



CENTER FOR
TECH AND
CIVIC LIFE

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR VOTER ENGAGEMENT

May 14, 2020

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INTRODUCTION

Social Media for Voter Engagement is a professional development course on social media and best design practices to help you better communicate with voters.

Increasingly, people are looking online for election information on mobile devices and social media. With that in mind, this training will equip you with tools to better understand your audience, put information where they are looking for it, and engage them with well-designed graphics.



Resources you'll need for this training

- A computer with internet access
- A pen and paper to take notes and doodle



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Learn more about CTCL professional development courses at www.techandcivicliflife.org/courses.



INSTRUCTORS



Rocío Hernández is a Training Associate at the Center for Tech and Civic Life. She helps train election administrators who want to increase their reach and capacity. Before joining CTCL, Rocío worked in education research where she identified opportunities to increase the impact of college readiness programs. Rocío holds a BA in Urban Studies and Sociology from Stanford University.

Email: rocio@techandcivicliflife.org

Twitter: @rocioehc1



Dylan Lynch is a Training Associate at the Center for Tech and Civic Life. He helps develop and deliver training courses that advance the tech and communication skills of election officials. Prior to joining CTCL, Dylan worked for the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) as an elections policy specialist. Dylan earned his Master of Public Administration, focusing on public policy, from Drake University.

Email: dylan@techandcivicliflife.org

Twitter: @election_nerd





Josh Simon Goldman is a Program Manager at the Center for Tech and Civic Life. He helps build, implement, and assess trainings that support election officials who want to learn about new ways to engage the public and keep up with changing technology. Prior to joining CTCL, Josh worked with organizations including Interfaith Youth Core, the largest civic interfaith institution in the United States, in a variety of training and operations roles.

Email: josh@techandcivicliflife.org

Twitter: @HiThereItsJosh



Sarah Mohan is the Project Manager for Media and Outreach at the Harford County Board of Elections. She has been working in elections for nearly six years with a focus in social media for the last four. As a millennial, her propensity for witty quips that are 280 characters or less runs much deeper than that. You could say it was what she was born to do, basically with a QWERTY keyboard in her hand. For the last few years, this Social Media Guru has

been published in election articles and given presentations around the country on effective social media strategies to her peers. Her goal is to engage the younger demographic in the election world with a modern approach of clever puns, opinion polls and a perfectly placed hashtag. Don't miss a chance at a GIF battle with this gal! Follow Sarah at @HarfordVotes, she follows back!

Email: scmohan@harfordcountymd.gov

Twitter: @HarfordVotes



OUTLINE

Understanding your audience

- Voter personas
- Research on how people access civic information

Social media best practices

- Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter at a glance
- Social media best practices
- Breakout: Creating a social media campaign

Designing engaging content

- Learn the basic principles of design
- Accommodating for image size and accessibility



OBJECTIVES

After completing this course, you will:

- Review what research tells us about how voters look for election information
- Know how to use social media to build trust with voters year-round
- Implement basic design principles to create engaging graphics



UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE

This course focuses on using social media to provide civic information to voters. But before you begin providing information, it's important to reflect on the people on the receiving end – especially their view on civic engagement and what the best way to reach them is.

VOTER PERSONAS

People are different and you need to account for their differences. Many parts of United States are growing and becoming more diverse. So, to start thinking about the public, we will take a look at 4 personas of voters and non-voters. We will also think about the best ways to reach them and what their need are.



Here's one of our personas. Alejandra is 18 and hasn't voted yet. The best way to reach her is on her smartphone, and she wants to learn how to start participating in elections and how she can encourage native Spanish-speaking family members to get involved.



As you keep Alejandra in mind, consider what the best communication platform is to reach her -- as well as what your message should say and do.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND DEVICES

Our personas focus on individuals, but demographics are also important. Device ownership and electronic habits vary by demographic, and you need to recognize the breakdown if you want to reach everybody.

72% of all U.S. adults have at least one social media account. Yet, adoption varies between 40% for adults over 65 years to 90% for adults between the ages of 18-29.

