



**CITY OF NOVATO**  
CALIFORNIA

Annual Update  
FY18/19-FY19/20

Communications & Community Engagement Plan

April 2018

## For Council Consideration

- ✓ Update of Communications & Community Engagement efforts to-date
- ✓ Draft Communications & Community Engagement Plan for FY 18/19 & FY 19/20

# Achievements to Date

## ✓ Public noticing guidelines adopted by City Council

<p>Notices mailed at least 10 days prior to meeting, hearing, or workshop</p>	<p>Notices to property owners and occupants within a 600'- radius of project/event/ construction</p>	<p>Streamlined content and format</p>
<p>Notices color-coded by department</p>	<p>Posting of notice to project webpages</p>	<p>On-site signage</p>



## ✓ Increased Spanish outreach

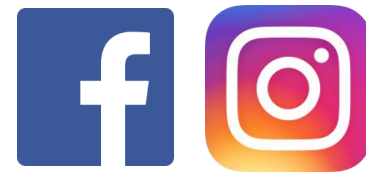
eNewsletter, public notices, news items, flyers & social media posts

## ✓ Closed Captioning

Live captioning at City Council meetings



# Achievements to Date



## ✓ Expanded social media outreach

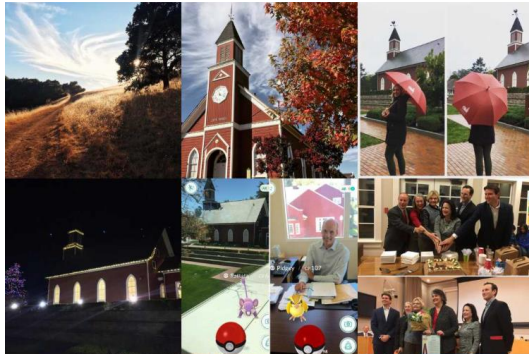
Nextdoor outreach expanded to include unincorporated Novato

Inclusion of community photos shared on social media feed

Posting information on community pages (i.e. Novato in the Know)

New City Sustainability Facebook page

2016



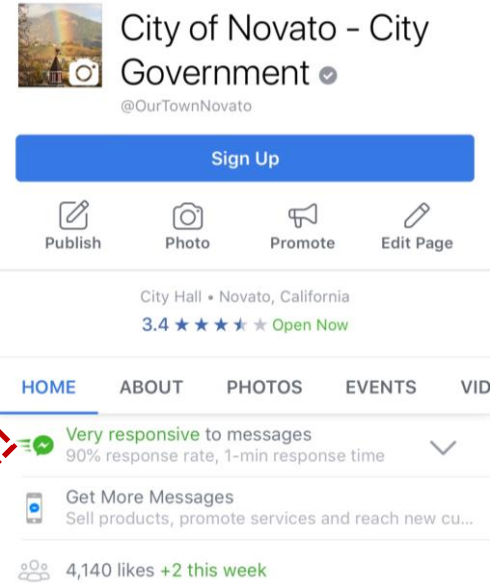
765 Likes to 43 posts in 2016  
 cityofnovato Thank you for your likes!

2017



5,210 Likes to 118 posts in 2017  
 cityofnovato Thank you for your likes!

90%



# Achievements to Date

## ✓ #NovatoProud

Expansion to include categories for Hometown Heroes (Novato veterans) & Sustainability Superstars



## ✓ Records Retention

Implementation of social media archiving for all City accounts



**Dorothy Suder**

United States Air Force  
Flight Nurse  
Active Duty 1950 to 1955

Dorothy served in post-war England, UK and in the United States.

