



CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC GROWTH COUNCIL

June 15, 2020

Re: AHSC Awardee Communications Toolkit

Dear Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program Awardee,

The enclosed Communications Toolkit provides information and tips to help you announce your AHSC award, keep stakeholders apprised of progress as you implement your project, and properly acknowledge California Strategic Growth Council and our partners when communicating about your award. I hope the Toolkit is a useful resource for your team.

Since we created the Toolkit prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, it does not yet specifically cover best practices for remote media events or remote community engagement. We are here to support you in adapting your AHSC-related communications during this dynamic time, so please don't hesitate to reach out to me directly. I'll be happy to talk through your questions, brainstorm ideas, and help you connect with resources.

With thanks and best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandra Lupien", with a long, sweeping underline.

Sandra Lupien
Chief External Affairs Officer
Sandra.lupien@sgc.ca.gov
916-634-3359

Communications Kit

[Welcome to the California Strategic Growth Council Awardee Community!](#)

Our team believes everyone deserves to hear about the important work you're doing to put California cap-and-trade dollars to work through your Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program (AHSC) award. This Communications Kit provides you with tips and recommendations to help you spread the word far and wide, as well as information to ensure that you are well-equipped to comply with our publicity and communications requirements for all AHSC awardees.

Dear Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Awardee,

Congratulations on your Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program (AHSC) award. All of your hard work has paid off! We look forward to working closely with you to achieve the major community-oriented environmental, housing, and transportation benefits your project promises.

Your work is important and deserves to be celebrated – both in your community and as a model for others. To help you spread the word, the communications and external affairs team at the California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) has prepared this Communications Kit. As you plan communications and events related to your AHSC award, please use this kit, which includes both 1) a set of communications and branding guidelines we require AHSC awardees to follow, and 2) an array of resources and best practices that can help you streamline and enhance your communications efforts across traditional and digital media channels.

We hope this kit serves as a resource for your current project and provides you with tools that can help you harness and strengthen your continuing relationship with SGC. We're here, along with the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and California Climate Investments (CCI), as resources for you and your work.

If you are planning an event or announcement, need sample materials, or need assistance or advice, please contact SGC's Chief External Affairs Officer, Sandra Lupien, at Sandra.lupien@sgc.ca.gov or 916-322-6138.

If you have questions regarding your standard agreement, funds disbursement, or project timelines, please contact your project representative at HCD.

Thank you for your important work in reducing greenhouse gas emission by coordinating the development of transit-oriented affordable housing and expanded mobility options in your community. We look forward to partnering with you!

Best,

The California Strategic Growth Council Team

Publicity Requirements & Guidelines for AHSC Awardees

SGC requires AHSC awardees to acknowledge the California Strategic Growth Council, California Climate Investments (CCI), and the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) in all publications, websites, signage, invitations, and other media-related and public-outreach products related to the AHSC grant. Guidance on CCI logo usage, signage, and logo files contained in the Style Guide are available at: www.caclimateinvestments.ca.gov/logo-graphics-request. Access SGC, CCI, and HCD logo files at the following link: http://sgc.ca.gov/programs/ahsc/docs/20200310-AHSC_Logos.zip

When using SGC's logo, use the color version only when the logo appears on a white background; on backgrounds of any other color, please use the white version of the logo.

LONG-FORM MATERIALS

Long-form written materials, such as reports, must include the following standard language about SGC, AHSC, and CCI:

The California Strategic Growth Council's (SGC) Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program (AHSC) makes it easier for Californians to drive less by making sure housing, jobs, and key destinations are accessible by walking, biking, and transit. Administered in partnership with the California Department of Housing and Community Development, AHSC provides funding for affordable housing developments and transportation infrastructure to build healthier communities and protect the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. For more information, visit <http://sgc.ca.gov/programs/ahsc/>.

AHSC is part of California Climate Investments, a statewide program that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing GHG emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment – particularly in disadvantaged communities. The Cap-and-Trade program also creates a financial incentive for industries to invest in clean technologies and develop innovative ways to reduce pollution. California Climate Investments projects include affordable housing, renewable energy, public transportation, zero-emission vehicles, environmental restoration, more sustainable agriculture, recycling, and much more. At least 35 percent of these investments are located within and benefiting residents of disadvantaged communities, low-income communities, and low-income households across California. www.caclimateinvestments.ca.gov.

