



Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts

Communications Action Plan

May 9th, 2014

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Introduction

Purpose

- The purpose of the communications action plan is to outline an approach to coordinate the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts' (COLT's) communications function in order to create and maintain relationships with key audiences
- This plan is intended to serve as a multi-year guide to inform the development and implementation of specific communications strategies and tasks
 - As COLT continues to mature, the plan will also inform future marketing and public relations strategies

Underlying Assumptions

- Communications is a critical organizational function that supports all aspects of an organization's work towards strategic goals
- Successful communications is based on an in-depth understanding of who you are trying to reach (key audiences) and for what purpose and relies upon messages tailored to the unique needs and interests of those audiences
- All who communicate on behalf of the organization must understand the key audiences and adhere to defined communications strategies and messages

Methodology

- Individual phone interviews with key informants, members, funders, partners, and decision makers (N = 30)
- In-person focus groups with land trust staff (N = 6) and breakout session discussions with land trust staff (N = ~30)
- Secondary research and review of COLT materials, documents, and websites
- Informed by Conservation Impacts extensive experience working with land trusts and statewide land trust associations

Definitions

- **Brand:** The endearing and enduring characteristics of an organization; the organization's essence. It is what makes an organization distinct and distinguishable.
- **Constituent-Centered:** Aligning all aspects of an organization around an understanding of the core constituents to create loyal, engaged, long-term relationships.

- **Communications:** The process of designing the most resonant messages to select audiences through the right channels for specific purposes. Effective communications is a two-way process of sending, receiving, and analyzing messages.
- **Key Audiences:** Those groups of people or organizations with whom it is most important to communicate; usually in order to create and/ or maintain relationships that help the organization achieve its strategic goals.
- **Marketing:** The process of defining and analyzing the market to provide products and services and outreach strategies that best resonate with the target market in order to meet their needs so they take the action you want.
- **Public Relations:** One aspect of an organization’s outreach strategy. It includes the relationships that an organization has with its “publics” and is about creating a positive and strategic public image, such that marketing can take place.

COLT History and Current Situation

- COLT started convening around 2000 and finally incorporated as a 501(c)3 organization in 2012
 - Mission: To serve and strengthen the land trust community in Oregon
- COLT's areas of strategic focus include:
 - Build the voice and power of the land trust movement with decision makers
 - Grow support for the land trust community by communicating its collective story
 - Advance conservation funding and tools for land trusts, and
 - Strengthen the Coalition's resources and capacity.
- Since its founding, COLT has grown to include 19 member land trusts that collectively represent over 35,000 supporters
- Board of Directors includes representatives from each member land trust
- The Executive Director, COLT's first staff member, was hired in January, 2013
 - A Communication and Outreach Manager was hired in April of 2014
- COLT completed a three-year strategic plan in 2011, with a significant update in May of 2014

Land Trusts in Oregon

- As of 2010, 23 land trusts operate in Oregon (including six all-volunteer)
- The human capacity of Oregon's land trusts has grown faster than the national average between 2005-2010 (2010 Land Trust Alliance Census)
 - 76% increase in full- and part-time staff/ contractor capacity vs. 19% growth nationally; as of 2012, land trust community employs 152 FTE.
 - 125% increase in active volunteers (1,244 volunteers) vs. 70% nationally
- The Yarg Foundation made a ten-year, \$10M gift to support the state's land trusts in 2011
 - Funds have provided organizational development assessments and subsequent capacity building grants to member land trusts (administered by LTA)

Conservation Impact of Oregon's Land Trusts

- As of early 2014, COLT's member land trusts have conserved nearly 300,000 acres of working lands, open spaces, and natural habitats by partnering with willing landowners
- In 2010, Oregon ranked 35th in the nation in acres conserved and fifth out of six northwestern states (2010, LTA Land Trust Census)

Operating Environment

Demographics and Economics of Oregon

- Population: 3.9 million (2013)
 - 70% of the state's population live in the Willamette Valley
 - Oregon State Office of Economic Analysis anticipates the state's population to steadily increase over the next 20 years to 4.9 million by 2035
- Nonfarm and government employment is only now beginning to recover to pre-recessionary levels (2007); per capita income recovered more quickly (by 2010)
- Oregon's recent economic growth is driven primarily by the manufacturing sector, while some natural resource sectors such as timber have steadily decreased
 - Many rural economies (especially in coastal and western Oregon) continue to struggle with sustainability (per interviewees)

