

THE RISE OF

# GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION



The principle role of government is to make policies that help society progress and to ensure the wellbeing of its citizens.

At the heart of this is **Government communication, which enables the exchange of views, wants, needs, and feedback between the government entities and the society.**

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# THE RISE OF GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION

The more effort a government puts into communication, the more it clarifies the purpose of its policies, and, the clearer the purpose, the more effective they are likely to be. While good communication is no replacement for poor policy, it does have a profound impact on policy design and implementation. This is, in part, due to the relationship between policy delivery and trust, and the relationship between trust and communication.

In today's world, communication leaders in government face unprecedented challenges in responding to the wave of technological change and public dissatisfaction. Audiences are increasingly heterogeneous, interconnected, and ever harder to reach. Moreover, the role of government communication itself is also evolving. Traditionally, the role of government communication has been to provide information to inform citizens. However, with citizens becoming ever more connected, aware, and involved, this role fast became insufficient. Governments now need to combine the willingness and ability to speak "with" citizens with a willingness and ability to speak "to" them to ensure that their needs and preferences are integrated into the policy process. Moreover, trusted sources of information and influence from amongst the citizens must be engaged to counter the spread of misinformation. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of this need to counter the "infodemic" - now, more than ever before.

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Social media has brought a progressive shift in the way governments around the world communicate with citizens. For governments today, presence on social media platform is no longer a question of choice. Social media is empowering individuals and influencing policy processes in a way that we are still understanding today. Today, people can, and do, engage in direct dialogue with senior politicians, civic officials, and government agencies. This is the new system that the communication team in any government entity has to orchestrate and manage. This report aims to explore how government communication, around the world, has witnessed innovations to respond to all these system changes, and how the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated this change. It highlights innovative case studies where governments have been communicating with their citizens and listening to their inputs on policies and initiatives.



# CITYSWIPE: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT APP MAKES URBAN PLANNING INTERACTIVE

# 01



**Imagine if next time you saw a plan for an oversized apartment tower block proposed for your street, you could get out your smartphone and swipe left to oppose it? Or you could see a carefully designed scheme for a new neighbourhood library, and swipe right to support it?**

Tinder for urban planning might sound far-fetched, but it was trialled in the Californian city of Santa Monica starting in 2016. City authorities are trying to gauge public opinion on everything from street furniture and parking, to art murals and market stalls for their forthcoming urban plan, using a digital tool modelled on the infamous dating app.

City Swipe presents local residents with images of potential scenarios and simple yes/no questions, encouraging people to swipe through the options, as if assessing prospective partners. For now, it's fairly basic: a photo of some street art appears with a caption asking: "Do you want more of this?" Folding cafe tables and chairs are shown next to pink park benches, asking: "Which do you prefer?" Other questions ask for a preference, like pictures of two possible new buildings or two ideas for downtown events like concerts or farmers markets, and users click the ones they like most.

If someone has more to say about a certain question, users can click the chat button on that question's slide and leave comments. Then continue and swipe to the next slide

The questions move on to attitudes towards walking, bike lanes, housing schemes and beyond, covering many aspects of the city's urban plan. It makes the consultation process effortless, compared with the usual feedback mechanisms of filling in lengthy mailed response forms, downloading wordy PDFs, or being solicited by a volunteer at your doorstep with a clipboard and physical survey.

It is one of the many tech tools cropping up in the world of town planning, in an effort to make what has always been an opaque and confusing system more transparent, inclusive and efficient for the public, planners and developers alike. Above all, the new app fuels rapid public engagement that creates more enthusiasm about the local community while also driving greater participation than ever before.





**City Swipe is managed by a non-profit that is in charge of Santa Monica's downtown facilities. The new app was originally designed to make it easier to get feedback about a specific document, the Downtown Community Plan, which will guide the future of the city's downtown for the next 20 years. It's the blueprint for improved mobility, a wider-range of affordable housing options, better public open space, and many other things that go into improving Santa Monica's downtown. With a document like the Downtown Community Plan, which has the potential to dramatically change Santa Monica's landscape, it is critical to gather as much feedback as possible, giving residents, property owners, downtown employees, and visitors ample opportunity to weigh in and make sure their voices are not ignored.**

The engagement process (App) has been an effective way for Downtown Santa Monica Inc. to get people's attention, as the design is based on other popular apps. It was so loved by city residents they kept it afterwards for additional evolving community needs.

**The City Swipe app offers citizens a different experience in communicating their preferences to the government,**

and makes people think about complex urban planning concepts in a way that is fun and easy to digest. The instructions are simple. For "yes or no" questions, users swipe right for "yes" and left for "no." For questions that ask users to choose a preference, they simply swipe in the direction of the photo they prefer. If they want to leave more substantive comments, they can do that by simply clicking on the chat icon in the upper right hand of the screen. By making it this simple and interactive, the app has made the engagement process more interesting for Santa Monica citizens. While planners had originally hoped to complete the Downtown Community Plan within a few months, city officials decided to extend the process significantly in order to have more time to include a broader voice, and because the City Swipe app was proving so popular. The city authorities plan to update CitySwipe in the future by adding more questions and features as new issues arise in the community.



