



Huron-Kinloss Communications Strategy

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this strategy is to help staff achieve communications excellence. Communications excellence includes giving and receiving information, it requires nurturing relationships, and it forces us to look at communications strategically. By striving for communications excellence, we will achieve much more than just a satisfied constituent base, we will experience increased workplace satisfaction, greater efficiency when managing projects, a greater success rate when implementing change or new programs/services, and a more trusted government.

The Communications Review Team consisted of Mary Rose Walden, CAO, Michelle Goetz, Community Development Officer, Elyse Dewar, Project Coordinator and Andrea Montgomery from Redbrick Communications Inc.

The communications strategy is split into two parts. Part 1: Research and Data Collection, provides an in-depth look at the data we compiled to build our strategy. Part 2: Strategy Development outlines what we are trying to achieve with this strategy and how we will get there.

By conducting research into best practices and reviewing the data we compiled in Part 1; the Communications Review Team was able to better understand where we are today and what the benchmarks for communications should be. Included in Part 1 is a review of the communication channels we currently use and who is responsible for them, a review of the internal methods for communicating, a quick overview of the procedure to create communications, a list of our stakeholders and media partners, audience information, an analysis of other communication channels, the survey results, a list of best practices and a SWOT Analysis. All of this data was used to create Part 2: Strategy Development.

To develop the strategy, the Team used what we learned from Part 1 to determine what success would look like. Once we understood what success looks like, we could determine how to get there by creating our vision, mission, guiding principles, goals and objectives.

Vision

Excellent communications where the community, Council and our staff feel well informed and engaged.

Mission

The Communications Strategy will provide a mandate for staff to continue to strengthen the community's trust in local government through strategic and relevant communications. The strategy will guide our communications to support our commitment to deliver exceptional service and to be a transparent and accountable local government.

The vision for our communications is straight forward and realistic, it will take a lot of work to get to this point but the future state is clear and easy to commit to. Our mission statement provides more detail of what we need to do to achieve our vision and how we are going to do it. When moving forward with this strategy we must also consider our guiding principles, our principles are what we will not compromise to achieve our mission and what we will always keep in mind as we implement this strategy and our action plan. Our guiding principles are:

- Resident focused.
- Strategic and well-planned
- Two-way communication (give and receive information)
- Take responsibility and be accountable.

Also included in Part 2: Strategy Development are our goals and objectives. Our goals for communications are:

1

Build a foundation for successful communications.

2

Create a culture of two-way communications.

3

Provide clear, concise, timely and accurate messaging.

In order for this strategy to be successful we need buy-in at all levels (staff, Senior Managers, Council) and we need accountability to ensure all parties commit to it. If we all agree this work is important then we need to consider the risks of not implementing this strategy. The risks of operating without communications excellence can include staff frustration, lack of transparency, loss of trust or support from constituents, waste of time and money and the potential for minor issues to become major ones.

To conclude, this strategy highlights what needs to be done over the next 36 months to achieve our vision of having a well-informed and engaged community and staff. With the commitment of community, Council and staff we believe that the work required to implement this strategy will create a more cohesive, collaborative, and positive culture of communication which will benefit all our projects, initiatives, and day to day to operations.

Introduction

In 2021, the Township of Huron-Kinloss included the creation of a communications strategy as part of their Economic Development business plan. The communications strategy will review current communication practices, administer surveys to multiple stakeholders, prepare a SWOT analysis, and develop a list of recommendations.

Why are we doing this?

Communication is a key function of municipal government. Staff and Council communicate with constituents in many different forms and for many different reasons. This communications strategy will provide guidance to staff and Council to ensure that we are effectively communicating with all our constituents.

The Township adopted a General Communications Policy (2004 as amended in 2012) and a Community Engagement Policy (2014); however, many of our internal processes and the communication and engagement channels we use have changed since those policies were put in place. These policies will be updated, and new procedures will be created because of this strategy.

This strategy will help us identify opportunities to be more efficient with both internal and external communications. By creating more efficient procedures and by looking at communications strategically we can avoid time-wasting, misunderstandings, capacity issues, and questions caused by the lack of clear or timely messaging.

Definitions

Communications: communications refers to the exchange of information. While it seems a simple concept, communication is very complex. To provide effective communications, the sender must consider: the message, who is receiving the message, the audience, the probability that the message may be misinterpreted, the communication channels available, how the recipient might react to the message, feedback that might be received due to the message and how to respond to that feedback. Communication can be used to persuade, influence, inspire, share, and inform.

Marketing: While often confused with communications because they can go hand in hand. Marketing focuses on 'selling' or advertising a product or service.

Channels, Media, or Pieces: Communication Channels, media or pieces refers to the different tools and/or the different types of media used to communicate our message; this includes but is not limited to social media, radio, newsletters, flyers, videos, posters, letters, newspapers, etc.

Local Media: Local Media refers to our newspaper, radio, and other communication partners.

Crisis Communications: communications required due to an emergency. Crisis communications are handled through the Emergency Management Program and/or communication procedures.

Strategic Communications: thoughtful creation of communications that meet a certain need, goal, or provide a certain outcome.

Community Engagement: The act of involving members of our community: residents, visitors, business owners, in the process of local decision making.

Constituents: Constituents refers to all the different groups of people that we communicate with including but not limited to permanent residents, seasonal residents, visitors, business owners, community groups, stakeholders, etc.

Marketing Collateral: The term marketing collateral is sometimes used to describe all the material used to advertise a program or service; for example, brochures, post cards, pull-up banners, radio ads, social media campaigns, etc.

Notice By-Law: The Township's Notice By-Law (2008) outlines certain communications practices that cannot be amended. This may include the scheduling of statutory notices or the content included in the notices.



Part 1: Research and Data Collection

Current Situation Analysis

The Township of Huron-Kinloss does not have a dedicated communications person or team so the process to communicate with residents varies between department, project, event, service, or announcement. Each department is responsible for creating their own communication plans and the channels used vary between department. Through the analysis of the Township's current communications practices, we noticed that all departments are missing the strategic approach to creating communications. The lack of strategy for communications can be caused by lack of time, a lack of understanding of what communication channels are available or a lack of knowledge about how to communicate efficiently.

In this section we've outlined our current communication channels including who is responsible for updating them and how often they are updated.

Current Communication Channels

Media Type	Description/Process	Person Responsible	Frequency
Facebook – Township of Huron-Kinloss	The Township Facebook page has 2,404 followers. Each department is required to provide content to Business & Economic Officer to post.	Business & Economic Officer	Up to three times/day, five days a week
Facebook – Do Business	The Do Business Facebook page has 1,780 followers. Business & Economic Officer and Business Development Coordinator update this Facebook page with content they think is valuable for the business community (Bruce County webinars, grant programs) or to advertise local businesses.	Business & Economic Officer/Business Development Coordinator	3 to 5 times per week
Twitter	We have 500 followers on Twitter. Business & Economic Officer updates Twitter with information received from other departments or retweets information from our community partners. Twitter has a character limit, so the announcements are generally short and include a link to more information.	Business & Economic Officer	As information becomes available, no set schedule.
Instagram – Ice Cream Trail	The Ice Cream Trail has an Instagram account that is updated by the summer student during the ice cream trail campaign. The purpose is to advertise the trail using previous or current photos or people on the trail, local points of interest, clues to find Sammy, etc.	Summer Student	3 to 5 posts from launch of ice cream trail to labour day weekend.
Instagram – The Hub	The Hub also has an Instagram account that is updated by Business Development Coordinator. This is used to promote upcoming webinars, The Hub’s services, or partners programs/ grant opportunities.	Business Development Coordinator	3 to 5 times per week
LinkedIn	There is a LinkedIn account affiliated with the Township, but it was created by LinkedIn and has not been endorsed by the Township.	n/a	n/a
HK connects	This is a monthly electronic newsletter. Community Development Officer requests information from each department, reviews Council agendas, or news items on the website for content.	Community Development Officer	monthly

