



Communications Strategy

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1. INTRODUCTION

Government work is a public activity, in a democracy government is elected by its people and is therefore an institution for the people and by the people. It is thus essential that ordinary citizens are constantly informed about government work and empowered to take active part in it. We therefore need to be able to read and understand the public mood so that our communication strategy and messages are relevant for the target groups. Research is an integral part of the communication process hence in any event the success of communication depends on the accurate diagnosis of the surroundings that will inform the selection of appropriate messages, target audiences and media platform. What is also important is for us as different spheres of government to communicate with one voice and avoid sending conflicting messages to the public. According to chapter three of the constitution section 41 (1) (h) "All spheres of government and all organs of state within each sphere must co-operate with one another in mutual trust and good faith by -

- (1) fostering friendly relations;
- (2) assisting and supporting one another
- (3) informing one another of, and consulting one another on matters of common interest;
- (4) co-ordinating their actions and legislation with one another."

Strategising for communications should therefore be taken seriously and the strategy should translate to concrete programmes that are supported by all including the highest office of the Municipality.

2. VISION

To be a municipality committed to provide effective services to its community

3. MISSION STATEMENT

To provide effective and efficient people centred governance that will facilitate the developmental role of local government

4. BACKGROUND

Developmental local government as prescribed by national legislation, seeks to forge a partnership between government and the citizenry for effective service delivery. Communication therefore becomes central to the work of local government, the sphere of government closest to the people. The White Paper on Local Government states that "Integrated Development plans are planning and strategic frameworks that serve as a basis for engagement between local government and the citizenry at the local level, and with various

stakeholders and interest groups. Participatory and accountable government only has meaning if it is related to concrete issues and plans, by serving as a basis for communication and interaction.”

The Dihlabeng Local Municipality’s Integrated Development Plan itself calls for greater community involvement in decision-making and for the Council to take on a community leadership role. The Council has committed itself to effective communication to fulfill these requirements and meet the information needs of the community and our own organisation as also stipulated by the Local Government Municipal Structures Act in section 44 (3)(g) where it states that “the executive committee in performing its duties must annually report on the involvement of communities and community organisations in the affairs of the municipality;”

Communication has a significant impact on how local residents judge their local council. Research shows that well informed residents are more likely to be satisfied with council services and to be supportive of its work. Furthermore people are unlikely to participate actively in the development agenda unless they:

- a) have information;
- b) can access information and their local Council via a range of media; and
- c) opportunities have been created by the Council for people to receive information, give feedback and know how they can get involved.

Research also shows a direct link between good internal communication and the high performance and motivation of staff. Effective communication is therefore vital to the successful implementation of the Council’s Integrated Development Plan.

This communications strategy provides a framework for communication to all audiences of the Dihlabeng Local Municipality as guided by the Local Government Municipal Systems Act in Section 18(1) where it states that “a municipality must communicate to its community information concerning:

- (a) the available mechanisms, processes and procedures to encourage and facilitate community participation”.

The strategy framework:

- Is guided by the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, the strategy seeks to address the communications needs of the municipality by ensuring that information dissemination is encouraged and promoted
- Is guided by the Government Communicators’ handbook
- Is the basis for work action plans and communication from the Municipality;

- Lays the framework for the work of the Communications Unit;
- Provides a basis for communication to advance Council's development agenda;
- Lays the basis for the promotion of the political leadership of the Council;
- Requires all employees and representatives of the municipality to communicate the strategy, vision and action plans of the Municipality ;
- Is a set of "rules" by which all employees of the municipality will abide;
- The communications strategy will be updated annually to ensure it is relevant, and that it promotes the Council's Strategic Direction and therefore the Executive Committees priorities each year.

Communication plans will also be developed with full involvement of plan owners on an annual basis with clear indicators of how these will be communicated to the public. This will ensure that our communication is proactive and that the citizens are better informed about Council activities and programmes.

5. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

To build, promote and enhance public awareness and comprehension of Municipal programmes, services and achievements. Moreover, to reinforce the communication messages as well as to stimulate action.

5.1 Plan 1 Sustaining our natural and built environment

- (a) Communicate and promote the use of built and natural environment.
- (b) Educate communities on how to sustain our natural and built environment.

5.2 Plan 2 Economic development and job creation

- a) Communicate economic opportunities to all communities of Dihlabeng.

5.3 Plan 3 Quality living environments

- (a) Communicate ways of sustaining quality living environments.
- (b) Create awareness about access to household and community facilities and services.

