Clear Path For Veterans Research Report

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Executive Summary

Clear Path For Veterans' mission statement states, "Recognizing the responsibility of communities to help those who serve, Clear Path For Veterans empowers service members, Veterans, and their families through supportive programs and services in a safe, respectful environment." The goal of this report is to help Clear Path For Veterans reach their mission statement objectives throughout the surrounding rural communities by doing extensive research on how Clear Path can better communicate to veterans and community members in the area.

Clear Path For Veterans has created a safe, communal space for the veterans in the upstate New York area. However, there is not only a disconnect between veterans who are not utilizing Clear Path's services, but also between the community whole. As a team, we researched tactics that have been proven in the past to reach members of rural communities. We hoped to understand which tactics, whether it be digital, via telephone, traditional print media or through mail carriers, are widely accepted as the most successful in communicating with veterans and rural community members.

We conducted extensive research and found that there are two approaches to reaching out and engaging with the rural community. One is more traditional, focusing on community based events, activities, door-to-door campaigns and even local newspapers. The second approach revolves around the growing use of mass media and technology. Since there is a large divide among rural residents regarding digital or traditional communication, our research suggests that a combination of both is needed in order to best communicate with everyone. If only digital approaches are adopted, a large portion of rural residents who are still not using or do not have

access to these technologies will not be reached. In addition to understanding the different ways to effectively communicate with veterans and rural community members, we conducted a literature review on how to engage the rural communities surrounding the Clear Path campus through events and special programming. We feel these tactics will be beneficial for the organization and generate support from the community.

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Main Body of Proposal

A. Background and Objectives of Proposed Research

Clear Path For Veterans has the task of reaching out and engaging veterans in a rural community, which can be difficult to do. Our goal is to figure out the best methods to communicate with people in rural areas in order to gain more community support and engage with more veterans and families. This research will help the organization alter and innovate communication methods that are best fit for the audience that it is trying to reach. As expressed by the client, the organization is currently having trouble getting messages out and getting more people to come to events. According to the organization's website, its mission is "To be *the* Veteran Service Organization (VSO) that Veterans turn to in order to improve their physical and emotional well-being and general sense of self-worth" (Clear Path, 2019). The organization would be better equipped to achieve this mission with research on communication methods and practices.

From our research, we hope to gain a much clearer understanding of the ways to reach members of a rural community. We will research the best methods of communication found by past studies so that the organization can implement new practices. Through our extensive research, we will provide Clear Path with the tools to reach its target audience in all 23 rural counties that it serves. Additionally, we hope to learn better ways to communicate with rural communities and what specifically will grab people's attention. Our research and information will be used to help Clear Path get its word out about any upcoming events, announcements,

fundraisers, and member activities, as well as to communicate success stories. We will use our information to change communication tactics of the organization, to come up with new ideas/methods of engagement and to target more veterans and families. Clear Path lacks getting its veterans' stories out, and we will use our findings to share their stories to further reach veterans and raise awareness.

Our main research question is what is the best way to communicate in a rural community to gain awareness for an organization. The main concepts we are trying to find in our research of other works are why it is hard to communicate in a rural community and what tactics are best to effectively communicate and engage with these community members.

B. Methods

Our research will serve as an extended literature review. There is a substantial amount of information that has already been collected through secondary research regarding communication, specifically the most optimal ways to communicate with rural communities. We believe there is an ample amount of information regarding this topic and it has been thoroughly investigated with means we do not possess. Our literature review will provide a series of descriptive, analytic summaries of various research articles and experiments that provide insight into communicating with rural communities. We plan to review at least 15 pieces of literature in order to gather and organize a sufficient amount of information to provide an answer to our research question.

The databases and journals we will review include: EBSCO, Factiva, Google Scholar, PressReader, The Pew Research Center, ProQuest and various trade publications. We plan to deeply review these specified articles and find at least 11 more from these databases to

cross-examine the studies and draw new conclusions about the best communication methods to reach members of rural communities.

