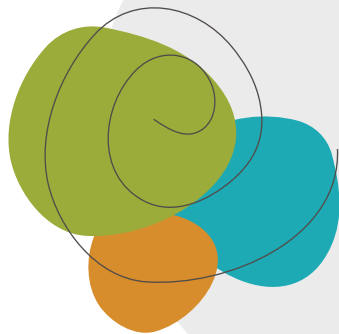




MIDCOAST
council



COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2019-2022

Part of our community every day

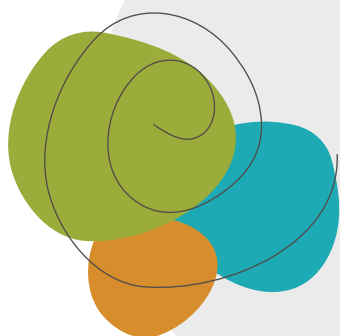


OUR VISION

We strive to be recognised as a place of unique environmental and cultural significance. Our strong community connection, coupled with our innovative development and growing economy, builds the quality of life we value.

OUR MISSION

We deliver benefits for our community in a way that adds value and builds trust.



COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2019-2021

Part of our community every day

Contents

We are part of our community every day	4
Introduction	5
Delivering our vision and mission	6
Community-centred communications	7
Our aim	8
Principles	9
Objectives	10
Key strategies	11
Our communication framework	
Who we are talking to?	12
What we are talking about?	13
When we are talking to our community?	13
Why are we communicating with our community?	14
How do we communicate with our community?	15
Evaluation, review and monitoring	16
Appendix	

MidCoast Council's Communications Strategy is the roadmap to deliver on our commitment to keeping the community informed of activities that impact them, and ensuring they are aware of the opportunities we offer to them, every day, as a member of the MidCoast community.

Adopted by MidCoast Council at the ordinary meeting of 26 June 2019



WE ARE PART OF OUR COMMUNITY EVERY DAY

We are everywhere our community lives,
works and plays every day.

We are at work on our roads, bridges, footpaths
in our main streets, parks and sporting fields.

We care for our community through
ageing and disability services, youth and
Aboriginal strengthening programs, building
and developing community connections.

We plan for the sustainable use of our land,
we protect and manage our natural environment
as we look to our community's future.

We strive towards a better tomorrow
through economic development programs,
tourism partnerships and cultural services.

We support events across our region, we
deliver transport services through our regional
airport, we provide water and waste services
to large parts of our community.

This is what we do for our community - every day.
And this is what we need our community to know.



INTRODUCTION

We recognise strong and effective communication with our community can deliver a range of benefits, including strengthening relationships, generating support and participation and improving community awareness of our programs, activities and services.

Communicating with our MidCoast community comes with many challenges. We are a large and diverse region with more than 90,000 people living in our 196 towns, villages and localities.

When we are communicating with our community we are mindful we are not dealing with one group of people, but rather a complex and diverse range of audiences. All these audiences are important in different ways, and at different times, to the delivery of Council services.

We are also communicating in a complex, dynamic and crowded environment. Our challenge is to cut through this in a clear and simple way.

To do this we will value direct communication with our community along with broadcast activity and actively seek to communicate with our many communities in the ways and places they most respond to.

We will communicate with our community not just to inform them, but to support the building of community capacity by increasing our community's knowledge on the themes and issues affecting them in their daily lives.

We also want our community to know we are here for them, we are making decisions and putting in place plans that impact on the future of our community and we take this seriously.

With 1000 employees, we are a strong and committed part of the community and have a vested interest in its success and future. We want our community to understand what we do for them on a daily basis, and help them be informed enough to meaningfully work with us to shape that future.

We also recognise that talking to our community will continue to change over time. We need to be constantly looking at how we work with our community and be flexible in our approach to ensure we are working in the spaces our community is communicating and engaging in.

This strategy identifies initiatives to support our commitment to communicating in a way that encourages an open relationship and builds trust with our community as we strive to deliver on our mission of delivering services to our community in a way that adds value and builds trust.

