Media Outreach – Essential tips for publicizing your project

The aim of your publicity efforts is to communicate with editors and reporters in ways that maximize positive coverage of your project, your organization, and your partner, the Wisconsin Humanities Council. You’ll do this by “pitching” your story to members of the media. Here’s how to do it in five steps:

**Step ONE:** Put yourself in a reporter’s shoes and ask yourself, “What makes my project newsworthy?”

Your organization just received a grant from the WHC. In Milwaukee that might not be enough by itself to get a story in the Journal Sentinel, but it is news in a lot of places. A much likelier way to get media attention is to combine the story of receiving a grant with newsworthy information about your project. So think about your project from a reporter’s perspective: Does it address a topic that is of particular local or statewide interest? Is it something that hasn’t been done before in your community? Answer these questions to help you craft a “hook” – something that will grab the attention of a reporter or editor.

**Step TWO:** Tailor the template press release and media alert provided in the WHC publicity toolkit to suit your project.

- Include a quote from a local spokesperson as indicated.
- Where possible, provide any local statistics or other information that connects your project to something of current, local interest. For example, if you project is about one room schoolhouses, make a connection to something people in your area care about regarding schools and students today.

**Step THREE:** Develop a list of media people to receive your press releases and media alerts. Contacting a specific individual will increase the chance of your news being picked up.

- Identify local publications, stations and websites
- Locate the appropriate editor or writer along with his or her contact information, including phone and email

**Step FOUR:** Write your “pitch” in an email to which you attach your press release or media alert. Make
the subject line of the email specific and newsworthy. Keep your email short and to the point. Provide only the most important details. Think about what will grab the reporter’s attention. If you can, make a personal connection to the reporter; show you know who s/he is by referencing a story of theirs that you read.

- Include your contact information in the email – name, phone number and email.
- Never send out a group email with your entire distribution list. This is impersonal and gives the reporter a poor impression.

**Step FIVE:** Follow up with a phone call. Follow-up is important, as you are not the only one trying to get your story covered. Reporters are hardworking, deadline driven people. Help them do their job by offering them solid, interesting stories succinctly and you’ll have a great chance of seeing your story in the news!