

# Op-Ed Template for Local Organizations

PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION WEEK 2026

This template is designed to help your organization share your story during Public Service Recognition Week (PSRW). Use it to explain the federal funding you received, what has changed after a year of cuts and why public servants and the services they provide remain critical to your community. Customize every bracketed section with your organization's specific details.

## HEADLINE

### Localize it:

Your headline should make clear who you are, where you are and what is at stake. Keep it under 12 words if possible.

**Example:** A Year Later, [City/County Name] Is Still Paying the Price for Federal Funding Cuts

**Example:** How Gutting Federal Grants Left [Organization Name] — and Our Community — Behind

**Example:** Public Servants Made [City/County] Work. Here's What Happened When Funding Disappeared.

**i** **Word Count:** 500–700 words (aim for 600) | **Timeframe:** PSRW is typically the first week of May

---

## [ SECTION 1: The HOOK — approx. 75–100 words ]

### Goal:

Open with a personal story or local anecdote that puts a human face on your work. Readers need to feel the impact before they understand the policy.

### What to include:

- A specific moment, event, or person that illustrates what your organization does
- A brief mention that it is Public Service Recognition Week (May [X–X], 202[X])
- A forward reference to what has changed — hint at the threat without leading with statistics

### Example:

**Example:** When the [local emergency or community moment] happened last [month/year], the first people on the ground were public servants — [your staff, their role] — doing what they always do: showing up. This is Public Service Recognition Week, a time to recognize the people who make our community work. But this year, recognition isn't enough. One year after sweeping federal funding cuts hit organizations like ours, the damage is real — and your neighbors are feeling it.

[Write your hook here]

---

## [ SECTION 2: THE FUNDING — WHAT YOU HAD — approx. 75–100 words ]

### Goal:



**PARTNERSHIP  
FOR PUBLIC SERVICE**

Better government. Stronger democracy.

Describe the federal funding your organization received, what it made possible and the partnership it represented between your community and the federal government.

**What to include:** grants, etc.)

- Specific numbers: dollar amount, number of people served, staff funded, programs supported
- What that partnership with the federal government meant in practice — what it allowed you to do that you could not do alone

**Example:**

**Example:** For [X] years, [Organization Name] received \$[X] annually through [grant/program name]. That funding paid for [X staff positions / specific programs / services]. It allowed us to [do something specific — serve X families, run X program, maintain X service]. That grant wasn't charity — it was a partnership. The federal government invested in [City/County] and our community invested back.

[Describe your federal funding and what it enabled here]

---

### [ SECTION 3: WHERE YOU ARE NOW — approx. 100–150 words ]

**Goal:**

This is the heart of the op-ed. Tell readers what happened after the cuts — specifically, concretely, one year later. This is where you connect your story to PSRW's Federal Harms Tracker and the broader pattern of cuts affecting organizations like yours.

**What to include:**

- What specifically was cut, reduced or eliminated — and when
- The immediate and ongoing impact on your staff, your services and the people you serve
- Any data or numbers that show the scale (staff laid off, clients no longer served, programs ended)
- How this connects to a broader pattern: this wasn't an isolated decision; it was part of a wave of federal funding cuts tracked across the country

**Example:**

**Example:** In [month/year], we learned that our [grant name] funding had been cut — entirely. Within [timeframe], we had to [lay off X staff / end X program / turn away X people]. A year later, we are still operating at a fraction of our former capacity. [X] fewer families receive [service]. [X] positions that once served our community are gone. We are not alone: organizations across the country have faced the same cuts, and communities like ours are absorbing the cost.

**Tip:** Check out our [Federal Harms Tracker](#) and [Cost to Your Community map](#) for local data points you can cite to show your community is not alone.

[Describe where your organization stands today — be specific]

---

### [ SECTION 4: WHY PUBLIC SERVANTS MATTER — approx. 100–150 words ]

**Goal:**

Broaden the lens. Connect your organization's story to the larger argument: public servants and the services they deliver are not overhead, they are the infrastructure of daily life.

