

# Media Outreach Guide

June 2021



# Table of Contents

- Introduction and Purpose ..... 1
- Best Practices ..... 1
- Building Relationships with the Media ..... 5
- Richmond Region Media List ..... 6
- Richmond Region Advertising Contacts ..... 8
- Press Release Template ..... 9
- Sample Editorial Calendar ..... 10

# 1

## Introduction and Purpose

Media outreach can garner awareness within target communities about PlanRVA and its various initiatives. Just like any other outreach, the most successful media outreach requires understanding the specific media outlet, knowing its target audience, and building relationships with reporters in the Richmond Region to ensure PlanRVA is covered fairly and comprehensively.

The following guide offers an overview of media outreach best practices, contacts for Richmond Region media, a press release template, and a sample editorial calendar.

# 2

## Best Practices

There is often fear or apprehension around engaging the media. But the media and PlanRVA are not at odds. In fact, you are often able to complement one another.

To do that effectively, there are a few best practices and key terms you should understand.

### Proactive Media Engagement

#### Press releases (aka media releases or news releases)

Press releases are news articles written by an organization to be published by an outlet and/or distributed on a news wire. News releases are almost always repurposed by reporters but can sometimes be picked up verbatim if written well.

#### ***Key Elements of a Newsworthy Press Release***

- A clever and concise headline to grab attention
- The opening paragraph should have a lede, or a hook, to make the reader want to continue reading the story
- Keep it concise– press releases should be kept to one page (two pages maximum)
- Relatable content– find a way to connect with your audience and add metrics
- Quotes are used to demonstrate the impact of your news and excite the reader
- Images and videos – high resolution photos and links to videos may increase visibility
- Contact information and links to resources provide media representatives an opportunity to learn more and follow up if needed

*Use this when:* Announcing comment periods, results of studies, new hires, major organizational changes, the publication of a new plan; results of an event; or when milestones are achieved.

### **Methods to maximize exposure:**

- Work with local community members to obtain a quote sharing a citizen's perspective
- Post the press release to PlanRVA's website and social media accounts
- Share the media outlet's news clip on social media and add hashtags to enhance discoverability
- Follow the story and contact reporters to schedule a follow-up interview to share successes when related news develops

### **Media advisories**

Media advisories are short alerts to media about events or news that may pique a reporter's interest to cover a story.

### **Key Elements of an Effective Media Advisory**

- Serves as an easy-to-read invitation to an event
- Shorter than a press release (100-150 words)
- A quick headline to grab the media's attention
- Contains a short informational blurb that explains the 5 Ws (Who, What, When, Where, and Why)
- Includes contact information for a PlanRVA representative that will be able to answer the media's questions and coordinate interviews if needed



*Use this when:* Announcing public meeting dates, ribbon-cutting events, presence at a national or regional event, hiring events, and PlanRVA workshops.

### **Methods to maximize exposure:**

- Create a targeted media distribution list that includes reporters, editors, bureau chiefs, and TV/radio producers
- Distribute the media advisory about five days in advance of the event to provide the media ample time to schedule and pass the information along
- Follow up the day before the event with media outlets to confirm attendance

## Expert advisories

Expert advisories are notices to media of qualified experts to speak on a specific topic. They can be issued at any time but are often more impactful if related to a news event.

*Use this when:* An event or news item is gaining interest in the media. For example, if a hurricane is approaching, PlanRVA could position one of its planners as an expert on emergency response for the Richmond Region.

## Press conferences/events

Gone are the days of many reporters coming to a conference for news and information—now much of the information is provided electronically. Press events can still be impactful if tied to an event already taking place, such as having a press session as part of a conference, or if done remotely via webinar to share news or information and allowing reporters to ask questions. Virtual press conferences allow the general public and the media to stream from any location and ask questions in a chat pod.

*Use this:* Sparingly—a press event can be time intensive to prepare and not garner much interest.

## Byline articles or Op-Ed pieces

Whereas news releases will have the byline of a publication's reporter if published, byline articles are articles written by an organization and placed with a byline of the author from the organization. These are pieces that are arranged ahead of time and only distributed to one publication.

*Use this when:* Establishing PlanRVA as a thought leader and offering unique perspectives on an item.

## Pitching Evergreen Content

Evergreen content is information that is not timebound—it's an article that can run at any time. It can be a long lead—meaning the reporter has time to shape the article and run it at a time that makes sense for their publication. These articles often are lengthier and include a lot of background information, data, and visuals. Often long lead articles will form out of a relationship with a reporter and understanding their interests and needs.

PlanRVA offers a bounty of data and reports that would add significant value to news articles about the region. As you build relationships with reporters ([Section 3](#)), show them how to navigate to this important information on the PlanRVA website, let them know when information is updated, and learn if there are ways PlanRVA could better package this information for regular use in articles.

