

POLICY AND PROCEDURES ON EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

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PART 1 – POLICY

Communications Objectives

IWSO communication objectives are to:

1. Enhance the image of IWSO.
2. Increase accessibility to IWSOs program and services through effective promotion
3. increase volunteer participation
4. increase public awareness of the role of IWSO in the community
5. support IWSOs fundraising efforts
6. in conjunction with community partners, increase public awareness of issues affecting immigrant and visible minority women experiencing abuse.

Communication Policy – General

1. IWSO communications ensure that the public receives information about IWSO's policies, procedures, programs and services and help to increase immigrant women's awareness of community issues. The Board, staff, volunteers and community are contributors to and recipients of, this information. All communications activities are conducted within the established decision-making structure of IWSO to ensure consistency in message and to reinforce our statement of mission, vision and strategic objectives.
2. IWSO communications activities include:
 - a. research and analysis to examine the public environment affecting an issue;
 - b. advice to the Board and the Management team on policy development, program planning and implementation, and public issues;
 - c. planning to develop corporate and program communications plans;
 - d. the application of the principles and practices of effective, ethical communications including regular evaluation of communications products, such as brochures and flyers; and
 - e. briefings and meetings with government officials, partners and the public.

3. IWSO's communications policy, strategies and activities will support the mission statement of IWSO.
4. Board, Staff, Volunteer and Client Roles

IWSO's communications responsibilities are organized using a centralized structure within which communications responsibilities are divided as follows:

- a. The Board of Directors is responsible for overall communications policy and strategic planning, nurturing strategic relationships with sponsors, donors, partners and political leaders and lobbying activities. Board members will take a leadership role in lobbying and advocacy activities on behalf of IWSO. To assist the Board with these responsibilities, staff will provide information on emerging issues, changes to programs and services and other relevant information on a regular basis.
 - b. The Executive Director is responsible for implementation of the communications policy including procedures, communications strategies and products. As such, the Executive Director is normally the final authority on all communications, including publications, strategies/campaigns and news releases, although there may be instances such as major fundraising initiatives, where the Board will be the final approving body. The Executive Director has the authority to delegate communications responsibilities, including sign-off authority, to others involved in specific initiatives. She will take the lead in coordinating communications activities.
 - c. Certain persons, due to their expertise, knowledge and/or communications skill, may be designated by the Executive Director as the Lead on a particular initiative or issue. Leads may include Board members, members of the management team, and others. This role is situation-specific, issue-specific and/or time-limited.
 - d. Contact with the public, partners and clients is a daily occurrence. We recognize that within the context of their specific roles, all Board members and staff are communication "Ambassadors" of IWSO and must be knowledgeable about IWSO, its programs and services. However, there is one official spokesperson for the agency, the Executive Director or her designate.
 - e. Community volunteers, students on placement, and clients may be asked to assist in communications efforts, such as interviews with the media. While these people will not speak for or otherwise represent IWSO policy or services, they may assist by speaking about their experience, concerns or issues.
5. The Board Chair, Executive Director, and other leads identified above will, if necessary, periodically receive communications/media training to strengthen skills. Orientation sessions for Board and staff will include a review of the communications policies and procedure. All Board members and staff will receive current information on communications strategies and priorities, programs and services and appropriate communications products.

6. A regular review of communications strategies, activities and materials will be undertaken to ensure compatibility with organizational reviews or service developments that may be taking place and to monitor effectiveness.
7. All communications efforts will be undertaken within IWSO's operational budget or from funds allotted for that purpose in special grants.

Languages of Operation

While the language of operation at IWSO is English, IWSO provides services in many languages. Therefore, communications vehicles will reflect, as much as possible, our commitment to provide services in as many languages as possible.

Spokesperson

1. Regular day-to-day IWSO business
 - a. Board members may be asked by the Executive Director and the Chair of the Board to participate in discussions and information sessions with government officials, funders and others.
 - b. Board members and staff, in their role as representatives of IWSO, may be asked by the Executive Director to speak to community members and groups on behalf of the organization within their area of expertise/knowledge.
 - c. Media requests will be directed to the Executive Director, who will identify the person who will speak on behalf of IWSO, and will identify appropriate information for distribution to the media. A timely response will be made to the media. If a person other than the Executive Director speaks to the media, a written report should be placed on file.
 - d. If Staff or Board members respond to a spontaneous or unplanned invitation to speak in the community for IWSO, they should inform the Executive Director as soon as possible. The Executive Director will determine if any follow up action is required.
2. Hot Issues and Crisis
 - a. "Hot issues" are those that could have a significant impact on the organization, its objectives, its public support and/or well-being. The Executive Director in close consultation with the Board Chair is normally the spokesperson in the case of Hot Issues.
 - b. "Crises" are defined as situations that may impact negatively on IWSO's image. The Executive Director and/or the Board Chair will normally be the only spokesperson in these circumstances.
 - c. On issues where IWSO Staff and Board members have different points of view, only designated spokesperson(s) designated by the Executive Director will speak on behalf of IWSO.

- d. When a Hot Issue or a Crisis occurs, staff will inform the person/media making a request for comment that they will forward the request to the Executive Director, who will determine who will respond and the manner of response.
- c. No Board members or staff will speak “off the record” to the community or to the media.