COVID-19 COMMUNICATIONS MODULE
The Communication Module provides support for Mayors’ Offices and communications officials to proactively and effectively communicate on COVID-19.

This document includes a list of best practices as well as practical tools for cities. The material is divided into two parts.

**Part A: COVID-19 Communications Guide**

This guide provides practical knowledge and recommendations for city communications leaders with a strong focus on social media and digital tools.

It contains information about how to staff and organize a Crisis Communications Unit including: the types of processes and procedures to put in place, messaging tips, and how to handle outreach.

**Part B: Tools—Templates, Checklists, and Resources**

In this section you will find tools designed to provide practical support when implementing a communications strategy.

- **Tool 1:** Calendar and Communications Outputs Template
- **Tool 2:** Agency Reporting Document Template
- **Tool 3:** Media Inquiries Template
- **Tool 4:** Managing Your Online Response Checklist
- **Tool 5:** Crisis Communications Social Media Checklist
- **Tool 6:** Communicating Your Work
- **Tool 7:** Digital Resources for Cities
- **Tool 8:** Social Media Resources for Cities
- **Tool 9:** Filming Checklist
- **Tool 10:** Sample User-Generated Content (UGC) Mayor Script
PART A: COVID-19 COMMUNICATIONS GUIDE
The COVID-19 Communications Guide provides support for Mayors’ Offices and communications officials to proactively and effectively communicate on COVID-19. This document includes a list of best practices as well as practical tools for cities.

The guide emphasizes three core pillars to help Mayors’ Offices manage the rapidly changing, unpredictable communications landscape of the current crisis:

- Staffing and organization
- Processes and procedures
- Messaging and outreach

All of the information shared here is based on our experience working in and with city governments. While we offer guidance that can be relevant for everyone, we strongly recommend each office to consider what may need to change in order to adapt to their specific situation.
1. STAFFING AND ORGANIZATION
BECOME A CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS UNIT

The COVID-19 crisis is putting an incredible strain on communications teams across the country. Many are under-staffed, have limited budgets, and struggle with internal reporting under normal circumstances. Unfortunately, most of these teams have neither the time nor the resources to recruit and build out a new COVID-19 response team.

Instead, communications departments will need to become—and see themselves as—their city’s Crisis Communications Unit. This means staff will be asked to take on new responsibilities, to put non-essential day-to-day work on hold, and to adapt to different processes than usual.

The functions, structure, and goals of most communications departments will need to change dramatically in response to this crisis.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As a first step, clearly identify new staff responsibilities; focus on division of labor and define roles. Eliminating redundancies and promoting efficiency is critical in crisis situations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communications Director</td>
<td>Reports to the Mayor; involved in strategic planning with Chief of Staff, Operations, Legal, Finance teams, etc.; determines core messaging and approves all public and press outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Liaison(s)</td>
<td>Oversees and manages the reporting loop between Crisis Communications Unit and internal agencies; responsible for tracking upcoming announcements and programs; manages press requests; collects data and relays critical information or requests to counterparts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Stakeholder Liaison</td>
<td>Leads outreach and engagement with external stakeholders including state and federal officials, city council, philanthropic sectors, and corporate sectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Manager and Social Media</td>
<td>Tracks local, national, and global news coverage; stays abreast of other cities’ response to crisis, tracks press requests; manages social media channels; produces summary reports for senior teams; manages logs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term planning</td>
<td>Prepare 3-month, 6-month, and 12-month communications roadmap; identify messaging needs, programmatic opportunities and potential rollout strategies such as post-social distancing, federal funding, and business incentives; supports social initiatives; supports legislative actions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Crisis Communication Unit Structure

- **Leadership**: Responsible for managing senior relationships, setting priorities, and leading the day-to-day work and routines of the unit.

- **Cross-functional team**: Responsible for supporting the unit’s day-to-day operational needs and assisting other agencies.

