hub
south vancouver
seniors active together

Communications Plan
— 2013 —

South Vancouver Seniors Hub Council

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1.0   Introduction

The South Vancouver Seniors Hub ("The Hub") is an advocacy group that represents the over 18,000 seniors living in Southeast Vancouver. Managed by a dedicated group of seniors sitting on The Seniors Council, The Hub holds information sessions on issues affecting seniors, identifies assets and gaps in community services and programs for seniors, and produces a newsletter that highlights community resources aimed at seniors. Thus, communicating to seniors is of utmost importance for The Hub. A communications plan was developed in August of 2012 to meet this need.

The senior audience is especially diverse. The varying life experiences and personal characteristics of seniors means that they also hold a range of values, beliefs and opinions. Place of residence, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and gender all contribute to the diversity of the senior population. Tailoring messages for a senior audience therefore means recognizing that seniors may hold different views. A communications plan will help present The Hub's message in ways that the diverse senior audience will understand and appreciate.

This document outlines a strategic communications plan for The Hub that discusses communication priorities, procedure, and best practices to increase the effectiveness of communications not only to seniors, but also to members within the organization and to external partners as well. We hope this plan helps make communicated information easy to see, easy to hear, and easy to understand – blurring the line between communication "for seniors" and communication for everyone else that in turn strengthens the sense of belonging and mutual respect that benefits everyone in the community.

This communications plan should be updated annually, and is developed partly to be an accessible template for other seniors groups to use.

2.0   Talking Points

Talking Points represent the main ideas that The Hub wants to communicate to their audience. These messages should be touched upon in all forms of communication. In the long-term, key messages should be what The Hub as a brand aims to represent.

2.1 Current Talking Points

The purpose of the Seniors Hub is to implement a collaborative community-based model that supports seniors' independence and active participation in the community.

- **The Seniors Hub works within a networked service model** that brings together seniors, community agencies and different organizations to help engage and serve seniors.
- **The Seniors Hub is driven by and for seniors.** Seniors lead, govern, identify needs and organize activities to meet those needs.
- **The Seniors Hub benefits individual seniors.** Seniors gain confidence, socialize interculturally, learn new things and create opportunities for isolated seniors.
- **The Seniors Hub benefits community services.** The network of partnerships has resulted in better coordination of services and activities.

Some of the issues and gaps that the Hub is currently addressing are:

Transportation: At a Digital Story Event launched in May of 2013, several isolated seniors described transportation barriers they experience to representatives from TransLink, HandyDart, Funding Organizations and other community members. These barriers, and others, will be considered as the Seniors Hub Transportation Committee continues its research project with transportation agencies who offer options to stakeholders. Target date for a report on their findings is scheduled for December 2013.

Health and Safety: The Seniors Hub, in partnership with Canadian Red Cross, and funded by a New Horizons for Seniors Grant, trained 17 multicultural volunteer seniors to identify safety hazards related to falls within the home. These volunteers have begun their outreach and plan to reach 150 seniors within the year's funding budget. Through partnership with Killarney Community Centre and Collingwood Policing Centre a Scooter Rodeo was held during Seniors Week to improve seniors' safety practices when using scooters.

Economic Security: The Seniors Hub organized workshops on benefits and entitlements in Cantonese, Punjabi and English, helping more than 100 seniors gain access to needed income and information.

3.0   Communication Priorities

This section identifies short-term priorities The Hub aims to focus on in order to achieve its long-term communication goals.

3.1 Internal Communications

- All members of The Hub should be familiar with key messaging (see pg. 4) in order to deliver this message whenever necessary.
- Use of the logo in letterhead all documents to increase awareness and branding of The Hub:

3.2. External Communications

- Ensure all methods of external communication aimed at seniors (e.g., newsletter, website) adhere to best practices recommended by Health Canada (see pg. 9).
- To promote brand recognition, the Communications Committee should strive to publish at least one article about a Seniors Hub project in a local newspaper
- Standard use of logo in all outgoing communications:

4.0 Stakeholders

This section identifies stakeholders of The Hub. Identification of different stakeholder groups is important because the communication needs for each group are different.

4.1   Internal Stakeholders

Internal stakeholders include:

- Individuals working for The Hub (including both staff and volunteers).
- Seniors currently engaged in The Hub activities and programs.
- Seniors Hub Council (oversees The Hub).

4.2 External Stakeholders

External stakeholders include:

- Community organization partners:
    - Champlain Heights Community Centre
    - Killarney Community Centre
    - Sunset Community Centre
    - Southeast Vancouver Seniors' Arts and Cultural Society (SVSACS)
    - South Vancouver Neighbourhood House
    - The UBC Centre for Hip and Mobility (serving as Evaluation Partner)
- Funding agencies:
    - Vancouver Coastal Health
    - The Vancouver Foundation
    - The City of Vancouver
    - The United Way of the Lower Mainland
- Seniors living in Southeast Vancouver currently unaware of The Hub
- Local public

5.0   Communications Plan

This section lays out what information needs to be communicated to different stakeholder groups, how this information will be communicated, how to earn stakeholder support, and who is responsible for communication.

