



Grey County

Communications Strategy 2016-2019

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Executive Summary

The **Grey County Strategic Plan** sets out clear and targeted goals and actions for ensuring it is strong and steady and future ready. At the core of these – improved collaboration, promotion of initiatives, demonstrating leadership, community engagement – is the need for strong communication. It is the goal of this Communications Strategy to support the County in increasing awareness of County services, programs and their value; key to this will be a focus on delivering relevant, fulsome and impactful information and engaging and collaborating with municipalities, residents and stakeholders in organizational decisions.

This Strategy does not include the activities of the Tourism department or Grey Roots service as these operations have separate communications plans already in place, with different target audiences and messaging.

Why a Strategy?

It is the intent of a municipal communications department to lead staff in the delivery of clear, correct and timely information to other staff, community members and other key stakeholders to the end benefit of citizens. This three-year Strategy identifies specific goals, strategies and tactics to enable the greatest success for Grey County as it dedicates greater focus and new resources into the planning, implementation and sustaining of strategic communications both internally and externally.

Our Process

The research and stakeholder engagement portions of this Strategy's development were significant and comprehensive. These included:

1. Client meetings/liaison
2. Media review
3. Materials review of more than 32 different pieces of literature and materials provided by the County
4. Website (previous version) and social media channel reviews
5. Five best practice interviews (counties of Dufferin, Oxford, Simcoe, Huron and the City of Guelph)
6. 45 one-on-one interviews that included the Warden, Mayors and Deputy Mayors, Grey directors, managers, tourism specialists, Clerk and select staff, municipal CAOs/clerks and communications personnel, and media
7. Three staff, external partner/stakeholder and public focus groups
8. Online public survey (558 responses)

Key Findings

Research and engagement found that the County's communications activity is suffering from a diminished presence both internally and externally, low success in consistently reaching and engaging with audiences, and from limited measurable results in communicating key information. Indeed, the County's services – versus those of the municipalities – are often misunderstood by audiences – including County staff.

1. **Department Structure:** The current staffing and resourcing of the Communications Department do not allow it to function as a dependable and forward-thinking strategic advisor, or able tactical developer. Communications can only offer *limited* support to critical County departments. In addition, the hierarchical placement of Communications – under the Clerk's office – prevents it from being optimally placed for strategic and quick response and planning.
2. **Staff Disconnect:** There is limited or inconsistent communications effort to/from County staff within the broader Grey County corporation. This carries the danger of uninformed, unengaged and "culturally" disconnected staff.

3. **Municipal Disconnect:** There are many instances of effective collaboration between municipalities and the County, but these are sporadic/isolated. There is limited interest amongst municipalities in broader information exchanges with the County due to a lack of perceived value or relevance. There also exists a range of communication focus amongst municipalities – for some it is a key strategy and others a lesser element of operations.
4. **Public Understanding:** There is currently a low awareness and understanding of the services provided by the County versus those provided by a municipality. The nature of County services means that the real “value” of them is often hard for citizens to see/quantify: they are often more service-oriented, such as road maintenance and broadband connection, rather than direct operational such as the garbage pick-up or library resources provided by municipalities.
5. **Efficient Operations:** Even with additional staff and/or resources, requirements of the Communications Department will be significant. Tactical and strategic efforts must utilize existing resources firstly, and additional requirements must be smart, efficient and highly-relevant.
6. **Council Engagement:** Grey County Council members are not consistently provided with the information, messaging and resources that would allow them to serve as key communicators in their broader municipalities. What is presented is often excessive, formal and term-laden, which is not conducive to easy and effective communication to the public. In addition, greater effort needs to be made to inculcate Councillors on the importance and value of communications.
7. **External Engagement:** It is often difficult for the public to find additional information on specific services or to connect with the appropriate County personnel. When information is presented, it is often heavy/excessive and written in a formal/corporate way that is difficult to interpret and share. In addition, there is not always ample time or a diverse number of ways for residents to engage on an issue of note for them.
8. **Information Source:** Most citizens know of the existence of a “two-tier system” (although ‘who provides what’ is still unclear to many), it is of little consequence to them from whom they receive information.
9. **Tactical Direction:** Currently, there are no formalized policies, guidelines, resources and responsibilities guiding communications in Grey County. Efforts are individualized, ad hoc. Smart, strategic materials, the revitalization of existing tools and tactics, and overarching and consistent guidelines will make better use of resources and staff time.

This Strategy includes broad-reaching recommendations to restructure the County’s communications, apply sound strategic direction to efforts and integrate new, or hone existing, tactics that will allow the County to progress towards effective and engaging communications. It tackles communications at every level, addressing Council needs, senior management, County staff, municipal contacts, partners and channels, and residents. And at its core, the Strategy anticipates a carefully-implemented and monitored tactical strategy overseen by a Manager and dedicated, centralized Communications Department staff, supported by the enthusiasm of County departments and staff.

RIGHT NOW

Strong and **appealing brand** • **Vested public** open to embracing efforts • **High-quality work from Communications** • Dedicated and **committed staff** • Commitment to communications from **top-down** • Number of media and community **outreach opportunities** • Trusted and respected County **Councillors** • Exceptional commitment to accessibility/ **inclusiveness** • Communications may be handled by **staff who lack the necessary skills/knowledge** • **Low presence** amongst many audiences • Feeling of **disconnection** by satellite staff • **Uncertainty** on service ownership (County or municipality) • Multiple unique **municipal identities and needs** • **Lack of concerted engagement** with municipalities • Lack of **internal collaboration** on communications • **Fragmented** communications • Dense and **text-heavy** communications • **Reactive** rather than proactive • **One-person communications team** only • Communications **operates under Clerk** • **Lack of strong support** of County by external audiences

NEXT STEPS VIA PLAN

A strong and **centralized communications team** • Targeted **communications strategies** for both Council and County staff • A consistent and energetic **brand** • Defined roles and **responsibilities** • **Defined audiences** targeted using the most effective tactics for their needs • **Formalized** channels • Established **internal-first** policy • **Finding and sharing** of good-news nuggets • **Convenient and robust** guidelines, tools, templates and ideas • Focus on **team effort** with roles for staff, partners and key audiences • Exploration and embracing of opportunities to reach out and connect with audiences **one-on-one** • Focused strategy to communicate **County services** • **Revitalizing existing** resources • Stronger emphasis on **low-cost electronic tactics** • Targeted **media policy and outreach** strategy • Fulsome and tight **social media strategy**

EXPECTED RESULTS / GOALS

Staff spend **less time on communications** and more on service • There is a greater **level of readiness/preparedness** • Staff supported by a **sufficiently-resourced** communications department • Audiences are quickly and **easily able to find information** • Stronger **municipal relationships** • Communications are **proactive** • Communications have a **positive and successful** impact • **Consistent** image, voice and graphic look • **Greater awareness** of County services • Council and County staff are **better informed** on services • Increased **staff integration** and morale • **Fluid** and **frequent** communications • **Increased presence** in municipalities and media • Increased likelihood of key audiences **engaging** • Audiences feel their **input is valued** • A **friendly brand** that attracts and engages

Imperative for Structured Communications

A Communications Strategy directs how various communications and community engagements are developed and dispersed by Grey County. It sets key communication priorities and overall messaging, defines target audiences, outlines roles and resources, frames internal and external tactics, and establishes media protocols. It is a living document – meant to be fluid as needs and opportunities arise, and to be reviewed and built upon every three to five years as strategic priorities develop.

Effective communications will help the County meet four critical strategic objectives:

1. Expanding the prosperity base

- a. Support and enhance outreach and promotion of the County as investment-ready AND a preferred tourism destination
- b. Attract visitors, residents and investors through a strong, appealing and friendly community brand
- c. Foster community pride through promotion of the efforts and successes of County citizens and businesses

2. Making connections

- a. Strong local partnerships
- b. Internal efficiencies through connection and collaboration with municipalities
- c. Culture of communications with increased staff morale, attraction and retention
- d. Enhanced issues management, preparedness and smart, strategic messaging for consistent, measured response

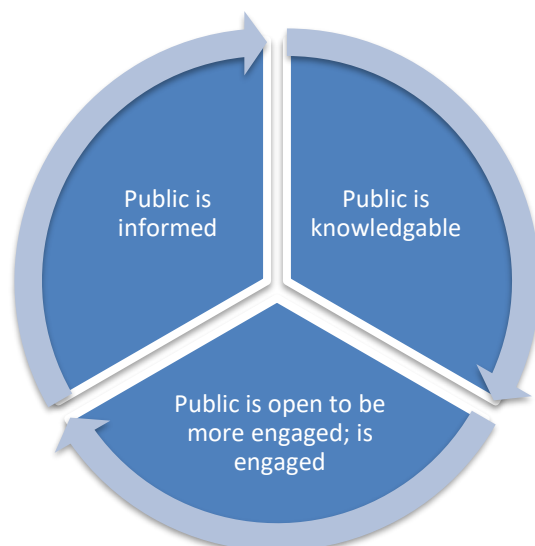
3. Listening and working together

- a. Clarity and understanding on County services, programs and value
- b. Collaborative, evidence-based decision-making
- c. Innovation in outreach and citizen engagement

4. Achieving excellence in governance and service

- a. Alignment and integration of strategic priorities
- b. Operational efficiency
- c. Citizen-centred service delivery

Why Engage?



The following two pages elaborate on 17 benefits of effective strategic communications:

1. **Strengthens relationships and collaboration between the County and municipalities:** Targeted and increased information exchange between the County and its municipalities builds stronger relationships. There is greater understanding of services and information, heightened trust, increased respect and a desire for collaboration. The end benefit is the positive, proactive, relevant and fruitful exchange of information between the County and municipalities and vice versa, as well as potential for a combination of resources for a reduction in resources and cost.
2. **Helps achieve strategic goals:** Communications are at the centre of an engaged, collaborative and connected County. Whether the County's corporate strategic goal is a targeted multi-media strategy to promote Grey for new Canadians or collaborate with the public, stakeholders, and other governments to improve delivery of County services, a Communications Strategy provides for smart, structured and inclusive communications that further the chance of success and allow for the greatest return on investment.
3. **Allows for strategic and inclusive dispersal:** The right information is sent to the correct audiences in the manner that is most likely to produce a favourable response. This is ensured by the upfront engagement – made directly with the intended audiences – that informed the Strategy's development.
4. **Promotes engagement to support evidence-based decision-making:** Audiences that are informed and aware of developments and opportunities in the County are more likely to support and contribute to their success and encourage others to do the same. In turn, their engagement provides opportunity for Council and staff to identify their needs or concerns, which allows for early identification of issues, and drives future planning for programs and initiatives.
5. **Uses resources effectively:** The defined and planned efforts of a Strategy ensure staff are not engaging in communication activity that is unnecessary, ineffective, a doubling-up of effort, or requires resources that are already available or can be reallocated.
6. **Correct or eliminate misinformation:** Controlled and structured communications ensure that only those charged with the responsibility of communicating are involved, that messaging is consistent, and incorrect information is identified and addressed.
7. **Promotes transparency:** Frequent and clear communications support a focus on accountability and transparency, which can lead to increased trust, more positive receipt of information amongst key audiences and an increased desire by audiences to engage, lead or consider political service.
8. **Promotes clarity and consistency:** Standardized communications set best practice examples for every staff member, leading to consistent communications – sharing a common structure, look and voice – that help to reduce confusion or missed information amongst audiences.
9. **Increases morale:** Staff or external audiences that don't feel included can feel frustrated and left out. This leads to disengagement and dissatisfaction. Having a plan that includes them and their needs – that seeks their input – is crucial to limit these issues.

