

Saskatchewan Trails Day Event Organizer's Manual



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This manual was prepared based on the *International Trails Day Event Organizer’s Manual* produced by the Manitoba Recreational Trails Association. For more information, visit www.mrta.com.

Introduction

Saskatchewan Trails Day

Held the first Saturday in June each year, Saskatchewan Trails Day is an opportunity to celebrate our province's recreational trails and the benefits they provide for healthy living, economic development, tourism, and environmental preservation.

All organizations, communities, and individuals across the province are invited to participate in the day's events, and especially to hold events of their own. This manual is a guide to help with hosting a Saskatchewan Trails Day event, whether it is an organized walk, run, or cycle, a nature or educational activity, a trail work project, or a recreational equipment workshop – the possibilities are endless.

We are inviting your community or organization to share with us in developing a public awareness of trails by hosting an event.

Some notes for event organizers

Dedicated trails enthusiasts like you have made Saskatchewan trails one of the province's best recreational resources. The Saskatchewan Trails Association (STA) thanks you for your support of the province's trails, as well as your participation in Saskatchewan Trails Day. On June 6, we hope to not only celebrate our trails, but also recognize your efforts, and those of other trail organizations who help to build, protect and maintain our trails, as well as promote the benefits of trails to the public.

Register Your Event

We want to hear about your Saskatchewan Trails Day event! Register your event by sending event details, including name, date, time, location, and description to info@sasktrails.ca. By letting us know about your event, we can post it online at www.sasktrails.ca and also inform the media, sponsors, and other trails enthusiasts about the events in their area.

Promote Your Event

Saskatchewan Trails Association can provide a brochure about the trail, which makes for a great handout for event participants and the media. Take advantage of promotional items brochures and posters. We look forward to hearing about your event and making this the best Saskatchewan Trails Day yet!

Chapter 1: Frequently Asked Questions

What is Saskatchewan Trails Day?

Saskatchewan Trails Day is designed to:

- Promote public awareness of and appreciation for trails and the people who build and maintain them.
- Build partnerships among trail groups, businesses, and public land managers.
- Broaden the constituency for trails.
- Encourage cooperative efforts among different trail users, including hikers, bicyclists, equestrians, walkers, runners and others.

When is the day held?

The day is held annually on the first Saturday in June, in coordination with International Trails Day. However, feel welcome to hold an event on a day close to the Saturday if it better suits your schedule. Another option is for your event to be a part of a week of trail events building up to, or following, Saskatchewan Trails Day.

Why are Saskatchewan Trails important?

Trails allow us access to the natural world for exercise, study, photography, camping, relaxing or solitude. When properly used, trails can also protect the environment for future generations. In addition, trails provide tourism opportunities for many communities, and the construction and ongoing maintenance of our trails are a source of economic development.

Who can participate?

Saskatchewan Trails Day is a celebration for all residents of Saskatchewan. The day brings together trails enthusiasts, community members, and tourists of all ages to participate in educational exhibits, trail dedications, gear demonstrations, and instructional workshops and trail work projects.

Saskatchewan Trails Day also extends beyond our province's borders as it is held in conjunction with International Trails Day, which is celebrated by trail clubs, outdoor businesses and government agencies worldwide. International Trails Day and Saskatchewan Trails Day both raise awareness of trails and inform the public of the need to protect and maintain trail corridors. The celebrations are great opportunities for local trail groups to promote proposed initiatives. They are also a chance to recognize the groups and individuals who are making a difference. Your event can be used as a tool to build alliances and to plan for the future.

Chapter 2: Planning Your Event

Planning a Saskatchewan Trails Day event involves the following three steps:

1. Building partnerships with trail and conservation organizations, public agencies, and outdoor retailers and manufacturers.
2. Identifying and planning your event.
3. Registering your event at www.sasktrails.ca.

How to build partnerships

Whether you are a trail manager or a non-profit group, chances are you have already worked with quite a few different people and organizations. Planning a Trails Day event is a great opportunity to broaden your partnerships in the trail community. Potential partners for your event include: Schools, Historical Societies, Youth Groups, Businesses, Artists, Environmental Organizations, Senior Citizen Groups, and Fitness Programs.

Identify and plan your event

By clearly identifying the purpose and details of your event, you can be sure that your Saskatchewan Trails Day event is a success.

Set a goal and be as precise as possible.

Your goal may be as simple as to introduce 100 new people to the trail or to raise \$100 for trail maintenance and upgrades. On the other hand, it may be a complex mixture that includes fundraising, building public support, extending the trail, and/or preventing a development project that could adversely affect your trail. Whatever the goal(s) of the event, be clear and explicit. Make sure there is a common goal among the participating groups.

Select when and where you will host the event.

In most cases, the best place for you to hold your event is at an easily accessible trail entrance. For larger events, try to select a spot that has enough open space to set up seating and a podium for the “official” part of your program. Make sure there is room to accommodate a big crowd. The large space will present an opportunity for clearer, higher quality photographs and TV footage.

Although Saskatchewan Trails Day is officially the first Saturday in June, you don’t have to schedule your event on this day. There may be other factors in your community that make another day better for you. If so, go ahead and pick the day and time that is best for you.

Make it official by registering your event with the Saskatchewan Trails Association.

To make your Trails Day event official, register it with the Saskatchewan Trails Association. To register, send the event information, including name, date, time, location, and description to info@sasktrails.ca. By letting us know about your event, we can be sure to promote it by posting the information on our website and including it in our media releases.

Chapter 3: Fundraising – Partnerships and Sponsors

In order for your Saskatchewan Trails Day event to be successful, you may have to raise money through sponsorships and/or partnerships with other groups for support and in-kind donations. Sometimes finding good partnerships can be a challenge. For this reason, it's best to think creatively, plan thoroughly, and cast a wide net.

Partnerships

An alliance with a local business, cooperation with a Boy Scout or Girl Guide Troop, or teaming up with other trails group in your area are different examples of partnerships. As you plan your event, you may discover that other organizations in your area are also hosting a Trails Day event; it may be beneficial to combine your efforts into one, large unified event. Partnerships can range from holding a joint event with an outdoors club or users group to merging with another community-related activity. The more creative the event, the most attention it will receive.

