



Town of **SLAVE LAKE**

VISION

"Slave Lake is committed to building opportunities by growing business, industry and population, while promoting ourselves and our exceptional quality of life."

MISSION

"Working Together, Building a Better Community"

'Our Vision and Mission will serve as a guide in our decision making'

Land Acknowledgement

In the spirit of respect, authenticity, and reconciliation the Town of Slave Lake honours and acknowledges that we are situated on the traditional lands of Sawridge First Nation within Treaty 8 territory. Home to Indigenous, Metis and Inuit peoples who have occupied these lands since time immemorial.

COUNCIL AS COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE and REGULAR MEETING

February 14, 2023 at 7:00 PM

Council Chambers

AGENDA

Page

1. Agenda

- a) Adoption of Agenda

2. CAO Update

- a) February 14, 2023

3. Management Task List

- a) February 2023 Management Task List

4. Question Period

5. Reports and New Business

- a) CN Caribou Trail Crossing- Project Update

10 - 12

Committee of the Whole Meeting
Tuesday February 14, 2023 at 7:00 PM

13 - 72

b) Communication Plan 2023

6. Committee Minutes

a) Finance, Legislative and Governmental Affairs

- i) Slave Lake Watershed Council
- ii) Alberta North Central Alliance

b) Community Services

- i) Tri-Council Health Committee
- ii) Slave Lake Regional Tourism Society
- iii) Slave Lake Library Board Meeting
- iv) Community Futures Lesser Slave Lake Region
- v) Homelessness Coalition
- vi) Children's Resource Centre

c) Property Services

- i) Municipal Planning Commission
- ii) Slave Lake Airport Commission Meeting

d) Protective Services

- i) Protective Services Committee

7. Mayor's Corner

8. Adjournment

CAO Update:

Friday February 9th, 2023

Human Resources:

Occupational Health and Safety

- Human Resources is coordinating health and safety training in stages for leadership team and cascading to managers and supervisors.
- The HR team met with e-Compliance for orientation and demonstration of the platform.

Recruitment

Recruitment has resumed, and the following roles are now at various stages of the recruitment process:

- Executive Assistant – accepting applications.
- Casual Facility Attendant – at the offer stage.
- Casual Recreation Assistant I – at the offer stage.
- Human Resources Advisor – accepting applications - pre-screens and interviews are in progress.
- Manager of Information Technology – accepting applications and conducting telephone pre-screens.
- Program Coordinator (temporary maternity leave coverage – interviews in progress.
- Public Works Operator – interviews in progress.

Finance:

General

- Finance is working on Year end and Final GST Return for 2022. Finance is working with the project manager and Director of Community Services on a grant for the MRC Refurbishment project through the federal Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Program. If successful, this grant could pay up to 80% of the project costs for the project or approximately \$780,000. The deadline for the grant submission is February 28th, 2023. We should know approximately 3-8 weeks after the deadline if we are successful or not. Currently the project is slated to be funded using our GTF (Gas Tax Fund) grants, if successful this will free up this grant funding to aid in other projects. Auditors are expected to be on site in March for the final audit of 2022. Finalizing the 2023 insurance through AMSC.

Taxes

- Working with KCL Consulting, our assessor, on properties for upcoming assessment update for the March assessment letters.

Payroll

- Pension reconciliation completed and all filings to LAPP have been submitted. Preparing T4's to be issued later on in the month.

Operations:

Utilities

- Semiannual water sampling.
- Wastewater lagoons full profile sampling.
- Resident CC repairs.

Public Works

- Sanding as required
- Regular recycle ctr clean up.
- Pushing back windrows to clear drainage
- Training upgrades
- Grade gravel as needed.

Projects:

- Working with contractors to revise estimates for the approved projects in 2023.
- Completing annual grant reporting requirement for Canada Community Revitalization Fund (CCRF). An announcement was made by Federal Government to allow extension for CCRF project upto March 2024.
- Preparing RFP/RFQ documents for the upcoming project in 2023.
- Revising the contract documents which will be utilized later in the year for our projects.
- Working with Alberta Environment and Parks for Water Treatment facility approval renewal.
- Working on applying Green and Inclusive Community Building Grant (GICB) for MRC- that could cover 80% of the cost related to the roof replacement. The grant requires overall energy saving of 25% or more post upgrades, so we are collaborating with energy modeler to determine best ways to achieve the required energy savings.
- Washroom unit for Hilda Eben Park was ordered on 08 Feb.
- Request for Design Input was sent out via website and social media for the Downtown Public Art piece on Monday (Feb 13)

Communications and Economic Development:

Communications

- 2023 Communications Plan draft completed.
- Conducted Snow Removal survey.
- Developed EngagementHQ launch and Facebook comment messaging plan.
- Website maintenance and troubleshooting.
- Prepped and scheduled a total of 78 social media posts, about 50% were updates from Community Services on programming.
- Engagement HQ site anticipated launch date of February 20, 2023
- Current Voyent Subscribers = 507
- Facebook followers = 7,379
- Facebook page reach = 23,045 (32.5% increase from previous month)
- Facebook page visits = 9,015 (61.2% increase from previous month)
- Instagram page reach = 1,238

Economic Development:

- State of the Lake was rescheduled for April 5, 2023, at the Legacy Centre based on keynote speaker availability.
 - Updated invitations were sent to the Slave Lake and District Chamber of Commerce on January 30, 2023.
 - Chamber of Commerce will be responsible for registration.
- Rural Renewal Community Designation Application submitted.
 - Review and decision expected in March 2023.
- Northern and Regional Economic Development Grant Application submitted.
 - Review and decision expected in March 2023.
- Economic Development Advisory Committee Board Application
 - Committee member application form to be released at end of January.
 - Two applications received to date.
- Roles, responsibilities, and procedures established for advertising program

Planning and Development:

- Holding on-going meetings with the operators of Big Fish Bay RV Resort regarding various development projects. Most recent approval for Big Fish Bay was the Inflatable Waterslide.
- Working on a Road Closure Bylaw for the closing of a Town lane/walkway. Bylaw #05-2023 received First Reading and a Public Hearing has been scheduled for March 7, 2023.
- Have hired Joanna Raymond as our new Development Officer. We are actively working on training.
- Working on a Deferred Infrastructure Agreement for the Main Street North Sanitary Sewer Line Extension.
- Will be meeting with HPSD regarding the Joint Use Agreement required by the MGA. Will setup a meeting date and time for Living Water School Division.

Fire Department:

Total Calls to date (2023) = 53 (As of Feb 6, 23)

Total Calls for December 2022 – 45

January Responses

Alarms – 7

Gas Leak - 1

Medical Co-Response – 16

Motor Vehicle Collision – 18

Outdoor Fire - 1

Structure Fire – 2

Fire Service Summary

In January 2023 two of our members Chief Pavcek and Deputy Chief McDermott were awarded the Queens Platinum Jubilee Medal. Training schedules for 2023 were finalized. Meetings with Northern Lakes College, Technical Advisory Services Group, Driftpile First Nation and MD Of Opportunity regarding possible training opportunities.

The 2022 Annual report was completed, as well the Safety Codes Quality Management Plans regarding inspections in the Town and MD were updated and submitted. Town budget as finalized and the MD final Budget items were submitted.

Two site inspections for burn bins were completed, two fire and life safety inspection were completed. The town fire bylaw was presented to council as well as the new fire protection agreement between the Sawridge First Nation and The Town of Slave Lake was presented to town council.

Community Services:

Enforcement:

- The pound is currently full as is the Animal Rescue Society. Currently we have no capacity for dogs on the loose.

Aquatics:

- Currently running courses to train potential new staff. Looking into hosting a second round of courses in the coming months.
- Our swimming lessons are in good demand.
- Hosting a Valentines Day Swim on Sunday the 12th.
- Coordinating a St Patrick's Day fun swim in March.

Facilities & Parks:

- New sign for Secure energy got installed for Arena #1
- Renovations for additional offices have started here at the GOA. Coordinating contractors and materials.
- Working on a system for work order requests for the Government tenants and trying to make it more user friendly for the tenants.

Family and Community Support Services (FCSS)

- Frost Fest – Family Outdoor Event. Partnership with CRC. Wednesday February 15, 2023 Hilda Eben Park 6:00pm.
- The Income Tax program starts March 1st and will run out of the MRC. Will be drop-in based.
- Anger Ed: will be running a women's group as there is enough demand for the program. Currently coordinating the start-up of this program.

Recreation & Programming:

- Recruitment in progress for the Program Coordinator's Maternity Leave Coverage
- Frost Fest will run February 11th to 20th, there is a full schedule this year. We were able to partner with several organizations and groups to tailor events and programming to a diverse range of community members.
- Spring programming is underway.
- The Legacy Centre will be getting an upgrade to their lighting system February 15th and 16th. Stage North has been integral to this upgrade.

Events:

- February 8, 9, 10 – PD Day Camps - MRC
- February 11-20 – Frost Fest
- February 15-16 – Lighting Work – MRC
- February 24 – Stage North – Legacy Centre
- February 25 – Private Event – Legacy Centre
- February 26 – Private Event – Legacy Centre

Task List February 14, 2023			
Action Item / Motion:	Opened by who and when	Due date	Assigned to: / Progress / Status
Drainage Master Plan Motion #174-19 That Administration task our contractor to update the Drainage Master Plan upon completion of the Alberta Environment Flood Plane Hazards Assessment.	Moved by Mayor Warman May 14, 2019	Waiting on AB Environment	Assigned to Project Manager - Awaiting Alberta Environment to complete the 2020 Flood Hazards Assessment Report - January 2022: Alberta Environment continues work on Flood Hazard Assessment.
C2 Secondary District Report Motion #093-21: That Council asks Administration to bring back a report to add the uses from the C2 – Secondary Commercial District that will be removed due to the zoning change, to add to the C1 – Downtown Commercial Mixed-Use District.	Moved by Councillor Ferguson - March 16, 2021	Not Specified	Assigned to Planning and Development. Will combine this project with the update/rewrite of the Land Use Bylaw so that that Planning Consultant can advise Administration and Council with respect to any potential negative impacts of that change. Anticipate to start Consultant selection in 2023.
Motion #113-22: School Zones That Council task Administration to bring back a report around the costs and implications associated with changing the current school zones from the current times to an 8:30 am until 4:30 pm.	Moved by Councillor Giroux March 15, 2022	Aug-22	Assigned to CAO and Operations - Update October 2022 - Administration has drafted a bylaw and is awaiting cost estimates to change signage. Pending public engagement following the launch of Engagement HQ.
Motion #101-22: Rural Renewal Program That Council task Administration to bring a report around the Rural Renewal Program for Temporary Foreign Workers and what resources would be needed for this program.	Moved by Councillor Giroux March 8, 2022	Not Specified	Assigned to Economic Development June 2022 Status: Rural Renewal Community Designation Application submitted by Economic Development on January 18, 2023. Review and decision are expected March 2023.
Motion #205-22: Credit Cards That Council direct administration to bring a report forward outlining the service level needed to accept credit cards at the Town Office.	Moved by Councillor Hughes May 17, 2022	Not specified	Assigned to Finance - Update October 2022 - administration is researching what comparable municipalities have employed. A report will be coming to Council in November 2022.
Motion #235-22: Weighting System of Tenders To direct Administration to draft a report to come back to council that lays out the current weighting system for purchasing and tendered documents	Moved by Mayor Warman June 7, 2022	Not Specified	Assigned to Project Manager - Report came to Council December 13, 2022 COMPLETED
Motion #261-22: Rural Economic Broadband Strategy That Council tasks administration to bring back a report on the Rural Economic Broadband Strategy	Moved by Councillor Adams June 14, 2022	Not Specified	Assigned to CAO
Motion #272-22: Municipal Tax Exemptions That the Town of Slave Lake reaches out to the Ministry of Seniors and Housing and ask for clarification around municipal tax exemptions for social housing owned by private industry and what the ministry's plan is going forward	Moved by Councillor Ferguson June 14, 2022	Not Specified	Assigned to CAO
Motion # 363-22: Public Art RFP Move that Council task Administration to create a Request for Design for the Downtown Art Installation and once shortlisted that a public engagement process begins.	Moved by Councillor Gramlich September 13, 2022	Not Specified	Assigned to Project manager -Request for Design input was sent via website/social media for the Downtown Public Art Piece. Deadline for submission is scheduled for 27 Feb 2023 by 4:30PM.
Motion #366-22: Traffic Bylaw Move that Council direct administration to amend the Traffic Bylaw to reflect possible speed limit changes throughout the community.	Moved by Councillor Gramlich September 13, 2022	Not Specified	Assigned to CAO and Operations - Updated bylaw, will be brought to Council after public engagement is completed.

