
Nonprofit Marketing Calendar Template

A 12-Month Planning Framework for Small Cultural Institutions

Structured around program cycles, fundraising seasons, and audience communications — not generic marketing theory.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Monthly channel-by-channel planning grid

Audience communication cadence guide

Seasonal campaign timing recommendations

Vendor coordination checklist

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How to Use This Template

This calendar is built around how small cultural institutions actually operate — not how marketing textbooks say they should. Use it as a living planning document, updated quarterly as your season develops.

Four Sections, One System

The template is organized into four tools that work together. Start with the Annual Overview to map your year, then use the Monthly Planning Grid during your regular team check-ins. Refer to the Cadence Guide when scheduling communications, and run the Vendor Checklist at the start of each quarter.

01 ANNUAL OVERVIEW

Map your full year at a glance. Program dates, campaign windows, fundraising seasons, and blackout periods on a single page.

02 MONTHLY GRID

Channel-by-channel planning for each month. Email, social, print, events, and earned media all in one place.

03 CADENCE GUIDE

Recommended communication frequency by audience segment: donors, general audience, press, and board.

04 VENDOR CHECKLIST

Quarterly vendor coordination tasks — print, digital, broadcast, and media partners — so nothing falls through the cracks.

A Note on Scope

This framework assumes a small staff with limited dedicated marketing time — typically one to three people managing communications alongside other responsibilities. The goal is realistic planning, not aspirational overcommitment. It is better to execute three channels consistently than six channels sporadically.

SECTION 01

Annual Overview

Map your full year before planning individual months. Mark program dates, campaign windows, grant deadlines, and blackout periods here first.

MONTH	SEASON	PROGRAM / EVENT NOTES	CAMPAIGN WINDOW	FUNDRAISING PRIORITY	BLACKOUT / CONFLICTS
JAN	Winter			Board appeal / Year-start push	
FEB	Winter			Membership renewal outreach	
MAR	Spring			Spring campaign launch	
APR	Spring			Grant season (NMTD, city arts)	
MAY	Spring			Sponsor cultivation	
JUN	Summer			Mid-year donor touch	
JUL	Summer			Summer sustainer push	
AUG	Summer			Season preview / presale	
SEP	Fall			Fall campaign launch	
OCT	Fall			Major donor cultivation	
NOV	Fall/Year-End			Year-end giving / GivingTuesday	
DEC	Year-End			Year-end close / tax deadline	

Tip: Fill in program and event dates first. Campaign windows should open 3-6 weeks before each major event or season. Blackout periods (holidays, competing community events) should inform your send schedule.

SECTION 02

Monthly Planning Grid

Use one row per month. Plan each active channel and note key tasks. Leave cells blank for channels not in use that month — do not force activity.

MONTH	EMAIL NEWSLETTER	SOCIAL MEDIA	PRINT / COLLATERAL	WEBSITE UPDATES	PRESS / EARNED MEDIA	GOOGLE ADS/GRANTS	PARTNER COORD.
JAN							
FEB							
MAR							
APR							
MAY							
JUN							
JUL							
AUG							
SEP							
OCT							
NOV							
DEC							

How to fill this in:

EMAIL	Note send dates, subject theme, audience segment (all, donors, members)
SOCIAL	Note platform focus (Instagram, Facebook), post frequency goal, any paid boost

PRINT	Note any print jobs in production — programs, postcards, signage — and due dates
WEBSITE	Note content updates, blog posts, event listings, or SEO priorities
PRESS	Note pitch targets, press release send dates, media partner deadlines
GOOGLE ADS	Note campaign focus, budget period, grant spend tracking
PARTNER COORD.	Note vendor check-ins, co-op deadlines, sponsor deliverables

Audience Communication Cadence Guide

Different audiences require different communication rhythms. Sending too often fatigues your list; too infrequently and you lose presence. These are recommended minimums and maximums based on best practices for small cultural institutions.

