

GETTING THE WORD OUT

The more people who know about the power of arts and culture and your AEP6 findings, the stronger your advocacy efforts are for arts and culture funding and arts-friendly policies.

Below are six critical steps to ensure you are maximizing your message. Other optional tactics including a press conference, editorial board meeting, and op-ed are detailed below.

Step 1: Customize the media materials / press release

Step 2: Research and create a media list

Step 3: Draft and distribute your press release, media alert and/or pitch email

Step 4: Follow up

Step 5: Monitor

Step 6: Promote success

Step 1: Customize the Media Materials / Press Release

Whether you have a press conference or not, you still need to write and distribute a press release to announce your AEP6 results. However, getting reporters' attention can be tricky, since so many are strapped for time. Here are some tips to ensuring your press release gets noticed (in a good way):

- **Don't bury the lead:** Again, think of the headline you'd like to see in the paper the next day and tailor your release to fit that message. Pick the few details that you think are the most vital and feature them in your first paragraph (a.k.a. the lede). You can fill in the supporting details later in the release. Here's a helpful way to think about it: Your lede paragraph should call out your lead point or main idea. Think of the who, what, when and where; the rest of the release should address why and how.
- **Make sure your headline is strong:** Headlines should grab reporters' attention and should read like a shorter version of your lede. Also consider packing a few additional details into a subhead. Remember, the goal is not to be witty or artsy. The goal is to get a reporter to spend 60 seconds reading what you have to say.
- **Dot your "i's" and cross your "t's":** Nothing makes you lose credibility with a reporter more than typos, misspellings, bad grammar, and not keeping to Associated Press (AP) Style. These careless errors reduce the credibility of your release, and as a result, journalists are less likely to take what you send them seriously. Always have a second or third set of eyes look your release over before you click send.



- **Personalize it:** If there are some reporters from whom you'd like to score coverage, be sure to do your homework on them before sending them your release. You are working to build a long-term media contact. Read their articles; watch/listen to their broadcasts. And let them know you're doing it. Send them a note complementing their work; they'll remember your name. And if a reporter knows who you are, she/he is far more likely to read what you send her/him.

To help you out, we've created a Swiss cheese press release (releasing the week of September 25th) that you can customize and use to announce your AEP6 findings.

Step 2: Research and Create a Media List

Create a list of reporters to whom you want to send the press release. You will want to target reporters and writers in your city who report about community news, business, arts and culture or human-interest stories. Your list should contain contact information for journalists at local newspapers, magazines, websites, blogs, television, and radio stations.

Make sure to connect with your committee because they likely have media contacts they will want to include on the media list. If a committee member holds personal media relationships, they may want to reach out directly to initiate the conversation. It's critical to work together as a team, so make sure the lead AEP6 media/comms person is included.

- **Newspapers (daily and weekly):** Arts and culture, business and lifestyle editors (where available), and local news reporters who cover your county/community.
- **Online:** Share press materials with any community e-newsletter contacts or digital reporters at traditional media outlets.
- **Television:** Send all press materials to the local TV affiliate's News Desk. Most markets have ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC, or CW affiliate TV stations. The News Desk email address can be found on their websites.
- **Radio:** Producers or newsroom

There are many ways to find contact information for the reporters in your local market, even without having access to an expensive media database. Below are several resources you can use:

- **Your Steering Committee:** Ask your committee first if they are willing to share media lists / contacts. This is a collective effort, and it's always helpful to work with established media contacts.
- **Google:** If you know the name of the reporter you are trying to reach, simply search their name. You may find their LinkedIn profile, X (Twitter) profile, or past published stories with an e-mail address or phone number included.



- **Second follow-up:** If you do not receive a response after your initial follow-up, it is appropriate to make another phone call and/or email to your contact. Take notes on the feedback you receive on your media list so that you can tailor future pitches to their interest/needs. If you do not get a hold of the journalist, it may be time to move on to other leads.
- It's always helpful to share feedback with your committee, especially if the media contact is the most appropriate for your story. Committee members who have experience working with that reporter may want to step in and assist.
- **DO NOT** become discouraged if it does not always work out. It takes time to build new media relationships. By engaging with reporters on a consistent basis, you can become a trusted source for that reporter on a variety of issues.

Step 5: Monitor

Sometimes reporters will run the story without letting you know in advance. One easy way to monitor for local coverage is to set up a Google Alert, which is an automated email alerting you of when your keywords appear online. Make sure you put your keywords in quotations or you will be receiving an email for every time the words appear on a news site. To set up a Google Alert, visit www.google.com/alerts.

If a story does run, it's always nice to send a quick "thank you" email to the reporter and let them know that you're available as a resource for future stories on the impact of arts and culture in your community.

Step 6: Promote Success

What good is a great story if you do not market it and share it? If you are fortunate enough to secure some editorial coverage, please:

- Share it with your internal team and committee, including the local communications and marketing team
- Promote your editorial coverage on your social media platforms
- Add to your local website
- For a big media win, print out and feature in your office

