Setting the Stage for Success:
Tips and Lessons Learned for Building Foundations of Sustainable Partnerships Through Effective PR and Communications

PHIG Annual Recipient Convening
Aug. 21, 2025

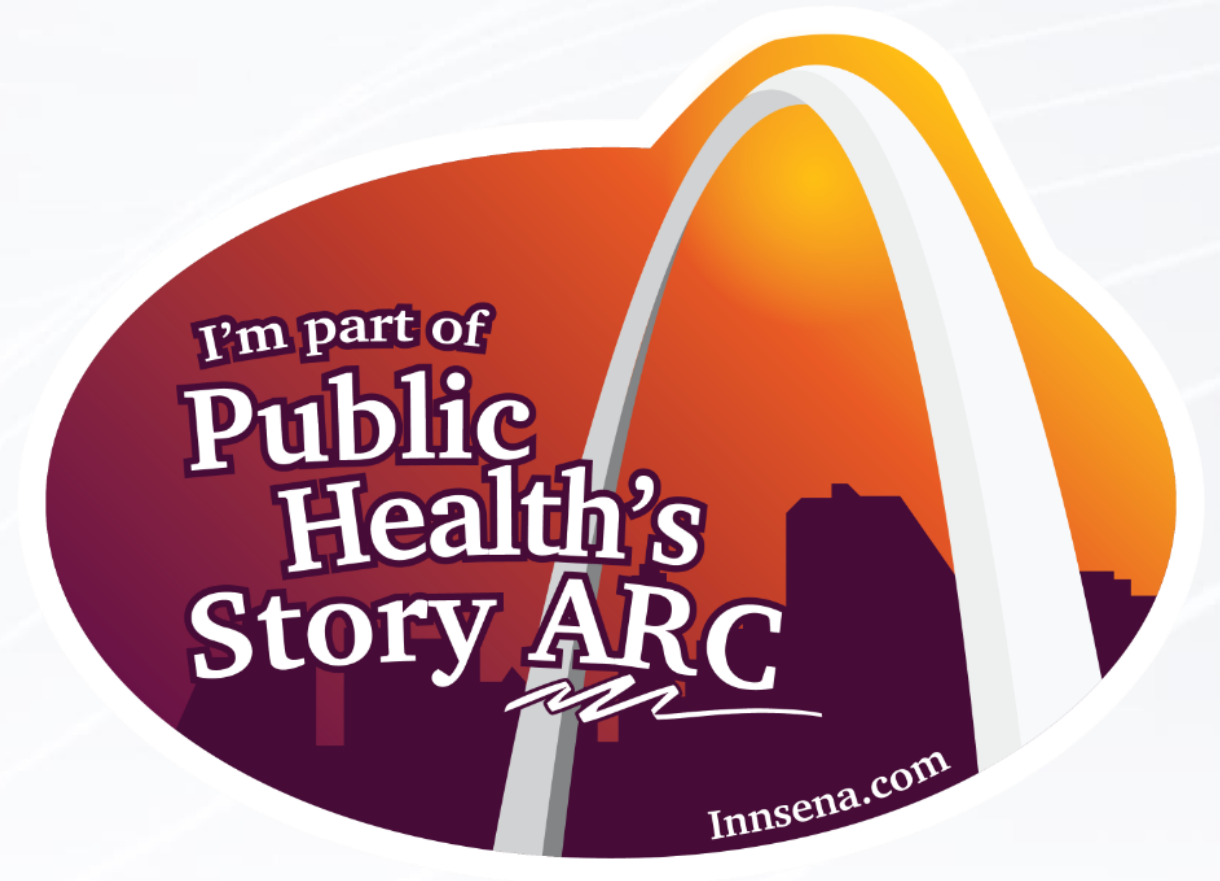innsena

Who We Are

Kim Ball,
Managing Director at Innsena

Patrice Wilding,
Senior Director at Innsena

Agenda

- Level-Setting
- Framing the Challenge
- Changing the Approach
- Getting Tactical
- Takeaway Checkpoint
- Interactive Segment

innsena

I'm part of
Public
Health's
Story ARC

Innsena.com

Goals for today

- Learn about the power of effective feedback loops
- Understand how shared governance can benefit projects
- Hear about the impact of connections

- Identify ways to counteract mistrust and misunderstanding
- Discover pathways for participation and transparency
- Collect tips for developing a comms-centered approach

innsena

The Irony of Data-Based Project Management

All the formal training and education in the world can't replace people skills

Data is great but communication is key to understanding

Sharing success requires a comms-centered approach

Framing the Challenge

There are Issues!

