

# Establishing a Speakers Bureau

**S**peakers bureaus have long been used by corporations, agencies and non-profit groups to offer presentations to the community. A speakers bureau is a core group of speakers (either staff or volunteers) who are available for community meetings or gatherings. Creating your own speakers bureau offers another opportunity to educate the public and act as a community resource.

Determine who will staff the bureau. Consider employees who are interested, or who possess the appropriate traits. Good speakers are enthusiastic about the public education program, interact well with people, and have a working knowledge of the issue. Volunteer speakers are another option if you are concerned about employees taking time away from work to make presentations. Suggestions on how to generate volunteer presenters are discussed later in this section.

Once you have selected the presenters for your speakers bureau, create an outline for the presentation. To start the outline, make a list of information you want to give the audience. Then put each piece of information into a category (e.g., what to consider when buying pesticides, proper application techniques, and integrated pest management practices). Next, place the categories in

a logical order. You obviously want to talk about use of the products before disposal. Once these elements are in order, create an opening and a conclusion for the presentation.

Once you have a tentative outline for the presentation and determine whether employees or volunteers will staff the bureau, then you are ready to look at the technical aspects of the presentations.

## Evaluation of Method

**Pros:** This is an effective way to reach the specified target audiences when appearing at community gatherings or meetings. This option offers the chance to speak to a captive audience, and gives the presenter the chance to explore pesticide use in greater detail than would be possible at other special events.

**Cons:** Sometimes the meetings will have a small number of attendees. This may decrease the value of a speakers bureau, given the time and effort required. Locating and training presenters to staff the bureau is also time-consuming. If district employees staff the speakers bureau, they will need time off from their regular duties.

# Recruitment of Volunteer Speakers

If you do not have employees who are interested in the program, or cannot spare employee time for presentations, there are a number of other options to staff your speakers bureau. These sources include:

## *Garden clubs and societies:*

Members of these groups already have a good working knowledge of gardening activities and should have a concern for the environment. You can obtain a list of these types of organizations either through a local nursery or by searching the Internet for agencies in your area.

## *Special interest groups:*

You may be familiar with area groups that are proactive on environmental issues, and sometimes more specifically water quality.

## *Community colleges and universities:*

The most appropriate contact point is the speech or communications department. Ask to speak to an adviser or professor in charge of student activities.

## *Toastmasters International:*

An international public speaking club that puts its members in touch with community groups who are looking for speakers. Toastmasters International has clubs in virtually every city

in California. In major metropolitan areas, there may be dozens of Toastmasters clubs. They are usually listed in the phone book.

## *Master Gardeners:*

The Master Gardener program provides information, expertise and educational opportunities about home gardening. The program is sponsored by the University of California Cooperative Extension. Master Gardener volunteers provide seminars, workshops and clinics throughout their communities. Part of the requirements of becoming a Master Gardener involve an agreement to serve the community.

Call these sources and explain that you are looking for volunteer speakers on an environmental topic. Explain that the speakers bureau is part of a larger effort to inform the public about pesticide use and water quality.

## Training Speakers with a Consistent Message

No matter who is presenting for your bureau, all speakers must be properly trained and familiar with the presentation. This is why it helps to create an outline for the presenters to follow. The outline provides consistency and a common template for your presenters. Bring speakers together in advance for background on the public education campaign, and to go over basic information on pesticide issues.

Hold the initial meeting in a relaxed setting. Provide speakers with refreshments. Introduce an agenda and review the entire presentation with your speakers. Ask them to contribute ideas or suggestions. This will help give your speakers a sense of ownership. Explain that the outline is needed to keep the presentations consistent.

Consider hiring a professional speaker or a speech teacher to discuss basic speaking skills at this meeting. Options for finding outside sources of instruction and training include:

### *Public speaking clubs:*

There are several public speaking organizations where members not only practice their own speaking skills, but offer their time and expertise to help others. Toastmasters International is probably the most well known and prevalent public speaking organization. Local chapters can often be found in your phone book or in the Yellow Pages under “public speaking.”

