



ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Agenda Report

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File #: 2025-4395

Agenda Date: 7/23/2025

Agenda Item No: 18.

FROM: Robert Thompson, General Manager
Originator: Jennifer Cabral, Director of Communications

SUBJECT:

YEAR-END UPDATE TO THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS STRATEGIC PLAN FOR FISCAL YEARS 2024-2026

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Year-End Update to the Public Affairs Strategic Plan (FY 2024-2026).

BACKGROUND

The Orange County Sanitation District's (OC San) Public Affairs Office is responsible for developing, managing and disseminating all internal and external communications. The primary objective of the Public Affairs team is to ensure messages are accurate, transparent, and foster trust and confidence in OC San. An integrated Public Affairs Strategic Plan is essential to engage the diverse audiences and align outreach efforts with OC San's mission and values.

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

OC San's Public Affairs Office supports a wide range of initiatives that require effective communication to both internal and external stakeholders. Inconsistent or uncoordinated messaging can reduce impact and hinder public understanding of OC San's mission and services.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

The current Public Affairs Strategic Plan includes goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics to execute the various messages and efforts set forth by OC San. The two-year plan is effective through June

2026, with updates provided to the Administration Committee every six months including a year-end report.

PRIOR COMMITTEE/BOARD ACTIONS

December 2024 - Received and filed the Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2026 Mid-Year Update.

June 2024 - Received and filed the Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2026.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Year-End Update:

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 first year of the plan.

- Employee Engagement Communications
Goal: Optimize communication with our internal audience, including those operating in the field.
 - Conducted Employee Engagement Survey with 55% response rate
 - Redesigned the Volunteer Incentive Program to encourage employee participation
 - 635 volunteer hours
 - Posted 742 The San Box Posts (Intranet)
 - Launched a new platform for The San Box
 - Emailed 52 *Three Things to Know* emails (weekly email)
 - Published six (6) *Pipeline* issues
 - Hosted five (5) employee events
 - Developed a new employee welcome kit
 - Conducted an employee t-shirt design contest
 - Hosted Honor Wall event for five honorees
- Industry Experts
Goal: Establish and solidify OC San's reputation as infrastructure leader in the wastewater and resource recovery industry.
 - 16 awards received
 - 31 speaking engagements reaching over 1,403 people
 - Launched new Resource Innovation for a Sustainable Environment (RISE) program
 - Participated in Regional conferences throughout the state (CASA, CWEA, WEFTEC and others)
 - OC Register Water Insert
 - Participated in the City Talk Show Podcast

- **Media Relations**

Goal: Cultivate relationships with traditional and social media journalists and influencers.

- 11 press releases issued
- 828 social media posts across five platforms with an average reach of 6,300
- 1,244 new followers across all platforms
- 30 articles published featuring OC San

- **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, and advertising, which includes maintaining a positive experience for OC San visitors.

- Launched new and redesigned ocsan.gov website
- Published Four (4) issues of the OC San Connection Newsletter reaching an average of 2,000 subscribers per issue.
- Published 49 articles on the OC San website
- Completed 217 graphic design projects
- Developed an educational display plan for the OC San Headquarters
- Issued RFP for video library - contract award in July
- Added 43 new honorees to the permittee awards program

- **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.

- Performed 110 tours reaching over 1,440 people
- Continued the partnership with the Heritage Museum of Orange County to include OC San messaging reaching approximately 2,500 people
- Participated in 11 community events reaching over 2,600 people
- Inside the Outdoors program leading to engagement with 1,200 students
- Hosted a spring session of the Wastewater 101 Citizens Academy that concluded with 43 graduates

- **Capital and Maintenance Outreach**

Goal: Develop and implement outreach programs that will engage the communities affected by OC San construction and maintenance activities.

- Outreach support for over a dozen CIP projects
- Eight (8) printed notifications distributed reaching over 18.3k people
- 38 electronic messages issued
- Four (4) presentations given to City Councils
- Conducted Construction Outreach team training to the engineering staff

- **Legislative Affairs**

Goal: Proactive engagement in legislative advocacy efforts that could impact OC San and the wastewater industry.

- Created an annual Legislative Plan
- Issued 11 State position letters

- Actively tracking 29 bills
- Advocacy Days in Sacramento
- Grants Coordination
Goal: Monitor, track, and apply for grants available to OC San.
 - Continue supporting the \$3.45 million in community project funding
- 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.
 - Board Member Speaking Points issued monthly
 - Coordinated Board Member Orientation
 - Developed OC San's Annual Report
 - Hosted an in-person State of OC San event with 150 participants
 - Hosted 26-member agency staff and council/board members for facility tours
 - Published 12 "Five Minutes Per Month" emails
 - Produced five (5) member-agency outreach toolkits
- Crisis Management
Goal: Ensure the Public Affairs Office serves as the primary spokesperson for OC San during normal business, crisis scenarios, and facilitates the dissemination of information.
 - Continue monitoring and updating Public Affairs Office's Continuity of Operations Plan
 - Supported OC San in emergency issues
- General Manager Support
Goal: Ensure the General Manager and Assistant General Manager are supported with information necessary to communicate to various OC San audiences.
 - Produced 12 General Manager Monthly Reports
 - Prepared monthly board member talking points
 - Developed material for speaking engagements and presentations
 - Coordinated Strategic Planning update workshops
 - General Manager's Work Plan coordination

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) with the complete agenda package:

- Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2026
- Presentation