

POWERING MILL CREEK:
A Media Planning Competition

WASHINGTON MEDIA SCHOLARS FOUNDATION

Background:

Mill Creek County is a growing Virginia community located outside a major metropolitan area. New residential and commercial development has brought significant investment to the county while also raising questions about how growth will affect existing communities. Crestline Digital Infrastructure, a technology company, has proposed building a data center on property in Mill Creek County currently designated for commercial and industrial development.

The proposed project would represent a significant private investment in the county and is expected to generate new local tax revenue. At the same time, residents living near the proposed site have questions about the project, including electricity demand, water use, noise, new transmission infrastructure, construction traffic, land use and the number of permanent jobs the facility would create.

The Challenge:
6 weeks to reach 18,000 nearby residents with a $7,500 media budget.

Before the project moves forward in the county review process, Mill Creek County will hold a public information meeting to give residents an opportunity to learn more about the proposal, ask questions and provide feedback.

The meeting is six weeks away. Approximately 18,000 adults live within five miles of the proposed data center site, and the county wants to make sure residents who may be affected by the project know about the upcoming meeting.

Mill Creek County has allocated $7,500 in paid media to make nearby residents aware of the meeting and encourage them to participate.

All advertising creative and messaging have already been developed and approved by the county.

Your Role:

You are a summer intern at Rivermont Media Group, the advertising agency hired by Mill Creek County to plan and place paid media for the upcoming public information campaign.

Your supervisor has just returned from a meeting with county officials. The county wants the campaign to begin as soon as possible, but there isn't enough money to use every available media channel.

The Rivermont Media Group buying team has prepared three recommendations for using the $7,500 budget. Each takes a different approach to reaching residents who live near the proposed site.

Your supervisor sends you an email:

"We have six weeks and $7,500 to reach the people who live closest to the proposed site. Our media team has put together three options. Take a look at the numbers, pick the approach you think gives Mill Creek the strongest buy, and be ready to tell me why. Let's meet Friday."

Next Steps:

Your supervisor has forwarded the four media recommendations listed in Appendix A.

Your job is to make a case for **ONE** of these recommendations in an essay. Explain how you would use the $7,500 budget and why you made your decision.

This is a media planning assignment. You are not being asked to develop campaign messaging or to take a position for or against the proposed data center.

APPENDIX A

Mill Creek County Public Information Campaign

Media Recommendations

18,000
Adults Living Within Five Miles of Proposed Site

$7,500
Total Media Budget

6 weeks
Campaign Window

	Media Type	# Weeks	Cost	CPM	Imps	Aud Size	Weekly Freq
CTV	CTV	6	$7,500.00	$35.00	214,286	18,000	2.0
Social - Facebook/Instagram	Social Display	6	$7,500.00	$10.00	750,000	18,000	6.9
Standard Display - Local News Websites	Standard Display	6	$7,500.00	$8.00	937,500	18,000	8.7
Preroll Video - Local News Websites	Preroll	6	$7,500.00	$20.00	375,000	18,000	3.5

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Submissions are due February 7, 2027 by 11:59 PM EST and should include the following:

A written document no longer than two pages single-spaced in which you answer the following questions in support of your media recommendation. Include your name and contact information at the top of the document.

- Select ONE of these recommendations and explain why you believe it is the best use of the $7,500 media budget.
- Who within the target audience do you think is most important to reach, and how did that influence your media selection?
- What advantages and disadvantages did you consider when comparing the three media options? Consider factors such as reach, frequency, cost and geographic targeting.
- What are the strengths and limitations of the media option you selected compared with the other two options?
- What other ideas would you consider using to make nearby residents aware of the public information meeting (separate from the options and budget above)?

There is no right answer; you will be judged on the rationale behind your decision, your writing ability, and creative/original thinking.

Submit your Qualifying Round entry to the Washington Media Scholars Foundation HERE.

The situation described in this case study is fictional. Research data for this case is fictional and only meant for the purpose of this case competition. Population estimates, media audiences, costs and other data do not represent any actual market conditions and should be used only by competitors in the qualifying round of the 2026-2027 Washington Media Scholars Foundation scholarship competition. Copyright 2026 by WMSF. Do not reproduce without permission. More information at http://mediascholars.org/case-competition/