

You Asked For It: Guidance for Communicating About Ready by 21

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We told you we were here to help

- Listen and learn
- Basics of branding and messaging
- Shape products and tools
- Capacity building for advocacy communications

Talking About Ready by 21

- How do you describe it?
- What examples or terms do you use?
- What works for you to describe the:
 - What it is?
 - What you get from it?
 - Why this approach?
 - How will it work?



Using communications to make connections



- What are concerns in community
- What do people need and want?
- What will help you?
- What do you need?



What are you talking about?
Why should I care?

Common Pitfalls

Many advocates and communications efforts fall into the same traps...

Submitted
by Col. J. H. ...
1/27-20/31

A REPORT ON THE FORESTRY POLICY OF STATE COLLEGE

The forests of North Carolina constitute one of its most in-
ble natural resources, the area of our state growing trees being
three times larger than the area growing all other crops combined,
ur forestry practices are so backward, wasteful and unscientific
the actual forestry potentialities for income of our state and
itizens are now said to be only about ten per cent realized. It
e of the chief purposes of the Consolidated University of North
ina and especially the State College of Agriculture and Engineering
omote a statewide understanding and acceptance of improved forestry
ices which should add millions of dollars to the state's annual
e. To further the program of the State College in forestry edu-
n and forestry practices, a North Carolina Forestry Foundation
reated.

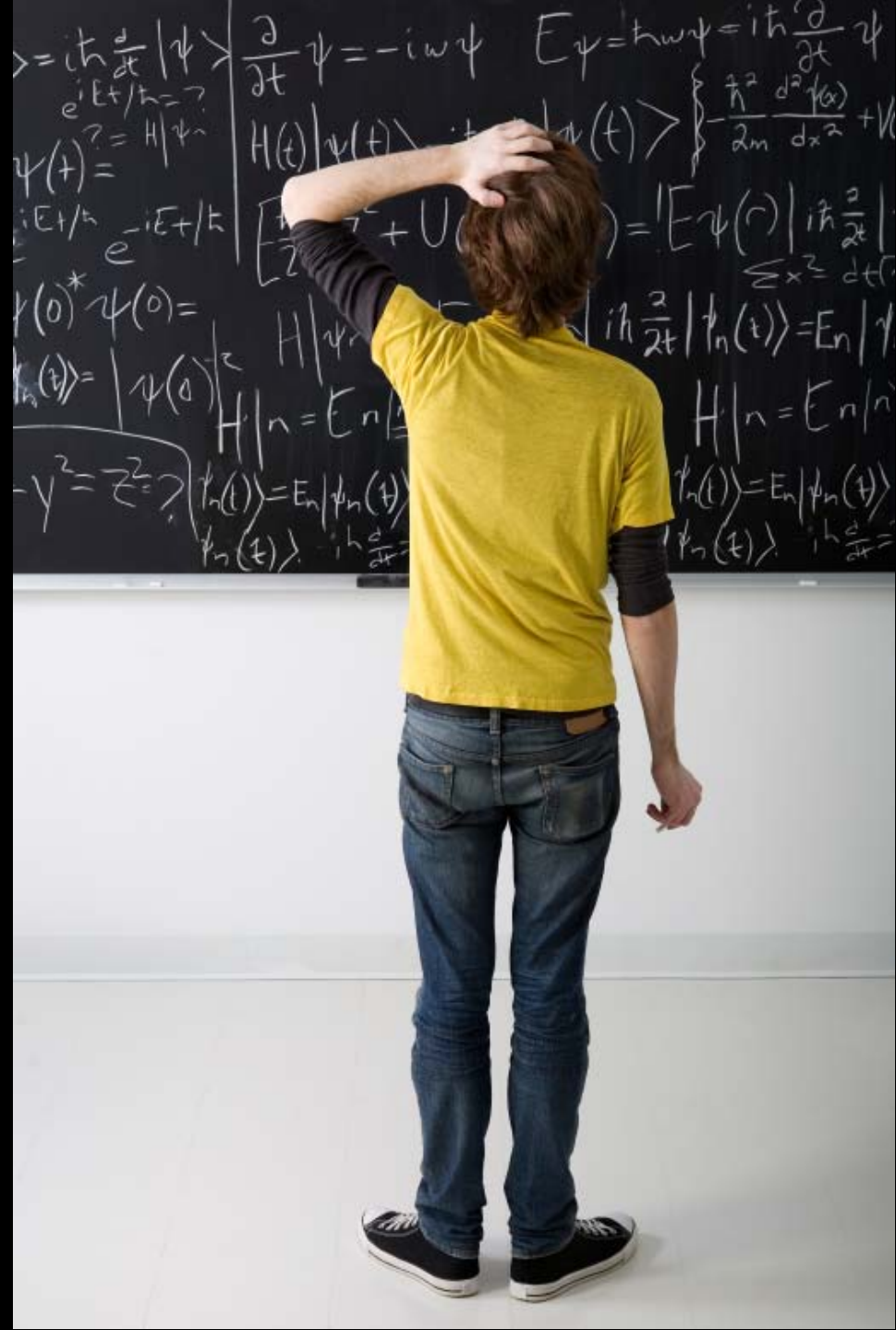
The North Carolina Forestry Foundation, Inc., is a non-profit
ization formed in 1929 by local trustees of State College with the
of themselves contributing and securing gifts from men of wealth
der to promote the work of the School of Forestry by acquiring
stration tracts, etc., illustrating various types of forest and
t management. Owing to disastrous financial reverses that followed
few months after the organization, these public-spirited trustees
not only left unable to carry out their purposes but have been sub-
d to serious financial embarrassment, solely as a result of person-
underwriting a plan to serve our institution and the public welfare.
chool of Forestry has felt it proper to lend its aid in trying to
y this situation. As soon as this temporary phase of its diffi-
es can be worked out, it is the desire of the Foundation to work

