

Jess Ann Kirby LLC

Woodstock, VT

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2024 WEDC Communications Program Proposal

February 2024

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this proposal is to outline a plan for an integrated communications strategy for the Town of Woodstock. Using a local hands-on approach this strategy is rooted in a personal connection and understanding of the unique needs of this community, as a resident and parent with a child in the school system. Our team's presence in Woodstock cements our ability to serve as a trusted voice for the community and visitors. It also gives us the advantage of being able to quickly shift priorities and efforts as needed.

We aim to create impactful campaigns that resonate on a personal level through visual and written storytelling, leveraging talent from local artists, writers and photographers. Utilizing WoodstockVT.com, email newsletters, social media campaigns, and local outreach, we are able to direct our efforts toward the objectives of the Woodstock Economic Development Commission for 2024 and beyond.

In addition to the management of a comprehensive communications program, this proposal outlines the development of a new website aimed at improving communication within our close community and engaging visitors in meaningful and lasting ways. The website will serve as a comprehensive platform including a mobile friendly design, user-friendly events calendar, various filter options for activities and itineraries, and (Search Engine Optimization) SEO-optimized blog content with endless options for customization to suit the Town's needs.

Ultimately it is important to create a strong, informative resource that is valuable to both visitors and residents.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

Jessica Kirby is a writer, content creator and founder of the successful New England lifestyle blog [JessAnnKirby.com](https://www.JessAnnKirby.com). Jessica has worked in digital marketing for over a decade, partnering with global brands including Anthropologie, Hyundai, Sephora, and Woodstock's own Woodstock Inn and Resort, to name a few.

Through stunning imagery, and strong SEO-optimized blog content, Jessica has grown her site to average 2.5M views and 900k users a year, an Instagram with 130k followers, Pinterest with 98k followers, and an email list of over 6k subscribers. Jessica was also the creator of two digital travel guides The Woodstock Guide and The Newport Guide, providing paying members with comprehensive, user-friendly travel information for both destinations.

She has success in driving meaningful ROI for brands and businesses, leveraging her unique ability to combine compelling written and visual storytelling, working with her partner Craig Mackay, a professional lifestyle photographer.

One example of local success includes her partnership with the Woodstock Inn and Resort, where Jessica has continued to drive increased sales year over year since 2020.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY

Develop the Woodstock Tourism Economy

1. Attracting visitors during slow periods of the year and minimizing peak volumes

- SEO optimized blog content highlighting itineraries, activities, and benefits of visiting Woodstock during slow periods, for example competitive rates, less crowds, etc. (January-June)
 - Target large groups and conferences during slower periods
- Highlight Spring in Woodstock through compelling visual and written content housed on WoodstockVT.com through an updated events calendar and blog content, and promoted via email and social media
- Increase awareness of, and attendance at, *Pride of Woodstock* and *Bookstock* in June 2024
- Create SEO-optimized blog content for WoodstockVT.com to help mitigate crowding in the village during peak times, and highlight Woodstock as a hub of a vibrant region, by providing recommendations and itineraries for visitors to nearby attractions (Barnard, Pomfret, South Woodstock, Ascutney, Killington, Bridgewater, Plymouth, etc).

2. Increase the number of qualified employees applying for jobs in Woodstock

- Build a centralized jobs board to be housed on WoodstockVT.com (linked from homepage and navigation menu)
 - Create an easy-to-use form for local businesses to submit job openings
- Promote, and provide easy instruction for, jobs board on various local communications channels including Listserv, Whatsapp groups

3. Provide visitors with information to help them navigate the Town

- Execute a campaign for the education of visitors using our various media channels. Create a comprehensive landing page on WoodstockVT.com (ideally a newly created WordPress site) highlighting the following information:
 - Visitor Center
 - Parking
 - Restrooms

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- Parks and Green Spaces (this is a good option for peak times directing visitors to places to eat outside of restaurants)
 - Events Calendar
 - Business Directory for Shops and Retail with filter functionality
 - Weekly calendar with hours of operation for local restaurants
 - Create an automatic “welcome” email for newsletter subscribers directing them to various informational content
 - Recruit local artist to install mural in the Village with signage for Visitor Center, restrooms and points of interest
 - Recruit local artist to produce printed town map to be distributed at local businesses and Inns

4. Increase the awareness of various events during off-peak times

- Create and promote an easy to use Events Calendar on WoodstockVT.com featuring filter capability and various display options for web and mobile
- Organically grow email list, with a focus on local leads, through website pop-ups, highlighted email sign-ups on home page, and social media calls to action
 - Establish a biweekly newsletter cadence to highlight local events pointing to established Events Calendar

Develop Our Local Resident Economy

1. Growing our resident population

- Move to Woodstock - Coordinated campaign across media channels leveraging personal local storytelling and making it easier to find information.
 - Identify interested prospects through social media posts, newsletter, and dedicated contact form on WoodstockVT.com
 - Create a “Relocation/Move to Woodstock” Landing Page on WoodstockVT.com
 - Link to available resources including local “ambassadors” to connect with individuals who show a strong interest in moving to Woodstock
 - Create compelling content informed by locals to be shared on social and via newsletters that highlight stories of recent moves to town, Woodstock’s exceptional schools, public pre-k program, tight-knit community, vast array of free experiences and activities “right outside your door”

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- My own move to Woodstock is a personal case study on this topic. After our first visit we fell in love with the town and eventually figured out a way to move our family here in 2020. There are many other families here with similar stories and I have a deep understanding of how to connect with people considering this kind of life change.

