



Communication Strategy

2025–2027

Vision

Where Nature, Agriculture and Tourism are Investments of Choice

Communication Strategy 2025–2027

1. Executive Summary

This Communication Strategy & Action Plan 2025–2027 sets out Matatiele Local Municipality’s vision to position communication as a powerful tool for development, transparency, and inclusive governance. Grounded in national and local frameworks, the strategy reflects the realities of a predominantly rural municipality facing challenges such as poor infrastructure, rising social ills, limited digital access, and growing demands for accountability.

The strategy introduces a two-way, people-centred communication model that empowers communities and strengthens institutional coherence. It outlines strategic objectives that focus on promoting transparency, profiling development interventions, countering misinformation, and building partnerships with traditional leaders, media, civil society, and the private sector.

In addition to core strategic goals, this strategy will be underpinned by alignment with critical national programmes such as the South African National Dialogue, which focuses on fostering unity, healing, and inclusive democratic engagement, and international initiatives like the G20 Summit, which presents an opportunity to position local innovation, governance responsiveness, and community resilience on a global stage. These high-level programmes provide communication leverage for profiling Matatiele’s contributions to inclusive development, participatory democracy, and global partnerships.

To ensure effective delivery, the strategy is structured around five key pillars: community engagement, strategic content and storytelling, media relations, internal communication, and capacity building. These are supported by media protocols, a stakeholder map, a risk management plan, and monitoring tools to track progress and improve responsiveness.

Ultimately, this strategy aims to create an informed, engaged, and empowered citizenry—equipped to co-create the development path of Matatiele.

2. Introduction

This Communication Strategy and Action Plan (2025–2027) is developed to strengthen the role of communication as a strategic enabler in service delivery, participatory governance, and institutional transparency within Matatiele Local Municipality. The strategy is anchored in constitutional mandates, the Municipal Systems Act, and the municipality's Integrated Development Plan (IDP), aligning with national and provincial communication frameworks to ensure coherence and impact.

Communication is not merely a support function but a critical governance tool that shapes how citizens perceive and interact with their municipality. In an era marked by rapid technological change, evolving citizen expectations, and increasing demands for accountability, the need for a coherent, inclusive, and forward-looking communication strategy is more urgent than ever. This strategy acknowledges the importance of both traditional and digital media, the role of storytelling in developmental messaging, and the necessity of ensuring that all voices especially those of marginalised communities—are heard and reflected in governance processes.

The strategy seeks to provide clear direction for both internal and external communication practices, foster a culture of information-sharing and responsiveness, and position the Communications Unit as a central player in driving the developmental agenda of the municipality. Through this strategy, Matatiele Local Municipality aims to unlock communication's potential to build trust, promote civic pride, and strengthen public participation.

3. Communication Environmental Assessment

As South Africa enters its fourth decade of democratic governance, the need for transparent, responsive, and inclusive communication has never been greater. This context is further shaped by the nation's hosting of the G20 Summit—a global opportunity to align local narratives with national and international priorities. For Matatiele Local Municipality, these events coincide with a pivotal moment: the final year of the current municipal administration and the approach of the next local government elections. This period presents a unique responsibility and opportunity to deepen engagement, reaffirm trust, and amplify developmental achievements.

The communication environment in Matatiele Local Municipality is shaped by a combination of socio-political, technological, and economic factors that influence both the effectiveness and inclusivity of government messaging. A deep understanding of this context is essential for designing communication approaches that are responsive, realistic, and community-anchored.

The municipality operates in a context marked by persistent socio-economic challenges, including high youth unemployment, underdevelopment in remote areas, and increasing incidents of social ills such as gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF), drug abuse, and violent crime. These dynamics not only inform the content of communication but also determine the urgency and tone required to engage residents effectively.

Technologically, the communication space is evolving. The rapid rise of mobile connectivity and social media has opened new avenues for engagement, especially among youth. However, the digital divide remains stark, leaving behind many rural and older citizens who still rely heavily on traditional formats such as radio, loud-hailing, and physical outreach. This creates a dual-speed communication environment that the municipality must navigate with balance and sensitivity.

The trust landscape is fragile. A rise in misinformation and public frustration over service delivery shortfalls has heightened scrutiny on municipal communication. At the same time, there is growing civic interest in transparency and public participation, which creates an opportunity for the municipality to lead with openness and inclusive messaging.

This assessment forms the foundation for the communication strategy, ensuring that it is grounded in the real-world barriers and opportunities that define the local media and governance environment.

