



Communication & Media Skills

Arab Fertilizers Association (AFA)



Prepared by: Dr Adel Saleh

Faculty of Communication and Mass Media

British University in Egypt (BUE)

Morocco, 28-30 October 2015

Contents

Introduction: Why Media is Important?..... 3

Unit I: Media Accessibility & Media Outreach..... 4

Unit III: Writing a Press Release 11

Unit III: Media Interview 13

Unit IV: Press Conference 17

APPENDICES..... 24

Introduction: Why Media is Important?

Running a national service program is more than a full-time job. Between developing projects, recruiting volunteers, managing finances, seeking resources, and filling out paperwork, it may feel like there's no time to do anything else. With all the things a busy program manager has to do, you may wonder: "Why should I care about media coverage, and can it really help me?"

The answer is yes – and getting it is easier than you think. You don't have to be a media pro to get good coverage, but having some tips and resources can help. Publicizing your program is not a goal in itself. It's a means of building support for your program and increasing your likelihood of success. Taking the time to communicate with the public helps attract resources from your community, including volunteers, sponsors, and funding, and helps educate people about your program.

Maintaining relationships with media outlets will help you be a voice for those you serve, and strengthen your organization as a trusted and credible resource in your community.

We are living in an information age. Therefore, targeting the news media has become one of the most effective methods for transmitting information to the public. You already know the types of media out there: television, radio, newspapers, the Internet, newsletters, and specialty magazines. What you may not know is that not all types of media are right for disseminating all types of information to all types of people. This is especially true given the thousands of other organizations competing alongside you for the public's attention. That's why it's necessary to apply a strategic approach to your public relations to determine:

- Who your audience is and what their opinions, attitudes, and perceptions are?
- Which types of media can best reach your audience?
- What is the best way to shape your message for each type of media?

Your job doesn't stop with the answers to these questions. Reaching the media takes strategic planning as well.

Unit I: Media Accessibility & Media Outreach

So, your program is incredible and you have amazing volunteers, dedicated community partners, and a list of accomplishments a mile high. What next? Spreading the word about your program and your accomplishments lets people know about the great things your program is doing.

Whether your goal is to raise awareness of your program, promote a specific event, highlight accomplishments, or recruit new volunteers or members, a media plan can help your program reach thousands of people—including potential volunteers, prospective funders, local and state officials, and potential partners. An effective plan can generate print, broadcast, and electronic coverage of your program, and help cultivate relationships with local television, radio, and print reporters, leading to on-going interest in your program.

1. Developing a Media Plan

An effective media plan will address three basic questions:

- What are your public relations goals?

The first step in developing a media plan is to determine your long-term goals. These goals will help you determine your messages, as well as what media you'll want to target. When determining your goals, keep the following questions in mind:

- What are you trying to do? Recruit new members? Increase program awareness? Build public support for your program?
- Who are your audiences?
- What are the main messages you want to communicate?
- If you could write the headlines, what would they be?
- What resources—staff, contacts, materials—are needed to communicate with the media?
- What materials and tools do you already have?

- What media contacts and relationships do you already have?
- Which staff members are available and how much time can they devote to media-related activities?
- What is your estimated budget for media relations?
- Can your partner organizations provide assistance, resources or spokespeople?
- Do you have a list of volunteers, members, and alumni who would be willing to speak to the media?
- Are there other community leaders or organizations that can speak on behalf of your program?
- Are there other community leaders or organizations that can speak on behalf of your program?

What is your timeline?

Consider your program's calendar of events and your local community calendar to determine what events and activities will provide the best media opportunities for your program throughout the year. Also consider the following questions to determine other newsworthy opportunities:

- What activities and events are already planned to take place throughout the year?
- Do certain activities traditionally attract more attention than others?
- What activities or events best showcase your program's strengths and contributions to the community?
- What activities are your volunteers or members most excited about?
- Which activities involve collaboration with other organizations, businesses, or community members?
- Will studies or results be released that you would like to promote?
- What opportunities exist to collaborate with other programs?

