

UMhlabuyalingana Municipality



Communication Policy & Procedures

(Compiled by: Communication Section)

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1. Introduction

The uMhlabuyalingana Local Municipality is committed to two-way communication, building relationships with its internal and external stakeholders and to form partnerships with the public and private sector. The purpose of this policy is to provide clear principles and guidelines for communication in the municipality, the different roles and responsibilities within the Municipality's communication are made clear, what is communicated, and by whom. This policy will ensure that communication takes place in a coordinated and uniform way.

2. Guiding Principles of this Document

This Communication Policy seeks to ensure that the uMhlabuyalingana Municipality acknowledges the importance of communication as a strategic management function and as an integral part of its daily functioning. It demonstrates that the Municipality is committed to a transparent and effective relationship with its internal and external stakeholders and will do so by a process of consultation and information dissemination. The Municipality acknowledges that it has a responsibility to inform its internal and external stakeholders of identified issues, progress made and results achieved in addressing its mandate.

The Communication Section has the responsibility to ensure that all communication activities, including procurement of services, are done in accordance with these policies and procedures. This requires all communication and communication-related activities to be coordinated and recommended by the section.

3. Legislative Requirements

In terms of chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act, the Municipalities are encouraged to strive for maximum participation of its citizens to its various programmes. Again the Promotion of Access to Information Act of 2000 further asserts the need for accessibility of the municipal information based on certain conditions as stipulated by the municipality. Furthermore the white paper on local government defines developmental local government as government that is committed in working with its citizens. Undoubtedly the central focus of the abovementioned legislation evolves around the effective communication between the municipality and its constituencies.

4. Policy Statement

It is the policy of the uMhlabuyalingana Municipality to provide information to its internal and external stakeholders about Municipality programmes and services. This has to be done in an accurate, timeous, relevant and understandable manner;

- ensure that it reports its achievements with regard to its mandate;
- ensure that it is visible, accessible and answerable to the public it serves.

All communications must reflect Council Units' communication programmes, as well as the communication priorities of government.

5. Communication Roles and Responsibilities

In order to ensure effective communication and compliance to Municipality Communication Policy, the following roles and responsibilities are adopted:

5.1 Mayor

The Mayor is the Chief Communicator (spokesperson) for the Municipality. He / she can delegate these responsibilities to the Deputy Mayor, Speaker or Municipal Manager whenever required. The

Mayor together with the Municipal Manager and the Communications Officer will be responsible for defining the annual communication priorities, objectives and requirements. This is done in consultation with the Senior Management Team.

5.2 Municipal Manager

The Municipal Manager is the spokesperson for the Municipality on strategic and operational issues. He ensures that the annual communication strategy is in line with Municipality communication objectives and reflects the Municipality's priorities. The Municipal Manager ensures the integration of the communication function within the Municipality's decision making processes and the integration of strategic communication planning in the overall planning of the Municipality.

5.3 Head of Departments / Sections

Heads of Departments/Sections are responsible for:

- Ensuring compliance with the Municipality's Communication Policy and Procedures;
- Attending to media enquiries through Communication Section;
- Ensuring that key communication issues and priorities are identified annually in line with the municipal Communication Strategy and
- that their programmes have the communication action plans, and this must be done in consultation with the Communication Section.

5.4 Communications Officer

The Communications Officer serves as the municipal authority on communication issues. He/she is responsible for coordinating all communication activities including the procurement of communication products and services. This includes the appointment of communication service providers, consultants and communication activities of the various departments/units of the Municipality. All these activities must be either approved or recommended by him/her. He/she ensures that the Communication Policy and Procedures are communicated to staff and adhered to. He/she provides communication advice and counsel to the Mayor and Municipal Manager. He/she serves as the Council's Spokesperson. He/she is responsible for co-ordinating liaison with the media, arranging media conferences, the issuing of media statements and handling media enquiries.

5.5 Communication Section

Communication Section is responsible for coordinating all communication activities in the municipality. In this regard the Communication Section, shall support and co-ordinate all communication efforts with the main aim of enabling the Mayor and the Municipal Manager to perform their function as Chief Communicators; shall provide strategic advice and counsel with regard to Communication Policy development; programme planning and programme implementation; develop and implement Communication Plans and produce publications for information dissemination.

6. Communication Guidelines

6.1 Internal Communication

All communications within the section must be approved by the Head of section.

All communications within the departments must be approved by the Head of Department.

All communications across departments must be approved by the Municipal Manager.

All communications with the municipal councillors must be approved by the Municipal Manager.

6.2 External Communication

All external communications must be approved by the Municipal Manager.

7. Procedures and Regulations

The following Procedures and Regulations are the rules that govern the implementation of the Communication Policy:

7.1 Media Relations

Communication Section is the municipality's first line of contact with the media and is responsible for coordinating all media relations. The following procedures have to be followed with regards to media liaison: it is advisable that before responding to media enquiries, Communications Section must be consulted. In a situation where this is not possible, the response must be signed off by the relevant Head of Department / Section and copied to Communications Officer.

