

Commonwealth Speakers Publicity and Audience Recruitment Guide

This guide is meant to take you step-by-step through generating appropriate publicity material (flyers, press releases, and pitch letters) with a timeline you should follow to effectively and efficiently carry out your Commonwealth Speakers event. The PHC expects you to recruit an audience of **no fewer than 25** people for this presentation, and following this guide should help you achieve this goal.

In addition to the value of audience recruitment, you should see promoting this presentation as an opportunity to raise awareness of your organization; how you're pursuing your mission, what your goals are, and your role as a center of cultural and civic activity in your community.

To assist your efforts, the PHC has included the following:

- **List of effective recruitment and promotional strategies.**
- Recommendations for creating an **effective flyer** to grab the public's attention.
- Instructions on how to create **effective press materials**; a description of the differences between press releases and pitch letters, and directions for when and how to use them.
- **Required publicity language crediting the PHC and any additional funder** who has provided support for the program.

Effective Publicity Strategies

Developing an audience for your presentation can take a great deal of work. The PHC understands that not all organizations have professional communications or outreach staff, but even the smallest organization can effectively bring in audiences and raise its profile in the community. We strongly encourage you to follow as many of our suggestions as you can; each is directed at a different group of people, and together they will help you bring in a large and diverse audience.

These are some strategies that the PHC has found to bring people to your presentation:

Using your organization's email list or newsletter. The first people you should contact are your own members and contacts. Be sure to include your board members, volunteers, and family. In your message, include the date, time, and location of the presentation, along with information about the Speaker that may attract your members

Connecting with other local groups that have similar or complimentary interests. If, for example, you are a library hosting a talk on the arts, contact your local museum and art galleries. If you're a museum hosting a talk on history, contact local historical societies. Ask them to contact their members with details about your event – and be sure to provide them with a press release.

Contacting local high school teachers. Teachers often seek extracurricular learning opportunities for their students, and teachers of history and the arts in particular are often interested in inviting students and their families to attend Commonwealth Speakers presentations. Send a letter detailing the presentation and why you think the students would be interested with a press release. Check online for your local school's website and teacher directory.

Flyers. Placing flyers in community organizations such as libraries, historical sites, community centers, arts organizations, community bulletin boards, churches, and other sites that receive a lot of foot traffic is especially effective.

Contact your local newspaper(s), TV and radio stations, and other media. This is best accomplished through sending out quality press releases and pitch letters – either by mail, email, or both – followed up by phone calls. If you personally know an employee of any media organization, contact that person first. He or she can help you figure out the best person to contact with your press release and phone call. See the timeline and sample press release and letter if you need more details.

Discuss any relevant local details with your Speaker. Find out if the Speaker knows anything about your local history that he or she can integrate into the presentation that you can use to promote the event and draw an audience. If your Speaker is unfamiliar with your area, provide them with a couple details of your region that they may find relevant.

Identify effective means of promotion of your events on the internet. If your organization has a website or blog, post articles and links to other relevant information about your Speaker's topic. Network with other organizations with websites in your community and try to get links or information about your events posted on their sites. Consider creating a page for your organization on wikipedia, MySpace, a group on

Facebook, a post on the community events section of craigslist, or any other high traffic interactive site.

Craft a message to spread by word-of-mouth and a strategy for dispersing it. Telling people about your program in a clear, compelling message can be one of the most effective means of spreading information. Come up with a simple description of your program and make sure everyone at your site knows about the program and that they tell each patron who comes into the building. Take any opportunity on or off the job to let people know about your event, such as adding it to the signature line of your email messages, or telling 10 friends and asking them to tell 10 friends.

Acknowledgement of PHC Funders

The PHC raises funds for Commonwealth Speakers from a number of different sources across the state. **It is very important that these funders, along with the PHC, receive credit for their support on ALL publicity materials generated for this program, including (but not limited to) flyers, press releases, pitch letters to written or electronic media sources and newsletter announcements.**

Please note: the Commonwealth Speakers Coordinator will give you information about the specific funder for your program.

Use this language for crediting the PHC and other funders:

“This Commonwealth Speakers presentation is a program of the Pennsylvania Humanities Council, supported in part: [*please select appropriate funder*]

- by NiSource and Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania.
- with federal Library Services and Technology Act funds administered by the Office of Commonwealth Libraries.
- by the National Endowment for the Humanities and its We the People initiative.
- by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

Example:

This presentation is a program of the Pennsylvania Humanities Council supported in part by National Endowment for the Humanities and its We the People initiative. The Pennsylvania Humanities Council, a nonprofit organization, inspires individuals to enjoy and share a life of learning.

