

COMMUNICATIONS PLAYBOOK



AMP

ALBERTA
MENTORING
PARTNERSHIP



WORTHINGTON PR & STORY

PURPOSE OF THIS PLAYBOOK

This communications playbook will help you learn and apply communications, public relations and marketing tools to help reach your target audiences.

This guide is a best practice reference and tool and will:

- Equip you with the tools to build or grow your presence.
- Provide best practices for generating engagement and attracting key audiences.
- Share standardized guidelines to help you get the most out of your efforts.
- Make the process as simple and accessible, regardless of your level of comfort or experience.



ABOUT THIS PLAYBOOK

This guide shares tips, tricks and best practices to help your communication strategy. You'll find ways to:

- Gain an understanding of best practices, do's and don'ts and tips for public relations success.
- Understand who your key audiences are and how to reach them.
- Provide key messaging and recommendations for communications channels.
- Create an effective media relations strategy.
- Prepare spokespeople for interviews.
- Navigate questions from the media.
- Access media and communication relations tools and resources currently available to the industry.
- Review general communications and branding guidelines.



VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT IN 2023

Across the province, communities have experienced a drop in mentorship and volunteering.

The past few years disrupted regular routines of Albertans, affecting community engagement and support.

We want to target new mentors, encourage past mentors to get involved and inspire existing mentors to up their involvement.



HOW TO SHARE YOUR MESSAGE

To build and expand mentoring across the province, we'll need to:

- Amplify the message that you may already act as a mentor in your everyday life.
- Increase awareness that being a mentor in your community is achievable.
- Provide general awareness about mentoring opportunities to Albertans.
- Reinforce the importance and responsibility of Albertans to consider mentorship / volunteerism to benefit their community.
- Drive traffic to AMP / partner's websites and social media channels.
- Increase applications / inquiries to AMP members from interested Albertans.



COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Having a communications plan allows you to have a big picture view of why you're doing what you're doing. A successful communications plan:

- Establishes your organization's branding and overall message.
- Raises awareness of your organization, what you're doing and why you're doing it.
- Engages with larger, broader audiences.
- Increases support for your cause or initiative.
- Informs and communicates with your stakeholders.



TYPES OF COMMUNICATIONS

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Internal communications is about promoting effective communications among people within your organization.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

External communication occurs when communicating with entities outside your organization, typically used for sharing your marketing mix to the outside world.

MEDIA RELATIONS

The goal of media relations is to educate the media, enticing them to report on or cover your company's vision, goals, objectives or accomplishments.



MEDIA RELATIONS

Media relations includes working with the media, like reporters, video journalists, producers and digital media, to inform the public of a campaign, story, etc. Working with the media is a great way to get your key messages or newsworthy stories out. It's important to create trustworthy relationships and ensure you're following some of the media do's and don'ts in this guide.

Examples of media relations activities:

- Press releases
- Media pitches
- Media event invites
- Interviews
- News articles



INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Internal communications includes any information shared with staff or employees to keep them connected, engaged and informed.

Examples:

- Internal newsletter
- Memos
- Presentations
- Emails and any communications with employees
- Town Halls
- Intranet platforms
- Staff room announcement boards/digital screens



EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

External communications includes any information being pushed out to the public. It should be geared toward the primary audiences you're trying to reach or the primary problem you're trying to solve.

Examples:

- Social media
- Newsletters
- Website
- Blogs
- Paid advertising
- Community events



KEY MESSAGING

A good story is relatable. It can inspire, attract attention or respond to something meaningful. The most memorable stories emotionally connect with your audience, and you must work at creating and keeping that connection alive through great storytelling and ensuring you have a key foundational message.

Key messages should be used across all your platforms and channels in a consistent and specific way. Make sure your message is similar each time and soon it will be synonymous with your brand. That's why it's always good to understand what exactly you want to communicate and why.



FOUNDATIONAL MESSAGE

We want people to DISCOVER the mentor in themselves.

