



Communications Plan

(revised March 2017)



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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 Centre office, McArthur Place, and the Bold Center. About 20 per cent of employees do not have access to a computer during their workday and the County is developing an Intranet site.

The County hires many contractors each year and a stable of volunteers 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

According to the 2016 municipal census, the total population of the County is 9,531, of which 8,544 are permanent residents and 987 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 First Nation and Beaver Lake Cree Nation reserves, and the Kikino and Buffalo Lake Métis 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, many residents are still making adjustments to being a part of a County family.

Industry and Small Business

The County has many large industries operating within the municipality. Resource companies have a vested interest in the County's programs, 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 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, 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 choose to live in work camps, hotels, motels, trailers or other temporary accommodations 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 outlets that directly serve Lac La Biche County are the Lac La Biche Post newspaper and Big Dog 103.5 FM and CHPL 92.1 FM radio stations.. The Coffee News serves the hamlet of Lac La Biche 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 dominant, particularly for a younger demographic. Facebook, Twitter, blogs and discussion forums 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 Public Schools, Conseil Scolaire Centre-Est (East Central Francophone Education Region) and Lakeland Catholic Schools 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 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 move 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 one of Alberta's best employers. 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.
- 1D. Promote a culture within the organization of open collaboration, communications and information sharing.

Goal 2: Position Lac La Biche County as one of Alberta's best employers.

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	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure Council meeting minutes are available to the public and staff. 	Low	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in proactive planning with communications as a core component of each project plan. 	Low	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the 'why' of decisions are included in communications. 	Low	In place
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish annual report to the community outlining operational and capital plans including a budget summary upon budget approval. 	Medium	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish annual report outlining outcomes on those plans (<i>Year in Review</i>) by the end of January of each year. 	Medium	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with other municipal administrations with a view to developing 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 that supports staff in their engagement initiatives. 	Low	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicize outcomes from engagement sessions/surveys/task forces. 	Low	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue posting Council Highlights to summarize all Regular Council Meetings on the County's website. 	Low	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicize important Council decisions on the website and social media. 	Low	Ongoing
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	Ongoing
	<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	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refresh the Bold Center website with new and more streamlined content for ease of access. 	Med	High

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a plain language tip sheet and customer service standards for public information. Coordinate with Strategy 1A (handbook). 	Low	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the internal IWORQs program, addressing confidentiality, consistency and accountability issues. 	Low	In place
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide adequate information and (cross) training supports within departments to enable staff to handle a variety of customer service needs. 	Low	In place
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a county directory on the website and an in-depth information tool on the Intranet 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	In place
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	Ongoing
	<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	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide customer service and professional communications tips in the County's internal newsletter, The Staffer. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and launch the County's Intranet site. 	High	Ongoing

External Goal 2: Position Lac La Biche County as one of Alberta's best employers.

Strategy	Tactics	Budget Impact	Priority
2A. Foster a culture that motivates staff and residents to become advocates and champions for activities, amenities, programs and services available in the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a steering committee that creates 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	In place
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and establish best practices for engaging with the public and staff for ideas. 	Med	Med
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a policy that fosters staff volunteerism in the community. 	High	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure continued awareness of staff advocacy and whistleblower avenues to demonstrate transparency and accountability. 	Low	Med
2B. Facilitate interdepartmental communication to foster a sense of team and valued contribution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate awareness of existing professional development & teambuilding policies in place. 	Low	Med
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish interdepartmental fundraising initiatives that benefit the community. 	Low	Low
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate an employee recognition day to promote engagement and interaction. 	High	Ongoing
2C. Ensure the website demonstrates Lac La Biche County as one of Alberta's best employers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post current jobs and highlight the benefit package. 	Low	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicize the CAO's quarterly report, profiling projects and services throughout the year. 	Low	Ongoing

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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showcase local events, services, amenities, and business. Ensure this information is current and available on the website. 	Low	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present a business case on northern living allowance opportunities. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use photography and amateur video to tell the County story visually. Invite community involvement and submissions. 	Low	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with Portage College to identify the gaps and needs for attainable housing. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Populate Facebook and Twitter with posts and activities to attract followers (use photos, videos and contests). 	Low	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redevelop the website and grow social media presence. 	High	In place
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue partnering with external sources to extend County messaging to a broader audience. 	Low	In place
3B. Ensure the website demonstrates Lac La Biche County as a community of choice in northeastern Alberta.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a section on the website that 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	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain community events calendar. 	Low	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight Portage College and the County's status as a "college community." 	Low	High

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	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redesign Your County In Touch and promote e-subscriptions to reach a wider audience. 	Low	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and continue to expand on a guide that lists the activities available through the County (the Lac La Biche County Activity Guide). 	Med	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Populate Facebook & Twitter and increase activity to attract more followers and friends (using photo contests, etc.). 	Low	Ongoing
	<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 programs and services outside of the County, when opportunities arise. 	Med	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage staff to search out and participate in local events as County representatives. 	Med	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight major assets like the Bold Center by hosting and promoting (progressively more) major events each year. 	High	Ongoing
	<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"> Partner with other companies and organizations at trade shows, conventions, etc. inside and outside of the County. 	Low	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a travelling display that can be manned or unmanned. 	High	In place
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link external events and initiatives on the website, and link to partners like Community Futures. 	Low	In place

