

Public Service Design

VISUAL COMMUNICATION FOR COMPLEX
SYSTEMS + COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Ciara Pickering-Foote MFA

VISUAL DESIGNER + ILLUSTRATOR
PUBLIC-FACING SYSTEMS | CAMPAIGNS | MOTION

SMUGPUGINK.COM

Designing **clarity** at the intersection of **systems** + **people**

I'm a visual designer and illustrator with an MFA in Media Design, specializing in public-facing communication for government and community programs. My work focuses on translating complex systems — services, eligibility, timelines, and civic processes — into clear, accessible visual experiences that help people understand what's available to them and how to take action.

I bring a systems-thinking approach to design, creating flexible visual frameworks that function across print, digital, and motion while remaining grounded in human needs. I've partnered with public agencies and cross-functional teams to support outreach, engagement, and education efforts that prioritize equity, usability, and clarity at scale.

The following case studies highlight campaign-based work created for large public programs, demonstrating how thoughtful visual communication can reduce friction, build trust, and support meaningful participation.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CCAP)



This public benefits campaign supported awareness of the Child Care Assistance Program, with a focus on newly expanded income eligibility. The primary challenge was communicating detailed requirements and application steps in a way that felt clear, approachable, and actionable for families navigating a complex system.

CLIENT

Seattle Department of Education & Early Learning (DEEL)

AUDIENCE

Seattle families and caregivers navigating child care eligibility and applications

SCOPE

Design of a multi-channel public benefits campaign focused on eligibility clarity and next steps

CHANNELS

Social, print, digital explainers, motion

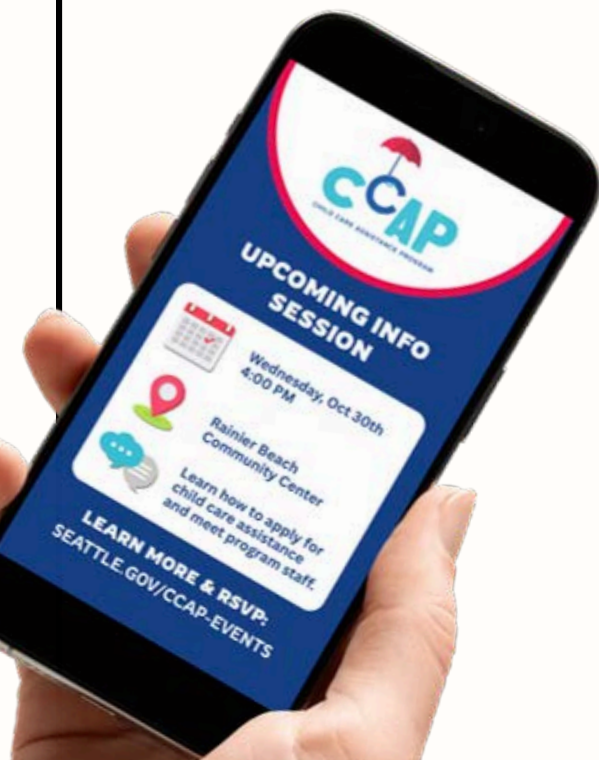


DESIGN STRATEGY

Designing for comprehension + confidence

The visual system emphasized clear hierarchy, plain-language messaging, and consistent iconography to support fast comprehension across formats. Layouts were optimized for mobile viewing while remaining legible and effective in print environments such as schools, community centers, and public spaces.

