This Working with the Media toolkit is designed to help you create and implement a media plan for your NEA-supported project. These resources are a guide only—you should tailor your public relations strategy to what makes sense for your organization and your project.

1. Working with the Media
2. Media Resources
3. Choosing a Spokesperson
4. Radio & TV “Etiquette”
5. Using Social Media
6. Requesting Corrections

Questions on media outreach? Contact NEA Public Affairs at 202-682-5570.
WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Think about media opportunities as you plan your project.

- Look for “media-friendly” events such as those that will provide unusual photo opportunities or a performance component that will translate well to television and/or radio.

Become familiar with your local media outlets.

- Think about all types of local media—commercial newspapers, radio, and TV; public broadcasting stations; community and alternative newspapers and newsletters; college and high school papers and stations; noncommercial and community access stations; listservs; and blogs.

- What is covered in different sections of your local newspapers?

- Does a paper have a specific desk for covering the arts, or does that fall to the Metro desk?

- Does a paper print arts-related stories on a certain day (or days) of the week? Does it print articles covering different disciplines on certain days of the week?

- Do your local TV or radio stations have a locally-produced interview or magazine program? Is there a local radio call-in show that includes guests?

- Who are the TV or radio stations’ local arts reporters? Who covers community events or human-interest stories?

- Is there a local newspaper columnist willing to do a series on your project?

- Think about if you’ll want to have a website, Facebook page, Twitter account, or another online platform as part of your publicity strategy. (See the Using Social Media document for more information.)

- Find out the outlet’s view on what makes a good story and how best to secure coverage of your project.

- Contact the section editor that covers arts news and speak with him or her directly.

ORGANIZING A MEDIA STRATEGY

Set media responsibilities.

- Determine who will serve as the main media contact. Ensure that the media can always reach your main contact.
Additional duties may include creating a media list, writing and distributing news releases and advisories, placing calendar listings, setting up interviews, securing photographers, developing social media content, and handling any sensitive issues that arise.

**Develop a timeline for creating and distributing press information about your project and any accompanying events.**

- Include deadlines for writing releases, putting together press kits, confirming a photographer, etc.
- Remember that listings for media outlets’ calendar sections generally have to be submitted at least 1-2 weeks in advance of the event. Make sure to confirm the exact deadline with the outlets.

**Develop a plan for “pitching,” or persuading reporters and editors to cover your project.**

- Highlight aspects of your project that are interesting and unusual. For example, are you reaching a segment of your population that hasn’t previously had access to your projects? Does your project have a local connection? Are you planning any special events?

**Determine your spokesperson strategy (see the Choosing a Spokesperson document for more information).**

- Assess the willingness of principals to speak to press. These interviews may be scheduled in advance, or on the day of an individual event.
- You may need to recruit and train spokespeople in addition to your staff to handle media inquiries.
- Develop media talking points for use by spokespeople. These should provide an overview of the project and its goals. Please note that these are generally not shared with media but are available to your spokespeople to answer questions consistently.
- Consider preparing, or having a prominent community leader write, an opinion piece for your local newspapers about your project.

**Decide how to handle potential controversy.**

- Prepare for a potential crisis or negative publicity by drafting a list of questions and answers you may receive from the media in such a circumstance.
- How will you respond to an argument or fight within a community over a controversial artist that is part of your project? How will you respond if a crisis forces you to end your project early?
Create a media list.

- Develop a media list to receive information about your project, targeting all local print and broadcast outlets. Make sure to include university news outlets, community or civic organization newsletters, local wire service bureaus (e.g., Associated Press), and online media, such as influential local and national bloggers.

- Keep the nature of your project in mind when deciding which newspaper editors or reporters to pitch. For example, an education reporter might cover a project that involves youth, while a political reporter might cover an arts event if local politicians are involved.

- Include newspaper photo editors on your media list. A photographer may cover an event even if a reporter is not available.

- You also should include newspaper columnists on your list, as they often write about a variety of subjects.

- Include each reporter’s name, address, e-mail, phone number, and fax number on the media list. Note if the contact prefers releases via fax or e-mail.

- You may want to add a “notes” column to your list to track if a reporter requests an interview, attends an event, writes a story, etc.

Plan what and when to announce to the media.

- Create a calendar of important dates for media announcements and advisories.

- Announce to the media that your organization has received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Use the “swiss-cheese grant announcement” provided by the NEA.

- If your project has multiple events, announce your schedule of events to the media.

- Send out media advisories 3-4 days before each of your events highlighting the who, what, where, and when of the event.