## ✓ Launch of new webpages

Volunteer webpage powered by VolunteerMatch

Sustainability webpages with resources for residents & businesses

A screenshot of a webpage titled "VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES IN NOVATO" powered by VolunteerMatch.org. The page features a navigation menu with categories: ADVOCACY &amp; HUMAN RIGHTS, ANIMALS, CHILDREN &amp; YOUTH, COMMUNITY, EDUCATION &amp; LITERACY, ENVIRONMENT, and VIEW ALL. Below the menu, there are two featured volunteer opportunities. The first is "Volunteer Opportunities at Olompali State Historic Park" with a "SIGN UP" button. The second is "Nurses and/or Spanish speaking medical personnel needed" for the "MARIN PREGNANCY CLINIC" with a "SIGN UP" button. The background of the page shows a blurred image of people at a park.

# How We Communicate

## City Website



## Website Visits

- ✓ ~45K monthly pageviews
- ✓ ~10K new monthly visitors
- ✓ 45% of visitors view website on a mobile device or tablet

## Notifications

- ✓ ~19K monthly e-mail & text message notifications sent
- ✓ ~30% open rate

# How We Communicate

Connecting via Social Media



**Facebook.com/OurTownNovato**

✓ Over 4,150 likes



**@cityofnovato**

✓ 870 followers



**@TweetNovato**

✓ 1,651 followers



**City of Novato**

✓ 18,149 members (including unincorporated Novato)

# How We Communicate

Two-Way Communication

**city@novato.org**  
**publicinfo@novato.org**  
**econdev@novato.org**

**Phone calls**

**Service requests**

**NextDoor**  
**Facebook & Instagram**  
**Neighborhood forums**

**Community Workshops**  
**Meetings**



**~50**  
Inquiries per day



## Communications Goal

*“to maximize **all** opportunities to effectively inform and meaningfully engage our community.”*

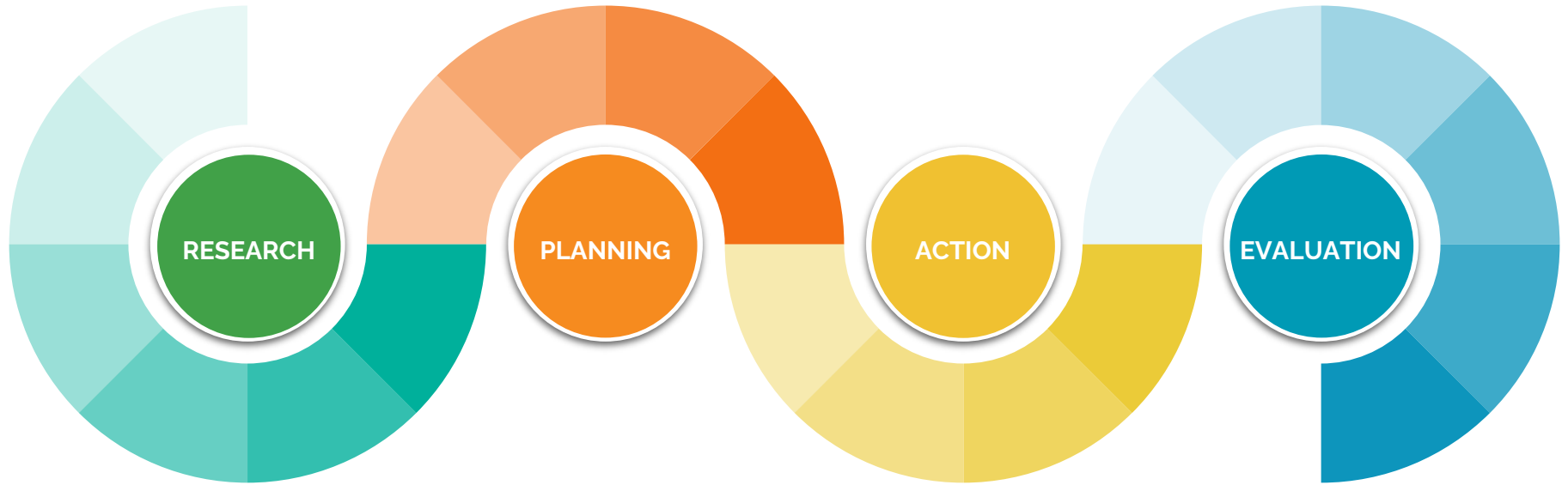
# Picture of Success

## If we are successful, we will have:

- ✓ Encouraged informed participation
- ✓ A solid understanding of the public's values and ideas
- ✓ Demonstrated the value of City services
- ✓ Improved City decision-making and actions
- ✓ Higher rates of community participation and leadership development
- ✓ Built more trust in each other and in local government
- ✓ Stimulated a vibrant economy, attracted & retained skilled and happy employees, and improved our services