Detailed demographics

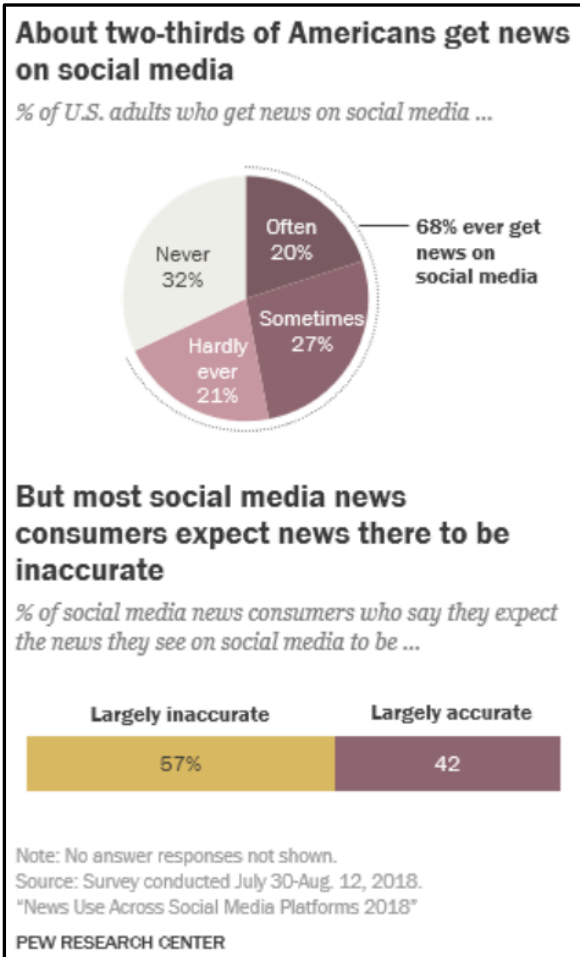
	Have a cellphone	Use the internet	Smartphone only
White	96%	92%	14%
Black	98%	85%	24%
Hispanic	96%	86%	25%
Ages 18-29	99%	100%	22%
Age 65+	91%	73%	12%
Low-income (<30,000)	95%	82%	26%

THE RISE OF SOCIAL AND MOBILE

Paper voter guides and desktop election websites are helpful resources, but these days, people are using social media and mobile devices to access important information.

Fact: Today nearly two-thirds of people get news and read about current events on social media.





Many people are skeptical of news they find online. That is why it is important to establish your office and your social media accounts as the local authority for trusted election information.

Fact: 90% of the time we spend with our mobile devices is spent in apps. This doesn't mean you need to create an app; it just means you need to create content that's easily accessible in apps.



A PLAN TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

As you prepare to provide more complete and helpful civic information to your community, it's important to make a plan. Ask yourself:

1. Who are you trying to reach?
2. What are their needs?
3. What are their pain points?
4. Are you answering their basic questions?
5. Are you speaking to them in a language they can understand?



SOURCES

- League of Women Voters of California Education Fund with the Center for Civic Design and the Future of California Elections: “How Voters Get Information”
<https://cavotes.org/download-best-practices-manual>.
- Pew Research Center: “Internet/Broadband Fact Sheet”
<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/internet-broadband/>
- Pew Research Center: “Social Media Fact Sheet”
<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/social-media/>
- Pew Research Center: “Mobile Fact Sheet”
<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/mobile/>
- Pew Research Center: “News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2018”
<https://www.journalism.org/2018/09/10/news-use-across-social-media-platforms-2018/>
- Digital Gov: “Trends on Tuesday: Content is King for Mobile Apps”
<https://digital.gov/2015/09/22/trends-on-tuesday-content-is-king-for-mobile-apps/>



SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES

Social media is a powerful tool to add to your toolbox for voter outreach. Having a good understanding of how to use it well will amplify your messages to the public.

FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, AND TWITTER AT A GLANCE

Facebook

Facebook is the most widely used social media platform in the United States. Who are Facebook users? Facebook users are the most broadly representative of the population of the country of the major social media platforms. 69% of all U.S. adults use Facebook.

Who are Facebook users?

White	70%
Black	70%
Hispanic	69%
Ages 18-29	79%
Age 65+	46%
Low-income (<\$30,000)	69%
Women	75%
Rural	66%

What about content? Facebook is the most personal social media platform because you have to use your name. People generally use it to connect with family and friends.

