

TOWNSHIP OF BLANDFORD-BLENHEIM

SEPTEMBER 2025

# CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN



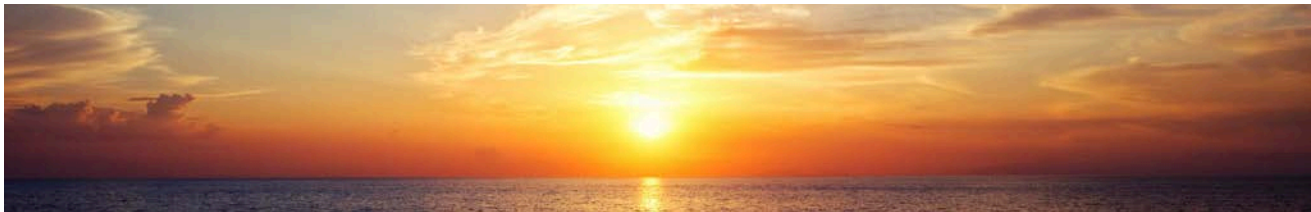
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**PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY**  
CLERK'S DEPARTMENT

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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim Corporate Communications Strategy is a comprehensive, future-focused strategy designed to transform how the Township communicates with residents, staff, Council, and stakeholders.

Grounded in the Township's rural heritage and community-first spirit, this plan lays the foundation for open, transparent, and inclusive communications that strengthen public trust and foster greater community participation.

## STRATEGIC GOALS

By enhancing clarity, consistency, and accessibility across all communication channels, the plan aims to:

- Strengthen community connections and encourage civic participation.
- Elevate Council visibility and responsiveness.
- Build a culture of transparency and mutual respect.

## IMPLEMENTATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

Featuring a clear action plan, timelines, and measurable outcomes, the plan empowers the Township to adapt and evolve as community needs and communication technologies change.

In short, this plan positions Blandford-Blenheim to lead by example among rural municipalities – fostering a more informed, engaged, and united community.



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## 2. INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE

This plan provides a unified, strategic framework to guide all Township communications. It aligns messaging and outreach efforts with the Township's broader strategic goals, ensuring residents feel informed, included, and empowered to engage in local governance.

### COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Nestled in Oxford County, Blandford-Blenheim is a warm, welcoming township of approximately 7,600 residents. Our community is built on a strong agricultural foundation and a proud rural heritage, with vibrant villages and hamlets including Plattsville, Bright, Princeton, and Drumbo.

The Township faces unique challenges in reaching all residents – balancing traditional communication methods with modern digital approaches. Considerations include an aging population, varying levels of internet access, and strong in-person community networks.



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# COMMUNICATIONS LEADERSHIP

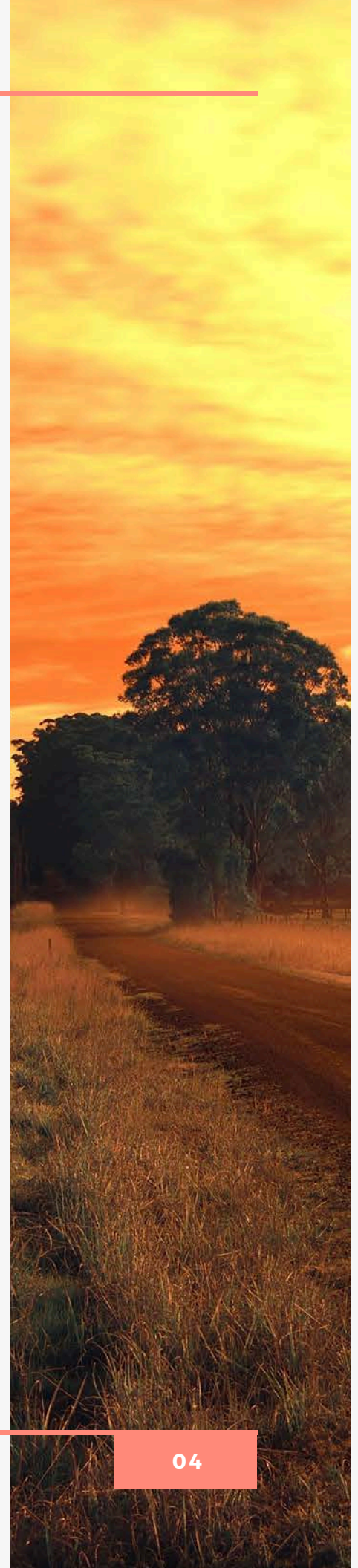
The Township of Blandford-Blenheim's communications efforts are coordinated by the Deputy Clerk / Communications Coordinator, who works closely with the Director of Corporate Services / Clerk. This role is responsible for leading the implementation of the Corporate Communications Plan, developing and distributing content across various channels, and supporting departmental communication needs.