3. Background

Matatiele Local Municipality recognises that effective communication is vital to fostering trust, accountability, and inclusive development. As the closest sphere of government to the people, it must ensure that its communication practices are responsive, accessible, and people centred.

While notable progress has been made—particularly in building local media partnerships and expanding reach—challenges such as infrastructure gaps, limited accessibility, and the rise of social ills like GBVF, drug abuse, and crime demand a more strategic approach.

There is also a growing demand for the municipality to communicate more deliberately around economic opportunities, urgent interventions to address unemployment, infrastructure challenges, and immediate responses to service delivery pressures. Citizens expect clear, empowering information on how the municipality is mobilising resources, forging public-private-civic partnerships, and profiling developmental interventions that improve daily life.

Furthermore, the role of Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) has become increasingly critical in ensuring coordinated service delivery, especially in rural municipalities where developmental backlogs persist. Strong IGR mechanisms help facilitate joint planning, integrated responses to community needs, and alignment across spheres of government. In this regard, communication forums also play an important role as coordinating platforms that professionalise and streamline communication efforts across departments and stakeholders.

This strategy draws from national policy frameworks and aligns with the municipality's Integrated Development Plan (IDP), ensuring relevance to local needs while embracing broader developmental goals. It seeks to embed communication at the heart of governance—not just as a tool for dissemination, but as a driver of dialogue, accountability, and co-production. By doing so, the strategy aims to create a responsive and participatory environment where communication supports planning, service delivery, resource mobilisation, and inclusive development. that effective communication is vital to fostering trust, accountability, and inclusive development. As the closest sphere of government to the people, it must ensure that its communication practices are responsive, accessible, and people centred.

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4. Legislative and Regulatory Framework Alignment

This Communication Strategy is developed in alignment with a range of legislative, regulatory, and policy frameworks that guide and support communication practices in the public sector. These include:

- **The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996:** Promotes access to information, transparency, accountability, and participatory governance.
- **Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act No. 32 of 2000):** Requires municipalities to develop systems of communication that enable meaningful engagement and community participation.
- **Municipal Structures Act, 1998:** Provides for governance structures that support participatory local democracy.
- **Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA), 2000:** Ensures the public's right to access information held by the state.
- **Batho Pele Principles:** Advocates for people-first service delivery, transparency, and communication that respects citizen rights.
- **Integrated Development Plan (IDP):** Serves as the municipality's principal strategic planning instrument, to which communication must be aligned.
- **National Development Plan (NDP) 2030:** Calls for the promotion of active citizenship and an informed public.
- **District Development Model (DDM):** Emphasises integrated planning, intergovernmental collaboration, and streamlined communication.

- **GCIS Communication Guidelines and Protocols:** Provide best practice standards for government communication, including media engagement, crisis response, and internal coordination.
- **GCIS National Communication Strategy Framework 2025–2030:** Provides comprehensive guidelines on cross-sphere coordination, citizen-centric messaging, rapid response mechanisms, and measurable communication impact—ensuring integration with national M&E systems.

In addition, this strategy draws from key communication frameworks and policy instruments that support implementation at the provincial and local level:

- **Eastern Cape Provincial Government Communication Strategy**
- **Eastern Cape Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) Strategic Guidelines**
- **South African Local Government Association (SALGA) Communication Frameworks and Toolkits**

Together, these instruments ensure the municipality’s communication strategy is both compliant and responsive, fostering integrated governance, community trust, and citizen empowerment.

By anchoring this strategy in these frameworks, Matatiele Local Municipality ensures that its communication efforts are lawful, ethical, responsive, and aligned with broader national development goals.

5. Vision and Mission

Vision

A people-centred and responsive communication system that informs, empowers, and amplifies community voices in local development.

Mission

To communicate in ways that empower citizens to co-create their municipality’s development path.

6. Strategic Objectives

- Align communication initiatives with national priorities such as the G20 Summit and the Fourth Decade of South Africa's Democracy, using them as platforms to promote local innovation and democratic progress.
- Communicate effectively during the final year of the current administration to document delivery achievements, address community concerns, and prepare for the transition into the next local government cycle.
- Advance developmental and people-centred communication by embedding communication as a governance tool that supports planning, service delivery, and social inclusion.
- Promote transparent and accountable governance through accessible, credible, and timely information sharing.
- Profile the municipality's developmental interventions and economic opportunities to strengthen citizen understanding, trust, and participation.
- Counter disinformation through consistent, coordinated, and evidence-based messaging.
- Strengthen two-way dialogue platforms to reflect community voices, feedback, and aspirations in municipal decision-making.
- Mobilise and coordinate strategic partnerships with government, private, and civic actors to address social ills and co-create sustainable development solutions.

