



Response to Request for Proposals 710-23-0007
Department of Human Services
Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education



better beginnings
EVERY CHILD DESERVES OUR BEST

Quality Early Care and Education Outreach and Promotion Campaign



Presented by

COMMUNICATIONS GROUP
Marketing | Public Relations
POWERING INSIGHT

February 21, 2023

201 E. Markham, Suite 300, Little Rock, Arkansas 72201
501-376-8722 | Comgroup.com



**Response to Request for Proposals 710-23-0007
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Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education**



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RESPONSE SIGNATURE PAGE

Type or Print the following information.

PROSPECTIVE CONTRACTOR'S INFORMATION			
Company:	The Communications Group, Inc.		
Address:	201 E. Markham St., Suite 300		
City:	Little Rock	State:	AR Zip Code: 72201
Business Designation:	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual <input type="checkbox"/> Sole Proprietorship <input type="checkbox"/> Public Service Corp <input type="checkbox"/> Partnership <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Corporation <input type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit		
Minority and Women-Owned Designation*:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian <input type="checkbox"/> Service Disabled Veteran <input type="checkbox"/> African American <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic American <input type="checkbox"/> Women-Owned <input type="checkbox"/> Asian American <input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Islander American		
	AR Certification #: _____ * See <i>Minority and Women-Owned Business Policy</i>		
PROSPECTIVE CONTRACTOR CONTACT INFORMATION			
Provide contact information to be used for solicitation related matters.			
Contact Person:	Dana Rogers	Title:	Senior Art Director/Vice President
Phone:	501-376-8722 ext. 1006	Alternate Phone:	501-580-8259
Email:			
CONFIRMATION OF REDACTED COPY			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES, a redacted copy of submission documents is enclosed. <input type="checkbox"/> NO, a redacted copy of submission documents is <u>not</u> enclosed. I understand a full copy of non-redacted submission documents will be released if requested. <i>Note: If a redacted copy of the submission documents is not provided with Prospective Contractor's response packet, and neither box is checked, a copy of the non-redacted documents, with the exception of financial data (other than pricing), will be released in response to any request made under the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). See Solicitation Terms and Conditions for additional information.</i>			
ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT CONFIRMATION			
By signing and submitting a response to this <i>Solicitation</i> , a Prospective Contractor agrees and certifies that they do not employ or contract with illegal immigrants and shall not employ or contract with illegal immigrants during the term of a contract awarded as a result of this solicitation.			
ISRAEL BOYCOTT RESTRICTION CONFIRMATION			
By checking the box below, a Prospective Contractor agrees and certifies that they do not boycott Israel and shall not boycott Israel during the term of a contract awarded as a result of this solicitation.			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prospective Contractor does not and shall not boycott Israel.			

An official authorized to bind the Prospective Contractor to a resultant contract shall sign below.

The signature below signifies agreement that any exception that conflicts with a Requirement of this *Solicitation* may cause the Prospective Contractor's response to be rejected.

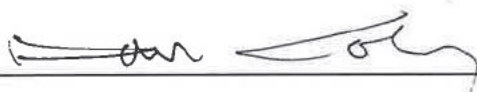
Authorized Signature:  Title: President/CEO

Printed/Typed Name: Dan Cowling Date: 02/15/2023

SECTIONS 1 – 4: VENDOR AGREEMENT AND COMPLIANCE

- Any requested exceptions to items in this section which are NON-mandatory **must** be declared below or as an attachment to this page. Vendor **must** clearly explain the requested exception, and should label the request to reference the specific solicitation item number to which the exception applies.
- Exceptions to Requirements **shall** cause the vendor's proposal to be disqualified.

By signature below, vendor agrees to and shall fully comply with all Requirements as shown in this section of the bid solicitation.

Authorized Signature: 

Use Ink Only.

Printed/Typed Name: Dan Cowling Date: 2/15/23

Contract Number _____
 Attachment Number _____
 Action Number _____
 Failure to complete all of the following information may result in a delay in obtaining a contract, lease, purchase agreement, or grant award with any Arkansas State Agency.

CONTRACT AND GRANT DISCLOSURE AND CERTIFICATION FORM

SUBCONTRACTOR: _____ SUBCONTRACTOR NAME: _____

☐ Yes ☒ No

IS THIS FOR: _____

Goods? ☐ Services? ☒ Both? ☐

TAXPAYER ID NAME: The Communications Group, Inc.

YOUR LAST NAME: Cowling FIRST NAME: Dan M.I.: _____

ADDRESS: 201 E. Markham St. Suite 300

CITY: Little Rock STATE: AR ZIP CODE: 72201 COUNTRY: USA

AS A CONDITION OF OBTAINING, EXTENDING, AMENDING, OR RENEWING A CONTRACT, LEASE, PURCHASE AGREEMENT, OR GRANT AWARD WITH ANY ARKANSAS STATE AGENCY, THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION MUST BE DISCLOSED:

FOR INDIVIDUALS *

Indicate below if: you, your spouse or the brother, sister, parent, or child of you or your spouse is a current or former: member of the General Assembly, Constitutional Officer, State Board or Commission Member, or State Employee:

Position Held	Mark (✓)		Name of Position of Job Held [senator, representative, name of board/ commission, data entry, etc.]	For How Long?		What is the person(s) name and how are they related to you? [i.e., Jane Q. Public, spouse, John Q. Public, Jr., child, etc.]	Relation
	Current	Former		From MMYY	To MMYY		
General Assembly							
Constitutional Officer							
State Board or Commission Member							
State Employee							

☐ None of the above applies

FOR AN ENTITY (BUSINESS) *

Indicate below if any of the following persons, current or former, hold any position of control or hold any ownership interest of 10% or greater in the entity: member of the General Assembly, Constitutional Officer, State Board or Commission Member, State Employee, or the spouse, brother, sister, parent, or child of a member of the General Assembly, Constitutional Officer, State Board or Commission Member, or State Employee. Position of control means the power to direct the purchasing policies or influence the management of the entity.

Position Held	Mark (✓)		Name of Position of Job Held [senator, representative, name of board/ commission, data entry, etc.]	For How Long?		What is the person(s) name and what is his/her % of ownership interest and/or what is his/her position of control?	
	Current	Former		From MMYY	To MMYY	Person's Name(s)	Ownership Interest (%) Position of Control
General Assembly							
Constitutional Officer							
State Board or Commission Member							
State Employee							

☒ None of the above applies

Contract Number _____
Attachment Number _____
Action Number _____

Contract and Grant Disclosure and Certification Form


Failure to make any disclosure required by Governor's Executive Order 98-04, or any violation of any rule, regulation, or policy adopted pursuant to that Order, shall be a material breach of the terms of this contract. Any contractor, whether an individual or entity, who fails to make the required disclosure or who violates any rule, regulation, or policy shall be subject to all legal remedies available to the agency.

As an additional condition of obtaining, extending, amending, or renewing a contract with a state agency I agree as follows:

1. Prior to entering into any agreement with any subcontractor, prior or subsequent to the contract date, I will require the subcontractor to complete a **CONTRACT AND GRANT DISCLOSURE AND CERTIFICATION FORM**. Subcontractor shall mean any person or entity with whom I enter an agreement whereby I assign or otherwise delegate to the person or entity, for consideration, all, or any part, of the performance required of me under the terms of my contract with the state agency.
2. I will include the following language as a part of any agreement with a subcontractor:

Failure to make any disclosure required by Governor's Executive Order 98-04, or any violation of any rule, regulation, or policy adopted pursuant to that Order, shall be a material breach of the terms of this subcontract. The party who fails to make the required disclosure or who violates any rule, regulation, or policy shall be subject to all legal remedies available to the contractor.
3. No later than ten (10) days after entering into any agreement with a subcontractor, whether prior or subsequent to the contract date, I will mail a copy of the **CONTRACT AND GRANT DISCLOSURE AND CERTIFICATION FORM** completed by the subcontractor and a statement containing the dollar amount of the subcontract to the state agency.

I certify under penalty of perjury, to the best of my knowledge and belief, all of the above information is true and correct and that I agree to the subcontractor disclosure conditions stated herein.

Signature  Title President/CEO Date 02/15/2023
Vendor Contact Person Dana Rogers Title Senior Art Director/Vice President Phone No. (501) 376-8722

Agency use only

Agency Number 0710 Agency Name Department of Human Services Agency Contact Person _____ Contract Phone No. _____ or Grant No. _____



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EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY:

The Communications Group is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate in its employment practices with regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, marital status, political affiliation, national origin or handicap.

PROPOSED SUBCONTRACTORS FORM

- **Do not** include additional information relating to subcontractors on this form or as an attachment to this form.

PROSPECTIVE CONTRACTOR PROPOSES TO USE THE FOLLOWING SUBCONTRACTOR(S) TO PROVIDE SERVICES.

Type or Print the following information

Subcontractor's Company Name	Street Address	City, State, ZIP

☒ **PROSPECTIVE CONTRACTOR DOES NOT PROPOSE TO USE SUBCONTRACTORS TO PERFORM SERVICES.**



Response to Request for Proposals 710-23-0007
Department of Human Services
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Executive Summary/ Description of Project

1) Please provide a summary of proposal.

Introduction

In the early 50's, the concept of space travel seemed like a fantasy. Achievable, sure. But in the next 10 years? Ambitious. Audacious. Impossible.

We all know how the story turned out. Space travel is no longer a fantasy or a novelty, it is our reality. Collectively, those advocating for and invested in the process, had an unwavering belief: that It Could Be Done.

Believing it could be done, more than a decade ago, Arkansas early childhood educators and state leaders proposed something ambitious, audacious and what at the time may have seemed almost inconceivable: build a quality rating system for licensed Arkansas child care providers that assigned “stars” to providers, giving parents the opportunity to make child care decisions armed with ratings almost like what one might find on their favorite ecommerce platform.

It wasn't quite a moon-shot, but it was close. At that time, few other states in the nation had successfully implemented consumer-facing QRIS for childcare. There was research, and studies and commissions and coalitions and funding existed and the data was compelling. But how to implement the program across the Arkansas child care licensing ecosystem? And how to introduce the rating system to the public in a way that allowed parents and families a way to sprinkle in a dose of the rationale to what is often a cost and convenience-driven decision?

It's safe to say that not only did DCCECE leadership believe a rating system could be done...they Made It Happen. In the last 10 years, Arkansas DCCECE reached for the stars with Better Beginnings. And the data shows, achieved a great deal of success. The stars – Better Beginnings 1, 2 and 3-stars – have become a visible and understandable symbol representing quality childcare in Arkansas. And we have been a part of that journey from the very start. We are celebrating 10 years of Better Beginnings success and are excited to present this proposal and executive summary to you demonstrating how Better Beginnings will continue its upward arc and launch the next stage of quality improvements.



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Executive Summary/ Description of Project

1) Please provide a summary of proposal. *Continued.*

Our outreach and education program and marketing plan works in collaboration with Better Beginnings program staff to promote the introduction of new star levels and support program growth and ongoing outreach and education to important audiences about the vitally important work and outcomes of quality care and early learning for all Arkansas children.

The result of reaching for the stars? Ten years of growth, name recognition for Better Beginnings and active acceptance and understanding from parents, providers and communities of the benefits of Better Beginnings star rating system. We still have a lot of work to do and many goals to pursue, but getting to the stars has already happened. Now its time to reach for more.



Executive Summary

ComGroup has been a partner on the journey from the beginning. We researched, launched, built, refined, educated, communicated, connected and promoted Better Beginnings, with families and child care providers, to create a brand that is making a difference, charting new territory and becoming a model for early childhood achievement.

The proposal that follows outlines, by section in the INFORMATION FOR EVALUATION, The Communications Group's plan for addressing the objectives in the RFP and the Scope of Work. The plan builds on the foundation of the last 10 years and brings new elements to the Better Beginnings program. In the proposal that follows you will see strategy, objectives, tactics, tools and evaluation that a) engages the three identified target audiences – families, providers and community stakeholders; b) reaches the entire state; c) uses the channels through which providers and families get actionable child care and early childhood education – digital, traditional and grassroots, and d) is year-round and consistent in its presence and messaging.

