



Office of the Auditor General / Bureau du vérificateur général

AUDIT OF THE CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS FUNCTION

2011

VÉRIFICATION DU SERVICE DES COMMUNICATIONS

GÉNÉRALES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Audit of Corporate Communications (CC) was included in the 2011 Audit Plan of the Office of the Auditor General, approved by Council on April 13, 2011.

Background

The focus of this audit is the Corporate Communications function of the City of Ottawa which operates under the direction of the Chief, Corporate Communications. This function has existed in its current form since December 2009, when it was realigned to focus on excellence in strategic and tactical communications, issues management and improving the City’s electronic presence on various platforms.

As per the 2012 Budget documentation, the overall mandate of the Corporate Communications Department is “To ensure communications efforts are aligned with the City’s priorities and plans while providing strategic communications advice and support to the programs, services and initiatives of the corporation”.

The scope of the audit focused primarily on the Corporate Communications function in place during 2010, which encompasses an organization of approximately 51 full time equivalents (FTEs), organized as follows:

Organization Unit	Focus	FTEs
Chief’s Office – Management and Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Function leadership and management • Communications strategic support and coordination • Advertising support coordination 	5
Chief’s Office - Issues Management and Advanced Legislative Agenda Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications strategy and plan development • Strategic advice related to the Advanced Legislative Agenda • Issues management • Crisis communications support 	7
Client Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support of the City and City departments and program areas in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ External communication strategy development and execution; ○ Internal communication strategy development and execution; ○ Visual identity management; and, ○ Communications material production; 	27

Organization Unit	Focus	FTEs
Media Relations and Public Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media relations support of the Mayor, Council, senior City staff Corporate event support Photography services 	6
E-media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Web strategy development and execution 	6
Total FTEs		51

In addition to these resources, various City departments also have a number of FTEs reporting internally that have communications-related duties. During the audit, Management identified an additional 11 FTEs that are 100% dedicated to communications and another 9 which have 5-90% of their duties related to communications (Appendix A, of the full report, lists each of these FTEs and their location).

Presented below are the budgeted and actual expenditures for Corporate Communications for 2009-2011:

	2009 Actual (000's)	2009 Budget (000's)	2010 Actual (000's)	2010 Budget (000's)	2011 Budget (000's)
Compensation	\$3,967	\$4,046	\$3,868	\$3,890	\$4,112
Operating	626	592	391	328	356
Allocations ¹	(697)	(684)	(416)	(978)	(63)
Total	\$3,896	\$3,954	\$3,843	\$3,240	\$4,405

Audit Objectives and Scope

As per the Audit Plan, the objectives of the audit were to:

1. Determine if the Corporate Communications function has appropriate management practices in place to ensure alignment between functional priorities and activities and the City's plans and strategic directions, and ensure compliance with applicable laws, legislation, regulations, and internal policies and procedures;
2. Assess the appropriateness of the Corporate Communications financial management framework; and,
3. Examine management practices, controls, and monitoring and reporting systems across the Corporate Communications function to assess the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of current operations.

The scope of the audit included an examination of the extent to which the Corporate Communications function of the City of Ottawa is aligned to the strategic

¹ Allocations include any chargebacks as well as other requirements such as efficiency targets

direction and plans of the City and complies with applicable internal and external requirements (e.g., legislation, regulations, policies and procedures). The audit also included an assessment of the management framework (including financial management) and operations of the Corporate Communications function in delivering communication services to its various stakeholders. The audit focused on Corporate Communications function activities undertaken and expenditures incurred during the 2010 and 2011 fiscal years.

Summary of Key Findings

Corporate Communications Mandate and Strategic Direction

The Audit identifies the need that Corporate Communications clearly articulate both its mandate in delivering services to the City, and the authority of the Chief and Corporate Communications vis-à-vis its clients (e.g., departments, Council, etc.).

The result of this lack of clarity and definition of authority has meant that stakeholders are less aware and may have less confidence in the capacity of CC to advise on, develop and manage effective public and internal communication strategies and initiatives to meet their program needs and objectives. Largely because of this lack of confidence and satisfaction with CC services, many departments/programs and Councillors have put in place their own communications resources to undertake communications activities outside the purview of Corporate Communications. During the audit, Management identified 11 such FTEs that are 100% dedicated to communications activities and another 9 which have 5-90% of their duties related to communications (Appendix A, of the full report, lists each of these FTEs and their location).

While it is common practice within most large municipalities to have some level of internal communications resources, in our opinion, the Corporate Communications function should have the necessary authority to coordinate efforts in order to ensure consistency and avoid duplication and working at cross-purposes. Without this, the development and provision of coherent, effective and economical communications to support City strategic and operational goals is compromised.

CC management is in the process of developing a Strategic Communications Framework and Communications Policy for the City of Ottawa that defines the City's overall policy on internal and external communications and identifies accountability and responsibility for its various elements. This is similar to communications policies identified in existence at other levels of government (e.g., Canada and Alberta).

Corporate Communications Governance

Frequent reorganizations and changes in the position of Chief, Corporate Communications (four times in 2011 alone) have meant a lack of consistent direction both strategically for the City and functionally within CC itself. At amalgamation in 2001, communications resources for the City were centralized in a single Corporate Communications unit on the basis that consolidation of communications resources would be a more productive model.

The audit found that there is an uneven approach to how communications services are provided to individual clients. Furthermore, we found that there are a number of areas where the client service role of Corporate Communications has either not been clearly articulated or understood by clients. These areas include:

- Corporate Communications support of City Councillors;
- The role of Client Relations project managers; and,
- The role of Corporate Communications strategists.

This lack of clarity in roles is further evidenced by client department observations expressing confusion as to whether Corporate Communications is a strategic advisor or an administrative support function. In an effort to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Corporate Communications Department in serving its varied client base, the Department has recently commenced development of a Strategic Framework and supporting business model, in order to articulate and differentiate each of the roles and responsibilities of the key functions of Corporate Communications. This document also includes a revised mandate to emphasize and articulate the strategic advisory role of Corporate Communications in serving its clients.

Operational Planning and Monitoring Processes

In serving its broad and diverse client base, including the Mayor, Councillors, Committees, City departments and programs, the Corporate Communications Department is engaged in responding to high volumes of service requests, both planned and unplanned, across its functional business lines. We noted that Corporate Communications does not yet employ consistent operational planning and monitoring processes in serving its clients.

We also noted that Corporate Communications lacks a prioritization framework to support and communicate resource allocation decisions.

In the absence of a consistent and disciplined approach to planning, organizing and monitoring work activities and workloads, it is difficult to assess whether Corporate Communications and client Departments are meeting objectives established for communication activities (e.g., results expectations, resource estimates, etc.).

The City of Ottawa is subject to a number of laws, by-laws, regulations and internal policies and priorities which departments/programs, including Corporate Communications must respect. Based on our audit, we found that there is no guidance in the City of Ottawa on how these requirements are to be integrated into communications planning and implementation. We also note that the Chief, Corporate Communications has no stated authority to monitor compliance to these requirements among clients (e.g., departments and programs).

Financial Management Considerations

The Corporate Communications budgeting process is focused on expenditures incurred within the Department (e.g., compensation costs for Corporate Communications staff) as Corporate Communications is not responsible for budgeting or monitoring communications expenditures incurred within client organizations (e.g., departments). The exception to this statement is advertising expenditures incurred by Corporate Communications clients. These costs are monitored by Corporate Communications.

Corporate Communications' knowledge of the costs of client communication activities would provide Corporate Communications with greater insight into planned client communication approaches. As confirmed with Corporate Communications representatives, access to this information would enable Corporate Communications to undertake more informed critical analysis in their provision of advice (i.e., is there a more cost effective approach that can be taken to achieving communication program objectives?).

Corporate Communications currently employs a chargeback system to recover a portion of costs for only two of its many service lines: advertising purchases and media monitoring services. This chargeback mechanism was implemented as a budgetary means of partially recovering associated service delivery costs. The chargeback system, however, has not been appropriately rationalized, nor documented, as part of any comprehensive approach or policy to establish which Corporate Communications services should be cost recovered.

Source Separated Organics Communications Strategy

The issues identified with the Source Separated Organics Communications Strategy can be summarized as follows:

- the target audience(s) were not properly identified;
- the most effective methods for reaching this target audience(s) were not adequately assessed and pursued;
- the strategic messaging to these target audience(s) was not developed; and,
- the communications initiatives utilized were never evaluated to determine which were effective and which were not to guide future efforts.

The Corporate Communications group was essentially not involved in the Source Separated Organics initiative. In our view, this experience demonstrates the implications of the broader issues raised in this audit of the need to clearly identify the mandate, role and authority of CC in the future.

Recommendations and Management Responses

Recommendation 1

That the City clearly define the intended overall mandate and role of the Corporate Communications function versus communications responsibilities of each department.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

In the summer of 2011, the newly hired Chief of Corporate Communications began efforts to clearly define the mandate and role of Corporate Communications. Through consultation and guidance from Council, Executive Committee and Senior Management Committee, two key documents were drafted: 'Delivering Corporate Communications at the City of Ottawa: A Strategic Framework' and a Communications Policy for the City of Ottawa. These documents have laid the groundwork to manage communications in a systematic and organized manner.

The draft Communications Policy and Strategic Communications Framework documents were distributed to senior management and their teams in Q1 2012. Both documents will be finalized and redistributed to senior management by Q2 2012.

Recommendation 2

That Corporate Communications conduct active consultations with Council and senior managers in the City, to ensure the Strategic Communications Framework and the Communications Policy currently under development meet their needs.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Senior Management Committee and Executive Committee were extensively consulted on the Strategic Communications Framework and Communications Policy in Q1 and Q2 2012, respectively. Both documents will be finalized and redistributed to senior management by the end of Q2 2012. These documents will also form part of the Corporate Communications briefing material, which is made available for internal consultation and is updated as required. To ensure that Council is informed as to the content of the framework and policy, Corporate Communications will distribute the documents to members of Council.

Recommendation 3

That once the Strategic Communications Framework and the Communications Policy have been promulgated, these documents should be part of regular orientation for all managers, including new hires.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Corporate Communications will conduct orientation sessions with managers by Q3 2012 and will ensure that Corporate Communications staff is available to brief managers as required. Corporate Communications will work with Human Resources to ensure that these documents are included in the corporate orientation program for new management hires by Q4 2012.

Recommendation 4

That as part of Strategic Framework development, Corporate Communications clearly articulate the governance model, including roles and responsibilities, and the communications support delivery structure (including level and type of required resources) for serving its varied client base, and to meet the City's overall communication requirements.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The Strategic Framework articulates governance within the department, roles and responsibilities for each resource as well as workflows and functional organizational charts. This document will be finalized and distributed to Senior Management by Q2 2012.

Recommendation 5

That, upon clarification of the Corporate Communications governance model, Corporate Communications update its functional job descriptions and communicate this information to affected staff.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

All Corporate Communications job descriptions will be updated to reflect the roles and responsibilities outlined in the approved Strategic Framework and will be communicated to affected staff by Q4 2012.

Recommendation 6

That Corporate Communications develop and implement a common set of tools to support consistent and reliable prioritization and planning of Corporate Communications workflows.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Corporate Communications is developing a Program Support Integration Model and an intake process to support the annual planning process, which will focus on aligning communication activities with priorities and capacity by Q3 2012.

Recommendation 7

That Corporate Communications develop a performance measurement framework that incorporates qualitative and quantitative performance indicators to measure if desired results are achieved and defined objectives met.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

A performance management framework, aligned to the Corporate Planning Framework will be developed by Q4 2012. The framework will feature an ability to measure the effectiveness of the communications business lines and report results to the appropriate department or committee. The indicators will be aligned to corporate priorities and will enable risk areas to be identified and mitigated.

Recommendation 8

That the various stakeholder feedback monitoring mechanisms be centrally coordinated to avoid overlaps and duplication.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Corporate Communications will prepare an annual consultation plan to reflect the major stakeholder feedback activities in conjunction with the annual planning process. This will be used to reduce duplication and integrate initiatives to the extent possible and will be made available to Executive Committee by Q1 2013.

Recommendation 9

That, as part of the development of the City's Communications Policy, the roles and responsibilities of Corporate Communications and City managers in regard to implementation and compliance be clearly defined.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The Communications Policy outlines that all City staff are responsible for adhering to the parameters of the policy and for ensuring all communications efforts of the City of Ottawa conform to its requirements. It also articulates the monitoring responsibility and the results of contravention. The recommendation will be considered implemented with the approval of the Communications Policy in 2012.

Recommendation 10

That the City review and monitor its use of various designs for communications vehicles to ensure the Visual Identity Guidelines are followed wherever possible.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Corporate Communications will update the Visual Identity Guidelines and will communicate them to key stakeholders by Q4 2012. Corporate Communications will also review communications products to ensure that the Visual Identity Program standards and other policy requirements are followed as part of the monitoring of the Communications Policy. Ongoing monitoring of the policy will begin in Q4 2012.

Recommendation 11

That, as part of the development of the City's Communications Policy, Corporate Communications include guidelines on the use of social media.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The official use of social media will be governed under the Communications Policy to be finalized in Q2 2012. Supporting guidelines will be created for the official use of social media (Twitter) by Q3 2012.

Recommendation 12

That the City implement a communications budget development process that is closely aligned to, and informed by its operational resource planning process, including all communications resources reporting within departments.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

As part of the current Service Level Agreement process, departments forecast their annual workplans in advance of the development of the budget. As indicated in the management response for Recommendation 6, Corporate Communications will be implementing a Program Support Integration Model in Q3 2012, to strengthen this process and align communications activities with priorities identified during the annual planning process.