Current Communication Channels

Media Type	Description/Process	Person Responsible	Frequency
Get Moving Huron-Kinloss	This is a quarterly electronic newsletter. Administrative Assistant/Programming includes information about her programs and events and anything recreation related in Lucknow	Administrative Assistant/ Programming	quarterly
NWCAC	This is an electronic newsletter created on an as needed basis to inform residents about the NWMO DGR project.	Project Coordinator	As needed.
Business Banner	This is a quarterly electronic newsletter that Business & Economic Officer creates using information about her services/ programs, information from The Hub and any other business partners.	Business & Economic Officer	Quarterly
Property Tax Bill	This newsletter is printed twice annually and mailed to all property owners with their tax bills. Deputy Clerk requests information from each department to be included in the newsletter.	Deputy Clerk	Twice annually.
Print Newspapers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kincardine Independent • Kincardine News • Lucknow Sentinel 	Deputy Clerk organizes ads in the local newspapers as needed. Departments provide her with the information that needs to be printed, the size of the ad and the dates the ad should run.	Deputy Clerk	As needed.

Current Communication Channels

Media Type	Description/Process	Person Responsible	Frequency
Kincardine Record online newspaper and ad	All staff send press releases to be posted as needed. Business & Economic Officer maintains our ad on the Kincardine Record website. This is usually comprised of upcoming events or engagement opportunities. Departments can provide information to Business & Economic Officer or she finds information from local community groups to include.	Business & Economic Officer	The Township is permitted to have 3 ads on the site. Business & Economic Officer updates-based timelines of current projects/events.
Local Hurontel One Show	Business & Economic Officer creates the Local Hurontel One videos based on upcoming events, or information departments have provided. The video is approximately 2-4 minutes long and is a weekly task	Business & Economic Officer	Weekly.
Direct Mail letters	As needed by all departments	All departments	As needed
Admail	As needed by all departments	All departments	As needed
Discovery Guide/ Municipal Guide	An annual publication that outlines Municipal programs and services. This is delivered by admail to all property owners with a Huron-Kinloss mailing address or it can be picked up at the municipal office or other locations.	Community Development Officer/ Business & Economic Officer	Once annually.
Brochures	As needed by all departments but mostly for economic development, tourism, or recreation needs	Business & Economic Officer, Community Development Officer, Administrative Assistant/ Programming	As needed.
Marketplace	Community Services writes a monthly article in the marketplace magazine. Typically, the information is regarding upcoming events or programs but can include other Township information – for example the communications survey,	Administrative Assistant/ Programming	Monthly

Current Communication Channels

Media Type	Description/Process	Person Responsible	Frequency
Radio <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 101.7 • 95.5 • 94.5 • 104.9 • Country 93 • AM 920 	As needed by all departments but mostly for economic development, tourism, or recreation needs	Business & Economic Officer, Community Development Officer, Administrative Assistant/ Programming	As needed.
Press Releases	As needed by all departments	All departments	As needed
Website News	As needed by all departments	All departments	As needed
Website Pages	Updated by all departments as new information becomes available.	All departments	As needed
HK Connects App	<p>We are not currently using the push notifications system. It is being reviewed as part of this strategy development.</p> <p>The other departments use this as a communication tool to respond to service requests.</p>	Community Development Officer Public Works, community services, by-law	Not yet being used. Responds as required.
Website Community Events	As needed by all departments but mostly for economic development, tourism, or recreation needs	Business & Economic Officer/Community Development Officer	As Needed
Have Your Say HK	The department that wants to add a project to the site meets with Community Development Officer to determine the appropriate tools, widgets, and timelines. Community Development Officer creates the project and provides any additional information at the request of the department (i.e., Videos, descriptions, survey questions, etc.). Once the project is live, it is monitored by the requesting department.	Community Development Officer and project administrators from each department	As needed.

Current Communication Channels

Media Type	Description/Process	Person Responsible	Frequency
Tourist Town websites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit Huron-Kinloss • Visit Ripley • Visit Lucknow • Visit Point Clark 	In partnership with Tourist Town, the Township has 4 additional Tourism websites (the main site is Visit Huron-Kinloss that feeds information to the other sites).	Business & Economic Officer and/or Tourism Student	Seasonally or as information becomes available
Pony Express	Departments use this as a method to reach our Mennonite community. The appropriate department writes an ad and drops it off to the Pony Express on Tuesdays.	All departments	As needed.
Posters/Flyers	Posters are created for certain initiatives, programs or events and placed throughout the community.	All departments	As needed.
Council Meetings	Contact: Clerk Council meetings take place twice a month and planning meetings take place once a month (as needed).	Organized by the Clerk's department, reports from all departments	2-3 times per month
Open Houses	Open houses are scheduled for large projects as dictated by Municipal Act or if a department requests to host one	All departments	As needed.
Email, Phone, In person meetings	These are done individually with staff as needed.	All departments	As needed.
Electronic Signs	The electronic sign in Point Clark is managed by the Community Services Department. Township announcements, upcoming events, service interruptions, etc. can be included on the sign.	Administrative Assistant/ Programming	As needed.

Current Communication Channels

Media Type	Description/Process	Person Responsible	Frequency
Image and Video Development	While not a communications channel, it is important to note that image and video development is a priority for the creation of engaging communication pieces. The Township has a YouTube channel that houses all our videos. We create videos using free online software programs or by hiring videographers. We also work with several photographers to get new pictures annually.		
Other Marketing Collateral	The Township produces other marketing pieces to advertise programs, initiatives, services, and campaigns. These are typically created for economic development or tourism initiatives and can include pull-up banners, post cards, information packages, and our business recruitment billboard, etc.	Business & Economic Officer and Community Development Officer	As needed.
Other Advertising	The Township will purchase advertisements for certain campaigns, for example the Ice Cream Trail, to help promote the program to our target audience. Advertisements are based on the demographic we wish to reach and can include magazine ads (Grey-Bruce Kids), radio ads or interviews, social paid ads, newspaper ads (local or in other regions), etc. Advertisements are typically purchased for economic development or tourism initiatives.	Business & Economic Officer and Community Development Officer	As needed.

Internal Communication Tools

Below is a list of the current internal communications tools. These tools are used by staff to communicate with other staff members.

Media Type	Description/Process	Person Responsible	Frequency
Email	Primary form of communication between staff.	All departments	Daily
Phone	Phone remains an important means of communication between staff	All departments	As needed.
Intranet	Provides daily staff updates, calendar updates and internal news to staff	All staff	Daily
Microsoft Teams	Microsoft Teams is used for instant messaging, meetings, and sharing of information between co-workers or departments.	All staff	Different level of use between departments
Zoom	Meeting software used for large group meetings and webinars for Council meetings	All staff	As needed.
In person meetings*	Meetings as required to discuss municipal affairs. Can include members of the public or stakeholders.	All staff	As needed. *not taking place during COVID-19 pandemic
Staff meetings	Held monthly after COW meeting to provide staff updates from each department.	All staff *excluding public works operators, landfill staff, casual and part-time workers	Monthly
All staff meetings	All staff meetings began because of the Internal communications review. The meeting is scheduled once annually after the budget is passed by Council. The goal is to review annual work plans for each department and capital projects.	All staff	Once annually.

