Community Engagement & Communications
2019-20 Strategic Plan

Building Trust with Albertans. Building Pride in Our People.
Alberta Health Services

Our Vision

Healthy Albertans.
Healthy Communities.
Together.

Our Mission

To provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

Our Values

[Icons of AHS cares, compassion, accountability, respect, excellence, safety]
Community Engagement & Communications
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Our role within AHS:

Engage and involve Albertans in their health and their healthcare system by sharing information, listening to their concerns and ideas, and helping them navigate the supports and services to ensure they get the care they need.

Who we are:

The Community Engagement and Communications (CE&C) team works to strategically promote Alberta Health Services, develop relationships with patients and families, enhance the reputation of the organization, and proactively manage a wide variety of issues. The team approaches this work in an integrated, multi-faceted manner that seeks to identify and engage internal and external stakeholders and approach all strategic communications using an iterative, two-way dialogue approach. The CE&C team helps create the voice of AHS by leading engagement strategies for the organization; helping to build awareness of the programs and services offered by AHS and engaging the public using an authentic, transparent, best-practice approach. The portfolio encompasses foundation relations, advisory councils and community engagement, strategic communications and issues management, web and digital services, and marketing/branding.

Building Trust with Albertans. Building Pride in Our People.

Community Engagement and Communications turns information into understanding. Our team of communications and engagement specialists reaches out to patients, families, and communities across the province to engage Albertans in a meaningful, authentic way – to learn about local healthcare needs, to gather public feedback before decisions affecting healthcare delivery are made, to enhance and promote healthy lifestyles and the overall wellness of Albertans, and to share information about available programs and services that address individual needs and community concerns. The CE&C team conducts regular engagement with municipal and provincial elected leaders, foundations, provider groups, unions, Indigenous communities, post-secondary institutions, law enforcement, the media, and many other private sector, public sector, and community-based stakeholders. The team also leads two-way communication and engagement with 102,000 AHS staff, volunteers and physicians within
Alberta’s healthcare system. As the largest employer in the province, AHS works to ensure its skilled and dedicated front-line healthcare providers and support staff remain informed, connected, and empowered. The CE&C team guides the internal communications which ensure the organization’s workforce is directly linked to – and fully understands - the over-arching vision, mission, and goals of AHS. Research suggests that a better engaged workforce provides improved care; and the work of our portfolio aims to build engagement and positive culture.

Structure:

In 2018, the CE&C portfolio completed a structural review and redesign with the aim of increasing capacity, better aligning operations with AHS’ Health and Business Plan goals, and ensuring integration across the portfolio. The CE&C portfolio is structured under the following areas: Community and External Relations, Foundation Relations, Communications (External and Internal), and Innovation and Digital Solutions. Additionally, the Issues Management team provides over-arching, proactive and responsive media-relations leadership. The core responsibilities of each area are outlined below. Each area has direct accountability to the Vice President, Community Engagement and Communications. The Vice President reports to the CEO and President of AHS, and is the management lead for the AHS Board Community Engagement Committee.

Community and External Relations
Committed to supporting meaningful and authentic engagement on projects, both large and small, across the province in support of AHS programs, services and initiatives, the team works to:

- Strengthen relationships with the 16 advisory councils (12 geographically based and four provincial councils) and Wisdom Council.
- Lead and facilitate relationships with elected officials and Alberta thought leaders.
- Facilitate engagement sessions supporting major projects across the province such as the Calgary Cancer Centre and Zone Healthcare Planning.
- Manage the organization’s online engagement platform Together4Health which connects Alberta’s online community with their healthcare system.
Foundation Relations
This group works to make donor support have more meaning, to go further, and have a lasting legacy. The aim is More Dollars, More Donors, More Gifts. The team works to:
- Build a culture of philanthropy within AHS and within Alberta, in partnership with AHS’ 69 foundations and trusts.
- Improve alignment between AHS and foundations on fundraising priorities, and develop collaborative fundraising approaches to maximize participation and donor impact.
- Strengthen foundation governance and proactively realign roles to improve alignment and donor impact.
- Find efficiencies and collaboration opportunities among the foundations that support AHS.