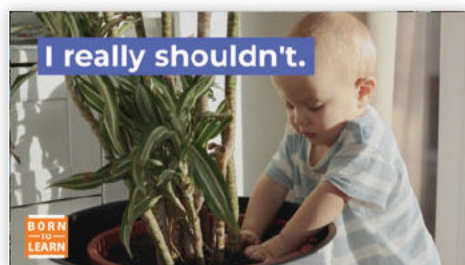
Executive Summary/ Description of Project

1) Please provide a summary of proposal. *Continued.*

The strategies used in this plan are closely aligned with the objectives of the Department of Human Services Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education. The Better Beginnings plan in this proposal is integrated, meaning it relies on many channels to reach target audiences. It is flexible, meaning it is not a set-it-and-forget-it plan. It is dynamic and modular, allowing for customization throughout the year. It is efficient and accountable. The proposal integrates every element requested in the Scope of Work and includes an accountable implementation plan. Included in the plan are dedicated deliverables designed to meet the objectives. Those deliverables are included in the detailed marketing plan that is outlined in Section E.2 of this response.

Deliverables are developed with the priority audiences – parents, providers and community stakeholders – at the forefront and include:

- Creative and promotional materials that leverage Better Beginnings's name recognition and brand graphics
- Creative messaging themes that follow approved Better Beginnings core messaging and proof points
- A fully integrated, data-driven media campaign incorporating not-for-broadcast, print, videos, digital advertising, streaming television, social media content and advertising, videos, grassroots events and communication, a full complement of conference and event materials and tools, public relations, media relations, and website resources and online tools
- Monitoring and evaluation tools



Paid Social



Print



Paid Social

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Executive Summary/ Description of Project

1) Please provide a summary of proposal. *Continued.*

- Monthly contact and collaboration with our Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education Better Beginnings program administrator, Kelli Hilburn, and her team

Monthly education outreach via a wide range of tactics includes traditional media, videos, print ads, digital ads, social media content, online engagement, a year-round media campaign, promotional opportunities and events, media relations, new promotional opportunities, media outreach, production of high quality promotional materials, support for Better Beginnings at events and conferences, connecting with providers, parents and community stakeholders, including Spanish-speaking audiences, every single month via the popular Buzz newsletter series, and more. You will see in our plan that search for the most efficient, targeted, high-volume platforms for outreach; organizing creative around learning themes and the overarching message that educates our audiences about “what quality child care and early learning looks like.”



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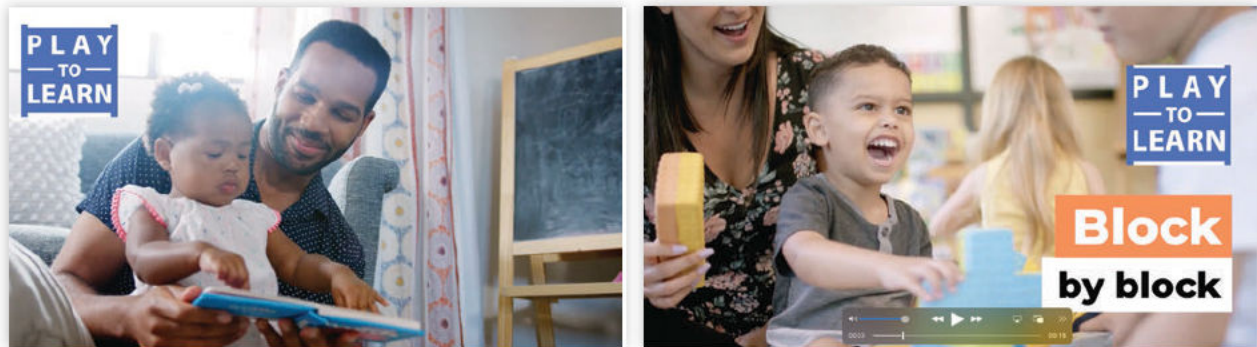
Executive Summary/ Description of Project

1) Please provide a summary of proposal. *Continued.*

TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

We create educational and promotional tools for Better Beginnings and deploy them in the places where our target audiences – parents, providers, community stakeholders – consume information. We are where they are. Better Beginnings is now in so many places it becomes difficult to escape the messaging if you're in our target audience. We create deliverables for:

- Public relations and community outreach
- Digital outreach
- Online access
- Media campaigns
- Multiple touchpoints for families and providers
- Regular education and outreach to community stakeholders
- Support for Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education program staff at important conferences where Better Beginnings outreach opportunities are highest



Paid Social

In short, we have created an education outreach and promotion program using thoroughly integrated, cross-channel, year-round messaging targeted at the audiences most important to Better Beginnings. And we've developed reliable metrics and tracking to ensure we're on target and accountable.

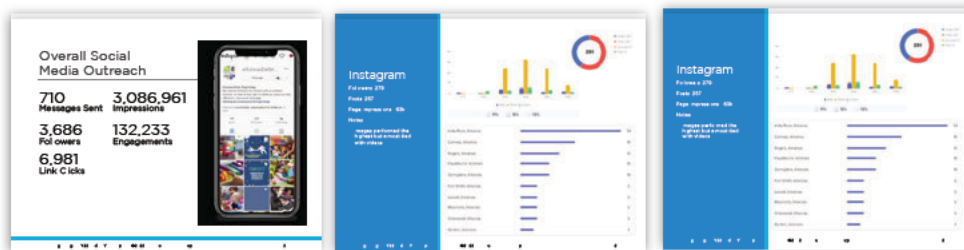
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Executive Summary/ Description of Project

2) Describe your plan for successfully carrying out the objectives of the contract.

The Better Beginnings education outreach and promotion program is not a “set-it-and-forget-it” program. It’s a dynamic, flexible outreach campaign that allows for adjustment as program focus changes. For example, implementation of the ARPA funding and launch of the new star level ratings. Our implementation plan for Better Beginnings includes:

- Weekly communication with Better Beginnings program administrator, Kelli Hilburn
- Weekly production meetings to ensure all Better Beginnings deliverables are being trafficked correctly, are meeting deadlines and are on budget
- Weekly monitoring of digital properties like ARBetterBeginnings.com and Better Beginnings’s social media channels on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter and LinkedIn
- Monthly monitoring of media campaign performance including digital tear sheet books
- Monthly budget reconciliation and reporting
- Monthly contractor reports containing KPI reporting for Better Beginnings program outreach elements
- Monthly Better Beginnings team meetings to ensure alignment with plan and action items
- Monthly communication with Better Beginnings contract managers, Paige Cox and Felix Duckworth
- Mid-year reporting
- Annual reporting against the approved plan
- Annual planning session with the Better Beginnings team based on data, and the goals of program administrators



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Executive Summary/ Description of Project

2) Describe your plan for successfully carrying out the objectives of the contract. *Continued.*

Every year, we look at the data and we factor in new creative tools for how to reach families and providers. Every month we review analytics to determine if any optimization or tactical revision is needed. And weekly, our Better Beginnings project manager, Dana Rogers, communicates with Better Beginnings program administrator Kelli Hilburn, to ensure outreach and education is focused where the division needs it to be focused.

Child care program elements can, and do, change rapidly at the local, state and federal level, and in the online world. When social media algorithms shift to favor video content, we are able to reallocate resources and begin developing original video contact, resulting in increases from parents in online engagement. When new federal ARPA funding comes into the division and intensive provider communication is needed, Kelli and Dana meet to discuss DCCECE objectives and convene the team to develop a plan addressing the new elements in the Better Beginnings outreach program. Implementation can begin quickly because of our Better Beginnings outreach plan's flexibility and our good working relationship with the DCCECE division and program administrators.

Family
Resource
Library



Biblioteca de Recursos



Buzz Newsletter



Paid Social Media



Organic Social Media

Executive Summary/ Description of Project

3) Describe how you will measure the success of the project.

We don't build the Better Beginnings education outreach and promotion program in a vacuum. We work in close collaboration with program administrator Kelli Hilburn, to build Better Beginnings outreach objectives that are trackable and measurable, and that have outreach impact.

Our team meets monthly to review analytics and metric data, then we compile it into a detailed report and deliver it to DHS DCCECE contract administrators. The report is organized by approved outreach plan element and deliverable. Detailed analytics are provided including:

- Website page views
- Website users
- Social media engagements
- Community outreach impact
- Conference impact reports
- Media campaign impressions and reach
- Individual number of people reached on social media
- Social media click-thrus
- Google searches for Better Beginnings keywords, including searches for Arkansas or local child care
- Google click thrus
- Promotional impact – for example for Better Beginnings TV appearances
- Earned media impressions (free publicity)



This monthly report is a detailed, monthly tracking tool for everyone on the Better Beginnings program team. It provides a linear progression of where we've been and where we are against our approved outreach program goals. The report gives us data that can be viewed retroactively to look at trends and make outreach plan revisions as the data indicates changes may be needed.



Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

1) How do you plan to meet the requirements outlined in the Scope of Work?

The Scope of Work includes requirements for 1) design and production of marketing materials; 2) production of printed materials that support the Better Beginnings mission along with review and approval proofs of those materials; 3) promotional merchandise and printed materials for distribution to the public; 4) design and production of conference and community event materials, including signage, backdrops and tablecloths. Below you will see how our plan incorporates each of these deliverables in collaboration with DHS Better Beginnings staff in an efficient and accountable process.

Year-Round Production of Marketing Materials

Focus group research that we conducted with parents of children under age 5, indicated the definition of “quality” child care was somewhat elusive, largely subjective and individually personal to each parent. When asked in the focus groups to describe quality child care, most parents could not do so in terms that were tangible. The findings indicated that parent-facing marketing materials and messaging had to help “show” parents what quality meant and “looked like” in Better Beginnings terms.

Our marketing materials focus on important early childhood education learning indicators like literacy, science and math, but put the messages into the context of learning through play. Those early learning themes are then illustrated contextually in a high-quality environment through images and copy. The materials help parents understand “what quality looks like” and how quality child care underpins kindergarten readiness and begins the learning journey as early as possible.

“I’m touring daycares now. I’m only touring 3-star Better Beginnings locations.”
- Mother of 8-month old son in NWA, focus group participant



Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

1) How do you plan to meet the requirements outlined in the Scope of Work?

Continued

Every piece of marketing material produced, regardless of its use, is prepared on a schedule that provides the materials to our Better Beginnings program administrator a minimum of one week in advance to allow for review, input and approval. Revisions requested are made promptly and materials are delivered to the appropriate location (magazine, website, social media, etc.) on deadline.

Outreach communication to families and the public focuses on one early childhood educational topic per month on all media channels. These channels include print, DAILY organic and paid social media to English and Spanish speaking Arkansans. All these channels send the same messages at the same time, providing consistency and statewide coverage:

- Children play to learn math, science and literacy in high-quality child care learning environments
- Positive and enthusiastic early childhood educators help children reach for the stars - their highest potential
- A primary goal of high-quality child care is to prepare children for kindergarten with a solid foundation for continued learning
- High-quality child care supports our workforce, who in turn support business and essential personnel, impacting Arkansas's bottom line.
- Call to action - Visit ARBetterBeginnings.com to find star-rated quality child care



Family Resource Library • Biblioteca de Recursos

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Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

1) How do you plan to meet the requirements outlined in the Scope of Work?

Continued



Better Beginnings organic social media informs providers of steps to “level up” their star rating, celebrates providers raising their star levels with personalized animated posts. Providers benefit from posts encouraging families to reach for the stars – the highest star-level of child care – to give their children the best start.

Each quarter we create original video content featuring Better Beginnings personnel demonstrating activities that parents can find in the Better Beginnings website resource: the Family Resource Library. Those appear as a monthly feature on organic social media. Voice overs in Spanish are added to the videos for Spanish paid social media.

Paid social media messages utilize video – the analytics data demonstrates these videos are the most effective means of communicating through social media. These videos are customized for streaming television, YouTube and other visual digital media channels. Additionally, “high-quality child care looks like” videos will be added to social and streaming media.



Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

1) How do you plan to meet the requirements outlined in the Scope of Work?

Continued



Business and community leaders receive targeted messages to increase awareness of the importance of high-quality child care to Arkansas's workforce and our bottom line. We will reach them through media, a special newsletter just for them, and public relations activities.

Families and Providers also get monthly newsletters delivered to their inbox via an op-in email campaign.

The Family Buzz:

- Helps families stay connected to child care news that may affect their child
- Provides fun learning activities they can do at home.

