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| **Communications Management Plan** |

**Document Information**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sponsor** |  | **Business Owner** |  |
| **Project Manager** |  | **Estimated Budget** |  |
| **Target Start Date** |  | **Target End Date** |  |

**Document History**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Version** | **Date** | **Summary of changes** |
| 1.0 |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Document Approvals**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Role** | **Name** | **Signature** | **Date** |
| Project Sponsor |  |  |  |
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Template Guide

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**What is a communications management plan?**

The communications management plan describes the goals, stakeholders, strategies, activities and timeframes for communicating information about the project.

**Why create a communications management plan?**

Clear and consistent communication is essential to the success of any project. The communication plan ensures that the methods, means and frequencies of communication are clearly defined for all project stakeholders. To effectively communicate with project stakeholders, the Project needs to develop a good understanding of the unique needs of each stakeholder group. This is accomplished with several “tools” that are included in the communication plan. These tools describe all project stakeholders, providing a clear understanding of the specific interests of each stakeholder group, their vested interest in the project, and their expectations.

**How to use this template**

This template provides a guide for project managers to develop a communications plan for new technology and/or business system projects. Additional sections may be added or removed according to the specific business circumstance and need. Sample tables and charts have been included to provide tips on how to complete each section.

*Italicized instructions are included throughout this template to explain the purpose of each section and how to complete it.* ***These should be deleted from the final document.***

# Purpose

*[This section summarizes the purpose for communicating on the project.]*

The purpose of this communications management plan is to:

* Identify and describe all project stakeholders.
* Describe the communication needs of the project stakeholders.
* Define how project stakeholders will be kept informed about the project.
* Identify the communication paths within the stakeholder groups.
* Ensure all information is consistent, accurate and timely.

# Responsibilities

*[This section describes the roles and identifies the people responsible for communicating about the project.]*

The project manager has ultimate responsibility to ensure communication about the project occurs for the appropriate audience in a timely and effective manner. The communications lead is responsible for the development and dissemination of identified stakeholder communications and reporting progress to the project manager. The communication team is led by the communications lead with direct support from the project manager, the project business analyst and the project business lead.

All project team members are expected to be a resource for communicating information about their area of responsibility and expertise on the project. Serving as a resource and sharing information about the project are mutual responsibilities of each project team member.

To enhance project communication, the project manager and communications lead will:

* Use the project schedule. The project manager will track key communication activities in the integrated project schedule in order to give those activities visibility and to monitor and report on their status. The project manager and implementation lead will coordinate communication activities each month.
* Work with the advisory group and partnering agencies. To find or develop opportunities to communicate project information to a broader audience within their respective administrations and group of regulated/contracted providers.
* Use the project team. Communication will be a regular agenda item for the project team to ensure all communication opportunities and deficiencies are identified and regularly improved.
* Leverage experts. Subject matter experts (SMEs) will be engaged throughout the project to help develop, review and distribute communications to stakeholders.
* Prepare for internal reviews. When communication products are prepared for use, the Project Manager will ensure the proper reviews and approvals are obtained prior to delivery.

The roles and responsibilities for communications management are:

| Role | Responsibilities |
| --- | --- |
| Project Manager | * Identify project communication needs. * Create project communications. * Review project communications. * Publish/distribute project communications. * Create project status reports and post to project online collaboration site. * Add communication activities to project workplan, as needed. * Track communication activities in the project workplan to ensure timely completion. * Report on project status. * facilitate project core team, project team, sponsors, and steering committee meetings and providing meeting minutes. * Report on project status at various stakeholder group meetings. * Monitor project email inbox as a backup to the implementation lead. |
| Communications Lead | * Draft communications management plan. * Create project communications. * Review project communications. * Publish/distribute project communications. * Keep project manager informed about project communication activities. * Identify and manage stakeholder communication needs, monitor project email box, schedule and facilitate meetings with identified stakeholders, provide next steps. * Prepare project updates. * Maintain project collaboration site. * Attend and report on project activities at various stakeholder group meetings. |
| Project Communication Team | * Identify project communication needs. * Create project communications, when needed. * Review project communications, when needed. |
| Unit Manager | * Identify project communication needs. * Review and approve project communications. |
| Sponsors and Steering Committee | * Identify project communication needs. * Create project communications, when needed. * Review project communications, when needed. |
| Project Team | * keep project manager informed about project activities. * Provide content for some project communications. * Review project communications, when needed. |

