
COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIC PLAN

2026-2028



Prepared by:



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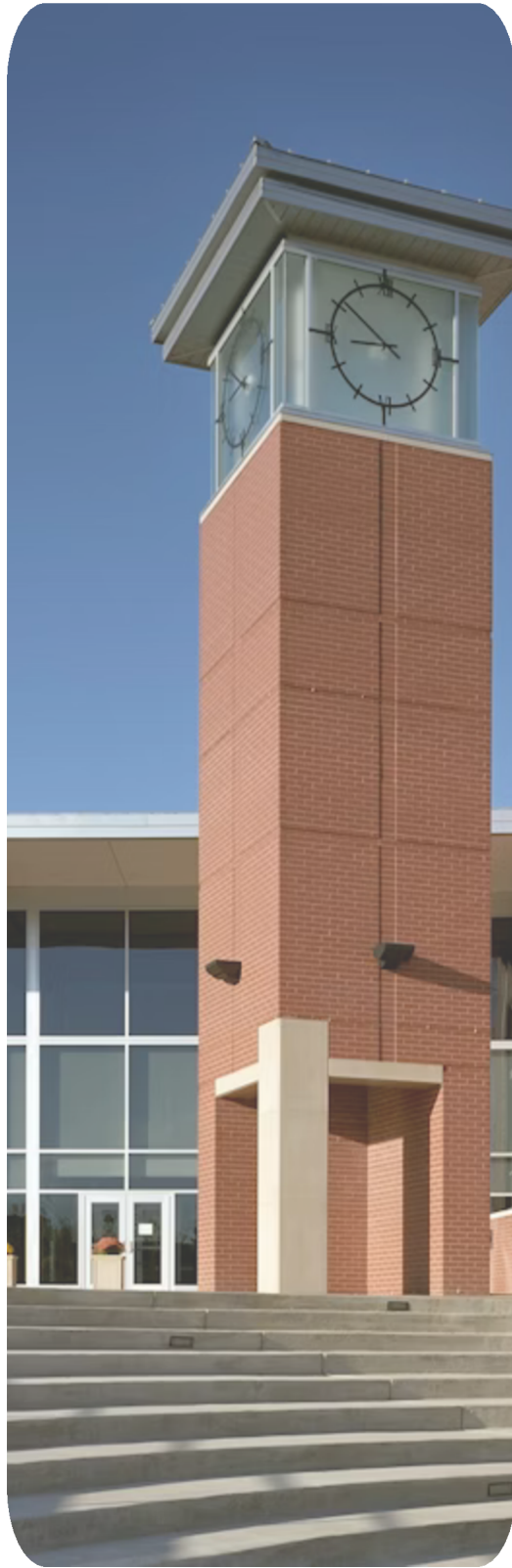
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INTRODUCTION

The City of Lee's Summit is one of the Kansas City region's most dynamic and desirable communities. With a population of more than 100,000 residents and continued growth expected in the coming decades, the City has built a reputation for strong neighborhoods, excellent public services, a vibrant parks system, and a commitment to thoughtful planning. As Lee's Summit continues to evolve, clear, consistent, and proactive communication will play a critical role in maintaining public trust, supporting civic engagement, and ensuring residents and stakeholders understand how the City is planning for the future.

This Communications Strategic Plan provides a roadmap to strengthen how the City communicates with residents, businesses, employees, and community partners. The plan is designed to help the City tell a clear and consistent story about its priorities, improve coordination across departments, and ensure that important information about City services, programs, and initiatives reaches the community in timely and accessible ways. Just as importantly, the plan establishes a framework that will allow the City's Department of Communications and Public Information (CPI) to move from a primarily reactive production role to a more proactive and strategic communications function.

The development of this plan builds on the work completed during the Discovery and Determine phases of the project. Through stakeholder interviews, communications audits, benchmarking against peer municipalities, and analysis of the City's current communications channels and processes, consistent themes emerged.



Lee's Summit benefits from a talented and creative communications team, strong visual storytelling capabilities, and a community that is highly engaged in local issues.

At the same time, the City's rapid growth and expanding service responsibilities have increased the demand for communication, creating the need for clearer priorities, stronger coordination across departments, improved processes for managing communications requests, and a more strategic approach to messaging and audience engagement.

This document constitutes the strategic communications plan that will guide the City, and specifically CPI, over the next three years. It was developed through collaboration with City leadership, department staff, and the Communications team to address issues identified during the communications assessment and stakeholder engagement process. The recommendations contained in this plan complement the organizational and process improvements identified throughout the project and are intended to strengthen the City's ability to communicate effectively with both internal and external audiences.

Successful implementation of this plan will depend on the City's continued commitment to prioritizing communication as a core function of local government. This includes providing the appropriate staffing, tools, and organizational support necessary for CPI to operate as a centralized communications resource for the City. With sustained leadership support and cross-departmental collaboration, this plan will help Lee's Summit strengthen public trust, improve access to information, and ensure that the City's story is communicated clearly and consistently as the community continues to grow.

DISCOVERY REPORT

DISCOVERY & ANALYSIS

To inform the development of this Communications Strategic Plan, Torres Communications Management (TCM) conducted a multi-phase discovery and assessment process designed to evaluate the City's current communications structure, capabilities, and opportunities for improvement. This process included:

01

Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews with City leadership, staff, and department managers

02

Audit of Existing Tools

A review of existing communications tools, platforms, and workflows

03

Benchmark Analysis

Benchmark analysis of communications offices in comparable municipalities across the United States

04

Channel Assessment

Assessment of current communications channels including social media, website infrastructure, digital tools, and internal communication systems

05

Evaluation of Organization

Evaluation of organizational structure, staffing mix, and communications governance models

The discovery process was designed to identify operational strengths, uncover structural gaps, and highlight opportunities to modernize the City's communications approach as Lee's Summit continues to grow.

Insights gathered during this phase informed the strategic recommendations presented throughout this plan.

STAKEHOLDER INSIGHTS

A Shared Vision for a More Strategic Communications Foundation

Stakeholder interviews revealed strong alignment among City leadership, CPI staff, and department managers regarding the need to evolve Lee's Summit's communications function into a more proactive and coordinated operation.

Participants consistently emphasized that communications should move beyond a reactive production role and instead function as a strategic capability that helps the City anticipate issues, engage residents, and strengthen trust in local government.

Many stakeholders noted that the City has already made meaningful progress with the establishment of CPI as a centralized resource for design, video production, and communications support. However, the City's continued growth and expanding service responsibilities are placing increasing demands on the communications system.

As Lee's Summit approaches a population of 140,000 residents, interview participants widely agreed that communications must evolve to match the scale, complexity, and visibility of the City's operations.



KEY OPERATIONAL INSIGHTS

Communications Structure & Governance

Stakeholders broadly supported establishing clearer communications leadership and governance across the organization.

Many interview participants emphasized the importance of formalizing a citywide communications structure that includes:

01

Stakeholders agree that the City's communications function must evolve from a reactive support role into a centralized, professionalized operation. There is broad consensus that establishing a clear Public Information Officer (PIO) function with defined authority for media relations, crisis messaging, and strategic leadership is a critical near-term priority.

02

There is unanimous consensus on the need for an integrated Crisis Communications Plan, unified messaging protocols across departments, and defined roles and responsibilities during emergencies.

03

Stakeholders broadly support formalizing interdepartmental workflows, reinstating regular coordination meetings, and establishing a Communications Council to sustain alignment year-round. Departments also expressed enthusiasm for a centralized intake and prioritization system.

City leadership expressed concern that the current system relies too heavily on informal coordination and individual initiative rather than clearly defined communication protocols.

Reactive Workflow and Capacity Constraints

A recurring theme throughout the discovery process was the highly reactive nature of the City's current communications environment.

CPI staff and department managers described workflows that are frequently driven by urgent requests and last-minute projects rather than long-term planning.

While CPI manages project requests through centralized tools such as Smartsheet, incomplete project information, delayed approvals, and tight turnaround expectations often create operational bottlenecks.

These conditions make it difficult for the CPI team to dedicate time to proactive planning, strategic campaigns, or performance measurement.

Stakeholders widely supported implementing clearer intake processes, project prioritization frameworks, and communication planning cycles to improve workflow predictability and overall efficiency.

Audience Engagement and Information Access

Stakeholder interviews also revealed gaps in the City's ability to consistently reach all segments of the community.

While Lee's Summit maintains strong engagement through digital platforms such as Facebook and city newsletters, some audiences remain under-reached. These include:

- Younger residents
- Residents who rely on traditional media or print communications
- Field employees and non-digital internal staff
- Vulnerable or lower-income residents with limited online access

Participants emphasized the importance of developing a multi-channel communications strategy that combines digital outreach with in-person engagement, print materials, and community partnerships to ensure inclusive communication across the City.

Technology and Data Capabilities

The discovery process also highlighted opportunities to strengthen the City's communications technology infrastructure.

Multiple tools are currently used across the organization, including Microsoft 365, Smartsheet, Hootsuite, Constant Contact, and Everbridge, but these platforms are not fully integrated.

Analytics are often collected manually across multiple systems, making it difficult to evaluate communications performance or identify trends in public engagement.

Stakeholders recommended developing centralized analytics dashboards, improving data tracking, and expanding the use of engagement tools such as GIS mapping and the LS Connect platform to provide residents with more accessible and real-time information.

Organizational and Departmental Insights

Interviews with department managers revealed both strong collaboration and structural challenges.

Departments consistently described CPI as a trusted partner and valued resource for design, video production, and communications support.

However, many departments reported that the current system lacks consistent processes for planning communications around major initiatives, infrastructure projects, and policy changes.

Departments often develop their own communication methods to meet operational needs, which can result in:

- Inconsistent messaging across departments
- Delays in public communication
- Limited coordination during major projects or public issues

At the same time, departments expressed strong interest in strengthening collaboration with CPI and implementing more structured communication workflows.

