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COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT PLAN



A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S

February 2014

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Communications Management Plan is to define the communication requirements for the project and how information will be distributed to ETBs and SOLAS, but more importantly disseminated to staff at all levels. The Communications Management Plan defines the following:

- What information will be communicated—to include the level of detail and format
- How the information will be communicated—in meetings, email, telephone, web portal, etc.
- When information will be distributed—the frequency of project communications both formal and informal
- Who is responsible for communicating project information
- Communication requirements for all project stakeholders
- How any sensitive or confidential information is communicated and who must authorise the release of the communication
- How changes in communication or the communication process are managed
- The flow of project communications
- Any constraints, internal or external, which affect communications from the Project Management Office (PMO)
- Any standard templates, formats, or documents the project must use for communicating

This Communications Management Plan sets the communications framework for this project. It will serve as a guide for communications throughout the life of the project and will be updated as communication needs change. It also includes a communications matrix which maps the communication requirements of this project. A directory for the PMO team is included to provide contact information for all involved in the project and their areas of responsibility which will be made available to all stakeholders.

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The PMO, led by the Programme Manager, will take a proactive role in ensuring effective communications on this project. The communications requirements are documented in the Communications Matrix presented in this document. The Communications Matrix will be used as the guide for what information to communicate, who is to do the communicating, when to communicate it, how it will be communicated and to whom to communicate.

As with most project plans, updates or changes may be required as the project progresses or changes are approved. Changes or updates may be required due to changes in personnel, scope, budget, or other reasons. Additionally, updates may be required as the project matures and additional requirements are needed. The Programme Manager will be responsible for approving all proposed changes to the Communications Management Plan. Once the change is approved, the plan and supporting documentation will be updated and distributed to the PMO team and all stakeholders and made available on the PMO dedicated area on the Department of Education and Skills (DES) website (www.education.ie).

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT CONSTRAINTS

All projects are subject to limitations and constraints as they must be within scope and adhere to budget, scheduling, and resource requirements. Project planning and documentation are no exception to this rule. There may also be legislative, regulatory, technology or Departmental policy requirements which must be followed as part of communications management. While communications management is arguably one of the most important aspects of project management, it must be done in an effective manner and within the constraints of the allocated time and resources.

Communication activities are performed by the PMO team as appropriate and all members of the team are kept informed of communication from every area of the PMO. Communication activities will occur in accordance with the frequencies detailed in the Communication Matrix in order to ensure the project adheres to schedule constraints.

Standardised formats and templates will be used for all communications from the PMO to ensure a consistent approach and to create awareness with all stakeholders that this communication is important and from the PMO. All PMO documentation will also include a logo for ease of identification which will be used jointly with the DES logo.

The Programme Manager will approve documentation to issue from the PMO and approval must be obtained prior to the distribution of any confidential information regarding this project from each member of the PMO team.

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS

As this project consists of a broad range of stakeholders, all of whom may have differing interests and influence on the project, the PMO in the first instance, has sought feedback to determine the communication requirements of internal stakeholders (i.e. SOLAS and ETB staff) in order to more effectively communicate information.

Based on the feedback from internal stakeholders global email is the primary preferred method of communication. The PMO has therefore engaged with ETBI and SOLAS to establish email distribution lists for ETBs and SOLAS and improve communication at all levels. The feedback also suggested a dedicated area on DES website would be useful. This has also been established and will be updated regularly, by the PMO.

As the feedback was only sought from internal stakeholders, the PMO will conduct a focus group session with external stakeholders/agencies to establish their communication requirements specifically from the PMO. This will take place in February 2014.

What	Who	When	How
Project Management Office Update	Nessa Doyle	Fortnightly to ETBI/SOLAS	By email using a standard template
Programme Board report	PMO team	As required	By email or at the meeting
Internet sites	Nessa Doyle and PMO team	As information for general distribution becomes available	www.education.ie www.etbi.ie www.solas.ie
Global emails	PMO team as required	As required	By email using contact lists established
Newsletters	Nessa Doyle and PMO team	Bi-monthly	By email
Bulletin boards	Feedback suggested, this option was a low priority	N/A	N/A
Payslip notifications	Feedback suggested, this option was a low priority	N/A	N/A
Telephone support	PMO team	As required	By phone
Email support	PMO team	As required	By email
Site visits	PMO team	As required	On site as required
Web conferences	PMO team	As required	Using available technology
Sectoral meetings	PMO team	As required	Attendance at meetings/events
Focus Groups	PMO team	As required	Arranged by N Doyle or lead person on project area.

Once all stakeholders have been identified and communication requirements are established, the PMO team will maintain this information in the PMO and use this as the basis for all communications. The method of communication may change and will be determined by the target audience.

ROLE OF PMO IN FORMAL COMMUNICATION SESSIONS

The PMO is committed to taking a direct role in supporting communications across the ETB/SOLAS sector. It considers that its participation in sectoral communications sessions is of critical importance in successfully managing the change agenda.

It will make a contribution to seminars, meetings and other events in ETBs and SOLAS in order to provide opportunities for engagement for those directly affected by the reform programme.

Examples of where the PMO will participate are-

- ETB-led communication workshops

- ETBI forums such as staff seminars
- SOLAS-led town hall meetings for exiting training centres
- Professional groups in-service e.g. CEEOA, AEOA.

