

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN



2015 – 2018



Prepared by:
Lac La Biche County
Strategic Communications Planning Team



Date: January 6, 2015



Your Playground of Opportunity

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background.....	2
Guiding Principles	3
Target Audiences.....	3
Desired Outcomes	6
Key Messages	7
Goals and Strategies.....	7
Implementation	9
Evaluation	10
Summary of High Priority Tactics	19
Roles and Responsibilities	23

BACKGROUND

As a result of the development and adoption of a Strategic Communications Planning Team Bylaw in December 2011, a team comprised of two Councillors and four County staff members began its work on a communication plan in early 2012. A core goal of the team is to *“ensure communication procedures used across Lac La Biche County are well coordinated, effectively managed and responsive to the information needs of County Council, municipal staff, the public and potential employees.”*

From its inception the planning team consulted with Marcomm Works, the County’s public relations agency. In reference to their findings after meeting with numerous County staff and members of the public, Marcomm Works helped the planning team establish goals and objectives and develop effective methods of communicating with a number of target audiences.

Upon the establishment of the goals outlined in the communications plan, the planning team was mindful of the available resources through the County’s Communications department that provides:

- Professional communications counsel, planning, writing and editing resources
- Website and social media tools
- Research concerning stakeholder information needs
- Brochures and other collateral materials
- External newsletters, advertising and reports
- Internal newsletter called the Staffer

In June 2012 Lac La Biche County Council approved the County’s first comprehensive three-year Communications Plan that identified key target audiences, desired outcomes, and strategies to improve internal and external communications. The plan is to be updated on an annual basis to ensure goals are relevant and timely.

This communication’s plan and its goals and strategies build from and support Lac La Biche County’s vision, mission and strategic plan.

Vision

Welcoming by nature; Your playground of opportunity.

Mission

Lac La Biche County is committed to building a region of excellence by delivering progressive, sustainable programs and services.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles were developed by the Strategic Communications Planning Team for the purpose of defining the communication climate and to serve as a foundation for effective engagement with internal and external audiences.

Work together for a common purpose

County departments work together and collaborate with community agencies to achieve a common purpose of promoting our services and programs and ultimately improving our region.

Communication is an investment

The County invests money, energy and support into communications resources, policy and practice. This investment reaps positive results and outcomes.

Promotion is innovative and responsive

The promotion of County programs and services is flexible, meaningful and provides value to a wide range of audiences.

Respect for diverse communication needs

Lac La Biche County understands the importance for effective and timely information to a diverse audience base and learning styles.

TARGET AUDIENCES

PRIORITIES

Internal Audiences

**Internal audiences would include managers and staff, staff paid by the County but working in sponsored agencies, County Council, County contractors and volunteers.*

Lac La Biche County Council is composed of a mayor and eight councillors representing seven wards. Lac La Biche County has about 170 employees located in multiple locations throughout the County. The three central locations are in the hamlet of Lac La Biche and include the County main office, McArthur Place, and the Bold Center. About 20% of employees do not have access to a computer during their workday and the County does not have Intranet.

The County funds or shares human resources with a few agencies such as Family and Community Services and the Lac La Biche Regional Economic Development Authority. The County hires many contractors each year and a stable of volunteers (mainly working in the Bold Center or with community programs) serve a variety of roles. Many of these contractors/volunteers represent County interests when they interface with internal and external stakeholders as part of their duties.

Residents

The total population of the County is 12,220 of which 9,094 are permanent residents and 3,126 are temporary residents. There are about 3,700 individual taxpayers and another 1,000 are corporate. It is unknown how many people are renters. A number of people inside the County's boundaries live on the Heart Lake and Beaver Lake First Nations reserves, and the Kikino and Buffalo Lake Metis settlements inside the County.

Some residents are hard to inform and engage because of socio-economic factors that may be significant barriers to two way communications. In the County's hamlets, many residents are still making adjustments to being a part of a County family. More modeling and transparency in engagement and communications targeting these communities is needed to overcome reservations and lingering we/they attitudes.

Industry and Small Business

The County has many large industries operating within the municipality. Resource companies have a vested interest in the County's program, services and promotions because of the impact it can have on their operations and employees. Sponsorship of the Bold Center and other County initiatives demonstrate many of these companies are willing to support County-led initiatives or programs that are publicly visible.

