

Draft Communications Strategy

OCTOBER 2022



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Acknowledgement of Country

Tamworth Regional Council acknowledges the Kamilaroi People, the traditional owners and custodians of the lands in our region. We would like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present, and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in and visiting our region.



FOREWORD

The Tamworth Regional Council Communications Strategy has been developed to guide us in continuing efforts to improve how we interact and work with our community.

Notably, it is the first time we have had a Strategy of this type. My fellow Councillors and I see it as a demonstration that we are listening to what community members are telling us – that they want Council to improve our communication with them.

This Strategy sets out how we will be proactive in providing clear and relevant information in a timely manner. We want to build a greater connection with our community through inclusive and consistent communications which are relevant, accurate, open and transparent.

Both Councillors and staff place real importance in the community's involvement in the development of this Strategy. We started this process with extensive communications and engagement in June this year. Now it is time to ask for more community feedback. Your comments will be a valued part of finalising the Strategy. I am confident it will help improve how we can work together in the years ahead.

Russell Webb

Tamworth Region Mayor



This Communications Strategy will drive further improvements in our communications processes to make it easier for our community to find information and stay informed.

Good communication plays a big part in a thriving community. For Council services and facilities to be effective, members of our community must know how and when they can use them – and this requires the community being informed and involved in decision making.

I would like to share Council's appreciation to all who shared their ideas, ambitions, and expectations for this Communications Strategy. Your input will shape changes that will help us work towards our shared vision for our region.

This Strategy highlights Council's commitment to being transparent, inclusive, and accessible in everything we do.

We welcome and encourage feedback for all Council activity so we can enhance our organisation to deliver your needs.

Paul Bennett

General Manager



OUR COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Tamworth Regional Council's Communications Strategy provides a dedicated approach to communicating and engaging with our Community.

Key elements of the Communications Strategy are illuminated below, including the vision, principles, and strategic objectives.

VISION

Our communication and engagement will be open, accessible and timely and our messages transparent, inclusive and relevant.

Our vision is to communicate successfully as an organisation, ensuring we regularly inform our community and empower them to be involved in decision making where possible.

Communication with and from the community, Councillors and staff will always be respectful.

PRINCIPLES

Guide and inform our future communication and engagement activity



Relevant & Timely



Open & Transparent



Responsive

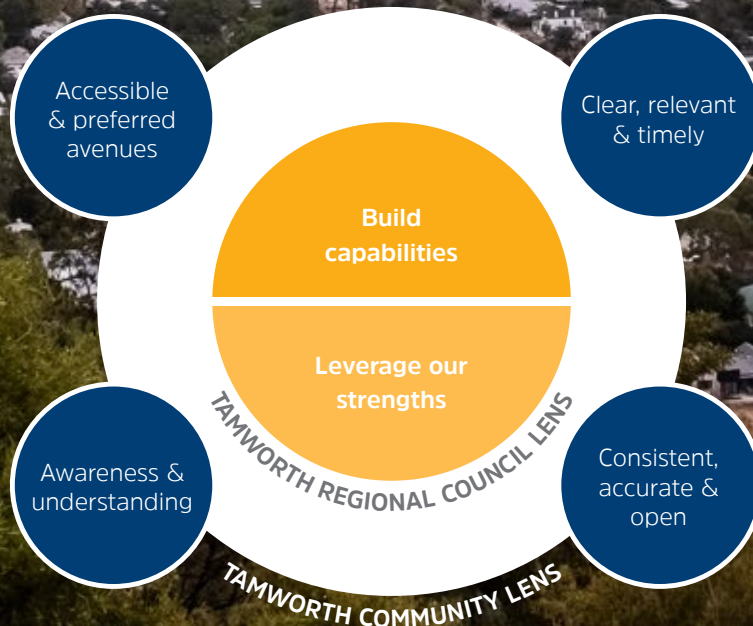


Inclusive & Accessible



Respectful

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



INTRODUCTION

We recognise the value of developing a strong two-way dialogue with our community. We want to leverage communications mechanisms to strengthen relationships, increase awareness, share knowledge, and foster participation and engagement in our region's diverse activities, programs, events, and projects.

