

HOW TO PITCH STORIES TO THE MEDIA

CREATE A MEDIA LIST

- Use the yellow pages or the Web to collect addresses and phone numbers for your local media outlets, including:
 - Local daily and weekly newspapers
 - Population-specific and community/neighborhood publications
 - Local and regional magazines
 - Radio stations
 - Television news stations

IDENTIFY THE APPROPRIATE CONTACTS

- Search online or call each media outlet and ask for the appropriate contact name, phone, fax and email address for the following:
 - Community/city desk, photo editors (newspapers and magazines)
 - News directors, community affair directors, morning show producers (radio)
 - Assignment editors, morning and noon show producers (television)
- Research each publication's target audience.
- Ask how and when editors prefer to be contacted, and ask about deadlines.

DRAFT YOUR PITCH

- Provide the basics: **who, what, where, when, why** and **how**
 - What is the impact on the community?
 - Is there a unique news angle? A compelling, personal story that demonstrates it?
 - Are specific populations involved or affected?
 - Include timely trend information or statistics to show relevance.
- Tailor your pitch to the individual reporter, media outlet and type of media
 - First connect with the recipient emotionally, then follow with the facts.
 - Offer powerful, amusing or off-beat stories.
 - For TV, briefly describe a visual element or photo opportunity, if available.
 - For radio, is there a possibility for live remote?
 - Can you offer an expert guest interview?
 - Make a specific ask (i.e., we would like a live remote at this location).

- What is the overall key message?
 - When sending an email, write the Subject line as a headline.
 - When making a phone call, open strongly and offer to send additional information via email or fax.
 - Know your key messages and stick to them.

MAKE THE CALL. SEND THE EMAIL

- Be aware of media schedules and call at the appropriate time. For instance, never call a television station 15 minutes prior to the news. Call in the late morning, before lunch.
- Start the call with “is this a good time?” and be quick and concise.
- Open strongly to grab the reporter’s attention and get to the point quickly. Use a statistic or compelling, personal appeal.
- Describe briefly why your story idea will be interesting to readers, listeners or viewers.
- When appropriate, send a fact sheet, charts and graphs or a photo along with your press release (see **Press Release Template**) or media alert.
- Ask the editor’s deadline – and honor that deadline.
- Leave your phone number and email address to reach you for more information.

FOLLOW UP

- Editors remember good sources. If a media contact calls you for more information, return the call and honor his or her deadline.
- Collect copies of all published articles and broadcasts.