

Writing a Press Release

by Craig White
Center for Participatory Change

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Working with the press to get information about your organization and your activities in the news helps:

- Spread the word
- Build community support
- Increase your membership
- Raise money
- Bring people out to meetings and events

A press release is a short document that provides information about your organization's events and activities to a newspaper, magazine, TV or radio station.

The news agency may use the information in a story, they might contact you for an interview, or they may not use it at all. Sometimes, if the press release is well written, it might get printed with only minor changes.

Keep a press file with copies of every published article about your organization. These can be included in handouts at public events, added to grant proposals, and used in almost any form of outreach.

Build relationships with reporters and editors. You're doing the news agency a service when you provide clear, organized information about community news. They do you an important service by helping you spread the word. Be sure to thank them every time you get good press.

The Elements of a Press Release

Red numbers in the sample to the right mark the thirteen elements of a press release, which are described below.

1. Use this heading to show the document is a press release, not a letter or memo.
2. List the news agency where you're sending the release. Whenever you can, use a reporter's or editor's name. If you're doing a general press release to hand out at an event, skip this line.
3. Provide your organization's name, a contact name, and a phone number so they can get more information.
4. Include the date.
5. Provide a headline.

1 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2 To: Rhea Porter, Asheville Citizen-Times
3 From: Center for Participatory Change
Contact: Craig White, 828-299-9437
4 Date: April 20, 2003

5 REGIONAL NON-PROFIT ANNOUNCES NEW GRANTS PROGRAM

6 Community groups in the mountains now have another source of support as they begin new projects or start new organizations.

7 The Center for Participatory Change (CPC), **8** a nonprofit that supports grassroots efforts throughout Western North Carolina, announced Thursday that it has started a new fund to provide start-up grants of up to \$1000 for community-based groups and or organizations.

The Self-Development Fund is part of CPC's effort to build a

6. The first sentence is the ‘lead’--it should grab the reader’s attention.

7. The second sentence gives a factual summary of the article. Some people only read this far, so make your point right away.

8. Be sure to provide a brief description of your organization for readers who may not know much about you.

9. Use quotes from members, leaders, or other supporters to strengthen your points or provide detailed information. Text carries facts; quotes carry feeling.

10. Write like a reporter--just the facts. Who, what, when, where and why. Don’t praise yourself--just write objectively, and let your work speak for itself.

11. Write like you’re talking about someone else--she, they, the organization--not we, us, our organization. Keep it short: 400 words or less. Use short paragraphs of only one or two sentences.

12. In the last paragraph, explain how people can contact you or get more information.

13. Four number signs together signal the end of the press release.

stronger democracy by helping residents of rural areas organize community groups and work on community development projects.

9 “Every community has informal leaders,” explains Thomas Watson, one of CPC’s Co-Executive Directors. “These are the people who have ideas for improving their community and a commitment to hard work. But sometimes they need additional skills or resources to make those ideas happen. CPC’s training programs can help teach the skills, and now the Self-Development Fund can help provide the resources.”

10 Recipients of Self-Development Fund grants receive services in addition to funding. CPC staff work with the group on choosing a project, writing the application, creating a budget, carrying out the work and evaluating their success.

“Our goal is to build strong organizations,” says Paul Castelloe, CPC’s other Co-Director. “By the time they get a grant, a group will have not just the money, but also the experience of writing a grant, a sample proposal that they can submit to other foundations, and a successful history of fundraising. All that helps them sustain their efforts when the start-up funds run out.”

11 CPC has no restrictions about the type of projects that qualify for funds, as long as they’re planned and implemented at the grassroots level. However, due to the intensive nature of CPC’s involvement, groups must have prior experience working with CPC before they are invited to apply.

12 More information about the Self-Development Fund is available online at www.cpcwnc.org, or by calling Paul Castelloe at 828-299-9437.

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