

Communications Strategy - Q4 2025 Progress Report

Purpose: This report provides Council and residents with a progress update on the implementation of 2021 – 2025 Communications Strategy.

Communications Strategy Framework: Action items within the Communications Strategy were organized by year based on the four key objectives.

Reference Information:

The following reference information can be used when reviewing the progress charts.

- Responsible (R), Accountable (A) and Supporting (S)
 - Responsible (R): The person or role responsible for doing the work to complete the task.
 - Accountable (A): The person or role who is ultimately answerable for the correct and thorough completion of the task.
 - Supporting (S): The person or role who will assist or provide guidance to complete the task.





- Status
 - Green Circle: The action has been completed or is on track and is progressing well.
 - Yellow Circle: The action is facing challenges, but there is a clear path forward to completion.
 - Red Circle: The action is facing significant challenges and requires immediate review.

Table of Contents




Contents


- Communications Strategy - Q4 2025 Progress Report 1
- Table of Contents 2
- Objectives 3
- 2021 Tactics and Deliverables 4
- 2022 Tactics and Deliverables 9
- 2023 Tactics and Deliverables 12
- 2024 Tactics and Deliverables 14
- 2025 Tactics and Deliverables 15


Objectives



Strategic Priority	Progress	Status of Actions	Due Date	Expected Outcomes	Related information
1. Establish a communications baseline		Completed	2021	The results of various communications metrics will be used to set a benchmark to track the success of communication efforts over the balance of the strategy.	The Communications Division actively reviews, tracks and benchmarks a variety of data points to monitor the performance and effectiveness of communication activities including the Town website, email subscription service, social media accounts, mailouts and public surveys. Data includes but is not limited to website analytics (page views, time on page, bounce rate, etc.), open rate and conversion rates, subscription numbers and engagement rates (followers, impressions, shares, etc.).
2. Cultivate corporate communications excellence		Ongoing	2022	Town staff will develop consistency in its messaging, including a strong brand identity for The Blue Mountains, demonstrating a unified voice, tone and visual identity across all channels with established standards for internal and external communications.	The Town developed brand guidelines to ensure consistency across all channels and messages. Town produced material is recognizable with a strong branding and professional design. Communications staff have clear guidance and processes for how and when to communicate internally and externally, including an update of the Town's notice policy to ensure strengthened external communication and engagement.
3. Develop creative content and enhance strategic communication efforts		Ongoing	2022	To reach a diverse group of residents and stakeholders, the Town will employ a number of communication tools and platforms. This list will be flexible and ready to adapt based on industry best practices and available technology that will allow the Town to engage the public and create a two-way conversation.	The Town strengthened its connection with the community by delivering information that is engaging, accessible and aligned with corporate priorities. Residents and stakeholders now experience more dynamic and visually compelling communications across a variety of channels that clearly convey the Town's initiatives, projects and services. The Town has enhanced public awareness, participation and trust through consistent and transparent storytelling.
4. Foster engagement and uphold public trust		Ongoing	2022	Communications will strengthen community relationships, increase transparency and accountability, enhance public confidence and reputation and provide meaningful and inclusive engagement for all members of the public.	The Communications division has strengthened its relationship with the public through open, two-way engagement. Updating the Town's Notice Policy, improving surveys, implementing a social media strategy, launching a new corporate website and the addition of monthly e-newsletters and quarterly printed newsletters has expanded the Town's scope. The Town has also expanded into new channels, including digital screens, video content and the exploration of AI agents.


