

Communications Strategy

As adopted by the Board of Directors on March 26, 2026

Purpose and Scope

1. LiRN's [Communications Policy](#) commits the organization to planned, organized, clear and timely communications, with plain English, approaches friendly to interested parties, and regular evaluation.

Guiding Principles

2. Communications should be:
 - a) Succinct, clear, and written in plain-English,
 - b) Timely and relevant,
3. Flexible to interested parties' needs, but standardized where possible, and
4. Role aware and boundary respecting.

Strategic Communication Purposes

5. LiRN communicates to external interested parties to:
 - a) Provide information,
 - b) Notify interested parties of important information / necessary actions,
 - c) Respond to questions and concerns, and
 - d) Consult with interested parties on matters that may affect them.

Audience Strategy

6. LiRN's primary audiences are:
7. Law association leadership, including Presidents, board members, and Executive Directors,
 - a) Library staff
 - b) Shareholders (the Law Society of Ontario, the Federation of Ontario Law Associations, and the Toronto Lawyers' Association), and

- c) The Ontario Courthouse Libraries Association.
8. LiRN's secondary audiences include:
- a) Library users / legal professionals and
 - b) Other legal organizations

Core Messages

9. LiRN's core messages are the foundational ideas that should appear consistently across all communications, regardless of channel or audience. These messages are not scripts; they are the guiding themes that shape how LiRN explains its work, purpose, and progress.
10. The Core Messages can be found in [Appendix A: Core Messages](#).

Channel Strategy

11. LiRN uses the following channels of communication:
- a) **Website:** full details and official repository.
 - b) **Informal Email:** everyday communication between LiRN staff and external parties.
 - c) **Formal Emails:** consultations and notifications.
 - d) **Network-Wide Updates:** quarterly communications via email or videoconference to provide updates to LiRN's primary audiences.
 - e) **Learn with LiRN Webinars and Conference:** professional development, dialogue and trust building.
12. **Marketing Newsletter:** public awareness, amplification, reputation.
13. **LinkedIn:** public awareness, amplification, reputation.
14. Additional details on how to use these channels can be found in [Appendix B: Communications Channels](#).

Interested Parties Relations Program

15. LiRN will create and maintain a shareholder relations program as detailed in [Appendix C: Interested Parties Relations Program](#).

Governance & Responsibilities

16. The Managing Director is the final decision-maker and overall leader of LiRN's communication strategy, responsible for:
 - a) Approving key messages,
 - b) Ensuring communication principles are followed,
 - c) Making sure the right groups get the right information, and
 - d) Leading Network Update videoconferences and Listening Tour meetings.
17. LiRN will assign owners for different communications areas and update the communications chart found on our website on an annual basis.
18. The Board of Directors will be visible in communications, including:
 - a) Board Chair statements in Network Update emails,
 - b) Summaries of Board decisions posted on the website,
 - c) Board presence at the Learn with LiRN Annual Conference,
 - d) Board participation in the Listening Tour meetings,
 - e) Regular mentions of strategic priorities the Board has set, and
 - f) Board review of the annual Interested Parties Relations Program.

Email management standards

19. LiRN staff will make best efforts to respond to emails with an acknowledgement within one day and a response within 3 days.
20. LiRN will develop an FAQ log to ensure consistent answers to common inquiries.
21. LiRN will review and update its distribution lists on an annual basis.

New Policies or Policy Changes

22. Where possible, LiRN will consult with interested parties prior to finalizing any new or amended policies. The following groups should be consulted:
 - a) Shareholders,
 - b) Association Presidents and Executive Directors,

- c) The Ontario Courthouse Libraries Association and Library Staff, and
 - d) Other interested parties / associations.
23. These groups and the Library Advisory Team may be consulted in determining whether a new or amended policy is necessary.
24. LiRN will use structured, formalized communication for any consultation announcement with the intention of:
 - a) Reducing conflict and misunderstandings,
 - b) Respecting employer roles and avoid boundary blurring,
 - c) Ensuring appropriate sequencing of communications, and
 - d) Providing clarity before system-wide distribution.
25. A New / Changed Policy Consultation Notice will be structured as follows:

Subject line: LiRN Policy Consultation – Looking for Your Feedback by DATE

Top-of-email summary box:

 - What is changing,
 - Who it affects,
 - What actions are required,
 - Who is being consulted,
 - Deadlines, and
 - Link to detailed webpage, which may include:
 - The rationale for the policy / amendment
 - Implementation timeline
 - Q&A sheet
26. After the consultation has been completed, LiRN will include communications about the process and result to the consulted parties.

Evaluation

27. LiRN will evaluate its communication performance on an annual basis, using such tools as:

- a) Email analytics,
- b) Pulse survey results, and
- c) Website analytics.

Appendix A: Core Messages

Core Message One: LiRN's Role and Boundaries

LiRN supports the courthouse library network by providing standards, resources, funding administration, and shared guidance — while respecting that law associations remain employers.

