



MEDIA EVENTS PLANNING GUIDE

As states reach critical milestones and spending goals in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) State Energy Program (SEP) and Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) project implementation, media events offer a way to highlight ARRA successes, groundbreakings, and other landmark actions.

There are a number of common measures that State Energy Offices can take to ensure that an event will be a success and achieve the objective of showcasing the efforts of the State Energy Office. The recommendations below outline the key steps to consider when planning a media event. These are not all-inclusive, nor are they the only approaches to take to achieve the same goal. States with media and communications staff may have alternative guidelines to follow.

Keep in mind that showcasing ARRA success through media events is a priority of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). The DOE may entertain the opportunity to participate in ARRA SEP/EECBG media events in states with innovative projects, high spend rates, or where complementary events are scheduled. However, DOE participation should not be the deciding factor in holding an event.

Recommended Steps to Planning a Media Event

1) Establish a planning team.

- *Involve officials from a range of agencies and with specific experience:* Include not only SEP or EECBG Project Managers, but also staff with a media or communications background. Coordinate regularly with all project stakeholders including the Governor's Office, project sub-grantees and contractors, DOE Project Officer, state or agency press office, and NASEO Regional Coordinator.

- *Consider alternatives to a planning team:* The planning team approach may not work for all Energy Offices due to time and resources required. Below are a couple of alternative suggestions:
 - Utilize staff from other state departments.
 - The NASEO Regional Coordinators are available to serve as part of a planning team if desired by the State Energy Office. The Regional Coordinators can participate by phone or in person. They are also available, if requested, to attend events.
- *Hold regular planning team meetings:* The media event planning team should meet on a regular basis to discuss which projects are at the proper stage for promotion.

2) Determine the project(s) for a media event.

- *Discuss the options:* Deciding which project or projects for which to hold an event is the first order of business. While a certain project may seem an obvious choice, a team approach to selecting a project may uncover reasons to consider an alternative project.
- *Consider the progress of the project:* Projects for consideration should either be in process, nearing completion, or completed. Signing contracts, while a major milestone, are not considered to have the same media value as one that is underway or completed.
- *Employ a strategic approach:* As more media events are held, the team will want to pay special attention to focusing on different types of projects each time. For example, a media event to promote a renewable energy project should not be followed by a subsequent media event showcasing a project from the same grant program.
- *Leverage the event to promote other related projects:* The media event, while focusing on and highlighting a particular project, could be used to promote other projects that are within the same market title (if applicable).
- *Think about external factors surrounding the event date or project scope:* The team may want to examine external factors for planning an event. These could include things such as the start of school to promote projects in schools.

- *Keep recent media coverage in mind:* The state's energy press officer should be aware of ongoing media coverage that should be factored into planning for events. A State Energy Office might have a series of stories to tell relative to building retrofits of K-12 schools. The local newspaper may have just done a story on local school system efforts to retrofit buildings. Although that story may have had absolutely nothing to do with stimulus or SEP, the fact that it already ran may make the media less interested in a similarly focused story.
- *Consider the ingredients that make for a successful project:* There are a number of key elements that make for a newsworthy project.
 - Innovation
 - Energy/dollar savings or project payback
 - High profile or large investments of ARRA funds
 - Projects that leverage private sector investment
 - Human interest (an angle that puts a face on the project)
 - Job creation or projects exceeding job creation estimates
 - Local angle such as a locally manufactured product
 - Ribbon cutting for a project launch
 - Dedication at a completed project
 - Exceptional carbon footprint reduction
 - High profile congressional or legislative district

3) Plan the event(s).

- *Determine whom to invite:* Send invitations to the appropriate DOE officials and state elected representatives (e.g., Governor, Legislator). High profile invitations, such as an invite to the DOE Secretary of Energy with a carbon copy to the Assistant Secretary, should come from the Governor.
- *Consider the timing for the event:* For example, Friday events may allow for participation from the state's congressional delegation.
- *Prepare presentations:* Draft a presentation for the State Energy Office Director or other official representative of the State that not only promotes the ARRA projects, but also the work of the State Energy Office.

- *Prepare event logistics:*
 - Make sure that ARRA logo and signage is present at the event.
 - Offer a podium at the event for media sound equipment (e.g., microphones), in addition to serving as a lectern for the speaker.
 - Provide printed handouts on the featured project and other related projects that offer background information, including details such as grant amount, fund matching, energy savings, and project payback.

4) Pitch the event to the Media.

- *Draft and issue a media advisory* (see attached template).
- *Be prepared to respond to media requests:* Ensure that State Energy Office staff and/or the press office are ready to answer media questions related to the project and the event.