



**FRIENDS OF THE
LA RIVER**



CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN



TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
WHAT IS A CRISIS?	3
CRISIS COMMUNICATION STRATEGY	4
<i>Response-Strategy Do's</i>	4
<i>Response-Strategy Don'ts</i>	4
GOALS OF THIS PLAN	5
PRE-CRISIS PLANNING	6
THE CRISIS COMMUNICATION TEAM	6
<i>Example Crisis Communication Team</i>	7
<i>Contact Sheet</i>	8
CRISIS PREPAREDNESS	10
ASSESS THE CRISIS	10
<i>Example Crisis</i>	10
<i>How to determine if a situation is a crisis</i>	11
IDENTIFY PUBLICS	12
<i>Key Publics</i>	12
IDENTIFYING COMMUNICATION CHANNELS	13
<i>Surveys</i>	13
<i>Communication Channel Assessment</i>	14
IDENTIFYING KEY MESSAGES	15
<i>Key Messages</i>	15
<i>Talking Points</i>	16
CRISIS HANDLING	17
CRISIS TIMELINE	17
CRISIS RECOVERY	19
RESOURCES	20
SURVEYS	20
INTERNAL CAMPAIGN EXAMPLE	22
<i>River Team Ambassador Program</i>	22
EXTERNAL CAMPAIGN EXAMPLE	25
<i>Naming the New Room in the Frog Spot</i>	25
KEY MESSAGES & TALKING POINTS	27
<i>Key Messages</i>	27
<i>Talking Points</i>	28
BLOG SAMPLES	29
NEWSLETTER SAMPLE	31
SPEECH	33



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following crisis communication plan outlines the steps to be taken in the event of a crisis at Friends of the LA River (FoLAR).

What is a crisis?

The [Institute for Crisis Management](#) defines a crisis as “a significant disruption that stimulates extensive news media coverage. The resulting public scrutiny will affect the organization's normal operations and could have a political, legal, financial and governmental impact on its business.”

A crisis can be an emergency or a non-emergency.

Emergencies – any situation that may involve or threaten to cause loss of life or severe injury to employees, volunteers, visitors, etc.

Non-Emergencies – any situation that threatens the organization, its facilities, such as The Frog Spot, or its reputation, but does not pose a physical or direct threat to employees, volunteers, visitors, etc.

Five common types of crises:

1. Rumors & misinformation – when false information about the organization or its members is circulated
2. Natural disasters – acts of nature such as flood or earthquake that affect the organization or impact its cause
 - a. This could be especially applicable as FoLAR's mission and activities deal with a sensitive habitat
3. Malevolence – violent actions by an external person or public that harms the organization
4. Accidents – technological failures or accidents that cause harm to an employee or volunteer
 - a. This could be especially applicable during the Annual La Gran Limpieza / Great LA River Clean Up
5. Misdeeds – when someone within the organization, employee or management, makes a mistake, takes legal action, etc., that causes problems or inflicts harm on the organization or its reputation

This communication plan will address a hypothetical crisis as an example: the closure of the Frog Spot due to an oil spill at the intersection of Interstate 5 and Highway 2. In this hypothetical situation, the educational services offered by the Frog Spot are temporarily relocated to the Echo Park Youth Center and all other services offered are temporarily suspended.



Crisis Communication Strategy

An effective crisis communication strategy provides quick, often and accurate information. What is shared on behalf of FoLAR must always be the truth and FoLAR must maintain transparency throughout and after the crisis.

Effective crisis communication will explain the organization's position on an urgent or emergency situation and maintain a positive public perception. The management of FoLAR's internal and external communication greatly affects its ability to and success in recovering its reputation and returning to normal operations as quickly as possible.

Crisis communication strategies should minimize confusion or anxiety among publics affected, both internal and external; stop or slow the spread of false or misleading information, again both within internal and external publics; and should reduce conflicts with first responders, emergency personnel or investigators.

Response-Strategy Do's

- Ingratiation and appeasing the public with coupons, donations, etc.
- Take corrective action to repair the damage and prevent it from reoccurring, such as with an accident
- Full apology – take full responsibility and ask for forgiveness

Response-Strategy Don'ts

- Attack the accuser – questioning the logic and facts of the crisis
- Denying that there is a crisis
- Excuse – stating that there was no intent to cause harm and/or the organization had no control over the events
- Justification – claiming that no serious damage was incurred and shifting the blame away from FoLAR



Goals of this plan

- To equip the organization with the necessary tools to handle a crisis situation and prevent further harm to FoLAR
- To establish a crisis communication team and prepare the crisis communication team to respond quickly, accurately and fully to requests for information about any crisis that affects FoLAR, its shareholders, employees, members and volunteers
- To provide the necessary resources to disseminate consistent, strategic communication in the event of a crisis
- To keep all publics - internal and external - and shareholders informed about a crisis so as to prevent confusion and uncertainty
- To protect and defend the reputation of FoLAR; to prevent a loss in profits, reputation and trust; to avoid litigation or legal actions taken against FoLAR
- To provide the necessary resources and tools to recover from a crisis

Depending on the nature of the crisis, further goals may also include some or all of the below:

- Rumors & misinformation, malevolence, misdeeds:
 - o Assure supporters/donors/members/etc. (external publics) that the crisis is not representative of FoLAR
 - o Assure external publics that the incident is isolated
 - o Promise that it will not happen again, and develop and implement a plan to back that promise
 - o Revert focus back to FoLAR's mission
 - o Rebuild and maintain trust and credibility with external publics, employees and volunteers
 - o Generate positive news/media coverage
- Natural disasters and accidents
 - o Develop and implement a plan to reduce and recover from the impact
 - o Monitor and improve the morale of employees and volunteers
 - o Reassure external publics that the mission of FoLAR remains
 - o Generate positive news/media coverage



PRE-CRISIS PLANNING

The crisis communication team should brainstorm the different types of crises. Different potential crises that could affect FoLAR have been outlined in the previous section, in the executive summary.

The Crisis Communication Team

The crisis communication team is a designated group of staff members, including public relations and crisis communications consultants, who are in charge of communication and handling the crisis. A crisis communication team should be designated so that FoLAR can continue with its regular activities as usual.

The crisis communication team should be prepared to adequately handle a crisis before a crisis occurs. This is accomplished through pre-crisis planning. There will not be time to plan for the crisis during a crisis situation.

The crisis communication team should have one designated spokesperson, usually a key decision maker in the organization. The crisis communication team should not be made up of all the key decision makers in the organization, but should be comprised of those at FoLAR that are most likely able to appropriately handle the crisis and adequately guide the communication strategies.

The roles and responsibilities of the crisis communication team are best determined by creating a checklist of necessary functions for each member and determining who at FoLAR is best to handle those responsibilities.



Example Crisis Communication Team

- **CEO/Senior Official**
 - o e.g., Lewis MacAdams (Board of Directors, Co-Founder and President Emeritus) or Marissa Christiansen (Executive Director)
 - o Duties:
 - Should make the initial statement and introduce the key spokesperson
- **Communications/PR Director**
 - o e.g., Michael Atkins (Communications and Impact Manager)
 - o Should be the only spokesperson after the initial statement
 - o All media inquiries should be referred to this person
 - o This role includes the majority of the work and the severity of the crisis will determine if an outside PR consultant should be hired to help and guide the team or if a communication assistant should carry out some of the work of this position
 - o Duties:
 - Notify all members of the team once a crisis has occurred
 - Post information online and posts to social media
 - Monitors and controls rumors and misinformation
 - Answers questions from the public and within the organization
 - Take advantage of already-established relationships and credibility
- **Financial Representative**
 - o e.g., Andrea White-Kjoss (Chief Financial and Operations Officer)
 - o In the case of a crisis that causes a major operational disruption or involves a natural disaster, access to emergency funds may be required
 - o Duties:
 - This person ensures that funding is available and appropriately allocated
- **Legal advisor(s)**
 - o The need for this role will depend on the severity and type of crisis
 - o There is a possibility that the crisis communications team will need access to legal advice and to understand potential liabilities
- **PR consultant**
 - o The need for this role will depend on the severity of the crisis and whether or not FoLAR is equipped to handle the crisis without an external consultant and extra hands on deck



Contact Sheet

Name:

Title	Senior Official
Work email	
Home email	
Work phone	
Home phone	
Cell phone	

Name:

Title	Communication Director
Work email	
Home email	
Work phone	
Home phone	
Cell phone	

Name:

Title	Financial Representative
Work email	
Home email	
Work phone	
Home phone	
Cell phone	

Name:

Title	Legal Advisor
Work email	
Home email	
Work phone	
Home phone	
Cell phone	



Name:

Title	PR Consultant
Work email	
Home email	
Work phone	
Home phone	
Cell phone	

Name:

Title	
Work email	
Home email	
Work phone	
Home phone	
Cell phone	

Name:

Title	
Work email	
Home email	
Work phone	
Home phone	
Cell phone	



CRISIS PREPAREDNESS

Assess the Crisis

It is important to keep in mind that small disturbances may not escalate to a full crisis. It will be necessary for FoLAR to determine if something is indeed a crisis and if, how and when it should be handled as such. Drawing further attention to an issue that is not considered a crisis could have the opposite effect.

There are three stages of assessing a crisis:

1. Discovery – identifying a potential crisis
2. Evaluation - some crises may be obvious, but not all negative situations are considered a crisis, and it is important to determine what is and isn't a crisis
3. Response – implementation of the crisis communication plan

Example Crisis

In the example of the closure of the Frog Spot, services offered by FoLAR will cease, employment may cease and many other communities will be affected. Donors and members may feel that their time and resources have been wasted, visitors will be let down, educational services will be put on hold, etc. Because there are many stakeholders affected, each will need to be addressed and the crisis communication plan will need to be put into place to guide FoLAR's response and the recovery process.



How to determine if a situation is a crisis

Ask yourself the following:

1. **Is there a loss of credibility?**
2. **Are there multiple stakeholders involved? If this issue is not addressed publically, will it negatively impact the stakeholders involved?**
 - a. Stakeholders can include the public, employees, members, volunteers, donors, etc.
3. **Does the issue have the potential to reach social media platforms?**
 - a. If yes, it is important to remember that issues can go viral very quickly. This will likely exacerbate the severity of the crisis.
4. **Is the issue of national or regional relevance?**
 - a. Examples of this could include natural disasters
5. **Is there the potential for emotional harm and/or distress** among publics affected, either inside or outside of FoLAR?
6. **Has the issue occurred before?**
7. **Is there misinformation that needs to be corrected?**

A response should be made and the crisis communication plan should be utilized if the answer to any of the above questions is yes.