A large percentage of industrial workers do not live in the County full-time. They present a new audience opportunity for messaging regarding living, investing and spending leisure time in the County.

Small business owners in the County are very active. They are collectively a major employer in the region and opinion leaders. Through the Lac La Biche and District Chamber of Commerce, the Lac La Biche Regional Economic Development Authority, Community Futures and other avenues, businesspeople have demonstrated a willingness to participate and support the County in its advocacy, promotion and marketing efforts. Businesses aligned with communities that were previously their own municipalities (e.g. Plamondon) may be reluctant to participate unless their communities are showcased.

Temporary Residents

There are hundreds of individuals each year who work in the County for an extended period of time but chose to live in work camps, hotels, motels, trailers or other temporary accommodation rather than permanently move to the County. Communications outreach to these residents is limited to third parties (media, employers) or passive measures (website). There may be opportunities to team with their employers to promote permanent residency.

Media

Media that directly serves Lac La Biche County are the Lac La Biche Post and Big Dog 103.5 FM radio. Both are in Lac La Biche. The Coffee News serves the hamlet of Lac La Biche hamlet

through direct drops at nearly 40 businesses and offices. Some external media from Edmonton provide information to County residents but the share of newspaper readership and radio listenership is considered to be lower than local offerings. Edmonton television stations with the best reach into the County are Global and CTV. CITL-DT in Lloydminster also is available via cable.

Like elsewhere, digital media has become more dominate particular for a younger demographic. Facebook 'friends', Tweepers, bloggers and discussion forum participants are becoming more mainstream, rivaling some traditional media as primary information sources.

Visitors & Seasonal Residents

Lac La Biche County is a very popular place for visitors, primarily for outdoor recreation. Thousands of people live part-time or spend a number of holiday weeks at the lakes and campgrounds within the County. There are opportunities to expand their understanding and appreciation for the County beyond their recreational experience but to date that outreach has been minimal unless the individuals are property owners.

Municipal, Provincial and Federal Governments

It's important that positive relationships are developed and maintained with these audiences, that they stay knowledgeable and informed of County activities and programs, and that opportunities for partnerships in advocacy on key issues (e.g. Medevac services) are constantly explored.

Students and Educators

There are a number of post-secondary, secondary and elementary schools as well as shared facilities through the County. Portage College, Northern Lights School Division and Greater North Central Francophone (it has a school in Plamondon) all service parents and students within the municipality. The reputation of a community is partially built on the strength of core services like education. The County's efforts to improve its reputation and perceptions of quality of life and services require a good working relationship and partnerships with educators and school/College administrators.

Volunteers

Lac La Biche County has a reputation for strong volunteer involvement. Volunteers are often the unofficial face and voice of an organization. They can be knowledgeable ambassadors and effective third party spokespersons if armed with the right information and encouragement. Volunteers, particular those who already volunteer for County programs offered at the Bold Center and elsewhere, are an asset the County should continue to develop.

Community Groups and Not-for-profit Organizations (NGOs)

The County has a number of community groups, service clubs and other NGOs that are opinion leaders and important information conduits. Groups in communities like Plamondon, Hylo, Rich Lake and elsewhere have strong community spirits that reflect positively on the County as a whole.

As third party communicators and opinion leaders, these groups are an important audience for County information and messaging. They also present opportunities for joint venturing on some communications initiatives such as program and facility showcases. Particular attention needs to be paid to groups where a cultural gap currently exists.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

The following describes what Lac La Biche County aspires to achieve:

1. Lac La Biche County's image has improved. Staff and residents are more positive about their municipal government and the community in which they live.
2. The majority of stakeholders believe Lac La Biche County is a well-run organization. Staff feel supported, well informed and engaged. Residents are satisfied with the information they receive, feel they have adequate opportunities for input and believe County staff are qualified and responsive to their needs. The quality and quantity of people applying for County jobs is higher.
3. The majority of people consider Lac La Biche County to be a progressive, productive, safe and environmentally sensitive municipality with excellent community spirit.
4. New residents acknowledge that favourable impressions of the County impacted their decision to moving here.
5. Open, transparent and client-focused communications is embedded in Lac La Biche County's values and management practices. Messaging, branding, protocols and policies are applied consistently across the organization.
6. Information is available to staff to encourage excellence in customer service and employee empowerment.
7. Staff feel involved and part of the County 'team'. They take pride in their work and believe they are part of one of the best municipal organizations in Alberta. They celebrate each other's successes and feel empowered to be proactive in dealing with challenges and opportunities.