4C. Ensure the website promotes the County as a progressive community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight community events and showcase successes. 	Low	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure information is current and relevant. 	Low	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide links to community resources such as Portage College, Greater North Foundation, etc. 	Low	In place

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"> Align plans and programs – and communication about them - to the goals set by Council and the senior management team. 	Low	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and provide communications tools for managers and team leaders. 	High	Ongoing
	<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	Ongoing
	<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	Ongoing
	<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	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include effective communication between colleagues and members of the public as part of every job description. 	Low	Ongoing
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure staff engagement exercises like the employee satisfaction survey include the circulation of a follow-up action plan to inform staff about outcomes and next steps 	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	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make stakeholder communications with the public a standing agenda item for staff meetings when applicable. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAO circulates a monthly newsletter to staff detailing agenda items from senior management meetings. 	Low	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make the use of on-line calendars as a standard practice. 	Low	Ongoing

on policies, plans and activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and communicate a policy on <i>Welcoming by Nature</i> values. Include the use and meaning when rolling out. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop brand visual guidelines to ensure visual standards are met. 	Low	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all external documents follow branding standards. 	Low	Ongoing

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 guidelines that outline how Administration ensures Council is kept up-to-date in a timely manner. Ensure that Council calendars are kept updated with County-related events. 	Low	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a communications component into new staff orientation. Include the communications handbook with the orientation manual. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make effective communications between staff and colleagues and members of the public part of every job description. 	Low	Ongoing

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

Strategy	Tactics	Budget Impact	Priority
<p>1A. Develop an evaluation framework that includes qualitative and quantitative measures.</p>	<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	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a post-event evaluation form for community programs to gauge if target audiences have been reached and program goals achieved. 	Low	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain the Policy Review Committee as advisors to Council, and have the Administration (Communications staff) update this plan annually. 	Low	Ongoing
<p>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.</p>	<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 2015 staff satisfaction survey as a benchmark. Repeat the staff satisfaction survey bi-annually. 	High	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use online analytics such as Google Analytics to track and analyze on-line views of County information, social media use and Internet conversation. 	Low	Med
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct random inventory and content analysis of public communications materials and products. 	Med	Med
	<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	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an annual report to Council, senior management, team leaders and staff to evaluate program impact. 	Low	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the bi-annual Citizen Satisfaction Survey to gauge residents' views of County programs and services. 	Med	High

SUMMARY OF HIGH PRIORITY TACTICS

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

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

- Consult with other municipal administrations with a view to developing a community engagement policy with procedures, which will include a briefing to Council as part of the procedures.

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.

- Refresh the Bold Center website with new and more streamlined content for ease of access.

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.

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

- Provide customer service and professional communications tips in the County's internal newsletter, The Staffer.

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

- Establish a steering committee that creates an environment in which staff feel valued and contributions and successes are celebrated.
- Research and establish best practices for engaging with the public.
- Develop a policy that fosters staff volunteerism in the community.

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

- Present a business case on northern living allowance opportunities.
- Liaise with Portage College to identify the gaps and needs for attainable housing.

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

- Create a section on the website that shares information about community events and organizations, and economic development.
- Highlight Portage College and the County's status as a "college community."

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.

- Encourage staff to search out and participate in local events as County representatives.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

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.

- Ensure staff engagement exercises like the employee satisfaction survey include the circulation of a follow-up action plan to inform staff about outcomes and next steps.
- Make stakeholder communications with the public a standing agenda item for staff meetings when applicable
- Develop and communicate a policy on *Welcoming by Nature* values. Include the use and meaning when rolling out.

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

- Build a communications component into new staff orientation. Include the communications handbook with the orientation manual.

EVALUATION

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

- Develop a post-event evaluation form for community programs to gauge if target audiences have been reached and program goals achieved.

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.
- Continue the bi-annual Citizen Satisfaction Survey to gauge residents' views of County programs and services.

Summary of Ongoing Tactics

These are tactics that staff use regularly to maintain good communication throughout the County.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

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

- Add a communications and engagement summary section and action items to all Council project briefings.
- Ensure Council meeting minutes are available to the public and staff.
- Engage in proactive planning with communications as a core component of each project plan.
- Publish annual report to the community outlining operational and capital plans including a budget summary upon budget approval.
- Publish annual report outlining outcomes on those plans (*Year In Review*) by the end of January each year.
- Roll out a handbook that supports staff in their engagement initiatives.
- Publicize outcomes from engagement sessions/surveys/task forces.
- Continue posting council Highlights to summarize all Regular Council Meetings on the County's website.
- Publicize important Council decisions on the website and social media.

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.

