Municipal Careers Awareness Toolkit

A Simple Approach to Building Awareness of Municipal Careers in Alberta

Firebrand Media
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Introduction

Background

In 2008, recruitment and retention of skilled workers was a key challenge faced by municipalities across Alberta. To understand and take steps to address this challenge, a *Municipal Careers Marketing Strategy* was developed in 2008 by Firebrand Media under the direction of a partnership of stakeholders including Alberta Rural Municipal Administrators' Association (ARMAA), Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA), Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC), Local Government Administration Association (LGAA), Society of Local Government Managers (SLGM) and Alberta Municipal Affairs .

The *Municipal Careers Marketing Strategy* was based on extensive research, including interviews conducted with municipal stakeholders, employees and human resource professionals from across the province, as well as representatives from key target audiences. The research undertaken for the strategy revealed four key findings regarding the public's perception of municipal careers. Specifically:

1. *Municipal careers are poorly understood by most Albertans.* The general public does not have a full understanding of the variety and availability of municipal career options; and many associate municipal careers with government and politicians generally, resulting in negative public perceptions about this career option.

2. *Municipal employees are motivated by factors that are not entirely financial.* Municipal employees are not just "in it for the money". They are often motivated by a desire to improve their communities, and to make a meaningful impact in the lives of their fellow residents.

3. *Lifestyle and quality of life are important influencers for today's municipal workers.* Satisfied municipal employees tend to desire favourable work-life balance. They place high value on their quality of life.

4. *Word of mouth advertising and social media networking are an extremely powerful influence over an individual's career choice.* Current municipal employees can play a very important and effective role in recruiting new employees through word-of-mouth efforts, especially online.

The *Municipal Careers Marketing Strategy* proposed a range of tactics, including a number of internal communications initiatives intended to be executed in parallel with broad based marketing and public relations activities. Of particular interest was strategy's proposed media/awareness building tactics. These tactics are the basis of the *Municipal Career Week Toolkit.*

Context

While the *Municipal Careers Marketing Strategy* provided a comprehensive plan for the promotion of municipal careers in Alberta, the scope of the strategy exceeded the available resources and capacity in many communities, particularly smaller communities. Some municipalities simply do not have the resources or manpower to single-handedly produce the type of wide-ranging promotional activities that the strategy required. Recognizing this, the decision was made to provide municipalities with a toolkit that would enable them to pursue awareness building opportunities with limited scope based on their needs, resources and capacity.

The fact is: Albertans' awareness of the breadth, diversity, and benefits of municipal careers is lower than it ought to be. And, should an effort not be made to raise the general public's awareness about municipal careers, Alberta's municipalities will almost certainly continue to face challenges in attracting and retaining top-tier talent. The *Municipal Careers Awareness Toolkit* was been created to help municipalities undertake this task in a flexible and cost-effective way.

Using the Toolkit

The *Municipal Career Awareness Toolkit* provides the "how to" for implementing tactics aimed at building awareness of the positive qualities of municipal careers.

This toolkit is broken down into five main sections:

1. Preparation (page 6) – The preparation that should ideally be undertaken beforehand.
2. Awareness Building Tools (page 15) – The tools you will need to create and make use (samples and templates located in the appendix)
3. Suggested Tactics and Strategies (page 23) – Concepts and narrative that will anchor your awareness building efforts
4. Campaign Evaluation (page 25) – Measuring the outcomes
5. Appendices (page 28) - including customizable samples and templates – tagged "TOOLS")

Each section provides the basic chronological map and "how-to" guide for developing and executing a customized *Municipal Careers Awareness* campaign specific to your community. It concentrates on three proven awareness building tactics: media relations, advertising and the utilization of social networking sites. Individually they are effective, but when combined, they have the potential to produce greater results.

The toolkit is not intended to be an all-encompassing communications plan for your municipality. Those particular details can be found in the original *Municipal Careers Marketing Strategy.* This toolkit is limited to activities that are realistic considering the pressure of your municipality's day-to-day

priorities. The tools were designed to be flexible and customizable based on your community's goals and desired outcomes. There are a number of reasons this approach was chosen, mainly:

- Cost-Effectiveness – Implementing the tools and tactics laid out in the toolkit require minimal investment. They have been designed to produce maximum return on investment by using low-cost tactics like exploiting local media opportunities or using social media networks to build awareness.
- Feasibility – Some municipalities lack the resources and capacity to implement broad (and expensive) initiatives. Most of the tools in the toolkit can be implemented by one or two employees.
- Complementary – The tools laid out in the *Municipal Career Awareness Toolkit* can supplement ongoing promotional activities in your community or used on an as-needed basis.
- Usability – The tools themselves are simple and effective and can be used in combination or independently

By shaping public perception of your municipality and portraying its employees in positive light, a campaign of this nature can also yield valuable benefits in the form of higher rates of employee retention and a stronger municipal brand.

