

FORMAL REPORT

To:	Chair Stratthdee and Members of Strategic Priorities Committee
Prepared by:	Brett O'Reilly, Corporate Communications and Events Manager
Date of Meeting:	19 September 2017
Subject:	COR 36-2017 Corporate Communications Plan Implementation Strategy

PURPOSE

This report presents information on three options for implementing the Town's *Corporate Communications Plan*.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT COR 36-2017 Corporate Communications Plan Implementation Strategy report be received as information; and,

THAT the Strategic Priorities Committee recommend to Council:

THAT that staff be directed to prepare the 2018 budget reflecting Corporate Communications Plan Implementation Option Two as presented in staff report COR 36-2017.

BACKGROUND

Within the Corporation of the Town of St. Marys, the responsibility for delivering internal and external messages and planning municipal events lies within the Corporate Communications and Events Department. This team includes a full-time Corporate Communications and Events Manager, a full-time Corporate Communications Specialist and a seasonal Corporate Communications and Events Assistant. The latter role is filled by a post-secondary student who works full time between April and August each year.

This primarily two person team executes a range of tasks related to the proactive dissemination of municipal information:

- **Media relations:** Drafts media releases and invitations; arranges photo opportunities; acts as a liaison for journalists and provides training, coaching and key messages to staff
- **Advertising:** Advises staff in all departments of advertising opportunities; books, designs and places print and digital advertisements
- **Graphic design and printing:** Designs and prints corporate materials; outsources projects to preapproved vendors; creates and disseminates Town-branded templates
- **Social media:** Guides and populates Town social media accounts; establishes guidelines; oversees broader social media channels
- **Website:** Drafts and manages content for the Town website; works with internal and external stakeholders to ensure information is accurate
- **Issues management and crisis communications:** Provides coaching and guidance to senior staff and Council when faced with issues or crises

This team also manages three major annual events (Stonetown Heritage Festival, St. Marys Car Show and Festive Winter Lights), leads many one-time celebrations, both planned and un-planned or spontaneous/short-turnaround (Canada 150, grand re-openings, ribbon cuttings, etc.) and assists with the promotion of other department-specific events (open houses, public input sessions, etc.).

Even with the size and breadth of this portfolio, this team has managed to make strides in improving the Town's communications over the past 18 months. Since 2016, the Town has moved away from reactive communications towards Council's strategic goal of proactive, clear and consistent messaging about municipal projects and initiatives. The result has been positive feedback from internal and external audiences and a growth in engagement from both parties.

This shift toward providing timely, accurate information to key stakeholders was driven by the *Town of St. Marys' Strategic Plan Revision and Update*. The plan places communications and marketing among its six strategic pillars and makes a number of recommendations for enhancing the Town's communications efforts:

- Improve **engagement** and build trust by communicating relevant municipal information and informing residents as stakeholders in key decisions
- Use **positioning** to improve the Town's reputation and establish a more prominent regional presence
- Leverage **social media** to improve public engagement and bilateral communication
- Develop a **media relations** policy to ensure accurate information is provided directly to media sources
- **Promote community events** and establishing new or re-branded events to broaden the Town's appeal and increase its audience

A commitment to improved communications is also expressed in various ways within the plan's five additional pillars. Many of the plan's strategic priorities include the development of new municipal policies and strategies; others suggest the building of new facilities or amenities. Underlying each of these initiatives is a focus on proactively communicating, consulting and engaging with stakeholders to ensure community buy-in.

In 2016/2017, Council directed staff to act on the strategic plan's recommendation to "develop a comprehensive and fully integrated communications plan." With help from the Letter M Marketing Group and extensive stakeholder feedback, that plan is now complete.

