% since 2000.
● Homelessness increased over 30% from 2006 to 2012. Almost half of homeless people are under age 21.
● Check Legislative District Profiles for local facts
Key facts: Housing Need

- Homelessness has risen since the start of the recession due to very tight rental markets and rising rents, fewer living wage jobs, and cuts in safety net programs.

- Many former homeowners became renters due to the foreclosure crisis. Rental vacancy rates have been below 3% (very low) in the Twin Cities for almost three years.
Key facts: Urgency for Bonding

- Minnesota is at risk of losing 30 percent of its 31,000 federally-subsidized Section 8 units in the next few years.
- There is at least a $300-$400 million in backlog in needed repairs for public housing.
- About 6,000 housing units totalling $1.1 billion are in the pipeline and could use bonding dollars. Bonding funds leverage private and federal investments.
Interest and mortgage rates are currently low. Bonding dollars used for housing will stretch further under these market conditions than they will when interest rates are higher.
Key facts: Impact

• $1.00 of state funding for preserving Section 8 or public housing leverages $4.00 in future federal funding. State funding also leverages private investment.

• Bonding for housing creates decentralized jobs in local communities.
Key facts: Impact

Supportive housing is a proven approach to helping homeless people maintain housing.

• Minnesota is leading the nation in reducing homelessness among veterans through targeted efforts that combines housing with federal resources.

• Supportive housing returns $1.44 for every public dollar invested. It generated at least $123 million for Minnesota taxpayers in 2010.
Making Your Case
Why is funding still needed after 2012 and 2013 investments?

Be honest, upfront, and gracious.
We appreciate that legislators from both parties have supported investments in affordable housing since 2012. This has made a real difference.

However, we are still coming out of a lean era. We’re playing catch up: there is a tremendous need for housing and many projects are ready to go.
Dos

• Be prepared to talk about specific examples
• Be positive
• Make the solution sizable to the problem
• Focus on tangible impacts
• Speak logically and practically
• Show broad support political and geographic
• Talk about housing stability
• Complement logic with the emotional case
Don’ts

- Overwhelm with facts or technical details (you’ll be forgettable)
- Focus on social injustice
- Talk about “ending homelessness” (it sounds impractical in a brief message, which compromises credibility)
Rule Twitter

- Be real-time
- Add value (news, narrative, give-and-take)
- Be respectful
- Shorten links with bitly.com or tinyurl.com
- Engage with others
- Use #mnleg #Homes4AllMN and #bond4housing
Other resources

- Legislative agenda
- Factsheets on bonding
- Legislative district profiles
- Bonding project cards describing impact of bonding

Check [www.mhponline.org/homes-for-all](http://www.mhponline.org/homes-for-all) for the latest resources.