**ICAPS: Customized Communication Plan**

**General Communication Recommendations**

Employers within numerous industries throughout the state are seeking skilled workers. At the same time, individuals of diverse backgrounds are struggling to become employable and successful. Enter the Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System (ICAPS). ICAPS is a unique program that offers the training, guidance, and support individuals need to successfully enter the workforce.We recommend marketing the ICAPs program in a clear, concise, and relatable way that will lead students to specific training or courses.

Marketing the organization that offers ICAPS itself is not the answer. Prospective students may find it hard to visualize themselves succeeding in a larger program. Marketing for courses, training, or certification programs alone may generate curiosity and can have some level of success. However, too many unique variations exist to have mass appeal. And some may see an ad for a specific course or training program, and not understand that enrollment or success in that area is a possibility for them.

We recommend a positive, solution-oriented marketing method, where ICAPS enrollment is the solution to employability. We shine a light on the fact that with training and certifications comes great opportunity. Enrollment means the development of skills. And, with the right skills, amazing things are possible. Perhaps their goal is financial independence, or they strive to be a better provider for their family. ICAPS empowers students with skills and certifications to achieve their most important goals!

Communications need to get the audience’s attention to be effective. Messaging efforts should take individuals to specific ICAPS training options. The goal will be to implement this marketing and communication solution wherever the ICAPS program is offered to increase enrollment.

**Language Recommendations**

* Focus on the ICAPS program
* Use headline for appeal
* Define program and purpose
* Explain benefits plainly
* Avoid acronyms or complexity
* Include relatable testimony or examples
* Include outcomes and possibilities
* Tone: optimistic and encouraging
* Include the specific programs offered (list)\*
* Include a clear call to action
* Have contact person and information
* Include a contact person picture if possible
* Consider having all tools translated (into the languages of your target learners)

**\*** In all general ICAPS information, a list of each unique course or certification offered is enough for referral sources and potential students to understand the possibilities. We recommend you have specific course or certification information online and ready to include as inserts in the ICAPS main brochure. A program insert template has been offered with this communication plan.

**Sample Language**

**ICAPS: Integrated Career and Academic Preparation System**

**Your Path to a Brighter Future**

ICAPS is an academic support program that gives students the help and skills they need to succeed. Our efficient and effective system connects individuals with specific, high-demand employment opportunities.

Employers in all industries across the state are seeking qualified employees. You can get a job within industries such as healthcare, manufacturing, food service, or technology with the proper support and skills. ICAPS enrollment can make that happen.

Programs throughout the state offer unique opportunities that combine core courses, critical training, and support services so students can enter the workforce quickly. Enrollment is easy, and each program benefits those who participate. Contact your ICAPS Representative today for more information!

**Concise Program Introduction (Elevator Speech)**

ICAPS is an academic support program that gives students the help and skills they need to succeed. We offer essential training and support services so students can enter the workforce successfully and quickly. Those who enroll have many options and a bright future!

**Social Media Copy**

Content will depend upon the platform and audience. In some instances, it would be wise to promote the ICAPS program itself. In other cases, promoting courses or specific training within the program may be wise. All ads and posts should attract attention, offer hope, and lead visitors to your web presence, where ICAPS is further explained. Once here, visitors can link off to the unique training programs offered at your location. Sample social copy follows:

* Looking for a better, brighter future? ICAPS provides the skills and training you need to succeed. Learn more today.
* Ready for a new opportunity? Our efficient and effective system prepares you for specific, high-demand employment.
* Training for a better future! ICAPS is a training and support program that enables you to enter the workforce successfully and quickly.
* Want to work in healthcare? We make that possible. ICAPS offers you the support and skills you need to succeed. Learn more about our unique program today!
* Want to work in IT? We offer the support and training to make that happen. Learn more today.
* Your future is bright! ICAPS offers training and support so you can reach your goals.
* Want work? We can help. Get the training and support you need to succeed.
* Get the support and skills you need to succeed.

Ad templates for Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn have been created for you. It will be vital that you have a dedicated web page presence for ICAPS language and information. All ads, posts, and inquiries must lead visitors to one location on your website that offers ICAPS messaging and information.

