



## Media Guide and Toolkit

This **Media Guide** and companion **Media Guide Toolkit** provides ConnectHomeUSA communities with strategies and templates to help amplify your work by engaging local media outlets and utilizing social media platforms effectively. We suggest anchoring your initial ConnectHomeUSA-related press outreach around your first **local convening**. However, the materials we provide can be adapted for a longer-term communications strategy.



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# 1. Introduction

The topics covered in this **Media Guide** include:

- Communications Planning and Strategy
- Working with Local Media
  - Includes tips for both existing and new ConnectHomeUSA communities
- Using Social Media Platforms

The **Media Guide Toolkit** includes the following templates and much more:

- Communications Plan Template (and steps to help you complete this document)
- Sample Communications Timeline
- Press Release Template

# 2. Communications Planning and Strategy

The first step in your media strategy should be to outline a communications plan. Your communications plan is a living, breathing document used to chart your communications approach. It should be easy to edit and share with others. Don't forget to check out the communications plan template we've provided as part of the Media Guide Toolkit.

## 2.1 Developing the Strategy

There are a few key concepts to keep in mind as you lay the groundwork for your communications strategy. As a starting point, it is useful to map out the following four components that answer the **who**, **what**, and **how** of your effort. The components include:

- ❑ **Objectives:** Brainstorm and list out the objectives, big and small, that you want to accomplish through your communications plan. It is important to identify your end goal so that the tools you use reach the intended audience(s).
- ❑ **Communication Tools:** Identify the various tools available to you. Make sure to assess which method is best to use for reaching each of your intended audiences.
- ❑ **Target Audiences:** Create a list of the types of audiences you want to reach about your program, event, etc. You will likely have multiple audiences which will require using a variety of communication tools in order to maximize the impact of your outreach efforts.
- ❑ **Frequency:** Determine the frequency of your communication strategy, you may have to tailor frequency to the type of event, stakeholder, or message you're trying to convey. For example, if you are holding an event, sending one announcement via email may not be enough to garner the level of participation you are seeking.



**Tip:** Use the Communications Plan Template as a step-by-step guide to developing your strategy. It can be found in the Companion Media Toolkit.



## 2.2 Planning the Strategy

Once you have mapped out what you want to communicate, how you will communicate and with whom, you will need an actionable plan and strategy to deploy the message. You will need to complete a **Communications Plan**.

As you develop your Communications Plan, make sure to reference the **Sample Communications Timeline** located in the Media Guide Toolkit. Compiling a central document with deliverables, timeline, and staff responsible is a best practice. Word and Excel work well for these types of documents. A comprehensive Communications Plan (such as the template provided in the companion **Media Guide Toolkit**) should include the following key pieces of information:

- **Deliverable:** Identify the communication tool(s) needed to get your messages out effectively.
- **Content/Media:** What is the purpose of the outreach? What will this look like?
- **Target Audience:** Who will receive the message? Who do you want to reach with this information?
- **Objective:** Link back to your original objectives and goals for the program or event.
- **Comments:** Make note of any special considerations or things to remember for each task. This can also be used as a space for the responsible party to add updates.
- **Project Manager:** Who will coordinate the full process from start to finish for each communications deliverable? This person will take the lead for coordinating content development, approval, and delivery within the targeted timeline.
- **Approvers:** Who needs to review the content? There will likely be a few people who need to edit, review, and approve any material that is being released publicly.
- **Release Date:** When will content be sent to the audience? In some cases, this may be when the press release is posted online, the target date to post an Instagram message, or when an Op-Ed is due to the local newspaper. Your plan should be as specific as possible -- the more specifics the more impactful your plan will be.



**Tip:** Often, one of the first communication tools used to share the news about ConnectHomeUSA is a press release. See Section 2.3 for a sample.

Below is an excerpt from the Communications Plan Template available in the Media Guide Toolkit.

