LIVERMORE
CALIFORNIA

CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT   ITEM 6.02

DATE: January 13, 2014

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Troy Brown, Assistant City Manager

SUBJECT: Communications Assessment and Strategic Communications Plan

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Staff recommends that the City Council accept the Communications Assessment and Strategic Communications Plan and provide direction.

SUMMARY

The City engaged Tripepi Smith and Associates for a two-phase project regarding the City's communications process and effectiveness with respect to community engagement. A comprehensive analysis of the City's strategic communications with improvement recommendations comprised Phase One. Phase Two builds on the first phase by assisting with implementation of desired improvements. Phase One of the project is now complete, and the project report is being transmitted for City Council review and feedback.

DISCUSSION

Community Engagement is one of the current Council goals that emerged from the City's two-year budget development process. The vision statement that directs this goal states the City will "*Explore and expand public information tools to further strengthen community connections and engage residents.*" While there has been significant progress on this goal, the City, aligned with its mission of continuous improvement, issued a Request for Proposals in July 2013 seeking firms to complete a comprehensive assessment of the City's communication efforts for community engagement. Tripepi Smith & Associates was the only firm to submit a proposal. A contract was executed in August 2013 that outlined a two-phase project – the analysis and recommendations as well as implementation assistance.

The Tripepi Smith findings are attached in the Communications Assessment and Strategic Communications Plan. The assessment included the technical side of media communications and the staffing and resources required to carry out these activities. Tripepi Smith staff evaluated tools the City uses to engage and inform residents and gathered feedback on the effectiveness and penetration of those forums. As part of the assessment project, Tripepi Smith completed an audit of media coverage the City has received, and reviewed all outlets from radio, TV, bloggers, and newspapers. They inventoried community communication touch points in City processes and determined which departments owned these touch points. Tripepi Smith staff examined if messages were transmitted and how effective they were in reaching the intended audience. Tripepi Smith staff also reviewed the reach and effectiveness of the City's electronic communications and reviewed data to develop and analyze metrics associated with the City's website and social media platforms.

Tripepi Smith staff met with leadership of every department as well as the individuals charged with executing the communications efforts within City departments. They engaged outside agencies and community influencers that either partner with or consume the City communications in order to assemble a detailed narrative. The outcomes of the discussions among City departments and community stakeholders provided an opportunity to hear feedback directly from the staff and end users, and facilitated an evaluation of the City's decentralized communications system approach. The assessment project discovered departmental best practices, and helped Tripepi Smith identify processes, understand variances in execution, and surface minor internal discrepancies surrounding priorities and responsibilities.

Having executed the steps outlined above, Tripepi Smith identified opportunities for improvement. Their recommendations, that are viable for implementation and consistent with the City's current organizational culture of a decentralized approach to communications, are included in the assessment report.

Phase Two of the contract scope of work will be the recommended implementation. Tripepi Smith will provide an employee to the City as an onsite, contractual resource to not only serve as a facilitator for staff in coordinating communication, but to continue to gather and analyze data to determine the effectiveness of the City's engagement tools. City staff is not recommending the creation of any full-time equivalent positions to aid in the implementation of the community engagement recommendations. A Summer 2014 report to the Council at the end of the Tripepi Smith one year contract will provide a progress update on recommendation implementation as well as their impacts on community engagement.

FISCAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE IMPACTS

The current contract with Tripepi Smith is for an amount not-to-exceed $75,000 for Phases One and Two. Phase One costs were approximately $18,700 and have been funded. Phase Two costs cover the cost of implementation and coordination using an onsite communications specialist for 20 hours per week. The cost of Phase Two is

approximately $33,000 over the next six months. The total costs for both phases are below the stated not-to-exceed amounts in the current contract with Tripepi Smith. No additional appropriation is required to continue with Phase Two of this project, which is currently funded from the General Fund (F001).

ATTACHMENTS

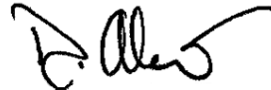1. Communications Assessment and Strategic Communications Plan

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Approved by:

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Fiscal Review by:

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Administrative Services Director

City of Livermore Communications Assessment and Strategic Communications Plan

An Assessment of Livermore Communications Processes and Associated Recommendations

December 2013

Version 1

Authored by Ryder Todd Smith

& Shannon O'Hare

TRIPEPI SMITH & ASSOCIATES

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Executive Summary

In order to implement the Council goals of increased communications and citizen engagement, the City of Livermore engaged Tripepi Smith to provide a communications assessment and possible ongoing support services. Tripepi Smith was selected after an RFP was let by the City of Livermore over the summer of 2013.

Beginning in the fall of 2013, Tripepi Smith worked onsite for 8 weeks with City staff, council members, community leaders, and local media. Our goal was to document and then assess the current communication efforts of the City, with a particular focus on the processes, platforms, and people involved.

From our brief engagement, it is evident that the City of Livermore employs highly professional staff and empowers them to run their respective departments with reasonable freedom. The result is an effective local government that has avoided crisis and weathered a significant economic downturn.

Livermore has promoted a federated approach to communications, where each department is charged with executing community outreach, communicating initiatives, and responding to questions from residents. As a result, various staff members in each department have the part-time responsibility of executing communications for their respective departments.

This federated approach yields strengths and weaknesses. It puts the experts closer to the communications and reduces bureaucracy. However, it also results in communication silos that can inhibit a cohesive message and effective branding.

Our interviews with outside parties indicate that the City does an acceptable job of communicating with its constituents, so fundamentally changing the communications process would be ill-advised. Furthermore, given the culture of the organization, centralizing communications would take responsibility away from departments risk undermining staff engagement. Instead, we believe that the existing structure should be retained and enhanced by establishing consistent processes across departments and offering more support to individuals charged with executing communications. This will yield more cohesive and consistent communications from the City as a whole. Methods to achieve this goal are identified in our recommendations.

It is important to note that Tripepi Smith was not engaged to revise the City's current message focus on viticulture, science and western heritage. Nor was Tripepi Smith engaged to suggest brand changes or enhancements, a process previously completed and currently reflected in most of the City's communications. The suggestions made in this document aim to reaffirm the City's existing message and brand across all communication channels.

Assessment Methodology

In order to evaluate the City's current communications strategy and processes, Tripepi Smith met with the leadership of every department as well as the individuals charged with executing the communications efforts within those departments. We also met with outside agencies and community influencers that either partner with or consume the communications coming from the City.

