



COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2025/26 (DRAFT)

COMPILED BY: COMMUNICATIONS UNIT



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1. INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is essential for enhancing transparency, accountability, and active citizen participation in municipal governance. This strategy provides a structured framework to ensure consistent, clear, and inclusive communication between the municipality and its stakeholders.

As the Breede Valley Municipality (BVM), we have adopted a developmental approach to communication, and the fundamental values of democracy, openness, and participation apply. Through the implementation of a developmental approach, the municipality seeks to cultivate a well-informed, engaged, and empowered community while reinforcing trust in local governance.

2. SCOPE OF THE STRATEGY

The scope of this strategy covers the period 01 July 2025 to 30 June 2028. It will be reviewed annually for the next three financial years in response to the local communications environment and the municipality's needs in relevance to current issues and administration.

A previous communication strategy was adopted by and served to council till 2023. This revised strategy is guided by the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and other strategic frameworks, aligning with the municipality's core mandate of provision of basic services, economic development, rural development, and infrastructure development.

3. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

This strategy is developed in alignment with the National Communication Policy, which is based on the national legislative and policy framework, including, but not limited to:

- *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*
- *Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 2000*
- *Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000*
- *Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003*
- *Promotion of Access to Information Act*

4. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

The main goal of this strategy is to enhance and streamline communication between the BVM Council, Executive Management, staff, external stakeholders, and the communities within the Breede Valley. To ensure effective and appropriate communication, this strategy has adopted the following specific objectives:

- *To increase public awareness and participation by keeping residents well-informed about municipal programs, policies, service delays, and achievements.*
- *To foster strong relationships with media houses to enhance and promote a positive corporate image of the municipality at local, provincial, and national levels.*
- *To ensure ongoing open and honest engagement with all stakeholders through social media and traditional media platforms on key issues.*
- *To enhance transparency and public trust by clearly and promptly communicating municipal decisions, budgets, and service delivery updates.*
- *To enhance information sharing among municipal departments, ensuring a consistent and unified message by continuously equipping municipal staff and councillors with effective communication skills.*

5. REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS YEAR'S STRATEGY

In accordance with the 2022/23 Council-approved Communications Strategy, the Communications Unit employed various channels to convey BVM's vision, goals, and achievements. The primary means of communication included municipal social media platforms, mainly Facebook and Instagram, along with the instant messaging service, WhatsApp. Additionally, media relations were strengthened with all local media houses in the Breede Valley, including Valley FM, Worcester FM, Worcester Standard, and the regional IsiXhosa publication, Dizindaba.

6. COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

Despite the strong social media performance and the adoption of a development communication approach to ensure the public had timely, accurate, and accessible information in the previous financial year, the following urgent communication challenges were identified:

Negative perception of Local Government – communication failures or a lack of responsiveness has created the perception that the municipality does not care. Addressing historical distrust in the municipality remains an ongoing challenge.

Limited access to digital platforms - not all residents have access to the internet, smartphones, or social media, which limits the reach of digital communication. As a result, reliance on traditional media, such as community radio (e.g., Valley FM, Worcester FM), remains essential for reaching offline communities.

Language and cultural barriers - A diverse population with various languages and dialects can create communication challenges. In BVM, while the majority of residents

speak Afrikaans, not everyone understands English, which is the primary language used across all channels. To address this challenge, some content must be curated in all three languages: English, Afrikaans, and IsiXhosa.

Resource constraints – The Communication Unit requires sufficient budget allocation to address shortages in personnel, branding materials, and equipment necessary for implementing new communication broadcasting platforms.

