



Sustainability Partnership

# Communications Strategy

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## I. Purpose of the Communications Strategy

The purpose of this communication strategy is to support the inclusive and intentional framework of the Lake Superior Headwaters Sustainability Partnership (Headwaters Partnership) by guiding how we share information, coordinate across sectors, and amplify the collective work of partners, including tribal nations, local governments, conservation organizations, researchers, and community members.

Through clear, consistent, and transparent communication, we ensure that diverse perspectives spanning natural resource management, community health, and economic development are heard, connected, and reflected in our shared efforts. Effective communication strengthens trust among partners, aligns common goals, and helps build the foundation for broader public understanding, support, and engagement.

This strategy outlines how the Partnership will share information, celebrate successes, and engage people across the region. It defines who we aim to reach, what messages matter most, and how we communicate with authenticity, clarity, and respect. Ultimately, it serves as both a roadmap and a collaborative commitment to telling the story of the Lake Superior Headwaters in ways that inspire participation and long-term stewardship.

Our communication approach is guided by the same principles that shape the Partnership's work: inclusivity, transparency, collaboration, and adaptability.

### **Through intentional communication, we aim to:**

- Build shared understanding of the Partnership's purpose, structure, and progress toward a sustainable, resilient socio-ecological landscape.
- Foster collaboration by strengthening relationships, sharing knowledge, and coordinating actions among diverse partners and sectors.
- Engage communities by connecting people to the values, opportunities, and outcomes of the Partnership's work, and while ensuring that communication processes and materials are accessible, representative, and responsive to community needs.
- Enhance trust and transparency through clear, consistent, and inclusive messaging and storytelling.

Through these efforts, communication becomes more than an exchange of information—it enables the Headwaters Partnership to function as a unified, collaborative community of

practice working together to achieve a sustainable and thriving Lake Superior Headwaters region.

## **II. Background & Context**

### **About the Partnership**

The Lake Superior Headwaters Sustainability Partnership (Headwaters Partnership) is a collaborative network of tribal nations, local governments, conservation organizations, researchers, and community members working to support a healthy, resilient Lake Superior Headwaters region. The Partnership emerged from the recognition by multiple agencies involved in the cleanup and recovery of the Lower St. Louis River that continued coordination and collaboration would be essential even after the St. Louis River Area of Concern is delisted.

Building on this foundation, the Partnership uses a Landscape Conservation Design (LCD) approach to create a structured coordination framework. This approach brings together local communities and tribal, State, and federal agencies responsible for managing natural resources to develop a shared vision for the conservation and utilization of these resources. Through this framework, partners coordinate land use and restoration strategies, apply common metrics to plan, measure, and track success, and foster networking and collaboration across sectors.

The Partnership is supported by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and is managed locally by the Minnesota Land Trust (MLT), which facilitates coordination among agencies, organizations, and stakeholders influencing land use decisions.

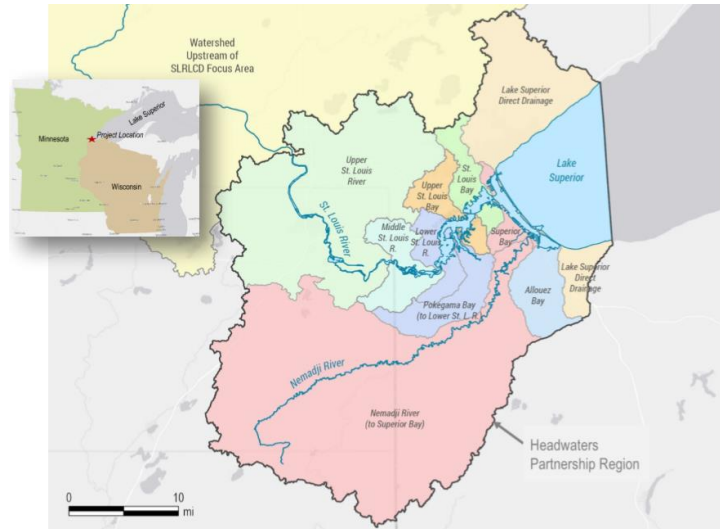
### **Geographic Focus**

The Partnership's focus area encompasses the Lake Superior headwaters region, including the Lower St. Louis River and surrounding landscapes in northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin. This region is ecologically significant, with diverse habitats that

support fish, wildlife, and plant communities, while also enriching the lives of the people who are connected to this place.