The Communications Coordinator collaborates with:

- The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO);
- Director of Corporate Services / Clerk;
- Department Directors and Managers; and
- Frontline staff who help share information with residents.

Responsibilities include:

- Maintaining the Township's communications strategy and content calendar.
- Managing social media accounts and monitoring engagement.
- Maintaining and updating the Township website.
- Preparing media releases and handling media inquiries.
- Assisting with internal staff communications.
- Supporting public engagement initiatives and surveys.
- Advising on branding and visual identity standards.





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## DEPARTMENTAL ROLES

All departments support communications by sharing timely updates, identifying key projects or issues, and consistently applying Township branding.

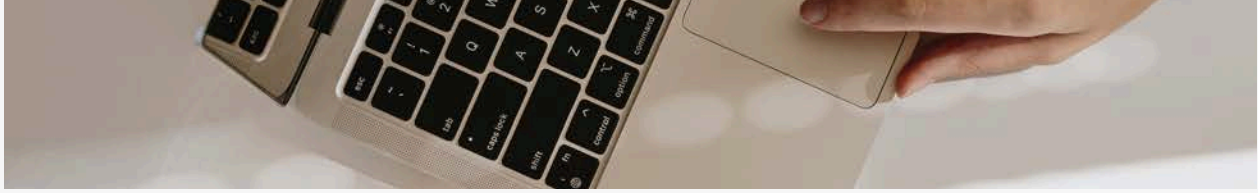
The CAO, Director of Corporate Services / Clerk, and Management Team foster a culture of proactive, open, and collaborative communication across the organization.

## OBJECTIVES

- Ensure clarity and consistency in all Township communications.
- Foster two-way communication and deepen community engagement.
- Enhance Council's visibility and demonstrate accountability.
- Expand reach through inclusive, diverse communication channels.
- Support emergency preparedness and community resilience.

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## 3. INTERNAL ASSESSMENT & BEST PRACTICE REVIEW



### A. METHODOLOGY

To develop this plan, a multi-pronged internal review and research process was undertaken, including:

- A comprehensive assessment of the Township's current communication tools, platforms, and workflows.
- An internal review of past communication efforts, challenges, and successes to identify opportunities for improvement.
- A scan of best practices and comparable strategies from similar rural municipalities across Ontario.
- Consideration of relevant municipal policies, strategic priorities, and legislative requirements to ensure alignment.

### B. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This strategy was shaped by core principles that reflect the Township's values and priorities:

- **Clarity:** Information should be timely, clear, and consistent across all channels.
- **Accessibility:** Communications must be inclusive and easy to access for all residents.
- **Transparency:** Open and honest communication builds public trust.
- **Community Focus:** Messaging should reflect the Township's rural identity and support engagement.
- **Efficiency:** Communications should align with strategic goals and support internal coordination.

These principles informed the review process and serve as the foundation for the recommendations that follow.



## C. SWOT ANALYSIS

### **Strengths**

- Dedicated and approachable Council and staff committed to community service.
- Strong community word-of-mouth and interpersonal networks.

