

# Real world policy and messaging

How to talk effectively about our values and mission with people across the political spectrum

## What does it mean to be “political”?

What do you associate with the word “political”? Jot down the thoughts and feelings that come up for you when you hear this word.

**Thoughts**

**Feelings**

**If your associations with the word “politics” is negative, consider adopting this working definition: “Politics is how we engage with each other to prioritize and direct resources to desired ends.” How does this definition of politics inform how you might approach speaking with political leaders about the value and impact of libraries?**

I have learned over the years that when one’s mind is made up, this diminishes fear; knowing what must be done does away with fear.

– Rosa Parks

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## Your passion, your practice

Speaking authentically and passionately to leaders and community members about your agency's mission and benefit for people and community will help build support.

Why do you, personally, choose to work in the field you work in? How has the type of work you do made a difference for you and/or those in your family?

Who do you serve? Who benefits from your agency's work?

Why is your mission important to those people? What difference have you seen your agency make in the lives of Utahns?

Effective communication is 20% what you know and 80% how you feel about what you know.

– Jim Rohn

## Preparing to talk with Electeds

Before meeting with an elected, make time to research them and develop an understanding of who they are and what they care about. Reviewing their biographies, including bill sponsorships, committee assignments, and campaign platform will help you develop an effective message that aligns with their values.

Name of Elected and their position: \_\_\_\_\_

Note The Sources Used to Research: (Legistorm, Votesmart, Ballotpedia, Official govt. webpage, campaign materials, Wikipedia, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Other Sources?)

What issues do they care about? What is their agenda? (Education? Economy? Health? Safety? Environment? Housing? Free Speech?)

What are their core values?

What are some key messages about the Library you can share that, based on your research, will resonate with this elected official?

What are some offers you can make to help this elected official be successful?

We should remember that good fortune often happens when opportunity meets with preparation.

- Thomas A. Edison

## Effective Messaging: 27 – 9 – 3

The 27=9-3 rule is a classic and frequently used approach to developing effective messaging. In short, the model suggests that we develop a message with no more than 27 words, deliverable in nine seconds, and containing just three (or fewer) ideas.

### 27-9-3 Message About Your Agency: Generic

27-9-3 Message About the Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

27-9-3 Message About the Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

27-9-3 Message About the Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Every act of communication is a miracle of translation.  
– Ken Liu

## THE THREE LANGUAGES OF POLITICS

In his book, *The Three Languages of Politics: Talking Across the Political Divide* author Arnold Kling suggests that there are three main ideological groups: progressives, libertarians, and conservatives. Each of these groups has a specific frame/worldview and – importantly – a specific default language that they use to describe the world.

Kling's hope is that by becoming more aware of our personal worldview and the language that we default to using to make political arguments, we can learn to communicate our values and positions in the language of the other two groups, thereby reducing polarization and making it easier to find common ground.

### The Three Spheres

**Progressives** fundamentally see the world as an axis of oppressed vs. oppressor. While they may value self-determination, personal liberty and responsibility, and the importance of tradition and group bonds, their values of equity and justice will take precedence. **Tip:** Frame the value of your work in language and stories of equity, social justice, a leveling of the playing field for all community members, and equal treatment for all.

**Libertarians** fundamentally see the world as an axis of personal liberty vs. coercion. While they may value the importance of equity, social justice, tradition and group bonds, their values of liberty, self-determination, and freedom from government regulations will take precedence. **Tip:** Frame the value of your work in language and stories of liberty, self-determination, opportunity, hard work, and support for those that are motivated to help themselves.

**Conservatives** fundamentally see the world as an axis of civilization/tradition vs. barbarism. While they may value the importance of equity, social justice, liberty, self-determination, and freedom from government regulations, their values of tradition and the importance of group bonds, will take precedence. **Tip:** Frame the value of your work in language and stories of preservation of tradition, local community history, family, helping new arrivals assimilate, and western/Christian values.

One of my prescriptions for slow political thinking is to try to avoid telling yourself, "I'm reasonable, they're not." Instead, I would suggest the following rule of thumb. The only person you are qualified to pronounce unreasonable is yourself.

- Arnold Kling

## Tailor Language to Community Groups

You can tailor the language you use to describe your work to different community groups by reflecting on what they care about. Creating a communication plan to connect with stakeholders across all spheres leads to an understanding of how your agency enacts the value system of the community and supports a shared vision.

- **Educational Stakeholders:** *“Who else cares about education?”* Organizations, agencies, and stakeholder groups (formal and informal) that cover pre-k, k-12, after school, and college/career readiness. Think about the people who run, organize, manage, or staff these organizations. What language might appeal to them?
- **Social Welfare or Faith-Based Stakeholders:** *“Who else cares about the same populations?”* Organizations, agencies, and stakeholder groups that run or support Counseling Centers, Food Pantry / WIC, Jobs Training Center, Literacy Centers, Youth Oriented Organizations, other Human Services and faith-based organizations.
- **Governmental Agency Stakeholders:** *“Who Cares What the Tax Rate is?”* People who run the town/city/ county/state agencies and departments who are partners or potential partners with you on programs or services, or that do overlapping or competitive services with your agency.
- **Civic/Social/Arts Organization Stakeholders:** *“Who Else Wants to Change the World a Bit?”* Civic and social clubs, organizations, and community groups. Examples include traditional clubs and orgs like the Rotary, and newer or transitional ones that come together with a local-focus on social media. Note volunteer or paid leadership of Clubs and Social Organizations, Heritage and Local History, GLBT, Immigrant and New Resident, Arts & Culture organizations, and Environment and Livable Communities.
- **Business Stakeholders:** *“Who Doesn’t Always Know about how your agency helps to support a healthy, thriving economy?”* Who are the biggest employers in town? Who runs and supports the various ‘main street’ or business district orgs in the community? Who is concerned about business growth and support? Who are your retail neighbors, including restaurants, bars, and services? Who are the key realtors in the community?
- **Politicians and Local Elected officials:** *“Who else has constituents and cares about the overall healthy functioning and livability of the community?”* Local, State, Federal officials, including key ‘former electeds’ who still have a role in the political life of the community.
- **Formal and Informal Media and Social Networks:** *“Who needs to hear it first?”* What are the local sources of information and gossip in town – formal and informal? Include Newspapers, Social Media Groups, Bloggers, Networkers, Influencers, and Connectors (aka gossips).

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

– African Proverb

## action planning

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### Real World Policy and Messaging

#### KEY CONCEPTS, INSIGHTS, AND TAKEAWAYS

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The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any.

Alice Walker

## action planning

### **ACTIONS I CAN TAKE TO APPLY WHAT I'VE LEARNED**

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You are what you do,  
not what you say  
you'll do.

C.G. Jung

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