Lamont County
Strategic Communications Overview

External Communication Strategy

Lamont County has a diverse set of stakeholders who need to receive accurate and timely information from the County. To ensure all external stakeholders receive the County's message, communications must come out in a regular and uniform manner.

The County also cannot rely on one medium to communicate its message; rather stakeholders must have a variety of mediums to receive County information. For effective communication, Lamont County must push its message to residents through numerous communication mediums and have multiple access points to information for County residents.

Lamont County needs to engage its primary audiences. Whenever possible, the County should use communication vehicles that allow for two-way communication, allowing County stakeholders to provide feedback. The County also has to work to engage the public at County and community events.

Lamont County will specifically address communication protocols with regional municipalities (especially Lamont and Bruderheim) when issues arise surrounding potential developments in Alberta's Industrial Heartland through the Heartland Implementation Plan.

External Communication Goals

The following goals have been identified for this plan:

- Inform residents and stakeholders about County services, issues and events
- Promote open and accountable government

Target Audiences

Primary Audiences
- County residents
- Regional Residents (urban and neighboring municipalities)

- Regional Municipalities – Councils and Administrations
- Existing Industry
- Potential Industry
- Local Media
- Member Associations (AIHA, Capital Region Local Food Council, NR CAER, etc.)

Secondary Audiences
- Community Groups
- Regional Media
- Provincial and Federal governments
- Non-member associations (NCIA, Lamont County Ratepayers Association, School Boards, etc.)

Communication Tactics

This section will provide an overview of communication tactics available to Lamont County. Currently the County does not have the human resources necessary to undertake all of these tactics. In the following section a chart will link our communication goals to tactics, and will provide an estimate of the resources (both human and financial) needed to undertake these tactics.

County Website

Lamont County's website is in need of a major overhaul. It has a very stale and dated appearance and the content-management-system (CMS) is in need of a major update. The County website has been hacked twice in the last six months - visitors to the County site were automatically redirected to a different site. The County looks very unprofessional when this happens and it could result in visitors to our website being infected with a virus. Our current website also has a limit on its storage which limits what we can post on the County website.

The cost to upgrade the CMS, quoted by Idea Market, is $3500 and this does not include transferring content. To ensure our current website does not have security issues in the future, we would need to budget, at minimum $4500 ($3500 for CMS and $1000 for content transfer). The current CMS does not allow for website flexibility and was supposedly designed for ease-of-use but is very clumsy and difficult to use.

Lamont County has the option to undergo a complete website re-design for potentially less money than it would cost to upgrade the existing site. A complete redesign of a website with a much more flexible CMS (Adobe Dreamweaver and Adobe Contribute) is estimated to cost $4500.

By creating a new website we also have the opportunity to begin strengthening Lamont County's existing brand and implementing new communications technologies. A new website will also refresh the County's overall look and will show to residents Lamont County is working to improve its communication. Numerous initiatives could also follow the launch of a new site (including County photo contests, e-newsletters, resident surveys, blogs, social media integration, etc.). An updated website would also have the capability to ensure all County documents are available electronically and easy to find on the County website. This can include County brochures, statutory plans, forms, promotional materials and any other County information.

Lamont County needs to recreate its website so but the County also needs to be mindful of of its primary audience's demographics. It must continue communicating with residents through non-electronic mediums as well.

InFocus Advertisement

Lamont County's InFocus advertisement appears on the back page of the Lamont Leader and has gained a reputation throughout the region as a source of County information. The InFocus advertisement is currently one of the main sources for County information utilized by residents. The County should build on this strength and redesign and expand the InFocus advertisement. Currently the County is limited to the back page of the Lamont Leader but we should look at expanding this when an internal demand for additional advertising space exists. The InFocus ad should also be redesigned as it currently is not visually appealing.

Internally, each department within the County needs to place more emphasis on advertising issues and events that are of importance to residents and stakeholders.

News Releases

News releases are a very effective method to communicate the County's message to residents and when they are picked up by the media, generate free publicity. This free publicity is also perceived as more credible than information received directly from the County.

Lamont County needs to issue news releases on regular basis. Anytime a 'newsworthy' event or issue occurs, Lamont County should create a news release and send it to an established media list including news papers and radio stations in Lamont County and the surrounding region. News releases will also be posted to the County website for residents and stakeholders to view.