Recommendation 13

That, as part of enhanced strategic and operational planning processes employed with clients, Corporate Communications request access to and be provided with departmental communication budgets and expenditure information.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Corporate Communications will work with the Finance department to obtain departmental communication budgets and expenditure information for the 2013 fiscal year to inform strategic and operational planning, by Q1 2013.

Recommendation 14

That Corporate Communications evaluate its two existing cost recovery mechanisms in order to ensure their continued relevance and value within the Strategic Framework currently under development.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The two cost recovery mechanisms were examined in Q1 2012, and as a result, the advertising surcharge was eliminated. The media monitoring cost recovery will be further examined upon renewal of the service in Q1 2013.

Recommendation 15

That City communications plans/strategies, especially those aimed at changing public behaviour, be based on a thorough analysis of the environment within which the communications initiative will be launched.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The requirement to incorporate an analysis of the environment into communications efforts is included in the Communications Policy. The policy will be finalized and distributed in Q2 2012.

Supporting Environmental Analysis Guidelines will be developed to reflect the need for public opinion research and media monitoring to be tracked throughout the implementation of a communications plan and readjustments to be made if required. This guideline will be complete by Q4 2012. The Communications Planning Template will also be updated to incorporate the requirement by Q4 2012. This will include a scan of past and ongoing media coverage around an issue.

Recommendation 16

That City communications plans have no more than three objectives, all of which “should be as precise and measurable as possible in order to ensure measurement and increase mutual accountability” (as described in the City’s *Communications Planning Template*).

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The Communications Planning Template will be updated to reflect the requirement for no more than three objectives in communications plans. The updated template will be made available on the City’s Intranet by Q4 2012.

Recommendation 17

That, when all citizens are affected by a City initiative, the City break out target audiences which might need tailored communications attention (e.g., new Canadians, rural residents, seniors, women, etc.).

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The requirement to identify and delineate strategies, tools and messages for communicating with target audiences is included in the new Communications Policy. The policy will be finalized and distributed in Q2 2012.

Recommendation 18

That all financial and human resources be identified to carry out benchmarking and performance measurement activities included in any communications plan.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The requirement to set out operational needs and resource allocations, and the requirement to measure the effectiveness of communications programs and campaigns is included in the new Communications Policy. The policy will be finalized and distributed in Q2 2012.

The Communications Planning Template will also be updated to reflect the requirement by Q4 2012.

Recommendation 19

That core messages be simple and consistent for all target audiences; that they should be tested before being made public and that adjustments to address the interests of particular audiences be added as needed.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The Communications Planning Template will be updated by Q4 2012 to reflect the requirement for core messages to be simple and consistent and will include detailed criteria for testing messages.

The Environmental Analysis Guideline will be created by Q4 2012, which will reflect the need for public opinion research to be tracked throughout the implementation of a communications plan.

Recommendation 20

That the human and financial resources be identified for any online tactics before the plan is approved.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The requirement to set out operational needs and resource allocations is included in the new Communications Policy. The policy will be finalized and distributed in Q2 2012.

The Social Media Guidelines also address the requirement for identifying human and financial resources as part of any social media/web 2.0 initiative. The Social Media Guidelines will be complete by Q3 2012.

As part of the annual planning process, resource identification will be a cornerstone. Service level agreements will be created with departments based on the identified resource requirements of planned projects.

Recommendation 21

That a sound media analysis be developed for incorporation into communications plans and updated on a continuing basis so that messaging and media strategies can be adjusted as needed.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The requirement for environmental analysis including media monitoring is included in the new Communications Policy. The policy will be finalized and distributed in Q2 2012.

An RFP will be issued in Q4 2012 to select a media monitoring firm to provide monitoring and analysis. The features for the new media monitoring service will be subject to financial availability of funds requested as part of 2013 budget and are dependent on approval.

Recommendation 22

That, in the case of a major communications plan, advertising be focus group tested before launch and evaluated periodically to ensure it continues to meet operational goals.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Guidelines to support the effective roll-out of communications plans, including how to create, implement and measure their effectiveness in accordance with leading practices, including focus group testing and other research methods, will be created by Q1 2013.

Potential Savings

At the time of the audit, Corporate Communications had 51 FTEs and a total budget of \$4.4 million. In addition, management identified another 11 FTEs within various departments whose duties are 100% dedicated to communications and another 9 whose duties are 5-90% communications related. The prorated salary cost of these FTEs is \$1.05 million. Management has indicated that the 11 FTEs do not duplicate the efforts or overlap the services of Corporate Communications. These FTEs are responsible for activities that are outside of Corporate Communications' mandate. Examples of activities include creating internal departmental communications and liaising with departmental content experts in the preliminary development of communication products.

Until the City clarifies the overall mandate, role and responsibilities for CC, it is difficult to determine the true level of resources required to deliver communications support and services. However, based on the level of communications resources scattered throughout the City, it is reasonable to assume that there is the potential for savings in streamlining the current structure.

Conclusion

Since amalgamation in 2001, the City's Corporate Communications function has undergone numerous changes in leadership, structure and mandate. As a result, management and Council have developed a lack of confidence and satisfaction with the services provided. The Corporate Communications Department is currently in a state of transition as its new leadership is in the process of developing a Strategic Framework and Communications Policy. Significant management attention and effort remain to ensure that this strategic foundation is completed in a timely manner, communicated broadly and endorsed by City managers and other impacted stakeholders.

In addition to the strategic perspective, management attention and project resources will be required to ensure the development and consistent implementation of enhanced management processes and tools (e.g., enhanced performance measurement framework, operational workplans linked to resource allocations linked to financial budgets, etc.) to ensure effective and efficient planning, deployment and monitoring of Corporate Communications resources.

Currently, the City has a number of communications resources that report internally within various departments. This is common practice within most large municipalities. However, in our opinion, the Corporate Communications function should have the necessary authority to coordinate efforts in order to ensure consistency and avoid duplication and working at cross-purposes.

It is important to note that during the course of the audit, CC management was in the process of developing a Strategic Communications Framework and Communications Policy for the City of Ottawa that defines the City's overall policy on internal and external communications and identifies accountability and responsibility for its various elements. This is similar to the communications policies that exist at other levels of government (e.g., Canada and Alberta). We are supportive of this initiative and understand that by the time this report is presented to Council the Framework and Policy will be in place. As such, progress toward addressing many of the issues raised in the audit should be well underway by that time.

Acknowledgement

We wish to express our appreciation for the cooperation and assistance afforded the audit team by management.

RÉSUMÉ

Introduction

La vérification du Service des communications générales (SCG) a été inscrite au Plan de vérification de 2011 du bureau du vérificateur général, approuvé par le Conseil, le 13 avril 2011.

Renseignements généraux

Cette vérification porte principalement sur le rôle des Communications générales à la Ville d'Ottawa, service dirigé par la chef des Communications générales. Dans sa forme actuelle, ce service existe depuis décembre 2009, date à laquelle il a été réorganisé afin de concentrer les efforts pour viser l'excellence dans les communications stratégiques et tactiques et la gestion de problèmes et aussi afin d'accroître la présence électronique de la Ville sur diverses plateformes.

Comme il est précisé dans les documents du budget de 2012, le Service des communications générales a pour mandat de « s'assurer que les efforts de communications concordent avec les priorités et les plans de la Ville, et de fournir des conseils et du soutien à l'élaboration de communications stratégiques axées sur les programmes, services et activités de la Ville ».

La vérification a porté essentiellement sur les activités de Communications générales en 2010, service qui compte quelque 51 équivalents temps plein (ÉTP), répartis comme suit :

Unité	Objectif	Nbre d'ÉTP
Bureau de la chef – Gestion et coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership et gestion • Soutien et coordination stratégiques des communications • Coordination du soutien en matière de publicité 	5
Bureau de la chef – gestion des questions d'intérêt et soutien au programme législatif avancé	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan d'élaboration et stratégie des communications • Conseil stratégique concernant le programme législatif avancé • Gestion des questions d'intérêt • Soutien aux communications en situation de crise 	7

Unité	Objectif	N ^{bre} d'ÉTP
Relations avec les clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soutien à la Ville, aux services municipaux et aux responsables des programmes pour : • l'élaboration et l'exécution de la stratégie de communication externe; • l'élaboration et l'exécution de la stratégie de communication interne; • la gestion de l'identité visuelle; • la production de matériel de communications. 	27
Relations avec les médias et information du public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soutien dans les relations avec les médias et soutien au maire, au Conseil et aux cadres supérieurs de la Ville • Soutien aux événements municipaux • Services de photographie 	6
Médias électroniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conception et exécution de la stratégie Web 	6
Total des ÉTP		51

En plus des ressources appartenant au Service des communications générales, divers services de la Ville comptent parmi leurs rangs des employés en interne qui assument des tâches liées aux communications. Pendant la vérification, la direction a répertorié onze ÉTP supplémentaires qui se consacrent exclusivement aux communications et neuf autres ÉTP dont 5 à 90 % de la tâche concerne les communications (vous trouverez à l'annexe A, du rapport intégré, une liste de ces ÉTP et du service dont ils font partie).

Le tableau suivant présente les dépenses prévues au budget et les dépenses réelles pour 2009 à 2011 du Service des communications générales :

	2009 réelles (en milliers de dollars)	2009 prévues au budget (en milliers de dollars)	2010 réelles (en milliers de dollars)	2010 prévues au budget (en milliers de dollars)	2011 prévues au budget (en milliers de dollars)
Rémunération	3 967 \$	4 046 \$	3 868 \$	3 890 \$	4 112 \$
Fonctionnement	626	592	391	328	356
Attributions¹	(697)	(684)	(416)	(978)	(63)
Total	3 896 \$	3 954 \$	3 843 \$	3 240 \$	4 405 \$

Portée et objectifs de la vérification

Selon le plan de vérification, les objectifs de la vérification étaient les suivants :

1. Déterminer si le Service des communications générales a mis en place les méthodes de gestion appropriées afin que ses priorités et activités fonctionnelles correspondent aux plans et à l'orientation stratégique de la Ville, et qu'ils soient conformes aux lois et règlements applicables et aux politiques et procédures internes.
2. Évaluer la pertinence du cadre de gestion financière du Service des communications générales.
3. Examiner les méthodes de gestion, les contrôles et les mécanismes de surveillance et compte rendu pour l'ensemble du Service des communications générales afin d'évaluer la rentabilité, l'efficacité et l'efficience des activités actuels.

La portée de la vérification comprenait un examen de la mesure dans laquelle le Service des communications générales de la Ville d'Ottawa respectent l'orientation stratégique et les plans de la Ville et satisfont aux exigences internes et externes (p. ex., lois, règlements, politiques et procédures). La vérification a aussi inclus l'évaluation du cadre de gestion (incluant la gestion financière) et du fonctionnement du Service des communications générales dans l'exécution des services de communication pour le compte des diverses parties intéressées. La vérification a donc porté sur les activités entreprises par le Service de communications générales (SCG) et les dépenses engagées au cours des exercices 2010 et 2011.

¹ Les attributions incluent toute la facturation interne, de même que d'autres exigences comme les objectifs en matière d'efficacité.

Sommaire des principales constatations

Mandat et orientation stratégique du Service des communications générales

La vérification a établi que le Service des communications générales doit définir clairement son mandat dans la prestation des services à la Ville ainsi que l'autorité que détiennent la chef et le SCG vis-à-vis des clients (p. ex., les services municipaux, le Conseil, etc.).

En raison de ce manque de clarté et de l'absence de définition des pouvoirs de la chef et du SCG, les parties intéressées ne connaissent pas l'étendue des services offerts par SCG et n'ont pas non plus confiance en sa capacité à les conseiller et à élaborer et à gérer des stratégies et initiatives efficaces de communication publique et interne pour répondre aux besoins et aux objectifs des programmes. En raison de ce manque de confiance et de satisfaction à l'égard des services du SCG, nombre de services, de programmes et de conseillers ont mis en place leurs propres ressources de communications qui assument la responsabilité de leurs activités de communication hors de la supervision de SCG. Pendant la vérification, la direction a repéré onze ÉTP supplémentaires exerçant exclusivement des fonctions liées aux communications et neuf autres ÉTP dont 5 à 90 % de la tâche est liée aux communications (vous trouverez à l'annexe A, du rapport intégré, une liste de ces ÉTP et du service dont ils font partie).

Certes, on retrouve dans la plupart des grandes villes, différents types de ressources et de niveaux de communications en interne. À notre avis, le Service des communications générales devrait posséder les pouvoirs nécessaires de coordination des efforts, afin d'assurer l'uniformité, d'éviter le double emploi et de prévenir le risque d'actions contradictoires. En l'absence de telles dispositions, il sera difficile, voire impossible, d'élaborer et d'exécuter des communications pertinentes, efficaces et économiques pour soutenir les objectifs stratégiques et opérationnels de la Ville.

La direction du Service des communications générales est en train d'élaborer un cadre de travail stratégique et une politique des communications pour la Ville d'Ottawa qui définissent la politique globale de la Ville concernant les communications internes et externes et établissent la responsabilité et l'imputabilité des divers éléments. Une telle stratégie s'inspire des politiques de communication mises en place à d'autres paliers de gouvernement (p. ex., Canada et Alberta).

Gouvernance du Service des communications générales

Plusieurs réorganisations et les fréquents changements à la direction de Communications générales (quatre fois en 2011 seulement) ont empêché d'établir une direction concrète des services, tant sur le plan stratégique pour la Ville, que sur le plan fonctionnel, pour le Service des communications générales même. Au moment de la fusion en 2001, les ressources de la Ville en communication ont été regroupées en une seule unité centralisée des communications générales, dans l'idée de créer un modèle productif pour les ressources des communications.

