Media Activity Record Specifications

TCEC
Tobacco Control Evaluation Center

This document provides the purpose, specifications, sample narrative, and data collection tracking form of a Media Activity Record (MAR) for earned media outreach and coverage. Different from paid media you buy (such as advertisements), "earned" or "organic" media refers to coverage that comes about either as a result of your media outreach efforts or spontaneously from the news outlet. The MAR tracking form is also available as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that will expand as the fields are populated.

Purpose

A MAR monitors and tracks the content, number, and type of **earned** media coverage over a specified period of time in order to see what issues are grabbing public attention at the moment as well as to judge the effectiveness of your media outreach activities. Doing so on an ongoing basis allows your project to: identify community priorities, look for ways to tie your issues to hot topics, and then respond quickly to opportunities to shift the media conversation to include your point of view. Through content analysis of coverage, you can determine whether your media tactics are working. Assess how the issue is being framed, the accuracy of facts presented, and whether your key messages are being utilized by the media. This analysis can provide insights into how you might improve your media strategies.

Use the form to track not only the pitch letters, news releases, media events, opinion pieces, and letters your project generates, but ALSO any relevant coverage that media outlets and their audiences may produce on their own or in response to your requests. You might also want to include analysis of social media, websites and/or blogs, especially if your campaign is posting online, but because some of the variables differ (tracking views, likes, reposts, downloads, etc.), it can make more sense to track this on a separate spreadsheet.

*[The MAR for the Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community (HSHC) should start with local and regional news sources for your community. Search from the date of the statewide HSHC media release and continue for 2 months after that. The frequency and sentiment of media pieces will indicate the importance tobacco retail-related issues were given in the public landscape. This should inform HSHC intervention strategies and help guide local educational and outreach efforts. If you are tracking this data as one part of a broader MAR, separate out or label the HSHC-related data in some way e.g., cluster the entries together and highlight it with a different color, identify it by objective with a separate column just for HSHC, or in some other way.]

Data Collection Specifications

Period of Analysis: Depending on what you hope to learn from your MAR and/or the timing of your media outreach activities, determine when it makes the most sense to monitor media coverage. *[For HSHC-related media activity, this period should be for two months following the statewide media release.]

Submitting Form, Media Pieces, and Analysis: Submit your completed MAR Tracking Form, an analysis of the findings, as well as copies of the media pieces in the progress report at the end of your monitoring period. A sample narrative of what to include in a MAR Activity Summary Report is provided below.

Method: The most efficient way to conduct your research is online as most media outlets post their content on their websites in addition to other delivery formats. Google Alerts is also a helpful tool that sets up automatic searches for your topics and communities of interest. Search the media outlets viewed/heard by audiences in your jurisdiction. Depending on the media markets in your area, you may want to do either a census (monitoring <u>all</u> media outlets in your market) or a purposive sample of the outlets, aiming for a representative mix of outlet types and audiences – those that represent different political views or those oriented toward specific segments of the community. Refer to your plan to see what your minimum sample size should be. Larger counties should track a variety of media sources and formats — a minimum of 3-9 newspapers, television stations and radio stations in the area. Focus on local media sources where your project has a better chance of getting coverage, rather than national media outlets.

Search Media Pieces: To conduct the research, use your browser (e.g., Google, Yahoo, Bing, Ask, AOL, etc.) instead of the search feature of each media outlet. Not only is it more efficient that way, but on individual websites you might not get access to results without a subscription to the publication. Consider becoming a subscriber to your local news outlets; it's one way to support your community and might increase the chances of getting your issues covered!

Keyword Search: Depending on your objective, select relevant key words to conduct your online research.

Sample search terms:

Tobacco	Smoke, Smoking	Cigarette	Vape, Vaping	Spit, Chew
Nicotine	Hookah	Cigar	Flavor	Names of policy members
Pod, Mod	E-cigarette	E-liquid	License, Fee	Retailer, Merchant
Smokefree	Beach	Litter	Secondhand	Recreational Area
Landlord	Tenant	Apartment	Multi-unit Housing	Rent Control
Park, Plaza	School	Bus Stop	Playground	Conditional Use Permit

In the search bar, you can also use the name of the media outlet, e.g., Use quotation marks (" ") to search the exact phrase, minus symbol (-) to exclude certain parameters, etc. See list of search tips such as this.