- For each event, prepare a press release to distribute to media the day of the event. Plan to send the release to anyone on your targeted media list who does not attend the event.

- Prepare a press kit for media that includes the press release, biographical information on the project principals, a fact sheet on your organization, and general information on your project.

- Newspapers often will request pictures to illustrate articles. Think about staging some interesting publicity shots. You should have a print-quality (300 dpi or more, and at least 4x4 inches in size) electronic versions of the images available for emailing or downloading from your website. Make sure to include information about the availability of any photos in your press kit.
Follow up after you distribute the press release or media advisory.

- Make a follow-up phone call to each reporter or editor to whom you have sent the press release or advisory. Be prepared to pitch the story, emphasizing the important information in your press release, and to offer interviews with event principals.

- For any events requiring tickets, make sure to let the reporter know where he/she can pick up tickets. (Note that media tickets to an event are always complimentary.)

- Keep track of potential media attendees so that you know how many press kits (and tickets) you’ll need.

THE MEDIA AND YOUR EVENT

Plan to take high-resolution, print-friendly pictures of your event.

- You will want to have a designated person assigned to take photographs at every event. It is useful to have high quality, high-resolution photos to distribute to media with a follow-up press release. Photographs are also useful for posting on your organization’s website, as well as documenting the event in your final grant report or future grant applications.

- Think about what makes an interesting photo when staging your shots. An “action” shot is always more interesting than a “talking heads” close-up.

- Images should have a minimum resolution of 300 dpi and a minimum size of 4x4 inches for print or web publication.

- For key events, consider hiring a professional photographer.

- Inform the photographer of your expectations, including length of coverage, important shots, and post-event delivery of images.

  ✓ Plan a shot list for the photographer, which is a detailed list of which photographs to take.

  ✓ Arrange with the photographer to receive electronic copies of 2-3 of the best photos immediately after the event to include with the follow-up news release or post on your website.

  ✓ For each photo, make sure to include caption information (each person that is in the photo, what’s taking place) and the photographer’s name. It’s a good idea to track this information even if you’re working with a volunteer photographer.

  ✓ Make sure that your contract with the photographer is clear on what usage rights you have.
Make sure to obtain permissions from anyone in the photographs.

✓ Have a plan for getting subjects to sign a release form that will allow you to use their images in future advertising or media coverage. It is best to have subjects sign a release form at or soon after the event.

✓ A release should include information about how the photographs will be used (e.g. in print publications, on your website, etc.) and for what purpose (e.g. for media or educational purposes).

✓ Keep in mind that if you’re photographing children under 18, their parents or guardian will have to sign the releases.

✓ In addition to individual releases, consider making a general announcement at the beginning of each event alerting attendees that their likenesses may be used for future publicity.

Prepare for TV or radio coverage of the event.

- Check if the venue is equipped with a mult box, which allows TV and radio crews plug in their equipment and record directly from the venue’s sound system.

- If the venue does not have a mult box, make sure there is ample room close to the action for camera and/or microphone set-up. Make sure the camera crews know of any restrictions to the recording of your event (e.g. no flash or restrictions to the number of cameras that can be near the stage).

- On the day of the event, you may want to have this area roped off or otherwise reserved for media crews.

- Make sure to give each producer or camera tech a press kit. Have extra copies of the press release on hand as camera techs will sometimes only want a page that easily fits in a pocket.

Welcome media to the event.

- Designate a welcome area for media. You may want to have a table for handing out press kits, tickets, and any other press materials.

- The media contact (or a designated greeter) should welcome members of the media to the event, hand out press materials, and show media to the press seating area.

- Ask the media representative if he/she is interested in interviews with any of the principals, if these interviews are not already scheduled.

- Have a sign-in sheet for media to help you track where stories might appear, as well as improve future media lists.
• Designate an area for interviews. A member of the media team should escort any media to and from the interview site.

Follow up with media after the event.

• Prepare a follow-up news release to share your project’s achievements.

• How many people participated in the project? What goals did you achieve? What are the short- and long-term effects in your community?

• Also send the press release to any targeted media who did not attend the event.

• Send one or two photos from the event with the follow-up release.

• If your project has a website, post downloadable images from the event on a media page. You also can upload photos to your site and instruct media to follow up with your media contact to receive images.

**MONITORING YOUR MEDIA COVERAGE**

Keep track of all earned media in print, broadcast, and online outlets. Earned media is any news coverage of your project.

• Request corrections to earned media as necessary. Remember you can only request a correction for a factual mistake. (See the Requesting Corrections document for more information.)

  ✓ Verify if the error is the news outlet’s mistake or if they received incorrect information from the project’s media contact.

