



# Communications Toolkit for NGOs

Summer 2014



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# Introduction

Designed to support SFF's partner organizations, **this toolkit aims to enhance your communications efforts by developing a solid communication plan and communicating effectively with your target audiences.** It is intended to be a reference guide to support you in crafting strong messages, maximizing your efforts with traditional and social media, and measuring your results.

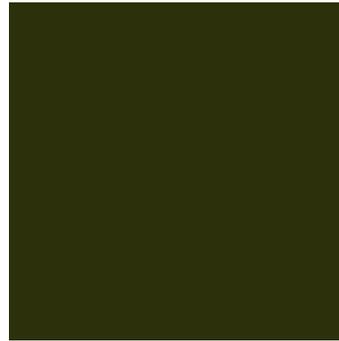
Local organizations increasingly realize that they must use communications strategically to better communicate their mission and work and to attract funders. Yet many local organizations possess a small staff and often devote so much of their time and revenue towards programming that little time is spent on their strategic communications efforts.

The [Segal Family Foundation \(SFF\)](#) works to empower African organizations to achieve a greater impact in their communities through targeted capacity building support. SFF's hands-on staff provides advisement and in-depth assessments, including messaging and communications consulting, for organizations to reach their full potential.

The toolkit is divided into five sections:

- [Creating a Communications Plan](#)
- [Message Development](#)
- [Channels for Communication](#)
- [Documents Every Organization Needs](#)
- [Measuring the Results](#)

Each section contains an overview of tips, tools, resources and sample documents for best practices to assist your organizations. We tailored this document to be helpful to SFF partners.



# Creating a Communications Plan

Creating an annual strategic plan for communications helps raise **awareness**, show your organization's **impact**, and attract **funders**.

## How to do it!

Ask yourself the following five questions:

1. What organizational goals are you trying to achieve this year? In the long run?
2. Who is your target audience(s)?
3. What messages do you want to convey to your audiences?
4. What communications tools should you leverage to best reach key audiences: blogging, traditional or social media, e-newsletters or videos?
5. How can we measure the results? Did your communications effort reach the target audience? Did you place a blog? How many times was your post shared on Facebook or retweeted on Twitter?

Answer these questions as a team and create a tactical communications plan.

If you don't have a dedicated staff person, identify a point person for communications.

Be sure to create a work plan to guide you on a weekly basis on how to execute and evaluate your communications plan.

## Tools

Use Microsoft Word or Google Docs to create your plan and Microsoft Excel or another spreadsheet software to track your progress and evaluate your work.

## Resources

- [The Foundation Center: Developing a Communications Strategy](#)
- [Smart Chart 3.0](#) an online tool to help you make and assess strategic communications decisions.

Use this [template](#) at the end of this document to create your own Communications Plan.

# Developing Effective Messaging

You've created a strategic communication plan, now it's time to begin crafting **clear and concise messages**.

Why is effective messaging important?

- Helps you communicate better with partners and donors.
- Conveys your organizational goals and objectives.

## How to do it?

These questions will help guide you in developing your messaging:

- What do you want your audience to understand about your organization or issue? When people talk about your organization, what do you want them to say?
- What do you want your target audience to know about your organization?
- What actions do you want your audience to take? Be specific.

**Don't forget to tailor your message to your target audience.**



## Resources

- [Nonprofit Times: Five Steps to Developing Your Strategic Message](#)
- Use this [template](#) at the end of this document to develop your organization's messaging.



# Channels for Communication

Your organization's messages should be incorporated in your website, social media, blogs, publications, speeches, videos and other channels of communications.

## Website

Your website builds credibility and reinforces your brand identity. **Your website should be visually appealing and feature strong messaging that will resonate with your target audience.**

A dedicated staff person should be responsible for **regularly updating** your website with your organization's latest news and events.

### Here's how to do it:

- Clearly state your organization's mission on the homepage.
- Create a current news section to highlight the latest news and developments.
- Feature compelling images and video to illustrate the impact of your organization.
- Highlight social media icons on the website. Displaying the icons is a great way to encourage visitors to follow you on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other sites.

**Tools:** Your website can be built on one of these platforms: [WordPress.com](http://WordPress.com) [StudioPress.com](http://StudioPress.com)

[Squarespace.com](http://Squarespace.com)

Use [Google Analytics](http://Google Analytics) to track your audience and engagement.

