

2019-2022

CRD Corporate Communications Plan



Updated Jan. 29, 2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The primary objective of the Cariboo Regional District's corporate communications is to establish the CRD as a two-way communications organization that is informative, proactive, inclusive and transparent by engaging our citizens and stakeholders in meaningful, cost-effective ways when delivering our services.

Looking at the next four years, this plan assesses the Regional District's current communication efforts, provides insight and direction for 2019-2022 and identifies specific goals and tactics to move those efforts forward.

The four main goals for 2019-2022 are:

1. Increase public awareness, knowledge and understanding of Regional District services, projects and initiatives;
2. Increase public satisfaction with how the Regional District makes information available to them;
3. Increase public satisfaction with opportunities the Regional District provides for two-way communication and to participate in decision-making processes; and
4. Increase Regional District key messaging through local media coverage.

Over the course of this plan, the CRD's communications efforts will primarily focus on digital communications while still using traditional communications tools and face-to-face engagement. This blend of tactics will create a well-balanced program that reaches the majority of stakeholders.

Evaluation will be conducted throughout and at the end of the plan to measure whether the CRD has successfully met its goals. By setting a strategic communications direction for 2019-2022 and using tangible measurables to gauge success, the CRD will be able to clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of its communications efforts and see the return on its investment.

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BACKGROUND

The Cariboo Regional District (CRD) spans both municipal and rural boundaries to deliver services to wide areas with common needs. The services offered by the regional district are varied, and include services like fire protection, recreation, library, waste management and utility systems.

The CRD is a regional government that functions independently of the provincial government. It was incorporated in 1968. The CRD consists of 12 electoral areas and four incorporated member municipalities, including Quesnel, Williams Lake, 100 Mile House, and Wells. The Cariboo Regional District presently serves an estimated population of just over 60,000 residents, based on the 2016 population census (Statistics Canada, 2017).

The Communications Department falls within the Administrative Services function and budget and provides communication services to all departments of the Cariboo Regional District.

The Communications Department manages the Regional District's internal and external communications. That includes all media relations activities, corporate events such as Board on the Road meetings, news conferences, managing the CRD's social media channels, website and graphic design standards. The department also plays a key role in issues management, emergency and crisis communications. The Communications team provides graphic design services to all other departments and is responsible for all promotional literature and materials.

VISION

The vision for Cariboo Regional District communications is to continue to make every effort to be informative, inclusive and transparent in our administration and operations. We aim to maintain the positive, open communication we have developed with the public, the media, and our local government partners. We will also seek ways to continually improve our communications performance and share our successes.

To realize this vision, we will:

- Maintain open and honest communications practices;
- Be proactive in engaging our target audiences;
- Preserve and enhance the Cariboo Regional District corporate image and identity;
- Be consistent in our communications policy and procedures;
- Foster a positive, open work environment and internal communications;
- Inspire staff ownership of communication ideas, projects and practices; and
- Work co-operatively and effectively with internal and external partners.

The CRD's operating principles for communication are detailed in the appendix.

PURPOSE

With this vision in mind, this communication plan is intended to assess the Cariboo Regional District's current communication efforts, provide high-level direction for the next four years and identify specific tactics to achieve communication goals. For consistency and alignment with the CRD's strategic planning exercises, this plan will follow the election cycle (2019-2022).

The main objective is to communicate well with CRD residents. While other audiences are noted in the plan, residents are the main stakeholder of the Regional District. Since the main focus is on external communications, a separate internal communications plan may be desired or could be integrated with this plan in future. The CRD also has a separate crisis communications plan which coincides with this plan.

The plan is intended to be a living document. While the objective and goals of this plan are designed to be reasonably static, the tactics will be updated and reviewed throughout the implementation of the plan as required. The plan will also be comprehensively reviewed at the end of 2022 and updated at that time.

Additionally, this plan focuses on Corporate Communications as an individual administrative department; however, many procedures, policies and activities will extend to other services of the CRD throughout the life of the Plan.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

PREVIOUS COMMUNICATION EFFORTS

CRD communications efforts typically involve a variety of tactics with an effort towards two-way communication, meaning we both share information and gather information (feedback) from the public.