C. Findings (Results)

We have reviewed related research in the form of a literature review to gain a preliminary understanding of communication methods, characteristics of rural residents and veterans in rural areas. Below lists each source and its brief review under the citation:

USDA. (2013). Rural veterans at a glance. *Economic Brief Number 25*

A study by the USDA (2013) is an analysis of some sociodemographic characteristics of rural veterans. They used data from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) March Supplements for 1993-2012, the CPS annual monthly surveys for 2011, the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates for 2007-2011, and statistics on military personnel and veteran population projections published by the Department of Defense and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The study does not provide a breakdown of individuals who took the surveys. They concluded that there are almost 4 million veterans residing in rural America. Rural veterans are also under-represented in the total veteran population. On average, rural veterans are older than nonveterans. The breakdown of ages of veterans in rural areas are: 18 to 34 equals 5 percent, 35 to 44 equals 9 percent, 45 to 54 equals 14 percent, 55 to 64 equals 22 percent and 65 or older equals 50 percent. Women and minorities are also on the rise in the category of rural veterans. Lastly, younger veterans are more likely to work in higher-skilled industries. Overall, rural veterans have several advantages that can be utilized when they are

recruited to take part in developmental programs and make up a large number of the veteran

population in the U.S.

Holder, Kelly. (2017). Veterans in rural america 2011-2015: American community survey

reports, *United States Census Bureau.*

A study by Holder (2017) looks at the population of veterans in rural America. The study

focuses on sociodemographic characteristics, health insurance, disability, employment, income

and poverty status of urban veterans and rural veterans. The data used in this report are from the

2011–2015 American Community Survey (ACS), over 5 years. This report presents statistics

about veterans and non-veterans 18 years and older living in rural and urban areas of the United

States. They found that 45.9 percent of rural veterans live in the South and 13.7 percent live in

the Northeast. For the state of New York specifically, about 25 percent of veterans live in rural

areas. Rural veterans were found to be older, have some sort of healthcare coverage mostly by

the VA, are more likely to have some type of disability, less likely to be employed and have a

lower income than urban veterans. The more rural the area is, the rates are higher for age,

disability and poverty. The employment rate in completely rural areas was lower than in rural or

urban areas. Overall, rural veterans' sociodemographic characteristics differ from urban veterans.

Barkan, Steven (2012). *Problems of rural life*. 402-419

In a textbook by Barkan (2012) in the chapter titled "Problems of Rural Life," it discusses

the positive and negative aspects of rural life in the United States. On the positive side, rural

areas feature much more open space, less crowding and cleaner air, resulting in lower levels of

anxiety and a greater sense of relaxation. For these and other reasons, rural residents exhibit

better mental health on average than do urban residents. On the other hand, rural areas often lack

services, employment opportunities and leisure activities. Rural residents with motor vehicles

often must still travel long distances to shop, to visit a doctor, to go to work and to do any

number of other activities. Lastly, many rural areas in the United States lack high-speed internet.

Overall this study highlights some of the advantages and challenges faced by members of rural

areas of the United States.

Anderson, Monica. About a quarter of rural americans say access to high-speed internet is a

major problem. (2018). Retrieved from

https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/09/10/about-a-quarter-of-rural-americans-

say-access-to-high-speed-internet-is-a-major-problem/

An article by Anderson (2018) is about how lacking access to high-speed internet in rural

areas is an issue. She uses data from the Pew Research Center with two surveys conducted in

early 2018. According to the research, 58 percent of rural residents saw the lack of fast internet

as a problem, with 24 percent stating it is a major problem. The issue also varies among the ages

of residents. Adults 50 to 64 and minorities are more likely to see it as a problem. Two factors

that contribute to this are that rural areas are less likely to be the focus of broadband providers'

services and there are limited options available when choosing a provider. Along with being less

likely to have broadband internet at home than urban residents, rural Americans are less likely to

own a smartphone. Lastly, 22 percent of rural living adults say they never go online, which is

more than double the percentage compared to urban or suburban residents. Overall, high-speed internet is lacking in rural areas of the United States, so much so that residents are identifying it as a problem.

Santucci, F. (2005). Strategic communication for rural development. Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f3d8/bd0b2782551398c65b2302179668a40cc999.pdf?_ga=2.221236765.448636565.1570382611-556211527.1570382611.

In an article by Santucci (2005), he analyzes strategic communications. He goes over the three different methods of communication; individual, group, or mass. Individual methods can be a person being contacted through an office, home or farm visit. Group method is when a limited number of people meet the person in charge of communication, such as a presentation. Mass methods or mass events: when a large number of people are reached such as a conference, an open day, a competition or an information booth. Along with these, she lays out types of media: electronic (television, radio), and print (press releases, newspapers, leaflets). Finally, she makes a point that defines a very specific targeted audience is extremely important when trying to utilize any type of media, especially in rural communities because they may not be the same tactics used in different areas. Gaining coverage in a print or online publication is a good way to start to promote an organization. Lastly, a key part of developing a strategy is to monitor your tactics and find out what works and what does not. Overall, strategic communications are necessary for garnering attention for an organization and identifying the method and type of distribution is key.

