

Best Practices for Communicating Grant Progress & Updates

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Agenda

- ✓ Overview
 - UConn TAB: Role & Services
 - Brownfields Funding
 - Communicating progress
- ✓ Communicating Grant Progress & Updates: Creating a Communication Plan
 - Creating a Communication Plan
 - Identifying Community Partners
 - Establishing Points of Contact
 - Choosing Communication Channels
 - Utilizing Plain Language
 - Consistent, Frequent Updates
 - Sharing Successes & Challenges
- ✓ Case Examples
- ✓ Q&A



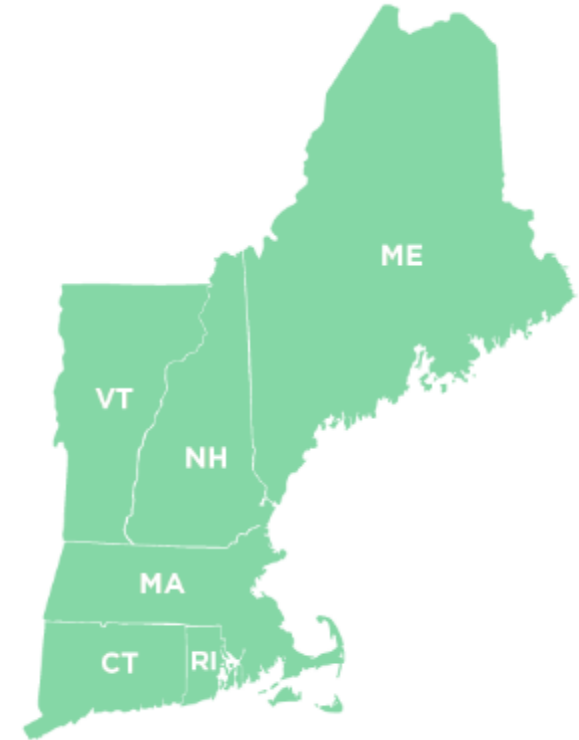
What is UConn TAB?

Technical Assistance to Brownfields

Our Role:

- Provide technical assistance to communities, states, Tribal Nations and other public entities
- Help address brownfield issues, increase community understanding and involvement in brownfields cleanup, explore reuse options that meet community needs
- TAB is available at no cost to communities
- **UConn TAB** serves EPA Region 1 (New England)

Equal Distribution of Resources in all 6 New England States and Tribes



Geographic Diversity

Rural & Urban Communities,
Small and Larger Towns, Cities



UConn TAB's Community Engagement Team



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NERHA Partnership



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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SERVICES

Free resources to assist with your brownfield community engagement goals - available anytime on TAB's website!



Tools & Guides



Public Meetings & Presentations

Our team can support you in planning public meetings: advertising, presenting, and tips and tricks

Get the conversation started with our Environmental Health webinars and free tools supporting topics such as displacement and affordable housing



Anti-Displacement, Affordable Housing, and Environmental Health



Community Pages, Social Media, & Online Engagement

We can create social media posts and help with online communication to ensure all residents stay informed on brownfields projects.

EMAIL US AT UConn-TAB@UConn.edu TO SET UP A MEETING TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR SERVICES AND GET STARTED!



Common Types of Brownfields Funding

Federal Brownfields Grants

- **Assessment Grants**
 - Identify and evaluate contamination
 - Phase I / Phase II environmental site assessments
- **Cleanup Grants**
 - Support remediation of contaminated sites
 - Focus on preparing sites for reuse
- **Multipurpose Grants**
 - Flexible funding for assessment, cleanup, and planning
 - Used across multiple sites or project phases
- **Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Grants**
 - Capital for loans and subgrants for cleanup
 - Funds are reused as loans are repaid

State Brownfields Programs

- Often administered through state environmental agencies
- May support:
 - Site assessments and technical assistance
 - Cleanup funding (gap financing or match support)
 - Liability relief or redevelopment incentives
- Requirements and funding levels vary by state



Don't Assume Your Community Knows the Process

Effective communication helps translate evolving brownfields work so community members can stay informed and understand what progress is occurring.