Assembling a detailed narrative on how various departments handle communications was critical to the assessment process for several reasons:

1. It provided an opportunity to document various processes into a single document for review by senior City management staff.
2. It afforded an opportunity to hear feedback directly from the staff, which facilitated an evaluation of the highly federated communications system.
3. It helped surface best practices that some departments have uncovered in the course of executing their communications
4. It gave department-level staff the freedom to speak openly and offer constructive criticism and frank observations.
5. It helped Tripepi Smith identify processes, understand variances in execution, and surface minor internal discrepancies surrounding priorities and responsibilities regarding the City's communication efforts.

Tripepi Smith met directly with media outlets to learn about their perceptions of the City and to understand their requirements for working collaboratively. Additionally, we performed a one-year audit of media coverage to evaluate how the press represents the City.

Metrics were collected from Google Analytics, Facebook Insights, and other sources. This data was laid against a backdrop of community metrics to better understand and measure the City's outreach efforts in relationship to its target market. Unless otherwise noted, all data was gathered September, 2013.

Having executed the steps outlined above, Tripepi Smith set about forming applicable best practices and identifying opportunities for improvement. We also sought to identify recommendations for improvement that were fiscally viable and consistent with the organizational culture.

Notable Observations

Tripepi Smith assembled numerous observations about the existing communication processes in Livermore. The key ideas listed here provide a general framework for the rest of the findings and observations that follow.

- City staff in each department does a fair to good job at executing communications in general. However, communication methods and efforts vary from department to department.
- Information sharing between departments takes place primarily via email and social media with phone calls being used occasionally for support. There is no centralized request or scheduling process for City communications related to press releases, social media posting, or website updates. Consequently, departments share minor news with the public without informing other departments (most notably the City Manager's Office) that the information has been released. That said, the City Manager's Office is aware of all major events and developments.
- No centralized calendar or social media management tools are used for coordinating the release of postings across Facebook and Twitter. While most of the City's social media sites are regularly updated, the lack of a calendar function discourages longer term strategizing and coordination across departments.
- Livermore takes a "common sense" approach to social media and departments enjoy a high level of autonomy when posting City information on social media channels.
- Inquiries about controversial issues are directed to senior staff members. Determination of what is considered controversial is left to the staff person initially speaking with the media. While there is no anecdotal evidence that a lack of protocol has resulted in negative communications or poorly handled media engagements, this method relies on the institutional knowledge of front-line department staff and their good judgment when speaking with the press.
- No staff members were able to estimate the amount of time they spend on communications efforts or social media management.
- Livermore does not hold staff meetings specifically dedicated to communications, with the exception of the two or three times a year that the City publishes the Official Community Newsletter of the City of Livermore ("Community Newsletter").
- The City of Livermore executed a new Civica website platform in 2011 affecting all departments and divisions within the City. Approximately 75 staff members were trained to execute content updates, but over time the core expert user group has dwindled to approximately 10 people.
- There is no clearly defined content owner/editor for the City website. Staff is not clear on who is responsible for the information on the website or who controls the featured stories on the home page.
- The Civica platform includes a built-in email communications program designed for residents to subscribe to newsletters by indicating the topics they are interested in. The platform also includes an email campaign execution function. However, this feature is only used for the distribution of the City Manager's Newsletter (aka City Manager eNewsletter). Few residents have signed up for the feature and staff does not track its use.

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- Metrics on the website are available via Google Analytics, however metrics are not routinely reviewed or used to strategize about what content is of most interest to residents. Additionally, the analytics are not optimized to track key interaction points on the website. Results are likely muddled by traffic from City staff, which should be filtered. Metrics are available within the Civica platform, but those metrics are difficult to access.
- With few exceptions, there is no evidence of a consistent effort to proactively engage media outlets. Engagement with media often happens via the occasional press release or in reaction to media inquiries. No single person is responsible for proactively engaging the media.
- City staff generally felt that given current City priorities, the costs associated with commissioning video production from Tri-Valley Community Television could potentially yield better results if spent elsewhere.
- There is no evidence that departments in the City of Livermore regularly take advantage of the free services Tri-Valley Community Television offers, including PSAs and interview segments.

The Case for Communications

An organized communication strategy is an essential part of establishing and maintaining trust with citizens. Whether it is mailing information about water conservation or celebrating the installation of solar panels, consistently connecting with citizens establishes a relationship. It illustrates a commitment to transparency, better informs citizens, and provides an opportunity to gather feedback as issues develop in a community. Importantly, these communications are not simply about outbound information, but are also designed to illicit inbound citizen responses to city initiated communication efforts. The result is an informed public and an informed city.

City government is often a citizen's only point of civic engagement. It is also the most trusted form of government, in part due to the ability of citizens to interact directly with elected leaders and key city management in their daily environment. Where municipalities used to be reliant upon press releases to local media outlets, cities now have the ability to disseminate information across multiple platforms, from the City website, to City-run apps, to a growing number of social media networks. Consistent and direct contact with citizens establishes transparency, builds trust, and drives increased citizen participation.

Livermore's Citizen Survey has historically found that residents enjoy high levels of satisfaction with the quality of life in the city and with government services in general. In response to the most recent survey, issued in 2011, 86% of residents rated the quality of life in Livermore as "good" or "excellent." However, residents may not understand the work and resources that go into the numerous programs and services the city provides on a daily basis to create this high quality of life. People cannot know what the City does not tell them. Further, informed citizens are involved citizens who can contribute back to the quality of the community.