**CREATE STAFFING SOLUTIONS**

Understanding that many Communications Departments, especially in less populous communities, may have minimal staff, we recommend exploring the following no-cost solutions to get additional support:

- **Internal reassignments**: request that PIOs and other employees from city agencies be loaned to the communications office for response and recovery efforts; the agency liaison and news monitor role may not require extensive communications or senior management experience

- **Expanded collaboration**: identify departments that have similar mandates and share resources such as External Affairs, Government Affairs, Community Relations

- **Third-party support**: explore the potential of sourcing employees from local non-profits, academic institutions, or the corporate sector. Many may have additional bandwidth depending on their industry
2. PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES
FOCUS ON REPORTING AND CONSISTENCY

In crisis situations, accurate information is difficult to find yet essential to share. The best way to ensure the Communications Department is receiving the data needed to keep their residents up-to-date, informed, and safe is by establishing consistent internal reporting protocols.

Specifically, attention should be given to: team tracking, citywide reporting, media relations.

TEAM TRACKING

The Crisis Communications Unit structure is flat and emphasizes division of labor. It is imperative that team activities are regularly tracked and reviewed to ensure quality control – especially in light of remote working mandated by social distancing.

Daily Team Meetings

- A full team check-in should be held every morning to review any public announcements, outstanding press requests, and updated agency information
- Following the team check-in, the Communications Director should alert the C-Suite of communications activities for the day and flag potential issues related to press requests or “bad news” updates
- The Communications Director, Agency Liaisons, and Office Manager should then have a call to review internal and external press requests, determine a response, announcement timing, and more

Communications Calendar

- The Office Manager is responsible for managing a communications calendar that lists: pending press releases, public announcements, social media activity, etc. The calendar should be made available to C-suite and, possibly, senior agency staff who are heavily involved in the response. The calendar should be shared in view-only mode

Note: Refer to Part B for “Tool 1: Calendar and Communications Outputs Template”
CITYWIDE REPORTING STRUCTURE

A Communications Department may find it a challenge to align with citywide staff. At times the communications team may not be aware of agency communications activities or have enough time to adequately plan. This information-sharing gap is intensified in a crisis situation.

To help address these issues, it is important to establish a citywide reporting structure for agencies. A simple system can be created wherein agency staff are required to fill out a form that alerts the main office of pending announcements, reporter inquiries, and other requests. The form is also a means of requesting support.

Note: Refer to Part B for “Tool 2: Agency Reporting Document Template”

PORTFOLIO MODEL

Assign a specific member of the communications team to a portfolio of agencies (see aforementioned description of Agency Liaisons). This team member is responsible for checking in with a designated point of contact in each agency to ensure that they fill out the request form and provide clear direction on next steps.

Group the portfolios by related city agencies. This is strongly advised to optimize coordination. See the example below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CORE SERVICES</th>
<th>ECONOMIC GROWTH</th>
<th>SOCIAL SUPPORT</th>
<th>GOVERNANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Safety</td>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>Community Development</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Social Services</td>
<td>Office of the Mayor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Civil Protection</td>
<td>City Attorney</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>City Clerk</td>
<td>Controller General</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Works</td>
<td>Urban Development</td>
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<td>Legal Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Science and Tech</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
MEDIA RELATIONS

The core function of any Communications Department is to engage with the media to ensure that residents receive accurate, up-to-date information on the city’s goals and activities. While the team is always expected to be a reliable source of information, this role is heightened in a crisis of this magnitude. It is imperative to have an organized and consolidated approach. Clear internal rules and guidelines need to be established in order to respond.

- Create a press request tracker to log all incoming media inquiries and catalog the city’s response
- Limit the number of authorized spokespeople to ensure accurate and consistent messaging; all other staff should direct media outlets to the appropriate press contact
- Promote consistency and routine by using uniform templates for press releases, statements, and advisories; use similar event, conference, teleconference protocols
- Schedule a set standard time and delivery method for daily public briefings from the Mayor; the goal is to drive resident engagement and manage media requests for COVID-19 updates
INCOMING PRESS REQUESTS

Due to COVID-19, staff members are taking on new responsibilities. A clear process for managing incoming press requests should be created and shared with relevant team members.