Like the *Strategic Plan Revision and Update*, the *Corporate Communications Plan* is an actionable and measurable document. Using direct feedback from internal and external audiences, it provides several overarching strategic directions to help the Town move toward conversational, interactive and open communications:

- **Emphasize electronic communications** while maintaining traditional tactics
- **Focus on traditional public and media relations** activities (rather than paid advertising)
- **Pursue centralized communications** as much as possible
- Ensure **sustained, strategic communications through planning**
- **Communicate in layers**
- **Promote a brand voice/identity**
- Enhance **internal communications**

The plan also identifies the specific tools and tactics that will empower the Town to deliver relevant, fulsome and impactful information, engage with residents, staff and stakeholders, and increase awareness of programs and services. It provides direction for achieving the priorities set out in the *Strategic Plan Revision and Update*, including those specific to communications and marketing, and

those that rely on engagement and transparency for success. The *Corporate Communications Plan* was presented to Council at the May 16, 2017 Strategic Priorities Committee meeting, where the following resolutions were moved by Councillor Van Galen and seconded by Councillor Pope:

- THAT COR 22-2017 Corporate Communications Plan report be received for discussion; and,*
- THAT the Strategic Priorities Committee recommend to Council that Council approves the Town of St. Marys Corporate Communications Plan;*
- THAT staff be directed to develop an implementation strategy for the Corporate Communications Plan with low, medium and high costs for implementation.*

Following Council's direction, staff undertook a thorough review of the *Corporate Communications Plan*, the associated costs and the original four-year implementation timeline. This was followed by an examination of current departmental budgets, as well as the tactics and priorities outlined in the Town's strategic plan.

Based on this research, staff have created three implementation strategies for Council's consideration. This report will examine each of the three options in detail and recommend the most beneficial and cost-effective model for implementing the *Corporate Communications Plan*.

REPORT

Having a well-researched, community tailored communications strategy will help the Town, Council, and administration meet growing public and societal expectations for clear, transparent, and timely communications from their government. But, as with any new initiative, there are certain costs associated with the implementation of the *Corporate Communications Plan*.

As per Council's direction, staff have created three implementation strategies that provide low, medium and high cost options for achieving the goals of the *Corporate Communications Plan*. Below is a breakdown of the three implementation options. Within each section is a description of the plan's deliverables and how they will be achieved; an explanation of associated costs; and a proposed timeline for each implementation option. At the end of each section is an in-depth analysis of the positive and negative aspects of each option.

A detailed chart demonstrating each implementation option is attached as Appendix A.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTION ONE: MEDIUM COST SCENARIO

Sample of Deliverables

INTERNAL AUDIENCE	EXTERNAL AUDIENCE
Updated brand guidelines and templates	Enhanced media relations; reduced print advertising
New policies (social media, media relations, public engagement, email)	Updated and enhanced Town website
Staff newsletter	Digital e-newsletter
Updated company drive that functions as intranet	Annual satisfaction survey
Mandatory departmental meetings and quarterly communications planning meetings	Partnership development with community groups
Annual summary and communications presentation to Council	Evaluation of opportunities for electronic signage
	Exploration of video and app development

Execution

- Timeline for completion of tasks will be eight years (2017 to 2024)
- Staffing levels and event delivery will remain status quo

- External consultants will be hired to complete specific projects and tactics (i.e. training on new policies; programming for website; graphic design for print materials; video and app development, etc.)

Cost

Below is a summary of the one-time costs associated with this implementation option. These figures represent new expenses that would require additional budget, over and above what the department currently spends on its communications efforts.

Although this model is presented as Option One, it should be noted that this is **not** the lowest cost option of the three. Because of this model's reliance on external consultants, it is more expensive than Option Two, making it the medium cost implementation option.

CATEGORY/ITEM	COST
External trainers	\$3,600 - \$4,500
External programmers	\$14,800 - \$16,000
External graphic designer	\$16,500 - \$17,000*
External videographer	\$1,600 - \$2,400
External signage consultant	\$15,000 - \$20,000
Total cost of new initiatives:	\$51,500 - \$59,900
Average annual cost of implementation:	\$6,500 - \$7,500 annually, over eight years (in addition to current budget)

*\$15,000 of this expense would be dedicated to the design of the annual report in 2024. This would become an annual cost from that point forward.

Analysis

PROS	CONS
No additional funding required for new staff	Limits ability of staff to support other departments during peak periods (tourism season, construction, etc.)
Outsourcing of work will provide some additional time for staff to implement communications plan	Implementation timeline doubles from four years to eight; risk of tactics/research becoming irrelevant
	Many outsourced tasks could be completed internally in a more efficient and cost-effective manner
	Tasks that cannot be outsourced (partner/relationship building) may be delayed or left incomplete
	Events will not grow; current events may need to be consolidated

As previously noted, the Corporate Communications and Events Department is currently made up of two full-time and one seasonal staff member. Even with a heavy workload and a high demand for internal and external communications support, this team has already accomplished a number of the goals laid out in the communications plan, while simultaneously managing and/or assisting with several successful Town events.

