



## MEMORANDUM

TO: MLDS Governing Board

FROM: Laia Tiderman

DATE: February 17, 2017

SUBJECT: MLDS Center Strategic Communications Plan

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### Purpose

The purpose of this agenda item is to provide information to the Governing Board on the development of the MLDS Center's Strategic Communications Plan.

### Background

In the MLDS Center 2016 Annual Report, the Governing Board recommended the following:

"The MLDS Center should develop and implement a communication plan that creates awareness of MLDS output and information, establishes a better understanding of how longitudinal data can be used to help drive decision making, and generally provides a systematic approach to engaging stakeholders." (Page 17)

### Summary

Since the December, MLDS Center Staff have begun developing a strategic communication plan designed to:

1. Inform stakeholders about the Center's products and progress;
2. Drive the development of content, consistent with the Governing Board's Research Agenda;
3. Deliver content that is responsive to stakeholder needs; and
4. Cultivate an audience of education and workforce professionals who use the products and resources available from the MLDS Center.

### Action

We request the Governing Board's feedback on the draft of the strategic communications plan to assist Center staff in further development.



# MLDS CENTER

Maryland Longitudinal  
Data System

Better Data • Informed Choices • Improved Results

## Communications Plan

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**Document Versions:**

Date	Document Version	Document Revision Description	Document Author
December 2016	1.0	Initial Document	Laia Tiderman
January 2017	1.5	Revisions from feedback from MLDS Center Management Team	Laia Tiderman
February 2017	2.0	Revisions from Research and Policy Board	Laia Tiderman

If you have questions regarding this publication please contact [mlds.center@maryland.gov](mailto:mlds.center@maryland.gov).

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## **Purpose**

This plan provides a road map for the marketing and communications efforts of the Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center. This plan is designed to:

1. Inform stakeholders about the Center's products and progress;
2. Drive the development of content, consistent with the Governing Board's Research Agenda;
3. Deliver content that is responsive to stakeholder needs; and
4. Cultivate an audience of education and workforce professionals who use the products and resources available from the MLDS Center.

This plan exists for the use of MLDS Center staff, the MLDS Governing Board, partner agencies, and other stakeholders that may have an interest in promoting the MLDS Center.

## **Overview**

A Communications Strategic Plan was developed in 2012, which was contingent on the hiring of an executive director. The Center subsequently hired an executive director in 2013, and became fully operational in 2014. Since that time, much of the Center's resources have been devoted to system development, data loading and matching, and developing initial content and output.

Since, the Center now has a number of research reports, data dashboards, and content that can be shared with stakeholders and the public, it is now time to develop an effective communications plan that will:

- Ensure stakeholders and the public understand the value and purpose of the MLDS and the MLDS Center; and
- Assist the Center in building its brand within the State as the source for timely and accurate information about student performance that can be used to improve the State's education system.

## **Desired Outcomes**

Through a comprehensive communications strategy, the MLDS Center will develop an audience that:

1. Uses the MLDS Center as the resource for longitudinal education and workforce data in Maryland;
2. Engages the MLDS for analysis of longitudinal student outcomes in Maryland;
3. Provides input on the direction for the continuation of MLDS Center output; and
4. Champions the role of the MLDS Center across the state of Maryland.

## Communications Timeline

Phase	Time Period
Phase 1: Needs Assessment	Through November 2016
Phase 2: Outcomes from Needs Assessment	Through March 2017
Phase 3: Audience Identification and Development	To be determined
Phase 4: Print Media	To be determined
Phase 5: Web-based Media and MLDSC Website	To be determined
Phase 6: Social Media	To be determined
Phase 7: Outreach	To be determined
Phase 8: Showcase	To be determined

### Phase 1: Needs Assessment

#### Review of the written and online materials developed by the MLDS

The Center has various documents and online resources to introduce and explain the Center's purpose and function.

1. [About the Center](#)
2. Brochure (see attached)
3. [Annual Reports](#)
4. [Privacy and Security](#)

#### Capacity and availability of staff

The MLDSC does not have a dedicated communications staff. Therefore, each member of the Center's management team will help with the content of communications and the Center's web developer will adapt that content to meet the needs for the website. The communication efforts will focus on activities and products that are streamlined, low-cost, low-labor initiatives targeted at attracting visitors to the MLDSC website and generating interest in the Center's work.

#### Goal Setting

Communications will be developed alongside produced content. The Center will work to develop applicable content for each audience engaged through the communications timeline. Aligning content to prioritized stakeholders will guide the work of the Center, by focusing content that is tailored to stakeholders.

