



Colorado  
**NONPROFIT**  
Association

Serving nonprofits. Strengthening communities.

# Working with the Media Nonprofit Toolkit



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**Special thanks to the South Carolina Association of Nonprofit Organizations (SCANPO). This toolkit was largely based on a tool compiled by SCANPO and was modified with their permission.**

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# Introduction

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Improving media relations and earning news coverage for your organization is critical to raising awareness of your mission. Media coverage of your organization's work and leadership helps establish your credibility in the community, attracts allies, and sways public opinion. Your issue and work can grow from something that only a small staff and board discuss regularly to something that families, other boards, and community leaders begin to address.

Working with the media is an integral part of accomplishing an organization's mission by informing the public and influencing public policy. Good publicity can bolster your organization's membership or volunteer efforts.

Getting good media coverage is often seen as a daunting task, but with some preparation and practice it can be a highly rewarding endeavor. A few keys to success are:

1. Develop a message or a short set of messages that you constantly refer to. Those messages serve as your guide to answering questions from media, prospective donors, legislators, or anyone interested in your organization, its cause and its programs.
2. Identify one key spokesperson to speak for your organization (usually the president, board chair, or communications director). Having one media liaison makes it easier for the media to contact your organization (thus more likely to do so) and helps avoid sending mixed messages.
3. Remember, with a few exceptions, the media are not "out to get you." They are people trying to do their job and report the facts on topics about which they are often not experts. They depend on people who are experts on topics to give them the information they need to compile their stories.
4. Don't forget to celebrate your successes. When you do get good media coverage, keep a copy for your files, share it with your board, if relevant, show it to your donors, clients or legislators. Good media can work FOR you.
5. Reporters and nonprofits hold a special responsibility to the public to voice opinions and act responsibly based on credible information. The role of the nonprofit sector and the free press sustain free and open dialogue which is vital to sustaining a strong democracy.

This toolkit provides useful tips, samples and how-tos to help nonprofit volunteers and professionals work with the media to advocate for your organization and mission. For those who are new to media work, this toolkit provides the basics for getting started. For those who are more experienced, each part of the resource guide can serve as a checklist for your ongoing efforts to keep the public informed through media.

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## What's News?

Knowing what is news is important to improving your media relations. Keep in mind that not all news items will or should generate a story. Sometimes the goal is to get your organization's news listed in media event calendars, people or announcement columns.

**Special Events:** Just having an event does not usually constitute a story; there also needs to be a hook – a unique speaker, award winner, milestone, or information about how your event or program affects the community.

**Services and Programs:** Do you keep track of how many people you serve in a year, month, or decade? Is the demand for your services changing? Is this trend tied to an external situation like the downturn of the economy, a change in demographics, or new legislation?

**Studies:** Does your organization have a study revealing new information about factors impacting your mission? What were the results and how will they affect the community?

**Donors and Volunteers:** All nonprofits benefit from the support of their donors and volunteers. These individuals typically get involved with nonprofits due to strong personal convictions or experiences. Do your donors and volunteers have stories to tell about their lives and why they support your organization?

**Public Policy:** Is there a new bill or regulation being considered that will hurt or help your organization's clients? How will a new federal, state or city budget impact financial resources of organizations such as yours? This type of story can also be an opportunity to educate reporters about nonprofit lobbying rights.

**Fundraising:** Has your organization launched a capital campaign, succeeded with a new fundraising strategy, or seen a change in donation patterns? When your fundraising activities receive coverage, it is important to follow up with the reporter to share the impact and result of your fundraising. Encourage them to write a story about how the money was used.

**Partnerships:** Is your organization entering into a partnership with a business, government agency, or another nonprofit? What brought the groups together? What were the difficulties encountered during the process? What will the benefits of the partnership be to the community?

**Operations:** Has your organization completed a new strategic plan, changed its business practices, or acquired new equipment? How will these changes affect the organization's ability to fulfill its mission? Who will benefit from these changes in operations? Is the organization turning a corner in terms of effectiveness? Is there a market trend such as rising insurance rates or energy costs that is creating a change in your operations?

**Leadership:** Has your organization recently hired a new leader or added new board members? Consider a release about the attributes of these leaders and their aspirations to successfully serve your organization.

**Tragedy:** When unfortunate events occur, nonprofits are often the first to respond. Does your agency provide a service that can help people recover? Does your organization provide a service that has been shown to be successful in preventing this type unfortunate event? Do you have stories to share of how your work led to a quick solution?

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## Tips for Generating Coverage

**Build Relationships:** Working with the media is about building relationships. The media are usually not experts at subjects they cover – they depend on the people they interview and the research they do to provide them the information they need. Establish yourself as an expert in your field by reliably providing good information. If an article is run that you wish you had been interviewed for, contact the reporter and let him/her know that if they need a contact on that topic in the future, he/she can call you. When a good story is run or you are well quoted send a thank you to the reporter responsible.

**Localize Your Story:** How does your story or information relate to the community you are addressing. If you have a release you are sending out statewide, are there quotes from local people or statistics from different areas that you can include to make it relevant to different areas of the state?

**Know Your Audience:** Who is the audience of the publication you are approaching, i.e. retirees, young adults, women, Latinos, etc.? Avoid using excessively big words; write at around an 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level.

