

The Corporation of the County of Northumberland
Corporate Support Committee
Agenda

Tuesday, July 30, 2024, 2:00 p.m.

Council Chambers

555 Courthouse Road, Cobourg, ON K9A 5J6

Hybrid Meeting (In-Person and Virtual)

Zoom Information

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89601897634?pwd=sgMZEnmaaCmHVSnbAggke6owG8S9G3.1>

Meeting ID: 896 0189 7634

Passcode: 025508

Phone: 1-855-703-8985 Canada Toll-free

Pages

1. Notices

1.a Accessible Format

If you require this information in an alternate format, please contact the Accessibility Coordinator at accessibility@northumberland.ca or 1-800-354-7050 ext. 2327.

1.b Meeting Format

This Committee meeting will be held using a hybrid meeting model. The public is invited to attend in-person in Council Chambers. Alternatively, the public may view the Committee meeting via live stream, join online, or join by phone using Zoom Conference technology. If you have any questions, please email matherm@northumberland.ca.

- Attend in-person in Council Chambers, located at 555 Courthouse Road, Cobourg
- Watch a livestream by visiting Northumberland.ca/Council
- Join online using Zoom
- Join by phone using Zoom

2. **Call to Order**

2.a **Territorial Land Acknowledgement**

3. **Approval of the Agenda**

Recommended Motion:

"**That** the agenda for the July 30, 2024 Corporate Support Committee be approved."

4. **Disclosures of Interest**

5. **Delegations**

6. **Business Arising from Last Meeting**

7. **Communications**

7.a **Correspondence, City of Stratford 'Urgent Need for Increased Funding to Libraries and Museums in Ontario'**

6 - 9

Recommended Motion:

"**That** the Corporate Support Committee receive the correspondence from the City of Stratford regarding 'Urgent Need for Increased Funding to Libraries and Museums in Ontario' for information, noting that County Council previously considered and supported correspondence regarding this subject matter at the May 15, 2024 County Council meeting; and

Further That the Committee recommend that County Council receive this correspondence for information."

7.b **Correspondence, Municipality of Wawa 'Support for Amendment to the Occupational Health and Safety Act to Clarify the Definition of Employer'**

10 - 10

Recommended Motion:

"**That** the Corporate Support Committee receive the correspondence from the Municipality of Wawa regarding 'Amendment to the OHSA to Clarify the Definition of Employer' for information, noting that County Council previously considered and supported correspondence regarding this subject matter at the February 21, 2024 County Council meeting; and

Further That the Committee recommend that County Council receive this correspondence for information."

7.c Correspondence, Loyalist Township 'Accessible Ontario by 2025' 11 - 13

Recommended Motion:

"**That** the Corporate Support Committee receive the correspondence from Loyalist Township regarding 'Accessible Ontario by 2025' for information; and

Further That the Committee recommend that County Council receive this correspondence for information."

7.d Correspondence, Peterborough County 'Jurisdiction of Ontario's Ombudsman' 14 - 15

Recommended Motion:

"**That** the Corporate Support Committee receive the correspondence from the City of Peterborough regarding 'Jurisdiction of Ontario's Ombudsman' for information; and

Further That the Committee recommend that County Council receive this correspondence for information."

7.e Correspondence, Town of Grimsby 'Township of Clearview Endorsement of Bill C-63' 16 - 18

Recommended Motion:

"**That** the Corporate Support Committee receive the correspondence from the Town of Grimsby regarding 'Endorsement of Bill C-63' for information; and

Further That the Committee recommend that County Council receive this correspondence for information."

8. Staff Reports

8.a Report 2024-095 Communications 'Northumberland County Communications Master Plan' - Presentation 19 - 83

Kate Campbell, Director Communications and Information Technology
Andrea Montgomery, Vice President, Redbrick Communications

Recommended Motion:

"**That** the Corporate Support Committee, having considered Report 2024-095 'Northumberland County Communications Master Plan', recommend that County Council approve and adopt this plan at the August 14, 2024 County Council meeting."

8.b	Communications - Quarter 2, 2024 Financial Analysis Matthew Nitsch, Director Finance / Treasurer	84 - 84
8.c	Information Technology - Quarter 2, 2024 Financial Analysis Matthew Nitsch, Director Finance / Treasurer	85 - 85
8.d	Legal Services - Quarter 2, 2024 Financial Analysis Matthew Nitsch, Director Finance / Treasurer	86 - 86
8.e	Corporate Services - Quarter 2, 2024 Financial Analysis Matthew Nitsch, Director Finance / Treasurer	87 - 87
	<p>Recommended Motion:</p> <p>"That the Corporate Support Committee receive the Quarter 2, 2024 Financial Analyses of the Communications, Information Technology, Legal Services and Corporate Services Departments for information; and</p> <p>Further That the Committee recommend that County Council receive the Quarter 2, 2024 Financial Analyses for information."</p>	
8.f	Communications, 'Communications Department Quarter 2 Update' - Presentation Kate Campbell, Director Communications and Information Technology Scott Berry, Communications Officer	88 - 91
	<p>Recommended Motion:</p> <p>"That the Corporate Support Committee receive the presentation regarding the 'Communications Department Quarter 2 Update' for information; and</p> <p>Further That the Committee recommend that County Council receive the PowerPoint presentation for information."</p>	
8.g	Report 2024-101 Communications 'Grant Activity Biannual Report' Jennifer Hardy-Parr, Grant Writer	92 - 96
	<p>Recommended Motion:</p> <p>"That the Corporate Support Committee receive Report 2024-101 'Grant Activity Biannual Report' for information; and</p> <p>Further That the Committee recommend that County Council receive this report for information."</p>	

9. Other Matters Considered by Committee

9.a Northumberland Accessibility Advisory Committee - Meeting Minutes

97 - 98

Recommended Motion:

"**That** the Corporate Support Committee receive the minutes from the May 9, 2024 meeting of the Northumberland Accessibility Advisory Committee for information; and

Further That the Committee recommend that County Council receive the minutes for information."

10. Media Questions

11. Closed Session

N/A

12. Motion to Rise and Results from Closed Session

N/A

13. Next Meeting - Tuesday, September 3, 2024 at 2:00 p.m.

14. Adjournment



City of Stratford, Corporate Services Department

Clerk's Office

City Hall, P. O. Box 818, Stratford, Ontario N5A 6W1

Tel: 519-271-0250, extension 5237

Email: clerks@stratford.ca

Website: www.stratford.ca

April 25, 2024

Sent via email to: jkirkelos@lincoln.ca

Julie Kirkelos
Town Clerk
Town of Lincoln

Dear Julie Kirkelos:

Re: Resolution - Increased Funding to Libraries and Museums in Ontario

We acknowledge receipt of your correspondence dated February 28, 2024, regarding the above-mentioned matter.

The said correspondence was provided to Stratford City Council for their information as part of the March 25, 2024, Council meeting Consent Agenda (CA-2024-036). Council adopted the following resolution:

That CA-2024-036, being a resolution from the Town of Lincoln regarding Increased Funding to Libraries and Museums in Ontario, be endorsed.

Sincerely,
T. Dafoe
Tatiana Dafoe, Clerk

/mf

cc: Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Hon. Neil Lumsden, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport
Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
All Ontario municipalities



4800 SOUTH SERVICE RD
BEAMSVILLE, ON L0R 1B1

905-563-8205

February 28, 2024

SENT VIA EMAIL: Premier@ontario.ca

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Honourable Doug Ford:

RE: Town of Lincoln Council Resolution – Urgent Need for Increased Funding to Libraries and Museums in Ontario

Please be advised that the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Lincoln at its Council Meeting held on February 26, 2024, passed the following motion regarding an Urgent Need for Increased Funding to Libraries and Museums in Ontario:

Resolution No: RC-2024-23

Moved by Mayor Easton; Seconded by Councillor Mike Mikolic

WHEREAS the provincial funding for public libraries is currently based on population levels from 25 years ago, which fails to reflect the substantial growth and changing needs of our communities. The Town of Lincoln Council wishes to draw your attention to the "Overdue" report of 2023 from the Canadian Urban Council, which emphasizes the pivotal role libraries play in various aspects of community life, including knowledge distribution, culture, health, reconciliation, belonging, and our democracy; and

WHEREAS libraries, situated at the heart of our communities, serve as multifaceted institutions catering to diverse needs. They provide essential services such as access to culture and information, refuge for those experiencing domestic violence, election information centers, job search facilities, health clinics, language learning centers for newcomers, and spaces for educational and community events. Despite their vital role, public libraries in Ontario have not seen an increase in provincial funding for over 25 years, leading to a decrease in the value of the province's investment by over 60%; and

WHEREAS the Town of Lincoln Council urges the Provincial Government to

consider increasing provincial funding for Ontario's public libraries to address critical shared priorities and community needs. While over 90% of library funding comes from local municipal governments, provincial operating funding is crucial for providing stability to library budgets, especially in times of inflation, technological changes, and increasing demands on libraries as community hubs; and

WHEREAS the Town of Lincoln Council would like to bring to the Provincial Government's attention the pressing need to increase the funding envelope for the Community Museum Operating Grant (CMOG). The Town of Lincoln currently receives \$25,000 annually, the maximum amount through this grant, but the funding envelope has remained stagnant for over 15 years. This limitation hampers the ability of community museums to offset increasing operational expenses, impacting their role in preserving and promoting local stories, attracting cultural tourists, supplementing school curriculum, and contributing to vibrant and vital communities; and

WHEREAS the Lincoln Museum and Cultural Centre is a community hub critical to the health and vibrancy of our community. An increase in CMOG funding will enable our museum to continue its valuable service to the community, creating a sense of place, attracting cultural tourists, and preserving local stories that define our unique identity; and

WHEREAS Cultural institutions, particularly museums, play a vital role in shaping and preserving our community's identity. They contribute to tourism, social participation, senior well-being, skill-building, and learning. As the largest government funder for most of Ontario's smaller museums, municipalities create value in their communities through the work of these institutions.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Town of Lincoln Council urges the Provincial Government to support increasing funding to both public libraries and community museums. Recognizing these institutions as national assets and strategically investing in their potential will contribute significantly to renewing post-pandemic social cohesion, economic well-being, and community resilience; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT this resolution be circulated to the Province, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Niagara Region, the 12 Local Area Municipalities in Niagara and all municipalities of Ontario for endorsement.

CARRIED

If you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Regards,



Julie Kirkelos

Town Clerk

jkirkelos@lincoln.ca

JK/dp

Cc: Premier of Ontario
Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport
Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
Ann-Marie Norio, Clerk, Niagara Region
Local Area Municipalities
All Ontario Municipalities





The Corporation of the Municipality of Wawa

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

RESOLUTION

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Resolution # RC24048	Meeting Order: 9
Moved by: 	Seconded by: 

RESOLVED THAT the Council of the Municipality of Wawa, having considered the correspondence from the Town of Plympton-Wyoming and Township of Larder Lake regarding 'Support for amendment to the Occupational Health and Safety Act to Clarify the Definition of Employer', support this correspondence and attached motion from the City of Greater Sudbury; and

AND FURTHER, THAT that a copy of the resolution be sent to the Honourable Doug Ford Premier of Ontario, the Honorable David Piccini Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, and the Honorable Paul Calandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and all Ontario Municipalities.

RESOLUTION RESULT		RECORDED VOTE		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CARRIED	MAYOR AND COUNCIL	YES	NO
<input type="checkbox"/>	DEFEATED	Mitch Hatfield		
<input type="checkbox"/>	TABLED	Cathy Cannon		
<input type="checkbox"/>	RECORDED VOTE (SEE RIGHT)	Melanie Pilon		
<input type="checkbox"/>	PECUNIARY INTEREST DECLARED	Jim Hoffmann		
<input type="checkbox"/>	WITHDRAWN	Joseph Opato		

Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and the general nature thereof.

Disclosed the pecuniary interest and general name thereof and abstained from the discussion, vote and influence.

Clerk: _____

MAYOR - MELANIE PILON	CLERK - MAURY O'NEILL
	

This document is available in alternate formats.

April 24, 2024

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queens Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

DELIVERED VIA EMAIL

Dear Premier Ford,

Re: Motion regarding Accessible Ontario by 2025

Please be advised that at its regular meeting of April 23, 2024, Loyalist Township Council passed the following resolution:

Resolution 2024-93

Moved by Councillor Proderick
Seconded by Councillor Willis

WHEREAS the Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act (AODA) is ground-breaking legislation, created to help people with disabilities fully participate in society, bring them to the table in crafting regulations, and build mechanisms to enforce standards;

WHEREAS Rich Donovan, an expert in accessibility issues, was appointed as the Independent Reviewer of the Act in 2022, and in his 2023 legislative review declared a crisis as a necessary catalyst to get Ontario back on track for accessibility;

WHEREAS at least 2.9 million Ontarians currently live with a disability, representing at least 22% of the consumer base and the workforce, but due to barriers, Ontarians with disabilities are too often falling short of their full potential;

WHEREAS the AODA aims to develop, implement and enforce standards related to goods, services, accommodation, employment and buildings before Jan. 1, 2025, and municipalities, as the level of government closest to the people are at the front lines, developing, implementing and enforcing these standards without meaningful guidance on its implementation and/or enforcement by the Province;



WHEREAS people with disabilities and advocates note the slow pace of current and previous Ontario governments in implementing the AODA and there are growing concerns there will be no renewed push to keep accessibility issues at the forefront after 2025;

WHEREAS Loyalist Township is dedicated and committed to creating a welcoming environment so that all people may have equitable access to programs, goods, services and facilities, but making investments to achieve the AODA standards has been challenging given the lack of consistent and stable funding for municipalities to remove accessibility barriers;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of Loyalist Township strongly encourages action on the part of the Provincial Government to urgently:

- a) create a "Municipal Accessibility Fund" for municipalities to develop, implement and enforce AODA standards related to goods, services, accommodation, employment and buildings. Such a fund could be modeled after the Canada Community-Building Fund or the Ontario Cannabis Legalization Implementation Fund on a per household basis;
- b) to commit to working with municipalities to implement the Donovan Review immediate crisis recommendations;

AND FURTHER THAT a copy of this resolution be sent to Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario, Honourable Raymond Sung Joon Cho Minister of Seniors and Accessibility, Honourable Micheal Parsa, Minister of Children, Community, and Social Services, Honourable Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health, Honourable Paul Calandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and the Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus, and all Ontario Municipalities for their support.

Motion carried.



Sincerely,

Anne Kantharajah

Anne Kantharajah
Township Clerk
akantharajah@loyalist.ca
613-386-7351 Ext. 121

cc: Honourable Raymond Sung Joon Cho Minister of Seniors and Accessibility
Honourable Micheal Parsa, Minister of Children, Community, and Social Services
Honourable Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health
Honourable Paul Calandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing,
Federation of Canadian Municipalities
Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus
Jim Hegadorn, Mayor, Loyalist Township
Rebecca Murphy, CAO, Loyalist Township
Councillor Proderick, Loyalist Township
Councillor Willis, Loyalist Township
Ontario Municipalities



April 11, 2024

Hon. Paul Calandra
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
via Email:
minister.mah@ontario.ca

Re: Jurisdiction of Ontario's Ombudsman

The following resolution, adopted by City Council at their meeting on April 8, 2024, is forwarded for your information and necessary action.

That Council approve the recommendations outlined in [Report LSOCS24-005](#), dated April 2, 2024 of the Commissioner, Legislative Services, as follows:

- a) That the Honourable Paul Calandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, be requested to introduce a Bill to amend the Ombudsman Act to require the Ontario Ombudsman to provide to each municipality, if requested by the municipality, sufficient particulars of each investigation, matter or case respecting the municipality that is referred to in each of the Ombudsman's Annual Reports to permit the municipality to fully understand and address the subject matter of each such investigation, matter or case including:
 - i) a copy of each complaint, as applicable, redacted only to the extent of individuals' personal information contained therein;
 - ii) the identities of the municipality's employees, officers and members of Council with whom the Ombudsman was consulting in respect of the investigation, matter or case; and
 - iii) particulars of the outcome of the investigation, matter or case including the Ombudsman's findings, conclusions and recommendations, if any.
- b) That the City Clerk forward Council's resolutions resulting from Council's approval of these recommendations to Minister Calandra, MPP David Smith, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and to the municipal Clerks of Ontario's municipalities.

Sincerely,

J. Kennedy

John Kennedy, City Clerk

cc: David Smith, MPP
Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
All Ontario Municipalities



**The Corporation of the Town of Grimsby
Administration**

Office of the Town Clerk
160 Livingston Avenue, Grimsby, ON L3M 0J5
Phone: 905-945-9634 Ext. 2171 | **Fax:** 905-945-5010
Email: vsteele@grimsby.ca

April 16, 2024

SENT VIA E-MAIL

Honourable Arif Virani
Minister of Justice & Attorney General
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Virani,

RE: Township of Clearview Endorsement of Bill C-63 in the House of Commons

Please be advised that the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Grimsby at its meeting held on April 2, 2024, passed the following resolution:

Moved: Councillor Charrois

Seconded: Councillor Korstanje

Resolved that Council support the Township of Clearview's resolution regarding the endorsement of Bill C-63 in the House of Commons.

If you require any additional information, please let me know.

