

**Agenda Brief:** Communications and Marketing Committee (CMC)

**Date:** September 9, 2016

**Presenter:** Rick Rhodes

**Background Information:**

1. **Committee Membership** (as of September 1, 2016):

<b>Voting Members:</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Email</b>
Chair (ESS) <sup>1</sup>	Richard	Rhodes III	Northeast	2014 – 2017	<a href="mailto:rcrhodes@uri.edu">rcrhodes@uri.edu</a>
Incoming Chair (AHS) <sup>1</sup>	Beverly	Durgan	North Central	2015 – 2018	<a href="mailto:bdurgan@umn.edu">bdurgan@umn.edu</a>
Past Chair (CES) <sup>1</sup>	Scott	Reed	West	2014 – 2016	<a href="mailto:scott.reed@oregonstate.edu">scott.reed@oregonstate.edu</a>
AHS Representative <sup>2</sup>	Nancy	Cox	South	2015 – 2017	<a href="mailto:ncox@email.uky.edu">ncox@email.uky.edu</a>
CES Representative <sup>2</sup>	Vacant			2016-2018	
ESS Representative <sup>2</sup>	Daniel	Scholl	North Central	2014 – 2016	<a href="mailto:daniel.scholl@sdstate.edu">daniel.scholl@sdstate.edu</a>
AHS Chair <sup>1</sup>	Louis	Swanson	West	2015 – 2016	<a href="mailto:Louis.Swanson@colostate.edu">Louis.Swanson@colostate.edu</a>
CES Chair <sup>1</sup>	Michelle	Rodgers	Northeast	2015 – 2016	<a href="mailto:mrodgers@udel.edu">mrodgers@udel.edu</a>
ESS Chair <sup>1</sup>	Shirley	Hymon-Parker	1890	2015 – 2016	<a href="mailto:sjhymonp@ncat.edu">sjhymonp@ncat.edu</a>
ACOP Rep. <sup>2</sup>	Cameron	Faustman	Northeast	2015 – 2017	<a href="mailto:cameron.faustman@uconn.edu">cameron.faustman@uconn.edu</a>
ACE Rep. <sup>2</sup>	Faith	Peppers	South	2014 – 2016	<a href="mailto:pepper@uga.edu">pepper@uga.edu</a>
CARET Rep. <sup>2</sup>	Connie	Pelton Kays	North Central	2014 – 2016	<a href="mailto:ckays@JSC.kscoxmail.com">ckays@JSC.kscoxmail.com</a>
APLU CGA Rep. <sup>2</sup>	Rick	Mertens	South	2015 – 2017	<a href="mailto:richard.mertens@tamu.edu">richard.mertens@tamu.edu</a>
Nat'l Impacts Database Rep. <sup>2</sup>	Sarah	Lupis	West	2014 – 2016	<a href="mailto:Sarah.Lupis@colostate.edu">Sarah.Lupis@colostate.edu</a>
<b>Non-Voting Members:</b>					
kglobal Liaison	Jenny	Nuber	N/A	N/A	<a href="mailto:jenny.nuber@kglobal.com">jenny.nuber@kglobal.com</a>

Cornerstone Liaison	Hunt	Shipman	N/A	N/A	<a href="mailto:hshipman@cgagroup.com">hshipman@cgagroup.com</a>
AHS ED/Admin. Rep	Ian	Maw	N/A	N/A	<a href="mailto:IMaw@APLU.ORG">IMaw@APLU.ORG</a>
ECOP ED/Admin. Rep	Jane	Schuchardt	N/A	N/A	<a href="mailto:Jane.Schuchardt@extension.org">Jane.Schuchardt@extension.org</a>
ESCOP ED/Admin. Rep	Rick	Rhodes	N/A	N/A	<a href="mailto:rcr3@uri.edu">rcr3@uri.edu</a>

The CMC Operational Guidelines define:

1. The officer (Chair, Incoming Chair, and Past Chair) terms are one year in each office for a total of three years.
2. Members representing the three sections (AHS, CES and ESS) and other organizations have two-year terms and can be reappointed indefinitely.
3. The section (AHS, CES and ESS) chairs serve one-year terms on the CMC during their one-year terms of office.

