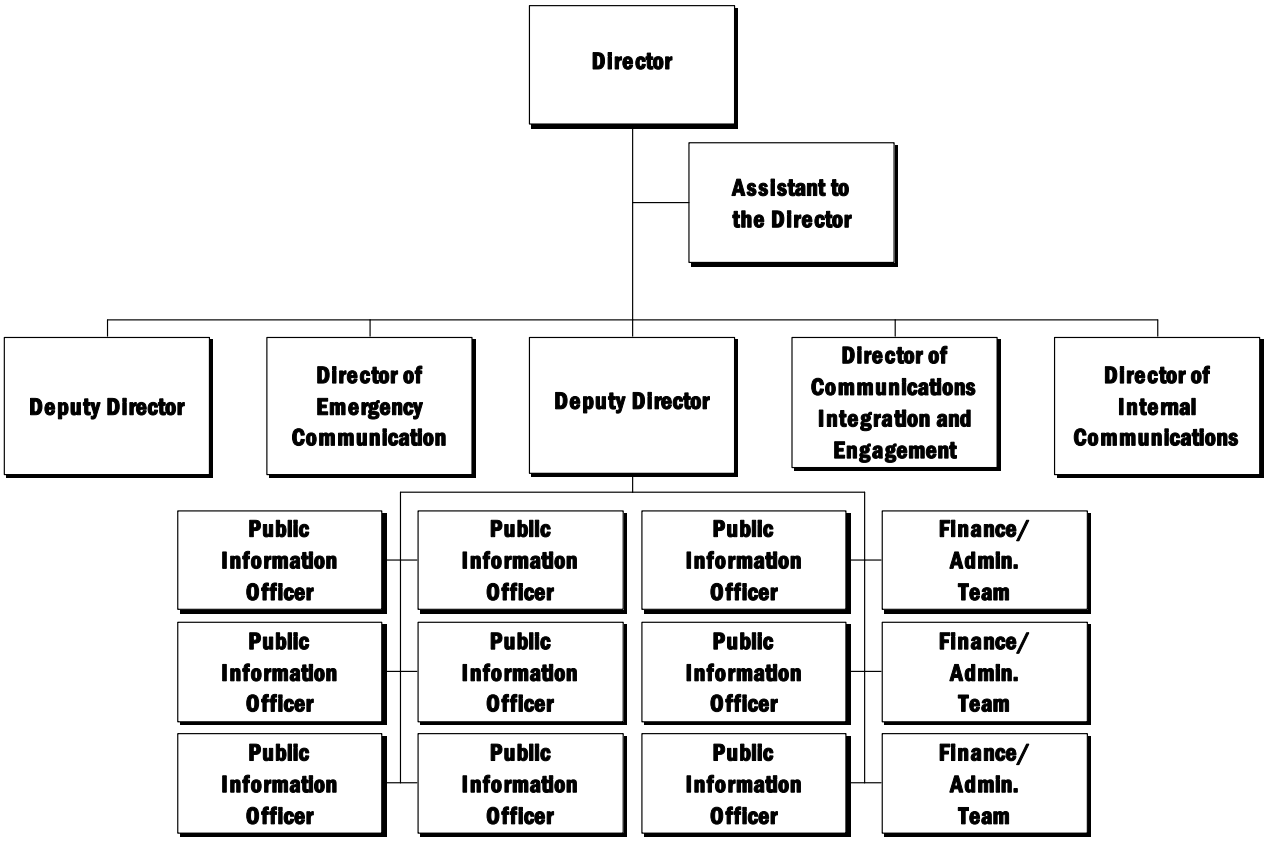
Office of Public Affairs



Mission

To lead coordinated communications and customer service from a countywide perspective that connects our residents with information about their government's services, operation and policies. To increase public awareness of hazards and to communicate appropriate actions to take before, during and after emergencies. To ensure clear, open and timely communications to and from our employees in order to maintain an informed and motivated workforce.

Focus

The Office of Public Affairs (OPA) provides essential information to the public, elected and appointed officials, County departments and the media concerning County programs and services and is the central communications office for the County. The Director serves as the County media spokesperson, and as a liaison with the County Executive and the Board of Supervisors.

