



#10 Keep it positive

The Goal & The Challenge

When the goal is... to bring other sectors on board with a proposed and critically needed collaboration...

The challenge is... that adopting an alarmist tone and emphasizing the urgency of the matter may actually turn potential collaborators away. Worse, if you don't offer sufficient context or helpful explanation, crisis messages have been shown to trigger suspicion, degrade trust, and feed fatalism among other sectors—all of which makes successful collaboration far less likely.

Before Framing

When You Say... *The percentage of children and adolescents affected by obesity has more than tripled since the 1970s. If the education and public health sectors don't work together to address this problem, we're going to see the rates of chronic illnesses like diabetes, high blood pressure, and osteoarthritis continue to rise.*

They Think... *We are well aware that child obesity is on the rise. In fact, we see the effects of it firsthand every single day. Our students also deal with a range of other health issues and challenges that affect their ability to learn. If public health really wanted to help us address these issues, they'd supply us with resources and empower us to make the changes we know we need.*

Framing can help

Framing can help motivate action and the sense of a common mission by invoking shared values, offering explanation, providing context, and detailing helpful examples. In projecting a constructive "can-do" attitude and positive outlook, the field of public health can advance a mobilizing vision—of safer, healthier, and more prosperous communities—that professionals in all sectors see themselves as having a role in and are inspired to help build.

An effective reframe would look something like this:

We know that teachers and administrators care deeply about the health of their students, which is why public health wants to work with the education sector to tackle childhood obesity. We can help garner public support for policies that give young people increased access to nutritious foods and regular physical activity, which would help alleviate numerous health challenges and improve educational outcomes too.

Remember, the reframe isn't a ready-made talking point. It's a sample iteration that models the framing recommendation in action.



HOUSING SECTOR | An effective reframe would look something like this:

Instead of... Unsafe, poor-quality, inadequate housing is making people sick.

Try... Safe, high-quality, available housing is essential to community health.



EDUCATION SECTOR | An effective reframe would look something like this:

Instead of... By not building health education into your curriculum, we're missing so many opportunities for improving student health and community well-being.

Try... Building health education into your curriculum will create a host of new opportunities for improving student health and community well-being.



HEALTH SYSTEMS SECTOR | An effective reframe would look something like this:

Instead of... If we don't share information between hospitals and the public health department, we can't effectively improve community health.

Try... If we share information between hospitals and the public health department, we can be much more effective at improving community health.



BUSINESS SECTOR | An effective reframe would look something like this:

Instead of... By accepting a silo mentality, where public health professionals and local business owners operate in separate realms, we are limiting the impact of our efforts to reduce health care costs and employee absenteeism.

Try... Through collaboration between public health professionals and local business owners committed to enhancing community health, we can double the impact of our efforts to reduce health care costs and employee absenteeism..