La vérification a constaté plusieurs inégalités dans la prestation des services de communications aux clients particuliers. De plus, nous avons observé dans de nombreux cas que les clients ne comprenaient pas le rôle du Service des communications générales, qui n'a jamais été clairement défini relativement à son mandat dans divers secteurs, par exemple :

- le soutien de SCG aux conseillers de la Ville;
- le rôle des gestionnaires de projet des Relations avec la clientèle;
- le rôle des stratèges du Service des communications générales.

Le manque de clarté dans la définition de ces rôles est mis en évidence par les observations des services clients : il y a confusion à savoir si SCG est un conseiller stratégique ou un service de soutien administratif. Dans un effort pour préciser le rôle et les responsabilités du Service des communications générales auprès de ses divers clients, SCG a commencé récemment l'élaboration d'un cadre de travail stratégique et d'un modèle d'affaires connexe, pour définir et distinguer chacun des rôles et des responsabilités inhérents aux principales fonctions des communications générales. Ce document inclut également la définition du mandat révisé expliquant l'importance du rôle de Communications générales en tant que conseiller stratégique.

Planification des activités et processus de surveillance

Pour servir sa clientèle large et diversifiée, incluant le maire, les conseillers, les comités, les services et les programmes municipaux et les programmes, le Service des communications générales doit traiter dans l'ensemble de ses unités fonctionnelles un important volume de demandes de services, prévues et imprévues. Or, nous avons constaté que le Service des communications générales ne s'est pas encore doté de procédures uniformes de planification et de suivi pour la prestation des services aux clients.

Nous avons également remarqué que le Service des communications générales n'a pas non plus établi de cadre pour l'établissement de priorités qui aiderait à la prise de décisions concernant la répartition des ressources et à la communication desdites décisions.

Sans démarche disciplinée et uniforme pour la planification, l'organisation et la surveillance des activités et des charges de travail, il est difficile d'évaluer si le Service des communications générales et les services clients atteignent les objectifs établis en matière de communication (p. ex., les résultats attendus, l'estimation de ressources, etc.).

La Ville d'Ottawa est assujettie à un certain nombre de lois, de règlements, de politiques et de priorités internes que les services, notamment le Service des communications générales, doivent respecter. L'analyse des résultats de la vérification révèle qu'il n'y a pas, à la Ville d'Ottawa, de directives en place expliquant comment intégrer ces exigences à la planification et à la mise en œuvre des communications. Nous avons aussi constaté que la chef du Service des communications générales n'a pas l'autorité établie pour surveiller le respect de ces exigences chez les clients (p. ex., les services et les programmes).

Questions touchant la gestion financière

Le processus d'établissement du budget du Service des communications générales ne porte que sur les dépenses engagées au sein de ce service (p. ex., la rémunération du personnel), car il n'est pas responsable du budget ou de la surveillance des dépenses de communications des organisations clientes (p. ex., services municipaux). Le poste des dépenses publicitaires des clients du SGC constitue cependant une exception. Ces coûts sont en effet surveillés par le Service des communications générales.

Il serait donc nécessaire que le Service des communications générales soit mis au courant des coûts des activités de communication de ses clients pour lui donner un meilleur aperçu des stratégies en matière de communications planifiées. Comme nous l'ont confirmé des représentants du Service des communications générales, l'accès à cette information permettrait au Service de procéder à une analyse critique mieux informée pour la prestation de conseils (p. ex., trouver des moyens plus efficaces pour atteindre les objectifs d'un programme de communication).

Le Service des communications générales utilise à l'heure actuelle un système de facturation à l'utilisateur pour récupérer une partie de ces coûts dans seulement deux de ses nombreuses gammes de services, soit les achats de publicité et les services de dépouillement des médias. Ce mécanisme de facturation à l'utilisateur est un processus budgétaire mis en œuvre pour recouvrer partiellement les coûts de prestation de services connexes inscrits. Toutefois, le système de facturation à l'utilisateur n'a pas été bien rationalisé ni documenté dans une approche ou une politique globale visant à déterminer quels sont les services du Service des communications générales dont le coût devrait être recouvré.

Stratégie de communication - Collecte des déchets organiques triés à la source

Les problèmes détectés dans la stratégie de communication relative à la collecte des déchets organiques triés à la source se résument comme suit :

- Le public cible n'a pas été cerné adéquatement;
- Les méthodes les plus efficaces pour joindre un public cible n'ont pas été correctement évaluées et suivies;
- On n'a pas conçu de messages stratégiques destinés à ces publics cibles;
- Les initiatives de communication utilisées n'ont jamais été évaluées afin de déterminer lesquelles étaient efficaces et lesquelles ne servaient pas nos efforts futurs.

Comme il a été énoncé auparavant, la participation du Service communications générales n'a pas été sollicitée pour le projet de communication relative à la collecte des déchets organiques triés à la source. À notre avis, cette expérience montre les enjeux plus vastes soulevés dans le cadre de cette évaluation relativement au besoin pour l'avenir de bien définir le mandat, le rôle et l'autorité de Communications générales.

Recommandations et réponses de la direction

Recommandation 1

Que la Ville définisse clairement le mandat et le rôle généraux prévus du Service des communications générales en tenant compte des responsabilités de chacun des services en matière de communications.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

À l'été 2011, la nouvelle chef du Service de communications générales a commencé à définir le mandat et le rôle du Service. Après diverses consultations, et conformément aux directives du Conseil, du Comité exécutif et du Comité de la haute direction, deux documents clés ont été ébauchés : *Delivering Corporate Communications at the City of Ottawa: A Strategic Framework* (Prestation des services de communications générales à la Ville d'Ottawa : un cadre de travail stratégique) et *Communications Policy for the City of Ottawa* (Politique sur les communications pour la Ville d'Ottawa). Ces documents jettent les bases pour gérer les communications d'une manière systématique et organisée.

La version préliminaire de ces documents a été remise à l'équipe de la haute direction et à leurs équipes au premier trimestre de 2012. Les deux documents seront finalisés et redistribués à la haute direction d'ici le deuxième trimestre de 2012.

Recommandation 2

Que le Service des communications générales consulte activement le Conseil et les cadres supérieurs de la Ville afin d'assurer que le cadre de travail pour des communications stratégiques et la politique sur les communications qui sont actuellement en préparation répondent à leurs besoins.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Le Comité de la haute direction et le Comité exécutif ont été largement consultés au sujet du cadre de travail pour des communications stratégiques et de la politique sur les communications au cours des premier et deuxième trimestres de 2012, respectivement. Les deux documents seront finalisés et distribués à la haute direction d'ici la fin du deuxième trimestre de 2012. Ils constitueront également une partie des documents d'information du Service des communications générales, qui sont mis à la disposition des personnes intéressées pour consultation à l'interne et sont mis à jour au besoin. Afin d'assurer que le Conseil est informé du contenu du cadre de travail et de la politique, Communications générales distribuera les documents aux membres du Conseil.

Recommandation 3

Que lorsque le cadre de travail des communications stratégiques et la politique sur les communications auront été adoptés, ces documents devront faire partie des directives courantes pour tous les gestionnaires, y compris les nouveaux employés.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

D'ici le troisième trimestre de 2012, le Service des communications générales tiendra des séances d'orientation avec les gestionnaires et s'assurera que son personnel est disponible pour informer les gestionnaires, au besoin. Le Service des communications générales travaillera en collaboration avec le Service des ressources humaines afin que ces documents soient inclus dans le programme d'orientation des nouveaux gestionnaires d'ici le quatrième trimestre de 2012.

Recommandation 4

Que dans l'élaboration du cadre de travail stratégique, le Service des communications générales définisse clairement le modèle de gouvernance, notamment les rôles et les responsabilités, ainsi que la structure de prestation des services de soutien aux communications (incluant le niveau et le type de ressources requises) pour servir sa clientèle variée et répondre à tous les besoins en communications de la Ville.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Le cadre de travail stratégique expose clairement le modèle de gouvernance dans le service, les rôles et les responsabilités de chaque ressource, de même que les flux de travail et les organigrammes fonctionnels. Ce document sera finalisé et remis à la direction d'ici le deuxième trimestre de 2012.

Recommandation 5

Que le Service des communications générales, après clarification de son modèle de gouvernance, mette à jour les descriptions de tâches fonctionnelles et communique cette information au personnel touché.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Toutes les descriptions de tâches du Service des communications générales seront mises à jour pour refléter les rôles et les responsabilités décrites dans le cadre de travail stratégique approuvé et seront communiquées au personnel concerné d'ici le quatrième trimestre de 2012.

Recommandation 6

Que le Service des communications générales élabore et mette en œuvre un ensemble commun d'outils pour soutenir l'établissement des priorités et la planification uniformes et fiables de ses flux de travail.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Le Service prépare actuellement un modèle d'intégration du soutien des programmes et un processus de réception en appui au processus de planification annuelle qui mettra l'accent sur l'harmonisation des activités de communication avec les priorités et la capacité, d'ici le troisième trimestre de 2012.

Recommandation 7

Que le Service des communications générales élabore un cadre de mesure du rendement qui intègre les indicateurs de rendement qualitatifs et quantitatifs afin de déterminer si les résultats attendus et les objectifs définis sont atteints.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Un cadre de gestion du rendement, correspondant au Cadre de planification municipale, sera mis en œuvre d'ici le quatrième trimestre de 2012. Le cadre de travail établira un mécanisme pour mesurer l'efficacité des divers secteurs d'activité de communications et présenter les résultats au service ou au comité concernés. Les indicateurs seront établis en fonction des priorités municipales et permettront de cerner et d'atténuer les secteurs de risques.

Recommandation 8

Que les divers mécanismes de surveillance des commentaires formulés par les parties intéressées soient centralisés pour éviter les chevauchements et le dédoublement.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Le Service des communications générales préparera un plan annuel de consultation prenant en compte les activités de rétroaction des parties intéressées, parallèlement au processus de planification annuelle. Cette stratégie servira, dans la mesure du possible, à réduire le dédoublement et à intégrer les initiatives, et le plan sera mis à la disposition du Comité exécutif, d'ici le premier trimestre de 2013.

Recommandation 9

Dans le cadre de l'élaboration de la politique sur les communications de la Ville, que soient clairement définis les rôles et responsabilités du Service des communications générales et des gestionnaires de la Ville en ce qui concerne la mise en œuvre et la conformité.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

La politique sur les communications précise que tout le personnel de la Ville est responsable d'adhérer aux paramètres de la politique et de s'assurer que tous les efforts en matière de communications de la Ville d'Ottawa sont conformes aux exigences. Elle précise également la responsabilité en matière de surveillance et les conséquences de son non-respect. La recommandation sera considérée comme étant mise en œuvre lorsque la politique sur les communications sera approuvée en 2012.

Recommandation 10

Que la Ville examine et surveille son utilisation des divers instruments de communication pour s'assurer que les lignes directrices de l'identité visuelle sont respectées, dans la mesure du possible.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Le Service des communications générales mettra à jour les lignes directrices sur l'identité visuelle et les communiquera aux principales parties intéressées avant le quatrième trimestre de 2012. Le Service des communications générales examinera en outre les produits de communication pour veiller à ce que les normes du programme d'identité visuelle et les autres exigences des politiques soient suivies dans le cadre de la surveillance exercée au titre de la politique sur les communications. Une surveillance constante au titre de la politique sera exercée à compter du quatrième trimestre de 2012.

Recommandation 11

Que le Service des communications générales, dans le cadre de l'élaboration de la politique sur les communications de la Ville, prépare des directives sur l'utilisation des médias sociaux.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

L'utilisation officielle des médias sociaux sera régie par la politique sur les communications qui sera finalisée au deuxième trimestre de 2012. Des lignes directrices complémentaires seront élaborées pour l'utilisation officielle des médias sociaux (Twitter) d'ici le troisième trimestre de 2012.

Recommandation 12

Que la Ville instaure un processus d'établissement du budget des communications fondé sur le processus de planification des ressources opérationnelles et conforme à ce dernier, incluant toutes les ressources en communications des divers services.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Dans le cadre du processus actuel de préparation de l'entente de niveau de service, les divers services préparent leur plan de travail annuel avant l'établissement du budget. Tel qu'il est indiqué dans la réponse de la direction à la recommandation 6, le Service des communications générales mettra en œuvre, au troisième trimestre de 2012, un modèle d'intégration de soutien aux programmes pour renforcer ce processus et harmoniser les activités de communications avec les priorités établies pendant le processus de planification annuel.

Recommandation 13

Que le Service des communications générales, dans le cadre des processus améliorés de planification opérationnelle et stratégique utilisés pour ses clients, demande et obtienne l'accès aux budgets de communication et à l'information sur les dépenses des services.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Le Service des communications générales collaborera avec le Service des finances pour obtenir d'ici le premier trimestre de 2013 les budgets de communication et l'information sur les dépenses des services pour l'exercice de 2013 qui serviront à guider la planification stratégique et opérationnelle.

Recommandation 14

Que le Service des communications générales évalue ses deux mécanismes actuels de recouvrement des coûts afin de s'assurer de leur pertinence et de leur valeur continues relativement au cadre de travail stratégique en préparation.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec cette recommandation.

Les deux mécanismes actuels de recouvrement des coûts ont été examinés au premier trimestre de 2012 et, en conséquence, la surcharge pour les frais de publicité supplémentaires a été éliminée. Le recouvrement des coûts de dépouillement des médias sera examiné de manière plus approfondie au renouvellement du service, au premier trimestre de 2013.

Recommandation 15

Que les plans et stratégies de communication de la Ville, particulièrement ceux visant à changer le comportement du public, soient fondés sur une analyse approfondie de l'environnement dans lequel les initiatives de communication seront lancées.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec la recommandation.