<u>Motion#394-22: Lane Closure</u> Move that Council directs Administration to prepare a Road Closure Bylaw to close the portion of Town Lane that exists between Plan 022 0315, Block 10, Lot 22 (1104 - 7 Street SW) and Plan 022 0315, Block 10, Lot 23 (709 - 11 Avenue SW), which is currently developed as a Town Walkway and all costs associated with the road closure, the purchase of the subject lands and the land conveyancing process be borne by Bruce and Erin Allarie.	Moved by Councilor Ferguson October 4, 2022	Not Specified	Assigned to Planning and Development. Council has agreed to close portion of lane. Bylaw was prepared and reviewed by Alberta Land Titles. A report for the bylaw will be presented to the January 24, 2023, meeting so that the bylaw receives first Reading and a date for the required Public Hearing is established. Bylaw came to February 7, 2023 Council meeting and passed first reading and public hearing was scheduled.
<u>Motion #420-22 MotoCross Site</u> To task administration to bring back information about future years of waiving tax for this site.	Moved by Mayor Warman November 01, 2022	Not Specified	Assigned to Finance
<u>Motion#438-22 6 AVE Crosswalk</u> Move to task administration to reach out to HPSD to look at possible options to look at congestion on 6th Ave SE.	Moved by Mayor Warman on November 08, 2022	Not Specified	Assigned to Administration/ Completed .
<u>Motion #477-22 Industrial Land Study</u> Move that Council accepts the report as information and directs Administration to begin discussions with affected landowners with respect to interest in an Industrial Land Study	Moved by Councillor Hughes December 13, 2022	Not Specified	Assigned to Planning and Development
<u>Motion #483-22 SL Victim Services</u> Move to task administration to reach out and invite Slave Lake's local Victim Services to be a delegation at a future council meeting.	Moved by Councillor Hughes December 13, 2022	Not Specified	Assigned to EA - reached out and extended the invitation to be a delegation in January 2023. Followed up on February 8, 2023 and have not had a response.
<u>Motion# 08-2023 Planning Service Levels</u> Move to task Administration to bring back a report to Council with resourcing options to maintain the same current service levels for Planning and Development.	Moved by Mayor Warman January 17, 2023	Not Specified	Assigned to Planning and Development
<u>Motion# 13-2023 Digital Advertising</u> Move that Council approves the new digital advertising rates selected and tasks Administration with the recruitment of a Commission-Based Salesperson to manage advertising sales.	Moved by Councillor Adams January 17, 2023	Not Specified	Assigned to Economic Development/ Completed
<u>Motion# 15-2023 Grant Application</u> Move that Council tasks Administration with the drafting and submission of the Northern and Regional Economic Development Grant Application for the purposes of conducting an Industrial Land Market and Fiscal Impact Analysis.	Moved by Councillor Adams January 17, 2023	Not Specified	Assigned to Economic Development Status: Northern and Regional Economic Development Application submitted by Economic Development on January 20, 2023. Review and decision are expected March 2023.
<u>Motion# 49-2023 EMS Letter</u> Move to direct Administration to draft a letter regarding emergency medical services and fires services in support of Fox Creek.	Moved by Councillor Ferguson February 7, 2023	Not Specified	Assigned to the Legislative Administration
<u>Motion# 50-2023 EMS Letter Inclusion</u> Move to have Administration share the letter with the Tri-Council Health Committee for their response.	Moved by Councillor Adams February 7, 2023	Not Specified	Assigned to the Legislative Administration

REPORT TO COUNCIL



Meeting Date: February 14, 2023

Staff Contact: Kush Patel, Project Manager

Department: Administration

Report Type: Request for Decision

Subject: **CN Caribou Trail Crossing- Project Update**

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:



Economic health



Livability



Good governance



Relationships and partnerships



Communication

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to provide project update to Council on the CN Caribou Trail crossing.

Background:

This project was identified in 2015 after completing a site review of the safety concerns with CN and Transportation Canada. Safety concerns noted at the crossing included, but are not limited to; variances in train speeds, close proximity of the intersection to the storage track switch, road traffic volumes, type of traffic, close proximity of the adjacent intersection and driver distractions.

At the time of review, CN and Town Administration agreed that the installation of an automated warning system consisting of flashing light signals, extra light units and bell with constant warning time devices would be an overall improvement to the level of safety at the crossing. Additionally, Town Administration indicated consideration for installing gates at the crossing.

Transport Canada indicated support for application under the Grade Crossing Improvement Program for the installation of an automated warning system consisting of flashing light signals, extra light units for the parallel roadways and bell with constant warning time devices. Town's contribution was 12.5% of the actual cost and the rest was contribution from Transport Canada.

CN filed an application for the installation of a warning system consisting of flashing light signals, gates, extra lights and bell with constant warning time devices on July 31, 2015 with Transport Canada. Transport Canada confirmed that all the applications are reviewed on an annual basis using a risk based process and projects are subsequently approved based on risk. Due to the limited funds within the program, it may be several years before some projects are approved.

Discussion:

Since submitting the application in 2015, Administration continued to follow up with CN for updates. Also, a capital budget was carried since the period of application. The amount carried in 2023 is \$60k. Recently Administration followed up with CN and it was confirmed that the Transport Canada did not select this crossing after several years on the application list.

Public Works department within CN confirmed the Caribou Trail Crossing has a stop sign and meets Transport Canada's Grade Crossing Regulations as a compliant crossing which is why may be one of the reasons for not approval of the application. They also confirmed that the funding model has changed recently. Transport Canada will pay up to 80% of the total cost if approved and the Town will be required to pay the other 20% of the total cost.

Town Administration asked for revision of estimate as the previous estimate was last provided in 2015 for an amount of approximately \$270k. CN verified that in order for their signals team to provide a estimate for the work, they require stamped engineering drawing to be submitted beforehand. Such task would cost approximately \$15k-\$20k to the town.

With the recent material cost increases along with higher than usual inflation, the estimated cost for signal upgrades would be around \$400k or more. Based on that 20% of Town's contribution would amount to \$80k or more. Plus the cost of stamped engineering drawings submittals bringing the total estimated cost for the town to \$95k-\$100k or more.

Options:

Council may opt for either of the following options:

- 1) Continue with the project or,
- 2) Do not proceed with the project

Resource Impacts:

Amount over approved funding of \$60k would require additional funding through reserves or other funding source. If Council decides to not proceed with the project then any unexpended funding amount will be allocated back to the reserves.

Recommendation to Council:

Administration recommends Council to not proceed with the project due to the additional cost increase expected for the project. Additionally, the condition of the crossing has not changed since 2015 with no significant safety related incidents or concerns. Even with resubmitting the application, the chances for securing the grant amount is very marginal.

Motion:

Move that Council directs Administration to not proceed with CN Caribou Trail Crossing Project and allocate any unexpended funding amount back to the funding source.

Attachments:

N/A

Ashley Whitford, Administrative Assistant

Approved
- 10 Feb
2023

Jeff Simpson, Chief Administrative Officer

Approved
- 10 Feb
2023

REPORT TO COUNCIL



Meeting Date: February 14, 2023

Staff Contact: Jason Swanson, Manager of Communications and Economic Development

Department: Administration

Report Type: Report for Information

Subject: **Communication Plan 2023**

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:



Economic health



Livability



Good governance



Relationships and partnerships



Communication

How this Request for Decision meets the Strategic Objective:

This Communication Plan directly aligns with the Town of Slave Lake's Strategic Plan. This Plan was developed to address the initiatives contained under the Communication pillar.

Focus on proactive engagement and communication with residents:

- Ensure accurate information is communicated.
- Develop strong issue management practices.
- Review communication methods and explore other ways to communicate and engage residents.
- Monitor engagement metrics.

Actively communicate a positive image of Slave Lake:

- Create positive first impressions of our community.
- Actively promote the new brand for Slave Lake.

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to present Administration's Communication Plan for review and approval.

Background:

Town leadership and Administration have heard clearly from residents that they desire more communication from the Town on current priorities and activities as well as increased opportunities to provide feedback and input on Town issues that are important to them. Communications is one of the five strategic priorities identified by Council in its Strategic Plan. Council believes that communicating the benefits of Slave Lake and engaging with community are key to increasing community pride. Under the Communication strategic priority, two key areas of focus have been identified which are both addressed in this Plan.

- Focus on proactive engagement and communication with residents.
- Actively communicate a positive image of Slave Lake.

The Communication Plan will focus on both external communication with stakeholders and internal communication amongst departments and staff with the intention of building a collaborative constructive and accountable relationship with the community and within the organization.

Discussion:

Research

To inform the Communication Plan, the Communications Department reviewed previous engagement results to ensure that goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics are aligned with the needs and requirements of residents. In May 2022, as part of the rebranding and visual identity scope of work, Incite (consultant) conducted a stakeholder engagement exercise to inform both the rebranding and communication efforts moving forward. This exercise included 27 targeted interviews with community and business leaders as well as a community survey that solicited 122 responses from residents. Questions included:

- Identification of general strengths and weaknesses of the Town
- Perceptions of the community
- Preferred communication methods and desired information outputs.

Results suggested that there is a distinct difference in how community and business leaders perceive the Town compared to residents. Results also indicated that Facebook is clearly the preferred communication channel for respondents. The top three preferred communication channels included:

1. Facebook = 82%
2. Email = 48%
3. Website = 44%

Survey respondents were also asked what type of information is most important to them with the top three information categories desired being:

1. Community Event Information = 84%
2. Recreational Opportunities = 81%
3. Transportation Updates = 72%
4. Program Service Offerings = 72%

The Communications Department also conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis to inform the Communication Plan.

External Communication

The following are the goals for external communication:

1. Develop and maintain positive working relationships with all priority stakeholders.
2. Build trust in the Town of Slave Lake.
3. Build mechanisms for receiving and incorporating input/feedback from stakeholders.
4. Increase and maintain transparency where appropriate.
5. Create awareness and increase knowledge of the public process to residents.

The following are the objectives for external communication:

1. Identify priority stakeholders.
2. Establish a strategy for delivering key messages.
3. Identify and address barriers to engagement.
4. Document engagement activities and their outcomes.
5. Set the stage for successful engagement.
6. Understand the cultural, traditional, and unique interests of Indigenous peoples including how Town activities may affect their ability to conduct traditional activities.

