

DRAFT STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PLAN SUMMARY

At the request of the Implementation Committee, the 2017-2018 Work Plan included a small amount of funding for the creation of a Communication Plan for the San Francisco Estuary Partnership (Partnership). A strategic communication plan for the Partnership can benefit the region by increasing visibility of the Estuary Blueprint, the Partnership's collaborative work, and regional successes and achievements by our partners. Articulating the value of the National Estuary Program (NEP) and the Estuary could help boost federal funding and other funding sources. Furthermore, broader visibility of the Partnership and the Blueprint should also elevate region-wide priorities and the work that our partners are doing to advance these priorities.

Background

To develop this draft plan, existing communication channels and audiences were inventoried and reviewed. Partnership staff were interviewed about communications within their programs and projects and within the organization. IC members who had volunteered to assist with development of the plan met with Partnership staff to identify desired goals and share effective strategies. A review of some partner websites has been initiated, and [a short survey](#) is currently being circulated to IC members and key partners. Additional input will be sought at the May 23 IC meeting, and revisions will be made during the summer. A final draft will be brought to the IC in August (see timeline).

Two primary themes have emerged from the analysis to date:

First, the Partnership should and does already communicate key messages regarding Estuarine health, priorities for the Estuary, work underway by our partners, and accomplishments that advance the goals of the Estuary Blueprint. By working more closely with partners to strategically align and advance these messages, we can increase our reach to both new and existing audiences and further elevate region-wide priorities.

Second, the Partnership's core programmatic strengths lie in regional collaboration and capacity-building. These strengths are well understood by key partners, but for potential partners unfamiliar with the Partnership, messaging on these strengths is not always clear. Programs and projects, even when led by the Partnership, do not always highlight the Partnership's role in their success. Both the organization and our partners would benefit from greater attention to the role of communications and consistent, clear messaging across all of the Partnership's channels and materials.

Both themes highlight the need for more clarity, consistency, and a strategic approach to Partnership communications.

Goals

DRAFT GOALS

Work with partners to communicate key, aligned messages regarding estuarine health and priorities, work underway, and accomplishments that advance the goals of the Estuary Blueprint.

Refine messaging about the Partnership as an organization, with a focus on clear and consistent messages about its core strengths and capacities and what it offers to partners and to the region.

Inventory of Active Communications Channels

Website

ESTUARY News

Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)

Program or Project-Specific Materials

Estuary Blueprint E-newsletter

Print Collateral

Events: State of the Estuary Conference

Partner Materials (for example, the Bay Link, MTC)

Flagship Products: Estuary Blueprint and State of the Estuary Report

Existing Key Messages

The draft plan calls for alignment of Partnership communications with key national, regional, and organizational messages, such as the examples listed below. Additional messages should be identified and potential new messages developed in collaboration with partners.

NATIONAL MESSAGES

- NEPs are non-regulatory and locally driven.
- NEPs provide a cooperative, efficient, cost-effective partnership to ensure federal assets and interests are coordinated, aligned and protected.
- NEPs are results-oriented and successful.

REGIONAL MESSAGES

- Restoration is working.
- The Estuary has come a long way, but there is much more work to be done immediately, particularly to prepare for climate change.

ORGANIZATIONAL MESSAGES

- The Partnership is a collaborative program that works in partnership with a broad range of stakeholders on improving the health of the Estuary.

Suggested Actions

The draft plan suggests a range of actions to meet the above goals, some of which will entail minimal effort, and others which will require more staff time and resources. However, due to the limited capacity of current funding, the draft plan emphasizes the importance of meeting these goals by developing consistent messaging and strategically strengthening our existing communication channels, as well as aligning with the communications efforts of partners, before investing resources into new, independent efforts. Example actions include:

- Identify opportunities for inclusion of the Estuary Blueprint in partner materials.
- Conduct regular outreach to Estuary Blueprint partners to request implementation success stories for inclusion in the Estuary Blueprint e-newsletter.
- For all future projects and program updates, develop a communications strategy at the outset for any expected products or outcomes; write this strategy into future grant proposals where possible.
- Identify current core messaging regarding the Partnership and the Blueprint and work closely with partners to strategically align them internally and throughout the region.

