



Change communication playbook:

Templates and examples to empower nonprofits to communicate with purpose

Table of contents

General framework and tips

PAGE 2

- Template
- Direct mail or email example

Organizational updates during societal change

PAGE 4

- Direct mail or email template
- Direct mail or email examples

Organizational updates during internal transition

PAGE 7

- Direct mail or email template
- Direct mail or email example

Talking point template for staff and board

PAGE 9



General framework and tips

TEMPLATE

Opening: Acknowledge the moment

- State the change clearly and concisely.
- Acknowledge the emotions or concerns this change may bring.

Middle: Reinforce the organization's mission and response

- Reassure stakeholders that the organization's core mission remains unchanged.
- Emphasize continuity in services and impact.
- If relevant, highlight past resilience.
- Provide a clear, factual explanation (without unnecessary detail).
- Frame the change as part of growth and strategy.
- Describe what the organization is doing to manage the transition.
- Set expectations for what's coming next.
- Commit to regular updates and a timeline for key updates, if possible.

Call to action: Invite conversation

- Encourage participation and engagement in a meaningful way.
- Reassure stakeholders that questions are welcome.
- Closing: Express gratitude and reassurance
- Reiterate commitment to mission and values.
- Express gratitude to stakeholders.
- End with a positive, forward-looking message.

Remember:

- Tailor messaging for different audiences (staff, donors, partners, beneficiaries).
- Use multiple communication channels (email, social media, meetings, newsletters).
- Ensure leadership is available for direct questions. Be responsive.
- Follow up—continue engagement beyond the initial announcement.

DIRECT MAIL OR EMAIL EXAMPLE

Subject: Important update from *Have You Eaten Yet?*

At *Have You Eaten Yet?* we try to serve our neighbors in the most effective and sustainable way possible. As part of our ongoing commitment to nourishing our community, we are making an important adjustment to our programming. We wanted to let you know right away.

Five years ago, we launched the From Scratch culinary education program as an exciting expansion of our community kitchen services. Our goal was to explore new ways to complement our core mission of providing fresh, nourishing meals and building community. We hoped to revive the restaurant industry in our community and to improve career opportunities for our young people.

While we had great engagement and enthusiasm from students, our restaurant industry has continued to struggle. We are committed to using our resources wisely to maximize impact and long-term sustainability. That's why we've made the tough decision to discontinue the program because the lack of long-range impact made the program difficult to justify to our key funders.

While change can be difficult, we believe it can also be a wonderful time to lean into what is familiar. We want to let you know how we are leaning in.

- We are not abandoning what we do best — ensuring that everyone in our community has access to nutritious meals regardless of their ability to pay.
- Our community meal programs will continue as usual.
- Lessons from the program will inform future efforts to integrate food education in a way that aligns with our resources and sustainability goals — and better meets the needs of our community.

Our team has been working behind the scenes to ensure a seamless shift so that none of our meal services suffer, and we look forward to continuing to serve our community with the same passion and dedication as always.

- Give: Your support ensures that we continue feeding those in need. **[Donation Link]**
- Advocate: Help spread the word about our mission and impact. **[Share Our Story]**
- Volunteer: Join us in shaping this next chapter — here's how you can help. **[Volunteer Link]**

We value your thoughts and invite you to reach out with any questions or feedback at 123-456-7890.

Thank you for being a part of our community. With your support, we will continue to nourish, strengthen, and uplift the community by simply asking our neighbors, "Have you eaten yet?"

Change brings opportunity, and we are excited for what's ahead!

With gratitude,

[Your Name]
[Your Role]
[Community Kitchen Name]

Organizational updates during societal change

DIRECT MAIL OR EMAIL TEMPLATE

Subject: Standing strong together: An update from **[Organization Name]**

Dear **[First Name]**,

As we navigate this period of **[describe the situation briefly, e.g., economic uncertainty, societal change, policy shifts]**, I want to share how **[Organization Name]** is adapting while remaining true to our values.

