

Media Planning Worksheet

Shape and share stories that serve your cause



Three simple steps

Media outreach can be a full time job, but we know you wear many hats. To make the most of limited time, we recommend thinking about these three steps:

1. **Build a list.** Identify the top few reporters that cover your issue or community and take note of reporters that come up repeatedly.
2. **Introduce yourself.** Send an informal email about your organization, and the top one or two problems you are focused on now. Offer to be a resource for them if they ever need background information or connections to residents, advocates, or experts.
3. **Flag news when it happens.** Let them know about events, decision points, milestones, etc. Reiterate your offer to connect them with spokespeople.

Framing your issue

To create the conditions for progress, we often need to counter stories or arguments that get in the way. Consider:

- What misunderstandings or arguments are out there about your issue? Often environmental and EJ groups bump up against arguments such as:
 - It costs too much.
 - This will put people out of work.
 - It's too late/too soon.
 - This is government overreach.
- What facts and feelings can help propel progress? Focus on human stories versus statistics, and emphasize that solutions are possible (and, generally, quite popular!)

Timing your stories

With so much going on in the world, it can be difficult to keep people focused on any one issue for long. But we know it takes years to pass or implement policies. In order to maintain momentum, it's helpful to map out some key media moments across the arc of a program or campaign. Consider:

- **Seasons:** Is there a particular time of year when this issue is especially relevant or visible?
- **Project or policy milestones:** What are the major phases or decision points?

- **DIY media moments:** Are you planning any tours, marches, lobby days, community events, etc.?

Putting together a media pitch

Whether you are writing a press release, a personalized note to a reporter, or an editorial board letter, it should include these key elements:

- **The hook:** Why is this important, and why now?
- **The characters:** Who can help tell this story?
- **The visuals:** What photos or videos could a media crew capture?
- **The tension:** What is getting in the way of progress?

Packaging and follow-up

Getting media coverage takes persistence, and different media moments call for different strategies. These can include:

- **Media note:** An informal email sent to a single reporter or a short list of media contacts you believe may be interested in this issue based on past coverage or conversation. This can be used to introduce an issue, an offer to connect a reporter with directly impacted community members, or to follow-up after an event.
- **Media advisory:** A more structured email about an upcoming event that includes Who, What, When and Where, as well as some background on the issue.
- **Press release:** A more formal document (pasted into the body of an email) that highlights current news, includes quotes and contact information for spokespeople, and includes background on the issue and the organizations involved.

Additional ideas

News stories can be a big help, but the work doesn't end there, and we can bring attention to our issues and apply pressure to decision makers through other means as well:

- **Direct outreach:** Print out press clips or petitions, or prepare a one-pager that explains what's possible and what's at stake.
- **Opinion media:** Consider writing an op-ed, letter to the editor, or asking a newspaper editorial board to weigh in ahead of a big decision point.
- **Events:** Can you rally supporters through a march or demonstration, or engage media with a press conference or virtual briefing?
- **Online:** Use your blog, Instagram, Facebook or other social media platform to share pictures, quotes, short videos, or links to news stories.