**Media Toolkit – 2024**

Getting media attention for your event requires planning and lots of follow-up. Below are a sample timeline and templates you can use to pitch your local reporters.

**HOW TO GET ATTENTION TO YOUR ORGANIZATION**

1. Identify the reporters at your local outlets who cover the issues that you’re interested in.
2. Plan what you would like to talk to them about. For instance, reach out to them now, before April 15, to let them know about Boost Your Budget Week. In your pitch, you can say something along the lines of, “people are happy that they’re getting a tax refund, but there are even more ways to get money in their pocket, which is to apply for the benefits they might qualify for. We help them do that.”
3. Think about the kind of story you would like to see in your local media about your work and see what elements it might include:
   1. Identify participants in your program who would be willing to talk to reports about their experience in your program. Reporters need to have a human-interest story and that also helps you reach potential new participants for your programs, who will find out about them from the story.
   2. Identify your organization’s spokesperson for the reporter to interview.
   3. Gather videos and photos that illustrate your services and your impact in the community. Let the reporters know you have them.
   4. Have handy data points, such as how many people you have served in the past year(s), how much money participants gained on average by enrolling in benefits through your help, and how much money total your organization put in the pockets of all participants. Any data that can give a reporter an idea of your impact is very helpful.
4. When reaching out to reporters, mention previous relevant stories they have written. This shows them that you have researched them before and are familiar with their work.
5. Persevere with your outreach and don’t feel discouraged when reporters do not get back to you right away. Engage with them on Twitter. Notice if a story might have benefitted from your input and reach out to mention that you would love to help provide a different perspective or more detail next time they cover a particular topic that’s relevant to your work.
6. Frame your pitch as information that is important to the community and the reporter’s audience.

**INTERVIEW TIPS**

**Phone Interviews**

* Pick a location that does not have a lot of background noise or echo. Keep children, pets, and noisy appliances turned off. Mute phones.
* Take your phone, whether mobile or handset, off speaker mode. If you have a high-quality headset with a mike, use it. It might make sense to invest in one.
* Some reporters send you questions and then have you record the answers on your smart phone app and send them the audio files. This is usually better sound quality than a phone line.
* Keep a cheat sheet with talking points but if you write out the answers, don’t read them verbatim because it always sounds like you are reading them word for word.

This is a link for journalists, but it may prove useful to see how the other side prepares for the interview: <https://ijnet.org/en/story/9-remote-interviewing-tips-journalists>

**Zoom Interviews**

* Get comfortable with Zoom prior to the interview, so you can be ready from a technical standpoint on how to use it. Practicing a few times helps.
* Pick a location that has sufficient light shining on your face. Natural light from a window is good as long as it is in front of you and not behind you. In fact, avoid sitting anywhere where a light is shining directly behind or overhead. You may want to invest in a small light ring or box that sits on your desk or attaches to your computer to make sure your face is properly lit.
* Frame yourself in the shot so there are about three hand widths of distance from the top of your head to the top edge of the screen and your head/body are in the center of the screen. The interviewer may ask you to make some adjustments, but this should be the standard setup.
* Try to adjust the camera lens so it is as close to eye level as possible and always look at the lens as you are answering. Imagine the lens is the face of the interviewer. Looking to the side or up and down makes you look distracted or untrustworthy.
* Try to have some kind of interesting visual behind you, bookcases or shelves or a deep background. Avoid locations where others might walk behind or around you or are otherwise visually distracting.
* For audio quality, see the tips in the phone interviews section as they are the same. Avoid noisy locations.
* Always wipe the portion of the screen where your built-in camera is on your laptop because over time the lens gets coated by a film of grease/dirt and makes the image look blurry.
* You may want to consider investing in a camera and a mike that you can attach to your computer as they tend to have better quality image and sound. Keep that lens clean too.
* Appearances matter, so being well groomed, combed hair, shaved, and dressed how you would dress to make a business presentation to others in your field of work is a good idea. Sometimes faces can get shiny with sweat and oil, so have something to wipe your face prior to the interview. Some people prefer to apply some light powder makeup.
* Have a cheat sheet with talking points but avoid reading answers verbatim or looking down. You want to sound natural. Not like you are reading a memorized speech.

Here are some additional tips for virtual interviews: <https://www.themuse.com/advice/video-interview-tips>

**MEDIA PLANNING FOR EVENTS**

***1 month before your event …***

Start building or updating your media list. Make a spreadsheet of the information you’ll need to contact reporters or outlets you want to cover your events.

For newspapers:

* Find out which editor or reporter covers community events. Look to see if there is another reporter who covers issues specifically relating to poverty, Medicare, older adults, or caregivers. Note the reporter’s name, email, and phone number.
* Find out if your local and/or community newspapers accept calendar announcements. Note where to send the announcement, the information to include, and how far in advance the paper needs them.

