TOWNSHIP OF ESQUIMALT
Corporate Communications Plan
2023

Township of
ESQUIMALT

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Corporate Communications Plan

Introduction

The Township sets out to achieve transparent, timely and accurate communication and engagement with our audiences both internally and externally.

Care has been taken to recognize the growing demand for open and two-way communication, particularly as it pertains to listening to citizens, gathering feedback and the expanding influence of technology in accessing information.

The role of communications within the township is to:

- Foster a trusting relationship between the public and the township
- Keep our audiences informed about township projects and activities in order to remain accountable and transparent
- Share information beyond the 'need to know'
- Communicate early and often
- Create opportunities to listen to the public
- Communicate in a style that is friendly and approachable, yet professional
- Reduce inquiries to staff due to proactive communications
- Improve the level of personal emergency preparedness
- Remain proactive, effective and trustworthy with our media relations to help journalists tell an accurate, balanced and fair story.

Responsibilities of Corporate Communications

Strategic communications

Using strategic communications as the lens by which content is filtered to ensure it upholds the values and standards set out in council's priorities.

Creating messages, campaigns or visual communications that further the township's strategic priorities and corporate messages.

Choosing graphics and content with the intention of reinforcing a corporate narrative.

Community engagement

Also called "public participation", communications takes an active role in community engagement.

When an engagement campaign is corporate-led, departments collaborate with communications to establish the goals, audiences and timelines for the campaign. This includes a discussion about how the results will be used i.e., the amount of influence the results will have on decision-making.

Communications will then:

- Collect relevant information on the topic
- Create any outreach materials
- Create website page(s) as needed
- Share information internally via the intranet
- Create social media graphics and associated campaign
- Arrange social media ads or paper ads if needed
- Share information via other tactics, including e-newsletter, the Current newsletter, digital signage and through stakeholders
- Write a media release announcing the project

The township uses the International Association of Public Participation spectrum as a guide to assess the various levels of public engagement.

When departments hire outside consultants to manage community engagement for a project, communications will round out the services provided by the consultants to ensure that the campaign has what's needed to be successful. This can include:

- Helping departments craft the community engagement portion of the RFP
- Creating social media graphics and managing social media messaging
- Coordinating any advertising and media releases
- Updating the corporate website
- Advising on stakeholders and audiences
- Advising on other public engagement tools as needed

Website and intranet

The corporate website is a key communications tool. It is not only used to put information forward but also used a way of taking in comments from the public via online forms.

The intranet is a repository for staff resources and important staff news, contact information and forms.

Communications manages the website and intranet's overall look and feel as well as the sites' administration.

Both the corporate website and intranet employ a decentralized web author model where key staff in each department have website access. These staff receive training from communications staff to ensure web standards are met. While overall site design rests with communications, department staff are able to make text and document updates pertaining to their portfolios.

Updating website/intranet with day-to-day departmental information such as:

- Updating existing documents
- Adjusting hours of service
- Updating project status

should be done by departments.

Social media

The current social media channels operated by corporate communications are:

- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Facebook
- Instagram

Questions from the public that arrive through these channels are treated with the same standards of timeliness and accuracy as by any other mode of communications.

The tone of the social media accounts is friendly and light. The approach to each is catered to the specific channel, but overall strives to create a community-minded and positive voice.

Details can be found in the Social Media Policy.

Emergency communications

Emergency management staff work closely with communications staff on annual preparedness campaigns and emergency planning. Communications is the primary contact for the Emergency Alert service and deploys alerts as needed.

When a situation happens that requires public alert, the subject matter expert (SME) or their director needs to update communications staff (CM) and the CAO; the emergency manager may also be brought in depending on the nature of the issue.

The SME gets relevant details to CM. Under instruction of the CAO, CM decides on the best methods of distribution.

The website is typically the primary location for emergency information. Social media and other links should point there.

Depending on the urgency, CM may be supported by other departments to share information faster, including Corporate Services admin staff, Parks/Rec and VicPD may be asked to repost news on their social media channels.

Branding

Maintaining brand consistency is an important part of communications. Colours, fonts and logo use are the primary elements of the township's current branding strategy.

Communications ensures that all corporate communications is appropriately branded and that partner agencies using the township logo does so in the prescribed manner.

The Township of Esquimalt has not gone through a brand update since 2015. Many elements, like the logo and primary colour palette, are in consistent use by corporate communications. A refresh should be considered in the next 1-2 years.

The broad implementation of a writing style guide is also outstanding from a fulsome branding perspective.

Media relations

Communications is the point of contact for media so that responses, be it by the mayor directly or in an emailed statement, are timely and consider corporate key messaging.

