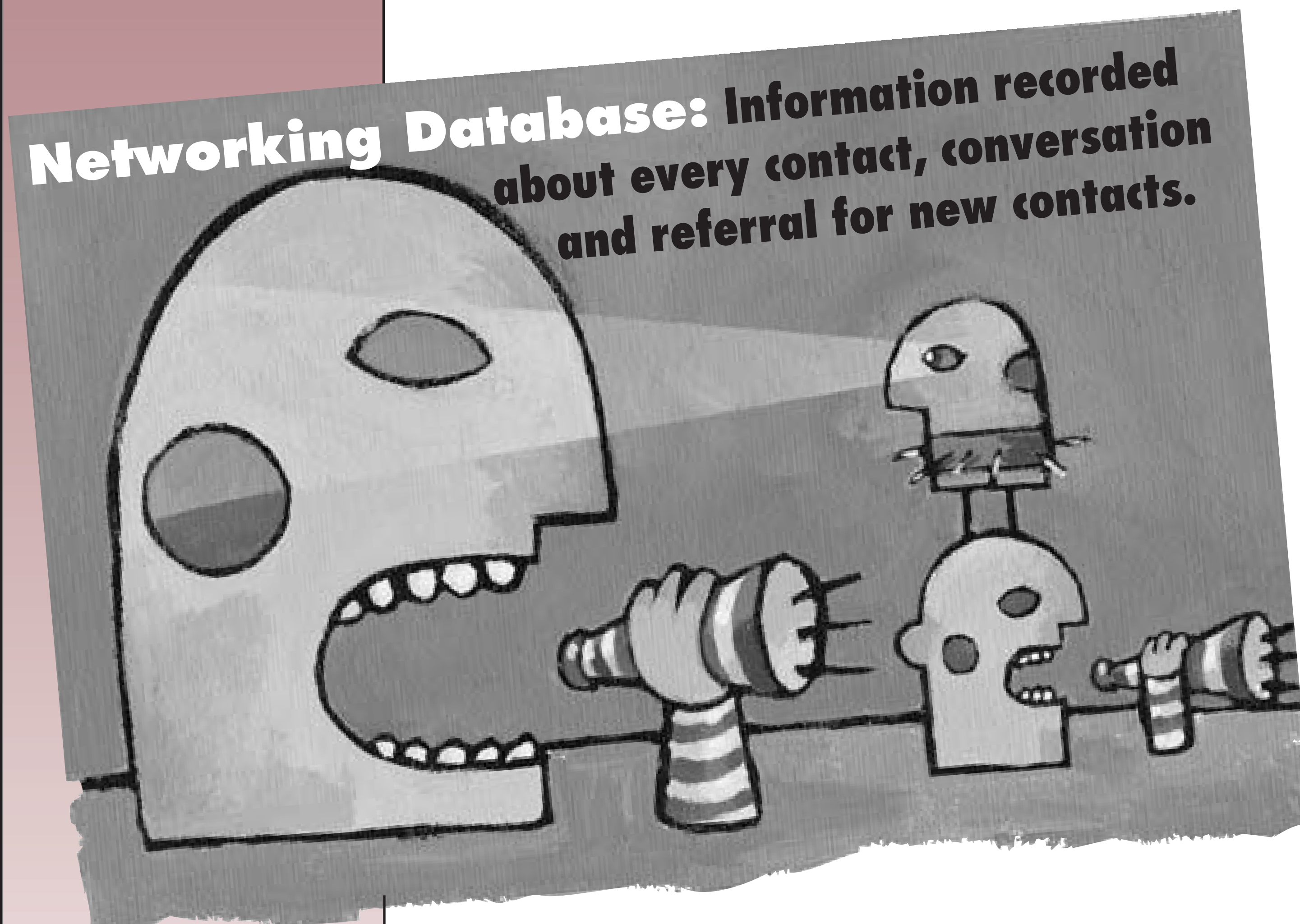
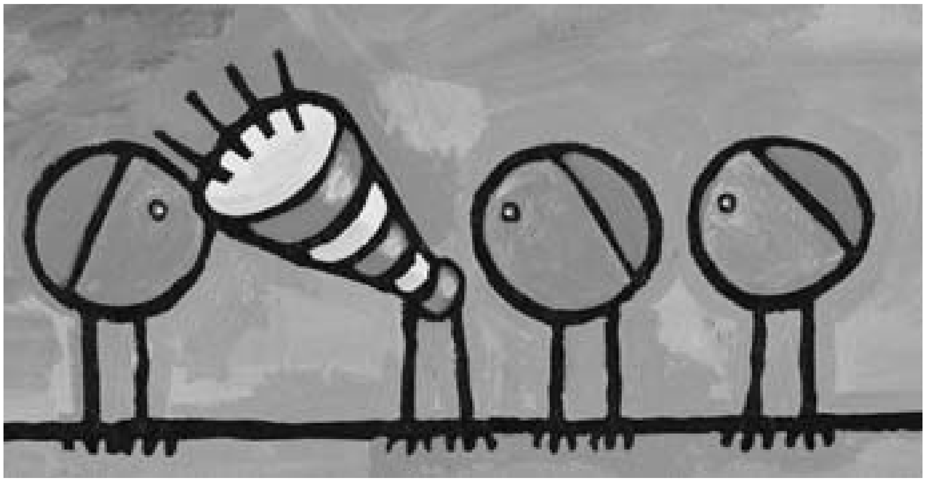
COMMUNITY
TOOL BOX

networking
DATABASE

WHAT WE'VE FOUND

Most organizations and people network with others all the time. Starting and maintaining a networking database focuses and organizes people's efforts. If a project or an organization wants to build a strong public involvement base, this is an effective way to do so. While setting up a database can require a substantial amount of time upfront, after that, we find this practice easy to implement and easy on the budget—after all, it's simply people talking to people and then writing a few notes.





