



**OKHAHLAMBA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**  
**COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**  
**2019/2020**

## Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THIS DOCUMENT.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. POLICY STATEMENT .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. COMMUNICATIONS BUDGET.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. COMMUNICATION ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES .....</b>	<b>5</b>
4.1 MAYOR.....	5
4.2 MUNICIPAL MANAGER .....	5
4.3 HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS.....	5
4.4 HEAD OF COMMUNICATION.....	5
4.5 MUNICIPAL SPOKESPERSON .....	6
4.6 COMMUNICATIONS UNIT .....	6
4.7 COMMUNICATION’S FORUM.....	6
<b>5. PROCEDURES AND REGULATIONS .....</b>	<b>6</b>
5.1 MEDIA RELATIONS .....	6
5.2 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION .....	7
5.3 EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION .....	7
5.4 PRODUCTION OF COMMUNICATION MATERIALS.....	7
5.5 ADVERTISING .....	7
5.6 CORPORATE IMAGE .....	7
4.7 BRANDING AND PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL.....	8
4.8 PROCUREMENT OF COMMUNICATION MATERIALS.....	8
4.9 WEBSITE .....	8
4.10 LANGUAGE AND TRANSLATION .....	8
4.11 COPYRIGHT.....	8
4.12 EXHIBITIONS .....	9
4.13 EVENTS .....	9
4.14 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT .....	9
4.15 OFF-THE-RECORD COMMENTS .....	9
4.16 CLASSIFIED INFORMATION .....	9
4.17 SUPPLY OF PHOTOGRAPHS AND FILM FOOTAGE .....	9
<b>5 CRISIS COMMUNICATION .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>6 SOCIAL MEDIA .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>7 PUBLIC DISCLOSURE AND RIGHT TO INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>8 PROCEDURES AND COMPLIANCE .....</b>	<b>11</b>

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## INTRODUCTION

The Okhahlamba Local Municipality is committed to multi-way communication, building relationships with its internal and external stakeholders and to form partnerships with the public and private sectors.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide clear principles and guidelines for communication in the Municipality.
- Clearly distinguish the different roles and responsibilities within the Municipality's communication, that is, what is communicated, and by whom.
- Build a citizen-centred, client-focused communication system.
- Ensure that communication takes place in a coordinated and uniform manner.
- Prescribe communication policy, provide for the regulations, processes and procedures, and assign responsibilities within the municipality so as to ensure that communication objectives are achieved.
- Advocate for communication as a strategic function that is allocated the resources to be able to fulfil its aims and objectives.
- Ensure efficient use of the existing government communications infrastructure.
- Create an effective feedback mechanism between government and its citizenry.

### 1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THIS DOCUMENT

The Communication Policy seeks to ensure that the Okhahlamba Local Municipality acknowledges the importance of communications 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 effect 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 in achieving its mandate.

The Communications Unit has the responsibility to ensure that all communication activities are done in accordance with these policies and procedures. This requires all communication and communication-related activities to be coordinated and recommended by the Unit.

### 2. POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of Okhahlamba 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 regards to its mandate;
- ensure that it is visible, accessible and answerable to the public it serves;

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

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### 3. COMMUNICATIONS BUDGET

Adequate resources must be allocated to the communication function, based on the communication's strategic plan and the size of the institution. The current MUNIMEC resolution stipulates this as 1% of the municipality's budget. This budget must be ring-fenced.

In addition to other standard items, the communication's budget should include funding for:

- Adequate staff to fulfil the strategic communications function
- Training, and
- The internal communication functions.

### 4. COMMUNICATION ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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

#### 4.1 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 Head of the Communications Unit will be responsible for defining the annual communication priorities, objectives and requirements. This is done in consultation with the Strategic Management Team.

#### 4.2 Municipal Manager

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

#### 4.3 Heads of Departments

Heads of Departments are responsible for:

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

#### 4.4 Head of Communication

The head of the Communications Unit serves as the Municipality's authority on Communication issues. He / She is responsible for coordinating all communications activities including the procurement of communication products and services. This includes the appointment of communication service

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providers, consultants, and communication activities of the various 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 are adhered to. He / She provides communication advice and counsel to the Mayor and the Municipal Manager.