Progress isn't always visible

- Work happens in phases that may not be obvious to the public

Information evolves over time

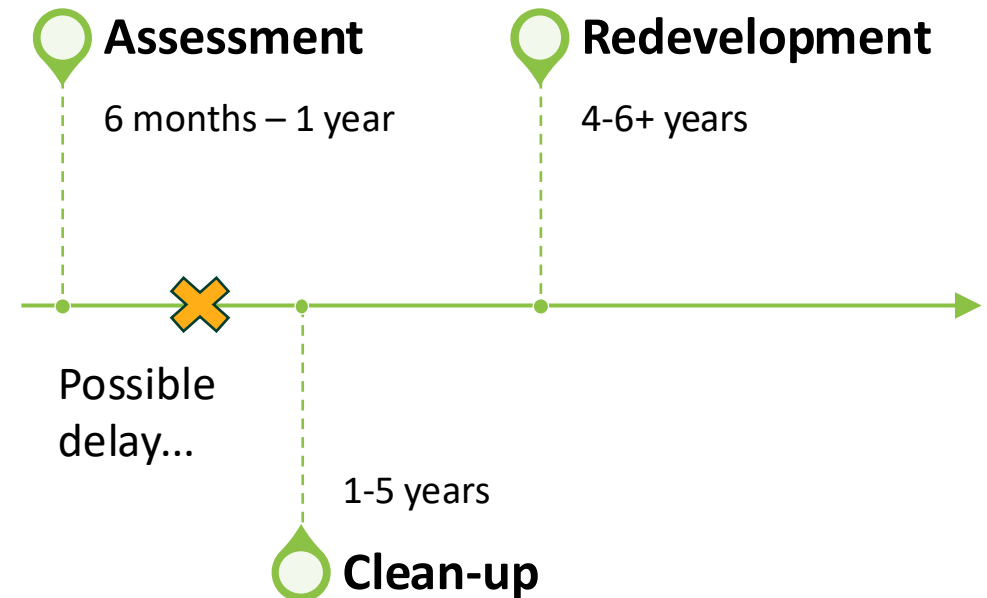
- New findings, delays, and changes are part of the process

Community understanding doesn't happen automatically

- Technical details and decisions need interpretation

Communication bridges the gap

- Turns project activity into clear, meaningful updates



Create a Communication Plan

UConn TAB Resource:
Community
Engagement Planning
Document

Goals

- What are you trying to communicate (updates, input, awareness)?

Audiences

- Residents, local officials, businesses, underserved communities

Key Messages

- Clear, consistent, tailored to audience

Methods

- Meetings, social media, flyers, email, etc.

Timeline

- When and how often updates will be shared

Responsibility

- Who is leading communication efforts



Identify Community Partners

- Engage **trusted local organizations** (CBOs, nonprofits, faith groups)
- Include **schools, libraries, and public health organizations**
- Connect with **neighborhood associations & local leaders**

Ask: Who does the community already trust?

- Leverage **existing relationships and networks**
- Offer meaningful roles (co-hosting, outreach, liaison support)



Establish Points of Contact



Example Scenario

*In your latest update, you mention that **cleanup activities have been delayed due to the discovery of additional contamination**, which now requires a revised remediation plan and additional regulatory review.*

*A **local resident reads this update and becomes concerned**. They live in a nearby neighborhood and rely on a planned outcome of the project: a new riverfront greenway and pedestrian path that would connect to their daily walking route and improve safe access to downtown. The delay means that not only is construction pushed back, but there may also be extended periods of truck traffic, noise, and restricted access near the site.*

*However, the **newsletter doesn't include a clear point of contact**, no project manager email, no city department phone number, and no link to more detailed updates. **The resident is left unsure who to reach out to for clarification**: Are the contamination risks increasing? How long will the delay last? Will the final redevelopment plan change?*

Now what?...



Scenario Continued...

They may not search the website or are unable to, they may not call the main line to track down the contact person ---> they are left feeling frustrated

Instead...

Version where every update includes a simple line: 'Questions? Contact [name/team] at this email or attend our monthly office hours.'

**UConn TAB
Resources:**
Host a Community
Page, MAP -
flyer/handout



Choosing Communication Channels

UConn TAB Resource:
Translation Services

Start with your Community

- Who is affected by the brownfields site?
- How do they already receive information?

Use Multiple, Layered Channels

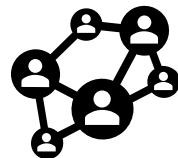
- Email lists & newsletters (project updates)
- Flyers & signage near the site (on-the-ground visibility)
- Community partners (trusted messengers)
- Social media & municipal website

Prioritize Accessibility

- Plain language (avoid technical jargon)
- Translations for key languages
- ADA-accessible formats & locations

Always Include a Clear Point of Contact

- Name, email, phone number
- Where to get more information



Utilizing Plain Language

Avoid or clearly define **technical jargon**

Use **short sentences** and common words

Break up content with **headings and visuals**

Translate materials when needed

Focus on what it means for **people's health and communities**

UConn TAB
Resources:
Common Acronyms,
Common Contaminants
Factsheets, BF101
Flyer

