
2021 Department Overview

Communications

Service Description

The Communications Department supports fulfillment of the County Strategic Plan and priorities through a coordinated and strategic approach to corporate communications. The goal is to support members of County Council and staff to effectively inform residents and stakeholders about County programs and services, and to foster public engagement with local government to help shape municipal priorities.

Department activities are grounded in Northumberland County's core values:

Mutual Trust and Respect: Understanding the needs of stakeholders and responding with quality customer service and communications products that address these needs are important facets of communications.

Honesty and Integrity: Providing clear information and communicating our values and service expectations defines accountable, efficient and effective operations.

Collaboration/Communication: By understanding and responding to the information needs of residents, Council, staff, member municipalities and community partners through a coordinated approach, the department helps to ensure transparency and successful relationships.

Caring and Supportive: The department supports the successful delivery of County programs and services by ensuring alignment between corporate messaging, imaging and activities, and the organization's mission, vision and values. We respect and understand the needs and priorities of our internal partners while being part of a caring corporate and community culture.



Accountability: The Communications Department is committed to promoting alignment with the County core values, mission, vision, goals and objectives.

Innovation and Excellence: We aim to provide high-quality communications campaigns and products – continuously exploring best practices for planning, innovative tactics for extending reach, and new mediums for sharing information and engaging in thoughtful dialogue with stakeholders – that perpetually improve connections internal and external to the organization.

Mandatory Programs

The Communications Department supports realization of the County Strategic Plan as well as individual departmental priorities through the planning, implementation and measurement of communications strategies and tactics for a wide range of programs, services and initiatives. In particular, the department fulfills the following functions:

- Branding and Creative Services – style guides, visual identity related to buildings, vehicles, signage and services, layout and design, photography, and videography.
- Communications & Campaign Management – planning and execution of cyclical communications (newsletters, website updates, social media posts) along with multi-channel marketing plans that engage target audiences and stimulate action related to specific initiatives.
- Emergency and crisis communications – management of the public information response from the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) in the event of a local emergency; protocols for managing and sharing timely, accurate information with various stakeholder groups, and strategies for reputation management when addressing public-facing challenges.



- Event management – concept development, budgeting and promotion, logistics and vendor management, on-site coordination, official remarks and marketing oversight.
- Grant writing – monitoring and identification of opportunities to secure funding from other levels of government and external sources for investment in County initiatives, coordination of interdepartmental collaboration on applications, and management of reporting requirements related to successful submissions.
- Internal Communications – tools, content and feedback channels that create well-informed and engaged workforce.
- Issues Management – protocols for identifying, monitoring and responding to key issues.
- Legislative compliance – monitoring of pertinent provincial and federal requirements pertaining to creation and distribution of information, and development of policies and practices to support compliance.
- Media Relations – proactive activities including story identification, materials creation and briefings and reactive activities including responding to inquiries and coordinating interviews.
- Public Engagement – strategies to involve community members in the planning, design and delivery of County programs, services and priorities.
- Reporting and best practice identification – ongoing measurement of outcomes achieved related to communications practices, as well as identifying and tracking best practices in corporate communications and public outreach in order to ensure continuous improvement across these core functions.



- Speech writing – background briefings, talking points and official remarks for elected officials and senior staff.

Discretionary Programs

In addition to mandatory programs, the department is also engaged in discretionary projects and initiatives. This engagement often constitutes communications collaboration and support for the work of committees such as the inter-municipal Emergency Information Officers (EIO) committee and the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland Leadership Committee, as well as ad hoc support for member municipalities in the areas of communications consultation, media relations, and materials creation and/or review as required.

Partnerships

See Discretionary Programs

Environmental Scan

Population & Demographics

Internal – Staff

Northumberland County employs over 600 people within nine departments. The Communications Department supports all departments through its key functions.

When developing internal communications plans, key considerations to maximize reach of messaging to all staff include:

- **Location:** staff members are spread across more than 15 locations throughout the County.
- **Hours of work:** staff members operate according to a range of traditional, shift and compressed hours, and the County also employs seasonal workers



- **Communications medium:** a minority of County staff members are office workers with regular access to computers.

External – Northumberland County

Projections based on 2016 Census data indicate that Northumberland County has a population of approximately 91,200 people spread across seven municipalities.

According to research provided by Greg Suttor Consulting, Deb Ballak, and Tim Welch Consulting as part of the Northumberland County 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan submitted in 2013:

- Compared with the average for Ontario, Northumberland has a higher proportion of adults aged 60 and over, with 30% of the population represented by this demographic compared to 21% at the provincial level.
 - Conversely, the County has fewer residents in the age bracket of 20-44 than the provincial average.
- The male/female ratio in Northumberland is similar to Ontario, at 51.1 percent female in comparison to 51.3 percent province-wide.
- Two-thirds of employed Northumberland residents work in the county.
- People living in Northumberland work primarily in economic sectors including:
 - Agriculture and other primary industries
 - Construction/utilities
 - Manufacturing, and
 - Retail



- Median incomes in Northumberland are about 10 percent lower than for Ontario. There are relatively more households with low to lower-middle incomes (\$20–\$60,000) and fewer with upper incomes (over \$100,000) compared to Ontario.

These factors will continue to provide important insights when defining the appropriate communications mix for sharing information and establishing dialogue with residents.

Funding

The Communications Department is funded through the County levy. As a corporate services department, a portion of the cost for delivery of this service is allocated to each operating department.

Legislative

The Communications Department ensures practices consistent with legislation including the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL), and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA).

Economic Factors

See Funding and Demographic information.