



Brand and Style Guide Frederick County Government

Communications and Public Engagement Office
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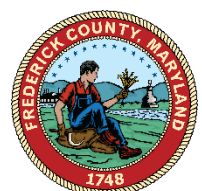


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Introduction

The role of communications in Frederick County Government (FCG) is to inform and engage the public on what we do, the services we provide, and how people in the community can get involved.

Effective communication ensures that people in Frederick County are well-informed about our initiatives, policies, and services. Transparent and clear communication fosters trust between the government and its constituents, promoting a sense of community and engagement.

Every piece of content plays a vital role in bridging the gap between the government and the public. This guide will ensure that each message is accessible, clear, and impactful.

Mission, Values, and Vision

- **Mission:** To foster an informed, engaged, and connected community by ensuring that everyone in Frederick County has access to clear, transparent, and inclusive communication that reflects the diverse needs and values of our community.
- **Values:** This style guide supports County Executive Fitzwater's key values of **transparency** and **inclusion**.
 - The clearer our words, the more transparent we are to the public.
 - Our messages must be accessible to everyone to be truly inclusive.
- **Vision:** This guide aligns with our Livable Frederick vision of a unique and vibrant community where everyone can live, work, and thrive while feeling a strong sense of place and belonging.

Purpose of the Brand and Style Guide

Why do we need this guide? The purpose of this Brand and Style Guide is to maintain our brand and style consistency across all communications and design materials. The FCG brand is an extension of our Mission, Values, and Vision. Unified and consistent branding positions FCG as a trusted and reliable resource.

What will this guide do? This guide will help Frederick County Government employees, representatives, consultants, and contractors create materials that are easy to identify, simple to understand, and make an impact. **Specifically, this guide will:**

- Explain how to use impactful visual branding elements.
- Explain why clear, simple writing is important and provide tips for writing in plain language.
- Provide examples and templates.
- Include best practices for creating inclusive and accessible content.

What types of materials does this guide apply to? This guide applies to all printed and digital content produced by Frederick County Government. Examples include:

- Printed Materials: Brochures, flyers, graphics, posters, handouts, advertisements.
- Digital Content: Website design and content, email newsletters, email signatures, social media posts, online advertisements, digital presentations, flyers, and graphics.
- Event and Outreach Materials: Invitations, signage, banners, flyers, brochures.

Why use this guide? Following this guide will ensure that our message is effectively communicated and will help the public become more aware of available services, resources, information, and ways to get involved.

What if my agency or program has its own Brand and Style Guide? This is the official FCG Brand and Style Guide. Generally, all content and materials representing Frederick County Government must follow this brand and style guide. Agencies **may** have their own sub brand and style guides for specific programs, services, or initiatives **pending approval** from Office of Communications and Public Engagement. Guidelines must generally align with those of the County-wide guide. If there is a conflict between guides, the FCG Brand and Style Guide supersedes any sub brand and style guide. A list of approved sub brands and guides appears in the Supplemental Information section of this guide.

Accessibility

Accessibility is a top priority throughout this guide. By ensuring that our messages reach everyone, we are promoting inclusion, ensuring equal access, and providing the opportunity for everyone in our community to participate fully. Beyond aligning with our Mission and Values, ensuring accessibility is also a legal requirement put in place by the U.S. Department of Justice. Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates that public entities, including local governments, ensure their digital content meets the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.1 Level AA](#).

Definitions

Marketing materials – Advertisements and branded giveaways designed to promote a Frederick County Government service or resource.

Outreach materials – Brochures, flyers, rack cards, or other items created to hand out to individuals. These materials may also exist digitally, but they were not created solely for posting online.

Branding Elements

The materials we create for Frederick County Government should reflect who we are and what we do. Branding elements are a set of tools that work together to create a consistent look so our communications materials are recognizable, easy to understand, and align with our Mission, Values, and Vision.

Communication goes beyond words. Colors, photos, images, and graphics set a tone and convey messages. When used to brand an organization, they can establish trust.

Seal and Logos

The Frederick County seal represents our government and identifies materials as official, trusted sources of information to the public.

- The Frederick County seal **must** be used on all outreach and marketing materials.
- The seal should use a 1:1 aspect ratio. The minimum size of the image should be no smaller than 1 inch for printed items (usually at a minimum of 300 dots per inch).
- Logos for a specific division or program should be secondary to the County seal. When secondary logos are used, the County seal should be placed in the bottom left with the secondary logo following.
- For digital graphics (including those in social media, email, web, etc.), signage, flyers, and brochures, the County seal should be placed in the bottom left corner.
- For reports, bound materials, and branded giveaways, the County seal placement may vary depending on layout and design needs. Any questions about materials should be directed to the Office of Communications and Public Engagement.
- Refer to [County Seal and Logo Identity Standards and Guidelines](#) for more details.

