

How-to: Generate Media Coverage

Goal

Generate media coverage to raise the visibility of your issue among the public and influence your target.

Best Practices

- Always work with your Food & Water Watch contact before conducting media outreach to help you plan and execute your tactics most effectively.
- Use media strategically
 - What sort of coverage will influence your target?
 - How will the coverage you generate fit with your strategy? (See Section 1: Developing Your Strategy)
 - Champion strategy – look for opportunities to generate positive media attention.
 - Pressure strategy – call your target out to get them to do the right thing.
- Follow your local news
 - Read your paper and watch the local news to see what’s being covered.
 - Look for opportunities to connect what’s happening locally to your issue.
- Stick to your message
 - Anything you say or write will be on record. Be sure you focus on the key message you want to send to your target and the public.
 - Whatever you say will be cut down to a sound bite, so make it concise!
- Pick your best spokespeople
 - In order to generate strategic media coverage, make sure your spokespeople are the best messengers to influence your target.

How-to

- 1) Who’s your audience?
 - Before launching any media components of your campaign, think about who you’re trying to appeal to and influence.
 - Power map your target to figure out what they care about and what type of message will influence them (See “Know Your Target: Power Mapping” under Section 1).
 - What messages typically resonate with your community? Is the area conservative or progressive? What are the hot topics that people are talking about?

2) Pick your best message and messengers

- A strong message is key to generating strategic media coverage for your campaign. This means not only the words you communicate, but who communicates them.
 - Decide on your **best message** (See “How-to: Develop Your Message”).
 - It should be the best pitch to influence your audience
 - It should be concise – practice getting your point across in 30 seconds or less.
 - Write out your 5-10 best talking points and memorize them.
 - Decide who your **best messengers** are:
 - Who in your group is the best public speaker?
 - Who (either in your group or not) is going to influence your target?
 - Think about people who represent key constituencies that your target cares about:
 - Farmers, union leaders, business owners, etc.
 - How will you involve them?
 - Write a letter to the editor
 - Speak at a press conference
 - Co-sign on an op-ed
 - Come to an editorial board meeting

3) Brainstorm media tactics

- Letters to the editor (LTEs)
 - Generating LTEs is a great tactic to respond to current news stories that connect to your issue and get the attention of your target. It’s also a great way to involve volunteers in media work because LTEs are typically short and easy to write (See “Exercise: Write a Letter to the Editor”).
- Press conferences
 - Think about holding a press conference if you have something newsworthy to announce. For example, if you’re delivering 1000 petition signatures that your group collected, or if you have 10 partner groups who have joined your coalition. (See “Exercise: Plan a Press Conference”)
- Op-eds
 - Op-eds are longer opinion pieces that are written to influence the public and decision makers, not necessarily in response to another article (as is usually the case when writing LTEs). You can send a more powerful message through your op-ed

- by getting a key grasstop or spokesperson who will help influence your target to co-sign.
- Editorial Board meetings
 - If you're able to meet with the editorial board of your local paper, they might write an editorial in support of your campaign. These meetings should be well planned and include several spokespeople to communicate your message most effectively.
 - Radio/TV interviews
 - Opportunities to conduct an interview on radio or on your local TV news program are a great way to get your point across. Make sure you memorize your key talking points and practice staying on message (See "Training: Staying on Message")
- 4) Incorporate goals for media coverage into your campaign plan
- Set goals for the media realm of your campaign.
 - Letters-to-the Editor submitted and published
 - Media events held and hits generated
 - Editorial board meetings held
 - Op-eds submitted and published
 - Look for opportunities to include media goals in other areas of your plan: e.g. if you're holding an event, decide if it makes sense to reach out to the media and set a goal of how many hits you'll generate.
- 5) Build relationships with members of the media
- You'll have more success working with members of the media if you work on building strong relationships.
 - Find out which reporters cover topics related to your issue and reach out to them to introduce yourself.
 - Be a resource. If they're looking for more information on a particular subject that will help them cover your issue, help them find it.
 - Remember that it's a two-way street. We benefit by getting our issue covered, and reporters benefit when we give them information and newsworthy stories to cover.
- 6) Collect media hits
- Keep good track of your media hits. Print or save press hits and ask if you can have a copy of any radio or TV hits.

- You can deliver media hits to your target to show that your issue is relevant in the community and to help build your case for why they should give you what you want.