



## AAPA Lighthouse Award Project Highlight PORTS Public Relations & Branding Campaign



Port of Everett  
Everett, WA, USA

### Project Overview

PORTS Public Relations & Branding Campaign

Award Category: Excellence in Public Relations Campaign

Completion Date: 12/31/2024

Description:

The Port of Everett is an economic engine for Snohomish County, the most trade-dependent county in Washington State. With international seaport operations, the largest public marina on the West Coast, and a billion-dollar mixed-use development, the Port plays a vital role in the region's identity. Yet, many engage with the Port in limited ways — mooring or launching a boat, attending events, dining at the waterfront, or watching cargo ships — unaware that these experiences are connected. To bridge this gap, the Port launched PORTS in 2024. It was a pivotal time, as interest in the Port has surged following major investments in maritime and mixed-use at its balanced waterfront. Focused on five pillars — People, Opportunity, Recreation, Transportation, and Sustainability — the campaign aimed to educate and help the public re-imagine the Port as one full picture. Through integrated messaging, branding, and widespread outreach, the PORTS brand campaign saw a reach of 10.2+ million across platforms and continues to grow today.

## Inspiration

The PORTS brand campaign followed in the footsteps of prior successful outreach initiatives, but this effort has a distinct focus on the present. While the Port's award-winning campaigns, The First 100 and The Next 100, celebrate and honor the work of the Port's past and look forward with strategic planning for the next era of the Port, PORTS is all about the here and now: what the Port is doing today and every day to serve its community and region.

At the core of the brand campaign is the answer to a simple yet powerful need: bring the Port's full identity into focus. Public feedback from earlier marketing efforts shows strong appreciation for the Port's transparency and storytelling approach, and social media listening and stakeholder engagement confirm a need for greater clarity and cohesion of the overall Port brand and understanding of its work. In particular, there is widespread awareness of individual Port projects or business lines based on stakeholder type, but less understanding of how all of these pieces of the Port are connected, or how they support broader goals such as job creation, economic vitality, and environmental stewardship. Using these insights, the Port's communications team developed PORTS as both a messaging framework and a visual brand that can be easily understood, widely applied, and readily adapted across various platforms and target audience segments. It pulls all of the Port's messaging — from the international Seaport to the Marina to commercial and industrial real estate and more — while underscoring its commitment to economic development, job creation, environmental stewardship, and promoting a high quality of life for Port District residents and visitors alike in one memorable public relations campaign.

## Challenges

One challenge the Port faced was its limited budget and resources. Though its work encompasses Snohomish County's only international Seaport, the U.S. West Coast's largest public marina, and an emerging billion-dollar real estate development, the Port has a limited budget due to the small size of its Port District. To overcome this, the communications team strategically embedded the PORTS brand across all existing annual communications efforts for operational efficiency and budget responsibility. From email signatures and a rebrand of all slide decks to public signage and publications, to print ads and digital methods, this subtle but pervasive approach ensures the brand message is reinforced at every touchpoint the general public and key stakeholders use to engage with the Port. It ensures cohesive communications and brand identity while employing responsible budget management by finding opportunities to modify existing collateral or annual, regularly budgeted pieces, instead of starting from scratch. This not only saves costs but ensures the campaign feels authentic, integrated, and sustainable.

## Lessons Learned

One notable learning: people who otherwise have no direct connection to the Seaport expressed strong interest in its operations once they learn that the Port operates the premier breakbulk-handling facility in the Pacific Northwest. With that in mind, the team made real-time adjustments to incorporate more Seaport content in the beginning of the brand campaign into its social media — and it resonated. One photo of breakbulk cargo at the Seaport earned 33,809 impressions — 10 times the Port's average post's performance. By embedding the brand into existing communications rather than launching costly standalone efforts, the Port maximized impact while managing costs. Staff from across

departments are engaged to ensure campaign integration into every line of business, reinforcing the campaign's central message: the Port works as one unified entity in service to the entire community.

## Value

The PORTS campaign introduces an innovative, scalable branding framework that redefines how ports can communicate their value. By translating complex operational functions into five accessible pillars — People, Opportunity, Recreation, Transportation, and Sustainability — it offers a simple yet compelling model for other ports to follow. Rather than relying on one-off media pushes, the campaign embeds its identity across all communication touchpoints: physical signage, social media, events, printed publications and more. This allows ports of any size to unify messaging and increase visibility. The campaign's short-term results are striking: **2.1 million** social media impressions, **90+** branded outreach events, and **20%** increased attendance at Port-hosted community activities across the board. Notable wins include new leases signed for Waterfront Place and boosting public interest in Port functions previously overlooked, such as breakbulk cargo handling. PORTS leaves a lasting footprint by establishing a brand that is both evergreen and scalable per individual Port project need. It has already resulted in renewed stakeholder partnerships, such as those with educational institutions and business tenants, and revived programs like the Port's community bus tours. The campaign lays the groundwork for ongoing public education and positions the Port as a replicable and scalable model for communications across the maritime sector no matter the size of the team (or marketing budget).

## Quotes

"The PORTS brand has become a fun and effective way to educate our community on who the Port of Everett is and highlight our value to the region. The acronym gave our team a simple way to feature our five mission pillars – People, Opportunity, Recreation, Transportation, and Sustainability – and break down our complexity into bite-sized messages and imagery. It's really enabled us to show how the Port of Everett, as well as all ports across the state and nation, work to drive economic opportunity, create jobs, and enhance the quality of life for Port District residents."

— [Catherine Soper, Chief of Business Development & Tourism, Port of Everett]

## Additional Information

The team believes that the Port of Everett was selected for the Economic Alliance Snohomish County 2025 "Opportunity Lives Here" award in light of its greater brand recognition and awareness thanks to the PORTS campaign – in addition to its multifaceted work to support economic development. In the long term, the PORTS brand now serves as an enduring platform of evergreen content for ongoing communication. It helps bring the Port's mission into sharper focus and lays the groundwork for future public engagement efforts.

## Contact

Contact Person: Kate Anderson

Title: Media & Marketing Coordinator, Port of Everett

Email: [katea@portofeverett.com](mailto:katea@portofeverett.com)

Phone: 425.388.0623

## Resources

Port of Everett Recognized with 2025 EASC 'Opportunity Lives Here' Award acceptance video:

[https://youtu.be/7YAXzatGo4Y?si=YjttVdhj\\_psDIt-J](https://youtu.be/7YAXzatGo4Y?si=YjttVdhj_psDIt-J)