



Wisconsin National Guard

COMREL Plan

Wisconsin National Guard

2400 Wright Street

Madison, WI 53704

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1 Introduction

The Community Relations (COMREL) Plan explains the methods of expanding outreach efforts for the Wisconsin National Guard.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to identify and coordinate COMREL efforts. This plan facilitates coordinated communications to identified audiences and addresses the audience's needs for standardizing communications to convey awareness, information, and address issues.

The audience is broken into these categories

- Media
- General Public & Specific Publics
- Military Public (current members, retirees)
- Legislative/Government Leaders

1.2 COMREL Objectives

The key objectives of the WING COMREL Plan include:

- **Educate** – inform audiences about the WING through outreach efforts aimed at explaining what the WING is, benefits and contributions to the state and nation. Explain who we are, what we do, and why we matter to ensure understanding and thereby public support for our missions.
- **Humanize** – tell the personal and humanizing story of the WING by outreach efforts and interactions with specified audiences. Demonstrate that our diversity in background is what makes our force strong and effective.
- **Expand Partnerships**- increase partnerships within the community and increase collaboration with stakeholders.

2 Roles and Responsibilities

This chapter identifies the roles and responsibilities of WING Public Affairs staff as it relates to COMREL operations

2.1 WING COMREL Team

The members of the WING COMREL Team perform the outreach efforts described in this plan. Although, not all-inclusive, listed below is a brief description of some of the duties within this area of the WING Public Affairs Team.

Director of Communications – Lt Col Penny Ripperger

- Implements vision and direction of the PA office. Serves as TAG interface and completes admin and senior leadership tasks. Back up media spokesperson/approval for media products.

Deputy Director of Communications – MAJ Joseph Trovato

- Focus on external communication products, to include news releases, talking points, and speeches. Serves as the primary media spokesperson and approval authority for media products.

Public Affairs Officer with COMREL & History focus – MAJ Brian Faltinson

- POC for military COMREL events, such as homecomings and roadshows. Serves as the media COMREL spokesperson. Acts as PA historian and assigned WING special projects.

Community Relations Officer – Kelly Bradley

- Primary POC for COMREL events, such as open houses, community events and networking opportunities. Serves as the subject matter expert for COMREL regulations and customer service interactions. Coordinates approvals of military orientation flights, speaker requests, flyovers and the loan/lease of federal equipment in support of missions.

Legislative Liaison – Bridget Esser

- Acts as the liaison and coordinator to legislative contacts and one of the primary POCs for government and legislative officials.

3 COMREL Activities

Type of Activity	Audience	Frequency	POC	Purpose	Notes
Military Educational Events	Media & Legislative	Annual or As needed	Trovato/Esser	Educate and Build Relationships	Ex: Military 101 Events, visit news rooms, open houses, media flights, armory tours
Open House	General & Specific Publics	FY21- 1x year FY22- 2x year	Bradley	Educate and Humanize	Ex: Educators, employers, family members, tie in with recruiting ops
Community Outreach Events	General & Specific Public	FY21- 1x year FY22- 2x year	Bradley/Varied	Educate, Humanize & Build Relationships	Ex: Movie nights, picnics w/static displays, events at armories, orgs (i.e. Boy Scouts, etc.)
Tour Program	General Public	Monthly	Bradley	Educate & Humanize	Offer monthly WING tour, coordinate w/Armories and Air Bases to highlight different areas
Agency Partnerships	Specific Publics: Students & employers	As Needed	Faltinson	Educate & Build Relationships	Collaborate with Starbase and Challenge Academy to educate students about the WING. Partner with ESGR to promote civilian employers.
Speakers Bureau	General and Specific Public	As Requested	Ripperger	Educate, Humanize and Build Relationships	Set expectations for senior leader involvement in community, create resources for all WING members to tell WING story
Military Homecomings and Send Off Events	General Public and Family	As Needed	Faltinson	Educate & Humanize	Highlight WING deployments, coordinate with Air to expand Air coverage, when able.
Public/Private Meetings	Specific Public and Legislative	TBD	Ripperger/Esser	Educate and Build Relationships	Ex: Legislative 1:1's, PFAS public meetings
DMA COMREL Requests	General Public	As Needed	Bradley	Educate & Humanize	Requests submitted to DMA office – i.e. Speaker Requests, Flyovers, Static Displays, Band Performances, Parades, etc.
Radio Updates	General Public	Weekly/Monthly	Trovato	Educate & Humanize	Leverage WBA to Obtain a 'slot' on a weekly/ monthly radio show to give WING updates

