

KEY MESSAGING FRAMEWORK

Building Your Policy Case





PURPOSE

This framework is designed to support MPOs to deliver clear, compelling, and actionable messages that leave a lasting impression on decision-makers. By leveraging this framework and [AMPO's MPO Engagement Toolkit](#), MPOs can amplify their voices, advocate for vital changes, and unlock transformative transportation solutions for their communities.

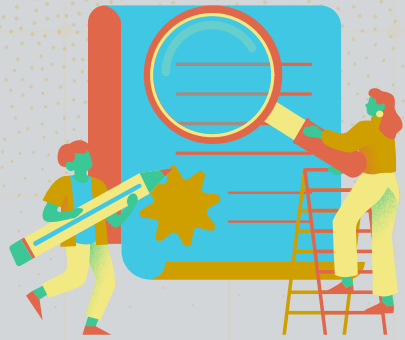
WHY MESSAGING MATTERS

The purpose of messaging is to clearly articulate MPO priorities and build support among decision-makers. Strong messaging **simplifies complex priorities into actionable points**, aligns engagement efforts across MPOs to maximize impact, and ensures consistent, compelling communication with decision-makers. Congressional offices receive hundreds of requests weekly. A clear and compelling message increases the likelihood that your priorities will be heard and acted upon.



CORE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

THE BIG PICTURE



What is the problem?

What needs to change?

- What needs to change?
- Which communities, industries, or stakeholders are affected by the issue?
- What happens if no action is taken?
- Are there barriers or challenges preventing progress?



Why does it matter?

Why may the audience care?

- Why may the audience care?
- How will the proposed solution benefit specific groups or the broader community?
- What are the economic, environmental, or social implications?
- How does this align with your audience's priorities?



What action needs to be taken?

What is your "ask"?

- What specific action or decision are you requesting?
- Are there statistics, case studies, or data points that support your ask?
- How does this action align with broader regional, state, or national goals?



When is action needed?

What's the urgency?

- What's the urgency?
- What is the deadline for action to have the desired impact?
- Are there critical milestones or events that make timely action essential?
- How can you highlight the urgency to inspire more engagement?



DEVELOP KEY MESSAGES

01

Clarify Your Advocacy Goals:

- What changes are we advocating for?
 -  **Tip:** See AMPO's: [Policy Roadmap III](#).
- How do these changes elevate our mission and create tangible benefits for the community?

02

Identify Your Audiences:

- **Primary Audiences:** These are the people with the most direct influence over your goals. For example, congressional members, federal agencies, and local elected officials are key decision-makers who can vote on policies or allocate resources.
- **Secondary Audiences:** These are groups who may not directly decide but can influence primary audiences. Examples include industry partners, business leaders, and community organizations who can advocate on your behalf or help amplify your message.

Tailor Messaging: Adjust your messages to address the specific concerns, values, and roles of each audience group.



DEVELOP KEY MESSAGES

03

Craft Your Core Message:

- Write a concise, dynamic statement that inspires action.
 -  **Tip:** See AMPO's suggested messages surrounding key legislative priorities in [AMPO's MPO Engagement Toolkit](#)

04

Develop Supporting Arguments:

- Build strong, relatable points that back your message with real-world outcomes.
- Show alignment with values like efficiency, accountability, community impact, and economic growth.

05

Gather Stories and Data:

- Share examples and data points that resonate with your audience.
- Use stories that highlight direct community impact to make it memorable

06

Refine and Share:

- Polish your messaging for clarity and consistency.
- Integrate it into advocacy materials and use it across all outreach efforts.
 -  **Tip:** Use tools and templates from [AMPO's MPO Engagement Toolkit](#).

TAILORING MESSAGES

What Typically Matters to Congress?

