



Lac La Biche County
welcoming by nature.

LAC LA BICHE COUNTY POLICY

TITLE: CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING	POLICY NO: CS-15-003
RESOLUTION: 18.1153	EFFECTIVE DATE: October 9, 2018
LEAD ROLE: COMMUNICATIONS	NEXT REVIEW DATE: October 9, 2022
SPECIAL NOTES/CROSS REFERENCE: Procedure CS-15-003	AMENDMENT DATE:

POLICY STATEMENT:

Lac La Biche County believes that corporate communications procedures must be effectively managed and responsive to a variety of information needs. New communications initiatives should address information gaps, support the County's goals, improve operations and add value to the organization.

"Original Signed"
Chief Administrative Officer

October 12, 2018
Date

"Original Signed"
Mayor

October 15, 2018
Date



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LAC LA BICHE COUNTY PROCEDURE

TITLE: CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

PROCEDURE NO: CS-15-003

SPECIAL NOTES/CROSS REFERENCE:
Policy CS-15-003

AMENDMENT DATE:

1. GENERAL GUIDELINES:

1. A communications plan for the County will be developed annually, and this effort will be led by the Communications department, in consultation with the Senior Management Team and other departments as necessary.
2. Communications plans will be developed in accordance with Schedule A of this Procedure, taking into account target audiences, current goals and objectives, and other considerations.
3. Communications plans are to be treated as living documents, with short and long-term tactics and flexibility to accommodate changes.

2. PROCEDURE:

1. The Communications department will develop annual communications plans for the organization by assessing communications needs and priorities and identifying opportunities for enhancement.
2. Schedule A of this Procedure will be a guiding document for the creation of communications plans. Any proposed changes to Schedule A, to reflect new goals and objectives or other amendments indicative of changes to the organization's approach to communications, will be presented to Council for approval.

“Original Signed”

Chief Administrative Officer

October 12, 2018

Date

Procedure CS-15-003 -- Schedule A

BACKGROUND

Lac La Biche County's first official Communications Plan was created in 2012. The intent was to develop a plan for the entire organization, to ensure communications procedures are well coordinated and meeting a variety of information needs. The Communications Plan has since been updated multiple times, but this overarching goal has not changed.

In previous years, revising the plan has been a matter of assessing the County's communications goals and strategies, and then adding, modifying or removing tactics based on the operational priorities of the day. In 2018, however, employees from all branches of County Administration were involved to better inform the revision process. An ad hoc committee of staff members identified current strengths and weaknesses, as well as information gaps and potential solutions. The result is a more modernized plan that better reflects today's communication needs.

Administration will continue to update the plan annually. The plan structure has been changed and simplified, for better tracking of different objectives. It also represents a "back to basics" approach that is strictly communications-focused, and omits items that are better suited to other plans and strategies.

While the Communications department has overall responsibility for the plan, implementing it and achieving desired outcomes requires an organization-wide effort. Communications will collaborate with multiple departments to ensure action items are being addressed.

This plan and its goals build from and support Lac La Biche County's vision, mission and policies.

Vision

Lac La Biche County is proud to be a diverse, healthy and safe community. Our citizens are engaged and enjoy enhanced social and recreational amenities. We are economically resilient as we continue to invest in top-quality infrastructure and services. We are environmental stewards who promote our natural assets, making Lac La Biche County the destination choice of northern Alberta.

Mission

Lac La Biche County is committed to building a region of excellence by delivering progressive, sustainable programs and services.

COMMUNICATION GUIDING PRINCIPLES

These guiding principles help to define the communications climate, and serve as a foundation for effective engagement with audiences.

We work together for a common purpose

We work in tandem and collaborate with partners to achieve a shared purpose of promoting and improving our community.

We see communication as an investment

We invest money, energy and support into communications resources and practices – and this investment generates positive results.

Our promotion is innovative and responsive

Promotion of Lac La Biche County's programs and services is flexible, meaningful and provides value to a wide range of audiences.

