Trees for Life 2021 Marketing and Communications Plan

September 2, 2021. Draft 4

SITUATION ANALYSIS

The Trees for Life name has been in existence for many years, but it has never had a brand identity, hence it has low awareness. Many tree-planting charities exist in the market. To achieve our donation and tree-planting goals, we need to establish and broadcast our unique offering to our key target audiences, to build confidence in TFL's expertise and capabilities, to retain current donors and partners and inspire new ones. Trees for Life has three distinct qualities that set it apart from other tree-planting organizations:

- Network of contacts – personal, horticultural, nursery, and government resources and expertise
- Ability to remove barriers for community-initiated, tree-planting projects, willingness to work with a range of partners
- Proven success for tree-planting, stewardship, and fundraising

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths:

- TFL's is a catalyst for urban tree planting and an advocate for native trees and shrubs where they are needed most, for locally initiated projects/partner organizations
- Our network of national nursery and horticultural professionals, resources, and experts and ability to grant in-kind materials, contacts or dollars
- Working BOD and their connections
- Our unique value proposition of honouring heroes in communities; multi-generational appeal
- Our willingness and ability to connect with a range of partners
- Success meeting goals for GT and HOHTC

Weaknesses:

- We need a system/list of criteria for identifying location and partner opportunities for efficient application and granting
- Limited resources to implement a comprehensive national expansion
- Limited awareness/credibility outside of GTA
- Confusion/overlap between TFL and other tree-planting organizations

Opportunities:

- Recognition as a connector
- Our network of partners will help our expansion through their networks
- Trees for Heroes is a unique platform that will resonate beyond the military to include COVID-related and other heroes
- Positioned to help inform supply and capacity planning and advocacy for the horticultural trades
- There is a demand for tree-planting and so far, public policy support

Threats:

- High competition for donor attention and funds
- Crowded field – many orgs already "own" the planting space (some of them are our partners), and big NGOs not previously engaged in tree planting have begun to plant such as WWF and NCC
- COVID restrictions may continue to limit our ability to host planting events and develop grassroots engagement
- Election called: timing will impact our launch period and may mean a change in government, which could impact government policy and funding

MARKETING OBJECTIVES:

- Establish a stewardship program to transition and optimize retention of current donors from GT and HOHTC programs to TFL
- Attract the required amount of donors and partners to help us achieve our $1M fundraising goal and national expansion of 30 new projects in 2021 which will create the foundation on which we will build upon in 2022 and beyond.
- Develop and execute a communications plan to support national expansion and awareness through to 2025.

MARKETING STRATEGY PHASE ONE

Primary Target Audience: Current donors and partners of HOHTC and GT

- HOHTC donors connect with the notion of honouring military heroes
    - They may be a member of the military, have a family member or loved one they want to honour, or are otherwise highly engaged.
- The GT donor base engages with the notion of creating a better planet for future generations, in particular their kids and grandkids.
    - Described as parents and hip grandparents, there is an approximate 40/60 split between under 60 yrs and over.
- The horticultural trades and project partners

Before TFL launches to the broader public, it is recommended that stewardship/thank you and transition plans be implemented with the current donor base.

These people are key to our past and future success and must be stewarded appropriately. Through this process, we'll learn more about them, why they give to our programs and how we can inspire them to continue to do so. This will inform our next steps to awareness building and new donor prospects.

All elements will support the launch on September 29th at the University of Guelph. Due to the quick turnaround, we will need to focus on earned and owned media and U of G has said they will support us through their email efforts and on-site, permanent signage.

Marketing Tactics:

1. Donor Survey:
    a. Email a select group of donors (segment donors, expired donors) with a short Mailchimp survey or embed the survey in a newsletter, asking them about their experience with GT or HOH, why they give, satisfaction with stewardship, their thoughts in honouring frontline workers or other heroes. What do we want to know to help us move forward? Ask BOD of directors what information would help them with their networks. Workback in development

2. Case for Support: Fine-tuning messaging
    a. Consult with 3-6 high-value donors and priority partners to establish if and how the messaging resonates with them, what will keep them engaged and giving, and to inform our subsequent donor and prospect outreach. Test the idea of honoring front-line workers with current partners (Sunnybrook, Whitby Fire Department, U of Guelph essential workers)
    b. If the timing works, consider running the new ad creative developed by The & Partnership, by 1-2 key donors.