Timeline for Development and Implementation

Task	Date
Assess existing audiences and communications channels	December 2017-January 2018
Survey staff	December 2017-January 2018
Develop first draft goals, identify suggested audiences and channels	January-February 2018
Meet with IC members about desired goals and current communications	March-May 2018
Revise draft goals and develop recommended actions	April 2018
Review revised goals and recommendations with staff and IC members	May 2018
Revise draft plan	June-July 2018
Present final draft plan to IC members and staff	August 2018
Begin implementation	September 2018-August 2019
First evaluation	July-August 2019

DRAFT

**Strategic
Communications Plan**

For Implementation Committee Review

May 23, 2018

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Introduction

Overview

The San Francisco Estuary Partnership is a part of the National Estuary Program, established in 1987 by Congress through an amendment to the Clean Water Act. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency oversees the national program, providing a small amount of federal funding, guidance, and technical assistance to each estuary. From the beginning, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) has hosted the San Francisco Estuary Partnership (Partnership); for most daily operations, however, the Partnership has maintained a high degree of autonomy.

The Partnership is required to maintain a committee of diverse stakeholders, the Implementation Committee, which has the responsibility of working collaboratively to implement the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (Estuary Blueprint). The IC also provides input into the Partnership's annual Work Plan and other important planning processes. These relationships provide the basis for communications between the Partnership and others; see below for a graphic of the flow of messaging between these entities.

About this Plan

This strategic communications plan is being developed at the request of the Implementation Committee (IC). This plan is intended to build on the Partnership's existing partnerships and strong regional reputation in order to effectively reach new audiences and strengthen outreach to existing audiences, with the result of more successful implementation of the Estuary Blueprint and a healthier, more resilient Estuary.

Background and Need

Identified Priority

At the request of the IC, the 2017-2018 Work Plan included a small amount (\$10,000) of funding for the creation of a Communications Plan. For the past few years, several IC members have called for greater public outreach, with some ongoing discussion about what this might mean in terms of identifying audiences and activities. This report forms the foundation of a strategic communications plan, to be refined and finalized with input from the IC.

Funding Security

For the past two years, the Presidential budget has proposed complete elimination of National Estuary Program (NEP) funding. San Francisco Estuary Partnership, like many of its NEP counterparts, enjoys strong and universal support from our region's members of Congress, and the NEP in general has bipartisan support, so the long-term security of the program is not at significant risk. However, criticisms of the NEP, the EPA, and of environmentally-focused programs in general have increased and could result in funding declines or threats. In addition, the limited funding provided through the EPA offers the only means of supporting vital programmatic work such as the State of the Estuary Report and unfunded actions in the Estuary Blueprint. The San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary receives very little federal funding; increased appreciation for the value of the NEP and the Estuary could help boost this federal funding and assist to secure funding from other sources, to the benefit of the San Francisco Partnership and regional partners.

Other Benefits

The Partnership has successfully built relationships with most of the agencies and organizations working to improve the health of the Estuary, and is well-regarded by its partners. However, there remain many stakeholders and audiences who do not know about the Partnership or the Estuary Blueprint. Greater awareness and engagement of these audiences can increase the Partnership's capacity to implement priority actions and result in a more successful outcome for the Blueprint as well as a more robust update in the next iteration. Furthermore, increased visibility of the Partnership, and by extension the Blueprint, should also increase attention to region-wide priorities and the work that our partners are doing to advance these priorities. Among existing audiences and internally, a strategic communications plan can provide clarity as to the Partnership's core strengths and capacities as well as align key messages with those of its partners.

Goals and Desired Outcomes

Draft Goals

Work with partners to communicate key, aligned messages regarding estuarine health and priorities, work underway, and accomplishments that advance the goals of the Estuary Blueprint.

