

# 2013 COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM

## INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSION ENTRY FORM

(Please copy and complete this form for each entry)

Check only ONE entry classification below:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. AAPA Awareness Initiative Messaging _____ | 8. Overall Campaign <b>XXX</b> _____    |
| 2. Advertisements – Single _____             | 9. Periodicals _____                    |
| 3. Advertisements – Series _____             | 10. Promotional/Advocacy Material _____ |
| 4. Annual Reports _____                      | 11. Social/Web-Based Media _____        |
| 5. Audio-Only Presentations _____            | 12. Special Events _____                |
| 6. Directories/Handbooks _____               | 13. Videos _____                        |
| 7. Miscellaneous _____                       | 14. Visual-Only Presentations _____     |
|  | 15. Websites _____                      |

<input type="checkbox"/> CATEGORY 1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CATEGORY 2
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Entry Title: The Port of Cleveland: Building Connections \_\_\_\_\_

Port Name: The Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority \_\_\_\_\_

Port Address: 1375 E. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 2300, Cleveland Ohio 44114 \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name/Title: Sandra Livingston, Vice President of External Affairs \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: 216-377-1341 \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: [Sandra.Livingston@portofcleveland.com](mailto:Sandra.Livingston@portofcleveland.com) \_\_\_\_\_

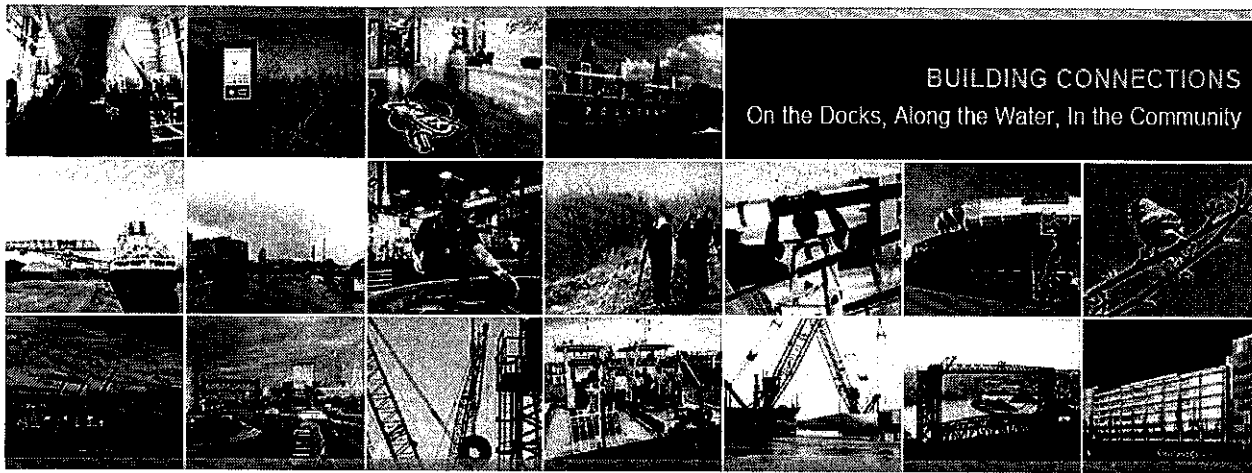
Please indicate precisely how your port's name should be listed on any award(s) it may win:

Name: Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority \_\_\_\_\_

Being as precise as possible, attach a separate entry statement, in English, that includes a descriptive summary of your entry and lists answers to each of the following four key questions:

- What are/were the specific communications challenges or opportunities?**
  - Describe in specific & measurable terms the situation leading up to creation of this entry.
  - Analyze the major internal and external factors needing to be addressed.
- What were your communications planning and programming components?**
  - Describe your overall goals (desired results).
  - Describe your objectives (identify specific, measurable milestones needed to reach your goals).
  - Identify your target publics (list primary, secondary and tertiary audiences in order of importance).
- What actions were taken and what communication outputs were used?**
  - Explain your strategies (e.g., identify media, timing & venue choices requiring tactics to complete).
  - Specify your tactics (actions used to carry out your strategies).
  - Map out your implementation plan (include timelines, staffing and budget).
- What were your your evaluation methods and communications outcomes?**
  - Describe formal or informal surveys, or anecdotal audience feedback, used to evaluate success.
  - Determine communications outcomes by assessing changed opinions, behaviors and attitudes.

The Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority  
2013 AAPA Communications Awards  
Category: Overall Campaign  
Title: The Port of Cleveland: Building Connections



The Port's revamped Facebook page highlights the range of ways the organization builds connections across the community

**Challenges and Opportunities**

In recent years the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority has stepped up with new, targeted, and innovative initiatives to maximize its benefit to the community – and with this historic pivot has come a more energized and strategic approach to communications, public outreach, and community engagement.