### Phase 2: Outcomes from Needs Assessment

#### Mission and Vision Development

The MLDS Center will work collaboratively with the Research and Policy Advisory Board to refine the mission and vision statements. The development of the mission and vision statements provides a succinct summary of the work of the Center and focuses internal and external stakeholders on the objectives and goals of the MLDSC.

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## **Messaging**

Messaging, in the form of common language or talking points, is developed to promote a product or service of an entity. In the case of the Center, messaging will be developed to succinctly describe and promote the MLDS, projects, grants, and other work of the Center. Messaging products might include:

- “Boilerplate” text describing published or upcoming projects for reports, dashboards, websites, or other publications;
- Elevator speeches to explain and promote the MLDS to various audiences; and
- Talking points for answering common questions about the MLDS.<sup>1</sup>

The MLDSC will develop language that accurately describes the MLDS and language to avoid when talking or writing about the System and the Center.

## **Communications Advisory Board**

The MLDS Center currently has two advisory Boards, the Research and Policy Advisory Board (RPB) and the Data Governance Advisory Board (Data GAB). The Communications Advisory Board (CAB) will leverage the expertise from MLDS Center partners to provide guidance and direction. The Communications Advisory Board will assist in the review of deliverables for use by the MLDS Governing Board, the MLDS Center, and invested stakeholders.

The Communications Advisory Board will assist in the development and provide consultation for:

- Written communication
  - Public messaging
  - Writing press releases
- Web design
- Graphic arts
- Videography
- Social media
- Event planning

## **Communications Advisory Board Members**

The Communications Advisory Board will include MLDSC staff, members from the MLDSC partner agencies and selected stakeholders with a direct relationship with the Center. MLDSC will leverage the in-kind support from the MLDS partner agencies as outlined in the MOUs with the partner agency.

1. MSDE
  - a. Communications
    - i. [MSDE Office of Communications and Partnerships](#): Bill Reinhard
    - ii. Public Affairs Officer II, Education Web
    - iii. Public Affairs Officer II, Media Communications

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<sup>1</sup> NCES, Institute of Education Sciences, SLDS Issue Brief, [Quick Guide to Branding and Promoting an SLDS](#), March 2014

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- b. Subject Matter Experts
  - i. Chandra Haislet
  - ii. Pat Mikos
- 2. MHEC
  - a. Communications -
  - b. Subject Matter Expert
    - i. Jon Enriquez
- 3. DLLR
  - a. Communications
    - i. [Communications and Media Relations Director](#): Maureen O'Connor - 410-230-6241
    - ii. [Communications and Media Relations Deputy Director](#): Summar Goodman - 410-230-6069
  - b. Subject Matter Experts
    - i. Michael Harrison
    - ii. Pat Tyler
- 4. University System of Maryland
  - a. Communications
  - b. Subject Matter Experts
    - i. Ben Passmore
    - ii. Nancy Shapiro
- 5. Other Stakeholders
  - a. Baltimore's Promise
  - b. Jacob France Institute
  - c. Baltimore Education Research Consortium
  - d. ?

### ***Meeting Frequency***

The Communications Advisory Board will meet on an as needed basis as content is developed by Center Staff.

### ***Audience Development***

The MLDS will identify the intended audience(s) so that messaging, output, and responses can be tailored to the needs of the audience. Center Staff will determine the reason why each audience should care. This will be done as simply as possible so that each audience sees the value of the Center<sup>2</sup>.

### ***Development of Communications Calendar***

The MLDSC will develop a communications calendar to plan project milestones, release of output, and outreach. A calendar will help keep key stakeholders and the MLDS Governing Board informed regarding the work of the MLDSC. The Communications Advisory Board will assist in the development of reasonable timelines for the communications calendar.

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<sup>2</sup> NCES, IES, [Best Practices Brief 6, Elevator Speeches](#), September 2013



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### **Phase 3: Audience Identification and Development**

The MLDSC has grouped audiences below. The groups are organized from the most specialized and direct relationship with MLDSC to broader and more indirect audiences.

