



Federal Demonstration Partnership

Final Communications and Marketing Plan

July 15, 2022

Introduction

The Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) is an association of federal agencies, research policy organizations and academic research institutions with administrative, faculty and technical representation. The FDP's mission is to streamline the administration of federally sponsored research and foster collaboration to enhance the national research enterprise while maintaining high standards of stewardship and accountability. All FDP members participate in identifying, testing and implementing new, more effective ways of managing federal research grants. The goal of improving the productivity of research without compromising its stewardship has benefits for the entire nation. The FDP is a unique forum for individuals from universities and nonprofits to work collaboratively with federal agency officials to improve the national research enterprise.

As part of FDP's Phase VII Strategic Plan, a key goal is to tell a powerful story to internal and external audiences. To help achieve this goal, FDP partnered with Vanguard Communications to develop a comprehensive strategic communications plan.

The purpose of the plan is to help FDP develop and execute a high-quality, comprehensive and unified campaign to demonstrate to stakeholders that the FDP is unique in its ability to collaborate with federal agencies, universities and institutions to help move research forward.

This plan will guide FDP's communications efforts and serve as an important tool to help FDP achieve continued success. It identifies FDP's priority communications goals and audiences and includes a comprehensive overview of strategies and tactics to reach the communications goals. A timeline is included to indicate specific responsibilities, dates and expectations for FDP. Implementation of the plan is intended to take place over a two-year period. The plan is a "living" document and will be reviewed and revised, as necessary, every six months or more often, according to changing circumstances.

Situational Analysis: Highlights

After surveying and interviewing FDP members and leadership, the following key insights were identified and used to drive the strategies for the plan.

- FDP is unique because it offers a hands-on approach to working with federally-funded institutions and helps move the administrative needle for these institutions. FDP is larger and more complex than at its inception, yet still largely volunteer-run.
- Being volunteer-run has led FDP to high success and valuable outcomes.
- Each research institution and federal agency has its own internal mandates, priorities and budget, so prioritizing FDP participation can be difficult. This has led to sometimes episodic engagement and interactions that are situationally based as opposed to operationally or tactically based.
- Internal communication channels could be improved.
- The impact and benefits of FDP are not clear to audiences.
- Many faculty don't fully appreciate the value of FDP.

- The number of FDP member institutions has grown exponentially, while federal members remain constant.
- Federal agencies experience an internal evolution of systems and processes and may be too focused within to participate in FDP activities.
- Both federal partners and institutional representatives are challenged by operational tempos, staffing issues, entity priorities, etc. which sometimes lead to less proactive issue management and more reactive responses.
- The past decade has been driven by a rapidly evolving regulatory environment with significant outside transparency and often driven by external parties to FDP (Congress, Executive Branch initiatives, etc.).
- Volunteers' universities don't always understand or support the work. Opportunities abound to collaborate with other partners in this space.
- The organization is underutilizing external communications opportunities in disciplinary columns and blogs.
- Social media is a potential area for growth.
- Breadth and depth of membership, along with COVID-19 and required remote meetings, has challenged our ability to foster collaborations, leading to demonstrations.

Communications Goal

- Establish the FDP as a trusted partner to enhance the national research enterprise by increasing efficiencies in the research environment.

Objectives

Objective 1:

- Increase communication coordination within the FDP.

Objective 2:

- Expand understanding of the value of the FDP.

Objective 3:

- Increase communication collaborations with federal agencies and research institutions to establish FDP priorities.

Primary Audiences

- Federal/governmental agencies
 - Federal research agencies who are members
 - Other federal agencies who are critical strategic partners (DOJ, HHS, OSTP, OMB, etc.)

- FDP member institutions (includes the administrative, technical and faculty representatives)
- FDP leaders and participants (as leaders and members of committees, subcommittees and working groups)
- Non-members
 - To show the value, high-level awareness and interest to what FDP is doing
 - To show the value of the work to any research institutions that receive federal funding for research

Key Message Concepts

Message Concepts for Federal/Governmental Agencies

Provides federal agencies with opportunities to test things out:

- FDP conducts demonstrations to provide information to federal agencies by soliciting input early and often.
- FDP allows federal agencies to collaborate and get quick external feedback on demonstrations.
- FDP is a key organization working in tandem with federal agencies and universities to help reduce administrative burden.
- FDP provides an opportunity for federal agencies to partner with the research institutions that will directly implement policy changes.

Collaboration with FDP provides unbiased, fact-based results to help federal agencies make policy or procedural decisions:

- FDP is non-partisan and research-driven and is focused on helping federal agencies accomplish their goal of enhancing science in the least burdensome manner.
- FDP is about proactive collaboration before something becomes a challenge.
- Federal agencies can benefit from “real time” feedback on demonstrations and current initiatives and FDP can coalesce a critical group to convene immediately over a particular issue.

FDP has a proven track record of developing solutions to administrative burden:

- FDP has a proven track record working with federal partners and building technical software solutions.