Regards,

Victoria Steele
Town Clerk

CC: Township of Clearview
Right Honourable Prime Minister Justin Trudeau
Dean Allison, MP Niagara West
Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Ontario Municipalities



CLEARVIEW
TOWNSHIP

Clerk's Department
Township of Clearview
Box 200, 217 Gideon Street
Stayner, Ontario L0M 1S0
clerks@clearview.ca | www.clearview.ca
Phone: 705-428-6230

March 27, 2024

Honourable Arif Virani
Minister of Justice & Attorney General
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Sent by Email

RE: Township of Clearview Endorsement of Bill C-63 in the House of Commons

Please be advised that Council of the Township of Clearview at its meeting held on March 25, 2024, passed the following resolution in support of the endorsement of Bill C-63 in the House of Commons:

Moved by Councillor Dineen, Seconded by Councillor Broderick, Whereas The Canadian Federal Government has drafted Bill C-63, The Online Harms Act, currently in front of Parliament and has had its first reading; and,

Whereas Bill C-63 requires that online tech companies and social media platforms remove child pornography and other dangerous content within 24 hours once the operator identifies the content, while also mandating the following duties:

- Duty to protect children;
- Duty to act responsibly;
- Duty to remove egregious content; and,

Whereas The Canadian Federal Government proposes to establish a "Digital Safety Commission" and nominate an "independent" Ombudsperson to proactively circumvent potential harms on behalf of Canadians; and,

Whereas online tech companies and social media platforms need to adhere to existing Criminal Laws; and,

Whereas online tech companies and social media platforms need to be held accountable to keep platforms safe from predators targeting children and other vulnerable Canadians and to protect them from bullying, hate, extremism, violence, discrimination, self harm, exploitation and sexual extortion that can lead to the most dire of consequences; and,

Whereas Clearview Township, as all Canadians, endeavours to foster safe homes, communities, schools and public spaces;

Be It Resolved That the Mayor and Council of Clearview Township endorse the passing of Bill C-63 in the House of Commons and the establishment of a "digital safety commission" and nomination of an "independent" Ombudsperson; and,

That a copy of this resolution be circulated to all municipalities in Ontario; the Association of Municipalities of Ontario; Terry Dowdall, MP; The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada and The Honourable Arif Virani, Minister of Justice & Attorney General of Canada. Motion Carried.

Sincerely,



Sasha Helmkey-Playter, B.A., Dipl. M.A., AOMC
Clerk/Director of Legislative Services

cc: Right Honourable Prime Minister Justin Trudeau
Simcoe Grey MP Terry Dowdall
Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Ontario Municipalities

If you require this information in an alternate format, please contact the Accessibility Coordinator at accessibility@northumberland.ca or 1-800-354-7050 ext. 2327



Report 2024-095

Report Title: Northumberland County Communications Master Plan

Committee Name: Corporate Support

Committee Meeting Date: July 30, 2024

Prepared by: Kate Campbell
Director, Communications & IT

Approved by: Jennifer Moore, CAO

Council Meeting Date: August 14, 2024

Strategic Plan Priorities: Innovate for Service Excellence
 Ignite Economic Opportunity
 Foster a Thriving Community
 Propel Sustainable Growth
 Champion a Vibrant Future

Recommendation

“That the Corporate Support Committee, having considered Report 2024-095 ‘Northumberland County Communications Master Plan’, recommend that County Council approve and adopt this plan at the August 14, 2024 County Council meeting.”

Purpose

To seek Council endorsement of a Communications vision for Northumberland County through approval and adoption of the 10-year Communications Master Plan. This Master Plan is designed to guide the organization’s efforts to build more inclusive and effective public services and greater trust in local government by fostering a community that is informed about County services, and engaged in shaping municipal priorities, policies, and programs.

Background

In 2023, Northumberland County engaged Redbrick Communications for the development of a Communications Master Plan. This plan will guide Northumberland County in the delivery of two-way communications with the residents we serve, over a 10-year period.

It will establish a strategic framework for engaging and exchanging information with the public based on industry (communications) and sector (government) trends, benchmarks, and best

practices; technology and emerging tools; and research into the ways in which target audiences prefer to hear from, and communicate with, their local government, with an action plan to track progress and measure success.

Trends

The field of communications has changed dramatically over the last ten years. Government communicators must be prepared to address trends such as the proliferation of online news and information sources, the decline of traditional newsrooms, advances in digital integration and audience segmentation in marketing practices, and developments in technology. Consistent with these changes, taxpayers today have increased expectations of government around timely access to information, two-way communication, and engagement in decision-making.

Modern communications practices are also required to ensure Northumberland County remains responsive to the community as it grows and changes. Provincial planning forecasts indicate that the local population will grow to 122,000 residents by the year 2051. As noted in the Executive Summary of the Growth Management Report from the County's Official Plan Update process, Northumberland County is located on the Outer Ring of the eastern region of the Greater Golden Horseshoe and is therefore "forecast to experience significant outward growth pressure...largely from the eastern and northern Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area."

Between 2016 and 2051:

- The 75+ age group is forecast to represent the fastest growing population age-group.
- However, the County is also anticipated to accommodate a growing share of young adults and new families seeking competitively priced home ownership and rental opportunities, with growth in this group anticipated to be primarily driven by net migration.

Delivering leading service to increasingly diverse stakeholders will require monitoring of sector and demographic trends, and careful listening to feedback from target audiences about their information needs and preferred channels for engaging with local government, in order to customize outreach plans and ensure content that resonates.

Consultations

From May through December 2023, development of the Communications Master Plan involved research and consultation including:

- Research into global trends and standards, and industry and sector best practices, through organizations such as the UK Government Communications Service (GCS), International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS), Registered Graphic Designers (RGD), International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC), and studies from organizations such as Edelman and Deloitte.
- A review of County strategies and business plans.
- Interviews with leading and comparator municipalities – five Canadian and one American.
- Interviews with journalists from four local media outlets covering print, radio, and online news.
- Interviews with all members of County Council and the CAO.
- Interviews with all members of the County senior leadership team.

- A survey of 140 County staff across all departments.
- A round-table discussion with community development stakeholders from the fields of manufacturing, agriculture, housing development, workforce development, social services, faith community, training and education, and the non-profit sector.
- Round-table discussions with Communications leads from Northumberland member municipalities.
- Together with member municipalities, a joint survey of community members, with nearly 640 responses.
- Sector insights from Redbrick Communications' 22 years working in the municipal sector.

The findings from this research were consolidated under key themes, analyzed against best practices, and assessed against a communications maturity model for municipalities. This analysis led to the strategic pillars, goals and objectives identified in this Plan.

Risk Considerations

Implementation of the Communications Master Plan is a critical undertaking, positioning the County to:

- Properly anticipate, plan for, and address the changing communication and engagement needs of our community.
- Leverage new technology and practices to deliver meaningful outcomes.
- Build mutually beneficial relationships with key stakeholders that drive trust.
- Establish objective success measures for demonstrating results and value.
- Ensure the Communications Department is positioned with the skills, structure, and training to support the organization over the long-term.

Without a structured long-term plan, these progressive aims are jeopardized, risking inefficiencies, missed opportunities for meaningful community engagement and innovation, and diminished public trust.

Discussion / Options

The development of a Communications Master Plan is identified as a key action under Pillar 1 of Northumberland County's *2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan*. This Plan is based on communications research, trends and current pressures, municipal best practices, and input from internal and external stakeholders.

While it spans a 10-year horizon, the County recognizes the world will not look the same in 2033 as it does today. As such, the plan is a guiding document. The vision and guiding principles identified are intended to root the County's work and give a clear line of sight to strive toward, even when the organization may need to change course and adapt.

Current state

In developing this plan, Northumberland County's corporate communications maturity was assessed using a maturity matrix customized for municipal communications. Maturity models offer a non-biased approach to measuring an organization's current state against a best practice state.

Developed by Redbrick Communications, the Municipal Communications Maturity Index is based on a review of other business and public relations maturity models, communications capability frameworks, and current municipal best practice and trends. It measures five levels of organizational maturity:

1. Side Hustler
2. Doer
3. Ally
4. Strategist
5. Partner

against five capability measures:

1. Organizational structure and competency
2. Strategic business purpose
3. Organizational accountability and processes
4. Operational Investment and Backing
5. Community building, accessibility, and inclusivity.

Based on this index, Northumberland County was rated as a ‘Strategist’.

The assessment revealed that, as an organization, Northumberland County’s approach and understanding of the strategic value Communications can bring to a municipality is progressive and advanced. The Communications team has built strong, highly collaborative relationships across all departments and offers a strategic voice for leadership. The team seeks to deliver the highest value to meet municipal goals and reach target audiences. A more in-depth rationale for this rating is available in the full Master Plan.

In order to continue moving along the index toward the ‘Partner’ level of maturity, building out strategic skillsets toward a more multidisciplinary Communications team, along with standardizing workflow, KPIs and reporting, will further elevate this function. As trust in government declines, the media landscape wanes, and municipal strategies for diversity, equity and inclusion continue to mature, the County will need to continue its work to foster an integrated approach to resident experience, and to demonstrate transparency, accountability and inclusivity to staff and the community. The Municipal Communications Maturity Index provides the County with a roadmap for growth and greater effectiveness based on a model for continuous improvement.

Next steps

Based on research undertaken to develop the Communications Master Plan, three key pillars emerged that represent the target outcomes. These pillars will be the foundational structure upon which next steps and future planning for Northumberland County’s communications and community engagement are built.

- **Pillar 1 – Focus** - A deeper focus on communications across the organization, ensuring greater collaboration and understanding of everyone’s role as an ambassador enhancing resident experience with the County; supporting the Communications team to achieve the highest professional standard and deliver value.

- **Pillar 2 – Partner:** A greater emphasis on partnership building; inviting in, listening to and engaging more audiences in meaningful ways, including staff; involving more voices to share and strengthen County information and value.
- **Pillar 3 – Innovate:** A flexible approach to adapt to changing needs and expectations; establishing new ways to communicate, engage and tell stories; leveraging new tools and approaches to increase reach and engagement; sharing authentic, human stories that resonate.

Fortified by these pillars, an ambitious implementation plan comprised of 7 goals with 44 related action items will be completed by the end of 2027. 18 of these actions were immediately undertaken in 2023 and early 2024 based on initial research, reflecting the five-year scope of this plan.

Financial Impact

In 2023, County Council approved an investment of \$50,000 in the development of the Communications Master Plan, comprising research, community engagement, and plan development. Council further approved \$25,000 annually for 2024 through 2026 to support implementation of measures identified within this plan.

Member Municipality Impacts

The County engaged with member municipalities throughout the development of the Communications Master Plan.

Through round-table discussions, Communications leads from member municipalities shared insights about local trends and observations, current gaps and lessons learned, and best practices. Through this table, the County and member municipalities also collaborated on a joint approach to community consultation. The data gathered through a public survey, promoted by all municipalities, was used to inform this Master Plan. Survey results were also shared with member municipalities to inform lower-tier municipal communications and community engagement strategies and activities.

Going forward, this intermunicipal communications network will establish a formal meeting cycle for continued information-sharing and joint project planning.

Conclusion / Outcomes

The purpose of the 10-year Communications Master Plan – a first of its kind for the County – is to foster a more informed and engaged community, and to elevate the County’s communications efforts for strong, positive municipal storytelling.

The Plan sets a clear vision and mission that will root the municipality over time. The guiding principles will steer the work of the team and ensure all communications and community engagement efforts from the County meet the highest standards of quality and ethics. The three pillars and their corresponding goals and actions establish an efficient structure that reflects what was learned from extensive research, and sets a roadmap for the way ahead.

With clear alignment to the County’s Community Strategic Plan established, it is recommended that the Committee support endorsement of a Communications vision for Northumberland County by recommending County Council’s approval and adoption of the 10-year Communications Master Plan.

Attachments

1. Report 2024-095 ATTACH 1 '10-year Communications Master Plan - Presentation'
2. Report 2024-095 ATTACH 2 'Communications Master Plan 2023 – 2033'



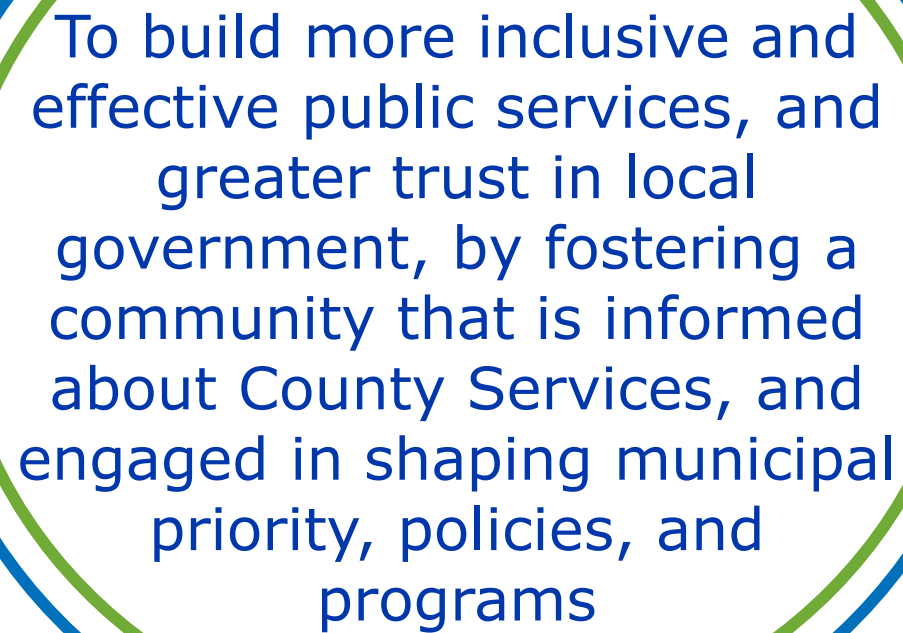
10-Year Communications Master Plan

K. Campbell, Northumberland County
A. Montgomery, Redbrick Communications





OBJECTIVE -



To build more inclusive and effective public services, and greater trust in local government, by fostering a community that is informed about County Services, and engaged in shaping municipal priority, policies, and programs

Why Now?

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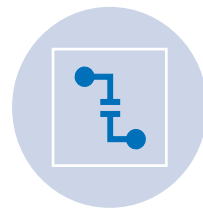
Current Landscape



Trust in government continues to decline.



Decline – and growing distrust – of traditional media.



Greater polarization, mis/disinformation, information overload.

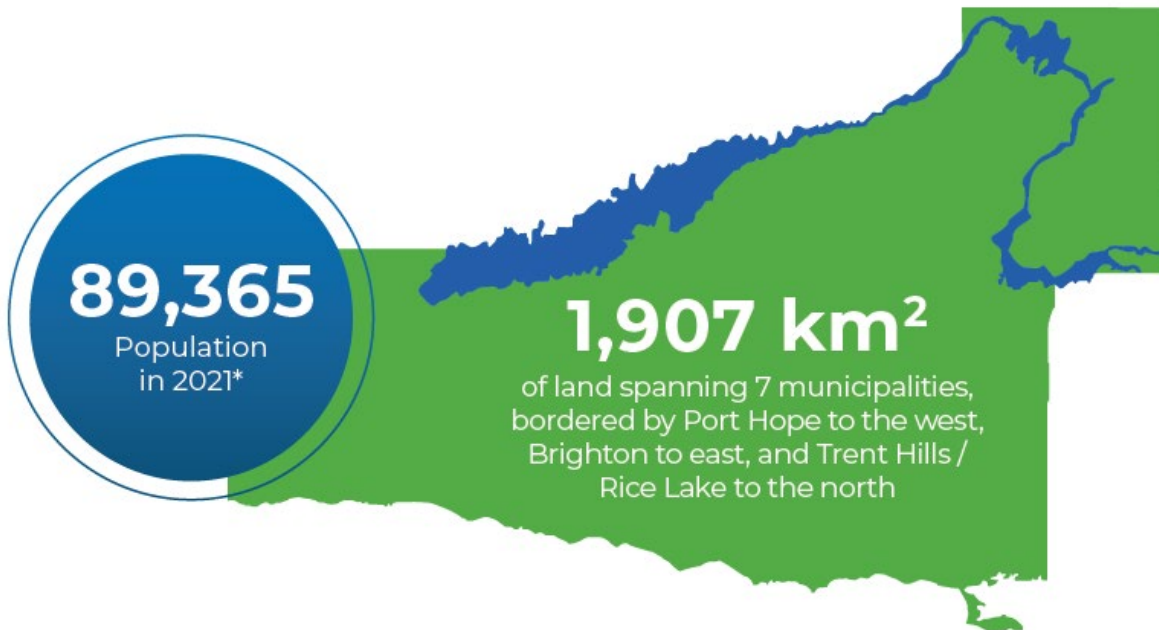


Pace of technology change – AI tools, evolving social media channels, customer service expectations.



Broader cross-section of skillsets required for municipal communicators – data management & analysis, digital marketing, accessibility tools, change communications.

