Section 7: Releasing the Report

After you've finished researching, writing, and publishing your report it's time to create a strategy for how to get your report out into the world. The report release creates an opportunity for you to publicize your work to media, organizational allies, public officials and others. A successful release can also be a good launching point for a campaign. This section features activities and tools that will assist your group in the report release process. It will help you devise a release strategy, plan for the release, and outreach to allies and the media. It also includes sample materials from previous report releases.

Activities
A7.1: Choosing a Strategy for Releasing the Report
A7.2: Planning for the Report Release
A7.3: Bringing in Allies
A7.4: Using the Media

Tools
T7.1: Media Release Strategies
T7.2: Report Release To-Do List
T7.3: Sample Report Release Invite Letter
T7.4: Contents of a Press Packet
T7.5: Tips on Crafting Testimony for a Report Release
T7.6: Select Media Outlets in NYC

Activity 7.1: Choosing a Release Strategy

Tool Needed
Tool 7.1: Types of Report Releases

Materials Needed
Butcher Paper
Markers

Intended Audience
Community members who have been actively involved in the research project

Time Needed
45 minutes

Purpose of Activity
The purpose of this activity is to educate participants about different types of research report release strategies so that you can make an informed decision about what type of report release strategy you will take.

By the End of Activity Participants Will
• Learn about different types of release strategies
• Discuss the positive and negative aspects of using each strategy
• Decide a release strategy

Before this Activity Participants Will Need to
Be informed about your research project

Part I. Media Release Strategies (45 minutes)

Facilitator Instructions

1. Frame the activity: today we are going to review and discuss different types of report release strategies in order to decide which strategy we want to use to release our report.

2. First, let's brainstorm some goals for the release that can then help us determine which type of release we should use. What do we want to accomplish through the release? Who do we want to impact? Who is our audience? Write answers up on butcher paper.

3. Pass out Tool 7.1: Media Release Strategies. Give basic introductions/definitions of each type of strategy.

4. Split participants into 4 small groups. Assign each small group one of the four media release strategies. Be sure each group has butcher paper and markers.

5. Have each small group discuss pros and cons of the strategy assigned to them and how it compares to the goals for your report release. Ask them to write their answers on butcher paper and be ready to be report to the large group.

6. Come back together as a big group and have each small group present their pros and cons. Take time for questions and answers after each group presents and remember to refer back to the goals for the release.

7. Next discuss which strategy is most suitable to your project and come to a decision about what format you will use for your release.

Activity 7.2: Planning for Your Report Release

Intended Audience
Members
Members who have been actively involved in the research project

Materials Needed
Blank butcher paper
Butcher Paper with Report Release Planning Chart
Markers

Tools Needed
T7.2: To Do List for Report Release

Time Needed
1 hour, 15 minutes

Purpose of Activity

The purpose of this activity is to collectively plan out everything your group needs to do to prepare for your report release.

By the End of this Activity Participants Will

• Delegate roles and responsibilities in preparation for your report release

Before this Activity Participants Will Need to

Be informed about your research project

Part I. Brainstorming the Release (30 minutes)

Facilitator Instructions

1. Frame the activity: now that we know the type of release we will use, let's brainstorm some ideas for what will happen at the release. We are not going to make any decisions yet, we are just throwing out ideas. Write all ideas on butcher paper.

   a. What do we want to DO at this event? Some examples: review research, hear personal stories, show examples of the problem, present pictures or visuals, share our recommendations.

   b. Who do we want to invite to this event? Some examples: elected officials, media, community members, allies,Where could we have this event? Some examples: City Hall, our neighborhood, community space, university, park, etc.

   c. When could we have this event? What day of the week will be best for most people? What time of day will be best? How much time will we need to prep?

   d. Who would speak at this event? Some examples: members, allies, elected officials, community groups, etc?

   e. How do we want to present our research? Some examples: factsheets, speakers, PowerPoint, stories, posters, video, etc.

