

Communication with Government, Parliament, and Stakeholders

**The Institution that Must Speak Clearly About
Things People Would Rather Not Hear**

The Communication Challenge

- Tension 1: Rigor vs. Accessibility
- Tension 2: Independence vs. Engagements
- Tension 3: Evidence vs. Uncertainty

Communication Starts Long Before The Report

The Audit Communication Timeline:

BEFORE

- Clarify scope
- Agree criteria
- Establish policy context
- Signal process to stakeholders

DURING

- Test factual understanding
- Surface missing evidence
- Identify alternatives
- Manage expectations

AFTER

- Track implementation
- Follow up on recommendations
- Support institutional learning



Listen Broadly. Test Rigorously. Decide Independently.

STAKEHOLDER EVIDENCE FRAMEWORK

What Stakeholders Provide	What SAs Must Retain
➤ Evidence and context	➤ Control of questions
➤ Implementation realities	➤ Evidentiary standards
➤ Alternative explanations	➤ Scope and Framing
➤ Blind spots	➤ Final Judgments
➤ Operational constraints	➤ Language and conclusions

SAI Role: Shed Light on Consequences, Do Not Own Policy Choices

THE BOUNDARY THAT PROTECTS SAI CREDIBILITY

SAIs CAN legitimately assess:

- Whether policy achieves its intended purpose
- Whether original assumptions remain valid
- Whether costs and benefits have changed
- Whether implementation creates unintended consequences
- Whether alternatives could achieve the same objective more effectively

SAIs should be CAUTIOUS about:

- What society's objectives ought to be
- The proper distribution of social values
- Ultimate political priorities
- Which of two legitimate political choices is preferable

Credibility vs. Acceptance, Rejection

THE TRANSPARENCY ARCHITECTURE

VISIBLE ELEMENT	CREDIBILITY FUNCTION
• Questions asked	• Shows the scope was defined, not assumed
• Evidence considered	• Demonstrates comprehensiveness and fairness
• Standards applied	• Establishes the basis for judgment
• Limitations acknowledged	• Shows intellectual honesty
• Reasoning connecting evidence to conclusions	• Allows the logic to be tested
• Stakeholder views and how they were considered	• Demonstrates engagement and open-mindedness

Credibility vs. Acceptance, Rejection

THE CREDIBILITY INVESTMENT MODEL

SHORT TERM

- Each finding defended on its merits
- Each process made visible
- Each challenge addressed transparently
- Each limitation acknowledged honestly

LONG TERM

- Institutional reputation as reliable arbiter
- Portfolio of work viewed as systematically fair
- Difficult findings accepted even by those who dislike them
- Reports sought out rather than distrusted and attacked

SAIs Must Communicate Clearly (and Often)

Seven Practices That Distinguish Effective SAI Communication

1. Design for use from day one — know the decision, the decision-maker, and the timing
2. Communicate throughout — not just at publication
3. Distinguish audience without changing substance — different channels, one evidentiary standard
4. Use your own language — never accept framing as a Trojan Horse
5. Make the process visible — so it can be evaluated, not just trusted
6. Hold sensitive findings to a higher standard of precision — not a lower standard of courage
7. Follow up — recommendations without tracking are advice without accountability

SAIs Must Communicate Clearly (and Often)

The Communication Test

Before publication, ask:

- ✓ Is it clear what we found?
- ✓ Is it clear why it matters?
- ✓ Is it clear what caused it?
- ✓ Is it clear what can be done?
- ✓ Is it clear who should act?
- ✓ Is it clear what we do not know?
- ✓ Is it clear how we reached this conclusion?
- ✓ Would a fair-minded reader regard the process as honest?

If yes to all eight: publish with confidence. If not: the communication work is not finished



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