Our communication tactics include a mix of digital and traditional tools such as news releases, media relations, mailed flyers, newsletters, emails, posters, public meetings or events, website and social media including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. To gather feedback from the public we usually use surveys, public meetings or events, and social media interactions.

The way the CRD communicates with residents has evolved over the last two decades with the growth of digital communications and declining participation in public events. Some changes of note in the last few years have been:

- Holding fewer public meetings due to high costs and low turnout at events;
- No longer producing an annual report due to low viewership;
- Seeing significant growth in our social media followings and continuously improving our social media tactics as the platforms change;
- Using an email management program and seeing increasing growth in subscriptions; and
- Incorporating public engagement best practices throughout our communications and engagement campaigns.

A detailed summary of recent changes in CRD communications efforts can be found in the appendix.

RESEARCH

The CRD has gathered research and data through several different forums, including former Town Hall Meetings, the current Multi-Agency Forum meetings, and recent communications and public engagement campaigns. The 2017 post-wildfire consultation meetings and survey, plus the follow-up 2018 wildfire survey, also have provided valuable insight into regular and emergency communications.

The research data and comparisons are included in the appendix. Research related to the context of communication in the Cariboo, including First Nations communications, historical background and data on immigration and language trends, is also available in the appendix.

Some of the relevant information gathered from the research follows.

- Significant numbers of rural residents are using the internet or social media to seek out the information they require, both for regular CRD business and emergency information.
- Specifically, CRD Facebook pages and emails are growing sources of information for residents.
- Twitter is not a significant information source for residents in the Cariboo; the majority of CRD followers on Twitter are media outlets, government departments or organizations.
- Residents continue to receive information from radio and newspaper sources.
- A large majority of CRD residents do have access to internet; yet, there are many CRD residents without access to reliable internet.
- Many Regional District residents do not have cell phone service.
- Consumption of mailed flyers is decreasing; yet, we hear anecdotally that this is the only way some residents hear about CRD information.
- There is declining attendance at events; although, residents say they value face-to-face engagement with the CRD.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previously established relationship with media and key community contacts. • CRD Departments have gained a better understanding of how communications can work with their department. • Increased public profile following the 2017 wildfires, where the CRD established itself as a reliable source of information. • Current CRD communication tools and efforts are seeing success and growth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited staff capacity and increasing communications demands from many CRD departments. • Public perception of lack of change or slow change following 2017 wildfires. • Local government decisions/topics can be challenging to communicate simply and are not always engaging. • The Communications department is currently not able to provide much support to some CRD services, such as CRD libraries and volunteer fire departments. • The CRD website is hard to navigate for staff and the public. • Lack of face-to-face engagement with the public can lead to abstraction (Sinek, 2014, p. 96).
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on positive relationships with local media. • Increased availability of high speed and satellite internet connectivity throughout the region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident apathy towards local government. • Low attendance at public meetings or events. • Access to high-speed internet is limited for some residents. • Limited cellular coverage throughout the region.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing number of followers on digital platforms, particularly Facebook. • New CRD Board in 2019, with new perspectives and ideas. • New residents are moving to the Cariboo. • Public trust levels in Canadian government institutions are seeing slight improvements (Edelman, 2018, p. 9). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic challenges in the region following the pine beetle infestation and wildfires. • The general population in Canada still has low trust in government institutions (Edelman, 2018, p. 9). • The public has high expectations for instantaneous communication, transparency and public engagement. • Increased Emergency Operations Centre activations take up communications resources. |
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ANALYSIS

Considering the CRD's previous communications successes, research and environmental scan, it makes sense for the CRD's communications efforts to primarily focus on digital communications while still maintaining traditional communications vehicles and face-to-face engagement for a well-balanced program to reach the majority of stakeholders.

As digital interactions increase, it is important to continue to find opportunities for face-to-face interaction with residents. Firstly, because residents value those opportunities and, secondly, because they will help us serve residents better. As Simon Sinek (2014, p. 96) explains in his book, *Leaders Eat Last*, "...the human beings...become so far removed from the people who mean to serve them that they simply become just another metric to be managed." He goes on to say "...the physical separation between us and those on the receiving end of our decisions can have a dramatic impact on lives... The more abstract people become, the more capable we are of doing them harm" (2014, p. 101).

