

April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY



ÉQUIPE SANTÉ ONTARIO
NIAGARA
ONTARIO HEALTH TEAM

CREATING CONNECTED CARE

ENTITY, IDENTITY &
HEALTHY COMMUNITY

"There is no entity without identity."
Willard Van Orman Quine

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Communication Plan is a critical instrument designed to equip NOHT-ESON with engagement tools and amplify its voice towards fulfilling its mission: *“To work as one coordinated team to provide service, support, and care, no matter when or where you need it”*. It does this by supporting the following three strategic imperatives for NOHT-ESON:

- 1. Deliver on the mandate from the Ministry:**
 - a. Create coordinated approach to care making it easier for patients to access services.
 - b. Facilitate seamless transitions between providers.
 - c. Improve health outcomes for patients and clients.
- 2. Support internal alignment among 47 organizations** committed to delivering a coordinated system of care to patients, clients, families and caregivers.

empower patients, clients, families and caregivers to tell their stories and shape health policy

3. Authentically Engage with Niagara Community to inspire participation in health policy decision-making and serve as a reliable and accessible source of health information.

The key elements of this plan in order of priority are:

1. Branding – A clearly defined brand–Name, unique selling proposition, key visual, tagline, and performance—command community mindshare and build public confidence in NOHT-ESON’s capacity and ability to fulfill its Ministry-entrusted mandate.

command community mindshare and build public confidence

2. Website Development—A website provides a tangible connection between the community, serves as a reliable source of health information and substantiates fidelity to the digital first strategy required by the Ministry of Health’s mandate.

3. Media Relations—Leveraging the combined and co-ordinated power of traditional and digital media strengthens NOHT-ESON’s capacity to build effective community relationships and empower patients, clients, families and caregivers to tell their stories and shape health policy.

4. Internal Communication—Creating cohesion in a network of distinct, disparate and independently branded organizations through mechanisms such as a communications community of practice, content calendar and a newsletter.

fidelity to the digital first strategy required by the Ministry of Health’s mandate

5. Community Engagement—Strengthening community relationships and fostering active public participation in health policy development through deployment of the Engagement Framework & Toolkit, nurturing storytelling efforts among patients, clients, families and caregivers and focusing on priority populations in accordance with the mandate from the Ministry of Health.

Timeline and Risk Factors

The activities outlined in this communications plan are scheduled across a fiscal year. Timely and successful completion of these projects is contingent on the management of several risk factors: (1) technology delays, (2) timely decision-making (3) effective delegation and (4) external factors (such as COVID-19 and its variants).

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS AND FOSTERING ACTIVE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN HEALTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

This Communications Plan identifies and prioritizes a set of start-up operational initiatives, situated within a strategic context, through which the Niagara Ontario Health Team (NOHT-ESON) will:

- Fulfill the mandate from the Ministry of Health to provide excellent healthcare to patients, clients, families and caregivers, and priority populations using a 'digital first' approach.
- Begin the evolutionary internal and external journey towards a connected and coordinated continuum of healthcare service delivery that will measurably and sustainably improve population health for the 480,000 people of Niagara.
- Establish itself as a new and necessary entity in the social and political landscape of Niagara, equipped and ready to work towards improving population health in each of the region's constituent communities.

These aims are encapsulated in the guiding mantras of the organization:

VISION: Healthy Together. Exceptional, connected care, now and for future generations.

MISSION: To work as one coordinated team to provide service, support and care no matter where or when you need it.

The activities identified and scheduled in this plan are designed to:

- Ensure that NOHT-ESON informs itself with the strategies and equips itself with the tools required to deliver on the expectations of the Ministry of Health.
- Align and inspire partners internally.
- Engage individuals and communities externally.

The success of these efforts will be measured in the stories and testimonials of the residents of Niagara—patients, clients, families and caregivers—who experience:

- Easier access to services.
- Seamless transitions between providers.
- Improved health outcomes.

VISION:
HEALTHY TOGETHER.
EXCEPTIONAL, CONNECTED CARE,
NOW AND FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

BACKGROUND

NOHT-ESON became operational in July 2020 when the Ministry of Health officially recognized the newly created partnership of 47 diverse healthcare organizations as one of 50 province-wide Ontario Health Teams (OHTs) who had embraced its mandate to revolutionize healthcare for patients, clients, families and caregivers. Since then, NOHT-ESON has taken several important steps, internally and externally, towards establishing itself as a viable organization capable, equipped and ready to transform healthcare delivery in Niagara.

Two of NOHT-ESON's mission-critical steps towards fulfilment of its mandate—the establishment of the Planning Table with its consensus model of decision-making and the creation of Working Groups whose ground-level activities drive the Planning Table's policy decisions—are the primary drivers of the partnership's success. The Communications and Engagement Working Group is uniquely responsible for:

- establishing and promoting NOHT-ESON's existence in Niagara,
- engaging the population in embracing its mission, vision and values
- disseminating key messages regarding NOHT-ESON's fulfilment of the mandate.
- promoting NOHT-ESON's accountability in the use of public resources.

Over the past year, as NOHT-ESON has begun establishing and operationalizing its vision, mission and values at the Planning Table, CEWG has been establishing the basic infrastructure required to launch the NOHT-ESON brand and build its reputation as a vital institution actively engaged in making Niagara Region a healthier community. This work has focused, so far, on inculcating the principles and practices of community engagement in the culture of the partnership and empowering Niagara residents to participate, as fully as they are able, in the healthcare

policy decisions being made on their behalf. The partnership has deployed an Engagement Framework and Toolkit to provide structure and focus to the engagement effort—a fundamental aspect of the mandate from the Ministry of Health.

Foundational to the success of this endeavor, however, is the prior need to create and establish the NOHT-ESON brand—position the organizational entity as a partnership with a distinctive identity in the hearts and minds of the people—partners and the public—it purports to serve. Ontario Health Teams were created and mandated by the Ministry of Health and entrusted with the flexibility to structure themselves so that they could distinguish their change strategy from past approaches to healthcare delivery and forge a new path to population health for present and future generations. This is where this communications plan begins: establishing a climate of partnership cohesiveness and agility internally, while creating the operational infrastructure—leading with the Ministry of Health's digital first strategy—required to instill confidence in the external audience that the partnership will be able to deliver on the promise of its vision, mission and values as the organization evolves from its infancy into maturity.

