Government Communication Service

GCS Evaluation Framework

Introduction

This new GCS Evaluation Framework is the tool to help communicators demonstrate the impact of our work. The communications we deliver contribute to public service goals. It has never been more important to showcase the difference our communications make and demonstrate the value of our work.

The Framework builds on the latest industry best practice and has been endorsed by Directors of Communications and the GCS Evaluation Council. It enables us to adopt a clear and consistent approach to evaluation across all communication activities. It has also been purposely designed to reflect the integrated nature of modern communications where all areas of communications have a part to play.

This framework should be used as a helpful reference guide when planning an activity and setting metrics to track our success, delivering against our communication objectives and organisational goals. It contains a recommended core set of measures for each GCS communication discipline to ensure we evaluate consistently and use the right metrics.

Alex Aiken
Executive Director of
Government Communications

A great many models and frameworks were referenced in the development of this Government Communications Service Evaluation Framework including the work of AMEC, PRIA, PRSA and IPR. Thank you to everyone who helped with its development including colleagues from across the GCS, academics such as Professor Anne Gregory and Professor Jim Macnamara, and the Evaluation Council - in particular Richard Bagnall, Neil Wholey, David Rockland and Kevin Money.

Framework endorsed by the following Directors of Communications

Russell Grossman
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David Hill
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Sarah Healey
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How to use this framework

What is this framework for?

This Evaluation Framework supports a more consistent approach to evaluation across the GCS, where outcomes are aligned to objectives.

The Framework provides you with a set of valid evaluation measures – outputs, outtakes and outcomes – to collect, analyse and report on for each type of communications activity.

It can be used to plan evaluation for low cost and no cost activities as well as paid-for campaigns.

Who should use it and when?

This GCS Evaluation Framework is for use by all Government Communicators during the planning stages of communications activities and campaigns.

Considering evaluation at an early stage in the communications planning process provides the opportunity to benchmark, track the right metrics and conduct robust and comprehensive evaluation. This is the time to think about what you want the target audience to think or do differently as a result of your activity and how to best show the impact.

How should it be used?

Select the areas of communications that you are using – media, digital, marketing, stakeholder and/or internal.

With your SMART comms objective and target audience in mind, select the relevant metrics across outputs, outtakes, outcomes and organisational impact to help you understand how your activity has performed.

Not every activity will require you to capture data on every metric, but you should consider a range of metrics and a mix of qualitative and quantitative evidence to help ensure robust and credible evaluation.

Use available data and audience insight to set benchmarks and targets

Set in place processes to collect data against your selected metrics regularly, adding context by analysing change over time.

Review performance and ensure evaluation insights are fed into live activity and future planning.

Need further support and help?

Visit the GCS website to:

Check the comprehensive User Guide, examples and Frequently Asked Questions.