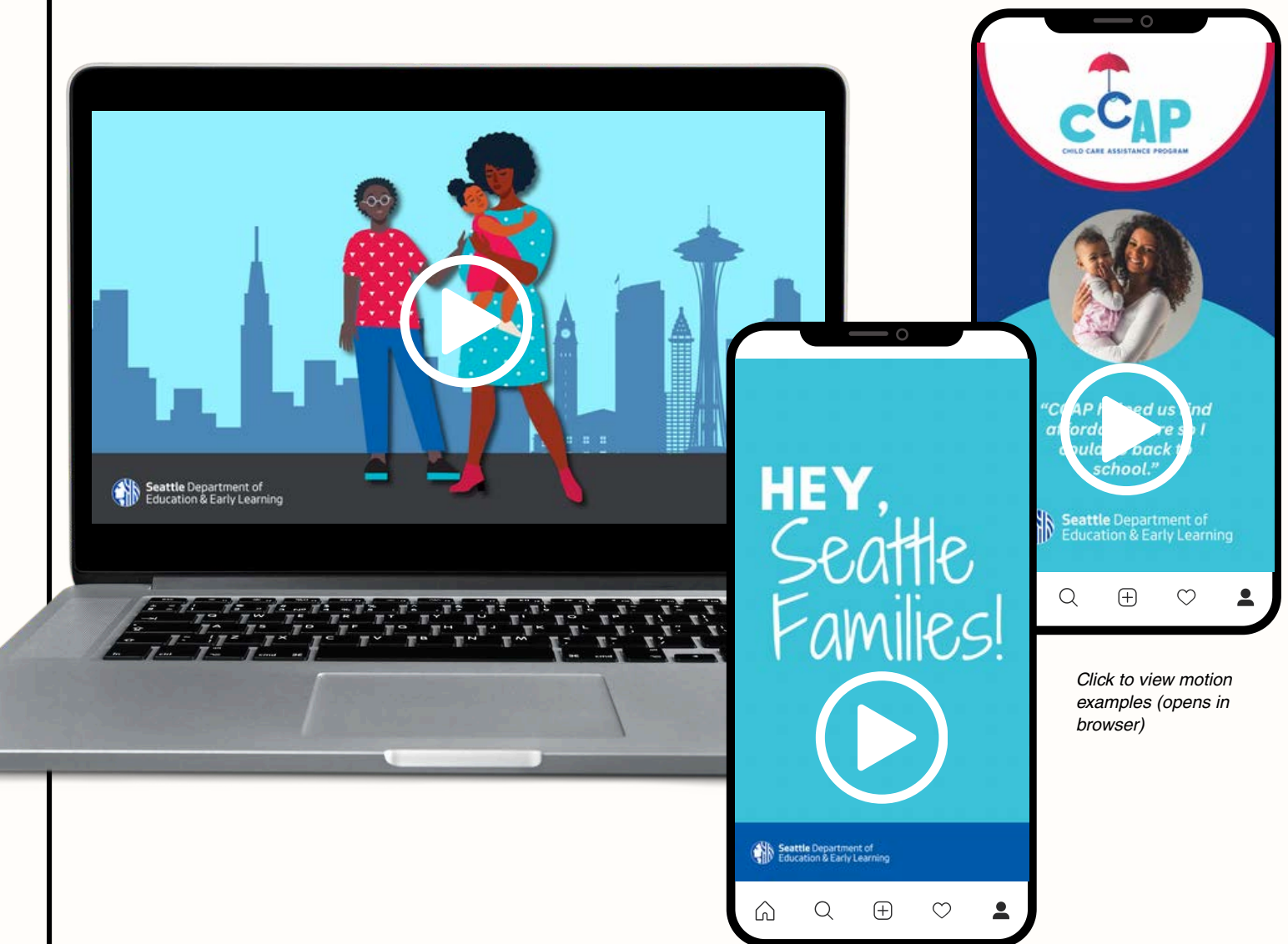
Design decisions focused on reducing intimidation and cognitive load, helping users quickly identify whether the program applied to them and what to do next.



MOTION EXAMPLE

Motion used as a navigational tool

Short animated assets were used to guide attention through key messages and steps. Motion pacing and sequencing were intentionally restrained to support clarity and accessibility rather than visual novelty.



STEP-BY-STEP COMMUNICATION

Translating process into structure

Sequential graphics and explainer layouts broke the application process into discrete, manageable steps. This approach supported first-time applicants and reinforced understanding through repetition and visual consistency.



OUTCOMES & CAPABILITIES

OUTCOMES

- Cohesive, multi-channel campaign system
- Clear communication of eligibility and next steps
- Reusable visual components for ongoing outreach

CAPABILITIES DEMONSTRATED

- Public benefits communication
- Information architecture
- Accessibility-first layout design
- Systems-based visual thinking



PROJECT OVERVIEW

EVERY CHILD READY: COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS



This campaign promoted a series of community conversations connected to the Every Child Ready initiative and the Families, Education, Preschool & Promise Levy. Materials needed to clearly communicate event details while encouraging participation across neighborhoods and audiences.