The process of creating a new consensus-based Planning Table partnership team from a collection of independent health service providers and further establishing a new network of consensus-based workgroups making decisions to support the policy decision-making at the Planning Table is perhaps best viewed through the lens of Tuckman's Stages of Group development. In this framework newly formed teams go through clearly defined processes—forming, storming, norming and performing—as necessary steps on the way to organizational effectiveness. (See Appendix B). This model provides a basis for understanding the pace and quality of decisions made at various stages of the organization's journey to maturity.

FOUNDATIONAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THIS ENDEAVOR, HOWEVER, IS THE PRIOR NEED TO CREATE AND ESTABLISH THE NOHT-ESON BRAND—POSITION THE ORGANIZATIONAL ENTITY AS A PARTNERSHIP WITH A DISTINCTIVE IDENTITY IN THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF THE PEOPLE—PARTNERS AND THE PUBLIC—IT PURPORTS TO SERVE.

OBJECTIVES

This communications plan outlines operational steps to be taken for establishing NOHT-ESON as a cohesive entity internally and presenting externally the image of a newly emerging, vibrant organization poised to work towards fulfilling its mandate as it develops gradually towards maturity. It is critical in this effort to assure the public that NOHT-ESON is an organization in development and to put in the Ministry expectation as your anchoring goal... how will you be measured?

The primary objective of this plan is to provide a strategic context in which a wide range of standard foundational/infrastructural activities can be identified, prioritized, budgeted for and implemented. Then, various evaluation mechanisms can be used to assess progress and recalibrate as necessary the efficacy of our efforts towards fulfilment of the mandate from the Ministry of Health.

In order of priority, the main areas currently identified as mission-critical for NOHT-ESON's start-up success are:

1. **BRANDING**
2. **WEBSITE**
3. **MEDIA RELATIONS (PESO MODEL)**
4. **INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS**
5. **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Taken together, the operational activities implemented in each of these areas during the fiscal year April 2022-March 2023 will constitute a program of external communications that will begin to:

- (a) fulfill the mandate as presented by the Ministry of Health, and
- (b) position NOHT-ESON favorably in the hearts and minds of the population (480,000 people) of Niagara.

The strategic trajectory of the organization will have been established. And NOHT-ESON will have deployed various tactics to disseminate its key messages.

It is critical to note from the outset that NOHT-ESON is not being launched as a finished product, ready to bestow the benefits of revolutionized health care to the community. Rather, NOHT-ESON is being launched as a work in progress—a journey from siloed dysfunction among healthcare workers to a connected, cohesive partnership of healthcare professionals committed to providing excellent healthcare as the organization develops into maturity. The public is being invited to participate in healthcare policy decisions as they are made so they can both design and experience the improvements as they emerge. As evidence of this, the website will be launched as a basic web presence and evolve over time as the primary healthcare hub for Niagara residents.

THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE OF THIS PLAN IS TO PROVIDE A STRATEGIC CONTEXT IN WHICH A WIDE RANGE OF STANDARD FOUNDATIONAL/INFRASTRUCTURAL ACTIVITIES CAN BE IDENTIFIED, PRIORITIZED, BUDGETED FOR AND IMPLEMENTED.

KEY MESSAGES

Key Message (1)

NOHT-ESON is a unified partnership of diverse health-care providers committed to working towards creating a connected and coordinated system of healthcare excellence for all patients, clients, families and caregivers of the Niagara Region, throughout their healthcare journey.

Deliverable: NOHT-ESON has established a brand identity that is reflected consistently on all its communications collateral—NOHT-ESON website, printed materials, social media, etc.

Deliverable: Partners/members of NOHT-ESON identify with the brand and actively promote it publicly. They display the NOHT-ESON brand identity along with their traditional brand identities, and promote the NOHT-ESON vision, mission and values to their patients, clients, families and caregivers. A variety of standard ways to accomplish this is presented in the logo style guide.

Deliverable: Partners/members routine media releases include a boilerplate statement (available in the brand identity guide) acknowledging partnership with NOHT-ESON and affirming commitment to its values.

Deliverable: Board members of partner organizations are actively engaged with NOHT-ESON and keep in touch with developments by subscribing to the Connected Care newsletter.

Deliverable: Communications and Administrative staff at partner organizations are connected with Communications staff at NOHT-ESON, sharing information (such as media lists, events calendars, social media calendars) to facilitate NOHT-ESON's curation of partnership relevant content for publication on NOHT-ESON's various platforms.

Key Message (2)

NOHT-ESON is committed to engaging the population of Niagara in making the healthcare decisions that affect them.

Deliverable: NOHT-ESON has created and deployed an Engagement Framework and Toolkit, conducted engagement activities and has implemented strategies (such as a contact management system on its website) to elicit and manage active public participation.

Deliverable: NOHT-ESON has created plain language communication materials—in print and online—to inform and engage its audiences in policymaking towards coordinated healthcare.

Deliverable: NOHT-ESON is fulfilling its accountability requirements by proactively reporting on its first year of activities in a published Annual Report.

Deliverable: The commitment to addressing Indigenous, Francophone and other marginalized populations is reflected in the design and presentation of all communication materials.

Deliverable: NOHT-ESON has established a routine for French translation of all public communications which respects the principles and practices outlined in the French Language policy and is actively engaged in dialogue with diverse representatives to explore further opportunities for engagement.

Deliverable: NOHT-ESON has established effective working relationships with diverse representatives from the Indigenous community, including Indigenous Health Network (IHN) and is actively collaborating with them in the fulfilment of its mandate using the Two-Eyed Seeing Approach.

THE COMMITMENT TO ADDRESSING INDIGENOUS, FRANCOPHONE AND OTHER MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS IS REFLECTED IN THE DESIGN AND PRESENTATION OF ALL COMMUNICATION MATERIALS.