### Resources:

- [The Foundation Center: Is It Time to Rethink Your Website?](#)
- [Creating a Responsively Designed Website: 11 Responsively Designed Nonprofit Websites to Study and Learn From](#)

### Examples of websites:

- <http://www.oneacrefund.org/>
- <https://morethanme.org/the-girls.html>



## E-Newsletters

E-newsletters are a cost effective way to keep supporters updated and highlight your success. They go right into your subscriber's inbox and can help generate buzz and fundraising opportunities.

### Here's how to do it:

- Create an editorial calendar featuring your news items. Distribute e-newsletters on a monthly or quarterly basis.
- Feature relevant information: highlight your success using blogs, photos and infographics.

### Tools:

[Mailchimp.com](http://Mailchimp.com)

[Constantcontact.com](http://Constantcontact.com)

[Verticalresponse.com](http://Verticalresponse.com)

### Resources:

- [Making Your Newsletter Valuable to Your Readers](#)

# Channels for Communication

Your organization's **messages** should be incorporated in your website, social media, blogs, **publications, speeches, videos** and other channels of communications.

## Blogs

Blogs are an effective communications tool to promote your organization's news and information. Blogs can help add new content to your website and social media and shape what your supporters read. It's also a great way to create your own press and PR around your organization.

Again, use your editorial calendar to create a regular blog schedule.

Here's how to do it:

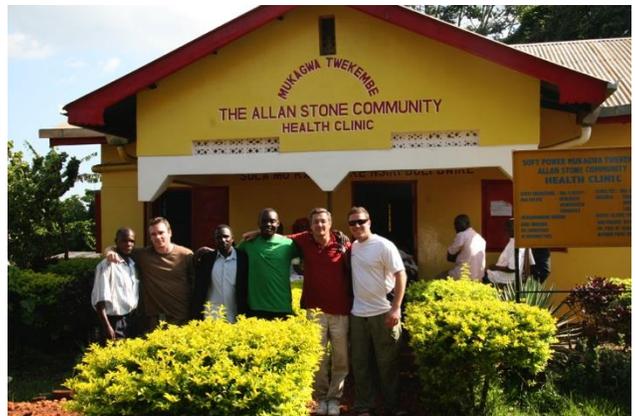
- Regularly write blogs on breaking news and organizational updates.
- Feature success stories of your work.
- Highlight resources and empowering How-To tips that would be of interest to your supporters.
- Invite **guest bloggers** such as a local expert, donors or thought leaders to contribute to your blog.
- Interview your beneficiaries about how your organization has made an impact on their lives and community.
- Create a photo slideshow to showcase your mission and work.

Tools: [Blogger.com](http://Blogger.com) [Tumblr.com](http://Tumblr.com)

[Blogster.com](http://Blogster.com)

Resources: [Inc. 10-Step Guide to Blogging](#)

Check out: [SFF's Blog Spot on The Huffington Post](#)



# Channels for Communication

Keep your [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube Channels](#) updated daily. Use social media platforms to promote your website, newsletter and blog.

Just getting started on social media? **Social Media 101**. New York Times technology columnist David Pogue gives tips on how to get started on Twitter, Facebook and other social media sites. Click [here](#) to read.

## facebook

- **Update Facebook at least 2-3 times a week**- once a day is ideal.
- Follow the Facebook Pages of your partners, donors and recipients.
- Write posts that link to your Facebook friends and pages you follow, when applicable. This will increase your exposure on Facebook and your “likes.”
- Ask questions or include a call to action to increase engagement.
- Facebook Insights: Tracks your “likes” and posts that engage the most people and your connections.



### Sample Posts:

**Infographic:** Check out this eye-opening infographic on maternal mortality. Learn more about how maternal health will improve the lives of mothers, families and communities in Africa. ([link to resource](#))

**For Events:** Follow our lead and start the weekend by putting something awesome on your calendar! Of course we're referring to the #galaforgood, it's just around the corner! See you soon @IACeventspace! ([link to events page](#))

## twitter



Twitter is one of the best ways to get up-to-the-minute updates on your donors, partners and beneficiaries. Fellowships, grants and other opportunities are often posted on Twitter first!

- **Write Twitter posts at least once a day (even 2-3 times a day).**
- Don't forget to use @twitterhandle in your posts. (For example, SFF's handle is @segalfoundation).
- Use .@ to start a conversation with like-minded individuals and organizations on issues, events and other news.

