WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

Working for a safer and healthier Washington since 1889

2013 Communications Plan

Presented to the Board—October 2013

Compiled by Timothy Grisham, Communications Consultant

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INTRODUCTION

The work of compiling this communications plan could not have been done without the collected communications efforts of Board member's and staff's work over the past decade plus. No project of this nature is created in a vacuum, and without these strides forward, the proposed communications plan would not have the foundation it has to launch from. While the communications plan does represent a change in existing methods of operation, it is not change for the sake of change. As a rule-making body, the Board must embrace technology and the opportunity it creates to invite participation from a greater pool of resources. To this end, the new communications plan creates guidelines for creating clear messaging that increases engagement and transparency.

In many ways the communications plan is intended to be a baseline, best practices based approach to communicating. Once many of the tools are in place, and momentum towards work on the goals begins, then the Board and staff can incorporated more performance measurable items to plan; but doing so without setting a baseline would undercut the fundamental work that needs to be done first.

The communications plan is intended to be a living document, where changes from emerging trends, technology, and shifts in government structures can be incorporated into the plan without deviation from the Board's communication goals. Though some technical aspects may change – meaning the tools to reach a goal – the Board's goals essentially stay the same.

We live in an increasingly decentralized society. In the pre-Internet era, when working at a distance was not possible to the same extent, participation would have demanded a far greater time commitment to a project. Today, people have relied heavily on emerging technology to decrease this barrier. Pre-Internet examples of decentralized collaboration emerging from changes in technology can readily be seen in the early adoption of email systems by state and federal government agencies.

Technology can reinforce the sense of working as a group by recreating some of the conditions of face-to-face work environments that build trust and belonging. Social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter have become avenues for increased social engagement where previously face-to-face interaction was mandatory; it has created a pseudo-face-to-face environment for deliberation and collaboration. Similarly video hosting services, Skype, and a plethora of new technological advances have created an ability to reach beyond the constraints of parochial engagement.

The ability for people to talk across a distance facilitates a greater avenue for public deliberation. Such deliberation focuses on residents discussing their views and opinions about what the state should and should not do. While the Internet itself is not the "killer app", an effort to reach beyond the traditionally engaged groups creates a larger sense of transparency and trust. Simply, information must be accessible and usable for real democratic transparency.

Engaging a community through web-based tools can lead to greater participation throughout the rule-making process. In traditional notice-and-comment periods the comment period is typically late in the rule-making process when policies are all but being finalized. With a more robust set of communications tools you can solicit the input of a large swath of stakeholders throughout the rule-making process creating a work product that is inclusive at the earliest state as possible.

When forming this communications plan we had to reach beyond simply, "How do we get more people involved in the rule-making process?" We had to ask ourselves if our information clear, easy to understand and not speaking only to subject matter experts. If the Board is to reach some of its goals, such as encouraging healthy behaviors, promoting healthy and safe environments, and reducing health disparities, it needs to provide messaging and information to a large cross section of Washington residents with very different methods of disseminating information.

One solution is to make the Board's information as visual as possible while still retaining its integrity of knowledge. The science of information visualization focuses precisely on trying to render information more intelligible by making it graphic and visual. Information visualization has proliferated from increased use of diagrams, interactive networked diagrams, and op-charts - we have increasingly become a visual learning society. In today's world the ability to give information physical form may make it more likely that people will perceive it.

While graph drawing, treemapping, and hyperbolic trees may not speak to everyone; their more utilitarian cousins in application nearly do. Infographics, market graphics, and data mapping have become commonplace in the post Internet age. Popular methods of info sharing like Venn diagrams have become so accepted that the tool has become a meme in its own regard.

All of this however is for naught if we do not create a consistent set of processes to get information from the subject matter expert to whatever target audience is needed. So beyond just creating tools, this communications plan also suggests the adoption of a number of policies, creates a set of procedures for communications, and formalizes some informal processes in the aim of creating a clear – concise guide on how to address a number of communications tasks.

To address the need for usable, clear information, greater community outreach and engagement, and consistency in both messaging and administrative processes the communications plan addresses four goals:

1. **Increase quality and consistency in all Board publications**
2. **Grow the Board's audience**
3. **Increase media awareness of Board activities**
4. **Create an awareness of the Board as a source of trusted, accurate information on public health topics**

GOAL 1: INCREASE QUALITY AND CONSITENCY IN ALL BOARD PUBLICATIONS

In the past the Board has had an aesthetic crisis of identity. Logos, formatting, and the overall aesthetic identity of the Board has shifted several times; often times within the same sets of information. In response to this Board Staff suggests the drafting, and adoption, of a new Publications Standards and Board Logo Policy. Additionally Board Staff will provide a Design Manual specifically outlining Board logo usage across all publications. Examples of publications include: web content, brochures, posters, informational guides, annual and biennial reports, strategic plans, and special reports.

