

***Municipality of North Grenville  
Business Retention + Expansion Program  
Communications Plan***

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## **Introduction**

The proposed BR+E Communications Plan set out in this document identifies:

- Objectives;
- Challenges and opportunities;
- Target audiences and key allies;
- Key messages;
- The recommended communications program, including timeline; and
- Tools and tactics required to execute the program, including recommended communications vehicles and public/media relations activities.

This plan is based on information from a 2004 communications plan prepared by Susan L. Hanna, Public Affairs Consulting for the Business Retention + Expansion Committee for Mississippi Mills', the Municipality of North Grenville BR+E Work Plan, the BR+E Certification Training Course Notebook and other BR+E materials.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of the BR+E project are to demonstrate and provide community support for local business, address immediate individual business concerns and improve communication between the Municipality of North Grenville, local business and the community as a whole. Over the longer term, the program endeavours to retain and expand local businesses by increasing their competitiveness, helping them create and preserve jobs and implementing a strategic action plan for local economic development.

The major project stages for BR+E are:

- Project Planning and Business Survey
- Immediate Follow-up
- Data Analysis and Recommendations
- Public Meeting and Implementation

In order to be successful, the BR+E project requires participation and support from a broad range of individuals and organizations in the community. Therefore, the objectives of this communications plan include:

- Making various key audiences aware of the BR+E project and its objectives;
- Building support for the project among these audiences;
- Encouraging participation in the BR+E project by community and business groups and local business;
- Building the project's profile in the local media;
- Communicating information about the project and its progress to various audiences on an ongoing basis;
- Reporting to various audiences on the project's findings and proposed strategic action plan for local economic development;
- Providing periodic progress reports to various audiences on the project's results and implementation.

## Challenges

Communication challenges associated with the BR+E project include:

**Complexity** – The project is process-oriented and multi staged. It takes time to explain the program, how it works, its goals and potential benefits.

**Apathy** – Individuals and organizations can be apathetic or cynical about various business development processes and programs, particularly if they can't easily see "what's in it for them".

**Confidentiality Concerns** – Local businesses may have concerns about revealing certain information to the interviewers.

**Effective Vehicles** – It can be difficult to identify communications vehicles that reach a broad local audience. The BR+E project has a limited media audience, i.e. it is of interest only to community media, i.e., print media. Many individuals do not rely on local print media for their news and information.

## Opportunities

The BR+E project can also take advantage of a number of communications opportunities, including:

**Partnership** – agreement between the Municipality of North Grenville and the North Grenville Chamber of Commerce around the BR+E project permits us to take advantage of both organizations' communications networks. Further partnerships with other business organizations such as BIA, BNI, NGBB could further expand our reach.

**The Opportunity to Deliver a Positive Message** – The BR+E process has a proven track record. Its findings will benefit local business in both the shorter and longer term. We can answer the question "What's in it for me?" We can use both the Municipality of North Grenville's experience from the BR+E of 1999 reporting results and provide testimonials of other communities' successes with implementation.

**Competition Among Local Media** – Kemptville Advance, EMC and Leeds and Grenville Business News coverage enhances our exposure and builds awareness. It creates more local media space and attention, which enhances opportunities for coverage of the BR+E project.

**Ongoing Communications** – A successful communications program for the BR+E project will lay the foundation for ongoing communications to the business community and other local groups.

## Target Audiences and Key Allies

Because a key component of the BR+E project is a survey of local businesses, the success of the project relies on “buy-in” from local businesses and other individuals and community groups. Therefore, the primary target audiences and key allies for the project are:

- Local businesses
- Volunteers (to conduct interviews and take on other roles, Task Force)
- Key local elected and non-elected officials (Mayor, Councillors, MPP, Wardens)
- Community leaders – i.e., stakeholder groups, ratepayer groups, service clubs, community organizations
- Local media

## Key Messages

*An "Elevator Pitch" is a concise, carefully planned, and well-practiced description about your company that your mother should be able to understand in the time it would take to ride up an elevator.*

Ideally, the key messages and content for an “elevator pitch” would be developed and refined in consultation with the Leadership Team. Based on the materials reviewed to date, key messages for the initial phase of the project could include:

- BR+E works because it asks local businesses what they want and need, which leads to concrete action to address specific issues and concerns.
- Majority of new jobs (80%+) come from existing businesses.
- Building on the foundation of a successful BR+E delivered by the Municipality of North Grenville in 1999 and with almost 100 projects being completed in communities across Ontario since then, the BR+E has a proven track record of success.
- BR+E is a community-based, volunteer-driven economic development tool that encourages growth and stability of local businesses and brings the community together towards a common goal of supporting the local economy.
- BR+E Program follows **strict confidentiality** guidelines and requires all participants and volunteers to sign a contract to ensure that information collected is treated as confidential and is not disclosed to others except in the context of the work for which it was intended. Data is reported in aggregate only, with no individual information disclosed or published.
- The BR+E will improve communications between the Municipality of North Grenville and local businesses. Business-to-business networks will also improve.
- A strong local economy means a strong community in which to live, work and raise a family. BR+E helps local businesses, local government and others in the community work together, on an ongoing basis, to identify ways to preserve and expand existing businesses.
- Participating in the BR+E program is a smart investment of time– for your business and your community.

These key messages (and any accompanying sub-messages) would be customized for each target audience. New and/or additional messages would be developed as the project progresses. New messages would also need to be developed to communicate the project results and follow-up actions.

# Recommended BR+E Communications Program

## Overview

The recommended BR+E communications plan envisions a co-ordinated program of letters to community and business leaders and local businesses, a launch event, information kits for businesses, community organizations and media, presentation materials, ongoing media coverage and regular updates to local businesses and other groups via email and mail. The program does not include paid advertising, most coverage can be done through press releases, though be prepared to spend advertising \$\$ if needed for certain events, such as the launch event and the public meeting to communicate the project's results.

The program is designed to communicate directly with local businesses and other key audiences, informing them of the project and its benefits and inviting them to the launch event. The launch event would provide further details of the project, via information kits and a presentation. Kits could be emailed/mailed to those who do not attend the event. As well, the presentation could be made to other groups, such as ratepayer associations, service clubs, etc. It is crucial that local businesses and others in the community be kept informed of the project's progress and results. Therefore, the program should also include regular updates via media, email/mail.

## Materials and Events

It is recommended that an accurate and up-to-date list of mail and email addresses for local businesses and other key groups/individuals be developed (contact list).

The execution of this plan would also require the development of a number of other materials, including:

**Introductory Letter/Invitation** – This letter would be sent to a comprehensive list of businesses and other key groups individuals, informing them of the project and inviting them to the launch event. Different versions of the letter could be developed for different audiences.

**Admail Campaign** – A flyer would be sent via Canada Post Admail to all businesses in North Grenville inviting them to the launch event.

**Email Blasts** – send email blasts through Chamber, BIA, Service Clubs inviting them to Launch event.

**Launch Event** – The launch event would provide further details of the project and provide an opportunity for informal discussion and questions. It would also provide opportunity to recruit volunteer Task Force members (have application forms available for completion).

**Information Kits** – These kits would include additional details about the project, such as timelines, testimonials from other communities, FAQs, etc. Content would be developed in consultation with the BR+E Committee and could be customized for various audiences.

**PowerPoint Presentation** – This brief presentation would provide an overview of the project and its benefits. It would be used at the launch event and for other groups. The benefit of using such a presentation is that it ensures a consistent message and can be narrated by different individuals. Consideration should be given to the development of another PowerPoint deck for the public meeting at which the project's results will be presented.

**Media Outreach** – Because of the limited number of local print media, it is recommended that one or more representatives of the BR+E Committee schedule meetings with them to introduce the project and answer questions, Kemptville Advance, Kemptville EMC, L&G Business News. These media outlets could receive an information kit (news release, backgrounder) and would also be invited to the launch event. They would receive periodic updates, via news releases and interviews. As well, information and updates could be included in the Municipalities regular column in the *Advance (NG Updates)*.

Once the project is launched and underway, consideration should be given to asking a member of the business community to write a supportive letter to the editor of the *Advance* about the project (pillar of our community, a community champion).

