

# COMMUNICATIONS PLAN



STORY COUNTY, IOWA

**FEBRUARY 2021**

Story County Board of Supervisors  
900 6th Street  
Nevada, Iowa 50201

[www.storycountyiowa.gov](http://www.storycountyiowa.gov)



# COMMUNICATIONS PLAN *Story County, Iowa*

## Historical Overview 1

Goals 2

Target Audiences 3

Strategies and

Action Steps 4

### We use this plan to communicate:

**Timely:** We will communicate what we know when we know it.

**Openly:** We will provide all public information in a way that's easy to access and understand.

**Proactively:** We will engage our customers and stakeholders before being asked to provide information and determine future needs.

## Historical Overview

A communications plan is a living, breathing document used to align information activities with the goals, objectives, and key communication messages of the organization. It prioritizes needs, identifies audiences, determines the message and how it is delivered, and measures whether or not the effort was successful. The plan is assessed and updated annually and includes measurable objectives and outcomes.

In January 2014, the Story County Board of Supervisors adopted the first Communications Plan aimed at a set of goals to improve the work we do. Since then, these goals have undergone revision to better meet the progress we have made and our objectives for the future. Our goals are now as follows:

- *Transparency and accessibility through duration of projects and issues in Story County and access to factual information for the public and County employees.*
- *Share the Story County vision with the general public and decision-makers.*
- *Improve communications between the Board of Supervisors and our constituents.*
- *Engage the community through service and recognition.*
- *Enhance emergency response communication.*

The Plan contains the following elements:

**Goals**

**Target Audience**

**Strategies**

**Action Steps**

This Plan serves as a roadmap to encourage participation and focus on what, how, where, and when we communicate so we can better inform, educate and engage citizens in Story County. It allows us to coordinate our messages, tell our stories and present a cohesive identity to the public.

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## Goals

**Transparency and accessibility through duration of projects and issues in Story County and access to factual information for the public and County employees.**

- ◆ Increase citizen participation and trust in local government.
- ◆ Spread awareness of issues and projects.
- ◆ Generate and distribute accurate information for residents, community organizations, businesses, other governmental organizations and media sources that serve these groups.

**Share the Story County vision with the general public and decision-makers.**

- ◆ The reality of county government in Iowa is that it is a somewhat decentralized operation, serving diverse needs of our residents, while facing the fiscal realities of budgeting and other economic constraints. Our communication strategies must be designed with this in mind.

**Improve communications between the Board of Supervisors and our constituents.**

- ◆ Integrate strategies that promote two-way dialogue between citizens and government.

**Engage the community through service and recognition.**

- ◆ We recognize it is important to serve the county through multiple outlets. We will strive to encourage participation and service in community activities and events, along with recognizing outstanding County Staff, citizens and employees.

**Enhance emergency response communication.**

- ◆ Story County excels in communicating in emergency response and related issues. Story County will continue to plan for enhancing communication strategies in this area, identifying all appropriate solutions to reach necessary populations for all types of incidents.



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## Target Audiences

Not only are Story County’s communication strategies targeted towards those already “in the know” about what is happening in Story County – the targeted audiences are far greater! Story County identifies six Target Audiences (described below) towards whom strategies are directed as further outlined in this Plan, including:

*County Employees - Public Officials - General Public  
Businesses - Media - Other*

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### COUNTY EMPLOYEES

Story County employees work in various locations and buildings throughout Story County. Within the Story County government framework, there are six elected offices – Board of Supervisors, Auditor, Recorder, Treasurer, Sheriff and Attorney, and over twenty different County departments or program areas in this structure. Communication amongst County staff at all levels ensures the vision for Story County is presented in a consistent manner.

### PUBLIC OFFICIALS

There are over 500 “public officials” in Story County – whether it be a local council member in one of our smaller communities, township trustee, volunteer first responder, member of the local Planning and Zoning Commission, or an individual appointed by the Board of Supervisors to serve on a board or commission.

These individuals rely on Story County for information and support services.

### GENERAL PUBLIC

According to the 2010 US Census, there are 89,542 residents in Story County. Of that, 17.8% of those people are under the age of 18, and 10% are over the age of 65. In addition, 95.1% of those people (age 25+) are high school graduates, and 45.4% (age 25+) hold at least a Bachelor’s Degree. Our population continues to grow and the demographic dynamics dictate that we explore new communication strategies to continue to engage and encourage participation.