**Tie to Current Events:** Pay attention to events the media in your community, across the country and around the world. If the media are closely covering stories about an issue that is related to your mission or programs, send a press release about your organization and how it is related to the issue, or call the media covering the story and offer to serve as a local resource on the issue.

**Avoid Jargon and Acronyms:** Nonprofits are notorious for jargon and acronyms. Keep your message easily readable by avoiding terms and acronyms that not everyone knows. You and your friends know what a term means, but don't take for granted that others will also. If there is any doubt, either find another word or briefly define its meaning.

**Build on Success:** If you have had success with a story, you can strategically use that success to spin more coverage. If you got coverage about a program you have initiated, you may be able to follow up with the same media outlet, or another one, about future developments in that program.

**Use Media Wisely:** It is good to generate media coverage on a regular basis; but it is not good to overwhelm the media. Sending regular press releases is good, but don't send them so frequently that people get sick of them and quit reading them. Take advantage of media opportunities in addition to press releases. Many news outlets now have online forms you can fill out to list events in calendars – some won't even take calendar announcements submitted any other way.

**Distributing Releases:** Some media still prefer to receive releases as faxes, some even prefer mail, but many, especially in print media, prefer to receive releases via email. If you are sending a press release via email, be sure to use a catchy subject (use your title for ideas) and paste the text of the release in the body of the email NOT AS AN ATTACHMENT. You want the reporter to open the release, quickly be able to determine what it is about, and want to read more. See the "Creating an Effective Press List" section for more tips on distribution.

# Establishing Your Message

Contacting the media is not about just getting your name printed, your voice aired, or yourself filmed. It is about presenting a message, an opinion, or a fact that you think will make a difference in how people think about your cause. Media relations efforts need to begin with clearly articulated statements. Your answers to the five Ws are essential to defining your story.

## The Five W's

1. Who are you? Who do you represent? This should be a concise organization description.
2. What is the news you want reported? When answering this question think carefully about what you want this story to accomplish. Are you inviting people to an event, are you communicating an important fact, or are you stating a position on an issue?
3. When will the event occur?
4. Where will the event occur?
5. Why is this news report important? Why should others care about what you are doing?

## How to Establish Your Message (Sample)

You can use this grid to help craft your messages.

1. Who	The Colorado Nonprofit Association is a statewide nonprofit membership organization dedicated to making Colorado a better place for people to live by fostering an environment that supports nonprofits.
2. What is your news?	State Representative Mark Larson will join the Colorado Nonprofit Association to present a Town Hall discussion about Referenda C & D to local nonprofit leaders.
3. If an event, when will it occur?	June 28, 2005, 12:00 pm-5:00 pm
4. If an event, where will it occur?	First National Bank of Durango, 259 W. 9th St Durango, CO
5. Why is your news relevant?	Most Coloradans are involved with or impacted by nonprofits at various levels. These referenda will help restore vital funding to the programs (including those that support or partner with nonprofits) that make Colorado a great place to live.
6. What is significant about your project, work or event? Elaborate on question #5.	Nonprofits are gathering across the state to learn more about and discuss support for the bi-partisan plan to help the state's economy recover and begin again to fund vital programs that make Colorado a great place to live.
7. Why is your project, work or event important to your clients? Elaborate on question #2.	Nonprofit organizations and their constituents have been hit particularly hard by the \$1 billion cut from the state budget over the last three years. Many programs partnering with or funding nonprofit service providers have been cut – raising the demand for nonprofit services and increasing the competition for limited foundation and individual financial support.
8. What kind of change can be expected from your project, work or event?	Nonprofit organizations will be incredibly important in educating voters about Referenda C&D and in getting out the vote in November.

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## How to Establish Your Message (Template)

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<b>1. Who</b>	
<b>2. What is your news?</b>	
<b>3. If an event, when will it occur?</b>	
<b>4. If an event, where will it occur?</b>	
<b>5. Why is your news relevant?</b>	
<b>6. What is significant about your project, work or event? Elaborate on question #5.</b>	
<b>7. Why is your project, work or event important to your clients? Elaborate on question #2.</b>	
<b>8. What kind of change can be expected from your project, work or event?</b>	

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# How to Write an Effective Press Release

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1. A press release is brief and highlights an important event, decision, or piece of information. The first paragraph of a press release should include who, what, when, where, why and sometimes how. Make verbs active and the subject concrete, for example. Cover the most important facts first and follow with details.
2. Give your press release a catchy title, e.g., “Nonprofit hails ban on assault weapons.” Write the heading as if it were the headline you’d like to read in the paper. Write a first sentence that makes it tough to stop reading.
3. Be sure to include a contact name and telephone number on the top right corner. List a number that will be answered by a live person – even if that includes cell, home and work numbers.
4. Don’t forget to include the date of your release on the upper left corner of your release. Write “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Month day, year.”
5. Include a quote from your spokesperson. Be sure to use his/her title and the full name of the organization. Sentences in quotes should be short and to the point. It is a good idea to alert your spokesperson about the release and their quote so they are not caught off guard.
6. Write in the third person. Using the first person will make your release more like promotional material than news.
7. Follow AP Style. The AP Stylebook is a guide to usage, spelling and punctuation, and a reference for terms and topics commonly encountered in journalism. Some examples of AP style: Always spell out “percent;” for a specific date, abbreviate the month, but spell out when using alone or with a year alone. Never abbreviate March, April, May, June or July. For a copy or online subscription visit: [www.apbookstore.com](http://www.apbookstore.com)
8. At the bottom of page one write “more” if necessary, otherwise write “end” or use the symbol “###” centered below the text.
9. Limit your release to one or two page. Reporters hate getting long faxes/e-mails. If you need to include more information and facts, send your release by mail.
10. If a major event warrants an immediate and more lengthy response from your organization than a press release, write a one-page statement from your president. Use the title: “Statement by (president), President of the (nonprofit).”
11. Proof everything at least twice. If your press release looks disorganized and is badly written, the nonprofit’s image will suffer. Conversely, if the release is well written, the paper may print it verbatim.
12. Never editorialize in press releases. For example, do not write that a speaker is gifted. Keep opinions and judgments within the quotes.
13. After sending your release, make follow-up calls to specific reporters, making sure they received your release.