- Words, words, words
- Literal sclerosis
- TMI
(Too Much Information)

Preference for “playing the old tapes”



Data, Data
Everywhere...



A silhouette of a person with long hair, seen from behind, reaching their hand towards a full moon in a clear blue sky. The person's hand is positioned as if they are trying to touch the moon, which is in the upper right corner of the frame. The overall mood is one of longing or aspiration.

Having
unreasonable
expectations

“Techno-Speak”



- Boring
- No urgency
- No sense of momentum
- Why now?
- Why me?



Believing there's one
magic message





Messages do

- Inspire interest
- Invite people in
- Make a connection
- Gear up for more information later

Messages do not

- Explain process
- Take the place of accurate description
- Convey deep IP

What are you trying to achieve?

Good message back up from
desired results and
are aspirational



Main Message

Ready by 21 is a strategy that helps communities improve the odds that all youth will be ready for college, work and life.

Supporting Points

- Ready by 21 is a strategy that meets leaders where there are, challenges them to think and work differently, and helps them progress further and faster to deliver results for youth.
- Ready by 21 was developed by national experts at the Forum for Youth Investment who have worked in youth policy for decades to help local communities prepare young people for adulthood.

Supporting Points

- The Ready by 21 National Partnership is an unprecedented coalition of organizations representing government, education, non-profit, business, research and philanthropy sectors.
- The Partnership itself is a model for community collaboration to drive better outcomes for children and youth.
- Our partners offer cities and states distinct capabilities for helping communities improve the odds that all youth will be ready for college, work and life.

The Elevator Speech De-Coded

- It *introduces* you and your organization
- It put right up front your goals and desired outcomes
- It interests the listener in learning more
- Ends in an ask or a set up for further engagement

- Elevator speech should take no more than 30 to 60 seconds to deliver.
- Content should be updated and revised as your work evolves.
- It always ends in an “ask.”



- Need Advance Avoid chart



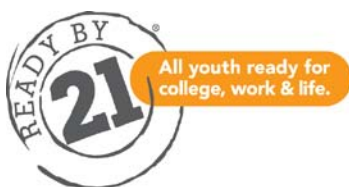
All youth ready for college, work & life.

Craft Your “Elevator” Speech



Practice

- How can we tell the Ready by 21 story at the community level?
- Who do you need to engage in your community?
- Who do you want to corner in an elevator?
- Who do you fear meeting one on one?
- Who are you likely to run into?



