

Communications 101

# Getting your message out

*How thinking like a marketer can lead to more effective early childhood communications*



Michael Medwick  
*Senior Communications  
Associate  
First Five Nebraska*



Kelly Medwick  
*Chief Business Development  
Officer  
Firespring*



# Who We Are



We change **public policy**  
by changing the  
**public conversation** for  
Nebraska's youngest children



WE LEVERAGE OUR  
**PEOPLE,**  
**PRODUCTS**  
**& PROFIT** — **TO DO —**  
**MORE**  
**GOOD**

# Today's Goal:

Learn to think like a marketer and leave here with the beginnings of a communications plan

- Identify your issue(s)
- Know your role in the conversation
- Understand your audiences
- Put your strategy into action
- Measure your success

# A show of hands: Who's in the room?

*You don't have to be a  
professional marketer to  
think like one*





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# Identify your issue(s)

- ✓ Be clear
- ✓ Be specific
- ✓ Know the problem or challenge you're trying to address

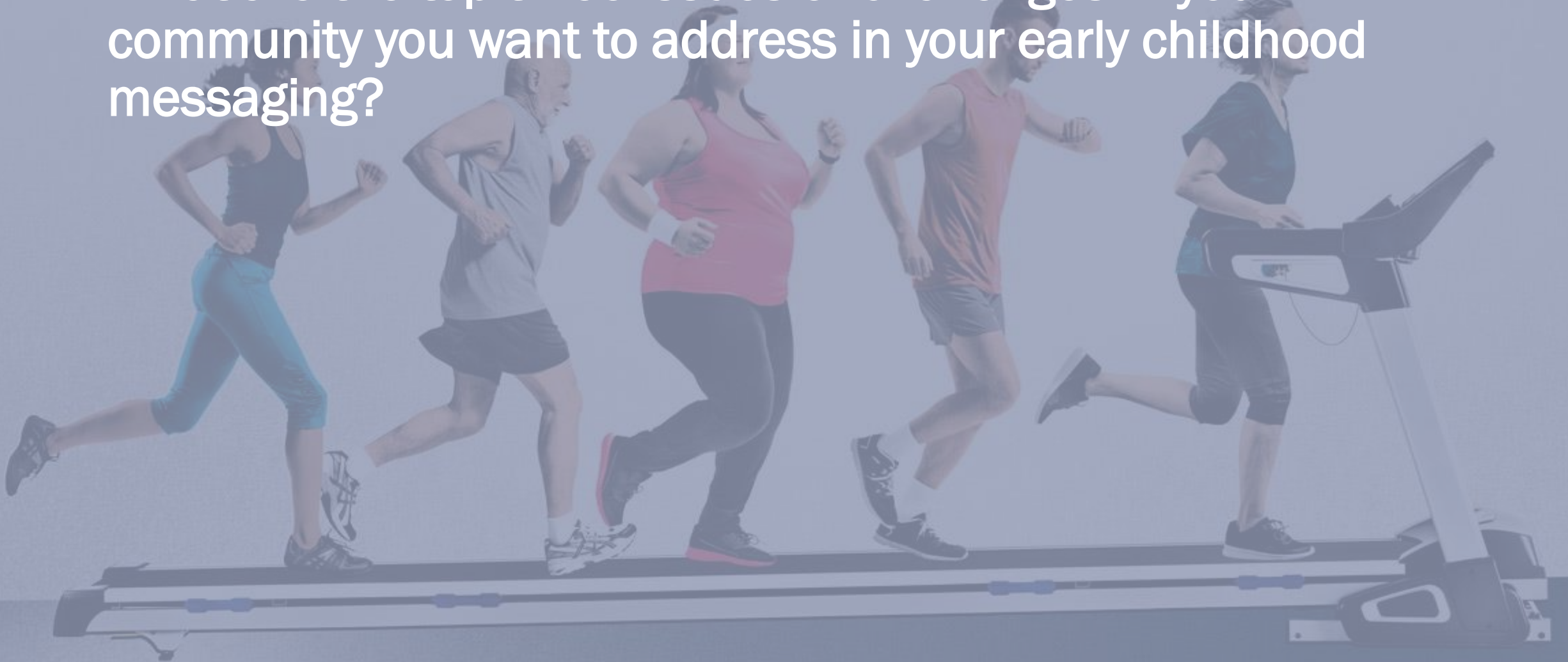
Ummmm...