County Publications

Lamont County should also create and enhance publications to communicate the County's message to residents and stakeholders. These publications also help to educate the residents and explain the County's reasoning and rationale. Examples of these existing publications include:

- Reeve's Report
- Financial Statements

Publications that could be produced by Lamont County include:

- Annual Report (business report)
- Council and County Newsletter (quarterly, bi-annually, annually)
- Economic Outlook

Marketing Materials

Lamont County needs to create marketing materials specifically for the Economic Development Department but also for other County departments and general marketing pieces for the County as a whole. Marketing materials, with the right software can easily be created internally but look professional, it requires templates designed by professional graphic designers.

Once the templates are created, the County can create marketing pieces to meet arising and emerging needs. Paper and electronic copies of all marketing materials are essential as we promote the County to attract residents and industry to the region. Electronic copies can be placed on our website and distributed through email and the paper copies can be placed at the County office and distributed at meetings and promotion events. Marketing materials could include:

- Community Profile
- Industrial Opportunities - General
- Industrial Opportunities - Land for Sale
- Business Attraction Packages
- County Event promotion
- County advertisements
- Other marketing opportunities

Welcome Packages

A Lamont County Welcome Package is a great way to begin a relationship with new residents. The Welcome Package would include a welcome letter from the Reeve and Council, the Guide to Rural Living and an overview of County Services and contacts. The Welcome Package contents can also be modified over time as new publications are created and new issues arise.

County Community Engagement Events

Hosting County sponsored community engagement events are an efficient way to communicate with business leaders, community advocates and regional municipalities. These events serve as a networking function, media event and communication vehicle. They also give residents a chance to interact and network with Council and Sr. Administration. These events could include:

- County Address
- County Golf Tournament
- Business Lunches
- Meetings with resident groups
- Open Houses
- Councillor Coffee Breaks

County Brochures

The county currently produces a number of brochures used to inform residents and stakeholders about specific issues. Numerous other brochures could also be created to more effectively communicate issues of concern for residents. Brochures can also be put on our website, allowing residents to access information without visiting the County office. These brochures need to be high quality and display the professionalism of the County.

Existing brochures include:

- Fire Permit Information
- Rural Addressing Project
- Building a Dwelling, Attached Garage or Addition
- Guide to Rural Living
- CALC Education Guide

New brochures could include:

- County Attractions
- School Information
- Clubroot
- Vegetation Programs
    - Weed Control
    - Roadside Spraying
    - Mowing and Brushing Progress
- Pest Control Programs
- Rental Equipment
- Emergency Information
    - Fire, Ambulance, Police
- FCSS Programs
- Industrial/Commercial Development Process
- Subdivision process and regulations
- Business Licenses
- Compliance Certificates
- Public Works Information
- Utility Information

Social Media

Another avenue to communicate with County residents and stakeholders is through social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter. Social media is a cost-effective way to reach audiences and is a great forum for communication. But to be effective, it must be an organizational priority and have significant human resources devoted to it. Social media needs to be constantly updated or it becomes stale and loses its audience.

To be effective, social media also needs to be combined with other electronic communication mediums. Lamont County should first work at improving its web presence before delving into social media. The County is currently not ready to implement social media strategies but these strategies should be in development and part of our long-term external communications plan.

Communication Tactics – Resources Required

Tactic	Currently Implemented (yes/no)	Requires Update (yes/no)	Audience	Goal	Frequency	Human Resources Requirements (hrs)	Financial Requirements ($)
County Website	Yes	Yes	All primary and secondary audiences	Inform residents and stakeholders about County services, issues, events and opportunities Promote open and accountable government	New website or update existing - Updated weekly	Update existing website – 35 hrs Create new website – 70 hrs Weekly Updates – 3.5 hrs	$4500 $4500 N/A
InFocus Advertisement	Yes	Yes	All primary and secondary audiences	Inform residents and stakeholders about County services, issues, events and opportunities Promote open and accountable government	Weekly	Weekly Coordination – 3 hrs	$600/week - $31,200/year Redesign - $200 Expand InFocus - $200/week - $5000/year (don't need additional space every week)

