



washington low income
housing alliance

Messages That Work

The Washington Low Income Housing Alliance used focus groups and online surveys to determine the value-based messages that resonate with typical Washington voters. This is what we learned.

What makes an effective message?

Framing and Values

The message fits into a familiar context, or frame; and speaks to values we all share

Captivate the Audience

The message is inspiring, memorable, and relevant to the listener-- not just to the messenger

Back It Up

Data is never the message, data must be close at hand if necessary for proving a point.

Broad and Deep

The message is broad enough to encompass everyone we serve, but is followed up with meaningful action the listener can take

How do we use the messages?

Consistently

Message discipline-- using the messages as they are written, without changes-- is the key to consistent, effective advocacy throughout the affordable housing community

Constantly

These messages are versatile and work into your publications, speeches, and talking points

Paired with Stories

Humanize the issue by allowing those who have benefitted tell their stories

Paired with Results

Show that affordable housing programs are worth the investment by showing results for people and the community

2008 Messaging Research

Messages, Messengers, and Actions

The Housing Alliance conducted focus groups in the 4 most populous counties in the state, and a statewide survey, to determine the **value-based messages** about affordable housing that resonated most with the voting public.

The following messages rose to the top:

- Everyone should have the opportunity to live in a safe, decent, affordable home
- It should be possible for working people to afford housing and still have enough money for the basics like groceries and gas and child care
- Children deserve a chance to succeed in school and in life, which all begins with their families being able to afford a decent place to live
- It's better for society, the environment and families if people can afford to live close to where they work.

Respondents indicated the messengers they would like to hear from most are **families who need low income housing**, a **formerly homeless individual**, and a **housing service provider**.

The action survey respondents were most likely to take after reading the messages was to **vote**.

2009 Messaging Research

Message Refinement and Policy Actions

In a statewide survey, the Housing Alliance tested variations to the "It should be possible..." message. **US military veterans, senior citizens, people with disabilities, and families** were all highly agreeable and appealing as a replacement for "working people" in that message.

Survey respondents were also asked what policy actions they would be willing to support. **Two thirds of respondents would vote in support** of new affordable housing or making existing housing more affordable. Of the 34% who would vote for the measure if it increased their taxes, 77% were comfortable with **taxation of up to \$10 per month**.

Those who did not support measures that would increase their taxes indicated that **information related to the costs and benefits of affordable housing would sway their vote**.