Tamworth Regional Council has developed this dedicated Communications Strategy to guide such an approach.

The Tamworth region is fortunate to have a diverse range of individuals and communities who have different values, needs, priorities and lifestyles. All these audiences are equally important and, as such, Council endeavours to make our communication processes inclusive of all.

The purpose of communications is not just to inform our community, but to build relationships, receive feedback, listen, and hear the ideas and issues affecting our residents in their daily lives.

This Strategy aims to support communications into the future, enabling Council to remain flexible and make the most of new and innovative approaches and technologies, while ensuring we continue to communicate and engage most effectively with our community.

To ensure action and progress, this Strategy will be supported by a clear implementation plan that will set out how we will work towards our vision, follow principles, and make the most of opportunities outlined in this document.

Communications incorporates a range of different aspects. For this Strategy we will focus on:



Frequency



Mode



Audience



Message



Intent



OUR REGION SNAPSHOT

Communications is vital for so many of Council's services and projects. Therefore, understanding Council's strategic context and our community is the first step in an effective Communications Strategy.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Our Blueprint 100 Community Plan describes what we want our future to look like, and how we are going to get there. It is Council's key strategic document developed to guide the delivery of services and facilities over the next decade.

It delivers an overarching strategy and roadmap to take the Tamworth region towards its vision of a prosperous economy and high living standards with a population of 100,000 people. Communication will be an integral part in enabling and promoting sustainable growth of the region and upholding the vision and focus areas of Blueprint 100 for current and future residents.

The Communications Strategy also links to our Customer Service Charter and Community Participation Plan. The Community Plan vision statement represents our community's aspirations for the future:

"Our region will be thriving, modern and prosperous, with compassion for our people, reverence for our culture, and respect for nature."

COUNCIL'S VALUES

Council's communications will continue to uphold our values in all forms of communication.

Our values are:

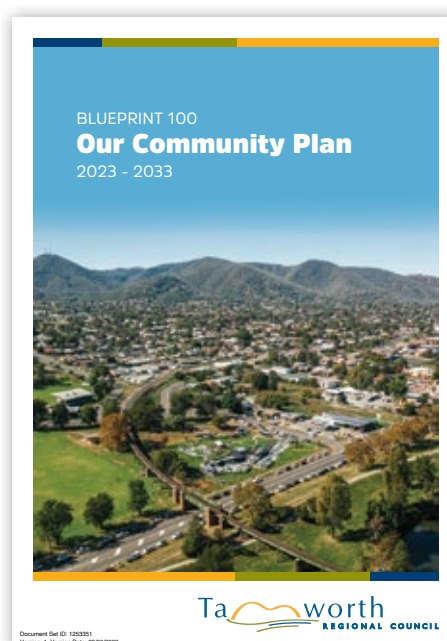
→ **ACCOUNTABILITY**

→ **EQUITY**

→ **TEAMWORK**

→ **SAFETY AND HEALTH**

→ **CUSTOMER ORIENTATION**





OUR COMMUNITY

Our region is diverse, which is acknowledged and celebrated through our communications channels. Our Communications Strategy aims to ensure all our community members have the opportunity to communicate with Council in a way that suits their needs.

