

**PRODUCING
A MEDIA
ACCESS
WORKSHOP:**

**A HOW-TO
MANUAL**

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FROM AAJA NATIONAL

You are a valuable resource.

Just think: Who in your newsroom is most likely to consider the coverage of issues affecting diverse, local communities? Who would community members turn to for advice about how to get media to cover their stories?

AAJA members understand why diversity – and coverage of underrepresented groups – is important. To reach out to the community, AAJA National offers the “How to Get Your News In the News” Media Access Handbook and this companion manual for workshop trainers.

Community leaders will value the opportunity to discuss issues and role play pitches with journalists. Journalists will get a chance to directly learn about community issues that they might not otherwise have heard about due to a non-profit organization staff’s limited time, lack of a promotions budget, or past challenges with media.

As part of AAJA’s five year strategic plan implemented in 2004, the National Board and staff envision AAJA as a leading source in providing Asian American and Pacific Islander community organizations and other community leaders with practical information on how to best get their stories covered by media. We hope that AAJA Media Access Workshops can be hosted across the country as a partnership between journalists and local community organizations.

This resource manual was made possible with the generous support of The New York Times Company Foundation, the initiative and experience of AAJA members Jessie Mangaliman and Scott Nishimura, and the expertise of all the chapter members who have hosted or participated in AAJA Media Access Workshops over the years.

JANICE LEE

Deputy Executive Director

ASIAN AMERICAN JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION

INTRODUCTION

“By offering access points between the newsroom and the community, AAJA can improve fair and accurate coverage of the Asian American community...”

— author Helen Zia, from a 1998 AAJA document
“Media Training Modules”

Since 1982, our colleagues from Los Angeles to Portland to New York have conducted an important community outreach that goes to the heart of one our founding missions: community outreach through media access workshops. It’s work that shares with others what we know best – our knowledge and insider’s perspective of journalism.

Many organizations that work in ethnic and immigrant communities, including those in Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, have little or no experience in dealing with and accessing the media. Often, these small groups have the best stories to tell but they don’t have the skills to “get their news in the news.” In some cases, these communities are thrust upon the media stage by a crisis, knowing little to none about the basics of media strategy, pitching stories, asking to meet with editorial boards, offering to write guest editorials, or raising questions about unfair coverage.

On the intersection of what these communities need, and AAJA’s goal of fair and accurate coverage in media, AAJA has a critical role to play. There’s a lot to learn from each other – journalists from community groups, community groups from journalists. And in doing this, we also serve the public good. Through media access workshops and training, AAJA can:

- help non-profit groups pitch stories
- train organization representatives how to interview on television
- become a better-sourced journalist through contacts made at the workshops
- showcase the work that AAJA does in the community, and inform potential funders about the work of AAJA in journalism, and in the community.

The goal of this manual is to show you that in your respective local AAJA chapters, producing a media access workshop is

easy, rewarding, and fun. It's also likely you'll come upon a story you hadn't thought of before through your contacts with representatives of community groups. The cost of this should be minimal. But consider charging a minimum amount, say \$10, for the cost of lunch. The workshop is free. You get local journalist and media professionals to volunteer their time. There are a myriad of ways to put on a media access workshop and what follows is a simple, chapter-tested template that can be finessed in various versions.



AAJA members Jessie Mangaliman, national board member who coordinated the Media Access guides and workshop; Helen Zia, whose early media training modules inspired the trainings today; and Keith Kamisugi, a media and community relations professional who has helped refine the Media Access model over the years.



STEP 1

decide on a plan

Media training workshops can be as simple as an hour-long session on how to write a basic press release to a day-long seminar on the ins and outs of your local media scene. As you'll see in the accompanying *AAJA Media Access Handbook*, "How to Get Your News In the News," there are a number of ways to present a workshop. But the first thing that must happen is for your chapter to identify a coordinator who can manage the project and set a timeline. Then decide what you'd like to do. Imagine what the hour or half-day program is going to be. Find out what non-profit groups would like to learn from you.

The DC Chapter in 2003, for instance, presented a workshop at the George Washington University on "What is a Press Release?" taking participants through the mechanics of writing one. That same year, they presented an all-day workshop that included practice writing of a press release, and a panel discussion on accessing the local media with an editor from *The Washington Post*, a producer from a local television station, a business reporter from another local publication.

In New York in 1997, the NY Chapter presented an evening workshop, "How to Get Your News Into the News: A workshop for community groups on how to pitch stories to the New York Media." That hour-and-a-half-long workshop was held at Columbia University and included editors from the *NY Daily News*, an Emmy Award-nominated spot news producer, the vice president of a New York City public relations firm, and a producer from CBS.

The San Francisco Chapter presented a four-hour, afternoon session in May 2003, following a similar model: a session on the press release, a panel on how media professionals access the media, a discussion on media access by local journalists, mock television interviews followed by a critique from local television

journalists. That session was held at the Japanese Cultural and Community Center, co-sponsor and host of the event. The workshop concluded with a “meet and greet,” at which local journalists met with the 25 participants and exchanged business cards.