To date Board Staff have:

- Launched the new logo,
- Unified all web content (Facebook, Twitter, Website) with the new logo,
- Incorporated the logo in all new memos and publications,
- Adopted a new template for PowerPoint presentations, and
- Created design guidelines on usage of the new logo.

Additionally Board Staff have:

- Drafted a suggested new publications policy,
- Reviewed DOH/Statewide correspondence guidelines,
- Taken and incorporated Plain Talk training, and
- Informally began utilizing a publications process incorporating more interaction with the Communications Consultant and Policy Analysts.

SUGGESTED PUBLICATIONS STANDARDS AND BOARD LOGO POLICY

Policy Statement

The Board has established uniform quality standards for its publications and guidelines for the development and distribution of clear and effective Board publications that use the best method for the intended audience, determined the appropriate time for dissemination, and demonstrate wise use of Board resources.

The Board will have one logo to clearly communicate its vision, convey a unified image, reduce confusion regarding the source of documents, and ensure standardization and consistency.

Procedure

1) To ensure compliance with Board quality standards and mission, the Communications Consultant will review and the Executive Director will approve Board publications that are intended to remain in public circulation and/or reach a large external audience.

2) Examples of publications that may be reviewed include: web content, brochures, posters, informational guides, handbooks, annual and biennial reports, strategic plans, and special reports. Publications do not include: materials intended for internal Board distribution, staff training guides, draft reports, working papers, and informal correspondence.

3) New publications may be developed when: there is a Board action, policy, or administrative requirement; there is no current publication covering the same subject; or it would be cost effective to consolidate information from multiple Board sources into one publication.

4) All Board publications will include: the state seal or Board logo and identification of Board member or staff contributing to the publication. The Board logo may be used by staff and partners for official Board business. The Communications Consultant is the primary contact for all questions and information regarding the Board logo. Board and Staff will refer to the design manual for guidelines on when and how to use the Board logo. The logo will not be altered or distorted in any manner. The logo may be used on: electronic publications and websites, signage, reports, pamphlets, posters, brochures, newsletters, and other publications, and all promotional items that represent the Board. Official letterhead, envelopes, and business cards are prohibited from including the Board logo as they utilize a statewide adopted standard bearing the state seal.

DESIGN MANUAL

Specifications

The following guidelines will assist in letting you know how to use the Washington State Board of Health logo appropriately.

It is important that these guidelines are followed accurately at all times.

The Board logo is made up of three elements; the state symbol, the Board's name, and the public health subtitle.

• The font used in the logo is **Arial MT**
• The blue used in the logo's hexcode is: 043d92
• The green used in the logo' hexcode is : 336600

One Color Versions

In rare occasions mono-colored versions of the logo may be needed. One color versions of the Board logo are available for use in addition to the default, full color version.

Spacing and Size

When using the Board logo, it is important to make sure it is used at an appropriate size and given correct visual weight. The following will help you ensure the logo is displayed clearly and legibly.

Clear Space

Always ensure that there is sufficient clear space around the logo. As a guide, there should be at minimum a space equivalent to the width of the primary lettering in the logo.

Size

Always be sure to check that the logo is of sufficient size and legibility when in use. While the logo should still function at small sizes, be sure to check that all text remains clearly legible at all times, including the public health subtitle.

Do:

Do Not:

Dos and Don'ts:

Do:

- Resize the logo, maintain the correct height to width ratio (constrained proportions)
- Use the single or full color logos discussed in this guide
- Contact the Communications Consultant if you have any questions

Do Not:

- Stretch the logo or skew it changing the height to width ratio
- Change the colors in the logo
- Redraw the logo
- Add additional imagery to the logo
- Change the font used in the logo
- Place the logo on a textured background
- Shrink the logo to where it is no longer readable
- Use any old SBOH logos

GOAL 2: GROWING OUR AUDIENCE

Public perception of the Washington State Board of Health is influenced by several factors. The Board's audience is both active and passive in nature. The idea of "audience" is one layered with complexity. The Board interacts with several stakeholders, an informed and un-informed public at large, media, etc., as well as strives to engage otherwise unengaged members of diverse communities.