# Press Release Template

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print on letterhead

		Organization
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Month day, Year or NEWS RELEASE (if not timely)	CONTACT:	Name, Title Phone Email

## Headline – One or two lines that capture the essence of what you want to say

Subhead – A line of support or another level of intrigue.

City, State (Date) – One (maybe two) sentences that summarize the whole story. If the reader gets no further, they will know what this story is about. In general, attribute something happening to someone: “Such and such happened,” according to Sally Jones, Queen of The World, Inc. This first paragraph may be repetitive of the first headline.

“Follow up with a quote as soon as possible,” Jones said. If the quote is attributed to the same person introduced in the first paragraph, just use their last name and don’t repeat the title.

Support what you said in the first paragraphs with more about why this article is relevant and any facts to back it up and make the point stronger.

If the release goes to a second page, make that known by...

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## Headline summary

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Date

Page 2

At this point in the release, support information can be given in bullet form if that makes it easier to read at a glance.

A news release should never be any longer than two pages. If it is, you can:

- Make sure everything in the release is relevant and important. Otherwise, cut out the fat.
- Take some of the support information you feel is important and include it in a second piece, like a fact sheet or by-the-numbers sheet.

### Photo Opportunity

If there is a photo opportunity with this story, make it known.

Boilerplate – Short paragraph that includes information about your organization (when it was founded, what it does, hours of operation, contact information again, web site.) It is something that should be included on and the same in every release you do.

About The World, Inc.

The World, Inc.'s mission is to.... Major projects include blah, blah and blah. The World, Inc is located at 1111 Main Street, Some Town, CO 80030. The Phone number is 303-555-5555 or toll free 800-555-5555. The Web address is [www.-----.org](http://www.-----.org).

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Let the reader know the release is over by...

###END###

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# Sample Press Release

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## Colorado Nonprofit Association

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 30, 2004

Charley Shimanski, President and CEO  
(303) 832-5710 office  
(303) ###-#### cell  
(303) ###-#### pager  
(303) ###-#### home  
[cshimanski@ColoradoNonprofits.org](mailto:cshimanski@ColoradoNonprofits.org)

## Colorado Nonprofits Respond to Asian Tsunami Disaster

When natural disasters strike, it is human nature to reach out to help. Whether as the result of a destructive tornado or large wildfire, Coloradans know firsthand the importance of relief agencies. Now, Colorado's many relief agencies are reaching out to provide desperately needed aid to the victims of the disastrous tsunami in Southeast Asia. Joining charitable organizations from around the world, these Colorado nonprofits are providing funds, food, medical services, shelter and other important services for the victims and their families.

For example, the Denver chapter of the American Red Cross is accepting donations to support efforts by International Red Cross disaster experts as well as the volunteers who are mobilizing teams to move into the affected areas for relief operations. To donate, visit [www.denver-redcross.org](http://www.denver-redcross.org) (or call 1-800-HELPNOW). 100 percent of donations designated for the International Response Fund - Asia Tsunami will go to help those affected by this disaster. Remember to specify that your donation is for the International Response Fund.

Asia Transpacific Foundation, a nonprofit foundation funded by the for-profit travel company Asian Transpacific Journeys, lists information about damage incurred by specific regions on their website, [www.asiatranspacific.com](http://www.asiatranspacific.com). They are also accepting tax deductible donations, 100 percent of which will go directly to aid tsunami victims, providing life-giving food, water and medical supplies. Please send donations to: Asia Transpacific Foundation, Attn: Tsunami Relief, 2995 Center Green Court, Boulder, CO 80301.

Other charities are assisting through variations on their regular operations. Julie Shaw, Executive Director of the Urgent Action Fund, a nonprofit that provides grants to women's human rights groups around the world, said, "Our organization is currently trying to find and, if possible, contact previous grantees, some of whom have called us, others we know are dead, and still more are missing." The fund yesterday awarded a grant to a Sri Lankan agency which they have supported in order to help with local relief efforts. They foresee awarding at least one more grant to another human rights agency later this week.

Another nonprofit that quickly responded to the disaster is the First Data Western Union Foundation which donated \$1 million to International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to support victims in

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the Asian countries most impacted by the earthquake and tsunamis. Individuals in the U.S. and Canada who would like to make donations to support disaster relief efforts can visit a Western Union agent location and transfer money directly to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies ([www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)) free of charge.