CLIENT

Seattle Department of Education & Early Learning (DEEL)

AUDIENCE

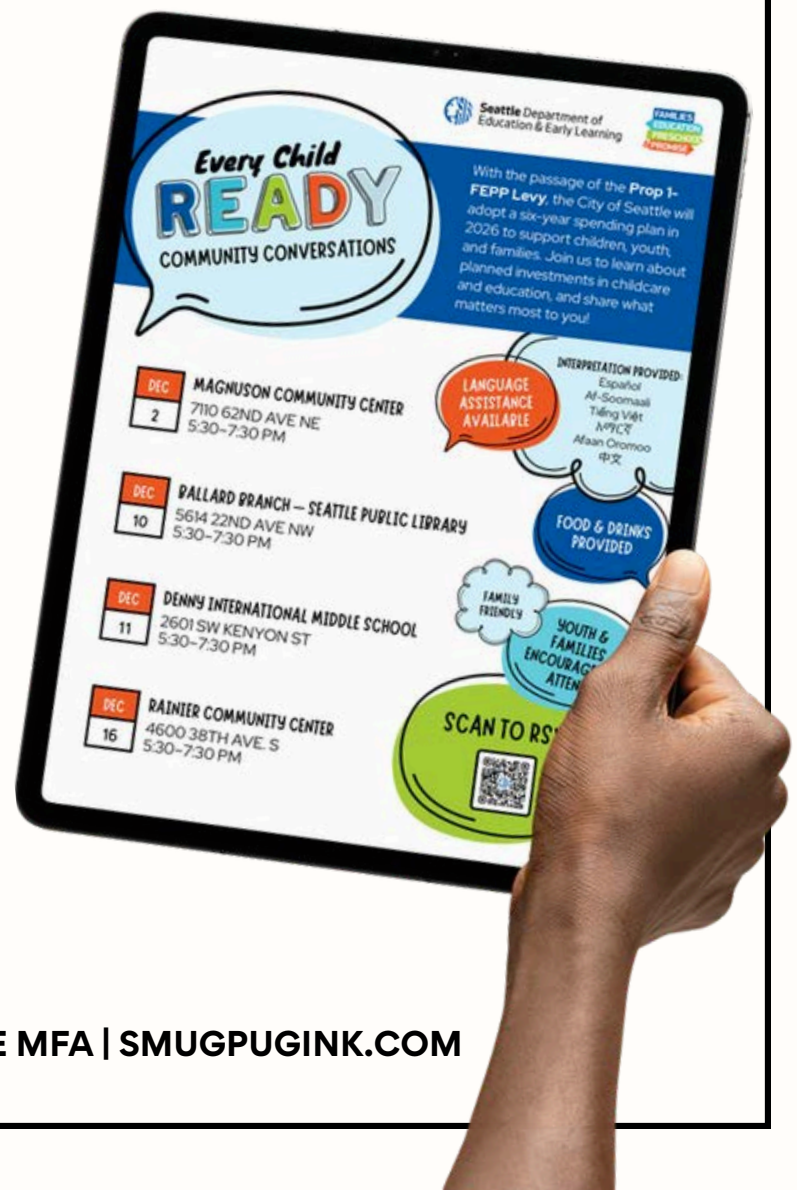
Families, caregivers, educators, and community members across Seattle

SCOPE

Design of outreach materials promoting community conversations tied to the FEPP Levy

CHANNELS

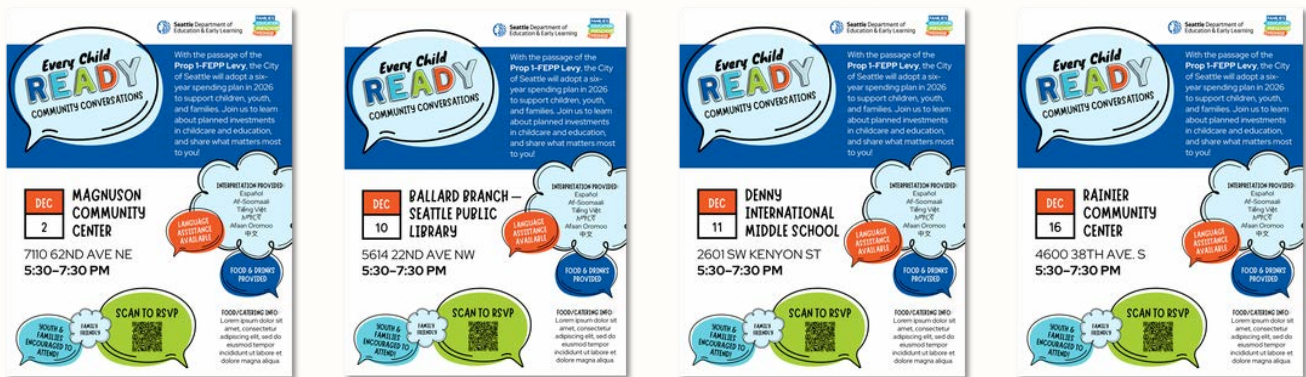
Print, social, digital displays, web



EVENT COMMUNICATION

Designing for time, place, and clarity

Layouts prioritized date, time, location, and RSVP information using strong hierarchy and scannable formats. Designs were created to function effectively in both digital and physical environments, supporting quick understanding at a glance.



