

COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

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CITY OF
PRINCE GEORGE

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ABOUT OUR COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Communications and engagement is important to the City of Prince George. Putting plans in place to inform and engage our residents, businesses, and partners is the key to achieving our strategic priorities – and meeting the needs of our community.

This Communications and Engagement Strategy provides the roadmap for the what, why, when, who, and how we will continue to inform our community and seek their input on matters that are important. It lays the strategic framework to achieve transparent, timely, accurate, and meaningful communications and engagement with our community.

What we heard

The approaches, ways, and means of communications in this plan are based on feedback from the City's recent Community Communications Surveys (random sample and online), the online Staff Communications Survey, council's recently developed Strategic Priorities, and supporting documentation. These informative documents stress the collective desire for open, inclusive, and effective communications and engagement.

Key points from what we heard and have taken into account in creating this strategy include:

- Provide clear, consistent, and meaningful information on topics that matter.
- Improve transparency by engaging our community sooner in the decision-making process.
- Provide more opportunities to listen and provide meaningful input, as well as learning how the input was used in decision-making.
- Continue to deliver a digital approach to communications.

Our communications and engagement strategy

Taking this valuable feedback into account, this Communications and Engagement Strategy takes a community-centered approach. The actions listed within are intended to help us organize and deliver for success. This includes a variety of communications tools, channels, and strategies including the use of media, social media, paid advertising, print materials, surveys and feedback channels, and community relations, with a focus on the popular digital channels identified in the surveys such as local online news, social media, and the City's apps.

This strategy leans on principles for excellence in communications and follows the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum and Guiding Principles for Public Participation to help guide recommendations for informing and engaging as detailed in the City’s Public Participation Toolkit.

Monitoring and measuring data are also important as annual goals and benchmarks are set, issues and opportunities addressed, and successes celebrated.

Most importantly, the actions in this report are designed to align with council’s Strategic Priorities and the City’s communications policy’s guiding principles – ensuring we deliver on our goal to provide information in a timely, transparent, accurate, consistent, and appropriate manner. ¹

The strategy is also to be considered a ‘living’ document as we seek to learn more about what works best, so we can continuously improve how we communicate and engage our vibrant and keen community.

Communications defined

Communications, also known as public relations, can be defined as: “the strategic management of relationships between an organization and its diverse publics, or stakeholders, through the use of communication, to achieve mutual understanding, realize organizational goals and serve the public interest.”

Public engagement and participation defined

We engage our citizens with every call, contact, or interaction. We also seek their input on decisions that matter, in keeping with the core values of the International Association of Public Participation. In summary, we believe that people impacted by a decision have the right to be part of, and even influence the decision-making process, providing they have opportunities to contribute and meaningful information and opportunity to do so.

International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Core Values



¹ [City of Prince George Communication Policy, council approved, July 11, 2022](#)

WHY THIS MATTERS

In today's rapidly evolving citizen landscape, effective communication and robust public engagement and participation are not just beneficial – they are essential for local governments. Prioritizing these elements is crucial for our City's success and the well-being of our community.

Enhancing decision-making

Improving communication and engagement with the public leads to better outcomes across various aspects of city governance – from project and community planning, policy development, program implementation to service delivery. The BC Auditor General's report on public participation found “the vast majority of Canadians surveyed indicated they would feel better about government decision-making if they knew the government sought informed input from average citizens on a regular basis.”² By emphasizing a two-way communication model, we can better inform decision-making by providing the community with the information and the opportunities for meaningful participation.

Building trust in local government

Trust in government institutions has been declining, influenced by factors ranging from pandemic mandates to socio-economic disparities. According to the Proof Strategies 2023 Report, trust in government has seen a significant drop in Canada since before the pandemic. For the City of Prince George, this means actively working to rebuild and maintain public trust through clear, honest, and timely communication. The quality of our reputation can impact our ability to secure the community's support for our initiatives, with the potential to help or hinder our progress.

This is critically important with the growing challenges of the social issues in our city, similar to what other communities across Canada are experiencing with homelessness, mental health, and drug addiction. This is being felt city-wide, with the majority of impacts taking place in the downtown core. It is a pressing concern for citizens, cited as the biggest issues our city faces in all three surveys (random sample, online, and staff).

Like these other BC municipalities, the City needs to work collaboratively with the agencies that hold primary responsibility for housing and health, such as BC Housing and Northern Health. This situation becomes complex when it comes to communicating

² [Public Participation Best Practices, BC Auditor General](#)

the extent of the City's involvement or actions. Balancing the desire and the need to do more with the limited scope of the City's role, amidst public expectations, presents a challenge that can impact trust-building efforts.

Mitigating misinformation and enhancing public participation

A well-planned communication strategy helps manage and address misinformation, reduce misunderstandings, and the potential for conflict. By involving a diverse range of voices in the decision-making process, we make decisions that are more likely to meet the community's needs, thereby increasing their effectiveness and transparency in the process.

Employee engagement and organizational reputation

Employees are the backbone of any organization, and this is especially true for local governments. By keeping our employees well-informed and engaged, we can boost their morale and enhance their ability to act as ambassadors for the City. High employee morale is crucial for retention and productivity, directly impacting our financial and operational success and public image.

Economic efficiency

Effective communication is more than a matter of informing and engaging our community – it has tangible economic implications. According to professional assessments, every hour spent on proactive communication planning can save up to 10 hours in dealing with issues later. Strategic communication leads to cost-effective decision-making and prevents the need for expensive 'do-overs.'

The role of technology and information in governance

The advent of digital technologies like social media, and artificial intelligence has transformed how information is disseminated and consumed. For local governments, this means navigating new challenges in ensuring that citizens receive the right information at the right time, feel heard, and see their input reflected in city plans. However, with these challenges come opportunities to make decision-making more inclusive and transparent as misinformation and disinformation can undermine communications. All the more reason to strategically plan to be more proactive with communications.

Reflecting community aspirations and values

The feedback from our Community and Staff Communications Surveys underscores the importance of communications for Prince George's residents. Our community clearly wants to be informed and engaged, reflecting a broader desire for transparency and participation in local governance. Our strategy is aligned with these expectations, aiming to create an informed, engaged, and vibrant Prince George that lives up to its reputation as the BC Northern Capital – a place we are all proud to call home.

“ You can have brilliant ideas, but if you can't get them across, your ideas won't get you anywhere.
- Lee Iacocca, Former Executive and Thought Leader ”

OUR NORTH STAR

Principles that guide our communications

The following principles are the foundation of our plan and guide how we design, implement, and evaluate our communications. They are based on feedback from our community, our council, and our team. They are drawn from the City's Communications Policy.

Guiding principles

1. Provide information that is timely, accurate, clear, accessible, and responsive.
2. Consider the range of communication tools at our disposal and use those most appropriate to address the needs associated with each circumstance.
3. Work collaboratively across the organization to ensure that information is thorough, factual, and timely.
4. Respect the access to information and privacy rights of citizens and employees.
5. Support opportunities for engagement to inform public policy.
6. Strive to achieve a culture of two-way communication and communications excellence practices.

Inclusive and accessible

In keeping with BC legislation for accessibility and best practice, we strive to provide communications that is inclusive and in plain language, accessible to all.

A Commitment to continuous improvement

We will continually listen, learn, and improve our communications and engagement as we go. We will explore new effective and cost-efficient ways, including pilot projects, to inform and involve our community to create a Prince George we can all be proud of.

METHODOLOGY

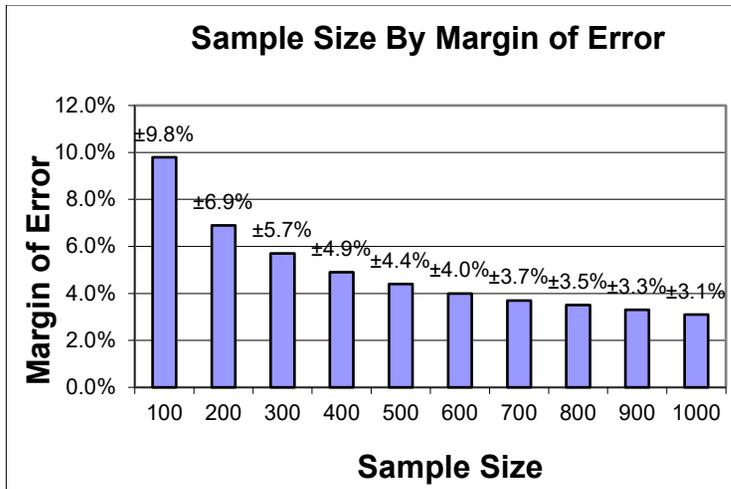
The recommended actions and ideas in this report are primarily based on the data from three recent surveys as well as best practices in communications and engagement. The three data sources are:

- A statistically representative random sample mail survey undertaken by the Discovery Research, leaders in local government research.
- An online self-selected survey, available through SurveyMonkey, administered by the City of Prince George.
- A staff survey, also available through SurveyMonkey and administered by the City.

The following information was provided by Discovery Research.

Random sample mail survey: random sample of City of Prince George citizens

A random sample of 1,100 Prince George residents were mailed a survey in July 2023. The random sample was generated such that each residence had an equal opportunity of being selected for the research. 223 surveys were mailed back, giving a response rate of **20%**. These survey respondents were selected through a random process, which is a critical aspect for statistical validity and representativeness.



This bar graph displays the margin of error associated with various sample sizes.

Statistics generated from a sample size of 223 will be accurate within ±6.5%, at the 95% confidence interval (19 times out of 20).

Online survey: self-selected participation

In addition to a mail survey, an online survey was made available to ensure that residents who were interested in this important topic had the opportunity to be heard.

To that end, the City posted an equivalent online version of the survey on their engagement platform. In total, 527 surveys were completed in entirety. Since the online survey is a non-probability sample, a margin of error is not reported. Unlike the random sample mail survey, online survey results must be interpreted with caution because of the self-selection bias inherent in the online methodology. Online respondents are more likely than mail respondents to feel strongly motivated to comment on City services. Online respondents seek out the online survey instrument to provide feedback. Mail respondents are more passive in how they were approached to do the survey and are randomly selected and are more representative of the overall population of Prince George. As a result of self-selection bias, satisfaction ratings generated from the online survey are slightly less favourable than mail results.

Survey promotion

An extensive public campaign ran from July 19th to August 14, 2023 promoting the mail survey and the online survey to ensure all citizens had the opportunity to participate. The campaign was announced via a news release³, posted on the website, advertised on the radio, and promoted extensively on the City's social media. Participation in the random sample mail survey was encouraged with a draw for Visa gift cards. See Appendix 2 for complete list of activities.

Staff communications survey

City staff were also offered the opportunity to provide their insights on external communications in a separate online survey. Promoted to staff through internal email and internet channels, there were 116 responses. Information from this survey was reviewed as part of the development of this strategy. The City has a separate communications plan that addresses internal communications.

³ [City of Prince George Survey News Release](#)

FROM INSPIRATION TO ACTION

Goals, objectives, and actions for success

The approaches, goals, objectives, and actions listed below will help us turn our inspiration into actions to communicate our strategic priorities, projects, and initiatives. Specifically, our communications and engagement goals align with several of Council's Strategic Priorities including:

- Focus on meaningful communication and relationship development to advance shared priorities.
- Continue to improve processes and practices to support effective and efficient service delivery.
- Market Prince George as a place to invest, live, and visit.
- Maximize the quality of life for all residents.
- Ensure a safe, healthy, and clean community for all, including supporting advocacy efforts and service delivery for homelessness and public safety strategies.

Detailed background information and actions to better inform and engage the community are outlined later in this report under Tools, Channels, and Strategies.

Digital first approach

This Strategy reflects a 'Digital First' approach to communications and engagement using digital as the primary means to share information and engage citizens. However, it is important to note, it is not a 'digital only' approach. Additional channels such as print that are appropriate for the project and the audience should be considered in the communications and engagement planning process.

What is a digital first approach?

Digital First prioritizes digital channels for disseminating information and engaging with the public. It involves using websites, social media platforms, subscription emails, mobile apps, and other online tools, as identified in the surveys, as primary means of communication. The approach focuses on leveraging digital technologies to reach and engage with community members

more effectively and efficiently. Traditional forms of outreach such as posters,, radio, and newspapers would also be used based on the purpose, target audiences, and available resources to achieve the optimal mix.

Why digital first?

Trust: A digital communications strategy is essential for local governments to remain effective, relevant, responsive, and timely in today's digital age. Digital forms of communications increase the ability to provide a timely response as well as monitor feedback. It enhances the reach and efficiency of communications and also fosters greater engagement, transparency, and trust with the community.⁴ It's how Canadians are consuming content according to the Reuter Institute's Digital News Report 2023: online news (including social media) is the source of news for 69% of Canadians, compared to 14% for print.⁵

Well-used: Locally, the metrics from the City's social media insights data shows strong growth in the use of our social media platforms, especially Facebook since the adoption of our social media strategy in 2021. The following shows the steady increase in followers as only one metric used to track usage.

PAGE	CHANNEL	# OF FOLLOWERS - DEC. 31, 2022	# OF FOLLOWERS - DEC. 31, 2023	% CHANGE
CITY OF PRINCE GEORGE	Facebook	17,946	21,007	17%
	Instagram	6,554	7,764	18%
	Twitter	5,625	5,759	2%
	LinkedIn	4,033	4,675	16%
	YouTube	1,370	1,550	13%
CN CENTRE	Facebook	16,231	18,630	15%
	Instagram	1,237	1,449	17%
MOVE UP PG	Facebook	6,000	6,100	2%
	Instagram	1,757	1,857	6%
	Twitter	971	1037	7%
INVEST PG	Facebook	1000	1,400	40%
	Twitter	2,414	2,414	0

Figure 1: City of Prince George 2023 Social Media Insight Metrics

⁴ [GovPilot: Digital Innovation in Local Government](#)

⁵ [Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023](#)

Even more telling, the engagement metrics (i.e., comments, shares, link clicks, etc.) are an indication that our audience is connecting with our content. For example, according to Hootsuite, a global leader in social media management, the average engagement rate on Facebook for a page in the government sector is 1.62%.⁶ By comparison, in 2023 City of Prince George Facebook page had an average engagement rate of 8.1%, representing 417,457 total post engagements. See Appendices for complete 2023 City of Prince George Social Media Data.

Overall most popular preferred channels: Overall, digital channels (the City’s social media and local online news) were the top two most popular channels.

On average, the City’s social media was the most popular choice for preferred ways to get information about City of Prince George services and programs at 50%. It was the top choice for people aged 19-39 at 67% and second for the 40-64 age group at 45% (after local online news and radio tied at 48%). Notably it was fourth for people aged 65+ at 29% (after local TV news at 59% and local online news and newspaper tied at 44%). Overall the City’s social media was even more popular in the online survey at 58%. Local online news was second most popular choice across all age groups.

While the sample size for the individual demographic differences needs to be interpreted with caution due to their size, they do provide a snapshot of preferences that can offer insights and some direction for consideration. For example, according to Discovery Research, it is not uncommon to see demographic differences in preferences for the use of social media.

Digital First but not Digital Only: While the City’s social media metrics data and the survey responses show an overall preference for digital channels, it is important to recognize that this is a ‘digital first’ but not a ‘digital only’ approach. Given the differences in demographic popularity of the City’ social media for example, it will continue to be important to assess the project, define the audience, and choose the optimum mix of channels in addition to the use of digital ones. Planning for communication and engagement as part of City projects will be key to ensuring the right channels are used to reach the right audience.

Connected: Given the high use rate of our social media, it is an excellent ‘ear to the ground’ source of information about what is happening in the community. This information can be used to better inform corporate insights on areas that are of interest and important to our community.

⁶ [Hootsuite Engagement Rates 2023](#)

The digital first approach

The success of the Digital First approach is written into the existing City-wide social media strategy and hinges on:

- Conveying purposeful and educational information in a humorous and engaging tone.
- Responding promptly to questions and in particular correcting misinformation.
- Monitoring comments and conversations to provide insights for operational, planning, and leadership consideration.
- Engaging divisions' staff to provide the background information necessary to enable prompt and accurate information is shared.
- Embracing a culture of humanity, locality, and humility – we are all residents of our community and treat it with care.
- Using digital channels to convey information or seek input as required.
- Combining digital with traditional channels and tools as planned to achieve the best reach and response.

This approach is foundational to the delivery of the goals, objectives, and actions laid out in this plan.

Goal 1: Organize for success

Support and encourage meaningful communications and community engagement and participation

In response to both the statistically representative random sample mail survey and the self-selected online survey, public participation matters to our community. While the City has a robust Public Participation Toolkit, a number of actions can help boost our ability to inform and engage in response to the survey findings.

When it comes to opportunities for public input, in the random sample mail survey, 54% indicated they were satisfied with opportunities for public input, yet 38% reported they do not feel the City listens to their feedback. In the online survey, the numbers were more pronounced: 32% indicated they were satisfied with opportunities for public input and 54% reported they do not feel the City listens to their feedback. In both the random mail and online survey, using online surveys was the top choice for providing input.

When it comes to feeling informed about City services, overall, people reported feeling less informed. In the random sample mail survey, only 20% agreed or strongly agreed they felt well-informed, and in the online survey the number was 28%.

Enhancing our capacity to inform and engage our community through targeted communication and engagement planning can help address gaps in information delivery. Opportunities to increase awareness include the use of the overall preferred channels such as the City's social media, local online news, and the City's apps. When asked about other channels, more than half of respondents in both surveys indicated interest in a City email newsletter.

Reporting out on what we heard in our public participation campaigns will also help increase awareness of our services and programs, and importantly how citizens' input was considered in the decision-making process. Research and best practices show that transparency in the process is key to maintaining trust and respect and is foundational for building strong relationships between local governments and communities.^{7 8}

⁷ [DigitalGov](#)

⁸ [International City / County Managers Association](#)

Objective 1.1: Organize for success by ensuring communications and engagement opportunities are planned, coordinated, and promoted.

Actions:

- Increase the use of annual communication plans, and more specific project and event communications and public participation plans that clearly identify the purpose and level of public participation, ensure audiences and impacts are identified and assessed, opportunities for input or feedback are identified, appropriate channels selected, materials developed and distributed, and appropriate budgets established.
- Consider a variety of tools and channels when planning communications to maximize reach with a focus on digital first, and specifically select those best suited and/or preferred by that audience (e.g., seniors, youth). (See Tools, Channels, and Strategies section for details).
- Collaborate on opportunities for communications and public participation via staff team meetings and council as part of the communication planning process, including establishing a process for providing the city manager and council advance notice of activities, events, and issues. This could include a Communication and Engagement Report to provide updates for council and division staff on communications and engagement initiatives to increase awareness of City activities and initiatives. See Appendix 4 for sample template.
- Establish a system to identify issues, options for timely resolution, and monitoring for escalation or success at the staff and council level. Consider an Issues Management Register to coordinate potentially impactful division activities with communications. See Appendices for instructions and sample register.
- Maintain a city-wide list of key partners and interested parties such as the Downtown Business Association, First Nations, Northern Health, BC Housing, and Provincial contacts. This can also be used to provide project updates and reporting out on projects as identified in a Communications and Engagement Plan and/or a campaign.
- Create and maintain an internal **Calendar of Key Events (as identified in the Internal Communications Plan)** for council and/or staff member participation to enhance our coordination, accessibility, and strengthen ties to our community.
- Develop a **Crisis Communications Plan** for managing issues, crises, and emergency response.
- Foster a culture of communications by ensuring it is part of every capital project, operational plan, and council staff reports. Communications should be considered in all things.



Objective 1.2: Provide multiple opportunities to keep our community informed and engaged in a timely, accurate, meaningful, and professional way using channels preferred by our community.