L'intégration d'une analyse environnementale aux efforts de communication est incluse dans la politique sur les communications. La politique sera finalisée et distribuée au deuxième trimestre de 2012.

Des lignes directrices complétant l'analyse environnementale seront élaborées afin de tenir compte de la nécessité de faire le suivi, pendant la mise en œuvre du plan de communication et des rajustements nécessaires, le cas échéant, des recherches sur l'opinion publique et du dépouillement des médias. La rédaction de ces lignes directrices sera terminée d'ici le quatrième trimestre de 2012. Le modèle de planification des communications sera également mis à jour afin d'y intégrer les exigences d'ici le quatrième trimestre de 2012. Il comprendra un résumé de la couverture médiatique actuelle et passée d'une question donnée.

Recommandation 16

Que les plans de communication de la Ville ne comportent pas plus de trois objectifs, qui devraient tous être « aussi précis et mesurables que possible afin d'en assurer la mesure et de favoriser la responsabilisation mutuelle » (comme il est énoncé dans le *modèle de planification des communications*).

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec la recommandation.

Le modèle de plan de communication sera mis à jour afin de tenir compte de l'exigence stipulant que les plans de communication ne devraient pas contenir plus de trois objectifs. Le modèle mis à jour sera disponible dans l'intranet de la Ville d'ici au quatrième trimestre de 2012.

Recommandation 17

Que, lorsque tous les citoyens sont touchés par une initiative municipale, la Ville repère les auditoires cibles qui pourraient nécessiter une attention en matière de communications adaptée à leurs besoins (p, ex., Néo-Canadiens, résidents ruraux, aînés, femmes, etc.).

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec la recommandation.

La nouvelle politique sur les communications exige également de repérer et de définir les stratégies, les outils et les messages pour communiquer avec les auditoires cibles. La politique sera finalisée et distribuée au deuxième trimestre de 2012.

Recommandation 18

Que toutes les ressources humaines et financières soient dégagées afin de procéder à des activités d'analyse comparative et de mesure du rendement qui font nécessairement partie d'un plan de communication.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec la recommandation.

La nouvelle politique des communications tiendra également compte de la nécessité de déterminer les besoins opérationnels et la répartition des ressources ainsi que du besoin de mesurer l'efficacité des programmes et des campagnes de communication. La politique sera finalisée et distribuée au deuxième trimestre de 2012.

Le modèle de planification des communications sera également mis à jour d'ici le quatrième trimestre de 2012 pour tenir compte de ces exigences.

Recommandation 19

Que les principaux messages soient énoncés simplement et avec une certaine uniformité afin de convenir à un vaste public cible et qu'ils soient aussi évalués avant de les rendre publics et que des rajustements y soient apportés, au besoin, pour les adapter à un public particulier.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec la recommandation.

Le modèle de planification des communications sera mis à jour d'ici le quatrième trimestre de 2012 pour tenir compte de la directive qui suggère de rédiger les messages principaux de manière simple et uniforme, et comprendra des critères détaillés pour évaluer les messages.

Les lignes directrices sur l'analyse environnementale seront créées d'ici le quatrième trimestre de 2012 et tiendront compte de la nécessité de faire le suivi des recherches sur l'opinion publique pendant la mise en œuvre du plan de communication.

Recommandation 20

Que les ressources humaines et financières nécessaires soient dégagées pour lancer des tactiques en ligne avant que le plan soit approuvé.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec la recommandation.

L'établissement des besoins opérationnels et la répartition des ressources sont inclus dans la nouvelle Politique de communication. La politique sera finalisée et distribuée au deuxième trimestre de 2012.

De plus, les lignes directrices sur les médias sociaux insistent sur l'importance de cerner les ressources humaines et financières dans le cadre de toute initiative liée aux médias sociaux/Web 2.0. Les lignes directrices sur les médias sociaux seront terminées d'ici le troisième trimestre de 2012.

Dans le cadre du processus de planification annuel, la détermination des ressources sera primordiale. Des accords sur les niveaux de service seront établis avec les Services en fonction des besoins en ressources déterminés pour les projets planifiés.

Recommandation 21

Qu'une analyse média poussée soit élaborée aux fins d'intégration aux plans de communication et qu'elle soit continuellement mise à jour afin d'adapter les messages et les stratégies média au besoin.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec la recommandation.

L'analyse environnementale, y compris le dépouillement des médias, est incluse dans la nouvelle politique sur les communications. La politique sera finalisée et distribuée au deuxième trimestre de 2012.

Au quatrième trimestre de 2012, la Ville va lancer une DP pour choisir une agence de dépouillement systématique des médias qui fera le dépouillement et l'analyse. Les fonctions du nouveau service de dépouillement des médias seront sujettes à la disponibilité des fonds requis dans le cadre du budget de 2013, lequel devra être approuvé.

Recommandation 22

Que, dans le cas d'un plan de communication d'importance, la publicité soit évaluée dans des groupes de référence avant d'être diffusée et qu'elle soit évaluée périodiquement pour s'assurer qu'elle continue de répondre aux objectifs opérationnels.

Réponse de la direction

La direction est d'accord avec la recommandation.

Au premier trimestre de 2013, est prévue la création des lignes directrices régissant le déploiement efficace des plans de communication, qui expliqueront comment les créer et les mettre en œuvre et mesurer leur efficacité conformément aux pratiques de référence, y compris des essais auprès des groupes de consultations et d'autres méthodes de recherche.

Économies possibles

Au moment de la vérification, le Service des communications générales comptait 51 équivalents temps plein pour un budget total de 4,4 millions de dollars. De plus, la direction a repéré onze ÉTP supplémentaires dans divers services qui se consacrent exclusivement aux communications et neuf autres ÉTP qui exercent des fonctions de communication pour 5 à 90 % de leur tâche. Le coût des salaires au prorata de ces ÉTP est de 1,05 million de dollars. La direction a indiqué qu'il n'y a pas de dédoublement ni de chevauchement des tâches de ces onze ÉTP avec celles du Service des communications générales. Le personnel exerçant ces fonctions prend en charge diverses activités qui ne sont pas du ressort du Service des communications générales. Par exemple, ces activités incluent la création de communications internes entre les services et la liaison avec les experts en matière de contenu dans l'ébauche de produits de communication.

Avant que la Ville clarifie le mandat global, les rôles et les responsabilités du Service des communications générales, il est difficile de déterminer le niveau réel de ressources requises pour assurer le soutien et les services de communication. Toutefois, selon le niveau des ressources de communications réparties dans la Ville, il est raisonnable de croire qu'il y a une possibilité de réaliser des économies en simplifiant la structure actuelle.

Conclusion

Depuis la fusion en 2001, le Service des communications générales de la Ville a subi de nombreux changements dans sa direction, sa structure et son mandat. En conséquence, les gestionnaires et le Conseil ont perdu confiance dans les services offerts dont ils ne sont pas satisfaits. Le Service des communications générales est actuellement en pleine transition, car sa nouvelle direction est en train d'élaborer un cadre de travail stratégique et une politique sur les communications. La direction devra encore déployer d'importants efforts pour établir en temps utile le fondement stratégique du service, en communiquer les grands points et faire approuver le tout par les gestionnaires de la Ville et autres parties intéressées.

En plus de la perspective stratégique, la direction devra également mobiliser ses efforts, et affecter les ressources requises, pour assurer l'élaboration et la mise en œuvre constante de processus et d'outils de gestion améliorés (p. ex., un cadre d'évaluation du rendement amélioré, des plans de travail opérationnels liés à la répartition des ressources en fonction des budgets financiers, etc.). Ce volet de la réorganisation du service est mis en œuvre afin de garantir que la planification, le déploiement et la surveillance des ressources du Service des communications générales sont des mécanismes efficaces et rentables.

À l'heure actuelle, la Ville compte de nombreuses ressources de communications qui exercent leurs fonctions en interne dans divers services. C'est une pratique courante dans la plupart des grandes Villes. Toutefois, à notre avis, le Service des communications générales doit avoir l'autorité nécessaire pour coordonner les efforts afin d'assurer l'uniformité, d'éviter le double emploi et de prévenir le risque d'actions contradictoires.

Il est important de souligner que pendant la vérification, la direction du Service des communications générales était en train d'élaborer le cadre de travail stratégique des communications et la politique sur les communications pour la Ville d'Ottawa qui définissent l'orientation globale de la Ville en matière de communications internes et externes et établissent les responsabilités et l'imputabilité des divers éléments. Une telle stratégie s'inspire des politiques de communication qui ont été mises en place à d'autres paliers de gouvernement (p. ex., Canada et Alberta). Nous encourageons la direction à poursuivre ce travail et sommes conscients qu'avant la présentation de ce rapport au Conseil, le cadre de travail et la politique seront en place. En conséquence, la résolution des problèmes soulevés pendant la vérification devrait avoir considérablement progressé d'ici là.

Remerciements

Nous tenons à remercier la direction pour la coopération et l'assistance accordées à l'équipe de vérification.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Audit of Corporate Communications (CC) was included in the 2011 Audit Plan of the Office of the Auditor General, approved by Council on April 13, 2011.

2 BACKGROUND

The focus of this audit is the Corporate Communications function of the City of Ottawa which operates under the direction of the Chief, Corporate Communications. This function has existed in its current form since December 2009, when it was realigned to focus on excellence in strategic and tactical communications, issues management and improving the City's electronic presence on various platforms.

As per the 2012 Budget documentation, the overall mandate of the Corporate Communications Department is "To ensure communications efforts are aligned with the City's priorities and plans while providing strategic communications advice and support to the programs, services and initiatives of the corporation".

This mandate is fulfilled via a range of communication services and products delivered by Corporate Communications resources in support of various stakeholders including City departments and program areas, Council, Ottawa residents and media representatives.

3 AUDIT SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Audit Scope

The scope of the audit focused primarily on the Corporate Communications function in place during 2010, which encompasses an organization of approximately 51 full time equivalents (FTEs), organized as follows:

Organization Unit	Focus	FTEs
Chief's Office - Management and Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Function leadership and management • Communications strategic support and coordination • Advertising support coordination 	5
Chief's Office - Issues Management and Advanced Legislative Agenda Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications strategy and plan development • Strategic advice related to the Advanced Legislative Agenda • Issues management • Crisis communications support 	7

Organization Unit	Focus	FTEs
Client Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support of the City and City departments and program areas in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ External communication strategy development and execution; ○ Internal communication strategy development and execution; ○ Visual identity management; and, ○ Communications material production 	27
Media Relations and Public Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media relations support of the Mayor, Council, senior City staff • Corporate event support • Photography services 	6
E-media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web strategy development and execution 	6
Total FTEs		51

In addition to these resources, various City departments also have a number of FTEs reporting internally that have communications-related duties. During the audit, Management identified an additional 11 FTEs that are 100% dedicated to communications and another 9 which have 5-90% of their duties related to communications (Appendix A lists each of these FTEs and their location).

The scope of the audit included an examination of the extent to which the Corporate Communications function of the City of Ottawa is aligned to the strategic direction and plans of the City and complies with applicable internal and external requirements (e.g., legislation, regulations, policies and procedures). The audit also included an assessment of the management framework (including financial management) and operations of the Corporate Communications function in delivering communication services to its various stakeholders.

The audit focused on Corporate Communications function activities undertaken and expenditures incurred during the 2010 and 2011 fiscal years.

3.2 Audit Objectives

The objectives of the audit were to:

1. Determine if the Corporate Communications function has appropriate management practices in place to ensure alignment between functional priorities and activities and the City's plans and strategic directions, and ensure compliance with applicable laws, legislation, regulations, and internal policies and procedures;

2. Assess the appropriateness of the Corporate Communications financial management framework; and,
3. Examine management practices, controls, and monitoring and reporting systems across the Corporate Communications function to assess the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of current operations.

4 APPROACH

The audit methodology focused on an objective evidence-based assessment of the Corporate Communications management framework and operational service delivery resources, processes and results. Key elements included:

- Reliance on documented evidence (e.g., plans, priorities, processes and procedures);
- Data gathering through structured interviews with a range of stakeholders including functional leaders and clients of the Corporate Communications function (e.g., Council members, department/program leadership);
- The use of metric and data based historic and current performance assessment (e.g., financial and operational performance measurement data); and,
- Deployment of a blend of quantitative and qualitative assessment tools.

Through these methods, the audit focused on addressing the following criteria:

- The Corporate Communications function has clearly defined and communicated strategic directions and strategic objectives, aligned with its mandate;
- The Corporate Communications function has processes, controls and appropriate resources in place to monitor compliance with applicable laws, legislation, regulations, and internal policies and procedures;
- The Corporate Communications function has an effective budgeting process in place to support the timely allocation of resources necessary to deliver on expected results;
- The function is supported by timely and accurate financial reporting to enable pro-active management decision-making;
- An effective governance structure is in place to oversee the manner by which the Corporate Communications function guides and supports communications activities across the City (e.g., departments and programs);
- The Corporate Communications function has in place operational plans and objectives aimed at achieving its strategic objectives;
- The Corporate Communications function has in place monitoring processes and practices to ensure timely and effective alignment of resources to priority activities; and,

- Open and effective channels exist for generating stakeholder feedback on the effectiveness of communication activities and results.

5 DETAILED FINDINGS, OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Corporate Communications Mandate and Strategic Direction

5.1.1 Clarity of Mandate

As per the 2012 Budget documentation, the overall mandate of the Corporate Communications Department is “To ensure communications efforts are aligned with the City’s priorities and plans while providing strategic communications advice and support to the programs, services and initiatives of the corporation.”

