

City of Madison

Job Description



Title: Senior Communications and External Affairs Officer

Department: Mayor

FLSA Status: Exempt

Pay Grade: 111

New Position Position Change Effective Date 3/23/2026

The following information is designed to outline the functions and position requirements of this job. It does not identify all tasks that may be expected, nor address the performance standards that must be maintained.

General Position Summary:

The Senior Communications and External Affairs Officer serves as a senior leader within the Department of Operations and Communications, reporting to the Director of Operations and Communications and acting as the department's deputy leader. This role is responsible for advancing the City of Madison's strategic communications, public engagement, and external affairs efforts while ensuring alignment with operational priorities and organizational goals. This position plays a key leadership role through cross-functional collaboration, influence, and subject-matter expertise, helping guide departmental strategy, decision-making, and execution.

Essential Functions/Major Responsibilities:

- Assists in the development and implementation of a comprehensive public information strategy aligned with the City's goals and priorities.
- Develops and distributes press releases, media statements, and public service announcements.
- Creates and manages content for various communication channels, including the City's website, social media, newsletters, and podcast.
- Plans and executes public awareness campaigns, town halls, and community engagement events.
- Collaborates with the communications team to identify media opportunities and enhance public engagement efforts.
- Ensures consistent branding and messages across all city communications.
- Mentors Public Information Officers in outreach and media relations.
- Serves as the deputy communications officer during emergency situations, ensuring the timely release of critical information.
- Coordinates with emergency response teams and public safety officials to manage crisis communications effectively.
- Develops internal communication strategies to keep city employees informed and engaged.
- Identifies opportunities for innovation and improvement across departments; fosters a culture of forward-thinking and continuous learning.
- Maintains up-to-date knowledge of industry best practices and communication technologies to enhance public engagement and transparency.

- Attends special events on behalf of the Mayor's office.

Secondary Functions:

- Serves as department decision maker in the absence of the Director of Operations and Communications.
- Performs other related duties as required.

Job Scope:

- The Director of Operations and Communication assigns work in terms of general instructions.
- Guidelines are generally clear but require some research and interpretation in application.

Supervisory Responsibility:

Acts as lead but doesn't supervise.

Interpersonal Contacts:

- Regularly interacts with a wide range of individuals, groups, the Mayor, City Council, department heads, the public, and media. Interactions require diplomacy, professionalism, and the ability to convey information effectively.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

- Ability to exercise objective professional judgment.
- Ability to craft clear, concise, and engaging messages for diverse audiences.
- Ability to maintain calmness and composure under controversial or intense situations.
- Ability to work as a team and build relationships.
- Ability to write press releases, speeches, website content, and social media posts that engage and inform the public.
- Ability to tailor messages to diverse audiences and handle sensitive or confidential information with
- Ability to adjust messaging and communication strategies in response to changing circumstances, public feedback, or emerging issues.
- Ability to plan and execute public outreach campaigns, press conferences, and community events.
- Ability to build and maintain relationships with media representatives, stakeholders, community members, and internal staff.
- Ability to work independently with limited supervision, to include time management, setting priorities of work and determining which task can be handled independently and which requires intervention by others as needed to meet deadlines and complete communications and other work in a timely manner.
- Ability to keep abreast of evolving communication technologies, social media platforms, and digital outreach strategies
- Knowledge and deep understanding of media operations, journalistic standards, and effective public relations strategies.
- Knowledge of best practices for managing public messaging during emergencies or crises.
- Knowledge of AP Style.

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- Knowledge of municipal government structures, public affairs, and legal considerations related to public information.
- Knowledge and understanding of FOIA and all laws governing the release of public information.
- Skilled in using content management systems (CMS), social media management tools, graphic design software (e.g., Canva, Adobe Suite), and video editing tools.
- Skilled in developing and implementing long-term communication plans that align with organizational goals.
- Skilled in decision-making, problem-solving and project management skills.
- Skilled in research, preparation and presentation of accurate and reliable reports and information.
- Skilled at public speaking and acting as a spokesperson.

Education and/or Experience:

- Bachelor’s degree in Public Relations, Marketing, Communications or related field.
- 8 years of related experience in communication, marketing, public relations or a related field.
- Any combination of education, training and experience that demonstrates the above knowledge, skills and abilities.

Additional Requirements:

- Strong background records demonstrate integrity, reliability, and sound judgment. This position requires access to city facilities, proprietary information, and direct interaction with the public, necessitating a high level of trust and accountability.
- Must maintain a valid driver’s license and a strong driving record to drive independently, and record may be periodically checked by the city (for city insurance purposes).

Job Conditions:

- Work in an office and field environment as needed to carry out various job assignments.
- Regular attendance is required, and must be able to work additional hours, nonstandard hours and weekends and at times with little or no notice.

Physical Capabilities:

- This position’s physical requirements involve light work exerting up to 20 pounds of force occasionally, and/or up to 10 pounds of force to move objects.
- Much work is performed while typically sitting at a desk or table or while intermittently sitting, standing, stooping, walking, bending, or crouching.
- Ability to work on a computer for long periods of time.

Mayor Approval

Date

Department Head Approval

Date