Background & Purpose

The Town of Erie offers a space for residents and visitors who have a passion for the outdoors, desire a diverse and dynamic community, and value a contemporary pace to life that appeals to all ages. With majestic mountain views and progressive civic vision, the Town provides a genuine small-town feel with a sense of community, neighbors who care, and modern amenities.

Not surprisingly, growing families, young professionals, outdoor enthusiasts, and active adults are drawn to the panoramic location, scenic trails, championship golf course, recreational activities, and premier educational facilities, which include new and planned schools. The attractiveness of the Town has led to exponential growth in the last two decades – the population nearly quadrupling - with more residential growth already planned or underway.

Maintaining close relationships with our residents, business owners, and visitors is important to the continued prosperity of the Town of Erie. The Communications & Community Engagement (CCE) department will be providing opportunities for education, outreach, and two-way communication to all who come to Erie.

This Communications & Community Engagement Improvement Plan (Plan) is intended to guide the Town in connecting with the broader community and understanding the needs and desires of those who live, work, and play in Erie. The Plan is also intended to be a living document that will change and grow as the makeup of the community and the needs also evolve. The CCE department will continually reference the Plan and make adjustments as needed.

Town of Erie Fact Sheet

- The Town of Erie government consists of roughly 250 full-time employees and nearly 200 seasonal or part-time employees. The Town is comprised of 10 departments (Administration, Communications & Community Engagement, Economic Development, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Parks & Recreation, Planning & Development, Police, Public Works).

- The Town of Erie is governed by a seven-member Board of Trustees, which includes a Mayor and six trustees. There are also seven advisory boards and commissions which provide advice and guidance to the Board of Trustees and the Town staff.

- The approved budget for the Town of Erie for 2021 was roughly $98 million, including many capital projects. Federal grants to be allocated as a result of pandemic relief bills and other proposed legislation will likely add to the Town's resources in 2021.

- Town staff executed an update to the organization's mission, vision, and values in 2020 which guides the way staff approach their work:
  - **Mission:** Enhancing quality of life by serving and building Erie with PRIDE.
  - **Values:**
    - **P**rofessional
    - **R**espectful
    - **I**ntegrity
    - **D**edicated
    - **E**ffective
  - **Vision:** Innovative stewards of our community dedicated to excellence.

Communications & Community Engagement Staff

Staff Member	Title	Contact	General Duties
Gabi Rae	Director	grae@erieco.gov	Act as spokesperson for Town of Erie, complete strategic planning, manage department staff, budget, and direction.
Amber Luttrell	Communications & Marketing Manager	aluttrell@erieco.gov	Oversee marketing and engagement for Town programs, projects, and events. Manage website, social media, and other tools.

Communication & Community Engagement Strategic Priorities

Agreed upon by the Communications & Community Engagement Director, the Town Administrator, and the Board of Trustees, the following Strategic Priorities will guide the CCE Department's work.

Goal #1

Ensure the Board of Trustees, Town staff, and Erie residents and business owners receive the information they need in time and in the form they desire to make informed decisions on and be aware of, issues affecting Erie.

- **Objective 1a: No Surprises.** Establish communications protocols to ensure there are "no surprises" and the Board of Trustees is proactively made aware of all issues that may generate significant interest in the community.

- **Objective 1b**: **Informed Ambassadors.** Establish communications protocols to ensure all Town staff is kept informed of Town issues so they can be effective ambassadors in the community and explain the "when and why" of Town policies and issues of interest in the community.

- **Objective 1c: Engaged Community.** Ensure Town residents and business owners hear about significant developments or changes in Town policy and can comment on such changes before the development or policy is finalized.

- **Objective 1d: Engaged Employees.** Ensure Town employees hear about and can comment on and influence actions that may affect them prior to any changes being implemented. In the other direction, allow employees to share ideas, celebrate milestones, and bring up concerns to the policymakers.

Goal #2

Increase consistency in the message and tone of communication coming from all departments and staff members within the Town of Erie.

- **Objective 2a: Consistent Voice.** Establish an approved Town of Erie Style Guide, which outlines the expectations and guidelines for all written communication from the Town.
- **Objective 2b**: **Internal evaluation.** Conduct internal surveys to understand the needs and concerns of Town staff as it connects to internal communication and engagement.
- **Objective 2c: Expert Employees.** Create internal training in clear, concise communication and working with the local media in order to better prepare staff for interacting effectively with the public and one another.
- **Objective 2d: Tools in the Toolbox.** Collaborate with Information Technology and Human Resources to clarify and complete training for staff on which tools will be the most effective in maintaining internal communication and sharing important documents.

Goal #3

Provide two-way communication opportunities for residents, employees, and visitors to the Town of Erie in the methods they prefer.

- **Objective 3a: Engagement Baseline Audit.** Complete a full communications audit with each department to understand the current communication strategies and tools being employed.
- **Objective 3b: External Evaluation.** Conduct a survey for residents, employers/employees, and visitors to the Town to understand their current knowledge of the Town, how they find information about the Town, and how they would prefer to engage with Town staff/leadership.
- **Objective 3c: Best Practices & Lessons Learned.** Research nationwide strategies for successful community engagement to compare and contrast the Town's current communications tools with others in cities and towns across the country.
- **Objective 3d: Efficiency & Effectiveness Check.** Using all survey data and research, make investments in tools which the Town does not currently use or perhaps retire tools that are no longer serving the community.

Goal #4

Identify what successful communication and engagement with traditionally hard-to-reach or marginalized populations looks like within the Town of Erie.

