
2024 to 2026 Business Plan & Budget

Communications

Prior Year Accomplishments

Innovate for Service Excellence

- Led the development of Northumberland County's 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan, designing and executing a comprehensive staff and community consultation process that resulted in direct engagement of over 910 residents, staff, elected officials, and community partners in providing insights for the plan, and a conservative estimate of over 50,000 people reached through marketing efforts, to establish priorities for the current term of Council and beyond.
- In collaboration with the County's GIS team, improved organizational transparency and accountability by leading the cross-departmental development and implementation of a public-facing dashboard for tracking corporate performance metrics; improving access to – and visibility of – key insights about the County's progress towards fulfillment of core priorities of the Community Strategic Plan.
- Led the development of a Communications Master Plan for Northumberland County, setting the direction for – and measurement of – strategic communications and community engagement practices over a 10-year horizon that cultivate an informed and engaged community, and that advance municipal priorities.
 - Strengthened strategic planning between Northumberland municipalities by leading a collaborative effort with all member municipality Communications leads on a joint approach to community consultation during development of the Master Plan. This resulted in the submission of 637 survey responses from community members about how municipalities can best engage and share information. The data gathered through this undertaking will inform the Master Plan and will also inform lower-tier municipal communications and community engagement strategies and activities.
- Produced Northumberland County's 2022 Annual Report – the County's premier publication detailing the allocation of budget dollars to program and service delivery, and highlighting key accomplishments delivered in fulfillment of the County's Strategic Plan. The Annual Report is a vital tool for demonstrating transparency and accountability to residents and businesses.

- For the fourth year in a row, Northumberland County was awarded a MarCom 'Gold' industry award, this time for the design of the 2022 Annual Report. The County has received this award for every Annual Report designed since 2019, along with a Hermes Creative 'Gold' Award for the 2019 Annual Report, and a Hermes Creative 'Honourable Mention' Award for the 2018 Annual Report.
- Supported implementation of the Northumberland County People Plan with the development of an HR Marketing Strategy designed to enhance recruitment and retention of staff. This included leading a staff working group to define a clear Employee Value Proposition (EVP), hosting staff focus groups to validate and expand upon this EVP, and launching a refresh of the 'Careers' section of the County website – including use of compelling video and imagery – and related social media advertising to better reflect this EVP and increase interest and applications for County job opportunities.
- Continued to prioritize accessible communications to ensure best practices, legislative compliance, and fulfillment of commitment to residents. This included engaging staff in focus groups to identify areas for improvement in accessible document protocols, development and implementation of a new protocol with the Clerk's office for accessibility remediation of Council documentation, and creation of a website audit protocol to spot check high traffic pages for accessibility gaps and work with lead departments on improvements.
- Improved organizational capacity by coordinating cross-department training sessions on behavioural science for improved program development, accessible document development, and social media strategy for improved audience engagement.

Ignite Economic Opportunity

- Delivered strategic communications and government relations support to advance infrastructure, workforce, housing, and technology priorities that are positioned to be key drivers of economic growth and prosperity.

Foster a Thriving Community

- Actioned the County's Community Strategic Plan commitment to meaningful engagement, cultural learning and understanding, and respectful action towards reconciliation with Indigenous communities. This included initiating development of an Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Action Plan, supporting a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation event in the Municipality of Port Hope, coordinating an introductory gathering between County Council and the new Alderville First Nation Band Council with further collaboration planned, and coordinating an Indigenous Knowledge Sharing session for County staff with former Alderville First Nation Chief Dave Mowat.

