

Chapter Seven

Building Program Visibility and Credibility

Part I: Increasing Visibility

Learning Objective: *To focus on building visibility through networking, collaboration, online and media outreach in order for a program to build credibility.*

Building visibility and credibility is important in sustaining and expanding your program's services.

Visibility is the extent your program's name is recognized by individuals, the media, potential funders, government officials, and other decision makers. Regardless of how effective your program is, funders and policymakers are most likely to listen to and work with groups they have heard about through the mass media or from people they know personally.

Credibility is the extent to which other people and organizations consider your program a source for accurate information on key immigration issues. As such, it is important for programs to engage in providing written materials or oral statements about these issues to the media and policymakers at appropriate times, and having respected individuals or organizations endorse your program's positions or statements. Credibility is established when you start getting phone calls from the media asking for your opinions or reactions to major events related to immigration.

Visibility and credibility are interrelated and are essential to sustain and expand your immigration program. The previous chapters focused on building a program's capacity using best practices to gain efficiency and minimize liability; important steps in building program's credibility. This chapter focuses on building visibility through networking, collaboration, and online and media outreach and exploring their crucial role in helping your program maintain and build credibility.

Steps to Increasing Program Visibility

While there are many strategies to help your program build name recognition, planning and resources will affect your approach. Here are some key steps to improve your program's visibility.

Get to Know Other People Personally

While there are many ways to expose your program, face to face interactions are still one of the most effective ways to increase visibility.

Therefore, it is important to frequently find time to network because relationships are cultivated over the long-term. Since clients are likely to talk about your program, it is important that your program provides quality services. Word of mouth is still the most credible and cost-effective form of outreach, according to Cause Communications. Community presentations are also effective tools for community members to get to know your program and for you to listen about community needs. Presentation topics in demand are "Know Your Rights" presentations, "Immigration 101" information, and legalization readiness recommendations.

Be Prepared to Network

Networking can happen anywhere. Be sure you always have your business cards handy. If you do not know anyone in the room, look for someone approachable and introduce yourself. Never make a good contact without following up with a later message. Another networking skill is to have an effective **elevator pitch** that quickly engages people and makes them want to follow up with you. An elevator pitch is a mini presentation that you can promptly give about your program, its services and importance.

Tips on Building Relationships

Bi-monthly community presentations on immigration helped Catholic Charities of Amityville build closer rapport with local parishes. As result, when ICE conducted home raids in several Long Island communities, Catholic Charities outreach coordinators were informed promptly and were given easy access to families in need of "know your rights" information.

Collaborate with Others

Partnering with local, regional, and national nonprofit agencies is essential in not only meeting the needs of your constituents, but also in obtaining resources for your program.

Local partnerships can take many forms and occur with other legal programs, social service providers, private law firms, businesses, and congressional offices. Collaboration may evolve around making or receiving referrals from other agencies, sharing information on the latest local USCIS practices and policy developments, shared advocacy priorities, organize joint campaigns, or co-implement community presentations.

Some programs work closely with local immigration attorneys giving and receiving legal technical support on complex cases. Either way, there needs to be recognizable mutuality in the collaboration so as to avoid the appearance of competition.

Collaboration Can Be Formal or Informal.

Regardless of its form, it has to be mutually beneficial to both parties. Ensure that potential partners:

- Share your program's values and commitment to serving immigrant communities
- Are trustworthy and ethical
- Show a desire to help build your program's capacity
- Are willing to share credit with your program and give your program opportunities to increase its visibility
- Have a solid track record and are well managed.

Collaboration Can Be an Effective Fundraising Strategy

Catholic Charities of Washington, D.C.'s Legal Immigration Services works with a number of law firms to recruit pro bono attorneys to take on complex cases. The program has an in-house pro bono coordinator who asks law firm pro bono coordinators to recruit volunteer attorneys. In return, Catholic Charities' attorneys provide trainings and legal technical support to the volunteer attorneys. This arrangement has helped many immigrants secure their benefits, and has also helped Catholic Charities obtain in-kind resources and money. For example, one of the partnered law firms printed the program's outreach brochures for free. Many of the pro bono attorneys and their firms have donated money to the program. Because of their satisfaction volunteering, the attorneys recruited more volunteers.