Internal Communication Tools

Media Type	Description/Process	Person Responsible	Frequency
Team huddles	Team huddles began because of our LEAN training and further recommended through the Internal communications review. Team huddles are planned by head senior team as an opportunity to discuss department matters and Township updates regularly with their respective teams.	All departments	Frequency differs between department; at minimum they should be scheduled once per week.
Tailgate training	Health and Safety training provided by the Public Works Administrative Assistant.	There are separate training times scheduled for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Office staff • Community Services Staff • Public Works Operators and Landfill staff 	Monthly
Onboarding	Communications procedures were added to onboarding as a recommendation from the internal communications review. The internal communications procedures are reviewed and training on the intranet is provided.	All new staff	Training done by the Community Development Officer
Senior Management Team meetings	The Senior Management Team meets weekly to discuss updates from the Council meetings and to provide project updates.	All Senior Managers	Weekly
Texting/Calling personal phones	While this may seem like a viable option to contact or send messages between staff, many staff do not wish to use personal phones for work purposes.	All staff	Not recommended.

Current Procedures

Each department follows its own set of procedures when providing communications to constituents. It is the responsibility of each staff person and each department to be aware of our communications structure and what channels are available to get their message out. We noticed in our team's survey that most departments understand that communications are important, but the understanding of what needs to be communicated, when and through what channels, varies by department. Looking back at recent campaigns or promotions, many departments focus their communications on social media, the electronic newsletters, and posters throughout the community (promotion/program based). Furthermore, there is a heavy reliance on direct mail letters when providing construction updates or service interruptions (a service that will need to continue to deliver timely information or updates).

When creating social media posts or electronic newsletters most of the responsibility for developing content, finding images or videos and formatting; is left to the staff person creating the communications piece. Some departments are great at providing content but often it is not in the proper format or missing essential information. Some departments rarely provide content and the staff person creating the communication piece spends much of their time reviewing Council reports or news items to find content on their behalf.

Similarly, when it comes to the website, some departments keep their content up to date, while others rarely update their content. Furthermore, as you browse the website it becomes apparent that the Township does not have a cohesive voice: reading levels differ between pages, plain language is not always used, the level of description, content or attachments varies by page, etc.

When creating communication plans, departments generally work on their own; however, there have been examples of departments working collaboratively to ensure effective communications. Collaboration happens typically for large projects, new initiatives, new education campaigns or contentious projects. For example, The Bruce Beach Drain project on Have Your Say HK was a collaborative effort between the Clerk's Department and the CAO's Department, and several new

public works education campaigns resulted from a collaboration between Public Works and the CAO's department.

Internal communications vary by department and individual staff members, after the 2019 review of internal communications several action items were implemented including:

- Intranet access for all staff
- Procedures and guidelines for using the intranet.
- Guidelines for communication within departments (team huddles, information relayed from senior team to their staff)
- Onboarding communication training
- All staff meeting after budget, to ensure every department and all staff know about upcoming projects and have a chance to discuss opportunities to collaborate.

Even with the implementation of the action plan, there is still confusion and frustration with internal communications.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are groups of people we communicate with like business associations, community groups, permanent residents, local media, etc. Understanding who we are talking to is very important when developing our messaging and determining what channels to use to get the message out. Through our public communications survey we were able to gain a much better understanding of who our constituents are and what channels they prefer.

Internal Stakeholders

- Council
- Senior Management Team
- Employees
- Service Contractors – Veolia (water sewer), BM Ross (septic)

External Stakeholders

- Permanent residents
- Seasonal residents
- Mennonite communities
- Business Owners
- Tourists/Visitors
- Community Organizations/Service Clubs
- Beach Associations
- Contractors
- Business associations

External Stakeholders

- Local Media
- Developer's/Investors
- Potential/new residents
- Other government organizations: County, Provincial, Federal, other municipalities
- Potential New business owners
- Not-for-profit organizations: Trillium Foundation, Community Foundation Grey-Bruce
- Private Industry: Bruce Power, Suppliers, etc.
- Agricultural businesses: Snobelen, Lucknow Co-op, Edgar's, etc.
- Facility users/program registrants
- Public Health
- Schools and School boards
- Environmental groups – Lake Huron Coastal Conservation, PRWIN
- O.P.P.
- Social Services
- Conservation Authorities

Local Media

In consultation with local media, we learned that we are providing adequate information but a streamlined process to distribute the information would be appreciated. At the current time, some partners are receiving the information two or three times through different distribution pathways.

Local Media Partners:

- Kincardine Record
- Kincardine Independent
- Kincardine News
- Lucknow Sentinel
- 101.7 The One
- Country 93
- Country 104.9
- Mix 106.5
- CKNX AM 920

Industry Information and Standards

To develop a thorough communications strategy, it was important for the team to review what communication channels we are currently using, what channels we are not using (and should we?), industry best practices and a comparison to other communities that excel in communications.

Review of Township of Huron-Kinloss Audience Information

Audience information is the “who” we are talking to when we create communications. The demographics for the Township are quite large and sometimes we need to reach all age groups, communities, and residency types. However, there are opportunities to segment our audience based on the message we are trying to get out. If we understand the “who” we are talking to, we can ensure that we use the correct communication channels when distributing messages.

Discovering who our audience is can be challenging because we often need to reach all residents within our borders; seasonal and permanent, all business owners (some may not reside in the Township) and all visitors that come to the Township. When we presented our findings to staff, we learned that renters in the Township do not receive our direct mail newsletters or flyers because we do not have their mailing address on file (we only have the property owner’s information). Information like this is important to consider as we create our action plan and tactics because we will not reach our vision of communications excellence if we are missing audience segments.

One place to start looking for our audience information is census data. We can also use the results of the survey, a general knowledge or understanding of the area and other data collected from previous projects or communications. It is important to note that our current understanding of our audience is not complete, we can see the gaps quite clearly from our survey results. Furthermore, our audience will continue to change as the landscape of our municipality changes – new subdivisions, aging neighbourhoods, etc. To begin to understand our audience we can segment them in to like categories, for example:



Lucknow
Ripley
Point Clark
Lurgan Beach
Blair's Grove
Bruce Beach
Whitechurch
Kinlough
Kinloss
Lakeshore area
Other rural areas



70+
60-69
50-59
40-49
30-39
20-29
19 and under



Full time residents
Seasonal residents
Visitors

We can also look at segmenting our audience by topic or subject matter. For example, if we want to gain feedback about what equipment to put in a park, we may segment the audience further to include: residents with children in the immediate vicinity of the park. This information can be obtained using our knowledge of the area, the property roll number system, and Bruce County Maps. The more specific we can be when creating and distributing messages from the Township the more specific and helpful the feedback will be for Council.

Census Data (2016)

According to the 2016 Census data, Huron-Kinloss has a population of 7,069 people with a median age of 46. Our largest demographic is between the age of 60-64. 58.95% of our population is considered “working age” between the ages of 15-64. 59.98% of the population is married and the average household income is above \$75,456/year.

New census data will be available after the May 2021 census update.

Review of audience information for all communication channels.