We respect diverse communication needs

We understand the importance of delivering effective and timely information to a diverse stakeholder base.

THE COUNTY'S COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

The Communications department works closely with all other departments to promote County programs and services, and share information about the municipality with the public and other stakeholders. The department provides:

- Professional communications counsel, planning, writing and editing resources
- Letters, speeches and other communications support for the Mayor and Council
- Website and social media tools
- Media relations services
- Research concerning stakeholder information needs and trends in information-sharing
- Professional graphic design for brochures, posters and other collateral materials
- External advertising, newsletters and reports
- Internal newsletter (*The Staffer*) and intranet website for employees
- Policy and procedure development for communications matters

TARGET AUDIENCES

Internal Audiences

County Council is composed of a Mayor and eight Councillors representing seven wards. County Administration has about 170 employees, about 20 per cent of whom do not have regular access to a computer during their workdays. The County also frequently hires consultants and contractors, many of whom need to communicate with the public and other stakeholders.

Residents

According to the 2016 municipal census, the total population of the County is 9,531, of which 8,544 are permanent residents and 987 are temporary residents. A number of people live on the Beaver Lake Cree Nation and Heart Lake First Nation reserves and the Kikino and Buffalo Lake Métis Settlements, but still receive information from the County.

Industry and Business

Many large industries operate within the County. Resource companies have a strong interest in the County's doings because of the impact the municipality can have on their employees and operations. A percentage of industrial workers do not live in the County full-time.

Business owners are very active in the County. They are collectively a major employer and can act as opinion leaders.

Temporary Residents (Shadow Population)

Hundreds of individuals work in the County for an extended period of time but live in hotels, work camps or other temporary accommodations. The 2016 municipal census counted 987 temporary residents, who may or may not receive information from the County during their stays here.

Media

Media outlets that directly serve Lac La Biche County are the weekly newspaper *Lac La Biche Post* and the radio stations Boom 103.5 FM and CHPL 92.1 FM. Media outlets based outside of the local area are also available, and they have accessed and shared information about the County in the past.

Digital media has become increasingly dominant. Many residents are active on social media, particularly Facebook.

Visitors and Seasonal Residents

The County is a popular place for visitors, primarily for outdoor recreation. Many people live in the County part-time or spend holidays and weekends at campgrounds, cottages, resorts and other places. Opportunities to expand their understanding and appreciation of the County, beyond their recreational experiences, should be explored.

Municipal, Provincial and Federal Governments

The County lobbies the provincial and federal governments on a regular basis, alone or together with other municipalities. The County has also worked collaboratively with neighbouring jurisdictions. It is important for positive relationships to be developed and maintained with these audiences, so they continue to be receptive to the County's messaging and opportunities for partnership.

Students and Educators

Portage College, Northern Lights Public Schools, Conseil Scolaire Centre-Est (East Central Francophone Education) and Lakeland Catholic Schools all operate in the County. A community's reputation is partially based on the strength of core services like education. Portage College, especially, is a draw for prospective residents.

Volunteers, Community Groups and Not-For-Profit Organizations

The County has a reputation for strong volunteer involvement, and the community is home to many groups like service clubs and societies. The County supports and works in conjunction with many of these groups, and their actions typically reflect positively on the municipality. Opportunities for joint venturing and partnership exist and may be explored.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

The following describes what Lac La Biche County aspires to achieve. These are ideals that the County continually works towards.

1. Lac La Biche County's image has improved. Staff members and residents are more positive about their municipal government and the community in which they live.

