Strategic External Communications Plan

CFUW St. John's

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Introduction

The purpose of this plan is to identify the communications priorities, messages and activities for CFUW St. John's to communicate effectively with its key audiences. The executive and various committees may access the plan as a tool to advance the priorities of the Club.

Through strategic internal and external communications activities, CFUW St. John's continues to enhance awareness of its role both within Newfoundland and Labrador and in the broader national and international arena.

While the communications plan is generic in nature, specific time-sensitive initiatives may be best included in an annual calendar that supports the annual operational plan or action plan of the club.

Vision

CFUW St. John's communications is marked by its two-way nature that sees accurate useful information shared in a timely manner. Reflecting the club's achievements and aspirations, communications activities revolve around showcasing what we accomplish through working collaboratively while celebrating the sense of fulfilment that comes from belonging to an organization that supports the global advancement of women. Ideally, the club is representative of the diversity and inclusivity of the community it serves.

Goals

Grow the communications capacity of CFUW St. John's among committees and the executive by sharing knowledge and contributing to a higher public profile.

Increase the use of social media to reach external audiences with a view to attracting new members and increasing awareness of who we are and how we can be reached.

Continuously improve the content and structure of the website for internal and external users

Objectives

Foster membership growth and retention by increasing community awareness of CFUW-St. John's

Publicize key outwardly focused activities such as the *Great Big Book Sale*, Outreach program, and annual Open House

Support national priorities including brand recognition and awareness efforts.

Desired outcomes

Improved membership recruitment and retention

Higher public visibility particularly among women

A consistent recognizable look through all media

Target Audiences:

Prospective members, partners and supporters including women of any age and women in traditional and non-traditional roles.

Citizens of St. John's and surrounding communities as well as community leaders e.g.: NGOs, service organizations

Public and private sector entities including educational institutions (MUN, MI, CNA), current students and graduates

Elected officials involved in legislation and policy development relating to social, economic and legal status of women and girls (education, peace, justice, human rights, and the environment).

Key messages:

Several select messages may be used at a given time depending on the nature of the initiative being publicized and the intended audience.

Scholarships and bursaries: CFUW donates most of the proceeds from its annual book sale to women studying at Memorial University, Marine Institute, College of the North Atlantic and other post-secondary institutions as well as the *We Care Foundation NL* for Girls in northeastern Nigeria.

Educational projects locally and internationally:

CFUW supports other organizations that play a key role in fostering learning e.g. School Lunch Program Tuition

Outreach

Through its Outreach program, CFUW St. John's helps many by working in concert with organizations such as Iris Kirby House (New Beginnings Baskets), Stella's Circle, the Association for New Canadians (Fresh Start Breakfast Program), Home Again Furniture Bank, Memorial University Campus Food Bank, and Teachers on Wheels.

Advocacy

Growing and retaining membership contributes to our success. We are part of a national and international community of women advocating for gender equality and the advancement of women. CFUW St. John's provides input to federal and provincial policy thrusts and legislation of particular relevance to women and girls.

Membership

In addition to advocating on key policy issues and priorities for women, CFUW offers life-long learning opportunities and fellowship to members through a range of activities including learning sessions, speakers series, and social events.

Branding

During 2023-24, CFUW at the national level is rebranding itself through a new visual identity including a new logo and taglines. The national body is asking all clubs across Canada to comply with the specifications outlined in the branding exercise. The new look sets the tone and style of outward communications for all levels of the organization with particular emphasis on advocacy, education, lifelong learning, connection, community, diversity and inclusion.

The revised logo evokes several images including a book opening and pages unfolding over the years, The diversity of members is suggested by a mosaic/lotus flower. Finally, the central shape of a flame, which stems from the prior image of the lamp of learning, suggests lighting the way upward and forward.

The tagline reads: *Realizing potential. For all women*. The concept of *realizing potential* means to understand and to make real, seeing potential and bringing it to life. The words *For all women* suggest both numbers and purpose – women's empowerment, education, representation, equality, and human rights

For websites or banners, there are several logo applications. Design templates are available for letterheads, print ready business, newsletters, PowerPoint presentations, Zoom meeting backgrounds, all with the capacity to incorporate the local club name.

Tools under development in 2023-24 include: logo guidelines for national and local clubs; logo package (colour, reverse, grayscale, black and white)

The national website will be refreshed with the new look in the specified cool to warm colours.