Group 1. Governor, General Assembly, and MLDS Governing Board

Group 2. MLDS Partner Agencies, state-wide workgroups, state boards and commissions

Group 3. Data Users and Data Providers

a) Local Education Agencies

b) College and University Administrative Staff

Group 4. Education Based Non-profit Organizations, Research Organizations, Education Think-Tanks

Group 5. Local School District Administrators, Principals, and other School Based Staff

Group 6. Parents, Students, and Families

Group 7. General Public

### **Grouping Audiences**

#### *Group 1. Governor and General Assembly*

a) [Office of Governor Larry Hogan](#)

b) [General Assembly of Maryland](#)  
[Maryland Department of Legislative Services](#)

#### *Group 2. MLDS Partner Agencies, state-wide workgroups, state boards and commissions*

a) [Maryland State Department of Education](#)

(1) [Maryland State Board of Education](#)

b) [Maryland Higher Education Commission](#)

(1) MHEC Commission

c) [Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation](#)

d) [Maryland Association of Community Colleges](#) (MACC)

e) [Maryland Independent Colleges and Universities Association](#)

f) [Public School Superintendents of Maryland](#) (PSSAM)

g) [Governor's P-20 Leadership Council of Maryland](#)

h) [Governor's Workforce Investment Board](#)

#### *Group 3. Data Users and Data Providers*

a) Local Education Agencies

i) [Maryland State Education Association](#) (MSEA)

ii) [Maryland Association of Boards of Education](#) (MABE)

iii) [Maryland Association of Counties](#)

iv) Research Offices of LEA's

(1) [Anne Arundel County Public Schools, Instructional Data Division, Office of Research](#)

(2) [Baltimore County Public Schools, Department of Research, Accountability, and Assessment/Data Warehouse, Office of Research](#)

(3) [Caroline County Public Schools, Department of Accountability and Student Data](#)

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- (4) [Carroll County Public Schools, Department of Research and Accountability](#)
- (5) Charles County Public Schools, Office of Accountability/Research and Assessment
- (6) Frederick County Public Schools, System Accountability & School Improvement
- (7) [Howard County Public School System, Research and Data Analysis](#)
- (8) [Montgomery County Public Schools, Shared Accountability, Applied Research Unit](#)
- (9) [Prince George's County Public Schools, Department of Research and Evaluation](#)
- (10) [Baltimore City Public School System, Achievement and Accountability Office, Research Services, Research Department](#)

*b) College and University Administrative Staff*

- i) [Maryland Association for Institutional Research](#) (MdAIR)
- ii) [MHEC Segmental Advisory Council](#)
- iii) [Council of University System Presidents](#)
- iv) [University System of Maryland Communications Council](#)
- v) [USM P20](#)
- vi) [System Research Administrators' Group](#) (SRAG)
- vii) College and University Institutional Research Offices
  - (1) [Salisbury University, Office of Graduate Studies and Research](#)

*Group 4. Education Based Non-profit Organizations, Research Organizations, Education Think-Tanks*

- a) Baltimore's Promise
- b) Annie E. Casey Foundation
- c) Baltimore Education Research Consortium
- d) [Jacob France Institute](#)
- e) Advocates for Children, Families, and Youth
- f) Family League of Baltimore
- g) [Maryland Assessment Research Center \(MARC\)](#)

*Group 5. Local School District Administrators, Principals, and other School Based Staff*

- a) [Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals](#) (MASSP)
- b) [Maryland Municipal League](#)
- c) [Baltimore Teachers Union](#)
- d) [American Federation of Teachers](#)

*Group 6. Parents, Students, and Families*

- a) [Maryland PTA](#)
- b) [Montgomery County Council of PTAs](#)
- c) [PTA Council of Howard County](#)
- d) [Harford County Council of PTAs](#)

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*Group 7. General Public***Stakeholder Engagement Calendar 2017**

Stakeholder Group/ Organization	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC

**Phase 4: Print Media**

The Communications Advisory Board will create Center-specific materials, including but not limited to Fact Sheets, timelines, and Q & A documents. The group will also identify agency members who will produce Press Releases for review. Listed below are some Center-specific materials in development. The Communications Workgroup will further refine and develop these documents.

**Data Brief**

Data Briefs are usually one-page (front and back) and summarize the data provided in MLDS Center dashboards. The purpose of the Data Brief is to highlight trends or important findings in the data dashboards. Group 1 and Group 2 stakeholders are the intended audience for Data Briefs.

**MLDSC Flyer**

The MLDSC Flyer is a trifold publication that provides an overview of the MLDS, the Center, and its objectives and goals. The MLDSC Flyer is intended for all stakeholder groups.

