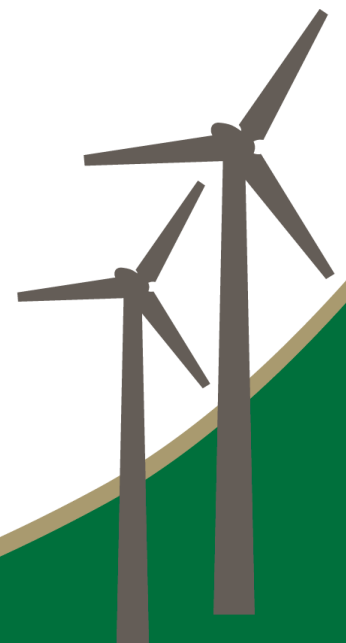




2025
COMMUNICATIONS PLAN
External



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1 INTRODUCTION

In the context of the Town of Pincher Creek's operations, both "communications" and "public relations" refer to the activities and strategies used to effectively convey information and messages to the public, stakeholders, and various audiences. These two terms are often used interchangeably because they share similar objectives, such as promoting transparency, fostering positive relationships with the community, and enhancing the Town's reputation.

Under the umbrella of communications, the Town may engage in various practices, including media relations, social media management, community engagement, crisis communication, and content creation. By utilizing these approaches, the Town aims to ensure that accurate and timely information reaches the public, while also managing and maintaining a positive image and understanding of its activities and initiatives. Whether labeled as communications or public relations, the Town's efforts focus on effective storytelling, clear messaging, and building trust with its diverse audience.

1.1 Council Core Values

This plan aligns with the Core Values established by Council in the Strategic Plan approved in 2022:

- *Our People – Our citizens, volunteers, staff, and Council Members.*
- *Two-way Communication – Sincere two-way communication to both receive input and inform all concerned.*
- *Transparent Decision-Making processes.*

1.2 Communications Guiding Principles

- Clarity – conveying information in a clear and straightforward manner, using simple and easily understandable language.
- Timely – we strive to provide information promptly and proactively.
- Strategic – identifying the most suitable tools and tactics to meet the communication needs for each situation.
- Informative – keeping residents and stakeholders well-informed of relevant Town information.
- Approachable – the Town supports opportunities for residents to provide their input.
- Collaborative – working with other Town departments to ensure strategies reflect the communication goal.
- Considerate – communicate in a respectful way.

2 COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES



Responsive communication: Town of Pincher Creek ensures the timely, accurate, dependable, and appropriate information regarding community-related matters, including Council resolutions, program developments, and service interruptions.

Credible voice: Town of Pincher Creek is the primary source of information that residents and stakeholders can turn to for reliable, credible information on Town operations and decisions.

Building trust in the Town: Town of Pincher Creek openly communicates details about operations and financial management practices to foster trust and confidence.

Interactive communication: Town of Pincher Creek encourages dialogue and provides feedback opportunities with organizations, collaborators, community associations, businesses, and citizens to ensure that choices, strategies, initiatives, and services align with the unique requirements of the community.

Community safety: In collaboration with Pincher Creek Emergency Services, Town of Pincher Creek guarantees that residents, businesses, visitors, and employees promptly and regularly receive reliable and consistent public safety updates during emergency situations.

Proactive, integrated positive narratives: Town of Pincher Creek takes the initiative to share engaging stories that cultivate a positive reputation and brand.

2.1 Target Audiences

- Citizens
- Council
- Town staff
- Business owners
- Visitors
- Regional partners
- Potential investors
- Media

2.2 Research

A communications survey was conducted publicly in the Summer of 2024, it was advertised using social media, print media (local paper), Town website, Town newsletter, Public Open House in June 2024, and via in person interactions at reception. Results were collated and presented to Council and can be found in *Appendix A – Communication Survey Results*. Additionally, a table was rented at the Farmers Market on August 14 and September 4 to gain further insight into communication needs in the community.

3 ENHANCING COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS

Aligned with the Town's communication goals and intended audiences, the crafting of the Communications Plan encompassed an assessment of the Town's existing communication channels, along with strategies to enhance their effectiveness.

3.1 Visual Identity

Consistently adhering to our Visual Identity/Brand Guidelines, whether in print or digital materials, is among the most significant avenues to link the Town's activities and establish a brand that stands out and is easily recognizable to our target audiences.

Enhancement Strategies

- Develop brand guidelines, to include specifications on fonts, brand colours and logo placement.
- Develop templates for external documents.

3.2 Website

In many organizations and municipalities digital communications are taking place of traditional methods as the primary method of information sharing. Websites are of critical importance as a source of information that citizens and stakeholders can access 24/7. Therefore, the website needs to be up-to-date, accurate, accessible, and easy to navigate.

Town of Pincher Creek's website (pinchercreek.ca) has recently had a design refresh and navigation update. Planning for a new website with increased functionality is underway.