#### **4.5 Municipal Spokesperson**

The Municipal Spokesperson serves as the Council's spokesperson. He / She is responsible for coordinating liaison with the media, arranging media conferences, the issuing of media statements and handling media queries. He / She is responsible for both Mayor and Municipal media liaison. He / She is responsible for writing the Mayor and other Office Bearer's speeches.

#### **4.6 Communications Unit**

The Communication's Unit is responsible for coordinating all communication activities in the Municipality. In this regard the Communications Unit shall support and coordinate all communication efforts with the main aim of enabling the Mayor and Municipal Manager to perform their function as Chief Communicators; shall provide strategic advice and counsel with regards to communication policy development, programme planning and programme implementation; develop and implement communication plans and produce publications for information dissemination. The Communications Officer will be responsible for all the communication requirements of Units in the Municipality that deal with these functional areas – this includes identifying communication issues, developing communication strategies, implementing and managing communication actions such as: campaigns, events, advertising, design and printing of communication materials, audio-visual and still communication, marketing and communication research.

#### **4.7 Communication's Forum**

The Communicator's Forum for all Council's Communication's staff exists and meetings are held quarterly. The Forum is a strategic platform for information sharing and coordination.

## **5. PROCEDURES AND REGULATIONS**

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

### **5.1 Media Relations**

The Communications Unit 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 queries, the Communications Unit be consulted. In a situation where this is not possible, the response must be signed off by the relevant Head of Unit and copied to the Head of Communications.

All media queries must be referred to the Communications Unit who will then engage with the relevant line functionaries for an adequate response. The Communications Unit should ideally at all times coordinate interactions with the media, such as media conferences, briefings, letters to the media and

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advertising. The Communications Unit is responsible for media evaluation and monitoring. A media monitoring service is available from the Communications Unit. Items of importance will be circulated to those impacted upon, either for information purposes or for draft response. Media queries 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 queries must be treated as top priority.

## **5.2 Internal Communication**

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

The following communication tools and mediums are used to communicate with members of staff: Newsletters, Posters, Notice Boards, Intranet, E-mails, Workshops, Staff Meetings, Toilet notice boards, SMS and Pay slips.

## **5.3 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: Newsletters, E-mails, Billboards, Radio, Television, Roadshows, Exhibitions, Conferences, Summits, Workshops, hand delivered Notices, SMS, loud hailing, Internet and Newspapers.

All external communication campaigns must be approved by the Communications Unit.

## **5.4 Production of Communication Materials**

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

## **5.5 Advertising**

The Communications Unit is responsible for coordinating all advertising activities. The Communications Unit must approve all advertising or procurement of advertising services. In all instances the correct procurement procedures should be followed. Heads of Units must compliment the budget.

## **5.6 Corporate Image**

The Communications Unit is responsible for the corporate image of the Municipality. The 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 is used and produced i.e. the font, use of logo's, corporate identity, etc. The Amphitheatre with the Shield and Spear, and hut is the official Municipal logo with the name of the Municipality written in full above the images in teal.

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### **5.7 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 Communications Unit. Branded merchandise is an integral part of the Municipality's branding strategy and as such cannot be developed without consultation with the Communications Unit.

The use of the Municipality's logo on projects not initiated by the Municipality has to be approved by the Communications Unit. Strict adherence to the corporate identity is a given with the development of any branded material.

### **5.8 Procurement of Communication Materials**

Communication materials include any type of publication, newsletter, magazine, brochure, audiovisual material, and any other material intended to convey information to the public. The Communications Unit 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 Communications Unit must be consulted on procurement processes for communication. It is advisable to make use of the Communications Unit's in-house service, depending on the type of project, the time frames, capacity available and budgets.

### **5.9 Website**

The Municipality's website serves as its window to the public and as such the Communications Unit has the following responsibility: The Head of the Communications Unit or a delegated official has the sole responsibility of placing and removing material from the Municipality's website. Information will be placed on the site only after the approval of a Unit Head or a delegated official now lower than the rank of Manager. It is the responsibility of individual Units to provide information for their web pages. The creation of links on the Municipality's website and or acceptance of a link of the Municipality's website to another website will only be done after consultations with the Head of the Communications Unit.

An E-Communications Forum made up of IT, Communications officials and Unit reps is responsible for approving all IT-related communications projects.

### **5.10 Language and Translation**

The Communications Policy is based on the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, 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.

### **5.11 Copyright**

The Municipality owns all publicity material and information it has paid for or 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.

