

Northern Healthy Communities Partnership

Communication Strategy



Northern Healthy Communities Partnership

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Introduction and Context

With a population of nearly 40 000 spread across more than 300 000 square kilometres, people living and working in northern Saskatchewan have a unique set of challenges and strengths. Income and education levels significantly lower than that of the province have a dramatic influence on the health and wellbeing of the population. Low population density and large distances between most communities present barriers to health and human service delivery, especially in the context of finite resources. Conversely, northern Saskatchewan residents demonstrate great resilience, persevering in spite of challenges and reporting relatively high levels of community belonging. The strength of this connectedness and community also represents an asset for health and human service providers who excel at working in partnership, supporting colleagues from different agencies and sectors to provide services that are greater than the sum of their parts.

The Northern Healthy Communities Partnership (NHCP) is a network of organizations working proactively to improve the health of people in northern Saskatchewan by influencing the conditions, in which they live, learn, work and play. Working together using a population health promotion approach, NHCP partner organizations are able to have a greater impact on the populations they serve, building healthier communities together. NHCP aims to be the first choice for organizations and health and human services professionals in northern Saskatchewan looking to grow their impact on the population through collaborative, upstream action.

NHCP partner organizations, through the Core Group, jointly identify priority areas for action based on challenges facing their organizations and impacting the health of northern Saskatchewan residents. NHCP Action Teams are formed around these priority areas and composed of representatives from interested partner organizations. With guidance and support from the Core Group, NHCP Action Teams choose, plan, implement and evaluate population health promotion strategies and projects aimed at addressing the upstream causes of their priority area and improving the health of the northern Saskatchewan population. NHCP partners include provincial and First Nations health organizations, as well as early childhood, recreation, education, provincial and community based organizations.

NHCP Vision: Healthy people, vibrant communities.

NHCP Mission: Working collaboratively with communities to maximize their strengths and achieve wellness.

The core work of NHCP partner organizations is often the delivery of a specific health or human service, such as community or hospital based health care service delivery or classroom education. While the mission and goals of NHCP align well with the broader goals of these health and human services organizations, the proactive and population based approaches employed by NHCP tend to fall at the fringes of their mandates. A significant challenge for NHCP is communicating the success and value of its



projects and initiatives to partner organizations. This challenge is twofold- successfully reaching managers and staff within partner organizations who are not directly involved with NHCP, and demonstrating to them the value of NHCP projects and initiatives, in particular as it relates to helping them achieve their goals.

Historically, NHCP communication activities have tended to be unidirectional, from NHCP to partner organizations, and centred on the needs of the partnership over the needs of and benefits to partners. NHCP has relied on members of its teams to communicate and relay information about the partnership and its work to others in their organizations. Generally it has been left to team members to do this, with little support or guidance from the partnership. As such, communication and messaging has been inconsistent in frequency, content and target audience, and limited knowledge and understanding of NHCP existence within partner organizations. Over the years efforts have been made to increase the frequency and consistency of communication in this area, such as newsletters produced by the NHCP Coordinators. However, the capacity of the NHCP Coordinators to invest many hours in the development and distribution of communication tools is limited, which has resulted in the inability to sustain labour intensive communication activities.

Communication by NHCP with residents of northern Saskatchewan and the broader general public most often occurs through posters in community spaces around the region and radio advertisements. Generally, these communications promote a health-related message as part of a particular NHCP project or initiative. Information about NHCP itself is de-emphasized or not included. The reach and effectiveness of these methods are largely unknown.

In response to these challenges, this communication strategy documents a coordinated approach to the internal and external communication activities of NHCP, including:

- Key messages and branding
- Communication with and within NHCP partners
- Website and social media
- Advertising and print media
- Publicity and media coverage

The focus of the NHCP Communication Strategy is on the overall communications activities of the partnership, emphasizing how different teams and parts of the partnership communicate with each other, how the partnership communicates to and with its partner organizations, and how NHCP is presented and shared with individuals and organizations who are not partners. Not included in the scope of this strategy are the functional or task-based communication activities that occur within NHCP Action Teams or communications specific to a particular project or initiative. Implementation of the NHCP Communication Strategy is intended and expected to complement and support ongoing work to increase partner engagement in NHCP by more clearly demonstrating and sharing how participating in NHCP is of benefit to partner organizations.