The Provider Buzz:

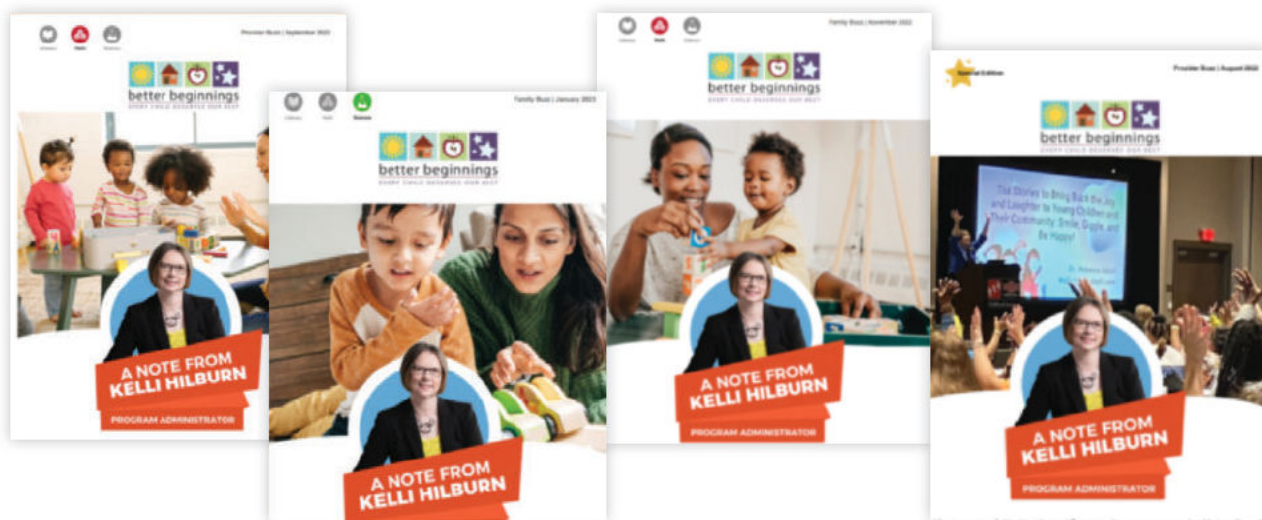
- Connects providers to changes and opportunities in Better Beginnings
- Gives providers themes and resources they can use in their classrooms in the coming month or share with their client-families
- Educates providers about current events in their field
- Health guidelines
- Services available to them
- ARPA grants
- Nominations for Arkansas Outstanding Early Childhood Professional
- Provides themes and fun learning activities for the coming month for providers to use in the classroom or share with client-families.

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Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

1) How do you plan to meet the requirements outlined in the Scope of Work?

Continued



The newsletters are created specifically for each audience, to keep them informed and inspired to make early learning fun. Newsletters have a letter from the program administrator addressing the coming month's educational focus and timely events, early learning tips and Family Resource Library resource recommendations in support of the monthly educational focus. The provider newsletter celebrates all providers who "level up" that month.



ComGroup presented the 2022 Prism Award to Better Beginnings team members during a break in the day-long video shoot to create content for the Buzz newsletters and the Family Resource Library.



Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

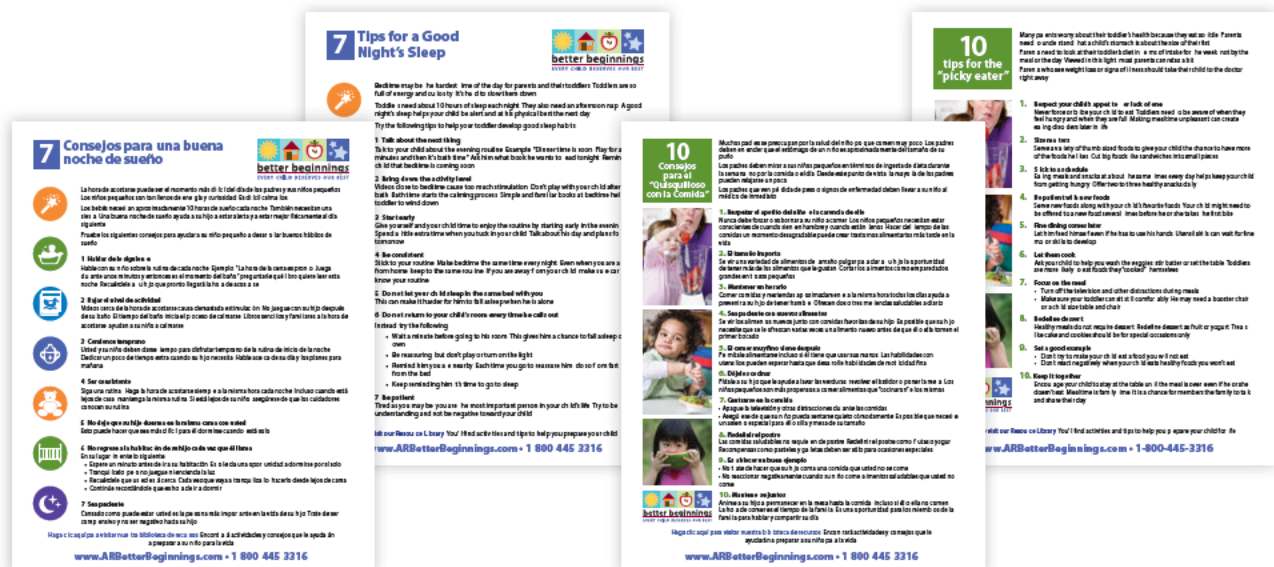
1) How do you plan to meet the requirements outlined in the Scope of Work?

Continued

All of the promotional materials are designed not just to be an announcement. Each contains an intentional call to action directing the audience to visit ARBetterBeginnings.com to:

- Learn what high-quality child care looks like
- Find out what is required for providers to earn their stars
- Search for and locate star-rated quality early childhood educators
- Have access to learning tools and find fun activities for learning through play in the Family Resource Library and Biblioteca de Recursos
- Access early childhood development information and guidance for children 0 to 5 years

ARBetterBeginnings.com has become the primary hub of the marketing program. Last year, the website had 321,455 page views and logged 83,261 unique visitors. The Family Resource Library was always on the list of the top 3 pages visited. New content is added to the website every month. The addition of content monthly contributes to high rankings for ARBetterBeginnings.com in search rankings.



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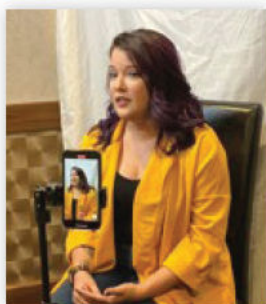
Continued

Conference Booths & Community Events

The pandemic put a halt to many of Better Beginnings's community and conference appearances. But beginning in August, the program returned to event appearances. We provide an extensive toolbox of conference materials for each of the requested early childhood education materials including, A-State Childhood Services Early Childhood Conference and the Arkansas Early Childhood Association. Over the years, we have increased Better Beginnings brand presence with branded backdrops, banners, table cloths and promotional materials. To promote booth traffic, we work with the Better Beginnings DHS team to create and design promotional materials that are tailored to each conference and event audience.

Recently we have leveraged each conference not just for presence and to distribute information and network, but as a unique opportunity to get the early childhood education community involved in the creation of original Better Beginnings content. We created special 3-D graphics for selfie stations (see photo). We set up lighting and photo booths to get testimonials and do interviews with conference attendees. We've recorded video for use on Better Beginnings's social channels. We've created special hashtags for use at each conference to increase social media engagement with Better Beginnings around the event. The result has been increased traffic at the events and spikes in website traffic during and following each conference.

We also use the events to encourage Buzz subscription signup. Events are also supported with onsite social media and promotion, with the use of geo-targeting to promote booth visits to conference attendees.



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Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

2) Please provide a detailed and creative marketing plan that promotes Better Beginnings and addresses the following:

a. Designing and producing promotional materials

The ComGroup Better Beginnings team also serves as event staff for many conferences and provide event setup and take down; we deliver the support supplies and materials. Every conference is followed with an impact report detailing activity and outcome.

Print and promotional materials serve to increase awareness of the goals and mission of Better Beginnings through several forms of media, often with overlapping distribution methods.

Distribution of brochures will occur through family and business events, business and provider conferences – any event where Better Beginnings has a presence. Child care providers will share them with current or prospective client-families. Child Care Aware centers will provide the brochures and licensing specialists stationed throughout the state will distribute to families and child care providers.

Children Play to Learn Brochure

This brochure is intended to educate families and the public about the mission and goals of Better Beginnings, and the importance of high-quality early childhood learning in determining a lifetime of learning and success.

The contents of the brochure feature:

- Early brain development
- The importance of quality early childhood education to kindergarten readiness
- How children learn – the principle of learning through play
- What high-quality child care looks like
- Online tools and resources for families in English and Spanish
- How to find star-rated quality child care





Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

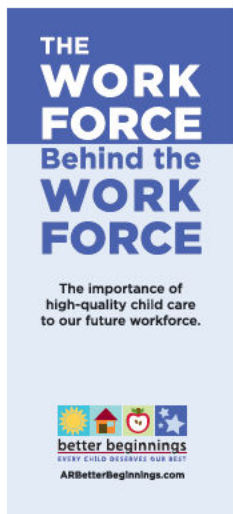
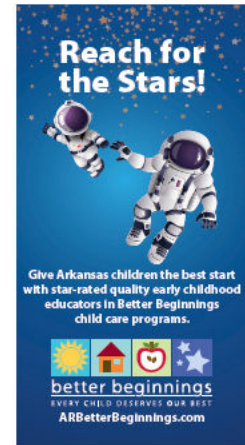
2) Please provide a detailed and creative marketing plan that promotes Better Beginnings and addresses the following:

a. Designing and producing promotional materials. *Continued*

Reach for the Stars brochure

This brochure explains what “Reach for the Stars” means for teachers, for children, for families, for the community and our workforce and economy.

Provider-specific information includes information regarding provider training and support online and in person, and online tools such as research-based curriculum. Current providers will be encouraged to “level up,” be informed of the benefits of doing so, including accepting more children on vouchers. Simple how-to steps to “level up” will be provided. Unlicensed and non-participating providers will be encouraged to join the Better Beginnings program.

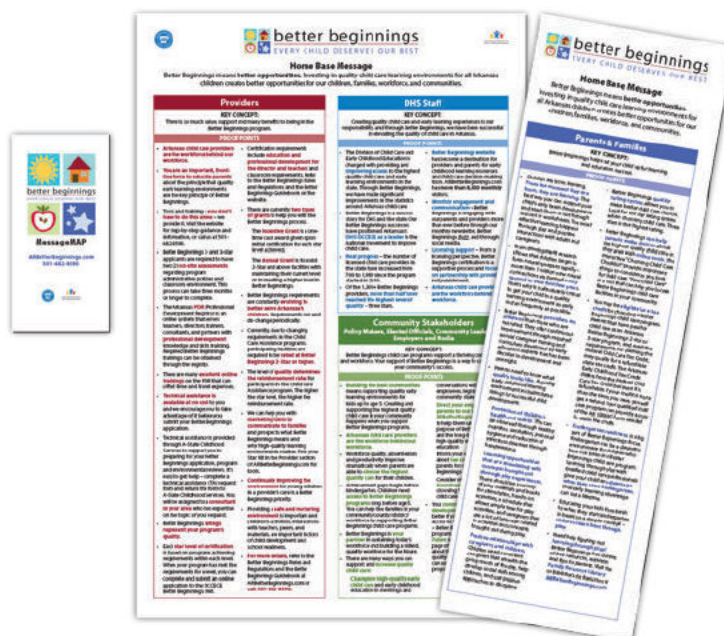


The ROI of Investing in High-quality Child Care brochure is directed at community leaders and business owners/management. This brochure provides statistics on child care in Arkansas, the effect of quality child care on our workforce, their attention and attendance in the workplace as well as facts about Better Beginnings and suggestions for this audience to become involved in ensuring their employees and communities have access to quality child care, and opportunities for tax breaks. The return on the investment in quality child care is a stronger workforce and better economy.



Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

a. Designing and producing promotional materials *Continued*



MessageMap

The MessageMap was developed in 2021 by a forum of Better Beginnings personnel and DHS early childhood education specialists working with a of team messaging specialists. It is, as the name implies, a map to Better Beginnings messaging to families, providers and community stakeholders including DHS employees. The map folds to a true pocket-size. The MessageMAP will be reviewed and updated as needed before printing.

Window Clings for Families and Providers

Family window clings will reinforce the Better Beginnings premise that children learn best through play. The 3" by 5" window clings can be placed in family car or child care bus windows stating: Our Kids Play to Learn, and bearing the Better Beginnings logo and URL, the clings perform as mini banners. Children might want them as "stickers" for their family car. (they don't actually use adhesive, so no worries)

Distribution will occur at family-oriented events where Better Beginnings has a presence, and they will be made available to providers that wish to share them with client-families.

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Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

a. Designing and producing promotional materials *Continued*

Provider window clings support high-quality child care with an out of this world Reach for the Stars motif that encourages the viewer to ask what it means. This window cling can be placed in automobile or child care location windows.