This *Municipal Careers Awareness Toolkit* was developed to help you produce a simple campaign to raise awareness about the benefits of employment with your municipality. It provides several different tactics that will bring positive attention to municipal employees and raise the public's interest in municipal career opportunities.

Preparation

Despite its relative simplicity, the tools in the *Municipal Careers Awareness Toolkit* require preparation, planning and customization based on your municipality's needs. The planning section below will help identify your target audiences, compile key messages and prepare for the awareness building activities highlighted later in the toolkit.

An awareness campaign of this nature requires careful preparation. Typically, the quality of an awareness campaign depends on the degree of planning that takes place ahead of time. The more preparation, the better the results. This section outlines a few steps that should be completed in advance of the campaign, and include:

- Conducting preliminary employee research
- Determining campaign objectives and target audiences for the campaign
- Establishing the timeline of the campaign
- Setting the budget

Follow the critical path sample (detailed on page 9) for tips on specific tasks listed in chronological order.

The process could take several days of preparation, or just minutes – depending on your municipality's circumstances and the size of campaign you wish to undertake.

Research (optional)

An assessment of your municipality's current situation can yield critical insights into current attitudes – both internally among employees, and externally with the public. As a first step, it is highly recommended that you conduct some simple research among your municipality's employees. Current employees can provide a great deal of wisdom. They are the individuals who interact with the public day to day, and as such can provide a unique perspective about opinions held in the local community. They are also ambassadors of your municipality, and their opinion and attitudes carry a lot of weight with potential recruits.

Your method of research can take different forms depending on how much time and resources you can afford to commit to the effort. Some common forms of research include:

- *Online surveys* – Internet surveys can be easily setup and promoted to different audiences. They are also a ready way of gathering opinions, since they are easily accessible for many audiences. Using a free service such as SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com) can be handy.

- *Focus groups* – A focus group involves gathering a representative cross-section of a 10-15 people, to discuss key questions and issues.
- *Telephone polls* – Telephone polls are quite common and easily understood.
- *Anecdotal research* - At a minimum, you should conduct some anecdotal interviews among employees to gather their insights and gauge their support for a *Municipal Careers Awareness Campaign* before moving forward.

Your research should aim to answer some key questions:
- What are your recruitment needs? Are they general in nature, or are there particular kinds of employees you find it challenging to recruit?
- Why have you had difficulty recruiting people to these positions? What have employees heard from interviewees in the past?
- Are employees happy with their workplace? How do they feel about the municipality?
- Would current employees recommend the municipality as an employer to their friends, family or neighbours? If not, why not?
- How do employees think the municipality is perceived by the general public? Are there particular misconceptions or perceptions that are challenging?

Objective Setting and Target Audience Identification

The awareness building tools in this toolkit are flexible. They enable your municipality to provide general information to the public about career options or specific opportunities for a defined audience. This is why it is important to establish the campaign objectives and target audiences early in the process. For instance, should the campaign focus on particular types of career options, or should it promote municipal careers in general?   Are there certain common misperceptions that need to be re-shaped? How?

The research should also yield critical information about your target audience, or audiences. Consider audiences that may have been overlooked in the past. Are there certain characteristics you are looking for, or is it a general message for the whole community. For example, is there value in targeting groups such as stay-at-home moms, retired baby boomers, or new college graduates?

Campaign Timing

The timing of your *Municipal Careers Awareness Campaign* is flexible by design. However it is important to consider what else might be happening in your community. If your campaign's timing conflicts with other events, you may risk being "drowned out" by other news or events, and the effectiveness of the entire project may be jeopardized.

A quick environmental/media scan can protect you from competing with other organizations. Here are some possible conflicts to watch out for:

- Is another group or professional organization conducting an awareness campaign at the same time?
- Is there a significant community festival or event happening?
- Is there a municipal, provincial or federal election in close proximity?
- Is there a major development happening in the community, such as the

TASK	DATE

opening of a new recreation centre, or the grand opening of a new store or service?

The campaign timing chosen should also take into account the objectives and audiences you established for the campaign, and the resources needed to execute the campaign. For example, if your target audience is post-secondary students, consider an October or March start date – the time when students may be more likely to be considering career options. If your target audience is industrial workers (such as energy servicing or construction workers), then consider running your campaign soon after the end of the construction or drilling season.

After selecting the actual date of your campaign, a detailed task list should be developed. This will help keep you to time and task and ensure you will have everything ready when the campaign begins.