7. MESSAGES AND THEMES

Everyone involved with the municipality needs to understand the key themes and messages that need to be communicated, as these reflect BVM's position and how it seeks to be perceived by its stakeholders. These themes are as follows: -

- *Quality service delivery and maximising public value*
- *Together, building an inclusive and diverse workplace environment*
- *BVM is the destination of choice for investment and leisure*
- *BVM is committed to clean administration and good governance*
- *BVM is dedicated to improving the quality of life for all.*
- *BVM is dedicated to fostering a safe, secure, and thriving communities in the Breede Valley.*

All content curated across the municipality's communication channels should reflect and be grounded in the above-mentioned themes. The municipality's communication efforts will convey a clear and consistent message, reinforcing the municipality corporate identity as a "*Caring Capital*" driven by its mission to be a ***Caring Valley of Excellence***.

8. KEY COMMUNICATORS / MESSENGERS

Not everyone is authorised to communicate on behalf of the municipality. Therefore, a structured hierarchy and approval process must always be followed to ensure the proper coordination of message dissemination. Communication as a function is assigned to the Manager of IDP, PMS, IGR, Marketing & Communications, and under the supervision of the Director of Strategic Support Services (SSS).

To maintain consistency, all communication must be approved by the Municipal Manager, or either of the following officials: the Strategic Support Services (SSS) Director, the Communications Manager, or the Senior Communications Officer. The Executive Mayor serves as the primary representative and Chief Spokesperson of the municipality on matters related to Council decisions and key service delivery projects. These responsibilities may be delegated to the Deputy Executive Mayor or Municipal Manager as needed, in line with the adopted System of Delegations.

Executive Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Speaker	These senior officials have the authority to communicate on Council decisions or any political matters within the municipality.
Municipal Manager, Communications Manager, and Senior Communications Officer	<p>As the head of administration, the Municipal Manager is the primary Spokesperson on any matter relating to the administrative function of the municipality.</p> <p>The Municipal Manager may delegate his authority to communicate with the public or media to the Communications Manager or Senior Communications Officer on any matter related to the organisation.</p>
Executive Management	<p>All Directors are responsible for communicating matters related to their respective directorates, including issues affecting service delivery projects.</p> <p>Furthermore, Senior Managers and Managers within each directorate may communicate on behalf of their respective directorates when delegated by their directors.</p>
MAYCO members and Ward Councillors	<p>Members of the Mayoral Committee (MMCs) are expected to communicate with the public and media on matters related to their respective portfolios.</p> <p>Ward councillors are authorized to communicate on behalf of ward committees regarding service delivery projects implemented in their respective wards.</p> <p>No councillor is permitted to communicate on behalf of the municipality in the media without the approval of the Mayor or the Municipal Manager, who serve as the primary communicators on behalf of BVM.</p>

9. COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

As part of its commitment to effective stakeholder engagement, BVM has adopted a range of communication channels. To further enhance and expand these platforms, the municipality will reintroduce the municipal newsletter as a powerful and cost-effective tool for sharing important information, updates, and news with both internal and external stakeholders.

Traditional Media	<p>Local radio stations – e.g., Valley FM, Worcester FM for announcements, profiling of service delivery projects, and discussions</p> <p>Community Newspapers – These publications are utilised for notices, articles, and public service announcements.</p> <p>Municipal Notice Boards – Crucial municipal notices and advertorials are placed in municipal offices, libraries, and public spaces.</p>
Digital and online platforms	<p>Municipal website – utilised for official announcements, reports, tenders, and service updates.</p> <p>Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, etc.) – used for service updates, engagement with audiences, and new appointment announcements.</p>
Public Engagements and meetings	<p>Public Participation Engagements – Community meetings for discussions on municipal development projects, policy changes, and employment opportunities.</p> <p>Ward Committee & Councillor Feedback meetings – Direct engagement with residents at ward level.</p> <p>Loudhailing – for community meetings, urgent service delays, and planned maintenance work.</p>
Printed material	<p>Government pamphlets, newsletters, and magazines – distributed in municipal offices, community centres, and municipal events.</p>

	Municipal Bill Inserts – selected campaign messages are periodically included in water and electricity bills on an ad-hoc basis.
Mobile and SMS communication	Bulk SMS Alerts – utilised for notifications about service disruptions, public safety, account payment reminders, and emergencies BVM Digital - utilised for news distribution and service notifications

In addition to these platforms, the municipality will explore podcasting as an innovative and engaging platform that fosters intimacy and provides a direct connection to listeners. This medium will offer the municipality a unique sense of immediacy and personal engagement with residents that traditional broadcasts or written media often lack.