At Home in Northumberland



Population at a glance

29%
of population are seniors¹

77%
increase in New Canadians
moving to Northumberland
from 2016 to 2021²

94%
of residents know English¹

27%
increase in population
projected by 2051

44.7%
of populations has a
post-secondary degree,
certificate or diploma²

Community Strategic Plan Direction

- Northumberland County's 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan centres on a clear mandate:

Guide this growth with intention

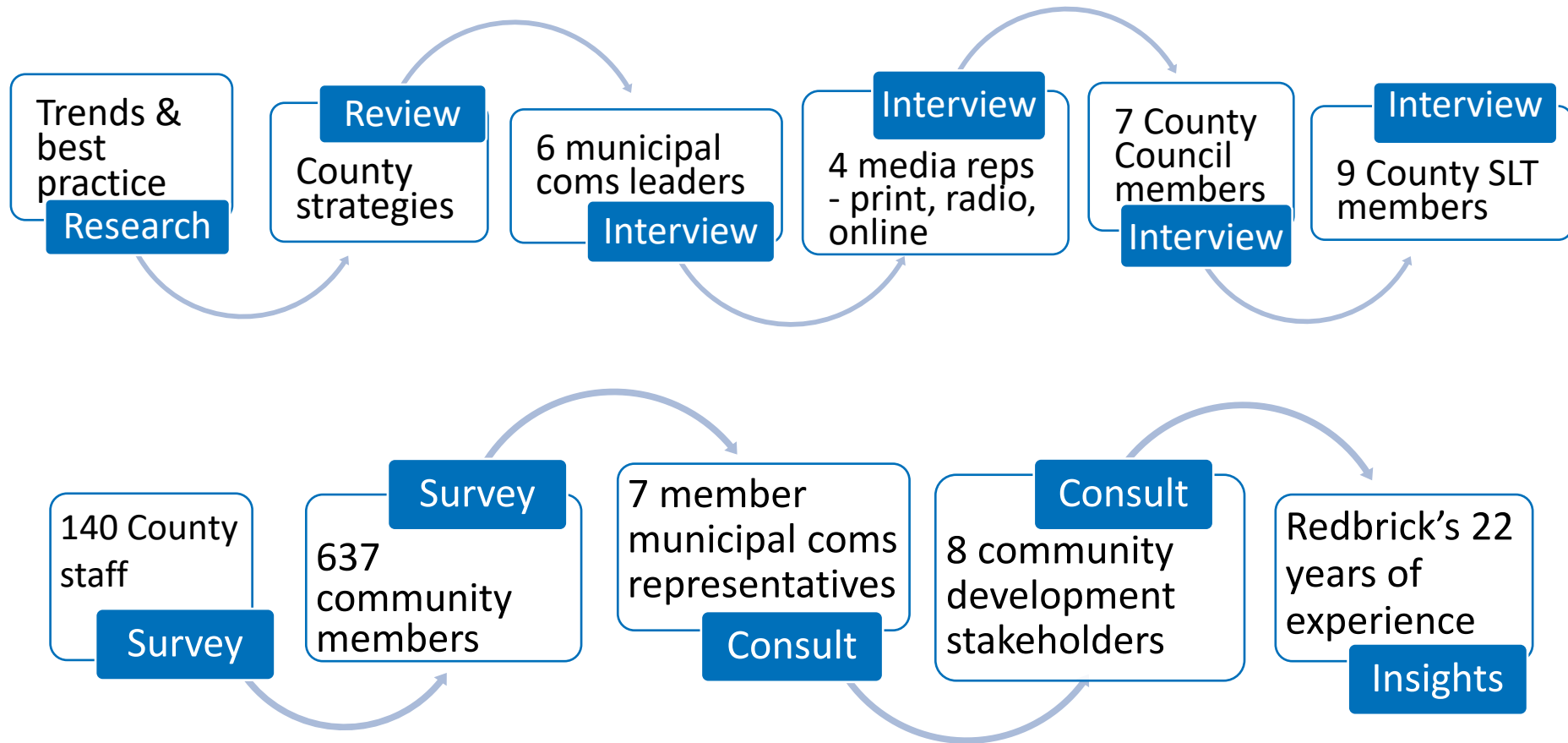
- Key Action: Development of Communications Master Plan



Plan Methodology



Scope of Research



Findings



Key Themes

Coms teams must be adaptable & innovative

- Keeping up with changing landscape/tools
- Finding new ways to reach audiences
- Staying current on changing social media algorithms

Authentic storytelling builds trust

- Strengthening community's connection with local government
- Engaging audiences, broadening reach
- Combatting negativity/misinformation through human stories
- Differentiating municipal from other levels of government

The County can't do it alone

- Needing to partner and collaborate
- Drawing in and inviting other voices to help tell and spread important information and good news

Key Themes (continued)

Meaningful listening & engaging matters

- Meeting residents' growing expectations to have a voice
- Focus efforts for better decision-making

Demands on communicators are increasing

- Strengthening internal processes, protocols and visibility
- Building capacity and competency
- Focusing on highest-value strategic work

Assessing Corporate Communications Maturity

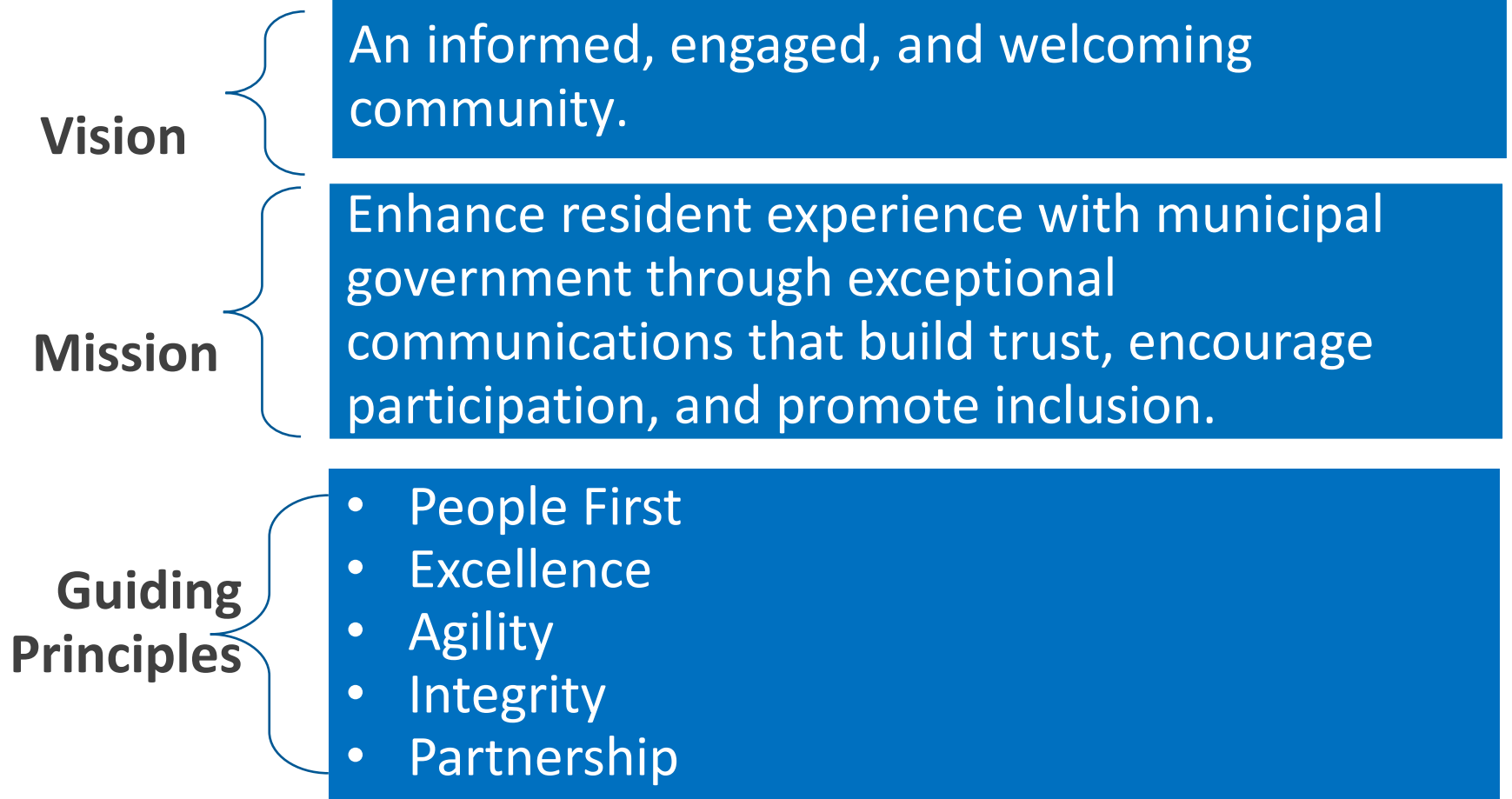


Redbrick's Municipal Communications Maturity Index

Maturity Indicator	1. Side Hustler	2. Doer	3. Ally	4. Strategist	5. Partner
1. Organizational structure & competency				●	
2. Strategic business purpose				●	
3. Organizational accountability & processes				●	
4. Operational investment & backing				●	
5. Community building, accessibility & inclusivity			●		

Final Plan

A Vision for County Communications



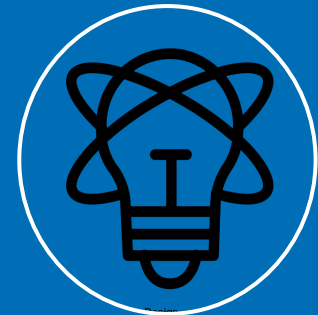
Strategic Communications Pillars



Focus



Partner



Innovate



Goals and Actions - Focus

Goal 1: Embed an organizational communications mindset

Goal 2: Build Strategic Communications Capacity

Goal 3: Align all communications to the County's strategic business purpose

Goals and Actions - Partner

Goal 4: Engage networks for shared insight

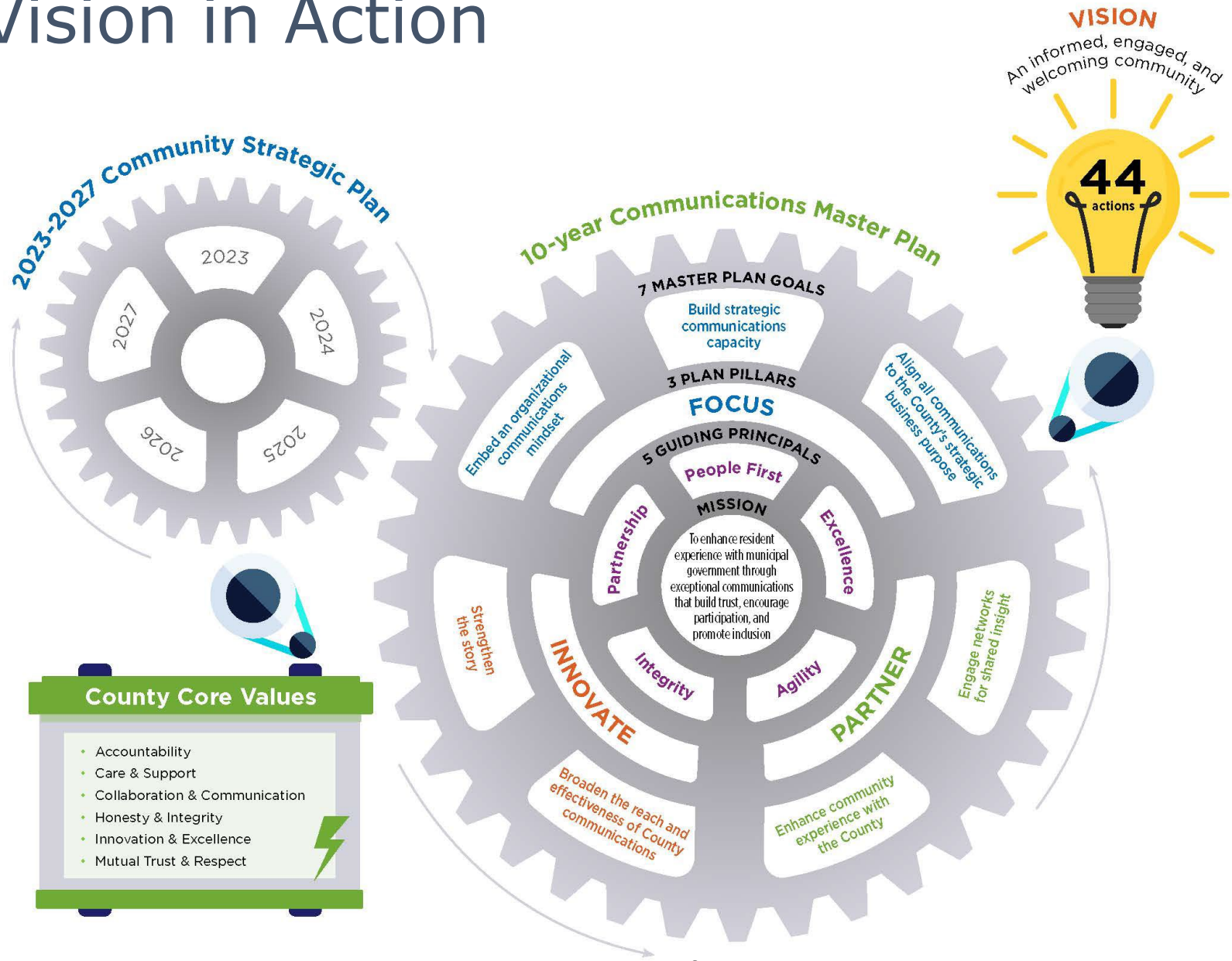
Goal 5: Enhance community experience with the County

Goals and Actions - Innovate

Goal 6: Broaden effectiveness and reach of County communications

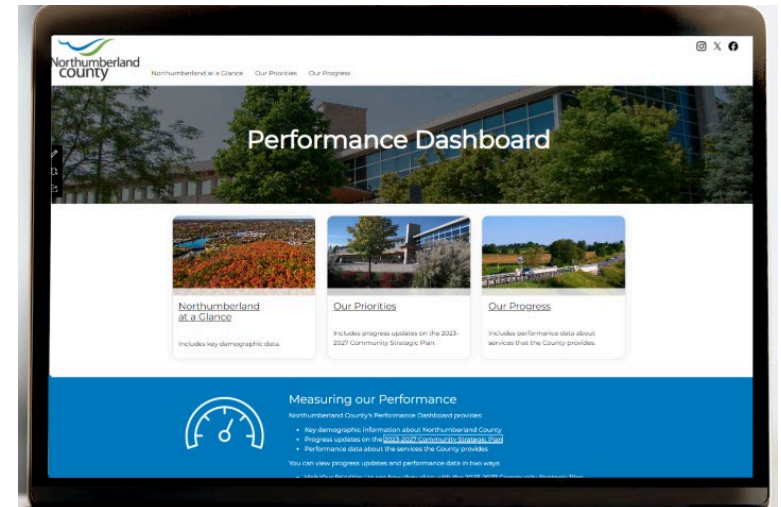
Goal 7: Strengthen the Story

Vision in Action



Sample Actions

- Improve inter-departmental coordination of public consultation efforts to make it easier for residents to engage
- Enhance tracking of KPIs with public dashboard
- Expand digital marketing and content management practices
- Formalize an Inter-Municipal Communications Network for sharing lessons learned and joint project planning



Measuring Outcomes



Reporting & KPIs

- Continued quarterly and annual reporting to Council, capturing completed actions & outcomes.
- Key performance indicators:
 - ✓ Residents who say the County has communicated well about its services, programs, policies, and plans
 - ✓ Residents who say that information provided by the County is clear and easy to understand
 - ✓ Media tonality (per cent of positive and neutral media coverage)

Ask of the Committee

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Endorse a Communications
vision for the County by
recommending Council
approve and adopt the 10-
year Communications
Master Plan



Thank you

Questions?





Northumberland
county

10-year Communications Master Plan

2023-2033

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Land acknowledgment

We respectfully acknowledge that Northumberland County is located on the Mississauga Anishinabeg territory and is the traditional territory of the Mississauga Anishinabeg.

Northumberland County respectfully acknowledges that the Mississauga Nation are the collective stewards and caretakers of these lands and waters in perpetuity, and that they continue to maintain this responsibility to ensure their health and integrity for generations to come.

Our commitment to accessibility

Northumberland County is committed to ensuring that people of all ages and abilities enjoy the same opportunities as they live, work, visit and invest in our community. The County is guided by the four core principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity, and supports the full inclusion of persons as set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). This document is available in an alternative format, upon request.

Northumberland County's Communications Master Plan is the result of a comprehensive process involving input from residents and stakeholders, backed by quantitative and qualitative research. It was shaped through a collaborative effort involving members of Northumberland County Council, the County's Senior Leadership Team and staff, stakeholders and community partners, and the Northumberland community. Northumberland County would like to thank all those who participated in this process for your engagement and input.