- **Objective 4a: Demographics Download.** Analyze census and other population data to understand the current demographics within the Town of Erie as it pertains to residents, businesses, and visitors.
- **Objective 4b: Deep Dive Community Evaluation.** Conduct surveys and listening sessions with these populations to better understand the needs and desires for communication in these communities.
- **Objective 4c: Collaborative Communication.** Create partnerships with local community organizations which may have greater reach and trust within traditionally marginalized communities. Use these partnerships to greater strengthen the engagement between the Town and all residents.
- **Objective 4d: Accessibility Prioritization.** Complete research on the need for and best practices surrounding non-English and other accessible communication types within the community.
- **Objective 4e: Right Tools for the Job.** Invest in tools which have been identified through research to be the best engagement options for communicating this identified hard-to-reach populations.

SEE THE APPENDIX FOR A MORE DETAILED OUTLINE OF THE STRATEGIC GOALS

Audiences

Identifying who the important audiences the Town and the CCE department needs to be engaging with is an important factor when making decisions about tools, tone, and communication frequency. We know from analytics of our websites and other tools that roughly 50% of the audience is using a desktop computer to access information from the Town and the other nearly 50% is using a smartphone (primarily Apple iPhone) to access Town information. This is important to note as we plan for our communication and how to best reach the audience with digital tools. Of course, we also have to account for any residents who are not accessing information digitally and are instead relying on traditional media such as newspapers, TV, radio, and physical mailings/posters.

Below are some of the audiences identified:
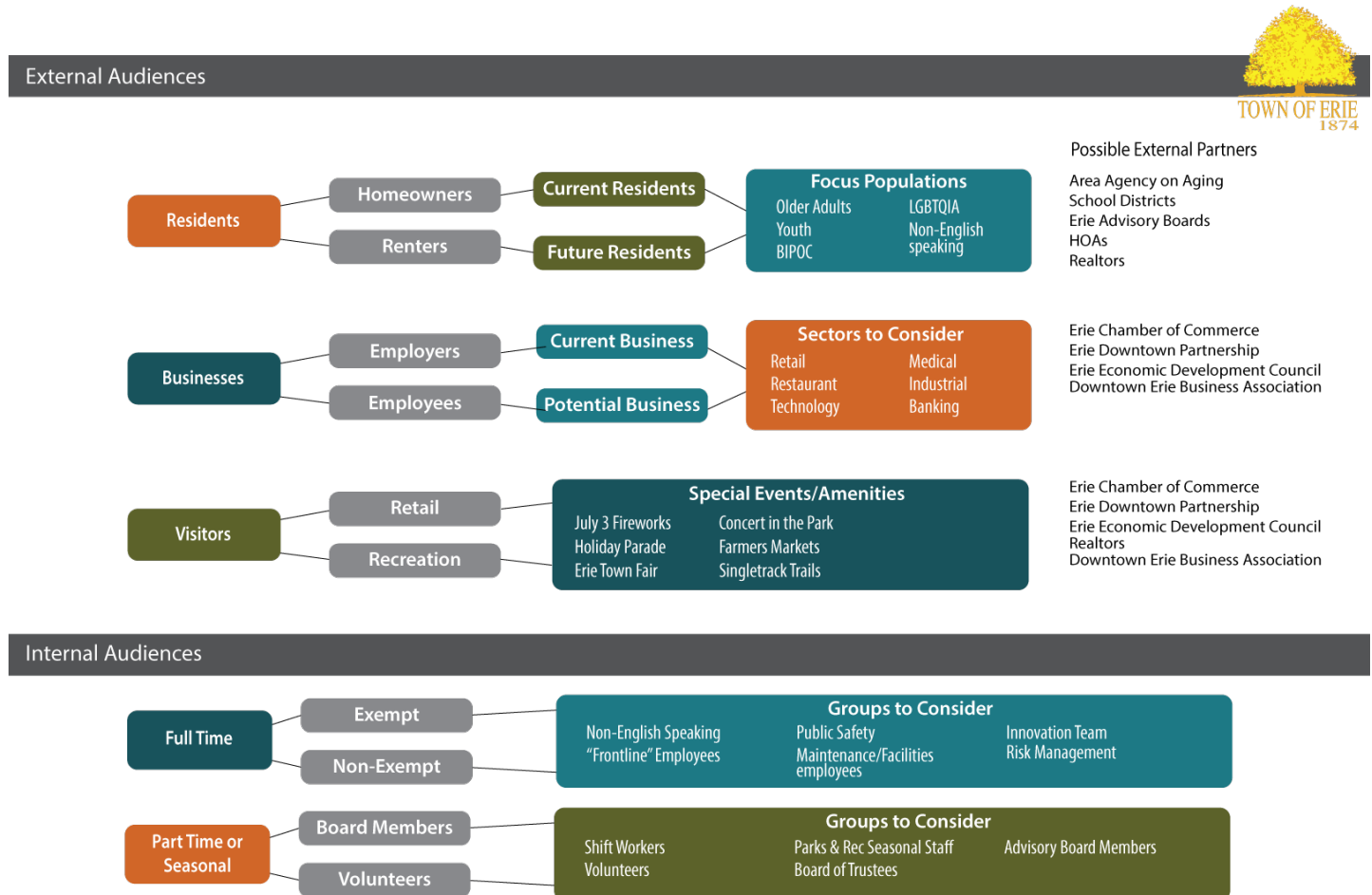
External Audience Insights

Based on analytics collected from the Town website, we know the top search terms that residents look for when they make it to our website (acknowledging that most visitors drop directly to a page based off of a Google or other search engine search). For the time span from April 2020-April 2021 we know that these were the top ten searched terms:

1. Pool
2. Jobs
3. Water efficiency rebates
4. Fireworks
5. Annual cleanup
6. Covid

7. Tree rebate
8. Soccer
9. Permit
10. Pickleball

The top five pages that were visited for that same time period – again, taking into account visits directly from search engines – include:
1. Homepage
2. Erie Community Center
3. Pay Your Bill
4. Building Division
5. Employment Opportunities

Though official 2020 Census numbers have not been shared yet, we know from other demographic sources that residents' median age in the Town of Erie is roughly 37 years old and just over 60% of residents have a bachelor's degree or higher. The median household income is roughly $120,000, and nearly 90% of residents own their home instead of renting. We know that many of these residents are young professionals and new families with young children.

