ADDENDUM I: ELEMENTS OF A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

**Goals:** Identify strategic goals that support your coalition’s mission and purpose. Goals describe what you hope to accomplish in the long term.

**Target Audiences:** Consider all audiences that you might contact, attempt to influence or serve. For instance, if your coalition is committed to increasing adolescent immunization rates, consider events and outlets that target this audience. In order to identify your target audiences, you may consider conducting a brief assessment of your community needs. When identifying your target audiences, ask yourself these questions:
- How does each audience best receive its information?
- How often should they be communicated to?
- What are the targeted media outlets to reach your audiences?
- What are the key messages that are relevant to each audience segment?
- What challenges might you need to overcome in communicating effectively with them?

**Key Messages:** Develop key messages that can be communicated to your target audiences throughout your program and on a consistent basis. Noteworthy messages should:
- Apply to your objectives and to your identified target audiences. Determine what you want the audiences to know and what action you want them to take.
- Be succinct, clear, memorable and relevant to each audience segment. The messages might be about the organization, an event or a call-to-action.
- Refrain from jargon. Use verbiage that resonates with your primary audiences.
- Complement existing news stories, topics or comments. Reinforce already covered news.
- Reference statistical data. Cast the message in a way that speaks to your audience. It’s more important that the audience gets the key point rather than memorizes the data.

**EXAMPLE:**
A statistic might say that 85% of school-aged children received their vaccines. Rework this statement to read: “We recognize that majority of parents, about 85%, get their school-aged children immunized. We are working to communicate to other parents that vaccines are safe and the best way to protect children from diseases.”

**Objectives:** Identify communication objectives—the results you want to achieve for each audience. These benchmarks are attached to a timeframe and are measurable. Measurable objectives help your organization stay focused on what needs to be achieved and evaluate the effectiveness of your initiatives. Most objectives typically measure awareness, acceptance or action.

**EXAMPLE:**
- By August, promote and host a back-to-school immunization fair for at least 100 families.
- Over the next year, increase annual earned media coverage by ___%.
- By the end of the year, attract **100** followers/fans on Facebook and Twitter.
- By December, position Dr. XXX as a local expert on immunizations by placing him in **four** media stories.
**Media Outlets:** Identify which media outlets reach your primary audiences. Media outlets include radio stations with news departments, television news stations, newspapers and magazines that are read and viewed by your constituents. The quantity of media outlets is not the goal; it is more effective that the selected media outlets reach your target audiences. Here are some steps to take:

- **List all outlets in your media market.** This includes daily newspapers, community publications, magazines, news stations and radio stations. Also, include organization newsletters and blogs.
- **Survey your stakeholders.** This can be done formally or informally to determine preferred outlets.
- **Watch newscasts and read publications.** Know firsthand the types of stories the broadcast and print media cover. This will give you insight into how to propose stories about your coalition.
- **Research the reporting style of certain health reporters, school reporters and relevant journalists.** It is ineffective to send every news release and/or media advisory to every outlet in the market. Identify the most appropriate publication or news station, given your target audience.

**Media Relations Tools:** Explore which tools and techniques should be used to propose your story. Media relations tools can include a pitch, media advisory, calendar release, news release, fact sheet, media kit or a public service announcement (PSA). Regardless of which method, it is important to incorporate the following:

- **Key message/call to action**
- **Intended audience**
- **Explanation of why your story is newsworthy**
- **Resources (statistics or factsheets)**
- **Brief background on your coalition**

**Spokespersons:** Identify a couple of people who are the face and voice of the organization. These are individuals who can be positioned as expert sources on immunizations and who can be called upon for interviews. Depending upon the objectives of your organization, you may have one or more spokespersons. For instance, you may have spokespersons for specific immunization topics like vaccine safety or influenza. You may also have a spokesperson who addresses medical/scientific issues and one who serves as your coalition representative.

**Events/Partnerships:** Identify community partners that share similar immunization promotion objectives. Before agreeing to commit to a partnership, consider the following:

- **Establish expectations for the partnership up front. Make certain that the union is mutually beneficial and that BOTH parties will gain from the partnership.**
- **Ensure the partner’s goals, objectives, audiences, and activities align with your plan.**

**EXAMPLE:** How will you publicize the event? Will you share communications platforms?

**Timeline:** Create a calendar, which outlines what activities need to be accomplished and by when. The calendar can include annual events, promotion opportunities, and appropriate times to pitch stories. For instance, back-to-school immunization events would be posted on the calendar for July or August.

**Evaluating Your Efforts:** Monitor and evaluate the impact of your efforts. Evaluation is the only way to determine what aspects of your communication plan are working and how efforts can be improved for future communication planning.