



# East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA) Strategic Communications Campaign

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*In partnership with*  
**East Central Intergovernmental Association**



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# **ECIA Final Report**

Strategic Communication Campaigns

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# Faculty Introduction and Recommendations

## ***Overview***

The students in the Spring 2017 Strategic Communications Campaign Class partnered with the IISC to create communication plans based on needs identified by the participating partner organizations. During the semester, students applied the academic skills and concepts learned in class to their client work.

The concepts and academic skills reflected in the final projects include:

- A detailed analysis of the organization and the communication situation they faced
- Research methods and results
- Strategic messaging recommendations based on concepts and theories discussed in class
- Specific tactics and communication channels based on concepts discussed in class
- Examples and/or suggestions of graphic design work
- Budget recommendations
- Suggestions for measurement and evaluation techniques
- Suggestions for a crisis communication plan

## ***Additional Faculty Assessment and Recommendations***

The communications challenges facing the ECIA are twofold. First, as indicated in the student report, there is a lack of cohesive communication protocol internally. This issue was articulated in both initial client meetings and within the research findings. Increasing the effectiveness of internal communications can help the organization function in a more efficient manner. Additionally, improving internal communications can help employees and staff advocate on behalf of the organization in a more effective way.

The second challenge ECIA faces is a lack of organizational awareness externally. As outlined in the student report, many citizens and community stakeholders are unaware of the valuable resources the ECIA provides for their communities. Increasing the organizational profile can help community stakeholders and citizens advocate on behalf of the work that the ECIA does.

In addition to the strategies outlined in the student report, the following recommendations are being made the course instructor:

### Internal Communication Recommendations

**Develop a monthly interdepartmental email newsletter.** The ECIA should develop an email newsletter to be sent to staff and employees on a monthly basis. Content may include general organizational news and information, employee spotlights, community spotlights, and project spotlights. The newsletter can be created in a free email marketing program such as Mail Chimp or Constant Contact.

**Create a private Facebook group for internal networking and discussion.** A private Facebook group is an easy and effective way to connect employees and staff. Individuals can share project information, suggest resources, and participate in general discussions.

**Host special networking events.** In addition to interdepartmental meetings, special staff appreciation events and programs can be an effective way for employees to connect, network, and share information on the projects they are working on. For example, staff events can be held in different partner communities to highlight specific projects and work.

### External Communication Recommendations

**Develop and implement cohesive organizational touch points.** All print and digital materials should have a cohesive brand message and look. Press releases, advertisements, letterhead, brochures, and mailers should all contain consistent fonts, brand color schemes, and updated logos. Consistency across these channels can help increase organizational recognition.

**Participate in community events.** As a method for community outreach, the ECIA could participate in local community events and festivals (such as county fairs, town celebrations, etc.) The ECIA could host a booth with information on the various projects the organization has contributed to the community. This is an effective way to directly engage with citizens, increase organizational awareness, and share the mission of the ECIA.

**Develop an email newsletter for community stakeholders.** An email newsletter can also be sent to community stakeholders (such as city administrators, county supervisors, city council members, etc.) This can be a very effective way to notify communities of grant and/or funding opportunities, application deadlines, and general news and information happening at the ECIA.

## Executive Summary

The East Central Intergovernmental Association, ECIA, was formed in 1974 with a goal of developing regional solutions for small communities. The ECIA works with member governments, their citizens, and others to enhance the life for Iowa communities in Cedar, Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson Counties. Through the ECIA, local governments share resources to achieve success they could not on their own. ECIA is an evolving organization creating new initiatives and programs in the areas of economic development, transportation planning, transit, housing, job training, grant-writing, grant administration, economic development, planning, codification, preparation of financial reports, and general information. The key problem the ECIA would like to address is improving its internal communication as an organization. This includes improvements in the areas of company-wide uniformity, interdepartmental communication and the organization's social media presence. Externally, the ECIA hopes to raise public awareness about what it can offer to member communities by strengthening its relationship with city officials.