Achieving these desired outcomes will take some time. While there have been positive accomplishments since the implementation of the 2012-2015 Communications Plan, communication is an evolving process that will continue to require attention.

KEY MESSAGES

Global key messages are the foundation for language to be used in Lac La Biche County's communications to stakeholders. The object is to work towards making the messages factual and top of mind. These key messages will be reinforced with sub-messages appropriate for specific issues.

- ✓ Customer service and communications are central to everything we do at Lac La Biche County.
- ✓ Lac La Biche County is a beautiful, safe, clean place to live, learn, work, raise a family and retire.
- ✓ Lac La Biche County is an honest and trustworthy municipality that provides high quality services and programs. Management and staff are committed, knowledgeable, reliable, helpful, responsive and efficient.
- ✓ Lac La Biche County is a regional employer of choice. Its well-informed employees are treated with respect.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

EXTERNAL

Goal 1: Communication initiatives support Lac La Biche County as a strong, well-managed organization.

Strategies:

- 1A. Increase the awareness and transparency of decision-making and policy to both employees and external stakeholders.
 - 1B. Improve the customer experience of external stakeholders by providing on-demand information and customer services that are proactive, responsive, timely, accessible and meet stakeholder needs.
 - 1C. Raise the visibility of the County's sponsorship, both "in kind" and monetary, and investment in various community programs and activities.
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- 1D. Promote a culture within the organization of open collaboration, communications and information sharing.

Goal 2: Position Lac La Biche County as an employer of choice.

Strategies:

- 2A. Foster a culture that motivates staff and residents to become advocates and champions for activities, amenities, programs and services available in the County.
- 2B. Facilitate interdepartmental communication to foster a sense of team and valued contribution.
- 2C. Ensure the website demonstrates Lac La Biche County as an employer of choice.

Goal 3: Become the community of choice in northeastern Alberta for prospective work force, residents, visitors and business.

Strategies:

- 3A. Encourage people to work, live and stay in the region.
- 3B. Ensure the website demonstrates Lac La Biche County as a community of choice in northeastern Alberta.

Goal 4: Develop and sustain an image of Lac La Biche County as a growing, progressive and productive community that has excellent community spirit.

Strategies:

- 4A. Increase the visibility and awareness of Lac La Biche County's assets, accomplishments and successes through more self-promotion and publicizing of positive events and outcomes.
- 4B. Partner with organizations to showcase each other's assets, successes, programs and services.
- 4C. Ensure the website promotes the County as a progressive community.

INTERNAL

Goal 1: Lac La Biche County's internal communications are effective, informative, well-supported and aligned with the organization's strategic plans and vision.

Strategies:

- 1A. Develop clear communication roles, expectations and reporting relationships for staff and communicate these to everyone in the organization.
- 1B. Develop regular communication links and feedback mechanisms with all employees that enable them to be up-to-date and fully briefed about municipal operations, decisions and public information, and enable and encourage them to provide feedback and input on policies, plans and activities.
- 1C. Increase brand awareness and utilization within County departments.

Goal 2: Council is up-to-date on community engagement initiatives, projects and emergent issues so they are prepared to respond to community concerns.

Strategies

- 2A. Develop clear and timely communication procedures between administration and council regarding community engagement initiatives, projects and emergent issues.

IMPLEMENTATION

The following pages outline how the various strategies will be implemented. Significant changes would be introduced in phases or as pilots to 'prove out' the value-added benefits of the tactic and to ensure staff have the training and knowledge they need to support the change.

A priority rating is given to each tactic. All tactics have value but a high rating indicates these tactics should be implemented first.

Lac La Biche County employees can be a tremendous communications asset but they need encouragement and direction to communicate and share information beyond their personal and work needs. This requires reinforcement and education that being a good communicator – internally and externally - is a County expectation and plays a significant role in achieving organizational goals.

While accountability can be reinforced in job descriptions, performance appraisals and other methods, it needs to be led by a culture within the County of open, transparent, consistent and current information-sharing of direction and decisions, best practices, success stories, project information, etc. This culture can be developed through a combination of modeling by management, training and education throughout the organization, and internal supports that empower, enable and reward staff for being information agents and brand ambassadors.

