AMERICORPS WASHINGTON STATE
COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

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Serve Washington
Changing Communities. Changing Lives.

SERVEWASHINGTON.WA.GOV

Dear program partners,

This tool kit is designed to help with your external communication efforts. YOU are the best storyteller, and we hope you place priority on developing and managing the best approach to publicize your program, acknowledge your members, and strengthen your voice to those you serve.

In this tool kit, you will find:

- **Social media** - why social media? this includes social media content examples, information on websites, graphics, and considerations around strategic planning and execution.
- **Connectivity on platforms** - when using social media, providing ways to connect and include others so that you can amplify your message beyond your audience of followers.
- **Planning strategy**
- **Branding**
- **Telling your story and local media reach**
- **Sample press release**
- **Sample of our release Form**

Keep in mind that this tool kit is *not* a set of requirements or guidelines. This is a set of resources and recommendations that will help you develop and grow your communications efforts. We hope that this tool kit is helpful and that you can take away pieces that help enhance your work.

If you have any questions about the toolkit, or would like help & guidance with your communications efforts, please reach out to your program officer.

We look forward to your continued success with recruitment and sharing the service message with your community.

Best,

Serve Washington Team

Social Media

Spending time to use social media to your advantage will yield high returns for your organization. All platforms of social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and others) can help you share information about your organization and build a stronger brand. All programs are strongly encouraged to follow/like/share **Serve Washington's** social media platforms to stay up-to-date on the latest information. It is incredibly helpful that you tag **Serve Washington** when sharing information about your program on social media. (Tagging is simple – just add *@servewa* or *#servewa* to the content of your social media post, and we will be notified that you mentioned us!)

We also cannot help amplify your message without **YOU** sending **US** photos, stories and upcoming events, so we can feature these through our social media platforms. Please keep our office up to date through your program officer.

We encourage you to take time and check out the following social media platforms and tools to manage your platforms.
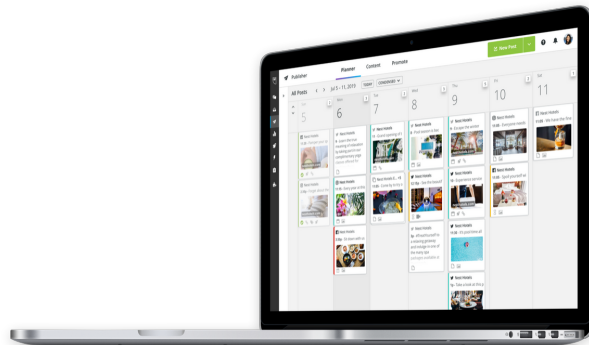
Main social media platforms:
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- LinkdIn

Social media management tools:
- Hootsuite - hootsuite.com
- SproutSocial - sproutsocial.com
- MavSocial - mavsocial.com
- Likeable Hub - likeablehub.com

You can easily find free management tools (like Hootsuite for example) where you can consider what you would like to share on social media, and then schedule it in advance. Once complete, you can move on to other work, not having to worry about what is going on socially at that time. Each of these tools provide different 'insights' to what is happening on your social media accounts when a message goes out. It can tell you how many people viewed, if people engaged (liked, commented, shared), or if you were mentioned in another social media platform by someone like *@ServeWA*. Lastly, they give you an idea, based on your audience (who follows you or likes your pages), when you should concentrate on posting on social media – what time of day and what day is best. If you are going to spend your time on social media, wouldn't you want it to be spent in the best way? Free versions of the platforms may have some limitations compared to the Pro versions. Research before using any platform.

You can always use social media for 'in the moment' posts and tweets, and you can see when the next scheduled message will be going out (so you can reschedule too if needed).
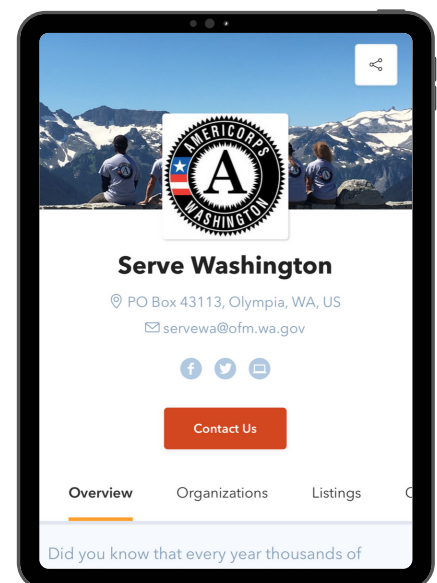
Social Media Content Tips

