

Hosting a Town Hall Meeting, cont'd

Overview: Public Awareness Priority Piece For facilitator only; not to be handed out to participants

Agenda

Section	Time Needed
Setting the Context	5 minutes
Introduction to Exercise	5 minutes
Introduction to Professional & Organizational Strengths	15 minutes
Peer Coaching	25 minutes
Feedback	5 minutes
National Feedback	15 minutes
Evaluation and Closing or Transition to Priority Piece	5 minutes
Total Time	75 minutes

Materials Needed

- Easel, flipchart, marking pens, masking tape
- Copies of the Evaluation Form for everyone

Facilitator's Guide – Public Awareness Priority Piece

Note: Sample wording has been provided in quotations below. Text in italics indicates actions to be taken by the facilitator(s).

Setting the Context

5 minutes

“The focus for this part of the Town Hall Meeting will be the priority on **Public Awareness & Support of the Sector**. This includes fair and balanced media coverage, increasing the public’s understanding of our work, and strengthening the unified voice of the nonprofit sector.

Public awareness is important for our own missions as well. We don’t work in a vacuum, we work in our communities; but our neighbors may not know about the impact we have here. And if they don’t know about our impact, why should they support us? If we are passionate about our missions, we must be able to show how our work connects to the rest of the sector and the rest of the world. If people better understand their local nonprofits, they can get involved in our work, from volunteering to funding to donating food or clothes. They will also be better equipped to keep us accountable so we can serve our communities effectively.”

Introduction to the Exercise

5 minutes

“We’ll approach public awareness here by focusing on **building relationships with the media** in our communities so they are better prepared to cover our hard work and triumphs, not scandals and needs.

Journalists are constantly looking for new stories on their beats, but they don’t know to look for what isn’t there. Each of our organizations can make itself a known resource or contact for reporters in our area so when a story comes up that impacts nonprofits or our specific missions, they know who to call.

In this group we have a mix of comfort levels around dealing with the media. We’re going to take advantage of the experiences and expertise we already have to help each other prepare to build relationships with the media.”

Introduction to Professional & Organizational Strengths

15 minutes

“We’re going to start with an opportunity for you all to brag a little bit about yourself and your organization. The first thing I want you to think about is a time when you felt like you personally were effective in communicating with someone about your organization’s work. Who were you communicating it to? What did you say or write? How did you know it was effective?

In order to give you a minute to think, I’m going to share my communication story.”

Tell your story of effective communication in a minute or so. Then ask 3-5 others to share their strengths.

“Now that you’ve thought about your personal communication effectiveness, we’ll expand this question out to the organizational level. On a piece of paper, jot a few sentences about a time when your organization successfully reached out to the media. If you haven’t done that yet, think about a compelling story you read or heard about another organization, or what it would look like for your organization to reach out to the media successfully. In any case, highlight the skills used to make that communication a success.”

Then, think specifically about your organization's needs in building relationships with the media. Again, think skills. Maybe you need help writing press releases. Maybe you need to make a media kit for an event you're hosting. In other words, what kinds of things could you learn from another nonprofit professional?"

Allow one minute or so for participants to jot down their ideas. Ask 2-3 people to share their examples.

Peer Coaching

25 minutes

"Now that you've identified some strengths and needs of your organization, you're going to find a partner at your table who can help you work on them, whether just today or in the future as well. Please choose one strength and one need that you can share with the others at your table in a minute. After everyone at your table has shared, break into pairs and move to sit next to each other if necessary.

At that point, you'll each have a partner matched to you based on strengths and needs and will spend some time peer learning from each other. The matches don't have to be perfect; you'll be able to learn from or coach anyone at your table. Take turns sharing what your organization needs and getting ideas from your partner on how to address that need. One person will "peer coach" the other for 10 minutes. Then I will call time and you will switch roles for another 10 minutes.

Really engage in active listening with your partner: focus in on what he/she is saying and try not to interrupt too much except to ask probing, not leading, questions. Remember, you will get your own chance to be listened to when we switch."

After 10 minutes, call time so that the pairs can switch off.

Feedback

5 minutes

Get some feedback: "How did that go? Did you learn any valuable tips that can help your organization? Any surprises?"

National Feedback

15 minutes

"All the work we've been doing today connects to the Nonprofit Congress, a larger movement of nonprofits. One of the most important things we can do is generate feedback and ideas for the National Council of Nonprofits, which coordinates the Nonprofit Congress, to take action on. Keeping in mind your organizations needs, let's brainstorm a list of informational or educational resources that we need to have. Please think specifically in terms of public awareness and support of the sector.

Record all ideas on a piece of flip chart people at the front of the room.

"We will now vote on the top three resources we need, and then I'll send that information to the national office. They will gather all the feedback from all over the nation and begin working on what we ask for. Each person gets one vote."

Go through the list, one item at a time, and ask for votes (or ask each person for their vote). Note the number of votes for each item next to it on the list. After the Town Hall is complete, include the top three needed resources in your Town Hall summary to send to the National Council of Nonprofits.

Wrap-up and Closing or Transition to Another Priority Piece

5 minutes

Hopefully, you've found this session useful in identifying some of the individuals and organizations in this community that can serve as a resource for you. You can use this type of exercise to flesh out your own public awareness plan and think about ways to work with others on it.

Before we close, would anyone like to share resources you know of that might be helpful when building relationships with the media, or other public awareness topics?

Thank you for your hard work!

Optional follow-up

Gather the lists of strengths and needs from participants, with their names attached. Compile them and send them out to the group along with everyone's contact information for future reference.