



2023-2026 Alberta Health Services

Community Engagement & Communications Strategy

September 2023

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Introduction

As Alberta's largest provider of care, Alberta Health Services (AHS) must communicate and foster engagement with all Albertans in their health and their healthcare system to build trust and understanding of that system.

Understanding health equity; the diverse needs of our workforce, patients and families, stakeholders and Albertans; the varying levels of health literacy, access to health information and digital access in the population; variations in cultural norms, attitudes, behaviours, and lived experiences; trends in social

media, communications and information consumption; socio-economic impacts; and demands on the health system, are important perspectives to ensure we are communicating, engaging and reaching Albertans in ways that are accessible to them.

The Community Engagement and Communications (CEC) portfolio at AHS provides this perspective and supports and aligns with the organizational priorities outlined in the Health Plan and Business Plan (2023-2026).

Who we are

The role of CEC at AHS is to strategically communicate and foster engagement with our workforce, patients and families, all Albertans, health care partners and health system stakeholders which:

- Ensures our workforce is supported in their roles
- Builds trust and understanding of the health system
- Enhances relationships for system improvement

The CEC portfolio strategically leverages our relationships, communications channels and engagement tools, digital properties, social media, paid media and mainstream media, to share information, listen to concerns and gather ideas, help Albertans navigate supports and services, champion the AHS workforce, and deliver on strategic goals as outlined in the AHS Health Plan and Business Plan. The portfolio also engages with communities through Provincial Advisory Councils and

Health Advisory Councils and through the numerous foundations and auxiliaries that provide support to our hospitals and communities. The CEC team develops and executes strategy based on the principles of authenticity, transparency, reliability, timeliness, accessibility and respectfulness in all communications and engagement.

Community Engagement & External Relations

Community Engagement and External Relations is committed to engaging and involving staff, physicians, volunteers, and all Albertans in their health and healthcare system by identifying opportunities to bring their voices to AHS where they can inform, advise, and influence planning that impacts their healthcare system. Engagement is increasingly important during times of significant change and transition. By engaging Albertans and giving them a voice in the decisions that impact their lives, we build

trust in the healthcare system. Engagement takes many forms including through AHS' 16 Advisory Councils and the Wisdom Council & Elders Circle, formal Community Conversations with Albertans and Alberta's Indigenous communities, community leaders, and informal conversations and connections with elected officials at the provincial and municipal level. In keeping with the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) engagement spectrum and best practice, AHS engagement takes many forms and can be delivered in-person, on virtual platforms or through AHS' online engagement platform, Together4Health.

Foundation Relations

Foundation Relations helps to build philanthropy by building trust and streamlining operations between AHS and the 36 auxiliaries and 70 foundations that support it.

The team helps make financial donor support have more meaning, go further, and leave lasting legacies by strengthening relationships, developing collaborative fundraising approaches, and facilitating opportunities for auxiliaries and foundations to merge or share operational resources to reduce costs. This work helps build AHS' brand and reputation as the volunteers and staff of foundations serve as ambassadors in communities across the province.

Communications

Communications works strategically through proactive storytelling, responsive and proactive media relations, issues management and strong social media presence to inform and engage with our patients and families, our workforce, and all Albertans to build trust, knowledge and understanding in the healthcare system on which all Albertans depend. The team provides accurate and

