

CATALYST LEADERSHIP CIRCLE FELLOWSHIP GRAHAM SUSTAINABILITY INSTITUTE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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Image Provided by Kathryn Economou

GREEN COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

A TRANSFERABLE, COMPREHENSIVE, GREEN COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY AND MEDIA PACKAGE TO AID LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ACROSS MICHIGAN EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE SUSTAINABILITY BEST PRACTICES, TOPICS AND INITIATIVES TO COMMUNITIES.



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GREEN COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE

GREEN COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

Vision, Methodology, Content Overview

Vision and Purpose

The acceleration of global climate change threatens the health of both the environment and communities that inhabit it. Local governments can help protect their respective communities and ecosystems through the promotion of best municipal and household level sustainability practice. This is often easier said than done, due to barriers facing the majority of municipalities including: lack of resources, staffing capacity, overstretch, and budgetary constraints. To alleviate these burdens to an extent, this toolkit offers municipalities a comprehensive guide to running a successful sustainability-centric communications campaign and ready-made content adaptable for a wide array of media mediums.

The intention of this toolkit is to aid local governments in developing a long-term system to share and promote best sustainability practices to communities within their jurisdiction. Empowering communities to adopt greater sustainability practice — starting at the household level—will translate into a wider movement towards fostering a 'greener' Michigan.

Why? How? Who?

The benefits of adopting greater sustainability practice, starting at the household level (e.g. planting native gardens, composting, etc.) and to a broader community level (e.g. participating in environmental town halls, attending green volunteer events, etc.) benefits us all. In an era of unprecedented climate risk, it is pertinent that communities band together to reverse this harmful trend through collective sustainability-centric action.

Municipalities can use the Green Communications toolkit to produce and disseminate valuable sustainability messaging to communities to generate greater local environmental stewardship

Methodology

The toolkit was developed through analyzing a variety of case studies from successful municipal sustainability campaigns, in addition to general best communications practice resources. The toolkit draws from a host of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) guides to ensure the strategy is representative of all residents and does not perpetuate harm, nor exclude historically marginalized community perspectives in the realm of sustainability and communications. The toolkit is intended to serve as a transferable resource for local governments. However, many of the materials presented are relevant to non-profits, other levels of government, citizens action groups, and community members.

Toolkit Navigation

The Green Communications Toolkit is split into 4 key sections. The first section discusses problem scoping and goal setting. The second section explores key messaging strategy and green communications best practices. The third section details evaluation metrics and considerations for green communications continuance. The final section offers sample media content and a plethora of resources for green communications campaigns.

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

- Green Communications Design Templates
- Supplementary Communications and Design Resources
- Example Green Communications Strategy: Meridian Township

PART 1

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

GREEN COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

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:

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.

Then ask, *how can a new communications strategy ameliorate the identified gaps surrounding sustainability-centric campaigning?*

TARGET AUDIENCE IDENTIFICATION

STEP 2: IDENTIFYING THE TARGET AUDIENCE

The second step in developing a green communications strategy is to determine the desired target audience for campaign dissemination. Communicating the urgency of adopting sustainability and critical action steps can be a daunting matter for municipalities, as the topic can appear highly technical. However, determining who the target audience is and utilizing clear and digestible information dissemination tactics can help communities participate in the conversation without overwhelming them with anxiety-inducing jargon.

By identifying the target audience and determining what they care most about, municipalities can better create messaging tailored to diverse community identities, interests, and concerns. Communities are diverse, so messaging ought to be as well to ensure all residents are represented, included, and informed. A good first step to identify the target audience is to ask:

Who is currently participating in sustainability programming?

What groups are less engaged in sustainability programming?

Who are we trying to reach?

After identifying your intended target audience, regardless of how narrow or broad the scope may be, reflect on how this audience contributes to the larger mission of expanding best community sustainability practice. Then, ask:

- What are defining demographics of the intended audience?
 - (E.g. *ethnicity, race, age, national origin, income level, education, professions, disability, gender, sexual orientation, etc.*)
- Where is this audience geographically located?
- What are the guiding values and policy

- What is the target audience's scope and awareness of local sustainability issues?
- What is the target audience's level of interest surrounding sustainability?
- What media, print, and interpersonal channels does this audience access information from?
 - (E.g. *print news, online news forums, television, radio, community centers, public meetings, email, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Nextdoor, etc.*)
- How can the target audience help advance the municipality's aim of improving community sustainability?