Communications
Connecting directly with Albertans through a variety of channels, the team aims to promote the work of AHS, share patient and family experiences, showcase innovation and research, and involve people in their healthcare system. All communications strategies seek to engage Albertans and invite two-way conversations. The team works to:
- Develop unique and creative ways to share the AHS story internally and externally, to provide a better understanding of what AHS is, and how the healthcare system works.
- Promote stories that highlight the life-saving work and world-class research of our frontline healthcare teams, including physicians, staff and volunteers.
- Engage with Albertans by creating a responsive and conversational presence on various social media platforms.
- Lead public awareness campaigns to empower Albertans with the knowledge to make the best decisions for their own personal health and wellness.

Corporate Communications
- Ensure that AHS staff and physicians have the information required to do their jobs; in-turn, ensure that the day-to-day work of staff, physicians, and volunteers is reflected in AHS’ vision, mission, values and operational goals.
- Engage AHS staff, physicians and volunteers in the Connect Care program, increasing their understanding of why the project is critically important and what it will mean to them and our patients.
- Promote procedures, policies and programs that keep our employees and patients safe, such as prevention of harassment and violence, diversity and inclusion, and a respectful workplace.
Zone Communications

- Each of the five geographic zones (North, Edmonton, Central, Calgary, South) has a Zone Communications team that works collaboratively with other areas within the CE&C portfolio – and each other - to ensure consistent, transparent, timely communications.
- As the local voice of AHS, Zone Communications works closely with Zone Executive Leadership (ZEL) to provide a direct link between patients and frontline staff to the organization.
- The team fosters positive relationships with local elected leadership, community stakeholders, the media and the general public.
- Zone Communications and Engagement Plans detail tools and tactics to provide strong proactive and responsive communications support and advice to zone leadership and zone-based operations.

Provincial Programs Communications

- Providing communications, issues management and engagement leadership to all provincial portfolios including (but not limited to) Cancer, EMS, Addictions and Mental Health, Seniors, Research and Clinical Support Services.
- Working with community stakeholders, media, government, and the general public to build confidence in Alberta Health Services.

Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) Communications

- Communicate the benefits of the province’s new integrated laboratory system, demonstrating to our patients and the public how laboratory medicine is critical to an integrated, high-performing healthcare system.
- Tell the story that laboratory medicine – far from being routine and rote – is a dynamic part of the healthcare system that provides cutting-edge, life-saving care to Albertans every day.
- The move to a single lab organization represents a significant change to Alberta’s healthcare system. Transparent, inclusive, on-going conversations are required with all internal and external stakeholders and the public-at-large during the transition.

Brand and Identity

- Identify and understand Albertans’ needs, wants and values related to health and wellness by engaging them in meaningful conversations.
- Translate and reframe complex health concepts into easily understood information that improves health literacy and health outcomes.
- Improve how people think and feel when AHS is seen or mentioned by consistently expressing our vision and values to grow pride and loyalty.
Innovation & Digital Solutions
The team designs and develops creative and innovative ways to share accurate and timely information across all AHS digital properties for patients, families, staff, physicians, and volunteers.

- Ensure Albertans have access to the latest need-to-know information including wayfinding information, program information and critical information during a crisis.
- Ensure staff, physicians and volunteers have online access to the latest information and tools they need through Insite to provide Albertans with the best possible care.
- Transform complex messaging into simple and easy to understand visuals using multimedia; seek new innovative communication channels to deliver up-to-date information to all stakeholders.

Issues Management
The team works to protect and enhance confidence in AHS through transparent and strategic issues management, helping identify and resolve issues that may negatively impact patients, Albertans and/or the organization.