- Use a hashtag in every tweet, on Facebook and Instagram posts to allow tracking, reposting, and retweeting
- If you can sign up for a Twitter account, you can manage your tweets easily through a free product like *Hootsuite*.
- Change your Instagram account from a personal profile to a business profile. It will need to be connected to a Facebook page under the same brand. The business profile will unlock some tools and functionalities that will help you develop the brand.
 For more info visit: https://business.instagram.com/
- Facebook allows you to schedule posts in advance, which is a helpful feature.
- Instagram allows for you to post immediately on additional platforms like Twitter and Facebook, so you only create content once! The only catch is that you can't schedule things in advance with Instagram.
- All three products (*Twitter, Instagram Business, and Facebook*) provide you with insights – details into how well your message was received. For example – how many people engaged with your tweet (liked it), or how many people saw your Facebook post? You can also find out the best time of day to reach those who follow you. That way you aren't spending the little time you have posting at the wrong time!
- **Facebook Live & Instagram stories** – consider them! It's super easy to do and it posts immediately. It's not about having everything neatly buttoned up. It's about the in-the-moment, raw video showcasing AmeriCorps members in action or even the pre-planning for an upcoming meeting or event. Something that others can experience in real time, that also makes things real. Have fun with it!
- **Snapchat** – consider it as well! Snapchat has the highest percentage of 18-34 year olds using it compared to other social media platforms. If you want to get in front of that audience, spend a bit of time on Snapchat. It is super easy to create filters for events (etc.) by using the 'geofilter'.

Website Links:

- Make sure you add links as they are, or through bit.ly (created through Twitter). Bit.ly is a link management platform used primarily by Twitter to shorten a link to a website so that you can stay within the 140 characters limit per tweet easier.
- Consider including links to relevant websites on every tweet, Facebook and Instagram post so you can give your followers an action option.
- If you are curious as to how many people are clicking on the links you provide through social media to your website, take time to review Google Analytics (find through Google.com). This is a free tool that can track this information for you and much, much more.

Serve Washington
PO Box 43113, Olympia, WA, US
servewa@ofm.wa.gov

Contact Us

Overview   Organizations   Listings

Did you know that every year thousands of

Graphics:

- Consider using photos of AmeriCorps members in action, having fun, and celebrating –capture shots with members in AmeriCorps gear (so you can see the logo – keep it visual) or make sure to add the AmeriCorps logo to the photo.
- *https://servewashington.wa.gov/programs/americorps/subgrantee-resources* does have logos, banners, fact sheets and photos for you to download if you wish. You may want to invest in some additional high quality local photos as well.
- You can create graphics through sites like Canva.com (free) or Snappa.com (free). Creating your own graphics allows for you to share specific information about your programs (data, photo collage, infographics and more – personalize it!). There are lots of tools out there!
- Extra signage at events should be used, as it provides an enhancement to the back drop of the photo. Photos can be staged as well as candid, to have a good variety.
- Programs are responsible to ensure all photos sent to Serve Washington have the proper photo releases and permissions.
- Remember to include a graphic or video on every social media post. It grabs attention and reinforces the AmeriCorps brand.

Sample Twitter Content

- Last year, @AmeriCorps members mobilized 77,292 volunteers in Washington to solve local problems. #JoinAmeriCorps today! [link to your site] [photo of members in action]
- Where will your new office be this year? What about here with us serving in @AmeriCorps? We are waiting for YOU! [service year video] [link to posting]
- 9 out of 10 @AmeriCorps alums say their experience advanced their career path. #JoinAmeriCorps – we are recruiting! [link to posting] [photo]
- #WeServeWA because we want to build a healthier and stronger educational system. Here at (program name), we serve in K-12 schools and community colleges. We have had an impact on more than 100 kids and young adults all around Spokane area.
- #IServeWA through (name of the program) in the Tacoma area. I decided to join AmeriCorps right after high school because I wanted to serve my community. I have learned and grown so much in the past 6 months thanks to service.

Keep in mind that these are examples and suggestions; use your best judgement to create new tweets that fits your needs. Also remember to tag us #ServeWA #IServeWA #WeServeWA @ServeWA

Washington Conservation Corps
@EcologyWCC
Follow

And that's a wrap! Our 2018-2019 service year was another incredible one. Thank you to each of our @AmeriCorps members for their dedication planting native trees and shrubs, improving and building trails, and responding to disasters in WA across the country. #WeServeWA

2:16 PM · 9 Sep 2019

Serve Washington
@ServeWA
Follow

Would an AmeriCorps member help your agency meet critical community needs? JVC Northwest is accepting applications for partner agencies to host AmeriCorps members. Check it out to see how they can #GetThingsDone for you!

