



CITY OF MADISON
HUMAN RESOURCES
2023

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

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Introduction

The Human Resources (HR) Department at the City of Madison strives to:

1. **Attract** a talented and diverse workforce.
2. **Retain** an engaged and diverse workforce where all employees feel they belong.
3. **Develop** our employees and organization to be an inclusive and high performing City.
4. **Implement** innovative and progressive Human Resources practices.

In order for HR to achieve these goals, it is imperative that we lead the charge in the creation and adherence to an Internal Communication Strategy (ICS) that promotes transparency and collaboration to inform, engage, and improve our City of Madison.

This HR ICS provides a framework for clear, consistent, and timely communication within the HR department, as we report out to the various agencies, stakeholders, and 3,000+ employees, no matter their title or position. By implementing this strategy, the Department of Human Resources aims to foster a culture of collaboration, engagement, and efficiency, ultimately leading to better service deliver and improved outcomes for our internal customers.

Goal and Objectives

Goal

To develop and implement a clear, accessible, inclusive, and consistent communication strategy which guides Team HR in providing vital Human Resources communications to all staff.

Objective(s)

1. **To set expectations:** For all HR Staff to understand, apply, and demonstrate accessible and inclusive communications best-practices in alignment with our [Human Resources Customer Service Framework](#). *(Through our Attitudes, Actions, and Accountability tools).*
2. **To provide support and resources:** For HR Staff to become communications professionals, and to utilize easily located, user-friendly templates and resources for efficient and consistent communications.
3. **To enhance information flow:** Ensuring timely and accurate dissemination of information to employees, enabling them to stay informed about updates, policies, and initiatives.
4. **To foster collaboration:** Encouraging cross-unit/departmental communication and cooperation to facilitate knowledge sharing and problem-solving.
5. **To improve employee engagement:** Promoting a culture of open communication, feedback, and recognition to increase employee satisfaction and productivity.
6. **To enhance organizational culture:** Reinforcing the organization's mission, vision, values, and service promise through consistent and staff-centered communication.
7. **To establish a reliable communication protocol for our four main communications "buckets":**
 1. Customer Service
 2. Quarterly Newsletters
 3. Urgent

4. Initiatives/Projects/Programs that Team HR Leads or Co-Leads
 - *Example: HR Management System with IT*

Scope

The scope of this Internal Communication Strategy encompasses all aspects of communications within and distributed out by the Human Resources department. It is designed to address the needs of employees at all levels and across all 31 departments, ensuring the information flows efficiently, collaboration is promoted, and a positive organizational culture is cultivated. The strategy aims to create a communication framework that aligns with the goals of Team HR and values of the City of Madison while keeping the workforce informed, engaged, and continually improving.

More specifically, the scope of this ICS includes the following:

1. **Internal Stakeholders:** This strategy covers all employees within the City of Madison, from top-level department heads to field staff, regardless of their job duties or departments.
2. **Communication Channels:** It includes the various communication channels within the City of Madison, including email newsletters, departmental meetings, collaboration tools, digital screens, print media, and EmployeeNet.
3. **Information Distribution:** How information is shared with employees, including HR updates, policies, initiatives, and other relevant news.
4. **Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing:** Promotes cross-unit/departmental communication and knowledge sharing to foster collaboration and problem-solving.
5. **Employee Engagement:** This strategy focuses on engaging employees through open communication, feedback mechanisms, and recognition to improve job satisfaction and productivity.
6. **Organizational Culture:** This strategy reinforces the organization's mission, vision, values, and service promises, along the data-informed culture of inquiry through consistent messaging and communication efforts.
7. **Urgent/Special Communication:** This strategy outlines protocols and procedures for communication during emergencies and urgent situations to ensure a coordinated and timely response.
8. **Communication Protocols:** This aligns with the *Actions: We are Strong Communicators* guidelines set in our [HR Customer Service Framework](#) for response times, escalation procedures, confidentiality, and consistent messaging.
9. **Feedback Mechanisms:** The strategy includes methods for gathering employee feedback, such as surveys, suggestion boxes, and open-door policies.
10. **Training and Development:** This addresses communication skills resources and communication training to enhance communication capabilities throughout all of Team HR.
11. **Monitoring & Evaluation:** The strategy aligns with our [HR Customer Service Framework](#) to measure the impact of our services through key feedback mechanisms, and the use of a customer service survey readily available to all we serve to allow for continuous improvement.

