



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

(LDA)

COMMUNICATION

MEDIA POLICY

“2010.”

1. Background.

Departments/organisations all over the country have to cope with many dramatic changes ranging from fundamental restructuring to revolutionary shifts in traditional values which offer departmental/organisational communicators unique opportunities to effect short-term as well as long term success, survival and growth. It is up to government communicators to function as strategists and leaders while guided by relevant communications policies to involve a portfolio of internal and external communication that will add value to the Department.

With policies it becomes professional to implement the strategic planning of communication in order to ensure effective internal communications which enable the Department to achieve goals such as productivity and effectiveness of Departmental desired goals. Though proper guidelines of these policies strategies are implemented and continuously adapted to changing departmental processes and objectives which will turn them into reality.

As environmental changes impact on communication with stakeholders, communicators must be informed about local and global trends and changes in order to ensure strategic communication management within the Department not forgetting to put the policies in place or amending them if possible.

2. Purpose.

The Communication Policy was formulated to provide the Limpopo Department of Agriculture and its employees with guidelines and procedural requirements to the challenges facing the Department Communicators within and outside the workplace.

It is therefore important that there is uniformity, clarity and consistency in the manner in which the LDA communicates when it markets itself, and that all employees understand their individual roles in this process. Employees are expected to adhere to this policy.

3. Acts and policies relevant to this policy:

Government has put all communication policies in place as a guideline for all government departments' communicators.

Communication Policy of communicating with people is also endorsed by the constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) section 32 (1), which provides that:

“Everyone has the right to”:

(a) Any information held by the state, and

(b) Any information that is held by another person which is required for the exercise or protection of any rights.

To give effect to this constitutional right the Public Service Regulation (PSR) part 1(H.4) of chapter 1(PRS/1/1/H.4) requires the Head of Department (HOD) to establish a policy on how employees in his/her Department may communicate with the printed or other public media.

The Public Access to Information Act also obliges government to provide the public with information relating to government services through high levels of transparency, accountability, openness, so as to make informed choices and improve their lives for the better.

The promotion to access to information act, 2000(Act 2 of 2000) seeks to give effect to the right of the public to access information as provided by the South African constitution. And for communicators to have a grasp of government policies, they must be able to understand policies for them to be able to articulate government position confidently without bringing their Departments into disrepute.

4. Needs addressed by communication policy.

Communication should be effected within a well-defined policy framework.

The necessity of a Communication Policy derives from the need to approach the communication function of the Department in a systematic, efficient and effective manner.

This communication policy aims to provide comprehensive guidelines:-

- For assisting the Head of Communications to communicate effectively and efficiently to the department's entire targeted audience, to eliminate communication related problems; and
- In the execution and implementation of communication functions/ activities by delineating what information is to be communicated, why it should be communicated, who should be the communicator, when should communication take place and how should messages be communicated.
- In this regard, communication should be understood to be about information sharing in relation to the progress made in planning, executing and reporting outcomes related to the Departmental strategy.
- More importantly, communication should be about empowering citizens, and the Department's programme of action and enhancing community participation. As a result communication is social and political in nature. Therefore, aspects of this function need to be driven by the political office of the MEC in conjunction with the Office of the Head of Department (Chief Information Officer). Therefore, strategy, planning and administration should be directed by the political agenda.
- Furthermore, this policy is intended to improve the external Departmental communication for effective service delivery. Communication in general should adhere to the appropriate legislative and policy framework.

4.1. Objectives of communication policy:

In addition to addressing stated specific needs, this policy is intended to achieve the following

Departmental objectives:

- To coordinate, effective, accurate, reliable information management systems;
- To communicate information to the public and the media in a consistent manner for effective management of information flow;
- To designate/delegate/authorize individuals to communicate with the media;
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of communication activities in relation to the objectives stated herein, and the departmental priorities;
- Inform the public in relation to government policies, programmes and major initiatives; and
- Monitor media coverage on matters within the area of competence of the Department and
- Initiate corrective measures.
- Ensure that the Department uses the latest communication tools to disseminate information to as many people as possible.
- To make sure there is a comprehensive Customer Care strategy that addresses the needs of stakeholders.

5. Methods of development communication.

- MEC's Road shows;
- Imbizo;
- Radio slots;
- Infomercials;
- Media releases and statements;
- Media briefings and networking sessions;
- Opinion pieces;
- Human resource recruitment advertisements;
- Advertisement on the invitation of tenders and public comments on policies, legislation and other Departmental activities;
- Project launches and marketing advertisements;
- Workshops;
- Policy related issues; and
- Departmental Corporate Identity.

