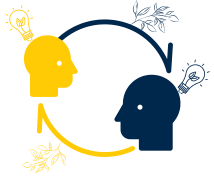
Green Communications Toolkit

A *transferable*, green communications strategy to aid municipalities across Michigan effectively communicate sustainability topics, programming and initiatives to communities.

Kathryn Economou, CLC Fellow

Catalyst Leadership Circle Fellowship
Graham Institute of Sustainability
The University of Michigan

7/28/2022



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The Team

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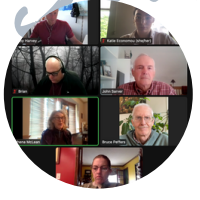

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Problem

A Gap in Municipal Sustainability-Centric Communications Resources

Problem

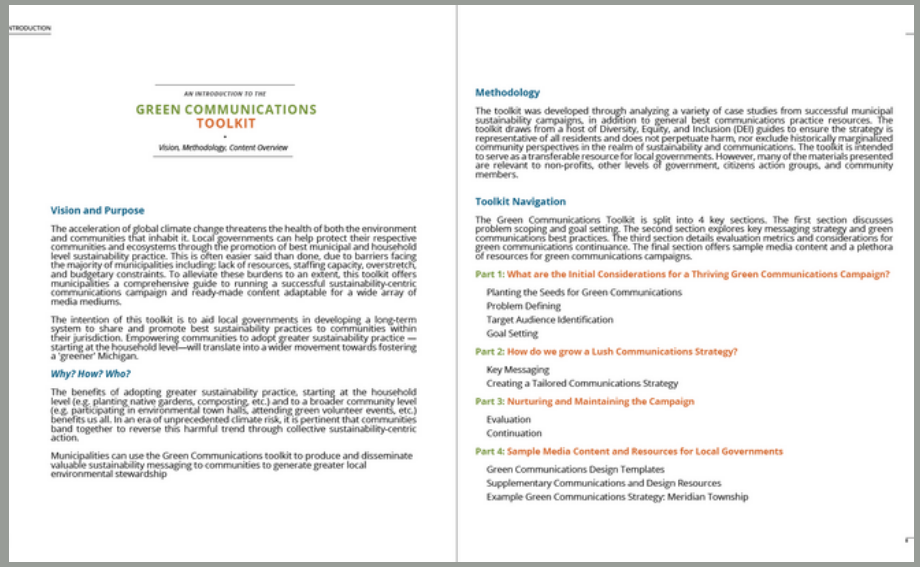
Lack of resources available to municipalities for sustainability communications

Remedy

Alleviate municipal burden through Green Communications Toolkit and Media Package

The Green Communications Toolkit

The toolkit provides municipalities with the tactics, resources, and skills necessary to make sustainability **marketable** and **accessible** to all residents.