## 2. Meetings:

- The CMC Executive Committee met by teleconference on September 2, 2016.
- The CMC met as a full committee by quarterly teleconference on September 7, 2016.

## 3. Updates:

- Darren Katz left kglobal and the Communications and Marketing Project (CMP) in July, 2016. Jenny Nuber assumed responsibility as the principal point of contact for kglobal. kglobal continues to have the exclusive responsibility of providing services to the CMC.
- kglobal met on August 12, 2016 and had “blue sky-brainstorming” event around the Communications and Marketing Project. All individuals at kglobal that had worked on the CMP were included in the event. The product of the event was a memo from kglobal to the CMC that proposed tactical shifts to the AgIsAmerica/CMP. In short, the memo (Attachment b) outlined: high-level shifts in strategy, suggested changes in the project for the remainder of 2016, a look ahead to 2017 with the current budget allocation and what kglobal could do with additional budget.
- The CMC met as a full committee by teleconference on September 7, 2016. Jenny Nuber from kglobal presented the proposed shifts in the AgIsAmerica/CMP. Kglobal suggested that the CMP evolve from a growth phase (i.e., growing numbers of web users, Twitter followers and FaceBook users) to an engagement effort. The CMP would then concentrate upon the BAA initiative areas (water, healthy food systems and people, infrastructure and ongoing funding). The targeted educational efforts of kglobal would strategically mirror the work of Cornerstone. The CMC voted unanimously to accept the recommendations of kglobal. The Plan of Work

Development Committee of the CMC (chaired by Bev Durgan) will adopt the recommendations of kglobal in the drafting of the 2017 CMC Plan of Work.

- The CMC is currently implementing the approved 2016 Plan of Work. The implementation tasks, the lead person(s) and the timetable are attached below. In short, the CMC made progress on all the implementation tasks.
- The CMC will begin drafting the 2017 Plan of Work. That will begin at the end of the summer/beginning of fall in anticipation of presentation to the full committee during the annual face-to-face meeting at AHS-CARET (March 5-8, 2017, Alexandria, VA).
- kglobal will be issuing the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarterly report during the second week of September.

4. **Action Requested:** For information only.

5. **Attachments:**

a. CMC 2016 Plan of Work Implementation Tasks

**CMC 2016 Plan of Work Implementation Tasks**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Timetable</b>
1	Focus quarterly calls on reviewing quarterly reports and providing specific feedback to kglobal	CMC Chair	Quarterly
2	Provide more specific feedback on impact of communication effort on advocacy	Cornerstone	Quarterly
3	Prepare a one page report when distributing kglobal's quarterly executive summary that provides a dashboard for specific results and shares other CMC accomplishments	R. Rhodes, D. Katz, F. Peppers (CMC Chair)	Quarterly
4	Quarterly report and executive summary will be forwarded to the AHS, CES and ESS distribution list and all others in the institutional points of contact list	Executive Directors/ Administrators	Quarterly
5	Manage the institutional contacts database	F. Peppers	On-going
6	Investigate a web format so that institutions can directly submit updates	F. Peppers	March-June 2016
7	Develop a one-page summary/roadmap that defines the communications and marketing strategy underlying the goal of increasing the awareness of the value of Land-grant University agricultural and related programs, Agricultural	R. Rhodes, D. Katz, F. Peppers	March -June 2016

	Experiment Stations and Cooperative Extension Services		
8	Present a program on best practices on strategic issue management in Land-grants to help strengthen institutional plans and linking them to national plans at joint CES-ESS meeting	F. Peppers and Chris Sigurdson	9/21/2016
9	Form a communicator's subgroup and work with institutional communications specialists to evaluate metrics used in evaluating communications efforts	F. Peppers and S. Lupis	March -June 2016
10	Encourage deans and directors to engage institutional communicators early in the process	Section Chairs	Periodically
11	Obtain feedback from deans/directors and especially those who have worked more closely with kglobal on specific projects including Twitter town halls	AHS Representatives	September-October annually
12	Schedule training for Deans and Directors during the 2017 CARET/AHS meeting on strategic issue management and importance of engaging institutional communicators in CMC efforts	Executive Directors/ Administrators	March 2017
13	Schedule training for new Deans and Directors orientations sessions	Executive Directors/ Administrators	During orientation program development
14	Develop a sustainable funding strategy for systematic message testing	CMC Executive Committee	Draft prior to next quarterly call
15	Develop a three year agreement with kglobal and Cornerstone with annual contract renewals	R. Rhodes, I. Maw	Fall 2016
16	Conduct a more thorough evaluation prior to establishment of and upon renewal of a three year agreement for the services of kglobal accomplishments	CMC Executive Committee, I. Maw	Fall 2016 & every 3 years thereafter