10. **Attracts and retains the best and brightest:** A focused Strategy promotes the image of the County as a successful, open, engaging and welcoming place that attracts not only visitors and residents, but also progressive businesses and driven, accomplished staff.
11. **Increases efficiency:** Having everyone on the same page helps ensure a project realizes success. In addition, structured communications – whether for routine needs or for a critical issue – ensure County and municipality staff spend more time delivering services than communicating about them.
12. **Minimizes unnecessary customer service:** Effective communications provides clear, relevant and timely information that not only saves the public’s need to call or visit the main administration building for information, but can reduce the time spent by Council and frontline staff to answer general inquiries – freeing them up for more fulsome public interaction.
13. **Builds resident pride in being part of Grey County:** A government that reaches out, stakeholders who share and contribute, and partners that are engaged together build a stronger sense of community and project a greater sense of pride in their collective achievements.
14. **Strengthens partnerships:** A Strategy defines, helps establish and grows strong communication channels and partnerships within the County and amongst the County and its member municipalities. This ensures effective community connections, enabling further opportunities and alignment with strategic goals, which benefits both the County, its municipalities and partners, and the community at large.
15. **Strengthens effectiveness in times of crisis:** Having structured communications in place, supported by a Strategy and tactics such as an enhanced web presence or strengthened partner channels, better ensures the County is prepared to reach key audiences quickly and effectively in times of need.
16. **Allows for measurement:** Formalizing communication efforts means outreach is strategically planned, implemented and measured. This allows for more effective evaluation of effort versus desired outcome to establish success measures, bring precision to future activities and to support positive public perception.
17. **Creates a brand experience:** When all public engagement and communications are aligned with a common identity, voice and personality, it leads to a more fulfilling brand experience resulting in greater stakeholder confidence and enthusiasm – promoting a united and resilient community to prospective visitors, investors and partners.

Goals and Objectives

Communications Department

1. Provide strategic communications and support to the Council, County and its departments that aids in the timely and effective provision of information to its member municipalities and citizens about County programs, services and initiatives (i.e. Green in Grey or Recolour Grey).
2. More widely incorporate new technology tactics, alongside various traditional tactics, to ensure greater and easier access, and broader, more economical delivery.
3. Ensure continued use of more “traditional” media, at least for the duration of this strategy’s three-year span, to address a higher median age of 48 (Ontario: 41.3).
4. Forge stronger and collaborative exchanges with municipalities, providing advice and support as requested.
5. Achieve consistency in identity and voice in communications.
6. Provide consistent, clear, accurate and high-quality messaging that reflects corporate goals and objectives.
7. Ensure a respectful tone and manner that encourages collaboration and the open exchange of ideas.

Internal

1. County corporate and departmental communications are supported by a sufficiently-resourced and skills-based Communications Department.
2. Department staff spend less time creating and addressing communications and more on delivering services.
3. Staff and municipalities seek out, and are confident in, the abilities, skills and guidance of the Communications Department.
4. Staff understand and utilize communication tools that allow them to operate more efficiently.
5. Staff respond to citizens with the information that they want.
6. Staff anticipate and deliver a timely and informed response on questions and issues.
7. Staff and Council awareness about what is happening in the County more broadly is increased.
8. Organizational goals are achieved through greater engagement and corresponding results.
9. Employees at satellite locations feel connected to the “Corporation”.
10. A tone and manner is developed and embraced by all staff that encourages collaboration and the open exchange of ideas – a “culture of communications”.

External

1. An involved community that is interested and engaged in the workings of its government.
2. Citizens and other key stakeholders feel informed about County services and operations.
3. There is clear understanding on what is a County or municipal service and where to access information.
4. Citizens and other key stakeholders feel they have a voice – and directly affect – key decisions.
5. Awareness of County priorities – and the public’s role in them – is more widely understood.
6. Stakeholder relationships are improved.
7. There are strong, proactive relationships with media.
8. The County’s image – both in the community and outside – is positively boosted.

A. COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Overarching Guidelines

The following overarching strategic directions are intended to guide all specific communication activities in the realization of the above Goals and Objectives:

1. Make engagement, feedback and enquiries as easy and efficient as possible.

Make it easy for the community to find information on their own, engage with staff if necessary or preferred, and share information easily by always providing clear call-to-actions, direct phone and email contact(s) and increased customer service levels. Clearly identify additional resources, community contacts and satellite locations to access information or staff directly.

2. Focus on timely communications.

Engagement, open houses, surveys and the like are rendered ineffective if audiences are not provided with ample awareness and opportunity to partake in these opportunities. Ensure set standards, practices and requirements are developed for all community engagement efforts and are uniformly applied across the organization.

3. Communicate in 'layers'.

Provide layers of content – from brief Facebook posts and media advisories, to online access of a fulsome brief, and yet further access to background details, reports and the like. Allow more for audiences to control their communications and engagement – this eliminates the possibility of inundating, oversharing or assuming audiences don't *want* information, while providing for them to access or engage as their individual preferences direct. It also supports strong tracking and measurement as clicks can be made quantifiable.

4. Make roles clear.

It is critical that it always be made clear what level of government is responsible for what service in order to limit frustration or misunderstanding. Clearly identify ownership (County or municipality) and provide a strong call to action, direct web link, or staff email address or phone number for additional inquiries (done to great effect on the website). This will be supported by developing, promoting and referencing an overarching "overview" of roles that details the responsibility of the Communications Department, Directors/Managers/Supervisors, staff/departments, County Council and municipalities in communications.

5. Emphasize electronic communications while retaining traditional tactics.

Public survey participants spoke clearly – interest in online communications is growing. Actively pursue new and innovative ways to reach stakeholders virtually: through use of sophisticated email/newsletter technology, social media channels, videos, blog platforms and smartphone apps. Given the strong number of satellite locations and staff that operate outside of an office environment, reliance on electronic communications (email, social media, SMS) is essential as well as economical.

Note: a commitment to more traditional forms of communications such as mailings and radio will still need to continue, as will a commitment to making these tools accessible.

6. Build strong community channels with key partners and influencers.

Make community and municipal outreach a core component of a more heavily-resource Communications Department in order to increase collaborative opportunities that will ensure more robust, comprehensive

planning. Establish communication and conversation relationships with academic institutions, cultural centres, businesses, arts groups and multicultural organizations. Explore unique communication arrangements with each to provide their stakeholders with timely, useful information that is relevant to them.

7. Promote a brand voice/identity that supports how the County wants to come across in communications.

Currently inconsistently applied, there is opportunity to more fulsomely adopt a welcoming, collaborative (“we”) and “charming” personality in communications to engage and entice internal and external audiences. It can be fun and playful, so long as it is also honest and respectful.

It is recommended, outside of instances where the full legal name is mandated, that the term “Grey County” be used in place of “County of Grey” in all communications, both internally and externally. It is a warmer and more approachable term and supports the more welcoming personality recommended above.

The Grey County brand voice can be reinforced – and indeed strengthened – by a promissory statement such as “Taking care of the county” and each communication identifying how the service provides care. This is different than the tagline attached to the brand (“Colour It Your Way”) – it is a cultural theme, a corporate operations promise. It is the experience expected of County services, not a County brand.

8. Ensure sustained, strategic and proactive communications through realistic and thorough planning.

Identify ongoing communications as a key responsibility for everyone involved on a program or campaign, and for each define ‘what you can do’. The County has a number of creative programming personnel whose superior skills and insights should be sought in the developmental stages of key programs.

There is also a tendency for communications to be – or be perceived as – reactive. A greater focus on issues management planning throughout departments, will minimize surprises and ensure that County staff can stay ahead of communication needs and to address potential conflicts.

9. Demonstrate appreciation of citizen and staff engagement, and the value of it, through updates.

A focus on follow-up through continued engagement, reporting and updates must be the cornerstone of communications – how is input being incorporated? What is the status of Recolour Grey? What’s next? Where can I find out more information? Audiences who are informed and involved in an authentic way are more likely to tell others and are generally more embracing of decisions. Staff are more likely to collaborate and share when communications support and promote what they have accomplished.

10. Endeavour to eliminate heavy, formal, superlative copy in favour of plain language and strong visuals.

Visual will catch attention and get recipients looking, is preferred by most stakeholder groups and is more memorable. Reduce copy-heavy communications in favour of visuals that make a more personal connection include internal documents, such as Council reports, in this focus. Embrace video more strongly as well as infographics and a professional, community-based image library.

11. Emphasize internal-first to foster a culture of communications.

Ensure County staff are made aware of issues and new information first. Often serving as the first point of contact for citizens, they can serve as brand ambassadors, delivering correct, knowledgeable and helpful support. Conversely, if staff are not informed, or ill-informed, this can demonstrate to audiences a lack of cohesion, poor operational effectiveness and low staff engagement.

Key Messages

These key messages represent the unique values that Grey County's communication efforts will realize. These key messages should remain strong areas of focus and improvement to help support the County's strategic objectives of "expanding the prosperity base" (goal 1), "making connections" (goal 4), "listening and working together" (goal 5) and "achieving excellence in governance and service" (goal 6).

1. Grey County effectively and efficiently delivers services that take care of everyone in the county.

1. Grey County, through strong collaboration with member municipalities, delivers fulsome services that support a high quality of life for our citizens.
2. The County is made up of nine distinctive municipalities that each have a voice in and influence over County-wide decisions.
3. The County is guided by a strong and engaged Council that is representative of the individual needs, personalities and make-ups of our municipalities.

2. Grey County will communicate critical and core service information to all key audiences.

1. We will deliver clear and informative information on County programs and services, and plainly and effectively distinguish between County and municipal services.
2. We will accommodate the varied communication needs and preferences of our citizens by using a blend of traditional and new technology methods for communications.
3. We will be open and transparent through proactive and frequent communications.

3. Readily-accessible information and citizen engagement will be of critical focus for Grey County communications efforts to ensure an informed and engage community.

1. We will ensure information on County services is readily available, easy to access through a number of channels, fulsome and easy to understand.
2. We will provide correct and accurate information, and clearly communicate where more details and ongoing updates can be found.
3. We will ensure strong, proactive and comprehensive communications and interaction with county organizations, associations, business and other key partners for effective information exchange.

and

4. Grey County communications will support and enhance the efforts of County staff to deliver services that take care of the county.

1. We will deliver strategic planning and guidance, as well as the full range of communications services, in order to allow County staff to focus on service delivery to our citizens.
2. We will inform and update staff on County programs and services to ensure they can serve as informed ambassadors to the community.
3. We will focus on proactive, fulsome planning with staff to ensure engagement efforts and information reach citizens in a timely and effective manner.

Audiences and Roles

Given the significant number of audiences and the perceived overlap in general needs and audience overviews, audiences have been grouped into similar “categories” with shared communication objectives and engagement recommendations. Persona identification pulls from best practices findings from The Letter M’s considerable outreach in the private/public sectors and feedback garnered during the focus groups and survey. This matrix will serve to guide the development of materials (content) and their distribution to audiences. Greater detail on the proposed tactical recommendations begin on page 29.