*[For HSHC, use terms like: Tobacco, Tobacco Retailers, Tobacco Advertising, Vaping, E-Cigarettes, Electronic Smoking Devices, Healthy Stores, nutrition, alcohol, condoms, availability, coupons, discounts, etc. Remember to relate it to your retail objective and community of interest.]

Complete Media Activity Record Tracking Form: After a media piece is generated (either by your campaign OR by a media source), fill in the following information for each piece using the categories provided below, if relevant. For example, if your campaign generates a media outreach item (e.g., letter to the editor, press release, etc.) which does <u>not</u> yield related coverage, just fill out the Project Messaging and Project Response fields of the tool to document a summary of your key messages and the media outreach done.

- MEDIA SOURCE – Name of media outlet and hyperlink to the *specific* piece of coverage, not just the outlet website. Pay attention to which outlets tend to cover issues you care about more than others and which present stories in a positive or negative light.

- PUBLICATION DATE/TITLE/AUTHOR – Date, title and author of publication. If you can identify the reporter's "beat" or topics they usually cover, note that in the column along with their name. Tracking who covers your issues should guide your outreach efforts. Try to establish relationships with specific reporters covering these topics. If the individual author is not known, just state outlet.

- MEDIA TYPE – Newspaper, TV, radio, social media or other

- MEDIA REACH – State whether the outlet is regional, county, city or neighborhood-wide; and note circulation/audience size, type (general or a specific priority population) and language. You can usually find this information on the outlet's website. The reach can give you a sense of how many people (and which populations) are hearing about the issue. This can help you prioritize future outreach decisions.

- STORY TYPE – News story (hard news/current events), feature article (human interest), letter to the editor, op-ed piece (opinion or editorial), on-air interview, social media posting or other. A news story usually tries to present both sides of the issue, while feature stories and other types of pieces present primarily one perspective. In print media outlets, front page or headline stories are always hard news while softer, more emotional human-interest stories, letters or op-ed pieces are secondary and may get fewer views. However, popular stories on social media are usually just the opposite.

- PROJECT MESSAGING – List the key messages your media campaign's outreach tried to convey (and identify mode in all caps, e.g., PRESS RELEASE, CALLS TO REPORTERS, INTERVIEWS, etc.) Being able to compare the information you *wanted* the media to cover to what they actually did is an indication of how effective your media messaging efforts are!

- SUMMARY – Summarize the main points covered in the media piece. Note whether any of your media messages were included or covered in some way. Also identify any misinformation that should be countered.

- SENTIMENT – Using a **+**, **-** or **=** sign, indicate whether the story was primarily supportive, in opposition, or neutral/mixed. You could also report the number of likes/shares it received.

- PROJECT RESPONSE – Briefly describe what your project did in response to the media coverage. What actions were taken or how did tactics change? e.g., the project thanked the media outlet and reporter for covering the issue fairly; wrote a letter to the editor or called the reporter to correct misperceptions; created a new fact sheet to counter public misconceptions about vaping; focused media outreach and messaging on the connection of vaping to weakened immune systems in youth. *Remember to ALWAYS attempt to respond to any relevant media coverage, good or bad.* It is your opportunity to shift, maintain or focus the conversation on topics you care about!

Analysis and Reporting

In addition to monitoring and tracking media coverage, your media coordinator (or someone empowered to manage your media profile) will need to analyze the media content along the way to inform and evaluate your project's media outreach and media activity. Because of social media and other online news outlets, the news cycle of today changes daily, if not hourly. If you don't respond immediately, it's often too late! So, in order to capitalize on opportunities to tag onto or counter news coverage, *media monitoring, tracking and analyzing should be done on an ongoing (daily) basis, entered on the tracking form, and used to inform the direction and timing of media efforts* (which are then captured in the Project Response column).