Request a Jesuit Volunteer - Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC) ...
Request a Jesuit Volunteer JV/AmeriCorps members are energetic, committed, and motivated individuals with fresh perspectives, bringing a strong educational background and go...
jvcnorthwest.org

10:55 AM · 5 Nov 2019

Sample Facebook & Instagram

Instagram is owned by Facebook Inc., which make both platforms similar in content and posting management. These are recruitment posts examples.

Keep in mind that these are examples and suggestions; use your best judgement to create new text that fits your needs. Also remember to tag us #ServeWA #WeServeWA #IServeWA @ServeWA

- Nine out of 10 @AmeriCorps alumni reported that their experience improved their ability to solve problems – with 8 out of 10 feeling confident that they could create a plan to address a community issue and get others to care about it. Looking for the same confidence? #JoinAmeriCorps and join our team – we are looking for YOU! #WeServeWA [photo of AmeriCorps members in action] [link to job posting]

- For one year, you can #JoinAmeriCorps and make your own path, develop skills, solve community challenges, and build stronger communities.   Since 1994, more than 1 million people have served in @AmeriCorps, providing more than 1.4 billion hours of service, and earning more than $3.3 billion in scholarships to pay for college. Don't miss out on the opportunity to join our team! [link to posting] [photo]

- We can't emphasize enough how valuable it is to be CPR/First Aid certified! Thanks to NEWESD 101 for always offering this amazing course to our AmeriCorps members at no cost to them. 🙌 #AmeriCorps #ServeWA #NEWESD #GetThingsDone @ Spokane Service Team - AmeriCorps

Account and Hashtags Resources

Remember to tag us (@ServeWA; #ServeWA) so we can help you spread the word about your programs and incredible members.

Accounts:
- @ServeWA (Serve Washington)
- @NationalService (Corporation for National & Community Service)
- @AmeriCorps; @AmeriCorpsAlums

Hashtags:
- #ServeWA; #IServeWA; #WeServeWA
- #GetThingsDone
- #NationalService
- #AmeriCorps; #AmeriCorpsAlums #MadeInAmericorps

Planning Strategy

We're all busy and when we're busy without a plan in place for the tasks we have to get done, things inevitably slip through the cracks. Social media content is no exception.

Just like with blogging, a successful social media strategy requires regular publishing and engaging with followers to see positive results.

Sample created for Washington AmeriCorps programs. Contact your program officer to get the Excel spreadsheet.

Remember that doing all your social media and website work at the last minute will not be very helpful. To really maximize on the opportunity social media presents, you need to plan ahead. Some people create a content calendar monthly, where they record everything that is going on in the upcoming month(s), and then spend time scheduling out posts/tweets about these things in advance. Always leave room to post/tweet about things as they come up. Remember – this is a tool designed to help you, and you customize it based on what works for you. If it's taking up too much time, then consider other options.

Calendars help you get organized to avoid the dreaded scramble when things come up. With a social media calendar, marketers can plan out posts for entire weeks or months in advance, which frees up working hours to strategize for the future -- and to dash off any posts about breaking news in your industry. Otherwise, you'll spend valuable time each day searching the internet for that day's content to share, which is a known productivity killer.

Branding.

Hopefully you know your brand, and you know it well. It's incredibly important in today's world of marketing to have a strong brand. It's not just about getting your target market (who is your message trying to reach) to act, think or behave in a certain way. It's about getting people to see you as the provider with the solution to the problem or resource to meet their need.