3.1.1 COMREL Activities Grouped by Audience

AUDIENCE: Media

- Media Open House at local armories/facilities (in high payoff markets initially – Milwaukee, Madison, Green Bay, Wausau, La Crosse)
- Media Tours/Media Flights/Media Days
- 1:1 Education Events to improve military literacy
- News Station/ Editorial Board Visits

AUDIENCE: General Public

- Open House
- Community Outreach – Movie Nights, Picnics, Equip Days (i.e. Dozer Days or Career Night)
- Tour Program
- Speakers Bureau
- DMA COMREL Requests – flyovers, static displays, speaker requests, media flights, etc.
- Milwaukee Armed Forces Week integration

AUDIENCE: Specific Public

- Open House – focus on educators, employers, etc.
- Agency Partnerships – Partner w/Starbase, Challenge Academy & ESGR
- GO Inspire Program – focus on underserved populations
- Public Meetings – PFAS

AUDIENCE: Military Families

- Military Homecomings
- Military Send Offs
- Senior Leader Meet & Greet
- Mid-tour FRG events (integrate with mid-tour family events already happening)

AUDIENCE: Legislative/Government Leaders

- Public Meetings
- Open House/Tours – Legislator focus
- 1:1 Education Events – Legislator focus

4 COMREL Action Plan

The following information contains strategic direction, related goals and objectives to fulfill the WING's COMREL strategies.

4.1 Strategic Objective #1: Implement outreach activities that educate audiences about the WING.

4.1.1 Goal: Editorial Board 'sit downs' with media

Action Steps:

1. Leverage relationships with media in major media markets and schedule meetings to educate about Guard units and history in the area, missions, objectives, point to resources (like DVIDS, website, Flickr, etc.), and local story pitches.
2. Intent is to give overview of Guard, answer questions and develop relationships to improve military literacy and facilitate media sharing accurate information to our other publics.
3. **Success Measure:** Sit-downs with primary news agencies scheduled by end of FY21. Yearly event going forward. Focus on high-payoff markets initially (Milwaukee, Madison, Green Bay, La Crosse, Wausau, and expand to smaller markets in future).

Responsible: MAJ Trovato

4.1.2 Goal: Create PFAS materials for Phase 2 communications

Action Steps:

1. Update talking points, website, and fact sheets about WING PFAS initiatives
2. Public Meeting preparations – research logistics, agendas, Q&A's, etc.
3. Identify target markets and create draft direct marketing materials for mass mailers/info blasts
4. **Success Measure:** Entire plan is prepared in draft form and ready for implementation for Phase 2 – draft plan complete NLT June 2021.

Responsible: Lt Col Ripperger (Esser)

4.1.3 Goal: Media participation in WING events**Action Steps:**

1. Invite media to planned exercises and events (i.e. Annual exercises like SIMCOM, GridEx, Patriot, Annual Training, Northern Lightning)
2. Invite media to all homecoming and sendoff ceremonies
3. **Success Measure:** Media is invited to all major exercises and troop deployment ceremonies and media attends and publishes stories on 75 percent of all events to which they were invited.

Responsible: MAJ Trovato**4.1.4 Goal: Implement Open House event at DMA****Action Steps:**

1. Create a SOP for WING Open House events
2. Establish contacts and working groups, as needed
3. Implement a schedule for future Open House events
4. **Success Measure:** Create SOP by the end of FY21. Conduct one Open House event in FY22 with the goal to implement two Open House events in the future FYs (one specific audience and one general audience).

