The most common tool used for announcing news to the press is the press release. The following are guidelines to help you craft a professional press release:

- **Keep it short** — Releases should be no more than one page long. Give your release a short, eye-catching title (ideally no more than five words).

- **Begin with your conclusion** — Your most important information or point should be stated in your opening paragraph. You can fill in explanations, details, secondary info, etc., in subsequent paragraphs. This format is called “inverted pyramid,” and it is designed to grab a reader’s attention immediately and communicate key information quickly and directly.

- **Provide the basics** — Include as many basic facts as you can. These include the who, where, what, when, how and why of your news. Don’t overload the release with statistics and data analysis; if reporters want to know about it, they’ll ask. Highlight the following wherever possible:
  - **Local connections** — Are you conducting your research in the local community? Do you work at the local university?
  - **Immediacy** — Is your research happening right now? Are there any time- or date-sensitive events connected to your work? Journalists are most interested in what is happening now or happening soon. Let them know when there is a time-sensitive aspect to your news, and avoid sitting on your news until after the fact. After the fact means old, and old means not news.

- **The big why** — Besides telling press why you are doing particular work, you should address another “why” question ever-present in journalists’ minds: Why should we care? (aka Why should our readers/viewers/listeners care?) Explain how your news impacts their audience. How is it relevant to people’s daily lives?
  - **Personalize for relevance** — You can use a personal story to illustrate why your news is relevant, useful, etc., to others.

- **Be clear, concise and consistent** — Resist the urge to make your release academically palatable; remember you are not addressing an audience of your peers but rather the public. Don’t use jargon. Be direct and concise. Use active voice. Use consistent grammar, style and references throughout. Try this trick as you write: Imagine you are explaining your work to an eighth-grader; could he or she understand what you’re trying to tell them?

- **Think visually** — Let journalists know of opportunities to photograph or tape your work in progress. Sharing this information may increase your odds of coverage, especially with broadcast journalists.

In addition to these guidelines, a press release starter and sample press release are available for you in Tipsheet 4.