Sponsors

Sponsors, through beneficial service and funding provisions, can maximize the potential of your Saskatchewan Trails Day event. However, the benefits go both ways: the advantages you provide your sponsors include increased community appreciation, media publicity, and corporate recognition.

The potential for sponsors are limitless. Remember that any business or agency could be a potential sponsor. Some tips for approaching potential sponsors are:

Be bold. Know what you want and ask for it directly. This can be achieved through conversation or by words on paper, written in plain, straightforward language.

Explain what a potential sponsor receives in exchange for support. For example, a detailed list of expected attendance, any "Sponsor ID" (logo placements, mentions of their support, etc.), and anticipated or guaranteed media exposure.

Speak to your target audience. For example, when talking to a businessperson, speak in marketing terms. Explain how they will receive "exposure," reach out to a "focused market of committed outdoors people," receive cause-related marketing opportunities, and be seen by the community as a "good corporate citizen." If you have any demographics for attendees, present those statistics at this time.

Keep in mind you may be just one of many asking for help. If you appear to have your "act together," it might make all the difference in who they choose to work with.

Under-promise and over-deliver. When providing exposure for sponsors, deliver a little more than what you promised. This will help create a strong foundation to expand upon your relationship in the future and, hopefully, for next year's Saskatchewan Trails Day event.

Be creative. STA will be sending out Press Releases and PSAs to announce Saskatchewan Trails Day. Remember that various local businesses can provide invaluable in-kind support as well, and this is particularly true for the local media.

Some examples of in-kind support include asking:

- Community media (print, radio, even TV) to cover your event.
- Local hospitals and doctors to donate health screening services.
- Local cafes, restaurants, or grocers to donate food and beverages.
- Outdoor retail and hardware stores to provide clinics or services (blister kits, gear repairs, tool maintenance, etc.), or to donate gear for a fundraising raffle.

Thanking Partners and Sponsors

Be sure to thank your sponsors and partners before, during, and after your event. This can be done in print on flyers, posters and handouts; in the media before and after the event; verbally during the event; and with a thank you note. A written note or an email shows your gratitude and lets your partners know that their support is appreciated by dedicated trail users and event hosts. A sponsor that is supportive one year will be more willing to participate in future years if you give them a lot of acknowledgement and show that you are appreciative.

Community Events

When planning your Saskatchewan Trails Day event, remember that how prepared you are will determine its success, level of media coverage, and support/participation from the community. The more detailed and explicit your event preparation, the more successful it will be. Because local groups host Saskatchewan Trails Day events, the day's activities are a reflection of the local conditions, opportunities and solutions.

Community events can include a number of activities, such as following:

- Host a day-long "Trails Fair" complete with trail user booths that feature recreational activities on the trails, such as hiking, cycling, horseback riding, snowmobiling, and ATVs. Include demonstrations, food, music, tours to nearby trails, and special programs such as education about wildlife.
- Celebrate the diversity and unity of trail users. Include a day hike, a youth nature walk, an equestrian ride, a mountain bike demonstration, a workday on the trail, a backpacking event or a wheelchair race.
- Hold an annual walk- or ride-athon to raise funds for a specific trail.
- Dedicate a portion of a trail in the evening to hold a moonlight walk. Include music, entertainment, food and refreshments.
- Lead a recreational hike or bike.
- Create a trail fundraiser or hold a membership drive.
- Develop a dedication, welcome, or other ceremony.

Chapter 4: Building Your Saskatchewan Trails Day Event

Plan

Creating a tentative timeline and job structure for your Saskatchewan Trails Day event will help to keep it running on schedule. By establishing these details beforehand, you will be better prepared for your event and have a clear picture of when certain elements must be completed. A timeline will also aid in targeting specific goals and tasks for different workers and volunteers involved in the event.

Timeline

Circulate a clearly written timeline with day-by-day deadlines to all those involved in the organization of your Saskatchewan Trails Day event. It may also be beneficial to establish external deadlines, such as a printer's schedule or the need to secure a permit by a certain time, because it can help keep your group on schedule.

When developing a timeline, consider the following:

1. Anticipate all possible disruptions of the event: rain, absent speakers, etc. Add disaster contingency plans to the task list (e.g., know where you can get a tent in the event of rain or more volunteers in the case of illness).
2. Consider your audience. The design, location, date, time and duration of your event will affect the audience you attract. In addition, the types of promotion and media outlets you use will also influence the amount of participants.
3. A timeline is based on a monthly plan. It's possible to organize an event in less time, although it may be difficult. Initial organizing tasks should be completed in March and April for June, so that a more intensive effort can begin in May.

Insurance

Plan for insurance coverage as well. Some events may require additional insurance coverage. Keep a copy of the insurance for your records.

Job Descriptions

All the jobs needed for your event must be defined and assigned. Try to match jobs to each volunteer's strength and interests. Help can come from anywhere, but how effective it is depends on what you make of it. Three basic classifications that you can use as guidelines for assigning jobs are: an event coordinator, a media committee, and logistics committee. A small event will not require a great number of people, but the more the merrier. For example, if you are simply hosting a guided walk, you may only need the help of one volunteer.

Event Coordinator

Event coordinators are responsible for the tasks dealing directly with the Saskatchewan Trails Association and other partners. Those tasks include registering your event, drawing up a budget, recruiting volunteers, calling meetings, and overseeing logistics and publicity.

Media Committee

Members of the media committee should be selected as soon as possible to develop a media strategy and contact the local media establishments. Their work should focus on lining up interviews and appearances, writing press releases, and placing public service announcements. In the absence of a media committee, the Saskatchewan Trails Association can assist with these tasks.

Logistics Committee

The bulk of the administrative work falls in the lap of the Logistics Committee. This committee oversees pre-event preparations, event day logistics, and post-event cleanup. As soon as the Logistics committee is established, pre-event preparations should take place, including:

- Securing necessary permits
- Checking the need for liability insurance
- Planning the event layout
- Coordinating exhibitors
- Arranging equipment
- Ensuring first aid is available
- Setting up Trail Wardens or security, if necessary

Less complex preparations should take place closer to the event, such as organizing a Clean up Crew and sending out flyers and posters.