HOW TO TALK ABOUT READY BY 21

What is Ready by 21?

Ready by 21 is a strategy that helps communities improve the odds that all youth will be ready for college, work and life.

How does Ready by 21 work?

Ready by 21 taps the expertise and dedication of leaders within communities, meeting them where they are and helping them chart a course for better outcomes for young people. Using innovative strategic planning tools developed by National Partners, Ready by 21 coaches, supports and mobilizes communities to amplify their efforts to prepare youth for success.

Why does Ready by 21 focus so much on leaders?

Years of experience in community development, research, policy, and fundraising led the founders of the Forum for Youth Investment to create Ready by 21 as a leader-focused initiative because leadership is what drives change. Local leaders already have the capacity and commitment to help young people grow up healthy, strong and prepared for the future. Equipping and empowering leaders is the fastest, surest way to improve outcomes for children and youth.

What does it cost?

Signature funding for Ready by 21 is generously provided by Philip Morris, an Altria Company. But each local community raises matching grants that exemplify partnership and demonstrate community investment. Ready by 21 planning tools focus on streamlining services and coordinating efforts to drive greater accountability and cost savings. Many communities initiate the work with about \$75,000 to develop a comprehensive plan of action, and implementation costs vary widely depending on the choices made in the plan.

Who are the key players?

Ready by 21 is delivered by the National Partnership, a group of national organizations with diverse expertise serving/helping children, youth, families, schools and communities. The National Partnership is a “dream team” of the country’s most effective agencies with trailblazing leaders who are shaping youth

and community development policies and best practices. Their combined reach is over 650,000 state and local leaders who impact the lives of more than 1 million children and youth.

Mobilization Partners offer unprecedented community capacity and have deep roots representing state and local governments, business, education, nonprofit and community leaders. Technical experts are nationally-recognized leaders driving innovative and strategic approaches in data collection and analysis and cutting-edge program quality tools.

Who is in the national partnership?

Ready by 21 National Partners are a coalition of prominent organizations whose members reach more than 1 million children and youth across the country. The Forum for Youth Investment is the founding and managing partner. The United Way of America is signature partner, joined by mobilization partners American Association of School Administrators, Search Institute, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the National Collaboration for Youth, and the National Conference of State Legislatures, and other leading organizations that help prepare youth for a better future. Mobilization partners constitute a distribution network that reaches every community in the country and inspire and inform their memberships to think and act differently to achieve better outcomes.

Ready by 21 Technical Partners that offer state of the art, competitively priced on-the-ground tools and incentives include Child Trends, Community Systems Group, Connect for Kids, SparkAction, David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, The Finance Project, The Gallup Organization, nFocus Software and Results Leadership Group, LLC.

What services and capacity does Ready by 21 provide?

Ready by 21 uses strategic planning tools originally developed by national experts in youth policy at the Forum for Youth Investment and expanded with the expertise of National Partners. Ready by 21 partners and coaches have a track record of providing community leaders with the tools and guidance they need to better use current resources and identify new resources where available.

What makes Ready by 21 different from other capacity building initiatives?

Ready by 21 is a unique, outcomes-focused planning approach that looks at children from birth to young adulthood, both inside schools and out. It empowers communities to develop plans that hold leaders and providers accountable based on shared local goals for young people.

Why do we need Ready by 21?

Everyone in the community benefits when youth are thriving, but research indicates that only four in ten young people entering their 20s are doing well – healthy, connected and ready for college, work and life. Two in ten are doing poorly and the rest are inadequately prepared. Current piecemeal efforts are not working.

What do you mean by “ready?”

Graduating from high school is an important milestone but it’s not enough for young people to be ready to begin a successful adulthood. All young people need a combination of knowledge and skills including academic competencies and “soft skills” for the workplace, but they also need internal assets like commitment, values and a strong personal identity. Too many young people do not have what they need to develop their potential and there are too many isolated and fragmented approaches to help them. Ready by 21 was developed to work across systems on broad, community level partnerships that make preparing youth for college, work and life.

What does it take to get kids “ready”?