Channel	Audience Description
Facebook	<p>Who is using Facebook?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.8 billion users • 25-34 is largest demographic. • 57% of Facebook users are male. • 72.8% of users are between the age of 18-44 • Facebook is accessed almost exclusively on mobile devices (keep this in mind when developing posts – vertical videos, links) • 83% of Canadians have Facebook. • The average user spends 34 minutes per day on Facebook. <p>Facebook best practices: pin or highlight important announcements, increase daily posting by repacking content into different types of messages: text, video, photo, link, lives. Create stories, engage with community by replying to comments. Create videos and images with less text. Use vertical videos. Use calls to action. Empower all staff to answer questions (reduces wait time ensures accurate responses), a single robust page is better for municipalities. Create a “troll” policy. As fake news swirls around, municipalities should use social media to provide reliable, up to date information. Set the record straight. Listen to your audience – they will tell you what they want to know. Help solve their problems. Leverage your credibility by educating your audience. Keep it simple.</p> <p>Township Followers: 2,404</p>
Twitter	<p>Who is using?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 353 million users • 70% male • 28.9% of users are between 25-34 • 28.2% of users are between 35-49 • 50% of users get their news from Twitter • 42% of Canadian adults have Twitter and 50% of those users access the platform daily <p>Twitter best practices: breaking news outlet, as it happens news. Only 280 characters – link to website to find out more. Be active – post frequently, at least three times per week. Add relevant hashtags – people interested in the topic that do not follow you will find you this way. Retweet – people interested in similar organizations will find you. Use photos. Tweet about upcoming events and Council decisions/resolutions.</p> <p>Township followers: 500</p>

Review of audience information for all communication channels.

Channel	Audience Description
Instagram	<p>Who is on Instagram?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 1 billion users • 4th most used mobile app • 51% users are female. • 49% users are male. • Users spend 30 minutes/day on the app. • 81% of users use Instagram to research products or services. • Mostly 25-34 years old's, followed closely by 18–24-year-olds. <p>Instagram best practices: show off your hometown pride (before and after photos of building renovations, festivals, etc.); build anticipation for events, use hashtags (3-5 per post), add your location – be specific to park names, trails names, etc.; balance business and fun, give your bio the attention it needs – who you are, what you do, etc.; post engaging, high quality images, stay on top of updates, know what your audience wants to see, post at optimal times (right now Wed and Fri at 11AM), tell stories, make data driven decisions (track performance), put a face or personality to brand, post consistently (2-3 times/day); only post what makes sense for your brand – only THK content; maintain consistent voice across all platforms</p> <p>The Township does not have a corporate Instagram account; however, The Hub and the Ice Cream Trail do.</p>
LinkedIn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees are 14x more likely to share employer information than others. • Who is on LinkedIn? • 722 million users • 57% men, 43% women • 17 million Canadians use it and 44% of all Canadian internet users have a LinkedIn account. • 59.9% of users are 25-34 years old. • 40 million users are looking for jobs. • 87% of recruiters use to recruit employees. <p>LinkedIn best practices: used to develop a profile to recruit new employees or celebrate accomplishment with professional contacts and colleagues. Members use to search for new job opportunities or stay in touch with professional contacts.</p> <p>The Township does not have a corporate LinkedIn account. There is a page for the Township, but it has not been endorsed or approved by the Township.</p>

Review of audience information for all communication channels.

Channel	Audience Description
Tik Tok	<p>Who is using it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6th largest platform in the world • 2 billion downloads • 689 million active users • 62% of users are between age 10-29 • 7.1% of users are over 50. • The number of adults using it is fastest growing demographic. • Users spend an average of 52 minutes per day on the app. • 60% of users are female. • 40% are male. <p>Tik Tok best practices: growing number of organizations using including the WHO, United Nations, etc. Using to help stop misinformation. Tik Tok is constantly at the top of download charts for apple and android. Tik Tok is home for positive, creative expression. Most engaging platform. Engage with younger supporters – create awareness around specific causes. Tik Tok wants to inspire and encourage a new generation to have a positive impact on the planet and those around them. Tik Tok has perfected the algorithm to give their users exactly what they want – Tik Tok brings info to the user, Instagram makes users find the information. Not hard to get your video on for you page but the engagement on your video will keep it there. Tik Tok videos are recognizable when you share them on all platforms, great way to promote your account. Challenges are a great way to engage your followers. Be authentic, be silly, make it fun, make it joyful. Make sure your videos tell your story, make original videos, keep it short.</p> <p>The Township does not have a corporate Tik Tok account.</p>
Mailchimp	<p>The Township produces 2 quarterly e-newsletters, 1 monthly e-newsletter and 1 e-newsletter on an as needed basis (as described in the current communications table).</p> <p>The Township has 829 subscribers in MailChimp. Our newsletter has an average open rate of 50%.</p>

Review of audience information for all communication channels.

Channel	Audience Description
Radio	<p>101.7 The One</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender: 57% women, 43% men • Age: 12-24 19%, 25-54 54%, 55+ 27% • Total Listeners: 57,900 • Coverage Area: Elora/Fergus west to Lake Huron, Zurich north to Tobermory <p>Country 93</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target audience age 25-54 • Mostly serves Grey and wellington Counties, some Wellington and Bruce – based on coverage map. Does not serve Huron-Kinloss, Port Elgin, or Kincardine, again based on map. <p>Country 104.9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target audience 25-54 • Serves from Grand Bend north to Kincardine, Wroxeter west to Lake Huron. <p>CKNX AM 920</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender: 49% men, 51% women • Age: 12-34 6%, 35-54 10%, 55+ 82% • Total Listeners: 33,000 • Coverage Area: Elora/Fergus west to Lake Huron, Zurich north to Tobermory <p>95.5 Shoreline Today</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender: 60% female, 40% male • Age: 29-65 90% • Coverage Map: Dungannon North to North Bruce, Mildmay west to Lake Huron • Weekly audience between 50,000-60,000 and 47% listen all day. <p>Mix 106.5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target audience age 25-54 • Coverage Area: Lucknow north to Tobermory, Wasaga Beach west to Lake Huron
Local Hurontel One	<p>INSTAGRAM: averaging 71 views, 3 likes (54-83 views roughly)</p> <p>FACEBOOK: averaging 132 views, 3 likes (95-183 views roughly)</p> <p>Do not have viewership from Hurontel</p>

Review of audience information for all communication channels.

Channel	Audience Description
Newspaper	<p>Kincardine Independent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulation of 6,453 in Huron-Kinloss <p>General Canadian Newspaper Trends 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferred method to receive news by Boomers aged 35-49. <p>Kincardine Record</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4,535 followers on Facebook • 23 million hits on online newspaper and counting (as of March 5th) <p>Kincardine News/Lucknow Sentinel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print for Kincardine is 6250 a week and around 48,000 views a month online. • Lucknow is around 500 a week print and 10,800 views a month online.
Podcasts	<p>Age: 18-34 followed by 35-54</p> <p>Growth: Listenership has seen a 3% growth since 2017</p> <p>Gender: 52% women, 48% men</p> <p>Device: Mostly mobile</p> <p>Genres: Comedy, Sports and News are most listened to. Government listenership is less than 1%.</p> <p>The Township currently does not create podcasts.</p>
YouTube	<p>The Township has a YouTube account where we upload our tutorial videos or project specific videos. We do not actively advertise our channel, rather, we advertise the individual videos for each project/service or initiative. If we expanded our video library and organized the channel into playlists, we could generate more followers and expand our content.</p>

Survey Results – Key takeaways

The Communications Review Team facilitated 4 surveys: Council, Public, Department, Individual Staff. We received great response rates to these surveys with all Council members responding, all but one department responding, about two thirds of staff responding to the individual survey and 172 responses to the public survey.