Thank you

County Council

Warden Brian Ostrander, Deputy Warden Olena Hankivsky, Councillors Lucas Cleveland, Bob Crate, Scott Jibb, John Logel, and Mandy Martin

Senior Leadership Team

Jennifer Moore, Chief Administrative Officer; Lisa Ainsworth, Director of Corporate Services; Dan Borowec, Director of Economic Development, Planning, & Strategic Initiatives; Susan Brown, Chief of Northumberland Paramedics; Dwayne Campbell, Acting Director of Planning and Economic Development; Kate Campbell, Director of Communications and IT; Glenn Dees, Director of Health and Human Services; Lisa Horne, Director of Community and Social Services; Denise Marshall, Director of Public Works; Darrell Mast, County Solicitor

Communications Team

Scott Berry, Communications Officer, Capital Projects; Jennifer Hardy-Parr, Grant Writer; Cara Timmermans, Specialist, Digital and Document Accessibility; Shayna Tinson, Manager of Communications & Creative Services

Northumberland County Staff

140 employees who submitted a completed internal communications survey

Northumberland Member Municipality Communications Leads

Emily Cartlidge, Deputy Clerk (former), Township of Hamilton (current Clerk, Township of Alnwick/Haldimand); Kara Euale, Communications Manager, Town of Cobourg; Holly Grant, CAO, Township of Cramahe; Nicole Hamilton, Deputy Clerk, Township of Cramahe; Ben Hagerman, Manager of Economic Development and Communications, Municipality of Brighton; Kate Ingram, Communications Manager, Municipality of Port Hope; Kira Mees, Community Development Manager, Municipality of Trent Hills; Jennifer Steen, Coordinator, Parks, Recreation and Culture, Township of Alnwick/Haldimand

Northumberland Community Members

637 community members who submitted a completed communications survey

Sector Stakeholders

Darla Price, Northumberland Manufacturers' Association Executive Director; Maggie Darling, Northumberland United Way Communications & Impact Director (former); Rev. Wanda Stride, Trinity – St. Andrew's United Church, Brighton Minister; Rev. Neil Ellis, Transition House Shelter Board Chair (former); Madelaine Currelly, Community Training and Development Centre CEO; Anthony Dew, Stalwood Homes General Manager; Ann Newell, Watton Employment Services Executive Director; Mark DeJong, Northumberland Federation of Agriculture President (former)

Local Media

Pete Fisher, Today's Northumberland; Sarah Hyatt, Northumberland News (former); Rob Washburn, Consider This Northumberland (Northumberland 89.7); Sue Dickens, Trent Hills Now (former)

Comparator and Leading Municipalities

York Region: Patrick Casey, Director of Corporate Communications, Andrea Griepsma, Manager of Digital, Design & PR, Jennifer Mitchell, Manager of Corporate Communications; **Town of East Gwillimbury:** Meeta Gandhi, General Manager of Corporate Services; **City of Calgary, Alberta:** Heather Hastie, Manager of Communications; **City of Wentzville, Missouri:** Kara Roberson, Strategic Communications Officer; **City of Guelph:** Tara Sprigg, Director of Communications (former), Laura Mousseau, Manager of Communications (former); **City of Mississauga:** Ivana Di Mello, Director of Communications (former)

Communications Consultant – Redbrick Communications

Brian Lambie, President; Andrea Montgomery, Vice President; Farah Tayabali, Vice President

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**Communications
Excellence ... [is] using
communications to manage
relationships with diverse
stakeholders/audiences to
achieve mutual understanding,
realize organizational goals,
and serve the public interest.**

*- Canadian Public
Relations Society*



This is the first Communications Master Plan for Northumberland County. It comes at a time of significant post-pandemic change and evolution in media, technology, social need, government policy and funding, and public sentiment.

The purpose of this Master Plan is to build more inclusive and effective public services and greater trust in local government by fostering a community that is informed about County services, and engaged in shaping municipal priorities, policies, and programs. As such, this plan is for all staff across the municipality who engage and interact with those we serve. It is also for the community.

The development of this Master Plan is identified as a key action under Pillar 1 of Northumberland County's 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan. It is based on communications research, trends and current pressures, municipal best practices, and input from internal and external stakeholders. While it spans a 10-year horizon, we recognize the world will not look the same in 2033 as it does today. As such, this plan is a guiding document. The vision and guiding principles identified here will root our work and give us a clear line of sight to strive toward, even when we may need to change course and adapt.



Northumberland County's 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan Pillars



Innovate for service excellence



Ignite Economic Opportunity



Foster a thriving Community



Propel Sustainable Growth



Champion a Vibrant Future

Specifically, this Master Plan will:

- **Reinforce the County's commitment** to placing residents at the centre of all communications, taking into account how they receive, interact with, and share municipal information.
- **Improve accessibility and inclusion** by providing a framework for how we engage and communicate with diverse audiences.
- **Help the County measure** and understand how well our communication efforts are working.
- **Set a five-year implementation plan** of concrete actions that are aligned with the priorities of the Community Strategic plan.
- **Equip the Communications Department with a roadmap for technology and training** that will ensure the team has the tools and skills required to be strategic partners.
- **Build trust in municipal government** through an integrated approach to resident experience that conveys care for residents; competence, reliability, and quality in service delivery; and commitment to open and honest communication.

This plan is about uniting the County team in our shared responsibility as County ambassadors. It is about strengthening partnerships, recognizing we can do more and better when we combine efforts and leverage strengths. It is also about the future and readiness for change. It will inform future investments and ensure the Communications Department continues to deliver the highest value and quality for the County and the public.



Background

Northumberland County is located on the traditional territory of the Mississauga Anishinaabeg. It is situated on the outer ring of the eastern region of the Greater Golden Horseshoe and consists of seven area municipalities.

Our population is growing, changing, and aging. Northumberland is projected to increase from approximately 89,000 (2021) people to 122,000 by the year 2051. The average age of the population is 48, with nearly 30% being 65 year of age or older¹. From 2016 to 2021, the county saw a 77% increase in new Canadians moving to the area².

As an upper-tier level of municipal government, Northumberland County has over 685 staff delivering a range of services from waste management, social and family services, long-term care, and paramedic services, to economic development, land use planning, natural and cultural heritage services, court services, and roads and asset management. Like many municipalities in Ontario, the County is facing increasing pressures related to housing and homelessness, opioid use, and increasing accountabilities for health and wellbeing as government funding models change and local needs grow.

Key drivers in Northumberland's economy are manufacturing, agriculture, food processing and tourism. The county is known for its outdoor beauty, waterways, rolling hills, beautiful downtown areas, and historic towns and villages.

¹ [Statistics Canada Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Northumberland County](#)

² [Northumberland County 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan](#)

Population at a glance

29%

of population are seniors¹

77%

increase in New Canadians moving to Northumberland from 2016 to 2021²

94%

of residents know English¹

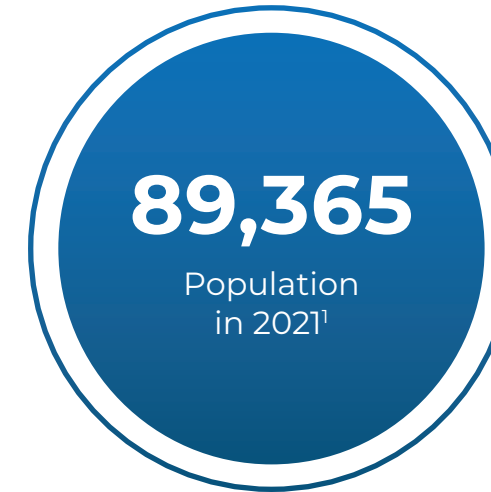
27%

increase in population projected by 2051

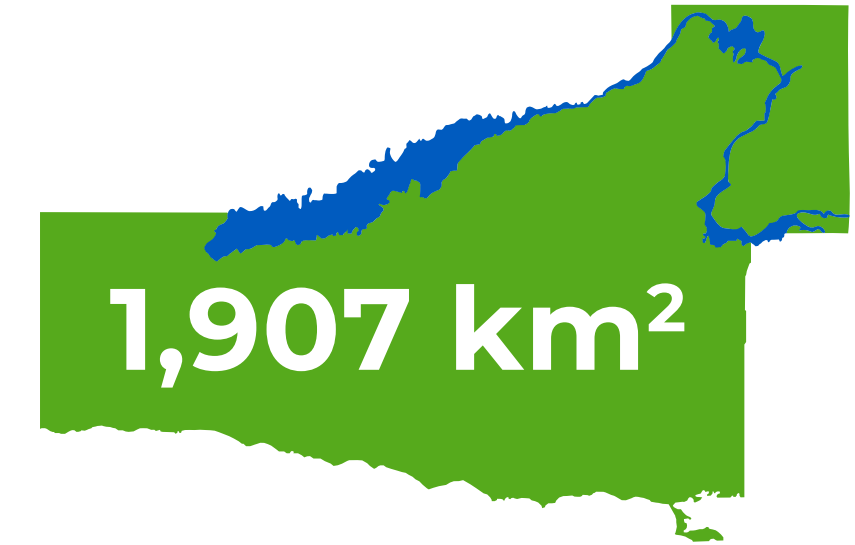
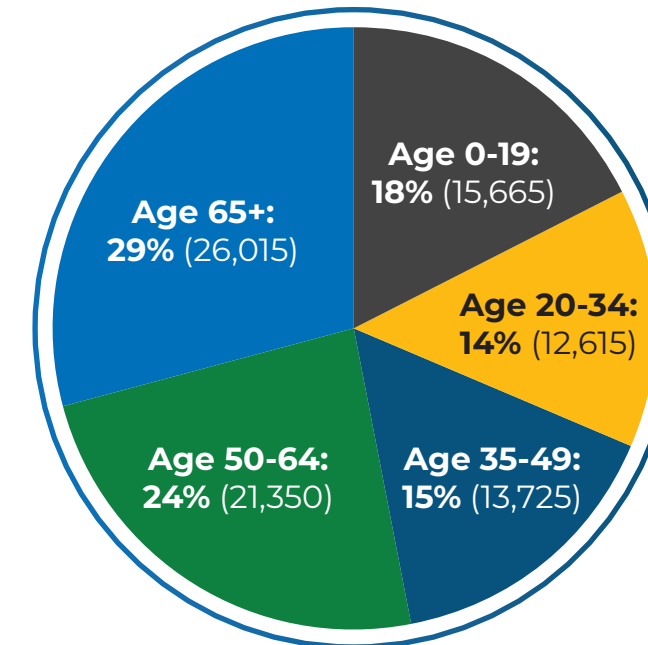
44.7%

of population has a post-secondary degree, certificate or diploma²

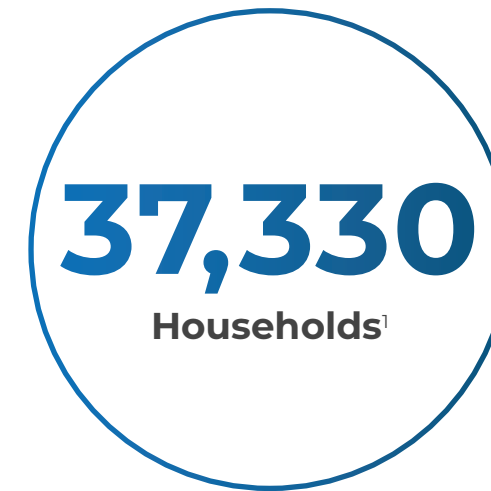
Our Northumberland



Population by age¹



Spans seven municipalities, bordered by Port Hope to the west, Brighton to east, and Trent Hills/Rice Lake to the north.



Since Northumberland County established a formal corporate communications department in 2013, the municipality has significantly advanced two-way communication with residents.

Continuous improvement

The department is focused on continuous improvement. Our team has adopted comprehensive content management strategies, enhanced social media governance, information accessibility protocols, and brand reputation practices.

Individuals have sought membership with professional associations like the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), the Association of Registered Graphic Designers (RGD), and the Municipal Information Systems Association (MISA) to help keep us at the forefront of emerging trends and technological advancements.

Team members have also achieved industry designations and/or certifications such as:

- Certified Communications Management Professional (CMP®)
- Registered Graphic Designer (RGD)
- Lean Six Sigma Yellow Belt
- Certificate in Public Participation by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)



Learning and development

In 2024, all staff of the Communications Department were trained in Group Facilitation Methods, as well as use of the new powerful Google Analytics 4 platform for enhanced digital marketing reporting and analytics. The Department also coordinates training to help staff across the organization develop and enhance their media and communication skills, including media spokesperson training, social media training, and content accessibility training.

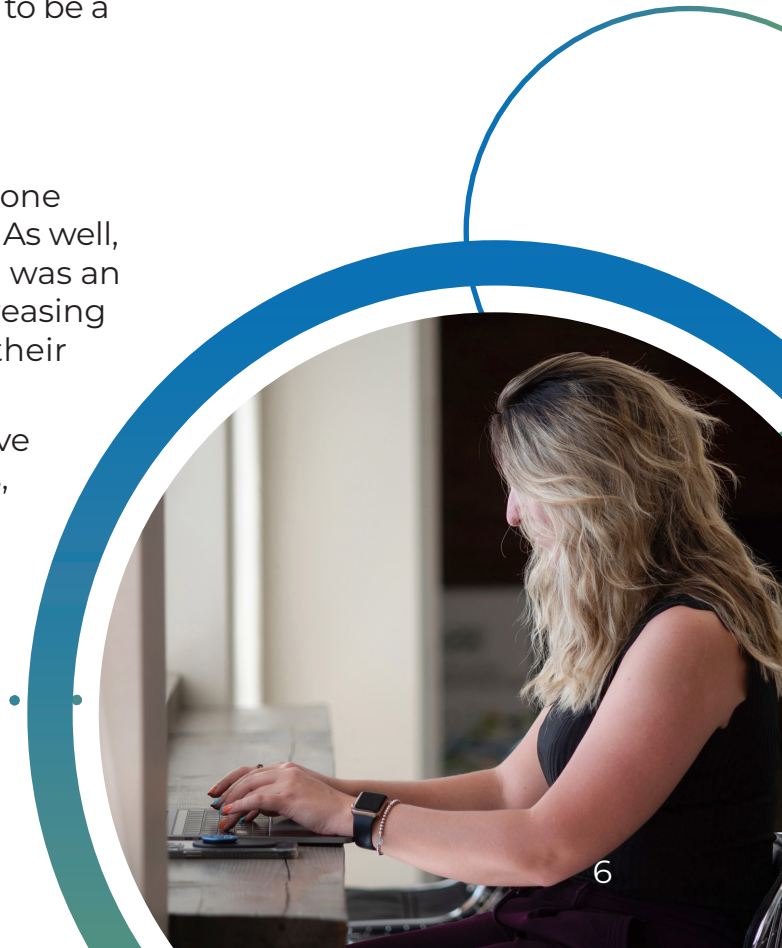
Fostering community conversations

Our team has successfully fostered robust two-way communication channels, ensuring transparent and responsive interactions between the County and its residents. Our progressive approach has not only strengthened Northumberland County's public relations efforts but also reinforced the organization's Mission to be a best practices leader in County government.

Addressing challenges

The County continues to face challenges reaching all residents. More than one third of Northumberland residents have limited to no internet connectivity. As well, local communities have recently lost their weekly print newspapers, which was an important source of accurate information. This is in an environment of increasing public expectation to be consulted and engaged in meaningful ways by their local government.

Efforts continue with service providers and government partners to improve local broadband and overcome barriers to ensuring residents, businesses, partners and key stakeholders have consistent access to important municipal information, updates and engagement opportunities.



Our approach

Vision

An informed, engaged, and welcoming community.

Mission

To enhance resident experience with municipal government through exceptional communications that build trust, encourage participation, and promote inclusion.

Guiding principles

People first

We place the resident at the centre of all our decisions and communications, delivering timely, accurate information on the channels, devices, and platforms that our community members prefer. We embrace diversity and ensure that all voices are heard and represented in our communications.

Excellence

We stay informed of industry best practices and emerging trends, striving for the highest standards of quality and professionalism in every aspect of our work. We set SMART goals, measure progress, evaluate outcomes, and apply what we've learned to drive results.

Agility

We are flexible and adaptive, ready to respond to the evolving needs of the organization and our community. We cultivate creativity, innovate and experiment to find fresh approaches to communication challenges and to reach target audiences effectively.

Integrity

We uphold honesty, accuracy, ethical behavior, and trustworthiness in all our interactions. We prioritize openness and accountability, uniting the whole County team in our shared responsibility as County ambassadors.

Partnership

We work together with internal clients, member municipalities, agency partners, Indigenous communities, and others to achieve common goals and enhance community outcomes. We maintain curiosity, fostering a culture of listening and learning, always open to different perspectives and new ways to improve our reach and impact.



The Communications Department is responsible for effectively sharing timely and accurate County information and meaningfully engaging with Northumberland staff and the community – including businesses, partners and key stakeholders. The Department’s roles and responsibilities span four key areas.

Corporate and executive communications



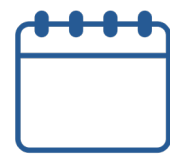
Communications strategy and planning



Media relations and issue management



Emergency communications



Event management and speech writing



Employee communications

Public affairs



Grant writing



Community engagement



Legislative compliance



Ad-hoc support for municipal & community partners

Digital experience



Website operations and governance



Social media corporate accounts and standards



Information accessibility



Analytics and reporting

Marketing and creative services



Graphic design and multimedia



Advertising and campaign management



Brand strategy



Northumberland County's Communications Department currently consists of five staff, which includes two positions not often found on municipal communications teams. We have a dedicated grant writer to help lessen the tax burden on local residents by increasing the County's access to potential external funding for major projects. We also have a dedicated role to ensure the County adheres to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act in all documents we produce that are publicly available.

Our current team complement



Director, Communications & Information Technology

Leads and manages the complete operation of the Communications and Information Technology teams.

- Directs strategic planning
- Oversees digital transformation
- Protects the County's reputation
- Leads issues management
- Manages media relations



Manager, Communications & Creative Services

Manages communications, marketing and creative services.

- Oversees the County's brand identity
- Produces all creative content
- Manages the organization's content accessibility and marketing strategies
- Leads development and implementation of marketing and communications campaigns



Grant Writer

Maximizes opportunities to secure funding from other levels of government and external sources, and leads corporate initiatives for enhancing municipal services.

- Researches funding opportunities
- Provides strategic guidance and prepares funding proposals
- Cultivates funder relationships
- Develops strategies and action plans to capitalize on opportunities identified by the organization and coordinates cross-departmental collaboration



Communications Officer, Capital Projects

Increases awareness and understanding of capital projects and improves access to municipal services.

- Supports strategic planning
- Develops communications plans and products
- Cultivates community engagement
- Fosters positive Indigenous Relations
- Supports media relations



Specialist, Digital & Document Accessibility

Leads accessibility and inclusion communications efforts for the organization.

- Develops and manages processes to ensure the County's compliance with legislated information and communication accessibility requirements
- Leads document accessibility training, auditing, and remediation
- Coordinates initiatives to promote inclusivity in County services and the community

The research framework for this Plan included inputs that are both qualitative and quantitative. The Plan was developed using feedback from many groups and individuals within Northumberland County, as well as input from municipal communications leaders across the province and beyond. Where input came through one-on-one interviews, group discussions, and open-ended survey responses, a framework was used to identify and analyze patterns and establish structured themes, as findings.

