



MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 18th, 2020

TO: Washington Association of County Officials Membership

FROM: Timothy Grisham, Deputy Director
Washington Association of County Officials

SUBJECT: 2020 COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

2019/2020 was a year of transition, growth, and rapid change. As we exited our 2019 Annual Conference, WACO was still operating a person down as it had for the bulk of the year. In November, Timothy Grisham was named Deputy Director, and by March 2020 WACO had hired a new Member Services Manager Melanie Terry. It should be noted that Melanie was hired, trained, and works entirely remotely (save a day a week in the office) as WACO had to adapt to social distancing regulations in the office due to the then emerging Covid-19 pandemic.

As many counties faced uncertainty and transition due to the effects of Covid-19 precautions, WACO pivoted quickly to address the situation by offering weekly listening forums for elected officials. The 19 weekly forums served as a communications platform to help inform the organizations legislative strategy moving into 2021.

In 2019 WACO was able to communicate the work of elected county officials and their offices to a large audience with increased efficiency.

In addition to hosting weekly Covid response meetings WACO quickly adapted to assisting affiliates, counties, and members address the remote meeting needs by offering assistance in procuring services – as well as hosting many discussions and trainings.

Of course, with this new, emergent, line of work – WACO still maintained its normal schedule of online training, legislative and education meetings, as well as a

continued focus on providing information on the roles of our elected officials and their offices.

Five years since launching a new communication plan, we are able to start seeing what appears to be a “norm” for the average monthly Twitter reach (impressions). The average remained steady, with an increase of no more than 1%, only a very slight bump from the preceding year. Twitter followers, however, grew by an average of 40% using a month to month comparison from previous years. This new growth will help increase our ability to reach more people in the years to come as we move into adopting a refreshed communications plan.

Currently, WACO staff is in the final stages of drafting a new, more robust, communications plan to address not only the current reality of WACO and its members, but to encourage growth in platforms, and to better align with the WACO Strategic Plan.

As with our Twitter reach, we are seeing parity in numbers for the track-able readership rate for the Courthouse Journal. For the 2018 and 2019 years we received a trackable read rate of 41% for CHJ mailings. Thus far in 2020 we are seeing a slight increase to an average of 43%. This is significantly higher than industry standards for newsletters, and well above our first year’s rate of 33%.

The website continues to be in a state of substantial growth in both views and users. The average monthly viewership increased by 34% since 2018, while the site had on average 35% more users per month for 2019. Thus far in 2020, the website use continues to grow at a significant rate. Though it should be noted that there are spikes in March and April that may through our statistics off due to heightened use of the Covid-19 resource page.

Despite a challenging year for communications, WACO has been able to quickly adapt, assist our members, and pull together resources and priorities that will affect county government in the next several years. This could not have been done without the hard work and dedication of our WACO staff; for whom I am thankful to share this journey with.