This strategy is supported by a clear action plan that will set out how we will implement the principles, objectives and opportunities outlined in this document.





DELIVERING OUR VISION AND MISSION

The delivery of effective communications activities is crucial to the realisation of our organisational mission, and through this to support the realisation of the vision our community has set for itself.

As a community we have a vision – set out in our community strategic plan **MidCoast 2030: Shared Vision, Shared Responsibility** - to be recognised as a place of unique environmental and cultural significance where our strong community connection, coupled with our innovative development and growing economy, builds the quality of life we value.

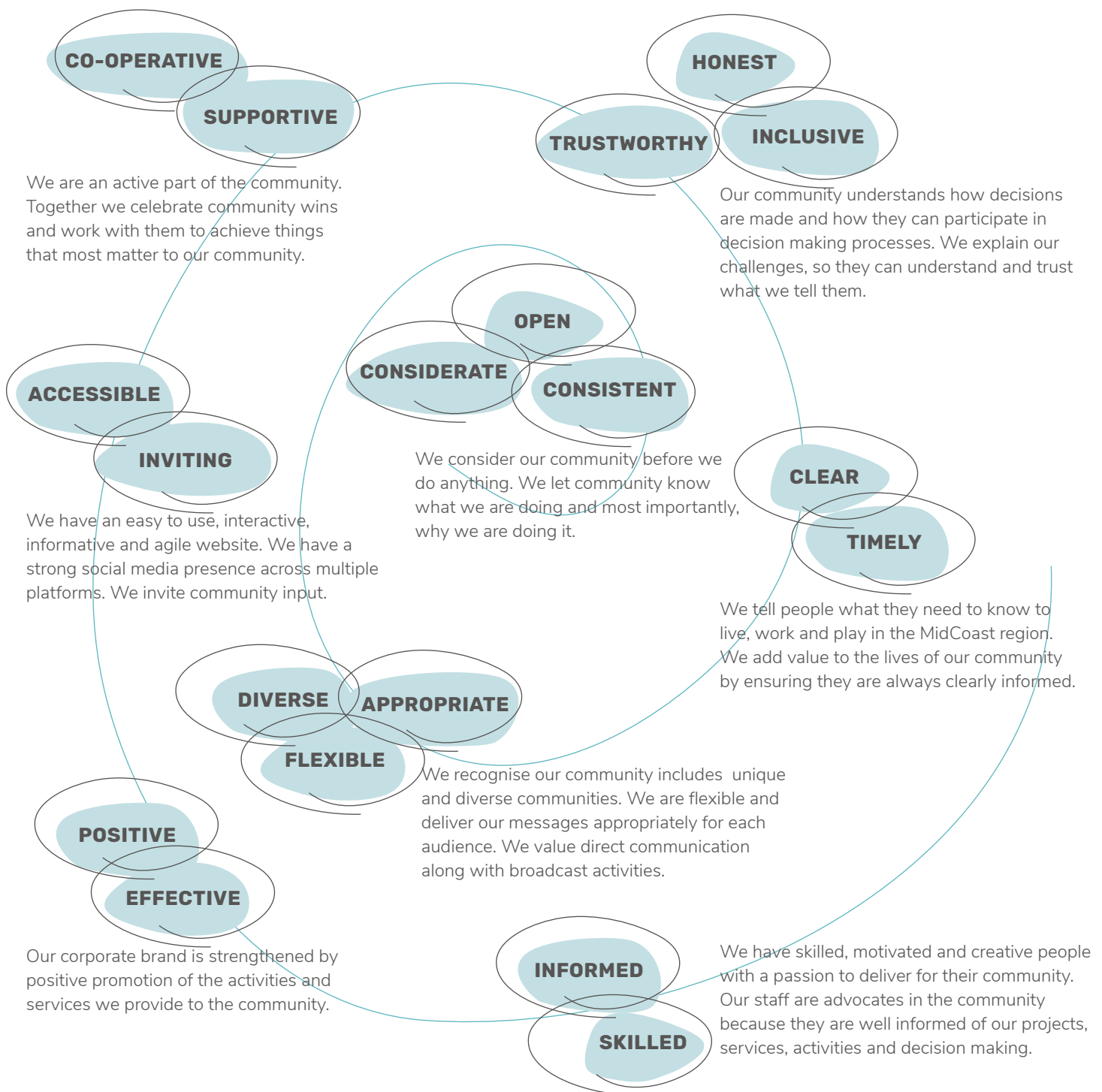
To support our community in achieving this vision, we need to deliver on our mission to deliver benefits for our community in a way that adds value and builds trust.

