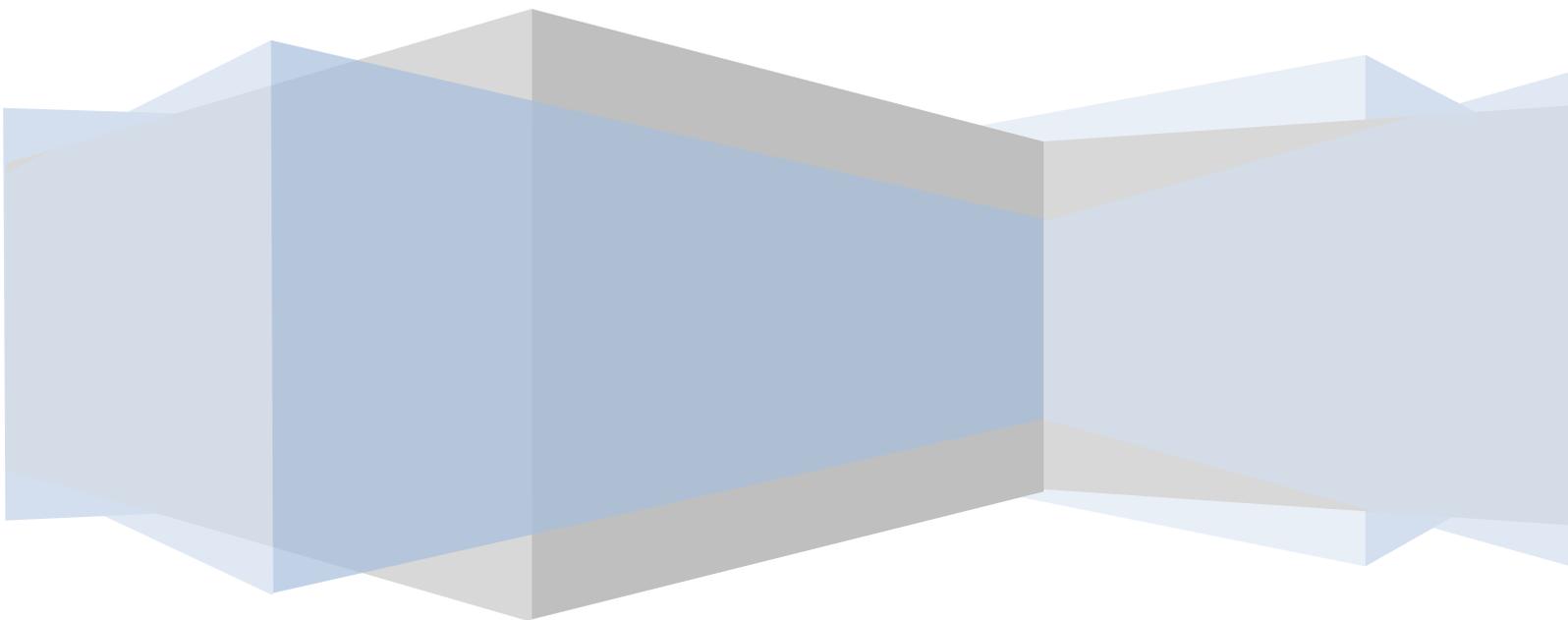Association of Scottish Community Councils

Brochures & Flyers

Written Communications Tool Kit

Introduction

Whether presenting background information, announcing a meeting, or celebrating a resource, brochures, pamphlets, flyers, and posters are great tools to reach large numbers of people. Production can range from being fairly inexpensive and homemade, especially with today's desktop publishing capabilities, to slick, four-color, special paper and professionally printed. It all depends upon your budget, your community, and your needs. If the message is clear and the images are captivating, we've seen all types work.

Definition

Printed documents that contain concise text and strong graphic images such as photos, drawings, maps, or charts.
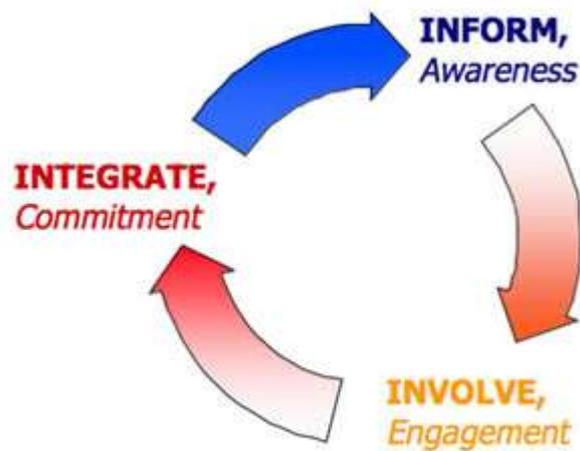
Essentials