If FoLAR's credibility is affected, it will need to be repaired as quickly as possible. Timeliness is an important factor. Preventing damage to credibility can be easier than recovering from damage done, and the speed with which an issue is handled can minimize the damage done.

If there are multiple stakeholders involved, if there is an emotional reaction to the issue or if the issue is of national or regional relevance, the scale of the issue has the potential to be greater and therefore needs to be addressed. All three of these factors have the possibility to encourage a farther reach and a greater reaction, and FoLAR must respond to the issue in order to minimize the damage and recover.

If the issue has the potential to or has already reached social media, it can quickly escalate, go viral and make the news. Addressing the issue as soon as possible in this case will minimize the negative media impacts and contribute to a speedy recovery.



Identify Publics

Publics, in regards to crisis communication, are any group of people affected or interested in the situation or its outcome. Publics can be internal, such as employees and staff, or external, such as volunteers and donors. Publics can also be unintended, such as neighboring residents or business owners.

Key Publics

The publics that are the most impacted will depend on the crisis at hand. Using the example of the closure of the Frog Spot, the key publics are listed and ranked below.

Level 1: Employees & Volunteers (operational)

The employees and volunteers that operate the Frog Spot are the most impacted and should be notified immediately. Employees that are expected to work within 24 hours of the Frog Spot's closure should be notified first. As they represent FoLAR, their confusion, frustration or dissatisfaction reflects on FoLAR if members of the public or press are in communication with them on-scene, during or after the crisis. They should be informed and feel confident about their role.

Level 2: Visitors & Customers

Visitors of the Frog Spot are the second-most impacted. Visitors currently on-site should be addressed immediately. They should be safely escorted off the premises and should be assured that everything is being handled. Purchases or paid workshops that are cancelled should be reimbursed, in addition to offering future coupons or discounts to make up for the inconvenience.

Visitors who are arriving shortly after the closure should also be addressed and rerouted immediately to avoid confusion or potential harm.

It is important that all information communicated to visitors and customers is honest and accurate. Do not try to hide the crisis. Be up front, open and transparent.

Level 3: Members & Donors

Members and donors are the third-most impacted and should be notified after levels 1 and 2, and communication should be ongoing throughout the crisis. Members and donors are the heart of FoLAR and provide the support, physically and financially, that FoLAR requires to fulfil its mission. A message informing this group of the crisis and of FoLAR's plans to address it and recover from it should be displayed on the FoLAR website and should be sent out as an email signed by the CEO or Senior Official (see the [example crisis communication team](#)). Subsequent email newsletters and updates on the website should keep this group informed of the situation and FoLAR's recovery process.

Donors may feel inclined to give more if they know their funds are being used to rebuild the Frog Spot and/or implement new and better facilities and programming.

Level 4: Those not affected by the crisis

This group still needs general information about the crisis and the organization and can access this information on the website or social media channels if they are seeking it out.



Identifying Communication Channels

A survey has been developed that you may wish to utilize to determine which channels your members and donors use to receive information about FoLAR and which channels they would access to seek information about FoLAR.

Those that are vested in FoLAR's actions and cause and that would be seeking information during a crisis are likely to be following FoLAR's social media channels or to have signed up to receive email updates, although this is not going to be the case 100% of the time.

Research, likely via a survey, will determine if the above speculation about the best way to reach FoLAR's target audience is accurate. Communication research is needed because sensitive and timely material will need to be sent out to the stakeholders invested in FoLAR in the most timely and effective manner in order to control the crisis situation, keep stakeholders in the loop, and provide updates, particularly in the event that a crisis pose a health or safety risk.

Surveys

Pre-crisis communication channels survey

This survey can be accessed at the link below or in the [resources](#) section of this plan.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GJZ95G7>

Sample message to accompany the survey:

Hello, Friend of the LA River! You are receiving this email because we want to learn a little more about you! We are inviting you to participate in a short survey to find out how you get information about FoLAR. The survey is only 8 questions and should take no longer than a few minutes. We want to make sure that we are sending out information the same way you want to be receiving it. This is especially important for urgent and time-sensitive information. Thank you for your time!

Post-crisis communication evaluation survey (internal)

This survey can be accessed at the link below or in the [resources](#) section of this plan.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GTZWBDL>

Sample message to accompany the survey:

As you know, things are finally winding down from _____. Now is the time to evaluate our communication methods to make sure we reached our most important publics in a timely and effective manner. Please take this short, five-question survey to help us determine if our communications research was successful. This survey should take you no longer than 5 minutes, depending on how thorough your answers are. This is very important in evaluating the success of our communications model. Thank you for your time and contributions to Friends of the LA River.



Communication Channel Assessment

Based on the assessment of FoLAR's current communication channels, it is recommended that the below channels should be used to communicate about the organization and the crisis during the crisis. It is recommended that FoLAR still utilize the survey method to assess how stakeholders are actually receiving and seeking out information from FoLAR.

Website – changes are that even if an email has been sent, it may have gone to a spam or promos folder or may have been overlooked. If someone is specifically seeking information, they are not likely to dig through their email first. It is presumed that one's initial move will be to access the organization's website to seek information. The information provided should be easy to find, if not on the home page. Below the crisis messaging or update on the website should be a link to sign up for future updates via email.