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## Target Audiences -Continued

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### **BUSINESSES**

Through the C2C Plan and Implementation Matrix, Story County identifies goals, objectives, and strategies that continue to encourage and support the strong, vibrant economy we experience. In order to meet these goals, the C2C Plan encourages Story County to foster countywide communication and strengthen collaborative efforts. Communication efforts regarding County programs should be targeted to existing businesses as well as potential emerging business throughout Story County.

### **MEDIA**

As media continues to shift how news and information is delivered, we need to continue to use outlets to cooperate with them in getting out our messages, news, and happenings. Media is much more than the local newspaper, radio and television. It now includes blogs, online resources, YouTube channels, and social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and many others.

### **OTHER**

Messages and information Story County shares must go beyond our perceived county boundaries. With I-35 and US Hwy 30 bisecting in our county, along with Iowa State University and many other attractions, we have to employ methods that reach our visitors. Not only those already here – but also those thinking about coming.

*What kind of information do they need to reach all their decisions?*

*Are our communications strategies designed so that their questions are answered or can be asked in a manner to which Story County can respond efficiently and quickly?*

Also, we need to be cognizant of that workforce that does not live here in Story County but spends the vast majority of their daylight hours here – nearly 20% of our workforce is from out of Story County. According to 2010 Census figures, there were 45,010 individuals working in Story County and 81.5% of those people live in Story County.



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## Strategies and Action Steps

Listed below are the strategies and actions steps corresponding to the goal they are working toward.

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**Strategies and  
Action Steps 4**

*Transparency and accessibility through duration of projects and issues in Story County and access to factual information for the public and County employees.*

- Annual Report
- Audio and/or video of Boards and Commissions meetings posted online
- Review potential to livestream meetings on Facebook and YouTube
- County News – internal newsletter for County employees
- Department videos – video descriptions of department duties and services
  - Increase quality of audio, visual production, and presentation
- State of the County Address – videotape and share on social media sites
- Timely press releases, accompanied by photos and graphics and follow-up
- Finalize Mission Statement and engage employees
- Established process for employees to nominate another employee for award for excellence-living the mission
- Updated County Services sheet – summary

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**Strategies and Action Steps** -Continued

Listed below are the strategies and actions steps corresponding to the goal they are working toward.

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***Share the Story County vision with the general public and decision-makers.***

- Assist the Human Resources Department with creating Onboarding and Recruitment Program materials
- Consistent messaging and branding
  - ◊ Produce posters, bulletin boards, mailed letters and other products
  - ◊ Tradeshow Toolkit – display boards
- Our Story – County-wide newsletter publication
- Use digital and multimedia platforms to create compelling, creative content to share the County’s story; create a photo-repository for the storage of images



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**Strategies and Action Steps** -Continued

*Improve communications between the Board of Supervisors and our constituents.*

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- Increase engagement on social media
- As appropriate, help organize, facilitate, and promote special events for the County
- Monthly radio updates of County events and activities
- Quadrant Meetings – biannual quadrant meetings with the Board of Supervisors, local elected officials and members of the public
- Provide a timely response to public records requests
- Analyze website tools, modules, and capabilities for potential implementation
- Conduct a technology needs analysis related to communications strategies
- Recognition of media partners during annual Sunshine Week
- Get to Know Story County segments
- Speakers Bureau presentations
- BOS YouTube updates



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**Strategies and Action Steps** -Continued

*Engage the community through service and recognition.*

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- Citizen of the Year
- National County Government Month
- County employee participation in United Way Day of Caring
- County participation in Leadership Programs
- Brown Bag Luncheon Series
- Wellness initiatives

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**Strategies and Action Steps** -Continued

*Enhance emergency response communication.*

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- Continue supporting exercises for the Emergency Operations Center and the COOP/COG
- Enhance distribution of information post disaster
- Outreach campaigns for Flood Awareness Month and National Preparedness Month
- Review and updated the Program for Public Information (PPI), incorporating outreach strategies related to the Watershed Assessments
- Review the Story County Comprehensive Emergency Operations Plan Emergency Support Function (ESF) 15 External Affairs
  - Review and update Story County EMA Public Affairs Activation Checklist
  - Review and update Public Information Officer Procedures Guide

# COMMUNICATIONS PLAN



In January 2014, the Story County Board of Supervisors adopted the first Communications Plan. The Board of Supervisors amended the approved Communications Plan in May 2014. Annually, the Plan is reviewed by the Board and updated as necessary. The Board updated the Plan as follows:

*February 2015*

*February 2016*

*January 2017*

*January 2018*

*February 2019*

*December 2019*

*February 2021*

## Story County Board of Supervisors



**Latifah Faisal**



**Linda Murken**



**Lisa Heddens**

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