



OHIO
UNIVERSITY

Center for Campus and
Community Engagement

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Baker University Center 417
Athens, OH 45701-2979
T: 740.593.4868
nallym@ohio.edu

Recommendations for Best Practices in Community-Related Communications

Preface

CCCE recommends “horizontal” relationships between the Ohio University and external community organizations. This signifies an equal partnership in all phases of interaction. More detail will be given in the sections below as to how this looks in action. In theory, however, this should be rethinking the basic idea that the University is “better” than any community organization and that the interaction between the entities results in a one-way gift to the community. This may be the case for simple donations of goods or services, but in project-based interactions, the community organization should be seen as a partner with attributes that are essential and valuable to a successful project outcome. Solutions, methods and dissemination in and of any project should be a result of healthy and equal collaboration. Furthermore, an organization often has clients whom they interact with in the community. A relationship developed with the organization does not necessarily extend to these individuals. Interactions between the University and members of the community should also be thought of as horizontal.

Creating Stories and News for an External Audience or Bobcat Nation

This pertains to a print article or multimedia piece, which is primarily intended to inform an audience of a positive outcome from a University-Community interaction or project and promote it as well.

A horizontal relationship would allow for the following:

1. The name of the community organization should be mentioned up front. For example, it is written into the “lead” of the article or opening video narration. Creative methods of introducing community partners are welcome.
2. Grammar matters: the community organization should be part of the subject of the sentence and not the object. Like the University, the Organization acts and it is not acted upon. For example, “Ohio University and Rural Action created an environmental education program for public kindergartens in Athens County.” We should avoid, “Ohio University created an environmental education program for public kindergartens in Athens County with Rural Action.”
3. Quotes should be sought from community partners, but those gathering these story elements should not cold call or surprise community partners, nor should these be the product of an email exchange unless that is acceptable to the partner. The best approach

would be a short in-person interview arranged in advance. If time does not allow, then a phone call is appropriate. The feedback we have received from some community partners in the region is that news media outlet workflows and deadlines rarely allow for an appropriate quote to be gathered and properly contextualized.

4. As mentioned previously, community partners should be included in written work, photographs or videos associated with the media piece. Production needs vary greatly in regards to media production of any type, but here are some guidelines to consider in the production workflow:
 - a. If gathering images or video during a university/community project, make sure the leading university faculty or staff member, as well as the community organization staff are completely aware of the production team's presence at an event. Be up front about the number of people or potentially intrusive equipment you would like to bring.
 - b. Getting permission from the organization does not mean you have permission from the organization's clients and members of the community who are in attendance. Ask permission, introduce yourself, offer a business card, identify and consult with a point person from the organization to help you. Some situations are sensitive based on the organization: children, members of the community experiencing vulnerability, as well as medical concerns that invoke HIPAA protections.
 - i. Involving children requires parental consent.
 - ii. Some members of the community may not want others to know they are experiencing hardship.
 - iii. Some members of the community may not be legally able to give consent for taking their image.
 - iv. Anything that potentially identifies private medical information can trigger legal protection. Consult with the organization and university participants before production begins.
 - c. When gathering images for use in a print or multimedia piece, avoid taking images that rely on generalization. Illustrating poverty in the region to add to a story about a university/community project may include an image of a dilapidated home, but taking an image of a random home in the area may actually result in public embarrassment for the occupants, despite its representational accuracy.