

MUSEUM on Main Street

Promoting Your MoMS Exhibition

Understanding Who Does What

Museum on Main Street uses a three-pronged approach for public relations activities: national, state and local.

- At the national level, the public relations staff at the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) issue press releases and press packets to national media on behalf of the multi-state tour of the exhibition. In addition, complete state itineraries and basic information are available at the MoMS website, www.museumonmainstreet.org. Exhibition images for use by the press are provided on a disc at the back of this notebook.
- State humanities councils provide in-state promotion via press releases, their newsletters, websites and email updates; many also develop and distribute special brochures or posters promoting the tour. The state council tour coordinator will work with the local venues in distributing the promotional materials provided by Museum on Main Street and in developing any publicity campaign for the statewide tour.
- Local venues are given the charge to utilize the marketing materials provided as strategically as possible. With this document, we offer information for traditional public relations strategies and suggestions of marketing campaigns that we have seen work at other host venues. As you review this material, consider which of the following approaches, or combinations thereof, would work best for your institution and in your community:

Publicity Pointers and Suggestions for Local Hosts

First Things First: Establish a PR Committee and Marketing Strategy:

It's very important that you assemble a Public Relations committee for your exhibition program. With some good planning and aggressive outreach on the committee's part, the potential is great to reach new media outlets and to get new visitors into the museum to see the Smithsonian exhibition and your local exhibits. As a group, consider your own experiences and the suggestions below to establish a marketing strategy for your programs.

1. Identify the audiences that you want to attract to your programs, and which programs would be best suited for them: general public, teachers, school groups, seniors, families, etc.
2. Consider all types of media: print, television, radio, internet, as well as networking with partners and other local organizations to help promote your exhibition. Identify any "connections" your committee members might have at such media outlets and which ones would be most effective in your community.
3. Identify specifically which media outlets you'll be targeting and assemble the appropriate contact information. Be sure to identify a contact person at each media source and direct your information accordingly.
4. Finally, establish a schedule of when you will be contacting them, with what form of information, and who is responsible. Press releases are best sent 7-10 days before the featured event, more lead time is required for weekly or monthly publications (newsletters, magazines). Be sure to schedule a follow-up phone call to the media contact a day or two before the event to confirm that they have received your materials.

Press Releases and Public Service Announcements:

- Templates for press releases to be issued pre, mid and post tour are provided in this Marketing Toolkit. In addition, a selection of digital images is provided to accompany your press releases. Whether you use the templates provided or your own press releases, be sure to promote your special programs and activities held in conjunction with the exhibition.
 - Consider sending press releases to:
 - Daily and weekly newspapers
 - Radio and television stations
 - Community and association newsletters
 - School/PTA newsletters or publications
- Radio and television stations will air public service announcements (PSAs), written or recorded, as part of their local programming.
 - Send local stations a written 30-second media spot announcement. For example:
 - “The Smithfield Art Center invites area residents to a special Smithsonian Museum on Main Street exhibition – “exhibition title.” [insert credit line] The exhibition opens on (date) and is on view through (date). The Art Center is open Sundays, 3-6 p.m. and weekdays, 2-5 p.m.”
 - If possible, record a local celebrity (mayor, business leader, etc) reading the PSA. Often, local stations will help with the recording.

Additional Pointers:

- Ask the editor of your daily newspaper to place an article or photographs in the Sunday photo magazine or supplemental section. These sections often reach more people than would a weekly paper.
- Calendars of Events: Contact the Calendar editors at area colleges and university newsletters, local chambers of commerce and visitors bureaus and convention centers to include a short item and photograph of the exhibition in their calendars.
- Host a press preview of the exhibition a few days before the public opening. Most journalists prefer a few days lead-time and wish to review an exhibition rather than print a news release verbatim.
- Arrange interviews for local print journalist and the broadcast media with the project directors, local exhibition curators, guest lecturers, scholars, and authors who are available.
- Coordinate promotional giveaways with local radio shows or stations. Giveaways could include shop or entrance-fee discounts and/or exhibition related books or posters. Exhibition-related paraphernalia could be used as membership incentive and would promote the work of your institution.
- Invite the media to cover special events and public programs, such as a celebration for the exhibition opening. These are community news items that bring attention to your organization and the exhibition.

Utilize the Internet:

- Don't forget to use your website to promote the program. If your organization does not have its own website, ask the local computer club, junior or high school computer class, or local computer store to develop a website for the exhibition and related programs. *Be sure to review the Web Site Guidelines & Suggestions provided in this Toolkit.*
- Link to the Museum on Main Street website (www.museumonmainstreet.org) and the website for your state humanities council. Follow up with these organizations so that they may establish reciprocal links back to your website.

- Establish reciprocal links between your project website and those of local partner organizations.
- Change the signature settings on your email messages to include information about the exhibition and related programs. Have members of your organization do the same for their email messages.

Create Promotional Displays or Appearances at:

- Schools and Libraries: design display cases with books or student artwork related to themes of the exhibition
- Community Centers and Shopping malls: utilize secured display cases to promote the exhibition.
- Collaborative partner sites and events are an excellent way to distribute promotional materials, brochures to a broader audience.
- Local parades: create an exhibition-related float for a local parade, advertising that the exhibition is coming.
- Holiday celebrations, such as Festival of Trees: decorate a holiday tree with postcards from the exhibition and exhibition related ornaments. Include a sign advertising when and where the exhibition is coming.

Other Ideas:

- The exhibition poster includes space on which local hosts can print the facility's name and the dates when the exhibition will be in that community. Posters can be distributed to: libraries, shopping centers, department stores, bank, civic and sports arenas, schools, clubs, community groups, and church organizations. *Be sure to review Tips on Strategic Use of Printed Materials provided in this Toolkit.*
- Arrange to talk to local groups about the upcoming exhibition and programs. Giving presentations at Rotary, service clubs, PTA or teacher meetings can help promote the upcoming exhibition and enlist volunteers. A scripted PowerPoint presentation is available for download from the MoMS website—be sure wait until after you have attended your in-state program planning meeting before showing this presentation to other groups.
- Talk to a local utility, phone company, or major employer about including a tag line on their bills or pay stubs with your museum name and dates of the exhibition.
- Print clear, sticky labels with the museum name and dates of the exhibition to include on envelopes for all your mailings during and just prior to the booking.
- Ask the city to hang banners on light posts along main streets announcing the exhibition.
- Solicit the donation of a billboard from a local business in a high-visibility location. Note: allow at least 3 months lead time for this
- In planning special events, i.e. and opening reception, press preview or public programs, be sure to invite your senators and representatives (see Congressional Relations Overview) as well as local officials (governor, mayor, city/county officials, and presidents of local colleges or universities). Special events and public programs can easily become the focal point for a community news story.

Finally: When planning your media relations strategy, remember that help is always available: State Council staff can assist in developing media strategies and identifying in-state media sources. In addition, the Museum on Main Street staff are available to you as a resource, offering strategies that they have seen work at other hosting venues or simply to brainstorm what types of promotions might work best in your region.