



Application for the NSPRA 2016 “Mark of Distinction” Recognition

Providing Professional Development/PR Skill-Building

Application for Section II: Special Focus Area; 1. Professional Development/PR Skill-Building; Category A – less than 50% NSPRA membership

Requirements and Criteria

The Missouri School Public Relations Association meets and exceeds all requirements and criteria to apply for recognition in the NSPRA “Mark of Distinction” Program. Of MOSPRA’s 176 members, 61 are members of NSPRA. The MOSPRA Board meets a minimum of four times each year. In October 2015, our Treasurer submitted information to NSPRA about our cash flow and membership contact list. We have notified NSPRA of our newly elected officers and we adhere to chapter bylaws.

Providing Professional Development/PR Skill-Building

Professional development is central to the work of MOSPRA. As an association we work to provide meaningful, applicable PD for those along the professional continuum, from the first-year practitioner to the savvy veteran, from the individual running a one-person shop through to those who work in larger departments, and from those working in school districts with only a thousand students to those with more than 20,000 students.

It is not an exaggeration to say that professional development IS what MOSPRA is all about. The examples noted in this application are specific methods for PD, but like NSPRA, MOSPRA’s members recognize the benefit of being part of a supportive network. MOSPRA members know that they are only a phone call or an email away from support, and in a manner, that is professional development.

SPECIAL NOTE: ALL SUPPORTIVE DOCUMENTS AND RELATIVE MATERIALS ARE LOCATED AT THIS LINK:

<http://mospra.schoolwires.com/domain/64>

A link to our yearly membership survey, a tool that assists us with data-driven decisions, is included here and on the noted website:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-5C8NQLBC/>

Our Strategic Plan, (Objectives 1.2 and 1.3.), outlines many of the professional development opportunities we provide including:

- Fall Conference
- Spring Conference
- Regional meetings
- Colleague Connections (mentoring)
- APR Promotion
- Communications Contest
- Scholarships to Spring, Fall and NSPRA Conferences
- *Special note:* In 2015, MOSPRA officially began developing **sub-regional meetings** to better reach members who are not located near the hubs of our regions. These “rogue” groups, as they were initially labeled, have been particularly helpful in reaching out to smaller districts, and equally important, adding several superintendents to our membership.

Links:

Strategic Plan: <http://mospra.schoolwires.com/domain/63>

Fall Conference

MOSPRA initiated its Fall conference in 2006. For many years MOSPRA has held a successful Spring Conference, but member surveys made clear that they wanted a shorter Fall Conference that would go very deeply into a single PR/Communications topic. In November 2015, our Eastern Region hosted the Fall Conference focusing on Crisis Management and Communications. Our presenter was Past NSPRA President, Rick Kaufmann. It was our most successful conference in many ways including number of registrants and positive feedback.

Links:

Agenda and marketing tools (single document) and participant survey.

Spring Conference

Each year MOSPRA holds its Spring Conference jointly with the Missouri Association of School Administrators (MASA). Holding the conference with school superintendents is mutually beneficial on many levels including shared professional development sessions. Naturally, we feel it is also in our members best interest to share time with those who often serve as their bosses. Another advantage is that we tend to add members when superintendents see the benefits of either joining MOSPRA themselves, or better, hiring a communications officer into their district. The feedback from the Spring Conference reinforces the quality of the PD offered and the value everyone sees in holding a joint conference.

Links:

Conference program, sample session presentations, marketing tools and surveys.

Regional Meetings

MOSPRA is divided into four regions: Eastern (Greater St. Louis), Western (Greater Kansas City), Ozark (Southwest Missouri) and Mid-State (much of the “out state” area). Each region has its own director who oversees regular meetings. Professional development is part of nearly every meeting.

Links:

Agendas (including the PD topic of the day); select presentations

Colleague Connections

As part of member services, MOSPRA offers our Colleague Connections program. In essence, this is a mentoring program, but we choose to look at it as a two-way street for many reasons: sometimes the “mentee” is a seasoned superintendent who brings much knowledge to the table, and there are those times where the “mentee” has come from the private sector and they can share their insights into public relations and communications as well. Regardless, of the background of the new member, MOSPRA provides a veteran communications person to serve as a sounding board and guide. In the past year we have aligned four new members with a colleague.