Departments also emphasized the need for communications planning around upcoming major initiatives, including infrastructure projects, technology upgrades, and regional events.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

To better understand how Lee's Summit's communications structure compares to similar municipalities, TCM conducted a benchmark analysis of cities with populations between approximately 100,000 and 250,000 residents.

These peer cities include municipalities across Kansas, Texas, Colorado, Missouri, and North Carolina that maintain centralized communications offices responsible for media relations, digital communications, and public engagement.

The benchmark analysis revealed structural differences between Lee's Summit and peer cities.

Most peer municipalities position their communications office within the City Manager's Office or under executive leadership, allowing communications leaders to play a strategic advisory role in policy discussions and public messaging.

Another notable difference is how peer cities publicly frame and brand their communications function. While Lee's Summit's department was named Creative Services, most comparable municipalities use titles such as Communications, Communications and Marketing, Communications and Engagement, or Communications and Public Information. These naming conventions reflect a broader strategic remit that includes media relations, digital strategy, public engagement, internal communications, and citywide messaging leadership.

While Lee's Summit benefits from strong creative production capabilities, including video production, graphic design, and AV operations, peer cities typically maintain more diversified communications teams with specialized roles in areas such as:

- Media relations
- Digital engagement
- Internal communications
- Public outreach and community engagement
- Data analytics and performance tracking

In addition, many peer cities maintain formal communications governance systems that define how departments coordinate messaging, manage crisis communication, and align communications with citywide strategic priorities.



KEY THEMES FROM THE DISCOVERY PROCESS

Across the stakeholder interviews, operational assessment, and benchmark analysis, a number of consistent themes emerged that shape the strategic direction of this communications plan.

First, Lee's Summit has strong creative talent and a well-established centralized communications team that produces high-quality visual and digital content.

Second, the City's communications structure is currently weighted toward production and reactive support, limiting its ability to operate as a proactive strategic function.

Third, the City lacks critical elements that are common in peer municipal communications offices, including formal communications governance, a clearly defined PIO leadership role, centralized analytics systems, and structured communication planning processes.

Finally, there is broad alignment across City leadership and departments around the need to modernize the City's communications approach in order to keep pace with community growth, evolving media landscapes, and increasing expectations for transparency and public engagement.

These findings informed the SWOT analysis that follows and provide the foundation for the strategic recommendations outlined later in this plan.

SWOT ANALYSIS

The following SWOT analysis synthesizes findings from stakeholder interviews, benchmarking, the needs assessment, and digital audits. It reflects the full picture of Lee's Summit's communications function as it exists today and identifies the strategic foundation on which this plan is built.



Strengths

- High-quality video production and creative output
- Strong public brand: safe, family-friendly, community-focused
- Positive resident trust and pride in City government
- Improved cross-department collaboration since Creative Services was established
- Leadership support for modernization and strategic change



Weaknesses

- Reactive, request-driven operating model with no formal intake system
- No citywide communications governance framework
- Inconsistent messaging across departments and channels
- Heavy production focus; limited capacity for strategic planning and analytics
- Fragmented technology and manually compiled analytics



Opportunities

- Upcoming major initiatives (stormwater ballot, city website update) require strong comms
- Stakeholder alignment and readiness for structural change is high
- Emerging platforms (short-form video, TikTok) offer untapped audience reach
- SharePoint intranet rollout creates internal comms infrastructure opportunity



Threats

- Growing misinformation and faster social media news cycles
- Without structural change, workload pressure risks eroding public trust
- Critical demographics (residents under 25, low-income, non-digital) remain underserved
- High-visibility projects amplify risk of inconsistent or delayed messaging

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIC PLAN

A large, heart-shaped mirror is the central focus, reflecting a street scene. The reflection shows a building with a sign that says 'BANK' and another sign that says 'DOWN TOWN'. There are trees and a bench in the reflection. The background of the page is a teal color with a faint illustration of a street scene, including a building, a bench, and a sign that says 'DOWN TOWN'.

PLAN PURPOSE & VISION

This Communications Strategic Plan establishes a clear, actionable roadmap for the City of Lee's Summit to evolve its communications function over three years from 2026 to 2028.

The plan is grounded in a simple conviction: effective communication is not a support function. It is a leadership function. When a city of 107,000 residents — growing toward 140,000 — communicates clearly, proactively, and consistently, it builds the public trust that makes everything else possible.

Plan Purpose

This plan serves four interconnected purposes:

- To shift the City's communications posture from reactive to proactive, replacing a request-driven model with advance planning, strategic campaigns, and clear governance
- To position CPI as a strategic communications leader with defined authority, clear roles, and the capacity to shape citywide narrative rather than simply respond to it
- To ensure residents, businesses, employees, and community partners have the timely, accessible, and meaningful information they need to engage with and trust their City government
- To provide a measurable, three-year framework that aligns people, processes, and resources around a shared communications strategy

Plan Vision

Lee's Summit communicates with clarity, confidence, and purpose earning public trust through transparency, serving every resident with accessible and timely information, and telling the story of a city that is growing well and governed with care.

This vision is aspirational and achievable. It reflects the community's values, the organization's strengths, and the strategic direction established in the City's Ignite! Comprehensive Plan. It recognizes that communications excellence is not about volume or velocity, it is about clarity, consistency, and community connection.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Five strategic goals guide this plan. Each goal is supported by specific objectives that translate strategic intent into measurable, actionable commitments.

1	Establish Strategic Leadership & Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reposition CPI as the City's strategic communications authority with defined governance authority • Clarify and formalize the Director's role as Chief Communications Officer and primary PIO • Establish a citywide Communications Council (Core Comms) with regular cross-department coordination meetings • Develop and publish a citywide communications governance framework covering roles, protocols, and approval processes • Formalize departmental PIO network and establish a shared chain of command for crisis communications
2	Shift to Proactive, Planned Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a centralized intake and prioritization system for all communications requests • Develop and maintain an annual editorial content calendar aligned to City priorities • Create campaign-based communications plans for all major City initiatives (minimum 4 per year) • Reduce the proportion of reactive versus strategic work from the current imbalance to a 50/50 target by Year 3 • Build and publish a standard communications planning process available to all departments

3	Strengthen Transparency & Public Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt the five foundational messaging pillars as the consistent framework for all City communications • Develop a crisis communications plan with pre-approved protocols, templates, and decision trees • Ensure all major City decisions are communicated with context, not just announcement, but explanation • Establish a standard for proactive project communications: all capital projects and major initiatives to have a dedicated communications plan • Increase resident satisfaction with City communications as measured through annual community feedback
4	Reach and Serve All Audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and maintain current audience profiles for all seven primary audience segments • Implement platform-specific content strategies for Facebook, Instagram, X, LinkedIn, YouTube and Nextdoor • Expand outreach to underserved audiences including residents under 25, low-income communities, and non-digital households • Develop multilingual or culturally adapted content for priority topics by Year 2 • Ensure field and hourly employees have consistent access to internal communications through the SharePoint intranet rollout
5	Build Capacity, Measurement & Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add targeted strategic roles aligned with the recommended staffing roadmap (Phase in over 3 years) • Establish a centralized analytics dashboard with standard KPIs reported quarterly • Deliver communications training to all departments annually covering brand standards, intake process, and channel guidelines • Conduct an annual review of the Communications Strategic Plan and adjust as needed • Document all key workflows, templates, and governance protocols to ensure institutional continuity

TARGET AUDIENCES

Effective communications begin with a clear understanding of who the City is communicating with and why. Lee's Summit serves a diverse and growing community, and a one-size-fits-all approach will not meet the moment. This plan identifies seven primary audience segments, each with distinct needs, values, communication preferences, and engagement patterns.

Primary Audiences

01

Residents: Families & Older Adults (65+)

Largest audience segment; drives demand for parks, roads, public safety, and services. Oldest adults are the fastest-growing demographic. Value stability, safety, and quality of life.

Priority channels: Facebook, City website, print/mailed notices, cable TV, community meetings

02

Younger Residents & Emerging Households

Renters, first-time homebuyers, young professionals. Key to long-term economic resilience. Often disengaged from local government unless directly affected by an issue.

Priority channels: Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, mobile-first website, short-form video

03

Business Owners & Employers

Critical economic partners. Value efficiency, predictability, and clear processes. Need reliable advance notice of policy changes, infrastructure, and development plans.

Priority channels: Email, LinkedIn, City website, direct briefings

04

Underserved & Under-Reached Communities

Spanish-speaking households, lower-income residents, limited digital access. An equity issue and a service-delivery issue. Trust grows through consistency and personal connection.

Priority channels: Community organizations, print, in-person outreach, bilingual content

05

City Employees (Office-Based & Field Staff)

Both ambassadors and service providers. Field staff face specific access barriers. Internal communication effectiveness is foundational to external success.

Priority channels: Email, SharePoint intranet, supervisor briefings, Workday

06

Elected & Appointed Officials

Rely on City communications to lead effectively. Must be equipped with accurate, timely information before the public receives it.

Priority channels: Direct briefings, email summaries, talking points, council updates

07

Community Partners & Media

Act as message multipliers. Their understanding of City priorities directly shapes public perception. Value accuracy, access, and clear points of contact.

Priority channels: Press releases, media briefings, direct relationships, pitches

Second & Tertiary Audiences

Secondary audiences — neighborhood associations; chambers of commerce; civic, nonprofit, and community-based organizations; arts and cultural nonprofits; schools; healthcare institutions and others who serve as community amplifiers. Messaging to these groups should align with core pillars and be handled through existing engagement channels.

Tertiary audiences — neighboring municipalities, county and state partners, and regional planning entities are important for coordination and reputation management, but are not a primary focus of day-to-day communications activity.

FOUNDATIONAL MESSAGING FRAMEWORK

Every piece of City communication, from a social media post to a press release to a department newsletter, should reinforce one or more of five foundational messaging pillars. These pillars are grounded in the City's Ignite! Comprehensive Plan, informed by stakeholder research, and designed to address the trust gaps identified in Phase 2.

