



MOAA Council and Chapter Public Affairs and Communications Guide

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! You volunteered to lead your MOAA Chapter or Council's public affairs and communications efforts. Whether your title is Public Affairs Officer, Communications Chair, or Newsletter Editor, your role is vital to the success and visibility of your organization.

In today's digital and fast-paced environment, clear, effective communications and a visible public presence are essential.

This guide provides updated best practices, tools, and resources to help you communicate effectively in the modern media landscape.

1. THE ROLE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Public affairs and communications can encompass:

- Internal communications (e.g., newsletters, emails, websites)
- External media relations (e.g., press releases, interviews)
- Community engagement (e.g., public events, partnerships)
- Digital presence (e.g., websites, social media)

Your objective is to represent your Council or Chapter, communicate its value, and promote MOAA's mission.

Key Responsibilities:

- Coordinate with the organization's president and board on strategic messaging
- Engage with local media outlets to promote organizational news
- Manage or support the newsletter and/or website
- Collaborate on event publicity and legislative campaigns
- Ensure consistent branding and messaging

2. GETTING STARTED

- Review this guide and familiarize yourself with available tools
- Meet with your Council or Chapter president to define goals and expectations
- Connect with your predecessor, if available, for insights
- Create a continuity folder (digital or physical)
- Order personalized business cards or digital contact templates
- Join MOAA's Public Affairs and Communication Professional Virtual Chapter (MPACOMVC) email list and subscribe to the MOAA Newsletter and Legislative Updates

3. MEDIA RELATIONS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Understanding the Media Today

- News cycles are fast; digital platforms dominate
- Many outlets prefer emails, digital assets, and multimedia
- Local relevance and human interest still drive coverage

Tips for Success:

- Build relationships with local journalists and bloggers and social media influencers
- Submit timely, well-written press releases and advisories
- Offer interview opportunities with engaging speakers or members
- Follow up courteously if your story isn't picked up

- Use MOAA’s national resources and branding templates

Content Ideas:

- Local impact of national issues (e.g., veteran legislation, health care issues)
- Member achievements and military stories
- ROTC/JROTC awards, scholarships and community involvement
- Special speakers or Chapter anniversaries

Effective communication with local journalists, bloggers, social media influencers, and community media outlets is essential for sharing the impact of MOAA’s work at the local level. Each Chapter and Council plays a vital role in advancing MOAA’s mission -“*Never Stop Serving*”- by publicizing events, highlighting member achievements, and reinforcing the importance of legislative advocacy for all uniformed service members, their families, and surviving spouses.

To assist Chapters and Councils in these efforts, MPACOMVC developed a Media Outreach Plan Template designed to help leaders establish and sustain relationships with both conventional and social media representatives (e.g., bloggers, podcasters, influencers, etc.) and other community storytellers. This plan provides a step-by-step framework for identifying local contacts, creating a clear communications schedule, and tracking outreach results.

The plan emphasizes proactive engagement - reaching out before coverage is needed, offering subject matter expertise, and sharing compelling stories about community service, scholarships, and advocacy. It includes sample press release language, a sample media contact list, and a fillable engagement tracker to record each interaction and outcome. Maintaining this record helps ensure continuity as leadership changes and fosters consistency in message and tone across all communications.

The Media Outreach Plan also aligns with MOAA National’s communications priorities and the annual Advocacy in Action campaign, ensuring that local outreach complements the Association’s broader legislative and membership objectives. Chapters are encouraged to share local success stories, photos, and coverage links with MOAA National at editor@moaa.org for potential inclusion in *The MOAA Newsletter* or on MOAA.org.

Chapters and Councils may download and adapt the fillable Word version of the MOAA Media Outreach Plan Template from the link below:

 [MOAA Media Outreach Plan Template](#)

This editable document allows each organization to tailor contact lists, press release formats, and outreach logs to their specific communities. Regular updates and consistent communication with media partners will help MOAA Chapters expand their visibility, attract new members, and demonstrate the continuing leadership and service of America’s military officers.