DEMOGRAPHICS (2021)

POPULATION

63,070

Tamworth region

2,834,051

NSW

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

12.7%

Tamworth region

6.6%

NSW

MEDIAN AGE

39

Tamworth region

39

NSW

POPULATION DENSITY

6.4

people/km²
Tamworth region

10.1

people/km²
NSW

EMPLOYMENT (2021)

LARGEST EMPLOYER BY INDUSTRY

Health Care and Social Assistance (15.1%)

Manufacturing (10.7%)

Retail Trade (9.9%)

LARGEST NUMBER OF REGISTERED BUSINESSES BY INDUSTRY

**Agriculture,
Forestry, and Fishing**
(25.8%)

Tamworth region

Construction
(16.9%)

NSW

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (2022)

5.1%

Tamworth region

4.6%

NSW

ECONOMY (2021)

GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT

\$3.56 billion

Tamworth region

\$632.88 billion

NSW

MEDIAN WEEKLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME

\$1,416

Tamworth region

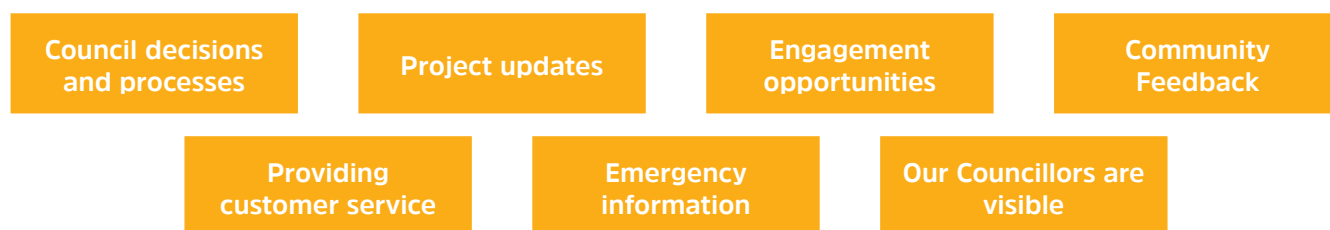
\$1,829

NSW

WHAT WE MEAN BY COMMUNICATIONS

Communication is the act of conveying and sharing information from one place, person or group to another. Communication underpins our role as Council and our service delivery for the community.

This includes:



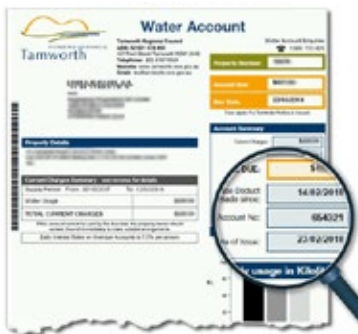
This is not only about how we communicate with our community, but also about how our community communicate with us, and in turn, how we as an organisation communicate with each other.



OUR CURRENT COMMUNICATIONS

We already communicate and engage with our Community using a multitude of mediums including:

- Council Websites
- Social Media
- Printed Collateral
- Letters to Residents
- Council Meetings
- Customers Service Channels
- Email Newsletters
- Speaking with the Community
- Radio and Newspaper Advertisements
- Displays, Signage, or Banners



WHAT DO COMMUNICATIONS IN OUR REGION LOOK LIKE?

Based on community engagement and our regional demographics, the personas below provide an example of how our community currently like to communicate with Council.

Reads the local newspaper regularly and appreciates being able to stay up to date with Council's activity and decision-making this way

Alfred, 51

Usually hears about events, progress on major projects, Council services and achievements via signage on noticeboards in her local area of Bendemeer

Eileen, 75

Finds it easiest to engage through a variety of social media channels and stays up to date with events and Council services via these channels

Hong, 28



Regularly listens to the radio and finds this the easiest way to stay up to date with changes made by Council and hear about events and engagement opportunities

Prisha, 32

Subscribes to the E-newsletter and enjoys reading this to stay up to date with the things happening in her area

Sally, 40

Often live streams or attends Councillor meetings or formal Council events to gain information and give feedback on Council decisions

John, 44

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Council engaged with the community in the design and development of the Strategy. This engagement was integral to ensuring our Communications Strategy is tailored to the unique needs of our region.