All media enquiries must be referred to the Communications Officer who will then engage with the relevant line functionaries for an adequate response. The Communication Section should ideally at all times coordinate interactions with the media, such as media conferences, briefings, letters to the media and advertising. The Communication Section is responsible for media evaluation and monitoring. A media monitoring service is available from Communication Section. Items of importance will be circulated to those impacted upon, either for information purposes or for a draft response. Media enquiries are to be dealt with within the stipulated deadline or otherwise within 24 hours. Inquiries received after hours will only be dealt with during office hours unless there is obvious urgency or instruction to do so. Inquiries from the media should be in writing. Responses are to be supplied in writing except for radio and television interviews. Media enquires must be treated as top priority.

7.2 Internal Communication

The main purpose of internal communication is to facilitate and manage the flow of information within the municipality in order to create an informed workforce. Internal communication involves information about municipality programmes, relevant human resource information, and other useful information that staff may have an interest in.

The following communication tools and mediums are to be used to communicate with staff members: newsletter, posters, notice boards, intranet, workshops, staff meetings, toilet notice boards, SMS, pay slips.

7.3 External Communication

The main purpose of external communications is to inform stakeholders of services and programmes of the Municipality. Different communication tools and mediums are used to communicate with stakeholders:

billboards, radio, television, conferences, summits, workshops, road shows exhibitions, internet and newspapers.

All communication campaigns must be approved by the Communication Section.

7.4 Production of Communication Materials

The communication Section must be consulted on the communication material that is produced on behalf of the municipality. Decisions to outsource such activity or part thereof must carry the approval of the Communications Officer.

7.5 Advertising

Communication Section is responsible for coordinating all advertising activities. The Communication Section must approve all advertising or procurement of advertising services. No contract or payment can be signed without the approval of the Communications Officer or his/her representative. In all instances the correct procurement procedures should be followed.

7.6 Corporate Image

Communication Section is responsible for the corporate image of the Municipality. This responsibility includes the following:

The look and feel of the Municipality's office buildings; the type of communication material to be used by the Municipality i.e. folders, letterheads, business cards etc; the way communication material to be produced i.e. the font, use of logo's, corporate identity, etc.

7.7 Branding and Promotional Material

Promotional material using the corporate identity of the Municipality may only be used for official purposes. The production of such material must be authorised by the Communication Section. Branded merchandise is an integral part of the municipality branding strategy and as such cannot be developed without the approval of the Communication section.

The use of logo on projects not initiated by the municipality has to be approved by the Communication Section. Strict adherence to the corporate identity is given with development of any branded material.

7.8 Procurement of Communication Materials

Communication materials include any type of publication, newsletter, magazine, brochures, audio-visual material and any other material intended to convey to the public information. Communication Section has the responsibility of ensuring that communication products and services, including that of consultants, or services are acquired in a fair and equitable manner. The communication Section must be consulted on procurement processes for communication material. It is advisable to make use of the Communication Section's in-house service, depending on the type of project, capacity available and budgets.

7.9 Website

The Municipality's Internet site serves as its window to the public and as such the Communication Section has the following responsibility: The head of Communication Section or a delegated official has the sole responsibility of placing and removing material from the Municipality website. Information will be placed on the site only after the approval of a Section Head or a delegated official not lower than the rank of Manager. It is the responsibility of individual departments to provide information for their web pages. The creation of links on the Municipality website and or acceptance of a link of the municipality website to another websites will only be done after the approval of the Head of Communication Section.

7.10 Language Policy and Translations

The UMhlabuyalingana Municipality Language Policy is based on the Constitution and the Municipal Systems Act, in this regard, it takes into account the language usage and preferences of the residents when communicating. English and isiZulu are business languages for

the Municipality and all official notes and advertisements issued for general public information must be published in English and isiZulu (UMhlabuyalingana Municipality Language Policy).

7.11 Copyright

The Municipality owns all publicity material and information it has paid for created consequently, the reproduction of any such material requires the approval of the Municipality. Copyright to the Municipality allows the Municipality the freedom to allow others to use the material without paying fees to the original producer. It also gives the Municipality the authority to prevent misuse of the material by the producer or anyone else.

7.12 Exhibitions

Communication Section is responsible for Branding and Corporate Identity of the Municipality {5.7}, thus, the Unity must be consulted when departments are taking part in fairs and exhibitions on behalf of the Municipality.

7.13 Events

Events shall be organised as prescribed in the Council's Events Calendar and Communication Section shall take full responsibility for Media, publicity and branding.

7.14 Training and Development

The Communication Unit shall identify communication -training course for Council officials who interact with media and public. Communication consultants engaged by Council should work closely with communication official so that skills can be transferred.

7.15 Communication in Crisis Situation

A crisis is very organization's worst nightmare, however it is important that a framework for such a situation exist. In the event of a crisis the following should be adhered to:

The Manager in whose area of responsibility is involved should inform his/her Head of Department; the Communications Officer is to be copied the information. A Crisis Committee will consist of the Municipal Manager, Communications Officer and relevant officials. The Mayor is to be informed immediately. A plan of action is to be drafted; the Crisis Committee will manage the issue, communication thereof and release the necessary statements with the involvement of the Mayor. The Mayor and Municipal Manager will act as spokespersons, no media statement or interview is allowed from any other officials; staff members will be kept informed of the situation.

8. Procedures and Compliance

This policy is intended to ensure that the Municipality engages in a co-coordinated manner with regard to communication and communicates in a standardised manner with unified messages. This communication policy and procedures are applicable to every staff member in the Municipality. The Communication policy falls within the scope of internal communications and it will be communicated accordingly.