Town of Huntsville
Communications Strategy

2023 and Beyond
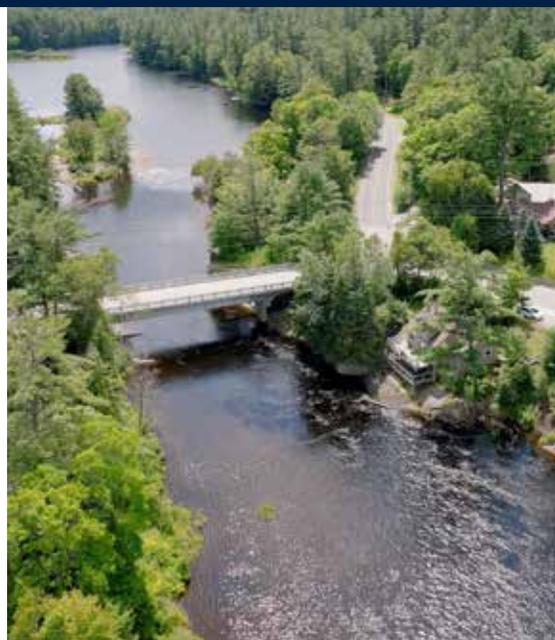
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Executive Summary

What is good communication?

Communications excellence occurs when organizations use communication to manage relationships with their diverse stakeholders to achieve mutual understanding, realize organizational goals, and serve the public interest.

What are effective municipal communications?

Effective communications teams are highly trusted and integrated within the municipality. Every department across the municipality should understand the importance of communications and when to engage with the department. Communicators are considered strategists, not simply tacticians. As such, they can respond quickly and with quality when issues arise, or advise when not to engage.

What do stakeholders need?

Often, residents only become engaged when a specific project or service affects them directly. When residents can find information easily, they have greater trust and confidence in their decision makers. Stakeholders are only able to engage with what they understand. Communications need to be written in plain language and supported through graphics to increase the public's understanding.

Huntsville's unique communication needs

As Huntsville continues to grow, there will be an increase in the public's expectation of services, changes to demographics and new opportunities to engage.

Vision and Mission
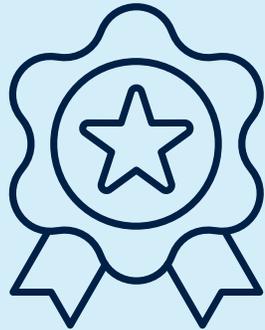
Vision

What is our north star?

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Town of Huntsville communications instill confidence and is the trusted source for municipal information.
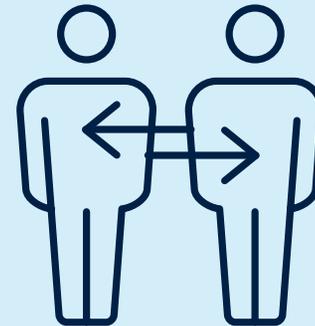
Mission

How are we going to do this?

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Communications are an integrated function of the organization equipped to provide relevant and accessible communications to engage and inform.

Communication Pillars

We will govern ourselves in the following ways:
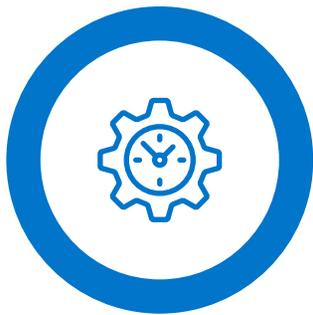
Timely

Relevant — proactive and responsive

Frequent — expedient and readily available

Transparent

Accessible — easy to find with inclusive language and graphics

Active Listening — acknowledge community impact

Strategic

Purposeful — reflective of desired outcomes and achieves a goal

Impactful — going to the right people

Accurate

Factual - facts first

Informed — we have the whole picture and communications are integrated

Communication Objectives

Our priorities for 2023 and beyond:

1

Proactive

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Communications is engaged proactively, creating a collaborative and cross functional culture aimed at informing the public and staff.

2

Stakeholder-First Approach

● ● ●

Prioritize and understand our target audience to produce impactfull communications that support strategic direction.

3

Innovation

● ● ●

Empowered to change and evolve to reflect industry practices and demands for services, supported through data and measurement.

Communication Objectives

1

Proactive

Communications is engaged proactively, creating a collaborative and cross functional culture aimed at informing the public and staff.

Actions

- Establish a point where communications is integrated into the formal planning processes, including establishing an internal communication process

- Provide training and education of communication strategic framework and develop materials and online resources

- Promote the subscriber function on the website and social media accounts as official sources of information

- Establish procedures and branded templates for easy-to-produce content for recurring corporate needs, events or issues

Communication Objectives

2

Stakeholder-First Approach

Prioritize and understand our audience to produce impactful communications that support strategic direction.

Actions

- Use imagery and graphics to help deliver key messages
- Simplify municipal language for public communication
- Diversify the engagement tools we utilize for more inclusive feedback
- Create engagement processes that cultivate relationships and provide a summary of the impact of the engagement

Communication Objectives

3

Innovation

Empowered to change and evolve to reflect industry practices and demands for services, supported through data and measurement.

Actions

- Integrate tracking and measurement into communication tactics for key learnings
- Better utilize website, digital, social and industry tools
- Stay up to date on industry practices through annual education
- Commit to resources for budget and staff tied to population and service growth

Sample Implementation Plan

1

Proactive

Communications is engaged proactively, creating a collaborative and cross functional culture aimed at informing the public and staff. A sample implementation plan is below.

Action	Deliverable	Lead	Expense	Year	Status
Establish a point where communications is integrated into formal planning processes	SLT to flag in the SLT Meeting special projects that have a communications need	SLT	-	Ongoing	
	Develop Standard Operating Procedure for special projects that require communications	MarComm	-	Ongoing	
Provide training and education of communication strategic framework and develop materials and online resources	Produce highly visual graphics to communicate the strategic framework (Vision Mission, Pillars)	MarComm	-	2023	
	Provide training to SLT and departments on strategic framework.	MarComm	-	2024	
	Create strategic framework resource repository on InnerCircle	MarComm	-	2024	
Promote the subscriber function on the website and social media accounts as official sources of information	Reevaluate news page and prominence of "Subscribe" function to increase visibility and awareness	MarComm	Status Quo Budget	2024	
	Leverage community influencers by developing shareable content to increase awareness of Town social media accounts and new page	MarComm	-	2024	
	Awareness campaign for news section of website and subscribe function	MarComm	Status Quo Budget	2024	
Establish procedures and branded templates for easy-to-produce content for recurring corporate needs, events or issues	Identify high volume recurring needs and build templates to address communication requirements (e.g. media release template for fire department)	MarComm	Status Quo Budget	2024	