CROSS-PLATFORM ADAPTABILITY

One system, many contexts

Assets were adapted for social media, digital displays, and web use while maintaining a consistent visual language. This ensured recognizability and clarity regardless of where audiences encountered the information.



Click to view motion examples (opens in browser)

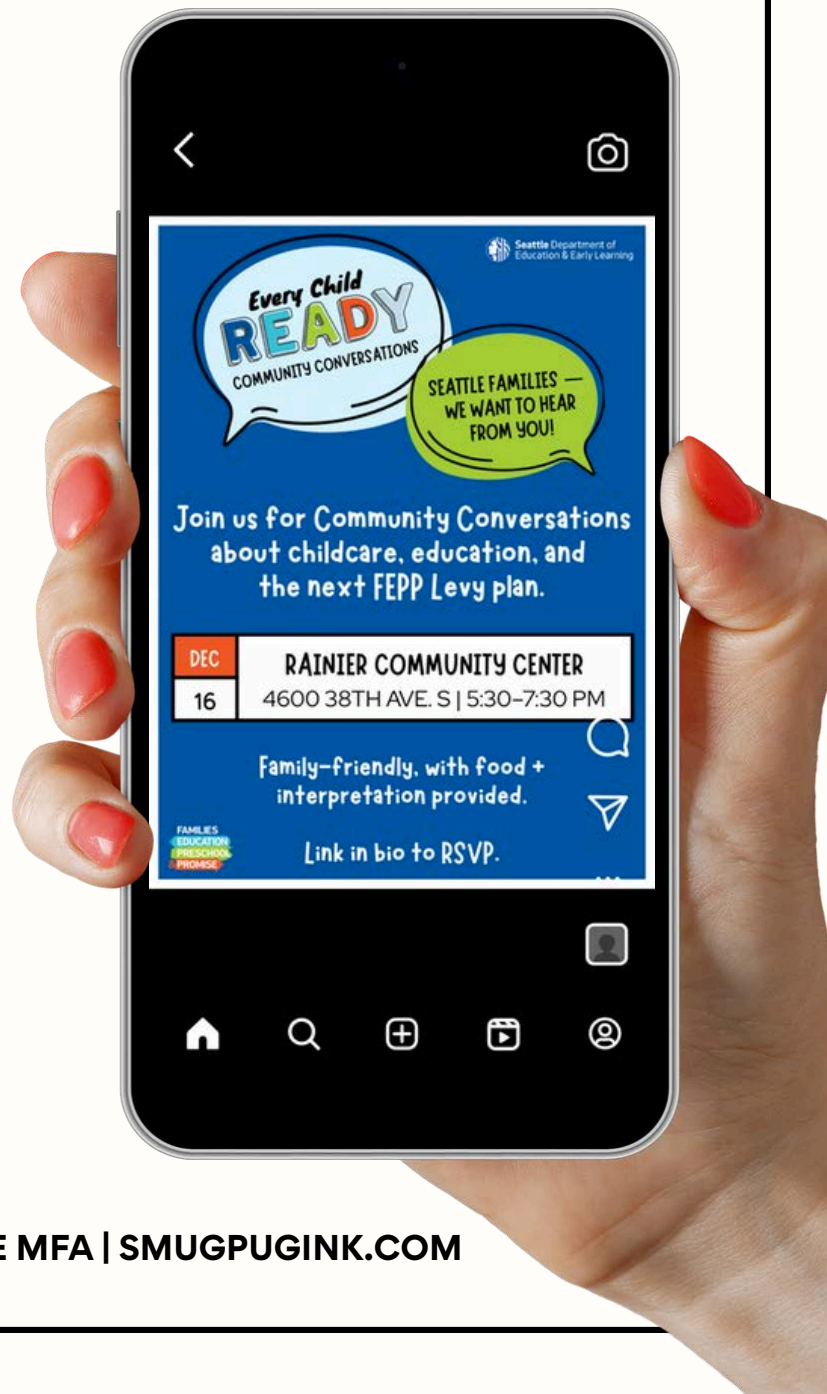
OUTCOMES & CAPABILITIES

OUTCOMES

- Clear, accessible promotion of community events
- Consistent visual system across platforms

CAPABILITIES DEMONSTRATED

- Event-based communication
- Location-specific messaging
- Scalable campaign systems



PROJECT OVERVIEW

LEVY OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE APPLICATIONS CAMPAIGN



This campaign supported recruitment for a volunteer oversight committee responsible for accountability and guidance around public education funding. The work required balancing approachability with the credibility and clarity expected of a formal civic process.