Actions:

- Enhance communications with emphasis on using the community’s preferred digital channels: the City’s social media, local online news, and the City’s apps, and expanding to other channels to target specific audiences.
- Continue to maximize the City’s award-winning social media channels to inform, educate, and engage the online community. Overall, the City’s social media and local online news were identified as the top two preferred ways to receive City information in both the statistically representative and online surveys.
- Ensure clear, consistent, and timely information updates are provided using the City’s regular digital channels of communications such as the Prince George subscribers emails, the website, and social media (see Tools, Channels, and Strategies section).
- Explore the potential for a city-wide enewsletter to provide consistent and proactive updates to the community, based on the level of interest. In the random mail survey, two-thirds of respondents indicated their interest in a City email newsletter.
- Use the appropriate tool or method to seek input, based on the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum as identified in the City’s Public Participation Toolkit. Use this handy guide to help identify levels of public participation on when we need to inform and when we are able to engage, and conclusions and actions/decisions are reported back to the community. Consider adding the IAP2 Spectrum to council staff reports to ensure the level of participation is clearly identified.
- Increase visibility of the Get Involved page on the City’s website as a one-stop for all engagement projects such as the Civic Core, the Budget consultation, and the Official Community Plan.
- In keeping with best practice, report out on public participation findings using multiple channels to help ensure the community is informed about the process and outcomes, and how their feedback was considered in the decision-making process if applicable.
- Continue to maintain the Fact Check feature on the website, including sharing links to updates on social media and other appropriate channels (i.e., an enewsletter for example).
- Consider specific targeted campaigns that use a wide range of communications tools and channels for announcing and/or reporting out. For example, a campaign can highlight the release of the informative Annual Report, with a focus

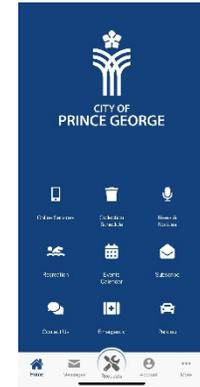


Figure 2; City of Prince George App

on where to find it, in response to survey findings that only about three-quarters of random sample mail survey respondents read it. A further 40% of online survey respondents don't read it because they don't know where to find it.

- Develop a culture of listening by responding quickly and accurately to questions and comments on platforms such as social media and taking appropriate actions when necessary. For example, if there is overwhelming number of comments on dissatisfaction with a City service consider further public participation activities to determine the extent and nature of the concerns.

Objective 1.3: Boost the ability of our team to provide open, accessible, transparent, and community-centered communications.

Actions:

- Expand the use of the City's **Public Participation Toolkit** with enhanced training for key staff and council (if desired).
- Engage project leads in the Digital First approach to boost their ability to provide the most current and accurate information that can be shared in a timely and responsive manner.
- Enable project leads to prepare and share project updates, key messages, or briefing notes with the latest information for a consistent message on major projects or initiatives for both internal and external audiences.
- Provide training on topics that may include communication planning, issues management, presentation skills, plain language, social media and media relations and response for subject matter experts as designated by the city manager.
- Provide orientation for key staff responsible for using collaboration and coordination tools, such as the internal Calendar of Events or the Issues management Register.
- Provide training for key department ambassadors to identify content for social media, news releases, and website updates.
- Continue to use templates for council and other reports including communications plans and public participation plans.
- Increase internal use of branded templates for ease of use, such as posters, flyers, brochures, project updates.
- Continue implementation of the **Internal Communications Plan** to enhance how information is received and shared within and between departments, that front-line staff are well-informed, and to build on a culture of being an inclusive, responsive, and engaging workplace.

Goal 2: Build connections

Build and strengthen trusted relationships with our community and our partners

Fostering a culture of effective communications and engagement encompasses every contact with our community members, First Nations, agencies, and others. From answering a phone call to undertaking a community-wide consultation, it comes down to being able to connect with our audiences so we can share information, seek input, and address comments and concerns.

About half of both survey respondents indicated they were satisfied with accessibility to City council members and a slight majority were satisfied with accessibility to staff. In the random sample mail survey, 70% of respondents were either very satisfied (29%) or somewhat satisfied (41%) with staff customer service. Building those relationships, even one call at a time, can help increase transparency and accountability.

Objective 2.1: Build trust and strengthen relationships by responding promptly to requests for information and proactively identifying and addressing issues.

Actions:

- Confirm procedures for responding to requests for information and residents' questions and concerns regardless of the platform used. For example, a comment received on the City's social media platforms requires an operational or technical response that can be posted by communications staff on the City's social media platforms.
- Flag potential concerns for the proposed Issues Management Register. Include how the outcomes are being shared with the public and or key parties.
- Plan to report out on findings, including the use of explainer videos on social media that address some of the more topical and/or complex concerns. This requires the support of division staff to provide the appropriate content for the response.

Objective 2.2 Tap into community insights with increased engagement opportunities.

Actions:

- Continue to promote the Super Citizens subscriber list of interested individuals who would be willing to provide their input on City matters via email. In the online survey, 179 respondents signed up to receive emails with links to future surveys and engagement opportunities.
- Host bi-annual promotional campaigns to encourage more citizens to participate, including a permanent link to the Get Involved page on the City's webpage and intranet.
- Where possible, get a picture of participants to share on the City's web and social media as a way to encourage others to join.
- Send welcome messages and information to new subscribers on what to expect (rules of engagement/charter), and how to share in case others also want to join.

Objective 2.2: Expand council outreach with planned, coordinated, and supported communications about City business as a way to share information, listen to citizens, and increase understanding of our community's interests.

Actions:

- Increase promotion of the existing Council Summary.
- Explore a plan for expanding outreach about City business via the mayor and council, such as having council members share City's news and information on their social media platforms or at community gatherings as a way to enhance our City's presence and strengthen ties to our community.

Objective 2.3: Stay connected with key regional, provincial, and federal partners.

Actions:

- Host regular or as-needed meetings with key contacts.
- Provide advance notice for urgent, emerging, or sensitive issues.
- Add to email distribution lists to ensure they receive any major project updates.
- Participate with partners on special events such as ribbon cutting, event opening ceremonies, etc.
- Work with their communications team on joint announcements.
- Ensure local partners are informed of all community engagement opportunities.

Goal 3: Expand our reach

Leverage community connections for delivery of a consistent and responsive message

Having other trusted sources share our message helps ensure messages are consistently and effectively conveyed and also strengthens the relationship between local governments and communities. This approach is integral to fostering trust and enhancing the effectiveness of community projects and initiatives.⁹ Having others help spread the word can increase awareness, reach new audiences, and better manage potential issues.

This also includes leveraging division-owned communications channels such as Economic Development and CN newsletters to inform the community and amplify the message, reducing the potential for duplication, increasing message consistency, and cost. For example, using the City's social media to share Economic Development videos can showcase amenities that benefit residents and prospective residents and businesses, in keeping with council Values of Civic Pride.

Canadian research company Proof Strategies' annual trust report shows friends and family in the top three most trusted sources of reliable information.¹⁰ With the City's social media being the most popular of all the preferred channels overall, leveraging conversations in community social media pages is worth considering as a way to share information. Community social media pages were identified as the sixth most popular option, at 31% in the random sample mail survey. While participating in these community forums is time consuming and challenging to manage with multiple conversations in progress, finding opportunities to access these community sites can help with the delivery of a consistent and accurate message.

Objective 3.1 Share a consistent message on all division-owned communications channels (i.e., division newsletters, materials, promotional campaigns).

Actions:

- Provide public information and branded updates for division channels as appropriate.
- Leverage City-owned channels such as social media and digital monitors to amplify divisions content (e.g., Economic Development video showcasing pride in the community).

⁹ [ICMA](#)

¹⁰ [Proof Strategies CanTrust Index](#)

- Liaise with divisions' content creators to optimize the use of marketing and production tools to increase efficiency, reduce duplication and cost.

Objective 3.2 Share a consistent message via partner channels.

Actions:

- Provide public information and branded updates for community groups and interested parties such as the Downtown Business Association or neighbourhood associations to share on their communications channels. For example, updates and/or social media posts on topics identified as important to the community, such as the work being done by council to advocate for housing and health services that are the responsibility of other agencies such as BC Housing and Northern Health.
- Provide project updates or key messages with the latest information on major projects for partners to share on their networks.
- Share partner agency social media posts where informative, appropriate, and/or aligned with City's priorities.
- Support for participation at partners's events where possible.
- Report back on community perspectives at meetings with council, the city manager, and/or project leads.

Objective 3.3: Expand our reach via community Facebook page administrators.

Actions:

- Build relationships with community Facebook page administrators as a way to provide timely, accurate, and relevant information without posting on these private pages directly and to extend the reach of the City's social media.
- Make contact with administrators offline via phone and/or in-person to better understand and identify how we can assist them in their goal to provide information to their followers.
- Ensure prompt response to requests for information, and proactively identifying and addressing issues.

Goal 4: Amplify our message

Build and strengthen trusted relationships with our local media to help ensure our coverage is accurate, timely, and useful for both our media and their audience

Media relations are indispensable tools for local governments, playing a critical role in shaping public perception, fostering transparency, and ensuring informed and engaged citizenship. Maintaining positive relations by being responsive with timely and accurate information can help ensure the right message is shared broadly. This involves garnering earned media coverage, through tools such as news releases and or opportunities for event coverage. To ensure a consistent message, paid advertising is also recommended, especially for those preferred channels identified in both surveys, such as local online news for example.

Local media coverage is well-received, with 77% of random sample mail survey respondents indicating they were very (9%) or somewhat satisfied (68%).

Objective 4.1: Continue to be proactive and responsive to our local media, ensuring we provide the accurate and timely information they need to tell the story and garner earned media coverage.

Actions:

- Continue to respond promptly to requests for information from the media.
- Identify and enable the appropriate media spokesperson such as the mayor or the city manager, or others trained and designated as subject matter experts as best meets the needs of the interview.
- Prepare key messages and public information to support the media inquiry and/or interview as required.
- Continue to provide news releases, media advisories, photos, videos, and interviews as appropriate.
- Meet with media to identify opportunities for interviews, feature stories, and/or provide any background.
- Monitor responses via media, social media, our staff, as well as via feedback from council to proactively correct misinformation and address as needed.
- Provide media training and interview support for subject matter experts, mayor and council as identified.
- Confirm the process for handling misinformation and crisis communications.

Objective 4.2 Ensure a consistent message using strategic advertising placements as required.

Action:

- Identify opportunities where advertising is required to ensure that the City's message is delivered consistently across channels, especially if the potential for miscommunication or misinterpretation exists.
- Develop a procedure to provide general guidance on when and where to advertise, with a focus on preferred channels identified in the community communications surveys such as online news, radio, and TV.
- Include potential advertising spending as part of communications planning with division contacts for specific and necessary projects.

Goal 5: Assess our impact

Monitor, measure, and adjust our communications as needed to ensure we are continuously improving our practice

Monitoring and measuring communication efforts enable local governments to refine strategies, enhance transparency and trust, and ensure effective engagement with both internal and external invested parties.¹¹ Monitoring is a necessary and key step in community engagement, determining how a particular message was received for example. It is foundational to managing issues and addressing concerns proactively.

Communications is critical to the success of local government operations; approximately one third of capital projects fail due to lack of or poor communications.¹² Given the importance of communications to service delivery, ensuring we are delivering the right message, to the right audience, using the right channels, at the right time is key.

Objective 5.1: Use what works best for our community.

Actions:

- Ensure measurements and metrics encompass the preferred channels identified in the recent communications surveys.
- Consider an annual random sample **Citizen Satisfaction Survey** for all City services to include questions about levels of service, as well as the opportunity to benchmark communications and engagement preferences.
- Promote the Citizen Satisfaction Survey as a campaign, using all channels, including attending events as identified in the **Calendar of Key Events** to gather feedback in-person using an iPad and print copies.
- Report out on findings.

Objective 5.2: Evaluate success and adjust for continuous improvement.

¹¹ [City/County Communications & Marketing Association](#)

¹² [PMI \(2013\). The Essential Role of Communications.](#)

Actions:

- Identify objectives and key performance indicators for campaigns, current, and future channels that may be adopted (e.g., podcasts, vlogs).
- Track metrics for owned digital channels such as website, social media, and subscription emails, newsletters (as applicable).
- Track earned and paid digital channels such as subscription metrics, radio and print demographics and reach.
- Monitor feedback received for trends and opportunities to address, including comments on social media.
- Identify opportunities to report out on the campaign metrics both internally and externally.

ABOUT THE CITY OF PRINCE GEORGE

Who we are and who we serve

Communications and engagement support

Communications and engagement at the City of Prince George is mainly delivered by a small and nimble team of four with a variety of skill sets. It is supported by council, subject matter experts and Project Leads who are trained as City spokespersons as needed. While additional communications and engagement activities envisioned in this plan may require additional resources, at this time the team undertakes the following:

- Prepare and execute strategic communication and engagement plans.
- Media relations such as news releases, media interview preparation, key messages, media monitoring and responding to media enquiries, correcting incorrect information that has been published, and maintaining open lines of communications with the media.
- Marketing communications, such as advertisements, print and online information, graphic design, both internal and external websites.
- City social media management, social media monitoring including working closely with the City divisions on content that can be shared proactively and/or in response to comments and questions.
- Brand and visual identity management.
- Photography and videography.
- Publication management such as the Annual Report.
- Crisis and emergency communications.
- Issues management and response.
- Speaking notes and presentation preparation

subject matter experts and project leads are responsible for assisting with and/or delivering public participation plans and processes for their projects.

Mayor and council provide information through their community connections and social media where applicable, in addition to the promotion of council meetings, agendas, and summaries through the media, website and social media.

Additional support as needed for major projects or areas of specific expertise such as training, or communication planning, website tools, design of posters, flyers, etc. would be required for some of the action items included in this report.

Who we serve

In March of 2023, the City of Prince George turned 108 years old, boasting a population of 76,708.13 with approximately 59,000 adults. Centrally located with a diverse economy, the City has emerged as BC's Northern Capital. With a variety of recreational facilities and a diversity of amenities and tourist attractions, our municipality combines the benefits of small city living with the service provision of larger urban centres.

The average age in the City of Prince George is 39.4 while British Columbia's average age is 42.3 years. Moreover, 38.6% of Prince George residents are 24 years old or younger. Given North America's ageing population, Prince George is positioned to provide a productive and competitive workforce in the coming years.

Our mission is to ensure that Prince George continues to be a preferred place to live, work and play. Whether you're a developer or business owner, a prospective home buyer looking for a friendly neighbourhood, or a couple looking to retire, our community has something for everyone.

¹³ [Statcan 2016 Census Information](#)

OUR COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Who we need to reach

We will continue to build and strengthen our connections with our audiences – our community, partners, agencies, First Nations, and governments as one of our strategic priorities. This starts at the project planning phase where we assess the impact of our actions – what it means and how we can best connect, communicate, and engage in ways that are relevant, inclusive, and meaningful.

Target audiences

The following is an initial list of key contacts we strive to reach with our communications and engagement activities, such as residents, businesses, and community groups. This list is a starting point and would be tailored to meet the communication needs for a specific project or purpose. For example, residents may also be targeted according to impact, such as those who live closest to a proposed development or by demographics, such as youth or seniors. A robust list of target audience considerations is included on page 9 of the City's Public Participation Toolkit (See Appendices).

Our community

- Residents (e.g., by demographic such as youth and seniors, by housing such as single-family homes or multi-family homes, those impacted directly, etc.)

- Businesses (e.g., by size, impact, location, impact, etc.)

- Property owners

- Individuals who work, shop, or play and enjoy the City of Prince George

Community groups

- Neighbourhood associations

- Service clubs

- Seniors' associations and groups

- Youth associations and clubs

- Sports and recreation groups

- Community advocacy groups

- Community groups, including online social media groups

Cultural, arts, symphony, and other interest organizations
Advocacy groups
Environmental groups
Volunteers

Business community

Businesses
Prince George Downtown Association
Prince George Chamber of Commerce
Developers
Property management companies
Rental associations
Private sector partners
Not-for-profit organizations

Public safety

RCMP
BC Emergency Health Services
BC Wildfire Service

Education

University of Northern BC
College of New Caledonia
School District No. 57 (Prince George)
Parent Advisory Groups
Public schools
Private schools
Preschools
Daycares
Employment-related associations (e.g., Prince George District Teachers Association).

First Nations

Lheidli T'enneh First Nation
Carrier Sekani

Governments and government agencies

Regional District of Fraser Fort George
Area MLAs and MPs
Northern Health Authority
BC Housing
Regional, Provincial and Federal Governments and their agencies

Media

My PG Now
PG Citizen Newspaper (print and online)
CBC Radio Daybreak North
CKPG TV
Popular local blogs and newsletters

City of Prince George (Corporation)*

Mayor and City Council
Employees
Project Teams
Fire and Rescue Services
Library

**Note communications for these internal audiences are included in the City's Internal Communications Plan, developed in 2022.*

OUR MESSAGE

Sharing a consistent message

Message consistency is key, especially in our digital world where almost everyone has the ability to create content and share broadly online. It is our responsibility to ensure our message is clear, consistent, and compelling as we work to deliver services for the benefit of our community. Consistent key messages are foundational to building trust and respect.

Our Communications team develops key messages for most projects, programs, services, and issues to provide the mayor and council and key staff with the most accurate and relevant information to share.

Here are a few examples of key messages based on council's recent strategic plan.

- We're focusing on improving city government and infrastructure. This means better services and respecting Indigenous rights.
- Our goal is to diversify and grow the economy, updating strategies and highlighting our local strengths.
- Social health and well-being are key. We're working with the agencies responsible for housing and health as we all work towards a safer, healthier community.
- Lastly, we're committed to protecting the environment and taking action on climate change.
- Each part of this plan reflects what we've heard from our community, combining our long-term vision with immediate actions.

CHANNELS OF CHOICE

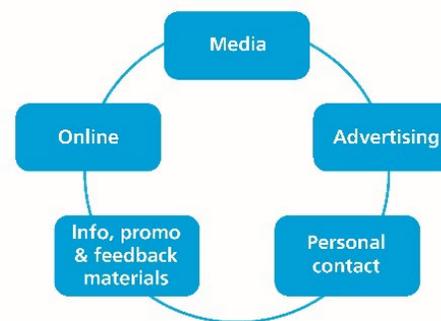
Tools, channels, and strategies to inform and engage

In this age of information overload, it's important to strategically identify the best ways to reach our audiences. For most projects, a combination of tools and channels are often needed to reach as many residents and businesses as possible and with a consistent message. Studies have shown that on average it takes about seven or more impressions of the same message to move your audience from awareness to action.¹⁴

Communications tools and channels

For the purposes of this report, communications channels are categorized into five areas for ease of analysis. The tools and channels chosen should best align with the audience as well as the City's Strategic Priorities and projects, and will vary by project, program, or service. Tools and channels reviewed below include the following.

1. Digital (Owned Channels):
 - a. Social media – Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), and Threads (inactive).
 - b. Websites, apps, email.
2. Media relations for earned media coverage.
3. Paid advertising.
4. Community relations/in-person contact.
5. Materials:
 - a. Informational and promotional materials like project updates, flyers, newsletters, and posters.
 - b. Feedback tools.



A complete list of tools for public participation can be found in the comprehensive Public Participation Toolkit. See Appendix 6.

¹⁴ [Media Training Bible](#)

Other communications models also recognize channels according to the PESO model: Paid, Earned, Shared, and Owned¹⁵ and are also referenced in this report.

Communication strategies

This report also recommends a number of strategies to help improve overall communications including:

- Communications and public participation planning.
- Campaigns.
- Responsiveness and Issues management.
- Mayor and council outreach.
- Super Citizen Panel.
- Team capacity and training.
- Monitoring and measuring.

The following table provides an overview of the City's featured communications channels, survey responses, and potential actions for future consideration.