Therefore, it is critical that the City work to inform citizens and open communications across numerous platforms to further enhance citizen engagement. By evaluating the existing communications activities

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of the City and then seeking to improve those processes, the City will be able to more effectively engage citizens and establish a relationship based on transparency and trust between citizens and their City.
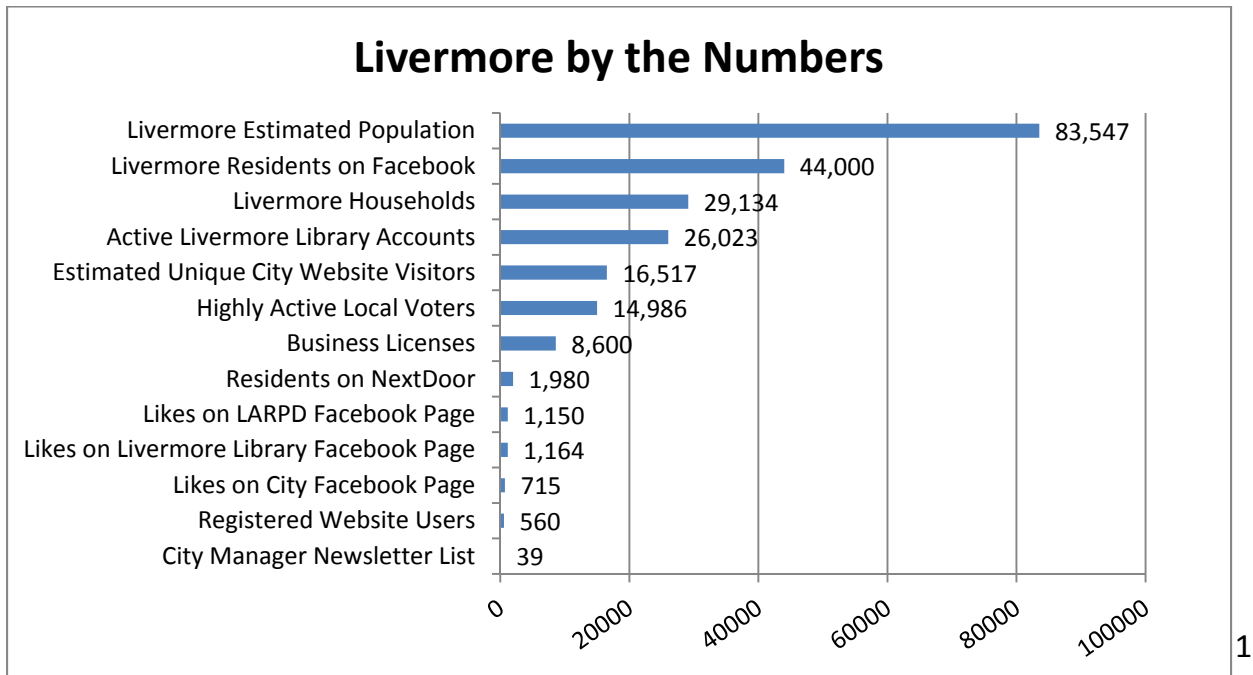
The Marketplace for Communications

Every city operates in a different market for communications. Some cities exist in large media markets with dense coverage of public affairs, while others operate in rural areas where a local radio station provides the sole source of City Hall coverage. It is important to view any communications effort through the lens of its total market.

Livermore by the Numbers

The City of Livermore has a number of different means and methods for communicating with its residents, and each channel allows for an opportunity to reach residents in a slightly different way. An effective communications effort will focus on using the platforms that its residents are most comfortable with including websites, email campaigns, social media accounts, print advertising, and television spots.

The chart below illustrates the various market metrics to evaluate the total potential audience and existing audience for City of Livermore communications. While the numbers are consistent on a relative basis with other cities in the Tri-Valley, there is a large audience still to be reached.

Livermore by the Numbers

Category	Value
Livermore Estimated Population	83,547
Livermore Residents on Facebook	44,000
Livermore Households	29,134
Active Livermore Library Accounts	26,023
Estimated Unique City Website Visitors	16,517
Highly Active Local Voters	14,986
Business Licenses	8,600
Residents on NextDoor	1,980
Likes on LARPD Facebook Page	1,150
Likes on Livermore Library Facebook Page	1,164
Likes on City Facebook Page	715
Registered Website Users	560
City Manager Newsletter List	39

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[1] Population and Household statistics are provided by U.S. Census Bureau. Residents on Facebook is estimated using the advertising tools on Facebook. Active Livermore Library Cards are library cards used since June 2012. Website and social media statistics are pulled from Google Analytics or the social media platforms. Highly Active Local Voters are defined as the number of voters in the November 2011 General Election (an election without any

Communications at Complementary Public Agencies and Key Institutions

During the fact-finding process, Tripepi Smith met with a number of outside agencies and organizations in order to identify city-specific best practices, and opportunities to partner with these agencies. The City, like any other organization, agency, or private company, is seeking a slice of mindshare from its residents. Therefore, it is important to understand how Livermore's efforts fit into the landscape.

The outside agencies Tripepi Smith met with include the Livermore Area Recreation and Park District (LARPD), the Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories Sandia National Laboratories, Livermore Premium Outlets, i-Gate, Zone 7 and Livermore Sanitation.

All of the neighboring public agencies we met with have some coordinated strategy for planning, executing, documenting, measuring, and analyzing their communications with the public. Moreover, a number of these agencies have recently increased their efforts to engage the public.

Tripepi Smith found the following outreach and communication activities are currently implemented in neighboring agencies:

- LARPD has ramped up its community engagement efforts by hiring a Marketing and Operations Supervisor.
- Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District (LVUSD) takes an active, but decentralized approach to communications, holding monthly communications meetings, and encouraging staff from each school to author releases at least every other month (which are submitted to Superintendent Kelly Bowers for approval). LVJUSD sends press releases to sister agencies and creates an internal culture where information is shared across departments.
- Google Analytics and social media analytics are regularly reviewed by most agencies on a monthly or quarterly basis.
- Most agencies that send e-newsletters collect open rates and analyze website traffic regularly.
- Quick Read (QR) codes (with traceable metrics) are regularly included in print material.
- Some agencies have experimented with "boosting" Facebook posts or running Google AdWords campaigns, and are considering running Facebook Ad campaigns.
- Outside agencies regularly invite the press to events, include pictures and supplementary material in press release material, and author long-form press releases in order to receive maximum coverage.

Evaluation of Livermore's Current Communications Methods

Tripepi Smith evaluated platforms currently employed by the City of Livermore to reach residents and engage its citizens. The platforms included:

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national up-ticket races to drive voter participation. Registered website users are people who have signed up on the City of Livermore website with an account that provides routine updates and notifications on opted-in content. The City Manager Newsletter List are people who have signed up on the City website and have also opted in to the City Manager Newsletter.

1. the Community Newsletter and related, consistent email communications
2. press releases and press-related activities
3. the City of Livermore website and its related sub-sites
4. social media and related assets of the City

Community Newsletter

The Community Newsletter is produced seasonally, with distribution targeted for three times per year. Eight weeks prior to publication, a call for articles is sent to staff from each department participating in the community newsletter committee. The newsletter team then meets to discuss potential article topics for inclusion. Like the website, the Community Newsletter exclusively features local pictures of Livermore, primarily taken by staff.

Articles are usually authored by members of the newsletter team, but other staff may draft articles to submit as well. While there are no official editorial guidelines for the newsletter, the City Manager's Office staff oversees the format of each issue. Staff noted that the membership and attendance of the Community Newsletter team is inconsistent, and that information-heavy or highly technical articles are rarely included.

Completed newsletter drafts are sent to the entire Community Newsletter team for edits and review. An approved draft is then sent to the City Manager's Office, and final sign-off is given by the City Manager. The completed newsletter is sent to the City Council shortly before the newsletter is mailed to the public.

The newsletter is distributed to every household in Livermore, as well as a list of businesses. It is also posted to the City of Livermore website, though staff does not track the number of times the newsletter is viewed. The wide distribution of the newsletter makes it the City's broadest platform for conveying information to the general public.

The 2011 Citizen Report survey indicated that 89% of survey respondents read the City of Livermore newsletter, suggesting a high penetration rate. Staff anecdotally note an increase in the volume of calls and inquires to the City Manager's Office after each newsletter is published, with generally positive feedback, although the frequency of calls and feedback is not tracked. Cost per issue is approximately $8,000, with an additional $5,000 in postage expense.

Staff has previously contemplated reducing the frequency of publication for the community newsletter (to a bi-annual publication) while increasing the number of pages, in order to maximize content and reduce postage costs. Staff has also discussed the possibility of offering a Spanish language edition of the newsletter online and adding a note to the print edition directing Spanish-dominant residents to the website.

In the mid-2000's, the City experimented with outsourcing the newsletter to a marketing firm. During our interviews, staff expressed that the articles and media featured in the outsourced newsletters were generic and consequently did not reflect a genuine effort to showcase Livermore or connect with residents. Since the Community Newsletter returned to in-house production, staff unanimously feels

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there is an increase in the quality of newsletter content, partially due to articles being written by staff close to the projects and the inclusion of local, timely photographs and topics.

Press Releases

Each department is empowered to authors its own press releases. Most departments send materials directly to the media, bypassing the City Manager's Office, however certain departments believe that all press releases must go through the City Manager's Office for approval. The City Manager's Office provides a regularly updated press release distribution list and handles press release creation and distribution for a number of (but not all) departments. Below is a count of press releases issued by various departments in the City of Livermore over the past 12 months. Due to the fact that some departments do not regularly submit press releases to the City Manager's Office or archive press releases in a central location, the chart below only reflects available press releases.

Documented Press Release By Topic	Number of Releases
Personnel	8
Community Event	5
Ordinance Announcement	1
Traffic Announcement/Public Works	2
Staff Accomplishment	1
Police Department –Specific Incident	31
Police Department – Events, Education, Accomplishments	33
Total	81

Because press releases are handled in different ways across departments, the details about the press release process are included in the Communications by Department section of the report.

Not every department regularly authors press releases, and some departments do not upload press releases to the website. Most staff communicated that the ability to author press releases with little oversight from a central gatekeeper allows for more timely releases, as well as greater control over what information is released.
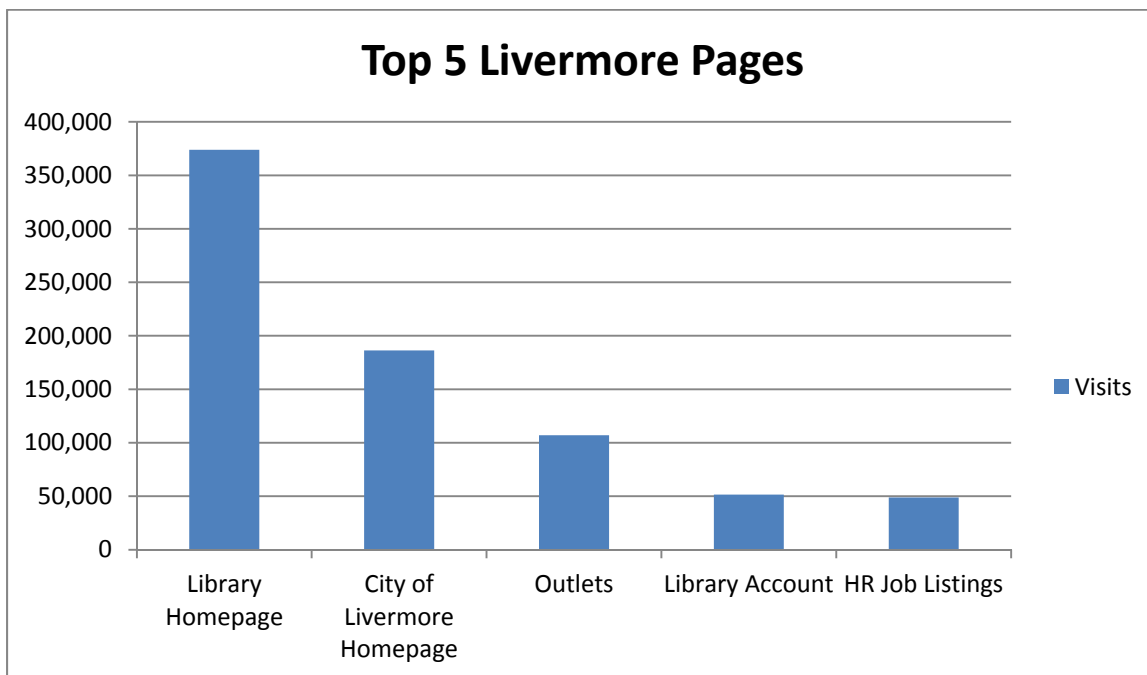
Website

Websites provide a standard, go-to interface for residents seeking services and are the bedrock for search engine indexing. As such, understanding the City website's popular pages, audience

demographics, and governance structure is critical to evaluating the overall communications processes of the City.

Website Quick Facts

The five most popular website pages over the last twelve months are outlined in the graph below. The data is pulled from the Google Analytics account that is embedded on the City's website. As evidenced by the data, the City Library is by far the most popular page. This result may be somewhat skewed by the fact that the page is the default for people logging onto public computers at the library. However, it is also expected given the relative frequency of citizen interaction with the library and the large number of active library cards that citizens have and use. Also of note is that the Livermore Premium Outlets webpage remains very popular and events around the launch of the outlets drove a large volume of traffic to the City's website.