County Communications Department:

Role
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Leadership: Departments with strong communications knowledge and capability; ensure best practices standards are adhered to2. Support: County departments with dedicated communications staff in-house (Grey Roots and Tourism)3. Support: Municipalities on strategic planning and issues management4. Dedicated liaison: Departments requiring fulsome assistance5. Source: County Council for messaging, updates and resources6. Strategic communication planning: All departments; key message drafting7. Public relations: Media relations/releases, monitoring, speech writing8. Electronic and visual communications: Social media management and monitoring, videos, Grey’p Vine, photography9. Emergency, issues and crisis communications: Releases/broadcasts, media/social media, publications, internal communications10. Graphic design services: Materials or outsourcing to preapproved vendors as required; creation of overarching templates (letters, posters, etc.) as well as creation, review and update of toolkit11. Event and community outreach planning: Internal and external in collaboration with depts.12. Advertising buys/marketing: For promotion of corporate initiatives13. Printing: Liaise with external, preapproved vendors to facilitate large-scale or professional printing; provide printers with identity standards regarding printing14. Website: Content updates15. Social media: Guide and populate approved social media feeds; establish policy; oversee broader social media channels16. Brand management: Corporate branding and style standards; policing usage; brand merchandise17. Accessibility (AODA)18. Coaching/training: As relates to communications such as media training, Grey’p Vine, template usage, social media or design guidelines, etc.) and provide one-on-one training for key staff as necessary on particular areas

Audience Group	Overview	Tactical Recommendations
Grey County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Spokesperson in their municipality; focus remains more strong on this role – Need clear and concise information and messaging – General understanding of County services; significant knowledge on some key areas – Governance and/or leadership role – Expect thorough analysis – Cost-benefit focused – May serve on other bodies (channel/ambassador) – Focused on citizen satisfaction – May be skeptical/cautious about County comms. – Often first point of contact for citizens, media and partners – Busy: rely on easiest form of communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Council update (from Comms. Dept.) – Report template (updated) – Council communications presentation; include issues mgmt. – Website – Media – Annual communications progress report – Candidates presentation (updated) – Media relations training – Social media training – CAO update (include in mailing) – Staff newsletter (include in mailing) – Grey’p Vine
Role		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seek support: Liaise with Communications to seek support with messaging 2. Be a brand ambassador: Support and promote the Grey brand 3. Be a key communicator: Provide Communications with personal and community feedback 4. Municipal citizen liaison: Serve as general contact for those requesting information on an issue, service or program 5. Monitor: Track public discourse/issues and liaise with County staff to collaborate/plan response 6. Provide support: Ensure awareness/understanding of key County communications to allow for accurate representation to constituents 7. Social media: Forward on/share/comment on County communications 8. Keep up-to-date: On communications processes/tools and take advantage of County training opportunities 		
Audience Group	Overview	Tactical Recommendations
Staff (includes volunteers) (individual and department/ location-based such as Finance, Grey Gables, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Focused on service delivery; pride in work – May be skeptical/cautious about comms. – May feel disconnected, separate or distinct from County services – Possible comms. “ownership” issues – Often first point of contact for citizens – Not guaranteed access to device (email) – Limited time to invest specifically on comms. – Busy: rely on easiest form of communication – Significant knowledge of department; limited on broader services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Grey’p Vine – Staff meetings – CAO update – Staff newsletter – Events (rotating locations) – Training (comms., brand, etc.) – Website – Social media – Award program – Campaign (brand awareness)

Role		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seek support: Liaise with Communications to seek support with messaging, tactics and roll-out 2. Strategize: Meet with Communications and provide dedicated resources to yearly departmental planning to ensure strategic and proactive communications 3. Municipal collaborator: In cases where cross-promotion or other service combination with municipalities is necessary or advised, serve as key liaison as appropriate 4. Printing: Coordinate in-house where possible or liaise with Communications to facilitate large-scale or professional printing 5. Support: Assist Communication by directing County staff to, or providing the information, relevant to your department/service as needed 6. Be a key communicator: Provide Communications with news, facts, information, etc. that allows the department to ably communicate, or to assist you in communicating, information 7. Community liaison: Serve as general contact for those requesting information on an issue, service or program that falls under your responsibility 8. Monitor: Track public discourse/issues and liaise with managers/senior staff to collaborate/plan response 9. Social media: Guide and populate external social media (only those staff who are pre-approved to do so); monitor feeds/pages; follow established guidelines for posting; follow and support County social media 10. Media contact: Serve as contact, following Communications approval, in select circumstances 11. Feedback: Provide ongoing feedback to Communications 12. Partner liaison: Serve as contact for external partners in situations where a relationship has been established or when it makes communications most expedient; rely on Communications for messaging and materials to support the relationship. Set yearly or bi-yearly meetings with partners to ensure an open, collaborative relationship 13. Keep up-to-date: On communications processes/tools and take advantage of Communications training opportunities 		
Audience Group	Overview	Tactical Recommendations
Member Municipalities (key communicator such as Clerk, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Municipality-focused mindset – Busy: rely on minimalist; easiest form of communication – Interested in resources/tools that reduce their time spent on comms. – Limited time to invest in collaboration, updates, etc. – Generally unconcerned unless issue affects them; citizens – General understanding of County services; general feeling of disconnect/separation from County – Focused on citizen satisfaction – May be skeptical/cautious about County comms. – Often first point of contact for citizens – Varying levels of communications knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Council update (from Comms. Dept.) – Bi-weekly summary – One-on-one engagement – Website – Speaker series – Campaign (Know Your County) – CAO update (include in mailing) – Communications Working Group

Role		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support: Liaise and partner with County communications on key services and programs of mutual note 2. Engage: Engage with and seek the input of County on issues management if/when necessary 3. Dedicated liaison: Serve as municipal liaison (supporting Mayor and CAO) to County 4. Source: Provide County communications with information, updates and news of note 5. Channel: Serve as key disseminator of County news of note/relevance in municipality 6. Emergency, issues and crisis communications: Releases/broadcasts, media/social media, publications, internal communications 7. Event and community outreach planning: Internal and external in collaboration with County communications 8. Website: Where website is managed by Grey County, provide content updates 9. Brand management: Properly and consistently apply Grey corporate branding and style standards 		
Audience Group	Overview	Tactical Recommendations
Residents – Permanent (general public, tenants, youth, etc.) Interest/advocacy groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Property-possessive; wary of interference – Prefer mix of electronic and traditional, but with growing preference for electronic – Lack of connection to/understanding of County – Greater interest in service information, but still high interest in planning/budget – May be leery of “government” – Generally unconcerned unless issue affects them; then vocal advocates – Limited time to invest in engagement; limited interest – Community advocates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Website/videos/app – Social media – Media/advertising – Enewsletter – Preferred channels/partners – Campaigns (brand, planning, etc.) – In-facility screens/message boards – Mobile County events and meetings – Community events – Surveys – Year in Review
Role		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide support: Act as a conduit for County messaging 2. Be a key communicator: Engage with and provide insights and feedback to County staff; share County communications more broadly in community 3. Social media: Forward on/share/comment on County communications 4. Keep up-to-date: Source and request information on County services/programs of interest (may also serve ambassadorial role) 5. Extend reach: Connect with hard-to-reach members of the community 6. Be a brand ambassador: Support and promote the Grey brand 		

Audience Group	Overview	Tactical Recommendations
First Nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Appreciate/desire greater one-on-one engagement and personal invitations – Property-possessive; wary of interference – Lack of connection to/understanding of County – May be leery of “government” and issues communications – Generally unconcerned unless issue affects them; then vocal advocates – Community advocates – Greater “niche” culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – One-on-one engagement at events – Website/videos/app – Preferred channels/partners – Social media – Media/advertising – Enewsletter – Campaigns (brand, planning, etc.) – Surveys – Year in Review
Role		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide support: Act as a conduit for County messaging 2. Be a key communicator: Engage with and provide insights and feedback to County staff; share County communications within broader First Nations community 3. Provide a voice: Ensure First Nations engagement is a critical component of communications and outreach efforts 4. Keep up-to-date: Source and request information on County services/programs of interest 		
Audience Group	Overview	Tactical Recommendations
Residents – Seasonal Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Majority of their interaction will likely be online – Lack of connection to/understanding of County – Limited interest in broader communications and County brand – More susceptible to “marketing” messaging – Generally unconcerned with most County services/engagement outside of direct personal needs – Busy; interested in short/succinct information – Limited interest in community engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Website/videos/app – Social media – In-facility screens/message boards – Media/advertising – Speaker series – Enewsletter – Community events
Role		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limited support: No direct role in communication of County services and messaging; act as high-level conduit for County messaging 2. Communicator: May provide insights and feedback on services and projects 3. External reach: May forward on key information to regions outside of the County 4. Social media: Forward on/share/comment on County communications 		

Audience Group	Overview	Tactical Recommendations
Committees (i.e. social services committee, public safety committee, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strong commitment to position/role – Generally, strong sense of community; community advocates – Need clear and concise information and messaging – General understanding of County services; significant knowledge on some key areas – May be point of contact for citizens, media and partners – Busy: rely on easiest form of communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – CAO update – Website/videos/app – Enewsletter – Social media – Media/advertising – Year in Review
Role		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inform: Ensure Communications is provided with meeting minutes/updates of note 2. Community liaison: Serve as information channel on the issue, service or program that falls under your responsibility 3. Be a brand ambassador: Support and promote the Grey brand 4. Social media: Forward on/share/comment on County communications 		
Audience Group	Overview	Tactical Recommendations
Businesses (general, landlords, communication providers, developers, etc.) Chambers of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Typically, strong community supporters – Need strong understanding of benefits and return on investment – Broad network of contacts – Generally, tech savvy – Busy; limited time for communications – Low knowledge on broader County services; may have significant knowledge on specific areas – May be skeptical of County communications/messaging – Not generally receptive to softer messaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enewsletter – Speaker series – Website/videos/app – Social media – Media/advertising – Year in Review – County meetings – Community events – Surveys
Role		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inform: Ensure Communications (EcDev) is provided with community business news and updates of note for greater promotion 2. Industry liaison: Serve as information channel to Communications on your particular industry/area of focus 3. Collaborate: Provide insights and feedback on relevant County services and projects 4. Provide support: Provide pertinent County information to employees/members/peers 5. Social media: Forward on/share/comment on County communications as appropriate 		

Audience Group	Overview	Tactical Recommendations
Institutions (i.e. hospitals (via Grey Bruce Health Services), elementary/secondary schools via school boards, Georgian College, Adult Learning Centres, Career & Business College, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Receptive to benefits of partnering – Professional and focused with communications experience – Highly-connected with substantial access to networks and contacts – In some cases, knowledge of County services; may not be accurate – Tech savvy – Generally, have structured internal comms. capacity – Busy; need-to-know – More receptive to individualized rather than blanket comms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Speaker series – Website/videos/app – Enewsletter – Social media – Media/advertising – Year in Review – County meetings – Community events
Role		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inform: Ensure Communications is provided with news and updates of note for greater promotion 2. Liaison: Serve as information channel to Communications on your particular industry/area of focus 3. Collaborate: Provide insights and feedback on key and relevant services and projects 4. Provide support: Provide relevant County information to members/clients/patients/students 5. Be a key communicator: Convey insights and feedback 6. Extend reach: Connect with hard-to-reach members of the County 7. Social media: Forward on/share/comment on County communications as appropriate 		
Audience Group	Overview	Tactical Recommendations
Media (print, radio and TV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Professional, focused and determined – Highly-connected with substantial access to networks/resources – Busy/time-crunched – High level of County operations knowledge (broadly) – Not generally emotionally invested – Highly tech savvy – Generally, disapproves of “salesy” language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – One-on-one outreach – Customized media releases – Social media – Website/videos/app – Year in Review – Mobile County events and meetings – Community events
Role		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask questions: Challenge decisions and seek the facts for audiences 2. Provide support: Act as a conduit for County messaging 3. Effect understanding: Influence public understanding and perception 4. Be a key communicator: Convey public insights and feedback 5. Social media: Forward on/share/comment on County communications 6. Extend reach: Connect with hard-to-reach members of the community 		

Audience Group	Overview	Tactical Recommendations
First Responders (fire services and Grey County OPP/Police Services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Often travelling – Community advocates – Highly tech savvy – Limited knowledge of broader County services – Busy; juggling many responsibilities – Ability to act/process under pressure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Customized memos/releases – Website/videos/app – Social media
Role		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inform: Ensure Communications is provided with service news and updates of note for greater promotion 2. Industry liaison: Serve as information channel to Communications on your area of focus 3. Collaborate: Provide insights and feedback on relevant County services and projects 4. Provide support: Forward on/share/comment on County communications as appropriate 		
Audience Group	Overview	Tactical Recommendations
Associations/organizations (i.e. volunteer centres, Conservation Authority, Ontario Early Years, CMHA, Community Care Access Centre, Downtown Improvement Areas, etc.) Community services/groups (i.e. YMCA, libraries (via municipalities), United Way, museums, churches, legions, Business Enterprise Centre, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Typically, strong community supporters – Trusted sources – Spokesperson in their specific “communities” or industry – Professional and focused – Highly-connected with substantial access to networks/resources – High level of knowledge (broadly) and in many cases, perhaps more specifically to County services – Generally, tech savvy – Disapproves of overt “salesy” language – Receptive to the end benefits of partnering – Significant resources/budget in some cases such as comms. dept. – May not have accurate information on County services – Busy; limited time for external communications – Generally protective of membership/members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Website/videos/app – Speaker series – Enewsletter – Social media – Media/advertising – Campaigns (youth, planning, etc.) – Year in Review – County meetings – Community events
Role		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaborate: Provide insights and feedback on key and relevant County services and projects 2. Member channel: Provide relevant County information to members/peers 3. Provide support: Forward on/share/comment on County communications 		