EVALUATION

Goal 1: Ensure Lac La Biche County's communications endeavours add value to the organization.

Strategies:

- 1A. Develop an evaluation framework that includes qualitative and quantitative measures.
- 1B. Evaluate programs against benchmarks, modify programs and/or enhance training as necessary based on the results. Programs will be evaluated at different times but at least once every two years.

External Goal 1: Communication initiatives support Lac La Biche County as a strong, well-managed organization.

Strategy	Tactics	Budget Impact	Priority
1A. Increase the awareness and transparency of decision-making and policy to both employees and external stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add a communications and engagement summary section and action items to all Council project briefings. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure Council meeting minutes are available to the public and staff. 	Low	On going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in proactive planning with communications as a core component of each project plan. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the 'why' of decisions are included in communications. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and launch a Snapshot on all committee decisions as a method to report quickly to staff and the community of committee key decisions and the process that went into making them. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish annual report to the community outlining operational and capital plans including a budget (<i>County in Action</i>) upon budget approval. 	Medium	On going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish annual report outlining outcomes on those plans (<i>County in Review</i>) by the end of January of each year. 	Medium	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a community engagement policy with procedures, which will include a briefing to Council as part of the procedures. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roll out a handbook with a checklist that supports staff in their engagement initiatives. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicize outcomes from engagement sessions/surveys/task forces. 	Low	High
1B. Improve the customer experience of external stakeholders by providing on-demand information and customer services that are proactive, responsive, timely, accessible and meet stakeholder needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamline administrative processes (such as email protocols, on-line calendars, program bookings, etc.) to improve efficiency, simplify procedures and eliminate duplication. 	Low	Med
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand and update website content, keeping it current with information of importance to citizens (e.g. budgets, Council agendas/backgrounders/decisions/salaries and expenses, tender links, road closures, fire bans, public notices and hearings, important dates, Bold Center calendar, etc.) 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a plain language tip sheet and customer service standards for public information. 	Low	High

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the internal IWORQs program, addressing confidentiality, consistency and accountability issues. 	Low	On going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide adequate information and (cross) training supports to enable staff to handle a variety of customer service needs. 	Low	Med
	Establish a county directory on the website and an in-depth information tool for staff that includes FAQs.	Med	High
1C. Raise the visibility of the County's sponsorship, both "in kind" and monetary, and investment in various community programs and activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a formal recognition policy and procedures guide that sets out expectations on how organizations are to recognize County grants and sponsorships. Communicate this to all groups and make a condition of all applications and awards. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a policy for the use of County brands. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least annually, publish lists of all sponsorships and grants that the County provides and has awarded. For example, in the Year in Review publication. 	Low	High
1D. Promote an internal culture of open collaboration, communications and information sharing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a means of communicating County plans, policy, program, or service changes to staff first (where possible) before communicating publicly. 	Low	On going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure this Plan is shared with each department establishing expectations for staff regarding collaboration, communications and information sharing. 	Low	High

External Goal 2: Position Lac La Biche County as an employer of choice.

Strategy	Tactics	Budget Impact	Priority
2A. Foster a culture that motivates staff and residents to become advocates and champions for activities, amenities,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate the establishment of guiding principles that foster an environment in which staff feel valued and contributions and successes are celebrated. 	Med	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the development of a leadership program for all levels of management to inspire staff productivity, recognize achievement & best capitalize on individual potential. 	High	Med

programs and services available in the County.	• Establish methods to engage with the public and staff for ideas.	Med	Med
	• Develop a policy that fosters volunteerism in the community.	High	High
	• Ensure continued awareness of staff advocacy and whistleblower avenues to demonstrate transparency and accountability.	Low	Med
	• Showcase employee profiles using County resources (web and social media).	Low	On going
2B. Facilitate interdepartmental communication to foster a sense of team and valued contribution.	• Generate awareness of existing professional development & teambuilding policies in place.	Low	Med
	• Establish interdepartmental fundraising initiatives that benefit the community.	Low	Low
	• Develop a planning team to facilitate an annual professional development day to promote engagement and interaction.	High	Med
2C. Ensure the website demonstrates Lac La Biche County as an employer of choice.	• Post current jobs and highlight the benefit package.	Low	On going
	• Link the website to ongoing recruitment and retention strategies.	Low	Med
	• Provide RSS feeds as new jobs are posted.	Med	Low
	• Recognize the value of staff in the website (e.g. meet your department).	Low	Med
	• Develop short video clips that describe the benefits of working for the County	High	Low

External Goal 3: Become the community of choice in northeastern Alberta for prospective work force, residents, visitors and business.