The information we gathered on the most searched terms and the most visited pages backs up some of these demographics. Homeowners are interested in ways to conserve energy and beautify their homes. They are looking for ways to get involved with sports and other recreation, and they have typical needs with regard to bill paying and applying for building permits.

With that in mind, we want to tailor our communication and engagement to reach these demographics where they are in their busy lives. In the coming months, and into the future, we will be completing surveys and polls with the community to get a better sense of how they wish to engage with the Town. Surveys are being spaced according to best practices so as not to interfere with the official Community Survey. We will look at how we are currently communicating with our residents and then share ideas for how to improve going forward.

External Communication & Engagement Tools

There are many available tools used to provide education and outreach opportunities and many tools specifically designed to encourage two-way discussion and engagement. After a comprehensive sweep of currently utilized tools and many interviews with staff, Trustees, and other stakeholders, the below tools were identified in the Communications Audit:

Tool	Uses	Analytics
Social Media		
Facebook (Town of Erie Government)	Daily posts for education, outreach, and engagement with followers. Also used for live video and event promotion.	7,136 followers
Facebook (Erie Parks & Recreation)	Daily posts for education, outreach, and engagement with followers. Also used for live video and event promotion.	3,995 followers
Facebook (Erie Police Department)	Daily posts for education, outreach, and engagement with followers. Also used for live video and event promotion.	4,586 followers
Instagram (Town of Erie Government)	Regular posts for education, outreach, and engagement with followers. Typically only used when content has visual element.	1,996 followers
Instagram (Erie Police Department)	Regular posts for education, outreach, and engagement with followers. Typically only used when content has visual element.	1,050 followers

Tool	Uses	Analytics
[Instagram](#) (Erie Parks & Recreation)	Regular posts for education, outreach, and engagement with followers. Typically only used when content has visual element.	1,264 followers
[Twitter](#) (Town of Erie Government)	Multiple times daily post and share content for education, outreach, and emergency notifications. Short content only.	2,411 followers
Nextdoor	Posting a few times per week to verified residents of the Town of Erie on topics that directly impact them. Place for engagement and outreach.	10,431 registered households
LinkedIn	Posting primarily job openings and organization-related content about awards, benefits, and other employee content for job seekers.	868 followers
Pinterest	Saved account name for use on the platform. Not currently active on the platform – recommend continueing non-use.	0 followers
Active NotifyMe Lists		
News & Announcements	Generic updates from the Town on a variety of topics. Emails are sent multiple times most days as content is available. Takes the place of traditional press releases.	1,851 subscribers
Police Department	Updates from Erie PD about public safety issues, events, and other law enforcement content. Sent when needed.	1,638 subscribers
Weekly Updates	Updates digested altogether in a newsletter design – topics range across all areas of Town government and some partner content as well. Sent on Mondays.	1,601 subscribers
Parks & Recreation	Information about parks, trials, and recreation activities. This includes many opportunities for community engagement with programs. Sent as needed.	1,573 subscribers
Public Works	Sharing water, roads, and other infrastructure-related content as needed.	1,392 subscribers
Oil & Gas Operations	Sharing information provided to the Town from COGCC and oil and gas operators, as well as any information from the Town directly on oil and gas-related topics. Sent as content is provided, few each week.	778 subscribers
Sustainability	Sharing information specifically related to sustainability efforts including work from the Sustainability Advisory Board. Sent as content is available.	388 subscribers
Community Conversations	Information shared relating specifically to the program for Community Conversations which covers issues surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion. Sent as content is available.	19 subscribers
Websites		
www.erieco.gov	Main website used to house all information pertaining to Town government operations. Includes all departments and is updated regularly to reflect current status for projects, programs, and events.	~40,000 visits per month
www.erieco.us	This is specifically a community engagement tool from our vendor BangtheTable – branded EngageErie. Posts here are intended to encourage a conversation between residents and the Town on various projects.	~1,000 visits per month
www.erie.earth	Information specifically about sustainability efforts at the Town of Erie – also shares information from the Sustainability Advisory Board and other partners working in the sustainability space.	~100 visits per month
Other Tools		

Tool	Uses	Analytics
Utility Bill Insert – ErieEdition	Information is included within the water bills for Erie residents. For residents who have opted in to go paperless, the information is sent in an email, residents who still get a paper bill get a physical newsletter-type flyer.	~4,000 digital ~8,000 paper
Erie Submit	Mobile app available for download. Users can submit concerns or comments to the platform and are sent to Town staff for review.	Waiting on analytics from Apple.
Virtual and in-person public meetings / events	Meetings for the Board of Trustees and other advisory boards are open to the public – currently all meetings are virtual, but will be held in a hybrid virtual/in-person capacity in the future. In-person engagement opportunites are just now being planned to begin again this coming summer.	Attendance changes based on the board and topics covered
Parks & Recreation Activity Guide	This is a quarterly guide that is available in a physical, printed version (though not during the height of pandemic) and also available digitally. Outlines offerings from Parks & Rec.	Pre-pandemic ~2,500 print copies Pandemic #s: - Summer 2020: 1,628 reads - Fall 2020: 5,612 reads - Winter 2020: 13,096 reads
Government Channel 8 (Comcast)	Video programming (now available in high definition) for local audiences to view on their televisions.	Waiting on analytics from Comcast.
TV monitors and message boards	TVs in buildings including Town Hall and the Erie Community Center are loaded with content for outreach ot visitors.	Unknown
GIS Maps	There are many maps created to share visual information about the Town's many projects. Primarily this is used for information from the Planning & Development department.	Top two maps: Development Activity – 7,556 views in 2020 Zoning & Land Use – 4,961 views in 2020