**STEP 1:**
Gather Intel from the Reporter
- Ask for the topic
- Record questions
- Ask who else is going on the record
- Get contact information
- Establish a deadline

**STEP 2:**
Do the Homework
- Research the interviewer. What have they reported?
- Evaluate the publications reach and agenda

**STEP 3:**
Discuss Strategy
- Discuss with the Mayor, appropriate senior leads, and agencies cited or needed for response
- Flag sensitivities
- Determine the best spokesperson
- Decide on a narrative structure. Determine how to shape the story

**STEP 4:**
Respond
- Prioritize outlets
- If overwhelmed with requests, provide canned responses, and direct to relevant briefing transcripts or press releases

Note: Refer to Part B for “Tool 3: Media Inquiries Template”
ONLINE RESPONSE

City websites provide an easily accessible place to house relevant resources and ongoing directives. City governments with successful digital response team:

- Dedicate a multidisciplinary team to lead the city’s online response
- Utilize a single web page with advice on COVID-19; the page has a clear URL and small amount of actionable content
- Create a simple, flat-file version of their website with essential information
- Update 404 page with links to the most relevant COVID-19 resources
- Ensure remote decision-making tools are in place such as digital signatures
- Remain aware of, and make use of, the ways other governments are responding
- Plan for what comes next; create a clear list of next steps for their online response that is understood across the organization

Note: See Bloomberg Associates’ “Tool 4: Managing Your Online Response Checklist” in Part B
SOCIAL MEDIA RESPONSE

Social media channels need to deliver real-time news and emergency notifications. Residents spend a considerable amount of time utilizing social media each day and now expect to learn about breaking news from social media as a first source.

- Establish a content approval process so that agencies know where to go for the most reliable sources for information.
- Develop sample social media posts that direct people to follow specific accounts for more information. Example: “Follow @NYCAler ts for official COVID-19 updates.”
- Clearly communicate to social media agencies which websites they should be directing people to like the CDC website or the city’s website.
- Make sure social media coordinates aligns the city’s website.
- Social media listening should use keywords to identify residents concerns with the city’s website, services, conflicting information, or other issues.

COVID-19 FEATURES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Several social media platforms have launched new features to help city governments to address COVID-19 in their cities. Leverage these tools and stay up to date on best practices for social media. *

Important sources:
- Facebook for Government, Politics & Advocacy: facebook.com/gpa
- Facebook Local Alerts: facebook.com/help/publisher/1064049677089136

Live streaming guidance from:
- Facebook: facebook.com/facebookmedia/solutions/facebook-live

*Best practices are shared in the appendix.
3. MESSAGING AND OUTREACH
ARTICULATE AN HONEST AND FOCUSED VISION

Government leaders who are most admired for their response to the COVID-19 crisis are those who are direct about the far-reaching impact of this pandemic and are consistent in their calls to action.

• Focus the Mayor’s communications on two to three core administration response and recovery priorities—this will make it clear that resources and attention are being allocated where needed most

• Utilize other senior deputies; enable them to take the lead as a spokesperson in other areas

• Engage third-party advocates to help explain each situation and the city’s response

MESSAGING AND OUTREACH

• Quote outside experts and partners

• Use active voice

• Support statements with data and examples

• Be prepared to provide brief foreign-language summaries

LANGUAGE

It is important to consider the tone and phrasing in each communication, not only the content itself. Keep in mind that COVID-19 and social distancing are impacting all residents, many of whom are not familiar with medical or scientific terminology. For some, English is not their first language.

• Start with most important information

• Be clear and succinct

• Avoid jargon or technical vocabulary

• Do not use acronyms and abbreviations
CASE STUDY: USING DATA AND EVIDENCE

Beyond the Numbers

Using Data to Tell a Story
Governor Jared Polis, State of Colorado

Data for its own sake isn’t enough – and it’s often confusing. When you include data in your messaging, make sure you do it in a way that’s clear, compelling, and actionable.

In his April 15th live update, Governor Polis provided an example of how data can tell a full story:

- **Start with shared goals.** Before you dive into the numbers, remind your audience of the shared goals you are trying achieve: Avoiding loss of life, ensuring quality medical care for COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients, mitigating economic and psychological hardship, and more

- **Explain data clearly.** Use visual aids and take time to explain what the audience is seeing. If you don’t have time to explain, skip the charts and graphs and get straight to the key takeaway

- **End with a key takeaway.** End every message with clear instructions and/or a clear call to action. For example, on the heels of hospital capacity updates, Polis instructed Coloradans to continue to seek medical care for urgent symptoms, just as they would have 2 months ago – a clear “so what” for that data set

Jared Polis mentions to data:

“This is what over time informs all of the social distancing measures… This informs what are we achieving today and what we are accomplishing through our social distancing. What we hope to see is that we have achieved 80% social distancing and then cases will begin to tail off”
VIDEO CONTENT

Video enables city leadership to engage and share content in a more personal manner than a standard press conference or news hit. Using video content, leaders have a unique chance to connect and engage with residents.

