



# SUMMIT COUNTY COMM. & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STAFF REPORT

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DATE: July 27, 2022

TO: Summit County Council  
Tom Fisher, Summit County Manager

FROM: Derek Siddoway, Summit County Communication & Public Engagement Director  
David Warnock, Summit County Human Resources Director

RE: Amendment to the Summit County Chart of Positions – Full-time & Benefited  
Communication Coordinator (Time-limited)

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## **SUMMARY**

This staff report outlines the need and funding strategy for a time-limited Communication Coordinator position in the Communication & Public Engagement (CPE) Department. Its purpose is to gain approval from County Council to amend the Summit County Chart of Positions and allow CPE to hire a full-time, time-limited Communication Coordinator.

**The position is intended to improve the department's capacity to support increasing county projects and initiatives.** Examples include but are not limited to:

- Summit County's Community Visioning Project.
- Summit County Health Department rebranding and public education campaign.
- Potential Truth in Taxation or mil levy initiatives.
- Public awareness of purchases related to GO Bond fund use and other property acquisitions.
- Immediate stability through the 2022 fire season and special events.
- Vaccine and immunization messaging for the upcoming school year and virus season, COVID-19 dashboard in coordination with new SCHD epidemiologist.

### **Additional information:**

- This position would replace an existing communication contractor that has worked the equivalent of a full-time employee in terms of hours since February 2021.
- The requested amendment does not require additional funds for the remaining months of 2022.
- Existing funds are identified to support the position through 2024 (roughly 50% CPE from Professional/Technical historically used for contractors, 50% COVID grants from SCHD).

## **BACKGROUND**

In the decade since the county created the Public Information Officer position in 2013, the need to better inform, educate and engage residents and visitors has increased exponentially. The public expects real-time communication via multiple channels and mediums. The CPE team is impacted each time Summit County increases services, experiences emergencies, or pivots to meet unforeseen challenges and new initiatives.

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- **2013-2019:** 2 full-time employees, a County PIO and Health Department PIO.
- **2020:** Formation of Communication and Public Engagement Department, transfer of existing Fair and Special Events Manager and addition of one full-time Multicultural Specialist position (total of 3 FTEs dedicated to communication and public engagement efforts).

**Over ten years of explosive growth in the County, one employee was added to increase communication and public engagement capabilities.** Additional needs were historically supplemented by public relations agencies and public involvement firms. Meanwhile, other government agencies comparable to or smaller than Summit County have increased communication teams to an average of 5 full-time employees to meet needs.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing transition to post-pandemic life, the CPE department has met these increased needs with an entry-level communication contractor who provided vital services to support the team.

Projects assisted by contractors during this time:

- RAP Tax public education and awareness.
- GO Bond public education and awareness.
- Increased marketing and promotion of Summit County Fair, Sheepdog Trials and Concert Series.
- County Government Month educational videos.
- Ongoing COVID-19 messaging and dashboard maintenance. (Vaccine Clinics, “We’re All in This Together” campaigns).
- 2022 Emergency Preparedness Fair.
- Various and extensive design work for numerous projects and county departments.

The efficiency and sustainability of this model are a concern in the current job market and when forecasting the size, scope and on-the-job knowledge required to successfully educate and involve the public in upcoming initiatives in Q3 and Q4 of 2022 and in 2023.

## **SOLUTION**

By utilizing available COVID funds and reallocating funds in the existing CPE budget, we can proactively address the department’s capacity. The time-limited component of the proposed position will allow the county to assess the need and structure of this resource beyond 2024.

The CPE department has implemented a project tracking and reporting app to record data showing the hourly breakdown of CPE work between departments, emergencies and unexpected requests. The data gathered from this tool will record the scope of work completed by this position and help us determine how to best serve the county’s needs beyond 2024.

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## FUNDING

Funding will be divided equally from two sources: the CPE budget and SCHD COVID-19 grants focused on communications. For the remaining months of 2022, CPE will move the necessary funds from its existing Professional/Technical budget.

For the 2023 and 2024 budgets, CPE will request the funds under Salaries as opposed to Professional/Technical. The ask will not exceed the amount approved in Professional/Technical for the 2022 budget (\$40,000).

SCHD funds are guaranteed through June 30, 2024.

Requirements for the position are two years of experience in public relations, marketing, advertising, graphic design, public engagement and outreach or event management.

\$45,000 - 50,000 competitive salary + estimated \$15,000-20,000 for benefits = \$60,000 - \$70,000 total.

The breakdown is as follows:

Funding Description	Amount
Communication & Public Engagement	\$30,000-35,000
COVID-19 Grants	\$30,000-40,000

Based on the information provided, CPE can fund this full-time, benefited position in a time-limited capacity without an additional financial commitment from the County General Fund through the end of 2024. The position will be limited to this timeframe.

## CONCLUSION

- This request can be fully funded with no increase to the existing budget through 2024.
- The value and need for this position exists and is demonstrated through communication work completed by contractors since the beginning of 2021.
- There is no financial commitment from the County General Fund for this time-limited position.
- Provides stability and sustainability within the CPE department during a critical time and challenging career landscape.
- Allows the CPE department to meet current and forecasted needs, especially in the next 18 months.

I appreciate your time and consideration of this matter.

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