2. Sum up the ideas mentioned and point out trends in the ideas. ("A number of you mentioned the importance of emphasizing personal stories during the release", etc).

Part II. Report Release Planning Chart
(45 minutes)

Facilitator Instructions

1. Frame the activity: in order to ensure the report release is a success there is a lot of preparation and planning we need to do as a group. The focus of today's activity is to do all of the necessary planning for the report release.

2. In advance of the meeting prepare a large sheet of butcher paper with the table from Tool 7.2: To-Do List for a Report Release (Note: These are just suggestions of tasks, these tasks will differ depending on the type of release).

3. Go through the table and fill out each section. Be sure to fill out the when column with dates. Add to the list any additional tasks that need to be accomplished before your release.

Activity 7.3: Bringing in Allies

Intended Audience
Members
Members who have been actively involved in the research project

Materials Needed
Butcher Paper
Markers

Time Needed
1 hour

Purpose of Activity
The purpose of this activity is to think strategically as a group about the ally organizations to which you will outreach, and to create an outreach plan.

By the End of Activity Participants Will
- Identify allies and adversaries of your organization that may affect your report release
- Create a plan to draw allies to your report release

Before this Activity Participants Will Need to
Be informed about your research project

Part I. Identifying Allies and Adversaries (30 minutes)

Facilitator Instructions

1. Frame the activity: this activity is designed for us to identify allies and adversaries of our project and organization. By identifying allies we can potentially broaden the impact of our report release by drawing strategic allies to play a role in the release, and/or more people to the release. By identifying who are adversaries are we can anticipate how opposition might affect the release of our report.

2. As a large group identify three categories of allies and potential allies of your organization or campaign: like-minded community-based organizations, legal, resource or advocacy organizations, government officials. Record them in a list on butcher paper. (If you have a group of more than 10 participants you might split into small groups and have each group brainstorm allies and report back.)

3. Discuss your organization's relationships with the potential allies listed, discuss how the allies would affect your release and decide whether or not you want to outreach to each group listed. Circle all groups you want to outreach to for the next activity.

4. On a different sheet of paper list potential adversaries to your organization or project. Be as specific as possible. Focus on the groups that may affect or be present at your release event.

5. Go through the list of adversaries and discuss how each group could potentially affect your release. Then discuss how you might account for their actions or counter-arguments.

6. Record list of any actions you might take to account for your adversaries.

Part II. Create an Outreach Plan (30 Minutes)

Facilitator Instructions

1. Prepare a sheet of butcher paper with the table below:

Ally	What You're Asking For	Who	When

2. In the Ally column, list all allies that you circled in the previous activity. Discuss and fill out the rest of the chart by clarifying what you are asking of each ally; deciding who in your organization is the most appropriate person to contact them, and when you should reach out to them.

3. Be sure to keep the results of your table for future reference.

Activity 7.4: Using the Media

Materials Needed
Butcher Paper
Markers
Paper
Pens

Intended Audience
Staff of your organization
Members who have been actively involved in the research project

Time Needed
50 minutes

Purpose of Activity

The purpose of this activity is to brainstorm and identify media targets for the research report.

By the End of Activity Participants Will
• Brainstorm possible media outlets
• Identify media targets

Before this Activity Participants Will Need to
Be informed about your research project

Part I. Media Scattergories (30 minutes)

Facilitator Instructions
1. Frame the activity: in order to draw media to your release you need to do targeted media outreach. This activity will enable us to both identify possible media outlets and to decide on which outlets we want to target.

2. Ask members to brainstorm different types of media (e.g. TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, online). Record each category on butcher paper.

3. Introduce that you will play a quick game of media scattergories to brainstorm possible media outlets to target.

4. Give each participant pen and paper.

5. Next choose one media category to begin with (e.g. TV, Radio, Blogs, Newspapers, Magazines) and give each participant 30 seconds to write down as many media outlets (e.g. ABC, CBS, WLNY etc) they can think of per category.