With low turnout at events, though, creativity should be utilized to find ways to engage the public in a cost-effective manner that balances face-to-face and digital engagement, remembering the value in face-to-face engagement goes beyond return on investment numbers.

Media relations also continues to be important, as many residents get information from the newspaper and radio.

Through all communication efforts, the Communications Department needs to continue to focus on building relationships – with media, the public and local government partners. Relationship building, pro-active communications and transparency around change and decision-making will help build and maintain public trust in the CRD.

OBJECTIVE AND GOALS

OBJECTIVE

To establish the Cariboo Regional District as a two-way communications organization that is informative, proactive, inclusive and transparent by engaging our citizens and stakeholders in meaningful, cost-effective ways when delivering our services.

GOALS

The following goals will serve to meet our overarching communications objective. The tools used to evaluate these goals and the indicators of success are described in the Measurement and Evaluation section of this plan.

1. *Increase public awareness, knowledge and understanding of Regional District services, projects and initiatives by 2022.*
2. *Increase public satisfaction with how the Regional District makes information available to them by 2022.*
3. *Increase public satisfaction with opportunities the Regional District provides for two-way communication and to participate in decision-making processes by 2022.*
4. *Increase Regional District key messaging through local media coverage.*

TARGET AUDIENCES

PRIMARY

Primary target audiences are those who need to know in order for us to achieve our goals and objectives.

Residents	Remote Rural Urban
Media	Local media Provincial media National media
CRD Board of Directors	
CRD Staff	C-Suite (CAO, DCAO, CFO) Management Office-based staff Field-based staff
CRD Volunteers	CRD Volunteer Fire Departments Central Cariboo Search and Rescue CRD Commissions & Committees

SECONDARY

Our secondary target audiences are those who like to know but are not directly linked to our objectives and goals. These audiences can also be viewed as influencers who can help with the objectives by influencing our primary audiences.

Visitors	
Municipal Councils and Staff	City of Williams Lake City of Quesnel District of 100 Mile House District of Wells

First Nations Band Councils and Staff	
Regional Elected Officials	MLA Cariboo-Chilcotin MLA Cariboo North MP Cariboo-Prince George
Partner Agencies	Provincial ministries (senior government officials) Funding partners Health Authorities Rural Division of Family Practice
Business & Tourism Groups	Chambers of Commerce Downtown Business Associations Tourism Centres Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association
First Responders	RCMP Municipal Fire Departments Independent Volunteer Fire Departments First Nations Fire Departments Search and Rescue Departments BC Ambulance Service
Others	Community groups Religious organizations Legions Sport organizations

COMMUNICATION WITH REMOTE, RURAL AND URBAN COMMUNITIES

Above all, the primary audience for the Regional District is the residents of the Cariboo, who can be categorized into remote, rural and urban. Not all communication tactics are applicable to all residents, which is why they have been specifically broken down in the table below. It is important to keep these factors in mind when targeting different resident audiences. It is also important to recognize most residents live in the Cariboo year-round; but, there is a significant number of seasonal residents as well, particularly in the South Cariboo.

Remote

The CRD's remote communities are by far the most challenging to communicate with. These residents can be found in the Chilcotin region (including Nazko area), Quesnel Lake region, as well as others. Remote residents may not have telephone, will only have limited satellite internet access, and have no access to broadcast radio or cellular networks. They may rarely come out to populated areas, sometimes being weeks or months between visits. Many of these people live off-the-grid and do so for a reason. They often have little trust in government, due to historic reasons and lack of regular information which is spread using modern communication methods.

Rural

Residents in these areas generally are in more populated areas, and will often have access to telephone, but will have limited or no access to radio, cellular and internet networks. These residents will have neighbours within a few kilometres and will either visit or work in nearby populated areas. Most of the CRD outside

remote areas is considered rural. Residents living outside municipalities, in unincorporated towns and small communities are in this category, including Wells.

