

2015-18

Department Business Plan

Communications

Updated June 2016



Strathcona County's communications needs are met by a network of communications, marketing and design professionals, residing both within a central or corporate Communications Department, as well as individual operational departments.

Collectively, this group has facilitated the successful implementation of longstanding and much-needed programs. These include the launch of a new Strathcona County brand, complete with messaging platform; Social Media Policy, guidelines and growing presence; and Communications Policy and guidelines.

With these foundational policies and a strong network in place, the corporate Communications Department is in an excellent position to move forward – to leverage the collective talents of the wider network to develop innovative tools and programs that enhance the current service offering. This business plan outlines the steps to be taken in that direction over the coming four years.

Recognizing the fundamental role communications plays in ensuring the organization's key audiences are informed and engaged, the first goal addresses improvements in three areas. These include: i) enhancing our digital media offering, ii) initiating a stronger focus on internal or employee communications, and iii) better understanding our citizens' needs and wishes related to messaging from Strathcona County.

Goal two recognizes our need to adopt a stronger culture of measurement and reporting for greater accountability; to identify and build on where we are doing well, and to understand where we can do better.

Goal three is meant to facilitate open and transparent communication with the organization's internal and external publics. This will be accomplished by supporting clear, consistent and timely messaging on topics of importance to the County.

Goal four speaks to efficiency and effectiveness. Communications will continue to investigate and adopt new technologies that enable us to deliver quality products and services; and, we will continue to create and adopt processes that facilitate an effective, seamless interaction with our colleagues in other departments.

I would like to thank the talented communications professionals working within the department and elsewhere for their dedication to delivering quality results and for challenging the status quo to introduce improved tools and programs to the County. I wish to express my appreciation as well to my colleagues on the leadership team for their continued support and for bringing us interesting, challenging projects on which to work.

Carmen Herbers
Director, Communications

Strathcona County Council created a strategic plan which outlines their vision for the County in 20 years, and the priorities and strategic goals to achieve that vision.

Strathcona County Administration has developed a corporate business plan to create a bridge between the long-term, high-level goals and priorities outlined by Council in its strategic plan, and the short to medium-term operational goals and priorities of the organization and its departments. Business plans will include measures so we can report how we are doing in implementing Council's strategic plan, as well as achieving department and corporate goals.

Vision and values

Strathcona County, located in the heart of Alberta, is an energetic and thriving community. A leader in North America's petroleum industry and a champion for advancing diverse agricultural business, we use our energy to power our new tomorrow.

We are a specialized municipality, and work cooperatively with our urban and rural residents to govern as a single municipality. Proud of our distinct governance model, we promote and demonstrate our achievements.

We are a welcoming place to live and attract people of all ages, cultures and walks of life to join us. Families thrive in our dynamic, caring and safe community.

We strive to be a model of ecological integrity, protecting our environment and preserving our agricultural heritage. Investment in infrastructure, quality services, cultural and recreational programs and facilities is a priority and sets us apart.

We are Canada's most livable community.

Corporate values

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Integrity | Be honest and transparent; Demonstrate ethical standards and behaviors; Display courage of convictions. |
| Respect | Build an environment of trust; Value other peoples' strengths and ideas; Treat others with care and dignity. |
| Safety | Follow safe standards of practice; Maintain a safety conscious workplace for ourselves and each other; Ensure a safe community for our residents. |
| Fairness | Create equal opportunities to learn and grow for all employees; Demonstrate approachable leadership; Strive to communicate with purpose and clarity. |
| Cooperation | Encourage collaborative relationships and unique partnerships; Strive for innovation and efficiency by being open-minded; Freely share information and ideas to contribute to Strathcona County's ongoing excellence. |

Department mission

In support of Strathcona County's strategic direction and business goals, the Communications Department advances the reputation and positive image of the organization through open, transparent and meaningful stakeholder communication and engagement.

Department overview

The Communications Department is made up of 10 professionals, who operate as a team of specialists, and in partnership with other internal and external resources. Communications' functions are governed and guided by all policies, practices, acts and plans (and any related procedures) to ensure professional and ethical conduct, and alignment with other corporate requirements. Of specific interest to Communications are the following:

- Public Engagement Policy (GOV-002-025)
- Communications Policy (GOV-002-029)
- Social Media Policy (GOV-002-028)
- Visual Identity Guidelines
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Communications' activities can be broadly grouped into five core business functions, as outlined below:

Communications planning

Communications develops and implements communications plans and programs to advance the organization's strategic and/or business objectives. These include building awareness, understanding and support for identified County projects, programs, services and position on issues. Communications provides advice and training to staff in 20 departments related to brand application, website content, and media relations.

- Communications planning and consultation

Stakeholder relations

Communications works to advance Strathcona County's relationships with its key stakeholders, including citizens, community organizations, businesses, staff, County suppliers, other levels of government, and all other individuals and groups with whom Strathcona County works and/or serves. Department staff issue some 80 media releases each year, prepare four to six briefings each month, and issue and/or respond to six to 10 social media enquiries each day.