7. Key Messages

- Communication is central to accountable, transparent, and people-focused local governance.
- Matatiele Local Municipality is committed to inclusive development and responsive service delivery.
- Citizens have a right to timely, clear, and accessible information about their municipality.
- The municipality values and listens to the voices and feedback of its communities.
- Through partnership and participation, we can address local challenges and social ills together.
- Empowered and informed citizens are essential to shaping the development of Matatiele.

- Every ward and community matters—communication is a tool to unite, build trust, and improve lives.

8. Multimedia Communication Landscape Assessment

Matatiele Local Municipality operates in a predominantly rural and geographically dispersed area. This reality presents both challenges and opportunities for reaching communities with consistent, accessible, and empowering information.

8.1. Key Characteristics:

- **Community Radio:** Alfred Nzo Community Radio continues to be the primary and most trusted source of municipal information for rural residents. It provides a vital platform for civic education, service announcements, and interactive programming.
- **Local Media Engagement:** The municipality has developed stronger relationships with local print and broadcast media, increasing the frequency and quality of developmental reporting.
- **Digital Reach Limitations:** Limited digital infrastructure and low internet access in some wards hinder the use of online and social media platforms as a universal communication tool.
- **Platform Gaps:** The prolonged silence of The Voice of Matat FM has created a communication void, especially for hyperlocal updates and multilingual content.
- **Reputational Pressures:** Social media platforms, while powerful, have amplified misinformation and negative narratives, particularly during service delivery protests and election periods.
- **Social Media Uptake:** The rise of social media has reshaped the communication landscape, enabling real-time interaction and broader reach, especially among younger and urban populations. Social media enhances immediacy and responsiveness in municipal messaging. However, it also presents a divide—leaving behind large segments of the population in rural wards who are digitally disconnected, thereby reinforcing exclusion for those without access or skills to engage online.

8.2. Implications for Strategy

To effectively navigate this landscape, the strategy emphasises the revitalisation of local platforms, expansion of multimedia channels, and targeted content production that reflects community realities. Strengthening communication infrastructure, building local media partnerships, and investing in inclusive digital literacy will be essential for reaching all residents—particularly those in remote and marginalised areas. To effectively navigate this landscape, the strategy emphasises the revitalisation of local platforms, expansion of multimedia channels, and targeted content production that reflects community realities. Strengthening communication infrastructure, building local media partnerships, and investing in inclusive digital literacy will be essential for reaching all residents—particularly those in remote and marginalised areas.

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9. Strategic Media Interventions

To strengthen media presence, improve public trust, and manage reputational risks, Matatiele Local Municipality will adopt a more coordinated and proactive media approach. This includes re-establishing local communication platforms, building media capacity internally, and deepening partnerships with credible media outlets across all levels.

9.1. Strategic Priorities:

- **Reinstate Local Platforms:** Prioritise the revival of The Voice of Matat FM and strengthen its programming as a key municipal information channel.
- **Editorial Partnerships:** Formalise relationships with local newspapers, radio stations, and digital platforms to amplify developmental content and ensure message consistency.
- **Media Capacity Building:** Train and support spokespersons, councillors, and communication staff in media engagement, interview preparation, and crisis communication.
- **Structured Storytelling:** Develop a municipal storytelling hub to proactively document and share success stories, policy updates, and community voices.
- **Responsive Messaging:** Implement a structured approach to respond to disinformation and negative media coverage with fact-based, timely messaging.
- **Integration with Service Delivery:** Align all media content with ongoing service delivery interventions, ensuring that communication reflects progress, acknowledges challenges, and outlines solutions.

These interventions will enhance the municipality's visibility, credibility, and ability to connect meaningfully with residents across multiple platforms.

10. Media Protocols and Spokesperson Framework

To ensure message discipline, institutional credibility, and accountability, Matatiele Local Municipality will enforce a clear media engagement protocol. This protocol outlines who may speak on behalf of the institution and under what conditions, to minimise reputational risk and maintain message alignment.

11. Designated Spokespersons:

- **Mayor:** Principal spokesperson on policy matters and strategic political announcements.
- **Municipal Manager:** Official voice on administrative operations, governance performance, and implementation.
- **Head of Communications:** Spokesperson on communication-related matters, public campaigns, and media facilitation.

