

**Communications & Technology Visioning
Session | Meeting Minutes**
Thursday | February 17, 2022 | 10:30am



Attendees: Patricia DeMarco, Forest Hills; Phyllis Anderson, Oakmont Borough; Tim McLaughlin, Aspinwall; Brittany Reno, Sharpsburg; Deneen Underwood, Carnegie; Steve Beuter, Carnegie; Krista Watt, Dormont

GSPIA/CONNECT: Lydia Morin, Kelley Kelley, Sarah Downing

The meeting began with casual introductions, why attendees came, & their roles in CONNECT

Background and Context for the Working Group

Two roles of this committee

- Improve government communications
- Communicating CONNECT well
 - CONNECT can get stronger, more influential; communications needs investment in time and resources
 - CONNECT needs to engage and activate members

Priorities for this Working Group

- For CONNECT: clear messaging platform that all members can use (with a positioning statement)
- For governments/communities: clear understanding of the technology options (free options especially)

Discussion:

- Aspinwall: CONNECT and municipalities need to unify. In government, there are smaller facets that want to their own message, this takes away from brand. This happens because they don't have a structure in place. Structure includes who is delivering the messaging. We don't need to tell anyone what to say, but they need to know the structure of it.
- CONNECT: Structure would save staff time
- Aspinwall: Sharing purely communications resources. Could have cohorts similar to LEAD, with different levels of readiness. Focus on external versus internal communications.
- CONNECT: CONNECT needs to be a marketing model. Communications is a roadblock to policy areas progressing. For Recycling, we have the data and the report, but we don't have the structure and the shared language.

- Forest Hills: CONNECT needs to anticipate how we get the Climate Action Plan out via comms
- CONNECT: We need to have a style guide and look like a franchise.
 - Have a structure for agendas, reports, newsletters across CONNECT and communities

Context of opportunities, debrief of Capstone report recommendations

CONNECT: We have been exploring for nine months, working on areas we can monitor and where there are opportunities. Alan Kugler and Sabina Dietrick at the University of Pittsburgh provided opportunities through the CONNECT capstone course at GSPIA.

Forest Hills: Prepare for systems change. Electronic communications are going to be more mainstream. Need to communicate important changes to our constituents and each other.

Aspinwall: Have a continuing conversation of what the brand positioning is, so constituents see similarities and consistency. It's going to be evolving, make sure they see the changes along the way. No need for a loud rebrand.

Presentation regarding internal/external communications opportunities

The presentation slides will be attached to these meeting minutes

Theme: Digital Communications and Social Media

Discussion:

Digital data that we gain makes us smarter; makes our traditional campaigns and communications smarter.

Dormont: Have a best practice guide for formatting for digital communications.

Aspinwall: CONNECT communications don't deviate that far from how governments are communicating. CONNECT can give resources such as the formatting guide. Resending communications (like newsletters) can get more clicks and open rates.

CONNECT: How do we get more engagement on CONNECT social media? We need more reshares.

Aspinwall: Need consistency, make it easier to tag and reshare.

CONNECT: Have skillshares and trainings for social media engagement. CONNECT has the content, we need help getting it out. CONNECT is valuable at providing content and resources, and shared language to communities.

Theme: Shared resources and a shared drive

Discussion:

CONNECT: We can have a password protected CONNECT drive, demonstrating the power we have by making everything digital

Churchill: We're using a shared OneDrive for resources

Oakmont: Need to have everything in one place

- Working group resources in one place
- Meticulous and updated
- (Could this be an opportunity for a consultant?)

Theme: Goals

Discussion

CONNECT: Use resources at Pitt (Photography, videography) and show how much value we give to Pitt with our engagement. Have a photographer at the retreat on April 21 for headshots to create a dossier of members. Host a connected alumni event.

Forest Hills: Opportunity to present to national energy stakeholder group in Pittsburgh.

Priorities/agendas/logistics for working group & RFP

Aspinwall: From DCED, we want investment in communications plan. Need a Strategic Marketing and Communication Plan adapted for local government that can be used by all CONNECT communities.

CONNECT: We can organize by cohorts and have a consultant team behind this. This time next year, we need to be able to point to a communication needs assessment. Investment in data management and communications staffing solution.

Sharpsburg: Interest in shared services and merging resources.

CONNECT: Spend a year executing this piece, have a resolution passed in May to bring to DCED.

The order is:

- Preparing CONNECT for an investment from the state
- Meeting with Hillman on March 24

- Get CONNECT communications in order; while someone is answering the RFP and creating CONNECT communications, they are creating resources for CONNECT members to use
- Conducting a needs assessment
- Trainings for membership on social media, working trainings
- Creating a SharePoint/shared drive to have everything in one place

We need members to keep cheerleading and pushing on policy areas

Forest Hills: We had a Local Government Academy intern who created a communications plan. We can ask members what their communications plans look like now

Agenda for Executive Retreat on April 21st

CONNECT: We want members to engage, have a plan, and engage the rest of the membership as champions for this working group at the Executive Committee Retreat

Will have workshops at the retreat for each working group

- Improve communications internally and externally
- Build a brand and have a clear brand identity
- Creating resources
- Who is ready and who are the early adopters?
- Put an ask: what do we want members to do? Surveys, data, interviews with the early adopters, etc.

Agenda and Time for first Communications & Technology WG Meeting

- Identity levels of support needed
 - Some communities might be at square one, some might be ready to go
- What are we asking of members?
 - Be responsive to the group, look over resources
- Record meetings to make available
- Need volunteers to be involved with facilitating discussion at the April 21 retreat
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion