



Making Communities Stronger Media Packet

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Massachusetts Nonprofit Network Making Communities Stronger Public Awareness Campaign – General Guidelines

Here are some methods for promoting your organization.

Press release – A document submitted to the media that is written like a news article. It could announce a new program or highlight how your organization or program is strengthening the community. Press releases are written in the inverted pyramid style – with the most important material coming first. See attached for more information on writing a press release.

Media advisory – A one-page document inviting media to an event or a press conference. You will often have additional press materials to hand out at the event. See attached for sample media advisory.

Op-ed piece – Short essays (800 words or less – check paper’s guidelines) that appear opposite the editorial page of a newspaper. Op-eds are often written in conjunction with a current news story. They can be a great opportunity to highlight ways your organization strengthens the community.

Letter to the Editor – A very short (200 words or less) reply to a news story or op-ed. Letters to the editor are often written to correct the public record or advocate about an issue. It’s another way for your organization to promote itself.

Both op-ed pieces and letters to the editor should be written by your Executive Director, a board member, or someone with expertise in the field.

Website

You should put all press releases and op-eds you submit, regardless of whether or not they are published, on your website. Of course, you should also include any type of press you receive on your website, too.

You may also want to include an online press kit – with staff contact information, press releases, fact sheets, photos, videos, and other images.

Be sure that your organization can easily be found through Google and other search engines.

Social Media

Facebook, Twitter, and blogs are a great way to promote your organization and raise awareness.

Whatever methods you choose, the key is to emphasize how your organization or program strengthens the community and how you are effective, efficient, and essential.



Framing your message

What does it mean for a nonprofit organization to be effective, efficient, and essential?

- Your organization achieves results.
- Your organization is improving the quality of life for the people in your community.
- Your organization is seeing a growth in service.
- Your organization is providing the community with much-needed resources.

Many nonprofit organizations provide services with limited staff and financial resources. They carry out their mission by doing more with less.

Nonprofit organizations strengthen communities by providing:

- Affordable housing
- Health care
- Job training
- After school programs
- Shelter for the homeless
- Tutoring and mentoring
- Nutrition programs
- Leadership opportunities for youth
- Exposure to arts and culture
- Early childhood education
- Food banks
- Fuel assistance
- Mental health programs
- Environmental education
- Legal services for immigrants

Besides offering these direct services, some nonprofit organizations strengthen communities by providing grant support and public awareness. If nonprofit organizations didn't exist, neither would many of the programs and services listed above.

All these services help improve the economic climate and quality of life of a community.

When promoting your organization, think of ways that your work strengthens the community and how you are effective, efficient, and essential. In addition, initiate a call to action in your press release or op-ed. This could include requests for donations, volunteers, or for people to contact their legislators.



Pitching stories to the media

Your story needs to be newsworthy. When evaluating media pitches, reporters will ask:

- Why now?
- Why is this news?
- Who cares?

Newsworthy stories include:

Something New

These could be:

- Programs you're launching
- Geographic areas you're expanding into
- Awards you've won
- Big donations
- Building dedications
- A new Executive Director or board member

Something Local

You'll have a much better chance of getting coverage if you target local periodicals. If you are in Springfield, don't pitch to papers in New Bedford.

Great Pictures

If you can tie your media pitch in with a good photo opportunity, you might have a better chance of getting coverage. Have some photos that capture what you do or of a recent event readily available for the media.

A Good Human Interest Story

Your organization most likely has many great stories to tell – a family who was able to get through the cold winter with fuel assistance, a young woman who is the first person in her family to go to college because of a tutoring program. Work with your colleagues to come up with a few good stories to pitch.

Hot Topics

Stay on top of current events and use those to craft your story ideas. For example how the proposed federal and/or state budget cuts would impact the low-income families you serve.

How you are part of the solution

Everyone likes to hear some good news. How are you making a difference in the community? What is the economic impact?

Talking to and cultivating relationships with reporters

After you have pitched your story to the media, you'll need to follow up. You'll also want to work on developing a relationship with reporters. Here are some tips to help you.

- The best time to reach reporters is in the morning or early afternoon when they are not on deadline. Ask if this is a good time to call them.
- Reporters appreciate if their paper is the only one you've pitched a story to. Also, don't call several reporters at the same paper with a story idea.
- Work to educate reporters in a way that pretends they already know.
- Speak slowly when making points that you want to be quoted.
- Say your message three times.
- Know that you can always rephrase a point if you aren't comfortable with something you said.
- Call reporters to commend them if you see a story that they wrote that you like.
- Try to be a resource to them by always being available and providing information, but keep in mind that conversations will not always result in a story about your organization.
- Ask if they would like you to read the story before it is published.
- Call back if you think of additional information or points.
- Be able to provide reporters with any additional information they might need, such as a fact sheet.
- Follow up with an email to stress your most important points.
- Can someone in your organization be an expert in the field that reporters can contact if needed? If so, emphasize that to members of the press.

Sources - *Winning Media Coverage for the Work You Do* by Dorie Clark, *Media 101* by Morrissey & Co., *Robin Hood Marketing: Stealing Corporate Savvy to Sell Just Causes* by Katya Anderson, *Batter Up: Pitching to the Media* by Third Sector New England



Press Releases for Nonprofits: Info and Sample

By [Joanne Fritz](#), About.com Guide and Free Press Release Center

Both Content and Format are Crucial

Press releases are not just for the press any more. They can be posted on your website for all to read and to help optimize your site for the search engines.

Nonprofit Press releases will vary, but the standard format is usually similar to the example below.

Basic Elements of a Nonprofit Press Release

1. **When the release can be distributed.** Usually, the release will carry the words, **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.**
(This can be put above or below the headline and can be on either side of page)
2. **Headline**
(Centered across top of organization's letterhead or special news release stationary)
3. **Organizational info:**
(Can go above the headline or below. Usually appears on the left side)
 - o Name of Organization
 - o Address
 - o Phone Number
 - o Website URL
4. **Contact information:**
(Can go above or below headline; and on the right or left side of the page. Check out various samples to see the variety of formats)
 - o Name (can be a person's name or a generic place such as "the Public Affairs Department")
 - o Email address of person or department
 - o Phone Number (include office phone and cell phone numbers)
5. **Place, day, date**
(Start the first line of release.)
6. **Body of release**
7. **Boilerplate information about the nonprofit organization**
8. **Repeat contact information**
(And/or offer to provide someone to interview.)
9. **###**
(These marks are centered just below the content of the release and signal the end of the release.)

Sample Press Release Template (from the Free Press Release Center website)

Here is a sample press release. When submitting a press release it is important to use the right format otherwise it may be rejected.

Headline Is Short and in Title Case Meaning You Capitalize Every Word Except for Prepositions and Articles of Three Words or Less; Ideally it is Not More Than 170 Characters and Does Not Take a Period

The summary paragraph is a synopsis of the press release in regular sentence form. It doesn't merely repeat the headline or opening paragraph. It just tells the story in a different way.

City, State (FPRC) Month 1, 2005 -- The first paragraph know as the "lead" contains the most important information. You need to grab your reader's attention here. And you can't assume that they have read the headline or summary paragraph; the lead should stand on its own.

A press release, like a news story, keeps sentences and paragraphs short, about three or four lines per paragraph. The first couple of paragraphs should cover the who, what, when, where, why and how questions.

The rest of the news release expounds on the information provided in the lead paragraph. It includes quotes from key staff, customers or subject matter experts. It contains more details about the news you have to tell, which can be about something new, unique or controversial or about a prominent person, place or thing.

"You should include a quote for that human touch" said Gary Sims, CEO of the Free Press Release Center. "And you should use the last paragraph to restate and summarize the key points."

This is example press release template for use at the Free Press Release Center. The last paragraph can also include details on product availability, trademark acknowledgements, etc.

About ABC Company:

Include a short corporate backgrounder about the company or the person who is newsworthy before you list the contact person's name and phone number. Your e-mail address goes only in the "Contact Email" box when you submit your press release.

Contact:

David Brown, director of public relations

ABC Inc

555-555-5555

<http://www.YourWebAddress.com>

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Sample Press Release (from DoJiggy.com)

DoJiggy hosts Walk-a-thon in support of Local Charities

Location, Date: – Online fundraising services provider, DoJiggy invites Denver and Boulder community members to sign up for their annual “DoJiggy Right Walkathon” event on Saturday June 27, 2010 at the Boulder Creek Path. Participants can register online at www.demopledge.dojiggy.com

The “DoJiggy Right Walkathon”, sponsored by ABC Company, will benefit a number of local charities including Colorado Nonprofit Association, Boulder Reservoir Preservation, and Meals on Wheels. Registration for the event is free. All participants will receive a “goodie bag” filled by event sponsors with a complimentary event T-shirt for those who raise \$100 or more.