**MLDS Infographics**

An infographic is a visual image used to represent information or data. While all audience groups will benefit from infographics, Groups 4, 5, and 6 are the intended audience. The MLDSC will develop the following types of infographics:

- Provide information about the MLDS and MLDS Center (Examples in Appendix)
- Visually portray information in data briefs and data dashboards
- Visually portray information in Research Publications

**Phase 5: Web-based Media and MLDSC Website****GovDelivery**

GovDelivery is a digital marketing platform built exclusively for the public sector to promote services, enhance public awareness, and increase citizen engagement. The state of Maryland includes GovDelivery as a Google App. MLDS Center staff has reached out to GovDelivery to begin using this tool. The Communications Workgroup will further explore the abilities of the tool and make recommendations on its use.

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### **Website Review**

The MLDS Center website contains a wealth of information on the MLDS, as well as, a wide variety of output. Some content on the website needs updating and additional work to ensure content is always intuitively accessible. MLDS Center staff will periodically review the content on the website to ensure it is in plain English and accessible to a wide variety of audiences.

The MLDS Center website will also be used in conjunction with GovDelivery to engage audiences and maintain contact with stakeholders.

### **MLDSC Blog**

Many SLDS agencies publish a blog on their websites. This is an easy way to update audiences on output from the agency, and keep audiences engaged. Topics may range from educational to informative. Some suggestions for an MLDS Center Blog include:

- Educating the public about statistical analysis like "What is a regression model?" or "How do we measure relationships between variables?".
- Defining concepts used in research reports or dashboards "What do we mean by dual enrollment?" or "What is an annualized wage?".
- Advertisements for published research reports that would include a one-paragraph summary of the published research report.
- "Ask an expert" posts which include a practice or policy interview with a local Maryland expert discussing the findings from published MLDSC research reports or national issues related to longitudinal data systems, or educational outcomes.

#### *Examples of Blogs:*

[The YN Blog](#), Youth-Nex

The University of Virginia Center to Promote Effective Youth Development

[The Methodology Center](#), Pens State

College of Health and Human Development

[VLDS Blog](#), Virginia SLDS

### **Frequency**

The frequency of blog posts varies, with monthly posts the most common. MLDS Center staff will create content in conjunction with the Communications Workgroup. The Communications Workgroup will determine the frequency of blog posts.

### **Phase 6: Social Media**

Many state agencies including MLDS Center partner agencies are active and present on social media outlets. The MLDS Center will develop a Facebook page and a Twitter handle. The Communications Advisory Board will consult on the Facebook page and Twitter handle and initial content. The

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Communications Advisory Board will make recommendations on the expansion into other social media sites.

The initial goal will be to post something on these outlets once per week. The content may be exclusively that of the MLDSC, or may also include helpful education and workforce material from the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Labor, and the MLDSC's data sharing partners (DLLR, MHEC and MSDE). Examples of content are in the Appendix.

*Resources:*

GovDelivery – [Facebook's Top 10 for Government](#)

*Examples:*

[U.S. Department of Education](#) Facebook Page

[Maryland State Department of Education](#) Facebook Page

[Maryland Higher Education Commission](#) Facebook Page

[Maryland.Gov](#) Facebook Page

## **Phase 7: Outreach**

The MLDS Center staff will develop a schedule to meet with identified audiences and promote the Center, its available products, and receive feedback on how the Center can provide content. Schedule meetings with identified stakeholders to explain the role of the Center, and engage in how the Center can assist stakeholders. Outreach may include:

- Inclusion in meetings scheduled by workgroups, partner agencies, etc.
- Meetings scheduled by MLDS to engage audiences
- Conferences
- Briefings

## **Phase 8: Showcase**

The MLDS Center will plan a one day event that showcases the work of the Center over the past year. This will be an opportunity to promote and expand the work of the Center. This day-long event will require a full staff effort and dedicated space.

*Option 1:* Maryland State House, lobby space, or conference space. During the Maryland legislative session, MLDS staff will be present with poster presentations, published reports, and interactive access to the MLDS Website. This event will allow law makers, legislative staff, and the interested parties to directly connect with the work of the Center.

*Option 2:* University of Maryland School of Law, Ceremonial Moot Courtroom or Krongard Board Room. Light food and beverage could be set up in the Krongard Board Room where attendees could meet the Center staff and ask questions between sessions. Fixed presentations with available Q&A built in would be held in the Ceremonial Moot Courtroom. This event would be scheduled to take place after the end of the K-12 public school year so that educators and administrators could attend.