COMMUNICATION STANDARDS

In order to achieve consistent and effective communications, standardisation of PMO documentation is a proven way to simplify the complexities of project management communications. The PMO have developed standard templates or formats for the various communication tools used throughout the project. Standard templates and formats of font will be applied specific types of communication (i.e. emails, status reports, e-zines, bulletins etc.). By using standardisation, it can help to achieve consistent and effective communications.

PMO Team Meetings – the PMO team will utilise an agreed standard template for meeting agenda and meeting minutes.

The PMO team will all use a similar signature and font (Calibri 11) to maximise the identity of the PMO by all stakeholders at first glance.

ROLES

ETB/SOLAS Programme Board

Representation and membership from stakeholders – DES, ETBI, and SOLAS – have been agreed and the Programme Board has been established. It meets on a regular basis and is chaired by the Secretary General, DES.

Programme Manager

The Programme Manager oversees the project and the resources assigned to the project.

Project Management Office Team

The PMO Team is comprised of all persons who have a role performing work on the project. There needs to be a clear understanding of the work to be completed and the framework within which delivery is expected.

Key Stakeholders

The stakeholders for this project are 16 ETBs and all staff employed by those ETBs, ETBI as representative body of ETBs, SOLAS staff all of whom are impacted upon by this change.

When considering stakeholders, ETBs must ensure that communication filters throughout the organisation to include schools and centres when providing updates on current or future developments.

Technical Expertise

Technical expertise may be required on certain aspects of the project or on specific projects to ensure that these are addressed and implemented in a technically sound manner.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT OFFICE DIRECTORY

The following table presents contact information for all persons identified in this communications management plan. The email addresses and phone numbers in this table will be used to communicate with these staff.

Role/Area of responsibility	Name	Organisation/ Department	Email	Phone
Programme Manager	Dalton Tattan	DES	dalton_tattan@education.gov.ie	01 8892416
Governance Finance	Frank Fox	DES	frank_fox@education.gov.ie	071 9193401
Projects Shared Services	Peter Collins	DES	peter_collins@education.gov.ie	01 8892904
Admin Support to PMO	Lynn McQuaid	DES	lynn_mcquaid@education.gov.ie	071 9193400
Communications/ HR/IR Issues	Nessa Doyle	ETBI	Nessa.doyle@etbi.ie	087 7426036

COMMUNICATION METHODS AND TECHNOLOGIES

Often the methods and technologies used to communicate are just as important a consideration as the information being communicated. The different technological capabilities of ETBs and SOLAS must be taken into consideration when planning the communication technologies. Some may have access to video conferencing and others only have telephone and email capabilities. In order to be effective, project information must be communicated to everyone involved by some method using available technology.

Determining communication methods and what technologies are available should be part of determining stakeholder communication requirements mentioned above.

The PMO will determine, the communication methods and technologies based on several factors to include: stakeholder communication requirements, available technologies (internal and external), and organisational policies and standards.

Upward communication

A number of methods of upward communication will be considered and used if required:

- **Staff Surveys** - Quantitative research provides statistics in response to set questions. This method of consultation may elicit views from a widely representative group of users (and non-users) and can give statistically reliable information. It also facilitates the compilation of comparative information as the project progresses. Quantitative surveys can be face-to-face, postal, telephone, email or web-based.
- **Focus Groups** - are normally made up of approximately 8/12 staff led by a trained facilitator in a one-off discussion focused on a particular topic. Within a focus group issues can be explored in considerable depth.
- **Email response** – give staff the opportunity to respond to issues.

- **Face to Face Meetings/Information Sessions** - arranged for staff to find out about and express their views on the project.

Care must be taken in order to ensure that the choice of method of upward communication is appropriate having regard to the issue to be communicated.

One-way communication

A number of methods of one-way communication will also be considered:

- **Article in newsletter/ezine** can be cheap to produce and reach a wide audience. Staff can read it when it suits them.
- **Intranet Page** gives more detail and is flexible when read but may not be available to all staff
- **Leaflets** that can be sent to staff along with other routine correspondence. They can also be included in pay packs, etc.
- **Emails** – can be circulated widely and even record when the message is read. Everyone gets the same message at the same time and it is very fast to get across.
- **Desk drop** – is a way to attract attention and can be used as a way to highlight and remind staff of issues to be done.
- **Meetings** with staff, collectively or individually, may be appropriate opportunities to inform them of issues to be dealt with and communicate the required response.
- **Team Briefing** – Can be a way of putting across a message to all staff and allow the message to be adapted to local and individual needs as required. It needs to be monitored as message may be influenced by local opinion.

GUIDELINES FOR MEETINGS

Meetings arranged by the PMO will adhere to the following best practice guidelines

Meeting Agenda

Meeting Agenda will be distributed 5 business days in advance of the meeting. The first item in the agenda should be a review of action items from the previous meeting.

Meeting Minutes

Meeting minutes will be distributed within 5 business days following the meeting. Meeting minutes will include the status of all items from the agenda along with new action items and the on hold/further discussion required list.

Action Items

Action Items are recorded in both the meeting agenda and minutes. Action items will include both the action item along with the owner of the action item. Meetings will start with a review of the status of all action items from previous meetings and end with a review of all new action items resulting from the meeting. The review of the new action items will include identifying the owner for each action item.

Note Taker

The Note Taker is responsible for documenting the status of all meeting items, maintaining a Parking Lot item list and taking notes of anything else of importance during the meeting.