The area is also culturally important to local Tribal Nations and communities whose livelihoods, traditions, and well-being are closely tied to the health of the river and its surrounding landscape. The

Partnership aims to integrate ecological, social, and economic priorities to support a sustainable and resilient future for the region.



## Challenges & Opportunities

The Lake Superior headwaters region faces a number of environmental, social, and governance challenges, including habitat degradation, legacy pollution, and competing land use pressures. The Partnership provides opportunities to address these challenges through collaboration and innovation:

- **Cross-sector collaboration:** Connecting tribal, local, state, and federal partners with community organizations and researchers to share knowledge and align efforts.
- **Integrated planning:** Balancing natural resource management, community health, and economic development priorities.
- **Networking and capacity-building:** Linking local projects to the broader landscape, identifying new opportunities, and addressing emerging needs.
- **Sustainable outcomes:** Promoting measurable improvements in ecological integrity, community well-being, and long-term resilience.

Through this collaborative approach, the Headwaters Partnership strengthens stewardship, supports informed decision-making, and fosters a thriving, sustainable Lake Superior headwaters region for people and nature alike.

## III. High-Level Communications Goals

This section highlights the overarching communications goals that guide how the Partnership informs, connects, and engages partners and communities.

## **1. Build Awareness and Shared Understanding**

Increase visibility and understanding of the Partnership's purpose, structure, and regional significance.

- Raise awareness of the Partnership's vision, initiatives, and progress.
- Provide clear, consistent messaging that explains why the headwaters matter and how the Partnership advances sustainability and resilience.
- Share updates, resources, data, and success stories that inform and inspire partners and the public.

## **2. Strengthen Collaboration and Information Exchange**

Support coordinated action and learning across Tribal Nations, local governments, conservation organizations, researchers, and community partners.

- Provide reliable channels for sharing projects, opportunities, research, and lessons learned.
- Encourage alignment across sectors through shared language, communication tools, and consistent messaging.
- Promote relationship-building that supports collective problem-solving.

## **3. Foster Engagement and Participation**

Create pathways for partners, stakeholders, and communities to participate meaningfully in the Partnership's work.

- Encourage input that helps shape priorities, initiatives, and shared strategies.
- Offer clear opportunities for involvement such as workshops, meetings, volunteer events, and community conversations.
- Ensure communication processes and materials are accessible, representative, and responsive to community and Tribal perspectives.

## **4. Celebrate Achievements and Demonstrate Leadership**

Highlight accomplishments to build momentum, reinforce impact, and elevate the work of partners.

- Showcase milestones, project outcomes, and partner-led successes.
- Recognize the contributions of Tribal Nations, local governments, conservation organizations, researchers, and community members.
- Share insights and contexts that position the Partnership as a trusted source of information for natural resource and community planning across the region.

## 5. Reach and Inspire the Wider Community

Expand awareness and support beyond formal partners to foster broader public stewardship of the Lake Superior headwaters. *This is a near-term aspiration and long-term goal.*

- Communicate stories, values, and opportunities that resonate with residents, visitors, and regional stakeholders.
- Promote events, trainings, and engagement opportunities that invite public participation.
- Increase visibility of headwaters sustainability efforts across the region through coordinated outreach.

## IV. Key Messages

This section presents the core messages that guide consistent, audience-aligned communication for the Partnership. These key messages reflect the Partnership’s purpose, values, and goals, and provide a foundation for tailoring communications to specific audiences as detailed in the Audience Matrix in the next section.

