

How to write a media release

The first thing to know about writing a media release is why you would write one.

The purpose of a media release

A media release is a simple and effective way of getting across a message to your community via one or more media outlets. It's a great way to raise awareness, but also to increase involvement and support for your LDAT's work.

Questions it needs to answer

To be effective, your media release will need to be structured to include a number of important components (listed below), and will generally also need to provide information on a number of key elements of the issue you're wanting to raise. These are the 'who', 'what', 'when', 'where', 'why' and 'how' of the story you're wanting to tell.

And remember, your media release needs to be 'news' – you need to be telling journalists, and your community, something fresh. This doesn't mean you can't raise an old issue, but that you need to provide a fresh angle on it if you do.

The structure of your release

Date

Ensure your media release has the date on which the information you're providing can be made public. If you're sending information under embargo, be sure to make that clear when the embargo ends including the date and time e.g. Under Embargo until 6am EST, 4 June 2017.

Headline

Your headline should be written in way that catches a journalist's attention, but also summarises the information within the main 'body' of the media release. Think about the headlines in newspapers. Use less than 10 words – the fewer the better. Try to be creative and catchy about it. Put it in bold.

Lead

The lead is the first paragraph and should contain the most important information. If someone reads just this part of the media release, they should have a good idea of the issue you're trying to raise.

Body

The remainder of the media release — or the body copy — should have the most important information at the top, and the least important is at the bottom. Use short sentences and active language. For example, ‘The man drove the car’ instead of ‘the car was driven by the man’.

One of the first stories your LDAT is likely to want to tell is that you’ve joined the LDAT program, or received funding for your project.

Make sure all the information you include in a media release is factual. If you’re using a statistic, you will need to reference its source.

Include quotes in this part of the media release.

If you have quotes from various organisations involved in your project, have just one spokesperson for each organisation. The quotes should add to the story, not simply repeat it.

If you’ve received funding or assistance from a particular person or group, you should check with them if they’d like to be included in the media release prior to its release.

How to finish your release

Be sure to add “For further media information contact:” and include a contact name, email and phone number at the end of your release.

A media release must be timely. For instance, if you want to advertise an event, don’t send out the media release the day before.

And finally, always have someone else check your media release for clarity, spelling and grammar prior to sending it out.