JUST THE FACTS

A networking database is a depository of information based on people interacting and communicating with other organizations and people. It contains information such as:

- **Person contacted** (including relevant biographical information)
- **Who made the contact**
- **When**
- **How**
- **Material distributed**
- **Reaction to/familiarity with topic**
- **Outcome**
- **Pending issues and/or follow up actions needed**
- **Recommended names to contact**

As records are completed in a networking database, it becomes possible to identify trends; to sort and find similar interests and resources; and to build a mailing list for surveys, newsletters, invitations to events and other communications. A formalized networking campaign can also strengthen public perception about a group or a project's mission generating positive feelings.

Within an organization or a project team, the networking database enables information to be shared. That means knowledge can be leveraged to better understand public opinion, strengthen outreach and develop new outreach opportunities.

A networking database requires:

- **Computers**
- **Database programs**
- **Database training**
- **Strong verbal communication skills**
- **Commitment to doing it**

1. Clearly define a networking campaign

Before creating a database or briefing people on what information to collect, the purpose of the networking needs to be understood. Is an organization looking to recruit new members, trying to identify funding sources or looking for specific technical information needed for a project? At this point it should also be decided what, if anything, will be done about follow up. If someone requested more information, copies of brochures to place in their stores or further discussions, a system needs to be set up that will ensure that happens. This is vital for establishing credibility.

2. Create lists and more lists

To jump-start the effort, pull together lists of people, organizations and programs that may be useful to your organization or project. These lists should be centrally stored so that they can be retrieved and easily used by many people in the organization.

3. Create the database and appoint keepers

As contacts are made with those on the lists, enter the information into a database Be sure the information is accurate and contains addresses, titles, telephone numbers and email addresses for each name.

It may also be useful to have a data field that states the kind of networking possibilities that each person or organization represents, e.g., funding, technical information or member. If standard categories are created and denoted with special codes, the database can be sorted by those codes when the need arises. This makes the database an even more powerful and useful tool.

HOW TO DO IT

Train two or three individuals in the use of the database system. Never rely upon just one person. It is also imperative to regularly make a backup copy: daily if there is a lot of information being entered; weekly or biweekly if there is less information.

4. Give members the tools

It is vital that everyone is constantly adding to, updating and refining the networking database. That means you need to give people a means to input information: give them an electronic copy of the database file to use on their home computers or printout the form with its fields for handwritten reports. Most likely both methods will be used depending upon people's access to computers. If necessary, set a schedule for members to turn in their contact information so that it all can be added to the central database.

One of the keys to a strong database is the constant addition of contacts. Remind people of the golden rule of networking: When you meet someone, ask for the names of any friends, family, associates, neighbors, classmates or other organizations that they know about that might also be interested in or in some way be beneficial to the mission of your organization or project.

Use It If…

- You want to track perceptions, trends and effectiveness of a public outreach campaign.
- Your fundraising efforts need a boost and/or you want to know the resources in your community (e.g., who's an expert in what field, who might help sponsor a festival in exchange for free publicity, who might show an interest to volunteer for a committee, etc.).

Forget It If…

- You find the records are inaccurate or incomplete. This means people are not motivated to keep the database or don't understand its importance.
- You don't have anyone who will maintain the records. It can be tedious especially if members are providing handwritten reports and there is a lot of data entry.

Timing is Everything

A networking database should be one of the first things to be organized; then it's maintained throughout the life of a project or organization.