ARKANSAS, USA



# GOV2GO APP: A PLATFORM APPROACH TO COMMUNICATION

# 02



For many people, apps are the preferred way of doing everything online, from shopping to watching TV – so it's hardly surprising that local and national governments have gotten in on the act. Governments around the world are using apps for communicating with citizens, and engaging them, at multiple levels.

In the United States, Arkansas was the first state to allow citizens to access local services via a digital personal assistant, Gov2Go. Accessible via native mobile apps, the smart watch and TV apps and the web, **Gov2Go** alerts users to important government deadlines that affect them.

**The app delivers  
personalized  
government  
interactions to  
more than 240,000  
Arkansans through  
their computers,  
mobile devices, smart  
watches, and smart  
TVs.**

Based on input from users, Gov2Go proactively brings relevant government services and information to citizens, while keeping track of important government deadlines such as voter registration, property tax payments, car tag renewals, and property assessments. It is also a critical communication as it is used to identify key user profile and needs, so it can send them the relevant information, as well solicit specific feedback from them.

To start, users download the app on their mobile devices and create a personal profile. Users who live outside of Arkansas (in another state or in another country) but pay their taxes etc in the state can also download the app and create a profile, providing information about their place of residence, property ownership and the cars they drive. Based on this personal profile and the information provided, the app builds a customized timeline for each user and schedules the user's government tasks for the year. The long-term vision for Gov2Go is to connect governments and citizens in meaningful ways and to transform the government-citizen relationship completely.



**Some of the innovative features of the app include the “Startup Wizard”. Rather than forcing users to select specific government services to engage with, Gov2Go asks users a few simple questions about themselves and then maps their responses to services that are integrated into the platform. Questions include: What county do you live in? Do you own any vehicles? What is your license plate number? And so on. Based on the information provided, Gov2Go creates a personal profile that tells the user what government services are being tracked. “My Vehicles” tracks the registration for any license plates entered. “My Locations” tracks personal property assessment and taxes in the counties selected. “My Businesses” tracks annual franchise taxes for any businesses entered. Users can open their profile at any time to add, edit or delete information.**

Once that is complete, the engagement and communication process starts.

**The “timeline” plots all of the user’s government deadlines and key dates for the year in sequential order as a task.**

Users can open a task to take action (“renew now,” for instance), mark a task as complete if they’ve already completed it, or view more options for handling a task via mail, phone or in person. Each task includes a countdown of days remaining until the deadline. For each government deadline tracked by Gov2Go, users can opt to receive email reminders, in-app messages and push notifications when the deadline is approaching. Reminders are written in plain language, include helpful instructions and links to take care of everything quickly online. Future releases will include stored payments to enable secure, one-tap transactions.

More than just a mobile app, Gov2Go is currently available to citizens on the web as a responsive website, native iOS and Android apps, and on the Apple Watch and Apple TV. In the future, the platform will expand to include integration with gaming systems, Amazon Echo, Facebook Messenger and other popular communication platforms to reach users where they are.

Gov2Go has been primarily cross-marketed to potential users through the existing government services that are integrated into the platform. For example, when someone pays their Arkansas property taxes online, they have a chance to opt-in to Gov2Go and receive property tax payment and other government service reminders. This has been an effective and no-cost marketing method that has resulted in more than 240,000 Gov2Go users. Additional promotion efforts include aggressive media relations, targeted Facebook advertising, Google Display Network and Adwords ads, video promotion online, and both digital and print outreach through government agencies. Nationally recognized for technological innovation, Gov2Go was awarded the NASCIO State IT Recognition Award, StateScoop 50 State Innovation, top six finalist in the mobile category of the GCN dig IT Awards, and top eight finalist in the American Council of Technology’s Industry Advisory Council (ACT/IAC) Igniting Innovation Award Challenge.



MADRID, SPAIN



# DECIDE MADRID: BETTER TRANSPARENCY AND ENGAGEMENT FOR POLICY DEBATE AND SPENDING

# 03

Following years of decline in public confidence in local government and in the midst of tightened budgets and corruption scandals in Spain, the Madrid City Council designed and launched the

## **Decide Madrid online platform.**



**The platform is part of a new generation of open source civic technologies which can be used to engage the public in decision making.**

Decide Madrid aims to ensure transparency of government proceedings in the city of Madrid and to widen public participation in Council decision-making and spending processes, involving citizens in generating innovative and viable ideas and proposals in order to improve their quality of life.

The website allows Madrid's citizens to engage with the local government in four ways:

1. Participatory budgeting - citizens can make spending proposals for projects in the city (apparently around 2% of the municipal budget)
2. Proposals - citizens can shape government actions by directly proposing and supporting ideas for new legislation that fall within the jurisdiction of the city council
3. Consultations - Madrid City Council gives citizens the opportunity to provide opinions about and vote on council proceedings
4. Debate - a platform for exchanging opinions which doesn't lead to direct decision making but gives the City access to public viewpoints

Decide Madrid allows citizens to participate in every stage of the policy cycle: agenda setting, policy analysis and preparation, policy formulation and policy monitoring. Participation can be carried out through five sections: debates, proposals, polls, processes, and participatory budgeting.