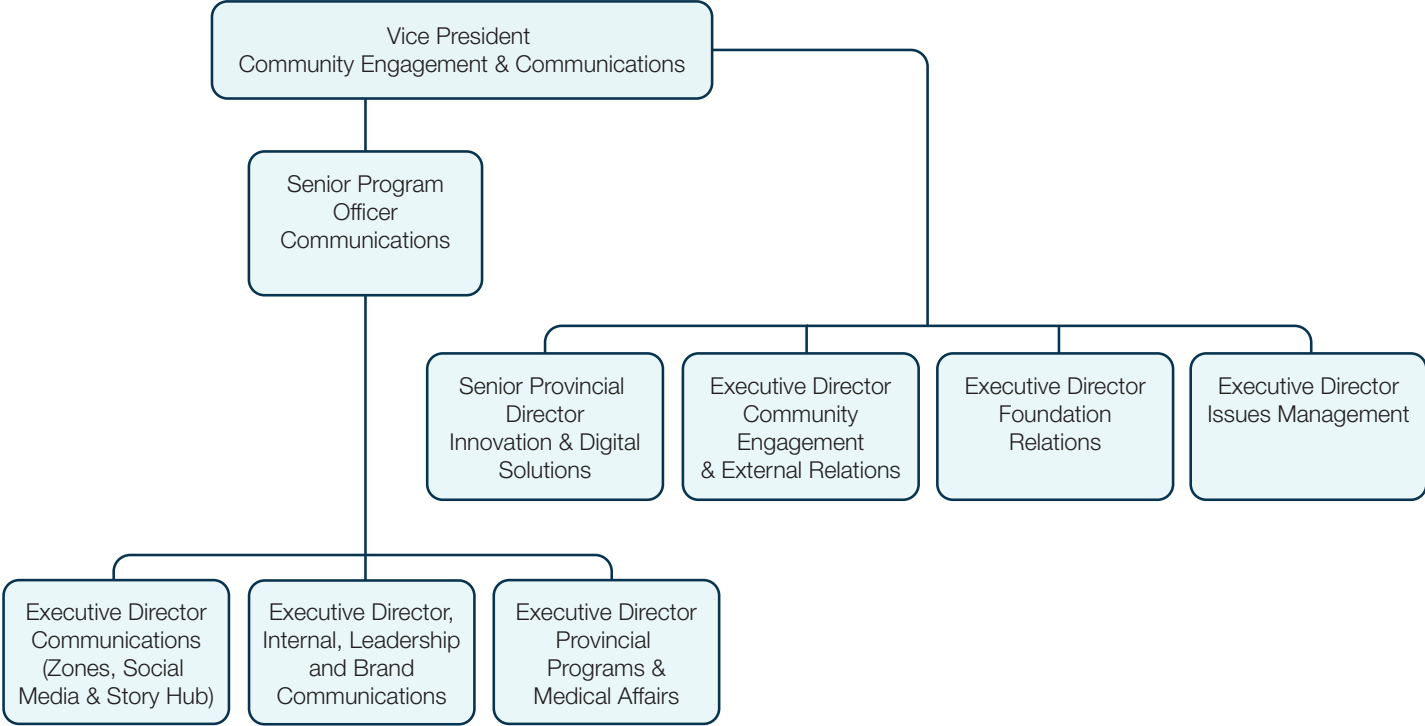
timely information and resources to staff, physicians and volunteers and to ensure a consistent and reliable voice for all leadership. Together, we:

- Promote stories highlighting life-saving, life-changing and inspirational work of frontline healthcare teams through video, print, social media and proactive media
- Engage with Albertans by maintain and informative and trusted presence on various media platforms, advertising and social media channels.
- Work closely with the Government of Alberta to ensure accurate and timely response to reputational issues
- Work with partners to develop internal, media and public relations campaigns (i.e., influenza and immunization)
- Inform and engage the healthcare workforce through a variety of internal communication channels and support internal engagement and strategic leadership communications.

Innovation & Digital Solutions

Innovation & Digital Solutions uses design thinking, best practice research, rich and creative designs, and innovative approaches to share accurate, trusted, and timely information across all AHS digital channels. This includes AHS' external website, AHS.ca, AHS' intranet and other web tools and apps. Utilizing a collaborative approach to develop innovative tools and solutions, AHS delivers critical information through new channels to help support Albertans on their health journey and provide AHS' workforce with need-to-know information to deliver world-class healthcare. This team also fosters creativity to transform complex information into simple, easy to understand visual solutions such as infographics and motion graphic videos.