Communications also follows a proactive approach to media relations by sending out media advisories and releases to notify media about township activities of interest.

When possible, background information related to an issue or statement is made readily available to reporters.

Full details can be found in the Media Relations Policy.

Council communications

Council-specific communications that is not related to township business does not fall under the responsibility of corporate communications.

Internal communications

Communications supports Human Resources in communication with staff by intranet maintenance, design and administration; graphic design; the delivery of key information to staff about relevant and timely updates to aid in responding to public inquiries and messages as needed about employee engagement activities. Internal communications also includes relevant updates to all staff about pertinent information about the organization and the community as a whole.

Our audiences

- Residents
- Businesses
- First Nations
- Other local governments
- Media
- Staff
- Other governments
- Prospective employees
- Prospective businesses

Communications tools

1. Website (including emergency notice banner)
2. E-newsletter (subscription)
3. Social media accounts
4. Digital signage (in facilities and on roadway)
5. Posters
6. The Current newsletter
7. Intranet
8. Community partner newsletters (e.g., the Chamber newsletter)
9. Earned media (unpaid media coverage)
10. Media release, media advisory, etc.
11. Advertising
12. Esquimalt Alert emergency notification tool

Messaging

Having a consistent tone to corporate messaging helps the audiences know what to expect and fosters trust when the tone is helpful and responsive. Corporate messaging helps relay the township's desired self-identity.

General themes

1. Esquimalt is a connected community with a friendly, neighbourhood feel and a strong culture of volunteerism
2. Esquimalt values the historical and present relationship with the Canadian Navy
3. Esquimalt's roots start with a rich First Nations presence that continues to this day

4. Esquimalt fosters a vibrant and active arts scene through collaborating with community groups
5. Esquimalt's coastal presence makes the natural environment an inexorable part of our identity as does stewarding that land

Departmental and project-specific messaging

Communications serves as a gateway to support township staff with strategic communications planning, visual identity and daily communications needs.

Communications helps departments identify opportunities for public updates about projects and items of interest to the public and other staff. By sharing not only the large initiatives but also the day-to-day activities, audiences can gain a better appreciation and knowledge about the work being done.

Working with departmental project leaders, Communications support includes:

- reviewing and editing an RFP
- working directly with communications consultants
- reviewing departmental plans and other materials for plain-language and copy edits
- graphic design of handouts, information brochures, project boards and advertisements
- social media graphic design and advertisements
- designing project web pages including creating online forms/surveys
- media support- writing information bulletins, key messages and arranging responses to reporters
- oversee publication of the annual report

Methods include a mix of print, electronic and one-on-one engagement.

Reporting out

Communications staff report out publicly on activities and accomplishments via:

- Period reports (3x a year)
- Annual report
- Project reporting, where relevant

Related documents

- [Social Media Policy](#)
- [Communications Policy](#)
- [Media Relations Policy](#)

Annual communications plan

The annual communications plan sets out a series of goals and actions rooted in council's priorities. The plan includes timelines and is updated every year.

2023 Communications Plan

The Township sets out to achieve transparent, timely and accurate communication and engagement with our audiences both internally and externally.

Care has been taken to recognize the growing demand for open and two-way communication, particularly as it pertains to listening to citizens, gathering feedback and the expanding influence of technology in accessing information.

The plan is a living document designed to grow with the changing needs of the township. It will be reviewed and updated annually as part of the township's commitment to continuously improving service.

Communications goals, strategies and actions

1. GOAL: Increase public understanding of township services and projects

Strategy	Actions	Timing
Work with departments on modernizing digital services	1. Lead the website update project and include staff input on updates 2. Reevaluate current digital email tool (Campaigner)	1. June '23-Feb '24 2. Summer
Improve accessibility of township communications	1. Train staff with social media access on accessibility 2. Continue to attend coursework about accessibility 3. Ensure new website meets or exceeds WCAG 2.0 AA standards 4. Use digital and hard copy means of communications for public engagement campaigns	1. Summer 2. Annual 3. Fall 4. Annual