2013 Oregon Values and Beliefs Survey

- 57% = Oregonians who agree more with the view that protection of the environment should be given more priority even at the risk of slowing economic growth
- 66% = Oregonians who consider protecting productive farm and forest land from development to be very or somewhat important
- 68% = Oregonians who believe that tax breaks for conservation are desirable
- 78% = Oregonians who mention environmentally positive terms (e.g., "natural landscapes") when asked what they value about Oregon
- 84% = Oregonians feel that people of diverse backgrounds coming together to work towards common ground is desirable; however only 42% think this is probable, suggesting a large degree of pessimism

Land Conservation and Land Use

- Oregon's land is 53% federally owned
 - Some counties in eastern Oregon are 60%+ federally owned
- Oregon's land use system largely protects farm and forest lands from development
- Oregon's policies, laws, and regulations provide unique challenges for conservation:
 - Land use laws devalue donated easements, lowering incentives for landowners
 - State legislators must approve any federal funding allocated to conservation
 - Limited state funding is available for land acquisition
 - Land use laws are administered locally by county commissioners; tax regulations vary by county
- Ballot Measure 76 created a permanent funding source from lottery revenue

- Approximately 10% is allocated to land acquisition; majority funds restoration work
- Numerous land management planning processes are underway across the state including potential listing of sage grouse, juniper utilization, forest planning, etc.

Interviewee Input

- There is strong consensus among COLT’s member land trusts that COLT’s key audiences are:
 - Members
 - Funders (primarily institutional funders)
 - Legislators/ decision makers
- These audiences align with COLT’s areas of strategic focus
- While COLT’s strategic plan has been updated as of May 2014, areas of strategic focus will likely remain the same for the next few years

Primary Findings

- **Members** report being most interested in receiving communications regarding policy issues, including calls to action, as well as seeing COLT tell the story of land trusts and their work in ways that are compelling and build support for land conservation.
- **Funders** are interested in hearing about how COLT is creating a unified voice to represent the land trusts in relevant policy issues and in seeing communications that explain the value of land trusts and private land conservation to policymakers, other funders, and the general public – especially when that work occurs through collaboration and/ or impacts working lands.
- **Legislators and other decision-makers** have a more limited understanding of the basics of land trusts and land conservation. They are interested in learning more about land trusts and the value of their work and being informed about ways in which the work of land trusts might dovetail with the goals and interests of their constituents.

Implications for Communications Action Plan

Priorities

- Input from interviewees, COLT’s mission and strategic focus areas, and the operating environment all point to **two top priorities** across all of COLT’s efforts:

Priorities:	1. Create a strong, unified voice to represent the land trust community	2. Debunk myths/ put a human face on the story of voluntary private land conservation in Oregon
Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keep me updated on policy issues ▪ Tell me what we need to do (calls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Raise the visibility of land trusts in the state

	to action)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure that those in positions of power and influence understand and value us
Funders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide a local, bipartisan voice on policy and funding issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Get more people to see the value created by land trusts – especially those who influence policy and funding (so that in time, there’s more land conservation happening in Oregon)
Decision-Makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tell me how the value created by land trusts affects my constituents and/ or members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Help me understand what land trusts are and what they do, especially for those I represent

Internal Capacity

- COLT is still in its start-up phase of development, meaning:
 - Staff, Board, and volunteer capacity are limited
 - Recognition and visibility outside the land trust community is limited
 - COLT is still building internal infrastructures, systems, and processes
 - COLT is still cultivating the active commitment of all member land trusts
- Capacity is growing (e.g., recently hired second staff person) and the refreshed strategic planning process will help solidify member buy-in and commitment

Operating Environment

- The policy environment in Oregon is complex with many different players/ agendas
- Overall, Oregonians’ values align strongly with those of land trusts
 - However strong resistance to anything conservation-related exists in some parts of the state
- In some regions, land trusts, if not trusted, then at least misunderstood in their communities
 - Taking land out of production and/ or off local property tax rolls is a widespread concern, especially among rural counties
- Rural/ urban dichotomy and tension is pervasive across the state
- The state’s economy has recovered from the recession to a large extent, but industries connected to working lands continue to struggle

Conclusions

- Creating a strong, unified voice to represent land trusts requires building relationships with many different decision-makers as well as organizations that wield influence
- Establishing COLT’s presence in the policy arena is urgent – not only do all key audiences expect this, but issues that impact land trusts come up consistently and may increase as Oregon’s population does