Vision and Goals of the NHCP Communication Strategy

The NHCP Communication Strategy aims to establish the Northern Healthy Communities Partnership as a recognized, valued and integral part of health and human service provision in northern Saskatchewan, both among health and human service providers and the general public.

Goals of the NHCP Communication Strategy:

- To position NHCP as the best forum for executing proactive strategies to improve health and related outcomes across northern Saskatchewan populations.
- To build support for and share the successes of population health promotion projects and initiatives undertaken by NHCP with internal and external stakeholders.
- To increase the understanding of and support for population health promotion among NHCP partner organizations and health and human services organizations throughout northern Saskatchewan.

SWOT Analysis of Current NHCP Communications

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NHCP is comprised of organizations rooted in northern Saskatchewan, who work with and understand the unique needs of the region. • The NHCP membership brings education and experience from a variety of backgrounds (not limited to health care). • NHCP has established relationships which cross jurisdictional boundaries. These relationships have endured through time and personnel changes. • NHCP has made connections to provincial organizations allowing both organizations access to each other’s resources and networks. • Ability of teams to work remotely. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHCP does not always tell a consistent story. • The NHCP webpage is static. • The partnership is undertaking exciting projects but is often failing to communicate the highlights of these projects to their audiences. • Communication often feels “us-centered” over “audience-centered.” • NHCP does not effectively communicate its strategy to its partners, specifically senior management who often influence partner participation. • Level of engagement/commitment from partner organizations is inconsistent. • Poor or inconsistent orientation to new staff. • Roles of team members are poorly understood or executed.



Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To strengthen the connection between the NHCP Core Group and the Action Teams/work of the Action Teams overall. • To establish and promote the NHCP brand through programs and deliverables. • To make better use of provincial organizations to enhance NHCP and promote it at a provincial level. • To employ social media as a communications tool. • To celebrate and promote the extent of collaboration within NHCP to engage partners and funders. • Increased advocacy for population health promotion within the province. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHCP partners have competing priorities and NHCP is viewed as a less urgent priority. • Support from partner organizations’ senior management teams varies. • Understanding of population health promotion is limited – often thought to be health education. • Anticipated but unknown reorganization of regional health authorities in the province. • Turnover of staff within partner organizations.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders have an interest in the work and goals of the Northern Healthy Communities Partnership. These stakeholders include any individual or organization that could either gain or lose as a direct or indirect result of the activities and initiatives of the partnership.

Internal stakeholders include those stakeholders who are directly involved in the work of the partnership. Internal stakeholders of NHCP include:

- NHCP Core Group and Action Team members,
- NHCP partner organizations,
- partner organization managers who supervise NHCP Action Team and Core Group members, and
- Boards of Directors of partner organizations.

External stakeholders include those who are not directly involved in the work of NHCP. External stakeholders of NHCP include, but are not limited to:

- partner organization staff who are not members of NHCP teams, and their supervisors or managers,
- human services professionals working in and serving northern Saskatchewan,
- provincial and federal organizations working and advocating in health promotion and related areas, including provincial government ministries,
- employers and schools in northern Saskatchewan,
- northern Saskatchewan municipalities and bands,
- physicians,
- Community Advisory Networks,



- media,
- patients, patient advocates, clients and residents,
- students and parents, and
- northern Saskatchewan residents and community members of all ages.