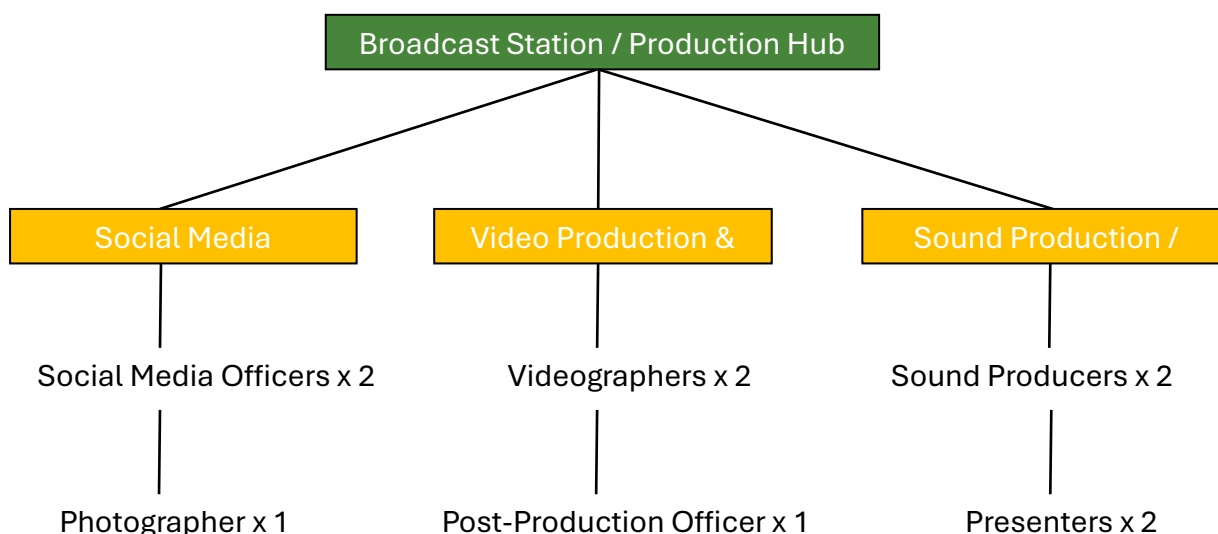
As a secondary platform, BVM will introduce live streaming on its official channels, including Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. This will allow residents to watch council meetings, public hearings, and announcements in real-time. By leveraging this innovative approach, the municipality aims to enhance transparency and build trust by openly showcasing decision-making processes. Additionally, this initiative will enable more residents to engage in local governance without the need for physical attendance, fostering civic involvement by making it easier to stay informed about municipal affairs from the comfort of their homes.

Without the appropriate software applications to support the creative process, things may unravel rather than come together. However, with the right tools in place, the Communications team can enhance their efforts and achieve better creative outcomes. In order to enhance the Communications Unit's efficiency and effectiveness in fulfilling its core mandate, the following creative software applications and broadcasting platforms will be adopted.

DIGITAL DESIGN	VIDEO & SOUND EDITING	LIVE STREAMING
InDesign	Adobe Creative Suite	OBS Studio
CANVA	Adobe Audition	Podbean
Photoshop	CapCut	Spotify
	Movavi	StreamYard

10. PRODUCTION STAFF COMPONENT

To address the immediate challenge of insufficient staff capacity within the Communications Unit, the strategy involves recruiting a skilled production team comprised of media and sound production graduates through MICT SETA funding. This will enable the Communications Unit to set realistic goals, deadlines, and budgets, and to adhere to a production schedule aligned with the monthly and quarterly targets outlined in the SDBIP.



11. BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to standard budgetary areas such as content creation, media placements, platform management, and monitoring and evaluation, the annual budget allocation will prioritise the following key developmental areas over the next three years to ensure the effective execution of planned activities and maximise their impact on the target audience.