**Regular Updates** – Local businesses and others would receive brief, regular updates on the project via email or regular mail. These would occur once a month. These updates will promote awareness of and interest in the project, and encourage feedback.

**Web Site** – All materials would be posted on [www.northgrenville.ca/BR+E](http://www.northgrenville.ca/BR+E).

**Participant Recognition** – Key participants in the program, such as Task Force members, interviewers and interviewees, should receive appropriate recognition and appreciation, e.g. a thank-you letter or certificate.

## Detailed Plan and Timeline

<b>Event/Activity</b>	<b>Event Date</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Deadline*</b>
Decide date, time and venue for launch. Identify who will be key spokespeople at launch and for media interviews.	Jan 28, 2010	Powerpoint presentation, Task Force application forms, one page flyers, BR+E Brochures	Nov 25, 2009
Contact media for feature article		Kemptville Advance to do feature article	Dec 18, 2009
Draft news release and other information for media kit		Press Release	Dec 15, 2009
Develop mailing list, community leaders, organizations, businesses		Build inventory of contacts, track progress, activities	Jan-Sept 2010
Draft letter/invitation to key community leaders		Letter/invitation to launch, can be customized for other outreach	Dec 20, 2009
Admail campaign to business, invite to launch		Letter/invitation, all NG businesses	Jan 8, 2010
Arrange media interviews with L&G Business News and EMC Kemptville		Contact editors for coverage	Jan 8, 2010
Draft PowerPoint Presentation		PowerPoint slide deck	Jan 11, 2010
Media interviews		Media kit	Jan 18, 2010
Draft info kits for launch		Backgrounder, FAQ, letter, testimonials, Task Force application form	Jan 28 10
Website development, launch and updates		Link from Municipal homepage under business, BR+E link, to information page. Update with content, press releases, events, information	Launch by Jan 28 <sup>th</sup> , continue to update
Community Stakeholder Meeting, BR+E Launch, Track attendance	Jan 28, 2010	Info kits, PowerPoint presentation Materials posted on Web site, track attendance, recruit Task Force	Jan 28, 2010
Email/mail info kits to those who didn't attend launch (email preferred to reduce costs)		Info kit email	Feb 8, 2010
Presentations to other community groups (if necessary), may do through membership email blasts if cannot be reached		PowerPoint presentation, info kits and/or email blasts to membership	Feb 12, 2010
Task Force, volunteers chosen, businesses identified and confirmed, prep surveys		Letters to businesses confirming participation, dates, visitation teams	March 31, 2010
Survey in progress Red flag issues addressed			Apr-June.
Monthly progress reports as surveys are completed, # completed, issues identified		Media progress reports, status, issues, successes	Apr-June 2010

<b>Event/Activity</b>	<b>Event Date</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Deadline*</b>
Volunteer recognition		Send thank you letter to volunteer visitors	July 31, 2010
Regular Updates to business community, other audiences through media coverage, NG updates in Kemptville Advance.	Every month	Media releases, NG Updates (council) progress reports, email blasts, letters	July – Dec, 2010 Monthly, as required
Review communications plan		New or updated materials to be developed as required	Sept 15, 2010
Task Force Recognition		Letter or certificate, recognize at public meeting	Sept 30, 2010
Recommendations/Public Meeting	End of Sept 2010	Invite media, MPP, other officials, all businesses, major event	Sept 30, 2010
Continued media coverage monthly celebrating every success, no matter how small		Local media, email, website postings	Oct-Dec 2010
Communications Plan evaluation		Identify effectiveness of the communications plan	Dec 31, 2010
Arrange follow up public meeting in 1 <sup>st</sup> qtr 2011 w/Implementation updates		Press releases, email blasts, mail out	March 31, 2011

These deadlines are recommendations only and follow the timelines of the BR+E Program Work Plan. Dates may change as required to accommodate project updates.

### **Evaluation**

If the BR+E Committee proceeds with this plan, its effectiveness should be evaluated. This could be accomplished by tracking media coverage, tracking event attendance and tracking participation by businesses, volunteers, etc. ***As well, a question could be built into the survey instrument to ask businesses how they heard about the project, whether they have seen any media on it, etc.***