



## **2018 BLUE STAR MUSEUMS PR TOOLKIT— HOW TO WORK WITH THE MEDIA**

This Working with the Media toolkit is designed to help you create and implement a media plan for your participation in Blue Star Museums. These resources are a guide only—you should tailor your public relations strategy to what makes sense for your organization and your project.

- [Working with the Media](#)
- [Media Resources](#)
- [Choosing a Spokesperson](#)
- [Radio & TV Etiquette](#)
- [Blue Star Museums Talking Points](#)
- [Social Media Tips and Ideas](#)
- [How to Use Public Service Announcements \(PSAs\)](#)
- [Partnering with other Museums to Maximize Media Interest](#)

**Questions on media outreach? Contact NEA Public Affairs at 202-682-5570 or [publicaffairs@arts.gov](mailto:publicaffairs@arts.gov).**

## WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

The national announcement of the Blue Star Museums program will take place on May 16, 2018 with a program start date of May 26, 2018 (the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend). The program ends on September 3, 2018 (Labor Day). Help amplify the national announcement with your own local media outreach efforts on or after the national launch announcement to highlight your involvement in Blue Star Museums. This is a standalone supplement to the main document.

**Organize your media strategy**—Your goal: promote your Blue Star Museum to local military audiences. How will you deliver that message, and what specific tactics will you use to reach this goal? Will you host a launch event on Memorial Day weekend? Will you partner with other museums to issue a joint announcement to local media? Or will you focus on direct outreach to the local military installation? Perhaps you will concentrate on social media to reach your target audience. Create a plan that is practical for your time and resources, and feel free to use the following tips.

**Assign media responsibilities**—Decide who will be your main media contact. Other duties may include creating a media list, writing and distributing news releases and advisories, placing calendar listings, arranging interviews, securing photographers, developing social media content. Determine who will be your Blue Star Museums spokesperson (see the Spokesperson section).

**Create a timeline**—Set a schedule for creating and distributing press information about the Blue Star Museums launch and any special events. Include deadlines for writing releases, booking a photographer, and scheduling social media tactics, such as blog posts, YouTube videos, and tweets. Check with local media on their deadlines for news releases, advisories, online and social media content, and factor that into your schedule.

**Connect with partners**—Consider coordinating efforts with other local Blue Star Museums, and reach out to local military installation. See [arts.gov/bluestarmuseums](https://arts.gov/bluestarmuseums) for all participating museums.

**Perfect your pitch**—What's unique about your involvement? Are there multiple Blue Star Museums in your area? Will you host special events for military families? Consider pitching a feature story, such as an interview with a military family.

## MEDIA OUTREACH

- Develop a media list for your launch announcement. Target local print, online, and broadcast news outlets. Include military outlets, university news outlets, community or civic organization newsletters, local wire service bureaus (e.g., Associated Press), and local bloggers. Remember to gather all contact information, including title, outlet, address, phone, email, and Twitter handle, for example.
- As you build your list, find out who are the local arts reporters for print, radio, TV, and online news outlets. Who covers community events or human-interest stories? Who covers military news? Which columnists write about local affairs? Find out who are the assignment editors at your local TV news stations. Remember to include photo editors on your list.
- Announce to the media that your organization is participating in the nationwide Blue Star Museums program. Use the sample toolkit release/advisory.
- Send a photo of your museum alongside your release. Make sure it is print quality (300 dpi, at least 4"x6") and make sure you have the rights to distribute the photo.

- Follow up! After you send your release, call the reporter, editor, or blogger, confirm they received the release, briefly pitch your story or event, offer interviews with spokespeople, and ask if they will cover your Blue Star Museum news or event.

### **PLANNING A MEDIA EVENT**

Are you planning an event as part of your announcement of Blue Star Museums? Here are some tips on organizing the event and promoting it to the media.