5. Communicating with Media and the public.

- An employee shall not release official information to the public unless he/she has the necessary authority (Public Service Regulation 1/II/E);
- An employee shall not disclose any official information for personal gain or the gain of others (Public Service Regulation 2/C.5.4);
- An employee shall not in his/her official capacity; irresponsibly criticize government policy at a public gathering or in a publication, or in the printed or other media (Public Service Regulation 1/I/H.5);
- An employee shall honour the confidentiality of matters, documents and discussions, classified or implied as being confidential or secret ;
- Any inquiries by the public/media relating to the Department of Agriculture's activities shall be directed to the Head of Communications and as a first line of entry;
- The Head of Communications and Liaison should coordinate any information that needs to be communicated to the media by the Department in consultation with the entrusted MEC's spokesperson;

- Comment to the media on issues pertaining to the Office of the MEC shall be directed to the MEC's spokesperson. The Head of Communications and liaison shall comment on all issues relating to the department.
- He/ She will also provide off and on record comments on issues relating to the Department and may also, in consultation with the MEC's spokesperson, comment on matters relating to the MEC;
- The Sub-Branch: Communication and Liaison services shall provide ongoing media analysis and provide such to the Office of the MEC and Senior Management; and
- Only the MEC, the Head of Department and the Head of Communications and liaison can comment on policy statements and politically related issues.

6. Designated persons to communicate to the media.

For consistency and accountability purposes, the Public Service Regulation part II (E) of chapter 1 requires that not all employees of the Department unless delegated to do so would communicate to the media.

According to the Department of Public Service Administration (DPSA) policy guidelines (pp 64) the following persons may communicate with and/or to the media.

6.1. MEC

Communicate all political and policy issues related to the Limpopo Department of Agriculture. The MEC may delegate responsibility to the HOD.

6.2. Head of Department (HOD)

- To be the main spokesperson for administrative and financial management matters of the Limpopo Department of Agriculture.
- To communicate all financial issues that have implications on the Office of the MEC; and
- To delegate responsibility to appropriate line functionaries in cases where, any information is required on other sections' activities.

6.3. Head of Communications and Liaison (HoC)

- To prepare and respond to media inquiries as delegated by the MEC and the HOD
- To attend and advise on routine communication issues within the Department's responsibility.
- To oversee and advise on all media liaison responsibilities of the Department.
- To develop strategies and policies;
- Participate in Inter-Governmental Relations Forums (IGR), e.g. Government Communicators Forum, Heads of Communication Forum etc.
- To ensure the monitoring of media and other sources and process the information for purposes of devising messages and strategies for the MEC;
- To be the main spokesperson during crisis communication;

6.4. MEC's spokesperson (Media Liaison Officer)

- To ensure that media releases/statements aligned to government policies are prepared, facts verified, with the support from the Directorate: Communication and Liaison Services before being released to the media;
- To contribute to the determination of the MEC's diary taking into account the communication programme ;
- To assist in the development and implementation of relevant campaigns for the MEC and Department ;
- To co-ordinate speech writing and editing for the MEC ;

- To co-ordinate all media inquiries to and from the Office of the MEC ;

6.5. Senior Management

Senior management has a responsibility and accompanying authority to handle the Department's communication activities as follows:

- Prepare and respond to the media issues as delegated by the HOD;
- Undertake routine communication responsibilities in the form of meetings with staff;
- Ensure that the information about units managed is available in the website/intranet; and
- Prepare and respond to media issues as delegated by the HOD via the Head of Communications.

6.6. Staff in the Chief Directorate: Communication and Liaison Services Sub-Branch

Refer all media inquiries to the HoC.

- To attend to communication issues within their areas of responsibility as directed by the HoC.
- To ensure that the Departmental programmes, activities and services are communicated through print and electronic media.
- To execute all media liaison functions as advised and recommended by the MEC, HOD and HoC;
- To keep the Office of the MEC and the Department abreast of latest media reports/ trends pertaining to their scope of work.
- The Manager: Communication Services will render support in this regard by monitoring and developing responses for key media matters.
- To coordinate the early warning/alert system in which reports pertaining to the functional activities of the Department are identified and brought to the attention of the MEC, HOD, HoC and Management as soon as possible after publication or broadcasting of such.
- Reports identified in the above process that warrant priority attention, will be brought to the attention of the HOD and HoC for corrective action.
- May write opinion pieces, letters to the editor in their official or personal capacity but in line with this policy.

7. Guiding principles.

The delivery of communication in the Department is subjected to the **Batho Pele policy under the following principles;**

- Courtesy;
- Confidentiality;

- Openness and transparency;
- Provision of information that improves lives of citizens;
- Timeliness.

8. Language

The obligation to inform the public includes the obligation to communicate effectively. Information about government policies, programs and services should be clear, objective, simple and presented in a manner that is readily understandable and readable to the target group. Messages should convey information relevant to the public needs, use simple language and understandable to the targeted group and be expressed in a clear and consistent style within the context of respecting the equality of languages.