Top 5 Livermore Pages

Website Traffic by Device

Visitors to the website are primarily using desktop computers, but there is a respectable percentage of mobile site visitors, and that number is likely to increase given current trends in technology. The City of Livermore website has a mobile optimized version of the website available, though it does not redirect to the mobile version automatically when accessing the site from a mobile device.

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Website Traffic by Device

- Desktop- 77%
- Mobile- 16%
- Tablet- 7%
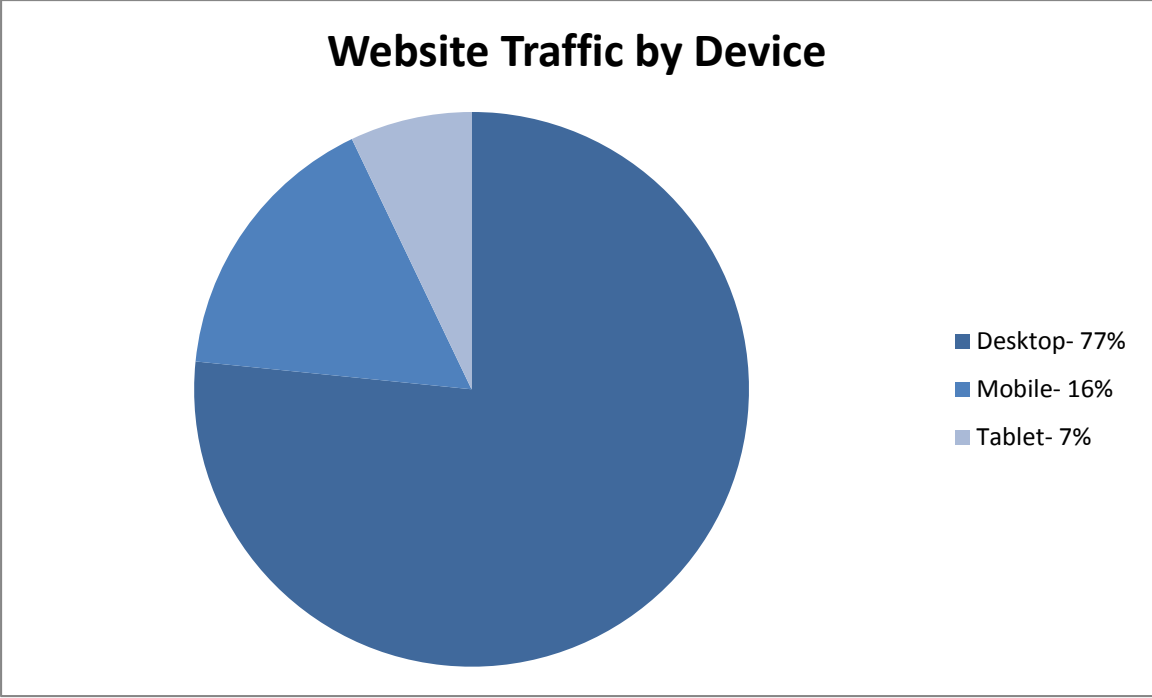
Website Traffic by Source

Most visitors to the City's website arrive via Google Search. Many others know the URL, have the site bookmarked, or have it set as a default on their browsers. All Google Analytics data must be judged with the understanding that traffic sourced from within the City Hall network was not excluded from the hit counts. In the course of our engagement with the City, Tripepi Smith made adjustments to exclude City Hall traffic based on guidance from the IT department. This should provide cleaner data for analysis in the future.

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Website Traffic by Source
September 2012-September 2013
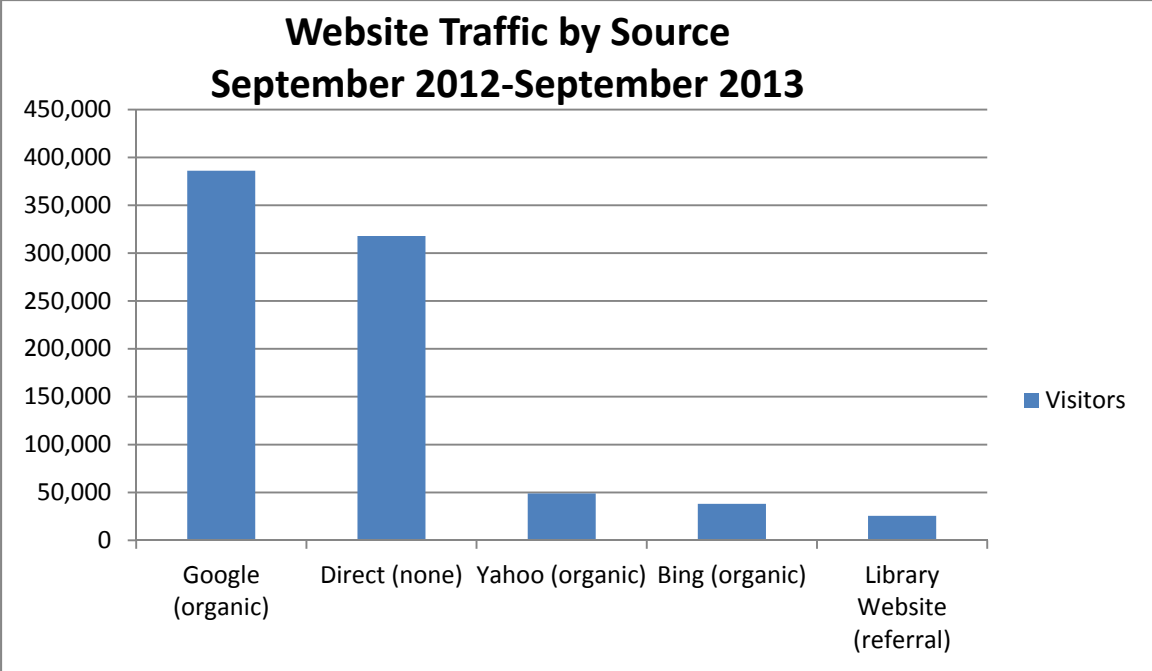
Website Traffic by Geographic Origin (Three-Month Review)

Google Analytics makes a best guess effort to determine the geographic location of a visitor to the website. This is accomplished by matching a database of source IP addresses with general geographic locations. The graph below demonstrates that in the last three months just over half of the traffic to the City of Livermore website has been generated by people outside of the City of Livermore.