Once you have determined your goals, opportunities and resources, you can set a strategy and adhere to a timeline. An outreach strategy will help you determine what, how, and when to communicate with the media. Keeping your overall media plan in mind, your strategy should:

- Identify who will be interested in the story
- Identify which media outlets reach these audiences

- Determine how to pitch or package the story as a newsworthy event
- Identify key messages and spokespeople
- Develop written materials to promote your program or event
- Set a timeline for outreach
- Determine a plan for tracking and follow-up

The following sections will guide you through these steps by offering ideas on how to get information to the media, identify and work with the right reporters, make the most of an interview, and communicate through public service announcements.

Tips:

Keep a list of “validators” who can speak enthusiastically about your program. Volunteers, community leaders, and others who have seen the benefits your program provides first hand are among your most valuable resources. Keep a running list of these and other individuals who you can point reporters to and who can act as validators for your program. Depending on your community, consider having a validator who is fluent in a second language, especially if you are targeting ethnic media.

Reporters love numbers and data. When it comes down to it, a reporter’s job is to present the facts. When thinking about your plan, include a method for collecting any data a reporter may find interesting. For example: How many seniors did your program assist in the last activity/month/year? How many meals/houses/projects did your volunteers serve/build/complete? Has there been an evaluation showing improvements in children’s test scores, attendance or participation in activities?

Designate a communications team. Communicating with the media is a team effort. Designate and train a communications team with clear roles and responsibilities and clear guidelines on how to pitch the story. Remember, your media outreach team could be quoted by a reporter, so be sure that each member of your team is well versed in the same messages and talking points.

How do you prepare a pitch?

- Compile a press list. Your list should contain the appropriate newsroom personnel or beat reporters/producers to contact. (See “Tips on Developing Press Lists and Newsroom Contacts” below.)
- Develop a set of pitch points. These are the main ideas that you will focus on to sell your story.

When do you pitch the media?

- One to two months before an event or activity: Call your local newspapers and television programs to determine their lead times for specific sections or programs. For example, many newspapers have longer lead times for their religion, business and entertainment/events sections. Local television programs also develop a list of potential program topics several weeks in advance.
- One week before an event or activity: Fax or e-mail the news advisory to everyone on your list. Make follow-up calls to pitch the event and gauge media interest.
- The day before the event: Send the advisory again and call contacts that you have not spoken with yet.
- The morning of the event or activity: Call again just to find out who is attending. Fax or email your news release at the conclusion of your event.

2. How Do You Build a Media List?

There are a variety of media outlets in your community that you can include in your press list. If you do not have access to an existing list, it is easy to create one. You can begin by looking in your local phone book for listings of TV and radio stations and local daily and weekly newspapers and magazines. You can also use the U.S. Newspaper List website at www.usnpl.com, or search for media outlets on web portals such as Yahoo or Google. These are useful, and cost-effective, if you send information to many media outlets on a frequent basis.

Once you have the list of media outlets you want to include in your press list, call each outlet to determine the appropriate media contact. At the very least, locate the names of the reporters and producers who cover community news (your first priority). In addition, identify the editors of the op-ed and editorial pages of the local newspaper, as well as the local columnists and feature writers who might take an interest in some aspect of your program’s focus.

3. Reports: Building and Maintaining Relationships:

Building and maintaining relationships with reporters is essential to getting your messages out in the media. Having strong relationships with reporters helps position your organization front and center in your community. It helps you gain coverage of your organization's activities and gets your message into stories that relate to the valuable work you are doing. If you want to draw a reporter's attention to neglected needs in the community and how you're helping to meet those needs, a well-developed rapport will enable you to do that. It will also increase the likelihood that the reporter will contact you for comments. Using the following tips will help you build these relationships that are so key to your outreach efforts.

Building the Relationship

Do Your Homework:

After you've identified the right reporters in your community to develop relationships with, read their stories and learn as much as you can about the news outlet where they work. Does the reporter have a specific beat or do they focus on several different issue areas? How big is the media outlet where they work? Do the reporter's stories get picked up by other publications (possibly as a result of a media partnership)?