3. Launch Video:
    a. To be leveraged wherever possible with TFL and partner websites, social channels. Motion video logo has been created pro-bono by Navigator production team. (thank you!)
    b. Launch video: Created by Big Shave Productions, target date of Sept. 29 to coincide with U of Guelph event
        i. Long (3 min max): for posting on website and embedding in TFL newsletter and on YouTube
        ii. Short (up to 1 min): for social media
        iii. Teaser (10-15 seconds): teaser social media campaign leading-up to Launch

4. Newsletter:
    a. September 1: A refreshed newsletter layout will launch with this issue that merges GT and HOH content in a way that is familiar but helps to move us away from these two projects as they have been known. New layout will organize content by topic and provide updates on where we are re fundraising goal, also add engaging content relating to tree/urban forest education.
    b. October 1 - Thank You: A video thank-you message embedded in the October 1st TFL newsletter, with content created at the Sept 8 BOD meeting. A message from Mark will sum the success of the two campaigns and transition to TFL projects, NRCan funding, and our goals for 2021. This video will include a group thank you. It will be meaningful to donors to meet the people behind the scenes. Video garners high online share of attention, we can repurpose this content on social channels and our website.
    c. Examine analytics (open, click through rates,

5. Donor Communication Schedule and Stewardship Materials:
    a. Early – mid November, High-level video impact report, on-going outreach and targeted messaging based on donor giving level. When the team gathers on September 8th, we can shoot a group message which will be added to a thank you message from Mark. Approximately 1.5 minutes long, the video could also feature key partners commenting on why they engage with us or the results achieved. The primary goal will be to thank our supporters for helping us achieve our goals which has enabled us to expand our vision nationally to TFL. (the transition part)
    b. Written Impact Report
    c. 'From the Forest' video updates from TFL staffers and partners at project sites.
    d. Donor appreciation events
    e. Sponsorship package elements
    f. Donor communications plan

6. Email Template
    a. Our email database is one of the most effective marketing tools we have. Individual donor outreach via a customizable email template will repurpose Case for Support content, facilitating efficient and consistent messaging while allowing for individualization.
    b. Segment by donor gift size >$500 physical content of Case For Support and Annual report. Approximately 20-25% of donor base in this giving segment. Develop email messaging according to donor segment. Timing and content for email campaigns TBC

7. Social Media
    a. Establish a content marketing plan and identify growth goals: Weekly content calendar that supports appeals messaging, education, partner events, and provides value to our audience and ultimately keeps them engaged and inspired to take action to further our mission.
    b. "From the Forest" (or some other name), videos will help to build our YouTube content, and enhance value to planting partners by offering them the opportunity to raise awareness for their work by submitting their videos to us.
    c. Data analysis – Google Analytics or Facbook Page Insights, Twitter Analytics
    d. LinkedIn account and marketing content strategy?
    e. Set targets for Follower growth

8. Events:
    a. Launch event Sept. 29 at Guelph University could be used as a high value donor appreciation opportunity, and will be the platform for the TFL launch announcement. Need input from BOD on which VIP' should be invited.
    b. Opportunity to test the 'essential workers' positioning. Dean of Business School currently considering honouring U of Guelph essential workers at this event. This approach would provide us with an exceptional pitch to media, and would be great story-telling for donors, partners, NRCan.

9. Potential Appeal Messaging/Social Media Themes and Timing: In combination with email, social channel and newsletter content and enhance existing strategy, to be developed in collaboration with fundraising.
    a. National Grandparents Day (September 12)
    b. National Forest Week (w/o September 19)
    c. Remembrance Day/Week (w/o November 8)
    d. National Child Day (November 20)
    e. Giving Tuesday (November 30)
    f. Holiday Giving (December)

10. Website: A few suggestions for edits that will highlight who we are and what we do.:
    a. Create a landing page with a redirect message when the GT or HOH URLs are accessed, with the aim of converting to TFL donors.
    b. Call out our pillars of focus: We have three-granting/project support, fundraising, and education Each needs to be clearly indicated on the TFL homepage with our funding criteria listed for the granting pillar
    c. Create a financial hierarchy for the donors and sponsors page: founding partners, identify gift ranges, and for high value sponsors, add a link to a description of the partnership to provide high value exposure for them and to inspire others to partner with us.
    d. Add press releases and news coverage to Tree News
    e. Add annual reports and progress reports section
    f. Partner spotlights – testimonials/ impact stories from select partners or beneficiaries

