



4th **DIVERSITY MATTERS**
a Commonwealth forum on cultural diversity

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WORKING WITH THE MEDIA - A GUIDE FOR NOT-FOR-PROFIT AND COMMUNITY GROUPS



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Foreword

The 4th Diversity Matters Forum held in Johannesburg in 2007, provided a unique opportunity for people from across the Commonwealth to share views and experiences on the broad and complex issues around the media and diversity. An objective of the Forum was to bring together journalists, editors, communities and educators to facilitate reciprocal learning.

The Forum demonstrated the importance for all sectors to develop constructive and supportive relationships. Some of the practical issues discussed were strategies to facilitate balanced and accurate reporting by the media and skills to assist communities work constructively with the media. As a result, a key recommendation emerging from the Forum is the development of a practical guide to assist not-for-profit community groups to work effectively with the media.

The guide will provide the tools to enable community groups to confidently engage at all levels with the media. The background information will also provide important knowledge on how the media works. The guide will, in effect, be a toolkit to encourage communities to take positive action through garnering support and effecting change.

It is hoped that by understanding how the media works communities will build stronger relationships with the media and that this will lead to informed and responsible coverage of diversity-related issues.

Communication Goals

- **Where do we want to go?**
- **How do we get there?**

As a not-for-profit or community group you need to promote yourself and your message to your target audience. These may include existing or new volunteers, donors, members, decision-makers, grant-makers, or specific audiences, for example, young people, interest groups etc. Regardless of how you promote yourself - through the media, websites, emails, leaflets, flyers, newsletters, posters or networking – it all comes down to one thing - **communication**.

Communication means a lot more than just being articulate; communication is a two-way process and begins **within** your organisation and **extends out** to the wider community. To achieve your communication goals it is important that your group is clear on **who it is** (activities and what it does and why), **what it stands for** (beliefs or philosophies) and **what it is striving to do or be**.

Before approaching the media or designing any promotional material your organisation must develop a strong, consistent and persuasive message. Once this message is clear, your group needs to include it in as many of your communications as possible, for example, on letterheads, slogans, on your website, and in any media release or promotional material such as newsletters, brochures, flyers etc.

Communicating your message to your target audience can be as easy as answering **WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY** and **HOW**. Take a moment to work through the following questions.

- **What** is the message you want to convey?
- **Who** do you want to convey the message to?
- **Why** are you conveying this message?
- **When** do you want to communicate this message? (is there a deadline for this message?)
- **WHERE/HOW** are you going to convey this message? (in the newspapers or other media, through flyers, posters, web).

There are many ways of communicating your group's message to the wider community. This guide will take you through several different communication mediums and will explore how you can make the most of these to increase your community profile and promote your message to the public. But let's start by looking at some effective and low-cost ways of promoting your group. These communication activities encourage your group to think innovatively and creatively.

Leaflets and Brochures

Leaflets are a way to quickly get information to your target audience. They can be designed to grab people's attention with a cartoon, graphic or provocative header. Leaflets can provide people with enough basic information to encourage them to ask for more and they can encourage discussion when they are handed out personally.

A leaflet or a flyer (handbill) is usually a short, often urgent, written message printed on just one side of a standard weight paper if it is to be handed out or on poster board or cover stock if it is to be posted on a bulletin board.

Use an attention-grabbing graphic or a short, snappy headline in large type at the top so that people can see it from a distance and will want to stop and read it.

A brochure is a glorified leaflet. It is usually a single sheet of paper but it's longer, folded up and printed on both sides. It can explain things in more detail. It is useful for mailings and long-term use and is less likely to be thrown away. You can fit more material into a brochure.

Whether you are creating a leaflet or brochure, it is important to focus on just **one basic idea or theme**.

Preparation Questions

No matter which format you choose to communicate the issue, there are a few basic questions to keep in mind when putting your written piece together:

Why are you writing the article, leaflet, flyer, brochure, article or letter? (Decide what action or attitude you hope to influence).

What do you want to communicate to the reader? (Clearly define your objectives).

