

iGEM Public Relations Toolkit for Teams and Community

Announcing Your Participation in the iGEM Giant Jamboree

Welcome to the iGEM Giant Jamboree Local PR Toolkit

Congratulations! You successfully made it through the iGEM 2018 Giant Jamboree. After many months spent in the lab and connecting with your community, you presented your projects with conviction, answered tough questions from judges, and bonded with your fellow iGEMers from all over the world.

It's important that all the incredible stories created and shared at the Jamboree extend beyond the Hynes Convention Center and back into your home cities, states, and countries. In addition to helping local people solving local problems, iGEM is dedicated to raising awareness for and understanding of synthetic biology and its potential. The more people that understand what's possible when we safely and thoughtfully engineer biology, the more opportunity we will all have to make positive changes in our world. We hope you can be a part of that mission too, by sharing your story with local media.

Why Public Relations?

- When iGEMers raise awareness about their work in their local communities, we strengthen the synthetic biology ecosystem. A stronger synthetic biology ecosystem means better education and resources, more attention from local governments, and a keener interest from organizations in your community to support iGEM projects in the future.
- Published stories about you and your project can be valuable assets as you apply for college, grad school or jobs.

To help you drive awareness around your participation in the iGEM, we developed some materials that you can use to promote your project to local media and the general public. This toolkit provides helpful tips, instructions and media materials that you can use to engage reporters.

With easy instructions and pre-made templates, much of this toolkit is ready to use if you just “plug and play” – meaning that all you need to do is add in the specific details on your team and project and the materials will be ready to go.

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How to Use the Toolkit

This toolkit includes materials intended to help you spread the word about your iGEM project and your participation at the iGEM 2018 Giant Jamboree in your local community.

The **PR Activity Timeline** will walk you through step-by-step actions to help you make the most out of your media outreach efforts.

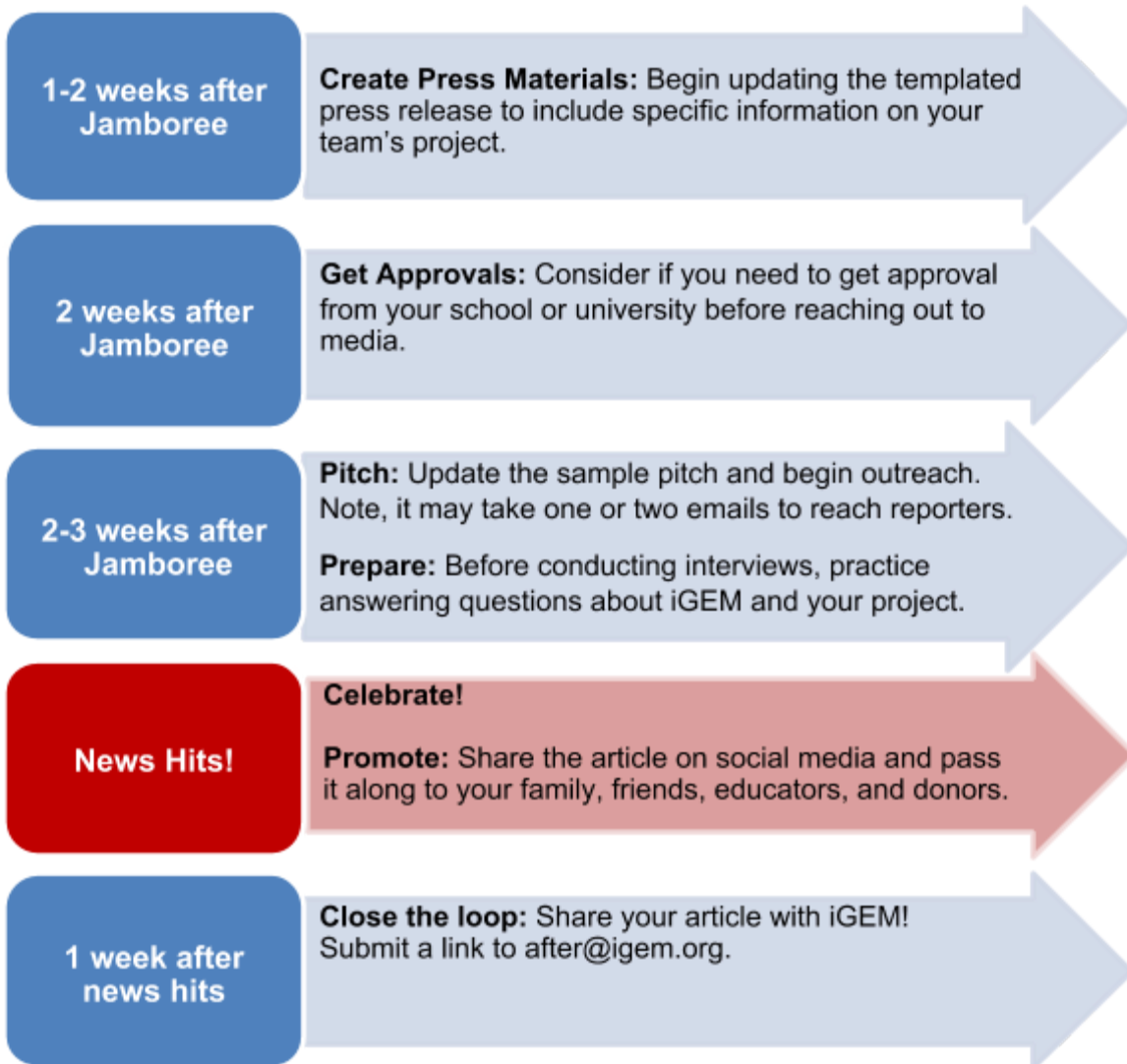
The **PR Templates** include fill-in-the-blank media materials that you can customize with relevant information on your specific project. All you need to do is add your information to the [bracketed, highlighted text], and the materials are ready to send to reporters. The media pitch and press release will be your main tools in alerting the media of your participation in the iGEM competition and Giant Jamboree and the specifics of what you presented there.