Given these facts, it may appear that the current staff complement is well equipped to execute the remaining deliverables of the communications plan, while continuing to manage municipal events. However, an observation of the Communications Plan is that this that these “results will likely soon plateau as reasonable efficiencies are realized.” This plateau was experienced in 2017 with the addition of the Canada 150 celebration to the Town’s event inventory. As successful as Canada 150 was, its success came at a cost, with the lack of a communications campaign to inform the public of the Town Hall landscape feature being a prime example.

If the status quo option is chosen by Council, a small, select number of the tactics recommended in the *Corporate Communications Plan* will be completed in the fall and winter, with a seasonal stall in the spring and summer as staff shift their focus to events. The timeline of this pattern is an issue on

its own. The spring and summer months bring heavy demands for communications support, with tourism, construction and recreation programs at their peak. Having communications staff tied up with events during this time leaves little opportunity to provide any communications support to summer projects beyond what is absolutely necessary. This is especially unfortunate when it comes to tourism and recreation programs, as the draft Recreation Master Plan has identified that effective marketing and communications could help these areas generate increased revenue.

Under the status quo model, the timeline for implementing the *Corporate Communications Plan* doubles, from four years to eight years. The extended timeline for implementation could prove to be problematic. The *Corporate Communications Plan* is based on present-day industry standards, best practices and feedback from current residents and employees of St. Marys. It also relies heavily on electronic communications and new technology. Given the rate at which trends and opinions change and technology advances, many of the recommended tactics could become irrelevant by the time they are implemented.

Because this implementation option does not include additional budget for staff, it relies heavily on the use of external consultants, designers, videographers and programmers. Outsourcing some of the more advanced projects will allow current staff more time to focus on day-to-day projects, while ensuring the implementation of the communications plan. It is worth noting, though, that many of these tasks could be completed internally in a more efficient and less costly manner under a different staffing model.

This model may also inhibit or delay staff's ability to complete some tasks that simply cannot be outsourced. Both the strategic plan and the communications plan emphasize the importance of building partnerships with neighbouring municipalities, community groups, business owners and other Town staff. The potential benefits of these relationships cannot be overstated, but they take time to develop – time that may not available under this staffing model.

If this option is selected, staff will continue to manage and execute the current line-up of municipal events, as required. However, the status quo model does not provide the necessary human resources to expand on current event offerings as contemplated in Council's strategic plan. There may also be a need to consider consolidating some events to maintain current service levels while also implementing the *Corporate Communications Plan*.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTION TWO: LOW COST SCENARIO

Sample of Deliverables

INTERNAL AUDIENCE	EXTERNAL AUDIENCE
Updated brand guidelines and templates	Enhanced media relations; reduced print advertising
New policies (social media, media relations, public engagement, email)	Updated and enhanced Town website
Staff newsletter	Digital e-newsletter
Updated company drive that functions as intranet	Annual satisfaction survey
Mandatory departmental meetings and quarterly communications meetings	Partnership development with community groups
Annual summary and communications presentation to Council	Evaluation of opportunities for electronic signage
	Exploration of video and app development

Execution

- Timeline for completion of tasks will be six years (2017 to 2022)
- Seasonal student position will be replaced with year-round, part-time Event Coordinator (two year contract) through reallocation of existing funds

- Majority of deliverables will be completed in-house, with external consultants hired only for complex or highly technical projects (i.e. app development, sign installation)
- Current municipal event offerings will be improved and/or re-branded, as per the strategic plan

Cost

Below is a summary of the one-time costs associated with this implementation option. These figures represent new expenses that would require additional budget, over and above what the department currently spends on its communications efforts.

Staffing is not included as a cost in the chart below because the hourly wage of the part-time Events Coordinator will not represent a new or additional cost to the existing approved budget. Instead, funds from the current communications and events budget will be reallocated to cover the majority of this cost:

- **Part-time wages:** The former summer student's wages will account for a portion of the Event Coordinator's annual earnings.
- **Advertising:** The Town continues to rely less on print advertising and more on media releases, as recommended in the communications plan. As a result, a portion of the existing advertising budget can be freed up to support the part-time Events Coordinator. A larger staffing complement will also allow current staff the opportunity to explore less expensive and more effective advertising options, while also generating more content in-house.
- **Events:** A small portion of the current event budget will be used to supplement staffing costs.