¹⁵ [PESO Model, Gini Dietrich, Spin Sucks](#)

COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS AND CHANNELS

<p>Digital – social media: Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube.</p>	
Background and findings	Action
<p>Social media is a must have for local governments. Recent Ipsos research shows that it remains popular with 84% of Canadians on Facebook, and that the use of other platforms growing. ¹⁶ It allows local government to join the community conversation, amplifying their message,</p> <p>The City’s Facebook pages have been extremely successful to date with an engagement rate (where people post a reaction, share, or comment), of 8.1% as compared to the average engagement rate on Facebook for a page in the government sector of 1.62% ¹⁷ The notable sense of humour is balanced with educational information about the city. It is a unique approach that has worked well, garnering the City a national award from the Canadian Public Relations Society.</p> <p>Key to the success is the participation of key divisions staff by providing timely and accurate information for content creation. We work closely with staff from economic development, bylaw services, roads, transportation, and parks on social media and marketing strategies to educate the public about important city operations and services.</p>	<p>Continue to maintain the City’s strong social media presence, with a Digital First approach, particularly on Facebook. Continue to monitor for potential issues or areas for attention.</p> <p>Encourage staff to continue to participate by providing pictures, participating in videos, flagging upcoming service changes, providing background how-to knowledge and responding to public questions in keeping with the City’s Social Media Strategy.</p> <p>Encourage council members to help amplify the message by liking and sharing City posts with their audiences on their social media platforms.</p> <p>Continue to work with appropriate and relevant partners’ social media platforms to leverage reach (e.g., UNBC, CNC, Downtown Prince George).</p> <p>Continue to work with Tourism PG on the recently launched initiative to co-manage the Mr. PG Instagram account,</p> <p>In keeping with social media trends¹⁸, continue to use Reels and short form videos to promote the City’s business, and continue to share on other online and electronic platforms (e.g., website, City of Prince George subscribers’ emails, potentially a City email enewsletter, and partners’ platforms). Reels and short form videos are 76% more effective in terms of share of</p>

¹⁶ [IPSOS 2023 Social Media Usage Study](#)

¹⁷ [Hootsuite Engagement Rates 2023](#)

¹⁸ [Social Media Today](#)

Digital – social media:

Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube.

Background and findings

This work is supported by a comprehensive Social Media Strategy with staff procedures to ensure consistency in use.

Recently, we partnered with Tourism Prince George on a initiative to co-manage the Mr. PG Instagram account, which has been dormant since April 2021.

Moving forward this will continue to be an important communications channel, in addition to others as needed. Both the mail and online surveys show that overall the City’s social media was the most popular preferred channel for how Prince George citizens want to receive information from the City at about 50%.

While the City has main City social media channels there are also some division social media pages managed by divisions such as CN Centre, Civic Centre, and Economic Development.

See Appendix 12 for the City of Prince George Social Media Stats 2023 for details on each platform.

Action

impressions compared to long-form videos. Campaigns featuring Reels delivered 20% higher effectiveness compared to campaigns with other video formats.

Use social media to promote opportunities to showcase customer service wins, ongoing operations, and special events. Activities include:

- Posting, responding to questions, comments.
- Sharing posts.
- Use of videos, photos, and visuals.
- Engage with others.
- Follow and share partners’ sites.
- Maintain the positive, informal, fun, and awarding-winning friendly tone.
- Monitor and respond to comments and questions as necessary.

Continue to repurpose content to other channels such as the Prince George subscription News emails, and (potentially) a City newsletter to ensure other ‘owned’ channels remain relevant.

Continue to monitor the social media landscape for future opportunities as resources allow. This could include the use of podcasts or vlogs to bolster communications outreach.

Consider eliminating underperforming divisional social media pages and leveraging the wider audience on the City’s main channels instead to improve reach.

Digital – website, apps, email

Electronic communications include the City’s owned channels such as the website, mobile apps, email distribution, City News and Notices subscription emails, digital monitors at City hall and the two pools, and potentially a City email newsletter.

Background and findings

Prince George has a crisp, colourful, accessible, and user-friendly website, updated in 2023. It should be considered as the one-stop source of information about the City. It is used to host the latest information and provide the links that can be used on social media and other electronic communication. Including links in emails and social media posts is an especially useful tool that allows staff and council members to direct citizens to accurate information with ease and ensure a consistent message. This also encourages residents to seek accurate information on the City’s channels as a first-choice which will help dispel misinformation.

The City has two mobile apps which were the third most popular of preferred ways to get information about the City services. There is an internal Digital Governance Team that manages all our digital assets. The Information Technology division manages the technology, while communications staff work with the divisions’ staff to obtain the content.

Given that the Prince George mobile apps are the third most preferred communications channels, ensuring the content and links are current and easy to find are key. While not statistically representative, there were a number

Action

Given the large volume of content on the website, it should be reviewed on a regular schedule to ensure it is up to date.

Increase promotion of the apps and the current news subscription emails on all channels, including fun and engaging explainer videos and reposting on social media.

Explore adding a City newsletter to provide consistent and proactive updates to the community. This may include getting feedback from the recently established Super Citizens list. Consider consolidating some of the existing newsletters into one City newsletter.

Continue to reduce content creation time by repurposing content across channels, for example, repurposing content from social media posts for digital monitors and using them to populate a future newsletter.

Ensure easy access to sign up for the subscriptions to the news and notices emails via the website, as well as access to any new newsletters. Consider polling recipients as well as the Super Citizens on content preferences.

Increase promotion of the Get Involved webpage:

- Internally with project leads and content providers.
- Externally with the public.

The Get Involved webpage site as the one-stop source of project information for public participation, with an easy-to-access link to the ‘engage page’ from the home page.

Digital – website, apps, email

Electronic communications include the City’s owned channels such as the website, mobile apps, email distribution, City News and Notices subscription emails, digital monitors at City hall and the two pools, and potentially a City email newsletter.

of comments in the online and staff surveys mentioning the difficulty in finding content on the website.

Currently the City offers eleven subscriptions, accessible via a link at the bottom of the City’s home page. People can sign up to receive copies of media releases and notices as well as three newsletters:

- CN Centre Event
- Economic Development
- Parks & /recreation

Currently, there isn’t a designated newsletter to provide a comprehensive and consistent messages. In the random mail survey, two-thirds of the respondents indicated their interest in a City email newsletter. This could also be used to increase awareness of City services, events, public participation opportunities and other topics of interest as identified in the surveys.

Survey results also indicate a desire for more opportunities for input on City decisions and business. Projects can leverage the one-stop shop that our Get Involved page provides, increasing the visibility and promotion of these important City projects.

Digital – website, apps, email

Electronic communications include the City’s owned channels such as the website, mobile apps, email distribution, City News and Notices subscription emails, digital monitors at City hall and the two pools, and potentially a City email newsletter.

Another strategic consideration is the importance of building these ‘owned’ channels – the mobile apps, the subscription services, and potentially a City newsletter – especially given the recent turmoil on various social media platforms. Building your own audience on your own channels is an important back up in case of potential social media fails.

Media Relations:

Leverage media coverage to increase reach.

Background and findings

Media relations is an important role for the communications team as well as all City spokespersons. Maintaining open lines of communications with our media is key to increasing the timeliness of our response and the accuracy of the information published.

The City actively seeks media coverage on matters that are important and to “earn” media coverage about the City’s projects, programs, or services. Earned media, includes non-paid news features and social media mentions, is generally seen as more credible and authentic, especially when the story is balanced, written by a credible journalist, and published in a prestigious outlet. Blogs written by independent bloggers were also found credible.¹⁹ However, earned media also comes with challenges. It is highly competitive, coverage is not guaranteed, and there is often no regularity in coverage. Additionally, the content is subject to journalistic integrity, meaning the media has control over what is said, which can sometimes lead to the removal of the City’s key messages or links.

Seventy-seven percent of survey respondents in the mail-in survey were very (9%) or somewhat satisfied (68%) with local media coverage on City issues and events.

Local media is key to reaching the many, through media stories as well as paid advertising. The stories that run in

Action

Continue to use tools to increase media awareness, such as news releases, public service announcements, backgrounders, trivia contests, interviews, talk shows. Others may include:

- Radio talk shows or on-air with radio personalities during peak listening such as morning or afternoon commutes.
- TV news stories or features.
- Newspaper articles.
- Coming event listings in local media as well as on the Prince George Calendar.
- Internet news services.

Continue to be responsive to calls and requests for information and interviews.

Monitoring media coverage is vital for ensuring the information is accurate, identifying public sentiments and potential issues, Taking appropriate action such as correcting misinformation is an important responsibility for ensuring the public record is accurate. (See the strategy for an Issues Management Register in the next section.)

Enhance both staff and council members’ ability to respond to media interviews, or at meetings and event where media may be present, with ongoing media coaching and training, and key messaging.

Maintain personal contact with local media to build relationships and foster a positive and transparent working relationship. This also includes popular local bloggers..

¹⁹ [Institute for PR](#)

Media Relations:

Leverage media coverage to increase reach.

the local media are also amplified when shared on their online news platforms which currently may include comments directly on their electronic channels such as their websites subscriber newsletters, or X (with Meta currently blocking Canadian news media from Facebook).

As identified in the City's Communications Policy, the mayor and/or their designate is the lead spokesperson. Designates could include subject matter experts to help provide useful and relevant background information.

Paid advertising:

Ensure a consistent message delivered to key target audiences through the use of paid advertising.

Background and findings

Both earned and paid media have their strengths and weaknesses. Earned media is generally seen as more credible and authentic, but it is challenging to generate and maintain. Paid media offers more control as the message is presented as designed and intended, however, it may be perceived as less trustworthy.²⁰ Identifying what channels to use as part of the communication planning process will ensure the best way to integrate the two for a balanced approach to the target audience.

Ad buys could be considered to ensure the best reach for the intended audience. This could include advertising with local radio and news outlets, as well as online platforms for music and movie streaming to reach the intended audience.

Templates ensure brand consistency. Opportunities for paid advertising can include:

Action

Include ad buys where appropriate to ensure coverage for target audience.

Monitor and measure ad buys where applicable.

Set an appropriate annual budget to allow for ad buys to address unplanned campaigns that become necessary through the year to respond to emerging issues.

Establish an appropriate annual budget to allow for advertising to be part of campaigns and be responsive to emerging issues.

²⁰ [Institute for PR](#)

Paid advertising:

Ensure a consistent message delivered to key target audiences through the use of paid advertising.

- Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Spotify, etc.
- Radio
- TV – traditional and streaming
- Newspaper online and in print
- Web
- Signage
- Other digital advertising opportunities
- Transit ads
- Unique opportunities (e.g., grocery store dividers, movie theatres)

Community and in-person contact:

Making connections through meetings, community meetings, presentations. In-person and online.

Background and findings

Presentations, meetings, and face-to-face interactions provide the opportunity for people to get to learn more and provide their feedback. This form of outreach offers the opportunity to listen to the concerns, ideas, and inspirations of our community and should be considered for all major projects, as well as ongoing programs and services.

Survey results indicate room for opportunity to increase accessibility to staff and council, with satisfaction roughly split between satisfied and unsatisfied. Providing more access via in-person contact as part of the communications and engagement planning process can help address this opportunity,

Survey results indicated a preference for evening meeting, either in-person and or online (e.g., Zoom, Teams).

Action

Use the internal Calendar of Key Events to identify in-person attendance with staff and council. These can include formal events such as the Festival of Trees or outreach activities such spending time at Seniors' Centres or the dog park to provide information or seek feedback.

Plan three months in advance to ensure major events are covered, and other events are identified, to provide prep time and avoid burnout. Monitor and adjust as needed.

On sensitive issues, where the audience impact is high, consider one-on-one meetings to listen, learn, and collaborate.

Include community outreach as part of Communication Plans.

Prepare a list of key project and related contacts; use to send information about engagement opportunities.

Materials:

Support communication efforts with:

- Informational and educational flyers, posters, brochures, display boards for open houses, etc.
- Promotional materials such as branded stickers, buttons, etc.
- Materials for collecting feedback such as surveys.

Background and findings

Planning for these materials will consider what works best for the intended audience, ensuring they are clear, easy-to read, and appealing. In addition, plan for distribution, such as enlisting community groups or neighbourhood representatives to post on their neighbourhood bulletin board, in addition to posting at facilities.

Two-thirds of the mail survey respondents indicated satisfaction with the information distributed by the City.

Yet more can be done. Roughly half of mail-in survey respondents indicated the amount of information was just right, whereas only 30% of the online survey respondents felt that way.

The continued use of City’s Writing and Style Guide and templates will help make it easier for everyone who is involved in producing materials.

The City uses a number of tools to gather feedback such as feedback forms at facilities and events, exit surveys at events, and citizen surveys – online and in print that best suits the project, program, or service. With regards to seeking feedback, 72% of mail-in survey results indicate a preference for online surveys and should be considered as a foundational feedback tool.

Action

Continue to assist with planning and production of materials as required for major projects or corporate initiatives to ensure the right product is used appropriately and efficiently.

Continue to provide orientation and assistance for staff creating materials for outreach purposes using the Writing and Style Guide (see Appendices) and templates for ease of use.

Review the Writing and Style Guide annually to ensure it has current standards for accessible and inclusive language.

Consider additional materials identified in the staff survey including use of digital signage and monitors.

Provide assistance with developing major surveys to ensure best practices are in place and that staff responsible for privacy regulations have approved.

Monitor materials produced to ensure consistency with current standards and provide assistance as needed.

Establish an appropriate annual budget to allow for print materials, graphic design, and other contracted services to be able to respond to emerging issues.

Examples of informational/educational materials may include:

Materials:

Support communication efforts with:

- Informational and educational flyers, posters, brochures, display boards for open houses, etc.
- Promotional materials such as branded stickers, buttons, etc.
- Materials for collecting feedback such as surveys.

- Enewsletters.
- Branded Quarterly (or as needed) Project Updates.
- Key messages, briefing notes.
- Brochures, flyers, poster, door hangers, post cards,
- Fact sheets, infographics.
- Photos and videos.
- Templates.
- Display boards for open houses.

Feedback materials examples:

- Online and mail surveys.
- Online polls.
- Forums.
- Comment cards.
- Exit surveys.

Promotional examples:

- Buttons, stickers, bookmarks, fridge magnets, stuffers, even mascots.
- Other promotional items as identified that clearly link back to Strategic Priorities and Goals.

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES

Communications and engagement planning

Building staff capacity for communications and public participation.

Background and findings

Plans to inform and engage our community need to be considered when we are even *thinking* about stopping, starting, or changing a program, service, or project.

In response to the survey results, citizens are seeking more opportunities to be heard, providing input and feedback on City actions.

The City’s comprehensive Public Participation Toolkit is intended to provide the overarching approach to communications and engagement. For example, City staff use a set template to create robust Public Participation Plans (in line with the principles of IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation) where there is a high level of public interest and/or impact.

In addition, using a simple communication plan template, plans can also be developed for project or event communications.

Action

Annual corporate communication plans and project specific communications will be tailored to meet the needs of major projects or initiatives.

Provide support and/or orientation to staff in preparing communications and engagement plans using the processes in the Public Participation Toolkit, including the need for providing background information and/or research on audience impacts of the project.

Confirm current planning processes and templates and identify next steps. Initiate work to develop a Crisis Communications Plan to provide guidance on a variety of crises, including emergencies as well as operational and reputational.

Increase promotion of the City’s Get Involved page as the one-stop location for all engagement opportunities.

Campaigns

Identify key topics for enhancing advertising and promotion to increase awareness. These may also be part of a communications and engagement plan.

Background and findings

The Communications Team excels in developing campaigns to inform and engage the community based on operational and aspirational objectives. Campaigns consist of focusing the appropriate communications channels and tools on a specific topic for a specific time period to highlight awareness and potentially increase desired actions (e.g., download the latest Annual Report, sign up for our subscription City News and Notices emails, and/or potentially a City email enewsletter).

Random mail survey respondents indicated the low levels of awareness as well as topics of interest that can be considered when identifying campaign topics for the year, These include events, roads, budget/spending, and infrastructure (also similar to online survey results).

Further, the random mail survey indicated that City should consult on master plans and neighbourhood plans, changes to bylaws and the budget (also similar to the online survey results).

In addition, when asked about the most important issue facing the City, homelessness, crime, and drugs topped the list.

Action

Identify campaigns for the coming three months in consultation with divisions staff. Use the current budget process as a tool to coordinate between operations and communications (i.e., what are the projects planned for the coming year, and what will we need to do to inform, engage, or seek public participation, what resources do we have to implement?).

The internal Calendar of Events can be used to schedule campaigns, Using the key topics and information gaps identified in the survey, in consultation with the divisions,

Consider topics identified in the survey as important to citizens when planning.

Continue to use the City's successful social media channels to increase awareness and drive action where applicable, along with the other preferred channels. Given the slight variations in the demographic responses to preferred channels is important to consider a mix of channels combining both traditional and digital.

Continue to provide a consistent look and message across all channels and spokespersons.

Responsiveness and Issues management

Identifying potential issues, working with divisions to communicate issues management outcomes.

Background and findings

Local governments provide services that mean the most to citizens on a daily basis – such as snow removal, clean drinking water, and fire protection. And with any service delivery there are bound to be issues. Managing issues is an efficient, cost-effective, and strategic business process, of which communications play a critical role. According to the Institute of Crisis Management nearly three-quarters of all organizational crises are ‘smoldering,’ that is, non-event-related, and therefore potentially preventable.

Moreover, managing issues in advance leads to better outcomes, with less damage control and ‘do overs.’ It also helps build trust and credibility, a key factor for local government success.

Using a community-first lens, we can demonstrate our responsiveness with systems to help us track and address concerns and manage issues proactively. Using a Digital First approach we can quickly identify and accurately address concerns as applicable.

Action

Confirm procedures for responding to requests for information and residents or businesses concerns. For example, tracking correspondence received and social media posts and action taken.

Confirm procedures for responding to requests for information and residents or businesses concerns, and opportunities to communicate the outcomes. For example, tracking correspondence received and action taken.

Take proactive measures to establish processes and templates to address disruptive operational issues such as planned road closures or park closures.

Consider an internal issues management tracking process where newsworthy and other potential issues are:

- Identified by audience and impact and actioned in staff meetings with council input (add to standing agenda for staff meetings).
- Regular reporting on at Directors’ meetings (or as needed).
- Can be part of informal project updates at regular staff meetings.

Ensure all staff and council aware of procedures.

Monitor and adjust processes as needed.

See sample Issues Management Register and procedures in Appendices.

Mayor and council outreach

Support for mayor and council to communicate City business.

Background and findings

Mayor and council are well-known public figures representing the City of Prince George. From the public perspective, local government electeds are ambassadors for their City whether they are officially acting on behalf of the City or not. As such it's beneficial when they are informed about major City initiatives so they can share a clear and consistent City message as trusted community members.

A council Summary is prepared after each council meeting. Currently, it is posted on the website, sent to News and Notices subscribers, and shared on social media.

While attending/watching council meetings did not rate high on either of the surveys, satisfaction with accessibility to council was split.

Another area of concern in the surveys was that of being heard. Providing more strategic and planned opportunities for citizens to connect with council can help bridge the information gap.

Action

Continue to promote about the council Summary updates that are prepared after each meeting. Look at opportunities to increase coverage. For example, asking council members who use social media to share City posts on their social channels.

Identify interest and opportunity in mayor messages and or council communiques. Examples include:

- Coffee with the mayor.
- Sharing on council social media pages.

Develop a plan with goals, strategies, tactics for outreach.

Explore council interest in participating in community outreach activities such as open house events or pop-up booths, depending on the project communications plan.

Confirm current processes to provide all of council with key messages on important issues with links to documents on the website and social media posts to share, as well as a process to report back and report out on what was heard as needed.

Monitor and adjust based on council feedback via the city manager.

Super Citizens subscribers

Crowd sourcing feedback via direct email to interested citizens to provide input on a variety of topics.

Background and findings

Citizen panels are used by local governments to solicit input or feedback on a variety of topics.

We recently established our Super Citizen panel in response to the feedback received in the online survey:

- In the online survey, citizens were asked if they wanted to sign up to be contacted with links to surveys and other engagement opportunities (and the related privacy impact information). Of 527 respondents, 179 provided their email address and more sign up through the website form every day.

Action

As people register, send an email to say thank you and what to expect (e.g., remove from spam notifications, upcoming engagements, encourage them to share sign up email with friends). Consider a template for an initial orientation email template with a friendly welcome, how it works, and who to contact if questions, for example.

Report out to the community about the Super Citizen opportunity. Use a campaign to encourage additional subscriptions.