Get to Know Your Local USCIS Office

Many USCIS offices hold monthly or quarterly meetings for community-based organizations and other stakeholders. These meetings are an important way to understand USCIS regulations and practices. Some offices hold separate meetings for members of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA). Attending these meetings regularly will help you stay up to date on legal and policy development as well as help you develop relationships with key decision-makers. These meetings may also include other agency representatives to explain how their respective agencies affect the community. Agencies such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Customs and Borders Control (CBP), Social Security Administration (SSA), and Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) are important to know.

Many USCIS offices have Community Relations Officers (CROs) who are available to answer questions and concerns. Visit www.uscis.gov and its Community Relations page to obtain a listing of the CROs by region. Some CROs cover a state while others cover a larger or smaller region. It is important that you engage in an open dialogue with your designated CRO to increase your program's visibility and credibility in her eyes. One way that trust is displayed is when USCIS offices issue referral lists of affordable legal service providers with your program's name on it. One thing to remember is that CROs do not address specific individual case inquiries. Rather, they guide you through the system, give alerts on new policy and procedural information, and address general questions and concerns.

What is Administrative Advocacy?

Administrative advocacy is the process of seeking action from a non-legislating government agency about a policy or specific case. Effective advocacy involving USCIS concerns pursue a hierarchy of authority in this sequence:

1. Local adjudicator or CRO
2. USCIS Director
3. Congressional representative
4. National non-profit network intervention

See Part II of Chapter 7 for our Advocacy Guide.

How to Forge Long-Term Relationships with Local USCIS

“Over the years I have worked to develop a relationship with our local USCIS Congressional liaison person. Now we are good friends, and so she will respond to my emails rapidly. My recommendations for developing a strong relationship: don’t ask them dumb stuff, and things you can find out other ways. Don’t ask them for legal advice. Don’t be antagonistic. Be grateful and appreciative. Talk about things other than cases—I know our liaison enjoys the outside contact she has with me. Find things you have in common and bond over them—for instance, both our liaison and I have grandkids, and we talk about them. I also use my husband’s military service as a way to connect to USCIS officers. My husband served during Vietnam, and I have used that so many times, because lots of CIS officers are former military.”

- Sue Colussy, *Catholic Social Services, Immigration Program, Atlanta, GA*

Get to Know Your Congressional Representatives

There are instances when contact with a congressional representative is needed to help resolve a problem, especially when direct communication with USCIS has failed or your client’s case needs special intervention. Congressional representatives typically have at least one staff person handling immigration-related inquiries. These staffers have direct access to USCIS officers. It is a very good idea to know the immigration staffer at your representative’s local office. If you need case specific assistance, most congressional offices have two basic requirements: 1) your client lives in their district and 2) you can produce a signed consent form from your client. Effective administrative advocacy involves giving congressional staff specific written questions to be answered by USCIS or what errors you think were made requiring steps you believe should be taken to correct the error.

Regional Partnerships

Problems and challenges in serving immigrants effectively is rarely only a local issue. As such, it is essential to be an active participant in state-wide or regional immigration coalitions. An organized coalition can disseminate information to a wide and diverse audience, and serve as an effective immigrants’ rights advocacy organization. An informal coalition might start out by just sharing information on a community level but grow to become providers of legal and advocacy training, develop pro-immigrant multi-media messages, and engage in legislative and administrative advocacy on the state and federal levels. When a coalition includes trusted local partnerships, challenging work can be shared among its members including: presentations at community meetings, testimony before legislative bodies, messaging with the press, conducting substantive immigration law training, and building a broader network. If there is not a coalition in your area, consider learning how to start one by contacting some of the existing ones in this non-exhaustive list.

Austin Immigrant Rights Coalition
www.austinirc.org

Bay Area Immigrant Rights Coalition
www.immigrantrights.org/about.asp

Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition
www.coloradoimmigrant.org/

New Jersey Immigration Policy Network
<http://demo.njipn.com/>

Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
www.icirr.org

Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights
<http://icir.igc.org/index2.html>

New York Immigration Coalition
www.thenycic.org

Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center
www.fiacfla.org

Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
www.miracoalition.org

Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition
www.tnimmigrant.org

National Organizations

Connecting with national organizations is important—particularly if it is not possible to join a local immigration coalition or national affiliate network.. Establishing a direct relationship with national organizations can enable your organization or program to: 1) stay current on cutting-edge legislative and regulatory developments; 2) gain access to educational resources and toolkits; 3) receive technical assistance, research and analysis on various issues; 4) engage in administrative advocacy on behalf of individual clients or seek more systemic change; 5) lobby Congress for reform of immigration laws; and 6) obtain useful guidance on working with the media.