Who are you trying to reach with this message? (Your audience will determine: 1) the tone of your article, etc.; 2) kinds of arguments used; and 3) action requested)

What are your most persuasive arguments? (Identify the main reasons why it is in the reader's interest to act in the manner you suggest).

Putting your leaflet together

Remember to grab attention through the **headline**, for example:

“Fears for safety: New housing project creates environmental disaster”

A good headline should give people reason to read on. It also helps if you try to see the situation from the audience's perspective, what is likely to make them stop, pay attention and think?

Another method of getting attention is by using cartoons, pictures or graphic. A cartoon can add interest and sometimes humour. A picture or graphic can illustrate key points. Leave plenty of space around the headline, the cartoon or the picture. People generally don't want to read a long, detailed sheet of information.

Next, outline your major points and use them as subheadings. Subheadings allow people to get the overall picture of the issue. For example:

Hundreds waiting for hospital beds

Fewer mental health services

Elderly forced to leave homes

Subheadings also help to make the leaflet easier to read as ideas are organised from most important to least important.

Explain each subheading and decide how much detail you will use. A one-page flyer or leaflet will probably just include highlights of information.

End the leaflet by re-emphasizing your main idea (what you want people to remember). The ending may also include an appeal for action:

"Call your government representative today"

"Attend the rally on March 04"

Try using the same layout or style for all your leaflets or brochures. People will begin to recognize your work and become familiar with its purpose. This will add a degree of comfort and confidence to their understanding the issues.

Posters

Posters are effective for local and community events. It is not difficult to put together an eye-catching design with event details on paper and stick copies on power poles, notice boards, and local shops (remember to obtain permission first).

Word of Mouth

Encourage members, supporters, volunteers and anyone associated with your organisation to spread the word. Word of mouth is still an effective means of strengthening your community profile.

Fairs, conferences etc.

Set-up a stall at the local fair and talk to people about your organisation, hand-out newsletters, leaflets, brochures.

Creating your own Newsletter and tapping into Local Newsletters

Newsletters are a great source of regular information. They keep people informed of what is happening in your group and they also reinforce what your group is doing and its aims and objectives. Newsletters can be distributed through the mail or via email. The important thing is that they are circulated to as many people and organisations as possible.

Take advantage of other newsletters circulating in the local area to publicise your organisation, event, cause etc.

- Explore newsletters that may be interested in your issues and get the names of the editors
- Often, local councils publish detailed newsletters for local residents

There are many opportunities for your group to promote and publicise its work. The above suggestions are just a few of the approaches your organisation can take to increase its profile and get its message out. The important thing to remember is to be proactive, responsive and creative in your approach. It's also a good idea to get everyone associated with your organisation to become involved in communicating your group's message and promoting your cause. Communication is not viewed then as a separate function but is incorporated into all aspects of the organisation. In this next section, we will discuss how you can work effectively with the media.

Why is the media important to you?

To work effectively with the media, your community group needs to be clear on the reasons for using the media in the first place.

So why use the media and how can the media make a difference to your community group?

The media is a main source of information for millions of people around the world and it is one of the most effective means of getting a message out to a large audience.

The media, however, is not simply a means of disseminating information; it is also a filter through which people can learn more about your organisation and the message you want to deliver.

People are influenced by the media. They form opinions and attitudes based on what they read, hear and see. Therefore, the power of the media to shape public opinion offers your community group great opportunities to actively seek out positive publicity through media coverage.

If you are still not convinced why you should use the media, take a few moments to answer the following questions. The self-assessment task will provide insight into how the media can be of assistance to your community group in achieving its communication goals.

YES	NO	Self-Assessment Task
		Does your community group want more people to know what it does?
		Does your community group want more people to think positively about what it does?

	Does your community group want the public to receive correct and balanced information about the issues it is promoting?
	Does your community group want to raise public awareness on the issues it is promoting?
	Does your community group want to deliver a specific message to the general public?
	Does your community group want to build its profile and visibility in the general community?
	Does your community group want to attract more members, donors, fundraisers, supporters, helpers?
	Does your community group want to set itself apart from other groups working in the same area?
	Does your community group want to increase its profile among decision makers, grant makers, and others with influence or power?
	Does your community group want to establish itself as a credible and authoritative source of information?
	Does your community group want to target its message to a specific audience?
	Does your community group want to increase its profile as an agent for change by helping to inform policies?
	Does your community group want to publicise a particular event or cause?
	Does your community group want to build a desired image?
	Does your community group want to establish itself as "legitimate", and its activities as important or notable?
	Does your community group want to market its activities and keep in the public eye without spending money advertising its achievements or events?