# Communications Planning Process



## Research

- Situational Analysis
- Communications Audit
- Audience Analysis
- Surveys
- Interviews & Focus Groups
- Best Practice Research

## Planning

- Findings Analyzed
- Key Insights Derived
- Strategy Development
- Plan Development
- Toolkit Development

## Action

- Present to City Council
- Plan roll-out
- Initiatives Launched

## Evaluation

- Measurement & Review
- Evaluation of Performance
- Adjustments to Plan

# Research & Outreach Conducted



Analysis  
&  
communications  
audit



Audience  
identification



Best  
practices  
research



Residents'  
survey



Business  
survey



Commissions  
Committees &  
Boards Survey



Interviews &  
focus  
groups

# Our Audiences



<p>Residents (approximately 55,000)</p> <p>Under 5 (6%); Age 5-19 (17%); Age 20-64 (62%); 65 and over (16%)</p>	<p>Local Agencies</p> <p>Novato Fire District; Sanitary district; Water District, Novato Unified School District, CalTrans, LAFCO etc</p>
<p>Business owners/ managers (approx 2,500)</p>	<p>Education community (teachers, parents, students)</p>
<p>Visitors</p>	<p>Media</p>
<p>Community partners (faith-based groups, community service providers)</p>	<p>HOAs, neighborhood groups and property owners</p>
<p>Healthcare community</p>	<p>Community interest groups</p>
<p>Regional, State and Federal agency partners</p>	<p>Development community</p>
<p>Employees (internal)</p>	<p>Business community ( &amp; employees who travel in)</p>

# Communication Tools and Channels



<p><b>Website</b>  City of Novato Website: Novato.org  Open Novato (surveys/ forum)  Service Requests</p>	<p><b>Signage</b>  Street Banners, Posters in Downtown Kiosks,  On-site Project Signs, Wayfinding Signs  Downtown</p>
<p><b>Initiative-specific Websites</b>  Websites/Microsites including Volunteering,  Shop Local Novato, Visit Novato, Novato  Proud, DNBA, Project Web-pages (Planning/  Public Works)</p>	<p><b>Broad Reach</b>  NCTV, Newspaper ads, NUSD (PeachJar),  Local Media</p>
<p><b>Social Media</b>  City of Novato Facebook, Instagram, Twitter,  YouTube and NextDoor</p>	<p><b>Email and Text Messages</b>  eNotifications, SMS, eNewsletter, Nixle, City  e-mail</p>
<p><b>Department/Affiliate Social Media</b>  Parks &amp; Rec (FB, Twitter, Instagram)  Public Works (FB)  Novato Police Department (FB, Twitter &amp;  Instagram)  Visit Novato (FB, Twitter and Instagram)</p>	<p><b>Mail and Print</b>  Public noticing mailers  Parks and Rec Activity Guide (3x per year)  Flyers, postcards &amp; posters  Business license mailers and insert</p>