The website should be the primary source of information and should always be kept up to date.

Email – The initial statement and updates should be sent via email to all who have signed up to receive email updates and to donors who may have provided an email address upon donating, but may not be on the email newsletter list.

Twitter – Twitter is an excellent way to communicate in-the-moment the progress of the crisis and to reinforce and maintain credibility and trust. Those who may not necessarily be seeking information will still see it on their feeds if they follow FoLAR's social media accounts. This is a great way to share important updates and success of the recovery of the crisis, such as with the closure of the Frog Spot.

Instagram – Instagram posts should be used sparingly, but can be an important tool if visuals will assist in reaching the goals of this communication plan. In the case of a Frog Spot closure, visual updates will succeed in showing renovation progress or before and after comparisons.



Identifying Key Messages

A key message is a carefully crafted message that reflects communicates what you do, what you stand for, what you are doing to recover from the crisis, etc. It is what you want people to remember. Overall, key messages should move the organization forward and should support the ultimate mission and goal.

Key messages offer a guideline and should be used throughout all communication channels, including digitally and in conversation when speaking on behalf of FoLAR.

Key messages should:

- Make no more than 3 key points
- Use clear, concise language
- Avoid the use of jargon or technical terms

Key Messages

These are examples and should be modified to apply to the current crisis FoLAR is experiencing.

- FoLAR's primary concern is and has always been the people of the greater LA area, their health and their safety.
- FoLAR is leading the way and taking great steps in ensuring an ecologically sustainable future for the LA River.
- FoLAR's success is a reality thanks to its members, advocates and volunteers, and we are saddened to learn of any tragedy affecting our Southern California family.
- We are working with specialists to ensure the safety of another Friend of the LA River is never at risk.

These key messages are intended to maintain FoLAR's reputation and credibility, maintain the support of and express appreciation for donors, members and volunteers.



Sample Key Message during a closure of the Frog Spot:

"We are rebuilding the Frog Spot and reconnecting nature to the community by fostering a healthier LA River with the help of our Southern California family."

It is important that our employees and volunteers know we are appreciative of their time and efforts and we wouldn't be where we are today without them. This key message assures them that they are part of the process of revitalizing the LA River and rebuilding the Frog Spot and reminds them that they are encouraged and fostering a stronger community. The key message is intended to clearly and simply express the goals of this campaign to our employees and volunteers.

Talking Points

Talking points are designed to keep messages on point and provide communicators with relevant material to support the key message. Talking points should help explain, inform and clarify.

These are examples and should be modified to apply to the current crisis FoLAR is experiencing.

- We are dedicated to the future of the Los Angeles River, a future free of trash, fences and concrete, and restoring its natural habitat.
- We want to revive the LA River's natural state for all residents of the greater LA area to enjoy and bring beauty into the world.
- We want the LA River to serve as a hub of nature and humanity and to be a place where people of all backgrounds can come together and share their experiences and enjoyment of nature.
- We are working with specialists in hosting focus-groups to find community-oriented, sustainable solutions to this pollution crisis.
- Become a member or join us on our monthly LA River clean ups.



CRISIS HANDLING

Crisis Timeline

A crisis timeline is categorized by the sequence of events that occur, not specific dates or an amount of time that has passed.

EVENT	ACTION
Initial Incident Occurs	Assess the situation and determine if the situation is a crisis and if the crisis communication plan should be deployed.
Incident Determined a Crisis	Preparation and dissemination of crisis communication material to crisis team members. Any of the below materials that are not already prepared should be prepared immediately. • Statement for initial spokesperson to issue to media • Statement for website homepage • Key message and talking points to the communications team member to begin drafting social media posts • Key message and talking points to key spokesperson to answer questions from media and public • Talking points to all employees and volunteers to answer the community's questions. Serious inquiries that can't be answered with the talking points should be referred to the key spokesperson to ensure consistency of information. • Email statement to be issued to all members and donors provided to the communications team member • Sign for onsite display sent to print
Initial Statement	The initial statement is delivered by the initial spokesperson (a Senior Official). The delivery of the initial statement will depend on the severity of the crisis. Regardless, the statement should be issued within the first hour of the crisis occurring, <i>especially if it is an emergency</i>. <u>Emergency</u>: A press conference should be held and the initial statement should be provided in person by the Senior Official. (continued on next page)



	<u>Non-emergency</u>: delivered electronically. A video of the Senior Official should be recorded and posted on the website and on social media channels. A link to the video should be provided in the initial email statement sent to all members and donors. (continued on next page) For digital dissemination of the initial statement, a graphic should be created that will be utilized throughout the crisis on social media and will be used for onsite signage.
Feedback	Feedback from the press, public, members, volunteers, donors, etc. should be monitored and answered immediately and hourly throughout the crisis. If the crisis is an emergency, monitoring and responding should take place hourly. If it is not an emergency, monitoring and responding can take place daily. After the crisis has been recovered from, monitoring and responding should continue on a weekly basis for two months if the crisis was an emergency. If the crisis was not an emergency, monitoring and responding should continue on a weekly basis for one month. Feedback should be monitored through the following channels: • Emails to contact@folar.org • Messages and mentions on all social media platforms • Phone messages • Onsite feedback should be monitored if this is applicable (are customers and visitors still asking about the crisis? Is there a "how are we doing?" box or system to monitor?)
Additional Communication	The public and stakeholders should be notified of updates on the crisis situation and recovery. In the event of an emergency, the public and stakeholders should be notified immediately when there is an update that affects safety or health. In the event of the closure of the Frog Spot as a crisis example, public and stakeholders should be notified when there is progress such as determining a new temporary location for the Frog Spot's services, plans to renovate in addition to rebuild the Frog Spot, periodic updates showing the success of the relocated services... Updates should be provided via email, Twitter posts, Instagram posts only if the message is enhanced with the use of visuals.



