



Pursuant to Resolution No. 21-1035, and in an effort to protect public health and prevent the spread of Covid-19 (Coronavirus), and because state and local officials are recommending measures to promote social distancing, the public may view this meeting online.

There will be no public location for attending in person.

This virtual meeting will be streamed at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81780103096?pwd=bG5ldUY5SUdjVFIREUhjRmlwZlhXQT09>

You may also join by phone at 1-253-215-8782, Meeting ID: 817 8010 3096 Passcode: 017241

**CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2022, AT 6:00 PM
61750 CHOLLITA ROAD, JOSHUA TREE, CA 92252**

AGENDA

1. CALL TO ORDER -
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE -
3. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM -
4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA-
5. PUBLIC COMMENT-
6. APPROVE MINUTES OF THE PRIOR MEETING
 - Draft Minutes – October 12, 2021
7. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN – Kathleen Radnich, Public Information Consultant –
8. ROUNDTABLE COMMENTS -
9. NEXT MEETING DATE – March 8, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.
10. ADJOURNMENT -

JOSHUA BASIN WATER DISTRICT
Minutes of the
CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
Tuesday, October 12, 2021

CALL TO ORDER – Chairperson Delph called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. via Zoom.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM – Chairperson Delph

IN ATTENDANCE – Barbara Delph, David Carrillo, Hannah Campbell, Kathy Carrillo, Paul Frank Coate, Shari Long, Karen Morton, Karyn Sernka, Karen Tracy

STAFF PRESENT – Anne Roman, Director of Finance; James Corbin, Director of Operations

CONSULTANTS PRESENT – Kathleen Radnich, Public Information Consultant

APPROVAL OF AGENDA – MSC¹ (Coate/K. Carrillo 2/0) approved the Agenda for October 12, 2021.

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

APPROVE MINUTES OF THE PRIOR MEETING – MSC¹ (Tracy/Coate 2/0) approved the Draft Minutes of August 17, 2021.

AB 148 WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEM PAYMENTS UNDER THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT OF 2021 – Director Roman gave the background on appropriation of funds for community water systems to forgive customer arrearages that accrued during a specific COVID period of time, March 4, 2020 through June 15, 2021, and to also provide assistance to agencies for lost revenue. While the District has seen a significant increase in arrearages/bills not paid, it has not seen a decline in revenue/money earned for services provided. Prior to the September 10, 2021 due date on the survey, the District made preliminary calculations of the arrearages and submitted the data to the SWRCB. These calculations indicated that the District may be eligible for up to almost \$105,000 for residential and up to about \$75,000 for commercial customers. The application period closes on December 6, 2021; however, the sooner the District applies, the sooner it will get funded. The SWRCB is planning to begin disbursing funds on November 1, 2021. The program allows a provision for the District to apply for 3% of assistance for administrative costs, up to \$5,392. The Program does entail some compliance. The District would be required to waive approximately \$34,000 in late fees, allocate the credits within six days of receipt of the funds, notify the customers of the credit and advise them of potential tax liability. Director Roman stated that it has been determined the District will not need to issue a Form 1099C. Director Roman added details about other requirements, including payment plans for remaining arrearages, opt-out option, informing customers of additional programs available, reporting expenditures, maintaining records for seven years, being potentially subject to audit by the State, returning uncredited or expended funds, and that there is no application process for the customers involved – they automatically receive the credits. Chairperson Delph added that credit amounts and dates that cover arrearages are set in AB148; therefore, customers cannot dispute the customer credit availability to the District. Director Roman further explained the Bill's eligibility period falls in the middle of the District's billing cycles and detailed which District bills are eligible. Consultant Radnich expressed her need to meet with Director Roman for further information regarding the complicated issues of dates and eligible bills. Consultant Radnich presented a question to the CAC: What is your opinion on what the public would accept in a message from the District on this Program? Chairperson Delph started that what will really help with customers frustrated about any unfairness in credit and forgiveness is the fact that this Program's rules and

guidelines were all set by AB148 and not the District's methodology. Multiple comments followed regarding transparency, making information available, creating a simple and positive explanation for the ratepayers, proactive communication, keeping a government program emphasis on it, tax issues, opt-out option, pros and cons, goodwill to the customers, government requirements, customer push back, stressing that this alleviates District "bad debt" for all ratepayers, and using terms like "qualifiers" while avoiding terms like "parameters." Topic ended with Consultant Radnich stating she will talk with staff in the near future and provide the CAC with a sheet of positive talking points to help when addressing the issue out in the community.