- Creating and sharing timely, accurate and necessary information with Albertans through effective public communications and media relations.
- Keeping Albertans informed during a crisis, disaster or public health emergency.
- Ongoing media relations support for AHS leaders and staff and the development of positive, trusting working relationships with Alberta media outlets and journalists.
- Helping to address community concerns, by listening to stakeholders, hearing their issues, raising them with AHS leaders, and working to actively address and provide solutions.
Areas of strategic focus for 2019-20:

April 1, 2019 marked the 10-Year Anniversary of Alberta Health Services. The AHS Vision of Healthy Albertans. Healthy Communities. Together. is central to the AHS story; a story that recognizes success over the past 10 years, and positions AHS to continue to deliver high-quality healthcare services to Albertans and their families in the next decade and beyond.

In 2019-20, Community Engagement and Communications will focus on three strategic priorities around the central theme of Building Trust with Albertans. Building Pride in Our People.

Building Trust with Albertans.
Building Pride in Our People.

- Proactive & responsive issues management & stakeholder relations.
- Telling the AHS story in a collaborative & meaningful way.
- Strengthening internal & external relationships & partnerships.
Strategic Priority #1: Proactive and Responsive Issues Management & Stakeholder Relations

Community Engagement and Communications’ responsibility is to protect and enhance public and stakeholder confidence in Alberta Health Services, through proactive, flexible and timely issues management. We do this by helping to identify issues that may negatively impact the organization and/or the public and our patients, actively listening and working collaboratively to find solutions to issues, and by ensuring our response is accurate, transparent and honest. The rapid and constant nature of today’s news cycle demands that we respond to media requests and issues as they emerge – it is critical that the public has faith and trust in how we respond, and we therefore must ensure our responses are genuine, while protecting and/or promoting the organization whenever possible. The ongoing rise and influence of social media means we must be ready to respond to questions and concerns quickly, ensuring people get the information and answers they need. The end goal: public confidence in the organization is enhanced and a better understanding of how to access our programs and services is provided to stakeholders, patients and families.

A Key Focus: Supporting Government Priorities

The start of the 2019-2020 fiscal year saw the transition to a new provincial government in Alberta. On April 30, 2019 a new Minister of Health and new Associate Minister for Addictions and Mental Health were appointed. A key focus for the year is providing strategic support for government’s healthcare priorities as they relate to policy changes and budget considerations. This requires further alignment of work across Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services in order to support the government’s mandate. The Community Engagement and Communications team will approach this work with a focus on agility, adaptability, and accuracy as we support the following government priorities:

- AHS Performance Review
- Laboratory Services in Alberta
- Addressing Wait Times
- Addictions and Mental Health
- Budget Management
- Review of Clinical Information Systems
2019-20 Strategic Goals

1. Look at ways to be more proactive in dealing with issues; to turn issues into opportunities to engage and improve communications with our stakeholders.
2. Continue to provide the AHS board and executive leadership with useful, timely information related to the provincial and national public discourse on healthcare as it unfolds in the media and social media spheres.
3. Be intentional in building and solidifying relationships with elected officials at all levels; enhance trust between AHS and policy makers through sustained, honest, and upfront communications with Alberta’s elected representatives and the constituents they serve.

Tactical Deliverables

Issues Management

• Continue to provide leadership with daily Social Scan (which tracks healthcare commentary on social media), the Daily Media Summary, Healthcare in the House, and ongoing tracking of commentary from political leaders, media, and the public.
• Organize and run monthly, ongoing Issues Management and Media Relations lunch-and-learns (or similar events) to discuss processes, listen to and address staff concerns, and improve the understanding of what the team does.
• Bolster media training initiatives for AHS staff: revitalize in-person media training opportunities – revise course content with aim for classes to begin in the fall.
• Develop the Issues Management and Media Relations team into a resource for all Community Engagement and Communications staff. Be available, helpful and understanding; work with Zone and other communications directors to ensure messaging is human, relevant, and impactful.
• Continue to monitor AHS’ reputation with the public and with key stakeholders through regular reputational surveys and advisory council and foundation satisfaction surveys.

