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It does not count as 1 of the 4 page totals for the submission.

Outstanding Award Application

Chapter Name:	Minnesota Chapter of NIGP
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List Program(s) that will be highlighted in application	Communications Committee Chair

☒ Has your chapter submitted your Performance Standard SEAL?

Check the box for the Outstanding Chapter Award you are submitting:

- ☐ Outstanding Chapter Operations Award
- How does your chapter excel in its operating processes, including policies and procedures, budgeting, recognition of agencies and individuals and involvement with NIGP?
- ☒ Outstanding Chapter Membership Award
- How well does your chapter market membership benefits and resources and what are your methods for membership retention and growth?
- ☐ Outstanding Chapter Advocacy and Outreach Award
- What practices and operations has your chapter demonstrated to be an effective advocate for members and our profession?
- ☐ Outstanding Chapter Professional Development Award
- How does your chapter go above and beyond providing educational resources and other opportunities to your membership?

Explain the program/event/best practice

I am thrilled to share about Minnesota Chapter of NIGP's progress and growth within membership. We have more than doubled our membership in a decade which calls for celebration with National NIGP and all affiliated chapters! The MN Chapter's growth can be attributed to many improved practices and new programs adding value to membership such as the Programs Committee Chair, Participation Incentive Program, and National NIGP Forum Scholarship described below. However, we wouldn't be able to market membership benefits and resources without a key position, the Communications Committee Chair. The Communications Committee Chair maintains a unified voice within the chapter through various communication channels. This involves coordinating and releasing communications to current and potential chapter members which we found is essential for marketing membership benefits and positively impacts membership growth and retention!

The Communications Chair maintains and updates information on the Chapter website and social media pages, and streamlines communications of programs, events, and activities through the website, email, and social media. The Communications Chair coordinates and releases communication including engagement, local and national policy changes, best practices, research, programming, events, conferences, surveys, professional development, upcoming activities, nominations and awards, certifications, Forum, and national communications. It is also part of the Communication Chair's duties to develop and maintain measurements on communication effectiveness which provides the results shown in Question 2 of how this position has positively impacted membership. The full responsibilities and job duties of the Communications Committee Chair are located in the Job Description on the MNNIGP.org Site: [Communications Committee Chair Job Description](#).

To provide additional background information, the MN Chapter was awarded the [2022 Outstanding Chapter Operations Award](#) for an overhaul of membership reporting, tracking, and renewal processes. During the overhaul, the Board realized that not only operations needed improvements, but membership benefits and resources needed new life. New programs to add value to membership were desired, particularly to attract young professionals and to retain members from the growth we had been experiencing. This resulted in two new Chair positions which include the Communications Committee Chair described above and the Programs Committee Chair: [Programs Committee Chair Job Description](#). The methodology behind the new Chair positions was for the Programs Committee Chair to develop programs to increase membership benefits and resources and the Communications Committee Chair to market these benefits and resources to membership.

Once the positions were in place, MN Chapter created the [Participation Incentive Program \(PIP\)](#) to incentivize membership engagement by earning points for different levels of participation. Members use accumulated points to obtain rewards. This program is managed by the Program Committee Chair and information and updates regarding the program can be communicated through multiple channels such as the Chapter's website, email, and social media via the Communications Chair. An additional new program, implemented in 2022, is the National Forum Scholarship. The information and benefits for this new program are communicated to membership on the website, email, and social media by the Communications Chair. This methodology for standardized communication of membership benefits and resources has proven to be a success!

Share Outcomes and results

Throughout 2022, the Board was able to see the results and significant impacts the Communications Committee Chair has had on MN Chapter membership by standardizing communications, marketing benefits and resources, and engaging membership. In addition, this Chair has taken time-consuming responsibilities off other Board members which was gratefully received. The following areas where the Chapter has seen significant impacts can be directly attributed to the Communications Committee Chair: Centralized communication and process documentation, Branding, Publicity, Web statistics, and Membership growth.

Centralized communication and process documentation: The Communications Chair has instated timelines, templates, and reminders for standard Chapter communications. As well as created procedural documents for common communication correspondence, and website maintenance creating consistency across all communication platforms. Examples of Chapter communications from 2022 include: Public Relations and Marketing (calendar entries, meeting invites, chapter surveys, and professional development offerings through various communication channels); Website Maintenance (rebrand as well as increased functionality and engagement, currently updating platform); Content Writing (email publications); Social Media (Facebook, LinkedIn); Photography; and Virtual Discussion Groups (job postings, Forum inquiries).