The pillars do not replace departmental messaging or technical content. They provide the unifying narrative thread that ensures Lee's Summit speaks with a consistent voice, regardless of channel or department.

01 ***Trust, Transparency, and Accountability***

We communicate early, clearly, and consistently so residents understand what is happening and why.

- Decisions are explained in plain language including tradeoffs, impacts, and next steps
- The City follows through with updates, not just announcements
- Information is accessible across multiple channels so residents can stay informed in the ways that work best for them
- Transparency and accountability guide how public resources are managed and communicated

02 ***Quality Services That Improve Daily Life***

City services are designed around the real needs of residents.

- Public safety, infrastructure, utilities, parks, and services work together to support a high quality of life
- Services are communicated clearly so residents know what to expect and how to access them
- The City measures performance and uses feedback to continuously improve service delivery

03 *Planning for Growth with Purpose*

Growth is intentional, balanced, and aligned with community values.

- The City plans ahead to ensure infrastructure, services, and neighborhoods keep pace with growth
- Growth supports economic opportunity while protecting community character
- Planning decisions are informed by data, public input, and professional expertise
- Today's investments are made with future generations in mind

04 *A Community That Works for Everyone*

Lee's Summit is committed to inclusive access, engagement, and opportunity.

- The City recognizes that residents experience services and information differently
- Communication is designed to reach diverse audiences, including those who are historically under-reached
- Multiple languages, formats, and outreach methods ensure access to information
- Community input is valued and helps shape City decisions
- Inclusive communication strengthens civic participation and community trust

05 *A City That Is Modern, Capable, and Forward-Thinking*

The City adapts, innovates, and continuously improves how it serves the community.

- Technology is used to make services more efficient, accessible, and user-friendly
- Data and analytics inform decisions and improve communication effectiveness
- New tools and platforms are evaluated thoughtfully to support transparency and service delivery
- A modern communications approach reflects a city that is prepared for the future

COMMUNICATIONS GOVERNANCE

One of the most important structural changes this plan calls for is the establishment of clear communications governance: defined authority, formalized roles, and shared protocols that allow the City to communicate consistently, proactively, and effectively across all departments and channels.

Without governance, communications defaults to a reactive, fragmented model where each department operates independently, messaging is inconsistent, and the organization struggles to present a unified voice during both routine operations and crises. With governance, CPI can fulfill its role as the City's strategic communications authority while departments retain operational independence and subject-matter expertise.

The Hub-and-Spoke Model

Lee's Summit operates a hub-and-spoke communications model. The Department of Communications and Public Information (CPI) functions as the central hub responsible for citywide strategy, messaging frameworks, brand standards, content production and distribution, media and crisis leadership, and intake coordination. Departments function as spokes providing subject-matter expertise, program updates, and operational details. They define what needs to be communicated; CPI determines how, when, and through which channels.

This model recognizes the operational realities of specific departments. The Police and Fire, Water Utilities, and Public Works Departments each retain a uniformed Public Information Officer who leads day-to-day departmental communications and incident-driven media relations, given the volume, real-time nature, and public safety sensitivity of those communications. Parks and Recreation retains independence for routine programmatic communications. In all cases, CPI provides strategic alignment through shared messaging frameworks, brand standards, and campaign coordination.

Organizational Positioning

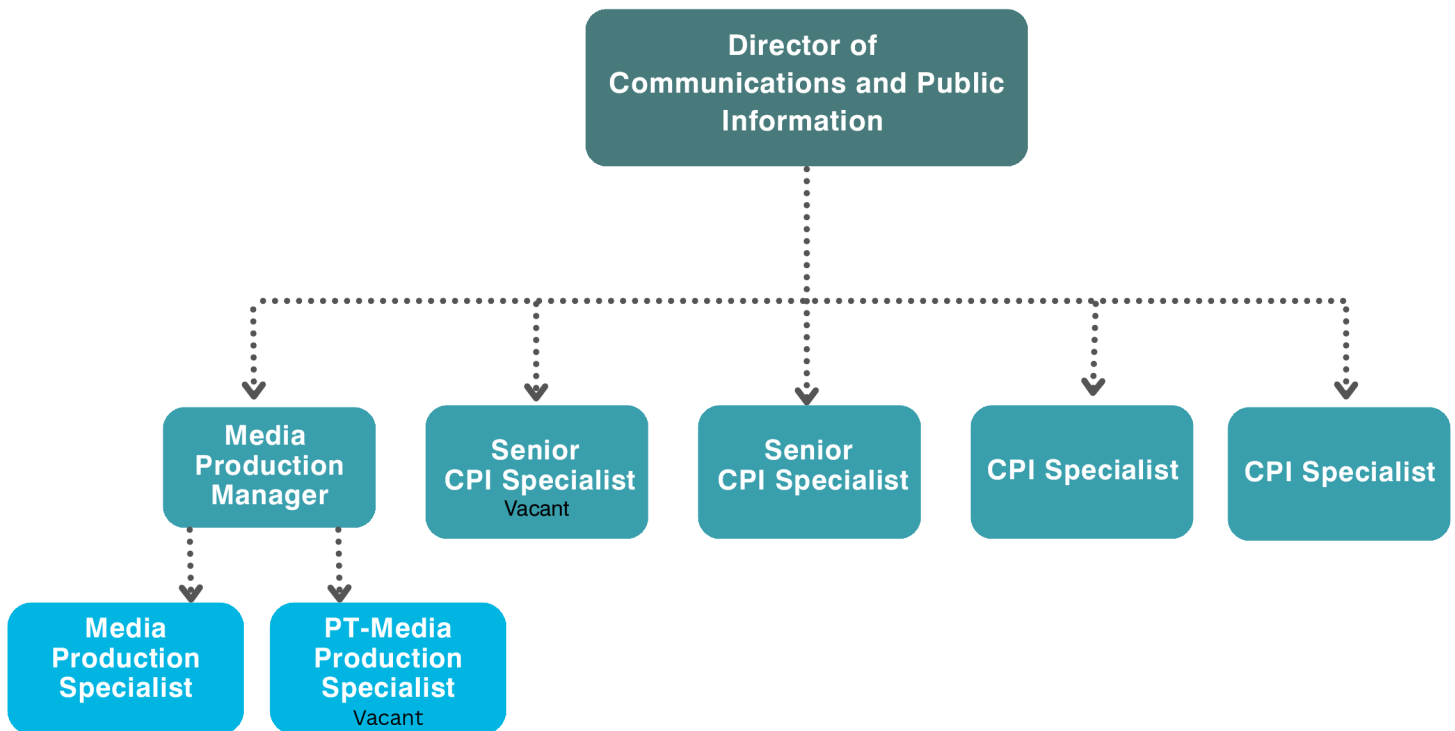
The Director of Communications and Public Information is the City's senior communications lead and serves as the primary PIO for the organization. This positioning is consistent with peer cities of comparable size and reflects the strategic scope of the role.

The Director's focus is intentionally strategic and forward-looking: leading development and execution of this plan, establishing and enforcing messaging frameworks, advising City leadership on narrative and positioning, and ensuring alignment with the Ignite! vision. Day-to-day operational communications, intake management, and workflow coordination are managed by the Senior CPI Specialist, while strategic campaign execution, messaging support, and proactive content development are led by the CPI Specialist, together protecting the Director's capacity for proactive leadership and governance.

<p>Director of Communications and Public Information (CCO / Primary PIO)</p>	<p>Strategic leadership; citywide messaging framework; media relations; crisis communications lead; executive advisor; plan execution oversight; department governance</p>
<p>Senior Communications and Public Information Specialist</p>	<p>Manages incoming communications requests and intake system; departmental coordination and liaison; Communications Council logistics and meeting cadence; project tracking and workflow management; operational PIO support; and marketing support.</p>
<p>Communications and Public Information Specialist</p>	<p>Campaign planning and execution; strategic messaging support; reactive and crisis drafting; proactive storytelling and content development; internal communications support; social media management; and marketing support.</p>
<p>Media Production Manager</p>	<p>City video production; government channel management; live meeting broadcasts; video content strategy; campaign planning participation; proactive storytelling identification</p>

Media Production Specialist	Live broadcast operations; AV production support; technical infrastructure
Police and Fire Department PIO	Lead day-to-day PD and FD communications and incident-driven media relations; coordinates with CPI on messaging for citywide incidents
All other Departmental PIOs (Public Works, Water, Parks & Recreation and others)	Day-to-day departmental communications; operational subject-matter expertise; coordination with CPI on citywide campaigns and messaging alignment

Note: there are two vacancies in the organizational chart - PT Media Production Specialist and Senior Communications and Public Information Specialist.



Governance Structure: Hub-and-Spoke Model



Communications Council

A Communications Council (Core Comms) should be established and meet monthly. The Council is chaired by the Director and includes CPI team members and departmental PIOs, serving as the standing forum for campaign alignment, messaging coordination, project planning, and cross-department collaboration. The Senior CPI Specialist manages logistics, agenda preparation, and follow-up coordination for all meetings.

Intake & Prioritization

A centralized intake system is being implemented in Year 1 as the single entry point for all communications requests across the City. All requests are logged, categorized by urgency and impact, and prioritized transparently. The Senior CPI Specialist serves as the primary intake coordinator, triaging requests, routing them to the appropriate team member, and maintaining visibility across the active project queue. The intake system reduces last-minute disruptions, sets clear expectations, and provides data to inform workload decisions.

Website and Intranet Workflow: CPI and ITS

The City's public-facing website and internal SharePoint site are shared communication platforms that require clear coordination between CPI and Information Technology Services (ITS). CPI serves as the primary owner of website and intranet content strategy, messaging, structure, accessibility, brand consistency, and overall user experience. ITS serves as the technical owner of the platforms, providing support for system functionality, permissions, integrations, security, troubleshooting, and long-term platform maintenance.