**Material Customization**

This language has been applied to communication and marketing materials to demonstrate how to carry the message and offer you the templates needed for customization. For your use, you have the following multi-purpose tools:

* ICAPS Brochure & Insert
* PowerPoint Presentation
* Social Media Ads/Posts
* Business Card

Because every institution that offers ICAPS is unique, as is their programs, the following should be included in materials but customized based upon your unique offerings:

* The specific list of benefits offered
* All courses or training offered
* Call to action: how one can enroll or get more information
* Course representative/contact information

**Communication Success: Tips & Talking Points**

Start by embracing the program, and its benefits to students, their families, employers, and employers. Introduce this program to everyone who should be aware, and doing so with enthusiasm and passion will impact your success.

Below please find talking points that can be used to have productive and positive conversations with multiple audiences.

**Communication with Marketing Departments**

* Explain that ICAPS offers hope and help for those seeking jobs
* New communication methods making it easier for everyone, including marketing departments to communicate and prompt a successful program
* ICAPS brings together two sides of the house in colleges and within community-based organizations, benefiting both credit and non-credit programs. It doubles the impact and provides access to training experience.
* Explain exactly what you need from them, which is:
	+ Put all ICAPS information on the web – ICAPS needs its own real estate (presence and page) using all the language as provided. This is a critical objective as your web presence is needed to be an anchor for all communications.
	+ Material templates – either ask them to customize or permit you to customize independently
	+ Specific course or training information will be listed and linked for more information about that program
	+ An ICAPS link needs to be clear and present on every existing program
	+ All interrelated programs need to be hyperlinked to ICAPS – including all ICAPS programs, all GED/HSE programs, and ESL programs
	+ All students, including the current population, should know about the ICAPS program and its benefits
	+ Ask what student communication platforms they are using and how you can leverage these for awareness
	+ Offer social media post samples (design templates and messaging) and recommend a consistent posting plan that takes advantage of both student and community channels (see social media recommendations)
	+ Ask if THEY have other avenues that would enable you to gain exposure to the current student population and the community population

**Communication with Students About Program**

* Discussions should be clear, concise
* Personalize the language: it’s a system for YOU!
* Encourage and reinforce enrollment decision
* You can get the education, training, and support you need for stable employment
* Course or certification-specific information needs to be available at the time of discussion
* It will be important for prospective students to understand that they can become a medical technician, a welder, etc.
* The program was designed to connect industries with skilled workers to fill in-demand positions; this will be a solid career move for anyone who enrolls
* Use student testimony or examples when possible; used experienced, successful students messaging their journey.
* Tell students exactly how to enroll
* Remind them they are not alone; support is offered for success.
* Other students like them are in and will go through the program. Everyone’s situation is unique, however everyone in the program has the same ultimate goals.

**Communication with the Larger Student Population**

* Current students or participants in your organization can be your best advocates, so internal organizational communication and education is important!
* Social media is important (above) however, you also have direct communication methods available that should be leveraged.
* All key teachers and leaders must understand the program and support communication with current students.
* Work with the administration to determine how best to communicate through email or direct-to-student channels.
* Also, work with your professionals who get new prospects in the door. Admissions, registration, and transition specialists are on the front line and should be armed with knowledge and materials.
* Make ICAPS messaging a part of all recruitment and orientation programs, so all students know from day one that this awesome opportunity exists.

**Communication with Teachers (Current and Potential)**

* Unlike with students or other populations, teachers need to know the basics of the program, however, discussions can be more academic.
* Be sure to include communications to Adult Education and CTE instructors where applicable.
* Since ICAPS aligns with OCTAE’s federal initiatives, there may be more job opportunities, especially for those who are just beginning in adult education
* Teachers will understand the wisdom of stackable courses and may appreciate a discussion of integrated and contextualized adult education criteria in a collaborative environment.
* They will understand the importance of learning skills contextually.
* Teachers will also appreciate their students gaining support
* Tell them directly what you need and want from them:
	+ Understand ICAPS program basics benefits
	+ Know the industry-specific programs offered at the college or through a training partner
	+ Remind them that their endorsement is important and powerful
	+ Ask them to point appropriate students to ICAPS opportunities
	+ Refer to ICAPS program and professionals whenever possible
	+ Discuss the program in appropriate classes; the more students that know, the better
	+ Ask them to keep materials on hand – to provide for students
	+ Ask them to encourage students for the benefit of all

