



### **Mission**

Ready Washington is a coalition of more than 20 state and local agencies, associations, and advocacy organizations that believe every Washington student should graduate high school prepared for a successful future—on the education and career path they choose—and we offer tools and resources to support them on that path.

### **Racial Equity Commitment**

Each and every Washington student has big dreams. Ready Washington coalition participants use communications practices that honor, amplify, and learn from the lived expertise of students and families, particularly those who experience systemic injustice. **The coalition commits to acting together to confront systems of racism that affect our students and ourselves.** Through storytelling and relationship building with coalition members, students, families, and educators, Ready Washington illuminates the brilliance of students, contributing to a system that supports every student – in particular, students who identify with Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and racially diverse communities – to graduate high school with the skills and knowledge needed to successfully navigate postsecondary education and training and pursue rewarding careers.

Ready Washington will:

- **Tell stories** that spotlight students’ power and potential and challenge damaging stereotypes.
- Use communications channels and processes to **connect with, learn from and magnify, in their own words, voices** of students and families who identify with racially diverse communities.
- Expand **access to culturally responsive college and career readiness resources and tools** for families with the least access to the educational system, particularly families who identify with racially diverse communities who speak a language other than English.
- Facilitate **ongoing learning and growth, both individually and collectively**, that coalition participants bring to their organizations and daily work.

Coalition participants grapple with how to sufficiently name all groups of students who are not being fully supported by our state’s education system. At present, this statement names three groups to acknowledge historic and ongoing injustices. The coalition will continue to return to this issue.

The participants of the Ready Washington coalition come from the education policy and communications fields and a majority are white.

### **Ready WA’s Racial Equity Communications Practices**

These practices are meant to support Ready Washington in operationalizing the four commitments listed above as we conceive of, create, and distribute tools and resources. We relied heavily on two sources as we created this guide:

- ***Best Starts for Kids:***
  - [\*Writing Style Guide\*](#)
  - [\*Guide to Equitable Storytelling\*](#)
  - [\*Guide to Photography and Visual Communications\*](#)
- ***Nonprofit AF: Content creators, here’s an Equity Screen to use as you work on your next blog post, book, podcast, or video.***

The guide is meant to be used during all Ready WA content creation and distribution processes, by coalition members and leaders. We post it publicly so others can see our processes and hold us accountable to them as needed. Other organizations are welcome to use the guide if it is helpful. The guide is a living document – coalition members will regularly reflect on processes and values in our commitment to fulfilling the racial equity statement.

### ***Decision Points***

Ready Washington examines the following decisions points:

- Where do we get our ideas for our stories and materials? Could we listen more deeply for ideas from Black, Indigenous, and Latinx students, families, and educators?
- Have we thought carefully about the goal(s) of the project?
- Who do we ask for sources?
- How do we set deadlines and when are we available to connect?
- What channels do we use for communication with storytellers? Languages?
- How are we getting feedback and incorporating it from storytellers?

### ***Principles***

Ready Washington uses the following principles and questions when creating messaging and stories so that we stay true to our commitments and accountable to the students, families, and educators whose stories we tell and who we seek to support with information and resources. In developing tools and resources, we:

- Reflect and include diverse communities
- Engage relationally with students, families, educators, and partners
- Use strengths-based framing
- Use clear and inclusive language

**Reflect and include diverse communities:** Ready WA uses communications practices that honor, amplify, reflect, and learn from the lived expertise of students and families, particularly those who are furthest from educational opportunity.

- Who has the opportunity to participate in Ready WA projects?
- What gatekeepers might be in place? Where is gatekeeping happening with a project?
- How does this project value the voices of students, families, and/or educators from the Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and/or other racially diverse communities?
- What translations and/or transcreations can we provide?
- Are we being intentionally inclusive? What visuals should be included? Do they showcase diversity and appropriately reflect the community or person in the story?
- How can we prioritize a variety of media beyond using writing, embedded audio recordings or video in first person voice and language?

**Engage relationally:** Ready WA values storytellers for their time, energy, and shared experiences. Ready WA recognizes that building and maintaining relationships takes time, and we build this time into our processes.

- How does outreach to students, families, and educators happen in ways that value their preferences, needs, and existing relationships with community organizations?
- How are storytellers engaged throughout the whole process of the project?
- Do the storytellers fully understand how their story will be used, where and for how long?

- How are storytellers compensated? (For example, with stipends? Access to coalition member networks and expertise?)
- Does the storyteller have audiences in mind with whom they would like to share their story?
- How can the story be crafted so it is valuable for the storyteller and beneficial content for them to share?
- How are we creating a feedback loop with storytellers?

**Employ strengths-based framing:** Ready Washington frames students, families, and educators through the strengths and assets they bring to their schools and communities, including their positive visions for the future and their resilience in the face of systemic and institutional inequities.

Questions to ask:

- Challenge dominant narratives: What dominant narratives does this story help to reframe or disrupt so that harmful myths are not perpetuated?
- Lead with positive aspirations:
  - What words and messages can be used to reflect and celebrate strengths rather than deficits (real or perceived)?
  - Would students, families, and/or educators share the vision presented for themselves?
  - Would this information make storytellers feel hopeful for the future?
- Hold the system accountable:
  - How does the individual story connect to larger institutional or structural issues or efforts?
  - Can the personal story uplift individual strengths while also revealing systemic barriers?
  - Do we name systemic issues and barriers, rather than inaccurately and harmfully placing the responsibility for change on students?

**Use clear and inclusive language:** Ready Washington uses language that shows rather than tells, and that invites all stakeholders to access our materials.

- Are we avoiding jargon and acronyms?
- Do we explain the *what* and *why*, rather than using less clear shorthand?
- Is language person-first (for example: students experiencing homelessness)?
- Use short, easy to access hyperlinks.

**Voice**

As a brand, Ready WA is aspirational, collaborative, human, and trustworthy.

Characteristic	Description	Do	Avoid
Aspirational, strengths-based	Focus on our vision and the positive things we want to see; highlight strengths and assets that students, families, and educators bring to their schools & communities.	- Focus on the good - Show enthusiasm and pride—don't be afraid of a few exclamation points!	- Avoid frames that rely on deficits (e.g. 'at risk youth') - Avoid detached, academic language (e.g. adolescents)
Collaborative, community oriented	Connect with people through shared vision for students and families; be	- Give credit to community for their ideas and successes	- Avoid framing a person or group as apart from a norm

	open to feedback and new ideas from partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Don't be afraid of first person</li> <li>- Iterate</li> </ul>	(e.g. 'people who don't speak English')
Human	Write like real people, using clear and inclusive language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Write in plain English</li> <li>- Prioritize photos of people as much as possible and appropriate (vs icons for example)</li> <li>- Use vivid language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Avoid unfamiliar or complicated acronyms and abbreviations</li> <li>- Avoid words like "program," be more descriptive and clear</li> </ul>
Trustworthy	Present accurate, relevant, timely information; humility in ongoing learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Share useful information and be a credible source</li> <li>- Discuss racism and other structural inequities and their impacts directly</li> <li>- Acknowledge areas where we are still learning or striving to be better</li> <li>- Double check information</li> <li>- Be clear about systemic context and responsibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Avoid sarcasm</li> <li>-</li> </ul>