The Port does face communications challenges. While it has strong working relationships with private and public stakeholders, the general public is far less familiar with the Port, its value to the community, and its re-invigorated approach.

This lack of knowledge results in part from two facts: first, the general public typically does not experience the Port directly or frequently; and second, many people are not aware that the Port connects with people in important ways that are not obvious.

This knowledge gap also stems from and is compounded by other factors. The Port previously went through a difficult period marked by instability and an overly ambitious plan (that has since been rejected) to move its maritime facilities. The Port also has received some negative media coverage and suffers from misconceptions.

Opportunities to address these challenges arose in June 2010 with the hiring of a new President/CEO. Since that time, the Port has produced a series of solid accomplishments and moved forward on unprecedented initiatives. The process has been strategic, methodical, and measurable, and communications and outreach have been a significant part of this new era for the Port.

In the fall of 2011, the Port adopted a new Strategic Action Plan, Vision, and Mission. Simply put, the Port's mission is focused on job growth, economic vitality, and vibrant waterfronts. Key messaging focuses on the mission, the mindset, and the work. By way of background, the Port is a public agency that receives funding from a countywide property tax voted on by residents, placing an even higher duty on the Port to inform the public about the use and benefits of its tax dollars, and making education and meaningful dialogue even more important.

The Port targets three key areas to enhance the region; messaging is focused on community benefits.

- **Maritime:** The Port is a leading international gateway for waterborne trade on the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Seaway System, providing services that help regional companies compete in the global economy
- **Development Finance:** The Port helps enterprises – from businesses to hospitals to arts institutions – connect to the customized solutions they need to expand and invest in new facilities
- **Environment & Infrastructure:** Recognizing that Cleveland's waterways are central to the city's renewal and economic well-being, the Port has taken on an expanded role as a steward of the harbor, which includes the downtown Lake Erie shoreline and the Cuyahoga River ship channel. The Port has launched environmental and infrastructure programs to safeguard the channel for the jobs, commerce, and recreational activities that

depend on it. The Port has also opened the 88-acre Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve to enhance the public's connection to the waterfront.

The Strategic Action Plan identified communicating for "transparency, public engagement, and accountability" as one of its seven strategic policies.

In essence that Plan launched a new era for the Port and is integral to the overall communications campaign.

In 2012, the Port developed a Strategic Communications Plan that grew out of the Strategic Action Plan and included a series of actions centered on key messaging, education, outreach, and engagement. At the time, the Port either lacked or needed to upgrade key messages and communications "infrastructure," such as the website.

During the latter part of 2012, the Port moved forward with an integrated communications strategy that included the following initiatives:

- Developing overarching messaging
- Launching a redesigned and rewritten website
- Creating interactive maps focused on maritime facilities and development finance projects
- Developing an electronic newsletter disseminated via email and the Port's website
- Strengthening the Port's presence and engagement on Facebook and Twitter
- Partnering with The Civic Commons (<http://theciviccommons.com/portofcleveland>), a social media site designed for civic and civil dialogue
- Creating a standard media kit
- Reaching out to a broad range of audiences with a series of meetings, speeches, and presentations to highlight the Port's business lines and stewardship role in and along Cleveland Harbor
- Developing more opportunities for the President/CEO to be a guest on TV and radio programs.

The Port is also measuring the success of its outreach efforts through ongoing analysis of feedback and statistics.

### **Planning and Programming:**

The Strategic Action Plan set the stage for improved communications and public engagement, and the Port has moved forward in a comprehensive, strategic, and sustained way to better tell its story. The goal of the campaign is to communicate with an ever-growing and diverse audience in a variety of forums, and to educate, engage in meaningful dialogue, and strengthen public trust.

The overarching goal is three-fold: To educate, inform, and engage with a growing audience so that they better understand the Port and the value it provides; to strengthen the public trust in the Port by highlighting not only the organization's accomplishments, but also its key messages, and approach, which is strategic, collaborative, business-oriented, and civic-minded, and; to supplement the Port's marketing materials, which demonstrate to potential customers and partners how the Port can help them achieve their aims of growth and competitiveness. While marketing is handled separately, key marketing messages about the Port's expertise, capabilities, location, and track record are an integral component of communications materials.

The Port developed specific objectives to reach these goals, and in each case the focus has been on improving the Port's brand with messaging that is strong in substance and that strikes a tone that is thoughtful, spirited, and realistic.

