



Developing Strategic Messaging to Attract TPP Program Partners



To recruit young people into your Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) program, you need to identify partners that serve youth who would benefit from participating. While it's essential to form partnerships that advance your program's goals, it's just as important to recognize how you can help potential partners meet their goals. By developing strategic messaging that highlights the benefits to each potential partner and addresses their concerns upfront, you can make it easier for decision makers to say "yes" to building a relationship with your TPP program.

This job aid will help you as a TPP project director or program manager:

- Identify the remarkable aspects of your TPP program to highlight with potential partners
- Understand potential partners' needs and motivations
- Develop strategic messages that will resonate with decision makers



Identify the remarkable aspects of your TPP program

When you're busy, it's tempting to copy your well-crafted grant language and plug it into your marketing materials and communications. But that language typically isn't written in a way that emphasizes what is remarkable about your program—in other words, what makes your program stand out. Sharing the remarkable qualities of your program can pique the interest of your potential partners and compel them to explore a partnership with you. Complete the steps below to identify what is remarkable about your program.

Step 1: Build your credibility bank

In addition to providing potential partners with evaluation results that show your program works, share the remarkable parts of your program's track record—like the press, awards, and certifications that your program has earned. These accolades can boost your credibility in the eyes of potential partners. As a team, create a “credibility bank” where you document and regularly update these accomplishments.

Step 2: Conduct past partner interviews

You can get compelling marketing language from partners you have successfully collaborated with in the past. Interview 3–5 past partners to gather their perspective on what your TPP program brings to the table. Use the questions on the right as your framework. Get permission to record the conversation and use quotes or soundbites in your marketing materials.

Questions for past partner interviews:

1. What reservations did you initially have about partnering with us?
2. Now we have worked together, how has your perception of us as a partner changed?
3. Can you share a specific example of an outcome of our partnership that has made a significant impact on your organization?
4. What would you say to an organization that is interested in working with us but is on the fence?
5. Is there anything else you'd like to share?



Understand potential partners' needs and motivations

To cultivate a successful partnership, you and your partners must have goals and objectives that align. Your next step is to learn as much about the needs and motivations of potential partners as you can. Once you deeply understand your potential partners, you can showcase the remarkable parts of your program that will benefit them. Complete the three steps below to understand your potential partners' needs and motivations.

Step 1: “Listen” online

“Listening” to what your potential partners say online before you start creating messages will give you a sense of what they care about and the unique language they use. You can then align the terms and tone in your messaging with theirs to “score points” and establish commonalities with them.

Questions for “listening” online:

1. Identify 3–5 potential partners to “listen” to.
2. Spend 10–20 minutes reviewing each of their websites and social media accounts.
3. For each organization, answer the following:
 - What topics do they talk about?
 - What words do they use? For example, do they call the people they serve youth, young people, students, or scholars?
 - What is their tone? For example, is it friendly? Serious?
 - What types of content and statistics are they sharing and reposting?
 - Who is interacting with them online? Who are their supporters? Who are their adversaries?



Understand potential partners' needs and motivations

Continued

Step 2: Hold initial conversations

Once you have “listened” to your potential partners online, you are ready to hold initial conversations in which you gather information about their priorities and challenges and how your TPP program can meet their needs. An initial conversation is not a platform for you to ask an organization to become a partner; rather, it is a venue for you to enhance your understanding of what is important to them. Use the questions on the right as your framework. Get permission to record the conversation so that you can reference it when you begin developing messages.

Questions for holding initial conversations:

1. Thinking about your short-term goals—what are your priorities right now?
2. What challenges are preventing you from achieving success in these priorities?
3. What strategies have you tried to overcome these challenges? What have been the results of these strategies so far?
4. Thinking beyond current priorities to your long-term goals—what’s the number one goal that you want to achieve for the youth in your community?
5. What are 3 of the concerns you have about achieving this goal?



Understand potential partners' needs and motivations

Continued

Step 3: Create organizational profiles

Now it's time to analyze the information you've collected and create organizational profiles called personas. Personas are archetypes that describe your potential partners' goals and behaviors. Having personas will help you keep your potential partners' needs top of mind so that you develop messaging that resonates with them.