Identify subscribers who may wish to assist with encouraging others to join through testimonials on social media, for example.

Promote access and include in orientation for communications and engagement planning with staff and add to Public Participation Toolkit.

Consider future plans to thank this group of volunteers (e.g., similar to the mayor's Volunteer Recognition event).

Always send participation opportunities to the Super Citizen subscribers.

Promote the Super Citizen subscription in every survey and at participation events.

<p>Team capacity Identifying opportunities to build capacity for communications and engagement.</p>	
<p>Background and findings</p> <p>Communications and engagement initiatives rely on the talent of our valued team. Training plans should include options to boost the ability of team members to inform, engage, and deliver.</p> <p>As new initiatives are added as considered in this plan, consideration should also be given to providing additional resources.</p> <p>To improve internal communications and ensure a culture of inclusivity, responsiveness, and effectiveness, implementing the Internal Communications Plan is recommended.</p>	<p>Action</p> <p>Plan and budget for training of key individuals in the following areas: communication planning, issues management, presentation skills, plain language, and social media and media relations for subject matter experts as designated by the city manager and mayor.</p> <p>Identify resources required for implementing additional tasks in this report as determined. Without additional resources, some of these initiatives are not feasible. Additional resources may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human resources. • Financial resources. • Contract services. • Equipment. • Digital services such as enews subscription programs.

Monitor and measure

Metrics and measurements support future decisions with evidence, key to our commitment to continuous improvement. Monitoring our progress will ensure we are responsive.

Background and findings

Monitoring allows for continuous improvement on the fly, allowing for a prompt response, and reducing the potential for issues to arise. Monitoring activities can include:

- Media scanning.
- Social media scanning.
- Feedback from council, staff, and community members.

Currently, we monitor local news and key hashtags twice a day.

Media is contacted when incorrect information is broadcast.

Social media content is tracked in the Hey Orca content calendar and social media management tool. As well we track our own social media statistics using the insights provided by each platform.

Currently, media, advertising and are tracked for overall success of the platforms. Individual campaigns and projects also have metrics to measure the reach and success. Advertising is also measured for reach.

Measuring helps improve the overall program as we assess what works, areas for attention, and next steps for communications and engagement. Measuring activities can include:

Action

Project communications planning should identify objectives and/or key performance indicators/outcomes to monitor and measure the success of the communications and engagement activities.

Continue to monitor and track media, social media, advertisements, feedback received, staff and council comments, etc.

Consider the use of a monthly or quarterly Communications and Engagement Update to report out to council and staff on metrics and activities. This report can also be used to identify high performing channels and/or content. See sample report in Appendix 3.

Use outcomes in follow up communiques, especially when reporting out on surveys.

Other questions to consider in designing evaluation include those based on Communications Guiding Principles, for example:

- Are we being proactive in planning our communications and consultation?
- Are we timely in our response?
- Are we seeking input, listening, and being inclusive of others' insights?
- Are we providing a clear, concise, and consistent message?
- Are we encouraging public input and reporting out on what we heard?
- Are we being respectful, empathetic, and transparent?

Assess and adjust as needed.

Monitor and measure

Metrics and measurements support future decisions with evidence, key to our commitment to continuous improvement. Monitoring our progress will ensure we are responsive.

- Website and social media metrics.
- Feedback received.
- Use of feedback tools.
- Other tools as identified for that project.

Research has shown the value of reporting out on activities is a proven strategy for building trust and credibility in the process. Sharing information about outcomes can provide the content for the important message.

APPENDICES

Documents

1. City of Prince George 2023-2026 Strategic Plan
2. Survey Promotion
3. 2023 City of Prince George Media Stats Report
4. Quarterly Communications Report Sample Template
5. Sample Issues Management Register
6. City of Prince George Public Participation Toolkit
7. City Writing and Style Guide
8. Policy: Communications
9. Procedure: Communications
10. Procedure: Media Relations
11. Procedure: Social Media
12. Strategy: Social Media

Data Sources

1. Discovery Research Detailed Tables
2. Online Community Communications Survey

OUR VISION AND MISSION

A diverse, progressive, and vibrant provincial centre with accessible opportunities, a strong and stable economy, and an enviable quality of life.

Along with our regional neighbours, we are leading the way to a strong and prosperous future. We grow by attracting and celebrating innovative people, businesses, and organizations.

OUR VALUES

- Civic Pride
- Inclusivity
- Integrity
- Accountability
- Optimism
- Resilience
- Vitality
- Transparency

OUR FOUR STRATEGIC PILLARS

I. CITY GOVERNMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE



II. ECONOMIC DIVERSITY AND GROWTH



III. SOCIAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



IV. ENVIRONMENT STEWARDSHIP AND CLIMATE ACTION



I. CITY GOVERNMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITIES

Grow the city.

- Create and share a long-term vision roadmap with targets (including population targets) and milestones that reflect the integration of capital planning, asset management, infrastructure planning, and Official Community Plan renewal processes, and associated financial commitments.

Focus on meaningful communication and relationship development to advance shared priorities.

- Develop a strategy to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that builds on the City's relationships with the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation and urban indigenous service providers.
- Build and maintain the relationships necessary to ensure co-ordinated advocacy, responsive service delivery, and the acquisition of external funding to meet the diverse needs of all residents.

Continue to improve processes and practices to support effective and efficient service delivery.

II. ECONOMIC DIVERSITY AND GROWTH PRIORITIES

Market Prince George as a place to invest, live, and visit.

- Promote presence and use of local assets and amenities in a way that aligns with growth goals.

Build a strong, resilient, and diverse economy for Prince George.

- Update the 2020-2025 Economic Development Strategy to reflect the current context, including immigration, and support its continued implementation.
- Identify and support the development of catalysts that enable and expedite the diversification of the economy.

III. SOCIAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING PRIORITIES

Maximize the quality of life for all residents.

- Create a vibrant civic core.

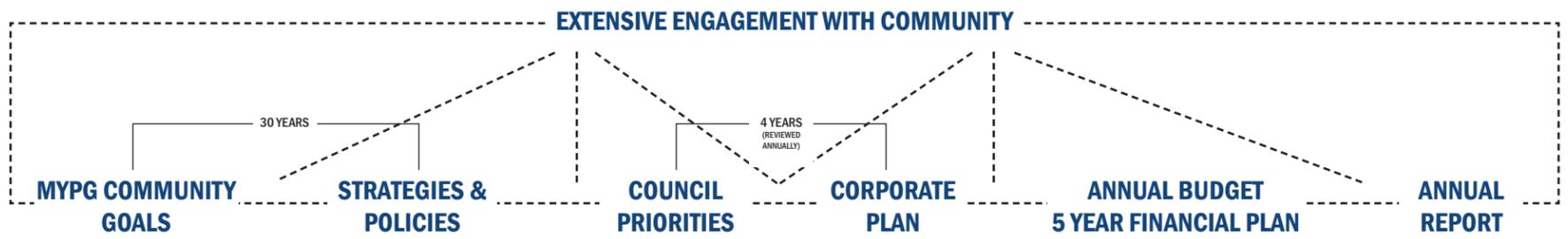
Ensure a safe, healthy, and clean community for all.

- Document, communicate, and implement the city's homelessness and public safety strategies to support advocacy efforts and enhance service delivery.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP & CLIMATE ACTION PRIORITIES

Preserve the environment.

- Implement local government actions that advance environmental protection including climate change and adaptation.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement informs each step of the strategic planning process. Without regular input from residents and partners, this framework would not be successful in accurately representing the City’s goals and long-term vision.

myPG Community Goals:

Planning at the City of Prince George is based on an integrated community sustainability plan, known as myPG, that was completed in 2010 and subsequently incorporated into a strategic framework the following year. The myPG plan for a sustainable and prosperous community captures the results of extensive public and stakeholder engagement that created a shared vision of the **long-term future** of Prince George. myPG was originally organized around four pillars: social development, the environment, economic development, and City government and is intended to improve alignment of the entire community’s efforts to achieve its shared vision of a sustainable future.

myPG Strategies and Policies:

Strategies defining how to achieve the community’s goals comprised part two of the myPG planning process. The strategic directions reflect principles of sustainability by being integrative (i.e., they incorporate action in many disciplines) and long term. Each one will be most successful when the City, partner organizations, and individual community members contribute together.

Council Priorities:

The City retained the original myPG pillars but refined the titles as follows: city government and infrastructure, economic diversity and growth, social health and well-being, environmental stewardship and climate action.

In conjunction with the election cycle, Council priorities are established every four years and reviewed annually. They reflect Council’s consideration of how the City can contribute to long-term community goals and strategies established during the myPG planning process, extensive and ongoing engagement with community members, a review of recent actions and measures associated with each of them, as well as the identification of opportunities to enhance what is working well and address areas requiring improvement.

Council’s priorities are established during a facilitated workshop. Priorities provide high-level, strategic direction and help inform decision-making.

Corporate Work Plan:

The Corporate Work Plan is updated annually following Council’s approval of the Strategic Plan. It identifies the specific actions administration will undertake to address Council’s priorities. Council receives information about Corporate Work Plan activities through staff reports comprising open Council meeting agendas and regular updates.

Annual Budget (5 Year Financial Plan):

The City’s Financial Plan aligns with its Strategic Plan and Corporate Work Plan and reflects the revenue generated from and the cost of delivering its services. As required by the Community Charter, a process of public consultation precedes finalization of the budget.

Annual Report:

The City’s Annual Report includes audited financial statements, a list of permissive tax exemptions, and highlights progress made to address Council’s priorities in the previous year. The report also includes information about goals and objectives for the upcoming year.

City of Prince George Communications Survey Promotion

Date Ran	Medium	Topic	Quoted cost (w/o GST)	Analytics after Campaign	Other notes
19-Jul to present	Webpage	Communications and Engagement Survey page on PG.ca	\$0	908 page views	N/A
19-Jul	Media release	Promoting engagement project	\$0	67% open rate (509/759)	N/A
19-Jul to 11-Aug	Mail-in survey	Surveying 1100 residents about external communications	?	223 responses	N/A
19-Jul	Social media	Promoting mail-in survey	\$0	Impressions: 4775 Engagements: 129	Facebook, Twitter, IG, LinkedIn
26-Jul to 14-Aug	Survey Monkey	Surveying residents about external communications	\$0	527 responses	N/A
26-Jul	Social media	Promoting online survey	\$50	Impressions: 38,795 Engagements: 2123	Boosted on Facebook Jul. 26-Aug. 14. Organic on IG and LinkedIn.
31-Jul to 14-Aug	Survey Monkey	Surveying staff about external communications	\$0	116 responses	N/A
1-Aug to 6-Aug	Radio	Promoting resident survey on Pattison stations	\$673.20	N/A	3 x 30s ads per day on 101.3 and 99.3
12-Aug	Social media	Survey reminder	\$0.00	Impressions: 4053 Engagement: 217	Facebook, Twitter, IG, LinkedIn

Social media:

The communications division is responsible for the City’s website and social media channels. The Prince George Conference and Civic Centre page will be phased out and merged with the City of Prince George Facebook page in 2024 due to changes to staff capacity. Reducing the number of pages the City owns will free up event services and economic development staff time and ensure our audience can find important City information in one convenient location, rather than from multiple different pages. The Prince George Events Group manages the CN Centre, Prince George Conference and Civic Centre, and Prince George Playhouse social media channels. The Economic Development division manages the Invest PG and Move Up PG pages. The audience demographic for the City of Prince George pages (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) is primarily women (67%) aged 25-34 and 35-44.

PAGE	CHANNEL	# OF FOLLOWERS - DEC. 31, 2022	# OF FOLLOWERS - DEC. 31, 2023	% CHANGE
CITY OF PRINCE GEORGE	Facebook	17,946	21,007	17%
	Instagram	6,554	7,764	18%
	Twitter	5,625	5,759	2%
	LinkedIn	4,033	4,675	16%
	YouTube	1,370	1,550	13%
CN CENTRE	Facebook	16,231	18,630	15%
	Instagram	1,237	1,449	17%
MOVE UP PG	Facebook	6,000	6,100	2%
	Instagram	1,757	1,857	6%
	Twitter	971	1037	7%
INVEST PG	Facebook	1000	1,400	40%
	Twitter	2,414	2,414	0

The number of followers is only one metric. The engagement metrics (i.e., comments, shares, link clicks, etc.) are an indication that our audience is connecting with our content.

Facebook:

The average engagement rate on Facebook for a page in the government sector is 1.62% ([Hootsuite, 2023](#)).

- **City of Prince George:** 417,457 total post engagements with an average engagement rate of 8.1% and 5,170,802 views in 2023 compared to 524,764 engagements and 4,266,253 views in 2022.

- **CN Centre:** 388,782 total post engagements with an average engagement rate of 6% and 6,522,401 views in 2023 compared to 277,791 engagements and 5,779,433 views in 2022.
- **Move Up PG:** 226,737 total post engagements with an average engagement rate of 5.8% and 3,917,133 views in 2023 compared to 47,131 engagements and 1,281,375 views in 2022.
- **Invest City of PG:** 1,346 total post engagements with an average engagement rate of 5.5% and 24,490 views in 2023 compared to 1,955 engagements and 25,594 views in 2022.

Instagram:

The average engagement rate on Instagram for a page in the government sector is 2.08% ([Hootsuite, 2023](#)).

- **City of Prince George:** 46,617 post engagements with an average engagement rate of 4.6% and 1,015,734 views in 2023 compared to 23,680 total post engagements and 724,541 views in 2022.
- **CN Centre:** 2,135 post engagements with an average engagement rate of 1.5% and 138,657 views in 2023 compared to 552 post engagements and 44,031 views in 2022.
- **Move Up PG:** 2,846 post engagements with an average engagement rate of 2% and 141,545 views in 2023 compared to 2,289 post views with an average engagement rate of 3.23% in 2022.

Twitter:

The average engagement rate on Twitter for a page in the government sector is 1.36% ([Hootsuite, 2023](#)).

- **City of Prince George:** 2,081 total post engagements and more than 477,300 views in 2022 compared to 4,122 engagements and 376,000 views in 2021.
- **Move Up PG:** 157 post engagements in 2023 (impressions and 2022 data not available).
- **Invest City of PG:** 219 post engagements in 2023 (impressions and 2022 data not available).

LinkedIn:

The average engagement rate on LinkedIn for a page in the government sector is 2.4% ([Hootsuite, 2023](#)).

- **City of Prince George:** 8,623 total post engagements with an average engagement rate of 5.4% and 161,004 views in 2023 compared to 2,420 post engagements and 32,457 views in 2022.

Social media summary:

The City's social media channels continue to rake in well above average engagement rates across all platforms. In 2024, we look to continue a partnership with Tourism Prince George on a strategy to co-manage the Mr. PG Instagram account, which has been dormant since April 2021. In addition, we are working closely with divisions such as economic development, bylaw services, roads, transportation, and parks on social media and marketing strategies to educate the public about important city operations and services.

APPENDIX: SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS REPORT TEMPLATE

Quarterly (OR AS PLANNED) Communications and Engagement Report: MONTH / YEAR

Update for Council and Key Staff

Overview

- # communications inquiries
- # proactive media pitches
- # media releases issued
- # media advisories
- # key messages produced
- # media interviews
- # anything else to add?

Media Inquires

- # of media inquiries
- Top three topics:
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - Other

Prince George News Email Newsletter

- Date issued
- # of subscribers
- # sent
- Percent opened
- Percent clicked
- Top three stories:
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - Other

Media Monitoring

- # media stories/coverage
- Sentiment

Hey Orca Social Media Insights

- TBD (e.g., if this is an excel form?)

Internal Communications

- Key activities (e.g., communication and engagement planning; media interview preparation/coaching, training).

Summary

- Comments about ongoing campaigns, new initiatives, response to media and or social media stories.

APPENDIX: Sample Issues Management Register

Why an Issues Management Register?

Local governments can use an Issues Management Register to systematically track and address various challenges and concerns that arise within the community and governmental operations. This tool enables efficient identification, prioritization, and resolution of issues, ensuring responsive governance and improved public service delivery. Additionally, it fosters transparency and accountability, as it provides a clear record of actions taken and issues resolved, enhancing trust between the government and its constituents.

Who should own the Issues Management Register?

In a local government, the ownership of the Issues Management Register should typically reside with a central administrative office, like the City Manager's office, with the communications team playing an integral role. The communications team's involvement is crucial for ensuring clear, transparent messaging about issues and actions taken, thereby fostering public trust and facilitating effective interdepartmental and public communication. This collaborative approach ensures a comprehensive handling of issues, combining operational efficiency with effective public engagement.

How to Use a Weekly Issues Management Register

1. Understanding the Purpose:

The register is designed to track and manage issues that arise during a project or operational period. It helps in identifying, assessing, and monitoring issues on a regular basis.

2. Key Components:

Issue ID: A unique identifier for each issue.

Issue Description: A brief description of the issue.

Date Identified: When the issue was first noted.

Raised By: The person or department who identified the issue.

Priority: Ranks the urgency of the issue (e.g., High, Medium, Low).

Assigned To: Person or team responsible for resolving the issue.

Status: Current status of the issue (e.g., Open, In Progress, Closed).

Expected Resolution Date: Anticipated date by which the issue should be resolved.

Actual Resolution Date: The date when the issue was actually resolved.

Actions Taken: Brief description of steps taken to address and if applicable, communicate the issue.

3. Filling Out the Register:

Enter details into each column as issues are identified.

Regularly update the register, especially the status and actions taken.

4. Review and Action:

Schedule weekly reviews of the register.

Discuss each issue, plan action steps, and assign responsibilities.

Update the register with new information from these meetings.

5. Resolution and Closure:

Once an issue is resolved, update the status to 'Closed'.

Review closed issues periodically to ensure they do not recur.

6. Archiving and Record Keeping:

Maintain the register as a record for future reference and lessons learned.

Sample Weekly Issues Management Register

Issue ID	Description	Date Identified	Raised By	Priority	Assigned To	Status	Expected Resolution Date	Actual Resolution Date	Actions Taken
001	Software Bug in App	01/01/2023	Dev Team	High	John Doe	Open	08/01/2023		Investigating source of bug
002	Delay in Supply	02/01/2023	Procurement	Medium	Jane Smith	In Progress	15/01/2023		Contacted supplier for update
003	Budget Overrun	03/01/2023	Finance	Low	Mike Lee	Open	10/01/2023		Reviewing expenditure



Public Participation Toolkit

November 2021

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INTRODUCTION

Local governments deliver services, offer choices, make decisions, and operate in ways that affect the daily lives of community members more than other levels of government. That's why public engagement is such a critical part of the decision-making process. The BC Auditor General's report on public participation reported the public desires greater participation in decision making and see it as an instrument of good governance.¹

The public expects governments to make wise decisions around potentially competing priorities, issues, needs, or opportunities. To make these decisions well, Council and staff need to hear from different viewpoints as they grapple with facts, data, options, and trade-offs. As a result, it is critical that staff and Council are responsive and consistently seek out and listen to input from residents and stakeholders from all parts of the community.

The rule: if you are starting, stopping, or changing something, you probably need to inform or engage the community. If you are not quite sure if this rule applies to you, discuss it with your Director and the communications manager.

Through public engagement, we can:

- allow community members and decision-makers to hear a variety of perspectives;
- manage differences, establish direction for moving forward on complex issues, and build understanding regarding trade-offs;
- foster confidence and trust in local government;
- build better neighbourhoods and stronger communities through common understanding and shared aspirations; and
- correct misinformation, and address hidden obstacles or unknown consequences early in the process.

If there is a project that is expensive (expensive is relative to your other projects and not easily defined. Discuss it with your Director if you are not sure) or will have an impact on the community, engagement is required. Not suggested, but required. Research shows that organizations with effective and efficient communication methods are more likely to stay within scope, meet quality standards and deliver intended business benefits². Further research on the importance of effective communications, indicates 56 percent of the project budget is at risk due to ineffective communications.³ This guide is designed to assist staff to draft a public participation plan in nine simple steps. In the end, you will have a better idea of who you are talking to, why you are talking to them, what you want to say, how you will say it and gather their feedback. Then you can take your first draft of a plan to the communications division and they will help you with the rest of the plan and the execution.