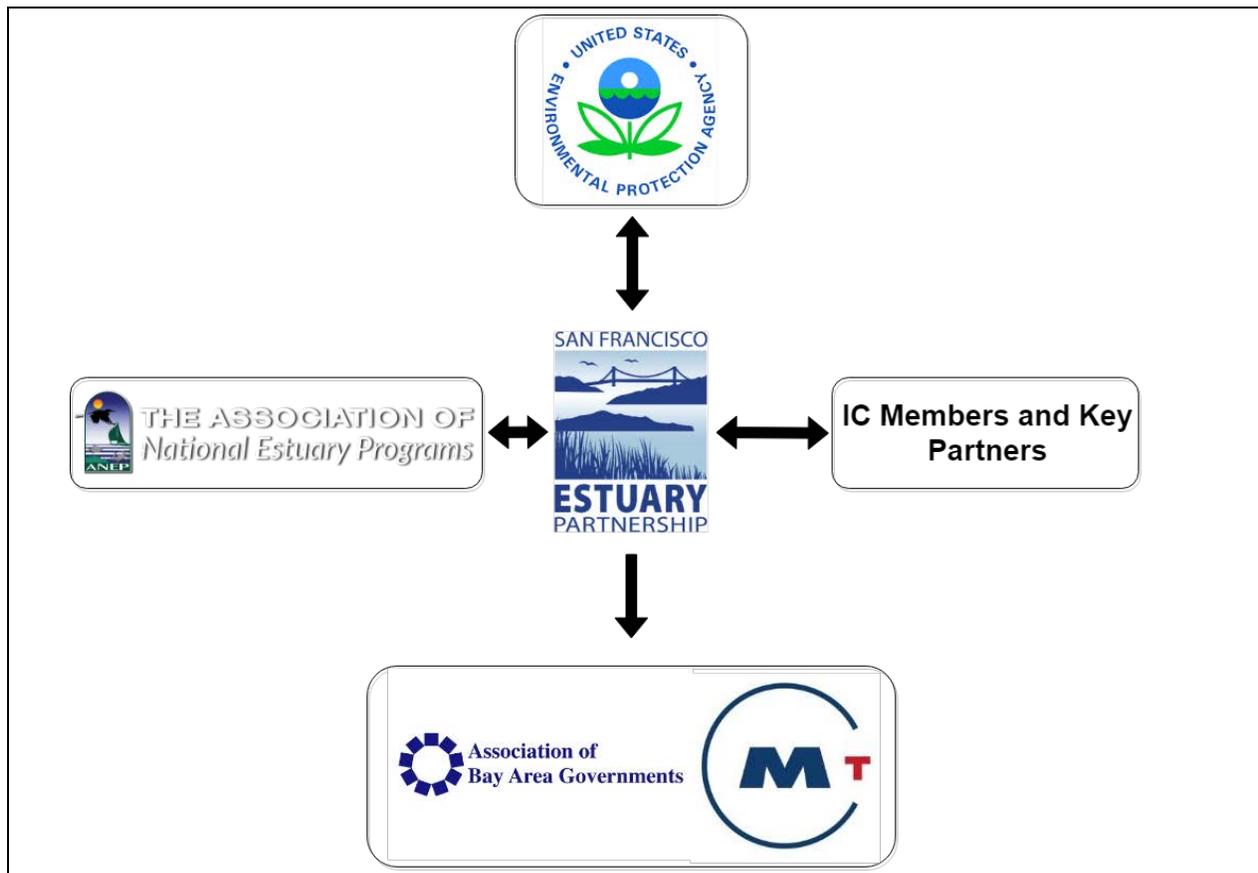
Refine messaging about the Partnership as an organization, with a focus on clear and consistent messages about its core strengths and capacities and what it offers to partners and to the region.

Desired Outcomes

- More support for and broader implementation of the Estuary Blueprint
- More regional partnership opportunities for the Partnership and its partners with a broader range of stakeholders
- Amplification of key, aligned messages to new and existing target audiences
- A more secure, diversified, and increased funding stream
- Expanded use and sharing of work products

Messaging Relationships Chart

The Partnership, like many NEPs, is situated within a complex structure of cooperating organizations and stakeholders (see Messaging Relationships graphic). Key messages regarding Estuary health and restoration efforts may be developed in collaboration with some stakeholders and shared with others. An effective strategic communications plan requires an understanding of these organizational relationships and the appropriate direction to messaging. This web of organizations should also be considered dynamic and subject to change: the recent merger of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) will eventually lead to the creation of a single regional planning organization which will house the Partnership.