Additional funds will be transferred from lesser budget lines to ensure that this shift in staffing does not increase the department's annual budget. This employee could also be hired on a two year, contractual basis to reduce any risk associated with this move.

Although this implementation model is presented as Option Two, it should be noted that this is the most inexpensive option of the three. Because of this model's modest staffing increase and reduced reliance on external consultants, it is less expensive than Option One and Option Three, making it the low cost implementation option.

CATEGORY/ITEM	COST
External videographer	\$1,600 - \$2,400
External graphic designer	\$10,000*
External programmer	\$10,000
External signage consultant	\$15,000 - \$20,000
Total cost of new initiatives:	\$36,600 - \$42,400
Average annual cost of implementation:	\$6,100 - \$7,000 annually, over six years (in addition to current budget)

*\$10,000 of this expense would be dedicated to the design of the annual report in 2024. This would become an annual cost from that point forward.

Analysis

PROS	CONS
No additional or new funding required for new staff	Seasonal student position would be eliminated in favour of year-round, part-time Event Coordinator
Would allow current staff to focus on implementation of plan and day-to-day communications support	Part-time Event Coordinator may not be able to add new events at the rate anticipated by the strategic plan
Would eliminate annual process of hiring, on-boarding and training seasonal staff	Public and other Town staff may see this as a new hire, instead of a reallocation of funds; could create negative optics
Would improve efficiency and consistency of event management	Having a year-round staff member instead of a seasonal student may imply that the Town is prepared to manage

	and execute new events
Part-time Event Coordinator would have time to develop key partnerships	Recruiting for a part-time, contract position may present a challenge; pool of applicants could be limited
Part-time Event Coordinator could grow and potentially re-brand current events, and assist with promotion of third-party events	
Many tactics recommended in the communications plan could be done in-house	
Would allow current staff to build relationships internally and externally to improve two-way communication and potentially increase revenue	
Most inexpensive option	

The second option for implementation provides a middle-of-the-road model for staffing at no additional cost to the existing approved budget. Most notably, it includes the hiring of a part-time Event Coordinator (on a contract basis) who would be responsible for organizing and executing the municipal events that are currently managed by the department. Not only would this action allow current staff to focus on proactive communications and the implementation of the communications plan, it can also be done at no cost to the municipality. As mentioned, approved funds in the current communications and events budget would be re-allocated to cover the annual salary of this new employee.

This move would see the elimination of the full-time seasonal student position in favour of a year-round, part-time Event Coordinator. While the Town has had the good fortune of attracting talented, ambitious students in the past, an Event Coordinator with expertise in fundraising, sponsorship and volunteer coordination would be an invaluable addition to the team. While students require frequent oversight and approval of a superior, an experienced Event Coordinator could work more independently, freeing up current staff to focus on communications. Further, hiring this year-round employee would eliminate the time-consuming tasks of recruiting, onboarding and training a new student each year.

Having a part-time Event Coordinator would also help to maintain consistency in the way that events are executed. Having one individual run the events year over year would allow them to make changes and improvements based on past experience. In addition, this employee would have the time to build strong relationships with vendors and volunteers, which would contribute to the future success of the events. The Events Coordinator could also work toward the creation of a stronger, more fulsome sponsorship program for events with a goal of generating revenue for the Town.

With the addition of this part-time employee, the timeline for implementing the *Corporate Communications Plan* is reduced from eight years to six years. Despite the change in staffing, this option is also the most inexpensive of the three. Whereas Option One relies heavily on outsourcing, Option Two relies on internal resources to complete many of the projects recommended by the communications plan in-house. This approach is more cost effective because the rate for internal resources is less than that of a consultant. It would also save the time and effort it takes to gather estimates, negotiate prices, share files and make edits to materials provided by a consultant.

More importantly, this model would allow staff to complete the tasks laid out in the *Corporate Communications Plan* that cannot – and should not – be outsourced. As previously mentioned, both the strategic plan and the communications plan place heavy emphasis on building internal and external partnerships in order to improve proactive, two-way communication. For example, the communications plan recommends that staff meet with all departments on a quarterly basis to discuss upcoming communications, marketing and promotional needs. Having an ongoing dialogue with all departments would help to promote proactive internal communication and ensure that information of corporate significance is being shared across all departments.