Proposed Improvements to External Communication

Website

Based on analytics of website usage for the main Town of Erie site, it seems appropriate to spend time cleaning up and analyzing all pages of the site. There were a total of 466,640 visits to the website in the year 2020. Nearly half a million visits from people searching for recreation opportunities, paying water bills, learning about sustainability options, and a whole lot more. The website is currently housed on a government-focused platform called CivicPlus and was last given a full redesign nearly four years ago. It is considered best practice for a website to be redesigned or at least fully analyzed and updated every four to five years.

CCE Department will spend the remainder of 2021 taking a thorough inventory of pages within www.erieco.gov to determine some key factors:

- Do all pages include accurate, timely information?
- Do all pages have accurate images, files, and links?
- Are there places where multiple pages can be consolidated into one?
- Is the information organized in a way that makes sense to the public – perhaps not in traditional departmental "buckets"?
- Does the information on the pages answer the most asked questions from the site's search field?
- Are all pages up to current accessibility standards?

This is no doubt a monumental task spanning literally thousands of pages of content. The CCE Department will schedule time with each other Town department to walk through their content together and determine the best enhancements and changes to provide better service to the public. Surveys for the public will also be created to see what else they may want in a local government website and how they prefer to use the site.

Accessibility will be a major undertaking on the website. Our platform host, CivicPlus does indeed have some tools already in place to test accessibility and we may consider contracting with a professional company to do a more in-depth analysis of the website for accessibility issues. We also plan to lean heavily on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion staff and advisory board for input on cultural relevance in the site's content and imagery.

Requested Funding: Hire an expert in digital accessibility – specifically in the government space.

Goal: Present to the Board of Trustees at the beginning of 2022 any major navigation/design changes and a discussion on whether a full re-design may be deemed necessary for 2022 or 2023.

Social Media

The Town's presence on many social media platforms has proven to be a useful tool for engagement in many ways in its current iterations and there are a few ways the interaction can be enhanced moving forward. There are a few things already happening that are considered best practices in social media, including consolidation of accounts, frequency of posting information, providing timely and accurate content. Many of the best practices for social media platforms vary from platform to platform and changes rapidly from month-to-month, year-to-year. Some things will remain key to practice over the upcoming year and test whether we can increase contacts with our followers and improve the quality of engagement:

- Utilize a consistent, conversational, and trustworthy tone across all platforms.
- Tailor content to fit each platform's individual strengths (imagery vs brevity vs hyper-locality) – in other words, do not copy/paste directly from one platform to another.
- Encourage questions, comments, and other engagement from followers.
- Actively and reliably respond to engagement from followers.
- Whenever possible, utilize truly local photos and imagery as opposed to purchased stock art.

- For any new and upcoming platforms, proactively reserve the Town's name while determining whether or not to utilize the tool.
- Share the Town's social media policy both internally and externally so all users understand what is expected and what will and will not be allowed.

As always, staff who monitor and manage social media will need to keep up with current trends and learn the best practices for new platforms and tools. Specifically, learning best practices for government agencies is important in relation to legal requirements and other expectations. Staff active on Town social media accounts will be expected remain active with associations like the Government Social Media Conference and the City/County Communications & Marketing Association.

Requested Funding: With the consistent growing of Town staff and the organization as a whole, it is imperative to support our Human Resources recruiting efforts. The CCE Department suggests that the Town invest in the professional, paid version of LinkedIn - LinkedIn Recruiter - for Town job postings.

Goal: Show an increase in meaningful engagement (conversations, comments, shares, etc.) by testing out different methods of communication on each platform.

General Communications

To ensure quality communication and an efficient workflow, a few areas can be enhanced, including:
- **Town Logo**
  - Currently, the Town of Erie has been utilizing the tree logo with the words "Town of Erie 1874" below it for many official communications, on the street signs in the community, and referring to it as the "official logo." The Town also has a secondary image of a lowercase "e" with the words, "The best place to raise a family" included. This has also been used in many spaces traditionally intended for a logo and has been successfully adopted by the Parks & Recreation Department to represent their department and many divisions.
  - It is the CCE Department's intention to thoroughly discuss the usage of both images and determine where each is appropriate for usage and make those expectations clear for all staff and partner agencies.
  - *NOTE:* With the potential for a Home Rule Charter to be voted on this fall and subsequently the possibility that the Town may become a City, we do not intend to invest money into this project until the outcome of the Home Rule Charter is determined.
- **Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion**
  - The CCE Department intends to work with the new DEI staff member and the DEI Advisory Board to determine best practices for translation and interpretation needs at the Town. This includes any website content, social media posting, flyers/posters, graphics, videos, in-person meetings, virtual meetings, etc.
  - The CCE Department will work with the new DEI Director, DEI Advisory Board, and/or a consultant in identifying all important holidays, days of remembrance, and other historic events that should be recognized and honored by the Town. Draft text including historic context will be needed to create accurate and timely communications and/or events.
  - The CCE Department will work with the new DEI Director and the DEI Advisory Board to audit current Town webpages images and other document images for inclusive representation. CCE Staff will rely on experts to help in acquiring inclusive and local imagery.