6. Record responses in a list on butcher paper.

7. Give a point to every participant who came up with a name that nobody else thought of. Ask everyone to record their points after each round.

8. Go through each category tallying points after each round. After finishing each round tally points, when you have finished each category tally total points and see who wins!

9. Keep the list of recorded media outlets for the next activity.

Part II. Identify media targets (20 minutes)

Facilitator Instructions

1. If your organization has a list of media contacts, print out copies in advance of the meeting and give one to each of your members.

2. Using the list of media outlets you created through the scattergory activity, as a group go through the list and star each outlet where your organization has a personal contact.

3. Then go through and star any other outlets that you think you can realistically turn out to your release.

Tool 7.1: Types of Report Releases

Press Conference

Is a news event where journalists are invited to hear a prepared presentation or statement. Journalists are often allowed to ask questions of the presenter(s).
Audience: Press, allies, members, elected officials.
Set-up: Podium or stage with people standing behind the speaker to show their support for the message. Often held at a strategic location (city hall, at a campaign specific site, etc.).

- **Benefits:** Less work, easier to get elected officials to attend, easier to get press to attend.
- **Drawbacks:** Not able to share as much in-depth information about the report as at policy briefing.
- **Roles:** MC; People to give testimony; Presenter for findings/recommendations; Elected official to introduce or endorse the report (optional).

Policy Briefing

Is a forum for your organization to share the findings and recommendations from your report with policy makers, elected officials and others that have interest in the given issue.
Audience: Policy makers, government staffers, allies, funders.
Set-up: Usually held in a more formal location and the program includes a briefing on findings and policy recommendations, testimonies by people directly impacted by the issue and/or panel discussion, Q and A.

- **Benefits:** Better able to share findings, more in depth, can attract allies and policy makers.
- **Drawbacks:** Not always as energizing as an action/rally, can be more difficult to attract media, can take more time and capacity to organize.
- **Roles:** Facilitator; People to give testimony; Panelists; Presenter for power point; Government official(s) to introduce or comment on report (optional).

Rally

Is a gathering of people to show support or voice concern about a particular issue. This can resemble or be combined with a press conference.
Audience: Members, allies, public, press.
Set-up: Action that involves members and allies. Can be creative and take place in a setting that draws attention to your report (i.e. in front of a vacant condo for a report about vacant condos or in front of a supermarket for a report about access to healthy food).

- **Benefits:** Can be a significant display of power, can be energizing for members and can draw media.
- **Drawbacks**: May not allow you to fully showcase your research findings and may be less effective in bringing out elected officials and policy makers.
- **Roles:** MC; Speakers.

Community Meeting

Is a gathering of community members to discuss and educate about the contents of the report. This can be used as a way to develop a plan of action to implement the report's recommendations.

Audience: Members, allies.

Set-up: Internal meeting to report information back to community.

- **Benefits:** Good for situations that deal with sensitive information intended for community members.
- **Drawbacks:** Not as effective for bringing in media or government officials.
- **Roles:** MC; Speakers; Presenter for findings/recommendations.

Tool 7.2: Report Release To-Do List

WHAT:	Who?	When?
Determine goals, audience and format for release		
Pick a date for release		
Pick a venue for release		
Create a "Save the Date" flyer		
Create a formal invitation/letter		
Create invite list		
Conduct outreach (send "Save the Date" and Invites)		
Create a program/agenda for event		
Create a media & outreach plan		
Select spokespeople		
Write Testimony		
Write the speaker's bios		
Gather quotes from spokespeople		
Write press advisory and press release		
Designate media point person		
Create a Power Point		
Track RSVPs		
Assign roles for day of release event		

Do Press outreach		
Compile Press Packets		
Conduct a prep session for report release		
Send out media advisory (2-3 days before event)		
Send out press release (day of event)		

Tool 7.3: Sample Report Release Invite Letter

[insert your organization's logo or put on organizational letterhead]

January 2009

Dear Friend,

We cordially invite you to the release of a report, Stuck in the System: How NYS Can Improve Public Health by Aligning the Penal Code with Public Health Law. This report is the result of a community survey administered by Voices of Community Advocates and Leaders (VOCAL) and analyzed by the Urban Justice Center's Community Development Project. The report documents the experiences of Syringe Exchange Program (SEP)/Extended Syringe Access Program (ESAP) participants and offers several recommendations to improve public health and safety in New York State.

