

2020



CITY OF CASTLEGAR
communications
PLAN



CITY OF CASTLEGAR *communications* PLAN

The City of Castlegar's Communications Plan outlines goals, objectives, strategies and actions that staff and Council will commit to in order to assist the City in enhancing communications, increasing public engagement and improving internal communications.

This plan recognizes the changing demand and expectations for true dialogue, particularly as it relates to listening to citizens, gathering feedback and citizens' use of technology to gather and share information.

The Communications Plan is a living document and will be updated annually and shared with Council for discussion.

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Building

A CULTURE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Where we've come from

The City of Castlegar 2019-2023 Strategic Plan has five strategic pillars. These are areas Council considers as high-level strategic directions for the organization for the near and longer-term.

One of the pillars is Engaged and Informed Citizens and Strong Civic Organization. This pillar sets the following goals:

- **Build relationships with our community through strategic and relevant communications**
- **Ensure a high level of awareness of City initiatives and decision making**
- **Develop trust of citizens in the work the City does on their behalf**
- **Ensure citizens are heard**
- **Build support for community initiatives**

Our Current State

The City uses a distributed approach that has placed responsibility for implementing and budgeting communication activities in the hands of each department. The approach is successful in building a sense of pride and ownership, promoting accountability, and ensuring the people who know the details are the ones creating materials.

Many elements of this approach have worked well but it has led to the following:

- **Untrained staff providing communications activities**
- **Inconsistent brand application**
- **Unclear messaging and errors**
- **Inconsistent procedures and lack of strategy**
- **A responsive rather than proactive approach**
- **No formal review and approval process**
- **Missed opportunities for meaningful public engagement**

Fostering

A CULTURE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Moving Forward

2020 is an exciting year as the City formed a Communications function. At the 2019 Strategic Planning session with senior staff and Council, we determined our vision is to:

- **Improve communications with Castlegar residents (share meaningful information, boost the City's reputation and reduce misinformation)**
- **Create informed citizens and encourage public participation in the City's decision making (engage in a more meaningful way)**
- **Support public engagement and participation during project planning and implementation**
- **Improve internal communications and engagement with all City staff**

By developing and implementing this plan, the City, staff and Council are committed to creating an organizational culture that understands its citizens and listens in a real way. This means we all have to understand how our roles, both individually and collectively, impact the City and its reputation when communicating.

In order to be successful, the City needs to commit to understanding what information citizens want, how often they wish to receive it, and using which channels. This will paint a clear picture of what is working well and where we need to improve. As part of this process, the City can also gather information about citizens' engagement preferences.

our **APPROACH**

INFORM CITIZENS

Provide timely, accurate and clear information to citizens using the channels they prefer.

INVOLVE THE PUBLIC

Those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.

LISTEN ACTIVELY

Engage with the public to inform the City's decision making and communicate how their input has been included.

BE INCLUSIVE

Respect diversity, recognize various needs, and develop strategies to ensure the City remains inclusive.

GUIDING *principles*

TAKE OWNERSHIP

All staff and Council will assist the City in listening to citizens, incorporating feedback, and communicating information from the City.

REMAIN RESPONSIVE

Stay responsive to the learning we do as we implement the plan and commit to evolving over time.

BUILD CAPACITY

Grow individual and organizational capacity to build trusting relationships in support of effective public policy.

SUPPORT GROWTH

Provide the tools required for staff and Council to support to delivery of the plan.

Goal #1

EXPAND AWARENESS OF CITY INITIATIVES AND DECISION MAKING.

OBJECTIVE 1.0

Communicate accurate information to citizens in timely and meaningful ways.

Strategies

1.1 - BUILD AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT INFORMATION CITIZENS WANT, HOW OFTEN THEY WISH TO RECEIVE IT, AND USING WHICH CHANNELS AND HOW CITIZENS WANT TO PARTICIPATE OR ENGAGE IN THE CITY'S DECISION MAKING PROCESSES.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Gather data using a statistically valid approach to ensure the views of all citizens are represented. Realistically, this is the first and most important action in the plan. All actions should be tailored and delivered based on the information gathered as part of this process.