UPDATES ON CURRENT PROJECTS – Director Corbin summarized updates and progress on Well 14 and the Tilford Project. He continued that the District is preparing three to five shovel-ready projects for possible future grant funding. Director Corbin gave a basic monthly report as well as further updates on the progress of the JT Auto Camp, and the District's efforts in trying to stay ahead of and work with the County in conjunction with the Sunburst bike path and future pipeline replacement in that area by the District. Director Corbin shared recent work performed by the Production Department following the State Water Resource Control Board's sanitary survey of the District as well as the Production Department's switch to Geo Viewer, making future reporting easier.

ROUNDTABLE COMMENTS – Chairperson Delph mentioned that GM Ban was on Z107.7's Up Close Show on Friday, October 8, 2021 and what an outstanding job he did covering all the hot topics.

NEXT MEETING DATE – December 14, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT – MSC¹ (Coate/Morton 2/0). Chairperson Delph adjourned the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark Ban, General Manager

¹ Motion seconded and carried.



Proudly providing water from an ancient sourcewell into the future.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

PREPARED BY: KATHLEEN J. RADNICH, PUBLIC INFORMATION AND OUTREACH

JANUARY 2021

DRAFT VS. 1.0

JOSHUA BASIN WATER DISTRICT

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

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Communicate

/ko-mu-ni-kate/

1. To pass on information, news or thoughts.
2. To spread to another or others

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

"In a perfect world, with unlimited resources and time, this plan can unfold..."

SUMMARY

It has been said that you cannot not communicate.

In other words, even if you communicate poorly to your audiences—or worse, don't communicate at all—you're still sending a message. Unfortunately, it likely isn't the message that showcases our organization in the best light.

An effective communications plan also helps increase open, two-way communication both internally and externally; enables strong and consistent messages that reinforce and reflect the goals of our organization; provides complete, accurate, and timely information to audience; and promotes the positive reputation of our District.

The need for a successful communications plan is underscored even more for JBWD, as we are a community owned public agency, which has fiduciary responsibility to the public at-large. Just as a corporation has a responsibility to keep its shareholders informed, so too does our District need to keep its stakeholders informed.

It should be noted that execution of the communications plan is not the sole responsibility of a few people in our District. All board members and the entire staff of our organization are ambassadors, and they help define, shape and communicate the organization's mission, vision and strategic priorities. It must be top of the mind with every interaction—from one-on-one meetings with key stakeholders, to interactions with the media, to emails and beyond.

Joshua Basin Water District's (JBWD) new communications plan sets forth the organization's guiding principles for communication; outlines the messaging that will be used in all efforts; details the tools and tactics that will be used to deploy the plan, and identifies the metrics that will be used to measure its effectiveness.

In summary, the plan is considered a living document. As communication tools evolve, metrics shift, and new tools continue to emerge, it is imperative to re-evaluate the plan at regular intervals and update as needed.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

All Joshua Basin Water District's communication efforts shall be guided by the principles outlined below in order to set a positive tone and tenor.

PRINCIPLE 1: BE TRANSPARENT

As a community owned District, JBWD operates in an open and transparent manner. These principles should carry over in communication efforts as well by openly communicating about programs, projects and services offered by the District. This principle also applies to controversial issues that may arise.

PRINCIPLE 2: BE PROACTIVE

No one is going to tell JBWD's story better than JBWD itself. That's why this plan encourages the District to tell its story first instead of remaining passive and letting others tell it for them. Pivoting to a proactive position, rather than reacting to issues as they spontaneously arise, will elevate the organization's reputation in the public vernacular and improve overall communication efforts.

PRINCIPLE 3: BE ON MESSAGE

JBWD is a unique District, and its work is complex, which makes explaining it to the public often challenging. A set of succinct key messages and a master narrative have been carefully crafted to aid in explaining the District's mission and should be used in all communication efforts, both internally and externally.

PRINCIPLE 4: BE ENGAGING

Communication has moved away from one-way efforts that simply inform. Instead, audiences expect to weigh in with their opinions and thoughts on various issues. To address this new reality, communication efforts should be established that encourage audience engagement and work to create a sense of collaboration when it makes sense.

PRINCIPAL 5: BE RESPONSIVE

In today's world, communication moves extremely fast. With the newfound ability to get news 24/7 from the palm of our hand, people expect to hear swiftly from an agency when an issue arises. They also expect to get content direct from the source on a regular basis. This plan aims to do both.



TARGET AUDIENCES

Several audiences have been identified as part of JBWD’s communications plan. They are outlined below and organized by internal/external segments.