The scope of the strategy is comprehensive, ensuring that best communication practices are integrated and aligned with the HR department's objectives. By addressing all of these aspects, the strategy aims to create a cohesive and well-informed workplace, leading to improved operational efficiency, employee satisfaction, and ultimately, better public service delivery by the City of Madison.

Key Metrics

In line with our [HR Customer Service Framework](#), we will use accountability tools to help us ensure alignment between our attitudes, actions, and our organizational values and goals.

1. **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Track the effectiveness of the ICS – I.E. Employee Engagement, Response Times. Primary performance indicators are included in the HR Customer Service Survey that will be attached to our email signatures, is available by QR code at the front desk, and is sent out with each recruitment we complete.
 - a. **HR Customer Service Framework Communication and Response Time Expectations:**
 - i. We respond in a timely manner. Phone calls and emails receive acknowledgement within 2 business days, with a timeline for further follow up as needed when possible.
 - ii. We share knowledge and best practices, leveraging technology for efficiency
 - iii. We strive for accuracy by ensuring the correct response gets back to the customer.
 - iv. Any errors are used as a learning experience, and we attempt to mitigate any unintended impact on customers.
 - v. We check for plain and gender-neutral language in communications
 - vi. We respond to email inquiries:
 1. Unless an out of office message is turned on, we standardly respond to emails within 1-2 days. If more time is needed for response, an initial response will at least provide acknowledgement of receipt of the correspondence with an anticipated timeline of follow-up.
 2. We incorporate our customer services survey in communications
 - vii. We answer phones:
 1. City of Madison Human Resources, this is (NAME). How can I help you?
 2. We return business calls to our main line within 24-48 hours of receipt.
 - viii. We set out of office messages: Staff proactively set an out of office Outlook message on vacation or when they are not able to be reached. This includes an alternate contact when possible. Employee’s supervisor is first line alternate.
 - b. View more details in our [HR Customer Service Framework](#) Overview.
2. **Feedback Analysis:** Regularly analyze feedback received through surveys to identify trends and area for improvement.
 - a. Surveys include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Pulse Surveys
 - ii. Exit Surveys
 - iii. Customer Service Surveys
 - iv. OD Consult and Training Evaluation Surveys
3. Accountability for internal HR folks to start using the (Confidentiality, Accessibility, etc.) best-practices with a three-month ramp up time once this strategy is implemented. Conversations with their managers would follow if individuals are not using these best practices by that to be determined date.

Continuous Improvement: Based on the feedback and evaluation results, regularly update and refine the ICS to meet the changing needs of the City of Madison and its employees.

Communications Buckets

After analyzing key communication areas, HR staff identified four communication “buckets” that would be the most efficient way to divide the types of communications the HR team most frequently sends out. Those four are the following: Customer Service, Quarterly Newsletters, Urgent, and Initiatives/Projects/Programs.

1. Customer Service

- **What this includes:** Any daily or routine communications. Guidance on style, inclusion and accessibility best practices, timeliness for responses, and a focus on customer service is needed.
 - **Examples:** Organizational Development weekly e-Blasts (Tuesdays), course highlights as needed (Wednesdays as needed), periodic benefits related email announcements (i.e. during Open Enrollment, flexible spending periods, and with other key benefit changes), and Supervisor Monthly emails (third Thursday of each month).
- **Level of review*:** Depends on the audience and content of the communication. Refer to the “Level of Review” section following the buckets for details.
- **Who this is sent by:** Any/all HR Team members
- Refer to our [HR Customer Service Framework](#) referenced throughout this document to ensure consistency and alignment.