Objectives include the following:

- Produce a Strategic Action Plan both grounded in data and public priorities, and written in a way that demonstrates capabilities and builds public trust
- Create key messages focused to help the public better understand the Port and the value it provides
- Strategically integrate communications
- Create an updated website that tells the Port's story with clearer messaging and more user-friendly information, showcases the organization's broad range of work, and is easier to navigate
- Enhance the Port's visual communications with interactive maps that show Port maritime facilities and development finance projects
- Develop an eNewsletter to showcase the Port's work and value to the community, and encourage more two-way dialogue

- Write periodic stakeholder letters from the President/CEO that are informative, put a human face on the Port, and enhance the organization's branding efforts
- Develop a more active presence on social media, using the platforms strategically to educate, engage, and increase two-way dialogues with the general public and other target audiences
- Create a partnership with The Civic Commons online forum, where the Port provides educational material and asks questions, answers questions that have been posed, and engages in live chats
- Develop more opportunities for Port's President/CEO, board members, and senior staff to give speeches in a variety of forums
- Seek opportunities for the President/CEO to be interviewed on television and radio where he can deliver key messages largely unfiltered and – in the case of radio – answer questions posed by members of the public
- Seek more opportunities for the print media to highlight Port initiatives and the importance of the maritime sector of the economy
- Strategically increase the audiences who learn about the Port online, in person, and through the mass media
- Build a library of photos to better tell the Port's story visually

#### **Target audiences:**

- Members of the general public
- Stakeholders in the Port's three focus areas
- Non-profit organizations (general community, civic organizations, environmental organizations, recreational organizations, economic development organizations)
- Government (local, state, and federal officials & agencies)
- Local, state, and national media outlets and trade publications
- Internal stakeholders (board, staff, terminal operators, terminal workers)

#### **Actions and Communications Outputs:**

The overall campaign has taken a comprehensive, strategic, and sustained approach to deliver and demonstrate key messages in a variety of forums and to a wide range of audiences. In essence the Port needed to rebuild, increase, and improve its communications across the board. Beginning with the strategic planning work, the Port has produced more compelling writing, more engaging visuals, and has more actively engaged with its audiences via social media, online chats, website materials, public speeches, and media interviews. The focus has been broad, but the aims in each case have been strategic with targeted objectives and results that frequently can be measured.

Similarly, the tactics were strategic and methodical. The objectives listed above that were project oriented – such as producing the Strategic Action Plan and launching both a new website and an eNewsletter – have been completed. Other objectives – such as the engagement on social media and community outreach initiatives – are ongoing and sustained, with continuing increases in audience numbers and community outreach efforts, and with demonstrated results.

The Port's Vice President of External Affairs (VPEA) has led the communications initiatives, working with both internal Port staff and outside firms to develop content and designs. The Port's senior management worked with a consulting firm in 2011 to draft the Port's new strategic vision, mission, and key policies, and the VPEA wrote a large portion of the plan. It was released publicly in July, 2011 and approved by the Port's Board in September, 2011. With that plan in hand, the Port moved on to develop a Strategic Communications plan and key messaging in early 2012.

This plan was both strategic and tactical, and the Port has been methodically completing the action items, some of which were already in process when the plan was being developed. Because communications is an ongoing daily endeavor, there are no specific times to provide, but below are dates for several milestone initiatives.

Last August, the Port launched its revamped website, which was designed by an outside firm and written by Port staff. The site is easier to navigate and better explains the work of the Port in text, interactive maps, graphics, and photos.

Also in August, the Port began a partnership with The Civic Commons, an online site for civic dialogue. And it began working with a strategic communications consulting firm, which developed and implements a social media plan and writes the Port's eNewsletter, which debuted in September as a monthly and now comes out every other month. In total the Port has issued six eNewsletters.

The relationships with The Civic Commons and the consulting firm give the Port additional opportunities to reach out to a broadening digital community with key messages and more interactive dialogue. At The Civic Commons citizens

can ask questions, learn about new initiatives, and connect with the Port and other community members in open and honest conversations and live chats. Separately, the consulting firm has worked with the Port to broaden its audience in several ways. For example the firm uses social media to encourage that community to visit the Port's website and read the eNewsletter. It also has successfully encouraged local officials and thought leaders to share Port content by distributing it to their large contact lists.

On the visual side, the Port revamped the landing pages for its Twitter and Facebook pages, using a designer to incorporate 18 thumbnail photos into an image that make the sites more engaging, effective vehicles for showcasing the Port's broad role in the community.

The Port also has worked with photographers to build its library with photos taken at events, on land and from both the air and water. The photos help to both engage readers and educate them about the Port's work on the docks, along the river and in the community. Photos – including those shot on a 635-foot freighter traveling up the twisting Cuyahoga River – take readers to places they otherwise might not see. They are also used for marketing purposes.

