City of Courtenay

Communication Strategy
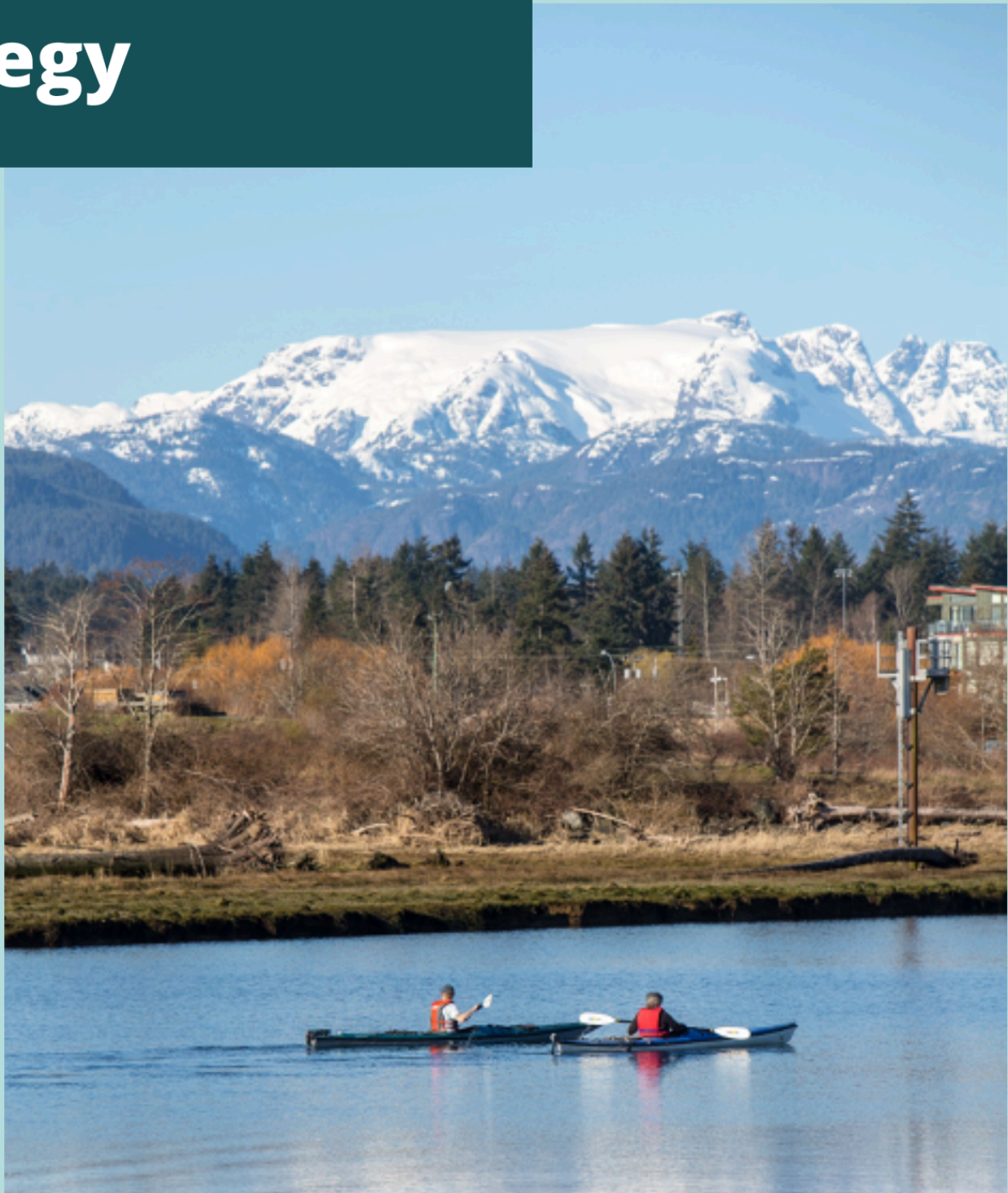
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1. Overview

This Communication Strategy comprises the strategic recommendations, planning framework guidelines, and methodology leveraged by Spur Communication ("Spur," "we") for the City of Courtenay ("the City"). The entirety of the contents of this strategy are meant to provide the City with an actionable communication plan to effectively inform residents, providing transparency of the necessary resources, tools, and frameworks.

1.1 How to Use This Plan

We have structured this plan as five distinct sections and an attached tool. Each section is designed to function as a standalone set of information and recommendations while also coming together as a holistic strategy. The sections and their functions are outlined in the table below:

Section	Function
1. Methodology	The *Methodology* section provides an outline of the research and engagement activities undertaken by Spur before preparing this strategy.
2. Communication Channels	The *Communication Channels* section is separated into three subsections, each providing recommendations on the usage of specific channels: ● *Digital Channels:* primary digital communication channels to be leveraged by the City in the majority of situations ● *Traditional Channels:* primary traditional (physical, in-person, or hybrid) channels to be leveraged by the City in targeted situations ● *Secondary Channels:* The City will leverage secondary digital communication channels sparingly
3. Tooling	The *Tooling* section outlines the recommended and alternative tools for the City team to best engage using the primary and traditional channels. This section includes pricing reflective of Fall 2023.
4. Work Plan	The *Work Plan* section functions as a guide to the attached *Resource Planning Tool*. This guide outlines the tool's usage and how it generates resourcing recommendations for the City based on the level and type of communication inputs.
5. Recommendations	The *Recommendations* section outlines Spur's recommendations to the City in three categories: ● *Strategic Recommendations:* bringing together previous sections into a holistic set of guidelines for City communication ● *Connecting with the Engagement Framework:* initial recommendations on how the contents of this strategy best

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| | connect with the City's engagement framework |
| | • *Novel Technology Recommendations:* additional recommendations and considerations around new and emerging channels and technologies |

1.2 Goals

The goals of this communication strategy are outlined in the table below. Each goal's description details how sections 2-6 speak to each goal:

Goal	Description
Audience Engagement	Building from the research presented in August 2023, this strategy assesses and informs how the City will engage with each audience segment in Section *3. Communication Channels*. Each channel recommendation includes a chart of the intended engagement of each identified audience persona.
Communication Procedures	The definition and delineation of specific communication procedures are primarily described in Section *3. Communication Channels*. Each channel is categorized by the recommended usage level and then broken down by intention, frequency measures, and usage types. Communication procedures are then expanded upon in Sections 4 and 5 from the perspectives of required resources and recommended tooling.
Key Performance Measures	Recommended key performance measures have been included with each primary and traditional channel outlined in section *3. Communication Channels*.
Work Plan	The production of a work plan for the City's communication is addressed in Section *5. Work Plan*. This section outlines the identified events, their categorization, and the recommended breakdowns of effort and channels for each.

2. Methodology

This strategy is the culmination of a process designed specifically for the City. To ensure that the unique circumstances of your residents have meaningfully informed the recommendations outlined in this strategy, Spur has conducted a range of research and engagement activities outlined in the following section.