### *Colleges and universities:*

Local colleges and universities may offer public speaking or presentation classes. You can find communications or speech departments at many state universities, private campuses, and community colleges. Contact these offices and ask to speak to the department chair or activities director. Consider the possibility of graduate students assisting with your program — some of these students already may instruct introductory speech classes.

### *Public speaking consultants and companies:*

This is an option if your budget allows. Most offer a set format and handouts for their classes. Costs will vary, depending on whether the instructor charges hourly or by the class. You can find these consultants/companies in the Yellow Pages under “public speaking instruction.”

It is important to offer your speakers updated information on a regular basis. Speakers must be up-to-date in all the technical aspects of pesticide use, disposal and IPM. Distribute updated materials with speaking tips, meet regularly to practice presentations, or offer a refresher course with the instructor who did the initial training.

# Development of Audiovisual Materials

Audiovisual materials will give speakers the chance to make a more professional and consistent presentation. These materials can include sound systems, overheads, slides, videotape, or even computer-generated presentations. Creating and producing audiovisual presentations can be costly both in terms of money and time. There are several things to consider when pursuing this option:

- How much money you have to contribute to this project
- How much time you can spend putting together the information
- Your knowledge of what makes an effective audiovisual presentation
- The presenters' comfort level with these types of materials
- Where the presentations will be held and what audiovisual capabilities are available

Once you've determined that you want to include audiovisual elements into your presentation, the next step is to create the materials. There are several different types of mediums you can use. Following is a list of audiovisual equipment, brief notes on how to create them and general costs associated with each type.

## Charts and graphs on flip charts or boards

These types of visuals are the easiest to create and can be prepared for a relatively low cost. There are a number of ways to create these types of visual aids, including hand-drawing, stenciling, cut-and-pasting, or mounting computer printouts on heavy paper stock. It is a good idea to have a portable easel to display the materials at the presentation. You can mount your charts and graphs on heavy tag board or have it foam-core mounted by a copy or business center.

Type of AV	Unit	Cost
Tag board:	Per sheet	\$.50-1.00
Foam-core mounting:	4' by 2'	\$10-15
Wipe boards:	4' by 3'	\$50-100
Portable easel:	One easel	\$50-150
Wipe board/ easel combos:	One board/easel	\$200-300

---

## Overhead transparencies

Overhead transparencies allow you to show and discuss a wide range of previously prepared transparencies and to write on clear transparencies.

Transparencies are shown using an overhead projector. The presenter or an assistant must change the transparencies during the presentation. Generally, black and white transparencies can be made from most office copiers; color transparencies can be made with a color printer.

Type of AV	Unit	Cost
Single sheet transparency:		
	One sheet copied	\$1
Box of transparencies:		
	100 transparencies	\$20-40
Portable overhead projectors:*		
	One unit	\$700 - 3,000

\*Overhead projectors may be available at venues where presentations are made.

### Evaluation of Method

**Pros:** Good for groups from 20 to 200 people. Overheads are also relatively inexpensive, versatile, and easy to create.

**Cons:** The quality is lower than that offered by a slide projector or laptop computer.

---

## Slide show

Slide shows add colorful and visual images to a presentation. Generally, slide shows are most useful when you want to use photographs to enhance a presentation.

Type of AV	Unit	Cost
Single slide:	One slide	\$7.50
Slide projector:	One unit	\$300-700
Portable screen:	One screen	\$200-300

### Evaluation of Method

**Pros:** Slides create a professional, polished image. Photos are easily captured on slides. And slide projectors only require the push of a button rather than flipping overhead transparencies.

**Cons:** The room must be completely dark for the slides to have full impact. Presentations are difficult to edit at the last minute.

---

## Video tape

Videos can enhance a presentation. Keep video presentations brief — two to ten minutes. Keep in mind that audiences can discern quality production and editing. Home video quality generally won't pass muster. The most common video format is Beta tape. Beta can be reproduced in VHS tapes for presentation using a TV and VCR. Videos are the costliest audiovisual. The general rule of thumb for video cost is \$1,000 per minute. This includes production cost

only. It does not include such items as travel, talent, specialized graphics and music, or duplication.

