



Inclusive Carrboro Communications & Community Engagement Plan

ADOPTED 8/18/2020

Introduction

The Town of Carrboro is committed to improving communications with its external stakeholders and internally throughout the organization. This commitment is evident through a Communications Team with representatives from each Town department who will collaborate to implement the *Inclusive Carrboro Communications and Community Engagement Plan*.

The Town Communications Plan was adopted by Council in 2017. Goals from the original plan are carried over in 2020 with new objectives and actions for how the Town of Carrboro can increase access to information, resources and civic processes by people of color, immigrant, refugee and other marginalized communities.

The *Inclusive Carrboro Communications and Community Engagement Plan* promotes multiculturalism and full participation by all residents through:

- Acknowledgement of the barriers that people of color, immigrant, refugee and other marginalized communities experience in accessing Town government or participating in public process.
- Recognition of diversity as both a strength and opportunity.
- Affirmation that a healthy democracy requires outreach and public engagement that takes into account our communities' racial, cultural, and socio-economic complexity

The Communications Manager, in conjunction with the Race and Equity Officer, is developing strategies for the revised plan to improve engagement and inclusivity, which will include:

1. Building upon successful strategies for generalized communications and engagement
2. Connecting with minority communities and building relationships
3. Adopting a grassroots approach
4. Ensuring culturally appropriate messaging and information

Our approach is to advance and refine an existing and generalized communications plan. We recognize that outreach efforts will build upon successful strategies and efforts to engage all residents. Effective communications campaigns utilize multiple strategies, messages, platforms, and channels to reach people. We will continue to identify best practices, leverage existing communication channels and networks.

The updated plan includes new strategies to engage, as best as possible, the entire demographics of Carrboro. We will pursue non-traditional methods of outreach to inspire entire community involvement. In this plan, we identify alternate opportunities for social interaction and relationship building. We will continue to expand new ways for the public to contribute input and offer feedback. This will occur through the implementation of racially and culturally inclusive outreach and public engagement processes.

We will implement strategies to effectively educate, inform and engage communities about services, events and programs; opportunities for leadership; and avenues to make positive change. This is an accelerated process and a dynamic plan. We recognize that the time is now to roll up our sleeves and get moving to create the kind of community where equity in opportunity exists for everyone.

Communications and engagement with stakeholders is a sound investment of Carrboro's resources and will continue to have a place among the Town's primary functions. Through this plan, staff will make every effort to improve public access to information about the Town and its services, programs and decisions, provide timely communication with stakeholders; engage racial and ethnic minority groups and other vulnerable and underserved populations; advance opportunities for all; assure the Town provides clear and useful information; and enhance transparency of decision-making and outcomes.

The Town will strive to tell our story continuously, comprehensively, and enthusiastically.

The objectives of this plan are to:

- Increase awareness
- Increase engagement
- Increase access
- Establish transparency and trust
- Tell our story

Summary of 2018 Biennial Citizen Survey

The Town of Carrboro contracted with BKL Research and Consulting to conduct a community survey in October and November 2018. A total of 400 residents were surveyed. The telephone survey methodology included listed, unlisted, and wireless numbers in the sampling frame.

Key findings related to public communications are as follows:

- The most significant barrier to citizen involvement in local government was “too busy – don’t have time” with a mean of 5.75 on a 9-point scale. Other less important barriers were “don’t know about opportunities” (4.62) and “timing is inconvenient” (4.23). These top three barriers remain unchanged from 2016.
- The top five major information sources (in order) used by the respondents were word-of-mouth, street signage, Carrboro’s website, television, and Facebook. Other sources also utilized but somewhat less important were radio, Carrboro’s email list service, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Resources Brochure, Twitter, and Instagram.
- It was generally noted that the traditional media sources that have declined (Raleigh News & Observer, Independent Weekly, The Daily Tar Heel, Government Access Channel, and Herald Sun). The only exception was television that rose from 5th to 4th place overall.
- 59.3% of respondents indicated they are “informed” versus 14.9% on the “uninformed” side about government services, projects, issues, and programs that affect them.
- 64% of respondents were satisfied with Carrboro making information available to citizens concerning important services, projects, issues, and programs – with 11.6% on the dissatisfied side.
- 61% of respondents were satisfied with the opportunities Carrboro gives them to participate in the decision-making process with 11% on the “dissatisfied” side.

Executive Summary of 2016 Citizen Communications Survey

The Town of Carrboro’s Communications Team conducted a survey of area residents, business owners, visitors, and other interested parties to learn how stakeholders were receiving information from the Town; what information they are receiving; how they prefer to receive information from the Town; and input on how to improve communications between the Town and its stakeholders.