Throughout the campaign, President/CEO Will Friedman has been one of the Port's most effective communications assets. He is an effective and engaging speaker who has both subject expertise and a down-to-earth demeanor that draws people in. He is central to the Port's rebranding efforts and is directly involved in efforts to strengthen public trust. He regularly speaks to groups large and small, has a standing column in the eNewsletter, and periodically sends out letters to more than 1,000 individuals via email blasts. The letters focus on key Port priorities and initiatives and have focused on everything from the arrival of the first ship of the international shipping season to the role the Port's cleanup boats played in the wake of Hurricane Sandy's damage along Cleveland's lakeshore.

Friedman has also been interviewed numerous times on TV and radio and for print publications, and in 2012 alone spoken at dozens of meetings, whether in one-on-one sessions with CEOs, at conferences, or before a wide range of organizations.

The Port's VP for External Affairs has been the main staff person involved in these communications initiatives. Administrative staff members have also been involved in managing the website and providing other support.

With the focus on rebuilding existing communications vehicles and creating others from scratch, the budget on the communications summarized in this submission has focused primarily on strategic communications planning, writing, graphic design, photography, and managing the Port's social media. The cost to the communications budget for the items described – either for one-time projects or for ongoing work on an annualized basis – is approximately \$82,700. The largest components of the budget were/are: \$28,500 for the strategic communications firm; \$24,000 for the website redesign and related graphics; \$12,000 for the photography (aerial, events, facilities, and nature preserve), \$7,500 for The Civic Commons Partnership, \$7,500 for the communications plan and key messaging. (This tally does not include the planning costs for the development of the strategic policies and actions in the Strategic Action Plan.)

### **Evaluation methods and communications outcomes**

The components of this communications plan are broad and this section will summarize highlights from the evaluation results, which include surveys, online tracking measures, and individual comments and feedback.

The Port issued the Strategic Action Plan in July of 2011 and then had a two-month period for comment and outreach before bringing the plan to its Board for a formal vote that September. An online survey was completed by several dozen people, who indicated support for the overall draft plan and priorities. Certainly the support demonstrated was for the policies, but the plan was written in a way that engaged readers, made a strong case, and clearly detailed the policies and key messages. In addition, the Port approached several local media outlets as part of the public roll out of the plan. The art and architecture critic for The Cleveland Plain Dealer offered strong praise for the Plan in a column whose online headline was: "Port of Cleveland plan led by CEO Will Friedman offers ray of sunshine for Flats and Cuyahoga River."

The Port recently conducted an online survey seeking input on the quality of its eNewsletter stories and whether the content was informative and had influenced the opinions of readers on the work and value of the Port. The organization also receives story feedback from individuals via email and social media.

More than 100 people responded to the Port's online survey about the eNewsletter. Just over 95 percent found value in the content; nearly 92 percent learned something about the Port and its work, with 37 percent reporting they had learned quite a bit; 85 percent reported they had a more favorable view of the Port; and about 60 percent shared stories with others, the vast majority by email.

A few of the comments provided as part of the online survey included the following:

- “This way of keeping the public informed is to your advantage. I enjoy hearing about what is going on. I am also educated by the pictures that accompany the newsletter. Keeping it short and educational makes me care for the work of the port.”
- “well written, concise and digestible.”
- “This is a great way to keep all informed.”
- “like the format, interesting info presented.”
- “The newsletter is always well written concise, and a great way to disseminate information about the Port activities. It certainly increased my knowledge of the role the Port plays in regional economic development.”

The Port has also tracked the following data regarding the eNewsletter:

- The Port’s distribution base for the eNewsletter has grown by more than 15 percent to 1,150 since last fall.
- Data also shows that open rates tend to exceed the average open rate of about 24 percent for government agencies. December for example was nearly 31 percent and February was more than 34 percent.
- The Port has also worked to strategically expand the audience by calling out stories on its Twitter and Facebook pages. The stories have proven to be popular clicked-on links — indeed they are often the most clicked on items.
- Not only does this encourage the social media audience to engage with the stories, it also takes readers to the website, where they can sign up for the eNewsletter, and discover more in depth information on the Port’s work.

Stories in the eNewsletter are written to be engaging to both the public and to media outlets. The Port has twice successfully pitched stories to an online publication called Fresh Water Cleveland, a weekly that focuses on innovative ideas, people, and organizations. Fresh Water “re-printed” the stories, giving byline credit to the Port, which is also a Fresh Water sponsor and benefits from having its logo on several landing pages. Fresh Water’s readership is large – 118,652 page views in the fourth quarter of 2012 – and as a result, the Port was able to disseminate its content and messaging to a wider audience. The editorial decision by Fresh Water to run the stories also speaks to the quality of the eNewsletter content.