INTERESTED AND AFFECTED PARTIES

Internal

- NOHT-ESON Planning Table
- Communications and Engagement Working Group
- All other NOHT-ESON Working Groups
- French-Speaking NOHT-ESON Partners
- Indigenous Health Network

PARTIES	OBJECTIVE	MESSAGE CONTENT	DELIVERY METHOD	TIMING
CEWG	Comm Plan Approval	Plan reflects key NOHT-ESON priorities.	CEWG Subgroup	Jan-Feb 2022
NOHT-ESON Planning Table	Budget Approval	Plan Reflects NOHT-ESON priorities.	Comm Plan	February 2022
NOHT-ESON Working Groups	Comm Plan Approval	CEWG is equipped to support key workgroup /NOHT ESON needs.	Co-Leads and Planning Table Meetings	February 2022
French-Speaking NOHT-ESON Partners	Comm Plan Approval	CEWG plan considers interests of Francophone community	CEWG Subgroup	Jan-Feb 2022
Indigenous Health Network	Comm Plan Acceptance	NOHT-ESON considers and values Indigenous perspectives.	Planning Table	January 2022

INTERESTED AND AFFECTED PARTIES

External

- Ontario Ministry of Health & National Healthcare Community
- Partner Organizations' Boards of Directors
- Communities of Niagara Region and Environs: Lincoln, Wainfleet, Port Colbourne, Welland, Pelham, Thorold, St. Catharines, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls, Fort Erie.
- Media Outlets (Mainstream Print and Broadcast organizations)
- Local Community Media & Social Media Platforms
- Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Pharmacists and other Healthcare Providers
- Patient, Client, Family and Caregiver Advisory Committee
- Residents of Niagara Region

PARTIES	OBJECTIVE	MESSAGE CONTENT	DELIVERY METHOD	TIMING
Ministry of Health	Funding	Mandate On Track	Performance Reports from Planning Table	Quarterly
Partner's Boards of Directors	Engagement with NOHT-ESON	NOHT-ESON is effectively providing the connections required to transform healthcare in Niagara.	NOHT-ESON Newsletter Connected Care	Quarterly
Mainstream Media Outlets-Print & Broadcast	Credibility and Coverage	NOHT-ESON is a viable entity, empowered, equipped and engaged in transforming healthcare.	Website, Media Releases, Annual Report, Story Pitches, Thought Leadership	Ongoing
Local Community Media	Building Trust, Engagement, Credibility, Coverage	The people of Niagara are being served by the NOHT-ESON and its new approach to healthcare.	Website, Patient/Client Caregiver stories, Annual Report	Ongoing
Communities of Niagara Region (11)	Trust, Engagement.	Each community is being served through NOHT-ESON's mandate.	Website, media stories, social media...	Ongoing
Physicians, Nurse Practitioners and Other Healthcare Providers	Trust, Credibility, Engagement	NOHT-ESON is a functioning entity, empowered and equipped to transform healthcare.	Connected Care NOHT-ESON Newsletter	Quarterly
Marginalized Communities	Trust, Credibility, Engagement	NOHT-ESON is a functioning entity, empowered and equipped to transform healthcare.	Website, Patient/Client Caregiver stories, Annual Report	Ongoing
Residents of Niagara Region	Trust Credibility, Engagement	NOHT-ESON is a functioning entity, empowered and equipped to transform healthcare.	Website, Patient/Client Caregiver stories, Annual Report, Collateral Materials, Advertising	Ongoing

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

Strategic Considerations

This section discusses the strategic context in which the major operational activities in the plan occur. It outlines the basic operational assumptions on which initiatives are based and indicates the desired outcome that is being sought through the specified activity. Critical to the success of these initiatives is the order in which they are implemented: each initiative solidifies the foundation on which its successor is built. Logical development of the organization instills confidence in key stakeholders—notably the Ministry of Health—that the mandate is understood and that its investment of resources and confidence will produce, in the short-term, public confidence in the trajectory of development of the health system and longer-term benefits in population health.

1. BRANDING

The most fundamental challenge that NOHT-ESON faces is establishing and promoting a strong, consistent and appealing brand identity. The challenge arises in two important ways. First, healthcare is generally considered to be a very inelastic commodity because everyone needs it: there is no readily available substitute. This detrimentally predisposes health professionals to dismiss the ideas of branding, marketing communications and public mindshare. Second, what is being branded—a new vision, strategy, technology and methodology for the delivery of healthcare—is largely intangible and requires buy-in from (i) healthcare delivery organizations with ties to their own pre-existing, established brand identities as well as (ii) the trust and confidence of the population.

The aim of establishing a brand is two-fold:

- a) Internally, it unites, co-ordinates and motivates the 47 partners and infuses the organization with its sense of purpose.
- b) Externally, a brand identity is needed to spark recognition, focus popular attention, and secure public mindshare on organizational messaging and galvanize goodwill and political support of the population of Niagara. Branding makes intangibles tangible. It provides an icon or symbolic focal point that makes mandated Ministry of Health deliverables such as ease of access to 24/7 connected care, a digital first approach, priority for marginalized communities real and realizable in the minds of the audiences.

To accomplish these aims, five elements of brand work together.

The Name:

The organization has, so far, chosen to use the default name Niagara Ontario Health Team together with its French equivalent Équipe Santé Ontario Niagara to create the acronym NOHT-ESON. The process of branding involves attaching social and political significance, positive associations and organizational key messaging to this name in the public consciousness, so that as changes are made to the health system, the public is aware of the organization that is responsible/accountable for the progress.

Externally, a brand identity is needed to spark recognition, focus popular attention, and secure public mindshare on organizational messaging and galvanize goodwill and political support of the population of Niagara. Branding makes intangibles tangible.

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Unique Ownable Specialty:

The main branding challenge facing NOHT-ESON is to get the public to associate the name NOHT-ESON with a public benefit that is **superlative, important, believable, memorable and tangible**. OHTs were created to transform a siloed system into an organizationally and technologically interconnected system that produces efficiencies in healthcare delivery. Thus, connectedness emerges as the importantly unique feature of the system that NOHT-ESON can own: connecting healthcare providers into a seamless continuum of care delivery creates optimal outcomes for patients, clients, families and caregivers. So far, the notion of connected care is meaningful and resonates powerfully among NOHT-ESON's 47 healthcare providers. It is an enhancement to the conditions in which they work. However, this new feature of the health system needs to be communicated as a benefit that the public can readily appreciate. Connectedness is for insiders—those who already know what it is. This system feature needs to be condensed into a single idea that communicates a tangible, understandable benefit to the public that they can immediately appreciate without explanation.