NHCP Partners

Athabasca Health Authority
Keewatin Yatthé Health Region
Kelsey Trail Health Region
KidsFirst North
Lac La Ronge Indian Band
Mamawetan Churchill River Health Region
Meadow Lake Tribal Council
Ministry of Justice
Northern Human Services Partnership
Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority

Northern Lights School Division #113
Northern Saskatchewan Population Health Unit
Northern Sport, Culture & Recreation District
Northern Teacher Education Program
Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation
Prince Albert Grand Council
Saskatchewan Cancer Agency
Saskatchewan Heart and Stroke Foundation
Saskatchewan Prevention Institute

A note about clients, patients, students and community members:

In working toward its vision “healthy people, vibrant communities” Northern Healthy Communities Partnership seeks to embark on projects and initiatives that improve the lives of northern Saskatchewan residents, including those who are clients of the health and human services providers that are partnered with NHCP. While many of the NHCP partner organizations are involved in providing services directly to these groups, the majority of the work of NHCP is to support those delivering services. As such, northern Saskatchewan community members of all ages are critical stakeholders for NHCP and audiences that should be considered when planning, implementing and evaluating all the activities of the partnership. The work of NHCP, however, reaches community members indirectly through our partner organizations and team members. Accordingly, NHCP focuses first on serving the needs of and adding value for our partner organizations and enabling them to better serve the northern Saskatchewan residents who are their clients, patients and students.



Target Audiences

Target audiences are the key groups from within the list of stakeholders that NHCP communication activities are specifically meant to reach. Identifying and understanding the goals and needs of target audiences will enable NHCP to craft communications that will best reach and influence members of the audience.

Target Audience	Core Work and Goals	Information Needs	Channels
NHCP Core Group and Action Team members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing health or human services to northern Saskatchewan community members • Sustained and improved health, education, early childhood, etc. outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about the activities and projects of NHCP, such as goals, workplans, project milestones, funding • Understanding and evidence of how NHCP activities and projects are influencing and improving relevant outcomes • Supports to share the impact and value of NHCP activities and projects with others in their organizations 	Email Meetings Website
Decision makers in NHCP partner organizations, including managers, senior managers and boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing health or human services to northern Saskatchewan community members • Sustained and improved health, education, early childhood, etc. outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding and evidence of how NHCP activities and projects are influencing and improving relevant outcomes • Understanding and evidence of how participation in NHCP benefits their organizational mandates 	Email Presentations Website
Human and/or public services professionals and agencies in northern Saskatchewan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing human services to northern Saskatchewan community members • Sustained and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of NHCP and how to access NHCP resources • Understanding how NHCP works to influence and 	Website Media



	improved education, justice, economic, etc. outcomes	improve outcomes relevant to professionals	
General public in northern Saskatchewan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities of daily living • Experience success, happiness, improved quality of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant knowledge of NHCP, its programs and how to access resources • Understand how NHCP works to enable conditions that increase the likelihood of northern Saskatchewan residents experiencing the desired increases in quality of life 	Posters Radio Media

Communication Strategies and Tactics

1. Ensure clear, consistent, regular messaging about NHCP to all stakeholders through a variety of communication channels and activities and using the NHCP brand consistently.
 - Create a clear, consistent brand for NHCP.
 - Issue news releases to introduce new and existing programming.
 - Use multiple avenues of communication tailored to different audiences (i.e. social media, print, radio, cable, promotional items).
 - Purposefully and broadly promote the success and impact of NHCP with emphasis on benefits to partners and community
2. Ensure that all NHCP partners understand and value the work of NHCP and support and protect the contribution of resources to the work of the partnership.
 - Develop key messages that are focused on the value added to partners and stakeholders by working with NHCP.
 - Clarify and support the role of core group members to ensure senior management in partner agencies are aware of programs and new initiatives.
 - Establish channels for and practices to strengthen the communication from partner organizations to NHCP to enable closer alignment of priority areas and greater benefit for partners
3. Ensure human services professionals are aware of NHCP programs and avenues to access them.
 - Leverage the networks and communications of NHCP partner organizations to spread awareness of NHCP programs.



- Maintain and update the website and use it as a resource hub that publicizes services and program launches.
 - Utilize communications through other channels to direct traffic to the NHCP website.
4. Increase awareness of the role of the social determinants of health and population health promotion among the general population of northern Saskatchewan

The Northern Healthy Communities Partnership Brand

The NHCP Brand Proposition

A brand proposition is the “promise” an organization makes to its customers or target audiences. The promise is not only about the product or organization, but also about the tangible and emotional benefits it provides to customers and the aspiration the customer and brand can achieve together.