If most of your responses fell into the YES category, it's time to think about putting a media strategy in place. But before we begin, let's find out more about what the media is and how it works.

The media: What is it and how does it work?

The "media" refers to various forms of communication. Its main purpose is to deliver a message but it does a lot more than that.

The media is made up of a variety of different mediums, including television, radio, internet, newspapers and magazines.

Each medium presents information in different ways and through a variety of programs or sections.

Television: consists of commercial television stations, non-commercial stations and pay television. Each of these stations presents information through programs such as news, current affairs, lifestyle, documentaries, dramas, etc. Television mostly relies on good visuals to tell a story.

Radio: is made up of commercial, non-commercial and community radio stations. Radio provides information to listeners through news, current affairs, and talkback programs. Information on radio is presented in segments ranging from 15 seconds to 10 minutes. Radio relies on conciseness and people who can articulate ideas simply.

Newspapers: consist of national daily newspapers, metropolitan daily newspapers, suburban newspapers and regional newspapers. Newspapers present information in a number of sections (e.g. news, education, business, sport). Newspapers rely on both words and pictures to tell a story. Newspapers provide a number of publicity possibilities ranging from news stories, supplements and feature articles to "What's On" and "Letters to the Editor" sections, Editorials and Op-ed.

Magazines: cover a wide range of special interest and general issues, everything from health to design, surfing to food. Magazines are usually weekly, monthly, bimonthly or quarterly. They rely more heavily than newspapers on good pictures and will also devote several pages to special stories.

The World Wide Web: includes websites, emails, blogs, e-zines, and videos to get your message out to the world.

Many media outlets have their own websites on the internet which provide the latest news or "breaking news" items at any given moment. Some media web sites offer fact sheets, tips or more information. The benefits of media websites is that information can be stored for a longer time, allowing users to view stories that were published months ago.

Target your story

The media's job is providing news, information or entertainment that connects with the interests of their readers and viewers. A story that may be appealing to one publication or program may not be appealing to another. **Your job is to target the right media outlet for your news story.** For example:

If your community group is involved in refugee health and welfare, then you should target the journalist/s covering community affairs or health.

There are 'media guides' and databases that list media organisations and the people who work within them. These guides are available by subscription online or can sometimes be found in public libraries. **However, nothing is quite as effective as getting to know your media.**

This involves regular monitoring of newspapers and magazines, television, radio and the internet.

As you read and listen to the news media, identify journalists who cover stories of interest to your organization. These are the journalists with whom you should establish relationships. It's important also that you understand how they cover the issues of interest to your organization.

BECOME A PROFESSIONAL MEDIA WATCHER!

There are two important tasks you need to complete to get the best media coverage for your community group.

One task involves **identifying the right media outlets for your news story.**

When you have a story in mind ask yourself the following questions:

KEY QUESTIONS THAT HIT THE TARGET:

1. *What sort of media coverage do I want – local, state, or national?*
2. *What is the medium I want to use – radio, newspapers, TV, magazines, niche publications or the World Wide Web?*
3. *Is this the right part of the media to target with my message?*
4. *Will my information fit into their format?*
5. *What types of stories are generally covered in this section/program?*
6. *Who are the journalists who generally cover this section/program?*

The other task involves **identifying key players in the media by creating a media contacts list.**

List every relevant newspaper, magazine, local radio, and local TV program. Create a profile that will tell you who to contact and when to contact for every particular story or event. Include: Names of journalists/editors/producers etc; their deadline for stories; format for news stories; who handles specific issues; and how they report news stories.

