

# Islands Trust Communications Strategy 2026/27

## 1. Context

An updated and refined communications strategy is a priority for Islands Trust and is essential to strengthening engagement with island communities, improving public trust, and supporting stewardship of the Islands Trust Area. Clear, consistent, and proactive communication builds understanding of the Islands Trust mandate to preserve and protect the Trust Area and its unique amenities and environment

Through effective planning, coordination, and resource allocation, communications will increase awareness of Islands Trust's governance, programs, projects, services, and commitment to Reconciliation, while encouraging informed participation and stewardship by residents and partners.

This strategy applies to Islands Trust Council, the Executive Committee, and local trust committees. The Islands Trust Conservancy and Bowen Island Municipality maintain their own communications strategies; coordination will occur where appropriate and capacity allows.

This document provides an overarching communications framework. Project- and program-specific communications work plans will continue to be developed as companion documents. A complementary organizational engagement strategy is anticipated to further support community engagement efforts.

## 2. Principles

All Islands Trust communications will be:

- **Accessible** – Clear, relevant, and written in plain language wherever possible
- **Focused on Reconciliation** – Reflecting Indigenous style principles and respectful practices (refer to Islands Trust Identity Guide)
- **Accurate** – Fact-based, clear, and measured in tone
- **Creative** – Engaging, visual, and reflective of positive stories and shared stewardship
- **Consistent** – Aligned with the Islands Trust Identity Guide in design, tone, and language
- **Measured** – Guided by goals, metrics, and best practices

- **Timely** – Relevant, responsive, and useful

### 3. Goals

#### Goal 1: Recognize community interests and respond with timely, clear, and coordinated information

##### 1.1 Improve issue identification, listening, and response by:

- Using Islands Trust–owned channels (website, forms, newsletters, subscriber lists) as primary tools for collecting and responding to public questions and concerns
- Monitoring emerging issues and trends, including feedback received through social media and community forums
- Ensuring timely information-sharing with elected officials, staff, and the public
- Monitoring local media and building a strong relationship with local journalists so that journalists feel encouraged to contact staff and/or trustees for clarification

##### 1.2 Strengthen internal preparedness and issue management by:

- Developing and consistently implementing an intake process that balances staff capacity with priority, legislative requirements, project needs, and timelines
- Updating procedures that outline best practices, roles, and desired outcomes for issues management
- Clearly identifying spokespeople by topic or issue and sharing this information internally
- Preparing key messages and speaking notes early, including for emerging or anticipated issues
- Connecting with journalists early and often to support the accuracy of information
- Manage and update an interested and affected parties email list that can be used to share information with community groups in the Islands Trust Area

##### 1.3 Proactively address community questions and concerns by:

- Preparing topic-based questions and answers and adding them to the Fact Check section of the website
- Regularly updating backgrounders and explainer content that supports transparency and understanding

- Providing frequently asked questions materials for projects and initiatives, available on the Islands Trust website on the relevant project pages

#### 1.4 Support trustees as informed communicators and ambassadors by:

- Provide timely speaking notes on emerging issues
- Providing clear guidelines and best practices for communications and social media use
- Offering training and learning opportunities as part of new trustee orientation and as set out in Islands Trust Council's Continuous Learning Plan
- Encouraging trustees to share Islands Trust information through their own networks in a coordinated and consistent manner

## Goal 2: Increase awareness and understanding of Islands Trust's mandate, programs, and value

### 2.1 Develop and distribute high-quality, accessible content that:

- Explains Islands Trust's preserve and protect mandate and how it is delivered through policies, programs, and services
- Facilitate public understanding of the Reconciliation Action Plan, and cooperation with First Nations and other levels of government (as applicable)
- Explains land use planning within the Islands Trust Area
- Provides clear, user-focused information or instructions that create clarity for the public when accessing Islands Trust services

### 2.2 Provide education that assists community members to be good stewards:

- Develop plain-language guides, fact sheets, web content, and presentations tailored to local trust areas and Bowen Island
- Develop website and webinar content suitable for realtors
- Mail a "Living in the Trust Area" information package to new residential purchasers

### 2.3 Publish and maintain a quarterly Islands Trust newsletter as a core owned communication channel, highlighting:

- Key Council and committee decisions
- Projects updates or highlights
- Engagement opportunities

- Stewardship education and success stories
- Showcasing staff and team contributions across Islands Trust-owned channels
- Island stories (news from other agencies)

#### 2.4 Provide clear and detailed information about the annual budget process, including:

- Create communications materials providing an overview of expected spending areas, explaining changes from previous years' budget, and providing more information about each spending area, the budget process, and the opportunities for public input. The materials include but are not limited to:
  - Providing trustees with speaking notes
  - Updating the Islands Trust website providing detailed and plain language information about the annual budget and the draft annual budget
  - Producing a property tax notice insert for local trust areas and content for the Bowen Island Municipality's property tax notice or, alternatively, an advertisement.