Crisis Recovery

A post-crisis communication strategy is needed to successfully evaluate the effectiveness of the crisis communication plan. Did it achieve its goals? For example, did it prevent further damage to the organization's reputation, etc.?

Evaluation of how the crisis was handled will allow you to update the crisis communication plan, if necessary, and better prepare to handle another crisis. If the same crisis happens a second time, the public will be far less forgiving.

An evaluation survey should be sent out within two weeks of the end of the crisis. The results of this evaluation survey should be reviewed and the crisis communication plan revised, if necessary, within two weeks of receiving the evaluation survey results. See the sample surveys provided in the [resources](#) section of this plan.

An internal and an external campaign may need to be implemented at the end of the crisis to rebuild trust and maintain reputation. Please see the resources section of this plan for a sample [internal campaign](#) and a sample [external campaign](#).



Resources

Surveys

Pre-crisis communication channels survey

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GJZ95G7>

1. Do you use social media?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. Which social media platforms do you use? Please rank in order of most usage to least usage. You may skip this question if you do not use social media.
 - a. Facebook
 - b. Instagram
 - c. Twitter
 - d. Snapchat
 - e. LinkedIn
 - f. Google+
3. Do you follow Friends of the LA River on any of your personal social media?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I do not use social media
4. Do you receive communication directly from Friends of the LA River?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. What types of communication do you receive directly from Friends of the LA River?
 - a. Misc email
 - b. Newsletter email
 - c. US mail
 - d. Text messages
 - e. Other (Please specify)
6. If you were to seek out information about Friends of the LA River, where would you turn? Please rank the below options in order from first choice to last choice.
 - a. Email
 - b. FoLAR's website
 - c. Facebook
 - d. Twitter
 - e. Instagram
 - f. LinkedIn
 - g. Google+

(continue)



7. If you were to seek out information that you needed **urgently** from or about Friends of the LA River, where would you turn? Please rank the below options from first to last choice.
 - a. Email
 - b. FoLAR's website
 - c. Facebook
 - d. Twitter
 - e. Instagram
 - f. LinkedIn
 - g. Google+
8. If you would seek out **urgent** information from Friends of the LA River in a way that was not listed in the previous question, please explain below:

Post-crisis communication evaluation survey (internal)

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GTZWBDL>

1. Did the research programs provide accurate information on what the most effective communication channel(s) was/were in the crisis?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Other (Please specify)
2. If you answered no, why?
3. How do we know if the research worked or not? Do we have evidence, facts, estimates? Please explain.
4. Has research been conducted to determine whether the communication channels used during the crisis were effective or not?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Other (Please specify)
5. If research has not been conducted, what research needs to be conducted to determine whether the communication channels used during the crisis were effective or not?

(continue)



Internal Campaign Example

River Team Ambassador Program

To be implemented in the event of the closure of the Frog Spot.

Purpose: It is important that our River Team knows that we wouldn't be where we are today without them and that our future and the future of the LA River depends on them. After the closure of the Frog Spot and the hard work our employees and volunteers have put in to rebuild it and bring back new and former programming, it is important that they understand our appreciation of their value and dedication to FoLAR. Our mission is carried out through teamwork by and for the community. Carrying out our mission depends not only on our employees and volunteers, but also on our supporters: those who visit the Frog Spot and partake in our programming, services and cleanups. It is important that our supporters know that we are stronger than ever and have fully recovered from the crisis. It is important that our River Team feels empowered by our mission and actions, especially in how we handled the crisis, so they can uphold these values and are prepared to move forward with FoLAR to a bigger and better future.

In order to successfully convey our appreciation to our employees and volunteers, a communication campaign should be planned and carried out with the above purpose in mind to achieve the desired outcome.

Outcome: Engage employees and volunteers to empower them to carry out our mission and convey their support of FoLAR to our supporters and visitors.

Audience: The River Team Ambassador Program targets our employees and volunteers, the face of FoLAR, who in turn carry out messages to our supporters and visitors.

Strategy: In order to create a communication campaign for our employees and volunteers, the below strategies should be implemented:

- Announce the River Team Ambassador Program (RTAP) to employees and volunteers simultaneously via an email newsletter and a flyer or handout in break rooms or employee meeting areas
- Create a RTAP icon or logo and have pins and stickers to get people excited to identify as a RTA



- Hold a kick-off event with employees/volunteers and the public to celebrate the reopening of the Frog Spot and to launch the RTAP
- Prepare a speech for the Senior Official to give at the event
 - See the sample speech in the event of the closure of the Frog Spot in the [resources](#) section of this plan
- Host special workshops on how to be a RTA
- Establish and provide key messages
- Develop tools for RTAs to communicate with supporters and visitors (i.e. signage and FAQs)
- Create a RTA page on the website to highlight employees and volunteers
 - Can include testimonials from RTAs or bios, success stories, a RTA of the Month, etc.
- Promote the campaign on all social media channels through informative posts and spotlights on RTAs
- Publish a blog post highlighting the RTAP
 - Subsequent blog posts spotlighting RTAs
 - See the sample blog posts in the [resources](#) section of this plan
- Host a monthly recognition of the RTA of the Month with an award and other swag to give away to other employees and volunteers who attend the recognition event

Key Message: We are rebuilding the Frog Spot and reconnecting nature to the community by fostering a healthier LA River with the help of our Southern California family.