Concept Summaries

Professional Audience Concept Summary: Working to change health outcomes in northern Saskatchewan requires the coordinated efforts of many people. Through the Northern Healthy Communities Partnership, organizations become part of a network that's working proactively to improve the health of northern Saskatchewan residents. As part of NHCP teams, professionals from across northern Saskatchewan and the province develop connections, motivation and specialized tools to help them be more effective in their everyday work. NHCP partner organizations are able to have a greater impact on the populations they serve through collaborative, collective efforts, achieving healthier communities together.

General Public Concept Summary: People in northern Saskatchewan face many challenges to better health. Northern Healthy Communities Partnership is a network of organizations working to improve the health of people in the region where they live, learn, work and play. Professionals from across northern Saskatchewan and the province develop connections, motivation and specialized tools to help them become more effective in their everyday work. Working together and with communities, NHCP partners are better able to influence and improve the health of our population.

Tagline: Building healthier communities together.

Language and Tone

The tone of NHCP communications should be positive and active, reflecting the proactive and strengths-based nature of the population health promotion work undertaken by the partnership. NHCP, its team members and partner organizations represent a variety of disciplines and sectors. Care should be taken in written and oral communications to be clear, concise, and accessible to audiences of a variety of backgrounds. Communications should use the simplest language possible, using short sentences and avoiding jargon. Discussions of population health promotion should reflect the research and recommendations included in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's *A New Way to Talk about the Social Determinants of Health*.

Visual Identity

All products, publications and promotional materials produced by the NHCP, including those produced by any of the Action Teams, should include the NHCP logo. Items produced by Action Teams may also include the Action Team logos. Additional information about logo use can be found in the *NHCP Branding and Logo Use Guidelines*.

NHCP publications and promotional materials should choose high quality photographic images over clipart. Ideally images are professionally shot photographs of real northern Saskatchewan residents. NHCP should have the appropriate consents and or licensing in place for all images used.



Key Messages

The key messages included below are short concise messages capturing key ideas and addressing frequently asked questions about NHCP.

For All Audiences

Northern Healthy Communities Partnership is a network of organizations working proactively to the improve health of northern Saskatchewan residents.

Population health promotion is an approach to improving health that focuses on changing the conditions in which people live, learn, work and play to make it easier for people to make healthy choices.

Improving the living and working conditions which create health can help make people healthier by default. It allows individuals more opportunities to make healthy choices, more control over their own health and a fairer chance to be healthy.

For Potential Partner Organizations or New NHCP Team Members

Through NHCP, partner organizations across northern Saskatchewan and the province contribute a little to get a lot. NHCP team members collaborate to form connections, motivation and specialized tools to help them be more effective in their everyday work.

NHCP partner organizations, through the Core Group, jointly identify priority areas for action based on challenges facing their organizations and impacting the health of northern Saskatchewan residents.

NHCP Action Teams choose, plan, implement and evaluate population health promotion strategies and projects aimed at addressing the upstream causes of the issue they were formed to address.

For Health Sector Organizations and Professionals

Health care is essential for treating illness and reducing suffering, however most of the things that make us sick or healthy exist outside of the health care system. By influencing the living and working conditions in northern Saskatchewan, NHCP projects work to enable patients and clients to make healthy choices by increasing the opportunities for them to choose.

NHCP works to enable patients and clients to make healthy choices by influencing the conditions in which they live to give them more opportunities to choose. A healthier population puts less stress on the health care system, saving health care providers time, money and resources.



For Education Sector Organizations and Professionals

Education is part of the foundation of lifelong health. Teachers know that a child's life outside the classroom has a profound influence on their ability to learn in the classroom. NHCP works to influence the conditions in which northern Saskatchewan children live, so that kids can start school ready to learn.

For Human Services Organizations and Professionals

The life conditions people need to succeed are also the conditions that support good health. Creating these conditions requires effort and collaboration from all sectors. Through NHCP, organizations choose priorities and work together on projects that influence these conditions, so everyone has a fair opportunity to succeed.

