**Template for CLC Communications Plan**

**Overview:**

What follows is template for your Communications plan. It is a guide that you can edit and/or adapt to your needs and audience based on the nature the project you are running at your CLC.

1. **Project description** – Think of this as an “executive summary.” Use this section to tell the reader about the basics of what you are doing. After you describe your project briefly (including the what, when, where of it) try and explain why you have chosen to undertake this project. This section needs to be succinct, right to the pointand written in jargon-free language so that anyone can understand it. **Suggested length: half a page to a page**
2. **Desired Outcomes** – **both organizational and communications** –It all begins with SMART goals. I suggested listing organizational goals first and communications goals second. The attached spreadsheet has tabs that you may wish to use. Remember the organizational goals speak to the bottom line measures of your project (i.e. - how many people participated, how much money was raised, etc) **Suggested length**: this section will vary based upon the nature/complexity of the project. Most project have only 1-3 biz goals and between 1-5 communication goals, since we are writing in list format the section **will not likely be more than half a page to 2 pages**

**2.1 Desired outcomes – Organizational**

**a)** List first goal (i.e. – “Have X people attend the event”). Ask yourself if it SMART – you do not necessarily need to write why it is SMART, just make sure it is. However, if the goal is time sensitive you may wish to note this here.

**b)** List the second goal and others in sequence (again, make sure goals are SMART)

**2.2. Desired Outcomes** - **Communications**

Communications goals relate to the activities you undertake to communicate your event. These will widely vary based on what you are doing and the tactics you employ. Communications goals should generally be framed in a time bound manner – see examples below)

1. List the first goal (i.e. - “Get the event mentioned by 3 media outlets over the next 4 weeks”)
2. List the second goal (i.e. “Increase the size of our email database by 10% before the main event”)
3. List the 3rd goal (i.e. – “Increase traffic to my main website by 10% over the next month)
4. List the 4th goal (i.e. – “Increase subscriptions to our blog by 5% in the next 6 weeks)
5. **Measures for desired outcomes** – This section can be rolled up and made part of section two in your plan. Whatever format you choose, in this part of the plan you want to explain which measures go with the specific goals outlined in section 2 (and potentially how you will obtain the data). You can set this up however you like, just make sure the reader understands how each of the items in section 2 is being assessed. **Suggested length** – again this will vary with the complexity of the project. If you are setting in up in **a tabular format it may be as small as half a page.** Conveying this info to reader via a written list is OK too**, and might run anywhere from half a page to one and a half pages.**
6. **Context (explore)** –Section Four allows you to show that you’ve thought through the macro factors surrounding your project. You will want to discuss what conditions in the wider environment buttress your chances for success. You also need to acknowledge what those conditions that may present a challenge.

Think about the following factors (you may discuss them all in your plan, or choose the relevant ones)

1. **Demographic variables about your existing community and location:** Are there demographic or other variables about your existing community, or location that may help or hinder your project? Have you done surveys or heard from stakeholders about interest in projects like yours?
2. **History of similar initiatives:** Have other organizations done similar things? Were these successful? If so, why or why not?
3. **Media attention of similar initiatives:** Did similar activities generate media coverage? If so, which journalists wrote about it? Can you contact them for your project if you plan on doing some media outreach? Was their coverage positive or negative? (you may want to include a link or sample clipping of coverage if you can find it)
4. **Other goings on at this time:** If you a scheduling your event on a specific date/time, are there conflicting events that may hurt your project? How might you work around this?

**Suggested length: This section will likely be anywhere from 1-4 pages**. Take your time with it and do it well. It shows the reader you have carefully thought through external elements that are often beyond your control. It will also help you prepare for various potential scenarios.

1. **Audiences/Stakeholders** – A critical section because you need to understand everyone who has a stake in your initiative in order for it to succeed. Make sure you note which stakeholders are among your most loyal fans, as these are the people who will do the most to amplify your message. I suggest organizing this section as follows.

**5.1 Internal Stakeholders** – Here, you’ll list stakeholders from within your community and organization – i.e. members of your team, volunteers, and executives within your organization that you may want involved in a project, etc)

I suggest listing each stakeholder as follows, or using the spreadsheet attached.