4. WORKING WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a powerful tool for engaging members, recruiting new ones, and reaching the public. Not all chapters need to be on all platforms. Consider your existing membership and the membership you hope to attract and focus on the outlet(s) they use most. You don’t have to be on every platform.

Suggested Platforms:

- Facebook: Community engagement
- Instagram: Visual storytelling
- X (formerly Twitter): Timely updates
- LinkedIn: Professional networking

Tips:

- Post regularly with quality photos and captions
- Tag MOAA National and partner organizations
- Use relevant hashtags (e.g., #MOAA, #Veterans, #MilitarySpouse)
- Monitor engagement and respond to comments
- Always represent MOAA’s values and nonpartisan stance

Harnessing social media can transform your outreach, turning it into a vibrant hub for engaging members, recruiting new ones, and amplifying your public voice. As a nonprofit veterans' organization, start by developing a clear strategy: set SMART goals like increasing membership by 20% through targeted posts, and create audience personas - perhaps retired officers on LinkedIn or military spouses on Instagram—to tailor your messages. Begin with the suggested platforms: Facebook for community building, Instagram for visual stories of chapter events, X (formerly Twitter) for real-time legislative updates, and LinkedIn for professional networking with potential partners.

To get started, claim or create Chapter profiles using MOAA's branding templates, ensuring privacy settings allow public engagement while protecting sensitive discussions in group pages. Post consistently - aim for 3-5 times per week - to build momentum without overwhelming followers. Focus on high-quality content: share digestible stories of member achievements, event recaps with photos, or calls to action on veteran legislation. Use relevant hashtags like #MOAA, #Veterans, or #MilitarySpouse to boost visibility, and tag MOAA National for amplification.

Time your posts for maximum reach: on Facebook, target 9-11 a.m. weekdays; Instagram shines from 3-6 p.m. weekdays; X performs best 7-10 a.m. during news cycles; and LinkedIn favors 9 a.m.-noon for professional audiences. Engage proactively - respond to comments within 24 hours, ask questions to spark conversations, and monitor insights (e.g., Facebook Insights or Instagram Analytics) to track likes, shares, and growth. Remember, always uphold MOAA's nonpartisan values; avoid political debates to maintain trust.

Embrace trends like using AI tools for content ideas or focusing on micro-virality through short, shareable videos. With regular effort, your social presence will foster stronger community ties and support MOAA's mission effectively.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Your Council or Chapter should be visible in your community as a respected veteran's organization.

Ways to Engage:

- Participate in local events and parades
- Present awards and scholarships at schools
- Partner with other veterans' groups and nonprofits
- Offer speakers or panelists for civic discussions
- Collaborate with local media on military appreciation stories

Remember: Positive visibility increases credibility, supports recruitment, and builds goodwill.

Building a strong community presence elevates your MOAA Chapter as a respected veteran's organization, fostering trust and attracting members. Start by identifying local opportunities to showcase your Chapter's commitment to service. Create a calendar of events - parades, Memorial Day ceremonies, or

school assemblies - where your Chapter can participate. Assign a point person to coordinate logistics, ensuring clear roles for setup, speaking, or media outreach.

Engage with schools by presenting ROTC/JROTC awards or scholarships, highlighting your Chapter's investment in future leaders. Prepare a short, punchy speech emphasizing MOAA's mission, and share photos on social media with hashtags like #MOAA or #Veterans to amplify reach. Partner with local veterans' groups or nonprofits, such as the VFW or food banks, to co-host events like veteran resource fairs. These collaborations build goodwill and expand your network.

Offer Chapter members as speakers for civic groups, local government panels or school functions, focusing on topics like veteran benefits or military history. Prepare a one-page bio sheet for each speaker to share with organizers, ensuring professionalism. Collaborate with local media to pitch stories, such as a feature on your Chapter's community service during Military Appreciation Month. Provide journalists with high-resolution photos and quotes from members to simplify their coverage.

Track engagement by noting event attendance, media mentions, or new member inquiries. Use free tools like Google Forms to collect feedback from community partners, refining your approach. By consistently showing up, sharing your mission, and celebrating local ties, your Chapter strengthens its credibility, supports recruitment, and embodies MOAA's values of service and unity.

