COMMUNICATION PLAN

Fiscal Years 2020 - 2025
To enhance the vitality and quality of life in central Minnesota, Region Five Development Commission (R5DC) strategically fosters open, two-way communication between its citizens, partners and stakeholders. This comprehensive communication plan will serve as a tool to ensure R5DC is providing accurate, complete, and clear communication which is respectful and timely to the region. This plan will also identify means to ensure Region Five Development Commission is effectively listening and pro-actively responding to the region's needs. These elements will assist in the success of R5DC’s determination, implementation and facilitation of regional community and economic development strategies.
What is Region Five Development Commission?
The Region Five Development Commission was established in 1973. Area governments came together to establish the Regional Development Commission through the Regional Development Act 1969. Research had found that issues of growth and development transcended local government boundaries and common solutions to local problems could be found by pooling resources through intergovernmental cooperation.

The work of the Commission is guided by a governing commission that consists of 24 members representing a cross-section of constituents from around the region. Members on the Commission include: 5 County Commissioners (1 from each county), 5 municipal representatives from cities under 10,000 (1 from each county), 1 municipal representative from cities over 10,000, 5 township board members (1 from each county), 2 school board members, 1 higher education representative, 1 representative from the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, 1 “Emerging Leader” representative, 1 soil and water conservation district representative, 1 Camp Ripley military representative, 1 workforce representative.

Mission
To enhance the vitality and quality of life in Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd and Wadena counties.

Value Statements

Dynamic Capabilities: We act as a dynamic, forward-thinking organization, constantly working in a state of change. When appropriate, we stimulate activities, change or progress. We carry a positive energy and attitude and work efficiently to solve problems. We demonstrate competency and proficiency in community and economic development practices. This enables us to meet the evolving needs of our communities.

Collaboration: We value authentic partnerships, innovation and teamwork. We establish alliances with organizations that align with our mission. We work in cooperation as a team and with diverse groups to promote and manage projects and programs. We share in our dedication and commitment to each other and strive to support one another in reaching our full potential, both professionally and personally.

Growth: We focus on building economic prosperity and success in our region and strive to establish equitable economic ecosystems. We promote, encourage and provide opportunities for development, leadership and mentoring. We promote continuous learning in our organization and invest in opportunities to enhance our growth through knowledge and practice.

Integrity: We are accountable to the public, our funding agencies and to each other for the quality of our work, promoting development of the region and being fiscally responsible. We expect professionalism to be demonstrated in our behavior and our conduct. We value timely, open and honest communication.

Intention: The work of our team and the inclusive nature of our programs are planned, purposeful, and deliberate. We value and respect the diversity of our region, all of its people, our partners and our organization. We understand uniqueness and recognize differing viewpoints, and we respond in a balanced, flexible and open-minded way.
Who is responsible for Region Five’s communication?

The entire team and Commission have a role in the outreach and communication of Region Five Development Commission. The marketing director serves the communication needs of the organization's departments and staff. The marketing director is responsible for communicating a vast amount of information to local units of government, partners and stakeholders. The marketing director must also employ multiple techniques for listening, engaging and maintaining partnerships.

Functions of the Marketing Director include:

**Media Relations**
- Proactive story development and targeted pitches
- Message development
- Interview preparation and media coordination
- R5DC education for local media
- Story tracking and analysis

**Public Relations**
- Message development for R5DC commissioners, staff, strategic partners, etc.
- Facilitating engagement opportunities for citizens, partners and stakeholders
- Message development and dissemination via social media channels
- Development and distribution of e-newsletter (R5DC quarterly, NCEDA monthly)
- Development and distribution of print publications (annual report, etc.)
- Web content development and design

**Marketing**
- Development, execution and analysis of strategic marketing plans and campaigns
- Advertising concepts, design and placing ad buys
- Graphic design and brand management
- Photography and video services

**Training Services**
- Coordination and hosting Marketing and Communication Training
- One-on-one contractual training with local units of government, businesses, entrepreneurs and non-profits
- Educational presentations related to marketing, media and public relations
What general audiences does R5DC want to reach?

