

Does Your Local Need Help with PR?

That's the question. Some follow-up questions to that big one might be these: Does your local association currently have a public relations plan that you are following? Do you have a public relations chair or representative in your local? Do you have a public relations committee? How does your local communicate amongst its members? How does your local communicate externally, to prospective members, to parents, to the community, to elected officials and government officials and/or the public? And if you're not doing any of the above things, would you like to? Also, do you want \$500?

Alright, now seems like a good time for you to ask us some questions, in kind. Go ahead.

Say what?

"What." Oh, sorry. North Dakota United has funds available annually to help local associations to continue, to improve or to start their own local public relations efforts. Your local can request up to \$500 in PR grants, each year.

What do I have to do to get it?

You can start by writing a grant request.

I've never written a grant request before. It'll probably take too much time or be too complicated.

Neither of those were questions. We want to help you, though. So we are providing you with what we call our very official NDU Public Relations Grant Example, and you can use this document to piece together some key things we need you to include in your proposal, and we'll even supply you with a few ideas and suggestions of PR activities you can do and use PR grant funds to do.

OK, I'm interested. What are the key items?

First, slow down a little. We're getting there. Second, state the amount your association wants as a grant. Grants of \$100-\$500 are used for a one-year PR program. Then, you'll need to tell us about your association and how the grant will be used. Start by explaining how many members you have, what your local dues are, and how much, if anything, your local association spends on public relations. Next, cover your objectives. If you're doing many things, separate the internal (for staff) objectives from the external (student and community) objectives. Finally, make a calendar that describes your plan of action for public relations for the year. It should include a breakdown of expenditures.

What does NDU get out of granting this money?

Glad you asked. North Dakota United is the statewide federation of more than 140 local associations, spread out across most of the cities and communities in our state. We ARE our locals. The well-being of our state federation is determined directly by the well-being of our locals. A strong local association is one that is active in protecting and promoting its members, and advocating for our professions and the

work we do each day. Equally important to what our locals DO for our membership is how well we are communicating what we are doing, and why we do these things, amongst members and to the public. It is in the best interest of NDU and all of our locals to be communicating well, internally and externally, on the local level. So NDU uses our PR grant program as an investment into promoting the good work our locals do each do, knowing full well that this investment will pay dividends down the line in public perception and membership, locally and for NDU.

Also, NDU would like to ask that any local that receives PR grant funds to allow NDU to spread the word about the work they do with these funds in the official magazine of NDU members, *United Voices*.

I can handle all of what you've told me so far. Is there anything else?

Sure, you need to know when it's due into NDU. That's important information. All applications must be submitted by March 15 each year to North Dakota United, Public Relations, 301 N. Fourth St., Bismarck, ND 58501, or you can e-mail electronic forms to kelly.hagen@ndunited.org.

Before you leave me, are there any other resources available to us for forming and building public relations in our local besides for money?

Oh, I love that question. As a matter of fact, there is. His name is Kelly. As many of us in member associations know, dues dollars are used to hire and retain expert staff, to work and serve our membership needs. NDU has a marvelous staff on hand, based across the state, and always available to help members and locals in any way possible. Our staff work directly in the field, as boots on the ground that deploy out to any and all communities in North Dakota, offering member services in bargaining, grievances, organizing, and giving expert advice to members wherever they are, whenever they need it. Part of our field staff is a lanky fellow – again, we call him Kelly – with a resume filled with experiences working, writing and communicating professionally for our state's two largest newspapers, in state government and, now, in service to the members of North Dakota United. His position as NDU Communications Director means he is uniquely available to ALL of our locals. Give our UniServ HelpLine a call at 1-800-369-6332, or e-mail him at kelly.hagen@ndunited.org, and he will travel to you, sit down with your local leadership, your public relations personnel or all your members, and talk to you directly about what you can do through a good PR plan in your local. He is YOUR resource, at your disposal to get anything you want done in public relations for your local. Call on NDU and we'll send this resource out to you!

Okay, let's see that sample copy you mentioned earlier!

Hey. Calm down. And here it is ... but please note that some of the blanks are left blank, and some ideas have been put into some of the blanks. You're not bound to any of these. Fill in your own.

NDU Public Relations Grant Example

GRANT PROPOSAL

The _____, a local affiliate of North Dakota United, requests a \$ _____ grant to help defray the costs of an *expanded, a beginning, an on-going* public relations program. This program will *boost morale, promote our professional image, increase awareness of ...*

Our association currently has _____ members, paying \$ _____ for local dues. We are a _____ percent local. *(include other information that tells about your local.)* Our PR chairperson is _____. The estimated total costs of this public relations project are \$ _____. Our local would be paying \$ _____ of the total cost.

OBJECTIVES:

The _____ intends to focus on public relations *to boost morale among our staff and to promote our professional image in the community.* We will use our Public Relations Committee to accomplish our goals. The public relations goals of the committee are:

A. External Relations

1. *Educate the community on the importance of...*
2. *Contribute positive articles on education to area newspapers*
3. *Involve the community in.....*
4. _____

B. Internal Relations

1. *Encourage teachers to...*
2. *Improve...*
3. *Develop...*
4. *Make...*

PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTION PLAN FOR _____ (year)

AUGUST:

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| 1. Assign a mentor for new staff | Cost: N/C |
| 2. Have a "Back to School" staff party to promote... | Cost: \$ _____ |
| 3. Send Association President to NDU summer function | Cost: \$ _____ |

SEPTEMBER:

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 1. Order sweatshirts with _____ logo | Cost: \$ _____ |
| 2. Golf tournament for entire association | Cost: \$ _____ |

OCTOBER:

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 1. Support the Public Schools Open House | Cost: \$ _____ |
| 2. Wear our _____ sweatshirts to the NDU Instructional Conference | Cost: N/C |

NDU Public Relations Grant Example

NOVEMBER:

In conjunction with American Education Week

- 1. Have radio spots Cost: \$ ____
- 2. Hang __ 's AEW banner on building all week Cost: \$ ____

DECEMBER:

- 1. Send Christmas cards to board members Cost: \$ ____
- 2. Organize an all-staff Christmas Party Cost: \$ ____

JANUARY:

- 1. Announce negotiation team members in news release Cost: \$ ____

FEBRUARY:

- 1. Host a pancake supper and give proceeds to charity Cost: \$ ____

MARCH:

- 1. Have a billboard promoting education Cost: \$ ____
- 2. Put together social media campaign Cost: \$ ____

APRIL:

- 1. Organize an "Adopt a Highway" cleanup Cost: N/C

MAY:

- 1. Have a retirement banquet for retirees Cost: \$ ____
- 2. Celebrate Teacher Day Cost: \$ ____
- 3. Co-sponsor the "Senior Blast" Cost: \$ ____

JUNE:

- 1. Letter to the editor thanking community for support Cost: \$ ____

So, are you ready to try it?

Ssh! Can't you see I'm typing?!

No, I can't actually. But we look forward to seeing your grant proposal, and hearing from you, ***what U plan to do with NDU!***