Government Priorities and MLA Engagement

• Complete and execute the MLA engagement plan; identify issues likely to be raised by MLAs, and ensure messaging and briefing notes are up-to-date.
• Provide lists of relevant political social media accounts to Zone Directors/Advisors and Provincial Program Directors/Advisors (e.g. MLAs, unions, media personalities, special interest groups); ensure these accounts are being followed and monitored.
• Ensure key messages reflect government healthcare platform and policy, update messaging to align with the new government’s direction and priorities.
• Work with Minister’s Office and Alberta Health communications staff to streamline communication processes related to:
  - issues management (briefing notes and key messages);
  - media requests and responses;
  - event planning and site tours;
  - news releases (including public service announcements, health advisories, government initiatives)

Strategic Priority #2: Strengthening Internal & External Relationships and Partnerships

Every day, there are more than 275,000 healthcare interactions between frontline AHS care providers and Albertans. The Community Engagement and Communications team seeks to connect with Albertans in a meaningful way in order to build stronger ties with patients and communities. We strive to seek input from our various stakeholders before decisions are made – ensuring that we build relationships based on consultation, mutual respect, and trust.

Alberta Health Services is the largest employer in the province with over 102,000 employees, 8,600 physicians and 14,300 volunteers. The organization has an obligation to ensure our people are engaged and included in the decision making process. Through respectful, two-way dialogue, we endeavor to empower these talented and committed individuals as partners and collaborators in the communication process.

A Key Focus: Connect Care

Currently, AHS has 1,300 information systems to manage health information. This decentralized approach to storing health information does not serve a provincwide health system that values integration and collaboration between patients and care teams. This is why Alberta Health Services is introducing Connect Care: a common provincial clinical information system that will serve as the bridge between information, healthcare teams, patients – and the future. Communicating the benefits and opportunities that exist as Connect Care is implemented – to both internal and external partners – will be critical in ensuring the success of this transformational project.
2019-20 Strategic Goals

1. Actively strive to earn the respect, trust and collaboration of all internal and external stakeholders; create and maintain relationships that are inclusive, honest and meaningful.

2. Seek opportunities to more fully integrate foundations and trusts into the organization’s strategic and operational planning and goals, enhancing the mutually beneficial partnership between foundations and AHS.

3. Deliver on the needs and expectations of patients and providers as the transition to Connect Care takes place through thoughtful and responsive communications.

Tactical Deliverables

Communities and Foundations

- Launch Health Advisory Council review: literature and best practice review, engagement session at the Council of Chairs meeting, Zone and Provincial leadership engagement, Advisory Council Fall Forum.
- Maintain momentum on Community Conversations and ‘Conversations with Verna’; schedule remainder of events in summer/fall/winter 2019-20; explore partnerships to execute these events.
- Implement Together4Health strategy to ensure the product is providing proactive value to AHS; continue to build understanding and support for the tool.
- Foundation Partnered Capital Projects: Obtain approval from joint operations committee to engage with foundations on Chapter 9.
- In-kind supports: engagement plan to be approved and implemented.
- Philanthropic and Honourific Naming Policy: provide oversight and advice to leadership regarding AHS’ naming policy; support the team in reviewing naming submissions.

Internal and Corporate Communication

- Enhancing two-way communication with our people by evaluating the effectiveness of our existing channels and identifying gaps and areas for improvement (such as improved access to analytics and response processes).
- Create correspondence efficiencies by auditing the number of feedback channels (including public and workforce facing inboxes owned by CE&C) to help streamline the response process and centralize the number of ways our people and the public engage with AHS.
- Promote leader visibility through community conversations, town halls, vlogs, and support the CEO and Executive Leadership Team in preparation for and during public events.
Connect Care

- Patient Communications: Prepare communications plan to generate awareness and understanding of Connect Care among patients and families; develop communication strategies for the launch of patient and physician portals, educating audiences on the portals’ benefits and encouraging use of the tools.

- Physician and frontline communications: Continued focus on physician engagement and frontline staff communications; create additional physician-focused tactics to better highlight physician perspectives on Connect Care; implement provider marketing plan.