Department PIOs or designated content managers will retain appropriate access and responsibility for managing routine updates to their respective department webpages, including timely updates to standard content, documents, forms, program information, and department-specific announcements. CPI will provide overall governance, standards, and support to ensure consistency across the City's digital presence, but day-to-day department-level content maintenance may continue to be handled by approved department representatives. Major webpage changes, new page creation, navigation changes, homepage visibility, public-facing campaigns, or content with citywide impact should be coordinated with CPI before publication.

Website and Intranet Workflow: CPI and ITS (cont.)

All public-facing website content requests, updates, and new page needs should flow through CPI for review, prioritization, and approval before publication. CPI will work directly with departments to ensure information is accurate, timely, audience-focused, and aligned with City standards. ITS will be engaged when requests involve technical configuration, functionality, platform access, integrations, forms, system limitations, or issues that require back-end support.

The same general workflow applies to the internal SharePoint site. CPI leads the organization, governance, and editorial standards for employee-facing content, while ITS manages the technical environment, user access, system reliability, and platform support. Departments should not independently create, restructure, or publish major public or internal web content without coordination through CPI.

This shared workflow ensures the City's digital platforms remain accurate, accessible, secure, user-friendly, and aligned with organizational priorities. CPI and ITS will maintain regular coordination to review website and SharePoint needs, clarify ownership, resolve issues, and support continuous improvement of both platforms.

Explore LS Workflow: CPI and Agency Coordination

CPI serves as the City's lead creative and content partner for Explore LS, supporting tourism promotion through brand-aligned storytelling, campaign development, social media planning, content creation, graphic design, video, photography, and other creative services. The Director of CPI serves on the Explore LS Board, helping ensure alignment among Explore LS priorities, City messaging, community identity, and broader destination marketing goals.

Explore LS may continue to work with an outside agency for paid media placement and influencer recommendations or coordination. The agency will provide direction on the creative assets specifications, timelines, and deliverables needed to support paid media or influencer campaigns. CPI will then develop and produce the creative content and campaign materials needed to execute those strategies across appropriate platforms.

This structure allows Explore LS to benefit from specialized outside media placement expertise while maintaining consistent creative direction, brand stewardship, and local storytelling through CPI. Routine collaboration among Explore LS, CPI, and any outside agency will ensure tourism campaigns are coordinated, visually consistent, strategically planned, and reflective of Lee's Summit's identity as a destination.

Explore LS Workflow: CPI and Agency Coordination (cont.)

CPI will serve as the primary owner of Explore LS creative execution, including organic social media planning, campaign concepts, written content, design, video production, photography, and coordination of City-supported promotional materials. Major campaigns, paid media initiatives, influencer partnerships or tourism efforts with broader City impact should be coordinated through CPI to ensure alignment, proper planning, and consistent public messaging.

COMMUNICATION PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

This section outlines the six strategic communication priorities for 2026–2028 and the tactics that will bring each to life.

Priorities are sequenced to build on one another: governance and infrastructure come first, followed by proactive communications development, audience expansion, digital maturity, and crisis preparedness.

Priority 1: Build the Strategic Foundation

Year 1 is primarily about activating the governance, structural, and process infrastructure that makes everything else possible. The foundational work is already underway: the department has been renamed the Department of Communications and Public Information, the Director has been elevated as the City's senior communications lead and primary PIO, and the team structure is in place. The work now is formalizing what has begun, launching the intake system, and establishing the coordination mechanisms that will sustain proactive communications over the long term.

Key Strategies & Tactics

- The Department of Communications and Public Information is established as the City's strategic communications authority, with the Director serving as CCO and primary PIO
- Launch centralized communications intake system using Microsoft Forms; designate Senior CPI Specialist as intake coordinator for all incoming department requests
- Establish and launch the Communications Council with monthly meeting cadence; Senior CPI Specialist manages logistics and agenda preparation
- Formalize the departmental PIO network with defined roles, protocols, and chain of command
- Develop a citywide communications governance document and distribute to all departments
- Conduct a departmental communications audit to baseline current activity, tools, and gaps

Priority 2: Develop Proactive Campaign Capacity

Moving from reactive to proactive is the central operational shift this plan calls for. Building proactive capacity requires both planning discipline and protected time for strategic work.

Key Strategies & Tactics

- Develop an annual editorial content calendar aligned to City priorities, events, the Ignite! plan, and seasonal service cycles
- Create communications campaign plans for all major City initiatives — including the stormwater ballot measure, website overhaul, and CityView permitting upgrade
- Implement a standard campaign planning template: objectives, audiences, key messages, channels, timeline, and measurement
- Reinstate and formalize monthly PIO coordination (Communications Council) meetings to align campaign planning across departments
- Protect Director and strategist time for proactive planning by clearly delegating work (proactive, production, reactive)
- Build a library of evergreen content: FAQs, explainer videos, and service guides to reduce reactive burden on recurring topics

Priority 3: Strengthen Narrative Leadership & Transparency

Residents want more than announcements. They want context: why decisions were made, how growth connects across the city, and what leadership thinks about the future. This priority focuses on shifting the City's communications from information delivery to public understanding.

Key Strategies & Tactics

- Adopt the five messaging pillars as the unifying framework for all City communications
- Develop a leadership voice strategy — regular, purposeful communication from the Mayor and City Manager across key platforms
- Introduce a monthly leadership video or written update tied to active City priorities
- Implement the five social media content pillars: City Decisions Explained, Services & What to Expect, Inside City Hall, Community Life & City Pride, and Leadership Updates & Civic Direction

- For all major decisions, develop a 'decision context' communication: what was decided, why, what residents can expect next
- Create a standard project communications framework: all capital projects and high-visibility initiatives receive dedicated communications plans with consistent update cadence

Priority 4: Reach Every Audience

Lee's Summit is not communicating to a single 'resident.' It is communicating to multiple groups with different needs, preferences, and levels of digital access. This priority ensures the City is genuinely reaching all of them.

Key Strategies & Tactics

- Implement platform-specific content strategies: Facebook as operational information hub; Instagram as community identity and short-form video; X as real-time service channel; LinkedIn as governance and employer brand; YouTube as managed media library
- Develop a short-form video strategy for Instagram Reels and TikTok (contingent on capacity) with 2-3 repeatable content series
- Expand outreach to younger residents through platform-native content, events-based engagement, and digital-first design
- Develop print and in-person outreach strategies for older adults, non-digital households, and underserved communities
- Create bilingual or Spanish-language communications for priority topics by Year 2
- Strengthen internal communications through the SharePoint intranet rollout, ensuring field employees have consistent access to updates
- Build a LinkedIn strategy as a workforce, governance, and employer brand channel

Priority 5: Modernize Technology & Measurement

Lee's Summit's communications tools are functional but fragmented. This priority addresses the integration, analytics, and AI readiness gaps identified in the needs assessment.

Key Strategies & Tactics

- Implement a centralized analytics dashboard aggregating data from social media, website, email, and intake systems reportable quarterly
- Establish standard KPIs across five categories: intake/workflow performance, output and production, engagement and reach, strategic outcomes, and internal communications effectiveness

- Evaluate and address website performance bottlenecks and content gaps identified in the 2026 Website Audit
- Develop a policy framework for AI-assisted communications tools (drafting, ideation, translation support)
- Conduct annual social media audit and platform strategy review

Priority 6: Build Crisis Communications Readiness

The City does not currently have an integrated crisis communications plan. This is among the highest-priority gaps identified by the Mayor, departmental leaders, and the core communications team. Crisis readiness must be built before the next crisis arrives.

Key Strategies & Tactics

- Develop and adopt a comprehensive Crisis Communications Plan with pre-approved templates, decision trees, spokesperson protocols, and post-incident review processes (detailed in Toolkit)
- Define the crisis communications chain of command across CPI, Police, Fire, and the City Manager's Office
- Conduct an annual crisis communications tabletop exercise with the Communications Council and department heads
- Develop pre-approved message templates for the most common high-risk scenarios: weather events, infrastructure failures, public safety incidents, financial news, and political controversy
- Establish a misinformation monitoring and rapid response protocol, including social media monitoring tools
- Ensure all communications staff and departmental PIOs receive crisis communications training annually

YEAR-BY-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

The following roadmap sequences the plan's priorities and strategies across three years. Year 1 (2026) focuses on foundation-building: governance, structure, and process infrastructure. Year 2 (2027) expands capacity and deepens strategic communications. Year 3 (2028) consolidates gains, advances digital maturity, and positions the City for long-term sustainability.

YEAR 1 : 2026	BUILD THE FOUNDATION
<p>Governance & Structure</p>	<p>The Department of Communications and Public Information is established. Director serves as CCO and primary PIO. Signals strategic intent to the organization and all departments.</p>
<p>Intake & Workflow</p>	<p>Launch centralized intake and prioritization system; train all departments on intake process; establish standard turnaround time expectations</p>
<p>Crisis Readiness</p>	<p>Develop and adopt Crisis Communications Plan; define crisis chain of command; create pre-approved message templates for top five scenarios; conduct first tabletop exercise with leadership</p>

YEAR 1 : 2026

BUILD THE FOUNDATION

Campaign Planning

Develop annual editorial content calendar for 2026; create communications plans for stormwater ballot, website overhaul; implement standard campaign planning template

Messaging Framework

Adopt messaging pillars organization-wide; develop brand voice guide; deliver departmental communications training (Session 1: brand standards, intake process, pillar alignment)

Digital Foundations

Launch leadership video/update cadence; define platform roles for each social channel; establish 2-3 repeatable Instagram content series; baseline current analytics across all platforms

Staffing (near-term)

Clarify and distinguish strategic vs. operational roles within existing team; transition strategic communications role to "defensive" function

Technology

Website content gaps addressed

YEAR 2 : 2027

DEEPEN STRATEGIC CAPACITY

Audience Expansion

Launch bilingual/Spanish-language communications for priority topics; expand outreach to underserved communities; develop TikTok strategy if capacity allows; strengthen field employee internal communications via SharePoint

Proactive Communications

Achieve 50% proactive vs. reactive work balance; full annual editorial calendar in operation; minimum four major campaign plans delivered; Communications Council fully operational

YEAR 2 : 2027

DEEPEN STRATEGIC CAPACITY

Crisis Preparedness

Second tabletop exercise; refine crisis plan based on Year 1 experience; expand pre-approved scenario templates; misinformation monitoring protocol operational

Analytics & Measurement

Centralized analytics dashboard fully operational; quarterly performance reports published; KPIs established across all five metric categories; website optimization priorities addressed

Training

Annual departmental communications training (Session 2: campaign planning, digital strategy, crisis communications basics)

Technology

AI policy framework finalized and distributed;

YEAR 3 : 2028

SUSTAIN AND ADVANCE

Organizational Maturity

Communications fully repositioned as strategic executive function; hub-and-spoke model fully operational; all governance protocols embedded in standard operating procedures

Evaluate Staffing Needs

Use intake system data and workload analytics to build evidence-based case for any future staffing additions.

