



# Communication and Community Engagement Strategy



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## Overview

Decisions made in healthcare have far-reaching effects. What may seem like a minor change can cause significant ripples throughout the communities served, and within the health centre itself.

To ensure we are making the best decisions, preparing for impacts/reactions and informing all stakeholders, it's imperative that Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre (RVH) connect with our stakeholders during every step of the process – from planning through to execution. This will help us build strong relationships and establish a two-way dialogue with the people affected or impacted by our plans.

In addition, the *Local Health System Integration Act, 2006* (LHSIA) requires health service providers (including hospitals) to "engage the community of diverse persons and entities in the area where it provides health services when developing plans and setting priorities for the delivery of health services".

## Objectives

The Communication and Community Engagement Strategy will:

- Demonstrate RVH's commitment to openness, timeliness and accountability in decision-making processes
- Build organization-wide commitment, culture and capacity for community engagement
- Bring diverse voices and perspectives into the planning and decision-making process
- Help RVH better meet the health needs of Simcoe Muskoka and identify service gaps, duplication and continuous improvement
- Enhance service quality, accessibility and system navigation based on community feedback
- Improve people's health literacy, ensuring they can understand and use information to improve and maintain their health
- Engage our communities in health promotion discussions in order to provide a more significant and lasting impact on health
- Identify new opportunities to integrate services and smooth transitions of care
- Target resources where they are most effective and needed in the community
- Build awareness, support, trust and confidence in RVH
- Further enable RVH to fulfill its vision to "Make each life better. Together."

## RVH's Commitment to Communication and Community Engagement

RVH is unwavering in its commitment to put patients and families first through our **MY CARE** philosophy, ensuring they are partners in their care and providing the most positive patient experience. Always and without exception. That means ensuring they are partners in their care throughout every step of their healthcare journey; informed and engaged in planning and decision-making.

We believe engagement is about giving stakeholders who may be impacted by a decision or action the opportunity to participate in the process, and help shape decisions before they are made. Real community engagement requires listening and learning, as well as informing and educating. Only through genuine two-way dialogue can RVH make better decisions that meet the needs of all stakeholders.

RVH will communicate and engage stakeholders when:

- An issue affects the introduction of new and/or the reduction of existing programs and/or services
- The decision has long-term, large-scale or otherwise significant social, environmental, health and/or economic impact for one or more stakeholder groups (e.g. access to service)
- An issue directly affects a significant group in the community
- A significant number of people or groups are likely to have strong views on the issue
- There is already, or will be, public media scrutiny over the issue

It is the expectation that all RVH programs and departments will develop and engagement/communication plan before launching new initiatives and services.

RVH is aligned with the North Simcoe Muskoka model of communication and community engagement. RVH is a member of the LHIN Communications Council, providing strategic communication and community engagement recommendations to the Care Connections Areas of Focus Councils and their corresponding Project Steering Committees, supporting the LHIN to achieve its vision of Healthy People. Excellent Care. One System.

## RVH's Communication and Engagement Principles

At RVH we believe true engagement goes beyond just informing various stakeholders about new initiatives or projects. It means seeking broad input to ensure we are considering, responding to and meeting the needs of all stakeholders. We are committed to these principles:

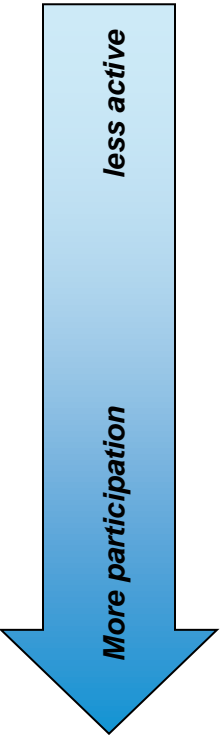
<p><b>Transparent</b></p> <p><i>We will engage stakeholders in an open process with transparent purpose, goals, expectations, accountabilities and constraints. We will be open about how the engagement will be used in decision-making.</i></p>	<p><b>Inclusive</b></p> <p><i>We will invite broad participation, considering visible and non-visible challenges such as socioeconomic status, cultural beliefs/traditions, language or disability.</i></p>
<p><b>Timely</b></p> <p><i>We will engage stakeholders early enough in the process to make a difference in decision-making. We will provide timely feedback and let participants know how their input was used.</i></p>	<p><b>Respectful</b></p> <p><i>We will treat stakeholders with courtesy, dignity and respect, while being responsive to their unique perspectives.</i></p>
<p><b>Effective</b></p> <p><i>We are committed to reflecting stakeholder feedback in our plans and actions. We will monitor the effectiveness of community engagement strategies.</i></p>	<p><b>Appropriate</b></p> <p><i>We will use methods of engagement that are appropriate to the purpose, while engaging stakeholders who are most affected.</i></p>