Chapter 5: Publicity and Promotion

Publicity and Promotion

Promotion is an extremely important facet of your planning. A well thought out promotion plan can determine the influence your event has on your community and your trails. STA promotes events among media, so the more we know about your plans, the easier it is to get interested people in your event. You can also work with your local media to publicize your event.

Press Release

When a press release is sent to media, it is in competition with hundreds of other ideas, programs and events. Most reporters will read no further than the second or third paragraph before making a decision to pursue the story or not.

When creating a press release, remember to:

- Include Who, What, When, Where, Why and How in the first paragraph. The most important information should be written first to attract editors and readers.
- Be accurate with names, numbers, statements, and quotes.
- Be brief. The release should be one to two pages, single spaced, with one inch margins.
- Write in the active voice, which is more powerful and requires fewer words.
- Include a centered headline near the top of the first page.
- Include a quote from an officer of your organization by at least the third paragraph of the release. This will identify your organization and add interest to the text.
- If using two pages, type "more" at the bottom of page one and "-30-" at the bottom of page two. This signifies the end of the release.
- Proofread for accuracy, spelling and punctuation. A professional release is more credible.
- Send each press contact a copy of the release by email. If that is not possible, default to fax or mail. STA can send out your release province-wide through its email and fax distribution system.
- Plan for the release to arrive at least seven days before you want the story to appear.
- Call your press contact after submitting your release to see if he/she intends to cover the event. Follow-ups are critical if you hope to get much attention or air time. Also, talking to reporters by phone may result in better, more complete coverage of your event.

Media Kit

A media kit is a compilation of materials that "sells" your event to the press, possible sponsors and celebrity speakers. By presenting real and substantial information, you give the event credibility. Your Saskatchewan Trails Day media kit could contain:

- A pocket folder to hold news releases, fact sheets, and other materials.
- A press release about the event.
- A list of the speakers expected accompanied by one paragraph biographical profiles.
- A newsletter brochure from your group.
- A fact sheet about the trail or park.
- Your event program and any Saskatchewan Trails Day materials.
- You may also include a feature story about your trail with photos and logos.

Chapter 6: Getting Your Message Out to the Media

Radio

Local radio stations can play an extremely valuable, promotional role in your event, especially to attract participants. Ask all radio stations to cover the event on their news programs, and also to air any PSAs. You can recruit a radio sponsor to broadcast live from the event and be appointed the “official Saskatchewan Trails Day station.” You may even find it helpful to recruit one of the station’s disc jockeys to be your emcee.

Pick a station with the most appeal to your target audience. Call the station and ask to speak with either the director of marketing or promotions, or the disc jockey you’ve targeted. If the station does agree to participate, encourage them to provide the sound system for the event – this will save you time and money.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

PSAs are advertisement-like messages made on behalf of non-profit groups. Radio and television stations air PSAs free of charge as a community service. PSAs can be useful in reaching a mass audience, although you cannot determine when the spots will be aired or what kind of program they will accompany. To receive air time, you must convince the station that your message is especially important to its local audience. Contact each station because guidelines for the acceptance of PSAs vary.

Some general rules for PSAs include:

- Your group must be a non-profit organization.
- All announcements must identify the sponsoring group.
- Finished or pre-produced PSAs must be provided to the station at least two weeks or earlier before they are to run.

Sample PSA

LOCAL SASKATCHEWAN TRAILS DAY EVENTS

15 Seconds: “Join [name of your group] at the [name of trail] on Saturday, June 6 to celebrate Saskatchewan Trails Day with demonstrations, nature walks, and for early birds, a sunrise hike. For details, call [phone number].”

Television

To enhance local television coverage, invite reporters to tour the trail a week or two before the event. This will give reporters a chance to collect footage of the trail that they can use to augment their coverage of the event (particularly if it rains).

Tip: *Contact television meteorologists in addition to regular reporters. Urge the meteorologists to deliver their local weather reports from the event location the Friday before the event begins.*

Other Promotional Ideas:

- Write an editorial or letter to the editor of your local newspaper.
- Invite local politicians and community leaders to the event. It's courteous and promotes word-of-mouth publicity.
- Produce and display large signs or banners over the site two weeks before the event.
- Post brightly coloured flyers around your neighbourhood, ask other groups to hand them out at their events, include as stuffers in other programs, and hand out at busy intersections. (Also, appoint people to remove the posted flyers after the event.)
- Print posters on heavy, coloured paper. Have a team of people hang them in local merchants' windows, bus/train stations, outdoors stores, and professional offices near the event site. Post them on bulletin boards in schools, health centres, churches, bars, theatres, and youth centres.
- Set up a simple display at your library, town hall or YMCA to develop interest.
- Encourage school teachers to create projects (essays on transportation alternatives or impact studies of creating accessible greenways in our communities, for example) in his/her classes.
- Take advantage of the free classifieds offered by some weekly newspapers.
- Contact the owners of notable buildings and ask for free use of their building's sign or marquee.
- Write a paragraph about the event and submit it for inclusion in other organizations' newsletters. Promise to reciprocate.

Utilize your own networks

- Mail to donor lists.
- Run a feature article, photos, and an ad in your newsletter.
- Activate your telephone chain to be sure everyone is informed.
- Build up word-of-mouth promotion with hoopla. Buttons and bumper stickers promote discussion.

After careful planning, your event is ready to be underway. Here are some considerations to make when setting up for the festivities.

Set Up

Place exhibits along attendees' anticipated lines of travel. Strategically orient concessions, raffles and other attractions behind the exhibits and information tables, so participants and onlookers will have to pass by the stands to get to the "goodies."

If possible, have a special press table at the event with press releases, supporting documentation and other information. It can also be a place for reporters to conduct interviews and learn about schedules and logistics.

Your podium should be equipped with a microphone and a media box that allows radio and TV stations to plug into the sound system.