## Additional Media Tips & Terminology

**Exclusives**- Exclusives provide information to a single reporter that will not be provided to other reporters or distributed by your organization until covered by that outlet. They are a way to get coverage of an item that a reporter or outlet might not cover otherwise. Some outlets, such as the Associated Press, will only cover certain items if they are exclusively reporting on that item. Almost all reporters will ask for an exclusive, but it is rare for them to cover an item if an exclusive was granted to someone else. If you're looking for lots of coverage in many different outlets, you would not want to offer an exclusive.

**Embargos**- Embargos ask reporters to hold information until a certain time or date. Embargos are an agreement and require the reporter to agree to the embargo prior to providing the information. This is a good way to make an impact while leveling the playing field for outlets by providing information to many outlets in advance so they can all release the information at the same time. If an embargo is not stated, it will be assumed that the news could be reported immediately.



**Interviews**- If reaching out to a reporter for coverage, have an identified spokesperson with good availability to speak to the reporter. Ensure that the identified spokesperson has taken a media training and is comfortable speaking to the content of the news item. Storytelling is an important part of conveying key messages.

**Off the Record**- Everything said to a reporter should be assumed to be on the record and quotable, unless they specifically agree to an off the record conversation. Off the record is also a written agreement that needs to be in place prior to speaking. If you are talking to a reporter and are not the authorized spokesperson, you should state that you are not able to talk to media but can put the person in touch with someone who is.

**Timing**- Understand reporter deadlines. Most reporters, but not all, are on deadlines in the afternoon and can be harder to reach. It's best to issue a press release earlier in the week. Bad news is often released on a Friday afternoon with the hopes of it being buried over the weekend. News should be released at a time that works well for PlanRVA staff as well—offering multiple time slots for interviews and ensuring a point of contact is available to respond to interview requests and clarify questions via email is important to ensure comprehensive reporting of your news.

**Tailored outreach**- Any outreach to media should be tailored. Understand the publication's mission, the reporter's beat, and how your story might fit into the publication before reaching out. Research the publication's archived stories to get a sense of what has already been covered, generate ideas to develop fresh newsworthy quotes and review the comments posted by the readers.

# 3

## Building Relationships with Richmond Region Media

PlanRVA stakeholders across the Richmond Region identified local media, both traditional and non-traditional media channels, as a primary way they get their information. As PlanRVA seeks to improve and expand community engagement efforts, tapping into these local media sources ([Section 4](#)) will be key.

Reporters are more likely to work with you and to feature PlanRVA's work once you have developed a rapport and they know they can rely on you as a trustworthy source of information.

A few ideas for building strong media relationships include:

- Access is currency for journalists. Offer easy access for the media to talk to the experts at PlanRVA by hosting regular round table events or offering a time for comments and questions following all Board and public meetings. These access points can be opportunities to walk through new data sets, recap meetings, or just answer questions either on or off the record.
- Show an interest in their work. Send a compliment on a good article about the region or let them know if you shared one of their works on a PlanRVA social media accounts. This shows the reporter that you're not only contacting them for favors but that you see the value in the work they do in the community. Small gestures and checking in regularly go a long way in building a relationship.
- Work with the reporters and editors at publications produced in languages other than English to see how you can best provide information that they can use and quote. Reaching out directly to these reporters in the language they work in will be a sign of respect and speak toward your intention and goals.
- Remember that reporters are just people too. Journalists need time to digest your information and story idea and typically must run it by their editors for approval. Journalists also have lives, and they are not waiting around for your news to come out. Following up can be helpful, but make sure you are giving them enough time before you do so.
- Don't ask to read a story about PlanRVA before it is published. Journalists can't let you read a story prior to publication because it can damage their credibility. If they offer, absolutely take them up on it. If they don't bring it up, you shouldn't either.



## Richmond Region Media List

### Radio/Podcasts

#### Virginia Public Media (NPR affiliate)

Ian M. Stewart  
[istewart@vpm.org](mailto:istewart@vpm.org)  
 Beat: Chesterfield County,  
 General Assignments

#### WNRN 88.5

Desiré Moses  
[info@wnrn.org](mailto:info@wnrn.org)  
 Beat: Community news

#### KISS Richmond

Clovia Lawrence (Miss  
 Community Clovia)  
[cllawrence@radio-one.com](mailto:cllawrence@radio-one.com)  
 Beat: Richmond Metropolitan,  
 Human Interest

#### Rejoice WREJ

Gary Flowers  
[garyflowersshow@gmail.com](mailto:garyflowersshow@gmail.com)  
 Beat: Community news