Title of Event							
Deliverable	Content/ Media	Target Audience	Objective	Comments	Project Manager	Approvers	Release Date
Press release	Announcement of event details	Potential partners, residents, stakeholders	Attract media attention for the event.	Include speaker names and partnership commitments.			30 days before Event
Pitch Op-ed	Executive Director writes about need for digital inclusion	Potential partner, existing stakeholders.	Enhance visibility of the event.	Raise awareness re: digital inclusion			30 days before Event
Social media posts	Photos, videos on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter	CHUSA stakeholders, Residents, Community partners	Encourage the community and/or staff to take part in or attend the event.	Choose branded hashtag for event, link to press release			25 days before Event

As part of your Communication Plan, you may want to consider working with local media outlets and using social media to engage your partners, stakeholders, and other potential supporters. These strategies are described in greater detail in the next two sections.

## 3. Working with Local Media

### 3.1 Why Is Working with Your Local Media Important?

Local media can bring attention to your program and help you garner more support from funders and other local organizations. Local media is also a great vehicle for highlighting your successes and thanking existing partners. Keep the following points in mind when engaging local media:

- Developing and maintaining relationships with your local media outlets is important but this can also **take time**, so **having a plan** is important.
- Sharing the successes of your ConnectHomeUSA program provides another way to highlight aspects of your agency that may not typically be picked up by local news outlets. This may introduce your organization to other possible partners or funders.



## 3.2 Local Media Outlets

Before you begin sharing news about your ConnectHomeUSA program, identify the types of local media outlets you want to target. Some of the different types of media outlets you may want to engage include:

- Local Newspapers (print and online)
- Local Television Stations
- Local Radio Stations
- Local Magazines
- Neighborhood or Local Newsletters or List-Serves
- Local Blogs

## 3.3 How to Find Relevant Local Media Outlets in Your Area

- List:** The outlets you are already familiar with, such as local TV stations and news anchors. Think about outlets that tend to focus on community events.
- Research:** Conduct additional online research to find other potential outlets, such as local list-serves or neighborhood blogs. Check Twitter and LinkedIn for news articles on *#digitalinclusion*. Add any new outlets to your list.

The example below shows media outlets for the DC metropolitan area.

### Sample Media Outlet List

News Outlet Type	Name	Webpage	Notes
Blog	Greater Greater Washington	<a href="https://gwwash.org/">https://gwwash.org/</a>	Regional blog with specific content for: DC, Maryland, Virginia
Blog	Technical.ly DC	<a href="https://technical.ly/dc/">https://technical.ly/dc/</a>	Regional publication with specific content for: Baltimore, DC, Delaware, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh
Online newspaper	StateScoop	<a href="https://statescoop.com/">https://statescoop.com/</a>	Reporting on news and events impacting technology decisions in state and local government
Magazine	East of the River	<a href="https://eastoftheriverdcnews.com/">https://eastoftheriverdcnews.com/</a>	A neighborhood-specific online and print magazine
Online newspaper	DCist	<a href="https://dcist.com/">https://dcist.com/</a>	Online publication hosted by local radio station 88.5 FM WAMU
Newspaper	Washington City Paper	<a href="https://washingtoncitypaper.com/">https://washingtoncitypaper.com/</a>	Local print and online newspaper



### 3.4 Tips for New Communities

For new communities, use the initial convening as a catalyst for engaging local media. Some of the ways you can generate interest and media buzz as a new community include:

- **Leveraging the media contacts of your partners**, including non-profit, city or local government partners and any of the national CHUSA stakeholders.
- **Making it easy to partner by offering draft press releases** and making your leadership team available for interviews or quotes.
- **Giving your media contacts lead time** so they can assign a reporter to your event.
- **Reaching out to a diverse group of media outlets** that are accessible to all your residents, including bilingual media outlets.



**Media Tip:** When sending a press release to a media outlet, it's a good idea to copy key text from the press release and insert it into the body of the email you're sending to your press contact. Journalists are very unlikely to open email attachments unless their interest has already been piqued.

