



Governance & Services Committee

TO: Governance and Services Committee

FROM: Jodie Foster
Corporate Communications Manager

DATE: July 8, 2019

SUBJECT: 2019 Corporate Communications Update

Purpose: To provide the Regional Board with a general overview of work being done in the communications function during 2019.

Executive Summary:

In January 2019, regional district resources were reallocated to retain a Corporate Communications Manager to bolster our public engagement and communications capacity. The mandate for this new position was to take inventory of how we are currently handling our communications needs, identify opportunities for improvement, and bring forward recommendations on how to better serve our residents, the Board and the corporation.

A wholesale review of how we undertake our corporate communications was undertaken and to assist with that work, a subject matter expert was retained to identify short, medium and long term needs for our program. This report explains what work has been completed or is underway in 2019 including the development of a formal visual identity standard for the RDCO.

Lastly, staff is proposing an update to the RDCO logo and has included some options for the Committee's consideration.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Governance & Services Committee receive the Corporate Communications Update dated July 8, 2019 for information;

AND FURTHER THAT the Governance & Services Committee recommend the Regional Board approve an update to the Regional District of Central Okanagan logo as shown in the report as Option 2.

Respectfully Submitted:

Jodie Foster
Corporate Communications Manager

Approved for Committee's Consideration

Brian Reardon, CAO

Implications of Recommendation:

Strategic Plan:	The proposed actions will help raise awareness of RDCO services, as well as creating better two-way communication channels for residents and employees.
Organizational:	The Visual Identity Guidelines will be used across the organization with the acknowledgement that there will be additional work to include sub-brands including Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission, Crime Stoppers and the fire departments.
Financial:	Work listed within the report will take place within existing budgets or will be addressed during annual budget deliberations.

Background:

In January, the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) reallocated resources to add a Corporate Communications Manager to the communications function. This is a .5 position, with the other .5 overseeing the Regional Waste Reduction Office.

Until the beginning of this year, the communications function at the RDCO existed entirely within the hands of one staff member, whose role was largely media relations, advertising, website and social media, plus support for the regional emergency operations centre. As a result, although that staff member was able to help out with other projects as much as possible, the various other communications activities and outputs were initiated by the operating departments.

The purpose of the new position is to increase communications support for the organization and to ensure that the work is done strategically, coordinating efforts to make the best use of resources.

Communications Review

A communications review was completed by Cross Wise Communications this spring to determine what communications activities are currently undertaken across the organization and to recommend priority actions going forward. Work for the review included:

- A material and channel review for visual identity consistency, design principles, use of print vs. digital material and language choice
- A review of communications policies
- Interviews with 17 RDCO leaders including three Board members to identify trends and future needs for corporate communications
- Benchmarking communications resources at the RDCO vs. other regional districts; AND
- Comparison of RDCO communications function to the International Association of Business Communicators Excellence Model

The review determined that while the RDCO has had a communications function in place for more than a decade, the mandate for that function has been narrow. As a result, the formative stage of the function might best be described as “early stage or basic”. The review outlines actions for the development of a more “mature” function.

These actions fall into three categories of work over the short, medium and long term:

- Develop the communications function – positioning within the RDCO, department structure and reporting, integration, develop overarching three-year strategy, branding and visual identity, policies and service offering.
- Build plans and content which recognize the trends and business issues of the RDCO – employee, research, climate change, regional growth strategy, transportation, water, major projects, taxation etc.
- Develop communication channels to better reach key audiences – web site replacement, intranet replacement and social media review.

Specifically, these can be broken down into the following actions by timeframe.