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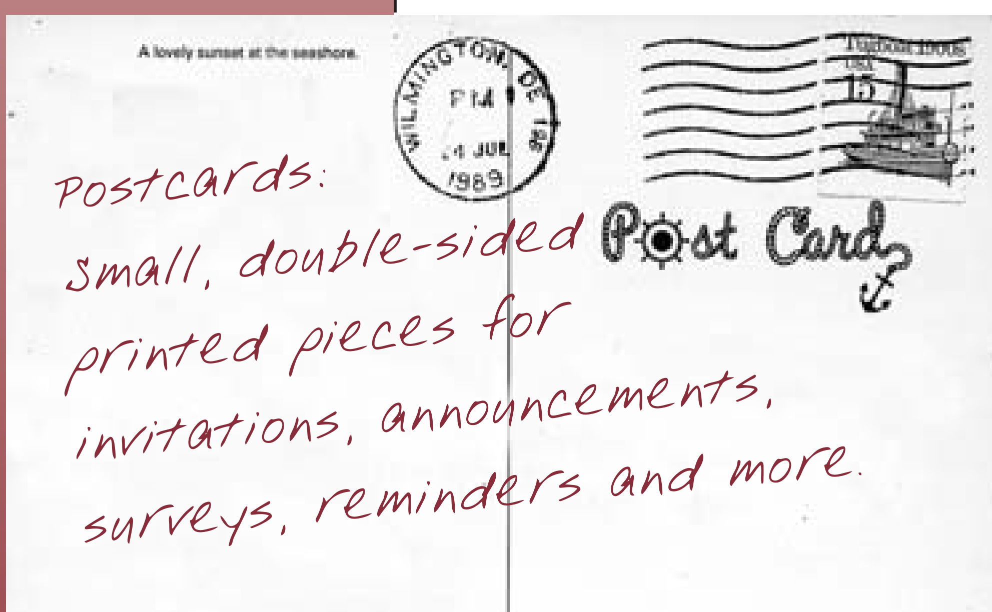
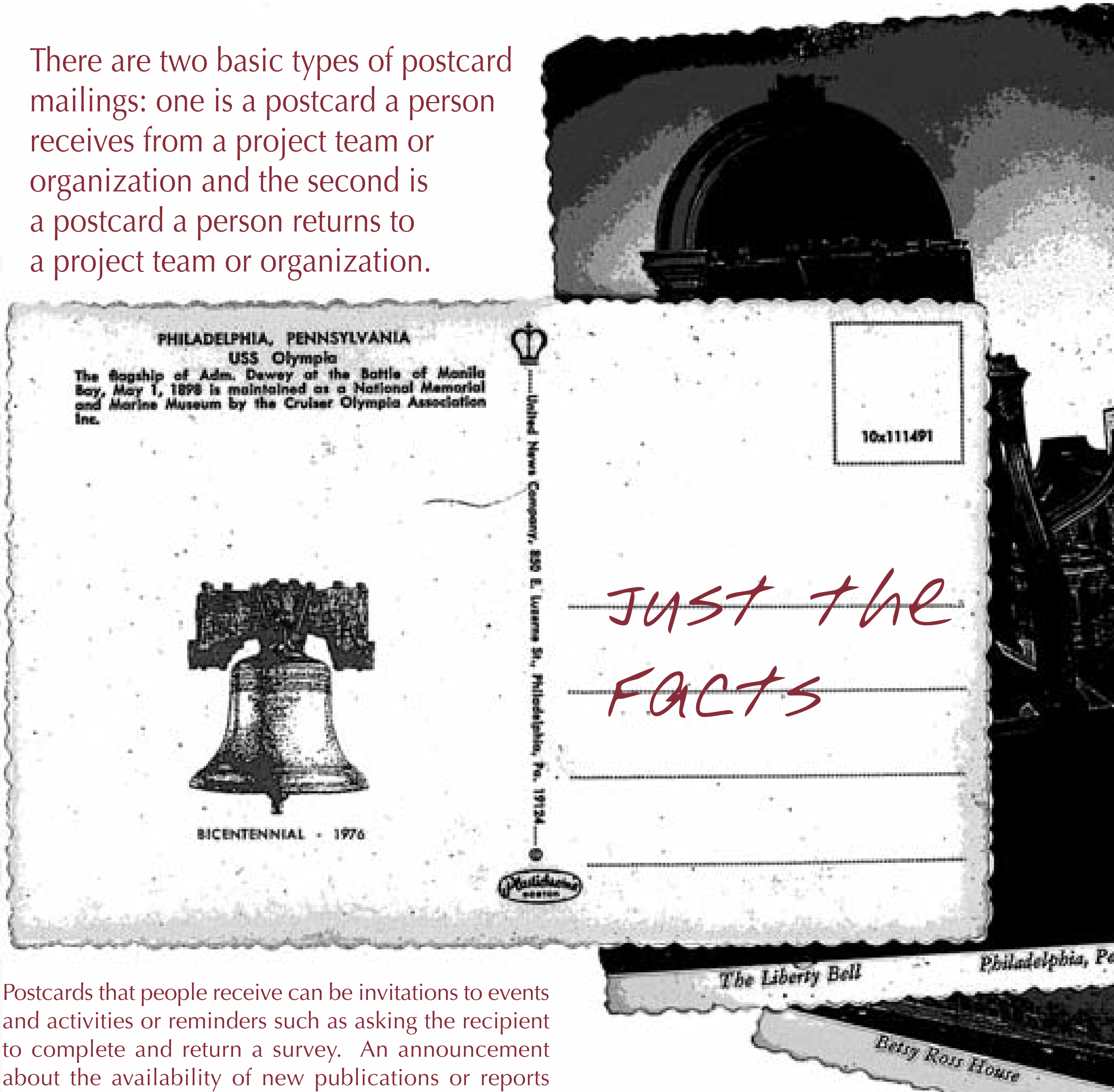
postcard mailings

WHAT WE'VE FOUND

Postcards are easy to use and a relatively inexpensive format to reach large numbers of people. Mailing postcards can be so easy, it is important to ask if they will be worthwhile. Will it be read? Will it be returned? For postcards that are giving information, we find they work best if used in conjunction with other tools such as press releases, posters and flyers, and public meetings and workshops. Regardless of what kind of postcard you are using, keep the format in mind: postcards are small so the message must be short and concise.



There are two basic types of postcard mailings: one is a postcard a person receives from a project team or organization and the second is a postcard a person returns to a project team or organization.



Postcards that people receive can be invitations to events and activities or reminders such as asking the recipient to complete and return a survey. An announcement about the availability of new publications or reports could have photographs of the covers, brief descriptions about them, and where to get copies.

Other types of postcards require action. Typically they are included in a package of information such as a letter, a brochure or some other document that explains the purpose of the mailing. Because the recipient is being asked to give information such as fill-in-the-blanks or check boxes, the postcard should be self-stamped and self-addressed to facilitate easy return. The request may be for names to include on a mailing list or recruiting volunteers, pre-registering for a conference or workshop, or a simple opinion survey to learn the degrees of support for, or opposition to, a particular project or action.

Only use postcards to solicit opinions if the project or question can be thoroughly explained with an accompanying brochure or letter, or when the projects has been running long enough, and has generated enough publicity, that it can be safely assumed that most people will have well-informed opinions.

1. DETERMINE THE PURPOSE

What is the goal of the postcard mailing? What will be accomplished? How do postcards fit into the project's overall public outreach plan? These questions are applicable whether the postcards will be used for giving information or receiving it. If it is the latter, be sure to plan how the data will be used. People will want to see evidence that the time they took to complete it, no matter how brief, was taken into account.

2. DESIGN AND PRINT

Good design and careful writing can give even small postcards a big impact. Depending upon how they will be used, the postcards may need special design considerations such as a perforated edge to detach from a brochure or prepaid postage for return. Options for printing postcards can range from seeking a professional to using blank post-cards designed for a computer printer.

3. SEND THEM OUT

To mail them, generate labels from a mailing list. If there are more than 200 to send out, get a permit to use bulk mail. Bulk mail requires some extra work such as sorting by zip code, but the result is significant cost savings especially for nonprofit groups. Find out more by contacting a U.S. Post Office.