- Issues management
- Internal communications
- Emergency and crisis communications

Digital media

Strathcona County has a strong web presence, with department staff managing more than 2,200 pages of content on its two (external and internal) sites. Yearly satisfaction survey results confirm the County website as a key source of information for citizens. Over the last several years, the County has assessed and integrated a number of new technologies into its repertoire, to facilitate improved dialogue and to communicate with its citizens where they are found. These tools include Twitter, Facebook, Linked In and Pinterest.

- Websites and digital assets
- Social media

Production

Strathcona County uses a wide variety of marketing and communications tools to build awareness, understanding and support for the organization, its programs and services. Communications works with the other departments to ensure that materials developed on behalf of the County provide accurate, relevant information, and that they present a professional image. The department places almost 1,000 ads each year on behalf of the organization's operational departments.

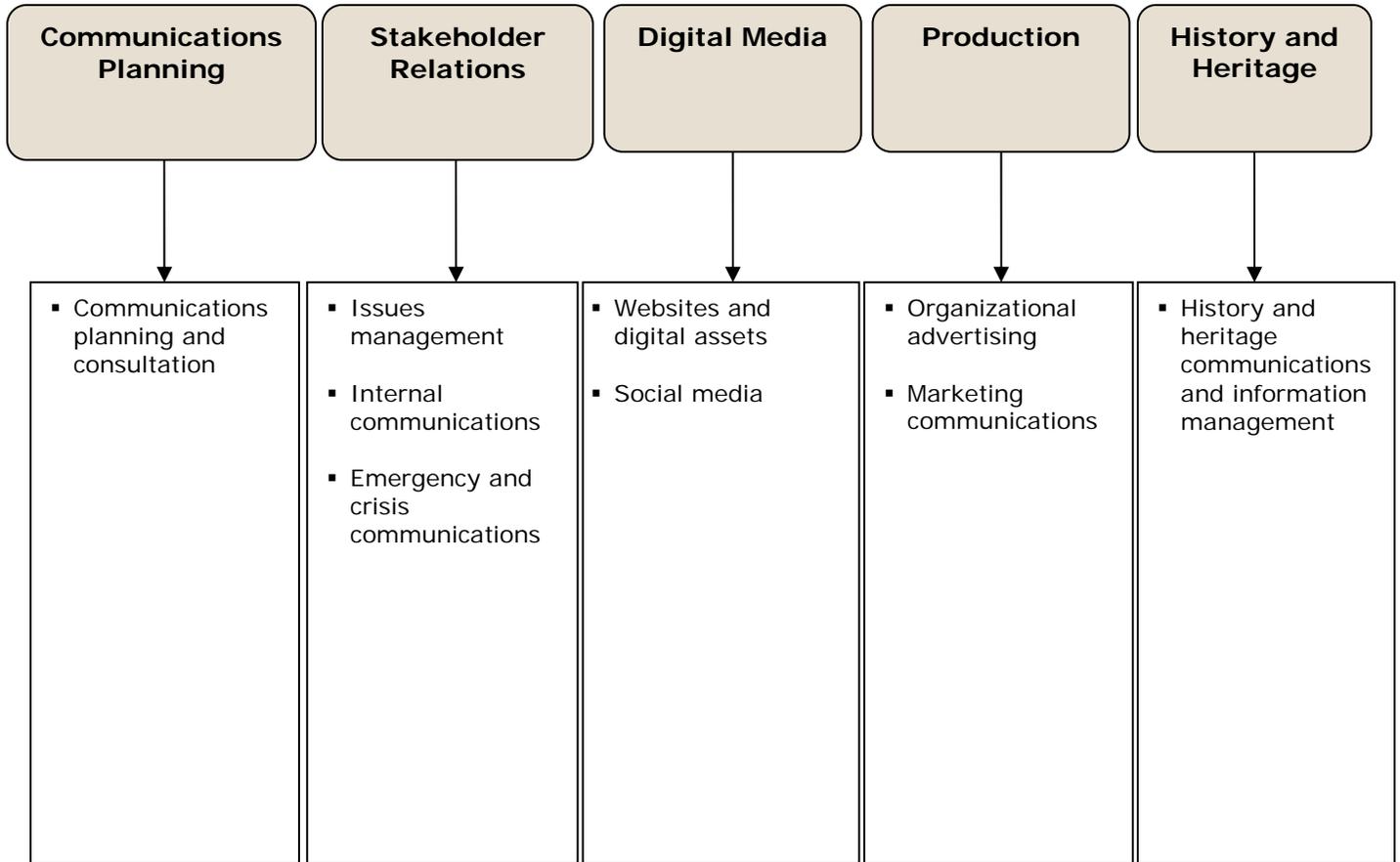
- Organizational advertising
- Marketing communications

History and heritage

Communications works to increase public awareness and appreciation of Strathcona County's history by:

- History and heritage communications and information management

Department organizational structure



Department goals

Goal 1: Strathcona County meets the need for open, transparent and meaningful stakeholder* communication and engagement.