6. INTERNAL/MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

Newsletters:

- Should be engaging, not just informational
- Include event recaps, member spotlights, legislative news, and calls to action
- Can be print, PDF, or email-based
- Share with prospective members and community leaders

Email Communications:

- Use email tools with list management (e.g., Mailchimp, Constant Contact)
- Segment your audience: members, prospects, media
- Follow digital communication laws (CAN-SPAM Act)

Effective internal/member communications keep your organization connected, informed, and motivated. Start by crafting a newsletter that's more than a schedule—make it a storytelling tool. Include vibrant event recaps with photos, member spotlights highlighting personal stories or military service, legislative updates tied to MOAA's national goals, and clear calls to action, like volunteering or attending meetings. Use free tools like [Canva](#) for professional layouts, ensuring mobile-friendly PDFs or print versions. Share newsletters with prospective members and community leaders to showcase your Chapter's impact.

For email communications, adopt a platform like Mailchimp or Constant Contact (free tiers available) to manage lists efficiently. Segment your audience - members, prospective members, and media - to tailor content. For example, send event invites to members and press releases to journalists. Craft concise subject lines (e.g., "Join Our Veterans Day Event!") to boost open rates, aiming for 20-25%. Comply with the [CAN-SPAM Act](#) by including an unsubscribe link and your Chapter's physical address in every email. Schedule sends for midweek mornings (Tuesday/Wednesday, 9-11 a.m.) for optimal engagement.

Encourage two-way communication by inviting feedback through surveys using free tools such as [SurveyMonkey](#).

Use Google Forms to collect input on newsletter content or event ideas, fostering member involvement.

Monitor metrics like email bounces, open rates and click-throughs to gauge effectiveness, adjusting based on trends (e.g., more visuals if engagement dips). By delivering consistent, engaging updates, you strengthen member loyalty, align with MOAA's mission, and create a vibrant Chapter community that inspires participation and growth.

7. MAINTAINING YOUR CHAPTER WEBSITE

Must-Haves:

- A chapter mission statement
- A link to MOAA's website (www.moaa.org) and to your state council's website
- Contact information for the webmaster and chapter officers
- A link to your most recent newsletter
- The time, date, and location of the next meeting and other upcoming events and projects

- Photos and news about recent events
- Information about legislative efforts
- A link or details about how to join

Best Practices:

- Keep it current - nothing discourages visitors like outdated info
- Optimize for mobile device viewing by using simple menus, large fonts and buttons, and compressed images
- Link to MOAA National and relevant resources
- Assign responsibility for regular updates
- Don't reprint copyrighted information

A well-maintained Chapter website is a powerful tool for showcasing your MOAA Chapter's mission and engaging members and the community. Begin by accessing MOAA's website templates at www.moaa.org/chapters, which provide pre-designed layouts to ensure consistency. Set up essential pages: a Chapter overview with your mission, a list of officers with contact info, a calendar of meeting dates and programs, event recaps with high-resolution photos, and an archive of newsletters. Assign a dedicated volunteer or team to manage updates, scheduling monthly reviews to keep content fresh. MOAA provides website support and templates: visit www.moaa.org/chapters for tools.

Optimize the site for mobile device viewing. Use responsive templates and test navigation on devices to ensure readability. Incorporate search engine optimization (SEO) by including local keywords (e.g., "MOAA [city] chapter") in page titles and descriptions to attract community members. Link prominently to MOAA National's website and social media for credibility and broader reach.

Regularly update content to avoid outdated information, which can deter visitors. Post event recaps within a week, refresh officer lists after elections, and archive newsletters promptly. Use Google Analytics (free) to track visitor numbers and popular pages, aiming for a 10-20% increase in traffic over six months. Embed calls to action, like "Join Us" or "Contact Us," to drive engagement. For technical support, contact MOAA's Chapter support team at chapters@moaa.org. A dynamic, current website reinforces your Chapter's professionalism, supports recruitment, and amplifies MOAA's mission in your community.