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Examples:

- [VLDS Insights Conference](#)
- [MSDE 2016 Data Summit](#)
- [Maryland Assessment Research Center, Annual Maryland Assessment Conference](#)

## Communications Calendar

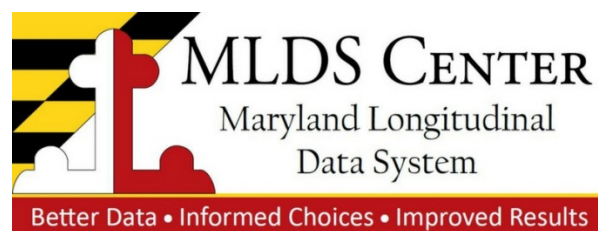
Month	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
November (2016)	Regular Emails				
December	Regular Emails				
January (2017)	Regular Emails	Monthly Report as E-Newsletter			
February		GovDelivery	Facebook		
March		Email capture	Facebook		
April			Twitter	Roadshow	
May			Twitter	Roadshow	
June				Roadshow	
July					Showcase?
August	Regular Emails	E-Newsletter	Facebook		
September		GovDelivery	Twitter		
October		Email capture			
November					
December					

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## Appendix

### MLDS Infographics Examples

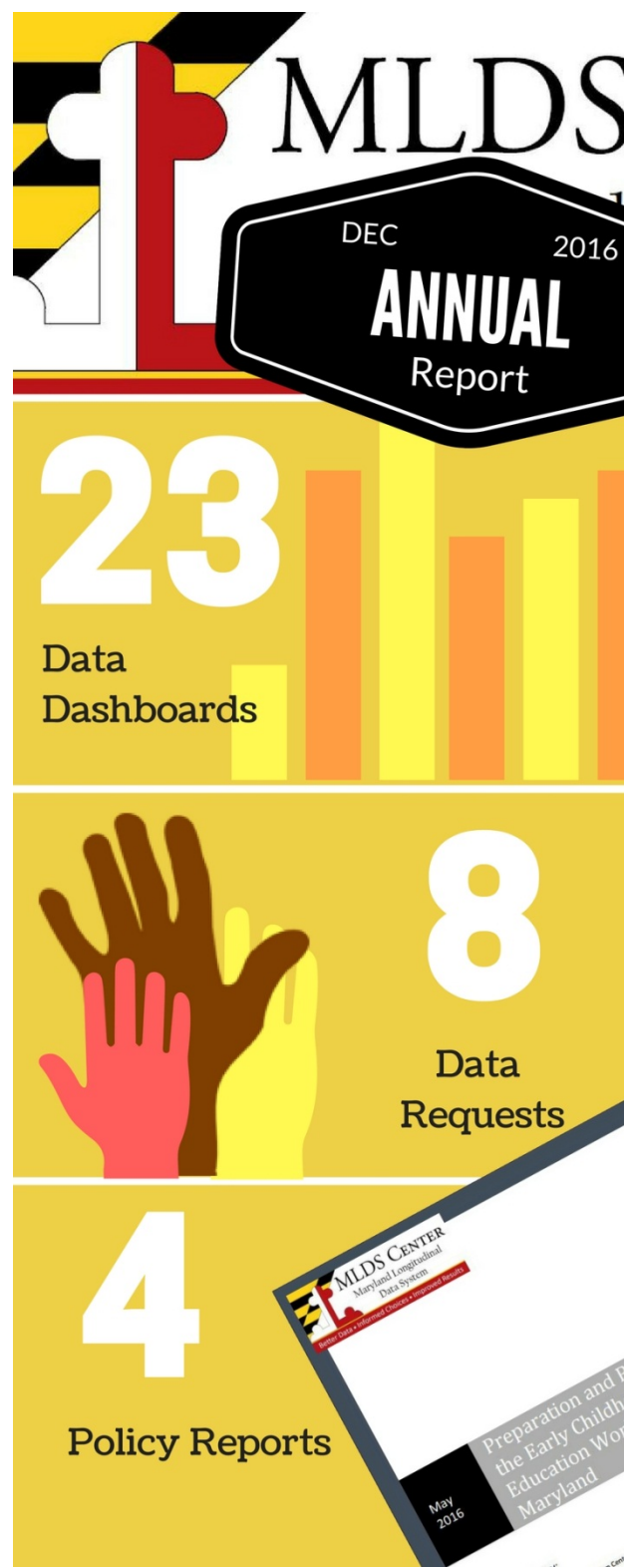
What is the MLDS?



The MLDS Center is Maryland's central repository for student and workforce data. Learn more here:

[MLDSCenter.Maryland.gov](http://MLDSCenter.Maryland.gov)

### MLDSC 2016 Year in Review



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***Social Media Examples***

How well do you know the MLDSC?

