MECKLENBURG COUNTY
2019 Communication Plan

Telling the Mecklenburg County Story
mecklenburg county
vision & mission:

vision
To be the best local government service provider.

mission
To serve Mecklenburg County residents by helping improve their lives and community.
What is a Communication Plan?

A communication plan is a living, breathing document used to align public information activities with the goals, objectives, and key communication messages of the organization. The plan prioritizes needs, identifies audiences, determines the message and how it is delivered, and measures whether or not the effort was successful.

The plan is assessed and updated annually and includes measurable objectives and outcomes.

The Mecklenburg County Public Information Department

HISTORY OF PUBLIC INFORMATION
Before 2006, public information in Mecklenburg County government was primarily decentralized with a small central office and other public information officers (PIOs) working in various departments.

To enhance transparency, consistency and accuracy, department PIOs were transferred into the centralized Public Information Department, where they remain, along with web services.

THE PUBLIC INFORMATION DEPARTMENT MISSION:
*Telling the Mecklenburg County Story*

GOALS
1) To inform, educate and engage residents and stakeholders about County responsibilities, services and results.
2) To inform, educate and engage County employees about the policies, procedures and information they need to be successful at their jobs.

STRUCTURE
The Public Information Department is composed of one part-time and 21 full-time staff members and divided into four Centers of Excellence:

1. Mass and Targeted Communications
2. Digital and Multimedia Communications
3. Web Services
4. Community Relations
Each team is comprised of a manager and staff members who are assigned to work within their specific areas of expertise with County departments or services. These teams have direct responsibility to meet regularly and communicate with County department contacts and other stakeholders to help achieve the goals of this plan.

Elements of the Plan

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES
The following core principles guide how Mecklenburg County engages internal and external audiences and customers.

We will communicate:
• Timely: We will communicate what we know when we know it
• Openly: We will provide all public information in a way that's easy to access and understand
• Proactively: We will engage our customers and stakeholders before being asked to provide information and determine future needs

AUDIENCES: EXTERNAL, INTERNAL, OTHER STAKEHOLDERS
• Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)
• Mecklenburg County Manager and staff
• Mecklenburg County residents
• Mecklenburg County employees and Sheriff’s Office
• Local media outlets
• Community partners – non-profit organizations, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, MEDIC,
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
• Charlotte City Council and City staff
• Towns – Cornelius, Davidson, Huntersville, Matthews, Mint Hill, Pineville
• Businesses
• Other elected officials – state, federal and judicial
COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Mecklenburg County communications will consist of a continuum of information that is connected and consistently:

- Open – Provide for government transparency for all audiences
- Responsive – Put individuals before processes or rules; respond quickly to change
- Progressive – Embrace change and look for ways to innovate
- Has clear governance – Set clear goals and written ways to provide information
- Accessible – Make information easy to find

COMMUNICATION RESOURCES

All Public Information employees provide services and resources to the following efforts.

DIRECT COMMUNICATIONS

Strategy: Provide important, timely and accurate information to residents and customers using a variety of communication channels.

Action Steps:
- Raise public awareness of the decisions made by the County Commission and the County Manager using multiple channels.
- Provide County information via the web, social media, and the news media.
- Stream County Commission meetings live online (MeckNC.gov and Twitter) and the Government Channel.
- Respond to public records requests.
- Develop County-wide branding and marketing strategy.
- Utilize video, digital and multimedia content to enhance communication.
- Design and produce printed materials.
- Manage events.
- Develop marketing and advertising campaigns for County departments.
- Publish a weekly Board Bulletin newsletter from the County Manager to the BOCC that includes timely news for elected officials and public subscribers.
- Create custom communication plans products to address client needs.
- Speech writing/coaching.
INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS:
Strategy: Provide important, timely and accurate information to all employees using a variety of communication channels.

Action Steps:
- Use MeckWeb (County intranet) as our primary channel to continually communicate information to employees.
- Send County-all emails when needed to communicate urgent information to employees.
- Produce and email Employee News Now (ENN) to employees weekly to highlight events and feature stories.
- Catalog PI activities and produce a monthly “Board Report” for the BOCC.
- Use digital and multimedia (video, streamed content, etc.) channels – video, streaming content, etc. – to create compelling, creative content that tells the Mecklenburg County story.
- Create quarterly Outlook Magazine employee print publication that highlights the stories that affect workers.
- Help Human Resources produce MeckEDU – online training module – videos to educate employees.
- Help create and produce posters, bulletin boards, mailed letters, and other products as needed.
- Proactively use County social media sites including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, to tell the Mecklenburg County story.
- Monitor media requests and send a daily media inquiry summary email to the Executive Team.
- Manage the Public Information Editorial Board and edit and proofread written communication before it is released to the public and employees.

WEB SERVICES:
Strategy: Use the County’s external and internal web sites to communicate County information to the public and employees.