- There is a disconnect between the aligned values of Oregonians and land trusts, and the limited awareness and understanding of the basics of private land conservation
 - This provides COLT an opportunity to proactively tell the story of land trusts
- Given current capacity, all communications strategies need to dovetail with existing activities and tasks assigned to staff and board (vs. adding more to the plate)
- COLT’s immediate communications priorities are establishing “the basics”
 - Building formalized communications channels with key audiences
 - Identifying and building relationships with specific individuals within key audiences (e.g., not every single state legislator, but those most relevant to COLT)
 - Strategically deploying limited resources with an eye towards the future (e.g., key audience members most likely to be relevant to COLT’s work in its areas of strategic focus moving forward)

Communications Action Plan Summary

Introduction

- The communications action plan is COLT’s guide to using its communications function deliberately – through designing and delivering messages that resonate with key audiences for a specific purpose (communications goals)

Communications Goals

- Increase knowledge and understanding of the basics of Oregon’s land trust community among key audiences
 - First and foremost, to grow support for the land trust community by communicating its collective story
- Build formalized communication channels and strong working relationships with strategic members of key audiences
 - Particularly, build the voice and power of the land trust movement with decision makers.
- Increase the sense of ownership in COLT of member land trusts, seeing their individual work as part of a collective state-wide effort
 - Including advancing conservation funding and tools for land trusts
- Position COLT as the credible, bi-partisan, and trustworthy voice of the land trust community
- Demonstrate to key audiences that land trusts deliver value that they care about
- Develop the internal infrastructure and capacity to support ongoing communications
 - This is part of strengthening of COLT’s resources and capacity to meet the needs of our members and opportunities in the state.

Image

- An organization’s image is how those external to the organization perceive it
- The image COLT will cultivate includes:
 - Being accessible and responsive
 - Being a bi-partisan, collaborative, Oregon-based, and credible source of reliable, trustworthy information
 - Active and pro-active, promoting the work of land trusts
 - A matchmaker and translator, connecting land trusts and their value with those who care
 - This includes explaining the value of land trusts in terms the key audiences most care about
 - A collaborative community partner interested in “win-win” opportunities

Messages

- Core messages include:
 - Land trust, land conservation, and conservation easement “101” information
 - The scope, scale, and collective impact of land trusts and private land conservation in Oregon
 - The public benefit provided by land trusts
 - Focus on tangible, publically appreciated benefits: protecting water quality, safeguarding access to the outdoors for children, maintaining working lands, providing economic value through restoration, etc.
 - The wide-ranging benefits and value of private land conservation, with special emphasis on impacts on working lands and how this impact is achieved through collaboration
 - Land trusts’ role in Oregon’s state and local economies
 - COLT represents the collective interests of Oregon’s land trusts
 - Land trusts are a unified community, coming together under the banner of the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts
 - Clear and compelling positions taken on specific policy and funding issues
 - Stories about land trusts delivering value to key audiences and their constituents
- Messages will be customized for each key audience (see next section)

Messengers

- During the beginning stages of implementing the communications action plan, COLT’s staff and board members will serve as the primary messengers
- In time, COLT’s messengers will expand to include:
 - Landowners with stories to tell (recruited by COLT and its members)
 - Members of the key audiences (to their colleagues and to their constituents)
 - Some members of member land trusts’ boards and staff

Strategies

- A core communications strategy is one-on-one relationship building with strategic members of key audiences
- Other strategies include:
 - Formal presentations
 - Strategic communications through a variety of channels
 - Social media, website, e-newsletters, fact sheets, talking points, State of the Lands report, etc.
 - Putting a human face on conservation through storytelling

- Having a consistent presence where the key audience is (e.g., in Salem)

Communication Vehicles

- Face-to-face interactions and conversations (informal)
- Written updates (policy updates, fact sheets, talking points, etc.) tailored to key audience needs and interests
- Website, social media, and e-newsletters
- Stories about the value of land trusts (in person, in writing, via social media, etc.)
- Formal meetings and presentations (in-person and via technology)
- Earned media, op-ed pieces, and letters to the editor
- Collaborative mapping project and an annual State of the Lands Report

Feedback Loop

- Communication is not just sharing information; rather it is a two-way process that includes sending a message, the message being received, and receipt being signaled
- Signals that COLT's messages have been received include:
 - Consistent use of "we" by land trust members when referencing COLT
 - Invitations to participate in activities related to policy issues
 - Requests for presentations, stories, and information/ testimonies
 - Members of key audiences ask more sophisticated questions about land trusts
 - Website traffic, Twitter activity, Facebook metrics, etc.
 - Over time, less reacting to policies and legislation counter to conservation and more opportunity to promote policies that benefit land trusts