First, let me say that our commitment to **[core mission/cause area]** is unwavering.

Thanks to your generosity, and the support of others like you, we have:

- **[Impact metric #1]** (e.g., Provided emergency housing to 150 families)
- **[Impact metric #2]** (e.g., Delivered 5,000 meals to those in need)
- **[Impact metric #3]** (e.g., Secured policy changes benefiting 10,000 individuals)

In times of uncertainty, our community gives us strength.

We are incredibly grateful for your belief in this mission. Together, we will continue to **[key value, e.g., build equity, create change, foster resilience]** — no matter what comes our way.

During these times of ongoing **[uncertainty/transition]**, we are taking specific steps to:

- **[Action #1]** (e.g., Expand our direct support services to meet increasing demand)
- **[Action #2]** (e.g., Advocate for policies that protect our communities)
- **[Action #3]** (e.g., Develop new programs to adapt to changing needs)

Your continued partnership makes all the difference. Here's how you can stand with us:

- Make a gift: Your support ensures we can sustain and scale our efforts. **[Donate Here]**
- Spread the word: Amplify our mission by sharing our work with your network. **[Share Link]**
- Get involved: Volunteer, advocate, or join our upcoming event. **[Learn More]**

With gratitude,

[Your Name]
[Your Role]
[Organization Name]

DIRECT MAIL OR EMAIL EXAMPLE

Example for a fictional nonprofit: “Heartland Arts Collective,” which provides arts education and community programs in rural areas.

Subject: Creativity in uncertain times – A message from Heartland Arts Collective

Dear Jenna,

At Heartland Arts Collective, we believe in the power of creativity to bring people together, foster resilience, and build stronger communities.

As our community experiences ongoing economic and policy shifts, we know that the arts are more essential than ever in providing hope, connection and inspiration — especially in rural areas like ours.

Despite the current challenges, we remain committed to ensuring that artists, students, and families in our community continue to have access to meaningful arts programs.

Right now, we are:

- Expanding workshops so that students can continue their creative journeys.
- Strengthening local partnerships to provide arts programming in collaboration with libraries, schools, and community centers.
- Advocating for rural arts funding from private foundations to ensure that small towns are not left behind in policy and funding decisions.

We need champions of the arts, like you, to ensure that rural communities continue to thrive. Here’s how we can stand together:

- Donate today: Your gift keeps arts education alive. **[Donate Here]**
- Share our story: Help us reach new supporters by sharing our work. **[Share Link]**
- Join us: Attend an event or volunteer your skills. **[Learn More]**

Times may be uncertain, but your support fuels the creativity that brings people together. Thank you. Together, we’ll continue making the arts accessible, vibrant, and inspiring for all.

With gratitude,

[Your Name]

Executive Director, Heartland Arts Collective

DIRECT MAIL OR EMAIL EXAMPLE

For a fictional nonprofit: “Green Horizons Alliance,” which advocates for environmental protection and sustainability.

Subject: Protecting our planet in changing times – An update from Green Horizons Alliance

Dear Kris,

At Green Horizons Alliance, we’ve always believed that a healthy environment means a healthy future for our communities. Right now, as we witness numerous policy changes, we know that our work to protect the environment is more critical than ever.

In times of uncertainty and change, I believe it is important to celebrate our wins. Because of the generosity of donors like you, we have:

- Secured funding for 10 new community-led conservation projects.
- Helped protect 500 acres of wetlands from harmful development.
- Trained 300 local advocates to fight for climate-friendly policies.

We understand that change can be difficult. But we’ve been here before — fighting for what we believe in, working diligently to secure funding and present legislative solutions. We are disappointed by the changes, but we won’t be deterred.

