

Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council

Strategic Outreach & Communications Plan 2018

Background

The Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council desires to improve the Council's image and messaging, engage a larger audience, and build support for the Council's mission. To accomplish these efforts, the Council contracted with Helvey Communications to develop a strategic outreach and communications plan.

The Council is facing a number of challenges, as articulated in its request for plan proposals. They include, in no particular order:

- lack of existing formal public relations plan;
- difficulty connecting and communicating with its audience; and
- a generational change and need for new involvement.

In order to develop an actionable and strategic communications plan, Helvey Communications conducted research through focus groups and individual interviews to better understand current perceptions about the Council as well as expectations for this outreach and communications plan.

The research and onboarding process highlighted a number of strengths as well as opportunities for improvements in communication and outreach efforts which are addressed in this plan.

The Council's most valuable and powerful attributes are its dedicated and passionate staff, Board members, and volunteers. These individuals are highly committed to the Council's mission: Citizens promoting environmentally safe operation of the Alyeska Pipeline marine terminal in Valdez and the oil tankers that use it. They are motivated and highly knowledgeable about the industry, its history, and the importance of maintaining a sense of urgency to protect Prince William Sound. The individuals who make up the Council understand the unique and critical role of the Council as established by the ground-breaking Oil Pollution Act of 1990 and champion the Council's continuous role in helping maintain a world-class oil spill prevention and response system.

Through the ongoing actions of its Board, staff, and volunteers, the Council has a strong reputation as a well-respected voice of the residents it represents. This reputation was earned from a history of providing proven advice and recommendations for improvement which are backed by quality, scientific research.

However, as oil transportation technology continues to improve and decades have passed since the Exxon Valdez oil spill, the connection to the Council and its work is beginning to dissipate. The Council must revise and refocus its communication efforts in order to maintain its relevance with residents, industry leaders, and policy makers.

Opportunities for improvement include:

- achieving consistency and clarity of messages and communication;
- more engagement with younger generations by connecting them to the benefit they receive through the Council's work;
- better-equipping stakeholders in order to easily share information;
- building a reputation of working collectively to find solutions which benefit the Sound, its users, and downstream communities;
- a stronger relationship with industry where all parties further build trust through civil discourse;
- agreement on core communicators and mission audiences: politicians and regulators versus the public and regional residents; and
- development of a measurement tool to determine the success of current outreach efforts.

Additionally, an audit of public perceptions conducted by an independent consultant to the Council in 2017 showed a less-than-desired understanding of the Council's existence and the role it plays in various communities throughout the Prince William Sound region.

The Council - comprised of staff, Board members, and volunteers - is very successful yet its work is complex with many areas of focus. In order to make this plan manageable and feasible with existing resources, efforts will first focus on improving communication with primary audiences identified in this plan.

Goals

Based on the complexity of its work and work environment, the Council's communication efforts will most effectively benefit from the creation and

prioritization of a core group of informed and engaged stakeholders to represent and carry forward its key messages. The core group of stakeholders will include Council leadership, Board members, committee members, staff, contractors, member entities, and organizations which hold a seat on the Board.

Equipping these stakeholders with the Council's key messages and providing tools to encourage them to share these messages in a strong and consistent fashion will exponentially expand the reach and effectiveness of the Council's communication efforts.

As such, this plan aims to achieve the following overarching goals.

1. **Establish a strong foundation of informed, engaged core stakeholders** through training and equipping them with tools and materials to effectively share the Council's message.
2. **Enhance the Council's ability to effectively represent citizens** by listening and sharing their feedback, and providing advice to the Council's mission audiences.
3. **Increase awareness, understanding, and interest** in the Council and its role among key audiences to:
 - create a pipeline of volunteers;
 - create individual and organizational ambassadors who can quickly act when needed; and
 - create support/goodwill for the Council and its role in keeping the Sound safe.
4. **Ensure the Council is a trusted subject matter expert** throughout the state, industry, and beyond.

Objectives

The following measurable objectives will be used to gauge the success of this plan. The focus will be on the outcomes (results, impact, etc.) of the efforts, rather than the outputs (activities, services, etc.).

- **Train and equip core communicators to effectively share Council's key messages.**

- Conduct survey among core communicators six months after launch of training materials.
 - Of survey respondents who used the communication materials, at least 75 percent indicate materials helped them effectively share Council’s key messages.
- **Increase knowledge and understanding of the Council and its work.**
 - As measured by qualitative, informal surveys, such as point-of-contact and social media inquiries, collected throughout the year. Surveys collected in the first year will set a baseline for future improvement measures.
 - Survey questions should gauge name recognition, basic understanding of Council work and sentiment.

Note: Formal public surveys are an option but may not be the best fit for the needs and resources of the Council.

- **Develop and employ a stakeholder engagement matrix to measure community/partner engagement.**
 - Create a staff workgroup to develop/populate matrix in FY 19.
 - Evaluate matrix results annually to create incremental goals.
 - Sample goals may include:
 - Increase the number of partners who share Council calls-to-action,
 - Increase the number of online Observer subscriptions,
 - Increase the number of responses triggered by the Council’s calls to action, and
 - Track which stakeholders share the Council’s messages and how they are shared.