Highlight services and department work through the year	1. Meet regularly with departments to seek updates on service successes, changes, etc. 2. Leverage seasonal campaigns like Local Government Week and Public Works week 3. Work with Parks staff and Green Shores Canada to promote Gorge Estuary enhancements 4. Support construction communications during active transportation improvements 5. Share information about annual municipal deadlines like property taxes, business and dog licences, budget feedback and annual report feedback. 6. Work with Esquimalt Archives on showcasing dates of note, soliciting new donations and celebrating BC Heritage week 7. Share Victoria-Esquimalt Police Board meeting notices	1. Quarterly or as needed 2. Seasonally 3. Spring-fall 4. Summer 5. Annual 6. Annual 7. Ongoing
Use both paid and earned media to share messages	1. Send out media advisories and news releases to announce initiatives/changes 2. Promote existing services on social media and newsletters 3. Create The Current newsletter 3x/year	1. Ongoing
Proactively update the public about important council discussions and feedback opportunities	1. Share council agenda information on social media 2. Continue to promote subscription-based agenda email 3. Use Esquimalt Alert system to notify subscribers of public hearings, garbage updates and emergencies 4. Use digital, hard copy and in-person tactics to share public engagement opportunities for corporate projects	1. Ongoing 2. Ongoing 3. Ongoing 4. Ongoing
Highlight Esquimalt's military connections	1. Continue the Memorial Banner Program 2. Share relevant public communications from CFB Esquimalt and MFRC	1. Summer/fall 2. Ongoing

5. *GOAL: Improve opportunities to communicate with residents and interest groups*

Strategy	Actions	Timing
Use Chambers as resource to understand business needs	1. Attend Victoria Chamber and Esquimalt Chamber events as schedule allows (min 4xyear) 2. Ensure township information is up to date on Chamber materials	1. Ongoing
Work with Destination Victoria to elevate township profile in the tourism sector	1. Ensure township information is up to date on DV materials 2. Send new photos to DV for promotional materials 3. Attend DV events and webinars to stay current on trends	1. May 2. June 3. Ongoing
Use social media as listening tool	1. Respond to questions on social media 2. Create communications materials when feedback warrants	1. Ongoing 2. Ongoing
Include relevant groups in public engagement campaigns	1. Businesses, advocacy groups, community groups, schools and the Chambers are included when developing plans, e.g., the Active Transportation Network Plan and Esquimalt Parking Study.	1. Ongoing
Support departments and partner municipalities in community engagement activities	1. Parking survey 2. Housing needs 3. Pickleball survey (regional) 4. Speed reduction survey 5. Extreme heat survey (CRD)	1. January 2. Fall 3. July 4. Spring 5. May

6. *GOAL: Ensure adequate communications planning for emergencies*

Strategy	Actions	Timing
Ensure resource documentation and training documents are up to date	1. Update communications section of emergency plan 2. Review training documents for accuracy	1. Fall
Encourage residents and businesses to proactively prepare	1. Run seasonal communications campaigns about emergency preparedness 2. Collaborate with government partners around Emergency Preparedness Week and Shakeout BC 3. Run seasonal communications campaigns about fire prevention and fire safety	1. Ongoing 2. October and May 3. Ongoing
Ensure there is redundancy in communications training	1. Train additional staff on emergency tools	1. Fall
Increase Emergency Operations Centre training	1. Take the EOC Planning Section course through JIBC	1. May
Maintain flow of information between Communications and VicPD	1. Cross-post alerts relevant to Esquimalt	1. Ongoing

7. *GOAL: Enhance community partnerships*

Strategy	Actions	Timing
Work with community groups to help share their messages, e.g., event information, volunteer callouts, important updates	1. Establish contacts within community groups 2. Cross-post events, activities and asks on social media 3. Meet with group representatives as needed to create further outreach strategies	1. Ongoing 2. Ongoing 3. Ongoing
Work with Songhees and Esquimalt Nations	1. Cross-promote events, learning opportunities and initiatives 2. Attend Nation-led events 3. Continue Indigenous learning courses 4. Seek partnership opportunities for shared signage and other communications tools	1. Ongoing 2. Ongoing 3. Ongoing 4. Ongoing
Work collaboratively with the Esquimalt and Victoria Chambers of Commerce and Destination Victoria to both share township initiatives with them but also reciprocate any information sharing requested.	1. Businesses and the Esquimalt Chamber are included when developing plans impact local businesses, e.g., the Active Transportation Network Plan and Esquimalt Parking Study.	1. Ongoing
Respond as needed to emergency situations	• work collaboratively with other agencies or departments to share information internally and out to the public 2. create communications materials as needed (digital or hard copy)	1. Ongoing
Enhance opportunities for film industry interest and collaboration	1. Ensure Esquimalt images and facility information is up to date on Creative BC website 2. Promote existing filming on social media	1. July 2. Ongoing

8. *GOAL: Have a cohesive brand look that is recognizable and implemented across the organization*