Requested Funding: Funding will be needed for translation/interpretation services based on recommendations from DEI experts. Potentially need funding for audits of images and for taking new inclusive, culturally relevant photos around the Town of Erie. May need financing, depending on capacity of internal DEI experts, for creating an accurate, all-encompassing calendar of content for diverse and inclusive events to honor.

Goal: The Town should be consistent in branding and how the Town of Erie is represented in materials and all places. It is the goal that by early 2022 a set of clarified guidelines with regard to the organization's logo will be approved and utilized (also dependent on the outcome of Home Rule Charter vote). The Town should also be taking consistent steps toward more inclusive, diverse, and equitable communication – following the lead of experts in this area.

Engagement Event Opportunities

Providing multiple ways for our constituents to engage with the Town is going to ensure that we reach a variety of community members where they are. This means planning both virtual and in-person opportunities, thinking about different times of the day or week, planning for childcare or respite care, etc.

- **Virtual Engagement**
  - During the pandemic we were forced to be flexible and innovative with how we presented information to the public. That included leaning heavily on the Zoom platform and video meetings. There are many pros and cons to this type of engagement and going forward we should consider it all.
  - One pro to presenting Town business virtually is allowing busy professionals and families the chance to interact without needing to be physically present at Town Hall or another Town facility. We believe maintain this virtual option even as we begin to open back up to in-person services is going to help invite more participation in Town business.
  - One con to virtual meetings is the inequitable access that some residents may have to the digital platforms. The CCE Department plans to work closely with the IT Department and DEI staff in conversations about high-speed internet access and the options in providing access to computers or mobile devices.
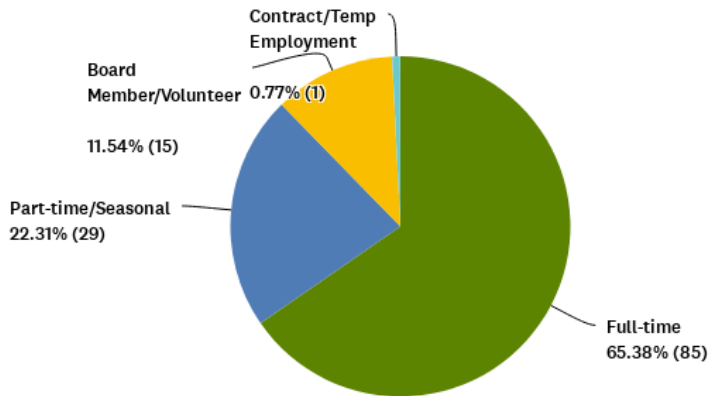- **In-Person Engagement**
  - Meeting with residents, visitors, and business owners where they are is an important step to creating an enhanced flow of information.
  - Identifying the places where people are already gathering – including at events like the farmers markets, Town Fair, fireworks events, etc. – and bringing Town representatives and information there, can help make it easier to interact with local government.
  - This also means meeting people outside of traditional "business hours" to allow for all residents to participate in Town decisions.

Requested Funding: Fund requests for events will be built into individual project funding and come out of regular funding for the CCE Department. There may be a need for findig with regard to broadband internet access or access to technology, but that would most likely come from other departments.

Goal: Set expectations with the community that the Town will be present and ready to have conversations without adding any additiona roadblocks in timing, location, or access. Ideally the one-on-one contacts between staff members and constituents will increase as planned events increase in frequency.

Internal Audience Insights

An internal survey was administered for all Town staff and the data collected from 130 respondents showed some of the following insights:

Who Responded?

Pie chart:
- Contract/Temp Employment 0.77% (1)
- Board Member/Volunteer 11.54% (15)
- Part-time/Seasonal 22.31% (29)
- Full-time 65.38% (85)

Years at the Town

Pie chart:
- Less than 1 year 15.38% (20)
- 1 to 3 years 34.62% (45)
- 3 to 7 years 23.08% (30)
- More than 7 years 26.92% (35)

