

Proposed Budget - Department Overview

FY2026-27



Communications, April 2026

Summary of Department Budget for FY26-27 Proposed Budget

Metro’s communications department provides leadership, resources and support that help build and maintain trust in Metro’s work among employees and the public. The department leads messaging, media relations, employee communications, community relations and brand identity work, provides design services and resources, manages shared communications channels and provides centralized tools and systems to advance accessibility, inclusion and language access across all of Metro’s communications and activities.

The budget for the department is \$2.9 million, which primarily includes personnel services funding for 12.6 FTE.

Accomplishments in FY 2025-26 include:

- Launch of Metro’s updated public-facing website.
- Launch of updated brand identity, including new templates, expanded design options for branded materials and the website and two new “About Metro” videos.
- Improved efficiency and resource use through staff role reconfiguration post FY 2025-26 reductions and after integration of the employee communications program (previously housed in the Office of the COO) into department operations.

Planned work for FY 2026-27 includes:

- Continued refinement of department’s role and improvements in service delivery.
- Continued work on content portion of digital accessibility project: tools, training and resources for creating accessible documents.
- Expansion and refinement of social and paid media coordination and strategies, providing further support to departments and more effective, intentional information sharing and outreach to communities in an increasingly complex media environment.

Ongoing Department Growth and/or Reductions included in FY26-27 Proposed Budget

The following budget modifications are proposed as part of the work to integrate the employee communications program into the department, provide better service delivery and leverage existing staff capacity to achieve the department’s goals more efficiently and effectively.

The total requested amount would be \$110,000.

Department restructure to create brand and design team. Restructure will be accomplished through reclassifications of three existing positions. This restructure (along with the reclassification below) is intended to rebalance investments in staffing to provide better, more consistent and proactive support

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to the organization. Scope includes existing brand, marketing and design services, with an expansion of capacity and responsibilities to provide greater support to departments around paid and social media.

Reclassification to support web program reconfiguration. In FY 2025-26, the department made shifts to right-size the staffing for its internal and external facing websites. One digital media specialist FTE was transferred to IT to help support more technical needs and training, the proposed budget includes conversion of another digital media specialist FTE, and the communications program manager over Metronet expanded responsibilities to include website lead duties. There is a need to broaden the duties of an associate public affairs specialist on the web team to support this shift.

Add/transfer of \$40,000 M&S to support employee communications program. This request allows for continued support of the employee communications program at approximately the same level of M&S expenditures as were needed when the program was housed in the Office of the COO.

Highlighted Significant Changes from FY26 Budget

The previous fiscal year's budget included a reduction of 3.6 FTE, resulting in funding for 11.6 FTE within the department. In addition, the employee communications program was housed in the Office of the COO, with approximately 3 FTE allocated for program support.

November amendments transferred 2 FTE from the Office of the COO to the communications department. 1.0 FTE was transferred from communications to IT. This resulted in a net 1.0 FTE increase, or 12.6 FTE overall for centralized communications support for the organization.

There are no significant changes to M&S funding outside of the request for funds for the employee communications program.

Any Other Overall Impacts that Require Council Direction and/or Attention

Last budget cycle, the department director outlined the need to continue to streamline workflows and identify priorities to respond to reductions in staffing. This work continues and is reflected in the proposed budget, and further refinement of the department's role and ongoing operational improvements are expected for the next 1-2 years. Conversations around Council priorities and approaches to the work will help set the stage for these refinements.