Digital Leadership

YouTube repositioned as managed media library with intentional content architecture; LinkedIn strategy delivering employer brand and governance presence; full platform-specific content strategies in steady state

Measurement & Learning

Annual Strategic Communications Plan review completed; Year 3 outcomes benchmarked against Year 1 baseline; updated plan developed for 2029-2031 cycle

Institutional Knowledge

All key workflows, templates, and governance protocols fully documented; staff training program sustainable and standardized; communications function no longer dependent on individual institutional knowledge

METRICS FOR SUCCESS

This plan will be evaluated against a clear, consistent framework of key performance indicators (KPIs). Metrics are grouped into five categories reflecting the full lifecycle of communications work from intake through outcomes. Reporting will occur quarterly, with an annual summary informing the plan review cycle.

The goal of measurement is not to generate reports, it is to learn, adapt, and continuously improve. Metrics should inform decisions, identify bottlenecks, demonstrate value, and guide resource allocation.

1. Intake & Workflow Performance		
Metric	Data Source	Reporting Cadence
Request volume by department (monthly)	Centralized intake system	Monthly
Request type distribution: emergency / time-sensitive / routine / strategic	Intake system tagging	Monthly
Average turnaround time by request type	Intake timestamps	Monthly
On-time delivery rate (% delivered by agreed deadline)	Intake + project tracking	Monthly
Ratio of reactive to strategic/proactive work	Staff time tracking + intake	Quarterly

2. Output & Production

Metric	Data Source	Reporting Cadence
Content volume by channel (videos, posts, graphics, emails, print)	Project tracking + platform logs	Monthly
Campaign completion rate (% of planned campaigns delivered as scoped)	Campaign calendars + project plans	Quarterly
Revision cycles per project (avg. rounds before approval)	Project management tools	Quarterly
Number of communications plans developed for major initiatives	Plan tracking	Annually

3. Engagement & Reach

Metric	Data Source	Reporting Cadence
Website traffic: sessions, unique users, top pages, bounce rate	Google Analytics	Monthly
Social media engagement: likes, shares, comments, reach, saves, click-through	Hootsuite / native analytics	Monthly
Video performance: views, watch time, completion rate	YouTube + social platforms	Monthly
Email performance: open rate, click-through rate, unsubscribes	Constant Contact	Monthly
Follower/subscriber growth across platforms	Platform analytics	Quarterly

4. Strategic Outcomes

Metric	Data Source	Reporting Cadence
Campaign awareness lift (traffic spikes, engagement lift, survey feedback)	Analytics + surveys	Per campaign
Public understanding of major initiatives (reduced inquiry volume, survey indicators)	Call center data + surveys	Semi-annually
Crisis response effectiveness (response time, message consistency, misinformation incidents)	Timeline reviews + monitoring tools	Per incident
Resident satisfaction with City communications (annual community feedback)	Community survey	Annually

5. Internal Communications Effectiveness

Metric	Data Source	Reporting Cadence
Internal message reach: email open rates, intranet engagement	Internal platforms	Monthly
Employee feedback on communications clarity and timeliness	Staff check-in + HR feedback	Semi-annually
Training participation rate across departments	Training records	Annually
Communications Council (Core Comms) attendance and agenda completion rate	Meeting records	Quarterly

TOOLKIT

A heart-shaped mirror is the central focus, reflecting a street scene. The reflection shows a building with the name 'ANNIE S...' on its upper floor and 'BANK' on the ground floor. A sign on the left side of the reflection reads 'LS DOWN TOWN'. The mirror is set on a stone-paved plaza. In the background of the scene, there is a bench and a building with a covered entrance. The entire image has a teal color overlay.

TOOLKIT OVERVIEW

This Toolkit provides City staff with the practical tools, templates, and reference guides needed to implement the Strategic Communications Plan. It is designed to be used daily as a reference for how to submit requests, plan campaigns, respond to crises, use the right channels, and communicate effectively as a team.

The Toolkit is a living resource. Sections should be reviewed annually and updated as workflows, tools, and priorities evolve. CPI is responsible for maintaining and distributing updated versions.

TOOL	PURPOSE
Communications Matrix	Match the right channels to the right audiences for every message
Intake Request Process	Step-by-step guide for submitting and managing communications requests via Microsoft Forms + SharePoint + Power Automate
Crisis Communications Plan	Protocols, decision tree, holding statements, and response checklist for emergencies and high-visibility incidents
Content Calendar Framework	Annual and monthly planning templates to shift communications from reactive to proactive
Social Media Strategy & Content Pillars	Platform roles, content pillar framework, cadence guide, and execution tips for all City social channels
Media Relations Tip Sheet	Best practices for working with reporters, issuing press releases, and managing media inquiries
Internal Communications Protocol	Guidelines for reaching City employees including office-based staff, field workers, and leadership

COMMUNICATIONS MATRIX

The Communications Matrix helps CPI staff select the most effective channels for reaching specific audiences. Before launching any communication effort, from a social post to a major campaign, refer to this matrix to ensure the right tools are being used for the right people.

Note: Not every message belongs on every channel. Use this matrix to match your audience to the tools most likely to reach them effectively.

Legend: Highly Effective ● Effective ● Sometimes Effective ● Not Effective ●

	Families & Older Adults	Younger Residents	Business & Employers	Underserved Communities	City Employees	Officials and Partners	Media
City Website	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Facebook	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Instagram	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
X (Twitter)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
LinkedIn	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
YouTube	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
TikTok	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Email / Newsletter	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Print Materials	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Digital Signage	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
LS Aware / LS Connect	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

	Families & Older Adults	Younger Residents	Business & Employers	Underserved Communities	City Employees	Officials and Partners	Media
Cable TV / Gov Channel	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
In-Person Events	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
SharePoint / Intranet	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Press Releases / Briefings	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Direct Briefings / Talking Points	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

How to Use This Matrix

- Identify your primary audience(s) for the communication
- Scan down the tool column for your audience to find Highly Effective (H) and Effective (E) channels
- Select 2–4 channels for routine communications; activate more for major campaigns
- For audiences marked 'Sometimes Effective' (S), use the channel only if it is already part of your standard workflow
- Avoid channels marked 'Not Effective' (N) for that audience; they waste capacity without reaching the intended audience.

Channel Quick Reference

Channel	Best Used For
City Website	Authoritative information, service details, official notices — the permanent record for all audiences
Facebook	Resident information hub: service updates, events, weather, community notices for broad reach

Channel	Best Used For
Instagram	Community identity, visual storytelling, short-form video for younger and general audiences
X (Twitter)	Real-time updates, service disruptions, situational awareness — write for speed and brevity
LinkedIn	Governance, employer brand, workforce storytelling, professional and business audiences
YouTube	Long-form explainers, meeting archives, city storytelling — evergreen managed media library
Email / Newsletter	High-value targeted information for residents, employees, businesses, and officials
Print Materials	Families, older adults, underserved communities — postcards, bill inserts, door hangers
Digital Signage	Public-facing announcements in high-traffic City facilities, time-sensitive service notices, event promotions, and internal staff communications in common areas.
LS Aware / LS Connect	Time-sensitive alerts, emergency notifications, service disruption notices
In-Person Events	Community trust-building, underserved outreach, high-engagement initiatives
SharePoint Intranet	Internal audiences only — employees, field staff, organizational updates
Press Releases / Direct Briefings	Media relations, official announcements, building journalist relationships
Nextdoor	Geographically specific service updates, infrastructure notices, and community safety information

COMMUNICATIONS INTAKE REQUEST PROCESS

The centralized intake system is the single-entry point for all communications requests submitted to CPI. It replaces informal, email-based, and ad-hoc requests with a standardized process that creates transparency, reduces last-minute disruptions, and generates data to guide workload decisions.

System Architecture

Microsoft Forms	SharePoint List	Power Automate
<p>Single Intake Portal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible to all departments via Microsoft 365 • Standardized fields capture all essential information • File upload for supporting materials • Acknowledgment checkbox at submission 	<p>Ticket Database</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each submission creates a logged ticket • Status updated in real time (Submitted / In Review / In Progress / Complete) • Sortable by department, date, priority, and type • Source of truth for analytics and reporting 	<p>Automated Workflows</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routes tickets to the correct team member • Sends automated status emails to requestors • Escalation reminders for overdue items • Weekly summary digest to CPI Director



Process Flow



Intake Form - Required Fields

The intake form is structured across six sections, based on the draft developed with the CPI team:

SECTION A Requestor Information

Requesting Department
Dropdown
Select department...

Primary Contact Name
Full name

Email Address
email@city.gov

Cell
(000) 000-0000

Extension
Ext.

SECTION B Project Overview

Project Title
Enter a short, descriptive title

Brief Project Description
What is this project?
Describe your project in a few sentences...