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### **5.12 Exhibitions**

The Communications Unit is responsible for Branding and Corporate Identity of the Municipality (5.7), thus, the Unit must be consulted when Units are taking part in fairs and exhibitions on behalf of the Municipality.

### **5.13 Events**

Events shall be organised as prescribed in the Council's Events Policy, and the Communications Unit shall take full responsibility for the media, publicity and branding.

### **5.14 Training and Development**

The Communications Unit shall identify communications-related training courses for Council officials who interact with the media and the public. Communications consultants engaged by Council should work closely with officials so that skills can be transferred.

### **5.15 Off-The-Record Comments**

No municipal employee will speak to the media "off the record". The only exception is the political principal and the MLO/HoC with the authority of the political principal, who might in certain circumstances be required to do so.

### **5.16 Classified Information**

Unauthorised disclosure of classified information to the public or the media will result in action being taken against the municipal official responsible.

### **5.17 Supply of Photographs and Film Footage**

Copyright for photography and film footage supplied to the media rests with the municipality and this should be reflected in the credits. All copyright laws must be upheld.

A final copy of the product must be made available to the municipality.

## **6 CRISIS COMMUNICATION**

A crisis is every organisation's worst nightmare. However, it is important that a framework for such a situation exists. In the event of a crisis the following should be adhered to: The Director in whose area of responsibility is involved should inform his / her Unit Head; The Head of Communications is to be copied the information. A Crisis Committee will consist of the MM or relevant Managers, the Head of Communications, and the relevant officials. The Mayor is to be informed immediately. A plan of action is to be drafted; The Crisis Committee will manage the issues, communication thereof and release the necessary statements with the involvement of the Mayor. The Mayor and MM will act as spokespersons. No media statement or interview is allowed from any other officials; Staff members will be informed of the situation.

## **7 SOCIAL MEDIA**

When it comes to personal use of social media by government employees, the code of conduct for public servants should be respected and considered as the guiding rule. The code of conduct for public

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servants allows government employees to act in a private capacity to influence public opinion or promote issues of public interest.

As government employees, we are guided by the Public Service Act which subscribes to the notion that all personal online communication activities should NOT bring government into disrepute. As a Government employee, you must at all times keep your postings legal, ethical and respectful.

Personal use of social media implies that the employees are using social media for personal interest, which have nothing to do with their duties for government and/or their departments. However, there are specific aspects that they must pay attention to when using social media in a personal capacity.

Note: All government employees should always think before they post, and they should use their common sense. Government employees should remember that even if they act or speak in a personal capacity, their position as government employees may be known to anyone in the potential audience and may be misunderstood or misrepresented as an official position.

**When using social media at personal capacity, employees should consider the following:**

1. Keep government-confidential information confidential
2. Government employees may not use personal social media platforms to post any confidential or proprietary information of their department or the government as a whole.
3. Government employees may only use personal social media platforms to share government news if that information has already been officially published in the public domain.
4. Government employees must familiarise themselves with the content of any non-disclosure agreement they signed when joining government and ensure that all personal social media activities are in alignment and compliance with this policy and all other applicable regulations, acts and policies.
5. Keep personal social media activities distinct from government communication.
6. Government logos and other government branding symbols may not be used in personal social media posts without explicit permission in writing from the designated departmental authority.
7. Government employees can be held legally responsible for all comments that they post on their personal social media platforms.

## **8 PUBLIC DISCLOSURE AND RIGHT TO INFORMATION**

In line with the spirit and purport of this policy and in light of the prescripts of the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (PAJA) and the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA).

The Okhahlamba Local Municipality has accordingly adopted a PAIA manual; which regulates the access to information held by the Municipality by external parties.

Staff are not permitted to disclose any information to the Media or Public or other external parties in respect of the protected classes of information detailed in the PAIA manual without having first complied with the procedures set out therein.

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## **8 PROCEDURES AND COMPLIANCE**

This policy is intended to ensure that the Municipality engages in a coordinated manner with regard to communications and communicates in a standardised manner with unified messages. Adherence to the policy will result in a coherent image for the Municipality. This communication policy and its procedures are applicable to every staff member in the Municipality. It is the responsibility of every staff member to familiarise themselves with the content of this policy and other policies and protocols it may refer to. The Communication policy falls within the scope of internal communications and will be communicated accordingly.

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