Signage

All services offered at your event should be clearly marked with identification and directional signs. You will need signs directing participants to restrooms, first aid, childcare (if provided) and information/lost and found. Make sure your security staff knows where these services are located.

Media Coverage

Be sure to follow up with all press contacts and personally invite reporters to the event. Find out what the reporters are interested in knowing or seeing during/about the event, and provide that information/service for them to the best of your abilities. Make sure either that your media table is staffed or that your event planner is accessible so that press queries can be handled quickly and knowledgeably. Introduce reporters to speakers, performers, and celebrities.

Prepare your speakers to talk with reporters by giving them memorable quotes, explanations of the event's purpose, descriptions of where donations will go, and details about the next steps for your trail.

Send a special "Photo Op" memo to photographers, print media assignment editors and local TV stations explaining activities they can photograph, where the best viewing sites are, and what the best times are. Keep these visual elements in mind when planning your event and remember that the more unusual a photo opportunity is, the more likely you are to see it in the papers or on TV.

Getting the Message Out

The greatest message in the world is useless if no one sees or hears it. Getting your messages out means:

- Identifying the most effective, appealing ways to reach your audience
- Identifying ways to reach your audience that fit within your budget
- Identifying ways to reach your audience that work best for your message
- Considering the potential unintended effects your message may have on others besides your audience who will receive it
- Working with the media effectively

Explore the Dissemination Tools at Your Disposal

This section addresses considerations for finding valuable, creative ways to get the word out and provides particular detail on working with the media. Your goal should be maximum exposure for your message. To build awareness and motivate people to take action, you want your target audience to see, hear, or read your message repeatedly in a variety of different places over time. To decide what tools to use to get your messages out, you will apply what you learned in earlier research and consider several other factors. Ask yourself these questions:

1. What are the most effective, appealing vehicles that reach the audience?

Think back to what you know about your audience members, especially what you learned from formative research. Consider the places they frequent, their daily activities, and their media consumption.

A list of potential outreach options should include a wide variety of communication vehicles. For example:

- Print materials (fact sheet, brochure, newsletter)
- Information posted on the Internet (information on the city or town site, an online “chat”)
- A slide presentation for use at group meetings
- A speech by a local leader
- Posters (placed in settings relevant to your audience such as parks, schools, bus shelters, doctors’ offices, factory lunch rooms, grocery stores, libraries, senior centers, gyms, etc.)
- An ad in a newspaper or magazine, or on the radio
- An article, editorial, or op-ed in a newspaper or magazine
- Banners at shopping malls or events
- Collateral materials such as t-shirts, baseball caps, water bottles, refrigerator magnets, buttons, post-its, or key chains
- A staffed table at a health fair, new hospital opening, or farmer’s market

2. What can you afford?

Some communication vehicles, such as professionally produced television and radio advertising, can be expensive. Others, such as writing editorial pieces or making a slide show, require more legwork on your part than direct expense. The general rule is to use a variety of means for reaching out.

3. What communication vehicles work best for your message?

Not all message opportunities are created equal. Some simply work better for given audiences than others. For example, if your message to sedentary adults is to start with just 10 minutes of activity, then add 10 more, you might focus on senior centers rather than the local gym. But, if your message is to invite a friend for a new activity [like this weekend’s nature hike], perhaps gym goers are just the right people to reach.

4. What unintended effects could your message have, especially for non-target audience members?

Unintended effects can be either positive, such as bringing people you never expected to your event, or negative, such as offending or stigmatizing a group of non-audience members. The best defense against negative unintended effects is a careful research process that includes testing messages and materials as well as careful thought. Common ways to disseminate messages includes a variety of options and wide range of costs. Use these starting points for your own brainstorming about message dissemination strategies.

Chapter 7: The Media Can Help You to Achieve Your Goal

Earned Media: Television, Print, and Radio Stories

Many news stories are broadcast or written because someone close to the story alerts the media and persuades a producer or journalist that the information is valuable to his or her viewers, listeners, or readers. In order to be ready and able to enlist the media's help, you must understand how the media works, and be prepared and willing to reach out to people who work in media.

Understanding the Media and Being Prepared

The prospect of working with media can be daunting. Program planners are sometimes wary of working with the media because they worry that journalists can be antagonistic. Indeed, the journalist's role as devil's advocate is what we most often see on televised press conferences and news shows. But journalists also have a keen sense of responsibility to their communities and the issues they cover. They are acutely aware of the reach of the media, and they take this seriously. There is nothing naive or unprofessional about asking for the help of a local reporter in letting the community know about opportunities to be more active and the good work that you and your program are doing.

In many cases, your media outreach will include:

1. Preparing a media list.
2. Identifying a news hook that will appeal to reporters, such as new public health statistics or an event that is related to your messages.
3. Sending background information with your news, such as a media kit that includes your contact information. See page 18 for more information on media kits.
4. Following up with each reporter or producer by telephone. Be sure you know exactly what you want to say beforehand, keeping in mind that reporters are busy and very often on tight deadlines. Know what you want the reporter to do: cover an event, take a photo, interview spokespeople, focus on the political aspects of an issue, write about what your program needs (volunteers, donations).
5. Focusing on your key messages once you have a reporter's interest (e.g., encouraging families to be physically active, letting kids know how much fun it can be to "get active," or listing the physical, social, and psychological benefits of physical activity and the civic benefits of an active living community).
6. Offering additional relevant information, such as public health statistics, facts about the decline of school-based physical education programs nationwide, or anticipated costs of building a skateboarding park.

To get started, research some fundamental information before you try to enlist the media or place a story.

Know the media in your area

Research the television, radio, and print outlets that reach your target audience. This may require some exploration with the outlets themselves to learn who their viewers, listeners, and readers are. You may have an instinctive sense of some of these facts (e.g., the local 24 hour AM news station probably has good reach with commuters), but there are other details you will likely need to learn depending upon your audience (e.g., what are the most popular radio stations and listening times for 12 to 16 year-old boys?).

