

## Getting press for your project

Identify the right media outlets  
and write a winning pitch

### 1 What types of press should I seek out?

**Start hyperlocal:** People often reach too high at the beginning—they read the *New York Times* every day, so they want to pitch their story there, but that’s not likely to work. Outlets like neighborhood blogs and local weekly papers are generally the first stop for proposing an idea, a place to “earn your first ink.” Hyperlocal coverage trickles up and informs bigger outlets, and it provides a more legitimate basis for follow-up and amplification than a cold-call pitch.



*Remember that direct communication—like going door to door, or canvassing on the street—and online avenues like social media and email lists are other good options. Pitching your project to third-party media outlets should only be one part of your overall press strategy.*

### WHO WE SPOKE TO:

**Wiley Norvell**  
NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio’s  
Communications Advisor for Housing  
and Economic Development.  
Has coordinated press outreach on  
some of the Mayor’s signature issues.



### 2 How can I choose the best outlets to contact?

**Identify your champions:** reporters or outlets who have shown a prior commitment to the problem you’re focusing on. For example, if you’re working on a child hunger-related project, the *New York Daily News* could be a press ally, as they have a longstanding campaign against that issue. **Do some research!**

**Find a hook:** Look for opportunities to communicate about your issue in the context of stories that aren’t your own. Primarily, you’ll want to seek out press for your own initiative, but when things happen in the news that are somehow related, you can also appeal to the press by **talking about how your project connects to them.** For example, if you want to improve pedestrian crossings in your neighborhood and the city reports on a traffic fatality, you can write to a media outlet about the importance and timeliness of your project with that event as your “hook.” This strategy comes with the added benefit of introducing yourself to reporters as a plugged-in source for future comment on current events that relate to your issue.

### 3 How should I pitch to media outlets?

Before you write a pitch, make sure you understand **where you fit in the context of your project**. Are you starting from scratch with a new idea? Or picking up where someone else left off? What is the history of your issue that's brought it to where it is today? You want to be seen as an authority on your idea, so **spend a little time getting to know your place in the bigger picture**.

**Keep it short!** Limit your pitches to three or four sentences. The people who read these queries are busy, underpaid, and working in a frenetic environment. Breaking through only happens when you recognize this and write a compassionately brief and clear pitch.

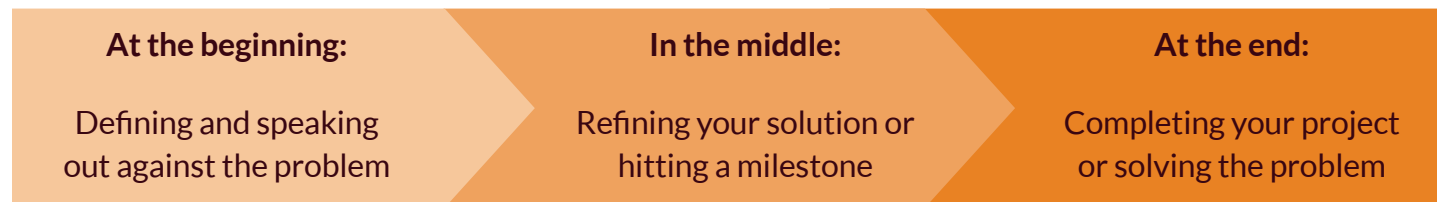
Convey the newsworthiness of your idea upfront, and give only a brief introduction to what you're doing—this is not the place for an explanation of every facet.

Structure your pitch like this:



### 4 When should I seek press?

You'll want different press at different stages of a project's timeline. One classic formula is:



## Why seek press coverage?

Getting your story told by the media can help convince influence-makers, elected officials, businesses, and the general public to support you and take action on your behalf—whether that means funding, an endorsement, volunteer time, or something else. **Think of press as a vehicle for engagement.**

When you're trying to get a good idea off the ground, you often have to work long and hard for a while before experiencing a win. **Press coverage can provide encouragement:** it shows you have capacity, substance, something of interest—important ingredients in building and sustaining movements.

## What if the reporter gets it wrong?

I've never read a story without erroneous details in it. Don't sweat the small stuff. If there's something really big that's wrong, or you've been misrepresented, a quick call or email to the reporter will often fix it. Be civil. Be polite. Compliment the piece before you ask for a change. If that doesn't work, Twitter and Genius are good ways to get your take out there. Just remember working with the media is all about personal relationships. Don't burn a bridge you'll need later on.

*Getting press during multiple phases of your project will help reach more people and keep momentum up.*