2021 Tactics and Deliverables

No.	Action Steps	Status & Percentage Completed	Due Date	Responsible & Accountable	Related information
1.1	Research and define resident/stakeholder personas to enable targeted engagement plans	 0%	2021	A: Comms R: CAO S: CCAC	A fulsome approach to communicating with the entire community was taken with the goal of engaging as many individuals as possible. The focus of the communications division remains to reach all demographics through a variety of methods. Staff have utilized different methods including but not limited to mailing campaigns, postcards, signage, social media, email, website postings, newspaper, radio and in-person engagement at Town events.
1.2	Develop and implement social media strategy	 100%	2021	A: Comms R: CAO S: CCAC	<p>The Town presented the updated Social Media Strategy and Policy to Council in April 2022. The policy outlined the goals to improve communication and digital engagement, diversify the Town’s social media audiences, build authority as an official news source and drive traffic to the Town’s corporate website. The strategy also outlined the planned expansion onto new platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Through these efforts, the Town actively maintains a presence on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, X and LinkedIn.</p> <p>Additional actions that have been implemented to support the Town’s Social Media Strategy include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created social media image templates to ensure consistency • Developed an annual content calendar comprised of key dates, annual activities and celebrations/events • Prepared master photography shot list and expanded the Town’s image database • Created a series of “Communicating with the Town 101” explainer videos
1.3	Implement email address collection campaign	 100%	2021 & ongoing	A: Comms R: CAO S: CCAC	Understanding the importance and opportunity to engage residents by email, the Communications Division has launched several promotional campaigns encouraging residents to subscribe for email updates. Before this effort, the Town had fewer than 500 email subscribers with low engagement rates. Following the efforts of the




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					<p>email address campaigns, the Town now has a database of over 4,800 unique email addresses subscribed, with the Town’s monthly e-newsletter being one of the most popular subscription categories with over 1,700 subscribers and an open rate of over 75%. Notably, the Town’s open rates across all email categories is 70%, which far exceeds the government industry standard of only 28% as reported by Mailchimp.</p> <p>To ensure that residents receive relevant content, the Town offers multiple subscription categories, including project-specific emails, as well as Press Release and Town News, Council and Committee Updates, Maintenance, Service Disruptions and Construction Notices, Public Notices, Monthly E-Newsletter and the Business E-Newsletter.</p> <p>Town Staff ensure that the email list follows Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation with express consent received by those who subscribe, as well as the ability for users to unsubscribe easily if they no longer wish to receive emails. The Town’s email service also allows for subscriber maintenance to ensure the legislation is followed based on subscription date.</p> <p>All email lists continue to grow and engagement with residents through email remains one of the strongest performing channels for sharing news and information.</p>
1.4	Launch quarterly, printed and mailed Town newsletter focused on storytelling	 100%	2021 & Ongoing	A: Comms R: CAO S: CCAC	<p>First published in 2021, the mailed Town newsletter has been a highly successful tool for sharing important news and project updates through engaging storytelling.</p> <p>The newsletter is printed and mailed through Canada Post to all households in The Blue Mountains. As a government organization, the Town has the authority to bypass the junk mail block that some households may have in place. Still, distribution of the newsletter</p>



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					<p>remains subject to the requirements and distribution timelines of Canada Post.</p> <p>As of October 2025, 15 editions of the Town newsletter have been produced and mailed. These editions have provided background information on key projects and initiatives, along with other key features highlighting messages from the Mayor, an employee spotlight, local events/activities, library information and more. The newsletters are also included in the tax bills that are mailed twice each year to ensure that those who live in the Town part-time or seasonally still receive important information.</p> <p>The Town newsletter recently won the Gold Award from the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals, MarCom awards, which honours excellence in marketing and communication.</p>
1.5	Launch new corporate Town website	 100%	2021	A: Comms R: CAO S: CCAC	<p>The website serves as the primary communication tool for the Town, as demonstrated by the fact that in 2024, the Town website was visited over 537,000 times.</p> <p>The Town website was fully redesigned and launched in 2022, in partnership with the Community Communications Advisory Committee. The website was developed with a focus on user experience, strong searchability and navigation. The process of developing the website was extensive, involving multiple meetings of the Advisory Committee, as well as public surveys, community focus groups, and user testing sessions.</p> <p>Following the launch of the website, the 'Current Projects & Initiatives' saw a 119% increase in visits to the page. In the month following the launch, page visits were up 21% and there was a 96% decrease in the use of the site search function, suggesting that users were navigating the website more effectively through the intuitive navigation.</p>