11.1. Delegation Rules:

- Political office bearers may only speak on municipal issues when formally delegated by the Mayor.
- No municipal official may engage with the media on institutional matters without written delegation or coordination through the Communications Unit.
- Communication content for political principals must be prepared or vetted by the Communications Unit to ensure factual accuracy and alignment.

12. Internal Compliance:

This framework must be consistently communicated and enforced across all departments. Breaches of protocol should be addressed through internal accountability measures to safeguard institutional integrity.

13. Crisis Communication Framework

In recent years, Matatiele Local Municipality—like the rest of South Africa—has experienced multiple crises that have tested institutional resilience and exposed critical gaps in public communication. From the COVID-19 pandemic and its widespread disruptions, to waves of social unrest, major service delivery protests, recurrent power outages, and devastating floods, each incident has underscored the need for rapid, transparent, and coordinated communication. The municipality has also witnessed increasing damage to infrastructure caused by extreme weather conditions and climate-related events, which, when combined with resource constraints, has delayed municipal responses and heightened public frustration.

Additionally, an alarming surge in Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) has generated public outrage, often accompanied by the spread of misinformation and disinformation. Leadership changes at various levels have further contributed to uncertainty, highlighting the importance of message discipline and continuity. These realities, including the recent outbreak of food poisoning incidents and recurring veld fires in the region, demand the active integration of disaster management personnel and units into communication and rapid response teams—ensuring that public health, safety, and infrastructure crises are communicated with accuracy, urgency, and empathy.

In response to these challenges, Matatiele Local Municipality recognises the importance of a proactive and robust crisis communication framework.

13.2. Purpose

To ensure the municipality responds swiftly, transparently, and consistently during crises—whether caused by natural disasters, service delivery protests, misinformation, reputational incidents, or socio-political unrest. where reputational threats, emergencies, and misinformation can rapidly escalate, Matatiele Local Municipality recognises the importance of a proactive and coordinated crisis communication framework.

13.3. Key Principles:

- **Preparedness:** Maintain updated contact lists, holding statements, and designated crisis response teams.
- **Speed and Accuracy:** Communicate verified information quickly across all platforms to prevent speculation and confusion.
- **Designated Spokespersons:** Use authorised voices only, in line with the municipality’s spokesperson framework.
- **Multi-Channel Messaging:** Disseminate updates via radio, loud-hailing, social media, WhatsApp groups, and community leaders.
- **Public Reassurance:** Acknowledge challenges, outline steps being taken, and commit to transparency throughout the response.

13.3. Activation Process:

- Crisis team led by the Communications Unit activates within 30 minutes of incident confirmation.
- Statement cleared by the Municipal Manager or Mayor, depending on severity.
- Stakeholders (internal and external) briefed before or alongside public release.

13.4. Post-Crisis Review:

- Conduct communication debriefs after major incidents to assess performance and adjust protocols.

This framework enhances public confidence and ensures the municipality maintains control of its narrative even in the most challenging circumstances.

14. Rapid Response Communication Approach

Matatiele Local Municipality adopts a proactive approach to address emerging issues, misinformation, and urgent service concerns before they escalate into full-blown crises.

14.1. Purpose

To enable swift, factual, and coordinated responses that demonstrate accountability and protect institutional credibility.

14.2. Key Features:

- **Issue Detection:** Monitor traditional media, social media, and community feedback channels to flag issues early.
- **Response Activation:** Within 2–4 hours of detection, the Communications Unit will coordinate a response involving the relevant department.
- **Approved Messaging:** Holding statements and fact-based responses to be drafted and cleared quickly.
- **Response Team Composition:**
 - Matatiele Communications Unit (Lead)
 - Head of Communications, Alfred Nzo District Municipality
 - GCIS Regional Communication Coordinator
 - District Communications Core Team

14.3. Communication Tools

Radio inserts, WhatsApp blasts, social media updates, loud-hailing, and face-to-face clarification via CDWs or Ward Councillors.

14.4. Feedback Loop

Monitor community responses and adapt messaging where needed. Issues not resolved within 48 hours escalate to the Crisis Communication Framework.

This approach enhances institutional responsiveness and public confidence, and reflects national standards for real-time communication governance.

14.5. Communication Action Plan Pillars

The implementation of this strategy will be driven by five interrelated pillars designed to integrate communication across institutional operations, community engagement, and developmental outcomes.

Pillar 1: Community Engagement and Outreach

- Coordinate community-based dialogues on pertinent social and developmental issues, Executive Outreaches, Handovers and Monitoring Visits, IDP and Budget Outreaches public participation processes.
- Deepen engagement with designated groups through targeted programmes.
- Establish feedback loops to ensure issues raised are addressed and reported back to communities.