- If you are planning one or more events around Blue Star Museums, announce your schedule of events to the media. Customize the "sample advisory" in this toolkit and send it to media to promote your event. Send media advisories 3-4 days before each event, highlighting who/what/ when/where/of the event.
- Prepare a press kit with a press release, biographical information for speakers (if you are holding a launch event), a schedule of any other special, related events, and fact sheets or FAQs for your organization and Blue Star Museums.
- Make follow-up phone calls to key reporters or editors to whom you have sent the press release or advisory. Confirm they received your press release, briefly pitch your story, and ask the reporter, assignment editor, or blogger if they plan to cover your event. Don't forget to offer your spokesperson for interview.
- Request a meeting with editorial board staff to educate them about your local Blue Star Museums program. The editors might write an editorial on the program, or assign a beat reporter to cover the local story/event.
- Keep an RSVP list of potential media attendees so that you know how many press kits you'll need.

### **Photography at your event**

- Assign a person to take photographs at your launch and any other events. Inform the photographer of your expectations, including length of coverage, important shots, and post-event delivery of images.
- Right after the event, have the photographer email you 2-3 photos to post in your newsroom or social media.
- Each photo must have caption and credit information (names of each person in the photo, what's taking place, photographer's name). Confirm usage rights with photographer via contract or otherwise.
- Suggested photos include candid or posed shots of military families enjoying your museum exhibition.
- Images should be at least 300 dpi resolution and a minimum size of 4x6 inches for print.
- Images should be at least 72 dpi resolution and a minimum size of 4x6 inches for web.
- Send these high-quality, high-resolution photos to distribute to media with a follow-up press release. Post these photos on your organization's website to encourage more families to take advantage of this program.
- At the event, consider having subjects sign a release form to allow their permission to use their images in future advertising or media coverage. Check with your marketing team if you have a media release form on file. At the event, you might post a notice or announce at the start that participants' images may be used for future publicity.

### **Prepare for TV or radio coverage of your launch**

- Ask if the venue has a mult-box—audio equipment that allows a camera/audio crew to record straight from the venue’s sound system. No mult box? Place camera crews where they can record audio. Tell the camera crews if the venue has restrictions (i.e., no flash, no roaming cameras, etc.).
- Reserve seating for media, and rope off camera crew space for media crews. This may be near the mult-box.

### **Welcome media to the event**

- Designate a welcome area for media, such as a media desk where you can greet media and give out press materials.
- At the welcome area, assign a person as the designated media contact. That person should greet attending media, have them sign in (to collect phone and email), give them a press kit, and bring them to the designated media space.
- Ask the reporter if he/she is interested in interviews with any of the principals.
- Designate an (ideally quiet) location for interviews. Assign a person to escort media to and from the interview site.

### **Follow up with media after the event**

- Send the press release or a follow-up press release, and one or two photos to media who attended.
- Post an item (with photos) on your blog/social media platform. Email reporters with a link to your follow-up story.
- Post downloadable images from the event on your website’s media page, offer a media contact for more assistance.

### **Monitor your media coverage**

- Monitor local print, online, and broadcast news for coverage of Blue Star Museums.
- Draft a “media highlights” report of top earned media placements to share internally. How many articles were placed, and in which outlets? If possible, capture circulation numbers to quantify your PR results. Analyze the tone of coverage, and the types of stories produced. Add links to online news stories to your website.
- Share your media. Keep the NEA and Blue Star Families informed of your local Blue Star Museums media success by sending us sample clips and media highlights about your local program. Contact us at [bluestarmuseums@arts.gov](mailto:bluestarmuseums@arts.gov).

### **Requesting corrections**

- Monitor coverage for accuracy. Despite your best efforts, media coverage may include inaccuracies. Prevent mistakes before they happen by sending media written copies of your program information.
- Does coverage include a factual mistake? Request a correction for factual errors, such as the name of your organization, the target audience, or the dates of the Blue Star Museums program.
- Was the mistake really the media’s fault? Perhaps there was a typo in the program materials, or maybe your spokesperson went off message. Either way, it still okay to ask for a correction, just acknowledge the gaffe.