Communication between the Town of Slave Lake and stakeholders must be based on consistent and strong messaging and best practices to build trust in the Town. Guiding principles for all future communication efforts and activities include (but are not limited to):

1. Communication is factual.
2. Messaging is easy to understand (and tailored for the intended audience).
3. Information is not retractable.
4. Communication is timely and relevant.
5. Communication and messaging are accessible.

Strategy and Tactics

The following summarizes how goals and objectives will be achieved.

Objective 1: Identify priority stakeholders

A stakeholder mapping exercise has been completed internally. The mapping exercise analyses and documents all potential stakeholders and organizes them according to the impact and influence they hold within the community for future targeted communication efforts. Potential stakeholders include local non-

governmental organizations, Indigenous groups, residents, local and regional business and industry, community groups, media organizations, and all levels of government. This map will be regularly reviewed and updated.

Objective 2: Establish a strategy for delivering key messages

The development of key messages or key value points is critical as they serve as the foundation for an organization's branding, marketing, and communication efforts. Key messages should be short, concise statements and should be reflected in all communication efforts moving forward to provide consistency. Key messages should be shared frequently but not to the point where communication efforts are creating fatigue amongst stakeholders. Key messages must be:

- Factual.
- Easy to understand.
- Not retractable.
- Timely and relevant.
- Accessible.

Key messages have been developed and tailored for residents, visitors, and businesses for each of the key value points.

Objective 3: Identify and address barriers to engagement

Facebook has become an unofficial forum for residents which frequently becomes derailed by the same small group of individuals who use the opportunity to provide negative (and unconstructive) feedback on Town activities, programming, and staff. Comments are public facing and can cause considerable harm to the Town of Slave Lake's image and reputation as well as hinder potential labour attraction and retention efforts both for the Town as well as local and regional businesses. As such, Leadership has directed Administration to turn Facebook commenting off on Town of Slave Lake posts once the EngagementHQ site is operating.

Administration plans to implement EngagementHQ as the preferred platform to improve engagement within the community and solicit feedback. Project based initiatives will be public facing and will create greater transparency and allow for a variety of feedback to be gathered through various engagement tools to inform project planning or other activities. Recognizing that the requirement to register with EngagementHQ represents a barrier to engagement, the Town will continue to provide opportunities for residents to provide general feedback via the Town website.

Objective 4: Document engagement activities and their outcomes

The Communications Department has created and will regularly update a consultation and engagement log. The purpose of this log will be to document and summarize all input and feedback received through the Town's communication, consultation, and engagement efforts. It will also record any follow up actions

required by staff, by when, and the responsible party. The log will serve as a planning tool for Administration to develop targeted communication efforts and activities aimed at responding to issues identified through consultation and engagement activities and assist in long-term communication strategy and planning.

Objective 5: Set the stage for successful engagement

Building and maintaining trust amongst stakeholders is a top priority however, trust takes time to develop. To help build trust, the communication team will ensure all outputs and efforts are grounded in best practices, these include:

- Providing consistent messaging.
- Encouraging open and transparent dialogue.
- Including a mix of participation, consultation, and information type activities.
- Providing opportunities for meaningful engagement that results in direct input to individual project design, Town priorities, etc.
- Providing timely and accurate information.

The implementation of EngagementHQ (in combination with the Town website) will create a centralized location for all official engagement efforts that will allow more opportunities for receiving feedback, building trust, and creating transparency.

It is critical that residents and stakeholders feel they are being heard. The Town will need to clearly demonstrate how feedback was utilized and how it informed project planning, or other activities, as appropriate.

Objective 6: Understand the cultural, traditional, and unique interests of Indigenous peoples including how Town activities may affect their ability to conduct traditional activities

Historic (and current) context requires an approach to engagement that may differ from non-Indigenous populations. Indigenous communities are unique from one another and therefore, the approach to engagement may differ depending on the community. The Town will utilize the best practices developed by Alberta Municipalities to guide communication and engagement efforts with Indigenous groups moving forward.

Evaluation

In addition to data analytics, the following indicators have been identified to measure and evaluate performance:

- At a minimum, produce monthly posts from each Department highlighting key activities, programming, or their role within the Organization.
- Greater number of respondents to engagement efforts and activities.
- Greater variety of feedback gathered from a greater variety of residents.
- Quarterly review of engagement log.

- Review of analytics on the Town website, EngagementHQ, and social media to identify trends and alter strategy accordingly.
- The Communication Plan will be reviewed at a minimum annually to ensure that it remains aligned with the Town's Strategic Plan and it is effectively completing objectives.

Internal Communication

Internal communication is critical to the success of any organization and serves a variety of functions. Typically, there are six communication functions within an organization (the first three are typically the responsibility of Leadership and Senior Managers):

- Regulate - Communication that is directed toward regulatory policies within the organization or messages about maintenance of the organization.
- Manage - Communication focused on getting personnel to do what is needed, learning information about personnel to know them better, and establishing relationships with personnel.
- Persuade - attempting to influence the employee to do something in particular.
- Inform - Function of providing needed information to personnel so they can do their jobs in an effective and efficient manner.
- Socialize - Being integrated into the communication networks in the organization.
- Integrate - Focused on coordination of tasks, work assignments, group coordination of the fusing of work units toward a common goal.

This Communication Plan focuses on the last three functions. The following are goals for internal communication:

1. Team integration across departments.
2. Clear leadership structure with roles and responsibilities clearly defined and understood.
3. Maintain appropriate protocols when sharing or distributing information.

The following are objectives for internal communication:

1. Identify and address barriers to internal communication.
2. Set clear and realistic expectations for interdepartmental communication.
3. Improve website content and information flow to increase navigability and accessibility both internally and externally.
4. Encourage public engagement activities for each department through EngagementHQ.

Strategy and Tactics

The following summarizes how goals and objectives will be achieved.

Objective 1: Identify and address barriers to internal communication

Typical barriers to internal communication include:

- Lack of trust in management or colleagues.
- Lack of information on internal communication processes.

- Lack of direct contacts between all employees.
- Lack of internal communication tools dedicated to the organization.
- Long information flows from the top of an organization to the bottom.
- Gossiping, that may lead to a contradiction in announced information to others.

Many of these barriers can be solved by using soft management skills like targeted conversations and discussions, negotiations, direct contacts, etc. The most often employed strategy to address barriers to internal communication is simply communicating more.

Objective 2: Set clear expectations for interdepartmental communication

Historically, the organization has occasionally struggled with obtaining all the relevant information for either internal or external communication activities in a timely manner.

Clear expectations need to be set within the organization that if information needs to be shared or feedback solicited for a particular project either internally or externally, it is the responsibility of the applicable department to provide all necessary information and documents to the Communications Department in a timely manner for review and content/message creation.

Objective 3: Improve website content and flow

The website currently being hosted by CivicPlus is difficult to navigate, coveys too much information, and contains information that is outdated or no longer relevant.

While no major revisions have been budgeted for 2023, potential outdated information will be flagged for review and removed. Work is currently underway.

A detailed site map will be created to ensure that the website is communicating the right information in a way that is easily understood, navigable, and accessible. This site map will serve as the foundation for any revisions or improvements made in the future.

Objective 4: Encourage public engagement activities for each department through EngagementHQ

EngagementHQ provides the opportunity for departments to directly engage with residents on specific projects using a variety of engagement tools to tailor the message according to the intended audience.

The Communications Department will ask that departments review workplans to identify projects that would benefit from or require engagement with residents (this will also be informed by Leadership and Senior Management).

Once engagement opportunities, requirements, and goals and objectives are identified, the Communications Department will assist other departments in tailoring engagement efforts and activities to ensure the right tools are used for the intended audience and solicit the required feedback.

Evaluation

The following indicators have been identified to measure and evaluate performance:

- Clear understanding among all employees or organizations roles and responsibilities.
- Clear understanding among all employees or organizational structure.
- Increased quality and frequency of inter-departmental discussions.
- EngagementHQ tools are utilized effectively to solicit the required feedback from a variety of residents.
- Conducting peer reviews of internal communication with department heads to determine which strategies are successful and which need to be improved upon.
- The Communication Plan will be reviewed at a minimum annually to ensure that it remains aligned with the Town's Strategic Plan and it is effectively completing objectives.

Policy Implications:

This plan will replace the 2022 Communication Plan.

Relation to strategic planning, mission statement, or vision statement:

This Communication Plan directly aligns with the Town of Slave Lake's Strategic Plan. This Plan was developed to address the initiatives contained under the Communication pillar.

Focus on proactive engagement and communication with residents:

- Ensure accurate information is communicated.
- Develop strong issue management practices.
- Review communication methods and explore other ways to communicate and engage residents.
- Monitor engagement metrics.

Actively communicate a positive image of Slave Lake:

- Create positive first impressions of our community.
- Develop a brand for Slave Lake.

Recommendation to Council:

To accept this information as presented.

Motion:

Motion to accept this information as presented.

Attachments:

[2023 comms plan rough draft V1.4](#)

[2023 comms plan powerpoint](#)

Ashley Whitford, Administrative Assistant

Approved
- 09 Feb
2023

Jeff Simpson, Chief Administrative Officer

Approved
- 09 Feb
2023



2023 COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Jason Swanson, Manager of Communications and Economic Development
Jordan Schenkelberg, Communications Coordinator



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Who We Are

The Communications team consists of the Communications Coordinator and the Manager of Communications & Economic Development.

The Manager of Communications & Economic Development is responsible for leading the planning, development and delivery of internal and external communications, including media/public relations activities.

The Communications Coordinator is responsible for the implementation of the Town's communication objectives and facilitating the communication process. This is done through gathering information and collaborating with department directors in order to develop and distribute content that communicates the organizations activities, projects, initiatives, and other relevant information.

External Communication

Introduction

Town leadership and Administration has heard clearly from residents that they desire more communication from the Town on current priorities and activities as well as increased opportunities to provide feedback and input on Town issues that are important to them. Communications is one of five strategic priorities identified by Council in its strategic plan. Council believes that communicating the benefits of Slave Lake and engaging with the community are key to increasing community pride. Under the Communication strategic priority, two key areas of focus have been identified which are both addressed in this Plan:

- Focus on proactive engagement and communication with residents.
- Actively communicate a positive image of Slave Lake.

This document will focus on both external communication with stakeholders and internal communication amongst departments and staff with the intention of building a collaborative, constructive and accountable relationship with the community and within the organization.

Goals

1. Develop and maintain positive working relationships with all priority stakeholders.
2. Build trust in the Town of Slave Lake.
3. Build mechanisms for receiving and incorporating input/feedback from stakeholders.
4. Increase and maintain transparency where appropriate.
5. Create awareness and increase knowledge of the public process to residents.



OBJECTIVES

1. Identify priority stakeholders.
2. Establish a strategy for delivering key messages.
3. Identify and address barriers to engagement.
4. Document engagement activities and their outcomes.
5. Set the stage for successful engagement.
6. Understand the cultural, traditional, and unique interests of indigenous peoples including how Town activities may affect their ability to conduct traditional activities.

Guiding Principles

All external communication efforts will be guided by the Town of Slave Lake's vision statement, mission statement, and strategic plan as directed by Council.

Vision Statement:

Slave Lake is committed to building opportunities by growing business, industry, and population, while promoting ourselves and our exceptional quality of life.