It may be helpful to produce a "Critical Path" document. This identifies major tasks, dates, persons responsible, etc. to guide you between now and the week of your campaign.

A sample Critical Path document is provided on the next page.

Preparation	
Conduct preliminary research could include: 1. Employee survey 2. Environmental scan 3. Current needs assessment 4. Establish target audience Authorize resource allocation (budget and man hours) Create critical path and project timeline Chose desired tactic Develop and prepare website (if necessary) Confirm *Municipal Career Week* details with stakeholders	September 2010
Media Relations	
Establish key message Produce press materials Finalize *Municipal Employee Award* program Draft and submit municipal government proclamation Establish responsibilities for media relations activities or media conference calls Confirm participation of major stakeholders	November 2010
Advertising	
Unify brand/key messages with current municipal advertising Consult advertising/design professionals or utilize in house resources Develop and approve advertising budget Solicit sponsorship arrangements with local media (if possible) Finalize and approve advertising contracts/agreements	December 2010
Social Media Networking	
Appoint one person to administer social network communication Set key message and communication parameters Build an online presence for your municipality 1. Create a facebook page (not a group) 2. Create twitter account 3. Contact key educational institutions Publicize meaningful information online often (daily, if possible)	January 2011
Execution	
Confirm advertising arrangements (obtain and approve proofs) Announce municipal proclamation	February –

Utilize social media networking tools to build excitement Submit Op-Ed print article Distribute press materials to local media editorial contacts Follow up and confirm media attendance Hold press conference (see press conference guidelines on page 15) Arrange interviews with relevant stakeholders	March 2011
Evaluation	
Collect news articles/clippings Consult stakeholders and survey opinions Produce Final Report	March 2011

Budget Considerations

Implementing a public awareness campaign in the manner described in this toolkit will be relatively cost-effective, but will still require the allocation of municipal resources. For example, establishing your municipality's online presence (Social Networking page 20) will require ongoing attention, and hence, some labour costs.

The breadth of the activities highlighted above – especially research – will depend wholly on the budget available for your campaign. That said, it is important to allocate a reasonable budget that will take all the potential costs into consideration. When developing your budget, you should account for the following:

- *Labour costs* – Remember to consider the person-hours required to execute each task in your critical path.
- *Administration expenses* – There may be administrative costs, such as hiring a consultant to undertake a telephone poll or other research. Remember to consider telephone, long distance, and other administration costs.
- *Travel costs* – Depending on the size of the geographic area your municipality serves, you may need to undertake some travel as part of the campaign.
- *Advertising costs* – Advertising expenses, if implemented could be a significant part of the budget.

Key Messages

Once you have outlined the objectives and target audiences of your campaign, it is imperative that you determine what you want to "say".

Typically, key messages are developed and used during interviews or anytime when your municipality makes a statement. These messages might be used when a spokesperson is speaking in public or in any other type of communication like brochures, web postings or advertisements in local media.

Your campaign's key messages should always be tailored to the audience you are intending to reach. If your audience is broad (i.e. the general public), you will want to use messages that are 'good for all seasons'. If your target audience is more specific (i.e. post-secondary students or retirees) then your key messages should consider the unique interests and viewpoints of that particular audience.

In any case, your key messages must be simple and easily relatable. It is critical to leave no doubt in the minds of your audience as to what your *Municipal Careers Awareness Campaign* is about and, more importantly, why it is important to them.

Ideally, your key messages will be designed to help you achieve the objectives for your campaign.

They should explain the following:

What is this campaign about?	[Example] It is about bringing attention to the people who make our municipality work, and the creative and fulfilling ways they make a difference in our community.
To whom is the campaign directed?	[Example] Anyone who is considering a career change, a new job, or a meaningful life change. There are lots of exciting and interesting career opportunities in a municipality. Whether you're a student, a new graduate or in a new phase of life, there's a way you can make a difference.
What is the "call to action"?	[Example] Visit our website, learn about the great work-life balance we offer, and consider working with us.

It is important that your campaign's key messages are factual. Use statistics and figures whenever possible to advance your case. Similar to an "elevator speech", your municipality's key messages must be delivered succinctly and with purpose, without over-burdening your audience with too much information. Different sets of messages can be designed for different audiences. For instance, there may be a critical shortage of applicants with specific skill sets.

In these cases, employing different key messages for different groups would be advisable.

Top-level messages for broad audiences

Top-level messages are designed for a broad audience and should appeal to general behavioral drivers such as the pursuit of better income, stability or a rewarding work/life balance. An overarching tag-line or campaign name can be used to provide a cohesive umbrella for underlying key messages.