If costs for postage are too prohibitive, or there is no mailing list, another option is to place the postcards in public places such as libraries, supermarkets, and coffee shops. Be sure they are attached to, or placed adjacent to an explanatory flyer or poster.

Use It If…

- You want to keep people informed.
- You are trying to get, in writing, a sampling of public opinion to determine the degree of support or opposition for a project or action.
- You need to collect names of people interested in the project or those who may be willing to serve on a committee or volunteer.

Forget It If…

- You do not have a good mailing list, the budget for postage, or the means to design, print, and assemble information packets.
- The project or action under consideration is extremely complex. While it may be tempting to seek simple answers to difficult questions, the opinions returned will be unusable and the project team's credibility will be hurt.

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COMMUNITY TOOL BOX

PRESS CONFERENCES

WHAT WE'VE FOUND

If there is breaking news or an event that will draw high-profile participants like elected officials, entertainment stars, or athletes, this is the time to call a press conference. The news media offers an important and powerful means of communicating messages to broad audiences. Sometimes the attention a project receives is not necessarily positive such as when significant controversy surrounds proposed actions. Our advice is to take a proactive approach in working with the media to help ensure that their reporting best reflects your own message and position.

Press Conference: A moderated gathering of media representatives for the purpose of sharing newsworthy information.

JUST THE FACTS

Press conferences involve an individual such as an elected official or a spokesperson making a statement and then allowing reporters to ask questions about the statement and possibly other issues. Press conferences can also involve more elaborate presentations: displaying graphic images and video, guest speakers, subject-experts, handouts, etc.

With the exception of late-breaking news, press conferences are usually organized in advance. Because of news schedules, the most effective times to hold a conference are between 10:00 AM and 3:00 PM on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. Journalists are invited to attend and possibly to also observe a special event or take a tour.

Some of the advantages of a press conference are that many reporters can participate at the same time and all hear the same message. Attendance by the media will depend upon other news that day and the topic and its relevance to the media's audience. Attendance will also vary based on the integrity of the organization or the individual: calling a press conference to cover routine issues or just to get free publicity damages credibility and could affect turnout for future events.

- Keep in mind the different approaches for reporting news:Press conferences are best for big special events or significant new developments.
- Press releases are best for ongoing newsworthy items involving local people, issues, decisions and actions, and progress.
- Interviews are best for offering exclusive stories, when requested directly by journalists, and for getting expert opinions.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Build a contact database

A media list should include reporters, columnists, editors, news directors, assignment editors and talk show hosts at all citywide, regional and community newspapers and television and radio stations. Begin creating one by asking a friendly local organization or local government agency for its press list. Other tactics are to scan the local yellow pages and call every media outlet listed or consult a national media directory such as Bacon's directories or News Media Yellow Book.

2. Get ready

Well before a news event or crisis happens, appoint one person as the official spokesperson. This does not have to be the president of an organization; it should be someone who speaks with clarity and is composed under pressure.

A pressroom should be large enough for the typical number of attendees including chairs for reporters and adequate space for television cameras. Have easels or tables for visual displays in the front; position a reception table outside the room as a place for press sign-in sheets and press packets; and have a podium with the group's name and/or logo attached to it. If it is not possible to maintain a separate room or for outdoor events, create a banner with the group's name and logo that can hang behind the spokesperson or speaker.

3. Schedule the event

Media should be informed about an event at least three to five days in advance. Give a brief synopsis of what will be covered. Follow up invitations with phone calls especially to key reporters. If the day will include a tour, make necessary logistical arrangements.

Prepare press packets that include contact information for the spokesperson, a press release of the day's event with carefully scripted quotes from the speaker(s), and relevant background information such as a history of the group or project, biographical sketches of key participants, charts or other statistics or graphic images, a copy of the document being released or being signed, etc.

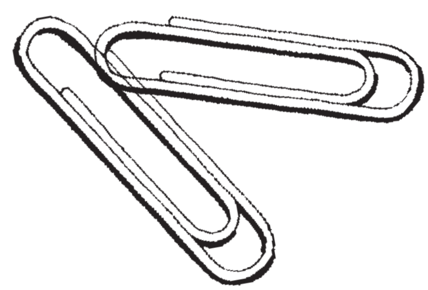
4. Present yourself like a pro

Just like with a major speech, take time beforehand to script or at least outline brief remarks that capture key points. Then remember this advice, tell the truth. If you do not know an answer to a question, tell the reporters you will find out. Then make sure you do!

Do not ignore controversy or downplay bad news. This is your opportunity to communicate your position and prevent rumors and speculation.

Be cool. Resist displaying anger at reporters' questions, becoming defensive, or responding sarcastically. Depending upon the situation, it is appropriate to show emotions such as enthusiasm, concern, or compassion.

Speak plainly. Avoid jargon, speaking-down to the audience, or using too many statistics. If there is one number-related statement that is powerful and can be easily and accurately captured by reporters, give it; otherwise include these types of facts in press packets.



Use It If…

- You need to reach a wide audience to increase awareness about your project.
- You know there will be significant public interest because the information directly affects them and their community.
- You want to capitalize on the appearance of a well-known celebrity at a special event.
- You are about to launch a major new initiative and want to establish rapport with local journalists.

Forget It If…

- You think every action your group makes is worth a press conference. Consider writing a press release, or carefully reevaluate the topic. Is this something unique or unusual or is it simply a routine issue?
- You are highly uncomfortable speaking in front of others and do not have a skilled spokesperson who can moderate the press conference.
- You are likely to be preempted by another event or story.
- For anything other than late-breaking developments, consider what else is happening in the community before you schedule a special event or tour for journalists.

