



2022 Business Plan & Budget

Communications

Prior Year Accomplishments

Economic Prosperity & Innovation

- Advanced efforts to strengthen the Northumberland County brand:
 - Delivered a year-five refresh of Northumberland County’s Visual Identity Guide, ensuring current guidelines and standards are in place for consistent, coordinated application of the graphic elements of the County’s brand across all assets – facilities, print and promotional materials, online channels and multi-media products. A standardized approach to application of a brand increases recognition and recall among target audiences, contributing to increased awareness and understanding of the value being delivered by the organization.
 - Developed a Visual Identity System and related guidelines for the Northumberland County Housing Corporation (NCHC), ensuring synergy with Northumberland County branding while establishing a distinct identity for the NCHC, contributing to the Board’s Strategic Plan priority of building and strengthening the NCHC profile.
 - Collaborated with the Northumberland County Archives and Museum (NCAM) team to establish parameters for development of a new logo and Visual Identity System for NCAM in alignment with plans for opening of the new facility in 2023, ensuring synergy with Northumberland County branding while establishing a distinct identity for the NCAM.
- Collaborated with IT and Economic Development Department partners on submission of detailed funding proposals to the federal Universal Broadband Fund (UBF) and Improving Connectivity for Ontario (ICON) programs to deliver a Northumberland home-grown “broadband as a utility” approach for improving broadband connectivity in our community.



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 – and development of – 18 funding applications in the first three quarters of 2021. During this time, \$358,295 in funding commitments was secured for community housing, infrastructure projects, and municipal modernization-related initiatives, along with \$430,320 for partner organizations as part of joint submissions advancing community priorities.
- Supported the advancement of corporate priorities through the development and implementation of over 20 internal and external communications campaigns – multi-channel promotional strategies that engage target audiences with a specific call to action - including:
 - Prince Edward Street Rail Crossing improvements
 - Annual Road Construction Program
 - Winter (Road) Operations
 - Affordable Housing Grant program
 - Paramedic Week
 - Digital Literacy Program
 - Campbellford Intersection Changes
 - GPL & NCAM Reconstruction Project
 - Motorized trails in the County Forest
 - Safely Managing Encounters with Coyotes in the County Forest
 - Installation of Safety Gates in the County Forest
 - Community Safety & Well-being plan overview and status updates
 - Housing Help website launch
 - 'Slow Your Roll' anti-speeding campaign (in collaboration with Transportation team)
 - Settlement Services web traffic campaign
 - 'Nab Your Jab' staff vaccination campaign
 - Natural Heritage System Draft Amendment Open House & Public Meeting
 - Building the 2022 County Budget consultation
 - National AccessAbility Week campaign/Multi-Year Accessibility Plan consultation
 - Northumberland County Forest Management Plan consultation



- Produced Northumberland County’s 2020 Annual Report – the County’s premier publication detailing the allocation of budget dollars to program and service delivery, and highlighting key accomplishments delivered in fulfillment of the County’s Strategic Plan. The Annual Report is a vital tool for demonstrating transparency and accountability to residents and businesses.
 - In 2021, the County was awarded a MarCom Gold Award for design of Northumberland County’s 2019 Annual Report (released in 2020, following approval of Audited Financial Statements for the previous year).

Thriving & Inclusive Communities

- In continuous pursuit of strengthening public engagement in the County’s annual budget process, collaborated with the IT and Finance Departments to launch a budget simulation pilot as a tool to increase awareness about the scope of programs and services administered by the County, and to obtain key insights from the public to inform Council’s deliberation and decision-making for the 2022 County Budget. In advance of the 2023 budget process, staff will assess the various mechanisms employed over the last several years to gather public input into the budget process and seek feedback from stakeholders to determine the best approach for the 2023 budget process.
- Supported the organization in its work to comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) by coordinating with Accessible Web Content Steering Committee members to review corporate practices and identify improvements. This included: assessing website monitoring and document remediation tools for effectiveness, delivering staff training on legislated requirements, updating templates and resources for staff to ensure compliance of the County’s online content, and gathering data and delivering reporting on implementation of related policies and protocols.
- Continued to expand reach of information about County programs, services, and initiatives through best-practice communications, media relations, and graphic design. In the first three quarters of 2021:
 - Secured media coverage for County good news stories and supported balanced coverage of sensitive issues through 50 proactive media releases designed to drive pick-up, and coordination of over 60 reactive responses to media inquiries. 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 the first three quarters of 2021 confirms:

- 415 local news articles covering County stories, related to these efforts;
 - 81 per cent of stories were balanced in tone; 17 per cent were positive in tone; and 2 per cent was negative in tone;
 - County spokespeople were quoted in 70 per cent of articles;
 - Key messages were captured 98 per cent of the time.
- Advised Council and senior staff in anticipating and effectively responding to issues and media inquiries through the development of over 20 issue notes and key message briefings.
 - Delivered visually engaging layout and design for over 50 products - publications, campaign materials, videos and signage for print and online distribution.
 - Grew Facebook followers by 21 per cent (to 5,234 followers); Twitter followers by 42 per cent (to 1,548 followers) and Council News subscribers by 13 per cent (to 849 subscribers) over 2020 numbers.

