



IDENTIFYING MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES

MEDIA ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

If you don't already have one, create a media inventory for your local area. Outlets to include are:

- Newspapers: state, local, community, and neighborhood. Don't forget weeklies and "shoppers."
- Radio programs, especially talk shows, that discuss community issues and activities.
- TV stations, including local cable stations that provide community information.

Develop a mailing list and contact information for each outlet you identify. For newspapers, you should include contact and other information for letters to the editor (LTE), especially the number of words they allow. Also, note if they accept guest opinion editorials, commonly referred to as "op-eds." Having this information handy when you are scrambling to get a communication out to the media can save time and help you meet the deadlines required by the media outlet.

You will want to follow the reporters who cover your beat. But also include and constantly consider the many different ways and places that your issues can be covered. Remember, the smaller the media outlet, the more likely they are to accept and print verbatim the material you send to them.

NEWSPAPER OPPORTUNITIES

News and News Features

- News Stories—For fast coverage of your organizational events or late breaking policy developments, keep on hand the names of editors and reporters who cover your issues.
- Feature Stories—In-depth articles on your issues may appear in weekly publications or in the lifestyle sections of daily papers.
- Special Series—Daily newspapers are frequently on the lookout for appropriate subjects for multi-part special reports, which they often promote heavily.
- Specialized Sections—If special sections such as "Business," "Food," or "Health" provide appropriate settings for your information, keep the names of their editors handy. They may accept features or regular columns from your organization if they are timeless, interesting, and of a high quality.

Editorial Coverage

- Editorial Page—Research shows that only 10 percent of the general public reads the editorial page regularly. However, that 10 percent includes community leaders and key decision-makers. Editorial writers may be willing to endorse community-wide events or campaigns. On other occasions, they may provide space for interested parties to present rebuttals to positions the paper has taken. (See "Getting Editorial Boards to Support Your Issue.")



- **Guest Opinions**—Daily and weekly papers may accept op-eds on matters of local interest.
- **Columns**—Some newspaper columnists reach a wide and loyal readership. You should know the columnists and their interests. When appropriate, pitch your positions to them directly.
- **Letters to the Editor**—Strategic use of LTEs can keep issues alive in a community, rebut negative forces, correct misinformation in a previous story, and provide a vehicle for thanking those who help your cause. (See "Writing a Letter to the Editor.")

Other Opportunities

- **Community Service Space**—Many newspapers devote space regularly to news of local non-profit organizations. These pages can keep your organization in the public eye and provide a vehicle for bestowing public recognition on hard-working staff and volunteers.
- **Community Calendars**—These sections will offer free listings of upcoming community events.
- **Community News**—Many papers have sections that print news of meetings, appointments, past events, and future activities and plans.

RADIO AIRTIME

News and Public Affairs

- **Daily News Reports**—Radio stations with all-news formats offer the most opportunities for coverage, but most stations broadcast at least short news reports throughout the day.
- **Weekly Public Affairs Programs**—These programs are typically in one-on-one or group interview formats. They are generally broadcast early or late in the day to relatively small audiences. But strategic placement of your spokespeople and issues can reach key audiences, including decision-makers.
- **Special Programs**—Stations (especially those with all-news formats) may produce special half-hour or longer reports at regular intervals.

Public Service Airtime

- **Public Service Announcements (PSAs)**—Stations broadcast, and some will also produce, public service announcements for non-profit agencies. When seeking placement for a PSA, try to secure a meeting with the PSA director to explain why your event is important to the community.
- **Management Editorials**—Some stations take public positions on issues of importance to their communities. You might get the station manager to deliver an editorial about your issue, or to allow a spokesperson from your organization to deliver one.
- **Community Calendar**—Like TV stations, most radio stations will accept and air announcements of upcoming community events.

Talk Shows

- **Local talk shows** have hours of air time to fill. Their interests converge with yours. Prepare your spokespeople to address your positions and pitch them for placement at key opportunities.

TELEVISION AIRTIME

Public Service Opportunities

- PSAs—Many stations broadcast PSAs for non-profit community organizations. Keep contact information for the PSA director in your contacts database.
- Community Calendar Announcements—Many stations offer special time slots in which community groups can publicize the dates, times, and locations for specific events.

Editorial Opportunities

- Community Viewpoint Editorials—Opinion messages delivered by members of the community on issues of public concern may be broadcast under such titles as "Point of View" or "Free Speech Message."
- Management Editorials—A station might regularly take public stands on community issues and broadcast management editorials. Sometimes these positions can be influenced by members of the community.

News and Public Affairs Opportunities

- Daily News Programs—Coverage of your event or issue in the news can bring broad exposure and interest. Many TV stations broadcast four or five news programs a day.
- Weekly Public Affairs Interview Programs—These generally focus on one news issue at a time. Audiences might be small, but include key players.