Mission Statement:

Working Together, Building a Better Community

Communication between the Town of Slave Lake and stakeholders must be based on consistent and strong messaging and best practices to build trust in the Town. If messaging isn't guided by strong communication principals, trust amongst stakeholders will erode over time. The following principles will guide all communication efforts and activities:

1. Communication is factual.
2. Messaging is easy to understand (and tailored for the intended audience).
3. Information is not retractable.
4. Communication is timely and relevant.
5. Communication and messaging are accessible.
6. Communications must work in respect to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy and be compliant with all applicable laws, regulations, and policy.



Organizational Strengths and Weaknesses

To guide the development of this Plan and guide future communication efforts, the Communication Department conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of current communication outputs to ensure the strategies and tactics proposed in this Plan address the results of the analysis.

Strengths: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A dedicated and experienced in-house Communications team.• Motivated Senior Staff and Council that encourage clear and transparent communication.• Knowledgeable Administrative Staff that are willing to collaborate when additional support is required.• An established Website.• Established Social Media accounts with an active online local community.	Weaknesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Website is difficult to maintain, hard to navigate, and houses too much information.• The difficulty to navigate the website makes it hard to determine what information is outdated.• The Communications Department does not always receive relevant updates in a timely or detailed manner.• There is a lack of clarity/understanding among residents on the roles and responsibilities of each Department within the Town of Slave Lake.
Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community is very active on social media and has a strong desire to be informed.• Residents desire to be engaged and provide feedback and input on Town priorities and issues that matter to them.• Have access to multiple platforms that offer a variety of engagement and information sharing tools.• Rework existing platforms so that each provides a specific communication function(s) (i.e., information sharing vs. engagement).	Threats: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A polarized community.• Misinformation is common and spreads quickly.• A vocal minority regularly challenge Town initiatives and attempt to control the narrative with misinformation or providing baseless claims.• Anyone who shares a differing opinion from the negativity is often attacked online from others in the community. This prevents many residents from participating in discussion and providing feedback.• Slow internal response times leads to a lack of trust in the community.• Information sharing to the community is occasionally lost due to vocal negative public opinion.



Strategy and Tactics

The following section presents how goals and objectives will be achieved, how issues will be addressed and the tactics to be used by the communication team in the delivery of key messages.

Objective 1: Identify priority stakeholders

A stakeholder mapping exercise has been completed internally to help advance the objectives of this plan. The mapping exercise analyses and documents all potential stakeholders and organizes them according to the impact and influence they hold within the community for future targeted communication efforts. Potential stakeholders include local Non-Government Organizations (NGOs); Indigenous groups; residents; local and regional business and industry; community groups; municipal, provincial, & federal governments, and media organizations. **Please see Appendix A for the Stakeholder Map.**

Objective 2: Establish a strategy for delivering key messages

The development of key messages or key value points is critical as they serve as the foundation for an organization's branding, marketing, and communication efforts. Key messages should be short, concise statements and should be reflected in all communication efforts moving forward to provide consistency. Key Messages should be shared frequently but not to the point where communication efforts are creating fatigue amongst stakeholders. Key messages must be:

- Factual.
- Easy to understand.
- Not retractable.
- Timely and relevant.
- Accessible.

In 2022, the Town of Slave Lake underwent a rebranding exercise to better position Slave Lake in the market. A community's brand is similar to a personality. Its attributes define who and what a community is all about. Successful brands inform stakeholders, in a memorable way, about the community, its people, and its core values. A brand is made up of experiences, and the quality of those experiences is imperative. By mapping out and managing experiences a stakeholder has with the Town of Slave Lake, it can ensure its differentiated value is communicated in a remarkable and consistent way at every interaction. As part of the rebranding exercise, the Town of Slave Lake developed the following key messages or key value points to guide and serve as the foundation for all future communication efforts.



Key Value Point	Key Messages
<p>Northern Connectivity - Slave Lake has the infrastructure, geographic location, and market connectivity needed to empower the creation of a thriving economy that connects north-central Alberta on a global scale.</p>	<p>For Residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Slave Lake is home to a population that values a community-centric lifestyle along with easy access to those services and amenities found in cities. <p>For Visitors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Slave Lake provides a fresh perspective on what a thriving, environmentally conscious, resource-based economy can look like.Daytrips and weekend adventures are easy with Slave Lake only 2.5 hours from the Edmonton Metropolitan Region. <p>For Business:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Slave Lake's richness in natural assets combined with its location as a service hub for north-central Alberta with efficient access to the Edmonton Metro Region, means it's easier to ship goods and materials along integrated infrastructure including road, rail, and air.

Key Value Point	Key Messages
<p>A Strong Community - One of Canada's youngest communities, the people of Slave Lake work hard, take care of one another, and embody an ambitious and resilient spirit that allows for numerous opportunities.</p>	<p>For Residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The people of Slave Lake have all the ingredients for a strong quality of life. We are neighborly and love the outdoors. We have built a community full of opportunity where people take care of each other today and for generations to come. <p>For Visitors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Slave Lake is a welcoming community that embraces the supportive lifestyle characterized by the positive relationships and sense of belonging that comes with knowing your neighbours. <p>For Business:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Home to the Tri-Council and the sentiment that strength comes from unity; the MD of Lesser Slave River, Sawridge First Nation, and the



Town of Slave Lake take a coordinated and collaborative approach to ensuring the community is safer, stronger, and better positioned for future growth.

Key Value Point	Key Messages
<p><u>Unlocking Access to the Great Outdoors</u> - Slave Lake is home to raw, untamed nature and is committed to building the capacity necessary for visitors to experience some of Alberta's best outdoor recreation.</p>	<p>For Residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The Town of Slave Lake is working to tell Slave Lake's story, establishing the unique experience, and generate inbound visitation because we know that when the visitor economy grows, so does Slave Lake. <p>For Visitors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">From backcountry trails to birdwatching to sandy beaches, Slave Lake offers four seasons of outdoor experiences and adventure, including incredible hikes, being home to Canada's northernmost bird observatory, Alberta's largest automobile accessible lake, cross-country skiing, and ice fishing. <p>For Business:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Slave Lake is home to raw and untapped natural assets that are foundational for industry and provide investors with the opportunity to develop unique and profitable businesses.

External messaging and communication outputs will be reviewed and approved by the communications team. The Communications Coordinator will approve messaging for regular day to day communications and updates on social media and the Manager of Communications and Economic Development will approve all other messaging prior to release or distribution. External departmental messages should be sent to the communications team directly from department directors, when possible, to ensure that the information is accurate and approved by the department. Platforms for the delivery of key messages and other communications include (but are not limited to):

- Social media posts (Facebook and Instagram)
- Voyent Alert updates
- Website updates
- EngagementHQ
- Council and Committee of the Whole Meetings



- Digital billboards
- Media releases
- Mailers
- Posters
- Town halls
- Open houses
- Newsletters

Objective 3: Identify and address barriers to engagement

The Town has heard clearly from residents that they would like more opportunities to provide feedback on Town issues that matter to them. As such, the communications department will strive to provide more opportunities for public engagement and allow the opportunity to provide feedback on Town priorities and issues as directed by Council or Administration. The level of participation will be based on the desired objectives for the engagement activity and determined by staff based on the number of residents who will be affected by the issue.

Currently, the Town's social media channels have become an unofficial forum for residents to provide feedback leading to Town discussions frequently getting dominated or derailed by the same small group of individuals who use the opportunity to provide negative feedback on Town activities, programming, and staff. Comments posted to Facebook are public facing and can cause considerable harm to the Town of Slave Lake's image and reputation as well as hinder potential labour attraction and retention efforts both for the municipality as well as local and regional businesses. Official means of providing feedback to the Town (website) are under-utilized and instead, residents use the Town's social media pages as a contact point.

Leadership has recently tasked Administration to turn off commenting on all Facebook posts moving forward and remove outdated posts from the page. The Communications Department supports this decision so that Facebook becomes an information-only communication tool. All targeted engagement and consultation efforts will shift away from social media and move to EngagementHQ and the Town's website. Nationally, many municipalities have turned off Facebook commenting due to public safety, bullying, and harassment concerns (Fernie, Tofino, Sudbury, Duncan, Kamloops, Canmore). Turning off Facebook comments may elicit a strong negative response from some residents that use Facebook as their primary source for attempting to contact the Town and providing feedback. A department contact directory has always been available directly at the top of the Town's Facebook page; additional efforts will be put toward making the Contact Us page on the website more accessible, easier to navigate, and clear so that residents know who to contact within the Town of Slave Lake for various issues and/or concerns.

Administration will implement EngagementHQ as the preferred platform to improve engagement within the community and solicit feedback. Project based initiatives in the Town will be public facing and will create



greater transparency and allow for a variety of feedback to be gathered through various engagement tools designed to complete various communication objectives. Administration will also maintain the current provide opportunities for residents to provide general feedback via the Town website.

Comments submitted via EngagementHQ are not public facing and can only be viewed by registered users. EngagementHQ also offers additional moderation controls to Administration that Facebook does not, (removing registered users that consistently breach protocol or those who post comments or feedback that could be considered bullying, harassment, or hate speech) and will allow the Town to hear from a variety of viewpoints and perspectives and not the same handful of negative individuals repeatedly. By switching the primary feedback mechanism from Facebook to EngagementHQ, the Town of Slave Lake can regain control of the narrative and the nature and tone of communication outputs from the Town. Regaining control of the narrative is critical to preventing the creation of an information vacuum. When a vacuum is created, individuals may use it as an opportunity to fill it, often with speculative, inaccurate, or misleading material. To combat this potential misinformation the Town needs to provide accurate and timely information while creating transparency through regular engagement activities. The Communications Department recognizes that EngagementHQ's requirement to register and create an account on the platform represents a significant barrier to engagement as demonstrated through the introduction of the Voyent Alert! App to residents. To ensure residents are provided with easily accessible ways to provide feedback, the Town website will continue to be utilized as a platform for residents to provide general feedback.

Objective 4: Document engagement activities and their outcomes

The Communications Department has created and will regularly update a consultation and engagement log. The purpose of this log will be to document and summarize all input and feedback received through the Town's communication, consultation, and engagement efforts. It will also record any follow-up actions required by Town staff, by when, and the responsible party. The log will serve as a planning tool for Administration to develop targeted communication efforts and activities aimed at responding to issues identified through consultation and engagement activities and assist in long-term communication strategy and planning. **Please see Appendix B for the Town of Slave Lake Consultation and Engagement Log.**

Objective 5: Set the stage for successful engagement

The Town will continue to build and maintain positive working relationships and two-way communication with stakeholders and residents through ongoing information sharing and engagement activities. Positive relationships are built on trust, and trust takes time to develop. This means that the communication team will need to be proactive in communication and engagement activities, ensuring that all outputs and efforts are grounded in best practices and guiding principles to improve transparency internally and externally and build trust amongst all stakeholders. These practices include (but is not limited to):



- Providing consistent messaging.
- Encouraging open and transparent dialogue.
- Including a mix of participation, consultation, and information type activities.
- Providing opportunities for meaningful engagement that results in direct input to individual project design, Town priorities, Town vision, etc.
- Providing timely and accurate information.

The implementation of EngagementHQ (in combination with the Town website) will create a centralized location for all official engagement efforts that will allow more opportunities for receiving feedback, building trust, and creating transparency. EngagementHQ will allow engagement to be customizable allowing a mix of participation, consultation, and information sharing activities.