Leadership in Change

- Continued to support the work of the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland (OHT-N) by collaborating with Communications Working Group partners to develop and implement effective communications strategies and meaningful community engagement approaches that advance OHT-N priorities for improved local services and health outcomes. In 2021, these collaborative efforts included:
 - Recruitment for, and launch of, the inaugural OHT-N Experience Partner Council - a body of patients and caregivers working together with service provider partners to transform the delivery of local health and community care through the Ontario Health Team model. Formation of an Experience Partner Council was a key commitment of the Collaboration Council in establishing the OHT-N.
 - Coordination of the third OHT-N Virtual Forum in February 2021, where a panel of OHT-N partners presented to, and engaged with, an audience of over 200 online/phone participants, answering questions about COVID-19 vaccines. Event promotions drove a 72 per cent increase in traffic to the OHT-N website, increasing awareness of this collaboration within the community.



- Use of social media to expand reach of communications about OHT-N work in the community and increase opportunities to directly engage with stakeholders, generating nearly 400 followers to the OHT-N Twitter account in the first year online, and launching a Facebook account in June 2021, generating 748 followers in the first 90 days.
- Development and implementation of a multi-pronged communications campaign to increase awareness and use of the OHT-N's Rural Outreach Clinic (ROC) in Colborne by Cramahe and area residents, resulting in an 84 per cent increase in patient appointments for ROC services.
- Informing the community about the launch of OHT-N Mobile Vaccination (pop-up) Clinics as an additional option for obtaining a COVID-19 vaccine, encouraging attendance through regular promotion across a mix of channels, and timely response to public inquiries. 4,901 vaccines have been administered through collaborative Mobile Vaccine Clinic efforts.

2022 Service Objectives & Initiatives

Economic Prosperity & Innovation

- Deliver focused strategic communications support to advance infrastructure, workforce, housing and technology priorities that are positioned to be key drivers of economic growth and prosperity.

Sustainable Growth

- Secure funding from other levels of government and external sources for investment in County programs and services by monitoring for and identifying grant opportunities and coordinating interdepartmental collaboration on applications.
- Coordinate with the Accessible Web Content Steering Committee to ensure ongoing WCAG 2.0 AA compliance to meet legislated AODA requirements.
- Collaborate with department leads to define communications objectives, develop strategies, and implement tactics to support successful deployment of 2022 County projects and initiatives.



Thriving & Inclusive Communities

- Continue to expand reach of information about County programs, services, and initiatives through best-practice communications, media relations and design, 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 2021 numbers.
- Continue to strengthen public participation in designing and shaping municipal priorities, programs and services through the design of engaging consultation processes that leverage dialogue and feedback mechanisms aligned with public expectations.

Leadership in Change

- Continue to refine departmental practices and improve service standards in order to deliver – and demonstrate – enhanced value to internal partners and the community.
- Explore design 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, in preparation for/alignment with development of the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan.
- Initiate development of a communications and community engagement master plan, setting the direction for – and measurement of – strategic communications and engagement, over a multi-year horizon, that advances corporate priorities and cultivates an informed and engaged community.
- Continue to support the work of the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland (OHT-N) by collaborating with communications working group partners to develop and implement effective communications strategies, and supporting the work of the Experience Partner Council to implement meaningful community engagement measures, in order to advance community priorities for improved local services and health outcomes.

Long Term Plan & Strategic Objectives

Thriving & Inclusive Communities

- Continue evaluating opportunities to enhance corporate customer service by incorporating 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.

2022 Issue Paper

Communications Officer – Capital Projects (contract)

Purpose

The Communications Officer – Capital Projects contract position provide dedicated strategic communications support to the Transportation and Major Project teams during a period of intensified development, coordinating communications activities to:

- increase awareness among internal/external target audiences of objectives and progress of key capital projects;
- enhance understanding of related budgetary and policy decisions and key partnerships; and
- encourage public and staff engagement in critical consultation processes.

Background

Between 2022 and 2024, Northumberland County will oversee significant pre-construction and construction activities on a series of major capital projects. This includes:

- Golden Plough Lodge & Northumberland County Archives and Museum Project – construction launched 2020, to be completed winter-2023.
- Elgin Park Affordable Housing Project - Phase 1 construction launched 2021, to be completed end-2022; Phase 2 construction to be completed by mid-2024.
- Ontario Street Affordable Housing Project – pre-construction activities ongoing, construction to launch in 2023 and be completed by end-2024.
- Campbellford Bridge and Arterial Road Network Project – pre-construction activities ongoing in support of a construction launch proposed for 2025.

Long-term plans also identify potential projects to launch during this timeframe including:

- Emergency Detour Route Project – feasibility study planned to begin in 2022
- Brighton Joint Fire and Paramedic Base – proposed to launch 2023/24

These projects collectively represent a multi-million-dollar investment over the long-term, including an estimated \$70 million during this three-year time span. In addition, the County undertakes an annual construction program of road and bridge rehabilitation; in 2021 this



program represents an investment of approximately \$10 million in the County transportation network.

Capital investments comprise a significant portion of the County's annual budget (40 per cent in 2021) and long-term plans, with a high rate of interest from the public and media in the details of these expenditures. Timely, robust communications throughout the life of a project are essential to transparency and accountability, reinforcing public confidence and trust in government management of public finances. Furthermore, capital projects often receive funding support from other levels of government and community partners, requiring careful management of specific and detailed recognition requirements.