Pillar 2: Strategic Content and Storytelling

- Profile municipal success stories, challenges, and innovations using multimedia formats.
- Develop municipal publications and a digital knowledge repository.
- Promote human-centred storytelling that connects governance with lived experiences.

Pillar 3: Media and Public Relations

- Maintain a proactive presence in local and regional media.
- Align media campaigns with national observances and service delivery calendars.
- Develop a media relations calendar and standard content approval processes.

Pillar 4: Internal Communication and Staff Engagement

- Improve internal information flow through development of employee-focused platforms.
- Reinforce compliance with the communications protocol across departments.

Pillar 5: Capacity Building and Resource Mobilisation

- Upskill communications staff and spokespersons in emerging trends and technologies.
- Mobilise resources through partnerships to strengthen platforms, tools, and materials.
- Explore innovative communication tools such as mobile loud-hailing, audio-visual formats, and community theatre.

15. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is essential to track progress, assess communication effectiveness, and continuously improve engagement. It ensures that communication efforts are aligned with municipal priorities and responsive to community feedback.

Key Approaches:

- Develop a communication performance dashboard and reporting system.
- Conduct regular audits of communication channels and campaigns.
- Use feedback tools (e.g. surveys, social media analytics, and community dialogues) to evaluate reach and impact.
- Host quarterly reflection and learning sessions across departments.
- Prepare an annual communication performance report for submission to Management, Standing Committee, Executive Committee and Council.

The insights gained through M&E will guide strategic adjustments, highlight successes, and enhance the impact of communication on development outcomes.

16. Stakeholder Map

Effective communication requires the active involvement of multiple stakeholders. The matrix below outlines key stakeholder groups, their roles, and preferred channels of engagement.

Stakeholder Group	Role in Communication	Preferred Channels	Engagement Frequency
Community Members	Primary audience and beneficiaries	Community radio, loud-hailing, outreaches and dialogues	Ongoing
Traditional Leaders	Influencers and gatekeepers of community dialogue	Community meetings, direct briefings	Quarterly
Ward Councillors & CDWs	Intermediaries between municipality and communities	WhatsApp, emails, physical reports	Monthly
Local Media (Print & Radio)	Amplifiers of messages and watchdogs	Press briefings, interviews, media releases	As needed
NGOs & Civil Society	Development partners and advocacy agents	Stakeholder roundtables, email	Bi-annually
Youth & Women Groups	Drivers of inclusive participation	Workshops, social media, forums, dialogues, tech talks	Quarterly
Private Sector	Partners in local economic development	Roundtables, joint campaigns	Bi-annually
Influencers & Changemakers	Message amplifiers, digital advocates, and civic mobilisers	Social media, dialogues, tech campaigns	Campaign-based / As needed
Faith-Based Organisations	Moral influencers and social support enablers	Pulpit announcements, community events	Monthly

Educational Institutions	Civic educators and platforms for youth engagement	School visits, debates, awareness campaigns	Quarterly
Persons with Disabilities & Forums	Inclusion advocates and accessibility advisors	Disability forums, assisted platforms	Bi-annually
Diaspora / Former Residents	Advocates for external support and municipal ambassadors	Social media, newsletters, digital forums	Annually
Law Enforcement & CPFs	Partners in safety communication and social mobilisation	Safety forums, awareness campaigns	Quarterly
Internal Departments	Content generators and programme implementers	Internal memos, staff briefings	Bi-weekly/Monthly

12. Current Communications Unit Structure

POSITION	FILLED/VACANT/ PROPOSED	ROLES
Manager Communications/Head of Communications	Filled	• He/she straddles the communication function across the political and administrative entities and is accountable/responsible for the overall communications function. • take the lead in integrated communication structures to ensure proper coordination and integration of communication policies and programmes throughout government. • Provide overall management of the communications team to support the implementation of effective communications, including but not limited to media engagement, all communication platforms, campaigns, marketing and PR functions, as well as research and analysis to measure the impact of communications.
Communications, IGR & Media Relations: Senior Officer	Filled	• Monitor print, broadcast and online media reports so as to be able to respond effectively to issues within the communication environment. • Coordinates IGR forum meetings. • Oversee the development of communications material including press releases, media engagements & outreach activities.