Strategy	Tactics	Budget Impact	Priority
3A. Encourage people to work, live and stay in the region.	• Coordinate a regional information package to showcase local events, services, amenities, and business. Ensure this information is current and available on the website.	High	Med
	• Engage with stakeholders to identify and support labour market needs.	Med	Med
	• Present a business case on northern living allowance opportunities.	Low	Med
	• Conduct a survey of non-Lac La Biche County residents. Focus messaging and	Med	Low

	information sharing on what people don't know about the municipality.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a program of video production, webcasts and photography to tell the County story visually. Invite community involvement and submissions. 	High	Med
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the gaps and needs for attainable housing. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Populate Facebook and Twitter with activities to attract followers and friends (use photos, videos and contests). 	Low	On going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redevelop the website and grow social media presence. 	High	On going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue partnering with other media sources to extend County messaging to a broader audience. 	Low	High
3B. Ensure the website demonstrates Lac La Biche County as a community of choice in northeastern Alberta.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The website shares information about community events and organizations, and economic development. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight social, recreational, and entertainment diversity of Lac La Biche County. 	Low	Low

External Goal 4: Develop and sustain an image of Lac La Biche County as a growing, progressive and productive community that has excellent community spirit.

Strategy	Tactics	Budget Impact	Priority
4A. Increase the visibility and awareness of Lac La Biche County's assets, accomplishments and successes through more self-promotion and publicizing of positive events and outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce a community directory and reference guide. Look for partnerships to produce the directory. 	High	Med
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a proactive media relations strategy with a focus on story marketing. 	Low	Med
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hire a digital communications/external publications coordinator to be responsible for all digital media and publications. 	High	Med
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Populate Facebook & Twitter and increase activity to attract more followers and friends (using photo contests, etc.). 	Low	On going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop presentation materials and solicit opportunities for staff and Councillors to showcase successes and innovations or distribute information about County 	Med	High

	programs and services outside of the County, when opportunities arise.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search out and enter award competitions for municipal organizations. Encourage staff to do the same as individuals. 	Low	Low
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight major assets like the Bold Center by hosting and promoting (progressively more) major events each year. 	High	Med
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with third parties to broaden our audience reach. 	Med	Low
4B. Partner with organizations to showcase each other's assets, successes, programs and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research a catalogue of opportunities and gain consents from other companies and organizations to piggyback or joint venture at trade shows, conventions, etc. inside and outside of the County. 	Low	Low
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a travelling display that can be manned or unmanned. 	High	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link external events and initiatives on the website. 	Low	High
4C. Ensure the website promotes the County as a progressive community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight community events and showcase successes. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure information is current and relevant. 	Low	On going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide links to community initiatives to broaden the reach. 	Low	Med

Internal Goal 1: Lac La Biche County's internal communications are effective, informative, well-supported and aligned with the organization's strategic plans and vision.

Strategy	Tactics	Budget Impact	Priority
1A. Develop clear communication roles, expectations and reporting relationships for staff and communicate these to everyone in the organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure plans and programs – and communication about them - reflect the connection to the goals set by Council. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and provide professional development in communications training for managers and team leaders. 	High	Med
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop standards, policies and procedures for internal and external communications. This would include customer service standards and expectations. Fully brief staff and include in the Communications handbook. 	Med	Med

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate in the communications handbook best practices in communications, customer service, municipal governance, information-sharing and being ambassadors. 	Med	Med
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place an FAQ and other core information elements (e.g. reference materials, templates, up-dates, etc.) on the Intranet once developed. In the meantime, ensure they are kept current and accessible to staff on the common drive. 	Low	Med
1B. Develop regular communication links and feedback mechanisms with all employees that enable them to be up-to-date and fully briefed about municipal operations, decisions and public information, and enable and encourage them to provide feedback and input on policies, plans and activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to posting Council highlights on web and social media. 	Low	Med
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch an Intranet when budget allows. 	High	Med
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key committees and highlight activities in monthly Snapshots. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure staff engagement exercises include the circulation of a follow-up action plan on input provided. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an e-mail and social media bulletin for breaking news or events, with media releases to follow. 	Low	On going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make Stakeholder communications as a standing agenda item for staff meetings. The meetings should serve as both an information session and feedback forum. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add a message from the CAO in the monthly Staffer. 	Low	Med
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make the use of on-line calendars as a standard practice. 	Low	On going
1C. Increase brand awareness and utilization within County departments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the current brand value through the citizen satisfaction survey. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and communicate a policy on the use of the <i>Welcoming by Nature</i> brand. Include the use and meaning of the brand when rolling out the policy . Coordinate with Strategy 1A (handbook). 	Low	Med
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop brand visual guidelines to ensure visual standards are met. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all external documents follow branding standards. 	Low	High