### **Weaknesses**

- Gaps in digital engagement and limited capacity to maintain frequent online updates.
- Inconsistent branding and messaging across departments.
- Lack of formal feedback mechanisms for residents.

### **Opportunities**

- Expand digital newsletters and interactive online surveys.
- Strengthen partnerships with local media, libraries, and community organizations as information hubs.
- Develop educational campaigns to build digital literacy and encourage broader participation.
- Launch a Township mobile app that delivers real-time updates and alerts.

### **Threats**

- Uneven rural internet access and generational gaps in technology use.
- Resource limitations and staffing constraints for proactive communication.
- Misinformation risks if official messaging is not timely and accessible.



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## 4. STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT



### A. ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

This strategy directly supports the Township's 2025–2028 Strategic Plan by advancing key goals across all four priority areas:

- **Engaged and Informed Community** – Enhances access to timely, clear, and consistent information to strengthen public awareness and civic participation.
- **Responsible and Strategic Growth** – Supports transparent communication around planning, development, and infrastructure to promote sustainable decision-making.
- **Community Well-Being and Inclusivity** – Promotes inclusive messaging and accessible channels to ensure all residents feel seen, heard, and connected.
- **Excellence in Public Service** – Encourages internal alignment and consistent communication practices that improve service delivery and build public trust.

Rooted in the values of transparency, accountability, and community spirit, this plan ensures communications contribute meaningfully to the Township's long-term vision.



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## B. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

- **Increase Public Awareness** — Proactively promote Township services, decisions, and opportunities.
- **Promote Accessibility** — Use clear, inclusive, and plain-language messaging in both print and digital formats.
- **Enhance Community Engagement** — Facilitate genuine two-way dialogue and encourage participation in civic life.
- **Strengthen Council Communication** — Empower Council to connect more directly and meaningfully with residents.
- **Support Emergency Readiness** — Provide rapid, accurate communication during crises to protect public safety.
- **Improve Internal Coordination** — Streamline cross-departmental communication to enhance operational effectiveness.



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## C. KEY FOCUS AREAS

- **Website Modernization:** Improve accessibility (e.g., AODA compliance), design, and content updates to create a user-friendly hub for residents.
- **Social Media Expansion:** Build a stronger, more consistent presence on Facebook, Instagram, and explore future platforms.
- **Printed and Traditional Communications:** Maintain posters, community bulletin boards, facility signage, and local newspaper notices to reach all demographics.
- **In-Person Engagement:** Host more Council-led open houses, attend community events, and provide face-to-face opportunities for feedback.
- **Internal Communication Protocols:** Create standard operating procedures (SOPs) and internal style guides to improve staff communication consistency.



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## 5. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



### YEAR 1 (2025 - 2026)

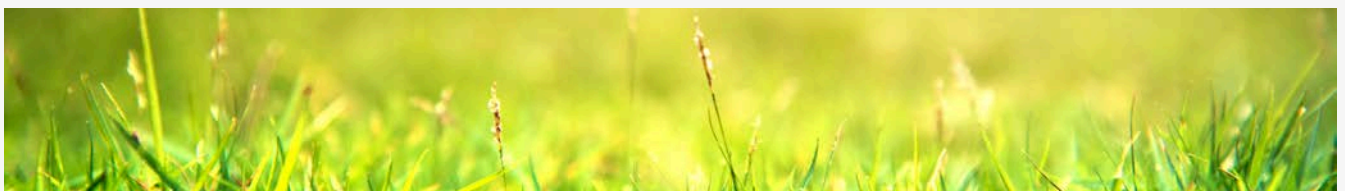
- Define clear roles and responsibilities for communications across departments.
- Develop and adopt Township-wide brand and style guidelines.
- Redesign and modernize the Township website, including improved service portals.
- Establish a centralized communications calendar to coordinate public messaging and campaigns.
- Conduct internal staff training on communications protocols, social media use, and customer service standards.
- Pilot new engagement tools (e.g., online surveys, public input platforms) to support community consultation efforts.
- Build a library of ready-to-use communication templates for key topics, including construction notices, public meetings, and program updates.