Northumberland County's Communications Department supports fulfillment of the County Strategic Plan and priorities through a coordinated and strategic approach to corporate communications. Two staff resources – the Director of Communications and the Communications Officer – are dedicated to supporting 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.

Specifically, the department works with 25 business units across the organization to advance priorities through the planning, development, implementation and measurement of communications strategies and tactics for a wide range of programs, services and initiatives, fulfilling functions including:

- Branding and Creative Services: style guides, visual identity related to buildings, vehicles, signage and services, layout and design, photography, and videography.
- Communications and 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.
- Communications planning and project management: Communications strategy development; coordination of cross-departmental resources and content for successful execution of projects originating in/led by the Communications Department.
- Emergency 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.
- Internal Communications: tools, content and feedback channels that create well-informed and engaged workforce.



- Issues Management: protocols for identifying, monitoring and responding to issues that have implications for the organization’s reputation and relationships.
- 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, coordinating interviews and counselling spokespeople.
- 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 plans, as well as identifying and tracking best practices in corporate communications and public engagement in order to support the organization’s continuous improvement.
- Speech Writing: background briefings, talking points and official remarks for elected officials and senior staff.

In addition to serving as a centralized corporate service for the organization, the Communications Department also provides periodic ad-hoc support for member municipalities and community partners, and provides dedicated support to the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland collaboration.

The County’s two Communications staff resources strive to carefully prioritize commitments in support of key priorities for each business unit. However, as demand for communications support continues to increase across the organization in tandem with the evolving scope and complexity of programs and services delivered, the Communications Department is increasingly challenged to effectively respond to the level of need. Addressing competing priorities between departments often necessitates a focus on more immediate tactical planning, with impacts to capacity for proactive strategy development and reporting and analysis.

Given the range of capital projects planned over the coming three years, and the need for related strategic, robust communications and community engagement planning and implementation, a dedicated resource is recommended for this time period to support successful delivery of capital projects.

Consultation/Options

In 2020 Northumberland County undertook a Modernization and Service Delivery Review (SDR) to identify opportunities to increase staff capacity, strengthen workflow and processes, and improve the efficacy of service delivery. The SDR involved a comprehensive assessment of



service delivery processes and resourcing requirements across select areas of the organization, including the Communications Department.

The SDR determined that, based on current resourcing, the Communications Department is understaffed by 0.9 FTE (as of January 2021), with workload expected to double over the next one to three years based on demand forecasted by internal partners, further increasing this resource gap.

The Department has focused on process improvements to navigate increasing demand, implementing project management software to track project requirements and deadlines, properly allocate resources to best manage competing priorities, and forecast anticipated need versus resource availability. The team is also refining a formal project intake process to eliminate process waste/improve efficiency, along with a project prioritization framework to further focus efforts on the highest priority items in alignment with organizational and department goals, and to better communicate timelines to internal partners.

However, the SDR notes that even with these improvements, the Communications Department – at its current size – will be challenged to meet forecasted demand without impacts to timelines and quality. To maintain service levels while volume of communications requests increases, one additional FTE resource is required to close the current gap.

Hiring a Communication Officer dedicated to communications and community engagement requirements for capital projects will enable the Communications Department to effectively support the Transportation and Major Projects teams during the upcoming period of intensive development, and meet public expectations for transparency and accountability. This will also enable the department to meet escalating demand within current service levels, as well as increase capacity for focus on strategic planning and proactive efforts.

Financial Impact

The Communications Officer – Capital Projects contract position was evaluated as a salary grade D, resulting in an annual salary range of:

- \$55,801 plus benefit costs, totaling \$74,570 to
- \$69,706 plus benefit costs, totaling \$87,741

This position will be funded through the County levy. 2022 will consist of a half year allocation, assuming the position will commence in Q3 (\$44,000), 2023 and 2024 are full year allocations (\$88,000) and 2025 is a half year (\$44,000) exclusive of annual inflation.

Risk Considerations

Maintaining the current staff complement of the Communications Department will limit capacity to effectively support the Transportation and Major Projects teams with the strategic communications activities required for capital projects being undertaken between 2022 and 2024. Insufficient communications planning and action risks impacting public perception of – and support for – projects, with reduced awareness of the rationale for a given project, of opportunities to provide feedback through consultation periods, and of the progress made and value being delivered for money. There is also the risk of project delays due to increased timelines for communications support.

Redirecting current resources to increase focus on capital project communications is not a recommended solution, as this would necessitate a reduction in support for other departments. A reduction in support at a time when demands are already high and increasing risks driving departments to independently develop communications plans and materials to meet immediate needs, leading to inconsistent messaging, look and feel of communications out to the community, ultimately impacting the professional image of the organization. Lack of central coordination of communications also risks potential damage to the County brand resulting from the absence of a ‘standardized’ Northumberland County voice, the lack of connection to the organization’s strategic direction, and improper management of possible sensitivities.

Impacts to Member Municipalities/Partners

Dedicated communications support for upcoming capital projects will support increased outreach to/engagement with target audiences including community members, staff and councils of municipalities most directly impacted by a given project. This includes opportunities for enhanced coordination and collaboration with member municipalities to ensure timely and consistent messaging to stakeholders.

Included in 2021 Long Term Plan: NO

This position is not included in the long-term plan.