BusinessDictionary defines brand as "Unique design, sign, symbol, words, or a combination of these, employed in creating an image that identifies a product and differentiates it from its competitors. Over time, this image becomes associated with a level of credibility, quality, and satisfaction in the consumer's mind. Thus brands help harried consumers in a crowded and complex marketplace, by standing for certain benefits and value. Legal name for a brand is trademark and, when it identifies or represents a firm, it is called a brand name."
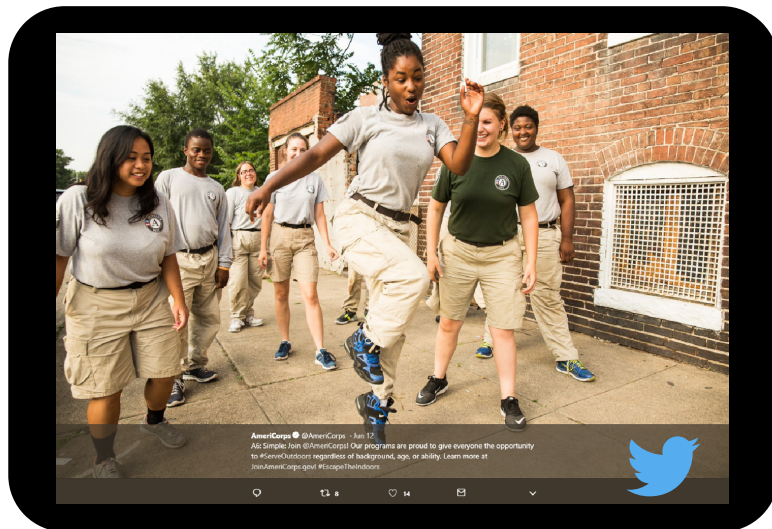
When you consider recruitment or storytelling, ask yourself these questions:
- How does your brand relate to your target audience? Will they understand your message right away without too much 'thought'?
- Are you communicating who you are, what you do?
- Are you sharing why your story/event/service opportunity is unique?
- Is your brand living up to what you've promised your 'customer' (what to expect when they serve with you; what the media should expect when come to your events; etc.)?
- Are you being consistent? Be true to your brand and design templates, brand standards, taglines and 'voice' for your brand – use with everything you do (even email signatures!). Integrate!

Again – integrate your brand EVERYWHERE – this doesn't always mean screaming your logo from the rooftops, but it does mean thinking **creatively**.

The foundation of your brand is your logo, and your logo helps communicate your brand. It's critical that you have **your own branding guidelines** and are considerate of the guidelines of others as well. When creating your marketing toolkit, make sure you know when you should use other logos to enhance your brand and satisfy requirements from funders and partners. If you don't know, just ask! Visit *https://servewashington.wa.gov/programs/americorps/subgrantee-resources* for more information on branding guidelines.

Acknowledging Serve Washington

Programs should acknowledge Serve Washington in all AmeriCorps communication, marketing and media materials, including, but not limited to, publications, press releases, newsletters, emails, websites, and brochures. Continue to use "CNCS" when referencing the Corporation for National and Community Service. Websites must post the program logo (AC, VGF, etc.) and we suggest use the Serve Washington logos.

Co-Branding

Co-branding is a really powerful way to introduce your organization's services to someone who is loyal and familiar with another. Both brands benefit from this in a variety of ways. Consider how having the AmeriCorps or Serve Washington logo can help build your brand.

It is important to consider your own branding guidelines and develop co-branding principles before you start creating imagery or randomly placing another logo with your own. You also need to know the branding guidelines of the other you are wanting to co-brand with, as you need to be approaching this relationship with the best interests of both parties in mind.
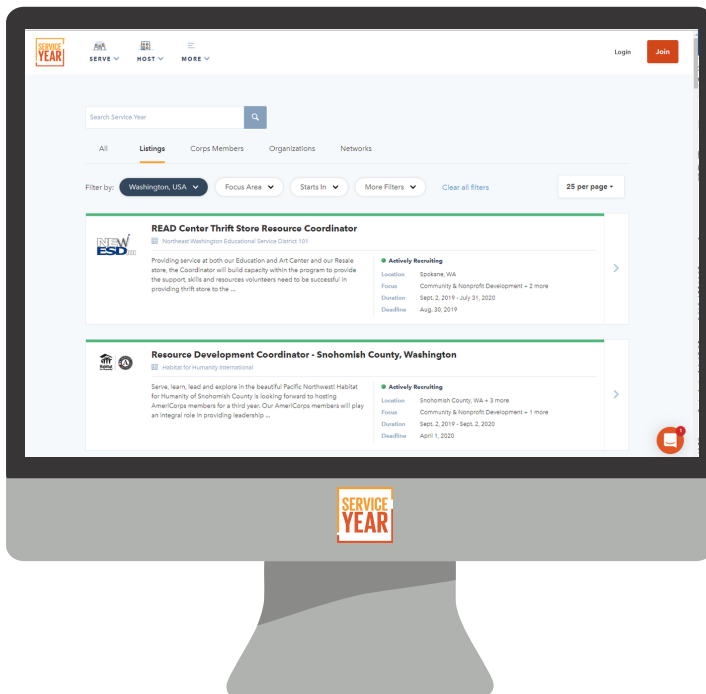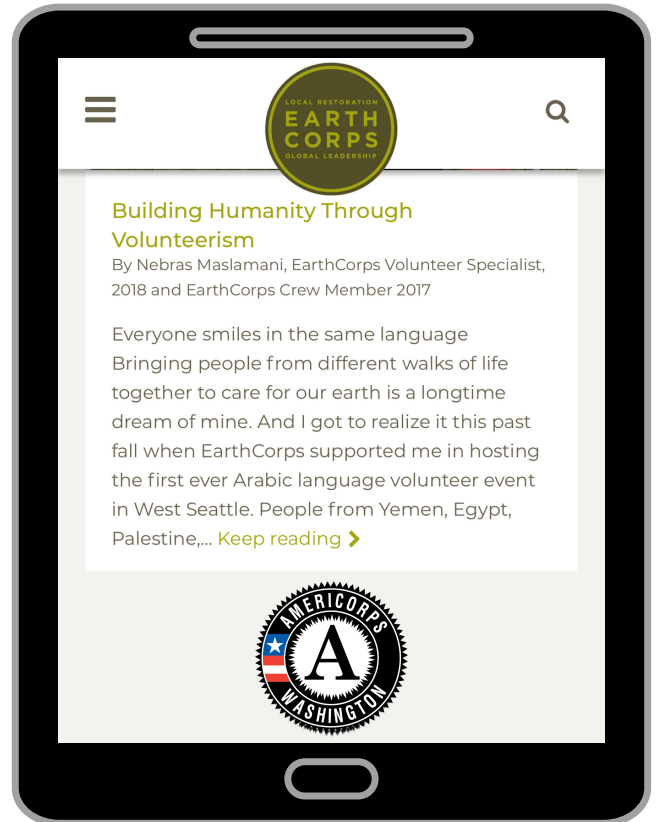
Recruiting