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## YEAR 2 (2026 - 2027)

- Introduce an annual public satisfaction and engagement survey.
- Implement an online feedback form for continuous resident input.
- Expand social media content variety, including video updates and community spotlights.
- Host annual town halls and rotating community forums in each village and hamlet.
- Explore partnerships for co-branded community information campaigns (e.g., with schools, libraries).
- Launch a communications performance dashboard to track engagement, reach, and responsiveness.
- Create and promote a “Stay Connected” campaign to boost newsletter subscriptions, website visits, and social media followers.
- Develop guidelines for inclusive and accessible communication, particularly for key public notices and emergency alerts.
- Formalize a process for regular review and updates of website content to ensure accuracy and relevance.



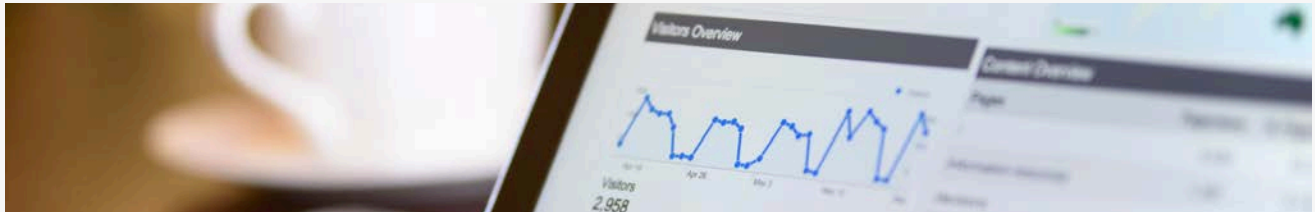


## YEAR 3 (2027 - 2028)

- Conduct a full review and impact assessment of the Corporate Communications Strategy to measure progress and identify gaps.
- Refresh and reissue brand and style guidelines based on lessons learned and community feedback.
- Launch a “Communications Excellence” internal award to recognize innovative and effective departmental communications.
- Expand video and multimedia content to include behind-the-scenes features, service explainers, and staff profiles.
- Formalize communications support for major Township initiatives, including templates, timelines, and promotional checklists.
- Develop a crisis communication refresher program and conduct an interdepartmental emergency response drill.
- Evaluate and enhance accessibility across all communications platforms in accordance with AODA standards.
- Identify sustainable funding and resource options for long-term communications capacity (e.g., communications intern, software tools).
- Prepare a new 3–5 year communications roadmap to carry momentum forward.

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## 6. MONITORING & EVALUATION



### A. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI)

- Website analytics (traffic trends, popular pages, accessibility compliance).
- Community feedback via surveys, online polls, or comment cards.
- Social media engagement (followers, reach, comments, shares).
- Volume and response times for public inquiries.
- Event attendance and participation metrics for town halls and open houses.

### B. REVIEW PROCESS

- Semi-annual internal reviews with all departments to assess communication progress.
- Annual presentation to Council summarizing KPIs, successes, and areas for improvement.
- Ongoing refinements to tactics based on community feedback, staff input, and evolving communication technologies.

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## C. DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR BLANDFORD-BLENHEIM (2025 - 2028)

### Goal 1.1

The Township proactively shares accurate, timely information to inform residents and encourage meaningful engagement across multiple communication channels.

- Increase use of Facebook and other social media channels, aiming for consistent posts each week guided by a content calendar.
- Maintain and update the Township website as the primary source of information, linking social media posts back to it whenever possible.
- Implement user-friendly online forms to streamline service requests and improve customer service.
- Launch a periodic community survey to better understand residents' communication preferences and needs.
- Ensure frontline staff receive timely updates so they can confidently provide accurate information to the public.