Enhancement Strategies

- Regularly update service information, especially following budget adjustments.
- Increase traffic to the events calendar by marketing the calendar to local groups to use it to advertise their events.
- Include updates regarding the advancement of major projects.
- Develop tourism information in a Visit section.
- Develop recreation programming information in the Play section.
- Develop a new website with increased functionality.

3.3 Social Media

Social media serves as a crucial tool within digital communications. It offers real-time distribution of information. Primary goals of posts are to drive traffic to the relevant information on the Town website and share local information relevant to citizens and stakeholders. Town of Pincher Creek currently operates on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube.

- Facebook: The Town operates under the account of Town of Pincher Creek

@TownofPincherCreek). Regular posts aimed at target audiences with accurate and timely information will increase followers and reinforce the Town as a trusted source of information. The results of the Communications Survey completed in Spring 2024 show that Facebook is the most used social media channel of respondents. The Culture and Recreation Department also operates a Facebook page (@pinchercreekrec) that keeps residents informed about the different offerings of the Town's recreation programs and facilities in addition to sharing relevant information from other organizations that work with the Town.

- Instagram: The Town operates under the account of Town of Pincher Creek (@townofpinchercreek). As a primarily visual based platform, posts should avoid heavy text and leverage the reels, stories, and carousels where possible.
- LinkedIn: The Town operates under the account Town of Pincher Creek. The account is used for sharing employment opportunities, Request for Quotations, promoting Town partnerships, and other relevant topics.
- YouTube: The Town operates under the account Town of Pincher Creek AB (@TownofPincherCreek_official). YouTube can serve the Town of Pincher Creek by sharing informative videos on community initiatives, local events, and public services, fostering transparency and engagement with residents. It's an ideal platform to reach a broader audience with visual content that can promote local culture, highlights municipal projects, and communicate important updates.

External organizations may submit requests for the Town to share events and information on social media to communications@pinchercreek.ca. Only organizations that send requests will have their social media posts shared.

Enhancement Strategies

- Increase sharing of Town investment opportunities and relevant news stories to LinkedIn.
- Harness YouTube as a platform to showcase videos spotlighting the Town and its projects.
- Investigate implementing TikTok for spotlighting the Town, its projects, and regular job duties to increase awareness.

3.4 E-Newsletters

Community Newsletter – Subscribers to this mailing list will receive monthly updates via email, containing snippets and links to articles on the Town website, community events, programs and offerings from not-for-profit organizations that benefit community members, and other articles that would be of interest to our community.

External organizations may submit their requests to be included in the newsletter to communications@pinchercreek.ca. Only organizations that have sent a request will be included in the newsletter.

Enhancement Strategies

- Grow subscriber list via a variety of methods: online advertising, print advertising through Shootin' the Breeze, in-person interactions at the front counter as well as tradeshow the Town participates in.
- Increasing newsletter categories as subscribership grows and if a need is determined.

3.5 Traditional Print Media

The Town purchases 1/2 page of advertising each week in Shootin' the Breeze (STB).

Enhancement Strategies

- Review options to increase traditional print media.

3.6 Digital Signs

The Town has a standard road-side digital sign on Hewetson Ave adjacent to the Ranchland Mall, a more complex digital sign at the MCC Arena, and digital screens inside the MCC Arena.

Enhancement Strategies

- Increase use of digital signage for all signs.

3.7 Print Collateral

Town of Pincher Creek regularly prints in-house materials including business cards for personnel, brochures for its campground and services offered by the Town, and a Visitor's Guide.

Enhancement Strategies

- Revamp the Visitor's Guide with new layout, imagery, and stories, and work with local organizations and individuals to create compelling stories.
- Revive the Town's twice annual Activity Guides to increase awareness of offerings from the Town and other organizations.

3.8 Phone, Email, Citizen Request, and In Person Interactions

The Town office is open to the public 8:00am – 4:00pm, Monday – Friday, excluding statutory holidays. Outside of these times the Town employs a dispatch centre to answer phone calls and either escalate emergencies to on-call members of staff or take a message to relay to staff during work hours. Citizen Requests can be submitted 24/7 and reviewed during regular business hours.

Enhancement Strategies

- Develop customer service guidelines that include the establishment of clear and reasonable response times for emails, voicemails, and Citizen Requests. By setting specific response time standards, the Town aims to enhance its customer service quality and demonstrate its dedication to promptly addressing the needs and concerns of the community. These guidelines would ensure that all incoming emails, voicemails, and Citizen Requests are acknowledged and addressed within a defined timeframe, promoting transparency and accountability in the communication process, as well as fostering trust among residents and businesses.