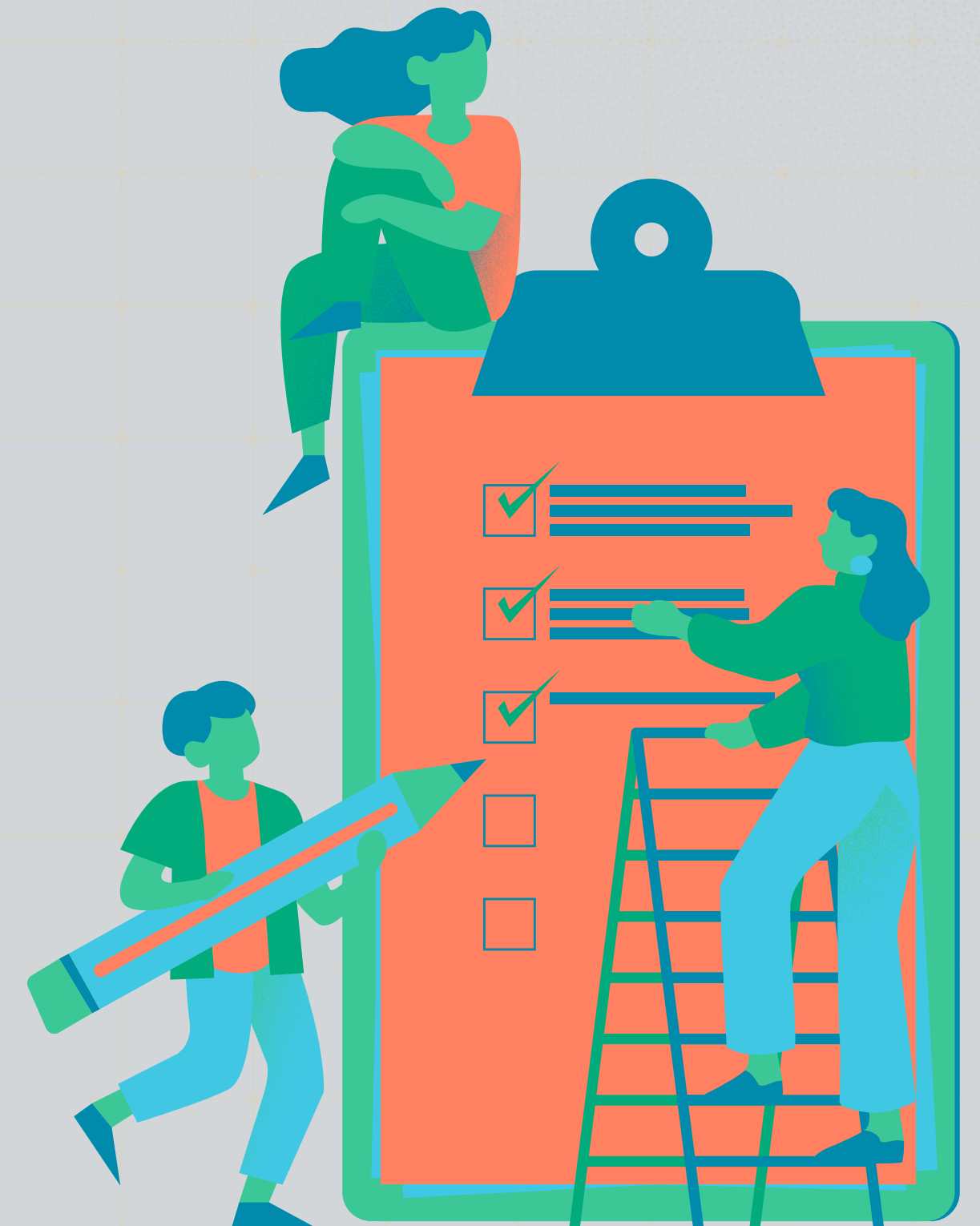
- **Constituent Impact:** How does this benefit their district/state?
- **National Goals:** How does this align with federal priorities (e.g., economic development, safety)?
- **Return on Investment (ROI):** How does this provide measurable benefits?

Tailored Message Example:

Top-line Message: "Federal funding enables MPOs to deliver innovative, impactful projects that enhance safety, mobility, and economic growth."

Strengthen your message by using one to two key statistics that highlights the issues.