This article discusses behavioral differences between rural and urban social media users. Although the purpose of this study was to help designers of social networking sites, this research can be used to help public relations practitioners with social media campaigns and communications. The researchers found that access to social media is an issue in rural communities, just as it is with any technology in rural communities. There is a lag between people in urban areas adopting trends and using the newest technology versus people in rural areas. They also found that people in rural communities prefer stronger ties to their communities, which can affect social media usage. Because of both of these reasons, social media aligns better with the needs of urban communities than rural communities. Some other relevant findings were that rural users are generally younger than their urban counterparts, have fewer social media friends, and keep their accounts private. Rural women are more likely to use social media than rural men. Rural social networks do not reach as far as urban social networks.

Overall, rural and urban communities use social media differently. The authors stated, "Designers of social media may be able to apply our findings toward building richer experiences for rural users. Rural people would like to reach beyond their geographic isolation using social media, but they have trouble establishing trust with distant people. Building systems that enable incremental trust may overcome this problem and provide rural users with access to a greater diversity of people online." This information can be useful because if an organization wants to use social media as a way to communicate with publics and encourage engagement in a rural community, it is very important to first establish a sense of trust, which can be achieved by curating authentic, real posts. If trust is not established, it may not be worth it to focus on social media as a communications method to reach a rural population.

Dash, H. (2009, April 8). Urban vs. Rural Community Outreach Tactics. Retrieved from
        https://www.prnewsonline.com/urban-vs-rural-community-outreach-tactics/.

Public relations professionals acknowledge that there are both similarities and differences between urban and rural outreach campaigns. Outreach projects in rural areas often involve a homogenous, anglo population; however, rural areas are increasing in minority populations. Rural residents tend to be more conservative. In rural areas, life revolves around community centers and town councils. Media tends to be the weekly community paper, yet many rural residents do use the internet as well. In general, one-to-one, door-to-door contact and community meetings work best. In a rural area, it is important to: know your community well, conduct one-on-one meetings, tone down the approach, have a friendly and known face on board, and take it slow.

Generally, urban areas tend to be more ethnically diverse. Yet, while there are more people to contact, they can be more challenging to reach. In an urban area, be sure to: build a team that is representative of the audience, have staff that understands the community, focus on direct messaging, use the internet, and be aware of neighborhood councils.

Although there are differences among reaching populations in different geographical locations, there are similarities with addressing communities across the board. First, do an analysis of your community, know your objectives and the timeframe; ensure to build extra time into the schedule as outreach takes longer than expected. Identify influential leaders in the community and fit them into the campaign. Effective outreach is built on mutual trust; listen and do not be judgemental. Be flexible and adapt your messages and plans. Any community can be

unified easily. They won't do anything until there is a layer of trust and they understand what is in it for them.

Perrin, A. (2019, May 31). Digital gap between rural and nonrural America persists. Retrieved

from

https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/05/31/digital-gap-between-rural-and-nonrur

al-america-persists/.

Still in 2019, rural communities tend to generally remain less likely than urban or

suburban adults to have home broadband or own a smartphone. In 2007, 35 percent of rural

Americans have broadband internet connection at home; in 2019, that percentage rose to 63

percent, or roughly two-thirds. Rural Americans are now 12 percentage points less likely than

Americans overall to have home broadband internet connection.

