

# **Living Classrooms of the National Capitol Region**

COMM 0646- Group Assignment: Strategic Plan

**Prepared by: American Consulting Group**

*Larry Bellinger Sarah Gray Matt Hurst Erika Johnson Martina Miskovova Julia Pflaum*

# BACKGROUND / RESEARCH

## Organizational Background

- LC facilitates educational and workforce development programs for youth and families in undeserved communities.
- In 1985, Living Classrooms was established in Baltimore. After much success, Living Classrooms expanded and opened a branch based in Washington, D.C. in 2001.
- The budget for LC in 2007 was \$1 million. Grants make up 55 percent of this revenue with 25 percent from fundraising, sales and events, plus 20 percent from donors. The largest contributor to LC is the U.S. Department of Labor.
- Last year’s programs served approximately 18,000 youth. Since inception, LC has had over 35,000 youth and young adult program participants in the D.C. area.

## SWOT Analysis

The grid below illustrates the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats currently facing Living Classrooms.

Strengths	Weaknesses
1.) Success of Baltimore-based parent programs 2.) Substantial financial support from U.S. Department of Labor 3.) Established relationships with current donor base	1.) Little to no press coverage 2.) Unclear messages on official Web site 3.) Limited number of corporate and individual donors 4.) Lack of consistent branding on promotional materials and documents
Opportunities	Threats
1.) New administration and commitments to changes in environmental and educational legislation 2.) Environmental trends and increased interest in “green” initiatives 3.) Cheaper and faster communication tools	1.) Economic turmoil stifling charity contributions 2.) Proliferation of nonprofit organizations and community groups in Washington D.C. area

### **Opportunity/Problem:**

- In understanding threats, LC should actively turn weaknesses into opportunities
- LC should promote the organization through increased media exposure. Opportunities present in the form of pitching story ideas, establishing relationships with reporters and hosting more fundraising events.
- Economy presents difficult challenges for fundraising but the new administration offers opportunities for increased federal funding.

## **Identification of Key Publics**

- Key publics include supporters, community members, volunteers, parents, teachers, students, participants, employees of LC, partners, donors and media.

## **Research Recommendations:**

ACG recommends the following research:

- Media audit to measure media presence
- Assess effectiveness of current materials
- Communication audit to gauge and assess external and internal messages
- Research new corporate partnering opportunities

# **COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES**

## **Goals**

Promote LC in Washington, D.C. by emphasizing the organizational mission of “learning by doing” through increased communication outreach to local media and press outlet and to current and prospective supporters.

## **Objectives**

In order to achieve goals, LC must successfully complete the following objectives:

- Living Classrooms featured in an article
- Distribute promotional materials or meet with one new reporter a month
- Increase donations from 2008

## **Key Target Publics**

- Media
- Current donors
- New donors

## **Message Design**

Messages include:

- Learning by doing
- Creating respect for environment
- Inspiring youth
- Teaching youth how to achieve success

# **Planning and Execution of Programming**

## **Strategies**

*1. Raise awareness of LC by improving media relations.*

## **Tactics**

- Improve media relations
- Identify LC’s designated spokesperson for media inquiries
- Build and maintain a media list of key contacts
- Create press kit with open house brochure
- Place op-eds and pitch stories on local events
- Invite media to attend events and tour program facilities
- Conceive possible story ideas beginning of each month

Strategies continued...

***2. Establishing a uniform brand and communicating with supporters.***

**Tactics**

- Consolidate press kit materials - revise print materials such as business cards, brochures and signage to include new logo and slogan
- Use consistent visuals, colors, fonts throughout
- Monthly newsletter for external audience to be sent monthly.
- Direct mailing program for special events
- Create donor/supporter database

# **Calendar**

## **May:** Build the **media list**

- Contacting local organizations;
- Update current media list of contacts;
- Rewriting organizational background;
- Writing organization fact sheet with recent statistics and data.

## **June:** Create **physical and digital press kit**

- revising program brochures,
- creating “open-house” brochure with background, fact sheet;
- statistics, etc.;
- incorporating new logo and slogan into materials.

## **July:** Pitch story to broadcast media outlets focusing on the **Riverfront clean-up program**

- send digital press kit and press release;
- incorporate pre-packaged video clips and photographs;
- tie-in environmental awareness and eco-consciousness.

## **August:** Promote **after-school programs** with a back-to-school theme

- press release and press kit to local print media;
- include details about specific programs;
- include information about location of programs;
- make available teachers and tutors testifying to program success.

## **September:** Focus on **work-force development program**

- send press release and press kit to print media and radio contacts;
- identify successful program participants for story focus;
- make available program mentors and instructors;
- incorporate personal antidotes;
- set up interviews with businesses that hire program participants.

## **October:** Invite members of the media to **A Night at the Yards fundraising event**

- send media advisory and press kit;
- include event details;
- highlight Riverfront location with tie to the building of the LC campus;
- include list of invited and past guests;
- highlight entertainment and musical acts.

## **November:** **Reflection on past program participants** and detailing current success

- promote diversity of programs offered with a where-are-they-now theme;
- include personal tales of achievement;
- include photos and individual contact information.

## **December:** Release **announcement of the GED program**

- send press release and press kit to print media contacts;
- include program details and purpose;
- highlight program benefits in comparison to other programs;
- make available program participant and program instructor for media interviews.

## **Budget**

Due to limited budget, the ACG advises LC to work within means and produce the majority of materials in-house. The organization should reach out to other community organizations to develop partnerships.

### **Printed Materials**

ACG found a printing company that is also a nonprofit organization with a mission of helping people with disabilities to find employment. It is called SOC Enterprises and is located in Arlington, VA. SOC Enterprises provided the following quote for full color printed materials:

50 boxes of business cards

50 reams of letterhead

50 boxes of envelopes

500 tri-fold brochures

500 Annual reports (8x10)

Total: \$12,681.95 (detailed quote attached.)

## **Evaluation**

### **1. Criteria**

Using the Internet and scanning local media outlets, LC will monitor the press daily to search for clips and to develop story ideas for future press releases. With thorough record keeping and organization, the database will be improved and grow to include media and press contacts for distribution of promotional materials. Through increased traffic and email inquiries, the web site will show an improvement in communication. Additionally, the number of attendees to fundraising and supporter events will illustrate effectiveness of communication outreach.

### **2. Tools**

To gauge the effectiveness of communication efforts, the LC must utilize tools to measure the success of objectives. One way to measure communication outreach is through an online survey. Upon submitting a form for additional information, a user will be asked to complete a short online survey. Also, promotional campaign can be measured through number of unique visitors to the web site. Upon the end of the campaign, a media audit may be conducted to illustrate presence in the press.