The Plan is also rooted in objective, important and timely insights from studies and expertise from recognized leaders in the fields of public relations and communications, and statistical information gathered from the County's digital channels, as well as staff and public survey results.

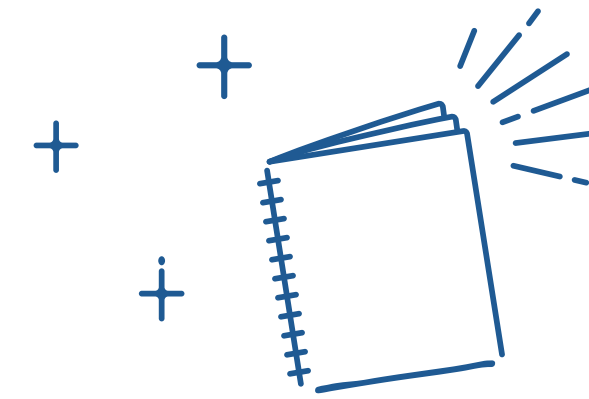
The findings from this research were consolidated under key themes, analyzed against best practices, and assessed against a communications maturity model for municipalities. This analysis led to the strategic pillars, goals and actions identified in this plan.

Inputs and engagement

Plan inputs included the following internal and external sources.

Internal

- Individual interviews with each member of County Council & the Chief Administrative Officer
- Group interviews with the County's senior leadership team
- Staff survey results (140 responses)
- A review of internal strategic documents, including the County's:
 - *2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan*
 - *2022 Annual Report*
 - *2024-2026 Communications Business Plan and Budget*
 - *2023 Communications Master Plan Budget Issue Paper*
- Review of Communications Department's services inventory, job descriptions, planning templates and guides
- Review of sample communications plans, marketing materials, and KPI reports
- Corporate channel review of the County's approach to digital communications: website and social media channels, including Northumberland.ca, Join In Northumberland, Facebook, X, and LinkedIn
- Digital analytics for the County's website and social media channels



External

- Meeting with eight different sector leaders in the community
- Consultation with Communications leads for each Northumberland municipality
- Interviews with four members of the local media (print, online, radio)
- Public survey results (637 responses)
- Interviews with Communications leaders in six comparator and leading municipalities (four in Ontario, one in Alberta, one in the United States)
- Secondary research into industry trends and best practices including thought leadership from Edelman Communications, Deloitte, International Association of Business Communicators, International Association for Public Participation, the Canadian Public Relations Society, the Beryl Institute, and more
- Environmental scan of 10 municipal corporate communications plans
- Sector insights from Redbrick Communications' 22 years working in the municipal sector



Findings

Below is a high-level summary of the input and insight gathered through the previously-noted activities.

General overarching themes

Below is a high-level summary of findings from the best practice research and the Master Plan consultation process. While learnings emerged from each input, the insights fall under the following five overarching key themes.

- Communications teams must be adaptable and innovative.
 - Keeping up with a changing landscape and tools
 - Finding new ways to reach audiences
 - Staying current on changing social media algorithms
- Authentic storytelling builds trust.
 - Strengthening community connection with local government
 - Engaging audiences and broadening reach
 - Combatting negativity and misinformation through human stories
 - Differentiating municipal from other levels of government
- The County can't do it alone.
 - Needing to partner and collaborate
 - Drawing in and inviting other voices to strengthen messaging and help amplify reach of important information and good news
- Meaningful listening and engaging matters.
 - Meeting residents' growing expectations to have a voice
 - Focusing efforts for better decision making
- Demands on communicators are increasing.
 - Strengthening internal processes, protocols and visibility
 - Building capacity and competency
 - Focusing on highest value strategic work

A changing communications landscape

- Trust in government and government leaders continues to be in decline in Canada (down two points in 2024 from 2023 based on Edelman's Trust Barometer)¹.
- Along with the decline of traditional media, in Canada, we are seeing some growing distrust of media, which is more recent.
- The public generally trusts their own research, meaning they have the greatest trust in their own search engine searches when seeking general news and information.
- Communities are experiencing greater polarization, misinformation and information overload. There is also a rise in the spread of disinformation.
- The pace of change is getting faster related to technology, the use of Artificial Intelligence tools, evolving social channels, and increasing customer service expectations.
- The face of communities is changing as a result of growth, resident relocations following the pandemic and federal immigration policies.
- Communications teams require a broader cross-section of skillsets, such as data management and analysis, digital marketing, publication and video design, accessibility tools, and change communications.

Stakeholder insights

County Council

- The County's Communications team is well respected and achieves high-quality work despite limited resources and capacity.
- The dwindling media landscape makes it harder to reach the public.
- There is need to foster greater public trust and confidence in the face of more polarization and misinformation.
- The public expects information how and when they want to receive it, with people appearing less inclined to proactively seek out information about government activity.
- There is a general lack of understanding around which level of government is responsible for which services.
- Public interest in engagement tends to be low.



Changing media landscapes

On September 15, 2023, Metroland Media group stopped printing 71 community newspapers across Ontario, including Northumberland News – moving to an online-only model.

County staff

- Most staff are informed by all-staff emails, managers, or word of mouth.
- Staff would like improved cross-departmental communication.
- Staff desire greater engagement and understanding of how their feedback is used when they are engaged.
- Survey respondents feel seniors, the homeless, new residents & youth are the hardest to reach audiences.
- There are opportunities to tell more engaging, authentic stories about County services and to get ahead of emerging issues.

Northumberland member municipality communications leads

- Member municipalities face challenges engaging the community, especially in person. Online surveys work best.
- Correcting misinformation is one of the biggest challenges they face.
- Lack of media sources makes it more difficult to inform the broad community.
- They see value in greater collaboration with the County and joint promotion and strategic planning.

Media

- Overall, they have a positive relationship with the County.
- They feel the pressures of a changing media landscape with fewer resources and new business models.
- They need as much advanced notice as possible for upcoming events or stories to cover.
- Media prefer access to subject matter experts, when possible, in addition to elected officials.

Sector stakeholders

- They value the direct relationships they have with County staff.
- They do not perceive social media as a reliable source of information given each channel's algorithms, but recognize it can be good for some information sharing.
- They encourage greater coordination between the County and member municipalities.
- They would like more positive community-based stories shared using a variety of channels.
- They want to ensure all voices have an opportunity to be heard, especially those most impacted by a decision.

Comparator and leading municipalities

- High-functioning Communications teams are investing in digital story telling and tools, and public engagement.
- Communications teams need to be adaptable and agile.
- They recognize the value of robust internal communications but do not always have the bandwidth.
- All are experiencing greater spread of misinformation and distrust.
- With declining media, they recognize the need to function more as a newsroom.
- Effective communications must be audience centric to have impact.
- Good policies and processes help elevate communications and issues management response.
- Based on nine municipalities with populations ranging from 82,000 to 150,000, the average number of Communications full-time equivalents is seven.²

Community

- The website is hard to navigate and they want more engaging content on social media.
- They desire simple communications and ways to engage with and contact the County/local municipality.
- They want less reliance on digital communications. The community would prefer hard copy notices and newsletters or emails.
- The public would like comments and questions answered on social media.
- Survey respondents want to be engaged, especially rural respondents, and to learn more about opportunities and how their feedback is being used.

² Data is based on the composition of communications teams from the following municipalities: City of Guelph, Town of Whitby, Town of Milton, City of St. Catherines, City of Pickering, City of Waterloo, City of Brantford, Town of Newmarket, Town of Caledon. Data is from research conducted from 2021-2023 and may not reflect current state.

Community's top information sources

64%
Facebook

49%
local newspapers*

47%
municipal website

However, they **trust** the County website (71%) more than media coverage (50%) or the County's Facebook page (45%).

**survey was conducted before Metroland announced the shutdown of print community newspapers*

Internal analysis

Strengths

- Communications leadership and the team are highly respected for their efforts and the quality of their work. The team has grown over time, and seeks to deliver value with every project.
- The Communications director sits at senior most table and drives a strategic approach tied to organizational goals and the priorities identified in the 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan.
- The municipal voice is strong and the Communications team continuously looks for ways to enhance this voice by being creative, proactive and by anticipating the needs of staff, council and the community.
- Communications has established a strong foundation on which to build, with most foundational policies and processes in place.
- The Communications team strives to measure, achieve and report back results against KPIs. They have created report-back dashboards to demonstrate the value and impact of their work, an area that many municipalities struggle with.
- Individual professional development plans exist for the team, with annual group training arranged based on core competency development for the department.
- The County is a leader in information and communication accessibility, with staff resources, policies and processes in place to ensure legislative compliance and continuous enhancement of organizational capacity.
- Marketing campaigns are becoming more sophisticated, increasingly using engaging visuals and messaging (e.g., 'Communications is always changing' campaign) along with a mix of marketing tools and channels, and enhanced metrics and reporting.



Challenges

- The County's current communications department consists of five team members, of which only 2.5 are professional communications resources. The additional roles (Grant Writer and Digital & Document Accessibility Specialist), while they complement efforts, support corporate priorities. As a result, the team is stretched and it is more challenging to keep up with demand, meet the organization's needs across 25 business units, monitor and manage reputation, use multiple, varied communications channels, and effectively inform and engage the community.
- The Communications sector is rapidly changing. Government communicators must be prepared to address trends such as the decline of traditional newsrooms, the prevalence of misinformation/disinformation, integration of disruptive technologies, and enhanced use of – and ethics related to – data. Diverse skillsets will be needed on the Communications team. A team approach to training and development will be required.
- Municipalities need to balance budget priorities and, with rising costs, they are struggling to keep tax increases manageable. This will be a key factor in decision making when considering investments in communications, community engagement, training and development.
- Based on internal feedback, there is a need to strengthen organizational listening and response (internal and external).
- Staff identified word of mouth as one of their main sources of information, which is not reliable. Staff want more timely and frequent information. Strengthening internal communications can help more staff become ambassadors for the County.
- Cross-departmental information sharing needs improvement and could help with consistent and more coordinated messaging, especially with customer service.
- Communications technology and tools are needed to monitor, listen, respond and measure. Some gaps exist.
- Improved clarity of roles, responsibilities and processes related to the County's community engagement approach is required.

External analysis

Opportunities

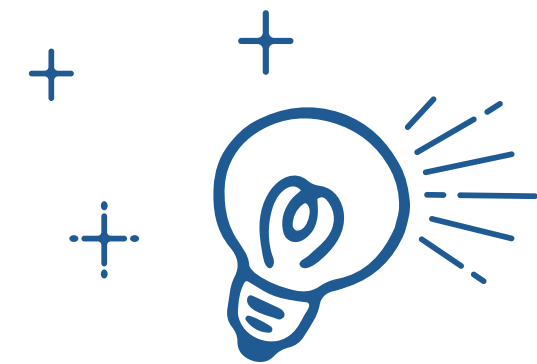
- Connections and collaboration with local municipalities are strong, with a commitment to continue strengthening ties and reach of messaging.
- The County has a strong Community Strategic Plan that can guide storytelling and the sharing of accomplishments.
- Community engagement efforts are strengthening, including inviting key stakeholders to the table and working to consistently close the loop. Community survey respondents said they are motivated to engage on issues they care about or directly impact them. There are opportunities to better position consultations in ways that resonate with the community and create actionable insights from the learnings.
- The County is working toward developing an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion framework and policies, which will help further guide and inform the County's related communications positioning.
- The County has rich stories to tell and with which to engage others, including the strength of partnerships and collaboration on key priorities like health and housing. Opportunities exist to increase positive storytelling by leveraging layers of information (from "quick and dirty" to greater detail).
- 60% of community survey respondents are on Facebook, but only 50% of those follow the County. There is an opportunity to promote the County's channels and increase reach.
- For the past five years, Facebook has consistently been the top source of traffic to the County's website by far. There is opportunity to further leverage that channel—such as more use of video – to expand reach and information sharing. Other area municipalities also drive traffic, though to a lesser degree; this could be expanded.
- Digital transformation is progressing across County operations, which will ultimately support improved client experience with County services.



Risks

- Trust in governments continues to decline while polarization is on the rise in Canada, and this is challenging for municipalities to manage and counter. Focusing on resident experience with the County, including targeted content customized for the channel and the audience, along with engaging diverse voices, will be essential to build trust and confidence in municipal programs and services.
- Polarization at upper levels of government is trickling down to the municipal level and has an impact on local, social debate.
- More than one third of residents in the County have limited to no internet connectivity. The closing of Metroland print community newspapers is a significant loss, especially since 49% of community survey respondents said they get municipal information from local papers. With a broad and diverse audience, it is a challenge to find the right level of information for the right audiences using the right channels.
- Northumberland is on the edge of a larger media market. Local municipal coverage is challenging to garner.
- Understanding of roles and responsibilities of each level of government is not well understood – leads to confusion / frustration.
- People are inundated with information and less likely to be proactive in seeking out information. Expectations are high for municipalities to reach residents in ways that work for the community (i.e., have the information come to them).
- Mis- and disinformation continue to spread, especially on Facebook community channels, which are a highly accessed source of information. Municipalities have challenges to stay ahead of the curve, and foster constructive engagement and discourse.
- Social media channels and their algorithms continue to change. It is challenging to keep up and ensure the County is reaching target audiences with these channels.
- Complicated stories, such as homelessness, growth, and preparing for change, are challenging to tell, have resonate, and influence opinions. Different audiences want different things. There are pressures from other levels of government.





Redbrick Communications' Municipal Communications Maturity Index

Northumberland County engaged Redbrick Communications Inc. for this project because of their depth of experience working within the sector. They have also developed a maturity index customized for municipal communications, to use as an assessment tool. Leveraging a maturity model was a key ask by the County for the development of this Master Plan.

What is a maturity index?

Maturity models offer a non-biased approach to measuring an organization's current state against a best practice state. As such, they are used for continuous improvement and can provide a roadmap to growth and greater effectiveness.

How is maturity measured?

Redbrick's index is based on a review of other business and public relations maturity models, communications capability frameworks, and current municipal best practice and future trends. It measures five levels of organizational maturity against five capability measures. It is a valuable assessment tool that has informed this Master Plan and strategic conversations with decision makers at the County.



The Chief Communication Officer provides 'horizontality' to strategy development, much like the CEO. Other C-suite members have a vertical perspective.

- Terry Flynn, Director
Master of Communications
Management,
McMaster University



Municipal Communications Maturity Index: Northumberland County

Maturity Indicator	1. Side Hustler	2. Doer	3. Ally	4. Strategist	5. Partner
Organizational structure and competency	Fractured and off the side of the desk; under resourced, limited skills and/or training; no access to the senior leadership team	Limited dedicated resource(s); emerging training/development; report to manager or director with limited to no access to the senior leadership team	Resourcing for service level expectations; some training/development; duo reporting to CAO and other	Strong alignment to service objectives; sufficient resources and varied skillsets to meet needs; development plans in place; report to CAO with seat at senior table	Sufficient complement for entire organization's communications needs; multidisciplinary; function is equal partner and integrated at senior table; embedded continuous improvement
Northumberland's rating				●	
Strategic business purpose	No Corporate Communications strategy (internal or external); tactical	Minimal involvement in business strategy and decision making	Alignment with business strategy and customer service emerging; consulted for some key decisions	Function aligned with overall strategy, customer service; Corporate Communications strategy followed, including for public engagement	Value Creator: involved in and advise on all business strategy, integrated with customer service
Northumberland's rating				●	
Organizational accountability and processes	No processes; no KPIs or use of analytics/data; no standards nor clear roles or confidence in communications	Some standardized processes and service level standards; minimal KPIs, use of analytics and reporting; emerging confidence in communications; some collaboration with departments	Processes are standardized, basic service standards in place; some analytics/data and reporting; regular collaboration; some confidence in communications	KPIs tracked; often data driven with regular reporting; continuous improvement; expected collaboration and high confidence in communications	Advanced analytics and reporting and KPIs; demonstrated impact to business goals; standardized/streamlined processes; clear roles; built in collaboration
Northumberland's rating				●	
Operational investment and backing	No budget, tools not automated; no flexibility to take innovative approaches	Minimal budget, basic tools; limited to no flexibility to take innovative approaches	Some budget and automation; emerging use of communications/marketing tools; some flexibility to take innovative approaches	Centralized budget, more advanced business tools in place; often innovative	Centrally owned and managed budget for all municipal communications; proactive adoption of new tools; always seek innovative approaches
Northumberland's rating				●	
Community building, accessibility and inclusivity	Reactive issues management with no communications involvement; no focus on strategic relationship building or on accessible/inclusive communications*	Some involvement in issues management and strategic relationships; some accessible and inclusive communications	Often involved in issues management and strategic relationships; communications are often accessible and inclusive	Always consulted for issues management and guiding strategic relationships; communications are always accessible and inclusive	Communications has influence and guides ethical response and strategic relationships; accessible and inclusive approach across the organization
Northumberland's rating			●		

*Accessible and inclusive communications mean the use of plain language, visual storytelling, following AODA guidelines and inclusivity best practices / language demonstrating a welcoming workplace/community

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Summary

As an organization, Northumberland County's approach and understanding of the strategic value Communications can bring to a municipality is more mature and progressive than many.

The Communications team is well respected across each department and offers a strategic voice for leadership. They work collaboratively with departments and seek to deliver the highest value to meet municipal goals and reach target audiences.

Increasing the team's current complement and looking for opportunities to build out strategic skillsets toward a more multidisciplinary team, along with standardizing workflow, KPIs and reporting will further elevate the function.

