

Rebranding a Research Identity: From Texas Climate-Smart Initiative to Texas Conservation and Sustainability Initiative

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Introduction

The Texas Climate-Smart Initiative was established through Texas A&M AgriLife to advance agricultural practices that enhance productivity while protecting natural resources. In 2025, under the guidance of Dr. Holli Leggette, I assisted in rebranding the program as the Texas Conservation and Sustainability Initiative to better reflect its long-term focus on conservation, research, and stakeholder engagement. The rebranding effort aimed to clarify the Initiative's mission, modernize its visual identity, and increase accessibility for diverse audiences across Texas agriculture. Through the experience, I sought to understand how strategic branding supports research translation, stakeholder engagement, and public trust in agricultural and environmental programs.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of my internship was to gain experience in science communication, apply branding and design skills within agricultural contexts, and collaborate with researchers and communication professionals to strengthen public-facing materials. The internship was guided by three key objectives:

1. Evaluate the current marketing and communications of the program to determine the rebranding needs.
2. Realign the significant components of the marketing strategy, such as the logo, website verbiage, and photos, to align with the Advancing Markets for Producers program.
3. Develop a realigned communications plan for the project to ensure long-term brand consistency and clarity.

Procedures

Throughout my internship, I engaged in a range of communication and design tasks that emphasized both technical and collaborative learning. I redesigned visuals and messaging materials, including the program's logo, website, and communication templates, to align with updated branding goals. I created multiple logo mockups in Adobe Illustrator, refined the final design based on team feedback, and applied the visual standards to digital infographics. In WordPress, I updated page layouts, revised copy for clarity and tone, and ensured accessibility compliance. I also revised the brand guide to ensure color palettes, typography standards, and logo usage rules were consistent for application across materials. Collaboration with Dr. Julie Howe (Project Director), Dr. Jason Vogel (Project Manager), and Dr. Holli Leggette (Communications Director) strengthened my understanding of teamwork and the process of integrating scientific expertise into accessible communication products.

Results

The rebranding of the Initiative resulted in a cohesive and modernized visual identity, culminating in several deliverables that reflected each project objective. To evaluate the current marketing and communications materials, I conducted a review of the program's website, social media presence, and print materials to identify inconsistencies in tone, messaging, and design. In realigning the brand's visual and strategic components, I produced a new logo and an updated website copy and layout. Finally, I developed a realigned communications plan by creating marketing materials that can be used in the future. Collectively, these products advanced the Initiative's mission by aligning design and messaging to convey credibility, unity, and accessibility for both academic and stakeholder audiences. The final products reflected the combined perspectives of project leadership and communicated the program's focus on sustainability and conservation in a way that resonates with both academic and stakeholder audiences. These outcomes illustrate the importance of aligning design and message to convey credibility and unity in science-based organizations.

The new logo (Figure 1) communicates the initiative's emphasis on crops, forestry, and livestock while visually connecting conservation and sustainability under a unified brand. Its clean typography and color palette convey professionalism, clarity, and trust, aligning with Texas A&M AgriLife's overarching visual identity.

Figure 1. Official Logo for the Texas Conservation and Sustainability Initiative.



The redesigned homepage (Figure 2) reflects the program's new visual identity and strategic communication goals. The layout and messaging emphasize key themes—soil health, conservation, innovation, regenerative agriculture, and sustainability—while clearly outlining audience engagement and participation opportunities. The update modernized the initiative's digital presence and improved accessibility for stakeholders across Texas agriculture.

Figure 2. Updated Website Design for the Texas Conservation and Sustainability Initiative



Conclusions

This experience refined my technical skills and clarified my professional direction in marketing and communications. Working within an interdisciplinary team revealed how multi-faceted science communication can be, from message development to stakeholder outreach. For organizations like TCSI, branding is essential in building public trust, stakeholder recognition, and long-term engagement. Research emphasizes that consistent and credible branding strengthens the relationship between science and the public by signaling transparency, reliability, and authenticity. A clear and consistent brand identity not only strengthens visibility but also helps translate research outcomes into accessible, actionable information (Newman, 2023). Moving forward, I will apply these lessons by developing strategic communication materials that bridge the gap between research and real-world application, ensuring that complex agricultural and environmental information is conveyed clearly to producers, policymakers, and the public. Understanding how branding contributes to organizational credibility will continue to shape my approach to future work in agricultural communication, marketing, and policy outreach.

References

Newman, T. (2023). Exploring the brand of science: Implications for science communication. *Journal of Science Communication*.