There is currently a lack of clarity in defining the authority of the Chief, Corporate Communications vis-à-vis its clients (e.g., departments, Council, etc.). In a broad sense, there are three potential mandates for Corporate Communications:

- CC is a *support* resource for clients. This means clients use CC simply as a service provider, editing content mainly developed by clients, creating graphic designs, handling ad placements and managing media relations.
- CC *influences/advises* on communications activities and decisions, proposing the most effective communications vehicles and approaches in the light of existing resources and communications objectives.
- CC *decides* on the priority to be accorded to a communications project and the way the project is implemented, ensuring it responds to established laws, policies and procedures. For example, in this role, CC could refuse a client’s wish to promote a program or initiative through paid advertising in favour of relying on other media and the client would have to respect that advice.

Interviews with Council and department managers showed that the first two models describe the current approach of Corporate Communications, which vary depending on the client. Since the CC mandate was initially defined at the time of amalgamation in 2001, there has been a number of revisions implemented or proposed, adding to confusion about the mandate. This has been exacerbated by the frequent changes in the position of Chief, Corporate Communications which have resulted in a lack of consistent direction, both strategic and functional, within CC.

The result of this lack of clarity and definition of authority has meant that stakeholders are less aware and may have less confidence in the capacity of CC to advise on, develop and manage effective public and internal communication strategies and initiatives to meet their program needs and objectives. Indeed, largely because of this lack of confidence and satisfaction with CC, many

departments/programs and Councillors have put in place their own communications resources to undertake communications activities outside the purview of Corporate Communications. During the audit, Management identified 11 such FTEs that are 100% dedicated to communications activities and another 9 which have 5-90% of their duties related to communications (Appendix A lists each of these FTEs and their location). While it is common practice within most large municipalities to have some level of internal communications resources, in our opinion, the Corporate Communications function should have the necessary authority to coordinate efforts in order to ensure consistency and avoid duplication and working at cross-purposes. Without this, the development and provision of coherent, effective and economical communications to support City strategic and operational goals is compromised.

It is important to note that during the course of the audit, CC management was in the process of developing a Strategic Communications Framework and Communications Policy for the City of Ottawa that defines the City's overall policy on internal and external communications and identifies accountability and responsibility for its various elements. This is similar to the communications policies that exist at other levels of government (e.g., Canada and Alberta). We are supportive of this initiative and understand that by the time this report is presented to Council the Framework and Policy will be in place. As such, progress toward addressing many of the issues raised in the audit should be well underway by that time.

Recommendation 1

That the City clearly define the intended overall mandate and role of the Corporate Communications function versus communications responsibilities of each department.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

In the summer of 2011, the newly hired Chief of Corporate Communications began efforts to clearly define the mandate and role of Corporate Communications. Through consultation and guidance from Council, Executive Committee and Senior Management Committee, two key documents were drafted: 'Delivering Corporate Communications at the City of Ottawa: A Strategic Framework' and a Communications Policy for the City of Ottawa. These documents have laid the groundwork to manage communications in a systematic and organized manner.

The draft Communications Policy and Strategic Communications Framework documents were distributed to senior management and their teams in Q1 2012. Both documents will be finalized and redistributed to senior management by Q2 2012.

5.1.2 Clarity of Strategic Direction

The current CC mandate does not define the Department's responsibilities for ensuring that communications efforts are aligned with the City's priorities and plans. Although the Strategic Priorities of Council have been promulgated, there is not yet an overall corporate communications framework and strategy in place to support them.

Development of such a framework and strategy is a complex process. Besides the public activities of the Mayor and 23 ward Councillors, the City has over 100 lines of business and numerous initiatives and events happening daily that affect the way the City is perceived by residents. Communications activities must reflect basic policy themes that tell a coherent story, whether the issue is public works, public health, transportation or management of a crisis, like an ice storm or power blackout.

CC management is in the process of developing a Strategic Communications Framework for the Delivery of Communications Services in the City of Ottawa based on eight main communications thrusts:

1. Policy and planning;
2. The Legislative Agenda – priorities of the Mayor and Council;
3. The Corporate Agenda – priorities of the City Manager and Executive Management Committee;
4. Issues management;
5. Program promotion;
6. Crisis communications and emergency preparedness;
7. Advertising; and,
8. Internal communications.

In addition, the Strategic Communications Framework needs to take account of policy and program initiatives by the other three government entities whose decisions may affect Ottawa – the Government of Ontario, the National Capital Commission and the City's largest employer, the Government of Canada.

Recommendation 2

That Corporate Communications conduct active consultations with Council and senior managers in the City, to ensure the Strategic Communications Framework and the Communications Policy currently under development meet their needs.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Senior Management Committee and Executive Committee were extensively consulted on the Strategic Communications Framework and Communications Policy in Q1 and Q2 2012, respectively. Both documents will be finalized and redistributed to senior management by the end of Q2 2012. These documents will also form part of the Corporate Communications briefing material, which is made available for internal consultation and is updated as required. To ensure that Council is informed as to the content of the framework and policy, Corporate Communications will distribute the documents to members of Council.

Recommendation 3

That once the Strategic Communications Framework and the Communications Policy have been promulgated, these documents should be part of regular orientation for all managers, including new hires.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Corporate Communications will conduct orientation sessions with managers by Q3 2012 and will ensure that Corporate Communications staff is available to brief managers as required. Corporate Communications will work with Human Resources to ensure that these documents are included in the corporate orientation program for new management hires by Q4 2012.

5.2 Corporate Communications Governance

5.2.1 Service Delivery Business Models

As mentioned above, frequent reorganizations and changes in the position of Chief, Corporate Communications (four times in 2011 alone) have meant a lack of consistent direction both strategically for the City and functionally within CC itself. At amalgamation in 2001, communications resources for the City were centralized in a single Corporate Communications unit on the basis that consolidation of communications resources would be a more productive model. Managers interviewed for the audit said they were assured that the level of communications support would remain at pre-amalgamation levels, but this has not proven to be the case based on interviewee opinion. Over the years, a variety of service delivery models have evolved without a clear rationale for any single approach. As was discussed earlier, currently there are a number of communications resources, outside of the purview of CC, distributed throughout various City departments.

In some cases, CC provides a resource (communications staff) *fully dedicated* to a specific client for a period of time. For example, CC provided a communications strategist to work full time on communications in support of the Bank Street infrastructure repair project. Management indicated that the City Manager's Office requested that the resource be applied to ensure that Council's motion with regard to accelerating the reconstruction of Bank Street (Motion: Capital 2), and the obligation under the OMB Glebe BIA minutes of settlement from March 11, 2011, were effectively fulfilled. The communications strategist was a secondment for which the client department covered the cost of the position and Corporate Communications back-filled this individual's position. The strategist worked with the local Councillor, business leaders and media to address concerns and explain progress, and this was viewed by the Councillor as very useful.

On the other hand, the Woodroffe Watermain Replacement and Water Ban project, also of great concern to the local Councillor and residents, did not have a full-time communications resource dedicated to it. Management indicated that this project had more than one resource assigned to it. An in-house team of Corporate Communications staff supported the Woodroffe Watermain Replacement and Water Ban project. This team included staff with different aspects of communications expertise: a communications coordinator; strategist; and graphics, advertising, and media relations resources.

The audit found that sometimes a communications resource was *co-located* with a client group. For example, OC Transpo was assigned a full-time media relations officer dedicated for a period of time. That person was eventually recalled to CC for reasons that were not communicated to the Deputy City Manager responsible for Transit. Management indicated that in the spring of 2010, OC Transpo identified a need to have additional communication resources assigned within the department. As a result, a communications strategist was seconded to OC for a temporary period (April 2010 to December 2010). As per an agreement between the Chief, Corporate Communications and the General Manager of OC Transpo, when the temporary term was up, this resource was returned to Corporate Communications, and the search for a candidate to fill this position on a permanent basis commenced. The Deputy City Manager of Infrastructure Services and Community Sustainability was aware of this arrangement, and the plans to permanently staff this position.

Internal communications staff are sometimes financed by departments themselves, largely independent of oversight and coordination by CC. For example, Ottawa Public Health nurses develop their own communications tools like presentations on health issues, with some support from. As another example, OC Transpo has a marketing group of four or five staff, including graphic designers that operate independent of CC.

Many departments and branches (Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services, Ottawa Public Health and Protocol) as well as some Councillors are writing their own

content for communications products because CC has not provided this support. Several interviewees observed that it is an ineffective use of resources to divert the activities of specialists in areas like protocol or parks and recreation from their main business functions in order to do communications work. They noted that it would be useful to have communications experts in house so as to ensure proper quality of their communications. The current approach puts content ownership with the subject matter experts, found in the client departments. Corporate Communications reviews and ensures appropriate and consistent messaging that aligns with corporate priorities.

There is also an inconsistent approach to how communications services are provided to individual clients. Some departments, like Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services and Organizational Development Services, deal directly with CC service providers on the basis of personal relationships and trust, while others are required to obtain services via Client Relations project managers. This can be a problem because of the considerable turnover in CC resources. Ottawa Public Health noted that its Client Relations project manager has changed five or six times over the past two years. This continuous change requires the Department to re-orient new CC advisors on a regular basis to ensure they understand client needs and priorities.

During the course of the audit several other Canadian municipalities were contacted to gather comparative data. However, due to wide variations in service delivery models and in the types and levels of services provided by these cities, no meaningful comparisons could be drawn. To avoid the risk of presenting data that cannot be compared in a reasonable manner, this information is not included here.

Recommendation 4

That as part of Strategic Framework development, Corporate Communications clearly articulate the governance model, including roles and responsibilities, and the communications support delivery structure (including level and type of required resources) for serving its varied client base, and to meet the City's overall communication requirements.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The Strategic Framework articulates governance within the department, roles and responsibilities for each resource as well as workflows and functional organizational charts. This document will be finalized and distributed to Senior Management by Q2 2012.

5.2.2 Clarity of Roles and Responsibilities

The Corporate Communications Department has existed in its current form since December 2009.

In supporting its mandate and delivering services to clients, the Department, led by the Chief, Corporate Communications is comprised of approximately 51 FTEs organized into three branches plus the Chief's Office.

Branch-by-Branch Overview

Chief's Office: Key client service functions and roles within the Chief's office include:

- Seven communications strategists supporting the City's issues management and mitigation strategy and providing client departments advice on City priority projects. Working with department heads, communication strategists support the Advanced Legislative Agenda by helping clients to identify potential risks to the City from a media perspective and to identify positive news stories. Strategists also support the Mayor, Council and committees as required.
- One advertising coordinator that supports management of the City's statutory and non-statutory advertising requirements and those of client departments.
- The Chief of Corporate Communications is also the Emergency Information Officer for the City of Ottawa.

Client Relations: The Client Relations branch is the largest of the Department's three branches. Comprised of three projects teams, plus a graphic design team, branch members are responsible for the day-to-day and planned communications needs of City departments. Each of the four Client Relations teams is led by a project manager who works directly with clients (i.e., departments and programs) in planning and monitoring the delivery of communications services and products.

Media Relations and Public Information: The Media Relations and Public Information branch provides a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week service to Council, senior staff and the media. It triages more than 8,000 media inquiries a year. The branch also leads media monitoring and analysis activities. Branch staff also provide in-house media training, photography and event management services.

E-Media: This team of new media professionals is responsible for the City's electronic presence externally (i.e., Ottawa.ca). The branch is also responsible for the City's intranet site (i.e., Ozone). The branch also supports the ongoing development of e-payment and registration applications for the City and provides training support to City employees. In providing its services, the Corporate Communications Department serves a broad client base including the Mayor, City Councillors and Committees, City departments and programs and the news media.

The audit identified a number of areas where the client service role of Corporate Communications has either not been clearly articulated or understood by clients.

These areas include:

1. Corporate Communications support of City Councillors: City Councillors interviewed during the audit consistently raised questions as to the purpose and role of Corporate Communications, both in terms of Corporate Communications broad role in supporting the legislative agenda and in the more tactical production of communication materials for the benefit of Councillors.
2. The role of Client Relations project managers: The current job description for this role (four staff members within the Client Relations Branch) includes the following:

“The project manager is responsible for developing and implementing departmental issue management strategies for critical, controversial and/or confidential departmental issues through consultation with senior management, staff of appropriate departments, and/or council so that information about issues is communicated to the public accurately and in a timely manner, while at the same time ensuring that both the integrity and reputation of the city are protected and preserved.”

The audit found that the focus of project managers is more on the tactical delivery of discrete communication products versus supporting client departments and programs in developing and executing communications strategies and plans. Client department representatives interviewed confirmed the “tactical delivery” nature of this role.

The role of Corporate Communications strategists: Based on an internal Corporate Communications Department description, Corporate Communications strategists are assigned to Committees, departments and to high profile and high risk files to provide a “media lens” and strategic advice and support:

- Departmental Communications Strategy;
- Issues Management & Advanced Legislative Agenda Support; and,
- Crisis Communications.

This description overlaps with the Client Relations project manager’s role description provided above, in relation to communication strategy and issues management activities. This lack of clarity in roles is further evidenced by client department observations expressing confusion as to whether Corporate Communications is a “strategic communications advisor” or an “administrative/tactical communication production support unit”.

In an effort to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Corporate Communications Department in serving its varied client base, the Department has recently commenced development of a Strategic Framework and supporting business model, in order to articulate and differentiate each of the roles and responsibilities of the key functions of Corporate Communications. This document also includes a revised mandate to emphasize and articulate the strategic advisory role of Corporate Communications in serving its clients.

Recommendation 5

That, upon clarification of the Corporate Communications governance model, Corporate Communications update its functional job descriptions and communicate this information to affected staff.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

All Corporate Communications job descriptions will be updated to reflect the roles and responsibilities outlined in the approved Strategic Framework and will be communicated to affected staff by Q4 2012.