Other ideas:

- A workshop on how to pitch ideas to columnists. Invite columnists to talk about what kinds of stories they choose to write about.
- How to write a successful guest editorial. Bring members of editorial boards from local media to discuss what makes a good opinion piece.
- How to write a letter to the editor. Opinion sections of newspapers often have designated editors who pick and choose letters submitted to editors. Invite him or her and discuss the elements of a letter that gets published.
- What is a feature story? Bring writers from your local media who focus on life stories and have a roundtable discussion about the feature story.
- Have a community forum to discuss issues of coverage. These are more difficult to set up because emotions naturally will run high. But if you have a good moderator who can control the discussion, you’ll find that it’s worthy.

STEP 2

outline your workshop

Imagine the structure of your workshop. What happens at the first hour? What happens next? Who's going to moderate? Write down the names of possible panelists.

Here's a real sample, based on Helen Zia's training module from 1998, which the San Francisco chapter successfully used in 2003.

12:30 p.m.

The Press Release (25 minutes)

This is a working lunch. A quick review of what is a press release. The week before, the participants were asked to write a real press release based on an event or program with their organization.

Requirements: A moderator, room and panel table with microphones.

1-2 p.m.

Media Strategy, How the Pros Do It (1 hour)

Requirements: Local media professionals, independent media relations people who can discuss how it's done. Moderator.

2-3:30 p.m.

Media Access (1½ hours)

How do different news media pick stories to cover? What's a story pitch?

Requirements: Television, print, radio and online journalists to serve as panelists. Moderator.

3:30-4 p.m.

The Television Interview (30 minutes)

The stand-up, the soundbyte. What makes an effective TV interview? Some participants are called on the spot to do a mock television interview with

local television journalists, in front of a camera shown live on a monitor being watched by other participants. This is followed by a quick critique after the interview.

Requirements: Television journalists on panel and critique session, camera, television monitor.

4-4:30 p.m.

Meet and Greet (30 minutes)

At the conclusion of the workshop, participants meet local working journalists. This is an excellent chance for participants to pitch stories, an opportunity to make valuable media contacts and finally, an important time for journalists to meet community leaders.

STEP 3

decide on location and date

Cast a wide net. You'll need a big room. Scout universities with journalism programs, community colleges, big non-profit groups, community organizations that have meeting rooms or auditoriums. Consider your own company.

STEP 4

line up your panelists and trainers

Outlining your workshop really helps propel you for this next step. You know what you need for each session. Now it's time to rally your chapter members and find panelists who can commit.

You'll also need volunteer trainers, journalists who can help you facilitate each of the sessions.

STEP 5

community outreach, finding a co-sponsor

The best way to identify your participants is through a community liaison. The ideal person would be someone who has established community connections and experience dealing with media, someone who works with a non-profit organization who can help you identify other non-profit groups who might be interested in participating in the media access workshop.

Meet with this liaison and explain the workshop and its goals. Your liaison's organization may also double as your co-sponsor. Ask for a list of possible participants. Screen the list. Exclude representatives of big non-profit groups that have media professionals on its staff. You want the small, non-profit groups that don't have experience dealing with media.

Use the liaison as the point person for the participants.

Here's a method that worked well in San Francisco. AAJA friend Keith Kamisugi, a media professional who also happens to be on the board of the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California, was the liaison for the 2003 media access workshop in San Francisco. Keith knew a lot of groups. He and the chapter came up with a list.

Keith set up a Yahoo! email account for the workshop participants. He sent out the invitations through the temporary Yahoo! address. The SF workshop was in such high demand we had a waiting list of people from out of town. Based on experience, you won't have a problem finding participants.

Limit the group to 25. Any bigger and the training and discussion becomes less effective.

STEP 6

media contacts

It used to be that each AAJA chapter that produced a media access workshop had to reinvent the wheel on materials for “How to Get Your News In the News.” Participants want and need handouts. With the publication in 2005 of the *AAJA Media Access Handbook*, “*How to Get Your News In the News*,” chapters no longer have to do this. The handbook comes with this how to manual.

But what you still have to put together is a list of local media contacts. This list is sought after by participants. Designate chapter members to collect the information for each medium – television, print, radio, online. Then compile it into a list, and distribute with the handbook.

Here’s a sample contact list from New York City’s 1997 AAJA guide:

NEWSPAPERS	
The New York Times	
229 West 43rd St.	
New York, NY 10036	
Metro Desk	212-556-1533
Metro Desk	fax 212-556-3717
City Desk	212-556-7702
City Desk	fax 212-556-1953
Education	212-556-3699
Education	fax 212-556-3758

Here's a sample contact list from San Francisco's 2003 guide:

CONTACTING THE MERCURY NEWS

Mercury News Main Office

750 Ridder Park Drive

San Jose, CA 95190

Main number: 408-920-5000

Newsroom: 408-920-5444

Fax: 408-288-8060

Calendar: fincalendar@mercurynews.com

STEP 7

bios of panelists, moderators

Begin to collect this as soon as you've got commitments from your panelists. A paragraph or two is sufficient for inclusion in a handout you'll distribute along with the media contact list.