Existing Communications

The first step in development of this plan was to analyze the status of existing communications and communication plans. The Partnership has several significant and effective communications channels; however, it does not currently have an overarching plan. The Partnership does have a Strategic Outreach Plan for the CCMP, prepared by Michael Baker International in November 2015 for the release of the updated Estuary Blueprint. Recommendations and strategies from that plan were used to inform this one, including the following:

- Establishment of an externally-facing brand identity of the CCMP and by proxy SFEP;
- Define goals for CCMP outreach;
- Define key messages for the CCMP for existing and potential new partners.

In addition, the Strategic Outreach Plan for the CCMP included identification of potential new partners through a Stakeholder Gaps Analysis, and development of a campaign strategy for both the release of the CCMP and ongoing CCMP communications.

Existing Messages: What are we trying to communicate?

As mentioned above, the Partnership develops messages with input from IC members and key local and regional partners, as well as with input from national partners (i.e., the federal branch of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [USEPA], the Association of National Estuary Programs [ANEP], and Restore America's Estuaries [RAE]). Regional partners have developed a number of key regional messages, a few examples of which are shared below. In addition, the Partnership promulgates--deliberately or inadvertently--key messages regarding its strengths and core capacities to audiences including IC members, partners, and potential partners.

NATIONAL MESSAGES

- NEPs are non-regulatory and locally driven.
- NEPs provide a cooperative, efficient, cost-effective partnership to ensure federal assets and interests are coordinated, aligned and protected.
- NEPs are results-oriented and successful.
- The NEP's non-regulatory and consensus-based approach aligns stakeholders and resources to identify and implement innovative and positive solutions to solve complex problems.

REGIONAL MESSAGES

- Restoration is working.
- The Estuary has come a long way, but there is much more work to be done right now, particularly to prepare for climate change.

ORGANIZATIONAL MESSAGES

- The Partnership is a collaborative program that works in partnership with a broad range of stakeholders on improving the health of the Estuary.

Existing Communications Channels: How and where are we trying to communicate?

As mentioned above, the Partnership has several existing communications channels (see overview list below). A simple audit was conducted to identify strengths, weaknesses, and

opportunities to increase the reach of each channel. Recommendations for each channel can be found in the Implementation section.

LIST OF CHANNELS

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Website | • ESTUARY News |
| • Social Media | • Program or Project-Specific Materials |
| • Estuary Blueprint E-newsletter | • Partner Materials |
| • Events: State of the Estuary Conference | • Print Collateral |
| • Flagship Products: Estuary Blueprint and State of the Estuary Report | |

Website

The Partnership released a substantially updated website in June 2017, including a new look and structure, and updated project pages. As part of this update, staff installed Google Analytics to gain new insights into website use and visitation. The main goal of this website is to communicate with key partners, particularly about events like the State of the Estuary Conference, progress on implementing the Estuary Blueprint, and the release of important documents like the State of the Estuary Report. The website is also home to the online version of ESTUARY News.

The website is easy for staff to update and for the first time provides an accessible means of tracking implementation of the Estuary Blueprint. ESTUARY News receives a large proportion of pageviews and is frequently one of the top three starting pages for visitors. The landing or home page for the website, however, frequently features links to outside websites and is updated intermittently as staff capacity allows. Responsibility for updating project pages lies with project managers, and the level of detail between project pages varies. The Estuary Blueprint E-Newsletter drives some traffic to the website through Estuary Blueprint updates and success stories; otherwise, no systematic means of driving traffic to the website exists.

Social Media

The Partnership has three primary social media accounts: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Posts are made to all of these accounts opportunistically based on staff capacity, and are primarily maintained by one staff person.

Estuary Blueprint E-Newsletter

The Estuary Blueprint newsletter is released quarterly, on approximately the same schedule as the IC meetings. It is intended to reach IC members and Estuary Blueprint partners and supporters with updates related to Blueprint implementation, such as success stories and progress tracking. Since its inception with the release of the updated Estuary Blueprint in fall 2016, it has grown from 121 to 222 subscribers. The e-mail newsletter is released via MailChimp, which enables list tracking and engagement. Engagement has remained high (47.7% average opens). Relative to the Partnership's complete mailing list of 4800, however, this newsletter reaches a small percentage.

