

City of Blaine Communication and Community Engagement Guide



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Overview and Goals

The City of Blaine communications team consists of the communications coordinator, web coordinator, and communications technician. The communications team works with all city departments and with the administrative services captain on public safety related matters. The communications division strives to provide Blaine residents, visitors, and businesses with effective communication at all times and works with all city departments to achieve this goal. This guide includes best practices and yearly milestones that are designed to keep all city departments connected to the community in an effective way.

Roles and Responsibilities

The communications coordinator is responsible for the oversight and execution of all city communications. The communications coordinator collaborates with the city council, city manager, department heads, and other city staff to manage the city's communication efforts and to continually explore new ways of connecting with the community while evaluating current methods. The communications coordinator also needs to identify key challenges to achieving communication and engagement goals.

The web coordinator leads the city's digital communication efforts and also is the city's graphic designer. The web coordinator is the main point of contact for the city's website provider, CivicPlus. The web coordinator also collaborates with many city departments to produce materials for both internal and external audiences.

The communications technician is responsible for the television and online broadcast of all city government meetings. The communications technician also works collaboratively with other communications staff on the production of print material for the community.

City Council

The communications coordinator will work with the city manager to provide talking points to the city council as needed or requested. Talking points will be prepared for any official city event where a member of the city council is expected to speak to the public. The communications coordinator is also available to help any council member prepare for a media interview.

Community Engagement

The City of Blaine will engage with the community in a variety of ways and will routinely review current engagement methods and explore new engagement opportunities when needed. The intent is to give Blaine residents multiple platforms to connect with city staff and the city council. The city will use the city newsletter, city website, email newsletters, parks and recreation guide, city cable television channel, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Nextdoor, community meetings, and community surveys. The communications team will also actively seek feedback from the community about engagement and communications efforts.

Crisis Communications

The communications coordinator is on call for all crisis communications events. The communications coordinator will take the lead on creating messaging that will be used by all staff and across platforms. The web coordinator will take the lead on posting messaging on various communications platforms. The communications coordinator will be the main contact for the media. The communications coordinator will prepare any staff members for media interviews or press conferences. The communications coordinator along with the police department and/or city manager will decide if the city emergency notification system, CivicReady, needs to be used for mass messaging.

Internal Communications

The communications team recognizes the importance of internal communications. With a staff the size of the City of Blaine it is important to engage in regular internal communication to keep all staff informed of important happenings. Quality internal communication can improve efficiency and increase general staff morale. The communications team will be responsible for communicating important updates to city staff to help the entire organization work together.

Media Relations

The communications coordinator will develop and maintain relationships with local media that cover the city. The communications coordinator will also keep an up to date media contact list for press releases and special event invitations. The communications team will also create media deliverables for local media after an event. During major events such as the 3M Open and USA Cup the communications team will attempt to connect with national and international media that are covering the event.

Social Media

Social media is a powerful tool and is a platform that the City of Blaine routinely uses to communicate. The communications coordinator, web coordinator, and administrative services captain are the three staff members who have the responsibility of posting and responding on social media. These staff members will determine when responding to a comment is necessary. Direct messages will always receive a response. Social media is a unique platform that allows the city to engage with a large audience in a different way than traditional communication methods. Social media allows for more creativity and occasional uses of humor. Social media is quickly becoming the most important way the city communicates with the community.

Training

The communications team will engage in regular professional development opportunities. This training will include conferences, research, and department meetings. In the ever changing world of communications and community engagement regular training on best practices and new trends is vital to the success of the city's communications efforts. The communications coordinator will also lead yearly communications/media training for the city council and senior staff.

Key Performance Indicators

City staff will develop and maintain a set of key performance indicators that evaluate the effectiveness of the communication methods being used to engage with the community. Key performance indicators will be based on measurable data. The communications coordinator will routinely report to the city manager on the performance of the city's communications efforts. A communication and engagement report will also be given to the council twice per year.

Tools

Besides the tools and methods that were detailed previously, the City of Blaine also uses third party tools to assist with community engagement.

Meltwater is a social media and traditional media monitoring program that allows city staff to search across social media for posts relevant to the City of Blaine. Meltwater includes many measureable data sets including: social reach, post sentiment/tonality, social echo, influencer list, media exposure, top trends, and more. Meltwater is also used to monitor news media sources and allows staff to contact reporters covering the city or events taking place in the city.

Sprout Social is used by city staff to schedule social media posts across all channels and accounts. Staff is able to create social media campaigns with reoccurring posts and Sprout Social is able to give staff data on the best date and time to post to reach the highest number of followers. Sprout Social also compiles demographic data on followers from each platform.

OpenBlaine is an important tool that is embedded into the city website that highlights both financial and non-financial data for the community. OpenBlaine is powered by OpenGov software, but the content is developed by staff.

Future Tools

OpenGov is a powerful tool to communicate and engage with the community and the city will continue to explore more ways to use OpenGov and its various modules.

Flash Vote is a community survey tool that asks residents to commit one minute per month to help make their local government better. Flash Vote can be used to send short surveys to residents that can give the city measurable data to help in making important decisions. Flash Vote would also be used for internal staff surveys. The communications team has identified Flash Vote as a potential future tool for community engagement.

The communications coordinator and web coordinator have been reviewing and demoing several community engagement platforms to determine if there is a provider that makes sense for the City of Blaine. The city's website provider, CivicPlus, is partnering with Civil Space to develop a community engagement product. This may be an option in the future, staff will continue to monitor the development of this product.

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