The walkathon starts at 1:00 PM, with participant and sponsor registration beginning at Noon. Sign up is at the registration tent on the corner of Fifth and Main Street near the Boulder Creek Path. Various viewing stations and tents will be set up along the path for supporters to watch and sponsors to distribute water and other items.

“This is our third season hosting this walkathon and every year we’ve not only accomplished our fundraising goals, but continued to increase participation,” said Susie Sample, Director of Development. “With the help of Denver and Boulder businesses and exciting post-event entertainment, we anticipate doubling event attendance in 2010.”

Following the event, participants are invited to a complimentary BBQ, catered by XYZ Restaurant and entertainment provided by a surprise local celebrity! Prizes will be awarded for the most pledges raised, first to cross the finish line, and most enthusiastic walker.

For more information or to register or donate online, please visit www.demopledge.dojiggy.com.

About DoJiggy

Founded in 2003 and based in Boulder, Colorado, DoJiggy is a leading provider of easy, affordable, online fundraising and event management solutions for nonprofits, schools, churches and community organizations. Using the DoJiggy suite, customers implement online fundraising and event management with tools designed for golf tournaments, online donations, charity events, auctions, walkathons and online pledge collections.

Media Contact:

Susie Sample

XXXX@dojiggy.com

(888) 999-0000

www.dojiggy.com

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Sample Media Advisory

Use this media advisory to alert people on your media list about your upcoming events. For maximum effectiveness, send it out on multiple occasions and follow up with phone calls to your local newspaper, radio stations, and television stations.

MEDIA ADVISORY FOR

[date of event]

For more information contact:

[your name and all phone number(s) at which the press can reach you]

[Name of Town]

Students, Teachers Rev Up for NEA's Read Across America Day

Students in *[name of town]* will join millions of their peers across the country to celebrate the ninth annual National Education Association's (NEA) Read Across America Day on
March 2, 2011.

NEA's Read Across America Day, which falls on Dr. Seuss's birthday, expects more than 45 million readers, both young and old, to pick up a book and read.

To honor the good doctor and celebrate the fun and value of reading, *[name of local association]* is asking you to join NEA and many of America's leading literacy, youth, and civic groups in bringing a nation of readers together under one hat-the red and white stovepipe made famous by the Cat in the Hat-for a flurry (or furry) of reading excitement!

WHO:

WHAT:

WHEN:

WHERE:

Our goal is to show America's children the joy of reading and build a nation of readers-on March 2 and every day. For more information NEA's Read Across America, visit www.nea.org/readacross and www.readacrossamerica.org and learn of other reading celebrations that are happening from coast to coast.

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Did you know...? Interesting Facts about the Nonprofit Sector in Massachusetts

Basic Nonprofit Information

- Massachusetts has over 25,000 nonprofit organizations.
- ¾ of nonprofits are less than 25 years old.
- The two largest sectors of nonprofits are human services and public/society benefits-which mainly consists of philanthropic and grant making establishments.
- All profits obtained by nonprofit organizations are recycled back into the organization and are either reserved for emergencies or used to pay for necessary investments like buildings, staff, equipment...etc.
- Nonprofit organizations often achieve growth rates well above those of for profit companies.
- The financial goal for nonprofits is to sustain sufficient working capital to continue helping the community.

Poverty Rates and Funding Cuts in Massachusetts

- The overall poverty rate in MA is 10.3% which is the result of a steady annual increase from 2000.
- There is an unemployment rate of 8.2% in Massachusetts.
- There has been a negative 3.4% change in available jobs from 2007 due to the recession.
- Funding has been cut in almost every sector from 2009 to 2011 including early education and secondary education.
 - Examples of cuts in funding in early education sectors include:
 - Universal pre kindergarten programs have had funding cut by 40% since 2009.
 - Early childhood mental health grants have been cut by 75% and the current funding is valued at \$750,000.
 - Healthy families programs which help prevent child abuse and neglect has had funding cut by 24%
 - Examples of cuts in funding in secondary education sectors include:
 - Transportation funding has been cut by 36%.
 - After school program funding has been cut by 74%.
 - Adult basic education programs have been cut by 11%.

The Most IMPORTANT Fact about Nonprofits

- Nonprofits help EVERYONE regardless of socioeconomic status.
 - For example-Girl Scouts, medical research, state parks, and wildlife conservations are all types of nonprofit services.