We offered the survey in both online and print formats to provide an opportunity for all members of staff and the public to fill them out. The public survey was advertised through the following channels:

- Kincardine News ad
- Lucknow Sentinel ad
- Kincardine Record
- Local Hurontel One show video
- Social media posts (multiple over the course of the engagement)
- Website news (sent to subscribers)
- HK Connects Electronic Newsletter
- Pony Express Ad
- Marketplace Ad
- Posters in Lucknow and Ripley Post Offices

The public survey was available on Have Your Say HK, registration was not required to participate, and printed copies were available by mail and at the Municipal Office.

Public Survey

- We received 172 responses to the survey. There were large gaps in the demographics of respondents; mostly permanent residents, over the age of 50, along the lakeshore.
- We need to consider these gaps in respondents to determine how we can engage with those demographics.
- Education is required about community engagement; how to provide feedback and how decisions are made.
- Most feel well-informed but only after decisions are made, there is a disconnect when decisions are being considered and how feedback can be provided.
- We received lots of great ideas about how to engage the public from townhalls and surveys to simply providing more information about what decisions are on the table.
- One interesting piece of information was the difference between how people are currently getting their information and how they want to get it. The top four ways the public wants to receive information are: e-newsletters, direct mail letters, Facebook, and our website.

If the public thinks they do not have a say in local decision making they can also be feeling underrepresented or that there is a lack of transparency about the decision making process. We need to address this by making it easier for people to learn about what is going on, to ask questions and to provide feedback. We need to change the perception to “we are listening, and our door is always open.” This strategy will strive to do that.

Department Survey

- Most departments follow different processes to create communication pieces, we need to work on creating consistent and efficient processes.
- There is confusion about who is responsible for what communication channels and what exactly needs communicated when and to whom.
- A streamlined approach with one person in charge of communications was recommended.
- We are not looking at communications strategically.
- Public perception varies by department, project, task, etc.
- Teams want the public to know that we are working for them and doing the best we can with their best interests in mind.
- Would like inter-department communications improved.

We need to remember that everyone is a communicator on behalf of the Township, and we need to communicate with one voice and tell the same story. Our frontline staff need to be equipped with all the information they need to field calls/complaints/questions.

When communications, customer service and community engagement go hand in hand, people tend to feel better about the municipality and how their tax dollars are being spent.

Individual Staff

- Not everyone uses the intranet in the same way, causing a varied degree of satisfaction and effectiveness.
- Every department needs to be better at using the internal news function to let other departments know what is going on.
- Most staff are either neutral or happy about internal communications.
- Some departments continue to feel disconnected from municipal office.
- Still feel siloed, some departments are great at communicating and some do not at all.
- Inconsistency between senior managers and how they provide communications to their teams.
- A lot of questions around what should be shared between departments.
- Because we have so many communication channels/procedures/people, etc. and there is not a streamlined approach, there is a confusion – internal and external.
- Timely responses to emails or timely decisions/approvals are affecting efficiency.
- Need clear expectations across the organization.
 - Roles
 - What the message needs to be/how to tell our story
 - Guidance – who to ask questions to, where to get help.
 - Consistency on what we want the perception of the Township to be.

The Senior Team needs to find out how to better support their teams, this could be as easy as adding “do you have any questions?” to huddle agendas. All other staff need to take the initiative to ask questions and make recommendations if they feel there is a better way to do things, or a process is not clear.

Council

The responses from Council were split making it difficult to determine key takeaways; however, Council for the most part feels well informed, there may be opportunities to provide additional updates through email on specific projects or emergencies (i.e., Water issues or emergency road closures). Council does not follow our social media channels and 2 members subscribe to the electronic newsletters. Between meetings, Council receives information through the website, through other Council members, and from the property tax bill newsletters. There may be some opportunities to assist Council in subscribing to electronic news or newsletters or to encourage them to follow social media to get timely and accurate updates.

Best Practices

The Communications Review Team conducted research into both communication best practices and industry best practices. The communications best practices were further broken down into internal and external practices. These ideas came from public and private sector businesses and organizations that excel in communications and public relations. The industry best practices came from research into other cities and municipalities that excel in communications. Redbrick Communications provided exceptional guidance into what communities are providing excellent communications.

External

- We must be ready to provide authentic, real answers to hard questions.
- Influencers should be incorporated into communications strategies.
- Storytelling is what people are interested in.
- Communications plans need to be integrated into the development of every project

- Establish and commit to your voice – your organization should be consistent in its tone, messaging, and sound, regardless of the department it comes from, and the messaging should come from a consistent member of the team – whether that is the Mayor, a communications person, a senior manager, etc.
- Determine the platforms/communication channels you will use, based on the target audience. Know your audience, know your analytics, and fill in the gaps. Each platform needs a message that fits its users – i.e., Use a variety of channels but change the format/message based on the channel itself.

Internal

- Strategy for communications is important: what do you want to achieve but also how can we get there? How can we track our success?
- Use the right tools – figure out what works best for your team and stick to it: and make sure everyone in the organization is using it.
- Avoid email overload – how can your communication tools help to solve this without creating friction or a more challenging communication landscape.
- Provide feedback opportunities.
- Cross departmental communication is vital.
- Always go back and check in – how are your communications doing, what needs fixed, what can be improved?
- Make it automatic – internal communications should be the first thing you think of every time something needs to be communicated: a new project, initiative, closure, etc.
- Improve work culture to promote collaboration and communication.

Industry Best Practices

- Information needs to be easy to access.
- Communications training is essential.
- Community Engagement needs to happen outside City Hall.
- Develop response guidelines (customer service) and make public aware of them.
- Develop organization wide communications content schedule.
- Engage in storytelling.
- Communicate in layers.
- Share information/news daily.
- Provide Council summaries and advertise what is on agendas before meetings (don't rely on the public to watch meetings or read agendas, it's our job to communicate)
- Communications and marketing are different.
- Every department is a subject matter expert.
- Image and video development is vital.

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis is a review of all the data compiled to create a list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This type of analysis provides a full picture of an organization by reviewing both internal and external factors that affect success. The Communications Review Team reviewed the survey data and industry standards to facilitate the SWOT analysis. The goal of the analysis is to determine what we can focus on to increase our success and minimize the threats to achieve our vision for communications.

Strengths

- We use a wide variety of communication channels.
- Lots of positive feedback about e-newsletters, social media posts and communications throughout the pandemic
- Lots of staff are willing to help and engaged/well versed in communications.
- Some departments are very good at reaching out to other departments to work collaboratively to deliver communications – especially for new services/programs.
- Often receive compliments that we have great vision, great energy, great customer service
- People generally trust staff's expertise.
- Very supportive Council
- desire to provide good customer service, meet the public needs.
- leadership (CAO) on board with enhancing communications
- strong social media presence
- positive, strong stories to tell, we do a lot of really good work - share those stories more, what we do to benefit the community.

- strong relationship with stakeholder groups, can we leverage these a bit more.
- feedback - appreciate monthly direct mail newsletters to keep residents up to date.