INTERNAL

Board Members

Employees

Professional Consultants

Construction Contractors (working on behalf of the District)

JBWD District Volunteers (CAC/Docents)

EXTERNAL—Primary

Retail Customers

Larger User Groups

- Hi-Desert Medical Center
- Hi-Desert Medical Center Skilled Nursing Facility
- Joshua Tree Cemetery
- Joshua Tree Laundry
- Copper Mountain College
- Morongo Unified School District

Mojave Water Agency

Department of Water Resources (DWR)

Key Elected Officials

- Federal
- State
- County of San Bernardino

- Local Government Agencies (Sheriff, CHP, etc.)
- Joshua Tree National Park

Community Groups

- Local MAC
- JT Association
- Community Neighborhood Groups

EXTERNAL—Secondary

Civic and Business Groups, Industry Associations

- Building Industry Association
- Hospitality Industry Group (Motels, AirBnB/VRBO, etc.)
- Local Chamber of Commerce

Developers, Architects, Builders (Local)

EXTERNAL—Tertiary

Government Agencies in the Morongo Basin

Residents At-Large in the Morongo Basin

MASTER NARRATIVE AND KEY MESSAGES

A thoughtful master narrative and key message platform provides recommended language to ensure all communication done on behalf of JBWD is clear, concise, and easily understandable. This is extremely important given the complex nature of our District's work.

By aiming towards making these messages quick to recall and easily broadcast by JBWD leadership and staff, the organization's mission will be better communicated and reinforced in a memorable manner.

MASTER NARRATIVE

Joshua Basin Water District is community owned, and is the only public water utility in Joshua Tree. We have over 300 miles of water lines to maintain that spread out over 96 square miles. We serve a local permanent community of less than 10,000, but provide for a world-wide visitor population of over three million annually.

Providing customers with an exceptional user experience is our top priority, and we do that by pairing consistent delivery of safe, reliable drinking water with superior customer service.

We see ourselves as more of a business than a bureaucracy, which is why we work tirelessly to ensure operations are as cost-efficient as possible; our imported water supply is safe, and our District's needs are being represented at the state and federal levels.

We view our customers as essential partners in ensuring long-term water security for our community. Through transparency and open governance, we work hand-and-hand on important issues like water conservation and local water protection and procurement.

Simply put, JBWD is focused on being the trusted water provider for Joshua Tree, upholding the highest level of stakeholder trust, and delivering a best-in-class customer experience through its water product and customer service.

KEY MESSAGES

Key Message 1: **SUPERIOR SERVICE**

The JBWD team provides a best-in-class customer service experience for all District customers.

- 1.1 JBWD provides high-quality, valuable service to customers through things like high water use mitigation; bill payment assistance; development guidance; water saving native plant gardening, landscape and irrigation advice; online how-to videos, water education, and more.
- 1.2 JBWD maintains a highly trained professional workforce necessary to manage and operate a complex water system.
- 1.3 As the community grows, JBWD is proactively transitioning the community's waste water septic system usage to package treatment plants, while preparing for the future of the community's eventual sewer system.
- 1.4 Acknowledging many customers are not full-time locals, JBWD strives to provide solutions to customer issues via phone contact (and/or email) as a first priority in communications.
- 1.5 Meter technicians are dispatched to a customer's home in a timely manner to address concerns that require an onsite visit.
- 1.6 JBWD participates in industry associations to keep informed on the latest trends in customer service, legislative actions, best practices, energy-saving opportunities, and operational efficiencies.

Key Message 2: **WATER QUALITY**

JBWD delivers its customers the highest quality water available.

- 2.1 When JBWD customers turn on their tap, they can count on their water being clean, tested and monitored to protect their health and safety.
- 2.2 JBWD's water comes primarily from two ancient pristine aquifers (ground water).

- 2.3 JBWD's operations team take daily water samples from throughout the District to ensure its water measures up to local, state, and federal purity standards
- 2.4 JBWD oversees five wells, which are responsible for generating water for the community of Joshua Tree.
- 2.5 The District's well water is safe directly from the well head; only a minimal regulated amount of plain chlorine is placed in the water to disinfect the more than 300 miles of distribution water pipelines. Nothing otherwise is added to JBWD's water.
- 2.6 Joshua Tree's ground water is classified as "mineral water." Chromium-6 is found naturally in ground water, but is measured below the current State and Federal maximum permissible amounts for health and safety.
- 2.6 JBWD provides an annual assessment (state certified) of the well water contents, which can be found readily on JBWD's website, or provided upon request.

Key Message 3: WATER QUALITY

JBWD has 100 percent reliability rate that ensures water service to its customers.

- 3.1 JBWD has expanded its reliable water source from local ground water, to purchasing water to address over-drafting of the aquifers. Purchased water comes from the Sierra snow pack, considered as good as (or better) than our local ground water.
- 3.2 The delivery of purchased water comes via a water pipeline from Northern California, paid for by the local community over decades. This pipeline is under the oversight of the Mojave Water Agency, our regional water wholesaler.
- 3.3 The purchased water is piped into our well-maintained recharge ponds, allowing for a natural water cleansing process (the earth).
- 3.4 JBWD contracts USGS to monitor our aquifers' water levels, our aquifer's overall health, and to help determine our import water needs.
- 3.5 Joshua Tree's aquifers are massive, with extra space to allow for ground water "banking." This resulted in a recent historic and

innovative agreement with our water wholesaler, providing for a creative way to store water for our community's benefit.

