# Real-World Responses to Integrating Communications for Greater Social Impact

#### THE PROBLEM

As the value of using communications as a tool for social impact has risen in foundations and non-profits, communications professionals remain relatively siloed within organizations.

This dis-integration limits the potential of communications as a force to drive the organization's mission forward and creates redundancies or gaps in efforts.

"There are times when we talk about trust-based philanthropy and needing to trust the external partners, but I wish it could be applied to the comms team [other teams] and that they were trusted to do the work and be seen as experts."

Interviewee

#### OUR APPROACH

We interviewed ten communications leaders at a range of foundations and non-profits nationwide to glean insights on best practices for integrating communications for social impact.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thank you to our interviewees and colleagues for generously sharing your expertise and insights!



### tccgroup solutions for social impact

Learn more about TCC's Integrated Initiatives to support integrating your comms for greater good. To speak with us directly via email or to schedule 45 minutes of thought partnership:

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LESSONS LEARNED FROM COMMUNICATIONS PROFESSIONALS

### CO-CREATING AND ACTIVELY PRACTICING ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION

**EXECUTIVE** Co-create or co-update shared mission and values

> Consider DEI in your comms roll out

#### SPECIALISTS

Lean on mission and values to support your comms aspirations

Help program teams see their work in the bigger messaging pillars

#### CLARITY EASE **IMPACT**

DIRECTORS & ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

Hire folks embedded in community Shift to asset framing in comms

### ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND INTEGRATION 101

#### STRUCTURE ONE

#### Embed a Comms Member into Program Teams

- Embeds serve as the liaison between programs and communications
- Attend weekly program meetings and strategic planning meetings
- Work hand-in-hand with program team to co-create concepts

#### STRUCTURE TWO

#### Separate Comms Team and Program Teams

- Meet with program teams monthly to remain in the know about comms projects
- Develop a ticketing system to streamline outreach to the comms team
- Socialize the comms team as the in-house agency to solidify their expertise
- Encourage staff to view everyone as a communicator

No one organizational structure seemed to be more associated with integration

### LEVEL-SETTING ABOUT THE FUNCTION OF COMMUNICATIONS HELPS STREAMLINE COLLABORATION

Whether the organization sees "everyone as a communicator" or leans heavily on the communications department, formal and informal ways to increase knowledge of communications as a strategic expertise helps build trust and advance cross-team collaboration allowing for more robust and impactful outputs.

#### Real World Tips:

- During onboarding emphasize values and present the organization's "communicators toolbox"
- Share a messaging matrix, national communications plan, and media toolkits with affiliates
- Build a blueprint that others can replicate by integrating communications with your tribe, and other teams will follow

## FINDING YOUR TRIBE ACROSS DISCIPLINES

What do I do if my organization isn't ready to integrate further?

#### Finding like-minded colleagues

- Learn and value different roles and expertise – step in and step back
- Share social media clips on relevant work for leadership to uplift with their own socials
- Building comms literacy among program officers over time

#### Allying with grantee partners

- Build and center relationships with grantees through comms work such as advisory boards, sharing digital content and materials
- "Getting to Know You" grants
- Comms capacity building

