Public Information Officer – Job Description

Position summary

The Public Information Officer (PIO) is the City's lead communicator, keeping residents, media and staff informed about municipal services, decisions and emergencies. In a small municipality this is often a one-person office, so the PIO plans strategy and writes, designs, posts, photographs and answers media calls directly.

The PIO works under general direction, exercises independent judgment on routine communications, and serves as the City's spokesperson and Joint Information Center lead during emergencies.

Detail	
Department	City Manager's Office
Reports to	City Manager
Supervises	None; may direct interns, volunteers or contractors
FLSA status	Non-exempt
Schedule	Full-time; evenings, weekends and on-call during emergencies and public meetings
Salary range	$40,000 - $45,032.00

Essential duties and responsibilities

Duties below are representative, not exhaustive; the city may assign related work.

Strategic communications

- Develop and carry out an annual communications plan aligned with Commission goals and the city budget.
- Advise the City Manager, elected officials and department heads on messaging, public perception and communication risks.
- Maintain consistent City branding, style guide and visual identity across all channels.

Media relations

- Serve as primary media contact and official spokesperson; respond to inquiries promptly and accurately.
- Write and distribute news releases, media advisories and statements.
- Prepare officials and staff for interviews, press conferences and public appearances.
- Monitor news coverage and correct inaccurate reporting.

Digital and print content

- Manage the City website, social media accounts, email newsletters and resident alert systems.
- Write, edit, photograph, shoot short videos and design graphics for City channels.
- Produce the City newsletter, annual report, utility bill inserts, flyers and signage for city events.
- Track engagement analytics and adjust content to reach more residents.

Emergency and crisis communications

- Serve as PIO under NIMS/ICS during emergencies, severe weather, utility outages and public safety incidents.
- Coordinate with police, fire, county emergency management and neighboring jurisdictions, including through a Joint Information Center.
- Maintain crisis communication plans, pre-approved message templates and emergency contact lists.

Community engagement and internal communications

- Promote City meetings, events, projects and public comment opportunities.
- Support community events, ribbon cuttings and public hearings.
- Keep employees informed through internal newsletters, intranet and staff briefings.
- Coordinate responses to open records requests related to communications, with the City Clerk and City Attorney.

Administration

- Ensure communications meet ADA accessibility, records retention and open meetings requirements.

Qualifications

Minimum qualifications

- Bachelor's degree in communications, journalism, public relations, marketing, public administration or a related field.

- Three years of professional experience in communications, journalism or public relations.
- An equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered.

Preferred qualifications

- Experience in local government or another public-sector setting.
- Experience as a spokesperson or in emergency communications.
- Accredited in Public Relations (APR) or Certified Public Communicator (CPC).
- Bilingual in Spanish / other locally relevant language.

Knowledge of

- Public relations, journalism and AP style.
- Municipal government structure, operations and public meeting procedures.
- Open records and open meetings laws, and records retention rules for social media.
- Social media platforms, website content management systems and email marketing tools.
- NIMS/ICS principles for public information during emergencies.
- Web accessibility standards (WCAG / ADA).

Skill in

- Clear, concise writing for varied audiences and reading levels.
- Photography, basic video production and graphic design (e.g., Adobe Creative Cloud, Canva).
- Public speaking and on-camera presentation.

Ability to

- Stay calm and accurate under deadline pressure and during crises.
- Simplify complex policy, budget and technical topics for the public.
- Use discretion with sensitive and confidential information.
- Build working relationships with officials, staff, media and residents.
- Manage several projects at once with little supervision.

Requirements, working conditions and how to apply

Licenses and certifications

- Valid driver's license and acceptable driving record.
- FEMA IS-100, IS-200, IS-700 and IS-29 (Public Information Officer Awareness) within six months of hire; ICS-300 and FEMA's Basic PIO course (E/L 0105) within one year.
- Must pass a background check.

Working conditions and physical demands

- Work is mainly in an office, with regular field work at events, project sites and emergency scenes, sometimes outdoors in poor weather.
- Must respond outside normal hours during emergencies and attend evening Council and board meetings.
- Must be able to lift and carry up to 25 pounds of camera, signage and event equipment.
- Extended computer use, frequent phone and in-person communication.

Compensation and benefits

$40,000 - $45,032.00, plus health, dental and vision insurance; retirement plan; paid leave; other benefits.

How to apply

Submit an application, resume, cover letter and three writing or content samples (for example, a news release, social media posts and a design piece) to Lindsay Cannon, lcannon@cornelia.city by November 30, 2026.

Equal opportunity employer

The City of Cornelia is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status or any other protected status. Reasonable accommodations are available upon request during the hiring process.