### Core Messages

- **Collaboration Builds Resilience**  
The Partnership connects Tribal Nations, local governments, nonprofits, researchers, and community members to strengthen ecological and community outcomes. *Emphasized for: Forum, Habitat Work Group, Tribal Nations, External Partners, Funders.*
- **Headwaters Health = Community Health**  
Protecting and restoring the Lake Superior headwaters and the St. Louis River

estuary supports thriving communities, ecosystems, and local economies.  
*Emphasized for: Community Council, General Public, Decision-Makers.*

- **We Achieve More Together**

Coordinated action, shared knowledge, and cross-sector collaboration amplify impact and credibility. *Emphasized for: Forum, Coordinators, Internal partners, Tribal Nations.*

- **The Partnership as a Bridge and Hub**

The Headwaters Partnership connects people, projects, and information, providing a central location for shared resources, opportunities, and updates. *Emphasized for: Coordinators, Internal audiences, External Partners, Funders.*

- **Community Voice Matters**

Inclusive engagement and local perspectives are essential to effective decision-making and stewardship. *Emphasized for: Community Council, General Public, Decision-Makers.*

- **Protecting Headwaters Safeguards Our Future**

Evidence-based, sustainable policies and practices ensure long-term ecological and community resilience. *Emphasized for: Decision-Makers, Funders, Media.*

- **Stories Demonstrate Impact**

Sharing successes, lessons learned, and project outcomes builds understanding, trust, and participation. *Emphasized for: Media, General Public, all Internal audiences.*

## Applying Key Messages

- **Audience-Specific Messaging:** The Audience Matrix translates these core messages into language, examples, and channels that resonate with each group.
  - Example: “Collaboration Builds Resilience” appears in newsletters for External Partners, briefings for Funders, and discussion points in Forum meetings.
  - Example: “Headwaters Health = Community Health” is emphasized in public events, community newsletters, etc.
- **Consistency Across Platforms:** All communications including digital, print, in-person, or media, should reflect these messages to maintain alignment with the Partnership’s mission and values.

- **Practical Use:** Communications staff and partners can reference both the Key Messages section and the Audience Matrix to determine:
  - Which message is most relevant to the audience.
  - How to phrase it for accessibility and clarity.
  - Which channels or tactics will be most effective.

These Key Messages serve as the backbone of the Partnership’s communications. When combined with the Audience Matrix, they provide a clear, actionable framework for reaching internal and external audiences, reinforcing shared goals, and fostering trust, collaboration, and public engagement across the Lake Superior headwaters region.

## V. Audience Matrix

The Headwaters Partnership works across sectors, perspectives, and geographic boundaries. Effective communication requires understanding the needs, motivations, and roles of each audience we aim to reach. The following categories guide how we tailor messages, choose communication channels, and create opportunities for engagement.

Internal Audiences				
Audience Category / Subgroup	Description	Desired Actions / Outcomes	Key Messages	Preferred Channels / Tactics
<b>Forum</b>	Primary decision-making body providing strategic direction and high-level coordination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay aligned on goals and strategic priorities.</li> <li>• Review and guide Partnership initiatives.</li> <li>• Ensure cross-sector coordination.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “We achieve more together.”</li> <li>• “The Forum sets the strategic vision that guides all partners.”</li> <li>• “Your input shapes the long-term resilience of the headwaters region.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly meetings</li> <li>• Strategic briefings / reports</li> <li>• Email updates and summary memos</li> <li>• Shared online workspace (e.g., Teams, SharePoint)</li> </ul>

<b>Habitat Work Group</b>	<p>Technical and science-focused group responsible for monitoring, restoration, and management activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share data, research, and restoration updates.</li> <li>• Collaborate on best practices.</li> <li>• Support evidence-based decision-making.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Science and data guide our shared decisions.”</li> <li>• “The Work Group ensures effective, coordinated habitat management.”</li> <li>• “Technical expertise strengthens regional credibility and outcomes.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical reports / briefings</li> <li>• Workshops, webinars, and working sessions</li> <li>• Shared data portals / databases</li> <li>• Email and collaborative project management tools</li> </ul>
<b>Community Council</b>	<p>Community members and local stakeholders providing input and perspectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share community insights and concerns.</li> <li>• Align Partnership initiatives with local priorities.</li> <li>• Participate in outreach and engagement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Community voice matters.”</li> <li>• “Local knowledge strengthens Partnership decisions.”</li> <li>• “Engaged communities support a resilient, healthy headwaters region.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email updates, as needed</li> <li>• Meetings, as needed <i>(dependent on funding)</i></li> <li>• Surveys and feedback tools <i>(to be determined)</i></li> <li>• Partner Collaborations</li> </ul>
<b>Coordinators</b>	<p>Staff or liaisons facilitating communication, logistics, and information-sharing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure smooth flow of information and updates.</li> <li>• Maintain Partnership resources (website, databases, meeting materials).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The Partnership is a hub for connection and information.”</li> <li>• “Coordinators keep partners aligned and informed.”</li> <li>• “Timely communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email distribution lists</li> <li>• Website management</li> <li>• Shared online workspace / collaboration platforms</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support cross-group collaboration and follow-up.</li> </ul>	<p>supports collaboration and action.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting facilitation and follow-up</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority Concerns Team Members / Partners</b> (Tribal Nations, government agencies, nonprofits, researchers, and others)</p>	<p>Broader members contributing expertise, funding, and implementation support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share updates, data, and project progress.</li> <li>• Coordinate with other partners to advance shared initiatives.</li> <li>• Participate in collaborative planning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Collaboration builds resilience.”</li> <li>• “The Partnership connects diverse expertise and perspectives.”</li> <li>• “Our collective work strengthens the health of the headwaters and estuary.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular partner meetings</li> <li>• Newsletters / email updates</li> <li>• Website resource hub</li> <li>• Reports, fact sheets, and technical briefs</li> </ul>