Along with the MAR tracking form, submit a summary for each objective as part of your progress report for each six-month period in which your project is conducting media activities. This summary, which does not have to be written until progress reports are due, is a way for the project to document and evaluate its media strategy. The narrative should provide an overview of the media outreach tactics used, an assessment of their success (including amount of coverage and number of instances where the project's media messages were used), and recommendations for future media efforts.

In addition to analyzing and describing the content of the tracking form, the summary might also include:

- What media activities the project conducted in this time period—purpose/goals, who was involved, description of tactics and results

- A description of efforts to establish/maintain relationships with specific reporters and media outlets—whose news feed you followed, who you reached out to, how the project attempted to be a resource, how quickly you responded to requests

- How the project developed its media messages—who was involved, how you trained people in your staff and coalition to respond to media requests by sticking to the messages, how you maintained a state of readiness

- How your media outreach, paid media and overall communication plan worked together to generate coverage and focus attention on your issues.

Both the MAR tracking form and the summary report are tracking measures that should be submitted as part of your progress reports in the document repository during each relevant six-month period, as specified in your evaluation plan.

In the OTIS FIELDS briefly state what work was completed, where (jurisdiction), when (dates) and with what results (number of media pieces). For example, *"In community A we completed x number of media outreach attempts between date-date, and in community B we completed x number between date-date. See attached summary report."*

Drawing from the activity summary submitted in the progress report, your final/brief evaluation report can include a more pared down version of efforts that focuses on tactics, results and recommendations. Here's a sample of what that might look like:

Media efforts were successful in generating positive coverage about tobacco control issues in our local media. In coordination with the statewide media event which released findings from the Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community retail observations, we sent out press releases to all six media outlets in our area (three television stations, one regional mainstream newspaper, one local Spanish-language paper serving Hispanic populations, and one online community media forum). Our key media messages were: "Tobacco company marketing is saturating our community. Flavored tobacco products aim to hook youth. We need to protect our kids from sneaky tobacco marketing tactics in local stores." Five of the six outlets picked up the story, framing the issue as problematic due to illegal sales of tobacco products to youth, sneaky tobacco marketing tactics aimed at kids, exposure to alcohol and tobacco advertisements can hook kids early, all pointing to the need for tobacco retail licensing with a fee. As a result of this coverage, a potential audience of 235,000 in our community may have been reached with this news.

Public response to these stories was mostly favorable. Eight subsequent letters to the editor and opinion pieces were published – two of them written by coalition members. The other pieces indicate that writers were most concerned about the density and proximity of tobacco retailers to schools and other youth-serving locations. The one unfavorable letter written by the Independent Convenience Store Association cited the undue financial burden imposing any restrictions on advertising, marketing or density of stores would have on small business owners. The project attempted to counter the views expressed by the association with our own letter, but it did not get published.

To capitalize on momentum generated by the media event, the project should aim to keep the issue alive in the news by asking different allies to write op-ed pieces and letters to the editor from different standpoints – school educators, parents, former tobacco users, etc. To combat pro-business sentiment decrying the loss of income, messaging should highlight the cost of tobacco and alcohol consumption to society and hammer home the influx of money coming from big tobacco and alcohol into community stores in order to keep our community hooked on their products for life.

Note: More detail can be added such as quotes from various media pieces, the names and kinds of media outlets, etc. In addition, an introductory paragraph should be added to the evaluation activity reporting that provides an overview of the media landscape in the county, i.e., which major newspapers, readership numbers, etc.

Data from this activity should be used to inform intervention strategies and help guide local educational and outreach efforts. It can indicate if work needs to be done to correct inaccurate messages, for example through letters to the editor or social media efforts.

EARNED MEDIA ACTIVITY RECORD TRACKING FORM   **Reporting Period: _____**

MEDIA SOURCE	PUBLICATION DATE	TITLE	AUTHOR	MEDIA TYPE	MEDIA REACH	STORY TYPE	PROJECT MESSAGING	STORY SUMMARY	SENTIMENT (+, -, =)	PROJECT RESPONSE	OBJ