Media Toolkit

A FUNDER'S GUIDE TO ENGAGING WITH MEMBERS OF THE MEDIA

exponent philanthropy

exponent philanthropy

Exponent Philanthropy amplifies and celebrates the vital work of a diverse group of givers who give big while keeping their operations lean, including foundations, public charities, donor advised funds, giving circles, and individual donors. We're a vibrant membership organization, and we provide resources and valuable connections to help funders make the most of the minutes they have and the dollars they give.

We welcome all philanthropists who work with few or no staff to join our organization and benefit from our nationwide network, wide range of resources, and high-quality programming.

Thanks to Patti Giglio of PSG Communications, LLC, for sharing this strategic framework developed from 20 years of experience as a journalist and media strategist.

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Leveraging Media to Advance Your Philanthropic Goals

Over the past 10 years, foundations, nonprofits, and philanthropists invested in social change have come to increasingly respect the role media communications plays in their overall strategies.

From positioning to coalition-building to educating, targeted media strategies can help you construct meaningful relationships with key audiences and showcase and elevate your organization, your grantees, and the causes most important to you.

For philanthropists at every level, engaging the media can reap multiple benefits, including:

- Identifying new partners and potential collaborators
- Giving others a better and broader understanding of your organization, its goals, and the kinds of organizations you are most interested in supporting; this often results in higher quality grant applications and proposals
- Reflecting your organization in a positive light, as one that embraces transparency
- Building your reputation as a leader in your community and areas of interest
- Promoting awareness of the organizations you support

> Whereas social media was once seen as a distraction and traditional media a potential challenge, successful change agents now recognize the importance of smart media strategies on both fronts.

Partnering With Media to Create Outsized Impact

Media outlets of all shapes and sizes are looking for new ways to sustain their industry. As funders you have a unique opportunity to explore this changing dynamic to meet programmatic objectives, foster quality journalism, and create new revenue streams for the media. The key to partnering with journalists is to think beyond the press release, open conversations about public interest news reporting, and consider what might be possible.

For example, The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation's Working Longer program funds a journalism fellowship on the economics of aging and work that includes reporting published by the Associated Press (AP). In this case, the AP retains editorial control over the content development; the fellow gains research skills and the opportunity to do in-depth reporting; and the foundation increases public understanding in a complex issue area.

Models of successful media partnerships are increasingly common, and old rules about editorial and advertising no longer exist. When funders and media connect with candor and mutual respect, there are abundant opportunities for creating outsized impact in new and previously unimagined ways.

Organizations now have the opportunity to communicate directly through digital and social media, and yet traditional media remains an influential medium. Print, digital, and broadcast media have established audiences, often in the millions. They can provide third-party endorsements that enhance credibility and raise awareness in ways that advertising and owned media (like your website and email lists) cannot. Traditional media can educate your audience and the public on issues you care about and elevate your mission and brand, your grantees' achievements, and your organization's successes. Audiences can identify not only with your organization's policies and practices, but with your overall vision for change.

Although you can't ultimately control what journalists produce, philanthropists who are engaged with the media are able to lend a voice to the public discourse as sources. Similarly, when organizations face a crisis, it's important to take a proactive, instead of reactive, posture. Those with established media relationships are in a better position to tell their story, instead of letting others dominate the dialogue.

> Strategic media relations allow you to tell your story or express a unique point of view.

Smart media strategies—based on goals that align with your organization's objectives—can help organizations of all sizes build a powerful public presence.

Whether through digital, social, or traditional avenues, organizations can successfully engage current audiences, build new ones, and broadcast their constantly evolving vision for change.

Building Blocks of a Successful Media Strategy

Every organization, no matter the size, should consider developing a media strategy. Beautifully landscaped Facebook pages and carefully crafted tweets are less important than unified messages and timely goals. Social media strategists agree that small organizations can benefit just as much as large ones from successful public relations.

The following general guidelines can be adopted by any nonprofit or foundation seeking to build relationships with its community and craft a powerful media strategy.

1 Identify a Purpose ("The Why")

Every media strategy should be rooted in a specific message and sense of purpose. The public won't respond to your call for attention if you don't know why you're calling them. Your campaign should be firmly targeted to both the population you want to serve and the people who can help you serve them. Scattered media strategies result in scattered goals and lackluster results. Before you initiate any campaign, make sure you know why you are doing so.