Links:

<http://mospra.schoolwires.com/site/Default.aspx?PageID=74>; list of those participating in the program

APR Promotion

Each year the MOSPRA Board appoints a member to oversee our APR professional development cohort. Members who are interested in pursuing their APR may join the cohort for ongoing assistance in preparation for the Readiness Review. Participation varies from year to year.

Links:

<http://mospra.schoolwires.com/domain/50>; **syllabus and participants**

Communications Contest

MOSPRA invites members to enter the only awards program in Missouri specifically recognizing high quality school publications and materials that promote the mission and message of a school district. The MOSPRA Communications Contest is designed to provide recognition for creative and effective work in school public relations, as well as valuable feedback from public relations professionals. Each entry is evaluated and assigned an award category based upon points awarded. In addition, the top entry for each category is recognized publicly at the Fall MOSPRA Conference. Public relations professionals from across the state and country judge this contest.

Links:

<http://mospra.schoolwires.com/Page/30>; **marketing tool; list of 2015 top award winners**

Sub-Regional (Rogue) Groups

MOSPRA's mission includes providing quality professional development, but it also calls for the organization to 1) support the growth of communications positions in school districts and 2) attract new members, including superintendents, to the association. For many years, members have presented to other organizations across the state in order to help those groups improve their own communications. A byproduct of those presentations included occasionally attracting a new member. Three years ago, Jill Filer, a Past President of MOSPRA, initiated a meeting of school administrators from neighboring districts that were just outside the established regional hubs of her region. The group would come together formally several times during the year and discuss public relations and communications issues over lunch. Since the initial concept was something Jill Filer put together on her own, we called them "Jill's Rogue Group," but it was clear that she was on to something. The Board decided to formalize what Jill was doing and launch similar groups in other areas of the state that did not have ready access to regular regional meetings. While the process is still in its infancy, we are already seeing positive return both in the professional development being offered and in

membership growth (we have added no fewer than five superintendents or assistant superintendents via this program).

Links:

Program overview and meeting agendas

Scholarships to Spring, Fall and NSPRA Conferences

With the understanding that our members work for districts that must watch their budgets carefully, the MOSPRA Board sets aside funding to provide multiple scholarships to our members so that they may attend workshops, seminars and conferences. For the 2015-2016 year, MOSPRA provided four scholarships for members to attend one of our state conferences (valued at \$250 each) and four scholarships for members to attend the NSPRA National Seminar (valued at \$500 each).

Links: <http://mospra.schoolwires.com/domain/37>; **letter; list of 2015-16 recipients**

Reflecting NSPRA's Goals and Objectives

MOSPRA's goals, objective and overall mission are very much aligned to those of our national association. For this application, we believe that we are meeting or exceeding all of the goals and beliefs noted below. We hope that our application and supportive documentation sufficiently demonstrates our commitment to quality school public relations and communications.

NSPRA GOALS AND BELIEFS - Policy 110.

Goal 1. NSPRA will be the professional organization that is indispensable to school public relations professionals and other education leaders.

1. NSPRA members will have the skills they need to plan and implement an effective public relations program.
2. NSPRA members will be recognized and valued as trusted advisors and members of school/district leadership teams.
3. School communication professionals, superintendents and other education leaders will use NSPRA products, services and resources.
4. NSPRA members will exhibit commitment and dedication to the Association.

Goal 2. NSPRA will be the recognized leader and authority on school public relations.

1. NSPRA (staff and members) will be visible throughout the educational community.
2. NSPRA will be the primary source of expert information and knowledge on school public relations.

3. School communication professionals, superintendents and other education leaders will understand the positive impact of an effective public relations program on student achievement and on a district's mission.
4. NSPRA members will use new and emerging communication technology to expand outreach and engage all stakeholders, including students, parents, staff and community members, in the schools.
5. NSPRA will have beneficial relationships with other organizations.
6. NSPRA will advocate for effective public relations in education organizations.

Respectfully submitted: May 3, 2016
David Luther