



The  
John A. Hartford  
Foundation

# Grantee Communications Toolkit

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# Grantee Communications Guidelines

## Acknowledging the Foundation's Support

In press releases, brochures/publications, conference presentations or other publicly disseminated documents related to projects funded by The John A. Hartford Foundation, grantees and subcontracted organizations must acknowledge the foundation's support. On first mention, always use the full name "**The John A. Hartford Foundation**" and ensure the "t" in "The" is capitalized. The acronym JAHF may be included in parentheses following the full name and used in subsequent mentions. It's also acceptable to use "the foundation" for subsequent mentions.

*Example:* We are proudly supported by The John A. Hartford Foundation (JAHF), a private, nonpartisan, national philanthropy dedicated to improving the care of older adults. The leader in the field of aging and health, the foundation has three priority areas: creating age-friendly health systems, supporting family caregivers, and improving serious illness and end-of-life care. Learn more at [johnahartford.org](http://johnahartford.org).

**Please note:** All publicly disseminated documents (press releases, brochures/publications, etc.) must be reviewed by the foundation in advance of release.

## Describing the Foundation

Descriptions of The John A. Hartford Foundation and its work follow for your use, where appropriate:

› **SHORT DESCRIPTION:**

The John A. Hartford Foundation, based in New York City, is a private, nonpartisan, national philanthropy dedicated to improving the care of older adults. The leader in the field of aging and health, the foundation has three priority areas: creating age-friendly health systems, supporting family caregivers, and improving serious illness and end-of-life care.

› **MEDIUM DESCRIPTION:**

The John A. Hartford Foundation, based in New York City, is a private, nonpartisan, national philanthropy dedicated to improving the care of older adults. For more than four decades, the organization has been the leader in building a field of experts in aging and testing and replicating innovative approaches to care. The foundation has three priority areas: creating age-friendly health systems, supporting family caregivers, and improving serious illness and end-of-life care. Working with its grantees, the foundation strives to change the status quo and create a society where older adults can continue their vital contributions. For more information, visit [johnahartford.org](http://johnahartford.org) and follow us on [LinkedIn](#).



› LONG DESCRIPTION:

The John A. Hartford Foundation, based in New York City, is a private, nonpartisan, national philanthropy dedicated to improving the care of older adults. For more than four decades, the organization has been the leader in building a field of experts in aging and testing and replicating innovative approaches to care. The foundation has three priority areas: creating age-friendly health systems, supporting family caregivers, and improving serious illness and end-of-life care. Working with its grantees, the foundation strives to change the status quo and create a society where older adults can continue their vital contributions.

The foundation was established in 1929 to do the greatest good for the greatest number of people. That was the guidance of its founders, brothers John and George Hartford, leaders of the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company – later known worldwide as the A&P grocery store chain. Since 1982, The John A. Hartford Foundation has invested more than \$758 million in grants focused exclusively on aging and health. For more information, visit [johnahartford.org](http://johnahartford.org) and follow us on [LinkedIn](#).

## Branding and Logo Use

The foundation believes a successful partnership includes co-branding (i.e., including the JAHF logo on a grantee’s website and project-related publications). For use of The John A. Hartford Foundation logo on printed materials and/or websites, contact your program officer or Clare Churchouse, senior communications associate at [clare.churchouse@johnahartford.org](mailto:clare.churchouse@johnahartford.org).

Please note that the JAHF logo includes our full name, “The John A. Hartford Foundation.” [Logos](http://johnahartford.org/grants-strategy/grantee-resources) can be downloaded from the Grants Guidelines and Resources webpage: [johnahartford.org/grants-strategy/grantee-resources](http://johnahartford.org/grants-strategy/grantee-resources) along with JAHF brand guidelines: [JAHF BrandQRS FINAL2025.pdf](#).

If you are developing a logo for your foundation-funded project, a draft must be submitted in advance to your program officer and you must receive approval for its use from the foundation. The names of JAHF-funded initiatives and products should also be vetted with the foundation. Please work with your program officer as you develop the branding for your foundation-funded project.

## Photography

The foundation expects that most grantee organizations will have internal capacity for basic photography of grant events and activities that can be shared with the foundation for social media, the web, and The John A. Hartford Foundation’s annual report. Please notify your program officer if this capacity does not exist.