  ✓ Contact the reporter or editor ASAP after the story runs.

  ✓ Be polite. Point out the error and provide the correct information. Make sure to acknowledge and apologize if the mistake was your organization’s fault.

  ✓ The news outlet may decline to run a correction. If that happens, just make sure to reinforce the correct information during your next media opportunity.

• If a reporter expresses an unfavorable opinion of your project, you might want to schedule a conversation to clear up any misunderstanding. Keep in mind that the reporter may not change his/her mind, and the outlet does not have to issue a correction unless it’s a factual mistake.

• Draft a “media highlights” report of top earned media placements.

• Add links to online news stories to your website.
**MEDIA RESOURCES**

Your list of media contacts should include all of your community’s print and broadcast media outlets as well as any pertinent national outlets or trade publications. You can use the resources below to augment your efforts to research the media community.

This is not an exhaustive list. You may be able to find other resources through your local reference librarian or by using an online search engine.

**Newspapers/Periodicals**

- **News Media Yellow Book**—This resource, published quarterly, provides a directory of contacts for the country’s largest daily, weekly, and trade newspapers and magazines. It also contains lists of radio and television networks, television channels, and radio stations. An assignment index includes a list of arts, culture, and entertainment reporters and editors.

- **Editor & Publisher International Yearbook**—This resource is published in two editions, Dailies and Weeklies, and includes most daily, weekly, community, specialty, and free outlets.

- **www.usnpl.com**—This website contains a list of local newspapers, as well as local magazines and college newspapers.

- **Newslink.org**—Similar to http://www.usnpl.com, this website sorts outlets by state and contains lists of business and specialty newspapers.

- **Dailyearth.com**—This website lists newspapers by state and also has a subset of major metropolitan dailies.

- **Mondo Times** (mondotimes.com)—This website covers media worldwide and contains a thorough list of local newspapers and magazines.

- **News Voyager** (www.newsvoyager.com)—Organized by the Newspaper Association of America, this website catalogues and links to all major U.S. daily and weekly publications, allowing a search by state process.

**Broadcast**

- **Broadcasting/Cable Yearbook**—This contains a list of all TV and Radio stations in the country.

- **Newslink.org**—In addition to listing print media, this website also contains lists of TV and radio stations by state and by category.

- **NPR.org**—On the National Public Radio (NPR) website, you can search by city to find local NPR affiliates.

- **Stationindex.com**—This website lists most of the TV stations in the top 210 media markets with call sign and network affiliation.
• **http://radiostationworld.com/locations/United_States_of_America**—You can search this page of the radiostationworld website for television and radio stations in several categories.

• **Mondo Times** ([mondotimes.com](http://mondotimes.com))—In addition to print media, this website also lists radio and TV stations.
CHOOSING A SPOKESPERSON

Choosing the person who will be the “public face” of your project is an important decision. The person you want is someone who is completely at ease with public speaking, talking with the media, and being on camera in either a taped or live situation. Sometimes even the best program administrator is not the best public spokesperson, so please consider this role carefully.

The person you want:

- Is fully knowledgeable about your project
- Is outgoing and at ease speaking in front of an audience.
- Is comfortable speaking with reporters.
- Isn’t afraid of a microphone or a video camera.
- Has a degree of familiarity with local media.
- Understands deadlines and the importance of disseminating information in a timely manner.

The person you don’t want:

- Is juggling so many other tasks that returning reporter inquiries or making media pitches falls to the bottom of the list.
- Is extremely knowledgeable about your project but gets nervous talking to a reporter or a room full of people.
- Is uncomfortable with the idea of being on television.
- Doesn’t normally read the local paper or watch the local news.

Talking points should be given to your spokesperson(s) to study so that there is a familiarity with your project and its goals.
RADIO AND TV “ETIQUETTE”

Not everyone is used to being on radio or television and sometimes all the equipment, the precise timing, the unusual jargon, and even being in the presence of local “celebrities” can be a little intimidating.

The following points are meant to make giving radio and TV interviews as uncomplicated and as smooth as possible.

RADIO

Before the interview:

- Find out who will do the interview and how long it will be. Plan your answers accordingly. If the interview is five minutes long, keep your comments concise and don’t ramble. (But don’t give monosyllabic answers either.) If the interview is 30 minutes, you can respond in more detail or perhaps be ready with an anecdote or two about your project.

