



VSD

Community Engagement Committee Special Meeting
Thursday, January 6, 2022 at 10:00 AM
Valley Sanitary District Board Room
45-500 Van Buren Street, Indio, CA 92201

Members of the public wanting to participate in the open session of the meeting may do so via the following Meeting ID: 883 0922 4854 Passcode: 823694. Members of the public wanting to address the Board 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 Draft Strategic Communications Plan Prepared by CV Strategies and Provide Feedback 3 - 20
[3.1 Staff Report Communications Plan.pdf](#) 
[VSD CommunicationPlan_121421.pdf](#) 

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
Board of Directors Meeting
January 6, 2022**

TO: Community Engagement Committee
THROUGH: Beverli A. Marshall, General Manager
SUBJECT: **Discuss Draft Strategic Communications Plan Prepared by CV Strategies and Provide Feedback**

<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 draft Strategic Communications Plan and provide feedback.

Attachments

Attachment A: Strategic Communications Plan

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

November 2021



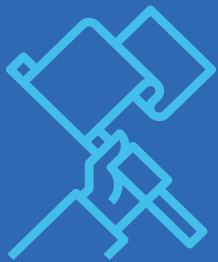
**VALLEY
SANITARY
DISTRICT**
INDIO, CALIFORNIA

Giving Water Another Chance



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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



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