Ready by 21 means providing all youth the opportunities they need to be on the path to a productive adult life. They need to grow up healthy and strong, learn skills for today’s jobs, be connected to community and prepared to succeed in college and work.

Why the number “21?” In some cases, youth need more time and research shows 26 might be considered the end of youth?

Certainly young adults are by no means finished preparing for adulthood by 21 years of age, and we need programming and policies that supports them through their twenties. However at 21, young people have all the rights and responsibilities of adults and need skills, tools and connections to community to make a successful transition. By 21, all young people need to be on a positive course for a productive adult life. By 26 they should be there.

Why “college?” Not every young person wants to, needs to or can go to college.

The U.S. Department of Education has stated that 80% of jobs in the future will require some form of higher education beyond high school. Clearly young people today need higher education or skills training to obtain good paying jobs with lifelong career opportunity. Additionally, the same skills that young people need to start living wage employment after high school are increasingly the same skills

that prepare them for college or other post secondary career training. This is well demonstrated by the national expansion of work readiness and work keys certification that correlate to college placement assessment.

Why is Ready by 21 the right approach?

Ready by 21 brings localized, expert strategic planning and guidance to states and communities that have already committed substantial efforts to help youth. Ready by 21 partners listen to local leaders, meet them where they are and help them advance their strategies with greater accountability for all.

How do we learn more?

Visit readyby21.org to learn more about how to create healthier, happier young people and families in your community. Attend a Ready by 21 institute, training or Webinar to learn about the strategies at work to better prepare youth for college, work and life.

What can I do as an individual?

If you are an individual leader, a key first step in getting started is to determine the opportunity to bring Ready by 21 ideas into your organization or community, in a setting such as a community gathering or planning meeting. The next step is visit readyby21.org to explore how other communities are using the Ready by 21 Strategy and to join the Ready by 21 Leaders Network, which will put you in contact with leaders across the country.

How does my community get started?

Have the members of your network or leadership group fill out the simple change horsepower diagnostic worksheet which is available free on the readyby21.org website. Use the results to have an initial conversation about the priorities for your work to improve the odds for children and youth in your community. Then, schedule a diagnostic phone call either with the Forum for Youth Investment or with any of the National Partners. From there, you can access expertise from the National Partnership, whose innovative strategic planning tools, coaching and supports help communities amplify their goals and get further, faster.



All youth ready for college, work & life.

MESSAGING

MAIN MESSAGE:

Ready by 21 is a strategy that helps communities improve the odds that all youth will be ready for college, work and life.

General Supporting Points:

- Ready by 21 is a strategy that meets leaders where there are, challenges them to think and work differently, and helps them progress further and faster to deliver results for youth.
- Ready by 21 was developed by national experts at the Forum for Youth Investment who have worked in youth policy for decades to help local communities prepare young people for adulthood.
- Using the Ready by 21 strategy, communities like Indianapolis, Austin, and Nashville are actively coordinating the efforts of diverse community stakeholders to ensure their leadership leads to healthier, more productive young people and stronger families.
- The Ready by 21 strategy amplifies the expertise of leaders from public structures like schools, libraries, and parks and recreation to help youth to be ready for college, work and life.
- Ready by 21 helps communities leverage available resources and better coordinate the outcome-focused programs and services that make a difference in the lives of young people.

Challenge/Rationale Supporting Points

- All young people need to grow up healthy and strong, learn skills for today's jobs, be connected to community and prepared to succeed in college and work.
- Research shows that only four out of ten young people are “ready” by they time they reach adulthood, and two in ten are in serious trouble.
- Without a successful strategy to meet the needs of young people, communities lose their potential to build a competitive workforce, strong social networks, stable families and future leaders.

- Communities cannot afford the skyrocketing costs associated with young people unprepared for a college education or skill training beyond high school.
- Too many young people are disengaged and seen as problems rather than individuals with assets who, with support, can achieve their hopes and dreams.

Solution Supporting Points

- The Ready by 21 National Partners bring expert strategic planning and guidance to states and communities that have already committed substantial efforts to help youth. Combined the National Partners reach over 650,000 state and local leaders who impact the lives of more than 1 million children and youth.
- Ready by 21 taps the expertise and commitment of leaders within communities who are dedicated to improving outcomes for young people and helps them chart a course towards better accountability.
- Using innovative strategic planning tools developed by National Partners, Ready by 21 coaches, supports and mobilizes communities to amplify their efforts to prepare youth for success.

