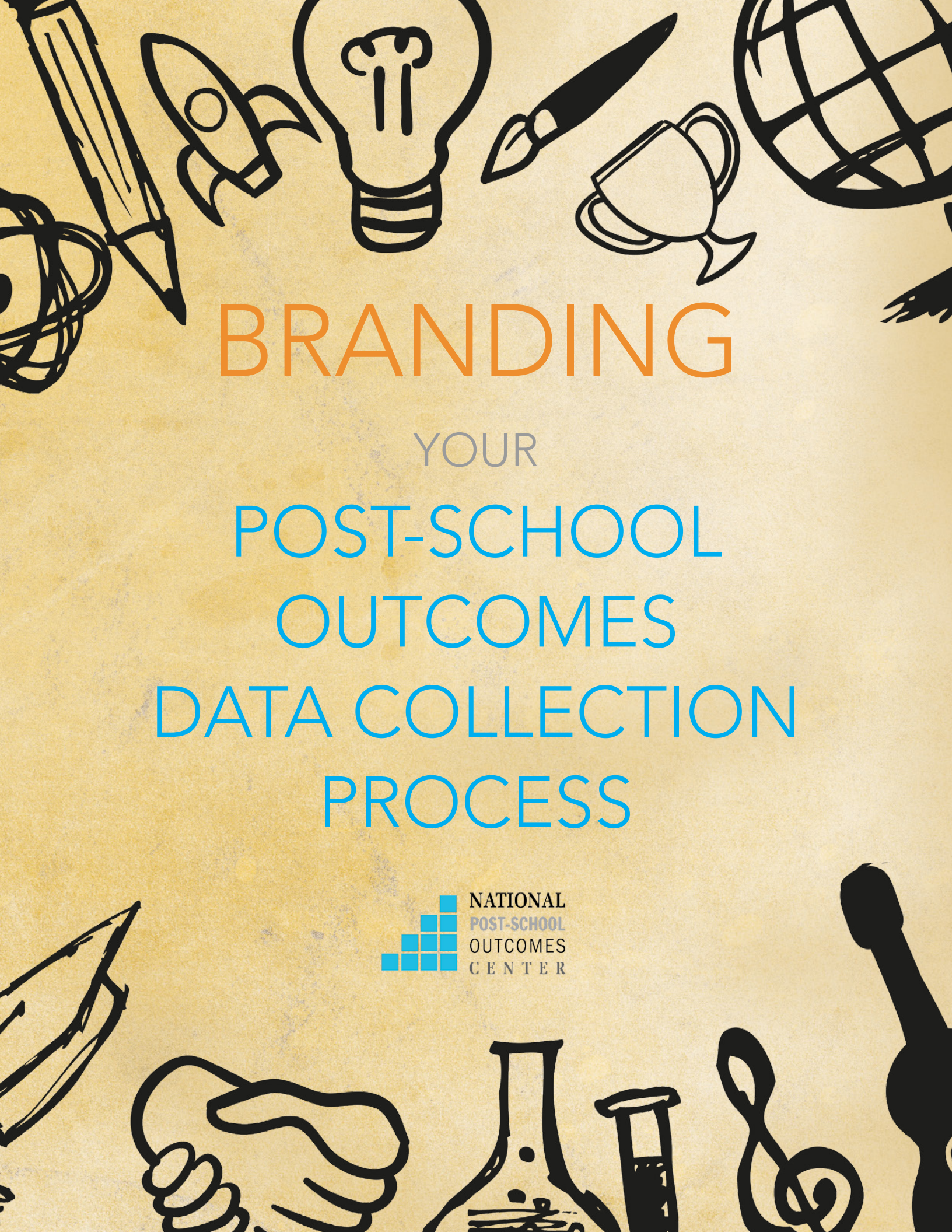


BRANDING

YOUR

POST-SCHOOL OUTCOMES DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

NATIONAL POST-SCHOOL OUTCOMES CENTER

DEVELOP A POST-SCHOOL OUTCOMES DATA COLLECTION IMAGE AND BRAND

Getting former students or their family members to respond to the follow-up survey or interview is a challenge many state departments of education face when collecting post-school outcomes (PSO) data. Reasons given for not responding include a lack of understanding related to (a) what the purpose of the survey is, (b) who conducts the survey, and (c) how the information will be used. Paired with instruction that addresses respondents' questions, creating a brand is part of a comprehensive marketing strategy designed to make the post-school outcomes survey more recognizable, therefore increasing the likelihood that youths or families will respond to the survey.

Building your post-school data collection image requires two items: creating an identity and consistency of use. Developing a brand enables you to distinguish yourself among various stakeholders (e.g., students and family members).

