VISUAL MESSAGE MAPPING FOR CCS OUTREACH

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ABSTRACT

In 2003, the U.S. Department of Energy-initiated Regional Carbon Sequestration Partnership (RCSP) Program established an Outreach Working Group (OWG) to enhance the communication and outreach efforts of the RCSPs through collaboration, joint training, and information sharing. Recently, the OWG worked with Media Master to receive training in the development and use of a tool known as a message map. Message maps are diagrams of key messages and supporting points that resemble a hub-and-spoke configuration. This visualization tool presents the information in a concise, easy-to-access format and provides a framework for organizing thoughts and laying them out clearly for communication. Once developed, message maps can be used to help develop more effective answers to questions from stakeholders, the media, colleagues, and others. The maps are also useful to organize information brochures, presentations, and speeches. The proposed poster will highlight the need that message maps can help address, the steps involved in developing a message map and how they can be used to address that need, examples of message maps developed by the RCSPs, and extrapolation of this process for use with other projects and to address tough questions.

Carbon capture and storage (CCS) are complex concepts. Media and the general public seek clear and short answers. As a result, coverage of CCS often includes technical inaccuracies, and too often the focus is on the technical detail of only one issue rather than the array of details, leading to confusion and even suspicion or lack of trust. Presenting only key points without detail can seem condescending and make people feel manipulated whereas having short pithy factoids organized by theme can facilitate using those facts in a coherent answer. A visualization tool can organize the complex information, teasing out the key points, dividing the details into digestible portions, and ensuring that the big picture is presented quickly in order to improve communication of CCS concepts to the public.

Message mapping is an intuitive way to bring disciplined order to a very large amount of information. The process starts with the development of a "home base" theme that embodies both important points and key questions. This home base is a central and constant point that is emphasized in all responses. From home base, spoke-and-wheel maps and submaps are developed to highlight the "proof points" and supporting elements of the central theme. The map's center presents the biggest picture view. Moving farther from the hub drills further into the details of the subject.

The RCSP outreach group conducted internal training to help each partnership gain insight to process and collectively think through how to use message mapping and what to include. The exercise has been an iterative process incorporating actual outreach efforts. The poster will present the highest-order map and a sample of the detailed maps for two spokes.

Visualization mapping can be applied to many situations and projects. The first step is learning how to use the tool. Examples included in the poster will highlight two tough questions and show a path through the map that reinforces the central theme, reminds the user of other key points, and specifically addresses the concern in the question. The second step will include pointers for people from a different project to consider in determining the points they would include.

The poster will have a flowchart highlighting OWG's evolution with the tool and pointers for development. It will show a few sample maps and show a path through those maps to answer specific questions. There will also be a handout with a master map and some pointers for use to help conference attendees apply visual message mapping to organize their work—from presentation to projects.