Systems/ Processes

- Active Communications Committee assisting staff in implementing this Communication Action Plan
- Talking points/ materials regarding land trust basics, updated annually
- Database of stories and storytellers; organized by interests of key audiences
- Member-update system, schedule, and tools (rapid response information)
- Up-to-date key audience contact information
- Calendar of key meetings/ events by key audience

Key Audience Descriptions

Members

Profile

- COLT's 19 land trust members, including their staff and boards
- Many are spending time and attention on individual projects and internal capacity building priorities
- Range from small all-volunteer or lightly-staffed organizations to larger organizations with many staff, including some with statewide, national, and even international service areas
- Some operate in parts of the state where conservation is viewed negatively
- Time and human capacity is limited; unrestricted revenue is limited

Audience Needs and Interests

- To see return-on-investment from their COLT membership dues
- Information on policy and funding issues that impact them and support to take action locally
- Consistent talking points and action alerts to use in their own communications with key audiences
- COLT's other key audiences need to understand and value land trusts

Priorities

- Monthly (at least) e-newsletters with funding, policy, and statewide updates
 - Be the “curator of information
 - Celebrate land trust success around the state
- Provide calls-to-action as needed, helping to provide individual land trusts with information and tools to respond to both threats and opportunities
- At a more macro-level, continue relationship-building and communication efforts with board leaders and members of individual member land trusts
 - Also, continue relationship-building and communications efforts with the Executive Directors of individual member land trusts

Funders

Profile

- Institutional funders who support land trust projects or have a specific interest in building capacity of land trusts and/ or conservation policy/ advocacy
- A few private foundations (including community and some family foundations)

- State and federal funding sources, particularly the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
- Some agencies and corporations that have mitigation or remediation requirements

Audience Needs and Interests

- Access to strong land trust partners in their region (i.e., to complete projects)
- Seeing the pace of land conservation increase through increased organizational capacity and/ or policy change
- Decision-makers should understand and value land trusts
- New and additional funding to support land trusts and land conservation

Priorities

- Establish and continue relationship-building efforts with individual organizations/ agencies, including: [Break out funders for land trusts and funders for COLT]
 - Bonneville Power Administration
 - Burning Foundation
 - Department of Fish & Wildlife
 - Grantmakers of Oregon and Southwest Washington
 - Land Trust Alliance
 - Meyer Memorial Trust
 - National Fish & Wildlife Foundation
 - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
 - Oregon Community Foundation
 - Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (leadership; funding arm)
 - United States Forest Service
 - Western Conservation Fund
 - Yarg Foundation
 - Other private foundations

Decision Makers/ Influencers

Profile

- Those involved in making decisions on relevant policy and funding issues, and those who influence those decision-makers
- Many have a limited understanding (or even a misunderstanding) of land trust basics, especially those representing rural constituencies
- Hear from constituents regarding various environmental issues; but they hear about land trusts and from private land conservation advocates less often

- Some have constituents who hold a negative opinion of land trusts or who believe common land trust myths (e.g., that land under conservation easement is “locked up”)
- Their rural constituents tend to see their interests as less-represented; Portland/ Salem vs. the rest of Oregon
- State legislators are citizen legislators with diverse professional backgrounds
- Legislative decision-makers (state and federal) are majority democrat
- Influencers include statewide associations and agencies somehow related to land and/ or water issues (e.g. Network of Oregon Watershed Councils, Oregon Association of SWCDs, Farm Bureau, etc.)

Audience Needs and Interests

- Better understanding of how policy decisions affect rural Oregon and to be seen as meeting those needs well
- The ways in which land trusts and private land conservation benefit their constituents (especially benefits to individual land owners and to local and state economy)
- Trustworthy information upon which to base decisions
- Talking points to explain decisions and/ or land trusts’ value to constituents (e.g., why land conservation is relevant in a state where 57%+ of the land is publicly owned)
- Know who to partner with in order to advocate on matters of mutual concern

Priorities

- Begin/ continue relationship-building efforts with state-level decision-makers charged with overseeing environmental and natural resource issues, such as:
 - House and Senate Majority Leaders
 - Natural resources policy staff in the Governor’s Office
 - Members of House and Senate Environmental Committees
 - Members of House Rural Communities Committee
 - Members of Senate Rural Communities and Economic Development Committee
 - Members of House and Senate Ways and Means Committees
 - Key individual legislators
- Begin/ continue relationship-building efforts with policy influencers who are also gatekeepers to groups/ audiences who are aligned with COLT’s areas of strategic focus: [This list is a bit odd]
 - Network of Oregon Watershed Councils
 - Oregon Association of Conservation Districts
 - Oregon Farm Bureau Federation (staff and lobbyist)
 - Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (leadership; government relations arm)