Key themes to explore in video:

- Reinforce messaging such as wear a mask, stay at home, social distancing, etc.
- Celebrate community pride by cheering on essential workers, offering thanks, etc.
- Spotlight heroes and community non-profits
- Address commonly asked questions from residents about rent deferrals, foodbanks, etc.
- Offer a personal message of how to adapt to the new normal:
  - Share personal challenges and experiences
  - Share tips on how to de-stress

INSPIRATION AND HOPE

The Mayor’s Office must not shy away from sharing difficult truths but must also be a source people look to for hope and inspiration. As a Crisis Communications Unit, it is important to find any opportunity to share good moments with residents.

Look for stories in the community. Share highlights of neighbors helping neighbors and profile heroic first-responders who are putting their lives on the line to take care of others. Don’t be afraid to share an occasional laugh or anecdote.
CASE STUDY: INSPIRATION AND HOPE

Getting Personal
Sincerity, Specificity, and a Sense of Humor
Mayor Randall Woodfin, Birmingham, AL

Mayor Randall Woodfin issued stay-at-home orders in Birmingham long before the Governor issued them statewide. His leadership is characterized by strong action – and great communication.

One thing Mayor Woodfin does exceptionally well is put himself at the front lines of communication. His sincerity, specificity, and sense of humor make his communication genuinely engaging – and show residents how much he’s in this with them. Mayor Woodfin is:

- Sincere. In this short video, Mayor Woodfin speaks from the heart, going out of his way to thank city employees for their invaluable work
- Specific. Mayor Woodfin cites examples of how Birmingham has responded to past challenges, in its own and neighboring cities, drawing on collective memory to remind residents that they can and will overcome this crisis, too
- Engaging. Mayor Woodfin’s own voice comes through loud and clear in his communications (see his Twitter feed for an excellent video of him making fun of his own beard)

Cautious optimism. Continued diligence.
“I’m not letting up.”
Mayor London Breed, San Francisco, CA

Mayor London Breed declared a state of emergency before the city confirmed a single case of coronavirus, and implemented stay-at-home orders early in the game. San Francisco and the Bay Area of have since emerged as a national model for how effective early and aggressive action can be, with much lower infection rates than other large cities.

However, Mayor Breed takes her success with a grain of salt. On the one hand, citizens need to hear that social distancing is working in order to keep doing it. On the other hand, nobody is out of the woods yet.

As Mayor Breed says, “San Franciscans are complying and people have been incredible with following this order. But on another note, there are a lot of folks who are not. And I am not comfortable letting up.” Her Twitter feed is positive, but emphatic: She shares success stories, inspiration, and good news, while steadfastly maintaining the need for continued effort. Her communications make it clear that this is not over yet.
INFORMATION ACCESS

Many communications departments make the mistake of relying too heavily on a press release to proliferate information. Remember, a press release is a trade tool used to encourage reporters to write a story. It is rarely seen by the general public.

• Conduct an audit of existing city-controlled communications channels including social media, TV/Radio broadcasts, bus shelters, street pole banners, direct mailers, newsletters, community meetings, and PSA carve outs

• Mobilize these channels and direct residents to one centralized place to find all COVID-19 related information; people should not have to visit multiple sites

• Work with external partners like Chambers of Commerce, BIDs, faith-based organizations, nonprofits to disseminate important messages through their communications channels

CREATIVE MESSAGING AND CONTENT

City government should also consider creative messaging and content strategies to maintain a sense of normalcy, promote local institutions, and engage residents during this difficult time. Where appropriate, city social media channels may consider how to:

• Promote local art institutions that have moved their offerings online

• Re-share resident or local celebrities #StayHomeSaveLives posts or share suggestions for what residents can do while they #StayHomeSaveLives. For instance, Chicago Mayor Lightfoot is encouraging residents to share music covers