GOAL SETTING

STEP 3: SETTING REALISTIC GOALS

The third step in drafting a green communications strategy is to set realistic goals that are both feasible and compliment existing municipal aims, resources, and capacity. Many local governments operate under conditions of varying precarity, often due to budgetary constraints, staffing capacity, and time; setting reasonable goals that do not stretch beyond realistic means is crucial to successful campaigning. Before setting guiding goals and objectives, municipalities should:

- Take inventory of existing municipal resources
 - Are there resources that could be reallocated or shifted to achieve green communication goals?
- Look for overlap and/or disconnect in sustainability programming/resources across municipal departments
 - If overlap exists, are there areas for collaboration?
 - If disconnect exists, what is the source?
 - Would it be more effective and efficient to have resources/programming centralized?

Take these considerations and questions into account before setting goals. There may be 'easy' fixes to some issues in communications, which can narrow down the scope of the problem and better inform the overarching goals.

Administering the University of California's, "[S.M.A.R.T Goals](#)" criteria can be helpful in drafting realistic and progressive communications goals.

Goals should be,

(S)pecific:

- What needs to be accomplished?
- What are actions steps to take for success?

(M)asurable:

- What evaluation metric should be used to measure progress and the goal itself?
- Is the goal quantifiable?

(A)ttainable:

- Is the goal achievable and realistic within existing means?
- Does the municipality have access to the resources, technology, and skills necessary to reach the goal?

(R)levant:

- How does the goal align with existing municipal values, aims, and goals?
- How does the goal align with community and target audience goals and values?
- Does the goal ameliorate pressing community and municipal concerns?

(T)ime-Oriented:

- What is the specific time frame necessary to achieve the goal?
- Is the time frame adequate in addressing the problem without it growing into a larger issue?

Goals should be at a large enough scale to reach the desired outcomes of the communication strategy, however, they should be specific enough so that successes are quantifiable. A good starting point may be setting four to five umbrella goals and allotting specific and related objectives to meet the desired outcome.

Example of Green Communications Goal and Objective:

- **Goal:** Increase Community Participation in Sustainability Events
- **Objective 1:** Increase in person attendance at sustainability events by 10% by October 2022.
- **Objective 2:** Increase and improve event outreach on Facebook by posting promotional materials (following language and design best practices) 1x per week till the date of the event.

The Green Communications Toolkit S.M.A.R.T Municipal Goal Template can help municipalities, vision, articulate, and and better structure sustainability communication goals to achieve success.

S.M.A.R.T Municipal Goal Template:

S.M.A.R.T. Municipal Goal Template

Developing S.M.A.R.T. municipal goals will help to articulate what the municipality hopes to achieve in the realm of sustainability. Using S.M.A.R.T goals will ensure the vision is feasible and relevant to the target audience. To create effective S.M.A.R.T. goals be sure to include clear language and action verbs.

Overarching Goal:

1. **(S)**pecific (*What does the municipality hope to accomplish? How does this connect to the target audience's priorities? When should this goal be reached? Why is the goal important?*)

2. **(M)**easurable (*How will progress be measured? Create a quantifiable metric of success.*)

3. **(A)**chievable (*Does the municipality have the resources and capacity necessary to meet the goal? If not, can this be remedied? Is the goal achievable given the timeframe?*)

4. **(R)**elevant (*How is the goal relevant to municipal sustainability visioning, aims, and initiatives? How is the goal important to the target audience?*)

5. **(T)**ime-Oriented (*Set a realistic deadline for municipal goal achievement.*)

Complete S.M.A.R.T. Municipal Goal: *Look back to each sub category of the goal and draft a comprehensive goal statement that addresses each aspect.*

STEP 4: CREATING A LOGIC MODEL

Using a logic model is another great way to set attainable and progressive communications goals. Logic models are a tool to visualize goals, objectives, and desired outcome. Logic models encompass broad and narrow goal setting and include inputs, action steps, outputs, and evaluation metrics.

Use the Green Communications Logic Model Template to get started:

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
<i>What is an overarching goal?</i>	<i>What resources are needed to reach the goal? What is the metric of success?</i>	<i>What actions must be followed to reach the goal?</i>	<i>What is the deliverable?</i>	<i>What should be achieved in the short-term and the long-term?</i>	<i>Was the goal achieved, was the metric of success fulfilled? What steps need to be taken to maintain progress?</i>
Goal 1:					
Goal 2:					
Goal 3:					
Goal 4:					
Goal 5:					

PART 2

HOW DO WE GROW A LUSH COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY?

GREEN COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

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 "[Developing Key Messaging for Effective Communication](#)".

STEP 1: CENTERING SUSTAINABILITY GOALS WITH THE TARGET AUDIENCE

When developing key messaging, a good starting point is choosing a handful of sustainability topics that the community is most interested in.

