



# Electoral Area Communication Strategy

## Central Okanagan West and Central Okanagan East 2021-2022

Approved by the Regional Board January 14, 2021

### **PURPOSE**

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The purpose of this plan is to improve communication and increase trust among the following groups / individuals during 2021 and 2022:

- Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) staff
- RDCO Regional Board of Directors
- Electoral Area Directors
- Residents in Central Okanagan Electoral Areas

### **BACKGROUND**

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Electoral Areas are communities outside municipal boundaries, often referred to as rural or unincorporated areas. As a regional district, the RDCO is responsible for administration and delivery of local services in Central Okanagan Electoral Areas including Electoral Area East and Electoral Area West.

Each Electoral Area is represented by a Director, who is elected directly to the RDCO's Board of Directors (Regional Board). Residents in the Electoral Areas only pay for services provided to their specific area. This may include a mix of local services (within one Electoral Area) and broader services offered at the regional and sub-regional level.

It should be noted that a substantial number of the services Electoral Area residents receive are from other levels of government. These include but are not limited to roads, health care, policing and schools. In Electoral Area West, many of these are delivered from organizations and offices within the North Okanagan.

#### **Central Okanagan Electoral Area West**

Central Okanagan Electoral Area West (124,756 hectares) encompasses the mostly rural, unincorporated area on the west side of Okanagan Lake, outside the municipal boundaries of the City of West Kelowna and District of Peachland. The population was 1981 in the most recent census (2016).

There are a number of communities within the Electoral Area including many along Westside Road (Traders Cove, Killiney Beach, Wilson's Landing, Westshore Estates, Fintry, Valley of the Sun), the area also includes two areas outside the District of Peachland: Trepanier Valley and Brent Road.

Westbank First Nation Reserves #9 and #10 (population 9028 in 2016 census) are included within the boundary of the Electoral Area, however Westbank First Nation is an independent, self-sustaining government.

Throughout the Electoral Area, the RDCO Zoning Bylaw applies and is supplemented by the Brent Road-Trepanier Official Community Plan and the Rural Westside Official Community Plan.

#### **Central Okanagan Electoral Area East**

This Electoral Area (127,109 hectares) encompasses the mostly rural, unincorporated area on the east side of Okanagan Lake, outside the municipal boundaries of the City of Kelowna and District of Lake Country. The population was 3824 in the most recent census (2016).

There are a number of communities within the Electoral Area including Ellison, Joe Rich and neighbourhoods along the south end of Lakeshore Road and June Springs.

Land use in the Joe Rich area is regulated by the Joe Rich Rural Land Use Bylaw and the remainder of the Electoral Area is regulated by the RDCO Zoning Bylaw, which is supplemented by the South Slopes Official Community Plan and Ellison Official Community Plan.

**Electoral Area services provided by the RDCO include:**

The Electoral Areas receive both community services, as well as some regional services. The key services vary slightly in each area, but generally include (and are not limited to):

Community Services:

- Community Parks
- Community Halls
- Water Systems
- Fire Services
- Solid Waste Management (curbside collection and / or transfer stations depending on the area)
- Community Planning
- Grants
- Transportation Demand Management
- Building Inspections
- Bylaw Services

Regional / Sub-Regional Services:

- Regional Parks
- Dog Control
- Regional Emergency Program
- 9-11
- Crime Stoppers and Crime Prevention
- Economic Development

