



PROMOTION AND MEDIA STRATEGIES

In this section, you'll find tips and tools for promoting your town hall before, during, and after the event. Promoting your town hall can yield benefits that extend well beyond generating an audience for a one-time event. Outreach can build brand recognition for First 5 as a trusted expert, and draw attention to the issues that impact young children in your community. It also can build relationships with policymakers and encourage their participation — the more media coverage and the bigger the audience, the more attraction to participate.

This section addresses outreach through three primary avenues:

- 👉 **Traditional Media:** Potential for coverage of your town hall concept goes beyond a “one-shot” media pitch. It provides multiple occasions and reasons for reporters to cover First 5 in the lead up to and after your event.
- 👉 **Social Media:** Provides an ideal, low-cost opportunity to promote the town hall to your network to generate an audience, raise awareness about the issues, and build interest. There are multiple platforms, including, but not limited to: Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, Twitter, and YouTube.
- 👉 **Paid Advertising:** There are plenty of ways to successfully promote your town hall for no direct cost. However, if you do have funding to purchase advertising, be sure to check out the Paid Advertising Tips and Sample Advertising Budget in this section.

Promotion Before The Town Hall


How to start: create a media plan

To map out your promotion strategy, start by creating a Media Plan for outreach activities and timeline. Your plan doesn't have to be elaborate; it can be a basic roadmap for promoting your town hall through outreach to your partners, the media, and social media. Think through each of the planning milestones that will occur and sketch out a plan in advance.

Identify and prepare media spokespeople

Take some time to consider the person/people you want to ask to represent your county commission and the town hall event, making sure whomever you select is available to speak to media before, during, and after the event. Consider asking a mix of people who are articulate, engaging, and aligned with your goals and can speak to:

- 👉 The role of First 5 and the need for the community town hall
- 👉 The most important issues to be discussed and the impact on your community
- 👉 Case studies/personal stories — grantee partners or people who have been personally affected who can provide a “face” to the issues

 **F5 TIP:**

Tap partners for help with media outreach

Many of the outreach opportunities outlined in this section are no- to low-cost and require only staff time. However, if your staff doesn't have much experience with media outreach, this responsibility might be just the right fit for a partner who does. *Learn more about finding partners in the “Planning” section.*



PROMOTION AND MEDIA STRATEGIES

Before any interviews, take some time to prepare your spokespeople to speak to the media by providing them with background about the town hall, and talking points related to the event and issues. We recommend hosting a mini briefing in person or over the phone to brainstorm potential questions and practice answering them together. Ask your spokespeople to keep you apprised when they speak to any media, and schedule regular debriefs after any interviews to hear how it went.

CHECK IT OUT!

Coordinate media outreach with participating policymakers

Work with participating policymakers' staff to promote the town hall. They have a vested interest in maximizing the number of guests and the caliber of the audience, so coordination provides an opportunity for elected officials to showcase their involvement in First 5 and the issues. In close coordination with and approval by their staff, offer reporters pre-event (or post-event) interviews with policymakers, as available. Explore opportunities to co-author an editorial piece focused on the issues. At the very least, this coordination helps to further build relationships and ensure policymakers are not caught off guard about media attention for the town hall.

How to reach out to reporters

Here are some of the opportunities/reasons for you to talk with reporters about the event and issues before the town hall:

- 👉 You can talk about the event itself — why the town hall is important, and why you're hosting this event now.
- 👉 You can reach out about why media should attend and cover the event, including the experts they will hear from, as well as local policymakers' perspectives and potential solutions to crucial issues.
- 👉 You can discuss the town hall policy issues and their impact on your community, as well as related grantee-partner programs, case studies, and personal stories about those who have benefited from programs, and/or highlight why a certain population still needs assistance.
- 👉 You can tell the First 5 story by including a human element highlighting a grantee partner who is working at the ground level and the impact and/or challenges the program is having.



F5 TIP:

Highlight New Information

Look for new or newsworthy information, data, or case study to present at the town hall, such as any new studies or reports that can provide a "hook" for encouraging audience and media attendance.



PROMOTION AND MEDIA STRATEGIES

How to “shop” your First 5 story

“Shop” (present) your story ideas to reporters to increase the likelihood that they’ll cover the issues, and so they’ll potentially frame the issue in the way you presented it. For each story idea, craft a 30-second “pitch” you can deliver over the phone. You can use the Menu of Story Pitching Angles in this section for ideas.