The survey was conducted from August 17- September 19, 2016. It was available in an online and paper version. The online version was advertised via email, on the Town’s website, social media outlets, and on other local listservs including HOA’s, church contacts, and school contacts. The paper version was available in English and Spanish and was available at Town Hall, El Centro Hispano, the Latina Festival, the Cybrary, the Carrboro Farmers Market, the Seymour Center, and by special request.

The survey received 364 responses.

The data from the survey was used to develop the goals, objectives, and action steps included in this plan.

Results Summary

Results of the 2016 survey lead to the following conclusions:

- 71% of respondents live in Carrboro; 27% work in Carrboro
- 99% of respondents have internet access
- About half of the respondents have lived in Carrboro for 5+ years.
- The majority of respondents receive their information about the Town from an indirect source (from a neighbor, info posted on Nextdoor, shared posts and tweets on social media)
- The top 3 utilized methods to get information from the Town are banners/signs/posters/flyers, Facebook, and the Town website.
- The top 3 preferred methods to receive information from the Town are News Flash (email from the Town with a news story/event), Facebook, email/listserv (i.e. Carrboro business listserv, HOA distribution, etc.)
- 52% of respondents are very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the information they receive pertaining to Town of Carrboro news, information, and events. 31% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 16% are somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.
- Nearly half of respondents use local radio stations (WCOM, WCHL, and WUNC) to find out about what's happening in Carrboro and more than half use print material (Chapel Hill magazine, Chapel Hill News, The Daily Tar Heel)

Goals, Objectives and Actions

Goal #1 Increase public awareness of and participation in Town decisions.

New Objective 1: Connect with people of color, immigrant, refugee and other marginalized communities

The Town will establish community conversations with neighborhoods and engage non-traditional stakeholders. Solicit insights from representatives of minority communities about the significance of engagement data for their communities. These leaders and liaisons are a valuable resource for interpreting engagement data to modify strategies to more effectively outreach to underserved populations. Engaging neighborhood representatives to serve as trusted messengers can serve to increase the effectiveness of outreach and engagement strategies.

Actions:

- a) Create neighborhood liaisons network
- b) Create community conversations
- c) Build personal relationships
- d) Increase accessibility (identify barriers such as location, transportation, childcare, language)
- e) Maintain a presence in communities and neighborhoods
- f) Offer multiple ways for residents to contribute input and feedback
- g) Offer information in different languages

Objective #2

Disseminate information to the media and stakeholders related to Town decisions.

Actions:

- a) Investigate electronic sign or signs for use on Town-owned property to display meeting times and public input opportunities.
- b) Establish internal procedures to keep track of upcoming decisions and public input opportunities.
- c) Examine and consider expanding outreach to media and stakeholders via news releases, public service announcements, and/or advertising.

Objective #3

Effectively and efficiently use social media to increase public awareness about Town decisions.

Actions:

- a) Evaluate current social media presence and followers.
- b) Educate staff on best practices for using social media for local government (develop parameters).

Objective #4

Provide for alternative input methods to allow citizen participation in Town decisions.

Actions:

- a) Identify input opportunities for in person and virtual participation (i.e. wiki maps, Skype, public and satellite meetings, a civic engagement tool).
- b) Evaluate options, select approaches, and train staff and community to use new input opportunities.
- c) Seek feedback on use of tools from the public, demonstrate change based on feedback.

Objective #5

Increase efforts to recruit and train residents for service on advisory boards.

Actions:

- a) Evaluate biannual community survey responses to determine needs of stakeholders.
- b) Develop in person and virtual methods for recruiting and training stakeholders (i.e. Citizens Academy or Carrboro Gov 101).

Goal #2 Increase public awareness of Town programs and services.

New Objective 1: Adopt a grassroots approach

The Town will support and encourage grassroots approaches, using trusted community organizations and groups – community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and ethnic- and culture-based groups – to engage communities and help disseminate information. These may be organizations that are already culturally tied to or are currently providing services to minority and underserved populations.

- a) Create townwide network to display info banners with Calls to Action
- b) Partner with businesses including supermarkets, laundromats and banks
- c) Partner with faith communities, nonprofits, schools, day cares
- d) Direct outreach with residents of apartment complexes, neighborhood associations, HOAs – including holding meetings in the neighborhoods
- e) Create places for sustained, informal interactions with staff and elected reps

Objective #2

Disseminate information across broad platforms and venues to ensure equitable access to information.

Actions:

Identify and promote key locations and events (i.e. Carrboro Day) where written information can be distributed (i.e. face to face – personal interactions).

- a) Develop procedure for sharing information with stakeholders who choose not to access information electronically.
- b) Create relationship with local radio stations such as WCOM, WCHL/Chapelboro and WXYC.
- c) ability to create video content for use in various places (i.e. website, local channels)
- d) Investigate ability to create content in multiple languages.