Here are some guidelines for the kind of content that works best:



- Write short summaries with a call to action
- Include videos and images
- Avoid hashtags
- Post 1-2 times per day



Fact: Facebook posts with images get 2.3x more engagement than posts without an image.

It is important to note that after 400 characters, Facebook will put the rest of your post under a “See more” link. Try to start your posts with a sentence or two that will engage users.

Instagram

Instagram isn’t as popular as Facebook, but it still has a healthy audience. Who are those users? 37% of all adults in the U.S. use Instagram.



Who are Instagram users?

White	33%
Black	40%
Hispanic	51%
Ages 18-29	67%
Age 65+	8%
Low-income (<\$30,000)	35%
Women	43%
Rural	21%

Instagram is a great way to share photos. It is best for showing things. What kind of content works best? Here's what you should do:

- Show behind the scenes activity and document events
- Include human faces
- Choose filters with warm colors and high contrast
- Use hashtags generously
- Post 1-2 times per day





Twitter

Twitter has hundreds of millions of active users. It is especially popular with college-educated adults under 50. In the U.S., 22% of all adults use Twitter.

Who are Twitter users?

White	21%
Black	24%
Hispanic	25%
Ages 18-29	38%
Age 65+	7%
Low-income (<\$30,000)	20%
Women	21%
Rural	13%



Twitter is all about short bits of information in the form of tweets. What type of content works best on Twitter?

- Retweets and shares
- Show behind-the-scenes
- Show off your office's personality



SOURCES

- Pew Research Center: “Share of U.S. adults using social media, including Facebook, is mostly unchanged since 2018” <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/10/share-of-u-s-adults-using-social-media-including-facebook-is-mostly-unchanged-since-2018/>
- Pew Research Center: “Social Media Fact Sheet” <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/social-media/>
- BuzzSumo: “How To Massively Boost Your Blog Traffic With These 5 Awesome Image Stats” <https://buzzsumo.com/blog/how-to-massively-boost-your-blog-traffic-with-these-5-awesome-image-stats/>
- Georgia Tech: “Face It: Instagram Pictures With Faces are More Popular” <http://www.news.gatech.edu/2014/03/20/face-it-instagram-pictures-faces-are-more-popular>
- Buffer: “How to Gain a Massive Following on Instagram: 10 Proven Tactics to Grow Followers and Engagement” <https://buffer.com/library/instagram-growth>



BEST PRACTICES

This section will provide best practices for all social media, but will focus on highlighting examples from Twitter.

1. Verify your account

Verification is the blue or white check mark next to an account name. It tells the public that the account is an authentic and official source of information. This helps users know that they can trust the information on the page.



Your Chief Election Officer can work with you to verify your account. Before you reach out to them you must take steps to prepare your account. If this is a new process for them, they can contact Maria Benson at mbenson@sso.org at NASS or Amy Cohen at acohen@nased.org at NASED.

For your Twitter account:

1. Registration email must be a government email
2. Two-factor login authentication must be enabled
3. Personalized cover and profile photo
4. Bio must specify the purpose of the agency
5. Include a link to an official website



6. Must be active account

For your Facebook account:

1. Personalized profile and cover photos
2. Must only represent your office

To maintain good cybersecurity habits, we recommend you enable two-factor authentication on both accounts, even if it is not a requirement.

2. Post often

Twitter is a fast-paced platform. People expect to be able to quickly scroll through their timeline and take in information in bite-sized chunks. This means Twitter is a platform where you see a greater quantity of information from users than, say, on Facebook.



