

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

HOW TO:

GET MEDIA COVERAGE OF YOUR STORY

GOALS

- Get news reports of your story in the most positive terms
- Increase public awareness of your organization
- Position your group as a reliable expert for future media stories about your issues

KEY TECHNIQUES

- Keep the reporters' needs in mind so it is easy for them to tell your story your way
- Be aware of your target reporters' other work and its relation to your issue
- Assert your passion for the importance of your story

Develop Stories For the Media

- Take advantage of events affecting your organization to create a newsworthy story to present to reporters.
- Find a “hook” in the story to entice reporters, something local, timely and related to broader issues, e.g., a key decision to be made by the City Council or a local business decision that will impact the need for affordable housing.
- Portray your issue through examples involving real people who were struggling to afford a home for their family and now have safe, secure affordable housing. People are more interesting than facts and figures.
- Reply to other stories, demonstrating the impact of affordable housing on related news events.
- Spell out relevant details and provide reliable and friendly resources for the reporter to use round out the story.
- Mention specific targets such as elected officials, voters and neighbors who can contribute by supporting affordable housing.

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- **Avoid using acronyms, jargon and unsubstantiated dollar figures.**
- **Plan ahead if you seek “Day of” coverage in the morning paper.** This is most important if you are trying to spur more turn out for an action, or to apply pressure on the day of a key vote.

“Work” Your Stories

- **Make it easy and relevant to a reporter’s work for him or her to cover your story.** Remember that reporters are inundated with people seeking coverage.
- **Don’t assume that your target reporter will see your press release.** Send it to them personally and follow up with a phone call.
- **Follow the media with an eye to developing your media list.** When you see a story on your issue, or a related one, notice who the reporter is. They may have an interest in your issue. Send them your next press release and call them, in addition to sending it to the assignment desk.
- **Keep track of your media coverage.** Past coverage by one outlet can be used to encourage future coverage elsewhere.
- **Don’t give up if your first coverage attempts are not successful.** No one gets coverage every time they try. Use it as an opportunity to build your relationship with the reporter by asking why they didn’t cover the story and what they might cover in the future.
- **Different stories lead to different reporters.** For example, if a development’s design is interesting, the architectural critic may cover your story.
- **Positive reinforcement helps.** Write a letter to the editor praising a good story on your issue. Send a copy to the writer of your piece, too.
- **Use letters to the editor to confirm or correct coverage of your issue.** The editorial page(s) is another way of publicizing your issue and the third most read part of a paper. (See “How To: Write Editorials, Op-Ed Pieces, & Letters to the Editor”)
- **Paint a picture of the outcome.** Take reporters on a tour of affordable housing developments. (See “How To: Host a Tour of Contemporary Affordable Housing”)