For radio and television:

* Collect phone numbers and emails for the station assignment editor.
* Call and ask for the phone number and email for the producer of the specific show where you would like to appear. Generally, local news stations include community, non-policy issues in the morning show and in the early evening newscast.
* If your stations have a local lifestyle show, it may have a different booker for guests or stories. Check their website for contact information. Also consider asking their host if they would participate in one of your activities (if appropriate).
* Ask if the station or website accepts calendar announcements. Find out where to send them, what information you should include, and how far in advance the station needs them.

***3 weeks before your event …***

* Evaluate your media contacts. Determine which contacts you want to personally invite to cover your celebration (this is called pitching), which contacts you want to invite with a media advisory, and if there are any you only want to alert with a press release.
* Send out your calendar announcements. Use the samples included in this guide and distribute them to local media based on the list you’ve collected.
* Pitch important media. Use the sample pitch included in this guide to begin approaching specific reporters and assignment editors about doing a story on your event. Remember, you must give them a good story idea and all the elements to tell the story to get them interested.
* Prepare and distribute a media advisory. Use the Sample Media Advisory included in this guide. Send the advisory via email to the media list you’ve collected.
* Start social media promotion across your channels. Remember, you’re trying to reach participants, reporters, and local influencers. Use similar messages across all the social media outlets you use, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, or Pinterest.
* Spread the word. Encourage your participants to tell their friends and families about your event. You never know who they know—they may have an association with members of the media that will give you a head start.

***10 days before your event …***

* Make follow-up calls to the media contacts you pitched to see if they are planning to do a story. Offer to help coordinate the interviews or photos they need and provide background that will help them tell the story you’ve pitched.
* Develop a strategy to ensure a big attendance at the event, including emails and follow-up phone calls to older adults and their families.
* Let older adults know there will be press at the event and let the press know there will be older adults they can speak with.
* Develop a list of specific older adults with stories to tell and connect media with them when appropriate.

***1 day before your event …***

* Email a final media advisory or news release to newspapers, daybooks, radio stations, and television stations. Be sure to include a phone number where reporters can reach you in the evening or early morning.
* Make follow-up calls to the media you invited personally to see if they are planning to cover your event, if they haven’t already committed to attending.

***Your event day!***

* Have your cell phone handy and check your messages frequently. Often media outlets don’t decide until the last minute whether to cover your event.
* Assign a staff person to meet and greet reporters. This person will also be responsible for helping the reporter arrange any interviews or photo opportunities.

***After the event …***

* Phone or email reporters to thank those who covered your event. You can also use this opportunity to offer to be a resource for future stories about aging in your community or aging policy stories.
* Compile your stories, articles, and photos in a special section on your website to highlight the accomplishments of your event.
* Share your success! Send links to your media coverage to [press@ncoa.org](mailto:press@ncoa.org).

**Sample Calendar Announcement**

Send this announcement to your local newspaper, TV station, online publication, or municipal office to be included in their local calendar. Typically, you will need to send announcements at least 2-3 weeks before your event. Including a list of invited special guests will increase media interest. If you don’t have a commitment from all special guests, but you have a pretty good indication they will attend, you can say “Mayor Jon Smith (invited)” on your materials.

[ORGANIZATION LOGO]

**Contact:**

[NAME]

[TITLE]

[ORGANIZATION]

[PHONE]

[EMAIL]

**[NAME & DATE OF EVENT]**

Are you or someone you know living on a fixed income? [ORGANIZATION] is holding a free event on [DATE] to explain how older adults can boost their budgets with benefits.

[ORGANIZATION] is committed to empowering all older adults in [COMMUNITY] to age well. We are partnering with the National Council on Aging (NCOA) to mark [Boost Your Budget Week](ncoa.org/article/boost-your-budget-week), April 15-19, 2024.

An estimated [$30 billion](https://www.ncoa.org/article/30-billion-left-on-the-table-connecting-more-older-adults-with-money-saving-public-benefits) in public and private benefits go unclaimed every year because older adults don’t know about them or how to apply. We are leveraging people power and digital power to connect eligible older adults to programs that can help them pay for food, medicine, rent, utilities, and more.

Join us [DATE] at [TIME] for [EVENT] to see if you or an older friend or neighbor can find benefits to boost your budget! The event is free. For more information, call [PHONE] or visit [WEBSITE].

**Sample Media Advisory**

Use a media advisory to highlight events you want media to attend. Email the advisory a few weeks before your event to newspapers, radio stations, and television stations and directly to the reporters on your media list who you do not want to invite with a personal email pitch. Follow up with 1-2 phone calls as the event gets closer. Send the advisory again the day before your event because broadcast media, such as television stations, often make decisions about what to cover on a day-to-day basis.