<b>External Audiences</b>				
<b>Audience Category / Subgroup</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Desired Actions / Outcomes</b>	<b>Key Messages</b>	<b>Preferred Channels / Tactics</b>
<p><b>External Partners</b> (Nonprofits, educators, academic institutions, community groups)</p>	<p>Organizations aligned with sustainability and estuary/headwaters work but not in core governance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay informed about Partnership initiatives.</li> <li>• Participate in shared opportunities.</li> <li>• Share information with networks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Collaboration builds resilience.”</li> <li>• “Shared knowledge supports stronger regional outcomes.”</li> <li>• “The Headwaters Partnership connects local</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email updates / newsletters</li> <li>• Partner meetings / workshops</li> <li>• Website updates</li> <li>• Social media highlights</li> </ul>

			work to broader goals.”	
<b>Funders &amp; Grant-Makers</b> (Foundations, agencies, Great Lakes/federal programs)	Entities providing financial support or aligning with watershed and Great Lakes priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in long-term sustainability strategies.</li> <li>• Recognize the Partnership as credible and strategic.</li> <li>• Support multi-year and cross-sector funding needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Cross-sector collaboration maximizes impact.”</li> <li>• “This work advances broader Great Lakes objectives.”</li> <li>• “Sustainable funding ensures long-term resilience.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grant reports and proposals</li> <li>• One-on-one briefings / presentations</li> <li>• Website updates highlighting impact</li> <li>• Impact stories and success summaries</li> </ul>
<b>General Public</b> (Residents, visitors, recreation users)	People who live, work, or recreate in the headwaters and estuary region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide input and participate in engagement activities.</li> <li>• Recognize the connection between watershed health and community wellbeing.</li> <li>• Stay engaged with news, events, and opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Headwaters health = community health.”</li> <li>• “Your voice matters—community engagement is encouraged.”</li> <li>• “Everyone has a role in caring for the estuary and headwaters.”</li> </ul>	<p><b>Future</b> (dependent on funding, capacity, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media campaigns</li> <li>• Public newsletters</li> <li>• Community events and volunteer opportunities</li> <li>• Website content and educational materials</li> </ul>
<b>Decision-Makers</b> (Local/state officials, Tribal)	Leaders who influence policies, land use, and investments affecting the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support sustainable policies.</li> <li>• Integrate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Protecting headwaters safeguards our future.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefings and presentations</li> <li>• Policy memos and fact sheets</li> </ul>

leadership, planning bodies)	estuary and headwaters.	Partnership data and expertise into decisions.  • Advance long-term watershed and estuary resilience.	• “Informed policy strengthens local and regional resilience.”  • “Shared strategies lead to stronger outcomes.”	• Direct emails / outreach  • Invitations to workshops, site visits, or demonstration projects
<b>Media</b> (Local, regional, state, Great Lakes outlets)	Communications professionals and news outlets that amplify stories and broaden visibility.	• Share successes, milestones, and collective achievements.  • Promote awareness and public understanding.  • Support a cultural shift toward stewardship and resilience.	• “The Partnership advances a collaborative vision for a healthy headwaters and estuary.”  • “Partners across sectors are making measurable progress.”  • “Stories demonstrate what is possible through shared leadership.”	• Press releases and media advisories  • Media kits with visuals and key facts  • Story pitches and interviews  • Social media amplification and video content

## VI. Brand & Voice Guidelines

These guidelines ensure that all communications maintain a cohesive identity that resonates with diverse audiences. By doing so, the Headwaters Partnership ensures its communications are recognizable, professional, respectful of all partners and communities, and reflective of the Partnership’s collaborative mission.