Weaknesses

- Council not on social media; cannot share information or receive regular updates.
- inconsistency across departments, lack of standard approach to communications
- do not currently have a strategic approach to communication or community engagement.
- don't have dedicated people to do communications.
- lacking communication mindset - strengthen culture of communication
- not everyone knows how/what to communicate
- We have lots of communication tools, but we need to do a better job using less.
- approval process
- each department is responsible for updating their part of the website - some do a good job of updating and some do not.
- staff do not take the initiative to ask supervisors to start something new - like communications team.
- do staff feel empowered to make those recommendations?
- disconnect between senior management and their teams.
- awareness - internal communication procedures
- sometimes miss the Mennonites when communicating in an emergency.
- Not all communication channels are used for their intended purpose or by each department.

- Limited number of electronic subscribers to e-newsletters and website news, social media
- Peer to peer communication – lack of response to emails or timely response to emails or not reading instructions/emails in full, too many internal communication tools.
- Communicating what decisions are on the table before they are made.
- Getting information from departments for township wide communication pieces is inconsistent -missing content, images, key messaging, some announcements are recycled annually and not updated.
- Brands and templates are not being used appropriately.
- Lack of training for staff about communications and creating key messages especially for frontline staff that are receiving phone calls.
- Reaching seasonal residents
- It is not that people do not care its that we have not provided the information in a way residents care to learn about it.
- Not all community groups provide their event information to the Township to add to our events calendar – this can be a challenge and time consuming for staff to find and contact event organizers.
- Direct mail newsletters/flyers do not get sent to renters in Township – this is an audience segment we often miss when providing communications.

Opportunities

- opportunity to define township better and more clearly.
- leverage more staff to help with engaging community/communication, help them communicate better, be ambassadors, influencers, champions.

Opportunities

- leverage media more and how to share stories, build those relationships.
- build communication mindset, culture of communication.
- enhance communication - build trust, issues management, proactive vs. reactive, when projects are communicated well the manager gets less questions - more efficient.
- better training for staff, clearly understand Council/staff relationship, decision making,
- create timely, strategic messaging, avoid surprises.
- clear customer service procedure, public engagement, social media, media relations, use of logo/brand guide.
- set up clear expectations, roles, and responsibilities - who posts on social, who talks to media, how media is used, how often, content, who we follow, who we do not follow.
- create a communication tool kit.
- streamline approval process.
- Council summary, news on website, social link, brief of each meeting
- communications brief - this is what you need to tell us when you need a social media post, clear guidelines, also lets us push back and say I cannot do that post until you give me these 5 pieces. Make them think about it first - be strategic.
- core key messages about municipality - consistent, training, plain language guide, how to write for website. Training staff and Council - what makes good communication.
- public engagement strategy - explain when we engage the public,
- IAP2 training
- team of 3 or 4 people that can meet bi-weekly for a short meeting to create/discuss

communication plans. Piggyback, work together, coordinate communication plans, can we do 1 ad or 1 letter instead of several.

- make sure news items are sent out to staff before public.
- in person meetings with the public - attending chamber meetings, engage with the public in person, by-law/community services currently.
- opportunity to segment our audiences based on messaging.
- To explore other communication channels to create a new outlet for communicating specific information (i.e.: Corporate Linked In to celebrate staff and organization achievements as well as job opportunities, RFP's, or other partnership opportunities).
- Increase number of subscribers to electronic newsletter and website news, social media.
- Can we re-shuffle current employee's responsibilities in CAO department to create this position?
- Social media – spend more time educating residents – we are the experts, what do they want to know, what are their issues, how are they struggling, how can we help?
- Senior managers need to sit down with their team to figure out why they are feeling uninformed and what they want to know about.

Threats

- public perception of Mayor/Council not on social media - not engaged.
- misinformation - word of mouth - heavy reliance on word of mouth, spreads misinformation
- staffing capacity – not meeting needs of the public, not feeling engaged
- media apathy -picking things up before we publish a press release, or picking up wrong info, talking to others not us.

- Some information is provided to us very last minute from third parties or other levels of government and we must do our best to communicate it.
- Some information related to projects/initiatives is confidential and we cannot use it to justify projects or tell staff internally.
- Low open rates for e-newsletters
- Costs of advertisements in certain media (radio and newspaper)
- Culture/Attitude –two-way communication does not seem to be a priority.
- Timely communication to seasonal residents – this can be limited by when we receive the information and the types of tools/communication channels we need to use to communicate with them.
- There seems to be a disconnect between Council and the constituents (based on survey results): more specifically what decisions/projects are being considered and what the constituents feel is important (threat because this may take more involvement by Council to solve).
- Survey respondents – how do we engage with the demographics that were underrepresented? If we do this again, we should consider direct mail letters and even presentations to different service clubs or at local events, and even possibly sponsored Facebook ads geo-targeted to HK.

Crisis Management and Communication

Through the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Township learned some valuable lessons about effective communications. A communications team was developed that met weekly to discuss what needed to be communicated to the public. While this was a great learning experience and we were able to incorporate some tactics into this strategy, we also learned that crisis communications need its own set of procedures. Our crisis communications plan will not be included in this strategy, it is available in the Municipal Emergency Response Plan.



Part 2: Strategy Development

This section of the strategy focuses on where we want to be and how we are going to get there. We have developed vision and mission statements and guiding principles to guide the Township through the strategy implementation.

A vision statement describes where we want to go, our future state. A mission statement outlines how we will get there, and our guiding principles are what we will not compromise to achieve our vision.

Furthermore, part 2 outlines our goals and objectives, how we will measure the success of this strategy, the risks of not implementing a communication strategy and other factors that will affect our success.

Vision

Excellent communications where the community, Council and our staff feel well informed and engaged.

Mission

The Communications Strategy will provide a mandate for staff to continue to strengthen the community's trust in local government through strategic and relevant communications. The strategy will guide our communications to support our commitment to deliver exceptional service and to be a transparent and accountable local government.

Guiding Principles



Goals and Objective

Goals and Objectives outline how we are going to achieve our vision. The Communications Review Team created three goals to help guide our actions over the next 36 months.

The objectives were developed using the SMART method, this means that our objectives are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time bound.

Goal #1

Build a foundation for successful communications.

Objectives:

- a. Streamline internal communications by implementing internal communications policies and procedures and providing training by December 31st, 2021 and ensure staff use consistently. Measured by staff adherence to the new policies and procedures and feedback received from an internal survey in May 2022.
- b. Restructure corporate communications by clarifying roles and responsibilities by December 31st, 2021 and further by determining the need for a dedicated communications role by December 31st, 2022.
Measured by increased understanding and reduced confusion for all staff and an increase of productivity by staff contributing to communications. Measurements will be received by tracking reduced staff time in creating communication pieces, through an internal survey in May 2022, and a review of communication pieces to ensure a more fulsome approach for all departments.
- c. Improve interdepartmental information sharing by creating coordinated, scheduled, and inclusive opportunities for department representatives to share and receive updates beginning in October 2021.
Measured by staff time required to create social media posts and newsletter content, and satisfaction levels for internal communications through the May 2022 internal survey.

- d. Define the Township's story by working with a consultant that specializes in brand development and messaging by December 31st, 2021.
Measured by reviewing all Township material to ensure consistent voice and look and feel is being used by all departments in all communications.

