



COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF BUNGOMA

Draft Communications Policy 2020

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ABBREVIATIONS

CECM:	County Executive Committee
CECM:	County Executive Committee Member
CCMT:	Crisis Communication Management Team
CGB:	County Government of Bungoma
CIDP:	County Integrated Development Plan
CoG:	Council of Governors
CoK:	Constitution of Kenya
DAP:	Differently Abled Persons
ICT:	Information Communication Technology

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Corporate Communication: These activities undertaken to communicate with internal and external stakeholders as well as with the wider public. The term implies an emphasis on promoting a sense of corporate identity and ownership, thus presenting a consistent and coherent public image.

Internal Communications: A function responsible for effective communications among participants within the county structure who are referred to as internal publics. They include the top level leadership, managers and staff of the county including seconded staff of the national government.

External Communication: The transmission of information between the County Government and other persons or entities in the county's external environment, referred to as external publics. Examples of these people and entities include customers, potential customers, suppliers, the media, investors, citizens and society at large.

The Department: The department of communication information technology in the County Government of Bungoma unless specifically stated otherwise.

The County: County Government of Bungoma, unless specified otherwise.

**CHAPTER ONE:
CONTEXT AND RATIONALE FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF BUNGOMA
COMMUNICATION POLICY**

1.0. Introduction:

This chapter presents the background information to the policy, policy vision, mission and goal, policy scope and policy rationale

1.1. Background Information

With the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression and the right of access to information, the County Government shall seek to communicate effectively with the internal and external stakeholders, ensuring alignment with its vision, strategies, and objectives. The County government of Bungoma endeavors to provide its stakeholders with timely, accurate, clear, objective and complete information about its policies, programs, services, and initiatives. Consequently, to realize the County's communication goal, this policy outlines core principles of good communication practice as a guide to its stakeholders. However, it is appropriate to adapt these principles to suit a working environment.

This policy document is designed to support the county's mandate as spelt out in the Constitution of the Republic of Kenya 2010, the County Government Act 2012, the county's Integrated Development Plan 2013-2017 and 2018-2022 and the County's policies and Acts. It is therefore expected that this policy shall act as a guideline for the development and improvement of government communication at county level.

1.2. VISION, MISSION AND CORE VALUES

This policy was guided by the following vision, mission and mandate;

1.2.1. Vision

To be a leading county in the provision of information services in service delivery to the citizenry.

1.2.2. Mission

To enable the county deliver quality services to its citizens through innovative application of technology.

1.2.3. Mandate

To design, develop and implement communication systems with a view to improving efficiency in service delivery.

1.3. Scope of the Policy

This policy covers Bungoma County government, all institutions affiliated to it as well as internal and external publics. It gives specific guidance on:

- Disseminating information
- Maintaining confidentiality of information
- Communicating electronically
- Intergovernmental communication
- Dealing with public enquiries

- Public awareness
- Branding and county identity
- Content and presentation of information

1.4. The Rationale

The county government of Bungoma exists to provide services to the public and other stakeholders. The exchange of information is therefore central to that mission. This policy is intended as a guideline to cultivate open, credible and effective communication with the county government's various publics in order to nurture better understanding of government goals, programs and services.

This policy shall ensure that communication, both internal and external, is well coordinated, effectively managed and responsive to the information needs of all the CGB stakeholders.

This policy is consistent with the broader context and direction provided by:

- The CoK 2010
- The CoG Act 2012
- The Human Resource Policy Manual
- The CIDP
- The County Government Departmental Service Charters
- The ICT Policy
- The Code of Conduct 2003
- The Public Officers Code of Ethics 2003
- Principles of good corporate governance

CHAPTER TWO:

POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.1. POLICY FRAMEWORK

Communication is an important tool for disseminating the county's values and philosophy to its external and internal publics. To support the county's quest for inclusive development and rapid wealth creation programs and projects, it is imperative to have effective communication among all stakeholders.

