

The Impact of the Reconnect 25+ Digital Marketing Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Reconnect Digital Marketing Program represents a coordinated, data-driven effort to increase awareness, application rates, and enrollment in the Michigan Reconnect initiative among adult learners age 25 and up. By combining targeted audience segmentation, strategic messaging, and continuous performance optimization, the campaign successfully expanded reach while generating measurable outcomes across the application and enrollment funnel.

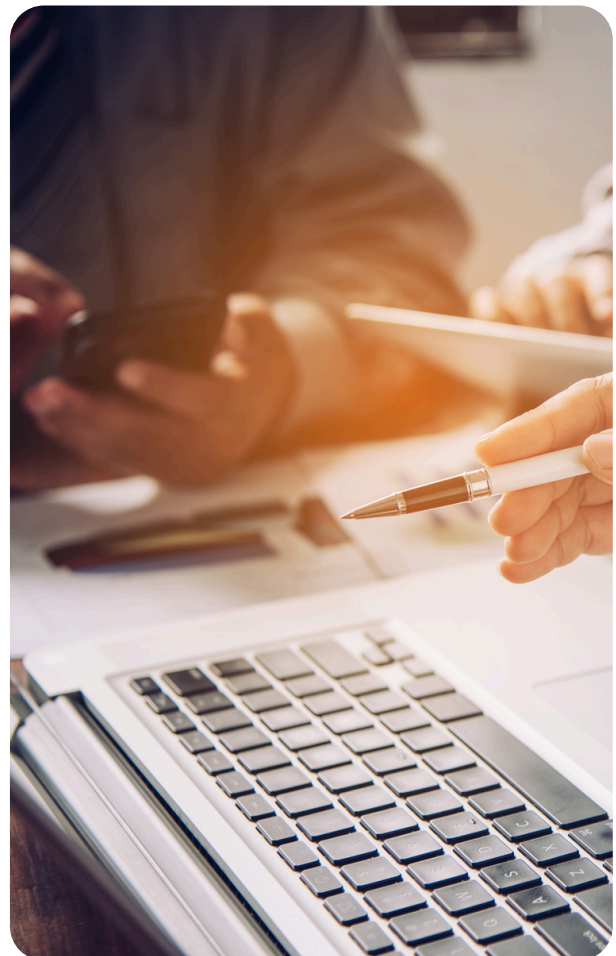
This white paper outlines both the operational process behind the campaign and the measurable impact achieved, demonstrating how structured collaboration and iterative marketing execution can drive meaningful postsecondary engagement.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Reconnect Digital Marketing Program was developed through a multi-partner collaboration led by the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement and Potential (MiLEAP) and including The Michigan Center for Adult College Success, CollegeAPP, and GÜD Marketing. The program was designed to:

- Identify and target eligible adult learners
- Deliver tailored messaging through digital channels
- Optimize engagement and conversion through ongoing performance monitoring

The campaign formally launched in February 2025 following a period of planning, audience development, and creative production.



CAMPAIGN PROCESS

The program followed a structured, iterative workflow that emphasized coordination, data sharing, and continuous improvement.

1. Audience Identification and Segmentation

- A comprehensive audience landscape scan was conducted
- Target subgroups were defined based on demographic and behavioral insights
- Digital channels were selected based on audience characteristics and budget considerations

2. Messaging and Creative Development

- Creative assets were provided by GÜD Marketing to support both awareness and conversion goals

3. Campaign Launch and Execution

- Digital campaigns were deployed across selected channels
- Paid media placements were based on a specific list of individuals with an intent to enroll
- Initial focus included both general awareness and application conversion

4. Ongoing Optimization and Governance

- Weekly or biweekly meetings ensured alignment across partners
- Regular reporting on campaign metrics informed decision-making
- Creative refresh cycles were implemented based on broader campaign refresh cycles
- A/B testing and iterative adjustments were used to improve outcomes

5. Data Integration and Evaluation

- Data matching processes linked campaign audiences to application and enrollment outcomes
- Funnel performance was tracked from exposure through enrollment

CAMPAIGN REACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Individuals in the targeted dataset were matched to state application and enrollment records using a deterministic matching procedure requiring exact agreement on date of birth, ZIP code, and last name, with an additional fuzzy match applied to first name to account for common name variations and data entry inconsistencies. This approach was designed to maximize match sensitivity while maintaining high specificity through the three-field exact-match anchor. Matched individuals form the basis for all campaign attribution figures reported in this document.

The campaign leveraged a large dataset of over 1.47 million individuals to drive awareness and engagement. While only a subset of this audience ultimately applied, the scale of outreach enabled meaningful downstream impact.