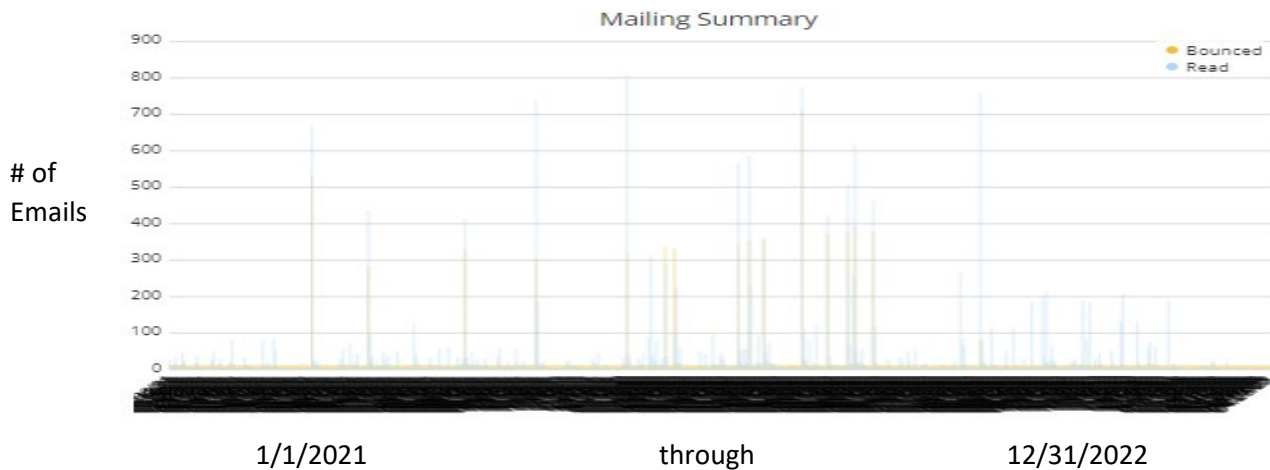
Branding: The position is responsible for the coordination, development, and ongoing enforcement of the Chapter's message to ensure consistency. Since instating the Communications Chair, the Chapter successfully coordinated with National an update to the logo to meet National's current requirements. The Board, through the Communications Chair, engaged members via e-mail, social media, and a Chapter wide survey to select a new logo. Other branding improvements include uniformity of chapter documentation, accessibility by creating fill-in PDFs, and consistency with text, font, colors used in Chapter correspondence.

Publicity: The Communications Chair works with Board Members and Chapter Members to ensure publicity requests, meetings, and important dates are submitted and conveyed in a professional manner to grab attention and engage membership. This includes providing graphics, creative writing, and slogans to create hype, and enthusiasm. The examples below are timely communications provided to membership while celebrating awards received at 2022 Forum.



Web Statistics: Demonstrated in the chart below pulled from StarChapter, you'll see significant results and improvements from late 2022. There was a substantial decrease in emails being bounced back. Bounced emails are shown in yellow, emails that have been read are in blue. The Chapter had high

numbers of bounced back emails from 2021 to early 2022, to mostly read emails that you see in blue in late 2022. By the end of 2022, bounced back emails in yellow are mostly nonexistent. You'll also see a large number of emails being sent at one time flooding membership with gaps in between communications. In late 2022, you'll see a steady number of communications emailed regularly and consistency in the amount emails and timing of emails being sent. This standardized approach ensures membership is regularly seeing and engaging in email communications.



Membership Growth: What have these positively impacted areas resulted in? The Chapter has seen substantial growth and has 267 total members. The MN Chapter received an award at 2022 Forum for 25% growth in Chapter membership. We have more than doubled our membership in the past decade. **The most significant result from 2022 is that we have seen 44% growth in Chapter membership since the installment of the Communications Committee Chair!**

Explain what makes your program/event/best practice unique or innovative

As membership was growing and young professionals were being elected to the Board, there seemed to be shared ideology among new Board members that standardized communication was fundamental for the Board's success. There was an overall sense of appreciation for communications and awareness that individually Board members could not take on the intricacies of communications along with successfully carrying out the responsibilities of their positions. It sparked discussion and development of a communications position which was validated at Chapter Academy that the MN Chapter was headed in the right direction with a Communications Committee Chair.

The Communications Chair was particularly beneficial during COVID where different than most chapters, the MN Chapter saw significant growth in membership and from all areas of Minnesota. With good communication, the Chapter has been able to smoothly pivot from in-person to virtual and hybrid environments. In 2022, the Chapter brought back in-person chapter meetings and activities, but membership needs had changed. Surveys showed that membership wanted to keep virtual and hybrid environments an option due to travel and scheduling conflicts. The Board agreed that a member's location should not limit their engagement within the Chapter. It was decided that the Board would meet virtually going forward and Chapter meetings, conferences, and professional development opportunities would offer a mix of in-person, virtual, and hybrid environments. It takes a lot of planning and communication to offer various engaging environments. The Communications Chair streamlines and

standardizes communication through the website, email, and social media to offer these options so we can have participation from membership in all areas of Minnesota.

Lessons learned so that others can adapt or replicate

Although we've made this sound like an easy feat, we've learned some lessons along the way. The Communications Chair is time consuming, requires attention to detail, and knowledge in technology and applications. This Chair position could be hard for some to balance within their organization and home life. The Chair position is best held with a Chair member that has the time, patience, and knowledge in both technology and business communications. And how do you provide cross-training and coverage for a position so specialized and fundamental to your chapter? Well, we discovered that it's difficult and the Board couldn't quite make the mark of cross-training and coverage during our Communications Chair's brief leave of absence. However, now with the Chair's transition to the Vice President role, the Board appointed a new Communications Committee Chair and the Vice President will provide back-up. The Board is working on materials and resources for cross-training and coverage for this fundamental position with a long-term goal of having a subcommittee or volunteer/s to help create and manage the content for the social media platforms.

Lessons learned, our Board being mostly children of the 80's and growing up with the iconic 1989 movie *Field of Dreams*, we're all familiar with the quote, "If you build it, they will come." This quote, being one of the most famous movie quotes of all time, is simply not true. NIGP Chapters can build all the programs and resources that we desire. However, if we're not communicating these programs and encouraging participation and engagement, people don't appear out of thin air as they do in the iconic movie.

In conclusion, membership requires to be continually communicated with through various channels for content to become memorable and to engage. Studies show it takes 5 to 10 views. One email isn't enough. After seeing 44% growth in membership since the Communications Committee Chair position, MN Chapter has proven that continued streamlined and branded communication through website, email, and social media is the most effective way to market membership benefits and resources for membership growth and retention.