



MARCH 2026
FLSA: EXEMPT
Bargaining Unit: UM
JCN: 1326

CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

DEFINITION

Under administrative direction, plans, organizes, develops, and manages comprehensive countywide communications, public information, and crisis communications programs which ensure timely, accurate, and effective dissemination of information to the public and media, as well as internal communication to staff. Serves as a strategic advisor to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and County executive leadership. Collaborates with the CAO, Board members, department heads, and other leaders to establish communications, public engagement, and public affairs objectives that align with the County's vision, values, goals, and needs. Acts as a bridge between the County and the public, determining communication strategies across various platforms including but not limited to social media, web and digital content, video, advertising, public statements, public events, and press releases. Provides leadership in the development of public outreach and awareness initiatives, crisis communication strategies, and community relations programs. Serves as the County's primary communications liaison during emergency incidents, including wildfires and other disasters, ensuring consistent, coordinated, and accessible public messaging in collaboration with emergency management personnel. Performs related duties as assigned.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED AND EXERCISED

Receives administrative direction from the Chief Administrative Officer or Assistant Chief Administrative Officer. Exercises general direction and supervision over management, supervisory, professional, technical, administrative support staff, and vendors either directly or through subordinate levels of supervision.

CLASS CHARACTERISTICS

This is a single-position executive management classification assigned to the Chief Administrative Office. Under general policy direction, the incumbent is responsible for managing and directing the County's public information and strategic communications activities. Successful performance requires knowledge of local government operations, the role of an elected Board of Supervisors, and the ability to navigate complex, high-profile matters with discretion, tact, and independent judgment. The incumbent develops and implements countywide communications strategies, coordinates messaging across departments, and represents the County in interactions with the media, community organizations, and other governmental agencies. Attendance at meetings outside of normal working hours and availability during emergency incidents is expected.

EXAMPLES OF TYPICAL JOB FUNCTIONS (Illustrative Only)

- Develops, implements, and manages strategic communications plans, ensuring timely and effective dissemination of public information and coordination of internal and external messaging.
- Serves as the County's spokesperson; prepares and delivers information to the public, media, and on social media platforms; ensures consistent messaging across all channels.
- Advises the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and other County leadership on public information strategies, media relations, and community engagement.
- Acts as the County's lead public information officer during emergencies and disasters, including wildfires, and coordinates with emergency management personnel to ensure accurate and timely public messaging.

- Consults with departments on community outreach strategies and public engagement efforts; encourages public participation in County programs and initiatives.
- Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of communication strategies, service delivery methods, and administrative systems; identifies and implements improvements.
- Selects, trains, supervises, and evaluates assigned staff; provides coaching and performance management; addresses personnel issues and recommends disciplinary actions as needed.
- Represents the CAO and County leadership in meetings with media, public agencies, community groups, and professional organizations; delivers public presentations and executive-level correspondence.
- Responds to sensitive public inquiries, requests, and complaints; recommends and implements resolutions.
- Maintains a strong social media presence using current and widely used platforms to enhance public awareness and engagement.
- Performs related duties as assigned.

QUALIFICATIONS

Knowledge of:

- Principles and practices of public and business administration.
- Principles, practices, and trends in public relations, advertising, public affairs, and public communication.
- Communication strategies during a crisis or emergency.
- Understanding audience dynamics and crafting consistent, compelling messages that engage the public and County employees.
- Communication strategies across various channels such as social media, video, advertising, public statements and events, and press releases.
- The role, structure, and functions of a County Board of Supervisors, including agenda development and public meeting protocols.
- Principles and practices of policy development and implementation.
- Social, political, economic, environmental, and related issues influencing local government functions and activities.
- Methods and techniques used in evaluating public attitude regarding county-wide operations and issues and the determination of public affair needs.
- Methods and techniques used for presenting public information and facts to the public and the media.
- Principles and techniques for making effective public presentations.
- Principles and practices of employee supervision, including work planning, assignment review and evaluation, discipline, and the training of staff in work procedures.
- Principles and techniques for working with groups and fostering effective team interaction to ensure teamwork is conducted smoothly.
- Techniques for providing a high level of customer service by effectively dealing with the public, vendors, contractors, and County staff.
- The structure and content of the English language, including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.
- Modern equipment and communication tools used for business functions and program, project, and task coordination.
- Computers and software programs (e.g., Microsoft software packages) to conduct, compile, and/or generate documentation.