Communication strategies are inherently designed to serve audiences—this requires that the perspectives, needs, and resources of the audiences be integral in the creation of an effective strategy. The methodology used in the creation of this strategy encompassed several specific audience engagement approaches, alongside research and assessment of the City's processes, resources, and current tools.

2.1 Inputs

The table below outlines the specific research and engagement activities that have informed this strategy:

Activity	Description
Audience Assessment	Spur produced high-level audience segments based on demographic data, communication archetypes, and the outcomes of the channel audit. These assessments have been outlined in the *Courtenay - Research Overview* deliverable.
Communication Channels Audit	We reviewed the current performance of channels used by the City. These channels were measured against standard benchmarks, along with the City of Victoria, the City of Port Moody, and the City of Port Alberni. This audit has been outlined in the *Courtenay - City of Courtenay Channel Analysis* deliverable.
Elected Officials Interviews	Through interview sessions with all members of the City Council, we gathered feedback on the expectations, nuances, and needs of elected officials. These interviews aimed to develop a strategy that meets staff needs while maintaining Council support and understanding.
Prioritization Workshop	We worked with City senior leadership to assess the known programs of work, ranking staff needs and capacity requirements. The workshop focused on reviewing and prioritizing identified initiatives into three distinct categories.
Interest Holder	We hosted a workshop with staff from various organizations in Courtenay

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Engagement	that serve equity-deserving members. This workshop aimed to better understand the communication challenges these individuals faced and how the City could improve communication with them.
Youth Survey	We worked with Foundry in Courtenay to develop a youth survey with their youth peer support workers. Twenty youths between 14 and 24 completed the survey and were provided an honorarium for their participation. The survey sought to understand what kind of information youth were most interested in receiving and the best channels to use when communicating with them.
Tool Assessment	Building from the channel audit and prioritization initiatives, we assessed the ideal tools to support each identified channel. This assessment evaluated a tool's ability to address multiple channels (e.g. posting, video production, and image design) alongside effective pricing recommendations.
Resourcing Assessment	We developed a nuanced understanding of existing resourcing methods, challenges, and patterns through ongoing engagement with the City project team for this initiative.

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3. Communication Channels

This section outlines recommendations for the City's communication channels, based on analyses conducted into the effectiveness of each channel. For each channel, this strategy outlines the recommended appropriate usage.

Considering the effectiveness of each channel in tandem with the appropriate usage is a crucial aspect of tactical resource management—by understanding which channels hold the most trust, reach, and quality, the City will be able to meaningfully deploy resources to achieve the strongest impact.

The *Communication Channels* section is separated into three subsections, each providing recommendations on the use of specific channels:

- *Digital Channels:* primary digital communication channels to be leveraged by the City in the majority of situations

- *Traditional Channels:* primary traditional (physical, in-person, or hybrid) channels to be leveraged by the City in select situations

- *Secondary Channels:* The City will leverage secondary digital tools sparingly

3.1 Digital Channels

For each digital and traditional channel, we have provided three sections of description:

- an initial overview statement that reflects feedback from workshops and surveys, along with an overarching recommendation on usage
- a work plan breakdown, outlining the recommended usage for each of the three work plan segments
- a communication team detail box, outlining the suggested level of effort required from the City team

For each secondary channel, we have provided two sections of description:

- an initial overview statement that reflects feedback from workshops and surveys, along with an overarching recommendation on usage
- a work plan breakdown, outlining the recommended usage for each of the three work plan segments

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3.1.1 Courtenay.ca

As a primary channel, courtenay.ca is a key part of communicating with residents, visitors and media. As a channel, it's an easy task to update the site with statements, releases and community news, no matter the size of the project or event. Feedback indicated that equity-deserving communities went first to the City's website as a main resource when looking for information, but users sometimes struggled to navigate the site.

Using the website as the primary information centre for everything happening in the City will create an authoritative location for residents. This will enable residents to easily find information, while empowering the communication team to be able to point other platforms (such as social media) to the single source of expanded information when those platforms can't (or don't) allow for full detail.

Being clear and consistent with how information is presented on the website will support building trust in the City as an authoritative organization. Clearly linking your digital channels (including any secondary channels) on courtenay.ca allows for a 2nd level of verification for when people want to work out if a post is coming from the City. This is crucial in building trust with your residents, as the majority of digital content lacks verification. Being able to source information from the City's website across other channels allows your residents to feel certain that they have accurate, updated information.

Work Plan Segment	Utilization
High	Courtenay.ca should be a staple of High segment communication events. For multi-month events and activities, the City website should be the authoritative hub of information, which can typically be accomplished by reproducing material from other channels on courtenay.ca.
Medium	Courtenay.ca should be a staple of Medium segment communication events. For moderate-length events and activities, the City website should still be the authoritative hub of information, which can typically be accomplished by reproducing material from other channels on courtenay.ca.
Low	Courtenay.ca should be a staple of Low segment communication events. For single-month events and activities, the City website should be the authoritative hub of information, which means that primary information should all begin with dedicated content for courtenay.ca.

Communication Team
As this channel is recommended as primary for all work plan segments, we see involvement from two of the three existing roles, as well as the need for an additional role if video and high-production graphic design are used.

For each role involved, we recommend approximately 8 hours per month, per

3.1.2 Facebook

As the largest social channel for the City, the continued diversification of the content on the channel will continue to grow the return and cement Courtenay channels as the point of official City information.

Facebook should reflect the community through imagery, current events and honest, direct information being presented up front in post copy, backed up by the website when further information is needed. The present use of templates is strong and allows constituents to know the style and consistent nature of the information the City is sharing. Actively linking to the City website ensures that residents recognize the material is current, accurate, and relevant.

The increased use of captioned video content will drive user engagement and lead to furthering the information provided by the City. This video content needs to be timely and relevant either as explainers for programs and projects, recap/celebration events held in the community, or to bring attention to important decisions or significant moments at council meetings. This can help grow the feeling of connection of the community to the council, reflect community members to themselves, demystify the processes and allow people who would not otherwise feel comfortable to engage a channel into how the council works.

Meta is currently (As of Nov 2023) restricting or entirely preventing news and other informational web links from Canadian media outlets from being shared on Facebook and other meta platforms. Using Facebook as a tool to highlight both what is happening and how/why it is happening steps up and fills a potential vacuum of information that is being created while engaging and bringing attention to the City. The City needs to have correct, timely, easy-to-understand information on its channels to both supply information to media outlets who may otherwise create a different narrative but also shut down constituent concerns or misunderstandings that can be brought about by the human tendency to jump to the worst conclusion when faced with little or no facts.

Work Plan Segment	Utilization
High	Facebook should be a primary channel of High segment communication events. For multi-month events and activities, Facebook should be a primary source of information for the City, feeding viewers back to courtenay.ca. This can typically be accomplished by creating versions of updates to the City website that prioritize design for Facebook. In practice, this looks like single-sourcing content when creating foundational content for the City website—making a version of the same content that provides summary information, Facebook-friendly design, and a link to the website content.