Why this matters:

The audit repeatedly highlights that many stakeholders are unclear about LiRN's role, especially where operational support intersects with employment issues. This confusion has led to distrust and frustration when communications went to the wrong audiences or addressed topics outside LiRN's mandate.

How to communicate it consistently:

- “LiRN is a **supporting** organization — not an employer.”
- “Our communications to staff focus on resources, training, and operational guidance, not personnel matters.”
- “Employment policy communication always flows through law association leadership first.”

This message directly addresses concerns about blurred responsibilities and maintains the integrity of LiRN's position within the ecosystem.

Core Message 2: Strategic Priorities and Visible Progress

LiRN has a clear set of strategic priorities, and we are committed to communicating progress on them regularly, transparently, and in ways stakeholders can easily understand.

Why this matters:

The audit shows that most stakeholders cannot identify LiRN's strategic priorities and do not see how current activities connect to long-term goals. Many described the vision as unclear or invisible.

Stakeholders specifically requested:

- Better explanations of strategy
- More visible progress
- A “report card” approach for demonstrating movement

How to communicate it consistently:

- “Here’s how this initiative advances Priority X…”
- “Here’s what we completed, what’s in progress, and what’s next.”
- “Here’s how this change affects your library or association.”

Use an annual **strategic progress report card** as part of the Key Impacts Report.

This message ensures LiRN’s work is connected, and continuously visible.

Core Message 3: Service to Stakeholders and Practical Value

Core message:

LiRN’s work is designed to support law associations, library staff, and the courthouse library system through resources, training, standards, and responsive communication.

Why this matters:

An important aspect of LiRN’s purpose is service — providing useful information, tools, and clarity to stakeholders. The [Communications Policy](#) communication purposes (information, notification, responding, consultation) all reinforce a **service-oriented posture**.

How to communicate it consistently:

- “This update is designed to support your budgeting / reporting / planning.”
- “These tools are meant to help your library serve users more effectively.”
- “Here’s what we heard, and here’s what we’re doing to respond.”

This message reinforces that LiRN is a partner.

Core Message 4: Trust, Transparency, and Predictability

Core message:

LiRN is committed to strengthening trust through transparent communication, predictable processes, clear expectations about who receives what information, and consistent follow-through.

Why this matters:

Trust one of the most recurrent themes in the audit. Issues included:

- misdirected emails

- unclear distribution practices
- perceived back-channel conversations
- delayed or missing responses
- not enough consultation before decisions

While many improvements have been made thanks to a client management tool and staff to manage it and additional consultation on policies, continued work and improvement is important to building trust.

How to communicate it consistently:

- “Here’s who this message is for.”
- “Here’s who will receive this next, and when.”
- “We heard your concerns about X, here is our plan.”
- “We will acknowledge all emails within 1 business day and respond within 3.”

This message sets a tone of reliability and accountability.

Core Message 5: Community and Capability Building

Core message:

LiRN strengthens the courthouse library network by supporting shared learning, facilitating collaboration, and amplifying the collective expertise of library staff and associations.

Why this matters:

Stakeholders deeply value opportunities to meet, learn, and connect — the annual conference, webinars, leadership training, and even informal networking were identified as major strengths.

At the same time, stakeholders highlighted the network’s diversity: 48 libraries, each with its own association, culture, and level of sophistication. This means community-building efforts must be intentional and inclusive.

How to communicate it consistently:

- “We are stronger when we share knowledge and learn from one another.”
- This training/event is designed to support your team and elevate skills across the network.”

- “LiRN’s role is to help connect, support, and amplify local expertise.”

This message reinforces a sense of shared purpose and collective progress.

Appendix B: Communications Channels

Website: Full Details and Official Repository

The LiRN website (lirn.ca) serves as the central repository for all formal documents, guides, policies, templates, and resources. Network can rely on it as the authoritative source for up-to-date information.

Use for:

- Policies, standards, and governance documents
- Grant administration information
- Tools, forms, templates, and operational resources
- Webinars, recordings, and conference materials
- A clear “Strategic Priorities and Progress” section

Purpose:

Ensure accuracy, transparency, and consistency through a single source of truth.

Informal Email: Everyday Communication Between LiRN Staff and External Parties

Informal email remains essential for daily interactions, clarifications, and exchanges that do not require formal documentation. Email overload is a challenge. Informal communication should be kept concise, appropriately directed, and supplemented with alternative channels where possible.

Use for:

- Quick clarifications

28. One-to-one coordination

- Non-sensitive operational dialogue

Purpose:

Facilitate efficient day-to-day communication while minimizing unnecessary email traffic.

Formal Emails: Consultations and Notifications

Formal email is LiRN's primary delivery mechanism for action required information, policy changes, and consultations. Both the Policy and the Audit emphasize that formal email must be timely, clear, succinct, and targeted to the correct audience. -required information, policy changes, and consultations. Both the Policy and the Audit emphasize that formal email must be timely, clear, succinct, and targeted to the correc

Use for:

- Notifications about grant deadlines, reporting requirements, or policy changes
- Consultation requests
- Executive pre-briefs before wider distribution (a key Audit recommendation)

Purpose:

Deliver structured, high clarity communications with documented expectations, roles, and timelines.

