

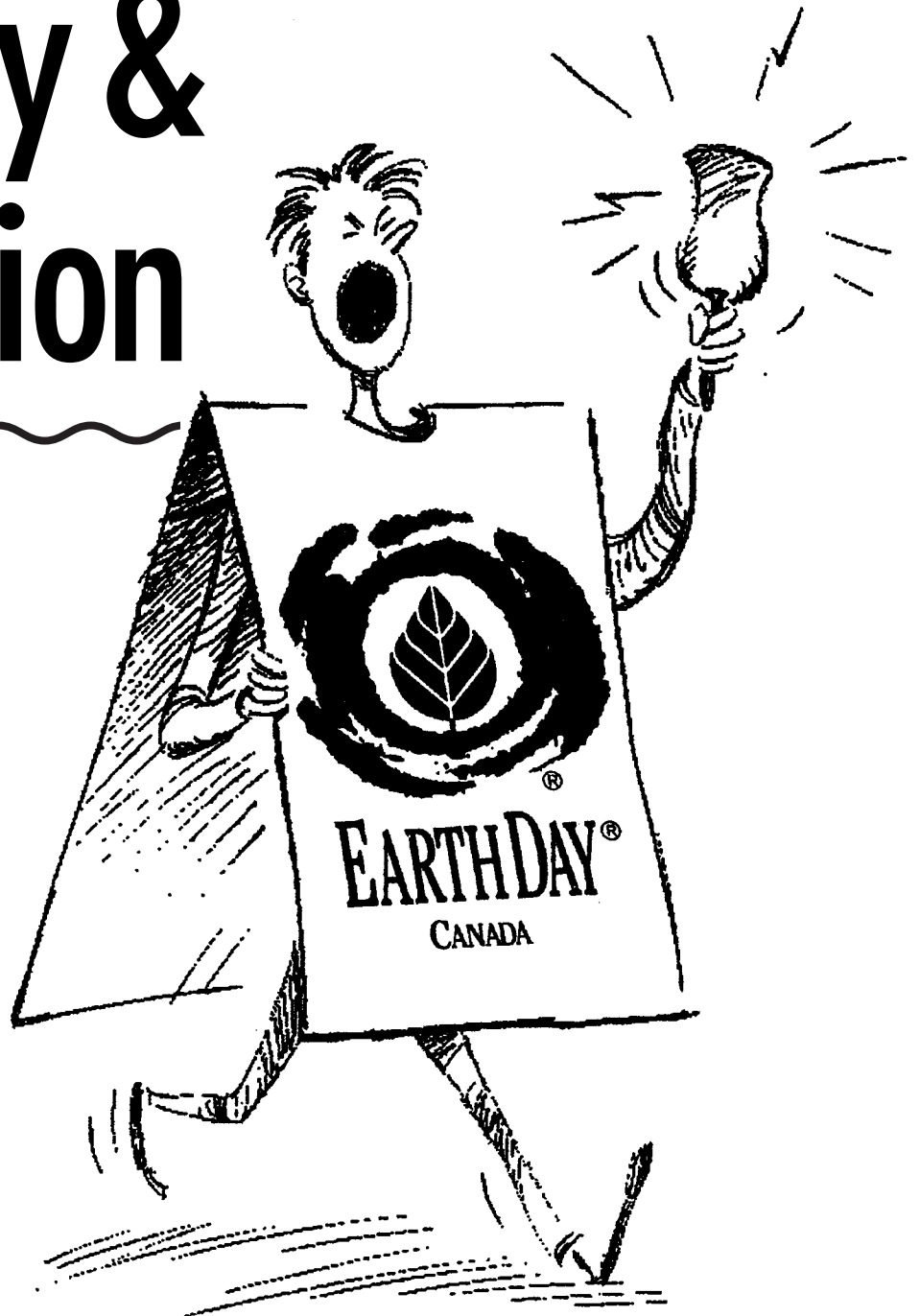


COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK



PROJECT PLANNER

Publicity & Promotion



PROJECT PLANNER

Publicity and Promotion

Publicity is a tool to inform people in your community about your project through the media. It's a great way to get public attention without paying for it.