## Developing Your Communications Strategy

As part of grant proposals, The John A. Hartford Foundation expects all grantees to develop a communications strategy that will support each project in achieving its goals. The foundation works in partnership with grantees to promote each program, and with foundation consultants, offers several communications resources for your use.

In the first quarter of a new project, a Grantee Orientation call will be scheduled with grant project leaders and their communications staff to review these resources and identify opportunities for offering support or coordinating communications activities.

**Note:** The foundation makes a limited amount of communications consulting time available for grantees with unanticipated communications needs, including media outreach. Please contact your program officer for more details.

### For More Information

For more information about The John A. Hartford Foundation's programs, please contact your program officer. Communications and media inquiries, as well as copies of press releases and published materials, should be sent to your program officer and Kiri Oliver, communications officer at [kiri.oliver@johnahartford.org](mailto:kiri.oliver@johnahartford.org).

## Key JAHF Messages

### Key JAHF Messages

**Change is needed:** People are living longer and powering up our communities in vital ways, but many of us will age with complex health and social needs. This requires the U.S. health care system to take a fresh approach.

**The solution is age-friendly care:** Making health systems age-friendly meets the unique needs of older adults and their family caregivers, applies at all stages of health including serious illness and end of life, and it helps deliver better care, outcomes, and experiences for everyone.

**JAHF's role:** The John A. Hartford Foundation is ensuring that age-friendly care reaches as many older adults as possible—and doing it quickly. We are working every day to create age-friendly health systems, support family caregivers, and improve serious illness and end-of-life care.

**Our call to action:** Collaboration is in our DNA. We work strategically with a wide range of partners to ensure older adults receive the best care possible. Join us in advancing age-friendly care that improves outcomes for older adults.



# Reframing Aging

The way people in America currently think about aging creates obstacles to productive practices and policies. How can the field of aging help build a better understanding of aging, ageism, and what it will take to create a more age-integrated society? To answer this question, a group of leading national aging organizations and funders commissioned the FrameWorks Institute to conduct an empirical investigation into the communications aspects of aging issues.

The Reframing Aging Initiative, hosted by the National Center to Reframe Aging at the Gerontological Society of America (GSA), has continued working with the Frameworks Institute and national aging organizations to offer webinars, materials and training opportunities that can be accessed at [reframingaging.org](http://reframingaging.org).

All JAHF grantees are expected to review the Reframing Aging research and incorporate its recommendations into your communications. We have provided one tool below, and you can access additional Reframing Aging resources at [reframingaging.org/resources](http://reframingaging.org/resources).

For more information, please contact Marcus Escobedo, vice president, communications and senior program officer at [marcus.escobedo@johnhartford.org](mailto:marcus.escobedo@johnhartford.org).





LED BY THE GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA  
[ReframingAging.org](http://ReframingAging.org)

## Quick Start Guide

Framing is the process of making choices about what to emphasize and what to leave unsaid.  
 Here's a **quick tour of themes to avoid and alternatives to advance.**

Instead of these words and cues:	Try:
<p><b>“Tidal wave,” “tsunami,” and similarly catastrophic terms for the growing population of older people</b></p>	<p><b>Talking affirmatively about changing demographics: “As Americans live longer and healthier lives . . .”</b></p>
<p><b>“Choice,” “planning,” “control,” and other individual determinants of aging outcomes</b></p>	<p><b>Emphasizing how to improve social contexts: “Let’s find creative solutions to ensure we can all thrive as we age.”</b></p>
<p><b>“Seniors,” “elderly,” “aging dependents,” and similar “other-ing” terms that stoke stereotypes</b></p>	<p><b>Using more neutral (“older people/Americans”) and inclusive (“we” and “us”) terms</b></p>
<p><b>“Struggle,” “battle,” “fight,” and similar conflict-oriented words to describe aging experiences</b></p>	<p><b>The Building Momentum metaphor: “Aging is a dynamic process that leads to new abilities and knowledge we can share with our communities.”</b></p>
<p><b>Using the word “ageism” without explanation</b></p>	<p><b>Defining ageism: “Ageism is discrimination against older people due to negative and inaccurate stereotypes.”</b></p>
<p><b>Making generic appeals to the need to “do something” about aging</b></p>	<p><b>Using concrete examples like intergenerational community centers to illustrate inventive solutions</b></p>

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[www.reframingaging.org](http://www.reframingaging.org)



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# Creating a Strategic Communications Plan

A strategic communications plan helps ensure your messages reach the right people at the right time to advance your project's goals.

