



## Office of the Mayor

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**To: Common Council**  
**From: Mayor Rhodes-Conway**  
**Subject: City Communications Manager Position**  
**Date: October 23, 2023**

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I have attached the job description for the City Communications Manager position funded in the executive operating budget. In response to questions that arose during discussion of the budget in Finance Committee, I thought it might be helpful to provide some background on the proposed position and the rationale for its creation.

First off, it's important to note that this will be a civil service position, charged with supporting the Office and City irrespective of who holds the office, and will help ensure continuity of communications across administrations. We intend to start a competitive hiring process immediately after the budget is adopted, with a goal of having someone start as soon after Jan 1 2024 as possible. I would like to have the Council Chief of Staff and/or Community Engagement Strategist participate in the hiring process, if Council Leadership is amenable to that.

This position fills a number of identified needs. One of the primary goals is to improve the City's capacity to inform and engage neighborhoods and communities about City government activities, particularly among marginalized and harder-to-reach communities. As I shared earlier, this was the top request from our Neighborhood Resource Teams, and I think it is worth repeating some of what they said in their request:

"As we saw clearly with COVID, but have observed consistently over the years, getting information out directly to specific groups and populations remains challenging, especially when those groups are smaller or have a history of marginalization. ...we still feel a centralized PIO remains of high importance for the City to effectively communicate with residents it historically has not connected with well. The position would have the ability to maintain an overview of the different messages issued by the City, find synergy within those messages as appropriate, and collaboratively develop both a common approach as well as inroads to disseminating information with specific groups. It is important for this position to operate out of the Office of the Mayor as that office is and will remain inherently the hub of information flow for the City of Madison and cannot effectively be replicated or simulated."

Helping City agencies, including the Council, communicate with all of the City's neighborhoods to maximize community engagement and better serve diverse communities is something we often struggle with and is at the core of this position's duties. As I think we've all experienced in our interactions with constituents, there is often a lack of understanding on the part of residents regarding the services the City provides and the allocation of City resources; in essence, what their taxes pay for. This position would help answer that question: the Communication Manager would be charged with highlighting City services and their role in constituents lives. Expanded knowledge of City services would allow, for instance, more low-income residents to take advantage of services they are eligible for - such as the up to 40% utility rebates available under the City's new MadCAP program. Or, marketing City services such as Metro – and soon BRT – would help grow those programs and, in some cases, revenues from

those programs. This position would also support communications about service changes, such as the large item pick up changes we recently implemented; as we were reminded during that process, even the smallest service change can cause controversy without a well-planned roll-out.

This will include researching and employing the most effective methods of communication to reach diverse communities through multiple channels. Promoting language access and culturally appropriate communications will be another key activity, as will providing trainings on accessible and culturally appropriate communications for communications staff as necessary.

During the Finance Committee's discussion of this position, there were also questions regarding how it would interact with City departments which already have PIOs. I would note, first, that the majority of City departments do not have PIOs or dedicated communications staff. This position would help fill that significant gap by helping these departments develop community engagement schedules and media plans for the year. In addition, the Communication Manager would work in partnership with the existing PIOs to help establish a city-wide yearly and monthly communications plans, consistent avenues for communication across departments (i.e., newsletters and social media) and goals for expansion for each channel. This could include basic activities such as ensuring that communications channels are being regularly cross-promoted and publicized, which no one is currently responsible for doing.

As another example, a number of departments - including Council staff - have asked our office for a list of community engagement opportunities. Such a list currently does not exist in any centralized way, as there is no staff member charged with tracking City-wide public engagement. Similarly, we have received requests for a centralized repository of materials on City services and programs for staff to hand out when they attend community events, which also does not exist in systematic way. This position would standardize both online and print materials to create a suite of easy to understand materials that can be used at public events, and would have a budget to print materials and ensure that they are readily available and used at City events and have a budget to boost social media outreach and expand upon opportunities to market city services on social media channels.

This position would also manage crisis communications for the City, and serve as the PIO for the Emergency Operations Center. As we have seen in the past, it is critical for the City to have coherent, comprehensive and timely communications in the event of an emergency. The Communications Manager would work with our new Emergency Manager to develop crisis communications plans for a range of potential events, as well as regular communications about emergency preparedness. In addition, they would work with the Department of Civil Rights to improve the cultural relevance of our communications and implement our language access plan. At the moment, there is a wide variety between agencies in terms of how often and what materials are translated. This position could support better planning around translation and the use of multiple media to reach different language communities. This language access work is critical to reach our growing Spanish speaking community in particular.

