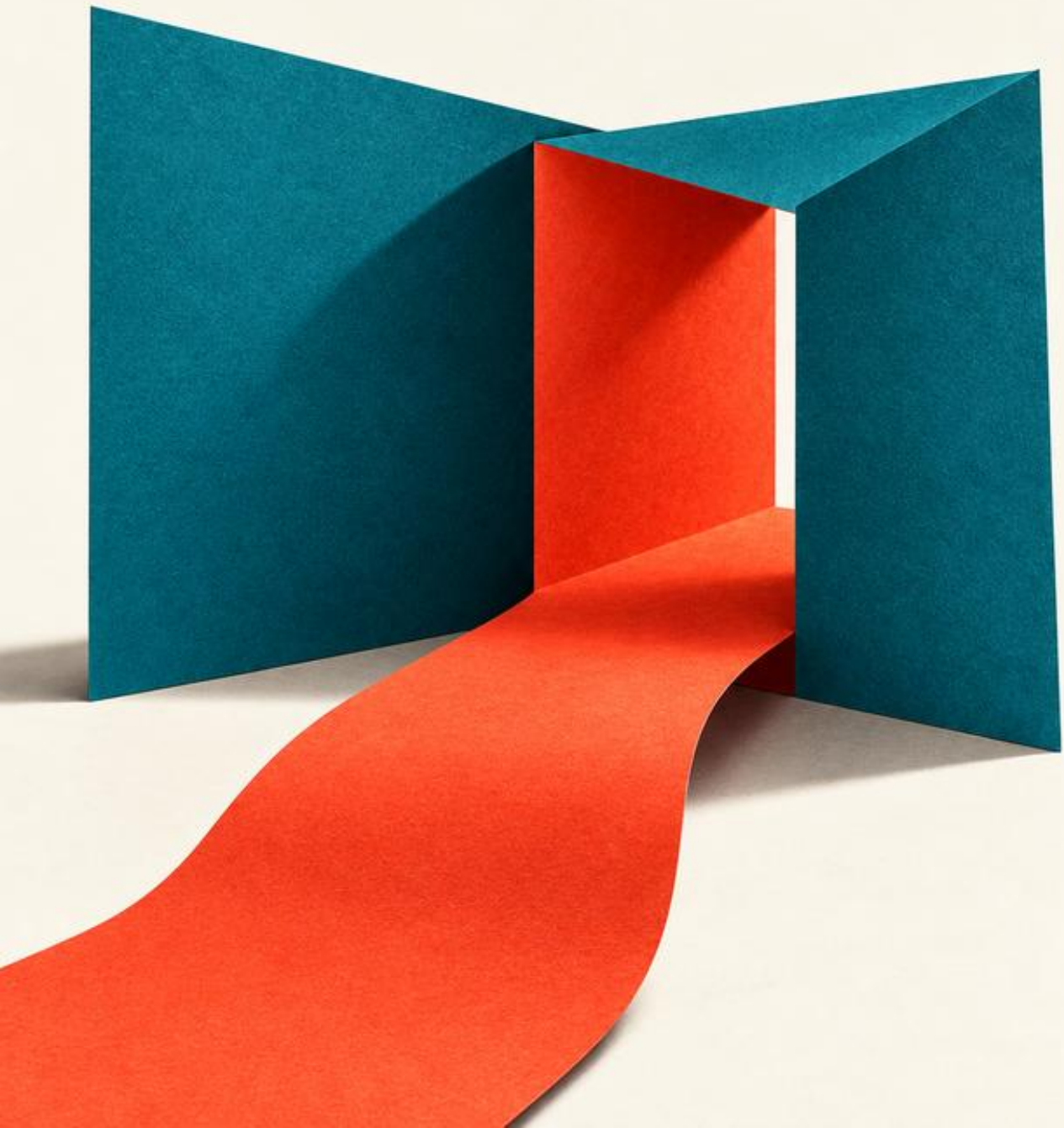
Government work people want to see.



01 / THE DECISION

Begin with the resident's unfinished task

A public announcement can be factually correct and still leave a person unsure what to do. It may list the programme name, participating departments and strategic ambition while delaying the useful fact: where to go, what is available, who can use it or what happens next. The institution is visible. The service remains hard to understand.

