

Addison County Communications Union District d/b/a Maple Broadband Public Relations Policy

Adopted August 5, 2021

Purpose

Maple Broadband strives to advance our mission by communicating openly and honestly using consistent messages to its constituents, the media, customers, partners and decision-makers.

All its communications should support its organizational objectives and strategies.

The purpose of this policy is to establish and maintain standards that will ensure that all public communications will:

- Convey consistency of Maple Broadband messaging,
- Be aligned with the organization's approved strategies and key points, and
- Be conveyed by the appropriate representative(s).

In this policy, "public communications" include any communications that a representative OF Maple Broadband delivers via:

- Traditional or paid or social media, including any Maple Broadband online channels such as its website or social media channels,
- Municipal, legislative or administrative decision-makers,
- Partner organizations (e.g., other CUDs, ISPs, vendors, etc.); and
- Members of the general public.

Therefore, it is important for all Maple Broadband Governing Board members, staff, subcontractors or volunteers who receive inquiries from – or see opportunities for responses to or conversations with – media, legislative/administrative or business-related entities– to refer such inquiries/opportunities to the appropriate Maple Broadband representative, so that our communications will be consistent, timely and responsive, while adhering to approved organizational guidelines and strategies.

Governing Board members and others acting in a capacity within a committee or task group should not make official statements, provide information for distribution, or provide background information unless specifically directed to do so by the Executive Committee, and in personal communications, should make it clear when they are/aren't speaking on behalf of the organization.

In all public communications, Governing Board and committee members must avoid conflicts of interest and ensure that their actions and public statements do not place personal interests or the interests of the communities they represent above the best interests of Maple Broadband. All public communications must also avoid copyright infringements.

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Inquiries

Governing Board and committee members must make it clear when expressing their personal opinion, for example:

“Even though I’m on the Maple Broadband Governing Board, this is my own personal opinion.”

Media-Related Spokesperson(s)

All Maple Broadband Governing Board members, staff, subcontractors or volunteers receiving inquiries from, or envisioning opportunities for responses to or conversations with:

- Traditional media (newspaper, radio, TV, cable access, magazine, trade organizations, etc.),
- Posts on social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc.), or
- Paid media

— shall direct the inquiry/opportunity to:

- Main contact: Executive Committee Chair
- Alternate contact if main contact is not available within the needed timeframe:
Executive Committee Vice Chair

The main or alternate contact will then either respond to the media as spokesperson or will refer the opportunity to the appropriate spokesperson. In general, Governing Board members are not normally authorized as spokespersons unless they have relevant expertise. The spokesperson will then use the Response Procedure below.

Legislative/Administrative Queries

All Maple Broadband Governing Board members, staff, subcontractors or volunteers receiving inquiries from or seeing opportunities for responses to or conversations with:

- State or Federal Legislators
- State or Federal Administrators

— shall direct the inquiry/opportunity to:

- Main contact: Executive Committee Chair
- Alternate contact if main contact is not available within the needed timeframe:
Executive Committee Vice Chair

The main or alternate contact will then either respond to the media as spokesperson or will refer the opportunity to the appropriate spokesperson. In general, Governing Board members are not normally authorized as spokespersons unless they have relevant expertise that is needed. The spokesperson will then use the Response Procedure below.

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Business-Related Queries

All Maple Broadband Governing Board members, staff, subcontractors or volunteers receiving official inquiries from or seeing opportunities for official responses to or conversations with:

- existing or potential vendors,
- existing or potential partner organizations

— shall direct the inquiry/opportunity to:

- Main contact: Executive Committee Chair
- Alternate contact if main contact is not available within the needed timeframe:
Executive Committee Vice Chair

The main or alternate contact will then either respond as spokesperson or will refer the opportunity to the appropriate spokesperson. In general, Governing Board members are not normally authorized as spokespersons unless they have relevant expertise that is needed.

Other Queries

Inbound email, online form, and telephonic inquiries to Maple Broadband from members of the public that do not fall under any of the above categories will be handled by the Operations Subcommittee.

The Marketing Subcommittee will provide written briefs to the Operations Subcommittee regarding any topics which are deemed relevant, particularly those that may be controversial. Likewise, the Operations Subcommittee will notify the Marketing Subcommittee of any inbound queries that merit standard boilerplate responses which will subsequently be accommodated by the Marketing Subcommittee.

Should an inquiry come through that is escalated to the Operations Subcommittee Chair, the Chair will liaise with:

- Main contact: Marketing Subcommittee Chair
- Alternate contact if main contact is not available within the needed timeframe:
Executive Committee Chair

The Operations Subcommittee Chair will then either handle the inquiry directly or will provide guidance to the Operations Subcommittee volunteer who escalated the inquiry.

Responses

Before responding, the spokesperson will, as time and availability permit, collaborate with the Chair or their designee and will ensure that the response is aligned with:

- Executive Committee-approved talking points and strategies
- partnership strategies and/or agreements
- nondisclosure or disclosure requirements
- organizational communication strategies (e.g., mission, priority audiences, value proposition).

When appropriate, the designated spokesperson may have other Executive Committee members provide additional information.

When possible, responses should be in writing, to ensure clear and consistent communication, and the Marketing & Communications Committee Chair will be informed of the communication as soon as possible.

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The role of the spokesperson is to amplify the organization's messaging, and if at all possible, the spokesperson should avoid mixing the organizational messaging with personal opinions or perspectives. If personal opinions or perspectives must be included, the spokesperson should make it clear they reflect a personal, not an organizational, perspective.

Allegations of Wrongdoing

If any inquiry or response involves an allegation of wrongdoing by representatives of the organization or any of its Governing Board members, employees or volunteers in relation to their Maple Broadband work, the spokesperson should confer with the Chair, and the organization's legal counsel if appropriate, before delivering any statements to the media or general public. (In some instances, an individual accused of wrongdoing may elect to retain their own legal counsel and may not be able to communicate with the organization's legal counsel in order to avoid waiving the attorney-client privilege.)

Supporting Statements

The Governing Board or executive committee may agree to approve a resolution in which Maple Broadband's name may be used to support a public issue, partnership or funding request that indirectly relates to its mission. With such authorization, the Executive Committee chair is authorized to add their name and title to others' statements, letters, proclamations, etc. which clearly support Maple Broadband's principles, policies or efforts.

However, Maple Broadband communications should be non-partisan in nature, supporting issues and positions and not supporting or advocating for specific political parties or candidates.

Outreach

Understanding that proactive outreach (i. e., press releases, newsletters, social media posts, requests for interviews, testimony, etc.) can have a strong organizational impact –positive or negative. Maple Broadband's goal is to use these tools as wisely and effectively as possible.

Governing Board members and others acting in a capacity within a committee or task group shall not proactively provide or distribute Maple Broadband information unless it is in collaboration with and approved by the Marketing & Communications Committee and uses approved procedures and templates.

All press releases or other promotional materials or communications are to be approved by the Marketing & Communications Committee or its designee prior to dissemination, and all information and promotional materials should be consistent with and supportive of the overall communications objectives of the organization.