It is the goal of the Board to foster positive collaborations with a diverse group of interested parties. Our audience, and participation, only strengthens our ability to serve the people of the State of Washington. Whether it is through media relations, social media, collaborative forums, or any number of other tools, a high priority for the Board is growing our audience.

A key component to growing our audience, and reaching new demographics, is taking in and adapting to feedback. Note what kinds of messages are resonating through various channels. It is important not only to track what resonates, but also what is being said. Social media and conventional media relations rely in large part on participatory involvement.

To date Board Staff have:

- Redesigned and launched a usable, interactive website that makes finding materials easy, and includes the ability to testify and give feedback online,
- Added RSS capability for new press releases,
- Re-Launched Facebook and Twitter and continue to grow its presence,
- Established relations with several statewide social media and communications groups for infosharing,
- Reviewed Policy 2005-002 Media Guidelines: Guidance for News Media Relations and Reporter Contacts suggesting an amendment to the policy to reflect a pro-active approach to media relations,
- Evaluated current media tools, and
- Drafted a suggested new social media policy.

EVALUATION OF TOOLS

AUDIO

Background:

The Board's most recent practice of archiving meetings included audio recording. The recordings at one point were hosted by TVW. Once that ceased, they were posted as single MP3s, not housed in a player, and hosted on the direct file directory.

This poses several issues. First without streaming via media player, and being hosted on a media server, there is a potential for a bandwidth spike that can bring down the agency's server. Second the raw-audio did not have any sort of attached transcript which breaks federal ADA/accessibility standards for government websites. Third, the files are quite large, and contain whole meetings. This is not usable to the public at large and creates a barrier in interaction.

With audio the Board needs to find a balance between usability/interactivity and transparency. The Board is required to record open meetings, however the Board is not required to post such recordings to an internet site.

Outcomes:

- DOH has created space and given permission to use their media server when audio and video needs to be posted on the web.
- The media will be displayed in a Content Management System (CMS) web module that will launch a player.
- Transcripts will be available for accessibility issues.

Future Priorities:

- Develop a system for creating and distributing podcasts which can be both a wrap up of past meetings, as well as informational bulletins on targeted campaigns.

BRANDING

Background:

As Outlined in Goal 1 of the Washington State Board of Health Communications Plan, the Board has had an aesthetic crisis of identity. There have been several logos, letterheads, banners, etc. utilized over the course of the last several years. Simultaneously the website had become in dire need of a revamp. The two parallel trends point toward the opportunity to look into an idea of branding for the Board.

The Public Health Improvement Partnership's (PHIP) Communications Committee developed an identity toolkit following a 1996 Harris Poll which reported, "Few Americans have any real idea what the words 'public health' mean." The toolkit provided an aesthetic guide for branding "public health".

In January 2013, Governor Jay Inslee took office. After launching his initial website his office released materials for his “the Washington Way” campaign, as well as adopted the state’s shape on his official letterhead and office materials – replacing the traditional state seal.

Taking aesthetic and philosophical cues from the PHIP toolkit, as well as the new Governor’s branding, Board staff began work on re-branding the Board and its materials on an aesthetic level.

Outcomes:

- The Board launched a new logo. The logo has been carried over to the website, Twitter, Facebook and Board materials including memo letterhead and all products.
- The Board adopted a new template for PowerPoint presentations taking the logo and color cues from the website and other materials.

Future Priorities:

- Adopt the suggested Publications Standards and Logo policy.
- Apply branding aesthetics to messaging campaigns to increase a visual awareness of the Board.

CORRESPONDENCE

Background:

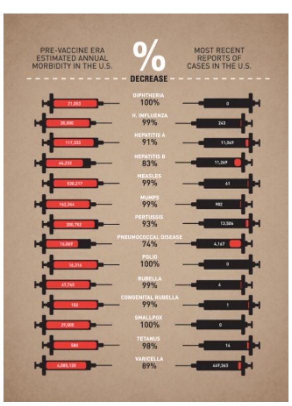
Board correspondence is informed by the Governor’s correspondence guidelines, as well as Governor Gregoire’s 05-03 executive order requiring plain talk. Correspondence refers to official letters signed by the Chair, committee chairs, or Executive Director, as well as memos. Email and unofficial notes are not considered correspondence.