**What to include:**



**PARTNERSHIP  
FOR PUBLIC SERVICE**

*Better government. Stronger democracy.*

- 2–3 concrete examples of what public servants do in your community (name real services, real places, real roles)
- A reframe: these are not bureaucrats, they are neighbors, first responders, teachers, environmental inspectors, librarians
- A brief note on what is lost when these roles go unfilled or underfunded — not just services, but trust

**Example:**

**Example:** Public servants are not abstractions. They are the [nurse at the county health clinic on [Street Name]], the [inspector who checks the water supply for [X] residents], the [case manager who helps veterans navigate benefits]. When we defund these roles, we don't just lose services — we lose the people who know our community, who show up in a crisis, who do the work no one else will. That is what is at stake.

[Name specific public servants or roles that serve your community]

---

## [ SECTION 5: CALL TO ACTION — approx. 75–100 words ]

**Goal:**

Give readers something to do. Make the ask specific, local, and achievable. This is where your op-ed earns its place.

**What to include:**

- A direct ask — contact a representative, attend a meeting, sign a petition, visit a resource
- A reference to PSRW as the moment to act — recognition should lead to advocacy
- Optional: direct readers to the PSRW Federal Harms Tracker or Cost to Your Community map to see the broader picture

**Example:**

**Example:** This Public Service Recognition Week, I ask you to do two things. First: thank a public servant. Second: contact [your Representative's name] and ask them where they stand on restoring federal funding for [program/service]. Visit [PSRW resource URL] to see how cuts like ours are affecting communities across the country — and what you can do about it.

[Write your specific call to action here]

---

## [ SECTION 6: CONCLUSION — approx. 50–75 words ]

**Goal:**

End on a note of commitment and forward momentum — not despair. Reiterate your organization's dedication to the community and the community's stake in public service.

**Example:**

**Example:** The people who serve [City/County Name] have not stopped showing up. They are still here — doing more with less, every day. The question is whether we will show up for them. This week and beyond.

[Write your conclusion here]

---

## SIGN-OFF

Include the following at the end of your op-ed:

- [Your Full Name]
- [Your Title and Organization Name]
- [City, State]
- [Email Address]
- [Phone Number — for editor use only, not always published]

---

## TIPS FOR PITCHING TO OUTLETS

Getting your op-ed published takes the same care as writing it. Editors receive dozens of submissions a week. These tips will help yours stand out.

### 1. Timing

Submit 1–2 weeks before PSRW begins (typically the first week of May). Op-ed queues fill fast. Earlier is better.

### 2. Exclusivity

Only submit to one outlet at a time. Inform them it is an exclusive submission. If you don't hear back within 5–7 business days, follow up once — then move to the next outlet.

### 3. Localize aggressively

Editors at local papers want local specificity. Name the street. Name the program. Name the neighborhood. Generic op-eds get passed over. Yours should be something only you could have written.

### 4. Lead with the human, not the policy

Your pitch email should open the same way your op-ed does — with a story or a person, not a funding figure. Hook the editor the same way you hook the reader.

### 5. Keep your pitch email short

Two to three sentences: who you are, what the piece is about, why it matters to their readers right now. Paste the op-ed below the pitch or attach as a Word document — whichever the outlet prefers.

### 6. Know your outlet

Research the outlet's op-ed page before submitting. Note their typical word count, format, and submission contact. Address your pitch to the opinion or op-ed editor by name if possible.

### 7. Follow submission guidelines

Many outlets have specific requirements for op-eds (word count, format, exclusivity statements). Check their website before submitting and follow them exactly.

### 8. Targets to consider

- Local daily or weekly newspapers
  - Regional news sites and digital outlets
  - Local TV or radio station websites with opinion sections
  - Community and neighborhood newsletters
  - Your organization's own blog or newsletter (if not picked up elsewhere)
-



*Better government. Stronger democracy.*

**Questions?** Contact our press team at [press@ourpublicservice.org](mailto:press@ourpublicservice.org) to support localizing this template, finding data on the Federal Harms Tracker, or identifying the right submission contacts in your region.

Public Service Recognition Week • [psrw.org](http://psrw.org)