

WORK SAMPLE

Climate-Adaptive Healthcare – Flagship Case Study

Liz Sahadi Smith | Strategic Communications | Phoenix, Ariz.

Work Sample Overview


Engagement Type	Flagship Case Study – Category Architecture and Narrative ROI
Organization	Healthcare nonprofit, Phoenix, Ariz.
Role	Senior Communications Leader – sole communications department
Time Frame	2023 – 2025
Outcome	544 national media placements; \$18M earned media value (verified by Cision); 7x donation growth in one week; 143% positive sentiment sustained across 113 consecutive days of record heat; first heat death decline in a decade

How to Read This Case Study

This document is not a campaign recap. It is a record of how a single communications leader engineered a category, built the governance infrastructure to sustain it, and tied that infrastructure to documented revenue, media, and institutional outcomes – across a multi-year, multi-channel engagement.

The underlying work samples for this case study are published separately in this portfolio:

- Climate-Adaptive Healthcare Marketing and Brand Positioning Plan
- Wound Care Clinic Launch – Integrated Campaign
- IV Hydration Emmy Pitch and related media strategy
- Expert Q&A – Healthcare Access and Homelessness in Arizona
- Digital Advertising Campaign Copy Portfolio
- Video Content Strategy and Production Brief
- Internal Digital Advertising Training Guide
- Award nominations and clinical scholarship submissions tied to heat, street medicine, and innovation

 This case study shows how those pieces fit together as a system – and what that system proves about operating level.

Context

The Situation

Phoenix entered 2024 after back-to-back summers of record heat, with **645 heat-related deaths in Maricopa County** and a visible rise in unsheltered homelessness. The healthcare nonprofit already operated clinics, medical respite centers, and street medicine teams, but the public story was still framed around charity, crisis, and individual tragedy rather than healthcare innovation.

The Window

At the same time, national media, funders, and policymakers were looking for concrete models that connected climate, health, and homelessness in ways that felt actionable. That intersection created a narrow window for one organization to define what climate-adaptive healthcare meant in practice – before the category was named by someone else.

The Education Role

The organization already had relationships with clinical education programs. Providers precepted medical, PA, and NP students, which meant any change in how care was framed and delivered would shape how the next generation of clinicians learned to practice in an extreme-heat, high-poverty environment.

Challenge

The organization needed to:

Reframe the Problem

Reframe extreme heat from a general public safety problem to a specific healthcare innovation problem it was uniquely positioned to solve

Move Donors

Move donors from episodic sympathy giving to sustained investment in a climate-adaptive care model, ahead of a major capital campaign

Maintain Trust

Maintain trust with public partners and government entities by staying squarely in its lane as a healthcare provider for people facing homelessness

Navigate Polarization

Do all of this in a polarized environment where climate and homelessness were already high-friction topics for elected officials and funders

- ① Internally, the organization also needed a communications and marketing plan that the organization could plug into without adding unsustainable complexity to the day-to-day work.

Strategy

1

Engineer the Climate-Adaptive Healthcare Category

Instead of competing in generic homelessness or climate discourse, Liz framed the organization as a pioneer in climate-adaptive healthcare – a care model built for people living outdoors in an extreme heat environment.

Key moves:

- Positioned a health center as the central destination for climate-adaptive care: IV hydration therapy, heat-driven chronic disease management, and heat-related cognitive awareness
- Framed medical respite, street IV hydration, mobile units, and specialized wound care as components of a single climate-adaptive continuum of care

This framing could become the base. Later initiatives – wound care clinic launch, senior cognition and memory-focused care, specialized women's and senior clinic days – could branch off as chapters of the same climate-adaptive story rather than standalone campaigns.

2

Build Algorithmic Brand Governance Into the Plan

In parallel with media strategy, Liz audited how journalists, funders, and policymakers searched for expertise across web, voice, and AI interfaces. She restructured pages, FAQs, and expert content using Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) tactics so the organization would surface as the authoritative answer on heat safety, medical risk, and homelessness healthcare.

This **Share of Model** strategy ensured that when people asked about extreme heat and homelessness, the organization's language and data shaped the answer.

3

Design for Resilience Architecture – Not One-Off Campaigns

The climate-adaptive narrative was built to survive staff turnover, news cycles, and election seasons. Liz tied it to durable operational facts – clinics, protocols, programs – rather than a single year's campaign theme, and embedded it into:

- The comprehensive climate-adaptive marketing and brand positioning plan
- Launch communications for the wound care clinic and other core services
- Ghostwritten executive articles and award submissions that codified the model for medical, policy, and philanthropic audiences
- Donor narratives and capital campaign framing so revenue growth and infrastructure expansion were explicitly linked to climate-adaptive care

4

Treat Staff and Students as Part of the Narrative System

The strategy assumed that clinical learners would be exposed to climate-adaptive practice, that frontline staff would absorb new processes tied to heat, hydration, wound care, and chronic disease, and that communications and development staff would grow into GEO, segmentation, and campaign disciplines through internal guides and systems that encoded the strategy. Career growth and education were not formal programs – they were built into how the work was framed, documented, and taught.