Network Wide Updates: Quarterly Communications via Email or Videoconference-Wide Updates

Quarterly network-wide updates provide a system-wide touchpoint for sharing progress, explaining strategic priorities, and reinforcing trust. Updates are highly valued for their clarity, accessibility, and ability to reach part-time staff who may miss live events.

Use for:

29. High level updates on LiRN initiatives-level updates on LiRN initiatives

30. Cross network announcements-network announcements

- Key dates, new resources, or emerging issues

Purpose:

Provide consistent, predictable, transparent communication across the entire courthouse library system.

Learn with LiRN Webinars and Conference: Professional Development, Dialogue, and Trust-building

Training and learning events are repeatedly identified by stakeholders as one of LiRN's greatest communication strengths. The annual conference, quarterly webinars, and other learning

opportunities enable direct dialogue, relationship building, and shared understanding across diverse library audiences.

Use for:

- Training on tools, processes, and standards
- Professional development
- Annual system-wide gatherings
- Discussions that require richer engagement than email alone

Purpose:

Build consistency, capability, and community across Ontario's courthouse libraries.

Marketing Newsletter — public awareness, amplification, and reputation

The external marketing newsletter is a public facing tool that highlights LiRN's impact, strategic progress, partnerships, and contributions to the legal information landscape.

Use for:

- Public storytelling about the library network
- Showcasing innovations, training, and resources
- Showcasing individual libraries
- Strategic updates appropriate for public distribution
- Strengthening LiRN's profile in the legal community

Purpose: Improve visibility, reputation, and understanding of LiRN's system-wide role.

LinkedIn: Public Awareness, Amplification, and Reputation

LinkedIn offers a complementary channel to reach legal professionals, partners, and the broader information community. It amplifies LiRN's public appropriate content and reinforces transparency and relevance. The Policy includes social media as a recommended communication channel, and LinkedIn aligns with requests for greater visibility of LiRN's work. -appropriate content and reinforces transparency and relevance. The Policy includes social media as a recommended communication channel, and LinkedIn aligns with requests for greater visibility of LiRN's work.

Use for:

- Newsletter promotion
- Strategic priority highlights
- Event promotion and recaps
- Resource spotlights
- Community and partner stories
- Recruitment messaging (where applicable)

Purpose:

Build brand awareness and reinforce LiRN's role in strengthening Ontario's courthouse library network.

Appendix C: Interested Parties Relations Program

About the Program

LiRN's ability to support Ontario's courthouse library network depends on building strong, transparent, and trusting relationships with its **interested parties**—including shareholders, law association presidents, executive directors, library staff, justice sector partners, and related legal organizations.

This Interested Parties Relations Program establishes a structured approach for how LiRN will build, maintain, and continually improve these relationships.

1. Purpose of the Program

The program is designed to:

- Build **trust**, predictability, and mutual understanding across the courthouse library system.
- Ensure LiRN understands the priorities, constraints, and expectations of each interested party group.
- Provide transparent communication, especially around policies, grants, employment adjacent issues, and strategic initiatives. -adjacent issues, and strategic initiatives.
- Support LiRN's communication principles of clarity, timeliness, consultation, and proactive engagement.

2. Principles Guiding the Program

Across all activities, LiRN commits to communication that is:

- **Purposeful:** each touchpoint has a defined objective.
- **Respectful of roles:** avoiding employer/HR boundary issues.
- **Transparent:** especially around strategic priorities and decision-making.
- **Predictable:** through consistent timelines, calendars, and formats.
- **Consultative:** providing opportunities for meaningful input, as required by the Communications Policy.
- **Accessible:** recognizing part-time staff and diverse library capacities across 48 associations.

3. Yearly Cycle for the Program

The Interested Parties Relations Program will follow an **annual rhythm** structured around predictable, meaningful engagement.

<p>Q1: Planning & Launch</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board reviews the annual plan • Annual engagement calendar (meetings, webinars, consultations) is published • Interested Parties Listening Tour scheduled. • Run a quarterly LiRN Network Update (email and/or videoconference).
<p>Q2: Deep Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening Tour begins. • Offer targeted executive briefings on upcoming funding cycles or policy changes. • Run a quarterly LiRN Network Update (email and/or videoconference).
<p>Q3: Deep Engagement & Consultation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct an annual executive pulse survey to gather focused input. • Run a quarterly LiRN Network Update (email and/or videoconference).
<p>Q4: Reflection & Reporting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce an Interested Parties Relations Summary Report with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What LiRN heard ○ What actions were taken ○ Outstanding issues ○ Recommendations for the upcoming year • Present report to the Board for review and adjustment. • Prepare revised program for the next annual cycle. • Run a quarterly LiRN Network Update (email and/or videoconference).