In most cases, users decide what is discussed on the platform, with the exception of public consultations and processes. Moreover, there is only a slight moderation before comments are published to ensure there are no illegal comments.





**One of the main modules of the software facilitates local participatory budgeting. These projects can be either city-wide or for particular districts. Residents of Madrid can submit proposals for council spending on the city as a whole or in a particular district. Residents access the process through the website with a verified account, or if they don't have access to the internet at home they can use any of the 26 Citizen Service Offices across the city. To help streamline the process, officials contact people who have submitted similar proposals to see if they would submit a joint one.**

Citizens can vote to support the proposals they like, both for city-wide projects and for district-level projects. At the district level, people can choose to vote to support proposals in a district where they do not live, such as where they work, shop, or where other family members live. However, they can only choose one district to vote in, so they must pick the one most important to their needs. To be considered by the city council, a project needs at least 1% of eligible voters to support it; as of 2021 that requires around 28,000 votes.

After citizens vote on the various proposed projects, they are listed in descending order of votes received, both for city-wide projects and district projects. They are selected starting with those which received the most votes, until the budget is filled for that district or city-wide allocation.

Following this, the city council then has one month to draw up technical reports on the legality, feasibility and cost of successful proposals, which are published on the platform.

## **The Decide Madrid platform has been most successful in engaging citizens in a project to remodel the city's Plaza de España**

where 26,961 citizens were involved in making and voting on proposals. Participatory budgeting attracted 45,522 people to get involved in its first year, and Decide Madrid had over 400,000 registered users in 2018. Institutions from more than 90 cities and regions are replicating the model of Decide Madrid, in places such as Barcelona, Buenos Aires, Paris, Turin, Jalisco, Valencia, and Oviedo.

Decide Madrid has benefitted from dedicated public relations and communications support, which has raised its public profile. About €200,000 was spent in the first year to promote the participatory budget aspect of the platform - equivalent to €4 per voter. The nature of participatory budgeting means that citizens can easily see the benefits of participating, as direct financial investments are made to their chosen projects and a user-friendly website design seamlessly integrates the different opportunities for participation. Decide Madrid received a 2018 United Nations Public Service Award in the Category "Making institutions inclusive and ensuring participation in decision-making".

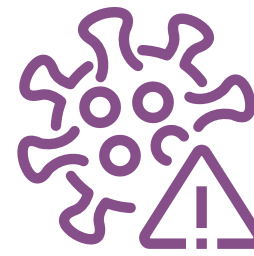
Decide Madrid provides an excellent case study regarding the importance of government commitment to citizen participation. This initiative led to changes in the organizational culture of the city council and in the traditional ways of citizen participation. All government areas and administrative units of the city council contribute by proposing topics and evaluating the proposals. Sometimes, citizen's proposals change the planning, priorities and ways of working. This has caused some resistance and complaints, because the different government units were given an additional workload with the same resources. Now, however, the staff is adapted to the new organizational culture.

NEW ZEALAND



# PRIME MINISTER SOCIAL MEDIA 'UNITE' STRATEGY FOR CRISIS MANAGEMENT

# 04



The Covid-19 pandemic has severely tested the leadership and communication abilities of political leaders globally. With exponential reinfection rates and high mortality rates particularly amongst the elderly population, the pandemic has wrought significant economic and social damage on communities, nations and global markets.

Guiding an effective response to the global pandemic has required leaders to demonstrate effective planning and coordination skills, as well as the ability to communicate clear consistent messages in an empathetic manner. The language used by leaders can perform a critical role in shaping individual behaviour and the tone of the message can instil confidence and offer reassurance to the wider public. It can also cause confusion or panic if not well articulated or well delivered, especially in times of high society anxiety like the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, language and tone help frame a shared reality, enabling a shift in sense-making for followers in terms of how they collectively perceive a critical and changing situation. As such, leadership can be best seen as a social process, in which values and beliefs espoused by the leader emerge from and interact with a particular social context, in this case, the national context.

One nation considered 'successful' at managing community transmission of the virus is New Zealand. The first confirmed case of Covid-19 was recorded in New Zealand on 28 February 2020 and over the course of March and April 2020, New Zealand recorded only 1,132 cases of Covid-19 and 19 deaths – a much lower transmission rate than most industrialized nations. On 27 April 2020, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced that they had won the battle against community transmission of Covid-19. Such a contained outbreak, in relation to the experiences of other nations, led to widespread praise from commentators, who pointed to Prime Minister Ardern's effective leadership style and the compassion shown in communications.





