

Changing the Process for Strategic Communications Management at HHS

Background: As communication science has evolved to leverage digital channels to reach our American citizens with relevancy in the moment, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs (ASPA) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has implemented a process innovation that has dramatically improved the way we plan, implement, and evaluate our communications.

Evaluation Methods and Results: To achieve deep and lasting cultural change, ASPA employed evidence-based principles of both organizational change and communications science. The new process is highly innovative in at least three aspects: (1) it focuses attention on *outcomes* achieved with a communication product rather than how it is created; (2) it promotes *involvement* of a wider range of institutional partners in the planning process; and (3) it employs an *online technology platform* for coordinating the process. ASPA took a co-creative approach to the new process design, ensuring both buy-in and a well-designed fit to the way program teams and public affairs offices worked. As a result, adoption by our communications professionals has been high, with over 500 participants after a year of use. Just as telling is the communication products that have been eliminated as a result of the process, a reduction of more than 50% in projects that require ASPA review, as teams used data to focus on the products with the most impact.

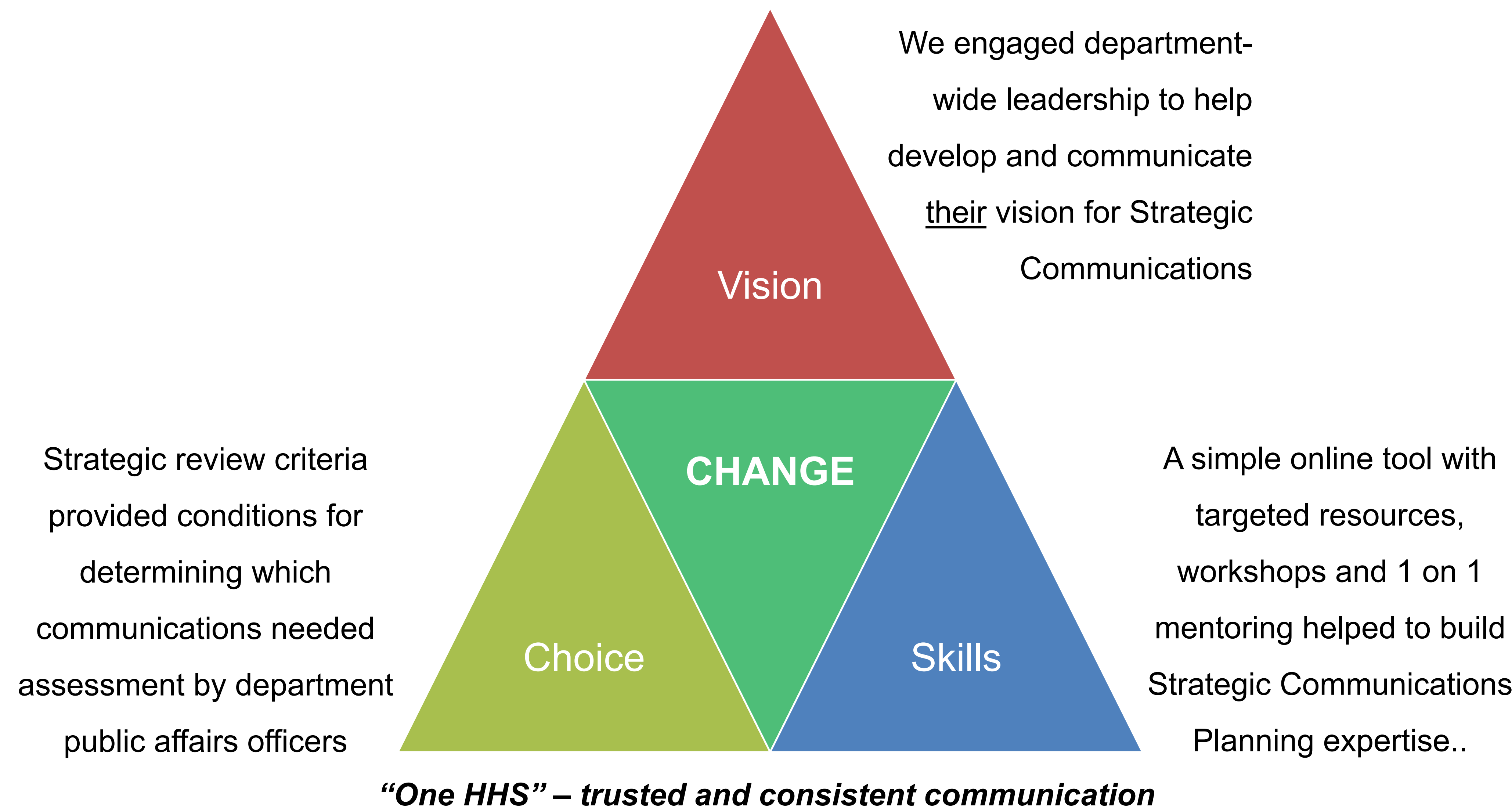
Strategic Communications Planning (SCP) Vision:

To deliver **audience-driven content** with **measurable outcomes** that **demonstrate impact** on the **health and well-being** of the **American public**.

