

# CRD Corporate Communications Strategy

2023-2027

Updated November 2, 2023

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Cariboo Regional District is proud to be present on the traditional territories of the Secwepemc, Dakelh, and T̓silhqot'in indigenous peoples. Through recognition of our shared past, diverse perspectives, and the intrinsic value of preserving traditional knowledge for future generations, our shared prospects will be prosperous.

We are committed to doing our part to implement the 94 Calls to Action made by Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and support the principles of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act as a pathway forward in reconciliation.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cariboo Regional District's corporate communications objective is to build and maintain the public's trust in our organization. We will do this by establishing 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.

Over the course of this plan, the CRD's communications efforts will primarily focus on digital communications while incorporating greater levels of non-digital communications tools and in-person engagement. This blend of tactics will create a well-balanced program that reaches most citizens and interested parties.

Emergency and crisis communications will continue to be guided by the Crisis Communications Plan, and is not explored further within this strategy.

During the next four years, the Regional District will build on previous communications efforts and seek to enhance its profile within the region. We will do this by:

1. Promoting public awareness, knowledge and understanding of Regional District services, projects and initiatives;
2. Make information available to residents, rights and title holders, and interested parties through multiple channels at their convenience;
3. Embrace Public Participation / Engagement as a core business practice, and provide opportunities for residents, rights and title holders, and interested parties to participate in decision making processes;
4. Enhance opportunities for reconciliation with Indigenous nations and governments; and
5. Increase Regional District key messaging through local media coverage.

Evaluation will be conducted over the next four years to assess our success in achieving these goals. By setting a strategic communications direction for 2023-2027 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 jurisdictional boundaries of the Cariboo Regional District (CRD) lie on the traditional territories of the Secwepemc, Dakelh, and T̓silhqot'ín indigenous peoples, and spans both municipal and rural boundaries to deliver services to wide areas with common needs.

Incorporated in 1968, the CRD is a regional government that delivers services under provincial legislation, including the *Local Government Act*, and consists of 12 electoral areas and four incorporated member municipalities (Quesnel, Williams Lake, 100 Mile House, and Wells). The CRD presently serves a population of over 62,000 residents living across over 80,000 square kilometers of land ([Statistics Canada, 2022](#)). Our services include land use planning, emergency management, fire protection, recreation, libraries, regional waste management, and utility systems.

The Communications Department falls within the Administrative Services function, and provides communication services to all departments of the CRD. Its primary purposes and functions include:

- Crisis, emergency, and issues-based communications;
- Corporate Identity Standards and graphic design;
- External communications with the public;
- Media Relations, media releases, and news conferences;
- Corporate events such as Board on the Road Meetings;
- Marketing and promotional programs;
- Digital communications platforms, including the website and social media.

## VISION

Our vision for the CRD's 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.

## PURPOSE

With this vision in mind, this communication plan will guide the Cariboo Regional District's communication and engagement 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 be reviewed again in 2027, following the next general local election.

Our primary objective is to communicate well with CRD residents. While other audiences are noted in the plan, residents are the main interested party of the Regional District as they are the most impacted by our policy and service decisions. 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.

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.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our communications with citizens, rights and title holders, and interested parties are guided by these overarching principles:

### ***Duty to Inform***

We have a responsibility to inform citizens and interested parties about our programs, services, and operations, and to respond to inquiries on matters of public interest.

### ***Collective Responsibility***

Communications are essential to successfully delivering our programs, services, and operations, and as such is a shared responsibility between all CRD departments and staff.

### ***Public Participation / Engagement***

Public participation / engagement is essential to creating inclusive, transparent government. People expect to be involved in determining their future and to participate in decisions made on their behalf.

### ***Open Two-Way Communication***

Having conversations with citizens and interested parties about information we are providing along with active listening is essential to how we communicate.

### ***Uniform Visual Identity***

Our corporate image and branding will be consistently present, both visually and audibly, ensuring that our communications are quickly and easily recognized.

### ***Consistency***

The communication strategy will reinforce and reflect the CRD's goals and objectives, thus underscoring the idea of an organization with one common purpose: the residents.

***Freedom of Information***

Citizens have a right to information about the activities and decisions made by their government, subject to explicit exceptions to protect privacy or as specified by law.

***Accessibility***

Our communications must be universally accessible. We will use plain language in our communications and use other tactics to ensure information is readily accessible.

***Value for Money***

The taxpayer has the right to cost-effective communications. We will utilize a variety of approaches at appropriate prices to communicate with our citizens and interested parties.

## SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

CRD communications typically involve a variety of tactics to promote 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 due to public health restrictions implemented during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020 – April 2022).
- Seeing significant growth in our social media followings and continuously improving our social media tactics as the platforms change.
- Developing a new website with an integrated email subscription feature, allowing for consistent web and email messaging.
- Incorporating public engagement practices into our communications and engagement campaigns.

The CRD has seen success in utilizing a digital-first corporate communications strategy, and the results achieved over the previous four years suggest that this approach be maintained. Funding and staffing limitations are the main factor informing this approach. However, non-digital communications tactics will remain important to maintaining public interest and trust in the CRD.

Traditional communications tactics remain highly relevant in an evolving and fragmenting social media landscape. Direct mailers, physical signage, print and radio advertising, and media relations continues to form a core part of the regional district's communications strategy. Expanding these tactics, particularly the use of direct mailers, will improve our communications with residents, and will remain important to reach most citizens and interested parties.

## AUDIENCE DEMOGRAPHICS

Key performance indicators of the CRD's communications programs include the following sources:

- Public meeting attendance;
- Engagement participation rates;
- Feedback survey results and participation;
- Social Media & email newsletter subscribers;
- Media Interviews and key messaging;
- Website visits and pageviews; and
- Emergency notification system subscribers.

The following table represents the results achieved under the prior Communications Plan, effective from 2019 to 2022 and utilizing 2018 as a baseline year:

Source	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Average (n)	Growth (+/-)	Growth (%)
CRD Facebook Followers	2,783	3,310	3,313	4,200	4,200	3,561	1,417	51%
EOC Facebook Followers	23,114	23,045	22,798	21,000	21,000	22,191	-2,114	-9%
Twitter Followers	2,557	2,563	2,571	3,165	3,165	2,804	608	24%
YouTube Subscribers	300	307	322	367	367	333	67	22%
Email Subscribers	1,909	2,274	3,237	2,769	2,769	2,592	860	45%
Media Interviews	122	143	77	29	44	83	-78	-64%
Media Key Messaging Rate	80%	85%	82%	90%	82%	84%	2%	2%
Emergency Notification System Subscribers	14,594	15,699	16,231	20,521	20,521	17,513	5,927	41%
Website Visits (Sessions)	220,799	127,120	125,092	423,285	423,285	263,916	202,486	92%
Website Pageviews	475,344	267,375	283,263	996,838	996,838	603,932	521,494	110%

Overall, the CRD saw significant growth in its digital engagement, particularly for channels connected to the website. Additionally, key messages remained consistently prevalent in media publications, while overall media inquiries saw a significant decline.

During this time period, no quantitative research was completed to assess the effectiveness of the Corporate Communications plan. Research conducted prior to 2019 was done on a per-event basis without any single source of feedback. The results of that research are reported in the 2019-2022 Communications Plan.

## ANALYSIS

The statistical information combined with qualitative analysis indicate that the CRD is maintaining its success in focusing on digital communications, and demand for such methods are increasing. As digital interactions increase, it is important to continue to find opportunities for face-to-face interaction with residents. 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 news organizations. Prominent news outlets in the Cariboo include Black Press, Vista Radio, CBC, and various TV based news stations continue to cover events in the Cariboo and interact with the CRD at varying degrees. 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

We will achieve this objective through the following goals:

1. *Increase public awareness of Regional District programs, projects, and initiatives by 2027.*
2. *Expand the use of non-digital media as a form of communication with Regional District citizens.*
3. *Increase public satisfaction with how the Regional District makes information available 2027.*
4. *Increase public satisfaction with how the Regional District's public engagement practices by 2027.*
5. *Maintain current levels of Regional District key messaging in local media coverage (80% or greater).*

### SPECIFIC ACTIONS

In support of the goals and objectives of this strategy, specific actions to be taken over the next four years include:

- Conduct evaluations of our communications efforts in 2024 and 2026, and evaluate existing and potential communications methods.
- Expand use of non-digital advertising, including a regular feature in newspapers, community newsletters, and radio stations.
- Explore opportunities to use more frequent video communications featuring CRD Directors and staff on regular and special topics of interest.
- Develop a marketing and events plan to guide the regional district's marketing activities, including attendance at community events, trade shows, and information fairs.
- Define and implement the role that Instagram, LinkedIn, Youtube, and other existing and emerging social media platforms will play in our corporate communications tactics and plans.