See Pages 4-5

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Methodology

Case Study Exploration

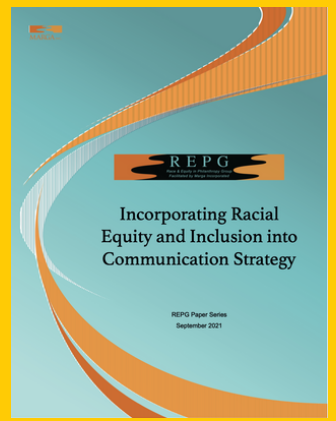
Communications Best Practice

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Best Practice

Meridian Township Collaboration

See Page 5

NRPA Green Parks Toolkit



REPG Racial Equity Guide

Michigan Municipalities

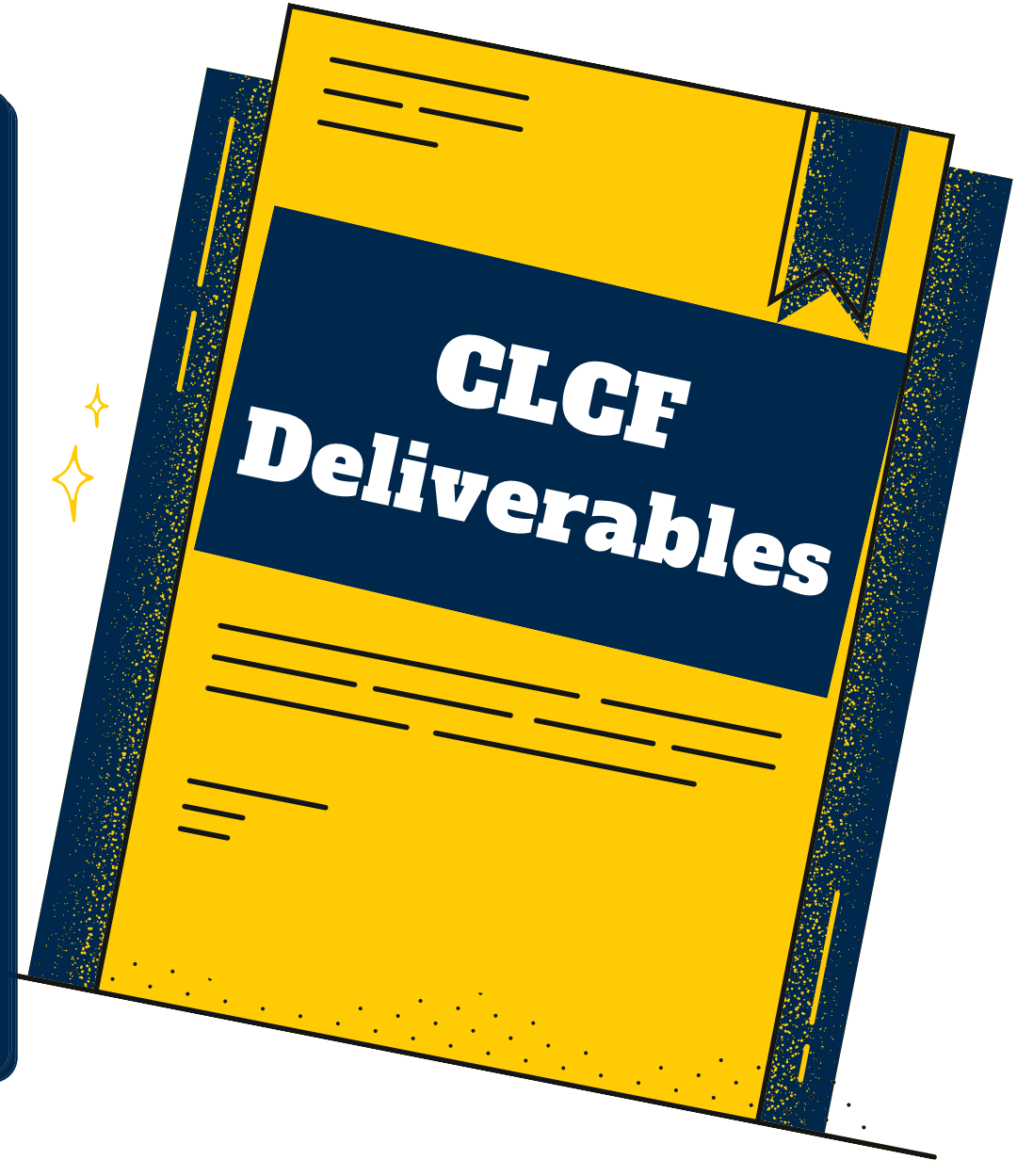
- Green Communications Toolkit
- Transferable Media Package

Formats: Print, PDF, and Website

Meridian Township

- Green Meridian Communications Toolkit
- Green Grant Communications Strategy
- Green Grant Media Package
- Green Meridian Sample Media Package

Formats: Resource Repository Drive and Website



Toolkit Overview ✦

Major sections of the Green Communications Toolkit

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Part 1: **What are the Initial Considerations for a Thriving Green Communications Campaign?**

- Planting the Seeds for Green Communications
- Problem Defining
- Target Audience Identification
- Goal Setting

Part 2: **How do we Grow a Lush Communications Strategy?**

- Key Messaging
- Creating a Tailored Communications Strategy

Part 3: **Nurturing and Maintaining the Campaign**

- Evaluation
- Continuation

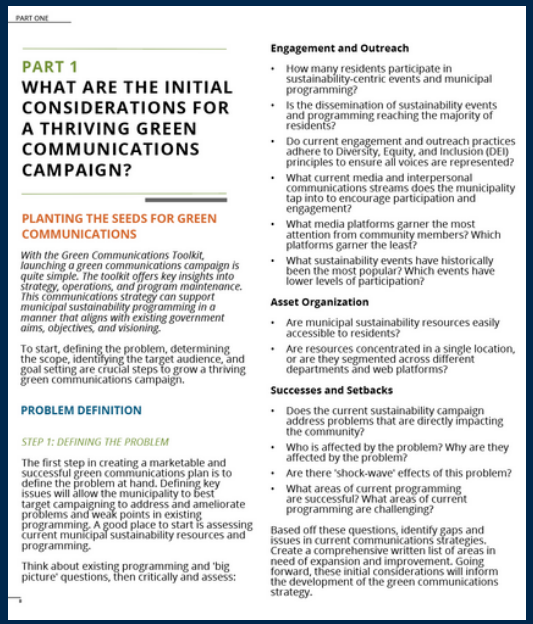
Part 4: **Sample Media Content and Resources for Local Governments**

What are the Initial Considerations for a Thriving Green Communications Campaign?

PART 1

Planting the Seeds for Green Communications

1. Problem Defining
2. Target Audience
3. Goal Setting



PART ONE

PART 1
WHAT ARE THE INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR A THRIVING GREEN COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN?

PLANTING THE SEEDS FOR GREEN COMMUNICATIONS

With the Green Communications Toolkit, launching a green communications campaign is quite simple. The toolkit offers key insights into strategy, operations, and program maintenance. This communications strategy can support municipal sustainability programming in a manner that aligns with existing government aims, objectives, and visioning.

To start, defining the problem, determining the scope, identifying the target audience, and goal setting are crucial steps to grow a thriving green communications campaign.

PROBLEM DEFINITION

STEP 1: DEFINING THE PROBLEM

The first step in creating a marketable and successful green communications plan is to define the problem at hand. Defining key issues will allow the municipality to best target campaigning to address and ameliorate problems and weak points in existing programming. A good place to start is assessing current municipal sustainability resources and programming.