Internal Goal 2: Council is up-to-date on community engagement initiatives, projects and emergent issues so they are prepared to respond to community concerns.

Strategy	Tactics	Budget Impact	Priority
2A. Develop clear and timely communication procedures between administration and council regarding community engagement initiatives, projects and emergent issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a policy and procedures guide that determines how administration ensures council is kept up-to-date in a timely manner. 	Low	Med
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a communications component into new staff orientation. Include the communications handbook with the orientation manual. 	Low	On going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make effective communications between staff and colleagues part of every job description and create a performance appraisal measure for all managers and staff. 	Low	High

Evaluation Goal 1: Ensure Lac La Biche County’s communications endeavours add value to the organization.

Strategy	Tactics	Budget Impact	Priority
1A. Develop an evaluation framework that includes qualitative and quantitative measures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include customer service and communications as reviewable items in staff performance appraisals. 	Low	On going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Communications Plan annually in conjunction with operational planning to ensure it remains in harmony with Lac La Biche County’s business strategies. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain the Communications Strategic Communications Planning Team as advisors to Council and management on standards and expectations. 	Low	On going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an on-line survey of County non-residents to establish a benchmark of attitudes and perceptions of the County. Repeat the on-line survey of County non-residents every two years. 	Med	Med
1B. Evaluate programs against benchmarks, modify programs and/or enhance training as necessary based on the results. Programs will be evaluated at different times but at least once every two years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include a participant evaluation form as a standard part of any public engagement forum, town hall or community session. 	Med	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the 2013 staff satisfaction survey as a benchmark. Repeat the staff satisfaction survey annually or bi-annually 	High	Med
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use on-line analytics such as Google Analytics to track and analyze on-line views of County information, social media use and Internet conversation. 	Med	Med
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct random inventory and content analysis of external communications materials and products. 	Med	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct website and social media tracking and analysis to enable awareness and response as required to media stories and commentary. 	Low	On going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an annual report to Council, senior management, team leaders and staff to evaluate program impact. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold periodic focus groups with staff and residents on issue specific matters. 	High	Med

SUMMARY OF HIGH PRIORITY TACTICS

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

1A. Increase the awareness and transparency of decision-making and policy to both employees and external stakeholders.

- Engage in proactive planning with communications as a core component of each project plan.
- Add a communications and engagement summary section and action items to all Council project briefings.
- Ensure the 'why' of decisions are included in communications.
- Develop and launch a Snapshot on all committee decisions as a method to report quickly to staff and the community of committee key decisions and the process that went into making them.
- Publish annual report outlining outcomes on those plans (County in Review) by the end of January of each year.
- Develop a community engagement policy with procedures, which will include a briefing to Council as part of the procedures.
- Roll out a handbook with a checklist that supports staff in their engagement initiatives.
- Publicize outcomes from engagement sessions/surveys/task forces.

1B. Improve the customer experience of external stakeholders by providing on-demand information and customer services that are proactive, responsive, timely, accessible and meet stakeholder needs.

- Expand and update website content, keeping it current with information of importance to citizens (e.g. budgets, Council agendas/backgrounders/decisions/salaries and expenses, tender links, road closures, fire bans, public notices and hearings, important dates, Bold Center calendar, etc.).
- Develop a plain language guide and customer service standards for public information.
- Establish a county directory on the website and an in-depth information tool for staff that includes FAQs.

1C. Raise the visibility of the County’s sponsorship, both “in kind” and monetary, and investment in various community programs and activities.

- Develop a formal recognition policy and procedures guide that sets out expectations on how organizations are to recognize County grants and sponsorships. Communicate this to all groups and make a condition of all applications and awards.
- Develop a policy for the use of County brands.
- At least annually, publish lists of all sponsorships and grants that the County provides and has awarded. For example, in the Year in Review publication.