Here is an example:

NAME: *John Carr*

ORGANISATION: *Daily Tabloid Newspaper*

POSITION/TITLE: *education reporter, political reporter, health and welfare reporter.*

PHONE: *xxxxxxx*

MOBILE: *xxxxxxx*

FAX: *xxxxxxx*

E-MAIL: *xxxxxxx*

WEBSITE: *xxxxxxx*

DEADLINES: *5pm daily. Prefers copy by 4pm if possible.*

OTHER INFORMATION: *Interested in stories on politics and local area political issues, events. Prefers releases via email.*

CONTACT HISTORY: *Under this heading you would include any occasions in the past you have contacted him, what it was about and whether your contact generated a story. If so, include what page and date that story appeared.*

12/11/04. *Rang re: refugee health issues.. Ran front page (13/11/04).*

10/09/04. *Met to brief on refugee health project. Ran page 17 with picture of elderly refugees.*

If you are still in doubt as to who is the most appropriate person to contact, do not be afraid to ring the media outlet. Clearly and briefly explain who you are, who your group is and what you are ringing about and ask if they could pass you on to the right person. This may be a journalist, reporter or editor.

It is always a good idea to have a brief speech prepared before ringing so that you come across professionally and competently. In the next section we will look at ways of developing a media strategy to ensure that your community group are prepared to work with the media.

Are you ready for the media?

The following questions are designed to provide insight into your group's readiness to work with the media. Take a few moments to answer the following questions.

SELF-ASSESSMENT TASK

- 1. How much media coverage has your community group had in the past year? And what form did it take?**
- 2. Did the coverage accurately reflect the message you wanted to deliver?**
- 3. Who do you normally contact in the media?**
- 4. Who normally talks to the media?**
- 5. Who takes publicity photos for your group?**
- 6. Has your community group built up regular contact with the media?**
- 7. Does your community group have an up-to-date media contact book?**
- 8. Do people in your community group have IT skills – desktop publishing?**
- 9. Do you work proactively with the media, i.e. contacting journalists and supplying stories?**
- 10. Do you work in a responsive manner with the media, i.e. responding to media requests for information?**

Developing a Media Strategy

The questions you just answered form the basis of a media strategy. The first step, however, is to ensure that your strategy is consistent with your community group's overall aims and objectives. The following points provide other key issues to consider:

- **Outline your group's goals for working with the media**
 - **How much media involvement do you want?**
 - **What type of media involvement does your group want?**
 - **Will your group actively seek coverage, prepare news stories, write press releases, publicise events**
 - **Will it respond to requests for information, or provide comments on issues**
 - **What are the main messages your group wants to communicate through the media**

- **Outline your community group's internal structure for working with the media**
 - **Does your group have a media coordinator**
 - **If so, what is the specific role of this person?**
 - **Does your group have an authorised spokesperson?**
 - **Does your group have a writer who will work to ensure consistent messages and themes come from your group across all media, as well as through speeches, presentations, etc.**

It is crucial to research, plan and coordinate all your media activities.

TURNING YOUR MEDIA STRATEGY INTO REALITY

Regardless of how your community group decides to divide up the work, it is important to ensure that there are people in your group who can skilfully co-ordinate media activities, speak to the media and write speeches, press releases, stories, etc.

CHECKLIST

The following list includes some of the activities required by a media coordinator, a spokesperson and a writer.

Find out if your community group has these jobs in check.

Media Co-ordinator: Does your group have a designated person/s who:

- Develops and updates media contact lists
- Cultivates relationships with media personnel at all levels
- Ensures that press releases meet journalists' deadlines

- Ensures that any information the media needs is supplied, any interview requests are catered for and any photo opportunities are planned and ready to go
- Works up story ideas that might appeal to different media organisations and proactively suggests story ideas even when there is no major event happening

Spokesperson: Does your group have a designated spokesperson/s who can:

- Articulate and speak with authority and clarity to the media
- Know how to counteract negative comments from journalists without being defensive or appearing uncomfortable
- Have in-depth knowledge about your group's issues, activities, events and aims
- Present the organisation or the issue in the most advantageous light
- Cater to the journalist's need for an interesting and entertaining interview

Writer: Does your group have a designated writer/s who can:

- Clearly communicate the messages decided on by your group
- Accurately reflect the position of your group
- Write concisely and cater to the media's need for an interesting and informative story

REMEMBER: *There should always be someone in the organisation that reads and checks all communications before they are sent out.*

GOOD ADVICE: *You can learn to become a good speaker by listening to others interviewees and identifying their strong and weak points. Remember to always research your issues and familiarise yourself with all the details so that you can hold your own in an interview or debate. .*

Your media strategy will only be as strong as the relationships you have with media personnel. In the next section we explore more reasons why it is so important to cultivate and nurture the media.

