



# AMPLIFYING YOUR IMPACT

## The Value of Earned Media & Reporter Relationships



*“**Earned media**” is one of the most effective ways to broadcast your message to the public. Earned media is any press coverage – on the radio, on TV, in newspapers, blog posts or on social media platforms – that you “earn” by telling a compelling story that highlights the importance of your campaign or the impact of policies on people in your community. It is best secured through proactive outreach to media outlets and their reporters. The best part: earned media is completely free. The only price you’ll pay is with your time: the time it takes to build relationships with reporters, develop a strategy and execute your media outreach.*

*To effectively target your message, it's essential to consider **all types of press and media, including ethnic outlets**, to reach diverse audiences. Consider connecting with the Statewide Priority Population Coordinating Centers for additional guidance.*

## HOW TO BUILD FRODOFRÆ RELATIONSHIPS

The time you invest in building relationships with the reporters in your community will pay off in more frequent, and often better-quality, press coverage. It may feel awkward at first if you've never talked to reporters, but don't let that scare you away! Reporters always appreciate being "in the know" – and you are perfectly positioned to fill a need by providing accurate and newsworthy information, identifying compelling stories and story-tellers, or tipping them off to breaking news. There are a few simple steps you can follow to get started on your relationship-building journey:

1

### Identify Local Reporters:

Begin with a quick Google search to see which local outlets and reporters have written about your issue recently. Newsroom turnover tends to be quite high, so it can help to check reporter's X.com profile or LinkedIn pages to make sure they are still covering your issue area. If you see reporters covering local government meetings at your city hall or board of supervisors, approach the reporter and ask them what they cover and which outlet they report for. Give them your "elevator pitch" and ask if they would ever be interested in writing about tobacco-related issues in the future. Don't forget to collect their contact information!

2

### Put a Face to the Name:

Once you've identified a list of reporters in your community, reach out! Start with a brief email that includes key information like:

- Your name
- Your title
- Your affiliation
- Details about your campaign (include any key data points, compelling human interest stories, or important timelines).

Keep your message to a short paragraph or two, and ask if they would be available to chat with you on the phone or meet in person for coffee.

3

### Take Advantage of Key Opportunities:

Now that you have started a relationship with reporters who cover your issue, invite them to cover upcoming events, press conferences, rallies, new data/studies, or compelling personal stories. Additionally, create opportunities to speak with issue experts or people with lived experience to enhance the reporter's understanding of your issue.

4

### Use Your Relationship Wisely

Before you reach out to a reporter, ask yourself if you have all the components for a compelling story. Does your story idea have "sizzle?" Journalists are most interested in covering something that will "hook" their audience.

# FRAMING YOUR PITCH

*The way you frame your story to a reporter can make or break their interest in covering it. Always lead with the most compelling components of your story – whether it is breaking news on a policy making its way through your local government, new data on the health impacts of tobacco products, or a powerful story from someone with lived experience. Use active language to make your pitch sound more exciting!*

## Think Like a Journalist:

### What's the angle?

Be sure to include fresh data, new studies, or highlight stories that emphasize the human impact of good, or bad, tobacco policy. Make sure it's crystal clear why the reporter should cover this issue right now.

### What's the deadline?

As newsrooms continue to shrink, reporters are spread very thin. Give them enough time to plan coverage by tipping them off about your story a few days in advance.

### What's the framing?

Reporters need to persuade their editors to approve their story ideas. "Framing" is how they present the story to guide the audience and make it engaging. To make a strong case, avoid using complex terms or abbreviations. Instead, focus on the essential facts, timing, or human interest aspects of the story that will grab attention.

## WEAK FRAMING VS. STRONG FRAMING

EXAMPLE:

You have organized a roundtable discussion with key stakeholders in your community to discuss policies that could further protect residents from the harms of tobacco.

### WEAK FRAME:

Roundtable Discussion on the Harms of Tobacco

### STRONG FRAME:

Public Health Experts Sound the Alarm on Evolving Threat of Tobacco Products to Kids

EXAMPLE:

Youth in your community are working on a special project to educate local decision-makers and their neighbors about the dangers of vaping.

### WEAK FRAME:

Big Tobacco Threatens our Kids' Health

### STRONG FRAME:

Youth Leading the Charge Against Big Tobacco Urge Local Decision Makers to Protect a Healthy Future for All

EXAMPLE:

You are presenting at your next PTA meeting on the importance of supporting smart tobacco prevention policies, and inviting parents and teachers to join you for public comment at an upcoming hearing at city hall.

### WEAK FRAME:

Please consider covering a presentation I will be doing on the harmful effects of tobacco at an upcoming PTA meeting.

### STRONG FRAME:

Parents and Teachers Stand Strong Against Big Tobacco by Speaking Out at City Hall



## FOLLOW UP

After an event or hearing, it is appropriate to reach back out to the reporter to ask if there is any further information they might need to develop their story. They may not need your help, but they'll have your contact information just in case.

Even though we spend time building these relationships, we don't always get the stories we want. Sometimes our opponents' perspective or "framing" is represented more clearly, sometimes reporters make mistakes, and sometimes they miss an important angle to your story. When that happens, politely reach out to offer corrections to factual errors — and ask about their interest in speaking with you further about any angles you think they might have missed.