Nearly 17,000 nonprofits operate in Colorado every day, many of them dealing with disasters on a regular basis. In the face of individual disasters stemming from domestic violence or homelessness, community disasters created by wildfires or blizzards, or international catastrophes on the scale of this week's tsunamis, nonprofits serve as the conduits for aid. Coloradans can support the charities they count on by volunteering and sending donations.

For more information about Colorado's nonprofit sector or for a list of Colorado nonprofit organizations, please contact the Colorado Association of Nonprofit Organizations by visiting [www.ColoradoNonprofits.org](http://www.ColoradoNonprofits.org).

#### About the Colorado Nonprofit Association

Founded in 1986, the Colorado Nonprofit Association is a statewide nonprofit membership organization dedicated to making Colorado a better place for people to live by fostering an environment that supports nonprofits. We lead the nonprofit sector in influencing public policy and public opinion. We serve our members with networking tools, communications, and administrative support. And we strengthen the nonprofit community with trainings, issue discussions, and communications to the public the benefits of supporting nonprofits. For more information, please visit [www.ColoradoNonprofits.org](http://www.ColoradoNonprofits.org) or call (303) 832-5710/(800) 333-6554.

### END ###

For more information about the nonprofits listed in this story, please contact:

Asia Transpacific Foundation, Marilyn Staff, President at (303) ###-####

American Red Cross, Mile High Chapter, Robert Thompson, Director of Communications, (303) ###-####

First Data Western Union Foundation, Ellen Brown, Senior Program Director, Europe, Middle East, Africa & South Asia, (303) ###-####

Urgent Action Fund, Julie Shaw, Executive Director, (303) ###-####

# How to Write a Media Advisory

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1. A media advisory functions as an FYI that alerts journalists to an upcoming event. It gives the basic information: who, what, when and where.
2. A media advisory “what” is much like a news release headline. Clearly state the news here with a short description of the event and the issue.
3. List the speakers at your event. Explain who will speak and what they will discuss.
4. Tell when the event will take place. Include the date and time.
5. A media advisory “where” provides the location name and address. Directions may be necessary if the event is held in an obscure location.
6. The contact should be the person who will speak to the media or facilitate interviews. This person must be easily accessible. Place the contact information in the top right corner of your media advisory.
7. In the top left corner, type “Media Advisory.” Beneath that, type the date.
8. Include a short summary of your organization in the last paragraph.
9. Mention “Photo Opportunity” if one exists and be sure to send it to the photo editors of local news outlets as well as to reporters – they don’t always share information with each other!
10. Type “###” at the end of your advisory. A media advisory should never be more than one page.
11. A media advisory should arrive 3 to 5 working days before the event. Fax or mail (if time permits) your advisory to the appropriate reporter, editor or producer at each news outlet on your press list.
12. ALWAYS make follow up calls the day before your event and have the advisory ready to be faxed or emailed.

# Sample Media Advisory

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## Colorado Nonprofit Association

For Immediate Release: June 10, 2005

Charley Shimanski, President and CEO  
(303) 832-5710 office  
(303) ###-#### cell  
(303) ###-#### pager  
(303) ###-#### home  
[cshimanski@ColoradoNonprofits.org](mailto:cshimanski@ColoradoNonprofits.org)

## MEDIA ADVISORY

**Who:** Colorado Nonprofit Association

**What:** State Representative Mark Larson will join the Colorado Nonprofit Association to present a Town Hall discussion about Referenda C & D to local nonprofit leaders.

Nonprofit organizations and their constituents have been hit particularly hard by the \$1 billion cut from the state budget over the last three years. Many programs partnering with or funding nonprofit service providers have been cut – raising the demand for nonprofits services and increasing the competition for limited foundation and individual financial support. Nonprofits are gathering across the state to learn more about and discuss support for the bi-partisan plan to help the state’s economy recover and begin again to fund vital programs that make Colorado a great place to live.

**When:** June 28, 2005, 12:00 pm-5:00 pm

**Where:** First National Bank of Durango, 259 W. 9th St Durango, CO

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### About the Colorado Nonprofit Association

Founded in 1986, the Colorado Nonprofit Association is a statewide nonprofit membership organization dedicated to making Colorado a better place for people to live by fostering an environment that supports nonprofits. We lead the nonprofit sector in influencing public policy and public opinion. We serve our members with networking tools, communications, and administrative support. And we strengthen the nonprofit community with trainings, issue discussions, and communications to the public the benefits of supporting nonprofits. For more information, please visit [www.ColoradoNonprofits.org](http://www.ColoradoNonprofits.org) or call (303) 832-5710/(800) 333-6554.

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# Who Does What

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With individual variations, almost every newspaper and magazine, radio and television station has the following sort of editorial lineup. Use it as your guide to “pitching” your idea.

## DAILY NEWSPAPERS

- Editor, managing editor or executive editor. Determines overall editorial stance of the newspaper (in conjunction with editorial page personnel) and the general thrust of news gathering.
- Metropolitan or city editor. Makes day-to-day decisions on what to cover and who will do it. Can refer you to the reporter who covers your beat.
- Editorial page editor. Writes some or all editorials. Supervises any other editorial writers and those responsible for selecting op-ed pieces and letters to the editor.
- Sunday editor. Assigns and oversees feature articles and other soft news in the Sunday paper, including sections on art, entertainment, lifestyle, nature, outdoors, sports, and travel.
- Feature editor. Assigns and often writes human interest stories.
- Lifestyle editor. A good prospect for stories on people in your organization who are doing interesting things.
- Columnist. These tend to be generalists. Most have special interests as well, such as the environment, politics, or the arts.
- Beat reporter. Specializes in a particular field, such as energy, education, labor, medicine, religion or government.
- Feature writer. Specializes in stories about people (human interest stories).
- Correspondent/stringer. Covers a region in the outlying circulation area of a newspaper.

## WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS

- Editor. In addition to traditional duties, usually writes editorials, some stories, and maybe a column.
- Correspondent. Reports on your town or region.
- Columnist. May also be the editor.

## TELEVISION AND RADIO

- Executive producer. In charge of a particular program or series of programs.
- Producer. Responsible for certain segments of a news program or a specific program in a series.
- News director. Responsible for overall tone and content of news programs and, at smaller stations, assigns crews to stories.
- Assignment editor. At larger stations makes day-to-day decisions on what to cover and who to send.
- Station manager. At smaller stations sets policy on news coverage and supervises overall operation.
- Program director. May determine content and select participants of talk shows (or you can deal directly with the talk show host.)
- Public affairs director. In charge of public service announcements (free commercials) that you provide, usually aired during off hours.

# Creating an Effective Press List

1. Include major newspapers in your area. Consider the media source's audience(s). Make sure that your media list includes all of the audiences you are trying to reach, i.e. local audiences, statewide audiences, young people, retirees, different ethnic communities. Remember, your target audience may change depending on the nature of the releases you distribute).
2. Get a list of state and local specialty publications/magazines that might be interested in your project.
3. Monitor your media relevant to your organization and keep an updated list of reporters covering your issues. Look for bylines and add them to your press list. Update your press list on a regular basis.
4. Include television and radio stations with news and current event talk shows. For broadcast news shows, send a release to the specific reporter covering your issue, or to the senior producer for smaller stations. For talk shows, send to the producer. Target drive time – early morning shows or late afternoon/rush-hour radio shows.
5. Check to see if you have a local wire-service bureau in your area that would help distribute releases. A couple large wire services include PR Newswire, [www.prnewswire.com](http://www.prnewswire.com), and Business Wire, [home.businesswire.com](http://home.businesswire.com).
6. Include relevant university newspapers, church bulletins and nonprofit newsletters.
7. Be sure to send your press release to the newswire daybooks. Both Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI) have daybooks, which are wire printout listings of times and locations of each day's press events. Send your press release at least two days in advance. Make a follow-up call to ensure it will be listed.
8. Send notice of all events to newspaper community calendars.
9. Verify that you have proper contact names (e.g., assignment editor, health care reporter, community/lifestyle reporter and editorial writer). Obtain correct spelling of names, telephone numbers, email addresses, fax numbers and addresses for background mailings. Media professionals like receiving information in various formats. While many now prefer receiving press releases via email, others still prefer fax or mail. Be sure to note in your press list the best way to contact them.
10. Find media contacts searching the web for "Colorado media" or asking nonprofits with similar missions to share their lists. You could also look in Broadcasting Yearbook, Editor and Publisher Yearbook, PBI Media Services or Bacon's at the library.

## Helpful information to have in your media contact list

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Company  | 7. Website                                   |
| 2. Contact name, title                            | 8. Contact preference (email/fax)            |
| 3. Type of contact (calendar, society, columnist) | 9. Media category (TV/Radio/etc.)            |
| 4. Address  | 10. Language (English/Spanish/etc.)          |
| 5. Phone  | 11. Distribution/Reach (City/State/National) |
| 6. Fax  | 12. Focus (general/business/youth/etc.)      |
| 7. Email  | 13. Audience (age/gender/etc.)               |

## Preparing for a Editorial Board Meeting

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1. The purpose of an editorial board meetings is to establish a good relationship with your local and state newspapers. They might not agree with all of your positions, but they should know who you are and respect your work.
2. Another important goal of editorial board meetings is to encourage the newspaper to write an editorial in support of an issue or campaign. The editorial board also could decide to publish a Q&A based on their discussion with you at the meeting.
3. Call the senior editorial writer at your state or local newspaper a week to ten days in advance. Tell her/him that you would like to talk with the editorial board to discuss your group's issue priorities, project or campaign. Time the meeting around your project or key action in the Legislature.
4. If the editor is not keen on an editorial board meeting, suggest that you send her/him a press packet on the issues or event that you would like to discuss and make a follow-up call. Get the editorial writer's direct phone number, fax number and mailing address. If the paper is small, suggest a meeting with the paper's publisher or editor, or an informal get-together over coffee or lunch.
5. Find out what positions the newspaper's editorial board has taken on your organization's issues. Get copies of those editorials from the newspaper's librarian. Read them carefully before the meeting.
6. Before the meeting, arm yourself with useful facts and figures. Don't be intimidated. They want to hear what you have to say.
7. Limit the number of people you bring to the editorial board meeting to two or three.
8. Reconfirm the meeting one day before. Send your nonprofit's president with your project manager or issue expert. Be sure to leave your business cards, with contact phone numbers.
9. Prepare an agenda for the meeting. List the points or issues you would like to cover. Distribute the agenda and fact sheets on your group's campaign or issues at the beginning of the meeting. Explain why you are there and why your issue or campaign is important. Invite questions from editorial board members during your presentation.
10. Make a follow-up call after the meeting to find out if the paper plans to run an editorial. Be sure to get a copy if it does. If the paper runs a negative editorial, ask for space to place an opinion editorial, or op-ed, stating your position.