Send a Press Packet

Providing the right reporter with information on your program should be your first step in introducing your program to the newsroom. This keeps you from having to cold call reporters and also allows them to have your contact information handy. You want to demonstrate the resources your organization can provide, so your packet should include the following:

- One-page background on your organization
- One-page Corporation program fact sheet that relates to your organization (i.e., AFA, OCP, etc.)
- Previously published news clippings that mention your organization (be sure they are positive)
- Your contact information

Give Them a Call

After you have sent a press packet, give each reporter a call. Rather than simply asking whether they received your press packet, use this opportunity to introduce yourself and your organization and how you can be a resource to them. Let them know that they can contact you if they have any questions about topics that relate to your program. You can also share with them any upcoming events that you might be having. However, keep the focus primarily on you and your organization as a resource in this relationship-building phase.

Meet with the Reporter

For those reporters with whom you would like to form a closer relationship, finding the opportunity to meet is the next step in building a relationship. Consider inviting the reporter to lunch or coffee. If you live in a smaller media market, you may want to set up meetings with all the community beat reporters at your local paper. Reporters may also be interested in seeing your program and your volunteers or members in action. You could schedule a site visit of your program facility or project. If you are building or renovating something, give reporters a chance to see and experience it. If you have a large number of reporters on your list, you should identify the most important contacts and focus on them.

What to say and bring to a reporter meeting:

- Allow the reporter to ask questions. This is their time to explore the issues and pose the questions they've never had a chance to ask.
- Bring a press packet with information on your program, the appropriate one-page Corporation program fact sheet, news clippings, and your contact information.
- Don't control the conversation. This is your time to build a relationship with the reporter, so your conversation should be a back and forth on what each of you do, activities in the community, and how you can be a resource to each other.

MAINTAINING THE RELATIONSHIP

Be a Resource to Reporters

In order to establish yourself and your program as a credible resource to reporters, you will need to provide them with the information they need by their deadline. When they call, take the request, ask what their deadline is, and get the needed information back to them within that time frame. This will improve the chances that they will keep your name and number in their Rolodex.

Keep a Current Media Log

In order to keep track of a reporter's contact information, media outlet, requests, and deadlines, it's a good idea to keep a log that you can refer to and that can be shared with colleagues to keep everyone on the same page. While a sign-in sheet (see Appendix) is used to track reporter attendance at an event, a log contains more in-depth information. It includes special notes related to the reporters' individual deadlines, preferences, and any stories the reporter has written on your program.

Provide Reporters with Up-to-Date, Newsworthy Information

Make a point of keeping reporters in the loop on what's going on with your local program and upcoming events. Be sure that you keep your updates to what is timely and newsworthy so your calls to reporters don't become a general update. Provide just enough information to keep them hooked and interested in what you have to offer.

Unit III: Writing a Press Release



The press release is the most widely used tool in obtaining media coverage—whether it’s print, radio, or television coverage. A press release should provide the news you want released to the media and read exactly how you’d like your news to be reported. Here are five basic tips on how to write a press release:

1. Put your reporter cap on – The press release should be written from a reporter’s perspective. Focus on the facts and provide as much information on what reporters (and their audience) want to know: who, what, where, when, why, and how.
2. Use the “inverted pyramid” – Be sure to organize your information in the “inverted pyramid” style of writing. Arrange your release so that the most important facts appear first, followed by supporting facts in the order of importance to your story. This is especially important because reporters always cut from the bottom up.
3. Come up with a good headline – The headline of your press release is what will either grab a reporter’s attention, causing them to read more, or give them reason to toss the release aside. Be sure to make it compelling so the reporter or editor takes notice.
4. Focus on the lead paragraph – The lead paragraph is the most important element of your release. It summarizes the news you are releasing and is meant to reel in the reporter. The lead should be kept short—no more than one to two sentences. Be sure you don’t bury your lead in the body of the press release. Other important elements of a press release include:
 - Quotations – Quotations from spokespeople bring your story to life and give your release a voice. Quotes allow you to state an opinion and