### 3.5 Tips for Existing Communities

For communities with well-established ConnectHomeUSA programs, keeping your local media contacts informed about your program can help maintain their interest and engagement over the long-term. A few ways to do this include:

- **Invite media to attend and cover any anniversary or milestone events** like graduations or grand opening celebrations related to ConnectHomeUSA.
- **Invite a news outlet to cover an ongoing program** so they can develop the story into a longer-term human-interest piece. For example, if you host a monthly coding club or a daily summer program for a few weeks, invite the media contact to join and observe. And don't forget to invite them to any special closing event you may organize!
- **Help connect local media with residents who are willing to share their story** about how the digital divide has impacted them and how they have benefitted from ConnectHomeUSA. You may want to help residents prepare for these interviews.
- **Develop and curate a library of community photos** to share in your media pitches (be sure to receive written permission from residents in advance). These can also be used for publications – media outlets will often ask for 1-3 photo options for pieces they're working on.

## 4. How to Use Social Media Platforms Effectively

Incorporating social media as part of your communications strategy is critical. Doing so can:

- Garner support for your program from a wide range of local organizations, including possible new partners and funders
- Advertise upcoming programs to residents, partners, other stakeholders
- Highlight and amplify successes
- Tell your story and build a narrative
- Thank partners and funders
- Develop online communities and deeper conversations

Included below is a list of social media platforms to consider as well as tips for initiating engagement and for keeping the social media conversation going throughout the implementation of your ConnectHomeUSA program.

### 4.1 Social Media Platforms to Consider

Included below is a list of social media platforms to consider as well as tips for initiating engagement and for keeping the social media conversation going throughout the implementation of your ConnectHomeUSA program.



**Facebook:** One of the most popular social networking sites that allows registered users to share status updates and photos with colleagues and stakeholders. Maintain an organizational profile in addition to posting to relevant group and public pages for increased visibility.



**Twitter:** Twitter is a microblogging social networking site that allows members to post tweets. Tweets are limited to 280 characters and may include hyperlinks and video. Best to use when writing shorter posts with links out or a thread of related short posts together. Be sure to add relevant tags and hashtags so more people will find your tweets.



**Instagram:** Instagram is a photo and video sharing social networking site. Use Instagram when you have compelling photography or video to share – and use relevant hashtags for better visibility.



**LinkedIn:** LinkedIn is a professional network to connect and strengthen professional relationships and find and post jobs. LinkedIn can be used to organize offline events, join groups, write articles, and post photos and videos. Post on your organization page and include relevant tags and hashtags. When possible, add commentary to your profile posts to increase reach and engagement.



## 4.2 Using Tags and Hashtags

A tag uses the “@” symbol and references a person, group, or organization in a conversation. A hashtag uses the “#” symbol and refers to a topic. Use this on all social media channels so others can follow along with what’s happening in your community.

### Important organizations to “tag” on social media, using the @ symbol:

- Local PHA
- Local stakeholders (ISP, Boys & Girls Club, etc.)
- Local partners
- National stakeholders you may be working with (e.g. T-Mobile, Comcast, AT&T, Cox, Starry)
- Local Mayor’s office, if applicable
- HUD (@HUDgov);

The ConnectHomeUSA Program hashtag is: **#ConnectHomeUSA**. However, you can create your own hashtag to reflect your own community name or ConnectHomeUSA program.

## 4.3 Social Media Use Best Practices

- **Evaluate which social media channels are best suited to your efforts.** Assess who you are trying to reach and what types of messaging would be most effective.
- **Integrate social media into your overall media strategy and into your full online presence.**
  - Your PHA’s website should have clickable buttons or links to all of the PHA’s social media pages.
  - If you have a presence on more than one social media platform, they all should be linked. For example, your Facebook profile should have a link to your Twitter account.
  - Email signatures and newsletters should highlight social media icons.
- **Some platforms have additional verifications.** For example, Twitter has the blue “verified” badge that lets people know that an account of public interest is authentic. To receive the blue badge, your account must be authentic, notable, and active (see: <https://help.twitter.com/en/managing-your-account/about-twitter-verified-accounts>).
- **If possible, include a photo or other visual.** Social media posts with images perform significantly better.
  - Other visuals may include infographics, short videos, and GIFs (short static and animated images).
  - Follow PHA policy regarding obtaining permission from residents or others featured in photos before posting; this may require residents signing media authorization forms. You can use your own agency authorization forms and can also use either of HUD’s two forms: “[HUD Authorization Form Authorization for Use of Physical Image on HUD Social Media](#)” and for children, the “[Authorization of Children’s Physical Image on HUD Social Media](#).”
- **Create a content posting schedule.** This will help you post content at a regular frequency.