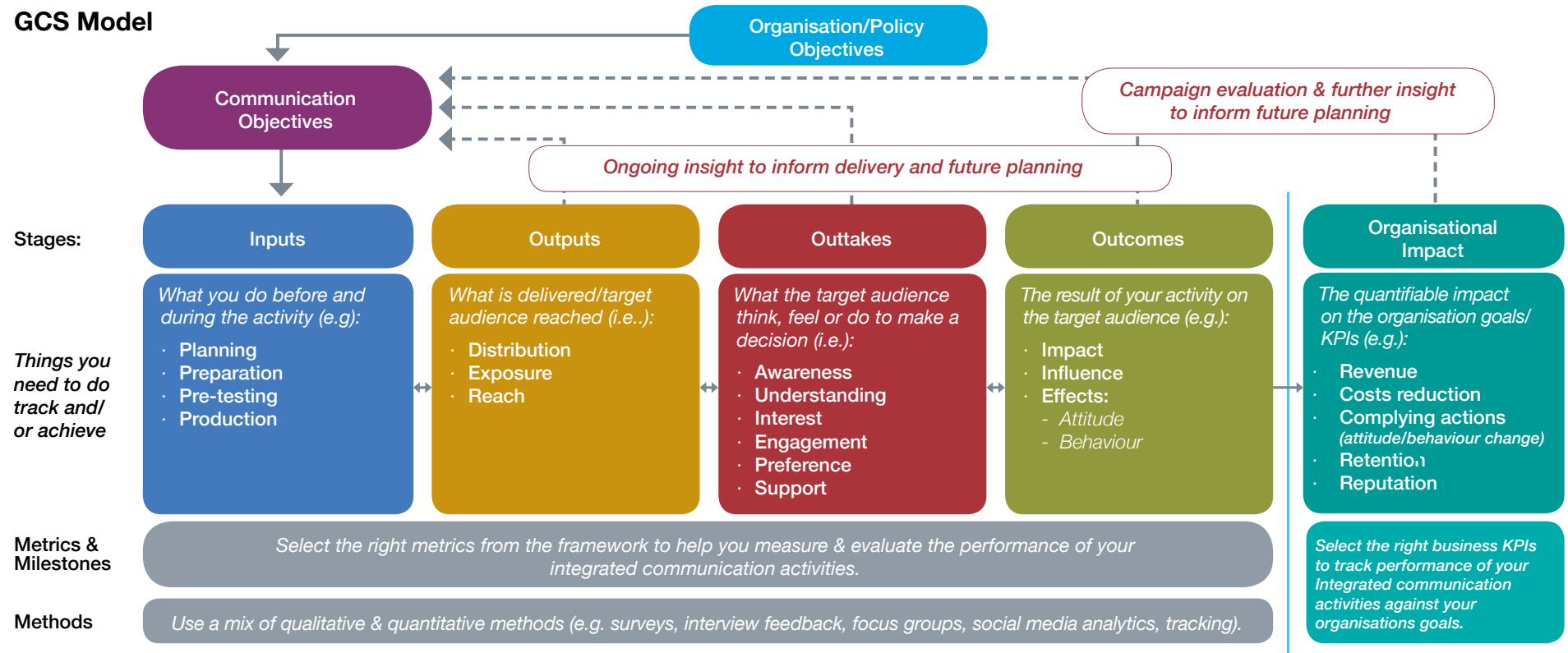Contact your Evaluation Champion – most government organisations have one.

Look up the list of sources and free analytics tools.

Come to an evaluation surgery.

Book evaluation training.

Contact the GCS Evaluation team at:
gcsevaluation@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

GCS Model

GCS Model

Organisation/Policy Objectives

Communication Objectives

Campaign evaluation & further insight to inform future planning

Ongoing insight to inform delivery and future planning

Stages:	Inputs	Outputs	Outtakes	Outcomes	Organisational Impact

Things you need to do track and/ or achieve	*What you do before and during the activity (e.g):*
	
	· **Planning**
	· **Preparation**
	· **Pre-testing**
	· **Production**
		What is delivered/target audience reached (i.e..):
		
		· **Distribution**
		· **Exposure**
		· **Reach**
			What the target audience think, feel or do to make a decision (i.e.):
			
			· **Awareness**
			· **Understanding**
			· **Interest**
			· **Engagement**
			· **Preference**
			· **Support**
				The result of your activity on the target audience (e.g.):
				
				· **Impact**
				· **Influence**
				· **Effects:**
				  - *Attitude*
				  - *Behaviour*
					The quantifiable impact on the organisation goals/ KPIs (e.g.):
					
					· **Revenue**
					· **Costs reduction**
					· **Complying actions** *(attitude/behaviour change)*
					· **Retention**
					· **Reputation**

Metrics & Milestones	*Select the right metrics from the framework to help you measure & evaluate the performance of your integrated communication activities.*				*Select the right business KPIs to track performance of your Integrated communication activities against your organisations goals.*
Methods	*Use a mix of qualitative & quantitative methods (e.g. surveys, interview feedback, focus groups, social media analytics, tracking).*				

8 Golden Rules of Evaluation

1

Set SMART objectives well before the start of your activity

2

Think carefully about who your target audience is when selecting relevant metrics from each of the five disciplines

3

Ensure you adopt an integrated channel approach when evaluating your communications activity

4

Collect baselines and benchmarks where possible

5

Include a mix of qualitative and quantitative evidence

6

Regularly review performance

7

Act on any insight to drive continuous improvement and inform future planning

8

Make the link between your activity and its impact on your organisational goals or KPIs.