b. Memo from kglobal to Ian Maw, Rick Rhodes and the CMC

**August 19, 2016**

**TO:** Ian Maw, Rick Rhodes and the CMC  
**FROM:** Jenny Nuber, Partner  
jenny.nuber@kglobal.com  
202-716-6044  
**CC:** Hunt Shipman  
**SUBJECT:** CMP/AgIsAmerica Scope of Work

Thank you for the opportunity to present this proposal to the CMC. The following is the culmination of many internal discussions, including a “blue sky” session during which the entire kglobal team met to conduct an assessment of the current strategy and tactics of the CMP/AgIsAmerica project. As we look ahead to 2017, we believe this is an appropriate moment to reflect on what we have accomplished over the last several years, which tactics have worked and which are ready to be discarded, and where we should focus our resources going forward.

## **STRATEGY**

When we launched the AgIsAmerica brand five years ago, our goal was to create a public, unified voice to communicate the value of the land-grant system in order to protect and grow its federal funding sources. The AgIsAmerica project is about education—sharing the value of the land-grant system and its impact on communities. When we educate the right people in great enough numbers, we have a powerful tool ready to support the system when it needs it.

Our focus for the last four years has been on building. We’ve built three incredibly successful education platforms—a website, Facebook page, and Twitter profile—from which we communicate a continuous stream of impacts. The AgIsAmerica brand is an established and trusted source of information for influencers, stakeholders, the media and the general public. We’ve built robust communities of both digital and traditional grassroots and grasstops that act as third-party validators of, and advocates for, the land-grant mission. We’ve built strong internal relationships with communicators, administrators, researchers and Extension agents throughout the system.

Now that we’ve built the foundation, what’s next?



## **Shifting From “Building” to “Engagement”**

We have a strong, trusted brand; a steady stream of powerful stories; a robust community of advocates; and internal buy-in and support. It is time to shift our strategy from “building” to “engagement.” Engagement is the key to successfully leveraging and activating our community of supporters. While we’ve always practiced ad-hoc, organic engagement activities (such as grassroots media efforts) the focus of our strategy up until this point has been growth. For the remainder of 2016 and in 2017, we recommend focusing resources on engaging our communities.

## **Focusing On the BAA Initiatives**

By concentrating our efforts on water, healthy food systems and people, infrastructure, and as a result, ongoing funding, we can ensure the CMC’s resources are being dedicated to priority areas, and that our education efforts are strategically mirroring the work that Cornerstone is conducting in Washington. Focusing on these initiatives allows us to target AgIsAmerica’s activities--honing and testing the power of the community on the strategic issues that matter most.

## **TACTICS**

The current tactics for the project fall into five buckets:

- **Content Creation** (Case Studies, Impact Statements, Feature Stories)
- **Digital and Social** (Website, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube)
- **Earned Media** (Press Releases, Op-eds, LTEs, Story Placements)
- **Local Grassroots and Grasstops** (as needed)
- **Internal Communications** (Conference calls, Meetings and Presentations, Monthly Newsletter, National Impact Database Committee)

## Here’s How We’ll Shift Tactics For The Remainder of 2016

### **Content Creation**

*What We’ll Keep:* We’ll continue to research, solicit and categorize case studies, impact statements and feature stories from across the land-grant system to be repurposed and pushed out over AgIsAmerica platforms. This content is the basis of all of our education efforts.

*What We’ll Do Differently:* Instead of sourcing stories, case studies and impact statements that represent the breadth and depth of the land-grant system’s contributions, we’ll focus on highlighting stories from the BAA priority areas, with a special eye towards regional, multistate and national case studies.