What specific outcome(s) are you hoping this project will achieve?
Select one

- Inform / Educate
- Explain a process
- Change / Influence behavior
- Promote an event / program

SECTION C Channels

Proposed Communication Channels
Select all that apply

- Website
- Email / newsletter
- Video
- Internal channels (Teams / Intranet)
- Social media
- Print (flyer, postcard, insert)
- Digital signage
- Unsure – need recommendation

SECTION D Timeline & Priority

Desired Go-Live Date
Date picker
MM / DD / YYYY

Is this date flexible?
 Yes Somewhat No

Priority Level (Requestor Perspective)
Select one

- Critical / time-sensitive
- High
- Medium
- Low

SECTION E Approvals & Readiness

Who is the final approver for content?
Name + title
Full name, Title

Supporting Materials Uploaded
File upload — attach all relevant assets

DRAG FILES HERE OR CLICK TO BROWSE

[Draft copy](#) [Logos](#) [Photos](#) [Background documents](#)

SECTION G Intake Acknowledgment

I understand that submission of this form does not guarantee immediate production and that CPI will prioritize requests based on citywide needs, capacity, and best practices.

All fields marked required must be completed before submission.

SUBMIT REQUEST

Priority & Turnaround Time Standards

Priority Level	Definition & Turnaround Target
HIGH / Time-Sensitive	Deadline-driven with limited flexibility. Response and/or execution within 1–3 business days.
MEDIUM / Routine	Standard communications need with a reasonable lead time. Response and/or execution within 5–10 business days.
LOW / Strategic	Long-term campaign or planned initiative. Scheduled into editorial calendar with advance planning. Submit 6-8 weeks from intended execution.

Guidance for Departments: How to Get the Best Results

- Only PIOs, Department Managers, and/or Director-appointed department designees can submit requests
- Submit requests with a minimum two-week lead time for routine projects and 4+ weeks for campaigns or video.
- Include all supporting materials at submission. Incomplete requests create delays and revision cycles.
- Name your final approver upfront; unapproved content is the #1 source of project stalls.
- Use the 'Unsure — need recommendation' channel option if you do not know which channels to use.
- For time-sensitive requests, call the Director directly and follow up with the form.
- The intake form is not for verbal conversations or information-sharing, it is for requests that require CPI production or support.

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

This Crisis Communications Plan establishes the protocols, roles, and tools the City of Lee's Summit will use to communicate during emergencies and high-visibility incidents. It should be reviewed annually, tested through tabletop exercises, and kept accessible to all designated staff at all times.

A crisis is defined as any event that prompts significant public attention, media coverage, or reputational risk and demands a rapid, coordinated response. An emergency is an event that presents immediate threat to public safety and typically involves Police, Fire, or emergency medical response.

The City cannot wait for a crisis to build crisis capacity. Preparation, pre-approved protocols, and a clear chain of command are necessary to allow the City to respond in minutes, not hours.

Crisis Level Definitions

Level 1: Life Safety / Public Emergency

Active threat, major fire, natural disaster, public health emergency, infrastructure failure affecting safety

Level 2: Reputational / Operational

Staff misconduct allegations, significant service failure, financial controversy, high-profile legal matter

Level 3: Routine Issue / Minor Disruption

Road closure, routine service outage, minor complaint, planned construction notice, social media concern

Crisis Response Framework



Crisis Communications Chain of Command

Role	Crisis Communication Responsibility
Director of Communications and Public Information	Primary crisis communications lead. Activates plan, designates spokesperson, coordinates all outgoing messaging, liaises with City Manager.
City Manager	Lead coordinator for Level 1 and 2 crises. Primary or secondary spokesperson. Liaison to elected officials and external agencies.
City Attorney	Ensures legal compliance; reviews statements for liability. Advises on confidentiality and public records.
Mayor / Elected Officials	Secondary spokesperson when appropriate. Briefed before public release. Provided talking points and key messages.
Police PIO	Leads Level 1 crisis communications for law enforcement incidents. Coordinates with Director on unified messaging.
Fire PIO	Leads crisis communications for fire and emergency medical incidents. Integrates into citywide plan for major incidents.
CPI Specialist	Operational support: monitoring, drafting updates, social media management, coordinating internal notifications.

The Messaging Triangle

Every crisis statement, from a holding statement to a press release, should address three questions:

WHAT HAPPENED?

State the facts known at this time. Be specific but avoid speculation. Acknowledge what is not yet known.

HOW DOES IT AFFECT CITY RESIDENTS?

Directly address the audience's concern. What do they need to know to stay safe or take action?

WHAT IS THE CITY DOING?

Describe the concrete steps being taken. Who is involved? What is the timeline? When will residents hear more?

Holding Statement Templates

Use these templates when full details are not yet available. Never say 'no comment.' Always acknowledge, express care, and direct audiences to where they can get updates.

Role	Crisis Communication Responsibility
Public Safety Incident	"The City of Lee's Summit is aware of an incident in [location/area]. Public safety personnel are on scene and actively responding. Resident safety is our immediate priority. We will share additional information as soon as it is available if/when appropriate at CityofLS.net and on our official city social media channels."
Service Disruption	"We are aware of [service issue] affecting [area/service]. Our team is working to resolve this as quickly as possible. We expect to have more information by [time/date] and will provide updates through [channels]. We apologize for any inconvenience."
Staff Misconduct Allegation	"We hold City of Lee's Summit employees to high ethical and professional standards. When concerns are raised, we conduct a thorough review to determine appropriate next steps. We are committed to transparency and will provide updates as the process allows."
Financial / Budget Controversy	"The City is committed to the responsible stewardship of public resources. We are reviewing [situation] and will provide a full accounting of the facts. We welcome questions from residents and will share information through [channels] as it becomes available."
Misinformation Circulating	"We are aware of misinformation circulating about [topic]. The facts are: [correct information]. For the most up-to-date and accurate information about this and all City matters, please visit CityofLS.net or follow our official channels."

Post-Incident Review

Within 72 hours of every Level 1 or Level 2 incident, the Director convenes a post-incident communications review. The review examines: response time from identification to first public statement; message consistency across all channels and spokespeople; misinformation that emerged and how it was addressed; what worked well; and what should be improved. Findings are documented and used to update templates, protocols, and training.

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY & CONTENT PILLARS

Lee's Summit's social media channels are a trusted source of information for residents and a significant opportunity to shift from announcement-driven communications to understanding-driven communications. This tool defines platform roles, content pillars, posting cadence, and execution guidance for all City social channels.

Platform Roles

Platform	Primary Role & Strategic Focus
Facebook	Resident Information Hub — Broadest reach across age groups. Operational City news, service updates, events, and community notices. Use predictable content rhythms so residents know what to expect.
Instagram	Community Identity & Short-Form Video — Visual storytelling and City pride. Primary platform for Reels, behind-the-scenes content, and short-form narrative video. Target younger residents and general audiences.
LinkedIn	Governance, Workforce, & Employer Brand — Leadership perspective, policy context, career storytelling, and City priorities. Distinct from other platforms. Target business community, professionals, and prospective employees.
X (Twitter)	Real-Time Service Channel — Time-sensitive updates, weather alerts, service disruptions. Write for speed and brevity. One clear purpose per post. Not a content mirror — optimized for immediacy.

Platform	Primary Role & Strategic Focus
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YouTube	Managed Media Library — Long-form public record and storytelling archive. High-production explainers, City council and committee meetings, and City initiatives. Consistent titling and thumbnails. Content should have utility beyond the moment it's posted.
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Nextdoor	Nextdoor reaches verified residents organized by neighborhood, making it the right platform for geographically specific service updates, infrastructure notices, and community safety information. Use it to meet residents where neighborhood-level conversations are already happening, not to broadcast citywide messaging, but to deliver relevant, localized information to the people most directly affected.
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The Five Content Pillars

Every piece of social content should align to one of five pillars. In any given week, at least three different pillars should be represented. Major initiatives should activate multiple pillars simultaneously.

Pillar	Purpose	Example Content Angles
City Decisions, Explained	Build understanding and trust around city actions and growth	Why a project is happening now; how resident input shaped decisions; what the timeline looks like; how success will be measured
Services & What to Expect	Reduce confusion and improve preparedness around service changes and disruptions	Roadwork timelines; seasonal service changes; weather response plans; what residents should expect next

Pillar	Purpose	Example Content Angles
Inside the City	Humanize City operations and expertise; build trust through transparency	Day-in-the-life of departments; staff spotlights; behind-the-scenes during events or emergencies
Community Life & City Pride	Reinforce community identity and belonging	Resident and business spotlights; neighborhood features; community events; parks, trails, and public spaces; volunteer opportunities; City milestones; local traditions; recognitions; quality-of-life storytelling
Leadership Updates & Civic Direction	Provide consistent leadership presence and context around long-term priorities	City Manager updates; priorities for the month or quarter; early framing for emerging issues

Recommended Posting Cadence

The most consistent finding across all 2025 research is that government accounts that post less frequently but more intentionally outperform those that post constantly. This is a meaningful shift from older advice to post daily which means the CPI team and department PIOs can focus energy on content quality rather than volume.

Facebook: 4-5 posts per week (daily on weekdays, rest on weekends)

Instagram: 3-4 posts per week. For government accounts, the highest engagement is concentrated midweek — Wednesdays and Thursdays — in the afternoons, roughly noon to 5 p.m.

LinkedIn: 2-3 posts per week

X (Twitter): As needed, real-time, operational, time-aware

YouTube: 1-2 planned uploads per month (utility and longevity focused)

Nextdoor: 2–4 posts per week, targeted by neighborhood or city-wide as relevant.