Building relationships with the media

Here are five good reasons for developing sound professional relationships with the media:

1. Building relationships with the media you learn about them. You learn who the journalists are that cover your area of interest, the position the paper/radio/television programs take on your cause, and how journalists/editors/producers like to be contacted.
2. By getting to know journalists who are in a position to cover your issues is a good way to build credibility and to be persuasive when the time comes for an important message to be told.

3. Building a relationship with your local media you can teach them about your organization for example, what your mission is, what your key messages are, what benefits you are bringing to your community and how you can be reached.
4. The better you understand the media, the better equipped you will be to provide them with the information they need to interest their readers.
5. Working with the media can generate positive press coverage which will inform and shape public opinion and set priorities for decision makers.

CHECKLIST

The following checklist provides three simple steps in familiarising yourself with the media. Check to ensure that your group undertakes the following activities:

1. **Staying informed**

Do you allocate time each day to read local newspapers so that you know:

- what kind of news the papers cover
- what issues are out there
- what your community group thinks and feels about the issues

2. **Monitoring the Media**

Do you collect newspaper, magazine articles of interest to your organisation?

- Start a media scrapbook of relevant articles
- Start a contact media list including a list of journalists who write about your issues in a fair and accurate manner. When it's time to send out a press release you will want to know who will be receptive to your story and who will not. Also, knowing which journalists are both favourable and unfavourable can help you better monitor the media for opportunities to submit an op-ed piece or a letter to the editor.

3. **Being Proactive**

Do you build relationships with members of the media, not just send stories to them every now and then?

- **Research!** Call the paper to find out who the editorial writers or appropriate reporters are. Read the paper regularly to familiarize yourself with its coverage and opinion pieces.

Practice your lines! Put together a few words that clearly and briefly describe your organisation and what it stands for (no longer than 1-2 min.).

Introduce yourself to the local media by setting up meetings with editors of local newspapers and with directors at local radio and television stations.

The next section explores what the media want and how your community group can give them what they're looking for.

WHAT DO THE MEDIA WANT?

By knowing what the media want you have a greater chance of having your story covered and getting your message across to the public.

To understand what media personnel want, it is important to familiarise yourself with the environment in which they work. Take a look at some of the issues journalists face on a daily basis.

A day in the life of a journalist

- Journalists work to very tight deadlines, often several deadlines in a day.
- If a journalist does not meet a deadline, the story will not appear in the paper or be broadcast over the radio or TV.
- Journalists often work under very intense pressure and are influenced by what the editor or program director wants.
- Because of time constraints, they rely on sources and contacts to provide them with news, information and background material to write a newsworthy story.
- Journalists often don't have much time to research and write a story so they don't have time to listen to someone explain an issue in detail for hours or read pages of information.
- Journalists dislike being bothered with non-stories but appreciate being contacted with a good story.
- If a story appears boring they will try to make it more exciting.
- Many journalists get to decide what stories they report but they do not always have a say over what stories are included in a publication or in the final cut of a program.
- Journalists are asked to cover many stories each day and must make decisions about which of these they will cover. The decision whether a story gets covered is made on the basis of its 'news value'.

In a nutshell, journalists are busy people with tight deadlines whose main goal is to produce stories that will be of interest to their audience.

This is where you fit in. You can meet the needs of the media without compromising what is important to you, namely, that your story is reported accurately, sensitively and realistically.

In the next section we'll examine what you can do to give the media a good story so that the media gets what it wants and you do too.

What makes a good story?

Understanding what doesn't make a good story is just as important as knowing what does. Let's explore some of the reasons why many media releases and story tips end up in the bin.

What ends up in the scrap heap?