Short term actions (rest of 2019):

- Build visual identity guidelines and begin brand development including confirming name use (RDCO vs. CORD), publishing and enforcing visual identity standards, creating templates
- Build a three-year strategic communications plan that responds to the trends and business issues identified during the review.
- Build case and start budget process for new website
- Complete the new intranet for staff, contributing to employee engagement goals

Medium term actions (2020):

- Define communications policies
- Develop media relations strategy and training program
- Conduct citizen survey
- Partner with HR on employee communication strategy
- Start development of new website
- Create and standardize interaction tools for use to provide residents with information and receive feedback

Long term (2021) and beyond:

- Build public engagement strategy
- Build communications / marketing research plan and program
- Conduct social media channel review
- Update three year communications plan

Work Underway

Some of the work listed above is already underway or completed.

- The Visual Identity Guidelines will be made up of two parts, with the first part complete. See details below.
- The web domain rdco.com has been purchased and will allow name consistency through website and email addresses going forward.
- A new interactive staff intranet is under development and expected to launch later this summer. It will be available to all staff and can be accessed remotely from mobile devices.
- An automated media monitoring program has been implemented.

- An automated system for programming the foyer TVs is under development.
- An annual photography program is underway to capture images for new website.

Visual Identity Guidelines

Work is already underway to establish formal visual identity standards. To understand the function and value of the RDCO identity, it is important to recognize that every organization has a specific public identity—an identity partly formed by the look of its printed materials, website, communication channels etc. Each element of communication contributes to the overall impression people have of the organization.

When an organization's identification program is a coordinated one, it projects a unified character which works effectively to reinforce all of its activities. In many cases, it also helps the organization to be more cost-effective in its communication efforts by simplifying certain decision-making processes.

Our visual identity is an essential part of a planned approach to building the RDCO's reputation and raising awareness about its facilities, services and programs. Everything the RDCO does, every service it provides, everything it owns should project a clear idea of what the RDCO and its goals are. The visual identity standards set specific rules that are meant to reinforce the projection of a consistently strong and distinguished image.

The visual identity program:

- Ensures citizens can easily identify, recognize and access all RDCO programs, services, facilities and information
- Assists citizens to recognize the value of the services they get for their tax dollars
- Helps the RDCO create a positive and approachable image of our organization
- Helps reinforce or support the RDCO's reputation or brand as it's otherwise known

Attached in Appendix A is a draft of the first part of the RDCO's visual identity standards which outline use of the logo, corporate fonts and a standard colour palette for use across all corporate communications and marketing materials. Part 2 of the guidelines will be developed later this summer and will include a set of templates, graphic elements and grandfathered sub-brands with specifics around how the RDCO will be acknowledged, as well as the use of any additional allowable logos such as the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission, Crime Stoppers and the fire departments.

Logo Update

The existing RDCO logo has been in use since the early 1990s. It is a difficult logo from a graphic standpoint in that it:

- Contains two unique fonts
- Includes a redundancy showing both RDCO and REGIONAL DISTRICT OF CENTRAL OKANAGAN
- Does not produce well on a copier because of the inconsistent colour in the brushstroke effect
- Contains font that is difficult to read due to its size, narrowness and all capitals structure

Staff are proposing a change in the logo to make it simpler and easier to read. The change does not significantly impact colour or form of the logo, so changes to existing materials, signage, business cards etc. could be done over time as replacement occurs. Additional cost is expected to be minimal.

Below is the existing logo and two simplified options. Staff is recommending that Option 2 be adopted as the new RDCO logo for all uses going forward.

Existing logo



New Option 1

New Option 2
(Recommended)

Organizational Issues

The Visual Identity Guidelines will be used across the organization. Communications staff met with senior leaders in the organization including the fire chiefs to start discussion around branding and visual identity. While in general there is agreement with the need for more branding consistency, details around grandfathering the sub-brands are still underway and will be finalized in Part 2 of the Visual Identity Guidelines.

Financial Considerations:

Work as listed above will take place within existing budgets or will be addressed in annual budget deliberations. The only significant investment required over the next three years will be for a new website.

Considerations not applicable to this report:

- *External Implications*
- *Alternative Recommendation*

Attachment(s): Appendix A - Draft Visual Identity Guidelines