Audience Group	Overview	Tactical Recommendations
Neighbouring Counties (Bruce, Huron, Wellington, Simcoe, Dufferin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – High level of understanding of County operations – Not necessarily “local”: main contact may be 2-3 hours away – Generally unconcerned with most Grey County services – Busy professionals; limited interest in engagement – Likely more interested in campaigns/softer messaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Speaker series – Website – Social media – Media releases (relevant) – One-on-one outreach as required
Role		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General liaison: May provide collaborative support on best practices and other issues management advice/recommendations 2. Limited support: No direct role in communication of County services and messaging 3. Commentator: May provide general oversight/feedback on County services and projects 		
Audience Group	Overview	Tactical Recommendations
Federal/Provincial Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Generally unconcerned with most Grey County services – No high level understanding of County operations/services – Majority of their initial interaction will likely be online – Not necessarily “local”: main contact may be 4-5 hours away – Busy professionals – Need-to-know; not receptive to softer messaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Website – Media releases (relevant) – One-on-one outreach as required
Role		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limited support: No direct role in communication of County services and messaging 2. Commentator: May provide general oversight/feedback on County services and projects 3. External reach: Limited media relations support (on significant issues) as part of a broader campaign 		
Audience Group	Overview	Tactical Recommendations
Unions (CUPE, OPSEU, UNIFOR and ONA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Leery of “government” – Unconcerned on County services unless issue identified with mbrs. – Professional and focused – Spokesperson and trusted source for membership – Need-to-know; not receptive to softer messaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – One-on-one outreach as required – Media/advertising – Website
Role		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limited support: No direct role in communication of County services and messaging 2. Commentator: May provide general oversight/feedback on County services and projects 		

Communication Channels and Partnerships

In the preceding section a number of target audiences were identified that will directly or indirectly benefit from the County's communication efforts. In many cases, these audiences also serve as *channels and partners* for communication efforts – these professionals, organizations and associations are readily positioned and able to promote County services and information and/or have direct access to a key audience. This directly supports a key action in the Strategic Plan to more effectively and efficiently deliver services and programs.

Each year, effort should be taken by the Communications Department (or alternate contact as per below) to set one-on-one meetings with 8 to 10 key partners to develop a formal communication program (and personal rapport) whereby the County supplies agreed-to content, specifically developed to support the organization's messaging or mandate, and invites the organization to provide likewise to the County. These meetings do not have to be marathon strategy sessions, but a phone call or quick coffee to update, identify opportunities and measure/evaluate previous communication collaboration efforts.

By including the County's updates in their existing activities, these partners can help bring information to their stakeholders, while the County effectively connects to some of the more tough-to-reach corners of the community.

1. **Identify key contacts:** For each of the identified partners, it is likely that one/more County staff members already act as an informal contact. In some cases, these partners are municipality-based, requiring initial discussion and outreach to municipal contacts in order to strategize an optimum approach. Any existing relationships should be identified, explored and formalized to limit cross-over/repetition with Communications, and to identify opportunities for further strengthening: one key contact, targeted messaging and personal communications.
2. **Key messages:** For each of the identified partners, it is recommended that three to four targeted key messages be drawn and amended from the recommended messaging (see page 12). These messages would answer or address partners' specific needs and wants, and form the basis for all communications with that particular audience. In few cases will the partner's mandates align directly with the County's, so great care will need to be taken to properly nuance messaging.

In some cases, strategic and tactical recommendations (such as collaborating with specific businesses on development or target neighbourhood populations on road construction) make more sense to be administered by the relevant department (from a messaging and follow-up standpoint). It is anticipated that the department may take the lead in these specific circumstances with close collaboration with Communications to ensure messaging is targeted and strategic communication and community engagement guidelines are followed.

Media and Public Relations

It is recommended that a modified and targeted media strategy be employed to engage with municipal print, radio and television sources. In all cases, it is key that efforts to engage with the media centre on providing fulsome and fact-based content that requires limited effort of time-pressed reporters to dig for PDFs or backgrounders.

1. Set media policy:

- i. Response: Ideal response to a media inquiry should be immediate or within 1-2 hours. Same day is the maximum requirement.
- ii. Monitoring: Continue to track media coverage and collect clippings, but summarize coverage rather than scan/cut/paste each article; evaluate coverage and liaise with department/media source
- iii. Establish roles: Communications should endeavour to establish greater and more personal one-on-one connections with key media representatives; Communications should attend all County events, where feasible, at which the media will be present. This will minimize the likelihood that media will reach out to non-authorized or uninformed County staff for comment or information.

Communications is to be the media relations contact in all circumstances except when:

- i. another source has been identified in a media release;
- ii. a previous relationship between a media representation and a department's Director or supervisor has been established; or
- iii. information is of a nature that does not require strategic oversight (i.e. date a road is closed?).

For i. and ii., at the discretion of the staff member, Communications should be notified of the exchange and/or called upon to provide/review messaging and appropriate response.

2. **Increase timeliness and frequency of outreach:** Media often indicate that not enough notice is given of a pending event – or they are simply not informed and find out “after the fact”. Increase the number of press releases and ENSURE staff contacts noted in releases will be available after release is sent. In addition, as a number of smaller outlets depend almost entirely on Council minutes for information, ensuring this resource is available as soon as possible is critical to ensure coverage.
3. **Evaluate and evolve release:** Rework the current release format to ensure the only key focus is how it will affect residents (not how it affects the County – i.e. not “the budget came in low”, but rather “residents will see reduced services in...”). In addition, knowing a particular media outlet's preference or format for information – and their deadlines – and catering to this, is a proven method of ensuring more fulsome, accurate coverage.
4. **Engage with media appropriately:**
 - i. **Radio:** More uniquely in Grey County, radio enjoys a preferred place as a key resource by key audiences. Ensure fulsome and fast distribution to key identified providers as identified through the survey: County 93.7, Mix 106.5 and The One 101.7 with Dock 92.3 less so, as well as other supporting stations. Efforts must keep in mind that most broadcasters have limited staff and time to collect, research and draft stories. Releases should be created specific to radio – short, written in a script style.
 - ii. **CTV:** Ensure fast and accurate releases and accessible sources; prefers hard news.

- iii. **Rogers Cable, Markdale Communications, Wightman, Eastlink:** Ensure fast and accurate releases; provide greater soft news.
- iv. **Print:** Provide greater soft news with continued and frequent one-on-one follow-up; ensure imagery is provided if media do not attend event; ensure updates are provided on initiatives. As indicated by survey respondents, the most frequently-read publications are the Owen Sound Sun Times and The Hanover Post, so the greater amount of outreach effort and budget should be allotted accordingly, with The Flesherton Advance and the Shoreline Beacon less so, as well as other supporting publications.

Where possible and advisable as part of a larger strategy, advertising placements with the top identified media above should be considered (see page 41).

- 5. **Share good news stories:** More aggressively identify and promote County examples/connections to provide ongoing coverage and awareness with media in-between harder news stories. This will help to better “sell” and celebrate the quality of people and leadership to overcome “one-step” removal perception of County, satellite staff isolation and demonstrate the value of County services. Key to this however will be ensuring that stories, while originating by/with Grey, will need to strongly and clearly demonstrate a value (what’s in it) for the community more broadly. Why does a particular story matter to the public? Without a broader value, it is anticipated media and community pick-up, and positive public impressions, will be negligible.

Brainstorm a list of stories to develop and push out to media and on social media – look at doing at least one story/release per month. Engage with departments on a monthly basis for 200-300 word stories (Colour It stories). These should look to highlight positive achievements and successes made by the County, its staff and municipalities, and its citizens. Ensure that a call for submissions is put out to staff through a general email.

Social Media Strategy

1. **Formalize a social media policy:** Communications should serve as a centralized resource for the oversight, content creation, monitoring and evaluation of online communications tools, except for specific instances where separate, trained administrators are better able to monitor and respond more effectively.

The following social media strategy is based on best practices stemming from similar governments, social media experts and analysts. It reflects the public feedback on preferred methods (Facebook with a growing Twitter following). This framework will provide a solid basis upon which the County's Communications team can support existing or build new campaigns. ***These recommendations apply to the County's corporate social media feeds as well as any separate feeds specific to, and managed by, other County departments.***

- Page/Feed Recommendations

It is recommended that, in order to concentrate feeds, resources and messaging, that consideration be given to amalgamating the County Jobs (639 followers) and Purchasing (136) feeds into the Grey County.

- Content Strategy

It is recommended that monitoring and posting on County social media feeds (under the County persona) be minimized and assigned to only those who have received training or who have demonstrated aptitude for the medium and for supporting strategic communications and corporate goals and planning. In all cases, contributing personnel must acknowledge that social media *monitoring* is as essential as using it.

Although all other County staff are encouraged to use and engage on social media, they must be reminded that their comments may reflect on their position within the County and on the County itself. Staff who are not authorized to engage as administrators on County social media **MUST NOT** under any circumstances undertake to do so without with express approval from the Communications Department. All staff who are approved for corporate social media engagement must sign off each tweet or post with their initials (e.g., "hey thanks for letting us know about the Governor General visit – we'll be there! – BL"). Approved contributors include:

1. Corporate
 - a. Manager, Communications Department
 - b. Communications Officer
 - c. Digital Specialist
 2. Grey Roots (two or three contacts)
 3. Tourism (one or two contacts)
 4. County Clerk (one contact)
 5. Paramedic Services (one contact)
 6. Planning and Development (one contact)
 7. Transportation Services (one or two contacts)
 8. Economic Development (one contact)
- Content Recommendations
 1. **County service information:** Launch news or updates on initiatives with pre-event Facebook or Twitter enticements. Sustain interest through updates and feedback on social media.

2. **Municipal service information:** Share partner news or service updates as appropriate and where clear distinction between County/municipality ownership can be made.
 3. **Activities and events:** Remind citizens of upcoming activities and events (in the County and municipalities). This can also be accomplished through an “Events” feed in Facebook, where users can subscribe to an RSS feed of events (effective Events calendar at visitgrey.ca).
 4. **Public and Council meetings:** Post reminders and hints of meeting content. Post meeting highlights within 24 hours and follow-up where appropriate.
 5. **Departmental feeds:** Share Grey exhibits, Tourism sightseeing recommendations, EcDev events, road closures and construction updates, HR job search recommendations, etc.
 6. **Job applications:** To help fill open job positions, post them with links to full job descriptions and instructions on how to apply. One or two posts on social media can get several people to apply and add new followers.
 7. **Videos:** County videos or slideshows.
 8. **National holidays and celebrations:** Issue a shout-out from the County for Labour Day, New Year’s, etc.
 9. **Education and public service announcements:** As is done with Paramedic Services (share and post original content).
 10. **Partners:** Share or give a shout-out to partners’, businesses’ and citizens’ events and celebrations such as awards, anniversaries and fundraising opportunities. Volunteer requests and program updates are also great ideas.
 11. **Crime prevention and police assistance:** Police post crime prevention tips, time-sensitive information such as Amber alerts and alerts on dangers in the area.
 12. **Questions/surveys:** Engage followers by grabbing their interest with quick personal, but not intrusive, questions such as “what road in Grey causes you the biggest headache?”
- Facebook Overview
Consider Facebook a hub for community engagement and an online junction for real-world interaction.

