

## 7.3 Reaching Landowners via Direct Mail

Direct mail includes a broad range of printed pieces—enveloped letters, folded mailers, and large- and small-format postcards—that are mailed directly to target audience members.

### WHEN TO USE DIRECT MAIL

Direct mail is an excellent tool to reach specific members of your target audience and track their responses. However, response rates to unsolicited mail from relatively unknown organizations are fairly low, and you should plan to send multiple mailings with consistency of offer, message, and branding to build recognition, trust, and conversion.

<b>PROS</b> ▲	<b>CONS</b> ▼
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You can target individual recipients (e.g., woodland owners on tax rolls, forestry program participants).</li> <li>• You can easily track the response rate.</li> <li>• If you send multiple mailings, you can generally assume that landowners are aware of your offer and lack of response signals lack of interest.</li> <li>• The mailout can be scaled to match your budget or response capacity.</li> <li>• If designed well, multiple waves of direct mail can increase brand awareness and credibility, even among non-respondents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be expensive, especially if you have to pay for a custom mailing list and are planning multiple mailings.</li> <li>• Mailing lists may need to be cleaned up and filtered before use.</li> <li>• Response rates on mail campaigns are typically low, about 1 to 4 percent.</li> <li>• Unsolicited communications are considered junk mail and almost half are never opened.</li> </ul>

## 7 GETTING THE WORD OUT

### HOW TO GET GOOD RESULTS

- Direct mail works best when you have a good mailing list of people who are capable of acting on your offer and (hopefully) interested in doing so. Using existing contacts is easiest but doesn't reach new audiences.
- If possible, use first and last names of the recipients both in the address and in the salutation.
- While more expensive, first-class postage reaches more people, with address correction and forwarding, and is more likely to be opened. Because undelivered mail is returned to the sender, first-class postage will also help you track your response rate more accurately and update your mailing list.
- Direct mail pieces typically have a few seconds ("between the mailbox and the trash can") to get and hold the audience's attention. Therefore, they need to be well designed. Moreover, the quality of the mail piece often influences the audience's opinion of the quality of the program or service that you're offering.
- People give mail pieces only a quick read. So keep your offer simple and singular, and focus on the benefits rather than the details. Complex or multiple offers cloud the recipient's decision-making. Complicated response methods create unnecessary barriers to act.
- Response rates grow substantially when people receive your messages multiple times within a finite time frame. Mailings should be spaced close enough together to evoke memory of the prior mailing, but far enough apart to provide a needed reminder. Two weeks is often a good interval between mailings. Three or four mailings in succession usually evoke the best response, especially if they are timed well, similarly branded, and reaffirm the offer. Multiple mailings can heighten the importance of an impending deadline.
- Time your mailing to match the audience's interest and receptivity. For example, a good time to offer a forester walk-through might be in either spring or fall, when landowners are excited to be on their land. Likewise, avoid heavy mail periods, such as the holidays or election times, unless you can relate your offer to the mood or activities of those occasions.

### METRICS TO ASSESS DIRECT MAIL CAMPAIGNS

- Responses received in total and as a percentage of pieces mailed
- Cost of mailing campaign in total and per individual exposed to the message
- Cost per respondent (i.e., total cost of mailings divided by the number of people who take the desired action)
- Variation in response rates per mailing within a multiple-wave mailing campaign