KEY INSIGHTS

Increase access to information in Spanish and other languages	Public Works project pages - timeline and FAQs.	Rate planning process (ecom style stars)	Film/video the DRC meetings	Timeliness: "We need more advance notice of meetings & proposals"	Follow up with each public input/ speaker	Facebook Likes campaign to increase reach	Developers Survey
Invest in + increase social media engagement / use of Open Novato	Timely minutes of CCB meetings.	Improve timeliness by having a full time 'reporter'/ PR on staff	Centralized Business Contact Database	Centralized online events calendar	Flyers via Meals on Wheels to seniors	New dedicated staff resource for communications	Annual Community Survey
Constantly publish list of ways people can access info, inc at meetings	All agendas in English and Spanish	City Meetings Recap email - key decisions on social media			Liaison with Seniors Club to have a regular column in their newsletter	Web recommendations: CTAs on homepage (10 things you can do)	Annual Business Survey like San Rafael
City staff to present at more community events, e.g. Rotary	'Tag' sections of city council meetings and post to relevant pages	Mailed Newsletter (see under Awareness Engagement)			Facebook Live	Scholarships via parks & Rec department	Comprehensive business email list
Web pages with current facts about projects and initiatives is vital	Expected time frames for permitting process	Research multi-lingual voicemail service			New Meeting info on social media	Build Capacity: Support Interest Groups with communication channels	Town Hall Meetings
We need a modern, accessible brand.	We need to better articulate the role of the City (not full service city)	Employee professional images to humanize organization			More 'Novato Proud Moments' to help increase civic pride	A new unified Events Commission - share communication resources	Novato Proud column in the local newspaper?
There needs to be a clear vision for Novato	Need to communicate the ways people can interact with the City (TV, FB etc)	We should have a welcome pack for new residents			Community Awards Program	More focus on good news stories	Dia de Muertos event - celebrate our Latino community
"We need to celebrate the wins more: ground breakings, staff, events"	We need to review best practices on transparency	Visit Novato & Downtown Novato should be part of the same brand family			Routine meetings with community interest groups to build trust	Need to highlight staff - make them feel celebrated (forthewin@)	Novato Proud web pages should be in Spanish
More facts, available faster: "We need to be the source of truth"	Improve website UI/ UX - investment in website	Sustainable City should be part of our brand - something we embrace	Emergency preparedness increased info and training	Provide Social Media training for all staff	Continue to invest in regular updates online and on social media	More ribbon cuttings and more community events	Veterans lamp post banners on Grant
Set of brochures/ web pages to sell Novato as a great place to live & work	More information online Better experience/ More services online	Establish messaging that can be used consistently	Visualization of communications metrics to help us evaluate progress (# email subscribers, social media engagements, NCTV watchers etc)		Implement process for following up calls (City councilmembers)	Standardized templates and communication tools	CCB members need Brown Act training

76  
Actionable  
ideas



# Communications Objectives



Establish a recognizable, usable, accessible brand for the City



Improve internal communications



Improve access to information



Engage the community and build awareness



Increase civic pride

# Key Insights from Research & Outreach

## City Image/ Brand

We need a modern, accessible brand

“We need to celebrate the wins more: ground breakings, staff wins, events”

More facts, faster:  
We need to be the official source of City info

Articulate the role of the City (not full service city)

Employee profiles/  
demystify City organization

Be the go-to for City information

A welcome packet for new residents

Content to promote Novato as a great place to live & work

Visit Novato & Downtown Novato part of brand family

Improve website & visitor experience

Sustainable City - part of our brand

More information & services online

Establish messaging that can be used consistently

# Key Insights from Research & Outreach

Standardized templates and communication tools	Staff newsletter
Improved news updates and quarterly 'all hands' meetings	Encourage and celebrate innovation
Streamlined department updates to councilmembers & community	Improve interdepartmental info sharing & collaboration
Evaluate & measure progress	Continue to provide outreach training to staff & develop toolkit



# Key Insights from Research & Outreach

## Accessible Info

Increase promotion of ways to access City info

Increase access to information in Spanish and other languages

Web pages with current facts about projects and initiatives is vital

Rate customer service, other city services (Yelp-style)	Public Works project pages - timeline and FAQs.
Improve timeliness by having a full time 'reporter'/ PR on staff	Video Design Review meetings
City Meetings Recap email - key decisions on social media	Business eNewsletter
Timely minutes of CCB meetings	Provide a way for constituents to subscribe to meeting minutes
Research possibility of multilingual voicemail service	Implement process for following up calls (City councilmembers)
Invest in + increase social media engagement / use of Open Novato	Communicate clearly development review process, permitting process (w/timeframes)