Change demands a renewed commitment. We remain committed to advocating for policies and programs that protect our land, water, and wildlife. We will continue:

- Fight for stronger environmental protections to ensure that local legislation prioritizes sustainability.
- Expand renewable energy Initiatives to help small towns access clean energy solutions.
- Mobilize community voices to equip local advocates to push for policy changes at the state and national levels.

Will you commit to take action in support of the environment today?

- Attend an event, volunteer, or become an environmental ambassador. [Get involved]
- Sign a petition or contact policymakers to demand climate action. [Advocacy link]
- Donate today. [Donate here]

We can see change as a challenge or as an opportunity. Today we welcome the opportunity to work smarter to ensure that future generations inherit a world filled with clean air, healthy forests, and thriving communities. Your support makes all the difference.

With gratitude,

[Your Name]

Executive Director, Green Horizons Alliance

Organizational updates during Internal transition

DIRECT MAIL OR EMAIL TEMPLATE

Subject: Staying strong through transition: An important update from **[Organization Name]**

Dear **[First Name]**,

As a friend of **[Organization Name]**, you know our mission is guided by a commitment to **[core mission, e.g., equity, education, community support]**. Thank you for your ongoing support.

I'm writing today to let you know about some upcoming changes taking place within our organization, why these changes matter, and how we're ensuring a smooth transition while continuing to serve our community.

[Briefly and transparently explain the change, e.g., leadership transition, restructuring, strategic shifts. What was the catalyst for change? Why do these changes matter?]

Even as we evolve, our commitment to **[mission]** remains unchanged. We will continue to:

- **[Explain services and programs]**
- **[Explain how you will navigate any financial impact]**
- **[Explain how you will keep them posted with any updates]**

I appreciate your support during this transition and hope that you will continue to stand with us as we enter this next chapter.

Here's how you can stand with us:

- Make a gift: Your contributions sustain and strengthen our mission. **[Donate here]**
- Stay connected: Follow our updates and celebrate milestones with us. **[Social media links]**
- Join the conversation: Have questions or concerns? Share your thoughts and ideas with us. **[Contact info]**

I believe change is an opportunity for growth and am deeply grateful to have you by our side.

With your support, we will continue to **[key value, e.g., build resilience, create impact, uplift communities]**, now and into the future.

With appreciation,

[Your Name]
[Your Role]
[Organization Name]

DIRECT MAIL OR EMAIL EXAMPLE

For a fictional community kitchen program, “Have You Eaten?” sharing a program transition.

Subject: A new chapter for *Have You Eaten?*

Dear **[First Name]**,

Thank you for being an important member of our Have You Eaten? Community kitchen. Without dedicated donors and volunteers like you, we would never be able to offer our neighborhood pay-what-you-can café or invite all community members to our weekly Sunday Tea.

After 15 years of dedicated service, our beloved Executive Director, Mark Jones, has announced he will retire at the end of 2025. Under his leadership, Heartland Arts Collective has expanded programs to 10 rural counties, secured landmark funding for arts education, and led a capital campaign to build the beautiful, state of the art cultural center that is frequented by neighbors from our 10-county region.

The Board of Directors is currently conducting a search to find our next Executive Director with a deep passion for rural arts access, a background in arts education, and successful leadership experience at another nonprofit. During the search and throughout our leadership transition, we remain committed to rural arts education and community programming.

Thanks to generous community members like you, in the past year we have:

- Served 500+ students in rural arts education programs in the past year.
- Hosted 12 community art festivals that celebrated local culture and creativity.
- Funded 30 emerging rural artists through microgrants and mentorship.

In the coming year, you can expect:

- New workshops and exhibitions at the satellite sites throughout the region.
- More student scholarship opportunities to ensuring that all young artists have access to materials and mentorship.
- Renewed focus on rural artist support to strengthening programs that uplift local artists.

We are grateful to Mark for his dedicated service and look forward to an exciting new chapter.

Please share this news with your family and friends. Please encourage qualified candidates to apply. Please continue to celebrate our success and support our future dreams.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Mark at mark@hac.org or 123-456-7890.