Maintain a list of current contacts and individuals in the media with whom you would like to work, including fax/phone/email addresses and notes about their main interests and preferred ways that you contact them. Identify which reporters cover issues relevant to your program sports, education, health, and community events.

Good relationships with those in the media will serve you well over time. To begin to develop your media list, check your local library for copies of the Editor and Publisher Yearbook, which lists media outlets across the country. See below for ideas on who your media contacts may be and who your media list should include.

PRINT MEDIA

- Newspapers (dailies, weeklies, monthlies, college/university papers and any small community newspapers, such as shoppers' circulars, real estate ads, commuter papers, or papers targeted to specific audiences such as women or seniors)
- City and regional magazines
- Local trade and business publications, including newsletters and brochures
- General editor, for smaller papers or weeklies
- Editors of regional community-based sections (usually larger newspapers)
- Assignment or lifestyle editors
- News and metro/community reporters who may cover environmental or policy news
- Health and consumer reporters who may cover hard news (new statistics on health risks) as well as feature stories (how to find an exercise program)
- Newspaper and magazine calendar editors who list community-based events
- Syndicated columnists who cover consumer and health related issues

RADIO MEDIA

- Local radio stations (including news, talk shows, call-in and local community affairs/public affairs programs)
- University radio stations
- Assignment editors
- Producers of health, community, and public affairs shows
- **Note:** for radio and TV, you can call the local stations to find out which of their programs are best suited for your story.

TELEVISION MEDIA

- Local television stations (including news, talk shows, call in shows, and local community affairs/public affairs programs)
- University television stations
- Local cable television stations
- Public broadcasting stations (which may have relevant health or policy programming)
- Provincial or local bureaus of national television networks
- Assignment editors
- Producers of health, community, and public affairs shows
- On-air talent with a particular interest in health, physical activity, or community events

Understand the Media's Goals and Working Environment

The key to successful media relations over time is often based on establishing productive relationships with media professionals. Here are some hints for doing that.

- Be conscious of reporter's deadlines. Give reporters advance notice of events, and deliver any requested information quickly and on time.
- Place calls early in the day. By late afternoon, many writers and broadcasters are working against the day's looming deadlines and won't be as receptive to your call.
- When possible, meet reporters, editors, and producers face-to-face.
- Be prepared for meetings and conversations. Bring written materials that support your messages to leave as background. Know your program's main messages so that you can be clear in conversation.
- Select an appropriate "media-genic" spokesperson (i.e., one who knows the topic well, displays genuine enthusiasm and commitment, speaks well, and is a quick thinker).
- Send a thank you note to your media contacts after a meeting and if they cover any of your program's activities.
- Besides covering a story, consider having members of the media take part in your program. For example, TV or radio stations sometimes co-sponsor events. Or, you could invite an on-air personality to participate.
- Make yourself available to media as a contact for questions in the future about your area of expertise.

Make Sure You Have "News"

Before you contact any media, be careful to ensure that your story is, in fact, newsworthy. Creating and pitching one bland announcement after another to your local media can actually mean *less* coverage if your media contacts stop paying attention to your calls and materials. Work to consistently deliver newsworthy stories that meet criteria such as the following:

Does the story:

- Appeal to the media outlet's audience?
- Have a moving, important, or surprising element for the media outlet's key audience?
- Address issues that directly affect or are relevant to the community?
- Focus on a problem, solution or activity happening at the local level? Can you tie your story to national data using local statistics?

- Stimulate debate?
- Have a controversial aspect? Are members of the community asking for significant changes in the way something is done? Is there opposition?
- Generate high ratings or increase media audience?
- Center on a hot issue, including ones driven by a celebrity or other influential person?
- Include fresh angles that will sustain public interest?
- Address something new? Is there a new event or activity happening?
- Tie to new data or a report being released on the national level?
- Distinguish the media outlet from its competitors?
- Have the potential to be exclusive? Can you interest a media outlet by offering them the first crack at your story?

Prepare Written Materials and Media Kits

Before you start reaching out to the media, prepare materials that describe your program so that reporters have a sense of what your program does and what its goals are. Your media kit will likely contain some standard materials about your program as well as materials that you tailor because of the particular media outlet or news hook you are focusing on. All materials should be brief and easy to understand, with as little or no jargon as possible. Citations should be provided for all statistics so that reporters have the necessary backup if they want to use the statistics in a story.

A media kit need not be packaged in a fancy way. In fact, many reporters prefer ones that are short and sweet. However, if it does not stand out from the other materials the reporter receives, it might not be read. Let your imagination, creativity, and good taste guide decisions about packaging and the “look” of your kit. Certainly, use your program letterhead and/or logo for all materials and make sure your contact information is on each piece of the kit as the various materials may get separated as they are passed around the newsroom.

Chapter 8: Standard Media Materials

Fact sheets set the context for the issues you're dealing with and amplifies them, especially in ways relevant to your community. For example, use fact sheets to provide data on the positive impact that moderate physical activity has on adults' health, on the decline of physical activity among teens and corresponding health risks, or on the potential benefits of a few key changes within your community. This background information will help a reporter to give depth and breadth to your story.

Bio sketches or organizational summaries describe key people involved with your program and/or organizations that are offering services, facilities, or funding.

Visuals add color, human interest, and depth to your information. These could be photos (of people, places, or products), graphs of statistics, a timeline showing your program's successes, or posters, maps, and other visual materials that represent your program. Printing visuals in a camera-ready format makes it more likely that they will be used "as is" by a media outlet.

Other materials include **public service announcements (PSAs)**, if you are asking media outlets to place them for you, or copies of paid ads and collateral materials.

Adaptable Media Materials

A pitch letter, which is often mailed along with the media kit, highlights why your issue is pertinent to the media outlet's audience. The letter should be only about one page long and should spark interest by:

- Showing the human side of an issue
- Outlining the benefits of your information for the reporter's audience
- Including facts and figures pertinent to your community
- Mentioning some key message points about your program
- Offering your spokesperson for interviews

A press release announces something newsworthy. It tells the reporter why it is important to pay attention to your materials *now*. A good release addresses the five Ws of any news story – who, what, where, when, and why or how – in the opening paragraph, since many people will not read any further.