2. Quarterly Newsletter

- **What this includes:** One quarterly newsletter from the Human Resources department will be sent out with unit-specific information.
 - Includes items and topics that staff need to be aware of around: Benefits, Changes, Policy & Procedures, Expectations, and General Important Information that impacts all staff.
- **Level of review*:** HR Unit Manager and HR Director
- **Who this is sent by:** To be determined, from HR@cityofmadison.com
- [Quarterly Newsletter Drafting Workflow \(SOP\)](#)

3. Urgent

- **What this includes:** Time sensitive information that must go out to all City Staff due to the nature of the content.
 - **Examples:**
 - COVID Updates
 - Inclement weather
 - Heat advisories
 - Urgent policy changes
 - Time specific updates on key HR projects
- **Level of review*:** HR Unit Manager and HR Director
- **Who this is sent by:** HR Director

4. Initiatives/Projects/Programs

- **What this includes:** Any efforts led or co-led by HR that are organizational-wide/multi-agency.
 - **Expectations:**
 - Develop and utilize a *Communication Plan* for all initiatives/projects/programs.
 - Wrap key initiative updates into quarterly newsletters wherever possible to eliminate excess emails and notices.
- **Level of review*:** Project Lead, HR Unit Manager (if unit specific), and HR Director
- **Who this is sent by:** Sent by individual/inbox determined in the communication plan for the initiative/project/program.
 - [Sending Initiatives/Projects/Programs Communications Workflow \(SOP\)](#)

*Levels of Review

You'll notice each bucket includes a "**Level of Review**" line above. While the specified parties above should be generally followed, each communication's requirements for review may vary. When in doubt, ask your HR Unit Manager for guidance.

The two main factors that influence the level of review required are the **receiving audience** and **content of the communication**.

- **Receiving Audience:**
 - **Organization-Wide Communications:** Must be reviewed by your HR Unit Manager and HR Director prior to sending out.
 - **Communications for Employee Sub-Groups:** Must be reviewed by your HR Unit Manager.
 - **Mayor or Mayor's Management Team (MMT):** Must be reviewed and approved by your HR Unit Manager and the HR Director. The HR Director would then introduce the information to the Mayor/MMT. Direct communications to the Mayor should only be sent after approval from the HR Director, or as a function of a pre-approved process.
- **Communication Content:**
 - **Free Flowing, Newly Developed Content:** Must be reviewed by HR Unit Manager and HR Director prior to sending out.
 - I.e., Supervisor Monthly Emails, New Benefits Information, Special Events (Conferences, Forums, Agency-Specific Offerings), Newsletters.
 - **Pre-Written, Template Content:** does not need to be reviewed by HR Unit Manager or HR Director. As with all communications though, a second set of eyes on the communication is recommended prior to sending.
 - I.e., OD e-Blasts, Course Highlights.

Audience

Audience will vary depending on which bucket the communication of focus is tied to.

- All Employees
- Supervisors & Managers
- Department/Division Heads
- Impacted Groups
- Employee Sub-Groups
- General Madison Community
- Project Sponsors
- Public Information Officers (PIO's)
- Initiative/Project/Program Work Group

Communication Channels

1. **Email Newsletters:** Send a quarterly newsletter to All Email Users to share important updates, achievements, and upcoming events from all three sub-units of the HR Department. (Quarterly Newsletter).
 - a. Ensure emails are printed/posted for staff without access to email.
 - b. This would include past benefits newsletter information.
2. **Collaboration Tools:** Implement collaborative tools to facilitate real-time communication and teamwork when possible (i.e. Microsoft 365, and Teams future state).
3. **Digital Screens:** Display important announcements and organizational updates on digital screens in the Madison Municipal Building, and across City of Madison facilities.
 - a. **Facilities that currently have digital screen signage which HR has access to editing:**
 - i. Fleet Service, with an estimated 41 staff
 - ii. Madison Municipal Building, with an estimated 493 staff
 - iii. Metro, with an estimated 446 staff
4. **Printed Flyers and Posters:** Utilize print media with QR codes and short URL's when referencing to online information throughout City of Madison facilities to ensure those without a city email have access to information.
5. **EmployeeNet Announcements & Webpage Postings:** Maintain up-to-date internal and public-facing HR webpages, and EmployeeNet announcements as a secondary source of accurate information, documents, and resources accessible to all employees.
6. **HR Team Meetings:** Continue to conduct these regular meetings within HR to discuss projects, goals, and resolve challenges.
 - a. Unit Meetings, Management Meetings, All HR-Staff Meetings, and 1-on-1's between HR Managers & Staff

Communication Protocols

1. **Customer Service:** Follow our [HR Customer Service Framework](#) when planning for, creating, and sending communications.
2. **Response Times:** Follow the response time expectations found in our [HR Customer Service Framework](#) for emails and messages to ensure timely communication. See [Key Metrics section](#) for response time details.
3. **Workflow and Escalation:** Establish a clear workflow for communication and escalation procedures for urgent matters.