Promotion may or may not involve the media, but does involve other ways of getting your message out. Sometimes promotion can be a fundraising tool for you.

This booklet tells you how to:

1. Inform individuals in your community of your project's goals and its success.
2. Ensure high participation levels for your project.
3. Recruit volunteers.
4. Get local media to promote your project.
5. Create and use publicity tools.
6. Create promotions that will raise awareness and funds for your project.



About Us

Earth Day Canada is a national environmental charitable organization that provides youth and community organizations, schools, businesses, government departments and individual Canadians with an opportunity to make a positive difference where they live, work and spend their leisure hours. We have a network that includes thousands of organizers in every sector — all working for positive change.

Operating year-round, our mission is to improve the state of the environment by motivating and helping individual Canadians just like you to take positive environmental action.

We offer interactive programs, a free community Earth Day/Earth Week public events calendar (available in March and April), and information and tools you'll use again and again.

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Earth Day Canada is the national coordinating body of Earth Day/Earth Week in Canada.

April 22 is International Earth Day—the largest environmental event in the world. Every year, millions of Canadians participate by joining people in about 100 countries in focusing on environmental solutions. This popular event has grown into Earth Week in Canada to accommodate the scores of events.

Publicity and Promotion

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Earth Day Canada
144 Front Street West, Suite 250
Toronto, Ontario M5J 2L7
Tel: 416/599-1991
Fax: 416/599-3100

Editor-in-chief:

Robin Jones Martin, Executive Director

Contributing writer:

Andrea Ellison, Public Relations Consultant

Copy Editor:

Mary Li, Communications Consultant
Finn Martin, Communications Consultant

Designer: Globe Resources

Illustrator: Greg McEvoy Illustrations

Types of Media

The media include two general types: print media (newspapers, magazines, newsletters, journals) and electronic or broadcast media (television and radio). They may have many of the same audiences (readers, listeners and viewers), but they have different ways of reaching them and different stories to tell.

There is also a third type of media that you may use: outdoor media. These are billboards, transit shelters, and most useful for your purposes—POSTERS. (See Promotional Strategies, page 10.)

PRINT MEDIA

1. **Daily and community newspapers** feature local news, community calendars and neighbourhood reports. Editorial sections will cover in-depth trends and issues.

Daily newspapers:

Lead time, news: 1–7 days (longer for weekend sections)

Lead time, editorial: Check with editorial department

Community papers:

Lead time, news & editorial: 1–3 weeks

2. **Magazines, Trade publications, Professional journals**

Published periodically, these generally provide “big picture” or in-depth coverage. Their editorial focus or “slant” is targeted to their specific readership.

Lead time: 30–90 days
(Check with editorial department))

3. **Newsletters**

Social clubs, neighbourhood associations, community groups, religious centres, local environmental groups, youth groups, educational institutions, businesses, and the Chamber of Commerce publish newsletters that announce individual accomplishments and scheduled events.

Lead time: Check with individual publication



BROADCAST OR ELECTRONIC MEDIA: Radio and Television

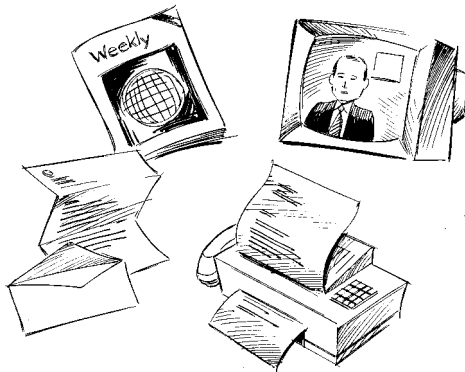
Radio and television programs have community calendars, news programs, talk shows and special interest features that you can use to promote your project. News information can be sent to local cable television stations and to regular network stations. Contact your local cable television stations to help you run public service announcements (PSAs).

