



VSD

Community Engagement Committee Meeting  
Tuesday, January 18, 2022 at 1:00 PM  
Valley Sanitary District Board Room, 45-500 Van Buren Street  
and 217 N 1st Street, Elma, WA 98541

Members of the public wanting to participate in the open session of the meeting may do so in person or via the following Zoom link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86904478169> Meeting ID: 869 0447 8169. Members of the public wanting to address the Committee may do so up until the public comment period is closed at the meetings.

Page

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

- 1.1. Roll Call
- 1.2. Pledge of Allegiance

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

*This is the time set aside for public comment on any item not appearing on the agenda. Please notify the Secretary in advance of the meeting if you wish to speak on a non-hearing item.*

**3. DISCUSSION / ACTION ITEMS**

- 3.1. Discuss Strategic Communications Plan and Key Deliverables 3 - 23
  - [3.1 Staff Report Communications Plan.pdf](#)
  - [Attachment A VSD Communication Plan FINAL.pdf](#)
  - [Attachment B ValleySan ImpPlan 2021 revised.pdf](#)

### 3.2. Identify Items for Future Meetings

## 4. ADJOURNMENT

Pursuant to the Brown Act, items may not be added to this agenda unless the Secretary to the Board has at least 72 hours advance notice prior to the time and date posted on this notice.



**Valley Sanitary District  
Community Engagement Committee Meeting  
January 18, 2022**

**TO:** Community Engagement Committee

**THROUGH:** Beverli A. Marshall, General Manager

**SUBJECT:** **Discuss Strategic Communications Plan and Key Deliverables**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Board Action	<input type="checkbox"/> New Budget Approval	<input type="checkbox"/> Contract Award
<input type="checkbox"/> Board Information	<input type="checkbox"/> Existing FY Approved Budget	<input type="checkbox"/> Closed Session

**Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is for the Committee to discuss the draft Strategic Communications Plan and provide feedback to staff and the consultant.

**Strategic Plan Compliance**

This item complies with VSD Strategic Plan Objective 4.1: Increase community understanding and support for the District and its programs.

**Fiscal Impact**

The cost for Plan implementation is dependent upon which items are approved by the Board. Once approved, staff will prepare an estimated cost for inclusion in the Comprehensive Budget for Fiscal Year 2022/23. The Comprehensive Budget for Fiscal Year 2021/22 includes some funds for community outreach and engagement.

**Background**

It is in the District’s best interest to develop a communications and outreach plan that informs the rate payers of the services and benefits provided by the District. The NPDES permit requires that the District performs education and outreach on a variety of water quality topics. In addition, the SSMP requires that the District publish a newsletter or annual report. Currently, the District does not regularly publish a newsletter or perform outreach activities on water quality topics.

In 2019, the Board of Directors identified “Goal 4: Increase Community Understanding and Support” as a key focus issue. To do this, the District needed to have: 1) a brand identity, 2) a communications plan, and 3) a platform for implementation. In 2020, the District began the process by adopting a more modern logo. In 2021, the District adopted a new tagline and brand use policy.

The third step was awarding a contract to CV Strategies to provide community engagement and communications services. As part of the contract, CV Strategies

prepared a draft Strategic Communications Plan (Attachment A) with recommendations on how to fully develop VSD's brand identity and market it. There are five communication goals outlined in the Plan.

- Raise awareness of VSD's work in the community
- Enhance VSD's brand identity
- Strengthen and update communications channels
- Develop bilingual communications
- Gain employee and Board support of communications efforts

In addition to these goals, the consultants recommend five messaging themes.

- Customer commitment
- Environmental stewardship
- Public health
- Industry innovation & leadership
- Regional benefits

Within the Plan, there are four strategies with identified goals and recommended actions for each strategy.

1. Brand Audit & Identity Refinement
2. Key District Messaging
3. Customer & Stakeholder Outreach
4. Internal Outreach

After receiving feedback from the Committee, staff will work with the consultant to finalize the Plan for presentation to the Board of Directors for discussion and approval.

