

VARSA Communication Plan

Communication between VARSA members, the grant coordinator, the Fiscal Agent and King County, will be open, respectful, and inclusive. It is important to employ clear communications, regardless of medium:

- Try to anticipate and predict possible causes of confusion, and deal with them up front.
- When writing a memo, email, or other document, be concise and stay on the topic.
- When someone is talking, try to see their perspective and use active listening skills (see appendix 1)
- Complex issues are best discussed face-to-face within the Coalition setting.
- When writing a report, memo, or email, please proof-read before sending. All documents should be personally reviewed for typos, appropriate tone, accuracy, and completeness.
- All VARSA business communication should be in writing via email. Texts and phone conversations will be followed up via email.

Email Communications

Email is a very effective form of communication when used well – it can also be the source of much frustration, confusion and unintended negative impact. Follow the following basic email protocol (see appendix 2):

- Address emails effectively and courteously.
- Ensure the correct people are included in the recipients list. Be careful when using “reply all.”
- Always include [VARSA] at the beginning of the subject line so Coalition emails are easy to see.
- Use the subject line effectively to request key information, provide deadlines or convey requests, e.g.:
[VARSA] Request for Information
- At the beginning of the email, clearly state action requested and a due date, e.g.:
Action: Request for information regarding vacant sector positions
Due by: Tuesday July 29, 6:00pm
- Write clear and concise email messages.
- Use appropriate size font and style and color font sparingly.
- Start a new email thread when starting a new email topic. Do not reuse an old email.
- Respond within one business day.
- Email minimum but necessary information only to people who need to know.
- Provide feedback (cc) to the entire group only when needed for group planning, voting, decision-making.
- Use one-to-one communication for clarifications or concerns.
- Conflict and confrontations need to be addressed in person.



Internal Email Sender/ Recipient Guidelines

These guidelines are designed to ensure responsive, clear communication between all members of the Coalition, and between the Coalition and the grant coordinators.

When requesting information, follow chain of command protocols for information gathering.

- **Sender:** Follow previous guidelines for initial request for information.
- **Sender:** If response is not received within one business day, another request will be sent stating that it is a follow-up response and additional one business day will be noted. The VARSA Chairperson and administrators will be cc'd on this request.
- **Recipient:** Confirm receipt of message with a reply within one business day of receipt unless out of office or on vacation (ideally, out of office email notification would be utilized).
- **Recipient:** Request of specific task or information will be acknowledged and/or answered within one business day. An appropriate response includes stating a specific timeline to provided the deliverable action.
- **Administrative Support Request:** After two unfilled requests, the VARSA Chairperson will restate the request to the Recipient while cc'ing all three involved parties (Sender, Recipient, Administrators).
- If the email Recipient does not respond to the *Administrative Support Request* or provide an appropriate response within one business day, the Recipient has created a conflict.
- The Conflict Resolution Plan initiates communication between the email sender, the email recipient, the VARSA Chairperson and the approved supervising individuals.

How do I share Information?

1) Flow of communication within the Coalition:

- Information is initially shared within a workgroup. This includes emails and meeting minutes.
- The workgroup Chairperson(s) share(s) group information with VARSA either via email or a presentation at another VARSA meeting.
- The VARSA officers share this information with the Coalition either via email, the VARSA website, The cloud-based backup, in writing, and/or with face-to-face conversations.
- This information is noted in workgroup and VARSA minutes, as well as supporting documents that are shared on The cloud-based backup and are provided to the appropriate administrative parties, such as the Fiscal Agent and grant administrators (county, state, federal government).

2) Flow of communication between VARSA, Fiscal Agent and grant administrators (county, state, federal):

- Responsible party to responsible party (i.e., treasurer to bookkeeper); each party is responsible for moving along their chains of command to share information, concerns or questions.
- MOU or Contract: VARSA Chairperson and/or grant staff to senior agency representative and reverse.

Meeting Attendance

Attending meetings is a prerequisite for all VARSA members and staff.

- Staff supervised by VARSA may miss no more than two meetings in a row or six in a grant cycle.
- VARSA voting members must adhere to the terms of their signed Coalition Involvement Agreement (CIA), outlining meeting attendance.
- Following three incidences of non-compliance with any of the above stated concerns will be brought to the attention of the VARSA Chairperson via email. The Executive Committee will then determine if the concerns can be resolved or if the Conflict Resolution Plan needs implementing. All communication will be documented via email.
- If at any time the Executive Committee believes there is a breach of VARSA confidentiality and/or terms of behavior in the CIAs, the Conflict Resolution Plan will be immediately implemented.