- 3.6 Joshua Tree's rainfall is meager, however, when storms deliver monsoonal torrential rain all at once, storm water channels direct water to the dry lake vicinity of Joshua Tree, which helps to return some natural water to our aquifer below it.
- 3.7 In 2018, JBWD launched a strong in-house maintenance and replacement program that addresses protecting the integrity of its pipes, pumps and infrastructure, mitigating reliability of water delivery. This program is called the Capital Improvement and Replacement Program, or C.I.R.P.
- 3.8. In-house maintenance and replacement programs help keep costs down, as well as, positions the District more favorably in the event of the need to respond to a catastrophic disaster. On-site ownership of large equipment is always at the ready.
- 3.9 JBWD requires certain predetermined entities (be they commercial, agricultural, or industrial) to maintain certifications for their water back-flow system that protects the community's water from any potential back-flow intrusion that may occur from their operations. This program is overseen by a state certified staff member.

Key Message 4: VALUE

A typical customer uses more than 250 gallons of water every day—(or 10 units a month) delivered right to their home in the middle of an arid region—for about the cost of one gallon of milk a day.

- 4.1 The minimal cost per day allows customers to shower, wash their clothes, water their yard, brush their teeth, prepare meals for their family, and so much more.
- 4.2 JBWD's cost for delivering this service is far less than a customer trying to invest in their own personal infrastructure (wells) to handle the same delivery of fresh, safe tap water.
- 4.3 The District's basic water fee covers emergency water line repairs to the customer's meter, 24/7, 365 days out of the year.

- 4.4 Property is valued at a significantly higher rate when the parcel is within a community water system, and exponentially higher when the property already has established water service.
- 4.5 JBWD proactively works to protect ratepayers from costly regulations affecting water movement in northern California, including taxes that would subsidize water use in other parts of the state.
- 4.6 Water fees at JBWD continue to support the expense of upgrading our entire water infrastructure, as well as, purchasing additional water for recharge to maintain the integrity of our aquifers.

Key Message 5: CUSTOMER CONTROL

JBWD empowers customers with supportive programs and useful information so each customer can take control of their water use and lower their monthly bill.

- 5.1 The District provides a step-by-step guide on identifying leaks on customers' properties. This helps to involve the property owner in taking responsibility with managing their own water use. It also decreases expenses to the District by utilizing staff more efficiently.
- 5.2 Our monthly bill provides a visual account of water use within different pricing tiers, along with an accounting of 12 past months of water use for customers to evaluate their water use.
- 5.3 A comprehensive landscape program is offered by the District for desert living. This program is free of charge, and offers a water wise demonstration garden to help new customers re-imagine landscaping for arid climates and free tours of the five-themed water wise gardens within the demonstration garden to guide customers on landscaping that would benefit their particular parcel and maintenance needs.
- 5.4 The District routinely offers free courses on installing, maintaining and repairing homeowner's drip irrigation systems, wildcrafting (collecting seeds of native plants, propagating and growing native plants), xeriscaping design, winterizing household and outdoor pipes, desert edible gardening and more.

- 5.5 JBWD offers extensive water saving information videos, guidelines, and more on their website for direct access by the public.
- 5.6 The District's website provides a tool for interested public when looking to purchase property and in need of general information as to where water access is (service lines/main lines) to undeveloped parcels in the JBWD's jurisdiction.
- 5.7 JBWD has initiated a new meter replacement program, replacing meters for free in order to improve accuracy in reading and reporting water usage. This helps customers understand their household needs and pinpoint opportunities to conserve water.
- 5.8 Being a "Community Owned Water District," JBWD holds an information booth every Saturday at the Joshua Tree Farmers' Market to allow customers and potential customers the opportunity to casually explore any and all water questions they may have.
- 5.9 JBWD's free Water Education Day and Native Plant Sale, is a long held favorite of locals and visitors, alike. Offering over 40 information booths on all water topics, ranging from water harvesting to water history, gardening techniques and more, this "outdoor water classroom" has something for everyone. The event additionally offers an authentic native plant sale and a free seed/plant swap booth, garden tours and more.
- 5.10 District Tours are another annual favorite that promises attendees an education they will utilize going forward with their daily water use for years to come. This free opportunity takes participants behind the scenes of the everyday challenges that District staff must contend with.
- 5.11 JBWD produces a monthly newsletter that targets its customers' seasonal concerns, while offering articles on "how to do it" (i.e., meter reading, or winterizing), along with other timely information to guide recipients in water conservation and more.
- 5.12 Any customer of JBWD may self-educate on the local water story by attending "Water School 101" on line for free at the District's website. This self-tutorial rewards locals upon completion of an "open study test" with a water conservation bucket filled with numerous items to immediately start them conserving water.

