

Harbor Community Benefit Foundation (HCBF) Organizational Communications Plan

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BACKGROUND

In May 2018, Long Beach Forward was contracted by the Harbor Community Benefit Foundation (HCBF) to develop an organizational communications plan to better define the HCBF brand and give staff guidance in external communications moving forward into the next phase of HCBF grantmaking.

To develop the final product, Long Beach Forward communications staff initiated a landscape analysis to with the intent to explore 1) How HCBF presented itself; 2) how HCBF was being perceived externally; and 3) how HCBF stakeholders talk about their work. The landscape analysis consisted of the following tactics:

- Stakeholder interviews with Meghan Reese (Executive Director, HCBF), Tamanna Rahman (Program Assistant, HCBF), Gisele Fong (Program Manager, The California Endowment), and Sylvia Betancourt (Program Manager, Long Beach Alliance for Children with Asthma)
- Media audit of print, radio, and digital media
- Social media audit of the HCBF Facebook and Twitter profiles
- Materials review of HCBF publications
- Website audit

Key insights that were identified from the landscape analysis included the following:

- Consistent use of branding across online publications and printed materials to convey the identity of the organization.
- Transparent and easily accessible information regarding the operations of HCBF and the oversight led by the Board of Directors.
- Minimal social media presence with a lack of proactive engagement beyond sharing email notices.
- Minimal presence in the media in regards to current role in the community and impact the foundation has.
- Overall absence of narrative regarding impact or benefit delivered to the community beyond grant awards given to specific organizations and their project information.

Findings from the landscape analysis were the basis of the defined goals and objectives of the plan. The strategies outlined in the communications plan are designed to directly address the identified needs and opportunities that currently exist in the organization's current communications.

While this plan lays out several tactics, each one will yield different outcomes based off the resources put into implementation of the plan, including staff time, funding for collateral development, and digital promotion.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The communications plan is a roadmap for using external communications to get us towards a new destination. The goals and objectives should be clear about why we are putting energy and time into a communications and what we want to achieve once the plan is complete. For this plan, our communications objectives are to:

1. Raise the visibility and presence of the organization as an integral change agent in the Wilmington and San Pedro community.
 - a. Double the number of followers on social media with curated content that embodies the organizational mission and demonstrates impact.
 - b. Explore traditional press and digital media to expose HCBF to a wider audience.
2. Position the organization as a valuable community asset that improves the quality of life for San Pedro and Wilmington residents.
 - a. Utilize storytelling and grantee reports to convey impact and bring people into frame of community benefits.
 - b. Establish a strong reputation as a vital community stakeholder in the health and wellbeing of the harbor area for years to come.

ORGANIZATIONAL MESSAGING

- **Vision:** The harbor communities of San Pedro and Wilmington become safe, healthy, and beautiful places in which to live, learn, work, play, and enjoy the physical environment.
- **Mission:** The Harbor Community Benefit Foundation assesses, protects, and improves the health, quality of life, aesthetics, and physical environment of the harbor communities of San Pedro and Wilmington, California, which have been impacted by the Port of Los Angeles.

TARGET AUDIENCES

Based off interviews and the landscape analysis, the communications strategy should take into account the top five audiences that are important to the success of HCBF. Following is an audience segmentation map showing each priority audience and digging deeper into their values, challenges, trusted messengers, and channels of communications as well as what HCBF needs them to do to be successful. The table below can be used to adapt messaging and tactics.