Begin with the person's unfinished task. They may need time at a library, an answer about a reported problem, or a way to book an activity. Ask what changes in that person's day if the service works. Then ask what information they need to use it without being surprised by a condition hidden elsewhere.

This does not mean every government campaign must sound like a form. Drama, humour and visual invention can make a useful truth more noticeable. Their role is to bring the service into focus. A moving film cannot establish that the institution provides something it does not provide, and a slogan cannot repair an inaccessible process.

This guide helps you develop a clear public-facing message and a revealing execution. It focuses on editorial and creative decisions. Service owners remain responsible for confirming current rules, operating arrangements and approved information. Every service example here is fictional and must not be treated as real public guidance.

02 / FIND THE USEFUL CONSEQUENCE

Translate the institutional description

Start with the actual provision. "Extended branch operating hours" is an operational description. "Time to use the library after your daytime commitments" is a possible useful consequence. The second gives the creative team a human situation to show, but it must remain connected to the first. Extended hours do not automatically mean every branch, every service or every evening.

Work through the consequence as a sentence: because the service provides this specific thing, a person in this circumstance can now do this. Then challenge every leap. Does the provision exist yet? Is the benefit available to all the people shown? Does the person need to book, pay, qualify or bring something? The answer may alter both the copy and the scene.

+ Provision: the concrete service, facility, change or response that actually exists.
+ Consequence: what it makes easier or possible for a person, without inflating the result.
+ Condition: the location, eligibility, availability or step that limits the promise.
+ Action: the useful next move and where complete current details can be found.

Give each part an appropriate place. The creative encounter needs a clear central thought; it also needs the conditions that would materially change somebody's decision. Additional detail can live on a service page if that page is easy to reach and the main message does not create a false impression.

03 / DESIGN THE ENCOUNTER

Give attention somewhere useful to go

Decide what the encounter must do before choosing a format. A street poster might make a changed opening time noticeable. A short film might demonstrate a new booking sequence. A service page must help someone complete the task. They can support the same campaign while doing different jobs. Repeating the launch slogan across every surface is not a service journey.

01 Identify the first useful fact. Put it where a distracted person can find it without understanding the institution's structure or vocabulary.

02 Choose one revealing moment. Show the consequence of the service through an action rather than through a series of generic happy faces.

03 Keep the next step close. Give a readable destination or instruction. Check it on the actual device, printed size or physical setting where it will be encountered.

04 Include the people the standard journey misses. Check alternatives for someone without a smartphone, someone using a different language or someone who needs assistance. Confirm the available alternatives rather than inventing them.

05 Walk the route with the service owner. Make sure the information, destination and operating procedure agree before release.

Where multiple languages are required, both must be able to carry the useful fact and its conditions. Treat one language being legible and the other merely present as a communication failure. The exact language choices should follow the service audience and verified requirements.

04 / WORKED EXAMPLE

An evening people can actually use

> INVENTED TEACHING CASE
>
> The Civic Library Network and its evening pilot are fictional. All hours, branches and arrangements below are scenario facts, not a real service notice.

The supplied provision: North and Market branches will open until 9pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays for six weeks, from 6 October to 12 November. Reading spaces and book borrowing will be available. Computers still require the existing reservation process. Other branches keep their normal hours. The library has a staffed phone line as well as a website for details.

The original brief asks for a film celebrating a more connected city. That ambition is too broad to tell a resident what changed. The proposed communication job is narrower: make the extra evening time at these two branches known and explain what it includes. The creative consequence is time for the visit that did not fit earlier in the day.

A poster that carries the useful fact

Headline: "There's still time for the library." Supporting copy: "North and Market branches. Open until 9pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6 October-12 November. Read, study or borrow books. Reserve computers through the usual booking service." The information block provides the fictional campaign's service-page and phone placeholders for the production team to replace with verified destinations.

The campaign does not claim that all branches stay open late. It names the pilot where the promise is made. A beautiful image cannot compensate for that information being illegible.

05 / MAKE IT WORTH WATCHING

Let the service change the scene

A proposed twenty-second film

Invented continuation of the library case: a person arrives at a familiar branch entrance after sunset. Their hand is already moving to put the library card away. Then they notice the new hours. We see the actual sign, the entrance and the available reading area. They sit, open a book and begin. On-screen words: "There's still time for the library." The two branches, days, dates and 9pm closing time appear in a readable final information frame.

