



NEGEF Media Outreach Suggestions

Do your homework

Remember that media outlets are businesses. While they provide a service to the community, they are not service organizations. Reporters and editors get paid for coverage of news and events. If you want coverage, make news or create an event.

Do your research first. *Find out what outlets your target audience relies on:* what do they read, what do they listen to, what do they watch, what do they subscribe? Sometimes you have to pay for this information, but most of the time, if you don't know, you just have to ask people like the people you're trying to reach—local residents, officials, merchants. Alternatively, you can drive around town and look for newspaper delivery boxes; buy the paper and see who's advertising, listen to the radio station, watch the local channel.

But perhaps the simplest way is to call the outlet's advertising department and ask them about their readership, listeners, viewers. They know, because that's how they make the case for ad revenue.

Read, listen, and watch. This is the only way to find out *for sure* who the reporters are who are covering your subject area, which ones have your "beat." You can often find out who's supposed to be covering it on the outlet's website (e.g., environmental reporter), but not always. *So read, listen, and watch.*

Develop Your Media Contacts

The work you're doing is vital to building safe, equitable and environmentally sustainable communities. But what's newsworthy is *how what you are doing benefits the community* not just the fact you are doing it. Think about reaching out to media contacts with a symbiotic relationship in mind. They need news (and positive news!) and you need folks to help get the word out. Here are some suggestions for starting from scratch in developing strong media connections:

- Make a list of all the print and web-based communications channels in your area, including blogs. Many of these are available through free local media sources online.
- Include free or periodic publications—everything from "penny savers" to the newsletters of churches and other local organizations; these can often be a great source for getting the word out.
- Find out the best contact for the publication or outlet. Once you've identified the nugget of news, the story you have that will help them help you, call and set up a meeting to share your work.
- Discuss what his/her priorities are. What are their deadlines or upcoming foci?
- Be sure to look at editorial calendars wherever they are available to see what upcoming subject opportunities there are they match your topics.

Once you've determined to whom you will be pitching your stories (and you've done a little more studying on their style and the kinds of things they like most), it's time to begin tailoring your story to meet the needs of your potential story-teller.

Consider what type of work your group or committee is conducting. Is this a one-time event or an ongoing public engagement strategy? Who's your audience and what do you want them to do? Are you seeking to get the word out generally or with a specific ask or time-sensitive alert?

Keep in mind that the fact that you are having, for instance, a fundraising event, is not news. It's an event; it should be in the local events calendar and may get a small write up in a go-and-do-type section. So, if you intend to pitch a story idea about such an event, *you'll have to make it news*: Someone is speaking on a topic that newsworthy (to your target journalist!); there will be a demonstration (of a thing or technique) that's newsworthy (because it will affect the lives of the people who read your target journalist's pieces, etc.); you've got a celebrity showing up. *Make it news-worthy*.

Make your pitch

When you pitch your story, be brief and be clear. Media contacts are very busy people, shifting through many submissions and priorities. Be sure to get across quickly why people (and therefore the reporter or editor) should care about what we're doing or promoting.

If you don't have a relationship with a reporter or specific knowledge of what a reporter covers, approach an editor. Avoid jargon or overly flowery text. Consider the audience carefully and how to get beyond the "choir". What might folks who *don't* typically attend your events or meetings care about that might intersect with your work?

Make sure to find out when, which time of day or day of the week, is best to contact a reporter or editor. And if they ask you for information and you need to call them back, don't ask what their deadline is; ask when they need it by; *their* deadline is too late for you.

Common elements to share with media might include:

- Backgrounders – This might be a brochure or one-pager about your organization or project. Make sure to include web links to your website url, Facebook page, Youtube channel or other social media links. Please remember to recognize your Grassroots Fund grant – details at: <http://grassrootsfund.org/publicity>
- Tip sheets, fact sheets or FAQs – statistics or "punchy" facts will stand out and be very useful to media contacts; help them find and tell the story.
- Bios – If appropriate share bios of key organizers or speakers (if this is event focused) that highlight why folks should care about their message – what are their credentials
- Contact Information – Although this information will be on a media release, add any additional contacts or specifics on best times to reach contacts, etc.
- Photos – The power of photos can not be overstated. Be sure to share high-resolution digital format or a link to find photos
- Promotional Materials – Add any items that are relevant to the media release/event/issue you are seeking to promote but don't over do it; media folks are under constant deadlines.

Ask "Can I send you a backgrounder?" "May I send you a tip sheet?" Try to get a sense for what he or she needs and deliver that. If an editor asks for a news release, send it.

Sample Press Releases

We've posted 2 sample press releases on our website. Find them at: <http://grassrootsfund.org/publicity>