

Remarks for Cuyahoga County Council 2020-2021 Budget Hearings

October 21, 2019

Eliza Wing, Chief Communications Officer

Good afternoon:

I appreciate the opportunity to come before you and discuss Communications 20-21 Budget.

I have provided you with background information on the department and highlights for 2019 as well as a visual overview of some of our platforms and products that we use to reach both external and internal audiences.

I will not go through those documents now because it is a lot of material and I want to keep my comments brief.

So, to address what I believe are the primary questions:

- My budget as submitted is sufficient for my department's needs.
- We are budgeted for 8 full-time positions and have one vacancy which I am planning to fill. I will be posting for that position by month's end.
- I did not present any new budgetary requests for my department that I feel need to be funded.

This past year has been one focused on continuing to grow our output – new vehicles for communication and growing our audience.

We've made a lot of progress and we keep looking for new ways to get the word out about the County's programs and services and all the great work that people do here day in and day out.

I thank Council for your support of our department and am happy to answer any questions that you might have.

Thank you.



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## Department of Communications

### MISSION STATEMENT

Communications is a centralized service department whose charge is to create strong awareness of the County's role as a regional leader and driving force behind positive change for all residents and businesses. The Communications Department also works to help create a culture of employee ownership and investment in our organization.

Communications projects are aligned with County initiatives and the County's Strategic Plan and they fall within two distinct areas: External Communications and Internal Communications.

#### **County Goal 11—Co-create systems level solutions**

**Developing and implementing strategies to raise awareness about County services, the benefits provided and access to solutions.**

### EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Communications Department provides information to many external stakeholders about important services, resources, events and critical information. This information is shared with county residents, the business community, nonprofits, media and other key groups by sharing relevant, timely and actionable information through a variety of formats.

#### **How we do it:**

##### **Press Releases**

The Communications Department is dedicated to developing and distributing high-quality, proactive and relevant press releases on an ongoing basis to raise awareness about County initiatives, resources and ways residents can best access our programs and services. Many of the press releases distributed by Communications are covered by members of the media in the form of positive online and/or print news articles.

The total number of press releases distributed in 2019 (as of September) was 106, and 13 media advisories were released. We are surpassing our goal of distributing eight to ten releases each month.

##### **Internet Redesign/Content/Traffic-Driving**

The Communications Department spends significant resources to coordinate with the IT Department to improve content and layout on the County's website. Communications and IT work together to gather content written by Communications and display it on the website in a user-friendly, readable, visual way. Content is constantly updated and edited based on updated information and events.

## Social Media

Through social media, the Communications Department is engaging with more people and relaying more news correlated with the County's Strategic Plan, so we can help foster a better understanding of the County's services and mission. Social media is used to increase awareness about what the County does, our values, and the types of services we can offer our residents. It's also a good way to engage in two-way conversation with our residents. In 2019, the Communications Department increased our social media following and began using new platforms such as **NextDoor** to reach more people.

**Our Facebook** average reach per day is 2,780, and our Twitter daily average is 5,600. Instagram has a monthly average reach of 2,147. Cuyahoga County has a NextDoor audience of 130,550.

**Our YouTube** channel just surpassed one million views.

Our goals are not only to increase followers but to increase engagement and promote two-way communications with residents.

**Our total social media following is 157,444**, although our audience is broader as our posts reach more than just our dedicated followers. For example, some of our top tweets reached over 70,000 people this year.

We don't only look at the number of followers and likes but at how engaged our audience is. In the last year our engagement on Facebook is, on average, 26% higher than our benchmark communities. (Fairfax/San Diego/Allegheny).

In the last year our engagement on Twitter is, on average, 41% higher than our benchmark communities.

## County News Now Monthly Newsletter

County News Now is an external e-mail newsletter sent out monthly to over 70,000 County residents. The newsletter is jam-packed with helpful information about services the County provides, vital resources, construction and maintenance notices and event dates.

The Communications team has a goal to add 25 new subscribers per month and maintain an open rate of 18-20 percent and a click-thru rate of five percent.

**\*\*note that 18-20 percent open rate is considered very high as is a click-through rate of 5 percent.**

## News You Can Use Monthly Video

News You Can Use is a short highlight of what's going on that month in the County—it takes the content of the e-mail newsletter and puts it in a visual format using footage from the multimedia team.

News You Can Use, since its creation in May, has had a reach across all of our social media platforms of just under 35,000. We are surpassing our goal to reach 5,000 residents for each monthly video.

## County Blog

The County Blog provides another outlet for unique storytelling. The Communications Department helps facilitate the drafting of posts, interviews subjects and brainstorms content. Blog posts tend to have a more casual and personal angle than press releases and allow for more freedom to tell interesting and relevant stories.

Some of the blog's top-performing posts include information on the Families Forward program, the Public Policy Fellowship and the Innovation Academy, which indicates that those who utilize our services or find them helpful tend to share these posts with family, friends and loved ones. The total unique page views as of mid-October is 5,507, with the goal to continue to create content that interests our residents that is published at least once per week.