The Department shall endeavor to translate its critical policies in all official languages (English, Afrikaans, Sepedi, Venda and Tsonga and etc.) spoken in Limpopo or depending on the province, including Braille for the visually impaired readers. In the event of the Department or the MEC having to liaise in writing or orally with target groups, shall: identify suitable people in the Department to assist in the translation or alternatively outsource to people or organizations with expertise.

9. Internal communication (Corporate)

- The role of internal communication is to keep employees informed about the goals and priorities of an institution, developments, changes or new initiatives affecting their work.
- Internal communication is also a vehicle for creating corporate culture and sense of community among the staff.
- Communicating to all staff members by means of a single email. Only the HOD and the Head of Communication can communicate to all staff members by means of an e-mail addressed to all staff members. All other emails addressed to all staff should be approved by the HoC or his/her delegate.
- Communication within directorates:-
Every directorate should convene a meeting once a month (regularly) as a forum not only for management, but internal communication as well. This method of internal communication is to be an obligation for all in Senior Management.
- Internal Communication by the Sub-Branch Communication and Liaison Services:-

The internal communication activities coordinated by the directorate should have the following outputs:

- Prepare, edit and convey management information to staff by means of bulletins, pamphlets, posters, newsletters, meetings, videos and notice boards/ electronic

- Boards, and etc;
- Set up the Intranet and tele/video-conferencing facility;
 - Ensure that employees receive and respond to communication media;
 - Establish and head editorial committee, write, edit and do lay-out and design for outsourced printing of the above publications;
 - Arrange open days and relationship building initiatives;
 - Establish a photographic library;
 - Convene the editorial committee of the Department's Newsletter and other magazines;
 - Convey DPSA and other correspondence such as circulars to all staff;
 - Update and manage the website;
 - Set-up and manage the contact and information centre;
 - Ensure that internal communication forms part of strategic planning
 - Establish and run a Customer –care centre.

9.1. Internal Communication Forum

- Every directorate should appoint one staff member to participate in the Department's Internal communication Forum;
- The Communication Forum should hold monthly meetings;
- Each directorate would be expected to table information for updating the Department's website and other information resources about the directorate, through its representatives at the Internal Communication Forum; and
- The Sub-branch: Communication and Liaison Services should convene the Communication Forum.

10. Crisis Communication

In the event of a crisis, the MEC, HOD, the HoC, Legal Section and any relevant government official shall meet as soon as possible to plan appropriate response/action. These individuals, also known as **the crisis committee** may appoint a spokesperson in the event of a crisis. All major projects of the Department should have a specific clearly defined contingent plan for crisis communication.

11. Internet/ website policy

The Intranet/website would be managed by the Internal Communication Unit (Corporate Communications) within the Communication and Liaison Services Sub-Branch with the assistance of GITO.

The website content should be available to the audience all over the world. It should be very professional and of high quality, accurate and relevant content that would enhance the image of the Department all over the world. The following are minimum guidelines relevant for the content development and management of the website:

- English language would be used in all content placed on Internet (unless specified);
- The language used in the website should be formal, non racial and non sexist;
- Website should be updated regularly, at least weekly;
- Content to be loaded on the website should be signed off by the Head of Communications or appropriately delegated official prior to placing. after thorough editing and other quality control procedures;
- All SMS should supply relevant information about their directorates and provide contact person for the website content development team;
- A monthly report should be produced by website management team with details of the utilization of the website by the public;
- All official statements and speeches of the MEC should be promptly placed on the website.
- The Spokesperson / MLO should ensure that this content is supplied to the Manager responsible on timely basis; and
- Placing of unauthorized content on the website is not allowed.

12. Commitment.

The Limpopo Department of Agriculture commits itself to providing adequate information to the public and the media in relation to its activities, in order that the public individually or through representation may understand, respond to and influence the development and implementation of the government policies and programmes.

This approach to communication shall be carried out through formal and informal exchanges in a dialogue that is continuous, open, relevant, understandable and reliable, however in line with the Department's values.

The Department will ensure that its political principal is visible, accessible and accountable to the people of the Limpopo Province.

13. Implementation

As a Limpopo Department of Agriculture we shall continue to communicate with all the internal and external stakeholders utilising the necessary media vehicles such as print (e.g. newspapers, magazines, posters and etc) and electronic (Radio and Television), hence making sure that our communication policy is in place and honoured. Communication will be done by relevant people who understand our policies on issues that need to be communicated to the public (e.g.; departmental services and programs) to achieve our desired goals, and also to align ourselves with Batho Pele principle of transparency and access to information respectively.



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Communication media policy 2010.

Approval and assigned by:

Head of Department.

Date:

MEC for the Department:

Date:

