

# Going After Local Media—Both Paid and Free

When accessing local media—newspapers, television, and radio—there are two approaches: paid advertising and free public relations. Aside from the budgetary issues, it's a huge advantage if you can get the media to provide free coverage. News stories that portray your program in a positive light carry much more weight than advertisements because they are seen as more authoritative and credible.

If your program is doing anything noteworthy in the community, let the press know about it! If you're fortunate enough to get coverage, try to use the opportunity to tell the public you're looking for new members. Many local radio and television stations (especially cable and/or community access) also have "bulletin boards" and public service announcements that you can tap into.

There are excellent tools to help you in your public relations efforts on the AmeriCorps Web site (or download the PDF of the AmeriCorps media kit on this site).

If you are considering purchasing advertising, there are a few things to consider:

What are the demographics of the newspaper's readers or the radio station's listeners? Do they match your target audience? How much will it cost? Will it take too much of your valuable recruitment outreach budget and prevent you from using other outlets?

If you are looking to attract diverse members, research the media that serve a particular community. For example, there are low-cost advertising opportunities on Hispanic radio stations. Many larger communities have specialty newspapers that serve specific neighborhoods or cultural groups.

Some things to know and consider about advertising include:

- Print advertising can be as expensive (or more so) than online or other recruitment outreach methods.

- In addition to print advertising, some newspapers include online listings for free or a small additional fee. Many radio and television stations also give their advertisers bonus ads on their station websites.
- Some newspapers will offer a package deal on ads so your ad is listed in several papers within a region instead of just one publication. Package deals are a little more expensive, but will give your advertising campaign an opportunity to saturate a local community. Radio and television stations also offer better deals the more spots you buy.
- If you are part of a large organization, your human resources department likely has worked out a special rate for ads. Alternatively, if you are part of a small nonprofit you may be able to get a discount on advertising.
- Referral ads are a way to make your advertising dollars stretch. They refer jobseekers to your ad in another section. That way, you can pay to place your ad in one section of the classifieds, but attract potential applicants from other sections.
- Buy white space instead of paragraph ads. If you look at the average Sunday paper, you will be faced with a sea of tiny black type and very few graphics or white space. In larger publications you may find that it is worth the money to include the AmeriCorps\*VISTA logo and some white space.
- If your budget allows, you may want to consider running ads for a period of two or more weeks so you can create a presence in the community you are trying to reach. This may involve running ads for a few weeks in a row, so be sure to pick the day(s) with the largest circulation. If you can't run consecutive ads, you can still run one-time ads. You may also want to spend a little more for that white space and referral ad to make sure your ad stands out.