



building communities together

2023 Business Plan Communications (1011)

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Working in partnership with communities large and small to offer local, sub-regional, and regional services to ensure that the Cariboo Chilcotin is a socially, economically, and environmentally desirable region.

Department/Function Services

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. Communications is also responsible for 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 communications and crisis communications. The Communications team provides graphic design services to all other departments and is responsible for all promotional literature and materials.

Administrative Services is a mandated service under the *Local Government Act* and as such, has no taxation limits attached. Each Electoral Area, the City of Quesnel, the City of Williams Lake, the District of 100 Mile House, and the District of Wells all participate on the basis of assessed value of land and improvements.

All members of the Board are responsible for the governance of this service.

Business Plan Goals, Rationale & Strategies - 2022 Goals

- 1. Goal:** Review and revise, as necessary, the 2019-2022 Communications Plan.

Rationale: This goal was identified in the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan. The 2019-2022 Corporate Communications Plan was developed and endorsed by the Board in February 2019, and has since expired. The plan includes a variety of measurables to assess whether the CRD is meeting its communication objectives.

Strategy: In consultation with CRD Departments and using public feedback on the CRD's current communication practices, update the 2019-2022 Corporate Communications Plan to reflect the CRD's new strategic planning objectives and appropriate performance measures for the 2023-2026 planning period.
- 2. Goal:** Develop a community engagement strategy and build staff capacity to conduct effective public engagement exercises.

Rationale: This goal was carried forward from the 2019 business plan and identified in the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan. Developing a strategy with written standards ensures public engagement is done with purpose and consistent with best practice. The strategy must include communication tools that front-load information to the public, where the decision is explained, and questions and concerns are anticipated.

Strategy: Through FY 2023 through FY 2025, use of external resources, seek out public input on current communication and engagement methods, consolidate feedback and best practices into a strategy, and deploy with policy and procedure development, training and implementation. Alongside this, complete training of Communications personnel in IAP2 engagement standards and methods.
- 3. Goal:** Research and identify a system for tracking public complaints/inquiries to the CRD. Aim for implementation in 2024.

Rationale: Some of the measurables in the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan include evaluating the number of complaints/inquiries received by the CRD. Currently, the CRD does not have a system for tracking positive and negative feedback.

Strategy: To be achieved in cooperation with IT, Corporate Administration, and Management. Review comparator local governments systems for tracking complaints, inquiries and feedback. Identify current complaint tracking methods and issues, along with current results of complaints management.
- 4. Goal:** Build communications channels and relationships with indigenous nations and organizations within the region.

Rationale: This goal is in support of the Board's strategic objective to develop relationships and collaborative partnerships with indigenous governments. Province-wide implementation of UNDRIP principles and requirements will require a higher level of engagement with Indigenous Nations.

Strategy: Utilize existing networks and channels alongside relationship building opportunities (ex. Board on the Road) to develop introduction pathways and utilize these pathways to build capacity and knowledge within the organization.

Overall Financial Implications

Aside from the Engagement Strategy, most deliverables of the business plan are intended to be utilized using existing human resources. This is in line with the intent and purpose of the Communications Department, which adds in-house capabilities for marketing, communications, and public/media relations.

Base increases are also expected within the base operating budget for the Communications Department. A significant increase is included for website hosting and maintenance, due to current contracts expiring. At this time, the estimate is based on a presumed price, and is subject to further negotiation with the provider.

The reintroduction of Director Meet and Greet, an additional Board on the Road meeting, and Interagency is the major driver of increased costs, representing 5.3% of the total departmental increase. Costs continue to rise to produce the Upfront Newsletter. The budget accounts for \$12,000 per edition for printing and postage.

In terms of initiatives, the Engagement Strategy will require additional financing, due to the time requirement to develop the base strategy and support organizational training and deployment. The Class B estimate for this full scope is \$30,000 (+/- 15%). This is based on \$10,000 for background research and public input into the strategy, \$10,000 for development of the strategy, and \$10,000 for organization wide training.