CLIENT

Seattle Department of Education & Early Learning (DEEL)

AUDIENCE

Seattle residents interested in civic participation and public education oversight

SCOPE

Design of an applications campaign supporting recruitment for a volunteer oversight committee

CHANNELS

Print, digital, social



DESIGN SOLUTION

Encouraging participation through trust + clarity

Clear calls-to-action, prominent deadlines, and structured layouts reduced friction in the application process. Visual consistency reinforced credibility while maintaining an inviting tone.



Click to view motion examples (opens in browser)

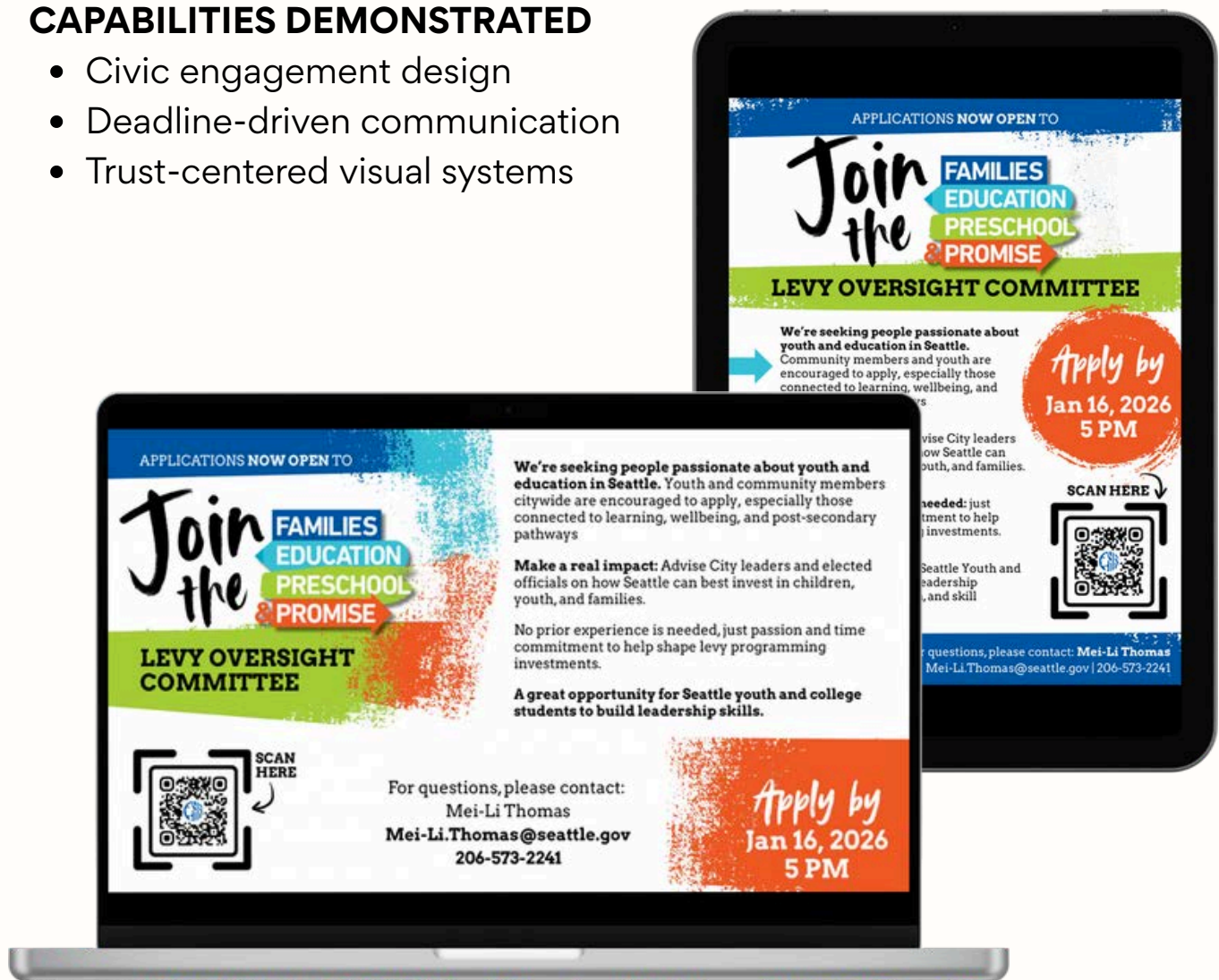
OUTCOMES & CAPABILITIES

OUTCOMES

- Improved clarity around eligibility and deadlines
- Increased accessibility of a formal civic process

