



*City of Lawrence*

**COMMUNICATIONS  
&  
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT  
PLAN**

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2016

## MISSION

The Communications Division of the City Manager’s Office provides information to residents and the media on city government programs and services. The office produces the city's newsletter and utility bill insert; oversees content and technical administration of the city’s web site, [www.lawrenceks.org](http://www.lawrenceks.org); oversees organizational communication tools including social media; coordinates, writes and schedules city news releases; coordinates the city’s media policy; oversees the government access television channel; and organizes special events as needed..

We are committed to fulfilling the city’s mission of providing excellent city services that enhance the quality of life for the Lawrence community.

## OUR GOAL

Communication is an essential function of government. Communications and public engagement is not the sole responsibility of a specific department but rather should be integrated into our overall program of work and cultivated at each stage of policy and program development. This communications and public engagement plan shows how effective, strategic communications can:

- help us achieve our overall organizational and department-level objectives;
- engage effectively with stakeholders;
- demonstrate the success of our work;
- Build community pride and satisfaction;
- ensure people understand what we do; and
- change behavior and perceptions where necessary.

## ANALYSIS OF CURRENT OPERATIONS

### Strengths

- Each department has an identified staff member that performs communications efforts on a part-time basis. The staff is professional and talented.
- Organization is willing and interested in developing communication tools that align with current technology.
- Management is supportive of efforts to provide strategic communications but need uniformity and resources to be more effective.

## Weaknesses

- A decentralized organization has created a model where departments feel responsible for communications and outreach. This can lead to inefficiency and mixed messages from departments on similar subjects.
- Policies are incongruent between departments to coordinate communications through the city's identified programs and policies.
- Limited resources are dedicated to communications and public engagement.
- There are many different plans, regulations, programs, advisory boards/commissions, and staff working on community issues. Efforts to communicate these complex ideas and efforts are difficult with many entities working to communicate these efforts in some way (leads to mixed messaging).
- Need to develop plans to engage underserved or underrepresented populations including youth and minorities.

## Opportunities

- Use of branding to ensure consistent design to enforce the overall organizational role, service and value to the community.
- Continue to upgrade technology for website and email communications to create professional, collaborative messages.
- Provide media training opportunities to staff to develop communications skills. Provide an orientation on city communications and public engagement to staff that are given the job function of PIO/communicator for the department. Revise media policy for consistent use.
- Communicate to the community the variety of work the city does; take the opportunity show the city's diverse workforce and professional staff.
- Create and adopt a city-wide public engagement plan as part of the Strategic Plan process.
- Gather more data on effectiveness of current tools.
- Provide resources (staff and/or funding) to actively market the city's programs and efforts.
- Develop web-based systems that provide a better end-user access to city government (searchable/indexable files, agenda keywords, a searchable staff contact database, etc.)
- Ensure that all public boards/commissions are using the same process for meeting notification.
- Perform a usability test on the website for feedback on how people use the site.
- Develop more internal communication strategies and tools to educate workforce about current issues and efforts.

## Threats

- Too often the media and public tell the city's story and do not allow the city to provide the message. The media, in particular, has a desire to have as many sources as possible and this can create an inefficient process where multiple people are working to fulfill a media request without

knowing others are doing the same. This also leads to mixed messaging. The media policy is too lax and not followed universally.

- Funding for the operating budget, capital projects and sales tax are voter-approved (or will become restrained by the tax lid). The city has to communicate value and community benefit to retain these funding sources with voter approval. These issues and messaging strategies take a large amount of community engagement and time to develop.

## RESEARCH

According to the 2015 Citizen Survey, the following information allows the benchmarks for communications efforts:

- 46% of respondents said they were satisfied with the effectiveness of city communication (44% in 2011; 42% in 2007).
- Combined, 25% of respondents listed communications as their first, second or third priority that should receive the most emphasis over the next two years.
- According to the Citizen Survey, the residents were least satisfied with the quality of video programming and efforts to keep people informed. The availability/timeliness of information had 62% satisfaction as well as 51% satisfaction with the city newsletter (not including neutral responses).
- Respondents said that they preferred to receive their communication from the city from the following sources: local media outlets first (40%), direct mail (37%), city newsletter (21%), email blasts (21%), city website (20%), parks and recreation guide (14%), social media (12%) and neighborhood associations (5%).
- In 2016, the city sent 568 news releases, 438 were sent in 2014.