PRESS RELEASES, FLYERS, AND VISUAL MATERIALS

Any informational materials that do not qualify as long-form, but that include at least a paragraph of text, such as press releases, media advisories, short case studies, some flyers, etc., should include the following language:

Long version:

"[Project Name] is supported by California Strategic Growth Council's Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program with funds from California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment – particularly in disadvantaged communities."

Short version:

"[Project Name] is supported by California Strategic Growth Council's Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program with funds from California Climate Investments—Cap-and-Trade Dollars at Work."

Mostly visual:

Grantees may at times produce promotional materials that are primarily visual in nature, such as banners, signage, certain flyers, and sharable images for social media. In such cases, when including the boilerplate language acknowledging CCI and SGC support is not practical, grantees should instead include the official logos of both SGC, CCI, and HCD preceded by the words "Supported by."

SIGNAGE

Awardees must display signs on project construction sites, stating that SGC is providing financing through the AHSC Program, in a prominent location visible and legible to the public, conveying the following message:

[WORK PROJECT/ HOUSING DEVELOPMENT NAME]

**THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN MADE POSSIBLE
BY FINANCING FROM**

CALIFORNIA CLIMATE INVESTMENTS
(Funded through the GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION FUND)
AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM
THROUGH THE
CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC GROWTH COUNCIL
AND
THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

MEDIA INQUIRIES

AHSC Awardees must identify a point of contact for all press inquiries and communications needs related to the project and provide the name, phone number and email address of this individual to SGC. Grantees must also distribute a press release after grant decisions are made at SGC's Public Council Meeting and are encouraged to do so for other major milestones throughout the lifecycle of the grant. All press releases must be approved by SGC's Chief External Affairs Officer prior to distribution and SGC must be alerted and invited to participate in any and all press conferences related to the grant.

COMMUNICATIONS MATERIALS & PHOTOS

AHSC awardees must prepare one or more two-to-four-page documents that provide a summary of the grant components and tell the story of the project development process and/or implementation. All

such materials must be approved by SGC's Chief Communications Officer prior to distribution. SGC may display such materials on its website.

In addition, SGC requires AHSC awardees to share between 8-24 high-resolution, color photos with SGC during the project period. These photos should include pictures of both people and the project. SGC reserves the right to use these photos across any and all of its communications platforms.

SOCIAL MEDIA

SGC encourages AHSC awardees to use social media to share the process of creating and developing an AHSC proposal as well as stages of the project's implementation. Awardees must tag @CalSGC, and @CAClimateInvest and @California_HCD all Tweets related to the AHSC grant; tag California Strategic Growth Council and California Department of Conservation on LinkedIn; on Facebook and other platforms, please mention California Strategic Growth Council, California Climate Investments, and California Department of Housing and Community Development.

Spread the Word

Here are a few effective ways to raise awareness around your important work. In every case, we recommend a clear, concise writing style that avoids technical terms and is easy for most readers to access. Be sure all your communications comply with the Publicity Requirements and Guidelines on pages 3-4 of this kit.

Create a Website

One of the best ways to share the latest information about the progress of your AHSC project is to compile everything the public needs to know into well-organized website or page within your existing website. Your website should be simple and inviting, with sections explaining who you are, what the AHSC program is, and why the project is important. Keeping the website updated with your latest accomplishments and steps taken to achieve your goals will keep members of your community enthusiastic and engaged. You can choose from dozens of inexpensive website templates, such as Wix, Square Space, and WordPress.

Press Releases & Media Advisories

If you're interested in getting mentioned by your local news outlets (newspapers, web-based news, radio, television), you've got to alert reporters, editors, hosts, news desks, and producers in your local media market. Here are a couple ways to get their attention (in both cases, include a contact name, title, phone number, and email at the top):

Press release

This is a narrative piece that tells the reader a story. Your best bet is to write it in the style of a story you'd read in the newspaper. Start with the most important part so that the reader knows immediately what you want to tell them about. From there, add details to flesh out the story (the amount of the grant, the number of affordable housing units, amount of pedestrian paths and bike lanes), along with quotes from people who are engaged with your project—for example, the developers, the community organizations involved, and SGC's Executive Director. Some media outlets might publish your press release as is! Others will follow up with questions or to interview someone.

Media advisory

This is a short piece you send to reporters, editors, hosts, news desks, and producers when you want to invite them to attend and cover an event, such as a groundbreaking, ribbon-cutting, dedication, etc. Make sure you answer the most important questions (who/what/when/where/why/how) and emphasize what makes your story worthy of media attention—as well as what photo opportunities will be available at the event.