Key Message 6: **FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP**

JBWD prides itself in using customer revenue responsibly to build, monitor and maintain the systems that deliver water service today and for future generations.

- 6.1 JBWD is committed to stabilizing the District's financial position through cost-effective service, fair rates and prudent investment strategies.
- 6.2 Every dollar received from water, waste water (package treatment plants), property taxes, investment returns, and federal and state grants is carefully accounted for using government-approved accounting procedures and audited by internal and independent accountants.
- 6.3 Every expenditure is authorized through a transparent public board process with employees routinely justifying every expenditure to ensure JBWD conducts business in the most cost-effective manner.
- 6.4 Because of JBWD's responsible fiscal stewardship, it is able to maintain its existing infrastructure and invest prudently to ensure it has the funds necessary to replace aging pipelines and equipment and invest in innovative water projects in accordance with the newly established C.I.R.P. plan.
- 6.5 JBWD takes a conservative approach to investing in order to maintain financial stability during downturns in the economy. Its board supports maintaining an emergency fund for disasters, as well as, routinely plans for responsible economic growth in its service area.
- 6.6 JBWD responsibly collects appropriate revenue through rates to operate the water and future waste water systems and provide the lifestyle that is customers enjoy.
- 6.7 To date, and without fail, JBWD has received only glowing unremarkable financial audit reports from third party certified auditors.

Key Message 7: LEADERSHIP

JBWD is a regional leader and collaborator in many facets of water quality and delivery, and often chosen as the lead organization to head test programs in the area for the state of California.

- 7.1 JBWD is currently the lead participant for the regional evaporative (swamp) cooler study for water conservation. This program includes the Mojave Water Agency, UC Davis, the Mojave Desert Regional Conservation District, and various other partners.
- 7.2 The District was chosen to oversee the only CIMIS station (the California Irrigation Management Information System) in the Morongo Basin. This device is located at Copper Mountain College, and transmits critical environmental information to the state of California.
- 7.3 JBWD was used as a test-site, along with outside grant funding, for solutions to remove (naturally occurring) Chromium-6 in ground water in an effort to identify an effective process for others to benefit from.
- 7.4 JBWD implements technologies and operational practices that increase efficiencies and lower costs. The District's Finance department was recently awarded the "Tyler Technologies Community Diplomat" award for leadership and integral assistance in being part of the solution; helping others working through new software.
- 7.5 An operations team member at JBWD received the prestigious "Water Operator of the Year" award, a top state award given out by the CAL Rural Water Operators Association in 2015. JBWD's staff invented a device and method that routinely saves 675,000 gallons of water a year or more since its implementation. The device only cost pennies to make, in comparison to the savings.
- 7.6 JBWD collaborated with the Joshua Tree National Park (JTNP), creating an unheard of business agreement whereby, the JBWD's docent volunteers would collect native seeds, and the JTNP nursery would grow the seeds. Then JBWD would provide these plants for sale to locals to encourage low water use/non-invasive landscaping benefiting both the missions of the National Park and the Water District.

- 7.7 JBWD was awarded the coveted Alliance of California Water Agencies' Huell Howser's Best in Blue Award in 2015 for its effective outreach on native plant gardening.
- 7.8 Additionally, due to the success of JBWD's Native Plant Program, the Bureau of Land Management recently awarded the District a significant grant to "grow" the native plant program further.
- 7.9 JBWD hires highly qualified personnel with state certifications and or accomplished degrees in their respective fields.
- 7.10 JBWD's leadership tracks and challenges regulatory and legislative efforts that unnecessarily add to the cost of providing service.



CAL Rural Water Operators Association's "Water Operator of the Year Award"



The only regional CIMIS station located at CMC and overseen by Joshua Basin Water District

Alliance of California Water Agencies' Huell Howser's Best in Blue Award



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this communications plan is as follows:

To ensure that key stakeholders know who Joshua Basin Water District is, what JBWD does, why JBWD is important, and understand the positive impact and value JBWD has on the region as a whole.

OBJECTIVES

The following objectives have been identified to support the goal of this plan:

1. Elevate the reputation and customer/stakeholder awareness of the value of JBWD's service both internally and externally across all audiences.
2. Improve the content, timing and delivery mechanisms for stakeholder outreach and enhance the regional understanding of JBWD's mission, vision and strategic priorities.
3. Build up and strengthen JBWD's brand identity both internally and externally.
4. Increase positive coverage for JBWD's digital footprint (media, social, etc.).

TACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

A variety of tactics should be deployed in order to reach the stated goal and objectives listed in this plan. The tactics fall into nine categories: benchmarking, content creation, branding, collateral development, earned media, owned media, paid media, community outreach and other. Each category is explained below with a summary of recommended actions to support each area. Keep in mind that many categories work together and are dependent on one another, and therefore should be handled in the sequence noted below.

1. **Benchmarking:** it is important to gauge perceptions of JBWD before, during and after deployment of the communications plan. This will provide important benchmarking data to determine whether our efforts are having the intended impacts desired. The following tactics are recommended to accomplish this:
 - 1.1 Conduct annual survey about perceptions, communications and community engagement efforts looking at both qualitative and quantitative data.

- 1.2 Conduct a communications audit to memorialize key metrics at start of plan deployment (i.e., Facebook engagement rate, Newsletter open rates, shares, etc.)
 - 1.3 Evaluate survey results with senior staff and adjust communication efforts as needed.
2. **Content Creation:** Developing engaging content is one of the most important elements of a successful communications plan. A master narrative and key message platform has been developed as part of this plan and should be used in every communication interaction JBWD makes—whether meeting one-on-one with elected officials, speaking to community groups, engaging the media or producing collateral. By adhering to these pre-determined themes, JBWD’s messaging will be more succinct and cohesive. The following tactics are recommended to accomplish this:
- 2.1 Distribute and explain master narrative and key message platform to board members and all staff. Explain that this language should be referenced and used as frequently as possible in all communication efforts (emails, staff reports, media interviews, etc.).
 - 2.2 As an extension of the messaging, use “plain speak” in all outbound communication tools in order to clearly articulate what JBWD does and its impact in the community.
 - 2.3 Create backgrounders on important elements of JBWD’s business operations (i.e., local water supply projects, water quality programs, such as our four-log treatment system).
 - 2.4 Create yearly editorial calendar to be used to plan, develop and deploy content at key points throughout the year.
3. **Branding:** Essential to any communications plan is a consistent visual brand identity. By establishing visual communication standards (i.e., logo use, typography, color palette, design elements, photo styling), JBWD will begin working towards immediate visual recognition of the agency. The following tacts are recommended to accomplish this:
- 3.1 Promote our new brand, tagline, and motto to reflect the modern trend in JBWD’s organization.
 - 3.2 Create/establish standardization of all graphics, including logo usage, typography, color palette, collateral designs, and photo styling.

- 3.3 Communicate these standards to the JBWD board and employees so they have an understanding of the purpose, expectations and procedures.
- 3.4 Deploy updated branding for organization.
4. **Collateral Development:** Collateral is any communication tool used to help amplify JBWD's message. Examples include, but are not limited to, fact sheets, brochures, eNewsletters, website, videos, photos, PowerPoint presentations, folders, business cards, stationery, etc. All collateral material should be on brand and on message. It is important that work in this area is done after tactics 1, 2, and 3 are completed. The following tactics are recommended to accomplish this:
 - 4.1 **Explainer Piece:** Create a four-page general explainer piece on JBWD to be used at community and civic presentations, meetings with new business partners, meetings with elected officials, briefings with media, or anytime JBWD needs to be understood by an interested party. Have the piece professionally designed and printed and place in key position on website. Include in branded presentation folder (see below) as a leave behind for all meetings with key stakeholders. Include copies in the lobby of JBWD.
 - 4.2 **Fact Sheets:** Inventory existing fact sheets and determine any additional needs. Rewrite and redesign all pieces to be in alignment with new messaging and branding. Print pieces professionally and place in key positions on website. Include in branded presentation folder as a leave behind for all meetings with key stakeholders. Include copies in the lobby of JBWD.
 - 4.3 **Annual Report:** Produce a four-to-eight page annual report at the end of each year that highlights key projects, programs and services. Distribute via eNewsletter, place on website, and hand-deliver copies to key stakeholders. (See Tactic 9.1 for tie in with this tactic). Include copies in the lobby of JBWD.
 - 4.4 **Produce on-brand pocket folder** for board members and senior staff to use when presenting materials to key stakeholders and business partners. Folder could also be used during media briefings to provide background information (press kits).
 - 4.5 **Website:** Audit site and develop recommendations on structure and content improvements. Implement recommendations as approved by JBWD to bring the site in alignment with brand and messaging. Exploration could result in recommendation to develop a new or updated website.
 - 4.6 **Digital Assets:** Create on brand digital assets to be used on Facebook, Nexdoor, and others (Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc., if applicable) in order to better represent the District. Create on brand MailChimp templates for news releases, news digest and general eNewsletter.

