

Grantee agency: Wyoming Department of Family Services

Date of report: December 23, 2020

Title of project: Changing the Way Child Support is Viewed in Wyoming

Key staff names, titles, roles, and contact information:

Project Management Team

Kristie Arneson
Wyoming IV-D Director
Role: Project Lead and Grant Coordinator
307-777-6031
kristie.arneson@wyo.gov

Denise Dunn
Wyoming Child Support Program Manager
Role: Reporting and Product Review
307-777-5653
denise.dunn@wyo.gov

Marketing Team

Steve Jackson
Owner, Jackson Productions, LLC
Role: Marketing content developer
480-234-9786
steve.jackson@jackson-pro.com

Dana Volney
Owner, Volney Ventures, LLC
Role: Marketing Coordinator
307-760-1656
dana@volneyventures.com

Child Support Program Outreach Team

Roles: Provide content feedback and general support
Janelle Burgener, janelle.burgener@wyo.gov
Tracy Haley, tracy.haley@wyo.gov
Jill Kiester, jill.kiester@wyo.gov
Ellen Rutledge, erutledge@ywcass.com

Evaluators

Roles: Evaluation
Muneyuki Kato, shinze@uwyo.edu
Tim Pearson, tpearso4@uwyo.edu
Wyoming Survey & Analysis Center at the University of Wyoming

Background

Grant Purpose

The Digital Marketing grant, sponsored by the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families, was a demonstration project with the goal of researching how digital marketing could help child support programs more effectively reach and serve families. In September 2018, the Wyoming Department of Family Services (WY DFS) Child Support Program (CSP) was one of 14 child support agencies to receive funds through OCSE to test digital marketing approaches and partnerships to reach parents/guardians who could benefit from child support services and create or improve two-way digital communication and engagement with parents/guardians.

The three primary goals of the Wyoming CSP's Digital Marketing grant project were to (1) increase eligible clients' awareness and knowledge of the CSP services, (2) improve eligible clients' attitude toward the CSP, and (3) increase enrollment in the CSP, especially through online applications. Online applications are more efficient than paper applications for two reasons. First, potentially eligible clients can access and submit their applications online anytime, unlike the paper application that must be physically submitted either by mail or by visiting a CSP office. Second, the online application system also automates some case data entry while the paper application requires manual data entry.

The CSP proposed using the grant funds to address three challenges related to reaching and enrolling Wyoming families in child support services:

- (1) The CSP's outdated website;
- (2) Lack of outreach to Wyoming attorneys (especially family law attorneys) and other professionals who are well-placed to educate potentially eligible CSP clients about the CSP and refer them to it; and
- (3) Lack of outreach to potentially eligible CSP clients via TV and popular media outlets such as Hulu, Sling TV, YouTube, Google, and Facebook.

The CSP addressed these challenges in three tiered and research-supported interventions. Taken together, the interventions aimed to better reach the target population (potentially eligible clients of CSP services) and to better promote the CSP's services. The goals of the

project were to increase awareness of, improve attitude toward, and increase enrollment in the CSP.

Problem and Hypotheses

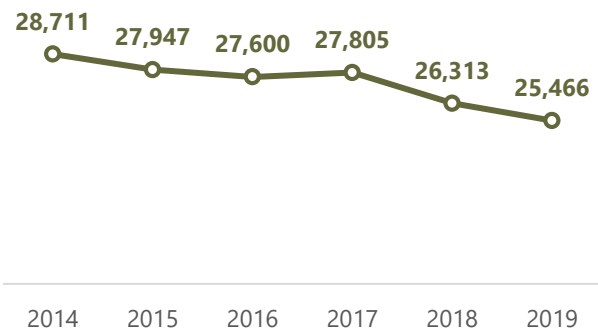
The Digital Marketing grant project team (comprised of CSP personnel, the outreach team, and the marketing team) hypothesized that a low level of awareness about the CSP among potentially eligible clients could be a factor for the declining number of caseload (Figure 1) and new cases (Figure 2) in recent years. The project team further hypothesized that the CSP could increase outreach, awareness, and new applications with large-scale, intensive digital marketing. This advertising could deliver many ad impressions that would then drive the target audience to the CSP website.