...you've got issues



# Exercise

What are the top three issues or challenges in your community you want to address in your early childhood messaging?





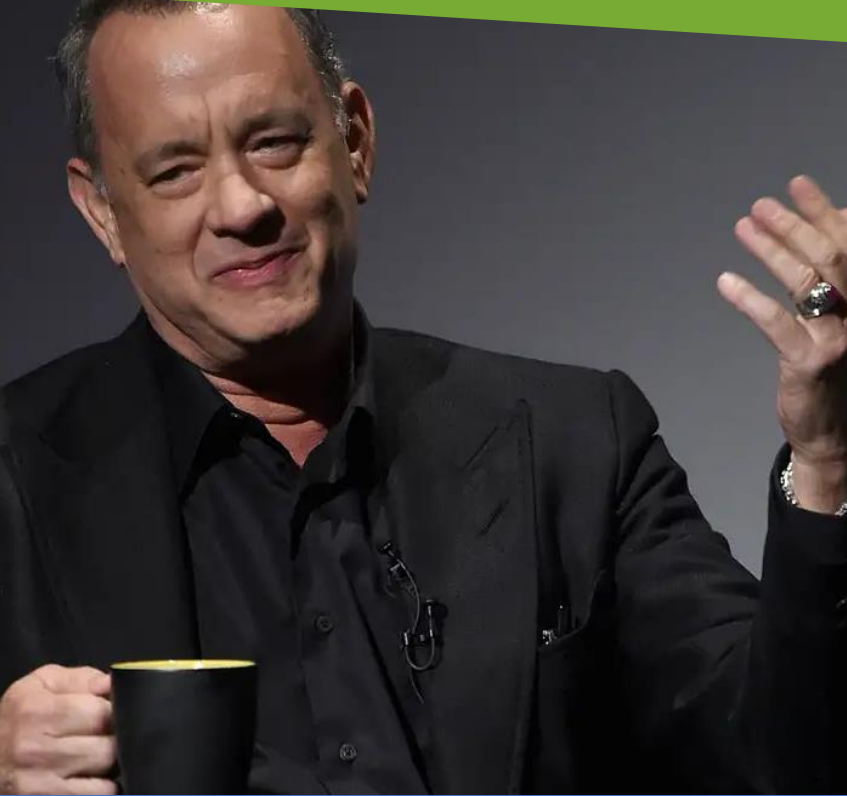
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## Know your role in the conversation

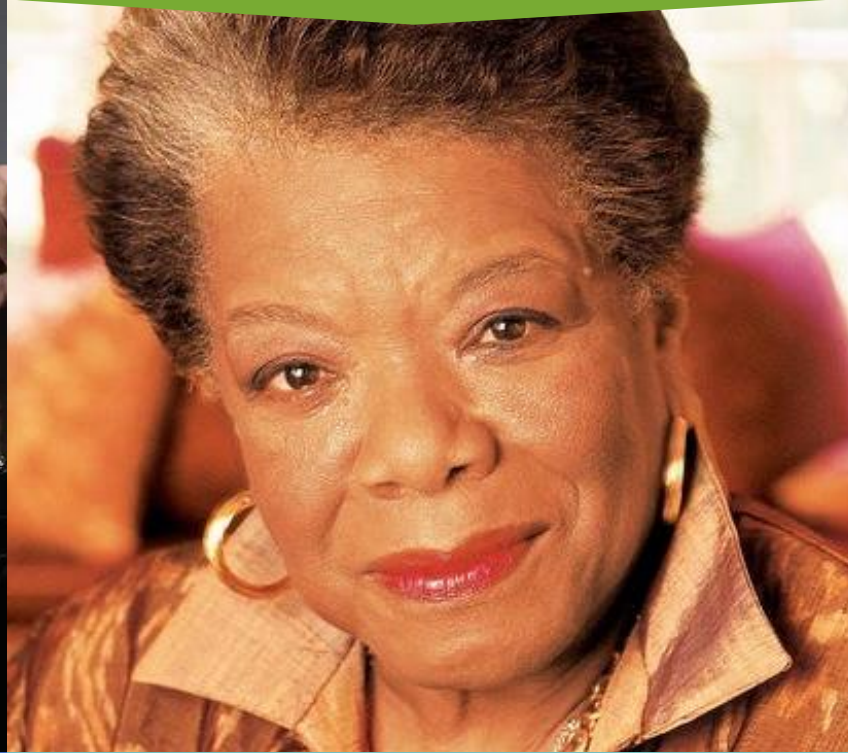
- How are you perceived in your community?
- What is your authentic voice?