As trust in government declines, the media landscape wanes, and municipal strategies for diversity, equity and inclusion continue to mature, the County will need to continue its work to foster an integrated approach to resident experience and to demonstrate transparency, accountability and inclusivity to staff and the community.

Breakdown by indicator

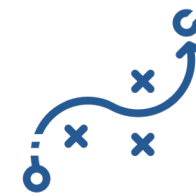


Organizational structure and competency

The County's team reports directly to the CAO and the director has a seat at the senior most table.

When considering the team's current capacity, compared to other municipalities of their population size, and as a growing community, Northumberland's team would benefit from one to two additional full-time positions to ensure a sufficient complement to meet the entire organization's communications needs. Current professional development plans are in place and focus on individual Communications staff. A team focus has recently been applied, with annual group training arranged based on core competency development for the department.

As a next step, focusing individual and department professional development on ensuring proficiency with increasingly sophisticated communications and analytics tools, while also advancing organizational communications competencies, will help the County as a whole deliver communications excellence.



Strategic business purpose

The team's work is highly aligned with the County's strategic objectives and focused on bringing the highest value to each department. Policies and processes are in place to guide their work and ensure they are working collaboratively with each program area.

This Master Plan will help root and direct the team's efforts over the coming years. Strengthening the County's processes, planning, coordination and approaches to community engagement will be an important next step.



Organizational accountability and processes

The County's team is results oriented, with a growth mindset. Whenever possible they use data to shape decisions, target the appropriate audiences and report to leadership. Some standard KPIs for Communications are in place, with an opportunity to enhance and align with the County's new Community Strategic Plan and this 10-year Master Plan.



Operational investment and backing

The organization has invested in the usual tools for graphic design, social media monitoring, community engagement and project management. The team is supported to use innovative approaches to reach audiences and have a general central budget for staffing and corporate projects. As digital transformation progresses across the organization, this will enable further integration of communications with customer service delivery.



Community building, accessibility and inclusion

By matter of course, the County's Communications team is consulted and relied on as a trusted advisor for issues management. They also inform strategic relationships.

Communications messaging is typically plain language, visuals are strong with some use of video (an area that could be enhanced). The organization is working toward developing its Equity, Diversity and Inclusion framework and policies. This is an important area for improvement to ensure there are sufficient structures and capacity to demonstrate a cross-organizational commitment to inclusivity.

Three key communications pillars emerged from the research findings that will inform next steps and future planning for Northumberland County's communications and community engagement.

These pillars build on the strong foundation already in place at the County, align with the Mission and Vision for our department, and represent the target outcomes of this Master Plan – what we will work to advance throughout the life of this plan.



Focus

- A deeper focus on communications across the organization, ensuring greater collaboration and understanding of everyone's role as an ambassador enhancing resident experience with the County
- Supporting the Communications team to achieve the highest professional standard and deliver value



Partner

- A greater emphasis on partnership building
- Inviting in, listening to and engaging more audiences in meaningful ways, including staff
- Involving more voices to share and strengthen County information and value



Innovate

- A flexible approach to adapt to changing needs and expectations
- Establishing new ways to communicate, engage and tell stories
- Leveraging new tools and approaches to increase reach and engagement
- Sharing authentic, human stories that resonate



Focus

Goal 1: Embed an organizational communications mindset

Trust in governments is declining. Polarization is increasing. Municipalities are struggling to authentically demonstrate their value and combat misinformation. Communications excellence is achieved through building trusting relationships, which cannot and does not fall to one team.

Communications excellence is achieved by the whole organization. All staff have a role as a communicator, whether they interact with other internal staff, with elected officials, stakeholders, partners, or members of the community. In every interaction, staff represent who the municipality is, what it stands for, and how it delivers value to those it serves, shaping an individual's experience with the County. Staff therefore play a key role in enhancing resident experience and building trust.

As such, the first goal in this Master Plan and under this pillar is to build a culture of ownership and responsibility for the success of Northumberland County's communications. For example, staff can proactively share information and updates with the Communications team, confirm facts, help broaden the reach of the County's messages through their networks, listen and report back with community input to inform approaches.

Embedding this mindset across the organization will go far in elevating resident experience with our organization, and our ability as a municipality to build greater trust with those we serve.

What this looks like...

- Teams across the organization understand their responsibilities related to communications and positive resident experience.
- Staff are clear about the expectations, standards and processes for inter-department and communications collaboration.
- The Communications team is visible and consistently engaged early in projects.

Goal 2: Build strategic communications capacity

The world of communications is changing, as are community expectations of local government. This means that municipal communications teams and approaches cannot remain static. They need the right people with varying skillsets, ready to adapt to changing landscapes.

In a time of growing misinformation, and a general feeling of information overload, municipalities also need the ability to communicate quickly and provide layers of information that are easy to digest and access for those who want more details.

Building off Goal 1, when organizations understand the value of communications, they ensure sufficient resources are in place. They are flexible to adopt new tools. They engage in partnerships that expand mutual reach and impact. They have the ability to effectively monitor and respond to emerging trends.

Northumberland, to date, has built a strong, strategic Communications team. Continued investment in communications, with a focus on building a multidisciplinary team, will further the team's ability to deliver strategic value.

What this looks like...

- The Communications team has sufficient resources to meet the entire organization's needs and are effectively set up to communicate quickly.
- The team has access to the necessary tools and technologies to support effective and efficient communications.
- Communications team members' skillsets continue to evolve as they have access to and pursue professional development.
- Communications competencies are increased across the organization, in all departments.
- The County has a mindset of continuous improvement. We review and evaluate our success, and adjust as needed based on our learning.

Goal 3: Align all communications to the County's strategic business purpose

The pace of change is getting faster. The daily delivery of municipal programs and services is demanding, broad in scope, and increasing in complexity. It is common to see communications efforts weighted heavily on meeting daily operational needs and messaging, and less on providing strategic value that advances organizational goals.

The County recently invested in completing its 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan. The municipality sought a wide range of voices and heard from a variety of stakeholders who told the County what matters to them and where they want to see Northumberland focus in the coming years.

The Community Strategic Plan is a foundational document. It provides a framework for Council and staff to inform strategies, actions, resources, and decision making. It identifies a commitment to integrate leading-edge technologies over the coming years. And it positions communications and engagement as a core goal.

As this Master Plan is implemented, the Communications team and the organization will keep coming back to what the County has committed to the community with the goal to ensure that all communications efforts are focused on the highest priority actions and initiatives that move the County closer to achieving goals.

What this looks like...

- This Master Plan is reviewed and consistently aligned with other corporate plans and strategies.
- All communications efforts and achievements tie back to corporate objectives.
- The County invests in opportunities to better understand our audiences to ensure a research-based approach that informs customized, audience-centric communications.





Partner

Goal 4: Engage networks for shared insight

As our community evolves, it is crucial that our communication strategies adapt to reach and engage a diverse range of voices. It is common for municipalities to have a group of people who consistently engage with local government; we value such feedback and also recognize there are many others from whom we do not hear.

Building and maintaining community trust requires an approach that demonstrates genuine care for residents, excellence in service delivery, and a commitment to transparent communication. Our communications efforts must be inclusive, research-based, timely, and focused on achieving tangible results. By doing so, we aim to ensure everyone feels their input is valued and that they have an equal opportunity to participate.

Through this Master Plan, we commit to strengthening collaboration with existing networks of staff and partners while embracing new voices. We have plans to strengthen our strategic partnerships and our advocacy to address and advance community needs and interests.

Through the County's Community Strategic Plan and our communications, we will build on our capacity and ability to tell the County's story to all who have a stake in our success and for all whom we serve. We will look for opportunities to further demonstrate the County's vision to bring together people, partnerships, and possibilities for a strong and vibrant Northumberland.

What this looks like...

- The County expands the methods and opportunities it uses to seek input from the community.
- Staff have access to the information they need, when they need it. They feel valued and heard, and report an improvement in organizational listening and timely information sharing.
- Communications leads in each municipality come together to formalize a network for regular and purposeful collaboration. This network is a gateway to share best practices, local data, and lessons learned for continuous improvement of communications and community engagement, expanded audience reach, and enhanced resident experience with municipal government.
- The County actively cultivates trusted collaboration with Indigenous residents and neighbouring First Nations communities.
- The County proactively reaches out and demonstrates its commitment to partnership-building with equity-seeking groups to amplify its ability to communicate with a range of audiences and stakeholders.

Goal 5: Enhance community experience with the County

The community is an important partner with the municipality. As taxpayers and residents, community members are impacted everyday by local decisions. They do and should have a voice in local government decision making.

Many communities have become more vocal in demanding to have a stronger voice in local government decision making. They expect more opportunities to have a say, in ways that are easy for them to access and participate. This means that municipalities are expanding beyond traditional engagement tactics, such as in-person Public Information Centres, where they are seeing a decline in attendance, and are looking for new ways to engage and hear from the public.

In addition, as seen in the research with comparable municipalities and those who have leading communications teams, more and more towns, cities, regions and counties are recognizing the need to improve their efforts and resourcing related to community engagement. Some municipalities have hired dedicated community management specialists, or created public engagement teams. Some are investing and expanding staff training in this area, and creating corporate strategies.

Through the County's Community Strategic Plan, Northumberland recognizes the need to foster a community that is engaged in shaping municipal priorities, policies and programs.

What this looks like...

- The County publicly establishes and declares its commitment to meaningful community engagement.
- Community engagement standards, policies and processes are in place and understood across the organization.
- Staff leading community engagement initiatives have the competencies and capacity they need to lead them effectively.
- The County expands the methods and opportunities it uses to seek input from the community.
- County staff consistently close the loop with the community, sharing how input was used to influence a decision or direction.
- Communications is embedded as part of corporate-wide initiatives, such as customer service, Reconciliation with Indigenous communities, and Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) commitments.



Goal 6: Broaden the reach and effectiveness of County communications

Reaching a broad range of audiences has become increasingly more difficult at a time when traditional media is in decline and there is great reliance on internet connectivity to access information and share input. Audiences are busy and inundated daily with information. Governments cannot rely on passive tools like websites to share information. Nor can they rely on traditional means of engagement to hear from as many people as possible. They need to find creative and innovative solutions to break through the noise.

The recent closing of Metroland print local newspapers has left a significant gap in the community's access to accurate information. The County continues to work with radio, broadcast, and online news outlets serving the community. We are also seeking new ways to be our own newsroom. We recognize we will need to be flexible and ready to experiment with new approaches so our community is aware of how their taxpayer dollars are being used and can play a role in informing our priorities and the decisions we make.

What this looks like...

- We actively and regularly seek out and learn from industry and sector leaders to improve our practices.
- We are flexible and adaptable to try new ways to reach and engage our audiences.
- We are audience-centric in our approach. We consistently evaluate our success, and adapt our efforts to align with how our audiences receive, interact with, and share municipal information.
- The Communications team plans for digital transformation, trying new tools and maximizing digital and data resources and practices to expand reach, build awareness, encourage participation, and promote inclusion.

Goal 7: Strengthen the story

As humans, we are drawn to stories. They connect and bring us together. They can build trust. Our staff and the community have told us they want to share and hear more of the positive local stories that make Northumberland County a great place to live, play, work and visit. They want to hear about the people that are making a difference, and we want to celebrate our staff, their accomplishments, and show the good work the County delivers every day.

At the same time, how stories are told has evolved. More channels are emerging, with social media continuing to be a powerful tool. It has demonstrated the power of visual and video storytelling. It has also shown the power of simple, easy-to-understand information – stories people are more likely to share with their friends.

What this looks like...

- The County focuses on sharing human, authentic stories that resonate and build trust.
- Our corporate website anchors our stories, connecting the County's vision with the community's voice, fostering awareness, understanding, transparency, and engagement.
- The Communications team focuses on visual and video storytelling when appropriate and leverages the strengths of each corporate channel to deliver content that is most relevant and useful to the audience.
- The County has a positive relationship with media, and partners with them to increase accurate and timely coverage on the stories that matter to residents.



2023-2027 Action Plan



Our Action Plan

The following Action Plan details how Northumberland County will achieve the goals set under each pillar in this Master Plan.

Prioritizing adaptability

As indicated earlier in this plan, the communications landscape continues to evolve. As such, so may these actions over time.

The County's Communications team will remain flexible and adaptable. We will regularly monitor and review progress, and adjust accordingly as part of annual business planning processes.





Focus

Goal 1: Embed an organizational communications mindset

Objective	Action	Partners	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Articulate a Communications vision for the organization	Affirm the Communications vision, mission, and goals through County Council endorsement	Council		✓			
Raise awareness of the Communications Master Plan across every department	Organize a cross-department 'road show' presentation and distribute a resource booklet on communications practices, policies, and supports	All County Departments		✓	✓		
Improve cross-departmental information sharing	Establish cyclical CAO Town Halls for management, with resources for staff communications	Office of the CAO; All County Departments	✓				
Expand the use of data to drive more efficient and effective operations	Expand organization-wide tracking of key performance metrics and deliver public-facing dashboard	All County Departments		✓			
Strengthen onboarding processes to orient new County employees to corporate communications culture	Establish a process and materials, including brand and communications protocols and baseline training	Corporate Services			✓		
Enhance consistency and professionalism of written content and promote inclusive writing practices across the organization	Develop a County Writing Style Guide to help staff maintain a consistent style, voice, and tone across written communications, web content and documentation	N/A		✓			

Objective	Action	Partners	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Update the communications policy framework	Develop and implement an updated Communications Policy Framework addressing areas such as advertising, media relations, issues management, social media, and content accessibility	N/A		✓	✓		
Improve the organization's ability to anticipate and respond to issues, reducing the likelihood of escalation	Update the County's Issues Management Policy and framework, and improve employees' understanding of their role in the process through roll-out of tools and training	All County Departments			✓		
Strengthen emergency preparedness	Lead cross-departmental review and update of crisis communications plans to ensure alignment with the County's Hazard Identification & Risk Analysis	N/A			✓		



Goal 2: Build strategic communications capacity

Objective	Action	Partners	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Assess Communications team composition and resources to ensure responsive and agile structure and capacity to meet organizational demand	Align proposals for changes to team structure with the organization's multi-year budget cycle	N/A	✓				✓
Invest in specialized skill development to ensure the Communications team remains well positioned to employ increasingly sophisticated tools and tactics	Establish and maintain a professional development program for the Communications Department aligned with IABC's Global Standard for the Communications Profession and integrating best practices for municipal communications leadership.	Corporate Services			✓		

Objective	Action	Partners	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Improve communications capacity across departments, equipping staff to leverage best practices and tools	Formalize a competency training program for staff (e.g., outcomes-focused program development, media relations, issues management, content accessibility, social media)	Corporate Services; All County Departments				✓	
Regularly assess the state of local municipal communications based on benchmarks	Partner with member municipalities to design and deliver annual community communications survey and assess results for trends and opportunities to enhance practices	Member municipalities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



Goal 3: Align all communications to the County's strategic business purpose

Objective	Action	Partners	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Deliver regular reporting to County Council on the effectiveness of corporate communications activities	Implement quarterly and annual reporting on communications-related business outcomes based on industry-leading UK Government Communication Service Evaluation Framework	N/A	✓				
Leverage outcomes-focused project models to maximize success in securing grant funding from other levels of government/external sources	Monitor for and identify grant opportunities, and coordinate interdepartmental collaboration on applications, to secure investment in County programs and services	All County Departments	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Establish process to identify annual communications priorities for each business unit	Create an annual corporate communications project calendar	All County Departments		✓	✓	✓	✓
Promote a single tone of voice for County-wide marketing and promotions	Launch an internal County Marketing Working Group to align and leverage marketing strategies and opportunities	Waste, Economic Development, Tourism Departments			✓		

Objective	Action	Partners	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Increase use of audience research and analytics to better understand current community priorities	Coordinate a County-wide market research program for enhanced municipal decision-making (e.g., satisfaction surveys, pulse checks)	County Senior Leadership Team					✓
Annually review the status of the Communications Master Plan	Fulfill the Plan's recommendations, incorporating into the County's budget and business planning processes	N/A		✓	✓	✓	✓
Reaffirm and renew the Communications Master Plan in alignment with the strategic direction of the organization	Develop a new five-year action plan for the next phase of County communications	N/A					✓



Partner

Goal 4: Engage networks for shared insight

Objective	Action	Partners	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Strengthen the County's employee culture through a more effective employee communications program	Create an Internal Communications Strategy, including undertaking an employee communications audit to assess and recommend new approaches for consistently seeking feedback, sharing information, and demonstrating how feedback is used	All County Departments				✓	
Strengthen collaboration with member municipalities	Formalize an Inter-Municipal Communications network and establish protocols for sharing lessons learned, local data, and joint project planning	Member municipalities	✓	✓			
Support the County's meaningful engagement, cultural learning and understanding, and respectful action towards reconciliation with Indigenous communities	Develop an Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Action Plan in consultation with Indigenous communities	Office of the CAO		✓	✓		

Objective	Action	Partners	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Ensure the County remains responsive and inclusive in addressing the needs of increasingly diverse community members, stakeholders, and staff as the community grows and changes	Establish an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion framework in consultation with equity-deserving groups and the broader community.	All County Departments		✓	✓	✓	
Promote a welcoming and inclusive community by raising awareness of cultural, societal, historic and religious dates of significance	Establish a Commemorative Dates Policy and annual calendar	N/A		✓			
Explore opportunities to enhance dialogue between residents and the County, ensuring community concerns are heard, addressed, and integrated into local government decisions	Consider creating round table community groups in each municipality to engage periodically, sharing their insights with the County and communicating municipal updates and consultation opportunities back with their networks	N/A				✓	