Our main goal in working with the ECIA throughout the semester was to improve its internal communication. Inconsistency internally stood out as the biggest problem to us. In an effort to improve this we encourage the use of a press release template and uniform email signature so any content that is created looks professional and is uniform across the ECIA. We also conducted research on current ECIA employee satisfaction with their internal communication and found areas to improve. The main opportunity identified through research is more interdepartmental communication, which is an area we also address. Focusing externally, the ECIA seeks to improve public perception of their organization. Utilizing social media, we provided guidelines on specific content to be posted online. Our hope was that by increasing the ECIA's social media presence, citizens would connect with them online and receive more exposure to the community work they are doing.

# Organizational Analysis

## *Internal Environment*

The ECIA works to better the lives of citizens in the Eastern Iowa area. The projects the ECIA becomes involved with are successful; however, the ECIA falls short when it comes to their ability to promote the good their projects are doing. The ECIA prides itself on their services to help grow small town communities in their region, which include such things as writing grants that can be used for home improvement projects. Because of limited resources in the member communities, these types of projects may not be possible without the ECIA's support. Lack of communication is one of the ECIA's biggest problems. They do not have any sort of communication plan, so many citizens are not aware of the good the ECIA does. As an organization which works to better its people's' lives, the ECIA is concerned about the public's lack of knowledge of the organization's contributions to the region.



The ECIA has an opportunity to create a communication plan and use this to help educate their public. They need to work on their internal communication, so that in the future they can work as a cohesive team. Once they improve their communication, they can implement a campaign highlighting positive impacts in their region as well as upcoming activities.

## *Public Perception*

As mentioned above, the citizens of Eastern Iowa are largely not aware of the ECIA and their efforts in the region. People do not like or dislike the ECIA, they are just not fully informed on all the work the ECIA does. There is a major lack of visibility and public knowledge so the ECIA, resulting in few people following their external communication efforts. There are no reviews for the ECIA on Yelp or Google. There is one positive review on Facebook from a citizen thanking the ECIA for installing a ramp. Often, citizens learn about ECIA only after they have been directly affected by a project.

### *External Environment*

Despite the ECIA's desire to better its relationship with the citizens in communities, they will find more success as a company if they focus on governmental officials. They are the ones currently in contact with the ECIA and they are the ones who can push efforts to promote the ECIA's work. In terms of the ECIA's member governments, they seem to get along with each other but need to improve their communication. This will allow these communities to work more cohesively together as a team.

### *SWOT Analysis*

*Strengths:* The ECIA is an established company. They are providing beneficial services for the communities within the ECIA. They currently have a newsletter to send out to community members to inform them on new projects.

*Weaknesses:* The ECIA lacks uniformity within the company -all employees have different email signatures; different company logos are used. They do not have a companywide communication plan making it challenging to create a uniform look on company products. The ECIA lacks a strong social media presence. Their current Facebook and LinkedIn pages are outdated.

*Opportunities:* Creating a company communication plan to establish uniformity. Develop current newsletter to expand audience. Build a stronger presence on social media for company to stay current and reach the audience using social media.

*Threats:* The lack of a concrete communication plan threatens project implementation and revenue. There is not a definite plan of sharing information or reaching community members making it difficult to increase revenue.

## Situational Analysis

The ECIA is facing many internal communication issues. A key challenge is lack of uniformity within the organization. Internally, this includes varying email signatures and lack of consistent formatting or protocol for press releases. Some employees are still sending out emails with the ECIA's 30-year anniversary ribbon from multiple years ago. These misalignments carry over to external communication issues, as the press releases and newsletters are the ECIA's prominent medium of public communication. This organization will need to address communication and uniformity across the boards.

A second weakness in communication for the ECIA is its nonsufficient online presence. Their Facebook and LinkedIn pages need to be revamped, as the Facebook page hasn't posted since November. The ECIA website needs to be fixed as well. On their site, there is no access to any of their social media accounts or mention about their newsletter, which is produced bi-monthly.

Fixing the uniformity issues will allow the organization to run in a more efficient manner, making communicating with the public much easier and more successful. Updating and revamping their online social presence will allow the ECIA to reach a greater audience.

### *Identify Publics*

The ECIA strives to reach interested community members in Cedar, Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson counties who are unaware of the work done by the organization. These community members are an important public to reach to expand communication and gain more revenue for the ECIA. By focusing on this public the ECIA has the opportunity to grow their current network and directly target those interested in their message.

Another key public for the ECIA are their employee stakeholders. Change is needed in the internal communication for the organization. To successfully implement those changes, all stakeholders must have consistent training and protocol within the ECIA to meet its vision and ideals.

