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**FROM:** Robert Thompson, General Manager

**SUBJECT:**

## **PUBLIC AFFAIRS STRATEGIC PLAN FOR FISCAL YEARS 2024-2026 MID-YEAR UPDATE**

### **GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION**

**RECOMMENDATION:** Recommend to the Board of Directors to:

Receive and file the Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024- 2026 Mid-Year Update.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Orange County Sanitation District's (OC San) Public Affairs Office is responsible for creating, organizing, and disseminating all internal and external communication. The primary objective of the Public Affairs team is to deliver messages that are accurate, transparent, and designed to foster trust and confidence. An integrated Public Affairs Strategic Plan is essential to effectively manage the variety of audiences served.

### **RELEVANT STANDARDS**

- Build brand, trust, and support with policy makers and community leaders
- Maintain collaborative and cooperative relationships with regulators, stakeholders, and neighboring communities
- Make it easy for people to understand OC San's roles and value to the community
- Maintain influential legislative advocacy and a public outreach program

### **PROBLEM**

There are various initiatives and messages that the Public Affairs Office must share with internal and external stakeholders for continued operation and efficiency of OC San. The messaging must be consistent, concise, and thoroughly planned to be efficient and effective.

### **PROPOSED SOLUTION**

The Public Affairs team has developed a plan to span fiscal years 2024-25 and 2025-26, in support of OC San's adopted two-year budget. The Public Affairs Strategic Plan includes goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics to execute the various messages and efforts set forth by OC San's Strategic Plan and the General Manager's Work Plan. The two-year plan commenced July 1, 2024, and updates are provided to the Administration Committee every six months.

## PRIOR COMMITTEE/BOARD ACTIONS

June 2024 - Board and Steering Committee received and filed the Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2026.

December 2024 - Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2026 Mid-Year Update

July 2025 - Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2026 Year-End Update

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

OC San's Public Affairs Office Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2026 (Plan) was developed based upon the principles of OC San's mission of protecting public health and the environment and to support the implementation of OC San's Strategic Plan. This Plan offers a vision to unify communication efforts and focus resources to achieve the greatest impact and greatest results. The Plan consists of 11 categories. Below is a recap of the last six months of the second year of the plan.

- Employee Engagement
  - Goal: Optimize communication with internal audience including those operating in the field.
    - Posted 275 *The San Box* Posts (intranet)
    - Distributed 26 *Three Things to Know* Emails (weekly email)
    - Published Three (3) *Pipeline* issues
    - Hosted Five (5) employee events
    - Distributed 44 New Employee Welcome kits
- Industry Experts
  - Goal: Establish and solidify OC San's reputation as infrastructure leaders in the wastewater and resource recovery industry.
    - Received 16 awards
    - Participated in eight (8) speaking engagements reaching over 400 people
- Media Relations
  - Goal: Cultivate relationships with traditional and social media journalists and influencers.
    - Issued two (2) press releases
    - Published 298 social media posts across five platforms including ads reaching over 143k people
    - Increased our followers by 635
- Agency Branding and Messaging
  - Goal: Enhance OC San's image and branding by utilizing proper messaging in external communication pieces such as OC San's website, presentations, digital media, advertising, which includes maintaining a positive experience for OC San visitors.
    - Published one (1) issue of OC San Connection Newsletter reaching over 3,300 subscribers

- Published 31 articles on the OC San website
- Completed 67 graphic design projects
- Educational Outreach  
Goal: Identify and implement avenues for education and outreach within OC San's service area to promote OC San's mission and vision.
  - Hosted 52 tours reaching over 913 people
  - Participated in six (6) community events reaching over 1,000 people
  - Completed the Headquarters Educational Display- Phase 2
  - Completed the sixth session of Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy with 42 graduates
- Capital and Maintenance Outreach  
Goal: Develop and implement outreach programs that will engage the communities affected by OC San construction and maintenance activities.
  - Distributed ten printed notifications reaching over 29,000 people
  - Issued 24 electronic messages
  - Held various meetings with project stakeholders
    - City of Cypress- Traffic Commission Presentation
    - City of Los Alamitos- City Council Presentation
    - City of Los Alamitos- City Manager and Public Works Director
    - Newport Beach- Bayside Village HOA Meeting
    - Newport Beach- Linda Isle HOA Meeting
- Legislative Affairs  
Goal: Proactive engagement in legislative advocacy efforts that could impact OC San and the wastewater industry.
  - Developed the 2026 Legislative and Regulatory Plan
  - Issued two (2) State position letters
  - Joined in one (1) Federal Position coalition letter
- Grants Coordination  
Goal: Monitor, track, and apply for grants available to OC San.
  - Continued support of the \$3.45 million in community project funding for the Supercritical Water Oxidation Project.
- Local Government Affairs  
Goal: Ensure that local elected officials, member agencies, stakeholders, and OC San Board Members are actively engaged in the work of OC San.
  - Issued monthly Board Member Speaking Points
  - Developed OC San's Annual Report
  - Hosted in-person State of OC San with 155 participants
  - Published six "Five Minutes Per Month"
  - Produced and distributed two (2) member-agency outreach toolkits
- Crisis Management  
Goal: Ensure the Public Affairs Office serves as the primary spokesperson for OC San during

normal business and crisis scenarios and facilitates the dissemination of information.

- Continued monitoring and updating Public Affairs Office's Continuity of Operations Plan
- General Manager Support  
Goal: Ensure the General Manager and Assistant General Manager are supported with information necessary to communicate to the varied OC San audiences.
  - Developed six (6) General Manager Monthly Reports
  - Prepared Monthly talking points
  - Developed material for speaking engagements and presentations

## **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

All items included in the Public Affairs Strategic Plan FY 2024-2026 are budgeted in the FY 2024-2026 Budget.

## **ATTACHMENT**

*The following attachment(s) may be viewed on-line at the OC San website ([www.ocsan.gov](http://www.ocsan.gov)) with the complete agenda package:*

- Public Affairs Strategic Plan, FY 2024-2026
- Presentation