Media

Inputs	Outputs	Outtakes	Outcomes	Organisational impact

- OASIS key steps *(e.g. planning, baseline, benchmarks)*
- Costs *(e.g. Staff, Agencies)*
- Content creation *(e.g. briefs, statements, rebuttals, speeches)*
- Media events/briefings organised
- Pre-engagement activities *(e.g. journalist, media outlets)*

- Target audience reach
- Key message penetration
- No. of articles or broadcasts *(Proactive and reactive)*
- Media events successfully delivered/Attendance
- Share of voice *(if operating in a competitive environment)*

- Awareness of issue
- Sentiment
- Audience engagement *(e.g. enquiry calls, click-throughs, shares, likes, retweets, downloads)*
- Responses/Feedback *(e.g. comments, letters)*
- Net favourability rating

- Advocacy *(e.g. recommendations, endorsements, ambassadors, supportive quotes, subversions)*
- Attitude change
- Behaviour change *(e.g. complying actions)*
- ROI or BCR

- Contribution to Organisation Goals/KPIs:
  - Behavioural *(e.g. complying actions improvement*)*
  - Attitudinal *(e.g. perception levels)*
  - Experiential *(e.g. customer experience)*
  - Financial *(e.g. increase revenue or cost reduction)*
  - Reputation *(e.g. RepTrak suvey, public polling)*

*NB: Examples: taxes paid; blood donated; reduced drink-drive cases, more health screening, etc.

📶 Digital

Inputs	Outputs	Outtakes	Outcomes	Organisational impact

· OASIS key steps *(e.g. planning, baseline, benchmarks)*
· Content development *(e.g. message testing, video production)*
· Content schedule and publishing plan
· Channel/platform selection *(e.g. third party, bespoke sites)*
· Channel/platform technical development
· Pre-engagement activities *(e.g. influencers, partners, suppliers)*
· Costs *(e.g. staff, agencies)*
	· Multimedia publishing *(e.g. blog posts, tweets, impressions, video/graphic/pics/page/audio reach)*
	· Digital channels *(e.g. internet, micro sites, mobile, intranet)*
	· Reach *(e.g. message penetration, share of voice)*
	  · Unique people reached for Facebook
	  · Average reach per each organic post
	  · Average actual impressions per tweet *(or sum of followers)*
		· Follows/Likes/Shares/Retweets
		· Click-throughs/Repeat visits/Engagement rates
		· Bookmarks/Votes/Pins/@ mentions/Hashtag use
		· Message sentiment/Favourability
		· Comments *(e.g. blog post, Facebook/LinkedIn)*
		· Downloads/Subscriptions
		· Bounce rates/Completion rates
		· Time on site
			· Advocacy *(e.g. endorsements, reviews, hashtag reuse, organic posts)*
			· Response *(e.g. online registrations/form completion)*
			· Co-operation/Support *(e.g. earned channel proactive content use)*
			· Referral traffic *(e.g. unique visitors from other sites)*
			· Attitude/Behaviour change *(e.g. complying actions)*
			· Satisfaction rating
			· ROI or BCR
				· Contribution to Organisation Goals/KPIs:
				  · Behavioural *(e.g. complying actions improvement*)*
				  · Attitudinal *(e.g. perception levels)*
				  · Experiential *(e.g. customer experience)*
				  · Financial *(e.g. increase revenue or cost reduction)*
				  · Reputation *(e.g. RepTrak survey, public polling)*
				
				*NB: Examples: taxes paid; blood donated; reduced drink-drive cases, more health screening, etc.