Slogan

Frederick County Government's official slogan is "Rich History, Bright Future." No other slogan should be used in conjunction with the County seal.

Typography

Consistent use of fonts unifies our branding across materials. Sans serif fonts are easy to read and are considered a best practice for digital accessibility.

- Approved fonts include Aptos, Arial, Calibri, Helvetica, and Montserrat. The full font family may be used, including regular, **bold**, *italic*, **bold italic**, light, and narrow.
- Times New Roman may be used for formal correspondence and printed documents. The font is not recommended for digital applications.
- The minimum font size for most documents is 12 pt. Headings should be sized 14 pt or larger.

- Other fonts and sizes may be used sparingly if required for the purposes of a unique project, with prior approval by the Communications and Public Engagement Office.

Note: Color contrast of text is important for people with visual disabilities. According to Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act, characters need to contrast with their background. For more details, visit www.section508.gov/develop/fonts-typography.

Color Palette

The following colors are the primary colors of Frederick County Government. These colors are essential to maintaining our brand identity and should be used on all outreach and marketing materials.



Blue #3e6194

RGB 62, 97, 148

CMYK 58.1, 34.5, 0, 42

Hue 215.6°, saturation 41%, lightness 41.2%



Dark Teal (Corsair) #185D6A

RGB 24, 93, 106

CMYK 77, 12, 0, 58

Hue 190°, saturation 63%, lightness 25%



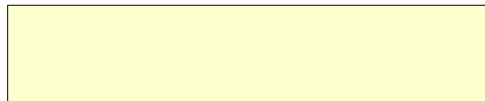
Green #50a079

RGB 80, 160, 121

CMYK 50, 0, 24.4, 37.3

Hue 150.8°, saturation 33.3%, lightness 47.1%

Secondary colors should include:



Yellow (Conditioner) #FFFFCC

RGB 100, 100, 80

CMYK 0, 0, 20, 0

Hue 60.0°, saturation 100%, lightness 90%



White #ffffff

RGB 255, 255, 255

CMYK 0, 0, 0, 0

Hue 0.0°, saturation 0%, lightness 100%



Red (Persian Red) #cc3333

RGB 80, 20, 20

CMYK 0, 75, 75, 20

Hue 0.0°, saturation 60%, lightness 50%

NOTE: Red is to be used exclusively for communicating in an emergency.

FCG TV

The following colors and fonts are to be used in relation to Frederick County Government Television.

FCG TV Branding

FCG TV should always be written with a space between “FCG” and “TV” in all capital letters. No dash or lower-case letters should be used.

FCG TV Logo

The font used on FCG TV’s logo is Geometr415 Blk BT.



Dark Blue #3e6194
RGB 62, 97, 148
CMYK 84, 64, 18, 3
Hue: 216°, Saturation: 58%, Lightness 58%

White and black are also acceptable colors. Note that “TV” is negative space.

FCG TV Live Graphics

Graphics on FCG TV should appear in Montserrat font in most cases. Limited exceptions may be permitted with prior permission.



Dark Blue (Lower 3rd) #33588d
RGB 51, 88, 141
CMYK 89, 70, 20, 4
Hue: 215°, Saturation: 64%, Lightness 55%



Light Blue (ID pop-up) #577cb3
RGB 87, 124, 179
CMYK 71, 48, 7, 0
Hue: 216°, Saturation: 51%, Lightness 70%



White (background) #ffffff
RGB 255, 255, 255
CMYK 0, 0, 0, 0
Hue 0.0°, saturation 0%, lightness 100%

Imagery

Imagery is a powerful tool that can be used to convey important messages while highlighting our brand's Mission, Values, and Vision. Photos and icons can help make content more accessible to people with different abilities. Graphics and flyers can enhance clarity, engagement, and understanding.

Note: All digital photos, images, icons and other graphic elements are required by law to include Alternative (Alt) Text. Alt Text is a brief text description of images and is an essential part of making content accessible. Alt Text is read by screen readers (or other assistive technology) to provide information about the image to the reader.

Best Practices for Alt Text:

- Keep it short, concise, and clear.
- Consider key elements of why you chose this image, instead of describing every little detail.
- Do **not** start with "Image of..." or "Picture of...". Screen readers announce it's an image. However, do say if it's a logo, an illustration, a painting, or a cartoon.
- Don't duplicate text that's adjacent in the document or website.
- End the alt text sentence with a period.

Source: [Write helpful Alt Text to describe images | Digital Accessibility](#)

Photos

Whether using photos taken by County staff or stock artwork, images should be high quality and reflect the community, services, and values of Frederick County.