### Tone & Voice

The Partnership’s communications should feel:

- Hopeful & Inspiring: Emphasize positive outcomes, progress, and shared potential.
- Collaborative & Inclusive: Highlight partnerships, shared goals, and collective impact.
- Place-Based & Community-Centered: Reflect the unique cultural, ecological, and social context of the Lake Superior headwaters.
- Accessible & Respectful: Ensure language is clear, jargon-free, and inclusive of all audiences.

## Voice Guidelines

- Use “we” instead of “they” to convey shared ownership and responsibility.
- Emphasize solutions, shared goals, and collaborative actions over problems alone.
- Incorporate both scientific and cultural perspectives, including traditional knowledge, where relevant.
- Avoid overly technical language when addressing non-technical audiences; provide context and explanation.

## Visual Identity

A consistent visual identity strengthens recognition and professionalism:

- **Colors:**

### MAIN COLOR PALETTE



### SECONDARY COLOR PALETTE



- **Typography:** Ubuntu Font
- **Logo Use:**
  - Use the Headwaters Partnership logo consistently across materials.
  - Any use of the Headwaters Partnership logo by partner organizations must have prior approval before publication. The logo should be used in

conjunction with materials or projects that align with the Partnership’s mission, values, and initiatives.

- Include partner logos where appropriate and when approved by partner organizations.
- Maintain clear space around logos and ensure readability.
- Prohibited Uses: The logo should not be used for:
  - Endorsement of political campaigns, candidates, or legislation
  - Materials that conflict with the Partnership’s mission or could harm its reputation
  - Modifications that distort, recolor, or otherwise alter the logo’s design
- **Imagery:** Use photographs and graphics that reflect the landscape, communities, and collaborative work of the Partnership. Highlight diversity in both human and ecological subjects.

## Language & Attribution Tips

- **Representation:** Always credit work to the Partnership and/or participating organizations when describing collaborative initiatives.
- **Attribution Rules:**
  - When sharing data, graphics, or photos, clearly indicate the source organization.
  - Avoid presenting joint initiatives as the work of a single entity; language should reflect shared effort.
- **Inclusive Language:** Use gender-neutral terms and avoid jargon that may exclude audiences.
- **Consistency:** Align all written, spoken, and digital content with the Partnership’s key messages and communications principles.

## VII. Channels & Tactics

The Headwaters Partnership uses a combination of internal and external communication channels to share information, strengthen collaboration, and engage partners and the broader community. Each channel is used intentionally based on capacity, audience, and purpose.

### Internal Channels

<b>Channel</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Led/Managed By</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>Email Updates</b>	As needed (milestones, reminders, time-sensitive updates)	Partnership Coordinators	All partners	Provide updates, announcements, meeting reminders, project milestones, and key documents.
<b>Partner Meeting Notes &amp; Briefs</b>	After each partner, working group meeting, or major event	Partnership Coordinators	All partners	Summarize decisions, action items, and next steps; maintain transparency and alignment across teams.
<b>Shared Online Workspace</b> (Teams & SharePoint)	Ongoing	Coordinators (management); all partners (usage)	All partners	Central hub for documents, calendars, collaboration; real-time editing, version control, archiving.
<b>Internal/ Partner Newsletter</b>	Quarterly or biannual	Partnership Coordinator	All partners	<i>Current:</i> Promote engagement opportunities.  <i>Future:</i> Share high-level updates, partner projects, and resources.
<b>Website – Partner Access &amp; Tools</b>	Updated as needed	Partnership Coordinators (provide updates), Web Consultants (manage)	<i>Future Opportunity:</i> Partners with login access	<i>Current:</i> Provide mapping tools, downloadable resources (i.e. Public Engagement Toolkit). <i>Future:</i> Data layers, saved map views; support coordinated planning and collaborative tools.