**New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's warm and informal use of Facebook Live has helped convey vital COVID-19 messages in a clear and relatable way.**

Communication experts claim the honesty and compassion shown by Ardern during live question and answer (Q&A) sessions and video diary updates from her family home created «a team of five million» against the virus. Positive and consistent messaging used on social media helped create a sense of unity across the country. The use of Facebook Live allowed Ardern to open up a weekly dialogue with citizens, highlighting progress and challenges in combating the virus and made her accessible and relatable. Ardern's news conferences for more than 30 minutes a day, taking queries, streaming Facebook videos and posting pictures on Instagram, offer a contrast with some world leaders who have stumbled through confusing briefings about virus combat plans.

From classifying the Easter Bunny as a key worker to taking a 20% pay cut in solidarity with workers who had been made redundant, her relaxed, informal messaging helped build a collective shared experience of COVID-19 and contributed to one of the lowest death rates in the world. She moulded a united approach, and carefully crafted it via her social media live channel.

Overall, **the New Zealand government's team opted to take a different route than other countries, focusing on the impact on people's daily lives and steps they could take to protect each other.** They wanted something that was very human. Within 48 hours of being briefed, the advertising company they worked with had landed upon the organising principle of their campaign: "Unite Against Covid-19".

From March 2020, advertisements pointing to the Unite Against Covid-19 website – the government's "single source of truth" for information on the pandemic – flooded radio, television and digital media. In its first three months, the website received 700m views. The Unite presence on Facebook and Instagram acted as customer service channels; since March, government staff have responded directly to more than 40,000 comments. This created the sense of a cohesive and ubiquitous response that many New Zealanders felt part of. Businesses, schools and community groups used the Unite branding on their own pandemic advice.

A study from Curtin University and the University of Otago found that 78% of New Zealanders said their trust in government had increased as a result of the government's management of the pandemic. The "team of five million" was more than just a catchphrase as everyone saw remarkable social cohesion, and people doing the right thing.

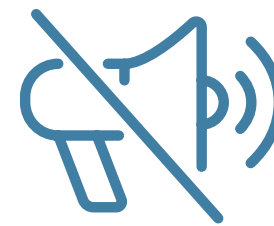
Social media provides leaders with an unfiltered forum to transmit key messages to followers. Moreover, it allows leaders to reinforce or challenge narratives of their leadership approach and show their authentic self.

CANADA



# CHECK FIRST CAMPAIGN- MANAGING MISINFORMATION IN CYBERSPACE

# 05



**In today's networked world, we do not just consume information anymore; we are all broadcasters, too, and everything we share online affects everyone else. Especially during a public health crisis, the ratio of good to bad information can be even more important than individual examples of misinformation. Whether the bad info we see is a misunderstanding, an exaggeration, or even an outright lie, how we respond makes a difference.**

Funded by the Government of Canada, MediaSmarts, Canada's not-for-profit centre for digital literacy, has launched the Check First. Share After campaign to encourage Canadians to empower other Canadians and help them identify and obtain reliable information on COVID-19 for their own safety and the safety of those around them. The main message of the campaign: Most of us probably cannot manufacture protective equipment in our homes or develop a treatment for the virus, but there is something we can all do: help stop the spread of misinformation.

The campaign features a video Public Service Announcement, an educational website [CheckThenShare.ca](https://checkthenshare.ca) and an extensive social media campaign with Canadian personalities and celebrities.

Amidst a global pandemic, every share of misinformation can be harmful to the health and well-being of Canadians. In this context, MediaSmarts, along with the University of Alberta's Health Law Institute, had one main focus: convince Canadians to turn only to trusted expert sources when it comes to info about the virus.

This was in response to a flood of misinformation when the pandemic started. Many of us have received one of those unsourced voice memos with advice from a doctor in Spain or UK and other countries, or seen a social media post promoting some immune-boosting elixir, but while some of these may be relatively innocuous messages, others may lead to more dangerous actions. What is true in either case is that an overload of false information makes the good information harder to come by. Meanwhile, sharing good, accurate info helps drown out the noise.





**The context nowadays is very challenging as it is really easy to be fooled by misinformation online, and it happens to everyone. People want to help their friends and family by sharing info with them. The Canadian campaign was urging citizens to truly show they care by being good digital citizens and taking a moment to pause and check if the info comes from a trusted expert source - like the Public Health Agency of Canada or a reputable news outlet - before sharing it.**

**The CheckThenShare.ca campaign teaches people to check three things before sharing any content online: where it originates from, whether it is from a trusted expert source, and what public health authorities and the government are saying.**

The campaign's educational website also provides a custom search engine that only produces results from official public health sources, which enables easier access to accurate information. It also gives different approaches that Canadians can take based on the situation. The first is to question the information. The idea is to nudge the sharer, and whoever else sees it, to really think about whether the content is accurate. The second is to correct the information through sharing accurate information from a trusted source that shows the truth without even mentioning the false info to correct it. And, finally, the third approach is through taking the power away from bad information by showing that it is wrong and why. Hopefully, once the bad info is debunked, onlookers will want to know the truth.

The campaign revolves around three key takeaways:

- The campaign's key message for Canadians: "Before you share, pause, check the source, and make sure it's legit."
- New research shows that asking people to pause and think before sharing can reduce the spread of false information.
- Researchers have also found that during a pandemic reducing bad information by just 10% has a significant impact on the severity of the outbreak.