- editorialize your news. Always be sure to obtain sign-off from the person you are quoting.
- Notations – It is customary to include the word “more” at the bottom of the first page of a release if it’s longer than one page. At the end of the press release, be sure to include one of the common end notations (### or -30-). This way, an editor knows that there is no more information.
 - Boilerplate – Don’t forget to include standard language to describe your organization at the bottom of every press release after the end notation. If you reference the Corporation for National and Community Service, be sure to use our boilerplate: The Corporation for National and Community Service provides opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve their communities and country through three programs: Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America. Together with the USA Freedom Corps, the Corporation is working to build a culture of citizenship, service, and responsibility in America. For more information visit www.nationalservice.gov.
5. Proofread – Always proofread a press release; do not rely on spell-check alone. It is helpful to have another person look over your press release before distributing it to media outlets.

Unit III: Media Interview



Preparing for an Interview

- Develop three to five messages or talking points. These are the main ideas you want to emphasize and repeat during your interview. Weave these points into all of your answers. Anticipate what questions may be asked and be prepared with the answers. If you are successful at “staying on message,” you will be better able to determine the shape of the news coverage.
- Learn more about the interview. Ask what the reporter is looking for. What is the goal of the story? Will this be live or on tape? If it’s a radio interview, will listeners be calling in to ask questions? Or, if it’s a TV talk show interview, will there be other guests or panelists? Who are they? What are their backgrounds?
- Understand the reporter’s timeline. Find out when the reporter must complete the story and plan your interview accordingly. You should plan to accommodate the reporter’s deadline, so they won’t feel rushed and your interview will go more smoothly. A lot of print reporting is done by phone. If a reporter calls you at an inconvenient time, you can ask to reschedule for a more appropriate time. Also, prior to the interview, find out if the reporter is talking to anyone else about the story.
- Choose a location. You may want to ask the reporter to conduct the interview at your program office or project site, so they can observe your working environment. Print reporters are most likely to visit you on site, though television and radio reporters may want to do the interview on site to film footage or capture sound. In this case, you should carefully review

which parts of your program site should be made available to the reporter. For some interviews, most often those for television and radio, you will be required to visit a studio. In this case, you should arrive early to prepare for the interview.

- Wear the right clothing. Since the reporters are interested in learning about your program and the people involved with it, you should dress as you would at your program office or project site to give them insight into your typical environment. For example, AmeriCorps members can wear their uniforms for interviews. All dress, however, should be conservative and neat.
- Relax and focus. Breathing exercises may feel silly, but they will go a long way toward helping you feel calm. Get to your location 10-15 minutes early and spend time practicing your core message points.

General Interview Tips:

- Be enthusiastic
- Avoid jargon or technical language
- Keep your answers succinct
- Maintain eye contact with the reporter
- Nothing you say is “off the record”
- Never say “no comment”
- Don’t repeat negative words or inaccurate facts included in a reporter’s question
- Don’t worry about repeated questions
- If you don’t know the answer to a question, say so
- If the answer is “no,” it’s ok to say “no”

Special Tips for Broadcast Interviews

- Use a conversational tone. Avoid reading from your notes. This technique will help keep you relaxed and build rapport between you and the reporter.
- Use your voice. Remember to change your tone to emphasize your message points. By using inflection, you can make the key ideas stand out.

- Keep your answers brief. The average broadcast sound bite is 10-15 seconds. Stick to your three to five message points and then stop talking.
- For taped stories, ask to do it again if you didn't like your answer. If the interview isn't live and you've fumbled an answer, tell the reporter you think you can do it better if they ask the question again. Reporters want the sharpest sound bite for their story, so they will often give you the chance to answer again.
- Ask for water. If your mouth or throat gets dry, you will be glad it is there during the interview. But be careful. Drinking too much too quickly not only looks sloppy, it could send a message that you are uncomfortable.