- **Determine frequency of posting by:**
  - Assessing how often you can create new content; and
  - Evaluating your social media channel analytics (e.g. traffic to your social media page, views, number of clicks).
- **Tips for Crafting Posts of Ideal Length**
  - Keep posts short and concise
  - Use headings, bullets, and lists when possible
  - Keep paragraphs to 2-3 sentences
  - Post 1 topic at a time
  - Include a link to an article or blog post where more content on the topic can be found
- **Guidelines for sharing content from partners** (i.e. retweeting, sharing, etc.)
  - First, verify the content source
  - Then, read the post and any links before you share it. Don't share content of subscription-based material that can't be accessed by your followers
  - Share information that benefits or informs your audience and followers
  - Include your own comment when sharing
- **Social media is interactive.** Always have an "ask" in social media posts. Examples: *Retweet this. Comment below. Tell us your story.*

## 4.4 Tips for Integrating Social Media into Events

- **Look for opportunities to live stream.** A keynote is a good option, but look for additional opportunities too
  - Social streaming platforms include Facebook Live, LinkedIn Live (this needs prior approval from LinkedIn, so only plan to use this if you've been approved), Instagram Live, or YouTube.
- **Use a social wall to show event activity in real time.** A social wall is an aggregate of posts across your social media platforms that can be filtered for your choice of hashtags or handles.
- **Consider having attendees submit digital questions to speakers.**
- **Use post-event video as additional content.**
- **Consider creating a digital post-event survey using social media.**



## 4.5 ConnectHomeUSA Stakeholder Social Media Handles

Curate who you follow on social media to stay in the know. Check out the following ConnectHomeUSA stakeholders' social media handles:

@ConnectHomeUSA	@BGCA_Clubs	@FreeGeekPDX	@natlhousingconf
@ABCmouse	@CollegeBoard	@generationsonline	@PCsforPeople
@ALALibrary	@comcast	@github	@StarryInternet
@ATT	@CommonSense	@googlefiber	@TMobile
@BestBuy	@CoxComm	@TeamKano	

## 4.6 Sample Social Media Posts

We have provided sample language to use for the various platforms, feel free to use these and be sure to insert your own organization and partners' names. To spark your imagination, we've also included examples of real-world social media posts that ConnectHomeUSA communities created to promote their events and programs.

### Sample Post Language

	<p>Congratulate our newest Digital Literacy Program graduates! Thanks to <b>@Training Partner</b> and <b>@Device Partner</b> we have trained <b>X # graduates</b> and distributed <b>Y # devices</b> to close the digital divide. Sign up for our next program here.</p>
	<p>Next week local digital equity stakeholders <b>@Partner 1 @ Partner 2</b> are convening to close the digital divide in <b>My ConnectHomeUSA Community</b>. Are you interested in narrowing the digital divide in our community? Register to join us here [insert convening registration URL].</p>
	<p>Are you interested in getting a computer or tablet to further your education or search for improved employment opportunities? Sign up for our ConnectHomeUSA Program and receive a free device at graduation! [insert signup link/other contact info]</p>
	<p>Thanks to <b>@Funder</b> for helping us narrow the digital divide at <b>USA PHA!</b> We are looking forward to expanding broadband access for our residents at <b>Y Community</b> with this investment.</p>