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COMMUNITY
TOOL BOX

Speakers' Bureau

What We've Found

Use a speakers' bureau anytime you need to spread the word about your project or if you are trying to gather public input. People are busy; they may not be willing to come to a public meeting about a project because of schedule conflicts, distance, not driving at night, or many other reasons. By sending speakers out to regular meetings of civic and church groups, service organizations, neighborhood associations, and other types of clubs, we have been able to reach many more people.

JUST THE FACTS

Organizing a speakers' bureau requires three distinct steps: recruiting volunteers who are knowledgeable about a topic or project, preparing a script and presentation, and finding and scheduling speaking opportunities. There may be one presentation that several different people give or each volunteer may have his or her own specialized presentation. Speakers' bureaus are educational outreach; they are also about promoting positive public relations and building community support.

In addition to giving information, speakers' bureaus can be used to gather information. From collecting names for a mailing list to getting comments on flip charts or distributing questionaires, the speaker can learn how well people understand a project, whether they are supportive of proposed actions, and p otentially recruit new volunteers.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Recruit
Find volunteers who are comfortable speaking and who may have experience. They do not have to be members of a project committee as long as they are willing to receive training and the committee feels confident of them as their ambassadors. If the project is especially long, it may be necessary to recruit others to join the bureau or to develop means of motivating the volunteers.
any props.

2. Prepare the presentation

The first step is for the full project committee to agree upon the message and key points. Then delegate to a subcommittee the actual preparation of the presentation and accompanying materials. Try to include on the subcommittee people with skills in photography, writing, and graphics. This committee may act as a support to a subject expert if the speakers' bureau is going to offer different presentations. If there will be only one presentation, consider preparing different scripts for different sessions: breakfast meetings require the briefest remarks; lunch meetings are more businesslike; and after-dinner speeches should not be too serious.

It may be also helpful to script potential questions and answers so that speakers are not caught off-guard. In a Q&A session, one of the most important responses is: "I don't know the answer, so let me get your name and number and get back to you." Remember the purpose of these speaking engagements is to spread accurate information and strengthen credibility and trust in the community.

3. Prepare props

Depending upon both the presentation and project budget, it may be useful to include props such as slides, computerized projections, maps, displays, etc. Ideally, each speaker should have a separate set of presentation materials to avoid confusion and potential scheduling conflicts. If this is not possible, arrange for storage of props at a central location, ideally one where all speakers can have 24-hour access. Speakers should also be supplied ample copies of brochures, newsletters, flyers, or other informational and promotional material that explains the project.

4. Coach and practice

Have the volunteers go over the scripts and practice many times. Depending upon the project budget, participants may benefit from a professional speaker. At minimum, there should be "dress rehearsals" where each speaker is videotaped and then the group reviews the tape. Don't forget to also stage a Q&A session and have the speakers use and be familiar with any props.

5. Make contacts

To find groups, begin by having the project committee brainstorm a list. Prepare a flyer that lists the topic, or topics, of presentation and contact information then mail the flyers to every community organization. Follow up with the mailings by calling or, ideally, making a personal contact with a known member.

6. Get the Facts

Information about an engagement should include the time, date, and place of the meeting; an agenda or any pre-publicity if applicable; the anticipated audience size; the format such as lecture, panel discussion, or workshop; amount of time allocated to speak; and, if applicable, availability of aids like a microphone, lectern, slide projector, etc. If the presentation will be at a distant location, travel and lodging arrangements will need to be discussed.

Speakers should not arrive at a facility expecting a slide projector only to find an overhead unit instead. Ask beforehand what is available, what should be brought, or what will need to be done without. Being prepared for different facilities means using different props.

7. Assign a speaker

Unless the presentation is speaker-specific, assign a presenter that might already have a connection with the group or organization. If that is not possible, just make sure there is not a negative history between the speaker and the audience or for some reason the speaker would be uncomfortable. Respect the reasons and remember that the speakers are volunteers.

8. Keep a master calendar

In case of last minute cancellations or emergencies, speakers should have a list that includes each speaker's name and phone number and a calendar showing all engagements. One person should be responsible for coordinating schedules, responding to special requests for information following a presentation, and soliciting new engagements.

Use It If…

- You want to increase visibility and people's awareness of your cause, project, or resource.
- You are having trouble getting publicity or are not able to disseminate information to broader, diverse interests.
- You want to counterbalance rumors, misinterpretations of news paper articles, and elements of controversy.

Forget It If…

- You do not have the volunteers because they are already stretched too thin, are not comfortable with or good at speaking in front of audiences, or will not be positive ambassadors for the cause for other reasons.
- You do not have clear project goals.
- Your project is extremely controversial and a session could turn into a debate. A trained facilitator is better able to handle an unruly crowd.