Many of our employees and volunteers are with us and dedicating their time to FoLAR because they already support our mission and goals. It is important that they know we are appreciative of their time and efforts and we wouldn't be where we are today without them. This key message assures them that they are part of the process of revitalizing the LA River and rebuilding the Frog Spot and reminds them that they are encourage and fostering a stronger community. The key message is intended to clearly and simply express the goals of this campaign to our employees and volunteers.

Delivering the Message: Messaging for RTAs to convey to supporters/donors/customers' needs to be developed. RTAs need to be provided adequate resources to carry out FoLAR's mission and ensure continued support of our community.



During workshops, RTAs should be provided with the following:

- Talking points to stay on track when communicating with visitors
- FAQs to assist them in answering visitors' inquiries
- Signage and graphics should be created and put up at the Frog Spot and online to further promote our key messages and our goals

Messages should be delivered through varying channels with the intention to reach either our employees and volunteers or our supporters and visitors. Below are some examples.

- Supervisors and/or FoLAR staff should utilize the key message and talking points during workshops and in one-on-one conversations with employees and volunteers
- Employee/Volunteer internal newsletter should be used to convey a personal message from a senior official in the initial newsletter introducing the campaign
- Additional internal newsletters throughout the campaign should include testimonials, communication tips, recognition of RTAs and the RTA of the Month, resources such as FAQs, etc.
- The internal newsletter can be via email or printed and distributed in break rooms and meeting areas, or both
- FAQs should be available to both employees/volunteers and supporters/visitors on the FoLAR website
- An RTA page on the website should include testimonials and recognition
- Press coverage should be acquired via press releases and media alerts to invite media to events such as the launch of the program
- The members' monthly newsletter should have a special launch edition and subsequent editions should include testimonials and highlights related to the program

(continue)



External Campaign Example

Naming the New Room in the Frog Spot

To be implemented in the event of the closure of the Frog Spot.

Purpose: It is important that FoLAR's supporters and visitors know that they are valued contributors to FoLAR and reaching the organization's goals. FoLAR's mission is carried out through teamwork by and for the community. It is important that our supporters know that we are stronger than ever, have fully recovered from the crisis and that the future of FoLAR is bright and holds exciting things.

In order to successfully convey our appreciation and to engage the community and bring them into the decision making process at FoLAR, a communication campaign should be planned and carried out with the above purpose in mind to achieve the desired outcome.

Outcome: Engage the community to foster a sense of connection with the organization to maintain and improve FoLAR's reputation.

Audience: This campaign targets all members, donors, visitors and volunteers of FoLAR.

Strategy: In order to create a communication campaign for our supporters, the below strategies should be implemented.

- Announce the campaign and invite the public to partake simultaneously via an email newsletter, social media post and the website
- Plan and host an event for those partaking in the competition to attend workshops to bring their naming ideas to life and present on their ideas with visuals they prepared at the event
 - The winner's visual can be hung in the new event space
 - Provide swag for those attending the event
- Prepare a speech for the Senior Official to give at the event
 - See the sample speech in the event of the closure of the Frog Spot in the [resources](#) section of this plan
- Establish and provide key messages for the employees and volunteers who will be present and facilitating the event
- Create a page on the website to highlight the event and showcase the winner and runner-ups of the competition



- Publish a blog post highlighting the event encouraging people to get involved
 - After the winner is selected, publish a post highlighting the winner and the runner-ups
 - See the sample blog posts in the [resources](#) section of this plan
- Create a promotional video during the event to post on social media and the website

Key Message: As we serve the community, we want the community to be part of the future of the Frog Spot.

It is important that our visitors and supporters know that we value their time and their input. FoLAR's mission is carried out largely with the help of our supporters, and our appreciation should be visible. The key message is intended to clearly and simply express to our community that they are more than just supporters, they are part of FoLAR.

Delivering the Message: Messaging for employees and volunteers to use when working with the public needs to be developed. Our team needs to be provided the adequate resources to carry out FoLAR's mission and ensure continued support of our community.

Prior to the event, employees and volunteers should be provided with the following:

- Talking points to stay on track when communicating with the public
- FAQs to assist them in answering visitors' inquiries
- Signage and graphics should be created and put up onsite and online to further promote the key message and goals

Messages should be delivered through varying channels with the intention to reach supporters, members, visitors, donors and volunteers. Below are some examples:

- FoLAR staff, employees and volunteers should utilize the key messages and talking points while engaging with visitors and supporters
- Key messages should be included in FoLAR's monthly newsletter, on social media posts and on the website
 - Additional newsletters, in addition to the monthly issue, should highlight the campaign and those that are partaking
- Press coverage should be acquired via press releases and media alerts to invite media to the event



Key Messages & Talking Points

Key Messages

These are examples and should be modified to apply to the current crisis FoLAR is experiencing.