STEP 8

project plan

Map out the workshop project once the major details are decided. Think of a timeline. So for example, once your journalists have been identified, write a letter, to be sent by your liaison, confirming their participation. Repeat details of the workshop: location, date, lunch fees, materials you need. Send this, perhaps by email, several weeks before. Then two weeks before, send a reminder. And again, another a week before.

Send confirmation and thank you letters to all your participants too. Confirm the date, location, details of their participation.

Here's a sample letter written in 2003 to the journalists participating in the SF workshop, again based on Helen Zia's training module from 1998.

To: Panelists and moderators
From: Jessie Mangaliman

Media Training Day,
"How to Get Your News in the News"
Saturday, May 31, 2003
Japanese Cultural and Community Center
of Northern California
1840 Sutter Street, San Francisco, CA 94115

Dear Panelists and Moderators,

Thank you so much for participating in this media training workshop, jointly sponsored by the San Francisco Chapter of the Asian American Journalists Association and the Japanese Cultural Center of Northern California.

For those of you who have done this in the past, you will notice that this is an abbreviated version. It's a very tight schedule and I apologize in advance for being a task master.

Our goal here is worth repeating, and I quote from an AAJA booklet on the subject: “To promote community access to news organizations and encourage accurate news coverage of Asian Americans.”

There’s a lot to learn from each other – journalists from community groups, community groups from journalists – and we hope in doing this, we also serve the public good.

As working professionals, your role in this is to describe what your news needs are so that community groups have the knowledge and tools to get coverage. Please focus on your particular medium. For instance, how does a television reporter go about choosing what stories to cover? How does a columnist choose a subject to write on? How does a professional devise a media strategy?

The panel format is straightforward. I’ll introduce you all briefly, followed by a three-minute individual presentation. Please focus your presentation on these general themes:

- What happens to a news release when it lands in your newsrooms? How does it reach you? Fax? Email?
- What are the elements you look for when deciding on a story to cover? What’s an effective story pitch? What’s not effective?
- What preparation should a community representative do before making a story pitch?
- What makes a good television interview?

As I mentioned before, you are all welcome to have lunch with us and attend the entire workshop. But I realize that your schedules are tight so I understand if you show up only for the times of your particular panels. I do have one important request: Please show up 30 minutes before your panels begin for a short briefing.

If you have questions, concerns, please contact me at jmangaliman@sjmercury.com or call me at 408-920-5794.

See you Saturday!

Yours,
JESSIE MANGALIMAN
AAJA-SF Board member
Staff Writer, *San Jose Mercury News*

Here's a sample letter to workshop participants, sent a week before the workshop. Our community liaison and partner, Keith Kamisugi, sent this out by email, through the free Yahoo! Mail.

May 23, 2003

Dear Participants,

The half-day media training workshop, "How to Get Your News In the News," jointly sponsored by the San Francisco chapter of the Asian American Journalists Association and the Japanese Cultural Community Center of Northern California, is a week away.

We will begin promptly at 12:30, with a working lunch, introduction and a quick discussion of The News Release.

For your homework, please be prepared to answer questions about an event or program taking place in your organization that you would like the news media to cover as a story.

This is easy. Using the model below, describe the event/program. If possible, have the information typewritten on your organization's stationery and bring it to the workshop. In addition, please bring lots of your business cards.

WHAT: Media Training for non-profits

WHO: Asian American Journalists Association and the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California, joint sponsors; representatives of Bay Area non-profit groups

WHEN: Saturday, May 31, 2003

WHERE: Japanese Cultural and Community Center, 1840 Sutter St., San Francisco, CA 94115

PHONE: 415-567-5505

WHY: To help small, non-profit groups in the Bay Area learn how to access the media and devise an effective media strategy

CONTACT: Keith Kamisugi, at JCCNC, 415-876-0589 or aaasfmediatraining@yahooogroups.com

STEP 9

details, details, details

What's for lunch? Where do you park? How much? Can I bring a friend? When do the trainers get there? Why? Do you serve cookies and coffee during the break? If you anticipate some of these things, they're not difficult to deal with. But many of these details – important ones, like which caterer to use or which you can afford – will come up. Preparation is everything for a smooth workshop day.

STEP 10

evaluation

At the conclusion of your workshop, ask the participants to fill out a quick evaluation form. Or you can follow up a day or two later, by email. You can learn a lot from these. What worked, what didn't and use what you've learned for the next workshop.

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and news managers in the industry