### **Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the Committee discuss the Strategic Communications Plan and key deliverables and provide feedback.

### **Attachments**

Attachment A: Strategic Communications Plan

Attachment B: Implementation Plan Timeline

# STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

November 2021

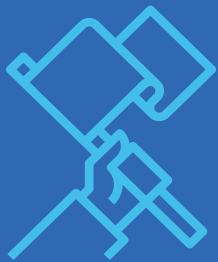


**VALLEY  
SANITARY  
DISTRICT**  
INDIO, CALIFORNIA



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# MISSION



Valley Sanitary District serves and benefits Indio and the surrounding communities by collecting, treating, and recycling wastewater to ensure a healthy environment and sustainable water supply.



# CORE VALUES

Valley Sanitary District's core values serve as a framework for consistent decision-making and are intended to be constant over the long term.



## TRANSPARENT

We provide information to the public in a complete, understandable, and timely form that is readily available.



## RESPONSIBLE

We take into account our environment, community, customers, and ratepayers in everything we do.



## RESPECTFUL

We value diverse viewpoints, teamwork, and active listening to our community and staff.



## INTEGRITY

We maintain high standards of conduct in all our actions and all circumstances.





# COMMUNICATION GOALS

**RAISE AWARENESS OF VALLEY SANITARY DISTRICT'S WORK** and how it benefits the community using clear, consistent messages.

**ENHANCE VALLEY SANITARY DISTRICT'S BRAND IDENTITY**, increasing the District's visibility and recognition.

**STRENGTHEN AND UPDATE COMMUNICATION CHANNELS** to effectively reach target audiences and convey engaging, timely and relevant information.

**DEVELOP BILINGUAL COMMUNICATIONS** to ensure knowledge and information reaches all audiences.

**GAIN EMPLOYEE AND BOARD SUPPORT OF COMMUNICATION EFFORTS**, setting the stage for internal and external communication effectiveness.



# AUDIENCE



Valley Sanitary District's communication efforts are primarily intended for the audiences listed below. Message focus may be tailored to each audience, but will always remain consistent with the District's overall key messages, brand, mission and values.

## Customers

- Residential
- Commercial
- High-strength

## Internal

- Employees
- Board members

## Community/Public

- Boys & Girls Clubs of Coachella Valley
- College of the Desert
- Community groups
- Homeowner's associations
- Local businesses
- Schools
- City of Indio/Indio Water Authority
- Desert Sands Unified School District
- Riverside County
- Indio Chamber of Commerce

## Stakeholders and Partners

- California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA)
- California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Colorado Region
- Desert Interfaith Council
- Desert Valleys Builders Association
- East Valley Reclamation Authority
- Greater Coachella Valley Chamber of Commerce
- State Water Resources Control Board
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



## Media

### Local

#### Print and online news

- The Desert Sun
- El Informador (Spanish)
- Desert Star Weekly
- CV Independent
- Patch.com (Palm Desert)
- Indio Live Newsletter (City of Indio)
- P.S. Bauch

#### Television

- KESQ (ABC & CBS Palm Springs)
- NBC-TV & Univision Palm Springs (English/Spanish)
- Spectrum News 1 (Cablnews)

#### Other

- Uken Report (news blog)
- City News Service

#### Regional

- Los Angeles Times
- Press Enterprise

#### Industry publications

- CASA Connects newsletter
- Western City Magazine (League of California Cities)
- American Water Works Association
- BC Water News
- Maven's Notebook
- California Water Association
- CWEA
- ICMA
- NACWA
- Water World
- Water Education Foundation
- Water Environment Foundation
- Water & Waste Digest
- Municipal Water Leader
- California Special Districts Association
- Association of California Water Agencies



# MESSAGING THEMES



**Customer  
Commitment**



**Environmental  
Stewardship**



**Public**





**Health**



**Industry Innovation  
& Leadership**



**Regional  
Benefits**





# COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

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## BRAND AUDIT & IDENTITY REFINEMENT

### Goals

- \* Refine the existing brand identity to establish a consistent, recognizable brand identity that reflects Valley San's mission and core values.
- \* Communicate a clear, unified message both internally and externally.