OPA coordinates a comprehensive, centralized public affairs program for the County and also provides communications consulting to County agencies. Employee internal communications, countywide Web content management, social media, and emergency communications are also part of the critical functions.

Operational responsibilities include planning, training and administration of the agency as well as the development and implementation of policies and procedures for the agency. They encompass the day-to-day management of the agency's staff, and provide leadership for the agency's workforce planning.

OPA is organized to provide focus in three main areas for County staff and the public: emergency information, internal communications and external communications. This structure facilitates the best use of OPA staffing to provide for the strategic issues that need to be addressed during the upcoming years:

improve crisis/emergency communications; publish content through many tools and engage the public; enhance access to information; provide information proactively to the media; and provide communication consulting services to agencies without public information officers. Strategies to address these critical issues include increasing collaboration with agencies; enhancing information on the County's intranet and internet; and exploring resources for reaching diverse audiences.

In FY 2012, OPA continued to recognize the need for increased emphasis on emergency communications, dissemination of information to the public and County employees, and communications consulting services for other County agencies. OPA remains proactive in anticipating the media's needs and providing timely information. OPA maintains the County's presence on www.fairfaxcounty.gov and several social media sites, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Flickr, allowing the County to directly communicate with the public.

External Communications

In FY 2012, interaction between OPA and the public continued to increase. OPA employees staffing the information desk at the courthouse, as well as the information desk at the Government Center, have seen a continued increase in traffic because they are the first point of information within those facilities.

OPA's online communications platforms serve as one of the primary ways to deliver information. The Fairfax County Internet home page receives approximately 50,000 unique page views per month. The bottom of almost every public website page includes a link to a satisfaction survey. In FY 2012, results from that survey showed users were more satisfied with their visits (4.12 on a scale of 1-7) than in FY 2011 (3.74).

OPA also saw a large increase in its social media metrics last year.

	Jan. 6, 2011	April 30, 2011	Aug. 31, 2011
Facebook Fans	12,570	14,681	17,807
Twitter Followers	3,876	5,052	7,137
YouTube Views	77,698	101,973	127,524
Flickr Photo Views	133,750	180,086	305,188
SlideShare Views	26,981	41,860	86,687

Additionally, OPA continues to publish NewsWire, which serves as a central location for daily news and information about the County, as well as key opportunities to connect and engage the community. NewsWire delivers news and information on a variety of topics in a variety of formats from all County agencies during business hours, or, if emergencies warrant, during non-business hours.

Internal Communications

During FY 2012, OPA dedicated significant time and resources to the planning, production, testing and launch of FairfaxNet, an intranet and collaboration platform to replace the Infoweb, the county's previous intranet system. OPA partnered with the Department of Information Technology from the earliest stages of the project to create a system that would facilitate internal communications and provide more advanced tools for productivity and collaboration. Upon completion of initial design, OPA led several rounds of usability testing to gauge employee response to the new system and identify potential

challenges and improvements. A number of significant changes were made to the system in response to feedback gathered through the usability testing process.

OPA is responsible for all countywide content on FairfaxNet, and publishes multiple news and feature stories on a weekly basis to help ensure that County employees remain informed about issues that impact them, including the budget and carryover, open enrollment and other benefits-related topics, health and wellness information and new programs and services. Additionally, OPA maintains a countywide calendar on FairfaxNet providing key information about trainings, programs and events for County employees. In order to maximize awareness, and in response to feedback gathered during usability testing, OPA also redesigned and streamlined NewsLink, the County's internal daily email update, highlighting information from FairfaxNet and emphasizing employee-specific content.

Emergency Communications

According to the County's Emergency Operations Plan, OPA coordinates and disseminates all information related to major incidents. In FY 2012, OPA continued to recognize the need for increased emphasis on emergency communications and dissemination of emergency information to the public, County employees, Board of Supervisors and other partner agencies and stakeholders, including the media.

Recent events – such as an earthquake, Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee, which led to flooding in the County, including the Huntington Community – further demonstrate the important role OPA plays in emergency communications.

During activations of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), OPA staff are key players in the EOC organizational structure, serving as the EOC Command and General Staff Public Information Officer (PIO); additional OPA staff serve in the Joint Information Center (JIC) as assistant PIOs, creating and disseminating all emergency related information during an EOC activation. In addition, the OPA agency director serves in the Senior Policy Group of key County leadership.