Rural Americans have consistently lower levels of broadband adoption

% of U.S. adults who say they have ...
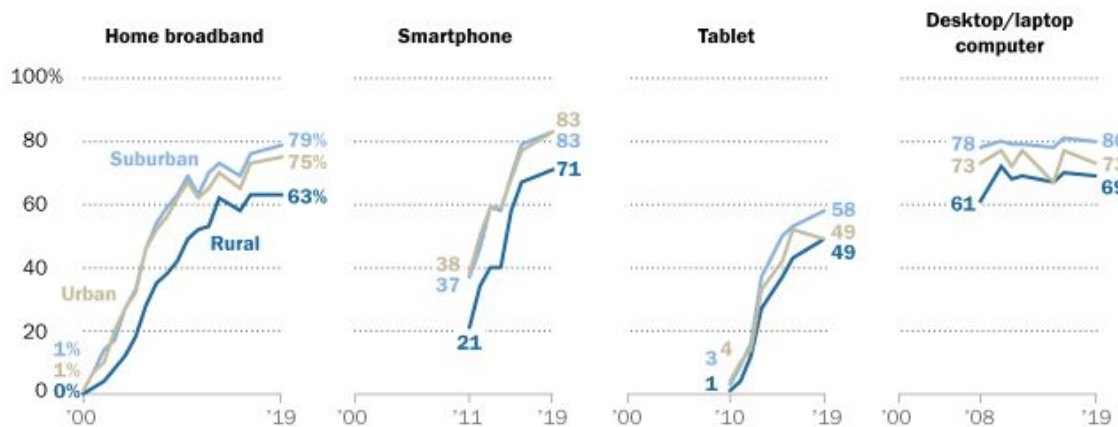
Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted Jan. 8-Feb. 7, 2019. Trend data from other Pew Research Center surveys.

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Further, smartphone usage has risen rapidly since 2011, from 21 percent to 71 percent.

Tablet usage has also risen. Adults who own a computer has only risen slightly, but is still a

majority of rural Americans. The gap between rural and urban adults has narrowed for some

devices, but rural adults are still less likely than suburban adults to own these technologies.

Rural adults are also less likely than suburban adults to have *multiple* devices or services that

enable them to go online. Further, 76 percent of adults who live in rural communities say they

use the internet on at least a daily basis, compared to 86 percent of suburban resides and 83

percent of urban residents. Additionally, 15 percent of rural adults say they never go online

compared with 9 percent of those in urban communities and 6 percent of those who live in the

suburbs.

In a separate Pew Research Center survey from 2018, adults who live in rural areas were

more likely to say that getting access to high-speed internet is a major problem in their local

community. Even though rural areas have better access to the internet than in the past, other

research shows that substantial parts of rural America still lack the infrastructure needed for

high-speed internet, and what access these areas do have tends to be slower than that of urban

areas.

Whitacre, B. (-1, November 30). Newspapers Still Key in Reaching Rural. Retrieved from

https://www.dailyyonder.com/newspapers-still-key-reaching-rural/2014/09/30/7550/.

Although there has been an overall decline in newspaper in within the past few years,

some recent survey results from Oklahoma make clear that rural residents still highly value their

local newspapers. Respondents from the survey, which spanned 12 rural communities, selected

newspaper as their preferred and current method of communication over social media or email

by an overwhelming margin. It did not make a difference whether the newspaper was in print or

online. Although newspaper is still thriving in rural communities, new media is still apart of the

equation as social media is the second preferred method of communication. The survey results included that 42 percent selected newspaper as their current source of information, or the most widely selected medium. This was more than double the next most selected option, or social media (20 percent). Further, newspaper was the preferred source for being informed about community events by 47.5 percent of paper survey respondents and 40.9 percent of electronic respondents.

FAO (1989). Retrieved from http://www.fao.org/3/t7974e/t7974e01.htm

In a rural community, Development Communication lays on the foundation that successful rural development calls for the conscious and active participation of the intended beneficiaries at every stage of the development process. As a way of accomplishing this, Development Communication can be systematically used through inter-personal channels, audio-visuals and mass media: television, radio, video, printed material, folk media, etc. Audience research concerning what media the people have access to and which enjoy credibility are all actually available or could be realistically established, greatly influence the choice. Although all of these forms of media have their individual benefits and costs, it is essential when communicating to gain a prior understanding of how the people who are affected by a project perceive their own problems and the development options being proposed, the institutional framework as it draws on the talents and skills involved in media production, an inventory of the available communication resources, and the physical circumstances in which the communication activities are to function. When implementing communication, it is important to "use media such as video recording and playback to help people towards a clearer awareness of their reality and the development options open to them…how a message should be presented to that audience, talking into account the particular concerns and perceptions of that audience." Given this, one of

the best ways to communicate in a rural society, given the required skills and financial capability is through the use of video. Highly used in the society that we live in, video has become the media in the minds of many. Not only is it highly persuasive and becoming more cheap and reliable than ever, but production flexibility is increased. More than one language is able to be recorded on a single tape which leads to opening the message up to an even greater variety of new and different audiences. When gaining awareness for an organization, the use of video is strong, persuasive, and impactful to first-hand audiences. The benefits simply way out the negatives, and this form of communication will get the job done in a rural setting.

