

Washington State Libraries Statewide Marketing Campaign—Introduction

Getting Started

Greetings! If you are reading this, then you likely work for a library in Washington State, and want to understand how to conduct direct and grassroots outreach in order to help achieve your marketing, communication and service goals. Congratulations, you've come to the right place.

Dollar for dollar (and minute for minute), conducting outreach is the most powerful way to tell your library's story and garner long-term support. Mass media campaigns, while appealing, are only successful if you have the resources to sustain them (And if you are reading this, you probably don't.) Conducting successful outreach puts you in front of the right people and organizations, ensuring that the time and resources you invest can be tracked directly to outcomes.

This toolkit is designed to assist you in effectively planning and implementing direct and grassroots outreach activities. This toolkit includes:

- How to identify outreach targets
- How to conduct outreach
- Tools to assist you

Even if you have never attempted it before, now is a great time to begin conducting outreach as part of your regular (or irregular) marketing activities. The new posters and bookmarks that are available through the Statewide Library Marketing Initiative help you tell your library's story, and convey the value of libraries. The posters and bookmarks are great outreach tools for your library, but in order to do their best work, they need to reach more than just the people who are already coming to the library—you and they need to reach out into the community and draw new people in.

Before You Begin

This toolkit will help you learn how to conduct successful outreach activities. Before you can conduct outreach, however, you should know what your goals and key messages are, because without out them, you won't know what you are trying to achieve or how you want to frame your discussion. If you don't have key messages, STOP! now and develop them. Messages don't have to be complicated; try using this straightforward approach:

- What—What does your library do?
- So What—Why should your audience care? No, really, why should they care, not why do you think they should care. How does your library impact their life or livelihood?

- Now What—You’ve convinced them that the library is important. Now what do you want them to do with that information?

Speaking in the Language of the Listener

Often, a major challenge for libraries is creating messages that are designed for the audience for which they are intended, and not for the library community. Below you will find a few “before and after” messages that help demonstrate the difference between audience-centered and library-centered messages.¹

Library Centered

We have a new service called BookLetters, which is available from the library by email. Go to the reference desk to sign up.

The library has many databases that students can use for researching homework assignments. We can help you get off to a fast start this school year. Reference librarian can help find information for even the most difficult assignments.

The library makes it easy to avoid overdue fines. Renew materials by phone or on the library website, so you never have to worry about paying a fine.

Audience Centered

Here’s a great way you can find out about the latest new books to arrive at your library. You can sign up for an e-newsletter called BookLetters that emails you information about the types of books you like to read. Finding the next good book to read has never been easier. I can show you how to sign up for BookLetters now, or you can do it from home through the library’s website.

Your teacher said you couldn’t use the Internet for this assignment? I think she meant you needed reliable sources. Did you know that you can use the Online Library to search for complete articles from hundreds of magazines, newspapers and encyclopedias? You can even do this at home after the library is closed.

Going out of town? Do you know you can enjoy these travel guides and not come home to overdue fines? All you have to do is go to the Online Library and click on “My Account.” You can renew library materials from anywhere in the world. Just be sure to have your library card with you.

¹ Drawn from the Michigan Smartest Card campaign.

Washington State Libraries Outreach Toolkit – Who to Contact

Who to Contact?

Who to conduct outreach to can be one of the biggest stumbling blocks in getting started—but it shouldn't be. Many different kinds of people, from all parts of your community, benefit from library services, whether they know it or not. This list is intended to get you thinking about who to contact in your outreach efforts, but it's not exhaustive, so don't let it limit your thinking.

Youth Serving Organizations

- YMCA/YWCA
- Boys and Girls Club
- Girl Scouts & Boy Scouts
- Schools

Business Community

- Local small-business owners
- Senior leadership at major employers
- Chamber of Commerce
- Influential business leaders
- Unions

Public Agencies

- City/county governments
- Elected officials
- Appointed officials
- Influential staff/leaders

Fraternal Organizations

- Rotary Club
- Kiwanis

Community Based Organizations

- Memberships groups that are comprised of one or more of your key audiences
- School support organizations (PTO, PTA, Site Council, Foundations, etc.)
- Arts and literacy organizations
- Other cultural/learning institutions (museums, zoos, etc.)

Social Services organizations

- ❑ Community-based health clinics
- ❑ Senior services
- ❑ Foster care providers

How to Prioritize

When you've completed a list of outreach targets, it should be a much longer list than you can tackle in the short term, which means prioritization is in order. You may have your own system for this, but if not, try this one:

- ❑ A – an essential library partner and/or a person or organization that you have a connection to (making it easier to get a meeting).
- ❑ B – an important potential partner, but with a hitch (you don't have a connection, the partner won't help you reach a priority audience, etc.)
- ❑ C – a partner you would like to have, but is not essential in achieving your goals.

Washington State Libraries Outreach Toolkit – How To Do It

Outreach can feel overwhelming if you've never undertaken it before, but it's a relatively straightforward process: know your message, identify the mode, and implement.

1. Message

- ❑ Know your messages, and if you need to, prepare yourself a simple script to use.
- ❑ Make sure that you didn't skip what you want to ask for in your "now what" message. Things to consider:
 - Hanging posters in the partner's locations.
 - Bringing a group to a program or promoting a program at the partner's locations or through their communication channels (newsletters, etc).
 - Advocating for the value of the library and publicly supporting it.
 - Sponsoring library activities (programs, prizes for Summer Reading, in-kind donations of services, etc.)