Events: State of the Estuary Conference

The biennial State of the Estuary Conference, held 13 times since 1993, attracts about 800 attendees ranging from internationally recognized topic experts to citizen volunteers and advocates. The State of the Estuary Report is usually timed for release in conjunction with the conference, which boosts the general visibility of both. Additionally, partners such as the Regional Monitoring Program have also tied release of reports to the conference, which has resulted in increased earned media coverage.

Flagship Products: Estuary Blueprint and State of the Estuary Report

As the primary guiding document for the Partnership and one of the primary plans for restoring the Estuary, the Estuary Blueprint serves as a vehicle for communicating region-wide priority actions. The State of the Estuary Report is one of the most publicly-accessible documents summarizing the status of current efforts by the Partnership and its partners to improve estuarine health. It provides a way for the interested public to understand the progress being made on the implementation of the Estuary Blueprint; Partnership staff are working to strengthen the connections between these two documents.

General Print Collateral

The Partnership has a number of flyers that provide an overview of the organization and its projects, for use in meeting with people new to the organization. These have been revised within the past two years in cooperation with the NEPs, and have aligned messaging with national partners.

ESTUARY News

ESTUARY News is a quarterly print and online newsletter with a dedicated readership of about 4,000-5,000. The Partnership provides significant funding for the newsletter and hosts the online version. ESTUARY News has a strong reputation for high-quality, engaging content. Recently, the editor expanded the newsletter's online presence through the

introduction of PEARLS, which covers news items between newsletter issues. Although it is closely affiliated with the Partnership, ESTUARY News is run independently, and the Partnership does not oversee content; however, the Partnership, its projects, or projects of partners are frequently featured in the newsletter.

Program or Project-Specific Outreach: Events, Print and Online Materials

In addition to the above materials, the Partnership partners with other organizations on several regional programs, such as the Clean Vessel Act Grant Program. In some cases, these programs have several communication channels (including an app!) that may or may not be able to feature the Partnership's brand identity prominently.

Partner Materials: Events, Print and Online Materials

The Partnership's complex organizing structure offers a potential advantage to increasing the reach of Partnership communications. Estuary Blueprint priorities should already be present, either explicitly or implicitly, in the outreach materials of most partners. Where opportunities exist, these connections can be made more explicit. Multi-stakeholder successes can be shared through the communication channels of all involved partners, boosting the visibility of these achievements and increasing public awareness and support.

Existing Audiences: With whom are we trying to communicate?

The Partnership currently communicates key messages to a number of audiences. These audiences have different levels of familiarity with the Partnership and diversity exists within each audience. Primary audiences are invested in the success of the Estuary Blueprint and should champion either the Blueprint or the Partnership; secondary audiences are less invested but can have influence over either the Blueprint or the Partnership.

PRIMARY AUDIENCES

1. IC members

IC members make key decisions regarding Partnership activities and Estuary Blueprint content. Committee membership is intended to represent the diversity of stakeholders throughout the Estuary, and members bring a wide range of perspectives to the Partnership's work. Most IC members represent organizations that are implementing one or more actions in the Blueprint; therefore, IC members are or should be champions of the Partnership and of the Blueprint.

2. Non-IC Blueprint implementers

Although most implementing partners in the Estuary Blueprint are also on the IC, some of the newer partners are not on the IC. These partners may have less buy-in for Estuary Blueprint implementation, but are aligned with at least one area of Estuary recovery efforts. These partners likely communicate on at least one topic

area to their own audience, but may not be champions of the Estuary Blueprint or the Partnership.

3. **Project partners**

Project partners range from project leads, such as the California Division of Boating and Waterways, to small grant sub-recipients. These organizations likely represent a diverse range of perspectives, and in some cases may not be familiar with the Estuary Blueprint, but they are helping to advance implementation.

SECONDARY AUDIENCES

4. **Academic groups and research organizations**

Area universities and scientific research organizations focusing on estuarine and aquatic ecology, habitat and wetland restoration, and natural resource management have likely heard of the Partnership. These stakeholders may or may not be advancing implementation, but are typically interested in researching at least one of the priority issues addressed by the Blueprint. This audience doesn't have direct responsibility for championing the Estuary Blueprint but could be an influential outside voice in allocating funding or prioritizing actions.