2.2. Governing Principles

The following principles and practices will be applied when communicating internally with employees:

- The CGB will develop and maintain *constructive dialogue* with employees at all levels to help the county achieve its purpose and to deliver on its mandate. *Dialogue* requires that communications are two-way and interactive; *constructive* dialogue suggests that problems are accompanied by suggestions for improvement. Internal communication within CGB shall, therefore, be adhered to.
- In communicating with employees, the CGB is committed to ensuring that, all employees are treated in a manner that reflects their individual needs and does not discriminate against individuals or groups on any grounds
- The CGB will foster a culture in which sharing information and knowledge is an expectation and continuous process.
- Internal communications shall be executed in an open, honest, accurate, timely, clear and prioritized manner. Information of high importance shall be given priority to ensure it is not pushed down the agenda by messages of less importance.
- The Executive will not share confidential, non-public information with employees and shall only disseminate such information to the appropriate employees where necessary.

The county exists to serve the public, and therefore accountable to them. The County government will seek to maintain an "open door policy" regarding the public's right to know, examine and question its inner workings. When dealing with the public, the following guidelines shall be followed:

- **Perceptiveness:** Listen first; then speak. The Constitution requires governments to provide an opportunity for public participation in government projects and

programs.

- **Pro-activity:** It is difficult to correct misinformation. That is why it is important to communicate before acting, if possible, anticipating and answering questions and concerns before they arise.
- **Positivity:** The public has a right to question or criticize its government and therefore response to such questions or criticisms should be accommodative and positive.
- **Simplicity:** Government communication should be simple, clear and concise in order to be understood by the citizens.
- **Promptness:** Be responsive always. Return phone calls or e-mails promptly. If more time is needed to gather a response, let the inquirer know when to expect an answer, then deliver. When responding to inquiries from the media ask, “When is your deadline?” then try to respect that deadline.
- **Professionalism:** Whether on or off duty, public officers are government ambassadors. Be polite and avoid arguing, finger pointing or use of foul language. All important government documents shall be published in the Kenya Gazette.

2.3. Objectives of the Policy

The objectives of this policy are informed by the county’s vision of creating a wealthy and vibrant county through offering high quality services to its stakeholders. These are to:

1. Initiate and maintain high visibility of the county’s development agenda and milestones with a view to creating a positive public image;
2. Promote coherence and consistency of information flow, internally and externally;
3. Minimize communication breakdown and delays including overseeing a customer feedback program;
4. Promote use of appropriate channels of communication to disseminate government messages.

**CHAPTER THREE:
COMMUNICATION OPPORTUNITY AND ASSOCIATED STRATEGIC POLICY
INTERVENTIONS**

3.1. Associated strategy and policies

(a) Access to government information

According Article (35) of CoK 2010 and Section (96) of the County Government Act; every Kenya citizen shall on request have access to information held by any county government or any unit or department thereof.

The opportunities emanating from various department of the County Government are as follows.

- Public Service Management - Employment Opportunities, Security & law enforcement.
- Agriculture - Subsidized fertilizers, seeds, ploughing, & A.I services.
- Health - Subsidized medical services, free maternity among others.
- Education - County Bursar and scholarships, Subsidized VTC courses.
- Trade – Trade loans and community empowerment projects.

The strategies on how to achieve the opportunities are through the following platforms:

- County Website.
- Media – Both Local and National newspapers, Televisions and Radios.
- Public Address.
- Information desks at the Sub – County Offices and Ward offices.

All the information going out of the County must be approved by the Office of the County Secretary.

3.5 Crisis Communication

Some of the crisis that may occur include;

- Drought and famine
- Hail stones
- Diseases
- Fire break out
- Floods
- Inter-community conflicts

Policy intervention

The County shall continue to proactively prevent events that are likely to lead to loss of stakeholder lives and confidence in the Government.

In the event of the above occurrence, appropriate response shall be undertaken by the government to rapidly and effectively respond to potentially negative situations through disaster management recovery responses.