Additional public outreach, media, social media, and advertising objectives and metrics will be outlined in individual subplans.

Communicators and Audiences

This strategic outreach and communication plan prioritizes effective communication efforts among the core stakeholders with industry, policy makers, and regulators as “mission audiences” and the primary recipients of their communication. While the plan stays true to the mission of the Council to communicate with these groups, it also ensures the Council

does not lose sight of important opportunities to connect with and engage external and community groups in its work.

- **Core Communicators**
 - Internal - Leadership, Board members, committee members, staff, and select contractors
 - Internal/External - Member entities/organizations which have seats on the Board
- **Mission Audiences**
 - Industry
 - Policy makers
 - Regulators
- **External and Community Audiences**
 - Young adults (approximate ages 18-40) in Prince William Sound and downstream communities
 - Commercial industries with vested interest in the Sound
 - Fishermen
 - Tourism and recreation industry employees
 - Professional mariners and maritime industry employees
 - Others
 - Partner organizations (non-member entities) and scientists
 - Residents in communities located around Prince William Sound and downstream communities
 - Native groups and subsistence users
 - General public outside of the Council's traditional service area
 - Petroleum industry (indirect) with a vested interest in the Council

This plan acknowledges the importance of outreach to external and community groups. However, in order for this communication to be most effective, there must be a strong foundation of mission stakeholders in place. Materials created in this plan for use by mission stakeholders will support the Council's external communication efforts.

It is recommended that event/issue-specific communication campaigns targeting industry, policy-makers, and regulators are developed as subsets of this plan.

Strategies

To achieve its goals, this plan utilizes the following communication strategies. These strategies are designed to guide the development and implementation of tactics outlined in the subsequent section of this plan.

- **Equip Council representatives**
 - Create an engaged, well-informed internal workforce (leadership, staff, volunteers), by equipping them with tools to easily share consistent messages.
- **Show everyday connections**
 - The Council will show positive, direct connections between its work and people's everyday life activities in the Sound and downstream communities.
- **Engage and inspire stakeholders**
 - The Council will incorporate storytelling into publicity of its work by infusing "heart and soul" into its messaging, whenever possible, in order to develop an emotional/personal connection with the recipient.
 - While recognizing the highly technical nature of its work, the Council will simplify communication and limit initial references of technical jargon in general public communication whenever possible for ease of consumption. More thorough, technical documents will be made available online for interested parties and/or in other relevant forums for technical audiences.
- **Promote collective work**
 - Leverage opportunities to celebrate successes and progress made by Council, industry, and partner organizations to protect where people live, work, and play.
- **Enrich member entity relations**
 - Enhance existing relationships with member entities to increase understanding of and engagement with the Council's work.
- **Share brief messages**
 - Create and deliver smaller, more digestible messages in order to capture attention of audiences in an information-overloaded society.

- **Build Board development pathway**
 - Create a Board development team to identify additional volunteer opportunities outside of Board membership. These opportunities should provide ways for stakeholders to engage in the Council's work, as well as prepare them for potential Board membership.
- **Specify calls to action**
 - Promote engaging, specific yet simple-to-do ways people can be involved/feel connected to the Council's work.
 - Request specific calls to action, such as letters of support or presentations, providing simplified opportunities to participate and provide assistance.
 - Create a structure for responding to time-sensitive calls to action.

Outreach, media, social media, and advertising subplans will reinforce these strategies.

Key Messages

The following key points and themes supporting the Council's identity, mission, and goals will be emphasized in communication to mission stakeholders as well as external audiences. Specific language should be developed to articulate these message points and themes according to the best practices for each communication medium.

Note: Technical reports and/or other materials for technical audiences may require variations on the key messages and their general tone, as these materials often serve a specific purpose different than materials created for general communication and broader audiences.

Who we are

- Citizens promoting the environmentally safe transport of oil through the Prince William Sound
- Advisory group made up of organizations and individuals representing the citizens in communities affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill
- Provide industry and regulators additional expertise and outside perspective
- Give a voice to the people of the Prince William Sound and downstream communities

How we work

- It takes the collective effort of many groups and individuals hard at work every day to protect the place we live, work, and play
 - Our daily lives depend on clean air, water, and beaches
 - Show people prevention is an activity/action; the main function that keeps spills from occurring
- The system is working thanks to ongoing, collective work of industry and partners
 - Successful operations for nearly 30 years
 - World-class spill prevention and response system
- History of success means we must stay actively engaged

Your role/What you can do

- Be informed. Be engaged.
 - Participate in calls to action
 - Easy ways to get involved/how you can help*

*Specific ways people can get involved/support the Councils efforts (both everyday and campaign-specific) should be listed in materials as relevant.

Tactics and Action Steps

It is not the intention of this plan to simply increase the number of tactics and outputs in order to expand reach. Rather, this plan focuses on optimizing current efforts by enhancing infrastructure and building on existing successes to improve outcomes.

1. Core communicators' toolkit

Create tools and templates that can be used by internal stakeholders for easy and consistent communication.