# What's your voice?



Creative | Fun | Witty  
Thoughtful | Relatable  
“The Common Touch”



Wise | Insightful  
Sincere | Compassionate  
“The Conscience”



Credible | Informed  
Practical | Responsible  
“The Decision-Maker”



# 3

## Understand your audience

- Who are you trying to reach and why?
- What's the specific outcome you want?
- What's the right message frame for the audience?



# Elements of an audience persona



- What are their social or political values?
- What are they anxious about?
- What is their educational background?
- Where are they in their lives and careers?
- What are their personal or professional goals?
- What role do they play in your community?
- Where do they get their information from?
- Where do they currently stand on your issue?

# Framing your message

## Sample Frame

## Use this frame when...

## Remember to...

Promoting academic success

Your audience is interested in the conversation about school funding and getting the greatest value for investments in education

Avoid fixating on standardized assessments—cognitive, behavioral and social-emotional benefits of EC all help deliver accountability for education dollars

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Empowering parents/families

Your audience embraces traditional cultural values and is concerned about preserving the central role of parenting in children's lives

Highlight examples of how quality child care settings actively involve working parents and keep them front-and-center in children's early development

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Building workplace productivity

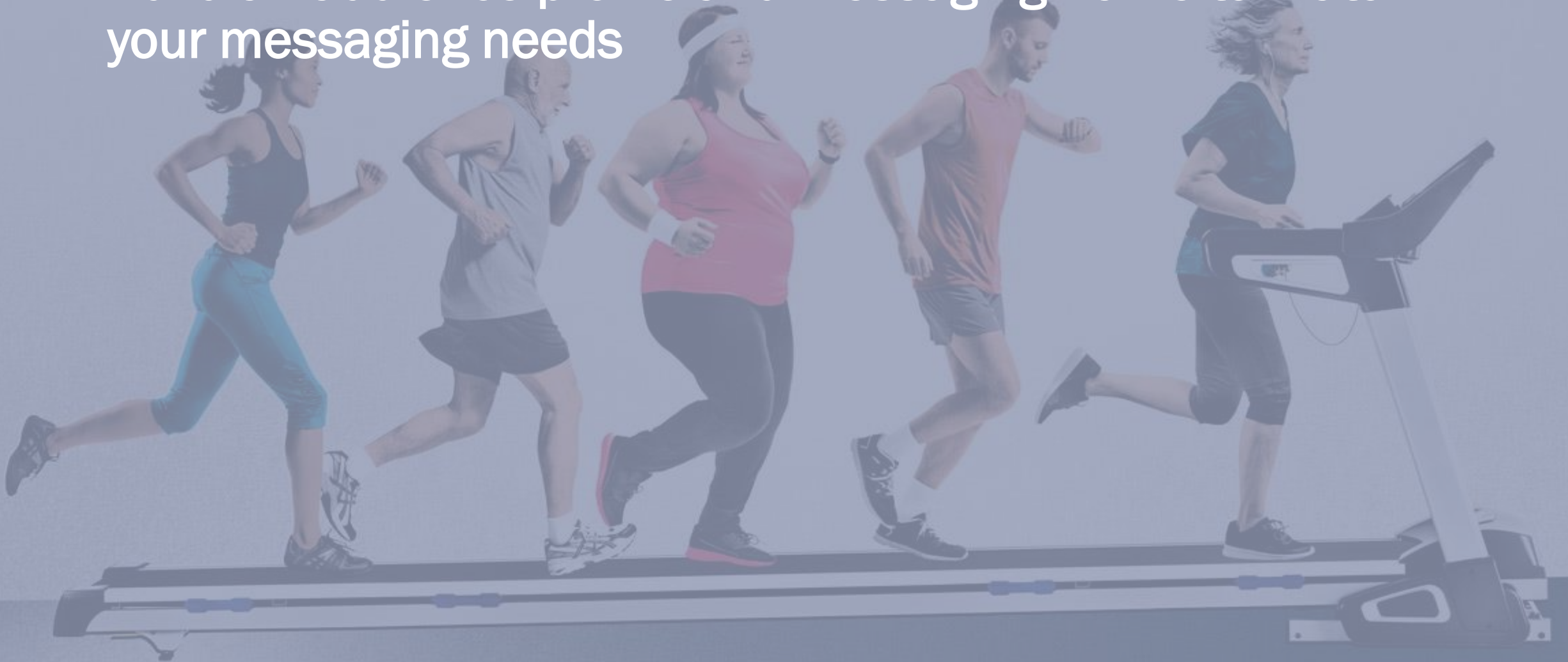
Your audience includes employers who need to clearly understand how local EC infrastructure affects their own bottom line

