IQA Communications Plan

February 1, 2014

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1. Background

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) leads the nation's healthcare mission by implementing the provisions of Medicare and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) while overseeing contact center operations for constituent inquiries. This is bringing about a significant change to health care access and coverage in the United States. Among numerous key provisions, the ACA calls for:

- The creation of Health Insurance Marketplaces (i.e., Marketplaces) for constituents to shop, select, and enroll in affordable health care coverage
- New regulations on all health plans that will prevent health insurers from denying coverage to people for any reason
- The requirement that most individuals have health insurance beginning in 2014, known as the Individual Responsibility Mandate
- The penalties to employers that do not offer affordable coverage to their employees, with exceptions for small employers

The responsibility for implementing many provisions of the ACA and related changes to Medicare lies with the CMS. The CMS Call Center Operations (CCO), which currently answers consumers' Medicare inquiries, will be responsible for supporting Marketplace inquiries as well beginning June 2013. Although CCO contact channels include phone, email, written correspondence, web chat, and the Advanced Resolution Center (ARC), CMS will focus initial Marketplace quality assurance efforts on phone inquiries. CCO inquiries will generally align with the traditional Medicare benefits and programs, as well as questions about general Marketplace policies, referrals for assistance in decision-making, or other individual health care needs.

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2. Introduction: Communications Plan

The purpose of the Training, Quality, and Content (TQC) communications plan is to ensure cross-functional work teams and stakeholders are aware of and engaged in executing the TQC requirements. There is an urgent need to collaborate across work teams to minimize and, optimally, eliminate any potential for silo operations. Consolidating and centralizing communications allows the TQC work teams to speak with one consistent voice to CMS and CCO (hereafter referred to as “client”). The communications plan outlines a structured approach for stakeholder engagement enabling leadership to accomplish the following:

- Convey clear and consistent messages that are directly related to the TQC goals and objectives
- Build cross-functional work team and external stakeholder understanding of TQC requirements, the impacts to their processes and systems, and strategies to address them as needed
- Build cross-functional work team credibility and trust through active and consistent communications
- Improve communication effectiveness through lessons learned and stakeholder feedback

2.1 Document Scope

This communications plan supports the TQC Statement of Work (SOW) requirements. The scope of this document is limited to providing communications guidance to the TQC work teams. This plan is designed to be a dynamic document; maturing into a roadmap for proactively developing and delivering targeted messages to engage, influence, and encourage internal and external stakeholders[1] to take action and ownership related to the advancement of TQC’s mission and vision.

2.2 Roles & Responsibilities

The TQC cross-functional work teams[2] will design, develop and execute communications activities and specific products. Deputy Program Managers[3] and Project Management Office[4] aid the work teams in identifying interdependencies and opportunities to collaborate across the two programs—ACA and Medicare; though, work teams are ultimately responsible for engaging

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[1] The term, “internal stakeholders,” generically refers to the HighPoint Global Team. The term, “external stakeholders,” generically refers to CMS and/or CCO.

[2] Refers to TQC contract work teams (i.e., HighPoint Global Team)

[3] Deputy Program Managers: Mike King, mike.king@highpointglobal.com (Indianapolis) and Mark Mandelkorn, mark.mandelkorn@highpointglobal.com (Baltimore)

[4] Project Management Office Director: Jim Snyder, jim.snyder@highpointglobal.com