## TARGET AUDIENCES

### PRIMARY AUDIENCES

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

<b>Audience</b>	<b>Audience Subset</b>
Residents	Remote Rural Urban
Media	Local media Provincial media National media
CRD Staff	Board of Directors CRD Managers CRD Staff
CRD Volunteers	CRD Volunteer Fire Departments Central Cariboo Search and Rescue CRD Commissions & Committees
Municipal Councils and Staff	City of Williams Lake City of Quesnel District of 100 Mile House District of Wells
First Nations Councils and Staff	15 Elected Council Tsilhqot'in National Government Northern Secwepemc te Quelew Southern Dakelh Nation Alliance

### SECONDARY AUDIENCES

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.

Business & Tourism Groups	Visitors/Tourists Investors & Businesses Chambers of Commerce Downtown Business Associations Tourism Centres Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association
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
First Responders	RCMP Municipal & Independent Fire Departments First Nations Fire Departments

	Search and Rescue Societies BC Emergency Health Services BC Wildfire Service
Community Based Organizations	Community groups & associations Sport & recreation 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, particularly in the South Cariboo.

Communications tactics for Remote, Rural, and Urban residents will require different approaches to ensure communications remain effective. Primarily, this means more print communications for residents in remote areas due to the limited availability of internet. Overtime, this may change as high-speed satellite internet service providers become more established.

**RESOURCES & BUDGET**

The Communications Department’s 2023 budget provides funding for 2.6 full-time equivalent positions, or 2,680 hours per year. The above listed goals and tactics are barely manageable with current staff resources, and communication and engagement demands on the CRD are increasing. Additional resources are required as the workload is intensifying with increased Emergency Operations Centre activations, emergency communication demands, and a higher demand for reputation management and public information campaigns in support of referendums, projects, and public engagement requirements.

Future operating budgets may need increased resources in order to achieve the CRD’s communications goals and effectively manage crisis communications needs.

## TACTICS

The following are the tactics the CRD will use to meet the outlined objective and goals in 2023-2027, along with some of the strategies to be developed in that timeframe. New tactics may be introduced as available platforms continue to evolve and the needs of regional residents change.

Tactic	Type	Primary Use	Strategies	Audience(s)
<b><i>E-Newsletter Updates</i></b>	Digital	Distribute CRD generated content published through our website. Current e-newsletters include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board Highlights</li> <li>• Career Opportunities</li> <li>• EOC Alerts &amp; Orders</li> <li>• Events Calendar</li> <li>• Grant Funding Newsletter</li> <li>• News Releases</li> <li>• Public Hearings &amp; Notices</li> <li>• Solid Waste Service Updates</li> <li>• Utility Service Updates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grow subscribers to e-newsletters</li> <li>• Provide relevant content, including news releases, Board Highlights, service news letters, and emergency alerts and orders.</li> <li>• Increase frequency of publications as appropriate.</li> </ul>	<b>All</b>
<b><i>Media Relations</i></b>	Multimedia	Journalists support our public communications efforts by writing stories information about CRD initiatives and events through media outlets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain positive media relations by being available for interviews and returning all media calls within one hour.</li> </ul>	<b>Media</b>
<b><i>Website</i></b>	Digital	Provide a platform to make summary and detailed information about CRD programs, services, and initiatives available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain existing website and continuously improve accessibility and content available.</li> </ul>	<b>All</b>
<b><i>Advertising</i></b>	Multimedia	Pay for space in print, radio, video, and digital media publications / platforms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to use paid print, radio, and social media advertising as appropriate.</li> </ul>	<b>All</b>
<b><i>Facebook</i></b>	Digital	Used for general communications needs, including voter/resident engagement, news releases, Board information, and CRD programs and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to grow our audiences on our Facebook pages and increase engagements on our posts</li> </ul>	<b>All</b>

