Communications Director
Tompkins County

Department: County Administration
Classification: Non-competitive, PJC
Labor Grade: Management Grade 85
Approved: 1/6/2020
By: LG, Deputy Commissioner of Human Resources

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS: EITHER:

(a) Graduation from a regionally accredited or New York State registered college or university with a Master's Degree in Communications, English, Journalism, Public Relations, Public Administration, Marketing, Public or Business Administration, Social Sciences or a related field; OR

(b) Graduation from a regionally accredited or New York State registered college or university with a Bachelor’s Degree in Communications, English, Journalism, Public Relations, Public Administration, Marketing, Public or Business Administration, Social Sciences or a related field; AND two (2) years of full-time paid (or the equivalent part-time) experience in a position with substantial public information responsibility; OR

(c) Completion of two years of study (at least 60 college credit hours) in a regionally accredited or New York State registered college or university with major coursework in Communications, English, Journalism, Public Relations, Public Administration, Marketing, Public or Business Administration, Social Sciences or a related field; AND four (4) years of full-time paid (or the equivalent part-time) experience in a position with substantial public information responsibility; OR

(d) Any combination of training and experience equal to or greater than that described in (a), (b) and (c) above.

Tompkins County is Committed to Equity and Inclusion. We encourage those with similar values to apply.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THE CLASS:

The Communications Director supports the County Administrator, a part of the Tompkins County leadership team, and is responsible for developing and delivering a comprehensive engagement strategy and communication plan that amplifies the County’s priorities and drives engagement across the community, while clearly defining objectives, channels, timelines, and measures for success.

The Director is an experienced communications leader, strong writer, and strategic thinker; well versed in communication strategies & processes; skilled in creating succinct, well-crafted, persuasive content. The Director is an effective communicator and thought partner with demonstrated experience working closely with senior leadership in complex settings. The Director plays a critical role in building public trust through various communications programs and initiatives and advancing transparency and accountability of Tompkins County government.

They lead the internal and external communications activities for Tompkins County Government including community outreach, public relations, public information, and media relations. The Director is responsible for key messages, press releases, social media, website content, print and electronic communication, manages Tompkins County’s role in government access television, assists departments with the development and implementation of communication strategies and crisis communications, and is the coordinator for internal employee communications and relations.

The Communications Director also works directly with and assists the Legislature and department heads to develop key information about County government, its services, finances, people and programs. They are seen as a leader in all communications and serve as a departmental advisor as needed.

The Communications Director will also have the opportunity to interact with leaders within local government, ranging from administrators to elected officials, and staff across multiple departments and agencies.
The position receives policy level supervision from the County Administrator and is expected to function in a highly autonomous manner. The position may serve as lead emergency Public Information Officer (PIO) for Tompkins County and works with community first-response agencies and other County PIO’s in the event of a widespread or long-term disaster. Supervision of others is generally not a function of an employee in this class but may occur on a project basis. The incumbent will perform all related duties as required.

TYPICAL WORK ACTIVITIES:

- Directs support staff in the coordination, development and implementation of internal and external communications, public information and community relations activities (i.e., broadcasting or streaming of meetings, website, social marketing programs, special events, etc.);
- Coordinates, plans, and manages integrated internal and external communication activities;
- Provides accessible, easily understood information about Tompkins County services and programs using various communication strategies, tools, and tactics;
- Anticipates media responses, prepares spokesperson(s) accordingly and responds to media inquiries;
- Administers and manages public and employee information programs;
- Provides oversight and direction for digital communications, including the website, e-newsletters, digital signage, intranet, and social media;
- May act as lead Public Information Officer or a team member of the PIO team responsible for communication functions during emergency or crisis events;
- Manages Tompkins County’s role with the government access channel;
- Supports County Administrator and other organizational leaders in the development of communications, including speeches, presentations and print/digital communications. Oversees the creation of background briefing documents for the Administrator before major interviews, meetings and presentations.
- Advises and counsels management and staff on policies, plans, and practices that affect the County's relationship with the public;
- Plans, organizes, and directs efforts that enhance Tompkins County's image in the community through relationship building, special events, and information sharing;
- Manages the dissemination of prompt, accurate information during emergency and disaster situations;
- Develops and recommends new communication methods and enhancements to better achieve County goals, including fostering the organization's core values and marketing County services to residents, community groups, and other external organizations;
- Coordinates public events, including open houses, ceremonies, and other public functions;
- Works cooperatively with the Public Information Advisory Board;
- Supervises the broadcasting of County Legislature and other public meetings;
- Responds to requests to produce video programming;
- Prepares Highlights of Legislature meetings;
- Advises and trains County staff and officials in effective use of media;
- Engages departments in community outreach and education events;
- Monitors and manages the public information program budget.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ABILITIES, AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- Thorough knowledge and understanding of the organization, functions, laws, policies, regulations, programs and goals of Tompkins County government;
- Superior oral and written communications skills, and the ability to create and articulate messages to a wide range of audiences;
- Exceptional writing and presentation skills;
- Excellent organizational and strong project management skills to manage multiple projects which and the ability to design and execute process where none exists;
- Excellent editing and proofreading skills;
- Excellent organizational and interpersonal skills;
- Considerable knowledge of public relations principles and practices as they pertain to internal and external communication needs of a large organization;
- Ability to interact effectively with senior leadership, elected officials, community leaders and external constituencies;
- Self-starter, able to establish priorities and work independently;
- Demonstrated knowledge of current communications trends in a government setting, including extensive knowledge of the use of social media;
- Demonstrated ability to deliver complex messages in simple, concise and understandable ways;
- Attention to detail that drives high quality outputs;
• High-energy and optimistic;
• Comfortable with change and uses feedback to drive personal growth and development;
• Consistently acts with integrity and maintains a high degree of confidentiality;
• Initiative, courtesy, integrity and tact are required;
• The employee’s physical condition shall be commensurate with demands of the position.