Local radio and television stations:

Lead time: *Fast-breaking news and events* require little lead time. Check with local stations for *programming* (shows that feature stories like yours) schedules.

Tools

Just as there are different types of media, there are different types of tools used in reaching the media to inform your public.



News Media (Print or Electronic) Tools:

- Media alerts
- News releases
- Public Service Announcements (PSAs)
- News conferences

Editorial or Program Media Tools:

- Media alerts
- News releases
- Project Backgrounders
- News conferences

(Editorial is primarily, but not only, print media. Program media are radio or television program people.)

Tips

Treat the media with respect, and they will support you in many ways. You may know your local media better than you think, and they are probably friendlier than you think they are. If you don't have experience in media relations, here are a few basic tips to keep you from making embarrassing mistakes:

1. DON'T hold a news conference unless you have something very important to announce. Having an event is not fast-breaking news. However, it is *newsworthy*. Make sure you tell the right media about it, and make sure you invite them to come to your event.
2. DON'T call a news conference a *press conference*, and don't call your news releases *press releases*. Press refers to print media only. Your local radio and TV people are NOT THE PRESS. They are MEDIA. Use the word *media* to refer to all media, and the word *news* or *story* to refer to your story.
3. DON'T send a news release unless you've got news you want reported *now*. (See *lead times* for different media.) Media people don't have lots of space and time to file things for future coverage. If your news story isn't immediate, your news release will probably end up in the garbage.
4. DO take the time to research your media. Find out who is interested in covering what types of stories. If you're dealing with a large city daily newspaper or station, there may be a reporter or editor who covers your "beat": environment, lifestyle, health, education. That person is very important to getting your story covered in depth. (See *Publicity Strategies*, Creating A Media List).
5. DO be realistic about how you spend your time getting media coverage. Local projects don't generally make *The Globe & Mail* or the *National News*. Unless there is a very good angle on your story, national magazines don't generally cover local stories either. It's your local media's job to cover local projects.
6. DO have confidence that your project is newsworthy. Good news is important and is covered by the media. You don't need to be a slick media handler to get people interested in your project—you just need to show enthusiasm and put your project in its true light.

Publicity Strategies: Working With the Media

When designing your strategy, plan ahead in order to make full use of the media. Consider recruiting volunteers to assist you with your public relations tasks.

NEWS STRATEGIES

1. CREATE a media list:

- Consult your local Yellow Pages under “Radio Stations”, “Television Stations”, “Newspapers”, “Periodicals”, and/or “Magazines” to create headings and listings of the media in your community. If you have (or have access to) a media directory, you won’t have to take this step. Media directories can be found in public libraries.

If you have the funds and you foresee public relations as an important aspect of your organization, you might consider investing in a media directory. Bowdens is the easiest media directory to use, and provides cross-Canada listings of print and electronic media. It’s not cheap. For information or to order call: (416) 750-2220.

- Target the media you want to use. This will save you time and effort later. Delete media that you don’t feel are going to reach your audience. For example, if you have a children’s project, you might want to delete radio stations that cater to ages 15 - 24, and target radio stations that feature children’s programming and those with an audience in the parents’ age group.
- Place a call to the media organization you wish to target. Ask for the names of journalists and/or news editors, their titles, and their special interests. Make special note of appropriate journalists (i.e. environment reporter, family & lifestyle, city editor, business editor, etc.). Take care to get the correct spelling of each person’s name.

- Ask for and record addresses (mail and/or courier), phone and fax numbers, time deadlines, and leave a space for the details of your correspondence with them (i.e. “receptive,” “did not seem interested,” “wants to do story”, etc.).
- While you’re at it, ask for the name and department of the person responsible for public service announcements. Broadcast media are quite familiar with PSAs. If the person you speak to isn’t sure, ask him or her about the promotions department.

Also, make sure you find out who handles any event calendar features for the station or publication.