Goal #2

Create a culture of two-way communication:

- a. Set expectations for communications by implementing a set of communication standards by March 31st, 2022 and ensure staff at all levels commits to these standards.
Measured by reduced call-backs, increased customer satisfaction and fewer project delays.
Measurements will be received through internal survey and resident satisfaction survey.
- b. Improve community engagement strategy through training, education and engagement campaigns and strategic partnerships beginning in March 2022.
Measured by the number of staff who receive engagement training, the number of strategic partnerships created, the number of comments, shares on social media, website analytics and the resident satisfaction surveys facilitated in May 2023.
- c. Increase awareness of Township programs and services from June 2021 to December 2023.
Measured by number of coordinated education campaigns, decrease in phone calls/emails related to campaign content, number of constituents who access online services, number of mobile app downloads and other campaign specific targets.

Goal #3

Provide clear, concise, accurate and timely messaging.

- a. Increase the reach of Township messages and engagement.
Measured by increase in social media followers, newsletter subscribers and open rate and website analytics from June 2021 to December 2023.

- b. Create tools to standardize communications including a communications flow chart completed by July 31st, 2021 and a communications toolkit in January 2022 after the development of the Township voice/story.
Measured by decrease in confusion/frustration when creating communications and consistency of Township materials from January – December 2022.
- c. Increase support from Council and other stakeholders with storytelling, ambassadors, and the use of influencers, beginning in spring 2023.
Measured by the number of ambassadors sharing Township information with their networks, the number of influencers creating content about the Township and the number of stories created.
- d. Increase sharing of factual information and enhance Township’s ability to correct misinformation by planning communications strategically. Begin baseline monitoring in July 2021 and continue to conduct monitoring throughout implementation of this strategy.
Measured by success of communications against baseline monitoring results.

What does success look like?

To determine what success looks like we must imagine our organization in its future state – if we achieve our vision. Our vision is to have excellent communications where the community, Council and our staff feel well-informed and engaged. We can look at success both internally and externally.

Internally, if we reach our future state, communication would be automatic. Staff knows everything they need to feel empowered and successful in their roles. Policies and procedures are understood and followed consistently. Staff feel encouraged to make suggestions up the chain of command and Senior staff are open to listening to these recommendations.

Our frontline staff feel informed of all communications, before the phone calls/questions start coming in. We see a reduction in phone calls because we prepare all communications strategically, reducing confusion or the spread of misinformation.

Staff managing projects feel empowered to make decisions and move their projects forward without the delays caused by a lengthy approval process or the inability to meet with their Supervisor in a timely manner.

Departments feel connected because we operate in a collaborative environment and support each other in achieving our goals. The disconnect between the municipal office and outside employees is reduced because we all take the time and make the effort to keep each other engaged and informed.

Council feels well-informed and has all the information they need to make informed decisions.

Externally, our constituents understand the decision-making process and trust that we have their best interests in mind. Residents that want to be engaged are given opportunities to provide their feedback and feel like they have a voice in local decision making. Our messaging is clear, accessible, and simple to understand, establishing trust and transparency with our constituents.

How will we measure success?

In the development of any strategy we need to determine how we will measure its success. When measuring the success of a communications strategy we must consider both qualitative and quantitative measurements. Qualitative measurements can include how constituents feel about the Township (do they feel our communications have improved?) or how staff feel (do they feel satisfied with internal communications). Qualitative measurements can also include the Township's brand – are we using a consistent look and feel in all our communications pieces, do members of the public understand what our priorities are and what our story is? Quantitative measurements are more tangible, they can include the number of subscribers to our electronic newsletters, followers on social media and/or the numbers of hours staff have gained by being more efficient communicators.

We have outlined some initiatives we will use to measure our success below:

- Annual surveys or polls to staff
- Review of Township's materials to see if consistent voice and look/feel being used.
- Resident Satisfaction Survey (part way through implementation and again at the end)
- Measure increases in followers on social media and subscribers to e-newsletter and news.
- Website analytics
- Touchpoints with Council? Offer website training, etc.
- Log calls and emails – does this decrease over the course of strategy implementation.
- Measure increases in engagement/participation.
- Strategic partnerships created: media, stakeholders, community groups.

What are the risks?

If we all agree that communication (specifically this strategy) is important, but we do not implement it, what might happen?

A lot of these risks results are from projects that do not have a strategic communications plan. Good communications plans help us avoid time-wasting caused by miscommunication or a lack of clear information. This strategy also strives to increase our efficiency and positive workplace culture.

Below is a list of some risks we could experience if we do not improve our communications and implement this strategy.

- Time wasting – potential project delays, inefficiencies, reactive approach to communications,
- Waste of tax-payer dollars
- Potential for minor issues to become major ones.
- Elected officials experience increased phone calls and feel unable to effectively respond to residents.
- Lose trust/support of constituents.
- Perceived as less transparent.
- Continue to struggle with capacity issues.
- Missed opportunities to engage media or share positive stories.
- Negative workplace culture

What do we need to be successful?

Finally, there are some additional considerations to ensure success of this strategy.

1. Enhanced workplace culture: Communications and culture go hand in hand, by creating more efficient and consistent procedures and by streamlining the approval process, staff will experience less frustration and confusion. Also, we can reduce silos and improve information sharing between departments, so staff feel informed. There are some opportunities to enhance workplace culture through this strategy, while keeping in mind that enhancing workplace culture is not the goal of this strategy:
 - a. Re-new commitment to LEAN with emphasis on empowering employees.
 - b. Determine if team building exercises or training can help promote positive workplace culture.
 - c. Share and celebrate Township (organization) and Employee (Individual staff) accomplishments to build pride and commitment (some communities do this on LinkedIn)
2. Public perception – we identify this throughout the plan, but we need to make note that public perception can be affected by a lot more than just communications – procedures, by-law, staff/ Council attitude, other levels of government or outside agencies, etc.
3. Buy-in – this strategy is not going to move forward if we do not have buy-in from all staffing levels – staff, senior team, Council, etc. we need to work together to move this forward.
4. Accountability – buy in is great but if there is no commitment, accountability, or repercussions for not following processes or meeting standards then the strategy will fall flat. We saw this with the internal comms action plan, the plan was implemented but without accountability most staff reverted to old habits. By creating expectations and reinforcing that we all have a role to play in communications, this strategy is much more likely to succeed.
5. Leadership support – Council and the Sr. team need to make communications a priority. We need them to lead our organization through reinforcement, information sharing and receiving, asking, and answering questions, and a dedication to constant improvement.

Path Forward

Finally, when we created this strategy, we looked at specific tactics and action items we could implement to help us achieve our goals and objectives. There are three tactics the Communications Review Team needs to complete before a full action plan can be implemented. In order to achieve our goals and develop a full list of action items and tactics we need to:

1. Complete a comprehensive review and inventory of current policies and procedures for communications and community engagement.
2. Meet with all staff who prepare communications content or manage communication channels to determine efficiencies and opportunities for how we prepare communications.
3. Meet with all departments to gain a better understanding of their needs, barriers, successes, where they need support or anything they want to learn for communications and community engagement.

These tactics will be complete by September 22nd, 2021. The final action plan will be created and presented to Council on October 4th, 2021. The action plan will include specific tactics and key performance indicators to measure our success.

Concluding Remarks

By executing this strategy, and adjusting it to changing circumstances, Huron-Kinloss will be able to move confidently towards its goal of providing excellent communications where the community, Council and our staff feel well-informed and engaged.





Huron-Kinloss Communications Action Plan



Vision

Excellent communications where the community, Council and our staff feel well informed and engaged.