# How to Write and Submit a Letter to the Editor

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1. The letters-to-the-editor section is one of the most widely read sections of any newspaper. Letters to the editor are usually written in response to an article or editorial published earlier in the newspaper.
2. If you see an article or opinion piece that presents a position that is opposite your group's, write a letter to the editor disagreeing with the article and stating your organization's position. If you don't disagree but have a different perspective, that too can be the basis of a letter to the editor.
3. Call the newspaper and ask to speak to the "letters-to-the-editor" department. Ask how long the letter should be. Find out the name, fax number and mailing address of the person you should send it to.
4. In the first paragraph of your letter, refer promptly to the article or position that you are writing about. Name the reporter who wrote the article and the date and the title of the article. State why you disagree and proceed to give your group's position on that particular issue. Short and pitchy is better than long and rambling.
5. Send with a cover letter addressed to the appropriate editor. Attach your business card. Be sure to sign the letter with your name, title and the name of your organization.

# How to Write and Submit an Op-Ed

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1. Opinion-Editorials, also referred to as Op-Eds, is an opinion piece a publication's reader writes and submits to a newspaper or magazine on a topic relevant to the publication's audience.
2. Learn the name of the newspaper's op-ed page editor and the length specifications for op-eds and the address or fax number. Most are 700-800 words long, so you need to be succinct in your writing.
3. Monitor your paper's op-ed page to see what kind of op-eds it publishes. If the paper recently ran a piece on a position that your nonprofit disagrees with, you might have a better chance of getting your organization's position in print.
4. There should be a compelling hook to generate interest in the op-ed and demonstrate its relevance to the readers and the community. Give it a strong local angle. The reader needs to be able to relate quickly and easily to your story.
5. Decide what message you want to convey. Write it in a brief sentence. Decide the key arguments supporting your message and develop each in turn.
6. Have an opinion and state it forcefully. Make your case from the top down. Begin with the premise of your opinion and then back up your opinion with facts. Don't present facts first and save your opinion for the conclusion.
7. Print your op-ed on your organization's letterhead and sign your name and title.
8. Send your op-ed with a cover letter and background information on your nonprofit to the op-ed editor. Include your business card with both home and work numbers. Make a follow-up call a day or two after the editor has received your op-ed. Ask if the paper intends to print it. If so, find out when. Get a copy.

**Op-ed Questions** — Prior to writing an op-ed, answer the following list of questions to ensure that you make the necessary points for an effective piece.

- What is the problem in the community that your organization is solving?
- How does your organization help to solve this problem?
- Describe your organization. How does it work?
- Why wasn't the problem solved before? What was the obstacle?
- Is there a villain in the story?
- What is the cost of the solution you propose?
- How can you "paint a picture" in someone's mind through your words?
- Which community leaders, groups or people in the community agree with you? Why?
- Which community leaders, groups or people in the community disagree with you? Why?
- What is the urgency?
- Who does this affect?
- What is the history of this story? What has been done before? What was the process to get to this point? Was there a cliffhanger or suspenseful event?

# Nonprofits Contribute Significantly to Colorado's Quality of Life

Colorado is lucky to have the wealth of services its 17,000 charitable nonprofit organizations provide. Nonprofits dramatically improve Coloradans' quality of life and significantly add to the state's economy. From March 7-11, business and community leaders and elected officials will join nonprofit staff and volunteers to celebrate the tremendous contributions of this vital sector.

Not only do nonprofits generate roughly \$13.5 billion dollars in direct revenue each year, they also create jobs for thousands of Coloradans and indirectly generate billions of dollars more for the state's economy by encouraging tourists and employers to come to Colorado.

Quality of Colorado life is further enhanced each year through the myriad ways that nonprofits address social and community issues. Each year in Colorado roughly 1,500 children are adopted into loving families thanks to the efforts of nonprofit adoption agencies. Homeless shelters continue to see increasing demands for their services including nearly 40% of those needing aid who are homeless for the first time. Agencies focusing on animals help tens of thousands of wild and domesticated animals receive care and find homes. The list of services could go on and on.

Across the state, some nonprofits help protect nearly one million acres of Colorado land, while other groups work to ensure that Coloradans and tourists alike can continue to enjoy our outdoor resources by creating safe trails, maintaining recreation areas and providing educational resources about Colorado's wilderness.

Other nonprofits entertain locals and visitors through incredible arts and cultural events. In the Denver area alone, over 11 million people attended cultural activities, generating \$1.3 billion in economic activity in 2003 based on the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District's recent data.

Consider a typical week and how many nonprofits touch the lives of you and your loved ones. As individuals and as a community, we depend on the services nonprofits provide us.

Governor Owens proclaimed March 7-11, 2005 Colorado Nonprofit Week, and I hope you will join me and the Colorado Nonprofit Association in celebrating the vast contributions of nonprofits in our community. It is easy to support nonprofits by donating money or goods. To learn how to get involved by volunteering with a nonprofit, visit [www.ColoradoNonprofits.org](http://www.ColoradoNonprofits.org). Celebrate nonprofits by taking advantage of what they offer – treat yourself to a cultural event or a hike on a favorite trail.