5. **NEP Directors, ANEP, RAE, and U.S. EPA**

This group does not champion the Partnership or help implement the Blueprint, but does provide top-line national messaging consistent with all of the NEPs, for a unified message where needed.

6. **Conference attendees**

Conference attendees who are not part of other categories may be members of the interested public or professionals who have not directly connected with the Partnership outside of the State of the Estuary Conference or Bay-Delta Science Conference (also currently managed by the Partnership in conjunction with the Delta Stewardship Council).

Implementation

The Partnership works with a broad range of partners, each with its own communications strategies and key messages. These partners also communicate with many of the same audiences identified in this plan (both existing and new or potential). With the development of this strategic communication plan, the Partnership should be aligning shared messages as well as clearly communicating its own role within the region.

For implementation, a range of actions are suggested to meet the above goals, some of which will entail minimal effort, and others which will require more staff time and resources. However, due to the limited capacity of current funding, the draft plan emphasizes the importance of meeting these goals by strategically aligning internal messages and by supporting and building on the communications efforts of partners over investment into a new, independent effort.

For successful implementation, full support and ownership of the plan by IC members and Partnership staff will be essential. To that end, an early draft is being circulated to IC members and staff to encourage substantial input into the plan. A final draft will be presented for review and approval at the August IC meeting (see Timeline on p. 1).

New Messages

New top-line messages will be developed with partners through implementation of this plan, in response to changing political, environmental, and other conditions. Existing messages should be reviewed regularly for their continued relevance and alignment with other partners. For greatest effectiveness, all messages should be tailored specifically to each audience.

In addition to top-line messaging, IC members suggested that the Partnership work with regional partners to highlight specific topics from the Estuary Blueprint and the State of the Estuary Report throughout the year. The San Francisco Bay Joint Venture has taken the lead on developing regional communications and Partnership staff support and participate in this effort. Staff can support this effort by reaching out regularly to key partners to develop timely topic-specific messages to push out via all relevant channels.

Finally, the Partnership should develop or refine key messages about its strengths and core capacities, and communicate those consistently through all channels. Ideally, IC members and Partnership staff will identify strongly with these messages and will provide significant input.

New or Under-engaged Audiences

Through [review](#) of existing communications and interviews with staff and IC members, the following audiences have been identified as new or under-engaged by the Partnership. Improved or expanded communications to the primary audiences identified here can lead to the desired outcomes of this plan. Secondary audiences may be equally important as influencers but do not directly accomplish desired outcomes.

PRIMARY AUDIENCES

- **Legislators**

Staff and IC members agreed that elected officials could be made more aware of the work by the Partnership and its partners; this is also consistent with national NEP recommendations. Many partners already conduct outreach to local, state, and federal elected officials; the Partnership can amplify these efforts with aligned messaging and celebrate partner successes as well as highlight Blueprint priorities that would benefit from political pressure.
- **ABAG/MTC Staff**

With the merger, the Partnership has gained dozens of new colleagues with little to no familiarity with the organization. These colleagues offer opportunities for collaboration within the transportation planning sector, and an expansion of the scope of regional transportation planning efforts to date.
- **Businesses**

The Stakeholder Gaps Analysis by Michael Baker International identified businesses, particularly the tech industry, as a priority audience missing from the Partnership's outreach, and identified over [60 businesses](#) for inclusion in future communications.

SECONDARY AUDIENCES

- **Media**

IC members stressed the multiple benefits of establishing and maintaining relationships with journalists and media outlets. Traditional media is still one of the most effective ways to reach the general public and raise the visibility of priority actions for the Estuary. The number of journalists covering regional environmental issues has dwindled; therefore, successful media outreach requires an ongoing investment in the relationship with individual journalists and editorial boards.
- **ABAG/MTC audiences**

The merger of these two organizations offers an opportunity for an increased reach of key messages. A new blog, The Bay Link, has recently been launched as part of the new combined "Bay Area Metro" identity and has already featured Partnership programs and Estuary Blueprint success stories. MTC/ABAG now has a publicity department with several staff who have been receptive to collaborating with the Partnership on communications, and currently is hiring a social media position.