Television Interviews

- Wear the right clothes. Women should avoid wearing elaborate jewelry, neon-bright colors or clothing with repeating patterns. Men should not wear white or striped shirts.
- Be aware of your posture. If you are sitting at a desk, keep your arms on the tabletop and do not tap your hands. If you are standing face-to-face with the reporter, keep your feet about shoulder-width apart and your hands at your side. If you are seated, don't swivel in the chair or sway. The most important rule: be natural.
- Never look at the camera. Keep eye contact with the reporter. Looking away or averting your eyes connotes that you are uncomfortable or untrustworthy. There is no need to talk down to the microphone—it will pick up your voice.
- Be careful about nodding your head. Besides the fact that it looks jarring, it implies that you agree with what a reporter may be saying. Also, refrain from waving your arms during an interview. The camera angle is probably not wide enough to capture your movements.
- Remain upbeat. Your compassion and commitment to your program is your best asset. Smile when appropriate. Stay focused and positive.
- Consider wearing make-up or powder on your face. The bright lights of television will make you look paler than you are normally. If you are offered powder, take advantage of it. Avoid looking shiny on television.

- Never frown. Television cameras tend to exaggerate facial expressions. A neutral facial expression can often appear like an angry or sad one.

After the Interview

A small but important way to help build a relationship with a reporter is to send a short thank you note to the reporter who interviewed you and others who may have been involved, like a producer or the media outlet's general manager. Express your gratitude for the interview and offer yourself as a resource to them in the future. If you have ideas for other stories, you could also include them in the note. And don't forget to record your interview experiences in a media log for future use by you and your colleagues.

Unit IV: Press Conference



- **WHAT IS A PRESS CONFERENCE?**

You and your group members have probably seen them on television before or after a major local or national event. On the evening news there's a short television clip of a speaker surrounded by a crowd of reporters asking questions. So, you may know what press conferences look like, in general.

But what exactly is a press conference? A press conference is a tool designed to generate news – in particular, hard news that can advance the cause of your organization. Hard news is defined as a story in the print or electronic media, which is timely, significant, prominent, and relevant.

Imagine a flock of media reporters coming to an event that you have organized. This can be exciting stuff, and an important opportunity for your organization. If you've never done it before, holding a press conference can be intimidating, even frightening.

WHY SHOULD YOU HOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE?

Press releases, interviews, and informal media contacts are excellent ways of getting your message across. They are the bread and butter of your media relations, and often of your entire outreach effort. A press conference is an additional media technique, for special occasions, when you really want to make an impression. More specifically, why hold a press conference? Because:

- You can give more information than in a press release.
- A press conference is interactive; you can answer questions from the press, and emphasize points you might not otherwise have a chance to make.

- You can announce an important development, and explain its significant local and wider implications.
- You can set the record straight if your group received negative publicity.
- You can often generate the kind of notice or publicity – a spot on the 6:00 TV news, for instance – that you'd otherwise have to pay a large amount for.
- When many media representatives are present, it makes your conference seem really newsworthy -- the media presence itself adds to the importance.
- A successful media conference can not only generate news, but can also boost the morale of your own group -- that is, your group can take pride in knowing that the press will really turn out to hear what you have to say.

WHEN SHOULD YOU HOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE?

You and your organization could hold a press conference whenever there is an event your organization wants to inform the community about. However, in some cases, you will want to hold a press conference for fast breaking news. For example, if an education funding bill were introduced in the state legislature, you might want to convene a press conference that same morning to react to the bill's implications. This will leave little time for elaborate preparations--you should just phone the press at a few hours notice.

Remember, you don't want to hold a press conference too often. It is a special event, and should be treated as such. But here are some cases when a press conference might be a good idea:

- When the event includes a prominent individual to whom the media should have access.
- When you have significant announcements to make, such as a campaign start-up or a lobbying victory.
- When there is an emergency or crisis centered around your group or the issues it deals with.
- When a number of groups are participating in an action, and the show of support will emphasize that this action is news.
- When you want to react to a related event; for example, when a national report relevant to your issue is released.