Objective #3

Utilize Town website as primary means of promoting Town programs and services.

Actions:

- a) Centralize Town event information via Community Events Calendar.
- b) Create easily accessible information on status of Town projects.

Objective #4

Educate public on where to obtain information on Town services and programs.

Actions:

- a) Periodically send instructions on where/how information may be obtained via Master Listserv.
- b) Inform citizens about the various means of obtaining information about Town programs and services (electronic and non-electronic).

Objective #5

Seek feedback and evaluation on current Town programs and services.

Actions:

- a) Encourage each department to seek feedback on programs and services within their department.
- b) Analyze feedback to improve quality of programs and services.

Goal # 3 Create opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback to the Town.

New Objective 1: Ensure culturally appropriate messaging and information

The Town will engage with stakeholders to receive feedback on their experiences interfacing with local government. Community buy-in and review are vitally important to developing culturally appropriate messages and information. Processes should be established to test informational messages to ensure that they are culturally appropriate as well as strategies for disseminating information. Factors including where and how people receive information, trusted sources of information and support in communities, and people's perceptions of and experiences with local government must be considered when crafting and disseminating messages particularly to diverse and underserved communities.

Actions:

- a. Schedule forums and community conversations with communities
- b. Use plain language guidelines for website content www.plainlanguage.gov
- c. Provide translation and interpretation
- d. Increase use of video messages and captioning

Objective #2

Evaluate existing opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback to the town.

Actions:

- a) Establish criteria to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of existing feedback opportunities (i.e. response rates to a survey).
- b) Ensure current feedback opportunities are measurable.
- c) Establish benchmarks for future improvement.

Objective #3

Establish a process to analyze feedback.

Actions:

- a) Assess the existing ways that we analyze feedback.
- b) Adopt a feedback framework that can be used across all departments.

Objective #4

Educate stakeholders on current opportunities to provide feedback.

Actions:

- a) Better utilize preferred communication methods (established by 2016 Citizen Communication Survey) to seek feedback.

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- b) Create education materials and distribute via preferred communication methods regarding feedback opportunities.

Goal # 4 Create internal systems to standardize and enhance the quality of communication created and distributed by Town Departments.

Objective #1

Improve internal communications with Staff in order for them to be an information resource for internal and external customers.

Actions:

- a) Help employees develop effective communication skills to ensure that all Town employees are informed about town goals, hot topics, new initiatives, programs so they can serve as community ambassadors.
- b) Promote and utilize the Town's intranet to direct staff to find updated information about Town government activities, new initiatives, programs, and hot topics.
- c) Create external and internal electronic newsletters to communicate Town news and information to citizens and employees.
- d) Develop multiple channels for communicating town news to employees including intranet, email, posted notices and staff meetings.
- e) Standardize Town Council presentations, email signatures and letterhead for consistent communication from Town officials.

Objective #2

Create a permanent communications team with a representative from each department to be responsible for proactively identifying and coordinating Town information to be communicated both internally and externally.

Actions:

- a) Train communication team members to identify newsworthy items, write news releases, prepare public service announcements, post items to website and to create social media content to effectively communicate Town's messaging.
- b) Establish a process to periodically monitor and evaluate Town communications activities.
- c) Create a campaign to encourage citizens to subscribe to receive Town communication via CivicPlus Notify Me.
- d) Provide continuing education and training for town employees on the capabilities and features of town website.
- e) Establish a chain of command system for how communication is handled within this policy including a point person for major event

Goal #5 Coordinate and standardize emergency communication.

Objective #1

Increase the effectiveness of both the OCAAlerts (Reverse 911) system and our internal Everbridge (employee notification) system.

Actions:

- a) Develop a coordinated community information campaign to increase the percentage of residents effectively utilizing the OCAAlerts system (e.g. social media, informational sign) as well as to increase understanding of the purpose of the OCAAlerts system.
- b) Develop criteria for OCAAlerts activation for community notifications.
- c) Create procedural guidelines for departments/department heads outlining how to initiate an OCAAlerts activation.
- d) Increase employee participation in the internal Everbridge system to 100%. Ensure accurate information is maintained in the system through routine informational updates and reviews.

Objective #2

Enhance overall town communication during emergency situations.

Actions:

- a) Utilize non-public safety personnel in the role of Public Information Officer (PIO) and/or to support the mission of the public safety PIO during emergency situations.
- b) Require department heads to participate in National Incident Management System (NIMS)/Incident Command System (ICS) training to improve awareness and understanding of emergency communication.
- c) Offer all town personnel the option of attending the same training.
- d) Explore the possibility of adding a full-time Town of Carrboro PIO.
- e) Expand current NIMS/ICS training for PW, PD, and FD with an emphasis on interoperability and coordination between the three departments.
- f) Train the current Town PIO to perform public safety PIO