Providers who reach 4, 5 or 6-star levels will receive 4" by 6" window clings that match their newly earned, uniquely designed facility banner.

Promotional Merchandise

Premium items gleaned at family-centric community events or provider education conferences carry the Better Beginnings logo and the memory of the occasion where ever they go.

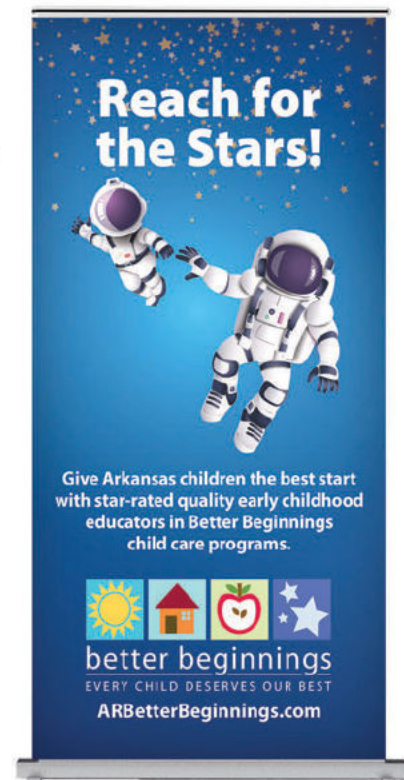
Better Beginnings branded premiums are a never ending reminder of the occasion and what was learned.

Conference and special event equipment

Better Beginnings branded event materials will include four custom-designed retractable banners with messages relating to themes such as Play to Learn, Reach for the Stars, The ROI of Investing in High-quality Child Care, and Online Tools for Providers and Families, to compliment events for all primary audiences.

Additional Better Beginnings branded materials for multiple concurrent events, include table cloths and fabric backdrops. Two sets of hardware to support the back drops – tripods and collapsible extension poles – will be provided with carrying cases.

Rolled paper backdrops for photo opportunities will be provided along with mobile, easy-to-use lights.





Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

2) Please provide a detailed and creative marketing plan that promotes Better Beginnings and addresses the following:

b. Managing media campaign

The Better Beginnings media campaign is an integral component that uses highly targeted approaches to get the Better Beginnings messaging in front of the right audiences with frequency and impact. In recent years, we have seen a shift in media consumption habits and have shifted media strategies accordingly.

Our media team is lead by our experienced media director, David Fahr. David has been a Better Beginnings team member for 5 years. He manages Better Beginnings media strategy, planning and placement. He is fluent in traditional, digital and social media placement and strategy. We use data and research to drive media strategy. David recognizes the unique demographics of our target audiences and he integrates what he calls a “tradigital” approach to media using established and emerging digital and social media with traditional media channels.

Three-Part Media Strategy

Traditional paid media is part one of a three-part strategy to reach our audiences where they choose to engage with Better Beginnings messages.

Every piece of new creative goes to the program administrator for review and approval with ten days to review.



Print



Organic Social



Paid Social

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Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

2) Please provide a detailed and creative marketing plan that promotes Better Beginnings and addresses the following:

b. Managing media campaign *Continued*

Part One: Traditional Media

Print Media

Print messages will appear statewide in three English family-centric publications, 3 Spanish publications, Arkansas Living and business and politics magazines to reach community leaders and business owners/management.

Print media outlets will post banner ads on their own social channels and website as added value.

Print messages and banner ads will be written and designed weeks before publication dates to allow ample time for administrator approval.



Print



Banner Ads

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Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

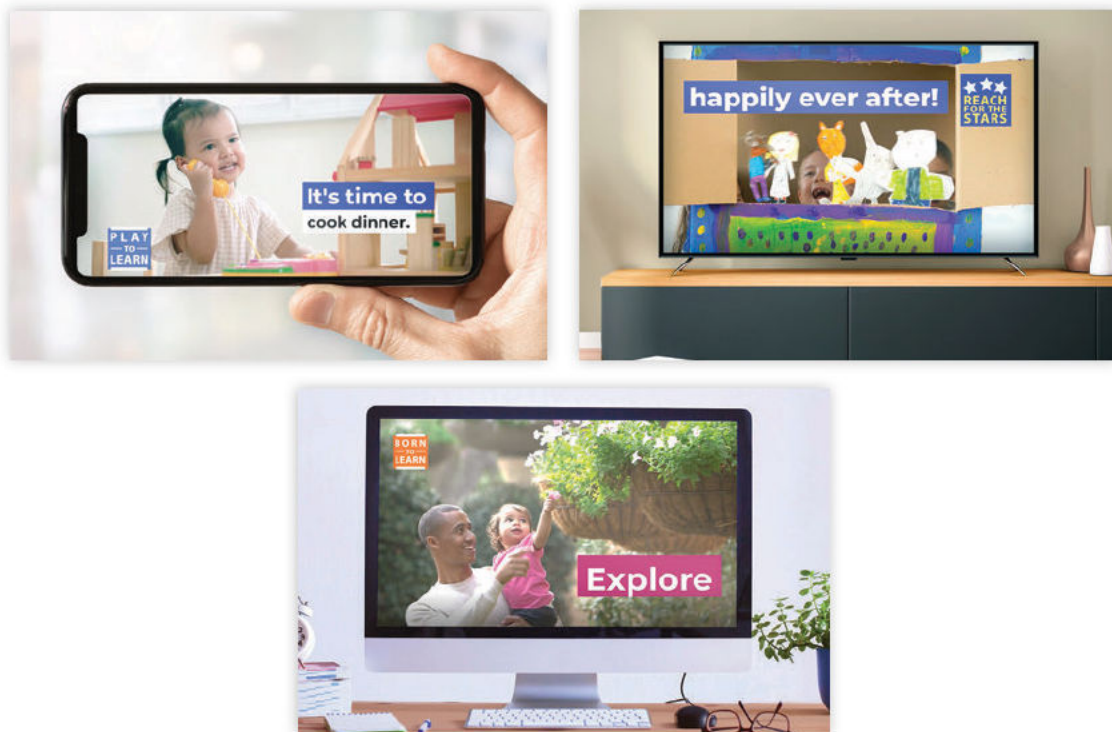
2) Please provide a detailed and creative marketing plan that promotes Better Beginnings and addresses the following:

b. Managing media campaign *Continued*

Part Two: Streaming Television

OTT / CTV content is streamed by users directly from the internet primarily on televisions and mobile devices. Streaming TV has become a powerful tool in the outreach toolbox because of our ability to precision target our audience. With streaming TV, there is virtually no waste. It's also powerful, because, unlike some other digital video ads, streaming ads are non-skippable. A non-skippable Better Beginnings video ad can be featured before, during, or after targeted programming – like commercials – but with the power to target our specific audience. This media targets Arkansas households with children statewide.

Modified versions of the monthly paid social media video ads will be used for streaming television.





Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

2) Please provide a detailed and creative marketing plan that promotes Better Beginnings and addresses the following:

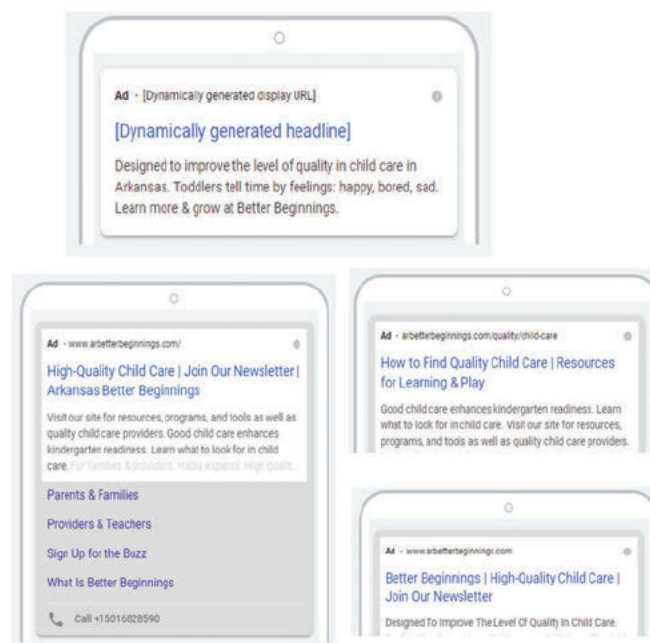
b. Managing media campaign *Continued*

Part Three: Paid Social Media & Not-for-Broadcast

Every month three new Better Beginnings videos are created for the upcoming month. The videos are featured in Facebook and Instagram ads that appear in user feeds, Stories, Messenger, Marketplace, and more. The videos are produced to look like normal posts, but always include a label identifying the video as “sponsored.”

Google provides Better Beginnings the ability to have their message shown to users as they search specific keywords or terms that are relevant to parents, and our other target audiences. YouTube provides Better Beginnings the ability to show video advertising before the user views other videos. Better Beginnings can target based on geography, lifestyle, behavior and content.

Like the print and streaming television, media messages focus on a single early childhood educational topic such as math, science or literacy, learning through play and finding quality child care at ARBetterBeginnings.com.



Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

2b. Managing media campaign *Continued*

B.2. Not-for-Broadcast

Non-Broadcast media includes all forms of digital media, out of home media, print media and cinema but does not include on-demand audio-visual media services. This media can be instructional content shown on websites or on digital media. The Better Beginnings outreach and promotion plan includes many not-for-broadcast elements.

We have created original video of Better Beginnings staff demonstrating activities from the website's Family Resource Library that has resulted in high-quality video content. The videos are fun and relatable, and represent Better Beginnings in a positive light that supports the program's education outreach mission. These original videos are tools for families and providers alike. We have raw footage remaining from the last video shoot that will be used to produce an ongoing video series featuring Better Beginnings staff doing resource library activity demos.

Those videos and other outreach content is used to support the education outreach plan and promote Better Beginnings across multiple channels, including the program's website, social media platforms, and community events.

Content planning for the Better Beginnings media campaign is a comprehensive and collaborative process that involves identifying the target audience and defining the audience-specific messages, selecting channels, developing a year-long content calendar, and determining the format and frequency of media campaign production. From pre-production to editing, we deliver a complete video, ready for administrator review and input. Once approved, we produce Spanish voiceovers and create a second Spanish-language version of each video.

Video shoot day





Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

b. Managing media campaign *Continued*

B 3. Website and social media

Website & Social Media

The redesigned, refreshed and completely updated Better Beginnings website was launched last year. Faster, easier navigation gives Arkansas families and providers the time and opportunity to explore our new website.

We revised navigation on the website with large menu options that make finding content easy. We know that providers visit ARBetterBeginnings.com frequently to access new program material, so we created a tutorial video to help familiarize returning users with the new website navigation. The website is the centerpiece and the hub for the majority of the outreach and promotion program. As a result, we develop new content and uploads monthly to the site. Monthly updates include Trending tab videos and the latest Buzz newsletters.

Our digital team manages the front and back end of the site, site hosting, content management, updates, analytics and website reporting. ARBetterBeginnings.com continues to see traffic and unique visitor growth year-over-year and the introduction of the new site resulted in steady growth.



Mega Menu

Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

b. Managing media campaign *Continued*

B 3. Website and social media

Website Optimization:

Our team continues to work monthly to ensure ARBetterBeginnings.com is optimized for optimum performance and search ranking. Website optimization refers to the process of improving the performance and user experience of a website to achieve specific goals, such as increasing website traffic, improving search engine rankings, and improving user engagement.

Website optimization for Better Beginnings results in numerous benefits, including increased traffic, improved user experience, enhanced visibility, increased engagement, better data insights, and increased conversion rates. Last year we worked with the new site developers to ensure the website contained accessibility controls.

Page modifications

This year, the plan includes the redesign of some of the Better Beginnings website pages to enhance the user experience and improve page performance. We are adding relevant content, monitoring performance and optimizing content, while enhancing the aesthetics of the home page and main pages.



Page modifications



Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

b. Managing media campaign *Continued*

B 3. Website and social media

The use of analytics, tracking tools, and a focus on user needs helps ensure the website provides valuable and relevant information to families, providers, and community and business leaders. The new pages help keep the look of the website fresh and give users an experience that makes them want to return to ARBetterBeginnings.com for valuable resources and information.

Social Media

Social media has become a popular platform for Better Beginnings to reach our audiences. We use two social media tactics to reach social media users – organic and paid. Organic social media content is developed monthly in an editorial content calendar.

Each month our team builds an organic social media content calendar that addresses parents, providers and our stakeholder audiences. A month's worth of Better Beginnings posts – 2 to 3 per week – are created that target all the Better Beginnings geographic and demographic profiles. The organic social media content is based on that month's learning theme.