- Be polite and professional when asking for a correction; frame it as a request, not a demand. Just point out the error and provide the correct information. Too late for a print correction? Ask for a correction in the online version.

### **Managing your relationships with the media**

If a reporter expresses an unfavorable opinion of your project, consider a conversation to clear up any misunderstanding. Keep in mind that unless there is a factual mistake there's no obligation to issue a correction.

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## MEDIA RESOURCES

Your list of media contacts should include your community's print, broadcast, and social media outlets. Use the resources below to research the local media community.

- **Media Databases**—There are a number of online media databases that track news outlets and reporters. You can search for print, online, radio, TV, etc. and create media lists for specific projects. These services often include information from specific reporters about what they do/do not cover as well as how they prefer to be contacted. These services usually are available by subscription.
- **[www.usnpl.com](http://www.usnpl.com)**— Contains a list of local newspapers, local magazines, and college newspapers.
- **[Newslink.org](http://Newslink.org)**— This website sorts outlets by state and contains lists of business and specialty newspapers. Also covers TV and radio stations.
- **[NPR.org](http://NPR.org)**—The National Public Radio (NPR) website offers information on local NPR affiliates.
- **[Stationindex.com](http://Stationindex.com)**—Lists most TV stations in the top 210 media markets.
- **[Radio Station World](http://RadioStationWorld.com)** — Search this website for television and radio stations in several categories.
- The U.S. Department of Defense offers a variety of social media resources for military families like **[DoDVclips on YouTube](#)**, and **[MilitaryOneSource on Facebook](#)**.
- The **[NEA Art Works Blog](#)** and **[Blue Star Families Blog](#)** will feature Blue Star Museums-related content through the summer. Feel free to share or point to these articles and interviews on participating museums and the military families that enjoy them!

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## CHOOSING A SPOKESPERSON

Choosing the person or persons who will be the “public face” or subject-matter-expert of your museum is an important decision. The people you want should be completely at ease with public speaking, talking with the media, and being on camera in either a taped or live situation.

You may want one person who talks to the media and one person who does community outreach such as to business, community, or education leaders. Whether you have one or more people in that role, you need to have someone who is up to the task. Sometimes even the best program administrator is not the best public spokesperson, so please consider this role carefully.

The person you want is:

- fully knowledgeable about Blue Star Museums.
- outgoing and at ease speaking in front of an audience.
- comfortable speaking with media.
- not afraid of a microphone or a video camera.
- familiar with local media.
- understands deadlines and the importance of disseminating information in a timely manner.

The person you don't want is:

- juggling so many other tasks that calling reporters or returning their calls falls to the bottom of the list.
- uncomfortable with public speaking or being on television
- not supportive of the military
- doesn't normally read the newspaper or watch the news

Use the Blue Star Museums **Talking Points** to brief your spokesperson. The talking points should be given to your spokesperson(s) to study so that there is a familiarity with why this program was created and what it means to your local community. It's important to remember that while your programming is localized to your community, you are part of a national initiative.

**Issues management** - Make sure your spokesperson is prepared to answer questions from the media about any potentially contentious topics. Draft a list of questions and answers you might receive from the media in such a circumstance. For instance, how will you respond if a crisis forces you to close the museum? How will you respond if visitors object to works in your collection?

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## RADIO AND TV ETIQUETTE

**Before a radio or TV interview** - Clarify the interview details with the media outlet representative (reporter or producer). Who will interview your spokesperson? When and where the interview will take place (in the studio or via phone)? How long will the interview last? What are the questions? What's the format of the interview (live interview, taped for future editing, or 'live-to-tape' [to be aired 'as-is,' with no editing]). Where/when will the interview air (on a news program, or a local entertainment show? Is it a call-in show? If you are calling the studio, confirm who is calling to commence the interview.

After you've collected the details, create an interview memo that outlines the "who/what/when/where/why/how" information and give it to your spokesperson to review before the interview. Include the producer's contact information. Send your media contact an advance press kit and ask them if you can talk about specific events.