- 4.7 Video: Produce a two-minute explainer video for JBWD that underscores the human-interest angle and impact JBWD makes throughout the Morongo Basin. Consider topic specific video content if budget allows (water conservation, infrastructure projects, etc.) for additional videos.
 - 4.8 PowerPoint: Produce on brand and on message PowerPoint to be used for all JBWD presentations. Consider topic-specific presentation if budget allows.
 - 4.9 Photo Library: Establish a curated photo library of key JBWD projects, programs and services that can be used in all collateral material.
 - 4.10 Display Materials: Produce tablecloth and banners that are on brand and on message to use at community festivals and events (see Tactic 8.4).
5. **Earned Media:** Earned media is any article/story that appears in newspaper, on a television channel, on radio, in a blog, or other media as a direct result of our proactive PR efforts. The medium must not be controlled by JBWD in order to fall into this category. The effort is important because it lends further credibility to our cause. The following tactics are recommended in this area:
- 5.1 Regular (weekly or monthly) strategy discussion with general manager's office to forecast story ideas and brainstorm angles.
 - 5.2 Issue proactive news release at least two times per month (+/-) in plain speak with human interest angle, when possible. Respond to media inquiries within 24 hours. Coordinate interviews with JBWD as interest arises.
 - 5.3 Customize pitches when appropriate to target industries (community reporters, hyperlocal publications).
 - 5.4 Place all news releases on the homepage of website (top three most recent should always appear) and keep an archive of all past releases one click away in order to create a digital footprint of news.
 - 5.5 Conduct informal desk-side meetings with key reporters to confirm understanding of JBWD, its role, and its limitations. These meetings should be scheduled when any new reporters are added to JBWD's beat.
 - 5.6 Conduct media training for board members and any senior-level staff who will be interacting with the press on a regular basis.
 - 5.7 Conduct quarterly hard-hat tours with key media to tour relevant JBWD related projects (C.I.R.P. projects, water quality 4-log project, etc.)

- 5.8 Track media coverage on weekly basis to understand trends and gaps in coverage.
- 5.9 Maintain a current media list, scrub list regularly to ensure accuracy.
- 6. **Owned Media:** Owned media is communication tools that you have control over—things like our website, social media platforms, blogs, etc. Tactics recommended in this area include:
 - 6.1 Website: Continually post fresh content on JBWD website in order to keep things current and relevant.
 - 6.2 Social Media: Create a monthly social media platform with relevant content per editorial calendar. Curate visual digital assets that are on brand to post alongside copy. Consider involvement on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Nexdoor and LinkedIn. Use social media platforms to post about organization news, industry trends, congratulations to other local entities that have relationships with JBWD.
 - 6.3 Explore various methods of streaming board meetings.
- 7. **Paid Media:** While often more expensive than other efforts, paid media can help amplify our message on platforms that we may not be able to reach with our traditional efforts. Because of this, paid media is an important component to a well-rounded communications plan. Tactics for this area include:
 - 7.1 Identify various platforms and publications available that reach JBWD’s target audience. Research costs associated with paid advertising and plan an advertising calendar based on available budget.
 - 7.2 Develop a campaign theme for the year to be used across platforms (i.e., local TV news, movie theaters, malls, local restaurants, etc.) Develop sub-campaigns for more hyper-targeted ad buys if appropriate.
- 8. **Community Outreach:** Thoughtful community relations are part of any good, comprehensive communications plan for a public agency. The work done in this area is a fundamental ingredient for the health of the organization to nurture positive, cooperative relationships between themselves and the public. The tactics under area include:
 - 8.1 Community group presentations. Curate a comprehensive list of community organizations that would benefit from an understanding of JBWD and make an effort to book the GM, or appropriate senior staff, at upcoming meetings to present a JBWD 101 presentation or relevant topic that aligns with JBWD’s

message platform. Presenters should bring the four-page explainer piece and/or appropriate fact sheets to leave behind for interested parties.

- 8.2 Hold community coffees or “lunch and learns” each quarter in key neighborhoods; build calendar out one year in advance and coordinate it with the content calendar (see Tactic 2.4).
- 8.3 Develop and promote a speaker’s bureau utilizing subject matter experts within JBWD. Actively seek out speaking opportunities for them in order to carry the message of JBWD to key audiences.
- 8.4 Research and participate in community events and festivals in key communities. Book space to have a table with collaterals, display boards of current projects, etc. Consider engaging in unique and fun ways beyond a simple information table (i.e., Farmers’ Market monthly water topics, Water Wise Demonstration Garden events).
- 8.5 Conduct routine tours of JBWD’s facilities for interested community members. Tours should include a morning or afternoon guided drive of JBWD’s projects with a coordinated narrative that supports JBWD’s key messages.
- 8.6 Utilize, encourage and maintain an “Advisory Council” made up of select and varied community customers that allows for direct feedback benefiting the District’s leadership. Meet with them routinely. Provide educational opportunities to keep them engaged, as well as up-to-date on current issues with the District.
- 8.7 Train, utilize, encourage and maintain a corp of general volunteers to provide docent services applicable to District public events. Communicate with them routinely. Provide educational opportunities to keep them engaged, informed and supportive of JBWD’s mission.
- 8.8 Create project /job site informational boards or banners denoting activity’s benefit to customers.