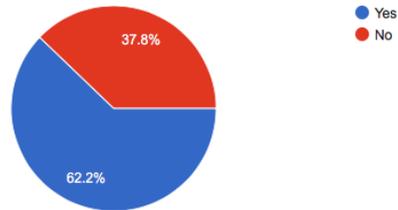
## Research

The research conducted internally and externally on the East Central Intergovernmental Association led us to put our main focus on the company's internal communication plan. In the questionnaire sent out to each employee, we asked how they felt their current

communication and which modes they prefer to find a communication plan that fits best for their company. We received 37 responses. Many of which answered that they are satisfied with current internal communication. However, there is room for improvement. Many claim they are unaware of what other departments are doing. 62 percent, or 23 employees, said their job would benefit from more communication, but prefer not to have agency wide meetings. From these findings, we moved forward on a strategic communication strategy that would best fit the company's needs. By creating uniformity within the company and enhancing their current internal communication with companywide email updates, we believe the company will be more successful and satisfy the needs of their employees.

The research conducted with external partners of the ECIA came back very generic. Many were pleased with the current relationship, this also contributed to our efforts on internal communication. By strengthening their internal communication and ensuring all employees are on the same page, this allows them to provide services better to their external partners.

Would your job benefit from more internal communication? (37 responses)



# Communication Strategies

## *Goals and Objectives*

For this project, we decided to focus on three essential goals for the ECIA. These include:

- Increase member communities' awareness about the ECIA
- Create uniformity within the ECIA's internal environment
- Increase interdepartmental communication for the ECIA

The ECIA wants more people to know about it and what it does. Getting that accomplished was the key aspect of external communication we focused on. However, before we could focus on that, the ECIA needs internal communication improvements. Uniformity and communication sufficiency were our central focus points. The ECIA has been operating without templates for content and with employees presenting themselves in non-uniform manners. Further, the employees have been working while communicating with each other very little. Providing the ECIA with answers to the related issues of uniformity and interdepartmental communication is what we set out to do.

Based on our goals, we had multiple objectives. These include

- Create uniform email signature and press release template
- Double interdepartmental meeting frequency
- Improve website and Facebook usage
- Create a magazine ad

Creating one template each for an email signature and press release for all employees to go off of is a way to correct the uniformity issue. To further better the internal communications, we recommend wanted doubling their interdepartmental meeting frequency. It would be a great way to improve employees' communication and understanding for each other. After taking a look at the various platforms the ECIA is currently using, we narrowed down our external communication improvement efforts. We considered opportunities to improve the website, and set out to figure out both how to improve the ECIA's Facebook usage and how to go about creating an advertisement. These objectives would address the goal of increasing awareness for the ECIA.

### *Message Strategies*

We realize it is key even for messaging strategies to focus on both internal and external communication for the ECIA.

Internally, we want the new message to be to push more communication, uniformity, and clarity within the ECIA. The messaging strategy should encourage the departments to communicate with each other more frequently. We want employees to be more knowledgeable about their colleague's updates, and we want the organization to be able to operate uniformly. This will include specifically an email signature format of which all the employees should start using for all of their work emails.

The strategy here is to play into what the employees want while getting them on board with the improvements. As we mention in the research section, many employees are content with current communication and even went as far as to say they are not interested in improving communication. When taking our ideas and putting them into context as objects of change, the employees' opinions on the matter make sense. Most of them have been working with the ECIA for ten or fifteen years or more. However, we want employees to take something new that is simple, like the email signature, and implement it. The message should get it across to them that operations would run more smoothly and potentially with a few simple changes, like an email signature.

Coupled with that will be providing the employees with a message to communicate more interdepartmentally. Employees answered that one area of communication they would be fine with improving is the interdepartmental communication. That is a good start, and the hope is to suggest doubling the interdepartmental meetings (that currently occur quarterly) and have employees take to the idea and comply.