The **Appendix** includes useful guidelines and tips for exactly how to communicate with the media and what you can expect from your efforts.

Reference Materials

Timeline

The timeline below will serve as a guide for when to prepare the necessary assets and materials, and when to activate media outreach. The less distance between the time of the Jamboree and when you reach out to media the better but don't worry if you need a little more time — this is just a suggestion.



PR Templates

Announcement Press Release

The press release below is the primary piece of collateral you can use to share the overview of your project and your participation at the Giant Jamboree. Aim to send this to local media, along with the pitch (on the following page), that will help explain to them why they should consider covering this.

MEDIA CONTACT

[Name] | [iGEM Team]
[Phone] | [Email]

[University or Organization Name] Presents [Project Solution] At Synthetic Biology's Largest Innovation Event

[Project Name or Description] demonstrates solution to [problem that you are solving]

[Community], [State] – [Date] – [University or organization name] successfully showcased [project] at the annual iGEM Giant Jamboree, the synthetic biology industry's largest innovation event hosted by the International Genetically Engineered Machine (iGEM) Foundation. [If you won an award, add in those details here.] The Giant Jamboree is the culminating event of iGEM's annual, worldwide, synthetic biology competition for students to use genetic engineering to solve local problems all around the world.

Each year, the competition brings together more than 6,000 participants from across the globe to explore and create unique applications of synthetic biology with the mission to bring positive contributions to their communities and society at large. Beyond the technology, participants are evaluated on teamwork, responsibility, entrepreneurship, sharing, safety and more.

The [university or organization] team's project [High-level, objective description of the project. Start with the problem you are solving, and a short, high level description of how you addressed it. We recommend four sentences at most.]

Students on the team include: [Name; Name; Name]

"This year's Giant Jamboree was a spectacular display of hard work and ingenuity. These students are showing the world what's possible when we fearlessly tackle tough problems and open our minds to new applications of engineering biology," said Randy Rettberg, co-founder and president of iGEM. "Many of the projects presented at iGEM will serve as the foundation and inspiration for important research, influential companies and international interest to come – these participants are most certainly tomorrow's leaders."

For more on iGEM Giant Jamboree, visit: http://2018.igem.org/Giant_Jamboree

About iGEM

iGEM (International Genetically Engineered Machine) Foundation is an independent, non-profit organization that pioneered the synthetic biology industry and continues to advance the field through education, competition and industry collaboration. iGEM's annual student competition is the largest synthetic biology innovation program and a launchpad for the industry's most successful leaders and companies. The competition empowers thousands of local people to solve local problems around the world by engineering biology for safe and responsible solutions.

The After iGEM program supports the competition's 40,000+ participants in their future endeavors to continue leading and setting the standards for synthetic biology on an international level. iGEM's community is comprised of students, leaders, investors, influencers and policymakers who continue to work toward a strong, responsible and visionary synthetic biology industry. For more information, visit www.igem.org.

PR Templates

Announcement Pitch

Aim to send this pitch to local media, along with the press release, within 3 weeks of your return from the Giant Jamboree. For the best results, send it out to media by noon that day so it's not lost in reporters' inboxes at the end of the day.

EMAIL SUBJECT LINE: Local Students Showcase [Your Project/Company Name] at World's Largest Synthetic Biology Event

Hi [Reporter's Name],

I'm reaching out on behalf of [school name] where a team of engineers and scientists recently [showcased or won an award for] a significant project at the world's largest synthetic biology innovation event hosted by the International Genetically Engineered Machine (iGEM) Foundation. Our student team is pushing the boundaries of synthetic biology, an industry that's changing the way we make things, solving global problems and treat [team project track] by engineering biology. *I thought you might be interested in hearing details about our project on [XX topic], and how it's impacting our local community.*

Our project explored [XX further details], and is important to our local community because [XX - it aims to solve this specific problem, etc]. As part of the project we [include any details about hyper-local human practices]. I've included below a press release regarding the project and participation in the iGEM competition for your reference.

I think our community would be interested in learning about this, and would love to chat with you to give you further details. Let me know if this sounds good, and when you'd like to speak!

