

SUCCESS STORY

KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

KING COUNTY GENERATES HIGH-PROFILE MEDIA COVERAGE THROUGH INFORMED COMMUNICATIONS DATA.

SITUATION

Traditional press releases are not generating enough results.

King County, Wash., provides many public services for more than 2 million residents in the greater Seattle area—from transportation and public health to natural resources and elections.

Traditionally, King County has relied on press releases to carry important messages, sending full-length stories to large email lists of journalists. But when the County interviewed reporters and asked about the effectiveness of those press releases, many told them the hard truth. “I don’t even read news releases from King County anymore,” said one reporter. “I know if it’s important (someone) will call me,” said another.

What many in the media said they wanted was access to more exclusives. “By the time you send a news release, it’s not really news anymore,” they told the County. To meet its organizational needs of connecting residents to events, activities and services, King County had to come up with a more strategic way to provide relevant and timely information to reporters and media outlets across the region.

SOLUTION

Using data to inform and deliver news.

King County chose GovDelivery to support the need for effective, strategic, and data-driven media relations. King County and GovDelivery re-imagined the press release experience, starting with the story’s online version and carrying through the email they send to reporters. A short summary was included in the message instead of the full-length version, making it easier for busy journalists to scan the message and get



King County

ABOUT

King County is home to more than 2 million residents, innovative local businesses, a thriving small business community, and some of the nation’s most beautiful natural resources and open spaces. King County is one of the largest employers in Washington State, with more than 13,000 employees delivering a wide array of services to a diverse community and vibrant regional economy.

“It’s not just about getting more media coverage; it’s about getting better coverage. This data is how we’re giving reporters what they asked for, which is access to more exclusives. Because the best story pitches are about the issues you really want to cover.”

DEREK BELT

SOCIAL MEDIA SPECIALIST AT KING COUNTY

information quickly. At the bottom of each condensed and to-the-point pitch email is a link to the longer story on the County’s website.

Using GovDelivery reports, King County can see who clicks on these links, viewing

activity reporter-by-reporter to gain important insights into recipients' behavior. Armed with information on which reporters are interested in specific subjects, King County is able to offer more exclusives and invitations knowing journalists are legitimately interested in the subject matter. The County is not just guessing about which reporters and media outlets to connect with. Through the GovDelivery platform, they know exactly who is interested in key areas.

Improved media relations yields high-profile coverage.

This innovative approach to traditional media relations allows King County to further its relationships with the local press, leading to better coverage and a more informed community. The County has used data from its press release program to invite specific reporters to a roundtable discussion on a plummeting public health budget, a tabletop exercise simulating a first-response crash near downtown Seattle, and a behind-the-scenes look at King County Metro Transit's low-income bus fare. The transit outreach ultimately led to national coverage in the New York Times and Meet the Press.

Using GovDelivery and a comprehensive digital communication strategy, King County is going beyond traditional press releases to engage the public in high-priority initiatives, announcements, and programs through email, text messaging, social media, and web properties.



REAL-WORLD EXAMPLE

In early 2015, King County Metro Transit launched ORCA LIFT, a public transportation program for low-income residents. ORCA LIFT offered a discounted rate of \$1.50 per trip for residents who earn less than 200 percent of the federal poverty rate, or around \$23,000 per citizen. King County had to start from scratch to generate public awareness for its new program. Enter the re-imagined press release.

A walkthrough of how King County was implementing ORCA LIFT was scheduled with a few local reporters. By using its digital press release template and the data from GovDelivery about who was interested in the areas of transportation and human services, King County was able to introduce ORCA LIFT to a local audience through quality coverage in the Seattle Times and KPLU-Radio, an NPR member station.

The County leveraged the local media attention to pitch a wider story to the New York Times, communicating the national implications for the conversation on income inequality and public transit. The efforts were successful as the NYT published a Sunday feature article highlighting the program. That piece went viral internationally and ORCA LIFT was covered in the Washington Post, Meet the Press, Daily Mail, and more. The news coverage had a positive impact on the national policy discussion, as other metro regions began discussing how to use transit to confront inequities.



RESULTS

220+ REPORTERS ON KING COUNTY'S MEDIA LIST

33% ENGAGEMENT ON NEW PRESS RELEASES

31% INCREASE IN PRESS RELEASE SITE TRAFFIC SINCE DATA USAGE



2015 WINNER
DIGITAL STRATEGY
& IMPACT AWARDS



METRICS

ABOUT GOVDELIVERY

Over 1,000 public sector organizations use GovDelivery's highly-secure cloud solutions every day to enhance the citizen experience for more than 100 million people. GovDelivery offers leading solutions for managing government communications, internal and external learning, and open data. The GovDelivery Network offers a unique and impactful way for public sector organizations to work together to cross promote content and increase digital reach. Organizations using GovDelivery see higher utilization of citizen services and greater citizen engagement.