Goal 5: Enhance community experience with the County

Objective	Action	Partners	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Amplify the County's messaging with a range of audiences and stakeholders	Build stronger and more robust relationships with key influencers, stakeholders, and community partners to expand opportunities to engage with community members and share information	External Partners	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Create consistent community engagement practices across the organization	Formalize a community engagement framework based on the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum and best practices, and roll out training and toolkits to staff	All County Departments			✓		
Increase public participation in shaping municipal priorities, policies, and programs	Improve coordination of consultation efforts across County business units to make it easier and more efficient for residents to engage on multiple topics of interest, and balance the use of traditional consultation methods (e.g. public meetings, surveys) with more collaborative methods (online forums, committees) to best suit the situation	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Objective	Action	Partners	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Build specific strategic actions to evaluate, address and improve resident experience with County programs and services	Create a Client Experience Strategy for the County, leveraging leading experience frameworks from other industries such as The Beryl Institute's Experience Framework for healthcare	All County Departments					✓
Create protocols for two-way lines of communication between Communications and the County's Customer Care Representatives	Formalize process for providing Customer Care Representatives with notices and key messaging to support response to public inquiries, and for Customer Care Representatives to share insights with Communications based on public interactions	Corporate Services		✓			



Goal 6: Broaden effectiveness and reach of County communications

Objective	Action	Partners	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Ensure a coordinated approach to continuous and effective communication with key audiences	Implement a County-wide content schedule and annually develop core County campaigns	All County Departments			✓		
Ensure content is created and distributed in a data-driven, coordinated, and customer-centric manner, maintaining consistency, accuracy, and quality across all departments	Develop a content governance model for County communications	All County Departments				✓	
Enhance the impact and strategic effectiveness of the County's use of social media	Redevelop the County's social media strategy, including implementing recommendations from 2024 channel audit	N/A			✓		
Increase reach and awareness of County communications via social media	Enhance marketing of current social media channels, and evaluate and expand social media channels to reach target audiences (prioritizing LinkedIn and Instagram)	N/A	✓	✓	✓		
Enhance and strengthen the County's digital marketing practices	Adopt new techniques and solutions in areas such as enhanced data-driven marketing, social media marketing optimization, email marketing, and digital publications	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Objective	Action	Partners	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Strengthen standards for/management of the County brand	Implement a Brand Standards Guide, Logo Use Policy and a Digital Asset Management solution to improve consistent use of approved County logos, brand elements and imagery	N/A		✓			
Explore new mediums for sharing engaging content with audiences	Consider a municipal magazine to fill declining print media gap; a 'Municipal Minute' video podcast; and expanded use of roadside signage	Member Municipalities		✓	✓	✓	
Increase the use and effectiveness of targeted content	Develop marketing content based on audience personas to help deliver content that will be most relevant and useful to target audiences	N/A		✓			



Goal 7: Strengthen the story

Objective	Action	Partners	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Revamp Northumberland.ca	Oversee a website redesign project to modernize the corporate site, emphasizing community storytelling, ensuring straightforward language and simple navigation, and focusing on mobile-first based on trends in community access.	N/A		✓	✓		
Leverage the reach and power of video to reinforce messaging and boost engagement	Create a 'Video' strategy, identifying community and organizational story ideas/priorities and budget	N/A				✓	
Surface and promote good news stories and the staff behind these stories	Establish simple processes for staff to share department accomplishments and good news stories, and feature these on corporate channels to demonstrate County staff care and expertise, as well as taxpayer value	All County Departments			✓		

Objective	Action	Partners	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Showcase the County's workplace culture, values, and success stories to attract and retain top talent	Enhance the County's brand visibility and reputation with prospective employees through a renewed Recruitment Marketing Strategy	All County Departments	✓	✓			
Enhance the County's media relations strategy	Implement cyclical and ad-hoc media briefings to ensure local reporters have access to the information they need for accurate and timely coverage of County services and initiatives	Local Media		✓	✓		

Measuring our success

The County's progress in achieving the goals identified in this Master Plan will be monitored, measured and evaluated along the way. The Communications team will report back to Council and the community on a regular basis through quarterly and annual reporting, and we will make adjustments as needed based on lessons learned, outcomes achieved, and other influencing factors over time.

Several tactics will be used to evaluate success. These will include, but are not limited to:

- Completion of activities identified in the Action Plan
- Feedback from internal staff and Council
- Feedback from the community, partners & key stakeholders, including member municipalities
- Website and social media growth and analytics
- Media coverage: quantity, tone and alignment with County key messages
- Public engagement participation and feedback from participants

Through an annual Municipal Communications Survey, we will also track three performance indicators, the results of which will be made available via the County's Corporate Performance Dashboard:

- Per cent of residents who say the County has communicated well about its services, programs, policies, and plans
- Per cent of residents who say that information provided by the County is clear and easy to understand
- Per cent of positive and neutral media coverage

Additional metrics will be monitored as plans unfold.

Looking ahead

Northumberland County's Communications team is committed to delivering high-quality, strategic and innovative content. Over the past 10 years, we have built a solid foundation based on trust across all departments. Internal partners engage the Communications team for advice and counsel and to produce collateral that is engaging and focused on achieving business goals. County leadership recognizes the importance of effective communications, and have made it a priority for the organization.

At a time when the communications landscape is changing rapidly, community expectations are increasing and trust in government bodies is waning, it is challenging for any municipal team to keep up. The goals of this 10-year Master Plan – a first of its kind for the County – are to foster a more informed and engaged community, and to elevate the County's communications efforts, its ability to deliver greater value, and to tell a stronger, positive municipal story.

The Plan sets a clear vision and mission that will root the municipality over time. The guiding principles will steer the work of the team and ensure all communications from the County meet the highest standards of quality and ethics. The three pillars and their corresponding goals establish an efficient structure that reflects what we learned from the research.

Developing this Master Plan achieves one of the actions identified in the County's Strategic Plan, and it will go a long way to strengthening communications and engagement from the County with its community for years to come.

Below are the many secondary sources reviewed during the research phase for the development of this Master Plan:

- The Beryl Institute. [The Beryl Institute Experience Framework](#). August 22, 2018. Accessed April 11, 2024.
- Canadian Public Relations Society. [Code of Professional Standards](#). Accessed October 6, 2023.
- City of Dryden, Ontario. [City of Dryden Communications Plan 2023-2025](#). February 2, 2023. Accessed March 5, 2024.
- City of Greater Sudbury, Ontario. [Connecting You, Connecting Us: Communications Strategic Plan 2018-2020](#). Accessed March 5, 2024.
- City of Guelph, Ontario. [One City. One Voice. Shared Purpose: Strategic communications and community engagement plan \(2022-2026\)](#). Accessed September 25, 2023.
- City of Kawartha Lakes, Ontario. [Corporate Communications Strategy 2024-2027](#). March 19, 2024. Accessed April 29, 2024.
- City of Mississauga, Ontario. [Communications Master Plan, 2012](#). May 9, 2012. Accessed July 18, 2022.
- City of Mississauga, Ontario. [Communications Master Plan, 2018](#). June 27, 2018. Accessed July 18, 2022.
- City of Nanaimo, British Columbia. [City of Nanaimo Communications Plan, Spring 2013](#). Accessed March 5, 2024.
- City of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. [Communications Master Plan 2017](#). Accessed March 5, 2024.
- City of Red Deer, Alberta. Community and Public Relations Department Plan.
- Deloitte. [“The Four Factors of Trust: How Organizations Can Earn Lifelong Loyalty.”](#) Press release, November 1, 2022. Accessed April 8, 2024.
- Edelman. [2023 Edelman Trust Barometer: Global Report](#). January 18, 2023. Accessed September 26, 2023.
- Edelman. [2024 Edelman Trust Barometer: Global Report](#). January 14, 2024. Accessed February 6, 2024.
- Edelman. [2023 Future of Corporate Communications Study](#). September 2023. Accessed October 6, 2023.
- International Association of Business Communicators. [Code of Ethics for Professional Communicators](#). 1977. Accessed October 6, 2023.
- International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC). [Barcelona Principles 3.0](#). July 10, 2020. Accessed September 27, 2023.
- International Association of Business Communicators. [Global Standard of the Communication Profession](#). 2011. Accessed October 6, 2023.
- International Association of Public Participation. [IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation](#). Accessed September 26, 2023.
- Reichheld, Ashley, and Amelia Dunlop. *The Four Factors of Trust: How Organizations Can Earn Lifelong Loyalty*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2022.
- Tisch, Daniel. [The Elevation of Public Relations: A discussion paper on a profession’s present – and its possible future](#). Argyle Public Relationships. July 30, 2018. Accessed September 26, 2024.
- Town of Blue Mountains, Ontario. [Your Community. Your Voice: Communications Strategy 2021-2025](#). Accessed March 5, 2024.
- UK Government Communication Service. [Strategic communication: a behavioural approach](#). March 2020. Accessed April 12, 2024.
- UK Government Communication Service. [The GCS Evaluation Cycle](#). February 2024. Accessed April 12, 2024.
- USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. [2024 Global Communications Report](#). Released April 2024. Accessed May 14, 2024.
- Wolf, Jason A. [“Introducing a Framework for Experience in Healthcare: 8 Strategic Lenses for Action.”](#) LinkedIn, August 30, 2018. Accessed April 10, 2024.

County Of Northumberland
Communications
June 30, 2024

	YEAR-TO-DATE		ANNUAL BUDGET		Comments
	Actual	Budget	Variance		
Cash Based Revenue					
Internal Chargebacks	\$377,508	\$377,508	\$0	\$755,015	
Recovery of Expense	\$869	\$0	\$869		
Total Revenue	\$378,377	\$377,508	\$869	\$755,015	
Expenditures					
Salaries & Wages	\$202,442	\$214,244	(\$11,802)	\$451,513	Timing
Benefits	\$60,690	\$62,038	(\$1,348)	\$124,077	
Travel & Training	\$953	\$8,950	(\$7,997)	\$17,900	Timing- Travel
Materials & Supplies	\$15,144	\$25,223	(\$10,079)	\$50,445	Timing- Advertising/Publications
Information Technology	\$206	\$150	\$56	\$300	
External Services	\$7,874	\$34,770	(\$26,896)	\$204,540	Timing - Communication Master Plan
TCA's under Threshold	\$0	\$104	(\$104)	\$208	
Internal Chargebacks	\$8,500	\$8,500	\$0	\$17,000	
Total Expenditures	\$295,808	\$353,979	(\$58,171)	\$865,983	
Investments					
Financing					
Transfer from Reserve	(\$55,484)	(\$55,484)		(\$110,968)	
Total Financing	(\$55,484)	(\$55,484)		(\$110,968)	
Surplus/(Deficit)	\$138,053	\$79,013	\$59,040		

County Of Northumberland
Information Technology
June 30, 2024

	YEAR-TO-DATE			ANNUAL BUDGET	Comments
	Actual	Budget	Variance		
Cash Based Revenue					
Internal Chargebacks	\$1,980,678	\$1,980,678	\$0	\$3,961,356	
Other Revenue	\$141,746	\$141,356	\$391	\$282,711	
Total Revenue	\$2,122,424	\$2,122,034	\$391	\$4,244,067	
Expenditures					
Salaries & Wages	\$696,360	\$813,463	(\$117,103)	\$1,769,737	Gapping
Benefits	\$206,470	\$225,686	(\$19,216)	\$451,372	
Travel & Training	\$12,103	\$37,123	(\$25,020)	\$74,246	Timing
Materials & Supplies	\$4,526	\$6,238	(\$1,712)	\$12,475	
Insurance	\$0	\$20,700	(\$20,700)	\$41,400	Timing- Cyber Insurance
Information Technology	\$215,905	\$300,537	(\$84,632)	\$469,520	Timing- Various Projects
External Services	\$57,531	\$110,768	(\$53,237)	\$259,963	Timing- Digital Strategy & Cybersecurity
Repairs & Maintenance	\$217,135	\$280,552	(\$63,417)	\$478,245	Timing
TCA's under Threshold	\$199,095	\$233,684	(\$34,589)	\$635,000	Timing
Internal Chargebacks	\$31,073	\$31,073	\$0	\$62,145	
Total Expenditures	\$1,640,199	\$2,059,824	(\$419,625)	\$4,254,102	
Investments					
TCA's over Threshold	\$17,349	\$78,500	(\$61,151)	\$152,000	Timing - Meeting room upgrades
Transfers to Reserves	\$112,500	\$112,500		\$225,000	
Total Investments	\$129,849	\$191,000	(\$61,151)	\$377,000	
Financing					
Transfer from Reserve	(\$166,719)	(\$166,719)		(\$387,035)	
Total Financing	(\$166,719)	(\$166,719)		(\$387,035)	
Surplus/(Deficit)	\$519,096	\$37,929	\$481,166		

County of Northumberland
 Legal Services
 June 30, 2024

	YEAR-TO-DATE			ANNUAL BUDGET	Comments
	Actual	Budget	Variance		
Cash Based Revenue					
Internal Chargebacks	\$269,375	\$269,375	\$0	\$538,750	
Total Revenue	\$269,375	\$269,375	\$0	\$538,750	
Expenditures					
Salaries & Wages	\$188,066	\$186,870	\$1,196	\$376,432	
Benefits	\$57,476	\$52,556	\$4,920	\$105,113	Timing - CPP & EI
Travel & Training	\$6,033	\$11,150	(\$5,117)	\$22,300	Timing - Travel
Materials & Supplies	\$0	\$4,250	(\$4,250)	\$8,500	Timing
Information Technology	\$0	\$500	(\$500)	\$1,000	
External Services	\$0	\$2,500	(\$2,500)	\$0	
TCAs under Threshold	\$6,352	\$6,750	(\$398)	\$13,500	
Internal Chargebacks	\$3,453	\$3,453	\$0	\$6,905	
Total Expenditures	\$261,379	\$268,029	(\$6,650)	\$533,750	
Investments					
Transfers to Reserves	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Total Investments	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Financing					
Transfer from Reserve				\$0	
Total Financing	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Surplus/(Deficit)	\$7,996	\$1,346	\$6,650		

County of Northumberland
Corporate Services
June 30, 2024

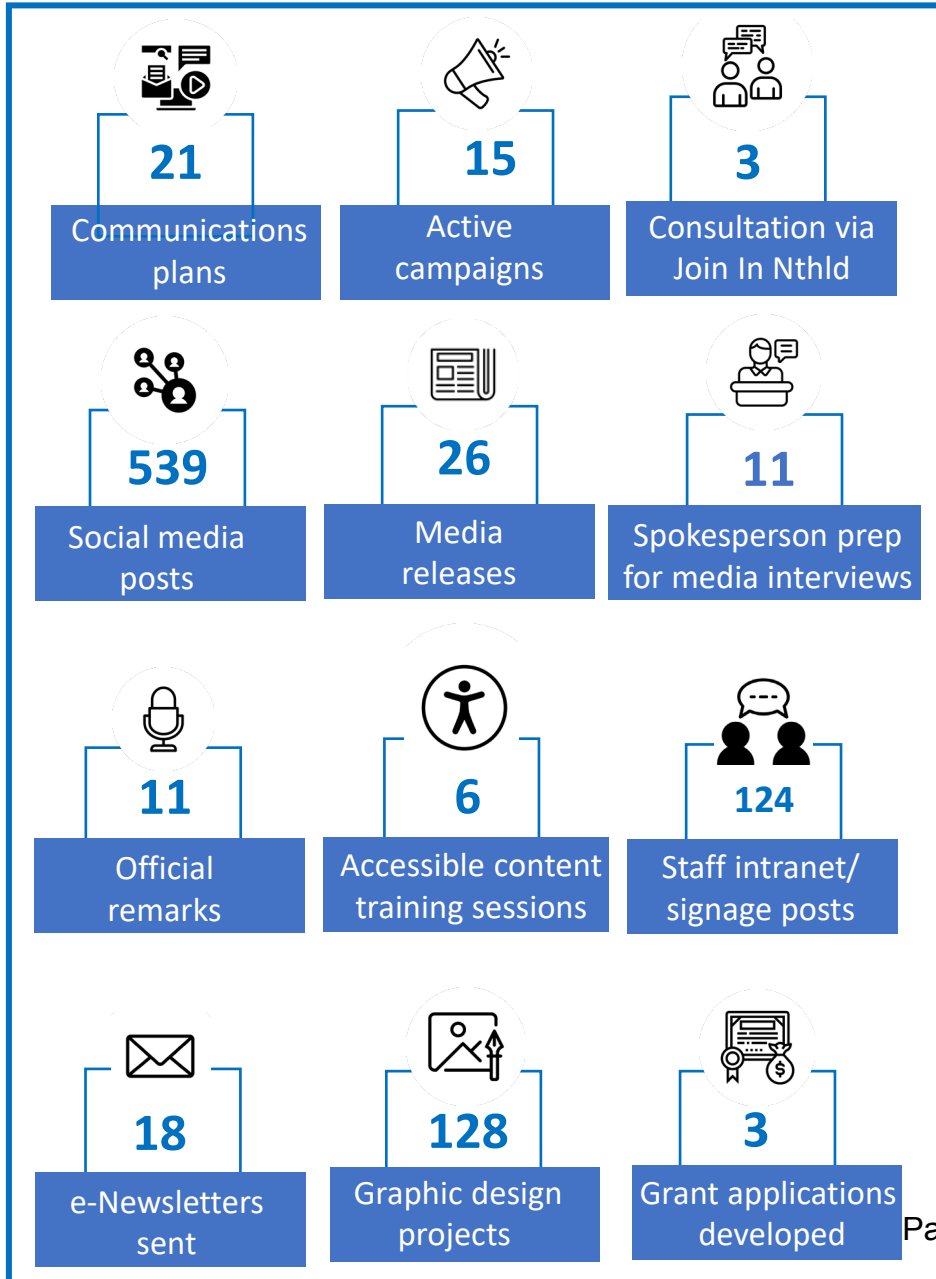
	YEAR-TO-DATE			ANNUAL BUDGET	Comments
	Actual	Budget	Variance		
Cash Based Revenue					
Taxation	\$1,618,939	\$1,618,939	\$0	\$3,237,878	
Internal Chargebacks	\$996,895	\$996,895	\$0	\$1,993,789	
Grants & Subsidies	\$109,996	\$0	\$109,996	\$427,406	Timing - NCAM Funding
Other Revenue	\$12,593	\$118,947	(\$106,355)	\$332,895	Timing - Donation revenue
Total Revenue	\$2,738,423	\$2,734,781	\$3,641	\$5,991,969	
Expenditures					
Salaries & Wages	\$1,061,598	\$1,109,077	(\$47,479)	\$2,291,776	Gapping
Benefits	\$323,279	\$311,305	\$11,974	\$622,609	Timing - benefits
Travel & Training	\$170,105	\$283,550	(\$113,445)	\$359,785	Timing- Corporate & Staff Training
Materials & Supplies	\$33,848	\$66,110	(\$32,262)	\$139,119	Timing - Health and Safety supplies
Health Care Supplies	\$9,194	\$11,500	(\$2,306)	\$23,000	
Information Technology	\$5,599	\$5,030	\$570	\$10,059	
External Services	\$578,384	\$574,627	\$3,757	\$1,779,499	
Utilities & Fuel	\$5,101	\$2,481	\$2,620	\$4,962	
Rent & Property Tax	\$0	\$3,000	(\$3,000)	\$6,000	
Repairs & Maintenance	\$38,222	\$38,819	(\$597)	\$77,638	
TCAs under Threshold	\$7,595	\$7,250	\$345	\$32,906	
Internal Chargebacks	\$250,496	\$247,049	\$3,447	\$494,098	
Total Expenditures	\$2,483,421	\$2,659,797	(\$176,377)	\$5,841,453	
Investments					
TCAs over Threshold	\$324,144	\$603,893	(\$279,749)	\$1,134,787	Timing - GPL & NCAM Project
Transfers to Reserves	\$67,208	\$67,208	\$0	\$134,416	
Total Investments	\$391,352	\$671,101	(\$279,749)	\$1,269,203	
Financing					
Transfer from Reserve	(\$659,552)	(\$659,552)		(\$1,118,687)	
Total Financing	(\$659,552)	(\$659,552)	\$0	(\$1,118,687)	
Surplus/(Deficit)	\$523,202	\$63,435	\$459,767		