Ability to:

- Manage and direct comprehensive public information, media relations, public outreach, and crisis communications programs.
- Develop and implement goals, objectives, policies, procedures, and work standards.
- Organize and conduct public meetings to promote positive communication efforts.
- Read, interpret, and apply federal, state, and local laws, policies, and procedures.
- Identify and respond to public issues and concerns.
- Plan, organize, and coordinate the work of professional, technical, and administrative support staff.
- Develop digital content and write letters, statements, and speeches.
- Select and supervise staff, provide training and development opportunities, ensure work is performed effectively, and evaluate performance in an objective and positive manner.
- Use tact and diplomacy to work cooperatively with a variety of individuals representing diverse cultures and backgrounds.
- Understand, interpret, and apply all pertinent laws, codes, regulations, policies and procedures, and standards relevant to work performed.
- Exercise good judgment in response to public information inquiries.
- Analyze problems, identify alternatives and solutions, project consequences of actions, and make recommendations based on findings.
- Promote trust and transparency.
- Prepare clear, concise, and effective comprehensive reports and/or correspondence, including the use of graphic aids.
- Effectively represent the department and the County in meetings with governmental agencies; community groups; various business, professional, and regulatory organizations; the media; and in meetings with individuals.
- Independently organize work, set priorities, meet critical deadlines, and follow-up on assignments.
- Effectively use computer systems, software applications, and modern business equipment to perform a variety of work tasks.
- Communicate clearly and concisely, both orally and in writing, using appropriate English grammar and syntax.
- Establish, maintain, and foster positive and effective working relationships with those contacted in the course of work.

Education and Experience:

Any combination of the required experience, education, and training that would provide the essential knowledge, skills, and abilities is qualifying; however, education may not solely substitute for the required experience.

Possession of a bachelor's degree from an accredited four-year college or university with major coursework in business or public administration, journalism, economics, marketing, public relations, political science, communications, or a closely related field;

AND

Six (6) years of progressively responsible experience in public communications, public relations, marketing, or program management; including at least two (4) years of such experience in the public sector.

Licenses and Certifications:

- Possession of, or ability to obtain and maintain, a valid California or Nevada Driver's License and a satisfactory driving record.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

Must possess mobility to work in a standard office setting and use standard office equipment, including a computer, and to operate a motor vehicle to visit various County and meeting sites; vision to read printed materials and a computer screen; and hearing and speech to communicate in person and over the telephone. Standing in and walking between work areas is frequently required. Finger dexterity is needed to access, enter, and retrieve data using a computer keyboard or calculator and to operate standard office equipment. Positions in this classification frequently bend, stoop, kneel, and reach to perform assigned duties, as well as push and pull drawers open and closed to retrieve and file information. Employees must possess the ability to lift, carry, push, and pull materials and objects up to 25 pounds with the use of proper equipment. Reasonable accommodations will be made for individuals on a case-by-case basis.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Employees predominantly work in an office environment with moderate noise levels, controlled temperature conditions, and no direct exposure to hazardous physical substances. Employees may work in the field and may occasionally be exposed to loud noise levels, cold and hot temperatures, inclement weather conditions, road hazards, vibration, mechanical and/or electrical hazards, hazardous chemical substances and fumes, or uneven terrain. Employees may interact with members of the public or with staff under emotionally stressful conditions during emergency situations or while interpreting and enforcing departmental policies and procedures.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Must be available to attend meetings outside of normal working hours and work extended hours, including weekends and holidays as needed.