Comcowich, W. C. W. J. (2018, June 11). How PR and Marketing Can Reach & Influence Rural
        America. Retrieved from
        https://glean.info/how-pr-and-marketing-can-reach-influence-rural-america/

Given the significant decline in rural newspapers, digital advertising and marketing have become the growing trends in this new day and age of modern technology. When marketing to a certain region or area, it is essential to have knowledge on that area's specific needs and wants. Individuals in rural areas are very likely to have different perceptions than people in urban areas, so it is crucial to know the target audience. According to the article, when trying to target a rural audience, especially when trying to gain awareness for an organization, the best form of communication to be exerted is through the use of television. As said before, with the rise of new and emerging technology, more individuals are surrounded with their electronics now more than ever. Given this, it can be a good idea to target rural audiences through their use of television watching, specifically pitching the organization during the time-frame this audience watches television the most. In order to do this, specific research must be done on this type of audience to ensure that the highest possible number of people are being impacted from the advertisement. In

addition, it can be a useful tactic to localize the product that will fit these individual consumers'

pride and allow them to value the idea even more. Effective marketing in rural areas calls for

respecting rural residents and understanding how they differ from audience types out of this

range. It is also crucial when communicating to empower people. "Rural and small town

residents enjoy exercising their power as voters and consumers as they feel wealthy corporations

and institutions have too much influence. Brands can empower rural consumers by giving them

the power to influence new products in development, corporate charitable work, and other

company activities." Perspectives, tastes, and preferences all differ based on type of living, and

this is all valuable information to be considered when addressing an idea to a new audience.

Kaushik, R., & Dev, K. (2013). Effective media for rural communication: A study of panipat
       area. *IJCEM International Journal of Computational Engineering & Management, 16*(5).
       Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/d663/f7c8d767a9f004b696a
       3066789f85ad0fd57.pdf

This study aims to find out effective means of communication to advertise to rural

communities in India, however this research can also be applied to rural areas in the United

States. The article first acknowledges that to communicate efficiently with rural audiences, it is

important to understand the aspirations, fears and hopes of the rural people before developing a

communication strategy. Another suggestion the authors offer is to act locally and develop

specific goals for the rural audiences. Some strategies recommended by the researchers are to use

influencers to powerfully promote the messages that the organization wants to communicate, to

use participatory strategy by holding events such as games and competitions so that the

organization can interact with people, and to use a show-and-tell strategy for education about the

brand. These are ways to build trust and engagement among the key publics. Some of the

challenges of communicating with rural communities are poorer infrastructure, poorer literacy rates, and poor media penetration.

To find out the best medium of communication, the researchers conducted a survey to members of a rural community in India. They found that 60% of respondents preferred television rather than newspaper, radio and other means of communication. Most of the respondents, who were in favor of T.V. lie in younger age group and elder one preferred the radio. Among the print media, newspapers are the most preferred medium. The researchers concluded that T.V. is the best method of communication for rural communities, and that older community members prefer the radio as well. This information can be useful when developing tactics for awareness and engagement in a rural community. T.V. and radio ads may be more helpful at times than social media and newspaper advertising.

Institute for Social Participation. (n.d.). Building Social Inclusion for Rural Older People Using Information and Communication Technologies: Perspectives of Rural Practitioners. Retrieved from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0312407X.2013.834064.

Those living in rural communities are at risk of social exclusion, especially elderly individuals. This is a result of rural disadvantage; they do not receive the same level of communication that those in more urban settings have access too. In order to counter this, those in rural communities need improved access to information and communication technologies (ICTs), as they have the potential to build social inclusion. However, current evidence shows that rural, older people are the lowest users of technology. One way to counter this issue is through education sessions that teach members of these communities on basic technological skills. Sessions are offered in person or at a local library or meeting place.

Rural aging: Grantmakers in Aging. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.giaging.org/issues/rural-aging/.

