



Running a Successful, Media-Friendly Event

Nearly any engagement with your community or stakeholders can help you tell your story, build awareness about your work or attract local media and influencers. Many events or engagements you're already planning can yield fantastic results with just minor adjustments. As you get started, here are some example events to help inspire ideas for events you can plan or how to adapt current activities. Just remember to keep your target audiences in mind as you design and plan your events, and engage your Teen Leaders in all parts of the planning!

Event Inspiration

- **City Hall Presentation:** Engaging City Hall is a great way to raise awareness in your community. This type of event provides an opportunity for your 4-H'ers to demonstrate new technology skills or discuss their projects directly with elected officials and other community or business leaders.
 - **Pros:** It is a great photo and storytelling opportunity for you and your local officials and influencers. You have a captive audience.
 - **Cons:** You need to schedule farther in advance and be flexible with the timing.
 - **Planning Tip:** Keep it visual and interactive. Teach elected officials how to write simple lines of code, use virtual reality or engage them in other tech directly related to your project.
- **Ribbon-Cutting:** A ribbon-cutting ceremony is a great option if you have a physical space where you will be holding technology trainings or a community center that has benefited from the grant.
 - **Pros:** It is a great photo and storytelling opportunity for you and your local officials and influencers. You have more control over the space and scheduling.
 - **Cons:** If people will be standing outside you will want to have good weather.
 - **Planning Tip:** Even if the physical space has already been open for a while, have a ribbon cutting on the first day of a new camp, or digital skills class.
- **Booth at the Fair:** A state or county fair booth is a great place to showcase your projects progress, teach community members new skills, recruit community support or all of the above!
 - **Pros:** Showcases your project to the broader community and reaches a large number of youth and parents.
 - **Cons:** Requires ongoing volunteer management to man your booth throughout the fair.
 - **Planning Tips:**
 - Have several fun and easy demonstrations related to your work that you can manage with volunteers and 4-H teen leaders.
- **School Board Presentation:** Engaging with your counties school boards is great way to raise awareness and garner support for your project. This type of event provides an opportunity to update your community on your work and even to demonstrate some new technology skills.
 - **Pros:** It connects you directly to your community and can be a great photo opp.
 - **Cons:** You will have less flexibility on the schedule and may have a limited amount of time to present.
 - **Planning Tip:** Keep it visual and interactive.

Planning

1. Think Visual

A key things local broadcast media look for is a compelling visual that will appeal to their viewers. Here are the types of things that can help make your event more visually engaging:

- ❑ **A Crowd. There's Strength in Numbers:** The more people engaged in your event, the more visual and appealing it will be to the media.
- ❑ **Action & Interaction:** Media want to see people *doing* not simply talking or being. Your job is to highlight the action to the media.
- ❑ **Don't Forget the Branding:** Feature 4-H branding wherever you can: Flyers, posters, pop-up banners, etc. (template and designs are included in the toolkit)

2. Location. Location. Location.

Many appealing events are overlooked because the location is not easily accessible to media. Here are tips to choose the right location.

- ❑ **Convenience is Key:** It's important to stage your event in a central location that is convenient and can make it easy for reporters to get "in and out" with the story they need.
- ❑ **Accessibility:** Live broadcast shots need to be connected to a nearby van and antenna, and photographers often need to get different lenses from their car.

3. Engage the Right Messengers

It's not only the "what" of the event; very often it is also the "who" that attracts media. Here are some tips for engaging the right messengers to elevate your event to a high priority for media appeal.

- ❑ **Youth Spokespeople:** Be sure to find ways to put your youth leaders and participants front and center. Use your 4-H teen leaders to speak about programming, give demonstrations and talk about their role as mentors to younger youth.
- ❑ **Experts or Leaders:** Do you have a local science expert or leader who can talk about the importance of computer science in your community? If so, invite them to be part of your event.
- ❑ **Local Officials or Celebrities:** Nothing attracts media like a big name. Invite someone prominent to be a part of your event and ask permission to use their name in local media outreach. Local elected officials are a great option, since many of them would be eager for a photo/press opp with 4-H youth. Many local officials may also have a press office that can help promote the event.

4. Consider Timing

There are certain times of day when media outlets have more reporters, photographers and videographers available to cover events. Here are sometimes worth considering:

- ❑ **During Reasonable Reporter Work Hours:** Reporters have a start time and end time to their workdays just like most of us. You'll have a better chance of getting coverage if you schedule during the middle of the day.

- **Weekday vs. Weekend:** While the weekends are not off limits, keep in mind that staff is leaner on the weekends. If you schedule an event on a Saturday, make sure you have all the other boxes checked.

5. Media Participation

One other way to boost your media coverage is to invite reporters or anchors to participate in your event. Here's how you can do that:

- **Host or Emcee:** Asking reporters or anchors to host or emcee an event greatly increases the chance it will be mentioned on-air. Keep in mind that competing stations will be less likely to cover an event hosted by a rival.
- **Media VIP:** If you are inviting the media to participate and not to just report, be sure to roll out the "red carpet" by providing a youth guide to walk with the journalists through the event as they partake in the activity.