Action Steps:
- Post external information to MeckNC.gov following best practices.
- Post internal information to MeckWeb and share with employees via Employee News Now.
- Utilize video, digital and multimedia content to support and enhance communication.
- Use GovDelivery or a similar distribution method to create mailing lists and deliver information.
- Utilize the SiteImprove tool to fix problems and improve accuracy.
- Ensure that content contributed by departments has the technology to support their needs and is viewable across all devices.
- Support departments in creating content that meets WCAG 2.0 standards for accessibility so that all visitors to MeckNC.gov are able to access the content they need.

SOCIAL MEDIA:
Strategy: Use the County’s social media to communicate County information to the public and employees.

Action Steps:
- Share external information via the County’s social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Instagram, YouTube, etc.) following best practices, the Mecklenburg County Social Media Policy and tailoring our message to targeted audiences.
• Utilize video, digital and multimedia content to support and enhance communication.
• Manage content contributed by departments.
• Update the Social Media Policy.
MEDIA RELATIONS:
Strategy: To be responsive, timely and accurate regarding media inquiries, proactively promote County information as media stories, and seek media coverage for special events and programs.

Action Steps:
• Distribute media releases to more than 500 contacts.
• Use Cision and GovDelivery to create subscription lists for the media and residents.
• Direct communication in person, on the phone, via email, etc. with reporters to deliver information, discuss stories and schedule interviews.
• Customize media relations efforts for specific outlets like Hispanic media and WFAE.
• Hold one-on-one meetings with County departments to develop and plan media strategies.
• Conduct media training for department directors/staff to prepare for interviews.
• Collect daily media inquiries from around the County and send a daily media inquiry summary email to the Executive Team.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS:
Strategy: Encourage proactive community engagement with County leadership and Departments early and often. Community engagement campaigns will encourage increased awareness, transparency and active citizen participation. Community engagement activities will be focused around County initiatives and delivered based on community interest.

Action Steps:
* Implement strategic community relations plan to guide current and future efforts.
* Hold community meetings and meet with key stakeholders specifically related to major County initiatives.
* Speak to groups and organizations proactively and regularly about Mecklenburg County services.
* Help plan and execute community meetings for Board of County Commissioners as needed.
* Communicate using direct communication methods tailoring outreach to fit all demographic groups.
* Help plan and execute special event planning and facilitation as needed.
* Participate and facilitate youth outreach through the Generation Nation’s Youth Council.
HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS
Public Information annually measures its internal and external performance in multiple ways, including:

- Community Survey results showing residents’ trust of information received from the County and how effectively Public Information communicates County information, and raises awareness of programs and services. Many of those measures make up the Public Awareness Index.
- Key Performance Indicators providing service level measures of our activities.
- Customer Satisfaction Survey results that give detailed employee feedback about Public Information.
- Employee Climate Survey results that reflect employee satisfaction with communication efforts.

Public Information results from the 2018 Community Survey are included in the Appendix.

SUMMARY:
Mecklenburg County is one of the fastest-growing areas in the country. Information is fluid and must be constantly updated to be effective.

In addition to annually updating this plan, Public Information meets with County departments each year to determine specific communication needs.

Those plans will be incorporated into this plan as they are developed and implemented.
Appendix

2018 Community Survey Results

What is the Community Survey?
The Mecklenburg County Community Survey is an annual public opinion survey of County programs and services. In 2018, the survey was administered by mail, web and phone (conducted by ETC Institute) to a random sample of 1,116 households.

Results

Are you aware that Mecklenburg County will be conducting a county-wide revaluation in 2019?

Are you aware of the county's revaluation website (meckreval.com)?

Do you know how to contact the County Assessor's Office in the event that you have questions about the 2019 revaluation?

Data Source: FY18 Mecklenburg County Community Survey

Awareness

Are you aware that the Mecklenburg Board of County Commission meetings are broadcast online at MeckNC.gov, as well as on Government Spectrum TV Channel 16 and through social media on Twitter and Facebook?
Appendix

Communication: To Public

FY18 response declined from FY17 response.

O&M Analysis: Answers compiled over time for questions asked consistently in the survey. Years available vary based on survey history.

Communication: Used Social Media?

51% of respondents indicate they have used at least one of the County’s social media resources—similar to the 52% response in FY17.

Data Source: FY18 Mecklenburg County Community Survey
What is your PREFERRED Source for receiving Mecklenburg County news and announcements?

- Television: 32% (2017), 37% (2018)
- Facebook: 12% (2017), 17% (2018)
- Other*: 15% (2017), 14% (2018)
- Newspaper: 12% (2017), 13% (2018)
- Nextdoor: 13% (2017), 11% (2018)
- Twitter: 11% (2017), 3% (2018)
- YouTube: 4% (2017), 1% (2018)
- Instagram: 2% (2017), 2% (2018)
- LinkedIn: 2% (2017), 3% (2018)

Notes: Percentages represent responses by category. Non-users, “don’t know” and non-responses were excluded.

*Other includes email, mail, text and website as the primary responses.
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