Think about municipal sustainability goals and community sustainability interests,

Where do intersections exist? With the new green communications strategy, how can municipalities direct flows of community interest towards sustainability programming?

STEP 2: CREATE A HANDFUL OF SUSTAINABILITY KEY MESSAGING

Before crafting key messaging, it is important to address municipal sustainability visioning and its connection to the key messages. Municipal sustainability campaigns should have both a vision and mission statement to guide future progress and action. The key messaging should tap into these umbrella statements and further the municipality's vision for future community sustainability.

Vision Statement

Vision statements briefly describes what the municipality hopes to achieve and depicts a vision of what the community may look like in the future if this course of direction is adhered to. Vision statements are often two to three sentences.

Example:

"Meridian Township's vision is to lead Michigan on the path towards greater sustainability. Meridian Township seeks to achieve innovation and excellence in green infrastructure development. The community and the environment are the Township's greatest resources. Fostering greater community environmental stewardship and investing in green infrastructure is of paramount importance to create a healthier, resilient, and green Meridian."

Mission Statement

Mission statements are brief statements that summarize the aims and values of the municipality. Mission statements are often one sentence long.

Example:

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

After ensuring the overarching sustainability visions and mission of the municipality are connected to the green communications goal, key messaging can be produced.

Anatomy of Powerful Key Messaging

Umbrella Statement: Key Message

Depicts the broad goal and mission of the municipality surrounding a specific topic in sustainability

Example:

"Help Meridian Township go green by enrolling in the community solar energy program!"

Supporting Messages:

Supporting messages provide more information and direct the target audience to supplementary resources and action steps to further the sustainability goal. Using two to three supporting messages can help strengthen key messaging.

Example:

"Solar power technology is scientifically proven to decrease carbon emissions and can lower household electricity bills. Visit www.meridian.mi\GreenMeridian for more information."

Example of Key Messaging:

"Help Meridian Township go green by enrolling in the community solar energy program! Solar power technology is scientifically proven to decrease carbon emissions and can lower household electricity bills. Visit www.meridian.mi\GreenMeridian for more information."

TAILORING THE GREEN COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Green communications ought to be specifically tailored to address the sustainability-focused needs, concerns, and desires of the target audience in combination with municipal resources, aims, and visions.

Once the target audience is set, community preferences are taken account of, municipal resources and limits are determined, and key messaging is established, the communications strategy can be fine-tuned to produce effective and efficient outcomes.

When tailoring the green communications strategy it is important to ask,

What is the best way to enhance engagement with municipal key messaging in a manner that boosts community participation in municipal sustainability programming and events?

A good place to start is to determine the municipality's budget for green programs marketing. Setting a concrete budget will help determine which channels of communication are feasible and aligned with municipal resources.

Another consideration when tailoring the communications strategy is to assess current marketing and outreach and ask:

What current sustainability marketing initiatives are most successful?

What current sustainability marketing initiatives have fallen flat in terms of engagement and participation?

What channels of communication does the target audience interact most with?

If certain marketing initiatives have not generated the desired amount of community participation, it may be beneficial to explore an alternative channel of communication.

Some initial considerations when selecting new channels of communication include:

Budget and Timelines

- Is the channel of communication feasible within the municipality's budget?
- Is there staffing capacity to develop, manage, and operate the new channel of communication?
- Is the time commitment necessary to develop the new channel of communication feasible and complimentary to the municipal goal time-frame?

Target Audience

- Is the target audience most likely to engage in this channel of communication?

Geographic Proximity

- Is the channel of communication geographically targeted and relevant to engage the target audience?

Municipal Brand Standards

- Is the new channel of communication consistent with that of the municipality?

STEP 1: SELECTING CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

After analyzing existing channels of communication and opening doors to new channels of outreach, ranking potential communication channels is a good next step. Communication channels include:

Channels of Communication: Examples

Traditional	Digital	Interpersonal
Press Release	Social Media	Municipal Town Halls
Memos	Digital News	Community Convening
Print News	Email	Events
Print Advertisement	Blogs	Workshops
Print Fliers	Web Discussion Forums	Public Meetings
Community Bulletins	Digital Advertisement	Community Forums
Billboards and Signage	Digital Community Bulletins	Focus Groups
Newsletters	Telemarketing	Community Charrettes
Direct Mail	Radio Advertisement	Open House

STEP 2: DRAFTING THE GREEN COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

After determining which channel of communication is best fit for the municipality, a tailored communications strategy presents itself. In this stage the municipality may begin to compile relevant reference materials including, key messaging documents, outside resources for best sustainability communications and design practice (See Part 4, "Supplementary Communications and Design Resources"), and a cross-promotional contacts list.