**KEY AUDIENCES/STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS**

<b>Audience</b>	<b>Level of Engagement</b>	<b>Notes:</b>
Regional Board	Empower	Final decision makers (on most Regional Board items – regional in nature)
Area Director	Collaborate / Empower	Final decision maker (on some Electoral Area issues)
RDCO staff (Admin)	Inform	
RDCO staff (Fire Depts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wilsons Landing</li> <li>• North Westside</li> <li>• Joe Rich</li> <li>• Ellison</li> </ul>	Inform / Consult / Involve	Within the branding guidelines Fire Depts can use their own logos in addition to the RDCO logo.
Member of the Legislative Assembly	Inform	Be kept up to date on provincial issues within the area.
Member of Parliament	Inform	Be kept up to date on federal issues within the area.
Electoral Area residents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water utility customers</li> <li>• Waste customers</li> <li>• Those paying for RDCO services</li> </ul>	Inform / Consult / Involve	Focus on content of most interest / value to residents. Also clarify RDCO role and services. Provide contact info for services not provided by RDCO.
Community Associations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Westside Community Association</li> <li>• Wilson's Landing Community Association</li> <li>• Cottages of Paradise Valley</li> <li>• Trepanier Residents</li> <li>• Joe Rich Ratepayers and Tenants</li> </ul>	Inform / Consult / Involve	Acts as conduit to residents.
Area specific media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vernon Morningstar</li> <li>• Westside Post</li> </ul>	Inform	Acts as conduit to residents.
Service providers outside the RDCO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Transportation</li> <li>• AIM Roads</li> <li>• Ambulance Service</li> <li>• School District #22</li> <li>• Adjoining Regional Districts</li> </ul>	Inform / Consult	Focus is to help residents recognize and contact these organizations when they have issues with their service.  RDCO will help amplify their messages to reach residents.

\*Engagement level based on the International Association of Public Participation Engagement Spectrum (See Appendix A).

**VULNERABILITIES & OPPORTUNITIES**

<b>Strengths (Internal)</b>	<b>Weakness (Internal)</b>
Existing channels already in place (website, social media, water newsletter etc.)	No additional resources to increase communications in 2021
Stronger branding on RDCO services, programs and infrastructure is underway	In some cases there has been inconsistent messaging from staff and elected officials
Website replacement in 2021 will provide better platform and communication tools for reaching residents directly (i.e. newsletter module)	In some cases there has been inconsistent messaging from Fire Department staff and other RDCO channels
Regional Board webcasting put in place in late 2020	Fire Department has not been strongly identified as an RDCO service
<b>Opportunity (External)</b>	<b>Threat (External)</b>
Drive residents to RDCO channels to get direct information, particularly the new website	Residents are getting information “via the grapevine” rather than directly from the RDCO which leaves room for errors
Residents to get consistent messaging through multiple RDCO channels	Residents vary in what they want / need from the RDCO especially as there are diverse neighbourhoods including Trepanier / Brent Road, Traders and North Westside
Provide digital opportunities for communication and engagement that don't require in person service at KLO	Residents do not all receive the same services (i.e. several water systems, transfer stations vs. curbside pickup)
Provide some face to face opportunities within the Electoral Areas (in accordance with COVID health orders)	Residents cannot always recognize RDCO services and there confusion about which services are provided by the RDCO or by other agencies (i.e. roads)
	Residents access many day-to-day services in the North Okanagan (government, postal, shopping, media etc.)
	Some residents mistrust the RDCO (and information issued by the RDCO) due to inconsistent messaging and misinformation in the community
	Media content received in area is largely from North Okanagan outlets
	Long distances to Electoral Areas make in person meetings more difficult

## **COMMUNICATION GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

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### **Goal 1: Residents feel they receive clear, correct and truthful information from the RDCO**

Objectives:

- a) To address residents directly through RDCO channels (we break our own news)
- b) To correct misinformation when it exists
- c) To provide consistent messaging through RDCO and Area Director's channels
- d) To know what information residents want most
- e) To know where residents most often get their RDCO information

### **Goal 2: Residents understand what services the RDCO provides and which are provided by other agencies**

Objectives:

- a) To ensure all RDCO services, programs, events, infrastructure and facilities are RDCO branded
- b) To use consistent visual identity guidelines
- c) To assist residents in understanding which services are RDCO and which are provided to them via other organizations / levels of government.