Plain language is not “simplified” - it's accessible, clear, and respectful



Here are Some Examples

Phase I Environmental Site Assessment	A first look at a site's history to see if pollution might be present
Phase II Environmental Site Assessment	Sampling soil, water, or air to confirm if contamination exists
Remediation	Cleaning up pollution at a site
Contaminants of Concern (COCs)	Harmful substances found at the site
Exposure Pathway	How people or the environment might come into contact with contamination
Institutional Controls	Rules or restrictions that limit how a site can be used (like fencing or land use limits)
Engineering Controls	Physical barriers that prevent exposure (like caps, covers, or ventilation systems)
Risk Assessment	A study of how harmful the contamination could be to people or the environment
Cleanup Plan / Remedy	The plan for how the site will be cleaned and made safe for reuse

Consistent and Frequent Updates



Share updates on a **regular schedule** (monthly, quarterly)



Align updates with **project milestones**



Use **consistent platforms** (website, email, social media)



Provide simple **status updates** (What's happening now? What's next?)



Provide updates **even when there is no major new information** (e.g., “no changes this month, project is ongoing”)

Sharing Successes and Challenges

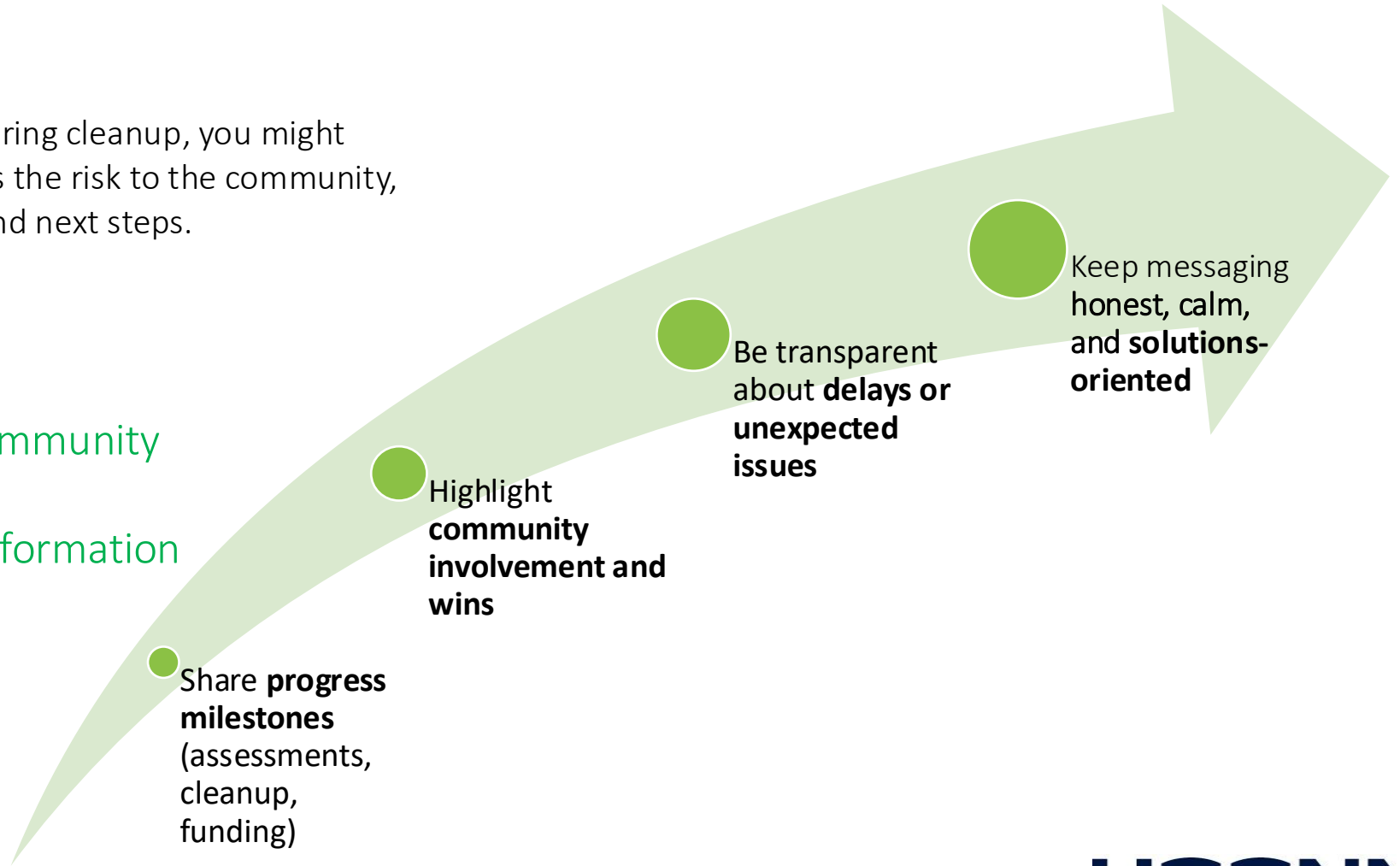
For Example:

If additional contamination is discovered during cleanup, you might explain what was found, whether it changes the risk to the community, and how it will affect the project timeline and next steps.