**Strategy One:** Enhance the existing brand to reflect the District's mission and core values conveying a responsible and efficient organization both internally and externally.

### Actions

1. Review organization name.
2. Poll District stakeholders for input on brand awareness and preferred communication channels.
3. Provide recommendation on new agency name options.
4. Work with leadership team and Board of Directors to finalize name.
5. Refine logo to reflect new identity and name.
6. Incorporate new name and refined logo within all District needs (website, letterhead, collateral, etc.).
7. Redesign website to reflect new branding.



## KEY DISTRICT MESSAGING

### Goals

- ★ Raise awareness of Valley Sanitary District's work and how it benefits the community, using clear consistent messages.

**Strategy One:** Develop messages that convey a trustworthy and professional organization and garner internal and external support of Valley Sanitary District's brand.

### Actions

1. Using messaging themes, develop key messages to ensure all communications align with the organization's mission and core values.
2. Compile Valley Sanitary District value and service talking points for each department to use when interacting with the public.
3. Carry messages across all outreach efforts including:
  - a. Newsletters/E-blasts
  - b. Media relations
  - c. Digital presence, including website and social media
  - d. Presentations
  - e. Collateral



## CUSTOMER & STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

### Goals

- ★ Raise awareness of Valley Sanitary District's work and how it benefits the community using clear, consistent messages.
- ★ Enhance Valley Sanitary District's brand identity, increasing the District's visibility and recognition.
- ★ Strengthen and update communication channels to effectively reach target audiences and convey engaging, timely and relevant information.
- ★ Develop bilingual communications to ensure knowledge and information reaches all audiences.

**Strategy One:** Assess and strengthen brand identity and messaging consistency to develop a strong platform for all communication efforts.

### Actions

1. Evaluate existing outreach for brand consistency and message clarity and identify opportunities for increased reach.
  - a. Digital outreach – Website, e-blasts, social media, videos, and digital ads
    1. Assist with enhancing website navigation
  - b. Direct customer contact tools – Community meetings, direct mail, bill inserts, door hangers, newsletters
  - c. Collateral – Flyers, fact sheets, postcards, signage, brochures, billboards
  - d. Media – Op-eds, press releases, newspaper columns



## CUSTOMER & STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

Continued

2. Improve existing collateral as needed, enhancing the brand and bringing alignment with key messages.
3. Utilize new communication tools that share Valley Sanitary District's story.
  - a. Design an engaging newsletter/e-blast
    1. *Create a title, include design elements and infographics*
    2. *Build an e-blast/email database for distribution*
    3. *Develop compelling content with information about projects, events, partnerships, FOG/wipes material, Water Bear campaign, Big Blue the Vector Truck, interactive contests, COVID updates, job openings, Board meetings and agendas, etc.*
  - b. Create new collateral advancing Valley Sanitary District's brand elements
  - c. Update the website to reflect Valley Sanitary District's brand and messaging and strengthen the District's online presence
  - d. Design pocket guides for field staff to hand out when approached by the public
  - e. Build a visual library, including photography and videography, that illustrates Valley Sanitary District's story and reflects the brand – including wastewater treatment process, recycled water, projects, staff, and community engagement
  - f. Use videos on the website and social media to highlight the District's value, service and industry leadership
4. Ensure communication materials are translated into languages that pertain to the service area, including Spanish.

**Strategy Two:** Add new and enhance existing social media platforms for delivery of information, using targeted and thoughtful approaches while ensuring consistency in message and brand identity.

### Actions

1. Develop social media policies and protocols.
2. Establish accounts on Instagram and Twitter.
3. Create social media plan and 30-day posting calendar for all accounts, including Facebook and Nextdoor.
4. Ensure engaging, relevant and timely information is presented in a visually pleasing manner, including use of infographics, photography and videos.
5. Develop contests and other strategies to grow followers and identify opportunities to reach key audiences.
6. Create campaigns for FOG, Wipes, Water Bear and Big Blue the Vector Truck.
7. Collect and report analytical data for ROI on all applicable tactics.