## 1. Define Your Communications Objective

- › What are you trying to achieve?
- › Align with your project's outcomes.  
*Example: Raise awareness of age-friendly care and the 4Ms among health systems to help meet our goal of 50 new Age-Friendly Health Systems participants.*

## 2. Identify Your Key Audiences

- › Who needs to hear your message?
- › Be specific. Prioritize decision-makers, influencers, or affected stakeholders.  
*Example: Health system leaders, national policymakers, caregivers of older adults.*

## 3. Craft Core Messages

- › What do you want each audience to take away?
- › Keep messages clear and relevant, and include a call to action.
- › Support with data and stories.

## 4. Choose Your Tactics and Channels

- › How will you reach your target audiences?
- › Choose the channels and/or formats that are most likely to reach your audiences.  
*Examples: policy briefs, webinars, email newsletter, social media campaign.*

## 5. Develop Materials

- › What content or tools will you need?  
*Examples: one-pagers, infographics, talking points.*

## 6. Establish a Timeline

- › When will key communications happen?
- › Align with project milestones or policy windows.
- › Allow time for review and outreach.

## 7. Measure and Adjust

- › How will you track success?
- › Use simple metrics (e.g., reach, interactions, signups).
- › Adjust based on what works.



# Sample Talking Points Formula

## Sample Approach for Message Development

Here is a suggested formula to help you communicate about your organization's work and its positive impact for older adults:

### GOAL + CHALLENGE + APPROACH + CALL TO ACTION

#### The Goal of Your Initiative

*Example: A new initiative from [Our Organization] aims to improve the health of older adults and their caregivers through replication of evidence-based social connection programs in communities.*

#### The Challenge Your Initiative Is Addressing

*Example: Socially isolated older adults face an increased risk of early mortality, comparable to that of smoking and obesity.*

#### The Approach You Are Taking to Address the Challenge

*Example: With support from The John A. Hartford Foundation, we're piloting a seed grant program that will fund social connection programs at eight community-based organizations. We will then identify a plan for broader replication of effective programs that promote social connection as a critical part of age-friendly care.*

### CALL TO ACTION

*Example: Learn more about the issues, apply for a seed grant, or request technical assistance by visiting our website. Let's work together to reduce social isolation and improve health for older adults.*

When drafting organizational messages or talking points, consider the following questions and prompts to help distill the work your organization does and the unique value that it offers within the context of the larger older adult care ecosystem. Responses should be brief, clear, and accessible to your key audiences.

1. Describe your organization's mission.
2. Describe what your organization does in one sentence.
3. What are your organization's core programs and what do they accomplish?
4. What does your organization do best?
5. How would others (competitors, stakeholders, etc.) describe your organization?
6. Who is your organization trying to reach through communications?
7. What action does your organization want each audience to take?



# Media Relations Tips and Best Practices

Relationships with media matter because they have the potential to connect organizations with their key audiences, make their work come alive, and reach people who can be converted into supporters, volunteers, donors, program participants, etc.

When speaking to the media, unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are representing your organization. It's important that anyone speaking to media **distinguish between personal opinion and experiences and statements being made on behalf of the organization.**

## Media Relations 101

### 1. Prepare your messages

Just as you should prepare organizational messages, you will want to prepare for outreach to the media, but with a slight difference. Think about your audience—often you are trying to reach very busy people who need to make quick decisions about what to write. Brevity and easy-to-identify take-aways are key. We recommend jotting down two to three key points you want to make in reaching out to a reporter by phone or email.

### 2. Do your research and keep records

It helps to know what makes a story pitch compelling to a media outlet. Start by reading the outlets you want to pitch and see what types of stories they cover. Create a list of reporters (with contact information) that you may be interested in reaching out to and maintain a master list with information about conversations, their responses to your story pitch or idea, etc. to track relationships as they grow.

Please keep in mind that media may or may not respond to your pitch, but can still be interested in covering your organization. Establishing and fostering relationships with reporters is always a positive, and keeping media informed of your activities is a good habit to practice. Media may file away organizational leaders, volunteers, and program participants as a resource for future stories.