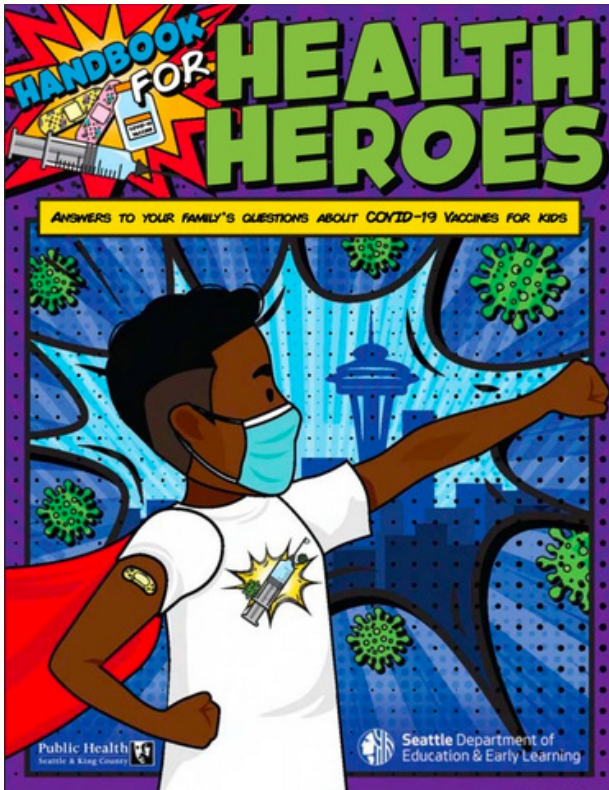
CAPABILITIES DEMONSTRATED

- Civic engagement design
- Deadline-driven communication
- Trust-centered visual systems



PROJECT OVERVIEW

HANDBOOK FOR HEALTH HEROES



This illustrated educational resource was created to help families understand COVID-19 vaccines for children through age-appropriate storytelling and clear visual explanations during a sensitive public-health moment.

CLIENT

Seattle Department of Education & Early Learning (DEEL)

AUDIENCE

Families, caregivers, and educators seeking accessible public health information

SCOPE

Illustration and design of an educational handbook with supporting outreach materials

CHANNELS

Print, digital, social



ILLUSTRATION + STORYTELLING

Making complex information approachable

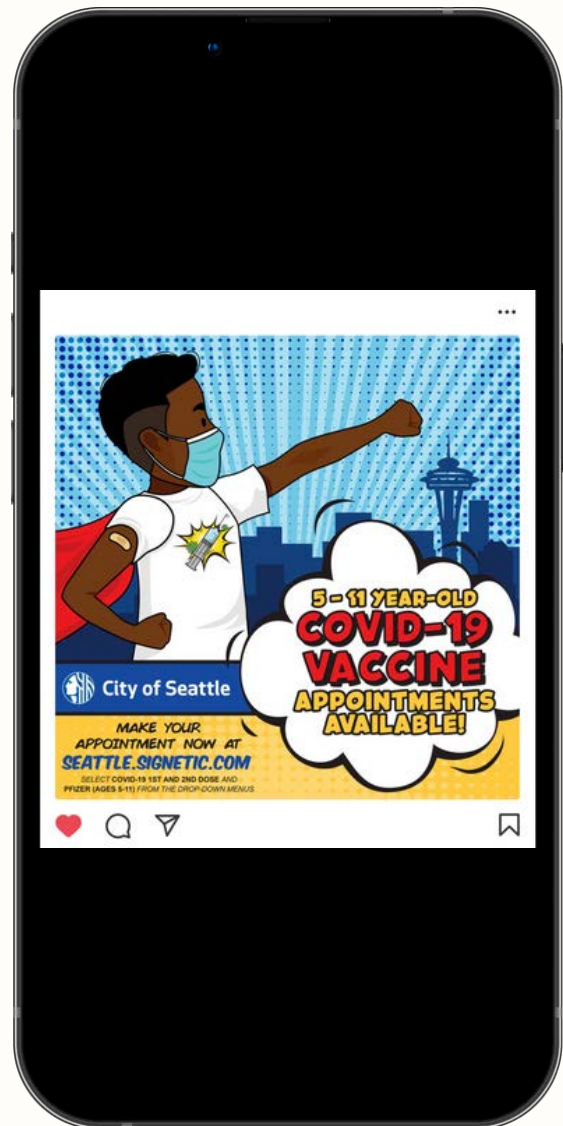
Comic-style layouts, diverse characters, and simplified visual storytelling transformed dense health information into an engaging, understandable format for children and caregivers.