- 6,016 individuals from the targeted dataset submitted applications
- This represents a matched application rate of 0.41%
- These applicants accounted for 14.5% of total program applicants during the campaign period

Importantly, the campaign contributed to broader awareness beyond the matched dataset, as total applications reached 41,468.

Monthly application volume increased significantly following campaign launch:

- February 2025: 2,020 applications
- Peak in August 2025: 3,657 applications

This growth indicates strong campaign-driven momentum during the initial and mid-phase rollout.

APPLICANT BEHAVIOR AND INSTITUTIONAL INTEREST

A large majority of applicants (over 93%) identified a specific institution, signaling strong intent to enroll.

Institutional interest was concentrated in high-population regions, with leading institutions including:

- Oakland Community College
- Macomb Community College
- Grand Rapids Community College
- Wayne County Community College District
- Lansing Community College

These patterns suggest effective geographic targeting aligned with population density and program awareness.



ENROLLMENT OUTCOMES

Although complete data are not yet available, a preliminary review yields the following findings.

Based on the limited data available:

- 619 matched individuals enrolled in college through Michigan Reconnect
- This represents a 10.3% conversion rate from matched applicants
- Matched individuals accounted for 12.1% of all enrollees (5,108 total)

Top enrolling institutions mirrored applicant interest, reinforcing alignment between marketing efforts and enrollment outcomes.



RETURN ON INVESTMENT

A complete ROI analysis is not yet possible given the lag in enrollment data reporting; the figures below reflect preliminary calculations that should improve as data becomes available.

The total campaign spend was \$500,000, excluding creative ad development costs, which were covered under a prior MiLEAP contract with GÜD Marketing.

Of the total budget, \$270,000 was spent directly on advertising, while the remaining \$230,000 covered expenses related to database utilization, audience development, and campaign management.

With a total reach of 935,918 individuals across all the platforms, the total campaign spend per individual was \$0.53. Looking at just the spend on advertising per individual, it drops to \$0.29.

It's too early to know what impact the campaign had on enrollments due to the data not being available yet. As such, any analysis on the ROI of the campaign on enrollments will not be done until more complete enrollment data is available.

DISTINCTIONS FROM THE RECONNECT 21 DIGITAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN

The Reconnect digital marketing campaign and the Reconnect 21 (R21) digital marketing campaign followed some similar patterns, but with a few key distinctions.

Similarities include:

- Targeted, data-informed audience segments.
- Biweekly meetings to analyze ad impact and make real time iterations to the campaign.

Key differences:

- Target audience of ages 25+ is a more challenging audience to enroll in college versus individuals in the 21-24 age range.
- Messaging for the R21 campaign was developed through an iterative process with all the partners each bringing data pieces to sharpen the messaging impact.
- As the R21 campaign progressed, tweaking the messaging and updating creative ad sets was more flexible and responsive.
- Creative evolved for the R21 to substantially more dynamic with video and voice-overs in order to drive improved metrics, while Reconnect 25 marketing was largely static or moving words with an instrumental soundtrack.



KEY INSIGHTS

1. Targeted Digital Marketing Drives Measurable Outcomes

Even with a relatively low application rate (0.41%), the scale of outreach produced thousands of applications and hundreds of enrollments to date.

2. Continuous Optimization Enhances Performance

Regular performance reviews, creative refreshes, and A/B testing enabled sustained growth and responsiveness to audience behavior.

3. Strong Funnel Conversion Indicates High Intent

The 10.3% conversion rate from application to enrollment suggests that

campaign-generated applicants were motivated.

4. Creative Matters

The Reconnect 25 ads were largely static relative to the more dynamic, video-driven Reconnect 21 creative. Whether this difference affected downstream conversion can't be determined from the current data, but it's a plausible factor worth isolating in future testing.

5. Collaboration is Critical

The structured coordination between partners—supported by regular meetings, shared data, and clear roles—was essential to execution and success.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE CAMPAIGNS

Based on the results of the Reconnect Digital Marketing Program, future initiatives should consider:

- Expanding targeted datasets to increase reach
- Continuing investment in data matching and attribution
- Enhancing personalization of messaging for key subgroups with dynamic ads
- Scaling high-performing channels and creative formats
- Maintaining strong cross-partner governance structures

CONCLUSION

The Reconnect Digital Marketing Program demonstrates how a structured, data-informed approach to digital outreach can significantly influence postsecondary engagement among adult learners. By combining strategic planning, iterative execution, and rigorous measurement, the program achieved measurable gains in applications and enrollment while establishing a scalable model for future workforce and education initiatives.