CREATING AN IDENTITY

Identity is comprised of the state name and a graphic image for the logo; it visually defines who you are. Think about the name of the post-school outcomes survey in your state. Is the name descriptive of the post-school data collection efforts? When people hear the name, do they immediately know what to expect? If you don't get a good feeling looking at the identity on the marketing materials, students and families will not either.

Does the logo create the desired image for the state? If not, it might be time to update the logo or create a stronger, more powerful one. Sometimes a simple color change is enough of an update. Sometimes you need to go back to the drawing board and start over. Think carefully about the name and image you develop for post-school outcomes data collection.

CONSISTENCY OF USE

Once the identity visually represents the post-school outcomes data collection efforts and reminds youths and families why they are being contacted, use it everywhere! Include the image on pre-notification postcards and letters to youths and families. Include it in training materials for interviewers. Use it on posters displayed in schools advertising the survey, as well as in PSO reports distributing the results to various audiences. Never miss an opportunity to promote the post-school outcomes survey.

The purpose of "Branding your Post-school Outcomes Data Collection Process" is to help state education agencies create brand recognition with youths, families, and school personnel for the post-school outcomes survey. Recognition—paired with information about the survey purpose, who is conducting the interview, and how the information will be used—contributes to response rates that better represent youths who exited school.

In this packet you will find:

- Steps for branding your post-school outcomes survey
- A sample letter and flyer for youths exiting high school telling them about the survey and that they may be contacted in one year
- A sample letter for youths exiting high school telling them about the survey and that they may be contacted in one year
- A sample prenotification postcard to be delivered (i.e., mailed or e-mailed) one to two weeks prior to the survey being administered
- Directions for accessing templates for each item that can be personalized for your state or district
- Instructions for using the templates to personalize each of these items for your state or district

STEPS FOR BRANDING YOUR POST-SCHOOL OUTCOMES SURVEY

1. Document your branding plan and strategy fully.

Brainstorm all the ways and places you might use the brand and how it supports post-school outcomes survey dissemination goals. For example, include the brand on notification materials sent to youths and families, training materials used with interviews, and informational materials sent to administrators. Attach the brand to school and public reports.

2. Identify the audiences and opportunities for using the brand.

Identify who you want to recognize the PSO brand. List the audiences you are targeting and for what purpose. For example, students and former students as respondents to the survey; parents as respondents or conduits to respondents; stakeholders, such as school personnel, for conducting interviews and promoting the survey; school personnel who review and share PSO results; agency partners and community stakeholders, such as vocational rehabilitation (VR) and mental health agencies, who have a vested interest in the outcomes of young adults with disabilities.

3. Research other states, districts, or contractors collecting post-school outcomes data.

Use terminology and images in the brand that resonate with your audiences. Be consistent when describing the survey or interview in materials (e.g., don't call it a "follow-up interview" in one product and a "one-year-out survey" in another). Use images, colors, and designs that attract the attention of youths, who are the target audience.

4. Develop an identifying mark or logo (and, optionally, a slogan) for your post-school outcomes survey.

Look at logos or brands that exist within the Department of Education for potential use with the survey. Perhaps a widely recognized brand already exists. If so, consider modifying it to represent the PSO data collection efforts. If an existing logo is not appropriate, sponsor a contest for high school students to design the logo for the yearly survey.

5. Make the brand visible in all you do.

Affix the brand to all facets of the data collection process from prenotifications sent to youths and families to training materials for interviewers to district data reports. Consistently communicate the purpose and intent of the post-school outcomes survey.

6. And, finally, don't be afraid to get help if you need it!

Use the resources available within the department, such as public relations or marketing experts, to help create the PSO data collection brand and marketing strategy. Talk with youths to find out what colors, shapes, and designs get their attention.

PRENOTIFICATION MATERIALS

Prenotification builds expectation and reduces the possibility that a potential respondent (i.e., former student, parent, or designee) might disregard the survey when it arrives. It informs students and families about the post-school outcomes survey and creates awareness. Although prenotifications require an additional investment of resources, States or districts should weigh the additional cost of creating and sending prenotification materials against the probability of a lower response rate. When sample sizes are small, every response counts, and prenotification is one way to potentially raise response rates and increase representativeness in the post-school outcomes survey.

The prenotification should include:

- The purpose of post-school outcomes data collection in the state.
- A description of how the survey will be conducted (e.g., mailed questionnaire, phone call, or in-person interview), who will contact them, how long it will take to complete the survey, and who to contact if they have questions about the survey.
- An explanation of what information is requested and why it is important for the youth or family member to respond.
- A description of how these data are used to improve transition services for youths with disabilities in the state or district.
- An explanation of why the person receiving the prenotification was chosen to participate in the survey (e.g., youths with disabilities receiving services under IDEA who exited high school during 20xx–xx).
- A statement that their participation is voluntary and anonymous and that the information they share will be kept confidential.