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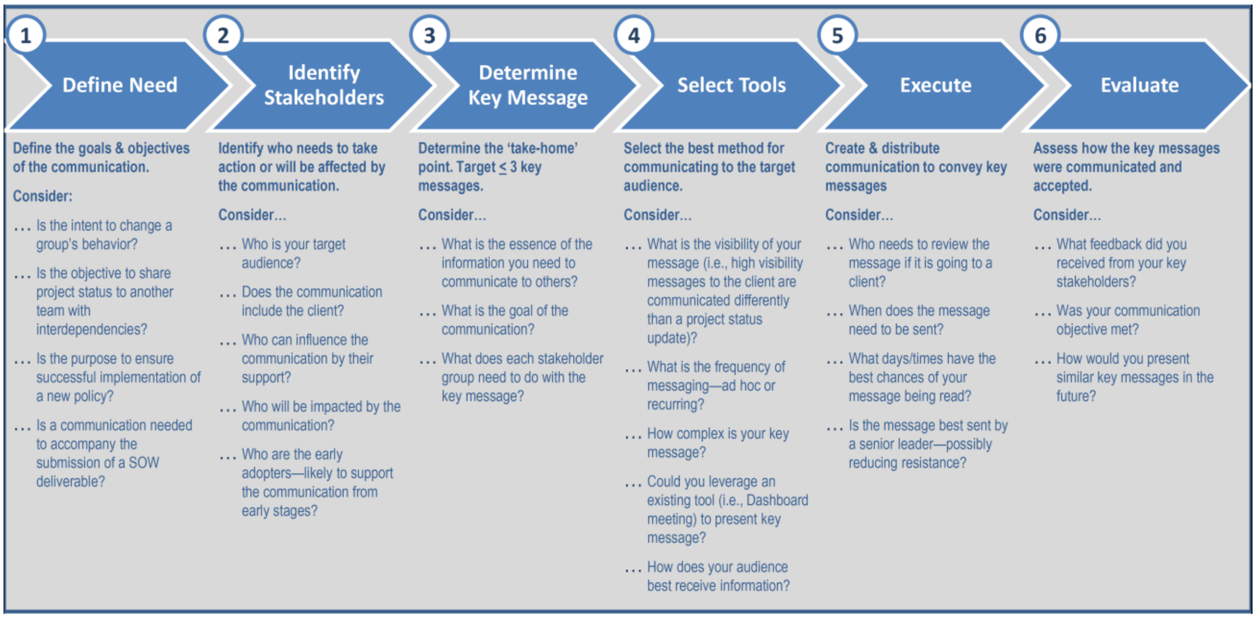
with their appropriate counterparts. TQC leadership[5] will continue to gauge communication effectiveness between the client and work teams.

3. Six-Step Communications Process

This process is designed to help work teams to define communication needs, identify stakeholders, determine messages, select appropriate tools, create communications products to convey the key messages, and evaluate feedback. This plan outlines a standard approach for developing and executing communications through a six-step process (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Six-Step Communications Process



3.1 Define Need

As work teams are established and capabilities expand, it is vital to remain consistent and concise in messaging and products. The initial step in the communications process is identifying a need for communication between work teams, with the client, or with another defined stakeholder group. Define the goals and objectives of the communication. Is the intent to change behavior, inform, or request input?

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[5] Refers to TQC contract leadership (i.e., HighPoint Global Team)

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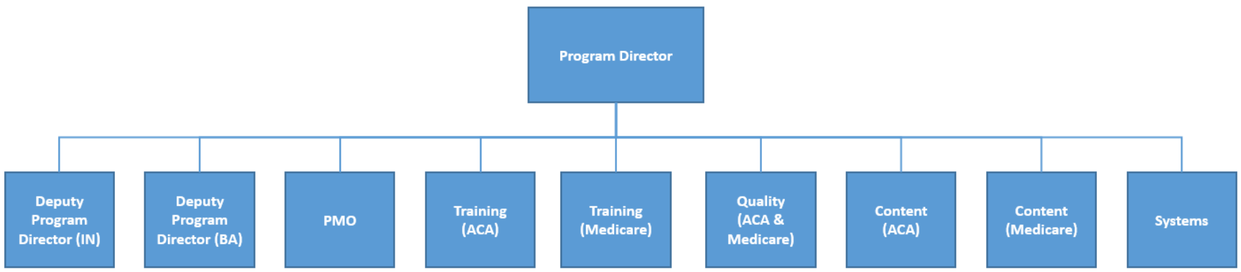
3.2 Identify Stakeholders

The TQC program is comprised of seven work teams and deputy program directors managing the Indianapolis and Baltimore offices (Figure 2). Each team has responsibilities for internal and external communications as defined within each team's concept of operations.

Figure 2. TQC Organization Chart



Each of these stakeholders has a stake in the ongoing activities and tasks performed across the TQC program. Consistent and accurate communication among these stakeholders and their audiences is essential to the continued success of the TQC. The second step of the communications process is to identify stakeholders. Key stakeholders, or target audience, are those individuals or groups identified who need to take action or will be affected by your communication. Engage work team leads (directors, deputy directors) and deputy program managers when the stakeholder group includes the client.

Table 1. Stakeholder Contact Information

Stakeholder contact information is maintained on the TQC SharePoint Site.