To begin developing personas, group your potential partners into categories based on common characteristics (like the type of organization and/or decision maker) or themes (like the type of challenges they face). For each category, create a persona that summarizes key findings about that type of partner's needs, motivations, challenges, language, and other relevant characteristics. For example, if you're considering a partnership with several middle schools, then you might create a single persona for a middle school principal that draws on all of the middle school-related research you've conducted and conversations you've had.

Example of an organizational profile:

Profile Name: Peter the Proactive Principal

Type of Organization: Middle school that prioritizes social and emotional learning

Demographics Served: 100% free and reduced lunch; 60% Black and 40% White

Buzzwords: Social and emotional learning, blended learning

Goals: Close achievement gaps

Challenges: Staff not trained to teach sensitive topics

Gatekeepers: School board and PTA

Objections: No time for non-academic activities



Develop strategic messages that will resonate with decision makers

Once you've identified the remarkable qualities of your program and you deeply understand your potential partners, you can translate this information into tailored messages designed to persuade each type of potential partner to build a relationship with your program. Complete the steps below to develop strategic messages that will resonate with decision makers at a potential partner organization.

Step 1: Write “what we do” statements

A “what we do” statement succinctly describes the type of organization you want to partner with, the primary challenge they face, and how you will solve their problem to help them achieve their desired outcomes. A good “what we do” statement shows your potential partner that you understand them and explains why they should partner with you. Note that a “what we do” statement may not mention teen pregnancy prevention because it should focus on the needs of the partner rather than your needs. Create a “what we do” statement for each persona using the formula below.

“What we do” statement formula:

We partner with [type of organization] that is [challenge] [how your TPP program will address the challenge] in order to [outcome 1], [outcome 2], and [outcome 3].

Type of organization: Use as specific a description as possible, based on information gathered during your initial conversation with the potential partner. (Don't rely only on the descriptions they use in printed materials, which tend to be broad.) Avoid using negative language when describing the potential partner organization—instead of “low performing schools,” say “schools that have high absenteeism rates.”

Challenge: Summarize the potential partner's primary challenge. Focus on the organization's challenge, not the individual student challenges that the program seeks to address.

How your TPP program will address the challenge: Describe the specific services and opportunities your program brings that can help solve the problem your potential partner is focused on.

Outcomes: List three outcomes that the potential partner wants to achieve. These desired outcomes tend to be longer term than the desired outcomes of TPP programs.

EXAMPLE: We partner with middle schools that have high absenteeism rates and engage students in life skills training in order to improve attendance, increase students' emotional intelligence, and boost achievement scores.



Develop strategic messages that will resonate with decision makers *Continued*

Step 2: Document a Q&A list

One roadblock to forming successful partnerships is not being prepared for objections that potential partners bring up—for example, “We don’t have time for your program.” Using information gathered in your initial conversations, create a list of the common objections you hear. Prepare answers to each of these questions so that you’re ready to respond. See the example to the right.

Response example to common objections:

Objection: Our staff aren’t trained to provide “TPP programming!”

Answer: We will train your staff in how to facilitate discussions about reproductive and sexual health topics and how to manage a classroom. These skills will prepare them to implement the TPP program and will enhance their teaching outside of the program.



Develop strategic messages that will resonate with decision makers *Continued*

Step 3: Create a pitch deck

Once you've completed all previous steps, you can compile your learnings and messages into a pitch deck. A pitch deck is a short presentation (about 20 slides) that organizational leaders use to market themselves to potential partners. Customize your presentation for each potential partner.

Remember to keep the presentation concise so that you keep your audience's attention. You can deliver the presentation live (in person or by webinar) or you can record it.

Make sure that your pitch deck presentation:

- Describes the potential partner's primary challenge (include statistics, if possible)
- Uses language and content that reflects a clear understanding of your potential partner's needs and motivations (leverage the persona for each type of partner)
- Explains how partnering with you will help the organization overcome their challenge (use the "what we do" statement for each partner)
- Addresses objections that you anticipate hearing from the potential partner (from your Q&A list)
- States a clear call to action that you want the organization's leader to take, such as scheduling a call or filling out an application