- Program communications: Support delivery of program readiness and implementation milestones, such as development of workflow walkthrough video, support for playbook releases and promotion of eHealth competency training.

- Foundations: Defined approach for philanthropic support for Connect Care; support Zone operations to prepare and execute Connect Care pitches to foundations; validate financial need with Connect Care team to align fundraising objectives and goals (e.g. Wi-Fi); develop a specific engagement strategy for largest foundations.

- Digital Communications to develop a unified patient portal approach; socialize and secure support for new approach to unify both MyHealth Record and MyChart.
Strategic Priority #3:
Telling the AHS Story in a Collaborative & Meaningful Way

Community Engagement and Communications aims to put a human face on Alberta’s largest and most complex public sector organization through collaborative story-telling. We conduct internal and external communications using plain language, and always endeavor to use the right message, right messenger, right tool, at the right time. We connect with our audiences using an integrated, multi-faceted strategic communications approach. Our aim is to promote and celebrate our people and tell the AHS story through the contributions of individual employees and teams. We also aim to help others in the organization be better story-tellers. Working collaboratively with other teams and departments in AHS, CE&C shares tools and techniques for effective communication to ensure that our organization’s ‘voice’ is consistent and clear.

A Key Focus: Alberta Precision Laboratories

Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) - a wholly owned subsidiary of AHS - became an official entity in July of 2018. The move to a single, provincial lab model is a game-changer that will improve patient care, and raise the bar for precision diagnostics, innovation and research. As with any major new entity or program coming on-stream within the healthcare system, the long term success of APL hinges upon clear, honest, and sustained communication between AHS, APL, government, patients, families, staff, physicians, contractors and community partners. Telling the story of how and why Alberta Precision Laboratories will offer improved outcomes for patients will be central to the work of CE&C and to AHS as a whole.

2019-20 Strategic Goals

1. Be innovative and creative in actively seeking out and sharing the experiences of providers and patients that tell the story of Alberta’s world-class healthcare system.
2. Connect the ideas and initiatives of the Innovation Action Team to the stories generated within the Zones, using the technical skills of the Story Hub, Branding and Digital Solutions teams.
3. More fully integrate Alberta Precision Laboratories communications into the CE&C portfolio.
Tactical Deliverables

Story Hub

- Tell the AHS story through contributions to the Story Hub – including (but not limited to) professional video and photography production, script writing and editing.
- Develop and populate a dedicated Story Hub landing page on external website.
- Leverage the Story Hub for zone-based pro-active media and story-telling; developing a minimum of six proactive media pieces per month that tell the AHS story, utilizing staff and community voices to foster togetherness. These pitches should specifically consider ways to utilize the Story Hub to showcase rural and Indigenous communities.

Digital and Online Presence

- Leverage our advisory councils and patient family advisory groups to recruit public champions to help co-design our digital properties.
- Explore additional channels for frontline communications including a possible web-based mobile phone app for staff.
- Develop an integrated and consultative approach to digital signage; produce an engagement strategy.

Brand and Identity

- Apple 2.0 engagement, redesign and launch.
- University of Alberta Hospital (UAH)/UAH Foundation brand rollout, including logo development; request for contract and statement of work, complete logo development and communications plan.
- AHS master brand logo strategy: develop a framework for a vendor to draft a logo strategy for AHS, its subsidiaries and entities.

Alberta Precision Laboratories

- Support APL leadership in building relationships with provincial government officials; help craft messages to convey the benefits of integrated lab services as the government assesses healthcare priorities from a policy and budget perspective.
- Assist in the execution of APL’s 2020-2022 Strategic Plan. As a new entity, APL has developed its first three-year strategic plan; Communications and Community Engagement will play a role in achieving the plan’s goals and objectives as they relate to improving integration within the healthcare system, engaging the APL workforce, and enhancing partnerships.
• Provide communications advice and support as APL executes the laboratory-related elements of Connect Care; assist in delivering consistent and timely messages to laboratory physicians and staff on how Connect Care will impact their work.
AHS Community Engagement and Communications Leadership Team

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