Tagline

NOHT-ESON's unique ownable specialty understood internally among health professionals as the new system feature of connectedness needs to be communicated to the public as an immediately recognizable benefit to them in a phrase that resonates with key audiences believably and memorably.

Externally, the tagline communicates NOHT-ESON's value proposition to the public by answering, in a very direct way, the most pressing question that commands each person's individual attention: "What's in it for me?"

Internally, the tagline unites partners by reminding them of their ultimate responsibility to the people they serve. Consistent messaging across all communication vehicles reinforces the tangibility of the new entity and reifies its ability to deliver seamless integrated care by both doing it and showing it.

Once established as part of the messaging strategy, taglines can be changed and adapted to send specific messages to different audiences as circumstances arise.

THE TAGLINE COMMUNICATES NOHT-ESON'S VALUE PROPOSITION TO THE PUBLIC BY ANSWERING, IN A VERY DIRECT WAY, THE MOST PRESSING QUESTION THAT COMMANDS EACH PERSON'S INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION: "WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?"

The Key Visual (Logo)

The key visual (logo) is a fundamental symbol that serves to focus NOHT-ESON's connection and collaboration efforts internally and brand recognition externally. Internally the logo builds identity among the partners reminding them that they function in the public eye as one organization working strategically together for a common purpose. It inspires adaptive brand behaviours by serving as a quick visual reminder of the larger goal. The choice of a logo is a creative exercise that challenges the organization to express its unique ownable speciality in a symbol—metaphoric or realistic—that, with exposure and repetition in positive contexts, the public will recognize and embrace. Over time the audience will come to associate the logo with not just the brand promise of the group, but its actual performance.

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Performance

The key to establishing a stable successful brand is actual performance. Performance is the essential building block of organizational reputation. Taglines, visuals and a unique selling idea are supporting factors. But the public will ultimately assess the success of NOHT-ESON's efforts by assessing the organizations performance against its stated goals and the expectation of the target audience. NOHT-ESON's Annual Report is the main vehicle for communicating the progress the partnership has made towards the fulfilment of its mandate. It is the primary instrument of public accountability. Other efforts to build reputation, disseminate key messages and build reputation include media releases and other information published via paid, earned, shared and owned media. All instruments should be designed to achieve a consistent and distinctive presentation style. But the Annual Report should unify and amplify all presentation elements to demonstrate to the Ministry of Health and to the public that NOHT-ESON is well on its way towards delivering healthcare benefits using the government's mandated digital first approach.

The key to fulfilling its mandate — optimal population health in Niagara — is to achieve critical mass in NOHT-ESON membership among healthcare providers in Niagara.

The Annual Report should unify and amplify all presentation elements to demonstrate to the Ministry of Health and to the public that NOHT-ESON is well on its way towards delivering healthcare benefits using the government's mandated digital first approach.

Building The Partnership Through Brand Performance

As NOHT-ESON progresses towards organizational maturity, the key to fulfilling its mandate—optimal population health in Niagara—is to achieve critical mass in NOHT-ESON membership among healthcare providers in Niagara. The transformative power of connectedness will begin to produce results exponentially as more organizations from all segments of the health system subscribe to NOHT-ESON's mission vision and values and begin collaborating in means and methodology towards producing the desired results. There is room for participation from both private sector healthcare organizations and the wider non-profit healthcare sector (food banks, social service and support organizations, shelters etc.) as extensions of the continuum of care. It is primarily through superlative brand performance that NOHT-ESON will be able to attract additional partners to the Planning Table. Investments made today in making the NOHT-ESON brand experience unique, tangible and distinctive will contribute immeasurably to building organizational reputation and make membership in NOHT-ESON the holy grail of excellence in healthcare. By combining exemplary brand behavior and creativity in reputation building through public connection and accountability NOHT-ESON is ensuring its future as a vital public institution.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

SUPPORTS RESPONSIVENESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITMENTS BY ALLOWING NOHT-ESON TO COMMUNICATE IN A TIMELY MANNER—IN CALM OR IN CRISIS—THE ACTIVITIES IN WHICH THE ORGANIZATION IS ENGAGED

Website

Technology has emerged as a major driver of progress in our society and the Ministry of Health's reliance on a digital first strategy in its mandate for improving population health reflects that reality. Websites have become foundational communication tools in our society and NOHT-ESON is bound by both duty (Ministry mandate) and pragmatic necessity (public expectation) to prioritize development of this tool.

By launching a branded website at the outset of its journey to organizational maturity, NOHT-ESON is sending a message of commitment both to the Ministry and to the public that it is equipping itself to fulfil the mandate and that it is focused on engaging its audiences in actively participating in the process of policy development towards healthcare excellence at maturity.

The website—even in the embryonic stages of development—serves the following functions:

- Allows the people of Niagara to tangibly identify the activities of the NOHT-ESON and experience the accountability they expect from a public entity working in their interests via the government's digital first approach.
- Supports responsiveness and accountability commitments by allowing NOHT-ESON to communicate in a timely manner—in calm or in crisis—the activities in which the organization is engaged.

- Provides a public portal (Mailchimp used as a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) facility) through which the people of Niagara's various communities can actively engage with the organization's ongoing community engagement activities.
- Provides an exclusive portal for NOHT-ESON partners, members and working Group Co-Leads to collaborate and conduct the business of the organization. (For example, new members of NOHT-ESON can receive interactive multimedia orientation sessions.)
- Provides a space for patients, clients, families and caregivers to tell their stories, connect with NOHT-ESON and actively participate in the evolution of the partnership as it develops towards maturity in the fulfillment of its mandate.