**Examples of Twitter Posts**

ConnectHomeUSA Retweeted

**HACP**  
@HACP1

Thanks to our partnership with ConnectHomeUSA & the National Network of Libraries of Medicine, our Mobile Lab helps residents gain the digital skills they need and access health info online. We're committed to improving digital & health literacy in our communities

ConnectHomeUSA and 2 others

2:56 PM · Jan 16, 2020 · Twitter Web App

**Faradilla AlFath**  
@alfathfarah

I am very honored to be a part of the ConnectHome research project in 2020 with ASU @KMossberger and City of Phoenix to mitigate digital divide problem among low-income communities in Phoenix! Yay to ASU and Phoenix :)

Phoenix distributes nearly 10,000 laptops to combat digital divide  
Phoenix is making remote learning easier thanks to CARES funding, a donation from Scottsdale Bible Church and laptops provided by School Connect.  
[azcentral.com](http://azcentral.com)

ConnectHomeUSA Retweeted

**CHA**  
@theCHATweets

On Safer Internet Day, we are highlighting our work to close the #digitaldivide and expand internet access for residents, helping them get the most of their internet experience, thanks to a partnership with @connecthomeUSA and @everyone\_on #SID2020

CHA Digital Inclusion  
[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

**ConnectHomeUSA**  
@ConnectHomeUSA

High-five @ECCommunities for the wonderful #digitalinclusion event they hosted reaching 100 residents! It takes cross-sector partnerships to foster digital equity and they're making it happen. Check out this article that talks about their recent work in New Haven, CT

**Elm City Communities** @ECCommunities · Feb 6, 2020  
[newhavenindependent.org/index.php/arch...](http://newhavenindependent.org/index.php/arch...)

3:42 PM · Feb 7, 2020 · Twitter Web App

**f** Examples of Facebook Posts

**Philadelphia Housing Authority**  
September 3, 2020 · 🌐

Philadelphia families: do you lack an Internet connection for the start of remote school? You may qualify for free high-speed Internet as part of #PHLConnectED, a new program from [City of Philadelphia Government](#) and [School District of Philadelphia](#) connecting Philadelphia households. To see if you're eligible, dial 2-1-1 and press option 1 or visit <https://www.phila.gov/PHLConnectED>.



PHILA.GOV  
**PHLConnectED | Office of Children and Families**  
Connecting 35,000 K-12 student households to digital access with internet, laptops, and traini...

**San Antonio Housing Authority**  
October 11, 2020 · 🌐

Last chance to donate toward Digital Inclusion Week 2020! Your generosity can help residents like Tanairie bridge the digital divide and #ConnectAllConnectTodos to digital literacy training, devices and connectivity.

Nearly 1 in 6 households do not have a computer and 1 in 3 individuals aged 65 years and older do not have a computer and a home Internet subscription.

Make change happen today! A \$100 donation helps provide a SAHA resident with training, a hotspot and device.  
[saha.org/diw](https://saha.org/diw)



YOUTUBE.COM  
**ConnectHome helps local resident**  
In the past year, the San Antonio Housing Authority's ConnectHome program has connect Pub...

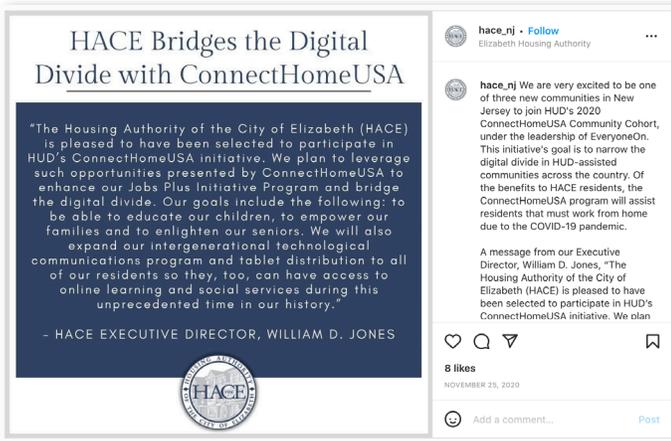
**Fresno Housing**  
October 6, 2020 · 🌐

The Fresno Housing team has been busy distributing tablets to our Veteran residents, helping to keep them connected with community resources, appointments and keeping in-touch with their loved ones. Pre-loaded Veteran specific apps and two years of free Internet.