Medium	Facebook should be a primary channel of Medium segment communication events. For moderate-length events and activities, Facebook should be a primary source of information for the City, feeding viewers back to courtenay.ca. This can typically be accomplished by creating versions of updates to the City website that prioritize design for Facebook.
Low	Facebook should be a primary channel of Low segment communication events. For single-month events and activities, Facebook should be a primary source of information for the City, feeding viewers back to courtenay.ca. This can typically be accomplished by creating versions of updates to the City website that prioritize design for Facebook.

Community Management & Channel Ownership

Community management is both a crucial, and increasingly demanding aspect of effective Facebook usage. While the topics of the City's Facebook posts will vary, we strongly recommend maintaining several key members of the Communication team as trained and available to moderate and respond to comments. For an individual with access to the appropriate FAQs, experience in community management, and a deep understanding of the City's tone and voice, this can be accomplished within the parameters stated in this section. However, if subject-matter-experts are enlisted as community managers for each topic, it becomes increasingly likely that the amount of time required increases, along with the likelihood of responses and dialogue that fall outside of the City's stated tone and voice goals.

This same logic informs our recommendation that the City maintains all departments as part of the broader City social presence on Facebook.

Communication Team

This channel is recommended as primary for all work plan segments, with the majority of content being leveraged from core website content. We see dedicated involvement from City roles that prioritizes copywriting, graphic design, and social community management. The additional role outlined in the Courtenay.ca section would serve Facebook as well, should video and higher-fidelity graphic design be desired.

For the identified role, we recommend approximately 8 hours per month, per communication event, for each month that it lasts. This comprises copywriting, graphic design, and standard community management (this should be doubled for controversial content, as community management on Facebook can become a large task). The additional role would prioritize higher-fidelity designs and video. If video content must be shot, and is

not derived from existing B-roll material, this task becomes approximately 16 hours per month, per communication event, for each month that it lasts.

3.1.3 Instagram

Instagram is a similar channel of importance to Facebook, and warrants focused efforts to engage with the strong audience representation and high-usage potential. The need to grow this channel remains rooted in providing core information to the public in a timely but playful manner. Of all of the City's current communication channels, this is the most used by Courtenay youth.

Continuing the consistent and reliable posting of information is important. We recommend leveraging Instagram in a similar manner to Facebook—diversifying the content types to reflect the community, celebrate moments of value and explain how and why decisions come to be. Video is now the primary format on Instagram, and moving to video would greatly benefit engagement. Leveraging the pinned posts, stories, reels and highlights functions to bring attention to major, ongoing or notable (things that get asked a lot) subjects will give an easy location for information to be easily found.

Instagram has a more limited scope of sharing links, but being a Meta platform, faces the same news outlet issues as Facebook.

Work Plan Segment	Utilization
High	Instagram should be a primary channel of High segment communication events. For multi-month events and activities, Instagram should be a primary source of information for the City, feeding viewers back to courtenay.ca. This can typically be accomplished by creating versions of updates to the City website that prioritize design for Instagram. For High segment events, we recommend prioritizing video.
Medium	Instagram should be a primary channel of Medium segment communication events. For moderate-length events and activities, Instagram should be a primary source of information for the City, feeding viewers back to courtenay.ca. This can typically be accomplished by creating versions of updates to the City website that prioritize design for Instagram. For Medium segment events, we recommend prioritizing video.
Low	Instagram should be a primary channel of Low segment communication events. For single-month events and activities, Instagram should be a primary source of information for the City, feeding viewers back to courtenay.ca. This can typically be accomplished by creating versions of updates to the City website that prioritize design for Instagram. For Low segment events, we recommend prioritizing static images and carousels.

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> **Communication Team**
> This channel is recommended as primary for all work plan segments, with the majority of content being leveraged from core website content. However, the primacy of video content for High and Medium work plan segments will require the addition of a dedicated video and graphic design role to the City team.
>
> We see dedicated involvement from two City roles—one that prioritizes copywriting, graphic design, and social community management, and the additional video and graphic design role.
>
> For the identified roles, we recommend approximately 8 hours per month, per communication event, for each month that it lasts. This comprises copywriting, graphic design, and standard community management (this should be doubled for controversial content, as community management on Instagram can become a large task). The additional role would prioritize higher-fidelity designs and video. If video content must be shot, and is not derived from existing B-roll material, this task becomes approximately 16 hours per month, per communication event, for each month that it lasts.

3.2 Traditional Channels

3.2.1 Direct Mail

While required in some situations and effective at reaching many households, there are limitations, particularly to the Canada Post mail service. There needs to be a full set of address data. Canada Post lists can miss parts of the community, often marginalized parts of the population in secondary suites or other non-legal residential situations. Direct mail is best when required and partnered with other communication tools. Many of the participants in the equity-deserving workshop identified this channel as important, especially when it comes to topics like garbage collection schedules and property taxes.

Work Plan Segment	Utilization
High	Direct mail is recommended as a discretionary-use channel for High segment communication events. As a discretionary-use channel, direct mail should be leveraged only for certain events that fit the criteria identified in the opening of section 3.2.1.
Medium	Direct mail is not a recommended channel for Medium segment communication events.
Low	Direct mail is not a recommended channel for Low segment

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communication events.

> **Communication Team**
> This channel is recommended as a discretionary-use channel for High work plan segments, as it typically requires unique content, unique designs, and additional administration (address collection, printing, and distribution).
>
> We see dedicated oversight from a management role, as well as dedicated involvement from a role that prioritizes copywriting and graphic design.
>
> For the oversight role, we recommend approximately 8 hours per month, per communication event, for each month that it lasts. For the copywriting and design role, we recommend approximately 16 hours per month, per communication event, for each month that it lasts.

3.2.2 Postering

An effective tool for reaching communities where they are at—and in the places you want them to be engaging. As a partnered tool to direct mail and digital media, postering is a great way to inform and remind viewers of key context and opportunities in their direct environments. Postering effectively catches the attention of a specific community or user base of a facility and can explain proposals in real time. This is a highly advantageous method to have critical information present in real places involved in change (such as changes to roads, parks or other infrastructure). Postering can also present reciprocal engagement between the City and communities, enabling cross-sharing and activity on specific topics.

Posters have a short lifespan with both the risk of damage and degradation but also over-exposure. If a poster for an engagement or event has been there long after it is relevant, people become blind to it, and when you need to replace it with a new project you reduce the likelihood of engagement. Posters are powerful when used judiciously and pointedly. Remember to get someone to take them down again!

Work Plan Segment	Utilization
High	Postering is a recommended channel for High segment communication events. For multi-month events and activities, postering should be a primary source of information for the City, providing concise, designed versions of the core information shared on courtenay.ca.
Medium	Postering is recommended as a discretionary-use channel for Medium segment communication events. As a discretionary-use channel, postering should be leveraged only for certain events that fit the criteria

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	identified in the opening of section 3.2.2.
Low	Postering is not a recommended channel for Low segment communication events.

Communication Team

This channel is recommended as a discretionary-use channel for High work plan segments, as it typically requires unique content, unique designs, and additional administration (printing, distribution, and take-down).

We see dedicated oversight from a management role, as well as dedicated involvement from a role that prioritizes copywriting and graphic design. With new brand standards and resources in place, this expectation will likely shift as individual departments increase their ability to produce materials independently.