While NOHT-ESON is committed to engaging the public and fostering active public participation in website development, the urgent need for this tool requires a pragmatic approach that expedites delivery of a functioning website which lays the groundwork for broader public consultation towards a site, rich with health-related information, co-developed through public participation.

This requires NOHT-ESON to rapidly develop and deploy a basic functional site based on the best available principles, practices and technologies of web design. When this basic website is launched and fulfilling the purposes identified above, CEWG can then launch a campaign to evolve from 'established best principles' to 'best learned practices' based on public input. These processes are generally found to complement each other.

Provides a space for patients, clients, families and caregivers to tell their stories, connect with NOHT-ESON and actively participate in the evolution of the partnership

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

2. PESO (PAID, EARNED SHARED, OWNED) MEDIA RELATIONS

In an age when digital technology dominates the culture and NOHT-ESON is mandated by the government to follow a digital first strategy in meeting its goals, it is imperative for NOHT-ESON to pursue a forward-looking and dynamic model for implementing and understanding the various platforms and vehicles the organization uses to convey its messages.

The PESO model—integrating PAID, EARNED, SHARED and OWNED media—is currently accepted as the industry standard for managing communications. Its success is attributable to the power of creating and promoting a single brand in a variety of communications arenas.

Paid media includes advertising on various new and traditional media platforms including social media—Twitter, Facebook, Google Ads—through which NOHT-ESON can expand its engagement efforts and connect with large segments of the 480,000 members of the Niagara community.

Earned Media is considered the traditional holy grail of the communications effort: This is typically achieved when mainstream media outlets recognize the organization's activities as newsworthy and seek to publish relevant and timely information.

Shared media is social media platforms—Twitter, Facebook, Instagram—that people use to comment on current issues and shape the cultural agenda in their communities. These platforms need to be branded NOHT-ESON so we can monitor public opinion and react judiciously and effectively.

Owned media is the NOHT-ESON website which gives the organization the power to control the dissemination of its messages.

Storytelling – NOHT-ESON and Community Collaboration Storytelling is the cornerstone of NOHT-ESON's organizational success. To build its reputation, NOHT-ESON must earn the respect of the mainstream media by:

- Showing accountability to the public.
- Gaining the trust and confidence of the major media outlets by showing consistent progress in the fulfillment of its mandate, and
- Working creatively to ensure that organizational achievements are portrayed in the best possible light.

Traditionally, organizations safeguard their hard-earned reputations by ensuring that persons designated to speak on behalf—usually a select few from the organization's leadership—have received training in basic techniques for handling media requests. Professional communicators are usually charged with pitching stories to the media and are rewarded for their success in securing positive media attention. NOHT-ESON needs to distinguish itself by exercising creativity beyond these traditional parameters.

By investing in media training for this group, NOHT-ESON is demonstrating its commitment to empowering the patients, clients, families and caregivers by equipping them with the skills required to tell stories that have the power to transform the healthcare system

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The distributed nature of the organization's leadership requires that Co-Leads of Workgroups receive training in media relations—particularly in the mechanics of focusing on key messages, bridging to messages, answering challenging questions, crisis communications etc. This, combined with other assets such as a story bank, designated spokespeople on key issues and a comprehensive crisis communications plan equips the organization with the basic tools for survival in media relations. However, with creative deployment of all assets at its disposal, NOHT-ESON is well positioned for excellence.

The organization is committed, by mandate, to prioritize the perspectives of patients, clients, families and caregivers. These people—with the healthcare stories they have to tell—can be creatively engaged in winning the competition for media attention. The challenge most organizations face—particularly those that operate at the system level—is in making the accomplishments they consider newsworthy relatable to a mass audience. Stories told via charts and graphs quoting arcane statistics do not appeal to the average news consumer. Journalists routinely ignore them in favor of stories, sometimes of lower social significance, that are presented with elements that showcase the strengths of the medium in which they are told (sound for radio, pictures and people for TV), or stories that feature the personal experiences of the people directly affected. By committing to telling system stories in relatable terms, featuring actual people directly affected, NOHT-ESON would be establishing effective working relationships with journalists by using one of the basic journalistic rules of thumb to its advantage.

To do this, NOHT-ESON needs to include patients, clients, families and caregivers in its media training sessions. Their training would focus primarily on the art of personal storytelling, establishing themes and key messages, techniques for feeling and looking comfortable on camera, bridging to key messages etc. A small cadre of trained patient/clients available to tell their stories when the opportunity arose would set the tone. More importantly, they would be well-positioned to orient other patients/clients when their opportunities arose. By investing in media training for this group, NOHT-ESON is demonstrating its commitment to empowering the patients, clients, families and caregivers

The singular aim of crisis communications is preserving public “goodwill”, protecting “brand loyalty” and maintaining “public confidence in NOHT-ESON’s ability to fulfil the mandate.”

by equipping them with the skills required to tell stories that have the power to transform the healthcare system. Nurturing this reciprocal relationship can only strengthen NOHT-ESON's community engagement efforts and enhance the capacity to fulfill the Ministry's mandate.

Crisis Communications

When things go wrong—and they sometimes will—a plan needs to be in place to mitigate or modify the effects of unanticipated events on organizational reputation. NOHT-ESON is not unique in this regard. Crisis management is a way of thinking and acting in adverse circumstances. (Crisis management plans are different from business interruption plans which are routinely managed through backups and redundancies.) This communications plan contemplates the Co-Leads and Alternates of the Planning Table and as core members of the crisis management team with the Communications and Engagement Co-ordinator from CEWG providing necessary support in managing crises that may arise. The singular aim of crisis communications is preserving public “goodwill”, protecting “brand loyalty” and maintaining “public confidence in NOHT-ESON's ability to fulfil the mandate.”

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

3. Internal Communications

Since collaboration and interconnectedness among NOHT-ESON partner/member organizations is a hallmark of the brand, it is critical that these messages, routinely directed at external audiences, be reflected in the routine operations of the partnership. To this end, NOHT-ESON should take steps to ensure that key aspects of partners operations are as integrated or collaboratively interconnected as possible.