1.2 - COMMUNICATE IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT COUNCIL DECISIONS AND CITY SERVICES.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Transition Council Brief to Council Highlights which can be generated quickly, without a graphic designer, after Council meetings and posted/shared on the City's website and Facebook page.
- Produce "Castlegar Connects" (similar to the former Council Brief) monthly and share in Castlegar News, Castlegar Source, City website and Facebook page, email and public locations as a poster.
- Produce, print and distribute to all homes and businesses an annual newsletter highlighting the City's accomplishments and looking ahead to the next year.
- Leverage utility bill distribution as way to share information.
- Remain responsive to issues staff and Councillors are hearing in the community.
- Create an organization-wide planning calendar to schedule communications and engagement campaigns, activities and events.
- Add a calendar of events to the City's website.
- Use a mix of communications tools for information sharing, including traditional, online and social.
- Explore developing an e-newsletter.
- Provide Public Information Office services during City emergencies.
- Leverage partners to share the City's information.

Goal #1

EXPAND AWARENESS OF CITY INITIATIVES AND DECISION MAKING. (Continued)

OBJECTIVE 1.0

Communicate accurate information to citizens in timely and meaningful ways.

Strategies

1.3 - CREATE A CONSISTENT BRAND AND IMAGE FOR THE CITY.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Revitalize the City's brand by issuing an RFP to complete a brand consistency assessment, develop Brand Guidelines, including visual identity and style guides, what/how images are used, and a set of standardized templates for corporate and departmental purposes (news releases, advertisements - corporate, legal, HR, civic works, finance, etc. -, posters, briefing notes, fact sheets/background documents, project updates, Council Matters and key messages) and develop approval process.
- Encourage co-branding with others who share the City's objectives.
- Centralize all creation, review and approval of external documents to Communications Manager.
- Provide orientation on brand guidelines for staff and consultants generating content for external audiences to ensure a consistent look, feel and voice for the City.

1.4 - STRENGTHEN TRUST IN THE WORK THE CITY DOES.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Celebrate municipal government by humanizing the City and building trust by aligning services with staff that deliver them. Create a visual campaign that showcases City staff and their effect on the community. This also supports Goal #3.
- Host a community event aimed at showcasing municipal services and creating an opportunity to connect with City staff.

1.5 - MAINTAIN MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEDIA.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Develop all materials for media and ensure they are invited to all City events.
- All staff and Council respond to media in a timely fashion.
- Monitor all media coverage of the City and issues relevant to Council and staff.

1.6 - CREATE GUIDES TO THE CITY'S ACCEPTED COMMUNICATIONS PRACTICES.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Update the communications policy.
- Update the social media policy.

Goal #2

INCREASE PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN THE CITY'S DECISION MAKING.

OBJECTIVE 2.0

Establish a formal, predictable and transparent approach to engaging with the community.

Strategies

2.1 - DEVELOP A PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & PARTICIPATION POLICY.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Adopt the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation.
- Share the Public Engagement & Participation Policy with the public and cross-reference all projects to ensure the engagement activities are in line.

2.2 - DEVELOP A PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & PARTICIPATION GUIDE TO CREATE CONSISTENCY.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Ensure public engagement is considered early in project planning, including adding an engagement section to staff reports and developing engagement plans for all major projects.
- Use both traditional and emerging techniques to best suit the situation.
- Provide training to staff and Councillors actively involved in engagement.
- Add a Public Engagement line item to all major projects or initiatives to ensure adequate resources are in place to meet the objectives outlined in the Public Engagement & Participation Policy and Guide.

2.3 - ATTRACT BETTER TURNOUTS TO PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Gather data on what issues residents want to engage on and how they would like to participate.
- Be “in the community” and set-up in public spaces. Do not expect people to come to us.
- Add a personal touch wherever possible.
- Work with partners to participate in events where participants will already be.
- Increase advance promotion of opportunities for the public to get involved and provide feedback; incentivize participation.
- Communicate the purpose of the event, and how the engagement will be used to support decision making, on multiple platforms to build trust.
- Empower City staff to leverage existing relationships and contacts.

Goal #3

ENHANCE INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT WITH ALL STAFF.

OBJECTIVE 3.0

Continue to empower staff and be a safe place to bring issues forward.