# Key Insights from Research & Outreach

Timeliness: “We need more advance notice of meetings & proposals”	Follow up with each public input/ speaker
Build capacity among City-affiliated groups via training & advice	Flyers via Meals on Wheels to seniors
Mailed Newsletter - at least 2x per year	Improved liaison with groups, e.g. Seniors Club
Provide calls to actions on homepage (i.e. - how to get involved in your city)	Consider alternatives to online communications
Business Anniversary Card (show them you are glad they are here)	Preview Meeting info on social media
Town Hall Meetings	Annual Resident, Business, and Developers Surveys



# Key Insights from Research & Outreach



A new unified events calendar	Novato Proud column in local newspaper
More focus on good news stories	Community Awards Program
Need to highlight staff - make them feel celebrated	Novato Proud web pages should be in Spanish
Reward excellence: Recognize a city staffer at Paint the Town Red	Veterans lamp post banners on Grant
Continue to invest in regular updates online and on social media	Regularly meet with community interest groups to build trust

# Communications Framework

## MISSION

“The mission of the City of Novato is to provide excellent services and enrich the quality of life within the community in a fiscally-responsible manner.”

## COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES



Establish City of  
Novato brand



Improve Internal  
Communications



Improve Access  
to Information



Engage  
Community &  
Build Awareness



Increase  
Civic Pride

## 8 KEY PRINCIPLES

Accessible | Accurate | Actionable | Credible and Trusted | Recognizable | Relevant | Timely | Understandable



## Key Communication Principles

- 1 **Accessible** to all persons in our community, both in terms of language and availability
- 2 **Accurate** communications that state facts clearly, and provide contact details, next steps and actions
- 3 **Actionable** communications that move our audiences towards action, mobilizing the community
- 4 **Credible & Transparent** being trusted, coordinating with partners, and speaking with one voice
- 5 **Recognizable** making the City of Novato brand and communications consistent, e.g. standard formats
- 6 **Relevant** tailoring comms for our audiences. Ensuring comms are aligned with our mission and strategic goals
- 7 **Timely** frequent, regular, well-prepared scheduled comms; responding quickly to situations and emergencies
- 8 **Understandable** use plain language, avoid acronyms, tell stories, make communications visual



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## COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Initiatives | Actions | Measurement



# COMMUNICATIONS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN OVERVIEW

# Objective 1: Establish a recognizable, accessible brand for City of Novato

Initiatives / Tactics / Actions	Timing
<p>Refresh and Modernize City brand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop a brand family so that department logos are consistent and unified</li> <li>- Make the master brand more accessible and legible</li> <li>- Evolution not revolution, so that costs are minimal</li> <li>- Sustainability as part of the City's brand</li> </ul>	<p>In process/completed by Summer 2018</p>
<p>Build a reputation for being the official source of City information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improve organizational framework to provide accurate &amp; timely info</li> <li>- Implement Open Data portal to provide on-demand access to City information</li> <li>- Promote the various ways that people can engage with City of Novato</li> </ul>	<p>Summer/Fall 2018</p>
<p>Refresh the City of Novato's website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Design and content refresh for the City of Novato's website</li> <li>- Improve website interface to make the site more intuitive and accessible</li> <li>- Public Works project pages (timeline/ FAQs / permitting time frames)</li> <li>- Consider rating system for experience with city services</li> <li>- Provide Calls to Action on homepage to help encourage civic service &amp; engagement</li> </ul>	<p>Winter 2018/Spring 2019</p>
<p>Establish "evergreen" messaging for staff signature lines, public notices, and other City outreach materials</p>	<p>Fall 2018</p>