Livermore Traffic by Geographic Origin
(Three-Month Review)

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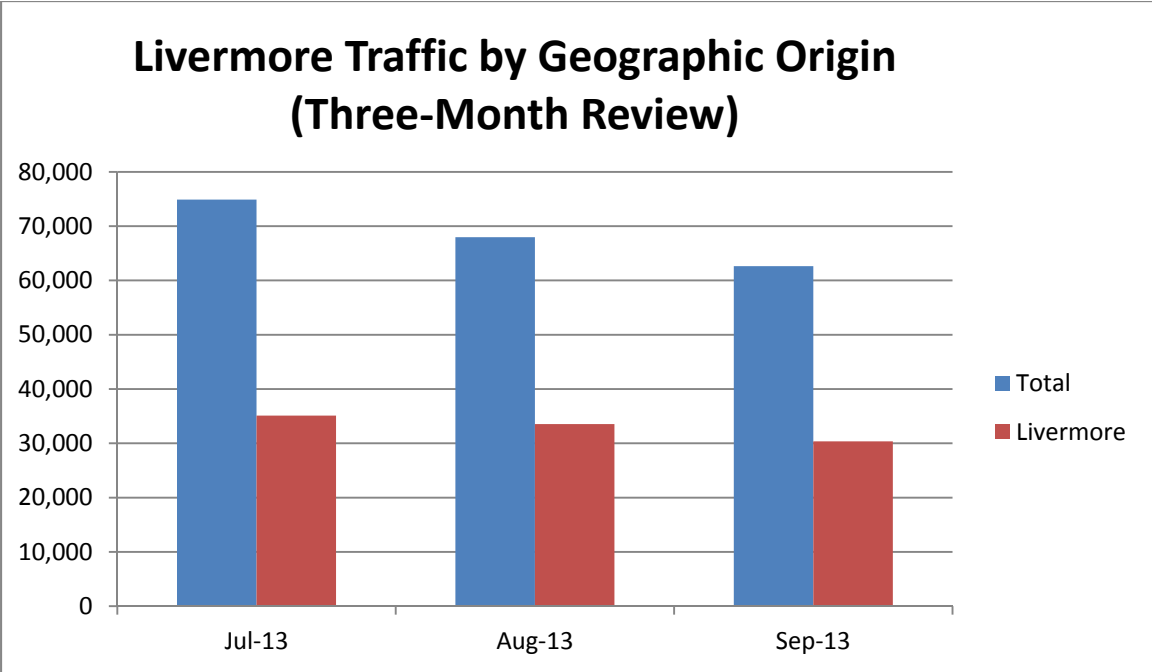
Website History

In 2011, the City of Livermore engaged Civica to redesign the city website. Staff members Dana d'Angelo and Jon Ostlund served as project leads on the effort.

Rather than establishing a single webmaster responsible for the website and its contents, the City of Livermore adopted a decentralized governance structure with the goal of empowering many staff members with the ability to edit the website. The belief was that this would keep content fresh, timely and routinely updated.

During the launch of the new website, Civica was scheduled to lead approximately 75 staff members in hands-on training of the website's content management system (CMS). However, due to technical difficulties on the scheduled day of training, Civica ended up leading two sessions: a high-end user session of 15 staff, and a general training of approximately 30 additional staff members. Using a train-the-trainer approach, Ms. d'Angelo and Mr. Ostlund managed to get the original 75 staff members fully trained. No additional Civica training has been provided since this initial effort, although a Civica-led webinar is scheduled to take place in winter 2013.

Immediately after training, each department established its own policy for approving website updates, with varying levels of oversight in each department.

Staff reports that although it was understood that a portion of the 75 trained staff would ultimately taper off, a significant amount of information learned during training was not retained due to the training taking place near the December holidays. This was compounded with the fact that Civica did not permit the majority of staff to access the website immediately after training. Staff retirements and personnel changes led to the additional loss of institutional knowledge around the Civica website.

In September 2011, the City created the CMS Superuser Group with the goal of continuing training and sharing best practices for a core group of Civica users. To date, the group has met a total of seven times. The Group meetings represent the only staff time specifically dedicated to the website and its management. Staff members estimate that the core Superuser Group currently consists of 15-20 members. Of these members, it is estimated that 10-12 possess a firm understanding of the website's functionality, with an additional three to four staff members understanding most of the capabilities of the website. There is no set Superuser Group membership or criteria for attending the Group meetings. Historically, the Group has met quarterly, although the schedule was recently revised to hold meetings every-other month.

Tripepi Smith advises a thorough review of the current access roles and rights granted to users of the website CMS for both security and skill inventory assessment in order to better establish who is responsible for website content and ensure that these staff members are provided adequate training and time allocation to do so effectively. This also will help ensure access to update the site has been fully removed from former employees or employees who are no longer in a position that merits the access to update the website.

Website Analysis

The absence of a single webmaster results in each department bearing responsibility for its own content creation and management. While this federated structure theoretically bypasses a bureaucratic process for posting content to the website, staff communicated that when situations call for technical help they are reliant upon the few members in the department with higher level access.

In addition to the increased workload experienced by staff members with higher-level permission on the website, the ad-hoc governance structure leads to a lack uniformity across the website and results in infrequently updated "orphan pages." Furthermore, a dearth of training on the Civica platform has resulted in many of the features of the website that would provide key measurement information and functional components for visitors to the site being underutilized.

Interviews and Opinions on Website

During numerous interviews and conversations with staff regarding the website, the single consistent opinion across departments was frustration and confusion surrounding the lack of structure and support. Staff expressed seven primary desires for the City website:

- A Department-level strategy regarding website content, priorities and functions
- Clear communication regarding CMS access
- A fix for the problem of "buried" information on website, in order to make the website easier to navigate and to improve the user experience
- Further training on using the website and its available functions
- Consistent review of website metrics to discern how the website is used by residents
- A clearly defined purpose for the website homepage
- A central point of contact to collect department-specific information

Metrics

No department in the City of Livermore regularly collects metrics or reviews Google Analytics on website traffic, although reports are infrequently produced by the IT department when requested by individual staff. Few staff members are granted access to the Google Analytics account for the website, and the Superuser Group has never received training on the capabilities of Google Analytics. Google Analytics is enabled for the majority of website pages, although certain functions are not optimized to collect specific analytics effectively.