OPA published and shared information with residents, the media, Board of Supervisors and other partners and stakeholders during the preparation, response and recovery timeframe of Aug. 25-29, 2011 (hurricane) and Sept. 8-9, 2011 (response and initial recovery phase of the tropical storm). Messages included preparedness messages, safety tips, weather updates, food and pet safety information, road closures and recovery information.

The creation of a new emergency information blog (www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/blog), and continued use of social media tools, confirms the changing way that we as government communicators must think about, distribute and encourage sharing of information in today's world. OPA posted 61 messages to the emergency blog during Hurricane Irene efforts with 50,668 views of this information and 77 comments from viewers. During Tropical Storm Lee – the period of Sept. 8-9 when the EOC was activated – OPA posted 46 messages to the new emergency blog, with 51,038 views and 53 comments from viewers.

OPA also used Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, the Community Emergency Alert Network, and Ask Fairfax during these emergencies to communicate with our target audiences.

Budget and Staff Resources

Agency Summary					
Category	FY 2011 Actual	FY 2012 Adopted Budget Plan	FY 2012 Revised Budget Plan	FY 2013 Advertised Budget Plan	FY 2013 Adopted Budget Plan
Authorized Positions/Staff Years					
Regular	20 / 20	20 / 20	20 / 20	19 / 19	19 / 19
Expenditures:					
Personnel Services	$1,364,087	$1,187,206	$1,255,328	$1,194,838	$1,209,853
Operating Expenses	82,768	155,781	201,012	155,781	155,781
Capital Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	**$1,446,855**	**$1,342,987**	**$1,456,340**	**$1,350,619**	**$1,365,634**
Less:					
Recovered Costs	($239,882)	($256,603)	($256,603)	($239,882)	($239,882)
Total Expenditures	**$1,206,973**	**$1,086,384**	**$1,199,737**	**$1,110,737**	**$1,125,752**

Position Summary		
1 Director	2 Information Officers IV	2 Administrative Assistants V
2 Assistant Directors	6 Information Officers III (1T)	1 Administrative Assistant III (-2T)
1 Management Analyst II	2 Information Officers II	
	2 Information Officers I	
TOTAL POSITIONS		
19 Positions (-1T) / 19.0 Staff Years (-1.0T)		**(T) Denotes Transferred Position**

FY 2013 Funding Adjustments

The following funding adjustments from the FY 2012 Adopted Budget Plan are necessary to support the FY 2013 program. Included are all adjustments recommended by the County Executive that were approved by the Board of Supervisors, as well as any additional Board of Supervisors' actions, as approved in the adoption of the budget on May 1, 2012.

- **Employee Compensation** **$41,414**
  An increase of $41,414 in Personnel Services reflects $26,399 for a 2.18 percent market rate adjustment (MRA) in FY 2013, effective July 2012, and $15,015 for a 2.50 percent performance-based scale and salary increase for non-uniformed merit employees, effective January 2013.

- **Full Year Impact of FY 2012 Market Rate Adjustment** **$23,744**
  As part of the *FY 2011 Carryover Review*, the Board of Supervisors approved an increase of $23,744 in Personnel Services for a 2.0 percent market rate adjustment (MRA), effective September 24, 2011.

- **Position Adjustments** **($9,919)**
  In order to properly align business functions with the core agency mission, $84,249 and 2/2.0 SYE administrative positions currently working out of the Jennings Judicial Center are being transferred from the Office of Public Affairs (OPA) to Circuit Court and Records. In addition, $74,330 and 1/1.0 SYE Public Information Officer III position is being transferred from the Department of Housing and Community Development to OPA in order to provide for enhanced coordination, collaboration and resource sharing in the area of public affairs-related work supporting housing.

- **Recovered Costs** **$16,721**
  A decrease of $16,721 in Recovered Costs is based on projected salary and operating requirements.