General rules to keep in mind when creating a press release:

- Try to keep the length of your release to one or two pages.
- Use short sentences and paragraphs.
- If the release is longer than one page, place the slug line "more" centered and at the bottom of the first page.
- Always add "-30-" at the bottom of the last page to signal the end of your release.
- As with all media materials, print your press release on your organization or project's letterhead.

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE	MEDIA RELEASE Date, Year
Attention Grabbing Headline	
<p>ANYTOWN, PROVINCE (Month Day, Year) <i>The lead paragraph should begin with the place or location where the news is being released. Following the location and date, explain who, what, where, when. Your opening paragraph should be compelling enough to make the reader want to continue. Use one to one and a half inch margins.</i></p> <p><i>Your second and third paragraphs should support information in your lead paragraph. Here, use quotes from experts and/or program spokespersons that are in direct relation to the information you've already provided. The most important information should be at the top of your release and less important information further down. Remember that the more localized you can make your release the greater chance it has of being used by newspapers.</i></p> <p><i>The last paragraph of your release should be a "boilerplate" that describes your program in general and any partners/sponsors. (You can also include a general sentence about the Saskatchewan Trails Association at the end of your description.)</i></p> <p>For more information, contact: Primary Program Contact (XXX) XXXXXXXX Secondary Contact (XXX) XXXXXXXX</p>	
-30-	

A media advisory is a brief invitation to members of the media for an event. The media advisory provides only the "who, what, when, where, and why". Unlike a press release, it does not provide a lot of supporting or background information.

General Rules:

- The purpose of a media advisory is to convince members of the media to attend your event. Make sure the event title and description is compelling and newsworthy.

- Send your media advisory to your contacts a few days before the event (three to four days prior works best. If your event is on a Monday or Tuesday, send out the advisory the previous Wednesday or Thursday).
- Never exceed one page. Keep descriptions to a few short, important sentences.

Call your media contacts the day before the event to ensure that they have received the advisory. Ask if they plan to attend, and offer more information as appropriate. Send another advisory if they did not received the first one.

Sample Media Advisory

MEDIA ADVISORY
Date XX, Year

HEADLINE THAT ANNOUNCES EVENT

Introduce the event with a short paragraph that covers the following:

WHAT: Describe your community’s event/program and sponsoring organization
WHY: Explain why the event is happening and why it’s important to members of the community; why should the media attend; why is it news?
WHERE: Provide event location, including address, city, and provincial.
WHEN: Date and time of event
[e.g., Monday, November 3, 2003 9:00 AM EST]
WHO: Include names, titles, and organization affiliation of speakers and key individuals attending the event

Finish the paragraph with a sentence inviting the media to attend and a recap of the event location, date, and time. For example:

You are invited to attend the event and media conference taking place at:

<Date>
10:30 a.m.
Location
Street Address

For more information, contact:
Primary Program Contact (XXX) XXXXXXXX
Secondary Contact (XXX) XXXXXXXX

-30-

Track Your Progress and Interactions with the Media

Tracking your results will enable you to evaluate what you've achieved and which reporters are particularly open to your message. It also allows you to measure the reach of your messages by calculating the reader/listener/viewership for the stories about your program. In addition, you can use the compilation as one tool among many to demonstrate the effectiveness of your program's outreach to those who inquire.

Tracking media interactions (past and ongoing) is important in another way. Doing so enables you to be highly organized, so that you can show appreciation for past stories, keep up with what you learn about reporters' interests, and follow-up effectively.

Two methods of tracking results are to:

1. Track the media "hits" your program achieved; and
2. Establish a system for keeping up with media outlets that have interacted with your program in any way.

In your compilation of "hits," include copies of print stories, tapes, and scripts/summaries of broadcast stories. You should also include copies of the press materials and pitch letters that generated interest in order to use them as models for future activities. Tracking interactions can be easily done by using tracking or call sheets such as the example shown below.

SAMPLE MEDIA TRACKING FORM

Date	Contact	Organization	Topic	Result	Next Steps, Title & Program	Send
4/09	Jane Doe	Eastlink TV	Sask. Trails Day Event		Called Producer of "Community Talks"	Interview Material 10 a.m.

Opinion Pieces and PSAs

In addition to striving to earn coverage via stories in the press, you may be able to get placement for a letter to the editor, an op-ed piece, or a public service announcement.

Letter to the Editor

A letter to the editor should be written in response to something that appeared in the newspaper such as an article, editorial, or even another letter. This means reading your local print media and looking for opportunities such as:

- Health stories about obesity, osteoporosis, increases in diabetes, or other issues that fit well with the need for increased physical activity and active living.
- Budget or planning meetings where activity facilities might be a topic.
- Stories covering youth and what the community can do to reduce crime, substance abuse, reckless driving, gangs, etc.
- Stories covering family life and how parents can stay in touch with their kids.
- Studies about the impact of increasing traffic congestion and/or pollution.

- Timely issues such as holiday shopping or graduation gifts where you can put in a plug for gifts that encourage activity instead of sedentary behavior.

Sometimes you can *create* opportunities by tying in other events. For example, in the US the National Health Observances Calendar lists a wide range of health-related observances, available at www.healthfinder.gov/library/nho/nho.asp, such as National Osteoporosis Prevention Month. You might be able to tie a letter to one or several of these commemorative weeks, depending upon the details of your campaign.

Whatever the subject matter, keep the letter short and simple, and be sure to follow the paper's guidelines for submitting a letter to the editor. Make sure you mention your organization in the body of the text, where it is less likely to be edited out.

Op-eds

Op-eds, or opinion editorials, typically appear opposite the editorial page in the newspaper. Some papers set aside days of the week or particular pages for materials written by readers ("My Turn" spaces, for example). An op-ed should relate to an issue of interest to the community, opening with a general statement and moving to the specifics. It should include a call to action or other definitive points of view – these qualities are why op-eds are *opinion* pieces.