Content Tips

- Hooks: Open with why the information matters to residents — lead with relevance, not logistics
- CTAs: Use clear, action-oriented prompts: 'Here's what to expect' / 'Save this for reference' / 'Share your questions with us'
- Repurposing: One long-form video can fuel Instagram Reels, a LinkedIn leadership post, a Facebook explainer, and an X contextual thread
- Consistency over volume: Fewer, better posts with repeatable formats outperform high-volume, inconsistent posting
- Platform-specific writing: Resist copying the same text to every channel — each platform has a distinct audience and tone

Responding to Resident Posts and Comments

Not every post about the City requires a reply, but every post deserves attention. The goal is not to respond to everything; it is to respond to the right things, in the right way, with enough consistency that residents trust the City is listening. The following framework guides when and how the City engages with resident-generated social media content.

Respond directly and promptly when:

- A resident has a factual question about a City service, program, deadline, or process that the City can answer accurately
- A post contains misinformation that, if left uncorrected, could cause public confusion, affect safety, or damage trust in City operations
- A resident reports a service issue, infrastructure problem, or public safety concern through a social channel; acknowledge it and direct them to the proper reporting mechanism
- A crisis or emergency is actively unfolding and residents are seeking information

Engage without a direct comment (like, react, or share) when:

- A resident shares positive or neutral content about the City, a City event, or City staff that requires no correction or clarification
- A community member answers another resident's question accurately before the City has the chance to: affirm it rather than duplicate it
- A local organization or partner shares City-related information that is accurate and consistent with City messaging

Monitor but do not engage when:

- A post expresses a personal opinion, political viewpoint, or general frustration that does not contain misinformation or a service need; the City's role is not to debate or defend every policy position in a comment thread
- A conversation between residents is resolving itself accurately and productively without City intervention
- A post is inflammatory, designed to provoke a reaction, or part of a broader pattern of bad-faith commentary; engaging can amplify rather than resolve
- The content falls outside the City's scope or jurisdiction

Escalate off-platform when:

- A resident's post indicates a potential safety concern, mental health crisis, or urgent personal need; do not attempt to resolve these in a public comment thread; refer to appropriate resources privately

Social Media Account Review

Annually, CPI should audit all active City social media accounts for relevance. An account should be considered for decommissioning if two or more of the following apply: consistently low engagement over 90+ days; maintenance costs exceed benefit; the account's content is redundant to another City channel; content no longer aligns with department mission; or the platform no longer reaches the intended audience effectively. If an account is decommissioned, notify followers, archive all content, and direct audiences to alternative channels.

CONTENT CALENDAR FRAMEWORK

An annual content calendar is the operational backbone of proactive communications. It shifts the City from reacting to requests to planning ahead, creating space for campaign development, narrative leadership, and strategic storytelling alongside the routine work of public information.

Annual Planning Framework

The editorial calendar should be built each fall for the following year. It should be structured around three layers:

Calendar Layer	What It Includes	Examples
Anchor Events	Fixed dates that drive communications activity: non-negotiable entries that all departments can plan around	City Council budget adoption, elections, annual report release, major construction project launches, seasonal service transitions
Strategic Campaigns	Planned, multi-channel communications efforts tied to City priorities scheduled at least 6–8 weeks in advance	Ballot measures, website improvements, infrastructure capital project communications, recruitment campaigns
Recurring Content	Predictable, repeatable content series that create consistency and reduce reactive pressure	Weekly City service tip, monthly leadership update, quarterly project updates, seasonal service reminders, staff spotlights

Campaign Planning Template

For every major initiative, complete the following planning template before production begins. A minimum of four major campaigns should be planned per year by Year 2.

Planning Element	Questions to Answer
Campaign Title & Objective	What is this campaign called? What specific outcome do you want it to achieve?
Target Audience(s)	Who are you trying to reach? What do they already know or believe? What do you need them to understand or do?
Key Messages (1-3 max)	What are the 1–3 things your audience must walk away understanding? Every piece of content should support at least one message.
Messaging Pillar(s)	Which of the five messaging pillars does this campaign activate?
Channels & Formats	Which channels will you use? What content formats (video, graphic, post, email, print)? Refer to the Communications Matrix.
Timeline & Milestones	What is the campaign period? What are the key milestone dates (launch, peak, wrap)? Is frequency increasing in the lead-up?
Production Needs	What needs to be created? Who is producing it? What materials do you need from the requesting department?
Approvals	Who approves content before it publishes? What is the approval turnaround expectation?
Budget	Are paid social media boosted posts needed? Any print or distribution costs?
Metrics for Success	How will you measure whether this campaign worked? What data will you collect and when?

MEDIA RELATIONS TIP SHEET

Strong media relationships are built on trust, responsiveness, and accuracy. The City of Lee's Summit's goal is not to control the news; it is to ensure that reporters have the information they need to cover the City accurately and fairly. Proactive media engagement builds credibility; reactive or evasive responses erode it.

Who Speaks to Media

The Director of Communications and Public Information is the primary media contact for the City of Lee's Summit. All media inquiries received by City staff should be immediately referred to the Director. The Police and Fire PIOs may respond to routine, operational media inquiries within their domain, but must notify the Director of any media contact within the same business day. For Level 1 and 2 incidents, the City Manager serves as the primary or secondary spokesperson, coordinated by the Director.

Core Media Relations Principles

- Always respond: even if only to say 'We are gathering information and will follow up by [time].' Never say 'no comment.'
- Be accurate, not complete. It is better to share what is known and update than to delay until everything is confirmed.
- Stay on message. Prepare 1–3 key messages before any interview or briefing; return to them consistently.
- Be helpful. Reporters are doing their jobs; treat them as professionals, and they will treat the City as a reliable source.
- Correct errors promptly. If a story contains factual errors, contact the reporter directly and professionally with corrections.
- Build relationships before you need them. Proactive outreach, story pitches, and briefings build goodwill with local media.

Media Inquiry Staff Response Templates

These templates are for use by any City employee who receives a media inquiry by phone, email, or in person. Departmental PIOs handle inquiries within their domain, but CPI must be notified when an inquiry is received and will provide initial review of any proposed response before it goes out. Final approval rests with the City Manager or the relevant Department Director. For staff who are not designated PIOs, inquiries should be redirected to the departmental PIO or CPI. These scripts ensure everyone responds professionally and consistently.

Situation	DO	DO NOT
Phone call from reporter	Be polite. Take their name, outlet, topic, deadline, and contact info. PIO notifies CPI immediately.	Answer their questions. Say "no comment." Transfer without notifying CPI.
Email from reporter	Send acknowledgment of inquiry to reporter. Notify CPI immediately. Draft proposed response for CPI review.	Ignore. Answer the question in email.
Reporter approaches you in person	Stay calm, be courteous, take their card or let them know you will follow up directly in email. PIO contacts CPI.	Walk away, say "no comment," make statements, speculate.
Reporter has camera/recorder	Professionally redirect to email. Step away calmly.	Touch equipment. Make off-camera comments. Look annoyed or dismissive.
Reporter asks "off the record"	Politely decline and notify CPI immediately of inquiry/interaction.	Agree to off-the-record conversation.
You're asked at a public meeting	Provide factual, publicly available information only. Note you'll follow up for anything requiring confirmation.	Speculate. Speak to policy matters not within your authority.

Media Inquiry Response Protocol

All media responses in Lee’s Summit follow this sequence, regardless of department or inquiry type:

- **Notify CPI immediately upon receipt.** The departmental PIO notifies CPI as soon as any media inquiry is received before preparing a response. CPI is not the first responder; they are the first to know.
- **CPI reviews the proposed response.** The departmental PIO drafts the proposed response and submits it to CPI for initial review. CPI checks for message consistency, tone, and alignment with citywide communications frameworks. CPI may suggest edits or flag concerns.
- **City Manager or Department Director gives final approval.** No response goes out until the City Manager or the relevant Department Director has given final approval. This step may be brief for routine matters and more deliberate for sensitive or high-profile inquiries.

Who Counts as “Media”?

The definition of “media” has expanded significantly in the digital era. CPI will use the following standard: a person or organization counts as media for purposes of this policy if they are actively gathering information for public distribution with the intent to inform an audience.

This includes, but is not limited to:

Type	Example	CPI Approach
Traditional Media	Newspapers (print/digital), TV news, radio, wire services, news magazines	Full protocol — same-day response, interview coordination through CPI
Digital News Outlets	Online-only news sites, regional news aggregators, nonprofit local journalism	Full protocol — treat same as traditional media
Independent Journalists / Freelancers	Credentialed freelancers writing for established publications; investigative journalists	Full protocol — verify outlet before scheduling interviews

Type	Example	CPI Approach
Bloggers / Independent Commentators	Local political blogs, community commentary sites, neighborhood newsletters with significant audience	Case-by-case — CPI Director determines appropriate level of access and response
Podcast / Video Creators	Local affairs podcasts, YouTube channels covering government, community creators with engaged audiences	Case-by-case — CPI Director evaluates reach, audience, and editorial approach
Social Media Commentators	Individuals with large local followings who report or comment on City matters publicly	Monitor — respond to factual errors via public channels; do not grant formal media access without CPI Director approval
Academic / Research Inquiries	University researchers, graduate students, policy institutes	Departmental PIO handles with CPI coordination. Confirm scope and use of information before responding. CPI notified per standard protocol.

What Access Does Media Receive?

Access Type	Standard and CPI Role
Public Meetings & Hearings	Open to all media without restriction. Media may film, photograph, and record in publicly accessible areas. CPI should be notified in advance when media attendance is expected for significant meetings.
City Facilities & Operations	Requires CPI coordination. Media should not access non-public areas of City facilities without prior approval. CPI arranges facility access and ensures appropriate staff are available.

Access Type	Standard and CPI Role
Interviews with City Staff	Departmental PIOs handle media inquiries within their domain and coordinate interviews with department staff. CPI must be notified when an inquiry is received, will provide initial review of proposed responses, and coordinates on cross-departmental or citywide matters. Final approval rests with the City Manager or relevant Department Director before any response goes out.
Documents & Records	Respond according to Missouri Sunshine Law. Director or designated PIO responds. Provide factual information, offer follow-up if needed.
Photo / Video of Facilities & Staff	Notify CPI Director immediately. Do not respond until CPI Director has briefed City Manager and provided direction. Prepare written statement before engaging reporter.