One area that would benefit significantly from increased communications support is recreation. As noted in the draft Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan, much more needs to be done to

market the programs and amenities offered at the Pyramid Recreation Centre (PRC). With the help of an added staff member, the Communications Department could use its internal expertise to develop an enhanced promotional plan for the PRC, which could improve its reputation, build awareness about its offerings and ultimately result in increased revenue through greater participation in programs.

While there are many benefits to the Option Two implementation model, it is not without its limitations. First and foremost, staff are cognizant of public sentiment that municipal institutions are overstaffed. This perceived addition to the Town's staffing complement could create poor optics among the public and within the organization. However, it is crucial to note that the part-time Event Coordinator would not be a brand new position, but a re-structuring of the seasonal student position. In this particular instance, a staffing model change is being proposed at no additional cost to the existing approved budget, and to close an identified plateau in the Town's service delivery that will prevent Council from achieving its strategic goals for communications and events.

From a service delivery perspective, with only 21 hours of work per week, the Event Coordinator's ability to introduce new events at the scale and pace suggested by the strategic plan may also be somewhat limited. However, he/she may have the time to "re-brand or re-envision an existing event..." as contemplated in the Strategic Plan. Likewise, there are many ways in which the Town's current events could grow and improve with the assistance of a dedicated employee. If time permits, this employee could also provide promotional assistance to the many community groups that frequently contact the Town for help in spreading the word about their events.

On average, the summer student works 650 hours each year (35 hours per week from late April to late August). The part-time Event Coordinator, by comparison, would work approximately 1000 hours per year (21 hours per week, year-round). Given that this increase in working hours would come at no additional cost to the municipality, this change is presented as a creative, practical and responsible approach that would address the growing demands for improved communications and enhanced municipal events.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTION THREE: HIGH COST SCENARIO

Sample of Deliverables

INTERNAL AUDIENCE	EXTERNAL AUDIENCE
Updated brand guidelines and templates	Enhanced media relations; reduced print advertising
New policies (social media, media relations, public engagement email)	Review, update and expansion of Town website
Staff newsletter	Digital e-newsletter
Updated company drive that functions as intranet	Annual satisfaction survey
Mandatory departmental meetings and quarterly communications meetings	Partnership development with community groups
Annual summary and communications presentation to Council	Evaluation of opportunities for electronic signage
	Exploration of video and app development

Execution

- Timeline for completion of tasks will be four years (2017 to 2020)
- As recommended by the communications plan, an additional full-time employee would be added
 - The seasonal student position will be replaced with year-round, full-time Event Coordinator (two year contract) through a combination of existing and new funds
- Majority of deliverables will be completed in-house, with external consultants hired only for complex or highly technical projects (i.e. app development, sign installation)
- Current municipal event offerings will be improved and/or re-branded; new events that highlight the Town's key amenities will be added, as per the strategic plan

Cost

Below is a summary of the costs associated with this implementation option. These figures represent new expenses that would require additional budget, over and above what the department currently spends on its communications efforts. The numbers in the chart are one-time costs, unless otherwise noted.

Only a portion of the cost of staffing is included in the chart below. This is because funds from the following lines in the current communications and events budget would be reallocated to cover a portion of the Event Coordinator's salary:

- **Part-time wages:** The former summer student's wages will account for a portion of the Event Coordinator's annual earnings.
- **Advertising:** The Town continues to rely less on print advertising and more on media releases, as recommended in the communications plan. As a result, a portion of the existing advertising budget can be freed up to support the part-time Events Coordinator. A larger staffing complement will also allow current staff the opportunity to explore less expensive and more effective advertising options, while also generating more content in-house.

While this reallocation will cover part of the annual cost of the Event Coordinator, some supplemental funds will need to be added to the budget, if this implementation option is selected. This employee could also be hired on a two year, contractual basis to reduce any risk associated with this move.

This model represents the high cost implementation option for two reasons. Although the addition of a full-time Event Coordinator will allow for further reduction of consultant costs, these savings are not sufficient to cover the additional funds needed for staffing. A more robust event budget will also be required if this new employee is expected to grow and develop new festivals and celebrations. These additional costs are reflected in the chart below.