Best Practices for Images

- Focus on using photos of people to highlight the community's diversity and vibrancy.
- Include photos of Frederick County's natural landscapes such as parks, rivers, farms, and mountains to showcase the region's beauty.
- Use photos of identifiable locations within Frederick County to create a strong sense of place and identity.
- Ensure that the photos are representative of the community, reflecting its various ages, ethnicities, and lifestyles.
- Emphasize inclusivity by featuring individuals from different backgrounds and abilities.
- Strive for authenticity in photos, capturing genuine moments and interactions.

- Mix wide shots of landscapes with close-ups of individuals to create a balanced visual narrative.
- Avoid staged or overly posed shots; aim for natural and candid images.

Permissions for Photo Use

Images posted publicly to Communications and Public Engagement’s Flickr account can be downloaded and used by anyone. When possible, these images should be credited to Frederick County Government.

Only use the faces of children if you have signed consent from the parent or legal guardian. A consent form is available on the SharePoint page for Communications and Public Engagement. Adults at public meetings and events have limited expectation of privacy.

Materials prepared for FCG programs and services should use photos taken by FCG staff or by Visit Frederick. When necessary, stock imagery may be used if it is obtained through a paid subscription service. Under no circumstances should photos or graphics be downloaded from the Internet without permission of the host site. Any photos or images created with the use of artificial intelligence must be clearly labeled as “AI-generated” or “AI-enhanced.”

Icons

Icons can be a helpful tool in design, providing a visual shorthand for conveying information and highlighting messages. Below are some best practices for using icons effectively:

- Icons should serve a functional purpose and should not be used as decorative elements.
- Icons should be easily recognizable.
- Maintain consistency for all icons within a project. This includes sizes, colors, and visual weights.
- Provide sufficient contrast so icons are easily visible against their background.
- Use appropriately sized icons.
- Keep icons simple with clear designs that convey their messages quickly and effectively.

Slides

Slides for public presentations should be professional in tone and appearance. The opening and closing slides in all public presentations must include the Frederick County seal. A sample slide template is included in this Guide’s Resources section.

Graphics and Flyers

By using consistent brand colors, fonts, and logos in our graphics and flyers, we create a cohesive image that resonates with people in Frederick County. These materials engage the audience, promote inclusivity and authenticity, and drive our audience toward action.

Visual Consistency

- Always use the FCG color palette and fonts as outlined in this Guide.
- Use colors that are harmonious and use no more than four colors. Pick a primary color and incorporate two to three secondary colors.
- Incorporate the Frederick County seal in a prominent position on all flyers and graphics. Ensure it is of high resolution and properly scaled.

Layout and Design

- Adopt a clean and uncluttered layout that allows information to be easily understood.
- Organize content using a clear hierarchy, employing headings, subheadings, and bullet points where appropriate. This is required to meet federal accessibility standards for any content that will be posted in a digital space, and it is important for all materials – both digital and print – to aid in understanding.
- Balance text with imagery to avoid overwhelming the viewer. Use white space strategically to create a visually appealing and readable design.
- Allow for extra space on materials that may be translated. Spanish typically takes up 20 to 30 percent more space than English.

Call to Action

- Include clear and compelling calls to action that guide the viewer on next steps.
- Make sure contact information, event details, and other critical information are easy to find and read.

QR Codes

QR codes are two-dimensional barcodes that can be scanned using a smartphone or QR reader to access information quickly. These codes can store a variety of data types including URLs, contact information, and text. QR codes are highly effective for directing viewers to online resources, simplifying the process of accessing websites, downloading apps, or viewing multimedia content.

- To ensure maximum usability, place QR codes where they are easily visible and scannable.
- QR codes are best used on printed materials.
- QR codes should be avoided on digital materials. If you are making a flyer or graphic for a website or social media, use a URL or link instead.

Writing and Style Guidelines

Audience

When writing content, think of your audience first. Starting with the audience means considering who they are, where they live, their capacity for participation, their capacity for understanding, their values, and more. **The better we understand who we are trying to reach, the more effective we will be at reaching them.**

Best practice is to avoid using the “general public” as your audience, as it is not specific enough to identify motivations and interests. When audiences are clearly defined, messaging resonates better, and tactics are more effective.

Examples of who your audience may include: business owners, farmers, parents, media, seniors, the Deaf community, college students, environmentalists, or the Spanish-speaking community.