Mistrust is the default

"Contract speak" ≠ good communication

Funding silos = communication silos

Comms seen as last-mile, not strategy

Common Pitfalls

Misaligned Messaging

- Collaboration is crucial to feeling in sync with partners

Misread Rooms

- Knowing your audience is half the battle – read the room to make the most impact

Accidental Silence

- No news isn't always good news – silence can sometimes create confusion

Ideas Get off Track Easily With...

Mismatched Goals and Expectations

- Conflicting interests
- Unclear needs and timelines
- Lack of alignment on project goals

Ineffective Communication Approaches

- Poor communication channels—email is not the best for time-sensitive, complex matters!
- Inconsistent messages
- Power imbalances and unmanaged conflict

innsena

Ideas Get off Track Easily With...

Erosion of Trust

- Lack of transparency—who's involved? What's the big picture?
- Duplicative requests
- Follow-through—deliver on time and in agreed-upon format

Operational and Structural Shortcomings

- Teams and organizations—traditional hierarchies or reporting structures can hinder collaboration and slow-down decision-making and genuine connection—neutral third-parties can help!
- Stakeholder management and engagement

Reaching Many Varied Audiences/Stakeholders

- Different audiences = different values, vocab, visuals
- Real talk: You can't reach everyone the same way

Healthcare Organizations

State & Federal Partners

Technical Partners/Implementers

Patients/General Population

Policymakers

Media

Industry Influencers & Thought Leaders

Changing the Approach

DO MORE!

Relate More Find Common Ground

- Align on mission
- Co-create priorities
- Articulate mutual benefit

Be More Open Invest in Trust Early

- Lay foundations in transparency
- Establish credibility in partnership with follow-through
- Value relationship-building

Collaborate More Establish Clear Roles and Structures

- Build joint decision-making processes
- Agree on foundational language, tone and strategy
- Share all comms, both internal- and external-facing, for awareness and feedback

Talk More Champion Two (or More)-Way Communication Loops

- Set cadence of regular check-in/update meetings
- Creating multiple channels for communication (dedicated email inboxes, Slack/Teams channels, project mgmt boards
- Leaving room for additional story capture, esp throughout the process

Teach More Commit to Knowledge and Resource Sharing

- Build on the strengths of each partner and what they do best
- Provide living library for toolkits, data, etc.
- Change management: overcoming fears in implementation (explaining the Whys)

Bend More Leave Room for Growth and Change

- Build on the strengths of each partner and what they do best
- Promote a "test and learn" culture
- Don't lose sight of milestones and wins along the way to goals

Getting Tactical

Communications Tactic Deeper Dive: Listening Sessions

Published Objectives:

- **Gain additional insight** into key topics based on feedback received during the PHA review of new agreements.

- **Facilitate solution-oriented discussions** to sensitive and complicated data challenges.

- **Enable a forum for PHAs** to foster collaboration and exchange ideas with colleagues and national sponsors.

- **Reinforce national sponsor's initiative** goal to work with PHAs to improve data sharing, governance, policies and processes.

Lessons Learned: Listening Sessions Takeaways

- **Don't start from scratch** – engage subject matter experts to inform the planning process before launching with project partners to move more quickly - understand what's worked well before and not

- **Engage stakeholders consistently** to build trust Ensure leadership and champions remain close to the work

- **Communicate early and remain nimble** to respond to dynamic project changes quickly

- **Demonstrate value** to teams/contributors by promoting progress widely

Best Practices for Building Trust

innsena

Commit to Feedback Loops

- Build a shared understanding of the program or project's success with regular updates, status reports, and collaborative tools. Determine meeting formats as a group.

Set up Shared Governance

- Create committees or working groups with clear representation from different stakeholder groups and determine the decision-making process--still prioritize simplicity.

Make Real-Life Connections

- Counteract mistrust and misunderstanding and encourage participation and transparency through authentic connections. There are ways to connect even when in-person isn't possible.

Establish Clear and Concise Communications

- Right-size communications based on preferences and needs. Each communication act is an opportunity to build consensus and ensure everyone is on the same page.

Best Practices for Tailored Feedback Loops

innsena

Partner surveys = **GOLD**

Stop info dumping — start listening

Real-time pulse checks (polls, 2-way alerts)

Takeaway Checkpoint

- Good comms ≠ "just marketing." It's a sustainability tool. A trust tool. An equity tool.
- Invite partners early so they feel seen + stay invested.
- Build shared language, not just shared goals.
- Be the bridge, not the broadcast.
- Use storytelling to unify silos and elevate your wins.

innsena

Name the Campaign	As It's Written	It's About Principle
100	100	100
200	200	200
300	300	300

Answer

This public health campaign was focused on teens and discouraging tobacco use.

Question

What is:

"The Truth"?

Answer

This public health campaign aimed to reduce maternal mortality and pregnancy-related complications.