# Audiences

*[This section describes the audience for communications and begins to define and detail stakeholders.]*

Stakeholders are all those groups, units, individuals or organizations—internal or external to the project—that are impacted by, or can impact, the outcomes of the project. This includes the project team, sponsors, steering committee, advisory groups and people who will be impacted by the change, including users, managers and customers. Stakeholders include audiences with different needs who are empowered to act or express a level of interest in the project. The following sample groups may comprise internal and external project audiences.

## Internal Audience

* **Project team**. The group of individuals assembled to work with the implementation vendor team and perform activities that comprise the project work.
* **Project sponsors**. Managers with demonstrable interest in the outcome of the project who are responsible for securing spending authority and resources for the project. The sponsors act as vocal and visible champions, legitimize the project’s goals and objectives, keep abreast of major project activities and are decision makers for the project.
* **Steering committee**. Management representatives from the key organizations involved in the project oversight and control. These people act individually and collectively as vocal and visible project champions throughout their representative organizations, approve major project deliverables, help resolve issues and policy decisions, approve scope changes, provide direction and guidance to the project and act as liaisons to executive groups and sponsors.

## External Audience

* **WaTech Office of Chief Information Officer (OCIO).** State office responsible for setting information technology (IT) policy and direction for the State of Washington.
* **Partners.** Other organizations who receive data and information from or provide data and information to the project or solution.
* **Vendors.** External organizations contracted to provide project related services to the agency.
* **Custermers.** Recipients of the services supported by the implemented solution.

# Stakeholder Engagement

*[Identify key project stakeholders and stakeholder groups, both internal and external to the project. For each, identify the communication objective, message, media, frequency, and communication owner. The text below is provided as example and should be modified or replaced with relevant information for your project. Add, delete or modify the table as appropriate for the project. Consider using the stakeholder impact analysis from the Organizational Change and Communications Management Workbook.]*

The stakeholder engagement strategy for the project will be used to identify and classify project stakeholders; determine stakeholder power, interest and influence; and analyze the management approach and communication methodology for project stakeholders. This will allow us to identify key influential stakeholders to solicit input for project planning and gain support as the project progresses. This will benefit the project by minimizing the likelihood of encountering competing objectives and maximizing the resources required to complete the project.

Early identification and communication with stakeholders is imperative to ensure the success of the project by gaining support and input for the project. Some stakeholders may have interests that may be positively or negatively affected by the project. By initiating early and frequent communication and stakeholder engagement, the project team can more effectively manage and balance these interests while accomplishing all project tasks.

The following criteria is used to determine if an individual will be included as a stakeholder:

1. Will the person or their organization be directly or indirectly affected by this project?
2. Does the person or their organization hold a position from which they can influence the project?
3. Does the person have an impact on the project’s resources (material, personnel, funding)?
4. Does the person or their organization have any special skills or capabilities the project will require?
5. Does the person potentially benefit from the project or are they in a position to resist this change?

Any individual who meets one or more of the above criteria will be identified as a stakeholder. Stakeholders will be grouped in order to simplify communication and stakeholder management.

| Stakeholder Group | Topics of Interest | Communication Content | Communication Plan |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
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# Communication Methods

*[This section describes the communication methods that will be used by the project. Identify key project stakeholders and stakeholder groups, both internal and external to the project. For each, identify the communication objective, message, media, frequency and communication owner. Add, delete or modify the text below as appropriate for the project. The table is provided as an example and should be modified or replaced with relevant information for your project.]*

This section identifies and defines communication methods that will be used throughout this project. The communications include:

* Project status documents.
* Project planning and control documents.
* Email.
* Meetings.
* Presentations.