Role	*Name/Title/Organization**
…	…

* Email the TQC SharePoint Administrator if you require access to the site.

3.3 Determine Key Message

Team members must choose the appropriate information to share, and ensure that its importance, urgency, and relevance is clear. The third step of the communications process is determining the key message(s). At the most basic level, what should the key stakeholder (i.e., communication recipient or target audience) takeaway from the received communication? Does the recipient need to take action or make a decision? Was the message simply a "FYI?" The author tailors information according to stakeholder needs, with a focus on clarity, consistency, main points, and tone. The rule of thumb is to include three or fewer key messages in the communication.

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3.4 Select Tools

The fourth step is selecting communications tools and tactics for delivering key message(s) to the intended audience. Choose a tool that is acceptable to the stakeholder group and appropriate for the complexity and urgency of the message. For example, a highly complex message requiring cross-team collaboration to resolve a critical project issue is best addressed through a meeting with read-ahead materials. Alternatively, an expense report change to how we enter our time is easily addressed through Human Resource's weekly email announcements. Leverage existing tools for communicating if possible (e.g., key message to the client could accompany an existing and relevant SOW-required report).

Table 2 highlights communication tools maintained on the TQC SharePoint site. Consult with work team leads, deputy program managers, or the PMO Director for insight on appropriate communications tools to use.

> **SOW Deliverables:** All TQC team leaders, program & project managers, and product owners need to be aware of the SOW deliverables, due dates, and process for delivering to client. The required deliverable may appear to be simple and straightforward; each deliverable owner should consider the cross-team dependencies—enhancing the ability to create both a comprehensive *and* innovative product.
>
> **Meetings Matrix**: Serves as a living document of all internal and external TQC meetings. TQC PMO[6] (hereafter referred to as "PMO") encourages all team members to frequently reference the matrix in an effort to stay informed of meeting interdependencies and overlaps. Team members can make recommendations within the matrix to keep, retire, modify, or add meetings to leverage cross-team synergies and SOW requirements. Once the Meetings Matrix has matured, the corresponding Responsible (R), Accountable (A), Consulted (C), and Informed (I) matrix will be developed.
>
> **TQC SharePoint**: Provides a shared online repository for managing team workflows, maintaining working files, and archiving final versions. This site is accessible to authorized TQC team members. Email the TQC SharePoint Administrator to request access.
>
> **TQC Summary Dashboard:** Acts as a collaboration tool for sharing each team's milestones, system deployment schedule, open issues, and progress against key deliverables. This provides a common tool and forum for engaging TQC process partners and client stakeholders.
>
> **Master Schedule (MS):** Integrates work teams' project management schedules—aids identification of specific activities, durations, estimates, target completion dates, critical path, and interdependencies—defining successful task completion. *The MS is under development*.
>
> **Project Toolkit:** Provides project managers and admin with project guides and standard templates, i.e., risk and issues log, TQC PowerPoint, communications plan. *The Toolkit is under development.*

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[6] Refers to the Project Management Office staffed with HighPoint Global resources.

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): Serves as a compilation of questions and answers relevant to all stakeholders. *FAQs are under development.*

Email Distribution Lists: Accurate communication to internal and external stakeholders depends on the use of current email distribution lists. Email distribution lists are dynamic and require TQC team input to remain up to date. *Email distribution lists are under development.*

Table 2. Communication Tools

Communication Tools	Communicator(s)	Stakeholders	Method	Frequency	Feedback Mechanism
SOW Deliverables	Designated deliverable owners should familiarize themselves with the standard process for providing SOW products to CMS (Refer to Appendix 1 – SOW Deliverable Process).				
Meetings Matrix	Team members are encouraged to leverage existing meetings (Refer to Appendix 2 – Meetings Matrix) before scheduling new meetings. Reach out to the Deputy Program Managers or PMO Director with specific meeting instances.				
TQC SharePoint	Project Managers & Admin Content Teams Training Teams Quality Team SOP Team Lead Policy Analysts Process Analyst	Same as Communicators	SharePoint alerts Email alert	As Needed	Email
TQC Summary Dashboard	Project Managers & Admin Content Teams Training Teams Quality Team PMO	CMS	Dashboard presentation Meeting Webinar In-person SharePoint	Weekly	Email In person
Master Schedule (MS)	PMO	CMS Project Managers	MS Project SharePoint	Weekly	Schedule Updates Email In person
Project Toolkit	PMO	Project Managers & Admin	SharePoint	As Needed	Email
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)	PMO	Project Managers & Admin Training Teams Quality Team	SharePoint	As Needed	Email
Email Distribution Lists	Refer to Appendix 3 – Email Distribution Lists				