## How to Pitch a Story Idea to a Reporter

### 1. Identify a story idea

Think about an aspect of your work or a key recent achievement that may interest media. If you have written a press release or advisory, send via email blast to all reporters you think may be interested.



## 2. **Determine which reporter(s) to follow up with**

Identify the outlet(s) that you want to reach and then seek out the relevant reporters' contact information. If the outlet is small, there may not be reporters covering specific topic areas, like business, health, sports, etc. In that case, the individual listed online as the "newsroom contact" or "assignment editor" is the person to go to with your story idea.

## 3. **Prepare and send your pitch email**

Equipped with your list of contacts, write a series of brief email notes, each personalized with their name.

Be sure to send a separate email to each contact on your list (do not CC or BCC). Make sure you have included your phone number and email address for follow-up questions. If you have a press release, include it at the bottom of the email. Reporters and editors are very busy and need to make fast decisions – be succinct and straightforward, but respectful. If you are alerting them to an upcoming event, send your initial email no later than a week before.

## 4. **Email to follow-up**

Follow up strategically. Journalists are busy, and a single email often isn't enough to get a response. A second, well-timed follow-up can significantly increase your chances of engagement. Keep it short—restate the key angle, offer an interview or exclusive insight, and reinforce why the story matters now. Thoughtful follow-ups help build relationships, making future media coverage more likely.

## 5. **Work with the reporter and prepare anyone at the organization who will be interviewed**

Once you get the green light from a reporter, work with them to fully understand the story angle that they wish to pursue and coordinate between the reporter and any employees, volunteers or program participants who will be interviewed. Depending on the journalist and outlet, you may be able to request the questions in advance so you can best prepare the interview subject.



## Preparing for an Interview

When you speak with a reporter, you are presenting your message and key points but doing it verbally, typically in an interview conducted over the phone or face-to-face.

Assume that the interview questions will not be shared in advance, which is why it is always important to prepare before you speak with a reporter.

Below are some tips to help you prepare for a meeting with a reporter.

### 1. **Research the reporter**

Part of preparing for an interview means knowing with whom you will be speaking. Be sure to visit the reporter's page on their outlet's website to read their recent stories and understand what topics they are currently covering.

### 2. **Identify key points and practice your answers**

You will want to go into a conversation with a reporter knowing the two or three key points you want to make. Even if you are not given an opportunity to make these points immediately or directly, you should consider how to incorporate them into your answers. To prepare, think about questions the reporter might ask and practice responding to them, ideally with another person. Practice weaving your key points into answers to questions that aren't directly related to them. The more you practice, the more natural this tactic will become.

### 3. **It's okay to say you don't know, but be sure to follow up promptly**

If you are asked a complicated question you can't answer, it is best to be honest and state that you will follow up once you have additional information. Be sure to provide it at the earliest possible opportunity.

### 4. **Everything is on the record, unless the reporter says otherwise**

Saying "this is off the record," without the reporter agreeing to the condition, doesn't mean you won't see what you said in print.

### 5. **If you feel like you've missed a key point in your interview, follow up**

Send an email thanking the reporter for spending the time with you. You can then say something along the lines of, "A point I wanted to make during the interview, and which is really important, is..."



## Social Media Best Practices

- › Create your strategy. Choose key themes you plan to highlight on your social media (e.g., relevant news, useful resources, and success stories from your work), then spread your content across those themes. You may find it helpful to create an editorial calendar.
- › Build your following. Include your social media links prominently on your website, email newsletter footer, and all printed and digital materials.
- › Build your community. Follow and engage with the posts of your partners, funders, similar organizations, policymakers and journalists who cover issues relevant to your work.
- › Keep it simple. Focus on writing concise posts with a main point, clear call to action and strong imagery.
- › Use hashtags. Aim to include about three to five relevant hashtags per post. These can be a combination of broader industry hashtags (e.g., #AgeFriendlyCare, #HealthyAging, #Medicaid) and any hashtags created for specific programs, observances, campaigns or conferences you're participating in. Monitor which hashtags are currently popular in your network on each platform.
- › Be responsive. Check your notifications often and respond to comments.
- › Stay up to date. Subscribe to newsletters and follow organizations that provide social media guidance for nonprofits like Network for Good and The Communications Network.