WHO AND HOW WE ENGAGED

We engaged our community in June 2022 via:



1 Community Surveys



3 Community Roundtables



2 Key stakeholder roundtables



3 Council Staff Workshops



1 Councillor Briefings



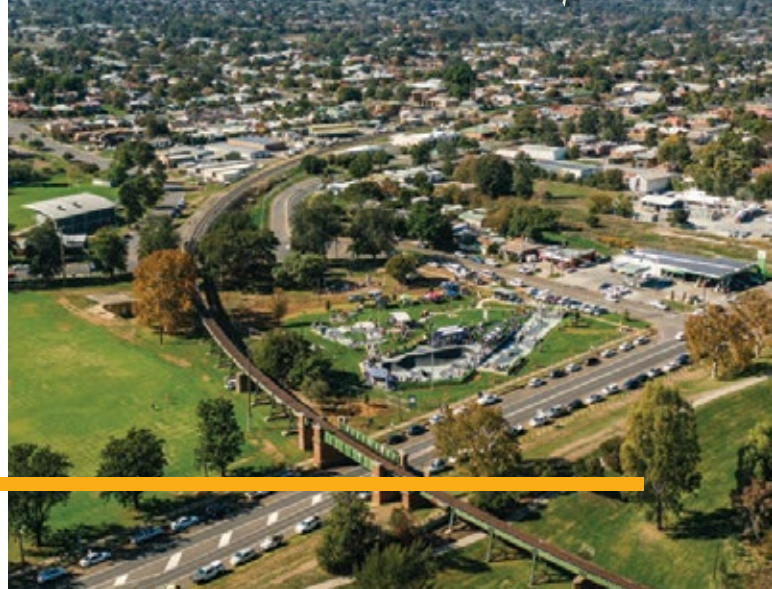
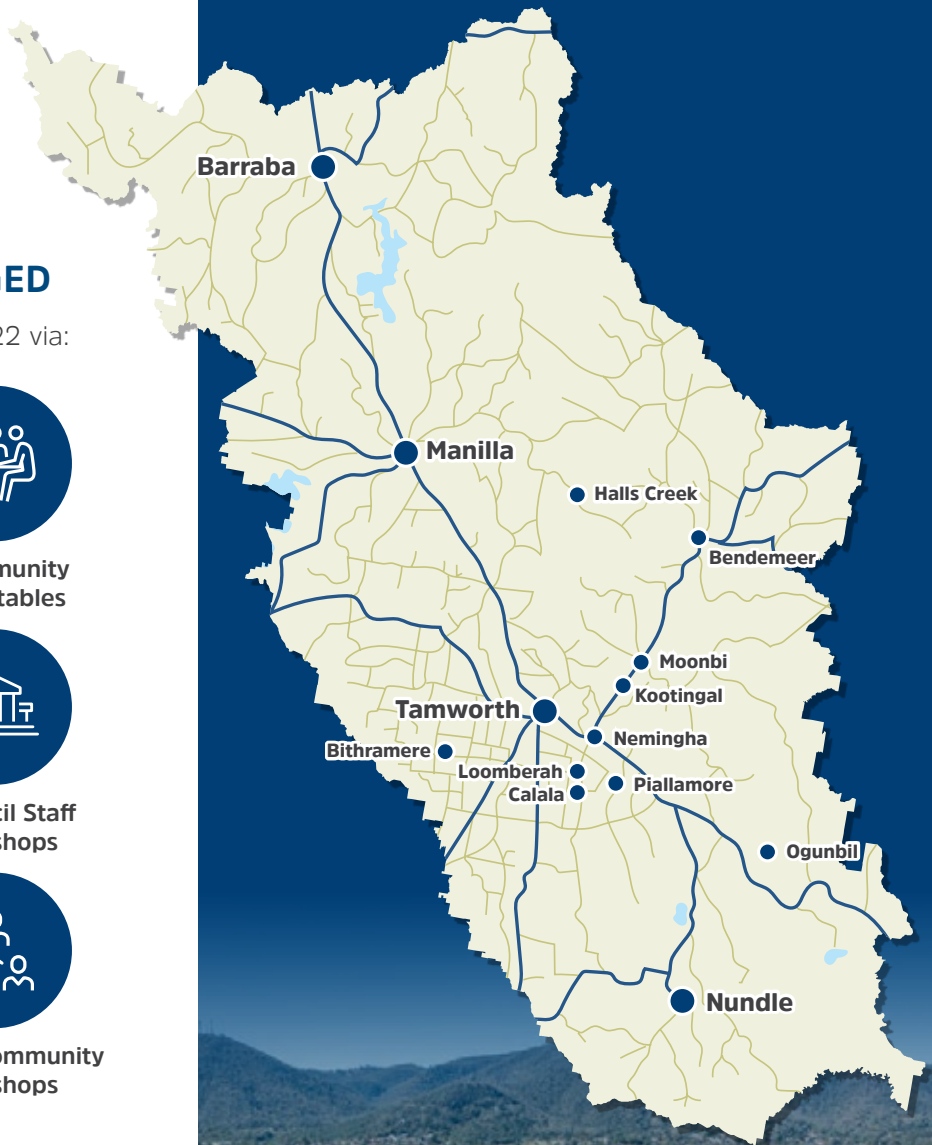
4 Local Community Workshops