Before calling any reporters, practice your pitch for each story idea you have. Make sure you feel comfortable before doing any outreach. This is your sales pitch. It should be said in the most concise and catchy way you can present only the most crucial details about the story, and why that particular reporter should cover the story. The goal is to try to “sell them” on why this story is newsworthy at this moment and why this is of interest to their media outlet’s audience. Think through how your pitch might change, depending on the media outlet and its audience, the specialty of the reporter, and what else is in the news on the day or week you make the call.

“PITCHING” AND “SHOPPING” THE STORY

Think through how each story is relevant in real time:

Research recent events or actions taken by your invited policymakers on your issues (or other policymakers in Sacramento or Washington, DC).

Research how your topic relates to a timely project or issue being debated within your community.

Be mindful of any potentially competing stories in the current coverage. Think through how to make your pitch relevant to the latest news; or, alternatively, think through how your story is exciting and different from current news.

See the “Policy Tools” section for timely ideas found in each First 5 Issue Paper’s Calls to Action, Sample Panelist Questions, and Internal Talking Points.

Match your story angle with a reporter’s specialty (for example):

In larger media markets, you can pitch a story on quality early learning to an education reporter.

In smaller markets, you can pitch a community interest or public safety reporter on a story about how your home visiting program decreases the need for social services referrals in your county.

Shop your story ideas:

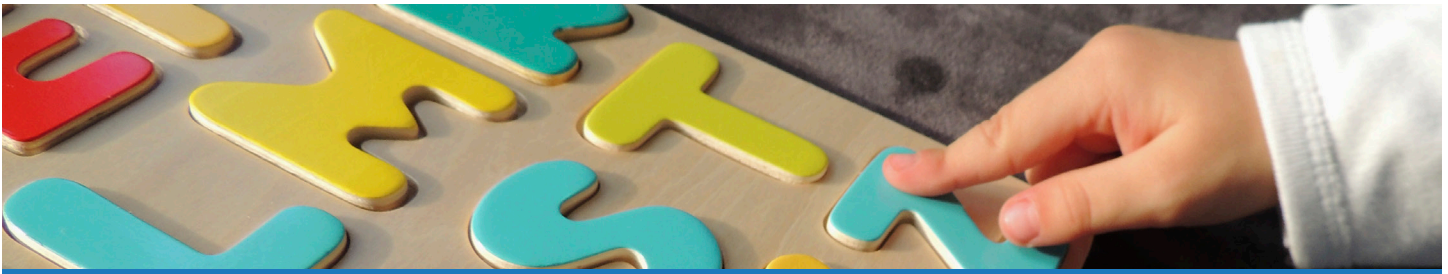
Identify several story ideas related to the above ideas, and call to pitch the reporter on your first idea.

If he/she is not interested, shop the next idea on your list.

If still not interested, ask for feedback to see if the idea might be enhanced so they’ll cover it.

We recommend identifying a handful of local and regional reporters as back-ups in case others decline, or to pitch alternative angles so you can increase the chances your story will be picked up.

After pitching your story, be prepared to follow up with additional details in an e-mail.



PROMOTION AND MEDIA STRATEGIES

Use social media

Here are some ways you can engage your social media network in town hall event promotion:

- ✎ Add a page, link, or announcement on your First 5 website home page that features the town hall.
- ✎ Create an event attached to your First 5 Facebook page.
- ✎ Post on your website, Facebook page, and Twitter account to announce partners, speakers, policymakers, agenda information, photos, and other relevant information.
- ✎ Leverage news media coverage of your town hall by sharing compelling personal stories via social media, as well as highlighting or retweeting timely stories and other social media posts that are relevant to your town hall and issues.
- ✎ Promote the town hall through other existing communication channels such as your First 5 newsletter or partner e-mail listserv.
- ✎ Add the town hall to your e-mail signature — each e-mail provides an opportunity to spread the word about your event.
- ✎ Create a special hashtag for your town hall that is relevant, unique, and short and sweet (#First5TownHall, for example). People use hashtags to organize, engage in, and amplify conversations online that also can carry your messaging and momentum beyond your one-time event. The hashtag will allow you to watch what is “trending” related to your town hall and get relevant real-time feedback in the process.
- ✎ Use your hashtag well in advance of the town hall on everything, including social media posts, on your website, First 5 and partner listserv e-blasts, e-mail signature, handouts, etc.
- ✎ Ask partners, participants, and guests to use the hashtag to help spread the word about the town hall through their social media networks.

Remember to use the Sample Media Plan in this section to figure out how the above strategies fit into your own Media Plan.