# CUSTOMER & STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

Continued

**Strategy Three:** Directly engage the community more frequently and promote two-way and in-person communication by providing increased opportunities for interaction.

## Actions

1. Launch and participate in community engagement events.
  - a. Treatment plant tours
  - b. School presentations
  - c. Open house events
  - d. Community events calendar and participation plan, including booth materials, giveaways and staffing
    1. *Event examples include Coachella Music Festival, Stagecoach, State of the City, Indio International Tamale Festival, Southwest Art Festival city-sponsored events, Riverside County Fair & National Date Festival, Dog Show at the Polo Grounds, Indio, Indio California BBQ State Championship and Festival, etc.*
2. Explore opportunities to engage the community in environmental stewardship efforts and leverage educational and outreach opportunities with the use of:
  - a. Water Bear campaign
    1. *Truck wraps*
    2. *Water bottle stickers*
    3. *Giveaways*
    4. *Billboards*
    5. *Newsletter content*
    6. *Mascot costume for events*
    7. *Social media content*
    8. *Social media ads*
    9. *Website content*
    10. *Video*
    11. *Digital and print ads*
    12. *Themed children's activities for a booklet and webpage*
  - b. Big Blue the Vector Truck campaign
    1. *Create cartoon version of "Big Blue"*
    2. *Themed children' activities*
    3. *Stickers*
    4. *Giveaways*
    5. *Videos*
    5. *Newsletter content*
    6. *Social media content*
    7. *Social media ads*
    8. *Website content*
  - c. FOG/Wipes campaign
    1. *Restaurant/commercial kitchen posters*
    2. *Animated videos*
    3. *Digital and print advertising*
    4. *Giveaways*
    5. *Social media content*
    6. *Social media ads*
    7. *Website content*
    8. *Flyers/brochure*
    9. *Infographics*
    10. *Magnets*
    11. *Pocket guide for field staff*
    12. *Vehicle wraps*



## CUSTOMER & STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

Continued

2. Develop, strengthen and leverage community partnerships to help promote Valley Sanitary District's brand and value and grow Valley Sanitary District's role as a leader in the wastewater industry.
  - a. Partner with the History Museum in Indio; original outhouse is on display – partner to tell the story of progress in wastewater efficiency and public health benefits
  - b. Sponsor local and regional events
  - c. Establish regular communication and collaboration with homeowner's associations in the service area
  - d. Coordinate with the City of Indio on partnership opportunities, including event booths/sponsorships, newsletter articles in Indio Live, communication coordination with Indio Water Authority
  - e. Actively participate in Indio Chamber of Commerce
  - f. Explore additional partnership opportunities with public, stakeholder and industry groups
  - g. Enhance the current partnership with Indio Water Authority
  - h. Leverage October groundbreaking of the plant expansion to advance local partnerships

**Strategy Four:** Build media relationships and proactively communicate with media to share Valley Sanitary District's value and story.

### Actions

1. Develop timely, relevant press releases to distribute to media.
2. Create online media toolkit.
3. Create an op-ed topic calendar, including local and regional publications; write and submit content.
4. Pitch innovative, industry leadership stories to local, regional and industry publications.
5. Offer treatment plant tours and employee interviews.



## INTERNAL OUTREACH

### Goals

- ★ Gain employee and Board support of communication efforts, setting the stage for internal and external communication effectiveness.

**Strategy One:** Improve internal communication efforts, ensuring staff feel connected and up to date with what's happening at Valley Sanitary District.

### Actions

1. Streamline the internal information-sharing process and methods, ensuring all staff receive information and updates at the same time.
2. Host all-staff events, including fun activities such as employee recognition events, to build a strong, connected team with high morale.
3. Use an internal newsletter to share team successes and accomplishments and District news.
4. Provide channels for feedback and ideas on communications efforts.

**Strategy Two:** Leverage staff to serve as “brand ambassadors,” helping educate the public about the important work Valley Sanitary District does in the community.