On the next few pages you will find templates for a

- post-school outcomes survey flyer
- prenotification letter
- prenotification postcard

Each sample can be used as a template for your state or district. Instructions for modifying them are included at the end of this document. Templates can be located at the National Post-School Outcomes Center website, psocenter.org, under the Tools and Resources tab.

FLYER

A flyer is a quick, attention-getting tool that provides brief information about the survey. Color and black-and-white flyers, containing the same information, are provided. Plan to distribute the flyer to youths multiple times during their last year. Pair the flyer with a brief description of the survey so youths begin to associate the flyer with the survey.

FLYER

Personalize the flyer by inserting your brand or logo and the state or district contact information.

Incorporate your brand or logo on the flyer to develop brand recognition. Distribute the flyer to students who are still in school as an introduction and frequent reminder that they may be asked to participate in the survey a year after they leave high school. Include the flyer with information about graduation caps and gowns, videos, and celebrations. Add the flyer to packets of information given to students who dropout.

LETTER

PSO Brand or Logo

Dear (insert name of student or parent or guardian),

The (insert school or district name) needs your help! We want to learn from former students how we can make high school transition services better in (insert school or district name). In the next few weeks, you will receive a (insert mailed survey or phone call) that asks questions about what you have been doing since you left high school. We will ask questions like: since leaving high school, have you worked or gone to school? About how many hours each week do you work? If you enrolled in school, did you complete one term? (If survey includes additional questions, note this here.) Answering the questions will take about ten to fifteen minutes.

By answering these questions you help students like yourself who are still in high school. Teachers will use your answers to learn what they can do to help other youths get jobs and go to school after high school. To take part in the (insert mailed survey or phone call), someone will contact you at the (insert phone number or address) listed on your school records. To make sure you have a chance to answer the questions, please tell the district if you change your phone number or move to a new address. We want to hear from you and what you tell us is important.

Your answers will be kept private. No one will share your name or answers with anyone else. For more information, see (insert state PSO website or SPP or APR website); or contact (insert contact name) at (insert contact e-mail), (insert contact phone number).

Sincerely,

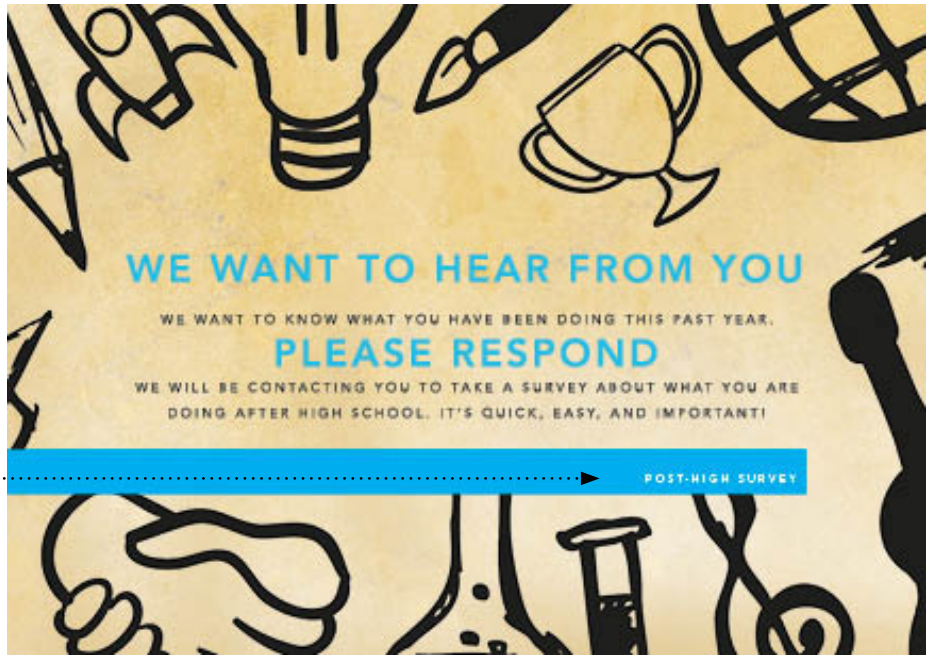
(insert name and title)