Consider the example: "Municipal Careers – *The Right Balance*"

Key messages can be derived easily to encapsulate the "Right Balance" concept. The following examples show a sample key message, and some "proof points" supporting each message:

- *Overall, people who work for the city/town are very satisfied with their jobs. They appreciate the fact their careers offer them:*
    i. Great work-life balance
    ii. Great pay and benefits
    iii. The chance to make a positive impact in the community
    iv. Educational and training opportunities that are second to none

- *Our municipality is always looking for great people to join us in making our community a wonderful place to live, work and raise a family. There are lots of different and interesting opportunities.*
    i. We are always looking for good candidates – whether you're fresh out of college or on your next career.
    ii. There are lots of opportunities whatever your education or experience.

- *Working for the municipality is not just a job; it's a full and fulfilling career.*
    i. There is a great range of jobs available and plenty of room for career advancement.
    ii. Municipal workers tackle the community's most pressing and important issues. Day to day, you can plainly see the impact our work has.
    iii. Municipal employees enjoy high quality training opportunities and there are a great deal of opportunities to learn new skills and experiences.

Specific messaging for specific target audiences

There are some instances where your messages should be directed specifically towards a particular target audience. Tailoring your campaign to a particular audience *and* considering their behavioral drivers will deliver more meaningful messages and better campaign results.

Consider the sample messaging matrix below in developing your own similar matrix.

Sample Message Matrix

Audience	Behavioral Driver	Message
"*Students*" • Post-secondary graduates • Summer students	1. Opportunity 2. Tangible Benefits	1. Municipal workers enjoy better than average pay and benefits 2. Demographic changes are creating more opportunities than ever before
"*Switchers*" (people considering mid-life career change) • Adults 25-45 skewed female	1. Flexibility 2. Work/Life Balance	1. Great hours and flexible schedules 2. Pick your kids up from school 3. Learning and professional development opportunities
"*Returnees*" (those considering returning to the workforce) • Adults 45-70	1. Benefits 2. Worthwhile Work 3. Helping The Community	1. Stimulating and respectful work environment 2. Experience is an asset

Awareness Building Tools

Now that you have established the parameters of the campaign and have outlined your municipality's objectives, the task becomes relaying this information to your target audience. The three tactics below were created to accomplish this task (Media Relations, Advertising, Social Media Networking):

TOOLS related to this section include:

1. An op-ed article (a letter to the editor or guest column) for your local newspaper (page 29).
2. Media contact sheet (page 32).
3. A template and sample of a press release (page 30 and 31).

Media Relations

Good media relations activities generate significant public awareness – mostly through news stories or any mention that is broadcast or published through local media outlets. And while these awareness opportunities don't have a specific cost, they still require effort and the dedication of human resources.

Successful media relations opportunities depend entirely on the strength of your message and your ability to convey it in a compelling way. Producing high-quality and accurate press materials is invaluable to presenting your municipality in a positive light. Press materials is a term used to describe any information or background materials about your campaign that you intend to pass on to media.

An easy way to gain publicity is by submitting an "Op-Ed" article for your local newspaper. An Op-Ed is simply a letter to the editor. It can be a tool used for any awareness building concept or even as a standalone piece. A sample letter is located in the appendix (page 29).

A press release should be produced and distributed to local media outlets by email. A media contact sheet (updated March 2010) is included in the appendix for your information (page 32). It may not have ALL of Alberta's media contacts, but it is a good start. In smaller communities, a media list of this size may not seem necessary – but there is always a possibility that your story may cross borders or be relevant to people elsewhere in the province.

No matter what subject you are discussing, it is critical to contact reporters and editors *on the phone* even when emailing information. Beyond the personal contact – it is simply the best approach when communicating with a reporter or editor who may receive hundreds of emails daily.

A sample press release and a template are located in the appendix for you to tailor for your municipality (page 30 and 31).

Press Event/ Conference Call Suggestions

Typically, a press event is a news conference or public presentation where media are invited. Some municipalities simply may not be big enough to benefit from a full press conference. In this case, a conference call between your spokesperson and members of the media would be sufficient. The press materials prepared will usually have the facts reporters need to create the story – they are simply looking for quotes or the opportunities to ask questions. There are advantages to face-to-face interviews however – particularly when a photographer or cameraman may be present!

If you have the resources and media outlets to justify a press conference, keep the following hints in mind:

1. Chose a visually appealing setting for the press conference and confirm it in advance
2. Review the speaking notes before hand
3. Print hard copies of your press materials
4. Arrange to have a microphone, podium and press feed and a tech person to operate the equipment (if possible)
5. Have food and drink available; coffee and muffins are sufficient (if possible)
6. Post signage near the press conference site so everyone can find their way
7. Keep speaking to a minimum
8. Arrange for one-on-one interviews to happen immediately after the end of the press conference.