Building trust is the overarching principle under which all communication activities should be delivered.

The communications activities of Council are also aligned with our community strategic plan, **MidCoast 2030: Shared Vision, Shared Responsibility** which outlines our values as:

- our unique, diverse and culturally rich communities
- a connected community
- our environment
- our thriving and growing economy
- leadership and shared vision

COMMUNITY-CENTRED COMMUNICATIONS





OUR AIM

Our communications activities foster strong connections with our community as we keep them informed about the things that matter most to them.

Our community understands our services, challenges and decision making processes as we communicate in ways that add value and build trust.

We are connecting with the community in a way that shows them we are part of their day, every day, working to deliver a better community for all of us.

OUR PRINCIPLES



HONEST

True and accurate

OPEN

Transparent and accessible

TIMELY

Planned proactive and responsive

CLEAR

Concise and easy to understand

CONSISTENT

Uniform in tone and meaning regardless of channel or audience

PURPOSEFUL

Relevant, topical and of interest to the community

ACCESSIBLE

Delivered across multiple channels



OUR OBJECTIVES

INCREASE COMMUNITY AWARENESS

To increase community awareness and understanding of our services, activities, projects, planning and decision making processes

PROACTIVELY DELIVER INFORMATION

To proactively deliver clear, accessible, timely, relevant and targeted information in ways that best meet the local interests and needs of our communities

PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATION

To provide accessible, interactive, informative and agile communication and digital services that meet the needs of our community

STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS

To strengthen relationships within our community, through communications activities, to increase confidence and support the development of trust

BUILD OUR IDENTITY

To build a clearly identifiable and approachable corporate brand that reflects our identity

KEY STRATEGIES

We will deliver on our principles and objectives and work to position our communications activities to deliver on where we want to be by implementing a range of strategies, programs and other deliverables including the development of the following:

Aim

Social media development program

To deliver a strong social media presence across a range of platforms, with the aim of developing two way conversations and being an active member of the MidCoast community.

Digital media strategy

To guide the continuous development of our website with the end-user the primary focus as we work to deliver an engaging, informative, trusted, interactive and agile website.

This will include customer journey mapping to ensure we have a constant view to deliver on the needs of our community. We will investigate how we can make it easy to do business with us online and how our website can become a hub for community information. This strategy will also look at other digital opportunities including the development of apps.

Brand management program

To guide the consistent delivery of the corporate brand. This will include a planned, proactive marketing campaign to build community awareness and exposure to Council services, activities and projects. Opportunities to deliver these messages in our customer service centres, libraries and other facilities will be explored.

Community communication guidelines

To outline processes and plans to support the delivery of targeted communications, prioritising a direct communications approach and reduce reliance on broadcast information and third parties. The guidelines will establish an approach to guide effective communications choices taking into account where and how individual communities' best receive their information.

Community education program

To support community understanding of who we are, what we do, how we make decisions and how we plan for the future. This includes ensuring we continue to develop strong relationships with traditional media to help our community understand our challenges and decision making.

Staff communications program

To increase staff knowledge and understanding of our services, activities, projects, decision making and planning processes to allow them to be advocates in the community both through their professional and personal interactions with the community.

Staff culture program

Development and implementation of processes to deliver a coordinated and proactive approach to informing the community of Council's role, and drive a proactive communication culture across Council, by putting tools in place to assist staff identify when there is a need to communicate in their operational activities. This will include building communications considerations into project management frameworks and other management strategies to support the consideration of communicating with the community at a range of milestones in our activities.