Following consultation in early 2021 with the County’s Management Operating Committee about how best to address escalating demand for strategic communications support in 2022 and beyond while acknowledging resource restrictions highlighted in the 2020 Service Delivery Review, the committee was in agreement with an approach to create capacity within the department by establishing a temporary position to consolidate and advance all communications activity related to capital projects: a high priority accountability for the organization.



In proposing the creation of the Communications Officer – Capital Projects position for a three-year period, staff will recommend to the Northumberland County Public Works Committee – for consideration by County Council – that this support be identified as a capitalized item in annual and long-term financial plans to ensure transparency to Council and the public of the full scope of investment in capital projects for the community.

2022 Issue Paper

Digital and Document Accessibility Specialist

Purpose

Northumberland County proposes to create the position of Digital and Document Accessibility Specialist. This position will be a centralized resource supporting all departments, ensuring dedicated technical expertise within the organization for producing high quality accessible documents and web content in compliance with legislated requirements for public sector website and document accessibility.

Background

Northumberland County is committed to ensuring that people of all ages and abilities enjoy the same opportunities as they live, work, visit and invest in the community. Guided by the four core principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity, the County supports the full inclusion of persons as set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

Section 14 of the Integrated Accessibility Standards under the AODA requires that all public sector websites and web content posted after January 1, 2012 must be compliant with the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 level AA as of January 1, 2021.

The County worked towards this compliance deadline in alignment with the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan developed and first approved by County Council in February 2013, including investments in staff training and assistive technology.

One of the most significant actions undertaken to ensure compliance and improve service delivery to the community was the launch of a new corporate website in April 2019; a capital investment of \$85,000. HTML content is more accessible than PDF content, and the launch of the new site enabled the County to remove many PDF documents from the online environment by transitioning the content to web pages. The site also includes a feature for building accessible online forms, which further reduces the organization's reliance on and use of PDFs.



In July 2020, a staff steering committee was established to review practices to date and identify and implement any additional measures required to ensure WCAG 2.0 level AA compliance with respect to:

1. Accessibility of all Northumberland County websites, including the corporate website (Northumberland.ca), the Council Portal, the Join In Northumberland consultation portal, the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland microsite, and seven business unit-specific sites.
2. Accessibility of documents currently on these websites (all forms, reports, plans and studies currently available online).
3. Accessibility of Northumberland County documentation going forward – including reports submitted monthly for the County Council agenda.

A work plan was implemented, resulting in:

A. Processes

- Establishment of a Working Group of designates from each department to review and address all PDF documents currently on County websites.
- Migration of four websites (Welcome to Northumberland, OAFVC, BECN and Proudly Northumberland) to the corporate website back-end.
- Updates to procurement and contractual documents with specific language regarding the requirement that all reports and other documents, digital media, or promotional materials from external providers, designers, and consultants that are intended for the online environment must be compliant.

B. Tools

- Assessment of a variety of PDF remediation tools, and licensing of a preferred solution.
- Creation of resources for staff to support the development of accessible documents, including updating the 'Guide to Making Accessible Documents' resource initially created in 2015 based on a document from the City of Peterborough, and creating an Accessible Documents Checklist based on a document from Durham Region.
- Updated licensing for a web governance service, through which the County monitors the website's ongoing compliance with WCAG 2.0, assessing and correcting common accessibility issues.

C. Training

- Accessible Word and PowerPoint training for all Working Group members, Managers and Directors, along with the introduction of cyclical training opportunities for new hires and staff who require a 'refresh', along with PDF remediation tool training for designated users.

In October 2020, the County implemented an Accessible Web Content Policy to formalize internal practices for the creation of content destined for the online environment, to ensure



the County remains compliant under the legislation. Under this policy, all content – including Committee/Council, reports, PDF documents, forms, images and videos – must meet accessibility criteria before it will be added to a Council/Committee agenda or to a County website.

Consultation/Options

In the absence of a central resource responsible for accessible documents, training and supports have been provided to the majority of County staff who produce documents, to ensure fulfillment of this policy and the County’s commitment to community members, in compliance with the legislation.

In addition to general staff-wide accountability for incorporating accessibility standards into the creation of documents, 17 employees across the organization have designated responsibility for remediation of documents to ensure accessibility prior to submission for Council agendas/the County website. These individuals are either support staff, or they are high producers of documents within their departments, including:

- Communications Officer (Communications)
- Application Assistance Representative (Community & Social Services)
- Community Outreach Caseworker (Community & Social Services)
- Customer Service Representative (3) (Community & Social Services)
- Data Analysis Coordinator (Community & Social Services)
- Housing Services Caseworker (Community & Social Services)
- Administrative Support (Corporate Services)
- Natural and Cultural Heritage Manager (Corporate Services)
- Human Resources Coordinator (Corporate Services)
- Human Resources/Accessibility Coordinator (Corporate Services)
- Entrepreneurship Program Coordinator (Economic Development, Tourism & Land Use Planning)
- Financial Administrative Clerk (Finance)
- Communications & Education Coordinator (Transportation, Waste & Facilities)
- Developmental Roads Operations Manager (Transportation, Waste & Facilities)
- Traffic & Right-of-Way Management Supervisor (Transportation, Waste & Facilities)

In addition, the Economic Development, Tourism & Land Use Planning department contracts a resource to support the Tourism Manager with digital marketing services, and this contract has been expanded to include accessible tourism document and web content remediation.

