

Op-Ed Tip Sheet

Building Energy Benchmarking Policy

WRITING AN OP-ED

- **Tell a story.** They're called opinion editorials for a reason – to showcase the unique viewpoint of the writer. Use the author's personal experience to make the piece authentic and grab the reader's attention. Avoid a dry piece written in the third person that anyone could sign.
 - Example: if the op-ed is authored by a building owner, include a personal anecdote about how benchmarking has helped their business succeed or helped them lower energy bills.
- **Make it timely.** To make the piece newsworthy, tie it to an issue or action that is current.
 - Example: a bill introduction or report release on benchmarking program results.
- **Keep it simple.** The most effective op-eds will follow one clear message or idea, and include 2-3 supporting points. Avoid jargon, and use simple, short sentences – most newspapers are written for an eighth grade reading level.
- **Single authors make it easier.** Since any story is told more strongly when you have one point of view, keep the op-ed to one author. In addition, most newspapers prefer a single author, unless you've got two VIP celebrities.
- **Close on a strong note.** Make your piece count by ending with a call to action that you'd like the reader – or targeted decision maker – to take.

SUBMITTING AN OP-ED

- **Identify your target newspaper.** Think about the audience you are trying to reach and determine which newspaper they read.
- **Check editorial guidelines.** Many media outlets will only take a piece if it is exclusive so check before sending to your target paper. Also make sure your op-ed fits their other criteria, such as word count. Typically op-eds will be about 600 words. Some newspapers will request a headshot; if so, make sure you have one of the author ready to go.
- **Select the sender.** Op-eds are more likely to get placed if the request comes from the author as opposed to an outside party. If the author is not comfortable sending it in, it is OK to have it

submitted by someone else, but it would be smart to at least copy the author to verify his or her authenticity.

- **Email op-ed editor.** Check the paper's website to find out who the opinion/editorial editor is. Send an email to this person, pasting the op-ed directly into the email body (*editors do not like receiving attachments*) along with a brief note telling them why this piece is relevant and requesting that they consider running it. A follow-up call the next day is recommended.
- **Wait.** Most newspapers will email you back within one to three days if they want the piece. If you don't hear back, you can call to check on their decision before sending it on to another outlet.