2 Tell a Story

It's often easier for people to remember stories than it is for them to remember facts. Compelling story lines build drama and attract attention. Your strategy should be guided by the very same principles that underlie basic storytelling. Who are the characters in your organization's story? Why are you taking the time to tell this story? What can you do to attract more listeners? Think of elements that make your organization unique and different (the story's "voice") and the challenges it is trying to face (the story's "conflicts").

3 Do Your Research

Before you launch any major campaign, know your facts. Communicate information to news sources you know will be interested in your story, and treat them with respect. Review social media networks and relevant publications to see what people are saying about your organization, the population it serves, and the issues you care about most. Examine related organizations' strategies to make sure your approach sounds unique, specific, and purposeful.

4 Develop Relationships

Building meaningful relationships with people in your community is key to the success of any campaign. Take time to get to know the journalists and key stakeholders in your field. Follow them on social media and retweet or "like" their posts, if appropriate. Make yourself available to them, and offer outside assistance when possible. A journalist is more likely to help you with your story when you've helped her with hers.

5 Stay Relevant

Your organization's message—just like your organization's purpose—should naturally attract the people you're trying to serve. Comb through Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites to make sure the images and quotes you're using are relevant to your target demographic. Set up Google News alerts and subscribe to industry publications. If your organization is up-to-date, your media relations strategy should be too.

Editorial Viability: How to Successfully Pitch Your Story and Make News

Journalists of all stripes are always looking for stories. The stress of ever-shrinking newsrooms and the constant pressure to publish on social media create an insatiable demand for story ideas. Philanthropists who can provide reporters with editorially viable story ideas will quickly become trusted sources.

What makes something newsworthy—or editorially viable—follows a time-tested formula. Six simple elements create the framework for how journalists gauge the merit of a news story. Understanding these elements can help you identify when you have a good story or how to create one when it doesn't otherwise exist.

Of the six elements of editorial viability, statistics, profiles, and timeliness are the three most important. The degree to which you are able to combine as many of the six elements as possible, however, will improve the viability of your story and the success of your pitch. And sometimes, a story is simply so compelling it stands on its own.

Elements of Editorial Viability

#1—Statistics: *Who is impacted and how do you know?*

Statistics are the single most important thing reporters need.

- Do an original study.
- Identify counterintuitive data.
- Define trends.
- Use outside statistics.
- Look for the "-EST" factor.

Consider doing an original survey, or partnering with others to commission a study to create the data that will help identify who is impacted and how you know they are impacted. Identify academic researchers studying the issues you care about and perhaps fund new research, or a survey or analysis of existing data to illustrate the problem you are addressing or the change you are trying to achieve.

If original research is cost prohibitive, consider your own organizational data or that of your grantees. Perhaps you served more people than you ever have before (or perhaps fewer than ever). Look for data that is counterintuitive and illustrates something particularly relevant to the work you are doing.

Consider defining trends. Take a longitudinal look at your own data or collaborate with others to define trends in your communities. Use government data or other outside statistics to answer the question of who is impacted and how you know. For example, every month the U.S. Department of Labor releases unemployment data; if you are working on programs that provide job training and employment services, those numbers provide the relevant statistics to tell a story about the work your grantees are doing putting people to work.

When you are considering statistics, look for the "-EST" factor: biggest, fastest growing, or even lowest or smallest, which can represent a challenge you face.

#2—Profile: *Tell the story of a person, community, or organization that is impacted.*

Open any major city daily newspaper on any day of the week, and it will become obvious why the second most important element of editorial viability is the profile. Good storytelling involves people—what's often referred to as human interest—and you will quickly see that news stories on a variety of topics begin with a vignette about a person.

The profile is also among the hardest elements for reporters to find, and it creates an important entry point for philanthropists. The people you serve are an invaluable asset in the realm of media relations. Identify people who are willing to tell their stories. This takes time and effort on your part, but is well worth it.

The profile does not have to be about one individual. Profiles can also tell the stories of communities, organizations, and businesses that are impacted.

#3—Timeliness: *Why today?*

News at its purest is supposed to be new. If you can answer the question, "Why today?" you have another element of editorial viability that will help land the media coverage you seek.