On opportunities in crisis communication for instance disease outbreak, the County will disseminate information to the people about prevention and existing facilities such as health centers where the prevention services are offered.

On propaganda and rumors and speculations, the government shall give the true position on matters related through respective channels.

Given the sensitivity of crisis communication:

- i) The Governor or any authorized person shall give information to the media
- ii) The Communication section shall maintain regular contact with stakeholders and give advice where issues or developments appear to cause problems
- iii) The communication department shall monitor local and international news and events and advise the Governor on issues or events relevant to the County

3.5.1 Crisis response: When a crisis occurs, the Governor, in consultation with the Deputy Governor, The Executive of the relevant department, the County Secretary, and the Head of Communication shall develop and advise on appropriate strategies to deal with the situation and communicate appropriate information to relevant stakeholders.

3.5.2. Crisis Communication Management Team: In case of a crisis, the County Executive Committee (CEC) shall become the Crisis Communication Management Team (CCMT) and co-opt other members as the situation may demand. The Head of Communication shall be a member of the team. The CCMT shall constantly monitor, interpret and manage issues with potential to escalate into crises and shall gather details about crises and approve strategies for internal and external communication.

3.5.3. Releasing information to the media: The Governor or authorized officers shall release relevant, appropriate and verifiable information to the media regarding any crisis. The Governor shall institute mechanisms to continually monitor media coverage and respond to the coverage accordingly.

3.6. County Channels of Communication

3.6.1. Government Website

The official government website is managed and operated by the Department of ICT.

Individual departments have sub – portals on the main website. Municipalities will have their sub portals under the department of lands and urban planning.

The public will not be permitted to host web pages that attempt to represent themselves as “official” Bungoma County Government site. The government website does not accept commercial advertising or promotions; however, opportunities exist for sponsorships or

partnerships. The county government website pages shall be designed to meet requirements of people, including Differently Abled Persons.

The use of County Government logo for any private business is prohibited.

Policy intervention

The county government shall seek or employ the services of Sign Language Interpreters in public meetings as well as government offices and facilities like hospitals .

3.6.2. Official E-mail

Policy intervention

County government staff should utilize official e-mail for work-related reasons. The primary function of the government's e-mail system is for the exchange of information in a timely or real-time manner. Typically, the Communications Department is the sole source for the distribution of official information both internally and externally, especially when the information for distribution is considered urgent in nature.

3.6.3. Meetings

Policy intervention

i) CECM meetings

In conformity with good corporate governance practice, County executives have an obligation to brief the Governor regularly to enable the county government as a whole to discharge its policies and oversight responsibilities effectively. This obligation shall be discharged mainly through Cabinet meetings.

All other official communication to the County Executive Committee Member should have prior endorsement of the County Secretary and should be channeled through the Office of the County Secretary. Employees are strictly discouraged from dealing with County Executive Committee Member directly on official matters without the express authority of the County Secretary.

ii) Departmental Committee Meetings (DCM)

The Departmental Committee meetings constitute a critical platform for sharing information among Departmental and or unit heads. In light of the foregoing, the Head of Communication and Public Relations have an ongoing responsibility for convening Departmental Committee meetings on a regular basis (at least twice a month) in consultation with the County Secretary.

In executing his responsibility as the Chair of the Departmental Committee, the County Secretary shall ensure that departmental and or unit heads are appraised on any relevant Cabinet decisions and any other internal and external developments that may affect the day-to-day operations of the County Government. It is the responsibility of County executives to convey news and information affecting the CGB employees working under them in a timely manner. This will be effected through a combination of regular (at least monthly) employees meetings to share information and ad hoc meetings whenever the situation warrants. In cases where specific news or situation may affect a particular individual, the appropriate supervisor is responsible for initiating dialogue with that individual as soon as the supervisor becomes aware of the news or situation. Individual departments to disseminate CEC decisions and cascade programs resolved in the cabinet meetings as a follow up action.

iii) Quarterly meetings with Employees

To ensure that employees are appropriately appraised on what is going on within the County Government and to galvanize employees to deliver on the strategic plan as well as individual and contractual performance obligations, the County Secretary shall endeavor to meet with employees at least once every quarter.