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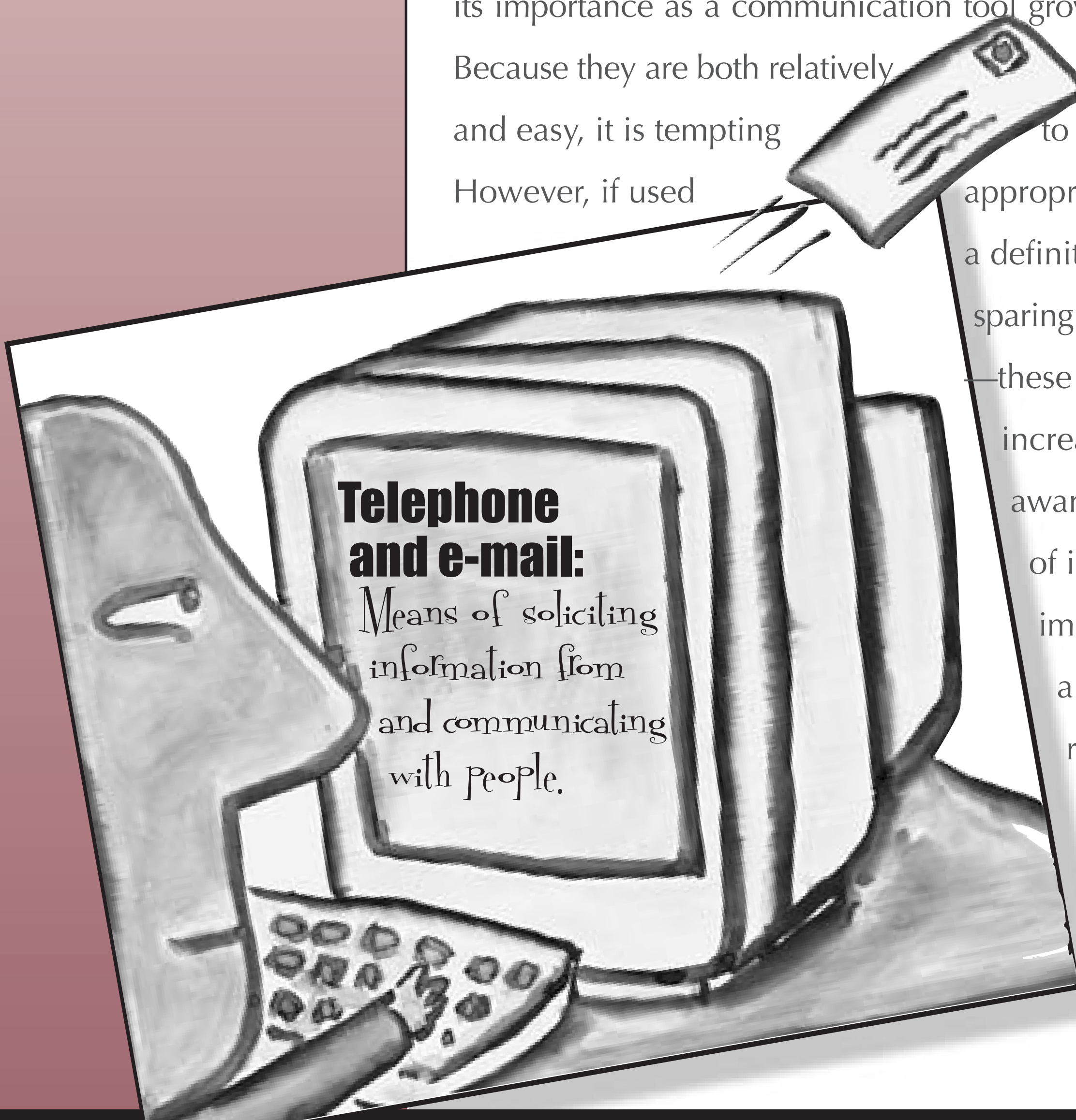
Telephone & E-mail

COMMUNITY TOOL BOX

WHAT WE'VE FOUND

For as long as telephones have been around, we still have things to learn about etiquette and maximizing their use. As more people gain access to electronic mail (e-mail), its importance as a communication tool grows exponentially. Because they are both relatively inexpensive and easy, it is tempting to overuse them. However, if used appropriately—with a definite purpose, sparingly, professionally—these tools can increase people's awareness and sense of involvement, improve credibility, and strengthen relationships among a community.



Just the Facts

There are two primary purposes behind telephone calls and e-mail notes: to give information or to get information.

Giving information may include invitations to events and meetings or reminders such as asking the recipient to follow-up on a task or complete and return a survey. E-mail might be used for the same purposes and also to announce updates on a website, to send an attached document such as background information or a newsletter, or to inform about the availability of new publications or reports and where to get copies.

Telephones and e-mail can also be used to gather information such as a brief, simple opinion survey to learn the degrees of support for, or opposition to, a particular project or action. If speaking to a person, the questions need to be yes/no or rated on a scale; open-ended questions cannot be included. They can be included if the survey is done on e-mail. For special events or festivals, contact potential volunteers by telephone or e-mail to ask for their help.

Finally, requests can also be made for money. Telemarketing needs to be entered cautiously. Improperly used, it can lead to resentment and animosity and lose potential supporters. Do not use a telemarketer who simply reads from a script; make the phone call more personal and use someone who understands the project thoroughly and who may already have a relationship with the potential donor. Since it is less personal, e-mail has greater limitations in the area of fundraising. Consider it as a first step: ask if the recipient would consent to speaking about a gift, to set up a meeting or a phone call, or to inquire if he or she would be willing to receive more information by mail. Phone calls or e-mails should be followed up with a complete package of information that includes a letter, a brochure or some other document that thoroughly explains the project or request for funds, and self-stamped return envelope and pledge card.

When considering using either telephones or e-mail for communication, keep in mind the following:

- Ask people directly if it is okay to phone them. When conducting a phone survey or solicitation, if people ask to be removed from your list, do it. Many states require this by law; regardless, it damages organizational credibility if requests are ignored.
- When collecting information from individuals, find out if they prefer you to call their home phone, work phone, or cell phone. On a signup sheet, next to where people will enter their phone numbers, include a box that they can check indicating the best number to reach them.
- Be mindful that not everyone has access to e-mail. It is important that people not feel they are missing out on information coming via e-mail. Be sure to send the same information by regular mail that is sent electronically. If possible, plan the distribution: send regular mail a day or two before sending e-mail so that everyone receives it at the same time.
- For people who have e-mail at work, be sure to check if it permissible to send information to that address. Many companies do not want employees using e-mail for personal reasons, so they may monitor messages.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Determine the purpose
What is the goal of the telephone call or e-mail? What will be accomplished? How does this fit into the project's overall public outreach plan? If requesting information, know exactly how the data will be used. People will want to see evidence that the time they took to complete an opinion survey, no matter how brief, was taken into account.

2. Get your list
Most likely this will be a targeted group of people with whom you want to regularly communicate such as a task force or an advisory committee. Collect phone numbers and e-mail addresses at public meetings and events, on surveys, on websites, by referrals, and other outreach methods.