### **Goal 3: Residents feel Board decisions are transparent and understand how decisions are made**

Objectives:

- a) To provide live access (in person or remote) to Regular Board meetings as well as Governance and Services meetings
- b) To provide a summary and recording of Board meetings available to residents anytime

### **Goal 4: Residents value the services they receive from the RDCO**

Objectives:

- a) To know what services residents value
- b) To understand resident priorities for their area
- c) To provide information and opportunities for input on issues of concern in the area

### **Goal 5: The Electoral Area Director and the Regional Board are aware of and feel supported through issues arising in the area**

Objectives:

- a) To notify the Electoral Area Director and the Board of emerging issues and provide communications support
- b) To take a coordinated approach in advocating for services (not administered by the RDCO) within the Electoral Areas
- c) To provide opportunities for the Area Director to speak to residents on behalf of the RDCO re: Electoral Area services and projects (\*Note: RDCO Board Chair will remain the spokesperson for the Regional Board on all Board decisions so this will require some balance).

### **Goal 6: Residents feel they have the information and direction they need during a crisis**

Objectives:

- a) To provide residents with emergency information when the Central Okanagan Emergency Operation Centre is activated
- b) To provide residents with information when local issues / crisis arise (i.e. water notices)

## **STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS**

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The following strategic considerations have been included when building out the communications strategy:

- This two-year plan will establish more formal protocols and can be reviewed in 2023 as needed to reassess community needs and accommodate a new Regional Board (election in fall 2022)
- Under current health orders due to COVID 19, the opportunity for face to face and group activities are limited / eliminated
  - Recognizing that face to face activities build trust most quickly, those activities will be returned as soon as health orders allow
- Activities should encourage collaboration between Area Directors and the Regional Board to develop consistent messaging being issued to the community
- The first source of RDCO information should be rdco.com and a new website will be delivered in Q3 2021
  - Enhances the ability to provide residents the information they want through e-newsletters subscription with the topics they chose (i.e. Electoral Area or Regional news, Economic Development, Parks, Water, Waste etc.)
  - Allows residents to more easily access information as the search function and site architecture will be improved
- Residents and the Electoral Area Directors are striving to see improved services delivered by other levels of government
  - The Regional Board and the Area Directors may be able to work in a more collaborative and coordinated role to advocate to on behalf of Electoral Area residents
- A strong communications strategy and collaborative working relationship will be able to better assist the information sharing required though the Provincial Restructure Planning Grant process.
- Community communications should focus on issues of highest importance to residents. More research on what is important to residents will be undertaken through a Citizen Survey in 2021. In the meantime, the Area Directors have identified:
  - Services and their costs to residents (value for service)
  - Services and how to contact the “right people” for both those delivered by the RDCO and also other agencies / levels of government (roads, police, schools, Agricultural Land Commission etc.).
  - Water utilities and their costs
  - Understanding of agricultural zoning and ALC (what is allowed / not etc.)

## **BUDGET**

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The budget for the communications activities to date has been almost entirely a corporate cost. Most activities are delivered on behalf of the RDCO to all residents in the region through corporate channels and through staff that work for the RDCO as a whole (i.e. Board communications, website, social media, communications staff etc.). The only exception has been public consultation for specific projects which has been achieved as part of the individual project cost.

If during 2021 additional communications activities and costs are required only for the Electoral Areas, these can be reviewed for the 2022 operating budget in collaboration with the Area Directors.

## **EVALUATION**

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The success of the communications activities toward meeting the goals and objectives of this plan will be evaluated through:

- Citizen Survey questions with baseline set in 2021
- Questions included in exit surveys from annual open houses and other project specific public engagements
- Number of attendees at open house (either virtual or online engagement)
- Number of web visits on Electoral Area page with baseline set in 2021
- Number of sign-ups for e-Newsletter (Electoral Area news and service specific such as water utility) with baseline set in 2021.