Marketing

Inputs	Outputs	Outtakes	Outcomes	Organisational impact
· OASIS key steps *(e.g. planning, baseline, benchmarks)* · Costs *(e.g. Staff, Agencies)* · Campaign plan/Design *(e.g. briefing, comms plan, production)* · Pre-engagement activities *(e.g. partnerships, earned channels, events organised)*	· Channels used *(i.e. owned, earned, paid or shared)* · Campaign target audience reach *(by channel, message, region)* · Partnerships secured · Reach through partnerships · Marketing events successfully delivered/ Attendance	· Campaign awareness · Message recall/Recognition · Intended behaviour · Audience engagement *(e.g. enquiry calls, click-throughs, downloads, subscriptions)* · Responses/Feedback *(e.g. sentiment of comments, letters)*	· Advocacy *(e.g. endorsements/ comments, advocates)* · Message calls to action *(e.g. take up, registrations, calls/leads/ conversion)* · Attitude change · Actual behaviour change · Campaign ROI or BCR	· Contribution to Organisation Goals/KPIs: · Behavioural *(e.g. complying actions improvement*)* · Attitudinal *(e.g. perception levels)* · Experiential *(e.g. customer experience)* · Financial *(e.g. increase revenue or cost reduction)* · Reputation *(e.g. RepTrak survey, public polling)*

*NB: Examples: taxes paid; blood donated; reduced drink-drive cases, more health screening, etc.

👥 Stakeholder Engagement

Inputs	Outputs	Outtakes	Outcomes	Organisational impact

Inputs

- OASIS key steps *(e.g. planning, baseline, benchmarks)*
- Costs *(e.g. Staff, Agencies)*
- Content creation *(e.g. consultations, correspondence)*
- Events organised
- Pre-engagement activities *(i.e. stakeholder mapping, prioritisation)*

NB: Applies to target stakeholders and/or their end audience

Outputs

- Item of stakeholder comms delivered *(e.g. letters, newsletters)*
- Target audience reached *(i.e. directly or via stakeholder comms channels)*
- Events successfully delivered/ Attendance
- Partners/priority stakeholders secured
- Channels used *(i.e. earned)*

Outtakes

- Awareness
- Sentiment/tone
- Message recall
- Purpose recognition
- Audience engagement *(e.g. enquiry calls, click-throughs, shares, likes, retweets, downloads)*
- Responses/Feedback *(e.g. comments, letters)*

Outcomes

- Stakeholder satisfaction rating
- Reputation rating
- Favourable responses *(e.g. votes, supportive quote)*
- Advocacy *(e.g. recommendations, endorsements)*
- Attitude change
- Behaviour change *(e.g. subversions, perception, complying actions)*
- Productive partnerships
- ROI or BCR

Organisational impact

- Contribution to Organisation Goals/KPIs:
  - Behavioural *(e.g. complying actions improvement*)*
  - Attitudinal *(e.g. perception levels)*
  - Experiential *(e.g. customer experience)*
  - Financial *(e.g. increase revenue or cost reduction)*
  - Reputation *(e.g. RepTrak survey, public polling)*

*NB: Examples: taxes paid; blood donated; reduced drink-drive cases, more health screening, etc.

Internal Communications

Inputs	Outputs	Outtakes	Outcomes	Organisational impact

· OASIS key steps *(e.g. planning, baseline, benchmarks)*
· Theme based content *(i.e. Employee Voice, Strategic Narrative, Organisational Integrity, and Engaging Managers.)*
· Events organised
· IC Initiatives
· Pre-engagement activities *(e.g. corp stakeholders)*
· Costs *(e.g. staff, agencies)*
	· Theme based comms delivered *(via print/online channels)*
	· Target audience reached *(by channels, site and grades)*
	· Events successfully delivered/attendance
	· Initiatives delivered
		· Awareness levels (by themes)
		· Message recall/recognition
		· Responses/Feedback *(e.g. comments, letters, posts)*
		· Sentiment/tone of staff feedback
		· Audience engagement:
		  · Readership/Subscriptions *(e.g. newsletters, bulletins)*
		  · Click-throughs/Downloads/ Staff postings/Blogs
		  · Followers/Likes/Shares/ Retweets/Repeat visits
		  · Initiative/Channel/Event satisfaction
			· Staff survey scores
			· Survey response rates
			· Advocacy *(e.g. endorsements, ambassadors)*
			· Behaviours/Attitudes:
			  · Organisational initiatives delivered
			  · Volunteering
			  · Registrations
			· ROI or BCR
				· Contribution to Organisation Goals/KPIs*:
				· Behavioural *(e.g. complying actions improvement)*
				· Attitudinal *(e.g. perception levels)*
				· Experiential *(e.g. customer experience)*
				· Financial *(e.g. increase revenue or cost reduction)*
				· Reputation *(e.g. RepTrak survey, public polling)*
				