The small turn is the expectation changing at the door. It gives the extended hours a consequence without inventing a life transformed by one visit. The service is the cause of the scene, not a logo attached after a generic story. Production must allow enough viewing time for the essential details; the proposed duration can change if they cannot be read comfortably.

Check the shot against the actual service. If a room shown is closed during the pilot, do not use it to suggest access. If the entrance arrangements differ at night, show the correct route. If the announcement becomes outdated, the campaign needs an owner who can replace the hours and remove obsolete placements.

A linked page should repeat the exact pilot details before explaining the wider programme. The visitor should not have to infer which part of the film applies to them.

06 / TRY IT

Separate acknowledgement from completion

Invented exercise: a local maintenance reporting service wants the line "Report it. Consider it fixed." The scenario process sends an immediate receipt, reviews the report and provides a later status update. Repair timing varies. Write a message that remains useful without promising a completed repair, then identify what the landing page must explain.

A model response

"Report it. We'll update you." Supporting copy: "Send the location and a description. We'll confirm receipt, review your report and send a status update." The page should explain the issues the service accepts, how reports are reviewed, how updates are communicated and where to go for issues outside its scope. Any timing statement needs confirmation from the service owner.

The revised line gives the resident a meaningful process without turning a receipt into a guarantee. Before release, confirm how the promised update reaches the resident and what information it contains. A status update does not imply an on-demand tracking feature. The creative team must not introduce one through copy.

For the exercise, check whether your answer helps a person understand the next step and preserves the difference between receiving, reviewing and resolving a report. Another wording is acceptable if it does those jobs. The objective is not to make uncertainty sound exciting; it is to communicate the provision honestly and clearly.

07 / WORKSHEET

The public-service message sheet

Complete this with the person who owns the service information. Use exact current details in production; the fictional examples in this guide are only teaching material. Mark any unanswered field before the creative work moves towards release.

What changed, for whom, and from what date?

What useful action or consequence can the execution show?

Which conditions must appear beside the promise?

Where can people act or get help, including a verified alternative route?

Who confirms the message and maintains it when the service changes?

08 / RELEASE CHECK

Judge the experience beyond the film

Ask somebody unfamiliar with the programme to use the campaign material to answer four questions: does this apply to me, what can I do, where do I start and what should I expect afterwards? Let them point to the information. If they need your spoken explanation, the communication or destination still has work to do.

+ Confirm that the named provision exists at the time and place shown, with the limitations that affect a person's decision.
+ Check that text, image and sound make the same promise. A cautious caption cannot reliably undo an exaggerated scene.
+ Inspect information hierarchy at the real size, viewing duration and language combination. Include captions or other necessary access provisions in the production plan.
+ Follow every destination through the actual task. Record any broken link, confusing instruction or unsupported promise and assign a responsible owner.
+ Plan who changes or removes the campaign when the pilot ends, hours change or the information becomes inaccurate.

A comprehension check can reveal specific misunderstandings; it cannot establish that the service meets everyone's needs or that the campaign will achieve a wider policy outcome. More consequential claims need evidence appropriate to them. Do not use a few positive reactions to substitute for that work.

Your next step is to make one complete encounter: a message, its essential conditions and the destination it sends people to. Review those together. That is where a public promise becomes a usable experience.

READING / PRACTICE / CONTEXT

Where the thinking starts

The methods, teaching scenarios, exercises and worksheets here are original synthesis. The books below inform particular decisions; their authors do not endorse this guide. Page references locate the supplied PDF editions and may differ from printed page numbers.

Robert W. Bly / The Copywriter's Handbook

PDF pp. 74-77; author and edition credits p. 442

The distinction between a feature and its useful consequence informed service-message development. Applying it to public communication is original synthesis; commercial persuasion is not treated as the sole purpose of public information.

Richard P. Rumelt / Good Strategy/Bad Strategy

PDF pp. 89-91

The emphasis on explaining the challenge rather than repeating an ambition informed the shift from institutional celebration to a specific communication job. The service examples and release checks are original.

Make the tools your own

Read the worked example, try the exercise before its model response, then use the worksheet on a real assignment. Print the worksheet at 100% or annotate a copy digitally. Check your actual product facts, audience context and production conditions before applying the advice.

THATCOPYADDICT / AHMED MOUSTAFA ELSHERIF / 2026