Currently there is no designated tracking system to determine when a piece of correspondence was received, who drafted the response and when a response was made. Nor is there a clear system for matching correspondence received with the official response.

Future Priorities:

- Create/implement a correspondence tracking system (Preliminary conversations have occurred).

INFOGRAPHICS



Background:

The Board currently does not create targeted infographics. An infographic, or information graphic, is a graphic visual representation of information, data or knowledge intended to present complex information quickly and cleanly. They can be anything from a postcard, to a pie chart, to a map. Infographics work on a convergence of the visual, the content, and the data. A key component to infographics is data visualization (time-series, statistical analysis, maps, hierarchies, networks, etc.).

According to a report released by Google, web search trend for infographics has increased by 1% daily since 2007. In a time when information is disseminated in 140 characters, graphics have become more memorable than large chunks of text. Simply, an infographic is more likely to go viral than any report, or white-paper ever will.

By breaking down a topic into graphics you can make your content more accessible to individuals who are not subject matter experts. This is probably the single greatest feature of infographics. The information can be designed in such a way that you can instantly turn anyone into an engaged participant in your target subject area.

Infographics can be created using Photoshop/Illustrator, or by utilizing a web-based service like Piktochart (which has a lot of bonuses, such as social networking aspects).

Outcomes:

- Board staff has begun Tweeting interesting infographics, which are re-posted on Facebook, to target areas of interest. This preliminary step precedes the creation and distribution of our own targeted infographics utilizing our existing web and social networking capabilities.

Future Priorities:

- Source appropriate software to create infographics for targeted campaigns.
- Employ infographics as part of targeted outreach or informational campaigns.

PHOTOGRAPHY and VIDEO

Background:

Currently the photography presence is limited to a few public-use images gathered a number of years ago. These have been used repeatedly over the course of five years. Additionally, light photography has been used, but not integrated in a communications plan.

The Board currently is not utilizing video. In the past video has been provided by TVW and streamed on their site. This is still a possibility. But due to budgeting TVW can only do it when utilizing the hearing rooms on the capitol campus, or when doing an in-studio interview, etc.

According to Pew Research Center’s Internet and American Life Project, “46 percent of internet users post original photos and videos online they have created themselves and 41 percent curate photos and videos they find elsewhere on the internet and post on image-sharing sites.” Overall 56 percent of internet users either create or curate photos or videos and 32 percent do both.

The rise of smartphones is a major part of the story because such phones have built in cameras, making it easier to take and share self-made pictures online. This, coupled with a rise in social media, specifically YouTube and Instagram has made curating activities easier because they are organized for easy image and video-sharing.

Photography and video can be used for gaining a level of interaction that, simply, words on a page cannot. Posts with video or photos via social media are more likely to be reposted than just messaging.

A quick snap at the Board's twitter feed will show that when we started using some photos and infographics our numbers of followers and reposts have risen. Interaction is the key. But to be interactive, you also have to be attention getting, and you must not flood the market with photos that will not make people want to interact. Keep it fresh, keep it modern, keep it relevant.

Outcomes:

- The Communications Consultant has begun using social media (Twitter, Facebook) photo-trends, filtered photos, complete with hash-tags, live-tweeting, etc. for the Board.
- Increased interaction has occurred.
- The Board is reaching people outside the standard stakeholder group.

Future Priorities:

- Identify events and usage of appropriate photography for web posting to enhance interaction and outreach.
- Identify video needs and summarize future equipment/software needs to create videos for posting online.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Background:

In April 2013 the web communications system was aging. The primary objective to update the webspace was launched by migrating the Board's web presence from an unsupported, outdated static website to a content management system (CMS). With the CMS migration there was more space for adopting emergent technology in a responsible and integrated fashion.

The Board had previously attempted using social media; a 2011 Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Blogspot page was launched without proper integration and follow up.

The whole social media experiment had to be redesigned. The Facebook page was migrated from a personal profile, which was breaking the site's Terms and Use policy, to a government page. Twitter posts – "tweets" – were checked if the links were still relevant. Both Twitter and Facebook were integrated using apps to broadcast to each other, and given a facelift using our new branding. Prior to the launch of the CMS Twitter and Facebook were used in "soft launch fashion" to build content and product awareness. The sites were incorporated into the skin (template) of our CMS so that access to, and interaction with, our social networking portals was available and encouraged. The YouTube channel and Blogspot page were deactivated.

