



STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

January 2021

Prepared by:



Strategic Communications

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INTRODUCTION

The Florida Water Environment Association Utility Council's (FWEAUC) leadership team embarked on a bold vision to develop a Branding and Communications Strategic Plan to educate the general public on the services, stewardship and protection provided by wastewater utilities around the State of Florida. In order to achieve that goal, the FWEAUC Public Messaging Committee commissioned a half-day Virtual Planning Workshop with committee members that focused on identifying opportunities surrounding four areas: The Foundation, Brand Awareness, Public Education and Issue Response. The planning workshop included a series of interactive activities and meaningful discussion that resulted in the Strategic Communication Plan outlined in this document.

VIRTUAL PLANNING WORKSHOP

The Virtual Planning Workshop was held on December 16, 2020 from noon to 4 p.m. The workshop started with a welcome from Rick Hutton, FWEAUC's President, followed by an overview of the virtual rules of engagement and a tutorial on the Webex and Mentimeter platforms, which were used during the workshop. After the housekeeping topics were covered, the agenda priorities were reviewed.

AGENDA:



VIRTUAL PLANNING WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

FWEAUC Members

Kevin Carter, Broward County

Lisa Wilson-Davis, City of Boca Raton

Jamie Floer, Toho Water Authority

Rick Hutton, Gainesville Regional Utilities

JoAnne Jackson, Black & Veatch

Sondra Lee, City of Tallahassee

Terri Lowery, Jones Edmunds & Associates

Jan Mclean, City of Tampa

Mike Sweet, Florida Governmental Utility Authority

Chuck Weber, City of Tampa

VIRTUAL PLANNING WORKSHOP FACILITATORS

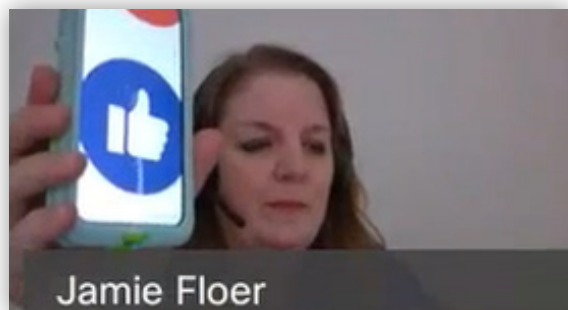
Michele Brennan, HDR

Vincetta Dunnell, HDR

Trinity Otero, HDR



Participants used visual aids to interact with the facilitators during the workshop.



FWEAUC STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The outcome of the Virtual Planning Workshop resulted in the Strategic Communications Plan outlined in this document. The plan is divided into four areas: The Foundation, Brand Awareness, Public Education and Issue Response. Sections 1, 2 and 3 include a series of objectives and tactics with an implementation time frame and targeted audiences. The goal of the plan is to serve as a 24-month guide for FWEAUC leadership. The objectives outlined in the plan are intended to raise awareness of the organization and secure FWEAUC's position in the State of Florida as advocates of public health, defenders of the environment and leaders in the wastewater industry.



Visual used during Virtual Planning Workshop.

THE FOUNDATION

Foundations matter. Building a strong foundation is key when striving for sustainable success. To achieve this type of success, we must understand the things that matter most - the why, the what and the who. We must not underestimate them, and we must know that it will take time and that most of this work is invisible. When great foundations are built, they might not be visible, but they are felt, they are powerful, they are effective and hidden from sight.

THE WHY: MISSION STATEMENT

To gain a better understanding of how members are currently connecting with FWEAUC's foundation, participants were asked a series of questions that focused on the mission statement. Opinions were expressed using visual props and virtual emojis. Consensus on the questions concluded that members are familiar with their mission statement and believe that it explains what they do, how they do it and for whom they do it for.



OPPORTUNITY:
Bring the mission statement to life by creating more dynamic visuals that inspire action.



Visual used during Virtual Planning Workshop.