A phased roll-out focuses on easy searching to access products. Old versions will be phased out and adherence to new brand standards will see the decommissioning of previous logos.

The national office will provide explanations for what the acronym CFUW stands for. Similarly, a national standard is being implemented for web content, social media, newsletters and event posters.

Since its launch of the new website in October 2023, the national office has initiated a range of workshops to foster use of the new tools by clubs across the country.

Tactics and tools: website, email, webinars, social media

The Club Action Newsletter aims to be of interest to members as a key means of obtaining timely and relevant information.

The Members Only website is easily accessible and updated regularly with relevant information.

Websites frequently reflect factual data about the club as well as time sensitive news that requires updating on a regular basis e.g., quick links to annual report, membership form, what's going on (by season), meeting structure, format and information on guest speakers

Showcasing annual report

Practical reminders on key points of interest: e.g., how to sign up to access national information, how to pay your membership, a monthly calendar that highlights what is currently on the go

News and Notices - local club-specific information

Website updating and maintenance

Social media: Facebook posts and page management (private and public), Twitter usage

Media advisories and releases

One-pagers and posters for specific initiatives

Focused access to other organizations to communicate our messages through their social media channels

Access to national Strategic Communications Plan and templates e.g., branding

Communications calendar and event-specific communications one-pagers e.g. Great Big Book Sale

Master distribution list for external communications initiatives

Key initiatives

CFUW undertakes a host of initiatives whose success is directly attributable to the significant effort by the Executive, several committees and individual members. In the spirit of continuous improvement, an annual assessment of key initiatives would be useful in gauging the level of success and lessons learned, both of which can be useful in determining the future approach to each undertaking.

Great Big Book Sale

From its humble beginnings in the mid-1980s, the book sale has evolved as the primary fundraising effort supporting the initiatives of CFUW – St. John's with annual proceeds exceeding $60,000 by 2023. A labour-intensive undertaking that calls for a significant volunteer effort by members as well as friends and family, the book sale is well known throughout the St. John's metro area and is a much-awaited event among the local book-loving community.

Outreach Program

A number of not-for-profit organizations in the St. John's area regularly benefit from a range of contributions that assist in achieving tangible results for individuals accessing their programs and services.

Open House

This annual undertaking aims to increase awareness of CFUW St. John's with a view to attracting and retaining new members. An annual assessment of the session would recognize strengths and identify opportunities for further developing the initiative to optimize results.

Advocacy

Continuous work takes place in support of provincial and national policy and legislative advancements that support women and girls.

Public Relations

The lion's share of the PR effort focuses on the dissemination of information relating to key initiatives. The Great Big Book Sale requires a significant effort to encourage the public to contribute books prior to the sale as well as to attend and purchase books at the sale. A communications one-pager that outlines the key tasks and associated timeline is an effective tool for the planning and attainment of PR requirements. Similarly, the one-pager may be equally useful for achieving the PR objectives for the annual Open House.

Media Relations

Developing and sustaining a positive rapport with St. John's media is an essential element in ensuring that the public and various stakeholders are aware of the work of CFUW. An accurate media list is updated on an annual basis to identify those organizations and individuals who may best carry our messages to a broad audience. While social media garners enormous and growing attention, there continues to be a significant demographic cohort in the St. John's area that relies on print, radio and TV to obtain information. Capturing the interest of popular journalists with newsworthy activities is mutually beneficial to CFUW and the participating media organization.

Measurement

Given that there are qualitative and quantitative means of measuring the success of communications efforts, measurement is often linked to financial and human resource capacity. That said, data can be collected that reflects the level of traffic on social media platforms. Likewise, an increase in membership numbers may be an indicator traceable to a specific initiative such as the open house or book sale. These results can be used to gauge the effectiveness of communications efforts in achieving intended results and zeroing in on those tactics that need to be modified or replaced by different methods.

Conclusion

To ensure the continued validity of a communications plan, it should be reviewed and revised on an annual basis. Ideally, the plan should be a companion piece that supports the goals of an overall annual operational plan. The extent to which resources are applied to the communications function may be reflected in the level of success in areas such as growing membership and heightening visibility in the community. CFUW faces opportunities and challenges that are shared nationally across the volunteer sector in terms of changing demographics and the ability to carve out one's place particularly in an already cluttered social media arena. Collectively reflecting on innovative approaches to foster the long-term sustainability of CFUW St. John's may result in the identification of next steps to strengthen the foundations for future generations of women.