General Audience / Ticket Buyers	EMAIL	SOCIAL	PRINT
Recommended Frequency	2-3x per month	4-5x per week	Seasonal (3-4x per year)
Guidance	<i>Lead with programming and events. Keep it calendar-driven. Subject lines should be specific — "June 14 Opening Night" outperforms "Exciting News This Summer."</i>	Best send times: Tue–Thu, 10am or 6pm local time	Avoid: Friday afternoon, holiday weekends, concurrent with major local events
Donors and Major Gift Prospects	EMAIL	SOCIAL	PRINT
Recommended Frequency	1-2x per month	N/A (personal)	Quarterly + year-end appeal
Guidance	<i>Prioritize impact stories, program outcomes, and acknowledgment. Never lead with an ask — lead with a result. The year-end appeal is your highest-stakes communication of the year.</i>	Best send times: Tuesday morning; avoid month-end	Avoid: Tax season (April), major holidays, within 2 weeks of a general ask
Members and Sustaining Supporters	EMAIL	SOCIAL	PRINT
Recommended Frequency	2-4x per month	Members-only content as available	Annual report + renewal letter
Guidance	<i>Emphasize access, exclusivity, and belonging. Members should always hear about events before the general public. Renewal outreach should begin 60 days before lapse date.</i>	Best send times: Mid-week; renewal emails perform best on Tuesdays	Avoid: Competing with general audience sends on same day

Press and Media Contacts	EMAIL	SOCIAL	PRINT
Recommended Frequency	Event-driven (4-8x per year)	Tag / mention for coverage	Press kits for major programs
Guidance	<i>Pitch 4-6 weeks before opening or event. Follow up once, briefly. Media contacts value brevity — keep pitches under 200 words with assets attached, not embedded.</i>	Best send times: Monday or Tuesday morning for weekly publications	Avoid: Friday, same week as competing major cultural openings

Board Members	EMAIL	SOCIAL	PRINT
Recommended Frequency	Monthly report + as needed	N/A	Annual report
Guidance	<i>Board communication should be structured and consistent. A monthly one-page marketing summary — metrics, upcoming campaigns, and any notable press — prevents surprises and builds confidence in the marketing function.</i>	Best send times: 3-5 days before board meetings	Avoid: Ad hoc, reactive-only communication patterns

Seasonal Campaign Timing

Most cultural institutions share a common seasonal rhythm. Use this guide to align your campaigns with when audiences are most receptive — and when competition for attention is highest.

WINTER (Jan – Feb)	OPPORTUNITIES	CAUTIONS
<i>Renewal and commitment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Year-start membership push + Board and donor stewardship outreach + Program announcement for spring season + Grant applications (NMTD CoOp, city arts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ! Audience attention is recovering from year-end overload ! Keep volume low — quality over frequency ! Avoid major campaigns in the first two weeks of January
<i>Priority: Relationship maintenance, planning, and quiet cultivation</i>		
SPRING (Mar – May)	OPPORTUNITIES	CAUTIONS
<i>Anticipation and activity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Season opener campaigns + Spring membership drive + Event and exhibition promotion + Sponsor acknowledgment and mid-year reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ! Spring break and school calendars affect audience availability ! Tourism season begins — coordinate with Tourism Santa Fe messaging ! Grant deadlines cluster in April — do not let admin overwhelm communications
<i>Priority: Audience acquisition and event-driven promotion</i>		
SUMMER (Jun – Aug)	OPPORTUNITIES	CAUTIONS
<i>Peak activity — highest traffic</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Peak tourism season — highest new audience potential + Partnership activations with hospitality and tourism sector + Google Grants spend should be maximized + Press and travel media pitching for fall preview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ! Staff capacity often reduced — plan content in advance ! Email engagement drops in July — increase social and in-venue presence ! Competition for attention is highest; keep messaging focused
<i>Priority: New audience reach, in-person experience, and partner coordination</i>		

FALL (Sep – Nov)	OPPORTUNITIES	CAUTIONS
<i>Urgency and community return</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Fall season launch — often the strongest programming window + GivingTuesday (first Tuesday after Thanksgiving) + Year-end giving campaign setup and donor cultivation + Annual report distribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ! Year-end giving window is competitive — start early ! Thanksgiving week: pause all non-critical communications ! Do not launch new campaigns in late November without strong rationale
<i>Priority: Major donor engagement, year-end positioning, and retention</i>		