• Engage and support online youth learning such as virtual storytelling

• Create or share social media moments that promote a sense of solidarity among residents, like Andrea Bocelli’s Easter concert in the Duomo Cathedral in Milan, for example

• Change profile photos or avatars of prominent public figures in your administration to photos in which they observe mask regulations. For instance, Mayor Garcetti in Los Angeles changed his profile picture to one of him wearing a face mask
CASE STUDY: MULTIPLE AND CREATIVE CHANNELS

Muti-lateral. Multi-channel.
Consistency Creates Confidence – and Compliance
Rhöndorf, Bad Honnef, Germany

Germany seems to be taking the epidemic in its stride with a high number of cases but a good management of sick patients. One of the factors that contribute to this is its communication strategy. Clarity and consistency from the National level down to individual household flyers create confidence – and confidence facilitates compliance with recommendations and directives.

In Rhöndorf, residents receive:

• **Highly visible local communication (print media).** Residents see inspirational messages on big posters throughout the city. The city distributed flyers to all households with help numbers for those who can’t leave the house, and need someone to walk the dog, shop for groceries, etc. They distributed pamphlets with info on the virus: What to do when you have symptoms, and more

• **State websites (digital/phone).** Every state has a helpline and website with state-specific information (some states border countries like France and Italy, which changes local regulations)

• **National info (podcast).** The leading virologist at Charité in Berlin delivers a podcast with updated info every other day. The transcripts are translated into several languages
PART B: TOOLS—TEMPLATES, CHECKLISTS, AND RESOURCES
TOOLS

In this section you will find tools designed to provide practical support when implementing a communications strategy.

• **Tool 1**: Calendar and Communications Outputs Template
• **Tool 2**: Agency Reporting Document Template
• **Tool 3**: Media Inquiries Template
• **Tool 4**: Managing Your Online Response Checklist
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TOOL 1: CALENDAR AND COMMUNICATIONS OUTPUTS TEMPLATE

Calendar and Communications Outputs Template is designed to track communication actions throughout the week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week of</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 27 - May 3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Social Media Messaging**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Twitter</td>
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<td>Facebook</td>
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<td>Instagram</td>
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</table>

**Top-line Announcements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Announcement</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Food Kitchen Opening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homelessness Initiative Announcement</td>
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</table>

**Daily Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00 AM</td>
<td>Daily Video Message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 AM</td>
<td>Daily Video Message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 AM</td>
<td>Small Biz Press Release</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td>Daily Video Message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 AM</td>
<td>Daily Video Message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td>Daily Video Message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 PM</td>
<td>Daily Press Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 PM</td>
<td>Daily Press Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:00 PM</td>
<td>Daily Press Conference</td>
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<td>2:30 PM</td>
<td>Daily Press Conference</td>
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<td>3:00 PM</td>
<td>Daily Press Conference</td>
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<td>4:00 PM</td>
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<td>4:30 PM</td>
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<td>5:00 PM</td>
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<td>5:30 PM</td>
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<td>7:00 PM</td>
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<td>10:00 PM</td>
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<td>10:30 PM</td>
<td>Daily Press Conference</td>
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<td>11:00 PM</td>
<td>Daily Press Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30 PM</td>
<td>Daily Press Conference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOOLS—TEMPLATES, CHECKLISTS, AND RESOURCES
TOOL 2: AGENCY REPORTING DOCUMENT TEMPLATE

Agency Reporting Document Template is designed to organize and manage communication plans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program or Initiative</th>
<th>How does this align with the Mayor's COVID-19 response?</th>
<th>How does this affect residents?</th>
<th>Where can residents access more information?</th>
<th>Investment and source of funds</th>
<th>Current Status/Project Dates</th>
<th>Overarching Messaging/Key Metrics</th>
<th>Potential Roadblocks or Negative News Angles</th>
<th>How to release information</th>
<th>Other Considerations (budget, city council votes, etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Press Release</td>
<td>Budget, city council votes</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
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<td>Exclusive Pitch</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<td>Mayoral Event/Press Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Social Media/Video</td>
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<td>5.</td>
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<td>Opinion Editorial</td>
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<td>TV/Radio Interviews</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
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Overview: To ensure that the Mayor is up to date on each agency’s programs and initiatives regarding COVID-19, please fill in the form below and submit to the Mayor’s Communications Office.
TOOL 3: MEDIA INQUIRIES TEMPLATE

Media Inquiries Template is meant to help manage requests from reporters.