### During the interview:

- If you are taping at a studio, be on time. Broadcast programming is scheduled to the second. Plan to arrive 15-20 minutes prior to the scheduled recording time, so you can prepare and relax. If you are calling in to the studio, know that producers prefer that you call from a landline and in a quiet location.
- You may wear a microphone or headphones; always assume your mic is "on" and speak appropriately. For radio, feel free to bring notes, since no one can see you reading. Relax and enjoy the conversation.
- If you are calling the producer, get the correct phone number and a back-up number. Find out how long before the interview they want you to call in and make that call on time. Be prepared to stay on hold for a few minutes, during which you will likely hear the on-air product. If the station is calling you, make sure they have the correct number and a back up, and make sure you are available at the appointed time.

**How do I act on TV?** TV notices everything, especially posture, energy, and facial expression. Be relaxed, comfortable, and confident. If you are sitting, sit up and lean forward to prevent slouching into your seat. Speak louder than normal, and with more energy. Smile!

**What do I say?** A typical local TV news story is 80 seconds long. Be ready to convey your top three messages about Blue Star Museums in short, concise soundbites, about 10 seconds long. Speak clearly and not too fast. After you convey the key messages, add anecdotes about your museum. Practice out loud to get rid of audible pauses like "uhm" and "you know."

**Where do I look?** If the interviewer is with you, you can look at the interviewer, rather than the camera. If the interviewer is elsewhere, (the anchor is in a studio and you are in a remote location), the producer may ask you to look into the camera.

**What do I wear?** Wear flattering, professional clothes in solid, neutral (not too dark) colors or subtle patterns.

### After the interview

Send your interviewer a note to thank them for sharing your Blue Star Museums news—it's a great way to show you appreciate their efforts and helps cultivate your relationship for future coverage of your museum.



## BLUE STAR MUSEUMS TALKING POINTS

*This document is for internal use by Blue Star Museums spokespeople. Feel free to use this language in your interviews with the media. This document is not intended for distribution.*

- Blue Star Museums is a collaboration among the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families, the Department of Defense, and more than 2,000 museums across America to offer free admission to the nation's active duty military personnel including National Guard and Reserve and their families each summer from Memorial Day through Labor Day.
- The 2018 program will begin on Saturday, May 26, 2018 and end on Monday, September 3, 2018.
- The free admission program is available for those currently serving in the United States Military—Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard as well as Active Duty, Reservists, National Guardsman, U.S. Public Health Commissioned Corps, NOAA Commissioned Corps and their family members—and up to five family members.
- To find participating museums and plan your trip, see the map on [arts.gov/bluestarmuseums](http://arts.gov/bluestarmuseums).
- Our museum is proud to be part of Blue Star Museums, a national appreciation program to thank our military families for their service and share with them America's cultural treasures.
- *[If applicable]* Admission to our museum is already free, but we participate in the Blue Star Museums program as a way to say "thank you" to our military families.

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## **SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS FOR #bluestarmuseums**

Social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, and blogs complement the role of print, radio, TV, and online news sites. With social media, you are the reporter as well as the PR contact. You can tell your story directly to the public, and your audience can share their stories, too. Consider social media tactics in your Blue Star Museums communications plan.

### **Key ideas for social media planning**

There are many social media channels to choose from, but you do not need to use all of them. Select platforms that meet your needs and time and people resources, and that reach your target audiences. Social media involves time-intensive writing, editing, and sometimes, media production. Also, consider what types of high-quality content you are able to produce or already have on hand when considering your social media choices.

Make a plan for your social media efforts. Who will write and/or edit the content? How long will it take to write/edit/get any necessary approvals on the content? How often do you plan to publish fresh content? Who will monitor and respond to public queries on social media channels?

Include your social media channel information on your press materials. Include icons and links for your social media channels on your website home page. Remember that social media is part of your branding effort; if possible, be consistent with the names you use on each of your social media platforms.