### Goal 1.2

Use a diverse mix of communication channels (digital, print, and in-person) to reach all residents, including those not active online.

- Continue to develop print materials and newsletters to reach rural and senior residents.
- Create clear standard operating procedures for social media use and content approvals.
- Maintain a centralized communications calendar that aligns with the Township's strategic priorities.

**Outcome 1: Residents feel informed and engaged with Township projects, news, events, and initiatives**



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## Goal 2.1

Strengthen media relations and ensure consistent messaging.

- Develop a formal Media Relations Policy to guide interactions and strengthen relationships with local and regional media.
- Invite local media to major Township events and provide photos or updates for those unable to attend.
- Create a high-resolution image library to support media requests and promote community identity.

**Outcome 2: The Township is recognized as a credible and reliable source by local media, with consistent messaging from Council and staff.**

## Goal 3.1

Clarify the roles of staff in supporting communications efforts.

- Provide training and encourage management to share key updates proactively with all staff.
- Develop a visual identity guide to ensure all materials reflect a cohesive Township brand.
- Create easy-to-use internal reference tools (e.g., “who to contact” guides) to assist staff in directing inquiries.

## Goal 3.2

Integrate communications planning into Township projects and initiatives.

- Encourage early involvement of communications staff in project planning to ensure proactive messaging and smooth implementation.
- Provide opportunities for staff to share feedback on communications processes to support continuous improvement.

**Outcome 3: Staff feel included, informed, and empowered in the communications process**

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### **Goal 4.1**

Educate residents about Township services and how to access them.

- Use social media, the website, and print materials to highlight what each department does and how residents can connect with services.
- Create infographics and stories that showcase the value of municipal services.

### **Goal 4.2**

Celebrate community spirit and showcase the Township as a great place to live, work, and visit.

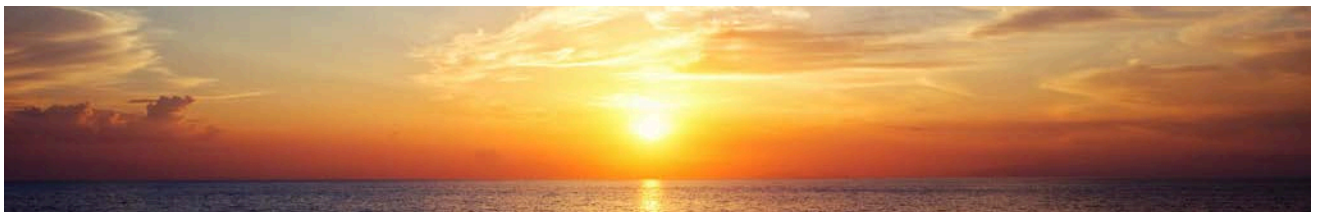
- Promote local events, recreation facilities, and heritage celebrations to foster community pride and increase participation.
- Share good news stories and examples of staff and community kindness to strengthen community connections.

### **Goal 4.3**

Highlight what makes Blandford-Blenheim unique.

- Develop a photographic library capturing local landscapes, heritage sites, community events, and seasonal highlights.
- Integrate visuals consistently into all communication materials to strengthen the Township's brand identity.

**Outcome 4: Blandford-Blenheim is recognized as a welcoming, engaged, and vibrant rural community**





## 7. CONCLUSION

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim Corporate Communications Strategy represents a bold step forward in strengthening local democracy, enhancing transparency, and building trust. By honoring the Township's agricultural roots and rural traditions while embracing innovative communication approaches, the plan ensures every resident has a voice and remains informed.

This community-first strategy empowers residents to engage meaningfully, supports staff in delivering exceptional services, and reflects the values that make Blandford-Blenheim a special place to live, work, and visit.

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**Prepared for Council consideration and staff implementation — working together, building a stronger, more connected Township.**