News stories have an inherent life cycle. Without something fresh to keep moving the news forward, those stories will naturally wane as others grow in importance or are more timely. If you actively think about the question, "Why today?" and incorporate an element of timeliness into your pitch, you are more likely to be successful.

Sometimes the element of timeliness is organic; sometimes it is contrived. A story that focuses on rescue efforts in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster is an example of organic timeliness. On the other hand, a story about breast cancer research or survivors is often best told in October (Breast Cancer Awareness Month).

#4—Expertise: *Who can provide credible perspective?*

Often, you—and often your grantees—have the credible expertise to provide perspective on the story you are hoping to tell. Sometimes, though, it is strategic to offer outside experts, university professors, or local professionals who can provide third-party validation and analysis.

As with the other elements of editorial viability, helping to identify an appropriate expert will strengthen your pitch.

#5—Star Power: *Who else is involved?*

- Celebrity
- Local personality
- "Too dang cute"

Sometimes all you need is a little star power to make news. Professional athletes, movie stars, and other celebrities are often looking for ways to contribute to the issues they care about. Why not yours?

Keep in mind: A celebrity doesn't have to be a Grammy Award-winning rock star. Consider local personalities, television anchors or reporters, local politicians, or even a high school principal, any of whom could provide the star power necessary to make your story editorially viable.

And never forget the star power of kids and animals. Reporters know that people will read stories and watch newscasts featuring things that are "too dang cute," simply because they are just too dang cute.

#6—Compelling: *Some stories just need to be told.*

The final element of editorial viability is something that is so compelling that the story just needs to be told. This element of editorial viability can often stand on its own as newsworthy, simply because it is so compelling.

How do you gauge when a story element is compelling? Here's a simple test: Did you want to text someone the news as soon as you heard it? Did you impulsively feel you had to share it with others? Are other people talking about it? If you can answer *yes* to any of these questions, you probably have a compelling story.

How to Pitch Your Story

Once you have pulled together as many elements of editorial viability as possible, it is time to pitch your story.

Identify the right reporter; get to know her work

Whereas all reporters are constantly on the lookout for new story ideas, they work at a very fast pace. And they are often beleaguered by weak pitches and stories that are irrelevant to the beats they cover. It is important to do your research and identify the right journalist to pitch.

Look for reporters who have done stories about other nonprofits or who routinely cover the specific issue you care about. Then, make a deliberate effort to get to know them. Follow your targeted reporters on Twitter; share their stories on your social media channels; and post thoughtful, relevant comments or questions.

Know your media market; start with the most influential outlet

Unless you are pitching an event or something that includes a major celebrity, pitch one reporter at a time starting with someone at the most influential news organization in your media market. Often, the major city daily newspaper is the news leader, and the local broadcast outlets will follow their lead.

Plan to provide photo or video opportunities

Consider what visuals might be necessary to tell the story. Do you have photos you can provide, or can you provide photo opportunities? If your story is particularly visual, the dominant television station may be the best outlet to start with. Also keep in mind that meteorologists are often open to doing their weather reports from local events.

Most reporters prefer to have stories pitched via email. Be concise while still detailing the story elements you can provide and offering to help facilitate anything else the reporter might need to tell the story. If you do not get a response, call the reporter directly. Typically between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. is a good time to connect with reporters before they are focused on their daily deadline.

There is a fine line in media relations between persistence and annoyance. If you leave a voicemail and a follow-up email and do not hear back from the reporter, assume they are not interested and move on to your next targeted journalist. If a reporter declines or "takes a pass," thank her for her consideration and move on. Nothing irritates a reporter more than being asked, "Why not?" And, since you may want to pitch the same reporter with another story, you should strive to develop respectful relationships over time.

If you have pulled together the elements of editorial viability, you can be confident that you have a sensible pitch. But that doesn't mean you will make news every time. You will, however, demonstrate to the media the kinds of stories and elements you can facilitate to help with their reporting.

If you are able to engage a reporter, yet she declines to use your story, consider laying the groundwork for future story possibilities. In other words, end the conversation with something like this: "Okay, Helen, I understand that this story doesn't work for you. Thank you for considering it. If you ever need anything in the future, as you work on stories about the human side of quantum physics, don't hesitate to let me know how I can help."

