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FEDERAL
ELECTION 2021

Media Coverage Tipsheet

4 ways to engage with media this election season

How to get media to attend your event

You've worked hard planning an event to get your community engaged in the upcoming election. Now it's time to alert the media! Having local journalists attend and report on your event is a great way to keep the conversation going—and to make sure your community's voices are at the centre of it.

Write a media alert.

This is similar to a press release but much shorter. Stick to the 5Ws - Who, What, Where, When, Why. This makes a media alert very quick and easy to create. Be sure to include all important details of your event, and make it sound enticing—after all, the point is to interest the media in attending! [Here](#) is an example.

Personalize it.

One to two weeks before your event, send the alert along with a personalized note to your media contacts. Invite them personally to attend the event and to connect with you on any questions beforehand.

Follow up with a press release.

Send a full press release after your event, summarizing what took place, who was involved, and why it was significant. In this longer release, you can include quotes from your Director and/or key speakers at the event, as well as information about your organization.



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How to pitch a story successfully

Not planning a pre-election event? That's okay! You can still use the campaign period as an opportunity to get media coverage. Think about what issues are most important to your community and what solutions are needed to address them. What needs to be on every politician's radar, and why? What makes your organization uniquely positioned to talk about this? Once you've got your idea, it's time to get pitching.

Pitch to one journalist—the right one.

Choose someone who's interested in the topic, has covered similar stories in the past, or has the topic area included in their title (e.g. Food writer, Social justice reporter).

Hook your pitch to something timely.

Local angles on a national trending topic, such as the federal election, are terrific. Your pitch should not only answer the question “why is this news?” but also “why is this news right now?” and “how can our organization add a unique perspective on this news?”

Keep it short.

Don't include the whole story or a lot of background information in your pitch. This is different from a press release. Focus on your story idea and what you can offer the journalist (interview, resources, images, etc).

Mention your spokesperson.

Make sure the journalist knows there is someone at your organization who is ready to speak with them for a story. Depending on the topic, this could be your CFC Director, a program coordinator, a volunteer or participant.



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Prove that you're paying attention.

Consider mentioning why you chose to reach out to them. This could be as simple as showing appreciation for a recent story they did on a similar topic.

Follow up (but not too much).

Give the journalist time to respond to you. The length of time will vary depending on how time-sensitive your pitch is, but ideally you can wait at least a week. It's okay to follow up once or twice—journalists' inboxes fill up quickly. If you still get no response, it's best to move on.

How to prepare for an interview

Your pitch was successful and the journalist wants to interview you—congratulations! Now the fun begins as you prepare (or help your spokesperson prepare).

Create an interview brief.

Gather all the interview details and information you need, including:

- Date and time
- Interviewer name and title
- Media outlet/program
- Interview length
- Interview topic/focus
- Potential interview questions
- Air/publish date (if known)
- Contact information

Develop key messages and practice them.

Decide on 2-3 main ideas or pieces of information you want to get across. These messages should be easy for you to remember and easy for anyone hearing the story to recall. Memorize any facts and figures you want to reference.



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Know the interviewer and the media outlet.

If you don't already know them, read their recent stories or watch/listen to some shows to get familiar with their style.

Do a mock interview.

Have someone ask you some anticipated questions and practice using your key messages in your answers.

Close with your call to action.

Decide what you want people to do and then ask the audience to do it at the end of the interview.

What to do after the interview

You did it! You rocked the interview. Now what? Here are a few best practices to follow after you've spoken to the journalist.

- Add the journalist's name and contact info to your media list.
- If you promised them additional information, act immediately.
- Thank the journalist for covering your story. Ask if they have everything they need, and offer to help out with any future stories.
- Obtain a copy of the article or interview for sharing on your digital channels.
- Analyze the interview: What went well? What went less well? What did you learn for next time?
- Reach out periodically to remind them of topics you can comment on, resources you have available, or to pitch new story ideas.