5.3 Operational Planning, Prioritization and Monitoring Processes

5.3.1 Planning

The Corporate Communications Department is engaged in responding to high volumes of service requests, both planned and unplanned, across its functional business lines. Based on a review of available planning documentation and interviews with Corporate Communications and client representatives, we noted that Corporate Communications does not yet employ consistent operational planning and monitoring processes in serving its clients.

For the purposes of operational planning in support of client service delivery, Corporate Communications employs Shared Service Agreements and semi-annual workplans. Our observations on these tools and related planning processes include:

- Shared Service Agreements - As part of the Service Excellence initiative, in 2010, Corporate Communications developed Shared Service Agreements with 19 departmental clients. The agreements are intended to detail the nature and extent of services delivered by Corporate Communications to these clients including:
 - Service descriptions;
 - Service timing and duration;
 - Estimated resource requirements of Corporate Communications and client department; and,
 - Estimated costs.

Based on our review, the agreements are not in place with all key Corporate Communications clients and those that are in place vary significantly in their level of detail and completeness. As confirmed by Corporate Communications and client representatives, the agreements also have not been used as a meaningful management tool to clarify expectations and support the planning and monitoring of communications activities.

- Semi-annual workplans - Based on current job descriptions, Client Relations project managers are responsible for “assisting in the development of semi-annual communications plans for departmental communications activities”. Beyond departmental communication activities (e.g., committee communication activities) planning requirements are not clearly identified. We noted evidence that semi-annual communication workplans have been created for a number of client departments, however this work planning process has not yet been documented, nor has it been fully and consistently adopted in support of all client departments or in support all key Corporate Communications clients. Examples of inconsistencies in workplans noted include:
 - The levels of detail describing the nature and extent of communication products/initiatives;
 - The definition of the objectives of communications products/initiatives;
 - The identification of target audiences for communications products/initiatives;
 - The identification of the priority of client communication products/initiatives;
 - The assignment of Corporate Communications staff to communication products/initiatives;
 - The timing (e.g., estimated start and end dates) of communication products/initiatives; and,
 - The estimated resource levels (e.g., number of hours, financial budgets) required of assigned Corporate Communications resources for specific communication products/initiatives.

In the absence of complete and consistent workplans, it is unclear how Corporate Communications is able to collectively plan for and allocate resources to client communication initiatives on a timely and efficient basis.

From a communication initiative monitoring perspective, we noted a range of approaches undertaken between Corporate Communications and its departmental clients to monitor the progress of work and to update client workplans. These approaches ranged from adhoc periodic interaction between Corporate Communications and a client department relating to a specific communications initiative, to one case within Public Works where a more disciplined monitoring approach has been implemented wherein:

- A client department has initiated a communications working group chaired by a departmental program manager;
- The working group departmental representation as well as representation from the assigned Corporate Communications project manager and the assigned Corporate Communications strategist; and,
- The working group meets on a bi-weekly basis to discuss:
 - Updates required to the communications workplan;
 - Progress against the communications workplan;
 - Status of key communications deliverables/activities;
 - Development of key messages related to specific communication deliverables/activities.

In the absence of a consistent and disciplined approach to planning, organizing and monitoring work activities and workloads, it is difficult to assess whether Corporate Communications and client departments are meeting objectives established for communication activities (e.g., results expectations, resource estimates, etc.).

Current Corporate Communications leadership has recognized the inconsistency and incompleteness of current planning and monitoring approaches employed and has commenced development of a series of planning tools to better allow the organization to identify work activities, allocate resources, and respond to client communication requirements. This enhanced approach has not yet been implemented.

5.3.2 Prioritization

The Corporate Communications Department is engaged in high volumes of service requests, both planned and unplanned, across its functional business lines. For example, the Client Relations branch notes that in 2010, it developed more than 3,000 communication products in support of departmental events and initiatives, including:

- Brochures and information materials (e.g., Waste Collection Calendar);
- Open House Display Boards for Lansdowne Revitalization;
- Election 2010 promotional materials;

- Recreation activity guides; and,
- Spring and Fall Cleaning the Capital promotional materials.

It should be noted that not all of these products represented unique tasks as many were adaptations of previously completed initiatives (e.g., seasonal recreation guides). One of the challenges cited by Client Relations Branch staff and client department representatives was the manner by which requests for service are prioritized and reprioritized in the face of “emergency” service requests.

Based on our review of available planning documentation and interviews of Corporate Communications and client representatives, we note that Corporate Communications lacks a prioritization framework to support and communicate resource allocation decisions. From a client perspective, questions were raised as to the consistency of the methods and criteria used by Corporate Communications to establish the priority of work in the face of competing requests from different clients.

Client Relations staff indicated that they have not yet adopted formal criteria for prioritizing requests. Instead, these competing requests are dealt with on an individual basis, whereby the project manager reviews the competing requests with the Client Relations Manager to determine options for resolution which might include:

- Changing the completion dates, and communicating these changes to the client. This means that clients’ planned projects are sometimes bumped from the Corporate Communications production queue if an issue arises that diverts Corporate Communications resources;
- Engaging staff from other Client Relations units to assist in service delivery; and,
- Outsourcing the service request to a contractor, as required.

In order to address potential client relations issues associated with unexpected service delays, Client Relations representatives and departmental clients interviewed indicated that the definition and adoption of a prioritization framework would assist in supporting Client Relations resource allocation decisions (e.g., assignment of staff vs. contracting of resources), and better allow Client Relations project managers to proactively manage client relations expectations.

In support of Corporate Communications development of a prioritization framework, we noted that Council has developed “Term of Council Priorities”, which provides a starting point for Corporate Communications prioritization efforts.

Recommendation 6

That Corporate Communications develop and implement a common set of tools to support consistent and reliable prioritization and planning of Corporate Communications workflows.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Corporate Communications is developing a Program Support Integration Model and an intake process to support the annual planning process, which will focus on aligning communication activities with priorities and capacity by Q3 2012.

5.3.3 Monitoring and Performance Measurement

There is limited focus on evaluating the outcomes of communications activities in terms of cost and impact on achieving Council/Department priorities and objectives.

In communications plans reviewed during the audit, we noted that the evaluation component tended to focus on media monitoring and web site traffic. While these represent legitimate communications evaluation tools, they do not necessarily allow for the measurement of the extent to which communications objectives were achieved. For example, the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario - Emergency Detour Routes (EDRs) communications plan states as one of its communications objective to “proactively educate the public and media about EDRs”. It proposes to evaluate the success of this campaign through media, web site and social media monitoring and “issue management success”. It is difficult to see how these evaluation methods will demonstrate that the public has been ‘educated’. An on-line survey, perhaps targeting organizations like the regional Canadian Automobile Association might offer a more reliable indicator of whether motorists saw and understood the communications campaign.

CC has a Communications Plan Framework and Template to guide the development of communications plans. It describes the components that should be contained in a communications plan including: Environmental Scan, Communications Objectives, Target Audiences, Strategic Approach, Key Messages, Communications Tactics and Costs, among others. Elements of the Template are reflected in the communications plans reviewed. The Template is very specific about the kind of measurable results communications plans should aim for. “If you (the communications plan author) have identified specific results to be achieved then you will need to develop performance indicators to determine if identified results are being achieved. Performance indicators may be qualitative (e.g., surveys/focus groups) or quantitative (e.g., number of media stories/web site visits).”

Performance measurement requires commitment and resources, both financial and human. Communications planning and implementation can lead to the conclusion that once a plan is executed, the job is done and communications specialists move on to the next project. Nevertheless, in an environment of ongoing budget pressures, it is essential to assess whether tools selected for a specific campaign were the most useful and cost efficient, or whether a different approach might be better. A more thorough analysis of performance measurement is contained in the 2011 audit report *Audit of the City's Performance Measurement Framework*.

Recommendation 7

That Corporate Communications develop a performance measurement framework that incorporates qualitative and quantitative performance indicators to measure if desired results are achieved and defined objectives met.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

A performance management framework, aligned to the Corporate Planning Framework will be developed by Q4 2012. The framework will feature an ability to measure the effectiveness of the communications business lines and report results to the appropriate department or committee. The indicators will be aligned to corporate priorities and will enable risk areas to be identified and mitigated.

5.3.4 Stakeholder Feedback Channels

Related to the issue of performance monitoring is the need to solicit stakeholder feedback. The City undertakes numerous activities to obtain information about the views and concerns of various stakeholders in the community. These fall into three main categories:

- Consultation with residents to obtain their views on various issues and initiatives (e.g., budget consultations, proposed zoning changes, proposed re-developments, etc.);
- Requests for feedback from the public on the provision of services like the “Rate Our Site” electronic survey on the Ottawa.ca web site; and,
- Internal employee surveys that occur every 18 months.

The first type of feedback initiative has potential for creating communications challenges. In October and November 2011 alone, an overview of planned consultations on a range of issues such as Rural French Services, the Older Adult Plan, Village Plan Reviews for a number of smaller communities, Choosing Our Future, and the Rideau Canal Footbridge were all being undertaken by various City departments. At least three of these consultations overlapped with the Budget 2012 consultations.

While Corporate Communications does not have responsibility for conducting surveys, they are responsible for ensuring that consultations are communicated effectively in a way to attract appropriate participation. At present there is no central coordination of these various feedback monitoring mechanisms to ensure that there is no overlap to limit the risk of 'consultation fatigue', particularly in rural areas where the consultation base is smaller.

We noted that CC is developing a calendar of consultations to help clients plan and coordinate these exercises in a more rational, effective manner.

Recommendation 8

That the various stakeholder feedback monitoring mechanisms be centrally coordinated to avoid overlaps and duplication.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Corporate Communications will prepare an annual consultation plan to reflect the major stakeholder feedback activities in conjunction with the annual planning process. This will be used to reduce duplication and integrate initiatives to the extent possible and will be made available to Executive Committee by Q1 2013.

5.3.5 Compliance Monitoring

The City of Ottawa is subject to a number of laws, by-laws, regulations and internal policies and priorities with which departments/programs, including Corporate Communications must respect. These requirements range from such broad documents as the Municipal Act of Ontario and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, to policies affecting communications like the Visual Identity Policy and the Multiple Formats Policy. We found that there is no guidance in the City of Ottawa on how these requirements are to be integrated into communications planning and implementation.

We also note that the Chief, Corporate Communications has no stated authority to monitor compliance to these requirements among clients (e.g., departments and programs). For example, CC is responsible for the developing and promoting the City's Visual Identity Guidelines, but it is the responsibility of City managers to ensure the Guidelines are respected and implemented. At present, this is not happening consistently.

To the extent that CC delivers programs and services directly to residents and City employees using the resources that it controls, (e.g., corporate advertising, intranet) we found it compliant with the Bilingualism Policy, the Visual Identity Policy, the Multiple Formats Policy and the requirements of the Corporate Emergency Management Plan. It is also working on new approaches to meeting

communications requirements regarding the Service Excellence Plan, Departmental Service Standards, and Shared Service Agreements. For those communications initiatives that are currently beyond the authority of CC, compliance is more difficult to assess.

In other areas such as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act that requires municipalities to post information about services provided to persons with disabilities on their web sites, CC was less successful in obtaining needed content information from departments in order to post it. However, this is no longer relevant now that management of the web site has been transferred to Service Ottawa.

Recommendation 9

That, as part of the development of the City's Communications Policy, the roles and responsibilities of Corporate Communications and City managers in regard to implementation and compliance be clearly defined.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The Communications Policy outlines that all City staff are responsible for adhering to the parameters of the policy and for ensuring all communications efforts of the City of Ottawa conform to its requirements. It also articulates the monitoring responsibility and the results of contravention. The recommendation will be considered implemented with the approval of the Communications Policy in 2012.

5.3.6 Visual Identity Guidelines

The variety of designs currently being used by various departments and Councillors is notable. This clearly does not respect the Visual Identity Guidelines. Failure to maintain a consistent corporate design or brand means the City does not present a coherent, recognizable face to residents in general and target audiences in particular, hampering the achievement of communications objectives.

Recommendation 10

That the City review and monitor its use of various designs for communications vehicles to ensure the Visual Identity Guidelines are followed wherever possible.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Corporate Communications will update the Visual Identity Guidelines and will communicate them to key stakeholders by Q4 2012. Corporate Communications will also review communications products to ensure that the Visual Identity Program standards and other policy requirements are followed as part of the monitoring of the Communications Policy. Ongoing monitoring of the policy will begin in Q4 2012.

5.3.7 Use of Social Media

Corporate Communications is currently developing a Communications Policy for the City of Ottawa that will define the City's overall policy on external and internal communications and stipulate accountability and responsibility for CC and City managers.

In the context of a Communications Policy for the City, as has been suggested in discussions of past audits, the City should have a policy on the use of social media. This is a growing component of communications outreach, especially among younger audiences, but inappropriate use of Facebook, Twitter etc. can have negative effects on the City's image and communications goals. Of note is that the federal government has recently published 'guidelines' on the use of social media.

Recommendation 11

That, as part of the development of the City's Communications Policy, Corporate Communications include guidelines on the use of social media.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The official use of social media will be governed under the Communications Policy to be finalized in Q2 2012. Supporting guidelines will be created for the official use of social media (Twitter) by Q3 2012.

5.4 Financial Management Considerations

5.4.1 Financial Budgeting

The Corporate Communications budgeting process is focused on expenditures incurred within the Department (e.g., compensation costs for Corporate Communications staff) as Corporate Communications is not responsible for budgeting or monitoring communications expenditures incurred within client organizations (e.g., departments). The exception to this statement is advertising expenditures incurred by Corporate Communications clients. These costs are monitored by Corporate Communications.

Departments have responsibility for their own communications budgets. These costs are included in either specific program operating budgets or within the capital budgets in the case of large capital projects and as such are difficult to quantify.