The project communication matrix will be used to track project communications and schedules, including:

* The audience for the communication.
* What will be communicated.
* The method for communicating.
* When a communication will occur and the frequency for repeated communications.
* Responsibility for the communication.

As new communications are identified throughout the project, they will be added to the communication matrix.

The following table summarizes the key communication and project reporting approach for the project.

Communication and Project Reporting

| **Stakeholder (Who?)** | **Objective/Message (What?)** | **Media**  **(How?)** | **Frequency**  **(When?)** | **Owner** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Project Team | Weekly assignments | Team meetings | Weekly | Project Manager, Team Leads |
| Project decisions, action items, issues, and risks | RAID Log | Updated as needed | Project Manager |
| Project status | Project Status Report | Bi-weekly | Project Manager |
| Steering Committee | Project status | Steering Committee meetings | Monthly | Project Manager |
| Project Status Report | Monthly | Project Manager |
| Project Sponsor | Project status | Steering Committee meetings | Attended as needed | Project Manager |
| Project Status Report | Monthly | Project Manager |
| Sponsor meetings | As needed | Project Manager |
| Project Advisor | Project status | Steering Committee meetings | Attended as needed | Project Manager |
| Project Status Report | Monthly | Project Manager |
| Sponsor/Advisor meetings | As needed | Project Manager |
| Project Management Office | Project baseline information | Project Charter; Project Management Plan; Completed Project Initiation and Planning Checklist | Submitted to the PMO within the first two weeks of implementation activities | Project Manager |
| Project status | Project Status Report | Monthly | Project Manager |
| Project closeout | Completed Project Close Out Checklist | Submitted to the PMO upon completion | Project Manager |

# Communication Principles

*[This section describes the project’s accepted principles of communication. The text below is provided as an example and should be modified or replaced with relevant information for your project.]*

The following summarizes our principles surrounding project communications:

* Executive sponsors will show visible support and active commitment.
* The project team will use a communication style that engages the audience and promotes ownership in the project and its outcomes.
* Communication will be credible, providing accurate, complete, timely information. If things occur that make prior communications no longer accurate, updated information will be distributed as soon as feasible.
* Communication messages will be consistent.
* Communications will be tailored to specific audience’s information needs.
* Communications will be repeated and utilize multiple communication channels to maximize reaching intended audiences.
* The project will strive to avoid information overload and target communications appropriately.
* Communications will be continuously evaluated for effectiveness.
* The project will invite feedback and maintain a culture where people feel comfortable providing feedback.
* The project team will listen to feedback with an open mind, give due consideration to all feedback received and make changes to communications as needed.

# Feedback and Measuring Effectiveness

*[This section describes how you will measure the effectiveness of your communications. Include feedback mechanism, measures and timeframes. The text below is provided as an example and should be modified or replaced with relevant information for your project.]*

Feedback is key to ensuring the ongoing effectiveness of project communication. In addition to determining whether people feel our communicators are doing a credible job, feedback will focus on finding the answers to a series of questions, for example, whether people:

* Understand what the project will deliver.
* Understand when the project will deliver specified capabilities.
* Understand the progress of the program.
* Understand the issues of the project.
* Feel they have been involved in what is happening.
* Feel they have had a chance to voice their opinions.
* Feel their questions have been answered.
* Believe in the project and own the resulting outcomes.

By evaluating feedback we will be able to adapt the communication plan in order to meet the needs of the audience at any given point in time. This will enable continuous improvement for future communication.

Face-to-face communication events (e.g., communication sessions, workshops and management walkabouts) will provide an opportunity for the audience to give feedback directly to the communicators. Other channels will include physical feedback forms and an online bulletin board—a place where people can post feedback or ask questions.