Explain clearly

- What happened
- What it means for the community
- What is happening next
- Be transparent with all information



Let's Break This Down...

Clearly identifies the site: Not all community members know the site by name, some may recognize it by the address.



FORMER WOODS WOOLEN MILL

23-25 West Mill Street Hillsborough, NH

WHAT TOOK PLACE HERE?

The Mill was in use from the late 1880s until it was abandoned in the mid-1980s. The river was used to power weaving looms.

Materials produced on the property reportedly included wool, cotton, burr, roving, rayon, silk, and camel hair. Natural and synthetic dyes and finishing chemicals were also stored/used on-site.

CLEAN-UP EFFORTS:

This site has undergone major cleanup efforts, including building demolition, removal of contaminated soil, and safe disposal of asbestos and lead. Cleanup efforts spanned from 2000 - 2022. Ongoing restoration work will improve riverfront habitat and prepare the site for future community use.

WHAT CONTAMINANTS WERE PRESENT?

Petroleum biproducts, metals, VOCs, lead, and asbestos were all discovered on site.

Hazardous building material, soil and groundwater contamination were found.

WHAT WILL THIS SITE TURN INTO?

A green space for the community for passive recreation. The site will help recreate a natural flood barrier and goals to rewild the site will restore the local ecosystem.

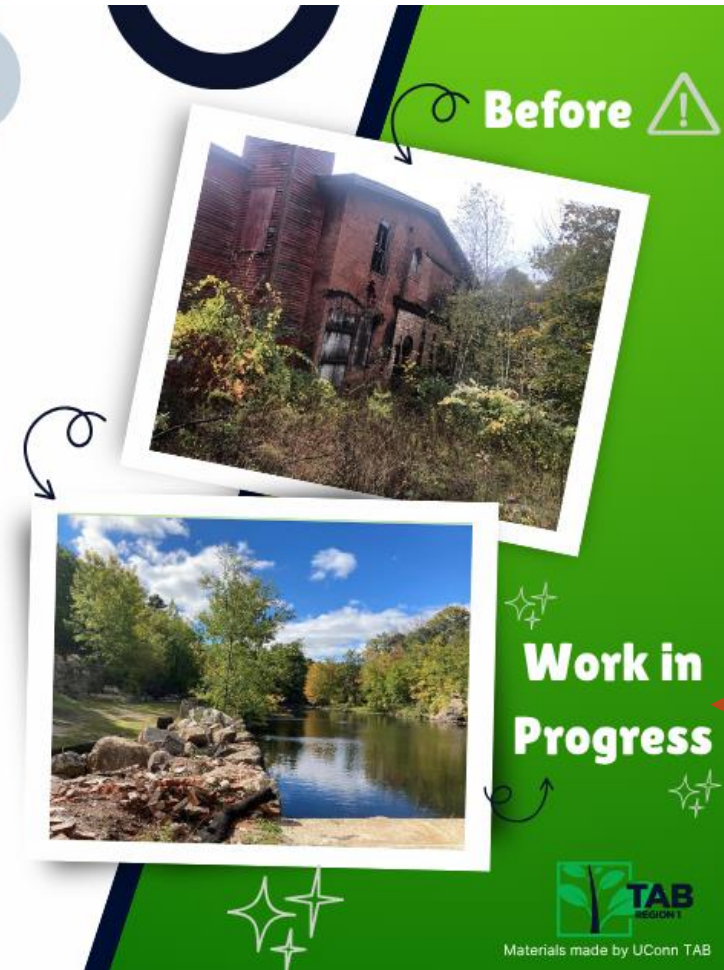
GET INVOLVED



Website: hillsboroughnh.org/woods-woolen-mill-brownfields-project/

Contact Form: hillsboroughnh.org/contact/

Answers the key Questions: *What happened, what does this mean, and what's next.*



Provides updates: Visually shows an update alongside text-based updates.

Includes contact information: Contact Form and where to find more information.



Story Map

Taking a closer look at a Story Map UConn TAB
created for East Hampton, CT

<https://s.uconn.edu/easthamptonstorymap>



Please reach out with any questions.
Thank you!



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