Then the municipality may Insert the guiding problem statement, provide background, outline goals/objectives, set the target audience, describe the strategy, list tactics, determine channels of communication, establish metrics of success, provide a timeline, and set a concrete budget. Use the Green Communications Toolkit communications strategy template to begin developing the strategy:

Green Communications Strategy Template

REFERENCE MATERIALS: *Key Documents, Reference Materials, Cross-Promotional Contacts List*

OVERVIEW: *Problem Statement, Single Sentence Summary*

BACKGROUND:

GOALS:

TARGET AUDIENCES:

OBJECTIVES:

STRATEGY:

TACTICS AND COMMUNICATION CHANNELS: *Branding and Marketing, News and Traditional Media, Print Communications, Digital Communications, Social Media Platforms, Events + Engagement, Digital Communications*

CHANNELS: *Paid, Earned, Shared, Owned*

METRICS OF SUCCESS:

TIMELINE:

BUDGET:

STEP 3: CREATING AN EDITORIAL CALENDAR

After writing the tailored Green Communications Strategy, the municipality can create an editorial calendar for timely content dissemination to ensure the media publication timeline is in sync with the overall communications strategy.

Editorial calendars are great ways to visualize the timeline for content dissemination and can provide additional structure to the communications strategy by concentrating all the resources in one place. The calendar also provides a supplementary layer of accountability for timely content dissemination to ensure that community members are receiving

relevant sustainability content, in an organized manner, that is complementary to municipal programming, goals, and objectives.

Use the Green Communications Toolkit editorial calendar spreadsheet template to get started:

GREEN COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT EDITORIAL CALENDAR: CONTENT DISSEMINATION
<p>Content Distribution Strategy and Timeline</p> <p>The second tab on this spreadsheet is titled "Media Dissemination Timeline" and contains an editorial calendar to be used for communications and media content publication. The timeline should be structured around specific municipal sustainability aims that will connect to a specific day (s) of the month. The municipality should alter the time to post each content block to compliment upcoming events, initiatives, and other activities to amplify the sustainability-centric key messaging. Click the second tab to view the strategy and timeline.</p>
<p>Content Blocks</p> <p>Within the second tab, at the top of the page is a section header. This section contains the media content to be posted, the platforms ('channels') to disseminate the material through, connected assets, and a recommended posting date. The municipal communications team should use these sections as a recommendation and alter aspects according to preferred communications channels.</p> <p><i>Note: This editorial calendar should be used as a model, dates/times for posting can be tailored to municipal specific events and initiatives timeframes. The calendar is valuable for providing a step-by-step breakdown of the order for web/print publications for materials dissemination. Following this model will help ensure that community members are receiving relevant sustainability information that is complimentary to municipal goals, aims, and existing ready-made media content.</i></p>

Media Type	Media Thumbnail	Connected Assets	Channel	Time
WEEK 1: Sustainability Aim #1				
WEEK 2: Sustainability Aim #2				
WEEK 3: Sustainability Aim #3				
WEEK 4: Sustainability Aim #4				

PART 3

NURTURING AND MAINTAINING THE MERIDIAN GREEN COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN.

GREEN COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

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 the 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?

- Are the goals and outcomes of the strategy successful in improving the issue determined in the problem statement?
- Is the timeline set for goal achievable and realistic?

Channels of Communication Analysis

- Are the set channels of communication successful in engaging the target audience?
- Are the channels of communications chosen the best dissemination tactic for communicating key messaging to the audience?
- What channels of communication were most effective in increasing audience participation? Which channels were ineffective?
- Do the paid channels of communication produce significant returns in audience participation with green programming?

Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) and Cost-Effective Analysis (CEA)

Using a hybrid CBA/CEA model is a valuable method in evaluating green communications progress and outcomes. CBA models can help municipalities determine which communication strategies are beneficial and should be continued, and which strategies are less effective in generating returns in audience engagement. CBA is a quantitative analysis that sums the benefits (returns) of the strategy and subtracts the total costs (monetary).

The Global Program for Safer Schools has a comprehensive guide to conducting a "[Cost-Benefit Analysis](#)".

CBA's are powerful tools in monetary assessment, however, it does not take into account many intangible costs and benefits associated with the communications strategy. Implementing a hybrid CBA/CEA model can fill gaps in the CBA model.

CEA models offer a more holistic and comprehensive view of costs and benefits associated with communication strategy. CEA aids in identifying non-quantitative "intangible" costs and benefits and assigns value to each in accordance to various measures such as community value (utility) and environmental health benefits.

The World Bank has a detailed guide to facilitating a "[Cost-Effectiveness Analysis](#)" available.