Presented below are the budgeted and actual expenditures for Corporate Communications since 2009:

	2009 Actual (000's)	2009 Budget (000's)	2010 Actual (000's)	2010 Budget (000's)	2011 Budget (000's)
Compensation	\$3,967	\$4,046	\$3,868	\$3,890	\$4,112
Operating	626	592	391	328	356
Allocations³	(697)	(684)	(416)	(978)	(63)
Total	\$3,896	\$3,954	\$3,843	\$3,240	\$4,405

As illustrated, compensation costs represent approximately 90% of Corporate Communications expenditures (i.e., compensation plus operating costs). Staffing levels within Corporate Communications have remained stable at 50 - 52 FTEs since a 2009 re-organization.

As noted previously, Corporate Communications has not yet implemented a consistent work planning process, nor has Corporate Communications implemented related processes to effectively estimate staff workloads and convert those workloads into resource estimates and related compensation budgets (including the appropriate mix of City versus contract resources. Accordingly, we note that financial budgets within Corporate Communications are established primarily based on historical workloads and staffing levels.

By not employing a more disciplined approach to estimating and monitoring required resource levels, the justification for current Corporate Communications resource levels across its business functions is unclear.

One of implications of Corporate Communications lacking this type of information is an increased difficulty in assessing and appropriately responding to evolving requirements (e.g., assessing the resource implications of addressing Corporate Communications Emergency Management support requirements, or developing a plan to satisfy operational efficiency targets mandated through broader City budgeting efforts).

From a financial monitoring perspective, Corporate Communications generates a monthly budget to actual comparison report at a departmental and branch level. This information is presented at a "line item" level of detail (e.g., compensation costs, professional services costs, etc.) to support detailed monitoring of expenditure performance against budgets.

³ Allocations include any chargebacks as well as other requirements such as efficiency targets

Recommendation 12

That the City implement a communications budget development process that is closely aligned to, and informed by its operational resource planning process, including all communications resources reporting within departments.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

As part of the current Service Level Agreement process, departments forecast their annual workplans in advance of the development of the budget. As indicated in the management response for Recommendation 6, Corporate Communications will be implementing a Program Support Integration Model in Q3 2012, to strengthen this process and align communications activities with priorities identified during the annual planning process.

5.4.2 Client Communication Costs

As noted, Corporate Communications has budgetary responsibility only for expenditures incurred within the Department (e.g., compensation costs for Corporate Communications staff). Beyond not having budgetary responsibility, Corporate Communications does not generally have knowledge of the communications expenditures incurred within departments with the exception of advertising expenditures which are being monitored by Corporate Communications as part of an advertising budget reduction initiative.

In preparing the 2011 budget, the City adopted a corporate wide \$800,000 reduction in budgeted advertising expenditures based on a revised approach of *"...using the various media to only advertise minimum legislative requirements for the size and frequency of these announcements and direct residents to the City's web site for full details."* "Legislative requirements" refers to By-law 2006-483 which requires the City to advertise in newspapers regarding road closures, permanent alterations to highways, licensing etc. Prospective changes to the by-law will remove the requirement for using print media. CC ensures compliance to the by-law via its monitoring of advertising expenditures.

This reduction was allocated across the budgets of a range of client organizations for 2011 and was communicated to Senior Management Committee in June 2011 in a memo that referenced *"Corporate Communications will continue to work with you to achieve the savings targets, by using alternate or more targeted methods such as earned media, web content, and community or specialty publications."*

In performing the "oversight" role referred to in the memo, Corporate Communications receives and approves all advertising invoices and monitors corporate wide advertising expenditures against budgeted expenditures via a consolidated monthly report.

Corporate Communications management representatives confirm that visibility into this financial information provides Corporate Communications with a more informed basis to provide clients with advice on optimal, cost effective advertising/promotion approaches.

With the exception of advertising expenditures, Corporate Communications does not currently provide any type of oversight or challenge function to client communication budgets and expenditures. In its role as an advisor on client communication approaches, Corporate Communications provides clients with strategic advice on, for example, optimal communication approaches to meet the goals of a communication initiative. A key area for consideration is the cost of any proposed communication initiative.

Corporate Communications knowledge of the costs of client communication activities would provide Corporate Communications with greater insight into planned client communication approaches. As confirmed with Corporate Communications representatives, access to this information would enable Corporate Communications to undertake more informed critical analysis in their provision of advice (i.e., is there a more cost effective approach that can be taken to achieving communication program objectives?). As was stated earlier, in our opinion, the Corporate Communications function should have the necessary authority to coordinate efforts in order to ensure consistency and avoid duplication and working at cross-purposes.

Recommendation 13

That, as part of enhanced strategic and operational planning processes employed with clients, Corporate Communications request access to and be provided with departmental communication budgets and expenditure information.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Corporate Communications will work with the Finance department to obtain departmental communication budgets and expenditure information for the 2013 fiscal year to inform strategic and operational planning, by Q1 2013.

5.4.3 Corporate Communications Chargeback Processes

Corporate Communications currently employs a chargeback system to recover a portion of costs for only two of its many service lines: advertising purchases and media monitoring services.

Advertising purchases - Under the current approach, a client that purchases advertising through Corporate Communications is charged a 5% surcharge on the invoiced amounts of advertising purchased on behalf of the client. This chargeback

mechanism was implemented as a means of recovering the resource costs associated with the Corporate Communications advertising coordination function.

For the 2010 fiscal year, approximately \$65,000 was recovered by Corporate Communications under this mechanism, which represents less than 1.5% of the Corporate Communications Department budget.

Media monitoring services – Corporate Communications currently provides media monitoring services, via a third party organization, to a range of clients including OC Transpo, Fire Services Branch, City Council and City departments.

On a monthly basis, Corporate Communications invoices only the following entities for media monitoring services provided:

- Ottawa Police Service;
- Fire Service Branch;
- Ottawa Paramedic Service;
- OC Transpo; and,
- City Council.

Each of these entities is invoiced based on the proportional “media mentions” for the entity versus total “media mentions” of the City and associated entities (e.g., for the period March 1, 2011 – May 31, 2011, Ottawa Paramedic Service was referenced in 145 media articles which represented 2.15% of the total City “media mentions”- Ottawa Paramedic Service is therefore allocated 2.15% of the total media monitoring costs).

This chargeback mechanism was implemented as a budgetary means of partially recovering costs associated with media monitoring for City entities that are not City departments. Based on a review of March 1 – May 31, 2011 documentation, we note that Corporate Communications recovered approximately 58% of the total monthly \$12,500 invoiced to the City by the third party provider of media monitoring services.

For the 2010 fiscal year, Corporate Communications recovered \$111,000, an amount that represents less than 3% of the departmental budget.

Based on discussion with Corporate Communications and Finance representatives, neither of the cost recovery mechanisms referenced have been formally documented, nor have these arrangements been appropriately rationalized as part of any comprehensive approach or policy to establish which services should be cost recovered.

Recommendation 14

That Corporate Communications evaluate its two existing cost recovery mechanisms in order to ensure their continued relevance and value within the Strategic Framework currently under development.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The two cost recovery mechanisms were examined in Q1 2012, and as a result, the advertising surcharge was eliminated. The media monitoring cost recovery will be further examined upon renewal of the service in Q1 2013.

5.5 Communications Plans/Strategies

Several different communications strategies for specific initiatives were examined as part of the audit, including:

- Source Separated Organics
- Woodroffe Watermain Replacement and Outdoor Water Ban
- Segregated Bike Lane
- Payment Card Industry Compliance
- Choosing Our Future
- Brain Injury Prevention
- OC Transpo Labour Disruption Contingency and
- Development Applications Search

In general, these strategies tend to be more tactical than strategic. Although target audiences are identified, there is often no specific mechanism identified for reaching each target (the plan for Brain Injury prevention is an exception to this as it is very detailed). Messages tend to be lengthy description of intent and process of the initiative being implemented rather than a concise message that target audiences are meant to be left with.

There is limited focus within CC and clients on evaluating the outcomes of communications activities. Little or no evaluation appears to take place as to whether one type of communications approach produces better results than another or whether these campaigns are still relevant to the City' priorities and goals.

5.5.1 Source Separated Organics Communications Strategy

A separate 2011 audit has been undertaken to examine the Green Bin (GB) contract in detail. To supplement this work, a more thorough review of the Green Bin Communications Strategy was incorporated into the broader Audit of Corporate Communications. The focus of this audit was an analysis of the research and marketing plans and activities put in place between June 2009 and July 2010 to support the Green Bin Implementation Plan and their potential effectiveness in promoting public participation in the program.

It should be noted that there was extensive staff turnover in Corporate Communications as well as in Solid Waste in the 2009 - 2010 audit period.

Although Corporate Communications was nominally the lead on this program, the documentation reviewed during the audit indicated that Solid Waste Management managed much of the communications with little involvement by Corporate Communications. At the time of the audit, it was anticipated that the City's new Communications Policy will ensure that in future, operational units must obtain the advice and approval of Corporate Communications in terms of planning and implementation. Management expects that this will address some of the weaknesses in the Green Bin communications planning and implementation process identified in this audit.

Because of the turnover of staff in the 2009–2010 period, corporate memory and file maintenance appears to have suffered. The observations in this audit are based on such information as was made available. In our view, regardless of staff turnover, retention of corporate documentation should be better managed.

We also consulted the cities of Halifax and Gatineau, which have been particularly successful in marketing their organics waste management programs. Both cities provided communications plans and discussed their best practices.

SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

Objective 1 - Research

To assess whether adequate market research was undertaken to ensure effective targeting of communications activities and events in order to promote participation and foster compliance with the requirements of the GB program during the launch period.

Objective 2 - Performance

To examine the plans, practices and monitoring/evaluation of the impact of communications activities, including:

- Existing plans and strategies;
- Media monitoring reports;
- Citizen feedback mechanisms like the web site, and 3-1-1 phone lines; and,
- Interviews with selected City Councillors on reaction from constituents about the GB program.

We were given the response to the City's Request for Proposals on *Consulting Services – City of Ottawa Green Bin Communications* submitted by the successful bidder, Fleishman-Hillard Canada Inc. (FH) that outlined a communications approach and tactics. The completed communications plan submitted to the City by the consultant on June 15, 2009 was also provided. No detailed roll out information or budget for the first phase of the communications campaign was provided.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the City is concerned about the extent to which the communications program contributed to increasing participation rates in the GB program over the initial launch period from June 2009 to July 2010, it is important to note the following:

“Efforts to change public behaviours rooted in decades (sic) of habit will inevitably meet with resistance, ranging from doubt to hostility” - Fleishman-Hillard Proposal to the City of Ottawa, June 5, 2009

“It’s going to take a long time to swing people over to a certain issue if they have to change behaviour.” - Terry O’Reilly, founder of the advertising firm “Pirate” and host of the CBC radio show “Age of Persuasion” in an article titled “The perception problem: The City’s campaign to change our ways on waste has been muddled at best.” - Ottawa Citizen April 9, 2011

Thus, this audit attempts to assess the extent to which communications efforts were professional, effective, reflecting best practices and so would be *likely* to contribute to promotion of participation over the longer term.

Research

The City of Ottawa *Communications Plan Framework and Template* states that City communications plans should “summarize key research and data at hand in order to have an understanding of the project, issue, program, etc. Elements of demographics, stakeholder group identification and perception analysis, an exhaustive media analysis including opinion pieces, results of focus group or surveys, internal City data and statistics...etc. will help to establish the current level of rigorous knowledge on the issue and could also trigger the need to recommend further research later on for certain or all elements in the plan.” This statement reflects conventional communications planning practice.

The Fleishman-Hillard RFP response stated “a key part of the (GB communications) plan will be understanding and appreciating stakeholder and audience motivators.”

The June 15, 2009 communications plan did not provide an assessment of the public and media environment within which the GB communications activities would be introduced.

Public Opinion Research

The June 10, 2009 Report to the Planning and Environment Committee cited six opinion research and communications initiatives undertaken by the City between 2002 and 2008. None of the research information was cited in the June 15, 2009 communications plan. Management indicated that this research information was used in the communications plan, even though it was not cited. We are of the

opinion that this information should have been cited since it was referred to in the June 10 report to the Planning and Environment Committee.

The most recent, a survey by NANOS Research, commissioned by the City in December 2008, made a number of recommendations about the type of communications that would be effective, based on public opinion expressed in their study. The research showed that women were more likely to support the expansion of the current recycling program than men.

Among NANOS recommendations:

- Education strategies and tactics should...highlight the impact of the GB program in reducing landfill.
- Communications should focus on the positive side of composting and using the Green Bin program while addressing possible resident concerns (about) ...odour and fruit flies.
- The City should nurture the public's support and enthusiasm for recycling by congratulating residents for their commitment to recycling. ... By recognizing each individual's effort, it can further improve participation and support for the program. Communications programs should also consider championing women in the advertising.
- Central to the long-term success of the program will be the ability to educate current non-recyclers. This could be done through further research including focus groups to explore challenges and educational opportunities.

None of these recommendations were cited in the GB communications plan, although the strategy that was put forward contained some concepts similar to those recommended by the research. The focus on women as a key target audience was not mentioned in the plan.

Focus group testing is a standard practice in developing communications products and campaigns. The City of Gatineau, which launched its Bac Brun/Brown Bin program in May 2010, began its communications planning process with a series of focus groups at the end of November and early December 2009 to determine levels of awareness about organic recycling. The groups also helped the City identify the most effective communications tools to inform and educate the public and test their advertising campaign.

Media Analysis

Corporate Communications maintains a daily inventory of media coverage of key issues including the organic waste disposal program which would have provided the background for analysis.