Demonstrate a basic understanding of their specific industry, workplace and employee base and relate that information to the costs of low worker engagement, absenteeism and turnover



# Exercise

Build an audience profile and messaging frame to match your messaging needs



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## Develop a plan and put it into action

- ✓ Make your communications plan SMART
- ✓ Guide your audience from awareness to action



# Make your comms plan SMART

**S**

## Specific

- State what you'll do
- Use action words

**M**

## Measurable

- Provide a way to evaluate
- Use metrics or data targets

**A**

## Achievable

- Within your scope
- Possible to accomplish, attainable

**R**

## Relevant

- Makes sense within your job function
- Improves the business in some way

**T**

## Time-bound

- State when you'll get it done
- Be specific on date or timeframe



# From awareness to action

**Awareness**



**Engagement**



**Action**



**Circulate key ideas and concepts to create context or “buzz”**

**Create a meaningful conversation with your target audience**

**Show key audience members how to become actively involved**

# From awareness to action

## Awareness



## Engagement



## Action



**Circulate key ideas and concepts to create context or “buzz”**

- Digital, print and broadcast campaigns and messaging
- Earned media coverage
- Op-eds and opinion pieces
- Community events/resources
- Special reports/publications

**Create a meaningful conversation with your target audience**

- Group stakeholder presentations and roundtables
- Special interest publications (selected blogs, newsletters)
- Paid/targeted social media campaigns that invite response

**Show key audience members how to become actively involved**

- Direct one-on-one contact with decision makers
- Formalized appeals (e.g. direct mail fundraising)





# SMART in action

We will use **local media and direct contact** to publicly invite **three of our community's largest employers** to a **special event** hosted at a quality **child care program used by their employees** to secure their endorsement for a community development loan to expand available slots **before the next city council meeting.**