2. The majority of stakeholders believe Lac La Biche County is a well-managed organization. Residents are satisfied with the information they receive, feel they have adequate opportunities for input, and believe County employees are qualified and responsive to their needs.
3. The majority of people consider Lac La Biche County to be a progressive, productive, safe and environmentally sensitive municipality with strong community spirit. New residents acknowledge that favourable impressions of the County influenced their decisions to move here.
4. Lac La Biche County is a favourite destination for visitors and a community for choice for commercial, retail, housing and lifestyle investment. Its recreational attractions and experiences are accessible, appealing and well used by a wide variety of people.
5. Open, transparent and client-focused communications is embedded in Lac La Biche County's operations and management practices. Messaging, branding, protocols and policies are applied consistently across the organization.
6. Information and other resources are available to staff members to encourage excellence in customer service and communications. They feel informed, involved and supported as part of a team, and they coach, mentor and support one another. Employees take pride in their work, celebrate successes, and are proud to work for the County.

Achieving these desired outcomes takes time. There have been many positive accomplishments since the adoption of the first Communications Plan, but communication is an evolving process. Administration is of the opinion that there is always room for improvement, even beyond the point at which these desired outcomes could be said to have been achieved.

KEY MESSAGES

Key messages are the foundation for language to be used in communications with stakeholders. Each message supports the Communications Plan's desired outcomes, and action items are intended to keep these messages factual and relevant.

1. Customer service and communications are central to everything we do at Lac La Biche County.
2. Lac La Biche County is a beautiful, clean, safe place to live, learn, work, raise a family and retire.
3. Lac La Biche County is one of Alberta's top employers.
4. Lac La Biche County works hard to preserve and protect the natural environment.
5. Lac La Biche County is an honest and trustworthy municipality that provides high-quality programs and services. Its employees are knowledgeable, helpful and efficient.
6. Lac La Biche County is an excellent place to visit, with a wealth of recreational attractions, experiences and opportunities.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Communications Plan includes external and internal goals for the organization. In previous versions of the plan, these goals were used to generate strategies and tactics that were then assigned priority ratings based on urgency, budget implications and operational capacity.

EXTERNAL GOALS

- **Ensure communications initiatives support Lac La Biche County as a strong, well-managed organization.**
- **Position Lac La Biche County as one of Alberta's top employers.**
- **Become the community of choice in northeastern Alberta for prospective workers, residents, visitors and businesspeople.**
- **Develop and sustain an image of Lac La Biche County as a growing, progressive and productive community.**

INTERNAL GOALS

- **Ensure that internal communications are effective, well-supported and aligned with the organization's strategic plans and vision.**
- **Ensure that communications endeavours add value to the organization.**

While the above goals remain relevant, Administration has taken a different course in updating this plan for the current and future periods.

The difficulty with strategies has been that they are subject to interpretation and can lose value over time as communications priorities and tools change. In 2018, staff members worked with a consultant to identify specific areas of strength and improvement in communications, which resulted in the following objectives:

◆ EXTERNAL OBJECTIVES:

1. **Increase general awareness of County activities, programs and services.**
2. **Increase awareness and understanding of capital projects and construction work.**
3. **Provide more proactive, rather than reactive, information.**
4. **Improve the flow of information between the County and the public.**
5. **Boost public engagement, and mechanisms for handling public feedback.**
6. **Recognize and promote County assets and successes.**
7. **Increase awareness and promotion of the County as a tourism destination, and encourage visitors to spend more time in the community.**
8. **Provide current and relevant information that meets stakeholders' needs online, through websites and social media channels.**

◆ INTERNAL OBJECTIVES:

9. **Incorporate more strategic and long-term planning into communications.**
10. **Improve the flow of information and knowledge resources between employees, between departments and between different levels of the organization.**

- 11. Recognize employee and organizational achievements, which can be communicated externally if appropriate.**
- 12. Establish a culture of collaboration and teamwork, and link the importance of this to individual and organizational success.**

◆ **SHARED OBJECTIVES:**

- 13. Raise the visibility and transparency of decision-making, including the “why” and “how” aspects of decisions that are made.**
- 14. Increase understanding of the County’s goals, strategic direction and vision.**

These objectives are to be used to generate action items.