In addition, a three-part follow-the-freight series ran in the October-December eNewsletters. It was written to tell the story of the movement of cargo and its transformation into consumer-and-industrial products in an engaging way, yielded this response from the individual who arranged for a writer and a photographer to journey on a freighter up the Cuyahoga River for the first installment in the series: “Thank you for the wonderful article about shipping in the Cuyahoga. You put the reader right in the pilot house and captured the essence of being on a shuttle. Great Job! I’ll be looking forward to reading the follow up articles.”

And separately, stories that appeared in the eNewsletter led to similar coverage in Crain’s Cleveland Business, and a story on a different issue was aired on the local NBC affiliate.

On the Twitter and Facebook fronts, the Port has made solid gains since August in the size of its social-media audience and the amount of engagement. The organization reviews metrics on a monthly basis, tracking information such as numbers of likes, followers, and retweets as well as comments and click-through rates. These metrics allow for evaluation of content shared with the social media audience, and gives an accurate measurement of what is or is not of interest to the audience.

The growth in audience since August is as follows:

- The Port’s following on Twitter has grown by nearly 520 percent and as of the end of April was at 675.
- Likes on Facebook have grown by 43 percent to 525, also as of the end of April.

Will Friedman’s stakeholder letters and eNewsletter columns have also drawn attention. For example in February two of the most clicked on tweets were those that highlighted Friedman’s column and a stakeholder letter. That same month, the open rate for Friedman’s column was 30 percent. One shipping agency executive wrote an email responding to one letter saying it “is really well done and uplifting to read.” And the top official with the local AFL-CIO wrote to say, “this is great stuff. I want to help any way I can.”

On The Civic Commons, five pages explain the work of the Port in user-friendly text. There were an average of 121 unique page views per month from November through March.

Finally, during 2012 the Port counted more than 100 meetings or presentations conducted mostly by Friedman as well as by Board members and staff.

Since the adoption of the Strategic Action Plan in September of 2011, the Port has launched and upgraded its communications across multiple forums and before numerous audiences. The focus is on telling the Port’s story in a way

that is informative, engaging, and leads to strengthened public trust. The effort has been strategic, sustained and measurable. In a relatively short time, the Port's communication's campaign has produced encouraging numbers and helped the Port engage with both current and new audiences. The Port will continue with its communications efforts, and plans several new initiatives, including: developing an expanded communication and community outreach plan, creation of a new logo, increased use of YouTube, new engagement opportunities on Civic Commons.

#### URL Links:

The Port's website: <http://www.portofcleveland.com/>

Maritime landing page: <http://www.portofcleveland.com/maritime-logistics/>

Maritime Facilities maps: <http://www.portofcleveland.com/maritime-logistics/facility-map/>

Development Finance landing page: <http://www.portofcleveland.com/development-finance/>

Development Finance maps: <http://www.portofcleveland.com/development-finance/financing-map/>

Infrastructure & Environment landing page: <http://www.portofcleveland.com/infrastructure-environment/>

River graphic: <http://www.portofcleveland.com/infrastructure-environment/river-infrastructure-restoration/river-map/>

The Port's eNewsletters (October – December issues)

December: <http://www.portofcleveland.com/category/newsletter/december-2012/>

November: <http://www.portofcleveland.com/category/newsletter/november/>

October: <http://www.portofcleveland.com/category/newsletter/october/>

President/CEO stakeholder letters

Most recent: <http://www.portofcleveland.com/media-center/ceo-letters-to-stakeholders-2/>

February 25: <http://www.portofcleveland.com/media-center/ceo-letters-to-stakeholders-2/february-25-2013/>

November 2: <http://www.portofcleveland.com/media-center/ceo-letters-to-stakeholders-2/november-2-2012/>

The Port's Twitter page: <https://twitter.com/portofcleveland>

The Port's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ThePortofCleveland>

The Civic Commons

Port landing page: <http://theciviccommons.com/issues/port-of-cleveland?from=portofcleveland>

On the River: <http://theciviccommons.com/issues/port-of-cleveland/pages/on-the-river>

Along the Lakefront: <http://theciviccommons.com/issues/port-of-cleveland/pages/along-the-lakefront>

In the Community: <http://theciviccommons.com/issues/port-of-cleveland/pages/in-the-community>

Development Finance: <http://theciviccommons.com/issues/port-of-cleveland/pages/development-finance>