CATEGORY/ITEM	COST
External videographer	\$1,600 - \$2,400
External graphic designer	\$7,500*
External programmer	\$10,000
External signage consultant	\$15,000 - \$20,000
Event expenses	\$1,300 (annually, starting in 2018)
Staffing (unfunded balance over/above existing seasonal wages)	\$31,000 - \$35,000 (annually, starting in 2018)
Total cost of new initiatives:	\$131,000 - \$148,800
Average annual cost of implementation:	\$32,750 - \$37,200 annually, over four years (in addition to current budget)

*\$7,500 of this expense would be dedicated to the design of the annual report in 2024. This would become an annual cost from that point forward.

Analysis

PROS	CONS
Would allow current staff to implement the communications plan within the original timeline and ensure that tactics remain relevant	Most expensive option
Full-time Event Coordinator could accomplish the event-specific goals outlined in the strategic plan, within the specified time frames (i.e. re-brand existing events, add new events that highlight key amenities, etc.)	Seasonal student position would be eliminated in favour of year-round, full-time Event Coordinator
Full-time Event Coordinator could assist with improving approach to volunteers, fundraising and third-party events	Significant increase in communications and events budget and addition of new staff member could create negative optics
Many tactics from the communications plan could be done in-house instead of being outsourced	Recruiting for a contract position may present a challenge; pool of applicants could be limited

Would allow current staff to build relationships internally and externally to improve two-way communication and potentially increase revenue	
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The third implementation option – which recommends the hiring of a full-time Event Coordinator – is the model that was originally prescribed by the Letter M in the *Corporate Communications Plan*.

The benefits of hiring a full-time Event Coordinator are twofold. First, it would allow existing staff to implement the *Corporate Communications Plan* within its original timeline of four years. As mentioned previously, the plan is based on present-day industry standards, best practices and feedback from current residents and employees of St. Marys. It also relies heavily on electronic communications and new technology. Implementing it in four years would ensure that the recommendations remain relevant and effective.

Second, a full-time Event Coordinator would have the time and resources to accomplish the event-specific goals outlined in the strategic plan, within the specified time frames. A full-time, dedicated employee could promote existing events while also establishing new or re-branded signature events to reach broader audiences and enhance the appeal of the Town. By building strong partnerships with the BIA, community groups and service clubs, this individual could use small- or large-scale events to celebrate the Town's key amenities, like the downtown and the waterfront. They could also assist in formalizing and improving the Town's current volunteer recruitment program and fundraising approach, while establishing a municipal policy to support third-party event partnerships.

While this approach would undoubtedly move the Town closer to achieving its goals of proactive, two-way communications and enhancing municipal events, it comes with the highest cost of the three implementation options. Unlike Option Two, the annual salary of a full-time Event Coordinator cannot be covered by current budgets, and as such, an additional \$31,000 to \$35,000 per year would be required to support this new employee. That being said, some of the other external costs associated with the communications plan could be reduced, given that existing staff would have more time to learn new skills and develop their internal expertise.

This implementation model has many of the same limitations as Option Two. The part-time, contractual nature of this new employee may present some challenges. Although contract positions reduce financial risk, they can sometimes limit the selection and quality of applicants. This addition to the Town's staffing complement and the associated increase in budget could also create poor optics among the public and within the organization. If this implementation option is selected, current and new staff will be challenged to alleviate concerns about overspending by making immediate and obvious improvements to communications and events.

SUMMARY

This report has presented three options for implementing the *Corporate Communications Plan*. The figure below provides a brief summary and cost comparison of each of the three options

OPTION ONE - MAINTAIN CURRENT STAFFING LEVELS	
Cost Level: Medium (an additional \$6,500 - \$7,500 annually, over eight years)	
PROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional funding required for new staff • Outsourcing of work will provide some additional time for staff to implement communications plan • Less expensive than hiring a full-time Event Coordinator
CONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limits ability of staff to support other departments during peak periods (tourism season, construction, etc.) • Implementation timeline doubles; risk of tactics/research becoming irrelevant • Many outsourced tasks could be completed internally in a more efficient and cost-effective manner • Tasks that cannot be outsourced (partner/relationship building) may be delayed or left incomplete • Events will not grow; current events may need to be consolidated