Outreach & Community Liaison Officer	Proposed	Responsible for the implementation of stakeholder engagement activities and execution of external community campaigns and Public Relations activities.
Events, Branding and Marketing: Senior Officer	Filled	- Coordinates activities/tasks associate with Events, Brand and Marketing through the creation and maintenance of good image of the municipality in order to attract investors and to promote Matatiele as a tourism destination of choice such that the desired outcomes of the municipality goals are met. - Manages and monitors specific procedural applications associated with municipal branding, marketing and events planning process to ensure its functionality and availability of information and resources.
Officer: Graphic Designing & New Multimedia products	Filled	- Responsible for managing all municipal social media pages & website. - Designs infographics - Ensures that all social media pages comply with government's CI and branding guidelines. - Monitoring and reviewing the content posted for accuracy and adherence to consistent government messaging.

13. Communication Strategy Action Plan

Communication Activity	Responsible person	Target Audience	Platform/Channel	Time Frame	Budget	Outcome
Internal communications						
Package policy pronouncements, progress on the implementation of Municipal Programme of Action Communicate upcoming events. Quarterly staff engagements	Office of the MM and HRD units	Staff	Staff e-mails Internal electronic newsletter (MLM Insider) Circulars Dept. WhatsApp groups Notice boards Internal screens/monitors	Quarterly	N/A	To keep the staff informed.

External communications						
Stakeholders Engagement						
Coordinate stakeholders' engagement sessions	Mayor, Portfolio Heads, Speaker, Chief Whip, Ward Cllrs, Public Participation & Customer Care	Traditional leaders, Civil society, designated groups, business sector, ratepayers, religious fraternity, Mayoral Business Council etc.	Face to face engagements	Quarterly	R100 000	To keep the stakeholders informed on current programmes and ensure participation of public.
Package content and get it ready for Community outreach.	Mayor, EXCO, Speaker, Ward Cllrs, Chief Whip	Ward communities	Loud-hailing Service delivery pamphlets Outreaches	Quarterly	R200 000	Information sharing

Khupha campaign/speak out (GBV & F programme)	Mayor, EXCO, Speaker, Ward Cllrs, Chief Whip and Men's Forum	Men	Face to face interactions	Quarterly	R100 000	Implementation of the national/provincial and local GBV & F strategy.
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION COMMUNICATION PLAN (BASIC SERVICE DELIVERY)						
Mayoral / EXCO Outreaches to hot-spot areas	Mayor, EXCO, Speaker and Chief Whip	Communities	Face to Face interactions	Quarterly	R100 000	To encourage public participation and communicating government programmes
State of the Municipality Address (Open Council Day)	Mayor, Speaker, Chief Whip and Management	Communities	Face to Face interactions, Live transmission, print, publications and website	Fourth Quarter	R500 000	To present government programmes, plans and achievements
Project launches / sod turning/	Mayor, EXCO, Chief Whip, Management and Communications Unit	Community	Face to face	As the need arise	R500 000	Profiling government projects

Project handovers	Mayor, EXCO, Chief Whip, Speaker, Management and Communications Unit	Community	Face to face	Quarterly	R200 000	Profiling government projects
Project Walkabouts/Monitoring Visits	Mayor, EXCO, Chief Whip, Speaker, Management and Communications Unit	Community	Face to face	As the need arise	R50 000	Profiling government projects and assess progress.
Community Dialogues/ activations	Mayor, EXCO, Chief Whip, Speaker, Management and Communications Unit	Matatiele communities.	Face to face	Bi-annually	R100 000	Distribute government information and interact with communities.
MEDIA ENGAGEMENT						
Structured media briefing session	Mayor, EXCO, MM	Media	Face to Face interactions	Quarterly	R100 000	Strengthening working relations

Structured radio slots/ programmes on current affairs show	Mayor	Community	Electronic media	Quarterly	R100 000	Profiling government programme of action.
Talk to your Portfolio Head Radio Programme. Talk to your ward councillor programmes	EXCO Members and Senior Managers	Community	Radio Slots	Bi- Annually	R500 000	To encourage public participation and communicating government programmes
State of the Ward Address (SOWA)	Ward councillors	All wards	Face to face, media	Annually	R500 000	Report the work done by government and report plans for the next fiscal year.
Media Tour	Mayor, EXCO, Speaker and Chief Whip	Media Houses (print & electronic)	Face to face interactions	Bi-annually	R100 000	To popularise service delivery initiatives and progress and its impact to communities.
Advertorials	Communications Unit	Community	Newspapers	Quarterly	R200 000	Information sharing
Media statements	Communications Unit	Media houses	e-mail, WhatsApp, Facebook	Adhoc	N/A	Information sharing

Media partnership	Communications Unit	Matatiele communities Provincial & national audience	Local & mainstream	Annually	R1 000 000	To share government information and market Matatiele as a destination of choice.
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Digital Media Platforms						
Produce and disseminate digital material on municipal programmes/tourism offerings.	Communications Unit	General public	Local & mainstream media Facebook live-stream YouTube Website WhatsApp Internal screens/monitors Infographics Newsflash	Ad hoc	R250 000	To share government information and market Matatiele as a destination of choice.

DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION & CAPACITY BUILDING PLAN						
Undertake structured communication intervention in identified wards	Core Team	Identified Wards as per priority interventions done by government in such areas	Profiling of service delivery interventions	Quarterly	R300 000	Well capacitated political principals on communication system
Media Training	Core Team	Focus Areas of interest	Profiling of service delivery interventions	Annually	R300 000	Well capacitated political principals on media management
Communication Strategy action plan reviews	Communications Unit	Municipality	Workshops	Fourth Quarter	R300 000	Development of a clear communication action plan
Coordination and participate in Communication structures (LCF, IGR, district Core team, LGCF	Communications Unit	Municipality	DCF meetings	Quarterly	R100 000	Functional communication structures
Communication Assessment/Audit	DCF core team & LGCF	Municipality	DCF meetings	Quarterly	N/A	Assessment of implementation of the LGSC

PUBLIC SATISFACTION SURVEY						
Conducting communication environmental assessment	Communications Unit	Community	Face to face interactions	on-going	N/A	Identification of hotspots and development of rapid response approach
Media Monitoring	Communications Unit	Media	Print and electronic media	Daily	N/A	Proper analysis on media coverage and respond to media enquiries.
Branding and Marketing						
Outdoor & indoor advertising	Communications Unit	Tourists, investors and communities	Digital & outdoor advertising	On going	R1 000 000	Marketing/promoting municipal programmes

Strategic events (Freedom Challenge Mountain Bike, Matatiele Fees, Mehlooding Heritage Event and Music Festival and Shisa Fest)	Communications & SP Unit and LED	Communities & tourists	Social media platforms, website, print & electronic media and magazines	ADHOC	R500 000	Marketing/promoting strategic events
OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER						
Activity	Responsible person	Target audience	Channel	Time frame	Budget	Outcome
Communication support to programmes in the Office of the Speaker (stakeholders' meetings, Taking council to the people, leaders)	Speaker and Councillors Public Participation Unit	Communities	Social Media Live streaming Internal screens/monitors Infographics Local and mainstream media	Adhoc	R300 000	Well informed communities about government programmes. Understanding of community needs by Council

Constituency Work Radio Programme	Chief Whip & Whippery	Communities	Face-face, streams	live	Ad hoc		Informed communities
Product Development							
Story submission	Communications Unit	Provincial community	SALGA		Bi-annually	N/A	Profiling Municipal and government programmes and interventions
Newspaper column	Communications Unit	Community	Print media		Quarterly	N/A	Profiling Municipal and government programmes and interventions
Newsletters/service delivery pamphlets	Communication Unit	Community	Print		Bi-annually	R300 000	Profiling Municipal programmes and interventions

Matat Newsflash	Communication Units	Matatiele communities (internal and external)	Print	Monthly	N/A	Profile government services and provide updates.
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FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Operation Clean Audit	Mayor, Speaker, Chief Whip, EXCO, Councillors and Management	Community	Awareness Roadshows	On going	N/A	Encourage staff to participate in a process of ensuring the municipality receives a clean audit.
Indigent support programme	Mayor, Speaker, Chief Whip, EXCO, Councillors and Management	Community	Awareness Roadshows	On going	R100 000	Ensure communities register in the system.

SPECIAL PROGRAMMES						
Communication support on key campaigns 16 days of activism, women's month, World Aids Day, June 16, Child Protection Week) Elderly Programmes Children's Awareness Programmes Disability and HIV Programmes Gender Programmes (Men & Women)	Awareness Campaigns Information sharing sessions Dialogues	Mayor, Speaker, Chief Whip, EXCO, Civil society groups & NGOs Men's forum	Roadshow, Information Days Community Media, Roadshows, Taxi Rank Activations Website	Ongoing	R300 000	Maximum social cohesion and well-developed designated groups.

13.1 Communication Forum

The Local Communicators Forum exists and is functional; however, more work needs to be done to streamline its operations and formally integrate it as a sub-forum under broader Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) structures. Strengthening this alignment will enable more effective coordination of services and communication responses to community needs.