For the oversight role, we recommend approximately 8 hours per month, per communication event, for each month that it lasts. For the copywriting and design role, we recommend approximately 16 hours per month, per communication event, for each month that it lasts. In the event of specific requests from departments at the City to include postering for Medium or Low event levels, it can be added through the Ad-Hoc section of the resourcing tool.

3.2.3 Media Relations

Engaging with the media is an important way to ensure the general public is aware of the work the City is doing and the important decisions that are being made. Maintaining open lines of communication with the media is key to ensuring that this channel remains productive and can serve its purpose as a vehicle for keeping the public informed.

The media should be considered the prime audience for any media relations strategy, but of course, any media coverage that results should consider the diverse range of audiences for the City.

As media relations is a complex and expansive area of City communication practices, we have included additional recommendations on a variety of sub-channels in the tables below.

The following table outlines proposed media protocols to support the City of Courtenay's media relations efforts. These are designed to balance a proactive, informative position while ensuring staff and media's time is focused on the most important news items.

Protocol	Approach
Spokespeople	As the mayor and councillors are elected officials, each person should be considered an approved spokesperson to speak to issues related to their constituencies. For major announcements, City Hall Communication staff should coordinate with the council to determine the best person to serve as the primary spokesperson for media interviews and related inquiries. No other City employees are to be considered approved spokespeople unless explicitly asked to serve in that capacity. City Communication staff should be made aware of any interview requests that come in directly to City Council members.
Media Contact Information	Consider creating a media@courtenay.ca email alias to filter all media requests through. All spokespeople can utilize this and direct all media to that email address for any interview requests. The City Manager and communication staff should receive all emails that go to this email address so they're aware of media requests and activities. If any spokespeople have arranged interviews not via the email alias, they should ensure they inform the communication team for awareness and any support that may be needed.
Press Releases	An effective tool for sharing information and news, primarily announcements that will impact a wider audience. This should include the who/what/where/when/why of the announcement and one or more quotes from key interest holders. Where possible, include a voice from the City and a complementary third party to emphasize the impact and importance of the news being shared. This should be written in an informative manner to provide the media with the details needed to write a story on the announcement or entice them to speak with a spokesperson to learn more.
Holding Statements	This is a reactive tool to have when the City is not making an announcement about a specific issue/situation, but there is a chance media will become aware of it and ask the City for comment. A holding statement can be as simple as a one-line statement that the City will not be commenting at this time or a prepared statement/quote from a spokesperson with a high-level comment on the matter. Generally, these are best paired with a commitment to follow up with more information when available, if appropriate. These are best delivered via email, but please note a holding statement is often quoted in media articles on the topic, so ensure that the information shared is approved to be shared publicly.
Quote Bank	A helpful tool to have for both proactive and reactive media situations. A quote bank is a set of 3-5 (or more if available) approved quotes on a given topic that is likely to be in the media. These should feature diverse voices and touch on different elements/impacts of the news, helping to paint a holistic picture of the benefits of the announcement/project/etc. These should be approved by each spokesperson and leveraged as needed in a press release or in one-to-one media interactions.
Talking Points /	Prepare a set of key messages or talking points to share with spokespeople for

Key Messages	key City announcements. These should cover the key details of the announcement and emphasize the "why." Encourage spokespeople to stick to the key messages to ensure a consistent message is being shared with the media. Please note that these are meant to be an internal resource for spokespeople and key staff and are not be shared externally. It can be helpful to include suggested talking points for tricky topics/questions that may come up as well to ensure spokespeople are prepared. These should be prepared at least one week prior to launch, if possible, and saved as a live document (such as Google Docs or Microsoft Word 365) that can be easily accessed by spokespeople and updated regularly throughout the life of the project.
Media Advisory	Issue as an invite directly to media for any press conferences, ribbon cutting, or media-friendly in-person events. Include the who/what/where/when/why of the event and let reporters know what they can expect when it comes to interviews or Q&A opportunities and potential visuals. Media will be more keen to send a camera to an event if they can be assured there will be a nice visual to capture when on site.
Media Interviews	Conducting media interviews with key spokespeople and members of the media is crucial for building relationships and ensuring the articles published include the City's point of view. It is not necessary to participate in interviews with journalists who will likely not write a fair story or have a perpetually negative take, in these instances, it is best to offer an approved quote.
Backgrounder / FAQ	This is a helpful document to prepare for media for any more complex or nuanced announcements. This document should include the key information about what is being announced, plus any relevant background information, like timelines and links to previous press releases or legislation. It is also helpful to include a Frequently Asked Questions section with answers to hot topics, if appropriate. This should be approved by any key interest holders to ensure all of the information is correct and appropriate to be sent to the media.
Media Training	Conduct annual media training sessions with mayor/council members to ensure they are prepared to speak on the record with members of the media. The session should include an overview of best practices for interacting with media, reminders about what is on/off the record, tips and tricks for blocking questions that should be avoided or bridging to key messages when in interviews. Provide actionable feedback for each person based on their performance in mock interviews conducted during the session.
Opinion Editorial	A vehicle to share an opinion with a newspaper's editorial staff / the public via the OpEd page. This tactic can be leveraged if the City or a key spokesperson wants to share more about why something is important and the larger

	implications of a decision. Please note these are most successful/likely to be placed when they include an obvious, and often strong, opinion on a topic. This is not meant to be solely informative.
Media Monitoring	Keeping a close eye on the media coverage that the City and your spokespeople receive is crucial to having a clear understanding of what your residents are hearing.
Paid Media	For High and discretionary Medium events, the included recommendations include the usage of paid media opportunities. With newspaper advertising as the most direct, effective method, the promotion of key events through paid media presents an effective opportunity to capitalize on awareness-building through existing circulation.

The following table outlines proposed media tactics to support the City of Courtenay's media relations efforts. These are designed to balance a proactive, informative position while ensuring staff and media's time is focused on the most important news items.

Tactics	When to Leverage	How to Deploy
Media Advisory	When the City is hosting an event/announcement that they want members of the media to attend	Prepare Media Advisory and send it directly via email to targeted media contacts and relevant newsrooms
Press Conference / Ribbon Cutting	Major City developments, infrastructure projects or announcements. Likely most appropriate for 3-months + projects	Arrange speakers, location and related logistics. Prepare press releases, media advisory, talking points/key messages, and backgrounder. Invite media via media advisory with at least one week's notice, follow up 3 days in advance and again the day before.
Press Release	Category 1 projects (3 months +), major capital investments, notable hires/team changes, etc	Send directly via email to targeted media contacts and relevant newsrooms. Include an offer to arrange interviews, as available/appropriate, with friendly media contacts.
Key Messages / Talking Points	For all Category 1 projects and as needed for projects in Categories 2 and 3	Prepare key messages and talking points in advance, ideally one week prior to launch, and share them with appropriate people. Update as needed over the course of the project.