- **A story that has no reader interest**
- **A story that doesn't fit the needs of the medium that received the material**
- **A story which does not grab attention and/or has no useful information**
- **A story that has no new angle or no angle**
- **A story that has limited local interest**
- **A media release that is written and structured poorly**
- **A media release that reads like an advertisement for a product.**
- **A media release that arrives the day after the story has already been in the national news**
- **A media release that is too long**

What are the ingredients for a good story?

Take a moment to think about what motivates the general public (by the way, that includes you) to read, listen and watch the media.

Generally, audiences are most interested in stories that affect them personally.

A good story touches people in some way. It can make people laugh, cry, angry; it can move people to help or feel that they've learnt something new.

A good story often focuses on real people. Even if the story is on a new piece of research or statistics, the personal angle can be highlighted by illustrating the potential impact on individuals or environment.

The media, being mostly profit-driven, need to produce stories that will 'sell' to their audience. Journalists, therefore, look for stories that an audience can relate to and that get a reaction. Stories linked to diversity, schools, health, education, employment, security, all have the potential to capture an audience's attention.

The next section explores different ways of presenting your story to make it more appealing to the media.

Improving your chances of success

The following list illustrates different 'angles' that can be used to present a story. Sometimes the same story can be presented using several different angles allowing you to target a variety of outlets in the media.

✓	Human Interest - Is it about people? The human interest angle presents the story through a personal perspective. Personal tragedies, a reunion, survival against the odds generate reactions in the audience.
✓	Originality The story must be new and exclusive. It may include controversy, scandal or ground breaking news.
✓	Attention-grabber The angle in this story is that there is something in it that is unusual, quirky, out of the norm.
✓	Information and advice The story covers specialist knowledge or provides advice on a particular issue.

Developing your own stories

Working in the voluntary and community sector means that your work involves people and that's all you need to create a good story. **So it's important to always keep a look out for potential stories within your organisation.**

CHECKLIST

The following is a list of events and activities that may be happening within your organisation at this very moment. Check if you can use any of these opportunities to develop your own newsworthy stories.

New services or initiatives
Breakthroughs and achievements
New research findings
Service openings
Conferences and workshops
Visits from well known individuals or experts in the field
A celebrity or politician endorsing your event/issue
Community involvement – fundraisers, contests/competitions
Winning or announcing awards
Launches, e.g. of promotion and prevention initiatives or awareness programs.
Staging a special event

Alternatively, you could look for opportunities in the media to create news by:

Working with the media on a mutual project
Linking up with a special day/week/event

Making comment on or tying a story in with news of the day

GOOD ADVICE: *If you have formed a relationship with people in the media you may be able to call them directly to discuss a potential story.*

MORE GOOD ADVICE: *When your work doesn't get published or aired, ring up and ask for comments on why your piece didn't fit and what they really do need. Chiefs-of-staff and reporters are busy people, and you won't get more than a few sentences at best, but they can be very valuable. If you are published, don't give up at just one publication - see if you can take the same facts and information and tailor for another paper or program or magazine.*

Getting your story to the Media

When you have decided on a story, the next step is to send it to the media. This is generally done through a **MEDIA RELEASE**.

A media release is a brief announcement of an event, performance, or other newsworthy story.

REMEMBER: The media are flooded with media releases every day so your media release needs to stand out from the crowd!

The following points include tips for writing an effective media release.

Preparation and Research

- Before you write your media release, ask yourself what is the most interesting and relevant angle to the story. You may need to do more research to make your story really newsworthy.
- Find a human angle that makes the story personal, or a "hook" that makes it different and relevant to the audience.
- Write down all the major points relating to your story.
- Order your points in descending order from most important to least important.

Once you have listed all your main ideas and completed your research you can start writing your media release making sure you incorporate the following tips.

Writing your Media Release

- **Attention grabber – the Headline**

Make the **headline** creative and keep it short and in the active voice:
"Destitute refugees left out in the cold" grabs attention better than *"Refugee Centre closed down due to funding cuts."*

Telling the Story – The Body

- The first couple of paragraphs are the most important part of the media release.
- Explain **WHO** did it, **WHAT** did they do, **WHERE** did they do it, **WHEN** did they do it, **WHY** did they do it and **HOW** did they do it, in the first couple of paragraphs

- Use the points you prepared in descending order of importance as the structure of your media release.

