

Earned Media Tactics

This is a brief guide to the purpose, goals, and typical lift of the most commonly used earned media tactics. Of course, how much work each of these tactics takes depends on your organization's structure and approval process. Hopefully this general guidance is helpful as you decide how best to elevate your nonprofit's work.

Questions to start with: **What's the desired outcome of this tactic?**

- Do we want to respond to something?
- What audience are we trying to reach?
- Do we want reporters to cover something that they aren't currently covering?
- Do we want to change the narrative?

Press Advisory

- **Purpose/Goal:** Alerts media to an event they should cover → Press attends event and we get coverage.
- **Content:** What, who, where, when. Include names of media-trained spokespeople who press could interview.
- **Timing:** Advisory can be sent 2-3 days ahead of the event. If possible, they should always be sent 24 hours prior and again the morning of the event.
- **Lift:** Not hard to draft, but before you can send it out, you need to have details of the event mostly confirmed, confirm and prep spokespeople and get an estimate of how many people will attend the event you're planning to advise. How much of a crowd you'll need for an event to be media-worthy depends on where you are. In rural areas, a dozen could be media-worthy. In larger cities, you may need upwards of 50 attendees for an event to interest local media.
- **Alternative:** Connect with a smaller group of reporters to pass along details of event, following up after event with photos, some social media links and a quick report-out on what reporters may have missed.

Press Statement

- **Purpose/Goal:** Publicly applauds/criticizes an action → Gets our quote in coverage.
- **Content:** Includes context on what happened and a quote from a relevant voice.
- **Timing:** If possible, prepare this before the action happens and send immediately when needed, but if needed, can be turned around quickly.
- **Lift:** Depending on the subject matter, the drafting/review process might take time. Ideally, you know that something might happen and can alert your spokesperson voice and team for approvals in advance of the action. Always best to work ahead of time!
- **Alternative:** Connecting with a smaller group of reporters to pass along a brief note with a quote and offer spokesperson availability if they need more quotes or context.

Note to Media

- **Purpose/Goal:** Packaging relevant coverage/resources about a newsy topic/trend in one place → Influencing how reporters frame their coverage of a given event

- A good option if too much time has passed to put out a statement.
- **Content:** News hook, resources/info reporters may be unaware of, clincher statement
- **Timing:** Usually reactive, best when sent **ASAP** while reporters still care.
- **Lift:** Depending on subject matter – content to draft/approvals vary based on topic.
- **Alternative:** Sending a brief pitch note to reporters explaining a trend or context you'd like them to include in their coverage of a news item.

Op-ed

- **Purpose/Goal:** Sharing opinion of stakeholders, supported by evidence or experience → Published piece that will persuade lawmakers and constituents
- **Content:** Typically 600 - 800 words, depending on outlet. Best when it features personal story/anecdotes and timely call to action.
- **Timing:** Can be reactive or proactive. If reactive, it should happen ASAP; if proactive, it needs to be planned out so it publishes when the public cares about the issue.
- **Lift:** Heaviest lift - requires a relevant voice, conversation with signer (if being written by someone else), drafting, review, approval from signer, and pitching to outlets. Plan for a week's turnaround.
- **Alternative:** Letters to the editor - shorter, and surprisingly well-read section of local papers.

Talking Points

- **Purpose/Goal:** Provide message guidance for spokespeople doing interviews, social media conversations or staff talking with donors about an issue → Frame the issue the way you want to see it framed.
- **Content:** Money quote, three supporting points and expected questions when possible.
- **Timing:** Best prepared in advance of when you need them and distributed to spokespeople before an interview.
- **Lift:** Depends on subject matter and materials already prepared (previous TPs, backgrounder, etc) and necessary approvals for the topic.
- **Alternative:** Prep a reactive line - brief, only one or two sentences. Better with trickier topics.

Media training

- **Purpose/Goal:** Prepare multiple potential spokespeople at a time for interview opportunities → Spokespeople understand basics of talking to media and what to do when they get a request
- **Content:** Conducted over the phone, in person or on Zoom, review of basic messaging, interview best practices, and practice questions using key talking points
- **Timing:** In advance of an event or a time when you think spokespeople may be necessary, but not always tied to an interview deadline.
- **Lift:** Once you have your basic materials set, trainings are typically only one hour of work, plus some prep time to update your materials.
- **Alternative:** Prep - quick phone call on media tips, tailored to an interview request