

# Promoting Your General Aviation Airport



Your airport is an important part of the local community and serves as a gateway for visitors from across the nation to access your location for business or tourism. It is often the first and last impression they receive of your city or town. Therefore, it's important to promote your facility as the incredible asset that it is.

Here are some promotional ideas that you might consider:

## Advertising:

**Print Advertising:** Purchase advertising in print or digital publications to share information about your airport and its services.

### Newspapers and Magazines

- Contact your local newspaper regarding advertising in print and digital editions.
- Advertise in aviation-specific newspapers and magazines.
- Advertise in travel-related newspapers and magazines.
- Advertise in airshow/fly-in literature to reach pilots flying to and from events.



## Digital Advertising:

- Advertise on aviation-specific sites, such as AirNav to reach pilots, and on social media to reach the general public.
- Billboards: Share your message in a prominent location on a professionally designed billboard.

## Radio Advertising:

- Purchase airtime on radio, television or digital services to advertise your services or to announce special events.
- Reach out to your local station to purchase airtime.
- Invite your local television or radio personality to visit the airport for additional coverage. Your local television weather person might also be a good choice.
- Invite your local television or radio station to participate in your airport event: airshow, fly-in or open house.

**Airport Video:** Consider creating an airport video that can be placed on your website and shared with partnering organizations to promote your airport and its services. And definitely upload the video produced by DOAV and VAOC in summer 2024.

**Sponsorships:** Purchase sponsorships to local events that will acknowledge you through signage, literature, etc. This is especially important as a method of community involvement and always good for an airport.

Support your local school/university by purchasing a sponsorship that includes ads in newsletters, on websites, and in sports programs. Support local charities by purchasing a sponsorship that includes ads in newsletters or a table at a charity function.

**News Releases:** Prepare and disseminate news releases regarding important happenings to local print and digital publications. Up-to-date photos and videos are also important to have for these promotional purposes.

Examples of times you may wish to send a news release:

- Completion of a project. For example: new or upgraded runway, taxiway, terminal building, etc.
- New senior staff hire. For example: new airport manager.
- New service: new flight training, aviation maintenance or avionics services, addition of rental cars



**Airport event:** airshow, fly-in, open house, Young Eagles Day, etc.

News Release format for an event:

[Airport Name]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Public Relations contact name]

[Phone number]

[Email]

[Website]

[Headline]

What: [Name of the event]

Where: [Location of the event – airport name and address]

When: [Date and time of the event]

Details (paragraph): [For events be sure to include parking instructions, availability of food, pricing for admittance (if any), and weather policy (rain or shine?), etc.]

Event Sponsors: [List any sponsors]

[Basic description of the airport and its services]

**Speaking Engagements:** Offer to speak to clubs and at government meetings as well as at aviation conferences regarding the value of your airport. Clubs include local pilot associations, Lions club, Rotary, Ruritan, etc. When planning your presentation, know your audience and plan accordingly.

For example: will they know common aviation terminology? If not, use terms that they will understand or plan to explain the aviation terminology. What type of technology will they have on hand (microphone, ability to run and project a Powerpoint presentation, wireless mouse to change slides, laser pointer, etc.)



When preparing a Powerpoint presentation, be sure that it is concise, easy to see and easy for the audience to read:

- Create a simple master slide for consistency in the presentation.
- Simplify and limit the number of words on each screen.
- No more than 6 lines on a slide.
- Use a single sans-serif font with a no font size smaller than 24 point.
- Avoid using all-capital letters.
- White space (empty space) on slides enhances readability.
- Use contrasting colors that show up well on a projector.
- Use good quality graphics and images.
- Limit the number of slides (one slide per minute at the most).
- Don't use "flashy" effects.
- Talk to the audience and not to the screen.
- Practice your presentation ahead of time for your comfort and to confirm its length.
- Anticipate questions you may receive before the presentation is made.
- Always have a backup plan in case of technical difficulties.

**Partnership Events:** Partner with local organizations to offer events and educational opportunities.

For example:

- Partner with EAA Chapters for a Young Eagles Day.
- Partner with your local pilots' group for a pancake breakfast, potluck dinner, etc.
- Partner with local pilots, a flight school, government entity, etc., to offer a flight safety seminar.
- Partner with your local student organization for a project or badge event.
- Partner with the Ninety-Nines for a Women Can Fly day.
- Partner with a local attraction (historical, recreational, specialty, etc.) that may draw pilots to fly into your airport. Trade promotional opportunities with them and work out transportation between the airport and attraction to encourage pilots to fly-in.

**Airport Career Days:** Partner with businesses on your field, schools, non-profit organizations, etc., to offer an airport career day to introduce local students to aviation careers. You might also offer your services as a speaker/exhibitor at school career days near your facility and/or offer airport tours to classes from nearby schools.



**Airport Tours:** Offer an airport tour program for students that provides opportunities to learn about the airport and its value to the community.

You may wish to discuss:

- The parts of an airport: terminal, hangars, ramp, taxiway, runway, nav aids, lighting systems, etc., and the fact that there is an airport traffic pattern that aircraft use when taking off and landing.
- Who uses the airport and why the airport is important. How many jobs rely on the airport and how much funding the airport brings in every year.
- Also include an introduction to aviation careers and explain how students may choose to pursue an aviation career. If you have a flight school at the airport, introduce them to a flight instructor.