Paid social media content for Better Beginnings includes the creation of 15-second videos produced and optimized for social media platforms. Each month we produce 3 videos that focus on the learning theme. These videos are integrated into the media schedule.





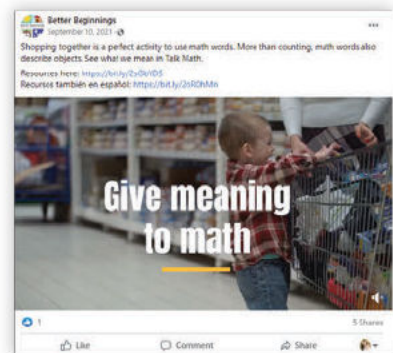
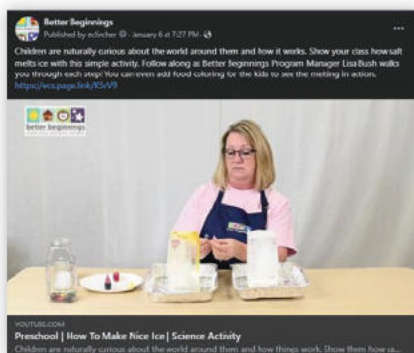
Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

b. Managing media campaign *Continued*

B 3. Website and social media

We manage all of Better Beginnings social media channels, including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter. Our social media management enhances Better Beginnings online presence and helps the program reach its target audience in a meaningful and impactful way. Our social media management includes:

- Writing compelling and engaging copy for social media posts that align with the mission and messaging of Better Beginnings
- Fresh content, including graphics and infographics, are tailored to each platform and designed to reach and engage the target audience
- Posts are timed and optimized for maximum engagement and reach
- Social community management that includes responding to comments and messages and moderating online discussions
- Regular reporting and analysis of the performance of the Better Beginnings social media campaigns
- Reporting includes comprehensive metrics and analysis. We include data on engagement, reach, and conversions (click-thrus). We use that data to optimize future social campaigns and strategies



Paid Social



Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

c. Conducting education outreach

Required from Scope of Work

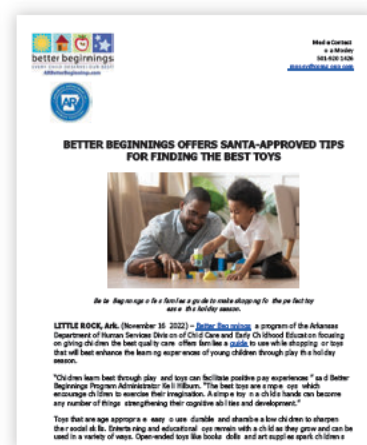
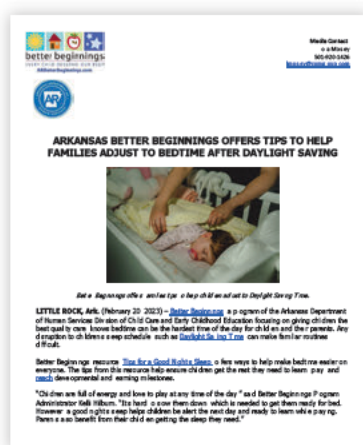
1. Draft a statewide plan
2. Focus on grassroots model
3. Fresh approach that most directly reached the target audience with proven success in previous campaigns

Education outreach for Better Beginnings is built in to the plan as a year-round activity. We begin every SFY with a planning session with the Better Beginnings team. During the planning session, we review previous year objectives and KPIs and we develop goals and objectives for the coming FY. We draft a statewide plan and review it with our Better Beginnings DHS team prior to implementation.

The entire plan is built around Better Beginnings priorities and goals for education and outreach. We use consistent, approved messaging from the Better Beginnings MessageMAP® to ensure the program's promotion is using consistent messaging with a narrow focus on the primary objectives. Each month we look for grassroots opportunities to promote the program and connect with our audiences.

Monthly News Release & PSA Schedule

- We create a monthly news release schedule that aligns to the overall program editorial and educational theme calendar
- Our PR team targets media with custom-built contact lists to maximize coverage of key messages and program priorities

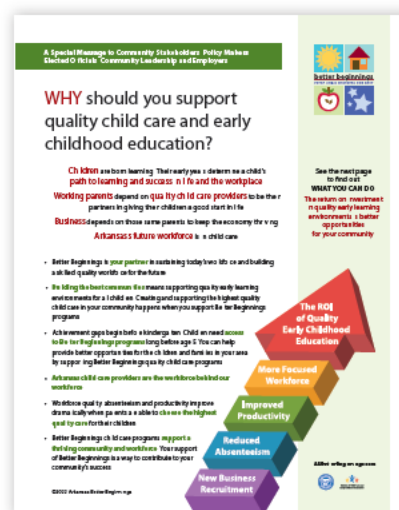
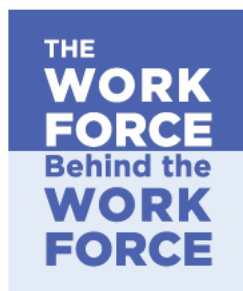


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Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

c. Conducting education outreach *Continued*

- We optimize release copy with SEO keywords and links to boost Better Beginnings's digital visibility, drive traffic to the website, create greater value for the program and readers, and boost release performance
- We plan to amplify the reach of the monthly news release schedule by providing PSA copy/scripts and distributing those statewide through the radio broadcast networks to reach localized stakeholders and audiences
- Regularly distributing news releases and PSAs to targeted media helps Better Beginnings grassroots visibility and keeps the program front-of-mind with valued media partners and their audiences
- This also gives us an opportunity to elevate Better Beginning's staff and program profile, overall visibility and credibility
- We have secured TV appearances recently featuring Better Beginnings program director Kelli Hilburn to promote Better Beginnings to a broad audience. Those appearances were prompted by our monthly news release series
- This year we are developing a high-impact pitch plan about "The Workforce Behind the Workforce" for our community stakeholders focusing on workforce development and critical role quality childcare plays in employee recruitment and retention





Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

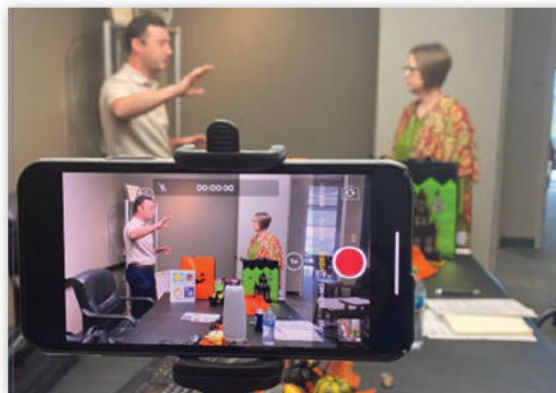
d. Maximizing promotional opportunities

To maximize promotional opportunities, we are using media relations and story pitching for Better Beginnings. We have good media relationships throughout the state and we plan to reach out to those contacts to amplify monthly news release topics and coverage, develop unique media opportunities and to manage incoming media requests.

As we continue to grow and mature Better Beginnings media strategy, it is to be expected that interview and on-air opportunities will become more frequent and should be leveraged for the greatest possible result. When we begin to increase media opportunities, we recommend media coaching for program spokespeople.

Media coaching is a less intensive approach to media preparedness than media training. In media coaching, our PR team works one-on-one with the program's spokesperson(s) to help them get the most out of each media appearance. We work on interview technique, do's and don'ts, messaging tips and Q&A techniques. Our goal is to help the Better Beginnings subject matter expert feel comfortable and at ease in the media setting. Our media coaching focuses on delivery and making sure the Better Beginnings spokesperson's messages are well-prepared to produce the best possible impact for the program.

The golden rule about grassroots outreach is rather than trying to make people come to you, go to where there are people already. We use this strategy in our approach to Better Beginnings promotion.



Media Coaching



Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

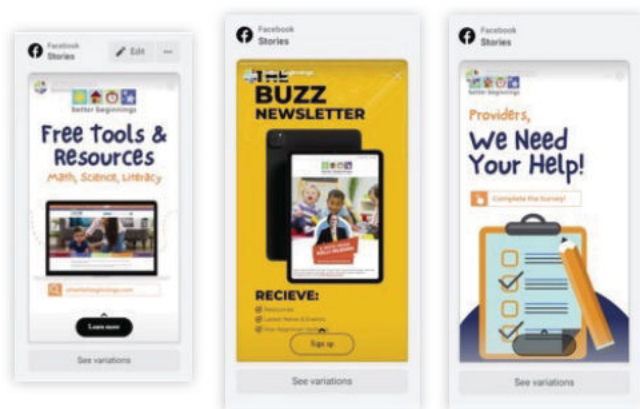
d. Maximizing promotional opportunities *Continued*

Conference Support & Event Management

We provide support for Better Beginnings at conferences by managing and staffing booths, promoting attendance and interaction and measuring, evaluating and reporting on the success of the program's attendance. We develop event concepts that are unique to the Better Beginnings program to create opportunities for enhanced stakeholder interactions. The face-to-face interactions and engagement that happen at events are of great value to the program. Having adequate support to help prepare and plan for, manage and staff the events, is critical to fully capitalizing on the opportunities that organically arise during events.

Conference support includes:

- Planning
- Event support supplies
- Event setup and take down
- Provider interviews – still photography and video (assets to be used for social and Buzz content)
- Provider Survey
- Buzz newsletter subscription form
- Onsite social media
- Live social media with video of Better Beginnings leadership
- Geo-targeting event location to promote booth visits
- Impact Report



Geo targeting digital ads

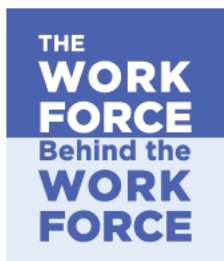


Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

d. Maximizing promotional opportunities *Continued*

This year, we recommend integrating community events into the grassroots outreach strategy. Community festivals with large family attendance are prime opportunities for community education about Better Beginnings. We can build a community event kit for providers who would like to participate in these events or festivals in their hometowns.

We have had success partnering with local library systems to reach community audiences, particularly parents and families. There are 34 public systems and 219 libraries in Arkansas. We can select target community library systems to build a pilot promotional event series around the extremely popular online Family Resource Library educational activities. We can use local library patrons to assist with and appear on-camera in activity videos. We can work with the library directors to post content about patrons doing their Family Resource Library activities. The Better Beginnings library series can be promoted online, through social media and in local radio. We can provide informational brochures, resource activities and QR coded counter signs in libraries that point visitors to ARBetterBeginnings.com. We have also used the state library system as a partner to promote to and disseminate materials to their member systems statewide.



We would also like to pilot an outreach program to business leaders through local Chamber of Commerce events and activities. We have had good experiences in the past working with local chambers to reach the business community. Chambers have regularly scheduled meetings and events at which we can give a presentation (we will develop the speakers presentation/video), distribute promotional material and answer questions. We can invite local business leaders with child care success stories to speak at these events and share their outcomes. From those success stories we can build video content to augment our library of promotional materials for the community stakeholder audience.

Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

3) Include implementation plan.

The Better Beginnings education outreach and promotion program is a year-round program. Every month, outreach and promotion activity occurs that encompass a wide variety of tactics, tools and activities. Below you will see an implementation plan that includes regularly monthly communication, reporting, planning, implementation and measurement.