- Continued to strengthen public participation in shaping municipal priorities, programs, and services through the design of six engaging consultation processes related to municipal strategic planning, child care services, and infrastructure maintenance and renewal, leveraging dialogue and feedback mechanisms aligned with public expectations.
- Advanced the County's Mission to be 'a best practices leader' by positioning Communications staff to deliver presentations and training sessions to staff, member municipalities, community members, and at industry events targeting municipalities, about best practices for ensuring content accessibility, for development of funding applications, and for enhancing organizational focus on effective Indigenous relations.
- Continued to expand reach of information about County programs, services, and initiatives through best-practice communications, media relations, content accessibility, and graphic design. **In the first three quarters of 2023:**
 - Secured media coverage for County good news stories and supported balanced coverage of sensitive issues through the release of over 45 proactive media releases designed to drive pick-up, and coordination of responses to over 55 media inquiries. Northumberland County uses the industry standard Media Ratings Points (MRP) – a tool endorsed by the Canadian Public Relations Society – to measure the effectiveness of its media relations activities. Analysis of media coverage from the first three quarters of 2023 confirms:
 - 579 local news articles covering County stories.
 - 89 per cent of stories were balanced in tone; 7 per cent were positive in tone; and 4 per cent was negative in tone.
 - County spokespeople were quoted in 64 per cent of articles.
 - County key messages were captured 86 per cent of the time.
 - Supported Council and senior staff in raising awareness of programs and services for the community and positioning key county priorities through the development of over 30 sets of official remarks.
 - Advised Council and senior staff in anticipating and effectively responding to emerging issues and media inquiries through the development of over 30 issue notes and key message briefings.
 - Delivered visually engaging layout and design for over 250 products - publications, campaign materials, videos and signage – for print and online distribution.
 - Grew Facebook followers by 11 per cent (to 6,786 followers); X (Twitter) followers by 17 per cent (to 2,163 followers) and Council News subscribers by 5 per cent (to 912 subscribers) over 2022 numbers.
 - Established a strategy and consolidated unofficial LinkedIn accounts to launch official corporate presence with nearly 1,100 followers.

Propel Sustainable Growth

- Monitored for, and identified, opportunities to secure funding from other levels of government and external sources for investment in County programs and services, coordinating interdepartmental collaboration on – and development of – 17 funding applications. During this time, over \$632,000 in funding commitments was secured for County facility accessibility enhancements, OAFVC equipment, paramedicine programming, and the annual Northumberland Diversity Festival, along with \$141,000 for partner organizations as part of joint submissions advancing community priorities, for a combined total of \$773,314 in funding secured for Northumberland as of November 1, 2023.
- Through the development of approximately 30 communications strategies and plans, and implementation of related multi-channel campaigns, supported the advancement of corporate priorities related to infrastructure maintenance and renewal, major capital development, regional transit, land use planning and development, communications, small business supports, human resource recruitment, community digital literacy, newcomer settlement and support, community housing, early learning and child care, and community paramedicine. As examples:
 - Developed a communications strategy to support full scale launch of Northumberland Paramedics' Community Paramedicine program, with the goal of building awareness of the program and driving increased intakes to support program sustainability. Over the campaign's five-month duration, it achieved the objective of driving 10 to 12 self-referrals per month to the program (an average of 11) and exceeded the objective of increasing referrals from health care partners by 40% over the previous nine months (165 referrals, or an increase of 59%).
 - Developed a communications strategy to address the local shortage of Early Childhood Education (ECE) professionals by building awareness among potential current and future applicants about the variety of roles available in Northumberland and the value of a career in Northumberland. Over the campaign's six-month duration, it exceeded traffic goals for dedicated webpage by 411%, creating profile for a consolidated list of local ECE job opportunities by driving 2,556 unique pageviews.
- In collaboration with the Architect for the Golden Plough Lodge & Northumberland County Archives and Museum Redevelopment project, established a plan for interior artwork within the home, including imagery reflecting the Northumberland community. Also designed a refresh of exterior wayfinding signage to be installed throughout the County campus, and which will be rolled-out to all County facilities as signage requires updating, reinforcing brand consistency for recognition and recall.
- Launched a consultation and design strategy to refresh Golden Plough Lodge branding in alignment with construction of the new home, engaging staff in a survey identifying key themes and features about the home, and assembling a

working group of staff, and resident and family council members, to identify logo concepts, and review and decide on final branding.

Champion a Vibrant Future

- Proactively built and maintained strong relationships with municipal and community partners to advance municipal goals, and drive new forms of value and advantage for the community, by:
 - Continuing to support the work of the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland (OHT-N) by collaborating with communications working group partners to roll out a broad-based recruitment process for participation in the Experience Partner Council (EPC), and supporting the work of the EPC to implement meaningful community communications and engagement measures, in order to advance OHT-N priorities for improved local services and health outcomes.
 - Directing Communications staff participation in workshops and annual conferences in communications, marketing, accessibility, municipal finance, and graphic design focused on industry trends, knowledge-sharing, and best practices in municipal communications and grant writing services.
 - Engaging with the Intelligent Community Forum, a global network connecting municipalities for collaboration on the use of information and communications technology to build inclusive prosperity and enrich quality of life in a connected world.