Members of rural communities tend to be in smaller and less-dense populations; are a part of less-differentiated social, economic, and organizational institutions; have fewer service options; are from different socio-demographic backgrounds; have more traditional values and cultural traditions; and have access to fewer resources to address the needs of older adults. In addition, they have higher poverty rates, lower incomes, fewer employment opportunities, rely more heavily on themselves and informal networks for transportation, are less healthy, have less access to a wide range of community-based social, health, and mental health services.

The combined lack of knowledge and access to technology suggests that the best way to communicate with a rural community is through technological educational sessions. Educational sessions would be on how to use technology (like a desktop, laptop, or smartphone), create and access an email account, and develop basic research skills. These are all proven to connect and support those in rural communities on how to find events and services available to them in their areas. It also gives rural members a mentor to reach out to if they ever feel alone or have questions about events or technology.

Framework on Effective Rural Communication for Development (edited by Riccardo Del
      Castello and Paul Mathias Braun). Retrieved from:
      http://www.fao.org/nr/com/gtzworkshop/a0892e00.pdf

Mixed media is also important to implement. This is because it can help overcome illiteracy barriers by conveying ideas in an audio and visual form, illustrate new ideas and events more effectively, and compress time and space issue (people can find out about events before they occur). In addition, digital information is the cheapest form of communication. It also has further outreach; however, as touched upon before, many members of rural communities are on

board with using technology to access information. So, education sessions would include social media lectures as well. Education sessions also promote brain stimulation for those who often don't have access to it. Multi-media also leads to cost-effective communication that is culturally and technically relevant. It is also sustainable. This means that there has to be complete integration between modern and traditional media and…that the strategic use of different media technologies (e.g. Internet, rural radio, print) and the optimum mix of media needs to be designed to meet this aim.

Parker, E. B. (2000). Closing the digital divide in rural America. *Telecommunications Policy*, *24*(4), 281–290. doi: 10.1016/s0308-5961(00)00018-5
https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/sites.udel.edu/dist/c/389/files/2012/01/ClosingDigitalDivideRuralAmerica_2000.pdf
In today's day and age, the internet is completely changing the way that communications is done. The economy is becoming almost fully electronic-commerce. Business and consumer purchases are being done largely through internet transactions. The networks are changing in order to be compatible for data, voice, video and other sources that can be fully converted to digital. A problem like this was originally seen in the early 20th century when telephone communication became a major aspect to everyday life. People in rural communities realized that phone access was vital to their business so they were able to create phone lines within their own rural communities. This is similar to the demand that we are seeing within rural communities today and their need to adapt to the fast increase in internet communications and technology. A major problem that has been seen within these communities is that they are often distanced from surrounding communities by major plots of land, railroads, and interstate highways. These often get in the way of creating major wireless network connection for these surrounding rural communities.

There has been a large increase in economic benefits for major counties and states when investments are put towards expanding the network connections within rural communities The payoffs have been seen to be significant. However, the efforts made to improve these connections in these communities are often not made due to the thought that there is not as much of a need within these areas, so big companies are choosing not to set up as much in these rural communities.

The two things that categorize rural communities are long distances and a small population. But there isn't a perfect solution that each rural town needs to follow in order to combat the problem of poor communication tactics. Each town needs to get support from the local governments in order to create individualized plans that will work for their population and community. It is important to create individualized plans because communities can be receptive to different tactics and techniques if any. Some might be resistant to change and adapting to the increase in social media communications. Due to this, it is important to raise awareness to the community in order for them to cooperate in helping the demands of all the community for both public and private sectors. Smaller communities need to work with larger potential users such as big businesses in order to attract the companies and show them the importance of high digital needs within these areas. The large companies can be seen as "anchor tenants" to the major networks proving that they will have a significant amount of business, regardless of the smaller population. If the communities speak out and make it known that they feel it is a necessity to grow and change with the rest of society when it comes to communication, it can help to get attention to local leaders to provide assistance in making a change with the networks.

Gilbert, E., Karahalios, K., & Sandvig, C. (2010). The Network in the Garden: Designing Social Media for Rural Life. *American Behavioral Scientist, 53*(9), 1367–1388. doi: 10.1177/0002764210361690
http://eegilbert.org/papers/abs09.network.gilbert.pdf

It has been known that throughout recent history, rural communities are often left out of the technology rise although, also needing technology just as much. The problem has been seen that the technology community does not understand the needs and that a rural community demands, so it is often looked over and forgotten in the technology advancements. Rural America has been known to happily adapt to technology features, however they tend to adapt them to fit their own needs.