Communications Department 2024 Q2 Update



Inputs



Outputs/Outtakes

Social Media



7.5k followers
1.1% increase
602k total impressions
2.09% av. engagement
 vs. **1.54%** industry av.



2.3k followers
2.8% increase
26k total impressions
1.48% av. Engagement vs.
1.48% industry av.



1.7 k followers
13% increase
25k total impressions
3.4% av. Engagement vs.
2.27% industry av.

Website



89k unique visits
205k total visits
1m 04s av. time

Grants



\$116K secured YTD
8 apps with funder
4 under development

Performance Dashboard



397 Site visits
33 Total KPI/CHIs tracked
13 New metrics added

Media Relations (print/online stories)



142 media stories/mentions
100% direct key message pick-up
83% spokesperson quotes
17% positive **83%** neutral **2%** negative

Public Consultation – Join In Northumberland



Visits
4.1k

Informed Visitors
1.2K

Outcomes

- **VIA Rail Commuter Train 641:** Following extensive public and political advocacy efforts to seek reinstatement of commuter rail service, VIA Rail Canada announced a step forward with introduction of Train 641.
- **Indigenous Relations:** In collaboration with Alderville First Nation, organized the grand opening of a universal trail in the County Forest with 80 participants in attendance, and in collaboration with the Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre and County Early Years team, organized a National Indigenous Peoples' Day event at the Cobourg Community Centre attracting close to 200 participants.
- **Northumberland County Instagram:** Soft-launched a corporate Instagram account to expand social media reach to a broader demographic.
- **Northumberland Next Official Plan Update:** Promotional campaign generated strong public engagement and participation with 3.5k visits to the engagement portal and 1.1k 'informed' visitors downloading documents or visiting multiple pages to learn more.



Highlights

- **Roads and Bridges:** Rolled out the 2024 construction communications program, building awareness of the many projects and infrastructure investments planned by Public Works over the coming months.
- **Grant-writing :** Launched a weekly e-newsletter for community and municipal stakeholders consolidating available funding opportunities, and monitored eight applications pending funder decision valued at \$4.3 M.



Q3 Objectives

- **Communications Master Plan:** Finalize and implement the direction for the County's strategic communications and community engagement practices over a 10-year horizon.
- **County Writing Style Guide:** Strengthen the County's tone of voice through cross-organization standardization of information such as common spellings, abbreviations, capitalizations and numbers, through development and roll-out of an employee writing resource, creating consistency and readability in materials produced by the County.
- **2023 Annual Report:** Collaborate with the Finance team to develop the County's 2023 Annual Report, detailing the County's financial performance and service highlights.

Context

County staff continue to advance Indigenous relations and reconciliation efforts in support of the Strategic Plan Pillar ‘Foster a Thriving Community’. Through intentional acts, the County will strengthen Indigenous cultural awareness and understanding within the organization and community, seek meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities, and advance respectful reconciliation.

Goal

Increase County capacity and efforts to build mutually respectful and beneficial Indigenous relationships and undertake meaningful reconciliation.

Objectives



- Increase meaningful consultation and collaboration with Indigenous communities.
- Deliver Indigenous cultural competency training for 200+ staff to strengthen awareness and understanding of Indigenous culture and historical truths, building staff working capacity and advancing reconciliation.
- Establish an Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Action Plan (IR&RAP) in consultation with Indigenous communities.

Q2 Highlights

Engagement and relationship-building with Williams Treaties First Nations (WTFN), and specifically with Alderville First Nation, as well as MNO, Peterborough and District Wapiti Métis Council, Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre.



Alderville FN Consultation

- Facilitated early consultation protocol and engagement on 10 projects & issues
- Engagement on best practices for project permits by County/municipalities and the application of archaeological assessments.
- Update and input into IR&RAP.

MNO Peterborough Métis Engagement

- 473 Ontario Street archaeological assessment.



Collaboration with Indigenous communities

- County presentation to Chief and council on 2023 initiatives and 2024 objectives.
- Porcupine Universal Trail development in County Forest with Alderville FN members and grand opening ceremony with 80 participants in attendance supported by Alderville FN cultural advisors and knowledge keepers.
- Assistance with environmental waste collection efforts for upcoming Alderville FN POW WOW.



Education and Reconciliation

- Hosted a National Indigenous Peoples’ Day event on Solidarity Day with close to 200 in attendance, in collaboration with the Early Years team, the Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre & Alderville FN.
- 3 Social media postings supporting Indigenous dates of significance (11 annually).
- Staff cultural education communications on Indigenous dates of significance.

If you require this information in an alternate format, please contact the Accessibility Coordinator at accessibility@northumberland.ca or 1-800-354-7050 ext. 2327



Report 2024-101

Report Title: Grant Activity Biannual Report

Committee Name: Corporate Support

Committee Meeting Date: July 30, 2024

Prepared by: Jennifer Hardy-Parr
Grant writer
Communications

Reviewed by: Kate Campbell
Director of Communications & Information Technology
Communications

Approved by: Jennifer Moore, CAO

Council Meeting Date: August 14, 2024

Strategic Plan Priorities: Innovate for Service Excellence
 Ignite Economic Opportunity
 Foster a Thriving Community
 Propel Sustainable Growth
 Champion a Vibrant Future

Information Report

“That the Corporate Support Committee receive Report 2024-101 ‘Grant Activity Biannual Report’ for information; and

Further That the Committee recommend that County Council receive this report for information.”

Purpose

To provide a summary of grant activity between January 1, 2024 and June 30, 2024.

Background

The Communications Department plays a vital role in achieving Northumberland County’s Community Strategic Plan and priorities across its 10 operating departments. This is

accomplished through a coordinated and strategic approach to corporate communications, which includes centralized grant writing services.

To help Northumberland County secure funding from public (federal and provincial governments) and private sources for various projects, programs, and services, the Grant writer is responsible for:

- Developing and nurturing relationships with funders, and leveraging knowledge of the funding landscape to identify government and industry channels that can support Northumberland County's initiatives for the community.
- Providing timely advice and information to stakeholders regarding funding opportunities, requirements, and procedures.
- Collaborating with staff and community partners to develop and present compelling projects that meet funder requirements.
- Researching and crafting persuasive content that aligns with the County's mission and vision.
- Coordinating the submission of proposals.
- Supporting departmental leads, as needed, to meet reporting requirements for successful applications.
- Building community capacity for securing funding for investment in Northumberland.

Between January 1, 2024 and June 30, 2024, three funding applications led by the Grant writer were confirmed as successful. Seven were confirmed as unsuccessful.

The successful applications included:

- \$100,000 from Employment and Social Development Canada's Enabling Accessibility Fund for a safe, fully accessible outdoor area at 800 Division Street in Cobourg. This space will support children's treatment and recreation, along with cultural awareness and outdoor education programs. This project represents a collaboration between Northumberland County's EarlyON Child and Family Centre, Five Counties Children's Centre, Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre, and YMCA Northumberland.
- \$11,327 from the Rotary Club of Cobourg to launch an Agri-Therapy Program in the greenhouse within the new Golden Plough Lodge (GPL) long-term care home. This program will allow residents and their families to enjoy the physical and mental health benefits of the greenhouse and gardening; present a fresh environment to engage the community with more volunteer opportunities; and provide staff with a greenspace to breathe, center themselves, and boost overall resilience.
- 76 hours of support (\$5,432 approx. value) from the Ontario Resource Centre for Climate Adaptation's Community Outreach and Engagement Program. Over the course of 12 months, Northumberland County staff will collaborate with the Ontario Resource Centre for Climate Adaptation team to develop and implement a community engagement strategy aimed at creating our first Climate Change Adaptation and Resiliency Plan.

At the time of this report, six applications are awaiting funder decisions, valued at \$3,071,752.06.

Consultations

When at capacity, the Grant writer offers support to departments independently completing grant applications rather than leading the development process. This support includes prefilling applications with basic information, sharing pre-written content, reviewing draft applications and related appendices, and making recommendations on application positioning strategies. Additionally, the Grant writer provides consultation support to member municipalities and community partners upon request.

Between January 1, 2024 and June 30, 2024, four funding applications supported by the Grant writer were confirmed as unsuccessful.

At the time of this report, two supported applications are awaiting a funder decision, valued at \$1,214,666.

Legislative Authority / Risk Considerations

Grant writing activities are conducted in compliance with all relevant legislation.

Discussion / Options

N/A

Financial Impact

Between January 1, 2024, and June 30, 2024, Northumberland County secured:

- \$16,759 from Foundations/Corporations/Private Organizations

During this time, community partners secured:

- \$100,000 from Federal Government

TOTAL: \$116,759

To review additional details regarding application-based grant funds secured between 2018 to present, please visit [Northumberland County's Performance Dashboard](#).

Member Municipality Impacts

A grant proposal submitted by partners, rather than a sole applicant, may have a higher chance of securing funding. To align with the County's mission to position Northumberland as a leader in best practices, Northumberland County encourages collaborative partnerships. We promote joint application opportunities and consultations with member municipalities, Alderville First Nation, and community partners whenever possible. Between January 1, 2024, and June 30, 2024, Grant writer capacity building activities have included:

- Growing the Weekly Funding Opportunities E-blast distribution list by over 17%, ensuring that Northumberland County Directors and Managers, Alderville First Nation, the seven member municipalities, and non-profit organizations within Northumberland receive timely notification and information regarding available funding opportunities. Presently, 74 Northumberland County staff and 119 member municipality/community partners receive the Weekly Funding Opportunities E-blast.

- Refreshing the Weekly Funding Opportunities E-blast so that it is easier to read on different devices and is more engaging. The refreshed E-blast launched on May 13, 2024. Detailed analytics are helping to measure the effectiveness of the E-blast. Specifically:
 - The open rate is the percentage of recipients who open an email out of the total number of emails delivered. A higher open rate indicates that more recipients are interested in the email content. The average open rate for the E-blast by County staff is 51% and by member municipality/community partners it is 39%. In the context of municipal government, a favorable email open rate typically ranges from 40% and 46%.
 - The click rate is the percentage of recipients who click on one or more links within the email out of the total number of emails delivered. A higher click rate shows that the recipients find the email content compelling and are motivated to take action. The average click rate for the E-blast by County staff is 36% and by member municipality/community partners it is 16%. In the context of municipal government, a favorable click rate falls between 2% and 5%.
 - The unsubscribe rate is 0% for County staff, member municipalities, and community partners.
- Enhancing the County's outcomes measurement practices – imperative for successful funding applications – by leading a cross-organization project to refresh the [Northumberland County's Performance Dashboard](#) with the focus on improving user experience and navigation. This update included the integration of 12 new metrics related to Corporate Financial Wellbeing, Court Services, Housing & Shelter, Paramedic Services, and Talent Attraction & Retention.
- Scanning the funding landscape for specific opportunities, as requested by internal and external stakeholders, and providing timely advice and information on funding opportunities, requirements, and procedures. Eight Funding Opportunity Scans have been completed for specific initiatives and provided to Northumberland County staff, member municipalities, and/or community partners.
- Delivering guidance to external stakeholders to generate value for the community through increased funding to the community overall. Grant writing support via the review of draft applications and related appendices, as well as recommendations on application positioning strategy are provided to member municipalities and community partners, on request.
- Engaging in speaking opportunities at pertinent community events and training sessions to elevate the quality of grant submissions – and the likelihood of success – from the community of Northumberland. A workshop focusing on an Outcomes Measurement approach to grant writing was delivered at Venture13 during this period. 100% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt better equipped to create high-impact, outcomes-focused funding applications after attending the workshop.

Conclusion / Outcomes

Contemporary issues such as the cost-of-living, international alliances/conflicts, the environment, and the lingering COVID-19 pandemic are continuing to shape monetary and fiscal

policies across the globe. This impacts how much grant funding is available and what sort of activities are considered eligible for application-based grant funding.

During the height of the pandemic (2020-2022), the federal and provincial governments engaged in large-scale counter-pandemic fiscal programs. Northumberland County capitalized on these opportunities, increasing the number of applications submitted annually by up to 144%. This proactive approach allowed us to secure significant funding during a critical period.

With core inflation decelerating and growth remaining tepid, recent economic data suggest that Canada and Ontario will likely avoid a recession and may begin recovering later in 2024 ([Bank of Canada reduces policy rate by 25 basis points](#); Jun 5, 2024).

In line with this economic outlook, the 2024 Federal and Provincial budgets continue to prioritize application-based grant opportunities that focus on housing/homelessness; education; green economy; high cost of living; public health care; infrastructure; economic renewal; and labour shortages.

In the 2024 document titled, 'Making Canada's Growth a Success: The case for a Municipal Growth Framework', the Federation of Canadian Municipalities calls on the Federal government to modernize municipal funding noting that "for many municipalities, especially small, rural, remote and northern communities that have limited staff resources, the application process associated with government grants and transfers is often a significant barrier to applying for funding" (p. 43).

At the same time, generative Artificial Intelligence tools are changing the face of grant writing. These tools can expedite the task of wordsmithing. This means that funders are going to receive even more applications, which is going to further increase the level of competition for available funds. This trend reinforces the value of Northumberland County consistently using an 'Outcomes Measurement Logic Model' as a method to design projects that outshine the competition.

Looking ahead, the Communications Department will continue to use these insights and tools to improve our grant applications, aligning them strategically with funding priorities to increase the County's chances of success.

Attachments

N/A

Northumberland Accessibility Advisory Committee Minutes

May 9, 2024

Ed's House Northumberland Hospice Care Centre, Program Room

1301 Ontario St, Cobourg (Program Room)

10:00 – 11:30 am

Members present: Bob Robertson, Christine Bayer, Hope Bergeron, Jason Ducharme, Selena Forsyth, Bobby-Jo Preston (Chair), John Logel (County Councillor), Andrea Nicholson (staff liaison)

Regrets: Stephanie Ash

Quorum was confirmed and the meeting called to order at 10:08am.

1. **Approval of meeting notes from April 11, 2024**

Moved by Selena, seconded by Jason that the minutes from the April 11, 2024 meeting be approved. **Carried.**

2. **Action items and follow-up from April 11, 2024**

Action 1: Andrea will meet with, and photograph, Helping Hands Award Recipients. **In progress.**

Action 2: Andrea will send out a meeting invitation for the June 27 ad hoc NAAC meeting. **Completed.**

Action 3: Bobby-Jo will confirm if space is available at Ed's House to host the May 9 NAAC meeting. **Completed.**

3. **New Business**

i **Woodland Trail - Porcupine Universal Trail Grand Opening**

The official opening is being planned for May 31 at 11:00am. Andrea will confirm details with the Committee as soon as they are available.

ii **National Access Ability Week**

Andrea reported that all planned awareness activities are in progress, and shared the committee member quotes and design that will be used for internal awareness and external awareness.

iii Accessibility Coordinator update

No update

4. Adjournment

The meeting was terminated at 10:51am

Upcoming meetings:

- **June 13, 2024 (2nd Thursday) 10:00am via Zoom (regular meeting)**
- **June 27, 2024, 10:00 am via Zoom (ad hoc meeting)**