

*Communications and Marketing Project  
Communications and Marketing Plan of Work*

**Vision:** Increase awareness of the value Land Grant University agricultural experiment stations, cooperative extension systems and their related academic programs through the creation of unified messages and a targeted educational effort.

**Overall Goal:** Attract additional federal funding through capacity and competitive lines to the state agricultural experiment stations and Cooperative Extension.

**Key Stakeholders:** Congressional decision-makers and those who have influence with identified congressional decision makers.

**Background:**

The Communications and Marketing Committee (CMC) oversees and guides the Communications and Marketing Project (CMP). The CMP is a coordinated and targeted educational effort to increase awareness of the Land Grant University agricultural and related programs, Agricultural Experiment Stations (AES) and Cooperative Extension Services (CES). The CMP is supported by three sections of the APLU Board on Agriculture – Administrative Heads (AHS), Cooperative Extension (CES) and Experiment Station (ESS).

The CMC is the policy-making body that oversees the development, implementation and effectiveness of this targeted educational effort, including coordination with APLU and consulting firms hired to advance this initiative. It is the responsible entity specified in the contract between APLU and kglobal and in the contract between APLU and Cornerstone Government Affairs for oversight of the work as it relates to the CMP.

**Goal of the plan of work in communications and marketing:** Articulate clear and focused strategies for decision making in communications and marketing.

**Decision Making Points in the Communications and Marketing Project:**

*Process for goal setting*

The CMC affirms the goals for communications and marketing. These include increasing awareness of the value of the Land Grant University agricultural experiment stations, cooperative extension systems and their related academic programs. The CMC re-affirms these goals on an annual basis with the BAA, BAC, AHS, ECOP and ESCOP. The goals drive the identification of the thematic areas.

Does the CMC wish to define sub-goals and objectives; what's the process?

### *Thematic areas for communications and marketing*

The breadth of expertise of the Land Grant system requires that thematic areas be identified for clarity of message. Currently (FY 15/16), the thematic areas for the Communications and Marketing Project are Health and Nutrition and Water Security. Other message themes that have been discussed include: Invasive Species, Plant and Animal Genetics, Soil Health, Endangered Species, Local Economies, and Food Safety.

### *Process for selection of thematic areas*

Each year by November 1, the Communications and Marketing Committee will solicit the sections, AHS, ECOP, and ESCOP for confirmation of continuing a current theme or consideration of a new theme (identified by the sections). The CMC will also solicit the Budget and Advocacy Committee (BAC) for new areas that have been identified as potential communication and marketing thematic areas.

The CMC will then use this input for deciding on the continuation of a current theme or identification of a new thematic area(s). The CMC will then inform the sections and the BAC on the thematic area(s) for incorporation into the communications and marketing strategy. Following the decision of the thematic area(s), the CMC will engage kGlobal to assess the resonance of the identified issues with focus groups. Should the issue not resonate with focus groups, other thematic areas will be considered. The CMC will inform the sections and the BAC of the change. Resonance with focus groups will be a key driver for staying with or changing themes.

### **Is this workflow clear and appropriate?**

#### *Roles and responsibilities of kglobal and Cornerstone:*

Working closely together and with input from CMC, Cornerstone and kglobal strategically identify key targets to focus communication and education efforts. This includes earned media including op-eds, the use of grassroots and grass-tops connections (as defined by kglobal), and digital and social media approaches. Communicating the value of Land-grant agricultural and related program impacts through Cooperative Extension, Agricultural Experiment Stations, and academic programs to key decision makers is a key goal of the CMP. Every effort will be made to take maximum use of the ECOP-ESCOP impacts database at [www.landgrantimpacts.org](http://www.landgrantimpacts.org).

#### *Roles and responsibilities of Land Grant administrators and regional executive directors:*

Regional Executive Directors/Administrators in Cooperative Extension and the Experiment Stations working together with deans/directors/administrators will assist

kglobal in developing the proper communication contacts for each state. (Each state may have unique external communication protocols that must be followed for success.) Points of contact for Cooperative Extension, Experiment Station and academic programs will be identified for each institution. The regional executive directors and Land Grant administrators will be expected to provide input on thematic areas to the sections.

### And what else? What's the expectation of the CMC?

#### *Monitoring and assessment of the project and effort:*

The overall purpose of the project is to increase awareness and federal funding flowing through competitive and capacity lines to AES and CES. While increases in advocated lines in the budget above previous levels is one metric of success of the effort, this does not necessarily indicate cause and effect. A systematic means of assessing the efficacy of the effort is needed.

What are those metrics? If we consider who the stakeholders are, then what metrics could be used to assess:

- How helpful kglobal efforts were in providing Congressional members with information needed to respond positively to advocacy efforts by Cornerstone.
- The impact of outputs related to social media, articles in traditional media, and visibility through [www.agisamerica.org](http://www.agisamerica.org).

What is the process for development of assessment metrics? We suggest bifurcating the assessment of kglobal and Cornerstone. Kglobal is a communications group and Cornerstone is a lobbying company. We'd suggest developing outputs and outcomes that address the efforts of each company alone. Those should be clearly defined in the contracts executed with each company. Then an assessment of the overall effort could be undertaken. That could be as simple as "did the federal funding rate increase?"

As a general observation, the amount of money going into the communications and marketing effort is extremely modest. We need to be careful of developing unrealistic expectations.

#### *Extending the effort? Where are the opportunities for added value?*

How could the communications and marketing effort be extended for collateral good?

How might institutional communications specialists be used in this effort?

Last the Plan of Work Committee hoped to define clear workflow processes as we wrestled with the overall organizational hierarchy and the identification of key decision makers.