- Find out the format so you’ll know what to expect. Is this a live interview? Is it live-to-tape? (Meaning it will be recorded as if it were live, with no editing when it is played back.) Is it recorded in order to be edited for sound bites? (Meaning the reporter/producer/announcer will pick out some of your answers and play them)

- Send your interviewer or the producer information about your project in advance of the interview. There’s no guarantee they will read it, but the more you can do to inform the interviewer, the better the whole exchange will be. If you want to talk about specific events, make the host and producer aware of that.

The interview:

- IN PERSON/IN THE STUDIO:
  - Be on time. Radio and television work in precise time. Programming is scheduled to the second. If you’re told to be at the studio for a 10:30 a.m. interview, it’s not okay to show up at 10:32. Arrive with about 15 to 20 minutes to spare so that there’s time to get some water, get a mic on, and take a breath.

  - They may or may not give you headphones to wear.

  - Feel free to bring some notes if you like. It’s radio. No one can see you looking at your notes.

  - Radio is an intimate medium, so relax and have a conversation. Don’t think of it as talking to thousands of people. Think of it as a one-on-one conversation.

  - Always assume your microphone is “on.” Never say anything while you’re in the studio that you don’t want the listening audience to hear.
• **OVER THE PHONE:**

  o Make sure you’re clear on whether you’re supposed to call the station or someone from the station is supposed to call you.

  o Keep in mind that you will need a land line for the radio interview, rather than a cell phone.

  o If you’re supposed to call, make sure you get the correct phone number—and a back-up number just in case. Find out how long before the interview they want you to call in and make that call on time. Be prepared to stay on hold for a few minutes, during which you will likely hear the on-air product.

  o If the station is calling you, make sure they have the correct number and a back-up and make sure you are available at the appointed time.

  o Everything else is the same as above.

**TELEVISION**

**Before the interview:**

  • Just as with radio, find out who will do the interview, how long it is, and in what format. Is this for a news story? Is it for a public affairs program? Is it a live shot? Is it taped?

  • Live television works in even more precise times than radio. Everything about being on time applies double to TV. Most often, a TV interview won’t be in the studio, but if it is, be on time and dress appropriately.

**The interview:**

  • Everything that applies to radio applies here as well.

  • Where do I look?

    o If the interviewer is with you, look at the interviewer. Don’t worry about the camera.

    o If the interviewer is in another location (such as with some live shots, when the anchor speaks from the anchor desk to the subject who is on location), look directly into the camera.

    o TV news is fast-paced. Be ready to talk about the top three messages about your project.
• What do I wear?

  o Wear flattering, professional clothes in solid colors or soft patterns. Avoid wearing lots of white as this “flares” on camera. A suit may not be necessary, but a tee-shirt with a logo isn’t a good idea.

  o One thing to bear in mind is that TV studios are often chilly.

**FOLLOW UP**

It is always a nice touch to send your interviewer a hand-written note of thanks for the opportunity to publicize your project via their program. It lets them know that their efforts were appreciated and made a difference—and leaves them inclined to deal with you again on something else your organization may do in the future.
USING SOCIAL MEDIA

There are many options for publicizing your project outside of traditional media (newspapers, radio and TV, magazines). Social media tools such as blogs, Facebook, and Twitter are a great and free resource for amplifying the reach of your message. When using social media, you become not just the press person but you’re also the journalist—you get to tell your story directly to the public.

But it is important to remember that social media is a tool and not a strategy. This document is designed to familiarize you with some of the most popular social media tools which you can then use to augment your public relations strategy.

Here are some key ideas to consider when planning your use of social media.

- While there are many social media tools out there, you don’t need to use all (or even any) of them. Familiarize yourself with the options, decide which tools are most appropriate for your project or organization, and focus on those.

- Keep in mind that using any of these tactics is as time-intensive as traditional media; especially if you’re new to social media, you may only want to use one or two tools.

- Make a plan for your social media efforts.
  - Who will write the content?
  - Who will edit and/or edit the content?
  - How long will it take to write/edit/get any necessary approvals on the content?
  - How often do you plan to publish fresh content?

- When developing content remember social media users are looking to build a community around interesting, informative, useful, and fun content. In other words, they are looking for personality. No one will utilize your social media platforms if the only content you ever publish is links to your press releases. Make sure your content providers are not only strong writers but also interesting writers that users will want to hear from on a consistent basis.

- Include in all press materials information about how to find your social media outlets, e.g. your blog, your Twitter name, the URL for your Facebook group, your RSS feed, etc. On the homepage of your website include the icons for any social media platforms you are using with appropriate links.