Thanks to our partners [Wells Fargo](#) and [T-Mobile](#) for helping us Bridge the Digital Divide and for helping create a solution for issues that disproportionately affect low-income residents.  
#DigitalDivide #DIW2020 #DigitalEquityNOW



## Instagram Examples of Instagram Posts



## in Examples of LinkedIn Posts

**Rockford Housing Authority** 589 followers 2yr

ConnectHome, is an initiative with the Rockford Housing Authority, the Rockford community, the private sector, and the federal government to expand high speed broadband to more families. The program was launched for low-income ...see more

Play 0:04 / 1:00

**DC Housing Authority** 756 followers 1w

The District of Columbia Housing Authority is proud to continue our partnership with [Cisco Networking Academy](#) who provided a generous technology donation for our youth. This month youth participating in the DCHA STEM program received Pi-Top computers to encourage their curiosity around coding, music, gaming and more!

DCHA staff at our EnVision Center guided students through a socially-distanced tutorial to help manually assemble their computers. In addition, each computer came with an Inventor's Kit, allowing them to develop robotics or science projects to complete everyday functions, such as turning on a light.

We are grateful for our partners who help us bring our mission to life where we foster sustainable communities and enhance the lives of customers we serve.

#stem #technology #ciscoNetworkingAcademy #partnerwithus



**San Antonio Housing Authority** 1,855 followers 4mo

We are kicking off Digital Inclusion Week with ConnectHomeSA to help bridge the digital divide and raise awareness to solutions addressing access to the Internet, devices and local technology training.

Data shows San Antonio is one of the worst connected cities in the country for its size, 35th worst according to the National Digital Inclusion Alliance.

SAHA resident and ConnectHomeSA graduate, Corrina Constante, says she is fortunate for the ConnectHomeSA program and encourages all residents to take advantage of the opportunity.

"You aren't just getting a laptop — you're getting the skills you didn't have before," Corrina says.

SAHA is raising \$5,000 to bridge the digital divide for SAHA communities. A \$60 donation purchases a refurbished computer for a participant in ConnectHomeSA. Make change happen today!  
[saha.org/diw](http://saha.org/diw)



### About the job

The Digital Inclusion Facilitator will provide technical support to CMHA residents as well as Wi-Fi implementation project management. Technical support includes assisting residents in connecting devices (computers, laptops, phones, smart TVs, etc.) to Wi-Fi networks, as well as providing on-site and remote Wi-Fi troubleshooting services to residents. The incumbent will also work with community partners and volunteers to develop and deliver digital literacy training to CMHA residents and will assist in searching for grants to help CMHA residents obtain devices and connectivity at affordable prices. Additionally, the Digital Inclusion Facilitator will provide support in the planning, resourcing, and implementing a resident digital inclusion initiative: ConnectHome. Connect Home engages community partners, city agencies, and the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority residents in a focused effort to bridge the digital divide by connecting CMHA communities to reliable, affordable, high-speed internet service; securing affordable devices, digital training, and access to educational, employment, and health care related services and applications. Candidate will feel comfortable working in Cleveland's neighborhoods, directly with consumers, and has had experience with hands-on group education and instruction. Must have a good working knowledge of everyday technology and the ability to learn and create a mastery curriculum with program-specific software (including online portals, training and assessment software). This individual must be detail-oriented with excellent written and verbal communications skills.

### Contact the job poster

**Lonnie S.**  
Talent Acquisition Leader Co...  
**PREMIUM**  
[Send InMail](#)

### Job Details

- Seniority Level: Associate
- Industry: Government Administration
- Employment Type: Full-time
- Job Functions: Project Management, Public Relations, Training



**ConnectHomeUSA**