Question

What is:

"Hear Her"?

Answer

A: This public health campaign championed by a First Lady focused on reducing childhood obesity with a healthier lifestyle.

Question

What is:

"Let's Move"?

Answer

In CDC's Crisis & Emergency Risk Communication model, the first of six core principles is this.

Question

What is:

"be first"?

Answer

The Plain Writing Act of 2010 requires government communications to be clear and this.

Question

What is:

understandable?

Answer

This nonprofit created the "Clear Communication Index" used by the CDC.

Question

What is:

the National Institutes of Health (NIH)?

Answer

In health communication, this "rule of three" suggest messages should be brief, clear and this.

Question

What is:

memorable?

Answer

This practice of tailoring a message to a specific demographic is called this.

Question

What is:

Audience segmentation?

Answer

A short, catchy phrase used to stick in the audience's mind is called this.
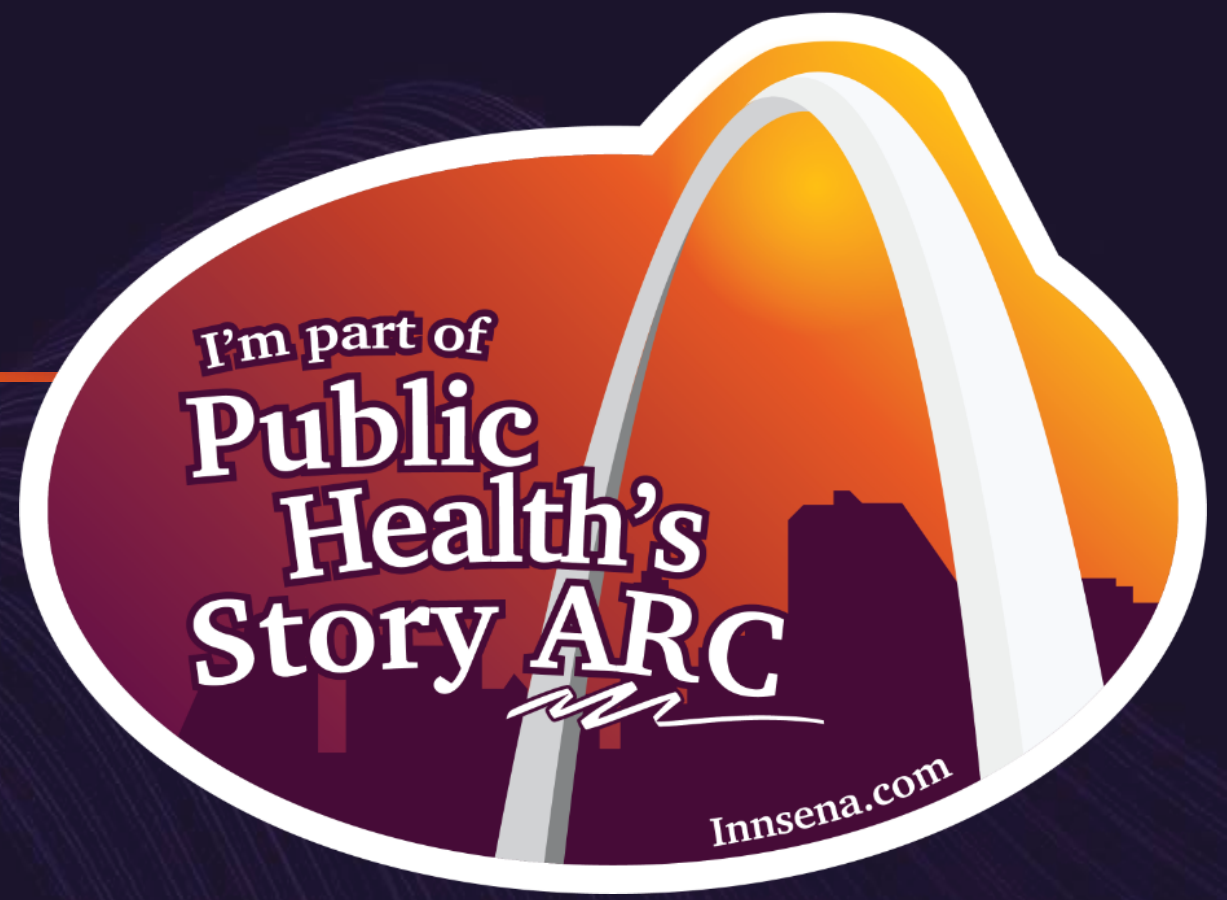
Question

What is:

Slogan or tagline?

Thank you!

- Innsena.com
- Patricewilding@innsena.com
- Kimball@innsena.com

I'm part of
Public Health's Story ARC
Innsena.com

innsena