NOTE: BEFORE YOU MAKE YOUR CALL: Small stations and publications may have one or two people who cover all their stories, so whoever you reach when you dial the number may be able to give you all the information you need. Large city daily papers and large stations have receptionists who may not be able to give you the details you want, so ask them to direct you to the right department (the editorial department, City Desk, Assignment Desk or Newsroom) to get your answers.

If you’re calling a large city daily paper, ask for the fax number for the person you want to reach. Different departments may have different fax numbers.

2. WRITE your story for the news and editorial media:

Your project is an interesting story. You will need to put some information on paper for most journalists so they can use it as a reference when building their story about your project.

- **A backgrounder.** This gives the background on the issue and the purpose of your project, who is involved, what you hope to achieve. Keep it simple, but include all the important information: Who, When, Where, What and Why. Try to keep it to one page. Follow the directions for writing a news release (next section), but omit titling it “News Release”. You may want to include a headline, if you have a catchy one. Address it to the person you are sending it to, (i.e. Attention Bob Smith, News Director, WKQQ AM Radio) at the top, or you may include a covering letter. Once your backgrounder is written, you are ready to call the media and can proceed to part 3.
- **A media alert.** This is what you will use to alert media to an upcoming activity. Always one page only and titled “Media Alert”, think of this as an invitation to your event. Put the most important message right up front (ie. “Join Mayor Jones and

600 area school children in bringing the forest back to our city”), and the rest is a detailed invitation (date, time, place—include a map if you need one).

- **A news release.** This is the news of your project—the action taken. This will repeat some of the information in the backgrounder, but is written as if the action is taking place. (Write it in advance, anyway! You can fix it up later if the facts change.) Following are tips on writing a release.

You will use these materials in the same order they are listed, which makes sense when you consider that:

the backgrounder is used to help media build the story before it actually takes place (pre-promotion), and will also be used as a reference for story writing

the media alert reminds them that the event is coming soon (so they’ll be there to cover it)

the news release is designed for media coverage the day of the event

Writing a Great News Release

A successful press release gives journalists information that is useful, accurate and interesting.

Design your news release to grab the media’s attention so that they will want to do a story on your project. Newsrooms receive a slew of news releases! Yours has to be well-written, concise and interesting (newsworthy).

What to do:

- a. Watch your timing. Consider competing news events. For example, don’t send your release on an election day.
- b. Type your press release on letterhead stationery printed with the name, address, and telephone number of your organization.
- c. Type “News Release” at the top of the page. Date your release. This is commonly done on the first line of copy. For example:

Toronto, April 22, 1995... Today Grade 5 students, area residents and local businesses celebrated Earth Day by cleaning up Brown’s Park.
- d. Double (or 1½) spaces between lines are standard in news releases, as this gives room for the journalist to make editorial notes.
- e. Keep it short—one page is perfect! Journalists don’t have the time to read lots of detail. (That’s what your backgrounder is for.)
- f. Get to the point right away. Include the who, what, when, where, why, and how of your project. Begin with the most important facts. Keep your presentation clean and easy to read.
- g. **Triple check facts for accuracy!**
- h. Type “-30-” in the centre at the bottom of the release (this indicates the end of a document in

journalism). All newsworthy information goes above the “-30-”.

- i. Include a contact name and phone number below the “-30-” so that the media know who to

call to follow up on your press release. (If a contact name and phone number is part of your news information, put it above the “-30-”.)

Who to fax or mail your news backgrounders, alerts and releases to:

- a. **Backgrounders** are sent to journalists you have spoken to before the event takes place. They will help you get the coverage you need before the event. You may send backgrounders at any time prior to your event.
- b. **Media alerts** are sent to everyone you want to attend or cover the event. You may wish to include the backgrounder with the alert. This is to get media to attend your event, or to cover the story even if they can’t attend. Send media alerts 1-3 days before the event to:

Newspapers: assignment editor

Radio news: news director

Television news: assignment desk, senior producer, or assignment editor

These contacts are responsible for assigning reporters to stories. Each morning during the “storyboard” meeting, the editor/director goes

through that day’s file of news releases (categorized by the date of an event). It is during this meeting that reporters and editors decide whether or not the event can be covered (factors such as number of available reporters, importance of event, other competing newsbreaking stories, etc. affect this decision). However, it is possible on occasion to make contact directly with a specialized reporter (environment, business, lifestyle, city etc.). Making this contact may improve your odds of potential coverage.