Stuck in the System will be officially released on Friday, January 29th, 2009 at 10am at a press conference at 250 Broadway in the Lower Manhattan. Syringe exchange programs promote safe-syringe practices, reduce the spread of HIV and other blood borne illnesses, and improve overall public health. These lawful programs allow properly documented participants to possess sterile or used syringes. However, the New York State Penal code does not recognize the Public Health Law exemptions and many lawful SEP participants are subjected to harassment, arrest or even incarceration, significantly reducing the effectiveness of these programs.

VOCAL, the nation's only membership organization led by active and former users developed this research project to document the experiences of SEP and ESAP participants. With research support from the Urban Justice Center's Community Development Project, VOCAL conducted over 75 surveys, 10 in-depth interviews and additional literature reviews. Stuck in the System contains the results of the surveys and interviews, as well as several vital policy recommendations that will increase the effectiveness of syringe exchange programs and improve public health and safety.

What: Press Conference and Release of Stuck in the System: How NYS Can Improve Public Health by Aligning the Penal Code with Public Health Law

When: Friday, January 29th, 2009 at 10am

Where: 250 Broadway in Lower Manhattan

If you have any questions or would like to RSVP for the press conference, please contact _____at_____ or _____. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
Voices of Community Advocates and Leaders (VOCAL)
The Urban Justice Center's Community Development Project

Tool 7.4: Contents of a Press Packet

HOW TO PREPARE A PRESS PACKET

The purpose of a press packet (a.k.a. a press kit) is to provide the media with concise, useful, and compelling documents or information regarding your organization, its issues, and the event for which you want to receive coverage. The materials included in a press packet should be graphically appealing and easy to read. Generally, press packets are distributed to journalists when they arrive at a press conference, briefing, meeting or interview. Materials included in a press packet can vary but should generally include the following:

Press/News Release

The press release is a news story which is written in an objective way so that reporters can reprint the release in its entirety as a news story. The release should always include a catchy headline, the main point of the report, several quotes from at least two spokespeople, and references to any detailed materials regarding the organization, the event, or the issue that are available to the press. This should be as short as possible with the most important information at the beginning because journalists often only skim press releases. The release should also include contact information for someone at your organization who will field calls from the press.

List and Short Biographies (Bios) of Speakers

The name of each speaker should be listed on a sheet according to their speaking order at the event. In addition, you should include a short bio with the title, organization and other pertinent background information for each speaker. The bio should be very short and specifically tailored to the issue or event that you are organizing.

Testimony

Printed statements from each event speaker and, if appropriate, from other supporting individuals or organizations not present at the event should be included in the packet in the proper speaking order. The statements should be in the first person voice and should be directly related to the issue or event you are organizing.

Background Statement

An organizational information sheet or brochure should also be included. This statement should not exceed 1-2 pages and should include the following items:
• The organization's name and logo.
• The mission or main purpose of the organization as well as short highlights of the organization's main accomplishments
• When the organization was founded
• The organization's recent accomplishments

Report and/or Fact Sheets

A copy of the report, document or item that is the focus of the event should always be included in the press packet. Additionally, you might include fact sheets that highlight your most significant findings.

Print Visuals

If possible, include one or two visuals (e.g. photos, illustrations, cartoons, charts, tables, illustrations) that the press can use to illustrate the story. You can use black-and-white or color materials that are 5" x 7" or larger. Also have these visuals in electronic format and be prepared to email them to journalists as requested.