- **Example:** "With past funding through the [insert federal program], we delivered [specific project] in your district, improving safety for X number of residents and reducing commute times by X%."
- **Example:** "Increased funding for [insert specific source] could enable our MPO to deliver safety-critical projects, like [specific project], reducing accidents by X%."



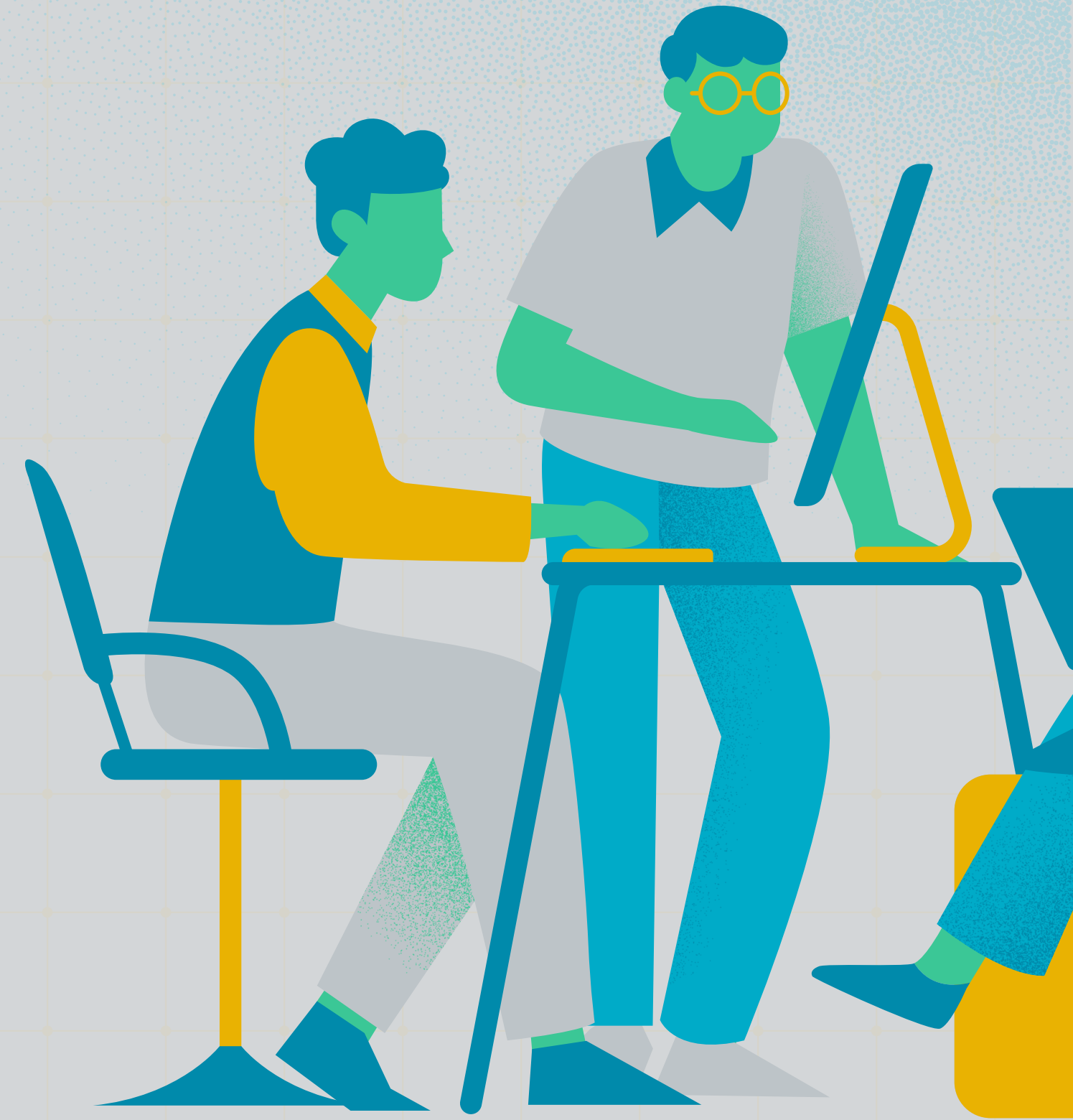
ENGAGEMENT DO'S

- **Research the Member:** Understand their priorities, committee assignments, and legislative history.
- **Prepare Localized Examples:** Share district-specific examples or success stories to connect the message to their constituents.
- **Focus on Local Impacts:** Emphasize how the priorities benefits their district or state directly.
- **Be Prepared to Answer Questions:** Anticipate potential questions or counterpoints and have responses ready.
- **Keep It Concise:** Meetings are often short—focus on the most critical points.
- **Provide a Leave-Behind:** Include a one-pager with key points and your contact information.
- **Follow Up:** Send a thank-you email with materials to reinforce your message.



ENGAGEMENT DONT'S

- **Avoid Overloading with Data:** Use only the most relevant facts —too much information dilutes your message.
- **Don't Use Jargon:** Replace technical terms with plain language.
- **Avoid Ambiguity:** Be clear and direct within messaging.
- **Don't Assume Anything:** Confirm they understand the role of MPOs and how funding directly impacts their district.
- **Avoid Partisan Language:** Keep the focus on wide-reaching benefits like economic growth and safety.





KEY MESSAGES TEMPLATE

This Key Messages Template provides a space to help you craft concise, impactful messages that resonate with decision-makers and stakeholders. Use this template to build your own persuasive key messages and ensure your priorities are heard.

HOW TO USE THE TEMPLATE

1. Fill in Specifics

Replace placeholders with details tailored to your MPO's advocacy goals and regional priorities.

2. Tailor Messaging

Adapt messages, supporting arguments, stories, and asks to resonate with specific audiences.

3. Integrate Into Materials

Use this framework and other tools from [AMPO's MPO Engagement Toolkit](#) to guide MPO-specific one-pagers, presentations, and talking points.



EXAMPLE: REDUCING LOCAL MATCH

Category	Details