Social Media

Numerous social media platforms support digital storytelling and promotion. Use your existing platforms to talk about your AHSC project. We also encourage you to follow SGC on Twitter and LinkedIn so we can watch for and share your updates about your AHSC project. Please see our social media section of this kit for more details.

Blog Post

If you or any of your partners currently has an active blog, we encourage you to write a post highlighting the progress or impact of your AHSC project. For example, ask a project partner to write a guest blog or sit with you for a Q&A to highlight the need and inspiration of the project and how it will benefit members of the community. After you've posted your blog, you can share it on your social media platforms!

Newsletter

If you or any of your AHSC partners have a newsletter or listserv, please share your award announcement and other important milestones through that platform. Encourage community leaders and/or elected officials who work with you frequently to announce AHSC milestones, such as groundbreakings and grand openings, through their newsletters or listservs as well. Please contact us at SGC so we can share your important AHSC milestones through our newsletter as well!

Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor

Consider writing an op-ed or letter to the editor of your local newspaper to raise awareness of your new AHSC award and the benefits it will bring to your community. A good approach is to acknowledge the various partners involved in the project planning process, name the specific benefits this project will bring to community members, and highlight the community need that this project is fulfilling. An op-ed is typically around 600 words (it depends on the outlet) and you submit it to the Op-Ed Editor; it is best to reach out to this editor with an outline for your piece and ask if they're interested in running a developed piece from you. A letter-to-the-editor is short – usually under 200 words – and you just submit it directly to the letters section of the outlet.

Events

Events with community members, leaders, and elected officials can be a draw for the press, as well as for local residents, and are a great way to build excitement about your AHSC project.

Hold a Project Area and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

Invite landowners, project partners, elected officials, funders, neighborhood residents, and other stakeholders to speak at the event. AHSC staff members and Council members try to be available to participate in these events. Invite local media to attend the event (see “Media Advisory” on page 6) and provide enough information that they’ll be excited to cover it.

Do a press conference right before the ribbon cutting. Plan the message you want attendees to take away from the event, so you can craft speakers’ dialogue around it. Generally, you want to agree in advance with your speakers about what angles they’ll cover—that way, you can be sure all the important points get attention without too much repetition. Let speakers know how much time they have for their comments—typically 4-5 speakers giving comments for about 2 minutes each is plenty for a press conference. Leave time for questions at the end. You’ll need a master of ceremonies who introduces each speaker, facilitates the Q&A, and keeps the program on-track. And an audio amplification system—a microphone and a speaker—is usually important, unless you are in a very quiet space.

Give yourself plenty of time to secure the time and location, publicize the event, invite press, gather equipment and any visual materials, and ensure spokespeople are fully prepared.

Host Community Events

Organizing a fun kick-off meeting and other community events for stakeholders and the general public is a great way to raise awareness about your AHSC award and get more people involved in the planning and implementation process. These kinds of events can help make sure everyone is on the same page and united in your mission, as well as enthusiastic about the tangible benefits your project will create.

Remember

The SGC team is here to help! We love to work with awardees to brainstorm communication strategies. We can provide quotes from SGC leadership for your press releases and make leadership available for media interviews. We can coach you on how to pitch media, help you identify reporters, and help secure participation by State officials in your event. Contact SGC’s Chief External Affairs Officer, Sandra Lupien, for support: Sandra.lupien@sgc.ca.gov; 916-322-6138.

Social Media

Social media offers an array of powerful, free platforms that enable you to communicate about your AHSC project to potentially large audiences.

Follow us

The California Strategic Growth Council (**@CalSGC**), the California Department of Housing and Community Development (**@California_HCD**) and California Climate Investments (**@CalClimateInvest**) post frequently on Twitter about the State's efforts to improve our environment and communities. SGC and HCD are also active on LinkedIn. We encourage you and your AHSC partners to follow our accounts to stay up to date on the latest news on our policies and programs. If we tweet about AHSC, or about anything else relevant or interesting to you, please 'like' and retweet us—sometimes it can even save you the trouble of crafting your own tweet.

Tag us

We love seeing awardees' progress from vision to reality. Please post updates and photos of project events or outcomes on social media, and make sure to tag us so that we can like, comment, and retweet to share your hard work with all of California.