- Elected Officials
- Local Units of Government
- Community Development Professionals
- Economic Development Professionals
- Transportation Professionals
- Business Owners/Entrepreneurs
- Non-profit Organizations
- Partner Organizations
- Public Health Organizations
- School Boards

How does R5DC communicate to its audiences?

Region Five Development Commission has many outbound communication channels through which information reaches a wide variety of audiences. Below are the channels utilized by R5DC, the type of audience it reaches, the frequency of use, and ways to measure success of these channels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Internal/External</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Daily/Weekly</td>
<td># of fans, likes, shares, comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td># of followers, re-tweets, likes, and mentions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td># of followers, likes, shares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Website analytics, page views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCEDA E-Newsletter</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Open and click through rates, # of subscribers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCEDA Insider E-Newsletter</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Open and click through rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take Five E-Newsletter</td>
<td>Internal &amp; External</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
<td>Open and click through rates, # of subscribers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep Dive Podcasts</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td># of listeners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printed Materials: e.g. folders, brochures, reports</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Ongoing/As Needed</td>
<td># of materials distributed, feedback and response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Relations: Press Releases, Interviews, Story Pitches</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Monthly/As Needed</td>
<td>Media coverage: newspapers, online, radio and TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Attendance, attendee feedback, survey results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission Meetings/Board Meetings</td>
<td>Internal &amp; External</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Attendance, meeting evaluation results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Semi-Annual</td>
<td>Survey results for completed projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How does R5DC listen to its audiences?

R5DC has many outbound communication channels through which information reaches a wide variety of audiences. Equally important are inbound channels that allow R5DC to listen to and engage with these audiences. While digital strategies are increasingly important, there are many traditional means of communication and engagement that still have enormous relevance and effectiveness.

Here are the primary means by which audiences can communicate with Region Five Development Commission:

**Boards, Committees, and Commission**
R5DC staff and commissioners serve on a variety of boards, committees and commissions throughout the five-county region, state and nation-wide. These positions provide opportunities for listening and engaging during meetings and events. Commissioners and staff serving in these roles can then provide recommendations to the organization that may lead to new programs to solve a need in the region.

**Public Meetings**
R5DC hosts public meetings for the organization, as well as for specific programs and projects. These meetings provide an opportunity for transparency in local government decision making. Citizens, partners and stakeholders are encouraged to seize these point-of-presence opportunities to provide feedback directly to the organization.

**Special Events**
R5DC hosts and/or participates in several special events throughout the region. Commissioners and staff can collect feedback from citizens, partners and stakeholders who may not otherwise have known about the organization during these events.

**Social Media Channels**
R5DC maintains several social media channels. These channels are not simply used to push out information; they are monitored for questions and comments that relate to the organization’s services, programs or personnel. A great degree of engagement and customer service occurs in these online spaces.

**Comprehensive Regional Economic Development Strategy (CREDS)**

**Partner Meetings and Partner Surveys**
What are R5DC’s communications goals over the next three years?

To position the organization for maximum success, it is important to operate with a defined set of goals, objectives, strategies and tactics. It is important to ensure they align with Region Five Development Commission’s strategic initiatives and then measure successes and failures against the goals. This plan was constructed with this process, and the following major themes have emerged: organization image and branding consistency. Please visit [www.regionfive.org/communication-plan](http://www.regionfive.org/communication-plan) to view communication plan matrix with outreach designations.

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**Goal: Use videos and podcasts to promote R5DC & NCEDA**

*Audience: General Public/Commissioners/Partners/Funders/Employees*

**Objective: Develop & promote videos about R5DC & NCEDA programs.**

*Strategy: Work with videographer to shoot and gather content to use in videos.*

- Overview video – short 30 second overview of R5DC
- Agency Wide video – share broad overview with clips from other areas (1-2 min)
- Community Development video
- Economic Development video
- Transportation video

Measure: Have videos completed and published by last quarter of FY2020.