Strategies

3.1 - BUILD A CULTURE WHERE EMPLOYEES FEEL INFORMED AND KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT CITY MATTERS.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Inform employees of matters affecting them before informing the public.
- Include communications updates at Department Head and staff meetings to review communications procedures and implement suggestions for improvement or new ideas.
- Confirm the best way(s) to get employees important updates on City activities, new initiatives, new policies, hot topics, etc.
- Use Council Highlights to keep staff in the loop.

3.2 - FOSTER A CULTURE WHERE EMPLOYEES FEEL ENGAGED AND HAVE A CONNECTION TO THE ORGANIZATION.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Seek feedback from all employees on how the City can improve internal communications and engagement as part of annual performance reviews.
- Involve staff in public engagement activities wherever possible.
- Appoint City staff to informal information ambassador roles to share City messaging with the public seek out information and answers relating to projects they are interested in.
- Host employee events at satellite locations.
- Provide access to relevant information in satellite lunch rooms and lunch rooms of large employers in Castlegar.
- Highlight staff in the City's marketing and promotions.
- Host bi-annual information sessions for employees to ensure they are informed about the City's Strategic Plan and priorities, initiatives and upcoming activities and challenges.
- Develop a Employee Recognition Plan to celebrate successes.

3.3 - ENHANCE INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND CAPACITY OF THE ORGANIZATION AS A WHOLE.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Offer media training to anyone who may serve as a City spokesperson with the media. Celebrate the successes to establish confidence and credibility.
- Develop key messages and supporting documents (backgrounders, fact sheets, Q&A, etc.)
- Begin annual needs-assessment sessions as part of the budgeting process between Communications and other departments to understand needs and identify opportunities.
- Train additional staff on issue/crisis communications to ensure back-up support during emergency situations.

Goal #4

BUILD THE CITY'S REPUTATION AS A DESIRABLE PLACE TO LIVE AND DO BUSINESS.

OBJECTIVE 4.0 Market the City of Castlegar.

Strategies

4.1 - RAISE AWARENESS BEYOND CASTLEGAR OF THE BUSINESS POTENTIAL AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN CASTLEGAR.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Review the Destination Castlegar Strategic Plan to determine if any area(s) require additional attention from the City of Castlegar.
- In partnership with the Castlegar & District Economic Development Committee, develop an Economic Development Strategic Plan, including a marketing and promotions plan.

4.2 - MAINTAIN POSITIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH INDUSTRY AND ECONOMIC LEADERS.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Maintain memberships in economic development or business-focused organizations.
- Have City representation at industry events.

Appendix

PROPOSED ACTIONS

TIMELINE

Goal #1

- | | | |
|------------|---|---|
| 1.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather data using a statistically valid approach to ensure the views of all citizens are represented. Realistically, this is the first and most important action in the plan. All actions should be tailored and delivered based on the information gathered as part of this process. | 2020 |
| 1.2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition Council Brief to Council Highlights which can be generated quickly, without a graphic designer, after Council meetings and posted/shared on the City's website and Facebook page. • Produce "Castlegar Connects" (similar to the former Council Brief) monthly and share in Castlegar News, Castlegar Source, City website and Facebook page, email and public locations as a poster. • Produce, print and distribute to all homes and businesses an annual newsletter highlighting the City's accomplishments and looking ahead to the next year. • Leverage utility bill distribution as way to share information. • Remain responsive to issues staff and Councillors are hearing in the community. • Create an organization-wide planning calendar to schedule communications and engagement campaigns, activities and events. • Add a calendar of events to the City's website. • Use a mix of communications tools for information sharing, including traditional, online and social. • Explore developing an e-newsletter. • Provide Public Information Office services during City emergencies. • Leverage partners to share the City's information. | 2020
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ongoing |
| 1.3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revitalize the City's brand by issuing an RFP to complete a brand consistency assessment, develop Brand Guidelines, including visual identity and style guides, what/how images are used, and a set of standardized templates for corporate and departmental purposes (news releases, advertisements - corporate, legal, HR, civic works, finance, etc. -, posters, briefing notes, fact sheets/background documents, project updates, Council Matters and key messages) and develop approval process. • Encourage co-branding with others who share the City's objectives. • Centralize all creation, review and approval of external documents to Communications Manager. • Provide orientation on brand guidelines for staff and consultants generating content for external audiences to ensure a consistent look, feel and voice for the City. | 2020
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2020 |

