

## Lines of Business

LOB #36:

### **EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS**

#### **Purpose**

The Office of Public Affairs is the lead County agency for internal communications, providing essential news and information to more than 16,000 employees, including merit, part-time and seasonal staff. Employees look to OPA to provide timely and accurate information that impacts the County, their agencies, their jobs and their personal lives.

#### **Description**

Among the tools used to provide information to County employees are:

- Team Fairfax Insider (generally produced twice a month)
- NewsLink (daily email to all employees)
- FairfaxNet (intranet)
- Emails and other communications from the County Executive

Topics/issues to communicate include:

- Compensation
- Benefits
- Personnel policy changes
- Training and development
- Succession planning
- Emergency preparedness
- Ethics/conduct
- Information technology news/help
- Safety and security information
- County/agency events/activities
- Media coverage of County government
- Awards and honors
- Employee/agency profiles

The Employee Communications LOB supports the information needs of an engaged, motivated and productive workforce. In addition to the ongoing development of FairfaxNet, an intranet and collaboration platform that replaced the County's Infoweb, considerable effort has been focused on the print and digital versions of Team Fairfax Insider (TFI), the County's biweekly employee newsletter. TFI has been integrated into OPA's suite of internal communications tools, joining NewsLink and FairfaxNet online, while helping to bridge the "digital divide" for employees whose work does not include regular computer access.

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In its role coordinating countywide internal communications, OPA works with subject matter experts to help publicize major internal initiatives such as benefits open enrollment and a dialogue on employee compensation. Internal communications also highlight the achievements and interests of employees, fostering a sense of community within the workforce.

With increased emphasis on employee involvement for the FY 2016 Budget and beyond, OPA developed and supported the Mission: Savings program, focused on engaging employees in the budget process and soliciting input on reducing costs and improving efficiencies. OPA established a strategy and new tools, including a blog and online suggestion submission, to make it easier for employees to get involved. OPA also established opportunities for employees to engage with County leadership online and in-person throughout the budget process, including Ask Fairfax Insider! chats and brown-bag meetings. Nearly 300 employee suggestions were received, resulting in over \$900,000 in savings identified.

OPA also expanded the use of video as a tool for sharing information with County employees. Major meetings of countywide interest are broadcast online for those unable to attend and OPA continues to coordinate video communications from the County Executive. This takes advantage of an additional tool to keep the workforce informed and engaged, and provides an opportunity for the County Executive to communicate directly with employees regardless of location.

OPA maintains a countywide calendar of key dates and events for employees and is developing and coordinating additional products and tools for internal communications including blogs, a knowledge base where employees can share information and start discussions, and a personalized space for each employee to share what they're working on and follow people, sites and documents.

### **Team Fairfax Insider**

Biweekly issues of this employee newsletter (four or eight pages per issue) are published between 22 and 24 times a year, on most payday Fridays. OPA produces TFI as a vehicle to deliver news and information for and about County employees. Policy and programmatic changes are highlighted and agencies are profiled to help eliminate stovepipes and broaden employee knowledge of County services and the people who provide them.

Two staff members are assigned primary responsibility for planning, layout, editing and production of this newsletter. Various other OPA staff contribute by writing articles for each issue.

### **NewsLink**

This email newsletter is produced and distributed by OPA to all County employees each business day. It provides timely County news, announcements and information of general interest, including alerts and explanation of the lowering of the U.S., state and/or County flags. It fills an information gap that TFI cannot due to its deadline, publication schedule and space restrictions. NewsLink also includes a comprehensive review of Fairfax County media coverage.

In addition to the NewsLink editor, OPA staff support NewsLink by searching online media outlets to identify and assemble coverage of Fairfax County. This provides further enterprise-wide awareness of issues, events and other developments related to Fairfax County government.

### **FairfaxNet**

FairfaxNet, the County's intranet, replaced the previous Infoweb system with a robust array of features for information provision and sharing, discussion, team building and project management. In addition to a central location for countywide and agency-specific news and information, FairfaxNet hosts forms, policies, applications, training materials, discussion space and other resources, all easily accessible through a powerful search tool. FairfaxNet also includes workspaces for agencies, teams, groups and projects and resources for automation of forms and workflows.

OPA and the Department of Information Technology (DIT) work collaboratively on FairfaxNet, with OPA providing content oversight, site design and creation, consultation and training for department and agency FairfaxNet administrators. During FY 2015, OPA and DIT implemented an extensive update to FairfaxNet. OPA consulted on new features and tools throughout the process and managed communications for the update.