Type of AV	Unit / Cost
Video:	2-10 minute video \$2,000-10,000 production only
TV and VCR:	Combination or separate units  Can be rented at most facilities. Purchasing one can cost \$200-1,000

**Evaluation of Method**

**Pros:** Videos grab audience attention and they can be very persuasive. Videos also dramatize problems well.

**Cons:** Expense. Also, for larger audiences (50 or more), you need special large-screen projection and sound equipment.

**Computer-generated presentations**

Computer-generated presentations, such as Microsoft® PowerPoint, are often shown directly from a laptop or desktop computer. With computer-generated presentations, you can choose from a number of different templates for easy input of text or graphics to create an interesting and visually appealing presentation.

Type of AV	Unit	Cost
Computer presentation:	50 frames	\$800
LCD projection panel:	One unit	\$2,000
Notebook computer:	One unit	\$3,000*
Computer-generated presentation projector:	One unit	\$2,000*+

\* 1998 costs  
+ The projector can be rented from most facilities.

There is always the option of working with a local school or civic group to design an audiovisual presentation. These groups may guide you through the process of selecting relevant materials, and they also may be able to produce the materials for you at little or no cost.

**Evaluation of Method**

**Pros:** Creates a professional, polished image. Also, it's easy to make last-minute changes to a presentation. And it requires only the push of a button to change slides.

**Cons:** There is a significant cost outlay for the laptop and computer-generated software. Unless you are limited to small groups, use of a projector is mandatory.



# Finding Presentation Opportunities

When presenters have been trained for your speakers bureau, it is time to find venues for them. Active promotion should result in speaker requests. But it is also important to be proactive about finding venues. These include:



**Conferences or seminars**

**Garden club meetings**

**Neighborhood meetings**

**Local schools (elementary, junior high, high school, and college)**

**Brown bag lunches at businesses or organizations**

**Service clubs (Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Lions, Junior League)**

**Church service groups**

Start by creating a list of places and organizations that would seem receptive to your speakers. Reference the community calendar listing you prepared in the Special Events section of this workbook. Call these organizations and ask for the name, address and phone number of the person responsible for scheduling presenters. Describe your program and ask if you can send information. Follow up this phone call with the “pitch letter” (see sample letter that follows) and back-up information on the program (flyers, fact sheets, and brochures in this workbook). A week after you mail the letter and materials, call your contact and pursue a date for the presentation.

When speakers go to their engagements, remind them to seek recommendations for other presentations. By building your network of speaking opportunities, you can broaden the reach of your public education campaign.

# Sample Presentation Pitch Letter

(Date)

Jane Smith  
Executive Director  
Land Park Garden Club  
1000 Main Street  
Sacramento, CA

Dear Ms. Smith:

Thank you for taking the time to discuss our offer to speak before your organization. Anytown Water District would be pleased to make a presentation on the proper use and disposal of pesticides as part of our "*H<sub>2</sub>O Home to Ocean*" campaign.

The Anytown Water District is concerned about water contamination from pesticides, including home and garden pest control products. By educating consumers about the proper use and disposal of pesticides, we can reduce pollution in local waterways and the ocean. In our presentation, your members would receive useful tips on keeping their homes and gardens safe while protecting the environment.

Historically, government agencies have focused on the impact of agricultural pesticides on water quality. However, urban pesticide use has also come under scrutiny in recent years. While urban pesticide applications are often small in scale, their cumulative impact is significant. Pesticide runoff from lawns and gardens, as well as improper disposal, can pose major problems for wastewater treatment plants.

Enclosed is a packet of materials and an outline of our presentation that can be tailored to your organization. We can also supply "*H<sub>2</sub>O Home to Ocean*" brochures and fact sheets for distribution at your meeting.

We are prepared to make this presentation at your earliest convenience, and our representatives are available for morning, afternoon, or evening dates. Please contact me at (phone number). I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

John Doe  
Director

Enclosure