



Engaging With the Media

“Media relations isn’t about spin — it’s about building public confidence through clarity, consistency, and credibility.”

1. Control the Narrative — Don’t Just React

Be proactive: define your message before others do.
Prepare 2–3 key talking points for every major issue.
Aim to 'own the first quote.'

2. Build Relationships Before You Need Them

Meet local reporters, editors, and radio hosts early.
Return calls promptly — credibility builds over time.
Include media in community events and briefings.

3. Stay Message-Disciplined and Unified

Coordinate messaging across commissioners and departments.
Speak with one voice — confusion erodes trust.
Use plain, accessible language.

4. Transparency Builds Trust

Address issues quickly and honestly.
Provide facts, not speculation.
Emphasize stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

5. Plan for the “Bad Day”

Develop a Crisis Communications Plan with backups.
Conduct media training and scenario drills.
The first 60 minutes define the next 6 months.



Owning the Narrative

THE CHALLENGE:

In rural counties, rumors outrun facts and government can't rely in the old ways of communication. Local newspapers reach fewer residents than ever. Nationally, only **~9% of U.S. adults** now often turn to print newspapers for news (Pew Research Center). Indiana likely feels this even more — **49 of 92 counties have two or fewer local news outlets**, leaving major information gaps.

THE NUP NARRATIVE FRAMEWORK™: reaching the right people, through the right channels at the right time by defining:

- **WHY – Lead With Purpose**: Explain the problem you're solving before explaining the solution. People fill silence with assumptions.
WHO – Target Real Stakeholders: Not "the public", very different groups: Farmers, commuters, businesses, retirees, young families, each needs a different version of the message.
- **HOW – Use Practical Digital + Local Channels**: Meet people where they already are. Facebook, Podcast, short videos/graphics, website updates, email/SMS, and in-person touchpoints fill the gap left by declining newspaper reach.
- **WHEN – Communicate Early & Often**: Communicate early — before rumors start. Communicate often — even if there's "nothing new yet." Communicate at decision points — so people understand the timeline.

THE OUTCOME:

With the proven successful NUP Narrative Framework™, you replace the communication void, reduce misinformation, and ensure your county — not a small group of citizens on Facebook — owns the narrative from start to finish.



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COUNTY
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Building Public Trust Through Effective Communication



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