There are several practical opportunities for increasing connectedness and collaboration that will payoff in increased responsiveness to the public expectations:

- Create a visual statement/expression of NOHT-ESON membership and a representation of the NOHT-ESON brand (logo display, poster or literature etc.) in public spaces of member organizations.
- Create a community of communications practice liaising the communications staff and the executive/administrative assistants of partner organizations with NOHT-ESON Communications staff, to facilitate exchange of information e.g. for posting on social media or website pages as necessary and to collaborate in the creation of an editorial calendar for publicising various news and events of importance to NOHT-ESON. This is also an opportunity to co-ordinate guidelines regarding announcements that are released from partner organizations and those released via NOHT-ESON.
- Create a boilerplate statement to be appended to partners' regular media releases. The statement would identify the organization as a member of the NOHT-ESON, reiterate the mission and vision of NOHT-ESON and point to the NOHT-ESON website for further information. This routine articulation of the NOHT-ESON's key message serves to amplify the organization's presence in the collective consciousness of the media and the various audiences they reach.

- Collaborate in the creation of a Niagara Regional media list of journalists, health and wellness bloggers and community influencers to be administered via the Meltwater media monitoring system. By pooling individual lists of media contacts, NOHT-ESON leverages the strengths of each member in amplifying the voices of all concerned.

4. Community Engagement

NOHT-ESON has already positioned itself for success in Community Engagement by creating and deploying an Engagement Framework and Toolkit which provides an operational foundation for conducting engagement sessions across the organization. Next steps in the engagement process involve devising strategic ways to:

- Identify various communities of need (including priority communities)
- Select major influencers in these groups who can be instrumental in helping to convey the NOHT-ESON message.
- Devise creative engagement approaches to introduce these groups to NOHT-ESON and inspire them to tell their health stories.
- Monitor the uptake of NOHT-ESON messages via various feedback mechanisms (e.g., the engagement database on the website) and recalibrate the message to meet needs expressed by each audience.

COMMUNICATIONS PRIORITIES

COMMUNICATIONS PRIORITIES	PRIORITY LEVEL	LINKS TO STRATEGY	AFFECTED PARTIES	COMPLIMENTARY ACTIVITIES/SERVICES	BUDGET
Brand Identity	I	Establish Identity for NOHT-ESON	NOHT-ESON & Population	Designers	\$5000
Brand Behaviour	I	Create Internal Connectedness & Cohesion	NOHT-ESON (Internal)	Partner Orgs & Planning Table &CEWG	---
Website Development Phase 1 (Beta) (Owned Media)	I	Establish public presence and place for public Engagement	NOHT-ESON & CEWG	Designers	\$30,000
Onboarding Training Modules Online	III	Enhancing brand performance and organizational agility as part of accountability, credibility and engagement.	NOHT-ESON employees, new partners and workgroup members..	Instructional designers, graphic designers create a unique approach to educating new NOHT-ESON members.	---
Social Media Sites (Shared Media)	II	Engagement with communities, storytelling, identifying detractors and supporters.	Facebook, Twitter, Meltwater, Partners CEWG	Need to hire a freelance assistant possibly from Niagara College to assist in content curation and site management.	\$10,000
Photography & Video	II	Public engagement with organization & its leadership	Planning Table, CEWG	Partner Organizations, CEWG	\$10,000
Earned Media Relations	II	Accountability, Credibility, Trust, Storytelling, Reputation	NOHT-ESON, CEWG	Meltwater, Media Trainers, PC/FC, Four Mainstream Media Releases 2022	\$20,000
Annual Report	II	Accountability, Credibility, Storytelling, Reputation	NOHT-ESON CEWG	CEWG, Designers Workgroup Co-Leads Planning Table	\$7,000
Paid Media (Print & Online Advertising)	IV	Population/ Community Outreach & Engagement	CEWG	Estimated from # of communities with media, known prices & anticipated outreach effort	\$20,000

TACTICS

The primary challenge facing NOHT-ESON is the need to balance the deliberative nature of the organizational culture with the need for quick decisions at start-up. Because the organization is in start-up mode, for pragmatic reasons, some infrastructural tasks—visual brand identity, development of the initial/beta website, basic collateral materials, need to be expedited. These tasks should be recognized as a means to a larger end rather than as ends in themselves. CEWG could benefit from streamlining decision-making around some details of these decisions so that the real work of engagement with the public can begin.

Internal communications initiatives are also important as foundational to external initiatives. Accomplishing those tasks is crucial because it is on that basis that readiness for external engagement can be decided. CEWG should consider using all means at its disposal to encourage dialog with the leadership of partner organizations so that the synergy of the partnership can be used effectively.

Also, despite the value to arranging projects on a timeline and proceeding according to plan, it must also be recognized that there is value in maintaining the flexibility to act opportunistically. Circumstances change and CEWG needs to maintain the flexibility to adapt as necessary.

INTERNAL

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
Members Only Web Portal	A common space for sharing documents among NOHT-ESON members.	Administration Staff/Website Administrator	March 15, 2022 for launch
E-mails	Standard tool for conveying information among NOHT-ESON	Shared among all NOHT Members	Ongoing
Working Groups	Working Groups Meet to discuss issues arising from the group or directives from the Planning Table.	Working Group Chairs	Ongoing
Briefing Notes	Tool for conveying information to the Planning Table.	Working Group Chairs/Staff	Ongoing