5.4 Plan 4 Safe, healthy and secure environments

- (a) Promote and create awareness about safe, healthy and secure environment.

5.5 Plan 5 Empowering our citizens

- (a) Profile Dihlabeng Municipality as a learning organisation.
- (b) Promote Municipality's skills development programme to both internal and external stakeholders.

5.6 Plan 6 Celebrating our cultural diversity

- (a) Communicate opportunities and benefits in participating in sports, arts, culture and heritage activities.

5.7 Plan 7 Good Governance

- (a) Promote and market corporate identity of Dihlabeng Municipality.
- (b) Profile processes and procedures that support and promote community participation in Municipal activities.

5.8 Plan 8 Financial viability and sustainability

- (a) Promote and create understanding of Municipal Finance Management Act both internally and externally.

6. COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT

As the political climate will become more congested in the run-up to the 2011 Local elections, the issues of service delivery will increasingly become a leverage to sway public opinion. The mood of communities we are talking to may be negative or positive.

6.1.1 Positive

- Economic opportunities as a result of 2010
- Celebrate proudly Dihlabeng
- Business opportunities especially Agriculture and Tourism

Negative

- Service delivery expectations
- Crime and unsafe environment (road accidents)
- Low staff morale
- Unemployment and poverty
- Media
- Perception by communities about poor consultation and involvement

7. COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

- Getting buy-in from Civil Society Organisations, staff, media and political principals
- Reaching all communities through conventional communication methods
- Communicating in all languages and various forms (e.g. Braille and Sign languages)
- Creating ownership by various stakeholders
- Mobilising Resources
- Apathy – public not interested in attending meetings

- Synergising messages
- People who have not received services e.g. houses
- Municipality does not have editorial control over news reports
- The message of Municipality does not get same amount of media coverage.

8. MESSAGES AND THEMES

An economic hub of the Eastern Free State

A tourism hub of the Free State

A prospering Municipality

A caring Municipality

A clean Municipality

A safe Municipality

Pay off line- Together we prosper

9. COMMUNICATION MESSENGERS, AUDIENCES, CHANNELS AND TYPE OF EVENTS

9.1 MESSENGERS

9.1 .1 Primary Messengers

- Mayor
- Speaker
- Councillors
- Municipal Manager
- Municipal Spokesperson

9.1.2 Secondary Messengers

- All municipal officials and communicators

9.2 AUDIENCES

9.2.1 Primary Audience

- Communities / Ratepayers
- Tourists
- Investors
- Municipal employees
- Stakeholders
- Media

9.2.2 Secondary Audience

- Municipal employees

Communications deliverables

- Pamphlets
- Adverts
- Banners
- Posters etc

9.3 COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

AUDIENCE	TOOLS
Staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Intranet 2. Internet newsletter 3. Workplace newsletter 4. Administrator 5. Structured induction programme 6. Notice boards 7. Workshops 8. Loo messages
Community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Council newspaper (published per quarter or as and when necessary) is the primary source of Council news, communiqués from the Mayor and Municipal Manager, Council vacancies, tenders and notices. 2. Council website 3. Road shows, Imbizos and regular briefings 4. Annual Report, IDP Review and Five-Year Report 5. Use of local commercial and community media both print and radio. 6. An in-house communication tool at all customer care entry points (e.g. Screens)
Media	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Press release 2. Media briefings 3. Media tours

Local organisations and other spheres of government	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Council newsletter/paper 2. Website 3. Stakeholder Forums 4. Government communications forum
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External stakeholders with regards to tourism and economic development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advertising programme as part of the investment marketing and tourism marketing strategies 2. Website 3. A set of regular communications tools such as brochures 4. Telephonic system with a voice over marketing the area when put on hold 5. DVD production marketing the area
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9.4 Types of events

- Mayoral Lekgotla
- Ward Committee meetings
- Council meetings
- Internal Briefing sessions with the Municipal Manager/Mayor
- Budget Speech and the passing thereof
- First Council meeting of the year – street parade
- Mayoral Awards for Excellence
- Batho Pele Service Week
- Long Service Awards
- Mayoral Golf Outreach
- Senior Citizens
- Matric Awards
- Church events

10. MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

- 10.1 Conduction of research on Dihlabeng brand is imperative since there are changing attitudes and behaviours of the diverse audiences. It is important to interrogate the psychographic, demographic, geographic profiles and behavioural profiles of these target audiences. Researching and keeping abreast of developments in the region to enable compilation of articles, itineraries and/or events calendars for inclusion into publicity material.
- 10.2 Employing integrated communications to market the area, through the use of both below the line advertising and above the line advertising; road shows; local, national and international exhibitions and public relations etc.
- 10.3 Marketing efforts to promote the investment potential of the region with regard to different sectors such as tourism, agriculture, commercial and trade etc.