Best,

[Signature]

[Paste text from finalized press release]

Key Messages and Media Tips

As you're talking to reporters, keep these key messages and tips in mind

When you are speaking to a reporter:

- Get a sense of the reporter's level of scientific understanding and how much detail they'd like for you to go into.
- Start with the mission or goal of your project, then share details about how your team went about working toward it.
- Emphasize if your project is addressing a local problem in your community or impacts the greater world.
- Discuss the human practices and safety of the project.

If the reporter asks additional questions about what iGEM is:

- iGEM is known for pioneering synthetic biology. It was founded in 2003, initially as an intersession course at MIT to explore and establish the intersection of biology and engineering. This was at a time when almost no one else was pushing forward the notion of engineering biology.
- That MIT class grew into a summer competition with just 5 teams in 2004; now, 340+ teams from around the world participate annually and more than 40,000 people (high school-grad school students, professors, advisors) from 45 countries have spent their summers engineering biology-based solutions for a variety of pressing problems facing millions of people.
- iGEM sits at the center of the \$40 billion synthetic biology industry, which is changing the way we make things and solve global problems in human health, agriculture, manufacturing, environmental and more by engineering biology. Many previous iGEM competitors have gone on to found hugely successful companies.
- iGEM and its participants know that engineering biology is a powerful tool and should be used thoughtfully and responsibly. iGEM is building a community of change agents who infuse this ethos into their work by actively considering the safety, security and ethics of their synthetic biology projects, and how their work is pushing the industry in the right direction.
- While the competition is at the core of iGEM, the foundation plays a bigger role in the industry by advising companies on the power of synthetic biology, building a culture of responsibility, ethics, safety and security, and connecting future leaders, investors, influencers and policymakers to build a stronger synthetic biology network.

Additional tips to think about:

- Decide who from the team will be the spokesperson (limit to 1-2 people).
- Keep your responses concise and to the point.
- Share any images or graphics that a reporter could use in their coverage.

Appendix: Pitch Guidelines

Media Pitch Guidelines

Local publications are eager to hear about interesting and innovative activity coming from members of their communities, for local interest stories that can build community support and drive awareness. Not only are they a good way for you to promote your project/company, but you never know who may be reading them - like a university admissions officer or potential investor!

It's important to have a strategic approach to local media relations, to ensure that you are reaching out to the appropriate journalists and providing them with the information they need, when they need it.

Here are a few helpful tips to optimize media outreach in local communities:

- **To find reporters/ contact publications:** Visit the websites of local and community publications and look for the "About Us" or "Contact Us" page. Send the news to the appropriate email address (i.e., a general email for news or editorial submissions or a "Submit News" web form).
- **Follow up:** Reporters' email inboxes are typically swamped, and quite often they appreciate a gentle reminder to take a look at your news. Don't be afraid to follow up, but be strategic in the frequency of outreach as not to annoy them. We recommend waiting 24-48 hours before sending a follow up email. It is OK to give the reporter or news desk a phone call if the news is highly important or timely, but we advise against leaving voicemails as they likely won't be heard.
- **Be prompt with responses:** Respond quickly (the same day) to any inquiries received from media, even if it's only to let them know that you'll get back to them soon.
- **Be prepared to provide background information:** Depending on how in-depth the reporter is planning to go in the article, they may ask you for written materials that they can use for additional insight/corroboration into your project. Make sure you have background information available that you can send to them if they ask, as long as you're comfortable with it being shared publicly.
- **Quote-checking:** Once you've provided the journalist with everything they need, it's okay to ask if they'd be willing to let you review the quotes or a copy of the story ahead of publishing. However, it's ultimately up to the journalist's discretion whether or not to provide you with this. Remember that everything you say is "on the record," so if you wouldn't feel comfortable with it being published in a story, don't say it to a reporter.
- **Value relationships:** Leverage any existing relationships with members of the press who may have approached you for information in the past and keep them up to date with the latest news.
- **Be realistic:** Recognize that reporters get hundreds of pitches per day, and it's not possible for them to cover every story that comes into their inbox - no matter how interesting. If you don't receive interest from a particular reporter, don't take it personally - that's just the reality of pitching, and may be outside of their control!

- **Remember that media have the last right of refusal:** While we have the opportunity to influence what gets published and how the story is told through pitching and interviews, media have the final say. Never tell a reporter they “must” write your story, and do not ask for corrections beyond factual inaccuracies. Understanding how the media works will help you build positive relationships with the media for future opportunities.

Appendix: Example Coverage

Below are some example articles to give you a sense of what you might expect as the outcome from your efforts!

[U of A genetics competition team to fight infection in bee populations](#)

The Gateway, October 2, 2018

[William and Mary students prepare for 'World Cup of Science'](#)

Virginia Gazette, July 20, 2018

[SVCE students win silver medal in global biotech competition](#)

The Hindu Business Line, February 5, 2018

[Abu Dhabi students' new invention can detect E.coli in 20 minutes](#)

Tahawul Tech, January 14, 2018

[UCalgary takes 3D printing "From Colon to Colony"](#)

3D Printing Industry, December 7, 2017

Questions?

Questions about your outreach? Contact Meagan Lizarazo, Executive Vice President at iGEM at: [**meagan@igem.org**](mailto:meagan@igem.org)