Supporting documents:

1. Communications Policy
2. Communications Procedure
3. Social Media Procedure
4. Media Relations Procedure

¹ <https://www.bcauditor.com/sites/default/files/publications/2008/report11/report/public-participation-principles-and-best-practices-british-columbia.pdf>

² <https://www.pwc.com/tr/en/publications/arastirmalar/pages/pwc-global-project-management-report-small.pdf>

³ [https://www.pmi.org/learning/thought-leadership/pulse/essential-role-of-communications#:~:text=PMI%20\(2013\),The%20Essential%20Role%20of%20Communications.&text=Our%20Pulse%20of%20the%20Profession,risk%20due%20to%20ineffective%20communications.](https://www.pmi.org/learning/thought-leadership/pulse/essential-role-of-communications#:~:text=PMI%20(2013),The%20Essential%20Role%20of%20Communications.&text=Our%20Pulse%20of%20the%20Profession,risk%20due%20to%20ineffective%20communications.)

5. Brand Standards Manual
6. Style Guide

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The City of Prince George will contribute to meaningful, responsive, transparent and accountable public participation by consistently applying the following guiding principles. Public participation will be planned, implemented, evaluated and reported using these seven interdependent guidelines that serve both as ideals to pursue, and as criteria for judging quality.

1. Authenticity

In advance of the decision, the decision-maker clearly communicates any commitments.

2. Inclusion

The decision-maker will make every reasonable effort to include all stakeholders in the public participation process. Through inclusive planning, the City will ensure that the design, organization, and process serve both a clearly defined purpose and the needs of the participants.

3. Openness and learning

The City will help all involved listen to each other, explore ideas unconstrained by predetermined outcomes, and learn and apply information in ways that generate new options.

4. Commitment and accountability

The decision-maker demonstrates that results and outcomes are consistent with the commitments.

5. Transparency and trust

The City will be clear and open about the process and the level of impact the participants will have on the outcome. The City will provide a public record of the organizers, sponsors, outcomes, and range of views and ideas expressed and demonstrate how the outcomes were used in decision making.

6. Impact and action

Adequate time will be allocated to engagement activities to ensure a level playing field of understanding exists to ground dialogue and decision making. The City commits to ensure contributions of all participants are heard.

7. Culture of participation

The City will promote a culture of participation with programs and institutions that support ongoing quality public engagement.

USING THE TOOLKIT

Beginning with Step 1, this toolkit will walk you through identifying the issues, objectives, your stakeholders, and the best ways to inform and/or involve them. The toolkit provides a clear and consistent framework for public participation so staff, Council, and the public know what to expect.

If you are starting something, stopping something or changing something you may need to do one of these things and this toolkit will help you with that.



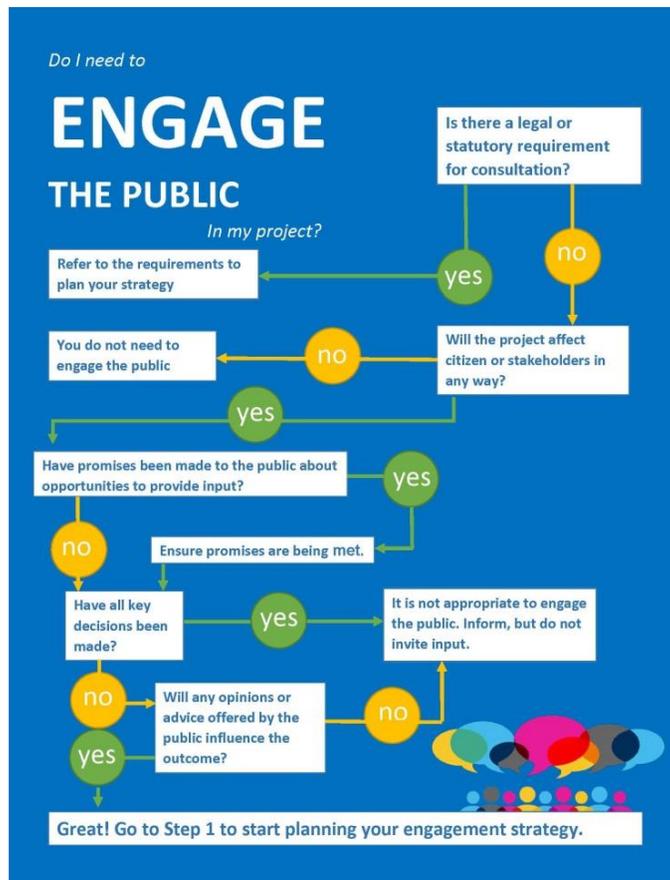
Begin by reviewing the steps to effective public participation in this toolkit and then use the fillable form in Appendix G to plan for your project.

PREPARE

Assess the need for public participation. If the public is not impacted or they are not able to influence the decision, their participation is not necessary. You may still need to inform them so read on.

Before you begin, have you:

1. Consulted with your manager or director?
2. Asked your Director if you need to inform Council?
3. Informed the Communications Division?
4. Informed any other Division that may be impacted like Risk, Procurement, Finance, Events, or Facilities?



STEP 1 - PURPOSE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Q1. Why do you need public participation? What are your objectives?

If you have determined you require public participation, describe how public input will impact the final decision being made. Appendix A will help you to develop SMART objectives (Specific, Measureable, Actionable, Relevant, Timely). See Appendix A for more on objectives.

Do you want to:

- Raise awareness for and generate understanding of a project?
- Build support for a project?
- Provide information needed for decision making?
- Provide open and transparent governance?
- Gain local knowledge and insight?
- Obtain feedback from community members on certain issues or options?
- Evaluate a program or service?
- Generate innovative or creative ideas?
- Develop ideas collaboratively and promote ownership for implementation?
- Something else?

Q2. What outcomes do you hope to achieve through this process?

When you go “above and beyond” in participation efforts, the reason to gather input shifts from “because I have to” to something more – an outcome. Outcomes are the intangible results of a process, like:

- Improved relationships or partnerships
- Changed perceptions (for the better)
- Improved communication channels
- Promotion of a wider circle of responsibility for decisions and actions - active and accountable citizenship
- Early identification of potential issues, conflicts and benefits
- Generation of new ideas
- Diffusion of conflict situations so they don't impede progress
- Enhancement of social capital and/or improved services for people
- Policy change
- Cost savings in the medium to long-term
- Promotion of local capacity building and learning (individual and organizational)
- Local support and goodwill fostered for a new idea or initiative
- Increased community cohesion and strengthened shared identity

Q3. Ultimately, what is the purpose of your public participation?

Summarize your answers to the previous questions in a succinct purpose statement that describes the decision being made, the role of the public, and the desired outcomes. For example, “Determine what amenities are needed at the Pine View Park and present the options to Council for a final decision.”

When Public Participation is not required (although there may also be a need to inform):

- The project or issue-related decision has already been made.
- The project or issue has been imposed by another level of government (there may still be a need to Inform).
- The project or issue isn’t significant enough to ask the public.
- The issue relates to the development of an administrative policy that doesn’t require or involve public consultation.
- The decision will be made in keeping with a Provincial or Federal legislation.

STEP 2 - IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS

After determining the purpose of the participation process, identify stakeholders. This is internal and external persons or groups impacted by the results of a decision made by the City. These individuals or groups may:

- Be directly or indirectly affected by the project or decision
- Have an interest in the project or decision
- Have something to offer the project or decision
- Impact the ability to carry out the project or decision
- Have influence on the project or decision

Q1. Who do you need to involve in your process to meet statutory regulatory requirements and when?

Which groups or partners need to be involved?

- First Nations?
- Neighbouring municipalities?
- Regional District?
- Provincial or Federal agencies?
- Others?

Q2. What groups/networks must be engaged to ensure your project is considered legitimate and that your outcomes/outputs are accepted?

Identify the individuals and groups who are interested in and/or affected by the process. Don't forget to think about people within and outside your organization. Staffs are always a key stakeholder. Engage staff before engaging the public as they can assist you in developing your messages and identifying potential issues.

- **Internal:** other departments, committees or management groups in your organization
- **Elected Officials:** Mayor and Council, MLA, MP
- **Other municipalities:** regional district or neighbouring communities
- **Landowners:** individuals and organizations that own land in your project area
- **Area residents:** homeowners and renters, community associations
- **Businesses and institutions:** commercial and institutional organizations, schools, and business associations located within the area or who have an interest in your issue
- **Special interest groups:** associations, informal networks, non-profits, advocacy groups, or industry groups who focus on your issue
- **Developers:** individuals and organizations with active or planned development proposals in the area
- **Private Utilities**
- **Regulatory bodies:** such as the Oil and Gas Commission or BC Forest Safety Council
- **Demographic Groups:** are there specific groups who need to be targeted based on demographic characteristics?
 - Age – Children, young adults, adults, seniors
 - Ability

- Economic status
- Ethnicity and/or cultural groups
- Family/parental status (ie., single parents, families with children, etc.)
- Gender (are there gender-specific issues involved?)
- Isolated groups (such as seniors living alone)
- Language (are there non-English speakers who will require translation?)
- Location or neighbourhood-specific groups
- Mobility (pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, drivers, service/delivery vehicles)
- New immigrants or refugees (and/or settlement associations to reach these groups)
- Occupation (ie., are there shift workers who may be harder to reach at certain times)
- Religious groups
- Vulnerable groups (ie., people at risk or facing homelessness)

Q3. What are your stakeholders' key interests? How many people should be involved? And how can you encourage participation from them?

Next, go through and highlight any individuals or groups who are key influencers who could help to raise awareness and encourage participation in your process.

When is the best time to reach your target audience and what tactics are most appropriate? What messages will resonate most effectively with them? Refer back to what you know about your stakeholders as you plan your public participation key messages and activities.

STEP 3- DETERMINE THE LEVEL OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Many factors determine the level of public participation required in a process, such as:

- Potential financial, quality of life, health and safety, and environmental impacts
- The history and context including the divisiveness or political risk of the issue
- How much influence participants will have on the decision
- Scale of the project/decision
- Legal requirements triggered by the issue or decision
- The relationship to Council priorities
- The range of impacts of the project or issue on the community

There are a variety of reasons we do public engagement from services changes to a capital project. We may be only at an Inform level or start at Inform and move onto other levels through the project. Even a referendum for loan authorization of a major city asset such as fire hall or pool will start at Inform,

Q1. Where does your project fall on the International Association for Public Participation spectrum?



	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternative and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspiration, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
EXAMPLE	A one way communication such as an advertisement.	Public meetings, emails, phone calls or social media comments where feedback is provided to Council for consideration.	Workshops that provide input to be used directly in the decision making process.	A task force or advisory committee.	Referendum.

The following table will assist you in determining where your project fits on the spectrum and then you can choose which tactics are best suited for the level of participation your project requires. Empower would be a referendum so that column is not included here. The statements here are generalities. There can be highly controversial issues that impact everyone but you may still only be at the Inform level if there is no decision to be made.

Project criteria	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
LEVEL OF IMPACT				
Public/stakeholder ability to impact decisions	Little to none – stay informed and provide comments to refine existing decisions	Moderate – provide feedback, acknowledge and consider concerns in decisions	High – work with the public to make sure concerns/aspirations/feedback are considered and understood	Very high – partner with the public in each aspect of decision making
Project type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor modifications to an existing program, plan or service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor modifications to an existing program, plan or service Possible impact on future public participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major modifications to existing or creation of new program, plan or service Major plan update or new plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major modifications to existing or creation of new program, plan or service Major plan update or new plan
Project duration – how much time before a decision must be made?	Short: 1-6 months	Short: 1-6 months	Medium: 6+ months	Medium: 6+ months
Internal impact	One department	Several departments	Entire organization	Entire organization
CONTEXT				
Controversial?	No	Yes, but a long time ago or Not really sure	Yes, and recently	Yes, and the controversy is ongoing
Impact on tax rate?	No	Some indirect impacts	Some direct impacts	Significant, direct impacts
Moral/emotional?	No	Moral or emotional issue for a specific group	Moral or emotional issue for some of the population	Moral or emotional issue for much of the community
COMMUNITY INPUT				
How many people impacted?	Limited number or select neighbourhoods or groups		Large portion or entire community	

Project criteria	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Will there be winners and losers?	No	Some perception of winners and losers	Widespread perception of winners and losers	Decision really creates winners and losers
Are property values impacted?	Not likely	Somewhat likely but with a lower potential impact	Very likely but with a lower potential impact	Very likely and with a high potential impact
Are there health and safety impacts?	Not likely	Somewhat likely but with a lower potential impact	Very likely but with a lower potential impact	Very likely and with a high potential impact
Are there environmental impacts?	Not likely	Somewhat likely but with a lower potential impact	Very likely but with a lower potential impact	Very likely and with a high potential impact
Impacts on quality of life? (noise, smell, dust...)	Not likely	Somewhat likely but with a lower potential impact	Very likely but with a lower potential impact	Very likely and with a high potential impact
LEVEL OF COMPLEXITY				
Is it a Council priority	No		Yes	
Level of disagreement between stakeholders	Little to no disagreement, can be easily managed	There will be a few competing positions but they can be managed with some effort	Competing positions with multiple stakeholder groups or more than a few different strongly held positions	
Impact on City reputation?	Very little	Some negative impact if not addressed carefully	Could have serious negative impact on reputation if not managed	

STEP 4 - DESIGN & SCOPE THE PROCESS

Public participation processes benefit from a phased approach. Many participation processes follow a funnel process which begins by asking broad questions and then narrows down to more specific questions.

Organizing your process in this way communicates that your process is open, transparent, well-organized, and logical. Moving from broad questions to narrow ones; with report-backs to participants at the end of each phase, builds trust, clarity, momentum, and can grow the number of participants over time.

Determine if there are phases of the project and what the objectives are in each phase. Determine the resources you have available including staff time and financial resources.

Begin with the end in mind – think about the data you want to collect and how it will be used to generate more meaningful questions.

Be prepared to adapt as you go. Once you begin the process and start connecting with your stakeholders you will learn what you didn't know about the issue. There may be components that are much more important to your stakeholders than you assumed. Be prepared to add additional steps or tactics. Where you thought you only needed one survey, the results of the survey may show you what questions you should have asked and a second survey or a focus group might be needed.

STEP 5 - IDENTIFY POTENTIAL ISSUES & MITIGATION MEASURES

In a public engagement process, organizations responsible for and coordinating the initiative sometimes face organized opposition, some of whom are credible, but some of whom may use misinformation, scare tactics, and accusations of bias to undermine the process. If issues and dynamics like this are not recognized and correctly addressed early on, they can build momentum and become a crisis for a project that seeks broad, diverse and meaningful public input. This can negatively impact the organization or project, and result in a derailed engagement process, heightened community conflict and/or a loss of reputation.

Q1. What potential issues could impact your project?

Identify the key issues - real and perceived – that may be involved in your project or process.

- Lack of public awareness of the issue and/or participation opportunities
- Other projects and processes happening at the same time
- Lack of overall participation
- Lack of diverse participation or representation of key groups
- Lack of transparency about process or decisions
- Lack of trust towards local government
- Impact to community or certain groups
- Political considerations
- Controversial issues
- External factors such as environmental or regional changes
- Other issues

Q2. What can be done to mitigate potential risks?

- Careful factual, timely messaging (including images, maps, tables etc.)
- A community champion
- Support from others: council, staff, community group
- Using a wide array of tactics to inform
- Be available to listen and provide genuine and empathetic responses

STEP 6 - SELECT APPROPRIATE TOOLS & TACTICS

- What is the purpose of your participation process and why are you collecting input?
- What do you hope to achieve through this process?
- Who are you inviting to participate?
- How much or what level of participation is appropriate for this process?
- What are your process phases and key questions?
- What activities do you need to plan for?
- Where will you reach the people you want to talk to?

INFORM	INPUT	ENGAGE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Social media • Print advertising • Radio advertising • News release • Council reports • Information booth • Posters/flyer/brochure • Fact sheet • Open house • City digital monitors • Video • Staff email signatures to share links • External partners – newsletters • Letter to residents • Telephone: one-on-one • Meeting • Media event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital survey • Paper survey • Social media poll • Media briefing • Open house • Public event • Information booth • Market survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council committee • Workshop • Detailed survey – open questions • Interviews • Highly interactive public events (open house with many opportunities for input): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Visioning and idea generation activities ○ Content exploration activities ○ Community mapping / input on spatial analysis ○ Prioritizing and voting activities ○ Options and scenarios tools ○ Crowdsourcing new ideas ○ Event feedback forms • Dialogue formats with groups (focus groups, workshops, charrettes, World Café, Idea Jams, Open Space meetings, deliberative forums, etc.) • Site visits • Advisory group

Q1. How long will those activities take? What budget should we allocate to these activities? Who is responsible for each activity?

See **Appendix B** for descriptions of the methods, events and tactics.

STEP 7 - DEVELOP STRONG MESSAGING

The next component to your Public Participation Strategy is to organize your communications. This identifies your key messages and framing language as well as communication protocols and notifications/promotional materials to raise awareness.

Identify ongoing communications and consistent messages. Early and ongoing communication is critical to the success of your public participation process. Community members should know where to look for more information and all project communications should have a similar look so they are easily recognizable.

Key messages are 3 to 5 points that summarize the most important things you want to say about your process. Be sure to write positive messages that match your audiences and the issues they care about the most. Write about the process and the content that you're seeking input on, and call for participation.

Key messages should use plain, simple language. They should be persuasive, easy to remember and focused on a single broad idea.

Appendix C has some tips on developing key messages.

STEP 8 - EVALUATION

With all the time, effort, and resources spent on engagement, it is critically important to evaluate both the process and results to better understand the impacts and outcomes, identify and learn from what worked and what didn't, and improve practice over time.

There are two types of evaluation which are most relevant for your public participation strategy.

- **Formative (Process):** used during a process to assess progress and learnings and identify ways to improve the process in real time to achieve better outcomes
- **Summative (Outcomes):** used after a process is complete - focuses on the outcome. Did the program work? Did we achieve our goals and objectives?

Regardless of the type(s) of evaluation you are conducting, it is essential to plan ahead so you know what success looks like, how you will measure it, and what you will do with the data.

Steps to a successful evaluation:

1. Record the results of the engagement process, including participant feedback on the project.
2. Document your methodology and process, and evaluate the success of your engagement against the guiding principles outlined on page 3 and 4.

Q1. What are your evaluation criteria?

Go back to your objectives. If they were measurable objectives they will assist you in determining how to evaluate success.

Q2. Which indicators will you use to measure success?

How will you know if you have been successful? Is it the number of people who respond to your survey or the number of people at an event? Perhaps it is a behavior change such as less cars parked on the streets in winter.

Q3. How will this be used to assist in decision making?

Will this information be provided to the decision makers such as a report to Council?

STEP 9 - REPORT BACK

A crucial part of any engagement project is reporting back to the internal stakeholders and the community. Why would anyone participate if they don't have confidence their input was valued and used in the decision making?

While specific reporting requirements will vary depending on the type of project, a public participation report should generally:

- **Describe what you did:** Provide a brief description of activities that occurred before, during, and after the participation process and how the process contributed to the overall project or decision.
- **Identify who participated:** Identify the number of people who participated in different activities and any other relevant information (i.e., demographics, key stakeholder groups, etc.).
- **Summarize what you heard:** Provide a summary of key ideas and priorities.
- **Explain next steps:** Explain how input will be used to inform subsequent stages and/or decisions. Identify next steps in the project (i.e., future participation opportunities or timelines for decisions or outcomes).

Five stakeholders you may need to report to:

1. **Internal Stakeholders:** Share the public's feedback with internal stakeholders who may work on future phases of the project.
2. **Departments and teams:** Share your own evaluation of your engagement process with other teams, for the purposes of continuous learning.
3. **Directors and Council:** Report out to senior leadership and/or Council.
4. **External stakeholder:** Report the results to the public on how their feedback affected the outcome.
5. **Toolkit:** While not exactly a stakeholder consider this toolkit. Based on your experience does this toolkit need to be amended? What additions would you make, if any?