The Flyer

The most basic promotional tool for your program is your flyer. Flyers should be posted wherever there is a community bulletin board (such as your local library, coffee shop, bookstore, church, etc.) at the event location, and anywhere else in your community

that seems appropriate. Some facilities and community organizations will permit you to leave a stack on a giveaway table or in a takeaway rack – we encourage you to do this as well, so people can take the flyer as a reminder to attend the event.

Here are some guidelines that will help you create an effective flyer:

- Include the Speaker's **name**, the **title** of the presentation, a short **description** of the presentation, the **day, date, and time** of the event.
- Include your **address** (with directions if necessary) a **contact person** for the event and **contact information** (phone number and/or email address) so that your community can easily inquire about the event.
- Always list the title of your Speaker first as a **Commonwealth Speaker**. Other affiliations are valuable to mention as well, but the Speaker is provided to you by the PHC, and should be initially acknowledged as such.
- Be sure to include, in some form or another, the phrases **free of charge** and **open to the public**.
- Credit the Pennsylvania Humanities Council and other funders using the required **publicity language** and **logo**.

The Press Release

The Press Release is used to communicate information about a news-worthy item to members of the media to encourage them to write articles and announcements about that item. Press releases are typically mailed, emailed, or faxed to assignment editors of media organizations. You should include as many pertinent facts as possible, from the date and time of your event to general information about your organization and the PHC.

Top left:

For Immediate Release, day, month, date and year.

Top right:

Appropriate Contact information. If you are the person to call about the event, write your name, the best phone number to reach you, and your email address. If your organization has an outreach coordinator or a PR/marketing staff person, his or her information should be used.

Heading:

Your heading should stand out with **Boldface** and a **larger font**. Your heading should try to grab the attention of the reader. Try using key words from the body of your press release and your speaker's name. Always identify the Speaker first as a Commonwealth Speaker.

First Paragraph:

The first paragraph answers the who, what, where, when, why and how questions. Make sure that you put in boldface the name of the Speaker, your organization, date, time, and location of the presentation.

Second Paragraph:

Use this paragraph to go into greater detail about the Speaker's presentation – is it a lecture, performance, or workshop? Include biographical information about the Speaker and his or her credentials as an expert. Think about why you requested this Speaker and what makes them appealing. Think about questions a reporter or potential attendee might have, and answer them here.

Third Paragraph:

The third paragraph should include the PHC's required publicity language, as well as a description of your organization and what it does. Your organization's mission statement is a good place to look for this language.

Bottom of the page:

List the title of the presentation, the Speaker's name, the date, time, and location (including street address). Under this information, write "###" to indicate the release is complete.

The Pitch Letter

The pitch letter is a letter written to individual reporters, editors, writers, or web publishers to pitch an idea of a story for them to cover. The pitch letter should be directed to people who cover topics related to your organization or location, such as an arts and education reporter, or someone who covers events in your town.

Your pitch letter should tell journalists why your organization is important to the community, and why they should cover it. The more specific details you can offer the better, such as, what makes your organization unique or special in your community? Why is hosting a Commonwealth Speaker an important event?

If you have the time, tailor each pitch letter you send to the specific journalist. If you are familiar with what he or she likes to write about or report, make a connection between what they cover and your speaker's topic.

We have requested our Commonwealth Speakers to make themselves available for interviews should the opportunity arise. We encourage you to offer them for interview – you should feel free to present them as individuals who can offer expert comments on their presentation in the Speakers program and their commitment to public humanities programming.

In addition to the Commonwealth Speaker, you should offer someone from your organization for interview. Appropriate people could include a program coordinator, an executive director, or even volunteers who believe in your mission and are familiar with your organization's history. This person should be prepared to answer questions about the organization, ranging from its history and budget to number of staff members to future plans and programs.

Of course, a representative of the PHC will be happy to speak with any interested members of the media as well. Please contact the Commonwealth Speakers Coordinator at (800) 462-0442 should a member of the media wish to contact us, or to get a comment about our work and our collaboration with your organization.

Online Resources

Here is a list of great resources to help generating ideas to promote your program

Facebook.com

Create a page or profile for your organization to gather followers in your community. Facebook is an excellent way to give your organization an online presence and let your community know what's going on in your programs.

Pitchengine.com

A generator of social media messages to distribute via the web.