Think about existing programming and 'big picture' questions, then critically and assess:

Engagement and Outreach

- How many residents participate in sustainability-centric events and municipal programming?
- Is the dissemination of sustainability events and programming reaching the majority of residents?
- Do current engagement and outreach practices adhere to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principles to ensure all voices are represented?
- What current media and interpersonal communications streams does the municipality tap into to encourage participation and engagement?
- What media platforms garner the most attention from community members? Which platforms garner the least?
- What sustainability events have historically been the most popular? Which events have lower levels of participation?

Asset Organization

- Are municipal sustainability resources easily accessible to residents?
- Are resources concentrated in a single location, or are they segmented across different departments and web platforms?

Successes and Setbacks

- Does the current sustainability campaign address problems that are directly impacting the community?
- Who is affected by the problem? Why are they affected by the problem?
- Are there 'shock-wave' effects of this problem?
- What areas of current programming are successful? What areas of current programming are challenging?

Based off these questions, identify gaps and issues in current communications strategies. Create a comprehensive written list of areas in need of expansion and improvement. Going forward, these initial considerations will inform the development of the green communications strategy.

See Pages 6-9

Step 1: Naming the Problem

Where do gaps exist?

- Engagement & Outreach
- Asset Organization
- Current Successes/Setbacks

Step 2: Target Audience ID

Who are we trying to reach?

- Demographic profile
- Geography
- Principles, values, priorities
- Level of awareness

Step 3: Goal Setting

What are we trying to achieve?

- S.M.A.R.T Goals
- Metrics of Success
- Logic Model

Part 1: Meridian Example, Problem Definition

Current Engagement/Outreach	Current Organization of Township Assets	Current Successes/Setbacks
Channel of Communication • Green Meridian Webpage • Meridian Township Website • Green Meridian Facebook • Meridian Township Social Media	**Department Coordination** • Meridian Comms Dept (Dissemination to GM Webpage and Township Social Media • Green Meridian Facebook (GM department)	**Successes** • Consistent weekly posting for "Green Thursdays"
Analysis Green Meridian Web Analytics: • Webpage visits down by 11% • Facebook engagement steady	**Resource Organization** • Spread across different department Webpages ◦ Segmented **Content Analysis** • Broken hyperlinks on webpage for resource directing • Web resources not easily accesible due to different locations	**Setbacks** • Website has scattered resources and broken hyperlinks which limit accessibility • Lack of resources and personnel dedicted to sustainability communications and materials dissemination

Gaps Identified

- Segmentation of sustainability resources on webpage
- Lower rates of digital engagement
- Lack of centralization of sustainability content between departments
- Nonfunctional links and widgets on Green Meridian webpage

Problem Scope Checklist

Toolkit Page 6, Problem Definition

Part 1: Meridian Example

Goal Setting & Logic Model

Municipal S.M.A.R.T Goals

Toolkit Page 8, Municipal S.M.A.R.T Goals

Model Inspired by University of California, Berkeley, "SMART Goals"

(S)pecific →

(M)easurable →

(A)ttainable →

(R)elevant →

(T)ime-oriented →

Problem Definition:

Meridian Township is rich in natural landscapes, green infrastructure, and sustainability-centric programming. Despite the Township's strong eco-friendly footing, a gap exists between the abundance of Township green resources and community buy-in.

Target Audience:

Meridian Township would like to increase participation in sustainability programming and initiatives in the following groups:

- Independent Community Organizations (e.g., Boy Scouts, Mid Michigan Group, Faith-based organizations, community action groups, etc.)
- Additional Audiences of Interest for General Programming:
  - Homeowners
  - Youth, Young Adults, Senior Residents (Residents below the age of 18, Residents between the ages 19-27, Residents above the age of 65)

Meridian Township Logic Model:

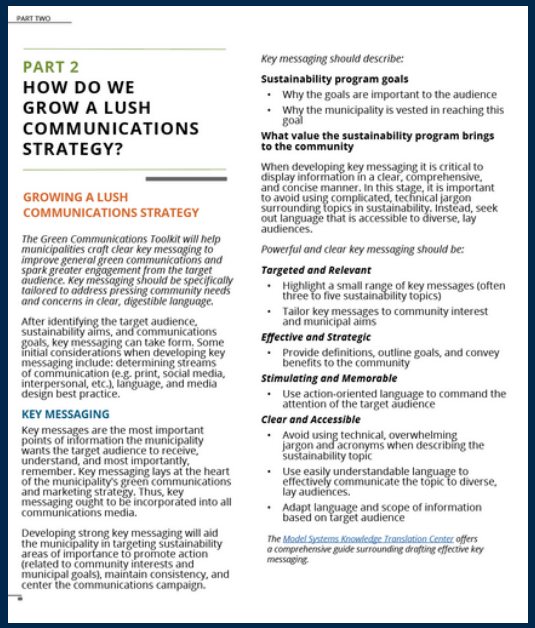
Goal	Metric of Success & Timeline	Resources & Outputs	Channels of Communication	Action Plan	Evaluation & Continuation
Goal 1 Increase community organization involvement in the Green Grant Program ***Sub-objective*** Increase general community engagement with Green Meridian initiatives vis-a vis resource direction in Green Grant Media Package	**M.O.S** 5% Grant Application Increase **Date** July 2023	**Deliverables** Green Grant media package, grant project specific write-ups for news media, green grant fliers, green grant landing page on township website **Resources** *Owned:* Design resources, HOMTV press *Paid:* Communications/design intern *Shared/Earned:* Grant recipient organizations listservs	**Channel of Communication** *Print:* Fliers, Community Bulletin, Township Brochure *Digital:* Social Media, Webinars, HOMTV, Green Gazette E-Newsletter, Green Meridian Webpage *Interpersonal:* Community Events, Grant Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies	Action Plan	**Evaluation** *Planned:* CBA/CEA Analysis, Impact Analysis **Continuation** *If Necessary:* Remedy plan

How do we Grow a Lush Green Communications Strategy?

