

The background of the slide is a marbled blue pattern with swirling, organic shapes in various shades of blue, from light to dark. The text is centered and white.

# R&G

## T2050 Comms Planning

Qualitative Research Findings

## AGENDA

- Why we're here
- Research Findings
- Recommendations & Approach
- Questions and Comments

## CONTEXT

- Rural communities lack resources and funding to implement communications strategies
- How can we support these municipalities with supplementary planning material that best fits the gaps in their communications processes?

## WHY WE'RE HERE

- Review community communications planning realities
- Explore insights from interviews
- Investigate an approach to providing supplementary material

## OUR PLAN



Understand the Challenge



Qualitative Research



Share Findings



Evaluate Recommendations



Create Materials

Realities

## COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS REALITIES

- The ambition is always to reach everyone
- Strategic Initiatives/Planners often solely responsible for implementing communications around their own projects, when supported, it's a very small department (maybe one communications person)
- Project-based communications campaign budgets spanned \$0 to \$10K at most (campaigns always hampered by funding, but if they have the money, they'll spend it, if they don't, they don't)
- Communications is done by rote, i.e. variations on the same process each time
- Direct mail, Bang the Table, radio relationships, proprietary newsletters, town halls and social media are all the main channels for comms with internal copy and design
- Largely measured success against a baseline or previous campaigns
- Often felt like they couldn't 'get ahead' of project messaging
- Very slim engagement numbers seen as a win (20 people in a town hall, 10 comments on a social media post)

# Key Insights

## PLANNERS DON'T WANT HELP WITH TACTICS, THEY WANT HELP WITH MESSAGE

- “The way the communities shape themselves, the messaging needs to be adapted for those audiences—info or data on messaging that worked or increased engagement on a typical topic”
- “When we disseminated that info and tried to engage residents we would equate the amount of kWh we’d create in a year and try to relate it to the number of houses in the community, it has to resonate”
- “It would be good to know priorities that most of the people have so if we do reach out or communicate we can use buzzer topics and things to get attention”
- “The biggest piece would be to identify motivations for making this kind of change—is it grandkids? Is it money? Being able to position the message better to these people would help.”
- “Message to councillors, Council has to participate, how do they become champions? Just have to understand their role in selling it”

## CASE STUDIES ARE ONLY USEFUL IF THEY'RE TIED TO 'SUCCESS'

- "I do like the idea of having the different options, 3 or 4 different ways to communicate and share..."
- "I'd like empirical evidence on successful strategies"
- "We found a lot of theory, some rooted in practice, most hadn't shared findings to suggest how successful they were, so going back and figuring out how impactful they were and finding some that might be reliable"
- "Case studies are interesting"
- "I don't know that we're missing any channels, we're adapting"

# Recommended Approach

## RECOMMENDATIONS

→ Focus supplementary material on rural Nova Scotian personas, connecting specific issues to motivators for each audience, targeted AND high level. Where relevant, organize all materials with persona 'tags' so planners can connect messaging and initiatives to audiences at a glance.

→ Include a 'How To' on how to turn a councillor into a Champion (and what's in it for them)

→ Include only novel and/or costed case studies/examples if they can demonstrate success metrics

→ Host webinar series or podcast, invite co-hosts (think ThinkWell!), record and maintain video or audio library links (YouTube/Spotify)

→ Create a 'rural' carbon equivalents calculator based on rural carbon factors that resonate with residents, so planners can pick and choose the ones that best support audiences customize their messaging

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Begin a well-organized and curated library of shared resources
- Keep a list of funding sources up to date, organized by specific topics where funding can be found/spent on comms

### Future:

Deeper, more consistent cycle of messaging on these topics rather than 'reacting' to plans and initiatives—can we create an association where constituents can 'look up' and 'engage' on ALL the climate efforts their community?

Comments?

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