CAMPAIGN EXTENSIONS

A cohesive educational system

The visual language extended beyond the handbook into social graphics, stickers, and print materials, creating a unified campaign presence across touchpoints.



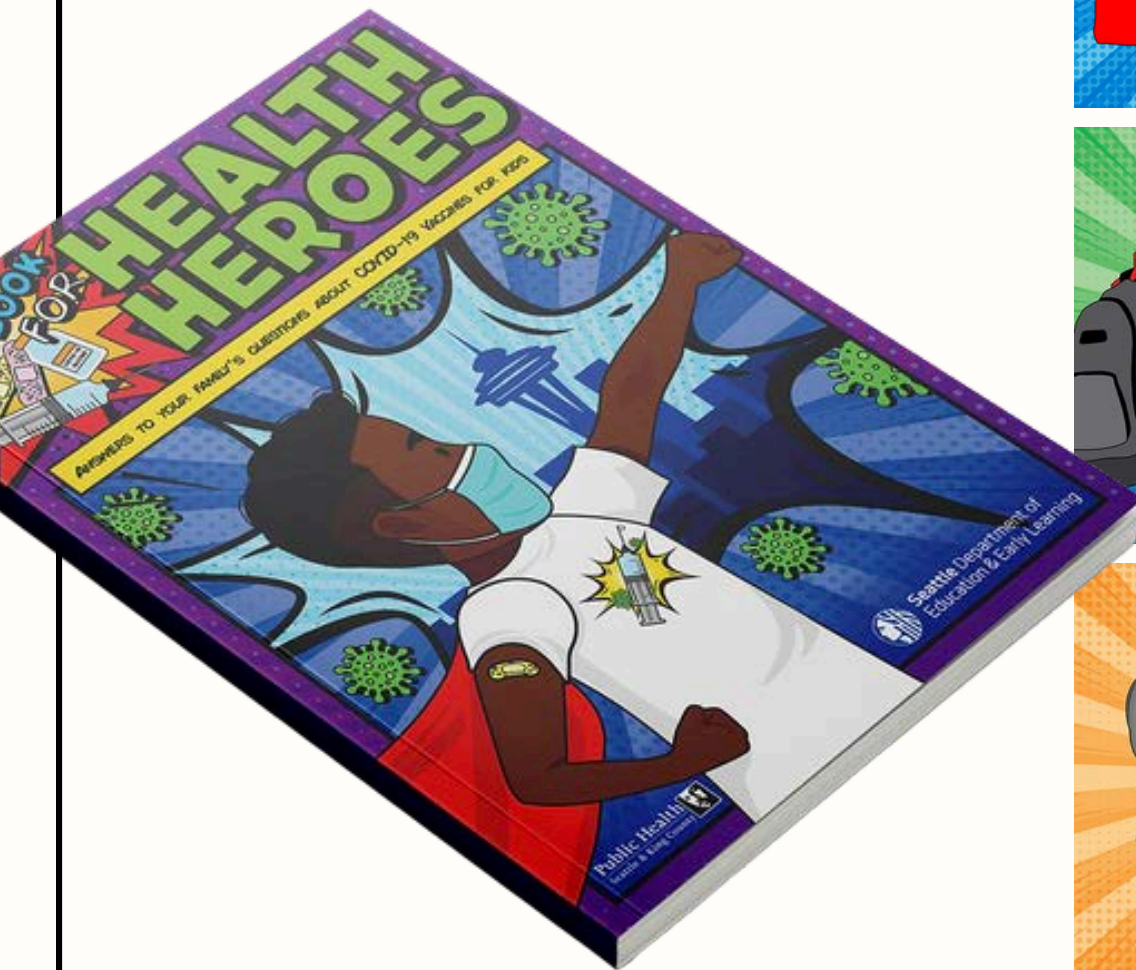
OUTCOMES & CAPABILITIES

OUTCOMES

- Accessible educational resource for families
- Consistent storytelling across formats