#### We Rise

Christine Gyovai  
[info@dialogueanddesign.com](mailto:info@dialogueanddesign.com)  
 Beat: Collaboration,  
 community resilience,  
 and tribal

#### Open Source RVA

Host – Don Harrison  
 Producer – Krystina Albus  
[opensourcervanews@gmail.com](mailto:opensourcervanews@gmail.com)  
 Beat: Conversations with  
 community leaders

#### RVA Dirt

Host – Francesca Leigh-Davis  
 Host and Producer – Melissa  
 Vaughn  
[info@RVAdirt.com](mailto:info@RVAdirt.com)  
 Beat: Local government and  
 community causes

### Newspapers/Digital News Sources

#### Richmond Times-Dispatch

C. Suarez Rojas  
[csuarez@timesdispatch.com](mailto:csuarez@timesdispatch.com)  
 Beat: City of Richmond and  
 transportation  
 Jessica Nocera  
[jnocera@timesdispatch.com](mailto:jnocera@timesdispatch.com)  
 Beat: Chesterfield and  
 Henrico counties  
 Mark Robinson  
[mrobinson@timesdispatch.com](mailto:mrobinson@timesdispatch.com)  
 Beat: City of Richmond and  
 housing

#### Virginia Mercury

Wyatt Gordon  
[wgordon@virginiamercury.com](mailto:wgordon@virginiamercury.com)  
 Beat: Transportation, housing,  
 and land use

#### Good Morning RVA

Ross Catrow  
[ross@gmrva.com](mailto:ross@gmrva.com)  
 Beat: Richmond,  
 transportation

#### Virginia Scope

Brandon Jarvis  
[brandon@virginiascope.com](mailto:brandon@virginiascope.com)  
 Beat: Local politics

#### Henrico Citizen

Patty Kruszewski  
[patty@henricocitizen.com](mailto:patty@henricocitizen.com)  
 Sarah Story  
[sarah@henricocitizen.com](mailto:sarah@henricocitizen.com)

#### Chesterfield Observer

Jim McConnell  
[jmcconnell@LocalNewsLLC.com](mailto:jmcconnell@LocalNewsLLC.com)

#### New Kent-Charles City Chronicle

Robb Johnson  
[robb.nkccnews@gmail.com](mailto:robb.nkccnews@gmail.com)

#### Richmond Free Press

Jeremy M. Lazarus  
[news@richmondfreepress.com](mailto:news@richmondfreepress.com)

#### Richmond BizSense

Jonathan Spiers  
[jonathan@richmondbizsense.com](mailto:jonathan@richmondbizsense.com)  
 Michael Schwartz  
[michael@richmondbizsense.com](mailto:michael@richmondbizsense.com)



## TV News

### WTVR-TV (CBS affiliate)

Sheryl Barnhouse, News Director  
[sbarnhouse@wtvr.com](mailto:sbarnhouse@wtvr.com)

### WRIC, ABC 8 News

Laura Perrot, Reporter  
[lperrot@wric.com](mailto:lperrot@wric.com)  
Delaney Hall, Reporter  
[dhall@wric.com](mailto:dhall@wric.com)  
Autumn Childress, Reporter  
[AChildress@wric.com](mailto:AChildress@wric.com)

### NBC 12

Desiree Montilla, Reporter  
[Desiree.Montilla@nbc12.com](mailto:Desiree.Montilla@nbc12.com)  
A.J. Nwoko, Reporter  
[nwoko@nbc12.com](mailto:nwoko@nbc12.com)  
Jasmine Turner, Weekend Anchor  
[jturner@nbc12.com](mailto:jturner@nbc12.com)

### Fox Richmond

[Comments@foxrichmond.com](mailto:Comments@foxrichmond.com)

## Community News Publications

### RVA Hub

[editor@rvahub.com](mailto:editor@rvahub.com)  
Niche: Local news for neighborhoods including Downtown, The Fan, Hills & Heights, Northside, West End, West of the Boulevard

### Church Hill People's News

[chpnrva@gmail.com](mailto:chpnrva@gmail.com)  
Niche: Local news for the East End of Richmond

### Richmond Grid

Paul Spicer  
[paul@richmondgrid.com](mailto:paul@richmondgrid.com)  
Niche: Sustainability-focused, community action

### The Mechanicsville Local

[editor@mechlocal.com](mailto:editor@mechlocal.com)  
Niche: Hanover County, with an emphasis on the eastern section

### Powhatan Today

[editor@powhatantoday.com](mailto:editor@powhatantoday.com)  
Niche: Powhatan County

### VCU Capital News Service

[vcucns@gmail.com](mailto:vcucns@gmail.com)  
Niche: Student-produced articles that are disseminated in other Central Virginia publications

