

Williamson County Public Affairs Communication Policy



Purpose

To establish a policy for the Williamson County Public Affairs Department's (Public Affairs) communication services for Williamson County (County) Elected Officials, Appointed Officials, Departments and their employees internally and with the County's external stakeholders. This policy covers all formats of information dissemination concerning County government related issues, programs, projects, services and activities in both emergency and non-emergency situations.

Summary

Public Affairs' mission is to provide information regarding County government activities through the most effective channels while encouraging engagement with stakeholders. County government activities include constitutional and statutory duties of the County, as well as authorized County services provided to enhance quality of life such as the County's parks and recreation facilities, events, and activities. Our stakeholders include current and future residents, employees, media, companies, taxpayers, other governmental entities, as well as the general public.

The County encourages positive communication within the County organization and with the public and stakeholders that reflects the County's actions and values. Communication should be accurate, timely, professional, and understandable.

Scope

This policy applies to all Elected Officials, Appointed Officials and Departments and their staff.

Definitions

Appointed Officials

The term "Appointed Officials" shall mean and include individuals that are appointed by a body or the State of Texas to serve as an official for a County office or department of the State of Texas that serves the County. Appointed Officials shall include, but not be limited to the County Auditor, Director of Williamson County Juvenile Services, and the Director of Williamson County Adult Probation.

Departments

Unless specifically noted otherwise, the use of the term "Departments" means the departments under the Williamson County Commissioners Court.

Elected Officials

The term "Elected Officials" shall mean individuals who are elected by the citizens of the County to serve in a County elected office.

Media

Any individual or organization that shares news information with the public through a recognized public media outlet, whether in print, digital or web-based formats.

Policy

Public Affairs will provide communication services for County Elected Officials, Appointed Officials and Departments, when requested, regarding the County's government activities. In order to utilize County communication resources, these activities must have a direct benefit to the taxpayers of the County.

Communication services encompass written, verbal, and visual communication forms including, but not limited to, press releases, social media posts, videos, flyers, brochures, posters, banners, reels, graphics, press conferences, and events. Types of acceptable content include information regarding professional awards, employee new hires/official appointments at director level and above, special recognitions, public programs, County-related public events/meetings, public education/awareness, countywide office closures, emergency communications, County economic development activities and other core County government services and announcements.

Public Affairs will not disseminate information for organizations that are not County government offices or agencies of the State of Texas or federal government that directly serve the County. In addition, Elected Officials have a legal obligation and duty to not use official County resources, including Public Affairs services, for campaigning or other political or personally beneficial purposes. The same prohibition applies to use of County resources to advertise or support any activity that is funded to any extent with campaign funds, even if the activity is not overtly political in nature. Public Affairs shall have the sole discretion in determining whether a requested communication qualifies as a communication directly relating to the County's government activities.

The Director of Communications and Media Relations is responsible for developing, directing, and implementing the County's overall community and media relations communication function under the oversight of the Williamson County Commissioners Court. The Director will assist in the planning of key programs and projects to ensure that concerns relating to community and media relations communications are fully considered. The Director will act as a consultant to County Elected Officials, Appointed Officials and Departments to design communication strategies for County government activities, develop guidelines for written communications, prepare for media interviews, and coordinate a consistent visual brand identity for the County. The Director is responsible for creating communication guidelines consistent with this Policy, which the Director may change and update from time to time as the Director determines necessary.