

# 2015 COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM

## INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSION ENTRY FORM

Please copy and complete this form for each entry.  
Create a separate document for answering the five questions below.

Check only ONE entry classification below:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. AAPA Awareness Initiative Messaging _____ | 8. Overall Campaign _____               |
| 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 _____ <b>X</b>              | 14. Visual-Only Presentations _____     |
|  | 15. Websites _____                      |

Please check the appropriate box:

CATEGORY 1

CATEGORY 2

CATEGORY 3

Entry Title School Boat Tour Program

Name of Port Port of Los Angeles

Port Address 425 S. Palos Verdes St., San Pedro, CA 90731

Contact Name/Title Theresa Adams Lopez

Telephone 310-732-3507 Email Address tadams-lopez@portla.org

On separate paper, **FIRST** write a short, descriptive summary of your entry, **THEN**, in as much detail as needed, specifically address each of the following five questions and number your answers. Your answers equal 50% of your score.

**1. What are/were the entry's specific communication 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.

**2. How does the communication used in this entry complement the organization's overall mission?**

- Explain the organization's overall mission and how it influenced creation of this entry.

**3. What were the communications planning and programming components for this entry?**

- Describe your overall goals or desired results.
- Describe your objectives and list specific, measurable milestones needed to reach your goals.
- Identify your primary and secondary audiences in order of importance.

**4. What actions were taken and what communication outputs were used in this entry?**

- Explain what strategies were developed to achieve success and why these strategies were chosen.
- Specify the tactics used (i.e., actions used to carry out your strategies).
- Detail the implementation plan by including timeline, staffing and outsourcing used.

**5. What were the communications outcomes from this entry and what evaluation methods were used to assess them?**

- Describe any formal/ informal surveys used, or anecdotal audience feedback received, that helped in evaluating the success of this entry.
- If possible, explain how this entry influenced target audience opinions, behaviors, attitudes or actions.

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*Project Name:* School Boat Tour Program (<http://www.portoflosangeles.org/education/sbtp.asp>)  
*Port:* Port of Los Angeles

### Summary

The Port of Los Angeles School Boat Tour Program provides free one-hour educational boat tours to school groups (fourth grade through university programs) to demonstrate the importance of world trade; its economic impacts; career possibilities; security, environmental and community initiatives; and other requested topics of interest in an age appropriate and stimulating way.

### Communications Challenge/Opportunity

Understanding that education is the key to a brighter future, the Port of Los Angeles (POLA) is committed to helping students of all ages learn about ports, the maritime environment and the industries that facilitate goods movement and global trade. POLA provides resources and experiences that broaden students' view of the Southern California region, international trade and their future career possibilities.

The Port of Los Angeles offers free educational boat tours to students - fourth grade through university programs - throughout the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and other area school districts, charter schools, private schools, home schools, and colleges and universities. These hour-long narrated boat tours offer students a visual perspective of the daily operations at the Port of Los Angeles, North America's leading container port and top international freight gateway. To measure the success of this program, teachers are asked to complete an evaluation form after their boat tour and records are kept year after year to keep participant contact information and evaluate number of participants and other pertinent details.

The challenge is to educate as many students as possible about the POLA and the maritime industry, despite very low school field trip budgets, in an age-appropriate, positive, stimulating way. The City of Los Angeles is a huge geographical area and enrolls more than 640,000 students in more than 900 schools and more than 180 public charter schools in LAUSD alone. The School Boat Tour Program has to be well-defined, in accordance with the state learning standards, while developing a connection, an understanding and a positive perception of the POLA and the maritime industry.

### Nexus to the Port's Overall Mission

This long-standing program continues to support the overall mission of the Port of Los Angeles. The *Port of Los Angeles Strategic Plan Update 2014* (Strategic Plan) identifies "Strong Relationships with Stakeholders" as one of its four strategic plan objectives.

In the Strategic Plan, under "Strong Relationships with Stakeholders," an initiative is to "attract visitors to the LA Waterfront of Wilmington and San Pedro." Providing school boat tours to educational groups is a stimulating way to build strong relationships with youth, young adults, educators and parents – essential stakeholders of our community. The narrated boat tours provide information about the Port's economic impact, environmental initiatives, security programs and jobs created. It's very possible that these messages do not end with only the students and educators that participate in these tours. Students that take these tours may go home to tell their parents about the Port of Los Angeles and educators that take these tours may teach more students and other educators about the Port of Los Angeles. This program brought 10,690 people to the LA Waterfront last fiscal year and is on track to exceed that number this fiscal year.

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### Planning and Programming

What better way to learn about the Port of Los Angeles than from the water? We contracted with a local boat tour service provider to provide hour-long narrated educational free school boat tours. Although school boat tours are now accommodated all year long as needed, based on weather and school schedules, it was determined that predominately advertising the boat tour program from March through June, Monday through Friday, except holidays, at 10 am, 11 am, and noon would be optimal for most groups.