Sincerely,

Charley Shimanski, President and CEO  
Colorado Nonprofit Association

# How to Respond to Questions from the Media

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If you do an excellent job submitting your story, reporters will be interested in learning more. Here is how you effectively answer their questions.

1. When a reporter contacts you, reply back immediately. Be prepared to ask them:
  - What is your deadline?
  - What questions do you have?
  - Who else have you contacted?
2. Know your message.
  - It is important that everyone in your group is clear about the message being conveyed. Have your message points written out and practice saying them before being interviewed.
  - Your message is where your expertise lies.
3. Your response to any question should tie back into your message.
4. If you know that an issue has come up where you might get calls from the media, prepare yourself by making up questions that the media will most likely ask and answering them in ways that tie back to your organization's message.
5. If you have initiated an interview with a member of the media, provide the interviewer with a fact sheet including information you would like to share and even suggestions of questions he or she could ask. The interviewer might not stick to what you gave them, but providing them information in the beginning will increase your chances of being able to cover the information you want to cover. Generally, the interviewer will appreciate your time preparing for the interview.
6. If you are able to schedule an interview, prepare yourself through role-play.
  - Make up some questions that you would expect a reporter to ask.
  - Answer those questions and familiarize yourself with them. Do not forget to tie in your message.
  - Have a partner repeatedly ask you those questions so you can practice answering and better prepare yourself for the interview.
7. Do not be afraid to say you do not know.
  - If you are unable to answer a reporter's question, refer him/her to someone who can, or offer to research the question and get back to him/her. If you take the second approach, be sure to follow up quickly.
  - If you realize you stated an incorrect fact or misstated your thoughts, immediately let the reporter know.
8. Provide any information that you may have for an upcoming story.
  - Reporters appreciate the gesture and this helps to build connections with media outlets.
  - Building rapport with a reporter will give you a better opportunity to frame your story for the public.

# How to Write and Deliver a Successful Speech

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1. Find out in advance who your audience will be and what type of event you are speaking at - what kind of group you will be addressing, what the group may want you to talk about, if they will want to ask questions after your speech, and how many are expected to attend.
2. Try not to speak longer than 15 to 20 minutes, if possible. Audiences are used to the fast pace of TV programming and tend to have very short attention spans.
3. Wear comfortable, professional clothes. Solid colors are good, especially if you get TV coverage; loud, clashing colors and prints “jump around” on TV. Avoid large, clanking jewelry; podium microphones pick up the “jingling” sounds. Bring copies (10) of your speech for your host and for the media.
4. Decide what message you want to convey. Write it in a brief sentence. Decide the key arguments of your message. Include short anecdotes, one or two short paragraphs, to illustrate your points.
5. If you think your audience will be likely to disagree with your point of view, list the potential significant objections and write a strong two-sentence rebuttal to each one. Then turn the rebuttal around and make it into a positive, factual statement.
6. Make sure your “message sentence” is at the top of the speech, and use the second paragraph of your speech to expand your sentence. Keep it short. If your speech is covered by the media, you must have your most important points at the beginning of the speech. Most media have to leave early to catch deadlines and other events.
7. Your last paragraph should be a strong finish. Never say “in conclusion” or “to sum up” or anything predictable. It can be appropriate to pause and say “thank you” at the conclusion of the speech.
8. Decide if you will speak from note cards or from paper at the podium. Leave lots of white space in your final copy; don’t cram the pages from top to bottom. Double-space your lines for easier reading.
9. Practice reading your speech aloud and time it for length. Pitching your voice lower and enunciating makes for better projection. Make sure it has plenty of short sentences and active verbs, and that you can read it easily without stumbling or running out of breath.
10. Save your speech for future use. If you have the chance to use it (or part of it) for a different audience, it will save a lot of time. But rework the speech for a new audience. Even politicians particularize their stump speeches for each event.
11. Now that you have researched, written and given a great speech, use it for other purposes. Publish it in your organization’s bulletin or shorten it and submit it as an op-ed to your local newspaper.

# Preparing for and Giving Great Interviews

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1. Never go to a media interview without reading the morning's newspapers. You should be very well informed.
2. Be sure to watch or listen to the program or host that will be interviewing you before you appear. Get to know the style and format of the show.
3. In some cases, it is good to send some questions for the reporter to ask you or preparatory fact sheets to the reporter prior to the interview. This will make it easier for the reporter to interview you and help you make a good impression by being well prepared.
4. Focus on no more than two or three major points to make during the interview. For each point, be sure to have two or three good facts to back it up. Don't let the reporter's questions get you off track. Keep coming back to your major points. Don't forget the reason you are there.
5. Listen carefully to the reporter's questions. Always answer by coming back to the main points you want to make. Never answer with a simple yes or no. Never say "no comment." It makes you sound guilty. The easier you make it on the reporter, the more likely she/he is to have you back.
6. Maintain good eye contact with reporters. Speak clearly and distinctly in a normal conversational tone. In TV interviews, ignore the camera.
7. Don't use technical jargon or acronyms. Be friendly. Avoid long sentences. Remember, you want to be quoted.
8. Never get upset or lose your temper with a reporter. You want the media on your side. Maintain a sense of humor. If the reporter is antagonistic, use your charm. Keep cool.
9. Remember, you represent your organization. Don't give personal opinions that might compromise your group. Never go "off the record." And never make partisan statements – even if prodded – or your quote could end up as a headline in tomorrow's paper.
10. You have a serious message to deliver. Don't wear clothes that are too flashy. Stripes, checks and white are not good on TV. Don't wear dangling jewelry. Don't fiddle on camera. Assume microphones are on at all times. Assume you are on camera until they tell you that you're not.
11. Remember, you know more about your issue than the reporter. You've got the upper hand! If the reporter wants facts and figures you don't have – tell her/him that you'll find out the information and go back to making your important points. If you are not sure about a fact or figure, don't use it! You want the media to rely on you as a reliable source of nonpartisan facts.
12. If possible, try to obtain a tape of your performance. Review it. Get a friend to critique it. Correct your mistakes in the next interview.