It is critical that residents and stakeholders feel that they are being heard and that their feedback is valued. Moving forward, the Town will need to clearly demonstrate how feedback was utilized and how it informed project planning, programming, or services offered as appropriate. Through the Completed Projects section on EngagementHQ stakeholders will be able to see the progression of projects and how their feedback directly (or indirectly) informed project planning or other activities.

Objective 6: Understand the cultural, traditional, and unique interests of indigenous peoples including how Town activities may affect their ability to conduct traditional activities.

Indigenous peoples have been in Canada since time immemorial. They formed complex social, political, economic, and cultural systems before Europeans came to North America. Colonization and white settlement changed the traditional Indigenous ways of life forever. Colonial practices and policies like the Indian Act and Residential School System sought to control and assimilate Indigenous peoples. These practices and policies, when combined with racism, loss of land, and decline or unequal access to traditional food resources and public services has had significant negative consequences on Indigenous people's health and socio-economic wellbeing.

It is this historic (and current) context that requires an approach to engagement that may differ from non-Indigenous populations. Indigenous communities are unique from one another and therefore, the approach to engagement may differ depending on the community. The following best practices were developed by Alberta Municipalities to guide municipalities in their communication and engagement efforts with Indigenous groups:

- Respect the importance of building genuine relationships. Meet in-person when possible and take the time to build the relationship before you make a request.
- Familiarize yourself with the purpose and practice and traditional protocols (e.g., offering tobacco when seeking advice or knowledge).



- Compensate Elders and Knowledge Keepers for their time and value of their service.
- Take the time to learn about the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada.
- Be familiar with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.
- Acknowledge the land and that we are all partners in the Treaty agreements.
- Recognize that cultural practices may differ from non-Indigenous populations such as the significance of time, how deaths in the community are treated, responding to written communication, or even differences in how handshakes are viewed.
- Consider using a cultural mediator for guidance. A good resource is to contact your local Native Friendship Centre or other Indigenous organization in your region.

Evaluation

The effectiveness of the communication plan will be determined through the regular use of analytics on the Towns various communication and engagement platforms. This data will help the communications team in determining what is important for stakeholders and what methods of communication solicit the most response and will tailor future communications, consultation, and engagement activities accordingly. In addition to the data analytics provided by the various communication platforms, the following indicators have been identified to measure and evaluate performance:

- At a minimum, monthly posts from each Department highlighting key activities, programming, or their role within the Organization.
- Greater number of respondents to engagement efforts and activities.
- Greater variety of feedback gathered from a greater variety of residents.
- Quarterly review of the engagement log.
- Review of analytics on the Town website, EngagementHQ, and social media to identify trends and alter strategy accordingly.

The plan will be reviewed (and potentially revised) annually to identify new goals and objectives, ensure that it remains aligned with the Towns Strategic Plan, and that the strategies and tactics contained within the plan are effectively completing the goals and objectives.



Internal Communication

Introduction

Internal communication is critical to the success of any organization. It serves a variety of functions within an organization. Typically, “there are six functions that dominate communication in the organizational context. The functions are:

- Inform – function of providing needed information to personnel so they can do their jobs in an effective and efficient manner.
- Regulate – communication that is directed toward regulatory policies within the organization or messages about maintenance of the organization.
- Integrate – focused on coordination of tasks, work assignments, group coordination or the fusing of work units toward a common goal.
- Manage - communication focused on getting personnel to do what is needed, learning information about personnel to know them better, and establishing relationships with personnel.
- Persuade – attempting to influence the employee to do something in particular.
- Socialize –It means being integrated into the communication networks in the organization.”¹

Given that the regulate, persuade, and manage communication functions are typically the responsibility of senior managers and leadership within an organization, this Communication Plan will focus on the inform, integrate, and socialize functions. Town administrative departments need to be working cohesively to ensure that information flows in a timely, relevant, and factual manner to provide the best possible service to residents and stakeholders. Clear understanding of department responsibilities and leadership structure (both internally and externally) will be vital for the organization’s success moving forward.

Goals

1. Team integration across departments.
2. Clear leadership structure with roles and responsibilities clearly defined and understood.
3. Maintain appropriate protocols when sharing or distributing information.

Strategy and Tactics

The following section presents how goals and objectives will be achieved, how issues will be addressed and the tactics to be used by the communication team in the delivery of key messages.

¹ Jakubiec, Marcin. (2019). The Importance of Internal Communication for Management of an Organization. *Scientific Papers of Silesian University of Technology. Organization and Management Series.* 2019. 47-62.



OBJECTIVES

1. Identify and address barriers to internal communication.
2. Set clear and realistic expectations for interdepartmental communication.
3. Improve website content and flow to allow ease of use and information flow both internally and externally.
4. Encourage public engagement activities for each department through EngagementHQ and the Town of Slave Lake.

Objective 1: Identify and address barriers to internal communication.

Some common barriers to effective internal communication can be found across organizations, these can include but are not limited to:

- Lack of trust in management or colleagues.
- Lack of information on internal communication processes.
- Lack of direct contacts between all employees.
- Lack of internal communication tools dedicated to an organization.
- Long information flows from the top of an organization to the bottom.
- Gossiping, that may lead to a contradiction in announced information to others.

Many of these identified barriers to internal communication can be solved by using soft management skills like targeted conversations and discussions, negotiations, direct contacts, etc. Some factors that influence internal communication processes include (but are not limited to):

- Communication skills of the manager.
- Quality of statements delegated by managers.
- Communication skills of workers.
- Organizational structure.
- Organizational culture and climate.
- Relationships between employees.

The most often employed strategy to address barriers to internal communications is simply communicating more. Often the most effective communication method is simply more direct conversations and meetings with managers so expectations, workflows, and required outputs are clearly defined and understood by both the manager and employee. However, the effectiveness of these conversations and meetings can be influenced by the personality of the manager, management style, relationships between employees representing different departments, relationships between employees in the same department, and organizational conflicts and



changes.² To ensure internal communication is effective, senior managers and leadership need to ensure that the right candidates are selected for management roles within the organization and make necessary changes to personnel or policy and procedures when serious internal communication issues arise and continue to occur after corrective action is taken. Addressing other factors that influence internal communication must come from senior management and leadership (i.e., organizational structure, organizational culture and climate) however, all employees have a role to play in effective internal communication across the organization.

Objective 2: Set clear expectations for interdepartmental communication

Historically, the Communications Department has struggled with obtaining all the relevant information from other Departments for either internal or external communication activities in a timely manner (e.g., snow removal updates). Clear expectations need to be set within the organization that if information needs to be shared or feedback solicited for a particular project either externally or internally, it is the responsibility of the applicable department to provide all necessary information and documents to the Communications Department in a timely manner for review. The Communications Department is responsible for ensuring all messaging and information meant for an external or internal audience conforms to all applicable legislation, policies, key messages, and procedures. The Communications Department will also be responsible for determining the best methodology for that communication effort (website, EngagementHQ, social media, etc.) and ensure messaging is drafted with the target audience in mind. The Communications Department will not release any messaging until all relevant information is provided and confirmed by the responsible department to ensure that the messaging is factual, easy to understand, not retractable, timely and relevant, and accessible.

Objective 3: Improve website content and information flow to Increase navigability and accessibility both internally and externally

The website that is currently being hosted by CivicPlus is difficult to navigate, conveys too much information, and contains information that is outdated or no longer relevant. A detailed and comprehensive review will need to be completed to confirm the goals and objectives for the website are still valid and the strategies and tactics used on the website to achieve those goals and objectives are working. It is envisioned that as part of the website review process a detailed site map will be created to ensure that the website is communicating the right information in a way that is easily understood, navigable, and accessible. This site map would be used as the foundation for any revisions or improvements made to the website in the future. It is envisioned that over time, EngagementHQ will become the primary source for detailed project information so that the website can be streamlined to make it more accessible and navigable.

² Jakubiec, Marcin. (2019). The Importance of Internal Communication for Management of an Organization. *Scientific Papers of Silesian University of Technology. Organization and Management Series.* 2019. 47-62.



While no major revisions are anticipated for the website in 2023, potential outdated information will be flagged and brought to the attention of department heads to determine if the information should be removed or moved to a different location within the site. Work is currently underway for this maintenance initiative.

Objective 4: Encourage public engagement activities for each department through EngagementHQ.

EngagementHQ provides the opportunity for departments to directly engage with residents on specific projects using a variety of engagement tools to tailor the message according to the intended audience. The Communications Department will ask that departments review workplans to identify projects that would benefit from, or require engagement with residents, (this will be guided by direction from senior leadership). Once engagement opportunities, requirements, and goals and objectives are identified, the Communications Department will assist other departments in tailoring engagement efforts and activities to ensure the right tools are used for the intended audience and solicit the feedback required.

Evaluation

The Communications Department has identified the following indicators as it relates to internal communication to measure and evaluate performance:

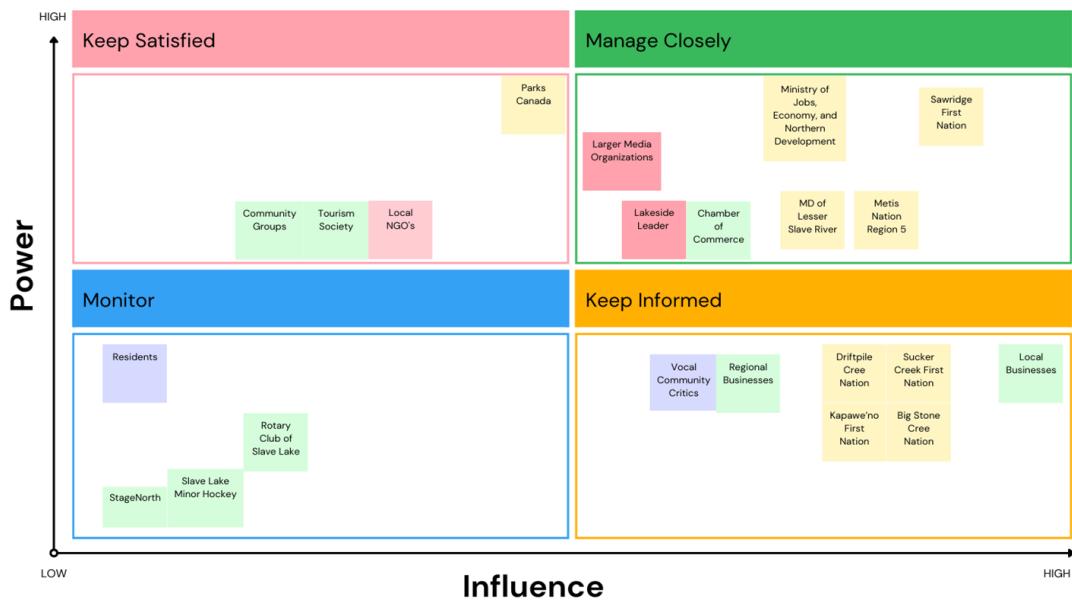
- Clear understanding among all employees of organizational roles and responsibilities.
- Clear understanding among all employees of organizational structure.
- Increased quality and frequency of intra-organizational discussions.
- EngagementHQ tools are utilized effectively to solicit the required feedback from a variety of residents.
- Conducting peer reviews of internal communication with department heads to determine which strategies are successful and which need to be improved upon.

The plan will be reviewed (and potentially revised) annually to identify new goals and objectives, ensure that it remains aligned with the Towns Strategic Plan, and that the strategies and tactics contained within the plan are effectively accomplishing or completing the goals and objectives.



