



2021 Business Plan & Budget

Communications

Prior Year Accomplishments

Economic Prosperity & Innovation

- Provided communications and media relations support for the industry-led Northumberland Economic Recovery Task Force, cultivating public awareness of Task Force efforts by garnering media coverage of work plan milestones, establishing a web presence for the Task Force, and producing print collateral featuring final recommendations for circulation to key stakeholders.

Sustainable Growth

- Monitored for, and identified, opportunities to secure funding from other levels of government and external sources for investment in County programs and services, coordinating interdepartmental collaboration on over 20 applications in the first three quarters of 2020. \$1,137,729 in funding commitments was secured for economic development, paramedicine, community housing, archives, asset management, social services and municipal modernization-related initiatives during this time, along with \$33,350 for partner organizations.
- Coordinated a Community Assessment and Planning Study to establish the fundraising threshold and determine the approach for a future capital campaign for the Golden Plough Lodge & Northumberland County Archives and Museum Redevelopment Project.
- Supported the advancement of key corporate projects and initiatives through the development and execution of communications plans for the:
 - Regional transportation survey
 - 2021 Financial Framework Survey
 - Community Safety & Well-being Plan survey



- Natural Heritage System mapping tool and feedback process
- Official Plan Update process
- Elgin Park Redevelopment project tenant communications and community updates
- Beagle Club trail closures in County Forest for timber harvesting
- Development Charges Background Study
- Delivered visually engaging layout and design for publications and signage supporting corporate initiatives, for print and online distribution. Some of these included:
 - 2019 Annual Report
 - Banner and print collateral promoting Northumberland County Archives & Museum (NCAM) redevelopment project, for community event booths
 - Northumberland County Forest pollinator garden signage
 - 'From Bags to Boxes' waste services tax bill insert/direct mail collateral
 - Design enhancements for the NCAM Strategic Plan, Community Paramedicine Clinical Guidelines, and Northumberland County Housing Corporation Annual Report
 - Weekly County News ad page for Northumberland's three local newspapers

Thriving & Inclusive Communities

- Continued to expand reach of information about County programs, services, and initiatives through best-practice communications and media relations, as well as coordinating and marketing events promoting County programs and services.
 - Secured media coverage for over 30 non-COVID-related County good news stories and public notices, and supported balanced coverage of sensitive issues, in the first three quarters of 2020 through development of compelling content designed to drive pick-up. Northumberland County uses the industry standard Media Ratings Points (MRP) – a tool endorsed by the Canadian Public Relations Society – to measure the effectiveness of its media relations activities. Analysis of media coverage from this period confirms:
 - 190 non-COVID-related local news articles covering County news;



- 95 per cent of stories were balanced or positive in tone;
- County spokespeople were quoted in 68 per cent of articles;
- Key messages were captured 92 per cent of the time.
- Developed over 20 sets of remarks for elected officials and senior staff for announcements and events throughout the County in the first and third quarters of 2020, ensuring clarity and consistency in the communication of County Strategic Plan and core value key messaging.
- Coordinated logistics and promotions for media and community events in the first and fourth quarters of 2020, including the Community Paramedicine funding announcement; the Trent Hills Emergency Services Base Virtual Grand Opening (in collaboration with Trent Hills staff); and the groundbreaking ceremony for the Golden Plough Lodge & Northumberland County Archives and Museum Redevelopment project.
- Grew Facebook followers by 36 per cent (to 4,309 followers); Twitter followers by 40% (to 1,088 followers) and Council News subscribers by 15% (to 752 subscribers) over 2019 numbers.
- In collaboration with the Information Technology Department, launched 'Join In Northumberland' – an online public consultation platform – to supplement traditional public consultation activities, expanding the reach of community engagement efforts for the purposes of improved municipal decision-making. 356 community members registered for Join In Northumberland within the first 90 days of its launch.
- In Collaboration with the Information Technology and Corporate Services Departments, established a Steering Committee to review the status of organizational compliance with AODA information accessibility requirements, and coordinated the enhancement of policies and processes, the updating of online properties and revision of online materials, and the delivery of staff training to ensure compliance.

Leadership in Change

- Leveraged LEAN yellow-belt training to plan and implement new communication and grant development project intake processes, improving departmental efficiency in project execution and delivering enhanced value to internal partners and the community.