Messages and Strategies by Audience

Introduction

- Communication strategies deliver messages to members of the key audience in order to meet pre-determined goals
- A core communications strategy of COLT’s communications action plan is one-on-one relationship building with important members of the key audiences
- This strategy fits well with COLT’s capacity in that:
 - Implementing the strategy is cost-effective
 - It can be executed during the normal course of work (i.e., without adding additional tasks to the plate of staff or board members)
 - It quite literally puts a face on Oregon’s land trusts in front of the key audiences
- The best relationship-building activities are often informal in nature; this means that anyone trained in the goals, messages, and other aspects of COLT’s communications action plan can assist with implementation

Customized Messages and Strategies

Members	
Messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ COLT staff are taking action on relevant policy and funding issues ▪ Examples of your membership dues at work ▪ Updates regarding current policy and funding issues in Oregon ▪ Calls to action (i.e., specific, limited tasks members can complete locally to influence policy and funding issues) ▪ Updates regarding COLT’s development and progress towards strategic goals ▪ Customized “matchmaking” messages ▪ Curator of information relevant to land trusts’ needs and goals ▪ Manage and communicate collective impact of land trusts (e.g. Oregon’s conservation lands database) ▪ Messages highlighting land trusts’ economic impact (e.g., number of employees, volunteer value, dollars spent on restoration, position on property taxes, acres of working land protected, etc.)
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frequent social media updates, including visuals, to signal action/ activity on the part of staff in real time (e.g., regular “updates from Salem” emails; mini-updates on Facebook, etc.; pictures in posts) ▪ Formal presentations to member leadership regarding COLT’s development, progress towards goals, and policy issues (annual presentations at individual land trust member board meetings, COLT board meetings, policy update webinars, etc.) ▪ Monthly COLT update, appropriate to share with land trust board and staff

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Customized matchmaking, which is building connections between land trusts and their legislators, funding opportunities, potential partners, etc.; (e.g., “Chatted with your rep today and told them about the great work your land trust is doing. Why don’t you give them a call next month?”)
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Funders	
Messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ COLT is creating a strong, bi-partisan, local voice and taking action on relevant policy and funding issues ▪ Updates on COLT’s development and increasing capacity of members ▪ Updates on the scope and scale of Oregon’s land trust community and its conservation impact ▪ Updates on any efforts to increase funding for land conservation ▪ Stories that demonstrate the value of land trusts, especially ones that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize land trust collaboration with non-land trust entities • Demonstrate partnerships that lead to larger-scale conservation • Include land and water conservation groups working together • Focus on conservation of working lands
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and keep current communication vehicles that funders expect – website, annual reports, emails updates, individual meetings, etc. ▪ Build relationships through regular face-to-face meetings focused on updates regarding COLT’s development and policy-related topics (e.g., lunches, etc.) ▪ Customized follow up communications and updates, with emphasis on sharing stories that align with funder’s interests and priorities (e.g., emails, calls) ▪ Attend key events/ conferences popular with audience members ▪ Reiterate messages via existing communications with funders (e.g., boilerplate language or stories members can use in grant proposals and reports)

Decision Makers/ Influencers	
Messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ COLT is the local, nonpartisan representative the interests of Oregon’s land trust community and its 35,000+ supporters ▪ COLT is open to partnering with other advocacy interests that align with the values of its members on a case-by-case basis ▪ Scope and scale of land trusts in Oregon; private voluntary land conservation 101; conservation easements 101 ▪ Policy positions and information relevant to current policy and funding issues ▪ The impact of current policy and funding issues on rural land owners, economies, and communities ▪ Messages highlighting land trusts’ positive economic impact (statewide and in their district) ▪ How land trusts benefit your constituents and home region (e.g. water quality