Brochures, pamphlets, flyers, and posters are versatile communication tools. Brochures and pamphlets are usually folded and printed double-sided to get multiple text panels. They are used to promote membership to an organization, give highlights of a project, summarize the findings from a report, show a map of trail system, and interpret the features of a particular place or resource, and other brief messages. They can be handed out, stuffed in an envelope, sent as a self-mailer, or placed in libraries, community centres, and other gathering places. Flyers and posters are typically one-sided and meant to be displayed fully open. Whether mailed or hung on community bulletin boards or other vertical surfaces, they can be used to announce meetings, special events, and contests; recruit volunteers; educate about a resource; etc. Posters can also be used as part of a fundraising event or given to special donors as acknowledgements. Some groups have successfully used them as the culmination of a competition such as photography, a river sporting event, or community anniversary.

1. Define the objective

What is the purpose of this publication? Who is the audience? How will it be used? Be as specific as possible in order to more narrowly define the message and help keep it concise.

2. Choose a format

Knowing the purpose of the piece and having an outline of the message will help decide whether to use a brochure, pamphlet, flyer, or poster. Keep in mind that there are many options for folding brochures and pamphlets. It may be helpful to collect several samples to see which ones work most effectively. Be aware that different folding patterns will affect the costs of production.

3. Write it

Know who the target audience is and write for them. Write a message that conveys feelings, that includes a story or something readers can relate to about your organization or a resource. Be concise – especially for posters and flyers. Use active, not passive, voice and avoid jargon and acronyms. Remember to include a contact name and phone number; a mailing address; and, if applicable, names of project partners and names and logos of sponsors who made possible the production of the piece. This may be the only representation of your organization that a person sees, so they need to know how to get more information.

4. Design it

Do not assume that using desktop publishing software will solve all the problems. If budget is a constraint, find a professional and offer to give him or her credit and referrals. Here are some elements to keep in mind: Readability: Since the ultimate purpose of the piece is for people to get information, it needs to be easy to read. Make sure the font is clear and that it is large enough: 11-12 point size for brochures and pamphlets is minimum (make cover text and headlines 3-times larger as a general rule); posters and flyers, which are read at a glance, should use big, bold fonts not script or italics. Allow for plenty of white space, which refers to blank areas that have neither copy nor images. Images: Select only quality photographs and artwork. Images should be used both to attract readers to the information and enhance their understanding of the message. Avoid using photographs, maps and drawings that are inserted just for decoration and do not strengthen a story. Do not resort to clip art to just fill in spaces; you'll lose your own personal identity. Style: Create a style for your organization that reflects your geography, history, and culture. Consider designing a logo and/or always using the same stock of colour paper. Every piece that is published should have a similar look and feel so that it is immediately identifiable to your group.

5. Proof it

Always, always have at least one person who was not involved in the writing or design of the piece give it a careful read. Look for typos especially in names and numbers, verify dates and contact information are accurate, and be assured the message is clear.

6. Produce it

Printing can be as easy as making copies or as complex as a four-color production on glossy paper. What method of printing is chosen will depend upon budget. If you haven't already, consider seeking the support of a sponsor or sponsors. Businesses or other organizations may be willing to help pay for production in return for having their names on the final product

7. Distribute it

Make the piece available to your target audience in whatever way is most applicable: recruit volunteers to help place pieces in public meeting spaces; alert members to the piece's availability via newsletters and on websites; issue a press release; hold a meeting to review report findings and have the piece available for attendees to take home; host a gala donor party or a reception for contest winners; etc.

When to Use

You want to communicate a consistent image of and message about your group, organization, or project.

You have the human resources to write and design a piece and the financial resources to print and distribute and/or mail copies. (Don't forget tapping volunteers and sponsors.)

You need a document to leave behind when doing presentations, to include in mailings, or to send to people who call requesting more information.

You want to generate publicity through a contest, find a special way to acknowledge donors, or create a fundraising tool.

Not Recommended If....

You cannot clearly identify a need and a target audience.

You lack the resources to write, design, print and distribute it.

You have too much text and significantly editing it confuses the message. Don't try using a smaller font size or reducing the number of images or white space to squeeze it all in; instead, consider designing and printing a small pamphlet or booklet.