- **Mayor interviews:** CPI should be notified of all media requests directed to the Mayor's office. For substantive policy, budget, or crisis-related interviews, the CPI Director should be available to brief the Mayor in advance and be present during or immediately available after the interview. CPI provides initial review of any prepared talking points or statements before they are used. For routine or ceremonial topics, CPI notification and talking points are sufficient.
- **Council member interviews:** Council members may respond independently to media inquiries about their personal views or policy positions. For topics involving City operations, pending decisions, or active projects, CPI should be notified and talking points provided. CPI does not screen or approve Council member statements but can be a resource.
- **Department directors and senior staff:** Department directors and senior staff respond to media inquiries within their domain through their designated departmental PIO. CPI must be notified when any inquiry is received and will provide initial review of proposed responses before they go out. Final approval rests with the City Manager or the relevant Department Director.

Interview Preparation Checklist

Before Every Interview or Media Briefing

- Confirm the reporter's name, outlet, story angle, and deadline
- Identify 1–3 key messages you want the story to include
- Anticipate the 3 most challenging questions you could be asked — prepare honest answers
- Director coordinates with Mayor's office or Councilmember. Prepare talking points and key messages before interview.
- Brief the City Manager if the topic involves policy, budget, or controversy
- Have facts, figures, and supporting materials ready — do not estimate or guess
- Know what you cannot say (legal, personnel, active investigation) — and prepare a response for those questions
- After the interview, note what was said and flag anything that may need follow-up or correction

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOL

Effective external communications begin with effective internal communications. City employees are both the delivery system for services and the primary ambassadors of the City's brand. When employees are well-informed, consistent, and confident in their knowledge of City priorities, it shows in every resident interaction.

Lee's Summit's current internal communications are fragmented: office-based employees, field staff, and leadership receive information inconsistently and through different channels. This protocol establishes standards to close that gap.

Internal Audience Segments

Audience Segment	Communication Characteristics & Needs
Senior Leadership & Department Directors	Need advance briefings before public announcements; require context on strategic decisions; primary channel is direct email from City Manager or Director
Office-Based Staff	Access Microsoft 365, email, and SharePoint/Workday. Prefer concise, role-specific updates. Respond well to intranet and email newsletters.
Field Employees (Public Works, Utilities, Parks)	Limited desktop access during shifts. Rely on supervisor briefings and mobile-accessible tools. SharePoint/Workday and direct manager communication are primary channels.

Audience Segment	Communication Characteristics & Needs
Public Safety Staff (Police & Fire)	Highly structured information hierarchy. Communications flow through department chain of command. CPI coordinates on citywide announcements.
New Employees	Require onboarding communications covering brand standards, intake process, communications expectations, and key contacts.

Internal Communications Channels

Channel	Best Used For
Email (Microsoft 365)	Primary channel for office-based staff. All-staff announcements, policy updates, benefits and HR communications.
SharePoint Intranet	Reference materials, policies, templates, project updates, organizational news. Single source of truth for staff resources.
Workday	HR-specific communications: benefits enrollment, payroll, leave management. Reaches all employees including field staff.
Director / Supervisor Briefings	Field employees, public safety, and hourly staff. Directors / Supervisors should receive information in advance and brief their teams directly.
Teams / Microsoft 365	Real-time coordination for project-based work. Not for formal announcements; use email for official communications.
All-Staff Video / Townhall	Major organizational announcements, leadership updates, strategy launches. Recorded and posted to SharePoint for field staff.

Internal Communications Standards

- **Advance notice rule:** All City employees should receive information about major decisions, policy changes, or public announcements before those announcements go public. No employee should learn about a significant City development from social media or the news.
- **Clarity over volume:** Internal messages should be concise, specific, and actionable. If it does not require action or awareness, reconsider whether it needs to be sent.
- **Communications cascade:** All city staff-wide internal comms follow a hierarchy/a comm sequence. CPI prepares supervisor briefing documents; supervisors deliver to their teams. Public safety employees follow department chain of command.
- **Consistent cadence:** A predictable internal communications rhythm: weekly or bi-weekly staff digest, monthly leadership update, quarterly all-staff communication. Reduces information gaps and prevents surprise.
- **Feedback loop:** Internal communications should include a mechanism for employees to ask questions or flag concerns. A shared mailbox, intranet feedback form, or designated point of contact should be established.

SharePoint Intranet - Priority Content

The SharePoint intranet rollout is a significant opportunity to centralize internal communications. Priority content for Year 1 setup includes:

- Communications intake form and direct link to Microsoft Forms portal
- Brand standards and approved templates (letterhead, PowerPoint, social graphic templates, email signature)
- Communications planning worksheet and campaign template
- Crisis communications plan and holding statement templates
- Departmental PIO contact directory
- Staff training materials and recordings

CPI is responsible for maintaining and distributing updated versions of all Toolkit resources housed on the intranet.

STAFFING RECOMMENDATIONS

The following staffing framework reflects the current structure of the Department of Communications and Public Information and provides a directional roadmap for how Lee’s Summit can build communications capacity over the plan period. The foundational structural work is already underway: the department has been renamed, the Director elevated as CCO and primary PIO, and the five-person CPI team is in place. The priority now shifts from structural setup to operational activation and, over time, strategic capacity-building.

Current State Staffing

Current Role	Primary Function
Director of Communications and Public Information	Strategic leadership; citywide messaging; sensitive media and crisis lead; executive strategic communications advisor to City Manager, Mayor, and Council; plan governance
Senior CPI Specialist	Intake and request management; departmental coordination; routine media; Communications Council logistics; project tracking and workflow
CPI Specialist	Campaign planning; strategic messaging support; reactive and crisis drafting; proactive content and storytelling; internal communications support
Media Production Manager	Video strategy and production oversight; government channel; live broadcasts; campaign participation; proactive storytelling identification
Media Production Specialist	AV operations; live broadcast technical support; production support

Current state assessment: The CPI team is talented, motivated, and operating in a newly defined structure. With the department rename and Director elevation underway, the immediate priority is activating the processes and governance mechanisms that allow each team member to work in their defined lane. The most important near-term actions are launching the intake system, formalizing the Communications Council (Core Comms), and building the editorial calendar — the three structural elements that shift the team from reactive to proactive.

Phase I: Activate the Foundation (Now - 2026)

The foundational structural work is underway. Phase I is about activating the operational and governance infrastructure that makes the new structure function and building the habits and systems that will sustain proactive communications for years to come.

Timeline	Action / Role	Description & Impact
Underway (2026)	Department Rename & Director Elevation	The Department of Communications and Public Information is established. Director serves as CCO and primary PIO reporting to the City Manager. Signals strategic intent to the organization and all departments.
Year I (2026)	Launch Intake System	Deploy intake system on Microsoft Forms. Designate Senior CPI Specialist as intake coordinator. Train all departments. This is the operational infrastructure that makes the team structure sustainable.
Year I (2026)	Establish Communications Council (Core Comms)	Launch monthly PIO coordination meetings chaired by the Director. Senior CPI Specialist manages logistics and agenda. Police and Fire PIOs participate as key partners alongside all departmental PIOs.
Year I (2026)	Develop Editorial Content Calendar	Build the first annual editorial calendar aligned to City priorities, anchor events, and recurring content rhythms. CPI Specialist leads development in partnership with the Director.
Year I (2026)	Implement Crisis Communications Plan	Formalize the crisis chain of command across CPI, Police PIO, Fire PIO, and City Manager's Office.

Phase 2: Deepen Strategic Capacity (2027)

With the foundation in place, Phase 2 focuses on building proactive communications capacity, expanding audience reach, and operationalizing measurement.

Timeline	Action / Role	Description & Impact
Year 2 (2027)	Achieve Proactive Balance	Target: 50% proactive vs. reactive work. Full editorial calendar in operation. Minimum four major campaign plans delivered. Communications Council (Core Comms) fully operational with strong departmental participation.
Year 2 (2027)	Analytics & Measurement	Centralized analytics dashboard operational. Quarterly performance reports published. KPIs established across all five metric categories. Website optimization priorities addressed.
Year 2 (2027)	Audience Expansion	Launch bilingual/Spanish-language communications for priority topics. Strengthen field employee internal communications via SharePoint intranet. Expand outreach to underserved communities.
Year 2 (2027)	Crisis Preparedness	Refine crisis plan based on Year 1 experience. Misinformation monitoring protocol operational. Expand pre-approved scenario templates.
Year 2 (2027)	Training	Annual departmental communications training (Session 2: campaign planning, digital strategy, crisis communications basics).

Phase 3: Sustain and Evaluate (2028)

Phase 3 consolidates the gains of the first two years, benchmarks outcomes, and positions CPI to plan its next three-year cycle, including making the evidence-based case for any future staffing investments.

Timeline	Action / Role	Description & Impact
Year 3 (2028)	Annual Plan Review	Year 3 outcomes benchmarked against Year 1 baseline. Updated communications plan developed for the 2029–2031 cycle. Findings shared with City Manager, Asst. City Manager, and management team.
Year 3 (2028)	Evaluate Staffing Needs	Use intake system data and workload analytics to build the evidence-based case for any future staffing additions.
Year 3 (2028)	Organizational Maturity	CPI fully repositioned as strategic executive function. Hub-and-spoke model fully operational. All governance protocols embedded in standard operating procedures. Communications function no longer dependent on individual institutional knowledge.

Guiding Principles for All Staffing Decisions

- **Keep CPI as the central strategic hub** — all role decisions should strengthen the hub's capacity for proactive, planned communications, not fragment it
- **Use workload data from the intake system to drive future staffing decisions**
- **Use the phased roadmap as a guide, not a guarantee** — let workload data from the intake system and annual plan reviews drive the timing of each step
- **Benchmark annually** — if peer cities of Lee's Summit's size have closed a specific gap, use that data to build the business case for investment

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