- a. Who drafts, who sends? What if HR Director is out for Urgent communications?
4. **Confidentiality:** Remind employees of the importance of confidentiality, especially when dealing with sensitive information.
5. **Consistency of Messaging:** Ensure that all official communications align with the organization's values and messaging and utilize ICS templates and resources for uniformity.
 - a. **Communications Templates:** Communications templates can be found in the HR Common > Internal Communications Strategy > Communications Templates folder. Utilize these when constructing your communications for consistency.
 - b. **Resource Access:** Hyperlink resources in all digital communications for ease of access.
6. **Multilingual Communication:** Accommodate employees who speak different languages by providing translations when necessary.
7. **Accessibility Standards:** Accommodate employees who have access needs for written communications by utilizing the *Accessibility Best Practices Tip Sheet* that goes along with this strategy.

What's Next?

- 1. Develop an Implementation Team:** To implement this strategy, build out the implementation timeline, workflows, and to determine resources, training, and materials that are needed.
 - a. Suggest OD Coordinator lead implementation.
 - b. Suggest one person per HR unit at a minimum, designated by HR Unit Managers.
 - c. Define roles and responsibilities once team is determined.
- 2. Utilize the Customer Service Framework** in tandem with this Internal Communications Strategy.
 - a. **Define Metrics:** KPI's & Feedback Mechanisms.
 - b. **Define Standards:** For all HR to adhere to regarding customer service.

Future Implementation Team Actions

- 1. Develop Workflow Protocols** for Urgent Communications
- 2. Ensure all HR Staff have OneNote access for Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's)**
 - a. **Create Customer Service SOP OneNote**
 - i. DRAFT: [Standard Operating Procedures \(SOP's\)](#) (with communication workflows)
- 3. Provide Best Practices, Resources, and Tools**
 - a. **Create Resources (*hyperlinked drafts*):**
 - i. [Customer Service Framework](#)
 - ii. [Confidentiality Best Practices – Tip Sheet](#)
 - iii. [Accessibility Best Practices – Tip Sheet](#)
 - iv. [Social Media Best Practices – Tip Sheet](#)
 - b. **Share Resources:** Once developed and require folks to utilize these when developing communications and providing customer service.
- 4. Provide Training and Development Resources**
 - a. **Communication Resources:** Communications best-practices resources can be found in the HR Common>Internal Communications Strategy>Communications Resources folder. It's important that all Team HR gets familiar with these to become communications professionals.
 - b. **Communication Training:** Provide training for all HR Staff to ensure they effectively communicate and lead by example.
 - i. Partner with the Language Access Program (LAP) and other departments to learn from SME's within our organization regarding communications, confidentiality, language access, and customer service.
- 5. Design and Implement Feedback Mechanisms**
 - a. **Employee Surveys:** Conduct periodic surveys to gather feedback on internal communication effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.
 - b. **Suggestion Box:** Set up a digital suggestion box to encourage employees to share ideas and suggestions anonymously.
 - c. **Open-Door Policy:** Encourage managers to have an open-door policy, allowing employees to discuss concerns and feedback in a safe environment.
 - d. **Anonymous Reporting:** Establish a confidential reporting mechanism for employees to report any misconduct or ethical concerns.

Deliverables Already Created

Communications Inventory

- In 2023, ICS core team developed an [HR Internal Communications Inventory](#) as a resource for all Team HR to access and become familiar with the communications currently led by folks within the department.
- Refer to this inventory for opportunities to get involved in these communications.
- It's expected that folks maintain this inventory by adding to this each time a new Initiative, Project, or Program is created or joined.

Communications Plan Template & Example

- A [Communications Plan Template](#) was created as a resource for all of Team HR to utilize. A template should be used for each Initiative, Project, and/or Program that Team HR leads or co-leads.
- A [Sample Communication Plan](#) was also created as a guide for how to use the Communications Plan Template.

Quarterly Newsletter Template

- A [Quarterly Newsletter email template](#) was created as an outline for Team HR to utilize and adapt as we move forward with the review and implementation of this ICS.

Course or Event Highlight Template

- A Course Highlight email template has been in use by HR-OD for a few years now. This template was refined and updated to be used to highlight [Upcoming Courses or Events](#).