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					<p>Understanding the importance of ensuring that the website is up-to-date and high functioning, the Communications Division produces a monthly analytics report that is reviewed internally and used to make changes and adjustments to the design, content, navigation and featured content. In addition, the Communications Division uses a variety of monitoring and feedback tools to track real-time performance of the website.</p> <p>These efforts have been strongly supported by Council through the approval of a \$10,000 annual budget to update and maintain the website. Each year, the funds are used to enhance the user experience and update critical elements of the website, which has contributed to strong performance and mitigated the need for a full or partial redevelopment project.</p> <p>Notably, the Town’s website has been well-received by other municipalities and has been used as a ‘best practice’ template throughout the local government industry.</p>
1.6	Evaluate public survey tool and engagement website	 100%	2022	A: Comms R: CAO S: CCAC	<p>Before the new website was developed, the Town utilized an online engagement platform provided by a third-party service provider. Through the website development process, positive elements of the engagement platform were built into the new website through the creation of project pages. A decision was made at the time to cancel the contract and internalize the work, resulting in stronger control and a greater ability to manage content and share information.</p> <p>In addition, through the cost savings, the Town transitioned all public surveys to a third-party survey software (SurveyMonkey). This tool was selected based on its overall cost-effectiveness, considering the availability of features and data reporting tools. The Town continues to utilize this service and is satisfied with it’s ability and service offering.</p>
1.7	Establish standards for customer service	 60%	2021	A: Comms R: CAO S: CCAC	<p>In 2021, a new customer service standard was approved by Council, which detailed a ‘2+5’ response model, in which staff would provide initial acknowledgement within two business days of an inquiry, and a</p>

No.	Action Steps	Status & Percentage Completed	Due Date	Responsible & Accountable	Related information
					<p>detailed answer or action plan within five business days. These standards were informally adopted by staff but were not properly monitored, tracked or enforced.</p> <p>Following the Corporate Structure Review in 2024, the Communications Division was expanded to lead customer service initiatives. Since the review, the Communications Division has been working to assess how customer service is managed internally. A report with an action plan will be presented to Council in Q4 2025, outlining staff recommendations to enhance and strengthen customer service. Three key initiatives that will be recommended as part of the report include the creation of a Customer Service Charter, which will formally introduce standards for staff regarding Customer Service and response times, the launch of an internal Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software that will be used to manage inquiries and response times and details regarding a centralized customer service delivery model that could be considered by Council through future budgets.</p>
1.8	Develop communication work plans and review	 100%	2021 & Ongoing	A: Comms R: CAO S: CCAC	<p>The Communications Division prepared quarterly workplan reports that were presented to the Community Communications Advisory Committee. Following the dissolution of the Committee in 2022, the work plans continued to be developed internally and are used to support the efforts of the Communications Team. The work plans are driven by the efforts to implement the Communications Strategy and to support the activities, projects and initiatives of all Town departments and divisions.</p>