Appendices

Appendix A: Stakeholder Map





Appendix B: Engagement & Consultation Log sample

Date Feedback Provided	Respondent Name and Engagement Tool Used	Project/Topic	Feedback Provided	Follow-Up Response Required? Y/N	Responsible Staff Member	Response Provided On (Date)	Response



Engagement Findings

May 2022

Friday, February 10, 2023





Methodology

- Conducted in May 2022 by Incite as part of the rebranding and visual identity scope of work.
- Engagement Methodology included 27 targeted interviews with community and business leaders as well as a community survey that solicited 122 responses from residents.
- Questions included:
 - Identification of general strengths and weaknesses of the Town
 - Comments on the old Visual Identity and Brand Personality
 - Perceptions of the community
 - Preferred communication methods and desired information outputs



Results – Strengths

Category	Strengths	Category	Strengths
Natural Environment	The lake	Proximity to Amenities	Distance to Edmonton
	Boreal forest		Local Box Stores
	Outdoor recreational activities		Sustainable
Community	Close-knit and friendly	Employment Opportunities	Vast career opportunities
	Supportive		Consistent industry employment
	Young Demographic	Other	Abundant resources
	Family-oriented		Education system

“The sense of community is a strength. We have been through a lot together, which is very heartwarming”

“We have a lot of people that don’t leave the community because the jobs here seem to be sustainable”

“As far as amenities, it’s tough to find all the stuff we have here in another small town”

“The lake is our number one strength since it is the largest lake in Alberta”



Results – Weaknesses

Category	Weakness
Undeveloped Tourism Opportunities	Lake access
	Lack of tourism operators
	Marketing and promotion efforts
Business Environment	Reliant on forestry and oil & gas
	Lack of retail diversity
	Unsupportive
Roads	Red tape
	Severe road conditions
	Pot holes
Other	Lobbying efforts
	Beautification
	Cost of Living
	Homelessness

“Tourism is severely under-developed. We have a beautiful beach that is consistently mentioned in top rankings but there is a lack of support from the Province”

“All you see in town are liquor and cannabis shops. The town needs to be more diverse than that; businesses are closing down and not much is moving in”

“Peace River has a number of restaurants with lots of variety, and they are around the same size as us. Their community really supports them, and I don't think Slave Lake supports business to the same level”

“The roads and highways need repair, and are not being prioritized”



Town Perception

Business and Community Leaders

Dynamic Potential
Vibrant Resilient
Welcoming Energetic
Friendly Family
Safe Young
Natural Rustic
Wild Unwelcoming
Expensive Exciting
Beautiful
Outdated Cozy
Community-centric
Inclusive
Helpful Untapped

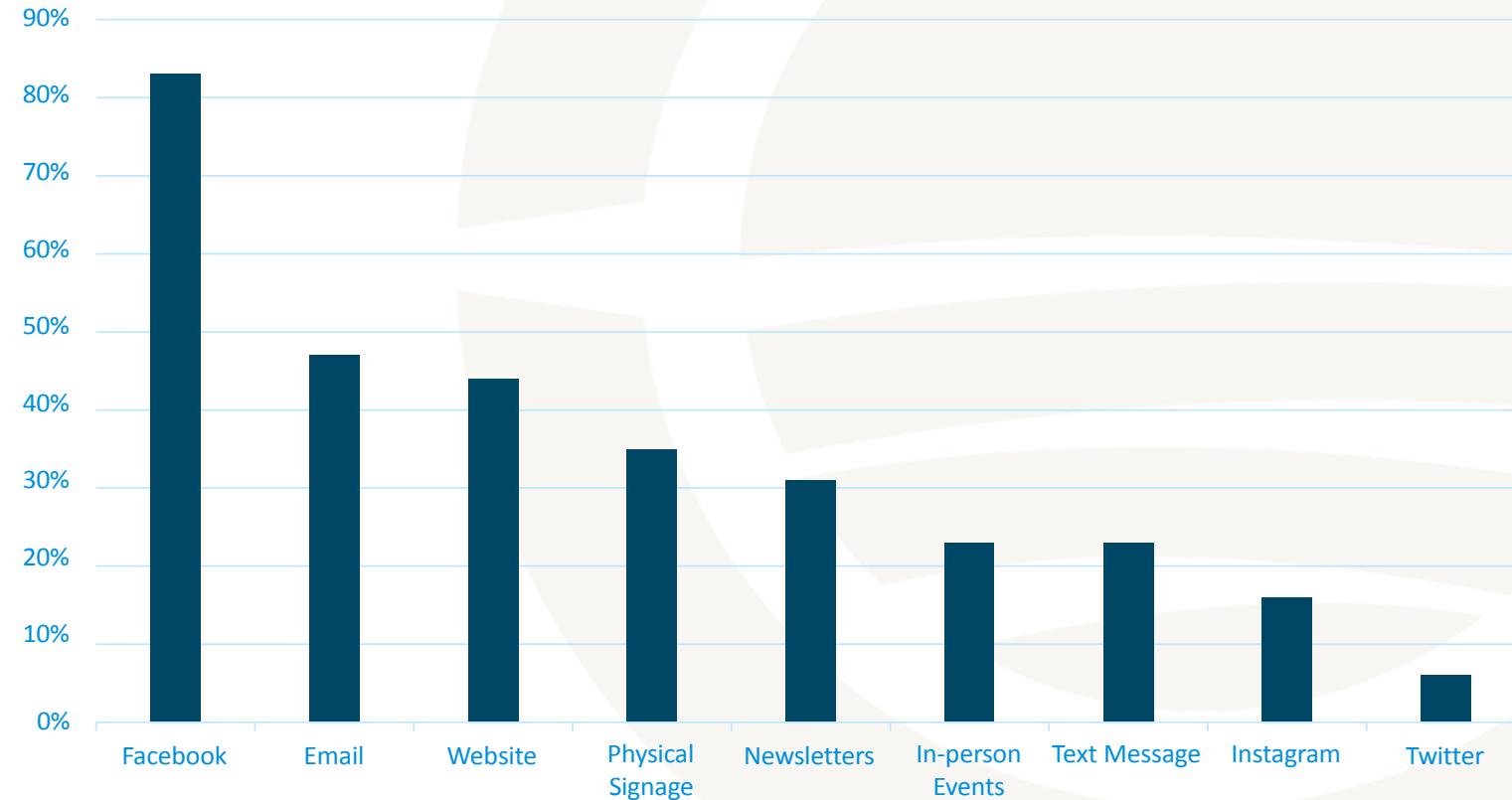
Residents

Comfortable Family
Friendly Cozy
Outdated Disconnected
Beautiful Cold
Resilient Unkept
Boring Industrial Ambitious
Scenic Charming
Sparse Fun
Dull Natural
Dirty Safe
Unwelcoming
Expensive
Transient
Community



Communication – Preferred Channels

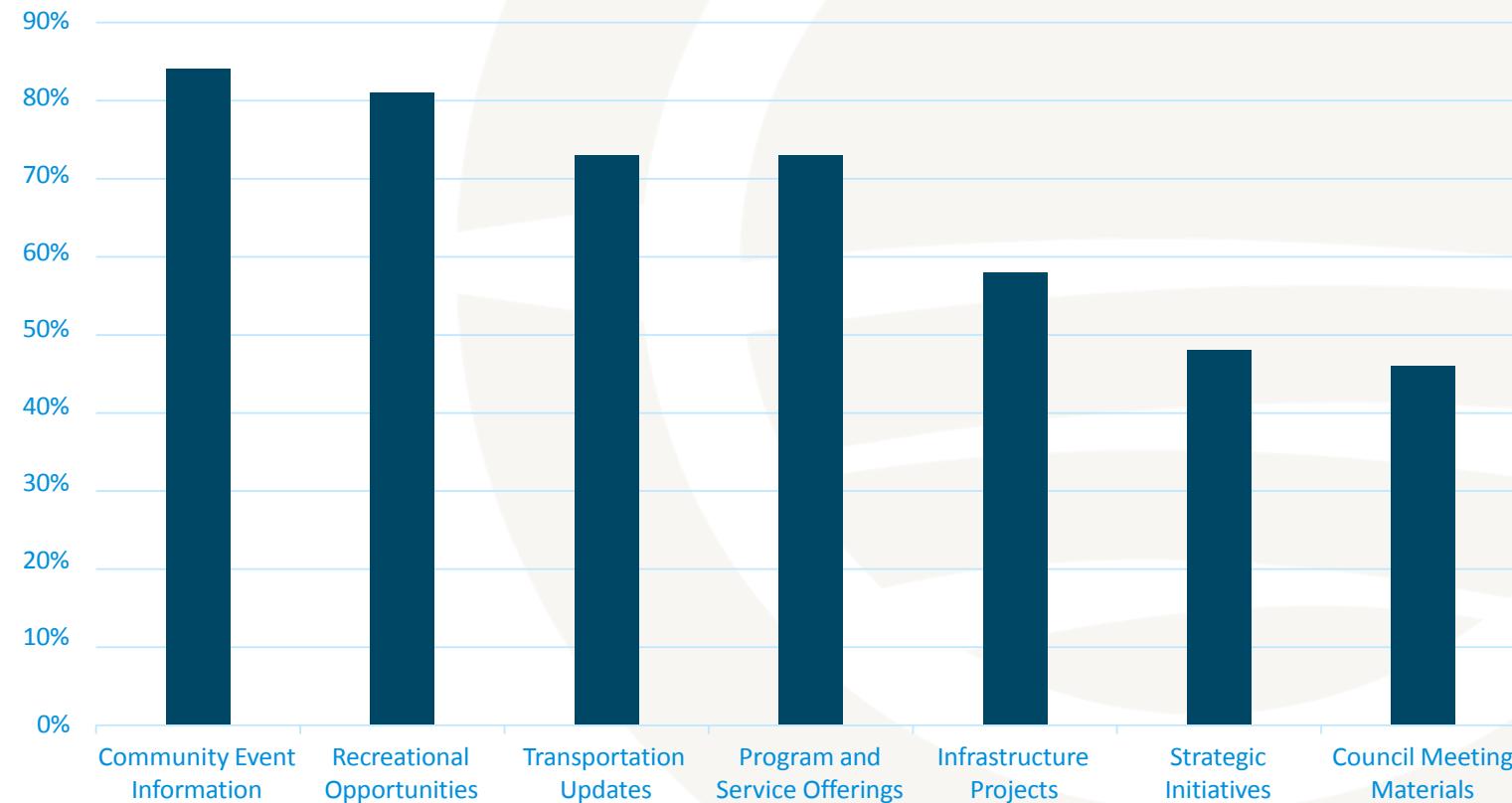
PREFERRED CHANNELS





Communication – Information Desired

INFORMATION DESIRED





Communications Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A dedicated and experienced in-house Communications team.• Motivated Senior Staff and Council that encourage clear and transparent communication.• Knowledgeable Administrative Staff that are willing to collaborate when additional support is required.• An established Website.• Established Social Media accounts with an active online local community.	Weaknesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Website is difficult to maintain, hard to navigate, and houses too much information.• The difficulty to navigate the website makes it hard to determine what information is outdated.• The Communications Department does not always receive relevant updates in a timely or detailed manner.• There is a lack of clarity/understanding among residents on the roles and responsibilities of each Department within the Town of Slave Lake.
Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community is very active on social media and has a strong desire to be informed.• Residents desire to be engaged and provide feedback and input on Town priorities and issues that matter to them.• Have access to multiple platforms that offer a variety of engagement and information sharing tools.• Rework existing platforms so that each provides a specific communication function(s) (i.e., information sharing vs. engagement).	Threats: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A polarized community.• Misinformation is common and spreads quickly.• A vocal minority regularly challenge Town initiatives and attempt to control the narrative with misinformation or providing baseless claims.• Anyone who shares a differing opinion from the negativity is often attacked online from others in the community. This prevents many residents from participating in discussion and providing feedback.• Slow internal response times leads to a lack of trust in the community.• Information sharing to the community is occasionally lost due to vocal negative public opinion.