In addition, the CSP was concerned that many family law attorneys in Wyoming do not know about the wide variety of CSP services, and attorneys in other practice areas might not be aware of the CSP program. Yet, these attorneys are well-placed to educate potentially eligible clients about the CSP. Outreach to Wyoming attorneys (especially family law attorneys) and other professionals in Wyoming could result in them becoming CSP's "referral partners."

Although the CSP began marketing efforts (including digital marketing) in 2016 to respond to the declining caseload and new cases, the CSP had not used digital marketing as intensively or with as many popular digital marketing platforms as the funding from the Digital Marketing grant allowed.

Figure 1: Wyoming Child Support Caseload Has Declined in Recent Years

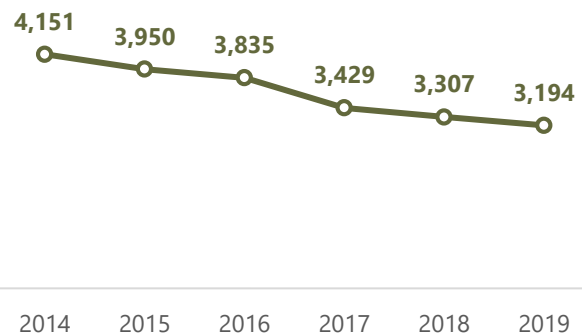
The number of open child support cases, by Federal Fiscal Year



Source: Wyoming Child Support Program

Figure 2: New Wyoming CSP Cases Have Also Declined in Recent Years

The number of new cases, by Federal Fiscal Year



Note: This figure includes all new cases enrolled in each year.

Source: Wvomina Child Support Program

Interventions

Project Description, Target Population, and Timeline

The Digital Marketing grant afforded the CSP resources to upgrade its digital marketing assets such as its website, and to expand on its existing digital marketing approaches by trying popular but more expensive digital marketing services than the CSP could afford on its own. Table 1 summarizes the activities of the three interventions.

Table 1: Summary of the Interventions

	Intervention Period	Challenges Addressed	Intervention Implemented	Target Audience
Intervention I	Mar 21, 2019 - Jun 18, 2019	The CSP's outdated website	The CSP launched a redesigned website with enhanced features: childsupport.wyo.gov .	Potentially eligible and existing CSP clients
Intervention II	Aug 1, 2019 - Oct 31, 2019	Lack of outreach to Wyoming attorneys and other professionals	The CSP deployed digital outreach to Wyoming attorneys and other professionals.	Wyoming attorneys and other professionals
Intervention III	Feb 15, 2020 - May 15, 2020	Lack of outreach to potentially eligible CSP clients via TV and popular media outlets	The CSP increased digital outreach to potentially eligible CSP clients via TV and popular media outlets.	Potentially eligible CSP clients

INTERVENTION I

In Intervention I, the CSP launched a redesigned website (<https://childsupport.wyo.gov/>). The redesign was intended to create CSP's own website and to help potentially eligible and existing clients easily find the website on search engines and effortlessly navigate through the website. The CSP enhanced the website with search engine optimization features so search engines such as Google would recognize the redesigned website as trustworthy and relevant to child support keywords (for example, "Wyoming child support") and would rank it higher in their organic search results. The redesign strategically placed child support relevant keywords throughout the website and applied a user-friendly and easy-to-navigate layout. The homepage of the redesigned website includes large links designed to be difficult to miss and relate to the reasons both potentially eligible and current clients would visit the site (e.g., to apply for services, to make a child support payment). The CSP also wants potentially eligible clients to apply online instead of using a paper application, and the large "Apply for Services" button helps them find

the application link easily. Mobile adaptability optimized navigation through the new website on smaller screens. The redesigned CSP website launched in Intervention I provided a foundation for CSP's future digital outreach efforts including Interventions II and III.