**Open Houses, Fly-Ins, Air Shows:** Depending on the size of your airport and the resources you have available, you may choose to hold an open house, fly-in, or air show at your field. These events encourage your neighbors to visit and learn more about the importance of your facility. These can also present an excellent opportunity to partner with other groups and associations in your community who can help plan and operate the event.

**Airshow:** An airshow is a public event where aircraft are exhibited and usually features aircraft providing aerobatic flight demonstrations. It usually requires an aerobatics box, paid performers, announcers, and special approvals and procedures.

**Fly-In:** An aviation event that is a gathering of people and aircraft for social or recreational purposes. At an airport it usually involves aircraft being invited to visit and park at the airport and the general public is also invited to come out to visit the airport and see the aircraft. These events often include food, exhibits (public safety units, craft booths, etc.), kids play areas, and sometimes musical performances. Aircraft fly-bys or skydiving may take place. There may be judging and competitions for the aircraft that fly-in and sometimes the event also includes a car show, motorcycle show, or boat show where these vehicles may also be judged. Airplane rides may be available from commercial airplane or helicopter operators.



**Open House:** A smaller scale event similar to a fly-in that encourages the public to visit the airport and learn more about the facility and the aviation industry. There may be static displays of aircraft, food, music, airport equipment, etc.

The Department of Aviation will post information about your events on its website at no cost to you, so please complete an Events Form (available on the Department of Aviation website [www.doav.virginia.gov](http://www.doav.virginia.gov)) or send details to Betty Wilson at 804-225-3783 or [betty.wilson@doav.virginia.gov](mailto:betty.wilson@doav.virginia.gov).

**Trade Shows:** Plan to attend certain trade shows and conferences as an exhibitor to promote your airport. An example would be the annual NBAA Schedulers & Dispatchers Conference. Bring a current, well-designed display, brochures, and promotional items to these events. You might also consider advertising in a printed/digital conference program for these tradeshow events.

**Website:** Purchase and maintain a well-designed and up-to-date airport website that encourages pilots to visit.

**Social Media:** Social media can be used as a great tool to help promote your general aviation airport. It is a quick way to reach a wide audience of people and inform them of events or news at your airport. There are a variety of channels available:

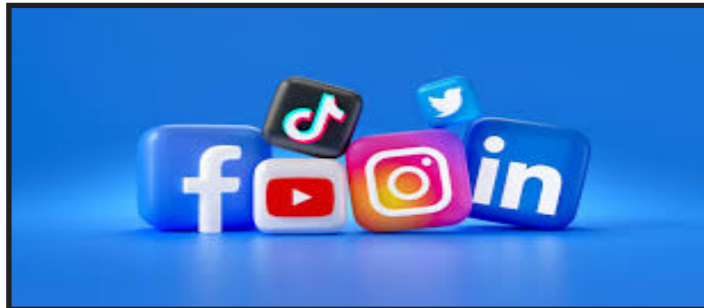
**Facebook:** The most widely used social media network by managers to promote their airport through advertising and displaying messages. Facebook contains the most mature audience in terms of age and its users tend to be very active.

**LinkedIn:** A professional networking site that can be used by managers to connect airports and organizations to each other. LinkedIn is primarily used to reach a more knowledgeable and higher educated audience and seems to resonate most strongly with 25- to 49-year-olds.

**Instagram:** A social media site that managers can use to share both images and short videos to their followers. Instagram is one of the most popular social media sites among the younger generation.

**X:** A social media site that can be used by managers to share live updates and important notifications. X is geared towards the younger generation and those who are frequent users of the site.

**YouTube:** In a category of its own, YouTube is a hybrid between a social media platform and a video content hub. YouTube can be used to share video and engaging content to promote an airport or event.



### **Boards of Supervisors/City Council and other government groups:**

The role of airport management is usually to oversee the day-to-day operations of your airport. Often you will work with Airport Authorities, County Department Officials, Boards of Supervisors, City Councils, or other local government organizations to establish long term development goals for the airport. You will want to invite members of these groups to visit the airport where you can share with them the value that it provides to the community and your ideas for future development that will benefit the local area. You may want to attend their meetings, when possible, to demonstrate your interest in community issues and to be available to address any airport questions that may come up. When you hold special events at the airport, be sure to invite these individuals to attend.

### **Airport Ambassadors**

As you develop relationships with community leaders in your area, seek to recruit them to be Airport Ambassadors for the airport. These individuals, who understand the value and importance of the airport in the community, can serve as public advocates for your facility.

### **Aviation and Airport Promotion Program Grants**

The Virginia Department of Aviation offers Aviation and Airport Promotion Program grants to Virginia's public-use airports that may be used for a variety of projects. General aviation airports may request up to \$10,000 per year. For details, see the DOAV Airport Program Manual or contact Betty Wilson at 804-225-3783 or [betty.wilson@doav.virginia.gov](mailto:betty.wilson@doav.virginia.gov)