Currently blogging is capable through the Board's website. The announcements and press sections of the site are examples of two traditional uses of blogging. Further expansion in an integrated and responsive manner using our CMS is possible without utilizing a Blogspot or Wordpress site.

YouTube was be re-examined within the context of a video production policy and procedure overview and flagged for future, possible integration with our existing tools.

According to a 2013 report by the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project, 67 percent of all internet users utilize Facebook. The rate of use is particularly high in women, and all adults ages

18-29. Similarly 16 percent use Twitter with a higher rate of use for users 18-29, African-American users and urban residents. Other high-use social media portals are Pintrest (15%), Instagram (13%), and Tumblr (6%).

According to the report, “Internet users under 50 are particularly likely to use a social networking site of any kind, and those 18-29 are the most likely of any demographic cohort to do so (83%). Women are more likely than men to be on these sites. Those living in urban settings are also significantly more likely than rural internet users to use social networking.” For a larger demographic breakdown, see Appendix A.

There is an immediate need to implement a social networking plan that is part of a larger comprehensive communications plan. The plan needs to allow for flexibility to stay up to date with the latest trends in social media, but rooted in best practices used by other government entities. It is important to create and maintain strong ties with the social media professional community within the State of Washington’s public service sector and share information on trends and best practices.

Outcomes:

- The Communications Consultant has joined a statewide new media committee for state government and local government communicators,
- Attended new media and social network training and seminars held by the federal government, City of Seattle and beyond.
- Twitter and Facebook was soft-launched April 24, 2013 with re-branding. Twitter grew from 6 followers to 109 followers in approximately one month.
- Linkages between Facebook and Twitter have been made for cross-posting to build material prior to full launch.
- Blogging is capable through the “announcements” module on the front page of the CMS website.
- News releases are presented blog style with RSS capability.

Future Priorities

- Continue to identify best practices and maintain a relationship with emerging trends in social media.
- Capture analytics and trends to target best-avenues for future communications.

WEBSITE

Background:

Until June 2013 the Board used a HTML-based website built originally in 1999. Using Frontpage as the content management and design tool, the website had become outdated in the 14 years since launch. Usability issues persisted, broken links were not fixed, and a number of issues arose prior to CMS launch. The server that hosts both the Board and Health Disparities Council websites is no longer under service contract by neither Microsoft, nor DOH. Meaning if anything happened to the server, it would not be fixed. The need to migrate to a new server hastened the decision to adopt a CMS system for the new site, and a total revamp occurred with the bulk of the work taking place between April and June 2013.

The Board now uses a web-based system to host and manage the Board's web tools. The system is based on "pages", but unlike a HTML system, a page does not mean a singular section of code or text. Text, photographs, widgets are linked to a "page" by using modules. There can be several modules on a page. A page has a skin (think template) and on that skin you can place modules in areas. On a single page you can have a photograph slider on the left top, text (HTML) on the right top, and links and FAQs on the bottom, all existing on the same page. The CMS does not use HTML, or hierarchical file directories, but an asp.net based system.

The board is using DotNetNuke as the CMS system. The open source system is intended to allow management of websites without a great deal of technical language, and to be extensible through a large number of third-party apps to provide functionality not included in the core module.

Outcomes:

- The CMS webpage was launched in early July 2013 for the Board.
- The Health Equity website is under development and nearing completion.

Future Priorities

- Regularly update CMS modules, maintain site integrity, and identify tools that may help present the Board's message in the future.

SUGGESTED SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Policy Statement

The Board will establish a process for social media sites used for official business to provide Board information to the public, and allowing the public to interact with the Board and staff. The Board defines social media as various activities that integrate technology and content creation. It is a collaboration of individuals creating, organizing, editing, commenting, combining, and sharing web content.

Procedure

1) Any form of social media representing the Board must have prior approval by the Executive Director. Staff will maintain an acceptable use of technology for appropriate use of social media sites. Content will not contain vulgar, offensive, threatening, or harassing language. Documentation from each social media site will be retained following the Records Retention Schedule, using available electronic and/or hard copy methods. Social media sites will not be used for personal purposes.

2) The Communications Consultant will work with staff to create and maintain approved social media sites. Requests from Board members and staff to add content to a social media site shall be made to the Executive Director or Communications Consultant. If a request is denied a detailed reason will be provided to the requestor by the Executive Director.