8. PHOTOGRAPHY AND DIGITAL CONTENT

Photos should be:

- High-resolution (300dpi preferred for print)
- Well-composed with engaging subjects
- Accompanied by complete captions (names, titles, date)

Avoid:

- Blurry or poorly lit images
- Distracting backgrounds
- Unnatural posing

Submit digital photos for MOAA's *Military Officer* magazine at editor@moaa.org or social media through proper channels with permissions obtained.

High-quality photography and digital content are essential for showcasing your organization's vibrancy and strengthening its public presence. Start by designating a volunteer to capture photos at events, using a DSLR or a modern smartphone with a high-resolution camera (12MP or higher). Aim for 300 DPI images for print and 72 DPI for digital use, ensuring clarity. Focus on well-composed shots—center subjects like award recipients or guest speakers, use natural lighting, and avoid cluttered backgrounds. For example, photograph a ROTC award ceremony with cadets in sharp focus against a neutral backdrop.

Always include detailed captions with names, ranks, titles, and event dates to add context and professionalism. Include notice of photography in registration or attendance materials or obtain photo release forms from participants, especially for minors, to comply with privacy guidelines; sample forms are available at www.moaa.org/chapters. Edit images using free tools like GIMP or Canva to adjust brightness or crop distractions, keeping edits natural to maintain authenticity.

Share photos on your Chapter's website, social media, or newsletters, and submit standout images to MOAA's *Military Officer* magazine via editor@moaa.org, ensuring permissions are secured. Avoid common pitfalls: blurry images, unnatural poses, or low-lit shots that diminish impact. For digital content, create short video clips (30-60 seconds) of events using tools like iMovie, pairing them with captions for platforms like Instagram or X. Track engagement metrics, such as likes or shares, to refine your approach.

Compelling visuals amplify your Chapter’s story, boost recruitment, and honor MOAA’s mission with pride.

9. MEASURING SUCCESS

You’re making an impact when:

- Your events are well-attended and covered by local media
- Members refer others to your Chapter via digital platforms
- Local leaders and reporters reach out to you for comment
- Your digital engagement (email open rates, likes, shares) increases
- Track your activity (e.g., media coverage, posts, website updates, events supported, etc.).

Evaluating your public affairs and communications efforts ensures your organization’s initiatives resonate and drive impact. Begin by defining clear metrics tied to your goals: event attendance, media coverage, member referrals, and digital engagement (e.g., email open rates, social media likes, or website visits). Create a simple tracking system using a free Google Sheet to log these metrics monthly, noting specifics like “20 attendees at Veterans Day event” or “3 local news mentions for ROTC awards.”

Monitor event success by counting participants and collecting feedback via Google Forms to gauge satisfaction—aim for 80% positive responses. Track media coverage by saving links to articles or mentions, targeting at least one local story per major event. For member referrals, ask new members how they heard about your Chapter; a 10% increase in referrals signals effective outreach. On digital platforms, use tools like Facebook Insights or Google Analytics to measure engagement—strive for 20% email open rates or 5% growth in social media interactions quarterly.

Regularly review data with your Chapter President to adjust strategies. For example, if website visits are low, update content or boost SEO with keywords like “MOAA [city] chapter.” Share successes, like increased event turnout, in newsletters to motivate members. Connect with MOAA National at chapters@moaa.org for benchmarking tips or to share standout results for *Military Officer* magazine. Consistent tracking and analysis demonstrate your Chapter’s value, strengthen community ties, and advance MOAA’s mission with measurable impact.

10. RESOURCES

- MOAA National: www.moaa.org/chapters
- Email: chapters@moaa.org
- Publications: Military Officer; The Affiliate
- Social Media Toolkits: Available on MOAA website
- Brand Guidelines: Use official logos, fonts, and colors

FINAL THOUGHTS

You are the voice and face of your Council or Chapter. Your efforts help amplify MOAA's mission, shape public perception, and bring new energy to your community.

Stay connected. Stay informed. And don't hesitate to ask for help—from MOAA National or the MOAA Public Affairs and Communication Virtual Chapter.

Together, we're stronger.