National organizations also need to hear from local immigration service providers to know how policies impact immigrants and if inconsistencies exist between policies and practices. By collecting client stories and experiences, your program can have a powerful impact on demonstrating how immigrants are negatively impacted by laws and regulations, or how they have succeeded in integrating in the U.S. For example, some national organizations, like CLINIC, meet with USCIS headquarters on a monthly basis to bring to their attention challenges and make specific requests for change. Partnering with national organizations is very much an interdependent relationship.

Many national organizations provide technical and legal assistance and management support, engage in litigation, and sponsor trainings on law, policy and advocacy. Some even have local or regional presence. Consider joining their mailing list or becoming a member to stay abreast of legislative and case law developments, to network with other agency members, and to increase your credibility. These organizations can help you locate other legal service providers in your area. National organizations can lead to funding opportunities by helping you identify funders or by providing flow-through funding. Furthermore, if your program is a start up, funders and other partners will look to see if you have technical legal and management support in order to gain adequate knowledge and experience.

Below is a list of some prominent national immigration organizations. Learn about their mission, constituents and services.

ABA Commission on Immigration

www.abanet.org/publicserv/immigration/home.html

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

www.lirs.org

American Immigration Lawyers Association

www.aila.org

Immigrant Legal resource Center

www.ilrc.org

ACLU Immigrant Rights Project,

www.aclu.org/immigrants-rights,

National Council of La Raza

www.nclr.org

ASISTA

www.asistahelp.org/,

National Immigration Forum

www.immigrationforum.org

Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.

www.cliniclegal.org,

National Lawyers Guild: National Immigration Project

www.nationalimmigrationproject.org

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

www.hias.org,

World Relief

www.worldrelief.org

Online Collaborative Tools

If you are pressed for time or have a limited travel budget, considered the following software for network collaboration:

Definition		Software Examples	Cost
Informal Conversations and Presentations			
Conference Call	Multiple callers on one phone line	Freeconferencecall.com	Free
Video Conferencing	Conference call with a video display component	WebEx Hardware Solutions	\$
Online Conferencing	Conference call with an online component (slides, documents, videos, and/or demos)	GotoMeeting.com WebEx	\$
Information Sharing			
Email Discussion List	Email Groups that lets participants easily email everyone in the group	Yahoo Groups Electric Embers	Free
Existing Social Networking Sites	Online networking sites where users can create profiles and connect with others	Facebook MySpace	Free
Collaborative Documents	Users share and edit documents online, either in real-time or over time	Google Docs	Free
Message Board	Online forums focused around questions and answers	vBulletin phpBB	Free
Long Term Structured Collaborations			
Online Project Management Tool	Users share documents, calendars, tasks, and structured conversations	Basecamp Central Desktop	\$
Online Community	Users share profiles, documents, calendars, message boards, and more	Ning KickApps	\$
Wiki	Collaborative website, where all who can view can also edit	Confluence MediaWiki	Free
Blog Network	Community of linked blogs where users interact with posts and feedback	WordPress TypePad	Free

Credit: Cause Communications

Establish an online presence

As people rely increasingly on the internet to obtain information, it is crucial that your program has an online presence. If your parent agency has a website, consider asking for a web page that contains your program's legal immigration services and contact information. It is also a good practice to provide upto-date resources and links to other reliable resources. This is a good way to increase visibility and credibility and ensure that the public has access to accurate information. Providing accurate information is essential in combating fraudulent immigration providers. If your program already has a website, consider making information available in one or more non-English languages. USCIS, Immigration Advocates Network, and ethnic-based organizations often share materials in more than one language.

An alternative to having a website is to create a page of your program on social networking sites like Facebook, Myspace, and LinkedIn. For example, on www.facebook.com, your program can create a fan page where Facebook users can choose to become your fan and read your news updates. Each networking site targets different audiences: www.linkedin.com attracts professionals while www.myspace.com draws youth and the music-minded crowds. Note that many faith-based groups also have their own social networking sites, such as www.tangle.com. While registering for an account is free on all these sites, it still requires time and strategy to manage and update your program's services, news, and events.