To finance this, the business plan proposes funding this project over three years, which also allows time for adequate public input and engagement, program development, and deployment. An alternative would be to front load the public input and strategy development into 2023 (\$20,000) and deploy in 2024 (\$10,000).

Significant Issues & Trends

- The Communications Department has seen significant internal turnover; as a small department, this results in a systems shock and reduces overall productivity over the initial startup period.
- Social media tools utilized in the past will need to be evaluated moving forward as the social media landscape continues to evolve. The CRD will need to consider its desires to expand into new platforms and reconsider existing platforms or accept a status quo approach. This is to be explored in the Communications Plan Review.
- Significant communications issues are expected beyond EOC Operations, which will require significant investment of staff time. Referenda, major initiatives and projects, and ongoing activities will continue to require staff time.
- A stronger commitment to engagement with Indigenous nations and organizations will require further time commitment on the part of the Department. This time commitment and resourcing will be reviewed over the course of the next fiscal year.

Measuring Previous Years' Success

1. **Goal:** Develop policy and procedures for updating the website.
Status: "Completed" – this item will shift into a process of continuous improvement. A detailed and thorough departmental manual exists, and while there will always be room for improvement it addresses the core functions for communications needs regarding the website.
2. **Goal:** Create a communications plan explaining CRD functions and operations.
Status: Completed in 2019. This item is being revisited in the 2023 Business Plan to support ongoing review and continuous improvement processes.
3. **Goal:** Develop a community engagement/consultation strategy and build staff capacity to conduct effective public engagement processes.
Status: Not started. This is being carried forward into 2023.
4. **Goal:** Align department filing with new corporate records management system.
Status: In-Progress. Continued training and process compliance is required; however, this item is being removed from the 2023 Business Plan due to the initiative requiring operations and maintenance as opposed to specific commitment.
5. **Goal:** Develop and implement a system for tracking public complaints/inquiries to the CRD.
Status: Not Started. This item is being carried forward into the 2023 Business Plan.
6. **Goal:** Develop and implement video updates for emergency operations updates and general CRD news.
Status: Not started. This has been removed from the 2023 Business Plan and further consideration should be given during the Communications Plan Review and development of the Engagement Strategy.
7. **Goal:** Build communications channels with local indigenous organizations
Status: In-progress, subject to exceptions. A register of key contacts has been developed internally, and organizationally varying levels of engagement and relationships exist. However, there is an opportunity to centralize this as a departmental function alongside the development of organizational resiliency as such this has been carried forward into the 2023 Business Plan.
8. **Goal:** Develop and implement an annual presentation to high school classes regarding the CRD and local government careers.
Status: Completed. This item has been removed as an objective and be focused on maintenance and operation as opposed to development.

9. **Goal:** Continue the CRD's formal, structured branding exercise.
Status: Not started. See objective 2022, goal 12 for further rationale.
10. **Goal:** Finalize the community engagement/consultation strategy and build staff capacity to conduct effective public engagement processes.
Status: Not started. This is being carried forward into the 2023 Business Plan.
11. **Goal:** Evaluate the effectiveness of the 2019-2022 Corporate Communications Plan.
Status: Not started. This is being carried forward into the 2023 Business Plan.
12. **Goal:** Undertake a formal, structured branding exercise.
Status: Not started. This has been removed from the 2023 Business Plan as the goals, purpose, and objectives of this branding exercise are not internally understood nor documented. There is also a need to maintain current stocks of branded material, which creates deferred financial implications.

Conclusion

The Communications Department has seen significant personnel changes in the previous year and is regularly involved in Emergency Management activities. Pending a reevaluation of the Board's strategic priorities and objectives, it is recommended that the Department focus on core business planning needs. Past objectives which have seen little progress should be sidelined pending further evaluation and alignment with the Board's strategic priorities moving forward.