Responsible: Kelly Bradley**4.1.5 Goal: Incorporate WING into partner agency educational programs****Action Steps:**

1. Establish relationships with partner agencies, specifically Challenge Academy and Starbase and ensure WING is involved in educating students about the National Guard.
2. Collaborate with RRB and Air Recruiting on effort to host career day with visit to local WING facilities and do meet and greets with Soldiers and Airmen in STEM fields (Starbase)
3. Coordinate WING into curriculum to highlight benefits and connections to the Guard
4. **Success Measure:** Make contact and create a 2021/2022 plan to integrate WING into programs, as applicable.

Responsible: MAJ Faltinson

4.1.6 Goal: Implement a DMA Tour Program**Action Steps:**

1. Research options and establish contacts within DMA to create a draft schedule itinerary
2. Work with WING, WEM and OEC to ensure DMA story is accurately covered
3. Coordinate a 'Welcome to DMA' video to highlight the organization (play at beginning of tours)
4. **Success Measure:** Tour program with SOPs established NLT Dec 2021. Monthly tours offered to public beginning in 2022.

Responsible: Kelly Bradley

4.2 Strategic Objective #2: Develop COMREL programs that further humanize the Guard to the public.**4.2.1 Goal: Plan a COMREL Kickoff Event – Sparta Send Off Ceremony****Action Steps:**

1. Sparta event – invite Governor, legislators and media
2. Handle all logistics, scripts, and talking point papers
3. Ensure media receive individual treatment for relatable stories per region
4. **Success Measure:** Accomplishment of a military sendoff event with max positive media exposure, estimated date: May 29.

Responsible: MAJ Faltinson (MAJ Trovato)

4.2.2 Goal: Establish a WING Speaker's Bureau**Action Steps:**

1. Develop and get senior leader approval of strategy and expectations
2. Create speaker bureau tools for presenters (general talking points and key messages)
3. Generate speaker list based on areas of expertise and regions and outreach activities to expand WING message
4. **Success Measure:** Soft launch of a WING Speakers Bureau initiated NLT October 2021, with full implementation by January 2022. Incorporating 2-3 speaking engagements via the bureau by end of FY2022.

Responsible: Lt Col Ripperger

4.3 Strategic Goal #3: Continue to **expand partnerships** with WING COMREL audiences through outreach efforts.

4.3.1 Goal: Coordinate Media Field Trip

Action Steps:

1. Create plan and organize logistics for trip
2. Collaborate with Air and Army POCs for support
3. Advertise to media
4. Success Measure: Host first Media Field Trip by January 2022.

Responsible: MAJ Trovato

4.3.2 Goal: Show support to WING employers

Action Steps:

1. Network with ESGR to implement programs highlighting civilian employers
2. Create employer 'thank you' videos – individual and series with messages gathered from field and ESGR-themed hashtag
3. TAG editorial to newspapers/ TAG Talk messages
4. **Success Measure:** Create communication plan to begin implementation NLT May 1 with a focus on monthly highlights of WING civilian employers from May 1 – Oct 1 2021.

Responsible: MAJ Faltinson

4.3.3 Goal: Integrate GO Inspire Plan into WING COMREL Plan

Action Steps:

1. See Appendix 1.1 for plan details
2. Collaborate with Air bases and form GO Inspire Team
3. Create an internal marketing plan.
3. **Success Measure:** Launch of the WING GO Inspire Program by June 2021.

Responsible: Lt Col Ripperger (GO Inspire Team)

5 COMREL Roadmap

Items in **BOLD** are deadlines, *italicized* items are suggested activities to meet deadlines. The focus of FY21 is preparation and implementation of the COMREL program, with a specific employer/ESGR emphasis. FY22 COMREL activities will focus on full implementation in a post COVID-19 environment.

FY21: Media Sit Down/Field Trip, 1 Community Event, 1 Open House, PFAS Prep, Employer Highlights, Speakers Bureau, Starbase/Challenge academy partnership

FY22: Continued FY21 activities + additional community/Open House events (2 each), increased PFAS activities, full implementation of Speakers Bureau & monthly DMA tours, expand frequency of media sit-downs and tours.