<table>
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<th>Time</th>
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<th>Reporter Name</th>
<th>How by whom was the inquiry received?</th>
<th>Inquiry/Questions</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Source of information (person, agency, department, data set, etc)</th>
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<th>Mayoral Inclusion or Quotes?</th>
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TOOL 4: MANAGING YOUR ONLINE RESPONSE CHECKLIST

Managing your Online Response Checklist provides seven practical steps for how to organize an online response.

1. Have a dedicated, multidisciplinary team in place to lead the city’s online response. This delivery team should have a product manager, a content designer, a technologist to make sure things can scale, a developer who can code, a user researcher/someone to monitor web analytics and an expert who can check medical advice for accuracy, and a communications lead linking to the government’s wider communications response.

2. Have a single web page giving advice on coronavirus, with a clear URL and small amount of actionable content. This is the simplest, quickest thing any government can do to help citizens now. This page should be the 'single source of the truth' from your organization. The Californian Government have delivered a good example, and so has the New York State Government.

3. Create a simple flat file version of your website with the most essential information. A lot of government websites are crashing due to increased traffic. Creating a flat file website with the most important information that you can stand up if your site is overwhelmed can ensure your citizens have access to the most important information if your site goes down.

4. Update your 404 page. Add the most relevant COVID-19 related links in case someone gets the wrong URL and is unfamiliar with 404 pages. This can help steer them to where the right information is. It would also be wise to link to key national websites and resources.

5. Ensure remote decision-making tools are in place. In some places, the law requires political decision-making bodies such as council to meet physically to make decisions. It may be a good idea to get your local or regional government to adjust rules to be able to pass resolutions remotely now, before you are overwhelmed by the crises, to ensure decisions can continue to be made over the coming months if a period of self-isolation is drawn out.

6. Be aware and make use of what other governments are already doing in response. Many governments are responding well under great pressure and are already making their efforts available to others, such as Singapore’s contact tracing app TraceTogether. Here is a list (that is regularly updated) of online responses from jurisdictions around the world compiled by Digital Doughnut.

7. Plan for what comes next. Create a clear prioritized list of next steps for your online response that is well understood across the organization. Having a clear roadmap and backlog of activity to decide what happens now, next and later.
TOOL 5: CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS SOCIAL MEDIA CHECKLIST (1/2)

PHASE 1: Get in control
Contact all social media managers; alert them that guidelines are forthcoming and instruct them to direct all inquiries to [insert email address of social media lead]

PHASE 2: Establish approval processes
- Establish a content approval process so that agencies know who to contact for the most reliable sources for information
- Consider which accounts are allowed to retweet or share freely, such as posts coming from the Office of Emergency Management, Police Department, or Mayor’s Office
- Develop sample social media posts that direct people to follow specific accounts for more information. For example: “Follow @NYCAlerts and @NYCGov for official updates on COVID-19”
- Clearly communicate websites that your social media channels should direct people to such as the CDC
- Set approval protocol for agency-specific messages. If an agency wants to share a message that is not covered by the main social accounts, they must know how to get approval in order to prevent conflicting information. Set up a distribution email in advance and activate protocol

PHASE 3: Avoid pitfalls
- Remove any pre-scheduled posts planned until after the crisis has ended; information is likely to change and posts may be inaccurate, confusing, or inappropriate
- Limit posts from third-party sources. Set guidelines for which accounts are okay to share. Consider whether you will allow social media managers to share news reports, federal accounts, and statewide accounts
- Inappropriate tone, sarcasm, humor, all caps, and exclamation points are typically not appropriate for emergency situations. Photos, images, and graphics used should reflect the gravity of the situation
TOOL 5: CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS SOCIAL MEDIA CHECKLIST (2/2)

PHASE 4: Be active and coordinated across city social media channels

Make sure social media is aligned with the city’s website. This includes making sure social sharing graphics are updated and that the city’s website is updated with the relevant information.