Social media users want to build community around interesting, informative, useful, and fun content. Make sure your content is a mix of hard news (press releases), narrative content (blog posts, or video stories) and external content. Consider the 80/20 rule: have 20 percent of your posts promote Blue Star Museum news, and use the other 80 percent to share interesting news about your community, the museum field, and more.

Social media content with visuals often has a better success rate. Use a cell-phone camera to capture high-quality, digital images of materials in your collection as well as visitor interaction with your museum. There are also multiple sites online that now offer high-quality images under a Creative Commons or Creative Commons Zero license that you can use to augment your own photos.

### **Blog**

- Blogging is an easy entry to social media. Try free blogging hosts available online. Remember that blogs tend to be more conversational in tone, and can be customized to reflect the personality of your museum. Post first-person narratives as well news announcements. Read blogs from other museums or similar organizations to get a sense of the length, tone, and types of content. If you enable comments to interact with readers, develop a comment policy and plan to review comments on a timely basis.
- Aim to publish new content at least once a week. If you publish less than 3x/week, choose consistent dates. Need content ideas? Consider interviews with curatorial staff, artists, scholars, or military personnel and families who have participated in Blue Star Museums; articles about exhibits; photos of items from your collection grouped into a particular theme; and photos of military families visiting your museum.

### **Twitter**

- Twitter allows you to send out a maximum message of 280 characters, including spaces. Use your 280 characters economically and allow room for maximum ease of RTing by your followers without editing. (Please note that Twitter no longer includes Twitter handles or images in the character count.)

- When you register for a free Twitter account, you will have to select several Twitter accounts to follow (get their Twitter messages sent to you) so make sure to do this research beforehand. There are online search engines to help you find Twitter users with similar interests that you can follow.
- Twitter hashtags make it easier to follow Twitter conversations. The official Blue Star Museums hashtag is **#bluestarmuseums**; use it to find others who are tweeting about Blue Star Museums, and help them find you. Add #bluestarmuseums to your “tweets,” and note it in your PR materials. You might also include hashtags popular with military audiences such as #Military #MilitaryFamily #MilitaryFamilies #MilFam #MilLife #MilSpouse
- Your Twitter frequency will vary based on the content you have to publish. Aim for 1-2 pre-written tweets/day. Consider “re-tweeting” (RT, or copying) relevant tweets from others you are following on Twitter. Be selective and develop guidelines for the types of content you are RTing.
- Content may include trivia or fun facts about exhibits; important dates about upcoming events; quotes from and about your field; provocative questions about your field; links to news about your museum, pictures from your events; blog updates, or press releases; or live tweet an event. You can also post videos of up to 140 seconds.
- The NEA and Blue Star Families use Twitter extensively to share Blue Star Museum news. Share your tweet with a cc @NEAarts @BlueStarFamily, and/or #bluestarmuseums so we can see your posts and share it.
- Consider tagging all content your museum publishes during this summer with #bluestarmuseums, even if it isn’t a Blue Star Museums or military-specific event. This is a great way to let your audience know you are participating in the program.

## Facebook

- Facebook is an online community space; you can register for an organization page. Post status updates on the “Timeline,” and your fans/friends can respond with comments. A Facebook page is a great forum to solicit feedback, anecdotes, and photographs from Blue Star Museum visitors. You can set up your Facebook page to be private so only “friends” see your content, or make it public to all Facebook users, even those without Facebook accounts. Make sure to create a comment policy for your Facebook page.
- Update your Facebook status at least 1x/day. You can even set up your Facebook page to automatically post content from your other social media accounts (blog, Twitter, YouTube, etc.).
- Need content ideas? Consider hosting a special event just for your Facebook fans with a special code just on Facebook, or host a live Facebook webchat with a curator. Create “photo albums” from museum events. You can also post video—try to aim for a length of 1-2 minutes.
- You are welcome to “like” the NEA and Blue Star Families Facebook pages, and you may also share our #bluestarmuseums content. “Tag” us when you post about #bluestarmuseums so we can follow your news.