Organizational Chart



Development of the CE&C Strategy

The CEC Strategy was informed by:

- The AHS 2023-2026 Health Plan and Business Plan strategic and foundational priorities
- AHS Vision, Mission, Values and Four Strategies
- Government of Alberta mandate letter for the Health and Mental Health and Addiction ministries, along with other identified priorities
- A current state understanding of trends and best practices related to communications and community engagement, social media and digital solutions
- An understanding of Alberta's population, demographics, and interactions with the health system
- An understanding of health equity and a health system perspective
- Feedback from stakeholder surveys, events and conversations
- Consultation with CEC staff and senior leaders

AHS Vision Statement

Healthy Albertans.
Healthy Communities.
Together.

AHS Mission

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

AHS Values



compassion accountability
respect excellence safety

2023-2026 Health Plan and Business Plan

Align specific actions and performance measures with the following strategic and foundational priorities:

Strategic priorities



Reducing emergency medical services (EMS) response times



Decreasing emergency department wait times



Reducing surgery wait times



Improving patient flow and continuity of care



Improving local decision-making



Strengthening mental health and addiction recovery-oriented services and supports



Improving access to care for rural & remote communities



Improving engagement and access to care with Indigenous people

Foundational priorities



A sustainable workforce



Strong population and public health



Digital health evolution and innovation



Excellence in patient outcomes and experience



Sustainability and value for money

Models and Principles

Communications

AHS will aspire to reflect excellent communications principles such as authenticity, transparency, reliability, timely, accessibility and respectfulness. AHS communications takes many forms to ensure the right messaging gets to the right audience at the right time.

Community Engagement

AHS conducts community engagement efforts using the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation as a framework. AHS community engagement takes many forms and can be delivered in-person, on virtual platforms or through AHS' online engagement platform, Together4Health.

Trends and current state

AHS is working to ensure that strategic communications and engagement supports are adapting to changing needs and influences such as:

- increased demand for reliable and accessible health information from the public
- the strain on our healthcare system related to access and volume demands
- increased reliance on and expectation of interactive social media
- a growing population in Alberta that is becoming increasingly diverse, older and concentrated in urban centres
- varying levels of health literacy and digital access in the population

- heightened scrutiny of the health system adding additional pressures on our physicians, staff and leaders
- workforce mental health and wellness, recruitment and retention
- Zone variability in geography, population and health demographics
- changes in public health behaviours and attitudes
- need to manage health misinformation
- evolving best practices in communications and community engagement
- greater need for philanthropic partnerships between organizations and among foundations amidst mounting downward pressures on traditional charitable gaming
- increased desire and expectations of individual and communities to have a voice in health care decisions that impact them
- changing online behaviours and expectations for mobile optimized content delivery and social media content and access
- implementation of alternative healthcare provider models to support increased demand for access to healthcare practitioners in community and acute care sites

Where do we need to go?

Thus, AHS' strategic communications and community engagement needs to be:

- Modern, engaging and accessible
- Consistent, accurate and reliable
- Adaptable and evolving
- Built on trusted relationships

