

Excerpt from March IPR Task Force Summary:

5. [Introduction on plans to develop a strategy for external communications \(01:39:45\)](#)

Deacon reported that she and Mr. Hammill discussed communication for the Task Force and also for the LEAD Program, GRACE Program, behavioral health crisis response, and homeless efforts. The Health Department is also undergoing an effort to educate the public on homeless services. Existing activities include the website and talking to media from time-to-time. One question is whether they should hire a communications specialist to help the Task Force develop a communication plan.

The Task Force members discussed options for enhanced communication:

- Create a list of entities, organizations, and professionals in the medical and legal professions that need to know what they are doing
- Information that someone seeks out on the website versus information that is sent to people directly
- How to engage community members who are concerned with these issues
- Need to figure out how to convey complex information as simply as possible with graphics and other techniques
- Identify social media influencers for the local community
- The possibility of funding a year-long contract for a communications expert to simplify the message and help create an effective communications strategy

Deacon to provide information on the cost of hiring a communications expert at the next steering committee.

Communications Planning for IPRTF

These items and ideas have been suggested in past IPRTF and committee meetings:

CONTENT

The need for a hook to catch peoples' attention

Outcomes and action items instead of process

For prevention efforts, it's better to identify outputs, not outcomes

Create a list of programs and their purpose

In addition to data, communicate anecdotes from program success stories;

DISTRIBUTION

Have a **community forum** once or twice per year, with a presentation and public comment period, to have a dialog with citizens to talk about the work of the Task Force and allow them to provide input on those efforts

A couple times per year, **publish an op-ed piece** in Cascadia Weekly and post it on the County and City Facebook pages.

The use of **social media** in communications: Using existing social media that people are already following

Live transcription services

All **members advocate/inform** the community

STRATEGY

Advertising the work of the Task Force versus making the meetings more accessible to the public

Work with the Bellingham Herald to come up with a format for an article.

Work with the County's Community Outreach Facilitator on ideas and strategies.

Define:

Content: outcomes and action items instead of process

Distribution methods: Social media, designated spokespersons for the Task Force

Audience: low-income communities, tribes, and folks with lived experience in the criminal justice system

Develop a communications campaign or hire someone to develop a campaign

List of priority groups and agencies that the IPRTF reports to about its work

Create a steering committee workgroup to develop action items for better communication

Use existing contractors to enhance communication

Use Health Department prevention specialists to help consult on communication

Identify who to inform about IPRTF work and accomplishments and identify the message the IPRTF wants to convey

Engage advocates for change located in Whatcom County.

DONE:

- Time notations on the meeting summaries, agendas, and other content
- Broadcasting recordings on YouTube
- Posting video instead of audio

RESOLUTION 2021- _____

TO REVIEW AND ENHANCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN
WHATCOM COUNTY

WHEREAS, A 2016 report by the County Council's Legislative Analyst found that Whatcom County has over 40 active boards, committees and commissions; and

WHEREAS, over 300 Whatcom County residents volunteer their time on boards and committees that advise the County Executive and County Council; and,

WHEREAS, the 2016 report determined that for most committees, it is difficult to recruit members; and,

WHEREAS, these boards and committees should provide a forum for residents to interact with and influence their government in a meaningful way; and,

WHEREAS, County Council meetings should provide a forum for residents to interact with and influence their government in a meaningful way; and,

WHEREAS; the Whatcom County Council and Executive rely on these boards and committees for advice on policy; and,

WHEREAS, it may be difficult for some members of the public to be aware of matters that come before the boards, committees and commissions, and matters that the Planning Commission and County Council address; and,

WHEREAS, online meetings associated with COVID pandemic and have altered how people interact with their government and present opportunities to rethink how the public may engage with government; and,

WHEREAS, there are myriad methods of recruiting people to volunteer for boards and committees;

WHEREAS, there are myriad methods of notifying the public about the business of their government; and,

WHEREAS, there are many potential ways that commissions, boards, and Council can be assisted by Council and Executive staff in order to increase public participation; and,

WHEREAS, there is a wealth of talent in the public and among County staff to advise on how to enhance public participation in meetings of boards, committees, commissions, and Council meetings; and,

WHEREAS, the County Executive has expressed a willingness to helping to identify staff who can help advise on these matters;

1 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council will work
2 with the County Executive to address the issue of public participation in our local
3 government and support recommendations for improvements; and,
4

5 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that The Chair of the Council and the County Executive
6 may identify staff and citizens to form an ad-hoc group of limited duration; and,

7 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this group may survey members of all the County
8 boards, committees, and commissions regarding public participation in their meetings; and,

9 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the group may make recommendations to the
10 Council on the following and related issues:

- 11 1. Effectiveness of traditional methods of "notice" in light of the changing ways
12 individual's access news and information.
- 13 2. Needs and opportunities for public education on the issues addressed by local
14 government so that citizens can be more effective in their participation.
- 15 3. The use of remote meeting technologies to increase ease of participation beyond the
16 current public health crisis.
- 17 4. The mechanics of navigating and accessing policy and legislation on the county
18 website.
- 19 5. The public comment process and accessibility.
- 20 6. Evaluation of all public participation processes and procedures through an equity
21 lens.

22 **ADOPTED** this _____ day of _____, 2021.

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27 ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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31 _____
32 Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council

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31 _____
32 Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

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34 **APPROVED AS TO FORM:**

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Civil Deputy Prosecutor