Meeting Protocols

To keep meetings functioning effectively follow the following protocols. Full Coalition agendas will reflect current priorities of workgroups and full-Coalition activities. Meetings are limited to two hours.

- Plan agenda items to include standard reports, and prioritize additional business by order of importance.
- Send out agenda three business days prior to the meeting date.
- Send out reports one day prior to meeting date.
- Send meeting invitation to all VARSA members, and send out meeting reminders where appropriate.
- Start punctually and assign a timekeeper.
- Turn off and put away cell phones.
- Refocus discussion when it gets off-track.
- Encourage all participants to contribute and keep personal stories brief.
- Discourage side conversations.
- Ensure that agreed actions have clear deliverables and due dates when assigned to a person or group.
- End on time.



Format for Reports

Reports will be sent via email in a Word document and limited to no more than 2 full pages (1.5 space.) They are to be completed by:

- VARSA Chairperson
- Treasurer
- CPWI and DFC Grant Coordinators
- Workgroup Chairpersons

Chairperson Reports to include:	Overall goals, mission and strategies progress Community events / outreach Proposed Coalition Action Items
Coordinator Reports to include:	Coordinator tasks Strategy Updates / Successes and Challenges Next Steps to be accomplished Proposed Coalition Action Items Update on County timeline progress
Treasurer’s Report to include:	Allocation/ expenditure reports for each funding stream Budget concerns Upcoming funding requirements Coalition Publicity, Media, Articles
Work Group Chairperson Reports to include:	Progress Successes and Challenges Next Steps Proposed Coalition Action Items

Reporting between VARSA and the Fiscal Agent

Communication between VARSA and the Fiscal Agent is key to making the partnership work effectively. Reporting will be clear, concise and timely, following the attached timeline.

- Reports to be prepared and conveyed electronically unless otherwise noted.
- Copies of all reports to be saved to the Cloud backup system, and hard copies filed with VARSA secretary.



Document	Contents/Notes	Due Date	Produced By	Delivered To
Meeting reports	For any meetings relating to administration of CPWI grant, include any ad hoc or regular meetings, report on agenda, attendees, length of meeting.	By third day of month or two business days prior to the fifth of each month, whichever is later.	Meeting coordinator	CPWI Grant Coordinator for Fiscal Agent. VARSA Chairperson for Coalition. Copy filed in cloud backup system
King County Prevention Coalition Activity Report	Standard xls spreadsheet design by King County.	5 th of Month or earliest available date.	CPWI Grant Coordinator for Fiscal Agent.	VARSA Treasurer DFC Grant Coordinator. Copy filed in cloud backup system
King County Prevention Coalition Fiscal Monitoring Report	Generated by King County fiscal staff.	End of month following billing month.	King County fiscal or contract monitor.	VARSA Treasurer CPWI Grant Coordinator for Fiscal Agent.
VARSA Volunteer Hours	DFC Coordinator to pull from combination of KC Coalition Activity reports and other meeting information. Report is generated monthly for prior completed month.	By 20 th of every month or earliest available date.	DFC Grant Coordinator.	Fiscal agent information systems coordinator
Invoices – generated by person to be reimbursed.	Invoices for expenditures outside of Fiscal Agent employee expenses	At least 5 business days prior to 1 st and 15 th of every month.	Person seeking reimbursement.	VARSA Treasurer
Invoices – processed and approved by VARSA Treasurer.	Invoices for expenditures outside of Fiscal Agent employee expenses.	At least 4 business days prior to 1 st and 15 th of every month.	VARSA Treasurer	Fiscal agent bookkeeper.



Format for Minutes

Meeting minutes to be distributed within two business days following the meeting (by Monday.) The secretary will email minutes in Word (.docx) format to VARSA Chairperson and file them in the appropriate cloud-based backup folder. Minutes will also be posted on the VARSA website. The format for minutes includes the following components:

- Meeting name, date and location.
- Start and end time.
- List of Attendees.
- Discussion Items
- Motions, seconds and voting outcomes.
- Meeting Summary.
- Action Items, who they are assigned to and completion dates.
- Reports to be attached to minutes

Publicity

Publicity involving the Coalition, the fiscal agency, a partner agency or group will be crafted and approved by the involved parties.