Audience	Values & Motivators	Challenges & Barriers	Trusted Messengers	Channels	Desired Action
Wilmington and San Pedro residents	Quality of life, healthier communities, overall well-being	Lack of access to services and opportunities, poor air quality	Local community leaders and CBOs	In-person, social media	See HCBF as a catalyst for community improvement and change
Community organizations and grantees	Social change, improving lives	Resources, time, competing priorities, leadership changes	Affected residents, constituencies served, Board members	Online (social media, website), in-person, press media	Understand and articulate the value HCBF adds to their work
Oversight agencies (POLA and State Lands Commission)	ROI, mitigating pollution and impacts, good PR	Regulations, legal obligations	Elected officials	Email, Social media, in-person	See value in HCBF's role as facilitator in community benefits
Local decision makers	Reelection, public service, good PR, being plugged into the community	Time, competing priorities, Industry influence	District office staff, local CBOs, community leaders	Online (social media, website), in-person, press media	See HCBF as a vital community asset and resource for improving the community
Appellants	Social justice, fairness, healthier communities	Not as connected to HCBF, competing priorities	Community residents, organizations	Email, Social media, in-person	See that HCBF has a track record and ability to improve the community

STRATEGIES

These are guiding principles that are derived from the current landscape around HCBF and will help guide your tactics towards the identified communications goals.

- **Report on the impact:** Much of the current outward facing communications from HCBF communicates new grants or awards, but not necessarily the result of the grants or how the community has changed because of the investment. Highlighting examples like new infrastructure improvements, gardens that have opened up, or advocacy efforts that have been supported will help audiences associate HCBF with tangible benefits in the community.
- **Bring people into the frame:** Your work is complex and often done behind the scenes through grants and paperwork, but there is a human impact to your mission and vision. Utilizing storytelling will help establish a more authentic connection between HCBF and the value your work brings to the community. Storytelling can be as simple as gathering quotes and photos from people involved in grantee organizations that speak to how valuable the community support is.
- **Grow your online presence by starting small:** HCBF operates a small staff, meaning staff time may be limited for proactive communications efforts. Planning communications tactics at scale to start small and expand over time with experience will help slowly yield the desired results. Expanding HCBF's presence on social media is a cost-effective way to reach many audiences and can consist of just one social media post a day, whether that is a relevant article, email blast, photo or link to a grantee's project, or highlighting a grantee organization.
- **Embrace the past as the key to moving forward:** The story of HCBF's creation is one that will resonate more with different audiences, but it is nonetheless the true story of a community coming together for the benefit of all. As the organization faces the challenges and uncertainty of sustainability, embracing the history while speaking to the demonstrated and tangible impact that organization has helped deliver will help solidify the organization's reputation as a catalyst for community benefits and the greater good.
- **Be a proactive resource:** Whether it is exploring the impacts of the port industry in the community, connecting community groups and grantees to each other, or providing organizations with the financial opportunities to carry out their mission, leverage your role in the community change landscape to be more visible. For instance, consider hosting a convening bringing policymakers and partners to the table and celebrating all the accomplishments that have been possible with HCBF's support.

TACTICS

These are the different steps the organization can take to get your brand out into the community (e.g. social media, earned media, events, etc.)

- **Community Conversations:** Having face-to-face conversations with key audiences like Wilmington and San Pedro residents and organizational partners is a valuable tool to developing relationships and building a strong community support network for the organization.
 - Utilize the stories and content created for other tactics to develop a presentation deck that tells the story of HCBF, describes the impact through stories and photos, and inspires people to support the mission and work of HCBF.
 - Identify key groups out of the target audiences to approach about making 20-30 minute presentations and have conversations about the impact and importance of HCBF.
 - Explore having a mix of staff, volunteers, and board members make presentations to help reinforce the community and multi-stakeholder approach of HCBF.
 - Identify key opportunities and avenues for community stakeholders who are engaged to plug in and stay connected (e.g. signing up for the newsletter, identify other organized groups, write testimonies of support).

- **Earned Media:** While it may be difficult to garner coverage for the organization itself, you may still consider doing some media relations for the impact the organization has. In addition, there are other story hooks to consider when pitching the rollout to reporters.
 - Target outlets broken out and prioritized by sector: philanthropy, environmental issues, health, progressive/social change-focused media.
 - Identify key reporters at the target outlets based off their reporting beat or past news coverage to build relationships with so they are more likely to cover your news and see HCBF as a source of information.
 - Identify profile stories of your staff, board members, or community partners that could embody the story of HCBF and its role in the community.
 - Op-eds and essays. This could be anything from a local media piece (“helping make Wilmington and San Pedro a healthy community for all”) to a philanthropy-focused piece pushing for more funding to support community benefits.