Hard Rules

1. 1 post in the morning and, where possible, 1 post in the evening
2. Always post with a visual/link (this can include an image, PDF, link back to the County’s website, link to an alternate website, how to contact, video, etc.)
3. Always have a call to action:
 - a. Sign up
 - b. Share
 - c. Like

- d. Go to this link
4. Always include a meaningful message when sharing other partners' content (never just blank share)
5. Always include a hashtag and any relevant hashtags (no more than three maximum)
6. When posting a picture with a text post:
 - a. Always have text on the picture itself
 - b. Always watermark the photo with the County logo, hashtag and link
 - c. Always use a high-res photo
7. Always respond with something meaningful (or friendly in keeping with County "voice")
8. Never delete a comment unless the content is inappropriate or defamatory. Instead:
 - a. Ask individuals into a private message session. Empathize with the disgruntled and possibly-misinformed user. Try to educate with fact:
 - If not possible, state that the County appreciates their input but agrees to disagree and end communication even if they continue to add more to the conversation
 - Only respond again if the County is in the wrong: apologize and withdraw from the conversation
9. Turn the narrative of the conversation that is public to the County's advantage:
 - a. State the facts
 - b. Remove emotion on the County's end, but embrace the emotion on the end user

Variety

1. Visual works best:
 - a. Photos will always have a better engagement level than text
 - b. Video doesn't always have to be polished: people crowding a webcam is just as effective
2. Always add some form of media to a lengthy text post and include a link

Make Connections

Every month, search for local pages or connection to "like". **A key focus should be following local media feeds and engagement.** Share appropriate content.

• Twitter Overview

Twitter is the most real-time of the social networks. Timely responses are imperative. If a resident has a question regarding anything County-related, ensure the question is answered the same day (i.e. "How much longer will there be construction on Grey Road 12?") – **THE COUNTY** then contacts Transportation to find the appropriate response rather than directing the individual to contact Transportation.

Hard Rules

1. Tweets will always have a:
 - a. Link or picture (if picture, it must always have text overlaying the picture)
 - b. #hashtag – whether it's #GreyCounty hashtag or leveraging an already-popular hashtag or both. One hashtag is fine, 10 are not. Use hashtags (#) to separate posts and organize content
2. Tweets will have no more than 110-115 characters to accommodate retweets (R/Ts) from the community. Don't use all 140 characters: give people room to retweet with a reply
3. No more than 15 original tweets per day (not including responses, R/Ts or quote-tweets [Q/Ts]), but 3-5 a day is recommended. Space out posts every few hours.

4. Always include a call to action
5. Never R/T – ONLY Q/T: Q/T'ing allows you to tell the community why they should read the tweet
6. Respond to mentions and thank R/Ts in no less than 90 mins up until 9 p.m. (this helps to alleviate batch responses)
7. Always be honest, kind and admit when you were wrong
8. Always shorten links
9. Always ask individuals to direct message (DM) the County if the need should arise to take issues off public domain
10. DO NOT FEED THE TROLLS:
 - a. Turn problems into opportunities for discussion
 - b. Ask volatile users into a DM conversation if need be (if they refuse, end the conversation)
11. Never block a user just because they disagree with a posting or commentary

Responsiveness

Responding within 90 mins is preferable and 24 hours is forgivable, but too late. We've recommended an approved team of contributors and supporting training that will ensure County social media responders will be comfortable with speaking to users online, which is an important factor to collecting successful user interactions online which leads to creating a predictable, reliable, and trusted online entity for Grey County.

Make Connections

Every two weeks or so, find a new list or hashtag to follow, and follow everyone on the list. This can be done by searching for keyword terms of choice in Twitter (e.g., #GreyNews, #VisitGrey, #GreyRoads, etc.), or more easily using Hootsuite, which can show dual feeds at the same time. **A key focus should be following local media feeds.** Wait 48 hours and unfollow the users who don't immediately follow you back in that window of time (this process allows you to engage the most prolific/communicative users that will engage with you more often and spread your message farther as more often than not their community is already full of prolific users).

Variety

1. When idle from any large-scale communication campaign (i.e. Connected County), keep content to roughly 65% on message for the County, and 35% light hearted conversation and non sequiturs.
 2. Make sure that you are not always relying on partners for content to recirculate: finding new media and users is always an important part of the process of staying fresh and influence/attention worthy online.
2. **Institute a policy/procedure:** At present there is a fulsome formal Social Media Corporate Policy in place to guide these communications. This policy should be reviewed and revised on an annual basis as needed.

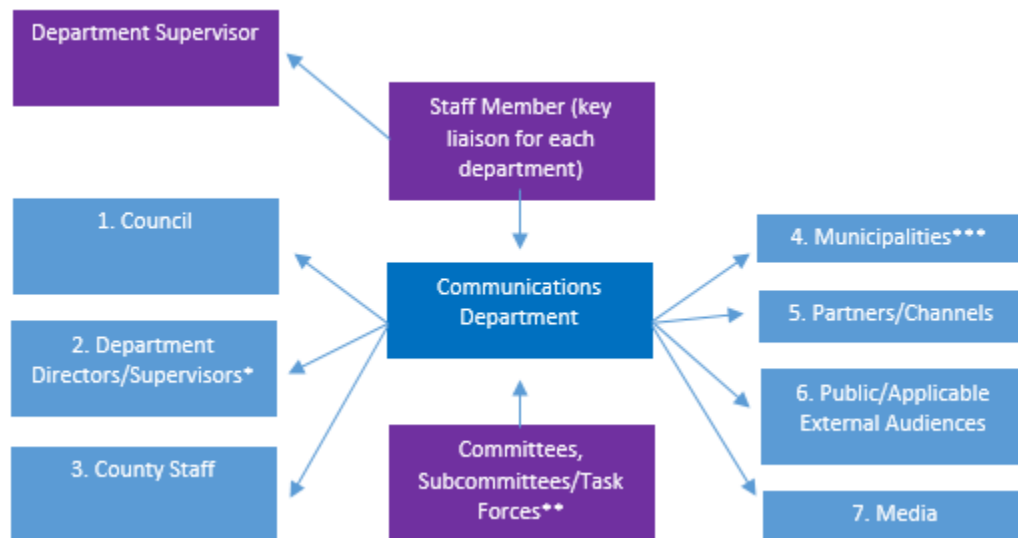
B. TACTICS

Internal – HOW TO REACH STAFF

A clear need for improved communication and collaboration within and between County departments and service areas was identified as a key action in the Strategic Plan. For good reason – the contribution that clear and effective channels of communications can make to the realization of a positive staff work environment is substantial. Through effective communications, staff are better able to understand, appreciate, contribute to and support goals and objectives, and can be motivated to achieve maximum performance and provide superior, cost-effective service.

1. **Formalize a structure for communications:** Each staff member has thousands of interactions with external audiences. An ideal flow of information minimizes unnecessary staff time, barriers, red tape or unnecessary approvals. Provided staff are equipped with timely and accurate information, and given effective motivation, they are a *critical* channel. Staff who are not informed will be unable to forward information, may forward inaccurate information, or suffer feelings of frustration or resentment at not being “in the know”.

It will be essential that an internal-first policy be required for all communications deemed relevant by senior staff and Communications (i.e. personnel change is “relevant” but new common printer for a department is “not relevant”). Although this policy will be helped along by creating an inherent culture of communication amongst staff, it must also be enshrined in all communication planning.



* Directors/managers (supervisors) often serve as information “gatekeepers”, acting as a trusted and authoritative source to their department staff. If they are directly informed, there is opportunity for the information to be passed onto staff via departmental meetings or other inter-department communiques. This would be in addition to staff being informed independently by the Communications Department.

** As deemed appropriate during internal discussions, Communications should receive Council, committee, subcommittee and task force meeting minutes.

*** It is anticipated that content and information provided to the municipalities via a bi-weekly summary (see page 36) would be determined in discussion with Clerks.

2. **Formalize staff meetings:** The majority of County departments hold update meetings on a structured or semi-structured basis. In most cases, the meeting format includes a segment where updates or information from other departments is shared. It is recommended that *mandatory* weekly meetings be instituted and that a structure where other County news of note is communicated be formalized. In cases where staff do not have formal in-office meetings, “tailgate” morning get-started or afternoon wrap-up meetings should be identified as key channels for information dissemination. Content would be provided by Communications to all department heads, via emailed bullet points, on a weekly basis.
3. **Develop a content strategy:** Develop a clear matrix – noting who, what and when – for each department that indicates what content they are responsible to provide in support of communication goals on a monthly basis. An example matrix is included below:

Department	Contact	Content	Format	Due
Transportation Services	Jane Smith	Fleet overview (# of vehicles)	250-400 words	Oct. 31
		“Colour It” story on exceptional service	100 words (max per event)	Nov. 7
Planning and Development	Joan Smith	Year in Review content	450-500 words	Dec. 5
		Project update(s)	200 words (max per project)	Dec. 12

4. **Expand beyond email:** It is recommended that a County-wide evaluation be made to determine which staff do not have access to email in the event of critical/crisis communication situations. This evaluation could take the form of a structured survey, or a questionnaire provided during scheduled departmental meetings. In such cases, do staff have access to County-provided (or personal) computers, tablets or cellphones? If the number is significant and employee interest high, employ and test an update app or use SMS that pushes information directly to staff or institute animated updates via Grey’s Vine. Content should be of moderate to high significance (i.e. Grey County Administration building renovation updates or CAO event for all staff and *not* a charity bake sale) and can pull from the monthly CAO update and quarterly newsletter proposed below.
5. **Develop a toolkit:** Even with the introduction of this Strategy, there is a possibility of individuals or departments continuing to manage all of some of their specific communications. This could be due to the presence of staff hired for such a position (as in Tourism) or a desire to simply continuing to “do what they have done”. There is inherent risk in the latter example, but which can be minimized by providing standard graphic templates and tools to address the possibility via Alfresco. This will ensure that communications will at least be readily identifiable as “County” although messaging or the strategy behind them may not be so.
 - i. Photo library: High-quality stock (or authentic County photos when consent has been sourced) grouped into categories (i.e., Housing, community engagement, Transportation, etc.)
 - ii. Council reports: See page 33
 - iii. County logo: Standard files (png, eps, jpg and black/white, etc.)
 - iv. Templates: May include standard #10 size brochure, insert/flyer, memo, PowerPoint, department newsletter, poster and ads (3” w x 2.5” h, 1/4-page and 1/2-page vertical and horizontal format)
6. **Institute monthly CAO update:** Identify the top three to five outcomes of Senior Management and Council meetings and email, SMS or push these out via app or Grey’s Vine – under the CAO’s name – to Council, municipal CAOs and all general staff contacts. This should be done on a monthly basis. Content should be short and succinct (think Tweets) for ease of reading and sharing.

7. **Launch quarterly staff newsletter:** Introduce a twice-yearly strategically-focused employee newsletter. But rather than sending it via email, take the additional step of mailing it to staff homes – for “you and your family”. Content could include a note from the CAO and should offer “corporate” updates on achieving strategic goals, but also quality of life articles on employee wellbeing and opportunities for families in the County. This piece may be 8-pages, 17” wide x 11” high, folded to 8.5 x 11. This will accommodate three main and 8-10 supporting articles (with images) along with a page of short events/blurbs; key will be providing ongoing brand awareness tie-in articles.
8. **Institute County staff events:** Held at rotating locations within the County these events should be fun and memorable, centered around connecting staff with the CAO and/or other senior County staff or Council. Invite all staff to attend – this would be an ideal time to award the staff service award (see page 32). Other opportunities include CAO luncheons, brand awareness campaign launch (see page 40), Strategic Plan feedback sessions, seminars on managing workplace stress, adopt-a-pet, etc.
9. **Tune Grey’p Vine:** Overseen by Communications, the Grey’p Vine intranet is a valuable and well-regarded tool that has the potential to be a key, and preferred resource. It is anticipated that all staff with computers have access, so it serves as a main source of providing County-wide communications to all recipients outside of blanket emails.

Consider implementing functional and content changes to increase readership. Traffic should be closely monitored and subsequent updates made accordingly, and staff feedback and engagement should be sought on a yearly basis.