While this campaign was born as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and aimed to tackle healthcare information online, the tools, and culture, it is building in the Canadian society, will be critical for all future communication purposes. Misinformation in cyberspace is probably one of the biggest challenges facing governments, and this campaign is a useful innovation that can be replicated elsewhere.

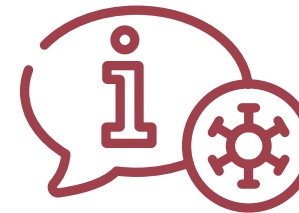


UNITED KINGDOM



# HEALTHCARE SERVICE (NHS-UK) PARTNERING WITH TECH GIANTS

06



In some ways, it has never been more important to stay informed – our wellbeing counts on it. However, as the Covid-19 crisis continues to unfold and spread across the world, so do many fake news stories. For example, the main source of vaccine misinformation is social media, and this swallowed down vaccination drives across the whole world. Adding to the problem is that misinformation itself may also be amplified by social media algorithms that prioritise content likely to receive a high amount of engagement.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK has been fighting bad advice and misinformation about the virus in the media and online as well as helping to promote good advice. In March 2020,

## **The NHS unveiled a package of measures in the battle against coronavirus fake news – working with**

Google, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook – to help the public get easy access to accurate NHS information and avoid myths and misinformation. It was critical to engage these

## **tech-giants as they are the ones who control the social media platforms, their content, and algorithms**

The measures include Google providing easy access to verified NHS guidance when someone searches for coronavirus. This algorithm is critical. It effectively controls what people see first in their searches. And following months of work, the NHS and Google introduced new Knowledge Panels – prominent pop out boxes of information – as part of Google search on mobile, to ensure it provides the public in the UK with easy access to NHS information about more than 250 health conditions, including coronavirus. The announcement came alongside the government's action to crack down on fake news, including a cross-government team to engage with social media firms to monitor the internet for scams.





**The measures also included working with Twitter to suspend a false account posing from fake accounts, or unverified ones including those putting out inaccurate information about the number of coronavirus cases; and publicly condemning homeopaths promoting false treatments.**

The NHS has also worked with Twitter, Instagram and Facebook to verify or 'blue tick' over 800 accounts belonging to NHS organisations including hospital trusts and local commissioning groups. Facebook removed "false claims and conspiracy theories" that "could cause harm to people who believe them" as they are flagged by organisations like the NHS. Both Twitter and Facebook are now officially directing users to the NHS website if they search for coronavirus.

Twitter has also given free advertising to non-profit organisations that are focused on fact-checking and getting credible information to a wide audience. TikTok has a consistent Covid-19 banner at the bottom of its platform which sends users to a host of influential and topical accounts sharing accurate advice and guidance. Instant messaging giant, WhatsApp has also taken an innovative approach to tackling the problem and is now working with the government on a new automated chatbot which provides factual information to users, reducing the strain on the NHS.

NHS believes that ensuring the public has easy access to accurate NHS advice however they search for it, not only will support people to take the right action but will also help the country's response to coronavirus. The NHS has also spoken out against misleading treatments being promoted by homeopaths online.

In this context, and in addition to social media collaboration, the NHS is increasing the number of contact channels. Whilst the NHS website contains the most accurate information for the public about coronavirus, for people worried they might have the virus the health service has started directing them to the NHS 111 online service to help support the national phone line after calls surged. The NHS 111 online service has dealt with more than a million enquiries relating to coronavirus, between February and March 2020, since it was updated for Covid-19.

Additionally, by making NHS website content free to use for third party organisations, NHS are ensuring that more people get NHS advice when they search online rather than from one of the many other sources; some with guidance that is not right for the UK, and some that just are simply not right. Syndication from the NHS website means that people can be confident that the information they see meets the highest clinical standards.

These steps are important to ensure that members of the public can access reliable, accurate health information, which is more crucial than ever as the UK, and the world, continue their fight against Covid-19, while at the same time fighting the misinformation pandemic with large volumes of inaccurate information about vaccinations being heavily circulated.



# INNOVATIVE LAWS TO PROTECT FROM ONLINE FALSEHOODS AND MANIPULATION BILL

# 07



In early 2020, security experts in Singapore warned that disinformation campaigns about COVID-19 are on the rise over the internet, as people's fears and ignorance are being exploited. Government agencies have clarified and debunked about 40 major instances of fake news on COVID-19 over the period between January, 2020 and May, 2020. Since then, the government has been fighting a plethora of fake news, from misinformation about its leaders contracting the coronavirus, to false reports of virus-related deaths and scammers trying to impersonate health officials to extract people's personal and financial details.

It became very clear from an early stage in this Covid-19 pandemic that the dangerous spread of disinformation and fake news about COVID-19 must be tackled alongside the virus itself.

In a positive trend, and as a flight to safety, this state of informational disarray has led to people becoming more reliant on mainstream news organizations and authoritative sources for accurate information about the coronavirus and the various national agendas in response. Leveraging this situation, the government had the opportunity to gain public trust by displaying effective leadership to safeguard their people from the information epidemic via news media and official statements.