- **Email Marketing:** Utilize the existing email marketing infrastructure to share more proactive stories related to impact while also announcing board meetings and special events. This could be a spotlight on a grantee or highlighting the success of a project from the grant report that grantees may already submit. You may also consider sending

a monthly update email to the list to keep them attuned of the progress and successes of HCBF.

- **Social Media Strategy:** Develop a social media strategy and leverage content to raise the visibility of the organization and what HCBF's support in the community looks like.
 - Identify a post for Facebook and Twitter for each day of the work week. This could include things like an email blast, a news article highlighting HCBF or a grantee, a news article that is related to the mission and vision, and a photo of a grantee or community member involved in HCBF supported work.
 - Create one hashtag that would represent HCBF's values and would encourage audience members and grantees to share content and engage more online. Suggestions include #HCBFcares #HCBFcommunity #OneHealthyHarbor
 - Find opportunities to do activities like Facebook Live, "behind the scenes" stories, and other activities that bridge online and offline experiences and events.

- **Video:** Develop a short video on the role and impact HCBF plays in the community, and why they are a vital contributor to community change, similar to [this](#). This could be unveiled on social channels and via email or at a future event. Short videos on social media are excellent ways to engage audiences and create more visibility.
 - Consider developing short, 30-second videos of staff, board members, and grantees giving their versions of the elevator pitch or core message to answer questions such as 'What is the Harbor Community Benefit Foundation?' and 'Why does HCBF's work matter?'
 - If there are budget limitations that make video production challenging, consider taking photos of the same people and adding a pull quote graphic of their testimonials instead. These could then be shared on your social channels and website.

- **Website:** Update the organizational website with more easy to find information about how money is invested in the community (beyond just the numbers) and what the human impact is. We suggest including collateral and assets you will develop such as future reports, community testimonies, and videos to engage viewers and help them better understand the unique impact of HCBF.

TIMELINE

Below is a sample 10-month timeline of a minimal but effective way to implement the communications plan based off the organization's current capacity. Note that the timeline can be altered in different ways based off the amount of resources put towards implementation.

Date or Month	Tasks
September 2018	Gather content: collect high-resolution photos, narratives, quotes, etc. from grantee organizations and community members
October 2018	Social Media: develop plan, select hashtag, prepare infrastructure
	Earned Media: identify people to write op-eds
	Evaluation: create infrastructure to start track metrics
November 2018 - January 2019	Social Media: roll out content (one post a day)
	Email Marketing: begin integrating stories and content from social media into newsletters
	Website: map edits to be made to the website with new content
	Earned Media: submit first op-ed
February 2019	Earned Media: submit second op-ed, identify reporters to pitch to
	Website: update website with revised stories and information
	Video: identify resources to produce short video
March - April 2019	Earned Media: pitch to local and regional media
	Video: produce video
	Community Conversations: begin developing presentation deck based off of materials and content gathered so far; identify key stakeholders out of the specific target audiences to approach about presentations.
May 2019	Video: launch video on website and social media

	Community Conversations: begin contacting organized groups and begin implementing community conversations
June 2019	Evaluation: record progress made over the last nine months with the identified metrics
	Assess: review communications capacity and make changes or adjustments as needed

EVALUATION

Evaluation of your communications efforts should not be a cumbersome step, but rather a way to keep tabs on how often communications tactics are being used and how audiences are responding to them. Ideal metrics will include the following:

- Number of website visits per month
- Number of emails sent, open, and click-thru rates
- Number of collateral distributed per month
- Number of events held and number of participants (if organized)
- Number of email addresses collected
- Number of digital and print media hits
- Number of “likes” on Facebook
- Number of people reached on Facebook per month
- Number of “followers” on Twitter
- Number of community conversations held