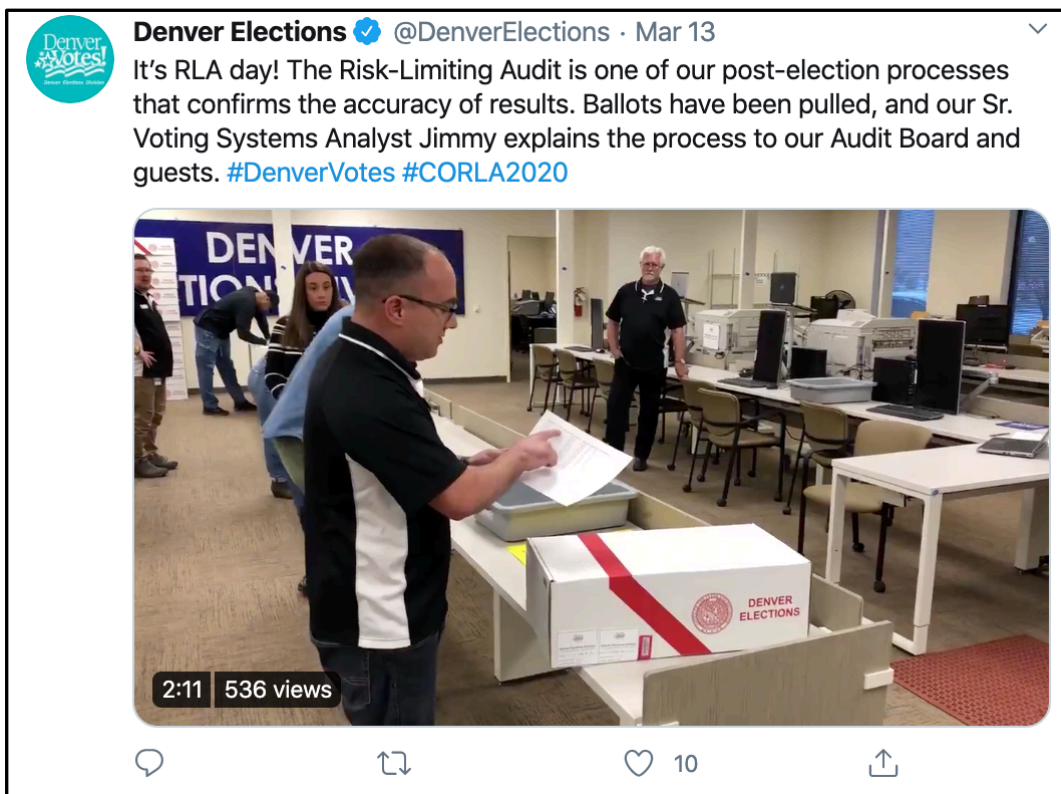
Marketing experts suggest that you Tweet at least 5 times a day. It's not always feasible as an election office to Tweet that often, but there are some strategies for finding a steady stream of information to share.



First, the Retweet is your friend. Did someone else Tweet something that you think is relevant to your voters? Use the Retweet button to share.

Twitter is also a great place to show your office's personality, especially if you can tailor your Tweets to the election cycle and other current events.

Check out this example from the Denver Elections Division. They Tweeted about their process of performing audits and included a video. They even gave a shout out to one of their staff members featured in the video.



3. Use photos

Twitter analyzed millions of Tweets to better understand what makes some Tweets more popular than others. One key finding was that including photos in government Tweets boosts Retweets by an average of 62%. This is no surprise: people are drawn to images.



4. Encourage sharing and engagement

On Twitter, hashtags are a great way to reach beyond your own followers and share your content. People use hashtags before keywords in their Tweets to categorize those Tweets and make them easier to find using Twitter search.

Clicking on a hashtag lets you quickly find all Tweets using it. Check out #ElectionTools for example: <https://twitter.com/hashtag/electiontools>. When you use a hashtag your Tweets can be found as part of a broader conversation by a greater number of users. Best practices recommend using no more than two hashtags per Tweet.

There's also a Twitter list of over 200 election offices that you can subscribe to so you can see what other offices are up to on Twitter. It might spark new ideas for your own Twitter



account. You can follow the Twitter list of election offices by subscribing at <https://twitter.com/TheElectionBuzz/lists/election-offices>.



On Facebook, you might encourage users to tag people in the comments. For example, you might encourage them to tag their “voting buddy” before election day or tag their best friend to remind them to check their voter registration. You can also ask questions and encourage people to answer in the comments, like “What is your favorite way to vote?”

For more ideas on how to communicate effectively on Twitter, check out the [Crisis communication for brands on Twitter website](#). For more opportunities to creatively use Facebook, check out the [Facebook guide for government, politics, and advocacy](#).

5. Post at the right time

People so often ask us if there’s any particular time of day that’s best to post.