YEAR-END (Dec)	OPPORTUNITIES	CAUTIONS
<i>Generosity and reflection</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Year-end tax deadline giving (Dec 28-31 window) + Impact and gratitude messaging to full list + Board year-end report + Planning communications for next year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ! Send volume across all sectors peaks in December — stand out or step back ! Personalized donor outreach outperforms mass appeals ! Do not start new initiatives — execute what is already in motion
<i>Priority: Gratitude, giving close, and year-in-review</i>		

Vendor Coordination Checklist

Run this checklist at the start of each quarter. Vendor relationships require consistent maintenance — dropped communication cycles cost time and money when deadlines arrive.

Q1 (January – March)

PRINT

- Confirm printer relationships and nonprofit pricing for the year

- Order season programs and any spring event collateral

- Review print budget allocation for Q2-Q4

- Confirm paper stock and turnaround times with primary vendor

DIGITAL

- Renew or review website hosting and domain registrations

- Audit Google Nonprofit Grant status — confirm \$10k/month eligibility

- Review email platform subscription and list health (unsubscribes, bounces)

- Update social media bios and profile images for new season

BROADCAST / MEDIA

- Confirm radio and broadcast partner contacts for the year

- Negotiate in-kind trade agreements for the season

- Submit CoOp marketing applications (NMTD deadline check)

- Distribute press kit for spring programming to media contacts

INTERNAL

- Confirm marketing calendar dates with programming and development teams

- Set up shared content calendar with staff

- Brief board on marketing plan and Q1 priorities

- Confirm photography/videography coverage for key spring events

Q2 (April – June)

PRINT

- Summer program and event collateral in production by May

- Tourism and visitor-facing materials updated and distributed

- Confirm display advertising placements with print partners

DIGITAL

- Google Grants: audit keyword performance and pause low-performers

- Update event listings across all platforms (Google, Eventbrite, local)

- Review social media performance — adjust frequency or platform mix if needed

- Confirm summer email cadence and pre-write evergreen sends

BROADCAST / MEDIA

- Submit summer event listings to press contacts by mid-May

- Confirm radio schedule and spots for June-August

- Pitch travel and tourism media for summer visitor coverage

INTERNAL

- Mid-year check-in with development team on fundraising/marketing alignment

- Confirm staffing for summer communications coverage

- Photograph spring events for fall communications assets

Q3 (July – September)

PRINT

- Fall season program in production by August

- Year-end appeal letter designed and approved by September

- Annual report design initiated

DIGITAL

- Google Grants: maximize spend during peak tourism season

- Fall email series planned and written by end of August

- Website updated with full fall season programming

- Begin social media content creation for fall campaign

BROADCAST / MEDIA

- Fall press kit distributed to media contacts by September 1

- Confirm broadcast schedule for fall season

- GivingTuesday media strategy confirmed

INTERNAL

- Year-end giving strategy confirmed with development team

- Board updated on mid-year marketing metrics

- Photography and video assets gathered for year-end storytelling

Q4 (October – December)

PRINT

- Annual report to print by mid-November for December distribution

- Year-end appeal letter mailed by November 15

- Holiday/seasonal cards or acknowledgment pieces if applicable

DIGITAL

- GivingTuesday campaign assets live and tested by November 1

- Year-end email sequence scheduled (3-5 sends between Nov 15 and Dec 31)

- Google Grants: year-end campaign active with donation landing page

- Donor acknowledgment emails automated and tested

BROADCAST / MEDIA

- Year-end press coverage outreach for season wrap stories

- Confirm any holiday event promotion placements

INTERNAL

- Year-end marketing report drafted for January board meeting

- Next year planning calendar initiated

- Vendor thank-you outreach and relationship maintenance

■ Archive all 2025 assets, metrics, and vendor contacts

Need a senior hand on the wheel?

This template gives you a framework. A Fractional Director of Marketing and Communications gives you the leadership to execute it — consistently, strategically, and without the overhead of a full-time hire.

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