Communicating with Civil Society

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The WINS Academy Elective on Communicating with Civil Society focuses on one of the most overlooked stakeholders in nuclear security: civil society. For the purposes of this module, civil society includes individuals, civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the media. At the broadest level, it simply means the public.

The module is targeted at professionals in the nuclear sector whose responsibilities include communicating with civil society on nuclear security issues—either on a day-to-day basis or during a crisis. Such professionals may not be specialists in marketing or public relations, but they may need to increase their knowledge of, and skills in, the communication process in order to interact more effectively with civil society individuals, community members, organisations and the media. Examples of such professionals include:

Board Members	Regulators
Executive Management	Offsite Response Forces
Security Directors	Scientists, Technicians and Engineers

The support of the public is necessary for the successful development and use of nuclear and radioactive materials—whether in industry, medicine or agriculture. When community members trust the organisation and its leaders, the support they provide can be invaluable. When distrust and conflict are the norm, protests, negative media coverage and lawsuits can harm an organisation's reputation, financial performance, and ability to conduct business. Therefore, one of the goals of the module is to constructively challenge the belief that all security-related information must be kept confidential. Another is to help participants understand how and why they should engage with the public, take actions that help to develop mutual trust, and communicate more effectively.

The module may also interest leaders in civil society and the media who seek to increase their understanding of nuclear security and the challenges that organisations face when communicating about nuclear security to civil society audiences.

By the end of this module, participants will understand:

— How and why the relationship between nuclear security and civil society has developed and changed over time and what this means today for those who are responsible for communicating about nuclear security issues.

— The current framework that guides how States report on their nuclear security arrangements and the progress they are making toward the effective implementation of such arrangements.

— The basic elements involved in the communication process, including the importance of body language, how communication noise affects communication, and why trust is so important in the relationship between nuclear organisations and civil society.

— The different ways in which organisations engage face to face with civil society stakeholders and why it is so important to do so effectively.

— Some of the forces affecting traditional media, how communications have changed in response to smartphones and social media, some of the benefits and risks in communicating with the media, and why it is so important to nurture long-term relationships.

— The basic structure of a nuclear communications emergency policy, the elements that need to be included in an emergency communications plan, and how to implement the plan in an emergency.

OUTLINE