There are no universal rules, but we can point to a few guidelines. First, people are mostly likely to be on Twitter during work and commuting times. That’s just when they’re most likely to have a device in front of them.



Click-through rate, which is the rate at which people click a link that you provide, is best during the middle of the week and weekends, and it's best at noon and 6 p.m.

6. Have a social media policy

A social media policy is the backbone of your online presence. A strong social media policy will provide guidance and accountability for anyone using or interacting with your social media accounts.

The core components of a social media policy include guidelines on:

1. Employee access, including roles and responsibilities
2. Security, including password procedures
3. Legal, including records retention considerations
4. Acceptable use, including guidelines around personal & professional social media accounts
5. Public conduct, including guidelines for how your office will deal with offensive comments from the public

As a starting point, here are two sample social media policies:

- Portage County (OH) Elections: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-mRceoyDaXBZmpoZWpxU2ZnN2s/view>
- King County (WA): <https://www.kingcounty.gov/about/news/social-media/handbook.aspx>

And here's a sample of a comment policy:

- Fairfax County (VA), on page 4: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicaffairs/sites/publicaffairs/files/assets/documents/fairfax-county-social-media-policy.pdf>

Need a little more inspiration? Consider the resources below.

- The Twitter glossary: <https://help.twitter.com/en/glossary>



- Managing Twitter trolls: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-mRceoyDaXBNmtpZlQzYS1ObFU/view>

7. Plan ahead

Now that you're ready to share lots of compelling content, it's a best practice to make a content calendar. A content calendar is a way to plan what your office will Tweet for the weeks and months ahead, keeping in mind important events and deadlines.

Taking the time to plan ahead will help ensure that you don't miss opportunities to engage and inform you voters. It also provides structure for any approvals you need to get ahead of pressing the Tweet button.

We've created a template for your content calendar here:

[https://www.dropbox.com/s/7p67bm58nkimx6x/Social media calendar %26 metrics.xlsx?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/7p67bm58nkimx6x/Social%20media%20calendar%20metrics.xlsx?dl=0)

[November 2020]							KEY:
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Holiday
1	2 Election Day reminders	3 Election Day	4 Election results update	5 Poll Worker Appreciation	6 Fun Fact Friday	7	Fun Fact Friday
8	9 Election results update	10 Cavass invite	11 Veteran's Day	12 Election results update	13 Fun Fact Friday	14	Fun Fact Friday
15	16 Poll Worker Appreciation	17 Board Meeting	18 Election results update	19 Candidate Info	20 Fun Fact Friday	21	Fun Fact Friday
22	23 Poll Worker Recruitment	24 Voter Registration	25 Community Happening	26 Thanksgiving Day	27 Fun Fact Friday	28	Fun Fact Friday
29	30 Poll Worker Recruitment	Board Meeting	Voter Registration	Candidate Info	Fun Fact Friday		Fun Fact Friday

For more ideas on how to plan tweets around holidays or big events, check out [Twitter's marketing calendar](#).