Explore Online Advertising

Online advertising uses keyword ads and web banners appearing on search engines. These can help your program increase visibility and raise awareness of your issues. For example, when searching a particular topic on Google, Yahoo, or Bing, you will see sponsored links appear on the top right hand side of the page. Therefore, it is important that you customize keyword terms. You can set the amount your program is willing to spend per day or month to fit your budgets. Google has an Ad Grant to help promote your program via advertising on Google: <http://www.google.com/grants/>

Media Outreach

Advantages of Media Outreach

While the internet has significantly changed the way media is defined, “mainstream” media outreach can help increase your visibility, educate the public about immigration issues, improve case outcomes, attract new clients, and reach policy goals. However, it takes substantial time and effort to manage positive media outcomes. Using the tips below will help you proactively work with the media and handle a media crisis.

Disseminating Information to Immigrants

The press may at times be able to disseminate important information about available legal remedies and eligibility, particularly in times of legislative change and uncertainty when the public may fall prey to the unscrupulous promises of unauthorized practitioners. For this reason, it is important to develop and maintain contacts with radio, television and print media—especially the foreign language media—in your local community, emphasizing the importance of professional legal representation.

How the Media Can Help Individual Clients

CLINIC helped a Korean woman who was in detention and facing deportation after 25 years of living as a lawful resident in the United States. She was sentenced to one month in jail after she pled guilty to embezzlement at the restaurant at which she worked. Unfortunately, her court-appointed attorney was unfamiliar with immigration law and did not realize that the guilty plea would result in her being considered an aggravated felon—a classification that made her deportable and landed her in mandatory detention. Even though deportation seemed too severe a penalty for this minor transgression, and would have separated her from her American-born children, legally there was little that could be done to help her.

CLINIC helped publicize her ordeal through high-profile media stories. After The Washington Post and The Richmond Times Dispatch ran feature articles about the case, U.S. Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA) took up the cause and appealed directly to DHS undersecretary Asa Hutchinson and ICE director Michael Garcia for her release. ICE eventually stated that the circumstances did not merit her continued incarceration, and released her. Without all the publicity that led to the involvement of a member of Congress, it is highly unlikely that DHS would have taken such a step.

Improve Case Outcomes

Cases that have stagnated in the courts may be expedited when they receive media attention and the chances of a positive outcome may improve as a result. A program’s client facing dire outcomes may take the matter up directly with the local media. Because a local, regional or national coalition may have stronger media contacts, it may make sense to approach the media through a coalition. Remember that the court of public opinion is often more compassionate than a court of law. A sympathetic story in the local newspaper, the national press or on national television may move your case forward more than any legal tactic.

Be careful, however, when bringing individual cases to the attention of the media.

You **MUST** make sure that your client consents to this exposure, and you must be sure to advise her or him as best as you can of the risks of media attention. Select your cases carefully and make sure that media attention is not likely to harm your client. *A sample media consent form is included in the Attachment section at the end of this chapter.*

Attract Clients

Mainstream media can increase the advertising for your program's services. When your program's staff members are quoted in the newspaper or interviewed on local television or radio, you instantly become an "expert." Elected officials and high level agency officials are more likely meet with you after reading newspaper clippings quoting you, or seeing and hearing you on air. However, policy makers are not the only ones reading articles and listening to discussions about immigration. Prospective clients are paying attention, too. After reading your name in the newspapers or seeing you on television, they are more likely to call your program for assistance.

Reach Policy Goals through Media Advocacy

Media advocacy is essential to the creation of immigrant laws and policies. Press coverage immigration issues can have a direct impact immigration law and policy. People easily form opinions or take action based on the media's presentation of an issue. It is important to work proactively with the media- to shape the story rather than just react to it. Successful media relationships do occur instantly. Rather, substantial time is required to cultivate relationships, develop a media plan, and work on cultivating media contacts. Below are a few tips on how to initiate or enhance media advocacy.

Get to Know Your Local Media

Learn Which Reporters Cover Immigration

The first step in reaching out to your local media is determining which reporters in your area cover immigration. Create a media contact list, gathering names and contacts from scanning news media websites, media associations' resources, or general directories of media contacts, such as *Bacon's*. It may also be worthwhile to ask other advocates for their media lists. Make sure to update the list regularly since media workers tend to switch jobs frequently. After an immigration story is published or a report aired, follow up with a note to the reporter you worked with response to the quality of coverage. If necessary, do not be afraid to be critical in a constructive way. Also, make sure to contact the person you worked with on a story if there are any important updates, which might lead to more coverage. This is a great strategy to acquaint the media with your program and for them to recognize your program as a source of reliable information. Reporters tended to quote people they know and trust.

