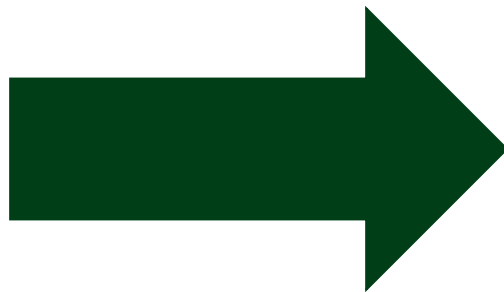




**Message Training
for CESA members**

Changing Media Landscape

A shifting media landscape has taken us from consuming news once a day in a physical paper, to nonstop digital consumption.



Understand the Terms

On the Record

Anything you say can be quoted and attributed to you by name.

Off the Record

Cannot be used or published. **Must be agreed upon in advance.**

On Background

Reporter can use the information but not name you (e.g., "a senior official said..."). Confirm attribution language up front.

Embargo

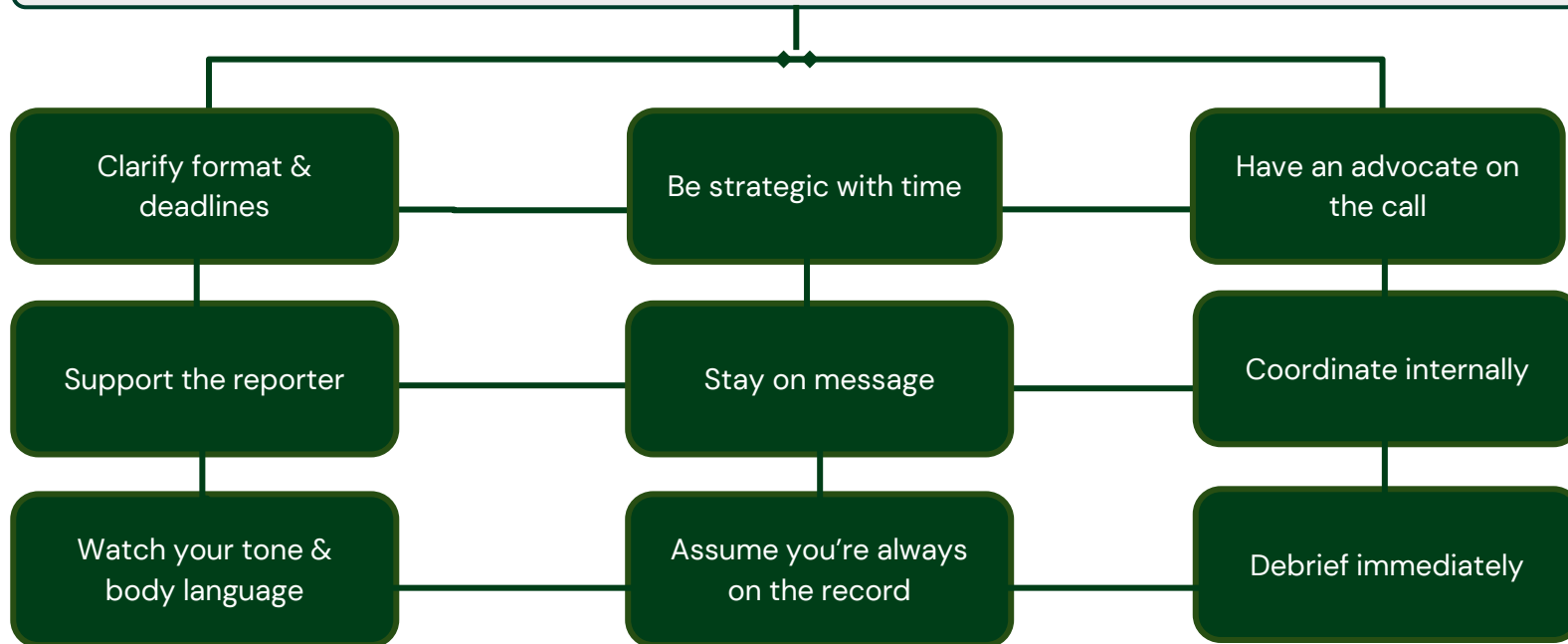
Information may be shared in advance but cannot be published before a specified date/time.

Hold for Release (HFR)

Like an embargo, often tied to event timing or coordinated rollout. Confirm the exact release time.

Brief Refresher

Top Tips for interacting with the media



Consider the Reporter

Facts

Reporters want all the details.

Quotes

They are looking for meaty, interesting sources. [Remember: They will **not** include everything you say!]