## Singapore passed the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Bill (POFMA),

which dictates websites have to run government "correction notices" alongside content it deems false. Under the law, the government will also be able to issue so-called "take down" orders that require the removal of content posted by social media companies, news organizations or individuals. In this context, authorities do not necessarily spend a lot of time and budget to proactively track down spreaders of fake news but they take quick action when misinformation is brought to their attention. Depending on the circumstances of each case and the outcomes of investigation, the public prosecutor decides if more serious action needs to be taken.





**With this innovative law, Singapore has led the way in producing advisories in news sources in order to correct rumours and misinformation and by requiring those found to have violated POFMA to publicly correct their falsehoods online. Singapore was followed here by South Korea, which primarily focused on debunking rumours via news sources in the form of FAQs and interviews with experts, government officials and health authorities.**

The Government of Singapore has also asked Facebook to disable local access to a page that they said contained false statements about its response to the coronavirus outbreak. Facebook's legal analysis gave the company little choice as if they do not, the company would be found guilty of an offense and fined up to \$14,400 a day under the law. Within a day Facebook had blocked local access to the page. Google, meanwhile, has also removed misinformation from platforms like YouTube.

Singapore authorities were also weighing how to use the law to target misinformation on encrypted apps such as WhatsApp, owned by Facebook. The fake-news law covers such platforms, but the tech companies cannot read the messages, so a solution hasn't been found.

Singapore further showed how a whole-of-government collaboration involving five separate ministries was able to create informational advisories accessible to different segments of society through diverse platforms – from official fact-checking sites to Facebook and Instagram pages belonging to government ministries and officials, government-driven message push channels in WhatsApp, right down to digital display panels in residential areas.

On the flipside, and to send out verified news, Singapore's government uses WhatsApp to regularly update citizens on the number of cases, disperse news on precautionary measures and debunk fake reports via a government broadcast group called Gov. sg. Singapore's health ministry puts out a daily report on its website detailing newly reported cases of COVID-19 and the status of existing patients over a 24-hour period.

The same information is also disseminated via WhatsApp for people who have signed up to receive them. Since Singapore has four official languages – Chinese, English, Malay and Tamil, the Government used an AI tool to rapidly translate the material from English, so that every community receives the information as quickly as possible. An algorithm produces the initial draft of the translation, which is then vetted by civil servants before being sent out on WhatsApp. The AI was trained using text from local government communications so is able to translate references and names of Singapore government schemes.

Top state figures including the President and Prime Minister have also repeatedly reminded people of the “great service [they are performing] for other Singaporeans” by being socially responsible and by not spreading rumours about the coronavirus. Schools and teachers have been roped in to support these socially-driven interventions. Across Singapore, programmes were implemented as part of character and citizenship education to teach the importance of verifying the authenticity of information related to the coronavirus.

Singapore's strategy to guard against and slow the spread of COVID-19 has been described as ‘multiple lines of defence’. Singapore's success is attributed to leadership being organised enough to get the messaging right as a team and ensuring people get accurate up-to-date information.

FINLAND



# GOVERNMENTS USING SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

# 08



While the rapid development of vaccines against COVID 19 is an extraordinary achievement, successfully vaccinating the global population presents many challenges, from production to distribution, deployment, and most importantly, acceptance. Trust in the vaccines is vital, and is critically dependent on the ability of governments to communicate the benefits of vaccination, and to deliver the vaccines safely and effectively.

In light of this, some governments have formally enlisted the help of social media influencers to manage the information landscape. These social media influencers have never been thought of as 'working with government' or the social good, but some innovative approaches allowed them to become a key part of public communication and engagement campaigns.

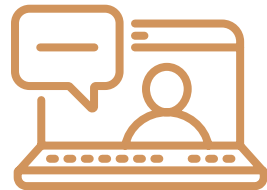
With the rise of influencer-based communication in all walks of life, governments are leveraging the "pull" of influencers to communicate with and persuade citizens - literally leveraging their ability to influence via social media. Prominent examples include the Finnish government's classification of influencers as 'critical actors' during the pandemic - alongside 'doctors, bus drivers and grocery workers' - as they have been designated to 'disseminate information on social media' to make up for the fact that 'government communication doesn't reach everyone.'

Finland's Prime Minister's Office, in collaboration with the National Emergency Supply Agency and the private sector partnered with social media influencers to provide clear and relevant information for younger audiences that can be harder to reach through traditional channels. Following a comprehensive influencer mapping,

**over 1 800 Finnish influencers helped the government share reliable information on health measures to empower and engage citizens in the fight against COVID 19.**

A follow-up survey conducted revealed that: "94% of followers felt they got enough information and instructions about coronavirus via influencers with over half saying influencer communication affected their behaviour" and "97% of respondents consider the COVID 19 information shared by influencers reliable".