Press Packet Folder

All the above-referenced materials should be distributed in a standard, color folder with two pockets on the inside flaps. A business card for your organization's media contact should be inserted into the slot found on the inside of the folder. A printed sticker, which has a graphic design and words that reflect the key message of the issue, event and the organization sponsoring the event should appear on the front of the folder. Alternatively, the sticker can also be an enlarged version of your group or organization's logo.

Tool 7.5: Tips on Crafting Testimony for a Report Release

Testimony at a report release should
- Focus on one or two issues or findings from your report
- Be personal and tell a story about how the research impacts you personally
- Share key data from the research
- Share recommendations from your report
- Motivate your audience to take action

Possible Outline for Testimony
1. Introduce yourself and your organization (could include your name, where you live, and any other personal information that you think is important to share with your audience).

2. Explain why you are here today and why the report you are releasing today is personally important to you.

3. Tell a personal story about how you have been impacted by the issues that are discussed in your report.

4. Give 3-4 findings or key pieces of data from your research to connect your personal story to the research.

5. Give 3-4 recommendations from your research that are connected to the findings or data you just presented.

6. Call to Action or a motivational closing that calls on the audience to take action to fix the social issues you highlight in your report.

Who Should Give Testimony at a Report Release?
- Someone that has a personal story to tell about the issues you discuss in your report.
- Someone that was actively involved in the research process.
- Someone that is an active member in your organization.

Tool 7.6: Select Media Outlets in New York City

Television

Bloomberg Television
MNN –Manhattan Neighborhood Network
MSG-Madison Square Garden Network
New York 1 (NY1)
News 12 Long Island
NYCTV
WABC-7
WCBS-2
WLNY
WNBC-4
WNET-PBS
WNJU-Telemundo
WNYW-Fox 5
WWOR-UPN
WXTV-Univision
Radio
WNYC
WQRX
WNYM
WINS
WVNJ
WADO
WVOX
WWRL
WHTZ

Newspapers

AM New York
Columbia Spectator
Crain's New York Business
Daily News
El Diario
Empire State News
Forward
Gotham Gazette
Metro New York
Newsday
News India Times
Queens Chronicle
Queens Courier
State Island Advance
The Jewish Post
The Jewish Week
The Manhattan Times
The New York Observer
The New York Post
The New York Times
The Riverdale Press
The Village Voice
The Villager
The Wave of Long Island
The Western Queens Gazette
Times Ledger
Wall Street Journal
Washington Square News

Additional Resources: Media and Communication
The following is a list of trainings and resources on media and communications relevant for social justice organizations:

- **The SPIN Project:** Develops communications skills, infrastructure and leadership, leaving stronger organizations with the ability to amplify their work with messages that evolve from the grassroots. The SPIN project has a variety of books and resources on their website.

  Available online at:
  http://www.spinproject.org/section.php?id=9

- **Talking the Walk:** A Communications Guide for Racial Justice
  This is a very useful book with many workshops and practical media trainings and Tool from a project called Interrupt. The book "collects and synthesizes best practices, recent research, and case studies into capacity building Tool for racial justice advocates. It is an attempt to build a bridge between the researchers and practitioners conducting cutting edge media work and the individuals who lead organizing and advocacy. The goal of this work is to develop the capacity of racial justice advocates to engage the media in order to promote dialogue and public policy addressing racism."

  Available online at:
  http://www.interrupt.org/pdfs/talkthewalkfinalTool.pdf

- **Re:Imagining change:** an introduction to story-based strategy
  This is a great publication from smartMeme in the Bay Area. "Re:Imagining Change is an introduction to the ideas and methods of the smartMeme Strategy & Training Project. smartMeme was founded to innovate social change strategies in response to the movement building and messaging demands of the globalized information age."

  Available online at:
  http://www.smartmeme.org/downloads/smartMeme.ReImaginingChange_bw.pdf