Stakeholder name/position:

1. Ideal role and desired outcome – if we were talking about the Principal of the school that your CLC is housed in we might say the ideal role was as a ‘project champion’. The ideal outcome might be for the Principal to let you send an email about your project to the school’s email database, put up posters advertising your project, talk to five influential parents about your plan, call a friend who owns a business that might be a partner for your initiative, or some combination thereof.
2. Means of communication (i.e. which media you will use) and timing – will your communication be only face to face. Will you also use email? The phone? Just list these here. Make sure you have thought about HOW each stakeholder likes to receive communication (i.e. by what media) AND WHEN communicating with them is likely to bear fruit (is there a particular time). You may find wish to use the spreadsheet attached to help you with this section
3. Possible concerns – what concerns or worries might they have? How will you deal with these? This can be listed in bulleted format.

Set up each of your internal stakeholders in this way in your written plan.

**5.2 External Stakeholders** –external stakeholders are different than internal ones but still play a critical role. They include the potential participants in your initiative, prospective sponsors, the media, potentially local government, organizations and/or people that might be opposed to or disapprove of what you are doing.

You can set up your external stakeholder section the same way as you did the internal one

**Suggested length:** Because success hinges upon knowing your audience and tailoring communications to them, this section needs to be detailed. **It will vary based on the number of stakeholders.**

1. **Strategy** – Strategy is the approach you will employ to achieve your goals.It is by necessity big picture. This section is this normally quite short. In it, you need to answer the following questions:
* Are you taking a high-profile approach (i.e. – do you want to get noticed) or a low-profile one?
* Will be proactive (i.e. go out and seek to make things happen) or reactive (i.e. only act once things happen)
* What level of stakeholder outreach will you undertake? (i.e. will you target key people and hope they spread your message or will you target a larger mass of people)

**Suggested length of this section:** half a page to 2 pages.

1. **Tactics** –Tactics are what you will ‘do’ to communicate with stakeholders. In this section you want to list them (note you may want to group these under different headings like ‘Personal Outreach’; ‘PR’; ‘Digital/social media’, etc. The list might include (among many others):
* Using Twitter to post updates about the program
* Sending the media a press release
* Holding a press conference
* Asking a local business to partner with you on your project
* Putting up posters about your project in a school
* Making phone calls to stakeholders
* Mailing letters with marketing materials or flyers
* Starting a blog for your CLC and its initiatives
* Using a sharing system like Google docs or a wiki to keep internal stakeholders involved
* Meeting face to face with a prospective sponsor
* ETC
1. **Messages** –Messages are what you say. These can be listed in the plan grouped under key messages, which generally don’t change and secondary messages which may. Break the sections out as follows:

**8.1 Key Messages** - you won’t likely have more than 3 of these

- List key message number one (i.e. – ‘This event is for all ages’)

- List key message number two (i.e. – ‘Go to the website [www.website.com](http://www.website.com) to register now and get for more info’)

**8.2 Secondary messages** – you may have several secondary messages. List them here. Since secondary messages are often meant for particular stakeholders, you should note who the intended receiver(s) of these messages are.

1. **Issues** –“Issues” in communications-speak are potential problems. Try to think through all of these when you are writing this section. It is often written as a Q&A. List ALL questions.

If, for example, you were doing a bike ride for a local charity at your CLC what kinds of questions might come up from stakeholders (including the news media)?

Perhaps the following:

*Q: Is your event safe? What happens if someone falls off their bike?*

*A: Safety is our number one priority. To that end, we have a minimum age restriction of 16 yrs, and require all riders to wear helmets. Moreover, we have paramedics on staff and will have local police on alert. We believe the event will be a great experience for cyclists of all levels and we are serious about making sure they are safe*

**List the rest of your questions and how you might answer them. Length of the section will vary depending on the activity and potential issues**

1. **Budget** –This section is very important – often especially for potential partners. Try and account for your time investment and costs of materials you want partners to help with. There are a variety of ways to organize this section, including attaching a spreadsheet file. You will want to list each line item, its costs (as precisely as you know them) and the estimated total cost of the communications for the project. Spend time on this section and you will likely have an easier time recruiting partners (who tend to want to know about what costs they’ll incur by being involved with you). **Suggested length:** Likely less than one page.