# Checklist for Press Conferences

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## One week before your press conference:

1. Arrange for a room that is not so large that it will look empty if attendance is light. Sites may include hotels, local press clubs or public buildings near media offices.
2. Check on:
  - Podium – stand alone
  - Speaker system – if needed
  - Microphone stand – on podium
  - Backdrop – blue if possible
  - Chairs – theatre style, large center aisle
  - Easels – if needed
  - Electricity – outlets for TV lights
  - Table – for media sign-up and materials
  - Water – for participants
3. Pick a convenient date and time. Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday is best. Try not to schedule before 10:00 am or after 2:00 pm.
4. Send out written announcements by fax, email, mail or hand deliver to:
  - Editors
  - Assignment desks
  - Reporters
  - AP daybooks
  - Weekly calendars
5. Prepare written materials, including written statements and press kits.

## The day before:

- Formalize the order of speakers and who will say what
- Call all prospective media and urge their attendance
- Double check the wire service daybooks
- Collate materials and make extras for follow-up
- Walk through the site and review details
- Type up names and titles of spokespeople for media hand-out

## That morning:

- Make last-minute calls to assignment desks and desk editors
- Double check the room several hours before
- Walk through the press conference with principal speakers

## During the press conference:

- Have a sign-in sheet for reporters' names and addresses
- Give out press kits
- Hand out a written list of participants
- Make opening introductions
- Arrange one-on-one interviews if requested

# Checklist for Press Kits

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It is not necessary to send a press kit every time you have information to share. A press kit is a useful tool for introducing your organization to a member of the media. It can also be helpful if you are announcing a major project or event. Keep in mind that reporters are inundated with information about potential stories. If you send them too much information, they may not have time to read it.

- Cover memo or press release with contact name and phone number
- Fact sheets on the issue
- History of the issue
- Quotes or comments by experts
- Selected press clippings
- State-by-state or city-by-city analysis
- Speeches or statements on the issue
- Charts, visuals or photographs
- Background biography on spokesperson
- Annual report
- Typeset copies of speeches or public testimony
- Standard one-page description of your organization

Date kit was sent:	Reporter sent to:

## Bibliography

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1. South Carolina Association of Nonprofit Organizations, [www.sColoradoNonprofits.org](http://www.sColoradoNonprofits.org)
2. STRATECOM, [www.stratecom.com](http://www.stratecom.com)
3. National Council of Nonprofit Associations, [www.ncna.org](http://www.ncna.org)
4. League of Women Voters of the United States, [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)
5. Michigan Public Policy Initiative, [www.mppi.mna.msu.edu](http://www.mppi.mna.msu.edu)
6. Kansas Action for Children Inc., [www.kac.org/docs/media.pdf](http://www.kac.org/docs/media.pdf)
7. University of Texas, [www.utexas.edu/lbj/rhodesprp/01\\_02/toolkit/Press%20Release.doc](http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/rhodesprp/01_02/toolkit/Press%20Release.doc)
8. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org)
9. N.C. Center for Nonprofits, [www.ncnonprofits.org](http://www.ncnonprofits.org)
10. GuideStar, [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org)
11. Nellie Mae Education Foundation, [www.nmefdn.org](http://www.nmefdn.org)
12. Making the News: A Guide for Nonprofits & Activists, Jason Salzman

## Resources

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- The following websites have links to media around Colorado and/or the country:  
[www.usnpl.com/conews.html](http://www.usnpl.com/conews.html), [www.all-links.com/newscentral/northamerica/colorado.html](http://www.all-links.com/newscentral/northamerica/colorado.html),  
[www.newspaperlinks.com/home.cfm?mid=us1](http://www.newspaperlinks.com/home.cfm?mid=us1)
- The Colorado Nonprofit Association's Business Member Directory provides contact information for businesses and consultants that work with nonprofit organizations. Business Members include copywriters, communications professionals and media, [www.ColoradoNonprofits.org](http://www.ColoradoNonprofits.org).
- The Colorado Nonprofit Association's bookstore sells Colorado specific titles published by the Colorado Nonprofit Association and other resources by nationally known experts including books about media and marketing for nonprofits. For a complete list of titles or to place an order visit [www.ColoradoNonprofits.org](http://www.ColoradoNonprofits.org), call (303) 832-5710/(800) 333-6554 or email [info@ColoradoNonprofits.org](mailto:info@ColoradoNonprofits.org).