The easiest way to get to know your local media is to call them. Always ask if it is a good time to talk before starting a conversation. Introduce yourself and explain that you would like to schedule a time to discuss immigration matters. Use the meeting as an opportunity to start a dialogue with the reporter, not to lecture him or her. Discuss generally what your organization does, what some of the current outstanding immigration issues are, and ask if they have any questions about immigration. At the end of the meeting, give the reporter your business card and a packet of pertinent materials. If you want to impact a newspaper's editorial outlook or gain more access to its editorial pages (i.e. writing op-eds), set up meetings with the local editorial board. Simply contact them and explain why you are calling. They are usually responsive.

Reach out to media outlets that cater to the ethnic groups in your community

Cultivate a reporter by sharing a compelling story that highlights a bigger issue, such as a young immigrant that can't affordably go to college because there is no DREAM act passed. Offer background information on topics of interest such as the danger of immigrants using *notarios*. Most ethnic media is eager to receive information relevant to their audience. You have that information. Offer the information freely and in a timely manner.

Develop a Media Plan

Don't put Your Client at Risk Just to Get Good Media Attention

An immigration legal services program, "ISP" (not its real name) had a long history of helping newcomers obtain immigration benefits like green cards and work permits. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) had recently conducted a raid in the community. A local television station approached ISP and asked if one of their clients would be willing to be interviewed about the raids. ISP arranged for the client to be interviewed and his story was featured on local television. The client movingly described the injustices he was subjected to as an undocumented laborer and his fear of living in the shadows.

Unfortunately, the client gave enough identifying information that it was easy for ICE to act on an anonymous tip and pick him up at home the next day. He was on an airplane back to his home country one day after the interview. ISP was dismayed by this result as they had not warned the client in detail about this possibility nor worked with the reporter to offer some anonymity to the client.

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Your organization should craft a protocol on responding to the media, working with the media, reaching out to the media, obtaining consent from clients, and designating and training an immigrant spokesperson.

Here are some organizations that have developed resources on how to develop a media plan:

- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service’s “Sample Guidelines for Communication and Public Relations” (see Attachments at the end of Chapter 7) establish a protocol for media calls into their offices. The guidelines identify the Executive Director as the key media liaison.
- The National Immigrant Justice Center’s “Media and Communications Memorandum: What to Do and Say When you are Contacted by the Media” (See Attachments at the end of Chapter 7) lays out a clear policy for employees’ interactions with the media.

The program spokesperson(s) who is the face and messenger of the program should be intimately familiar with the parent organization, the immigration program’s services and the agency’s position on immigration. Ideally, the program’s spokesperson should be the immigration director. If this is not the case, keep the spokesperson informed of the latest legal and policy developments.

Seek Media Training Opportunities

Consider having key staff members attend media training which may be available through local or state coalitions or national organizations such as AILA and the National Immigration Forum. These organizations often have press kits and press releases to use and communications directors who can share their experiences with you.

National Immigration Forum: www.immigrationforum.org

American Immigration Lawyers Association: www.aila.org

The SPIN Project (Strategic Press Information Network): www.spinproject.org

Cause Communications: www.causecommunications.com

American Forum: www.mediaforum.org

Main Stream Media Project: www.mainstream-media.net

New American Media (Ethnic Media): www.newamericamedia.org

The Progressive Media Project: www.progressive.org

Public News Service: www.publicnewsservice.org

Also, *The Strategic Communications for Nonprofits: Step by Step Guide to Working with the Media* by Kathy Bonk, Henry Griggs, Emily Tynes, and Phil Sparks is a helpful tool in creating successful media outreach. Key elements include: knowing your target audience; conducting background research on relevant issues; crafting effective messages; developing appropriate tools and resources; and having a written communications work plan.

Media Plan of the Migration Office, Amityville, New York

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The Migration Office is located in Long Island, NY. It has a staff of 17 that includes one attorney and several BIA accredited representatives. The Migration Office has developed relationships with local reporters that have made the office a credible source of information on immigration. The Immigration Program Director Carmen Maquilon, a fully accredited BIA representative, shares responsibility with the Catholic Charities Communications Director to respond to media requests. Ms. Maquilon is the main spokesperson for the immigration program and regularly conducts interviews and responds to reporter inquiries about immigration law and program services. Questions on the church's position on immigration policy and pending immigration legislation are referred to the Catholic Charities Communications Director.