- c. **News releases** are sent to be received the day before the event. The best possible scenario is to have them faxed to the media so they will be included in the storyboard meeting the next morning. You can call with a gentle reminder the next morning. See “Follow Up With the Media,” on page 8.

3. DEMONSTRATE the importance of your project — sell your story!

Before you call the news media, make a list of the most newsworthy points of your project. Use your backgrounder as a guide. Remember, the person you are calling has got to tell your story for you, and you have to get her or him interested. If you are planting trees at a well-known civic eyesore, if you have VIPs or celebrities at your event, or any other piece of interesting news, make a note to mention it.

You are competing with other groups/ organizations/businesses for coverage. When you speak to the media, you’re representing your group and your project. You have a great story to tell, and you can help the journalist tell the story to the public.

Establish contact with any media who may feel some personal connection to the project and to whom you can send future news releases. Be friendly and considerate of the journalist’s time. Offer to fax or mail your backgrounder and any other material that will help build a story.

4. CREATE a media kit.

Your media kit does not have to be fancy. If you have several pieces of information, especially if some of them are not standard size (like a brochure, plus a photo, plus a poster), then it is best to package them somehow so the pieces will all arrive and stay together. Kits with pockets are still the standard, but you can make covers as interesting as you like (or have time to make).

It's best to make kits that will fit a standard manilla mailing envelope. Mail media kits to media and guests who cannot attend your event, and distribute them to the media at your event. Make sure your sponsors and/or supporters receive a kit as well.

5. FOLLOW UP with the media

- Don't wait for the media to call you about the material you send them. If you don't hear from media, it may mean a number of things: they might not be interested, they might not have received the release or may have misplaced it, or they may be interested but need a *gentle* reminder.
- Place a call 1- 2 days prior to your event or when you want coverage of your project. Ask to speak to the journalist to whom you sent the release. Politely remind him/her of your release and establish whether or not he/she is interested in covering it. You may get voicemail: leave a detailed message with a phone number, and include the time and date of your call.
- Make sure that you call all media (especially TV and radio) right before your event to make sure they have everything they need and your event is in the Assignment book. It's nice to know that they're coming, not only because you will receive coverage, but also so you can have the right number of media kits available, and so you (or your media person) can keep an eye out for them, arrange interviews with the right people, make sure they go to all the right places, see all the right things, and see that they have everything they need for their story.

6. SAVE your news coverage

Save all press clippings as a record of your project, to share with supporters and to show potential sponsors of future projects. If you are unable to save clippings and/or transcripts (radio and television), Bowdens will provide this service for a fee. Call (416) 750-2220.

Earth Day Canada's clipping service will receive any press clips that mention the words "Earth Day", and we will be happy to provide you with copies. This process takes a little time. Give us a call if we can help you.

OTHER PUBLICITY STRATEGIES

Newsletters

You can research organizations that publish and distribute newsletters in your community. Businesses, associations, service clubs, churches, school boards, and many others regularly communicate with their employees, customers and members. Local utilities send out newsletters with their customers' bills.

Contact the editor and ask if he or she will publish information about your project in an upcoming issue. Ask about the length requirements and submission deadlines. Why do you think your project is interesting to their readership? Be prepared to discuss.

Public Service Announcements

A PSA is like a news release; it provides clear concise answers to the who, what, when, where, why, and how of your project. Radio and television stations are required by law to provide a certain amount of programming time for PSAs. Newspapers may also provide this service. Phone ahead of time to check.