9 Community Pop Ups

Many areas of the community and region were represented during engagement. The map represents the spread of engagement participants from across our region.

Survey respondents from across our region



WHAT WE HEARD

Key insights, themes and messages from engagement included:

Two-Way Communications

Continuing to drive innovative communication methods and increase channels for feedback and engagement

Inclusive and Balanced Communications

Strengthening communications to be more inclusive of more geographically remote areas outside of Tamworth CBD and of different demographics across the region

Showcase Tamworth

Promoting why the Tamworth region is a great place to live, work, invest and study is considered a key priority for future communication planning

Acknowledging & Valuing the Presence of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander People in the Community

With over 10% of the region's population identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, there is a clear desire for Council to be increasingly inclusive of the region's indigenous population in its communications

Transparency

Sharing information and detailed progress updates regarding major ongoing projects on a regular basis

A Source of Truth

Ensuring Council remains proactive and only shares reliable and honest sources of information

Build Internal Capabilities

Strengthening and streamlining internal communications capabilities to improve the timeliness of communications

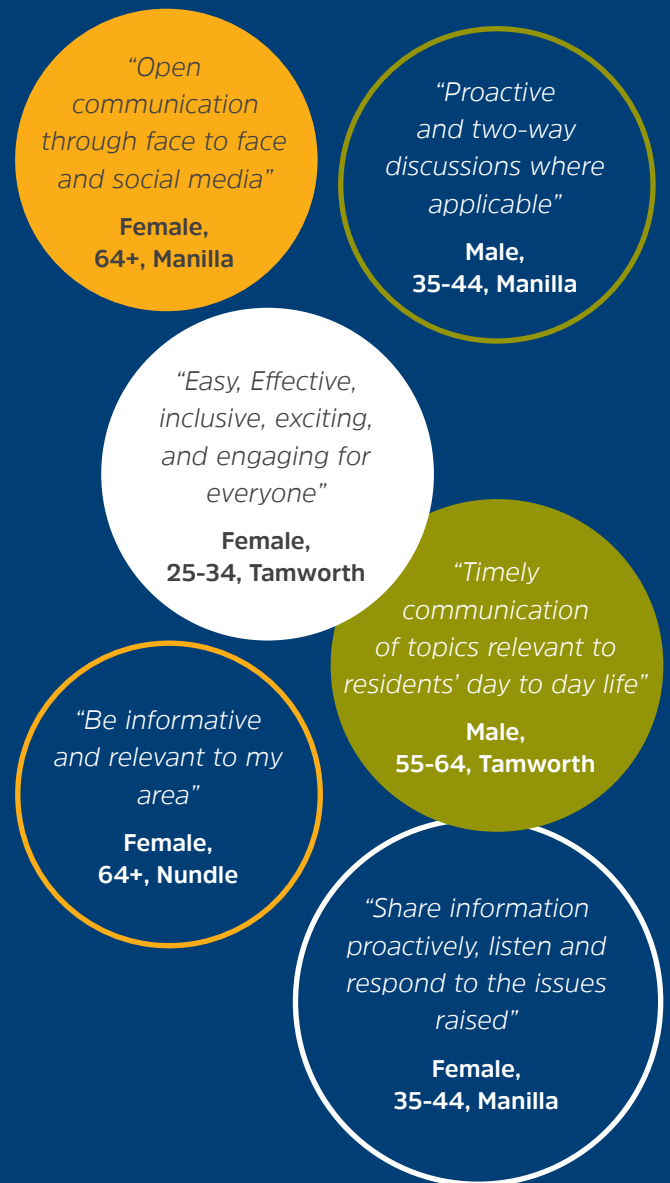
Leverage Councils Strengths

Leveraging the strength of Council's brand, its ability to embrace new forms of engagement and communication to ensure quantity and consistency of Council engagement

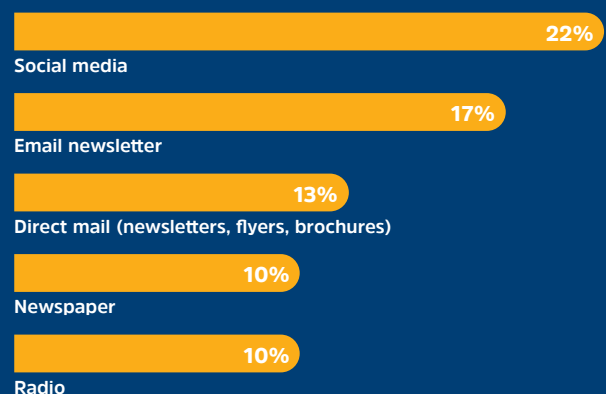
Regional Inclusion

Ensuring communications remain inclusive of all corners of the Tamworth region and recognises their unique contexts and needs

What does effective council communications look like to our community?