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More expensive than hiring a part-time Event Coordinator
OPTION TWO - HIRE PART-TIME EVENT COORDINATOR Cost Level: Low (an additional \$6,100 - \$7,000 annually, over six years)	
PROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional funding required for new staff • Would allow current staff to focus on implementation of plan and day-to-day communications support • Would eliminate annual process of hiring, on-boarding and training seasonal staff • Would improve efficiency and consistency of event management • Part-time Event Coordinator would have time to develop key partnerships • Part-time Event Coordinator could grow and potentially re-brand current events, and assist with promotion of third-party events • Many tactics recommended in the communications plan could be done in-house • Would allow current staff to build relationships internally and externally to improve two-way communication and potentially increase revenue • Most inexpensive option
CONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seasonal student position would be eliminated in favour of year-round, part-time Event Coordinator • Part-time Event Coordinator may not be able to add new events at the rate anticipated by the strategic plan • Public and other Town staff may see this as a new hire, instead of a reallocation of funds; could create negative optics • Having a year-round staff member instead of a seasonal student may imply that the Town is prepared to manage and execute new events • Recruiting for a part-time, contract position may present a challenge; pool of applicants could be limited
OPTION THREE - HIRE FULL-TIME EVENT COORDINATOR Cost Level: High (an additional \$32,750 - \$37,200 annually, over four years)	
PROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would allow current staff to implement the communications plan within the original timeline and ensure that tactics remain relevant • Full-time Event Coordinator could accomplish the event-specific goals outlined in the strategic plan, within the specified time frames (i.e. re-brand existing events, add new events that highlight key amenities, etc.) • Full-time Event Coordinator could assist with improving approach to volunteers, fundraising and third-party events • Many tactics from the communications plan could be done in-house instead of being outsourced • Would allow current staff to build relationships internally and externally to improve two-way communication and potentially increase revenue
CONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most expensive option • Seasonal student position would be eliminated in favour of year-round, full-time Event Coordinator • Significant increase in communications and events budget and addition of new staff member could create negative optics • Recruiting for a contract position may present a challenge; pool of applicants could be limited

Based on the above comparison, and considering budget implications, staff recommend that Council select Option Two for implementation. This is proposed as a creative, cost neutral, “middle-of-the-road” approach that will enable staff to execute the tactics set out in the *Corporate Communications Plan*, albeit over a slightly longer term than originally expected. The addition of a part-time contract Events Coordinator will also help the Town enhance its existing event offerings, as recommended by the *Strategic Plan Revision and Update*.

Even with the addition of a part-time contract Events Coordinator, Option Two is the least costly of the three, as it allows existing staff the time to complete tasks in-house instead of spending on external

consultants. It would also allow current communications staff to focus their efforts on promoting potential revenue sources, like the PRC, recreation and tourism.

Within the *Strategic Plan Revision and Update*, Council has set out its goals for providing frequent, transparent and open communications to the Town's many audiences. This has already led to more focused and proactive advice on critical issues, successful campaigns and more strategic and clear communications for high-profile projects and initiatives.

The implementation of the communications plan will achieve a number of the key priorities of the strategic plan, which notes the need to "develop and launch a new communications approach based on revised strategic priorities." However, the communications plan cautions that the existing staffing model will result in a plateauing of the department's capacity to deliver on Council's strategic goals, as was experienced during the 2017 construction and event season. In order to realize Council's goal's for proactive communications and re-envisioned events within a reasonable timeframe, the current complement of communication staff must be re-organized.

Option Two for implementation provides a practical, accountable and cost-neutral way to ensure that the Communications Department has the resources it needs to carry out the actions of the communications plan and the strategic plan, while also meeting a growing demand for more and improved municipal events. By selecting Option Two, Council will ensure the organization has the necessary tools to deliver consistent, effective communications and provide enriching opportunities for community members and visitors to celebrate St. Marys.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The total cost of each implementation option is summarized below. A detailed breakdown of the financial implications associated with each of three implementation options is attached as Appendix A.

OPTION	COST LEVEL	AVERAGE ANNUAL COST
Option One (Maintain current staffing levels)	Medium	Additional \$6,500 - \$7,500 annually, over eight years
Option Two (Hire part-time Event Coordinator)	Low	Additional \$6,100 - \$7,000 annually, over six years
Option Three (Hire full-time Event Coordinator)	High	Additional \$32,750 - \$37,200 annually, over four years

As previously noted, Option Two is the low cost implementation option, despite the addition of a part-time staff person. This is because the wages of the part-time Event Coordinator will be covered by re-allocating funds from the current communications and events budget. The chart below shows the budget lines and amounts that could be reallocated, if this option is selected.