Urban

Residents of Quesnel, Williams Lake, and 100 Mile House are in this category. They have easy access to all modern communication tools, and regularly access them. While they live together with other populations, some residents live very reclusive lives, or are disconnected from society (vulnerable populations).

Residents	Primary Communication Tactics	Secondary Communication Tactics
Remote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Printed information (mailed flyers, newsletters, direct mail, brochures) Posters Face-to-face engagement 	
Rural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website Email Social media posts Radio Emergency notification system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Printed information (mailed flyers, newsletters, direct mail, brochures) Posters Face-to-face engagement
Urban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website Email Social media posts Radio Newspaper Emergency notification system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal printed information (mailed flyers, newsletters, brochures) Face-to-face engagement

KEY MESSAGES

- Incorporated in 1968, the Cariboo Regional District is a regional government serving about 60,000 residents over 12 electoral areas and four incorporated member municipalities, including Quesnel, Williams Lake, 100 Mile House, and Wells.
- A jewel in the heart of British Columbia, the Cariboo Regional District is a great place to visit or call home. You'll find breathtaking landscapes, a wealth of recreational opportunities and a vibrant economy.
- The Cariboo Regional District currently provides more than 100 local government services to taxpayers including fire protection, land-use planning, solid waste management, and invasive plant management as well as libraries and recreation facilities.
- Creating new partnerships, enhancing services, undertaking capital projects, informing the public and responding to residents' needs is what building the region is all about. It is important to us that we are informative, proactive, inclusive and transparent as we engage with you and deliver services.

- With a goal of *Building Communities Together*, we value your participation and feedback in our decision-making processes. We are committed to engaging with you in meaningful, cost-effective ways and remaining responsive to your needs.

TACTICS

The following are the tactics the CRD will use to meet the outlined objective and goals in 2019-2022, along with some of the strategies to be developed in that timeframe.

Tactic	Strategies	Timeline	Audience(s)	Link to Goals
Email Updates	Continue to grow subscribers to our email updates and provide relevant content, including news releases, Board Highlights and emergency information.	Ongoing	All (except remote residents)	1, 2
Media Relations	Maintain positive media relations by being available for interviews and returning all media calls within one hour.	Ongoing	Media	1, 2, 4
	Make effective use of corporate advertising to support earned media coverage.	Ongoing	Media Urban & Rural Residents	
	Provide communications and media relations training for elected officials and CRD spokespersons.	Professional training in 2019. Follow up training in 2020, 2021, 2022.	Board Management Some staff Some volunteers	
	Develop a media policy for the CRD and move towards a decentralized model.	2019	Board All staff Volunteers Media	
Website	Conduct website improvements and redesign.	2019-2020	All (except remote residents)	1, 2
Advertising	Continue to use paid print, radio and social media advertising as appropriate.	Ongoing	All (except remote residents)	1, 2
Social Media	Continue to grow our audiences on our Facebook, Twitter and YouTube channels and provide relevant content.	Ongoing	All (except remote residents)	1, 2, 3
Print & Electronic Publications	Produce and distribute two CRD UpFront newsletters annually in June	Ongoing	All residents	1, 2

	and December.			
	Utilize direct mail, unaddressed mail and posters as appropriate.	Ongoing	All residents	
Face-to-Face Engagement	Continue to hold three Multi-Agency forums a year in the North, Central and South Cariboo with rotating location. Explore ways to make this event relevant and increase attendance.	Ongoing	All residents	1, 2, 3
	Continue to host two Board on the Road events twice a year (once in an election year). Explore ways to increase public participation and Board engagement with the host community.	Ongoing	All residents Board	
	Continue to utilize engagement events as appropriate for specific communication plans or engagement campaigns (community group presentations, open houses, tours, etc.). Explore ideas for different events or forums to engage with residents to increase attendance and/or participation.	Ongoing	All residents	
	Develop a public engagement policy and increase staff and Board training around best practices for public engagement.	Develop policy in 2019 and host initial training in 2019 or 2020. Ongoing training in subsequent years.	All staff Board	
Corporate Branding	Standardize presentation and increase the use of the Cariboo Regional District name and logo on corporate assets and publications.	Ongoing	All	1
	Develop promotional items and projects to expand corporate image recognition.	Ongoing	All	
Emergency Communications	The CRD's crisis communications plan outlines crisis levels and the appropriate communication tactics based on those levels.	Ongoing	All	1, 2, 3, 4