Media Training Tips

Ideally, your media relations efforts will develop into media speaking opportunities – so, it is best to be fully prepared. Being interviewed can be daunting prospect, even to a well trained spokesperson. In the event you are not a seasoned expert, or if you are preparing someone else, keep these media training tips of mind:

- Be sure to hit your key messages early on in the interview
- Be honest
- Be calm
- Be believable
- Be conversational (simple language and friendly delivery)
- Be concise
- Always correct any misinformation reporters may have
- Don't be afraid to say that you "don't know" – offer to find out and get back to them
- Don't be tempted to answer quickly - take your time and think about the question
- Know all the relevant facts and figures

- Prepare, prepare, prepare – you cannot be over prepared

Advertising

If implemented strategically, buying advertising space with local media outlets can have a multiplying effect when combined with the other tools and help keep municipal careers top-of-mind for your target audience. It's the reason successful awareness campaigns almost always involve creative advertising in one form or another. Advertising is popular with corporations and governments the world over simply because it produces results.

TOOLS used in this section include:

1. 5" x 7" print advertisement template (page 42).
2. 2" x 4" print advertisement template (page 43).

Print advertising templates were selected for inclusion in the toolkit because weekly publications continue to be the most effective way to communicate with residents, especially in rural municipalities. Overwhelmingly, rural residents rely on local print publications for information regarding career opportunities and information on all civic matters.

The primary reason advertising works so well is that it allows you to perfectly craft your organization's statement and direct it to your target audience. It is the only awareness building tool that allows for your complete control of the message (your key messages). Unlike media relations activities, messages conveyed through advertising are relayed without the filter of a reporter or a newspaper editor. And, unlike the communication that happens on social networking sites, your municipality's message cannot be altered or responded to by unauthorized parties.

The points below provide the essential strategies for successfully advertising municipal careers. They include guidelines for choosing the right advertising venue as well as sample advertising templates.

Some key considerations to take into account when advertising:

1. Desired Outcomes

When considering adding advertising to your campaign, take into account your municipality's desired outcomes. Ask yourself how your choice of media (TV, print, radio, etc) and your messages will help:

- Raise public awareness about the availability and attractiveness of municipal careers
- Shift public perception about municipal careers in a positive direction
- Drive your target audience to learn more or visit your website

2. Targeting

It doesn't make sense to spend money advertising to people outside your geographic area or people who do not belong to your target audience. It is important to be focused and clear about who you want to speak to and what you want to say. If you are simply driving general awareness about municipal careers then consider broad mediums and messages (i.e.: "*Celebrating Municipal Workers*" on a billboard at the entrance of town). If, on the other hand, the goal is to drive your audience to a facebook page for a contest, advertise to an audience that uses facebook. The same goes for post-secondary students – don't buy space in the career section of the newspaper, try student publications instead.

3. *Messaging*

Key messages created for the advertising should reflect the messages developed in the previous media relations section. It is important to maintain consistency with your messaging in all areas of the campaign, regardless of medium. Having a consistent "voice" with which to recruit, promote or celebrate municipal careers or employees is the core of how your target audience will internalize their own view of your municipality and the type of career opportunities it presents.

4. *Brand*

A key consideration when creating any advertisement should be the careful application of your municipality's 'brand'. Sample *Municipal Career Awareness* word marks are included in the toolkit in different file formats (page 45). The design concept is meant to be applicable to municipalities across Alberta regardless of geography or size and to convey a sense of opportunity, community development and progress.

Should you employ another campaign concept, be sure that your brand will represent the specific characteristics and attributes of municipal careers you wish to invoke. Always be consistent and prominent with your visual identity – it is imperative that it be recognizable.

5. Media Selection

At first glance, smaller communities in Alberta may not appear to have the breadth of media choices that a larger city enjoys (a television station, or several print publications for example). But there are always creative opportunities to get your message out to the public, and it doesn't have to cost a fortune. For example, if your municipality is active on facebook, consider advertising your municipality's page. You may also consider using the blank space on the envelopes your municipality sends to citizens. Or, circumstances permitting, you might adhere bumper stickers to your municipalities fleet vehicles – they will be seen everywhere. Should your budget allow, traditional advertising mediums like radio or print advertising should be considered for your municipality's awareness campaign. Brief outlines of each medium are included below for your reference:

Television Advertising

According to recent data available from Statistics Canada, the average person over two years of age spends 21.4 hours per week watching television. And, despite the fact that since the mid-1990s average television watching may have decreased slightly, television continues to be the primary medium for individuals to receive local information, news and entertainment. Consequently, TV remains one of the most effective ways to communicate with the general public.