PART 2

Growing a Lush Communications Strategy

1. Key Messaging
2. Tailoring the Strategy



PART TWO

PART 2
HOW DO WE GROW A LUSH COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY?

GROWING A LUSH COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The Green Communications Toolkit will help municipalities craft clear key messaging to improve general green communications and spark greater engagement from the target audience. Key messaging should be specifically tailored to address pressing community needs and concerns in clear, digestible language.

After identifying the target audience, sustainability aims, and communications goals, key messaging can take form. Some initial considerations when developing key messaging include: determining streams of communication (e.g. print, social media, interpersonal, etc.), language, and media design best practice.

KEY MESSAGING

Key messages are the most important points of information the municipality wants the target audience to receive, understand, and most importantly, remember. Key messaging lays at the heart of the municipality's green communications and marketing strategy. Thus, key messaging ought to be incorporated into all communications media.

Developing strong key messaging will aid the municipality in targeting sustainability areas of importance to promote action (related to community interests and municipal goals), maintain consistency, and center the communications campaign.

Key messaging should describe:

Sustainability program goals

- Why the goals are important to the audience
- Why the municipality is vested in reaching this goal

What value the sustainability program brings to the community

When developing key messaging it is critical to display information in a clear, comprehensive, and concise manner. In this stage, it is important to avoid using complicated, technical jargon surrounding topics in sustainability. Instead, seek out language that is accessible to diverse, lay audiences.

Powerful and clear key messaging should be:

Targeted and Relevant

- Highlight a small range of key messages (often three to five sustainability topics)
- Tailor key messages to community interest and municipal aims

Effective and Strategic

- Provide definitions, outline goals, and convey benefits to the community

Stimulating and Memorable

- Use action-oriented language to command the attention of the target audience

Clear and Accessible

- Avoid using technical, overwhelming jargon and acronyms when describing the sustainability topic
- Use easily understandable language to effectively communicate the topic to diverse, lay audiences.
- Adapt language and scope of information based on target audience

The Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center offers a comprehensive guide surrounding drafting effective key messaging.

See Pages 10-13

Step 1: Centering Goals

Spurring Connections

- Municipal goals, aims, vision, resources, and capacity
- Target audience concerns, interests, and policy priorities

Step 2: Key Messaging

What do we want to convey?

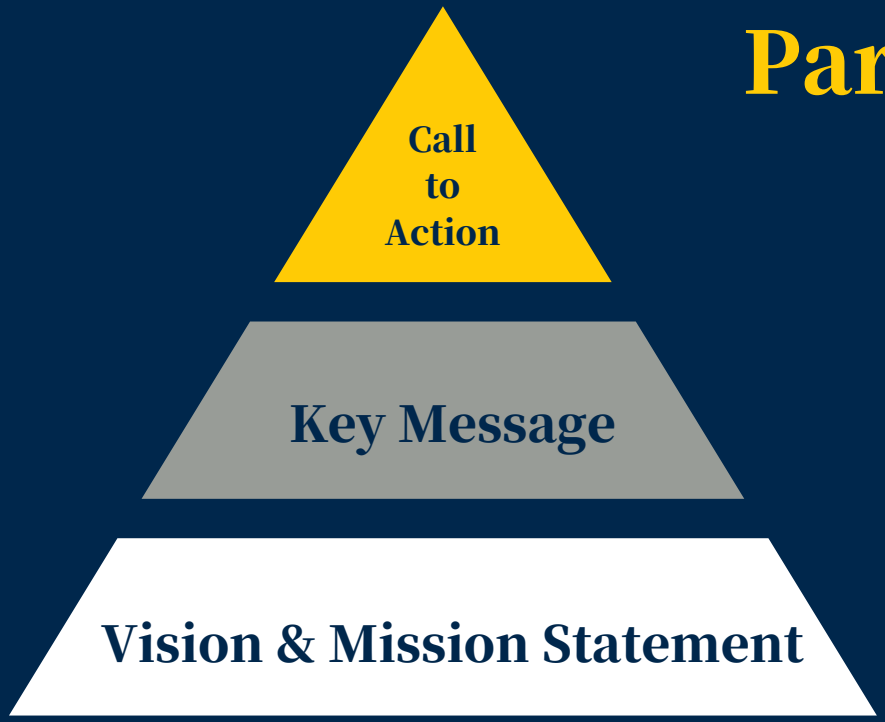
- Anatomy of powerful messaging
- Vision and mission statements

Step 3: Strategy Tailoring

How will we communicate?