## What is Community Engagement?

Although there is no universally accepted definition of community engagement, the World Health Organization (WHO) defines it as “a process by which people are enabled to become actively and genuinely involved in defining the issues of concern to them, in making decisions about factors that affect their lives, in formulating and implementing policies, in planning, developing and delivering services, and in taking action to active change.”

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) and the WHO have identified levels of engagement and these have been adopted by the Local Health Integration Network Collaborative (LHINC).

1. Inform
2. Consult
3. Involve
4. Collaborate
5. Empower



<i>Goal</i>	<i>When To Use</i>	<i>Tools &amp; Tactics</i>
<b>Inform</b>	Provides clear, balanced information to assist in understanding issues, options and opportunities.	Publications, newsletters, press releases, Public Service Announcements, advertising, fact sheets, FAQs.
<b>Consult</b>	When the objective is to gather information, analysis and feedback from a variety of stakeholders.	Surveys, opinion polls, community outreach, public forums, social media comments, written submissions, Town Halls.
<b>Involve</b>	Active participation from stakeholders ensures issues and concerns are understood and considered.	Patient groups, committee membership, stakeholder research, focus groups.
<b>Collaborate</b>	Working together in the decision-making process and incorporating recommendations into the decision.	Patient and Family Advisory Council, ad hoc committees, one-on-one consultations.
<b>Empower</b>	Actively partnering with stakeholders and sharing final decision-making.	Patient and Family Advisory Council, working groups.

**\*\*\* Different levels of engagement and tactics are used depending on the objective and need.**

## RVH Engagement Tools and Tactics

RVH currently uses many tactics to engage and communicate with its stakeholders, including (but not limited to):

- Bedside electronic survey for patients/families
- Post-discharge patient calls
- Personalized information letters
- Community Forums / Open Houses
- Workshops
- Focus groups
- One-on-one discussions
- Surveys/questionnaires
- Telephone and in-person Town Halls
- Newsletters
- Feedback option on website
- Feedback post-cards for patients and families
- Elected Officials presentations and meetings, including annual tour
- Robust media relations strategy, including:
  - Three times weekly television series providing health news
  - Monthly newspaper feature
  - Radio Public Service Announcements on 6 local radio stations
  - Annual Report magazine distributed to all homes in the region
- Paid advertising (predominantly print)
- Social media (YouTube channel, Twitter, Facebook)
- In-hospital digital monitors
- Videos on website
- Website postings including safety indicators (i.e. hand hygiene, infection rates), Board of Directors meeting minutes, executive contracts and expenses
- Fact sheets/information brochures
- Community outreach, including presentations and speeches
- Events
- Speakers' Bureau
- Communications Calendar
- Issues management and crisis communications
- Participation in external committees, councils and purposeful partnerships
- Presentations to, and input from, RVH's Patient Family Advisory Council

## Patient Family Advisory Council

RVH's Patient Family Advisory Council (PFAC) is the cornerstone of community engagement and RVH's patient-centred strategy. The Patient Family Advisors represent the voice of the patient and families. Their experience, insights, expertise and perspectives are invaluable to improving care.