- Use # (hashtag) to increase your tweets' exposure. (ex. #socialmedia #africa #health #youth)
- More Tweets = More Followers

### Sample Tweets:

**[Ashoka Changemakers @changemakers](#)**

Betting on 'youth club' of Africa: Rwanda, Zambia & Zimbabwe's working-age pop'll increase by 20%  
<http://bit.ly/1g57S93> #AfricaYouthFwd

### For Events

On the way to @SegalFoundation Annual Meeting. Looking forward to meeting some new faces. #SFF2014 @AVBryant #philanthropy

### Tools:

- [Hoot Suite](#)
- [Buffer](#)
- [Twuffer](#)
- [Bitly](#) is an easy way to shorten URLs

# Documents Every Organization Needs

## Press Release

Create a press release before an event or a new project is unveiled to increase press coverage. Pitch your story to print, broadcast and online media **before** your event. It is important to plan your media outreach:

- Make sure your pitch is newsworthy.
- Create a list of media outlets to reach out to.
- Based on the audience of the media outlet create a tailored pitch with your press release. Contact the appropriate reporter or producer with a pitch email about your story idea.
- Reach out to media contacts by phone and email if you are having trouble reaching them and remember to stay in touch with your media contacts for future stories.
- It's OK to be persistent.

Sample press releases from our partners can be found on our website.



## One-Pagers

A one-pager – also referred to as a fact sheet -- provides a concise overview of your organization. It introduces your organization and enables partners, donors and potential contacts to better understand who you are. **The one-pager is a tangible resource to bring to meetings and conferences or attach to an email to convey your mission.**

Remember to assign a communications staffer or another point person to create the one-pager and update it at least once a year as your organization grows.

What information should your one-pager include?

- Background information on your organization.
- Information about your thematic and regional area of focus.
- Highlight outputs, outcomes and impact of programming and number of people served.
- Feature a case study, success story or unique program or project.
- Use infographics and visually appealing ways to display your message.

Sample one-pagers from our partners can be found on our website.

# Documents Every Organization Needs

## Pitch Decks (Slide Decks)

A pitch deck is a slide presentation that highlights your organization's programs or new projects to potential donors. A well-designed pitch deck should inspire potential donors and investors to want to learn more about and invest in your organization.

- Slides should be visually appealing with lots of pictures and graphics.
- Explain your organization, the "problem" you are addressing, project activities, and what the solution and outcome will be.
- Don't forget to include your business model, funding needs, management team, key metrics and your timeline.

### Tools to build a pitch deck:

[Slides](#)

[Prezi](#)

Microsoft PowerPoint

Sample pitch decks from our partners can be found on our website.

### Resources:

Beth Kanter: [Nine Ways Networked Nonprofits Use Slideshare](#)

A showcase of [startup pitch decks](#)

[Slide Share](#)



## Annual Reports

Annual reports are a great way to tell your story by showcasing your organization's accomplishments and financial statements to donors, potential donors and partners. It can also be a useful marketing piece to accompany your info packet, grant applications and media kits.

- Focus on your accomplishments for the year.
- Use graphics, pictures, statistics and words to show your accomplishments.
- Include information on your financials.
- Consider recognizing your top donors with a donor list.
- After you marvel donors with your accomplishments, include action steps that they can take to help your organization reach its goals for the next year.

**Annual Reports Wiki:** Examples of creative nonprofit annual reports. <http://nonprofitannualreports.wikispaces.com>

### Sample Annual Reports from our Partners:

[Last Mile Health 2013 Annual Report](#)

[Reach a Hand Uganda 2011 Annual Report](#)

[Project Muso 2012 Annual Report](#)

[Echoing Green 2013 Year of Impact](#)

# Documents Every Organization Needs

## Additional Resources

Look at our website for sample documents from our partners on:

- Grant Reporting
- Donor Relations
- Budgets
- Fundraising Plans



# Measuring the Results

Throughout your communications effort, you should set measurable benchmarks to evaluate whether you are achieving your goals.

Evaluating your communications strategies and tactics will improve the effectiveness of your communications and ensure that your organization is connecting with your key audiences and that your messages are resonating with them.