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Communication Tools	Communicator(s)	Stakeholders	Method	Frequency	Feedback Mechanism
	Project Managers & Admin Content Teams Training Teams Quality Team SOP Team Lead Policy Analysts Process Analyst	Same as Communicators	Email	Updated Bi-weekly	Email

3.5 Execute

Communication among the cross-functional work teams and stakeholders is a recurring and ad hoc necessity. The timing of messages is important as well as the vehicle used to deliver the message. The fourth step of the communications process is creating the communication and distributing to key stakeholder groups. *Quality Assurance* – Ask a colleague or work team lead to review prior to sending high-visibility and/or complex communication. The TQC team is committed to providing excellent, error-free work products to the client. Use multiple quality assurance reviews if necessary.

3.6 Evaluate

The last step of the communications process is evaluation. Were the objective met? How would the process be improved in the future? Using several different methods to measure communications effectiveness is key to refining messages, tools, and tactics, and to ensuring that activities meet stakeholder needs. Some methods are quantitative, while other methods provide anecdotal or qualitative information.

Quantitative methods gauge the number of stakeholders reached, the type, and number of products distributed, and the frequency each stakeholder group receives a communication. In contrast, qualitative methods support two-way dialogue between the work teams and stakeholders. This dialogue allows stakeholders to provide input about how and if communication efforts met their needs.

Table 3. Methods to Measure Success

Quantitative: Progress Indicators	Qualitative: Feedback Mechanisms

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To determine the number of stakeholders reached, track the frequency and/or use of: ▪ Electronic surveys ▪ Online polls ▪ Feedback emails received by PMO Director ▪ Attendees at each event ▪ Read receipts	To gauge stakeholders' commitment level, analyze: ▪ Electronic surveys ▪ FAQs (via emails, meetings, informal interactions) ▪ Face-to-face interactions – Project schedule updates – Weekly TQC Dashboard reviews – Other meetings ▪ Feedback emails received by PMO Director ▪ Unsolicited feedback via phone, email, or in-person

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4. Templates

The PMO maintains communication-focused templates on the TQC SharePoint site.

- Communications Matrix
- Meeting Agenda & Minutes Template
- Standard PowerPoint Template
- Project Status Template

Email the TQC SharePoint Administrator if you require access to the site.

5. Conclusion

The TQC communications plan is designed to help key stakeholders work collaboratively across teams and with the client to support continuity of operations. More specifically, this document is intended to improve stakeholder understanding and proactively engage stakeholders in a two-way information exchange. Work teams can leverage the plan in guiding communications to evolve and mature in support of project objectives. It increases focus on successful tactical and strategic project implementation through key stakeholder engagement. Furthermore, it frames a common understanding of themes and key messages and presents tools available to engage and deliver the right messages, to the right people, at the right time. Concise communication requirements and expectations support team cohesiveness and project execution.

The plan will be a living document—reviewed and revised as needed to ensure that it remains flexible and adjusts to the changing needs of all TQC stakeholders.

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Appendix 1 – SOW Deliverable Process

SOW Deliverable Process

Appendix 2 – Meetings Matrix

The Meetings Matrix is a living document. Its intent is to aid in identifying TQC meetings to keep, retire, modify, or add to satisfy the SOW and cross-team requirements.

The "Consolidated Meetings List" tab provides a summary of meetings compiled from Briljent, Booz Allen Hamilton, and HighPoint Global. Review the Meetings List as needed and make recommendations (Column B "Recommended Actions") to add, remove, modify, or maintain meetings. Please do not delete any rows; rather, use Column B "Recommended Actions" to capture your team's recommendations. The spreadsheet headers have comments inserted to provide additional detail of each column's contents.

Once the Meetings Matrix has matured, the corresponding Responsible (R), Accountable (A), Consulted (C), and Informed (I) matrix will be developed.

Email the PMO with questions, suggestions, or comments about the intent of the meeting matrix file or any of the meeting resources provided.

Appendix 3 – Email Distribution Lists

TQC Email Distribution Lists

Appendix 4 – Instructions for Setting up SharePoint alerts

SharePoint Instructions

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