In the first six months of 2021, designated staff collectively dedicated approximately 565 hours to accessible document remediation, and an additional 315 hours is anticipated to be spent



over the second half of 2021. The technical complexity of this work has resulted in both a significant draw on the time of designated staff, and inconsistent outcomes in developing documents that meet legislated requirements for accessibility.

Consolidating this work under a central resource with subject matter expertise will ensure a consistently high standard of document and web content accessibility in line with legislated requirements, a resource for staff to ensure accessible document best practices are properly embedded into internal processes as well as work with external contactors and community partners, and efficient allocation of staff resources to operational accountabilities. The Digital and Document Accessibility Specialist will specifically be responsible for:

- Remediation of PDF documents – as well as MS Word, MS PowerPoint and other documents as required – to adhere to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 at the required AA level, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and other emerging accessible document legislation.
- Compliance reviews and updates of County websites, and of documents submitted for the corporate website along with Council/Committee agendas.
- Training and support for staff in building accessible Word, PowerPoint and other documents.
- Providing guidance to/developing resources for vendors and community partners to ensure provision of documents to the County that are accessible/meet the needs of the community.
- Engaging with communities of practice and monitoring changes to legislation, standards, and tools, and recommending updates and changes to the organization's document accessibility practices to ensure ongoing compliance and best practice.

Work managed by the Digital and Document Accessibility Specialist will be complimentary to the work of the Human Resources/Accessibility Coordinator currently on staff. The Coordinator will continue to be responsible for development and implementation of the organization's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, oversight of accessibility-related policies and practices, ministry compliance reporting, and facilitation of the Northumberland County Accessibility Advisory Committee, in addition to HR-related accountabilities.

Financial Impact

The Digital and Document Accessibility Specialist was evaluated as a salary Grade C, resulting in an annual salary range of:

- \$47,702 plus benefit costs, totaling \$64,774 to
- \$59,569 plus benefit costs, totaling \$78,378



This position will be funded through the County levy. 2022 will consist of a partial year allocation, assuming the position will commence in Q2 (\$58,500), 2023 and beyond will be full years (\$78,000) exclusive of annual inflation.

Risk Considerations

Impacts to capacity

The current distributed model of accountability for accessible document remediation is impacting capacity across departments, redirecting resources away from areas of core accountability and thereby risking reduced productivity and operational delays.

Impacts to service

While all staff currently designated with responsibility for accessible document remediation have received training and supports, there are varying levels of expertise and ability to navigate the technical complexity of the process to produce a document that meets all accessibility criteria, increasing opportunity for error and oversight. Documents that do not fully meet accessibility criteria risk creating barriers of access to information for community members with disabilities, contravening the County's commitments to equitable service provision.

Risk of penalties

The AODA allows for monetary penalties for any violation to the Act, including up to \$100,000 per day for a corporation that is guilty of a violation.

Impacts to Member Municipalities/Partners

AODA requirements apply to all public sector organizations. As Northumberland County continues to strengthen practices to ensure compliance with legislation and fulfillment of service commitments to community members, this role can support enhanced coordination with member municipalities, facilitating knowledge-sharing and exploring opportunities for the development and application of consistent policies and practices across Northumberland municipalities. In addition, any plans, policies and resources developed to advance County practices for accessible documents and websites can be shared with member municipalities as they pursue similar objectives.

Included in 2021 Long Term Plan: NO

This position is not included in the long-term plan.

The County has been incrementally building capacity since 2013 to fulfill digital and document accessibility-related requirements in line with legislated timelines, with the intention of absorbing additional work effort within existing staff structures.



However, as this work has progressed, an evaluation of the technical complexity of remediating documents for accessibility, an assessment of current resource allocation towards this effort, and an understanding of the risks of non-compliance has prompted staff to recommend a dedicated resource with subject matter expertise to lead the County's document and web content accessibility efforts.

2022 Issue Paper

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Manager

Purpose

Northumberland County proposes to create the position of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Manager. This position will be a subject matter expert responsible for engaging County and member municipal councils and staff, community members and stakeholders in the design of an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Framework for adoption by County Council and participating member municipalities.

This Framework will, furthermore, guide the Manager's creation, implementation and measurement of an action plan for the County that fosters an environment where diversity is embraced and staff and community members are able to fully participate in, and contribute to, a thriving and inclusive Northumberland.

Background

Northumberland continues to grow and welcome a more diverse population.

Provincial planning forecasts indicate that the community will grow by approximately 30,000 people by 2051¹. 2016 Census data indicates that 3.4 percent of the population in Northumberland identifies as a racialized person (visible minority) and 2.7 per cent percent identifies as Aboriginal².

Northumberland County is committed to the removal of any barriers in the way of a creating an inclusive and equitable workplace and community. The establishment of an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion position and the creation of an EDI Framework will solidify and strengthen this commitment, aligning with Strategic Plan priorities - specifically fostering a thriving and

¹ Province of Ontario. *A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*. August 2020. Page 94, Schedule 3 – Distribution of Population and Employment for the Greater Golden Horseshoe to 2051. Retrieved from <https://files.ontario.ca/mmah-place-to-grow-office-consolidation-en-2020-08-28.pdf>

² Statistics Canada Census (2016). Census Profile, Northumberland, County, Ontario. Retrieved from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=3514&Geo2=PR&Code2=35&SearchText=Northumberland&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=3514&TABID=1&type=0>



inclusive community – and representing adherence to Northumberland County’s vision, mission, and core values.