Outcome: Stakeholders are satisfied with the information they receive and the opportunity to engage with Strathcona County.

Linkages:

Strategic Plan (prioritized):

Goal 4: Increase public involvement and communicate with the community on issues affecting the County's future.

Corporate Business Plan:

Goal 2: Strathcona County priorities, successes and challenges are known.

Goal 6: Strathcona County is an employer of choice attracting and retaining the best people in all aspects of municipal service delivery.

Initiatives:

Strengthen and integrate digital media as part of communications programs

Develop internal communications strategy, following employee survey

Review and redesign County websites

| Key Performance Indicator/Measures | Benchmark | Target |
|---|--------------|------------|
| Residents feel informed about County programs, services and activities (Good/Very good) | 77.8% (2013) | 80% (2018) |
| Resident rating of opportunities to express their opinions about municipal services or municipal issues | 45% (2013) | 55% (2018) |
| Resident satisfaction with County website | 54.5% (2014) | 65% (2018) |
| Employees are satisfied with the information they get about what is happening in the corporation | 58% (2014) | 65% (2018) |

** Stakeholder – citizens, community organizations, businesses, staff, County suppliers, other levels of government, and all other individuals and groups with whom Strathcona County works and/or serves*

Goal 2: Strathcona County understands the strategic value of ongoing communications programs and specific campaigns.

Outcome: Decisions about the most effective and efficient allocation of communications resources are supported by data.

Linkages:

Strategic Plan (prioritized):

Goal 4: Increase public involvement and communicate with the community on issues affecting the County's future.

Corporate Business Plan:

Goal 2: Strathcona County priorities, successes and challenges are known.

Department business plan goals; campaign-specific objectives

Initiatives:

Assess level of uptake of brand messaging within and external to the community

Quantify and report on success of ongoing programs and selected campaigns

Directors receive yearly reports related to website usage and specific campaign performance

| Key Performance Indicator/Measures | Benchmark | Target |
|---|---|---|
| Stakeholder perceptions of Strathcona County related to brand messaging: | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community of choice • Empowers/enables citizens' success • Canada's energy engine | <p>95% (2015)</p> <p>80% (2015)</p> <p>73% (2015)</p> | <p>95% (2018)</p> <p>80% (2018)</p> <p>73% (2018)</p> |

* Stakeholder – citizens, community organizations, businesses, staff, County suppliers, other levels of government, and all other individuals and groups with whom Strathcona County works and/or serves

Goal 3: Strathcona County proactively addresses issues and opportunities with one, clear voice.

Outcome: Strathcona County's position on key issues is well known, and communicated in a clear, consistent manner, increasing stakeholders' perceptions of openness and transparency.

Linkages:

Strategic Plan (prioritized):

Goal 4: Increase public involvement and communicate with the community on issues affecting the County's future.

Corporate Business Plan:

Goal 2: Strathcona County priorities, successes and challenges are known.

Initiatives:

Strengthen communications support for Council as key spokespeople

Continue to assess and prepare organization to respond to potential and emerging issues

Elected Officials/senior leadership are satisfied with the level of communications support provided and feel prepared to respond to issues

| Key Performance Indicator/Measures | Benchmark | Target |
|--|------------|------------|
| Council and senior leadership participate in media and crisis communications training (sessions per year) | 1 (2015) | 1 (2018) |
| Elected officials and senior leaders are satisfied/very satisfied with the support they receive from communications to respond to issues and opportunities | TBD (2016) | 75% (2018) |

Goal 4: New tools and/or processes adopted increase efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of Communications' service delivery across Strathcona County.

Outcome: Communications is efficient, effective and consistent.

Linkages:

Corporate Business Plan:

Goal 5: We are efficient and effective in daily operations.

Initiatives:

Continue to assess, adopt and develop innovative tools and processes

Assessment of history and heritage resources within the Cultural Strategy

| Key Performance Indicator/Measures | Benchmark | Target |
|---|--------------|------------|
| Residents feel informed about County programs, services and activities (Good/Very good) | 80.9% (2014) | 80% (2018) |
| Resident satisfaction with County website | 54.5% (2014) | 65% (2018) |
| Internal client satisfaction with services provided by County Communications | TBD (2016) | TBD (2018) |

Goal 5: Communications supports a positive working environment and opportunities for learning and growth.

Outcome: Employees are satisfied, empowered and motivated to learn, achieve and innovate.

Linkages:

Corporate Business Plan:
Goal 6: Strathcona County is an employer of choice attracting and retaining the best people in all aspects of municipal service delivery.

Initiatives:

Actively practice and encourage open communication, active listening and support
Provide timely and meaningful recognition and feedback
Encourage participation in relevant training

| Key Performance Indicator/Measures | Benchmark | Target |
|--|------------------|---------------|
| % of training and development budget accessed by employees | 60% (2013) | 80% (2018) |