### Actions

1. Share Valley Sanitary District's key messages, mission and values with all staff, including as part of the onboarding process for new employees.
2. Develop a brand style guide and implement a communication approval process to ensure consistency across communication efforts.
3. Train staff and the Board of Directors on community and customer interaction, including messaging and brand consistency.
4. Provide media training as appropriate.
5. Educate employees on how to use communication tools such as pocket guides, presentations, etc.
6. Consider identifying Valley Sanitary District communication ambassadors.





**Valley Sanitary District**  
45500 Van Buren St, Indio, CA 92201  
(760) 238-5400 | [www.valley-sanitary.org](http://www.valley-sanitary.org)



■ Foundational Shift    
 ■ Initial Implementation    
 ■ Ongoing Outreach

Strategies/Tasks	Status	Timeline												Metrics & ROI	NOTES		
		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC				
<b>BRAND AUDIT &amp; IMAGE ENHANCEMENT</b>																	
Conduct online survey																Established baseline and identified areas of success.	
Poll stakeholders for input on brand/identity																Increased visibility of Valley San's value in its service area. Brand protection and consistency in messaging. Measured through survey results.	
Develop brand style guide																	
Obtain photography																	
Develop photo and video library																	
Create PowerPoint template																	
Create fact sheet template																	
Create staff report template																	
Assess additional template needs																	
Develop communication policies and procedures																	
<b>KEY DISTRICT MESSAGING</b>																	
Develop key messages																Brand protection and consistency in messaging.	
Create talking points for each department																	
<b>CUSTOMER &amp; STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH</b>																	
Design new e-blast																Increase in email addresses for e-blast distribution list to 200+.	
Build e-blast/email database																	
Improve existing collateral as needed																	
Design new newsletter																Clearer differentiation between Valley San and other local entities and a better more consistent understanding of the organization's value in the Valley. Measured through survey results.	
Develop newsletter and email content (projects, events, partnerships, FOG/wipes, Water Bear, Big Blue Vector Truck, interactive contests, COVID updates, job openings, Board meetings, etc.)																	
Update website to reflect new brand, streamline information for easy access																	Enhanced agency profile and standing. Number of website visitors increased by 10 percent.
Design pocket guides for field staff																	Increased visibility of Valley San's value in its service area. Measured through survey results.
Create videos to highlight District value, service and industry leadership; to be used on social media and website																100 views per video.	
Translate/create collateral in Spanish																Online poll in Spanish determines success. Established baseline, increased reach by 10% year over year.	
<b>Water Bear</b>																	
Truck wraps																Clearer differentiation between Valley San and other local entities and a better more consistent understanding of the organization's value in the Valley. Measured through survey results.	
Water bottle stickers																	
Giveaways																20,000 Indio-focused impressions.	
Billboard																	
Newsletter content																Clearer differentiation between Valley San and other local entities and a better more consistent understanding of the organization's value in the Valley. Measured through survey results.	
Mascot costume																	
Social media content																10% increase in post engagement in relation to number of followers.	
Social media ads																200 impressions with 50 reaches per ad.	
Website content																Enhanced agency profile and standing. Number of website visitors increased by 10 percent.	
Video																100 views per video.	
Themed childrens activities for booklet/webpage																Enhanced agency profile and standing. Number of website visitors increased by 10 percent.	
<b>Big Blue the Vector Truck</b>																	
Create cartoon version																Clearer differentiation between Valley San and other local entities and a better more consistent understanding of the organization's value in the Valley. Measured through survey results.	
Themed childrens activities																	
Stickers																	
Giveaways																	
Newsletter content																10% increase in post engagement in relation to number of followers.	
Social media content																	
Social media ads																600 impressions with 50 reaches per ad.	