Past those matters, we must handle the external communication. The ECIA is an organization that exists to do good for its small communities. The messaging strategy for the external communication involves generating a cheerful, fun, and bright message. When consumers see anything about the ECIA, they should have a positive reaction. We want the members of the ECIA's communities to become more aware of the organization's existence. Further, we want everyone who knows of its existence to associate it with the betterment of the community they live in. Whether external communication be through the website, Facebook, or various forms of advertisement, the ECIA should brand itself as impactful and beneficial all of the time. The association wants more publicity and a great way to stick in their community members' minds is to make the community members believe that what the ECIA does matters to them. The external messaging should cast the ECIA in a light that grants them the appearance

of essentiality. We want to citizens to draw connections between their everyday lives and work being done by ECIA. If we can make people attach the ECIA with a positive image from their lives, we will have succeeded. The external communications strategy for the ECIA is to couple the coming increase in external communication with an improvement of each piece of that communication that sticks in the minds of community members.

### *Action Strategies*

To get the public to interact more with the ECIA - whether that be via Facebook likes, website hits, or phone calls - we want the ECIA to launch an external campaign. This campaign would include advertising to a pertinent audience a message that is positive. The advertisement should allow the consumer to associate the ECIA with something tangible and positive that the ECIA has done. Each new advertisement should display something tangible that is different from the one in the previous ad. The advertisement should also include basic information about the ECIA so consumers can learn more about the organization. Through conversations with our project partner, we learned that the organization prefers not to use newspaper ads and would consider a magazine advertisement instead.

Further, we want the ECIA to implement a greatly improved Facebook strategy. The association has multiple social media profiles, but improving everything at once is too hefty a task for the time and resources at both our hands and the hands of the ECIA. Therefore, we believe the ECIA would benefit greatly from revamping their Facebook. The ECIA provides services that improve communities, both for the youngest members and for the oldest. In regards to their target audience for these external communications, it includes mostly community members who are middle-aged and older. Looking at the social media the ECIA has (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest), Facebook is the most pertinent and potentially helpful for this campaign, especially for our purposes.

We would like the ECIA to greatly increase its Facebook activity. They currently post very infrequently, so we want them to begin posting at least weekly. We would also like them to share posts from other Facebook profiles, like those of their member counties and cities. In our "Implementation" section later, we outline with examples the kind of schedule the ECIA could follow as well as the type of content they could be posting and sharing. The strategy in this is to use Facebook to aid in the overall increase in awareness the ECIA is looking for. We recommend that the ECIA boost its Facebook posts. This will increase the number of users who see a given post. Whether they boost the posts or not, they need to post and share weekly if not more. The more times people see an ECIA post, the more likely it is they

remember what the ECIA is, a feat the ECIA wishes more people could do. Sharing posts is another great way to do this. By associating themselves with their member counties, cities, and projects, the ECIA will be drawing more and more attention to themselves. They will be far more likely to have their own posts shared by the very pages the ECIA is sharing the content of.

In the effort to gain more recognition, it is imperative that the ECIA keeps up its website. We want the ECIA to add on its home page a front-and-center link to its Facebook page somewhere appropriate, likely in the masthead below their contact information. Further, the new look is a great improvement over the previous layout. That does not, however, mean it should be untouched for months. The ECIA should keep their site updated with new information and photos as often as possible. At a minimum, the website and Facebook platforms should each be updated weekly. The hope is that starting with a weekly schedule will allow the ECIA to get a hang of things and have no problem updating more and more frequently.

### *Tactics*

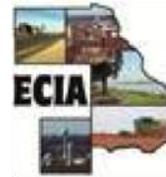
At one point, a central tactic for the messaging strategy of the ECIA was to craft a press release template to be used from here on out. Thus, to address the lack of uniformity in press releases, we advised the ECIA to stick to one particular template that they tried out in the past and left it at that. Past that, we focused our external messaging tactics on creating an advertisement. The ECIA believes that creating a magazine ad in the Iowa League of Cities' magazine, *Cityscape*, would be more effective than creating newspaper ads for their communities. The ECIA's ad will run in *Cityscape*, which is distributed monthly. The ad, which we believe should either be half of a page or a full page, will be a photograph from a project the ECIA completed. The project chosen for each ad should be easily identifiable in multiple ECIA communities. On the ad the ECIA will include a link to its website, a link to its Facebook, a message inviting consumers to find out more, and a message inviting anyone interested in helping out to donate, complete with enough information for someone to do so.