The vessel accommodates 149 passengers with open air topside and covered seating below – all connected to a speaker system from which the tour presentation is broadcast. Tours are conducted rain or shine given the flexibility to use the covered portion of the boat.

Because of tight school budgets, the Port of Los Angeles also offers a bus subsidy as an incentive to schools to take advantage of the school boat tour program. The bus subsidy aids with paying for the school bus to and from the Port and covers nearly, if not all, of the bus cost. Schools have a hard time believing that in addition to the free tour, bus subsidies are provided.

An age-appropriate script was developed to provide the target audience with a general port overview; digestible statistics; and fun facts, such as, 20,000 Barbie dolls and 16,000 teddy bears can fit into one 40-foot shipping container and the man-made island, Pier 400, is as large as 3 Disneyland and California Adventure Amusement Parks put together.

In addition to the narration, on the boat, teachers can select a scavenger hunt/photo activity, quiz suggested for middle school students, or quiz suggested for high school students depending on the grade/level of their students. Clipboards and pens are available for students to use on the boat for this purpose. These materials keep the students engaged and focused on the narration and provide options for teachers who may have students at differing grade/ability levels. The materials are also available on the Port's website with the answer guides for the teachers to view before/after their tour. Teachers receive three Port of Los Angeles string backpacks at the end of each tour to provide to the three students of their choice as an incentive/reward for answering questions correctly, receiving the highest score on their quizzes, etc.

The School Boat Tour Program web page on the Port of Los Angeles website also includes a *Make a Day of it* information sheet which refers teachers to other area educational activities at POLA such as the Los Angeles Maritime Museum, Battleship IOWA and Cabrillo Marine Aquarium. This encourages teachers to stretch their bus subsidies for other educational activities at the port. We have received positive feedback from these and other facilities for bringing students to their sites as well as feedback from teachers that these experiences enhanced their field trips to POLA.

High school and college/university student groups typically receive narrations more specific to their focus. For example, a high school group focusing on careers may learn from Port representatives about careers in the maritime industry and a university MBA Transportation Planning group may receive a briefing on the POLA focusing on the Port's Strategic Plan followed by a narrated boat tour.

**Goals:** The goal of this program is to educate as many students as possible about the Port and maritime industry in an age-appropriate, positive and stimulating way. POLA strives to teach students about the connection that the Port has to their everyday lives; the economic impact of the Port; the career opportunities connected to POLA; and the environmental, security, and community programs underway at the Port.

**Objective:** The objective is to have a higher number of participants than in the previous year, as to educate as many students as possible. Another objective is to receive an overall rating of "excellent" on every School Boat Tour Evaluation form received by our office. In addition, every evaluation form received would state that

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the teacher would come again in the future and/or recommend the School Boat Tour Program to other teachers.

*Target Audience:* Fourth through sixth grade LAUSD students are the target audience for this program. This grade range was chosen because it is the point in the LAUSD curriculum where students learn about the maritime industry and the Port of Los Angeles.

*Secondary Audiences:* LAUSD middle and high schools, charter schools, private schools, home schools, colleges and universities.

It has become more and more apparent that all ages of student groups are interested in tours of the Port of Los Angeles. This year, in addition to advertising to the target audience, we also announced this program to secondary audiences, including middle schools and high schools.

## Actions Taken & Outputs

*Strategies:* This ongoing program at POLA is well-known by the coordinators for the target audience - teachers of fourth through sixth grade students. Over the last several years, we have seen a shift in the preferred contact method of the teachers. In the past, we mainly communicated with teachers through United States Postal Service mail that was sent to the school. More and more, we began hearing that often the packets that were mailed to the schools would sit in the school offices and never reach the teachers who book the trips. But, at that same time, not every teacher was email and computer savvy – until recently. Now, teachers have told us that they prefer to communicate by email. It gives them the opportunity and flexibility to communicate during school breaks and after hours.

*Tactics:* We switched to a completely electronic system slowly, over a few years, providing teachers the opportunity to adjust to and in the end prefer the online method. Teachers got used to the online reservation site, while still receiving paper communications and confirmations.

Over the past several years we have required that school/teacher contacts provide email addresses when booking tours. For our target audience, we have a pretty solid email list. In addition to the contact list that we had already compiled, our college student worker also created an email list of principals, counselors and/or teachers for our secondary targets, including middle schools and high schools in LAUSD and local charter and private schools.