The benefits of embracing diversity in both the workplace and the community are well-summarized in the City of Oshawa’s Diversity and Inclusion Plan³:

- **Improved organizational performance** - This includes higher job satisfaction, increased employee engagement, and greater productivity and service delivery.
- **Strengthened social cohesion and social capital** – Accessible services and employment opportunities maximize capacities for stronger and safer neighbourhoods and build trust in public institutions and processes.
- **Increased vibrancy** - Diverse cultures create a more robust and exciting cultural milieu, contributing to the arts, culture and cuisine that shape (a community). Valuing and showcasing this diversity will draw yet more communities, businesses, and events to the area, thus contributing to both the cultural and economic dynamism of (the community) as a destination.
- **Upgraded social and institutional learning** – Diversity enriches the flow and consumption of knowledge and information by opening up space for new perspectives and inspiring reflexive rather than routinized behaviour. As a result, inclusive action stimulates the learning capacity of public and private organizations, making community institutions more creative, flexible and adaptable.
- **Expanded access to global and domestic talent pools** - Current and future labour force needs will demand increased immigration to fill the gaps in skilled job opportunities. Global competition for this pool of skilled talent requires ...a welcoming place to live, work, learn and play.
- **Enhanced innovative competency** – Diverse communities tend to be more resilient to rapid technological change because they often have a deeper and broader repository of knowledge and expertise. Moreover, diversity equates with creativity in that it allows for multiple voices and perspectives when approaching complex challenges. The resultant ability

³ City of Oshawa. *Oshawa Diversity and Inclusion Plan*. October 2017. Pages 5-6. Retrieved from <https://www.oshawa.ca/city-hall/resources/Research-Report--Diversity-and-Inclusion-Plan.pdf>



to think outside the box offers a competitive advantage for the (municipality) and for businesses within its borders.

- **Enhanced economic growth** – Diverse communities bring with them culturally specific languages, practices, and connections that enable both the (municipality) and local business to flourish by delivering first-rate and socially aware services. Immigration, and in-country migration patterns provide access to new and wider markets domestically and globally. Newcomer Canadians, in particular, bring with them technical training and skills that can contribute to the success of local industry and (public) institutions, as well as create new businesses and employment opportunities.

Robust Equity, Diversity and Inclusion practices also support organizational alignment with national and provincial legislation and action plans including:

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Canadian Human Rights Act
- Canadian Multiculturalism Act
- Employment Equity Act
- Occupational Health and Safety Act
- Ontario Human Rights Code
- Ontario's Anti-Racism Strategic Plan
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada - Final Report
- Workplace Safety and Insurance Act 1997

The Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities – a network of municipalities through the Canadian Commission for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – identifies 10 Common Commitments for signatory members seeking to improve their policies against racism, discrimination, exclusion, and intolerance. These commitments are structured around three areas of municipal responsibility:

The municipality as a guardian that respects the public interest

- Increasing vigilance against systemic and individual discrimination.
- Monitoring discrimination in the municipality and taking action to address it.
- Supporting individuals who experience discrimination.
- Providing police services that are exemplary institutions for fighting discrimination.



The municipality as an organization that upholds human rights

- Providing equal opportunities as a municipal employer, service providers, and contractor.
- Supporting measures that promote equity in the labour market.
- Challenging discrimination and promoting diversity and equal opportunities in housing.

The municipality as a community that promotes diversity

- Involving citizens by giving them a voice in anti-racism initiatives and decision-making.
- Challenging discrimination and promoting diversity and equal opportunities in education and other forms of learning.
- Promoting the respect, knowledge, and appreciation of cultural diversity and the inclusion of Indigenous and Racialized communities in the cultural fabric of the municipality.⁴

These commitments form a solid foundation on which to create a municipal EDI Framework, advancing initiatives designed to:

- Improve municipal practices to promote social inclusion;
- Establish policies to eradicate all forms of racism and discrimination; and
- Promote human rights and diversity.

Northumberland County's commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity is well-established. In June 2020, residents of Cobourg and the surrounding area participated in a peaceful demonstration of support for the Black Lives Matter movement and for protesters in the United States, following the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. In a statement to the community, then-Northumberland County Warden Bob Sanderson indicated, on behalf of County Council:

“(It is important to acknowledge that) racism persists in our community and our country, including anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism, and racism against other People of Colour. From this starting point, our efforts must demonstrate a genuine determination to root out and eliminate discrimination of all forms from our institutions and our neighbourhoods... We recognize that that there is still more work to do, in particular to directly address the harmful impacts of racism and hate... (Northumberland County today) reaffirms a commitment to breaking

⁴ Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities. *A Guide for New and Established Members*. Canadian Commission for UNESCO. Retrieved from <file:///C:/Users/campbellk/Downloads/ToolkitCoalitionInclusiveMunicipalities.pdf>



through silence, confronting racism, protecting human rights and removing barriers to equality. Together we are united around a common purpose of building a more welcoming, resilient and inclusive community, and ensuring a strong and vibrant Northumberland for future generations.”⁵

Northumberland’s EDI Framework will unite under common direction, and build upon, various initiatives, programs and actions already undertaken by the County to affirm and advance its commitment to equity and inclusion, including:

- Establishing an Accessibility Coordinator staff position to enhance provision of inclusive and accessible services and facilities for all members of the public and staff.
- Leading collaboration with community partners to develop a Northumberland Community Safety & Well-Being Plan, collectively developing and implementing actions that will address the root causes of crime and complex social issues within the community to improve quality of life for all.
- Participation of County Council and senior staff in Indigenous Cultural Competency Training provided by the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, with a commitment to expand this training to additional staff and community partners.
- Development of an inaugural exhibit (and travelling components) for the grand opening of the new Northumberland County Archives & Museum (NCAM) celebrating the Michi Saagiig dialect of Ojibwe, along with integration of information about the traditional territory on which Northumberland is located into NCAM's permanent outdoor 'trail system' exhibit, based on generous guidance provided by e wiindmaagzijig (Indigenous Advisory Circle).
- Collaborating with the Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre to deliver culturally relevant licensed child care and early years programs for children and families, along with cultural awareness training for early years educators and community partners, through the EarlyON Child and Family Centres Indigenous-led Early Years program.
- Partnering with Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services (OAHS), Northumberland County Housing Corporation (NCHC), and Habitat for Humanity Northumberland to jointly develop and manage an affordable housing complex at 473 Ontario Street in Cobourg, introducing 62 new affordable housing units to the community with a mixture of tenure and affordability types.

⁵ 2020, June 4. Statement by Warden Bob Sanderson. Northumberland County website. Retrieved from <https://www.northumberland.ca/en/news/statement-by-warden-bob-sanderson.aspx>



- Pursuing federal funding to establish and maintain a Settlement Services Coordinator staff position, supporting newcomer Canadians to transition to Northumberland as part of economic development and talent attraction priorities.
- Establishing and maintaining an online Immigration Portal welcoming and supporting newcomer Canadians to the community.
- Coordinating an annual Diversity Festival (launched in 2014), engaging diverse community groups in celebration of the many unique experiences, backgrounds and traditions that contribute to Northumberland’s cultural vibrancy.
- Collaborating with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to host public Canadian Citizenship Ceremonies in Northumberland.
- Flag raisings and Council proclamations commemorating various organizations, events, holidays and other significant occasions.
- Expanding community engagement and outreach through launch of the Join In Northumberland online consultation portal in 2020.
- Complying with legislated requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (I.A.S.R.) and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (A.O.D.A.), the Employment Standards Act, the Human Rights Code and the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Furthermore, at the June 2021 meeting of County Council, Council supported further examination of the 50-30 Diversity challenge, an initiative launched by the Government of Canada, business and diversity organizations challenging Canadian organizations to increase the representation and inclusion of diverse groups within their workplace, while highlighting the benefits of giving all Canadians a seat at the table. Implementation of an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Framework will support achievement of the goals of this challenge.

Consultation/Options

Municipalities throughout Ontario and across Canada have or are beginning to implement EDI strategies and plans within their organizations, pertaining to areas including but not limited to strategic planning, recruitment, retention and employment practices, training, program and service delivery, and public communication and outreach.

In formulating this proposal, Northumberland County consulted either directly with, or reviewed reports and plans from:

- Town of Cobourg
- City of Peterborough
- City of Oshawa
- City of Guelph



- City of London

Town of Cobourg

In June 2020, Council for the Town of Cobourg passed a resolution instructing staff to develop a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy for the Town that will “encourage, promote, and insist upon awareness, equality, and acceptance by all residents and Municipal Staff in the Corporation of the Town of Cobourg”. In subsequent resolutions throughout 2020, Council provided additional direction to staff:

- To develop Terms of Reference, based on broad public input, for establishment of an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee of Council, and to establish this committee, which will identify and develop priorities, strategies and initiatives to support the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion effort in the Town of Cobourg (Terms of Reference approved December 7, 2020 with first committee meeting held March 25, 2021);
- To make an application to join the Coalition of Inclusive municipalities (CIM) as a commitment to investing time and resources toward creating a more welcoming and inclusive community (declaration to join the Coalition signed on January 4, 2021);
- To develop an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy (currently under development).⁶

City of Peterborough

In striving to build an open and inclusive community, the City of Peterborough joined the Coalition for Inclusive Municipalities in December 2019.

The City is now moving forward with creation of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion plans, including hiring – in July 2021 – a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer responsible for, “providing the vision, direction, and leadership through the creation and implementation of diversity, equity, and inclusion plans across the Greater Peterborough Area.

The Officer will create clear accountabilities, strengthening the ability to serve diverse communities. The Officer acts as a regulator for diversity and inclusion issues and will work with Human Resources to ensure legislative compliance and employment law regulations are followed and implementing best practices to support an inclusive work environment.”⁷

⁶ Town of Cobourg. *Report to Council: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy*. November 23, 2020. Page 17. Retrieved from <https://www.cobourg.ca/en/town-hall/resources/Accessibility/Memo-Re-Equity-Diversity-and-Inclusion-Strategy-Report.pdf>

⁷ (2021, June 14). City hires its first Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer. City of Peterborough website. Retrieved from <https://www.peterborough.ca/en/news/city-hires-its-first-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-officer.aspx>



City of Oshawa

Oshawa City Council approved the City of Oshawa's Diversity and Inclusion Plan in November 2017. The Plan sets out a vision to embrace the diversity of the population who live, work, learn and play in Oshawa and is a commitment to create an inclusive and welcoming community.