3. Write a draft

Before calling, write down a few key points. Reading a script will result in an unnatural conversation, but it can be helpful to know exactly what needs to be covered. Always begin a conversation by identifying yourself and the organization and asking if it is a convenient time to talk. If the response is no, ask for a time when you can call back or give your number. Speak clearly and be enthusiastic—if you smile, it comes through in your voice.

For e-mail, most importantly, check spelling before sending! Succinctly summarize the e-mail's purpose in the subject line and include all relevant contact information at the end of your message: your full name, organization, e-mail address, and telephone number(s). Keep in mind that e-mails can take on a life of their own: they can be forwarded, printed and saved, and even used in a court of law.

4. Handle no responses

When leaving a message on an answering machine or voice-mail box, give your name, a succinct summary of the purpose of your call, and your phone number repeated twice. Unless someone has specifically requested a full explanation of why you are calling, avoid the temptation to leave lengthy messages.

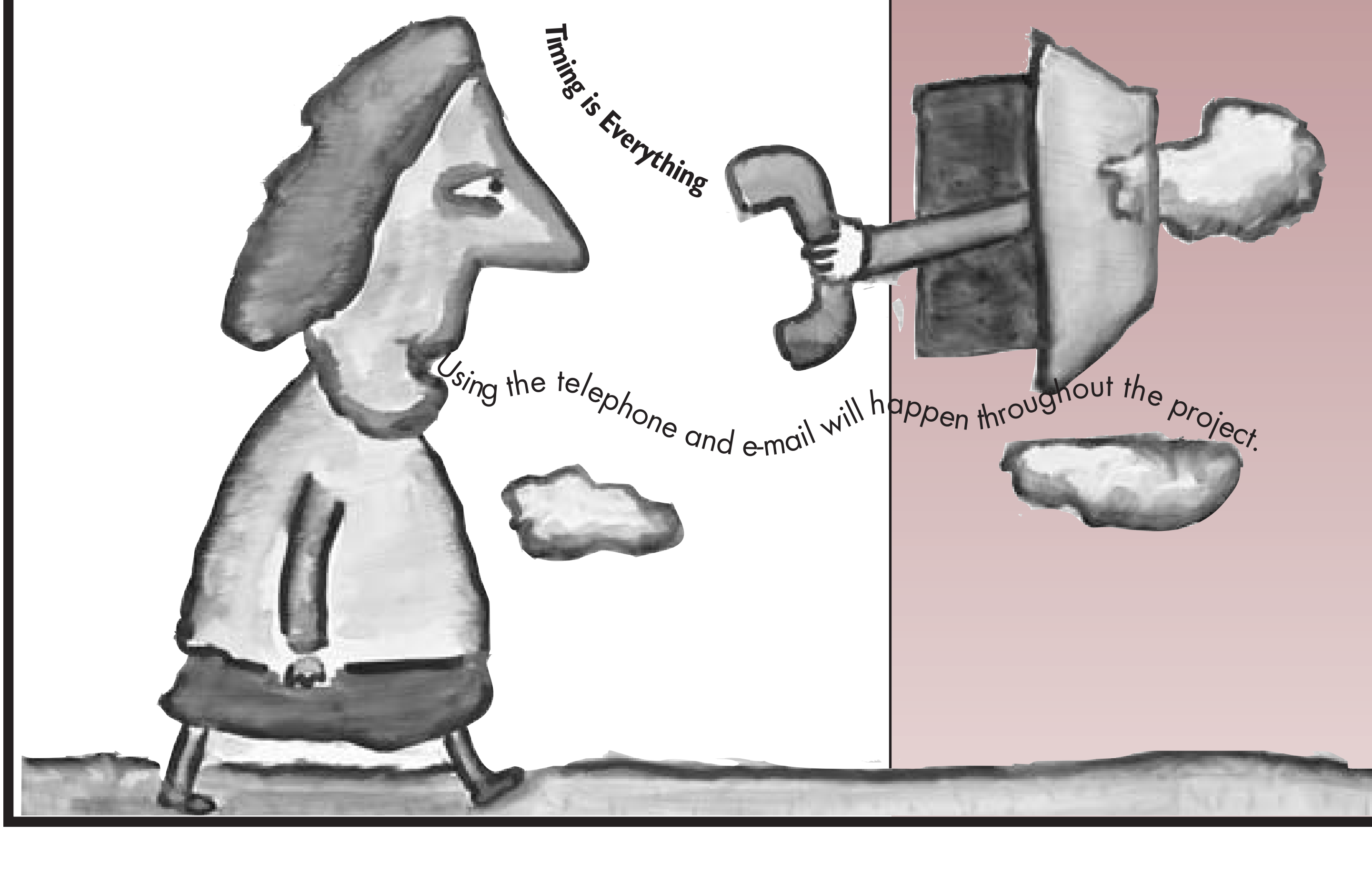
For e-mail, keep in mind that not everyone checks e-mail daily. Many mail programs have a function called "return receipt" which will automatically notify you when your message is opened. Also consider calling and letting the recipient know he or she has an e-mail message from you.

Use It If…

- You want to keep people up-to-date.
- You need to get a sampling of public opinion to determine the degree of support or opposition for a project or action.
- You have just launched a new or enhanced website.
- You are looking for ways to increase exposure, build support, and get folks involved. A personal call or message from a high- profile individual can bring significant results.

Forget It If…

- You lack a purpose for the communication. If people know messages from you include information they need or are interested in, you can better guarantee that they will consistently give your communications the necessary attention.
- You want to rely solely on e-mail but are not sure if everyone in the target audience has access to it. Do not make assumptions, and be wary of creating a two-tier communication system between the haves and have-nots.
- You are looking for fundraising methods but do not have access to a professional who can advise you on proper telemarketing techniques.