Measurement and evaluation processes

To deliver consistent measurement of communication activities and reporting on communications outputs and impacts. Regular analysis will be used to improve practices and constantly refine our approach. A dashboard of metrics will be established and targets set to allow for regular reporting of communications activities.



WHO ARE WE TALKING TO?

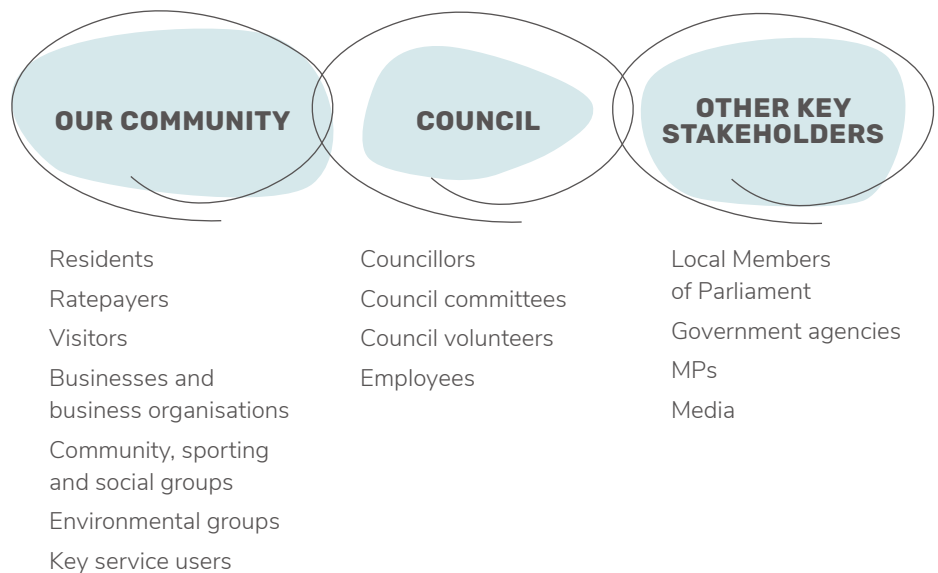
When we are communicating with our community we are mindful that we are not dealing with one group of people, but rather a complex and diverse range of audiences.

The MidCoast is home to 92,462 people, living in one of our 196 towns, villages and localities. When we are communicating with our community we are mindful that we are not dealing with one group of people, but rather a complex and diverse range of audiences.

All these audiences are important in different ways, and at different times, to the delivery of council services. The majority of the time we are not trying to communicate with everyone, as specific council issues, initiatives or programs usually only relate to segments of our community, so we need to be constantly thinking about who we need to reach with our particular activities.

As we plan our communications activities we will think of our audience in terms of segments and primary and secondary priority targets to fine-tune our activities and help determine which tactics will work best in any given situation.

In broad terms our audiences fall into several categories:



Our communication framework

WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

We aim to provide information to our community to build their knowledge of our projects, services and activities and decision making processes. We will do this in line with our principles and objectives and convey the important message to our community that we are part of their everyday.

Our communications activities build on the way our community views our services to help show our community how we are a positive part of their lives.

It is critical our communications activities are supportive of our community, and not separate to it – to this end we will build partnerships across the community to support information flow and be a good citizen in the community in which we all live, work and play.

WHEN ARE WE TALKING TO OUR COMMUNITY?

We talk to our community at every available opportunity, and are mindful of identifying these opportunities early in the delivery of projects and activities.

We are holding a constant conversation with our community about our activities, services and decision making and recognise repetition is the key to successful message delivery.



Our communication framework



WHY ARE WE COMMUNICATING WITH OUR COMMUNITY?

We communicate to inform our community of our activities, services and decisions and to build relationships with our community. By delivering information in line with our principles, we are working to build trust with our community and assist in delivering our organisational mission.