## External Channels

<b>Channel</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Led/Managed By</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>Email Updates</b>	As needed (milestones, reminders, time-sensitive updates)	Partnership Coordinators	All partners	Provide updates, announcements, meeting reminders, project milestones, and key documents.
<b>Public-Facing Website</b>	As content becomes available	Partnership Coordinators (provide updates), Web Consultants (manage), Community Council (input)	Public and stakeholders	Current: Main public information source; uses templates for event summaries and resources. Future: Project spotlights; engagement opportunity promotions, etc.
<b>Presentations</b>	As needed for meetings, briefings, community events, or conferences	Partnership Coordinators, Partnership Members	Public audiences, stakeholders, decision-makers, community groups, funders	Provide clear, consistent, and aligned messaging; share project updates, science summaries, and partnership stories; support transparency and relationship-building.
<b>Public Engagement Events</b> (i.e. Gathering Grounds, Heart of the Estuary)	2–4 annually or as opportunities arise	Project leads, Communications lead, or partner reps	Partners, community members, stakeholders	Engage communities; use story maps and visuals to communicate data; build relationships and transparency.
<b>Future External Channels</b> <i>(capacity and funding dependent)</i>				
<b>External Newsletter</b>	Quarterly or biannual (capacity-dependent)	Communications lead or partner with capacity	Public, stakeholders, interested community members	Share LSHSP story, mission, vision, partner highlights, project spotlights including timelines, successes,

				input opportunities, other general updates, visuals, and resources.
<b>Social Media</b>	TBD; occasional posts via partner channels or Headwaters Partnership specific account	Communications lead; partners amplify content	Public audiences	Extend reach of events, stories, and announcements; may become dedicated accounts as capacity grows.
<b>Press Releases &amp; Media Outreach</b>	As needed	Communications lead with partners	Regional media outlets and public	Elevate awareness, credibility, and major accomplishments.

<b>Shared Tools</b>		
<b>Tool</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>Presentations / PowerPoint</b>	Created/refreshed as needed	Support aligned, professional communication across meetings and events.
<b>Handouts PDF</b>	Updated as needed for events, briefings, or education	Communicate scope, mission, and vision of Partnership.
<b>Interactive Mapping Tool</b>	Updated as new data becomes available	Includes various layers including Environmental Justice Tool, Habitat Plan Update, etc.
<b>Data Dashboards</b>	Updated as new data becomes available	Provide real-time insights into progress, ecological data, and project metrics.
<b>Community Engagement Framework</b>	Created/refreshed as needed	Guidelines for how partners engage and communicate with each other and the public.
<b>Community Engagement Toolkit</b>	Updated as new data becomes available	Worksheets partners can use to design and facilitate engagement for their products.

## VII. Accessibility & Inclusivity

The Headwaters Partnership is committed to communication that is accessible, inclusive, and respectful of the diverse communities we serve. Our approach ensures that all partners and community members can meaningfully participate, understand shared information, and engage in decision-making.

## **Plain Language**

We use clear, concise, and jargon-free language in all external communications. Technical terms are explained, and materials are structured to support easy reading and comprehension. The goal is to make information understandable to non-experts while maintaining scientific accuracy.

## **ADA-Compliant Digital Content**

Digital materials including web content, PDFs, videos, and presentations, are created or adapted to meet ADA accessibility standards. This includes:

- Providing alt text for images.
- Ensuring keyboard navigability.
- Using high-contrast colors and legible typography.
- Captioning videos and providing transcripts.

## **Accessible Meeting Formats**

Meetings and events are planned to maximize access and participation. Strategies include:

- Offering hybrid (in-person + virtual) formats whenever possible.
- Providing American Sign Language (ASL) and other interpreters upon request.
- Ensuring wheelchair accessible venues and clear wayfinding information.
- Sharing materials in advance in accessible formats.
- Offering varied meeting times to reach those with different work or family schedules.

## **Incorporating Feedback from Diverse Communities**

Feedback is essential to ensuring our communications remain relevant, respectful, and effective. We commit to:

- Actively seeking input from partners, community leaders, and residents from diverse backgrounds.
- Using surveys, listening sessions, and one-on-one conversations to gather insights.
- Reviewing and adapting our communications based on community feedback.
- Closing the loop by reporting back on how input-shaped decisions or materials.

