Municipality of South Huron "Draft" Communication Plan

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CONTENTS

Introduction

The Municipality of South Huron Communications Plan provides a framework for the organization to enhance its two-way communication, improve stakeholder relationships, and encourage public participation in the municipal process.

The Plan is designed to influence all activities that relate to communications within the organization, and outlines positive and achievable practices that will help the Municipality achieve its organizational goals.

All employees have a role to play to ensure the success of the Plan. By working collaboratively across departments to ensure communication efforts are well-co-ordinated and responsive to the needs of stakeholders, we will achieve a more informed and engaged workforce, community and Council.

This is an evolving strategy for the entire organization. The Plan will help build our communications capacity and allow us to develop trustworthy relationships and effective public policy.

Vision

An aware and involved community and engaged and responsive employees, capable of listening, sharing ideas openly and working collaboratively to shape the future of South Huron.

Mission

To provide a framework to enhance the Municipality of South Huron two-way communications capacity, improve stakeholder relationships, and deliver effective communications programs that help achieve organizational goals.

Guiding Principles

- Provide information that is timely, accurate, clear, accessible and responsive.
- Consider the range of communication tools at our disposal and use those most appropriate to address the needs associated with each circumstance.
- Work collaboratively across the organization to ensure that information is thorough, factual and timely.
- Respect the access to information and privacy rights of citizens and employees.

- Support opportunities for engagement to inform public policy.
- Strive to achieve a culture of two-way communication and "communications excellence" practices

Goals of the Communication Plan

1. To Improve the Quality of Internal Communications

2. To Proactively Identify Issues and Respond to Them in A Timely Manner, Reducing The Likelihood of Escalation

3. To Support and Encourage an Engaged Community That Is Aware of and Participates in The Public Involvement Process, Recognizes Its Role in Addressing Issues and Contributing to Municipal Policy and Solutions

4. To Establish and Build On Mutually Beneficial, Trustworthy Relationships with Stakeholders

Implementation Plan

The implementation plan will provide a map that establishes objectives, strategies and actions within the framework of the four Communication Plan Goals. The following outlines the Implementation Plan:

Goal 1: To Improve the Quality of Internal Communications

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	ACTION
Increase the number of employees who consider themselves well-informed about programs, issues and initiatives	Make information about corporate priorities and initiatives easy to access	Create a source for employees to get important updates on "need to know" information (Council decisions, new policies, etc.). Host quarterly information sessions for employees to keep them informed about MOSH priorities, initiatives, financial position (budget), etc. Record sessions and make them available to employees via streaming or other media.
	Increase employees' knowledge of departmental functions across the organization	Create department pages on web to educate employees on the function of the department and its divisions, and provide relevant resources and additional information/links to program information, etc. Provide an overview of organizational structure and department functions in the new employee orientation program Increase opportunities for employees across the organization to collaborate through cross-departmental projects, initiatives, and teams

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	ACTION
Increase employees' readiness for communication and problem solving across departments	Increase communication skills and enhance the communications capacity of the organization as a whole	Develop background information and key messages for employees for large projects Provide training opportunities and resources for employees to improve communication skills
	Build understanding of the organization's communications function in helping to build better relationships	Better inform employees on the role of Corporate Communications; incorporate more information into new employee orientation program. Implement annual needs-assessment sessions between Corporate Communications and Municipal service areas; develop service level agreements • Nurture leadership's understanding of the communications function

Goal 2: To Proactively Identify Issues and Respond to Them in A Timely Manner, Reducing The Likelihood of Escalation

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	ACTION
Improve the organization's ability to anticipate and respond to issues	With the involvement of the Senior Management Team, develop an issues management protocol to effectively identify, monitor and respond to issues.	Explore the possibility of establishing an issues committee to identify and review the status of issues and the organization's response. Develop tools to be used across the organization (risk analysis template, communications plan template, key message template) Prepare employees to be ready and accessible to respond to inquiries.
	Enhance the issues management capacity of communications staff	Ongoing professional development for communications team Conduct environmental scanning; review on a regular basis to identify emerging issues, top issues, etc.
	Develop a public engagement strategy to guide the public consultation process and create consistency across the organization. Ensure that the process for receiving and responding to feedback from the public is accessible and compliant with the AODA Accessibility Standards	Create more formal/informal opportunities for feedback.