	BUDGET ALLOCATION	FUNDS PRIORITISATION
YEAR 1	R500 000 (+ 5%)	Procurement of sound and technical equipment to kickstart the BVM podcast and live-streaming channels
YEAR 2	R525 000 (+ 5%)	Procurement of brand-new camera equipment, lenses, studio lights, and
YEAR 3	R551 000	Office renovation into a production studio setup, soundproofing, office equipment, and software applications licensing.

The proposed budget considerations will be reviewed periodically to ensure cost-effectiveness and alignment with the department's goals. Resources will be strategically allocated to develop a new internal broadcasting channel (production studio), enhancing existing platforms to expand audience reach and boost engagement. While pursuing the vision of establishing a production channel or station, the municipality will remain committed to supporting and maintaining strong relationships with local, regional, and national media institutions.

12. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

	FIRST PHASE	SECOND PHASE	IMPLEMENTATION
Newsletter	The Communications team is responsible for the design, editing, research, and writing of all the stories to be featured in each edition.	A mock-up edition will be designed in the 1 st quarter and submitted to the Manager and SSS Director for approval	The first official edition is anticipated to be designed and published in the 2 nd quarter (April – June)
Podcast Channel	A mock-up podcast setup and sample episode will be produced in the 1 st quarter as a trial version of the idea. Before this period, the recruitment process for selecting a suitable presenter will be completed	Procurement of podcasting gear is anticipated early in the 2 nd quarter (April – June).	The first official episode is expected in the 2 nd quarter covering critical service delivery initiatives
Live Streaming	A seasoned expert will be lobbied to conduct an equipment audit and provide training to ensure that the Communications team is fully equipped and empowered to effectively manage live streaming and podcasting channels	Procurement of additional live-streaming gear is anticipated early in the 2 nd quarter (April – June). Conduct research into SAMRO music licensing fees to be able to operate a 24/7 live streaming services as a station.	Following the procurement process of the necessary equipment and accessories needed, implementation of this platform will commence in the 3 rd quarter
Graduate Programme	In the 2nd quarter, an introductory meeting with MICT SETA will be	As a trial exercise, the debut funding application for the	The placement of the students depends on the availability of

	scheduled to present the strategy and emphasize the need for graduate recruitment to strengthen the staff capacity of BVM Communications.	graduate program will be submitted for 3 to 5 interns. In the upcoming MICT SETA funding cycle, the proposal request will aim to secure funding for a total of 10 interns, as specified in the production staff organogram.	funding, equipment, furniture, and office space to utilise <i>(This process is anticipated to be implemented in the next final financial year 2026 - 2027)</i>
Production Space	In the first year of this strategy, the Communications team will be responsible for identifying a vacant office space or building that can be transformed into a production studio	If a preferable office space has been identified, renovation should commence in the 2 nd year of this strategy.	The studio's first broadcast will take place after all the equipment, software applications, and office furniture have been procured and installed.

13. CALENDAR OF EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

The Communication Unit will conduct a number of communication activities and campaigns to ensure a consistent, proactive communication approach, address key concerns, and maintain transparency with residents. Based on the availability of budget and resources, the calendar primarily aims to balance proactive communication (announcements and education) with reactive communication (feedback and issue resolution). For BVM, the most effective way to build brand trust is by prioritising proactive communication over-reactive approaches, allowing the organisation to maintain control of the narrative.

