

## STEP 5

# Get Your Message Out



There are a wide variety of channels to use in getting your message out. Make sure that you are getting the right message to the right audience at the right time. This will mean prioritizing some of those channels over others and tapping into the different strengths and connections of your advocacy team to navigate them. Here are some of those avenues:

### Traditional Media

**Letters to the Editor:** Everyone reads letters to the editor! So why not ensure that a pro-library letter slips in every now and then? A good way to “hook” library promotion into a letter to the editor is to respond to a big issue that the press is covering while showing how libraries can make a positive impact.

**Op-Ed Pieces:** It can be harder to get your local paper to print an Op-Ed piece. Here is what will help you get some excellent press coverage via this more in-depth citizen editorial:

- Have a well-known citizen write it.
- Tie into a major issue facing the community and show how the library helps (see “Letters to the Editor” above).
- Call the editor and talk to them about writing an Op-Ed piece and find out what issues they are interested in and how you can increase your chances for placement.

**Radio:** Develop radio spots for airing on local channels. Visit your local radio station and ask them if they would create some Public Service Announcements (PSAs) for the library as a contribution. If not, ask if they would do so at a discounted price. Visit with the radio

station and tell them about what the library has to offer and why it matters to everyone in the community. Ask the station to develop three or four spots using your message or slogan as a tagline. Finally, be sure the station is willing to air the spots.

**Television:** Pitch your story to a specific reporter who covers related issues. The key to a good story is showing how the library positively impacts the lives of people in the community. Large events may also be of interest. Make sure you have your spokespeople lined up and ready to tell their stories.

Another television avenue—and one that may be easier—is to get time on a local noon show or on public access television. Talk with your local station manager to see about being a guest on a local show.

**Identify traditional media outlets to be engaged for this campaign. Consider:**

- Outlet name
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- Type of engagement
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- Primary contact
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- Spokesperson
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## Social Media

Facebook, Twitter, Linked-In, TikTok, Instagram, and other social media tools offer fast and efficient ways to disseminate information at an exponential rate. In some cases, advocacy communications are conveyed through an organization’s existing social media account, but sometimes



dedicated accounts are created around events or advocacy efforts. Know which channels are used by key stakeholder groups and audiences that you need to reach. Then:

- Build your social media communities organically by connecting and interacting with social media accounts from other libraries/library organizations, non-profits, education and cultural institutions, businesses, and government agencies in your area.
- Interact with your online communities by asking questions, replying to followers and similar organizations, and providing a space for people to engage with each other on various topics of relevant interest.
- Make sure the information you post is on message, accurate and without errors.
- For important or special announcements, you can pay to promote your post on some social media platforms. This can help you distribute your message widely across and beyond your online communities.
- Appoint a person to monitor your sites and communication. While the bulk of the feedback or comments received is generally positive, be aware that negative and inflammatory comments may arise and have a plan for handling them.
- Be sure to post follow-up information, such as the results of your campaign, photos from an event, and progress towards your goals with your advocacy effort.

**Identify social media outlets to be engaged for this campaign. Consider:**

- Outlet name
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- Type of engagement
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- Primary communicator
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- Support, including graphics
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## Other Media

**Website:** Make it easy for supporters to know how they can help advance your advocacy goals by including specific and easily accessed information on the very front page of your site, if it is allowed by policy and law. Possible actions can include:



- Signing up as an advocate or taking action on a specific advocacy request (e.g., call your councilors, legislators, write the mayor).
- Volunteering for a committee or to help with the campaign—provide contact information.
- Writing a letter to the editor—give the newspaper’s address, along with “talking points” to help advocates make the case.
- Turning out to vote. Make sure your organization follows applicable elections laws.

**Organization Newsletter:** Your newsletter gives you the “power of the press” to communicate with stakeholders not just about news and events, but also advocacy priorities and their impact on the community. It also is an opportunity to reinforce the library’s or organization’s branding and key messages.

**Direct Mail:** Although expensive, there are times when direct mailings are a constructive way to reach your audience (e.g., during a referenda campaign).

**Promotional Materials:** Bookmarks, book bags, program flyers, membership renewals, direct mailings for membership drives—all of these materials are opportunities to get your message out. Be creative and consider other options as well:

- Leave branded bookmarks with your key messages at high traffic sites and places where people go and wait, such as doctors’ offices.
- Ask the local grocery store to put your message on their bags for a given length of time.
- Ask your utility company if you can include a bookmark or insert that contains information about your organization in a citywide mailing.
- Send a selected list of new business resources at the library to members of the Chamber of Commerce and be sure to include how the library benefits all businesses in your city.

**Presentations:** Nothing is more effective than personal contact. That’s the upside. The downside is that you can’t reach as many people at once with your message. You’ll need to create and train a cadre of volunteers—board members, volunteers, retirees, to get the message out in person.

Civic groups such as the Lions, Rotary, Kiwanis, etc. always welcome guest speakers. Your volunteers may belong to other clubs and organizations as well. Make a list of all the opportunities there are in your community, prioritize them, and begin scheduling speaking engagements to get your message out. Remember to “know your audience.” Make sure when you talk about the importance of the library and its services, you are tailoring your comments to what is of interest to your audience. If you are talking to physicians, for example, talk about the link between health and literacy and all that the library does to support literacy.

## Strategize

Consider the following when deciding which strategies to use:

1. **Who** is your audience?

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2. **What** is the best way to convey the information to the target audience? What kind of image do you want to project? Will it be an effective part of your total communication effort?

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3. **When** is the deadline? Will your message be distributed in time to be effective?

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4. **How** much will it cost? Is this the most effective use of available funds?

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5. **Why** is this the best strategy for this audience?

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## Resources Checklist

How will you deliver your message? What tools (brochures, fact sheets, etc.) will you need to help build your case?

- Infographics and print materials
  - Print or digital advertisements
  - Sample letter to the editor or Op-Ed
  - Graphics and copy for social media
  - Video content
  - Public Service Announcements (PSAs)
  - Other (list here):
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## Create a table to track communications:

Target Audience	Communication channel/tool	Responsibility	Timeline
<i>e.g. voters over age 65</i>	<i>Traditional media/ Op-Ed in local paper</i>	<i>Volunteer A</i>	<i>draft finalized by February 25; placement March 15–March 31</i>