	<p>protection)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ COLT provides access to Oregon’s land trusts (e.g. “one-stop shopping”) ▪ Stories that demonstrate the value of land trusts, especially ones that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize collaboration • Demonstrate partnerships that lead to larger-scale conservation • Include land and water conservation groups working together • Focus on conservation of working lands and emphasize the benefits for individual farmers and ranchers
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create land trust basics information, talking points, and leave behind materials ▪ Build relationships “on the fly” through regular, visible presence where the key audience congregates (i.e., statehouse) and regular one-on-one meetings focused on policy-related topics and information sharing ▪ Deliberately distinguish COLT from other organizations that may seem similar – Oregon Conservation Network, 1000 Friends of Oregon, Central Oregon Land Watch, etc. ▪ Align with state conservation implementers (OACD, NOWC) ▪ Invite decision makers and influencers to attend and/ or make informational presentations at COLT board meetings ▪ Customized follow up communications and updates, with emphasis on sharing stories that demonstrate land trust value and align with the needs and priorities of individual decision makers/ influencers and their constituents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including arranging meetings with landowners, land trust staff, and volunteers from their constituencies ▪ Systematically track current policy and funding issues and regularly provide either policy positions or relevant information to decision makers (especially how a decision might impact rural communities) ▪ Connect individual land trusts with their respective legislators; remind them to invite policy makers on tours, etc. ▪ Host tours of private voluntary land conservation projects (emphasizing collaboration, rural areas, working lands)

Implementation Priorities

- Given COLT’s current capacity, it is important to prioritize key audiences and communications strategies
- All of the key audiences agree that COLT’s two top priorities are:
 - Creating a strong, unified voice to represent the land trust community
 - Debunk myths/ put a human face on the story of private voluntary land conservation in Oregon
- Given these priorities, we recommend the following prioritization of audiences:
 1. COLT members
 2. Decision makers/ influencers
 3. Funders

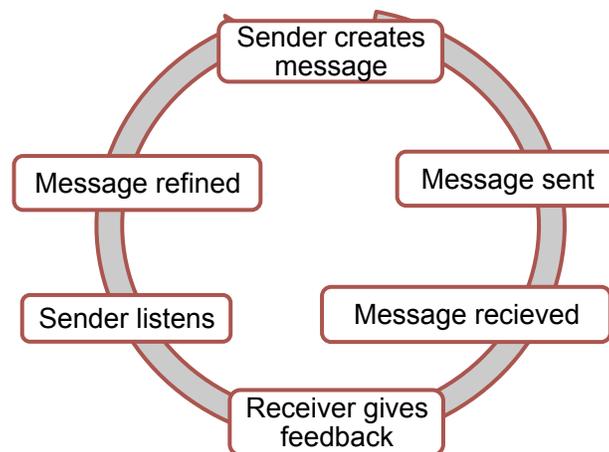
The most important strategies to implement during the coming year include:

Year One Priority Strategies for top two audiences	
Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formal presentations to COLT member leadership regarding COLT’s development, progress towards goals, and policy issues ▪ Monthly COLT updates, appropriate to share with land trust board and staff, as well as other interested parties. ▪ Create State of the Lands report, showing collective impact of every land trust’s effort; this will also be a strategy for the other two audiences
Decision Makers/ Influencers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create land trust basics information, talking points, and leave behind materials ▪ Build relationships “on the fly” through regular, visible presence where the key audience congregates, as well as regular one-on-one meetings ▪ Deliberately distinguish COLT from other organizations that may seem similar ▪ Systematically track current policy and funding issues and regularly provide either policy positions or relevant information to decision makers

- Only after these strategies are successfully implemented should COLT begin adding additional strategies to its workload
- COLT’s other top priority is building the systems, tools, and processes needed to successfully execute its communications strategies, namely:
 - Maintain and improve website
 - Develop communication content, materials, and vehicles
 - Implement social media strategy
 - Refine policy tracking/ position development system
 - Train staff and board members on key audiences, strategies, and messages
- See Appendix 1 for draft implementation project plan

Conclusion

- The time is right for COLT to begin deliberately communicating with its key audiences in order to achieve its goals:
 - Increase knowledge and understanding of the basics of Oregon’s land trust community among key audiences
 - Raise the visibility of land trusts, showing the collective impact across the state
 - Build formalized communication channels and strong working relationships with strategic members of key audiences
 - Position COLT as the credible, bi-partisan, trustworthy voice of the land trust community
 - Demonstrate to key audiences that land trusts deliver value that they care about
 - Develop the internal infrastructure and capacity to support ongoing communications
- In order to achieve these goals, COLT members must play an integral part in implementing communications strategies (i.e., COLT staff can’t do it alone)
- Sharing responsibility for implementation has the side effect of speeding up the communications feedback loop, with more “senders” listening to “receivers” and enabling efficient refinement and fine-tuning of messages and strategies for maximum impact



- As COLT communicates its messages consistently and regularly, it will build the relationships it needs to meet its strategic goals now and into the future