CBA/CEA Hybrid Model:

Take account of tangible (quantifiable) and intangible (qualitative) costs, and tangible and intangible benefits of the communications strategy. Then, rank the communications strategy action components in relation from highest benefit and lowest cost to highest cost and lowest benefit. This rank-order list may reveal which components of the green communications strategy are most valuable and which aspects may need to be reevaluated and adjusted.

See Page 16-17 for more on how to conduct a CBA/CEA hybrid analysis.

STEP 3: COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

To assess the impact and effectiveness of the green communications strategy, harnessing and analyzing community feedback is crucial. Not only does conducting community engagement demonstrate to residents that the municipality is vested in supporting programs that the community values, it is a great way to spur new and innovative solutions to programmatic issues. As community members hold a wealth of local knowledge and are experts in local needs, concerns, and desires, they ought to be involved within every step of the communications strategy from development to evaluation.

Some methods of obtaining community feedback on the communications strategy include:

- Focus Groups
- Community Convening
- Municipal Town-halls
- Digital Engagement
- Surveys

Ensuring these methods are accessible to the community is necessary for fostering effective community engagement for feedback generation. This can include holding meetings in accessible spaces (both in-person and virtual) at various times that accommodate diverse work schedules.

Many valuable considerations and tips on municipal community engagement can be found at City Accelerator's, "[Accelerating Public Engagement: A Road map for Local Government](#)".

CONDUCTING A CBA/CEA HYBRID ANALYSIS

A great way to assess the progress of a green communications strategy is to conduct a hybrid cost-benefit analysis (CBA) and cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA). This new, holistic approach to communications strategy evaluation helps better inform strategy reform and continuation. As previously noted, CBA holds blind-spots in accounting for intangible benefits and may assign these benefits less weight in the evaluation process, regardless of their impact. By combining the traditional CBA method with CEA, less discrepancies between impact, cost, and benefit exist and municipalities are able to make well informed decisions.

The Green Communications Toolkit offers an interactive CBA/CEA hybrid spreadsheet template for municipalities to use during the evaluation phase. The process is quite simple, as the calculations necessary for CBA and CEA are programmed into the spreadsheet.

STEP 1: DOWNLOAD THE GREEN COMMUNICATIONS CBA/CEA HYBRID MODEL TEMPLATE

Municipalities can access the CBA/CEA Hybrid Model Template [HERE](#). After downloading the Excel file, save a copy of the template and rename the document in accordance to the specific Municipal Green Communications Strategy title.

STEP 2: INPUT INFORMATION AND VALUES TO CONDUCT THE CBA

Tabs one (GCS Cost-Benefit Analysis) and two (CBA Summary) are dedicated to the CBA component of the hybrid model (see template layout to the right, page 17).

Begin by filling in the general communications strategy and municipal information on tab one. Then, insert the non-recurring costs and timeline into the designated cells. Then, follow the same process for recurring costs. Recurring costs are monetary costs that occur periodically over a specific period. After completing these steps, the template will calculate the total costs of the

After that, input the benefits (revenue streams) and timeline into the designated cells. The spreadsheet will output a calculation for the total revenues. Then, insert any cost savings as a positive value and the timeline in the specified cells. The template will produce a value for total cost savings. Once the aforementioned steps are completed, a calculation of total benefits will appear.

Next, shift to tab two (CBA Summary) to view the comprehensive CBA which provides a comparative monetary focused view of communications strategy. Now, save your progress to ensure no calculations are lost.

STEP 3: INSERT INFORMATION AND VALUES TO CONDUCT THE CEA

Tab three (GCS Cost-Effectiveness Analysis) and is dedicated to the CEA aspect of the hybrid model (see template layout, page 18). The first step in CEA is to rate the impact of each strategy aspect (e.g. digital advertisement) by impact. This is normally done on a scale of one to five, one being the least impactful, and five being the most. Impact can be measured through varying scales that take into account reach, engagement, and participation. Similarly to CBA, the second step is to assign costs to each strategy aspect. Next plug these values into the first table (Cost-Effectiveness Ratio) and the template will calculate the cost-effectiveness ratio, which will contribute to the final CEA results.

The next step in conducting the CEA is to calculate the incremental cost-effectiveness ratio (ICER). The ICER is the ratio of marginal cost and marginal effect compared between different strategy aspects. The template has pre-embedded formulas for marginal cost, effect, and ICER so all that is necessary for the municipality to input is the impact weight and cost.

After these values are added into the spreadsheet, the calculations will produce an impact assessment.