## CURRENT COMMUNICATION EFFORTS

### Marketing & Communications Team

As an organization, we need to do a better job of planning our communication efforts and ensure we are using our communication tools effectively. We need to be strategic in our efforts to link departmental efforts together to show collaboration, innovation and cohesive achievement of organizational goals.

*2016 Goals for the Marketing & Communications Team:*

Goal #1: Meet monthly to review editorial calendar and focus areas for the upcoming month.

Goal #2: Develop communications plans for selected campaigns and ensure the plans are completed with the messaging, timeline and tools indicated. Not everything we do needs full campaign development but the team should discuss when to develop a full campaign and how that process is handled internally.

Goal #3: Provide media training to Marketing & Communications Team.

Goal #4: Review and propose revisions to the city's media policy to the City Manager.

Goal #5: Develop and/or review internal communication strategies to educate/inform employees.

Goal #6: Propose ways to create brand consistency and unity across departments for communication tools. Update the style guide with best practices and templates for communication tools.

Goal #7: Work to promote organizational and City Commission strategic goals through communications efforts. Specifically note in communications how a program, service or event is supporting the strategic plan and goals. Use visual communications and messages to illustrate how city programs and services are meeting set goals.

**We have numerous options available as an organization for communication.  
A snapshot of how we currently utilize the tools is below:**

News Releases & Email Subscriptions

With over 9,000 email addresses in our database, e-mail communications is one of the most powerful tools we have at our disposal. The city uses email subscriptions to provide information on city services, department news, program information, agendas for boards and commissions, promote job opportunities and provide internal communication for employees.

*2016 Goals for Email Subscriptions:*

Goal #1: Migrate email subscription system to MailChimp in spring 2016.

Goal #2: Re-organize/edit current subscriptions and reach out to existing subscribers to ensure accurate and up-to-date contacts and subscriptions.

Goal #3: Produce daily news updates from the city through MailChimp. Work with departments to create editorial calendar to guide planning process for daily news updates and e-news systems.

## City Website

The city's website, *www.lawrenceks.org*, is our greatest communications asset. It is the central repository for information and should be used to its maximum potential.

Goal #1: Rebuild the city website with a focus on enhancing its core function of managing and delivering content in a useful, thoughtful and appealing way. The target release date is June 2016. The Web Content Developer will work with key department staff to:

- Optimize technology and implement best practices in web design; and
- Optimize the content management system focusing on the internal user functionality and the external audience presentation (including navigation and development of applications that enhance the user-experience).

Goal #2: Provide monthly reporting of Google analytics and trends for the city website. Reporting will include insights into use of the site as well as key topics and searches.

Goal #3: Create a video highlight page for city-created video content that highlights current campaigns and features video on the city's homepage.

Goal #4: Audit the process for posting meeting notifications and agendas on the website. Make recommendations to ensure consistency in the process across the organization.

Goal #5: Work with internal departments to redesign the intranet. Discuss with IT a way to deliver the intranet directly to employees as part of a log-on process at workstations. Develop an extranet capability for employees to access off-site.

## Social Media

Social media is an ever-increasing tool to reach residents and stakeholders. As of April 2016, the city uses Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as social media platforms. A full-time Communications Specialist was added in 2016 to coordinate social media and video production for the city. This was added due to the need to keep the city's social media efforts robust and develop digital content that engages followers.

Goal #1: Provide monthly reporting of social media activities, analytics and trends. Work to increase engagement metrics and ensure city accounts are comparable to efforts in peer cities.

Goal #2: Develop a social media plan to increase engagement and identify ways the various platforms can be best used for the City of Lawrence and our departments. Review use of Pinterest, Instagram, NextDoor and LinkedIn for increased presence. Review and make recommendations for expanded use of social media by departments.

Goal #3: Revise city social media policy to include a terms of use policy and update all city social media accounts with policies.

Goal #4: Use social media to encourage interaction and participation in city programs. Social media tools will be used to increase engagement efforts to involve the public in the development of a strategic plan and annual budget.

Goal #5: Use social media management tool to pre-program social media plans for campaigns in advance.

**Facebook** (5,300 followers as of April 2016): Facebook has been identified as a primary tool for communications. It is best used for posts that can have more longevity, more explanation and multiple photographs/images to convey a message. Facebook's video, advertising and event promotion tools have been particularly successful for city communications thus far.

Goal #1: Increase use of Facebook events manager and sponsored advertising in Facebook to grow the follower base of city accounts by 7% overall in 2016.

**Twitter** (10,700 followers as of April 2016): Twitter is best used as a responsive, real-time communication tool with followers. Although it is difficult to condense a message into 140 characters, Tweets should be hyperlinked to the city website whenever possible to provide additional information. Twitter has been effective in emergency situations and the use of the hashtag #lawrencecitycomm has trended multiple times in the Kansas City area.