APPENDIX A – PRO TIP: Creating SMART objectives

Ensure your project goals and objectives are SMART or better yet ensure they are SMARTER. This will help you when it comes time to evaluate your project success. If your objectives are not measurable, what will you measure?

Specific

- Who is involved?
- What do I want to accomplish?
- When – time frame
- Requirements/constraints
- Why is this important?
- How many participants do I want to reach? How many different groups?
- What? Is there specific feedback I am looking for?

Measureable

- Qualitative and quantitative – how will I know when I have reached my goal?

Actionable/Achievable

- Complete within a reasonable time
- Realistic
- Can you achieve what you set out to achieve? Is it even possible?

Relevant

- Does it matter to the organization?
- Does it matter to the completion of my project?
- Does it matter to the community?

Timely

- Deadline for completion.
- Does the project deadline impact other projects or other priorities?

Evaluate

- Determine the outcome.
- What is the significance of the goal that was achieved?

Re-Evaluate

- Evaluate. Rinse. Repeat.
- Re-evaluation should be done to refine and repeat goals and objectives where applicable.

APPENDIX B – Event/Method descriptions

Event/Method	Description	Considerations
Advisory committee	Advisory committees are representative of a broad range of stakeholders and provide advice or guidance in a range of areas. They are tasked with providing advice and guidance to the Board, in particular on priority subjects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important to ensure that advisory committees are truly representative of the community. Examine the demographics of the group and take steps to recruit more participants from groups that are being left out. Advisory committees should have a clear Terms of Reference and be aware of the level of decision-making responsibilities they hold. A staff member should work with the advisory
Card storming	Card storming works well for visioning, identifying issues, and strategizing and can be used at many of the public meetings listed here. Begin with a broad focus question that will draw out the ideas and creativity of the group. Participants write down on scratch paper all their ideas and then share in small groups. The groups decide on most significant ideas between them. The facilitator calls for ideas in about 3-4 rounds and group the ideas in categories. Group consensus pair the categories and ideas down.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contentious issues can be more difficult with this method if the participants are polarized as the method doesn't allow for deep understanding of all the issues. Thoughts can be expanded, color coded and joined using different charting methods. These manipulations can all be done while elements of the mind-map are adjusted to fit as part of the whole. A permanent record of the group's work can be kept through photos– allowing simple distribution and publication of the documents.
Charrette	A charrette is an intensive multi-developmental process using a team of experts that meet with community groups, developers and neighbours over a period from a few days to two weeks, gathering information on the issues that face the community. Charrettes are often conducted to design such things as parks and buildings, or to plan communities or transportation systems. The charrette team then develops solutions resulting in a clear, detailed, realistic plan for future development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The process is intensive and can be expensive, usually lasting several days and involving experts and specialists, including a trained charrette facilitator. The process operates with general sessions, small work groups, report backs to the large group, and feedback sessions with, or presentations from technical staff or decision makers. Use other types of participation techniques such as briefings, interviews, panels, review sessions and others to support the charrette. Decision makers work with participants to achieve reasonable and feasible decisions, by identifying reasonable constraints, teaching relevant design principles, and offering professionals insights to the ramifications of different design approaches. Trained facilitators should be used.
Citizen jury	The Citizens' Jury method is a means for obtaining informed citizen input into policy decisions. The jury is composed of 12–16 randomly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process requires significant resources and time commitment for participants and organizers.

	<p>selected citizens, who are informed by several perspectives, often by experts referred to as ‘witnesses’. Jurors then go through a process of deliberations where subgroups are often formed to focus on different aspects of the issue. After a series of focused discussions, jurors produce a decision or provide recommendations in the form of a citizens’ report. Usually a 4–5 day process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Random selection ensures impartiality of jurors. • Small size of group and their non-intimidating nature allows for innovative ideas and active participation. • Brings legitimacy and democratic control to non-elected public bodies.
Community Mapping	<p>Community Mapping is a participatory process that enables citizens to map the social, ecological and economic assets, along with historical events of their community. It is a useful way for initiating dialogue and planning in a community. • Mapping is an accessible and graphic way to learn about people’s perceptions of a place and can be useful in the visioning process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The method can be used to document certain aspects, strengths or weaknesses, or locations of services within a community, neighbourhood or municipality. • It is useful to break a large group into smaller circles of 3-6 people. • With the use of a blown-up map of the municipality, or large blank pieces of paper, participants can use different coloured markers to locate various things on the map. • The small group maps can eventually be integrated into a larger, collaborative map. • This method is interactive and fun, and can also be used successfully with children and youth.
Crowdsourcing	<p>Crowdsourcing is a type of participative online activity in which an individual, an institution, a nonprofit organization, or company with varying skills, experiences and perspectives utilizes a group of people for the voluntary undertaking of a task.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows you to obtain ideas or services from a large group of people quickly. • Great way to engage your community and provide the opportunity to network, hear fresh ideas and problem-solve together. • Managing a large group of expectations and ideas all at once can be difficult so be clear and specific in outlining your purpose, timeline and the outcome you’re hoping to achieve. • Build a relationship with the crowd to identify those who are invested. Get to know the people who actually care about your issue or initiative.
Deliberative forum	<p>Deliberative forums bring people together in groups to make choices about difficult, complex, public issues where there is a lot of uncertainty about solutions and a high likelihood of people polarizing on the issues. The goal is to find where there is common ground for action. Discussion guides are prepared and distributed to support participation in the forums. The guides include a number of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trained moderators are important as these are generally sensitive topics. • Interview stakeholders to gather all of the views prior to the forum to use in preparation of the guides. • Clear guidelines for discussion must be established by the moderator. • The moderator directs the flow of conversations, encouraging discussion of personal experiences, to ensure all participants have an opportunity to speak. Participants

	approaches to consider to resolve an issue.	<p>consider all possible outcomes to each approach.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Result: constructive statements that reflect the common ground of the groups.
Expert committee	Expert committees help to identify the important questions, provide unbiased information, and review recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experts should be sought for a range of areas to provide a balance of perspectives, such as technical and socio-economic. Information from experts should be "translated" into simple language before being shared with the wider community.
Focus group	Focus groups are small group discussions with six to eight participants. An established format and a trained facilitator can effectively "dig deeper" for participants' insights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skilled facilitators are essential to encouraging better levels of discourse. If you are doing more than one focus group, it is essential to have the same process and questions so that the results are comparable. An honorarium should be provided to participants for their time.
Key informant interview	Interviews are excellent ways of gathering initial information and learning about specific situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An interview requires an established format with a set number of questions. Four to six questions are more than enough. It is useful to share your notes with the interviewee afterwards to ensure that you captured all the main points. More than one interview should be done with each interest group to make sure that the information gathered is representative and valid.
Kitchen table discussion	Kitchen table discussions, also known as "coffee klatches", are informal meetings of community members (without staff involvement) to discuss certain issues and share feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing a good kitchen table guide is essential – this guide would include background information, discussion questions, and a form for completing feedback and sending back to the project team. It can be difficult to get a significant level of uptake on kitchen table discussions, as these are mainly community-driven.
Online forum	Online forums are web-based discussions that can occur in real time or over a period of time and are complementary to face-to-face engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant guidelines are essential and these instructions should be simple to understand. Forums need to be moderated in order to vet the input and keep the discussions focused. The amount of real-time forums should be limited to allow for participation from a wide range of people.
Open house/ Community fair	Open houses were traditionally static, information sharing events; however, by including interactive stations, entertainment, and other ways of providing input, they can be exciting and appealing to a wide range of people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There may be a risk of overwhelming participants with too much information. Make sure that displays are visually appealing and only share the information that is important. Staff at the open house should be well briefed prior to the event.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff should discuss the issues and options with attendees but not show bias while gathering input. • Open houses can offer a range of other engagement exercises as separate “stations” within the larger event.
Open Space Meeting	<p>Open space meetings are self-directed meetings formatted to enable participants to design their own agenda on a specific and important purpose or task. Participants create the agenda themselves at the beginning of the session by sharing their most important issue in a “Marketplace of Ideas” and self-organizing into groups based on these issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open space meetings are a self-organizing practice that empowers people to take responsibility for what they care about. • It is an innovative approach to creating whole systems change and inspiring creativity and leadership among participants. • Most common use is to address an urgent and difficult need such as with people who have experienced loss.
Participatory budgeting	<p>Participatory Budgeting programs are innovative policymaking processes. Citizens are directly involved in making policy decisions. Forums are held throughout the year so that citizens have the opportunity to allocate resources, prioritize broad social policies, and monitor public spending.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory Budgeting works best where there are already high levels of community activism. • The power attributed to citizens in the decision process can vary, from providing decision-makers with richer information about citizen preferences to processes that assign parts of the budget to direct citizen control. • Has the ability to be a very public process and can therefore convey legitimacy beyond the immediate participants. • Isn’t as successful where central targets and restricted budgets limit the amount of power that can be given to citizens. • If managed poorly, can create unrealistic expectations amongst participants.
Presentation	<p>Presenting to organizations throughout the community is an excellent way of building relationships and doing outreach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations are most likely to be well attended if they piggyback onto existing meetings. • Make a special effort to meet with groups that are harder to engage, such as immigrants and youth, as they are often underrepresented in public processes. • Ensure that your presentation is short and simple, as there will likely be many questions. Do not overwhelm your audience with too much information or jargon. • Provide handouts so that people can review later.
Revolving conversation	<p>A leaderless meeting process designed to facilitate the discussion of controversial topics with varying group sizes. It is set up as a conversation among four participants in a small circle or at a small table. Participants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because of the minimal role for facilitation, consider using this process when there is a high level of distrust toward the meeting’s sponsor.

	<p>change over the course of the discussion during the forum when other participants tap them out of the circle or the participant in the circle chooses to step out.</p> <p>A facilitator may help set up the process and seating arrangements, but will not participate or lead the conversation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of the conversation is best done with flip charts so everyone can see the points being made.
Surveys (mail/phone/online)	<p>Surveys are a good way of getting a snapshot of opinions across a wide range of demographic groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The level of statistical validity depends on the type of survey you undertake. Generally, it is harder to get a representative sample or statistical validity from online surveys, although they are easy and affordable to organize; however, they are good ways of engaging with youths, working people, and anyone who would not otherwise participate. Mail and telephone surveys can be more representative; however, they are quite expensive to arrange due to the costs of carrying out the surveys and coding the results.
Task forces	<p>A task force is a committee charged with a specific task (deliverables) under specified deadlines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task forces should be kept small, with clear guidelines. A staff member should work with task force to provide support and guidance.
Workshops	<p>Workshops can be either small or large, and are structured events with a set process to facilitate discussion on specific topics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No more than 25% of the workshop time should be dedicated to providing information. Ensure that larger workshops offer opportunities for everyone to participate, through regular small group discussions. Begin with a clear idea of the desired outcomes, both when planning the event and when communicating with participants. Participants should have an opportunity to provide feedback. Circulate the summary of the workshop to participants and articulate how the information will be used.
World Café	<p>World Cafés enable groups of people to participate together in evolving rounds of dialogue with three or four others while remaining part of a single, larger, and connected conversation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small, intimate conversations link and build on each other as people move between groups, cross-pollinate ideas, and discover new insights into questions or issues that really matter in their life, work, or community. Room set up is important to allow multiple conversations and room to move around. Provide table hosts to take notes and report back to the larger group.

APPENDIX C - PROTIP: Creating key messages

* In preparing all of your material, remember to reference the City of Prince George Brand Standard Manual, and Style Guide.

Engagement

For stakeholders to provide meaningful input, they need to understand the project and why it's worthwhile for them to participate. Build credibility and trust in the process by sharing the details of the engagement in plain language, including:

- What is being considered
- Why engagement is needed
- The overall engagement timeline
- Details of the engagement activities
- What the limitations are (legal, insurance, budget, jurisdiction)
- What is expected of them and why it's worthwhile for them to participate
- Who will be making decisions and how their input will be used

The project/issue

To communicate the details of the project or issue you are engaging on consider:

- Why is this project important to the community?
- Are there economic, environmental, social or cultural benefits?
- What are the impacts or risks? How will they be mitigated?
- What is important to the residents?
- What is important to the stakeholders? Answer the question, "What is in it for me?"
- What is important to the business community?
- Consider who is reading it and what they want to know most. Is that different than what you want them to know?

Messages

Framing the messages:

- Keep your key messages language simple. Do not use technical jargon or acronyms.
- Use as few words as possible.
- Include visuals whenever possible. This can be drawings, maps, photos or pie charts and tables.
- Keep the messages neutral in tone.
- Lead with the key messages and keep the finer details in the background. Make it easy to find the key points.
- Organize into subject groups if necessary.
- Use bullets not long paragraphs
- Lead with the action. If there is something you want the reader to do, start with that.

APPENDIX D - PROTIP: Event check list

Phase	Item	Staff to organize	Staff to manage at event
EVENT			
	Book venue – get keys		
	Catering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water • Coffee/tea • Juice • Cookies • Fruit/veg tray • Muffins • Napkins/cups/plates 		
	Floor plan, tables, chairs		
	Janitorial needs		
	Presentations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen • Projector/laptop • Microphone • Podium • Power /HDMI cords • Remote control (batteries) 		
	Internet access		
	Triple check anything IT related		
	Camera for event photos or video		
	Directional signage		
	How to transport materials to venue		
	Develop plan B if there is an audio or visual failure		
	Parking – and accessible parking		
REGISTRATION TABLE			
	Welcome sign		
	Business cards		
	Sign-in sheets		
	Pens		
	Name tags – staff and guests		
	Notice of event photos		
	Poster of event schedule		
	Information packages		
	Staff greeter		
DISPLAY BOARDS			
	Display boards mounted on foam core		
	easels		
	maps		

	Material for activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pens • Post-its • Notepads • stickers 		
SURVEY TABLE			
	Paper surveys		
	Postcards with link to digital survey		
	Reference material/map		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pens • Post-its 		
EXTRAS			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pens • Felt markers • White boards • Dry erase pens • Flip charts • Scissors • Tape • Stapler • Binder clips • Duct tape • Staff contact list • Painters tape for hanging posters 		

APPENDIX E - PROTIP: Facilitation tips

PURPOSE

State the purpose of your event at the beginning so everyone knows why they are there. Are you just gathering feedback or are you looking for consensus?

TYPICAL GROUND RULES FOR MEETINGS

Before starting a meeting it is important to establish some ground rules to ensure the meeting stays on topic, respect is shown for all participants and facilitators, and time is used wisely. Ground rules can be set beforehand or developed with the group at the beginning of a session. Some common ground rules for meetings include:

- Minimize distractions. Turn off cell phones and avoid unnecessary talking.
- Actively participate and listen.
- Be respectful and considerate of others.
- Come informed, having read any background materials.
- The facilitator or note taker will record ideas and comments.
- Stay on topic and keep questions and comments brief so everyone has a chance to participate.
- The meeting will end on time.

KEY SKILLS FOR GOOD FACILITATION

Events are often most successful when facilitators/staff avoid getting defensive or trying to win by talking about facts and data. Often, participants just want someone to listen to them. After participants have expressed their concerns, they may be open to hearing a different point of view. The best you can do is invite participation in the process, let people know how to find out more information, and let them know that their thoughts are important.

Summarize & Reflect Back

- To summarize and reflect back: “What I think I am hearing is...”
- To get info and issues: paraphrase comment “It sounds to me like you’re saying... ”and then ask, “Did I hear/get that right?”
- Show active listening: Maintain eye contact, show body language cues that you’re listening (such as nods, un-crossed arms, perhaps even talking notes), prompt for more detail with “Tell me more about that...” or “Could you explain that?”
- For quiet people: “Thank you for visiting our display. Do you live in the area/when did you come to area? What do you think?”

Move from positions to issues and values

- To go deeper to get past positions to issues and values: “Tell me why this is important to you.”
- For dismissive comments (“that’s a stupid idea!”): “We’re interested in hearing everyone’s perspective. What would you add? Why does this matter to you?”

Move from values to actions

- **To find common ground:** “I’m hearing that X values (safety, peace and quiet, sense of community, etc.) are important to you. How can I help you with your concern?”
- **To increase understanding:** “You mentioned earlier that you are interested in X. What information can I share with you about that?”
- **To reduce conflict at an initial meeting:** “The good news is we don’t have to decide this today, as we are just raising awareness and learning what matters. Did you know that we are holding open houses on X dates? At these events we will...After that, ...” (give person poster/handout with event dates and locations)
- **For those who cannot be facilitated:** “This is an important issue. Here’s my card... call me next week. I’d love to come meet with your group and talk about this issue further.”

APPENDIX F - PROTIP: Sample Budget

CATEGORY	ITEMS TO CONSIDER	COST
Human resources	Staff time (incl. support from other departments)	
	Consultant/contractor	
	Citizen champions/committee	
Advertising	Newspaper/radio ads	
	Social media ads	
	Graphic design costs	
	Printing – posters, surveys, brochures	
	Mail-out	
	Incentives - prizes	
	Special ads in related magazines, programs or websites	
In-person tactics	Room rentals	
	Table/dishes/linen rentals	
	Catering	
	Materials – flip charts, pens, stickers, display boards, easels	
	Recruitment incentives (honorarium, childcare)	
	Facilitator	
	Audio-visual equipment rental	
	Fees for booths at events	
Digital techniques	Hardware – laptops, ipads, screens, speakers	
	Video – camera, digital recorder	
	Monthly software costs	
	Snapchat filter or other digital opportunities	

APPENDIX G – Public Participation Planning Worksheet

STEP 1 - PURPOSE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

What are your SMART objectives and what are the outcomes you are working toward?

STEP 2 - IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS

Use the table below to list your target audiences, their key issues and interests, your participation target, and any special considerations for engaging or sharing information with them.

- **Key issues** may include specific interests or concerns of a target audience or group. Note whether they are generally supportive, neutral, or opposed to the project or issue at hand.
- **Participation targets** may be a specific number or proportion (ie., all adjacent landowners); a percentage (ie., 5% of the total population); or they may include a diverse range of interests or groups (ie., an equal number of people representing different interests on an advisory committee).
- **Special considerations** may include things like participation type (in person vs. online) timing, location, communications methods, language, childcare, transportation, event design, catering, and staffing requirements that could encourage more participation. What power dynamics / relationships, language, cultural issues, or other potential barriers need to be considered in the process?

Target audience	Key issues or interests	Participation target	Special considerations

STEP 3 -DETERMINE THE LEVEL OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

STEP 4- DESIGN & SCOPE THE PROCESS

You might start your project on one level like inform and then move into another level. Check off where you think your project will be and during which phase of the project.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Dates:				
Processes: What is happening				

STEP 5 - IDENTIFY POTENTIAL ISSUES & MITIGATION MEASURES

Identify the risks to the project's success:

ISSUE	LEVEL OF RISK	MITIGATION MEASURES

STEP 6 - SELECT APPROPRIATE TOOLS & TACTICS

INFORM	INPUT	ENGAGE
<input type="checkbox"/> Website <input type="checkbox"/> Social media <input type="checkbox"/> Print advertising <input type="checkbox"/> Radio advertising <input type="checkbox"/> News release <input type="checkbox"/> Council reports <input type="checkbox"/> Information booth <input type="checkbox"/> Posters/flyer/brochure <input type="checkbox"/> Fact sheet <input type="checkbox"/> Open house <input type="checkbox"/> City digital monitors <input type="checkbox"/> Video <input type="checkbox"/> Staff email signatures to share links <input type="checkbox"/> External partners – newsletters <input type="checkbox"/> Letter to residents <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone: one-on-one	<input type="checkbox"/> Digital survey <input type="checkbox"/> Paper survey <input type="checkbox"/> Social media poll <input type="checkbox"/> Media briefing <input type="checkbox"/> Open house <input type="checkbox"/> Public event <input type="checkbox"/> Information booth <input type="checkbox"/> Market Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Council committee <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop <input type="checkbox"/> Detailed survey – open questions <input type="checkbox"/> Interviews <input type="checkbox"/> Highly interactive public events (open house with many opportunities for input): <input type="checkbox"/> Dialogue formats with groups (focus groups, workshops, charrettes, World Café, Idea Jams, Open Space meetings, deliberative forums, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Site visits <input type="checkbox"/> Advisory group

<input type="checkbox"/> Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Media event		
--	--	--

Based on everything you have identified in steps 3-6 develop your final timeline here:

Phase/dates	Activity	Tactics	Staff assigned

TACTICS & BUDGET	
ITEM	COST
Graphic design	
Other consultant	
Printing	
Staff time/overtime	
Advertising	
Special equipment	
Room rental	
Permits	
Other	

STEP 7 - DEVELOP STRONG MESSAGING

See Appendix C to develop your messages.