[ORGANIZATION LOGO]

**Contact:**

[NAME]

[TITLE]

[ORGANIZATION]

[PHONE]

[EMAIL]

**MEDIA ADVISORY**

[DATE] – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**[ORGANIZATION] CELEBRATES BOOST YOUR BUDGET WEEK WITH [NAME OF EVENT]**

[CITY, STATE] [DATE] — [ORGANIZATION] is committed to empowering all older adults in [COMMUNITY] to age well. On April 15-19, 2024, we are partnering with the National Council on Aging (NCOA) to celebrate [Boost Your Budget Week](https://www.ncoa.org/article/boost-your-budget-week).

An estimated [$30 billion](https://www.ncoa.org/article/30-billion-left-on-the-table-connecting-more-older-adults-with-money-saving-public-benefits) in public and private benefits go unclaimed every year because older adults don’t know about them or how to apply. We are leveraging people power and digital power to connect eligible older adults to programs that will help them pay for food, medicine, rent, utilities, and more.

**WHAT:**

[DESCRIPTION OF THE EVENT. BE SURE TO INCLUDE PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTING INFORMATION, INCLUDING IF YOU WILL BE OFFERING FREE ELIGIBILITY SCREENINGS.]

**WHO:**

[LIST OF SPECIAL GUESTS. MAKE SURE TO LIST IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE, WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS FIRST.]

**WHEN:**

[DATE AND TIME OF EVENT]

**WHERE:**

[ADDRESS OF EVENT]

**About** [ORGANIZATION]

[YOUR ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION]

**About NCOA**

The National Council on Aging (NCOA)is the national voice for every person’s right to age well. We believe that how we age should not be determined by gender, color, sexuality, income, or ZIP code. Working with thousands of national and local partners, we provide resources, tools, best practices, and advocacy to ensure every person can age with health and financial security. Founded in 1950, we are the oldest national organization focused on older adults. Learn more at [www.ncoa.org](http://www.ncoa.org) and @NCOAging.

**MEDIA PITCHING**

A news pitch is very similar to an elevator pitch in business. You have under one minute to get the journalist’s attention and convince them to engage with you and ask more questions and hopefully cover your event. There are a few points you want to make in your pitch—some will be generic (apply to all reporters) and some will be media specific (depending on what type of news organization it is). Whether your pitch is in writing or by phone, it should include the elements below.

**Generic**

* Stress why the story is important to the community and audience the journalist covers. For Boost Your Budget Week, you could point to the poverty rate in your community, the statistics for older adults (including how many are missing out on benefits), and the growth of the older population.
* Stress the role your organization plays in the community and what you are doing to address the issue through this event. Briefly describe the event and why it may be interesting or unique—whether it’s the event itself or the people who are participating.

**Specific Pitches by Medium**

The second part of your pitch should be why this is a story that will work specifically for the reporter’s medium:

* **TV reporters** love stories that have interesting images and action. Try to create an event that will offer this. If you have a high-quality video that your organization has used in the past, put it online and tell the reporter they can download it. Tell the journalist they will have good images. TV reporters hate to cover stories that are just people giving speeches. If your story includes testimonials from some of your clients or success stories, be sure to have the clients share digital pictures of themselves or allow reporters access to them, so they can tell an intimate portrait of the good work you do and be able to visually document this.
* **Radio reporters** like events that include sound. Events where there is singing or some type of activity make for good radio. Even more than TV, radio reporters rely on interviews, which requires a spokesperson and interviewees who can convey your messages in a clear and compelling fashion. Line them up in advance and train them on what to say by giving them 3-4 key messages.
* **Print and digital reporters** like more information and data, as they usually have to write much more than TV and radio reporters. They also appreciate photo opportunities, infographics, or other high-quality visuals they can insert in their digital versions. They will want access to spokespersons and interviewees who can speak compellingly. Train your interviewees and provide them with 3-4 key messages they need to convey.

**Sample Pitch Letter**

Dear [REPORTER]:

Today, [NUMBER] of older adults living in our community struggle to put food on their tables and must choose between paying for medicine or heat. [ORGANIZATION] is dedicated to empowering all our older neighbors to age well. We have been working in this community for [X YEARS], and on April 15-19, 2024, we are partnering with the National Council on Aging (NCOA) to celebrate [Boost Your Budget Week](https://www.ncoa.org/article/boost-your-budget-week).

An estimated $30 billion in public and private benefits go unclaimed every year because older adults don’t know about them or how to apply. During Boost Your Budget Week, we will be leveraging people power and digital power to connect eligible older adults to programs that will help them pay for food, medicine, rent, utilities, and more.