Additionally, communication issues that require district-wide attention will be escalated to the District Communications Core Team and the Rapid Response platform for integrated intervention.

13.2.1 Community Development Workers (CDWs)

CDWs serve as frontline communicators and development facilitators. They play a dual role of informing communities about government services and programmes while also reporting community needs and sentiments back to the municipality. Their embeddedness in the community enables real-time feedback, civic education, and rapid mobilisation during emergencies.

Key Roles:

- Distribute communication materials and service updates.
- Facilitate ward-based dialogues and support municipal campaigns.
- Act as first responders in the rapid response communication system.
- Channel citizen grievances and developmental suggestions to the relevant departments.

13.2.2 Ward Communicators and Support Assistants

These actors enhance the ward councillor's ability to engage with communities. They assist with campaign logistics, maintain community WhatsApp groups, and help coordinate outreach activities.

Key Roles:

- Disseminate messages and mobilise residents.
- Capture and report back on community concerns.
- Coordinate outreach events and ensure feedback is shared with departments.

13.2.3 Ward Committees

As elected representatives of their communities, Ward Committees are key partners in deepening public participation. Their knowledge of local dynamics makes them important advisors for shaping relevant, localised messaging.

Key Roles:

- Support the planning and coordination of outreach activities.
- Provide early warning on misinformation or unrest.

- Validate the relevance of communication content.

13.2.4 Community Policing Forums, Neighbourhood Watch, Civic Organisations and Village Committees

These structures often operate informally but serve as trusted, hyper-local actors with real-time access to community dynamics. They can support community mobilisation efforts, reinforce safety messaging, and assist in alerting the municipality of urgent issues.

Key Roles:

- Strengthen mobilisation during safety campaigns or service delivery roll-outs.
- Act as communication liaisons in remote or under-served areas.
- Serve as trusted relays for municipal information during crises.

These community-based communication actors will be integrated into the outreach calendar, feedback loops, and campaign roll-outs to ensure messaging is co-created, people-centred, and locally responsive.

14. Risk and Mitigation Plan

This section identifies potential risks that could hinder the successful implementation of the communication strategy and proposes mitigation measures to address them.

Risk Description	Potential Impact	Mitigation Measures
Inadequate budget allocation for communication activities	Limits reach and quality of campaigns and tools	Advocate for dedicated communication budget in the IDP; seek partnerships for resource mobilisation
Digital divide and low connectivity in rural wards	Excludes significant populations from receiving digital messages	Maintain traditional platforms (radio, loud hailing); invest in inclusive communication tools and formats
Spread of misinformation and disinformation	Undermines public trust and causes confusion	Establish rapid response team; strengthen media monitoring and fact-checking routines
Inconsistent application of communication protocols	Causes message fragmentation and reputational risk	Enforce internal training and accountability; integrate

		communication roles in departmental planning
Limited internal capacity and understaffing	Delays implementation and weakens support to other departments	Upskill current staff; advocate for strategic staffing aligned to organisational structure
Low stakeholder participation in communication programmes	Reduces feedback, ownership, and public engagement	Strengthen targeted stakeholder engagement strategies and incentives for participation
Damage to infrastructure caused by extreme weather events and delayed communication response due to limited resources	Undermines credibility and frustrates affected communities; increases vulnerability during crises	Integrate crisis and rapid response protocols; pre-develop holding messages; prioritise communication around high-risk areas and resource mobilisation
Inadequate budget allocation for communication activities	Limits reach and quality of campaigns and tools	Advocate for dedicated communication budget in the IDP; seek partnerships for resource mobilisation
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Low stakeholder participation in communication programmes	Reduces feedback, ownership, and public engagement	Strengthen targeted stakeholder engagement strategies and incentives for participation

14.1 Review and Process Plan

To ensure relevance and continuous improvement, this communication strategy will be subject to periodic review and adaptation:

- **Annual Internal Review:** Conducted by the Communications Unit to assess implementation, highlight gaps, and integrate feedback.
- **Mid-Term Strategic Review (2026):** To align the strategy with shifting institutional priorities, external dynamics, and community needs.
- **End-of-Term Evaluation (2027):** To inform the development of the next strategic communication framework aligned with the incoming administration.

15. Approval Process

- The strategy will be tabled before the **Good Governance Standing Committee** for political oversight.
- Upon endorsement of the strategy, it will be tabled to the **Executive Committee** and finally to the **Council** for formal approval and adoption.