What are the top 5 ways our community would like us to communicate with them?



VISION

Our communication and engagement will be open, accessible and timely and our messages transparent, inclusive and relevant.

Our vision is to communicate successfully as an organisation, ensuring we regularly inform our community and empower them to be involved in decision making where possible.

Communication with and from the community, Councillors and staff will always be respectful.

Distilled from engagement, the vision for our Communications Strategy aligns to community, Elected Members, and Council employee insights and with our Community Plan.

The vision works to guide communications activity in the Tamworth region, providing a high-level and aspirational end-state to work towards.



PRINCIPLES

The following principles will guide and inform all future communication and engagement activity both within Council and in its dealings with the Community.

The principles help uphold Tamworth Regional Council's values of safety and health, accountability, equity, teamwork, and customer orientation.



Relevant & Timely

We communicate the right information to the right audience at the right time.

We are innovative in our communication methods and ensure our methods are applicable and appropriate.



Open & Transparent

Our messages are communicated with integrity to ensure the community sees us as a source of truth.

We have the courage to be authentic and honest to support trust between the community and Council.



Responsive

We are agile and perceptive in our communications.

We ensure that we close the loop on two-way dialogue and consider a range of perspectives in our communications.



Inclusive & Accessible

Our communications reach all areas of our community to support inclusivity across our region.

Our services and communications are accessible for all.



Respectful

All communications to be respectful.