There is no evidence that the communications plan and activities were adjusted to address these public criticisms as was called for in the communications plan.

The City of Halifax communications plan provided an assessment of media coverage of its organic waste management *before* the green bins were distributed. There was considerable negative coverage and the City used this analysis to “refocus their strategy, to develop key messages and to launch a campaign promoting the positive aspects of the program” in time for introduction of the bins themselves.

Recommendation 15

That City communications plans/strategies, especially those aimed at changing public behaviour, be based on a thorough analysis of the environment within which the communications initiative will be launched.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The requirement to incorporate an analysis of the environment into communications efforts is included in the Communications Policy. The policy will be finalized and distributed in Q2 2012.

Supporting Environmental Analysis Guidelines will be developed to reflect the need for public opinion research and media monitoring to be tracked throughout the implementation of a communications plan and readjustments to be made if required. This guideline will be complete by Q4 2012. The Communications Planning Template will also be updated to incorporate the requirement by Q4 2012. This will include a scan of past and ongoing media coverage around an issue.

PERFORMANCE

Strategic Considerations

The Green Bin launch communications plan listed five strategic considerations, specifically:

- “The Green Bin program is one of many waste diversion initiatives within the RETHINK garbage brand”
- “Effective use of existing resources and budget”
- “Awareness, interest and understanding steadily increase over time”
- “Ottawa is a City with great geographic and community diversity”
- “This campaign will focus on minimizing the amount of waste it produces”

However, as noted earlier, the plan did not provide an assessment of the public and media environment. It simply stated that “tactics include sufficient flexibility to be adapted for specific community needs.”

The evidence from media reports shows that at least one major target of communications efforts - the rural audience - was not well-served by the initial communications tactics. Two rural audiences exist: Rural-Villages and Rural-Remote. The Green Bin program was not rolled out to the remote rural constituency; however, the rural villages were part of the audience for the communication strategy. A Fact Sheet addressing ‘Rural Issues’ was provided but it was undated and there was no indication as to whether this was a response to negative media coverage of the rural issue. It did not include a strategy on how this information was to be disseminated to rural audiences.

Communications Goals and Objectives

The communications plan cited eight objectives with the last being to “increase participation in waste diversion efforts, thereby extending the life of the landfill.” In contrast, the City of Gatineau established three objectives, with sub-objectives under each. They were to:

- Inform residents
- Create awareness
- Change behaviour in favour of organic waste reduction

Recommendation 16

That City communications plans have no more than three objectives, all of which “should be as precise and measurable as possible in order to ensure measurement and increase mutual accountability” (as described in the City’s *Communications Planning Template*).

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The Communications Planning Template will be updated to reflect the requirement for no more than three objectives in communications plans. The updated template will be made available on the City’s Intranet by Q4 2012.

Audiences

As stated in the City’s *Communications Plan Framework and Template*, “Defining the target audience as ‘the general public’ or ‘everyone’ should be avoided as much as possible.” In the case of the Green Bin, audience segmentation was rudimentary, particularly with respect to residents, who were simply lumped together as one homogeneous target. As recommended in the NANOS study, women should have been a particular target audience.

Recommendation 17

That, when all citizens are affected by a City initiative, the City break out target audiences which might need tailored communications attention (e.g., new Canadians, rural residents, seniors, women, etc.).

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The requirement to identify and delineate strategies, tools and messages for communicating with target audiences is included in the new Communications Policy. The policy will be finalized and distributed in Q2 2012.

Benchmarking and Measurement

The communications plan listed a number of benchmarking and measurement activities to “ensure that communications efforts are achieving program goals” and that “communications efforts can be refined and adjusted in a timely way.”

Among the activities to be tracked and measured were:

- Earned media – tone and content
- Social media – traffic tone and content
- 3-1-1 – number, types and topics of calls received
- ottawa.ca – number, types and topics of inquiries

We were unable to obtain reports on results of this tracking from the City to assess public and media reaction. There is no evidence that adjustments to communications activities were made during the audit period.

Recommendation 18

That all financial and human resources be identified to carry out benchmarking and performance measurement activities included in any communications plan.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The requirement to set out operational needs and resource allocations, and the requirement to measure the effectiveness of communications programs and campaigns is included in the new Communications Policy. The policy will be finalized and distributed in Q2 2012.

The Communications Planning Template will also be updated to reflect the requirement by Q4 2012.

Core Messages

The messages proposed in the communications plan were numerous and detailed, including lengthy lists of what could be put in to the bins rather than more general and easily understood guidance. Information was also included about statistics and experiences in other cities that would be of limited interest to most of the target audiences.

It is vital that the city chose and repeat a simple message on its website, via Twitter and Facebook, at public meetings, in schools and on posters at community centres.

Recommendation 19

That core messages be simple and consistent for all target audiences; that they should be tested before being made public and that adjustments to address the interests of particular audiences be added as needed.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The Communications Planning Template will be updated by Q4 2012 to reflect the requirement for core messages to be simple and consistent and will include detailed criteria for testing messages.

The Environmental Analysis Guideline will be created by Q4 2012, which will reflect the need for public opinion research to be tracked throughout the implementation of a communications plan.

Online Tactics

The communications plan proposed to produce “a thorough analysis of current social networks, blogs and websites” and then described a series of activities to take advantage of these sites for later phases of the campaign. The audit was unable to find evidence of this research. The plan also called for creation of a ‘branded micro-site’ to complement the City’s main web site, ottawa.ca. It was to ‘house social and interactive features the City of Ottawa site can’t’. We were not able to locate this site as its content was rolled into ottawa.ca and integrated with existing information pertaining to all waste collection. In addition, the plan did not identify who would actually implement the online tactics.

There were several interesting Green Bin postings on YouTube however, including an excellent video on how residents can use newspapers to make bin liners. Nevertheless, not all residents go to YouTube for municipal information and we found no easy link from the City’s Green Bin site to the YouTube video as it was embedded in the existing web content. This is a good example of the type of information that should have been included in the communications plan.

Recommendation 20

That the human and financial resources be identified for any online tactics before the plan is approved.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The requirement to set out operational needs and resource allocations is included in the new Communications Policy. The policy will be finalized and distributed in Q2 2012.

The Social Media Guidelines also address the requirement for identifying human and financial resources as part of any social media/web 2.0 initiative. The Social Media Guidelines will be complete by Q3 2012.

As part of the annual planning process, resource identification will be a cornerstone. Service level agreements will be created with departments based on the identified resource requirements of planned projects.

Media Tactics

Although the communications plan proposed proactive media engagement, the pre-launch period saw considerable media criticism of the City's communications efforts:

"Green bin program badly explained..." - Ottawa Citizen, Nov. 15, 2009.

"Mere shakeup won't fix City's garbled message; failure to grasp communications strategy requires new approach" - Ottawa Citizen, Nov. 29, 2009.

"Green and confused; who knew bin was so complex" - Ottawa Sun, Dec. 1, 2009.

"Bins face rocky rural road, Councillor says trash program PR poorly done" - Ottawa Sun, Dec. 6, 2009.

"Get green bin message out, Councillors say; rural Ottawans not being given full scoop on benefits" - Ottawa Citizen, Dec. 11, 2009.

We noted that at later stages of the GB campaign, in the post audit period, media coverage began to become more positive, particularly as media relations began to focus more on community newspapers serving various sectors of the city:

"City encourages schools to go green" - Ottawa East EMC, Feb. 3, 2011.

"City talks trash with residents" - Ottawa South EMC, Jan. 20, 2011.

““City’s waste diversion rates continue to rise with Green Bin” - *Orleans EMC, Aug. 5, 2011* (Note: this article was written by a City official and published in the EMC).

“Tide turning for battered green bin (despite bad selling job by the city...” - *Ottawa Sun, April 11, 2011.*

Recommendation 21

That a sound media analysis be developed for incorporation into communications plans and updated on a continuing basis so that messaging and media strategies can be adjusted as needed.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

The requirement for environmental analysis including media monitoring is included in the new Communications Policy. The policy will be finalized and distributed in Q2 2012.

An RFP will be issued in Q4 2012 to select a media monitoring firm to provide monitoring and analysis. The features for the new media monitoring service will be subject to financial availability of funds requested as part of 2013 budget and are dependent on approval.

Advertising

We found no evidence that the advertising campaign was focus group tested, or evaluated after it had been launched to determine impact and allow for adjustment.

Recommendation 22

That, in the case of a major communications plan, advertising be focus group tested before launch and evaluated periodically to ensure it continues to meet operational goals.

Management Response

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Guidelines to support the effective roll-out of communications plans, including how to create, implement and measure their effectiveness in accordance with leading practices, including focus group testing and other research methods, will be created by Q1 2013.

In conclusion, the issues identified with the Source Separated Organics communications strategy can be summarized as follows:

- the target audience(s) were not properly identified;
- the most effective methods for reaching this target audience(s) were not adequately assessed and pursued;
- the strategic messaging to these target audience(s) was not developed; and,
- the communications initiatives utilized were never evaluated to determine which were effective and which were not to guide future efforts.

As was stated earlier, the Corporate Communications group was essentially not involved in the Source Separated Organics initiative. In our view, this experience demonstrates the implications of the broader issues raised in this audit of the need to clearly identify the mandate, role and authority of CC in the future.

6 POTENTIAL SAVINGS

At the time of the audit, Corporate Communications had 51 FTEs and a total budget of \$4.4 million. In addition, management identified another 11 FTEs within various departments whose duties are 100% dedicated to communications and another 9 whose duties are 5-90% communications related. The prorated salary cost of these FTEs is \$1.05 million. Management has indicated that the 11 FTEs do not duplicate the efforts or overlap the services of Corporate Communications. These FTEs are responsible for activities that are outside of Corporate Communications' mandate. Examples of activities include creating internal departmental communications and liaising with departmental content experts in the preliminary development of communication products.

Until the City clarifies the overall mandate, role and responsibilities for CC, it is difficult to determine the true level of resources required to deliver communications support and services. However, based on the level of communications resources scattered throughout the City, it is reasonable to assume that there is the potential for savings in streamlining the current structure.

7 CONCLUSION

Since amalgamation in 2001, the City's Corporate Communications function has undergone numerous changes in leadership, structure and mandate. As a result, management and Council have developed a lack of confidence and satisfaction with the services provided. The Corporate Communications Department is currently in a state of transition as its new leadership is in the process of developing a Strategic Framework and Communications Policy. Significant management attention and effort remain to ensure that this strategic foundation is completed in a timely manner, communicated broadly and endorsed by City managers and other impacted stakeholders.

In addition to the strategic perspective, management attention and project resources will be required to ensure the development and consistent implementation of enhanced management processes and tools (e.g., enhanced performance measurement framework, operational workplans linked to resource allocations linked to financial budgets, etc.) to ensure effective and efficient planning, deployment and monitoring of Corporate Communications resources.

Currently, the City has a number of communications resources that report internally within various departments. This is common practice within most large municipalities. However, in our opinion, the Corporate Communications function should have the necessary authority to coordinate efforts in order to ensure consistency and avoid duplication and working at cross-purposes.

It is important to note that during the course of the audit, CC management was in the process of developing a Strategic Communications Framework and Communications Policy for the City of Ottawa that defines the City's overall policy on internal and external communications and identifies accountability and responsibility for its various elements. This is similar to the communications policies that exist at other levels of government (e.g., Canada and Alberta). We are supportive of this initiative and understand that by the time this report is presented to Council the Framework and Policy will be in place. As such, progress toward addressing many of the issues raised in the audit should be well underway by that time.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to express our appreciation for the cooperation and assistance afforded the audit team by management.

APPENDIX A: DEPARTMENTAL FTES WITH COMMUNICATIONS DUTIES

Title	Branch	Department	% Comm.	Portfolio
Coord, Strategic Support	Policy & Planning Branch	Finance Dept.	5%	CMO
Coord, Strategic Support	Information, Security & Prj Srvc Branch	Information Technology Services	10%	City Ops
Coord, Strategic Support	Information, Security & Prj Srvc Branch	Information Technology Services	10%	City Ops
Coord, Strategic Support		Community & Social Services Dept.	25%	City Ops
Strategic Initiatives Prj Officer	Housing Services Branch	Community & Social Services Dept.	30%	City Ops
Arts Comm & Graphics Assistant	Cultural and Heritage Services	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	50%	City Ops
Coord, Dept Communications	By-law & Regulatory Services Branch	Emergency and Protective Services Dept.	75%	City Ops
Coord, Strategic Support	Quality and Standards	Service Ottawa	90%	City Ops
Specialist, Marketing and Communication	Client Services	Information Technology Services	90%	City Ops
Arts Comm & Graphics Assistant	Cultural and Heritage Services	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	100%	City Ops
Arts Comm & Graphics Assistant	Cultural and Heritage Services	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	100%	City Ops
Communications Assistant	Rail Business Services	Rail Implementation	100%	ISCS
Coord, Dept Communications	Business Support Branch	Community & Social Services Dept.	100%	City Ops
Coord, Dept Communications	Citizen Centric Services	Service Ottawa	100%	City Ops
Coord, Dept Communications	Citizen Centric Services	Service Ottawa	100%	City Ops
Coord, Dept Communications	Citizen Centric Services	Service Ottawa	100%	City Ops
Prg Mgr, Rail Communication & Outreach	Rail Business Services	Rail Implementation	100%	ISCS
Specialist, Marketing and Communication	Cultural and Heritage Services	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	100%	City Ops
Specialist, Marketing and Communication	Cultural and Heritage Services	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	100%	City Ops
Strategic Initiatives Prj Officer	Rail Business Services	Rail Implementation - Vacant but to be filled	100%	ISCS

Total Prorated Salary Costs

\$1.05 million