



TOOLS FOR CONNECTING WITH MEMBERS

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH NETWORKS AND LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS

Communication tools for a professional growth network or local association should meet the needs of members and offer convenient use and upkeep. Organizations should conduct a thorough assessment of communication needs, projected usage and available resources to help determine the tools that are the best fit for its needs.

GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

- A professional growth network or local association is a community. To inform that community, consider the target audience and develop a communications direction to respond to the needs of that audience.
- Emphasize planning and the creation of a one- to two-year communications/marketing calendar with manageable goals to guide efforts and engage in a periodic review of the plan and goals.
- Review what the group has to “market,” including networking events, conferences and learning opportunities, research, bursaries and scholarships, etc.
- Conduct an assessment of human/volunteer resources, procedures and strategies as well as communication tools (e.g., website, social media, newsletters, etc.).

WEBSITE

A website serves as home base for all communication efforts – it is the first thing people will see if they search for your group. Websites are ideal for groups that want to:

- Share information about its purpose and mission.
- Post contact information.
- Create and host resources/documents.
- List board of directors/executive information.
- Provide membership information, including benefits and how to join.
- Promote your organization.
- Share photos and videos.
- Share a calendar of events.
- Publish lengthy content.

STF WEBSITE SERVICES

The Federation has engaged a third-party vendor to host websites for professional growth networks and local associations. Four WordPress templates provide users with design and administrative control. The STF covers the expense of hosting and maintenance of basic template functions. Additional apps, plug-ins and enhanced features are the responsibility of the user and can be arranged with the third-party vendor.

Templates and additional information can be viewed at <http://educateinstyle.com/>.

The Federation has allocated funds for a limited number of local professional growth networks and associations to update their website to one of the templates provided. Networks and local associations will receive an outline of services available within a web services agreement. More information is available by contacting Member Experiences and Operations.

FACEBOOK

Facebook is an easy-to-use platform to share information and bring together community, but it may be too limited for some purposes. When considering a Facebook page or group as a primary communications tool, it is important to recognize that members may require a Facebook account to fully interact with and access content.

A Facebook page and/or group are useful for organizations that want to:

- Share information about the organization's purpose and mission.
- Post basic contact information.
- Offer membership information, including benefits and how to join.
- Share resources that are hosted elsewhere.
- Host discussions and connect with colleagues.
- Promote the organization.
- Promote in-person or virtual events.
- Share photos and videos.

What you can do on Facebook:

- "About" section to share information about your organization.
- Anyone can like or follow your group if it is public.
- Create events within Facebook and promote on your page.
- Have more than one administrator of the page.
- Functions similar to a personal page, so is easy to use and integrate.
- Add Call to Action buttons.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Two primary social media platforms that organizations may already be using or may be considering are Instagram and X/Twitter. Social media can be effective if organizations are able to post regularly and provide a mix of original and shared content. A commitment is required to create engaging content on at least a semi-regular basis. If accounts are inactive for weeks or months at a stretch, or if followers are not active on social media, time invested may not be worthwhile. Organizations should review their existing social media accounts to determine:

- When was the last post?
- What kind of engagement did you receive?
- Who are your followers and are they active?
- Are current (or proposed) social media platforms a good investment of time and resources?

SUPPORT

Federation staff are available to discuss website and communications options and provide support as needed. Please contact Member Experiences and Operations at stf@stf.sk.ca.