9. Other

- 9.1 Report to the Community: Utilize the local Municipal Advisory Council (MAC) to outline accomplishments from the year congruent with the release of our annual report (January). Unveil annual report content in presentation form and present attendees with a takeaway copy. Consider producing a companion video to be shared during the presentation event and online that summarizes key accomplishments.

- 9.2 Celebratory recognition and awards: Research opportunities and participate both in attendance and in application of awards, when possible.
- 9.3 Host credible outside speakers to present on topics of interest at regular board meetings to draw more of our general audience to the table.



METRICS

To gauge the success of this plan, metrics will be established to continually monitor efficacy. This will allow JBWD to optimize components of the plan throughout its implementation.

THE GOAL OF THIS PLAN, AS MENTIONED EARLIER IS:

To ensure that key stakeholders know who JBWD is, what they do, why they are important, and understand the positive impact and value they have on the region as a whole.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS PLAN, AS MENTIONED EARLIER, ARE TO:

1. Elevate the reputation and customer/stakeholder awareness of the value of JBWD's services, both internally and externally across all audiences.
2. Improve the content, timing and delivery mechanisms for stakeholder outreach and enhance the regional understanding of JBWD's mission, vision and strategic priorities.
3. Build upon and strengthen JBWD's brand identity both internally and externally.
4. Increase positive coverage for JBWD's digital footprint (media, social, etc.)

Two types of measurement is recommended to gauge implementation success. The first are *output metrics*, which are considered "counting" metrics. These metrics track the amount of outputs related to the campaign. For instance, activity metrics would track the number of news releases issued per year or the number of community outreach events held. While output metrics are an important data point in evaluating the overall outreach effort, they only tell a portion of the story (i.e., what we've done).

Perhaps more important are *outcome metrics*, which more accurately measure whether or not the needle was moved with key goals like "elevating JBWD's reputation," for instance.

OUTPUT METRICS TO BENCHMARK AND ESTABLISH GOALS SHOULD INCLUDE:

- Number of emails sent to customers and/or other stakeholder groups
- Website traffic data
- Number of news releases produced
- Number of custom media pitches offered
- Number of paid media advertisements placed
- Number of community outreach events held

OUTCOME METRICS TO BENCHMARK AND ESTABLISH GOALS SHOULD INCLUDE:

- Customer and stakeholder satisfaction levels (in comparison to baseline data)
- Email open and click-through rates
- Website quality analytics (time spent on site, return visits)
- Earned media placements through PR efforts
- Social media engagement (reach, likes, comments, follows, impressions)
- Organic search traffic
- Event attendance
- Program participation

Other measurement tools to be considered in evaluating the plan's effectiveness include surveys (online and/or in person), focus groups, a comprehensive digital footprint analysis and observations.

CONCLUSION

This plan has been developed to assist Joshua Basin Water District in spreading the word about programs, projects and services it offers to the people of Joshua Tree and encompassing region, when applicable. It has also been designed to elevate the agency's visibility and image among key stakeholders in the local, national and international community that shares our water.

Execution of this plan is considered mission critical to help JBWD achieve a higher level of success in raising the water knowledge in the communities it serves. Although the investment to implement the Strategic Communication Plan will require significant time and resources, the benefit to JBWD—more knowledgeable customers and stakeholders—will be worth the effort and yield better results than the current unfocused, untargeted, and less strategic and effective methods of outreach and communication.

Communicating a well-crafted message is vital when you consider the far-reaching impact the organization has on all local residents. The damage done to JBWD's credibility by letting individuals communicate their own inaccurate messages via social media channels cannot continue and gets harder to repair the longer JBWD fails to respond with clear facts.

By pivoting to a proactive, transparent, strategic message-based stance, JBWD will help ensure its target audiences receive and understand the information the District intends to communicate. This builds credibility and trust. Credibility and trust play a strong part in times of necessary rate increases and grant requests.

This is an exciting time for Joshua Basin Water District, and this communications plan will help guide the District's efforts to amplify the good news they have to share about delivering safe, reliable water and future wastewater services to all who come to Joshua Tree.

Our community is growing and every changing. It is imperative JBWD's service grows with the needs of the community, while remaining one step ahead of communicating our water story.