Objective	Reduce or eliminate local match requirements to unlock federal funding for all communities, especially smaller and under-resourced areas.
Key Message	High local match requirements create unnecessary red tape and prevent smaller communities from accessing the federal funding they need to address critical infrastructure. By reducing match requirements, we can remove these barriers, streamline federal investments, and ensure taxpayer dollars are working smarter—directly benefitting rural and small communities
Audience	• Primary: Congressional staff (particularly those working on the T&I Committee) • Secondary: Coalition partners and local government stakeholders.
Supporting Arguments	• Reducing match requirements ensures federal dollars reach the communities that need them most. • Smaller jurisdictions with tighter budgets are disproportionately impacted by high match thresholds, often delaying or canceling essential projects. • Reforming match requirements would help level the playing field, ensuring all communities, regardless of size, can benefit from federal transportation investments.
Asks	Advocate for reducing or eliminating match requirements for [specific federal program, e.g., TAP, CMAQ, or CRP], ensuring smaller communities can access critical funding.
Stories & Evidence	Success Story: "[Insert MPO or community] was able to secure federal funding for a [project type] after match requirements were reduced, delivering tangible benefits to [specific region]." Data Point: "A study by [Insert credible source] shows that [specific percentage] of small jurisdictions struggle to meet federal match requirements, leaving them unable to access available grant opportunities."

MESSAGING FRAMEWORK TEMPLATE



Category	Details
Objective	
Key Message	
Audience	
Supporting Arguments	
Asks	
Stories & Evidence	

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT

01 Know the Rules

- MPOs must adhere to state, local, and federal lobbying restrictions.
- Check with your legal team to ensure compliance.

02 AMPO as a Resource

How AMPO can support your MPO:

- Join your MPO in meetings with Hill staff and members to provide expertise and amplify messaging.
- Provide messaging templates and one-pagers.
- Offer support on developing key messages.
- Keep you informed on federal transportation policy, funding, and reauthorization efforts.



Get Involved!

AMPO

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