STEP 4: COMBINING THE CBA AND CEA MODEL

After reviewing the CBA and CEA assessment, compare the two analyses and take note of any discrepancies in ranking. Does the CEA rank note any aspects to be valuable, while the CBA portrays the opposite? Use the last tab to visually compare differences between the CEA and the CBA. Take these differences into account when determining which strategies should remain, versus which should be omitted.

CBA TEMPLATE

GREEN COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 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	TOTAL
(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 STRATEGY COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS SUMMARY TEMPLATE

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

CEA TEMPLATE

GREEN COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY COST-EFFECTIVENESS ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

MUNICIPALITY		FACILITATOR	
GREEN COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY		DATE	

COST-EFFECTIVENESS RATIO	IMPACT	COST	CE RATIO
STRATEGY COMPONENT			#DIV/0!
(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			
IMPACT WEIGHTS		#VALUE!		#VALUE!
		#VALUE!		#VALUE!

MARGINAL CUMULATIVE STRATEGY	IMPACT	MARGINAL EFFECT	COST	MARGINAL COST	INCREMENTAL CE RATIO	TOTAL CE RATIO
STRATEGY ASPECT						
Assess strategies based on community impact on smaller segments of focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water conservation Energy efficiency Recycling 			1100	#VALUE!	#VALUE!
		#VALUE!		1100	#VALUE!	#VALUE!
		0.00		1100	#VALUE!	#VALUE!

CONTINUATION

Prioritizing continuous improvements in communications strategy is integral to communications best practice and success. After evaluating the program, weak points in strategics may present themselves, these aspects can be remedied in the continuance phase. Making alterations to the strategy is important to ensure that community needs are addressed and that the allocation of municipal resources and capacity is not wasted.

STEP 1: DEVELOP A REMEDY AND ACTION PLAN

If weak points in the communications strategy are identified, ask:

Is the gap able to be remedied through altering goals, objectives, or timelines?

Is it feasible and effective to keep this component of the strategy?

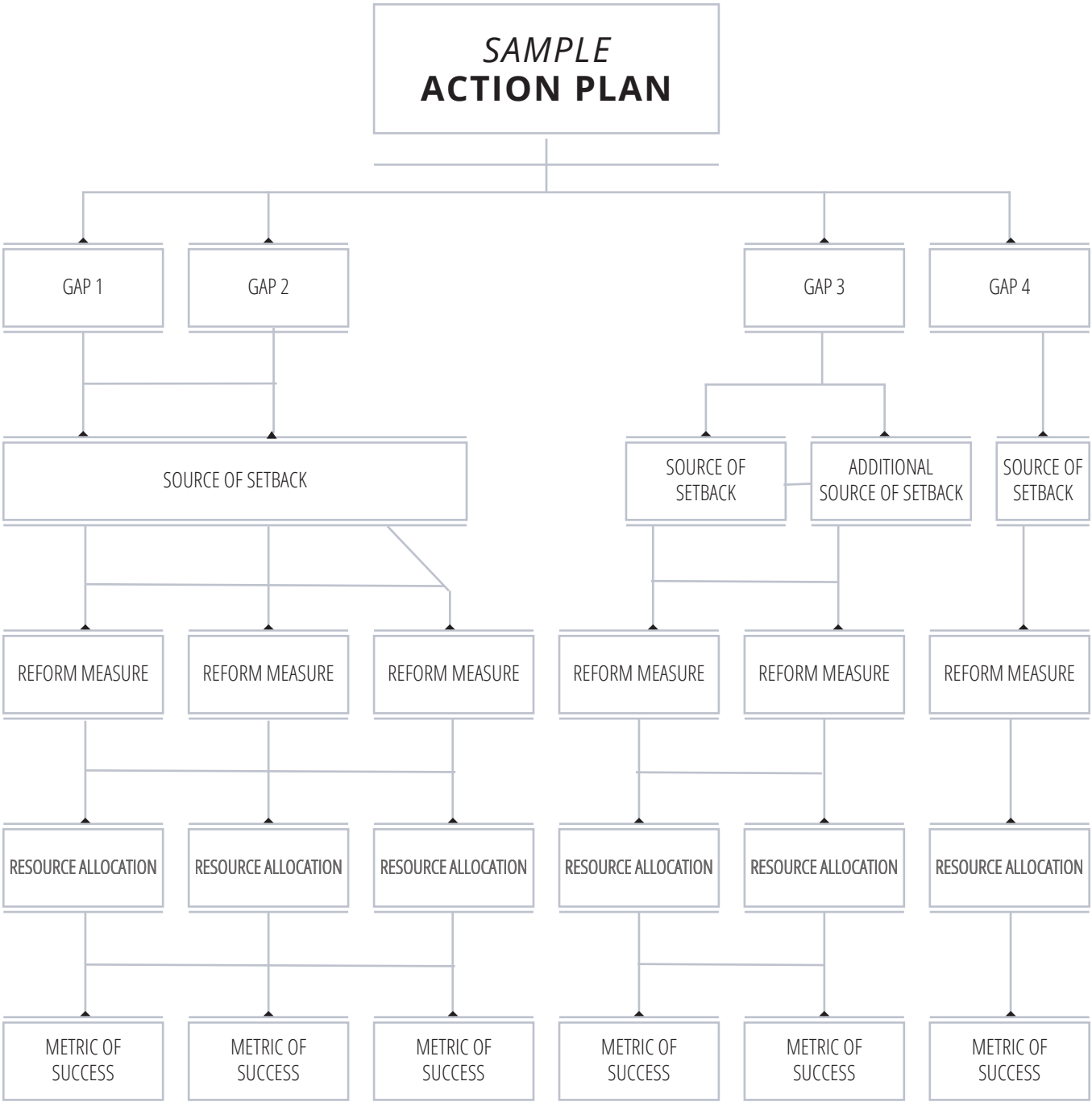
If additional resources and time are dedicated to fix the weak point, will it produce significant returns?