A Word About Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor

Publishing an opinion piece is often a high-risk, high-reward proposition. Drafting a compelling op-ed can be very time consuming, and most submitted pieces never see the light of day. Increasingly, commentaries are solicited, so one way to minimize the risk is to reach out to the op-ed page editor to gauge their interest in your topic and point of view before you write the piece.

Although there is no magic to successfully publishing an op-ed or letter to the editor, it is very important to carefully follow published submission guidelines and word counts. Editors tend to be very busy. The more work they have to do to get your piece ready for publishing, the less likely they will be to use it.

Media Messaging and Interviews Made Easy

Whether speaking with the media or being an ambassador for your organization, it's important to plan and practice (yes, out loud!) what you want to say.

1 Write Down Your Key Points

Before your interview, write down three key points, no longer than 2–3 sentences each. The first sentence works as a setup for your point. The second and third sentences provide more information or perspective. Consider if you can add in words to create urgency, power, or emotion.

2 Identify Supporting Facts and Anecdotes

Identify both a relevant fact and an anecdote to support each point. These can be woven into the conversation and used as transitions back to your key messages.

3 Refine Your Message

- Be bold, memorable, and repeatable.
- Embrace clarity and brevity.
- Use active, impactful verbs and avoid overly aggrandizing adjectives.
- Do not use acronyms or industry jargon.
- Avoid listing more than three items in a row.

4 Practice

Everyone is better when they practice, so do it! Preferably, you should practice in front of a mirror or while using a recording device, but, even if it is in the car or shower, practice out loud. Get it done.

Interview Tips

- Commit to accuracy and transparency.
- Do not assume that the journalist knows anything about you, your organization, or your mission. Be prepared to start with who you are and what you do.
- Consider transitional phrases to help direct the conversation. Phrases like, "From where I sit, I see..." or "What we know is..." or "What's important to understand is..." or "Let me provide some perspective..."
- Never speculate or speak about something you don't know. It is always better to say, "I don't know, but I am happy to find someone who does."
- Reporters will almost invariably ask if there is anything else you would like to add. This is your opportunity to repeat your key message in a neat, quotable package.

There Is a Reporter on the Phone—Top 10 Tips

1 Consider the reporter's inquiry an opportunity.

Most reporters want to get it right and approach their work with journalistic integrity. You should assume the inquiry represents an opportunity, not a threat.

2 Be helpful and responsive.

Journalists come back to people who are responsive. It is important to respond within an hour, even if it is only to gather information about what the reporter is looking for and understand her deadlines.

3 Start by gathering information.

Ask for the reporter's name, affiliation, contact information, story line, and deadline. This is your opportunity to interview the reporter and learn about her story and how you can help. Appropriate questions include:

- What is your deadline?
- Who else are you speaking with?
- Are there specific questions I can help with?
- Can I help with photos or other visuals to tell your story?

4 Avoid spontaneous or off-the-cuff interviews.

It is important to always be courteous and respectful of the reporter's time, but it is generally a mistake to do spontaneous or off-the-cuff interviews.

Thank the journalist for her interest in your organization or expertise and ask if you can gather answers to her questions and call her back.

Again, the rule of thumb is that you should respond to reporter inquiries within an hour, or expect that she will have moved on to someone else. Always be respectful of the reporter's stated deadline.

5 Prepare for the interview and write key messages.

Remember that you are the expert. Journalists cover a broad range of issues and know a little about a lot. Be confident about your expertise and start with the basics.

Gather the information you need and write down three clear, succinct key points. Whenever possible, avoid acronyms and jargon. Support your points with impactful facts and compelling anecdotes or personal stories.

6 Force yourself to practice out loud.

Everyone is more effective when they practice, period. If time allows, ask a colleague to help you practice with mock questions and answers. Consider recording the practice session and reviewing the video as part of your preparation.

7 Always be transparent and honest.

Remember, you are much more of an expert on the subject than the journalist. Be confident about your expertise, but never speculate or speak about something you don't know.

It is always better to say you do not know an answer than to try to bluff your way through a topic or line of questioning. It is perfectly acceptable to say, "I don't know the answer to that question and, rather than speculate, I would be happy to research it and get back to you."