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**Objective: Develop & promote podcasts about R5DC & NCEDA programs.**

*Strategy: Record podcasts according to set schedule of topics and publish and promote.*

- Each podcast will include R5DC staff, a Commissioner, funder/partner and participant
- Each podcast will be approximately 20-40 minutes in length

Measure: Record and distribute podcasts beginning in third quarter of FY2020.

**Strategy: Use podcasts as a training tool for people to learn about our programs**

- Current Commissioners
- New Commissioners (share podcast link in new commissioner packets)
- Partners, funders
- New and existing employees
Goal: Embrace R5DC’s centralized method of communication with a commitment to assist departments in delivering consistent, branded messages to the public.

*Audience: Employees*

**Objective:** Team to delegate communication and design elements of projects to marketing director.

**Strategy:** Develop a communication plan for the organization.
- Implement the communication plan and distribute internally.
- Review and update the communication plan annually.

Measure: Adopt the communication plan in the fourth quarter of FY2020, readopt each fiscal year by the first quarter.

**Strategy:** Ensure website, promotional materials and distribution lists are up to date and accessible.
- Audit promotional materials annually and revise accordingly.

Measure: Achieve 75% accuracy in audit review conduct, in the fourth quarter of FY2021 and increase by 5% each subsequent year.

**Strategy:** Train all staff on the resources and assistance the marketing director can provide.
- Provide training during the on-boarding process of new employees of the communication functions.
- Establish a central location to house all marketing materials.
- Develop a communication calendar with access for all employees to see.
Goal: Deliver timely, open and honest messages that inform, educate, inspire and engage the region.

Objective: Promote citizen engagement with variety of content produced by R5DC.

Strategy: Create more dynamic content and more appealing headlines, subject lines, and teasers for both digital and traditional content.

- Distribute monthly e-newsletter for NCEDA, NCEDA-Insider.
- Distribute quarterly e-newsletter for R5DC – Take 5 with Region 5
- Post multiple times per week on Facebook and weekly to Twitter and LinkedIn.
- Distribute at least one region-wide press release bi-monthly to area newspapers/ magazines.

Measure: Increase e-newsletter subscribers and social media followers by 10% by the fourth quarter of FY2021. Increase engagement activity by 5% each subsequent year.

Strategy: Enhance and manage Region Five’s website to ensure content is relevant and engaging.

- Conduct a web audit quarterly to ensure information is still relevant.

Measure: Increase view of the home page and contact us page by 5% by the fourth quarter of FY2021 and by 5% for subsequent years.

Strategy: Develop an annual communication calendar for external communication.

- Develop methods to track metrics regularly from these strategies.

Measure: Implement by second quarter FY2021.

Objective 2: Understand stakeholder’s needs throughout the region.

Strategy: Develop and promote avenues for R5DC to listen to stakeholder’s needs and measure partner satisfaction and R5DC performance.

- Implement regular satisfaction surveys to stakeholders.
- Encourage involvement in R5DC’s events (e.g. forums, meetings).
- Encourage R5DC commissioners to submit relevant feedback they receive from their jurisdictions.
- Conduct partner surveys when projects are completed to gauge performance.

Measure: Achieve 70% stakeholder satisfaction and increase by 5% in the subsequent years.
Goal: Help employees, commissioners and partners easily communicate what R5DC is and how it serves the region.

Audience: Employees, Commissioners, Public

Objective: Train commissioners as ambassadors for R5DC.

Strategy: Provide commissioners with communication tools and resources.

- Send commissioners media kits to promote events/news for Region Five Development Commission to their respective jurisdictions.
- Share event flyers and invitations and pertinent news and emails with commissioners.

Measure: Track attendance at events.

Objective 2: Ensure R5DC brand consistency throughout all communication.