### Richmond Outside/Views from the Treehouse

Andy Thompson  
[andy@richmondoutside.com](mailto:andy@richmondoutside.com)  
[riversideoutfitters@gmail.com](mailto:riversideoutfitters@gmail.com)  
Niche: Outdoor activities in the Richmond Region

### The Village News

[news@villagenewsonline.com](mailto:news@villagenewsonline.com)  
Niche: Weekly newspaper in Chester, VA

### Northside Vibes

Deone White-McWilliams  
[flavornews@gmail.com](mailto:flavornews@gmail.com)  
Niche: Positive community news focused on Northside

## Magazines

### Richmond Magazine

Mandy Loy, Online Editor  
[mandyl@richmag.com](mailto:mandyl@richmag.com)  
Harry Kollatz Jr., Senior Writer  
[harryk@richmag.com](mailto:harryk@richmag.com)  
Rodrigo Arriaza, Staff Writer/Assistant Editor  
[rodrigoa@richmag.com](mailto:rodrigoa@richmag.com)

### RVA Mag

Marilyn Drew Necci, Editor  
[marilyn@rvamag.com](mailto:marilyn@rvamag.com)  
[hello@rvamag.com](mailto:hello@rvamag.com)

### Style Weekly

Brent Baldwin  
[brent.baldwin@styleweekly.com](mailto:brent.baldwin@styleweekly.com)

## Non-English Publications

### 1380 AM Radio Poder, Enfoque a la Comunidad (Spanish)

Oscar Contreras  
[oscar@wbtk.com](mailto:oscar@wbtk.com)

### The Nuevas Raices (Spanish)

Fernando Gamboa  
[fgamboa@nuevasraices.com](mailto:fgamboa@nuevasraices.com)

## Richmond Region Advertising Contacts

Publication	Contact	Email	Phone
<i>Chesterfield Observer</i>	Carol McCracken	<a href="mailto:sales@localnewsllc.com">sales@localnewsllc.com</a>	804-545-7502
<i>Henrico Citizen</i> Note: Online only	Tom Lappas	<a href="mailto:tlappas@henricocitizen.com">tlappas@henricocitizen.com</a>	804-262-1700, ext 1
<i>Richmond Free Press</i>	Cynthia Downing	<a href="mailto:classifieds@richmondfreepress.com">classifieds@richmondfreepress.com</a>	
<i>New Kent-Charles City Chronicle</i>	Paula Chamberlain	<a href="mailto:Paula.nkccnews@gmail.com">Paula.nkccnews@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:Sales.nkccnews@gmail.com">Sales.nkccnews@gmail.com</a>	804-843-4181
<i>Richmond Suburban Newspapers</i> Note: Includes <i>Mechanicsville Local,</i> <i>Goochland Gazette,</i> <i>King William Local,</i> <i>Powhatan Today,</i> <i>Cumberland Today,</i> <i>Ashland-Hanover Local</i>	Janet Williams	<a href="mailto:jwilliams@bhmginc.com">jwilliams@bhmginc.com</a>	804-649-6763
<i>Richmond Times-Dispatch</i>	Shirley Royal	<a href="mailto:sroyal@timesdispatch.com">sroyal@timesdispatch.com</a>	804-649-6759
<i>Richmond BizSense</i>	Samantha Baldwin	<a href="mailto:samantha@richmondbizsense.com">samantha@richmondbizsense.com</a>	804-308-2447
<i>The Nuevas Raices</i> Note: Weekly Spanish language publication. Deadline for ads is every Monday at noon ET.		<a href="mailto:info@nuevasraices.com">info@nuevasraices.com</a>	877-683-8277 540-560-5335

## Press Release Template



### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Name, Phone, Email

### HEADLINE

*Subhead*

Richmond, VA—Lede.

PlanRVA is the only organization that connects leaders in the nine localities in the Greater Richmond area to develop solutions to enhance economic growth, reduce traffic delays and congestion, improve sustainability, increase safety and save costs in the Richmond Region. Visit [PlanRVA.org](http://PlanRVA.org) for more information.

####

## Sample Editorial Calendar

### July

July 8: Media Advisory to calendar editors from local outlets with dates and times of public meetings

July 25: Press release on publication of Connect2045 plan

July 31: Press release on new community engagement manager hire

### August

August 1: Media Advisory to calendar editors from local outlets with dates and times of public meetings

August 3: Expert advisory to local outlets on availability of emergency management subject matter experts as hurricane season peaks

August 15: Press release on public comment period for emergency management plan

### September

September 1: Media Advisory to calendar editors from local outlets with dates and times of public meetings