**Communication with Referral Sources**

* Focus on groups who serve at-risk or socially-marginalized populations as well as high school counselors and administration
* Referral sources want the best for the population they serve and ICAPS offers an opportunity for future success.
* Discussions should be concise and goal-oriented
* Tell them directly what you want from them, which is to:
	+ Understand ICAPS program benefits
	+ See it as a wise path to programs and success
	+ Have materials at the ready – hard copies and online
	+ Encourage, endorse, and refer students
	+ Call or email with any questions always

**Social Media Marketing and Communication**

* Social Media messages can and should promote programs, possibilities, and benefits, all linking back to the ICAPS web presence.
* Consider a multi-platform approach – for example, your students are more apt to be on Instagram while referral sources and employers are more likely to be on Facebook or LinkedIn.
* Sample social media messages are provided for your use, application, and customization based on market and platform.
* Choose what you can do and do well vs. doing it all poorly; bad social media is memorable and shared. It will defeat the purpose.
* Collaborate with your marketing department; share your goals, language, materials, and needs. Ideally, you can piggyback off their marketing efforts, growing the ICAPS program benefits the organization.
* Make ICAPS messaging a part of all recruitment and orientation for your programs, so students know from day one that this awesome opportunity exists.

**Direct to Employer Communication**

* Match your specific programs with local employer needs for each area of certification or program offered. If unsure, work with your internal Career and Technical Education program professionals, local Economic Development Center, or Workforce Council to gain lists and contacts.
* Seek out the HR or Upper Management of these organizations, contact and offer information about the program and how it can work to provide them with skilled employees. Strive for a meeting – video or in-person discussion- that will have more benefits than a phone call or email.
* Encourage them to market the program in all ways; offer them materials, language, and links to the website. You are offering them a recruitment model that is effective and affordable.
* Companies often spend high dollars on recruitment; having a steady stream of trained hires is valuable; encourage them to spend ad/marketing dollars to push targets to your website and programs.
* While you cannot promise that any individual will work for them after training, you can take their cards and company information and have that available for those in the program; many will be excited that there are interested employers upon course completion.

**Referral Source Marketing**

* Focus on groups who serve at-risk or socially marginalized youth populations as well as high school counselors/administration.
* Program administration and leadership need to understand the program's merits and instruct members/employees to refer.
* Ask if they would be willing to spread the word about this great program to their market – newsletters are great opportunities, offer to send content and links.
* Ask to speak at group meetings, the new PowerPoint is available for customization.
* Provide information and contact information for them to offer their population.
* Use provided business cards and elevator speech language to spread the good word about this wonderful program.

**General Networking/Community Canvas Plan**

* In any given calendar year, a dozen worthy community events would offer opportunities to meet with potential referral sources and employers.
* Plan to go with elevator speech in mind and cards in hand. Connections are golden!
* Determine what local memberships exist within your organization; specifically, ones that sponsor major community networking events.
* Examples would include your local Chamber of Commerce and your local Economic Development Council – these events tend to be business-based; however, many are at specific employer sites and others are geared towards social service agencies or schools.
* Your organization may also have a role or part in a larger area community initiative- such as a task force or community partnership type program. These tend to be luncheons or program-based events that are great networking opportunities.
* Talk with your marketing and recruitment professionals about these events; have they ever attended? Would they like to join you?
* Social service agencies and schools appreciate participation at their fundraising and community events. If you have a referral source that sends students to you – consider supporting what they do as well. Partnerships should go two ways.

**Consistency and Perseverance**

New language, visuals, and approaches will provide a foundation for ICAPS programs across the state to grow and reach their true potential. To make this happen, it will be necessary for your communication program to be both consistent and constant. New concepts take time and repetition to become familiar and accepted. Don’t take the campaign mindset; that is a temporary tactic for short-term goals. Instead, adopt a brand mindset that involves a permanent communication strategy for long-term success. Your work matters. Celebrate successes and communicate these through case studies and continued communication efforts. Never give up!