I hope this helps to clarify the intent and importance of this position, and why I prioritized including it in my executive budget. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any additional questions or wish to discuss. I sincerely hope you will support the creation of this critical position, which will serve all our constituents.

## CITY OF MADISON POSITION DESCRIPTION

1. Name of Employee (or "vacant"):

Vacant

Work Phone:

2. Class Title (i.e. payroll title):

Communications Manager

3. Working Title (if any): Citywide PIO

4. Name & Class of First-Line Supervisor:

Mayor's Chief of Staff

Work Phone:

5. Department, Division & Section:

Mayor's Office

6. Work Address:

210 MLK Jr. Blvd. Room 401

7. Hours/Week: 38.75

Start time:                      End time:

8. Date of hire in this position:

9. From approximately what date has employee performed the work currently assigned:

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10. Position Purpose: (How this position fits into the overall mission, vision, and goals of your agency and work unit.)

This position will be responsible for developing and implementing communications and outreach plans in support of the City's mission, vision, and goals.

11. Position Summary:

This is a responsible, professional position that will plan, organize, and coordinate the City's communications and outreach activities with the goal of better informing and engaging neighborhoods and communities about City government activities and increasing the reach of City engagement channels. The incumbent will serve as a key spokesperson for City government and will research best practices and develop standards and benchmarks for city-wide use relative to community education and engagement. This position will also coordinate and strengthen the educational efforts of the majority of City departments that do not have a Public Information Officer (PIO) and will work in coordination with the PIOs actively serving City agencies. This position works under the general supervision of the Mayor's office as a locus of information and advance planning across city agencies. Helping City agencies communicate with all of the City's neighborhoods and communities is a key goal of this position.

12. Functions and Worker Activities: (Do NOT include duties done on an "Out-of-Class" basis.)

55% A. Plan, implement, and maintain communication, information, and outreach programs for the City of Madison to better engage our neighborhoods and communities in city activities.

1. Work with City's management team to develop and execute proactive community outreach strategies for major projects with a special focus on best practices to engage marginalized communities, including creating a plan and budget for paid marketing of City services, boosting and promotion of City social media for greater reach, creation and distribution of more robust print material. Track community engagement as a given project progresses.
2. Create yearly and monthly communication plans, with a focus on setting a proactive agenda for community education and engagement in coordination with city PIOs and other communications and outreach staff.
3. Work with the 15 city departments without PIOs to develop a regular schedule of engagement and communications with the public. Assist them in developing regular press releases, social media kits, print materials and other communications engagement tools as needed.
4. Use the city's primary social media channels to lift up key content from across city agencies. Develop budget for paid promotion and boosting of City social media for greater reach and to engage new and less connected groups.
5. Develop a strategy to assist city agencies in growing the number of residents and businesses receiving the city's communications. Ensure that communications channels are being regularly cross-promoted and publicized.
6. Serve as a key city spokesperson and as a primary media contact who promptly and accurately responds to informational requests from the media and the general public.
7. Develop and maintain media relationships, proactively pitch stories, and act as a liaison to other city agencies, experts and policymakers.

20% B. Ensure all departments and City communications staff are accurately, effectively, and consistently using best practices to develop materials and grow their reach to better engage our diverse communities in city activities.

1. Research best practices and develop standards and benchmarks for City-wide use relative to external communications across platforms, including paid research and data analytics as necessary.
2. Ensure that all public information meetings use best practices to maximize community engagement and better serve diverse communities.
8. Enhance the City's social media platforms to grow their reach and better engage our diverse communities in city activities, including a strategy to use paid promotion and boosting of City social media for greater reach and digital inclusion.
3. Convene regular meetings with agency PIOs to coordinate around upcoming events, ensure consistency and regularity of communications across platforms, ensure consistency in branding, and to grow the reach of city electronic and print newsletters.
4. Standardize city brochures and print materials to create a suite of easy to understand materials that can be used by city policymakers and staff at public events, including engaging external design support and paying for more robust print materials as necessary.
5. Analyze website metrics, enhance website content and coordinate City branding with Information Technology and the Web Development Team.
6. Work with agency PIOs to track the success of overall communication strategy through program participation, website analytics, newsletter feedback, social media analytics, media mentions and earned media.
7. Keep abreast of trends and developments in communications, including social media, encouraging the adoption of emerging techniques and tools, enhancing the use of video and audio. Organize trainings for communications staff as necessary.

