

Role of a PIO

What is a public information officer?

A public information officer is a professional who facilitates communication between an organization and the general public. These professionals may perform a wide range of public relations management tasks, such as holding press conferences and preparing speeches.

A public information officer typically works for a government agency or a major organization. For instance, a public information officer may work for a city or county, transportation department, police department, school district, university, emergency management office, professional organization, hospital or research institution.

Most public information officers work for state or local governments. This is because governments often have complex or technical information that they want to share, so a public information officer can help make these communications accessible to all audiences.

What does a public information officer do?

A public information officer has several responsibilities that relate to sharing information with the community. One of the most common job duties for a public information officer is hosting press conferences or other types of events where they can make announcements about important news or share updates about crisis situations. **Normally, about 95% of the work a PIO performs will be completed in non-emergency times, while typically 5% is directly related to incident response or recovery.** Public information officers also spend a good amount of time writing press releases, social media posts and other forms of communication that they share with the public via the internet.

Some additional job duties for public information officers include:

- Speaking with individual members of the public to answer questions and gather information
- Developing content strategies for releasing updates
- Writing press releases
- Hosting special events that promote important public events or holidays
- Arranging interviews between members of their organization and other stakeholders or groups
- Maintaining positive relationships with media outlets
- Helping executive management create a specific public image for their organization

What skills are important for a public information officer?

There are many skills that are essential for public information officers, most of which relate to communication. Another key skill for public information officers is organization, as they often have to review and bring together high volumes of information to create an overall understanding of this information. Social media skills are also very important, as many members of the public receive their daily news on these platforms.

Here are a few more skills that a public information officer commonly utilizes:

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- Public speaking
- Attention to detail
- Collaboration
- Empathy
- Writing
- Computer literacy

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