## How to do it?

- List **three achievable goals** to assess whether your communications effort made an impact.
- Did you gain a set number of media placements?
- Did you achieve a high number of “likes” on your blog?
- Did your communications effort help you reach your fundraising goal?
- Did your supporter take action on an awareness campaign?



## EVALUATION METRICS

- Review your communications plan and prioritize the specific communications objectives where your organization would like to measure the result. For each communications objective, conduct the S.M.A.R.T. test.
- **Specific** – What is the specific communications objective, strategy or tactic that your organization would like to evaluate?
- **Measurable** – What are your key performance indicators?
- **Assignable** – Who will implement the communications objective? Do we have staff to consistently carry out the communications effort?
- **Realistic** – What results can realistically be achieved?
- **Time-related** – What is the timeline for the result to be achieved?

OBJECTIVE	SPECIFIC	MEASURABLE	ASSIGNABLE	REALISTIC	TIME-RELATED

### Resources:

[Fenton Communications: See, Say, Feel and Do](#) a resource guide that provides a simple framework for planning and measurement.

[Communications Consortium Media Center \(CCMC\): Social Media Evaluation Tools](#)

# Service Providers

If you're interested in hiring a service provider to assist you with your communications strategy, look into these options:

**CatchaFire** connects talented volunteers to your organization to help in their area of expertise (i.e. graphic designer, marketing consultant).

**Big Duck**, a communications firm that works exclusively with nonprofits, focuses on three different areas—brandraising, campaigns, and training—to help organizations reach supporters, build awareness, and raise money.

**Fenton Communications** is a social change communications agency that uses the power of stories, media and technology to make the world a better place.

**Serendipity Creative** is a graphic design firm that focuses on web design, print design and strategy for socially conscious organizations.

**Spitfire Strategies** is a communication firm that works with nonprofits and foundations to help create their vision of a better world.



# Samples: Communications Plan

## Communications Plan

January 2014– December 2014

### Introduction

Give an overview of your communications plan for the year.

### Objectives

What are your communications goals for the year?

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- 
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### Target Audience

Who are your organization's target audiences?

### Strategies

Describe your communications tactics to reach your key audiences and maximize the impact of your communications effort.

#### 1. Strengthen the media and communications capacity of your organization.

- Strategically employ a wide array of communications tools, including media placements and social media efforts to promote your organization's work.
- Creation of an editorial calendar for blogs and other opinion pieces on key issues
- Create or update media products (press kits, fact sheets, briefs) on your organization.
- Maintain a targeted press list of reporters and media outlets.

- Identify, craft and distribute press releases and pitches on newsworthy story ideas to key media outlets and news blogs for placements.
- Monitor coverage in major media on Africa and write opinion piece or Letter to the Editor on critical issues related to Africa and your organization for major newspapers and news sites, such New York Times, Washington Post, CNN.com, Huffington Post, AllAfrica.com, among other media outlets.
- Set up one-on-one informational interviews with key reporters and editors covering Africa.
- Ongoing evaluation of results and outcomes from media and communications efforts.

## **2. Lead media outreach efforts to highlight your organization's influence and contributions at events**

- To raise the visibility of your organization, its mission and partners at events.
- To highlight the impactful efforts of your organization
- To promote your organization's ongoing efforts to weigh in on development and philanthropic initiatives at events.

## **3. Creation of an awareness campaign**

- Develop a concept for an awareness campaign.
- Create a work plan for all aspects of the campaign.
- Develop a social media effort to encourage engagement on the campaign for Facebook page and Twitter.

## **Evaluation**

How will you measure the effectiveness of your annual communications plan?

# Samples: Message Development

## Message Development Planning Document

### Purpose

This messaging document aims to help guide the development of a core message and key messaging points for your organization.

### Target Audiences

- **Funders:** international foundations, government and individual donors
- **Beneficiaries**
- **General Public**

### About Us: Core Message

#### Core Message Options:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

### Key Supporting Messaging Points

- 
- 
- 

### Tagline

### Measuring the Impact of Your Messaging

*What are the measurable goals to assess whether your messaging is resonating with key audiences?*

### Areas of Messaging Opportunity

Communications Tool	Existing Content	Suggested Enhancements	Notes:
Website		•	
Pitch Materials		•	
Social Media		•	
Blogs		•	
Media Relations		•	



*We partner with outstanding individuals and organizations that improve the well-being of communities in Sub Saharan Africa.*

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