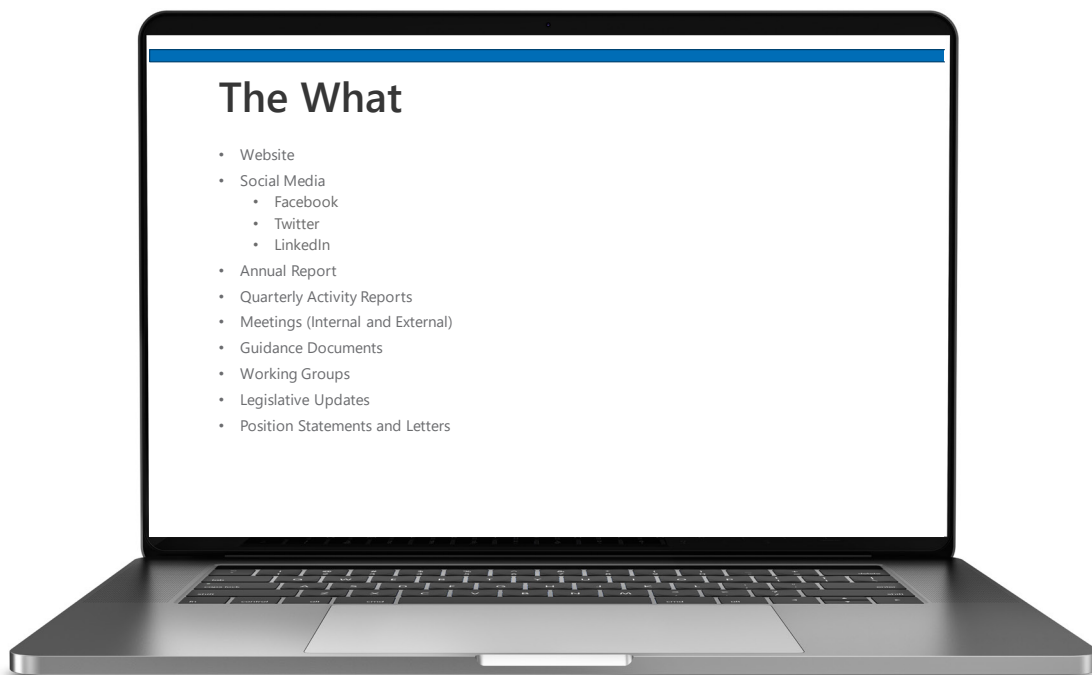
THE WHAT: COMMUNICATION TOOLS AND TACTICS

To set a baseline for evaluating the organization's communication efforts, participants were asked a series of questions that focused on tools and tactics. Again, opinions were expressed using visual props and virtual emojis. Consensus on the questions concluded that members feel the organization has great potential to increase the effectiveness of its communication tools and tactics.



OPPORTUNITY:

Develop a proactive strategy that includes creating a robust media effort, customizing content for audiences, increasing quantity and quality of communication tools to include motion and virtual engagement, and leveraging partners to assist with outreach.



Visual used during Virtual Planning Workshop.

THE WHO:

UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCES

Understanding your audiences is a critical component of having a solid foundation. It is important to recognize that your audiences do not include everyone, and by creating content for everyone, you create content for no one. Targeting specific audiences creates the opportunity to meet the goals outlined in the Strategic Communications Plan.

Participants were asked to rank FWEAUC’s audiences in order of importance using a live Mentimeter poll. The results, ranked in order of most important included:

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Officials, policy makers and regulators</i>	<i>FWEAUC members</i>	<i>Media</i>	<i>General Public</i>	<i>Corporations, groups and associations</i>

Note: After the poll was closed, it was discussed that officials/policy makers should be a separate category and regulators should be listed as an additional audience.



OPPORTUNITY:
Create custom content that connects with key audiences. Prioritize efforts outlined in the plan based on participant rankings.



Visual used during Virtual Planning Workshop.

SECTION 1 BRAND AWARENESS

SECTION 2: PUBLIC EDUCATION

SECTION 3: ISSUE RESPONSE

SECTION 1: BRAND AWARENESS



FWEAUC is seeking to create a multi-faceted Brand Toolkit to elevate the organization's position across the State of Florida. This resource will connect FWEAUC to the communities it serves by encompassing the organization's mission, values, relationships and impact. The result will position FWEAUC's members as collaborators, educators and protectors of the environment.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Develop a series of visual assets that will be integrated into the Brand Toolkit.