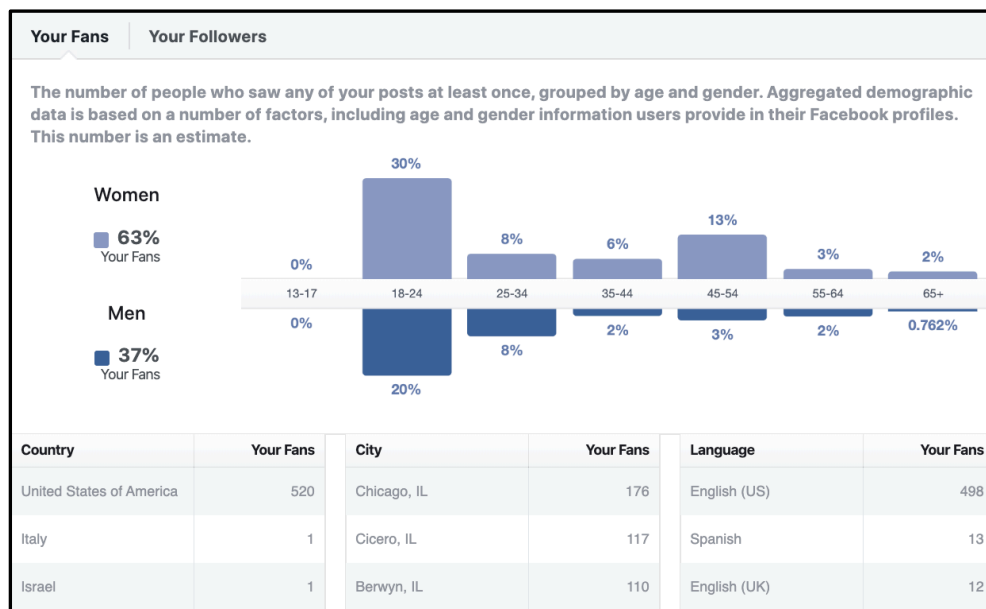


8. Measure success

Common metrics for success include measuring awareness, engagement, and traffic. Maybe you're thinking, "How will we measure all these things?" Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter all have useful analytics tools built-in.

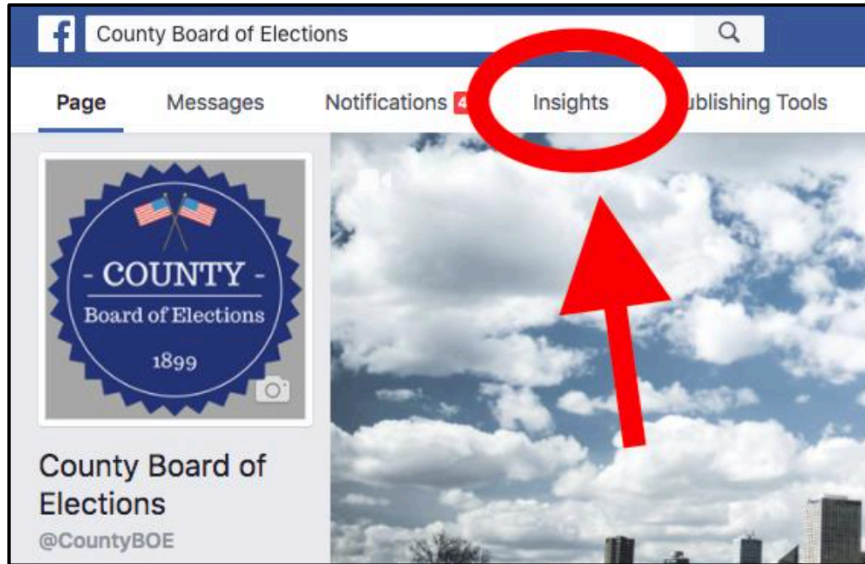
Metrics is one of the biggest benefits of Facebook. As soon as over 30 people like your page, you start generating metrics. It's what Facebook calls Insights.

Below is an example of Insights on your Facebook audience. It shows the gender, location, and language of the people who visit your Facebook page.

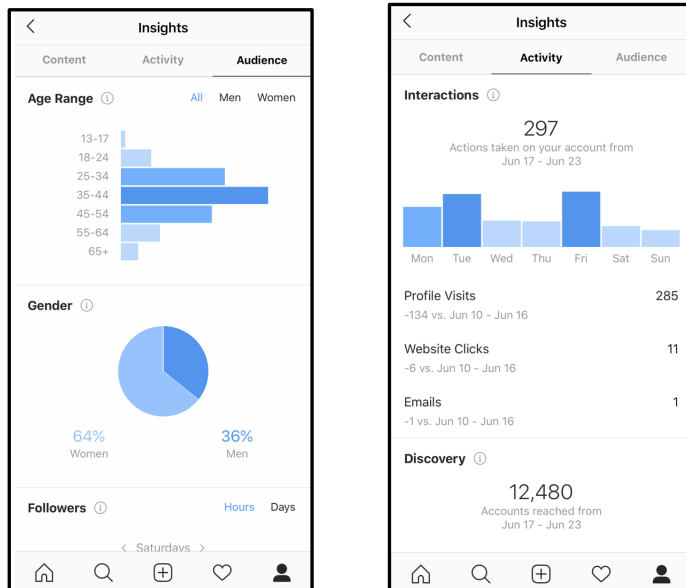


To get to your Facebook Insights, go to your Facebook Page, then go to your Page menu. Click on Insights.





