

WVLS Marketing Support Grant Pilot Project Final Report

The 2024 WVLS Marketing Support Grant was a pilot project and opportunity for WVLS libraries to evaluate their marketing goals and to advance a library marketing plan or marketing campaign.

One of the challenges for public libraries is finding effective ways to promote what they do, and focusing on a specific marketing campaign or creating a marketing plan are great places to start. A marketing plan is a document that defines marketing strategies to reach a targeted audience. Marketing campaigns are sets of strategic activities that will achieve a specific marketing goal. A marketing campaign could be used to promote a product, a service, or the library as a whole.

Recipients of the WVLS Marketing Grant were: Lorelee Petersen, Owen Public Library; Laurie Ollhoff and Chris Sprague, T.B. Scott Free Library (Merrill); and Brandon Hardin, Withee Public Library.

Objectives of the 2024 WVLS Marketing Support Grant included:

- Assess current library marketing practices.
- Create and execute library marketing goals.
- Discover new target audiences.
- Work toward a library marketing plan or campaign that supports the library's goals.

Grant recipients were awarded \$250-\$500 to support their marketing plan or campaign.

WVLS Education Consultant Jamie Matczak met with grant participants monthly to provide support on new tasks, answer questions, and guide participants through their marketing campaigns. Some of the tasks in the first few months of the project included reading blog posts related to library marketing, watching videos on marketing plan development and implementation, and maintaining a marketing diary to assess their current marketing efforts. The assessment helped to answer such questions as: Were the library's current efforts successful and time-worthy? Where should the library focus? What audiences are the library trying to reach?

Once the recipients completed these tasks, they worked on executing a marketing campaign.

Owen Public Library: Older adults was selected as the target audience. To get feedback on what programs the library should offer, surveys were handed out at a Farmer's Market in June. The

library partnered with the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) to host a Lunch and Learn Senior Program. The ADRC also designed posters and flyers on behalf of the library.

Withee Public Library: They focused on a marketing campaign to promote its summer program performer, Nature’s Niche. A plan was developed to determine best efforts in promoting this event, and the extra planning and effort paid off. Over 100 people attended the program. Kids and teens who attended the event were asked to complete surveys that would give the library ideas for future programming and marketing efforts. While responses on surveys were diverse, an “Escape Room” came up as a programming idea several times.

The library did a second marketing campaign for its Escape Room, which was scheduled to run from August 19-September 14. The WVLS Marketing Grant was used to create 18 yard signs with Vistaprint, an online marketing company geared toward small businesses. The signs were placed all over Withee. The event was also promoted through an article in the local paper, Facebook posts, and with a sign outside the library. Brandon said 57 kids visited its Escape Room. Due to its popularity, the event was extended to an additional two weeks.

T.B. Scott Free Library (Merrill): A marketing campaign was created that promoted its ‘Library of Things’ collection to a target audience of adults living within a 30-mile radius of Merrill. The WVLS Marketing Grant was used to purchase Facebook ads, bookmarks, stickers, and a banner. The bookmarks and stickers were purchased from Canva, and the banner was purchased from Vistaprint. This campaign will continue for the next several months.



When asked about the benefits of this grant opportunity, WVLS Marketing Grant recipients noted the following:

- Normally we wouldn't be able to print yard signs because our budget is small. The marketing grant funds allowed us to print quality signs and place them all over town where they could be seen. They definitely created a buzz, because people were talking about them. Nice, visual images matter. People do notice them.

We had new kids (people that I haven’t seen before) visit the Escape Room, and eventually, sign up to receive library cards. And now these kids are regulars. That’s pretty cool. - Brandon Hardin, Director of the Withee Public Library.

- The funds were beneficial because we branched out and did things we normally would not do. We printed some stickers and bookmarks from Canva. The quality was very good, and we received them quickly. We would consider using them again for future graphics.



It was nice to focus on one thing over a period of time. There are so many different events going on at the library, and it's hard to focus on one. I found it to be an interesting process to learn how much lead time is needed to do future marketing campaigns.

I can't say I enjoyed doing the diary exercises (at the beginning of the project), but it was nice to see on paper what I am spending my time working on, and are these things really necessary? Should I be putting these events in all these places? - Chris Sprague, Technology Services Coordinator, T.B. Scott Free Library (Merrill)

Both Chris and Brandon commented on the ease of using companies like Vistaprint and Canva to print promotional materials for the library.

What are some recommendations from WVLS if the grant was offered to our member libraries in the future?

- Shorten the grant project from 8-12 months to 6-8 months.
 - Focus exclusively on marketing campaigns instead of a library marketing plan.
- Reiterate the grant goals and objectives once the recipients are selected.
 - Encourage recipients to keep up with assignments and target activities to sustain group feedback on grant project updates, successes and challenges.