

A Guide to Promoting Your Weed and Seed Site



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WHY PROMOTE YOUR WEED AND SEED STRATEGY?

Promoting the Weed and Seed strategy in your community is often overlooked as you begin work in a new neighborhood or as you work on sustaining the efforts of a mature program. There are many reasons that a promotional campaign is well worth your effort. A promotional campaign:

- Encourages those who are already working hard by giving them credit for this hard work;
- Informs the community about the success of your program;
- Sends a message to the criminal element that your neighborhood will no longer tolerate criminal behavior;
- Informs grantors that Weed and Seed is worth their investment.

Here are some simple steps for marketing your Weed and Seed efforts. They can serve as a starting point for a larger effort which you may want to undertake later. Since many advertising and public relations firms perform services on a pro bono basis, you should contact local agencies to become a part of your Weed and Seed effort.

WHAT SHOULD BE PROMOTED

Many Weed and Seed leaders often forget to let others know of their successful events because they are either too busy trying to attract local residents and officials to the event, or they are unsure that these events are newsworthy. Event coordinators should remember --everything that you do is of interest to someone! The following are examples of information that should be shared with others:

“**Successes**” may include the completion of a project such as a cleanup of a drug house or the opening of a truancy center. It may be a program offered for the first time in the community or a completion of a long-term project.

Upcoming events should be well publicized, but don't forget to publicize the results of these events. For example, you may have placed fliers and signs about an upcoming neighborhood cleanup in local grocery stores, newspapers, or on residents' homes' doorknobs. Follow this up with an article in your local Weed and Seed newsletter (or in Weed and Seed *In-Sites*), saying how many people attended, how many garbage bags or dumpsters were filled, and how the neighborhood looked afterward. You could also distribute “Thank You” fliers with the same information, thanking the residents for their participation. Publicizing the results encourages citizens to join in the next time an event is organized.

Support from community leaders and government officials should be promoted. Let everyone know who is supporting your Weed and Seed initiative. A statement from the Mayor, U.S. Attorney, business or nonprofit leaders, or community association president can go a long way in encouraging others to join your Weed and Seed effort.

Arrests and Prosecutions are an integral part of the Weed and Seed strategy and the criminal element in your neighborhood also reads papers and listens to the news. Work with your “Weeding” component to publicize arrests and prosecutions, sending the message to lawbreakers that your neighborhood is no longer tolerating criminal behavior. This message is also a pat on the back for the local police, federal investigative agencies, and prosecutors and helps to maintain momentum. Some sites report these arrests and prosecutions in their local Weed and Seed newsletters, Web sites, and in news releases to local news media.

TARGETING THE WEED AND SEED AUDIENCE

The most important step to take in promoting your Weed and Seed program or event is to decide what audience you want to respond to your promotion. In other words, who will be reading or hearing this message?

There are several audiences that you will want to target as you create a promotional strategy, such as:

- Law Enforcement
- Government Officials (local and state)
- Neighborhood Residents, including faith-based groups
- General Public, including youth and senior groups
- Business and the Private Sector

Each group responds to messages differently. It will be up to you to explain how the Weed and Seed program will benefit each audience.

Once you have targeted an audience, there are several other steps to take to ensure that the message is received and elicits the right response.

What's in it for me?

For Weed and Seed residents, the payoff may be increased safety (all residents), recreational activities (youth); increased property values (homeowners); increased availability of jobs (job seekers); positive results from contributions (all contributors); decrease in crime (citizens, law enforcement, and local government officials); or after-school programs (working parents with children). Once you understand what message your target audience will respond to, you are better able to communicate effectively.

What is the best medium for reaching this audience?

Be aware of what medium your target audience is most likely to see and hear. For example, if the target audience speaks English as a second language, the promotional material may need to be written or spoken in their native language. Likewise, if there is a local neighborhood newsletter or paper, this might be the best medium for reaching adults. High school students, however, might best be reached by a public service announcement on a popular radio station.

Some Weed and Seed sites have found it most practical to **create neighborhood brochures and newsletters**. These resources are crucial to "spreading the word" about Weed and Seed contributions to the welfare of the community. The same information can be mirrored on a Web site. Conduct a Web search for Weed and Seed and take notice of what other sites are promoting. Many times, the local police department or city mayor's office will maintain a Weed and Seed Web site for the community to reference, listing upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, safe haven hours, etc. Your site may choose to do a brochure, a newsletter, or a Web site, or all three. You will be:

- providing visibility to the program
- providing information about upcoming events
- recognizing the contributions of the Weed and Seed partners
- publicizing successes of the strategy thus far
- publicizing important phone numbers, i.e., those of community police officers
- creating a job or training situation for those who publish the newsletter.

Weed and Seed community residents may be willing to deliver the newsletter door to door, or it may be distributed through the schools. The important thing is that the information is made available to the public.

Where can this audience be best reached?

To insure maximum exposure for the promotion, you must go where the audience is! For example, if you want to encourage high school students to participate in a gang prevention program, you will probably receive more response from a flyer distributed at a local high school or high school hangout than from a flyer distributed at a local grocery store. Likewise, if you only distribute information to people who are already attending the Safe Haven, you are unlikely to get a large increase in attendance. Instead, it might be more productive to enlist the help of those Safe Haven attendees to distribute the information to the entire neighborhood by walking door to door.