As a general rule, the proceedings of all internal communications meetings at the departmental and or unit, Committee and corporate levels should be recorded in the form of minutes or reports. The minutes and or reports should be made available to the meetings' participants and to those who were unable to attend as soon as it is reasonably practicable.

3.7. County Information Visibility

News releases primarily are generated by the Communications Department to gain exposure for government programs, services or events. News releases prepared by government departments must be written on approved government letterhead.

All government publicity material like brochures, flyers, catalogues as well as display ads like billboards, banners and other miscellaneous publications are especially effective for quick explanations of programs and services. Many are used to draw attention to a one-time event. They should be visually interesting and include basic facts: who, what, when, where and possibly, why.

Policy intervention

The Communications Department will assist with the production of these specialty materials. All materials must be approved by the Communications Department prior to printing and distribution.

3.8. Special Projects or Events

Understanding communication is a key component of any special event or project.

Policy intervention

The Communications Department shall be included in advance planning of all special events and programs such as service launches, commissioning of projects, anniversaries and news conferences. In addition, the Communications Department is available to consult with each government department to promote government services and programs.

3.8. County Official Brands Name,

3.8.1. Logo and Colors

Policy intervention

The use of the County Government of Bungoma name and logo in advertising by collaborating or any institutions without authority from the CGB is prohibited and shall be subject to legal action. The County Government shall ensure the use of emblem, logo, Anthem and all its intellectual properties are registered and protected.

The production of promotional county items or material shall at all times reflect the correct County Government name, Colors and Logo. Where there are uncertainties, the concerned parties shall consult with the CECM Public service management and Administration and the County Secretary.

3.8.2. Branding

As it is the case of the County Government, branding is a powerful identity tool for any organization and should be clear to all its stakeholders.

Policy intervention

To maintain its strong brand, the County will use the correct logo, name and staff uniforms as well as the right fonts and Colors on stationery and other key products at all times to reflect the true identity to its stakeholders. The communication department's inputs shall be sought by other departments before initial release of promotional materials.

3.8.3. Branded Templates

Policy intervention

Official communication shall be done using approved CGB branded templates. CGB Staff shall exercise caution when using the County's letterhead. If writing in the capacity of an individual rather than on behalf of the County, a CGB letterhead shall not be used.

3.9. Releasing Information to the Media

With few exceptions, the constitution of Kenya 2010 requires government information to be released to the media and the public when requested. However, certain portions of personnel records, like medical records, juvenile records and victim's names, minutes of Cabinet meeting, details of a crime, may be protected from disclosure.

Media inquiries involving pending government litigations, or other legal opinions on county policies or activities are not to be released. Such information may be withheld if revelation would jeopardize investigation or prosecution of a criminal matter.

Policy intervention

Government officials must be aware of defamation laws, as well, be careful not to show contempt for, or expose an individual or business to ridicule. At its most basic, libel means injury to reputation and generally statements accusing someone of being a criminal, an adulterer, insane or infected with a repugnant disease are considered "capable of defamatory meaning."

3.10. Prohibited Communication Materials

Policy intervention

All postings shall respect the human dignity of all people and shall not contain materials that may reasonably be considered offensive. Such content includes, but is not limited to, sexual comments or images, racial and ethnic slurs, derogatory gender-specific comments or beliefs, national origin or physical attributes.

3.11. Corporate Advertising

Policy intervention

The County shall use corporate advertising while utilizing print, electronic and support media for corporate advertising to continually promote a positive image of and ensure observance of the best advertising principles and practices in the County.

3.12. Policy Stakeholders

3.12.1. Bungoma County Spokesperson

Policy interventions

- On all matters pertaining to the county, His Excellency the Governor shall be the spokesperson.
- However, from time to time as and when necessary, the Governor may delegate other officers to represent the County Government.