- FoLAR's primary concern is and has always been the people of the greater LA area, their health and their safety.
- FoLAR is leading the way and taking great steps in ensuring an ecologically sustainable future for the LA River.
- FoLAR's success is a reality thanks to its members, advocates and volunteers, and we are saddened to learn of any tragedy affecting our Southern California family.
- We are working with specialists to ensure the safety of another Friend of the LA River is never at risk.

These key messages are intended to maintain FoLAR's reputation and credibility, maintain the support of and express appreciation for donors, members and volunteers.

Sample Key Message during a closure of the Frog Spot:

"We are rebuilding the Frog Spot and reconnecting nature to the community by fostering a healthier LA River with the help of our Southern California family."

It is important that our employees and volunteers know we are appreciative of their time and efforts and we wouldn't be where we are today without them. This key message assures them that they are part of the process of revitalizing the LA River and rebuilding the Frog Spot and reminds them that they are encouraged and fostering a stronger community. The key message is intended to clearly and simply express the goals of this campaign to our employees and volunteers.

(continue)



Talking Points

Talking points are designed to keep messages on point and provide communicators with relevant material to support the key message. Talking points should help explain, inform and clarify.

These are examples and should be modified to apply to the current crisis FoLAR is experiencing.

- We are dedicated to the future of the Los Angeles River, a future free of trash, fences and concrete, and restoring its natural habitat.
- We want to revive the LA River's natural state for all residents of the greater LA area to enjoy and bring beauty into the world.
- We want the LA River to serve as a hub of nature and humanity and to be a place where people of all backgrounds can come together and share their experiences and enjoyment of nature.
- We are working with specialists in hosting focus-groups to find community-oriented, sustainable solutions to this pollution crisis.
- Become a member or join us on our monthly LA River clean ups.

(continue)



Blog Samples

Author: Michael Atkins, Communications and Impact Manager, and key spokesperson

Audience: Members, supporters and volunteers, and environmental advocates

Objectives: Increase the number of visitors at the Frog Spot for its re-opening

Drive traffic: include in monthly email newsletter, feature on website, mention on Twitter, link to blog post in an Instagram post about the re-opening of the Frog Spot

Headline: The Future of the Frog Spot is Bright

SEO Keywords:

- Frog Spot reopening
- Things to do for fourth of July in LA
- Community
- Live music

Keyword phrase: The grand reopening of the Frog Spot is right in time to celebrate the fourth of July with friends and family, with live music performances, free face painting and eco-crafts, it's a great way to connect with the Los Angeles community and celebrate our past, present and future.

Images:

- Before and after comparison to get people excited about the new Frog Spot
- Recap photo of the oil spill that caused the closure
- Photo of a previous event or gathering at the Frog Spot

Call to action: Visit the Frog Spot for its grand reopening

(continue)



Blog copy:

Since it's opening, the Frog Spot has served as a hub of culture and connection in our community. The Frog Spot has educated thousands of Angelinos and has provided the resources and helping hands necessary to take back our river and revive it's ecological habitats. We were saddened to close the Frog Spot in March, but we are thrilled to announce that we are ahead of schedule and will be reopening on Saturday, June 30. The grand **reopening of the Frog Spot** is right in time to celebrate the **fourth of July** with friends and family, with **live music** performances, free face painting and eco-crafts, it's a great way to connect with the Los Angeles **community** and celebrate our past, present and future.

When we realized we had to close the Frog Spot to clean up and repair the damage done by the oil spill, we decided to take advantage of the opportunity to do some remodeling and make the Frog Spot even bigger and better than before. The Frog Spot has been witness to many private parties and even weddings, and now has an even bigger space to celebrate your loved ones and host your friends and family. With the expansion of the building, we have added two new rooms with a removable center wall to accommodate for larger parties. With this expansion, we also have the space to offer bigger workshops and classes such as our popular yoga and meditation classes.

While the Frog Spot was under construction, we were able to partner with the Echo Park Youth Center to continue our educational programming and classes. Thanks to this experience, and with the added space at the Frog Spot, we are adding youth-oriented activities and workshops to our schedule.

Come see our bigger, better facilities during our grand **reopening** and get a taste of the new and exciting things we have to offer in the future! You will also have the opportunity to sign up for our classes and workshops for the summer before they are made available to the general public. Summer is an exciting time on the Los Angeles River and at the Frog Spot and these activities often fill up fast! The few classes that are not free will be offered during our reopening at a special discount.

Come celebrate **Fourth of July** with us, partake in eco-friendly DIY **fourth of July** crafts, and get groovy with some local artists!