- In response to the emergence of COVID-19, implemented a multi-pronged crisis communications plan addressing internal and external audiences across earned, owned and paid channels. Between March and September 2020, this included:
 - Dedicated pages on Northumberland.ca for service updates and community resources, generating over 78,000 pageviews.
 - 27 media releases, generating 157 news articles across local media outlets.
 - A content plan and common look and feel template for COVID-related Facebook and Twitter posts, sharing approximately 4 to 5 County and partner posts per week with safety information, service updates, and referral to community resources. 128 Facebook posts achieved an average reach of 1,700 individuals and an average engagement rate of six per cent– five percentage points above the industry average. 104 Twitter posts achieved an average of 673 impressions and an average engagement rate of 2.5 per cent.
 - Launched the #NorthumberlandNeighbourhoods Campaign to inspire creativity and positivity from home during COVID-19, inviting residents to decorate their homes according to themes and submit photos to a dedicated Instagram page.
 - Print advertisements with service updates and referrals to online information resources in 16 editions of the County News page in Northumberland’s three weekly newspapers.
 - A CAO Update bulletin for dedicated COVID communications to County staff, a central source for COVID-related updates and resources on the County’s employee intranet, and regular information posts to digital signage in staff rooms.
- With Northumberland County engaging in collaboration with local health and social care stakeholders and patient and caregiver advisors to successfully form an Ontario Health Team for Northumberland (OHT-N) in 2019, continued to support the goals of the OHT-N Collaboration Council through the Communications & Community Engagement Working Group. In 2020 the Working Group:
 - Facilitated a ‘Listening Session’ with patients/caregivers who act as advisors to OHT-N partners, to gather expertise and guidance for the future release of a Call for Interest to the community to form an OHT-N patient and family advisory council.



- Coordinated opportunities to demonstrate a unified voice among local health and social care partners during COVID-19, including:
 - Coordinating interviews by local media outlets with OHT-N partners, jointly discussing COVID planning and preparedness.
 - Issuing joint messaging to the community through media releases, promoting these releases on social media and redirecting the public to the OHT-N website.
 - Creating a radio Public Service Announcement campaign, with local health care officials reminding the public about the importance of physical distancing. Officials delivered the tag line “Northumberland health care partners are at work for you, please stay home for us”. The campaign ran 100 times throughout the month of April on local radio stations including MyFM 93.3; Classic Rock 107.9; and Brighton Oldies 100.9.
 - Coordinating a Virtual Town Hall for the community with a panel of OHT-N partners on May 13, 2020. Over 400 participants joined the telephone/audio-streamed event, and promotions generated social media profile for the OHT-N including likes/shares/retweets from provincial government and key stakeholders, as well as drove significant traffic across the OHT-N website, increasing awareness of this collaboration within the community.

2021 Service Objectives & Initiatives

Economic Prosperity & Innovation

- Advance efforts to strengthen the Northumberland County brand in fulfillment of the Strategic Plan priority to foster Economic Prosperity and Innovation.

Sustainable Growth

- Collaborate with department leads to define communications objectives, develop strategies, and implement tactics to support successful deployment of 2021 County projects and initiatives.



- Monitor and identify opportunities to secure funding from other levels of government and external sources for investment in County programs and services and coordinate interdepartmental collaboration on applications, delivering a minimum of \$80,000 in funding commitments in 2021.
- Support the launch and execution of a Capital Campaign to generate community funds for the construction of the new Golden Plough Lodge & Northumberland County Archives and Museum facility.

Thriving & Inclusive Communities

- Continue to expand reach of information about County programs, services, and initiatives through best-practice communications and media relations, as well as coordinating and marketing events promoting County programs and services.
 - Grow corporate Facebook and Twitter followers and Council News subscribers by 20 per cent (each platform) over 2020 numbers.
- Coordinate the launch of a Participatory Budget pilot, as a tool to increase awareness about the scope of programs and services administered by the County, and to obtain key insights for strengthening annual budget development and administration (deferred in 2020 due to COVID-19).

Leadership in Change

- Explore the development of a public dashboard for tracking corporate performance metrics, improving access to – and visibility of – key insights about the County's progress towards fulfillment of Strategic Plan objectives (deferred in 2020 due to COVID-19).
- Conduct a review and update of the organization's communications-related policies and consolidate under a Corporate Communications Policy to ensure suitable guidance for current practices.
- Continue to support the work of the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland (OHT-N) by collaborating with working group partners to develop and implement effective communications strategies and meaningful community engagement measures that advance OHT-N priorities for improved local services and health outcomes.



Long Term Plan & Strategic Objectives

Economic Prosperity & Innovation

- Ongoing collaboration with the Economic Development Department to promote the Northumberland County Brand in order to drive economic growth and prosperity.

Thriving & Inclusive Communities

- Continue evaluating opportunities to expand corporate customer service to incorporate best practices for connecting with and serving residents and stakeholders, such as a municipal 311 service that would deliver a single point of access to local government non-emergency services.
- Advance public engagement and business intelligence practices by:
 - Strengthening use of audience research to align communications efforts with the information needs/desired delivery mechanisms of residents/stakeholders, and to measure the effectiveness of these efforts.

Leadership in Change

- Continue to expand the corporate marketing mix by maximizing the use of technology to deliver effective communications, including new social media channels, website apps, SMS technology, and other web and mobile-focused tools and solutions.
- Pursue best practice strategies and tactics to ensure strong corporate culture and employee engagement in order to maximize performance, achieve organizational goals, and enhance public trust and confidence in government.