However, access is always a major issue when it comes to technology in any rural area. Although the gap is closing slowly but surely. 60% of rural people and 71% of urban people have internet access. However broadband is still a very limited when it comes to rural areas. This journal studies the difference in SNS usage between rural and urban users. The table below exemplifies these differences in myspace users.

Measure	Rural	Urban	z	p-value
N	1661	1721		
MySpace ID	54M	2.7M	-40.1	<.001
Age	22	24	-7.9	<.001
Friends	45	104	-14.6	<.001
Comments	40	118	-14.9	<.001
Images	17	21	-3.5	<.001
Embedded videos	0	0	-5.5	<.001
Days since last login	4	10	-12.1	<.001
Unique commenters	11	29	-14.9	<.001
Reciprocal relationships	2	5	-10.1	<.001

In order for small town communities to not lose large percentages of their populations to urban communities because of the lack of social media innovation awareness, it is important for the government policymakers to create specific plans and agendas to get better internet technology for rural places that work just as efficiently to those of urban communities.

National Standards for Community Engagement Advice Notice. Retrieved From:

https://www.shb.scot.nhs.uk/board/pfpi/documents/pfpi-ce-usingstandards.pdf

In order to keep members of the rural community involved, there are 7 issues that must be identified and responded to. These issues are anonymity/confidentiality and stigma, parochialism, the need to recognize and respond to very local experience, 'hidden' populations and dominant cultures, dominant voices, influential power holders, and communities in transition and conflict.

In small areas, many people know each other. Though there are a number of positive aspects of people being familiar with one another, this may become a negative aspect in regards to engagement as many may be reluctant to participate when private matters become public. When this becomes an issue, you must always consider the subject matter of the engagement and how to ensure confidentiality if there is any potential for embarrassment or stigma. If this issue is not addressed, it may result in disadvantaged members or lack of voices.

Though rural communities may be parochial, it is also important to recognize that they are unique as well. With community engagement, it is necessary to identify that local communities have very specific local concerns as well that are valid. Organizations that engage communities must understand communities' characteristics and needs of the local people and address them.

D. Conclusion and Recommendations

There is not one best tactic for communicating and reaching rural communities. Communication in rural communities can be either in digital or print form, but targeting a specific audience is the first step to figuring out which approach is best to use. Typically, multi-faceted communication is effective. With the rise of new and emerging technology, more individuals are surrounded with electronics now more than ever. Communication can be systematically used through different channels, audio-visuals and mass media. Although there is a growing and significant use of technology in rural communities, it is also important to take into consideration the physical limitations of rural communities. Depending on the location of the rural area, internet providers may provide limited services in these specific areas weakening the connection overall. Because the rural community is not completely emerged in 21st century technology, there is a divide. A sense of community is a traditional aspect of rural communities that is still valued today. Thus, local newspapers and community centers are still important.

Consequently, the best way to reach a rural community is a combination of traditional and new tactics. Basic and established digital tactics (such as social media, email or video) should be used alongside traditional tactics (newspaper features or community center events) in order to get through to the rural community.

Clear Path can use this information to engage with rural communities through relationships with local leadership, special programming, and events that appeal to the general public. Literature reviews have shown that individuals in local communities respond better to specialized campaigns that reflect the characteristics of the population, and Clear Path can incorporate these elements into the organization's communications strategy to further its mission.

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Appendices

A. Biographies of Researchers

Alaina Caruso

Alaina Caruso is a junior at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications studying public relations with a minor in finance. She is also pursuing an emphasis in financial and investor communications. Alaina works as an undergraduate research fellow for the School of Information Studies, researching nomadic work and the gig economy under Professor Steven Sawyer. Alaina also serves as the Vice President of Communications for the Rho chapter of Delta Gamma. Alaina is also a member of the Public Relations Student Society of America.

Kathryn Elliott

Kat Elliott is a student at the S.I. Newhouse School of Communications at Syracuse University. She currently holds an account executive position at Hill Communications, and she is a member of the Public Relations Society of America at Syracuse University. She has had multiple summer internships and jobs in public relations and sales roles that have continued to strengthen the skills that will allow her to succeed in these fields. She also recently started the Financial Investor and Communications Emphasis Program (FICE) at the S.I. Newhouse School. On top of this experience, she is also pursuing a marketing minor in the Whitman School of Management, serving as the Vice President of Delta Gamma Fraternity, as well as being a member of the Syracuse University Club field hockey team.