## Objective 2: Improve internal communications

Initiatives / Tactics / Actions	Timing
Streamline department updates to Council & Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish a fixed, streamlined way for department updates to be communicated on a regular basis to City Council &amp; the community (e.g. quarterly City projects report)</li> </ul>	Early 2019
Encourage and celebrate innovation and success: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set up an email address for staff to send good news items</li> <li>- Include a City Staff award in annual Paint the Town Red ceremony</li> </ul>	Spring 2018 Winter 2019
Improve communication of news to staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure all staff are signed-up for e-notifications and the City's e-newsletter</li> <li>- Internal newsletter</li> <li>- Executive management to attend departmental meetings</li> </ul>	Ongoing Fall 2018 Start Spring 2018
Staff communications training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Outreach &amp; facilitation training for staff</li> <li>- Social media &amp; website</li> <li>- Staff toolkit</li> </ul>	Summer/Fall 2018 Ongoing Summer 2018
Establish measurements for Plan initiatives Update Communications & Community Engagement Plan	Summer 2018 Summer 2019

## Objective 3: Improve access to information

Initiatives / Tactics / Actions	Timing
Continue to increase social media presence and programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase Facebook followers to reach more residents</li> <li>- Increase communications through Next Door and Open Novato</li> <li>- “Did You Know?” social media / email campaign (evergreen) - e.g. Volunteer page</li> </ul>	Ongoing Ongoing Summer 2018
Provide more information in multiple languages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase information published in Spanish</li> <li>- Research possible multi-lingual voicemail service</li> <li>- Add “¿Habla español?” with a web link to all major project signs</li> </ul>	Ongoing Summer 2019 Summer 2018
Streamline and unify business communications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Launch business e-news</li> <li>- Development Review &amp; Permitting processes on website and in brochures/checklists</li> </ul>	Summer 2018
Increase access to City meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use Facebook live for significant meetings/ events</li> <li>- Preview meeting info on social media channels</li> <li>- Film/ video DRC meetings</li> <li>- Timely minutes of Committees, Commission, and Board meetings</li> <li>- Promote list of ways people can access meeting info</li> </ul>	Summer 2018 Summer 2018 TBD Spring 2018 Ongoing

## Objective 4: Engage the community & build awareness

Initiatives / Tactics / Actions	Timing
Develop “Town Hall” style engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Allow constituents to bring their own questions for City Councilmembers and staff</li> </ul>	Summer/Fall 2018
Annual Surveys to assess constituents needs and improvement opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Annual Residents Survey</li> <li>- Annual Business Survey</li> <li>- Annual Developers Survey</li> </ul>	FY 18/19
Build capacity by supporting special interest groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support special interest groups and minority groups with their own communication channels in order to build capacity</li> <li>- Improved liaison with groups, e.g. Seniors Club to get features in their newsletter</li> </ul>	Ongoing
Promote existing channels and initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Better promotion and awareness of existing comms channels</li> <li>- Mailed Newsletter - at least 2x per year</li> <li>- Consider alternatives to online communications</li> </ul>	Ongoing FY 18/19 Ongoing

## Objective 5: Increase civic pride

Initiatives / Tactics / Actions	Timing
<p>More 'Novato Proud', to help increase civic pride</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continued focus on positive Novato news</li> <li>- Novato Veterans featured on Grant Ave banners</li> <li>- Launch Novato Proud merchandise</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing July 2018 Fall 2018</p>
<p>Community Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue exploring sponsorship opportunities</li> <li>- Strengthen Speakers Bureau with City staff to meet with community groups</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Community Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use annual events to communicate ways to engage</li> <li>- Explore a Día de los Muertos event in Novato</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing, start Fall 2018 Fall 2018</p>
<p>Communicate more of the good news</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improve communication of the 'wins': disseminate those good news stories</li> <li>- Recognize a city staffer at Paint the Town Red</li> <li>- More coverage of City project milestones, awards, etc.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing January 2019 Ongoing, start Spring '18</p>



THANKS!