10% C. Manage crisis communications for the City of Madison

1. Serve, at times, as city-wide PIO in the Emergency Operations Center.
2. Develop and execute a crisis communication plan for emergencies.
3. Work with City IT and Emergency Manager to develop and oversee emergency alert and

text alert notification systems.

4. Work with the Emergency Manager to develop a regular cadence of communications around emergency preparedness.

10% D. Promote language access and culturally appropriate communications

1. Review City messaging to ensure culturally appropriate communications.
2. Ensure key communications are effectively translated and transmitted in multiple languages
3. Incorporate print, audio/visual, social media, and other methods of communication most effective at serving our diverse communities, including paying to boost social media or for communications placement as necessary to reach diverse communities through multiple channels.
4. Work with the Department of Civil Rights (DCR) to support implementation of the City's Language Access Plan.
5. Collaborate with DCR and HR to provide trainings on accessible and culturally appropriate communications for communications staff as necessary.

5% E. Other communication and outreach duties as assigned

13. Primary knowledge, skills and abilities required:

At least 5 years of experience in relevant positions, including some experience coordinating or supervising teams around communications planning and strategy. Excellent written and oral communication skills. Thorough knowledge of applicable promotional, public relations, and journalist theories, techniques and practices. Thorough knowledge of print, broadcast, and media principles and practices. Thorough knowledge of standard social media platforms. Thorough knowledge of and ability to use computer software applicable to the duties of the position. Working knowledge of the Open Records law and appropriate confidentiality standards. Ability to develop, recommend and promote public information materials in keeping with the City's missions and goals. Ability to cultivate and maintain positive relations with the media. Ability to produce and promote public information events, write accurate news releases, and public service announcements, and to review and edit the related work of others. Ability to compile and disseminate appropriate information about City activities, events and operations. Ability to organize activities, establish priorities and meet deadlines. Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships. Ability to communicate to a diverse audience. Ability to draw appropriate conclusions from varied data including identifying sources of information. Ability to provide on-air and live broadcast presentations. Ability to oversee and coordinate the work of other PIOs working in different agencies. Ability to maintain adequate attendance.

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14. Special tools and equipment required:

15. Required licenses and/or registration:

16. Physical requirements:

The incumbent will be expected to travel to various locations throughout the City in order to facilitate community outreach and coordinate media events. The incumbent may have to lift and carry relevant materials and equipment for such presentations and events. Otherwise, work is performed in an office environment using standard office equipment such as a computer, telephone, and copier.

17. Supervision received (level and type):  
Office of the Mayor

18. Leadership Responsibilities:

This position:  is responsible for supervisory activities (Supervisory Analysis Form attached).  
 has no leadership responsibility.  
 provides general leadership (please provide detail under Function Statement).

19. Employee Acknowledgment:

- I prepared this form and believe that it accurately describes my position.
- I have been provided with this description of my assignment by my supervisor.
- Other comments (see attached).

\_\_\_\_\_  
EMPLOYEE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

20. Supervisor Statement:

- I have prepared this form and believe that it accurately describes this position.
- I have reviewed this form, as prepared by the employee, and believe that it accurately describes this position.
- I have reviewed this form, as prepared by the employee, and find that it differs from my assessment of the position. I have discussed these concerns with the employee and provided them with my written comments (which are attached).
- I do not believe that the document should be used as the official description of this position (i.e., for purposes of official decisions).
- Other comments (see attached).

\_\_\_\_\_  
SUPERVISOR

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

Instructions and additional forms are available from the Human Resources Dept., Room 261, Madison Municipal Bldg., calling 266-4615 or visiting [cityofmadison.com/employeenet/policies-procedures/position-descriptions](http://cityofmadison.com/employeenet/policies-procedures/position-descriptions).