CAPABILITIES DEMONSTRATED

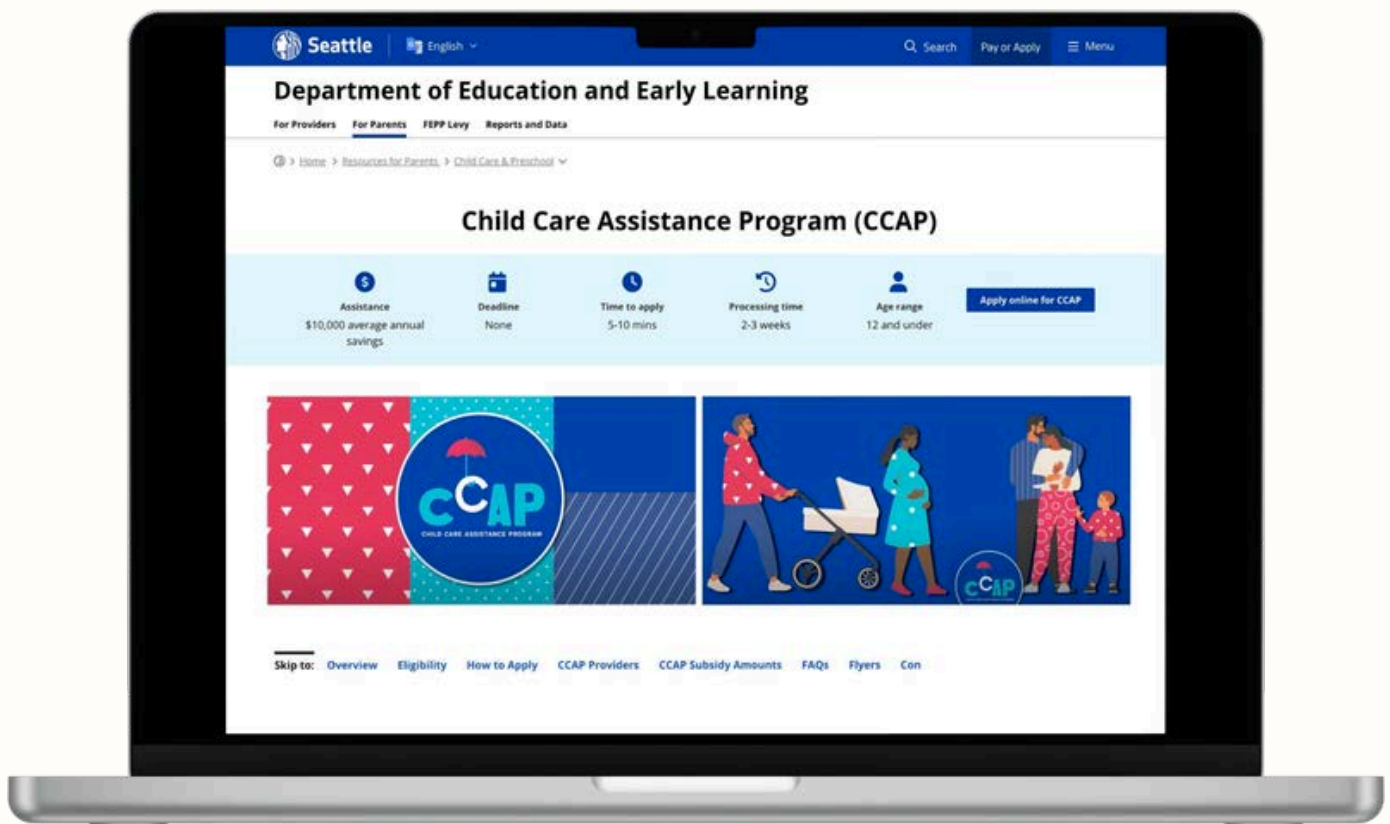
- Educational design
- Narrative illustration
- Empathetic visual communication



CORE CAPABILITIES

Design capabilities for public agencies

- Translating complex systems into clear visuals
- Accessibility-first information hierarchy
- Multi-channel campaign development
- Cross-functional collaboration
- Community-centered design thinking




CONTACT

Ciara Pickering-Foote MFA

VISUAL DESIGNER + ILLUSTRATOR
PUBLIC-FACING SYSTEMS | CAMPAIGNS | MOTION

 **smugpugink.com**

 ciara.pickering@gmail.com | ciara@smugpugink.com

 828.243.1467

 **LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/ciarapickering](https://www.linkedin.com/in/ciarapickering)

 **Instagram:** [Instagram.com/smugpugink](https://www.instagram.com/smugpugink)