The Patient Family Advisory Council is an opportunity for patients and families to participate as partners in care and shape the patient experience at RVH. They partner with RVH's staff and physicians to provide direct input into policies, programs and practices which affect the patient experience. It is only when we see healthcare through the eyes of patients and their families that we can improve their experience.

## Target Audiences

RVH believes everyone is a potential stakeholder because, at some point, nearly everyone has a direct experience with the health centre and they – as well as their families -- will be impacted by the decisions we make.

Stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

- Patients and families
- Visitors
- Staff, physicians and volunteers
- Healthcare partners
- Community partners
- Donors
- Elected officials
- Funding partners
- General public
- Media

It is also important to recognize that people define themselves by which communities they feel part of, including:

- Geographic communities such as municipalities or defined neighbourhoods
- Non-geographic communities of common interest based on age, gender, ethnicity, disability, language, demographics and cultural communities
- Communities of interest or common experience such as patients with similar needs
- Communities of shared beliefs

## Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Back

Effective community engagement requires on-going monitoring, evaluation and reporting back. It is important to understand the tools and tactics that were effective, what could have been improved and the lessons learned. It's also critically important to inform stakeholders of how their feedback and ideas contributed to decision-making.

## Acknowledgements

Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre would like to acknowledge and thank the following organizations and sources for sharing content and/or providing guidance during the development of our community engagement strategy:

*Bluewater Health: Community Engagement Strategy and Operational Plan, 2011*

*The Scarborough Hospital: Community Engagement Framework, 2013*

*Westpark Health Centre: Community Engagement Plan, 2012*

*Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare: Community Engagement Framework, 2010*

*Southlake Regional Health Centre: Community Engagement Strategy, 2013*

*North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network: 2011-13, Communication and Community Engagement Strategy, 2012*

*Southwest Local Health Integration Network: Communications and Community Engagement Plan 2014-2015, A Healthier Tomorrow, 2014*

*Engaging People Improving Care (EPIC) website –supported by the Local Health Integration Network Collaborative (LHINC).*



## Appendix A: Checklist for Planning and Conducting Community Engagement Activities

### Step 1: Establish the Goals

- Identify the purpose of the engagement. What do you want the engagement/communication to achieve?
- Set objectives for each engagement activity
- Identify stakeholders, their unique needs/concerns and the messaging/tactics that will be most successful with them
- Determine clear timelines, and most responsible person for each tactic
- Complete Communication Engagement Plan template

### Step 2: Structure the Activity

- Decide which tool(s) to use to engage the communities
- Determine how the ideas and feedback will be recorded and considered in planning and decision-making
- Determine the timing of engagement
- Develop background information (fact sheet, FAQs) to distribute, if necessary, and key messages
- Determine logistics and resources needed to support engagement
- Engage the communities using the selected tools

### Step 3: Evaluate and Communicate the Results

- Monitor the engagement process and make adjustments to the process, if necessary
- Design evaluation techniques that are appropriate to each activity
- Evaluate the engagement process
- Revise and execute a communication plan
- Report back to the participants
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of the engagement on decisions

*\*Adapted from Ardal, S., J. Butler and R. Edwards. 2006. The Health Planner's Toolkit – Module 5: Community Engagement and Communication (Health System Intelligence Project). Chafe, R. et al. 2007 (December). A Framework for Involving the Public in Healthcare Coverage and Resource Allocation Decisions.*



## Appendix B: Communication/Engagement Plan

**Project name:**  
**Engagement/Communication roll-out launch date:**  
**Project implementation date:**  
**Last Revised:**  
**Project Lead: extension #**

Decisions made in healthcare have far-reaching effects. What may seem like a minor change can cause significant ripples internally and externally and the list of potential stakeholders is long.

To ensure we are making the best decisions, preparing for impacts/reactions and informing all stakeholders, it's imperative that you develop a comprehensive engagement and communication plan which will connect with our stakeholders during every step of the process – from planning through to execution. This will help us build strong relationships and establish a two-way dialogue with the people affected by our plans.