The Port of Los Angeles Graphics section created a clickable “reservation site is open” notification that was sent via email blast to these contact lists. It allowed recipients to click on the boat image in the email so they could directly go to the Port of Los Angeles school boat tour webpage for further details and to make a reservation. This notification also boldly stated that tours are free and bus subsidies are available for this program. This year, the opening of the School Boat Tour reservation site notification was posted to the Port’s Facebook page. We also advertised the program to POLA employees through the employee newsletter, “What’s New, Crew?”

The Port of Los Angeles online reservation system was transformed so that all possible communication that could be paperless would be paperless. For example, a teacher who received the emailed “reservation site is open” notification could click on it to be taken directly to the school boat tour web page where they could access all the information they would need to make a reservation and plan their trip – including a bus subsidy instruction guide and form for LAUSD schools, *Make a day of it* (other facilities to visit at the POLA and in the harbor area) document, map with parking directions, and the school boat tour reservation site. Since many secondary audiences - including non-LAUSD schools - are now participating, we added a non-LAUSD bus

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subsidy instruction guide and form to the website this year for other school districts and schools to easily apply for bus subsidies.

On the reservation site, teachers create a user login, have access to the tour calendar to check availability and request their tour. After requesting their tour day/time, they receive an automatic notice that their tour request was submitted and that they will receive a notification once confirmed. Once the POLA school boat tour administrator confirms the tour, the teacher receives an automatic confirmation notice with links to the school boat tour webpage for bus subsidy, map, parking, and other pertinent tour information. One week prior to their tour, the teacher receives an automatic email notification that allows the teacher to click to "confirm" or "cancel" their tour and links them once again to the POLA school boat tour webpage for pertinent tour details. Every automatic email received includes a POLA contact phone number and email address so the teacher can easily connect with the POLA administrator if desired. This automation has allowed for a flexible, easy process for teachers and POLA administrators.

*Implementation Plan:* Contact lists were updated by our college student worker during the college winter break. The reservation site was updated over the summer and went live in September for the school year. At that time, the email "reservation site is open" notification was blasted to the Port's contact lists. Tours could then be booked immediately for the school year.

One Port of Los Angeles staff member administers the program with the assistance of one student worker intern.

The total budget for this program is \$90,000. Each boat tour is \$450 + (up to) \$300 for a bus subsidy. To save on costs, smaller groups of students often tour together. One bus subsidy is offered per school, per year. Also, not every school utilizes the bus subsidy offered to them – a nearby school walks to the boat, some private schools already have funding for transportation, some schools never complete the required LAUSD paperwork to be reimbursed, etc. Some transportation costs amount to lower than the \$300 subsidy amount especially for schools in the harbor area.

## Outcome and Evaluation

As stated above, a goal of this program is to educate as many students as possible about the Port and maritime industry in an age-appropriate, positive and stimulating way. An objective of this program is to have a higher number of participants than in the previous year, as to educate as many students as possible.

In FY2013/14, 10,690 guests and 131 groups participated in the School Boat Tour Program. Groups are paired together when possible, so these 131 groups shared 110 boat tours. Bus subsidy requests were received for 46 groups. At 110 tours (\$49,500) + 46 (approx. \$300) bus subsidies (\$13,800), the program incurred a cost of approximately \$63,300, or \$5.92 per participant.

As of April 2015, in FY2014/15, 10,991 guests have participated or are signed up to participate in the School Boat Tour Program. Currently, 121 tours are booked for 168 groups. Bus subsidy requests are still being collected. The current number of participants for FY 2014/15 is already 3% greater than the 10,690 guests that participated in FY 2013/14 and 48% greater than the 7,450 guests that participated in the program in FY 2012/13.

Evaluation forms are provided to teachers on the tour, available on the POLA school boat tour webpage, and are sometimes emailed to teachers after their tour. Teachers are asked to fill them out and leave them with the boat crew after their tour or to email, fax or mail back to the POLA School Boat Tour Coordinator.

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Another objective is to receive an overall rating of "excellent" on every School Boat Tour Evaluation form received by our office. In addition, every evaluation form received would state that the teacher would come again in the future and/or recommend the School Boat Tour Program to other teachers. Evaluation forms for this year are still being collected, but so far responses have been "excellent" and have stated that teachers will return again and/or recommend the program to other teachers. Many schools/teachers continue to come back year after year. One of the evaluation forms received this year stated, "Our entire group loved this field trip! Thanks for making it possible for us to enjoy the Port of LA. We will recommend this to many other groups."

POLA strives to teach students about the connection that the Port has to their everyday lives; the economic impact of the Port; the career opportunities connected to the POLA; and the environmental, security, and community programs underway at the Port. Another evaluation from stated, "I've been a teacher for 20 years, and I've taken my students on several different field trips over the years and this was one of the best. This trip provided students to see and experience many new things all at once. It also greatly contributed to their understanding of the transportation of goods and of the economic importance of the port. We are looking forward to returning again next year!"