HOW DO YOU HOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE?

BEFORE THE PRESS CONFERENCE:

As we've discussed, you may have to schedule a press conference on short notice. If you do have lead time, however, you and your group will want to start planning at least a week or two before the press conference is to take place. The following steps should help you plan for your press conference:

DEFINE THE MESSAGE

Define the key message(s) that you and your group are trying to get out to the community. Your goal may be to introduce or shed more light on your issue, to announce a new program or event, to react to a news story or to a criticism of or attack on your effort, or to draw attention to an honor or award your effort has earned. Whatever the message, it should be summarized in clear 3-5 key points to the press. If a date, a time, an address or phone number, or other specific information is part of the message – if the purpose of the press conference is to announce an upcoming event, for example – make sure to give it more than once, and to have it displayed prominently in your press kit (see #7 below.) Double- or triple-check any such information to make sure you have it right, both in speech and in print.

SCHEDULE THE DATE AND TIME

You and your group will need to determine a date and time for the press conference, and make sure it doesn't conflict with other press events or media deadlines. One way to find this out is to check with the local media and the wire services, who will know if your press conference conflicts with another. Here are some other tips for scheduling your press conference:

- Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays are the best days for press conferences, as they are considered slower news days. Try to have your press conference on one of these days if at all possible.
- The best time to schedule your press conference is between 10:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m, to ensure maximum coverage by the media. If you schedule it later, you risk missing the afternoon paper or evening news.
- Remember, you are competing with all the other news of the day; so don't be too worried if everyone doesn't show up.

PICK THE SITE.

Make sure you pick a location for the press conference that has adequate parking and is not too far away for reporters to travel. Also, pick a site that provides visual interest and relationship to each topic--such as the state capitol building, city courthouse, or a local clinic or other site where the activities you're talking about are actually going on. Other considerations include picking a location relatively free from high levels of background noise (e.g., traffic, telephones, aircraft), and one which has adequate electrical outlets and extension cords for lighting, etc.

SELECT AND TRAIN YOUR PARTICIPANTS

At this stage of your planning process, you probably won't want to have just anyone from your group participate in the press conference. You will want your participants to be knowledgeable and articulate about the issue. They should be able to handle press questioning and scrutiny as well. People with high credibility, such as local politicians, the director of a local health promotion organization, or a physician may make effective spokespeople. Firsthand testimony from people from the community affected by the issue can be extremely powerful and convincing.

Here are a few tips for participants:

- Be clear and concise – avoid using jargon, rhetoric, or inflammatory language, and stifle "ums" and "ahs." You want to draw attention to the issue, not distract the audience with your words.
- Assume the audience is intelligent – avoid sounding patronizing.
- Don't fiddle with or clutch anything -- it's distracting and makes you appear nervous.
- Appearance counts – participants should be dressed neatly and appropriately for the occasion.
- Always tell the truth. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Don't exaggerate or give figures that aren't backed up by evidence, and don't state opinions as fact, or make charges that can't be proven.

In addition to the press conference participants, you will need to find a moderator who is experienced with the press and the issue. He or she will be in charge of convening the press conference by introducing the issue and participants. The moderator also answers questions or directs them to the appropriate participants.

If you and your group are new at this, you may want to attend at least one other press conference to get a feeling for what they are like. Even if you are very experienced in this area, it may be a good idea to conduct a dress rehearsal. Speakers should have scripts to memorize the 3-5 key points, and to make sure to speak no longer than 3-5 minutes each. A dress rehearsal is very helpful in training new participants, and a good time to try to anticipate tough or hostile questions. Have someone from your group play devil's advocate and see how participants respond.

For example, a suitable response to a tough or misguided question might be, "That's a good question, but it is not within the scope of this press conference. Our focus today is on..." If the question is legitimate but you don't know the answer to it, it's okay to call on someone else from your group who might know, or check out the answer and get back to that reporter later.