Goal #1: Increase followers on Twitter by 7% overall in 2016.

Goal #2: Schedule two tweet-a-longs each month to highlight a city service or program.

**YouTube** (135 channel subscribers as of April 2016): The city has made a concerted effort to move video hosting and streaming to YouTube. YouTube will allow the city to create interactive minutes which will provide end-users with easy access to specific agenda items for review. The city is using YouTube to archive meetings for the website and is the streaming mechanism for City Commission and Planning Commission meetings.

Goal #1: Increase channel subscribers on YouTube by 10% overall in 2016.

Goal #2: Develop interactive minutes process between the City Clerk's Office and Communications.

### *The Flame*, Utility Billing Insert and Utility Billing Message

*The Flame* is a one-page, double-sided monthly newsletter produced by the Communications Office. It is inserted in the mailed utility bills each month (approximately 30,000 customers). The city can place one insert in the mailings in addition to *The Flame*. The city also has the ability to provide a 13-line, 135 character message on bills each month.

Goal #1: Maintain consistency of campaigns and communications by planning content in coordination with the editorial calendar. *The Flame* requires a month lead time due to printing and shipping timelines. Content should be provided by the first of the month for the month preceding the newsletter (i.e. April 1 for a May 2016 newsletter). *The Flame* must be mailed by the 15th of the month for insertion.

Goal #2: Promote the newsletter content, insert and utility billing message via social media outlets and strategically identify key topics contained in the newsletter.

Goal #3: Plan and program use of the insert calendar and utility billing message along with the editorial calendar. This is a cost-effective communication tool and a key part of the strategic communications plan.

### Video (created in-house)

Video is a powerful medium that can be used to tell a story or convey a message. Edited video is labor-intensive due to pre-production, filming, editing and post-production. On average, an edited video takes four hours of staff time to complete one minute of finished video. However, there are increasing options to produce video quickly and cost-effectively through mobile applications. Videos produced need to be brief to keep the viewer's attention and be optimized for application in social media and the website.

Goal #1: Continue to research and utilize mobile applications to create engaging content that can be directly connected to social media platforms. YouTube is used for archiving and URL linkage from social media and the website. Videos will also be uploaded organically to Facebook, or through an identified best practice. For YouTube, the division will work to increase subscribers to the city's channel on an annual basis and provide metrics in communications monthly reports to show progress.

Goal #2: Create and follow a schedule for video content creation and release that is in line with the overall editorial calendar. Twenty hours a week will be dedicated to video development. The schedule below is a guideline for production with release dates that can change but the schedule should remain consistent. Departments must develop a script with notes for specific shots before filming begins. A limited number of edits will be provided as part of the post-production effort.



Week 1

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Lawrence In Focus (2 min)	Field-produced video (30 sec to 1 min)		Lawrence In Focus (2 min)	Field-produced video (30 sec to 1 min)

Week 2

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Field-produced video (30 sec to 1 min)	Lawrence In Focus (2 min)	Field-produced video (30 sec to 1 min)		Made In Lawrence (2 min)

Week 3

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Field-produced video (30 sec to 1 min)		Lawrence In Focus (2 min)	Field-produced video (30 sec to 1 min)	Lawrence In Focus (2 min)

Week 4

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	Lawrence In Focus (2 min)	Field-produced video (30 sec to 1 min)	Lawrence In Focus (2 min)	Field-produced video (30 sec to 1 min)

Channel 25

Channel 25 is a public government channel provided by the local cable company for city use. The city began managing all content (static and broadcast) on the channel in 2012. Departments have access via an internet-based application to update slides.

Goal #1: Perform a monthly review of static slides for accuracy. The use of a calendar when programming slides decreases the chance of out-of-date material but slides should be refreshed as soon as possible.

Goal #2: The Communications Office staff will program all video provided via in-house and external resources on the channel and schedule in accordance with the overall editorial calendar.

Goal #3: The City Commission meetings will continue playback on the channel at the following times: Wednesday @ 6:00 p.m., Thursday @ Noon, Friday @ 8:00 a.m., and Sunday @ 6:00 p.m. Staff will upload video and schedule the meetings by close of business on Wednesdays after a City Commission meeting.