- These officers will be fully informed on developments in the county requiring external communication or response.
- In this connection, County Executives, Chief Officers and Directors shall keep the spokespersons apprised on significant developments in the county in liaison with the Communications Department.

3.12.2. Key Publics and Opinion Leaders

The government's highest priority are the citizens of Bungoma - those who live, work or have various interests in the county; those who benefit from our services, elect our leaders and influence our future and policies.

Policy interventions

- The county government shall ensure timely access to accurate and relevant information to the key publics

3.12.3. Employees

Employees are those individuals who are in the active service of the county government.

Policy Interventions

- The county government shall provide relevant working information to its employees as well as protect them from bias from consumers of the county government information.
- Staff meetings will help staff members to ventilate and share ideas.

3.12.4. News Media

Media is a resource. Through newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet, the county has a powerful platform to inform, instruct and influence public opinion.

Policy Interventions

The county government shall ensure collaboration with the media for enhanced working synergies

3.12.5. Elected Officials/ Opinion leaders

Elected Officials are those individuals who hold office by the virtue of the mandate of the electorate and influence over the electorate. Opinion leaders also have influence on the constituents.

Policy Interventions

The county government shall ensure collaboration with the elected officials and opinion leaders for enhanced working synergies.

3.12.6. Suppliers

These are organizations or individuals who do business with the County government.

Policy interventions

- The county government of Bungoma shall ensure ease of access to information by suppliers upon request

3.12.7. Other County Governments

We encourage a spirit of cooperation, healthy competition; open sharing of information with other counties and collaboration.

Policy Intervention

The county government of Bungoma shall enhance collaboration and share information with other county governments to enhance service delivery and seek to resolve any confidentiality amicably.

SECTION FOUR: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION COMPLIANCE AND REVIEW

4.1. Policy Implementation

The CECM for ICT, e-Government and Communication, the Director for Communications, and selected Communication Officers will advise on implementation of this policy and monitor its implementation. The aforementioned shall also lead the sensitization training on the new communication policy.

4.1.1. Roles and Responsibilities

- a. The following County Government of Bungoma officers are responsible for the implementation of and adherence to this Policy:
 - i All Cabinet Members;
 - ii All employees (whether full time, part time, temporary and casual);
 - iii All sub-contractors, volunteers and work experience students working with The County Government of Bungoma employees and using The County Government of Bungoma services and assets;
 - iv Any business units and/or corporatized entities.

4.2. Budget

The department of ICT, e-Government & Communication shall provide a budget for the implementation of this policy and resources for training the policy stakeholders

4.3. Monitoring and Evaluation

The communication department shall:

- Develop appropriate strategies for monitoring and evaluation of the Communication Policy
- Carry out annual evaluation on the implementation of the policy, and
- Define the short-term, mid-term and long-term interventions based on the outcomes of the evaluation reports.

4.4. Compliance

All stakeholders shall comply with this Policy to ensure effective implementation of this policy. Compliance in this Policy is adhering to guidelines, standards, operating procedures and regulations. All Public Sector Institutions, Civil Society and Private Organizations that are registered with Government and handle public funds will be required to comply with the provisions of this Policy. Standards set out in this Policy document that guide the implementation processes shall be applicable across the County Government structures.

4.5. Compliance Requirements and Obligations Shall Include:–

- (a) Reporting obligations according to agreed formats;
- (b) Abiding by the principles of the policy
- (d) Abiding by the agreed quality, quantity, time and standards. (These shall be defined and agreed with stakeholders).

4.6. Monitory and Evaluation

The County Government will follow up on the implementation and evaluate the effectiveness of the communication policy.

4.7. Review of Policy

This Policy establishes a framework for management of communication in the county. The practice, approach and tools for implementation will continue to evolve with time. As such this Policy will be reviewed through a participatory process after every 3 year in line with the implementation period for the MTPs for Vision 2030 and CIDPs, so as to capture relevant developments and emerging practices and approaches. There shall however be a continuous review process of the Policy.