- Be clear, simple and brief and avoid using jargon and technical phrases.

- Create an interesting story and avoid boring details.

Use quotes, they make the story real and personal

Use quotes to sum up points in a brief and lively manner

- Don't tell lies or exaggerate the truth.

Don't make claims that can't be backed up and don't oversell.

- Highlight the benefits/achievements/positives.

Explain how people will benefit from going to your event, donating to your cause, working on your project, etc.

- Keep it short.

One page or page and a half at most. If the reporter needs more information they can contact you.

- Remember important detail

Location, date, and time of your event/announcement/media conference, etc. are included.

Your group's contact details

Have a spokesperson ready and willing to talk to the media.

- Check and re-check.

Proof read your media release,

Edit your media release

Read it aloud

Have a friend or colleague read and check.

The following is a sample media release:

Your community group's Letterhead

Date

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PUT YOUR HEADLINE HERE IN BOLD

Your first paragraph needs to grab the reader's attention. Ensure it is clear, succinct and conveys your key message.

The following paragraphs should contain a mix of quotations and statement of fact and should explain in further detail the key messages – who, what, where, when, why.

A good media release should fit into one A4 page.

- ENDS -

Media Enquiries:

Contact name, address, phone and fax number, email address and website.

Distributing Your Media Release

Now that the media release has been written it's time to send it out to the media.

Remember, the type of media you select will depend on the message you want to get across and the target group you want to reach. It's a good idea to ask yourself the following questions:

- What media organisations are you targeting? Who is going to be interested in your story? What audience(s) are you targeting?
- Take the time to ring the publication or program and find out which journalist/editor to address your information to; speak to them if possible.
- Check for media deadlines – late stories are no stories.

More Media Opportunities

There are many ways in which your group can promote itself and its messages without spending any money at all. The following are some avenues you might consider exploring when the time comes to communicate your message.

Newspapers Local and Major

Using your Media Contacts List, approach newspapers and pitch a story of an upcoming event or issue.

- 'News' is something local newspapers are always looking for. If your group goes in with the right angle and enough lead time, you might be able to get an article in. Send a media release a month or so in advance with professionally prepared photographs, then ring and talk to the journalist and try to get your story and photo in the paper.
- Feature articles draw a lot of attention. You can either write the article yourself or send a media release that introduces the idea for a feature or an interview.
- Try to link into other current news.

Write an **Op-Ed** (this stands for opposite the editorial page)

- An Op-Ed is a concise opinion piece that anyone can submit for publication in a newspaper or magazine.
- Op-Eds are an inexpensive way to get your message out to the public and are often read by decision makers.
- Check your local and national newspapers and study the format and style of writing in the Op-Ed section.

Write a **Letter to the Editor**

- These are short letters written by people in the community in response to a topic that is relevant to them or opinion pieces in the paper.
- You may also want to respond to an article that was critical to the subject, or perhaps a reporter who was misinformed.
- When submitting a letter to follow the editor's guidelines.

Community Calendar Listings

- Almost every newspaper, school newsletter, church bulletins, local magazines and community newspapers include a Calendar of Events section.
- Contact each paper to find out their deadlines and preferred format for submitting calendar listings.

'What's on' columns – published and on-line

- Local and major newspapers, as well as portals or sites, have 'What's On' sections which publicise information and upcoming events.
- 'What's On' columns can be used to target an audience viewing a site or reading a paper.
- Contact each newspaper and on-line sites to find out their deadlines and preferred format for submitting information.

Community Service Announcements

Radio and television stations often run Community Service Announcements for community or charitable organisations.

- Firstly, check with the media outlet about whether they run community service Announcements and if so what the guidelines are.
- If your group is in doubt about how it should present its community service announcements or community notice, contact the media outlet you are targeting and get this information before you prepare your information.

Websites

The internet has changed the way we communicate and has opened up a new world of possibilities for groups to get their message out to the world. Most importantly, it presents the opportunity to communicate with millions of people directly, without having to go through a journalist. In other words, it enables you to take the media into your own hands!