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## **Email/Communications from the County Executive**

At the request of the County Executive, OPA drafts emails and other communications to County employees for distribution under the County Executive's signature.

There are 2/2.04 FTE positions associated with this line of business. However, rather than one person, it includes parts of several OPA employees' time.

## **Benefits**

This line of business is the primary source of countywide information for employees. Regular communication such as the daily NewsLink or Team Fairfax Insider generally every pay period, provides employees with timely information about County programs, accomplishments by fellow employees, events or other developments that may affect them. This awareness contributes to more engaged and effective employees.

FairfaxNet is the go-to source for information about County policies, procedures, forms and programs. With the recent upgrade, employees have access to a workspace which allows for greater collaboration, resulting in a more productive workforce.

## **Mandates**

This Line of Business is not mandated.

## **Trends and Challenges**

With the growing number of retirements, the coming years will see a larger number of new employees coming on board, increasing the need for providing information necessary to help function at a high level. Estimates done by the Office of the Financial and Program Auditor in September 2014 are that 20 percent of current merit employees are eligible to retire in 2016. By 2020, that number increases to 35 percent and is 49 percent for 2024 – fewer than 10 years away.

The numbers are even greater for senior managers: 54 percent are eligible to retire in 2016, 69 percent in 2020 and 83 percent in 2024. When long-term employees leave, there is a knowledge gap. Bringing new employees up to speed on County policies, programs and other information they need to do their jobs is accomplished not only within the employee's agency, but is done on the countywide level as well.

Studies have shown that if people are communicated to regularly and in an effective manner, they are much more engaged with the organization and have a more positive attitude toward their work and their customers.

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## Resources

Category	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Adopted
<b>LOB #36: Employee Communications</b>			
<b>FUNDING</b>			
<u>Expenditures:</u>			
Compensation	\$164,095	\$153,232	\$162,545
Operating Expenses	14,155	15,553	13,380
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$178,250</b>	<b>\$168,785</b>	<b>\$175,925</b>
General Fund Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund</b>	<b>\$178,250</b>	<b>\$168,785</b>	<b>\$175,925</b>
<b>POSITIONS</b>			
Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)			
<u>Positions:</u>			
Regular	2 / 2.16	2 / 2.16	2 / 2.04
<b>Total Positions</b>	<b>2 / 2.16</b>	<b>2 / 2.16</b>	<b>2 / 2.04</b>

## Metrics

Metric Indicator	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Estimate	FY 2017 Estimate
Team Fairfax Insider (employee newsletter) issues	12	22	24	24	24
NewsLink emails to employees	244	246	246	251	249
FairfaxNet home page visits	NA	NA	3,472,098	3,475,000	3,475,000
Average time on FairfaxNet (minutes) per day	NA	NA	7.10	7.15	7.15

The workload for this line of business is fairly static and predictable. The 2/2.04 FTE who plan, coordinate and develop employee communications are tasked with producing a NewsLink email each workday the County is open. Generally there are between 244 to 249 NewsLink emails annually. However, if the County is closed for severe weather or another significant event, NewsLink is not produced. In those cases, staff is typically diverted to assist with emergency communications.

In addition to the part of an employee's time spent as the NewsLink editor who coordinates announcements and other useful information for County employees, other staff from the Office of Public Affairs take turns collecting the media links each morning to keep the workforce informed.

This LOB is also responsible for producing the employee newsletter, Team Fairfax Insider. It generally comes out each pay period; however in a few months, there is only one issue. Staff researches as well as interviews employees for articles for the newsletter. Since resuming the employee newsletter in mid-FY 2013, there have been 22 to 24 issues each year.

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Also included in this LOB is content production and management for FairfaxNet, the County intranet. In addition to providing extensive consultation for agencies that wish to maximize their use of FairfaxNet collaborative workspaces and team sites, OPA works in partnership with DIT on design and functionality and maintains all countywide content (news, policies and procedures, awards slideshows, org charts and other high-level pages.)

Over the course of the year, the FairfaxNet home page receives an average of over 3 million visits annually, with employees spending an average of seven minutes and 10 seconds on the site, per visit. In the context of the organization's intranet, it is important to strike a balance between an efficient and effective experience that supports employee productivity, and maximum awareness/utilization of the content and services provided.