

## PROPOSED PROCESS TO IDENTIFY AND DEVELOP KEY MESSAGES For Discussion

- 1) Articulate the benefits to your organization of having a set of shared, consistent, scientifically validated and approved messages (or talking points) to use, adapt or tailor for specific audiences. These key messages, with consistent use, will help establish a national identity and voice for the McKnight Brain Institutes (MBI) and the McKnight Brain Research Foundation (MBRF).
  
- 2) Identify the common themes among current messages from the MBIs and MBRF as well as the areas of difference.
  - a. **Common themes/shared messages**
    - What is cognitive aging?*
      - i. Cognitive aging is not a disease
      - ii. Cognitive decline that accompanies aging can occur independently of age-associated diseases
      - iii. Cognitive aging is normal brain aging without evidence of neurodegenerative disease
    - When does it start/how can you slow it down?*
      - iv. Aging/age-related memory loss begins at birth and continues throughout the lifespan
      - v. Individual differences in cognitive aging – with some people showing marked decline and others showing relative preservation of cognitive function – suggest that specific, modifiable brain changes underlie cognitive decline
    - Goals*
      - vi. Maintaining our brain health is critical to helping seniors live independently longer
      - vii. With seniors living longer, we need to close the gap between cognitive healthspan and lifespan
      - viii. Promote brain health to help seniors age successfully, stay active and live independently
    - Need to discover the underlying factors/causes of cognitive aging/age-related memory loss*
      - ix. A better understanding of the brain changes and genetic and lifestyle factors that contribute to them can be used to design better strategies and interventions to promote successful cognition across the lifespan
      - x. Clinical interventions for combatting cognitive aging can not progress without increased knowledge of the underlying fundamental mechanisms
      - xi. There is a need to accelerate the discovery of the causes of age-related memory loss and cognitive decline and develop improved treatments for them
  - b. **Differences in messages**
    - Is it inevitable?*
      - i. Age-related memory loss is an inevitable consequence of aging
      - ii. Cognitive decline is not inevitable with age
  
- 3) Consider from a layperson's point of view what the key questions are or might be about cognitive aging and age-related memory loss.

Examples:

- Is memory loss inevitable?
- When does it usually begin? At what age?
- How many people have this?
- How can I prevent, delay or minimize cognitive decline and age-related memory loss?
- Is cognitive decline and age-related memory loss a disease?
- How do I know I don't have Alzheimer's Disease? Can my doctor test me?
- What is the difference between age-related memory loss and Alzheimer's Disease?

- 4) Identify and agree upon the questions to work with to develop key messages.
- 5) Discuss and draft and agree to wording of key messages to respond to the identified questions. There can be more than one message under each question.
- 6) Tailor or adapt the key messages to address each audience – public, scientific/medical communities, and policymakers and grant-making agencies.
- 7) Discuss process for scientific validation and approval by leadership. Encourage them to incorporate the key messages into their presentations and writing.
- 8) Scan current website content to ensure there is alignment with key messages. Incorporate key message into new content where possible and beneficial.
- 9) Share feedback and ideas for using key messages with the members of the Communications Working Group.