The website has a survey feature, where visitors can rate the website experience as well as offer comments. Survey results are not regularly reviewed, and many Superusers were unaware of the survey's existence until Tripepi Smith's inquiry into the results.

City of Livermore Mobile Application

The City of Livermore has a mobile application (or "app") to supplement the City of Livermore website which is available on Android and iOS platforms. The app was created by a local developer and is maintained by City of Livermore Information Technology Director Neal Snedecor. Information from the app feeds directly to the City website. App metrics are not collected or reported. Reference to the app is

integrated into the City of Livermore website. App features include the ability to submit a maintenance request and access City contact information. .

Social Media

Social Media is a powerful communication tool. Unlike traditional media, social media presents the potential for enhanced connectivity and immediate direct engagement. According to Pew Research Center, 72% of online adults use social networking sites. Although social media is still used by young adults at higher rates, the online presence of those ages 65 and over has tripled in the last four years, with 43% of online seniors using social media sites in August 2013[2].

The City of Livermore uses multiple social media platforms to communicate with its residents. While Facebook remains the leading social media platform by "engagement count," alternative social media platforms may prove useful for particular forms of engagement. In addition to Livermore's City Hall accounts, some departments also maintain separate accounts in order to directly engage with residents on their specific subject areas. Currently, the following social media platforms are in use by various departments in the City:

Department	Social Media Platform	Public Engagement
City of Livermore- City Hall	Facebook	715 Likes
Community and Economic Development	Facebook	188 Likes
Livermore Public Library	Facebook	1,164 Likes
Livermore Municipal Airport	Facebook	117 Likes
Livermore-Pleasanton Fire Department	Facebook	339 Likes
City of Livermore	LinkedIn	235 Followers
City of Livermore	Nextdoor	1,980 registered users
City of Livermore	Twitter	449
Livermore Police Department	Twitter	1,146

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[2] Brenner, Joanna and Aaron Smith. *72% of Online Adults Are Social Networking Site Users*. Rep. Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, 5 Aug. 2013. Web.

Fans of Livermore's social media Facebook pages (people who "Like" the Pages) skew older and disproportionately female compared to general Facebook users. Notably, these channels are also only hitting a small segment of the overall City of Livermore population as identified in the "Livermore by the Numbers" chart.

Livermore's social media platforms have levels of engagement that are comparable to neighboring cities in the Tri-Valley; however there is enormous potential for growth in this arena.

Livermore Social Media Accounts – Followers and Likes relative to Neighboring Cities

Social Media Account	Followers/Likes
Livermore PD Twitter	1,424
City of Pleasanton Twitter	1,400
Town of Danville FB	1,241
Livermore Public Library FB	1,160
City of Dublin Twitter	959
City of Livermore FB	706
City of San Ramon Twitter	432
City of Livermore Twitter	420
Livermore Library Twitter	336
Community & Econ FB	184

City of Livermore Facebook Accounts Relative to Complementary Agencies and Community Groups

Facebook Account	Likes
Downtown Livermore Inc.	9,020
LVJUSD	1,712
Livermore Public Library	1,164
LARPD	1,150
City of Livermore- City Hall	715
Las Positas Community College	580

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LPFD	339
Livermore Sanitation	221
Comm. and Economic Development	188
Livermore Municipal Airport	117

Media

Tri-Valley Community Television/City Video Production

The City of Livermore is part of a three city consortium that funds the local government access television station, Tri-Valley Community Television, to broadcast the City Council meetings and provide video archive of the council meetings for review online. Currently, no other department in the City of Livermore regularly contracts with Tri-Valley Community Television for video production, citing above-market prices with below market production value.

Tri-Valley Community Television actually has three channels within the community, which can create confusion. Unlike many cities that can reference a single station for residents to visit for city programming, Livermore must reference three different channels.

All departments send press releases and news items to Tri-Valley Community Television, but staff at Tri-Valley Community Television noted that releases are rarely received. This would indicate a significant gap in communication that needs to be reconciled. The media distribution lists provided to Tripepi Smith by various departments list Tri-Valley Community Television alternately as pr@tri-valleytv.org or mts@tri-valleytv.org. These differences suggest a need for improved communication between the City of Livermore and Tri-Valley Community Television in order to ensure information is shared regularly and effectively.

Tri-Valley Community Television produces programming on local city news including, *Slipstream*, *Tri-Valley Conversations,* and Public Service Announcements (PSAs). Twice a month, they produce a half-hour program wherein the Mayor updates residents on the City of Livermore. No other departments have made use of the interview opportunities on *Slipstream*, *Tri-Valley Conversations,* or PSAs.

Metrics on viewership and website visitor counts were not made available to Tripepi Smith.

The City of Livermore recently launched a Vimeo account, using regular staff-photographer Kris Adams for video production. Although staff noted the potential for increased interaction and engagement via a regularly updated video page, the time needed to produce and edit video has kept the effort from moving forward.

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Print Media

The media landscape in the Tri-Valley has changed drastically in recent years. In August 2011, the Bay Area News Group announced the reorganization of eleven of its papers. Three Bay Area News Group titles (the *Tri-Valley Herald*, the *San Joaquin Herald*, and the *Valley Times)* consolidated to form the *Tri-Valley Times*, a localized edition of the *San Jose Mercury News*.

Despite changes in the media market for newspaper coverage, there remains a strong appetite for community information. According to Patch Editor Mayra Flores de Marcotte, *Livermore Patch* remains one of the strongest *Patch* markets in the country, maintaining one editor dedicated to the city while in most markets, editors are now responsible for multiple cities.

Media Relations – Staff and Reporter Interviews

Tripepi Smith met with members of the press regarding their opinions of City communications and the journalistic process. Press members communicated that City of Livermore staff were generally friendly and responsive. All members of the press identified the Public Library Department and Police Department as the most proactive in sending information.

Chief concerns of local media included the failure of City staff to return calls, lack of sensitivity to deadlines, and difficulty navigating the City website to find pertinent information.

There is no single staff member dedicated to acting as a media liaison. Staff in the City Manager's Office typically field questions from the press and direct media to the appropriate staff member. Staff from multiple departments expressed annoyance with local media's failure to fact-check stories, and noted that staff titles, names, and dates of events often appear inaccurately in local media. Staff attributes these mistakes to human error and not willful misrepresentation on the part of the press. City staff also noted frequent turnover of media personnel as a barrier to reporter engagement.