INTERVENTION II

Intervention II targeted Wyoming attorneys and other professionals in Wyoming (e.g., healthcare professionals, family counselors, and others who would likely have contact with single parents) with a digital marketing campaign. Intervention II was intended to increase awareness and knowledge of the CSP among Wyoming attorneys and other professionals so they would partner with the CSP to help their clients obtain child support. The CSP distributed digital advertisements to the target audience to educate them about CSP services with the expectation that these professionals would then refer their clients to the CSP and the CSP website. For Intervention II, the CSP developed two (2) special landing pages on the redesigned CSP website and digital advertisements, including three promotional videos and display advertisements (i.e., graphic, text, and/or video displays such as banner ads). The CSP distributed its digital marketing advertisements via the online version of the Wyoming State Bar magazine, "Wyoming Lawyer," LinkedIn, and Spectrum Reach.

INTERVENTION III

The intention of Intervention III was to expand the reach of the CSP to potentially eligible clients by informing them about the CSP's services and increasing their visits to the redesigned CSP website. The CSP placed two (2) video ads on TV (via Spectrum Reach) and streaming services such as Hulu, Sling TV, and YouTube. The CSP placed a third video ad on a special page set up on the CSP website. The CSP ran display advertisements on websites via non-streaming platforms including Spectrum Reach, Google Ads, Facebook, and Cap City News, a local news platform based in Cheyenne, Wyoming. The advertisements stated that the CSP offers time- and money-saving child support services. The evaluators also posted an online survey for website visitors to comment on their awareness of and attitudes toward the CSP and the usability of the CSP website.

Research Questions

The CSP used three (3) high-level research questions to examine the reach of each intervention, visits to the CSP website, and online applications:

1. How many impressions and views of digital advertisements did the interventions deliver?
2. How did the interventions affect the incoming traffic on the redesigned CSP website?
3. How did the interventions affect online applications from potentially eligible clients?

Outcome Measures, Results, and Analysis

How Many Impressions and Views of Digital Advertisements Did the Interventions Deliver?

Outcome measure. The key outcome measure for this question is the number of impressions (impressions delivered) to determine the reach of the digital advertisements. Impressions indicate how often a particular video ad was delivered on a viewer’s screen. Impressions do not indicate whether the targeted audience member paid attention to the advertisements.

Results & Analysis. Intervention II delivered about 1.6 million ad impressions (Table 2). Intervention III supported an even larger digital marketing campaign, delivering roughly 12.1 million impressions. About 8.5 million impressions came from the video ads on the streaming services with 5.5 million views, and 3.6 million impressions came from the display ads distributed via the non-streaming services.

Table 2: Interventions, Marketing Platforms, and Ad Impressions

	Platforms	Total Ad Impression
Intervention I	N/A	N/A
Intervention II	Wyoming State Bar magazine "Wyoming Lawyer," LinkedIn, & Spectrum Reach	1,585,760
Intervention III	Hulu, Sling TV, YouTube, Spectrum Reach, Google Ads, Facebook, & Cap City News	12,066,669

Source: Digital marketing platforms, Google Analytics, & Wyoming CSP online (E-543) application log.

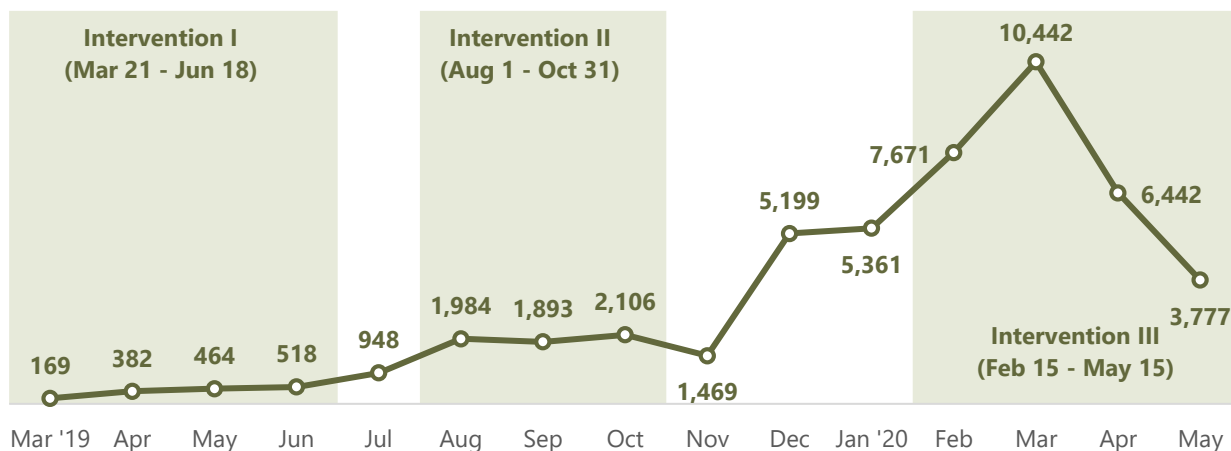
How Did the Interventions Affect the Incoming Traffic on the Redesigned CSP Website?