DOES YOUR COMMUNICATION PRODUCT REQUIRE DEPARTMENT REVIEW?

When in doubt - Ask

- Is it **Newsworthy** ?
- Does it contain **New Information** ?
- Is the subject/content **Controversial** ?
- Is it a **Public Education Campaign** ?



Change Motivators:

- Vision – Mission-driven individuals are motivated by proof of increased impact
- Skills – Science-based yet simple and replicable methodology tied to HHS strategic goals and objectives
- Choice – Flexibility in how SCP is implemented ensured easy integration into their workflow

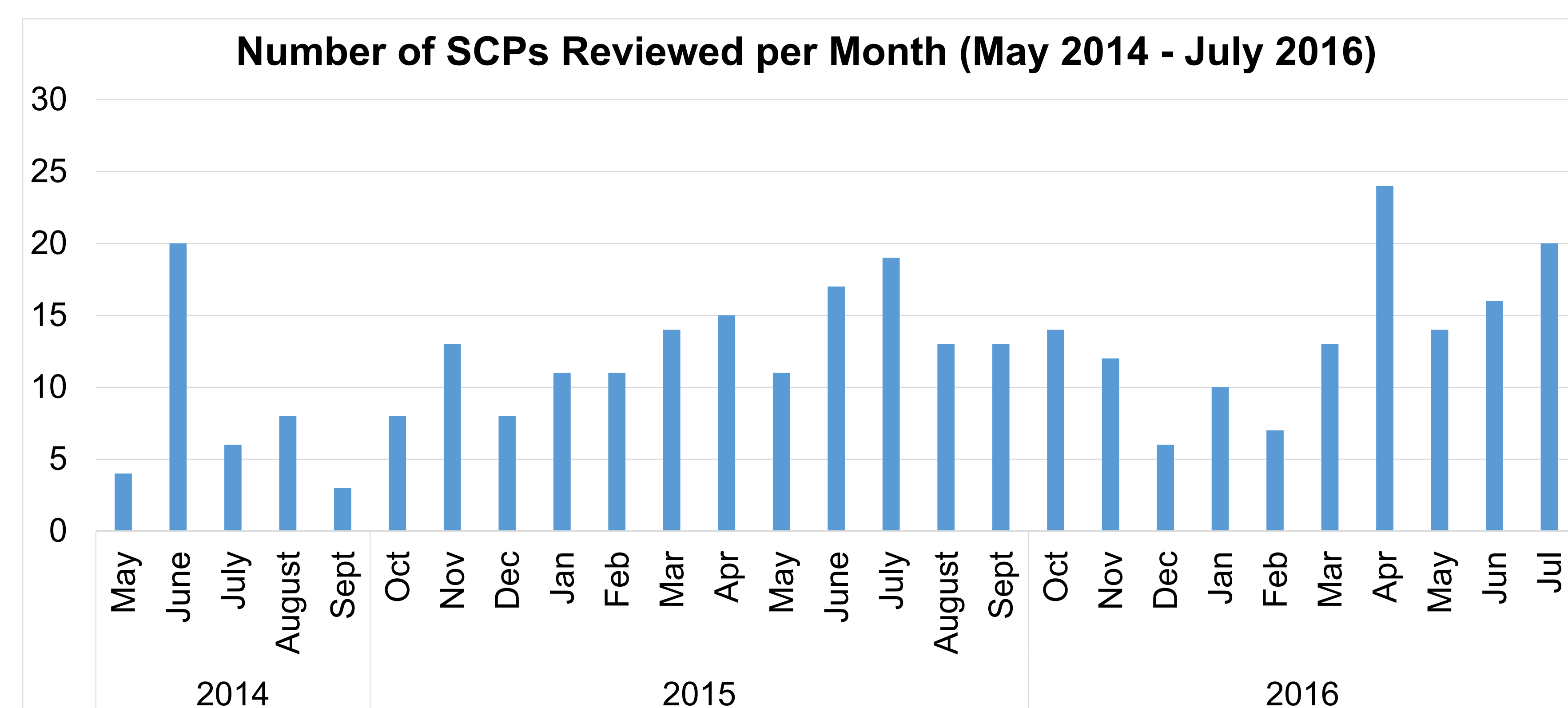
Change Inhibitors:

- Vision – Risk adverse and siloed culture slowed implementation of change
- Skills – Measurement of impact is not straightforward and digital evaluation methodology is still nascent
- Choice – Policy-driven culture removes flexibility to use more creative approaches

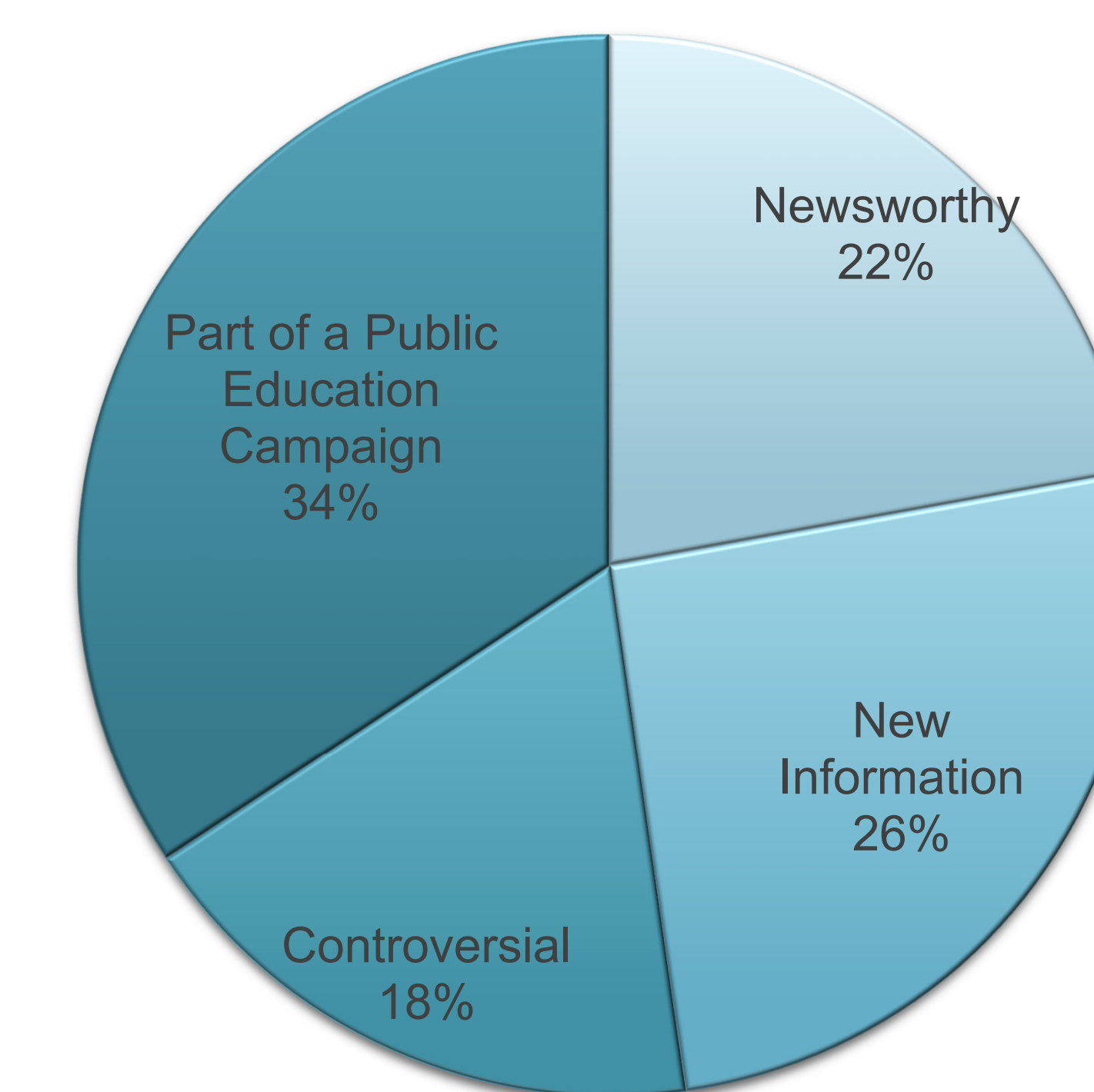
Measuring Our Progress

Before May 2014:

- 80 paper forms reviewed per month
- Plans focus on content tactics rather than strategic message
- Collaboration was inconsistent and labor intensive
- Only the biggest campaigns had strategic goals and impact measures



Reviewed SCP's that Meet the 4 Criteria



As of July 31, 2016	
Number of SCPs	768
Percent of SCP's that are Internal Review Only	27%
Percent of SCP's with HHS Collaborators	62%
Percent of SCP's with External Collaborators	37%
Percent of SCP's with more than 1 Goal	64%
Number of SCP's evaluated	22
Number of SCP Users	549