- i. Consider eliminating the programmed push-out that results in regular emails being sent to staff; instead, send a Friday summary that links to the portal
 - ii. Explore and enliven content for greater interest. Considerations may include:
 - a. Five things you should know about right now
 - b. Feature article(s) (Colour It stories from departments)
 - c. Employee profile
 - d. Departmental sections
 - e. Weekly poll
10. **Institute yearly departmental planning:** Each department already develops a yearly operations work plan to establish goals and guide service development. It is recommended that this be expanded to include *proactive communications planning*. This can be facilitated through an early-year meeting between Communications and department personnel when Communications provides a template and coaching, the department fills out the template, and both parties meet to review and amend. The plan should be supported by a mid-year review, or more often as required, for each department and Communications.

These plans will identify how each department can and should use current resources – or additional resources as required. These plans can be developed/modified during the mid-year review as required in order to ensure they continue to guide efforts and resources effectively.

Communications’ role in the development should be to serve as a consultant and planner, guiding the department to the best resources – not just the standard or “easiest”. The template for communications planning for each department could include:

- i. Goals (for department) and corresponding focus of communications
 - ii. Messages (if specific messaging is required for a particular department/program)
 - iii. Audiences (internal/external)

- iv. Key spokesperson(s) (if necessary to support public communications)
- v. Communication partnerships
- vi. Tactics (electronic and printed): Include engagement framework (see page 37)
- vii. Media plan
- viii. Social media strategy
- ix. Budget/resources
- x. Calendar
- xi. Measurement

11. **Institute awards program:** An excellent way to boost staff morale – and earn positive PR – is through an awards program where friendly nomination/competition acknowledges the achievements of staff in service/delivery or exceptional communications. Submissions can be made via Grey’p Vine or a dedicated URL on the Grey website, and the award should be significant, such as a \$250 Visa gift card, to encourage participation. Tiered rewards for second/third and finalists should also be considered. Communication of this program should remain internal (i.e., Grey’p Vine, staff newsletter), but a general media release could be distributed and social media posts included to highlight and support the “our staff *take care* of Grey citizens” brand voice.

A winner can be announced during the CAO staff event (see page 31) along with a 20-minute presentation to demonstrate how staff efforts at connecting with citizens to deliver superior service allow the County to “take care”.

12. **Provide training and workshops:** Effectively communicating and building excitement around initiatives is ensured by Communications’ frequent, friendly contact with staff. These contacts are best made via short (30 minute) engagement training or information sessions. Depending on the end number of planned sessions, there may be opportunity to introduce a certificate program (i.e. once five modules are done the staff member is awarded a “Community Communicator” certificate. Training opportunities include:

- i. New staff: Orientation on County operations currently exists and is administered through Human Resources. Through collaboration with Communications, this should be updated with an eye to incorporating strategic communications, key responsibilities and resources.
- ii. Media: An external consultant can provide, on a term basis, media relations training in close consultation with Communications. The training should address that the use of media for divisive/conflicting viewpoints is a key instigator of discord amongst audiences. As it is recommended that media relations be strongly centralized under Communications, only key senior staff, that may act as media liaisons, and Council should be included in sessions.
- iii. Social media: Those tasked with monitoring and posting social media content and management should receive formal instruction on the County policy and their role/responsibilities every two years. Communications should prepare and administer the session.
- iv. Accessibility: As AODA compliance is currently overseen through Communications, an all-staff session on how it affects their work is a key recommendation.
- v. Departmental staff: Primer and workshops on Grey’p Vine.
- vi. Grey’p Vine: Communications should prepare and administer an overview session, with an all-staff invitation (and Council), on Grey’p Vine and supporting “cheat sheet” covering access, content and accessible resources. This may include the toolkit templates (see page 30).
- vii. Engagement: An external consultant can provide key department staff, who are anticipated to have front-line engagement with the public, with engagement training on how to approach, interact and close conversations.

Internal – HOW TO REACH COUNCIL

Providing that Warden and Council, and senior staff, are well-informed, and easily able to access information ensures they can appropriately serve their role as liaisons to both the community and staff. They serve as key front-line channels and are trusted and sought sources of information. As such, additional effort should be made to more effectively promote the “value” and benefit of communications – to get them excited and vested in efforts.

In particular, Council members must strike a delicate balance in their dual roles as both a municipal representative (Mayor) and County Councillor. There is often confusion or misunderstanding on exactly how these roles support and differ from each other. Concerted effort at providing clear, nuanced and strong messaging – continually – will aid their role in supporting Grey County, its brand and its communications and engagement efforts.

In all cases of connection with Council – as well as more broadly within Grey County operations – it is recommended that a more personal and friendly tone be adopted as and when appropriate. Currently, there is a tendency at all levels of government to adopt a formal, “policy-speak” manner. We see no need or value in maintaining this approach to communications in Grey County.

1. **Presentations:** There is an existing orientation video for candidates that provides an overview of their role on County Council. In collaboration with Communications, this presentation should be updated to include key messaging (see page 12), the proposed brand voice and a brand overview in order to deliver a consistent and professional image to incoming Councillors.

It is recommended that a second presentation (video) then be created that focuses specifically on the role of Communications in supporting County Councillors and helping to inculcate a “culture of communications”:

- i. Value of communications/current communications climate
- ii. Overview of County community outreach and engagement (include issues management)
- iii. Overview of the direct impact communications has on the achievement of strategic goals
- iv. The roles of Communications and staff, and the role of Council
- v. Examples of communication initiatives
- vi. How Communications will directly support Councillors

2. **Institute monthly CAO update:** Ensure Council also receives the CAO update (see page 30).
3. **Council report template (from County staff):** Update the staff Council report template to include a staff-written, one to two-page public-focused, clear and simplified summary of the over-arching findings of the content within the report. The key direction on the content of the summary should be that it provides brief “information bites” that can be easily remembered and distributed verbally or via social media channels (a good rule of thumb will be to provide 140-character ‘Tweet-friendly’ bullets that Councillors can quickly absorb and pass on). Communications may need to hold a training session or offer one-on-one guidance to select staff as this template rolls out.
4. **Council update report (from Communications):** Ensure Council stays ahead of potential issues through a Council report prepared by Communications in advance of Council meetings (based on staff reports), but updated right after Council and provided to Councillors. Content of this summary should be a two to three-page snapshot that addresses key “what” (flagging key potential issues), “who” (identifying key parties/contacts, political/public implications) and clear, simple guiding messages based on Communications’ anticipation of key issues that will capture public attention. It should be sent to Council members and municipal CAOs.

5. **Establish issues management process:** Part of Communications' role is to serve as a source for County Council for messaging, updates and resources in support of their interactions with audiences. Key to this is identifying, anticipating and addressing issues of importance to County constituents. Although this should already be done on a yearly basis via the creation of departmental communications plans (see page 31), new concerns may arise that are not foreseen. Proper issues management is about anticipating these challenges before they become problems, so the necessary steps can be taken to garner support, prepare audiences, clarify questions before they arise and ensure preparedness:

1. Forecasting Issues

- i. "Potential Issues" should be on the agenda at Council, senior management and staff meetings, at quarterly meetings with key County communicators, and identified through Communications' ongoing staff engagement efforts. From there, Communications can work with the required departments to develop a micro plan for action.
- ii. Review media websites (daily) and community organizations' and advocacy groups' websites (monthly). Speak with Councillors on what issues are at the forefront of community concern.

2. Analyzing Issues

- i. Review and discuss at the department level if the issue is low-risk, with a micro plan being developed in the process.
- ii. Medium or high-risk issues must be addressed by the department Director, who will be responsible for analyzing the County's risk in concert with the CAO and Senior Managers, and preparing a specific plan and communicating with Council and staff.
- iii. Micro plans for Council and staff should include an issue history and background, a list of stakeholders, statistics and facts that help clarify the issue, definition of threats and opportunities related to the issue, and a forecast of potential scenarios and County actions.

3. Acting on Issues

- i. In most cases, unless otherwise directed by the Director, Council and staff should be notified (before external audiences) of the issue and appropriate messages and responses relayed.
- ii. Public notification should take the form of targeted media such as news releases or a conference, advertising/open letters, posted flyers, content in existing vehicles such as newsletters, etc. Appropriate tactics would be defined in the micro plan.
- iii. For critical issues, a County meeting may need to be planned and advertised.
- iv. Any media contact will be based on factual information, and highlight County key messages.
- v. Close monitoring of the issue is required.
- vi. A concluding report assessing the strengths, weaknesses and overall effectiveness of the plan.

6. **Institute an annual progress report:** In support of the work that Communications currently does, and which is expected to increase through the dedication of greater resources, and to prove that additional investment in communications is warranted, it is recommended that Communications prepare and present a PowerPoint summary of achievements to Council on a yearly basis. The presentation may include:

- i. Department structure (matrix)
- ii. Overview of department services (what they do)

- iii. Summary of achievements (# of completed tickets, # of media releases, # of videos, etc.)
- iv. Graphic design projects (# and examples)
- v. Four to six case studies of department projects (demonstrating strategic planning and guidance)
- vi. Events overview
- vii. Website/app review
- viii. Advertising summary

- 7. **Grey'p Vine:** Ensure Council access, if they don't already have it (see page 31).
- 8. **Staff newsletter:** Ensure Council also receive the quarterly staff newsletter (see page 31).

Internal – HOW TO COMMUNICATE AS A DEPARTMENT

The following are recommended resources or initiatives to be undertaken by Communications in support of their day-to-day operations to the benefit of department efficiencies and wider support to other County staff.

1. **Establish operational pillars:** It is recommended that the Communications Department develop and promote to Council and staff a set of fundamental guidelines on how they operate (versus the Overarching Guidelines on page 10 that address how communication efforts in the County are directed). These pillars may be:
 - i. Citizen-centered: Our efforts focus on providing all necessary information to our citizens; our support to County departments focuses on assisting their delivery and communication of services to citizens.
 - ii. Educators: It is the role of our department to provide our audiences with the information they need and to serve as a primary source for clarification and follow-up.
 - iii. Leaders: We will serve as informed, strategic and leaders in communications and provide staff with sound guidance and external audiences with targeted and smart outreach efforts.
 - iv. Accessible: At the core of our efforts is a commitment to ensuring the greatest, most convenient and preferred opportunities for our audiences to share and contribute.
 - v. Transparent: Our communications with staff and external audiences will be at all times honest and sincere, and present factual, supportable information.
 - vi. Inclusive: We will develop communications that can be easily accessed and read, with the greatest opportunity to be clearly understood.
 - vii. Ensure staff commitment (through understanding of communications and its importance)
2. **Integrate department:** Increase opportunity and availability of Communications staff (through additional resourcing) in reaching out and being accessible to senior and general staff, and Councillors (i.e. attend Business Visitation Program visits, department celebrations to grab an image for the staff newsletter, etc.). In addition to ensuring this positions Communications staff as integrated, committed and accessible resources, it builds rapport and personal connections that support the integration of communications into County operations.
3. **Create a Communications Advisory Committee:** Establish an internal team of four to six members that include Grey Roots, EcDev/Tourism and other key internal communication leaders. This team should meet quarterly to explore the County's communication needs, identify emerging opportunities, discuss brand/voice synergy and shared resources, issues management, and new channels and challenges.
4. **Create a communications primer:** Develop and circulate a primer on "working with communications" to introduce staff and Council to the operations, role and responsibilities of the department, and to their processes. Content could include the pillars of the department (see this page), lead time for project requests, information required in order to facilitate a request, anticipated turnaround time for design or other jobs, etc. It is recommended that the primer be a four to six-page emailed document (also available on Grey's Vine).
5. **Source and integrate a time-tracking or ticket software program:** A time-tracking program will allow Communications to accurately track and report on time and resources spent per project. This allows Communications and other departments to understand and plan future budgeting and resource requests, and places a time value on the work of the Communications department. Examples are the *Hours Keeper* app (via iTunes) or *TimeLedger* (<https://www.timeledger.com/>) which record time spent on individual projects. Daily, weekly and monthly summary reports are immediately available, as well as any associated external expenses (i.e. printing or media buys) for each department.