Outcome Measure. The outcome measure for this evaluation question is the number of first-time visits to the redesigned website. This number indicated whether internet users, including potentially eligible clients, discovered the CSP website, thereby expanding CSP’s awareness and reach among this target population.

Results & Analysis. The CSP website had a surge of new visitors during the months of Intervention II and Intervention III. As seen in Figure 3, the surge during Intervention III was larger than the one experienced during Intervention II.

Figure 3: Visitors to the CSP Website

The number of first-time visits, by month



Source: Google Analytics on Wyoming Child Support Program website

How Did the Interventions Affect Online Applications from Potentially Eligible Clients?

Outcome measure. The outcome measure for this question is the number of first-time online applications submitted for child support services.

Results & Analysis. The number of first-time online applications gradually rose after the launch of the online application system (Figure 4). The rise was especially steep during Intervention III, compared to previous months.

Summary

The redesigned website deployed in Intervention I laid the groundwork for CSP’s future digital marketing efforts. Interventions II and III included large-scale digital marketing efforts delivering millions of ad impressions (see Table 2) and coincided with a surge of first-time visitors to the CSP website (see Figure 3). Particularly during Intervention III, the number of first-time website visitors and online applications (see Figure 4) surged to a high the CSP had not been before, suggesting that large-scale, intensive digital marketing could increase the awareness of the CSP.

Figure 4: New Online (E-543) Applications

The number of first-time online applications by month, July 2018 – May 2020



Note: The bold green line shows the three-month moving average.

Source: Wyoming Child Support Program online (E-543) application log

Impact of COVID-19

In Wyoming, COVID-19 spread with the first reported case in March 2020 (Klamann, 2020). Although the spread of COVID-19 in Wyoming was relatively slow, Wyoming's unemployment rate spiked from 4% in March 2020 to 10% in April 2020 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020), and the spike was likely due to the pandemic (Feighery, 2020).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the CSP employees worked remotely and the CSP closed its offices to the public (some offices have since re-opened). The CSP continued serving clients via phone and email. Customers could still drop off paperwork at the CSP offices and use the web-based Self-Service Portal to apply online, check case information, and make payments.

Much of Intervention III coincided with the pandemic. However, no modifications were made to planned activities funded by the Digital Marketing grant in response to the pandemic because the project team believed the marketing message in Intervention III (that CSP saves time and money) would be even more relevant during the pandemic.

In our evaluation, we could not separate the number of first-time online applications submitted as a result of the intervention from those that were due to the pandemic. Job losses or other hardships related to the pandemic could have motivated both new and existing CSP clients to

contact the CSP regardless of Intervention III as this was a time of uncertainty and hardship for many Wyoming families. Additionally, many residents might have watched TV or used streaming services such as Hulu and YouTube more often because the pandemic kept them at home. Consequently, the pandemic might have boosted visits to the CSP website and online applications beyond the hypothesized impact of Intervention III.