(continue)



Newsletter Sample

May articles:

- **Success of the 29th Annual La Gran Limpieza**
 - Recap of the three-weekend long river clean up in April
 - Testimonials from volunteers
 - Stats on how much trash was collected
 - Fun highlight on the biggest and the heaviest pieces of trash collected
 - Speculation on room for improvement for the 30th cleanup and a look into the future of the river
- **#YesOn68 - What's the Deal?**
 - FoLAR's position on Prop 68, what it will do for the LA community and the LA river
 - Ensures clean drinking water, improves and expands access to existing parks, and restores and protects coasts, rivers and streams
- **Spotlight**
 - Feature focusing on a member or volunteer, their story and why they are a part of FoLAR
- **Celebrating Our New Partners**
 - Spotlight on the services of new partners and how they help our mission
 - The Bottle Box - takeout containers from recycled water bottles
 - Hathaway Dinwiddie - innovative Project Planning and Management contractor
- **Rock the River at the Frog Spot**
 - Highlight on the upcoming bands and artists that will be performing every Saturday evening at the Frog Spot

June articles:

- **Spotlight**
 - Feature focusing on a FoLAR employee, their story, where they came from, hobbies, passions, etc
- **Parks for Your Health**
 - The benefits of parks and green spaces on family connectedness, health and the environment
 - Locations along the LA River with grassy areas that are safe for children and family outings
- **Guess Who's Hanging Out At Our Favorite Water Spot**
 - Highlight on the species seen at the river
 - Highlight bird watching locations and ideal times

(continue)



- **Ditch the City and Have Fun in the Sun**
 - Encouraging outdoor fun on the river as temperatures increase and summer approaches
 - Kayaking, paddling and river-floats: when and where they are allowed
- **Save Water and Money**
 - Tips to save water in your own backyard
 - DIY water-saving irrigation for gardens and lawns
 - Local nurseries to find California-native plants

Sample newsletter copy:

#YesOn68 - What's the Deal?

With everything you've undoubtedly seen in the news, it's clear that we can't count on Washington to protect California. It's up to us to preserve our natural resources. California and all who want the best for her future have a responsibility to act in the face of climate deniers. You can help build local resilience by voting yes on 68 to protect our environment and preserve our natural resources.

With droughts, wildfires and other impacts of climate change, California needs to take action. Prop 68 has seen support from Californians across the entire diverse state. One thing everyone seems to agree on: Prop 68 is good for California.

Here are a few things Prop 68 does:

- Invests in the quality of parks and water
- Creates tens of thousands of planning and construction jobs
- Ensures clean drinking water
- Increases local water supplies
- Plans for drought preparedness
- Improves existing parks and expands access in underserved areas
- Restores and protects our coasts, rivers and streams for future generations

Together we can build a better tomorrow for California with cleaner, safer water, more accessible and innovative parks and facilities, and more natural beauty for our children's children and so on. We have the opportunity to leave a legacy for the generations to come. Let's lay the foundations for a greener future for California.

This general obligation bond will invest \$4 billion to restore and protect California's resources and will appear on the June 5 statewide ballot.



Speech

Addressees: Members, supporters and volunteers that contribute to the organization with donations/membership fees and their volunteer time

Crisis: Closure of the Frog Spot

On behalf of everyone at Friends of the Los Angeles River, I want to thank all you here today and each and every one of our supporters, members and volunteers who have made our vision possible. We have grown from a small operation hosting LA river clean ups to a nationally renowned organization that hosts the largest cleanup in America every year. Because of that growth, we were able to establish a community educational center and heart of FoLAR: the Frog Spot. Since it's opening, the Frog Spot has served as a hub of culture and connection in our community. The Frog Spot has educated thousands of Angelinos and has provided the resources and helping hands necessary to take back our river and revive its ecological habitats. We were saddened to announce last week that it would be closed through summer. After a tanker truck carrying gasoline overturned on the highway 2 and interstate 5 interchange, just one block north of the Frog Spot, we have had to close the Frog Spot due to safety concerns from the oil spill and have focused our efforts on preventing the oil from reaching and polluting the river itself.

While we were saddened to temporarily remove the Frog Spot's services from the public, we have successfully prevented the oil spill from polluting our beloved Los Angeles River. It did, however, pollute the area south of the accident, including the Frog Spot and the surrounding neighborhood. We have now shifted our efforts from pollution prevention of the river to clean up of the neighborhood and home of the Frog Spot. This unfortunate occurrence has offered us a unique opportunity to not only bring back the Frog Spot, but to take advantage of its already existing closure and to renovate, add services and expand our location. The Frog Spot has served the community with its free and low-cost classes, including yoga, meditation, nature walks and literary events. The Frog Spot regularly hosts live music performances, private meetings and parties, and has even seen a few weddings. We are sad to see these activities that connect our community put on hold. We have temporarily relocated the workshops and educational events to a nearby location. The Echo Park Youth Center, just 3.6 miles and 11 minutes away from the Frog Spot, has offered us their location to continue our most beneficial services. This also offers us a unique opportunity to connect nature and conservation to the youth of our great city in a way we have never been able to before. We are sure this will open the door to an expansion of future youth oriented programs and offerings at FoLAR.



We are confident that the future of the Frog Spot will be even brighter than when it opened just one year ago. With our renovations, we are making room for more programs, more fun and more ways to connect with one another and with the Los Angeles River. The return of the new Frog Spot will allow us to further realize our goals for the Los Angeles River. While we have a small team and many amazing volunteers reviving the Frog Spot, we still have the strength of the remainder of our team, the many members, volunteers and supporters working to realize our goals, to break the concrete, to establish a full length bike path along the river and to revive a natural and ecologically sustainable habitat along the entirety of the Los Angeles river for human, fish and animal alike. None of this would be possible if not for every one of our members and supports. We thank each and every one of you for your patience in this matter and your willingness to stick it with us to the end.