5.1. Internal Communications Plan

Stakeholder group	What they need updates on	How The Hub communicates to them	How to gain their support	Who is responsible
Individuals working for The Hub	• Staff events • Training workshops • Status of current initiatives	• Newsletter (biannually) • E-newsletter (monthly) • Website • Emails • Social Media	• Demonstrate progress in initiatives • Showcase a staff or volunteer member	• Joan Wright (Seniors Hub coordinator) • Com. Committee
Seniors partaking in The Hub programs	• Local events, workshops, and programs • Local news • Safety information • Status of current initiatives • Contact info	• Newsletter (biannually) • E-newsletter (monthly) • Website • Emails • Social Media • Get-togethers (word of mouth)	• Demonstrate progress in initiatives • Showcase a senior	• Com. Committee
Seniors Hub Council	• Status of current initiatives • Funding status	• Emails • Word of mouth	• Joan Wright (Seniors Hub coordinator) sits on communications committee	• Joan Wright (Seniors Hub coordinator) • Com. Committee

5.2 External Communications Plan

Stakeholder group	What they need updates on	How The Hub communicates to them	How to gain their support	Who is responsible
Community Organization Partners	• Status of current initiatives • Local events, workshops, and programs • Local news	• Newsletter (biannually) • E-newsletter (monthly) • Website • Emails • Social Media	• Demonstrate progress in initiatives • Demonstrate positive impact in the seniors community	• Com. Committee
Funding Agencies	• Status of current initiatives	• Annual Reports	• Demonstrate progress in initiatives • Demonstrate positive impact in the seniors community	• Joan Wright (Seniors Hub Coordinator)
Seniors unaware of The Hub	• Info about The Hub • Local events, workshops and programs • Contact info	• Word of mouth • Newsletter (biannually) • Website • Social Media	• Demonstrate positive impact in the seniors community	• Com. Committee
Local Public	• Info about The Hub • Local events, workshops and programs • Local news • Contact Info	• Press releases • Newspaper articles • Interviews	• Demonstrate need for media attention on seniors issues • Demonstrate positive impact of Hub initiatives on seniors	• David Wu (newspaper articles & press releases) • Daisy Kler, Joan Wright (interviews)

6.0   Communication Tools

This section highlights best practices of the various communication tools at The Hub's disposal. It is essential to consider the target audience of the message in order to decide what communication method is most likely to reach them. Because The Hub communicates primarily with seniors in extremely diverse neighbourhoods, certain challenges must be kept in mind (e.g. loss of sight, loss of hearing, ESL, etc.). Information is largely taken from Health Canada (1999).

6.1 Personal Communication

- Personal contact is seniors' "preferred" source of health information, information about pensions, entitlements, housing options, transportation options, and recreation opportunities.
- Seniors tend to trust and pay attention to is also known as "key informants".
- Aboriginal cultures (Inuit, Metis, and First Nations) - based on oral tradition and preferred information source is word of mouth and print is the least effective means of reaching a senior audience.

- **Overall, methods such as social connections and oral transmission of information are preferred.**

Table 6.1 Key pointers on both verbal and non-verbal behaviour during personal communication with seniors

Verbal communication	Non-verbal communication
• Ask the person to list questions or concerns before a visit	• Avoid establishing physical barriers (across desk) between you and the client
• Ask the person how they prefer you to address them (Mrs., first name…)	• Remain seated during the conversation
• Use open-ended questions to elicit information	• Show courteous attention; demonstrate interest in what they're saying
• Summarize information provided by the client to check your comprehension or the facts	• Show (don't just tell) the client how to do something
• Avoid formality and professional jargon; speak to the person's level of vocabulary and understanding	• Maintain eye contact; communicate occasionally through touch if appropriate
• Offer checklists, visuals, pictures, or other plain language material to back up oral instructions	• Avoid doodling or fiddling
• Make sure your client has understood you by asking that he/she rephrase	• Stay alert to non-verbal clues that contradict or supplement verbal

what was said	communication
• If the client doesn't understand, rephrase the sentence; don't just repeat the same words or say them louder	• Stay focused on the client; don't consult your schedule or watch

6.2 Communicating in Print

Both message content and format are important factors to consider when communicating material in print.

6.2.1 Message Content

- Do not include too much information or else it becomes a wall of words (it is as bad as including too little information).
- Always provide contact information so questions can be asked.
- Use familiar words and a conversational, personal tone. Avoid jargon.
- Proceed logically, with the most important idea first, and linked from one paragraph to the next.
- Use action verbs and active construction, not passive.
- Favour short words, short sentences, and short paragraphs.
- Use concrete examples to illustrate ideas or concepts.
- Highlight main ideas and important information with headings, point form, and boldface type.
- Avoid use of ageist language (e.g., aged, elderly, senile, feeble, etc.).
- Use "seniors", "older persons", or "older adults".