### LinkedIn

- › LinkedIn is the most important platform for professional engagement and discussions, both for your organization and its individual leaders and staff members.
- › Seed early engagement. The LinkedIn algorithm favors posts that get engagement within the first 60 minutes of publication. Share priority posts internally after they are published and encourage engagement among staff and stakeholders.
- › Use big, bold imagery and experiment with different visual formats (images, PDF documents, videos).
- › Discuss current issues and tie them back to your mission and work. Posts about “hot topics” in your industry are more likely to have a higher engagement rate.
- › Build thought leaders. Work with your president or other subject matter experts on your team to post consistently from their own accounts about current issues in your industry, conferences and events they're attending, and key updates from your organization.



## Instagram:

- › Instagram is a visual platform. Most of the time spent on Instagram posts should be making sure the image itself is compelling and will catch the eye as people scroll through their feeds
- › Use video strategically. Videos take more resources to create but get the most engagement. Identify some opportunities to get video footage, such as a series of short educational videos by a staff member, testimonials from program participants at an event, and short clips from your leadership speaking at a webinar or event.
- › Brands and organizations often use a more casual voice on Instagram than on other platforms.
- › Use your stories to share useful resources and post informal, in-the-moment content from events.
- › Instagram is a great platform for a “takeover,” where someone from your organization posts photos and videos from a “day-in-the-life” angle. This could be an opportunity for employees, volunteers and program participants.

## Facebook:

- › Facebook is often the best platform for communicating directly with community members and older adults.
- › Keep posts short, with strong visuals and a focus on people—your team, program participants and events. Share positive messages and success stories.
- › Facebook is also a good platform for sharing community resources and events.

## Short-Form Text Platforms (Bluesky, Threads, etc.):

- › There are now several social media platforms that focus on short-form text posts. Look at which platform(s) your partners and similar organizations are currently using and choose which one(s) make the most sense for your organization.
- › Keep posts short and to the point with a clear call to action. Keep in mind the character limit for the platform you’re using.
- › Use visuals strategically. Text is the focus here, but photos, infographics and short videos can help elevate the message.



- › Attribution helps with engagement. Include the handles of people or organizations that are referenced in the post.
- › Start conversations. For example, “How do you define #AgeFriendlyCare?” In turn, make sure to participate in conversations started by other organizations and thought leaders in your network.
- › Strike a balance between pre-scheduled posts and in-the-moment updates. These platforms are ideal for breaking news, timely commentary, and live posting from conferences and events.

### Social Media Graphics Best Practices:

- › Keep it simple. Minimize text on graphics and let the visuals speak. Avoid clutter by limiting competing elements like multiple logos, photos, or excessive words. Use templates. User-friendly design programs like Canva allow you to upload your logos, brand colors and fonts, and to create basic templates that your team can use for different types of posts. This simplifies the design process and keeps your content professional and consistent.
- › Each platform has a different ideal size for posts, and they sometimes change over time. Sprout Social has a great resource that shares up-to-date image sizes for each platform: [sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-image-sizes-guide](https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-image-sizes-guide)

And to help make posts more searchable, remember to use common hashtags and tag JAHF when possible:

 [The John A. Hartford Foundation](#) on LinkedIn

 [The John A. Hartford Foundation](#) on Facebook









 #OlderAdults #AgeFriendly #FamilyCaregiving #SeriousIllness



# Working Together: How Can We Help You?

The John A. Hartford Foundation works with McCabe Message Partners, a Washington, D.C.-based public relations agency focused on communicating about health and the issues that affect it. The agency is available to assist JAHF grantees with a variety of communications services. To take advantage of this opportunity, please contact your program officer.

## Services offered include:

-  Audience Research
-  Branding/Positioning
-  Communications Audits
-  Communications Planning
-  Editorial Services (op-ed development, speechwriting, copyediting, etc.)
-  Message Development and Message Training
-  Media Relations and Media Training
-  Digital Media Strategy (social media, web content, analytics, etc.)
-  Graphic Design/Materials Development (infographics, social shares, toolkits, etc.)
-  Paid Media Strategy (print and digital advertising)
-  Strategic Counsel

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**ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**

Effective January 2026



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