



Offering Framing Feedback

Reframing Housing and Community Development

This worksheet is a guide to identifying areas for improvement as well as effective framing strategies at work in communications. Offering feedback on these points is a critical piece of building organizational and individual strategic framing capacity. Framing feedback has the added benefits of building awareness of the importance of language cues, helping communicators effectively frame why their work matters, adding tested framing strategies to communications, and building capacity to evaluate framing in the future.

Use this worksheet to review products like social media posts, editorials, fact sheets, reports, policy statements, grant applications and brochures; any form of outreach communications is an opportunity to frame.

Step 1: Check your document for communications backfires.

Understanding what framing choices may backfire or cue up unproductive cultural models—deeply held, shared assumptions surrounding a social issue—is a key step to framing issues effectively. Read your document and search for language that might reinforce unproductive assumptions about housing. Make the following notes:

- Circle any passages that strike you as invitations to default to unproductive cultural models.
- In the margins or on a separate sheet, name the cultural models in the *Swamp of Housing* that these passages may activate. For example, *Corrupt and Inefficient Government*, *Consumerism* (a home is another product you buy/if you can't afford one, tough), and *Fatalism* (this problem is too big to solve) are all problematic assumptions.
- Underline any words or phrases that are crisis-oriented.

Step 2: Establish what is at stake.

Well-framed communications use values to show why an issue is a matter of public concern. Read your document a second time and make the following notes:

- Identify any passages that use a value to explain the issue's collective importance.
- Label any uses of the *Interdependence* (we are all connected) or *Fairness Across Places* (where we live should not prevent us from thriving) values.
- Place a "V" in the margin to identify missed opportunities to insert a value and establish what is at stake.

Step 3: Frame solutions and data effectively.

Skipping solutions and not adequately explaining what data points show are two avoidable communications traps. Read your document again as though you are not an expert in this issue. Make the following notes:

- Place an “S” in the margin to identify any missed opportunities to introduce solutions.
- Identify any uses of data points, statistics or numbers. If they reinforce unproductive frames (e.g. *Fatalism* or *Crisis*) or are not explained, mark them with a “D”.
- Find opportunities to explain more clearly how something works or to show causal links (what affects what). Mark these with an “E.”

Step 4: Create the reframed draft.

The annotations you made in Steps 1-3 are a blueprint for reframing this document. These notes will help build a new draft that implements key framing principles.

- Delete the circled and underlined language cued. Replace them with more productive cues (e.g., emphasizing what steps improve affordability instead of crisis language).
- Consider whether or not the document uses tested values.
- Where you have marked the draft with a “V,” draft sentences that use a recommended value to show why the issue matters.
- Where you have marked the draft with an S”, draft sentences that introduce solutions.
- Check whether data points add explanatory power.
- Fill in the holes in explanation wherever the draft is marked with an “E.”