8 Never say "no comment"; accept that there is no such thing as "off-the-record."

Say what you mean and mean what you say. Assume that anything you say could end up in a story.

In extreme cases—if you absolutely must speak confidentially—carefully negotiate the rules of engagement, even with a trusted reporter. Phrases like *off-the-record, on-background,* and *not-for attribution* are often interpreted differently. Be crystal clear about the rules of engagement and understand that you are always taking a risk when you choose to speak to a reporter confidentially. If you agree to be an anonymous source for a story, you should ensure that you are not also a named, quoted source in the same story.

9 Insist on factual accuracy.

In today's world of shrinking newsrooms and the ever-present demands of social media, reporters have little time to double-check facts.

Offer to help the reporter fact-check, or introduce her to a third party who can help ensure factual accuracy. If a reporter gets something factually wrong, request a correction and be sure the error is corrected in all digital stories. Do not hesitate to call an editor or supervisor to ensure factual accuracy.

10 The reporter will have an agenda; make sure you do, too.

Journalists don't just call out of the blue. They have a story they are working on or a lead they are trying to follow. In other words, whether benign or not, they will have their own agenda and will try to fill those needs. You should keep in mind your own agenda, aligned with the organization's mission and goals, and see to it that your attitude, approach, and comments fulfill that agenda.

Stories From Small-Staffed Foundations

Beyond the Press Release: When Media Partnerships Lead to Lasting Change

The Patterson Foundation of Sarasota, FL, believes in the power of partnerships to achieve greater results. It uses a unique model to collaborate with and support successful programs. More specifically, the approach leverages existing relationships with subject matter experts to catalyze social change.

Central to the accelerator process is the role media plays in framing public opinion, educating the community, and shaping the conversation around the issue at hand. A prime example is a public-private partnership the foundation established in 2010 with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs—National Cemetary Administration. This first-of-its-kind partnership was formed to design and build Patriot Plaza, an enhancement to a national cemetery in Sarasota.

In the year leading up to the dedication of Patriot Plaza, the foundation embarked on a Legacy of Valor Campaign, a mosaic of community partnerships to honor veterans and their families.

The campaign facilitated over 100 brand-new and existing collaborative partnerships, led to more than 200 community events and activities honoring veterans and their families, and raised more than $272,000 for partner nonprofits serving veterans.

"It is important for funders to think beyond the press release," says Roxanne Joffe, president of MagnifyGood and The Patterson Foundation's communications expert. "Media outlets at every level are looking for new business models. The media's goals aligned with the campaign's, resulting in effective partnering."

> Media outlets at every level are looking for new business models.

This partnership model included a contribution from The Patterson Foundation, which allowed the region's main local daily newspaper to chronicle the Patriot Plaza project in an advertising insert that it produced. The project received the publicity it needed. The newspaper produced a new revenue stream. And corporate sponsors were seen as supporting veterans. By creating an opportunity for the community to rally around a common cause—honoring veterans past, present, and future—The Patterson Foundation was able to produce a positive outcome for local residents, businesses, and media.

A Voice for Minnesota's Most Vulnerable Children

When The Sheltering Arms Foundation of Minnesota talks about the lives of children, more and more people are paying attention. As one example, the foundation and partners attracted almost 1,000 people to an annual legislative briefing that drew just 200 in its beginning years.

Clearly, Sheltering Arms—and its partners in a statewide campaign to increase public funding for high-quality early child care and education programs—has gained influence in the halls of the state's legislature. Its public policy agenda is front and center, thanks in part to a proactive media outreach campaign designed to give a voice to Minnesota's most vulnerable children.

With just two staff members, Sheltering Arms has found that partnerships with larger organizations such as United Way and coalitions like MinneMinds have drawn attention to its work.

> Its public policy agenda is front and center, thanks in part to a proactive media outreach campaign.

"We gained credibility as a group," says Executive Director Denise Mayotte. "We hired a PR firm to lead the coalition's joint messaging and media outreach campaign, and together we were able to leverage our collective influence to educate the media about the critical needs of low-income 3- and 4-year-olds." Mayotte says front-page news stories about the problem, editorials calling for sensible solutions, and a social media advocacy campaign aligned to give Minnesota's most vulnerable children a voice.