We want to change how everyday Albertans view themselves, reminding them they have so much to give and an opportunity to make a great impact.

Not just for youth in our community and the impact in their individual life, but collaboratively the impact it will have on future generations reflected in our neighbourhoods, communities, towns and cities.



ADDITIONAL KEY MESSAGES

- Mentoring happens everyday in places and situations where you may already find yourself. You don't have to be a superhuman to engage in mentorship.
- Mentors are caring adults who strengthen our community through the simple act of spending time with youth.
- You can be a mentor. You're never too old, too bold, too shy, too weak or too strong.
- Mentors are needed in our community. Mentorship opportunities are easily accessible.



BRAND AND TONE

Cheerful	Trustworthy	Authoritative	Dry
Conservative	Conversational	Caring	Enthusiastic
Fun	Casual	Irreverent	Matter of Fact
Funny	Formal	Provocative	Passionate
Humourous	Professional	Edgy	Upbeat
Playful	Frank	Respectful	Trendy
Serious	Sympathetic	Unapologetic	Nostalgic
Informative	Friendly	Sarcastic	Romantic
Quirky	Smart	Snarky	Witty
			Coarse

- Your brand voice and tone should capture your organization’s personality and reflect the audience you’re trying to engage.
- Which of these words best represents your brand? How do you want people to describe your brand “personality”?
- Choose a few words that you feel best represent your organization, and use them to guide your copywriting.



IDENTIFYING KEY AUDIENCES

To establish a target audience, identify the people who align with your organization's vision, cause and call to action. Some ways to can find this information are:

- Focus groups and researching various articles, blogs and information related to your industry or your cause.
- Identify and browse social media accounts similar to yours and observe who engages with online content related to not just your organization but similar accounts.
- Brainstorm with others often reveals information and points of view unconsidered.
- Think outside the box and creatively tapping previously unconventional targets.



PRIMARY TARGETS

POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS

Studying education, social work, humanities or child studies.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

Recent graduates under the age of 30 with no children.

RETIREES

Senior citizens with free time and a lifetime of experience.

Males will be targeted within each core audience, as there is a high need for more male mentors.



WHERE TO FIND MENTORS

POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS

Post-secondary institutions, school clubs, arts and cultural institutions

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

Local business and community groups, local influencers

RETIREES

Faith-based organizations, local community groups

Primary audiences can also be targeted with digital ads in different spaces.



YOU WANT YOUR AUDIENCE TO...

	ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS	POTENTIAL VOLUNTEERS	COMMUNITY
THINK?	My role as a volunteer is important.	There is a need for volunteers.	This organization is an important member of the community.
FEEL?	I feel proud to be a volunteer and am making a difference in my community and the life of my mentee.	I feel inspired and empowered to become a volunteer.	I feel engaged with this organizations vision and their work in the community.
DO?	Keep volunteering, share their experience as a volunteer and encourage others to apply.	Visit the website and apply to become a volunteer.	Create opportunities for collaboration, spread the word about your organization and volunteerism and donate.



IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Consider partnering with strategic organizations who you have established connections with, asking them to amplify your message. This could include:

- Corporate partners
- Donors
- Employees
- Local non-profits
- Other mentoring / volunteer recruitment organizations
- Local governments agencies and officials
- Influencers and content creators



WAYS TO PARTNER

- Joint press release: Feature quotes, logos and spokespeople from partner organizations. Always get final approval from all stakeholders before sending out.
- Accessible and downloadable toolkits: Includes key messaging and information about campaigns, key statistics, ways to amplify your message, social media posts, social media cover photos, printable handouts, etc.
- Ask partners to feature you in any communications channels: Social media, newsletters, website, blogs, etc.



IDENTIFY COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS

When identifying potential communications channels, complete an audit of the channels you are currently using. These can include:

- Media communications: press releases, media events, interviews
- Internal communications: intranet platforms, presentations, employee handbook
- External communications: social media, paid advertising, blogs
- Social media channels: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, Twitter

Communication channels change rapidly, so continue evaluating what you should start doing, what you should stop doing and what you should continue doing. This is called the “start, stop, continue” approach.