True engagement goes beyond just informing various stakeholders about new initiatives or projects. It means seeking broad input to ensure we are considering, responding to and meeting the needs of all stakeholders, while setting our projects up for success. This tool will assist you in identifying stakeholders and their impact on your project, while clarifying key messages and approaches.

<b>Issue / project purpose</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>In plain language, describe this project. What need, opportunity or problem will it address?</i></li> </ul>	
<b>Background</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Explain at a high-level, the background necessary to fully understand the project.</i></li> </ul>	
<b>Alignment with MY CARE Strategic Plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Describe how this project aligns with RVH's strategic directions.</i></li> </ul>	
<b>Primary strategic key messages</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>3 to 6 of the most important messages that a wide variety of stakeholders should know (i.e. it enhances patient safety, drives clinical excellence, accelerates learning and research, values people.)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

<p><b>Secondary Operational key message</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specifics of the initiative that may be pertinent to specific stakeholders (i.e. project go-live date, resulting workflow changes, new departmental location, staffing changes, training opportunities etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Potential challenges/risks of engagement/communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the issues of greatest concern for engagement? (e.g., participation may be an issue; stakeholders will be upset)</li> <li>• How do you plan to address them? (e.g., promote early and provide incentive for focus group participants; ensure you address concerns in messaging)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Evaluation and impact of engagement/communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will you know the engagement/communication plan was effective and how will you use the feedback received?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Engagement logistics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline resources you require to support your engagement activity (e.g., venue, people, materials, food, etc)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Collateral communication products required</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think about supporting communication products you may need developed, i.e. posters, screensavers, newsletter story, key messages, FAQs etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Corporate Communications comment only:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please return this completed form to Corporate Communications for review</li> </ul>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Communication will develop and lead on a comprehensive communication strategy</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Communication requirements are limited and will be developed and executed by the project lead. Stakeholder engagement will be led by lead department/program</p> <p><b>Comments:</b></p>

\*\*\*On the next page, identify all impacted stakeholder groups and the engagement/communication tactics you will use to reach them. Identifying their level of impact/influence will help you prioritize your time and efforts and determine the best approach. Add and delete rows as required, but be as specific as possible.

<b>Stakeholder/ Audience</b>	<b>Level of Influence/ Impact of stakeholder on project</b>	<b>Date/ Timing</b>	<b>Engagement/ Communication Tactic/Tool(s)</b>	<b>Information needs</b>	<b>Messenger/lead</b>
Who needs to receive communication  (stakeholders below are just a guide; add/delete as required)	Low, Medium, High  (Highlight rows identified as "high")	The launch and frequency of communication	Most appropriate format(s) for communication (i.e. face-to-face meeting, staff meeting, e-mail, newsletter etc)	What information needs to be communicated? (i.e. go-live date, learn new processes, participate in decision making, specifics about changes to care)	Who will lead on communications?  Who else is involved?
Board of Directors					
Senior Leadership Team					
LHIN (CEO, board, Leadership Council)					
Unions					
Volunteers/ Auxiliary					
Foundation					
Medical Advisory Committee					
Most impacted staff/physicians					
Other impacted departments – <b>Staff</b> i.e. ED					
Other impacted departments – <b>Physicians</b> i.e. ED					
Human Resources					

<b>Stakeholder/ Audience</b>	<b>Level of Influence/ Impact of stakeholder on project</b>	<b>Date/ Timing</b>	<b>Engagement/ Communication Tactic/Tool(s)</b>	<b>Information needs</b>	<b>Messenger/lead</b>
Who needs to receive communication  (stakeholders below are just a guide; add/delete as required)	Low, Medium, High  (Highlight rows identified as "high")	The launch and frequency of communication	Most appropriate format(s) for communication (i.e. face-to-face meeting, staff meeting, e-mail, newsletter etc)	What information needs to be communicated? (i.e. go-live date, learn new processes, participate in decision making, specifics about changes to care)	Who will lead on communications?  Who else is involved?
Joint Health & Safety					
General Staff					
General Physicians					
Other affected hospitals - Boards / Leadership					
Partner health organizations (i.e. Barrie Community Family Health Team, CCAC, Criticall, patient transport partners, EMS)					
Partner community organizations (i.e. Meals on Wheels, Cancer Society, Red Cross -- <i>identify with separate rows</i> )					
Patients / families / advocacy groups					