COMPONENT	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
PROJECT MANAGEMENT												
Planning Session	Annual						Mid Year					Next Year/ EOY
Monthly Reporting	x	x	x	x	x	x	Mid Year	x	x	x	x	Annual Rpt
Digital Tearsheet Books			x			x			x			x
Budget Reconciliation	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Contract requirements	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
MEDIA CAMPAIGN												
Print	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Facebook	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Google	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
YouTube	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Streaming TV	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Stakeholder Print	x		x		x		x		x		x	
Spanish		x		x		x		x		x		x
Providers	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Media monitoring	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
CREATIVE												
Videos	Math	Science	Literacy	Resources	Math	Science	Literacy	Resources	Math	Science	Literacy	Resources
Print Ads	Math	Science	Literacy	Resources	Math	Science	Literacy	Resources	Math	Science	Literacy	Resources
Spanish Materials	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Brochure		Play to Learn		Reach for the Stars								
Other Materials		Conference equipment	Window Clings		Family Clings		MsgMAP update	Conference equipmt				
Promotional Items			x			x			x			x



Technical Approach to Scope of Work/ Viable Implementation Plan

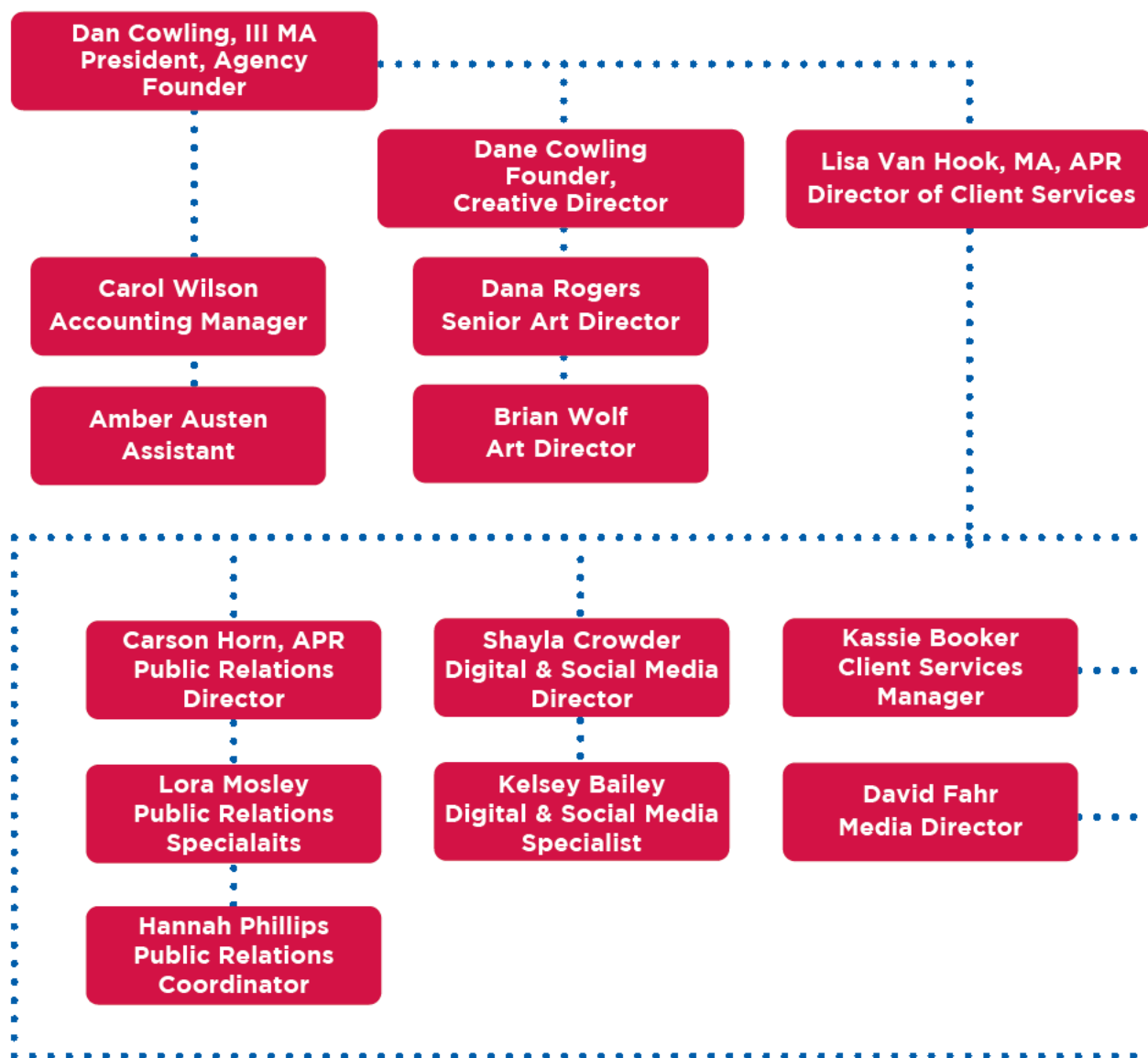
3) Include implementation plan.

COMPONENT	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
SOCIAL MEDIA												
Facebook	Math	Science	Literacy	Resources	Math	Science	Literacy	Resources	Math	Science	Literacy	Resources
Instagram	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
YouTube	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Monitoring	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Analytics	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
DIGITAL												
Buzz Provider	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Buzz Family edition	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Buzz Stakeholder			x		x			x			x	
Website optimization	x			x			x			x		x
New pages		x	x	x	x						x	x
Website management	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
PR & COMMUNITY OUTREACH												
Conferences				AECA					A State			
Community Events	Festival	Chamber	Library Event	Festival	Chamber	Library Event	Festival	Chamber	Library Event	Festival	Chamber	Library Event
News releases	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Media pitching	x		x		x		x		x		x	
Media coaching	x		x		x		x		x		x	
Radio PSAs	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Project Organization, Staffing and Experience

1) Please provide an overall organizational chart and a project-specific organization chart showing proposed staff by job title and lines of supervision sufficient to meet objectives.

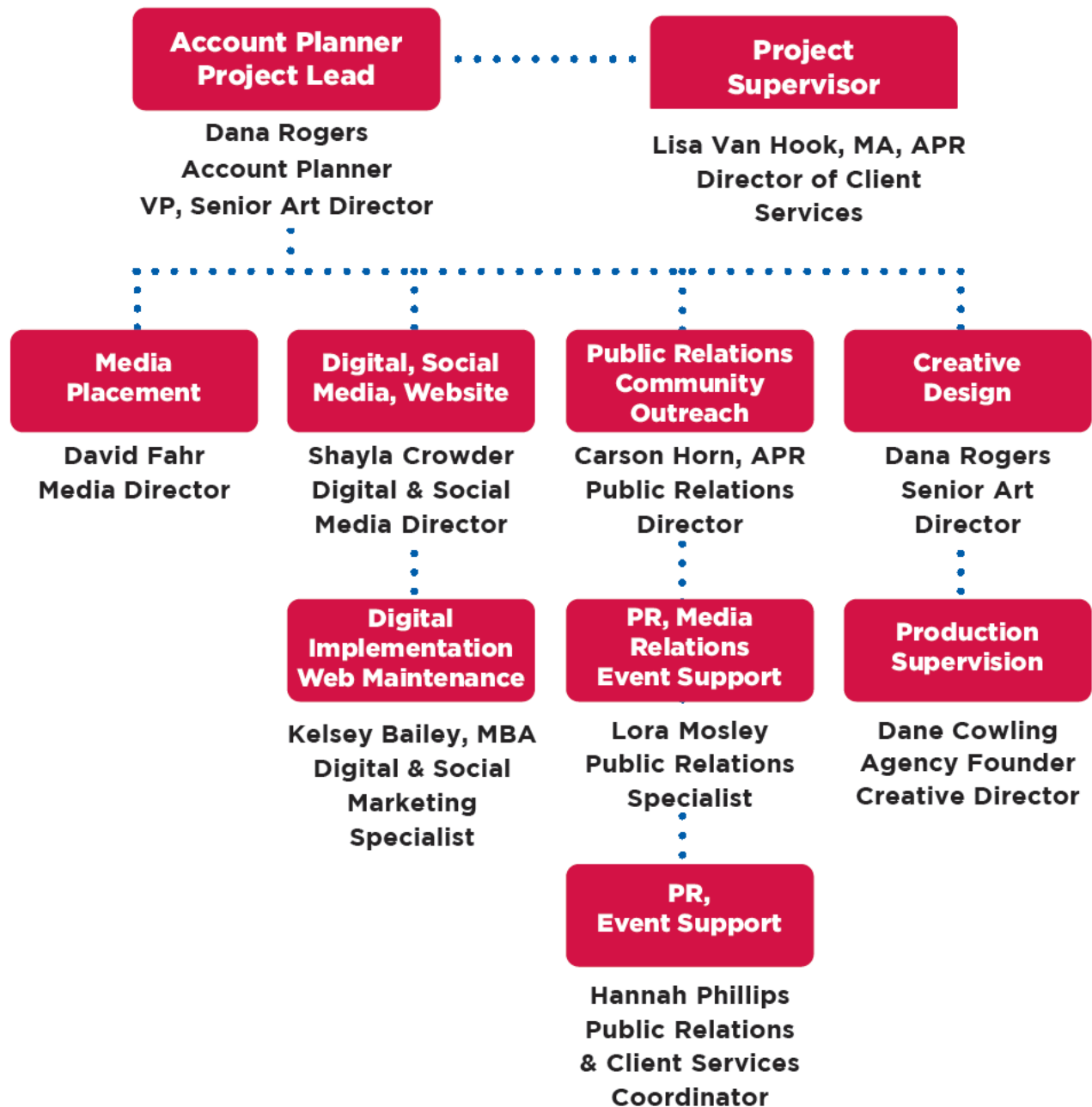
Communications Group Organizational Chart



Project Organization, Staffing and Experience

1) Please provide an overall organizational chart and a project-specific organization chart showing proposed staff by job title and lines of supervision sufficient to meet objectives.

Communications Group Project Organizational Chart





.F.3. Project Organization, Staffing

2) Please provide resumes and experience for key staff that will provide services under the contract.

The ComGroup team dedicated to Better Beginnings is experienced and coincidentally, are all parents who have become advocates of the star-rating system and champions for Better Beginnings mission.



Dan Cowling, MA
President, Agency Founder
For Better Beginnings:
Strategic Development

Dan is a founder, president and CEO of The Communications Group. He serves as the senior strategist for our customers. His specialization is in research, message and strategy development. Dan is the leader of our Outreach and Education Group. Under his leadership, ComGroup has developed over 30 government to citizen outreach and education programs working with community, state, regional, and national governmental agencies and corporations. In addition to his experience in marketing, Dan has served as Adjunct Professor at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville teaching marketing, public relations and personal development.

Years working in advertising/market/PR:

51

Years working at ComGroup:

35

Skills

Agency leadership and management
Account oversight and management
Relationship development
Personal development
Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)
program development
Public/Private Sector Coalition Building
Market research
MPACT Planning™ (strategic planning)
Public speaking
Teaching

Industry Experience

Law enforcement
Government outreach and education
Higher education
Industrial manufacturing
Public utilities
Health care, hospitals
Banking and financial services
Insurance
Franchise marketing
Agriculture
Regional economic development
Nonprofits
Wireless telecom
Pharmaceuticals
Energy



.F.3. Project Organization, Staffing

2) Please provide resumes and experience for key staff that will provide services under the contract. *Continued*



Dane Cowling
Agency Founder, Creative Director

For Better Beginnings: Production supervision, outsourcing coordination

Dane works in a variety of roles with almost every ComGroup client. From creative concept to copywriting to account planning support, Dane is involved in many aspects of our company.

Dane's credentials include a Bachelor of Arts degree in Speech/Communications as well as a Master of Fine Arts degree in Theatre Arts.

Years working in advertising/marketing/PR:
38

Years working at ComGroup:
35

Skills

Creative Messaging Development
Copywriting – print, digital and broadcast
Photography
Industrial Manufacturing Marketing
Art Direction
Budgets
Print and Broadcast Production

Areas of Previous Experience

Performing Arts Stage Management
Associate Professor at the University of Arkansas – Little Rock





Project Organization, Staffing

2) Please provide resumes and experience for key staff that will provide services under the contract. *Continued*



Lisa Van Hook, MA, APR
Director of Client Services

For Better Beginnings: Research and Message Development
Message development, MessageMAPPING, strategy, research, evaluation, public relations, media relations, community events, project management

Lisa is a shareholder, executive vice president and Director of Client Services. Lisa specializes in PR and media relations. She is the developer of and leads our MessageMapping™ process.

Lisa's credentials include a master's degree in organizational communication and has worked with early childhood education campaigns and Better Beginnings for over a decade.

Years working in advertising/marketing/PR:
36

Years working at ComGroup:
25

Skills

MessageMapping
Media relations
Market research
Marketing plans
Strategic planning
Research and PR planning
News conferences
Media events
Publicity and promotion
Media training
Public relations planning, implementation and evaluation
Special event planning and management
Crisis communications
External and internal communications

Writing and editing
Publication development
Volunteer coordination

Areas of Previous Experience

Government outreach and education
Early childhood education
Hospitals, health care
Private physician practices
Sales tax and special election campaigns
Nonprofits
Community outreach
Regional economic development
Law enforcement
Industrial manufacturing
Material handling
Public utilities
Electric and wind power transmission
Crisis communication consulting
Wireless telecom
Pharmaceuticals
Oil and natural gas transmission





Project Organization, Staffing

2) Please provide resumes and experience for key staff that will provide services under the contract. *Continued*



Carson Horn, APR
Public Relations Director
For Better Beginnings: Public Relations Specialist

Carson leads the management and execution of all public relations and earned media campaigns for the agency's agriculture, B2B, and Outreach & Education customers.