STEP 8 - EVALUATION

How will you evaluate? What will determine success? Use your objectives to determine how you will evaluate.

STEP 9 - REPORT BACK

What steps will you take to report back and to whom?

WRITING AND STYLE GUIDE

2024



All website users and content developers for the City of Prince George must use these guidelines when writing for an audience (both internal and external). If you have questions about the guidelines or would like someone to review your writing, please contact the communications division: communications@princegeorge.ca.

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Accessibility

As a municipality we are required to have the information on our website and public documents accessible to all readers.

- Use clear, plain language.
- Add alt-text to every image, including maps, charts, and photographs. DO NOT MARK AS DECORATIVE.
- Avoid **bolding** or CAPITALIZING a line to create a heading. Instead, select the appropriate heading style.
- Avoid italics, which can be difficult to read for some people.
- Use tables for tabular data. Include proper headings for rows and/or columns.

Content

When considering your content, be aware of who the audience is. What information do they need to know? What is their reading level? What format would they prefer to receive the content (e.g., brochure, email, or web content)?

Following the tips in this guide will ensure the content is easy to scan for the reader so they can find what they are looking for quickly.

FAQs are discouraged. If the question really is frequently asked, then the answer should be easy to find in the content created. A long list of questions creates more text to read than simple headings and bullets.

Formatting and spelling

The City of Prince George follows the Canadian Press Style Guide. Items not covered in this guide can be found there.

Spelling and punctuation

- Canadian English spelling conventions occupy an odd middle ground between British and American rules. In Canada we use the Canadian Oxford Dictionary. Some words use the British form (e.g., “colour”) and others rely on the American style (“organization, analyze, etc.”) with a number of exceptions.
 - For consistency’s sake (and to eliminate confusion), use British spelling conventions in all copy.
 - When editing or writing copy in SharePoint, be sure to set the dictionary to “English - UK” rather than the default “English - US” and use the spell check feature.
- Use the Oxford comma (“Trees can be found on Oak Street, Dogwood Street, and Elm Street.”).
- Do not use exclamation marks.
- Place periods, commas (where relevant), and other punctuation outside quotation marks.

Abbreviations

- Write the term in full the first time you use it on the page and put the abbreviation or acronym in brackets. For all uses after, you may simply use the abbreviation. For example:
 - The Official Community Plan (OCP) review project is underway. The OCP guides planning and land use management.
- Try using a short form such as "the program" or "the plan," in lower case instead of repeating the full term or using an abbreviation.
- You may use the shortened version without writing the full term if you're confident it's better known to the widest audience than the long-form version (e.g., PDF, DNA, or RCMP).
- You do not need to spell out British Columbia before using the abbreviation B.C. Always use periods between the 'B' and the 'C'. The only exceptions are brand or company names, such as BC Ferries or BC Hydro. Other Canadian provinces and territories are abbreviated using periods only when they include more than one word:
 - Alberta: AB
 - Manitoba: MB
 - New Brunswick: N.B.

Capitalization

The first word in a sentence or a heading is capitalized. The others are not. Contrary to what we learned in elementary school, most words are not capitalized. Job titles are not capitalized. Proper names of people or places are capitalized. For city and province if we are talking about the place, they are lower case but if we are talking about the government, they are upper case. Council is also lower case. The following are correct:

- Jane is in Prince George.
- Jane, the communications manager, is in the park.
- Mayor Jane is in Cannought Hill Park.
- Jane, the mayor, is in the regional district office.
- Ms. Jane is in the Fraser Fort George Regional District office.
- Finance Minister Jane Smith and John Doe, the minister of culture are invited.
- The whole city came out to see the City Council meeting.
- John was elected to the council.

Formatting paragraphs

Always left justify blocks of text. Full justified text to create straight margins on both sides is hard to read because it creates large spaces between words.

ALL CAPS is difficult to read. Always use sentence case, even in headings.

Formatting measurements

- Use the Metric system for all weights and measures and convert all non-Metric units to their Metric equivalents (round up or down where appropriate).
- Abbreviations for Metric units may be used or typed out in full, but keep the style consistent on the page (e.g., 1,000kg OR 1,000 kilograms).

Formatting dates and times

- Specific times are shown as numerals. Use a colon to separate minutes from the hour, with “a.m.” and “p.m.” in lower case with a space after the last number. Do not include “:00” when writing a time on the hour.
 - E.g., 12 p.m., 1:33 p.m., 3 a.m., 5:39 a.m.
 - To express a time range, use “to” as a connector, not a dash (e.g., 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.).
- Dates must be expressed in the “DAY-OF-WEEK, MONTH DAY, YEAR” format.
 - E.g., Wednesday, March 12, 2018.
 - For a range of dates, use “to” as a connector and include the year if appropriate. (e.g., March 17 to March 22, 2018).
 - Dates are September 1st or September 1, 2021. Do not put the “th” if you are including the year.

Formatting numbers

- Spell out numbers from zero (0) to nine (9) and write numbers 10 and up numerically . The exception is if they are at the beginning of a sentence, in which case write in full. E.g.: Four hundred, one thousand and six, etc.
- Use commas for numbers in the 1,000+ range.
- Use the word “per cent” rather than the “%” sign in text content.
- Use the “%” sign in tabular data where appropriate.

Formatting HTML links

- Use actionable language when creating HTML link text (exception for links with time/date stamps) to embed the link in appropriate text. For example:
 - [View the City Events Calendar](#)
 - [Learn more about Parks, Trails, and Sports Fields](#)
 - **NOT:** [To read the Recreation Guide click HERE](#)
- Mark PDF links with the [PDF] affix.
 - [Download the 2024 Council Meeting Calendar \[PDF\]](#)
- Add description text for all links in SharePoint. Description text can be the same as the link itself.

- Links must be bulleted when possible.
- For print material use a custom URL for the text rather than a long, complex URL.
- Time and date stamps may be included in links where appropriate using the following format:
 - [\[December 1, 2023\] - Winter Recreation Guide Launching Today](#)

Commonly misspelled or misused words

animal waste - never use poop, crap, fecal matter, doggie doo, or dung.

biohazard – refers to human waste. Same as above - never use poop, crap, fecal matter, dung, etc.

bylaw - never hyphenate (by-law) or capitalize, unless it's part of the proper name (the Business Licence Bylaw)

cancelled - cancelling (verb) Canadian spelling uses two Ls

councillor - refers to an elected official, whereas a counsellor is a therapist

email - do not hyphenate

firefighter - the compound word version is the correct Canadian spelling

internet - is not capitalized

its and it's - its is the possessive form of it; it's is a contraction of it is

licence - is a noun, as in a driver's licence (remember: you can "c" your driver's licence)

license - is a verb, as in dog owners must license their pet

non-profit - or not-for-profit

per cent – it is two words in Canada. Percentages is one word.

property tax notice or **tax notice** are correct, capitalizing it to read Property Tax Notice is incorrect

social media - is not capitalized

website and webpage - are not capitalized. The website refers to the whole site, webpage refers to one page on the website.

Tone

Maintain a consistent neutral tone

- Content in all City documents, and websites uses neutral, objective language and not flowery, marketing-oriented prose.
- Do not use personal pronouns unless the content is a Q&A or FAQ involving rhetorical questions.
- Do not use promotional writing styles that try to "sell" users on a service, idea, etc.

The exception to this is the City's social media channels. Tone for social media complies with the City's social media strategy.

Always use active voice

An active voice sentence is where the **subject** performs an **action**. For example:

- The **letter carrier** **collected** the letters.
- The **cat** **shredded** the sofa.
- The **Mayor** **cut** the ribbon at the opening ceremony.

A passive voice sentence is where the **subject** is acted on. For example:

- The letters were **collected** by the **letter carrier**.
- The sofa was **shredded** by the **cat**.
- The ribbon was **cut** at the opening ceremony by the **Mayor**.

Active voice sentences are a direct and effective way to communicate ideas - especially complex ones - that may be difficult to understand if written in passive voice.

Plain Language

A written communication is in plain language if its wording, structure, and design are so clear that the intended readers can easily find what they need, understand it, and use it.

Be concise

- Keep copy clear, concise, and precise.
 - Keep sentences short and cut unnecessary words.
 - Avoid jargon, acronyms, and bureaucratic language.
 - Use the active voice (avoid passive language).
 - Use the present tense.
 - Be consistent: use the same word to describe the same thing.
- The average internet user spends 15 to 30 seconds on a page scanning - and not actually reading - most content. Make sure copy is scannable.
- Scannable copy incorporates many of following elements (where appropriate):
 - Useful headings and sub-headings that clearly describe content.
 - Bulleted lists.
 - One idea per paragraph.
 - Short sentences (around 10 to 15 words) written in active voice.

- Use the Inverted Pyramid Model approach to writing:
 - Start with the main point and then go into details (e.g., how news articles are structured).
 - If readers can't grasp the general idea within the first couple of sentences, they may not read the rest.



Sample plain language usage

Original text	Plain language replacement
High-quality learning environments are a necessary precondition for facilitation and enhancement of the ongoing learning process	Children need good schools if they are to learn properly
Prospective applicants should fill in the form	Complete the form
advance planning	planning
after this is accomplished	then
In the absence of	Without
Please be advised that	(do not use)
In order to	To
As a means to	To
No later than	By
Subsequent to	After
Provided that	If

Titles and headings

- Use built-in heading styles to create a heading. Avoid **bolding** or CAPITALIZING a line to create a heading.
- Use appropriate heading hierarchy (e.g., If Dogs is H2, Retrievers is H3, Golden Retrievers is H4).
- Do not end your heading with a colon.
- If necessary to include a date, place at the end of the title (e.g., Council meeting summary - February 6, 2023).

Bullets, tables, and graphics

To make it easier for the reader to quickly skim to find the information they are looking for, bullets, tables and graphics are often preferable to long paragraphs of text.

Examples

Instead of:

Out of country students will need to get medical insurance, get a BC driver's licence, and inform the Registrar of their local address.

Better:

Students coming from outside Canada will need to:

- Obtain medical insurance
- Obtain a BC driver's licence
- Provide the Registrar with a local address

Instead of:

We must receive your completed application form on or before the 15th day of the second month following the month you are reporting if you do not submit your application electronically or on the 25th day of the second month following the month you are reporting if you submit your application electronically.

Better:

If you submit your forms:	We must receive it by:
Electronically	25 th of the second month following reporting
Not electronically	15 th of the second month following reporting

Inclusive and Indigenous language

Inclusive language

Use accurate terms:

- When referring to the general population, use “residents” instead of “citizens” to be inclusive of landed immigrants.

Use inclusive terms for abilities:

- Avoid terms that may stigmatize individuals with disabilities, such as “challenged” or “handicapped”.
- Use person-first language. For example, use "person with a disability" instead of "disabled person".
- Avoid words that restrict ability such as “wheelchair-bound,” “suffering from,” “affected with” or “victim”.

Consider age sensitivities:

- Use language that is respectful to people of all ages. For instance, use "older adults" instead of "seniors" or "elderly".

Be mindful of cultural sensitivities:

- Respect different cultural backgrounds by using language that is inclusive and doesn’t perpetuate stereotypes.

Gender-specific words should be replaced with gender-neutral words that have the same meaning. In addition, the following writing techniques should be considered to avoid using a gender-specific pronoun:

- Use the singular "they" and its other grammatical forms ("them", "themselves" and "their");
- Do not use he/she;
- refer to indefinite pronouns and singular nouns;
- replace the masculine pronoun with an article (“the property” instead of “his property”);
- use a neutral word or phrase such as "person", "any person", "every person" or "no person";
- repeat the noun;
- Eliminate the pronoun completely.
 - For example: Instead of ‘The applicant must fill out the form and provide his or her ID.’ use ‘Fill out the form in person and provide ID.’

Replace gender specific terms

Avoid	Use instead
Chairman	Chairperson
Fireman	Firefighter
Policeman	Police Officer
Businessman	business executive/entrepreneur/business person
Foreman	Supervisor
Cameraman	Camera operator
Mailman	Letter carrier
Waiter/waitress	Server
Stewardess	Flight attendant

Indigenous relations

Use inclusive language involves being respectful, acknowledging cultural diversity, and avoiding language that may be offensive or exclusive.

Terms

- **Chief** – A Band Chief is a person elected by Band members to govern for a specified term. Hereditary Chief is a leader who has power passed down from one generation to the next along bloodlines or other cultural protocols.
- **Elder** - Elders have earned the respect of their community through wisdom, harmony, and balance of their actions in their teachings. Elders work to instill respect in their community members for the natural world.
- **Equality** - "Equality" and "Equally" are terms that should be avoided when working with Indigenous Peoples. The term equality or equal suggests they are asked to give up their constitutionally protected rights or they can be equal only if they give up their human rights to be who they are as a People.
- **“Indian, “Aboriginal,” “Native,” or “Indigenous”** - In Canada the most common term which includes Metis and Inuit, is Indigenous. However, if referring to a specific Nation or Band, it is best to ask them what they are calling themselves.
- Usage of the word "Indian" in Canada is decreasing due to connections to colonial policies under the Indian Act, and government departments. The term should only be used in reference to the Indian Act or for Bands that continue to use it (e.g., Osoyoos Indian Band). The term “Aboriginal,” was made more popular in the 1980s when the federal government began using it. Today, the term has fallen out of use and should be avoided. The term “Native” is outdated and no longer used except when working with specific organizations who use the term, such as the Native Friendship Centre.
- **First Nations** - First Nations is a term used to identify Indigenous peoples of Canada who are neither Métis nor Inuit. It can be used to refer to a single band or pluralized to refer to several

bands. Some communities use band as in Burns Lake Band while others use Nation as in Squamish Nation. As always, if unsure, ask.

- **Plural** – When referencing the peoples generally and not a specific Band or Nation, First Peoples, First Nations, and Indigenous Peoples are always plural and capitalized.
- **Possessive language** - Avoid using possessive phrases like "Canada's Indigenous Peoples" or "our Indigenous Peoples" as they have connotations of ownership. Consider, "Indigenous Peoples in Canada" instead.
- **Reserve** - In Canada we do not use the term, "reservation." Reserve is the Canadian term. Bands and their members are situated on reserves. Reservation is the American term for a place where Native American tribes live.
- **Stakeholder** - While currently widely used, the term "stakeholder" is generally considered to be deeply rooted in colonial practices. The City will not use this term but instead use "interested parties" or "interested and invested parties." Variations such as "Interested groups" or "interested community groups" are also acceptable.

If a document needs to include written Indigenous language, our brand font may not contain the special characters required. For these instances, please contact communications@princegeorge.ca for assistance.



POLICY

POLICY NAME: Communications Policy

CATEGORY: City Government and Infrastructure
APPROVED BY COUNCIL: 2022/07/11
DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE: Office of the City Manager

PURPOSE:

This purpose of the Communications Policy is to establish guidelines for the City of Prince George when communicating or releasing information on behalf of the City. To ensure information is provided in a timely, transparent, accurate, consistent and appropriate manner.

This policy applies to all City of Prince George employees and all contractors or partners who communicate with citizens, other agencies or the media on behalf of the City.

POLICY OBJECTIVES:

To establish standards for effective City communications.

POLICY:

1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

All communication activities conducted by the City of Prince George must adhere to the applicable policies, procedures, guidelines, and statutory requirements set out by legislation.

Communications activities must also reflect the City of Prince George's Communications Principles:

1. Provide information that is timely, accurate, clear, accessible, and responsive.
2. Consider the range of communication tools at our disposal and use those most appropriate to address the needs associated with each circumstance.
3. Work collaboratively across the organization to ensure that information is thorough, factual, and timely.
4. Respect the access to information and privacy rights of citizens and employees.
5. Support opportunities for engagement to inform public policy.
6. Strive to achieve a culture of two-way communication and communications excellence practices.

2. PLAIN LANGUAGE

The City of Prince George will use plain language for its internal and external communications as much as possible while also meeting statutory requirements.

Plain language can be broadly described as any writing designed to ensure the reader understands the message as quickly, easily, and completely as possible. Plain language strives to be easy to read, understand, and use. It avoids verbose, convoluted language and jargon and uses document structure and visual aids (such as graphics or charts) to guide the reader.

3. TIMELY RESPONSE

The City of Prince George will strive to provide residents, business, visitors, and other interested and invested parties timely, accurate, clear, accessible, and responsive information. City of Prince George employees will respond to enquiries as promptly as is practicable.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The City of Prince George is committed to involving its citizens in the decision-making processes, where appropriate. When the City gathers feedback from the community, the community will be informed of how the information will be used and the results of the public engagement will be made public.

The City is guided by the following International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Core Values as its foundation when considering public participation and engagement:

- 4.1 *“Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.*
- 4.2 *Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.*
- 4.3 *Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.*
- 4.4 *Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.*
- 4.5 *Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.*
- 4.6 *Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.*
- 4.7 *Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.”*

5. MEDIA RELATIONS

Media relations activities will be coordinated in accordance with applicable supporting Administrative Procedures approved by the City Manager.

6. PARTNERSHIPS AND THIRD-PARTY PROMOTION

For the purposes of this policy:

6.1 “Partnership” is defined as an arrangement where parties agree to cooperate to advance their mutual interests in order to increase the likelihood of each achieving their mission and to amplify their reach.

6.2 “Sponsorship” is defined as a formal agreement in which cash and/or an in-kind fee is paid toward a program, service or amenity in return for marketing, advertising, public relations or other recognition.

The City of Prince George regularly, as part of its day-to-day operation, enters into partnerships or sponsorships with other organizations, governments, societies, and businesses. The City should acknowledge these partnerships as part of its regular communications. This may include short statements outlining the partnership or sponsorship arrangement, use of a logo on advertising materials, or another similar tactic.

The City will not actively promote or advertise any third-party organization, society, entity or business over another similar organization, unless as part of an officially recognized partnership or sponsorship relationship.

7. SOCIAL MEDIA

The City of Prince George will use social media as communication and engagement tools to:

- Engage citizens at their convenience.
- Make it easy for citizens to participate.
- Create a two-way dialogue with the community.
- Provide the City with the ability to communicate effectively and quickly.

Use of City social media platforms and accounts will adhere to applicable supporting Administrative Procedures approved by the City Manager.

8. BRANDING AND BRAND ELEMENTS

The City of Prince George has a single and consistent visual identity for its roles and responsibilities to be clearly recognized. All communication from the City from signage to correspondence to digital platforms will adhere to the applicable Administrative Procedure approved by the City Manager.

Where naming rights exist additional branding may be present in accordance with any contractual obligations but this does not preclude any City branding unless authorized by the City Manager.

9. WEB ELEMENTS

The City of Prince George will maintain one official website (www.princegeorge.ca) to provide the public with information regarding City services, Council decisions, Council and committee meeting

schedules, minutes and agendas, bylaws, activities and events, and ongoing local government business.

The website and any other City web elements will only be used to promote activities provided by the City or in partnership with the City.



CITY OF PRINCE GEORGE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

PROCEDURE NAME: Communications

CATEGORY: Communications
APPROVED BY CITY MANAGER: 2022/10/31
DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE: Office of the City Manager

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Communications Procedure is to establish the procedures, roles and responsibilities for all City employees and representatives when communicating or releasing information on behalf of the City. This procedure provides guidelines and procedures that support transparent, consistent, and informative communications from the City of Prince George.

This procedure applies to all City of Prince George employees.

