



ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Agenda Report

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Agenda Item No: 13.

FROM: Robert Thompson, General Manager
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SUBJECT:

PUBLIC AFFAIRS STRATEGIC PLAN FOR FISCAL YEARS 2024-2026 SUMMARY

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file the Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2026 Summary.

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 Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2026 included goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics to execute the various messages and efforts set forth by OC San. The two-year plan was effective through June 2026, with updates provided to the Administration Committee every six

months, including a year-end report. With the period complete, a summary report has been prepared.

PRIOR COMMITTEE/BOARD ACTIONS

December 2025 - Received and filed the Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2026 Mid-Year Update.

July 2025 - Received and filed the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Year-End Update to the Public Affairs Strategic Plan (FY 2024-2026).

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

Summary of Fiscal Years 2024-2026:

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 offered a vision to unify communication efforts and focus resources to achieve the greatest impact and greatest results. The Plan consisted of 11 categories. Below is a summary of the completed goals of the two-year plan.

- **Employee Engagement Communications**

Goal: Optimize communication with internal audience including those operating in the field.

- Conducted an Employee Engagement Survey in fall 2024 with a 55 percent response rate
- Launched the *Community Corner* initiative in response to feedback from the engagement survey and held three events across Plant Nos. 1 & 2 and Headquarters
- Redesigned the Volunteer Incentive Program to increase employee participation
 - 1,160 volunteer hours
- Launched a newly designed intranet (The San Box)
 - Posted 1,241 stories and updates
- Distributed 104 *Three Things to Know* Emails (weekly email)
- Published 12 issues of the employee newsletter, *The Pipeline*
- Hosted 10 employee events
- Developed a new employee welcome kit and distributed 82 kits
- Held an employee t-shirt design contest; the winning design is available at the OC San company store
- Held first ever Employee Art Contest with six submissions
- Hosted the Honor Wall event for five honorees and over 100 guests
- Hosted the Take Your Kid to Work Day event for the first time since 2017 with over 200 kids and over 100 employees participating

- Held the first Employee Family Picnic in over 20 years, with more than 300 staff and family members in attendance

- **Industry Experts**

Goal: Establish and solidify OC San's reputation as infrastructure leaders in the wastewater and resource recovery industry.

- 54 agency awards received with 23 of them specific to Public Affairs
- 54 speaking engagements, reaching over 1,400 people
- Launched the Resource Innovation for a Sustainable Environment (RISE) program highlighting our sustainability initiatives

- **Media Relations**

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

- 14 press releases issued
- 1,421 social media posts across five platforms with an average reach of 6,300
- 2,865 new followers across four platforms
- 48 articles published (including an OC San mention)

- **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.

- Published eight (8) issues of the OC San *Connection* Newsletter, reaching an average of 3,500 subscribers per issue
- Published 107 articles on the OC San website
- Completed 387 graphic design projects
- Installed an educational pipe display for OC San Headquarters
- Updated OC San's Video library - nine (9) new videos completed
- Added 106 new honorees to the Honor Roll Permittee awards program
- Developed and launched a new website

- **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 229 tours reaching over 4,650 people
- Partnered with the Heritage Museum of Orange County through June 2025 to include OC San messaging reaching approximately 2,500 people
- Participated in 24 community events reaching over 4,200 people
- Continued *Inside the Outdoors* program, resulting in engagement with over 2,400 students
- Held three sessions of the Wastewater 101 Citizens' Academy that concluded with 178 graduates
- Created and launched a Library Program to highlight OC San messaging and careers in wastewater
- Hosted a film screening of a documentary highlighting America's essential water

professionals, attended by over 100 guests

- **Capital and Maintenance Outreach**

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

- Provided outreach support for more than a dozen Capital Improvement Program projects
- 34 printed notifications distributed reaching over 71.4k people
- 73 electronic messages issued, reaching over 2,400 residents
- Four (4) presentations given to City Councils
- Held four (4) community meetings
- Conducted Construction Outreach team training for engineering staff
- Visited neighborhoods to share project information with residents

- **Legislative Affairs**

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

- Developed annual Legislative and Regulatory Plan
- Issued 16 State position letters
- Issued two (2) Federal position letters
- Actively tracked 60 bills
- Participated in Advocacy Day in Sacramento and met with six representatives from different Senate and Committee offices

- **Grants Coordination**

Goal: Monitor, track, and apply for grants available to OC San.

- Continued supporting the \$3.45 million in community project funding
- Researched grant opportunities applicable to OC San

- **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 two in-person State of OC San events reaching over 150 participants for each event
- Hosted representatives from 43 public agencies and council/board offices for facility tours
- Published 24 "Five Minutes Per Month" emails
- Produced eight (8) 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 the Public Affairs Office's Continuity of Operations Plan
- Supported OC San during emergency situations
- Participated in tabletop exercises

- **General Manager Support**

Goal: Ensure the General Manager and Assistant General Managers are supported with information necessary to communicate to the varied OC San audiences.

- Produced 24 General Manager Reports
- Prepared 24 Board Member talking points
- Planned and hosted two (2) All-Hands meetings
- Developed material for speaking engagements and presentations
- Coordinated Strategic Planning update workshops
- Facilitated General Manager's Work Plan coordination including mid-year updates and year-end reports

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

All items included in the Public Affairs Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2026 were 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, FY 2024-2026
- Public Affairs Portfolio, FY 2024-2026
- Presentation