RESOURCES & BUDGET

The CRD Communications Department currently includes the Manager of Communications and a part-time Communications Assistant (20 hours per week). The above listed goals and tactics are barely manageable with current staff resources, and communication demands on the CRD are increasing. Additional resources are required as the workload is intensifying with increased Emergency Operations Centre activations, emergency communication demands, referendums, projects, and public engagement requirements. The Department is currently advocating for increased resourcing and this goal is included in the 2019 business plan, which the Board will review in December 2018.

The budget for 2019-2022 averages around \$115,000, not including staff wages. The 2021 and 2022 budgets will be adjusted based on the evaluation of the program following 2019 and 2020. See the appendix for a detailed breakdown of the five-year financial plan for the Communications Department.

MEASUREMENT & EVALUATION

MEASUREMENT TOOLS

The communication goals outlined will be measured through a variety of tools, including:

- Public surveys – In 2020 and 2022, public surveys will be conducted through a paid public phone survey (approximately \$10,000 each), paper surveys will be given out at all events and a corresponding online survey will be made available.
- Media monitoring, including tracking for key message inclusion – This will be ongoing. The costs are included in our Meltwater subscription costs.
- Social media analytics – This will be ongoing. There are no costs.
- Website analytics – This will be ongoing. Google Analytics will be used, which is free.
- Email program analytics – This will be ongoing. The costs are included in our MailChimp subscription costs.
- Attendance/participation tracking – This will be ongoing. There are no costs.

Total Cost = \$20,000

EVALUATION

This plan's success will be evaluated by the success indicators below. If we meet them by the end of 2022, we will know our goals have been achieved.

Goal	Measurement Tool & Timeline	Success Indicator
<i>Increase public awareness, knowledge and understanding of Regional District services, projects and initiatives by 2022.</i>	Website Analytics	Increase public traffic to the Cariboo Regional District website by 10% each year from 2019 to 2022.
	Social Media Analytics	Increase social media followers (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) by 10% each year from

		2019 to 2022.
	Email Program Analytics	Increase email subscriptions by 10% each year from 2019 to 2022.
	Survey	60% of survey respondents are aware of Regional District projects, services and initiatives by 2020 and 70% are aware by 2022.
<i>Increase public satisfaction with how the Regional District makes information available to them by 2022.</i>	Survey	When asked about their satisfaction with the CRD website, survey respondents indicate satisfaction levels of 3.8 by 2020 and 4.0 by 2022, on a 5-point scale.
		When asked about ways the CRD makes information available, 60% of survey respondents can identify at least two avenues to obtain information from the Regional District by 2020 and 70% by 2022.
		When asked about their satisfaction with CRD communications, survey respondents rate CRD communications with an average of 3.8 by 2020 and 4.0 by 2022, on a 5-point scale.
<i>Increase public satisfaction with opportunities the Regional District provides for two-way communication and to participate in decision-making processes by 2022.</i>	Attendance and/or participation tracking	Increase attendance and/or participation in Regional District events or engagement activities by 10% each year from 2019 to 2022.
	Survey	When asked about ways to engage with the Regional District, 60% of survey respondents can identify at least two avenues to provide input to the Regional District by 2020 and 70% by 2022.
		When asked about the CRD's efforts in two-way communication and public participation, survey respondents rate the CRD with an average of 3.8 by 2020 and 4.0 by 2022, on a 5-point scale.
<i>Increase Regional District key messaging through local media coverage.</i>	Media monitoring	70% of stories written about Regional District projects, services and initiatives contain corporate key messaging by 2020 and 80% by 2022.

REFERENCES

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Note: Ideas for the objective and goals outlined were inspired by the Saugeen Shores Corporate Communications Strategy and the Regional District of Fraser Fort George's Communications Plan.