Communication Plan Template and Guidance

The communication plan identifies who needs what information, when they need the information and how that information is provided. In developing the communication plan; consider how to tell the project story throughout the project life cycle. Communicate the health of the project; accomplishments, upcoming challenges, significant changes, and budget and schedule status.

Early on establish a protocol for actively managing the project; maintaining good relationships across functional boundaries, and with consultants, contractors, outside agencies, etc. is critical to the project’s success. Stress the importance of timely change management and communicating project information openly, clearly, concisely, and timely.

As an element of the Project Management Plan, develop a project specific communication plan that addresses the appropriate key points listed below. In addition, the tables are one example of how communication methods, frequency, timing, etc. can be documented both internally and externally in a simple matrix format. Define the level of detail based on the needs of your project.

Key Points:

* Review office policies and procedures for external and internal communications; including document management policies, procedures or tools. Document any project specific procedures.
* Describe how decisions are made (Operating Guidelines) and how those decisions are communicated internally and externally.
* Document how project information (i.e. schedule, budget, risk, change) is communicated with stakeholders, executives, the public, other agencies, specialty groups, HQ, consultants, contractors, etc.
* Describe the frequency of updates and method of communication (email, phone, web, etc.).
* Develop an internal/external contact list and identify who is responsible for maintaining the list. A contact list created in a database or spreadsheet that includes major deliverables or contacts is easily sorted to identify who needs what information.

### External Communication

Public Communications Tools and Tasks

* Identify local, other states, federal agencies or officials, stakeholders, the general public or others who have interest in the project. This may include commuters, pedestrians, special interest groups, local businesses, local media, bicycle clubs, etc.
* Identify methods for external project communications; such as the Gray Notebook, web pages, reports, etc.
* Develop key messages or a basic overview of the project including the benefits and other messages important through the life of the project or phase. They may appear on project web pages, email alerts, newsletters, press releases, etc.

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| **Com. ID** | **Who; identify agencies, stakeholders, businesses, the public, etc.**  | **What event or information will be provided?** | **When will the information be provided?** | **With what frequency?** | **Responsible Party** |
| **Example** | General public | Project web page | Immediately | Updated monthly or after significant milestones | Mark Thomas |
| **Example** | Elected officials, project neighbors and businesses | Open House | March 12 | One time | Keith Bishop |
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### Internal Communication

Operating Guidelines

* Develop a method for capturing lessons learned.
* Identify the time, frequency and location of project team meetings.
* Identify who is responsible for setting the agenda, taking notes and identifying who should attend.

Team Protocol

* Identify key decision makers and authority levels by position.
* Identify specialty groups and others who are involved in the project. Determine the need for an Internal Scope of Work agreement.
* Document communication methods with specialty groups, HQ, consultants, contractors, etc. Including how services are secured and agreed upon milestones, this may be addressed in the Scope of Work agreement.
* Identify a document management (including email) protocol for sharing, storing and archiving project documents. For example; project documents will be stored in a common project folder on the office “g” drive. Identify a responsible party.

Reporting

* Identify required reports, such as the confidence report and construction status reports. Other examples include quarterly reports, monthly progress payments, consultant invoice reports, etc.
* Identify who is responsible for ensuring the reports are prepared and distributed on time.
* Identify how often the project management plan is updated, who is responsible for updating it, and how updates will be distributed or posted. For active projects, the PMP and progress reports are updated, at a minimum, monthly.

The following example identifies the deliverables and internal communication needs of the project manager, project team, and/or Region/Organization Management.

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| **Com. ID** | **What, identify the deliverable.** | **How will the information be provided?** | **When will the information be provided?** | **With what frequency?** | **Party responsible for delivery.** | **Party responsible for accepting** |
| **Example** | Traffic Analysis Report | pdf via email | May 9 | n/a | Mary Smith, Traffic Office | Fred Jones, Team Leader |
| **Example** | Project Schedule | pdf  | Project status meetings | Monthly | Karen Williams, controller | Nancy Allison, PE |
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