Blog

- Blogging is one of the easiest ways to get started with social media. There are a variety of blogging hosts out there – many of them free – to help you get started. Keep in mind that blogs tend to be more conversational in tone. You don’t want to just republish your press release on your blog. Spend some time reading blogs to get a sense of length, tone, types of content, etc.
• Consider enabling the comments feature on your blog to give your community a way to interact with your organization and with each other. Make sure to develop (and post) your comment policy: will the comments be moderated/unmoderated; if the comments are moderated, what’s the review type; what types of comments will be deleted, etc. Also think about how you will respond to comments, e.g. questions about your project, interesting discussions, etc.

• You should expect to publish new content a minimum of 1x/week. If you are publishing less than 3x/week, try to be consistent on which days you publish.

Twitter

• Twitter is often known as microblogging; you can send out a maximum message of 140 characters. Since this maximum includes your “Twitter name,” make sure to choose something that’s both recognizable as your organization but not overly long. You can register for a free Twitter account at www.twitter.com. You develop a community by “following” people (signing up to get their Twitter messages sent to you) and by getting other people to follow you.

• To start you may want to follow arts organizations in your community, experts/leaders in your field, print and on-line journalists who cover your organization, and other supporters. There are also a number of online search engines that can help you find Twitter users with similar interests that you can follow.

• Conversations on Twitter are often grouped by hashtags, e.g. #oilspill, #BarackObama, etc. Consider creating a hashtag around a particular exhibit or event to encourage community comments and feedback. Make sure to advertise this hashtag on your Twitter stream and in any print PR.

• Your Twitter frequency will vary according to the content that you have to publish. It’s good to aim for 1-2 tweets/day. You can also increase your presence by re-tweeting interesting/relevant items that have been tweeted by your followers.

Facebook

• Facebook is an online community space; you can register for an organization page at www.facebook.com. The basic building block of a Facebook page is the “wall.” On the wall, you can post status updates about your organization and your Facebook fans/friends can write comments about your organization. A Facebook page is a great forum for soliciting feedback, anecdotes, and photographs from your organization’s events. You can do everything from hosting special events just for your Facebook fans by releasing a special code just on Facebook, to having a live webchat for your fans, to running a contest.
• You should aim to update your Facebook status update at least 1x/day. You can set up your Facebook page to also have feeds from your other social media accounts, e.g. your blog, Twitter, YouTube, etc. so it will also be updated every time one of these platforms is updated.

• You can repurpose content that you gather for your blog and other social media platforms on Facebook. For your status update, you might want to elaborate on the briefs you send out via Twitter. Facebook is also great for posting “photo albums” from events, hosting live chats with curators, experts, or other appropriate people. It’s also a good forum for posting extended answers to questions from your constituents.

**YouTube**

• YouTube is an online community space for posting videos. Generally, videos on YouTube are no more than 1-3 minutes. Users are able to comment on your video; they also can share your video on other social media sites or embed your video on their own blogs since each YouTube video is accompanied by a piece of HTML.

• There are many low-cost, upload friendly compact videocameras on the market as well as free or low-cost editing software, which makes it relatively easy to turn around short, high-quality videos.

• The frequency with which you upload content will all depend on the type of content you are producing.

**Flickr**

• Flickr is a worldwide, online photography community. Users post their own photos and comment on photos by others. You can create special groups on Flickr and also create collections/photo albums. There is also limited capability to upload video to Flickr.

• Like with YouTube, the frequency with which you upload content will all depend on the type of content you are producing.
REQUESTING CORRECTIONS

It’s a good idea to monitor the earned media your project garners for accuracy. Though you’ll do your best to make sure that media receives accurate information about your project, there still may be instances in which the information that gets into the news is incorrect. Here are a few tips on deciding when to request a correction and approaching the news outlet about the correction.

- Prevention is the best medicine: Always send media written copies of your program information before or as a follow-up to an interview, even if those program basics are covered in the interview.

- You can request a correction for any information that is factually inaccurate. Examples include the amount of your National Endowment for the Arts grant or the dates of your project.

- Before you contact the news outlet, make sure the mistake is their fault.
  - Double-check the accuracy of any program materials you’ve sent to media including FAQs, your grant announcement, etc.
  - Make sure that the briefing materials you have given to your spokespeople are accurate.
  - You can still ask for a correction even if it was your fault, but it is good media manners to acknowledge if it was your mistake.

- The number one rule of approaching a media outlet to ask for a correction is be polite and professional.
  - Whether contacting the writer or editor by e-mail or phone, frame the “ask” as a request not a demand.
  - Don’t cast blame. Simply point out the error and provide the corrected information.

- Make sure to also emphasize the correct information during your next media opportunity.

- If the print outlet can’t or won’t include a correction in its print edition, ask that the story be corrected in the online version.