

Writing a Press Release

Purpose

To write and distribute a press release to publicize community events, projects, and successes.

Overview

Press releases are an effective way to share information about a community's upcoming events, recent awards or successes, or new projects. There are three parts to writing and distributing an informative and compelling press release. The first is deciding who you want to share information with and finding the media that reach those individuals. The second is writing and formatting the release itself. The third is sending the release to the appropriate editors and following up with them.

Steps

Develop Media Contacts

- Decide who you would like to inform about your event or project. Everyone in a town? Everyone in a county? Everyone in the state? Do you want to reach a specific group, such as senior citizens?
- Make a list of all the media outlets that reach the groups that you're interested in. Consider newspapers, magazines, radio stations, television stations, and websites. You might also include the local government, chambers of commerce, local non-profits, clinics, or libraries that have newsletters or websites.
- Cultivate relationships with the people at local media outlets. Small outlets will be much more likely to publish your information than larger ones such as the Albuquerque Journal or Santa Fe New Mexican. Most small town newspapers and radio stations don't have more than a few staff. Often it's a single person. Go to their office and introduce yourself. Learn about the things that they like to publish and think how they align with the work that you're trying to publicize. Leave with the contact information for the specific person to send materials to.



Write Your Press Release

Press releases follow a general format. See Appendix A for an example or find a template that you like online.

- Use or create your group's letterhead. It shouldn't be cluttered with too much information. A logo in the header and contact information in the footer is all it needs. This will help to develop a recognizable brand for your coalition.
- A press release should not be more than a single side of a page.
- Write an attention-grabbing headline. It should be honest, brief, and clear. Think about what the editor will find compelling and original. Sometimes it's easiest to write the headline last, after you've already written the rest of the release.
- Follow the headline with a few lines of basic information – the date, the place of origin, and a line that says something like “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.”
- The body of the press release comes next. Editors will often print or read a press release verbatim, so write the information as you want it to be broadcast.
- Use the first sentence of the body like a subtitle. It should fill in the details of the headline.
- For the rest of the body:
 - Keep sentences and paragraphs short. Paragraphs should not be more than two to four sentences. Consider using bullet points.
 - Write about the project or event – the news – not the sponsoring organization(s). Include one or two sentences about the organization(s) near the end for context.
 - Remember that you're writing for the general public. Not everyone values physical activity or new trails. It's your responsibility to clearly explain why your work matters.
 - Include a direct quote or two.
 - Include a picture, if it helps to illustrate the story.
 - Put the logistical details – the meeting place and time if it's an event – near the end. People will only want these details if you've already gotten them interested in the event.
 - In the last sentence, give the reader a place to go for more information. Include a website and/or the name and contact information for a specific individual.
 - Press releases usually end with “###” centered on the last line. This simply means “the end.”



Sending Your Press Release

- Most editors prefer to receive press releases by email, either in the body of the email, as an attachment, or both. If you're only sending the release to few outlets, you can ask how they'd like you to send it to them.
- If you don't hear back within a few days of sending the release, call to follow up.
- If you included a photo in your press release, send the original file as a separate attachment along with the release. The editor will need it if they decide to publish it.
- Be sure to send your release to the PRC to publicize on the VIVA Connects website.



Lessons From the Field

Nichole Romero and Patricia Walsh, Ramblin' Round Raton (RRR) co-leaders, worked with the VIVA Connects team to write a press release for a Walkability Workshop that they hosted in their community (see Appendix A). Since the workshop was for people that live in or near Raton, they sent the release only to local media. For them, that's the Raton-based radio station KRTN and the nearby Trinidad, CO-based station KCRT and weekly newspaper the World Journal. The World Journal and KCRT both ran a story about the workshop. Walsh was invited to give a live interview on KRTN. Some of the workshop participants came because they heard about it on the radio.

Resources

- [wikiHow: How to Write a Press Release](#)
- [Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs: How to Write a Non-Profit Press Release](#)
- [Nonprofit Tech for Good: 11 Tips for Making Nonprofit Press Releases Social and Shareable](#)



Appendix A



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 21, 2017

Volunteers Needed for Walkability Workshop

Raton, NM—Ramblin' Round Raton (RRR) is seeking volunteers to assess various walking routes in downtown Raton as part of a workshop to enhance and promote walking for both health and transportation.

“The workshop will give everyone a chance to see where we’re at and consider where we’d like to be in terms of walkability,” said Patricia Walsh, an employee of N.M. State Parks and co-leader of RRR.

“Walking and physical activity can address alarming health and mental health issues in Colfax County such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and depression,” added New Mexico Health Department health promotions specialist Nichole Romero, another RRR co-leader.

After a brief overview of best practices for making communities more walkable, workshop participants will divide into small groups to assess several target areas in town. The assessments will last about an hour, after which the small groups will reconvene to discuss their findings and various alternatives for improving conditions. All are welcome - volunteers do not need any specific skills. Please dress appropriately to be outdoors, including comfortable walking shoes.

In early 2017, RRR published a free booklet titled “Walking and Hiking: A guide to places in and near Raton, N.M.” The booklet, which describes 23 trails in the Raton area, was printed with grant funding from the Miners’ Colfax Medical Center Auxiliary and the McCune Charitable Foundation.

The workshop is scheduled for 3-6:30 p.m. on Monday, October 16th at the Center for Sustainable Community, 130 Park Ave. in Raton. Drinks and snacks will be provided by the University of New Mexico’s Prevention Research Center, one of the stakeholders in the RRR walking coalition.

In addition to the UNM Prevention Research Center, RRR coalition members include: N.M. State Parks, N.M. Department of Health, GrowRaton!, Miners’ Colfax Medical Center (MCMC), the National Park Service, City of Raton Parks, and Recreation and Rocky Mountain Physical Therapy.

For more information, contact Patricia Walsh at (575) 445-5607 or Nichole Romero at (575) 445-3601, or visit www.viva-connects.org.

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Questions? Comments?

[Send us a message](#)

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