Internal – HOW TO REACH PARTNERS

Working collaboratively with municipalities is a key action in current Strategic Plan. This extends to communications, although there is recognition that municipal partners are generally overwhelmed and internally-focused, with minimal time to support County communications. Efforts at outreach must be smart, strategic, resource-light and efficient.

1. **Relationship building:** Generally, key municipal communicators (Clerks or dedicated communications personnel) feel a lack of connection with County Communications. In some cases, this is due to resources and priorities (municipal staff are busy and focused on their own municipal service delivery). In others, a “value” in closer connections with County staff is unclear and anticipated to be onerous. This can be counter-acted through the proposed Know Your County campaign (see page 41), but can be more strongly supported through increased one-on-one engagement between Grey and municipal communications personnel. This can take the form of frequent, monthly phone calls to follow-up on County communiques or to find out more information on municipal ones. Relationship building should also include personal invitations to attend County events.

An added benefit of this type of personal engagement is that it will allow the County to better understand their key communication partners, and to more easily and ably customize communications, where possible, in order to make the greatest use – and demonstrate respect – for their time. For example, if it is known that one township prefers to be copied on all County news of note, and another prefers only information of direct relevance to their operations, effort should be made, where possible, to cater to this.

2. **Make it EASY:** The efforts required from municipalities should be kept minimal. This includes keeping phone chats to a short duration, providing “layered” information that starts with a short, succinct and cut/paste soundbite, attaching key documents instead of requiring them to log into a separate interface and including links and images with information that allows them to quickly and easily put together their own releases.
3. **Bi-weekly enews summary:** It is recommended that direct relationship-building with municipalities be supplemented with a value-demonstrating enews summary. Customized, as much as and where possible, this summary should be developed in close collaboration between the County Communications and Clerks departments in order to apply a strategic lens on relevant content and a polish on tight, impactful messaging. Each enews should contain three to five items of relevance for municipalities, these being short soundbites with links to, or attachments of, supporting documentation. This summary will serve as an excellent base of contact for Communications when reaching out through increased one-on-one engagement.
4. **Communications Working Group:** There was interest expressed by some municipalities in being part of a communications working group to exchange best practices, identify concerns, opportunities (County-wide communications such as elections) and synergies. Although an invitation should be provided to all, participation would not be mandatory and might not be accepted in all cases due to resource and workload concerns.
5. **Content provision:** Stronger relationships with municipalities – and demonstrating value – can be realized through in-person meetings. On a yearly basis, it is recommended that Communications staff sit down with municipal contacts to liaise on mutually-beneficial content provision: determining opportunity for a set County space on an existing municipal eblast, website or mailing, and how the County can push out municipal content via their channels.
6. **Training:** Municipal contacts can be invited to sessions when appropriate (media, social media and accessibility).
7. **Council update report:** Municipal CAOs should receive the Council update report (currently done). See page 33.

External – HOW TO REACH THE COMMUNITY

Engagement and collaboration with residents and stakeholders is a key strategic goal for Grey County. While electronic communications are key and critical, they cannot be the only focus in Grey County. Especially as an organization with a strong commitment to accessibility, and a geographically-spread audience (not all with equal access to electronic networks), the majority of County communications and engagement efforts must be two-stream to ensure information has the opportunity to reach the greatest number of stakeholders.

Direct Engagement

1. **Develop an engagement framework:** Eliminate overlap, fatigue or misuse of resources by formalizing outreach and engagement efforts in an engagement framework document (i.e. formalize when a public meeting will be held, etc.). This will help to guide Communications, as well as department staff, in ensuring their efforts are supportive of overall strategic goals. Ensure it is incorporated in the development of departmental plans (see page 31) and promote it on Grey's Vine, providing actual case studies of usage.

The framework should also outline County responsibilities on updates and ongoing liaison with audiences. This would be a formal commitment to set reporting and status updates. This demonstrates the value that the County places on audience contributions, will garner greater support and ensure more fulsome understanding from stakeholders, and encourages staff to share updates and results that effectively demonstrates their efforts.

An example may be:

County Action	Notice of Proposed Action				Notice of Completed Action			
	Notice to Public	How Notice is Provided	Notice to Affected Individuals	How Notice is Provided	Notice to Public	How Notice is Provided	Notice to Affected Individuals	How Notice is Provided
Council Meeting	Yes	- Website - Social media	Council	- Revised staff report	Yes	- Media release - Website - Social media	Council	- Council update report
Public Survey	Yes		Staff					

2. **Implement mobile "County admin centre" with visiting staff:** Connect with community members by being *in* communities. Create an in-person presence, such as a tabletop or roll-up display ("Do you know you live in Grey?"), to be set up and manned by County in key municipal facilities on a rotating basis. This presence will allow opportunity for the County to connect with municipal staff as well as their citizens.

For each event, County staff should prepare a custom one or two-page printout, in collaboration with Clerks and the applicable County Councillor, noting specific concerns or initiatives for that municipality that fall under County service, and seek to engage on those.

Consider also including a Warden's Breakfast as an event (rotating County locations by municipality), with direct invitations to Councillors and key municipal staff, partners and leaders.

3. **Identify areas of interaction:** Visits to County sites were not part of the research to inform this Strategy. As such, it is recommended that Communications complete an "audit" and evaluation of all public County facilities in order to identify those that act as "hubs" for community engagement, and to explore the current existence or

potential introduction of video screens, banners or message boards in these central locations. Where feasible, exploration can also be made to include displays in partner facilities such as:

- Libraries/museums
- Hospitals/health centres
- Seniors' centres
- Transit stations
- Post-secondary centres
- Fitness centres
- Shopping complexes
- Food banks
- Community centres/community support services
- Chambers of Commerce

4. **Attend community events:** Many County municipalities, partners and community organizations hold yearly or quarterly events or meetings to which they may invite contacts such as County staff (i.e. Blue Mountains' Jazzmania, Georgian Bluffs' Canada Day, Grey Highlands' Feversham Fall Fair, etc.). Generally, celebrations or updates on progress or to define new directions, these events often include achievements or success touting. Where time and resources allow, Communications or other departmental staff should attend: this type of personal engagement and interest is critical to the relationship-building that is a cornerstone of effective mutual communication support and gives a positive impression to the general public. Where feasible, a branded presence should be set up (i.e. tabletop roll-up display).
5. **Public meetings:** Direct engagement with external audiences through a public meeting forum may be required or recommended via the engagement framework (see page 37) for a particular service, initiative or issue. Unless a key or critical issue, these types of events generally have low attendance. Greater strategic focus is necessary to bring progressives "to the table" – i.e. don't always hold these at the County Administration Building. Go out to communities, stream it live, offer online engagement/feedback opportunities if individuals cannot attend.

Online/Electronic (technology-based)

6. **Website:** The website, as indicated via the public survey, is a critical communications tool. While the previous site fell short of audience needs and expectations, the County has just launched a revitalized website presence (currently in BETA testing mode). As it was introduced mid-way through the engagement, it has not been evaluated as part of this strategic process.

It is recommended that Communications' role for the website be as key content manager, evaluating and adding content as appropriate to support County communications, in collaboration with staff as appropriate and necessary to update specific departmental content. It is recommended that ongoing analysis of analytics and community feedback, and an ongoing focus on strong SEO, also be overseen by Communication as a cornerstone of the website's continued development. Consideration should be given to broader promotion of the "Events in Grey County" calendar currently resident on the visitgrey.ca site – include in the "Residents" section of the corporate website and ensure community services/operations are aware of it.

7. **Enewsletter:** There is significant potential to bring useful information to an increased subscriber base through a revitalized and more heavily-promoted enewsletter. A consistently reliable (i.e., every first Tuesday at 3 p.m.) monthly enewsletter can provide highlights of County news and updates, good news stories, feature articles that reflect the County's strategic goals, upcoming events, fun facts/figures and "have your say" survey links.

Revitalize the current eblast with a fixed footer and fixed delivery. Reintroduce the enewsletter with more prominent placement on the website homepage and strong advertising in County communications (such as a footer graphic on all email accounts or paid Facebook advertising).

As indicated in this Strategy's Communication Strategies (see page 10), content should be provided in "layers", with summaries only, and the full article available online with a simple click. This promotes effective search engine optimization (SEO), and allows Communications to analyse the open/click-through rate of individual articles to gauge effectiveness and popularity of different content.

A limited number of newsletters can be exported, printed and made available as print versions at key County/municipal facilities.

8. **Video:** Video is the perfect messaging medium – it is exciting, engaging and popular amongst audiences. It is an effective way to share important information and to inspire. It has a huge following and is highly expressive. The County does not currently manage a YouTube channel (only Grey County Tourism does), which should be an avenue of future exploration as efforts to develop video are streamlined and increased. Potential video opportunities may include timely program interviews with key County staff/spokespeople, Council sessions, tours (i.e. social housing), community contest (most beautiful spot in Grey), etc. Effective and increased use of video would need to be supported by a substantial increase in the use and/or placement of screens in community hub areas (see page 38).
9. **Surveys:** Consider ongoing online surveys on the website and social media, changed approximately every month, to encourage *brief* input and participation in dialogue about current issues (i.e. "what do you feel about ATVs on County roads?" or "what is your favourite spot in Grey County?", etc.). Communications can encourage departments to also provide survey content/questions in support of their service delivery.

A more comprehensive, yearly survey on the state of communications, similar to that completed in support of this Strategy, can also be employed, supported by online promotion and paper copies in County facilities.

10. **Provide apps:** Public survey responses indicated a significant interest in the introduction of a mobile app in support of County communications. Ranging from straightforward access point for recent County news, to applications specific to certain services (i.e. day out in Grey, Find It at Grey app, etc.), they are a great means of engaging with people where they live, work and play.

However, apps are time and resource-heavy undertakings of significant expense. Careful planning must be ensured and strong value readily apparent. Through close collaboration with IT and fulsome engagement with staff, consider integrating an app to further engage stakeholders and that provides quantifiable information that can be communicated back to Council and staff for strategic planning.

Collateral

11. **Consistently apply visual brand:** With the introduction of a bright, bold and appealing logo, adoption is made that much easier. To ensure continued usage, a clear and consistent application of the corporate visual identity is important to assist the public in recognizing, accessing and assessing communications on the policies, programs, services and initiatives of the County. It is essential that Communications lead this consistent usage. It can also serve as a "policing arm", gently noting improper usage to the responsible parties.
12. **Update "Year in Review":** A revitalized report/newsletter is recommended, delivered/mailed on a structured basis once a year. Content should be expanded to include those brand supports recommended in this Strategy such as a brand voice/identity, staff award, engagement framework examples, survey results, etc. In addition, it is recommended that an invitation be made to all departments to promote their services and achievements.

These reviews will serve as excellently-done signature pieces for the County that can be broken up and catalogued for wider promotion via other channels (i.e., social media). It is recommended that the review be no more than 16 pages, and succinctly and boldly communicate staff – and citizen – achievements.