MESSAGES/SOUNDBITES FOR SPECIFIC AUDIENCES

For National Partners

- [Name of National Partner] is a National Partner in Ready by 21, a strategy that helps communities improve the odds that all youth will be ready for college, work and life.
- The Ready by 21 National Partnership is an unprecedented coalition of organizations representing government, education, non-profit, business, research and philanthropy sectors.
- Partnering in Ready by 21 helps [Name of National Partner] fulfill our mission by [tailor for each National Partner].
- The Ready by 21 National Partnership is itself a model for community collaboration to drive better outcomes for children and youth.
- Ready by 21 partners offer cities and states distinct capabilities for helping communities improve the odds that all youth will be ready for college, work and life.

Regional Audiences/Potential Challenge Cities

- Ready by 21 is a strategy that meets leaders where there are, challenges them to think and work differently, and helps them progress further and faster to deliver results for youth.
- Ready by 21 offers a cadre of nationally regarded technical experts and allied services that may not be available at the local level.
- We can help you mobilize your local leaders from diverse disciplines to create more efficient and effective ways to help all youth become Ready by 21; ready for college, work and life.
- Ready by 21 offers an objective voice to help local leaders consider the big picture, evaluate progress and efficiency, and develop a localized plan of action.

Employers/Business Community

- Ready by 21 is a strategy for communities to offer youth a range of opportunities to learn and develop skills that will prepare them to succeed in school and begin a productive working life.
- For economic recovery and to compete globally, we urgently need to improve college and workforce readiness.

Youth Development Audiences

- Ready by 21 is a precise, tested strategy that helps communities progress further and faster to deliver results for youth.
- Superintendents, teachers and school professionals know that young people need support outside of school and around the community to help them succeed.
- Ready by 21 offers solutions for passionate leaders who want greater efficiency, cross sector partnership and impact for youth.
- Diverse community leaders, from youth serving agencies and faith-based organizations to after-school programs, want to support schools and the young people they serve. Ready by 21 is a tested strategy that helps groups like these strengthen their partnerships and achieve their goals together, faster.

Funders

- Ready by 21 is an opportunity for philanthropy to leverage their investment through a unique strategy that equips caring communities with expert strategic planning tools designed to deliver better results.
- The Ready by 21 strategy leads to better returns on public and private investments that benefit from a shared accountability structure in which leaders can leverage better outcomes for children and youth.
- Local corporate funders with a mission to strengthen their communities are investing in Ready by 21 to prepare youth for college, work and life.
- Signature funding for Ready by 21 was provided by Philip Morris USA, an Altria company, with significant support from some of the nation's leading foundations including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Atlantic Philanthropies. Mobilization partners including United Way of America, American Association of School Administrators, America's Promise Alliance, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the National Collaboration for Youth, Search Institute and the National Conference of State Legislatures leverage ongoing programmatic resources for Ready by 21.

Educators and School Leaders

- Schools are at the core of young people's learning and development but we all know schools alone cannot prepare all youth for college, work and life.
- Ready by 21 engages leaders across public structures within the community who can work in concert with school districts for better outcomes for youth.

Post Secondary Educators

- Higher education embraces the challenge to increase degree attainment to drive innovation and economic competitiveness, but too few young people are prepared to enter college with the skills they need for success.
- Colleges and post-secondary credentialing programs should support the Ready by 21 strategy within their communities to lay the foundation for all youth to prepare for college success.

ACTION MESSAGES:

- Find out how you as a key stakeholder can coordinate efforts and implement actions in your community to better prepare young people for adulthood.
- Visit readyby21.org to learn more about how to create healthier, happier young people and families in your community.
- Attend a Ready by 21 institute, training or Webinar to learn about the strategies at work to better prepare youth for college, work and life.
- Become a Ready by 21 community, city or state and get the coaching, strategies and support you need to develop a localized action plan and improve outcomes for youth.