Likewise, the UK government has employed influencers to ‘help spread accurate health information’ especially among younger audiences who ‘may be more susceptible to fake information’. Turning to post-COVID-19 recovery, **the Indonesian government has similarly set aside around US\$5.2 million to engage influencers to ‘promote the country’ and encourage tourism to boost the economy.**

Indonesian social media influencers were also at the front of the line as Indonesia launched its first mass COVID-19 vaccination rollout. While the government said it was a controversial decision, they believe that it was a conscious communication approach, set in the belief that influencers will post their experience online and help convey those vaccines are safe, effective, and allowed under Islamic law. For example, Raffi Ahmad, a television star with 49.5 million Instagram followers, got vaccinated live on television alongside Indonesian President Joko Widodo, singers Ariel and Risa Saraswati, and the first round of 18.7 million frontline health care and public service workers.

The Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare launched the “Thanks Challenge” on Instagram, with the aim of expanding the reach of awareness raising efforts around COVID 19 measures. The initiative invited citizens to share a picture of themselves at home to promote social distancing and “stay at home” measures. Celebrities and influencers also took part in the campaign and helped the government disseminate official information about the disease and its symptoms. The Korean government partnered with animation companies and child influencers such as Awesome Haeun (YouTuber) to introduce social distancing rules with songs and dancing. In a similar manner, the Asia-based media agency Millenasia and UNESCO Global Education Coalition collaborated on a YouTube music video featuring K-pop singers to promote COVID-19 prevention rules and to encourage students and children to ‘stay strong’, while practising social isolation during this time.

**The Japanese government worked with influences through a collaboration video between the governor of Tokyo, Yuriko Koike, and one of the most influential YouTubers in Japan.**

The partnership was praised as tangible proof of the influence of YouTubers in contemporary society. In Australia, influencer marketing platforms have also collaborated with influencers to promote healthy messaging around well-being and health, in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) and National Mental Health Commission (e.g. the ‘#InThisTogether’ campaign). Around 80,000 influencers in Australian company Tribe’s network were invited to ‘submit free content that includes advice and “hacks” on social distancing that were subsequently boosted on social media to reach a million people under 24 hours.



# MANAGING THE STRATEGIC NARRATIVE: MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COORDINATION - MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND PREVENTION (MOHAP)

# 09



**The UAE's Ministry of Health and Prevention (MOHAP) has been a global leader in demonstrating an effective communication strategy amid the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Bloomberg's COVID Resilience Ranking in September 2021, the UAE led the region's countries and was ranked 9th globally, and according to Our World in Data (OWID), the UAE leads the world in the number of fully-vaccinated people and in terms of vaccine distribution for every 100 persons. These achievements were challenging to attain, and communication played a critical role.**

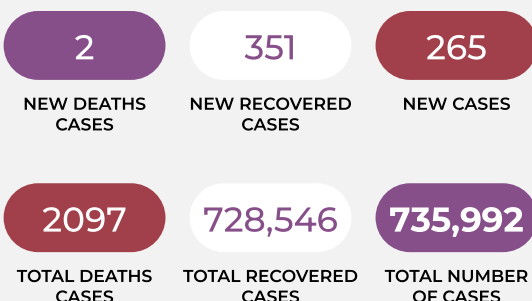
The challenging times the world lived during the Covid-19 pandemic clearly showed the essential role of a comprehensive digital government communication system as the “first line of defense at the media level”. Thanks to its flexibility and its quick response to updates in multiple languages, MOHAP has been able to enhance the public's confidence in the efficiency of the government and health system by making them aware of all information and developments, such as new daily COVID-19 cases. UAE government used different communication aims and strategies to face the pandemic according to the risk management scenario and the pandemic phases. In the quarantine phase, communication focused on giving people information about the disease, raising awareness about the disease, motivating health and behavior change, informing people about government decisions and procedures. In the coexistence phase, communication focused on emphasizing the necessity of adherence to health measures, providing information on re-work in institutions and commercial centres, involving people in the health and social initiatives, and confronting non-compliance with health precautions. Government communication also focused on facing rumors and false information. UAE government communication used digital platforms and social media to address more than 200 nationalities living in the country for ensuring that they adhere to the precautionary measures and coordinate with the authorities. Government communication was committed to a set of values including equality between citizens of the state and residents, societal and individual responsibility, recognising the frontline medical staff and acknowledging their sacrifices. To this end, MOHAP implemented an integrated, coherent and effective scenario to deal with the crisis.



#### LATEST INFORMATION & UPDATES ON

Coronavirus (Covid - 19)

UAE 30 - September - 2021



MOHAP's goals were to optimally and effectively use the visual components on social media to produce innovative, transparent, and credible messages that reinforce the outcomes of its surveys to measure community awareness levels. These visuals include daily infographics about COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and recoveries. The focus and message emphasis changed with time and was situational. The focus was "safety first," with the early messages being balanced, precautionary and non-intrusive. Then the government worked its way up to a more authoritative, directive approach. Once the disease spread was under control, the message moved to a more communal and collaborative approach (underlining everyone's responsibility).