Strategy	Actions	Timing
Ensure Township photos are up to date and appealing	1. Identify gaps in photo subject matter and hire photographer to add to the collection	1. Spring
Use consistent branding elements	1. Hire consultant to review and update corporate colours and fonts 2. Harmonize Township logo and sub-logo use 3. Implement new design elements in new website	1. Late summer 2. Fall 3. Winter
Empower staff to implement branding guidelines	1. Create guides on colour/font use, logo use and writing style guide	1. Fall

9. *GOAL: Improve internal communications opportunities and systems*

Strategy	Actions	Timing
Ensure digital assets are organized	1. Implement digital asset strategy	1. Fall
Use consistent branding elements	1. Hire consultant to review and update corporate colours and fonts 2. Harmonize Township logo and corporate sub-logo use 3. Implement new design elements in new website	1. Late summer 2. Fall 3. Winter
Share media relations best practices with senior leadership and council	1. Organize media relations training for senior leadership and council	1. Spring

Staff information on the website and intranet is accurate	1. Work with HR Director, Finance Manager and IT Manager on streamlining onboarding and offboarding process	1. Spring-summer

Overarching corporate messaging is derived from the Council Priorities and typically include how the township is delivering on those priorities.

1. Priority: Strong Relationships/Partnerships

Sample key messaging

- We are an active participant in the region and strive to work with other governments to ensure accurate and timely communications in areas of mutual involvement;
- We have a friendly and open relationship with community groups and other governments;
- We believe strongly in the value of community groups and are proud to help when possible;

2. Priority: Diversified, Thriving Economy

Sample key messaging

- We are strong supporters of local business and celebrate the diversity of services offered in Esquimalt;
- Hearing from businesses as well as the shipyard and navy base are priorities as we plan for the present and future of Esquimalt;

3. Priority: Engaged, Healthy Community

Sample key messaging

- We want you and your family to be prepared in case of an emergency; we encourage you to sign up for Esquimalt Alert and review the emergency information we share with you;
- Esquimalt staff collaborate regionally to help the township be as prepared as possible;

- The township appreciates Esquimalt's strong community of volunteers;
- Improving accessibility is a priority for the township;

4. Priority: Climate Resilience and Environmental Stewardship

Sample key messaging
- Esquimalt is a wonderful place to be active. The natural environment and municipal parks are important amenities for residents and visitors alike;
- The township is committed to the goals and actions set out in the Climate Plan;

5. Priority: Good Governance and Organizational Excellence

Sample key messaging
- Communications uses questions and comments shared by residents to consistently adjust and improve the content and availability of corporate communications;
- We want to hear from you;
- We commit to listening, answering questions or putting you in touch with the right person if we can't help;
- Staff take pride in their work;
- We're investing in infrastructure in a methodical way that balances sound financing with caring for and improving the resources we currently have;
- We take a forward-thinking approach to infrastructure design that includes accessibility and climate change considerations;

6. Priority: Housing

Sample key messaging
- Council is focused on making evidence-based decisions when it comes to updating and creating housing policies;
- A range of policies, like parking and development cost charges, are important to consider when looking at housing;
- Robust and diverse housing is necessary for Esquimalt to continue to see a range of families and adults in various life stages calling Esquimalt home;

Completed actions

Period 1

Activity	Related departments	Status
Seasonal reminder communications	PW, Parks, CSS	done
Heritage Week promotion	CS	done
Observance days and proclamation promotion	All	done
Pink Shirt Day- coordinate with council and WiTS	All	done
Plan new photos and hire photographer	All	done
Speed reduction public engagement	ENG	ongoing
Attend networking opportunities with Chamber, Esq Chamber and Destination Vic as appropriate	-	done
Coordinate township attendance at MARPAC (CFB Esquimalt) Health Fair	CSS, Rec	done
Media promotion for Fire Department youth camp	Fire	done
Get renewed quote for website	-	Done
Create and send out The Current	All	Done
Create and send out e-newsletters to highlight public engagement, events and news	-	Done

Period 2

Activity	Related departments	Status
Public Safety Building communications	CSS	Ongoing
Police Service Model Transition communications	CSS	Ongoing
Hot weather safety communications	CSS	Ongoing
Tillicum Bridge Midden Site Signage	CR/HR	In progress
Parking Strategy communications	ENG/DS	Done
Onboard Ec Dev Manager	CR/HR	In progress
Update communications for E-TAG program	ENG	In progress
Annual report- design and finalization	All	Done
Tax communications- design and finalization	FIN	Done
Updating the township's visual identity program including corporate guidelines	-	In progress
Create and send out The Current	All	Done
Create and send out e-newsletters to highlight public engagement, events and news	-	Done