It is important to highlight that many of these activities and initiatives will be carried out in collaboration with other departments within the organisation. As a result, some activities will be directly funded by the respective departments and/or relevant external stakeholders, ensuring a collaborative effort to proactively deliver the right messages to residents. A detailed outline of the activities and campaigns is attached to the strategy as an Annexure

14. STRATEGIC MEDIA RELATIONS

The municipality is committed to cultivating and maintaining strong relationships with local, regional, and national media institutions. This ensures open communication on matters requiring publicity while also providing opportunities to address issues of concern. For a media entity to conduct business with the municipality for advertising purposes, it must comply with the following prerequisite guidelines:

- It must be legally registered with CIPC
- It must have a legally registered bank account
- It must be operating or cater to audiences within the Breede Valley boundaries
- It must be an affiliate of one or more of the following industry-related entities:
 - *National Press Club (NPC)*
 - *Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC)*
 - *Association for Independent Publishers (AIP)*
 - *Association for Communication and Advertising South Africa (ACASA)*
 - *Southern Africa Freelancers' Association (SAFA)*
 - *South African Media Monitoring and Measurement Association (SAMMA)*
- Print and online media entities must provide empirical data from the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) to verify their circulation figures.
- Radio and television broadcasters must provide empirical data from the Broadcast Research Council of South Africa (BRC), OR the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) to affirm their audience measurement.
- An online media entity must demonstrate that its content is consumed by audiences within the Breede Valley area. Additionally, it must have a reach of at least 50,000 viewers or followers across its platform.

15. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

To enhance the strategy's effectiveness, BVM will implement a structured Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) framework to assess messages, themes, platforms, engagement, and impact. The Communications team, under the guidance of the Communications Manager, will conduct an annual evaluation of the strategy. This monitoring and evaluation process will ensure that the strategy remains dynamic, responsive, and aligned with the needs of the target audiences. This will be achieved through the following methods:

- *Conduct surveys to assess public satisfaction with communication.*
- *Analyse social media feedback and radio audience responses.*
- *Prepare a report on communication effectiveness for internal review.*

16. CRISIS COMMUNICATION

The role of the Communication team in the Joint Operations Centre (JOC) during a crisis is to deliver timely and accurate information to residents, maintain public trust, and manage public perceptions effectively. The following communication framework will be employed for each crisis incident to ensure clear, coordinated, and culturally appropriate communication throughout the crisis.

Key Messengers	Executive Deputy Mayor Fire Chief Officer (FCO) Deputy Fire Chief Officer Communications Manager	<p>The Deputy Executive Mayor as a senior political official responsible for the safety and security portfolio, is the designated primary Spokesperson.</p> <p>The communications team led by the Manager will be responsible for media coordination, press releases, and content creation.</p>
Communication Channels	<p>Channels of communication will be BVM Live, Valley FM, and Worcester FM (for urgent and broad reach).</p> <p>Additionally, other platforms such as the website, social media, local newspapers (both print and digital), and SMS alerts for critical information will also be considered.</p>	<p>Through these internal and external channels, the delegated key messengers will provide clear instructions for public safety by providing regular updates on what is known and unknown. Also, reassure the public on actions being taken to resolve the crisis.</p>
Action Plan	<p>BVM will focus primarily on ongoing communication (2–24 hours):</p> <p>This includes providing hourly updates via radio and social media. Conduct press briefings after every JOC meeting. Also, issue an official update statement on the crisis.</p> <p>Furthermore, the messaging will place emphasis on recovery communication by providing</p>	<p>Sample radio and social media advertorials during this period:</p> <p><i>"This is an emergency update from BVM Municipality. We are aware of the current situation, and our team is working hard to address it. Please stay tuned for further updates"</i> (audio clipping)</p>

	updates on progress in resolving the crisis and collecting feedback for post-crisis analysis.	
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17. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the communication strategy outlined above offers a robust framework for effectively engaging with our target audience, promoting transparency, and building trust within our communities. By utilising a combination of traditional and digital communication channels such as local community newspapers, radio stations (Valley FM and Worcester FM), and social media - we can ensure the timely and inclusive dissemination of information.

Over the course of this three-year strategy (2025 – 2028), the Communications Unit aims to establish its internal live-streaming studio. This production studio will be dedicated to producing high-quality sound and video content, which will be curated and shared across all BVM platforms. To address the challenge of staff capacity, the team will build strong relationships with all relevant SETAs to facilitate the implementation of the graduate program as outlined in the strategy.