



GET YOUR TST OR JA PROGRAM THE ATTENTION IT DESERVES – HOW TO WRITE A PRESS RELEASE THAT WORKS!

GETTING THE WORD OUT...

How would you like to increase the visibility of your H-1B Technical Skills Training (TST) or Jobs Accelerator (JA) program to enhance participant recruitment, attract employers and/or additional funding support, or secure public recognition for its accomplishments? A well-written press release is an essential tool for getting your story picked up by the media. But if it's poorly written and doesn't follow a standard format, the likelihood of getting that attention is slim to none. This Bulletin will provide you with the information you need to write a press release that gets noticed. Follow this guidance and you'll have reporters knocking on your door!

WHAT'S THE PURPOSE OF A PRESS RELEASE?

A press release is a written announcement about a newsworthy event or an organization's achievement that is distributed to the media. Its primary objective is to attract the attention of an editor or reporter and generate media coverage. In large organizations, the public affairs department prepares press releases and handles inquiries from the press. While you may not be called upon to write a press release if you work for a large organization, knowing how to prepare one allows you to assist your public affairs department and produce a document that meets your specific needs. If you work for a small organization without a public affairs office, knowing how to write a press release will give you an avenue for reaching out to the media.

Keep in mind that editors may receive dozens of press releases every day. You need to make sure that your announcement is newsworthy and likely to get their attention. Place yourself in the position of the editor and read it from his/her perspective. Would you consider this story of



interest to the public? Does it have value to the audience?

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FOLLOW THE FORMAT!

Press releases generally follow a standard format. Using this format increases the probability that it will be read and acted upon. Here are some guidelines for writing a press release:

- 🔗 **Keep it concise and no longer than 500 words** - Editors and reporters may receive hundreds of press releases each week. If it is concise, it is more likely to be read.
- 🔗 **Use your organization's letterhead** - The press release should be written on your organization letter head. If several agencies are participating, such as collaborating JA partners, the logos or seals of each organization should be at the top of the page. Your organization's name, address, telephone number, and web address should be at the top of paper.
- 🔗 **Clearly identify the document as a press release** - The words "**PRESS RELEASE**" should be printed in **BOLD CAPITAL** letters at the top and center of the page.
- 🔗 **Provide a contact person** - The press release contact person and telephone number should be under the words "**PRESS RELEASE**" aligned with the left margin. Make sure that the contact person is readily available to respond to any inquiries made by reporters.
- 🔗 **Indicate whether the news is ready for release** - If the press release is for **IMMEDIATE**

RELEASE, print these words on the left side of the page. Otherwise, indicate that is embargoed until a specified date.

☞ **Provide a short and compelling headline** - The title or headline of your press release should be printed in **bold** and centered on the page. It should be short and catchy.

☞ **Double space the text of the press release** - The body of the press release should be double-spaced. Do not capitalize all letters.

☞ **Use the first paragraph to provide the essential facts** - Start off the first paragraph of the press release with a dateline which includes the date and city of origin. The first sentence should provide the essential information: Who? What? When? Where? How? Keep in mind that your headline and first sentence much catch the attention of the reader. The remainder of the first paragraph should amplify this information.

The middle paragraphs should tell the reader why he or she should care about your press release. Make it timely by connecting it to current events. For example:



“Despite an increase in the city’s unemployment rate this year, 97 percent of program participants are employed on a full-time basis.”

If possible, include a quote from an organization head, a board member, a public figure, or an authority on the subject. Avoid clichés and avoid puffery. Give reporters a news story, not an advertisement. And don’t use workforce development jargon that is not familiar to the general public.

The third and final paragraph should include information about your organization or collaborative partnership if applicable. It typically begins as follows: About the [name of your organization]. If it was not mentioned in the body of the press release, you’ll want to give credit to the U.S. Department of Labor and any other major funding sources. The last line

should include your web address. If your organization’s Web site has a media page, you should provide that address, not your home page.

☞ **End the release with the following symbols centered on the page: ###** - This is a journalistic practice that should be followed. If the release requires two pages, put the words “Page 2” in the upper left hand corner of the page.

After you have completed your press release, have another person check the spelling, grammar and facts. Errors of this nature are likely to land your press release into the wastebaskets of many editors.



To see examples of press releases related to workforce development news, visit the U.S. Department of Labor’s Newsroom at <http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/opa/>. There you’ll find many excellent examples that can serve as templates for your media outreach efforts.