Execution

Integrated Launch Moments

The climate-adaptive narrative anchored multiple launch moments rather than living in a single campaign:

Wound Care Clinic Launch

Media pitch, donor email, and a ghostwritten executive article positioned the clinic as the next chapter in climate-adaptive care, treating burns and complex wounds caused by 160-degree pavement and prolonged heat exposure as a public health response

Street IV Hydration

A 96-word pitch email framed field-administered IV hydration as innovation and compassion in 102-degree heat, grounded in the county's 645 heat deaths. That story spread nationally and became the proof point for the broader climate-adaptive model

Corporate Partnership Concepts

A Grand Slam Giving proposal tied hydration kits, senior recovery support, and capital expansion for respite beds to a climate-adaptive narrative that resonated with a major league team's community brand

Each activation advanced the same category logic while speaking the language of a specific audience – reporters, donors, corporate partners, clinicians.

GEO and Content Systems

Liz built content systems so that every channel reinforced the same climate-adaptive logic in different registers:

- Long-form Q&A explained how clinics, respite centers, mobile teams, and behavioral health services collectively addressed heat-driven health risk and root causes of homelessness
- Digital ad frameworks, short-form hooks, and geofenced event campaigns made climate-adaptive care legible at a glance to donors and community residents
- Internal training guides for digital advertising translated geofencing, Lookalike Audience targeting, and senior segmentation into simple, time-boxed workflows so new staff could step into sophisticated GEO work without a marketing degree

Clinical Education and Mentorship as Multipliers

While Liz obviously did not run clinical training herself, the narrative and award work she led elevated clinicians whose practice and mentorship extended climate-adaptive care to students:

- A Physician Assistant fellowship submission highlighted a PA provider who precepts clinical students, emphasizing that each clinical insight from advanced training multiplies through learners in the field
- Leadership, nursing and innovation award nominations for organizational leaders documented how field IV hydration, mobile phlebotomy, and backpack healthcare models became case studies for other organizations and for trainees

By writing these narratives and securing recognition, Liz helped cement climate-adaptive practice as teachable, exportable, and part of how students experienced the organization.

Outcomes

Many factors contributed, but the climate-adaptive healthcare narrative and marketing architecture correlated with a step-change in reach, revenue, and institutional standing:

544

Media Placements

Media placements generating an estimated \$18M in earned media value, verified by Cision – including The New York Times, BBC, NPR, AP, NHK, Politico, and a PBS/WETA documentary feature

7x

Revenue Movement

An extreme heat campaign linked to this narrative moved donor-reported giving from roughly \$15,000 in all of 2023 to more than \$100,000 in the first week of the 2025 fiscal year, an sevenfold increase

143%

Positive Sentiment

The organization sustained a 143% positive sentiment increase through 113 consecutive days over 100 degrees, contributing to the first decline in heat deaths in a decade in its service area

Awards and Recognition

The climate-adaptive work directly underpinned multiple innovation and leadership awards, including state-level innovation recognition for street medicine IV hydration and regional business awards for executive leadership and organizational excellence

Institutional Positioning

The organization shifted from local relevance to national thought leader on extreme heat and health, securing invitations to consult on international heat-health research and inform multi-state health agencies

What This Proves About Operating Level

For a CCO or CEO, this case study demonstrates that Liz:

Engineers Categories

She created and scaled the climate-adaptive healthcare category so executives, funders, policymakers, and reporters had language they could use and repeat

Governs Algorithmic and Media Reality

She architected Share of Model and media systems so that when people asked about heat, homelessness, and health, the organization's framing led the answer

Builds Resilience Architecture

She designed narrative and communications infrastructure that outlasted individual campaigns and personnel, supporting multi-year capital and program growth

Turns Narrative into Measurable Outcomes

She linked category design to earned media value, donor revenue, sentiment, and awards in a high-scrutiny environment with zero margin for message error

Treats People as Part of the System

She created frameworks that gave frontline staff, communications hires, and clinical students a way to grow into more advanced climate-adaptive work, so capability building and education were built into the model, not added later

This is what a solo strategic communications and sensemaking looks like: not managing campaigns, but designing the entire system that makes the campaigns, the revenue, and the reputation possible.

About Liz Sahadi Smith

Strategic communications leader with 25 years of experience shaping institutional positioning, governing AI-era brand reputation, and building resilience infrastructure for organizations operating under high public scrutiny.

Narrative Arbitrage | Category Engineering

Engineered the climate-adaptive healthcare category to generate \$18M in earned media value. The category was adopted by partner organizations nationwide.

Algorithmic Brand Governance

Architects organizational Share of Model strategy, ensuring authoritative citation status in AI-generated outputs and governing how institutional reputation is synthesized across media and information platforms.

Resilience Architecture | Reputational De- risking

Designs crisis communications systems that outlasts staff transitions and survives narrative hijacking. Built systems that achieved 143% positive sentiment across 113 consecutive days of record heat and contributed to the first heat death decline in a decade.

Relational Capital Stewardship

Manages high-value media and institutional relationships as balance-sheet assets. PBS/WETA documentary feature; coverage in The New York Times, Reuters, AP, NPR, BBC, Politico. 91% award win rate – 20 wins from 22 submissions.

Growth Operations | Narrative ROI

8x donation increase in one week: \$15,000 annually to \$120,000 in seven days. Verified by client Chief Development Officer. 544 national media placements generating \$18M in earned media value, verified by Cision.