FDP has diverse membership, providing federal agencies easy access for testing and conducting surveys to the broad research community:

- FDP has a wide variety of member institutions to provide federal agencies with access for testing systems or analyzing the impact of policy changes.
- FDP gives federal agencies access to a wide range of research institutions, large and small, public and private, including research intensive universities, research hospitals and medical centers, emerging research institutions, and independent research institutes and labs.
- The FDP has diversified membership, which include Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and a variety of stakeholders and participants, including faculty, research administration professionals and technical partners.

Message Concepts for FDP Member Institutions

- FDP’s mission is to streamline the administration of federally sponsored research.
- FDP reduces the administrative burden for research institutions by identifying ways to streamline paperwork, providing templates and tools, and creating solutions to adhere to and address complex policies and regulations.
- FDP is a key organization working in tandem with federal agencies and universities to help move research forward.
- FDP provides a forum for faculty representatives to share information about the administrative burdens they face, which takes time away from their research.
- By participating in FDP activities and interacting with federal agencies, faculty representatives are contributing to FDP’s mission of improving administrative burden.
- FDP membership gives universities and research institutions a “seat at the table” where important solutions are being discussed, piloted and implemented.
- FDP membership allows institutions access to federal agencies to collaborate on demonstrations.
- FDP members gain unique access to peers and mentors in their profession.

Message Concepts for FDP Leaders and Participants

- Being a part of FDP leadership makes you part of a strong, responsive and passionate team advancing the research enterprise.
- As an FDP leader or participant, you are driving change to make research and research administration more efficient.
- FDP provides opportunities for its members for professional development and networking through its many volunteer committees and working groups.
- FDP creates collaboration between research administrators and faculty.
- FDP is unique in its ability to collaborate with federal agencies, universities and research institutions to help reduce administrative burden and move research forward.
- FDP collaborations focus on continuous improvement by constant review of processes, procedures and policies.
- FDP can maximize its visibility through showcasing its accomplishments, demonstrations and burden-reducing initiatives with the broader research enterprise.

Message Concepts for Non-Members

- FDP’s mission is to streamline the administration of federally sponsored research.
- FDP creates products to reduce administrative burden that is available to the research enterprise regardless of membership status.
- FDP is a key organization working in tandem with federal agencies and universities to help move research forward.
- FDP can quickly get input from a broad range of stakeholders, including different types of institutions and different leaders within those institutions.
- The whole research enterprise benefits from the work of the FDP, regardless of membership.

- FDP meetings are open to anyone, regardless of membership status, where the latest topics are discussed and anyone can hear the latest updates from federal agencies.
- FDP has unique opportunities to partner with other associations (e.g., COGR, etc.) to share about the work of FDP and its contributions to the research enterprise.

Strategies and Tactics: Materials, Activities and Events

The tactics we have proposed will enable FDP to increase awareness of the organization, its benefits and its impact on the research enterprise among key audiences, showcase success stories and demonstrations, engage important stakeholders and better streamline communications activities.

Materials

Building upon the existing materials FDP already uses, Vanguard proposes the development of these new foundational elements for FDP, including:

- A set of tailored message concepts for key audiences
- A comprehensive public-facing FAQ document
- One-page fact sheet on the general activities, benefits and impact for key stakeholder groups (faculty, federal and administration/research)
- 60-second videos customized by audiences that could include federal, faculty and administrative leadership
- A master PowerPoint presentation
- A federal agency template to provide to the federal liaisons to share agency overviews, current initiatives and top issues
- An onboarding toolkit for new FDP members and new committee members
- An onboarding toolkit for the different levels of federal engagement (including what each level contributes and the value they receive)
- A set of brief talking points for each committee or working group to share both internally and externally with relevant stakeholders (i.e., faculty working group creates talking points to share within their institutions about the value and work of FDP as well as talking points to share with other working groups and committees within FDP)
- A set of brief talking points about FDP to be integrated into presentations and other materials
- As a secondary initiative: social media messages and graphics

Newsletters

In addition to the existing Quick Session Summaries FDP already distributes after the meetings, a branded triannual FDP newsletter with regular updates on research priorities and demonstrations would help raise awareness of FDP. It could be branded as “What’s New with FDP” or “What’s New in Research This Quarter” and include information about relevant policy changes, upcoming demonstrations or important information currently happening. It could be distributed after each FDP meeting to both existing FDP members as well as non-members. The newsletter also could include a triannual spotlight from an FDP

committee member or leader with content tailored to their role and priorities. For example, an FDP federal committee member could provide updates on what's happening in the federal/governmental agency research arena or could share why the FDP is important to their role within the agency.

Infographics

FDP could create an overarching infographic explaining the purpose of the organization and the value it brings to the research enterprise. It could include an example of the demonstration process and the steps needed to successfully complete a demonstration. It could also highlight the important benefits the demonstrations provide for specific priority audience groups (federal/governmental agencies and institutions).

Conferences, Webinars and Allied Publications

Throughout the year, FDP leadership and committee chairpersons can attend conferences and meetings associated with the research and research administration enterprise to reach the wider stakeholder audiences such as federal agencies, research institutions and other associations.