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PROPOSED ACTIONS

TIMELINE

Goal #1

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| 1.4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrate municipal government by humanizing the City and building trust by aligning services with staff that deliver them. Create a visual campaign that showcases City staff and their effect on the community. This also supports Goal #3. Host a community event aimed at showcasing municipal services and creating an opportunity to connect with City staff. | 2021

2020 |
| 1.5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop all materials for media and ensure they are invited to all City events. All staff and Council respond to media in a timely fashion. Monitor all media coverage of the City and issues relevant to Council and staff. | ongoing
ongoing
ongoing |
| 1.6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the communications policy. Update the social media policy. | 2020
2020 |

Goal #2

- | | | |
|------------|---|---|
| 2.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt the International Accreditation of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation. Share the Public Engagement & Participation Policy with the public and cross-reference all projects to ensure the engagement activities are in line. | 2020
2020 |
| 2.2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure public engagement is considered early in project planning, including adding an engagement section to staff reports and developing engagement plans for all major projects. Use both traditional and emerging techniques to best suit the situation. Provide training to staff and Councillors actively involved in engagement. Add a Public Engagement line item to all major projects or initiatives to ensure adequate resources are in place to meet the objectives outlined in the Public Engagement & Participation Policy and Guide. | ongoing

ongoing
ongoing
2020 |
| 2.3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather data on what issues residents want to engage on and how they would like to participate. Be “in the community” and set-up in public spaces. Do not expect people to come to us. Add a personal touch wherever possible. Work with partners to participate in events where participants will already be. Increase advance promotion of opportunities for the public to get involved and provide feedback; incentive participation. Communicate the purpose of the event, and how the engagement will be used to support decision making, on multiple platforms to build trust. Empower City staff to leverage existing relationships and contacts. | 2020
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Appendix

PROPOSED ACTIONS

TIMELINE

Goal #3

- | | | |
|------------|--|--|
| 3.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform employees of matters affecting them before informing the public. • Include communications updates at Department Head and staff meetings to review communications procedures and implement suggestions for improvement or new ideas. • Confirm the best way(s) to get employees important updates on City activities, new initiatives, new policies, hot topics, etc. • Use Council Highlights to keep staff in the loop. | <p>ongoing
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ongoing</p> |
| 3.2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek feedback from all employees on how the City can improve internal communications and engagement as part of annual performance reviews. • Involve staff in public engagement activities wherever possible. • Appoint City staff to informal information ambassador roles to share City messaging with the public seek out information and answers relating to projects they are interested in. • Host employee events at satellite locations. • Provide access to relevant information in satellite lunch rooms and lunch rooms of large employers in Castlegar. • Highlight staff in the City's marketing and promotions. • Host bi-annual information sessions for employees to ensure they are informed about the City's Strategic Plan and priorities, initiatives and upcoming activities and challenges. • Develop a Employee Recognition Plan to celebrate successes. | <p>ongoing
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| 3.3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer media training to anyone who may serve as a City spokesperson with the media. Celebrate the successes to establish confidence and credibility. • Develop key messages and supporting documents (backgrounders, fact sheets, Q&A, etc.) • Begin annual needs-assessment sessions as part of the budgeting process between Communications and other departments to understand needs and identify opportunities. • Train additional staff on issue/crisis communications to ensure back-up support during emergency situations. | <p>2020
ongoing
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2021</p> |

Appendix

PROPOSED ACTIONS

TIMELINE

Goal #4

- 4.1**
- Review the Destination Castlegar Strategic Plan to determine if any area(s) require additional attention from the City of Castlegar.
 - In partnership with the Castlegar & District Economic Development Committee, develop an Economic Development Strategic Plan, including a marketing and promotions plan.
- 4.3**
- Maintain memberships in economic development or business-focused organizations.
 - Have City representation at industry events.

2021

2021

ongoing

ongoing