PHASE ONE: Launch

Recommended Activity and Timing:

Marketing Channel/Brand	Date	Content	Notes
Article: TO Star	July 10	Mark and Ben's column announces genesis of TFL	
Radio 105.9 In Conversation	July 31	Anne Rohmer interview w/ Mark	
Media Event	August 10	Lynde Shores Tree-planting event	w/ MoE office, NRCan, CLOCA
Newsletter	September 1	Combined HOH and GT Content: transition formatting	combined logos, new format
Group email & one on one outreach	September 15	U of Guelph dignitaries invites	Obtain VIP input from BOD
Social Media FB/Twitter	September 15-17	U of Guelph planting event volunteers	In concert w/ U of G volunteer registry platform
Email	September 17	Donor survey; 5 questions what we need to know about our donors	To donor segments by gift level Mailchimp survey &/or select donors
Radio 105.9 The Feed	September 18	The Feed w/ Anne Rohmer	
Government Relations	September 21-	What is the GR strategy in light of election results	When is the time right to reach out to new/old government. Input from BOD
Email, PR	September 24-27	Media advisory	U of Guelph event / Strut Entertainment
Facebook	September 24	Teaser 15 sec	Launch messaging
Twitter	September 24	Teaser 15 sec	Launch messaging
Facebook	September 27	Teaser 15 sec	Launch messaging
Twitter	September 27	Teaser 15 sec	Launch messaging
Press Release	September 29	Guelph event with photos and launch messaging	Strut Entertainment
Event	September 29	Guelph University	TFL launch & donor appreciation? ad creative

Website	September 29	Launch video feature length	
Facebook	September 29	Launch video 1 min	full length video; ad creative
Twitter	September 29	Launch video 1 min	Ad creative
YouTube	September 29	Video feature length	Ad creative
Social Media Influencers/Ambassador Program	September 29	Launch messaging	Provide content 'ready to post' to key high-profile Influencers – Ask BOD for input on who might be interested in being an Ambassador
Newsletter	October 1	Video Thank you & launch messaging; U of Guelph feature	Consider engaging influencers for the launch
Website	October 1	Video thank you ; launch video; U of Guelph feature	
Email	October	Donor survey; 5 questions what we need to know about our donors	An alternative timeframe to obtain feedback on how we're doing from select donors or mass email by donor segment

MARKETING STRATEGY PHASE TWO: Building Awareness and Credibility

Secondary Target Audiences/prospects:

- The broader public (assumes that our secondary targets are people too and will be reached with the general campaign message vs a specific audience segment message)
- All levels of government, with an emphasis on ministries overseeing the environment, forestry, agriculture, infrastructure
- Public institutions
- Community Foundations
- The corporate sector
- Charitable foundations

Corporate donors and foundations factor significantly into our funding model. Outreach to these donor groups will be individual and strategic as it is not feasible to target this segment for specific ad messaging at this time.

Government relations will also be handled strategically based on alignment between ministry focus and our goals, and current relationships.

The broader public is key to TFL's growth. This is where the in-kind partnerships with national media will build awareness for TFL and help organic growth.

Mass advertising provides the benefit of reach - touching many people outside of their 'day jobs' when they are more receptive to advertising messages. Where possible, local ad placements will support community-specific projects, and map to the organizational strategic plan for expansion into priority markets.

(See Trees for Life Advertising and Promotion Overview spreadsheet for the detailed media plan)

The full media partner list is currently in process, however our first national media will begin with SJC November issues, (on newsstands mid-late October), starting with Toronto Life, Maclean's, Fashion, and Ottawa Magazine.

More to come as the ad creative is finalized and the media plan and organizational project priorities are developed through consultation with ED, fundraising and the BOD.

PHASE TWO: **Building Awareness and Credibility**

Recommended Activity and Timing:

Marketing Channel/Brand	Date	Content	Notes
Magazine, Outdoor, TBC	October - December	Broad TFL messaging, donor communication schedule	Mass media release of new ad creative; broader public outreach plan in development as media outlets are confirmed
Donor Communications including email, social media, website, newsletter			Schedule and nature of outreach is in development
Government Relations			What is the strategy ask for BOD input