- Channels of communication
- Strategy Development

Part 2: Meridian Example
Key Messaging



Anatomy of Powerful Key Messaging

Key Messaging Tips

Toolkit Page 10, Key Messaging

Mission Statement

"Meridian Township is committed to improving the environmental well being of the community and creating a sustainable future."

→

Key Message

"Help Meridian go green by enrolling in the new native yard community task force!"

→

Call to Action (Supporting Message)

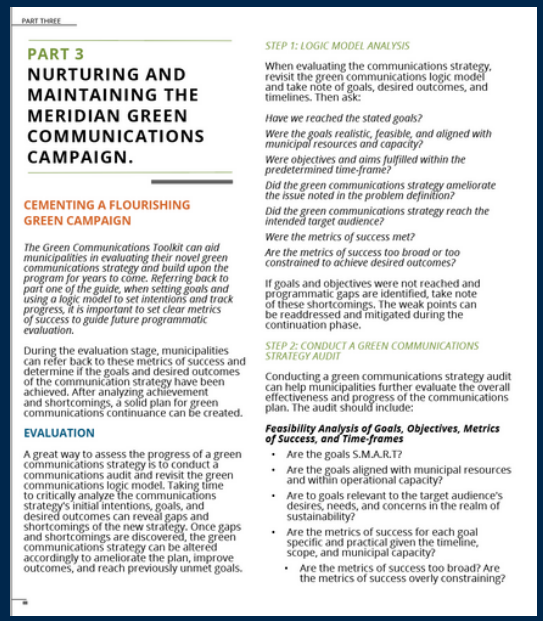
"Native yards absorb nearly 35% more stormwater run-off than traditional lawns and are serve as habitats to natural pollinators. Learn more at: www.meridian.mi\greenmeridian "

How do we Grow a Lush Green Communications Strategy?

PART 3

Cementing a Flourishing Campaign

1. Evaluation
2. Continuation



PART THREE

PART 3

NURTURING AND MAINTAINING THE MERIDIAN GREEN COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN.

CEMENTING A FLOURISHING GREEN CAMPAIGN

The Green Communications Toolkit can aid municipalities in evaluating their novel green communications strategy and build upon the program for years to come. Referring back to part one of the guide, when setting goals and using a logic model to set intentions and track progress, it is important to set clear metrics of success to guide future programmatic evaluation.

During the evaluation stage, municipalities can refer back to these metrics of success and determine if the goals and desired outcomes of the communication strategy have been achieved. After analyzing achievement and shortcomings, a solid plan for green communications continuance can be created.

EVALUATION

A great way to assess the progress of a green communications strategy is to conduct a communications audit and revisit the green communications logic model. Taking time to critically analyze the communications strategy's initial intentions, goals, and desired outcomes can reveal gaps and shortcomings of the new strategy. Once gaps and shortcomings are discovered, the green communications strategy can be altered accordingly to ameliorate the plan, improve outcomes, and reach previously unmet goals.

STEP 1: LOGIC MODEL ANALYSIS

When evaluating the communications strategy, revisit the green communications logic model and take note of goals, desired outcomes, and timelines. Then ask:

Have we reached the stated goals?

Were the goals realistic, feasible, and aligned with municipal resources and capacity?

Were objectives and aims fulfilled within the predetermined time-frame?

Did the green communications strategy ameliorate the issue noted in the problem definition?

Did the green communications strategy reach the intended target audience?

Were the metrics of success met?

Are the metrics of success too broad or too constrained to achieve desired outcomes?

If goals and objectives were not reached and programmatic gaps are identified, take note of these shortcomings. The weak points can be readdressed and mitigated during the continuation phase.

STEP 2: CONDUCT A GREEN COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY AUDIT

Conducting a green communications strategy audit can help municipalities further evaluate the overall effectiveness and progress of the communications plan. The audit should include:

Feasibility Analysis of Goals, Objectives, Metrics of Success, and Time-frames

- Are the goals S.M.A.R.T?
- Are the goals aligned with municipal resources and within operational capacity?
- Are to goals relevant to the target audience's desires, needs, and concerns in the realm of sustainability?
- Are the metrics of success for each goal specific and practical given the timeline, scope, and municipal capacity?
  - Are the metrics of success too broad? Are the metrics of success overly constraining?

See Page 14-20

Step 1: Logic Model Analysis

Successes? Setbacks?

- Metrics of success
- Impact evaluation

Step 2: Strategy Audit

Points of Weakness and Prowess?

- Feasibility Analysis
- Channels of Communication Analysis
- CBA/CEA Hybrid Model