The piece should be about 500-600 words long. It should be signed and a brief bio of the author should accompany it. The cover letter should let the editor know you are available to provide more information and how you can be contacted. Try your hand at writing an op-ed piece that encourages those in your community to do their part to make their neighbourhood an activity friendly one.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

PSAs are unpaid advertisements that promote the programs of government or non-profit organizations serving the public interest. PSAs can be a powerful and economical way to reach audiences. For a message to qualify as a PSA, it must be: non-commercial in nature, brief (generally 15, 30, or 60 seconds), and on behalf of a non-profit organization, charity, or other community group. PSAs are considered "economical" because the air time or print space they occupy is given gratis by a media outlet. However, note that developing PSAs can be expensive.

PSAs are most successfully placed when they:

- Have a strong public service appeal that will benefit the audience.
- Are locally relevant to the station's viewing area or paper's distribution range. This can be achieved by tagging the ad with a local organization name and/or phone number.

To place your PSA, work directly with the public affairs directors at networks and local stations. If your PSA is related to an event, make sure you reach out to PSA directors early. Media managers usually need two to four weeks to place a radio PSA into a broadcast rotation cycle, so plan ahead. Encourage stations to air the PSAs at times when the highest numbers of people are

likely to be tuning in. For radio, the ideal times are the “drive times” from 5:00 to 10:00 a.m. and from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Radio: Because radio stations are no longer required to use PSAs, competition is intense for the time they choose to donate. However, most media managers want to respond to their community’s concerns and are especially interested in communicating timely and relevant information on public health. This is where you can play a critical role by meeting or talking to your local media managers to explain an upcoming event or, more generally, the impact of physical inactivity and the importance of disseminating information on active living.

In some cases, you may provide a pre-recorded ad. But in many cases, radio stations are willing to do a less expensive “live read,” meaning you provide the text and an on-air personality reads it. In fact, some radio stations may prefer to use live read announcer scripts for brand identity purposes. In addition, when announcers and DJs read the PSA, the audience identifies the familiar voice and recognizes that the information is a public service message meant to benefit their community and listeners.

Print: Newspapers and magazines have limited pages and publish on a certain schedule and frequency, so placing print PSAs can be challenging. As with radio, successful print placement depends on how well you market or pitch your issue locally. One way to do this is by using statistics or facts on physical activity in your community. For example, how many people in your community are affected by inactivity? How many face environmental barriers to active living? If you hope to take advantage of such free advertising, have your announcement ready for print, or “camera-ready.” That means that the paper or magazine can simply drop it in to the layout without having to do additional work of typesetting or laying out the ad. Many organizations provide media with ads in different sizes, for example one or two column widths, so that the paper or magazine can use a size that best fits their available space.

Television: As with print and radio PSAs, you should work with the public service director to place public service announcements on local television stations. Local relevance and potential benefit to the stations’ audiences are key to appealing to these gatekeepers and getting placement for your PSAs.

General Rules:

- A pitch letter to media is essentially a sales letter. Its purpose is to interest a reporter or editor to cover an event or issue, conduct an interview, and write or produce a story.
- Identify the appropriate media contact (in this case, probably a lifestyle, health, or city/community reporter). For local or community newspapers, one reporter or editor may cover multiple beats. If you are not sure who the appropriate contact is, place a call to the media outlet’s main number or assignment desk to find out.
- Begin your pitch letter with a strong opening paragraph to grab the reporter’s interest. Use statistics or compelling facts and be sure to cover who, what, where, when, and why in the first few paragraphs.

- Write in a manner that's direct and to the point while still friendly and creative. Keep the reporter and his/her audience in mind. Why should they be interested?
- A pitch letter should be one page or shorter in length. Try to keep your letter to 400 words or less. End the letter by telling your contact you will follow up with a phone call in the next few days.
- Provide your phone number and/or email address.

After you send the letter, call your contact to follow up and determine interest. Be prepared to answer questions about your topic and don't forget to offer additional information and materials (photos, fact sheets, etc.). You may want to start making calls to newspapers as early as two months in advance to pitch a print PSA. In general, call newspaper contacts two to three weeks before the date you would like to see the PSA published. Again, make your calls a few weeks in advance of any event to encourage print placements to appear in the days leading up to the event.

Sample Letter to a Public Service Director

The sample media pitch letter below can be tailored to sell your community or organization as a place where physical activity and an active lifestyle are fully supported. Every community and organization is unique, so use the sample below as a guide to promote yours by describing new programs or infrastructure that encourage physical activity and active living.

(Feel free to personalize and use your organization's letterhead)

Date
Media Contact's Name
Address

Dear Mr./Ms. _____:

In the first paragraph, grab the reader's attention by using an interesting fact or statistic about physical activity and active living, and tie it to local issues. For example:

Despite the health benefits of physical activity, two-thirds of American adults do not meet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommendation that adults engage in physical activity at least five days a week for 30 minutes or more. However, new science shows that accumulating 30 minutes of moderate activity per day by engaging in everyday activities like walking, gardening, or taking the stairs instead of the elevator can yield dramatic health benefits throughout the lifespan. Yet there are obstacles to walking in our community.

In the next paragraph, describe your community's program and the benefits it offers. Provide unique points and necessary details about the program. If possible, describe a personal story or real life example.

Through a new campaign **[fill in your group's program/campaign]**, the **[Name of your community group]** and the Saskatchewan Trails Association want to encourage people to

support trails not only as a recreational endeavour, but also as a routine, convenient part of every day life. **[Name of program/campaign]** in **[Name of your community]** aims to promote Saskatchewan Trails Day and local trails in our communities as a means for residents to benefit from an improved quality of life. By reading/hearing about **[Name of program/campaign]**, your **[readers, viewers, listeners]** will be inspired to become more regularly active in their daily lives, therefore improving their overall health and quality of life.

With your help we can get the word out! I will follow this letter with a phone call in the next few days to discuss your interest and provide you with any further information or materials you may need.

Sincerely,
[Name, Title]
Enclosure

BOTTOM LINE

Various forms of media carry your messages to different audiences. Both variety and repetition are important, so try to deliver your message frequently and through a number of different media and community channels.

