

Media Outreach Toolkit

Reaching out to local media is a wonderful way to increase community awareness of and involvement in your GEAR UP TN Collaborative. GEAR UP TN events are a positive reflection of work happening in your community and inviting the media will shine a spotlight on the work you're doing through the program.

Steps for Reaching out to the Media

1. **Write a press release or media advisory:** Write a brief press release or media advisory for your event or news. Typically, a press release is used for a news story where there isn't a specific event for the media to attend (but many people also use press releases for events). For example, you may want to write a press release about an innovative new partnership that has been established as a result of your GEAR UP TN Collaborative.

In each press release or media advisory, be sure to include contact information, including a name, telephone number, and email address, for your designated media contact. In the body of the press release, make sure you cover the basic questions (when applicable) of: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? Please see page 84 for a sample press release for College App Week.

A media advisory should be used for a specific event, such as a kickoff. The media advisory will highlight the date, time, and location of the event, as well as providing some background information. Please see page 85 for a sample media advisory for a GEAR UP TN kickoff event.

2. **Distribute the press release:** When you are ready to announce your news event, send out the press release or advisory to the local media. When inviting media to an event, you should try to send the advisory out approximately two weeks prior to the event.

If you email a copy of the press release or advisory, include the text in the body of your email rather than as an attachment. This will help your email avoid spam filters. If you can, send the email from an address linked to a person's name (rather than a general organizational mailbox). An email from kate.derrick@tn.gov is more likely to be read than an email from CollegeforTN@tn.gov.

Tip: If you or someone involved with your Collaborative has a relationship with the media or a specific reporter, have that person reach out and/or follow up. Also try reaching out to reporters who have covered your school(s) previously.

3. **Follow up once you send the advisory:** Once you have sent the press release or advisory, follow up by phone to make sure the newsroom received the advisory. Prepare a small script ahead of time with the most important information. Prepare to be brief on the phone- newsrooms and reporters are usually busy and being prepared when you speak to them will help you keep their attention.
4. **Designate a media point of contact:** Choose someone closely involved with your Collaborative, such as the site coordinator or project director, to be the point person for any members of the media who may want more information about the news release or event.

If you are hosting an event, the media point of contact should be prepared to greet anyone from the media who attends the event and direct them to students, faculty, or anyone else willing to be interviewed for a news piece.

5. Follow up the day before any big events: The day before any big events (or the Friday before if you have a Monday event), follow up with your media targets by phone or email to remind them of the event and/or confirm their attendance, and give them contact information for your designated media point of contact.

6. The day of your news release or event: Ensure that your media point of contact is prepared to answer basic questions about your news release, including pertinent information about your GEAR UP TN program, such as the number of students being served, the amount of funding your program received, or current college-going rates in your schools and/or district.

If you are hosting an event, make sure parking is available for any media and that your school's front office is aware that media may be arriving.

Make sure you have contact information for any journalists with whom you speak so you have their contact information for future events/announcements and to send a follow-up thank you.

7. Send a thank you: Send thank you notes to members of the media that cover your story and/or attend your event. This will help to maintain a good relationship with your local media outlets.

Sample Press Release

Note when the release can be made public (typically, it will be for immediate release).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, please contact:

**Name,
Phone,**

E-mail Address

ALWAYS include a press contact.

Include your local Collaborative logo.



Your headline should reflect the content and be in capital letters or in bold.

SCHOOL NAME HOSTS COLLEGE APP WEEK

CITY, TN (DATE) - In an effort to promote college awareness and access, **Name of Your High School** will participate in College App Week, a statewide initiative sponsored by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and CollegeforTN.org, on September 29 - October 3.

The goal of Tennessee College App Week is to provide all Tennessee seniors the opportunity to complete and file college applications with the support of their school. While much of the focus of College App Week is geared toward first-generation college students and students who may not otherwise apply to college, **Name of Your High School** will also offer college-focused activities for freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors who have already applied to college. This is the sixth annual College App Week in Tennessee and the **Insert Number** time it has been held at **Name of Your High School**.

Name of Site Coordinator, College App Week event site coordinator for **Name of Your High School**, is expecting more than **Insert Number** seniors to participate with the help of **Insert Number** volunteers from **Insert names of School Faculty/Administration/College/Community Resources that will help**. "College App Week gives our students the opportunity to complete and submit their college applications, all with the support of the local community. The event is a unique opportunity to create a college going culture in **Name of Your County/City/or District**," said **Last Name of Site Coordinator**.

For more information about the **Name of Your High School** College App Week event, please contact **Name of Site Coordinator and contact information**.

Tennessee College Application Week is a statewide event organized by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and sponsored by CollegeforTN.org, Tennessee's college and career planning web portal. The goal of College App Week is build excitement around the college application process and provide every graduating Tennessee high school senior the opportunity to apply. More information about 2014 College App Week can be found at 2014collegeappweek.eventbrite.com.

Your first paragraph should be only one sentence and be both summative and draw the reader into the rest of the release.

Include a city/state and the date of the release.

At the end of each press release, it is a good idea to include "boilerplate language" or a standard description of your GEAR UP TN Collaborative. You can adapt the GEAR UP TN boilerplate language on page 74 of this guide.

###

This mark lets readers know that this is the end of the press release.

- The body of the release should address the who, what, where, when, why, and how of the news, including a brief explanation of GEAR UP TN.
- Try to include at least one quote from someone who plays a leadership role in the news (for example, a director of schools or the mayor).
- The release should total between 4 and 7 paragraphs and no more than 2 pages.

Sample Media Advisory

Include notice that the document is a media advisory, the title of the event, and the date of the event.

Include your local Collaborative logo.

MEDIA ADVISORY FOR:

[Collaborative Name] GEAR UP TN KICKOFF EVENT

[Date of event]



Give a brief summary in the title of the media advisory

Always include main point of contact.

For more information contact:

[Name, phone number, email address]

[County, city, or district name] 7th Graders and Seniors Celebrate College Access and Success with Local GEAR UP TN Kickoff

[County, city, or district name] will kick off its \$[grant amount] grant to promote college enrollment and graduation through the GEAR UP TN program on [date of event].

Include just 1 - 3 introductory sentences to give context to your event and GEAR UP TN.

[Collaborative name] will serve [number of students] over the next seven years, including the Class of 2018, currently in the 7th grade, and seniors at participating schools in the district. [Include details about your specific event, such as activities. "9th graders from x schools will recite a pledge to attend college and seniors will wear college sweatshirts."]

Using bullet points or a list, include the Who, What, Where, and When of the event.

WHO: [Seniors at [high schools]]

WHAT: [Collaborative Name] GEAR UP TN Kickoff Celebration

WHERE: [Location]

WHEN: [Date]

The purpose of GEAR UP TN is to expand the college-going culture in Tennessee and increase the number of students attending and succeeding in postsecondary education. Across Tennessee, GEAR UP TN will serve 7,500 students in the class of 2018 and 5,000 high school seniors each year through 2019.

###

At the end of each media advisory, include "boilerplate language" or a standard description of your GEAR UP TN Collaborative. You can adapt the GEAR UP TN boilerplate language on page 74 of this guide.

This mark lets readers know that this is the end of the press release.