Sometimes recruitment for National Service positions can be tricky. Your posting might go up and many applicants apply. Other times you can struggle to find enough candidates or the right person for the role.

Finding the right program or role for the applicants could be difficult and the application process isn't easy. We suggest you use **Service Year!** (serviceyear.org/servewashington) It is an online platform that host all our Washington programs and open positions.

We suggest you attach the Service Year link to your social media post related to recruitment.

Telling your story

Considerations when 'pitching' a story to the local media:
- Who are the local media outlets? (television, radio, print) Do you know anyone that works there? Can someone you know connect you (a board member, staff member, volunteer, alum)?
- Consider how people find out about events happening – think about the audience you are trying to reach. Just as important – think about who the media outlets believe are their target audience(s).
- If you have a local television, paper or radio station – don't forget about them! Consider writing up PSA's (public service announcements) and ask if they can run those for you for in-kind. Sometimes a local station can do this. Additionally, if they are local, they often want local people to interview! Ask for an opportunity to do a live interview or write up an opinion piece for the paper. You can google how to write an opinion or letter to the editor for suggestion.
- Remember it's about timing. Ask to meet with them in advance of needing anything, and ask them questions about their audience, how they receive press releases, how they want to be communicated with (etc.). They will appreciate you asking, and it will help you know how and when to reach out. If you continue to send them things that they will not publish because you don't take the time to find out more, you are hurting your own chances for coverage.
- Remember when writing press releases and other news-worthy items – you must include the Who, What, Where, When, Why and How of the news item. Make it obvious. Keep it simple.
- Lastly, if they do run a story for you – a hand-written thank you goes a long way!

Hosting a Public Event

Serve Washington strongly encourages programs to identify and invite the Serve Washington Commissioners and staff, local elected officials, local media, business partners and community partners to ensure an active event that shows the strength of the statewide partnership. Programs should consider designating 1 or 2 spokespersons at each event that are familiar with core messaging, communication, and the elevator speech for consistent messaging.

These items should be included at or take place at public events:
- AmeriCorps Logos, Signage, and Clothing (required)
- Introduction of Stakeholders
- Testimonials
- Presentation
- Information Packet with Statistics & Business Cards
- Photo Opportunities
- Sponsor logos on printed materials.

Keep in mind that you can ask Serve Washington to borrow banners and sandwich boards.

Use a press release to share newsworthy information. This is an official statement delivered to members of the news media for the purpose of providing information, an official statement, or making an announcement.