1D. Promote an internal culture of open collaboration, communications and information sharing.

- Ensure this Plan is shared with each department establishing expectations for staff regarding collaboration, communications and information sharing.

2A. Foster a culture that motivates staff and residents to become advocates and champions for activities, amenities, programs and services available in the County.

- Facilitate the establishment of guiding principles that foster an environment in which staff feel valued and contributions and successes are celebrated.
- Establish methods to engage with the public and staff for ideas.
- Identify the gaps and needs for attainable housing.

3A. Encourage people to work, live and stay in the region

- Continue partnering with other media sources to extend County messaging to a broader audience.

3B. Ensure the website demonstrates Lac La Biche County as a community of choice in northeastern Alberta.

- The website shares information about community events and organizations, and economic development.

4A. Increase the visibility and awareness of Lac La Biche County’s assets, accomplishments and successes through more self-promotion and publicizing of positive events and outcomes.

- Develop presentation materials and solicit opportunities for staff and Councillors to showcase successes and innovations or distribute information about County programs and services outside of the County, when opportunities arise.

4B. Partner with organizations to showcase each other’s assets, successes, programs and services.

- Develop a travelling display that can be manned or unmanned.
- Link external events and initiatives on the website.

4C. Ensure the website promotes the County as a progressive community.

- Highlight community events and showcase successes.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

1A. Develop clear communication roles, expectations and reporting relationships for staff and communicate these to everyone in the organization.

- Ensure plans and programs – and communication about them - reflect the connection to the County’s Strategic Plan.

1B. Develop regular communication links and feedback mechanisms with all employees that enable them to be up-to-date and fully briefed about municipal operations, decisions and public information, and enable and encourage them to provide feedback and input on policies, plans and activities.

- Identify key committees and highlight activities in monthly Snapshots.
- Ensure staff engagement exercises include the circulation of a follow-up action plan on input provided.
- Make Stakeholder communications a standing agenda item for staff meetings. The meetings should serve as both an information session and feedback forum.

1C. Increase brand awareness and utilization within County departments.

- Assess the current brand value through the citizen satisfaction survey.
- Develop brand visual guidelines to ensure visual standards are met.
- Ensure all external documents follow branding standards.

2A. Develop clear and timely communication procedures between administration and council regarding community engagement initiatives, projects and emergent issues.

- Make effective communications between staff and colleagues part of every job description and create a performance appraisal measure for all managers and staff.

EVALUATION

1A. Develop an evaluation framework that includes quantitative and qualitative measures.

- Include customer service and communications as reviewable items in staff performance appraisals.
- Review the communications plan annually in conjunction with operational planning to ensure it remains in harmony with Lac La Biche County's business strategies.

1B. Evaluate programs against benchmarks, modify programs and/or enhance training as necessary based on the results. Programs will be evaluated at different times but at least once every two years.

- Include a participant evaluation form as a standard part of any public meeting, town hall or community session, and use to develop best practices.
- Conduct a citizens' satisfaction survey every other year.
- Repeat the staff satisfaction survey each year.
- Debrief regularly with Council, senior management, team leaders and staff to evaluate program impact.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Manager of Communications has overall responsibility to implement this communications plan. However, it will be important to the success of the plan that it be championed by Council, the CAO and all members of senior administration. Roles and responsibilities are:

- **County Council** needs to champion internal and external communications excellence, support policies and initiatives that enable this to occur, and role model behaviour expected of staff.
- **Chief Administrative Officer** needs to empower and encourage managers to be central communication drivers and emphasize the importance of good communications through clear directives and policies, enabling skill development and support, and role modeling expected behaviour.
- **Managers** need to recognize good employee and stakeholder communications is a priority and to role model effective communications. This will require, among other things, improvement of personal communications skill sets (as needed) and in-house training and support from human resources and communications.
- **Human resources staff** will need to adjust job descriptions, performance appraisal templates, recruitment objectives and other applications as required. Programs such as the recognition and rewards, wellness and others may require adjustment as well.
- **Planning and development, recreation and culture staff** will need to team with communications in the development of an advertising campaign and other crossover initiatives.
- **All staff** as individuals will need to learn how to become information agents and brand ambassadors, and work in an environment where customer service and information sharing are high priorities.