> The survey was sent to anyone who considers themselves linked to the Town in some way. This includes full-time employees, part-time employees, board members, volunteers, etc. We wanted to understand the needs of all who do work for the Town of Erie.
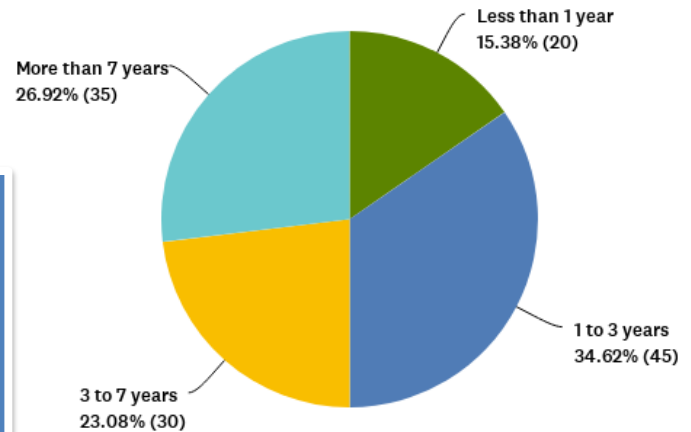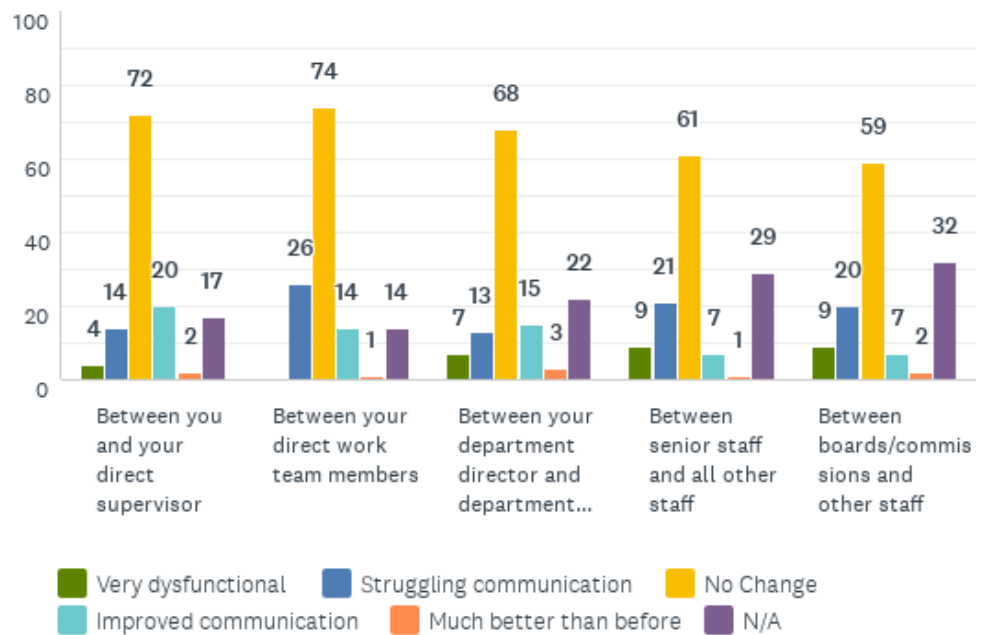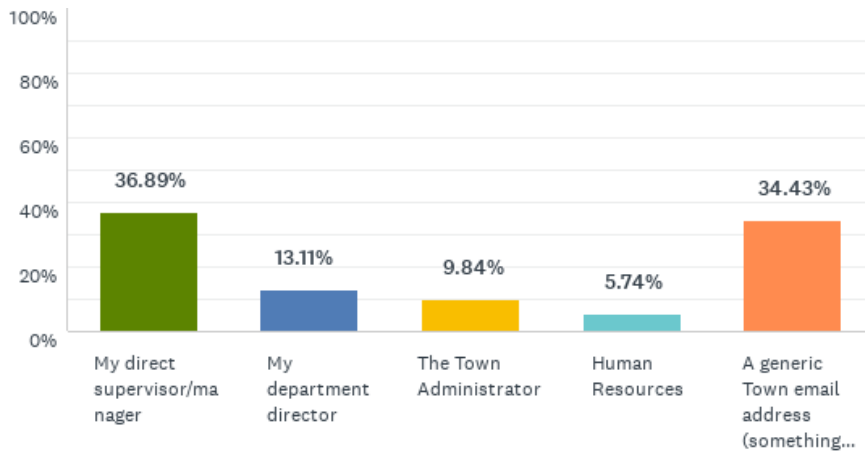
Pandemic-Related Communication

We asked respondents to describe any changes they have seen in communications while many staff members have been working remotely. Surprisingly, we saw that most respondents saw no change in the quality of their communications with their supervisors, work teams, senior staff, and our Town boards. Between the respondents and their supervisors, 72 respondents saw no change, and 20 actually saw improved communication.

We take this as a sign that though we anticipate moving services back in person that need to be, many positions may be successful in a hybrid-remote capacity when it comes to communications.
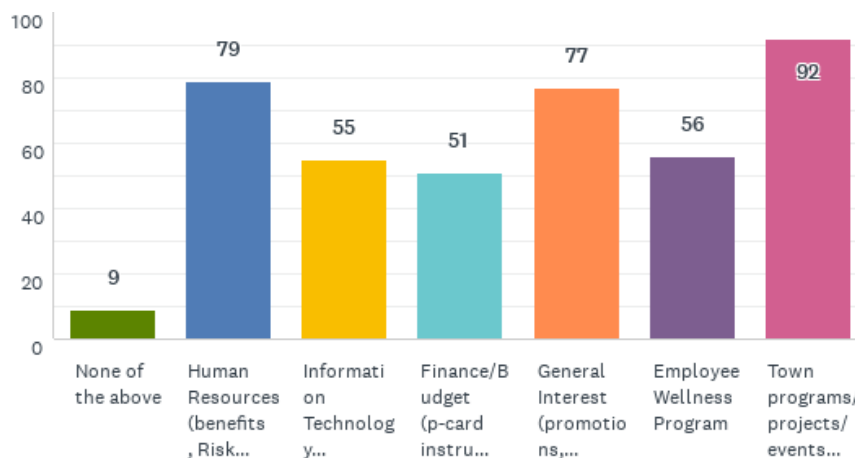
Bar chart:

Category	Very dysfunctional	Struggling communication	No Change	Improved communication	Much better than before	N/A
Between you and your direct supervisor	4	14	72	20	2	17
Between your direct work team members	26	14	74	14	1	14
Between your department director and department...	7	13	68	15	3	22
Between senior staff and all other staff	9	21	61	7	1	29
Between boards/commissions and other staff	9	21	59	7	2	32

Who do they want to get information from?

What type of info do they want to receive?

Would they be interested in chat?

Based on the answers to the question of where respondents want to receive information from, we can see that most staff members want to receive information from their direct supervisor or from a generic Town email address.