About the NHCP Action Teams

The **Active Communities Team** works to build capacity in northern Saskatchewan communities to create environments that support physical activity. By promoting and enabling active living, the team helps maximize health for all ages and abilities.

The **Babies, Books and Bonding** team supports early literacy and parent-child bonding to improve lifelong learning, achievement and mental wellbeing.

The **Babies, Books and Bonding** early literacy program provides age appropriate board books to children and families along with education on the importance of reading and telling stories through nurses who provide childhood immunizations.

The **Building Vibrant Youth** team works to empower northern Saskatchewan communities to respectfully engage, mentor and build relationships with all youth. Strong, positive relationships help build resilient young people who avoid risk-taking behaviours and achieve their goals.

The **Healthy Eating Team** fosters nutrition by supporting and rewarding the creation of healthy food environments, such as those in northern Saskatchewan schools and restaurants. Healthy food environments enable healthy eating habits, which are critical to managing and preventing chronic disease.

The **Northern Tobacco Strategy** works to build environments that are resistant to commercial tobacco use while being respectful of the traditional use of tobacco, focussing on two target populations: pre and post-natal mothers and youth.



Approach and Resources

Implementation of the NHCP Communication Strategy will be led by the NHCP Coordinators, with support from all NHCP members and communication specialists in NHCP Partner Organizations. Given the limited capacity of the NHCP Coordinators, a phased approach to implementation will be adopted. Implementation efforts will focus on sharing clear, consistent and regular messaging about NHCP and ensuring that NHCP members and partner organizations understand, value and support the work of the partnership over the short to medium term. Efforts to increase awareness of NHCP human services providers and the general public will follow over the medium to long term. Funding for implementation of the strategy will be requested and allocated from the annualized funding for NHCP as needed, in accordance with the *NHCP Financial Guidelines*.

Key activities in the first phase of strategy implementation will begin with further defining the NHCP brand, including creating visual identity guidelines. The basis of the NHCP brand has been established as part of the creation of this strategy. Subsequently, the NHCP Coordinators will develop a communication workplan based on the goals and target audience defined in this strategy and on consultation with the priority target audiences aimed at assessing the most effective ways of communicating with them. Implementation of the communication workplan will follow and focus first on updating and establishing communication channels to reach our target audiences, including the NHCP website, print and digital resources, email and social media. A final key activity for implementing the first phase of the NHCP Communication strategy will be to identify and leverage other communication channels to share messages about NHCP and its projects and initiatives, including media and NHCP partners' communications channels.

Risks, Assumptions and Constraints

Assumption	Risk	Possible Impact	Mitigation Strategies
NHCP Partner Organizations will remain stable and engaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to structure or organization of health services delivery Health promotion is deprioritized/defunded by partners in favour of more acute services/needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of NHCP partner organizations Loss of coordination support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equip champions with shareable evidence of NHCP value and value of population health promotion Pursue formalized participation of partner organizations and representatives in NHCP
Key messages define benefits for partner organizations, are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key messages fail to meaningfully convey value delivered by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner engagement and capacity of NHCP decreases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test key messages with Core Group members and partner



“audience-centred”	NHCP		organizations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise key messages based on feedback
NHCP members will employ key messages consistently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variation in messaging • Communications remain “us-centred” over “audience-centred” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion among audiences about NHCP • Weak and unclear brand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide written key messages and supporting resources wherever possible • Designate a single point of contact for media
Implementation of communication strategy is manageable for NHCP Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient time to implement and maintain communication strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication strategy not fully implemented • Communication channels established but not maintained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Evaluation

Specific goals, indicators and evaluation standards will be identified during the development of the communication workplan. In determining the success of the overall NHCP Communication Strategy, the following evaluation questions will be considered:

- Are NHCP communications target audience-centred and consistent with the NHCP brand?
- Are members of NHCP acting as ambassadors or champions for the partnership?
- Are multiple communication channels being used regularly?
- Is information flowing in multiple directions to, from and within the partnership?
- Are NHCP communications reaching their target audiences?
- Have members of our target audiences increased their understanding of and support for NHCP?



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