- a. Power Point slide deck
- b. Talking points flow chart
- c. Council boilerplate (elevator speech)
- d. Report template
 - i. Executive summary
- e. Style guide
- f. Other

2. Internal communication procedures

Update standards and protocols for Council communications.

- a. Connect each Board memorandum to a specific goal as outlined in Council's strategic plan
- b. Review approval chain to communicate externally on behalf of the Council

- c. Include a brief executive summary in all reports, research findings
- d. Create expectation on when to develop talking points for important issues or those of media interest
- e. Clarification for when Board member speaks as an individual or represents Board
- f. Communications checklists for events, announcements, etc.

3. Leadership speakers' bureau

Identify regular opportunities for leadership to 1) share updates, announcements, and activities internally before they are shared externally, and 2) connect with core stakeholders to build connectivity with mission, vision, and work over time.

- a. All-staff meeting
- b. Conduct monthly/quarterly speakers' bureau to update staff/entities on Council's work

4. Standardize Board report opportunities

Develop suggestions for how Board members can share announcements, progress, and activities from their communities with the Board and the Council staff. Provide templates and tools for written or verbal reports.

- a. For Board meetings, create time and/or method for Board members to share what they've done in community as a Board rep since last meeting
- b. Develop suggested actions on how Board members can engage/communicate Council information and key messages in their communities

5. Update existing communication tools

Review existing communication tools, and make updates, as necessary, to reflect revised Council voice and messaging.

- a. Draft updated language in accordance with Council voice and key messages in existing communication channels
- b. Analyze available metrics, such as Facebook and Google analytics, to optimize use of communication channels

6. New external communication tools

Develop quick-reference collateral materials that can be used by core stakeholders to tangibly represent the Council to external groups.

- a. Informational rack card
- b. Flyers on current events/positions
- c. FAQ
- d. Infographic

7. Catalog of successful work

Create running list of examples of successful collective work that highlight the necessity of the various organizations/stakeholders working together to keep the Sound safe. These examples can be shared via communication channels as opportunities arise to emphasize the key messages related to “Our work.”

- a. Include collective work with industry and partner organizations
- b. Create a milestones/activity calendar to inform messaging

8. Board membership handbook

Update handbook to reflect revised Council voice and messaging.

- a. Incorporate Council’s updated voice and messaging style into handbook

9. Volunteer orientation packet

Create volunteer orientation packet for new or interested individuals.

- a. Include quick-reference materials
- b. Include motivating/inspirational stories/testimonies

10. Optimize website

Update website for ease of use, functionality, and updates to Council’s messaging priorities.

- a. Audit current website content and efforts
- b. Determine priority content
- c. Implement updates

11. Calls to action

Identify a variety of ways people can participate in the Council’s work, including a range of low- to high-commitment involvements.

- a. Create templates for simple and fast calls to action
- b. Create a political activity calendar, as applicable, to inform needed stakeholder support
- c. Create a content calendar to track potential upcoming needs for stakeholder support
 - i. Include a political activity calendar
 - ii. Include Council activities
 - 1. Attend a meeting, share on social/public/etc.
 - 2. Attend an outreach event
 - 3. Volunteer at an event

- iii. Include others ways to get involved
 - 1. Pledge/commit to become a community supporter of Prince William Sound
 - 2. Encourage residents/visitors to think about how they use the Sound and how their actions impact it
 - 3. Stay informed - subscribe to newsletter

12. Community outreach plan

Create a subplan for community outreach efforts.

- a. Identify goals for outreach
- b. Create outreach plan for reaching these goals, which will include:
 - i. Identification of appropriate methods and events
 - ii. Schedule for event participation
- c. Develop procedures and guidelines for outreach activities

Note: The outreach plan will outline detailed approach and action steps.

13. News media plan

Create a subplan for earned news media efforts.

- a. Identify goals for media presence
- b. Create media plan for reaching these goals, which will include:
 - i. Identification of target outlets and key reporters
 - ii. Protocols for response to media inquiries
 - iii. Development of media kit
 - iv. Create a media pitching calendar
- c. Develop procedures and guidelines for media engagement, as necessary, including designated spokespeople

Note: The news media plan will outline detailed approach and action steps.

14. Social media plan

Create a subplan for social media presence.

- a. Identify goals for social media presence
- b. Create social media plan for reaching these goals, which will include:
 - i. Identification of appropriate social media tools
 - ii. Schedule for posting/updating priority messages
- c. Develop process for creating content

- d. Develop procedures and guidelines for social media use, as necessary, including posting responses on behalf of the Council

Note: The social media plan will outline detailed approach and action steps.

15. Paid advertising plan

Create a subplan for paid advertising.

- a. Identify goals for paid advertising presence
- b. Create paid advertising plan for reaching these goals, which will include:
 - i. Identification of mediums
 - ii. Budget schedule
- c. Develop process for ad creation

Note: The paid advertising plan will outline detailed approach and action steps.

Evaluation

Refer to measurement targets listed in Objectives section and determine which have been reached. If any targets were not met, evaluate issues or other factors that contributed to the target not being reached, and determine what adjustments should be made to address them.