## **VIII. Future Needs and Opportunities**

As the Headwaters Partnership continues to mature and evolve beyond the St. Louis River Area of Concern delisting, several strategic communication needs and opportunities have been identified. Addressing these areas will strengthen coordination, improve clarity for partners and the public, and support long-term sustainability of the Partnership’s work. Many of these opportunities are capacity- and funding-dependent and can be phased in over time.

### **Clear, Consistent Foundational Information**

#### **General Information / Elevator Speech**

There is a need for a concise, shared description of the Headwaters Partnership that can be used consistently across meetings, presentations, grant proposals, and public-facing materials. A clear “elevator speech” will help partners confidently explain who the Partnership is, why it exists, and how it adds value to the Lake Superior headwaters region.

#### **Updated Overview PDF / Handout**

An updated, visually engaging one- to two-page PDF handout would support outreach, onboarding, and public engagement. This material could include:

- Partnership purpose and vision
- Geographic focus map
- Core activities and outcomes
- Key partners and funders
- Contact and website information

This resource would be adaptable for events, briefings, conferences, and digital sharing.

### **Partner Onboarding and Internal Alignment**

#### **Partner Onboarding Materials**

As participation grows and roles evolve, the Partnership would benefit from a more formal onboarding process for new partners, staff, and representatives. This could include:

- A brief onboarding document outlining governance structure, work groups, decision-making processes, and expectations
- An onboarding email or packet with links to key resources, meeting schedules, and shared platforms

### **Welcome Email Series**

A short welcome email series (2–3 emails) could introduce new partners to:

- The Partnership’s history and values
- How to engage effectively and find relevant information
- Opportunities to participate in meetings, work groups, or projects

This would improve early engagement, reduce confusion, and strengthen long-term participation.

## **Visual Identity and Design Capacity**

### **Graphic Design and Visual Assets**

As communications expand, there is an opportunity to refresh and strengthen visual consistency. Investing in design capacity will improve recognition, professionalism, and accessibility across materials. Future needs may include:

- A refined or updated logo (if appropriate and partner-supported)
- Additional graphic elements such as icons, templates, maps, and diagrams
- Consistent design templates for presentations, fact sheets, and reports

## **Structured and Strategic Content Development**

### **Content Planning and Storytelling Framework**

There is an opportunity to move toward more structured, proactive content development. This could include:

- A shared list of core content themes (e.g., collaboration, habitat outcomes, community engagement, data-driven decisions)
- A simple content calendar aligned with meetings, milestones, and seasonal activities
- Clear guidance on how partners can contribute stories, updates, or visuals

### **Content Types to Develop Over Time**

- Partner and project spotlights
- Success stories and lessons learned
- “What we’re working on now” updates

This structured approach would support consistent messaging, reduce ad hoc communication demands, and make it easier to scale outreach as capacity grows.

### **Long-Term Opportunity**

Together, these future needs and opportunities position the Headwaters Partnership to:

- Communicate more clearly and confidently with diverse audiences
- Support stronger onboarding, engagement, and partner alignment
- Increase visibility, credibility, and impact across the Lake Superior headwaters region

As funding and capacity allow, investing in these communication foundations will help ensure the Partnership remains an effective hub for collaboration, shared learning, and regional resilience well into the future.

## Appendix

Logo assets folder: [tinyurl.com/lshsp-assets](https://tinyurl.com/lshsp-assets)

Logo and Visual Identity Style guide: [HP Branding Guidelines 2026.pdf](#)

# Lake Superior Headwaters Sustainability Partnership BRANDING GUIDELINES

## OFFICIAL LOGO



## SECONDARY LOGO



## FONT

Aa

Ubuntu

## MAIN COLOR PALETTE



#246E89



#56AFC1



#ED9D5C



#DCCC94



#EEE6D1

## SECONDARY COLOR PALETTE



#388FA3



#91D1D3



#BAE7E0



#C7B257



#F8A951



#845460



#A07676

*Any use of the Headwaters Partnership logo by partner organizations must have prior approval before publication. The logo should be used in conjunction with materials or projects that align with the Partnership's mission, values, and initiatives.*