Step 3: Community Outreach and Engagement

Harnessing Community Feedback

- Methods of community outreach
- Reevaluation of priorities

Continuation: Remedy Plan

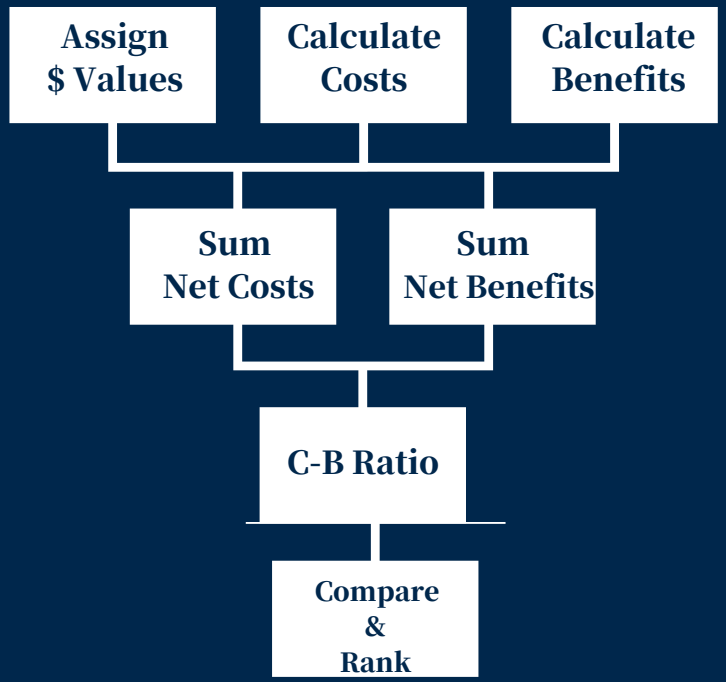
Initiating Strategy Change

- Creating an action plan
  - Identify root cause and sources of setback
- Develop reform measure to combat root issue
- Reallocate resources accordingly
- Generate new metrics of success and alter logic model

Part 3: Evaluation Example

Cost-Benefit Analysis

- Tangible & Dollar Values
  - ex: cost of paid channel
- Blindspots



Cost-Effectiveness Analysis

- Intangible & Value Weights
  - ex: community utility
- Equity Lens

Hybrid Model

Holistic Approach to Strategy Evaluation

Part 3: CBA/CEA Hybrid Model & Remedy Plan

GREEN COMMUNICATIONS STATEGY COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

MUNICIPALITY		FACILITATOR	
GREEN COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY		DATE	

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS	TIME (ANNUAL/MONTHLY)	TIME	TIME	TOTAL
NON-RECURRING COSTS				
(Enter Non-recurring Costs Here)				$ -
				$ -
				$ -
TOTAL NON-RECURRING COSTS	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -

RECURRING COSTS	TIME (ANNUAL/MONTHLY)	TIME	TIME	
(Enter Recurring Costs Here)				$ -
				$ -
				$ -
TOTAL RECURRING COSTS	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -

TOTAL COSTS (NON-RECURRING & RECURRING)	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -

QUANTITATIVE BENEFITS	TIME (ANNUAL/MONTHLY)	TIME	TIME	TOTAL
REVENUES				
(Enter Revenue Sources Here)				$ -
				$ -
				$ -
TOTAL REVENUES	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -

COST SAVINGS	TIME (ANNUAL/MONTHLY)	TIME	TIME	TOTAL
(Enter Cost Savings Here)				$ -
				$ -
				$ -
TOTAL COST SAVINGS	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -

TOTAL BENEFITS	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -

GREEN COMMUNICATIONS STATEGY COST-EFFECTIVENESS ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

MUNICIPALITY		FACILITATOR	
GREEN COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY		DATE	

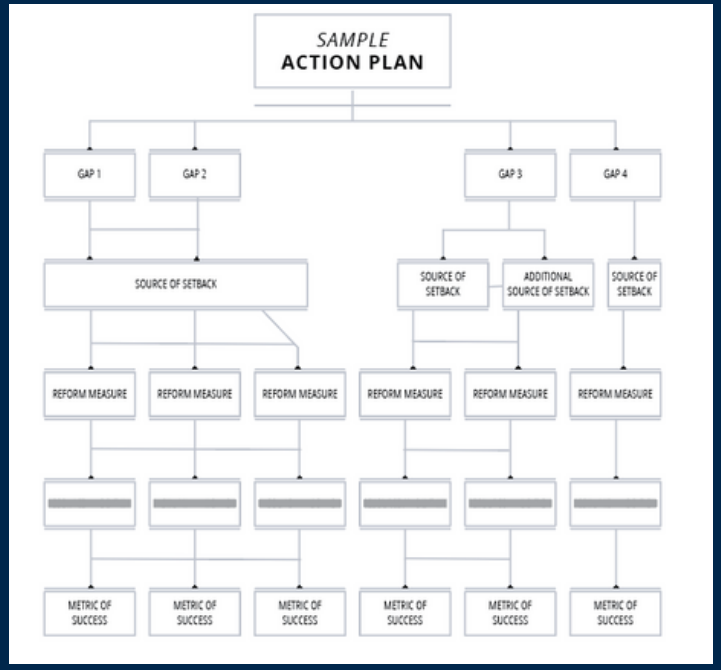
COST-EFFECTIVENESS RATIO			
STRATEGY COMPONENT	IMPACT	COST	CE RATIO
(Enter Strategy Aspect Here)			#DIV/0!
			#DIV/0!
			#DIV/0!

WEIGHTS OF IMPORTANCE DESIGNATION				
	IMPACT	WEIGHTED SCORE	COST	WEIGHTED CE RATIO
WEIGHTS	Insert Weights Here			
INSERT STRATEGY ASPECT HERE		#VALUE!		#VALUE!
		#VALUE!		#VALUE!