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	ACTION
	Foster a cultural shift whereby employees understand their role in the issues management process	Through training and behavioural change, improve the communications capacity of employees, better equipping them to interact with stakeholders and respond to issues more effectively. Work with employees and Council earlier on to develop key messages; be more proactive

Goal 3: To Support and Encourage an Engaged Community That Is Aware of and Participates in The Public Involvement Process, Recognizes Its Role in Addressing Issues and Contributing to Municipal Policy and Solutions

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	ACTION
Increase participation in public consultation and dialogue	Develop a public engagement strategy to guide the public consultation process and create consistency across the organization. Ensure that the process for receiving and responding to feedback from the public is accessible and compliant with the AODA	Explore best practices in public engagement Train employees to select the best engagement strategies to serve their purpose; train employees on how to facilitate them.
	Increase awareness of existing opportunities for public engagement and dialogue	Better promote opportunities for the public to get involved and provide feedback
	Identify new/alternative opportunities for public engagement that are accessible and convenient to the public.	Take consultation activities to the Community to a place that's convenient for the public. Provide informal opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback (online polls and forums, etc.). Hold Community meetings that provide opportunities for the public to ask questions about Municipal issues
	Leverage southhuron.ca and introduce social media to promote opportunities for input	Develop a social media policy.

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	ACTION
	Increase the public's trust that the Municipality genuinely wants input and will take various points of view into consideration	Create a "How to get involved" section of website that lists public engagement opportunities, how to provide feedback, a summary of feedback received, and how the feedback was used Promote the web page, generating awareness and encouraging future participation
	Establish communication channels with local organizations to reach a multitude of stakeholders in a targeted and cost-efficient approach	Conduct a pilot project with a local organization to establish and test an approach where the organization provides Municipal information to its members on behalf of the Municipality and solicits feedback Have stakeholder groups host public events and opportunities for people to talk to key Municipal staff to learn more about Municipal initiatives and issues

Goal 4: To Establish and Build On Mutually Beneficial, Trustworthy Relationships with Stakeholders

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	ACTION
Improve the quality of the MOSH key stakeholder relationships	Enhance the MOSH media relations strategy. Ensure that MOSH news is covered by local media; increase accurate media coverage of MOSH services and initiatives	Provide more information on critical or complex issues through media briefings, and more face-to-face time with key reporters Consistently identify newsworthy stories and present them in a way that's compelling. Ensure inquiries from the media are given a high priority and responded to as quickly and efficiently as possible
	Develop a public engagement strategy to guide the public consultation process and create consistency across the organization. Ensure that the process for receiving and responding to feedback from the public is accessible and compliant with the AODA Accessibility Standards	Create guidelines and provide training to help employees foster relationships with stakeholders (e.g. conflict resolution, negotiation, effective listening, problem solving and decision making, constructive feedback). Balance the use of traditional consultation methods (e.g. public meetings, surveys) and emerging methods (e.g. online forums) to best suit the situation

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	ACTION
	Develop a social media strategy	Develop social media guidelines and media relations policies
	Establish stronger ties with neighbourhood groups, boards and committees, and coalitions	Work with stakeholder groups to host public events at which MOSH key employees and/or Councillors can address issues.

Explore the possibility of leveraging existing advisory committees (or groups with a similar structure) to help identify key issues, pulse checking, etc.

Ensure that there is a formal reporting mechanism established for Councillors sitting on Committees reporting back to Council via a verbal or written report |
| | Increase communication skills and enhance the communications capacity of the organization as a whole | Better equip our organization's spokespeople

Provide media training

Provide training opportunities and resources for employees to improve their communication skills |
| Increase stakeholders' awareness of MOSH programs and initiatives | Make MOSH information and opportunities for input more accessible | Develop a high level "Get to know MOSH" document which includes core service information. |
| | Participate in Speaking engagements and public outreach | Continue to host public outreach events and open houses |

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	ACTION
	Revamp southuron.ca Whenever possible, build in opportunities for users to provide feedback on issues/services of the day	Work to ensure website is compliant with the AODA accessibility standards Explore centralizing content around easy-to-recognize user themes and customer-focused Content categories Use the most straightforward language as possible
	Continue to support the MOSH Brand	Be consistent with branding internal and external documents and promotional materials. Develop and roll out sign guidelines so that all city signage is consistently designed and branded Develop and implement a rebranding process