Keep social media active:

• Live stream press conferences; make sure press conferences consistently promote the mayor’s social media handle and website
• Upload press conferences to YouTube channels so they are easy to find and embed them on the city’s website. Consider other live streaming platforms for press conferences including YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. If live tweeting press conferences, produce easy-to-follow graphics to publish during the broadcast
• Have the Mayor record video messages direct-to-camera outside of press conferences. This can be done on a smartphone, make sure all videos have subtitles
• Put experts like the Health Department Commissioner, Transportation Commissioner, or Police Chief on social media; Use video interviews, written Q&As, photo essays, quote graphics, and other creative ways to highlight that they are a go-to source for accurate information
• Create a repository of social media assets, logos, and videos or graphics that have been produced. Use a Dropbox or Google Drive. Then share the media hub with all agencies for their use

PHASE 5: Monitor closely

• Social media listening should use keywords to identify residents concerns with the city’s website, services, conflicting information, or other issues
• Team members should rotate being on-call for social listening duties
• Develop an incident report workflow to flag issues
• Surface posts from across social media platforms, also look in your own posts’ comments
• If your agency does not have access to a social media listening platform, check with the Mayor’s communications office and other agencies to see what can be done
Communicating Your Work provides a step by step guide for strategically planning and delivering new messaging.

Phase 1: Understanding your goals
- Step 1: Identify your overarching goals
- Step 2: Determine what success looks like with metrics and specific details

Phase 2: Engaging your audience
- Step 3: Map out your audience and stakeholders. Who are you trying to talk to?
- Step 4: Identify consumer insights—what do you want them to think about the city, Mayor's Office, and programs?
- Step 5: Identify calls to action: What specifically do you want to spur your stakeholders to do?

Phase 3: Delivering your message
- Step 6: Create talking points for general and specific audiences; rely on data and proof of performance—consumer insights and calls to action are your reference points
- Step 7: Audit your delivery channels. This includes social media, website, press, industry meetings and conferences, and public forums
- Step 8: Plot a timeline for communications opportunities based on important dates, program launches, etc.
- Step 9: Activate
Digital Resources for Cities is a compilation of digital resources intended to support communities and to provide information, guidance, and advice regarding remote working and digital engagement.

Social Media Resources for Cities provides intel and strategy for outreach to residents through social media.

TOOL 7:
DIGITAL RESOURCES FOR CITIES

COVID-19 COMMUNICATIONS MODULE

TOOL 7: DIGITAL RESOURCES FOR CITIES

Last updated: April 15, 2020

Bloomberg Associates has compiled a list of digital tools and resources to support city governments in:

1. Prevent the Spread of COVID-19
2. Shift to Remote Working
3. Serve and Engage Residents Digitally

Please note that these digital products and resources are not endorsed by Bloomberg Associates and are compiled to provide information and support. Please share them with others if they help them navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

I. Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

COVID-19 Resources:

• Center for Disease Control (CDC) Coronavirus Update and Guidance: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html
  CDC website, which includes up-to-date information, guidance and resources for the community.

• Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center: https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/; Interactive web-based dashboard to track COVID-19 in real time created by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University.

• COVID-19: Transportation Response Center: https://nacto.org/program/COVID19/ Guidance and tools for city governments and transit agencies compiled by the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) and supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

• City Hall Coronavirus Daily Update: https://bloomberg.us15.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=08570eb3cd6fe16c4edfbe881&id=cd9b908a26 (to subscribe) Daily email that elevates critical information city leaders need to respond to and recover from the challenges at hand.

• COVID-19 Local Action Tracker: https://www.nlc.org/program-initiative/COVID-19-local-action-tracker Collection of actions taken by local leaders to address the pandemic, created by Bloomberg Philanthropies and the National League of Cities.

• COVID Act Now: https://COVIDactnow.org/ Website with projections of when hospitals will likely become overloaded, and guidance on what to do to stop COVID-19.


TOOL 8:
SOCIAL MEDIA RESOURCES FOR CITIES

COVID-19 COMMUNICATIONS MODULE

TOOL 8: SOCIAL MEDIA RESOURCES FOR CITIES

Last updated: April 15, 2020

Social Media Resources for Cities provides intel and strategy for outreach to residents through social media.

Bloomberg Associates has compiled a list of digital tools and resources to support city governments in:


• Facebook Local Alerts: https://www.facebook.com/help/publisher/1064049677089136 Feature that allows primary government pages (e.g. “City of/County of XYZ”), law enforcement and emergency responder pages, and public health agency pages to send push notifications to followers to communicate urgent information.