10.4 Development of publicity and marketing material e.g. business cards, diaries, calendars, banners, car stickers, branded furniture, corporate clothing, corporate gifts, town branding and all other branding material.

10.5 Promotional material must be displayed at all Council events where there's engagement with the public, external stakeholders, and/or intergovernmental functions. Each Directorate that manages any event must take the responsibility to inform Marketing and Communications section.

10.6 "Arial 12" to be the standard font and size that is used in all municipal correspondence both internally and externally

10.7 That Corporate Identity of the Municipality will be reviewed every five years and the public engagement be made in this regard to determine the relevancy of the identity

10.8 A production of Corporate Identity manual for consistency and for enhancing brand image.

11. A PHASED COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAMME

11.1 Phase 1 – Pre-launch

- Tabling the draft to management
- Policy Committee
- Table the draft to EXCO
- Executive Committee
- Council for adoption
- Radio, posters, etc – mobilising people to the launch

11.2 Phase 2 – Launch of the Strategy (June 2010)

- Communicate key messages about the Strategy to internal employees

11.3 Phase 3 – Implementation Plan

OUTPUT		ACTIVITIES	METHOD	TIME FRAME	BUDGET
Internal communication		Publish Programme articles in Newsletters	Write articles about the programme and its various projects	Monthly	SDBIP
		Website	Regularly bring up to date the information on Intra/Internet.	On a regular basis	SDBIP
		Global e-mails	Sending out e-mails to all staff members	As required	
		Notice boards	Maintain professionally looking notice boards	As required	
Communicating and marketing the Council externally		Develop and implement communication plans for Council programmes		As required	SDBIP
		Develop materials for information dissemination	Distribute through Sizakala Centers, exhibitions, Municipality events, izimbizos	On regular basis	SDBIP
		Advertisements	Place ads in print & radio to inform the public of Municipality programmes including financial/ investors magazines, tourism magazines and agricultural magazines.	As per communication plans	SDBIP
	Media	Send out media statements on various issues	As required	Nil	

	Media Monitoring	Coordinate media responses to media articles	On regular basis	SDBIP
	Radio Interviews	Interviews on Regional/Community Radio stations' current affairs programme	As required	
	Roadshows	Mayoral road shows to communities	As required	
	Promotional material – both below the line and above the line advertising			SDBIP

12 STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES

STRUCTURES:

12.1 Internal

- The Secretariat Section will be responsible for managing internal correspondence effectively working closely with Marketing & Communications section and Internet Technology.
- All outgoing correspondence shall be signed by the Municipal Manager having been proof read by Secretariat.
- All public notices, tenders and job advertisements must be proof read by Marketing and Communications section before being on newspapers and/or website among others.
- A fully fleshed Marketing and Communications Section with language practitioners should be in place.

12.2 Communicators Forum

Dihlabeng Local Municipality shall participate in Local Communicators Forum, District Communicators Forum and Provincial Communicators Forum.

12.3 Monitoring the implementation of the Imbizo approach on an ongoing basis annually in the municipal communication cycle through “**Mayor and Ward Councillors Meet the People**” initiatives.

- Ensure effective monitoring systems of such forums through the relevant Provincial (IGR) Premier-Mayor Forums.

12.4 EXCO and Council Responsibilities

- Good communication needs everyone to play their part but there must also be a clear understanding of particular roles and responsibilities.
- Better communication skills are needed across the organisation and this must be given priority. Some responsibilities of groups are set out below:
- The Mayor and the Executive Committee set the tone for Council and are the ultimate spokespeople and role models for Council.
- Councillors have the key role in setting the overall goals for the Council and leading communication and consultation internally and externally.
- The Municipal Manager and his/her management team have to engage with the public, listen to their views and comments, propose and explain ideas; explain decisions and the reasons why those decisions have been made and ensure opportunities exist for two-way communications.
- Staff have to engage with the public to listen to enquiries, help decide how needs can best be met, explain about options or limits to services, refer to partners or other agencies. Internal communications must be strong and members of staff also have to communicate with each other as colleagues, managers, team members, customers and suppliers.
- Everyone has to promote Dhlabeng Local Municipality to the wider world to support the creation of a positive image at regional, national and international level.