Sheltering Arms has been able to reach its potential largely by embracing relationships with other grant-giving organizations and nonprofits as well as with media outlets, both traditional and social. Mayotte says all these efforts have raised Sheltering Arms' ability to educate the media and the public.

She says today, state legislators listen more closely when Sheltering Arms and the MinneMinds consortium talk about the needs of underserved children.

No Downside to Talking About Your Foundation and Its Work

Media coverage doesn't always happen when and how you think it will. But it pays to be ready when that reporter is suddenly on the phone. The VNA Foundation in Chicago, which supports home- and community-based healthcare for the medically underserved, has learned that lesson through experience.

Executive Director Rob DiLeonardi says there have been times when the foundation implemented seemingly promising PR campaigns only to attract little or no interest by the media. Conversely, they have had hugely successful coverage when they least expected it.

The first time came in 2007 after it honored a local nurse with its annual SuperStar Nurse award. As it turned out, the nurse was let go from her job with Cook County due to budget cuts just days after receiving her award. The *Chicago Sun-Times* splashed the story on its front page, followed by pickups by most of the local print and broadcast outlets as the story became something of a political football.

DiLeonardi says that situation prepared him for a subsequent experience with a *Wall Street Journal* reporter who was doing a story on collaboration among foundations. Though his mention was a minor part of the article, the foundation received great exposure.

"It was wonderful because it opened doors and started new conversations for us," says DiLeonardi. "Even that sort of 'don't blink or you'll miss it' mention in a news story can help to further promote your mission, because it's enough to get your name out there."

> It's important to be ready to talk about your work with reporters, or anyone who wants to know what you do.

DiLeonardi adds that anytime you are able to publicize the work of your foundation, it's a good thing. "The more publicity you get, the better understanding people will have about the work you do. In fact, for us, it resulted in better targeted, more accurate grant proposals."

His advice? It's important to be ready, with bullet points and discussion items, to talk about your foundation's work with reporters, other foundations, grantees, or anyone who wants to know what you do. Ultimately, DiLeonardi says, there's no downside to being open and transparent about your work with everyone.

Templates

MEDIA ADVISORY

A media advisory is used solely to announce an upcoming event or news conference. It is sent beforehand, in an effort to get reporters to attend the event, and is often released in addition to a news release, which would likely be distributed at the event. Wire services (such as the local or national AP office) and news collaboratives (such as your state news service, if there is one) are good targets, in addition to assignment editors at local media outlets.

MEDIA ADVISORY

TO: Daybooks/Calendar/Correspondents/Assignment Editors

FROM: Name Here, Organization Here, 123-456-7890, email@email.org

Headline of Media Advisory Goes Here

Optional Subheadline Goes Here

WHAT: This is where you give the basic information about your event, starting with the nameof your organization, the event that's taking place, and who is participating. Consider including a website hyperlink or further information online. This section can be 2–4 sentences.

WHEN: Date XX, 201x, Time

Type of event [luncheon, reception, news briefing] and time of day

WHERE: The address of the event including name of building, street address, and city, state, and zip code. A link to a map or driving directions is also acceptable.

WHO: About Organization: Here is where you give basic boilerplate information about your organization, usually in no more than 2–3 sentences.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Use this tool to respond to a previously published article or op-ed that directly relates to your work or an area of clear expertise. Often a letter to the editor is used to offer a different point of view or to support or rebut the main argument of the article in question. In general, your letter to the editor should be 150 words or fewer.

Headline Should Go Here

Dear Editor:

I'd like to applaud [name of paper/publication] for its recent article, "Headline of Article," (Date xx, 201x). [Alternately: I'm writing in response to your recent article, "Headline of Article," (Date xx, 201x).]

Now, give a one-sentence recap of what the article's main point was. Then go on to say that your organization has been involved in this area of concern for xx number of years, in brief detail.

In this paragraph, either support or rebut the main argument of the previous article, whichever is appropriate. You should accomplish this goal in no more than 2–3 short sentences.

Now suggest that any readers wishing to find out more about the issue have a number of resources available to them at www.mywebsite.com or by contacting the local My Organization office.

