

Priorities Committee Meeting_May11_2021

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AND UPDATE

Communications- Department Business Plan Update

Report Purpose

To provide Priorities Committee with an update on the progress of the 2021-2024 department business plan for Communications.

Our Prioritized Strategic Goals

Goal 7 - Provide opportunities for public engagement and communication
Continuously improving the way we work, as one organization, in an agile and sustainable manner

Report

Communications supports Strathcona County's strategic direction and business goals by advancing the reputation and positive image of the organization, through open, transparent and meaningful stakeholder communication and public engagement. The department is comprised of 15 professionals, who operate independently as a team of specialists, and in partnership with other internal and external resources in five key areas:

- **Communications consultation, planning and implementation** – strategic communication direction, consultation and training for client departments, executive and elected officials. Assess communications needs, develop communications plans and messaging, determine best approaches to communications challenges, and measure results of campaigns.
- **Stakeholder relations** - foster positive working environments – internal and external - to meet strategic direction and business goals. Advance the organization's reputation and enhance stakeholder understanding of the organization's priorities, programs and position. Program is responsible for monitoring the environment (traditional and social media), issues management, and for preparing the organization to respond. Other areas of focus include internal communications and emergency and crisis communications.
- **Digital communications** - manage development, evolution and ongoing maintenance of County websites (external and internal), and proactively monitor the industry for trends, opportunities and challenges. Develop, advise and oversee standards for corporate websites. Administer, oversee, and provide training and support for corporate communications applications (event calendar, survey and e-newsletter, Digital Asset Manager, social media tools). Provide consultation on web analytics, online marketing, web usability, accessibility, and custom website applications.
- **Brand management** - oversee and preserve the integrity of the Strathcona County brand, which includes developing standards, monitoring application and evaluating results. Brand elements include the logo, typeface, messaging and overall tone of communication. Application of the brand spans all communications, from advertising, to printed and digital materials, signage and social media. Program area includes

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oversight and coordination of the design and placement of the organization's advertising.

- **Public engagement** – guide public engagement efforts at Strathcona County, based on the Public Engagement Policy and Framework, which outline a process for planning, implementing and evaluating these activities. Provide guidance, analysis and advice on corporate and department surveys, coordinate the annual public satisfaction survey, and provide reporting and analysis for census. This program also manages the online research panel.

Over the 2021-2024 business planning cycle, corporate Communications continued to work with department partners to clarify roles, strengthen collaboration and improve overall efficiency. The Communications review being conducted in 2021 will also help to set the stage for more integrated, strategic communications both internally and externally.

Continuous improvements:

- **Communications consultation, planning and implementation** – Continuing to refine our internal communications channels and processes to help reach staff and help staff feel connected to news and to each other (including reaching offsite and remote workforce and reducing message clutter).
- **Stakeholder relations** - Support to Council – Communications started and will continue a daily scan for Council that provides them with the day's news/events, suggested social media content and upcoming news as well as support for emerging issues. Communications continues to find synergies between strategic plans including ways to coordinate the People Plan, Digital Services Plan, Economic Development and Tourism Plan, Recreation and Culture Plan and other priority plans that have key impacts on communicating with staff, residents and businesses. We are also continuing to evolve our social media presence, policy and practices.
- **Digital communications** - The way we communicate, internally and externally transformed in 2020 due to COVID and it continues to transform. It has caused the need to adjust how communications and public engagement efforts are delivered. Communications continues to work with partner departments to continue to support communicating digitally. The web team also continues to work with IT on transforming our digital assets onto one platform, saving additional software license costs, and costs to support the One Digital Workplace vision. The web team is also investigating the impacts of digital waste and begin educating content owners on how to build a culture of digital sustainability. The webteam also continues to explore opportunities and to implement site improvements and enhancements to improve our visitors' experience with a focus on web accessibility, usability and monitoring for new technological trends capable of enhancing the delivery of municipal digital communications, such as augmented reality.
- **Brand management** – updating visual identity manual including section on signage, incorporated new features, added templates, looking to integrate strategic plans into the broader conversation about brand/communications framework for the County.

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- **Public engagement** – Since the onset of COVID 19, public engagement in Strathcona County has taken place exclusively online. Over the next four years, online engagement will be the primary method for gathering input from the public. Training for digital face to face engagement started in 2020. Training will continue to be offered across the organization to support the transition to online engagement; to ensure staff are fully adept at engaging the Strathcona County community and internal stakeholders going forward. Strathcona County's online opinion panel (SCOOP) has also seen a significant increase in panellists since the beginning of COVID; An increase of over 600 brings our total to over 2,300 panellists. This number will continue to increase over time. SCOOP panellists provide good data to Strathcona County upon which decisions are made. An online discussion forum was launched in 2020 and it enabled the public engagement community called SCOOP the chance to explore topics in detail and exchange ideas. It is intended to continue further online discussion forums in 2021–2024.

Council and Committee History

December 6, 2018	Council approved 2019-2022 Corporate Business Plan and 2019 Budget
January 28, 2020	Update on the progress of the 2020-2023 department business plan for Communications

Other Impacts

Policy: Public Engagement Policy (GOV-002-025), Communications Policy (GOV-002-029), Social Media Policy (GOV-002-028), Public Sponsorship Policy (PUB-001-014), Visual Identity Guidelines, Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Legislative/Legal: N/A

Interdepartmental: All departments

Master Plan/Framework: N/A

Enclosure

1	Communications business plan update 2021-2024
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