MARGINAL CUMULATIVE STRATEGY						
STRATEGY ASPECT	IMPACT	MARGINAL EFFECT	COST	MARGINAL COST	INCREMENTAL CE RATIO	TOTAL CE RATIO
Rank Strategies here in order from largest to smallest weighted CE ratio	(Enter Strategy with Largest Weighted Score Here)			0.00	#VALUE!	#VALUE!
		#VALUE!		0.00	#VALUE!	#DIV/0!
		0.00		0.00	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!

GREEN COMMUNICATIONS STATEGY COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS SUMMARY TEMPLATE

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS	TIME (ANNUAL/MONTHLY)	TIME	TIME	TOTAL
BENEFITS				
COST SAVINGS	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
REVENUE	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
TOTAL BENEFITS	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
COSTS	TIME (ANNUAL/MONTHLY)	TIME	TIME	
NON-RECURRING	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
RECURRING	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
TOTAL COSTS	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
NET BENEFIT OR COST	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -



See Page 17-18, 20

Sample Media Content and Resources for Local Governments

PART 4

Sample Media Content and Resources

1. Meridian Township Strategy and Content
2. Green Communications Design Templates
3. Supplementary Design/Communications Resources

PART ONE

PART 4
SAMPLE MEDIA CONTENT AND RESOURCES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.

GREEN COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

SAMPLE GREEN MEDIA CONTENT AND RESOURCES

The Green Communications Toolkit offers municipalities pre-made communications design templates adaptable for print content, social media, websites, and more in the "Green Communications Design Templates" section.

The toolkit also holds a repository of helpful communications and design best practice resources to help the municipal green communications strategy flourish in the "Supplementary Communications and Design Resources" section. Finally, the "Meridian Example: Sample Media Content and Resources" gives municipalities a real-world case study of a successful green communications campaign.

The case study is from Meridian Township, Michigan, a municipality that sought to increase community participation in general green programming and their new Green Grant program. The case study includes a comprehensive Green Meridian communications strategy, media content, press releases, a Green Grant media package, and specialized Green Meridian Communications toolkit. Meridian Township's communications strategy and resources can be used as a model for other municipalities for crafting a program specific plan for increased community engagement and participation in sustainability initiatives.

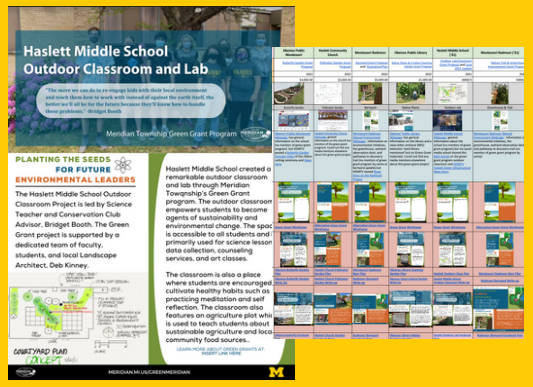
MEDIA RESOURCES NAVIGATION

1. Green Communications Design Templates
2. Supplementary Communications and Design Resources
3. Example Green Communications Strategy: Meridian Township

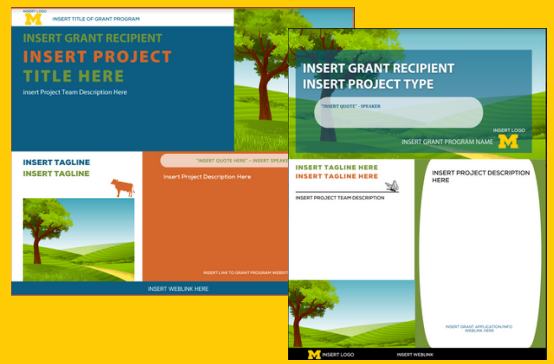
Sample Media Content

See Page 21

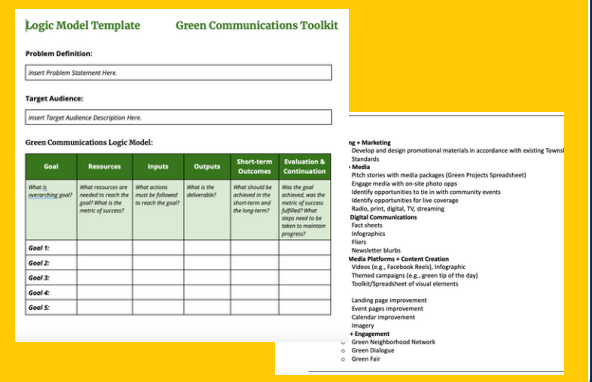
Meridian Example



Design Templates



Supplementary Resources


Logic Model Template — Green Communications Toolkit

Problem Definition:

Insert Problem Statement Here.