NATIONAL POST-SCHOOL OUTCOMES CENTER

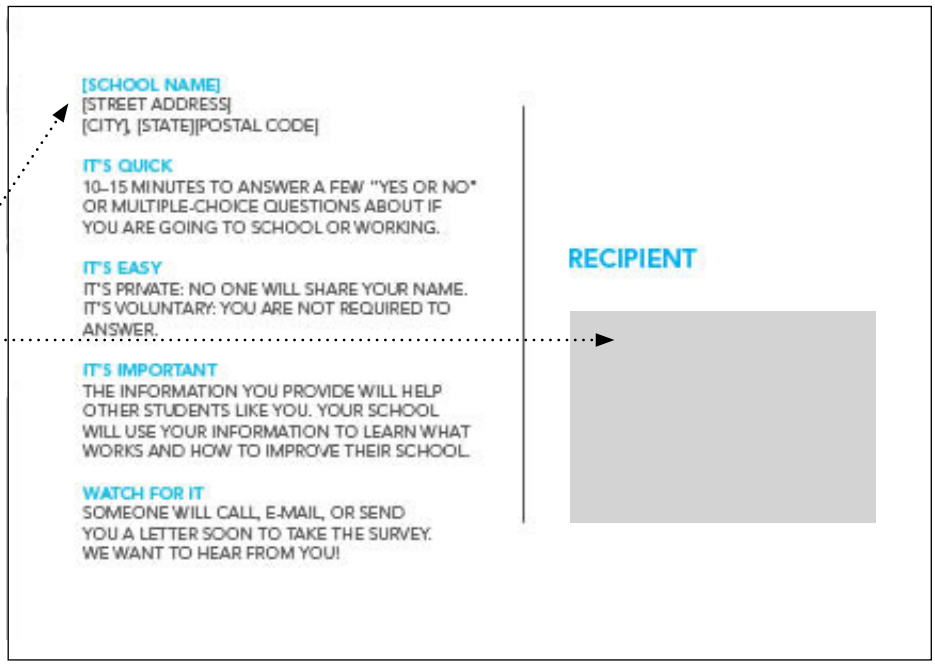
Place the letter on official letterhead and mail or deliver it to students and families two to three weeks prior to starting the survey. Be sure to include the PSO brand or logo on the letterhead. Use simple, nontechnical language to describe the survey process. Personalize the letter using the former student's name; avoid Dear Former Student. Individually sign each letter, in a contrasting-colored ink, rather than using an automated or electronic signature. Get the attention of potential respondents by mailing the letter in a white, hand-addressed envelope; windowed envelopes indicate a bill and affixed address labels indicate a mass mailing. Individualizing the letters, signing each one, and hand addressing each envelope conveys that this survey is important.

POSTCARD

Click to enter the state or district name on the front of the postcard.



Click to add the school's name, address, and the recipient's address on the back of the card.

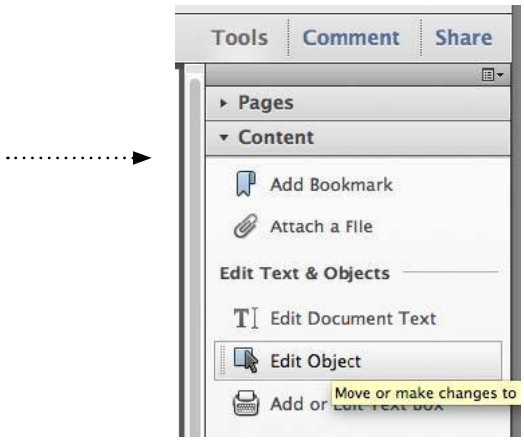


A postcard is an excellent way to increase awareness about the survey and to remind potential respondents that they will be contacted soon to participate in the post-school outcomes survey. Remember to include the PSO brand or logo and to make the postcard attractive to the target audience.

USING THE TEMPLATES

Templates that can be personalized for your state or district can be located at the National Post-School Outcomes Center website, psocenter.org, under the Tools and Resources tab. The sample flyer, letter, and postcard are formatted as templates in Adobe .pdf. To add your brand and logo or change the information in a template, follow these instructions.

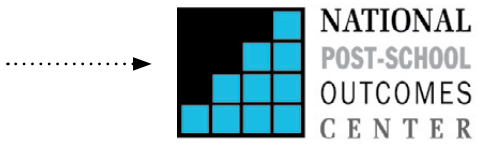
1. Open the .pdf file in Adobe Acrobat



2. In the Tools menu, under the Content submenu, select "Edit Object"

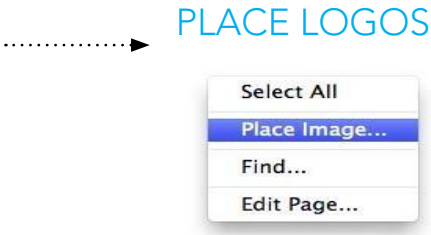
3. Right Click (Control click on a Mac computer) in the area you wish to place your graphic

PLACE LOGOS HERE



4. Select "Place Image . . ." and navigate to your graphic

PLACE LOGOS HERE



5. Once the graphic is placed, you can resize by clicking a corner button and dragging to your desired size.

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