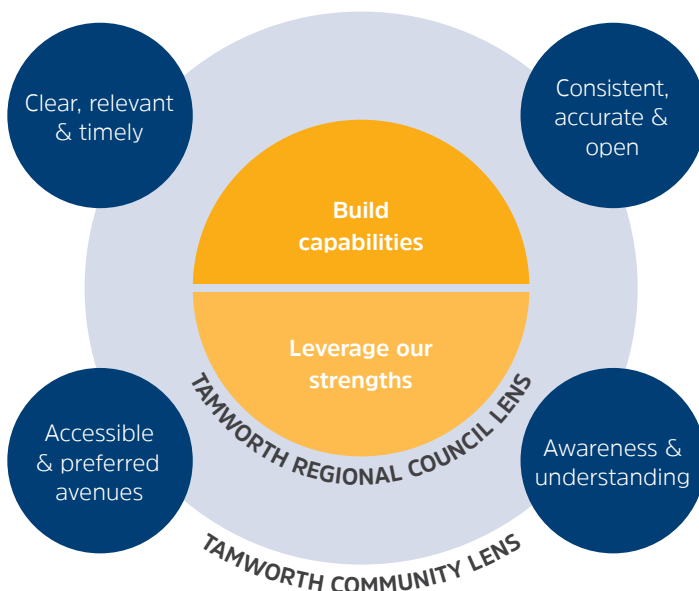
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The strategic objectives outline at a high-level what Council seeks to achieve through the delivery of this Strategy.

Aligning with the vision, and drawn from extensive engagement, the strategic objectives reflect the combined views of community and Council.

Our objectives have been split into two lenses:

- **Community lens:** Our aspirations and directions for communications with our community
- **TRC lens:** Our approach to ensure the skills, processes, policies, pathways of our organisation support our communications vision



TAMWORTH COMMUNITY LENS OBJECTIVES

Objective 1

Provide clear and relevant information proactively and in a timely manner

- Delivering information in a manner that best meets the needs and interests of the community
- Providing up-to-date information that keeps our community informed and confident in Council decision-making
- Preparing messages and communications that are easy to understand and engage with

Objective 2

Enhance consistent, accurate, open, and transparent messaging

- Ensuring Council is a current, reliable and convenient source of information
- Continuing to ensure our communications are honest and provide information without fear or favour
- Encouraging messaging that positively reflects our identity

Objective 3

Increase awareness and understanding

- Enhancing awareness and understanding in the community of Council's programs, services, and decision-making processes
- Building two-way communications pathways to ensure open dialogue with our community focussed on enhancing our region's liveability
- Increasing Council visibility of community-led achievements, actions, activities, and projects

Objective 4

Provide accessible, preferred ways of communicating and engaging

- Understanding how our community like to provide and receive information
- Providing a range of communications methods that are most convenient to our community
- Ensuring our diverse community can simply and easily participate in dialogue with Council



TAMWORTH REGIONAL COUNCIL LENS OBJECTIVES

Objective 1

Build Capabilities

- Improving systems and processes to streamline Council capacity
- Developing skills and resources to more effectively communicate
- Appreciating new trends, technologies and communications innovation to best serve our community