Note: Be intentional and specific about the words you use for your audience. For example:

- **Hispanic/Latino/Spanish-Speakers** – These words have different meanings. Not all people who are Hispanic speak Spanish. Not all Spanish speakers are from Latin America.
- **Latinx** – This non-gendered word to refer to all people from Latin America is not widely used by Latinos. Before using Latinx in any materials, find out if the audience you are trying to reach prefers Latinx or Latino/Latina.

Delivery Method

How are you going to reach your audience? Considering your delivery method is crucial because it directly impacts how your audience receives and perceives your message.

Different platforms and materials each have unique characteristics and expectations. For example, a flyer requires brevity and visual appeal, while a technical report requires depth and comprehensive analysis.

By aligning your content with the most effective delivery method, you enhance clarity, engagement, and the overall impact of your communication, ensuring that your brand message is delivered in the most suitable and effective manner.

Voice and Tone

Voice refers to the unique style and personality of the writer. It communicates who we are, and a consistent brand voice creates recognizable and easy-to-understand content. In maintaining the Frederick County Government brand voice, it is essential to be:

- **Engaging**
- **Inclusive**

- **Concise**
- **Authentic**
- **Informative**

We recognize that each writer or specific project may have its own slightly unique voice, however, that voice should still align with the FCG brand voice. When crafting content, always consider your audience and what voice will resonate with them.

Tone reflects the emotional quality or attitude conveyed in writing. It also helps to connect us to our audience. In maintaining the FCG brand tone, it is essential to be:

- **Respectful**
- **Professional**
- **Trustworthy**
- **Welcoming**

Messaging

Everything we write should be clear in its meaning. Plain language is easy to understand and makes our content more accessible and easier to share through translations and interpretations.

Remember, the purpose of our communication is to inform and assist our audience. By prioritizing plain language, we know our message is clear, accessible, and impactful.

When creating content:

- Follow the seven Cs of communication: clear, concise, correct, complete, contextual, concrete, and courteous.
- Write at an eighth-grade level.
- Use simple words and simple sentence structure.
- Use active voice.
- Avoid acronyms, jargon, and technical terms.
 - If you must use a technical term, include an explanation.

Grammar and Punctuation

In most cases, FCG follows the Associated Press stylebook for writing and grammar. Below are some general guidelines and County-specific rules.

- **Acronyms:** Generally, avoid acronyms. If you must use an acronym, spell out the full name the first time it appears on the page, followed by the acronym in parentheses. If you aren't going to use the acronym later in the document, there is no need to identify the acronym in parentheses.
- **Addresses:** Spell out *Street, Road, Avenue*, etc.

- **Agency:** Use *agency* when referring to a non-specific unit of Frederick County Government. This avoids confusion about the reporting structure of divisions, departments and offices.
- **County vs county:** Capitalize *County* in the context of Frederick County Government or when County is used as a shortened version of Frederick County Government. Don't capitalize *county* when referring to a county or counties in general.
- **County Council:** *County Council* is capitalized when part of a proper name.
- **County Executive:** Use *County Executive Jessica Fitzwater* in the first reference.
- **Dates:** Write out the full date, such as *Thursday, September 4*. Include the year only when it is not the current year. Write out the full day and month; do not abbreviate.
- **Emails and URLs:** Use pascal case for writing out emails and URLs. For example, write *HMorris@FrederickCountyMD.gov* or *www.FrederickCountyMD.gov*.
- **Links:** Do not use vague language such as *click here* or *read more*. Instead, use descriptive language to provide context for a link within a sentence. For example, *"To learn more, visit the Frederick County Government website."*
- **Numbers:** Write out numbers one through nine. Use numerals for 10 and above. *Exception:* Write out a number if it is the first word of a sentence, unless that number is a year.
- **Symbols:** Avoid using symbols like the percentage symbol (%) and ampersand (&). *Exception:* Dollar amounts should be preceded with \$.
- **Titles:** Capitalize and spell out formal titles when they precede a full name. Use lowercase elsewhere.

Approval Process

New outreach materials must be approved by the division's communications manager **prior** to printing and distribution. For agencies without a communications manager, approval will come from the Office of Communications and Public Engagement.

Materials will be reviewed for plain language, accessibility, design standards, ease of translation, copyright claims, and any potential conflicts with and/or connections to other FCG materials.

Resources

Templates

Templates for various materials will be available on the Communications and Public Engagement SharePoint page. You may create your own templates that fit the guidelines outlined in this document or reach out to the Office of Communications and Public Engagement for template samples.

Supplemental Information

Frederick County Government official policies, procedures, best practices, and other guidance supplement this guide. As more materials become available, they will be distributed to staff.

Questions

If you have any questions about the information included in this style guide, or you want to request additional supplemental information, please contact the Office of Communications and Public Engagement at 301-600-6740.

This document was last modified October 2025.