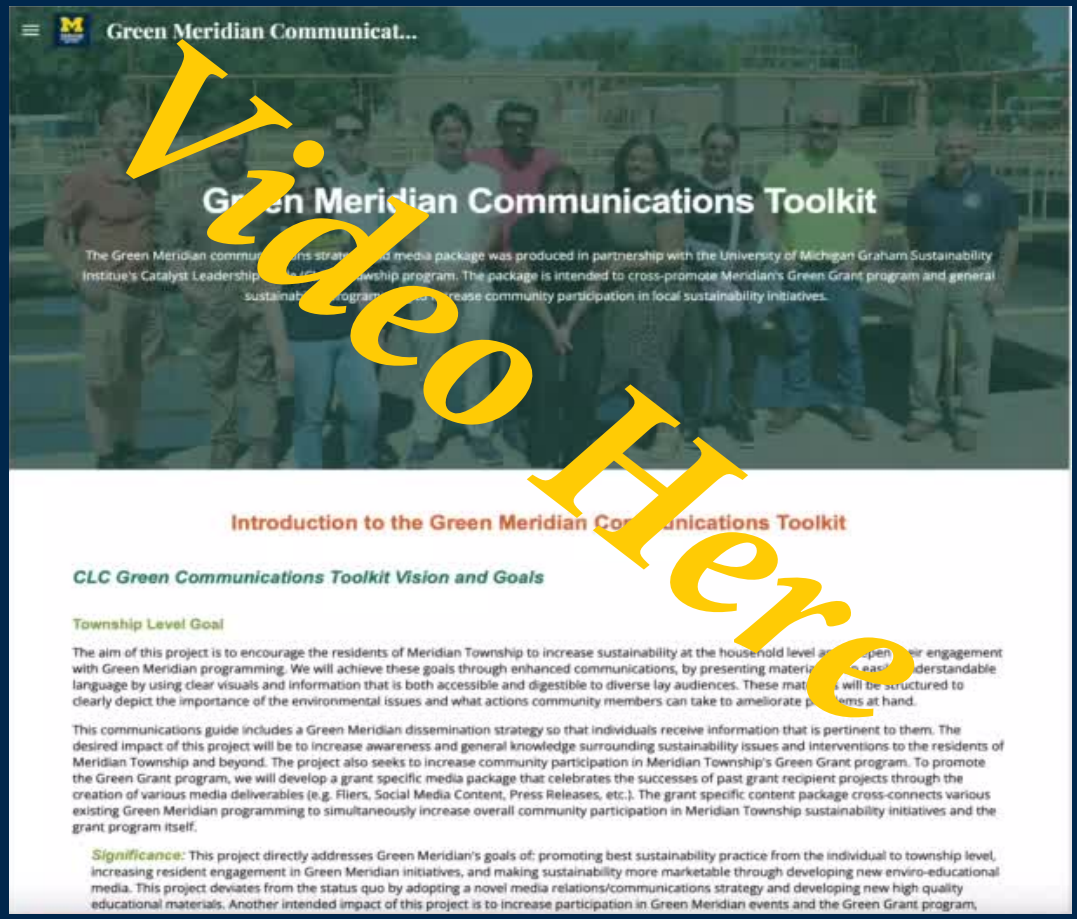
Target Audience:

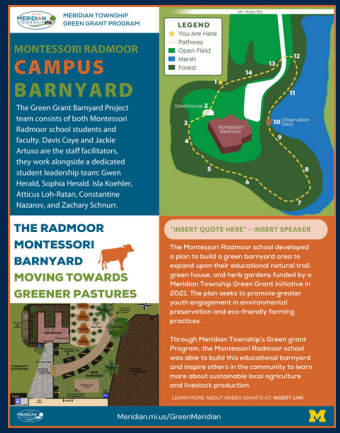
Insert Target Audience Description Here.

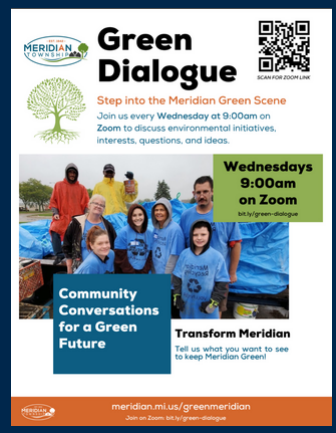
Green Communications Logic Model:

Goal	Resources	Inputs	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes	Evaluation & Continuation
What is overarching goal?	*What resources are needed to reach the goal? What is the metric of success?*	*What actions must be followed to reach the goal?*	*What is the deliverable?*	*What should be achieved in the short-term and the long-term?*	*Was the goal achieved, was the metric of success fulfilled? What steps need to be taken to maintain progress?*
Goal 1:					
Goal 2:					
Goal 3:					
Goal 4:					
Goal 5:					

ng + Marketing
Develop and design promotional materials in accordance with existing Townsh
Standards
+ Media
Pitch stories with media packages (Green Projects Spreadsheet)
Engage media with on-site photo opps
Identify opportunities to tie in with community events
Identify opportunities for live coverage
Radio, print, digital, TV, streaming
Digital Communications
Fact sheets
Infographics
Fliers
Newsletter blurbs
Media Platforms + Content Creation
Videos (e.g., Facebook Reels), Infographic
Themed campaigns (e.g., green tip of the day)
Toolkit/Spreadsheet of visual elements
Landing page improvement
Event pages improvement
Calendar improvement
Imagery
+ Engagement
Green Neighborhood Network
Green Dialogue
Green Fair







CATALYST COMMUNITIES

EGLE
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES, AND ENERGY

Meridian Media Package Example

NEXT STEPS

Where do we go from here?

- Internal Review of Toolkit
- Dissemination of Green Communications Toolkit and Media Package

Questions?

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