Angles

They are looking for unique or different point of view for the topics they cover.

Background

They want to understand where the story is coming from, how it relates to what has happened before, or is happening in the world.

Visuals

A picture is worth a thousand words. Digital mediums demand visuals that help convey the story and create shareable, sticky content.

Remote Interviews – Best Practices



Know Your Interviewer: Look into whether the reporter has previously covered you, your organization, or the issue.



Pre-Taped Interviews: Ask in advance if you can redo lines if needed. Most reporters will allow this. If you stumble, pause, collect yourself, and rephrase the line cleanly.



Lighting: Ensure light is in front of your face, not behind.



Camera Framing: Position at eye level with a clean, professional background.



Connection: Test Wifi; use a wired connection if possible.

Effective Communication

3 COMPONENTS

Thinking through these questions before activation is key to effective communication.



MESSENGER



Who is the best messenger to communicate your message to your audience?

MESSAGE



What is your key message?
What do you want your audience to remember?

AUDIENCE



Who is your audience that you want to reach with that message?

Is your message tailored to them and their beliefs?

Identify and Activate Authentic Messengers

Department Heads

There may only be a few opportunities to engage your leadership. Prioritize high-touch, high-impact asks. Map these relationships and activate these trusted voices to speak with key private sector leaders they know.

Public Sector Leaders

Leverage the public sector leaders for which projects are impacting: School superintendents, teachers, principals, hospital leaders, fire chiefs, etc.

Local Businesses

Map relationships of notable local businesses who are participating in the project or funding as contractors, developers, lenders, etc. Activate these trusted voices to speak with key policymakers.

Labor / Workers

One step deeper into the business/supplier pipeline are their employees/labor unions who are completing the construction, installation, etc. They are fantastic messengers to highlight job creation, manufacturing, and production happening here at home.

Constituents

Collect stories of impact from residents, community members, and other stakeholders to share their perspective how a particular project has improved their lives from lowering costs, creating a healthier neighborhood, etc.

Stay “On Message”

- Have brief, consistent talking points for each project, story, announcement.
- Ensure the talking points are tailored for your specific audience (like a private sector leader, a D v. R elected official, state v. federal stakeholder, etc.)
- In the event where you're short on time or interact with your key audience by chance or in passing, have an even more brief elevator pitch with one key message you want the stakeholder(s) to take away.
- Pursue multiple opportunities for your trusted messengers to share their story. Layered, repeated messages work for a reason!

Three Step Process for Message Development

CONNECT: How do I get them listening?

PROOF: How do I make them believe? [Insert evidence or data]

TAKEAWAY: What do you want them to do, think or feel?



Connect: Tailor to your Audience

When looking at your messaging and external materials with fresh eyes, you should be thinking about:

- **Tailor your messages to meet audience members where they are:** Lean into the specific energy policy of interest to your target audience (ex: nuclear, hydrogen, etc.) or local supplier or training program that they have a relationship with.
- **Highlight the detailed impact on the local community:** Share specific and personal examples of how energy investments are creating local, good-paying jobs, delivering economic benefit to the district/state, and otherwise benefiting the community. For example: Cite the number of jobs, how much they are paying, and what training they require. Highlight what local businesses you are hiring.
- **Be specific:** Directly acknowledge the tax credit or program you're using and how it was a factor in your decision to invest in the community. Also mention public/private partnerships, if applicable and appropriate.

3-Minute Exercise: Map out your message

TAKEAWAY

PROOF

CONNECT

Answering Tough Questions

- Anticipate difficult or off-message questions ahead of time.
- Practice bridging techniques (e.g., “That’s a fair question, but what’s really important is…”).
- Never speculate—if you don’t know, say so and offer to follow up.
- Avoid repeating negative frames (“We’re not corrupt” can reinforce the idea of corruption).

Additional Resources

- [Tough Questions Guide](#): a Q&A guide on some of the trickier questions folks may receive about their work
- [Events Checklist](#): to get you started on planning activations in your community
- [Polling & Topline Message Resource Guide](#): Compilation of public and available private polling on clean energy topics from Summer 2025 up to June 2026
- [Digital Assets & Advertising Toolkit](#): a menu of options for building your organization's digital presence

How Can We Help?

What makes you feel nervous or uncertain about speaking to a certain audience given the current political and legal landscape?

What would make you feel more confident or prepared to speak to a reporter or other specific audience group?

Is your organization or department aligned on how to interact with the media or your state legislators? Do you have any additional context you or your organization/department are remaining mindful of that we can assist in navigating?



Thank you
leslie@liletteadvisors.com