## Publications and State of the County Production

The Communications team creates the content and design for a variety of publications. These include the annual Year End Overview which summarizes achievements and performance across all of the County's departments and agencies as well as year-end overviews/annual reports for HHS, Department of Development and any other publication requested by a department.

Each year the County Executive hosts a State of the County address in which new initiatives are announced, progress is discussed, and goals are launched. This event is attended by hundreds of local community leaders and covered extensively by the local media. The Communications Team helps formulate a theme for the speech and helps to write the speech, develops ideas for related videos (up to seven per speech), facilitates media relations, displays visual set-ups and assists with run-of-show.

## Conversations with the County

The Communications Department, in coordination with the Multimedia Department, produces monthly "Conversations with the County" based on topics residents may find interesting. County Executive Armond Budish interviews local community members about how their use of our services has benefited them or he speaks with County employees and local leaders about major initiatives.

Over the course of five episodes, 22,905 residents have been reached across our social media platforms. We have surpassed our goal to reach an average of 3,800 viewers per video.

## Community Survey

In coordination with the Department of Innovation and Performance and the Baldwin Wallace University Community Research Institute, the Communications Department issued a Community Survey for residents to answer questions about their understanding of services the County provides and their perceived importance. The results of this survey have been used to develop and implement communication strategies to raise awareness about the County's services, benefits provided and access to solutions. The next Community Survey, budget permitting, will be conducted in 2021.

## Digital Boards

The Communications team facilitates the content creation and design of content for digital boards in multiple County buildings. Content includes videos and digital posters and is rotated and updated based on timeliness and relevancy.

### **County Goal 14—Provide a superior customer experience**

**Work through other County departments to provide excellent customer service, expand services through smart effective use of technology and building trust in government.**

## How We Do It:

### Media Response

The Communications team works with both local and national media outlets to answer questions and support their stories about the County through information-gathering and facilitation of interviews.

### Public Records Requests

Responding to public records requests in a timely manner is part of the County's mandate. Communications fields all requests made by media and the number has grown over the past year. We have been working with the Law Department to find better software and with Innovation and Performance to analyze current processes to look for ways to reduce the strain on employees and increase efficiencies.

## **Press Conferences and Other Events**

The Communications Department is instrumental in the facilitation and execution of events for the County Executive and other departments. The team spearheads the logistics of events such as invites and set-up, sends out advisories for media coverage, writes press releases and social media content to push out coverage in all capacities.

## **Emergency Communications**

The Communications team supports the Office of Emergency Management on getting the word out to residents in the event of an emergency. Communications received Public Safety Full Scale training to understand protocol for distributing information in case of a community emergency.

## **INTERNAL**

### **County Goal 15—Make Cuyahoga County an employer of choice**

#### **Ensuring proactive two-way communication among County staff**

#### **How We Do It:**

##### **In the Know Email Communications**

The Communications team sends out weekly emails from the County Executive to all County employees about important initiatives, department and employee shout-outs and internal campaigns so employees can feel connected to County operations and leadership. The email list is 4,224 employees.

The team has a goal of measuring the open rates of these weekly emails when a bulk email system is acquired by IT.

##### **Intranet**

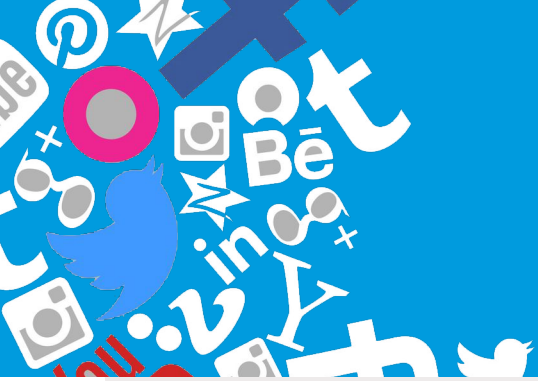
The Communications Team oversees all content creation and maintenance for the County's intranet, which provides helpful resources for County employees, multimedia, procurement forms, benefits and wellness information and information on policies and procedures. The intranet is currently being redesigned and restructured and set to launch by the end of 2019.

##### **Communications Survey**

Each year, communications fields a Communications Survey that allows County employees to anonymously share their views, questions and concerns about communications sent out by the department. The survey allows the department to identify challenges and opportunities for better communicating with employees.

##### **Employee Drives and Events**

Cuyahoga County hosts multiple drives and internal events throughout the year, including Harvest for Hunger and Hope for the Holidays. The Communications Team shares information with employees through email and helps facilitate the set-up and success of all events and drives hosted by the County.



# Growing Our Audience



## Twitter Followers

2019 YTD: 16k

2018: 14.5k

2017: 13k

2016: 11.2k



**Nextdoor**  
Reaching 133K residents

## External



## Facebook Fans

2019 YTD: 5.5k

2018: 3.8k

2017: 2.4k

2016: 2k



## Instagram Followers

2019 YTD: 2.3k

2018: 1.6k

2017: 1.1k

2016: 1k



One million  
minutes  
watched

## Internal

**IN THE KNOW** is emailed to about 4,224 Cuyahoga County employees.



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