

Waitomo District Council

Communications Strategy 2022

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INTRODUCTION | KUPU ARATAKI

We are everywhere our community lives, works and plays every day.

We are at work on our roads, bridges, footpaths in our main streets, parks and reserves.

We care for our community through building and developing community connections.

We plan for the sustainable use of our land, we protect and manage our natural environment as we look to our community's future.

We strive towards a better tomorrow through economic development initiatives and tourism partnerships.

We support events, we provide water and waste services to large parts of our community.

This is what we do for our community - every day, and these are what we need our community to know.

Effective communication is about telling our story and telling it well. We can do this by building relationships with mana whenua, iwi and stakeholders, telling our unique stories, celebrating our successes and milestones, disseminating factual information to key audiences, and inspiring public ownership of Waitomo District Council (WDC) business.

This Communications Strategy (CS) provides a 'road map' of how WDC needs to develop and implement its communications to support and meet its organisational objectives and legislated requirements which enable democratic local decision making, as well as promoting the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the Waitomo District. It will also be consistent with organisational values.

The CS will also describe what Council wants to achieve, who it will engage with, through what channel, and how we plan to evaluate the usefulness and effectiveness of Council communications.

This strategy has three key components:

- Aims
- Principles
- Outcomes and Measurement (achieved results)

The intended impact of all communications is to raise public awareness and help build better understanding and knowledge. The key to effective and successful communications will be to define the target audience and align key messages, which ultimately supports our vision and outcomes.

We cover a wide geographic area with one urban town and several rural towns – all of which are unique and have different ways of receiving information and different interests and communication needs.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE | TE ARONGA ME TE KORAHĪ

The purpose of the CS is to provide a strategic direction for the WDC on how it is to engage with the community and meet the aims and principles set out below while ensuring that the intended outcomes are met.

1. Our Aims

The aims of the CS that the WDC seeks to promote are:

- To foster strong connections with our community through engagement on things that matter most to them.
- To ensure the community understands our services, challenges and decision-making processes as we communicate in ways that add value and build trust.
- To connect with the community in a way that shows them we are part of their day, every day, working to deliver a better community for all of us.

2. Our Principles

The principles that WDC will adopt in all of its communications and engagement are:

- **Honest:** True and accurate
- **Open:** Transparent and accessible
- **Timely:** Planned proactive and responsive
- **Clear:** Concise and easy to understand
- **Consistent:** Uniform in tone and meaning regardless of channel or audience, strong brand recognition
- **Purposeful:** Relevant, topical, strategic and of interest to the community.
- **Accessible:** Delivered across multiple channels

In accordance with the LGA, the following six principles apply when a Council undertakes consultation:

- Councils must provide anyone who will or may be affected by the decision, or anyone who has an interest in the decision, with reasonable access to relevant information;
- These people should also be encouraged to express their views to Council;
- People who are invited to present their views to Council should be given clear information about the purpose of the consultation and the scope of the decisions being made;
- People who wish to present their views must be given reasonable opportunity to present them;
- Councils should receive these views with an open mind and give them due consideration when making a decision; and
- Council should provide people presenting their views with information relevant to decisions and the reasons for them.

3. Our Outcomes

Outcomes are the specific results that we aim to achieve through communication. They are the backbone of the strategy and influence all aspects of communication as well as aligning to WDC's vision: *Waitomo – a vibrant district.*

- **Increase community awareness:** To increase community awareness and understanding of our services, activities, projects, planning and decision-making processes;

- **Proactively deliver information:** To proactively deliver clear, accessible, timely, relevant and targeted information in ways that best meet the local interests and needs of our communities;
- **Provide accessible communication:** To provide accessible, interactive, informative and agile communication and digital services that meet the needs of our community;
- **Strengthen relationships:** To strengthen relationships within our community, through communications activities, to increase confidence and support the development of trust;
- **Build our identity:** To build a clearly identifiable and approachable corporate brand that reflects our identity and promotes a sense of community and pride of place; and
- **Community involvement:** Encourage involvement in local decision-making; enhanced community input

4. Audience and Communication Channels

When we are communicating with the public, we are mindful that we are not dealing with one group of people, but rather a complex and diverse range of audiences.