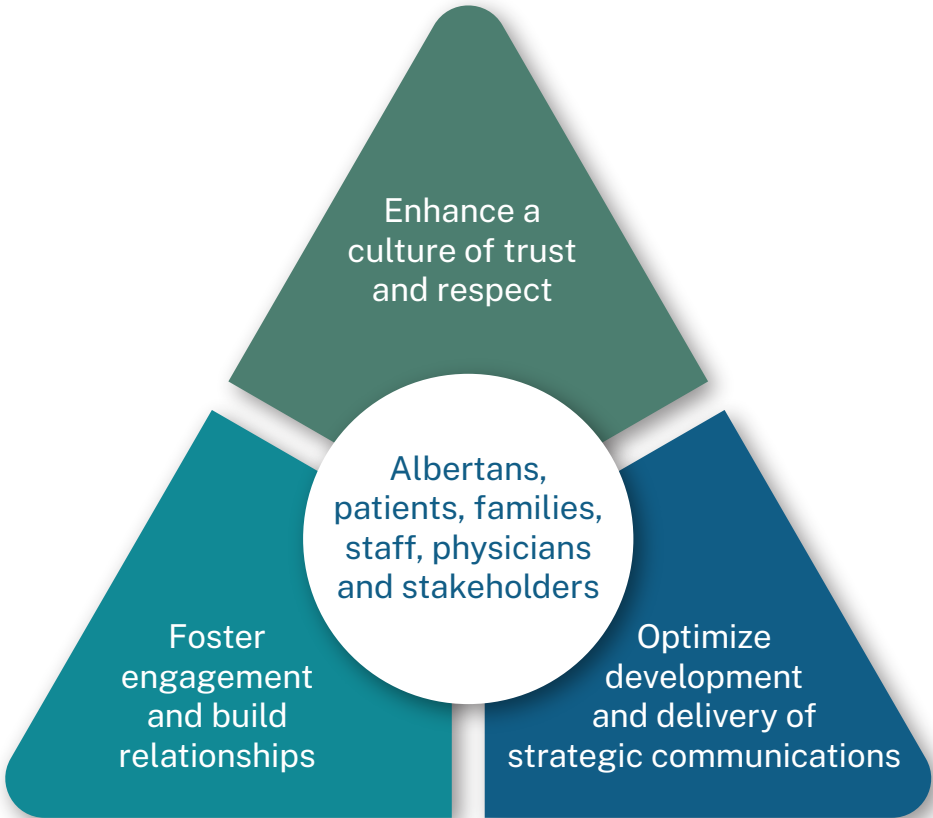
Community Engagement & Communications 2023-2026 Strategy

The CEC three-year strategy outlines how the CEC team at AHS will communicate and foster engagement with the AHS workforce (staff, physicians, volunteers, students and contractors) to ensure they are supported in their roles, as well as with Albertans to build trust and understanding of the health system and how it can support their health needs.

As strategic communications and engagement needs evolve, AHS' CEC Strategy recognizes

external changes and influences, AHS' vision, mission values and foundational strategies, and alignment with strategic and foundational priorities outlined in the 2023-26 Health Plan.

The following three interdependent areas of focus of the strategy will ensure this is achieved through strategic, clear and concise communication, and thoughtful and meaningful engagement.



These areas of focus will be supported by strategic plans for:

- Internal Communications
- Zone & Operations Communications
- Provincial Programs Communications
- Social Media & Storytelling
- Physician and Medical Affairs
- Foundation Relations
- Community Engagement & External Relations
- Crisis Management Communications
- Proactive Media and Issues Management
- Innovation & Digital Solutions

1. Enhance a culture of trust and respect

Enhancing a culture of trust and respect across the organization, from a CEC perspective, will help to support AHS' focus to be a source of trusted and reliable health information and an employer with a positive and supportive work environment.

This will be achieved through storytelling, branding (reputation), internal and external (public) campaigns and promotional support for organizational initiatives, engagement with public and with the AHS workforce, as well as alignment of strategic priorities.

Our aim is to promote and celebrate our people and tell the AHS story through the contributions of individual physicians, employees and teams. We also aim to help others in the organization be better storytellers. Working collaboratively with other teams and departments in AHS, CEC shares tools and techniques for effective strategic communication to ensure that our organization's 'voice' is consistent and clear, keep our workforce informed and create a sense of transparency.

Key outcomes include:

- AHS is a source of trusted health information by providing current, reliable and timely information in a variety of ways
- Albertans have confidence and trust in AHS
- Public and stakeholder confidence in AHS is protected and enhanced, through proactive, flexible, and timely communication
- Improving the effectiveness and reach of our communications and engagement with our workforce to support organizational priorities, such as rebuilding the culture and supporting workforce recruitment, optimization and retention
- Empowering teams to strengthen the AHS team culture through improved communication, engagement and collaboration and local-decision making
- Continue to grow and foster a culture of engagement at AHS by developing a shared understanding of its purpose, importance, value and impact