With appreciation,

[Your Name]

Board Chair, Heartland Arts Collective



Talking point template for staff and board members

When we experience crisis or major changes, many people want answers. Your donors might turn to your organization as a trusted source of information. Depending on the scope of these crises and changes, and the legal nature of your organization's involvement with it, your board of directors might consider hiring a public relations professional or instruct staff to speak with the organization's lawyer, board chair, or executive director for guidance.

Apart from legal liability issues, it is important to equip board members and staff with talking points to ensure it doesn't seem like you are avoiding transparency. This information is designed to provide a framework for how board members and staff could respond promptly and professionally, instilling trust and furthering engagement with your community.

These talking points should be adjusted and adapted for donor conversations, public statements, internal meetings, and stakeholder discussions. Different portions of these examples will be used at different times by different individuals.

HOW TO USE THIS TEMPLATE:

- Customize the talking points based on your specific crisis, change, or disaster response.
- Stay transparent while maintaining a hopeful and solutions-oriented tone.
- Repeat key messages across multiple communication channels (emails, meetings, social media).
- Invite participation by giving donors, stakeholders, and staff tangible ways to help.

Acknowledge the situation

- We understand that this is a time of uncertainty, and we want to be transparent about how **[Organization Name]** is responding.
- Like many in our sector, we are facing **[describe the crisis: economic shifts, policy changes, natural disasters, leadership transition]**.
- We acknowledge the challenges ahead, but our commitment to **[core mission]** remains as strong as ever.
- Our priority is to ensure that **[affected group: community members, beneficiaries, staff, etc.]** continue receiving the support they need.

Reaffirm mission and stability

- While external factors are shifting, our mission remains the same: **[state mission clearly]**.
- We have built a strong foundation that allows us to adapt while continuing to serve.
- Even in times of change, our work remains focused on **[key service or impact area]**.
- We are taking measured steps to ensure stability and sustainability, both financially and operationally.

Communicate immediate actions and response

- In response to **[specific crisis/change]**, we have taken the following steps: **[list 2-3 immediate actions]**.
- To address these challenges, we are **[describe proactive steps: adjusting programs, reallocating resources, strengthening partnerships]**.
- We are working closely with **[partners, funders, community leaders]** to ensure a coordinated response.
- Our leadership team has developed a strategic plan to navigate this transition, which includes **[briefly describe the plan]**.

Frame change as opportunity

- Change can be challenging, but it also creates opportunities for growth and innovation.
- This is a moment for us to strengthen our impact and find new ways to serve.
- With change comes the opportunity to deepen our work, expand our reach, and build long-term resilience.
- We are embracing this as a chance to refine our approach and better serve our community.

Highlight donor and stakeholder impact

- Your support has made it possible for us to **[specific impact]**.
- Because of our incredible supporters, we've been able to **[list recent successes despite challenges]**.
- We need your help to sustain our work during this period. Here's how you can support us: **[list ways to give, volunteer, advocate]**.
- Every gift, every action, every voice makes a difference. Thank you for standing with us.

Encourage engagement and questions

- We know you may have questions, and we are here to provide answers.
- We value your input and encourage you to reach out with any concerns or ideas.
- Our leadership is committed to transparency, and we will continue to keep you updated.
- If you'd like to learn more about our next steps, please join us for **[mention an upcoming meeting, webinar, or event]**.

Close on a note of resilience and gratitude

- Through challenges and transitions, we remain committed to **[mission-driven statement]**.
- We are deeply grateful for our community of supporters who make our work possible.
- Together, we will continue to build a future that reflects our shared values of **[values: equity, sustainability, resilience, etc.]**.
- Thank you for being part of this journey — we are stronger together.

We're in this together. Visit our nonprofit resource center to explore more tools, templates, and materials to help you communicate during times of change and uncertainty.

[Visit the resource center](#)