The Migration Office's relationship with the media developed slowly. For a long time, after several negative stories were aired on the diocese and its programs, the Archdiocese responded to all media questions about immigration. Eventually, the Immigration Program Director was authorized to conduct media interviews. This change was inspired by Ms. Maquilon's efforts to nurture an amicable relationship with area media. With permission from the Archdiocese, Ms. Maquilon provided background information and shared sympathetic client stories with reporters to help them better understand issues related to immigration. Her outreach resulted in more positive and encouraging stories about immigrants in the area media. Ms. Maquilon has been quoted in *Newsday* and the *New York Post* commenting on local immigration ordinances, trafficking and crimes against immigrants. The Migration Office's relationship with the media is also enhanced by its membership on the Long Island trafficking commission. As a result, the Migration Office frequently responds to interview requests on issues related to human trafficking.

The Immigration Program Director has established a policy for program staff when there is a media request.

1. All media request are received by the Migration Office receptionist. The receptionist collects the name of the reporter, the media outlet and their question.
2. This information is relayed to the Immigration Program Director. When she receives the request, the Program Director does two things:
 - a. Research the media outlet
 - b. Inform the Catholic Charities Communications Director. While Ms. Maquilon has the authority to speak on behalf of the immigration program, she has developed a close relationship with the Catholic Charities Communications Director and shares all media requests with him.
3. Before responding to the media request, Ms. Maquilon writes down brief talking points to guide the conversation.

Ms. Maquilon tries to respond as quickly as possible to media requests and tries not to delay more than a day. This allows time to research the issue, if needed, collect her thoughts and compose the main talking points.

Handling a Media Crisis

You should have a plan in place for dealing with a media crisis or an unwanted press inquiry. Given how contentious the immigration debate can be, it is likely your organization, program or client may be drawn into a controversial story. Among the many possible scenarios: the Minutemen could come to town; there could be a workplace raid; one of your clients could commit a high profile crime; your office could be flooded with clients who camp out outside your premises; local law enforcement officials could be drawn into becoming federal immigration law enforcers; or day laborers could be attacked. It is very important to have a media response plan in place before a crisis occurs.

Suggestions for planning for a media crisis:

- Establish protocols on how to handle media inquiries. Make sure everyone on your staff is familiar with them.

- Assemble a team of community partners to respond together. Allocate roles and responsibilities to promote a common voice.
- Seek expertise by making contact with communications directors at larger advocacy organizations. They often get involved in local matters that can resonate on a larger stage. Have a short list of key names to call in an emergency. Alternatively, have a seasoned public relations person on your board or cultivate a sympathetic public relations person as an informal advisor.
- Familiarize yourself with some online resources that may be available to deal with specific types of crises. For example, the Immigration Advocates Network (IAN) has assembled a number of resources on its website for dealing with immigration workplace raids. These resources feature materials prepared by CLINIC, AILA, Casa of Maryland, the National Immigration Law Center, Detention Watch Network and the National Immigration Project.

Here are some suggestions for minimizing your exposure once you are contacted for a response:

- When an inquiry does come in, do not answer right away. Take down the reporter’s information and deadline. Follow your media inquiry protocol. Refer the call immediately to your designated media point-person. As appropriate, take time to collect facts and determine if there are sensitive issues at stake. Talk to your colleagues, and consult with other organizations you trust. You may need to work fast, particularly if there is a tight deadline involved.
- Consult with your local “crisis response team.” Develop a coordinated response using the crisis management plan you developed together. Do not act alone and do not act in haste.

Media outreach can have a powerful impact but requires time to cultivate relationships and to develop a pro-active media plan and a crisis response plan. For programs that do not have a media plan, consider initiating a discussion with your agency’s communications staff. Also, reach out to your local, regional, and national partners for assistance on best practices.

Conclusion

There are many ways for your program to increase its visibility: face to face interactions; getting to know and collaborate with local, regional, and national nonprofits, coalitions, and government agencies; conducting outreach online; and working closely with the media. For your program to increase visibility to various audiences, it needs to use several strategies. Expanding your program’s name recognition can lead to many benefits including increased number of clients and volunteers, increased awareness of immigration issues, and fruitful partnerships. Moreover, when individuals and organizations know your program and the work that you do, they are more likely to trust you role and judgment. This trust establishes credibility for your program. Lastly, individual and institutional funders are more likely to fund programs they know, trust, and see having a positive reputation in their community.