These conferences and meetings could include the following:

- SRAI presentations and presentations with other associations
- Federal agency working group meetings
- National Academies
- National Council of University Research Administrations (NCURA)
- Council on Governmental Relations (COGR)
- Professional societies of interest to faculty — AAAS, FASEB
- NCURA Magazine
- Research Management Review
- Journal of Research Administration (SRA publication)
- SRA Catalyst

These conferences, webinars and publications present numerous opportunities to raise awareness of the FDP's impact as well as share information about the FDP in general. FDP can utilize a range of materials referenced above, such as the master PowerPoint presentation, FAQs and talking points. FDP could also provide a brief update on its partnership activities at COGR meetings and other ongoing meetings throughout the year.

In addition, there are collaboration opportunities for FDP to be featured in association publications such as newsletters, blogs or other communication activities to share about specific demonstrations or relevant FDP work.

Website

For materials, the first step will be to update the FDP website with information about the organization as well as to showcase its success. This will include building from FDP's strengths to curate a more strategic,

sleek web presence. The updated website will position FDP's unique value and build engagement with researcher and federal agency key stakeholders. The website will also be searchable and useful for current members to navigate the existing work of the FDP. We will begin by conducting a web audit of the current platform and content as well as offer architecture recommendations. The goal of the website will be to migrate visitors more easily to information about the FDP, its benefits and its impact on the research enterprise.

Success Stories and Data

To showcase the impact of the FDP, a series of success stories can be created and shared on the FDP website, social media channels and during speaking opportunities.

Specific stories could include:

- A successful demonstration between the FDP and a federal government agency detailing how demonstrations work and why they are important to the research enterprise.
- An FDP leader sharing about the FDP and its impact on the research enterprise providing an overview of the FDP, what it does and why it's important.
- An FDP faculty representative sharing about the benefits of the FDP and why it's important to institutions.
- An FDP federal representative sharing about the value of FDP to federal government agencies, demonstrating the opportunity to build relationships across sectors and include federal agencies directly in the decision-making.
- The Faculty Workload Survey report findings could be shared on the website, through social media or in a video format to demonstrate how the FDP uses surveys and demonstrations to identify faculty administrative burden.
- Additional stories could feature evaluation data.

Social Media (as a secondary priority/if internal capacity allows)

FDP can leverage its existing Twitter page to share messages, graphics and materials related to FDP, targeting aspiring and current members as well as the public. FDP can create an appropriate hashtag, allowing the engagement to be tracked. In addition, FDP can develop an editorial calendar of pre-prepared messages and graphics to share on social media and in newsletters. This can include upcoming observances, activities and milestones. If there is internal capacity, FDP could also create a Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn account to share content and engage with stakeholders on social media. Once FDP has established its social media presence, FDP could host a Twitter chat or a Facebook Live where participants could join and ask questions to FDP committee chairpersons or leadership and learn more about the FDP and the value it brings to the research enterprise. Specific topics could be discussed around demonstrations or upcoming policy changes, giving participants a chance to engage with FDP through its social media channels and build brand awareness.

Partnership Development

FDP has a robust network of stakeholders with whom it is regularly in contact with. There is an opportunity to expand its network and forge stronger relationships with existing partners. It also provides an opportunity to engage new partners such as research associations and other national organizations. FDP can identify specific stakeholder communication platforms that can be leveraged to spread awareness about FDP and its contributions to the research enterprise. For example, it could leverage its position under the National Academies and share reports and materials that could be posted on both the FDP website and the National Academies website. FDP could also identify partners that are hosting podcasts on science and research and could collaborate on a podcast series aimed at sharing how FDP demonstrations have advanced the research enterprise.

Measures of Success (in Partnership with the Evaluations Working Group)

- Website analytics from Google Analytics
- Social media metrics, including boosted reach and engagement
- Number of new followers on FDP social media accounts
- External conference attendance
- Media impressions and message analysis
- Number of newsletter and listserv subscribers
- Number of webinar attendees
- Number of success stories distributed
- Number of participants for Twitter chats and Facebook Lives
- Number of new partners and engagement from partners (such as podcast listeners and views of reports on partner websites)

Timeline

Recommended tactics for first six months:

- Develop tailored message concepts for key audiences
- Develop comprehensive public-facing FAQs and finalize other existing FAQs
- Create one-page fact sheets for each of the key stakeholder groups
- Create onboarding toolkit for new FDP members and new committee members
- Create brief talking points to be integrated into presentations and other materials
- Create brief talking points for each working group/committee
- Update the FDP website
- Identify new partners such as other research associations and national organizations

Recommended tactics for the next six months:

- Create master PowerPoint presentation
- Keep FDP website current

- Create infographic highlighting the demonstration process
- Create series of success stories
- Present and attend conferences and meetings to reach key stakeholders and the wider research enterprise
- Conduct outreach to new partners
- Establish social media presence
- Create digital editorial calendar with monthly social media and newsletter content

Recommended tactics for year 2:

- Share success stories on the FDP website, social media channels and during speaking opportunities such as NCURA, SRAI, COGR, APLU, AASCU and other professional organizations and disciplines
- Keep FDP website current
- Present at and attend conferences and meetings to reach key stakeholders and the wider research enterprise
- Collaborate on partner activities such as podcasts or social media events as appropriate
- Host Twitter chat or Facebook Live