
PUBLICITY: GETTING THE WORD OUT AND THE PEOPLE IN

The following suggestions are to help you attract participants for your discussion event or series. Our goal is to help you reach a wider and more diverse audience. To that end we have included guides to traditional publicity methods as well as some new ideas.

At the end of this section, you will find models for announcements across various media. Adjust them to suit your area, your organization(s), and your event or series. Be sure to include all necessary information, especially that events/sessions are free and open to the public, and funded by Mass Humanities.

ENLIST OTHERS TO HELP YOU answer questions and carry out the publicity. Ask anyone who might be involved or interested, anyone who might benefit from the event or series, or even a local reporter or radio personality. The questions and suggestions provided below are for any community, but you and your colleagues know your territory, so be imaginative: What works in your community?

START EARLY. News releases to newspapers, announcements for newsletters, newspaper community service announcements, and radio and TV public service announcements all need to be sent at least a month ahead of time. Check schedules and desired formats with area papers, radio and TV stations, and community web calendars. Additionally, if you're organizing a discussion series, publicity during the series is important; without it, participation will dwindle.

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE YOUR POTENTIAL AUDIENCE. People often will travel a fair distance for a desired discussion event or series. A good rule is to consider communities and people within a 45-minute travel distance when thinking about the following questions and suggestions.

Know Your Audience

- Who already knows your organization or host site?
- Who does not? Are they men, women, students, older, younger, retired, teachers, farmers, professionals, parents?
- Who might be interested in participating in your event or series?
- Who would you like to interest in participating?
- Discussion events and series regularly attract new people to organizations and host sites. Think about new audiences, along with familiar audiences, when planning publicity.

Other Organizations and Groups in Your Area

- Which neighboring organizations, groups, or people will help distribute posters, flyers, and bookmarks?
- Will they also register people and help provide materials?
- Are there trustees or former trustees of your organization who will help? Are any of them members of other organizations that would help spread the word?

Newspapers, Radio, and TV

- Talk with local editors, reporters, and announcers about what you are doing and why it is important. They will be more receptive to your news releases and announcements, and they may even send a reporter for a feature story.
- Which newspapers do people in your area read (dailies, weeklies, shoppers)?
- Send each paper a news release so that it appears four weeks before the event or series. (See the model below.)
- Advertisements in newspapers reach a wide audience. Place them so they appear a couple of weeks before the event or series. Talk with the newspaper(s) about the best days and sections for your ad, about design, and about cost.
- Which community web calendars and listings serve your area? The local NPR radio station may have an online calendar.
- Which radio and TV stations serve your area?
- Find out the schedule for submitting Public Service Announcements (PSAs). Send one to each station before the series. (See the model below.)
- Many radio stations have informal interview shows. Ask about them. It's good publicity for the event or series and for your organization.
- Some local cable TV stations may videotape discussions and show them before additional events/sessions.
- Send announcements to the newspapers and radio and TV stations for their "Community Calendars" before *each* event/session. (See the model below.)
- Weekly papers (and some dailies) may run short news stories on local meetings. Immediately after the first event/session (if you're running a series), send a short, concise story; use local names and quotations from participants, if possible.

Social Media

- Make use of social media. Use your organization's Facebook page, Twitter account, Instagram profile, etc., to advertise the event or series and connect with Mass Humanities. (See the model below.)
- Consider creating a temporary Facebook group for the series or create an event on your organization's Facebook page and invite fans.
- Create a hashtag for the series and use it in your social media posts, e.g. #DiscussXYZ.

Printed Materials

- At least two months before your series begins, start thinking about printed materials. Ask someone with experience in graphic design and text layout for help, or look in books of clip art or period graphic art for an appropriate and eye-catching motif. Posters, flyers, and bookmarks make great promotional materials. Please see specific grant guidelines for requirements, suggestions, and resources.
- Where are the places posters will be seen and read?
- Where can stacks of flyers and bookmarks be placed for distribution? Banks, bookstores, coffee shops, and schools are good, easy answers. Where else? Enlist several volunteers to put up the posters and distribute flyers and bookmarks at least a month before the event or series.

Mailing lists

- Your organization or host site may have email lists, including lists of people that have attended other programs. If possible, email the flyer to lists and invite registration through email.

Newsletters

- Many organizations have newsletters (printed and electronic) and will include a news release or announcement in them if it is received in time. This is a good way to reach a large membership easily. Contact such organizations as: PTOs, PTAs, other parents' organizations, Chambers of Commerce, local recreation departments, local community centers, youth groups and organizations, schools, museums, senior citizens' organizations, women's clubs and organizations, faith-based organizations, Friends of Libraries, and other literary groups.

MODEL SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

- *Sample Facebook Post:* [Our program] is supported by Mass Humanities, whose grants inspire considered thought, conversation, and action through the humanities. We're happy to participate in their mission to improve civic life in Massachusetts. See more about what Mass Humanities does here: <http://www.masshumanities.org/>
- *Sample Twitter Post:* We're funded by @masshumanities, who supports thought, conversation, and action in Massachusetts: www.masshumanities.org