

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS & EFFECTIVE MESSAGING p1-3  
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## **BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS & EFFECTIVE MESSAGING**

*Types of activities to effectively message to donors, volunteers, clients and community members include: media, presentations, print materials, electronic media, community activities, advocacy, and direct outreach/education*

### **Building Partnerships**

*Key partnerships for RRFB may include: media, other non-profits/agencies, government entities, local associations and community groups (Chamber of Commerce, Farm Bureau, service clubs, etc.), the faith community, the academic community, local business that can donate goods and services (e.g. agricultural, labor, legal, mechanics), medical community.*

**Key Audiences for Messaging:** *Existing and potential donors, volunteers, clients, community partners, and advocacy partners*

### **Unique Remote Rural Challenges:**

#### Media issues (Print, radio):

Many rural communities have limited, locally based media outlets (TV, radio, print, social media). The quality may not be as high as in larger venues. For locally owned media, the coverage may be very easy to get for both newspaper and radio, if a good connection is forged. If the area is serviced by a regional media entity, it can prove difficult to highlight local activities in a meaningful way.

Client outreach issues: Word of mouth is the most powerful client outreach. However, managing that messaging (for truth) can be a difficult challenge. Ensure that all staff are providing accurate and consistent information to clients.

Partnership Issues: For many RRFBs, partnerships are a strong asset. In very remote areas however, partnership opportunities are limited. Or, there can be multiple nonprofits competing for the same, limited resources such as food donations.

#### Online messaging issues

- Some areas may be without broadband access, or have access to limited vendors for broadband. Bandwidth can be poor. If vandalism or natural damage occurs, repairs can take a long time for remote areas.
- Many RRFBs have little or no budget for IT support or technology upgrades. Website development is hindered by capacity in terms of both cost and expertise. This issue is also shared by partner agencies. Many contract with outside firms for servers, maintenance, or website hosting and development. It is difficult to find funds for technology.

#### Messaging issues:

Media has to be fresh, new and engaging to be effective. This requires resources and staffing and these are in short supply in RRFBs.

## **Suggested Standards and Best Practices:**

### Build relationships with community members.

- Look for opportunities to speak with any potential partner, volunteer, or donor about the Food Bank.
  - Ask to be a guest speaker at Rotary, Kiwanis and other service clubs.
  - Look for opportunities to speak to the faith communities (e.g. social concerns committees).
  - Attend Chamber of Commerce mixers and political events open to the public to build personal connections with business owners and elected officials.
  - Joining the local Farm Bureau can be beneficial as it provides access to the local Ag community including their members for financial and crop donations.

### Build and Nurture Partnerships and Advocates.

- Create formal or informal agreements with partners in regards to shared food solicitation/gleaning, or joint projects. Ensure that new leadership is informed of past successful practices and partnership agreements. Even if a single shared project is not successful, maintain communication with that partner to nurture the possibility of future projects.
- For partnerships to be successful, they have to be mutually beneficial.
  - Do research about the agency's mission, vision, and objectives to find common ground.
  - Meet personally with leadership to formulate a plan to go forward.
  - Ensure that partners are recognized for their contributions.
  - Maintain ongoing connections through leadership changes.
- Important advocacy partners: local elected officials, local farm bureau, entity that regulates water, border patrol (if applicable). Forge relationships and invite them to the Food Bank site.
- Be cognizant of which constituencies are represented on advisory boards.
- Make connections, where possible, with state and federal program people, so that practical suggestions can be heard effectively. Where possible, initiate advocacy conversations versus reacting to issues. Support advocacy work where it is occurring.

### Develop a good website and a strong social media presence:

- Keep websites and Facebook updated, easy to navigate, and mobile friendly.

### Develop good print materials:

- Older adults often prefer hard copy media to electronic media. Use a combination of email letters and print materials.
- Try to do printing in house, small batches, so that it can be changed frequently.
- Develop multiple brochures, because messaging is different for different approaches and different languages.

### Use messages that are engaging, well-defined, and consistent:

- In working with media representatives, have the message well defined, be ready to take control of the interview and make it go where you want it to go.

- Target messages to recipients based on who they are (clients, donors, health providers) as well as the type of media used (radio, newspaper, electronic, brochure). Be politically and culturally sensitive in messaging to all audiences. Be aware of gender differences in how messages are received. The true message of hungry children can be powerful, even to those who generally distrust government programs.
- Strive to make print, website and social media materials accessible for various literacy levels and for people with disabilities.
- Make messages short and direct and keep the message fresh.
- Use images that are effective and engaging and that capture people's interest.

### **Resources and Contacts:**

- Berkeley Media Studies Group provides training and outreach on effective media (Lori Dorfman). <http://www.phi.org/focus-areas/?program=berkeley-media-studies-group>
- Humboldt State - CA Center for Rural Policy Google CCRP at The California Center for Rural Policy, located at Humboldt State University does advocacy work and other projects for rural counties in northern CA. <http://www2.humboldt.edu/ccrp/>
- Farm Bureau Info: Kevin Sanchez, ED, Food Bank of Yolo County 530-668-0690 [kevin@yolofoodbank.org](mailto:kevin@yolofoodbank.org)
- Volgistics software helps with email blasts to volunteers, donors.
- There are a variety of sources to help with web-based outreach; an online search will provide many resources.
- The online company *idealware - Helping Nonprofits Make Smart Technology Decisions* offers a variety of online training useful for nonprofit technology needs, including how to improve accessibility. <http://www.idealware.org/online-training>
- ATCAA Food Bank (Tuolumne) has information on effective partnership building: Lee Kimball, Director ATCAA Food Bank (209) 984-3960 ext 102 (Tuolumne)
- Imperial Food Bank has sample brochures in Spanish and English. Contact Sara Griffen, Executive Director Imperial Valley Food Bank, 760-370-0966 [sara@ivfoodbank.org](mailto:sara@ivfoodbank.org)
- Humboldt County Food Bank has a CallFresh webpage on their website (Food For People) which is a helpful resource. <http://foodforpeople.org/programs/calfresh-outreach>
- Use emerging research to build on messages. For example, the data on pre-diabetes for CA counties released by UCLA can be used as a lead-in for media or partnership discussions. <http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/publications/search/pages/detail.aspx?PubID=1472>
- California Assoc. Of Food Banks (CAFAB) does good work with advocacy and supporting RRFB advocates to travel to conferences and legislative venues. CAFAB is engaged in political advocacy for broader issues as well, for example emerging non-profit legislation. Information can be found on the CAFAB website at: <http://www.cafoodbanks.org/advocacy>
- CA Food Policy Advocates works directly on advocacy issues in California. <http://cfpa.net/>

### **Advocacy Issues for RRFB Community Partnerships and Messaging**

- Proposed legislative agendas usually do not reflect rural remote issues. It is difficult to get remote rural issues on the legislative radar screen.
- There is a need for a collective national rural advocacy voice. However, with small staffs, advocacy

efforts can take low priority.

- For food banks that are part of a government entity, advocacy efforts may not be allowed or encouraged.