Currently, emails to staff come from multiple different individuals and have not been consolidated in a way that is easy to filter or organized in increasingly full inboxes.
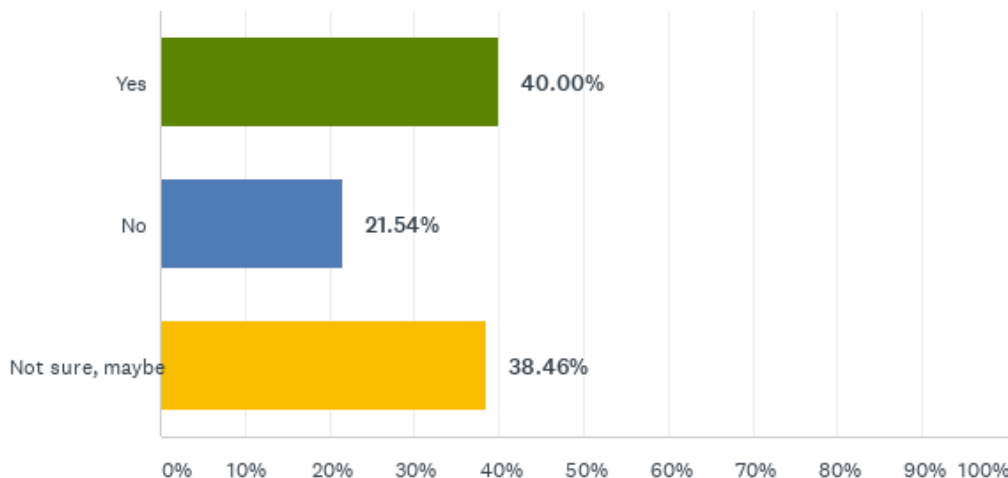
We also see that the types of information the staff would like to receive is primarily about HR-related topics, general interest or morale-related information, as well as information regarding Town projects and programs.

We also asked respondents to let us know where they typically find out about Town programs and projects and the top three answers were 1) the Weekly Update newsletter, 2) the Town's website, and 3) social media.

It is our belief that adding a digested email from a generic Town email address that summarizes all of the information from the week that is typically shared in those top 3 places might help staff from feeling overwhelmed, but still "in the know".

Internal Communication & Engagement Tools

As the Town of Erie as an organization continues to grow to keep up with population and commercial growth within Town limits, it is more important than ever to maintain a high-level of internal communication. Below is a list of tools currently being used to accommodate this task:

Tool	Purpose & Use
Email to all employees	Using the group list of "Town Staff" emails can be sent to all employees with one click. This can be used for a variety of topics that pertain to all staff including benefits, IT information/updates, new hires, etc.
Intranet - Sharepoint	The internal intranet for Town staff is used primarily to house internal forms and documents that staff need to complete their jobs. This includes forms about benefits, accident reporting, submitting information to the Clerk, etc.
Erie Edge Newsletter	Monthly digital newsletter sent through email to all Town staff. This includes information about work anniversaries, new employees, safety information, open positions, and kudos to staff for their outstanding work.
Weather Hotline	Phone number to call to learn about any facilities closures due to inclement weather or other emergencies.
All Staff meetings	Pre-pandemic these were in-person meetings, currently they are held virtually. An opportunity for the Town Administrator and Senior Staff to share updates with all employees and take questions from staff. Held as needed/quarterly.

Proposed Improvements to Internal Communication

Intranet

Any organization should have a space for employees to access important information, documents, and forms that are relevant to their job duties. This space can also be used for team building and morale boosting if created and executed correctly. The CCE Department intends to work with the Information Technology Department extensively over the next few months while the intranet platform – Sharepoint – is upgraded. This is the perfect opportunity to audit the information currently housed on the intranet and create a space that works to achieve consistency, efficiency, and a stronger team culture.

- Work with the internal Innovation Team, IT, HR, and other stakeholders to re-brand the intranet. Find a name, character, or theme to build the new site around. This new theme should represent the tone of the Town and the mission, vision, and values that we have agreed upon.
- Restructure and rebuild the site to better serve the needs of employees. The new design will be based on input and feedback from employees and best practices for user experience.
- Determine an agreed-upon set of naming conventions and protocols to ensure that documents and forms are maintained and up to date.
- Integrate features to encourage conversation and engagement between employees in particular across teams and departments.

Requested Funding: Funds for the upgrade to Sharepoint have already been allocated in the Information Technology budget. Timing for the roll-out is being determined now.

Goal: Build more connection across and within teams to ensure consistency in knowledge, enhance morale, and to support a more informed employee base to act as ambassadors out in the community.

Email Protocol

There are many areas where efficiencies can be made, and organization can be honed when it comes to the most frequently utilized form of communication – email.