## Other Social Media Platforms

- YouTube is an online community video platform, and can be a powerful way to promote your Blue Star Museums news. The average YouTube video is 1-2 minutes, so plan your videos accordingly. Viewers may comment on your videos and – if you allow it – share your video on other social media sites, extending your message. Need tips on producing a video? Search YouTube for thousands of “how-to” videos, or to find existing #bluestarmuseums videos.
- There are many more social channels to help share news about Blue Star Museums. Is your local military audience on photo/video sharing platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, or Pinterest? Consider those platforms to post or share



photos or brief videos about Blue Star Museums, special military family events, or exhibits. On platforms that use hashtags, make sure to tag your content with #bluestarmuseums to help people who are interested in the program find your content.

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## **HOW TO USE PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS (PSAs)**

### **Make the placement of public service announcements part of your publicity plan.**

Another promotional tool to consider is the public service announcement (PSA), which is an advertisement carried free of charge by local media (radio and TV) to publicize a message in the public interest. A sample PSA script is available in this PR toolkit.

- You may want to develop your own PSAs for broadcast use.
- Ask a local radio show host, mayor, or other public official to read your PSA.
- If you produce your own PSA for radio or TV, it should run either 15 or 30 seconds.
- Consider asking your community radio or TV stations to produce a PSA in support of Blue Star Museums.

### **How to work with broadcast outlets.**

- Contact the public service manager of your local commercial and public broadcast outlets to ask how to submit a PSA for broadcast. Stations often air PSAs during non-peak broadcast times (after 11:00 pm or before 6:00 am), although stations sometimes have a policy of airing one PSA in each newscast.
- Contact university and public access cable broadcast outlets—including your local educational channel—that may have more flexibility with airtime.
- Because airtime for public service announcements is free, it is also highly competitive. If your budget allows, consider purchasing some ad time on a commercial station and asking for additional free time.
- Encourage a local commercial broadcast outlet to become a Blue Star Museums sponsor and to air the PSA as an in-kind contribution.

### **Ask non-media outlets to broadcast the PSAs.**

- Ask local schools to show the video PSA as part of a student assembly, or play the radio PSA, or read the PSA script during morning announcements.
- Ask playhouses, music venues, and other performing arts spaces to play a PSA before an event.
- Contact your local movie theaters about showing Blue Star Museums PSA as part of pre-movie advertising.

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## **PARTNERING WITH OTHER MUSEUMS TO MAXIMIZE MEDIA INTEREST**

In many communities and/or regions, multiple museums have joined [Blue Star Museums](https://arts.gov/bluestarmuseums). Here are some tips and talking points to leverage this opportunity into more media exposure for Blue Star Museums.

### **STRENGTH IN NUMBERS**

- The fact that multiple organizations in our community joined Blue Star Museums is a testament to the strength of the arts in our community.
- Our museums are proud to be part of Blue Star Museums. Together, our museums have the opportunity to thank our military families for their service and share with them America's cultural treasures.
- Consider making a joint grant announcement to state media, i.e. your state's Associated Press bureau, about all of your state's Blue Star Museums involvement, in addition to announcing your involvement locally. Then you can announce the kickoff for each individual museum at the local level. Use 'power in numbers' as a story 'hook.' For example, "Museum X, Museum Y, and Museum Z have joined Blue Star Museums, which offers free museum admission to military families this summer."
- Point out the different experiences the museums provide and how these experiences can be linked. For instance, a history museum might highlight Lewis and Clark while an art museum might highlight its collection of western landscapes.

### **SELECTING MEDIA TARGETS**

- Consider coordinating your media outreach efforts with other local participating museums. If you release a joint announcement, keep in touch with local Blue Star Museums to coordinate your media efforts.
- Decide which outlets and reporters to target for your joint announcement (daily and weekly newspapers, local network TV affiliates, cable access channels, and online news outlets).
- Increase the visibility of the team effort by sharing anecdotes and stories on your social media outlets, such as blogs, Twitter, and other platforms. Don't forget to use #bluestarmuseums so we can see your posts and share them.

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