

TIPS: Newsletter Checklist

Well-crafted hardcopy newsletters, annual reports, update letters, notes, and calls; Good News postcards, emails, and social media; and community programs form the basis of your overall communications and engagement strategy.

If you want your newsletter to stand out and build passion for the work your land trust is doing—and how you are connecting to your community—you’ll want to think strategically about how, and why, you are using a hardcopy newsletter.

- **What’s your mailing strategy?** How are you segmenting your audience? For example, you might send newsletters to: current donors (within 12 months), lapsed donors (between 12-24 months), in-kind donors, volunteers, business and organizational members/partners, foundations, community leaders, financial advisors, sponsors, conservation landowners, etc. You might send an oversized postcard, with the same cover image, to prospects or those who have lapsed more than 24 months, driving them to the website where the PDF of the newsletter is located.
- **Evaluate your newsletter** to see how welcoming, inclusive, inspiring, and impactful it is.
- **Does your newsletter focus on impacts/change/problems/solutions** (i.e. “Stories of Change”)? After reading your newsletter, will your readers understand what the key impact was, what they can continue to do, and how they can spread the word?
- **How will you repurpose the newsletter stories in your social media and e-Newsletter?** Avoid posting the full newsletter as a PDF except for in your newsletter resource area on your website.

Good	Could Be Better	New Idea	Newsletter Component	Your Thoughts
			Before you start: What do you want this newsletter to do?	
			Have you created a story map?	
			Have you identified the impact that the work of your organization is having on the community, thanks to your donors?	
			Do you have Stories of Change and related photographs?	
			Have you clarified your audience?	
			First impressions: What makes your reader want to pick up this newsletter?	
			What does your “brand” feel like? Do you feel welcoming, friendly, helpful, engaging, inclusive?	
			How skimmable are the stories?	
			Are you using feature boxes to highlight calls to action or next steps?	
			Titles and subtitles: are they engaging?	
			Captions: So What, Who Cares?	

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			<p>Content: Do you feature core program areas that relate to your mission and values?</p>	
			<p>Do you know what your members and supporters care about, and have you included one or more stories related to that topic, showing change?</p>	
			<p>Shared values: do they come across in different ways, in different stories?</p>	
			<p>Evergreen topics: what are they? How are you keeping them fresh?</p>	
			<p>Are you offering invitations for engagement beyond asking for money?</p>	
			<p>Donor-reader-centered writing: Is your tone friendly and conversational?</p>	
			<p>Did you avoid jargon (e.g. are you using conservation agreement instead of conservation easement)?</p>	
			<p>What's your "you : we" ratio? (It's suggested by Tom Ahern that it should be at least 2:1.)</p>	
			<p>If I were a reader, how would this newsletter make me feel? (Like I can help/ am helping to create positive change?)</p>	
			<p>Communication strategy: Are you "drip-feeding" new ideas, where you help make the case, or bringing people on a journey of change with you?</p>	
			<p>Are you helping readers see possible impacts, outcomes, and visions of what could be?</p>	
			<p>"Stories of Change:" are you including them in different ways?</p>	
			<p>Are you including counter-messaging to misinformation or areas of "push-back?"</p>	
			<p>Are your messengers varied? Do they reflect who your different audiences trust?</p>	

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			Visuals: Are your images emotionally connecting, and sized large enough for impact?	
			Is the text clear and large enough for elderly readers?	
			Have you created a design that provides for short paragraphs, adequate white space, and inspiration?	
			Do you have high contrast text? (Avoid white text on dark backgrounds unless for small accent areas.)	
			Have you selected two primary colors, and one or two accent colors? You want to avoid a "rainbow" of colors for readability and brand identity.	
			Have you avoided red text (which comes off as aggressive) unless that is your desired effect?	
			Do your visuals feel welcoming? Do they represent the diversity of your community, in ages, genders, occupations, and ethnicities who you are working to engage and serve? (Or are you showing the same type of person?)	
			Other Thoughts?	