If the weak point in the strategy is still relevant to community and municipal interest and feasible given resources and capacity, it may be valuable to dedicate focus upon this issue through creating an action plan.

Action Plans:

1. Identify root of the communications issue to determine cause and sources of the setback
2. Pave a path for the component's reform to reach the goal
3. Reallocate resources and restructure component strategy to achieve the desired impact
4. Generate new metrics of success in accordance to the alterations

Once fixes have been made to muddy points in the green communications strategy, the plan should be reviewed by both municipal experts and community members to ensure it is still representative of community interest, municipal goals, and sustainability ideals.



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

Sample Media Content



GREEN MEDIA CONTENT DESIGN TEMPLATES

The Green Communications Design Template section has a wealth of customizable media and design resources for municipalities to use when adopting the new strategy.

Accessible below is a are hyperlinks with different Green Communications wireframe media templates that municipalities can customize according to their tailored sustainability campaign.

These resources may be easier to access through the Green Communications Toolkit Website. Click [here](#), to access the media content subpage.



WIREFRAME TEMPLATES



COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA DESIGN RESOURCES

The Green Communications and Media Design Resource section has many external communications and design resources for municipalities to use when adopting the new strategy. These resources include best practice guides to ensure the campaign is accessible, inclusive, and effective for communicating sustainability to diverse audiences. This section also includes a key definitions guide for language considerations

Accessible in this section is are short descriptions with hyperlinks to different communications and design resources to better inform the strategy.

These resources may be easier to access through the Green Communications Toolkit Website. Click [here](#), to access the media content subpage.

KEY SUSTAINABILITY DEFINITIONS

When communicating topics in sustainability it is important to provide clear definitions to ensure the messaging is properly interpreted by the reader. Additionally, definitions give clarity, this is important when discussing technical topics in the realm of sustainability. Listed here are some commonly used words present in sustainability communications.

Anthropogenic

- Definition: Arising from human activity (mainly relating to environmental pollution).
- Alternative Phrasing: Man-made

Aerosol

- Definition: The suspension of an extremely fine solid or liquid particle in atmospheric gas (ex: smoke).
- Alternative Phrasing: small airborne particle

CH4

- Definition: A flammable gas that is the main component of natural gas.
- Alternative Phrasing: Methane

CO2

- Definition: Atmospheric gas that forms when carbon is burned, a key contributor to greenhouse gases.
- Alternative Phrasing: Carbon Dioxide

PCBs

- Definition: Polychlorinated Biphenyls. carcinogenic chemicals from industrial manufacturing that are environmental and health toxins.
- Alternative Phrasing: Industrial Pollutant

Green Infrastructure

- Definition: Natural green spaces that use natural processes to ameliorate environmental concerns such as, water quality, run-off, habitat preservation, air quality, and more (ex: native gardens).

Environmental Justice

- Definition: The movement towards creating more equity for all people in the realm of the environment, particularly surrounding environmental regulations, health hazards, and equitable access to natural resources.

Environmental Sustainability

- Definition: The practice of responsible and mindful human interaction with the environment to avoid environmental degradation and preserve the planet for future generations.

Environmental Preservation

- Definition: To protect the environment from harmful human interaction and activities (ex: forest protections, sustainable logging practice).

Sustainable Development

- Definition: Meeting government developmental goals while simultaneously preserving the ability of natural processes to provide and protect natural resources and ecosystems.