F5 TIP:

Plan a town hall “countdown” to build interest

Build interest in your town hall by highlighting an event “snippet” on your website and/or other communication channels with each planning milestone as the event draws closer. The Sample Media Plan in this section outlines ideas for weekly outreach beginning at about six weeks before your event. These are just ideas — the frequency and content of each communication is completely up to you.





PROMOTION AND MEDIA STRATEGIES

No-to-low-cost outreach ideas

- 👉 **Tap into your First 5 network:** Ask grantee partners and neighboring county commissions to promote the town hall through their networks (after inviting them to attend, too!).
- 👉 **Leverage outreach through partners and guests:** Ask partners, sponsors, participants, and guests to promote the event through their existing communication channels (listserv e-mails, newsletters, etc.) and social media networks (Facebook, Twitter, and more).
- 👉 **Go for grassroots:** Post flyers/posters in visible, popular places such as community centers, coffee shops, public libraries, and other community gathering places.

Promotion During The Town Hall

How to reach out to reporters

You can work with media who attend/cover the event to connect them with prepared and designated town hall spokespeople, such as expert presenters and First 5 representatives. Or facilitate an interview with press and your participating policymakers. If you facilitate an interview with local press and your policymaker, make sure it is arranged with the policymakers' staff first, and check with staff before you make any promises to either party. You'll want to handle this with extra sensitivity.

You also can self-report the event by designating one or two people to take photos during the town hall and keep track of event highlights, such as memorable quotes, Calls to Action, and audience questions that can be used in a live-tweet or other social media post during the event, or a press release or newsletter story after the event.

Use social media

- 👉 At the beginning of the event, announce the special event hashtag you created, invite guests to live tweet during the event, and use it in their social media posts.
- 👉 Designate a staff member to live-tweet during the event, and post photos and some memorable quotes and Calls to Action.
- 👉 Consider video recording the town hall so you can post footage or snippets to your website or YouTube page to give the event a longer lifespan. You also can include brief interviews (one to three minutes) with spokespeople and participants about the event, key take-aways, and next steps.



PROMOTION AND MEDIA STRATEGIES

Promotion After The Town Hall

How to reach out to reporters

You can use the Post-Event Press Release Template in this section as a starting point for outreach after the event. Customize and insert memorable quotes, attach photos, and pitch to media who did not attend the event. Smaller community papers with little or no staff, in particular, may run your photos and story verbatim.

After all this great outreach, remember to track your event mentions in the media — both to monitor the traction of your efforts, and maximize exposure by sharing and retweeting news stories on social media. This also will help you evaluate the results of your town hall for next year. *See the Media Tracking Sheet in this section for more information.*

Use social media

- ✎ Customize the Post-Event Press Release Template in this section, and post a recap to your website with photos and video, if available.
- ✎ Ask partners/co-hosts to tout the event’s successes to their social media network using the event hashtag.
- ✎ Post photos of guests who attended the town hall and “tag” them on various social media sites, if possible. This gives people an opportunity to comment about what they learned or how valuable the event was.
- ✎ Thank guests for attending through your social media channels. Include links to photos, videos, and other materials, such as expert presentations and handouts to provide greater value to those who attended and give non-attendees an idea of what they missed.

F5 TIP:

Recognize Your Partners

Remember to include your partners and sponsors in all of your outreach materials to provide them with as much exposure as possible as a “thank you” for their hard work and support. This includes aligning your website posts, listserv e-blasts, etc. with your partners whenever possible by asking them if they would be willing to share them with their networks as well.

Tools Available in the “Promotion” Section:

- ✓ **Sample Media Plan** includes ideas for weekly outreach beginning six weeks out based on sample event milestones
- ✓ **Pre-Event Media Advisory Template** customizable template to promote your town hall to the media one month ahead of the event
- ✓ **Post-Event News Release Template** customizable template to continue the positive media exposure after the event
- ✓ **Media Tracking Sheet template** to help you monitor traction of outreach efforts, maximize event exposure, and evaluate the results of your efforts
- ✓ **Paid Advertising Tip Sheet** outlines paid advertising strategies for county commissions that want to consider options for paid media
- ✓ **Sample Advertising Budget** outlines costs related to additional options for paid advertising “buys”

You can use these templates exactly as outlined, adapt them, or create new promotion materials to meet your needs. *See the “Policy Tools” section for customizable templates and other resources to communicate background on your featured policy issues, and drive the conversation during the town hall.*