FY 2021 (Oct 1 2020 - Sep 30 2021) - Preparation Phase					
April	May	June	July	August	September
Employer/ESGR Comm Plan finalized (F)	Memorial Day (31) Armed Forces Week	FY21 Media Sit Downs begin (T)	Independence Day (4)	Northern Lightning	FY21 Media Sit Downs complete (T)
	COMREL Kickoff Event: Sparta Homecoming (F)	PFAS Phase II Materials complete (R)			FY21 Community Event complete (B)
WING Open House Coordination & Research (B)		Begin Speaker Bureau Creation (R)		Speaker Bureau soft launch & rollout (R)	WING Open House SOP created
	Establish relationship with partner agencies (F)				Make a 2021/2022 plan with partner agencies

FY 2022 (Oct 1 2021 - Sep 30 2022) - Partial Implementation (Q1 & Q2)					
October	November	December	January	February	March
	Veterans Day (11)		FY21 Media Field Trip Complete (T)		
PFAS Phase II implementation (likely)(R)		PFAS Public Meetings/Outreach Activities (ongoing)	Speakers Bureau Implemented (R)*	Monthly Tour Scheduled (B)	Monthly Tour Scheduled (B)
Speaker Bureau soft launch & rollout (R)		DMA Tour Program Established (B)	Begin Speaker Bureau full implementation (R)		Speakers Bureau Engagement (R)

FY 2022 (Oct 1 2021 - Sep 30 2022) - Full Implementation (Q3 & Q4)					
April	May	June	July	August	September
Monthly Tour Scheduled (B)	Memorial Day (30)	Monthly Tour Scheduled (B)	Independence Day (4)		FY22 Media Field Trip (T)
FY22 Media Sit Downs Begin (T)	FY2022 Open House			Monthly Tour Scheduled (B)	Monthly Tour Scheduled (B)
	Monthly Tour Scheduled (B)		Monthly Tour Scheduled (B)		FY22 Media Sit Downs complete (T)
	Speakers Bureau Engagement (R)		Speakers Bureau Engagement (R)		Speakers Bureau Engagement (R)

6 APPENDIX

1.1 General Officer (GO) Inspire Program

Background: The GO Inspire Program is an Air Force initiative to increase senior leader outreach by directing GOs to be involved in at least 1-2 public speaking engagements per year to underserved populations. The intent of this initiative is to expand Air Force knowledge and ultimately increase recruiting opportunities in underserved areas.

WING Adaption: Per Brig. Gen. Eric Peterson's direction, a variation of the GO Inspire Program will be implemented within the WING. The intent of the WING GO Inspire Program will focus on *building relationships* in key underserved communities through outreach and speaking opportunities. Community outreach activities will not be limited to just general officers, but rather a variety of presenters. The emphasis will be to ensure the Airman presenting/interacting with the underserved populations have the ability to connect with the intended audience, (i.e. based on personality/experience versus rank).

The WING GO Inspire Program will consist of three phases:

- **Phase 1: Build & Empower a WING GO Inspire Team (Feb 2021)**
 - Team: Lt Col Penny Ripperger (State PAO), Lt Col Amber Reiter (Exec), Lt Col Christine Schmoker (J-9), Capt Amanda Dickinson (PA rep), Chief Bill Smith (128ARW rep), SMSgt Zach Brewer (State Recruiting) and SMSgt Jamie Mills (Exec), & TSgt David Brown (EO)
- **Phase 2: Identify and Engage with Community Stakeholders (Mar-May 2021)**
 - Identify underserved populations and POCs to represent these populations
 - Finalize/approve lists with WING Leadership & coordinate event date/agenda for each base (Volk, 128ARW and 115FW)
 - Invites sent to POCs by May 2021.
- **Phase 3: Execute the Plan (June 2021)**
 - Agenda generation for each base:
 - Base Tour/Displays
 - Briefings (AFWERKS, Challenge Academy, Starbase, PAO services)
 - Lunch format – 1:1 discussions
 - Implement feedback mechanism for future networking opportunities
 - Incorporate results into future planning and COMREL activities
 - GO Inspire Group will continue to meet each drill to track results and update schedule, as needed.