CONTACT THE MEDIA

The media aren't things – they're made up of human beings doing their jobs. If you can make human contact with those folks, and especially if you can make their jobs easier, they'll return the favor.

You will also want to have a press advisory prepared and mailed about one week ahead of time to inform the media about the press conference. A press advisory is similar to a press release, with the difference being that press advisories can be used for background information to your media contacts. The format is basically the same as that of a press release.

FOLLOW UP WITH THE MEDIA.

After you and your group have mailed the press advisories to the media, you will want to follow up your press advisory with phone contact to the major media outlets. Give your press advisory three days to arrive, then begin your telephone follow-ups with the people you sent your press advisory to (if they say they never got one, offer to bring or FAX one to them). Also, follow up a second time the morning of the press conference.

DEVELOP A PRESS KIT

A press kit is a folder of information to give reporters background information

about your issue or program. Press kits are very useful, if your group can afford it. If a press kit is beyond your budget, a press advisory will do. Your press kit should contain the following:

- A list of press conference participants.
- A press release, which should state your group's position on the issue, highlights of the press conference, and a few quotes from participants.
- Background information about the issue (i.e., statistics, historical background, case histories, or reprints of news stories).
- A few black & white glossy photographs (action photos are most interesting).
- Short (less than a page) biographies of participants.
- Related news stories from prestigious national publications
- Putting the kit together: The press release goes in the right side of the folder, and the other information goes in the left side of the folder.

PREPARE THE ROOM

There are a number of things you can do to prepare the room you're holding the press conference in. Here are some tips:

- Check the location of electrical outlets for microphones and lights.
- Set up the room with a table long enough to seat all your spokespeople, with name cards.
- Provide enough seating in the room for reporters, and enough room for their supporting equipment (e.g., cameras, microphone).
- Display visuals as a backdrop to your speaker's table: charts, posters, etc.
- Have a sign-in pad for attendance.
- Provide a podium for the moderator, perhaps with your organization's logo on it.
- Have coffee, tea, water, and any other refreshments set up.

At the Press Conference:

When the big day finally arrives, there are a number of things you and your group can do to help your press conference run as smoothly as possible. We will go through these, step by step:

- Welcome members of the press as they arrive.
- Have members of the press sign in, with their affiliation, and give each of them a press kit.
- Seat the press conference participants behind the table facing the seated

reporters.

- Check the sign in pad to see which media outlets are represented. You may also want to make personal contact with major media representatives before or after the press conference.
- Start approximately on time -- no later than 5 minutes after the scheduled time.
- Tape record the event, for your own records, and for possible media use.
- Have the moderator welcome the press, and introduce the issue and participants.
- Each participant should present for no more than 3-5 minutes, making his/her 3-5 key points.
- After all the presentations, the moderator should entertain any questions from the press, and direct questions to the appropriate participants.
- After about 45 minutes, bring the formal conference to an end. Thank the participants for presenting, and the media for attending. In many cases, you may want to encourage the media to stay for further informal conversation with the participants.

After the Press Conference

To the extent that you can, make personal contact with representatives at least of the major media outlets represented. In a small town, this could mean one or two people; in a big city, there might be 20 or more. If you can have a short, pleasant conversation with these folks and make a good impression, they'll remember you when they need information or a story about your issue, and they'll respond when you contact them.

By looking through your attendance register, you should be able to determine which major media were not represented. Not everyone may arrive, as your conference may be preempted by some late breaking news story elsewhere. You may want to hand deliver a press release and press packet to these people, send a tape feed, or, try to schedule an interview with a reporter and one of the press conference participants.

You might also review the press conference with others from your organization that attended. What went well? What could you have done better? And how will you improve the next press conference you hold?