TACTICS

EXTERNAL

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
NOHT-ESON Website Soft Launch of Basic Functions & Key Pages.	The official NOHT-ESON will be available with basic content and functionality required to facilitate community engagement activities including co-created corporate logo.	Communications Coordinator	March 15, 2022
Logo Design Choice	Design of NOHT-ESON Logo in consultation with key affected and interested parties.	CEWG	February 15, 2022
NOHT-ESON Letterhead	Official correspondence to interested and affected parties in community engagement or communications activities should be presented on officially designed letterhead co-created by consultation with interested and affected parties.	Communications Co-ordinator	February 28, 2022
NOHT-ESON Brochure	Plain Language, Francophone bilingual, Indigenous Influenced brochure introducing NOHT-ESON to the public.	Communications Co-ordinator	February 28, 2022 Table.
Logo Style Guide	This includes creation of a style guide specifying rules for the proper use of the logo: size specifications, variations, backgrounds, possibilities for display on collateral materials such as T-shirts, posters, brochures.	Communications Coordinator	February 15, 2022
Annual Report 2020-2022	An annual report will be published to meet accountability requirements and to drive the messaging for the launch of community engagement.	Communications Co-ordinator	April 30, 2022
Photography & Video	To support community engagement via the website, a photographer will take photos of health-related activities in Niagara on an ongoing basis. A video (3-5) minutes introducing NOHT-ESON via key messages from Planning Table Leadership etc.	Communications Co-ordinator	March 30, 2022
Boilerplate	A succinct boilerplate statement about connection to NOHT_ESON will be created and partners will be invited to append it to their standard media releases.	Communications Co-ordinator	March 30, 2022
Connected Care Newsletter	Needs to be launched shortly after the website is operational.	Communications Coordinator	May 30, 2022
Selected Social Media Sites	NOHT-ESON needs social media to keep abreast of health-related developments on Twitter and Facebook.	Communications Co-ordinator	---

TIMING AND TIMELINES

The activities on the following timeline are scheduled across a fiscal year. Timely and successful completion of these projects is contingent on the management of several

risk factors such as technology delays, timely decision-making as well as external factors such as COVID-19.

TIMELINE

	JAN-FEB-MARCH	APRIL-MAY-JUNE	JULY-AUG-SEPT	OCT-NOV-DEC
Branding: Visual Identity Launch	CEWG selects a logo from options presented and presents it to Planning Table for approval.	Collateral materials will be created and distributed to support community engagement efforts.	Brand Identity program promoting NOHT-ESON via partner locations, websites etc. fully implemented.	Evaluate impact of brand identity efforts and recalibrate as necessary.
Website Development	Basic Structure and Key Pages of the Website are made public by March 31. Public expectations are managed. Key messages: site is in evolution.	Engagement related tasks such as SEO optimization and Google Ads, Mailchimp database will be implemented.	Publication of Annual Report and video on website.	Ongoing effort to develop the website via community engagement efforts revisited evaluated and recalibrated.
Media Relations	A list of local media and influencer contacts will be created (with partner collaboration) and maintained in the Meltwater media monitoring system.	Media training for Co-Leads and selected patient /client/ family caregiver reps.	Promote NOHT-ESON via media relations outreach. Leverage newly trained patient/client reps to help identify and engage other patients/ clients with stories to tell.	Pitch NOHT-ESON stories to various media outlets using the talents of the
Community Engagement	Preparation for Engagement Events. Advertising and awareness in some priority communities.	Community Engagement Events Launched.	Incorporation of Annual Report and video into messaging for community engagement.	Evaluate and recalibrate engagement initiatives. Identify potential communities for outreach.
Internal Communications	Information gathering for launch of Connected Care newsletter. Outreach to partners' Boards of Directors for membership. Invite partners to use a common boilerplate statement on media releases.	Launch of next edition of Connected Care with Mailchimp database and website support.	Enlist partners' communications staff in promoting and contributing stories to Connected Care.	Evaluate success of effort to publicise NOHT-ESON via media release boilerplate statement. Evaluate partner engagement with social media platforms.
Annual Report	Information gathering for Annual Report.	Information gathering for Annual report. Creation of NOHT-ESON video for website.	Launch of Annual Report and organizational promotional video to all media.	Identify new audiences/ ambassadors/detractors for outreach and engagement.

BUDGET

BUDGET

ITEMS FOR PURCHASE	DESCRIPTION	COST
MEDIA TRAINING	This will provide either in-person or online media training for 22 people including training manuals, videos and pocket tip booklets for each participant.	\$14,000
MEDIA RELEASES	This is based on an estimated 4 CISION (National level) media releases per year. Other LOCAL releases may be sent to media contacts via Meltwater media monitoring system free of cost.	\$6000
DESIGN SERVICES	Services of a freelance graphic designer to produce print and electronic illustrations—posters, advertisements, Annual Reports etc. for a year.	\$15,000
PRINT ADVERTISING	The estimated cost of placing advertising in various community publications—for example the French Language publications, and other community media that may surface...	\$15,000
ONLINE ADVERTISING	Social Media Advertising—Google Ads, Twitter Ads, Facebook Ads—is new territory for most organizations, including NOHT-ESON but necessary in a “digital first” strategy designed to engage 480,000 people in health-care delivery and in building NOHT-ESON’s reputation.	\$15,000
WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT	The estimated cost of maintaining the website in French and English: adding pages, SEO maintenance, online learning & chat functionalities...	\$20,000
PHOTOGRAPHY	The estimated cost of freelance photography assignments for one year.	\$3,000
VIDEO	The actual researched cost of producing a 4-minute high-quality corporate video introducing NOHT-ESON to the population.	\$7,000
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES	The estimated cost of producing various engagement events (in person or online) as circumstances permit. (Based in part on allocation in 2021.)	\$20,000
TOTAL		\$115,000

EVALUATION

NOHT-ESON is in its infancy.