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Backgrounder / FAQ	For major news or complicated projects, usually accompanied by a press release.	Send via email to the media upon request or as needed. Also, circulate with council and relevant internal teams to ensure everyone knows the information/answers.
Media Interviews	When the City has a major announcement, usually as indicated by the need for a press release	Liaise directly with the media to arrange. Ensure the spokesperson is equipped with key messages and has background about the reporter, the types of questions to expect and relevant previous coverage that may influence the angle of the interview.
Op-eds	If an announcement, project or issue the City is facing is not being received well or could use additional context or reasoning. Or to emphasize the importance of a matter and engage the public, getting them bought in on a spokesperson's perspective.	Draft an opinion article, usually ~800 words (will vary by outlet). Leverage key messages and get approval from the spokesperson who is going to be the author. Submit directly to a media outlet.

Work Plan Segment	Utilization
High	Media relations should be a staple for High segment communication events. For multi-month events and activities, media relations are going to lead to critical engagement with the majority of the City's audiences, in terms of both proactive and reactive media presence.
Medium	Media relations is recommended as a discretionary channel for Medium segment communication events. Based on the activity tables provided in section 3.2.3, some medium segment communication events will warrant partial media engagement (often reactive, focusing on the preparation of spokespeople).
Low	Media Relations is not a recommended channel for Low segment communication events.

Communication Team
This channel is recommended for High work plan segments, and as discretionary for Medium work plan segments.

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> In both cases, we see active involvement and oversight from a management role, as well as dedicated involvement from a senior practitioner team member.
>
> For the oversight role, we recommend approximately 35 hours per month, per communication event, for each month that it lasts. For the second role, we recommend approximately 8 hours per month, per communication event, for each month that it lasts.

3.2.4 Newsletters

As a tool, a well-maintained list is a useful way to get information at a high level out to residents as long as the information can be expanded on the website. Give the newsletter a name (for example, *The Courtenay Connection*) and ensure that it is promoted on the City's website and social media channels.

Each subject in the newsletter should be short, engaging, and visual. Consistent presentation through the use of templates is important for both visual appeal and allowing people to be able to find sections that relate directly to them quickly. Consider including the following sections:

Protocol	Approach
Mayor's Message	A short note from the mayor (or City Manager) summarizing key developments and priorities for the City in the coming month.
City Council Updates	City Council updates Highlights from recent City Council meetings, decisions, and upcoming agendas or opportunities for public comment.
Infrastructure & Public Works	Information on ongoing and upcoming infrastructure projects, road maintenance, and public works initiatives.
Emergency Preparedness	Tips and resources for residents to prepare for emergencies, such as natural disasters or public health crises—should be made relevant to the month/season.
Highlights	There is an opportunity to bring humanization of the City staff into the picture through profiling and anecdotal coverage of the City's team members. This can easily tie to teams directly involved in key events of a given season, and present opportunities to showcase the events from different perspectives.
Did You Know?	Section Information on how residents can access City services, pay bills, and report issues or concerns.

Maintaining a list and ensuring a consistent delivery schedule maximizes the usefulness of a

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newsletter. If people know when they will get the newsletter, they will come to expect and rely on this authoritative channel. Also, offer print copies in City Hall and at key City buildings (e.g. libraries and community centres).

A newsletter should maintain a regular cadence, and given the regular updates the City has, a monthly issue would serve the residents well.

Work Plan Segment	Utilization
High	Newsletters should be a primary channel of High segment communication events. For multi-month events and activities, newsletters should be a primary source of information for the City, feeding viewers back to courtenay.ca. This can typically be accomplished by creating versions of updates to the City website that present as summaries accompanied by visual assets for the newsletter.
Medium	Newsletters is a recommended channel for Medium segment communication events. For moderate-length events and activities, newsletters should be a primary source of information for the City, feeding viewers back to courtenay.ca. This can typically be accomplished by creating versions of updates to the City website that present as summaries accompanied by visual assets for the newsletter.
Low	Newsletters is a recommended channel for Low segment communication events. For single-month events and activities, newsletters should be a primary source of information for the City, feeding viewers back to courtenay.ca. This can typically be accomplished by creating versions of updates to the City website that present as summaries accompanied by visual assets for the newsletter.

Communication Team
This channel is recommended as primary for all work plan segments, with the majority of content being leveraged from core website content. We see dedicated involvement from two roles that prioritize copywriting and graphic design.

For the identified roles, we recommend approximately 8 hours per month, per communication event, for each month that it lasts, for each role. This comprises copywriting, graphic design, and the collection of material from other channels on an active basis. This projection only works for repurposing material from other channels.

This recommendation is intentionally designed to *stack*. The more events that are being allocated to being covered in the newsletter, the larger the amount of time required will be.

If unique content is prepared for the newsletter that requires more than summary writing or design tweaking of material from other channels, we recommend that this project is doubled

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3.2.5 In-person Events

Running in-person events is a valuable exercise that generates high engagement. It allows the City to have staff in the community visibly—either through running specific program-related pop-ups or attending general events with projects. Events also hold value as a 'what the City is up to' update.

Being in-person can allow the City to meet people where they are and get into parts of the community that may not otherwise engage with projects. When in-person, the priority should always be on key events to keep the staff load manageable and bring in external people to understand talking points and hand out information on the project.

For general City updates, targeting high throughput events such as farmers' markets. This allows people to engage with the City without having to find or seek out people to engage with.

When the project is high-profile and 'newsworthy,' consider adding a media component with highly visual outlets (i.e. broadcast).

Work Plan Segment	Utilization
High	In-person events should be a primary channel for High segment communication events. For multi-month events and activities, in-person events are going to lead to critical engagement with the majority of the City's audiences.
Medium	In-person events are recommended as a discretionary channel for Medium segment communication events. Some medium segment communication events will warrant in-person events, which will typically require similar time commitments, but over fewer months.
Low	In-person events is not a recommended channel for Low segment communication events.

Facebook Live
We have included consideration of Facebook Live as part of the In-Person Events due to the dual nature of live feeds as both a potential *substitute* for events, while also being a companion / add-on for ongoing events.

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While livestreaming can be advantageous, there is a minimum quality threshold that must be achieved to ensure effectiveness. Specifically, the following elements must be considered before launching any live-streamed media:

- **Video quality:** an investment into proper streaming gear would be required. We do not recommend live-streaming City events from cell-phones or laptops, unless video professionals are involved to optimize quality, lag, and connections.

- **Sound quality:** without proper microphone placement, a live-stream can quickly become a non-participatory video feed. Effective sound management includes orienting the event around microphones that service the live-stream.

- **Ongoing moderation:** many viewers will join live-streams with the goal of engaging with the event. An effective live-stream must have a designated moderator to respond to questions and troubleshoot connectivity issues for viewers.

- **Technical suppor**t: physical and digital setup teams will be required to ensure the streams function, and that all materials and connectivity concerns have been addressed.

Should live-streaming be added to any event, we recommend leveraging the Ad-Hoc capabilities of the resourcing tool to include video coverage at a minimum.

Communication Team
This channel is recommended for High work plan segments, and as discretionary for Medium work plan segments.

In both cases, we see active involvement and oversight from a management role, as well as dedicated involvement from a senior practitioner team member.

