

AAPA 2020 Communications Awards
Port of New Orleans
Maritime Career Info Sessions – Community and Educational Outreach

Summary: In 2019, the Port of New Orleans (Port NOLA) began to host Maritime Career Info Sessions on a quarterly basis offering information about careers available in the region’s maritime industry. These sessions allow the public to learn about the variety of jobs that are available on or near the river, many of which have minimal entry-level requirements. Each event includes presentations by tenants and partners who work in the industry, and highlights jobs such as longshoreman, deckhand, trucker, Harbor Police Department officer, and port facility maintenance. Additionally, the session includes a variety of workforce providers and educational institutions to connect attendees with training information and resources. For the purposes of this entry, we will be specifically highlighting the first Maritime Career Info Session that we hosted in October 2019.



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1. What are/were the entry’s specific communications challenges or opportunities?

Port NOLA contributes significantly to two of the State’s largest economic engines—the maritime and hospitality industries. Louisiana ports create one in five jobs in the state, and as such, the Port has put an intentional focus on expanding our workforce development programming to ensure that residents in our jurisdiction can access the jobs generated by the Port, our tenants and local maritime partners.

As we developed the Port’s Maritime Career Info Session, our biggest challenge to address was the Port’s perception. Based off conversations with regional workforce partners, economic development organizations and residents, we learned that the public had a perception that the Port was responsible for employing all positions within the local maritime industry. As a landlord port, Port NOLA provides the infrastructure necessary for tenants and partners to operate efficiently. The regional maritime industry that Port facilitates generates approximately [19,000 maritime jobs](#) locally. However, because we are a landlord port, Port NOLA only directly employs about 300 of those 19,000 jobs, which is a challenge when cultivating workforce development initiatives.

In our 2018 strategic master plan, the Port saw an opportunity to go beyond our fundamental role as a landlord to support our tenants and industry by helping connect residents of the region with information about maritime jobs, schools that provide training and tenants that need workers with specific skills.

In consideration of our challenge and opportunity, we began to ask ourselves: Although the Port does not directly employ all of the 19,000 regional maritime jobs, how can we create an initiative to educate the community about these careers, while simultaneously connecting them with tenants and industry partners who hire for port-related jobs?

2. How does the communication used in this entry map back to the organization's overall mission? – Explain the organization's overall mission and how it influenced creation of this entry.

The Port of New Orleans mission is to drive regional economic prosperity by maximizing the flow of international trade and commerce as a modern Gateway.

With the Port's mission in mind, we realize that we cannot drive regional economic prosperity without cultivating the workforce that drives it. In order to remain competitive as a Port, we recognize that investing in our maritime workforce is as integral as investing our infrastructure.

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

When coordinating the Maritime Career Info Session, we envisioned an educational event that would make the Port and local maritime industry feel more accessible to the public. Through the event, we knew we needed to address that the Port itself is not the direct employer of all maritime jobs in our region, however that because of the Port, the local maritime industry exists. We partnered with tenants, industry partners, workforce providers, the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development and educational institutions to ultimately create a two hour event that would be both a presentation and exhibition.

Knowing that an event like this would be the first of its kind, and to limit over-promise, we wanted to be clear [in our outreach](#) and direct that the event was an educational session—not a job fair. The event was structured with 6 employer presenters, each speaking for no more than 7 minutes, followed by an exhibitor-style format in which attendees could speak to presenters, workforce providers and educational institutions.

Our goals for the first Maritime Career Info Session included:

- A minimum of 2 non-Port related presenters: goal surpassed with 6 presenters
- A minimum of 15 attendees at event: goal surpassed with 32 attendees
- A minimum of 2 workforce providers: goal surpassed with 5 workforce providers
- A minimum of 1 educational institution: goal surpassed with 2 community colleges

The primary audience for the session was anyone who has interest in working for the Port/Port tenants and local community members with a desire to learn more about port operations. Our secondary audiences included tenants, industry partners, community partners, schools and elected officials.

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

Because the Port had never hosted a Maritime Career Info Session in the past, we knew that expansive community outreach was necessary to introduce the event to the public. We promoted the first session through neighborhood associations, NextDoor, local hiring/training programs, the Louisiana office of Housing and Urban Development, regional economic development organizations and chambers of commerce, community colleges, local libraries and Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Another strategy in planning this initiative was to decide how we would maintain it for the future. Our goal became to bring the event to different communities in our region on a quarterly basis. For example, the first event took place in Algiers, a community on the west bank of New Orleans, followed by another session in the Lower 9th Ward—on the outskirts of Orleans Parish. Because the Port's jurisdiction includes three parishes (counties)—Jefferson, Orleans and St. Bernard Parish—our goal is to bring these sessions to these parishes and the communities within them to make them as accessible as possible.

From inception to execution, the first Maritime Career Info Session took about 2.5 months to plan. For subsequent sessions, we have coordinated the location and venue 6 weeks out, and begun marketing the event 4 weeks out, with a strong marketing push with local stakeholders such as neighborhood associations the week of the event.

Seven to ten Port employees staff each session, with roughly six presenters and ten exhibitors. The Port public affairs staff handles all event collateral, site selection, set up, break down, [speaker coordination](#) and outreach. When necessary, the Port Human Resources department assists in planning and staffing the sessions.

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

Attendees were asked to fill out a survey upon departure. Based off [survey results](#), the event was positively received. 23% of those surveyed said the initial event needed no improvement, and ¼ of attendees reported leaving the event “extremely knowledgeable” of the regional maritime industry.

We also received positive anecdotal feedback from workforce providers in attendance who were not affiliated with the event stating how pleased they were that the Port was leading the charge to connect the community to the maritime industry—a coveted industry to work in locally because of pay and benefit opportunities.

Neighborhood associations in attendance were pleased to see the Port elevating its community engagement efforts and complimented the level of advertising that done to promote the session to community members.

On the night of the event, three attendees (that we know of) left with action items on how to apply/follow up on an application for a certain position that was presented. Our Human Resource director and three presenters received follow up calls from attendees about vacant positions.

The energy of the session felt overwhelmingly positive, with both attendees and presenters leaving with a positive sentiment of the Port, our mission and our value in facilitating the maritime workforce.

Photos from Workforce Events: <https://portno.canto.com/b/NK6DK>

<https://portno.canto.com/b/UJMPG>

MARITIME CAREER INFO SESSION

The New Orleans region benefit from one of the most integrated multimodal transit systems in the country! Have you ever been curious about what it takes to work on the exciting Mississippi River?

Tuesday, October 29, 6-7:30 p.m.

Algiers Regional Library, 3014 Holiday Drive, New Orleans, 70131

Join us to learn about local maritime careers that require minimal qualifications to start. There will also be opportunities to talk to local educational institutions about training offered for these roles.

Learn from maritime industry representatives who will discuss these roles:

- **Truckers:** Export containers to and from a port to final destination.
- **Longshoremen:** Load and unload ships at a seaport.
- **Deckhands:** Handle maintenance of hull, decks, mooring and cargo handling.
- **Harbor Police Officers:** Patrol and enforce the law on Port properties.
- **Crane Technicians:** Specialized mechanics who work with mobile equipment that transports heavy materials.
- **Maritime Facility Maintenance:** Port maintenance roles such as carpentry, grounds keeping, painting and general maintenance.

Please note, this event is not a job fair.

This event is open to the public, however it is tailored for adults 18+ who are not in school.



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