Sample press releases

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Month Day, Year

Contact: First Last
Name of Organization
email@ofm.wa.gov
phone / toll free line

Headline (short, and in Title Case, ideally 170 characters or less)

Summary (synopsis of the press release. Tells the story in a different way, doesn't repeat headline)

CITY, (Olympia)– The first paragraph is the "lead" and contains the most important information. Grab the reader's attention here – don't assume that they have read the headline or the summary line. The lead should stand on its own.

The body of the release has short sentences and paragraphs (about three or four lines per paragraph). The first paragraph should cover the 5 W's.

The rest of the press release expands on the information provided in the lead paragraph. This includes why the story is significant. Here you answer the questions "so what" and "how."
"Include a quote to personalize the content" said First Name Last Name, title and organization. Quotes can come from key staff, partners, or subject matter experts.

The last paragraph should restate and summarize the key points. It can also be used to share details on an event, where to get more information, or a call to action.

# # #

About Serve Washington
Serve Washington advances national service, volunteerism and civic engagement to improve lives; expands opportunity to meet the local critical needs of residents of Washington; and strengthens community capacity while creating healthy and resilient communities. For more information, visit servewashington.wa.gov.

This funding is provided by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency for volunteering and service. This year marks the 25th anniversary of AmeriCorps. Since the program's inception in 1994, more than 1 million Americans have served their country through the national service program. Organizations are currently recruiting for AmeriCorps members to begin service this fall. Those interested in serving can learn more at AmeriCorps.gov/Join.

About partner organization/agency
Use boilerplate information about partner organization/agency that was prominently featured in your press release. Include website.

# # #

Use a media advisory to encourage media outlets attendance at an event. Release this document 2 to 3 days prior to the event. Add information about RSVP process if necessary.

Sample media advisory
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Month Day, Year

Contact: Name
Name of Organization
email@ofm.wa.gov
phone / toll free line

<div align="center">

Media Advisory for (insert day and time)

Attention Grabbing Headline

Newsworthy subheading

</div>

Include a sentence or two to make the case for a reporter to attend the event. Convey why this is news and why they should turn up (the WHY of the event)

WHAT: Event name and a brief description of what the event entails.

WHO: Mention the key players here. Highlight if you're expecting a local policy
                maker/influencer/etc. Provide titles of the people involved.

WHERE: Location of event, with directions if necessary.

WHEN: Date and time.

<div align="center">

# # #

</div>

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Content Release Form Sample

If you are having a big event we suggest that you hang signs with information about your content release policies.

I hereby authorize Serve Washington, its employees, agents, and assignee to:

1. Take photographs and videos of me and my property;
2. Make audio recordings of me and my property; and
3. Make use of, license, or assign the use of such photographs, videos, and/or audio recordings and other reproductions of any of these, including modified forms, in perpetuity, for any lawful purpose, including, without limitation, training, education, trade, advertising, and promotion, with or without my name, in any media, now known or later developed, including, without limitation, print, electronic, web, and social.

I understand and agree that I will not be compensated for these uses and that Serve Washington will own exclusively all rights to the images, videos, and recordings, and to any derivative works created from them. I waive the right to inspect or approve of the uses. I hereby also release and hold harmless Serve Washington, the state of Washington, and its employees, agents, subcontractors, and assignees from any and all claims that may arise from these uses, including, without limitation, claims of defamation or invasion of privacy, or infringement of moral rights or rights of publicity or copyright.

This Release is binding on me, my heirs, assigns, and estate. This Release expresses the complete understanding of the parties.

I have read and understand this Release. I affirm that I am at least 18 years of age, or, if I am under 18 years of age, I have obtained the required consent of my parent/guardian as evidenced by their signature below.

_____   _____
Full Name (Printed)   Signature

Date: _____   Phone Number: _____

Parent/Guardian Consent for Individuals Under the Age of 18

_____   _____
Full Name (Printed)   Signature

Date: _____   Phone Number: _____

The QR code term stands for Quick Response Code. QR codes are square barcodes (two-dimensional barcodes) that were first developed and used in Japan. Like any other barcode, a QR code is nothing more than a way to store information in a machine-readable optical label. The data contained by a QR code can be anything from simple text, to email addresses, to phone numbers, website, PDF, and so on.

If you have an iPhone you can just aim your camera to the QR codes and a window will pop up in the top of the screen with the link to the content. Android or other OS holders will have to download a QR reader app in order to have access to this codes.

https://servewashington.wa.gov/

https://serviceyear.org/

We hope that this tool kit was helpful and that you can apply some of what you learned in this toolkit.

If you have any questions about the toolkit, or would like help & advice with your communications efforts, please reach out to your program officer.

We look forward to your continued success with telling your organizations service story.