<b>Stakeholder/ Audience</b>	<b>Level of Influence/ Impact of stakeholder on project</b>	<b>Date/ Timing</b>	<b>Engagement/ Communication Tactic/Tool(s)</b>	<b>Information needs</b>	<b>Messenger/lead</b>
Who needs to receive communication  (stakeholders below are just a guide; add/delete as required)	Low, Medium, High  (Highlight rows identified as "high")	The launch and frequency of communication	Most appropriate format(s) for communication (i.e. face-to-face meeting, staff meeting, e-mail, newsletter etc)	What information needs to be communicated? (i.e. go-live date, learn new processes, participate in decision making, specifics about changes to care)	Who will lead on communications?  Who else is involved?
Elected officials					
MoHLTC (i.e. issues branch, capital, etc.)					
General community/media					
Other					

Different levels of engagement are used depending on the objective and need. However, true engagement goes beyond just informing various stakeholders about new initiatives or projects. It means seeking broad input in advance to ensure we are considering, responding and meeting the needs of all stakeholders. The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) and World Health Organization have identified levels of engagement and these have been adopted by the Local Health Integration Network Collaborative (LHINC). They are considered to be best practice and include:

- Inform
- Consult
- Involve
- Collaborate
- Empower

*Note: It is not necessary to use all levels of engagement when empowering stakeholders, but rather, use the most appropriate tactics/levels.*

### RVH Communication Principles:

Principle	Why?
Be transparent, honest and credible	Fosters trust, respect and support amongst stakeholders
Be inclusive	Reinforces trust and ensures all stakeholders are equally informed and onboard
Accurate and timely information	Eases concerns / ensures void isn't filled with inaccurate information
Provide consistent messages	Inconsistency diminishes credibility and creates confusion
Tailor engagement and communication to audience needs	Makes information relevant and compelling to audience
Include personal stories	Puts a face to the story. People relate to people
Reinforce RVH's strategic goals and support strategic directions	Helps stakeholders "connect the dots" and better understand overall goals.
Vary mechanisms	A variety of tools best meet range of preferences and needs
Use both pull and push tactics as appropriate	Promotes stakeholder engagement. Informs and involves
Manage and meet expectations	Mutually-agreeable deliverables and consistently-met deadlines increases trust and demonstrates value of engagement/communications
Avoid information overload - target communication	Too much information, or irrelevant information, makes people tune out.
Develop creative solutions	Creative communications engage stakeholders and "cuts through the noise"
Make leadership, particularly clinician leadership, support visible	Lends credibility to communication
Listen and act on feedback	Ensures engagement/communications meet changing audience needs

## Appendix C: Engagement Evaluation Plan

This will assist in evaluating your engagement activities and identifying areas for improvement.

Indicators and measures that may be used in evaluation, include:

- The number of people who attended the activity
- The demographic distribution of people that attended the activity
- The number of information resources distributed
- Participants' satisfaction with the activity and their opportunity to provide input
- How much participants felt they gained from the activity
- Evidence of new relationships and partnerships
- Knowledge gained by participants
- Perception of confidence in RVH
- Did the input affect the decision-making process and project outcomes?
- Were programs and services improved by engagement?
- Was health and well-being improved as a result of engagement?

Questions	Notes:
What are the indicators/measures that will be used?	
What method of evaluation will be used? (survey, questionnaire)	
How will the evaluation results be communicated?	
Where will the information be stored, recorded and tracked?	



## Appendix D: Engagement Reporting Back Plan

This will assist in reporting back to stakeholders that their input/concerns were considered.

Questions	Notes:
To whom and when will written reports be required?	
When does the community require feedback? (i.e. after each activity?)	
How will you communicate that the community information gathered was considered?	
What information do you need to convey?	
Is media notification required?	
Is ongoing communication required?	