*The following communications plan template was adapted from the First Nations Communications Tool Kit.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

# [Insert subject of plan here]

# Communications Plan

## Background

Explain in a few sentences or paragraphs what the nature of the project or initiative is.

Questions to consider:

* *What is the current situation and what needs to happen?*
* *What communication activities have already been undertaken?*
* *What are some of the contentious issues?*

You may also want to include any public environment information (public opinion, media coverage, research, etc.) in the background.

## Communications Objectives

Objectives should be specific, concrete, and measurable

Questions to consider:

* *What are you or your organization trying to achieve?*
* *What do you want your audience(s) to do?*
* *How will you measure success?*

## Key Audiences

Be sure to consider all your potential audiences (think wide). List your audiences with a brief rationale for why each is important to reach out to.

Questions to consider:

* *Who are you communicating with?*
* *Who do you want your communications messages to reach?*

**Key audiences may include[[2]](#footnote-2):**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Residents/occupants, if there is a tenanted building the proposed site
* Local governments (various department staff, mayor, and councils and boards)
* Neighbours (within close proximity to the development site, approximately 500 m)
* The broader community (usually within the local government jurisdiction)
* Business owners (within close proximity to the development site, approximately 500 m)
 | * Schools and community centers
* Local media
* Indigenous groups
* Distinct stakeholders such as organizations that serve youth, vulnerable women, seniors, LGBTQ2
* People with lived experience
* Community advocates and special interest groups (e.g. resident association, business improvement association, Homelessness Task Force)
 |

## Key Messages

List at least three key messages that you want to convey. Key messages are the core of your communication activities. These may need to be broken down further to include specific messages for specific identified target audiences. It is important to carefully consider what words/messages will resonate with your audiences. It is best if key messages are short and to the point.

Main question to consider:

* *What do you want/need your audiences to know?*

Below are some tips on how to create effective key messages.[[3]](#footnote-3)

* Begin with a premise statement or “topic sentence”
* Ensure the key message is in the active voice.
* Be positive.
* Develop supporting points, statistics or quotes to back up the message.
* Bring the key message to life—the more visual, the better. Help the audience emphasize by telling a story.

## Strategic Considerations

Outline any challenges, opportunities and environmental factors that need to be taken into consideration. Include information that would be relevant in determining the communications approach and messaging. Identify pros and cons of the strategy.

## Communications Approach

Describe the recommended communications approach.

Questions to consider:

* Will it be proactive or reactive?
* Will it be a low-key or high-profile approach?
* Will it be local or province-wide?

[The “Beyond NIMBY: A Toolkit for Opening Staffed Community Homes in Manitoba,”[[4]](#footnote-4) explains some advantages of taking a high profile approach versus taking a low profile approach.](http://www.newdirections.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Nimby-Toolkit-web.pdf)

Determining your communications approach depends on (among others):

* Development budgets
* Development timelines
* Phase of development
* Level of public interest/concern
* Whether zoning application is required.[[5]](#footnote-5)

## Communication Activities and Tools

Outline what you plan to do and how you plan to do it, and provide a list of deliverables. Identify what tools you are going to use (i.e. news release, poster, advertising, etc.)?

The communication tools you decide to use are dependent on the level of engagement. Below is a table to help you identify tools for different levels of engagement.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Level of Engagement | Definition | Tools |
| INFORM | One-way communication providing the public with balanced and objective information to assist understanding about something that is going to happen. | * Notice on City Page
* Open houses
* Word-of-Mouth
* Presentations
* Letter to residents
* Fact sheets
* Social Media
* Apps & Websites
* Storytelling
* Videos
* Podcasts
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| CONSULT | Two-way communication designed to obtain public feedback about ideas including rationale, alternatives and proposals to help with decision-making.  | * Focus Groups
* Interviews & Conversations
* Surveys
* Open Houses
 |
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|
| INVOLVE | Participatory process designed to help identify issues and vies to ensue concerns and aspirations are understood and considered prior to decision-making. | * World Cafes
* Workshops
* Community Liaisons
* Monthly Meetings
* Tours/field trips
* Open space meetings
 |
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| COLLABORATE | Working together to develop understanding of all issues and interests with the intent to work out alternatives and identify preferred solutions.  | * Partnerships in Decision Making
* Expert Committees
* Citizen Advisory Committees
* Consensus Building
 |

## Timeline

What is the project schedule? Establish timeline with specific milestones and deadlines for completion of activities.

## Budget

Estimate resources (financial and human) required to complete each component of the plan.

## Evaluation

List what tools you will use to evaluate success. Some of these tools may include:

* Stakeholder/partner feedback
* Media monitoring
* Public opinion research
* Web site hits
1. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. “First Nations Communications Toolkit.” 2015. <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-BC/STAGING/texte-text/fnct_e_1100100021861_eng.pdf> (accessed June 11, 2019) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. BC Housing. “Community Acceptance of Non-Market Housing Toolkit Guide 3: Gaining and Maintaining Community Acceptance.” June 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. International Association for Public Participation. “Planning for Effective Public Participation.” 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. “Beyond NIMBY: A Toolkit for Opening Staffed Community Homes in Manitoba,” Community Inclusion Awareness Committee, Prepared by New Directions (December 2015) - http://www.newdirections.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Nimby-Toolkit-web.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. BC Housing. “Community Acceptance of Non-Market Housing Toolkit Guide 3: Gaining and Maintaining Community Acceptance.” June 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)