

Communications Plan Template

Background

Here is an example of our background statement. Tailor yours to fit your institution and initiative.

The Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA) has received a Mellon Foundation grant for a 3-year project to explore how to make the most of our art information by focusing on the interrelated nature of our practices, processes, and systems. The Art Information Commons (AIC) project aims to leverage institution-wide standards for how information about individual works of art can be linked to related contextual information—such as archival materials, bibliographic references, exhibition labels, provenance documentation, conservation records, interpretive content, curatorial research files, and non-object images such as exhibition photography. This planning phase is part of an organization-wide evolution in how we holistically manage our collections-related data and support a sustainable information culture—an Art Information Commons—that spans the entire organization and will benefit data creation, access, and preservation for years to come.

Communications Objectives

Here are communications objectives we used that can be applied to art information initiatives in general. See how these would work for your organization.

Internal

- Enable all internal stakeholders to see themselves, their knowledge, their work product, and their needs as important to achieving the goals of the initiative and how it relates to the mission of the institution;
- Create a safe, open, and vibrant environment for sharing, in which individuals and departments actively participate by contributing their work practices, perspectives, needs, wishes, and concerns;
- Foster understanding of the initiative as organization-wide and how it connects to the institution's mission and long-term strategy, culture goals, position in the community, etc.;
- Create a cohesive internal program that engages and aligns internal stakeholders, employing best practices from other initiatives and groups to leverage what works well;
- Clearly articulate the expected outcomes to make it clear to all stakeholders what the results are projected to be.

External

- Communicate effectively to all appropriate audiences how the initiative will impact and benefit them in how they interact with the institution;
- Reinforce and expand organization's reputation as a leader in making the most of digital information;

- Excite and engage the larger community to learn about, learn from, and engage with the initiative's externally-available programs and activities;
- Create new models and concepts around data integration for the cultural heritage, digital humanities, and GLAM (gallery, library, archive, museum) communities to follow;
- Share lessons learned to the wider GLAM communities.

Audiences & Stakeholders

Here are the key stakeholders and audiences we identified. The way your institution is organized might change who is affected by the initiative.

Internal

- Board of Trustees
- Departments
- Department Heads
- Director
- Initiative Team
- Senior Management
- Steering Committee
- Other Working Groups and Committees

External

- Advisory Board
- Digital Humanities community
- GLAM community
- Institutions managing similar initiatives
- Larger cultural heritage community
- Your funder (if applicable)

Key Messages

Here is an example of the messages we used and how much detail we decided to include for a 3-second and 30-second pitch.

Road Runner (3 Seconds)

The Library and Archives received a 3-year planning grant from the Mellon Foundation to embark on a collaborative institution-wide initiative. We will be identifying and making connections between all the kinds of information we create around the art collection, and the workflows of the creators and users and consumers of it. Building on our existing work to evolve the ways we create, share, and store information across the museum, we'll be creating blueprints and testing possible improvements.

OR

- Very exciting 3-year planning grant from the Mellon Foundation!
- It's a collaborative institution-wide journey
- We're identifying the connections
 - between and among all the types of information we create about the collection
 - between users (within and outside) the museum
 - between the information and users
- It's an evolution
 - Building on our existing work to evolve the ways we create, share, and store information across the museum
- We'll be creating blueprints and testing possible improvements
- It's a technology-agnostic initiative

Highest-Level Key Messages (Elevator Pitch - 30 Seconds)

- The Library and Archives received a 3-year planning grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for the Art Information Commons initiative, focused on imagining new possibilities for our art information (such as archival materials, bibliographic references, educational materials, exhibition labels, provenance documentation, conservation records, interpretive content, curatorial research files, and non-object images, such as exhibition photography).
- The Art Information Commons is about making connections between and among the multitudes of information we already create and hold about our collection, and connecting users (within and outside of the institution) to the information they need.
- This is a collaborative, technology-agnostic exploration to leverage and evolve the existing ways PMA creates, shares, and stores data across the museum. Outcomes of this initiative will include blueprints for possible improvements to how we manage art information.
- If you have any questions at all or would like to discuss the initiative further, please contact ____ (*whomever you deem the manager, coordinator, or point of contact for the initiative*).

Detailed Messages

Here is where you can get into the finer details of your initiative. Focus on the WHAT, WHY, WHO, WHEN, AND HOW. Try answering the below questions to get at the message you want to convey.

WHAT...

- are the parameters of the initiative?
- will the initiative provide for the overall institution?
- does success look like?
- challenges is the initiative tackling?
- opportunities is the initiative leveraging?
- major activities does the initiative plan on conducting?

WHY...

- are we doing this initiative?
- is this the right institution for it?
- are we starting this initiative at this time?
- is this important to staff? External stakeholders?
- is this integral to the strategy and mission of our institution?

WHO...

- will be doing the work?
- is on the project or initiative team?
- is a stakeholder?
- is impacted directly? Indirectly?
- will advise on this initiative?
- makes decisions?
- will approve the work?
- will sustain this for the future?

WHEN...

- do you plan on achieving the initiative's overall goal?
- do you plan to hit major milestones?
- will you need help from others or conduct major activities that need support?

HOW...

- will you get this work done?
- will you gather feedback and information?
- will you know what is the best path to take?
- will you test tools and strategies?

Additional Audience-specific Talking Points

You might have specific audiences who will need tailored talking points. You can develop more targeted communications if necessary.

Connection to other Programs, Initiatives, & Efforts

Remember to make a diligent effort to respect, learn from, and leverage existing work, including that demonstrated by your internal stakeholders. Find ways to keep the communication stream open with these individuals or groups.

Communications Tactics & Vehicles

The Philadelphia Museum of Art has established vehicles and tactics for communications. We leveraged what already existed in addition to building new ways of communicating with staff. For each type of engagement, make sure to identify your goals, approach, structure or generic agenda, questions to ask the audience, and types of follow-up needed.

Internal

In-person

- General organizational engagement such as All Staff meetings
- Roadshow (departmental/team/group meetings)
- Coffee with the Commons (quarterly open forums for all staff)
- Specific meetings called as needed for decisions, asks, and other activities
- Regular updates within standing working group, steering committee, senior management, etc. meetings, as appropriate
- Lectures, workshops, programs as part of a larger curriculum

Email

- Staff Newsletter
- Email for simple updates to small groups, departments, committees

Other communications tactics and vehicles

- Intranet site (we use Sharepoint)
- Cascade program, with clear expectations, for senior managers and working group members
- Leverage communications / human resources initiatives to carry message and spark engagement across the institution

External

In-person

- Annual Advisory Board meetings
- External stakeholder workshops, lectures, and panels
- Conference presentations, panels, posters, etc.

Email

- Regular updates to Advisory Board on progress of initiative

Online

- Announcement via press, social media, etc.
- External web presence (we use Github)
- Recordings of externally available programs
- Library and Archives social media (if you have a departmental account)

Key Materials

Here you can identify key materials (presentations, handouts, and other communication documents) and to which audience or group of stakeholders these materials should be disseminated.