“START”

Identify potential new channels your organization is not currently using. For example, you want to start using TikTok to reach new audiences and create more awareness about mentoring. When considering starting a new communications channel, it is important to keep in mind:

- **Resource Management**
 - **Time:** Do you have enough time to dedicate to creating TikToks in order for your channel to be successful?
 - **Cost:** Is their room in your budget for you to spend more time on TikTok?
 - **Outsourcing:** Is it a good option to consider outsourcing this? Outsourcing can include hiring someone to manage and monitor your TikTok or social media channels.



“START” CONTINUED

- Create Bitesize Goals
 - Secure the TikTok handle for your organization and create your account. Invite users from your other social media channels to follow your new TikTok account.
 - Cruise TikTok to identify themes, trends and ideas for content.
 - Create a content calendar, which will help you stay organized and efficient.
 - Start by posting one TikTok video per week.
 - Evaluate your results after a couple of months of posting. You can use the analytics within TikTok.



“STOP”

Are there any channels that you should stop using?

For example, are there any social media platforms that are no longer of use to your organization?

Evaluate whether you should spend time and budget on a different platform.

Compare analytics and audience reach as a way to evaluate whether a channel is reaching your key goals.



“CONTINUE”

Evaluate what is currently working for your organization and keep doing it.

For example, perhaps your newsletter has great content, a large audience and good open rate. Keep doing what works, and consider making it even better by updating your visual content or asking your audience what they would like to see.



PRESS RELEASES

Press Release Template

Press releases are a great tool for organizations to make key announcements or share newsworthy content. It is a standardized way of getting information to the media, and in turn, to your stakeholders. Press releases follow a strict template that makes it easy for journalists to understand your perspective and cover your story.

On the next slide is a sample template for building your own press releases. It is recommended that you develop a format that you can use consistently each time you write a press release on behalf of your group or organization.



YOUR LOGO HERE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Headline in Bold – Clear Summary of the news you are sharing

Sub-head in italics – Additional newsworthy details about your message

The province is not required if it's coming from a major Canadian city.

CITY, PROVINCE - Month, Day, Year – The first paragraph should include your lead copy. Get to the point of your press release early, giving the most important details first. They should go into this paragraph.

You can lead your second paragraph with a quote from one of your key spokespeople. A good rule of thumb is to ensure that you're not repeating information from elsewhere in the release in your quote. Try to share something new. Use quotation marks around your quote, also indicate the name and title of the person to whom the quote is attributed.

In the third paragraph, you can provide additional details about the news you are sharing. Keep it to 2-3 sentences.

The fourth paragraph can provide more information, or a quote from a second spokesperson.

Conclude your press release with a call to action for your readers.

About Your Organization

This is where you will put your boilerplate, which is a short paragraph describing your organization. Don't forget to include a website link where people can find more information.

All press releases traditionally end with "###" or "-30-", centered at the bottom. This denotes to reporters the end of the copy of the release.

-30-

For more information, please contact:

NAME
Title
Organization
Phone Number
Email

In most cases, your press release will be "live" as soon as it is sent, so indicate that it is "For Immediate Release". If you are sending information under embargo, indicate in this section the date and time when the information can be made public. Under embargo means you are giving media access to information before it goes live so they can prepare a story in advance. Use embargos cautiously as there is a possibility that information could get leaked.

The "About" section you see at the bottom of press releases is called a boilerplate. This is standardized copy about your organization that is consistently used in every press release. Ensure that your boilerplate information is reviewed for accuracy on a regular basis. You may want to put your website at the end of your boilerplate.

Include the name (or names) of the communications officers who will field any media phone calls. Make sure they are available by email / phone for reporters on the day the press release goes live to coordinate any required interviews. Put a maximum of two contacts, or one per organization if it is a collaborative news release.

