



## HELPFUL TIPS FOR GETTING YOUR PRESS RELEASES NOTICED

With a rapidly changing news media industry and shrinking newsrooms, there is growing competition for space and attention. How information is shared and distributed also is changing quickly. Regardless of these changes, there are some essentials when it comes to developing press releases, which will increase the likelihood of getting coverage.

### Elements of a press release

- **Contact information:** Includes the name, telephone number(s), and e-mail/ mailing addresses.
- **Dateline:** Gives the city where the release is issued and the release date.
- **Headline:** Seizes the reporter's attention with a catchy, short title. It can be a teaser, convincing the reporter to read on.
- **Lead paragraph:** Gives the key information: who, what, where, when, and why.
- **Body:** Provides additional background about the topic of the release. This is where you tell the story.
- **Close:** Ends the release with either ### or -30-.
- **Boilerplate:** Describes the organization issuing the release. It should be straightforward, providing basic information about the organization's purpose and activities. It's always placed at the end of a release.

### Writing a press release

- **Cut to the chase.** The competition for attention in a busy newsroom is fierce. Your press release is likely one of hundreds landing in a media outlet's inbox each day. You only have a few seconds to get a reporter or editor to review your release and decide if it is interesting, so be sure to share the key news/details in the first paragraph.
- **Be clear and concise.** A superb release is no more than one page, a good release no more than two pages.
- **Set the context.** Press releases should provide context to help the reader understand how a particular issue/topic impacts the larger community, or how it is linked to a state or national policy debate.
- **Quotable quotes.** Include the voices of key speakers and/or foundation executives. Make sure their quotes are compelling. The goal is to have the quote be included in any news coverage.



## Distributing a press release

- **Got media list?** A press release is only as good as the media list you use to distribute it. Identify the reporters and editors who are the best fit to receive your release. Occasionally, it might be helpful to also send a release to the editorial page editors, as newsrooms and editorial pages often have separate decision-making processes.

Finding contact information, such as an e-mail address, phone, or fax number, can sometimes be difficult. If you do not have access to a media database service, call the media outlet's newsroom to find out who is the best person to receive the release.

**Following up is important.** Don't assume that an e-mail will be read immediately. Sometimes, news outlets have spam filters and much of their incoming e-mail may end up in a junk folder. A follow-up phone call may be necessary, but be respectful of the person's time and be ready to answer questions and make your case if you reach someone directly.

**Make it newsworthy.** For something to be newsworthy, it should be interesting, timely, and important. Ideally, there also needs to be a hook or a story that contains a human experience, and is informative and compelling. It also has to establish an emotional connection that motivates people to act. This does not mean the hook has to be new every time. Reporters often are receptive to a fresh angle on data, events, issues, people, and places.

**Deliver the best pitch.** Be prepared. Follow related news coverage, editorials, and columns and make sure that what you're pitching is relevant to the targeted reporter or editor. Know what you are going to say. Write down some talking points. Practice your pitch and tailor it to whatever interests the reporter or editor.

**Be aware, be smart, and take a breath.** When you call a reporter, make sure they aren't on deadline. When you reach them, keep it brief and to the point, but don't rush through the pitch. Make sure they are following along with you. If the reporter or editor isn't interested in the story, they usually will tell you why.