2. Growing enrollment within the school district (**Delivering 25 qualified leads for eligible students from school choice towns**)

- Grow email list to include local parents and students from school choice towns through targeted outreach leveraging Listserv, Whatsapp groups, social media, and website
- Newsletters that include school related events and activities including an up to date events calendar
- Feature stories from local students sharing what they love about learning in Woodstock (blog posts, newsletter, social media)
- Offer an internship or broader partnership with students at the high school through their C3 program (Center of Community Connections)
- Build a roster of local residents interested in serving as ambassadors for students/parents from school choice towns

3. Increase awareness of events during off-peak times (**Development and maintenance of an information channel to educate visitors on the Town and a well-populated events calendar.**)

- Leverage Listserv, Whatsapp groups and informal communications channels to grow local resident sign-ups for email list raising awareness of events throughout the year
- Build a robust events calendar to live on WoodstockVT.com to organize, raise awareness, and provide information about things happening in and around Woodstock
- Leverage current media channels, Listserv, Whatsapp groups to grow local awareness of Events Calendar
- Build an easy to use submission form housed on WoodstockVT.com allowing local residents to submit events and keep the calendar current
- Utilize social media to support event communications pointing to the email sign-up and events calendar on WoodstockVT.com

OUTCOMES

I am confident in reaching the following measures of a successful communications program for the Town of Woodstock

1. Delivering 25 qualified leads for eligible students from school choice towns
2. Development and maintenance of an information channel to educate visitors on the Town and a well-populated events calendar.
3. An increase of 5% in overall retail sales within the town of Woodstock in May and June of 2024 (measured by sales tax revenue during this period)

THE TEAM

Jessica Kirby, Woodstock, VT

Digital Marketing Manager, Writer, Content Creator

Email: jess@jessannkirby.com

Craig Mackay, Woodstock, VT

Photographer / Independent Contractor

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Kelley Boymer

Writer, Editorial Assistant / Independent Contractor

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BUDGET

This proposal is for the development and management of a comprehensive communications program for 12 months. I welcome the opportunity to design and build a user-friendly WordPress site for WoodstockVT.com. Much of what is accomplished through a successful communications program relies on being able to direct traffic toward an informative and easy to use (and easy to manage) website.

Ongoing Communications Management: \$4,520/month including:

- Professional in-house photography
- SEO optimized blog content
- Up to date events calendar and relevant site updates
- Newsletter management with 2-4 emails/month (including audience segmentation and analytics)
- Social media management

Site Management	Creation of an Editorial Calendar Min. 2 blog posts/month In-House Photography Events Calendar Management Site and Page Updates Form Submission Management	\$1800
Social Media Management	Photo and Video Content Creation For IG Feed, Reels and Stories Facebook Posting Management Communication Management via DMs and Comments	\$1000
Newsletter Management and Communication Management	Creation of an editorial calendar 1-2 emails a month Identifying and corresponding with leads for new residents and school choice students	\$1300
Email Management Fee (Flodesk)	Includes unlimited subscribers, audience segmentation, analytics, pop-up and embedded forms, integration with social	\$35/month
Monthly Comms Program Total		\$54,240 annually

STRONG RECOMMENDATION

Build and launch an intuitive, visually appealing website using WordPress that is easy for users to navigate and utilize both for residents and visitors.

Why WordPress?

The current website should be re-designed. There are huge benefits to switching to WordPress as a content management system (CMS) platform. Overall the cost is significantly less to host (\$440 less/month), manage and customize a WordPress site. WordPress is easier to train users so it can be managed seamlessly by various people.

Drupal is not a beginner friendly CMS, there are far fewer developers trained on Drupal which makes it more expensive to maintain and update. For comparison purposes WordPress has been used on 60 percent of all CMS-based websites where Drupal has been used for just under 4 percent of all CMS-based websites.

I feel strongly it is not worth investing in marketing efforts using the current website because it is leading users to a dead end. One of the most important aspects of a communications and marketing strategy is a strong website. The site is not user friendly nor in line with current website standards. This can also hurt SEO rankings because users are not spending meaningful time on the site.

I've spoken with my developer who can move the current website from Drupal to WordPress ensuring there are re-directs so we don't lose backlinking, internal linking or SEO rankings. We can also consult an SEO expert if desired.

In the long run, a move to a new website would be incredibly beneficial to the overall marketing and communications strategy for the town. It will make it more cost effective, easier to manage, and onboard anyone who oversees the process in the future.

BUDGET

Website Design and Build	Including migrating content from Drupal to Wordpress, imagery, design and creation of new and improved landing pages, Events Calendar, Contact Forms	\$15,000 flat fee
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