To address the internal communication struggles, we want the ECIA to schedule more interdepartmental meetings. As mentioned, we recommend that they double their interdepartmental meeting frequency. The ECIA has struggled with uniformity among employees and their external communication. For this, we want the ECIA, if it brings press releases back, to stick with this template that they used once in the past:



To further address the uniformity issues, we created an email signature based loosely on the format our project partner Marla Quinn has been using. We want all ECIA employees from the top to the bottom to implement this signature. Here is the referenced email signature, using Marla as an example employee:

[Marla Quinn](#) | Grants and Development Coordinator  
East Central Intergovernmental Association  
7600 Commerce Park | Dubuque IA 52002  
563.690.5703 (direct) | 563.556.0348 (fax)



# Budget and Implementation

## *Budget*

While no formal budget was provided, ECIA did express an interest in advertising in the Iowa League of Cities’ monthly magazine, *Cityscape*. Depending on what kind of advertisement the ECIA chooses, prices range from \$165-\$965 with an additional \$75 fee if the ECIA wants to add a whole ad link which would bring a reader directly to their website.

Ad sizes (width x height in inches)	Price/insertion	Add Whole Ad Link
Full Page (8.5 x 11, trim 9 x 11.5, bleeds)	\$965	\$75
Half Page (8 x 5)	\$555	\$75
Third Page - horizontal (8 x 3.25)	\$440	\$75
Third Page - vertical (2.25 x 10)	\$375	\$75
Sixth Page (2.25 x 5)	\$240	\$75
Professional Square (2.25 x 2.25)	\$165	\$75

Since the ECIA does not have any sort of marketing budget it is important to keep costs down. One way to do this would be hiring an unpaid intern to create the ads for the Iowa League of Nations. This way a new employee would not need to be hired.

Another potential cost could be boosting a post on Facebook. The primary social media outlet used by the ECIA is Facebook. Boosting a post means that your Facebook post will appear higher in the News Feed and more frequently so there is a better chance your intended audience will see it. The cost to boost a post depends on how many people you want to reach on Facebook. The more people the ECIA wants to reach with their boosted post the higher their budget must be. The chosen budget will then be spent throughout the duration of the boosted post. \$5 would be a good initial budget for them to boost a Facebook post. The boosted post can run from one to seven days.

## *Implementation*

Our main efforts have focused on improving the ECIA’s internal communication as they have had many problems with consistency. While we are not launching a new campaign, we are proposing new ideas that will encourage more company-wide consistency. These include a uniform press release template and uniform email template. Marla Quinn will be responsible for presenting these new templates and

making sure all employees are aware that they should all be using the same premade template. She will also be responsible for creating content, such as newsletters and press releases, and contacting media outlets. Additionally, we believe an unpaid intern would be the perfect person to send out the company's newsletter and keep up with social media. This intern would be responsible for running the ECIA's Facebook page and any additional social media sites the ECIA may decide to utilize. This is a way for the ECIA to keep costs down and young people are often savvy with social media platforms. While the ECIA does have a Facebook page they struggle to post consistently on it and struggle with content to post. We have included a mock schedule of what to post and when for the month of June.

6/1 @ 12 noon	A post about the upcoming projects the ECIA will be working on in the month of June.
6/8 @ 12 noon	A post about a new grant the ECIA just wrote, including who it is going to and what will be done with the money.
6/15 @ 12 noon	An update on something happening in one of the ECIA's counties.
6/22 @ 12 noon	Share a Facebook post about a community event posted originally by one of the ECIA's five counties. (This should be the default post if for some reason there is nothing to post about.)
6/29 @ 12 noon	A post about the projects that were completed in June or are still being worked on. Essentially, a progress report with pictures.

An example of each post is provided below:



6/1: We are just as excited as you for school to be out and the weather to be warming up! This month we are so excited to be working with Cedar county to build a basketball court for their community. We will also be working with Jackson county to help finish up the remodel of their Big Wave pool!

6/8: We are happy to announce we have just distributed a grant to Dubuque County for the construction of a new park! Updates to come!



6/15: Be sure to sign up for Clinton County's 10th annual 5k benefiting Windsor Elementary School. Only 5 more days to sign up!

6/22: Make sure you check out Delaware County's garage sales going on all weekend long!



6/29: Here is a sneak peek at Jackson County's Big Wave pool that was just completed! It will open for the public next weekend.