Jamie Lambert

Jamie Lambert is a current junior at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University seeking a degree in Public Relations and minoring in Information Management and Technology. Her particular interest is centered upon entertainment as well as media production due to my tremendous passion for the film industry. Jamie seeks out

experiences where she is going to have an impact while at the same time working in a collaborative setting.

Sydney Sarokin

Sydney Sarokin, 21, is a senior at Syracuse University, studying public relations. She is a current digital marketing intern for The Social Life. Previously she was the editor-in-chief of Her Campus Media of the Syracuse Chapter, and the Vice President, Finance of Delta Gamma Fraternity, Rho Chapter. This past summer, Sarokin interned for Krupp Group where she further her career in the fashion public relations industry. Sarokin prides herself on being independent and creative. She hopes to put forth these skills in working for a major magazine or media website after she graduates from Syracuse.

Jessica Shechtman

Jessica Shechtman is a pre-law dual major at Syracuse University in the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications and the Maxwell School of Citizenship of Public Affairs. She is studying public relations and international relations with a minor in Spanish. Shechtman has held an internship at the Nassau County District in Long Island, New York and coordinated social media and advertising for a printing company this past summer. She is the community service chair for her sorority, Kappa Kappa Gamma, and a current volunteer at Syracuse Refugee and Immigrant Self-Empowerment.

Rebecca Skaggs

Rebecca Skaggs is a junior at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, studying public relations. She is also working towards minors in Music Industry and Sociology. She is the music director at Z89, a local radio station, is a host on the morning talk show, and is a member of the Public Relations Student Society of America. She has worked at a summer camp as the arts and crafts director for the past two years.

Brielle Rapach

Brielle Rapach, 21, is a junior at Syracuse University. She is pursuing a major in public relations within the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications as well as a business minor within the Martin J. Whitman School of Management. Additionally, she is in Syracuse University's Renée Crown University Honors program. On campus, Brielle is an active member of the Delta Phi Epsilon sorority, as well as the Public Relations Student Society of America. She has completed an internship with Edison Research, a media research firm, in Somerville, New Jersey.

William DeMuria

William DeMuria, 19, is a sophomore at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public

Communications at Syracuse University. He is pursuing a major in Public Relations with a minor

in Visual Culture. In his free time, William enjoys reading and engaging with his peers in

intellectual conversation. On campus, he serves as a member of the Residence Hall Association

for Shaw Hall as Public Relations Chair, as well as being an active member of the Public

Relations Student Society of America.

Nancy Wang

Nancy Wang is a senior dual majoring in Finance and Public Relations at Syracuse

University. Wang recently completed an internship with KeyBank and is joining GE Aviation in

the Financial Management Program after graduation. On campus, she is involved in

Entrepreneurship Club, the Investment Club, and the planning committee for Relay for Life.

Joshua Hurst

Joshua Hurst is a junior, dual majoring in public relations and marketing at Syracuse University. Hurst is an active member of the Syracuse Ski Team, the Public Relations Student Society of America, as well as a consulting club, Tamid. In addition to an active life on campus, he also is currently employed in a marketing capacity at Actifio, a software company located in Waltham, MA.

Adam Hillman

Adam Hillman is a junior, majoring in public relations and minoring in sport management at Syracuse University. He served as the sports assistant copy editor for The Daily

Orange, the independent student newspaper, this semester. He also served as a communications

intern at the government contractor, AMERICAN SYSTEMS, based in Chantilly, VA.

B. Infographic

Clear Path FOR VETERANS

HOW TO
BEST COMMUNICATE
TO RURAL
COMMUNITIES

COMMUNITY-BASED
TACTICS & MIXED-MEDIA

Newspapers & Community Centers

12 rural communities selected newspaper as their preferred and current method of communication over social media or email by an overwhelming margin.

Mixed-Media

Mixed-media helps to overcome illiteracy barriers by conveying ideas in an audio and visual form, illustrate new ideas and events more effectively, and compress time and space issue.

One Suggestion for Clear Path

We believe one possible tactic for Clear Path should be to recruit a community leader to be a spokesperson on upcoming events. The leader will have an in-person event and an online streaming, so members of rural communities have the option to learn on their preferred means.

@CLEARPATH4VETS