For the oversight role, we recommend approximately 16 hours per month, per communication event, for each month that it lasts. For the second role, we recommend approximately 35 hours per month, per communication event, for each month that it lasts.

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3.3 Secondary Channels

3.3.1 Reddit

The Comox Valley subreddit (/r/comoxvalley) is a regional-focused page encompassing all communities in the Comox Valley. As a channel, this would be useful for larger announcements that have a reach beyond Courtenay and its direct residents. We know there is a lot of travel and commuting through and to Courtenay. Using this channel to seek engagement or share information of regional relevance will be effective.

This platform is a high-engagement, mostly text-based platform. When posts are made, they need to be monitored and questions answered. Reddit has an upvote/downvote system, and if the use of the platform is not genuine and engaged, users do police themselves, and the account could get voted down; however, being genuine and willing to engage when you do post reduces this risk.

This channel is a true community channel. Topics and information that need to be shared or are interesting will travel fast. The Reddit community readily fact-checks itself. Establishing a trustworthy voice could benefit emergency communication—through the willingness to promote and share accurate information.

Work Plan Segment	Utilization
High	Reddit is not a required channel for High segment communication events.
Medium	Reddit is not a required channel for Medium segment communication events.
Low	Reddit is not a required channel for Low segment communication events.

3.3.2 TikTok

This channel is a youth-focused channel that can be tricky for organizations to crack. Involving exclusively short-form video that is often comedy or reactionary, it can be hard to be relevant on this platform. In short, although this could be a powerful platform for reaching youth in Courtenay if the City has the staff capacity, and understanding how to leverage the platform truly will impact the level of success you can have with it.

The Youth Survey conducted as part of the engagement process to design this strategy included the following notes about TikTok:

- Only 40% of respondents indicated that TikTok would be a viable channel for them to engage with the City.
- 75% of the respondents who indicated that TikTok would be a viable channel also use Instagram as their primary channel.

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Work Plan Segment	Utilization
High	TikTok is not a required channel for High segment communication events.
Medium	TikTok is not a required channel for Medium segment communication events.
Low	TikTok is not a required channel for Low segment communication events.

3.3.3 Twitter / x

X (formally known as Twitter) remains one of the most interesting platforms in the current mix for most organizations. While we could not examine the analytics closely during our Channels Audit, Courtenay is currently getting worthwhile engagement out of the platform, counter to many others' experiences. There is a documented increase in bots and extreme right-wing content, the unfortunate reality for some organizations is any keyword in a post (tweet) could bring unwanted attention to the Courtenay account. Recognizing this shift, Twitter becomes a platform that, while useful, should continue to be monitored.

Work Plan Segment	Utilization
High	Twitter / X is not a required channel for High segment communication events.
Medium	Twitter / X is not a required channel for Medium segment communication events.
Low	Twitter / X is not a required channel for Low segment communication events.

Twitter / X as an Emergency Response Platform
While this platform is not considered required for any of the Work Plan communication segments, it does hold inherent value as an emergency and crisis response platform. This role may, over time, transition to one of the emerging platforms (such as Threads), but is currently still held by Twitter / X.

Should any emergency or crisis events occur, it's likely that many residents will still look to Twitter / X for real-time updates from the City. We recommend maintaining this platform in these scenarios for the foreseeable future.

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Offboarding from Twitter / X
The following statement applies specifically to communication events from the Work Plan segments:

While this channel has lost its previous role as a reliable staple communication tool, we do not recommend immediately abandoning it. Despite the change in tone, there are still going to be residents who have been looking to this platform for updates, and will need to be weaned away to other, more reliable channels.

Recommended offboarding approach:
1. For Twitter to become a discretionary-use only channel, the City's primary digital channels must all be active and maintaining *at least* monthly updates and releases.
2. Once the City's digital channels are considered effectively active, the City's Tweets should prioritize linking to those channels, instead of sharing self contained content. This is meant to build trust between your audiences and those digital channels.
3. Reduce the frequency of Tweets over a period of approximately 2 months.

4. Tooling

This section outlines the recommended and alternative tools for the City team to best engage with the primary and traditional channels. This section includes pricing reflective of Fall 2023.

4.1 Tooling Evaluation Matrix

The tables below outline the tools reviewed, inclusive of their scoring on the following indices: channel coverage, cost per user, required number of users, and learning curve. Each index was scored on a scale of *Unaligned—Neutral—Aligned*, the definitions of which have been included in section 4.2.

The first table outlines the tools based on their scoring, the second table outlines the tools based on scoring logic.

Tool	Channel Coverage	Cost Per User	Required Number of Users	Learning Curve
Primary Recommendation				
Canva	Aligned	Aligned	Aligned	Neutral
Alternative Recommendation				
Adobe Rush	Neutral	Aligned	Aligned	Neutral
Adobe Illustrator	Neutral	Unaligned	Unaligned	Aligned
Later	Neutral	Unaligned	Aligned	Neutral

Tool	Channel Coverage	Cost Per User	Required Number of Users	Learning Curve
Primary Recommendation				
Canva	All channels can	Free licenses can	All members of	While there is

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	be addressed.	address all channels at a foundational level.	the City Communication team will require access.	some learning required, the tool is highly user-friendly.
Alternative Recommendation				
Adobe Rush	Channels with video needs can be addressed.	Free licenses can provide the required levels of video production for digital channels.	At least one member of the City team will require access.	While there is some learning required, the tool is highly user-friendly.
Adobe Illustrator	Channels with image/printing needs can be addressed.	The base license for 1 year is $335.88	At least two members of the City team will require access.	Effective use of this tool requires a high amount of learning.
Later	All digital channels can be scheduled.	The base license for 1 year is $407.23	Only two members of the City team will require access.	While there is some learning required, the tool is highly user-friendly.

4.2 Tooling Evaluation Definitions

The table below outlines the definitions of logic used in the evaluation of the tools in section 4.1.

Category	Unaligned	Neutral	Aligned
Channel Coverage	This tool only addresses the needs of one channel.	This tool addresses the needs of some but not all channels.	This tool addresses the needs of all channels.
Cost Per User	This tool has a high single-license cost.	This tool has a moderate single-license cost.	This tool has a minimal single-license cost.
Required Number of Users	The required number of users (x) the license cost leads to a high amount.	The required number of users (x) the license cost leads to a moderate amount.	The required number of users (x) the license cost leads to a minimal amount.
Learning Curve	Effective use of this tool requires a high	Effective use of this tool requires a	Effective use of this tool requires a

	combination of training/tutorials and practice.	moderate combination of training/tutorials and practice.	minimal combination of training/tutorials and practice.