## Evaluation

To find out if our goals and objectives have worked, ECIA should be monitor the number of people checking out their website and Facebook pages over a six-month period. Once the company starts to post on their social media sites, such as Facebook, at least once or twice a day for two months they will be using Hootsuite to monitor their progress on the internet. With Hootsuite, they will be able to monitor their social profiles, receive analytic reports, assign team assignments, custom brand URL, receive one on one training on how to improve their posts, and be able to schedule when they want to publish their posts.

We recommend that ECIA creates Google alerts so they can monitor when they are being mentioned anywhere on the internet. Google alerts is a free tracking tool so it will not affect their budget, but it will improve their relationship with their followers and increase their engagement within the communities by helping them to know what is being and said so they can respond to these posts.

Once the various external communication tactics are in place, a great way for the ECIA to collect the knowledge necessary for evaluation is through surveys. We believe the ECIA should survey its participating counties, a method that could be conducted a number of ways, depending on what the ECIA sees fit. One effective process would include either emailing or mailing a survey to each donor asking them how they learned about the ECIA (magazine advertisement, word of mouth, Facebook post, etc.). These results would allow the ECIA to evaluate the effectiveness of its different tactics.

After our implementation of a uniformed press release template, ECIA should send out surveys and polls to ECIA employees through their email accounts to see how they feel about these changes, whether they are positive or negative and the ECIA will adjust accordingly.

## Summary of Recommended Communication Activities

- Consistent signature lines
- Standardization of press releases
- Positive messaging
- Focus social media efforts on Facebook
- Add social media links to website
- Post on Facebook weekly
- Share FB posts from other organizations and member communities
- Maintain website with fresh content
- Use magazine advertising to reach a broad audience
- Double frequency of staff meetings
- Send frequent internal e-mail updates
- Create Google alerts
- Use HootSuite
- Evaluate progress with surveys
- Hire an intern to implement communications plan

## Appendix: Crisis Communication Plan

*Purpose of the Plan: Make a plan of action for ANY CRISIS, using an online and offline format for the plan of action*

The ECIA prides itself in working with local government, and their citizens, to create better life for the lowan communities in Cedar, Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson Counties. In this field of work, the ECIA must always be aware of a possible crisis, as one mistake or false accusation could jeopardize the trust of citizens. It is for this reason that a crisis communication plan is necessary to protect the ECIA and their stakeholders. The following plan creates general guidelines for companywide communication, communication with the press, and communication with the public in the event of an emergency.

In the event of a crisis, this plan must be followed precisely to create a companywide message and must be performed in a timely manner to ensure public faith is maintained and respected.

Although few crisis' can be predicted before they take place, we can effectively define what warrants one. As an organization that works with city government, the ECIA must be prepared for some crisis' more than others. Although this plan will not be specific to any one crisis in particular, the guidelines allow it to be flexible with most situations. As a general rule for the ECIA, a crisis shall be defined as any action or event that creates a negative perception from the public of the ECIA or their partner organizations, damages their credibility with other local governments, or prohibits them from being able to perform their job of helping their communities.

### *Detailed Escalation Plan*

There are specific steps the ECIA must follow while responding to a crisis. The first step in any crisis is determining the appropriate team of employees that can represent the company. As a general rule for the ECIA, the following roles will need to be filled for each crisis:

### *Spokesperson for the ECIA*

For an organization the size of the ECIA, there should be only one person who speaks with the media. Job responsibilities include media press conferences, public statements, etc. This person should be very

familiar with the details of the crisis and all ECIA company protocols and regulations, and preferably a high-ranking employee.

#### *Crisis Manager*

This person coordinates all ECIA actions during a crisis. Job responsibilities include preparing the spokesperson for all media coverage, determining which media to contact, crafting the organizational response to the crisis, allocating the work and responsibilities amongst team members, and providing a timeline for the crisis plan.

#### *Media Relations Specialist*

This person is responsible for all contact with relevant media outlets. They should be available at all times during the crisis to answer questions or concerns from the media. Other responsibilities include directing media to the correct people in the organization and allowing the media to craft stories beneficial to the ECIA.

#### *Media Research Specialist*

This person is responsible for all media research of the crisis. This includes coverage in all mediums, including social media, television, print, radio, etc. It is their responsibility to gauge how the public and media is reacting to the crisis.