1. Call your local radio station to establish their PSA policy. What are the time requirements? May you fax the information to them and will they devise their own PSA? If you write a PSA for an announcer to read on the air, keep it to 15 seconds.

2. Cable television stations and some local stations provide PSAs in calendar form. Call to establish their guidelines. Do you need to send a tape? May you fax the information so that they can devise their own announcement?

3. Include the name, address, and telephone number of your group.

Who to fax or mail your PSA to:

Send it to the Public Affairs Director at least two weeks before your project will occur.

The publicity strategies we've outlined are designed to help groups reach the public at very little cost. Publicity, or awareness created through the media, is not just a low cost replacement for advertising. Editorial coverage has an impact value of 4x the value of an equal paid advertisement. You will be well-rewarded for your efforts.

Promotional Strategies

Promotion is different from publicity in that it does not necessarily involve the media. Like publicity, promotion is a communications tool. Promotion often involves products of some kind, and therefore may have a cost attached to it. Here are some strategies for promoting your project for little or no financial cost.

Posters and Flyers

These should be as eye-catching and informative as you can make them.

- a. The community Earth Day event poster is used by many participants to help publicize their projects. There is plenty of space to write with a marker, or to have printed, information you want publicized.

If you want to create a poster from scratch, you may be able to get the materials (i.e. paper), and

services (i.e. printing and distribution) donated. Try to use an environmentally responsible paper stock (high post-consumer content) and printing process.

- b. Print the name of your group and phone number in a highly visible area.
 - c. Remember to receive permission to place posters in areas that are frequented by the people you want to reach.
-

Word of Mouth

Never underestimate the power of the telephone! A phone blitz to the right people is often the best way to get your message out. Convincing people to support your project is easier when you're in direct contact with them. The basics are:

- Be polite, positive and enthusiastic.
- Introduce yourself.
- Define your relationship to them (e.g. "I'm your neighbour at #64") and/or to the project (e.g. "I'm working with the Scouts and local conservation authority"). This puts you on a personal basis with your project (so you won't sound like a telephone solicitor).

- Define your project and its goals and benefits.
- Tell them why you are calling them (how you want them to help).
- Ask them to pass on the information.

Other word-of-mouth strategies:

- e-mail (for internal and external promotions)
- voice mail (for internal promotions): leave an Earth Day message in people's voice-mail boxes to remind them to participate in your event.

Partnering

In business, this strategy is called cross-promotion. Each participant brings something of value to the project, and they leverage their investment. It's a great strategy, as everyone gets more for their money than if they were on their own.

Not-for-profit groups use this strategy to leverage a tiny budget into a great big splash that benefits them and their partners in the project. You can create a cross-promotion by offering the benefit of your event as your investment in the partnership.

- a. Start by identifying logical partners.
 - a donor or group of donors who are willing to give you products and services that you can use as prizes (dinners at nice restaurants, composting units, gardening tools, gift certificates), or a local retailer who is willing to help you promote your project
 - a contact in local radio, television or the press who is willing to help you promote your project
- b. Decide what your goals are for the promotion. Is it to create awareness only, or do you want it to be a fundraiser as well?
 - if you need to raise funds, think about holding a silent auction through the media.
 - if you want to get more people to take part in your event, then use your prizes as incentives to attend.
- c. What are your potential partners' goals for the promotion? You are asking for their support, what can you offer in return? Whatever their core business is (media, customer services, retail), their goal is to create a warm identification with their community. You are providing them with a perfect opportunity. You can offer them identification with your project, through:
 - logo placement on your posters and flyers
 - and/or hands-on participation in the event itself
- d. Now structure some ideas. Can your media partner promote it? Can your retail partner hand out information to customers? How can you see them getting involved? Can the retail partner's employees participate? Can your media partner broadcast from the event?
- e. Make sure you create promotional opportunities for all of your potential partners.
- f. When you have a few ideas sketched out, call your potential partners and ask them for their ideas, too.

Notes