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE

News Release

[DATE]

CONTACT: Name

[PHONE]

E-MAIL ADDRESS]

[LOCAL PROGRAM] Celebrates Community Service with [TYPE OF EVENT] and Highlights Involvement with the Corporation for National and Community Service

[HIGHEST RANKING SPEAKER/PARTICIPANT] participates in [ENTER EVENT] with community members

OR

Local community members join forces with [LOCAL PROGRAM] to [ACCOMPLISH WHAT IN THE CITY]

[CITY, STATE]—To [DESCRIBE REASON FOR HOLDING EVENT], more than [NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS] volunteers from [PROGRAM NAME], a program funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service, have come together today to [DESCRIBE SERVICE EVENT/ACTIVITY].

[HIGHEST RANKING SPEAKER/PARTICIPANT] joined the [EVENT/SERVICE ACTIVITY] on [DATE] to [DESCRIBE INVOLVEMENT]. Other participants included [NAME ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS].

“For [ENTER YEARS IN EXISTENCE] years, [PROGRAM NAME] has helped [LOCAL COMMUNITY] to [DESCRIBE APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES AND HIGHLIGHT ACCOMPLISHMENTS],” said [HIGHEST RANKING SPEAKER/PARTICIPANT]. “Thanks are due to the Corporation for National and Community Service, which funds [LOCAL PROGRAM].”

Across the country, the Corporation for National and Community Service’s participants in Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America have done tremendous good for our nation. They have improved the lives of millions of our most vulnerable citizens by helping children learn to read, caring for the frail elderly, rebuilding communities struck by disasters, transforming failing schools, and revitalizing communities. They have done this both through direct service and by mobilizing millions of additional volunteers.

“[LOCAL PROGRAM] volunteers serve our community with tremendous dedication and enthusiasm,” said [PROGRAM DIRECTOR]. “Without their assistance, we would not be able to provide the services vital to the health and well-being of our community.”

###

[LOCAL PROGRAM BOILERPLATE]

The Corporation for National and Community Service provides opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve their communities and country through three programs: Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America. Together with the USA Freedom Corps, the Corporation is working to build a culture of citizenship, service, and responsibility in America. For more information, visit www.nationalservice.gov.

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

MEDIA ADVISORY

[DATE]

CONTACT: Name

(PHONE)

[E-MAIL ADDRESS]

[LOCAL PROGRAM] Holds [TYPE OF EVENT] to Highlight [YOUR MESSAGE]

[HIGHEST RANKING OFFICIAL/PARTICIPANT] will [DO WHAT AT EVENT] with community members

OR

Local community members join forces with [LOCAL PROGRAM] to [ACCOMPLISH WHAT IN THE CITY]

This [DATE], more than [NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS/MEMBERS/ PARTICIPANTS] from [PROGRAM NAME], a grantee of the Corporation for National and Community Service, will [DESCRIBE SERVICE EVENT].

Since 1994, the Corporation’s Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America programs have engaged millions of Americans of every age and walk of life in volunteer service to meet vital needs in communities throughout the country. [LOCAL PROGRAM] has provided [LIST SERVICES] and engaged more than [X] volunteers in service to the community.

In [STATE/COUNTY/CITY], [LOCAL PROGRAM] will [EXPLAIN YOUR REASON FOR HAVING EVENT – GAIN MORE VOLUNTEERS, MARK A SUCCESS, CELEBRATE SERVICE, ETC.]. Members of the community are invited to attend and participate.

What: [EVENT/SERVICE ACTIVITY] to:

- [DESCRIBE SERVICE EVENT]
- Provide information about [LOCAL PROGRAM] to interested individuals

- Link [LOCAL PROGRAM] to the Corporation for National and Community Service
- Who: [HIGHEST RANKING SPEAKER/PARTICIPANT] • [PROGRAM DIRECTOR]
- [NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS] volunteers from [LOCAL PROGRAM]

Where: [ADDRESS AND DIRECTIONS]

When: [DATE AND TIME]

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE MEDIA SIGN-IN SHEET

Name	Outlet/ Organization	Phone	E-mail

References

http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/Media_Guide.pdf

<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/promoting-interest/press-conference/main>