#### *Writing Strategist*

This person is responsible for all organizational writing in regard to the crisis. Responsibilities include drafting press releases, social media, both proactive and reactive, drafting of speech writing and talking points for the spokesperson, etc. This person should understand how to craft a message to the media in a timely and efficient manner.

Once a crisis communication team is in place, the organization must work together to craft a message to the public that identifies the problem in place and assures that it will never happen again. While the

message crafting is taking place, the organization must agree upon an effective way to distribute the message to public. This could be through social media, media contact, etc, as long as the organization takes a proactive approach.

To effectively reach the media and public with this message, the ECIA must prepare a list of publics to contact. For this plan, the three publics that are essential for the ECIA to contact include, all citizens within the organization's jurisdiction, all local and relevant news media, and employees of the ECIA. Although these three are deemed the most important by us, it is noteworthy to remember that each crisis will differ in relevant stakeholders.

With the message crafted and the publics chosen, the ECIA must determine the plan of action for reaching them. Each crisis will differ in the distribution of the message. However, in every crisis scenario, the most important task the ECIA must complete is message proactiveness. The crisis will spiral out of control unless the organization is able to effectively get ahead of the story. Tasks that will help the ECIA complete this include contacting relevant media before they seek the organization out and researching possible concerns of the public.

It is important to understand the crisis in full to effectively get ahead of the story. If the organization has a full grasp of possible consequences, they will more effectively be able to spin the story to their liking. For example, by contacting the media ahead of time, the ECIA can pick and choose which issues to focus on. The organization will be better prepared to control the story and lead it in a direction of their choosing.

Additionally, if the organization can prepare for media and public questioning and concerns, they will be better able to deal with them in the moment. By preparing the spokesperson ahead of time by creating talking points and example questions, the organization will be better prepared to tackle the media bombardment. This is important to prevent mistakes that could potentially damage the company reputation.

Finally, it is important to establish a timeline for all company communication and crisis management. This includes both short and long term management.

The company must have uniformity in all responses to media and the public. If a response is not made in a timely manner, the public will begin to have doubt in the truthfulness of the message. It is for this reason that we suggest all responses to be done as soon as possible, especially in regard to social media. The writing strategist must be available at all times to effectively respond to any concerns over social

media. This will go a long way in proving to the public that the ECIA cares about their concerns and is working to fix them. For the media, we suggest a 24-hour maximum response policy. If a response is not made within that time period, it will become a burden for the media and they may not craft the story in your organization's favor.

This plan must be followed precisely to avoid fallout from a crisis scenario. Although not guaranteed to fix every crisis, this plan should help the ECIA control the damage from any crisis in the future.

### *Spokespeople*

For any crisis, the ECIA must choose an appropriate member to represent them. While each scenario could dictate a different employee, we feel that in general, Kelly is the best person for this job. She is very knowledgeable of all departments within the ECIA and could effectively present a message to the public by keeping a calm and intelligent demeanor.

### *Monitoring / Follow-up*

In the aftermath and de-escalation of a crisis, it is important to remember that the job is not complete until the situation has passed completely. To effectively complete the crisis communication plan, the ECIA must be confident that the public has forgotten or forgiven the situation enough to allow business to be back to normal. This requires a few steps to establish that the job is complete.

The first task is to continue researching the media until the ECIA crisis is no longer included. The media research specialist must be alert to news stories each day, even if they only have some relevance to the ECIA crisis. The research and media contact from the ECIA should continue to be proactive until the situation is over.

Additionally, the writing strategist should continue to be proactive in social media engagement until all concerns have stopped. Whether there is engagement from hundreds of Iowa residents or one, there should be a response to all until it has concluded.

Once the media and public have stopped questioning the ECIA about the crisis, the organization will need to decide on follow-up messages. We believe that in most situations, after the crisis has concluded the organization should change their priority to shifting the story to positive ECIA projects. By presenting

feel-good stories about community involvement, the public will forget about the crisis and move on, allowing the ECIA to continue their hard work in creating a better community for Iowa residents.

Finally, the last step in the crisis communication plan is archiving all records from the situation. It is important to have these on hand in the event of another crisis so that the company can quickly allocate resources and begin work to solve the problem.