12.5 Spokespersons and their responsibilities

Government communication must in the main be done by individuals holding positions of political oversight or leadership. In the spirit of being a transparent organization, media relations must be strengthened moreover a clear guidance on areas for comments should be provided at all times to spokespersons. Dhlabeng Local Municipality will have spokespersons who can give comment at varying levels as follows:

Mayor	All aspects of Council policy and programmes
	Matters of policy yet to be adopted/enacted
	All political comment must come from the Mayor
	Is key person for all public participation unless s/he delegates otherwise
Speaker	All comment relating to Council “housekeeping” must come from the Speaker
EXCO members	All aspects of Council policy and programmes in their portfolio
	May be delegated spokespersons on an issue by the Mayor
Councillors	Comment on all activity in their ward except for matters that are policy still to be adopted/enacted

Municipal Manager	Any area of the municipal administration
	Matters of policy yet to be adopted/enacted
	Information around any legal processes the Municipality might be engaged in
	Any matter that relates to the running of the Municipality as a whole and is not specific to existing policy, programme or activity of a specific department
Directors	On all aspects of their service areas
	Queries from journalists will be referred to Directors for comment/clarification/information. Comment will then go out in the name of the Unit Director unless that Director delegates. The Directors therefore will carry the can for comment from any person in their Unit.
Marketing and Communications Manager	He/she will be responsible for the following: Co-ordination of media communication, media conferences and media statements Facilitating responses to media queries

12.6 Rules for comment:

- The rule is that no employee or elected official of the Municipality will ever respond with “**no comment**” to a media enquiry. They must refer issues to the correct and authorized person.
- Where possible, the Mayor and delegated spokespersons will be the ultimate spokes people, having been briefed and supported by the Communications Unit and EXCO.
- Each Communication Officer when approached for media comment will approach the official concerned (designated spokesperson for Unit or City Manager) and the Executive Committee member in whose portfolio the issue resides. This will ensure that we carry both an administrative and a political response. When approached for comment please ask for requests in writing and, in turn, send responses in writing.
- Comment will be given in reasonable time taking note of reasonable deadlines and with an understanding of how news media works.

12.7 Other communications aspects:

- Communication to form part of agenda items (EXCO, Management, portfolio committees, cluster meeting etc.) as a standing item.
- Communication to form part of agenda items (EXCO, Management, portfolio committees, cluster meeting etc.) as a standing item.
- Commit Council to allocate sufficient budget for communications.

- Good Information Technology Systems to support and complement communication efforts must be in place
- An adopted customer care policy must be in place.

PROCESSES:

12.8 Phase 1 – Pre-launch

- Radio, posters, etc – mobilising people to the launch
- Circulating the draft to all Heads
- Table the draft and to Council for adoption.

12.9 Phase 2 – Launch of the Strategy (During 2010-2011 financial year)

12.9.1 Communicate key messages about the Strategy to internal employees.

13. VALUES AND ETHICS

- Communication should be needs driven
- Consistency – in themes, messages, tone and style – to ensure an instantly recognisable look and feel to all communications from the Council to all audiences
- To communicate with integrity and honesty
- Communications to be timely and accurate
- Embrace a genuine desire for people to feel good about dealing with the Council
- Staff and Members should be told about Council initiatives first or simultaneously with outside audience
- Professional telephone etiquette for receptionist and the entire municipality as per the adopted Telephone Etiquette Policy.
- Good customer care for frontline staff and the entire municipality

14. ACTION PLAN

Comprehensive Communication implementation plans will be developed annually in line with the Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) and covering some of the points as per the format below.

Plans and Programmes	Date	Responsibility	Status	KPI	Budget
Plan 1					
Create an Events Calendar for					

the municipality					
Plans and Programmes	Date	Responsibility	Status	KPI	Budget
Plan 2					
Activities					
Develop, print & distribute brochures					
Develop and flight radio adverts in all community radio stations					
Organise road-shows					
Plan 3					
Advertise in Investor related magazines					
Plan 4					
Advertise in Tourism related magazines					
Plan 5					
Advertise in Agriculture related magazines					
Plan 6					
Create promotional material					
Plan 7					
Ensure communication with the public through CDWs and Ward Committees					
Plan 8					
Newsletter					