GOAL 3: INCREASE MEDIA AWARENESS OF BOARD ACTIVITIES

The main aim of media relations is to inform the public of the Board’s mission, policies, and practices in a positive, consistent, and credible manner. Typically this means coordinating directly with the people responsible for producing the news and features in a media outlet. The goal is to maximize positive coverage without having to pay for marketing. Many people use the term “public relations” and “media relations” interchangeably; however doing so is incorrect. Media relations refers to the relationship that we develop with media professionals, while public relations extend that relationship beyond the media to the general public.

It is possible for communication between the media and the organization to be initiated by either side, however dealing with the media presents unique challenges in that the news media cannot be controlled — they have ultimate control over whether stories pitched to them are of interest to their audiences. Because of this fact, ongoing relationships between an organization and the news media are vital.

One way to ensure a positive working relationship with media personnel is to become deeply familiar with their "beats" and areas of interests. Media relations and public relations practitioners should read as many magazines, journals, newspapers, and blogs as possible, as they relate to one's practice – in this regard it is the Communications Consultant’s job to be familiar with as many media outlets as possible.

Many organizations compile a media list, or a list of possible media outlets who may be interested in an organization’s information. The media list can consist of magazines, newspapers, TV and radio stations, and even blogs. So when a “newsworthy” event occurs the organization can use their media list to send out the information to a broad spectrum of interested parties via a press release.

Historically the Board may not have generated a volume of press/news releases that would require contact with the press. However, increasingly media have become more interested in topics under Board authority.

Currently press releases for the Board are sent out via DOH. There are no sustained media-contacts or partners. Our press presence is created through a filter, meaning our materials are sent to DOH for review and editorial assistance before being sent out. Some barriers that may exist with this model are a possible conflict with one agency’s vision and goals possibly defining another’s output, lag in timing for sending out more emergent materials (turnaround time), and a lack of person-to-person contact with the Board and the media on initial contact.

There are several factors in looking at why there is not a strong media-relationship between the Board and both local and statewide press. First, most of our “work” is funneled through DOH. Second, due to a high level of turn-over in the Communications Consultant position, the social capital based relationships between the Board and media had become nearly non-existent.

In April the Communications Consultant began reestablishing bridges with former collaborators. Formerly TVW would film and host our meetings (which also went towards meeting our mandated requirement to record all open/public meetings). However cuts in TVW budgets, and an erosion of existing relationships with the Board had put an end to this practice. Repairing this relationship is vital in beginning to build new and strong media relationships. By reaching out to three TVW producers the Board now has the ear of a local organization that produces video content, as well as a well viewed blog.

Secondly, after receiving a minor press bump with a recent Board announcement, Board staff has reached out to the article authors via Twitter to help establish a more concrete relationship. Since then a local political staff writer has begun to follow the Board on Twitter. Having a more tangible relationship with the media will allow for a more immediate level of coverage for the Board, and inversely the media contact would then have a more trusted source of information in a direct manner.

One of the most important tasks for the Board in media relations is to cultivate and maintain their own positive working relationships with the media, whether it be from reaching out to the media – or following up in a quick, professional, and certain manner.

Of course media relations should not be a passive or reactive function. To this end Board staff has suggested the adoption of an amendment to Policy 2005-002. The change will allow Board Policy Analysts to sit with the Communications Consultant prior to Board meetings with hot topic issues and public hearings to discuss the material and prepare a set of talking points in advance of a public meeting. This will allow for a more controlled and managed set of messaging prior to even initiating media contact.

To date Board staff has:

- Re-established a relationship with TVW for the possibility of filming meetings, as well as being a venue for more targeted campaigns, talks, and blog content posting either through video or via their blog.
- Reached out to individuals following the Board to establish a more trusted relationship.
- Proposed a change to Policy 2005-002 to take a more proactive approach to media preparedness.

In the future Board staff will:

- Attend state run media relations training (Executive Director and Communications Consultant).
- Continue to build new and maintain existing media contacts for a more direct line of communication.
- Prepare talking points in advance of all public hearings.

POLICY UPDATE 2005-002

After a thorough review of Policy: 2005-002, it became clear that the current state of media relations was very responsive but lacked a proactive element.

We suggest amending the policy to reflect a proactive attitude with media relations by adding a new subpoint 3 in the procedure section, and re-numbering the subsequent procedures to follow the numbering scheme.