2024 to 2026 Service Objectives & Initiatives

Innovate for Service Excellence

- Lead the implementation of the County's Communications Master Plan, fulfilling identified actions to achieve the goal of cultivating a community that is informed about County services and engaged in shaping municipal priorities, policies, and programs.
- Oversee processes supporting continued effective management of the County's newly launched Key Performance Indicator Dashboard, ensuring visibility to the public of key insights about the County's progress towards fulfillment of core priorities of the Community Strategic Plan.

Ignite Economic Opportunity

- Deliver strategic communications support to advance infrastructure, workforce, housing and technology priorities that are positioned to be key drivers of economic growth and prosperity, including:
 - Provide Communications leadership in support of the Economic Development division's roll-out of a 'Broadband as a Utility' initiative to

deliver high-speed internet access to all households and businesses across Northumberland, in partnership with private sector partners and with funding from the federal and provincial governments.

- Lead creation of an internal working group to structure Northumberland County's pursuit of Intelligent Community Forum certification, pursuing citizen-first economic, social, and cultural growth through technology, innovation, and community engagement in alignment with direction identified in the 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan.

Foster a Thriving Community

- Continue actioning the County's Community Strategic Plan commitment to meaningful engagement, cultural learning and understanding, and respectful action towards reconciliation with Indigenous communities by advancing development of an Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Action Plan, fostering continued meaningful engagement with Alderville First Nation and urban Indigenous partners, coordinating awareness and education activities for staff and the public, and more.
- Continue to expand reach of information about County programs, services, and initiatives through best-practice communications, media relations, event management, grant writing, and graphic design.
 - Grow corporate Facebook, X (Twitter), and LinkedIn followers and Council News subscribers by 15 per cent (each platform) over 2023 numbers, and evaluate opportunities to grow social media reach by expanding to additional platforms.
- Continue to strengthen public participation in designing and shaping municipal priorities, programs and services through the design of engaging consultation processes that leverage dialogue and feedback mechanisms aligned with public expectations.

Propel Sustainable Growth

- Secure funding from other levels of government and external sources for investment in County programs and services by monitoring for and identifying grant opportunities and coordinating interdepartmental collaboration on applications.
- Collaborate with department leads to define communications objectives, develop strategies, and implement tactics to support successful deployment of 2024-2026 County projects and initiatives.
- Design and present a refreshed logo and brand guide for the Golden Plough Lodge in alignment with construction of the new home.

Champion a Vibrant Future

- Strengthen advocacy and government relations, including joining municipal networks, to advance community priorities such as:
 - A coordinated system response to prevent, reduce, and end chronic homelessness, that incorporates the physical health, mental health and addiction wrap-around support services people need, in addition to the shelter and case management supports currently overseen by municipalities.
 - For a new municipal funding framework that reduces reliance on property tax, developing a sustainable long-term funding model that supports improved delivery of community infrastructure and services.
- Continue proactively building and maintaining strong relationships with municipal and community partners to advance municipal goals, and drive new forms of value and advantage for the community, by:
 - Continuing to support the work of the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland (OHT-N) by collaborating with communications working group partners to develop and implement effective communications strategies, and supporting the work of the Experience Partner Council to implement meaningful community engagement measures, in order to advance community priorities for improved local services and health outcomes.
 - Directing Communications staff participation in workshops and annual conferences in communications, marketing, accessibility, and graphic design focused on industry trends, knowledge-sharing, and best practices in municipal communications services.
 - Pursuing ongoing engagement with the Intelligent Community Forum, strengthening relationships with municipal members and leveraging best practices for use of information and communications technology to build inclusive prosperity and enrich quality of life in Northumberland.

Long Term Plan & Strategic Objectives

Innovate for Service Excellence

- Continue evaluating opportunities to enhance corporate customer service by incorporating best practices for connecting with and serving residents and stakeholders, such as Artificial Intelligence applications, and a municipal 311 service that would deliver a single point of access to local government non-emergency services.
- Advance public engagement and business intelligence practices by strengthening use of audience research to align communications efforts with the

information needs/desired delivery mechanisms of residents/stakeholders, and to measure the effectiveness of these efforts.

- Continue to expand the corporate marketing mix by maximizing the use of technology to deliver effective communications, including new social media channels, website apps, SMS technology, and other web and mobile-focused tools and solutions.
- Pursue best practice strategies and tactics to ensure strong corporate culture and employee engagement in order to maximize performance, achieve organizational goals, and enhance public trust and confidence in government.

Champion a Vibrant Future

- Proactively build strong relationships with other levels of government, municipal, and community partners to address community needs and interest, influence policies, and advance municipal goals.