PRESS RELEASES DO'S AND DONT'S

DO:

- Use appropriate Canadian Press standards throughout your work. The Canadian Press Stylebook is a good resource to access the latest standards and information.
- Write in the third person, “I” or “we” should only be used in direct quotes.
- Ensure your message and content is newsworthy – why would a reader / viewer / reporter care about this story? Is it sharing something new and relevant?
- Whenever possible, try to keep your press releases to around 500 words. Editors may get dozens or hundreds of story ideas and press releases per day – make it easy to find the information.
- Think about “headlining” your content – get to the point quickly, and then fill in additional details as you read through the press release. Make your key message very clear.



PRESS RELEASES DO'S AND DONT'S

DO's continued:

- Try to use keywords that will make your press release easier to find through search engines.
- Ensure you fact check any statistics or positioning statements; provide a source wherever possible.
- Leverage strong spokespeople for quotes within the press release to enhance the quality of the overall release.
- Proofread your copy for accuracy and grammatical correctness.
- Be consistent with your writing style, tone and press release format.



PRESS RELEASES DO'S AND DON'T'S

DON'T:

- Don't use too many abbreviations and acronyms: For consumer-facing pieces and press items, a best practice is to spell it out, unless it is a term or acronym that's very familiar to people.
- Don't forget to proofread your work and check your sources for accuracy.
- Don't send multiple press releases within a short period to time – be selective of what you say, and make sure it's new, different and/or newsworthy.



DISTRIBUTING PRESS RELEASES

When you're ready to distribute your press release, keep the following points in mind:

- Ensure your media lists are accurate and up to date.
- A friendly follow up phone call to the appropriate reporter can help ensure your press release doesn't get missed. That said, following up too much might irritate a reporter – use your best judgment.
- Don't pitch your press release to every reporter at a particular publication – be selective, do your homework and connect with the appropriate person.
- Consider leveraging a newswire service to amplify your distribution, particularly if you have time-sensitive or big news to announce.



DISTRIBUTING PRESS RELEASES

- Try to distribute your press release in the morning when possible, and avoid Fridays if you can.
- Consider lead time with your story pitches and press releases. While online, TV, radio and print coverage occurs daily, longer lead publications such as industry magazines plan their pieces months in advance.
- Post your press releases to your website and social media channels as appropriate.



PRESS RELEASE BASIC GUIDELINES

Follow the Canadian Press Stylebook

- The Canadian Press Stylebook is the standard format for media-related work in Canada.

Imagery and Supporting Materials

- Pictures, infographics, video and other appropriate supporting materials are a welcome addition to any press release. Ensure you have both high-resolution (minimum 300 dpi) and web-ready (lower resolution) images available.

“Headline” your information

- Be efficient and straightforward with the information in your press release. Tell media in the headline and lead paragraph the key points of your information and provide supporting information and quotes throughout the body of the release. If you’re putting your press release on the wire, note that many wire services charge per 100 words, so efficiency also makes economic sense in many cases as well.



BOILERPLATE / OFFICIAL MESSAGES

- The “About” section you see at the bottom of a press release is called a boilerplate.
- This is standardized copy about your organization that is consistently used in every press release. It basically tells audiences who you are and what you do.
- Ensure that your boilerplate information is reviewed for accuracy on a regular basis.
- Add your website to the end of your boilerplate to help reporters easily access additional information.
- Don’t forget to add your contact information after the boilerplate.



BOILERPLATE EXAMPLES

EXAMPLE: Alberta Mentoring Partnership (AMP) is a network of community agencies across the province, highlighting the importance of mentoring and impacting youth and children in Alberta in a powerful way.

EXAMPLE: Every Albertan has a stake in the future of the province. AMP supports the development of healthy, engaged citizens. AMP can help Albertans make a difference in the life of a young person by connecting them with a mentoring or youth serving organization. Learn more at albertamentors.ca.



PITCHING THE MEDIA - TIPS

Whether you're on the receiving end of a phone call from a member of the media or proactively pitching a media story, following these best practices will help get the results you're looking for.