Programs/Campaigns

1. **Speaker series:** There is opportunity for Grey County to become and be known as a best practice promotor and a strategic municipal operations leader by serving as a hub of knowledge sessions. These yearly events can invite national or international, high-profile experts (i.e. Richard Florida on urban studies) for community planning and design, capacity, urban development, etc. sessions. Topics should be sharp, current and engaging – open invitations should be sent to staff, Council, municipalities and neighbouring counties, as well as residents when appropriate.
2. **Implement youth advisory programs:** It is recommended that Communications employ targeted methods to reach out to and engage more often with County youth to generate interest in and understanding of County operations, ensure their voice is heard in strategic planning, and allow for their greater role in communications:
 - i. Summer projects: Engage with students, via Launch Pad to plan and implement projects (i.e. social media campaign, on-location public surveys, videos, designing poster for launch event, etc.). Draft and promote these engagements as case studies for wider PR efforts.
 - ii. Youth advisory committee: Create a monthly youth committee to inform and shape and support community outreach and engagement efforts with youth (i.e. granting temporary social media access, honing messaging, etc.). Ensure there is fair representation across County municipalities.
3. **Communications Strategy launch campaign:** It is recommended that an adopted Grey County Communications Strategy be launched internally to staff as a means to encourage adoption and as a first, bold example of communicating “internally-first”. This helps to get staff on-board at the outset, encourages enthusiasm for initiatives that may be challenging or perceived as such by some. It also ensures that staff involvement – how the Strategy will affect them – is made clear, and expectations and best practices established at the beginning. This can be accomplished through a lunch and learn session with the CAO and Communications, a SMT information Q&A session and in-building signage (“have you communicated today?”) for awareness-building.
4. **Brand awareness staff campaign:** The “Colour It Your Way” branding is bold, smart and strategic. But it hasn’t enjoyed the adoption and greater public awareness that are desired. In addition, it isn’t “lived” on a consistent basis by staff. It is recommended that the brand be re-launched with a strong staff focus that offers tight, clear messaging (“Colour It Your Way” is inspirational and aspirational, but can be construed many ways) and real examples of how it is or can be effected in their day-to-day work – what staff ideas and initiatives have helped to shape Grey’s vision of “taking care”? Source out and collect these stories via County staff events (with hand-held video, staff meetings and Grey’s Vine. Promote in newsletters, staff award program, Year in Review, etc. over a five to six-month period.

With County staff taking the initiative to “live the brand” and the subsequent promotion, greater understanding, recognition and adoption by the wider community is anticipated.

5. **Know Your County campaign:** Foster greater awareness and understanding of the Grey branding and voice (“We take care”) and its role in a two-tier system through a widespread, multi-tier and dedicated information campaign. Distribution can be made via County staff, the community engagement framework, partners and channels, media, Council and municipalities. Recommended deliverables include:

- i. Infographic (showing operations/services of tiers).
- ii. Factsheet (for mailing to households by municipality).
- iii. Stories/anecdotes from each department on “we take care” theme: For enews, social media, Grey’s Vine and website promotion, post a rotating series that profiles each department and their operations (i.e. “Did you know that Housing, in addition to managing 888 residential units, also oversees all of the County facilities?”, etc.).
- iv. Ad series: Highly-visual social and local media placements (“Snow removal: We do that” (at Grey County Housing), “Historical preservation”: We do that” (at Grey Roots).

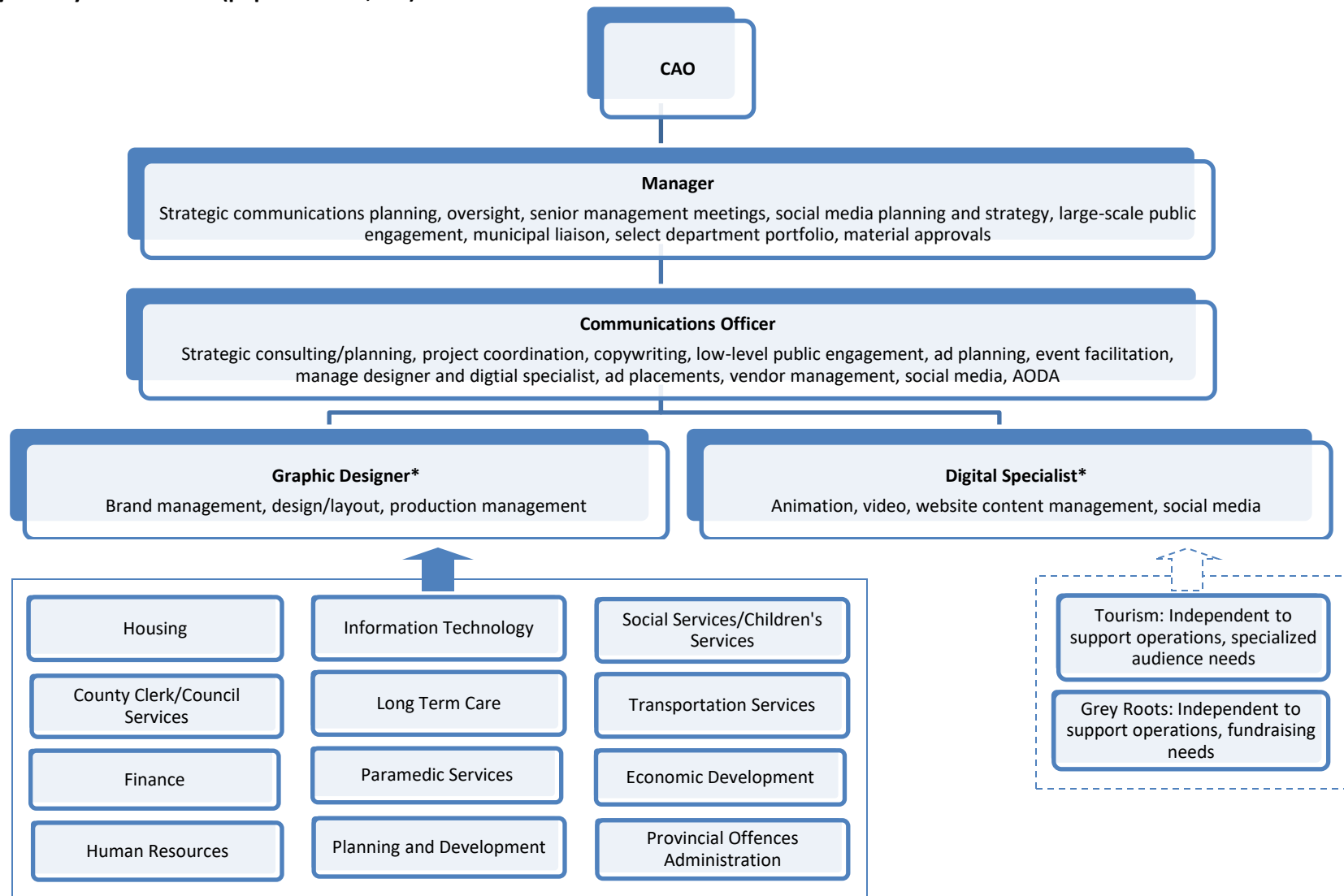
6. **Find It campaign:** The 211 telephone service is a critical and citizen-first-focused service. Awareness of it remains low. Provide dedicated promotion of the service to increase engagement and positive opinion on County services. Support the campaign through a graphic element (ad) on the website and social media, and a dedicated spot on municipal websites. Provide graphic and supporting information (one-page factsheet or email) to municipalities, key community partners and channels, and media.

7. **Hone advertising efforts:** Significant advertising budget is required to make the necessary impressions, and even with this, it is still difficult to stand out amongst a sea of ads. Infrequent or one-off ads are low-yield and generally ineffective. Advertising should largely be only one of many communications tactics to support a need, for example to promote attendance at an event or to encourage newsletter subscriptions. It is also recognized that ad spends, in general, can sometimes be linked to greater editorial coverage, a practice that is unfortunate, but a reality, although it is not indicated that local media engage in this practice. A modest advertising budget is recommended to maintain the County’s profile and communication commitments, strengthen its brand, and support important/unforeseen needs as specific situations arise:

- i. Facebook: These placements are highly customizable (cost-per-click selection and budget limits). Once budget is determined, robust engagement with site sales personnel is recommended to determine the most effective placement positions, frequencies and costs.
- ii. Print (mandated): As identified by Municipal Act, some updates, notices or changes are required advertisements in local media.
- iii. Print and online (event and brand support): Engage with the top two print and radio media on having a set County update section. Content should be information/update based and strongly limit “self promotion”.
- iv. Print (seasonal): Place “collective” ads from County on a whole for particular celebrations (holidays or key partner anniversaries) and thank you ads (i.e. volunteers, etc.). The current practice is for many different departments to create and place their own.

C. OPERATING MODEL AND RESOURCES

Grey County – PROPOSED (population 94,000)



* Could be combined into one position for years three-five if graphic design request as less significant than anticipated.

Communications Department Structuring Notes

- No centralization of County-wide communications is recommended; each municipality would continue to manage their needs with support from Grey as needed in strategic planning and issues management.
- It is recommended that the County's communications be centralized under a resourced and separated Communications Department (reporting directly to the CAO's office), but that the Tourism Department and Grey Roots service continue to operate independently. These two exceptions currently maintain experienced and specialized staff to manage their unique communication needs which should continue until strategic impetus and the natural realignment of staff resources allows for smart and successful integration.
- To the decentralized exceptions noted above (Grey Roots and Tourism), there should be yearly/twice-yearly planning meeting to identify areas of cross-promotion or other opportunity.

Budget/Resources

- It is recommended that a restructured Communications department be supported by an annual budget to facilitate development of centralized communications as proposed herein including additional staffing, print sourcing, media buys and other related expenses. This will result in:
 - Volume efficiencies
 - Skills efficiencies
 - Strategic, lower-cost tactics
 - Reduced outsourcing
 - Increased services delivery
 - Less follow-up

Implementation (Phased)

- Phase 1 – Manager and graphic designer critical immediate needs for Plan rollout
- Phase 2 – Digital specialist

D. MEASUREMENT

Evaluating the success of communication activity is important to gauge the effectiveness of the program as a whole and individual activity. It informs and supports strategic planning, and strengthens community perception. Growth also motivates staff and promotes the value and effect of their contributions.

1. **Overall communication goals:** Develop a measurement dashboard, reflective of overall communication goals and review progress, on a yearly basis against previous results:
 - i. Greater awareness of County services
 - ii. Audiences are quickly and easily able to find information
 - iii. Council and County staff are better informed on services
 - iv. Staff supported by a sufficiently-resourced Communications department
 - v. Staff spend less time on communications and more on service delivery
 - vi. Stronger municipal relationships
 - vii. Increased presence in municipalities and media
 - viii. Communications have a positive and successful impact
 - ix. Increased likelihood of key audiences engaging
 - x. Audiences feel their input is valued
 - xi. There is a greater level of readiness/preparedness to address issues
 - xii. Communications are proactive
 - xiii. Increased staff integration and morale
 - xiv. Consistent image, voice and graphic look to communications
 - xv. Fluid and frequent communications
 - xvi. A friendly brand that attracts and engages
2. **Tracking/Measurement:** In order to substantiate the recommended strategies, additional and reallocated resources, and supporting tactics – to demonstrate benefits and results – both qualitative and quantitative measurements are recommended:
 - i. Website: On a **weekly** basis, monitor website traffic patterns, identifying major trends – growths, dips – and understanding the most-used areas to guide content development (number of visits, user location, what pages are visited, length of visit, last pages viewed, etc.).
 - ii. Facebook/Twitter: On a **bi-weekly** basis, review social media follows, likes, shares and commentary; evaluate which posts/tweets get the most visibility. Track percentages of positive, negative and neutral commentary by users.
 - iii. Enewsletters (public): On a **monthly** basis, track sign-up, open and bounce rates; evaluate which articles/features are most read and enhance future communication themes accordingly.
 - iv. Staff CAO update and Grey's Vine: On a **monthly** basis, track opens, click-throughs, downloads.
 - v. Media: On a **monthly** basis, collect and evaluate media coverage in terms of number of stories, type of coverage (positive/negative) and how on-message/on-brand they are.
 - vi. Engagement: Keep record of and measure on a **quarterly** basis, growth in the number of inquiries from citizens, Council, municipalities, media, partners and other target audiences as a result of a direct communication; monitor themes and tone of inquiries.
 - vii. Staff and public surveys (**yearly**).
 - viii. Events: Track number of events and on a **yearly** basis, evaluate attendees and event feedback (through at-event survey).

- ix. Departmental: On a **yearly** basis, evaluate increase in requests of Communications, adoption of Communication templates and recommendations (via downloads from Grey Docs and general policing by Communications department); monitor themes and tone of inquiries.
- x. Training: On a **yearly** basis, evaluate number of sessions, attendees and event feedback (through at-event survey).
- xi. Partners: Connect with key partners **yearly** to gauge effectiveness of activity