#### 2.5 Establish project-specific communications work plans by:

- Working with directors and managers to identify priorities, routine activities, and strategic projects
- Aligning communications activities with the Strategic Plan and available capacity
- Maintaining a robust project/activity intake form

#### 2.6 Ensure consistent, coordinated communication to the public, trustees and staff through:

- Providing training, templates, and updated procedures to support staff preparing communications materials
- Share key messaging early and to all affected staff and trustees

#### 2.9 Use meetings, webinars, and events—online and in person—as communications opportunities to:

- Explain Islands Trust work and achievements
- Highlight current projects and engagement opportunities
- Share stewardship education messages
- Ensure Islands Trust materials are visible and accessible at events and during meeting breaks

## Goal 3: Improve communications that support engagement with communities

3.1 Support the development and implementation of an organizational engagement strategy that includes:

- An intake process that balances staff capacity with project needs and timelines
- A variety of engagement methods that support meaningful and equitable inclusion of diverse voices with supporting processes
- Tools like checklists and evaluation metrics
- Clear definition of roles and responsibilities

3.2 Develop a communications work plan for each engagement initiative to:

- Support clarity, consistency, and reach
- Prepare staff and trustees on what to expect for engagement communications during the process
- Create consistency and transparency on the process
- Allow for an improved user experience when looking for project-specific information

## Goal 4: Build trust, resilience, and confidence through clear, reliable communication

### 4.1 Plain language

Use plain language and accessible formats, and create opportunities for informal dialogue where appropriate

### 4.2 Islands Trust–owned communication channels

Prioritize strengthening Islands Trust–owned communication channels (website, newsletters, e-subscriber lists)

### 4.3 Social media

Use social media strategically to amplify and direct audiences to Islands Trust-owned content, when needed

### 4.4 Islands Trust branded clothing

Support spokesperson and staff visibility and recognition through consistent branding, including corporate clothing when appropriate

4.4 Continue improving the website to:

- Simplify navigation and search results
- Highlight frequently-used information
- Ensure consistency in design, language, and accessibility

#### 4.5 Investigate website replacement

- Undertake preliminary research into potential costs and staff resources associated with major website upgrade or replacement

#### 4.6 Meeting standardization

- Enhance live-streamed meetings with consistent visuals and placeholder screens during breaks, technical interruptions, or closed sessions
- Standardize the look of Islands Trust local trust committee meetings through equipment, as appropriate
- Improve cultural safety through standardized speaking notes for Chairs and a meeting decorum signage

### Goal 5: Support emergency and urgent communications

#### 5.1 Collaborate with regional districts, emergency management organizations, and other partners to:

- Amplify official emergency messages affecting Islands Trust Area communities
- Share timely, accurate information through Islands Trust-owned channels

#### 5.2 Clarify Islands Trust's role in emergencies by:

- Communicating what Islands Trust can and cannot provide during emergency situations
- Ensuring messaging is coordinated, accurate, and capacity-appropriate

#### 5.3 Maintain basic emergency communications readiness by:

- Identifying internal contacts and roles
- Preparing adaptable templates and procedures for urgent communications
- Ensuring rapid updates can be shared through the website, e-subscriber lists, and social media when required
- Completing an emergency communications procedure

## 4. Target Audiences

- **Primary:** Residents and organizations within the Islands Trust Area

- **Secondary:** Indigenous Governing Bodies, regional districts, municipalities, improvement districts, provincial government, and media
- **Tertiary:** Islands Trust staff and elected officials

## 5. Tools and Tactics

The Islands Trust website is the primary communications hub. Other tools include:

- Website content and updates
- Quarterly Islands Trust newsletter and e-subscriber messages
- Digital and print publications
- Fact sheets and stewardship education materials
- Media releases and earned media
- Direct outreach (email, phone, meetings)
- Events and webinars (online and in-person)
- Social media (used strategically to support and amplify owned channels)

## 6. Evaluation

Communications will be continuously monitored and refined using available data and feedback, including:

- Website analytics and subscriber metrics
- Newsletter performance
- Engagement levels for project-specific public engagement efforts
- Social media engagement trends
- Meeting attendance and participation
- Feedback from trustees, staff, and community members