BUDGET LINES TO BE RE-ALLOCATED	AMOUNT
Existing seasonal student wages	\$11,093 (inflated due to 2018 wage increase)
Existing advertising	\$10,500 (\$30,000 remaining)
Existing event expenses	\$6,200 (\$12,500 remaining)
Existing miscellaneous	\$4,469
Total:	\$32,262

STRATEGIC PLAN

- ☐ Not applicable to this report.
- ☒ This initiative is supported by the following priorities, outcomes, and tactics in the Plan.
 - Pillar #2 Communication & Marketing:
 - **Priority:** Engagement

- **Outcome:** St. Marys is committed to engaging and informing residents as stakeholders in key decisions. Communicating relevant municipal information, as well as soliciting input from residents, builds a solid foundation of trust.
- **Initiative(s):**
 - Develop an engagement policy for staff that will meet the expectations of the community; conduct internal and external surveys as necessary
 - Build an interactive web presence that is accessible and navigable; a site on which residents can interact with the municipality on multiple levels
 - Measure community engagement, continue to seek new communication mediums, keep policies updated meeting new channels of communication.
- **Priority:** Positioning
- **Outcome:** Work to have a more prominent regional presence, and improve the perception and reputation of St. Marys outside of its borders. Develop a sense of “who we are” as a means of sharing the narrative both internally and externally.
- **Initiative(s):**
 - Conduct internal and external engagement surveys to gather baseline data about staff and residents’ perceptions of the Town, its current approach to communications, transparency, etc.
 - Develop measurement tools to assess effectiveness of public communications; review regularly with a view to reputation management.
 - Develop guidelines (Engagement Policy) for community engagement/public participation to be used by staff across the corporation
 - Develop measurement tools to assess effectiveness of public communications; review
 - Develop budget to ensure on-going positioning presence. Seek new public and private partnerships to advance this agenda.
 - Be an active partner in the region to advance the municipality’s strategic priorities
- **Priority:** Social Media
- **Outcome:** The use of social media may be an instrumental supplement to an overall communications plan, which not only improves public engagement in bilateral communication between the Town and residents, but also shares the prospect of broadening the reach of the Town in terms of what it can offer, while celebrating its unique heritage.
- **Initiative(s):**
 - Develop a comprehensive social media strategy with a view to centralized function (“same-page messaging”). Frequent updating and the use of social media engagement policy. Decide on the social media venues that are most appropriate, with a view to providing rich media content
 - As part of reputation management, assess feedback in terms of scope, reach, and sentiment. Adjust policy as required so that it continues to achieve the outcomes of the strategy.
- **Priority:** Media Relations

- **Outcome:** Maintaining and cultivating effective relations with local media is key to preventing misinformation about Town objectives.
- **Initiative(s):**
 - Develop a comprehensive media relations policy for best channeling information directly to media sources about Town initiatives and other essential information. Create a spokesperson contact and ensure centralized communication relations with local media.
 - Create a communications training package for staff and Council for internal distribution.
- **Priority:** Community Events Promotion
- **Outcome:** Actively promoting existing cultural/community events while seeking to establish new or re-branded signature events (such as festivals) may result in broader audiences and increase the appeal of the Town. Develop a new event, or re-brand and re-envision an existing event, to be the “signature” St. Marys event.
- **Initiative(s):**
 - Create an event, or re-brand and re-envision an existing event, to celebrate the Town’s key amenities and ties in with the reactivation of the downtown/waterfront.

OTHERS CONSULTED

Stacey McCarthy, Senior Account Manager, The Letter M Marketing
 Stacey Wheal, Corporate Communications Specialist
 Lisa Lawrence, Human Resources Manager
 Jim Brown, Director of Finance

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Corporate Communications Plan – Implementation Calendar

REVIEWED BY

Recommended by the Department



Brett O'Reilly
 Corporate Communications and Events Manager



Trisha McKibbin
 Director, Corporate Services

Recommended by the CAO



Brent Kittmer
 CAO / Clerk