				NB: Examples: staff retention, sickness absence, staff incidents, etc.

Glossary

Advocacy – third party endorsement of your message/organisation or endorsement of other activity/organisation by you.

Audience/target audience – a specified group within a defined public targeted for influence.

Audience engagement – the extent to which the target audience interacts with the content. Typically takes the form of enquiries, calls, clicks, shares, downloads, etc.

Attitude – a settled way of thinking, feeling or perceiving something.

Awareness – audience is aware of the communication activity and/or key message(s).

Barcelona Principles 2.0 – seven principles issued by AMEC (International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication) in 2015 that set out good practice in evaluation of communications.

Behaviour – the way in which an individual or group acts or conducts themselves. This is usually in line with a requirement to comply with an instruction/wish.

Benchmarks – performance data from previous or similar activity that helps us set targets.

Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) – a measure of value for money indicating whether or not the benefit of doing an activity outweighs the cost of it.

Bounce rate – a 'bounce' is when a visitor to a website only views a single page (often the landing page) before leaving the website completely. Bounce rate is the percentage of visits to a webpage where this occurs. A high bounce rate can indicate a lack of engagement with the content.

Call to Action (CTA) – an instruction to the audience to provoke an immediate response, e.g. sign up, call and visit a website.

Channel – the medium through which a message is sent and received.

Click – each instance when a visitor follows a hyperlink from one page to another.

Click Through Rate (CTR) – a ratio showing how often people who see your content end up clicking it. CTR is the number of clicks that your content receives divided by the number of times your content is shown expressed as a percentage (clicks ÷ impressions = CTR).

Complying action – when the audience acts in accordance with a wish or command delivered via communication activity.

Content creation – the work that goes into communication development such as briefings, drafting messages, speech writing, design etc.

Cost per click (CPC) – the cost of the content divided by the number of clicks on the content.

Costs – considered an input and includes cost of resource, equipment, agency fees (where applicable, for example paid for activity such as campaigns and events).

Customer journey mapping – the process of recording how a (potential) target audience experience a communication they are exposed to from their perspective (for example their experience when searching for information on a specific topic). This involves mapping the interactions and feelings that take place throughout the journey.

Download – when a copy of a document or other digital file is pulled from a web server to the user's Internet connected device.

Earned – earned media is the publicity gained through means other than paid-for advertising or own channel.

Engage – occupy or attract someone's interest or attention; involve someone in a conversation.

Experiential – involving (or based on) experience and observation. May relate to customer experience of a government service.

Exposure – the number of target audience who have been exposed to message.

Financial – relating to finance, budgets, costs or revenue.

Followers – on twitter, blogs and other social media sites' a follower is someone who subscribes to receive content updates.

Frequency – the amount of times that an event occurs; often used in conjunction with reach to determine how many times an individual was reached with a message or piece of communication.

Hits – the logged request for a file on a webpage and images and other digital assets on that page made by a browser, a search engine or a webcrawler; commonly confused as a count of the number of times that the page has been viewed in its entirety.

Impact – quantifiable effect of communication activity on the target audience.

Impressions (digital) – the count of each time some content is loaded into a browser.

Indicator – a quantitative or qualitative factor that provides a reliable measurement which reflects the change of an intervention. An indicator is about 'how much' or 'how many' or 'to what extent' or 'what size.