03/21/23

■ Foundational Shift    
 ■ Initial Implementation    
 ■ Ongoing Outreach

Strategies/Tasks	Status	Month												Metrics & ROI	NOTES		
		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC				
Website content																Enhanced agency profile and standing. Number of website visitors increased by 10 percent.	
Video																100 views per video.	
<b>FOG/Wipes</b>																	
Restaurant/commercial kitchen posters																Backups due to FOG or Wipes reduced by 5%.	
Animated videos																200 views per video.	
Digital and print advertising																600 impressions with 50 reaches per ad.	
Giveaways																Clearer differentiation between Valley San and other local entities and a better more consistent understanding of the organization's value in the Valley. Measured through survey results.	
Social media content																10% increase in post engagement in relation to number of followers.	
Social media ads																200 impressions with 50 reaches per ad.	
Website content																Enhanced agency profile and standing. Number of website visitors increased by 10 percent.	
Flyer/brochure																	
Infographics																	
Magnets																Backups due to FOG or Wipes reduced by 5%.	
Pocket guide for field staff																	
Vehicle wraps																	
Collect and report analytical data for ROI																Board buy-in.	
<b>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENTS</b>																	
Launch and participate in treatment plant tours																Two tours conducted in the first year. Survey cards securing feedback and at least 15 email addresses added to the e-blast distribution list each tour.	
Create school presentations																Presentations at six schools in first year, one for every two grade levels.	
Design open house events																One event hosted in first year. Survey cards securing feedback and at least 15 email addresses added to the e-blast distribution list each event.	
Create events calendar and participation plan including booth materials, giveaways and staffing																Participation in three community events, creating clearer differentiation between Valley San and other local entities and a better more consistent understanding of the organization's value in the Valley. Measured through survey results.	
<b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b>																	
Develop social media policies and protocols																Consistent messaging tone across platforms.	
Establish Instagram account																50 more followers per month for first three months totaling 150.	
Establish Twitter account																35 more followers per month for first three months totaling 115.	
Create social media plan and 30-day posting calendar for all accounts: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Nextdoor																	
Develop contests to grow followers																	
Determine opportunities to reach key audiences																10% increase of the number of followers per platform.	
Create campaign for Water Bear																	
Create campaign for Big Blue Vector Truck																	
Create campaign for FOG/Wipes																	
<b>COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS</b>																	
Partner with Indio Chamber to conduct online survey to identify awareness of agency across local commercial customers and stakeholders																Established baseline awareness and shift in commercial customer awareness.	
Assist with partnership with History Museum in Indio to develop partnership on history of waste/wastewater capture																	
Identify and broker sponsorship of local/regional events																	
Establish regular communication/collaboration with HOAs																	
Coordinate with City of Indio on partnership opps																	
Coordinate with Indio Water Authority on partnership opps																	
Assist with active interaction with Indio Chamber																	
Explore additional partnerships																Speak invitation at one local/regional/industry function.	
<b>MEDIA OUTREACH</b>																	
Develop timely, relevant news releases																One English earned media article per quarter placed in local/regional outlets; one Spanish earned media article per quarter place in local market.	
Create online media toolkit																	
Create op-ed calendar incl local/regional publications																	

10  
9  
8  
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2  
1  
2023

Foundational Shift	Initial Implementation	Ongoing Outreach
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JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
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Strategies/Tasks	Status												Metrics & ROI	NOTES	
Write and submit content for op-eds														Two op-eds placed in local, regional, or industry media outlets per year.	
Pitch stories to local, regional, industry publications														One English earned media article per quarter placed in local/regional/industry outlets; one Spanish earned media article per quarter placed in local market.	
Offer treatment plant tours and employee interviews															
Collect and report analytical data for ROI														Board buy-in.	
<b>INTERNAL OUTREACH</b>															
Streamline internal information-sharing process															
Assist w/ regular staff meetings and/or events to build morale														Increased efficiencies for staff; agency productivity and morale.	
Develop internal newsletter														Open rate of 75% on e-newsletter.	
Provide channels for feedback/ideas on communication efforts														Increased efficiencies for staff; agency productivity and morale.	
Assist with sharing key messages, mission, vision, values with all staff incl as part of onboarding new employees															
Train staff and Board of Directors on community and customer interaction incl messaging and brand consistency														Brand protection and consistency in messaging.	
Provide media training as appropriate															
Educate employees on how to use communication tools															
Consider identifying District communication ambassadors															