- Streamline administrative processes (such as email protocols, online calendars, program bookings, etc.) to improve efficiency, simplify procedures and eliminate duplication.
- 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 tip sheet and customer service standards for public information. Coordinate with Strategy 1A (handbook).
- Establish a county directory on the website and an in-depth information tool on the Intranet for staff that includes FAQs.

- 1D. Promote an internal culture of open collaboration, communications, and information sharing.**
- Establish a means of communicating County plans, policy, program, or service changes to staff first (where possible) before communicating publicly.
 - Ensure this plan is shared with each department, establishing expectations for staff regarding collaboration, communications, and information sharing.
 - Develop and launch the County's Intranet site.
- 2B. Facilitate interdepartmental communication to foster a sense of team and valued contribution.**
- Facilitate an employee recognition day to promote engagement and interaction.
- 2C. Ensure the website demonstrates Lac La Biche County as one of Alberta's best employers.**
- Post current jobs and highlight the benefit package.
 - Publicize the CAO's quarterly report, profiling projects and services throughout the year.
- 3A. Encourage people to work, live and stay in the region.**
- Showcase local events, services, amenities, and business. Ensure this information is current and available on the website.
 - Use photography and amateur video to tell the County story visually. Invite community involvement and submissions.
 - Populate Facebook and Twitter with posts and activities to attract followers (use photos, videos, and contests).
- 3B. Ensure the website demonstrates Lac La Biche County as a community of choice in northeastern Alberta.**
- Highlight social, recreational and entertainment diversity of Lac La Biche County.
 - Maintain community events calendar.
- 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.**
- Produce a community directory and reference guide. Look for partnerships to produce the directory.
 - Redesign Your County In Touch and promote e-subscriptions to reach a wider audience.
 - Create and continue to expand on a guide that lists the activities available through the County (the Lac La Biche County Activity Guide).

- Populate Facebook and Twitter and increase activity to attract more followers (coordinated with Strategy 3A).
- Develop presentation materials and solicit opportunities for staff and Councillors to showcase successes and innovations or distribute information about County programs and services out of the County, when opportunities arise.
- Highlight major assets like the Bold Center by hosting and promoting (progressively more) major events each year.

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

- Partner with other companies and organizations at trade shows, conventions, etc. inside and outside of the County.

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

- Highlight community events and showcase successes.
- Ensure information is current and relevant.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

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

- Align plans and programs—and communication about them—to the goals set by Council and the senior management team.
- Develop and provide communications tools for managers and team leaders.
- 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.
- Incorporate in the Communications Handbook best practices in communications, customer service, municipal governance, information-sharing and being ambassadors.
- Place an FAQ and other core information elements (e.g. reference materials, templates, updates, etc.) on the Intranet once developed. In the meantime, ensure they are kept current and accessible to staff on the common drive.
- Include effective communication between colleagues and members of the public as part of every job description.

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.

- Create an email and social media bulletin for breaking news or events, with media releases to follow.
- CAO circulates a monthly newsletter to staff detailing agenda items from senior management meetings.
- Make use of online calendars a standard practice.
- Develop brand visual guidelines to ensure visual standards are met.
- Ensure all external documents follow branding standards.

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

- Develop guidelines that outline how administration ensures Council is kept up-to-date in a timely manner. Ensure that Council calendars are kept updated with County-related events.
- Make effective communications between staff and colleagues and members of the public part of every job description.

EVALUATION

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

- Review the Communications Plan annual in conjunction with operational planning to ensure it remains in harmony with Lac La Biche County's business strategies.
- Maintain the Policy Review committee as advisors to Council, and have administration (Communications staff) update this plan annually.

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.

- Use the 2015 staff satisfaction survey as a benchmark. Repeat the staff satisfaction survey bi-annually.
- Conduct website and social media tracking and analysis to enable awareness and response as required to media stories and commentary.
- Develop an annual report to Council, senior management, team leaders, and staff to evaluation program impact.

Summary of In Place Tactics

These are tactics that staff have already put in place to maintain good communication throughout the County, and require little further action.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

- 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.**
- Improve the internal iWORQs program, addressing confidentiality, consistency, and accountability issues.
 - Provide adequate information and (cross) training supports within departments to enable staff to handle a variety of customer service needs.
- 1C. Raise the visibility of the County’s sponsorship, both ‘in kind’ and monetary, and investment in various community programs and activities.**
- 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.
- 2A. Foster a culture that motivates staff and residents to become advocates and champions for activities, amenities, programs, and services available in the County.**
- Support the development of a leadership program for all levels of management to inspire staff productivity, recognize achievement and best capitalize on individual potential.
- 3A. Encourage people to work, live, and stay in the region.**
- Redevelop the website and grow social media presence.
 - Continue partnering with external sources to extend County messaging to a broader audience.
- 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, and link to partners like Community Futures.

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

- Provide links to community resources such as Portage College, Greater North Foundation, etc.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

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

- Link external events and initiatives on the website, and link to partners like Community Futures.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Communications department 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.