MOHAP's innovation was using all available internal and external communication channels in a holistic way. Now, the Ministry routinely uses all widespread social media channels to educate the public, on topics such as how to positively adhere to official instructions, while explaining all the measures taken by the government in a clear and transparent way.

The Ministry efficiently and effectively capitalized on the national health services' electronic and smart services in order to raise people's awareness about the COVID-19 pandemic and consolidate the efficiency of the ministry in utilizing the sophisticated digital infrastructure which has been developed according to a forward-looking vision.

Noteworthy was the appearance of government leaders from all levels, practicing precautionary measures themselves such as social distancing and adopting virtual meetings. They also recognised (in person) the medical staff and frontliners for their efforts in protecting the public against COVID-19.

Furthermore, **MOHAP actively encouraged its customers to share their thoughts, opinions and suggestions,** and has implemented a range of tools to help its customers do so at any time. Citizens and residents can contact the Ministry through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, in addition to participating in discussion forums, polls, surveys, and following blog posts. Customers are encouraged to share their opinions and suggestions concerning all services and initiatives launched by MOHAP, through their favorite channels of communication. Some previous surveys include: public satisfaction with MOHAP's website, community engagement for a 50 year development plan, premarital counseling, and growing a healthy and positive work environment.

In adherence with MOHAP's Digital-Participation Index, they have a dedicated team responsible for collecting the information gathered from surveys regarding services and initiatives. Some of this information is then shared on both the Official Portal of the UAE Government and on MOHAP's website. The information gathered is used to make decisions, meet the needs of the community, and improve the happiness of all customers.

MOHAP was honored at the Sharjah Government Communication Awards in 2021 for having the best new media government communications strategy.



# “BEE THE CHANGE” BRINGING AWARENESS TO, AND EMPOWERING, PEOPLE OF DETERMINATION - ZAYED HIGHER ORGANIZATION FOR PEOPLE OF DETERMINATION (ZHO)

# 10



With centers and clubs for People of Determination across Abu Dhabi, the Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination (ZHO) provides a range of integrated services that aim at rehabilitating disabled people for inclusion into the community.

These services include training and education, vocational and therapeutic rehabilitation (assessment, early intervention, physiotherapy, functional therapy, speech therapy, and vocational training workshops), psychological care, family counseling, as well as supporting educational and sport activities. Throughout its history, ZHO has made wide strides and considerable achievements, notably its expansion plans to accommodate disabled people all over the emirate of Abu Dhabi.

In late 2019, ZHO launched “Bee the Change”, a social awareness campaign aimed at changing perceptions relating to the abilities of people of determination, as well as highlighting the important role they play in developing and creating a global movement.

Bee The Change was a collaboration between Growing Happy (UK) and ZHO. The campaign emerged following the remarkable success of the Special Olympics World Games, Abu Dhabi, 2019, in parallel with the various initiatives launched to celebrate the Year of Tolerance, which has contributed to improving the lives of people of determination across the nation.

There was a global invitation extended to all individuals and entities to become part of the change that benefits People of Determination. The campaign works toward achieving its vision of a more tolerant world where People of Determination can invest their full abilities in the community. The campaign's message is that of empowerment of people of determination and their families to instigate change all over the world, through innovative services and initiatives aimed at contributing toward the attainment of this vision. With less than 10% of individuals with intellectual disabilities in employment, the campaign aimed for mobilizing change. It sought to promote a more inclusive, tolerant, open minded and equal society.





## **Bee the Change aimed to empower people of determination to become leaders of change, including social, environmental and economic sustainability in the community.**

**It sought to provide them with increased training and employment opportunities in various sectors, foster their abilities and sustain the positive impact of their empowerment across the global community. Furthermore, Bee the Change seeks to celebrate the talents of people of determination and help them become leaders of change themselves.**

A highlight of this campaign was the «Bee Cafe» project. It was the first project of its kind in the UAE: a cafe managed and operated by six people of determination. The Bee Cafe is not limited to providing specialized coffee; it also offers technical training to qualify people of determination to obtain an internationally recognized certificate in the specialty coffee industry. The café is also working to become recognized as an internationally accredited training center for people of determination.

More recently in summer 2021, but still part of the “Bee the Change” campaign, ZHO and the Abu Dhabi Youth Council, with the support of the Federal Youth Authority and Abu Dhabi Youth Hub, organized an event for Youth of Determination. The event’s main theme was signifying the never-ending passion and perseverance of youth with disabilities. The event included activities to raise awareness, invest, develop, and empower the younger population of determination. In addition, the event highlighted their abilities, potential, and talents, while focusing on key challenges facing today’s youth and discussing important issues and future opportunities.

The event addressed challenges in the rehabilitation and employment sector while promoting societal, cultural awareness in work environments on facilitating determination-based career development. In addition, prompting active listening, dialogues, and solutions proposed in response to these challenges, including the rights of people of determination and the implementation of an approved and specialized law in support of their employment.

At the Sharjah Government Communication Awards in 2021, ZHO was awarded the Best Idea for Engaging Future Generations award for its far-reaching “Bee the Change” campaign.