Strategy: Develop and implement a style guide for R5DC’s brand.

- Create templates for frequently used documents (e.g. letter head, forms).
- Ensure employees update e-mail signatures and other internal and external documents to be consistent with style guide and branding.
- Distribute current logo and logo usage guides to key partners.

Measure: Implement the branding /style guide by quarter four of FY2020.
R5DC’s Social Media Guidelines

Purpose:
The social media guidelines provide guidance for employee use of social media, which should be broadly understood to include blogs, social networking sites, website, online forums, electronic newsletters, and other sites and services that permit users to share information with others in a concurrent manner. These guidelines pertain to Region Five affiliated accounts.

Goals:
R5DC acknowledges social media has become a growing tool for communication. It is imperative for the employees of R5DC to be aware of and support the following goals:

• Provide accurate, complete, and understandable communication which is respectful and timely to the region.
• Emphasize topics relevant to the region’s needs and striving to be pro-active with those needs.
• Demonstrate openness, transparency, professionalism, and ethical behavior in all communication efforts.

Guidelines:
• R5DC posts shall be published by the marketing director, unless otherwise specified.
• R5DC's e-newsletter must be approved by the executive director prior to distribution.
• Settings on R5DC’s social media accounts should be set to public, allowing all citizens to see the profile information.
• It is prohibited to post anything that is dishonest or misleading on one of R5DC’s social media outlets.
• R5DC posts should respect all people regardless of race, creed, age, religion, color, marital status, gender, physical or mental disability, national origin, sexual orientation, etc.
• Plagiarizing is illegal and will not be tolerated. Proper respect to laws concerning copyright should be followed. Excerpts of someone else’s work must be attributed to the original writer.
• Posts must respect R5DC’s and NCEDA’s partners, sponsors, loan recipients, etc. Discussing general details about a project is allowed; however, permission must be given when identifying specific details.
• Using profane language and obscene or offensive content is forbidden.
• R5DC reserves the right to take down any post that is deemed to be inappropriate, untrue or disrespectful. If a post is in violation of any guidelines listed above, the post will be removed.
• Staff will be responsible for monitoring all social accounts.
Approved R5DC Social Media Networks:

Facebook:
- Used for citizen engagement, publicity, and events
  https://www.facebook.com/RegionFiveDevelopmentCommission

Twitter:
- Used for publicity and events
  https://twitter.com/Region5MN

LinkedIn:
- Used for events, publications and job postings
  https://www.linkedin.com/company/region-five-development-commission

YouTube:
- Used for publicity
  https://www.youtube.com/user/RegionFiveCommission

Constant Contact:
- Used for newsletter publication, publicity, events, and announcements

Public Terms of Use on Social Media Networks:

R5DC social media administrators are responsible for policing and enforcing the Region Five Development Commission's Public Terms of Use.

Region Five Development Commission reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of the public terms of use or any applicable laws. Comments posted do not reflect the opinion of Region Five Development Commission. All postings should be relevant to R5DC.

Content or comments containing any of the following will not be allowed for posting:

- Comments or material not topically related to the post being commented upon
- Profane language or obscene content
- Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination based on race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status regarding public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, etc.
- Personal attacks, insults or threatening language
- Plagiarized material: private, personal material published without consent; or potentially libelous material
- Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity
- Advertising or promotional announcements
- Comments made related to political campaigns or ballot measures

Region Five Development Commission reserves the right to restrict or remove any content deemed in violation of the terms outlined.

Region Five Development Commission reserves the right to update these terms of use as needed.
Social Media Tips:

- Use spell-check and read the post for grammatical mistakes or factual errors. It is important that the post is written professionally, as it will represent R5DC.
- Keep personal opinions out of Region Five social media posts.
- If you are unsure about a post that you have written or if it does not feel right, consult the communication specialist or the executive director to get their opinion before posting it to a social media site.
- Keep in mind that you are posting for everyone to view, do not put information out that you would not want the public to see.