Tactics	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Audiences
Develop PowerPoint templates in High Definition format, including various layouts and options. A series of title pages, divider pages, and image-heavy slides should be created.	●				FWEAUC members
Develop a report template created in Microsoft Word or similar program that is branded and ready to use with ADA styles included. This option will serve as a template for technical content.	●				FWEAUC members
Develop a series of letterheads for various audiences, including elected officials, the community, other associations, and members. These should be produced in industry-standard programs, such as Microsoft Word.	●				FWEAUC members
Create a visual brand overview that includes the logo, colors and fonts. This will serve as a resource to share internally and outside the organization. It should be easily accessible for members and outside vendors when producing deliverables for FWEAUC.	●				FWEAUC members

OBJECTIVE 2:

Develop a series of key messaging to establish the organization's voice and support the visual brand.

Tactics	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Audiences
Develop a brand promise based upon information from the planning workshop held with members of FWEAUC. This idea can be used in conjunction with key messaging.	●				Officials/policy makers, regulators, FWEAUC members, media, general public, corporations/ groups/associations
Develop a position statement created with input from key leadership of FWEAUC. The statement will help further develop messaging and unity in the brand voice.	●				Officials/policy makers, regulators, FWEAUC members, media, general public, corporations/ groups/associations
Craft the organization's story to create an understanding of FWEAUC's purpose.		●			Officials/policy makers, regulators, FWEAUC members, media, general public, corporations/ groups/associations

OBJECTIVE 3:

Introduce the Brand Toolkit to FWEAUC members.

Tactics	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Audiences
Present the Brand Toolkit during FWEAUC's membership meeting.		●			FWEAUC members
Distribute the Brand Toolkit digitally through the established internal communications protocol.		●			FWEAUC members
Post the Brand Toolkit on a member accessible virtual platform.		●			FWEAUC members
Evaluate the effectiveness, relevance and comprehensiveness of the Brand Toolkit. The toolkit will be built as an organic document with flexibility to evolve as needed. The Public Messaging Committee will provide oversight of the document.			●	●	FWEAUC Public Messaging Committee

SECTION 2: PUBLIC EDUCATION



Public education continues to be a priority for FWEAUC. The creation and implementation of clear, concise and visually appealing campaigns will position the organization and it's members as subject matter experts in the wastewater industry.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Enhance the public's awareness of FWEAUC through education, engagement and media outreach.

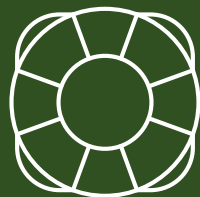
Tactics	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Audiences
Create and distribute a survey to FWEAUC members to gather their insight on engagement and outreach to establish a baseline for measuring impact.	●				Officials/policy makers, regulators, FWEAUC members, media, general public, corporation/groups/ associations
Develop a series of visuals to include GIFs, videos, and images to be distributed through all FWEAUC's communication channels.		●			Officials/policy makers, regulators, FWEAUC members, media, general public, corporation/groups/ associations
Identify and activate a suite of communication tools that will be used for campaigns. Recommended tools include website, social media (LinkedIn), digital newsletter.		●			Officials/policy makers, regulators, FWEAUC members, media, general public, corporation/groups/ associations
Participate in local community events, festivals, and conferences, virtual or in-person, to demonstrate FWEAUC's connection to local communities.	●	●	●	●	General public
Implement a proactive media strategy to include story pitches and follow up with key media outlets. Establish a tracking process to maximize media engagement.	●	●	●	●	Media

OBJECTIVE 2:

Develop educational campaigns that focus on FWEAUC's top three public education focus areas: biosolids, surface water discharge and potable reuse.