Media Lists: Ensure your media lists are up to date with the appropriate contact information. Build strong relationships with media in your community - understand the topics they cover, and what they look for in a good story.

Your Story Pitch: Keep your story pitch to the point and efficient. Whenever possible, make your story pitch specific to the person you are pitching. The best story pitches are only a few sentences long: Provide your story approach, support it with general facts / statistics / insights, and indicate the subject matter expert (spokesperson) who is available for an interview.



PITCHING THE MEDIA - TIPS

Who to pitch: From your pre-prepared media list, consciously decide who will receive your pitch. Are there two people you are pitching at the same publication, consider sending the pitch to both of them at once so they have visibility and can discuss who will get back to you. Avoid sending your pitches directly to publishers or editors-in-chief of major publications; they will rarely read it.

When to pitch: Keep in mind the day and time you pitch. It is generally suggested to avoid Friday afternoons and be mindful of pitching on or around holidays.

If your news is urgent: If your pitch or press release is urgent in nature, be sure to send it to the appropriate news desks which often operate close to 24 hours a day.



MEDIA INTERVIEW TIPS

Once you have a media opportunity secured, it's time to prepare your spokesperson for the interview.

- **Know the outlet and their audience:** Who is the end consumer you're speaking with? What is the knowledge level of the subject matter you're sharing?
- **Understand the deadline:** When do you need to get back to the reporter? When will the media interview take place? Take your time: Never take an interview on the spot, even if media want to speak with you right away, give yourself a short period of time to prepare in advance. When you're responding, don't be afraid of a short pause before you answer, thinking through your key messages.
- **Prepare your key messages in advance:** What are the key 3-4 points that you or your spokesperson should get across?



MEDIA INTERVIEW TIPS

- **Select the appropriate spokesperson:** Who has the expertise and authority to speak about this particular subject matter? Have they been media trained? Are they comfortable with the subject matter?
- **Headline your responses:** Similar to your press release format, ensure your spokesperson headlines their responses appropriately.
- **Memorable quotes or statistics:** Preparing some key sound bites and having current statistics and figures at the ready will help make your interview more successful. Ensure your information is accurate and relevant.
- **Practice:** Work with your spokesperson by walking through some interview scenarios in advance. Anticipate any difficult questions and work through how you will navigate them.
- **Control the interview:** Every interview should be an opportunity – take control of the interview and articulate your key messages.



MANAGING DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

Depending on the subject matter, your spokesperson may encounter difficult questions in a media interview.

When you don't know the answer: If you don't know the answer, don't make one up – have your spokesperson find out the information and then get back to the reporter.

Bridge back to your key messages: When possible, bridge your response back to your prepared key messages to help reinforce a point.

Off the record: Nothing is ever off the record.

Negative Questions: If faced with a negative question, try your best to not articulate a negative response in return. Don't repeat negative jargon that is inaccurate or not used. Return to your key messages and reinforce your perspective in a positive way.



MANAGING DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

Speculative Questions: If a question is speculative or takes you into an arena where you can't answer the question, don't feel the need to comment. Simply say, "I'm not the best spokesperson to answer that question."

Competitive Questions: Questions about competitors may sometimes arise. Don't provide your personal point of view or opinions about competitors, reinforce your own key messaging.

Don't say "No Comment": No comment seems like an admission of guilt. If you don't know the answer, indicate that you're not the appropriate spokesperson for that particular question.



MEDIA RELATIONS TOOLS

- Campaign Launch Press Release / PSA with photo
- Media drops to key media outlets
- Media availability with a spokesperson from your organization
- Localized spokespeople available in secondary markets (we recommend conducting a mini media training with all spokespeople in advance)
- Media Interview Briefs / support
- Media monitoring and tracking (looking for news articles, interviews, etc. following campaign announcements)



WHERE TO FROM HERE?

- Consider building a “Plan on a Page” - Which tools from this kit seem most feasible for you and your team?
- Engage with the “Mirror Mirror” campaign to build traction in your communities.
- Connect with us if you have questions.



THANK YOU

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