Billboards or Outdoor Advertising

Billboards, bus benches and other outdoor advertising mediums are very effective tools for raising awareness. Billboards are a high-impact, cost-effective medium when calculating overall exposure; messaging developed for billboards must be simple and brief. Some of the benefits of choosing billboard advertising are as follows:

- Well designed billboards gain attention. Colourful, creative and eye-catching billboards have more impact.
- When considering overall exposure, billboards are one of the most cost-effective mediums of advertising.
- Billboards are an important tool to use to increase brand awareness and name recognition.
- Billboard advertising targets a specific audience according to location.
- Advertisements do not risk getting lost in between numerous competitors' advertisements and editorials.
- Messages are delivered continuously and frequently.
- Messaging and design can create a call to action for the audience.

Newspaper Advertising

According to the *NADbank 2007 Readership Study*, three quarters of adult Canadians read a newspaper at least once a week. The study shows that newspapers continue to be a key source of news and information for Canadians. Community newspapers (weekly publications, typically) remain a safe advertising choice for communicating to residents in rural areas – although the readership is skewed older than the general public. Newspaper advertising is particularly useful in conveying relatively complex messages (when compared to television or radio).

Radio Advertising

Despite the advent of satellite radio and the iPod, radio continues to be a strong awareness builder, particularly for adults 25 and up. Radio advertising relies on the frequency your message is heard and won't allow for a great amount of detail like a newspaper can.

Career Magazine Advertising

There are multiple career publications available to job seekers in Alberta (often bundled with websites). Many of these publications are available at post-secondary institutions, community centres and retail outlets. The advantage of advertising in these publications is that the majority of their readers are actively searching for a new career.

Internet/Online Advertising

Online advertising is measurable, cost-effective, highly targeted marketing, and has a rapidly growing audience. Online advertising is no longer simply for the younger segments of the population – people of all ages are "online". Internet advertising has the particular advantage of allowing your municipality's messages to be targeted *directly* to your target audience.

The old-fashioned static banner ad (basically a billboard at the top of websites), while effective, is giving way to a new generation of ads that use animation, video and capitalize on social media relationships. These ads can deliver information to students in an appealing fashion and will make it easier to build awareness in this traditionally hard-to-reach demographic.

Online advertising is very cost effective because advertisers are only charged for the amount of measured exposure received. Online advertising is also easily tracked and measured. Many websites allow advertisers to gather detailed information regarding who saw an advertisement, when, in what context, and how many times. These statistics can be received instantly, allowing for easy campaign and messaging adjustment.

.Some specific examples of other online advertising vehicles include:

- *Search Engine Advertising* – Offered by companies such as Google, clients can create a profile of their target audience, by age, gender, browsing habits, geographic area etc. and have an ad appear to that specific audience. This method holds a distinct advantage, as the advertiser has the option of paying "per click" or by the number of people that click on the ad and who are directed to the advertiser's site.
- *Social Media Networking Sites* – (see below) Some sites allow advertising, while some do not. It is highly advisable to advertise on facebook if your municipality has a facebook page.
- *Advertising through Educational Institutes* – Another option would be to partner with educational institutions to have career openings posted in their e-newsletters. Students looking for employment options will regularly check employment sections on post-secondary institution websites and e-newsletters.

6. Print Advertisement Templates are included (page 42 and 43).
   Despite the breadth of media choices available, local newspaper advertising is the primary vehicle for many municipalities in Alberta. The ads are convenient, contain vital (and sometimes complex) information and people have come to expect to find information about their municipality in the newspaper. For this reason, two basic print ad templates are included in the toolkit (one 5" x 7") and one classified size. Different wordmarks (logo's) in different file formats are also included in the toolkit. Feel free to use them as you wish.

7. Sponsorship Opportunities

Wherever possible, media sponsorships should be sought out with local media outlets. Sponsorships are a regular occurrence and are the ideal way to keep advertising budgets low. In exchange for cross-promotional branding opportunities and community good will, a media outlet will often offer a significant discount on the cost of advertising (exclusivity may be required). An added benefit can be extra media relations or "on-location" opportunities, possibly with a media "personality" hosting.

Social Media Networks

Many municipalities across the province have created online identities – and not just through their websites. They have incorporated social media networking websites into their overall communications strategy. The number of social media networking websites grows every day, but the *Municipal Career Week* toolkit focuses on two sites in particular, facebook and twitter. Far and away, these two websites are the most popular in Alberta and across North America and their influence is growing daily.

Social media networking websites have become a critical hub for sharing information and engaging citizens on a personal level. They enable municipalities to communicate directly with their citizens or with anyone interested in their communities' affairs. These communication tools are both instantaneous and dynamic, and they allow for real time, two-way conversations between your municipality and members of the general public. Social networking websites can be particularly useful when communicating with young people or other audiences who are typically "hard to reach".