OTHER POTENTIAL NEW AUDIENCES

- Community-based organizations: many small, community-based organizations work on issues related to Estuary Blueprint priorities but are not familiar with the Partnership. While the individual capacity of these organizations may be low, they may have an interest in advancing Blueprint actions and can effectively disseminate key messages to their communities.
- Project or Program-specific audiences, such as city planners and managers.

New Communications Channels

The existing communications channels listed above should provide ample means of meeting the proposed goals, particularly if the reach of partners' channels are fully leveraged. One possible exception is in engagement of the new or under-engaged audiences identified above. The needs of these audiences should be examined in greater depth to determine the most effective messages and channels; a direct email strategy, for instance, may work best for several of these audiences.

Suggested Actions

The following list of actions is also categorized by goal and anticipated level of effort [here](#).

1. Conduct a survey of IC members and key partners to evaluate current communication of the Estuary Blueprint and the Partnership (underway).
2. Identify opportunities for inclusion of the Estuary Blueprint in partner materials.
3. Conduct regular outreach to Estuary Blueprint partners to request implementation success stories for inclusion in the Estuary Blueprint e-newsletter.
4. For all future projects and program updates, develop a communications strategy at the outset for any expected products or outcomes; write this strategy into future grant proposals where possible.
5. Identify current core messaging regarding the Partnership and the Blueprint and work closely with partners to strategically align them internally and throughout the region.
6. Conduct a survey of IC members and key partners to evaluate current communication of the Estuary Blueprint and the Partnership (underway).
7. Align key national messages: work with ANEP, EPA, and NEP directors to align SFEP's messaging with national messages. Prioritize these messages in communications with relevant audiences and tailor them to all audiences.
8. Align key regional messages: SFBayJV is leading regional communications development; work with SFBayJV and others to support and develop key regional messages.

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- a. Support SFBayJV efforts by attending regional communications meetings.
 - b. Propose a monthly conference call with interested regional partners to identify upcoming topics and timely messages.
9. Align key organizational messages:
- a. Review all communications channels and outreach materials for description of SFEP, its strengths and core capacities, and revise as needed for consistency.
 - b. Review results of IC members and partner survey for current status of Partnership and Blueprint promotion.
 - c. Identify opportunities for increased promotion of the Partnership and inclusion of the Estuary Blueprint in partner materials.
10. Tailor key national, regional, and organizational messages to each existing and new audience
- a. Assess new and existing audiences for needs and preferences regarding messaging and communications channels.
11. Implement the following recommendations for all existing communications channels:
- a. Website Recommendations:
 - i. Create a schedule for frequently updating the landing page; focus on internal links on the 3-panel updates section.
 - ii. Create a schedule for updating project pages; set a standard for amount of information on project pages with a timeline for completion.
 - iii. Use all communication channels to drive traffic to the website.
 - b. ESTUARY News Recommendations:
 - i. Since the newsletter is run independently, suggestions of changes to content or structure would not be appropriate.
 - ii. Partnership staff and ESTUARY News staff could collaborate more closely to coordinate content-sharing on social media.
 - c. Estuary Blueprint E-Newsletter Recommendations:
 - i. Regularly reach out to Estuary Blueprint partners to request relevant success stories for inclusion in the newsletter.
 - ii. Monitor newsletter response for declines in open and click rates; consider changes to “refresh” content and look if declines happen.
 - iii. Consider strategies for increasing subscribers, or if determined to be necessary, development of a separate newsletter or blog aimed at a broader audience.
 - d. Social Media Recommendations:
 - i. Establish a regular social media calendar with scheduled posts for all channels on a daily or weekly basis, depending on the channel.
 - ii. Coordinate social media calendar with partners, particularly around yearly events and in tandem with overall regional communications calendar.

