



# 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**.