6.2.2 Message Format

- Use a catchy title and pleasant concept to attract readers
- 12 point font or higher
- Avoid the use of run-on sentences. If you have to pause for a breath, the sentence is too long.
- Headline placement and colour can enhance readability.
- Use dark print on a light background.
- Avoid overusing italics, all capitals, and underlined type.
- Use wide margins and justify paragraphs.
- Use two columns, with lots of white space between paragraphs.
- Present ideas with high-definition photos or illustrations.

- Avoid wavy lines or dots.
- Use plain, non-glossy paper.

6.3 In-print Newsletter

Some key points to remember when publishing a newsletter for seniors:

- Newsletters allow skilled readers to absorb information at their own pace and to retain the information for future reference.
- Can be tailored for an audience with more limited literacy skills through plain language, design and message development.
- Written material, even plain-language material designed for maximum readability, are not always seniors preferred information source.
- Written material may have limited use reaching people with low literacy skills or limited vision, or communicating with members of cultural communities with no literacy in the languages the newsletter is published in.

Newsletter Policy
- Joan Wright coordinates the content of the newsletter, while Carol Weaver does the layout and design.
- The newsletter is published 2 times a year, approximately once every 4 months.
- The newsletter should be approximately 12 pages, any longer and seniors may lose interest
- The text of the newsletter should have a minimum of 12 point font. The use of pictures and colour should be maximized.
- At least one article should be from a senior.
- The newsletter should be put on the website once it is published.
- Local businesses should be approached every issue for potential advertising. Advertising is key to maintaining the sustainability of the newsletter.

6.4 Internet (Website, E-Newsletter, & Social Media)

While the Internet is a vital channel of communication for non-senior stakeholder groups, it should not be disregarded when looking at methods to communicate to seniors. While the segment of the senior population on the Internet remains small, it is a segment that is expanding with every new generation. Not only is the population growing, but research has also found that Internet use in seniors is related to psychological and cognitive well-being (Shapira, Barak, & Gal, 2007). Therefore, in-print best practices should also be referred to when communicating to seniors electronically to encourage seniors to adopt Internet use.

Website Policy

- The current website is run by Carol Weaver.
- The text of the website should have a minimum of 12 point font. The use of picture and colour should be maximized.
- The website address: theseniorshub.org, should be displayed prominently in all materials produced by the Seniors Hub to increase traffic and brand recognition.
- The website blog should be updated at least bi-weekly.

E-Newsletter Policy

- The E-Newsletter is produced by Carol Weaver.
- The E-Newsletter should be sent monthly to promote upcoming events and projects the Seniors Hub is engaged with.
- The audience for the E-Newsletter is primarily Hub partners and other service organizations, not seniors.

Social Media Policy

- The Seniors Hub maintains a facebook profile that is run by Carol and the rest of the Communications Committee
- The Communications Committee should aim to use the facebook profile to post items at least once everyday to increase followers.

7.0   Logo Use, Colours, & Typography

Logo Use, colours, and typography should remain standard and consistent for every form of communication.

Please see the attached Graphics Standards file for more details about the current policy.

Some Key Points

- Do not alter the logo. Do not change the font size or add to it. Do not distort the logo by expanding or condensing it. Never apply the logo at an angle.
- Minimum Logo size is 1.5 inch wide.
- Use the grayscale form of the logo when printing in black and white. Use the colour logo in all other situations.
- Preferred Fonts should be Frutiger or Optima. If these are not available, use Times New Roman or Georgia as they are easier to read for seniors.
- Colour schemes should correspond to that of the logo (see attached Graphic Standards document for details).

8.0   Contact List

8.1 Seniors Hub Key Spokespeople

Joan Wright, Seniors Hub Coordinator
   Email: joan@southvan.org
   Phone: 604-345-6212 ext. 109

Daisy Kler, Seniors Hub Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator
   Email: daisy@southvan.org
   Phone: 604-324-6212 ext. 141

8.2 Communications Committee

David Wu, Communications Committee Chair (2013)

Carol Weaver, Seniors Hub Webmaster
   Email: stardrum@yahoo.com

Joan Wright, Seniors Hub Coordinator and Communications Committee Member

Loren Spiller, Communications Committee Member

8.3 Logo

All questions regarding proper logo use or the design of miscellaneous promotional material should be directed to:

Sue Rutchinski, Logo Designer

   Email: srutchinski@gmail.com

9.0   References and Acknowledgments

Health Canada (1999). Communicating with seniors: Advice, techniques, and tips. Retrieved from: http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/H88-3-26-1999E.pdf

Shapira, N., Barak, A., & Gal, I. (2007). Promoting older adults' well-being through Internet training and use. *Aging & Mental Health, 11*, 477-484.

We would like to thank UBC's Centre for Hip Health and Mobility in providing us with their 2010 Communications Plan. Their plan formed the basis for the current document.

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David Wu prepared the current version.