Mission

The Communications Strategy will provide a mandate for staff to continue to strengthen the community's trust in local government through strategic and relevant communications. The strategy will guide our communications to support our commitment to deliver exceptional service and to be a transparent and accountable local government.

Guiding Principles



Goal #1: Build a Foundation for Successful Communications

Objectives	Who	Timeline	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
A. Streamline internal communications			
The Treasury Department will provide training to all departments on printing property owner information for mail-outs.	Taxation & Revenue Clerk	Q1 2022	Reduced staff time in Treasury department printing and managing lists for all other departments.
An online form will be created for all departments to use to provide information for the Communications Coordinator (Administrative Assistant/Finance will also be cc'd on automated email to ensure information is relayed to frontline staff before the public).	Manager of Strategic Initiatives create form, managed by Communications Coordinator	Q4 2021	Measured by increased understanding and reduced confusion for all staff and an increase of productivity by staff contributing to communications.
Update communications procedures.	Manager of Strategic Initiatives	Q4 2021 - Q2 2022	
Provide training to staff – on new procedures, form, etc.	Manager of Strategic Initiatives	Q3 2022	
B. Restructure corporate communications by clarifying roles and responsibilities			
Hire a Communications Coordinator to streamline communications (Clerks Department, Back-up Deputy Clerk).	Chief Administrative Officer/HR	Q4 2021	Complete.

Objectives	Who	Timeline	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
C. Improve interdepartmental information sharing			
Monthly Meetings: to encourage and inform, department representatives will meet monthly (around COW meeting) to share information from their department that can be included in upcoming communication campaigns (educational campaigns, HK Connects, Social Media, etc.).	Manager of Strategic Initiatives to organize and invite department reps	Q1 2022 (test for 12 month period)	Measured by increased understanding and reduced confusion for all staff and an increase of productivity by staff contributing to communications. Measurements will be received through an internal survey in May 2022.
Create Outlook calendar for Communications Coordinator to input content, view only.	Communications Coordinator create and give Clerk and Deputy Clerk edit access and Administrative Assistant/Finance, Payroll & Asset Coordinator, Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Project Coordinator view only access	Q4 2021	
Staff engagement: determine how staff wants to received information, how they want to be engaged and what information they want to receive.	Project Coordinator	Q4 2021 – Q2 2023	Increase of staff morale, fewer questions and confusion – measured through internal satisfaction surveys – baseline data gathering January 2022, development and implementation of recommendations and comparative survey in January 2023.

Objectives	Who	Timeline	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
D. Define the Township's story			
Social Media and other communications channels– best practices guide, what to share/what not to, preferred third party accounts, events, voice and tone.	Manager of Strategic Initiatives	Q4 2021	Measured by reviewing all Township material to ensure consistent voice and look and feel is being used by all departments in all communications.
Customer Service guidelines.	To be decided	Q1 2023	To be decided.
Customer Mapping.	To be decided	Q1 2023	To be decided.
Marketing Guidelines.	Manager of Strategic Initiatives/Project Coordinator	Q3 – Q4 2022	Guidelines are complete.
E. Training			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing in plain language • Media training • Accessibility • Strategic communications • Customer service • How to use the different communication channels/best practices • Communicating through language barriers 	Annual training planned for department representatives based on available budget and timing of courses being offered.	Q1 2022 – Q4 2024	Number of courses administered and number of staff who attend.

Goal #2: Create a Culture of Two-Way Communication

Objectives	Who	Timeline	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
A. Set expectations for communications			
Electronic Signs – need procedure for all three electronic signs in the Township (PC and fire halls).	Fire Chief, Administrative Assistant/ Program Coordinator, Manager of Strategic Initiatives, Clerk, Communications Coordinator	Q1 2022	Measured by increased customer satisfaction, decreased confusion on staff, and number of staff trained.
Social Media and other communication channels – best practices guide.	See Goal #1E		
Customer Service Guidelines.	See Goal #1E		
Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing in plain language • Media training • Accessibility • Strategic communications • Customer service • How to use the different communication channels/best practices • Communicating through language barriers 	See Goal #1E		

Objectives	Who	Timeline	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
B. Improve Community Engagement Strategy			
Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan.	Manager of Strategic Initiatives/Project Coordinator	Q1 – Q4 2022 (based on funding)	Engagement strategy complete.
IAP2 training.	Manager of Strategic Initiatives/Project Coordinator	Q1 2022	Measured by increased understanding and reduced confusion for all staff and an increase of productivity by staff contributing to communications.
Create audience segments and figure the best way to reach them: who we are missing, why are we missing them, etc. (renters, communities, etc.).	Manager of Strategic Initiatives/Project Coordinator	Q1 2023	Measured by increase of engaged community members and staff and number of projects requesting engagement.
Create how to get involved web page.	Project Coordinator	Q4 2021	
Staff Engagement.	See Goal #1C		
C. Increase awareness of Township programs and services			
Communications Plans – committee to work with departments to develop and implement communications plans for large projects and educational campaigns.	Committee: Communications Coordinator, Project Coordinator, Manager of Strategic Initiatives, and Depts reps.	Ongoing	Measured by number of coordinated education campaigns, decrease in phone calls/emails related to campaign content, and other campaign specific targets.
Marketing Guidelines.	See Goal #1D		
Provide Training to staff.	Manager of Strategic Initiatives		

Goal #3: Provide Clear, Concise, Accurate and Timely Messaging

Objectives	Who	Timeline	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
A. Increase the reach of Township messages and engagement			
Purchase video equipment and editing software; create bank of videos to use annually.	Communications Coordinator and Manager of Strategic Initiatives	Q4 2021	Measured by increase in social media followers, newsletter subscribers, open rate and website analytics from December 2021 to December 2023.
Investigate municipal minute, podcasts, etc.	Manager of Strategic Initiatives	Q3 2022	
Consistently measure our reach and impact.	Communications Coordinator	Ongoing	
Investigate opportunity for community information boards.	Manager of Strategic Initiatives	Q3 2022	
B. Create tools to standardize communications			
Create communications flow chart - procedures.			
Create Communications Toolkit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Templates • Key messaging • Plain language guide • Accessibility guide 	Manager of Strategic Initiatives content, Communications Coordinator design.	Q1 - Q2 2022	Measured by decrease in confusion/frustration when creating communications and consistency of Township materials from January – December 2022.
Training: Provide training on toolkit to staff.	Manager of Strategic Initiatives	Q3 2022	

Objectives	Who	Timeline	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
C. Increase support from Council and other stakeholders			
Develop relationship with media – including annual buys for radio, newspaper, magazines.	Manager of Strategic Initiatives/Project Coordinator	Q2-Q4 2022 for implementation in 2023	Measured by reduction of phone calls/questions about Township matters, and increase in engaged residents providing their feedback about Township services.
Investigate municipal minute, podcasts, etc.	Manager of Strategic Initiatives	Q3 2022	
Start council updates.	Communications Coordinator	Q1 2022	

Objectives	Who	Timeline	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
D. Increase sharing of factual information and enhance Township's ability to correct misinformation			
Start council updates.	Communications Coordinator	Q1 2022	Measured by success of communications against baseline monitoring results.
Research Adding FAQs to website.	Project Coordinator	Q1 - Q4 2022	
Communication Coordinator manage content calendar and ensure information is being disseminated in a timely manner and consistently across all platforms.	Communications Coordinator	Ongoing	