It is a strategic framework with an internal and external focus and the intention to ensure that all residents have equitable access to programs and services, employment opportunities, and feel welcomed and involved in their community.

The Plan recommends over 90 strategies and actions for the City to implement over a 5 to 10-year horizon, with pillars including:

- Leadership
- Community Engagement and Participation
- Community Development
- Human Resource Development
- Education and Awareness
- Assessment and Accountability⁸

City of Guelph

On May 16, 2019, 'A United Vision: Guelph's Community Plan' was presented to Guelph City Council. Recognizing that the Community Plan does not specifically address systemic racism, in July 2020, the City began the process of reaching out to the people and organizations most affected by systemic racism in Guelph, including the Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC) communities, to address this gap.

The City has since embarked on three interconnected streams of work to achieve anti-racism, inclusion, diversity and equity goals, including:

- Supporting community-driven systemic action through Guelph's Community Plan;
- Creating and maintaining an inclusive workplace through the launch of the City's Employee Diversity and Inclusion Plan: and
- Acting on opportunities identified through the City's Strategic Plan to embed anti-racism and inclusion practices and principles into our services, service delivery, policies and decision-making processes.⁹

⁸ Diversity and Inclusion Plan (2017). City of Oshawa website. Retrieved from <https://www.oshawa.ca/city-hall/diversity-and-inclusion-plan-2017.asp>

⁹ (2020, November 27). City reflects on initial steps toward anti-racism, diversity and inclusion goals. City of Guelph website. Retrieved from <https://guelph.ca/2020/11/city-reflects-on-initial-steps-toward-anti-racism-diversity-and-inclusion-goals/>



City of London

In May 2019, the City of London, Ontario began implementation of a Community Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. The vision of this strategy is “a diverse and inclusive community that honours, welcomes and accepts all people; where people have the power to eliminate systemic oppressions.” The plan has 47 actions captured under five priorities including:

- Taking concrete steps towards healing and reconciliation
- Having zero tolerance for oppression, discrimination, and ignorance
- Connecting and engaging Londoners
- Removing accessibility barriers to services, information, and spaces
- Removing barriers to employment¹⁰

To date, 96 Canadian municipalities, including all municipalities identified above, have joined the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities as part of commitments to fostering internal and external environments of equity and inclusion, and to best meeting the evolving needs of staff and community members.

Financial Impact

The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Manager position was evaluated as a salary Grade F, with an annual salary range of:

- \$73,746 plus benefit costs totaling \$95,660 to
- \$ 92,165 plus benefit costs totaling \$118,328

This position will be funded through the County levy. 2022 will consist of a partial year allocation, assuming the position will commence in Q2 (\$88,500), 2023 and beyond will be full years (\$118,000) exclusive of annual inflation.

Risk Considerations

Racism and discrimination weaken societal cohesion, raise barriers against civic participation and access to public programs and services, diminish organizational performance, limit productive discourse, and propagate disadvantage experienced by vulnerable and historically marginalized communities.

Municipalities have a clear responsibility, as a provider of public services, to listen, learn and take action to combat hate and systemic inequality, and to build inclusive workplaces and

¹⁰ (2021, March 4). Community Diversity and Inclusion. City of London website. Retrieved from <https://london.ca/CDIS>



communities. In the absence of an EDI Framework, municipalities lack strategic mechanisms for gathering reliable insight into employee and community member experience, and have limited ability to measure the impact, nor the business value or return on investment, for actions taken to advance commitments to equity and inclusivity.¹¹

Development and implementation of an EDI Framework will structure a formal commitment and guide concerted efforts by local municipalities to:

- Foster a culture of equity and inclusion both within the municipal workplace and in the community, where all staff, community members and visitors experience dignity and belonging;
- Identify, address and prevent barriers of discrimination and disadvantage that hinder access to municipal programs and services, inhibit community engagement in public sector decision-making, and limit opportunity and participation in our workplace, in order to drive meaningful change;
- Cultivate practices of listening and learning, and expand channels of communication, to support and amplify the voices of people and organizations already working to address racism and discrimination in Northumberland, and to inform the development and implementation of municipal policies, programs and services that respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse community and workforce.

Recognizing that this is a long-term journey that involves building partnerships with individuals who have lived experience as well as organizations working to combat systemic inequality and increase safety and inclusion, and involves engaging in dialogue and learning to generate sustained action and community change, staff recommends instituting a dedicated resource to oversee this vital work.

Impacts to Member Municipalities/Partners

The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Manager will coordinate development of an EDI Framework for adoption by the County as well as member municipalities interested in a shared framework.

In developing and implementing an action plan for the County based on this Framework, any tools, policies, programs or materials developed by the Manager will be made available to member municipalities to support development and implementation of their respective action plans.

¹¹ Town of Cobourg. *Report to Council: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy*. November 23, 2020. Page 17. Retrieved from <https://www.cobourg.ca/en/town-hall/resources/Accessibility/Memo-Re-Equity-Diversity-and-Inclusion-Strategy-Report.pdf>



For member municipalities seeking training, implementation support and other oversight services following adoption of the EDI Framework, cost recovery-based shared services opportunities with the County can be explored.

Included in 2021 Long Term Plan: NO

No