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- iii. Explore collaboration with ABAG/MTC staff on social media, including regular contributions to the Bay Link blog.
 - e. State of the Estuary Conference Recommendations:
 - i. Continue past coordination with partners on a media strategy for the conference, including expanding coordination with ABAG/MTC publicity department.
 - f. Print Collateral Recommendations:
 - i. Regularly review existing and planned documents to evaluate alignment with key national, regional, and organizational messages.
 - ii. In forming communication strategy for new audiences, evaluate whether print collateral will be part of the strategy, and if so, whether these flyers use effective messaging for these new audiences.
 - g. Program- or Project-Specific Materials: Events, Print and Online Materials Recommendations
 - i. Evaluate these materials for alignment with national and regional messages, and incorporate consistent messaging regarding the Partnership into updates to materials.
 - ii. Ensure that the production of future materials includes a similar evaluation.
 - iii. For all future projects and program updates, develop a communications strategy at the outset for any expected products or outcomes; write this strategy into future grant proposals where possible.
 - h. Partner Materials: Events, Print and Online Materials Recommendations
 - i. Use survey results to evaluate opportunities to highlight the Estuary Blueprint, relevant topic areas, or the Partnership in partner materials
 - ii. Work through regional communications development to increase shared communication of multi-partner successes.
12. Tailored outreach to audiences unfamiliar with the Estuary Blueprint is needed:
- a. Consider development of an alternative newsletter or blog to reach new audiences.

Implementers

As mentioned earlier, Partnership staff, IC members, and key partners are all essential participants in implementation of this plan. As actions are prioritized and finalized, implementers will be identified for each action.

Evaluation

Implementation of this plan should include an evaluation process, to assess progress toward objectives and goals. Proposed evaluation methods include:

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1. A quarterly or biannual assessment of all Partnership communications channels for audience engagement and progress toward desired outcomes
 2. Monthly check-ins with Partnership staff.
 3. A yearly survey for Partnership staff, IC members, and key partners.

Estimated Level of Effort:

0-2 hrs/month

2-6 hrs/month

6-10 hrs/month

Draft Goal #1:
Work with partners to communicate key, aligned messages regarding estuarine health and priorities, work underway, and accomplishments that advance the goals of the Estuary Blueprint.

Work with SFBay/JV and others to support and develop key regional messages by attending regional communications meetings.

Assess new and existing audiences for needs and preferences regarding messaging and communications channels.

Hold a monthly conference call with interested regional partners to identify upcoming topics and timely messages.

Social Media: Explore collaboration with ABAG/MTC staff on social media, including regular contributions to the Bay Link blog.

Social Media: Coordinate social media calendar with other regional and national partners, particularly around yearly events and in tandem with overall regional communications calendar.

Estuary Blueprint E-Newsletter: Conduct regular outreach to Estuary Blueprint partners to request implementation success stories for inclusion in the newsletter.

**Implementation:
Suggested Actions**

BOTH GOALS

ESTUARY News: Partnership staff and ESTUARY News staff could coordinate more closely on sharing content on social media.

New Audiences/New Channel: If tailored outreach to audiences unfamiliar with the Estuary Blueprint is needed, consider development of an alternative newsletter or blog to reach new audiences.

Social Media: Establish a regular social media calendar with scheduled posts for all channels on a daily or weekly basis, depending on the channel.

Print Collateral: Review existing and planned documents on a regular basis to evaluate alignment with key national, regional, and organizational messages

Partner Materials: Work through regional communications development to increase shared communication of multi-partner successes.

Estuary Blueprint E-Newsletter: Consider strategies for increasing subscribers.

Draft Goal #2:
Refine messaging about the Partnership as an organization, with a focus on clear and consistent messages about its core strengths and capacities and what it offers to partners and to the region.

Identify current core messaging regarding the Partnership and the Blueprint and work closely with partners to strategically align them internally and throughout the region.

Align key organizational messages: Review all communications channels and outreach materials for description of SFEP, its strengths and core capacities, and revise as needed for consistency.

Program- or Project-Specific Materials: Evaluate these materials for alignment with national and regional messages, and incorporate consistent messaging regarding the Partnership into any updated materials.

Program- or Project-Specific Materials: For all future projects and program updates, develop a communications strategy at the outset for any expected products or outcomes; write this strategy into future grant proposals where possible.

Partner Materials: Use survey results to evaluate opportunities to highlight the Estuary Blueprint, relevant topic areas, or the Partnership in partner materials.

Website: Create a schedule for frequently updating the landing page and regularly updating project pages; set a standard for level of detail.