For our community to trust we are a well-run and managed Council it is imperative they understand how we make decisions, how we plan for the future and how we provide services to our community.

If the community learns more about what we do, why we do it, and how we support the community we all live and work in, it will support the development of an understanding of our role in the community.

Communicating openly and honestly and will help, over time, to build trust in our community.

Our communication framework

HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE WITH OUR COMMUNITY?

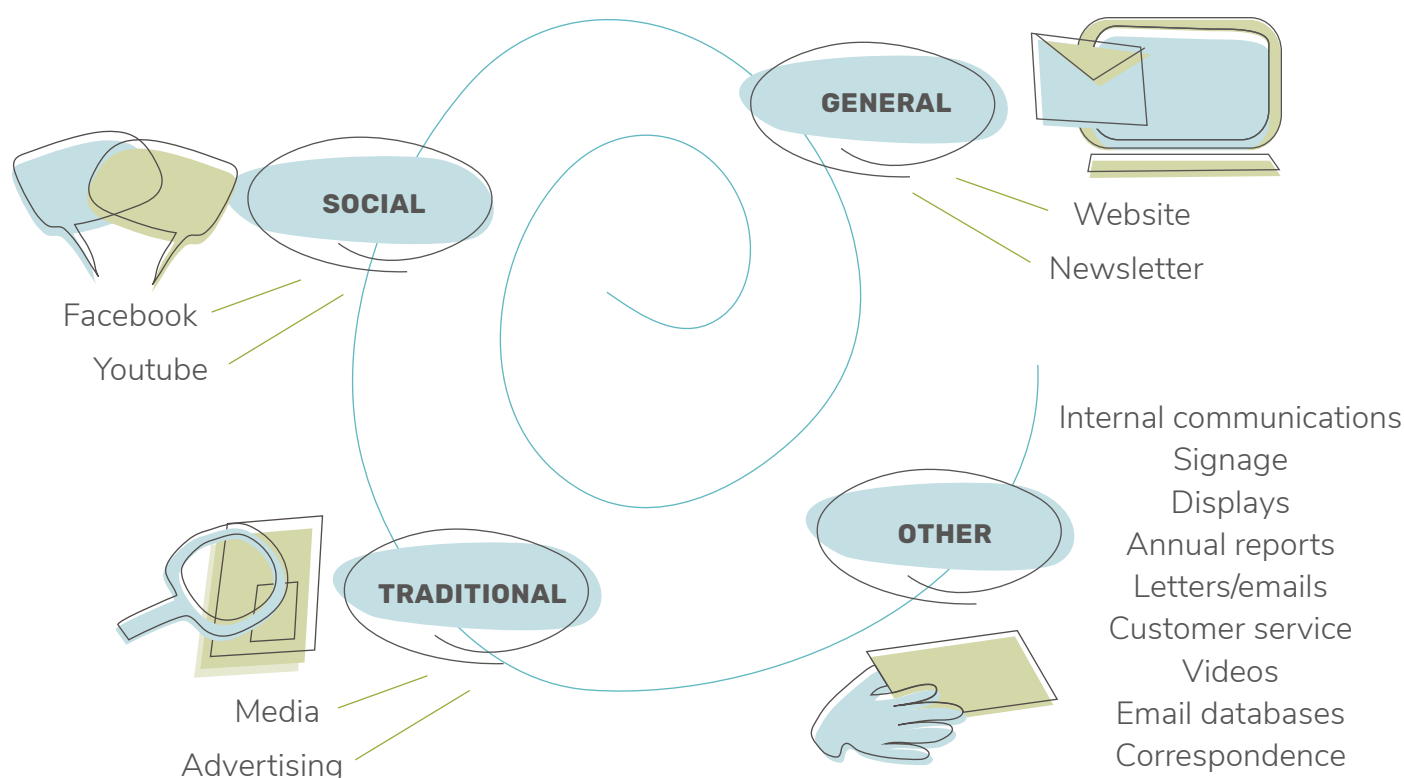
The management of the communications activities at Council is undertaken within a framework of policies, procedures and guidelines, informed by the overarching principles outlined in this strategy.