Inputs – the work you do before and during the activity, e.g. planning, preparation, pre-testing and production of content, messaging and materials.

KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) – are measures of success (metrics) that can help track progress towards an end objective.

Like – when social media users click to favour a post or page (e.g Twitter, Periscope or Facebook).

Message penetration – the extent to which key messages are covered by the media, stakeholders or commented upon by the public.

Message recall – to remember or recollect the message.

Negative Sentiment – where the author (or twitter user, blogger) conveys a feeling that is against the organisation's feeling on an issue.

Net Favourability rating – an indicator produced from data typically provided by media agencies to indicate whether the sentiment of overall publicity related to the organisation has been favourable (positive) or unfavourable (negative). Otherwise it could be calculated by taking the reach of articles with negative sentiment away from the reach of articles with positive sentiment.

Neutral Sentiment – where the author (or twitter user, blogger) conveys merely the facts without any indication of feeling on the issue.

OASIS – part of the Government Communication Service tool kit. OASIS stands for Objective, Audience, Strategy, Implementation and Scoring (evaluation).

Organisational impact – the quantifiable impact communication makes against the organisation's goals and key performance indicators, e.g. revenue, cost reductions, complying actions, retention and reputation.

Outcomes – the effect of your activity on the target audience related to change of attitude or behaviour e.g. adopting a service.

Outputs – communications delivered and target audience reached. This includes distribution of content, exposure of the audience to that content, its reach and reception.

Outtakes – what the target audience think, feel or do to make a decision, measured by awareness, understanding, interest, engagement, preference and support.

Owned – owned media refers to channels that your organisation has complete control over such as your website, blogs, communities, email newsletters as well as social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram.

Page views – a request for a file from a webserver whose type has been defined as a page in the log analysis of the web server. One page view may account for many web hits.

Paid – paid media covers traditional paid advertising, banner ads, paid search marketing and sponsorships.

Positive Sentiment – where the author (or twitter user, blogger) conveys a feeling that supports or endorses your organisation's stance on an issue.

Proxy Measure – is one that may be used in place of another, for example an increase in burglar alarm sales might provide a proxy indicator for a crime (burglary) reduction campaign in the absence of other evidence.

Qualitative evidence – descriptive evidence that approximates or characterises but does not measure attributes, although it is observable. It describes, whereas quantitative data defines. Qualitative data is collected via qualitative research methods (e.g. focus groups, unstructured/semi-structured interviews and participatory observation).

Quantitative data – numeric data, which can include management information as well as measures of opinion or attitudes. Methods such as surveys are used to collect quantitative data.

Reach – percentage of an audience exposed to content. 'Reach' differs from impressions or opportunities to see in that it counts the actual number of people exposed to coverage rather than the number of 'opportunities' to see the coverage.

Readership – the readers of a newspaper, bulletin or magazine regarded collectively.

Recognition – audience recognises the activity.

Reputation – the beliefs or opinions that are generally held about someone or something.

Return on investment (ROI) – Calculation of the financial return of a campaign. ROI is used extensively in private sector communication. In the public sector it can only be used in cases where there is a potential financial gain of a campaign (e.g. financial return from public health saving which follows from changes in behaviour, such as people having stopped smoking).

Retweet (RT) – when a Twitter user endorses another Twitter users' tweet by posting it to their followers.

Share of Voice – the proportion of the total audience covered by your activity compared with other communicators.

SMART – stands for: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely.

Staff survey scores – Regular surveys of staff attitudes seek to understand the staff's views in key areas of engagement and score them – typically as a percentage of total staff.

Stakeholders secured – the number of parties with an interest that you have persuaded to pass on your messages/content.

Subversion – refers to a process by which the values and principles of a system in place and or messages are contradicted, reversed are undermined either by key influencers/opinion former (e.g. journalist, lobby groups etc).

Time on site – the length of time that elapses from the first moment a web user enters a particular website or pages on a website until the time that user leaves that website or page.

Unique Visitors – the number of distinct individuals requesting pages from the website during a given period, regardless of how often they visit.