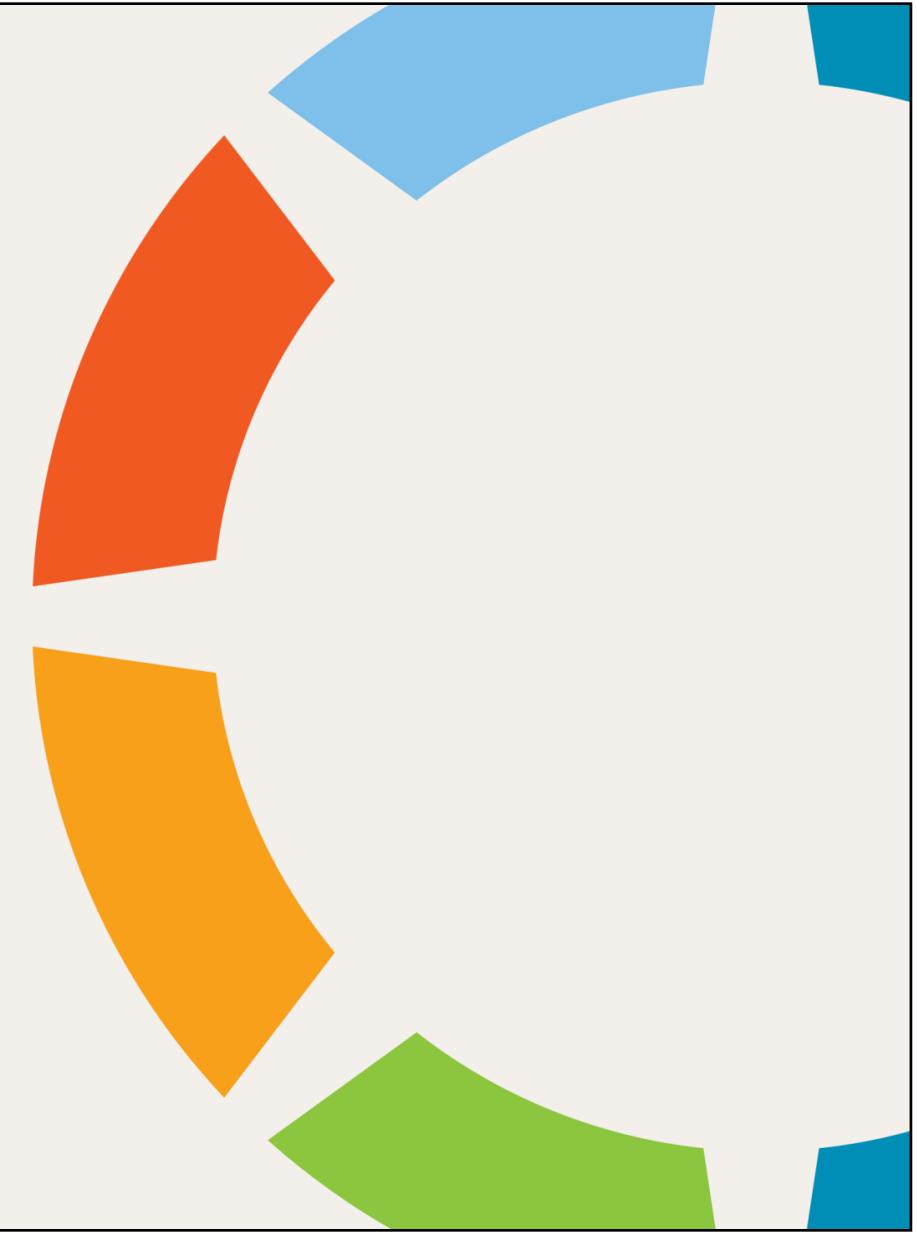


Communication Plan

Friday, February 10, 2023



External Communication





External Communication

Town leadership and Administration has heard clearly from residents that they desire more communication from the Town on current priorities and activities as well as increased opportunities to provide feedback and input on Town issues that are important to them. Communications is one of five strategic priorities identified by Council in its strategic plan. Council believes that communicating the benefits of Slave Lake and engaging with the community are key to increasing community pride. Under the Communication strategic priority, two key areas of focus have been identified which are both addressed in this Plan:

- Focus on proactive engagement and communication with residents.**
- Actively communicate a positive image of Slave Lake.**

This document will focus on both external communication with stakeholders and internal communication amongst departments and staff with the intention of building a collaborative, constructive and accountable relationship with the community and within the organization.



Goals

- 1. Develop and maintain positive working relationships with all priority stakeholders.**
- 2. Build trust in the Town of Slave Lake.**
- 3. Build mechanisms for receiving and incorporating input/feedback from stakeholders.**
- 4. Increase and maintain transparency where appropriate.**
- 5. Create awareness and increase knowledge of the public process to residents.**



Objectives

- 1. Identify priority stakeholders.**
- 2. Establish a strategy for delivering key messages.**
- 3. Identify and address barriers to engagement.**
- 4. Document engagement activities and their outcomes.**
- 5. Set the stage for successful engagement.**
- 6. Understand the cultural, traditional, and unique interests of Indigenous peoples including how Town activities may affect their ability to conduct traditional activities.**



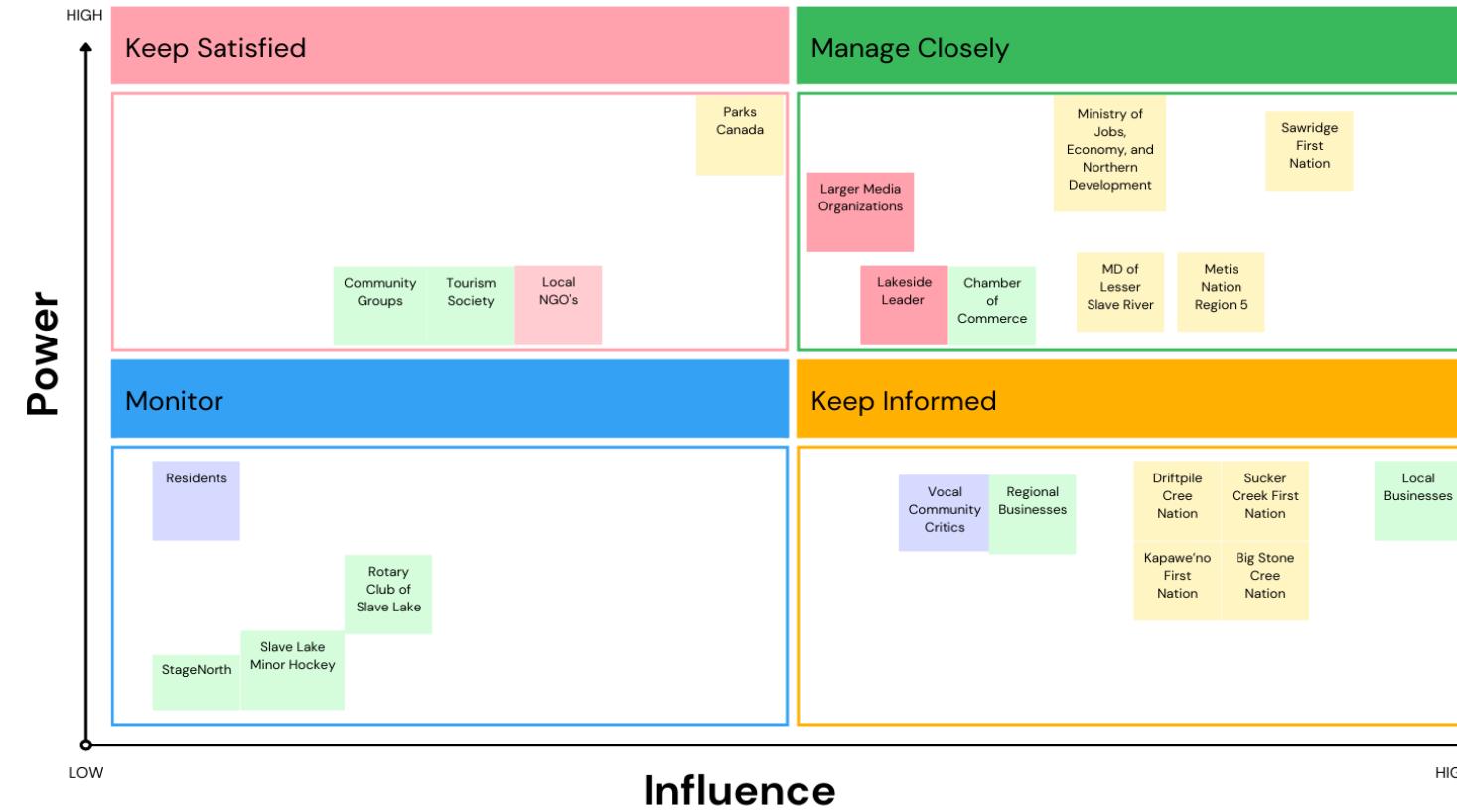
Guiding Principles

Communication between the Town of Slave Lake and stakeholders must be based on consistent and strong messaging and best practices to build trust in the Town. Guiding principles for all future communication efforts and activities:

- 1. Communication is factual.**
- 2. Messaging is easy to understand (and tailored for the intended audience).**
- 3. Information is not retractable.**
- 4. Communication is timely and relevant.**
- 5. Communication and messaging are accessible.**



Objective 1: Identify Priority Stakeholders





Objective 2: Establish a strategy for delivering key messages

As part of the Town's rebranding exercise, the Town of Slave Lake developed the following key messages or key value points to guide and serve as the foundation for all future communication efforts.

Northern Connectivity

Slave Lake has the infrastructure, geographic location, and market connectivity needed to empower the creation of a thriving economy that connects central Alberta on a global scale.

A Strong Connectivity

One of Canada's youngest communities, the people of Slave Lake work hard, take care of one another, and embody an ambitious and resilient spirit that allows for numerous opportunities.

Unlocking Access to the Great Outdoors

Slave Lake is home to raw, untamed nature and is committed to building the capacity necessary for visitors to experience some of Alberta's best outdoor recreation.

Key messages have been developed and tailored for residents, visitors, and businesses for each of the key values points



Objective 2: Establish a strategy for delivering key messages

External messaging and communication outputs will be reviewed and approved by the communications team. External departmental messages should be sent to the communications team directly from department directors, when possible, to ensure that the information is accurate and approved by the department. Possible platforms for the delivery of key messages and other communications include (but are not limited to):

- Social media posts
- Voyent Alert updates
- Website updates
- EngagementHQ
- Digital billboards
- Media releases
- Mailers
- Posters
- Town halls
- Open houses
- Newsletters

Slave Lake is home to a population that values a community centric lifestyle along with easy access to those services and amenities found in cities.

Slave Lake's richness in natural assets combined with its location as a service hub for north central Alberta with efficient access to the Edmonton Metro Region, means it's easier to ship goods and materials along integrated infrastructure including road, rail, and air.

