

Media guide for community groups



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Using the media strategically presents many great opportunities for community groups of all sizes. It can offer free, credible publicity that can reach and influence the opinion of an organisation's full range of stakeholders.

Some essential features of news

The most important element of attracting the media's attention is to have a story that will spark a journalist's interest (sending media releases about every occurrence in your organisation will only annoy and condition the journalist to ignore your efforts).

Most commonly, the media will apply the following questions when assessing your story:

- what is unique about the information?
- what is unique about those involved?
- how does it affect the general public?
- will people be interested?

Which story will generate media interest?

To attract the media's interest, you should focus on 'highlights' and 'angles', which will serve as a suitable hook for journalists who may cover your story. You may have to get creative with stories that seem unappealing.

Targeting your story

It is important to assess the market realistically, to determine your story's reach. How wide will its interest be?

Determine what media is available to you such as the major, statewide outlets (The Advertiser, metropolitan TV and radio), or the local newspapers and community radio stations. You can even make use of external organisations publications, which may have hardcopy or electronic newsletters.

You will need to have some understanding about each medium and the type of information being included in each to target your story appropriately.

General media coverage

Sometimes it's best to use the 'blanket' approach to inform all parts of the media. You can use this approach when you feel that your story has widespread appeal.

Building your contact list

It's a valuable tool to have a contact list of journalists, researchers or producers who have an interest in your organisation's activity.

You can identify these contacts by paying attention to who writes or produces stories in your area of activity, or by contacting a media outlet directly and ask for a recommendation of who to talk to.

Arranging a meeting is an excellent place to start, giving the journalist an insight into your organisation's objectives and its range of activities.

Remember, journalists need contacts within their community and are always looking for material to fill their pages and news bulletins, so don't be shy and remember to keep in touch regularly.

Writing a media release

When preparing a media release, the most important aspect is the use of clear, concise and simple language.

- don't be too wordy, for example 'appeared' rather than 'put in an appearance'
- keep sentences brief and try not to include too many ideas
- use 'active' language rather than 'passive', for example. write "Jack hit Bill" instead of 'Bill was hit by Jack'
- try to keep the media release to one page
- use quotes from a spokesperson to add depth
- ensure all important details are covered – who, what, why, where, when and how and put the most important points at the start of the media release
- always include contact details for further information (business and after hours)
- date the media release.

Distributing a story

1. Send your media release to the targeted media outlets.
2. If possible, phone the media outlet/s to briefly describe your story and promote interest (this can also be a good way to make contacts).
3. If the journalist is interested, follow up with an email and attach your media release. It is also helpful to include the Chief-of-Staff or equivalent in this email.

Holding a media event

When your group has a major announcement or achievement (openings and launches) you want to make sure it's promoted to as many people as possible. For these significant events, it's most effective to stage a media conference or media event.

Preparing for an event

Send a media alert out, advising the media of your upcoming event. Make sure you give five or six days' notice so they know what to expect if they attend.

Early advice should include:

- event details and how it will be conducted
- date and time
- location
- a brief background
- a description of what vision is available for photographers and/or TV crews

Helpful tips

- mid-morning is often the best time for a media event as it allows the media plenty of time to process your story
- choose the most accessible location and call to confirm media attendance on the day of the event
- send embargoed copies of your media release after your event to media outlets that were unable to attend

Further Information

For further information, visit the Government of South Australia's webpage on 'Marketing a Community Organisation': <https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/community-support/community-organisations/managing-a-community-organisation/marketing>.