Key Lessons Learned and Other General Conclusions

Large-scale, Intensive Digital Marketing Can Increase Awareness of the CSP

Project team members suggested in interviews and during the LI² sessions that funding from the Digital Marketing grant allowed them to explore new marketing strategies. More specifically, the project team found Hulu, Google Ads, and YouTube were effective platforms for delivering many ad impressions to potentially eligible clients. YouTube was the most cost-effective streaming platform at \$.01 per view. Hulu was the most effective in terms of total views in Wyoming, but it was also expensive (\$.03 per view). The project team concluded that while Hulu was expensive, it should be considered for brief, targeted, marketing efforts.

Sling TV had a small viewing audience in Wyoming, was also expensive, and did not provide data about ad impressions delivered and views completed. For these reasons, the marketing team does not plan to use Sling TV for future marketing efforts. They do plan to use YouTube and Google Ads for future marketing because they had a broad reach at low cost. They plan to use Hulu in small, directed, and affordable increments. Project team members believe grantees in other states may find marketing via TV streaming services effective too.

Marketing Messages Should Reflect the Social and Economic Context in Which Potentially Eligible Clients Live

The message that the CSP can save people time and money in Intervention III resonated with potential clients according to the online survey respondents. Project team members also believe this marketing message, conceived before the COVID-19 outbreak, was effective following the economic impact of the pandemic.

Effective Communication and Established Work Protocols Can Lead to Successful Project Coordination, Implementation, and Management of Digital Marketing Interventions

The strength of the project team's group processes led to successful planning, promotion, and direction of the digital marketing efforts throughout the interventions. These processes included frequent and regularly scheduled meetings; clearly defined work assignments; effective communication using phone calls, texting, and emails; and the diversity of team members' skills. These strong team skills were likely bolstered by previously established work relationships and trust among team members, and they will continue beyond the grant period.

The Digital Marketing Grant Allowed the CSP to Try Marketing Approaches Outside Their Usual Budget for Outreach

The Digital Marketing grant affected CSP's marketing capacity by funding innovative marketing strategies that would have been outside the CSP's usual outreach budget.

The Project Team Will Continue to Use Evaluations Strategies They Were Introduced to During the Digital Marketing Grant.

Participating in the evaluation of the Digital Marketing grant exposed the project team to evaluation strategies they had not used before. Evaluation tools, including systematic data collection and review, will be part of the team's future outreach efforts.

Other Conclusions

The final project brief guidance asked two (2) questions the evaluators have insufficient information to answer. The first question is "What did you learn that isn't captured in the data?" When WYSAC evaluators posed this question to the project team, they responded by discussing the strengths of their team's work protocols and communication. We sought to answer this question, but the data we obtained only corroborated the data we had collected in the interviews of the project team. So, the question was asked, but not answered. The second question is "How are you translating findings from tests run before the COVID outbreak to the new social and economic context?" Because the COVID outbreak occurred nearly at the same time, the CSP began Intervention III, we cannot differentiate the effects of the pandemic from the effects of the intervention. Project team members believe the marketing message they chose for Intervention III (the CSP could save families time and money) would be even more relevant during the pandemic.

Next Steps

What Permanent Changes, If Any, Do You Plan to Make Based on What You Learned as Part of Your Digital Marketing Work?

The Wyoming CSP will use Google Ads and YouTube for future marketing efforts because they are affordable and effective in reaching potential clients.

The online survey conducted in Intervention III solicited anonymous feedback from website visitors on what directed them to the website and their experience on it. The project team intends to use online surveys periodically to obtain feedback from website visitors on improving the CSP's marketing and website design.

References

Feighery, M. (2020, May 27). Wyoming's unemployment rate more than doubled in April.

Wyoming Public Media. <https://www.wyomingpublicmedia.org/post/wyomings-unemployment-rate-more-doubled-april#stream/0>

Klamann, S. (2020, March 11). First coronavirus case reported in Wyoming. *The Casper Star-*

Tribune. https://trib.com/news/state-and-regional/first-coronavirus-case-reported-in-wyoming/article_0b075aea-a3ab-58d8-b5bd-a5b03b764075.html

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020). Wyoming economy at a glance. Retrieved from

<https://www.bls.gov/regions/mountain-plains/wyoming.htm>