- **Reductions** **($32,592)**
  A decrease of $32,592 reflects the following reductions utilized to balance the FY 2013 budget:

Title	Impact	Posn	SYE	Reduction
Additional Management of Position Vacancies and review of Administrative Assistant V position	This reduction requires the Department to further manage position vacancies and specifically review the Department's Administrative Assistant (AA) V position when it becomes vacated. Savings are anticipated through either hiring the position at the bottom of the AA V scale or determining if the agency's needs can be met with an AA IV level position.	0	0.0	$21,728
Manage Position Vacancies	This reduction requires the Department to review all positions that become vacant and hire at lower than current salary levels and/or review the current grade of a vacated position and analyze if a change might better reflect the agency's new operational structure based on skill-based teams instead of individual agency consultation.	0	0.0	$10,864

Changes to FY 2012 Adopted Budget Plan

The following funding adjustments reflect all approved changes in the FY 2012 Revised Budget Plan since passage of the FY 2012 Adopted Budget Plan. Included are all adjustments made as part of the FY 2011 Carryover Review, FY 2012 Third Quarter Review, and all other approved changes through April 24, 2012.

- **Carryover Adjustments** **$63,353**
  As part of the *FY 2011 Carryover Review*, the Board of Supervisors approved funding of $18,122 in Personnel Services for a 2.0 percent market rate adjustment, effective September 24, 2011. In addition, the Board approved encumbered funding of $45,231 in Operating Expenses.

- **Third Quarter Adjustments** **$50,000**
  As part of the *FY 2012 Third Quarter Review*, the Board of Supervisors approved funding of $50,000 to meet requirements associated with a number of labor intensive activities during FY 2012 including elections, school bond referendum, and weather events.

Key Performance Measures

Objectives

- To provide communications consulting services to County agencies without public information officers, while maintaining a 90 percent or higher satisfaction rating.

- To provide requested information to residents contacting customer service staff and to disseminate useful information to the general public, while maintaining a 90 percent or higher satisfaction rating.

- To disseminate useful information to the media that earns a 90 percent or higher satisfaction rating.

Office of Public Affairs

Indicator	Prior Year Actuals FY 2009 Actual	FY 2010 Actual	FY 2011 Estimate/Actual	Current Estimate FY 2012	Future Estimate FY 2013
Output:					
Hours spent in support of communication consulting services to other agencies	5,757	6,045	6,000 / 6,025	6,000	6,250
Customer service interactions with the general public	348,629	366,060	340,000 / 372,255	340,000	170,000
New/existing webpages created, reviewed or updated (1)	4,825	5,548	5,000 / 5,788	5,000	4,000
Number of posts to social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube)	393	347	325 / 337	325	500
Number of media interactions	515	383	400 / 287	400	400
Efficiency:					
Hours spent consulting and issues management per agency	231	202	225 / 211	225	200
Total staff hours per media interaction (hours)	0.30	0.25	0.25 / 0.25	0.25	0.25
Percent of time spent planning, creating, editing and updating web content and social media	84.6%	88.0%	70.0% / 85.0%	70.0%	70.0%
Service Quality:					
Average satisfaction with OPA's services support as assessed by customers (agencies, general public, media)	93%	95%	90% / 92%	90%	90%
Percent of information requests from the general public answered within a day	95%	97%	95% / 97%	95%	95%
Percent information requests from the media answered within a day	97%	97%	95% / 97%	95%	95%
Outcome:					
Percentage rating of user satisfaction for consulting services	95%	95%	90% / 95%	90%	90%
Percentage rating of user satisfaction for information provided to the general public	93%	95%	90% / 95%	90%	90%
Average percentage rating from reporters who respond to media satisfaction survey	96%	95%	90% / 95%	90%	90%

Note: The Director's time is not included in any of the performance indicators.

(1) New/existing web pages include the county's many social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Flickr.

Performance Measurement Results

OPA continues to publish NewsWire, a countywide comprehensive news and engagement website that serves as the central place for customers to find information. Located at **www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news**, NewsWire features:

- One master list of all news published by County agencies.
- More than 40 topic, location and social media RSS news feeds. Our new location RSS news feeds include specific content for Tysons, Reston and other major areas of the County.
- Multiple ways for people to get information: E-mail, news feeds, social media, video, audio, mobile, text messages and more.

Customer service interaction continues to be an agency priority. OPA employees staffing the Government Center Information Desk are the first point of contact for many customers who frequent the facility on a daily basis. Additionally, there continues to be an increase in the usage of 703-FAIRFAX, social media sites and the OPA public mailbox as a means for customers to receive public information.