Tactic	Currently Implemented (yes/no)	Requires Update (yes/no)	Audience	Goal	Frequency	Human Resources Requirements (hrs)	Financial Requirements ($)
News Releases	No	N/A	Local Media Regional Media	Inform residents and stakeholders about County services, issues, events and opportunities Promote open and accountable government	Minimum of 1 news release per month	3 hrs per news release	N/A
Reeve's Report	Yes	Yes – needs the same look as all County publication	All primary and secondary audiences	Inform residents and stakeholders about County services, issues, events and opportunities Promote open and accountable government	Annually	25 hrs	N/A Printing/paper costs (professional printing costs - $750)
Financial Statements	Yes	Yes	County Residents	Promote open and accountable government	Annually	N/A – currently use letter from auditor	N/A

Tactic	Currently Implemented (yes/no)	Requires Update (yes/no)	Audience	Goal	Frequency	Human Resources Requirements (hrs)	Financial Requirements ($)
Annual Report	No	No	County Residents Regional Residents Regional Municipalities Existing Industry	Promote open and accountable government Inform residents and stakeholders about County services, issues, events and opportunities	Annually	35 hours	Total Costs - $1600 Printing - $1200 Mailout - $400
Council and County Newsletter	No	No	County Residents Existing Industry Local Media	Inform residents and stakeholders about County services, issues, events and opportunities Promote open and accountable government	Annually, bi-annually or quarterly	35 hours	Total Costs - $1200 Printing - $800 Mailout - $400

Tactic	Currently Implemented (yes/no)	Requires Update (yes/no)	Audience	Goal	Frequency	Human Resources Requirements (hrs)	Financial Requirements ($)
Economic Outlook	No	No	All primary and secondary audiences	Inform residents and stakeholders about County services, issues, events and opportunities Promote open and accountable government	Annually	20 hours	N/A Printing done in-house Distributed online and at County offices.
Marketing Materials	No	No	County Residents Regional Residents Existing Industry Potential Industry	Inform residents and stakeholders about County services, issues, events and opportunities Promote open and accountable government	As needed	N/A – Template Creation (done by consultant) 10 hrs per week - Content addition -	$500 – template creation (matching County image) N/A – Content addition

Tactic	Currently Implemented (yes/no)	Requires Update (yes/no)	Audience	Goal	Frequency	Human Resources Requirements (hrs)	Financial Requirements ($)
Welcome Packages	No	No	County Residents	Inform residents and stakeholders about County services, issues, events and opportunities Promote open and accountable government	Mailed when new residents move to County (use tax roll information)	Maximum 5 hours per month (welcome packages include already created documents)	N/A Mailing costs – N/A
County Address (Breakfast series)	No	No	All primary and secondary audiences	Inform residents and stakeholders about County services, issues, events and opportunities Promote open and accountable government	Annually, biannually	20 hrs	Cost neutral – sponsorship and admission sales
County Golf Tournament	No	No	All primary and secondary audiences	Promote open and accountable government	Annually	35 hrs	Cost neutral – registration and sponsorship fees

Tactic	Currently Implemented (yes/no)	Requires Update (yes/no)	Audience	Goal	Frequency	Human Resources Requirements (hrs)	Financial Requirements ($)
Community Lunches	No	No	All primary and secondary audiences	Inform residents and stakeholders about County services, issues, events and opportunities Promote open and accountable government	Annually, bi-annually, quarterly	20 hrs	Cost neutral – sponsorship and admission sales
Resident Open Houses	No	No	All primary and secondary audiences	Inform residents and stakeholders about County services, issues and events Promote open and accountable government	Annually	20 hrs	$300 per Open House

Tactic	Currently Implemented (yes/no)	Requires Update (yes/no)	Audience	Goal	Frequency	Human Resources Requirements (hrs)	Financial Requirements ($)
Councillor Coffee Breaks	No	No	All primary and secondary audiences	Inform residents and stakeholders about County services, issues and events Promote open and accountable government	Annually, biannually, quarterly	3 hrs	$50 per Councillor Coffee Break
County Brochures	Yes – more need to be created	Yes	County residents Potential Industry Existing Industry	Inform residents and stakeholders about County services, issues and events Promote open and accountable government	Updated Annually	3 hours per brochure (10+ brochures need to be created)	N/A – In House printing $50/brochure – professional printing
Social Media Presence	No	No	All primary and secondary audiences	Inform residents and stakeholders about County services, issues and events Promote open and accountable government	Ongoing	3.5 hours per week	N/A