

How to Engage with The Media

FOUR FACTORS TO CONSIDER FOR YOUR MEDIA STRATEGY

1. **Goal:** What specific action do you want your audience to take as a result of your communication? This could be a policy change, public awareness, behavior modification, or support for an initiative.
2. **Audience:** Who can take action toward that goal? Identify the key stakeholders or audience segments who have the power or influence to take the desired action. For example, state legislators, environmental advocacy groups, city planners, health department staff, community organizers/community leaders, educators and families.
3. **Sources:** Where does your audience go for their news and information? Understanding the media consumption habits of your target audience is crucial; identify the platforms, outlets and channels they use to stay informed.
4. **Key messages:** What does your audience need to hear to inspire them to act? You should craft compelling messages that resonate with your audience's values, priorities and concerns. These messages should directly address the action you want them to take.

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER IN THE PERFECT PITCH

- **What?** Share the motivation behind your work — the problem you are trying to solve or what gap you are addressing. Then link it to what your audience cares about.
- **So what?** Provide clear, actionable recommendations based on your work. These should be practical and achievable by the target audience.
- **Now what?** Clearly state what you want your audience to do next — whether it's adopting a policy, funding a project, or spreading the word. Convey why immediate action is necessary and how their involvement can make a difference.



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN...

Selling Your Pitch

- **Key messages/talking points.** Frame your work in a way that's easy to understand and appealing, highlighting its real-world relevance. When you can, include memorable hooks to capture attention quickly.
- **Fact sheet or brief.** Provide a summary of your work, including key findings/highlights, implications, and recommendations. Include charts, graphs and bullet points to make complex data accessible and engaging when applicable.
- **Pull quotes.** Offer concise, impactful statements that capture the essence of your work. Make it easy for journalists and media outlets to cite your work by providing clear, quotable insights. Let them know they have your permission to use this information as though they had spoken with you.

- **Press release.** Write the press release with a strong headline and lead that emphasizes why your work matters now. Include the who, what, where, when, and why of your work, ensuring that the key points are easily digestible. Ensure you direct readers to your call to action and encourage journalists to contact you for interviews.
- **Perspective and lived experience.** Share your personal or professional connection to the work when it adds depth and authenticity. And when appropriate, include personal anecdotes or stories that humanize your research and make it more relatable.

Landing Your Story

- **Identify reporters, hosts, editors, etc.** Follow journalists, editors, and media personalities in your field to understand their interests and beats.
- **Hone your pitch.** Customize your pitch to fit the specific interests of the reporter or outlet, focusing on the angle that aligns with their recent work.
- **Make your pitch.** If possible/relevant, send your pitch when the topic is timely or relevant to ongoing news.

Giving a compelling interview

- **Practice:** Before the interview, practice delivering your main points succinctly.
- **Be Clear and Jargon-Free:** Explain your work in plain language and stay focused on the key messages.
- **Stay Calm and Confident:** Listen carefully to questions, take your time to respond and stick to your prepared messages.
- **Interview tips** (from National Council of Nonprofits):
 - **Bridging.** Acknowledge the question, but redirect focus back to your core message. (E.g., "I heard the school board is not going to teach climate change in their curriculum. What are your thoughts?" Answer: "I can't speak to that, but what I can tell you is...")
 - **Flagging.** Bring specific attention to what you are about to say by adding emphasis at the front of your statement. (E.g., "The most important thing for people to note is...")
 - **Reframing the question.** Adapt the question at hand to re-emphasize your point tactfully. (E.g., Q: If this is such a great idea why hasn't it been done before? A: There is a right time for everything. We think this is the right time...)



After the interview

- **Send a thank-you note** to the interviewer and offer to clarify any points or provide additional information.
- **Share the published story** through your networks and on social media to maximize its reach.

The American Public Health Association's Center for Public Health Policy recently supported 10 community-based organizations working to advance healthier environments and communities through its Building Strategic Communications Capacity Among Community-Based Organizations Working to Create Healthier Environments Mini-Grants program. APHA partnered with Metropolitan Group, a full-service social change agency that crafts and integrates strategic and creative services, to provide communications support to strengthen the visibility, reach and impact of the organizations. This tip sheet was created to help public health professionals and advocates learn how best to engage with the media to expand their organization's reach and impact.