2022 Tactics and Deliverables


No.	Action Steps	Status & Percentage Completed	Due Date	Responsible & Accountable	Related information
2.1	Hire research firm to assist with all Town surveys	 100%	2022	A: Comms R: CAO S: CCAC	<p>The Communications strategy identified an opportunity to improve the Town's survey methodology by using an independent, professional third-party research firm. Through an open RFP process, the Town hired The W Group as the survey firm of record.</p> <p>Since 2023, The W Group has helped develop and conduct the analysis for all Town surveys. The process involves The W Group working with the Town's project team to identify the goals and objectives, drafting/reviewing the questions, administering the survey and completing the data analysis and final summary report.</p> <p>In Q2 2025, Council passed a motion to investigate different survey methods including representative randomized sampling methods and the feasibility of partnering with neighbouring municipalities to gauge interest in a joint procurement model to reduce costs. Staff will present their findings to Council in Q4 2025.</p>
2.2	Develop communications orientation package to onboard new staff and Council members	 100%	2022	A: Comms R: CAO S: CCAC	<p>The Communications strategy identified an opportunity to create an orientation package to introduce new staff and Council members to the role and function of the Communications Division in the Town's overall structure.</p> <p>This work was completed and used during the orientation process for the current term of Council. The material has also been used when introducing the work of the division to other groups, such as the Committees of Council.</p>
2.3	Launch monthly e-newsletter	 100%	2022	A: Comms R: CAO S: CCAC	<p>The monthly e-newsletter was launched in January 2023 and quickly gained a large audience. The e-newsletter subscription list is now above 1,700 users.</p>

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					<p>The E-newsletter shares important Town news and project updates, giving the public an opportunity to receive a brief update on all Town initiatives without having to open multiple emails.</p> <p>The e-newsletter has an open rate of 76% and a click rate of 12%, showing that users are engaged and interacting with the content.</p>
2.4	Develop issues management communications plan	 100%	2022	A: Comms R: CAO S: CCAC	<p>The Town developed an Issues Management Strategy to provide an efficient and effective process for monitoring, responding/managing and tracking issues as they arise and to ensure a consistent approach for informing the CAO, senior staff, the Mayor and Council.</p> <p>The Issues Management Strategy includes briefing note templates, an awareness email template and an awareness document so all staff can be informed on potential issues. An issues watchlist has also been created by staff that is to flag, monitor and assess potential issues that is reviewed by the Senior Management Team.</p> <p>This ensures a consistent approach that allows the Town to be properly prepared for issues as they arise.</p>
2.5	Conduct Citizen Satisfaction survey as identified in the Corporate Strategic Plan	 100%	2022 & 2024	A: Comms R: CAO S: CCAC	<p>The first Resident Satisfaction Survey was conducted in 2022, and a follow-up Resident Satisfaction Survey was conducted in 2024.</p> <p>The purpose of the Resident Satisfaction Survey is to better understand resident satisfaction related to the Town's service delivery, customer service and communication, financial management and leadership. The survey also included questions regarding resident satisfaction with Town-owned infrastructure, including roads, sidewalks, bridges, water and wastewater systems and recreational facilities/amenities.</p> <p>The survey results presented to Council and used to benchmark and help identify where Town resources should be used. In addition, the survey results are reviewed in detail by the Town's Senior Management</p>



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					Team and are used to track and implement measures to strengthen service delivery.
2.6	Create new resident welcome package	 100%	2022	A: Comms R: CAO S: CCAC	<p>The Town published the Resident Welcome Guide in 2022 with a digital version available on the Town website and hard copies available at Town Hall. The Resident Welcome Guide provides information on Town services and answers to common questions.</p> <p>The Communications Division partnered with the Building Department to provide copies of the guide during the final occupancy inspection as a way to informally welcome residents into their new homes.</p> <p>In addition to the guide, a resident welcome package was created, which includes additional Town information such as a letter from the Mayor, a Library Card and the most recent edition of the printed Town newsletter.</p>