**TACTICAL ACTIVITIES**

\*\*Note: blue are new or revamped activities, black are existing

Goal / Objective	Activity	Timing and Notes
<b>Goal 1: Residents feel they receive clear, correct and truthful information from the RDCO</b>		
<p>To address residents directly through RDCO channels (break our own news)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drive residents to rdco.com as main source of information</li> <li>• E-newsletter subscription (optional resident sign up) with new website</li> <li>• Electoral Area webpage</li> <li>• Annual open house (delivered in person with accompanying digital options)</li> <li>• Annual newsletter delivered to homes – budget focus</li> <li>• Media relations program (news release, PSAs)</li> <li>• Water utility newsletter (twice annually)</li> <li>• Utility billing notice</li> <li>• Program advertising (events, programs etc.)</li> <li>• Social media used to amplify news and advertising</li> <li>• Identify and provide regular information to stakeholders (community associations, service clubs, staff including Fire Departments)</li> <li>• Find other channels and meet residents where they are (Westside Post, Community bulletin boards etc.)</li> <li>• Waste app for all solid waste info</li> <li>• Temporary street signage</li> <li>• Posters at community bulletin boards and RDCO facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Available Q3 2021 with marketing to inform residents of new option</li> <li>• Ongoing (updated new website)</li> <li>• Last in 2018. As permitted due to COVID in 2021 or 2022</li> <li>• Q2 2022</li> <li>• Ongoing as needed</li> <li>• Q1 and Q3 ongoing</li> <li>• Quarterly and ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing as needed</li> <li>• Ongoing as needed</li> <li>• Ongoing and as needed</li> <li>• Review in 2021</li> <li>• Ongoing and as needed</li> <li>• Replaced in 2020 – ongoing and as needed</li> <li>• Ongoing and as needed</li> </ul>



CENTRAL OKANAGAN ELECTORAL AREA COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

To correct misinformation when it exists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Just the Facts webpage on rdco.com and sent to local media as a PSA</li> <li>• Monitor social media and provide information as needed to correct misinformation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing as needed</li> <li>• Ongoing as needed</li> </ul>
To provide consistent messaging through advertising, RDCO channels and Area Director's channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative message from the Director in annual newsletter to Electoral Area residents</li> <li>• Collaborative message from the Director on Electoral Area webpage</li> <li>• Regular advertising</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q2 2021 and annually</li> <li>• Q1 2021 and onward</li> <li>• Ongoing as needed</li> </ul>
To know what information residents want most	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electoral Area questions in bi-annual citizen survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q4 2021</li> </ul>
To know where residents most often get their RDCO information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electoral Area questions in bi-annual citizen survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q4 2021</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 2: Residents understand what services the RDCO provides and which are provided by other agencies / levels of government</b>		
To ensure all RDCO services, programs, events, infrastructure and facilities are RDCO branded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply RDCO branding guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New guidelines in 2019 being implemented and ongoing</li> </ul>
To use consistent visual identity guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adhere to RDCO visual identity guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New guidelines in 2019 being implemented and ongoing</li> </ul>
To assist residents in understanding which services are RDCO and which are provided to them via other organizations / levels of government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directory of Services to be sent out with annual newsletter and available online – versions for Traders, North Westside and Trepanier / Brent Road since many service contracts are different in each neighbourhood</li> <li>• Coordinate other service providers with opportunity to speak to residents re: their services (i.e. Ministry of Highways, School District #22 etc.). Optional digital or face to face delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q2 2021 and annual</li> <li>• As allowed for group gathering or digital in Q4 2021</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 3: Residents feel Board decisions are transparent and understand how decisions are made</b>		
To provide live access (in person or remote) to Regular Board meetings as well as Governance and Services meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular Board and Governance and Services meetings livestreamed on rdco.com</li> <li>• Public invited to attend Board and Governance and Services meetings (*seating limited during COVID)</li> <li>• Board meetings and public hearings advertised</li> <li>• Board reports, presentations available on rdco.com prior to meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Started in Q4 2020 and ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>

CENTRAL OKANAGAN ELECTORAL AREA COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