2. Foster engagement and build relationships

AHS is committed to engaging and involving staff, physicians, volunteers, patients, families and all Albertans in their health and healthcare system by identifying opportunities to bring their voices to AHS where they can inform, advise, and influence planning that impacts their healthcare system. By engaging Albertans and giving them a voice in the decisions that impact their lives, we build trust in the healthcare system. This includes building relationships and trust between AHS, local decision makers and communities. Engagement takes many forms

including through AHS' 16 Advisory Councils and Wisdom Council, formal Community Conversations with Albertans and Alberta's Indigenous communities, and informal conversations with elected officials and community leaders.

Establishing and building relationships with all stakeholders including our workforce, patients and families, government, foundation and auxiliaries, physicians, Albertans and more, is crucial to building trust and understanding of the system.

Key outcomes include:

- Suite of engagement tools, tactics, and evaluation processes based on best practice
- Capacity and confidence amongst AHS leaders to support and grow a culture of philanthropy and engagement across the organization
- A culture of philanthropy and established relationships with foundations and auxiliaries
- AHS Advisory Council members and alumni are key strategic partners in facilitating relationships between AHS leaders and community
- AHS Advisory Council members have tools, education and resources they need to understand and execute their role as trusted advisors to –and partners of – AHS
- Positive, supportive relationships with our workforce, physicians, patients and families by creating opportunities for two-way conversations that promote engagement
- Established relationships with key stakeholders including government, foundations, community providers etc.
- Improved media and government relations
- Robust online engagement and active listening to concerns and ideas through surveys, social media and digital channels and tools

3. Optimize development and delivery of strategic communications

Developing strategic communications and engagement organizational competency and capacity will ensure AHS is positioned to deliver efficient, timely and reliable communication and engagement services and opportunities to all stakeholders. Strategic communication supports are

provided to AHS Zones, operational areas and provincial programs. This also includes efforts focused on improving digital solutions, addressing organizational health literacy, and coordinating and implementing organization-wide communication plans in alignment with AHS strategic and foundational priorities.

Key outcomes include:

- Tailored and targeted communications and engagement based on demographic, geographic and program needs
- Alignment of communications with the Health Plan and organizational priorities
- Supported workforce recruitment, retention and optimization in alignment with Health Plan priorities
- Supported accreditation standards through engagement with leaders, identification of stakeholders and established mechanisms to work with the governing body of the organization
- Improved organizational health literacy through the Health Literacy Initiative
- Listening, reporting and monitoring through satisfaction surveys
- Improved user experience, accessibility and navigation of AHS.ca through the redesign initiative
- Supported provincial programs, Zones and operational areas with strategic communications
- Issues management and media relations supports
- Supported Zone Senior Leadership team and Zone healthcare plans
- Improved internal and external communications processes and tactics
- Effective emergency/crisis management
- Improved and enhanced digital communications and social media
- Implementation of provincial campaigns i.e., Know Your Options, Influenza, Immunization
- Supported leader visibility and strategic communications capacity
- Supporting our people (the workforce), programs and operational areas with strategic communications approaches, information resources and tools

Measuring Success

Progress will be tracked and reported quarterly using key performance indicators along with supporting metrics to provide further context around Health Plan priorities.

Our measures will focus on to specific areas:

Trust, Engagement and Relationship Building

- Leadership satisfaction survey
- Foundation satisfaction survey
- AHS Reputational satisfaction survey
- HACs/PACs satisfaction survey and feedback
- Workforce engagement surveys (Our People Survey and pulse surveys)
- Attendance and feedback gained through engagement events

Performance and Operations

- Volume metrics for social media, website etc. i.e., Open rates, page views, visits, number of subscribers
- Participation rates in engagement events
- Growth in stakeholder database
- Number and reach of proactive stories
- Descriptive ways in which we communicate i.e., # newsletters, websites, apps
- Campaigns & initiatives metrics
- Proactive media metrics
- HAC/PAC vacancies