## Media Relations

The city's current media relations policy allows any city employee to talk to the media but requires reporting the interview to a supervisor, department head and City Manager's Office immediately. This policy is not enforced uniformly across departments with public safety specifically having their own media relations protocol. Effective media relations involves managing the message to communicate the intent of the organization to provide a service, develop a program or policy, and convey ongoing efforts to fulfill the city's mission to provide excellent city services that enhance the quality of life for the Lawrence community.

Goal #1: Review and revise the current media policy to adhere to organizational goals and best practices for public communications.

Goal #2: Communicate the media policy to employees to ensure compliance. Offer media relations training to Marketing Communications Team and key department communicators.

Goal #3: Consider media briefing program to allow time for media professionals to meet with key staff on a regular basis to receive info on current issues and upcoming programs/agenda items.

## Other Tools

The city uses other communication tools to augment various aspects of the communications process. These include:

- Weekly radio segment on KLWN 1320
- Recorded message on city phone systems
- Parks and Recreation Guide (twice a year)
- City calendars on website and placement on select community calendars
- Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods listserv and direct communication to neighborhood leaders (<http://lawrenceks.org/pds/neighborhoodcontacts>)
- Quarterly article and advertisement in *Lawrence Business Magazine*
- City Manager's Report on City Commission agenda

## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

Public participation must be an organizational goal and reinforced through communication efforts, both internally and externally. The City of Lawrence has never approved a formal public engagement plan. It is recommended that, as part of this overall communications plan, the organization approve of the efforts outlined herein to create and utilize a formal engagement program and take steps to implement public engagement efforts throughout the departments.

The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) defines public participation as a means to involve those who are affected by a decision in the decision-making process. It promotes sustainable decisions by providing participants with the information they need to be involved in a meaningful way, and it communicates to participants how their input affects the decision. The practice of public participation can involve public meetings, surveys, open houses, workshops, polling, citizen's advisory committees and other forms of direct involvement with the public. IAP2's recommends the use of core values when practicing public participation:

- Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
- Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
- Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
- Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
- Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
- Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
- Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

The IAP2 Spectrum outlines the public participation goals and promises to the public. To date, the City of Lawrence does not have a certified IAP2 staffer or trainer. The Communications Office uses this spectrum as an outline for how the organization can use IAP2 best practices to create more engagement and better decision making by the organization.

## iap2 public participation spectrum

developed by the international association for public participation

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advise and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
EXAMPLE TOOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fact sheets</li> <li>• Websites</li> <li>• Open houses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public comment</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Public meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Deliberate polling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen Advisory committees</li> <li>• Consensus-building</li> <li>• Participatory decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen juries</li> <li>• Ballots</li> <li>• Delegated decisions</li> </ul>

Goal #1: Present public engagement plan to City Manager’s Office, Executive Team and Management Team. Ask for support in deploying the tools and efforts needed to create an effective program. Communicate efforts internally and externally to launch public engagement efforts. Develop public engagement plans in tandem with communication plans for at least six selected campaigns in 2016.

Goal #2: Develop at least two new mechanisms to further public engagement in Lawrence. This could be the creation of a ‘pop-up’ City Hall at various locations and events in Lawrence, an Ask-Me-Anything session with leadership through social media or another tool that reaches underserved populations.

Goal #3: Develop a 2017 Communications and Public Engagement plan that incorporates additional engagement tools.

## Lawrence Listens

The City of Lawrence launched Lawrence Listens in April 2015 as a first step to increase public engagement efforts. It was used during the budget process in 2015 and for various surveys but is not widely used by the organization.

Goal #1: Increase use of Lawrence Listens. The Communications Office will work with departments to identify ways to use the online engagement tool to gather feedback from the community about city programs and efforts. It should, at a minimum, be used to release a survey every two weeks on varying topics. The budget process should utilize Lawrence Listens extensively, as well as other communication tools. The Communications Manager will work with the Finance Director and City Manager's Office to develop survey tools related to the budget process. The feedback received through Lawrence Listens shall be provided to decision-makers as part of the overall research process.

Goal #2: Work with Peak Democracy (the vendor) to identify best practices for public engagement and online tools. Use existing knowledge database to develop Lawrence Listens surveys.

## STAR Community Rating System

The city and county are working to rate our governments according to the STAR Community Rating System (<http://www.starcommunities.org/rating-system/>). Our public engagement plan should utilize concepts and frameworks to create more livable communities for all. The STAR system has a section devoted to equity and empowerment that provides tools for increasing civic engagement.

Goal #1: Utilize the STAR framework to develop additional measures for citizen engagement.

Goal #2: Work with others in the city to communicate the STAR process and educate the community about STAR and the city/county work to achieve a high-level STAR rating.