On [DATE], we will be hosting [DESCRIBE EVENT]. Our goal is to find and enroll as many older adults as possible into benefits programs that can improve their health and economic security.

We invite you to see our staff in action and meet older residents who are looking for ways to stay independent. Please help us tell this story that will surely be of interest to your audience.

You can reach me at [PHONE] or [EMAIL].

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[ORGANIZATION]

**Sample Phone Pitch**

**YOU:** Hello. This April, [ORGANIZATION] is participating in a national educational and outreach campaign that uses people power and digital power to help hundreds of struggling older adults who are having to choose between paying for food, medicine, or heat. Do you have a minute?

**REPORTER:** Yeah, but that’s about it.

**YOU:** We are celebrating Boost Your Budget Week, April 15-19, 2024. It’s a nationwide initiative sponsored by the National Council on Aging, but we are holding an event right here in our hometown. [DESCRIBE DATE, TIME, LOCATION, DETAILS OF EVENT]. We think it’s a great story that ties in with issues like poverty, aging, health care, Medicare, and the use of technology to overcome some really tough socioeconomic problems. [ORGANIZATION] believes older Americans shouldn’t have to choose between food on their tables or roofs over their heads. Boost Your Budget Week is one way we are doing something about it.

**REPORTER:** Ok, tell me more.

**YOU:** If you attend the event, we can put you in touch with some fantastic staff, as well as older residents and anything else you need to tell a great story. We have videos, charts, graphs, and photos.

**REPORTER:** It sounds like a worthwhile program. Can you send me something in writing?

**YOU:** Sure, I’ll email our advisory right now. Thanks for your time.

**Template Press Release**

[ORGANIZATION LOGO]

**Contact:**

[NAME]

[TITLE]

[ORGANIZATION]

[PHONE]

[EMAIL]

**[ORGANIZATION] MARKS BOOST YOUR BUDGET WEEK APRIL 15-19   
WITH SPECIAL EVENT TO CONNECT OLDER ADULTS IN [COMMUNITY] TO BENEFITS**

[CITY, STATE] [DATE] — [ORGANIZATION] is committed to empowering all older adults in [COMMUNITY] to age well. On April 15-19, 2024, [ORGANIZATION] is partnering with the [National Council on Aging](http://www.ncoa.org) (NCOA) to mark [Boost Your Budget Week](https://www.ncoa.org/article/boost-your-budget-week) with free benefits screenings for seniors.

An estimated [$30 billion](https://www.ncoa.org/article/30-billion-left-on-the-table-connecting-more-older-adults-with-money-saving-public-benefits) in public and private benefits go unclaimed every year because older adults don’t know about them or how to apply. [ORGANIZATION] is leveraging people power and digital power to connect eligible older adults to programs that will help them pay for food, medicine, rent, utilities, and more.

“[QUOTE FROM ORGANIZATION SPOKESPERSON ABOUT WHY THIS EVENT IS SO IMPORTANT FOR OLDER ADULTS IN THE COMMUNITY],” said [NAME, TITLE, ORGANIZATION].

In [COMMUNITY] alone, there are [#] older adults who are eligible for benefits programs but not enrolled. For older adults living on a fixed income, benefits like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicare Low-Income Subsidy can make a significant difference in supporting their desire to stay healthy, financially secure, and independent in the community.

“Having access to benefits programs means our older friends and neighbors do not have to cut pills in half, skip meals, or turn down the thermostat in the middle of winter in order to make ends meet each month,” said [NAME]. “We are here to help older adults understand what benefits they may be eligible for—and take the steps to apply.”

Boost Your Budget Week is a national effort to educate older adults about benefits programs. [ORGANIZATION] will be hosting an event where older adults can learn more and get a free benefits screening.

**WHAT:**

[DESCRIPTION OF THE EVENT. BE SURE TO INCLUDE PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTING INFORMATION, INCLUDING IF YOU WILL BE OFFERING FREE ELIGIBILITY SCREENINGS.]

**WHO:**

[LIST OF SPECIAL GUESTS. MAKE SURE TO LIST IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE, WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS FIRST.]

**WHEN:**

[DATE AND TIME OF EVENT]

**WHERE:**

[ADDRESS OF EVENT]

**About** [ORGANIZATION]

[YOUR ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION]

**About NCOA**

The National Council on Aging (NCOA)is the national voice for every person’s right to age well. We believe that how we age should not be determined by gender, color, sexuality, income, or ZIP code. Working with thousands of national and local partners, we provide resources, tools, best practices, and advocacy to ensure every person can age with health and financial security. Founded in 1950, we are the oldest national organization focused on older adults. Learn more at [www.ncoa.org](http://www.ncoa.org) and @NCOAging.