3) Often times media requests for information are made in response to a press release, or hot topic issue. To anticipate any potential media contact the Communications Consultant, with the Executive Director, and appropriate subject matter expert will meet no less than two weeks prior to a public hearing, or a public meeting with a potentially hot topic agenda item, to discuss potential issues. In situations when the Communications Consultant is unavailable the Executive Director may delegate the task to another staff member. For every hearing or hot topic item a set of media talking points should be discussed and finalized before the draft agenda is posted to the public to prepare for potential media contact.

GOAL 4: CREATE AN AWARENESS OF THE BOARD AS A SOURCE OF TRUSTED, ACCURATE INFORMATION ON PUBLIC HEALTH TOPICS

Much as a business employs image consulting techniques to ensure that everything is uniform in maintaining the company's exterior messaging and image – going so far as to create dress codes, uniforms, and personnel policies; the Board can utilize a similar set of priorities and guidelines to ensure that messaging and external relationships create an image of the Board as a source of trusted, accurate information on public health topics. To become a source of trusted, accurate, information on public health topics you must first establish that your information is accurate, translatable and topical.

Much of the task of creating an awareness of the Board as a source of trusted, accurate information on public health topics is grounded in a common-sense truism; to create an awareness of the Board as a source of such information, the Board must first ensure that it is a source of such information. Simple tasks such as fact checking, making sure that data is up to date and accurate is essential in any attempt to create an external image of information-reliability.

In that regard Goal 4 of the communications plan is linked to the previous goals. While Goal 1 addresses the format and aesthetic uniformity and consistency in all Board publications, Goal 4 addresses the accuracy of the information provided. Reliability and awareness are not inherent, it takes work, but by increasing the Board's audience (Goal 2), the awareness of the Board as a source of trusted, accurate information on public health topics is a much easier goal to achieve.

Through the maintenance and dissemination of accurate information the Board creates a level of trust with those seeking more public health information. To engage the public beyond the level of outreach, the Board also has to make sure that the information it provides is both responsive to need, and searchable/easy to find.

Usable and searchable content goes a long way toward creating an image of the Board as a trusted source of information on public health topics. After all, if a user cannot find the information easily, they may try to establish another avenue to obtain the information they are looking for. The new Board webpage has multiple ways of finding information – easy navigation headings, topic search lists, USA.Gov search box, circular links, etc. The new Board site is usable, searchable, and provides information in a manner that increases transparency.

Although the Board receives relatively few public disclosure requests, the process itself serves as an avenue to provide the requestor public information; it is at this intersection of the public/Board that we have the opportunity to show how transparent the Board is, and will continue to be in the future.

Currently the Board's online materials go one calendar year beyond their on-site State Archives retention schedule. This is to help ensure more immediate access to materials within the current retention schedule. It should be noted that the Board goes well beyond the online schedule, and beyond what contemporaries are hosting on their web domains; in this regard the Board is very open and transparent – and a significant amount of disclosable material is readily available online.

A key issue in increasing access, searchability, usability, and in turn, transparency is the ability to easily find materials. A big step in the process is creating a streamlined, easy to understand filing system with the CMS. The most important rule for effective file naming is consistency. Best practice file naming will only occur if your file naming conventions are applied consistently for all files. In the past this has not been the case with Board materials too often the materials relied on the name or title of the document and not a consistent/achievable name.

File names should be kept as short as possible while maintaining clarity and usability. Try to ensure that the words in the file name reflect the files contents. Try to ensure that the words in the file distinguish it from others, meaning no duplicates! Long file names create unnecessary complexity and long file pathways that are more difficult, and sometimes technologically impossible to manage across a system. As a government agency we are bound by public disclosure rules, and due to this all documents should be dated for easy searching; and to help facilitate best practices in archiving.

So far in the plan we covered the form and aesthetics of content, naming and usability of content, the need to maintain media relationships to discuss content, and how to get the content to a larger audience; however we haven't discussed the actual content. What is the voice of the Board, who is the audience, and how should materials be written? This goes beyond the issue of plain talk and formal aesthetics outlined earlier in the plan. It extends to what research is highlighted, how you explain such research, and when you are speaking beyond the scope of the subject; or conversely not reaching the scope.

Of great importance is that information is created and relayed in a timely manner. Outdated information should be assessed and updated, new reports and statements should maintain a tight standard that makes sure facts, figures, and dates are correct and the information is both pertinent to the topic and timely. A good example would be providing statistics from a recent report to discuss an issue, rather than a report ten years old (without verifying the information is still relevant).

Above all the overall tone of Board communications across-the-board ought to be authoritative but not overbearing, plain and easy to read, and should guide the reader to desired info points without confusion. Often times in reports and extended memos tone can slip into a level of talking to an audience that is too specific; we need to remember that our external communications have an implication and audience beyond the immediate.

