

Communications Officer

1. Overall Purpose:

The Communications Officer is accountable for assisting in the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of communications strategies and tactics that contribute to internal and external stakeholders' awareness and understanding of Agency initiatives, policies and decisions. Under the direction of the communications manager, the communications officer provides communication expertise and advice to the President and senior staff.

2. Specific Accountabilities

- Working with the communications manager, contributes to internal and external stakeholders' awareness and understanding of Agency initiatives through assisting and/or coordinating in the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of communications tactics and strategies
- Working with the communications manager, ensures the President and Agency spokespersons are prepared to communicate the Agency and government partners' position on sensitive issues to internal and external stakeholders, including the media, and the public. Provides verbal briefings and prepares speaking notes, briefing notes, high-level Qs and As, issues notes, and multi-media presentations for senior staff.
- Working with the communications manager, ensures members of the public and the media receive timely, accurate information pertaining to Agency and government initiatives by preparing media releases, organizing media conferences, and preparing and updating information for the Agency's website.
- Working with the communications manager, ensures effective communications of the Agency's initiatives, policies and decisions through the preparation and management of written and audiovisual communications, marketing and promotional materials for internal and external stakeholders using a variety of media.
- Contributes to effective Agency issues management by identifying potential issues through regular media monitoring and analysis and assisting with the development of Agency responses, according to Agency policies and procedures and strategic goals.
- Working with the communications manager, ensures the accuracy and retention of Agency messages through ongoing research including media monitoring and analysis, ongoing dialogue with internal and external stakeholders, and the coordination of focus groups, surveys and opinion polling.
- Working with the communications manager, ensures clear and concise communication of the Agency's initiatives, policies and decisions through planning, researching, writing and editing of communications products including annual reports, backgrounders, fact sheets, brochures and business plans.

3. Reporting Relationships

This Job has a Reporting Relationship to the Communications Manager

4. Skills Required for the Communications Officer

- **Communication Skills** – The Communications Officer must have exemplary oral and written communication skills. The Communications Officer must be able to write about complex technical, scientific, and emotional topics in clear, plain language, and do so quickly and under pressure. The Communications Officer must be able to speak publicly, before large and small groups and via electronic media, on short notice, and do so in a clear, articulate, and persuasive manner. The Communications Officer must be able to converse and communicate with, and develop working relationships with, all manner of citizens, community organizations, staff, officials, politicians, suppliers, unions, and stakeholder groups.
- **Grace Under Pressure** – The Communications Officer must be able to perform all assigned tasks calmly and effectively while under pressure, and in the face of pointed and hostile criticism. However, under no circumstances are staff of the agency expected to tolerate abusive treatment.
- **Judgment and Initiative** – This position requires a high degree of individual initiative, self-reliance, resourcefulness, discernment, and motivation. The Communications Officer must be a quick study, able to consider new information and situations, and react quickly and calmly under pressure.
- **Critical Thinking** – In a communications environment characterized by entrenched mythology and gullible thinking, the Communications Officer must be able to use logic and reasoning to distinguish evidence-based reality from notions and nostrums.
- **Time management** – The Communications Officer must be able to effectively manage, prioritize, and work under pressure.

5. Other

Other important information that will help applicants understand this position:

The Sydney Tar Ponds Agency is a special operating agency established in 2004 to oversee the implementation of the 10-year, \$400-million cleanup of the Sydney Tar Ponds and Coke Ovens sites. The Agency is responsible for all aspects of the cleanup, including project design, project management, procurement of goods and services, environmental assessment, occupational health and safety, community relations, and communications. The Agency has two operating divisions: Support Services and Engineering. Each of the two operating divisions has a Director who reports to the Agency's President.

6. Education, Experience, and Core Skill Requirements

The Communication Officer requires:

- A university degree in journalism, communications, or public relations and at least three years of practical work experience in one or more of those fields, or, absent such a university degree, at least five years of practical work experience in one or more of those fields.
- Demonstrated outstanding talent as a writer of plain, lucid, persuasive prose.
- Demonstrated ability to write for all media, including radio, print, and web communications.
- Demonstrated outstanding skill as an oral communicator.
- Good planning, time management, and organizational skills.
- Knowledge of the Sydney community and of the Tar Ponds and Coke Ovens project history and plans (see: www.tarpondscleanup.ca).
- Proven ability to build and maintain effective working relationships with the staff, industry, other government organizations, and the community.
- Familiarity with office communications tools including email, word processing, spreadsheets, Power Point, and web research tools.

The following skills will be significant assets for the communications officer:

- Familiarity with graphics tools such as PhotoShop, Illustrator, and Dreamweaver; and
- Demonstrated ability to understand technical and scientific information and documents, and translate them into plain prose understandable by lay people.