## **Digital and Social**

*What We'll Keep.* The website, Twitter and Facebook are all robust gathering places for the media, stakeholders, and the general public. Our brand is a trusted source of information on the land-grant system and its impacts. Our target audiences know that they can come to AgIsAmerica to find success stories, case studies and additional resources that highlight the unique services and value that universities provide. These three platforms are the foundation of the project.

*What We'll Do Differently.* Up until this point in the project, we have been focused on growth: bigger website traffic numbers, more Twitter followers, more Facebook page likes. While growth will continue organically (albeit at lower rates), our efforts will shift to engagement.

For instance, we'll tweak the format of our articles on the website so that people stay on the page longer and are more likely to click through to individual universities' pages. We'll make the articles shorter and adopt a consistent, predictable format so that visitors can quickly determine whether or not it's an article they're interested in learning more about.

Furthermore, instead of producing many short blog posts summarizing press releases and newsroom articles, we will focus on producing a smaller number of high-quality feature articles that kglobal will plan, research, and source using content and resources from communicators at individual universities.

On Facebook, our goal is to drive engagement with our posts: sharing them, liking them, and commenting on them. On Twitter, we'll focus not on the numbers of people following us, but making sure they are the right people from our target audiences consistently engaging with us and our content.

Additionally, we'll drop the YouTube page from the AgIsAmerica portfolio. Our audiences have never really engaged with the platform in numbers high enough to justify further investment in its maintenance and upkeep. In addition, we'll discuss a new strategy for video content in the 2017 portion of this proposal.

## **Media Relations**

*What We'll Keep.* The media is a powerful ally. In addition to providing reporters with a trusted place to find information on the land-grant system, its impacts, and its available resources, AgIsAmerica provides reporters with a steady stream of proactive information via social media and through press releases and story pitches.

*What We'll Do Differently.* We'll focus our media relations activities on the BAA priority areas. We'll start by creating a separate media list of the national, regional, key state, and industry reporters and bloggers that cover topics related to each priority area. Then we'll work with communicators at appropriate universities to create a database of available researchers and Extension agents, projects and impact statements for each given priority area.



## **Grassroots and Grasstops**

*What We'll Keep.* During the course of the project, we have leveraged the power of traditional grassroots and grasstops activists, as directed by Cornerstone, to reach new audiences and to amplify our education efforts. We'll maintain the ability to leverage this group of third-party validators.

*What We'll Do Differently.* As the digital landscape has changed and the tools grow more advanced, building digital communities of grassroots activists has become more efficient and cost-effective. Activating these communities with digital calls to action ensures ease of response and a quick turnaround in results. We'll focus efforts on building out and testing these communities, as directed by Cornerstone.

## **Internal Communications**

*What We'll Keep.* Everything. As we begin to shift other tactics, we believe it is more important than ever that we keep close communication with the CMC, internal stakeholders and individual communicators to assess the progress and impact as we begin to shift our tactics and execution.

## Here's What We'll Plan to Add In 2017

### **Audience Identification Planning Session**

The new year will bring with it many changes that could impact our target audiences. An election will usher in a new administration and a new Congress, along with a changed media landscape. These changes will influence the makeup, concerns and priorities of our target audiences. In addition shifting our focus to the BAA priority areas will add new players to the mix. We'll begin the year by conducting a strategic planning session with Cornerstone in order to ensure we have the right targets (geographic and priority-area specific) for our education efforts throughout the year.

### **Content Creation**

We'll continue the strategy laid out for the end of 2016: a focus on creating content centered on the BAA priority areas.

In addition, the way that people consume content has changed significantly from when we began this project. Now rather than text, visually appealing content like infographics, evocative photography, and videos is the standard. So in 2017, in addition to regular articles and traditional text formatted content, we'll add original infographics, memes, gifs and photos to AgIsAmerica. This will allow us to offer content to our audience that is more easily consumed off of mobile technology, and is more accessible for social media.

A strong arm of our content creation service will be an emphasis on user-generated content. This is material that will be provided by current students and alumni through social media





outreach. This will offer greater opportunities to include those already invested in the land-grant mission in the AgIsAmerica community.