Tag Your Partners

Remember to include co-applicants and other key stakeholders and champions in social media posts about your AHSC award. Tagging partners gives them the recognition they deserve while increasing the audience for your post.

Use Hashtags

Hashtags can be a very effective way to increase a post's visibility and response rate. It is best to use a few relevant hashtags, like #AffordableHousing #Sustainability #transit and #climatechange.

Take Pictures

A social post with a great image attached is bound to get more traction than one without an image. Throughout every stage of the AHSC process, be sure to encourage your team to bring their phones or even a nice camera and take a picture of their colleagues or work environment. Having a photobank of pictures can work wonders on your social media accounts, especially because you'll have the freedom to choose the highest quality or most interesting photos. Please see the Photo Tips section of this kit for more information.

Shorten the Message

Given the character limit for tweets, you will need to pick and choose what information to include. Incorporate hashtags and tagging partners into your sentences, (see the sample posts below). Use commonly known abbreviations and conjunctions.

Amplify the Voices of Community Members

Reach out to partners and community members for their videos, quotes, and pictures that share how your AHSC project will affect their lives. These stories can increase your social media audience's

enthusiasm for your project. Retweeting posts that residents and stakeholders create is another way to demonstrate AHSC’s impact.

Post Often

Interact with your audience as much as possible on all platforms. It is ideal to post between a few times a week and once or twice a day on social media. Brainstorm with your staff to come up with creative ways to keep the public informed and interested in your work. Then create a schedule and remain consistent.

More Social Media Tips

- Encourage audience engagement by posting questions.
- Use URL shortening tools from sites like bitly.com and tinyurl.com.
- Don’t be afraid to use emojis.
- Encourage your colleagues and AHSC partners to participate in social media conversations.
- Be visual! Use infographics instead of text when possible.
- Observe copyright laws.

Sample Posts

 You Retweeted

 **CAClimateInvestments** @CAClimateInvest · 5h 

This project is supported by the #capandtrade funded, Affordable Housing & Sustainable Communities program, administered by @CalSGC 



Blackstone Avenue project breaks ground, to include housing - The Busi...
Councilmember Esmeralda Soria invited local officials, media, college students and members of the community to the groundbreaking of the ...
 thebusinessjournal.com



LA County CSO
@CSO_LACo



Willowbrook is a place with tremendous leadership. Hearing from [@LINChousing](#)'s excitement to continue bringing investment in the community via [#AHSC](#).



 Linc Housing and Mark Ridley-Thomas



Eden Housing
@EdenHousing



Thanks @TomSteyer #nextgenclimate for touring Hana Gardens site #AHSC #TOD, coming senior #affordablehousing @cityofelcerrito! #capandtrade



Tom Steyer and 4 others

1:23 PM · Jun 20, 2017 from El Cerrito, CA · Twitter for iPhone

9 Retweets 23 Likes

Photo Tips

Consider pointers in this section when using photography to tell your project's story.

Quality

Use the highest quality camera you can access. Good news: many modern smartphones are usually sufficient, as long as your subject is in focus, well-lit, and the phone is turned sideways (landscape orientation—use this orientation for videos, too!). Photos on social media don't have to be as high quality as photos on your website or newsletter.

Everyone's a Photographer

Encourage your staff and partners to take photos whenever they have the chance, and to send them all to your organization's communications team – or better yet, create a shared drive so everyone in your organization can access them. Designating someone who owns a nice camera to take photographs during events is always a good practice.

Don't Have a Great Photo?

Services like Flickr, Pixabay, and Upsplash offer countless high-quality photos that you can download and use for free.

Content

When possible, photos should be bright and colorful, without being too 'noisy,' blurry, or filtered. Candid photos of people working or interacting tend to be more unique and eye-catching than people smiling at the camera. Highlight interesting aspects of your project so your photo stands out.

Remember

The picture is what draws people in to read the caption and learn about your work. Don't underestimate its importance!

STAY IN TOUCH!

Feel free to contact SGC's Chief External Affairs Officer, Sandra Lupien, if you have questions or need support on any of your communications efforts at sandra.lupien@sgc.ca.gov.

SGC'S NEWSLETTER AND TCC LISTSERV

bit.ly/2CTvCyB

Follow us on social media and check our website regularly for new announcements and updates!

TWITTER

twitter.com/CalSGC

LINKEDIN

linkedin.com/company/strategic-growth-council/

WEBSITE

sgc.ca.gov