

## **POLICY ON COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

### **1. PREAMBLE**

Communications and External Relations are a critical aspect of the Department's public image and how it is perceived. An effort must be made to ensure that a positive image is portrayed of the department at all times and clear, accurate and consistent communication is conveyed to the media and stakeholders. This policy aims at defining common principles and shared vision for the Department's communication and how citizens will be provided with an opportunity to express their views, be heard and dialogue with leaders of the Department enhancing public participation.

### **2. DEFINITIONS**

In this policy -

**“Media Liaison”** refers to the interaction that takes place between the media and the department continuously formally or informally to unpack and inform the public its strategic objectives and programs. This interaction can take place through media statements and press briefings.

**“External Communications”** occurs when the department interacts formally and informally to its stakeholder i.e. the Public, Parastatals, National Departments, sister Departments about services delivered by the Local Government Department. This interaction can be in a form of letters, emails and media statements.

**“Internal Communications”** takes place when the officials of the Department interact formally or informally using letters, faxes, mails and telephones to one another while performing duties of the Department, sharing information and transferring knowledge. Some of the main channels of informal communications can be staff meetings and internal newsletters.

**“Official Spokesperson of the Department / MEC”** refers to the person mandated to speak to the media formally or informally on behalf of the Department, be it to respond to queries or unpack programs and policies of the Department.

### **3. PURPOSE**

The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Communication Policy seeks to create a platform for dialogue and move from a one way communication to reinforced dialogue, from institution centered to a citizen centered communication approach. People should have a right to fair and full information about the department.

### **4. AUTHORISATION**

- 4.1 The Constitution of the RSA, Chapter 2, Section 32
- 4.2 Public Service Regulations Part 1 Section (H4 and H5)
- 4.3 Public Service Regulations Part 11 Section E

### **5. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 The Constitution of the RSA, Chapter 2, Section 32
- 5.2 Public Service Regulations 2001
- 5.3 Promotion to Access to Information Act 2 of 2000

### **6. POLICY FRAMEWORK**

Individuals with Key Responsibilities and Competencies deal with media

#### **6.1 Member of the Executive Council (MEC)**

- a) Key link between the Department and the public
- b) Handle all political sensitive communication issues
- c) Chief Spokesperson for the Department

#### **6.2 Head Of Department (HOD)**

- a) Sole spokesperson during crisis management situations
- b) Handle all communication issues that have important policy implications
- c) Handle all communication issues that financially implicate the Department
- d) Approve all departmental media releases/statements
- e) Delegate media related responsibilities to appropriate line functionaries

#### **6.3 Head of Communications**

- a) Accountable to the HOD and MEC for all media- related issues.
- b) Manage all media liaison and monitoring in the Department

- c) Liaise with appropriate line functionaries with regard to media queries.
- d) Take responsibility for the screening, drafting and distribution of media releases of the Department.
- e) Oversee the formulation, presentation and distribution of all publicly disseminated information by the department, including external publications and the Department's website.
- f) Official voice for the Department in terms of responding to the media.
- g) Maintain continuous contact and a positive relationship with contact persons in the print and electronic media.
- h) Ensure the monitoring of media and process the information for purposes of devising messages and strategy.
- i) Advise the MEC and HOD regarding short and long term communication issues and implications.
- j) Represent the Department at Provincial and National forums on communication issues.
- k) Participate in Departmental management meetings to identify communication opportunities.
- l) Give final approval for all advertorials both print and electronic
- m) Have regular consultation with line managers on communication opportunities for their programmes.
- n) Arrange and chair all press briefings.

#### **6.4 Media Liaison Officer (MLO) of the MEC**

- a) Report to the Department's Head of Communication.
- b) Accountable to the MEC
- c) Develop and monitor comprehensive media strategy for the MEC.
- d) Prepare and respond to media queries that have a direct bearing on the MEC in collaboration with MEC, HOD and respective Managers.
- e) Work out a Communication Strategy and relevant campaigns for the office of the MEC.
- f) Take part in all media liaison issues involving the MEC.
- g) Plan, arrange and handle media interviews and press conferences for the MEC.
- h) Maintain continuous contact and a positive relationship with key contact persons in the print and electronic media.

- i) Plan and supervise research into public opinion.
- j) Ensure the monitoring of media and other information sources and process the information for purposes of devising message and strategy.
- k) Contribute to the determination of the MEC's diary.
- l) Advise the MEC regarding short and long term communication issues and facilitate the MEC's public communication.

#### **6.5 Other Staff Members**

No staff member is allowed to talk to the media on departmental issues, on behalf of the Department except the official spokesperson and other delegated people. (Senior Managers are also encouraged, after consultation with the Head of Communication, to address the media, provided it is within their area of competence and does not contradict existing policies of the Department).

### **7. HANDLING MEDIA ENQUIRIES AND RESPONSES**

- a) An effort must be made to react swiftly and accurately to the media enquiries received before the deadline.
- b) All enquiries from the media must be submitted in writing and forwarded to relevant Senior Managers for them to respond.
- c) Responses to be put in writing and sent back to communications.
- d) A media statement in response to the negative publicity must be drafted after proper consultation and issued

### **8. MEDIA MONITORING**

- a) National and Provincial media should be monitored at all times. This includes both the electronic and print media.
- b) The objective is to enable the Department to respond to any negative publicity and also to keep record of all coverage, both positive and negative.
- c) If there is any negative publicity it should immediately be brought to the attention of the Head of Department and / or the Executing Authority.
- d) As a tool to monitor the media newspapers will be delivered to the following offices on a daily basis: Office of the MEC, Office of the Head of Department, Communications, Personal Assistant, Media Liaison Officer and Parliamentary Officer .