5. Work Plan

> **The work plan is the confluence of the audience, engagement, auditing, and tooling recommendations. In order to effectively communicate with residents on key issues of varying magnitude and length, we have collaboratively defined a three-point scale by which to segment planned communication events for the City.**
>
> **Each scale segment is paired with specific channel and resourcing recommendations, taking into account the length of required activity, the audience personas needing to be addressed, and the overall reach and effectiveness of specific channels.**
>
> **These fulsome segments then translate to the attached Resource Planning Tool, through which the total volume of effort can be assessed against the volume of communication activities, giving the City a holistic view of the resources required.**

5.1 Work Plan Definitions

The City's Work Plan has been segmented into three categories, with the intention of accurately reflecting the variation in duration and resources required. The naming structure of Low-Medium-High does not reflect the importance of the events they represent. This naming convention is used purely to reflect the duration of communication events, along with the holistic resources required for each category.

Furthermore, the examples used for each of the segments represent common, but not iron-clad use cases. The nature of civic communication segments is that they are inherently unique, with the specific audiences, needs, plans, and goals being slightly different, each time. When categorizing an event, be sure to consider the breadth of audience, the expected level of impact, the expected level of engagement, and the duration itself.

The communication segments have been structured as follows:

L

Low

Communication activities and events placed in this category are intended to engage with approximately one-third of the City's residents, including consideration of a specific equity-deserving community. These events are typically focused on quality-of-life services, and have low interest or visibility. They require 2-6 weeks of notice and preparation (averaging one month) and typically have low-to-moderate resourcing requirements.

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M

Medium
Communication activities and events placed in this category are intended to engage with approximately two-thirds of the City's residents, including consideration of multiple (2-3) equity-deserving communities. These events are typically focused on essential services, and have moderate interest or visibility. They require 6-12 weeks of notice and preparation (averaging two months), and typically have moderate resourcing requirements.

H

High
Communication activities and events placed in this category are intended to engage with approximately two-thirds of the City's residents, including consideration of multiple (4+) equity-deserving communities. These events are typically focused on emergency services and voting on bylaws and have high interest or visibility. They require 12+ weeks of notice and preparation (averaging three months), and typically have high resourcing requirements.

5.2 Work Plan Channel Load

In accordance with the definitions described in section *5.1 Work Plan Definitions*, this section breaks down the recommended channel usage for each work plan segment. These recommendations are based on the conclusions of section *3. Communication Channels* regarding audience reach and persona mapping.

Channel		Low	Medium	High
Primary Digital Channels	**Instagram**	☑	☑	☑
	Facebook	☑	☑	☑
	Courtenay.ca	☑	☑	☑
Traditional Channels	**Direct Mail**			☯
	Postering		☯	☑
	Newsletters	☑	☑	☑
	In-Person Events		☯	☑

	Media Relations		☯	☑
Secondary Channels	**Twitter**		☯	☯
	Reddit			☯
	TikTok			

☑ *recommended for each event in this category*

☯ *recommended to be discretionary for a given event in this category*

Variation Between Channels

This Work Plan chart represents the inclusion of channels for specific segments. In doing so, it maintains consideration of the following aspects related to resources, timing, and overall effort:

1. A key differentiator between each segment is **time**. *Low* segment events have a typical duration of one month, while *High* segments have a typical duration of three months.
2. The inclusion of a communication channel in multiple segments is reflective of the first point. For example, the inclusion of *Instagram* in the *Low* segment represents the amount of resources required to maintain Instagram presence (content development, community management, graphic design) for one month of activity related to a single event. Conversely, the inclusion of Instagram in the *High* segment represents the same amount of resources, but for three months of activity related to a single event.

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5.3 2024 Work Plan

The table below outlines the current 2024 work plan, as defined by input from the City. This table does not represent the optimal load of events but instead reflects the reality of known, planned, or expected communication events in 2024, as identified in Fall 2023.

Month	High	Medium	Low	
January	Solid Waste Program	Playground Design Standards	Subdivision & Servicing Bylaw Update	Recreation - Programming Promotion
	Anderton Dike Borrowing AAP	Anderton Dike Notification	Statutory Reporting	Outdoor Pool & Aquatic Services Feasibility
	Website Updates Fees and Charges		Facilities Fees and Charges	Council Flag Event / Statement
			Parks Control Bylaw	Communication Strategy
February	Housing Action Plan	Housing Action Plan	Comox Valley Emergency Program	Recreation Special Event
	Short Term Rental	Cultural Strategic Plan	Council Code of Conduct	Recreation - Programming Promotion
	TOD		Sports Field Allocation Engagement	Council Flag Event / Statement
	Amenity Cost Charges		Good Neighbour Guide 1/4	
March	Anderton Dike Open House	Sport Field Allocation & Fees	Permissive Tax Exemptions	Recreation - Volunteer Appreciation Week
	Engineering Capital Projects	Spring / Summer Program Guide & Registration	Engagement Strategy	Recreation - Programming Promotion
			Recreation -	Parcel Tax Roll

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Month				
			Spring Registration	Review Panel
			Recreation - Special Event	Council Flag Event / Statement
April	Community & Social Development Framework	Court Usage & Pickleball Feasibility	Recreation - Summer Registration	Good Neighbour Guide 2/4
	DCC Updates		Parks & Rec Master Plan Implementation Strategy & Park Projects	Recreation - Programming Promotion
			Florence Filberg Facility Needs Assessment	Council Flag Event / Statement
May	Puntledge Sewer Construction	New Interpretive Signage for Totem Pole	Annual Recruitment Drive	Anti-Racism Strategy Launch
	Harmston Local Area Plan		Council Flag Event / Statement	Recreation - Programming Promotion
			Property Tax Collection	Recreation - Special Event
June	1st Street Lift Station Construction	Harmston LAP	National Indigenous People's Day	Good Neighbour Guide 3/4
			Cemetery Fees & Charges	Recreation - Programming Promotion
			Recreation - Special Event	Recreation - Special Event
			Simms Concert Series	Strengthening Communities Grant Ends

			Property Tax Collection	Council Flag Event / Statement
July	Mcphee Meadows Construction	Canada Day	Animal Control Bylaw	Recreation - Programming Promotion
	East Side Firehall Borrowing AAP		Council Flag Event / Statement	
	Bill Moore Park Plan			
August	Lake Trail MUP Construction	Website	Fall Programs & Registration	Recreation - Programming Promotion
			Recreation - CV Fall Guide	Council Flag Event / Statement
			Recreation - Cozy Corner Preschool Sign-up	
September	Engineering Capital Projects	Community Policing	Fall Programs & Registration	Recreation CV Fall Guide
		Committee Recruitment	Recreation - Programming Promotion	Recreation Cozy Corner Preschool Sign Up
			Council Flag Event / Statement	
October		Anti-Racism Strategy Final Report	Recreation - Programming Promotion	Recreation - Special Event
		Budget Engagement Balancing Act	Recreation - Special Event	Council Flag Event / Statement
November		Bylaw Adjudication	Dog Tags	Council Strategic Plan Check-in

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	Snow & Ice Control Bylaw	Recreation - Winter Registration	Recreation - Winter Guide Release
		Recreation - Programming Promotion	
December		Flood Management	Recreation - Programming Promotion
		Recreation - Special Event	Recreation - Special Event
		Recreation - 12 Days of Fitmas	Council Flag Event / Statement
		Christmas Closure	Good Neighbour Guide 4/4

Communication Team
Communication events in the table above marked in blue include external communication resources. For the purposes of capacity and work planning, these events are understood to specifically impact the Communication Department at a management level.

5.3 Resourcing Planning Tool

The attached Resource Planning Tool ("the tool") is meant to provide the City with a dynamic system to plan communication activities and events across a total year. Using the logic of this communication strategy, the tool provides a projection of the required level of effort for each communication role based on the following elements:

- **Channel Load**
  Each channel identified in section 3. *Communication Channels* is mapped as required / not required for each of the described work plan segments (low/medium/high). Changing which channels are leveraged in each segment becomes a key variable in the level of effort required.

- **Level of Effort per Channel**
  Each channel is mapped to an associated level of effort per City communication role. This mapping is based on standard and expected levels of involvement to conduct planned communication activity in monthly time allocations. These mappings are applied to each event in each work plan segment to produce an overall picture of the load, per role, per channel.

- **Work Plan**
  Each event identified in the work plan has been mapped to one of the three work plan segments. The presence of an event in a specific segment effectively dictates:
    - The channels that will be leveraged each month for that event
    - The number of months expected to be dedicated to the event

- **Ad-Hoc**
  Intentional modifications can be made on a monthly basis to include channels for specific events. These can be added through a volume-based multiplier, to ensure a range of customization is available for all event segments.

- **Manager Tracking**
  Events can be removed from the traditional tracking methods, and instead be tracked through a unique manager tracking function. This allows for third-parties to conduct communication efforts for specific events, while ensuring that involvement and oversight from a manager role can be correctly accounted for.

In effect, the heart of this communication strategy is the logic of the resource planning tool.

6. Recommendations

The recommendations included in this section are a summary of recommendations outlined throughout this strategy document.

6.1 Strategic Recommendations

This communication strategy is designed to align the following elements:

- **Meaningful Engagement**
  Ensuring that all of the City's audiences can be reached effectively through the City's range of available communication channels.

  The included mixture of digital and traditional channels represents the feedback gathered from interest holders, equity deserving communities, youth groups, City staff, and City leadership. Just as there are a variety of learning styles, so are there a variety of engagement styles. The selected channels are meant to address the breadth of engagement styles represented by the City of Courtenay, ensuring that audiences can be met where they are at, and where they expect to find you.

- **Appropriate Channel Allocation**
  Leveraging the right channels for the right types of communication activities and events.

  This strategy hinges around the intentional segmentation of communication activities and events into three categories: High, Medium, and Low. From High to Low, these categories represent length in months, topic selection, and interest levels. Specific channels have been allocated for inclusion with specific segments, matching these traits to garner the most effective outreach, engagement, and informing of the City of Courtenay.

- **Predictive Communication**
  Working within a system that allows future communication activities and events to project logical requirements for personnel and timeline requirements.

  Effective communication to large audiences requires trust, and trust is built from consistency. This strategy examines modes of engagement for each identified channel, and seeks to define *single-source-of-truth* communication practices. While the final modes of expression will vary across channels, the core messaging and structure of information should remain predictive and consistent.

- **Required Resourcing**
  Understanding the type and volume of staffing required, in advance, to conduct City

communication activities and events effectively.

Systems excel when they are predictable. This strategy understands each channel, role, and category as a fixed variable, which allows for intentional projection and planning of the required effort to prioritize consistency, accuracy, and quality.

6.2 Connecting with the Engagement Framework

The City is planning to develop a Community Engagement Framework in 2024. That framework will provide a cohesive and consistent approach to community engagement. This will include things like:

- An overview of the IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement and how the City uses it
- A process for identifying whether engagement is necessary, and if so, at what level
- A cohesive approach to engagement across departments
- A unified process for interdepartmental collaboration
- An approach for small, medium and large engagement projects
- Recommendations for online engagement tools and platforms

Once in place, these strategies will work in tandem to outline not only our communication out to the community but also our two-way dialogues.

6.3 Emerging Technology and Platform Recommendations

6.3.1 Emerging Technologies

While chatbots have been around for a while, the advent of accessible and increasingly reliable AI platforms present opportunities to use these services to reinforce and bolster staff capacity. Across the City's social media and other points of public interaction, AI platforms can be leveraged to answer questions, synthesize reports, strategies, and other City documents to enable increased access for residents and visitors.

Chatbot implementation

There are several iterations of chatbot that can be implemented straight away; the easiest is the inline Meta offering for frequently asked questions. If needed, this tool can also set conversation or question guidelines (e.g. if there are topics that cannot be answered in the chat you can direct people to the appropriate channel with a greeting at the start of the conversation).

Effort Consideration
Presently, all chatbots need to be set up and have initial, manual input of topics and answer logic. This is a heavy lift to start, but becomes highly sustainable after initial setup (with effort

then being focused on minor updates and maintenance as required).

Artificial Intelligence (A.I)

Artificial Intelligence is an emerging platform with promising tools to supplement and bolster staff capacity by performing repetitive tasks that can often take up unnecessary amounts of staff time. Right now, these platforms are powerful options to make large sets of information available to people through a *frequently asked question* format.

ChatGPT (as of November 2023) is the current market leader. The new GPT offering allows fully custom tools using bespoke data sets, and can be a powerful tool to allow staff to set up project-specific tools to explain strategies, plans, or reports quickly.

As the technology evolves, staff can begin by using a paid subscription version of ChatGPT (the free version, while powerful, has limited data points). The paid version allows you to train specific topics and create your own GPTs. Staff can leverage this platform to train, learn, and get any specific GPTs you may want to run, like answering social media questions. More complex setups may need to involve a specialist.

6.3.2 Emerging Platforms

There is currently a lot of energy in the space of becoming *the next platform*. Whether it's related to *replacing Twitter* or *creating entirely new ways of connecting*, there is a fundamental truth in recognizing that platforms will shift and audiences will migrate. Below, we have included consideration of several emerging platforms that warrant observation and light engagement.

6.3.1.1 Threads

Threads is gaining traction. Currently, this platform is maintaining a strong integration with Instagram. Saving a user account for the City here is relatively easy as you already hold your Instagram name, and you cannot sign up to the platform without an Instagram account.

Having recently crossed the 100M active users a day threshold, this is a platform to keep an eye on and consider. As it is a text and image-based platform (video implementation is shaky as of November 2023), this could be considered a tool to take up the space created by offboarding from Twitter, and can likely leverage a lot of planned Instagram content from the City's Work Plan.

6.3.1.2 Bluesky

Bluesky is growing now that it is out of closed Beta. This platform is heavily supported by a user group passionate about replicating the 'Twitter-like' interaction style. It is a platform to watch as it comes out of beta and begins to gain further traction, as it could readily replace X in people's routines with its mirror-like interface. This platform will thrive on short, high-interaction information sharing through text or video.

6.3.1.3 Mastodon

Mastodon is a niche platform popular with audiences that were the first to leave X (Twitter). It is worth being aware of this platform. As the systems shift and senior levels of government start to ask questions about regulation, audiences have started to look at platforms outside of the current ecosystem of the corporations currently holding the market share— there could be a shift to decentralized platforms like this one.

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