Tactics	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Audiences
Create and distribute three surveys to determine a baseline of understanding on the public education focus areas: biosolids, surface water discharge and potable reuse.	●				Officials/policy makers, regulators, FWEAUC members, media, general public, corporations/groups/ associations
Develop a series of educational graphics to include GIF's, videos, virtual tours and images to share through digital communication channels.		●			Officials/policy makers, regulators, FWEAUC members, media, general public, corporations/groups/ associations
Develop three overview handouts each specific to the focus areas that explain what biosolids, surface water discharge and potable reuse are, and include impactful data and personal storytelling from FWEAUC. These can be shared digitally or in print.		●			Officials/policy makers, regulators, FWEAUC members, media, general public, corporation/groups/ associations
Develop FAQ handouts for each specific focus area. These can be shared digitally or in print.		●			Officials/policy makers, regulators, FWEAUC members, media, general public, corporation/groups/ associations
Develop key messages for biosolids, surface water discharge and potable reuse that are clear, concise and easy to digest, and can be used in a number of formats and across multiple platforms.	●				Officials/policy makers, regulators, FWEAUC members, media, general public, corporation/groups/ associations
Create dedicated space on FWEAUC's website to share campaign information and resources. The website should serve as a depository for all content related to campaigns. Website analytics can be used to track engagement.		●	●	●	Officials/policy makers, regulators, FWEAUC members, media, general public, corporation/groups/ associations

SECTION 3: ISSUE RESPONSE



FWEAUC has identified the need to establish an Issue Response Strategy to prepare the organization to effectively respond to any crisis and manage potentially high-profile and sensitive matters. In addition, the Issue Response Strategy will establish the foundation for proactive outreach and messaging and will ensure the appropriate tools are in place to act quickly and effectively with key audiences.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Develop an Issue Response Organizational Structure.					
Tactics	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Audiences
Identify members who will serve on the Issue Response Leadership Team. Identify subject matter experts for various topics.	●				FWEAUC members
Develop guiding principles for the Issue Response Leadership Team that include: clearly defined roles and responsibilities, length of service, and communication and approval protocols.	●				FWEAUC members
Host a learning session for the Issue Response Leadership Team.		●			FWEAUC members
Include an Issue Response Leadership Team standing agenda item during all meetings to provide updates.		●			FWEAUC members
Create an Issue Response Leadership Team resource packet. This resource packet can be used to train incoming Leadership Team members.			●		FWEAUC members
Communicate the creation of the Issue Response Leadership Team to the membership.			●		FWEAUC members

OBJECTIVE 2:

Create a stakeholder database for the Issue Response Leadership Team.

Tactics	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Audiences
This database will serve multiple purposes and can be used for proactive communication, including the distribution of a digital newsletter.	●				FWEAUC members
Research, gather and input contact information for the following categories: legislators, local elected officials, National League of Cities, Associations of Counties, FSAWWA, Governor's staff, media, Department of Environmental Protection, variety of national organizations and others as appropriate.	●	●	●	●	FWEAUC members

OBJECTIVE 3:

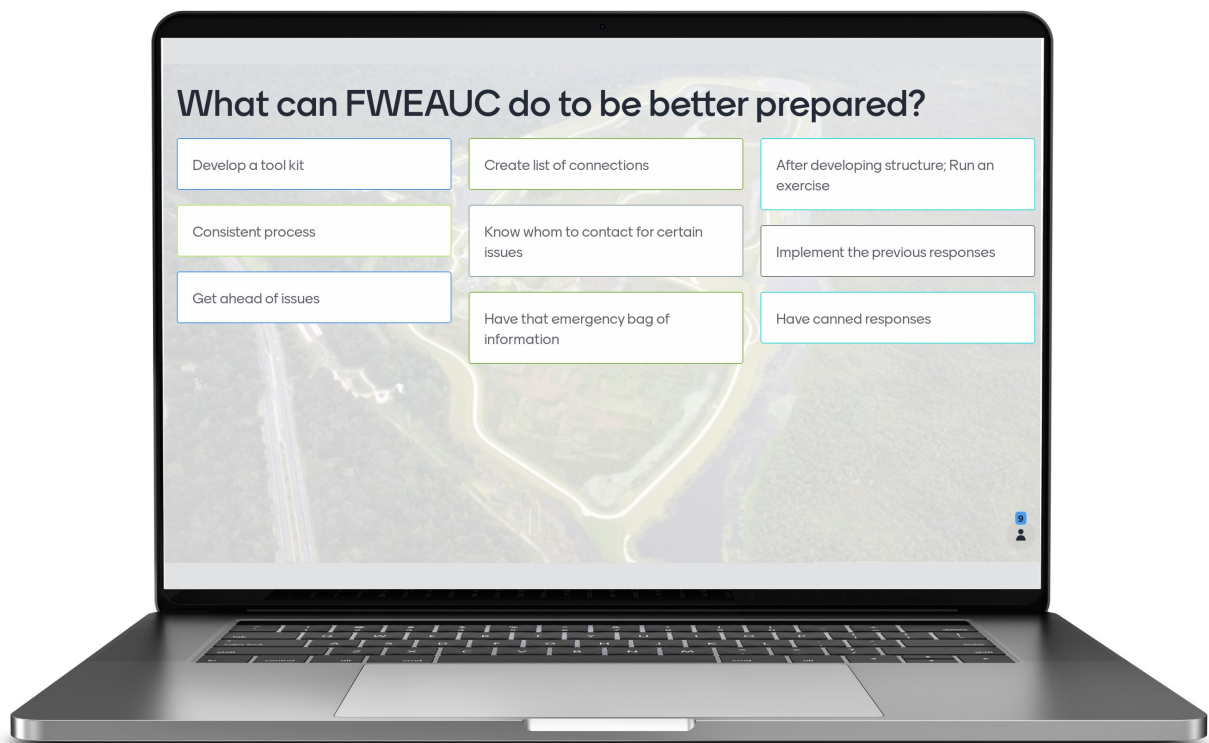
Build an Issue Response Plan.

Tactics	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Audiences
Complete an initial assessment of tools and tactics, create a master list of communication tools, passwords and administrators, and conduct an audit of the website to ensure ADA accessibility.	●				FWEAUC members
Develop a series of tools, including media advisory templates, and headers for the website, social and email.		●			All audiences
Create and include issue specific content for FWEAUC's digital newsletter and social media account.	●	●	●	●	All audiences
Develop key messages and holding statements that are translated into different languages.		●			All audiences
Create a Q&A series for the website.			●		All audiences
Develop a series of visually interesting handouts that address FWEAUC's key topics and resources.		●			All audiences
Create a series of short videos that address FWEAUC's key topics.	●	●	●	●	All audiences

OBJECTIVE 4:

Conduct issue response preparedness training.

Tactics	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Audiences
Host a media training for FWEAUC members who have been selected to speak on behalf of the organization.			●		FWEAUC members
Host a yearly virtual media roundtable to build relationships and establish points of contact.				●	Media



Visual used during Virtual Planning Workshop.

EVALUATION AND MEASUREMENT

Evaluation and measurement are critical parts of any strategic communication plan, both to determine and set a baseline and to track and assess progress. The following resources may be utilized to evaluate and measure the effectiveness of objectives and tactics included in the plan.



Member Survey



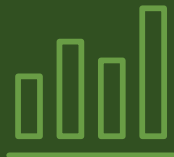
Media Hits



Media Survey



Website Analytics



Social Media Analytics



*Community Feedback and
Engagement Levels*

CONCLUSION

The Strategic Communications Plan reflects the collective vision of the Public Messaging Committee and is the result of the Virtual Planning Workshop. The intent of the plan is to provide direction for the organization for the next year. It is also meant to be a guiding document and action plan for members, and to align communication efforts and priorities for the organization. The three goals of this plan focus on creating a multi-faceted brand toolkit; educating key audiences on biosolids, surface water discharge and potable reuse; and establishing an Issue Response Plan. The specific tactics outlined in the plan will serve to meet these goals, using specific measures of success to ensure that progress is being met. This plan was designed to be a living document that is flexible in nature and can be amended to reflect progress and identify new goals as needed.



Create a
multi-faceted
Brand Toolkit.

Educate key
audiences on
biosolids, surface
water discharge and
potable reuse.

Establish an
Issue Response
Plan.

As the voice of Florida's wastewater industry, FWEAUC is ready to tell the story of the sustainability, safety and innovation, supported by science, data and policies.

APPENDIX A: VIRTUAL PLANNING WORKSHOP SURVEY QUESTIONS



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