Note: This tool is not available to elected officials or public figures, only the government organizations listed above.

• Facebook Best Practices for PSAs: https://www.facebook.com/gpa/blog/tips-and-tools-for-public-service-announcements

• YouTube Live: https://services.google.com/fh/files/emails/live-stream-two-pager.pdf YouTube’s live streaming service that allows you to reach your audience in real-time and interact through live chat and comments.

Note: This is a public platform so is not a great offering for private live streaming.

• Facebook Live: https://www.facebook.com/facebookmedia/solutions/facebook-live Tool to interact with viewers in real time that enables you to field viewers’ questions and check out their live reactions to gauge how your broadcast is going in real-time.

Note: Not recommended for in-depth working sessions with community members.

• Twitter Live: https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/twitter-live Twitter allows you to go live, designate moderators, invite participants, ask and share questions, and keep its recording. Note: Not recommended for in-depth working sessions with community members.
TOOL 9:
FILMING CHECKLIST

Below is a checklist to ensure the best quality recording shot from an iPhone or handheld device.

1. **Background**: Try to avoid background with doors or staircases, as people may be coming in and out of the frame while you are filming your video.

2. **Lighting**: Make sure you are in a well-lit room with minimal backlighting and that is reasonably quiet.

3. **Framing**: Position your phone so the camera is at eye level and your face is in the shot. Avoid angling the camera up or down. Hold your camera with your arm fully extended, ideally resting against a stable object, to ensure your video is steady. If you have someone available to film, they should rest their arms against a stable object and use two hands while holding the camera.

4. **Attire**: Do not wear white, or any stripes or busy patterns; wear solid, dark colors. Avoid wearing logos that could be mistaken as a sponsor.

5. **Remember**: Clean your lens. If you have a microfiber cloth or a piece of cotton handy, a few quick swipes on your camera lens makes a big difference.

*Important: Before you start filming, check your framing and make sure you are comfortable with everything that can be seen in the shot. After you finish filming, always have your Communications Director review any post before it goes live.*
TOOL 10: SAMPLE OF MAYORAL VIDEO SCRIPT

Below is an example of how a Mayor could structure his or her message to an audience.

First, introduce yourself:
• “Hi this is Mayor X. Reporting to you from X”
• This is a chance to normalize working from home and share what helps you excel in this environment. As part of your set, perhaps include family photos or desk objects that you feel comfortable sharing with your audience.

What are you doing to address COVID-19?
• Share the “what” and the “why”, use specific examples and anecdotes
• How are your teams collaborating? Are there specific examples of success?
• Are there specific tools or resources that have informed your decision-making such as crisis communications advice, tips from your peers, or data from the CDC?

A few things to consider:
• What have you done differently in your city that has worked, or is showing promise, that you want other cities to know about?
• What is happening in your city that inspires you?
• Do you have a message for those who feel scared or hopeless in this situation?
• What do you hope cities around the world will take from your experience?

Acknowledgements, reminders & closing statement:
• Acknowledge that this is a challenging time
• Show gratitude to those on the front lines of this crisis
• Remind people to practice social distancing and wash their hands
• End on a hopeful, positive note
The COVID-19 Communications Module and corresponding tools were developed by a team at Bloomberg Associates in support of the Bloomberg Philanthropies COVID-19 Local Response Initiative.

Bloomberg Philanthropies invests in more than 570 cities and over 160 countries around the world to ensure better, longer lives for the greatest number of people. The organization focuses on five key areas for creating lasting change: the Arts, Education, Environment, Government Innovation, and Public Health. Bloomberg Philanthropies encompasses all of Michael R. Bloomberg’s giving, including his foundation and personal philanthropy as well as Bloomberg Associates, a pro bono consultancy that works in cities around the world. In 2019, Bloomberg Philanthropies distributed $3.3 billion.

Bloomberg Associates is the philanthropic consulting arm of Michael R. Bloomberg’s charitable organization, Bloomberg Philanthropies. Founded in 2014, we work side by side with client cities to improve the quality of life for residents, taking a strategic, collaborative and results-oriented approach to make cities stronger, safer, more equitable and efficient.