To date Board staff has:

- Created a naming convention for new files posted to the website that is short, searchable, and easy to identify.

In the future Board staff will:

- Identify staff who need plain talk training, or require an updated training.

ACTION STEPS / NEXT STEPS / ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The following action steps require Board action to successfully launch the communications plan:

1. Approve the suggested Publications Standards and Board Logo Policy (draft)
2. Approve the suggested change to Policy 2005-002 Media Guidelines: Guidance for News Media Relations and Reporter Contacts
3. Approve the suggested Social Media Policy (draft)

The following items are steps that Board staff should take following the adoption of the stated action steps by the Board:

1. Begin to develop a system for creating and distributing podcasts which can be both a wrap up of past meetings, as well as informational bulletins on targeted campaigns
2. More broadly apply branding aesthetics to messaging campaigns to increase a visual awareness of the Board
3. Create/implement a correspondence tracking system
4. Source appropriate software to create infographics for targeted campaigns
5. Employ inforgraphics as part of targeted outreach or informational campaigns
6. Identify events and usage of appropriate photography for web posting to enhance interaction and outreach
7. Identify video needs and summarize future equipment/software needs to create videos for posting online
8. Continue to identify best practices and maintain a relationship with emerging trends in social media
9. Capture analytics and trends to target best avenues for future communications
10. Regularly update CMS modules, maintain site integrity, and identify tools that may help present the Board's message in the future
11. Attend state run media relations training (Executive Director and Communications Consultant).
12. Continue to build new and maintain existing media contacts for a more direct line of communication
13. Prepare talking points in advance of all public hearings
14. Identify staff who need to take plain talk training

The following are items or steps Board staff has accomplished:

1. Launched the new logo
2. Unified all web content (Facebook, Twitter, website) with the new logo
3. Incorporated the logo in all new memos and publications
4. Adopted a new template for PowerPoint presentations
5. Created design guidelines on usage of the new logo
6. Redesigned and launched a usable, interactive website that makes finding materials easy, and includes the ability to testify and give feedback online
7. Added RSS capability for new press releases

8. Re-Launched Facebook and Twitter and continue to grow its presence
9. Established relations with several statewide social media and communications groups for infosharing
10. Reviewed Policy 2005-002 Media Guidelines: Guidance for News Media Relations and Reporter Contacts suggesting an amendment to the policy to reflect a pro-active approach to media relations
11. Evaluated current media tools and created a plan on future use
12. Incorporated the use of infographics in social media retweets and posts
13. Joined statewide new media committees for state government and local government communicators groups
14. Attended new media and social network training and seminars held by the federal government, City of Seattle and beyond
15. Re-established relationship with TVW
16. Reached out to individuals following the Board to establish a more trusted relationship.
17. Proposed a change to Policy 2005-002 to take a more proactive approach to media preparedness
18. Created a naming convention for new files posted to the website that is short, searchable, and easy to identify

APPENDIX A

Who uses social networking sites

% of internet users within each group who use social networking sites

	All internet users (n=1,895)	72%
a	Men (n=874)	70
b	Women (n=1,021)	74
	Race/ethnicity	
a	White, Non-Hispanic (n=1,331)	70
b	Black, Non-Hispanic (n=207)	75
c	Hispanic (n=196)	80[a]
	Age	
a	18-29 (n=395)	89[bcd]
b	30-49 (n=542)	78[cd]
c	50-64 (n=553)	60[d]
d	65+ (n=356)	43
	Education level	
a	No high school diploma (n=99)	67
b	High school grad (n=473)	72
c	Some College (n=517)	73
d	College + (n=790)	72
	Annual household income	
a	Less than $30,000/yr (n=417)	75
b	$30,000-$49,999 (n=320)	72
c	$50,000-$74,999 (n=279)	74
d	$75,000+ (n=559)	71
	Urbanity	
a	Urban (n=649)	74
b	Suburban (n=893)	71
c	Rural (n=351)	69

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Spring Tracking Survey, April 17 – May 19, 2013. N=1,895 adult internet users ages 18+. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones. The margin of error for results based on all internet users is +/- 2.5 percentage points.
Note: Percentages marked with a superscript letter (e.g., [a]) indicate a statistically significant difference between that row and the row designated by that superscript letter, among categories of each demographic characteristic (e.g. age).