Carson has been practicing in the field of communications for over a decade. His experience ranges from traditional to new media including both print and broadcast journalism. He was named "Communicator of the Year" in 2015 by a major national industry association and earned his accreditation in public relations in 2020. Carson holds a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Communications from Oklahoma State University.

Years working in advertising/marketing/PR:
11

Years working at ComGroup:
3

Skills

Public relations
Social and digital media planning
Social and digital media strategy
Social and digital media engagement
Media relations
Government relations
Strategic communications
Internal communications
Community outreach
Special events
Publicity and promotion
Writing
Web development

Areas of Previous Experience

Nonprofit
Government outreach and education
Association marketing
Radio/Broadcasting
News/Business publishing
Agriculture
Wind energy
Oil and gas



Project Organization, Staffing

2) Please provide resumes and experience for key staff that will provide services under the contract. *Continued*



Shayla Crowder
Digital & Social Marketing Director
For Better Beginnings: Website, digital and social media

As the Digital & Social Marketing Director, Shayla brings a wealth of experience in leading successful digital marketing and social media campaigns. With a strong background in website, social media, and email marketing, Shayla has a proven track record of delivering results for clients. In addition, Shayla runs a successful wedding photography business on the side and has generated a social media following of over 350k. As a professional photographer and videographer, Shayla brings a unique perspective and creativity to her work. Shayla's accomplishments include leading a digital visibility project for a global manufacturing company, resulting in a 106% increase in social media engagement and a 72% increase in followers (over 20k followers increase). Shayla is a member of both the Digital Marketing Institute and the American Marketing Association, staying up-to-date with the latest industry trends and techniques. With a keen eye for detail and a passion for creativity, Shayla is a valuable asset to our agency, delivering exceptional results for clients.

Years working in advertising/marketing/PR:

2

Years working at ComGroup:

2

Skills

Search Engine Optimization
Pay-Per-Click Advertising
Social Media Marketing
Content Marketing
Email Marketing
Web Analytics
Video Marketing
Video Production
Photography

Areas of Previous Experience

Child Care
Business-to-business
E-commerce
Local Business





.F.3. Project Organization, Staffing

2) Please provide resumes and experience for key staff that will provide services under the contract. *Continued*



Dana Rogers
Senior Art Director
Vice President

For Better Beginnings: Creative Lead, Account Planner

Dana is a Vice President in our firm. She specializes in brand development and account planning for our outreach and education customers. Dana is our longest tenured employee. She has honed her skills developing brands for over 40 outreach/education initiatives at the state, regional and national levels. She has worked with Better Beginnings for over a decade.

Years working in advertising/marketing/PR:
42

Years at ComGroup:
32

Skills

Account Planning
Writing
Graphic design
Logo concept and design
Photography coordination and art direction
Illustration
Website development and design
Website content creation

Areas of Previous Experience

Education, higher education
Nonprofits
Public utilities
Government outreach and education
Health care, hospitals
Banking and financial services
Insurance industry
Industrial manufacturing
Agriculture
Regional economic development





Project Organization, Staffing

2) Please provide resumes and experience for key staff that will provide services under the contract. *Continued*



David Fahr
Media Director
For Better Beginnings: Media Buyer

David manages customers' media strategy, planning and placement. He is fluent in traditional, digital and social media placement and strategy.

David holds a BS Degree in Business Marketing from the University of South Carolina. His credentials include certification in social marketing by the Online Marketing Institute.

David has spent 26 years negotiating planning and buying media, using data and research to drive strategy. He integrates a "tradigital" approach to media using established and emerging digital and social media with traditional media channels.

Years working in advertising/marketing/PR:
26

Years working at ComGroup:
6

Skills

- Media planning
- Media negotiation & placement
- Customer service
- Research
- Media relations
- Metrics reporting
- Trade media outreach

Areas of Previous Experience

- Education, higher education
- Industrial manufacturing
- Business-to-business
- Retail
- National corporations





3.) Provide three (3) case studies which exemplify work similar to that described in the agency RFP. A case study should identify the client, contain a statement about the scope of work and provide insight into how the campaign was developed and implemented.

Better Beginnings Case Study	57
ARKids First Case Study	60
Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board	63

3. Case Studies



Television Interview



Launched in 2010, Better Beginnings, a program of the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS), was developed to ensure quality child care is available to all Arkansas children. Research was conducted to ensure the program met the needs of providers and the children of Arkansas.

ComGroup worked with DHS to help brand and launch the program that introduced the concept of star rating child care providers. Our audiences include providers, community stakeholders and families.

ComGroup provides services from PR to media relations to social media and website content. We developed ARBetterBeginnings.com and add content on a monthly basis.



Conference support



Video shoot of client team demonstrating Family Resource Library learning activities to be used for social media and YouTube

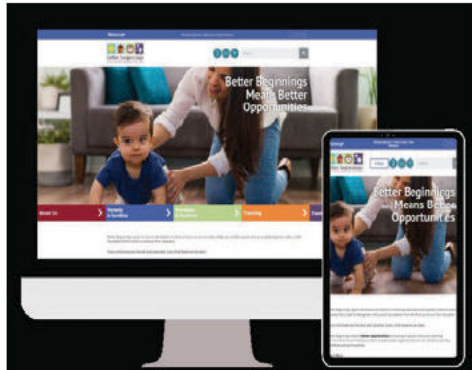
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3. Case Studies



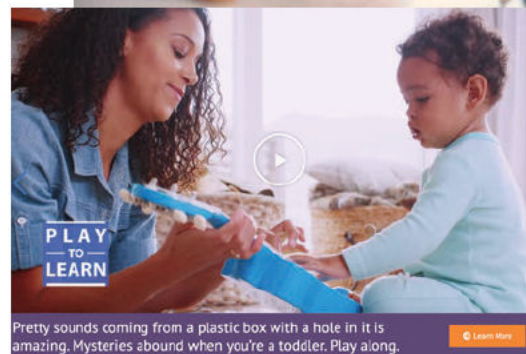
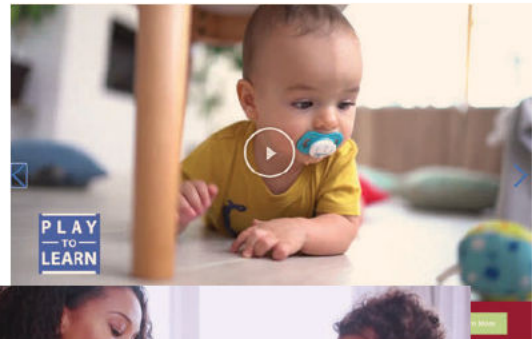
All outreach, no matter the media channel, directs the audience back to the website for information and resources for families, providers and community/business leaders



In SFY22 Paid Social Video Views numbered 222,320



Organic Social Media



Website videos, like those above, direct families to the Family Resource Library.



Monthly educational focus print messaging

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3. Case Studies



The open rates of monthly newsletters to families and providers routinely reach or exceed industry standards.



The Family Resource Library and Biblioteca de Recursos offer more than 40 resources

SFY22 End of Year Report Highlights

3,086,961

Organic Social Impressions

132,233

Social Channel Engagements

321,455

Website Page Views

83,261

Website Users

2,958,980

Print Ad Circulation Impressions

2,852,801

Paid Social Impressions

63,417

Paid Social Persons Reached

6,579

Paid Social Click Thrus

222,320

Paid Social Video Views

267,895

Google Searches

18,980

Google Click Thrus

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3. Case Studies



The Communications Group (ComGroup) was hired to create an awareness plan to tell the ARKids First story and assist in reducing the number of uninsured children in the state. The purpose of the program is to help families find a medical home for their children and to get well-child care so they can experience healthier, more productive lives.


Soon after the creation of ARKids First in 1997, the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) contracted with ComGroup to develop a marketing plan for this revolutionary new program to the people of the state.

Based on national and local research, ComGroup targeted parents and grandparents with eligibility messages that emphasized the importance of well-child checkups.

ComGroup has worked with DHS, local hospitals, schools, media outlets

and libraries to distribute messages statewide. The ARKids First story was delivered through logo and brand development, media and printed materials in both English and Spanish, as well as outreach events and public relations

The initial campaign was so successful that enrollment goals were met in the first 10 months



Welcome to ARKids First

During your hospital visit today you have been given 1 ARKids First health coverage for children through age 18. It's long-term coverage to ensure the health of your child, and ARKids First will take care of your child and help with you at all times.

Regular checkups help keep your kids healthy. Is school and not the emergency room. Make sure you choose a primary care physician (PCP) or PCP. Your PCP is the doctor who is in charge of your child's health. To find a doctor or dentist, visit www.SentaraDHS.org. If you have questions about your benefits, call our ARKids First toll-free hotline or visit your local DHS office.

ARKids First covers well-child checkups, dental checkups and eye exams.

ARKids First covers well-child checkups, dental checkups and eye exams.

Well Child Checkups and Screenings

Age	Well Child Checkups	Dental Checkups	Eye Exams
0-1	✓	✓	✓
1-2	✓	✓	✓
2-3	✓	✓	✓
3-4	✓	✓	✓
4-5	✓	✓	✓
5-6	✓	✓	✓
6-7	✓	✓	✓
7-8	✓	✓	✓
8-9	✓	✓	✓
9-10	✓	✓	✓
10-11	✓	✓	✓
11-12	✓	✓	✓
12-13	✓	✓	✓
13-14	✓	✓	✓
14-15	✓	✓	✓
15-16	✓	✓	✓
16-17	✓	✓	✓
17-18	✓	✓	✓

ARKids 1st
Healthy Kids. Healthy Families.
1-888-474-8275 ARKidsFirst.com

ER information sheet

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3. Case Studies

ComGroup transitioned from a fullscale statewide enrollment campaign to one that encourages ARKids First enrollees to utilize the preventative benefits ARKids First provides.



Digital advertising Facebook ads



Dental outreach materials

Well-child
checkup
magnet

Community partners in recent years included Radio Disney, who drew children and parents to events that provided tips for good health and materials about ARKids First.

ComGroup worked in 2014 to make the most efficient use of budget by targeting counties with the highest non-emergency ER visits and lowest dental and well-child visits. Counties were targeted according to Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS) statistics.

ComGroup reached out to newly enrolled families in emergency rooms with benefit information, immunization and well-child checkup schedules. Messages encouraged caregivers to find a medical home for their children and avoid non-emergency visits to the ER.

Because oral health is tied to overall good health for a lifetime, ComGroup enlisted elementary school nurses as partners for distributing dental information. They were provided toothbrushes and a dental health tip sheet to give to their students.

ComGroup continues to partner with Arkansas State Libraries in the high-need counties to distribute the well-child checkup schedule.

The call to action in all these materials was to visit SeeYourDoc.org for more information and to find a doctor or dentist.

3. Case Studies

The goal of ARKids Outreach is to communicate with those adults who are in a position to influence the health, wellness and safety of ARKids-enrolled children, with a special emphasis on parents and guardians who might be at risk: teens, multicultural, low-income and grandparent guardians in data indicated high-risk counties.

That communication was never more urgent, more needed, than in the health environment of April 2020. ComGroup was honored, that after more than 20 years of service, when ARKids took their communications in-house, we were able to assist with this critical outreach to all Arkansans.

Response to the COVID-19 Outbreak in Arkansas

Two extensive digital outreach campaigns were launched in April.

Campaign 1: Apply Online

Department of Human Services offices across the state were crowded with applicants for state benefits. Arkansans were urged to apply safely online from home.

Campaign 2: ARKids First Family Matters

Advice and tactics were provided for families under pressures created by the arrival of COVID-19.