Tactic	Type	Primary Use	Strategies	Audience(s)
<b>Twitter / X</b>	Digital	Used to communicate emergency alerts and orders, news releases, and other “headline” news.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to grow our followers on our Twitter / X feed and increase engagements on our posts</li> </ul>	<b>All</b>
<b>Instagram</b>	Digital	Used to communicate our CRD news, public engagement initiatives, and information about tourism, economic development, and recreation programs and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to grow our audience on our Instagram feed and increase engagements on our posts</li> </ul>	<b>All</b>
<b>LinkedIn</b>	Digital	Platform for promoting corporate initiatives, profile, and identity, while also	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to grow our audience on our LinkedIn feed and increase engagements on our posts</li> </ul>	<b>All</b>
<b>Pinterest</b>	Digital	Currently not used – use to be explored to promote public engagement, tourism, recreation, and economic development programs and initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore use of Pinterest in our corporate communications plans and evaluate as a viable tactic</li> </ul>	<b>All</b>
<b>YouTube</b>	Digital	Serves as an archive and distribution channel for CRD videos focused on emergency operations, fire protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to use Youtube as a video archive and content distribution platform.</li> <li>Explore use of YouTube shorts as a method of communication</li> </ul>	<b>All</b>
<b>Up Front Newsletter</b>	Print	Communicate seasonally relevant information about CRD biannually.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce and distribute two CRD UpFront newsletters annually in June and December.</li> <li>Explore opportunities to increase frequency to quarterly.</li> </ul>	<b>All residents</b>
<b>Direct Mailers</b>	Print	Engage in direct communications with residents on specific projects and initiatives impacting them, such as referendums, engagement opportunities, and service notices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize direct mail, unaddressed mail, and posters as appropriate.</li> <li>Explore use of regular publications as advertisement opportunities for CRD programs and initiatives.</li> </ul>	<b>All residents</b>

Tactic	Type	Primary Use	Strategies	Audience(s)
<b>Board Events</b>	In-Person	Host events as opportunities for CRD Board and staff to directly engage with residents outside of formalized engagement opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>Hold up to three Multi-Agency forums a year in the North, Central, and South Cariboo with rotating locations. Explore ways to make this event relevant and increase attendance.</li> </ul>	<b>All residents</b> <b>Board</b> <b>Agencies</b>
<b>Public Engagement</b>	Various	Provide and participate in opportunities for the public to participate in decision making and governance processes related to CRD programs and initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement the 2023 Engagement Strategy.</li> <li>Utilize engagement principles and practices to create opportunities for improved policy and decision making.</li> <li>Explore ideas for different events or forums to engage with residents to increase attendance and/or participation.</li> </ul>	<b>All residents</b> <b>CRD Board &amp; Staff</b>
<b>Corporate Branding</b>	Multimedia	Create and maintain a cohesive corporate identity for the CRD and its supporting functions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the Cariboo Regional District name and logo on corporate assets and publications.</li> <li>Develop promotional items and projects to expand corporate image recognition.</li> </ul>	<b>All</b>

# EVALUATION

## MEASUREMENT

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

- Public surveys – In 2024 and 2026, public surveys will be conducted through an online survey to collect quantitative and qualitative data about our communications efforts over time. The survey link will be distributed through multiple methods. The costs for this include staff time for preparation, distribution, and analysis, plus costs of advertising.
- Media monitoring, including tracking for key message inclusion – This will be ongoing. Costs for this are for media monitoring software and staff time to collect and distribute data.
- Social media analytics – This will be ongoing. There are no costs aside from staff time for collection and analysis.
- Website analytics – This will be ongoing. Google Analytics will be used, which is free, plus staff time for collection and analysis.
- Attendance/participation tracking – This will be ongoing. There are no costs aside from staff time.

## OUTCOMES & OUTPUTS

This plan’s success will be evaluated by the success indicators below. If we meet them by the end of 2027, we will know our goals have been achieved.

Goal	Measurement Tool	Timeline	Signs of Success
<i>Increase public awareness of Regional District programs, projects, and initiatives by 2027.</i>	Website Analytics	Annual	Maintain current level of web traffic to the Cariboo Regional District website.
	Social Media Analytics	Annual	Increase social media followers (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) by 5% each year from 2023 to 2027.
	Survey	Annual	70% of survey respondents are aware of Regional District projects, services and initiatives by 2027.
	Website analytics	Annual	5% increase per year for website e-newsletter subscribers by 2027.

Goal	Measurement Tool	Timeline	Signs of Success
<i>Increase public satisfaction with how the Regional District makes information available to them by 2027.</i>	Survey	Annual	When asked about their satisfaction with the CRD website, survey respondents indicate satisfaction levels of 4.0 by 2027, on a 5-point scale.
		Annual	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.
		Annual	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 2027.</i>	Attendance and/or participation tracking	Annual	Increase total attendance and/or participation in Regional District events or engagement activities by 10% each year from 2023-2027.
	Survey	Annual	When asked about ways to engage with the Regional District, 80% of survey respondents can identify at least two avenues to provide input to the Regional District by 2027.
	Survey	Annual	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 out of 5.0 by 2027.
<i>Increase Regional District key messaging through local media coverage.</i>	Media monitoring	Weekly	90% of stories written about the Cariboo Regional District contain key messaging.