<p>To provide a summary and recording of Board meetings available to residents anytime</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Board news (summary reporting for each meeting provided to local media)</li> <li>• Minutes on rdco.com</li> <li>• <a href="#">Video</a> and audio recording of meeting on rdco.com (with links to individual agenda items)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing and <a href="#">video new in 2020</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal 4: Residents value the services they receive from the RDCO</b></p>		
<p>To know what services residents value</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Electoral Area questions in bi-annual citizen survey</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q4 2021</li> </ul>
<p>To understand resident priorities for their area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Electoral Area questions in bi-annual citizen survey</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q4 2021</li> </ul>
<p>To provide information and opportunities for input on issues of concern in the area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Highlight as content in publications and channels listed in Goal 1</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">RDCO staff attend North Westside Community Association meeting as needed but at least twice annually</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Investigate online public engagement platform</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Feedback from open houses and any engagement processes</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">More formally in 2021</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">2021 and onward (this happens now but will be formalized)</a></li> <li>• 2022</li> <li>• Project specific ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal 5: The Electoral Area Director and the Regional Board are aware of and feel supported through issues arising in the area</b></p>		
<p>To notify the Electoral Area Director and the Board of emerging issues and provide communications support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board Memo with issue background</li> <li>• Key points / messages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
<p>To develop a coordinated approach in advocating for services (not administered by the RDCO) within the Electoral Area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Staff to work with Electoral Area Director to bring forward Board resolutions</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Request made formally from the Board to higher levels of government on behalf the Electoral Areas</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Joint meetings with MLAs and MPs to address issues within Electoral Areas</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Investigate options to get better information regarding issues from service providers in the North Okanagan on topics which also impact Electoral Area West residents</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q1 2021</li> <li>• Q1 2021</li> <li>• Q1 2021</li> <li>• Q1 2021</li> </ul>

CENTRAL OKANAGAN ELECTORAL AREA COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

<p>To provide opportunities for the Area Director to speak to residents on behalf of the RDCO re: Electoral Area services and projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual newsletter, open house introduction, ribbon cuttings in Electoral Area (shared with Regional Board Chair as appropriate)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q2 2021 and ongoing as needed (*RDCO Board Chair will remain the Board spokesperson on all Board decisions so this will require some balance).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal 6: Residents feel they have the information and direction they need during a crisis</b></p>		
<p>To inform residents of emergency information when the Central Okanagan Emergency Operation Centre is activated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email notification with links to cordemergency.ca</li> <li>• Road signage in neighbourhoods impacted</li> <li>• rdco.com banner alert</li> <li>• News release or PSA sent to local media and stakeholders</li> <li>• Social media channels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q1 2021</li> <li>• Updated in 2020 and ongoing</li> <li>• Q3 2021 with website delivery</li> <li>• Ongoing as needed</li> <li>• Ongoing as needed</li> </ul>
<p>To provide residents with information when local issues / crisis arise (i.e. water notices)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email notification (i.e. Water Advisory and Boil Water Notification)</li> <li>• Road signage in neighbourhoods impacted</li> <li>• rdco.com banner alert</li> <li>• News release or PSA sent to local media and stakeholders</li> <li>• Social media channels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing as needed</li> <li>• Updated in 2020 and ongoing</li> <li>• Q3 2021 with website delivery</li> <li>• Ongoing as needed</li> <li>• Ongoing as needed</li> </ul>

**APPENDIX A – IAP2 ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM**

# IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



	<b>Inform</b>	<b>Consult</b>	<b>Involve</b>	<b>Collaborate</b>	<b>Empower</b>
<b>Public participation goal</b>	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
<b>Promise to the public</b>	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
<b>Example techniques</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fact sheets</li> <li>▪ Web sites</li> <li>▪ Open houses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Public comment</li> <li>▪ Focus groups</li> <li>▪ Surveys</li> <li>▪ Public meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Workshops</li> <li>▪ Deliberative polling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Citizen advisory committees</li> <li>▪ Consensus-building</li> <li>▪ Participatory decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Citizen juries</li> <li>▪ Ballots</li> <li>▪ Delegated decision</li> </ul>