All these audiences are important in different ways, and at different times, to the delivery of WDC services.

The majority of the time we are not trying to communicate with everyone, as specific WDC issues, initiatives or programmes usually only relate to segments of our community, so we need to be constantly thinking about who we need to reach with our particular activities.

In broad terms our audiences fall into several categories:

Our Community	Council	Tangata Whenua	Other Key Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents • Ratepayers • Visitors • Businesses and business organisations • Community, and social groups • Environmental groups • Key service users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor and Councillors • Council committees • Employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iwi Maori • Hapu • Mana Whenua 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council volunteers and contractors • CoLab (Waikato LASS) • COs and CCOs • Local Members of Parliament • Government • LGNZ and Taituara • Economic development agencies • Local government support agencies • MPs • Media • Private and corporate funders

Potential communication channels:

Not all communication channels are currently being utilised, however WDC will review, consider and apply specific communication methods and channels as and when needed.



5. Internal Communications

Internal communication includes both operational staff (employees) and elected members.

In both cases, communication can be a deliberate and planned effort, as well as informal, ie. staff social club, internal celebrations and social get-togethers.

All internal communications will be consistent WDC's organisational values.

The goal is that staff are well informed and know what they need to know to ensure the effective and efficient running of council operations, and the development of a positive and healthy workplace culture.

Internal communication channels include email, phone, face-face, staff meetings, online meetings, intranet and signage.

6. Processes

Along with well-developed Communications Plans, Council will also use the internationally recognised IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation framework to determine which level of communication is appropriate for the subject and audience.

Where Joint Management Agreements, Memorandum of Understandings or any other similarly high-level agreements exist, these will be considered as a starting point when engaging with Māori when appropriate.

For mana whenua groups without a formal agreement a separate engagement plan will be developed as appropriate.

When Council makes a decision that is significantly inconsistent with this strategy, the steps identified in Section 80 of the Local Government Act 2002 will be undertaken.


IAP2 framework identifies the form of engagement Council will use to respond to some specific issues. It also provides examples of types of issues and how and when communities could expect to be engaged in the decision-making process.

It is important to recognise that there are many forms of engagement – all of which have an appropriate place. Each engagement needs to be considered as to which technique is used. For example not all engagement requires consultation. From one extreme we are just informing (ie telling) and at the other extreme Council is empowering someone else to make the engagement decisions.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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EVALUATION AND REVIEW | ARO MĀTAI

This strategy will be reviewed every three (3) years to ensure it continues to reflect the principles and objectives of the WDC and is delivering on the communications needs of our community.

A six-monthly progress report to Council will provide an update on the actions and campaigns undertaken to meet the objectives set out in this strategy.

To assess performance, WDC carries out a Resident Satisfaction Survey as a means of gauging the satisfaction of residents with the activities it carries out and the services delivered. This strategy will be monitored in line with the Resident Satisfaction Survey.

Specific engagement may also be undertaken to further understand what our community wants in terms of communication.

1. Related Documents

Social Media Guidelines for Waitomo District Council (A220030).

Media Policy – September 2018 (A362751)

DEFINITIONS | NGĀ WHAKAMĀRAMATANGA

Engagement	Term used to describe the process of seeking information from the community to inform and assist decision making. There is a continuum of community involvement.
Group of Activities	The term is used to describe a whole-of-activity approach. Without limiting the application of this provision to other assets, it means all activities and assets comprised within a group as a whole and not each individual component of the group.
Joint Management Agreement	<p>An agreement between a local authority and an iwi authority (or other group representing hapu) that provide for the parties to jointly perform the local authority's functions in relation to a natural or physical resource in all or part of the region/district.</p> <p>An agreement that state's each party's intention to take action, conduct a business transaction, or form a new partnership.</p>
Memorandum of Understanding	A memorandum of understanding is a document that describes the broad outlines of an agreement that two or more parties have reached and communicates the mutually accepted expectations of all of the parties involved in a negotiation.
LGA 2002	Local Government Act 2002.