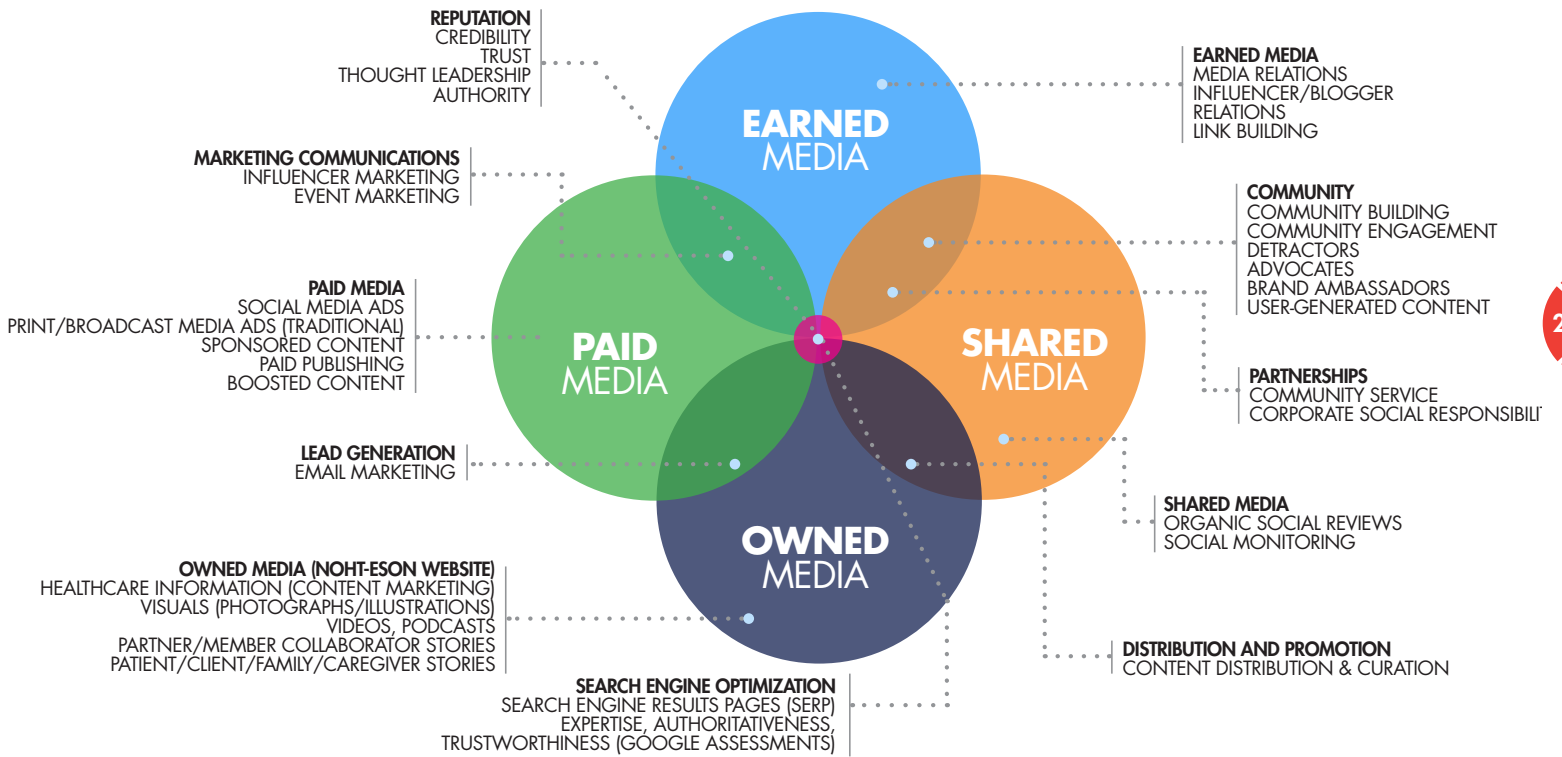
Key performance indicators (KPI) of success will include:

- Number of unique visitors to the website as measured by Google Analytics.
- Number of people who visit the community engagement pages of the website and request to be involved or collaborate etc. in NOHT's decision processes.
- Number of partner board members who sign up to receive the Connected Care Newsletter.
- Number and quality of mainstream media articles/broadcast stories about NOHT activities.
- Number and quality of social media mentions/likes/shares on Facebook and Twitter.
- Number of francophones, Indigenous people and marginalized communities with positive stories to tell about perceived improvements in their healthcare issues and their feelings of satisfaction with NOHT-ESON's efforts.

Number and quality of social media mentions/likes/shares on Facebook and Twitter.

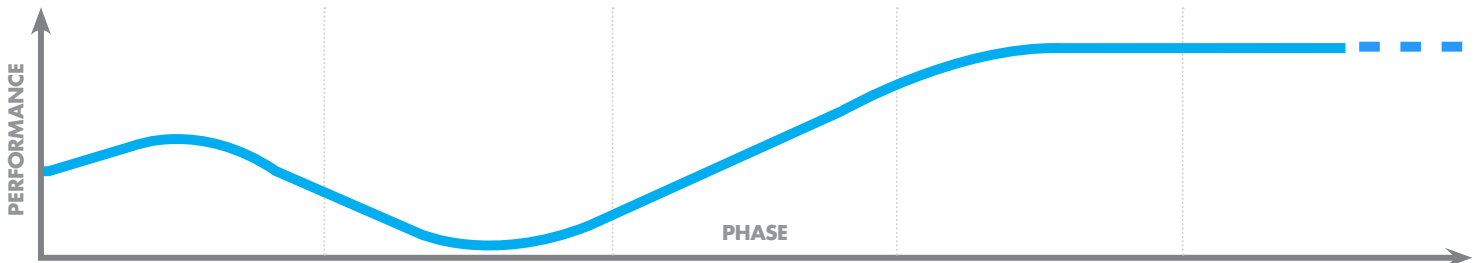
NUMBER AND QUALITY OF MAINSTREAM MEDIA ARTICLES/BROADCAST STORIES ABOUT NOHT ACTIVITIES.

APPENDIX A



APPENDIX B

Phases of Team Development



	FORMING	STORMING	NORMING	PERFORMING	ADJOURNING
CHARACTERISTICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistance • Questioning • Socializing • Displaying Eagerness • Focus on group Identity and Purpose • Sticking to safe topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of participation • Conflict • Competition • High Emotions • Starting towards group norms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconciliation • Relief • Lowered anxiety • Members are engaged, supporting cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrations of independence • A healthy system • Ability to effectively produce as a team • Balance of task and process orientation • Celebrating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitioning Phase • Shifts to process orientation • Sadness • Recognition of team and individual efforts • Disbanding
STRATEGIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking the lead • Providing clear expectations and consistent instructions • Quick response times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normalizing matters • Encouraging leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing individual and group efforts • Providing learning opportunities and feedback • Monitoring the energy of the group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal intervention (guide from the side) • Encouraging group decision-making and problem-solving • Providing opportunities to share learning across teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing change • Providing opportunity for summative team evaluations-lessons learned • Provide opportunities for individual acknowledgements • Celebrate the teams accomplishments (have an afterparty)