OVERVIEW:

This Procedure identifies responsibilities and standards for City communications

SCOPE:

This procedure relates to all public messages, images, and communications from the City. This includes signage, correspondence, reports, digital platforms, social media and advertisements.

POLICY:

1. RESPONSIBILITIES

The City Manager is responsible for:

- Implementing this procedure;
- Ensuring policy and procedures reviews occur; and
- Approving any new web elements or social media channels.

Directors are responsible for:

- Understanding and adhering to the policy and the procedures outlined in the related guidebooks;
- Ensuring employees are aware of this policy and related procedures; and
- Reviewing and amending this policy as required.
- Ensuring all contractors who may communicate with the public on behalf of the City are aware and abide by this policy.

The Communications Division is responsible for:

- Establishing communications standards and appropriate manuals and guides for staff use.

All City of Prince George employees are responsible for:

- Understanding and adhering to this procedure.

2. Written material

Staff should adhere to standards established in the City of Prince George Writing and Style Guide for all written material in all standard and digital platforms including, but not limited to, signage, correspondence, reports, digital platforms (including the website and any apps), social media and advertisements.

3. Brand Standards

The communications division is responsible for ensuring consistent application of the brand identity standards throughout the organization.

The communications division is responsible for any updates to the Brand Standards Manual.

All communications from the City must have the appropriate visual identity:

- All City departments and divisions use the City logo.
- Communications prepared on behalf of Mayor and Council, including Council committees, use the City Coat of Arms in their official communications.
- Fire and Rescue Services use the Prince George Fire and Rescue logo.

No other logos or symbols should be used for any City communications without prior approval of the communications division. An exception is logo use related to Naming Rights Agreements as explained in the Communications Policy.

4. Writing and Style Guide

The communications division is responsible for ensuring consistent application of the standards established in the Writing and Style Guide throughout the organization.

The communications division is responsible for any updates to the Writing and Style Guide.

5. Website and Intranet

Management of City websites (both the public site and internal CWW) is the responsibility of the communications division and the information and technology services division. All additional pages or changes in the page layouts must be approved by both divisions.

Wherever possible, the websites will provide links to other official information sources and not post information from other sources directly to the website.

The public website should be considered the first point of contact when new or revised information regarding programs and services is established.

Department designates are responsible for content edits, additions and deletions for their Department's section, and designates may make routine edits and additions to their website content.

Non-routine, complex, or new content (for example, a new page or section, or a rewrite of an existing page) must be approved by the communications division.

Exceptions to this include recreation programs and event content which change regularly.

The City of Prince George Website Style Guide and Website Sitemap provide website content standards that will be adhered to on the public website.

6. Public Participation

The communications division will establish a toolkit for staff use to aid in effective public engagement processes.

The communications division should be consulted on proposed public participation activities by any division or department that are not required by statute (i.e. excluding public processes in connection with planning and land use bylaws or variance applications).

7. Promotion

The Council Communications Policy states, *"The City will not actively promote or advertise any third-party organization, society, entity or business over another similar organization, unless as part of an officially recognized partnership or sponsorship relationship."* This does not prohibit the City from profiling local entrepreneurs, industry, trades, or businesses in pursuit/compliance with our economic development policy/goals/program. The communications can highlight the activity without a call to action that benefits a business.

External Relations

Media Relations

City Government - Effective Governance

Approved by City Manager: July 18, 2019

OVERVIEW

A coordinated approach to media relations is foundational for building mutually beneficial and trusting relationships with news media. Such relationships help to foster accurate, balanced, and fair reporting; help the City to convey information through the media to citizens; increase coverage of important civic developments; and protect and enhance the City's reputation as an open and transparent government.

While External Relations leads the City's media relations activities, all City departments have a role to play in sharing information and building co-operative and mutually beneficial relationships between the City and media.

SCOPE

This administrative procedure applies to all City staff including full-time and part-time staff, casual and temporary workers, volunteers, and co-op placements. It does not apply to the Mayor, Council, or Council Committees.

PURPOSE

This Media Relations Procedure informs staff of how they should respond to inquiries from the news media in order to provide reliable, timely information to the public. The Procedure also helps to ensure that consideration is given to the range of communication tools available and to using those most appropriate to address the needs associated with each circumstance (see the [City's Public Facing Digital Communications Channels Procedure](#)). In addition, the Procedure guides staff on how to initiate and conduct media relations.

This administrative procedure supports the following principles:

- Working collaboratively across the organization to ensure information provided to media is accurate, thorough, clear, easy to access, and timely;
- Respecting the access to information and privacy rights of employees and citizens;
- Ensuring that the particular requirements and timelines of the media are considered; and
- Communication is integral to achieving the City's strategic priorities.

GUIDELINES

External Relations produces and disseminates City news releases, advisories, and public notices via multiple channels. Staff also work with reporters to provide story ideas and topics of interest to build greater public and media understanding of City programs, services, and initiatives.

Initiating media relations

City-initiated media relations activities are led by External Relations. City departments and staff wishing to initiate media relations in promotion of an event (such as an announcement) or initiative should contact the External Relations Department as indicated below.

Department of External Relations – Point of Contact

Unless otherwise indicated within this procedure, the point of contact in the External Relations Department is as follows:

1. Senior Communications Officer
2. Director of External Relations

Responding to media inquiries

All media inquiries should be directed to the appointed staff in the External Relations Department who will then contact the reporter and determine their needs and deadline. External Relations staff will then work with the relevant department or division to determine an appropriate spokesperson and help to prepare the necessary information and a suitable date and time for an interview. All directors and managers are expected to be responsive to media inquiries and to provide a spokesperson within a reasonable amount of time that takes into account the media's often short deadlines.

Acting as spokesperson

In the interest of openness and transparency, the City provides the media with access to its subject matter experts for interviews. Officially, the mayor is the spokesperson for the City of Prince George and Council as a body. The City Manager speaks on behalf of Administration, but will often delegate this responsibility to City directors, and directors on to department and division managers. In certain cases, managers may appoint staff members to do interviews on topics particularly related to their positions.

The selection of an appropriate spokesperson is typically a decision made between External Relations and a relevant manager and/or director, although the City Manager can appoint a staff member to speak for the City on a particular subject (e.g. labour negotiations). The Senior Communications Officer and/or Director of External Relations may speak on behalf of other departments or divisions when a quick response is necessary and a relevant departmental representative is unavailable, or when the City's Emergency Operations Centre has been activated.

Reports to Council

Reports on the Council agenda are circulated to Mayor and Council and posted on the City's website the Wednesday immediately prior to the Council meeting date. Members of the media routinely ask for clarification, background information, or reaction to Council reports as soon as they are posted. External Relations will assist designated spokespeople or subject matter experts to provide clarification and background information in a way that does not presume the outcome of Council deliberations. Staff will not comment to media on the contents of any Council reports before they are made available to Council.

Council and other public meetings

In the interest of openness and timely communication, City staff members may regularly agree to media requests for interviews during and immediately following Council meetings and other public gatherings relating to City business such as budget deliberations and committee meetings. In such circumstances, it is unrealistic to ask the media to wait to speak to the appointed External Relations

Department staff before conducting an interview. Therefore, staff may in these circumstances opt to participate in the interview on-the-spot provided they are the relevant expert on the topic at hand. Members of the media who request interviews at a later date should be referred to the appointed External Relations Department staff (i.e. the Senior Communications Officer) to ensure that the request is completed.

Service agreements and/or contracts

All verbal or written agreements, contracts, or service agreements containing a media/promotion component (i.e.: events, City-led initiatives, stakeholder promotion, etc.) must first be reviewed by and discussed with the Director of External Relations. This will include a review of the commitment of City resources and staff, and the alignment of the proposed media/promotion with City strategies, branding, and priorities.

Media training

Media training will be coordinated by the External Relations Department, in conjunction with Human Resources, on an appropriate schedule (typically once every two years) to ensure staff are comfortable to speak on behalf of the organization in a variety of circumstances and situations.



CITY OF PRINCE GEORGE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

PROCEDURE NAME: Social Media

CATEGORY: Communications
APPROVED BY CITY MANAGER: 2022/10/31
DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE: Office of the City Manager

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Corporate Social Media Procedure is to establish clear guidelines and approvals for employees who manage City official social media pages.

OVERVIEW:

This Social Media Procedure outlines the corporate standards and principles of communicating in the online world related to discussing, sharing or commenting on City business.

The purpose of City social media pages is to inform and engage citizens on local government issues in a friendly, timely, accurate and clear manner. The pages create a two-way dialogue that is easy and convenient for citizens to use.

As the official voice of the City, all communication will adhere to the City's Communications Policy and Administrative Procedure.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all employees and all City social media pages.

This policy also offers practical guidelines for responsible, constructive communications via social media channels.

POLICY:

1. DEFINITIONS

1.1 "Post" is a post to a social media page by the City of Prince George.

1.2 "Comment" is a comment on a page by a page follower.

2. GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC POSTS

2.1 City managed social media sites should display public comment guidelines where possible.

2.2 The guidelines will specifically state the kinds of comments that are not permitted if the content:

- is slanderous or defamatory;
- contains obscene language or sexual content;
- promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;
- promotes commercial services or products other than significant sponsors, affiliations, or business partnerships;
- promotes a political candidate;
- promotes illegal activity;
- provides information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
- includes personal content without consent;
- violates a legal interest of another party;
- includes comments by anonymous or fake accounts; or
- includes comments that provide misinformation or disinformation.

2.3 The guidelines will also state that those comments will be deleted and the commenter may be blocked from the page.

2.4 Employees with access to City social media sites are authorized to use their best judgement in monitoring and are empowered to remove or not approve comments that violate these guidelines.

2.5 Where possible City social media sites will utilize profanity filters so that no comment from the public containing profanity will pass through the filter and be posted to the site.

3. EMPLOYEES GUIDELINES

3.1 Posting best practices

The City's social media use can be sustained with designated City employees. The communications division is responsible for specific social media functions including providing access to staff, ensuring all posts on all pages meet City standards and adhere to policies and procedures, posting fresh and engaging content, monitoring statistics and ensuring timely responses to public questions.

Social Media training is provided to key employees, by the communications division, in each department to build social media capacity throughout the organization (including knowledge of best practices and trends), leverage ongoing communications opportunities and provide timely responses to citizen inquiries.

The City's social media sites are only to be used for the purpose of sharing City information and not information from individuals, media, businesses or groups.

Employees representing the City on social media sites are expected to communicate in accordance with the Employee Code of Conduct, and the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

3.2. Approval and access

The City uses the following social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube. The addition of any accounts or platforms must be approved by the city manager.

Employee access to City social media sites must be approved by the department director or division manager. Designees and/or administrators can be any departmental employee with a complete understanding of all communications and social media policies and procedures.

The City communications manager will have administrator access to all City social media sites.

Only employees with authorized access to City social media sites are permitted to post or comment on behalf of the City. Sharing account log in information is not permitted.

Access to the City Facebook account will only be permitted through the creation of a City personal Facebook account using a City email address. This newly created personal email account is still considered personal and employees should refrain from speaking on behalf of the City where possible. On occasion Facebook will block such accounts and other access will be arranged through the communications manager.

Only the communications division will comment on behalf of the City on other community or business social media pages.

When incorrect information is posted on another Facebook site the City may comment on the other site to correct information and drive the conversation back to a City official platform where the conversation can be managed. This is not a requirement and can only be done if workload permits.

3.3. Only post as the City

Employees should not use a personal social media accounts to speak on behalf of the City, nor should they provide information related to City business.

Employees will not post personal comments when posting as the City.

City social media accounts will be branded as the City and follow the City Style and Writing Guide standards.

3.4. On the record

Communication on social media sites or accounts should always be considered public and permanent. Online communications are not private; posts may be accessed by a wider audience than intended or copied by others and published elsewhere.

City employees must not post confidential or sensitive information acquired through their work.

3.5. Clear, accurate, and timely

When representing the City of Prince George, employees should only comment and post about their own program area. Information from subject matter experts should always be sought to ensure clarity and accuracy of posts.

Communications on the City's behalf, on all social media sites, should be based on current, accurate, complete, and relevant data.

The public expects City employees to be accountable for their communications. Be courteous and stick to facts. Mistakes should be addressed quickly to restore trust.

Posts are never deleted even if the information changes. If the information posted is incorrect or has changed since it was originally posted, correct information will be posted above the original text with “UPDATE” and the date/time and the correct information. Apologize if necessary.

Twitter does not allow tweets to be edited. If the information shared is incorrect the tweet may be deleted and followed up with an immediate tweet explaining the correct information and noting the original tweet has been deleted.

The City should respond to questions or misinformation as quickly as practicable. When accurate information is not available within 24 hours, the question or comment will be responded to provide acknowledgement and approximately when the information will be provided. Complex or detailed questions may be referred to the Freedom of Information process through consultation with the legislative services division.

Requests for service will be referred to the 311 telephone line or email.

3.6. Respect

Privacy, libel and human rights laws and policies apply to social media sites and accounts as they do to other forms of communication.

Respect copyright laws: do not post documents, logos, photographs, graphics or other material owned by others without written permission, unless such postings fall under an exception to copyright protection. All photos found on the internet are subject to copyright laws and can not be used.

3.7. Logo use

Employees will not use City logos, the City crest or any other corporate/city images or iconography on personal social media sites or personal websites.

City social media sites or accounts are official City websites or accounts and should be easily identifiable as such through logos and text.

4. ENFORCEMENT

This policy is in addition to and complements all existing or future policies regarding the use of technology, computers, email and the internet of the City.

The City may restrict or remove any content from City social media sites that are deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law.

The City's social media strategy follows the [Communications Policy](#) and the Administrative Social Media Procedure. Day to day use of social media follows best practices in communications and social media management.

The communications division is responsible for overseeing the City's social media channels. The Prince George Events Group manages the CN Centre, Prince George Conference and Civic Centre (to be phased out in 2024), and Prince George Playhouse social media channels. The economic development division manages the Invest PG and Move Up PG pages. For the main City pages, content is managed by the communications division and analytics for each channel are drawn from the social media scheduling tool, HeyOrca.

The following strategy is specific to the main City of Prince George social media channels and not the divisions' independent channels.

Goal

Develop a reputation of being a trusted source of City information. Provide information that is timely, accurate, clear, accessible, and responsive.

Objectives

- Raise awareness for City services and programs by increasing reach, impressions, and engagement by at least 10% each year (e.g., impressions on Facebook increased 21% from 2022-2023) by consistently creating creative and engaging content.
- Educate residents about how to find information on the City's website and increase web traffic by 5% each year by providing links to the website whenever possible.
- Build and maintain positive relationships with residents by responding to inquiries within 24 hours.
- Build resident trust by correcting misinformation within 24 hours and providing sources where they can learn more (i.e., webpages, staff reports to Council, capital project reports, etc.).
- Create a safe space for residents to engage by monitoring comments daily and moderating, when necessary, by referring people to the social media guidelines for posting on our pages.

Audience

Audiences for the official City social media channels include current residents, prospective residents, businesses, and organizations within Prince George.

According to 2021 Census data, the largest age group in Prince George are people between the ages of 15 and 64 (67%). The average age of the population (76,708) is 40. The gender distribution of the population in Prince George is balanced at nearly 50% men and 50% women. 8,745 (11%) people identify as a visible minority. The largest visible minority populations in Prince George are made up of South Asian, Filipino, and Black residents. The number of immigrants in the city between 2016 and 2021 (1,435) was nearly double of that in the previous census period (845).

The City's following on Facebook and Instagram is mainly women (approximately 60%) aged 25 to 54. Approximately 60% of followers are located in Prince George. The City's following is also made up of people from neighboring communities including Quesnel, Williams Lake, Kamloops, Vanderhoof, Vancouver, etc. Top countries are Canada (approximately 90%), United States, and India.

The audience breakdown for Facebook and Instagram as of January 2024 is:

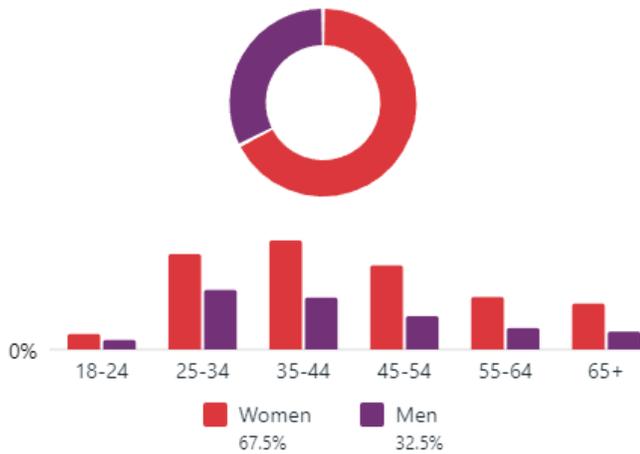
Facebook followers ⓘ

21,272

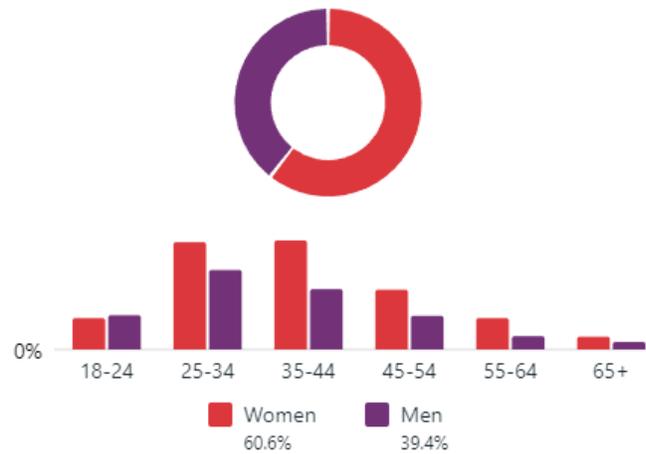
Instagram followers ⓘ

7,790

Age & gender ⓘ



Age & gender ⓘ



Platforms

The City's approved platforms are Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter). A Threads account has been reserved but it not currently in use.

Content strategy

Tone

Generally, the tone is informal and approachable as it is always presented in plain language. Staying on top of trends and incorporating humour into topics such as road maintenance, garbage collection, and community events results in higher levels of engagement and increased reach which gets important operational information in front of new audiences. Serious topics such as safety, finance, and important council updates have a professional but conversational tone.

Content

Regular content includes seasonal messaging (i.e., bear awareness, snow clearing, road maintenance, parks closures, etc.), City business (i.e., council meeting updates, taxation, business licensing, etc.), events, and programs and initiatives. Generally, if the City is starting, stopping, or changing a municipal service it will be communicated on social media. The City only shares content from other government pages and reliable partners such as Tourism Prince George or the Prince George Public Library.

Staff will work with City subject matter experts to provide all content including the posts and the responses to ensure accuracy. Where appropriate, the information can also be used to update the website to ensure all digital platforms have current, accurate information.

Images and links

Every post will include an image to get the attention of those scrolling by. The image, whether a photo or a graphic,



SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

will also include the City's logo to make it easy for viewers to quickly see this is content from the City. Videos are preferred over still images because they provide greater reach.

Posts will also include a link to more information on the City's website (or a reliable source such as another government site) where applicable. Efforts should be made to keep the content brief enough to inform the audience of the most important things they need to know as well as a link for more detailed information.

Respond

Per the City's Social Media Administrative Procedure, social media pages will also be responsive. Staff will respond to questions within 24 hours (workdays). An acceptable answer may be to acknowledge the request and establish a reasonable time to respond again with the data or information requested. Efforts will be made to correct any incorrect statements within 24 hours (workdays). This level of responsiveness is necessary to build trust within the community. The tone of the response will match the tone of the poster. One person asking a question, provides an opportunity to provide the answer to thousands. Requests for service will be directed to 311.

Measuring success

Analytics reports are created using HeyOrca, a social media scheduling platform, for all platforms including the economic development and events group divisions pages annually.

Throughout the year, analytics are examined across all platforms to determine content types that are performing well and areas for improvement.

Analytics are collected using Meta Business Suite for all social media marketing campaigns at the end of the campaign to determine ROI and identify areas for improvement.