SFY20 Paid Social Media Outreach Results

4,173,288

Number of times ARKids First messages were seen by Arkansans

64,316

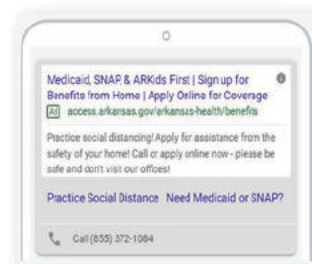
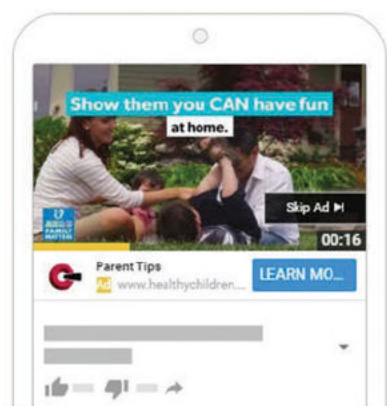
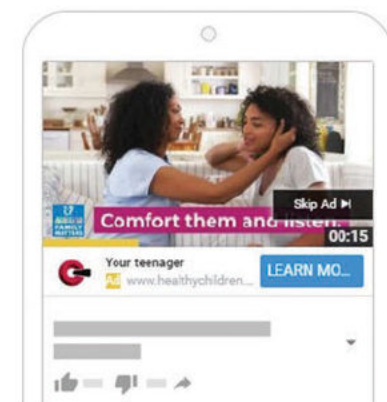
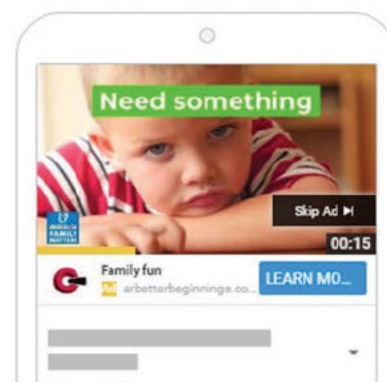
ARKids First complete video views

7,376

Clicks on ARKids First messages

1,395

Engagements with ARKids First messages



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3. Case Studies



Video Shoot



At first glance the Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board promotion program may not seem to have much in common with early childhood education promotion, but there are similarities and overlap that demonstrate experience with a statewide education and outreach program. The ASPB promotion contract is a state government promotion and outreach program funded by mandated producer checkoff dollars. The program is designed not to sell a product or service, but to educate specific target audiences about the board's efforts in research and education to audiences including soybean producers, consumers and students.

Since 1971, the Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board has been committed to helping local farmers generate new markets and demand for their crops through research, education and promotion. This federally mandated program leverages producers' checkoff dollars by investing in programs that support the Arkansas soybean industry. In 2014, ASPB engaged ComGroup to manage its promotional activities and communicate the board's efforts in research and education.

ComGroup conducted research to identify the board's primary communications objectives, messaging and most effective communications channels to reach their primary audiences including producers, consumers and students.

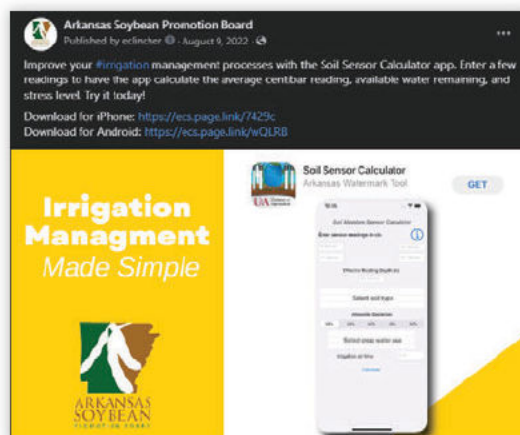
3. Case Studies

ComGroup worked with the board to create a unique brand and state-of-the-art website as the foundation of the board's communications plan.

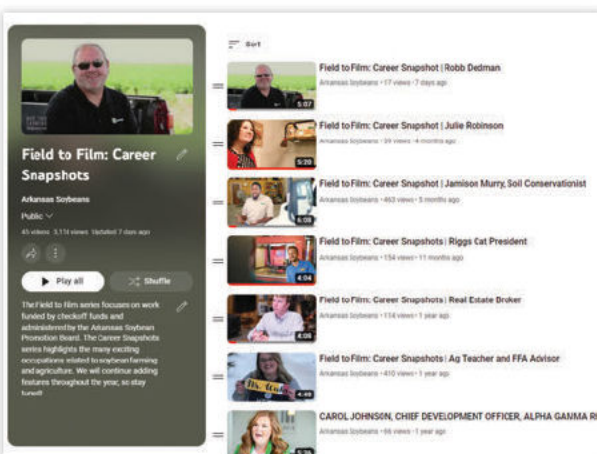
Since then, ComGroup has expanded its work to include a variety of services such as social media management, digital marketing, public relations, media relations, and content development and management.



YouTube

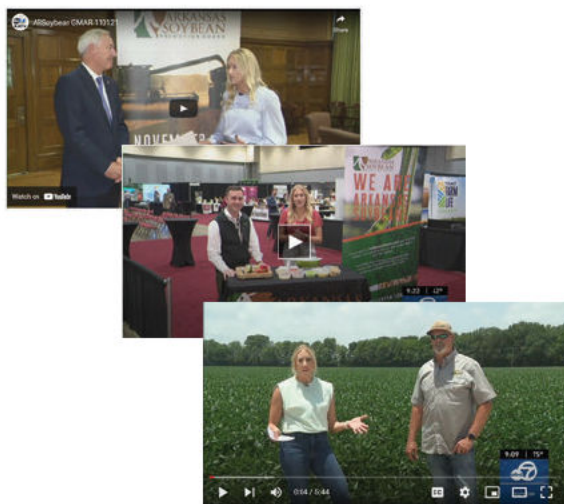


Social Media



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3. Case Studies



FY22 Annual Review July 2021 – June 2022

Earned Media Coverage

PRINT & DIGITAL

TOTAL POTENTIAL IMPRESSIONS

8,162,940

Paid Media

1,396,575 social impressions

210,608 individuals reached

11,128 click thrus

TOTAL POTENTIAL IMPRESSIONS:

27,077,695+

Digital Marketing

TheMiracleBean.com

Web Performance

Users decreased by 25% compared to July 1, 2020 – Jun 30, 2022 indicating less traffic was driven to the website.

Pages per session increased by 39% compared to July 1, 2020 – Jun 30, 2022 indicating users are visiting more pages when they visit.

Bounce rate decreased by 4.5% compared to July 1, 2020 – Jun 30, 2022 indicating users are less likely to leave without interacting with the website.

The average session duration has increased by 40% compared to July 1, 2020 – Jun 30, 2022 indicating users are staying on the website longer.

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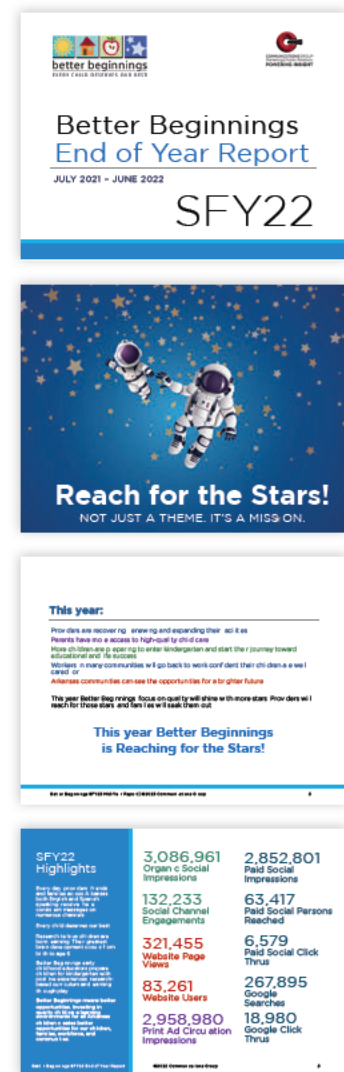
Management Plan

1) Please describe ability to manage and control project activities, report progress, and coordinate with DHS.

After 10 years of working with DCCECE and Better Beginnings, our team has an efficient process in place for program management, tracking and control. The Better Beginnings outreach program is managed by Dana Rogers, Better Beginnings brand advocate and team lead. We have a Better Beginnings project team with significant experience and depth, giving us the ability to manage the comprehensive program seamlessly throughout the year.

Our implementation plan for Better Beginnings includes the following control, tracking and coordination activities:

- Weekly communication with DHS DCCECE program administrator, Kelli Hilburn
- Weekly production meetings to ensure all Better Beginnings deliverables are being trafficked correctly, are meeting deadlines and are on budget
- Weekly monitoring of digital properties like ARBetterBeginnings.com and Better Beginnings's social media channels on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter and LinkedIn
- Monthly monitoring of media campaign performance including digital tear sheet books
- Monthly budget reconciliation and reporting
- Monthly contractor reports containing KPI reporting for Better Beginnings program outreach elements
- Monthly Better Beginnings team meetings to ensure alignment with plan and action items
- Monthly communication with Better Beginnings contract managers, Paige Cox and Felix Duckworth
- Mid-year reporting
- Annual reporting against the approved plan
- Annual planning session with the Better Beginnings team based on data, and the goals of program administrators





Management Plan

1) Please describe ability to manage and control project activities, report progress, and coordinate with DHS. *Continued*

Every year, we look at the data and we factor in new creative tools for how to reach more families and providers. Every month we review analytics to determine if any optimization or tactical revision is needed. And weekly, our Better Beginnings project manager, Dana Rogers, communicates with Better Beginnings program administrator Kelli Hilburn, to ensure outreach and education is focused where the division needs it to be focused.

Child care program elements can, and do, change rapidly at the local, state and federal level, and in the online world. When social media algorithms shift to favor video content, we are able to reallocate resources and begin developing original video content, resulting in increases from parents in online engagement. When new federal ARPA funding comes into the division and intensive provider communication is needed, Kelli and Dana meet to discuss DCCECE objectives and convene the team to develop a plan addressing the new elements in the Better Beginnings outreach program. Implementation can begin quickly because of our Better Beginnings outreach plan's flexibility and our good working relationship with the DCCECE division and program administrators.

**Thanks to ARPA Funding and the
Dedicated People Who Helped the
Funding Reach the Right People**

	Expansion	Supply	Total
Infants	1,482	672	2,154
Toddlers	1,696	1,095	2,791
School-age	1,886	1,592	3,478
Homes	96	27	123
Total Children	5,160	3,386	8,546

**8,546 more children will receive
high-quality Child Care in Arkansas.**

CONGRATULATIONS!

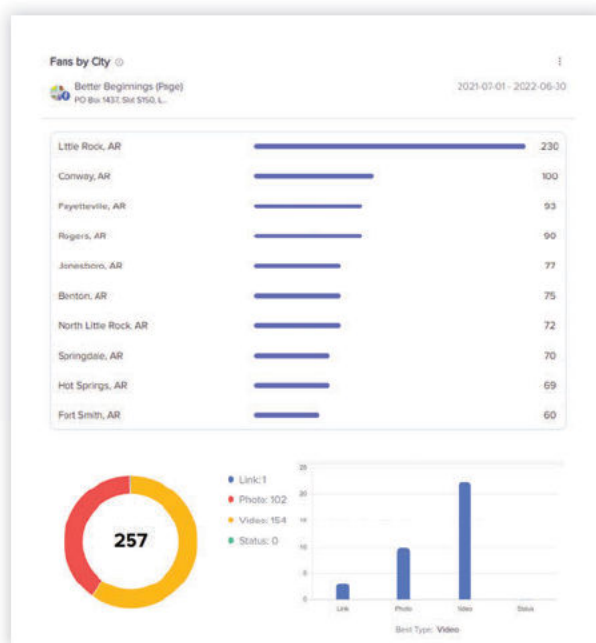
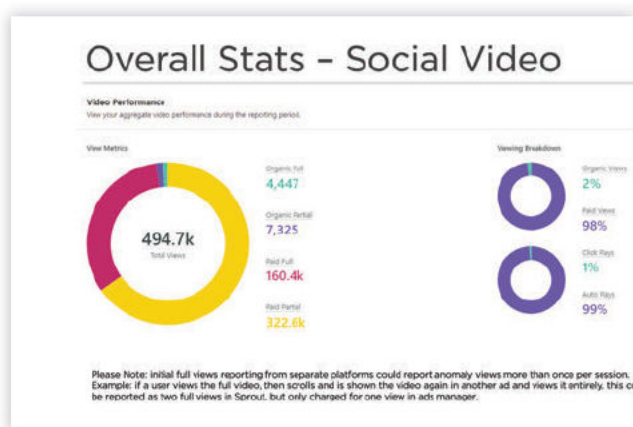
Management Plan

2) What is your method for collecting, tracking, and reporting data that is relevant to the project and DCCECE requests?

Data drives the majority of the Better Beginnings outreach and promotion program. We set goals, benchmarks and metrics annually in our planning session with DCCECE Better Beginnings program staff and then track monthly against those metrics. We provide monthly reports and produce comprehensive mid-year and annual reports.

Data collection and tracking includes:

- Google analytics for Google Search ads
- Word Press analytics for ARBetterBeginnings.com
- Media impressions, coverage reporting and distribution from media database
- Quarterly electronic tear sheet books
- Constant Contact analytics - open rates, click thurs, on Buzz newsletters
- Circulation figures for print media outlets
- Monthly contractor reports with data
- Sprout Social analytics Event Impact Reporting - following every conference and event



Management Plan

3) Provide Vendor's financial statements and most recent audit or provide electronic access to same.