When it comes to online campaigning, there are two main approaches – responding to what's already online or generating new online campaigns. Both can be useful and effective ways to get your message across.

Making use of what is already online

Start by doing a search to see whether there are any existing online campaigns on your issues in Blogs, e-zines and videos.

Ask yourself whether it will be more effective to support those campaigns or start your own. Maybe there are online campaigns based in other countries or states which you could offer to promote within your local community.

Adding your support to an existing campaign can be a quick and easy way to start changing your world. You can sign up to receive email updates and start taking the actions suggested!

Be creative about finding new ways to get your message across. There doesn't need to be an existing campaign for you to start taking responsive action. For example, look at the stories posted on online news websites and respond to them online. If there is an interesting report which adds weight to your campaign ask, email the link to your friends. Raise the issues you care about when chatting in online chat rooms. Add your comments to blogs. Vote in online polls.

Going that extra step

If you want to take your online campaigning further and get a little more proactive, start by surfing the net and looking at the types of online campaigns and actions you think have the most impact. What is it about them that make them effective?

There are numerous ways for you to generate support for your issue. Write an email about the issue and send it to all your friends. Ask them to forward it on to others.

Start up your own blog. Write about the issue on your [MySpace](#) or [Facebook](#) site. Invite people to an event (**MySpace** is a popular social networking website offering an interactive, user-submitted network of friends, personal profiles, blogs, groups, photos, music and videos for teenagers and adults internationally (Wikipedia) <http://www.myspace.com/>

- Post photos of media stunts on photo-sharing sites such as [Flickr](#). Turn them into a video and broadcast it to the world on sites like [YouTube](#)
- You could even start up your own website to provide information about the issue and suggest actions for people to take
- The possibilities are endless. So, go on, start changing your world online!

RESOURCES

This section contains a few good websites designed to assist you with working with the media and related topics. But check out the web for yourself; you'll be amazed at the amount of information on marketing, promotion, media; basically anything you need to know about getting your community group's name and message out there in the public eye.

ourcommunity.com.au provide a one-stop-gateway for practical resources, support and linkages between community networks and the general public, business and government - building capacity to strengthen the community. They have a range of practical resources such as layouts and templates, contacts, training courses, help sheets on a range of topics that may be useful - log into their site at www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_main.jsp.

Jayne Cravens & Coyote Communications provide resources and consulting & training services for mission-based organizations (not-for-profit organizations, non-governmental organizations/NGOs, civil society and public sector/government agencies, departments and initiatives) www.coyotecomunications.com

Social Change Media is a full service social marketing agency that develop communication/education strategies; implement comprehensive education programs for the community, industry and other groups; carry out social research programs; carry out community consultation programs; provide a full range of communication and social marketing tools (incl. direct mail, media relations, publications, face-to-face etc); provide ready-friendly and Plain English graphic design to a high standard; provide web-site development and strategic internet consultation. They also have some online resources you may be able to use <http://www.media.socialchange.net.au/>

American Public Health Association –APHA is the oldest and most diverse organization of public health professionals in the world and has been working to improve public health since 1872. Their website is a good example of how to put a community group's information together. It also provides a manual on working with the media entitled **Connecting with the Media** http://www.apha.org/Media_Advocacy_Manual.pdf

Suffolk Association of Voluntary Organisations Media Toolkit - The Media Toolkit is intended to help Voluntary and Community organisations raise their profile by taking advantage of free publicity which is available, and producing effective publicity material. The **Toolkit** provides examples of press releases, newsletters, posters and websites, plus tells you how to prepare for an interview. Log into their site at <http://www.savo-elearning.org/media/index.htm>

Colorado Nonprofit Organisation - Working with the Media Nonprofit Toolkit - A complete guide to working with the media for not-for-profit groups. Log into their site at <http://www.coloradononprofits.org/media%20toolkit.pdf>

Transforming Communities is a not-for-profit advocacy group for the prevention of violence against women and girls. Their website has excellent resources on effecting change in the community and political arena including guides that can be downloaded on working with the media <http://transformcommunities.org>

Wise Geek is a website that tells you all you need to know about creating your own website. <http://www.wisegeek.com/how-do-i-create-my-own-website.htm>