Daytrips and weekend adventures are easy with Slave Lake only 2.5 hours from the Edmonton Metropolitan Region.



Objective 3: Identify and address barriers to engagement

- Facebook has become an unofficial forum for residents which frequently become derailed by the same small group of individuals who use the opportunity to provide negative feedback on Town activities, programming, and staff. Comments are public facing and can cause considerable harm to the Town of Slave Lake's image and reputation as well as hinder potential labour attraction and retention efforts both for the Town as well as local and regional businesses.
- Administration plans to implement EngagementHQ as the preferred platform to improve engagement within the community and solicit feedback. Project based initiatives will be public facing and will create greater transparency and allow for a variety of feedback to be gathered through various engagement tools to inform project planning or other activities. Recognizing that the requirement to register with EngagementHQ represents a barrier to engagement, the Town will continue to provide opportunities for residents to provide general feedback on the Town website.





Objective 4: Document engagement activities and their outcomes

The Communications Department has created and will regularly update a consultation and engagement log. The purpose of this log will be to document and summarize all input and feedback received through the Town's communication, consultation, and engagement efforts.

Date Feedback Provided	Respondent Name and Engagement Tool Used	Project/Topic	Feedback Provided	Follow-Up Response Required? Y/N	Responsible Staff Member	Response Provided On (Date)	Response



Objective 5: Set stage for successful engagement

- **Building and maintaining trust amongst stakeholders is a top priority however, trust takes time to develop. To help build trust, the Communication team will ensure all outputs and efforts are grounded in best practices, these include:**
 - Providing consistent messaging
 - Encouraging open and transparent dialogue.
 - Including a mix of participation, consultation, and information type activities.
 - Providing opportunities for meaningful engagement that results in direct input to individual project design, Town priorities, etc.
 - Providing timely and accurate information.
- **The implementation of EngagementHQ (in combination with the Town website) will create a centralized location for all official engagement efforts that will allow more opportunities for receiving feedback, building trust, and creating transparency.**
- **It is critical that residents and stakeholders feel they are being heard. The Town will need to clearly demonstrate how feedback was utilized and how it informed project planning or other activities, as appropriate.**



Objective 6: Understand the cultural, traditional, and unique interests of Indigenous peoples including how Town activities may affect their ability to conduct traditional activities.

Historic (and current) context requires an approach to engagement that may differ from non-Indigenous populations. Indigenous communities are unique from one another and therefore, the approach to engagement may differ depending on the community.

The following best practices were developed by Alberta Municipalities to guide municipalities in their communication and engagement efforts with Indigenous groups:



Sawridge





Objective 6: Understand the cultural, traditional, and unique interests of Indigenous peoples including how Town activities may affect their ability to conduct traditional activities.

- Respect the importance of building genuine relationships. Meet in-person when possible and take the time to build the relationship before you make a request.
- Familiarize yourself with the purpose and practice and traditional protocols (e.g., offering tobacco when seeking advice or knowledge).
- Compensate Elders and Knowledge Keepers for their time and value of their service.
- Take the time to learn about the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada.
- Be familiar with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.
- Acknowledge the land and that we are all partners in the Treaty agreements.
- Recognize that cultural practices may differ from non-Indigenous populations such as the significance of time, how deaths in the community are treated, responding to written communication, or even differences in how handshakes are viewed.
- Consider using a cultural mediator for guidance. A good resource is to contact your local Native Friendship Centre or other Indigenous organization in your region.

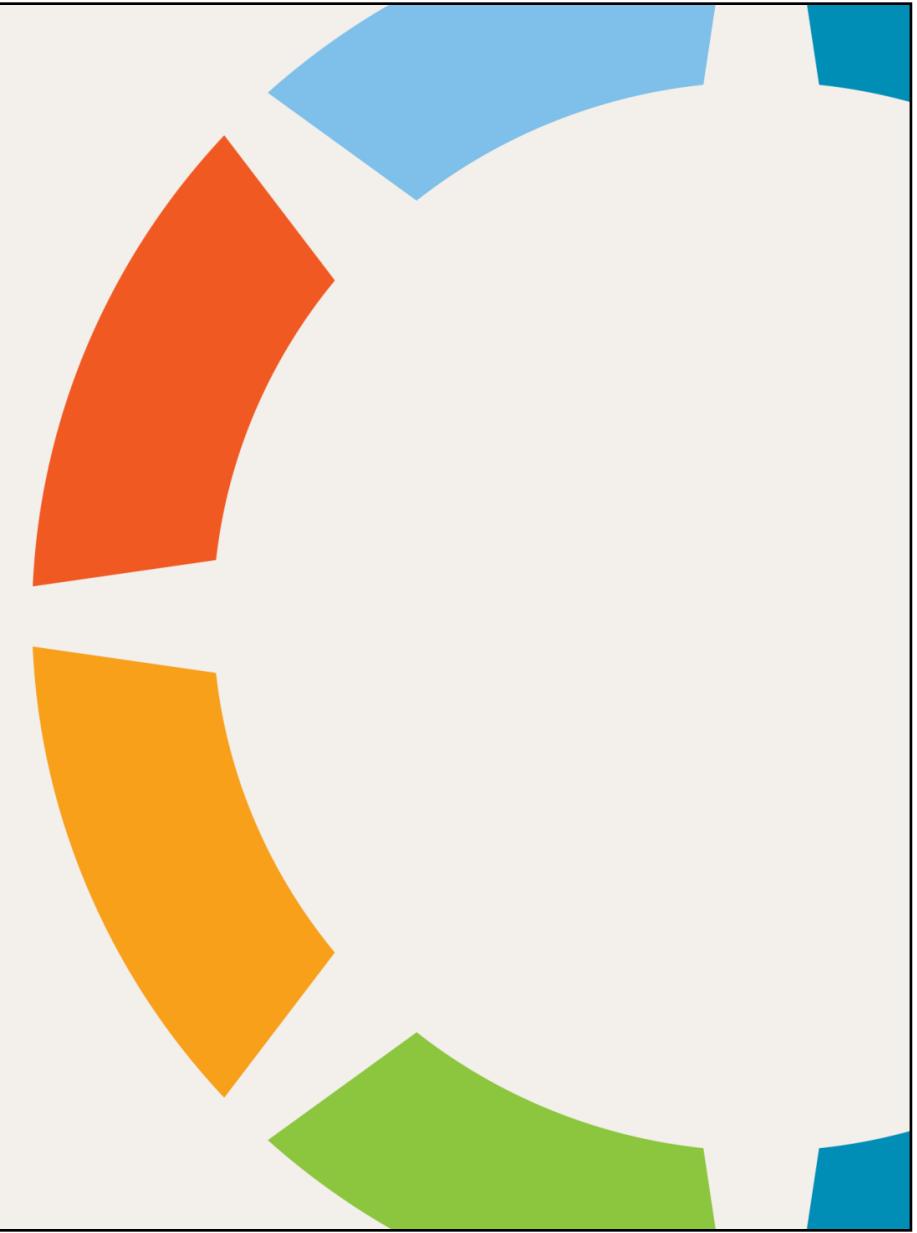


Evaluation

In addition to data analytics, the following indicators have been identified to measure and evaluate performance:

- At a minimum, monthly posts from each Department highlighting key activities, programming, or their role within the Organization.
- Greater number of respondents to engagement efforts and activities.
- Greater variety of feedback gathered from a greater variety of residents.
- Quarterly review of the engagement log.
- Review of analytics on the Town website, EngagementHQ, and social media to identify trends and alter strategy accordingly.
- The Communication Plan will be reviewed at a minimum annually to ensure that it remains aligned with the Town's Strategic Plan and it is effectively completing objectives.

Internal Communication





Internal Communication

Internal communication is critical to the success of any organization and serves a variety of functions. Typically, there are six communication functions within an organization.

- **Regulate** – Communication that is directed toward regulatory policies within the organization or messages about maintenance of the organization.
- **Manage** – Communication focused on getting personnel to do what is needed, learning information about personnel to know them better, and establishing relationships with personnel.
- **Persuade** – attempting to influence the employee to do something in particular.
- **Inform** – Function of providing needed information to personnel so they can do their jobs in an effective and efficient manner.
- **Socialize** – Being integrated into the communication networks in the organization.
- **Integrate** – Focused on coordination of tasks, work assignments, group coordination of the fusing of work units toward a common goal.



Goals

- 1. Team integration across departments.**
- 2. Clear leadership structure with roles and responsibilities clearly defined and understood.**
- 3. Maintain appropriate protocols when sharing or distributing information.**



Objectives

- 1. Identify and address barriers to internal communication.**
- 2. Set clear and realistic expectations for interdepartmental communication.**
- 3. Improve website content and information flow to increase navigability and accessibility both internally and externally.**
- 4. Encourage public engagement activities for each department through EngagementHQ.**



Objective 1: Identify and address barriers to internal communication

Barriers

- Lack of trust in management or colleagues.
- Lack of information on internal communication processes.
- Lack of direct contacts between all employees.
- Lack of internal communication tools dedicated to the organization.
- Long information flows from the top of an organization to the bottom.
- Gossiping, that may lead to a contradiction in announced information to others.

Solution

Many of these barriers can be solved by using soft management skills like targeted conversations and discussions, negotiations, direct contacts, etc. The most often employed strategy to address barriers is simply communicating more.

Influential Factors

- Communications skills of the manager.
- Quality of statements delegated by managers.
- Communications skills of workers.
- Organizational structure.
- Organizational culture and climate.
- Relationships between employees.



Objective 2: Set clear expectations for interdepartmental communication

- Historically, the organization has occasionally struggled with obtaining all the relevant information for either internal or external communication activities in a timely manner.
- Clear expectations need to be set within the organization that if information needs to be shared or feedback solicited for a particular project either internally or externally, it is the responsibility of the applicable department to provide all necessary information and documents to the Communications Department in a timely manner for review and content/message creation.



Town of
SLAVE LAKE



Objective 3: Improve website content and flow

- The website currently being hosted by CivicPlus is difficult to navigate, conveys too much information, and contains information that is outdated or no longer relevant.
- While no major revisions have been budgeted for 2023, potential outdated information will be flagged for review. Work is currently underway.
- A detailed site map will be created to ensure that the website is communicating the right information in a way that is easily understood, navigable, and accessible. This site map will serve as the foundation for any revisions or improvements made in the future.



Objective 4: Encourage public engagement activities for each department through EngagementHQ

- EngagementHQ provides the opportunity for departments to directly engage with residents on specific projects using a variety of engagement tools to tailor the message according to the intended audience.
- The Communications Department will ask that departments review workplans to identify projects that would benefit from or require engagement with residents (this will also be informed by Leadership and Senior Management).
- Once engagement opportunities, requirements, and goals and objectives are identified, the Communications Department will assist other departments in tailoring engagement efforts and activities to ensure the right tools are used for the intended audience and solicit the required feedback.





Evaluation

The following indicators have been identified to measure and evaluate performance:

- Clear understanding among all employees of organizational roles and responsibilities.
- Clear understanding among all employees of organizational structure.
- Increased quality and frequency of inter-departmental discussions.
- EngagementHQ tools are utilized effectively to solicit the required feedback from a variety of residents.
- Conducting peer reviews of internal communication with department heads to determine which strategies are successful and which need to be improved upon.
- The Communication Plan will be reviewed at a minimum annually to ensure that it remains aligned with the Town's Strategic Plan and it is effectively completing objectives.



THANK YOU