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# Media Advocacy: Looking at Challenges, Finding Solutions

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## Refresher: MG's Role as the Media Contractor

- We can help you identify:
  - The right messages
  - The right stories
  - The right voices
  - The right pathways
- It doesn't have to be about placing a story in the local paper



## Definition: Media Advocacy

- Strategic use of **mass media** and **community advocacy** to advance a public policy initiative
  - Not just a news release
  - Message, messenger, audience, medium



## Overview of Calls with Grantees

- Good story opportunities
  - SFWL compliance, apartments going smoke-free, worksites moving toward healthier policies
- Limited time/capacity
  - You have a lot on your plates, and a lot of competing needs
- Working with partners can be challenging
- Media can be limited



## Today's Focus

- Working with partners: It's not your story to tell

*"A policy just passed and I want to share the story with the community, but it's not my story and the partner is hesitating."*

- Media can be limited

*"My county has limited media outlets and I call them all the time. They are tired of hearing from me."*



## Working with Partners

- It's takes a village! (Ex: creating a tobacco-free state)
  - Smokefree Housing
    - Housing Authorities, private apartment complexes, individual rental homes
  - Schools
    - Districts, Head Start, individual schools
  - Community College and Universities
  - Employer Campuses
  - Smokefree Workplace Law
    - Bars and restaurants, bowling centers



## Working with Partners

- Media advocacy means communicating with key audiences to engage them in policy change.
- Important for the preparation, policy change, celebration and enforcement.
- Different voices in a variety of mediums helps do this. Your partners are vital.
- Sometimes partners need help to see their role.



## Working with Partners

- Start by finding out what they value:
  - What do they care about?
  - What are their priorities?
  - Who do they listen to?
  - What information do they need?
  - What barriers do they put up?
  - What openings can we find?





# Working with Partners

- What to do if your partners say:
  - “No thanks”
    - Ask them why? Usually “no” is actually “tell me more”
  - “We don’t have capacity to do this”
    - We can help:
      - Develop messages
      - Draft a press release
      - Disseminate information internally and externally



# Working with Partners

- “We want to work on this internally first”
  - Good idea! We can help:
    - Put together an internal and external communication plan, including a timeline
    - Develop materials that explain your new policy decision
    - Disseminate information
  
- “We don’t want the attention”
  - Be open and honest; may not be a perfect policy but it’s a positive step in the right direction
  - Position you as a leader who supports creating a healthy community



# Working with Partners

- “What if the story is negative?”
  - Respond!
    - Online opportunities to respond in real time and share your perspective
    - Opportunity to correct arguments, provide facts and gather additional support
  
- “What’s in it for me?”
  - Positions them as a good employer/business/organization
    - Healthy worksites attract and retain employees
    - Shows you are a good steward (green, sustainable, most Oregonians are non-smokers)
    - Stop paying out health costs



## Working with Partners

- “It’s too political; we don’t want to make a fuss”
  - Meet with the decision makers
    - What led to the policy change in the first place?
    - How is the new policy making a positive impact?
    - Brainstorm the positive and negative reactions from people.
      - » MG can help by writing talking points that will really showcase the policy’s positive impact



## Too Many Stories, Too Few Outlets

- The challenges:
  - Today's media environment is shrinking
  - Many Oregon communities and regions have a handful of newspapers and radio stations
  - Health departments have many stories to tell
    - H1N1, childhood obesity, asthma, mental health services, senior services, tobacco policies
- Question: How can you do effective media advocacy?



## Too Many Stories, Too Few Outlets

- Answer: Media advocacy isn't about the media. It's about communication:
  - Messenger: you or a partner?
  - Story: impact and opportunity
  - Timing: before, during and after policy change
  - Audience: who needs to hear the information to act?
  - Channel: traditional media or community channels?



## Too Many Stories, Too Few Outlets

- Traditional media is part of a tapestry of communication channels. Stories can be told through:
  - Newspaper, radio, TV
  - Community blogs
  - Listservs
  - Newsletters
  - Websites
  - Partner email updates
  - SmokefreeOregon.com, Facebook Fan Page, Twitter



## Too Many Stories, Too Few Outlets

- Stories can also be told through:
  - Presentations (Chamber, Rotary, PTA)
  - Letter writing campaigns
  - Events
  - Testimony
- Partners are key, they expand your impact and offer a diversity of channels





## Too Many Stories, Too Few Outlets

- Identify:
  - Who are the businesses, nonprofits, and organizations aligned with your objectives?
  - Where is your audience? (ex: SF Housing = Goodwill)
  - Rotary, PTA, Chambers
- Building a relationship with partners
  - Stories may be a value-add for supporting these relationships
  - MG can help you reach out and build relationships



## Too Many Stories, Too Few Outlets

- Traditional media, thinking beyond the press release
  - Pitching a story
  - Commenting on a story that has run
  - Sending a letter to the editor
  - Submitting an op-ed
  - Participating in an editorial board
  - Advertorial
- Don't forget your partners



## Wrap Up

**Questions  
comments, peer stories, aha's?**