How to Get Your Op-Ed Published

After you have written a compelling op-ed, it’s time to pitch your piece to the editors of your local newspaper and convince them to publish it.

Do Your Research
First, do some research on local publications. Identify which papers would be mostly likely to run your piece and read their recent news coverage and editorials to determine how your op-ed connects to the issues on which they are most focused.

Find Contacts
Next, identify the Editorial or Opinion Page editors of the paper. Their names and contact information can typically be found on the newspaper’s website. If you need assistance identifying the best people to contact, reach out to CFED.

Make Your Pitch
Now, write a pitch email introducing yourself and your op-ed to the editor. A pitch email should quickly grab the editor’s interest by conveying the primary headline, laying out the basic narrative of your piece and enticing with compelling data.

Be sure to keep your pitches brief and to the point. Journalists are busy people, and research has shown that shorter messages are more effective. Also, use the research you have done to link the messages in your op-ed to the paper’s recent news coverage. Keep in mind that local publications tend to focus on local community news, rather than state or national stories, so be sure to tailor your pitch to the appropriate audience.

Example:

**SUBJECT:** Guest op-ed: Ill. can’t wait for strong rules against predatory lenders

Dear [Editor Name],

I am the Executive Director of the Peoria Opportunity Coalition, and I greatly appreciate your recent coverage on the movement to raise the city’s minimum wage.
Every day, I talk with many of our community’s low-income workers, whose low wages occasionally force them to turn to payday loans to make ends meet. However, in Illinois, the interest rate cap on such loans is an astounding 404%, so predatory lenders can quickly trap working families in a cycle of debt.

In the op-ed submission below, I argue that the CFPB needs to propose stronger consumer protections and close loopholes that allow predatory lenders to continue exploiting financially vulnerable Peoria families.

I’m happy to talk to you further about the piece and answer any questions you may have. Please let me know by COB on Friday if you plan to publish the op-ed.

Thank you,
[Name]
[Contact information]

[Text of op-ed]

Follow Up
If you don’t hear back within 24 hours of sending your pitch, follow up with a phone call. When you call, ask if the editor has two minutes to chat. If she does, remind her about your email and your op-ed, very briefly describe your submission to jog her memory and ask if she would be interested in running the piece. If it’s not a good time, politely ask when would be a better time and call back then. Don’t annoy the editor and risk her deleting your email.

If you are active on Twitter, tweet at the editor or send them a direct message. Many journalists communicate primarily through Twitter; you can tell if an editor is a heavy Twitter user by visiting their Twitter profile and seeing how many followers they have and if they tweet/retweet frequently.

If you haven’t received confirmation that the paper will run your op-ed, email and call again the day before the deadline you outlined in your pitch. If you do not get a response or if the answer is no, select another newspaper and send them your pitch.

Build the Relationship
Even if an editor does not run your piece, stay in touch. They may still be interested in learning more about your work or about predatory lending. Continue to monitor the paper’s coverage and send quick emails expressing appreciation for any stories related to payday
lending or other areas of your work. Offer to provide data, quotes or introductions to local low-income residents with compelling personal stories for any related articles they may write in the future. These gestures will keep you on the paper’s radar. You never know—the next time they are working on a story about predatory lending or a related issue, they may reach out to you.

This resource was adapted from a document produced by The Hatcher Group.