

## Report CCR-CC-27-16

**To:** Warden Barfoot and Members of Grey County Council  
**From:** Kim Wingrove, Sharon Vokes and Heather Morrison  
**Meeting Date:** October 4, 2016  
**Subject:** **Adopting a Corporate Communication Strategy**  
**Status:**

### Recommendation(s)

**THAT Report CCR-CC-27-16 be received;**

**AND THAT the Corporate Communications Strategy, 2016 be endorsed;**

**AND THAT staff begin to implement the recommendations contained within the Strategy.**

### Background

Communication is a fundamental component of all that Grey County does and is embedded in almost every activity the County is involved in from attracting businesses to the area, to supporting people services such as long-term care and children's services to promoting our area as a four season tourism destination. It provides stakeholders, both internal and external with the knowledge of who Grey County is and what we do. It also provides a process for further engagement into county services and an opportunity to garner stakeholder support and consultation for those services.

In the 2016 budget approval was given to proceed with the hiring of a consultant to develop a corporate communications strategy for Grey County. The Letter M Marketing was hired through RFP in March 2016. The strategy will set the direction for both the County's internal and external communications as well as provide clear guidance for planning future communications with all stakeholders.

The strategy submitted is comprehensive and reflects 45 one-on-one meetings with council members, communications staff, local municipal staff, media, three focus group meetings with staff, stakeholders and the public along with an on-line public survey and

a review of best practices.

## Benefits of Effective Strategic Communications

As noted above, communication is a foundational component of everything Grey County provides. The consultant identified several benefits of effective strategic communications including:

- Strengthens relationships and collaboration between the County and municipalities
- Helps achieve strategic goals and increase efficiency
- Promotes engagement to support decision making
- Uses resources effectively and attracts and retains the best and brightest
- Corrects or eliminates misinformation
- Promotes transparency, clarity and consistency
- Builds resident and employee pride in Grey County

## Key Findings

Within the Strategy, the consultant identified several key findings and also links those findings back to the overall Corporate Strategy:

- **Disconnects**-at the staff, municipal and general public level due to inconsistent, lack of relevancy or understanding
- **Department Structure**-the current staffing and resource model doesn't allow it to function well
- **Efficient Operations**-using communication resources, both new and existing, effectively and efficiently
- **Engagement**-Council, staff and external stakeholders to engage and act as ambassadors for Grey County
- **Tactical Direction**-Development of resources to guide corporate communications

## Key Messages

The Strategy also provides some key messages that represent the values of Grey County as a whole and will support the County's overall strategic objectives.

- **The County of Grey effectively and efficiently delivers services that take care of everyone in the County**

- **The County of Grey will communicate critical and core service information to all key audiences**
- **Readily-accessible information and citizen engagement will be of critical focus for Grey County communications efforts to ensure an informed and engaged community**
- **Grey County communications will support and enhance the efforts of County staff to deliver services that take care of the County**

## Guidelines for Effective Communication Strategies

The Strategy provides for some guidelines in order to maximize communication activities within Grey County.

- Make engagement, feedback and enquiries as easy and efficient as possible
- Focus on timely communications
- Communicate in layers
- Make roles clear
- Emphasize electronic communications while retaining traditional tactics
- Build strong community channels with key partners and influencers
- Promote a brand voice/identity that supports how the County wants to come across in communications
- Ensure sustained, strategic and proactive communications through realistic and thorough planning
- Demonstrate appreciation of citizen and staff engagement, and the value of it, through updates
- Endeavour to eliminate heavy, formal wording in favour of plain language and strong visuals
- Emphasize internal-first to foster culture of communications.

## Implementation

It is expected, should Council endorse the Strategy, that Communications become its own department reporting to the CAO. Through the implementation of the action items contained within the Strategy, communications staff will provide more services to the stakeholder groups in a more proactive and engaged manner including providing a consistent image, voice and graphic look, greater awareness of County services, having County Council and staff better informed of county services, increased presence with the media and the promotion of the County brand that attracts and engages audiences. The Strategy contains some recommendations within each audience group and actions on how to achieve the goals outlined.

## Financial/Staffing/Legal/Information Technology Considerations

The Strategy recommends that Communications become a department under the leadership of the CAO as well as the immediate hiring of a manager to lead the department in its implementation of the Strategy. These funds have been included in the draft 2017 budget. The Strategy also recommends a graphic designer and digital specialist, which could be combined into one position, at least in the interim, to oversee the graphic needs and website and social media management portfolios.

## Link to Strategic Goals/Priorities

The Corporate Communication Strategy compliments the Corporate Strategic Plan as communications is interwoven in everything the County does. The Strategy will assist in communicating the opportunities in Grey County to assist with Expanding the Prosperity Base (goal 1). It also supports connecting with others inside and outside of Grey County to achieve strong collaboration with all stakeholders as well as ensuring the community is well informed and engaged (goals 4 and 5).

There is a very strong component within the Strategy about taking care of the County. The implementation of full communication services allows staff to focus on their delivery of services to our citizens (goals 2 and 6). Communication staff will work with tourism and economic development staff to continue to explore new opportunities to leverage Grey County as a four-season destination for residents and visitors (goal 3).

Respectfully submitted by,

Kim Wingrove, CAO  
Sharon Vokes Clerk/Director of Council Services  
Heather Morrison, Deputy Clerk

Attachment:

Grey County Communication Strategy