Resolving Conflict through Communication

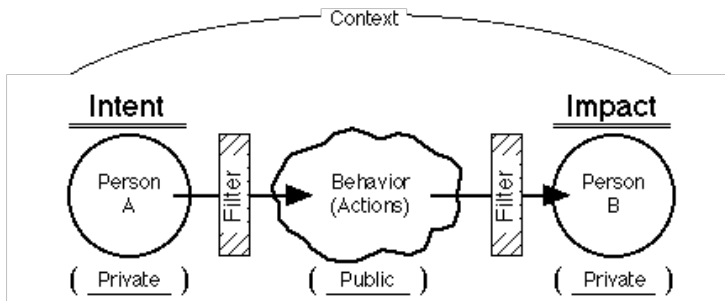
VARSA will not act out conflict with any organization in the media or with elected officials. Conflicts between the Coalition and partner agencies will be resolved utilizing the VARSA Conflict Resolution Plan.

VARSA Communication Plan Appendix 1

VARSA Active Listening Skills

The Interpersonal Gap (Wallen)

The most basic and recurring problem in communicating with others is the relationship between what you intend and the effect of your actions on others. The Interpersonal Gap refers to the degree of congruence between one person's intentions and the effect produced in the other. If the effect is what was intended, the gap has been bridged. If the effect is the opposite of what was intended, the gap has become greater. One way to reduce the gap is through active listening.



Becoming an Active Listener

There are five key elements of active listening. They all help you ensure that you hear the other person, and that the other person knows you are hearing what they say. Remember, what you hear and what the other person is saying can often be remarkably different. Good communication skills require a high level of self-awareness. By understanding your personal style of communicating, you will go a long way towards creating clear, crisp communication with others.

1. Pay Attention

Give the speaker your undivided attention, and acknowledge the message. Recognize that non-verbal communication also "speaks" loudly.

- Look at the speaker directly.
- Put aside distracting thoughts.
- Don't mentally prepare a rebuttal!
- Avoid being distracted by environmental factors. For example, side conversations.
- "Listen" to the speaker's body language.

2. Show That You're Listening

Use your own body language and gestures to convey your attention.

- Nod occasionally.
- Smile and use other facial expressions.
- Note your posture and make sure it is open and inviting.
- Encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal comments like yes, and uh huh.

3. Provide Feedback

Our personal filters, assumptions, judgments, and beliefs can distort what we hear. As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said. This may require you to reflect what is being said and ask questions.

- Reflect what has been said by paraphrasing. "What I'm hearing is," and "Sounds like you are saying,"
- Ask questions to clarify certain points. "What do you mean when you say." "Is this what you mean?"
- Summarize the speaker's comments periodically.

4. Defer Judgment

Interrupting is a waste of time. It frustrates the speaker and limits full understanding of the message.

- Allow the speaker to finish each point before asking questions.
- Don't interrupt with counter arguments.

5. Respond Appropriately

Active listening is a model for respect and understanding. You are gaining information and perspective. You add nothing by attacking the speaker or otherwise putting him or her down.

- Be candid, open, and honest in your response.
- Assert your opinions respectfully, with "I" statements.
- If you find yourself responding emotionally to what someone said, say so, and ask for more information: "I may not be understanding you correctly, and I find myself taking what you said personally. What I thought you just said is XXX; is that what you meant?"
- Treat the other person in a way that you think he or she would want to be treated.

Key Points

Be deliberate with your listening and remind yourself frequently that your goal is to truly hear what the other person is saying. Ask questions, reflect, and paraphrase to ensure you understand the message.

VARSA Communication Plan Appendix 2

Sample Email

From: Strata Associates (Lisa MacLeod)

To: Chuck at VARSA

Cc: 'Nancy Vanderpool'

Bcc:

Subject: [VARSA] Request for Information

Action: Request for information regarding vacant sector positions

By when: Tuesday July 29, 3:00pm

Hi Chuck and Nancy

Please can you let me know which sector positions are filled and which are vacant?

I think I may have some people interested in joining the coalition and need to see where they might fit.

Cheers!

Lisa MacLeod