Despite their ease of use, social media networking communication should be highly regulated with parameters identified at the outset. There are three appendices attached to this toolkit that provide the essential "how to" information for municipalities wishing to establish a virtual presence on twitter and facebook. They contain detailed instructions on how to create and maintain your account and some key considerations for success. They include *Twitter 101 for Business* (page 45) and *Facebook Pages Guide* (page 77) and *Facebook Best Practices for Government* (page 87).

It is not simply enough to have a presence on these websites. Your municipality must provide meaningful, relevant and appealing content for users. And, you must be willing to accept reasonable critiques as graciously as you accept compliments.

Twitter Tips

Twitter messages ("tweets") are limited to 140 characters, so taking a direct approach when communicating to your followers is desirable. The intent is to communicate a simple messages, or share relevant information with the other

Twitter users - especially those who choose to "follow" you. Hashtags are topics or categories that marked with a "#" in front are markers for peoples' specific interests. Some important hashtags for municipalities to track are #alberta, #jobs, #careers. Review the *Twitter 101 for Businesses* in the appendix (page 46) for more detailed information on using Twitter.

Remember that tweets are not limited to words. It is highly recommended that you include relevant web links or interesting photos as often as possible. Consider these examples of possible *Municipal Career Week* tweets:

- *Have U had a positive encounter w/ somebody from #MuniXYZ? Let us know by visiting* www.munixyz.ab.ca *& filling out a nomination form.*
- *Municipal employment: not just for old people.*
- *#MuniXYZ will B at the #uofa #career fair ths Monday. We love working here - maybe you would too?*
- *Working for us is a career, not just a job.*
- *Municipal employment: more satisfying than surf and turf.*
- *#MuniXYZ employee recognized for bravery, "just doing his job" he says!*
- *Municipal workers tackle the community's most pressing issues*
- *Municipal careers are more secure and stable than your relationship.*
- *People say #MuniXYZ is a warm and inviting place – what do you think?*
- *Mayor of #MuniXYZ declares Mar 14 MUNICIPAL CAREER DAY. Find out about our fabulous career options.*
- *Did you know that #MuniXYZ employees are TWICE as happy as their colleagues in Edmonton? Find out why at www.munixyz.ab.ca*
- *Guess who has the cleanest air in #Alberta? MuniXYZ – smell for yourself.*
- *Municipal employment: job satisfaction to the max.*
- *# MuniXYZ wants you…to work for us.*
- *Impact your community by taking on a municipal career.*
- *Make bank! Get a municipal career.*

Facebook Suggestions

Facebook on the other hand allows for more flexibility with respect to word space, but brevity is still advisable. It's also recommended that you keep content relevant and interesting and include links in every post (videos, images and other interesting content is preferred). Also, your municipality should have a "page", not a "group" (see *Facebook Pages Guide* and the *Facebook Best Practices for Government* documents in the appendix). Be sure to offer your

"friends" and "fans" incentives from time to time to take part. Complimentary recreation centre passes or movie tickets are great ideas.

Keep your status updates lively, interesting and rewarding. Some suggestions for your municipality's facebook page:

- *MuniXYZ We are signing up crews for our annual highway cleanup program – check the prizes you could win www.munixyz.ab.ca*
- *Do you hate red lights? Check out this traffic calming pilot project. Should www.munixyz.ab.ca do the same thing on Main Street?*
- *Have you had a nice experience with someone from #MuniXYZ? Let us know at www.munixyz.ab.ca and you BOTH can win prizes.*

Suggested Campaign Themes and Strategies

An awareness building campaign is generally built around a theme or a concept. Establishing a theme early on gives a cohesive approach to the campaign's messages, press materials and provides a focal point in the minds of your target audience. Below are three customizable themes and strategies that you could customize as necessary.

TOOLS used in this section include:

1. A sample municipal government proclamation. Having the Mayor or Reeve declare it Municipal Careers Week, for example (page 94).
2. A sample PowerPoint presentation slide (page 41).

Municipal Careers Week

The *Municipal Careers Week* concept is straight-forward. By proclaiming, celebrating and publicizing a particular week of the year in which to recognize the importance of municipal workers in citizen's daily lives, your municipality can generate positive awareness and stimulate interest in the diverse career options available.

It is advisable to submit a proclamation request based on the sample in the appendices (page 94) well in advance of the actual date of the event, even though they are almost always accepted by the local government officials. The proclamation is important because it lends the government's credibility to the campaign and is the basis (from the media's perspective anyway) for the entire concept.