COMMUNICATIONS BEST PRACTICE GUIDES

Accessible here are various external sustainability-centric best practice guides to help municipalities communicate a wide spectrum of sustainability topics to community members. To access the materials, simply click the guide title.

[The Psychology of Climate Change Communications](#)

- Sub-header: "A guide for scientists, journalists, educators, political aides, and the interested public."
- Author: Center for Research on Environmental Decisions
- Description: This guide helps professionals in sustainability fields communicate to the public. The guide details many biases and barriers to understanding of scientific sustainability topics and provides fixes to ensure the audience receives the information in an equitable and understandable manner.

[Green Infrastructure Toolkit](#)

- Key Section: "Communication Strategies for Green Infrastructure."
- Author: Georgetown Climate Center
- Description: This toolkit helps organizations communicate topics in sustainability (primarily green infrastructure) to communities and offers key insights and examples for media campaigns, written materials, workshops, presentations, and partnerships.

[Communicating Sustainability](#)

- Sub-header: "How to produce effective public campaigns."
- Author: UN Environment Program
- Description: A guide for organizations that seek to communicate green energy initiatives, sustainability, waste management, and natural resource preservation to communities in an efficient and effective manner.

DESIGN BEST PRACTICE GUIDES

Accessible here are various external design-centric best practice guides to help municipalities visually communicate sustainability topics and initiatives to community members. To access the materials, simply click the guide title.

[Digital Media Best Practices](#)

- Author: SAMHSA
- Description: This guide helps organizations best structure their digital media platforms and content to accommodate diverse audiences and increase general digital engagement.

[10 Best Practices for Digital Media Platforms](#)

- Author: Kantar Media SRDS
- Description: This guide helps organizations create a detailed digital media platform plan to ensure consistent and smooth content dissemination. The guide also provides various considerations for media design to aid the general communications strategy.

[Best Practices in Accessibility for Marketing and Visual Design](#)

- Author: CUNY
- Description: This guide helps organizations ensure that print and digital content is fully accessible (ADA compliant) for all audiences across many platforms.

[Accessibility Considerations for Data Visualization and Design](#)

- Author: KEEN Chargify
- Description: This document provides guidance and details for data visualization best practice and offers various templates and charts for color considerations, data communications, and more.

EXAMPLE GREEN COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY: MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP

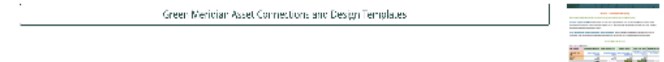
The Green Meridian Township Communications Toolkit includes a comprehensive communication strategy and media package related to their Green Grant program. The Green Meridian strategy followed the Green Communications Toolkit step-by-step guide to formulate their overarching plan for sustainability-centric media relations and communications. Meridian Township's communication strategy and resources can serve as an example for content creation and toolkit usage for other municipalities across Michigan.

Accessible in this section is are Green Communications Toolkit components tailored to Meridian Township. This resource can be used as inspiration for other municipalities to form their own green media strategies.

These resources are accessible through the Green Communications Toolkit Website. Click [here](#), to access the Meridian Township example strategy subpage.

Green Grant Project Navigation Hub

These pages provide information on each Green Grant, and the website navigation below lists the featured project content. You can also click on the navigation hub to view the Green Grant project details. The Green Grant project details page also includes a media gallery, social media guide, and a list of all the featured project content. The Green Grant project details page also includes a subpage titled "Green Grant Project Details" which provides a comprehensive overview of the Green Grant program and other general Green Grant resources.



Media Type	Media	Connected Assets	Channel	Time
WEEK 1: Okemos Public Montessori Butterfly Garden				
Website Publication (Photos, Resource Directing, Filer, and Write-Up)		Connected Green Meridian Assets Recommended: HOMTV YouTube Butterfly Garden Ceremony Video, Eco-Landscaping Filer	Website: Green Meridian Webpage, Green Grants Projects Sub-Page	Day 1
Social Media Post		Hashtags: #GreenGrants #GreenMeridian #YouthLeadership #PollinatorGardens #MeridianTownship #ButterflyGarden #Community #GreenInfrastructure #Sustainability #OkemosMontessori	Facebook: Meridian Township (Page), Green Meridian (Group)	Day 2

Green Meridian Communications Toolkit

Home

Green Meridian Communications Package

CIC and Meridian Press Release Content

Green Meridian Communications Toolkit

The Green Meridian communications strategy and media package was produced in partnership with the University of Michigan Cramer Sustainability Institute's Catalyst Leadership Circle (CLC) Fellowship program. The package is intended to create and promote Meridian's Green Grant program and general sustainability programming to increase community participation in local sustainability initiatives.

Introduction to the Green Meridian Communications Toolkit

REFERENCES

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