Reporters commented that the City often fails to respect publication calendars. To aid in this effort going forward, Tripepi Smith discussed deadlines with local media and compiled the following information.

Reporter	Publication	Usual deadline
Janet Armantrout	*The Independent*	Tuesday
Mayra Flores de Marcotte	*Livermore Patch*	Rolling deadline (continuous)
Jeremy Thomas	Bay Area News Group	Three days in advance, a week in advance preferred

Reporters said they found the City website difficult to navigate. They would like easier access to documents needed for background research including press releases, calendar items, and other City news postings.

Media Audit

As part of the fact-finding process, Tripepi Smith conducted an audit of available archived media coverage in national, statewide, regional, and local markets. Tripepi Smith audited available archived articles of major local, regional, statewide and national news outlets. Tripepi Smith found that media coverage was generally neutral and brief. As one might expect, Lawrence Livermore and Sandia provided the bulk of national and statewide media interest. On a more local level, stories involving crime, the Livermore Premium Outlets, and the Livermore Valley wine region tended to dominate. Local television coverage heavily focused on public safety, weather, and commerce. Given the number of press releases issued by the Police Department (as compared to other departments) and the media's bias for crime stories, these findings are consistent with expectations. Furthermore, Tripepi Smith found national coverage of Livermore in major news outlets to be rare.

Communications by Department

As noted in the introduction, the federated nature of communications in Livermore results in each department having different approaches to execution. Tripepi Smith consulted staff in each department to best understand the strategies each individual department employs to communicate with residents.

Tripepi Smith found significant variation across each department, with some departments having sophisticated processes while other departments dedicate very little time to communications efforts. What is clear is that the culture of the City lends itself to continuing to allow each department to have some control over department efforts, but offering a guiding hand to assist some departments in executing their communication efforts. The findings for each department are incorporated into the recommendations section of this report.

Recommendations

Based on our observations, Tripepi Smith recommends continuing the federated approach to communications in the City of Livermore. It is an approach that can ensure subject matter experts are close to communications while also respecting the culture of independence and personal responsibility that the City has created.

Organizational Recommendations

- Organizational Recommendation #1: Establish a communications team to meet twice a month to review the City's current message focus, upcoming major events, current City issues and initiatives, review measurements and metrics, learn new skills, share experiences and review results.
- Organizational Recommendation #2: Assign a resource that is responsible for hosting monthly meetings of the communications team, preparing meeting materials and follow up action items and notes.

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- Organizational Recommendation #3: Assign a resource responsible for developing a communications calendar to coordinate information releases, social media posts and City events.
- Organizational Recommendation #4: Assign a resource to seek cooperation and collaboration with sister agencies where appropriate and consistent with Council policy.
- Organizational Recommendation #5: Assign a resource to identify organization-wide stories via observation of leadership meetings and other city meetings.
- Organizational Recommendation #6: Identify all city platforms and opportunities for cross-promotion of City events including department mailings, bill inserts, and agency-specific social media accounts.

Press Releases/Media Relations

- Press Release/Media Relations Recommendation #1: Identify stories for press releases well in advance. Issue additional press releases summarizing events after they take place.
- Press Release/Media Relations Recommendation #2: Enhance press release template to include a strong "boilerplate" statement reaffirming Livermore's brand. Boilerplate statements can be customized to include Department-specific information where appropriate.
- Press Release/Media Relations Recommendation #3: Position press material to facilitate the media's coverage of City events. This includes assembling an event timeline, providing photos, pre-assembling approved quotes, and sharing staff contact information.
- Press Release/Media Relations Recommendation #4: Assign a resource to routinely meet with the media and facilitate informal communications.
- Press Release/Media Relations Recommendation #5: Assign a resource to produce a weekly media review report focusing on city media mentions. Distribute media review report to the communications team and leadership.
- Press Release/Media Relations Recommendation #6: Assign a resource to periodically review the press release recipient list and make sure that important outlets (such as Tri-Valley Community Television) are listed correctly.

Photography/Video

- Photography/Video Recommendation #1: Utilize free services provided by Tri-Valley Community Television and leverage available television platforms.
- Photography/Video Recommendation #2: Share and strategize about upcoming events to showcase department-specific video production opportunities.
- Photography/Video Recommendation #3: Identify all photography and video services commissioned by each department at communications team meetings. Repurpose content as appropriate.

Newsletters

- Newsletter Recommendation #1: Leverage a graphic art resource to create a test version of the newsletter incorporating different formats and graphic layouts.

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- Newsletter Recommendation #2: Integrate QR codes, social media accounts and links to the City website to drive readers back to the website.
- Newsletter Recommendation #3: Evaluate metrics around implementation of an electronic Spanish language edition of the newsletter.
- Newsletter Recommendation #3: Investigate other paper-based community outreach opportunities such as Water Division water and sewer bill mailers and Livermore Sanitation mailers as possible communication channels for City of Livermore news items.

Social Media
- Social Media Recommendation #1: Measure and track metrics of all City social media accounts.
- Social Media Recommendation #2: Work to drive engagement on City social media platforms by posting more pictures of the community, feature local businesses, mention citizens, and run a Facebook Ad campaign.
- Social Media Recommendation #3: Leverage Nextdoor (across multiple departments) to target specific communities and areas.
- Social Media Recommendation #4: Fully integrate social media references into all citywide materials.
- Social Media Recommendation #5: Establish a social media calendar and explore the possibility of utilizing a social media management tool such as Hootsuite to schedule, track and coordinate across all City platforms.

Website
- Website Recommendation #1: Evaluate the capabilities of the website and determine how existing functions and capabilities can be best utilized.
- Website Recommendation #2: Define a single website editor responsible for updating homepage content and cleaning up links. Require this website editor to review analytics and create periodic reports for the communications team and City Manager's office.
- Website Recommendation #3: Review the capabilities of the existing Superusers. Add significant training component to Superuser meetings to train staff in the website's capabilities.
- Website Recommendation #4: Define a clear criteria for CMS access based on user proficiencies, job description and security concerns. Share the criteria with staff and establish a review process to increase access when appropriate.
- Website Recommendation #5: Develop standards for City of Livermore website. As part of these standards, define a consistent process for content review and define editorial standards and objectives. Superusers should be trained in these standards.
- Website Recommendation #6: Evaluate the capabilities within the CMS system and fully utilize all tools available.