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WEB SITES

WHAT WE'VE FOUND

More and more people are turning to the Internet to find stuff and get answers to questions. As a result, it's becoming assumed that every group is going to have a web site.

While some see it replacing printed literature, be careful of taking that route since not everyone has a computer nor does everyone feel comfortable surfing online. But if a web site is easy to navigate and shows a complete, honest picture of the organization, it can be another effective outreach tool and an ongoing perk for members.

Just the Facts

Web sites consist of an address called a URL (Uniform or Universal Resource Locator). The first screen that appears is called a homepage, and it may have a table of contents pointing visitors to other files and images, audio recordings, videos, and/or shopping. Web pages are written in hypertext, referred to as hypertext markup language or HTML. The purpose of a site might be to provide information, to offer merchandise, to solicit support, or something else.

The best web sites are those that are built by a team that includes professional writers, designers, programmers, and subject experts. The site should answer the original inquiries that led someone online as well as spark new questions and engender more interest. Sites should also be continuously updated: content refreshed, links between pages and to any other web sites checked, images changed, etc.

Posting a web site requires saving pages or files to a server. Larger companies, government agencies, and organizations have their own servers; smaller groups usually buy space or find free space. For example, space may be available along with a paid email account, in exchange for allowing banner advertising, or because of a group's nonprofit status. There are many alternatives worth researching; one place to look is http://www.freewebspace.net, which reviews different providers.

HOW TO DO IT

1. THINK IT THROUGH
Seek out different people and ask them some questions: Does thetarget audience have access to computers and is this an acceptable method of communication? Who will be responsible for the content and the ongoing technical management of the site? What should the contents include? Do we have the financial resources to do the work and keep the site updated? Are there alternatives?

2. DECIDE ON CONTENT
Begin by looking at what your group is already doing: newsletters brochures, posters, and other mailers. Brainstorm what would be ideal: secure fundraising, online surveys, live chat sessions, etc. Check out other the web sites of groups who do similar work and those that are considered cutting edge. Prioritize contents based on technical capabilities and cost.

Tech Guidelines:

- **30K SHOULD BE A WEB PAGE'S MAXIMUM SIZE, INCLUDING ALL IMAGES.**
- **A GOOD SCREEN SIZE IS 640 PIXELS WIDE BY 480 TALL.**
- **EACH IMAGE, SOUND FILE, OR APPLET SHOULD BE LESS THAN 12K.**

3. MAP OUT NAVIGATION

Plan the web site before creating it, keeping it simple and consistent. Similar to an organization chart, show the relationship between screens, or pages, and how they will be connected. Diagram the flow on paper.

This is also the time to plan for how viewers will get around the site. Include a table of contents so people can choose what's most pertinent to them. Provide place markers—a "you are here" sign—that shows the path they have followed and an easy escape out to select another topic. If a web site is going to contain a large number of pages, get expert advice. This is a critical step to plan and keep organized.

4. WRITE FOR THE MEDIUM

Web writing is more than taking printed brochures and articles and putting them online. While this material can be used, it should be adapted. It's estimated that only 10% of viewers will scroll beyond the first screen of text, so break the text up and put a table of contents so viewers can choose easily. This type of writing is referred to as "basic."

There are two other types of web pages: splash and scripted. Splash writing is brief and concise. A splash page offers readers choices to more in-depth material but still communicates a message. Scripted writing is taking full advantage of the medium, getting a reader to interact with the text and graphics such as through a game. There are a minimal number of words on those types of pages.

5. DESIGN A LOOK

Create a layout that is consistent. This means use a style that is similar to existing printed pieces and uses the same logo.
It also means making sure each page within the web site looks alike: same background color, navigation links always in the same place, and contact information (name, address, phone, email address). Keep in mind that viewers may not sequentially go through your site. Every page needs to be a stand-alone from the whole.

6. MAKE IT VISUAL

Capitalize on the medium by making use of icons and images. Don't assume icons will be intuitively understood; provide a label or pop-up window description. Photographs and images need captions. Just as with print, however, make sure photographs, maps and drawings strengthen the content and are not just for decoration making a file too large.

Because images and special effects such as animations use a lot of memory, use them sparingly. If a screen takes too long to download due to large files, many people won't wait to see it. A good rule of thumb is to design for the slowest system; that means dial-up modems as opposed to cable modems or DSL. Be sure to also do research on "web colors." Certain colors work better than others on computer monitors, or video display systems. Try and avoid deeply saturated primary colors (red, green, blue); they are prone to smearing or bleeding, making the image difficult to see.

7. BUILD IT AND TEST IT

Bring the elements together using a web page software program. Then once the graphics, text, and links are combined, test the site. Make sure every link works and every image appears. Also have someone, who was not involved in the writing, proof the text for typos, flow, and accuracy.

8. POST IT

Follow the instructions according to the web software, the host server's protocol, or the advice of a technician.
Be sure to consider protection measures and submitting the site to search engines. Then let folks know about it. Issue a press release and write an article for a newsletter, and add the web site address to business cards, brochures, and other printed pieces.

Use It If…

- You have the creative resources to write and design a site and the technical knowledge to post and manage a site or the financial resources to do it.
- You have an ongoing need to present detailed information, provide a forum for exchanging ideas, and share updates, announcements and news.
- You want a central place where everything the group produces, such as print publications, press releases, and speeches, can be easily accessed.
- You have information to share about a topic that is not covered \anywhere else.

Forget It If…

- You do not have the resources to write, design, and technically manage a site or keep it updated.
- Your constituency has expressed no interest in looking online or has said they do not want to receive information electronically.
- You know of another web site that has a similar purpose. Approach that organization about including a section describing your group, making a banner or other addition highlighting your activities.

Timing is Everything

Launch a website at any point during the planning process. Just make sure to regularly update it and keep it current.

RIVERS & TRAILS PROGRAM

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