Chapter 9: Common Ways to Disseminate Messages

PAID MEDIA

Television spot

- Usually 15, 30 or 60 seconds long. Most run 30 seconds.
- Reaches a broad audience.
- Audiovisual impact.
- Expensive to air and to produce.
- Short amount of time in which to deliver message

Radio spot

- Paid radio spots are typically 60 seconds.
- Expensive, but cheaper and longer than television spots.
- Narrower target.
- Can be produced quickly
- Audio impact only.
- Narrow reach.

Print ads

- Ads in newspapers, magazines and other publications.
- Reaches very specific audience, including opinion leaders. Often misses younger and lower socio-economic demographic.
- Short lead time, immediate impact.
- Very short life span.

Outdoor

- Includes billboards and other outdoor signage in stores, and on busses, trains, or benches.
- Can reinforce messages also placed elsewhere.
- Can repeatedly expose commuters to message. Transit space can be inexpensive compared to other forms of media.
- Possibly high exposure.
- Limited message space.
- Weather/graffiti damage.
- Very difficult to target narrowly.

EARNED MEDIA

Earned media involves placing stories in print or broadcast media. Earned media:

- Does not require the out-of-pocket costs that are included in buying print space or air time.
- Can achieve good reach.
- Has credibility with readers/viewers.
- Can be particularly helpful for reaching policy and decision makers, who are often especially attuned to news media.
- Limits the extent to which you can control the message, as you will not be writing the story.
- Feature placement requires contacts and may be time consuming.

Obtaining free print space or airtime for public service announcements (PSAs):

- Is less expensive than buying print space or air time.
- Can provide copy (instead of pre-made ads) for radio announcers to read. This is less expensive than producing spots.
- Print PSAs are inexpensive to produce.
- PSAs can be expensive to produce (especially television and radio) and distribute.
- No control over when and if your message will air, and thus how well it will reach your target audience.

POINTS OF INTERACTION

Place a message in a location/medium where people will be deciding whether to be active, vote for a policy change, etc. Points of interaction:

- Expose audiences to the message when they are well positioned to act on your advice.
- Have limited space for a message. Sometimes difficult to gain access to the point of interaction.

PRINT MATERIALS

Print materials can include informational brochures, posters, newsletters, paycheck stuffers, and flyers. Print materials:

- Can be inexpensive to produce and usually have a longer life. Some types support detailed messages.
- Are not an “interruption” medium, so recipients must want to be reached. Print materials need to be disseminated. Duplicates may be provided to the same individuals.

ONLINE VEHICLES

Websites

Many programs build websites, some of which are aimed at specific audiences. Websites:

- Can be relatively inexpensive and can be updated quickly. However, maintenance and monitoring may be required.
- Provide an unlimited message area. The information is always available to those who seek it. Your issue/message can also be promoted through partners’ websites.
- Require promotional efforts to drive traffic to site.
- May limit audience or miss certain demographic or socioeconomic groups.

Web Banners

- Click through web banners can link commercial and partner websites to the program.
- Broaden exposure on new media.
- Can range from inexpensive to expensive to produce.
- “Click through” rates are typically low.
- Small message space.
- May limit audience or miss certain demographic or socioeconomic groups.

SPONSORSHIPS

Sponsorships are payments to be promoted as a supporter of a concert, sports contest or other event. Goal is to win exposure while associating the campaign with something popular, credible, exciting, or in some other way viewed positively.

- Typically turn key promotional opportunities. (You pay the money and the event staff will handle the rest.)
- Associates programs' "brand" with well-liked celebrities, brands, or events.
- Many sponsors want non-profits to be associated with their event and may provide free benefits.
- Sponsorships can be expensive. An Association could be seen negatively by some audiences. Limited reach versus mass media.

COLLATERAL MATERIALS

Programs may create all sorts of other promotional materials, such as t-shirts, key chains, or refrigerator magnets.

- Can provide continued, albeit limited, exposure to target audience.
- Provides benefit for people involved in activities.
- Requires distribution.
- High cost for limited exposure.

BUDGET TIP

You may be able to get a local print shop or copy outlet to donate a certain number of copies at no charge in return for the tax benefit or community goodwill. (Be sure to give them credit on your document!)

For website assistance, perhaps a local community college would be willing to make development and maintenance of the site part of a class assignment for students pursuing an education in web design. If media coverage would give you a boost, invite journalists to join your board or advisory committee.

Chapter 10: The Day of Your Event

Day of Event Checklist with Task and Who Completed

- ✓ Notify the police
- ✓ Obtain proper insurance
- ✓ Have cash boxes and have change in proper denominations for each cash box
- ✓ Receipts
- ✓ Bring Saskatchewan Trails Association and Trans Canada Trail brochures to display
- ✓ Bring your organization's current newsletter, fact sheet, calendar of meetings and events, membership applications, and sale merchandise
- ✓ Provide sign-in list
- ✓ Provide name tags for organizers and volunteers
- ✓ Have emergency numbers for police, fire and ambulance
- ✓ Have cash for emergencies; coins for pay phone and/or cell phone
- ✓ First Aid Kit(s)
- ✓ Pens, scissors, and other office supplies
- ✓ Tape, poster board and black markers
- ✓ Errand runner for emergencies and forgotten items
- ✓ Watch
- ✓ Comfortable shoes
- ✓ All necessary phone numbers: host, speakers, entertainers, politicians, etc.
- ✓ Name of doctor, nurse or paramedic who will be present
- ✓ Fire Extinguisher
- ✓ Sense of humour, tact, patience and imagination

Most important of all - have fun!

The Saskatchewan Trails Association can help make your Trails Day event a success!

Here are some of the ways:

- Website Publicity
- Articles prior to and after Saskatchewan Trails Day
- Press Releases and PSAs
- Brochures

Wrapping Up the Event Planning

After the event is over, meet with your committee again to review what worked and to establish suggestions for next year. Start planning for next year's Saskatchewan Trails Day by developing an idea bank, a committee, tentative time-line, and possible budget. Look at adding an additional activity, sponsor, partner, or promotion to watch your event grow.