2023 Tactics and Deliverables


No.	Action Steps	Status & Percentage Completed	Due Date	Responsible & Accountable	Related information
3.1	Conduct media relations training for Senior Management Team and Council	 0%	2023	A: Comms R: CAO S: CCAC	<p>As recommended by the Communications Strategy, media relations training was proposed in the 2023 budget but did not proceed based on Council direction.</p> <p>Media relations training will be recommended in the 2027 budget to align with the new term of Council following the 2026 municipal election.</p> <p>This timing will ensure that all members of Council receive consistent and up-to-date training that reflects current communication practices and priorities.</p>
3.2	Establish youth engagement opportunities through partnerships with local schools and other levels of government	 100%	2023 & Ongoing	A: Comms R: Council S: CCAC	<p>The Town has worked with Beaver Valley Community School to provide opportunities for the youth to share their feedback on various projects and to learn more about municipal government. Targeted youth outreach was conducted for the Moreau Park Redevelopment and the Corporate Strategic Plan. The Town has also worked to engage families through attendance at events such as the Clarksburg Kids Fest, Family Movie Night and Olde Fashioned Christmas.</p> <p>Classes have also been invited on tours of Town Hall, where the Mayor has hosted mock Council meetings to teach students about the processes and procedures of Municipal government. Tours have been planned at the Wastewater Treatment Plant and the Water Treatment Plant as part of lessons related to school curriculum.</p>
3.3	Launch resident text message communications and emergency alert tool	 20%	2022	A: Comms R: CAO S: CCAC	<p>The Communications division investigated the feasibility of a resident text message communications and emergency alert tool in partnership with The Blue Mountains Fire Department. Following the review, it was determined that the cost and resources required</p>

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					<p>to implement and build up a user base would be an inefficient use of Town resources.</p> <p>Partnerships with neighbouring municipalities were also explored to lessen the costs, but it was determined that the provincial alert tool for emergencies in conjunction with the Town’s robust email subscription list and social media reach would be sufficient for resident communication.</p>
3.4	Develop general Town and department specific explainer content (ex- How to, Did you Know, Infographics, Videos, etc.)	 100%	2023 & ongoing	A: Comms R: CAO S: CCAC	<p>The Communications division continues to produce explainer content for the Town on a wide range of topics. Videos have been produced to explore Capital Projects, including the Thornbury Wastewater Treatment Plant, Thornbury West Phase 1 and the Victoria Street Water Tower. Explainer videos have been created for different steps in the Development Process including Building, Development Engineering and Pre-consultation and planning. Additionally, videos regarding the Lobbyist Registry and a behind-the-scenes look at a Town snow plow operator have been produced. Infographics have also been created to help residents understand the public engagement process with Council.</p>

2024 Tactics and Deliverables

No.	Action Steps	Status & Percentage Completed	Due Date	Responsible & Accountable	Related information
4.1	Launch municipal podcast to share news and information with residents	 20%	2024	A: Comms R: CAO S: CCAC	Communications staff investigated the viability of a Municipal Podcast and researched what other municipalities have done. A municipal podcast was deemed to be too resource intensive for the expected reach and listenership it would receive. The Town has focused on storytelling in other mediums including the printed newsletter to share information and updates on initiatives.
4.2	Launch pilot project with Town 'news boxes' located in high-traffic areas to assist with newsletter and Town survey distribution.	 70%	2024	A: Comms R: CAO S: CCAC	The Town has procured news boxes and is in the stages of determining how and where to install them across the municipality. These news boxes, when installed, will carry the printed Town newsletter or Town surveys to further expand the Town's reach.

2025 Tactics and Deliverables

No.	Action Steps	Status & Percentage Completed	Due Date	Responsible & Accountable	Related information
5.1	Purchase and improve use of digital screens in Town facilities	 100% and ongoing	2025	A: Comms R: CAO S: CCAC	<p>The Town has been active in implementing digital screens across Town facilities.</p> <p>The Information Technology Division has done excellent work in helping to procure and install the screens at different Town facilities, including Town Hall and the Beaver Valley Community Centre.</p> <p>Screens in Town Hall and the BVCC now run a constant slideshow that can easily be updated online to show relevant Town news.</p> <p>An iPad kiosk has been installed in Town Hall to allow users the ability to learn more about Town projects and browse the corporate website.</p> <p>Additionally, when a survey is live, it is set as the homepage so users have the ability to provide their feedback. The kiosk is portable and has been brought to events including the Seniors Fair. Additional kiosks are planned to be installed at the Blue Mountains Public Library and the Beaver Valley Community Center in Q4 2025 and Q1 2026.</p>