Getting Started:

Create a list of individuals and businesses to target: this is best managed using database technology or word processing software. Organize this list by area (i.e. residents, nonprofit organization, law enforcement, faith-based). As your strategy grows you'll be able to get an idea of where you should conduct more outreach.

Outline what you would like to include in your initial brochure/newsletter. Is this an informational tool introducing the community to the strategy/concept? Or is it to be utilized as an "update" on progress, or an alert to upcoming events? Does the local high school have a journalism class or club that might be able to produce the brochure/newsletter? Be sure to have your product reviewed by several people and make it look professional.

Distribution:

Starting with local businesses: give them the opportunity to learn about Weed and Seed and your initiatives. The people running a business in the target area are very interested in improving the surrounding area, so it isn't a hard sell! However, these business owners will think that you want a contribution of some kind and may brush you off on the spot. As an initial approach to attracting the attention of the local business community, prepare promotional packages for distribution. Pool resources from the city and the neighborhood and create a package that can be mailed or hand delivered to businesses in the area. The next time you walk into their place of business, bring with you a plastic window sign and ask if they'd be willing to display the "We Support Weed and Seed" sign. This brings visibility to the community.

Faith-based targeting: chances are that a large percentage of residents in the target area are affiliated with a local church. Ask the local churches if you can put informational pamphlets or brochures on a table for distribution. Also, some churches may be willing to insert the Weed and Seed logo in their newsletter with a brief announcement.

Leveraging Resources:

Printing costs are a major consideration for most Weed and Seed sites starting a promotions initiative. Businesses, schools, and even local post offices are eager to help by offering their resources. When you approach a copy shop, offer free advertising by placing the copy shop's logo, name, etc., on your newsletter. Once you have targeted a good portion of your community residents and business owners, coordinate a "town meeting" and continue your promotion. Don't let too much time pass. People are much easier to mobilize when they see that the ball is rolling. Remember: the greater the number of partners, the faster your strategy will take off! The foundation of the Weed and Seed strategy is collaboration.

LOGOS

The Weed and Seed Logo and a variation:



Restrictions on Using the Logo

This logo may only be used on materials produced by Officially Recognized Weed and Seed sites. The logo should not be altered in any way other than adding the city's name beneath or above it. For example, do not remove the words Weed & Seed and replace it with your city's name.

The logo is usually printed in green ink (PMS 348) but it is permissible to print it using other shades of green. CCDO asks that you use only green or black when using the logo. Keeping the logo uniform for all sites makes it a recognizable symbol.

CCDO is frequently asked if a community which has not yet received Official Recognition can wear a Weed and Seed lapel pin or a Weed and Seed tee-shirt bearing the logo. The answer is yes, but a community should not print its own tee-shirts using the logo until receiving Official Recognition. (This use of the logo is much like the policy used by the Disney corporation: while you can purchase a tee-shirt with the Disney logo, it is not permissible to put the Disney logo on any printed materials without their permission.)

When to use the logo

CCDO encourages each Officially Recognized site to use the logo on all materials relating to the Weed and Seed program or in which Weed and Seed grant funds are being used. This includes pamphlets, flyers, letterhead, business cards, signs, banners, billboards, and generally any pertinent printed material.

Electronic copies of the logo may be downloaded from the CCDO Web site at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ccdo/promotingws.htm#logo>.

Using the Weed and Seed Name

If you are implementing or beginning implementation of the Weed and Seed strategy, the name should be used in conjunction with your efforts. The following uses of the name are permissible:

- Operation Weed and Seed
- Weed and Seed
- Weed & Seed

Do not use "Weed 'n' Seed."

It is also permissible to incorporate Weed and Seed into your program name: for example, "Weed and Seed Midtown," or "Midtown's Weed and Seed Program."

The name should be used in news releases and all printed materials, including signs and banners, especially when Weed and Seed grant money has contributed to the effort.

UTILIZING THE SKILLS OF WEED AND SEED RESIDENTS

As your promotional campaign begins, your community, local residents, and businesses can be the key that opens doors. Many residents and local businesses have skills and experience that can greatly aid your efforts to promote the Weed and Seed program. Some sites have hosted contests at local schools for best newsletter title, layout, and concept. To learn what skills and experience might be available in your neighborhood, do a survey of skills, experience, and interest at the Safe Haven, in the schools, or at community meetings.

GENERAL PUBLIC INFORMATION INITIATIVES

Get your site noticed on a national level. In 2004, CCDO remade *Weed & Seed In-Sites* into an electronic-only publication to give quick and easy access to important information from the field about topics such as community policing and neighborhood restoration and to update sites on CCDO's new focus areas: public housing, reentry, and American Indian/Alaska Native affairs.

The *In-Sites* quarterly e-pub consists of six sections: law enforcement, community policing, prevention (including intervention and treatment), neighborhood restoration, reentry, and American Indian/Alaska Native affairs. Each section contains stories from the field highlighting effective strategies, important events, strong community leaders, and grassroots efforts to improve our neighborhoods.

With more than 300 officially recognized Weed and Seed sites throughout the country, there are numerous stories that should be shared and you can make sure your site is highlighted by submitting your story to *In-Sites*. Visit <http://www.ncjrs.org/ccdo/in-sites/index.html> for more information.