Finally, we'll launch an external newsletter. As originally conceived, the AgIsAmerica newsletter was meant to inform internal audiences and to encourage their participation in the project. We have that buy-in and engagement from the land-grant community; therefore we propose that we shift those resources to an external audience. Email marketing is a powerful tool, particularly with those members of our target audience who are not regularly on social media. A monthly newsletter allows us to stay top-of-mind with our impact stories and serves as a constant reminder of the wealth of information and resources the land-grant system has to offer media, legislators and the general public. We'll work in close coordination with Cornerstone to curate and build an external email-marketing list.

Deliverables:

- Regular (at least 1 per month) visual content production including infographics, memes, gifs, photos
- Daily website posts
- Daily Facebook and Twitter posts
- Monthly email newsletter

**Digital and Social**

We'll continue our 2016 engagement-focused strategy for Facebook and Twitter. In addition, we'll begin a more robust targeting strategy for each platform. We'll analyze which types of content resonate the most and where that content is coming from.

When we launched the Facebook page, our goal was to target land-grant alumni. The idea behind this strategy is that there is no more powerful advocate for the system, its contributions to communities and its overall impact on America than the very students that graduated from land-grant universities. Over the last several years, we've grown the Facebook page organically and have lost some of this focus. We'll shift our efforts back to organizing and engaging with those alumni and alumni groups.

Any sound engagement strategy includes tests of the responsiveness of its members. In 2017, working in close coordination with Cornerstone, we'll launch regular calls-to-action focused on our digital communities to better understand what content motivates them, and what activation vehicles are most effective.

Deliverables:

- Daily Facebook and Twitter engagement
- At least one call-to-action per quarter (4 per year)



## **Media Relations**

We'll begin by building an editorial calendar for each priority area that tracks events and newshooks to be leveraged for media outreach and pitches in 2017. At least once a month, we'll conduct media outreach in the form of press releases, individual pitches, op-eds or letters-to-editor. We'll work directly with the appropriate communicator(s) at the represented university(s) to draft all content.

Using the priority area database created in 2016, we'll work with the appropriate administrators and communicators to conduct a media roundtable and accompanying digital event for each priority area (for a total of four throughout the course of 2017). We'll work with the CMC to determine the most appropriate process for execution.

### Deliverables:

- Editorial Calendar for each priority area (4 total)
- At least one media outreach activity per month (to include press releases, pitches, op-eds/LTEs)
- 4 media roundtables

## **Internal Communications**

As we shift the focus of our efforts, our hope is to put as many resources as possible into our engagement activities. We'll look to the CMC to decide which meetings, presentations, conference calls and travel expenses are a necessary use of those resources and which can be eliminated moving forward.

### Deliverables:

- Quarterly Activities Reports
- Call-to-Action Reports
- Quarterly CMC Calls
- Meetings and Presentations per CMC's request.

## Here's What We Can Do With Additional Budget in 2017

**New Website.** The current AgIsAmerica website is built on an outdated platform. As a result, it doesn't translate well to mobile technology, nor does it allow us to capture the latest updates on things like search and SEO. The user experience is clunky and not optimized using the latest available technology. We would completely overhaul the website, right down to its underlying infrastructure. For example, the current website built 5 years ago – a lifetime on the internet – does not emphasize the research specific universities do in an easy-to-use or informative way. The new website would make a land-grant university easily clickable with key information emphasized, such as milestone research, state and federal Congressmen it's represented by, and contact information. If we do nothing else in 2017, we strongly recommend redoing the current AgIsAmerica website.



**Priority Area Message Testing.** We'll build a message platform for each priority area. Then, using a combination of in-person focus groups and national polling, we'll test which messages and in which format resonate best with our target audiences.

**Video Campaign.** We'll produce branded high value AgIsAmerica videos, one for each BAA priority area. The videos would be geared towards informing the general public about each priority issue, current research projects and Extension programs, and existing impacts and success stories. We'll include interviews with land-grant experts and will repurpose the videos for distribution across AgIsAmerica channels and as aids in media outreach.

**Digital Advertising Campaign.** The way people get and consume content is increasingly digital. Digital advertising is a powerful tool to get our stories out to the widest segment of our target audience. We can put in place digital ads that are geo-targeted to Washington, DC or to people who visit certain websites or buy certain products.