The *Municipal Career Week* concept is strong for two main reasons:

- It is a positive, attractive and media-friendly concept that can resonate with many different audiences; and
- It focuses awareness activities into a short but linear time-frame that ensures maximum impact with minimal investment.

Municipal Employee of the Year Award

The establishment of an awards program that recognizes outstanding achievement among current municipal workers will lend itself to many media opportunities like:
- Promoting the opening of nominations for award candidates, inviting employees and the general public to participate;
- Profiling nominated candidates in the media, and using this opportunity to illustrate the breadth of career options in which municipal employees can "make a difference in their community";
- Celebrating nominees and award-recipients.

Some of the steps to organizing an event/campaign of this nature would be:

1. Create a committee that will also act as a jury
2. Create entry forms
3. Create a website for nominations and information
4. Announce the campaign internally and externally (solicit nominations for the public as well as employees)
5. Pick the winner(s)
6. Announce at a public ceremony (if feasible) like a BBQ

Generating positive sentiments with a program like *Municipal Employee of the Year* can have several valuable spin-offs like a better work environment, positive word-of-mouth advertising which will inevitably lead to a better perception of municipal careers.

Municipal Career Student Drive

Activities aimed at encouraging high-school and post-secondary students to consider a career with your municipality don't have to be complicated. A variety of possible activities could provide opportunities to raise awareness, such as:

- In-class presentations to high-school students by human resources staff;
- Job shadowing and "bring a student to work" days;
- Class field trips to the municipal offices.

A student drive lends itself nicely to all three awareness building tools in the toolkit (media relations, advertising and social media networking) - but pay particular attention to social networking sites. Engaging potential employees on their level (i.e. online or in person) will give your municipality added credibility.

Every municipality should also attend student career fairs which are held regularly by post-secondary institutions across the province. They provide excellent opportunities to raise awareness and improve public perceptions with a desirable target market. Representatives at career fairs can provide detailed information and literature regarding specific municipal career options and the municipality – passing on the messaging you planned during the preparation phase earlier in the toolkit. Many post secondary institutes and universities also have faculty-specific career fairs, offering good opportunities to promote career opportunities to targeted categories of workers. A PowerPoint slide template and a sample presentation are located in the appendix (page 41).

Campaign Evaluation

In order to measure and tract the effectiveness of your campaign, it is essential to record and collect any news stories, mentions or articles that featured your municipality. Not only will they validate the effort put into the campaign's development, but they can actually be impartially evaluated *and* assigned a dollar value. It may sound fanciful, but a news story is actually a measurable commodity.

TOOLS used in this section include:

1. A sample media evaluation chart (page 95).

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The Value of Media

Logically, a news story or article should be at *least* as valuable as an advertisement of equal size and proportion. Most public relations professionals take that statement much farther, claiming that editorial opportunities (interviews and news stories) are of much greater value than advertisements – up to 10X more. It is based on the belief that media consumers (including members of your target audience) are much more likely to pay attention to a news story or a radio interview then they are to an advertisement in the same location at the same time. That is the reality of today's media environment. There are simply very few people who buy a newspaper simply to look at the advertisements. This is a challenging metric to assess, so in assigning a value, it is important to consider the tone, prominence and credibility of the article based on where it was published and who the author/producer was.

For clarity's sake and to provide a real-world example, a sample media evaluation chart is included in the appendix.

When combined with advertisement and social networking stats – a comprehensive media evaluation can take shape. Consider the following example:

1. $18,500 of publicity
2. 3 print ads in the local paper - readership of 9400 (x3)
3. 120 followers on twitter
4. 3800 unique visitors to career page

For a smaller community this would be a fantastic result for a short-term awareness building campaign.

Final Report

The last step for any awareness campaign is the production of a final report that encapsulates the steps taken to produce the campaign, the materials and, most importantly, the results. Be sure to include as many statistics and facts as possible ("followers" on twitter or hits to your municipality's career website, for example) and identify areas where improvement is necessary. And don't forget to take the time to thank the stakeholders for their effort and take a moment to congratulate yourself too – producing an awareness campaign is hard work!

Acknowledgements

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Appendices

1. Op-Ed Sample
2. Press Release Sample
3. Press Release Template
4. Media Contact List
5. Logo Guidelines
6. Sample Power Point Slide
7. Print Advertisement 5"x7" and Classified
8. Sample Wordmark/Logo's
9. Twitter 101 for Businesses
10. Facebook Pages Guide
11. Facebook Best Practices for Government
12. Sample Municipal Government Proclamation
13. Sample Media Valuation Chart *Municipal Career Awareness Toolkit* Research
    i. Media Scan (courtesy AUMA)
    ii. Best Practices Research (courtesy AAMDC)