- **Resident → Town of Erie**
  - Currently, there are two main ways the public can email the Town of Erie (if they do not know the direct name of someone in the Town), 1) using contactus@erieco.gov or 2) using BOT@erieco.gov. One is intended to be for general questions, the other intended for the Board of Trustees' questions.
  - The CCE Department suggests that both of these email inboxes be monitored by one single individual whose task it is to monitor questions and comments as they arrive, delegate the job of answering the emails to the correct subject matter expert, follow up to make sure the loop was closed and the email was indeed answers, and finally categorizing and documenting the topics that come into the inboxes to report to the Board and Senior Staff.
  - The documenting and categorizing of topics will be useful in analyzing the webpages and other communications for things that are still not clear based on incoming questions. It will also help in the creation of frequently asked questions widgets as needed.
  - Centralizing the initial viewing of the inbox will help with organization, accuracy, and consistency in messaging coming from the Town.
- **Communications & Community Engagement Department → Town Staff & Board of Trustees**
  - Based on the results of the survey regarding internal communications, the CCE Department intends to send out a once-weekly digested email of the most relevant information that employees and Trustees are wanting. This includes a list of news stories published about the Town, any news items shared in the Weekly Update, updates about progress on Work Plan items, and other important developments pertaining to the services provided by the Town of Erie.
  - Most of the information included in the weekly digest could be found in other locations, but by combining them into one communication we anticipate more employees being able to absorb and remember the highlights. *See Appendix for example of weekly digest email.*
- **Town Leadership → Town Staff**
  - There are currently no limits on who can send emails to all Town staff and no expectations set for which email addresses to look for when searching for important internal information.
  - The CCE Department suggests creating a generic email address (ideally based upon whatever branding is decided for the intranet) that will be the key place where important internal information is sent from. Employees will understand that emails arriving from that address will contain important information pertaining to their job with the Town.
  - Consolidating where the emails can be sent from can also help with the timing of important messages in making sure multiple requests aren't overlapped or competing. Best practice says that there should only be a small handful of users who can email from the consolidated address and perhaps that same group of users plus remaining Senior Staff who can email all Town staff at once.
- **Advisory Board Members → Town Staff**
  - It is the recommendation of the CCE Department that Advisory Board members no longer are assigned a Town email address. Administering essential digital security training to this group is increasingly difficult, there is a cost to providing these email accounts, and many board members complain about needing to track a separate inbox for emails only a few times per month.
  - Training for Advisory Board members* on the legal expectations for open meetings and transparency would be given and they would be expected to follow such rules and would be responsible for providing any requested emails if they were involved in any sort of Colorado Open Records Act request.
    Full training for Advisory Board members and Advisory Board Liaisons is in development.

Funding Request: A position request has been created for a new administration staff member who can help with the constituent emails. Moving away from Town emails for Advisory Board members will actually end up saving funds for the Town.

Goal: Town staff should have a better sense of expectations and frequency of emails that hold important internal information. Employees should feel comfortable acting as ambassadors in the community for a host of programs and projects as they are able to read high-level information about them in the weekly digest.

Guides & Training

To support staff in feeling prepared and in control when communicating about Town projects, a style guide and communications trainings will be provided.

- **Town of Erie Style Guide**
  - It is important for all staff members across all departments and teams to be speaking with the same tone, voice, and grammar. Consistency proves thoughtful execution and connected inner workings of the organization.
  - The Town Style Guide touches on topics from how to write out dates and times when listing events, to the correct terms to use when referencing protected populations, to the accepted uses for the Town logo. *Please see the Appendix for the full Town of Erie Style Guide*.
- **Clear, Concise Writing Course**
  - A basic course on writing and Town expectations for communication will be provided to all Town staff multiple times each year. The class will be taught by CCE Department staff and includes group interaction, practice writing samples, and a full overview of the Town Style Guide.
  - We understand that writing emails, creating presentations, or applying for grants are just some of the things that will be completed outside of the CCE Department and should still follow consistent guidelines and expectations for Town writing. This course will help staff feel comfortable and confident in their role representing the Town.
- **Media 101**
  - Best practice says that the subject matter expert for any given topic should be the person to explain that topic. This is especially true when it comes to talking with the media. Though the CCE Department staff can and will act at spokespeople when needed, it is often better to have a staff member who is directly involved with a project be the one interviewed by a reporter.
  - The Media 101 course will be taught by CCE Department staff multiple times per year and will allow Town staff to become comfortable with the protocol, expectations, and guidelines when interacting with the media. Building a media-savvy employee base helps the Town get the word out to the public more accurately about programs and project that affect their lives.

Requested Funding: It is highly recommended that the Human Resources Department explore training management system to help all Town staff access and track the trainings they have undertaken, as well as provide options for providing feedback on the instructor and materials.

Goal: Hold at least one class of Clear, Concise Writing and one class of Media 101 by the beginning of 2022. Work with HR to create a possible certificate program for staff to earn some sort of status or bonus for completing a pack of courses.

Communications & Community Engagement Staffing

In order to meet the goals and expectations of our public and to uphold the priorities of the Board of Trustees, the CCE Department will inevitably need more staff to help with the workload. The CCE Director will present needs to the Trustees in the regular budget cycle in the fall. Currently the anticipated staffing looks like:

- **Current Staff:**
  - **Director** – Oversees the strategic priorities, vision, direction, and budget of the CCE Department. Acts as official spokesperson for the Town. Manages other CCE staff.
  - **Communications & Marketing Manager** – Completes day-to-day communications and marketing tasks including managing social media, creating content (text and visuals) for communications from the Town, manages major engagement projects, maintains webpages, and more.
- **Anticipated Needed Staff in the Next Year:**
  - **Multimedia Specialist** – A staff member dedicated to creating video and graphics to augment our traditional written content. This person will primarily work in the visual space and will have experience with conducting live meetings/live event videos, creating edited videos, designing graphics, logos, and other imagery.
  - **Bilingual Communications Specialist** – Based on anticipated recommendations from the DEI experts, it will be necessary to hire someone who is a Spanish-language speaker and also a professional in communications. This person will help with creating culturally relevant content for our Spanish language community members.
- **Anticipated Needed Staff in 3+ Years:**
  - **Communications & Marketing Specialist** – As community expectations grow and our major areas of interest – Parks & Recreation and Police – also grow, it will behoove the department to add at least one more person to the team who can solely focus on those topic areas.
  - **Social Media Specialist** – As always, technology is constantly changing and keeping up with the latest tools is a challenge. Hiring a person who specializes in the most utilized tools will help us maintain connection with our young and savvy residents.

Appendix

1. Communications & Communications Strategic Priorities
2. Sample Weekly Digest for All Town Staff and Trustees
3. Town of Erie Style Guide