2. Mode

You can conduct outreach in a variety of ways—face-to-face, over the phone, via email, or via a combination of methods. Of these methods, an in-person meeting is the most highly valued, giving you the opportunity to form personal connections, and usually affording you more time to convey your message and make an appropriate "ask." If time does not permit, however, it's more important to do something, rather than delay because you can't find the time for face-to-face meetings.

- ❑ Determine which mode is most important for your priority outreach targets (It may differ for each person and organization.)

3. Implementation

Now is the time—launch your implementation plan. Using the modes you have identified, begin conducting outreach by scheduling times to meet in-person, using email, voicemail or any other means that will work for you.

- ❑ Initiate contact.
- ❑ Conduct meetings.
- ❑ Track progress.
- ❑ Follow-up as needed.

Washington State Libraries Outreach Toolkit – Media

Outreach to media is a specialized form of direct outreach. While you may not be able to mount a full-scale mass media campaign, media partners can help amplify your message and will support your direct outreach and other engagement strategies. Remember, in the first season of the campaign, a number of radio ads and PSAs were created, which are available for you to place with your local media.

Public Service Advertising (Radio)

A public service announcement (PSA) or public awareness announcement, simply put, is a message or advertisement informing the public about a socially relevant issue and asking the public to take action to make lasting and positive social change. Think “Friends don’t let friends drive drunk,” or “Take a bite out of crime.” A PSA can be a very powerful and effective way to get important messages and information to key audiences. However, the success of a PSA campaign hinges on placement—it doesn’t matter how catchy the copy is, if your message isn’t heard it doesn’t exist

For radio stations time is money. Competition for donated radio time is fierce, with dozens and even hundreds of community and social service organizations approaching local radio stations for sponsorships, PSA placements and on-air mentions every month. Once your on-air copy is developed, there are two factors that go a long way in helping get your message read on the air—outreach and distribution.

This is where knowing your goals and key audiences comes in handy. Although “everyone” might be an audience for your library, it’s best to narrow your audience before you begin media outreach—knowing who you most want to reach will help you select priority media targets. As you build your distribution list, be sure you take into account the demographics and focus of the stations you are targeting. If your message is designed to reach an audience of 13- to 24-year-olds, be sure to send it to radio stations that serve that age group. Not only will you reach the people you have identified, but the radio station is much more likely to support you by giving your message airtime.

Outreach – Making It Real

The most frequently placed PSAs are those that have a local connection. Before your radio script is sent out to on-air personalities and PSA directors, it is critical that someone from your organization or from a partner organization call to encourage the stations to air or read the message.

By contacting the radio stations directly, you have the opportunity to remind them of the important role your organization plays in the community, to raise awareness about the key messages of the campaign, and to serve as a resource on the issue or the campaign should the station need more information. Also, by conducting outreach, you make the campaign and its messages real.

Before conducting your outreach either by phone or in person, craft a set of key points you want to communicate. The points should include:

- The key messages and call to action you want to deliver
- The importance of libraries for their target audience
- Any events and activities that are upcoming or linked to your campaign
- Key local statistics and research that help to underscore the importance of the libraries in your community
- Your contact information

Distribution – Getting the Message Out

When you distribute a PSA, be sure to include a brief cover letter that provides a quick overview of reasons for the campaign and its call to action. This additional information will remind PSA directors and on-air personalities that you spoke with them before sending them the PSA, and help them determine whether or not the campaign is something they can support. This is your chance to provide compelling information on why the campaign is important for the community and why THIS radio station should support it. After you have distributed the script (or audiotape), it is appropriate to briefly follow up with PSA directors and on-air personalities to verify that they received the PSA and to inquire if they might use it. If they indicate that they will, ask when they might use it, to help in tracking.

Tip: Be persistent, but not a pest.

- ❑ Create a list of stations in your area that your key audiences listen to.
- ❑ Identify station PSA directors and any popular on-air personalities.
- ❑ Contact PSA directors and on-air personalities to tell them about the campaign, and ask if they are interested in supporting it.
 - If yes, move to steps below.
 - If no, ask why not. You will probably learn something that you can apply the next time you want a media sponsor.
- ❑ Distribute PSA.
- ❑ Follow up to ensure the information was received.
- ❑ Track the coverage you receive.
- ❑ Thank the sponsor at the end of the run, and use that opportunity to demonstrate the value that each of you received from the transaction.

Tools You Can Use

In the first year, paid media was a component of the campaign. This year, these tools that were created remain available for you to use in your own media outreach: two pre-produced radio spots (featuring the characters Gina and Ricky) and copy that can be used for public radio and/or customized for use with a commercial radio partner. These tools can be found in the Marketing Toolkit for Libraries at:

<http://www.secstate.wa.gov/library/libraries/projects/marketing/toolkit/flash.html>.

Washington State Libraries Outreach Toolkit – Tracking Worksheet

Contact (organization, person)	What do we want?	Who will contact?	By when?	Outcome?
<i>YMCA</i>	<i>Long-term relationship/ partnership</i>	<i>Jennifer</i>	<i>March 1</i>	<i>Send 5 posters—follow- up in May about a potential Summer Reading partnership</i>