A media policy and a social media policy, and associated procedures, provide a structure for our communications interactions with our community via those channels.

As MidCoast Council we cover a large number of towns, villages and localities – all of which are unique and have different ways of receiving information and different interests and communications needs. We must continually remember to target our communications to the audiences that require the information and use channels that are accessible and familiar to them.

Effective targeted communications utilising the networks and outlets most relied upon in a particular community, rather than a general broadcast of information.

Communication channels





EVALUATION, REVIEW AND MONITORING

This strategy will be reviewed every three years to ensure it continues to reflect the principles and objectives of MidCoast Council and deliver on the communications needs of our community.

This strategy is supported by an action plan (appendix A). This plan sets out a range of actions and associated timeframes to deliver on the objectives identified in this strategy.

The plan is designed to be a living document that is reviewed and adjusted annually to take into account new ideas, technologies and opportunities for development and delivery to our community.

Items listed in these plans will be monitored and reported on to the General Manager on a quarterly basis.

Many of the actions will also form part of our integrated planning and reporting processes, which are reported on a six monthly basis to both Councillors and our community.

The strategy will also be monitored in line with our bi-annual community satisfaction survey and improved index score results of the performance measure of informing our community.

Specific market research may also be undertaken as part of developing various elements of the action and development plans.





ACTION PLAN

The following action plan has been developed to support MidCoast Council's Communications Strategy. This action plan plots a range of actions against timeframes that align with the Deliver Program and Operational Plan cycle to ensure continuous development of our communications activities.

Objectives



Action	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	Objectives
Social media development program	•	•	•	1 2 3
	•			1 2 3 4
	•			1 2 3 4
		•		1 2 3 4
		•	•	1 2 4
Digital media strategy	•	•		2 3
	•			2 3
		•		2 3 4 5
	•	•	•	2 3 4
		•	•	1 2 3 4
Brand management program	•			5
	•			5
		•		5
		•		5
	•			5
		•		5
		•		5
		•		5
		•		5



Community
communication
guidelines

Community
education
program

Staff
communications
program

Staff culture
program

Measurement
and evaluation
processes

Action	2019- 2020	2020- 2021	2021- 2022	Objectives
Develop guidelines to prioritise direct communications approaches	•			1 2 4
Review and understand where people want to receive their message and how in various communities	•			1 2 4
Review current advertising arrangements	•			1 2 3 4
Review current newsletter approach	•			1 2 3 4
Engage with community newsletters, websites and social media		•	•	1 2 3 4
Engage with community groups to help communicate directly with communities		•	•	1 2 3 4
Build strong effective media relationships	•	•	•	1 2 3 4
Develop education program to inform our community on decision making processes	•	•	•	1 2 4
Develop education program to increase awareness of services and projects	•	•	•	1 2 4
Provide pre and post meeting summaries of council meetings for the community, media and staff	•			1 2 4
Livestreaming of council meetings		•		1 2 3 4
Identification of positive media opportunities from council meetings	•			1 2 4
Develop e-newsletter program for specific projects and activities		•		1 2 4
Promotion of news and activities in service centres and other facilities		•	•	1 2 3 4
Develop education programs to inform our staff on decision making processes	•			2 3 4
Develop staff program on core services, projects and activities	•			2 3 4
Investigate opportunities for connecting with our strong volunteer base		•		
Integrate communications checkpoints into project management framework		•		1 2 3 4
Staff education program to identifying news opportunities	•	•	•	1 2 3 4
Implement checkpoints with managers and coordinators	•	•	•	1 2 3 4
Develop dashboard of metrics		•		2 3
Set targets and review cycles		•		2 3
Ongoing analysis and reporting of effectiveness of digital communications		•	•	2 3
Ensure media coverage is monitored and audience insights developed to inform ongoing communication strategies	•	•	•	2 3
Implement quarterly reports for management	•	•	•	2 3