Regards,

Your Name
Title, Organization
123-456-7890
email@email.org

Note: It is very important to review the targeted publication's submission guidelines and follow them closely. Submission guidelines are generally easy to find on publication websites. The paper's editorial staff will likely rewrite the headline, but it is a good practice to include a catchy option for the editor's consideration.

NEWS RELEASE

News releases are traditionally used to communicate to journalists editorially viable story lines and timely information. At other times, they are used exclusively to communicate to partners, stakeholders, and internal audiences. In the digital era, news releases are increasingly used to support search engine optimization objectives. You may use the sample below as a template.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE/FOR RELEASE ON DATE XX, 201X

Contact:
Name Here
Title Here
123-456-7890
email@email.org

Headline of the Story Goes Here

Subheadline Goes Here

(CITY, State) – The first sentence is where you put the lead of the news release, the most important thing you want to say, in as few words as possible. The second sentence is used to support or explain information in the lead line. Think of the first question that pops into your mind when you read the lead line, then answer it in the second sentence.

"Quote goes here from a top organizational official or spokesperson," says Name Here, Title Here, Organization. "Quote is then continued in a short sentence or two."

This paragraph is where you explain some of the background or put things in context for the reporters. Use 2–3 sentences in most cases to explain this information.

"You can put a secondary quote here, either from the same official or from someone else," says Name Here, Title Here, Organization. "You don't need the 'Title Here, Organization' information if it's the same person from the original quote, only if it's a new person."

Use this paragraph to detail any further information that is important to the telling of the story, but that you haven't already given. It might be some further supporting information or data, or perhaps even a forward-looking bit of information that gives the story future context. Regarding the lead line: It helps to use fresh data, perhaps something that is counterintuitive, or a catchy bit of word usage to attract attention. It should also reflect what you've said in the headline and subhead, which, by the way, you can think of as being like writing a very short couple of tweets about your subject. Strive for keeping the release to a single page.

About Organization: This is where you include some boilerplate language about your organization, usually a sentence or two that gives the overall description of who your organization is and what it does.

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Note: Whenever possible limit the news release to one page and provide links for additional information.

Additional Resources

Exponent Philanthropy

Exponent Philanthropy amplifies and celebrates the vital work of a diverse group of givers who give big while keeping their operations lean.

- Media & Communications Find resources and tools to help you tell your story and see results.
- Discovering Your Foundation's Brand Identity This member-only article from the Rose Family Foundation includes an exercise foundation leaders can do with family, friends, and colleagues to begin defining the organization's brand identity.
- Going Public With Your Giving This member-only article from our quarterly publication *Essentials* makes the case for operating in the public realm.
- Telling Your Story Another *Essentials* article includes examples of how members are sharing their foundations' stories.

The Communications Network

The Communications Network is a membership organization that supports foundations and nonprofits to improve lives through the power of smart communications.

- Are We There Yet? A Communications Evaluation Guide This guide walks users through a nine-step process for creating plans for monitoring and measuring their communications.
- com-matters.org This model for effective communications breaks down the various elements of brand, culture, strategy, and action.
- Making Ideas Move, a series by *Stanford Social Innovation Review* and the Communications Network, includes leaders from foundations, nonprofits, and research institutions sharing how effective communications helped them drive social change.

GrantCraft

GrantCraft offers free resources and information for funders to help them become more effective and strategic in their work.

- Strategies: Communication A large selection of communications resources for grantmakers, from infographics and videos to blog posts and guides.
- Communicating for Impact: Strategies for Grantmakers In this guide, grantmakers explain how they've used communications to advance programmatic goals. They discuss what's involved in developing a strategy, structuring a program, managing relationships, using new media, and evaluating communications activities.
- Communicating For Impact: Discussion Guide for Thoughtful Funder Reflection These questions are intended for use with GrantCraft's guide *Communicating for Impact: Strategies for Grantmakers*.

Working Narratives

Working Narratives works with movements to tell great stories that inspire, activate, and enliven democracy.

- Storytelling and Social Change: A Strategy Guide for Grantmakers This guide looks at the recent history of storytelling and social change; reviews the theories of change behind this work; provides case studies of 10 projects and their funders; offers guidance on every stage of grantmaking; includes sidebar interviews and other features; and lists resources for additional exploration.