**Specific:** *Identify the audience and engagement tactics*

**Measurable:** *Success measured by attendance of the invitees and the outcome of the city council meeting*

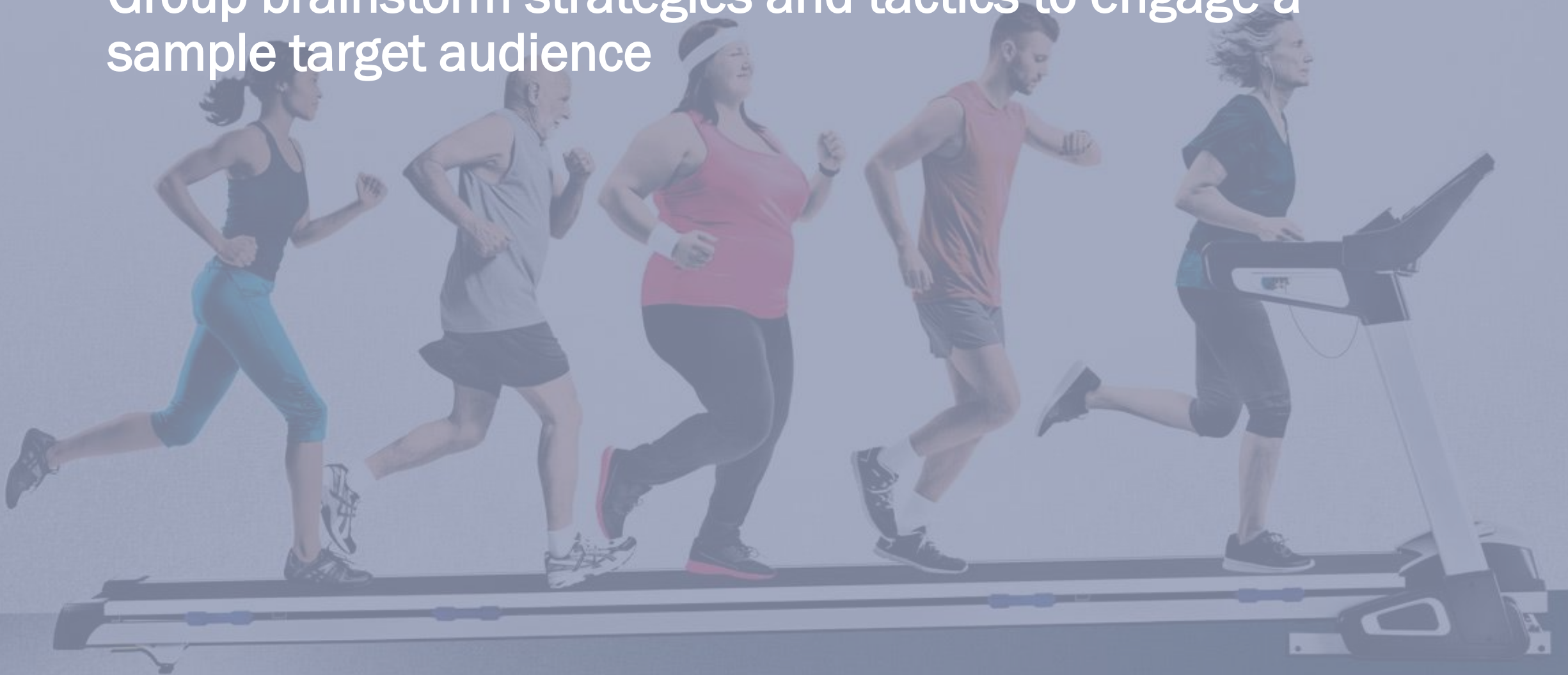
**Achievable:** *Limited guest list keeps the event manageable*

**Relevant:** *Tactic sets the stage for a substantial conversation about worker and employer needs*

**Timely:** *Must take place prior to the next city council meeting*

# Exercise

Group brainstorm strategies and tactics to engage a sample target audience



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## Measure Your Success

- ✓ Know where you succeeded, where you didn't and why
- ✓ Use success metrics to fine-tune your approach



# Before you rinse and repeat...



- News stories/letters to the editor placed?
- Social media impressions, shares, likes, engagements?
- Presentations delivered? Quality of attendance and discussion?
- Unsolicited examples of third parties spreading your message?
- Meetings with decision makers and conversation quality?
- Did you meet your specific outcome goals for target audiences?
- Where did you encounter pushback?



# You've got this!

- ✓ Identify your issue(s)
- ✓ Know your place in the conversation
- ✓ Understand your audiences
- ✓ Put your strategy into action
- ✓ Measure your success





[FirstFiveNebraska.org](http://FirstFiveNebraska.org)

Policy Advisement | Data Analysis

Strategic Communications

[MMedwick@firstfivenebraska.org](mailto:MMedwick@firstfivenebraska.org)



[Firespring.com/Nonprofit](http://Firespring.com/Nonprofit)

Printing | Strategic Guidance | Marketing

Nonprofit Website Builder

[Kelly.Medwick@firespring.com](mailto:Kelly.Medwick@firespring.com)