## **9. MARKETING AND ADVERTISING**

- a) If the need arises that the department needs to communicate through the mass media and yet the media houses are not willing to carry the story, the department will use paid communication in the form of marketing and or advertising.
- b) The advertorial will be developed in consultation with the Head of Department and or the Member of the Executive Council depending on the message that needs to be communicated.
- c) The advertorial will then be placed on the agreed media be it print or electronic.

## **10. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION**

- a) An effort must be made to ensure that internally there is communication that is clear, accurate and consistent. Contentious and sensitive issues must be dealt with in consultation with the Head of Department (HOD) and the Member of the Executive Council (MEC). The following are the internal communications;
  - i. Communication Directorate
  - ii. Staff Meeting
  - iii. Internal Publication

## **11. INTERNET USAGE**

- b) Users must comply with all applicable laws and regulations and must respect the legal protection provided by copyright and licenses with respect to both programs and data.
- c) Users must avoid accessing sites that might bring the public service into disrepute, such as those, which carry offensive material
- d) Sensitive information must not be transmitted via or exposed to Internet access
- e) Employees may use government Internet services for personal improvement, outside of scheduled hours of work, provided that such use is consistent with professional conduct and is not used for personal financial gain.

- f) Internet Relay Chat channels or other Internet forums such as newsgroups or net servers may be used only to conduct work related business or to exchange technical or analytical information. Users who wish to express personal opinions must use a private Internet provider and a personal I.D.
- g) Users must not attempt to obscure the origin of any message or download material under an assumed Internet address.
- h) Accounting Officers must ensure that all users sign an Internet Usage Agreement before access is allowed.
- i) Alleged inappropriate use of the Internet will be reviewed by the Department on a case-by-case basis and may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal or cancellation of contract.
- j) The Communications and Information Technology Directorate will monitor the use of government networks and may monitor selected network traffic at the request of the Accounting Officer.
- k) Users are responsible for ensuring that their use of internet access is appropriate and consistent with the ethical conduct under this policy and with the Standard of Conduct Policy contained in section 1. of the Personnel Management Policies and Procedures issued by the Public Service Employee Relations Commission.
- K) Accounting Officers are responsible for ensuring that all employees who have internet access have signed an internet Usage Agreement and that it is placed in the employee's personnel file.

## **12. USAGE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES**

- l) Employees are permitted limited personal use of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs IT resources. This personal use shall not result in loss of employee productivity, interference with official duties or other than "minimal additional expense" to the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs in areas such as:
  - i. Communications costs for voice, data, or video image transmission
  - ii. Use of consumables in limited amounts (e.g., paper, ink, toner);
  - iii. Data storage on storage devices; and
  - iv. Transmission impacts with moderate e-mail message sizes, such as e-mails with small attachments.

- m) Employees have no inherent right to LG IT resources for personal use.
- n) Unauthorized or inappropriate use of LG IT resources could result in loss of use or limitations on use of equipment, disciplinary adverse actions, criminal penalties and/or employees or other users being held financially liable for the cost of inappropriate use.
- o) Employees are expected to conduct themselves professionally in the workplace and to refrain from using government office equipment for activities that are inappropriate.
- p) Any personal use that could cause congestion, delay, or disruption of service to any LG IT resource for example, greeting cards, video, sound or other large file attachments can degrade the performance of the entire network as does some uses of "push" technology, such as audio and video streaming from the Internet
- q) The intentional creation, downloading, viewing, storage, copying or transmission of sexually explicit or sexually oriented materials;
- r) The intentional creation, downloading, viewing, storage, copying or transmission of materials related to gambling, illegal weapons, terrorist activities, and any other illegal activities or activities otherwise prohibited;
- s) Use for commercial purposes or in support of "for-profit" activities or in support of other outside employment or business activity (e.g. consulting for pay, sales or administration of business transactions, sale of goods or services).

### **13. WEBSITE**

- a) The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs website is currently containing information about services rendered by the Department.
- b) Service information on the website is categorized according to two main service types;
  - i. Services for people: Services for South African Citizen and others where the services are not restricted to citizens
  - ii. Services for organizations: Services relevant to organizations and businesses

#### **14. SCOPE OF APPLICATION**

The above minimum provision will be applicable to all staff within changing legal framework and shall be subjected to approval by the Head of Department

#### **15. PROCEDURES FOR AMENDMENT OF THE POLICY**

The amendment of this policy shall be done in accordance with changing legal frameworks and shall be subjected to approval by the Head of Department.

He/she shall have the discretion to deviate from any clause in this policy where needs be.

**16. MONITORING EVALUATION AND REPORTING**

The department through its delegated structures shall monitor and evaluate effectiveness of the implementation and report to the Head of Department on an annual basis

**APPROVED/ NOT APPROVED**

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**MR. S. NGUBANE**

**ACTING: HEAD OF DEPARTMENT**

**DATE**\_\_\_\_\_