Objective 2

Leverage our Strengths

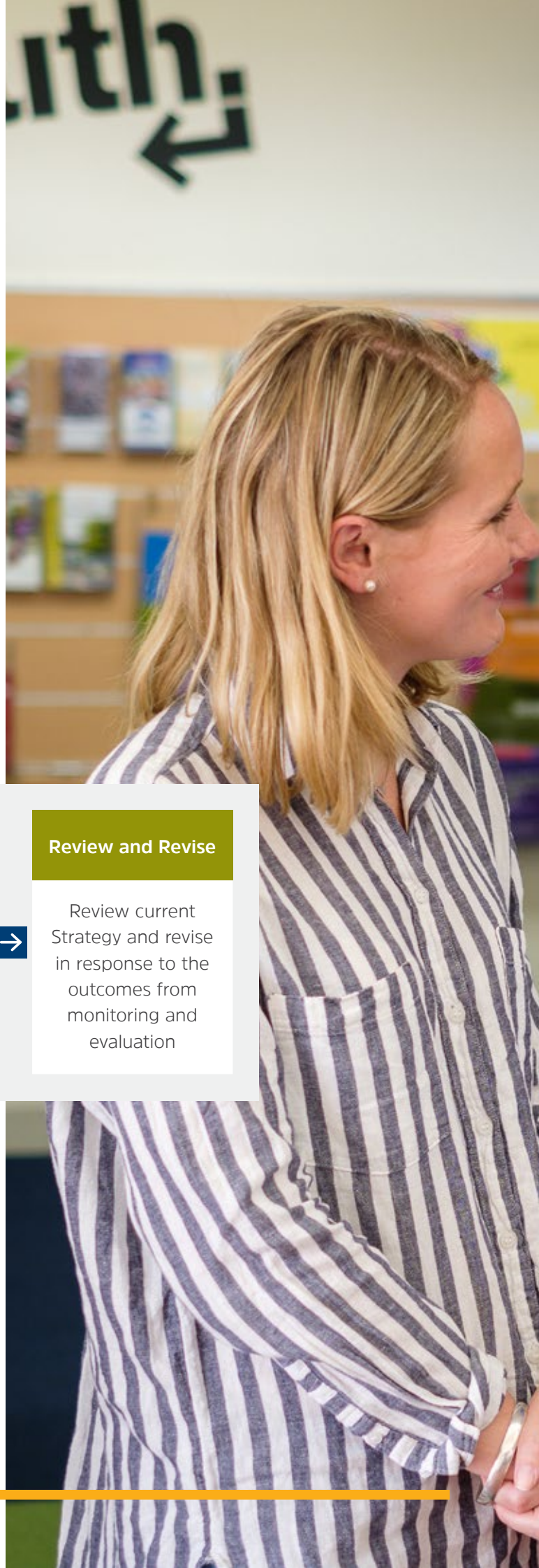
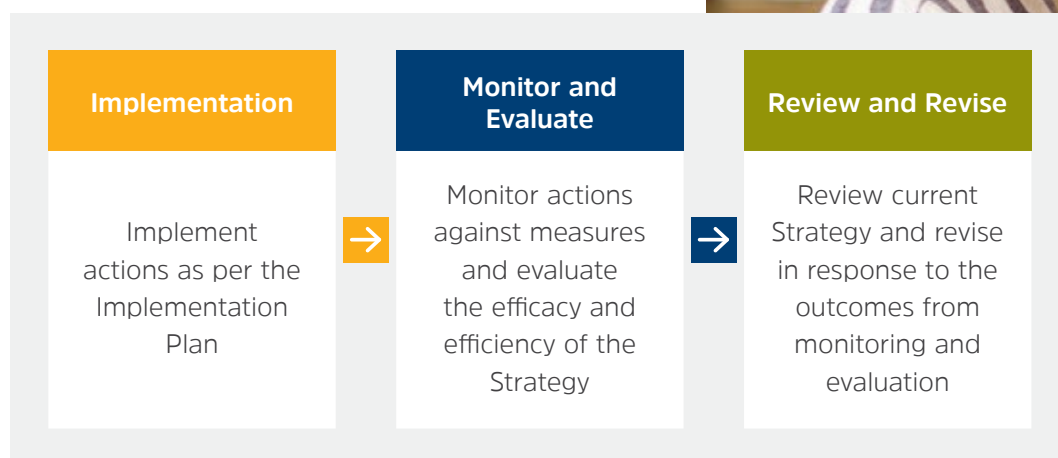
- Continuing to build Council's communications branding to enhance our reputation within the region and more broadly
- Sharing knowledge, skills and resources to support efficient and effective communications
- Strengthening our regional networks and partnership opportunities

IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

An Implementation Plan will complement this Communications Strategy. The Implementation Plan is an operational document that includes actions and priorities to support the delivery of our objectives.

The Implementation Plan will be reviewed yearly, to ensure our communication activities stay up-to-date with the technologies, needs, requirements and preferences of our community.

We are committed to realising our objectives, upholding our principles, and achieving our vision for communications and the vision for our region. A roadmap to achieve this is below:







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