4 RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMUNICATIONS

Core Responsibilities	Communications Service Level	Other Department Role & Responsibility
Advertising	Design advertisements.	Provide required content and invoice coding for special projects and initiatives.
Communications Planning	Provide support to other departments and collaborate on communications plans for both regular and special projects. Plans can take the form of formal documents or informal verbal plans. Provide direction and assistance in communicating initiatives at every stage, from planning to implementation and completion.	Collaborate with Communications to plan and review all initiatives, ensuring all necessary information is included. Review and approve plans within designated timelines. Promptly inform Communications of any updates or changes to the plan.
Community Engagement	Develop community engagement plan for relevant projects. Coordinate the implementation of the plan in conjunction with the respective department. Communicate results of public input process. Assist departments in understanding and integrating public input into their projects.	Engage in the process of determining the appropriate level of community engagement, and identifying key stakeholders. Actively participate in any necessary in-person events related to the community engagement process. Offer transparency by communicating how public input influenced the decision-making process and provide a rationale for the final decision.
Town Visual Identity/Brand	Establish and regularly update guidelines.	Follow guidelines.
Crisis Communications – emergency management events	Coordinate with Pincher Creek Regional Emergency Management Organization (PCREMO) to ensure timely and accurate information is provided to all affected individuals.	Provide accurate and timely information during emergency events in collaboration with PCREMO.
Crisis Communications – non-emergency management events	Monitor media channels. Assist with key messaging and communications.	Alert Communications to potential or emerging issues. Provide accurate and timely information during crisis events.
Documents and Reports	Provides templates, cover pages, and formatting.	Provide content and direction during the creation of documents.
Graphic Design	Design advertisements, digital content, and other visuals.	Provide Communications initial content and applicable coding for any invoices.

Media Relations	<p>Draft news releases and ensure their distribution to local media outlets for wider coverage.</p> <p>Create key messages and backgrounders as needed to support media engagements.</p> <p>Facilitate media interviews.</p>	<p>Conduct interviews and respond to media requests within one business day.</p> <p>Provide relevant information to Communications and verify the accuracy of draft releases.</p>
News Updates	<p>Develop news items, review, edit, and proofread content, and electronically distribute through email, social media, and website.</p>	<p>Consider and submit newsworthy topics, inform of upcoming news items, and provide draft or point-form content for consideration.</p>
Promotional Materials	<p>Design promotional materials, and/ or proof logo use.</p>	<p>Request specific promotional materials/items for projects and notify the Communications & Marketing Officer of all use of promotional materials.</p>
Social Media	<p>Manage social media channels that represent the Town. Exception: Recreation social media will continue to be managed by the Culture & Recreation Department.</p>	<p>Provide information for items to be communicated through social media.</p>
Special Event Planning / Support	<p>Create or assist with the development of communication material for events.</p>	<p>Provide requirements for any event that needs communicating.</p>
Speeches and Presentations	<p>Aid in preparation and/or editing of speeches. Assist with editing and formatting presentations.</p>	<p>Provide event details and context.</p> <p>Provide draft of presentation and key points.</p>
Website	<p>Liaise with web developers.</p> <p>Maintain website including updating content, images, menus, creation or deletion of pages and new articles.</p> <p>Create an RFP for a new website with increased functionality.</p>	<p>Review department information for accuracy. Send up to date content to communications to ensure website stays relevant.</p>

5 APPENDIX A – COMMUNICATION SURVEY

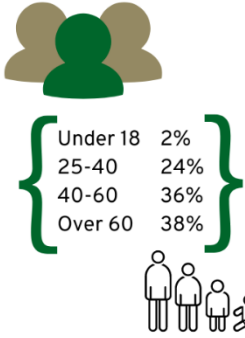
2024 Communications Survey Results



115
Responses

83%
live in Town

95%
live in the region



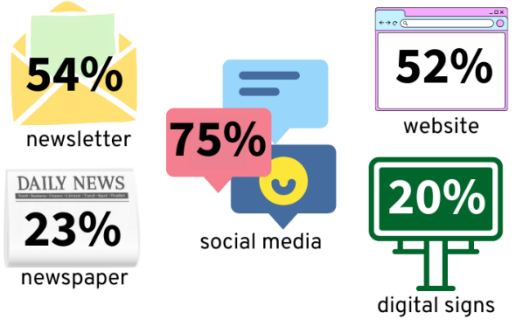
60% are dissatisfied with communications from the Town

81% follow us on Facebook

20% follow us on Instagram

11% do not use social media

Preferred method of information delivery



37% sometimes or regularly watch livestreamed Council meetings

21% were unaware we livestream Council meetings



32% visit at least once per week

65% feel it is easy to navigate

Overall satisfaction with Town communications

Very Satisfied **3%**

Satisfied **37%**

Dissatisfied **46%**

Very dissatisfied **14%**

Respondents want to hear more about

- Finances/Spending
- Major Projects
- Council Decisions

While acknowledging that the survey had a limited number of respondents, we recognize that it may not fully represent the opinions of all residents on communication. However, it does provide us with valuable insights and a glimpse into the overall sentiment.