If You Build It, Will They Fund?
How Effective Communication Can Support Sustainability

Christina H. Zurla
Communication Specialist
Communication & Social Marketing Center
January 26, 2011, Bethesda, MD
Session Objectives

• Understand the role communication plays in sustainability.
• Share learning from our research with GLS grantees.
• Discuss key sustainability audiences and what they need to hear to support your work.
• Review and assess how grantees currently talk about GLS.
• Learn about a series of key messages now available to GLS grantees.
• Practice using and applying these messages.
Why Communication Matters

*If you build it, will they come?*
Why Communication Matters

If you build it, will they fund?
What We Heard You Say

• Create a clear, compelling, and consistent way of talking about the GLS program and framing your work in the context of a larger, national picture.
  – Elevate sense of **urgency** about youth suicide.
  – Increase communities’ **understanding and application** of suicide prevention practices.
You Want Resources That . . .

- Make your case.
- Make it personal.
- Make it a community responsibility.
- Ultimately, garner support and funding.
Who Do You Need To Talk To?

• School leadership
• School staff
• Student leaders/organizations
• Business/community leaders
• Fraternities/Sororities
• Academic Departments
• Community-Based Organizations
• State-Based Suicide Prevention Programs

• Faith-based leaders
• Parents/parent organizations
• Policymakers
• Campus Counseling/Health Centers
• College Administrators
• Campus Housing
• Campus Security
• Others?
Who You Said You **REALLY** Need To Talk To

For sustainability:

• Institutional Leaders
  – Presidents
  – Trustees
  – Administrators

• Policymakers/Government Influencers
  – State/Federal legislators
  – Other government agencies
The Challenge

• You may be starting from scratch.
• They have plethora of competing priorities.
• They may not understand complexities of suicide prevention/mental health.
• They face pressures from outside constituents.
• They need to clearly see ROI.
So, Your Messages Need To . . .

• Elevate the urgency of your work.
• Solve a problem for your audience.
• Give your suicide prevention efforts national context.
• Communicate not just what you do, but *why your work matters*. 
Some Tips On Effective Messages

• Mix attributes with outcomes and benefits.
• Use moving, simple language that humanizes the subject. (jargon-free)
• Use data, where available, to support your messages.
• Align with your audience’s needs, beliefs, values, and priorities.
• Speak with one, consistent, and compelling voice.
How You Talk About Your Work

• We interviewed 50 GLS stakeholders.

• Asked: “How do you describe the GLS program to someone unfamiliar with it”.

• Here’s what we heard . . .
“Garrett Lee Smith is a Federally funded Initiative that's administered through the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration. Its aim is to elevate suicide as a public health concern and to develop strategies both in states and across tribal nations around the country for addressing youth suicide as a national health priority.”
“GLS encourages the development and enhancement of suicide prevention on college campuses so that we can catch students early before we experience an unfortunate incident of suicide.”
How You Talk About Your Work

“We are pursuing ways to prevent the death of our young people with the hope of saving lives and helping to promote wellness among young people.”
“It's a Federal program supporting states, tribes, territories, and campuses in implementing a public health approach to suicide prevention.”
Remember: Your Messages Should

• Elevate the urgency of your work.
• Give your suicide prevention efforts national context.
• Communicate not just what you do, but *why your work matters.*
Key GLS Messages

• Critical safety net.
• Empowering people to act.
• Advancing the field.
Critical Safety Net

From This
It's a Federal program supporting states, tribes, territories, and campuses in implementing a public health approach to suicide prevention.

To This
GLS grantees help create a suicide prevention safety net for young people at one of the most emotionally vulnerable times of their lives, and build capacity for people to talk about and address suicidal thinking.
Empower People to Act

From This
GLS elevates suicide as a public health concern to develop strategies on college campuses around the country for addressing youth suicide as a national health priority.

To This
GLS grantees are building a national response to youth suicide. We connect communities, people, and services so action can be taken to ensure we never turn a blind eye to a young person’s need.
Advance The Field

**From This**
It's a Federal program supporting States, tribes, territories, and campuses in implementing a public health approach to suicide prevention.

**To This**
GLS grantees are pioneers in the relatively new field of suicide prevention; experimenting and establishing best practices; ensuring the right infrastructures are in place; and sharing what they learn so young people have a chance to live long, healthy, and happy lives.
Next Steps

• Just a preview; more to come.
• All are customizable.
• Delivering training Webinar and sharing messaging tool.
• Developing a communication toolkit.
Using The Messages

• Using the messages on your worksheet, brainstorm as a team on how you would answer the following questions. Be prepared to report out to the group.
  – What is the GLS program?
  – Why is GLS important?
  – How has GLS been successful?
  – What do GLS grantees do?
Questions?
CONTACT:
Christina Zurla
Communication Specialist

christina_zurla@gallup.com
1-800-790-2647, Ext. 4037