Metrics are an important part of using Instagram. These are called Insights and provide a detailed age breakdown, location, and gender. You can also see detailed information on engagement including profile visits, website clicks, and total accounts reached.



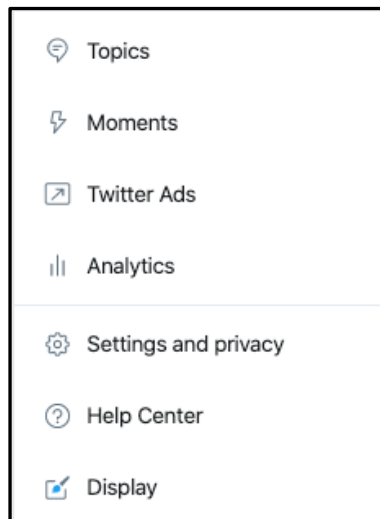
To get to your Instagram Insights, on the mobile app navigate to your county page and click the top right-hand button with three lines to expand options. Then click on Insights.





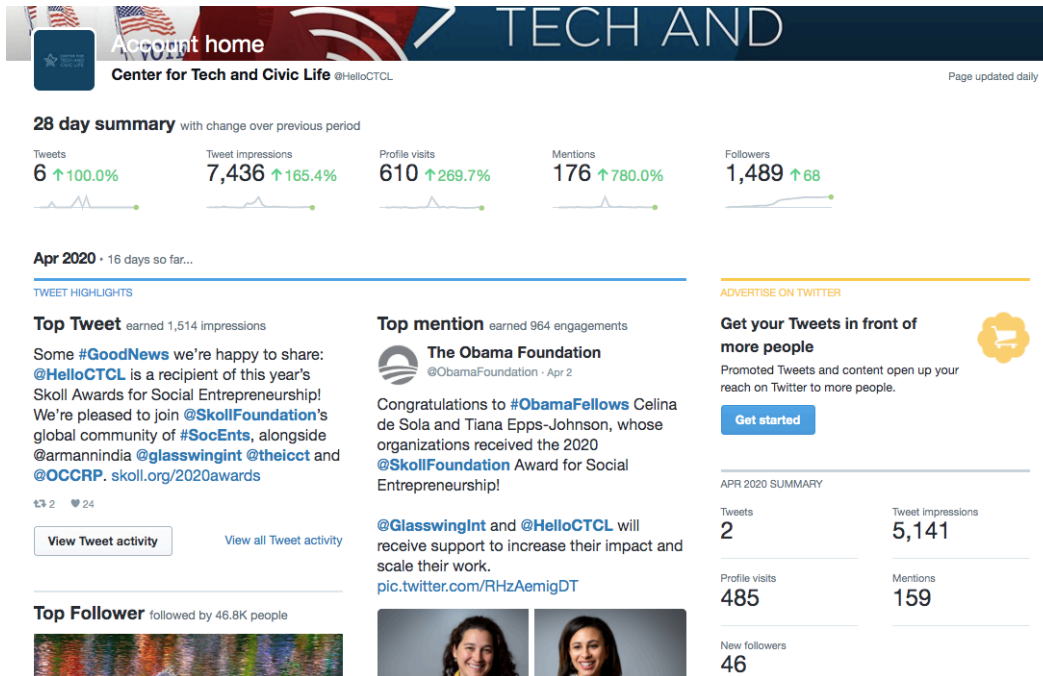
To access to Insights, your account must be converted to a professional account. This can be done easily by navigating to settings and then account, where you will see the option to switch to a professional account.

When switching to a professional account you can decide between a creator account or a business account. We recommend you choose a business account. This will give you the option to indicate that you are a government organization, which will appear on your profile.



Twitter has free analytics built into your account. This includes things like the number of followers and engagement rates.





To see this data, navigate to settings and click “Analytics” to see more.

9. Consider advertising

Advertising can be a relatively affordable option if you are interested in expanding your reach beyond your followers.

Campaign objective

Need help choosing an objective for your business needs? [Learn more](#)

<p>Tweet engagements You want to maximize engagement of your Tweets and get more people talking about your business.</p>	<p>Promoted video views You want more people to see your GIFs or videos.</p>	<p>Awareness You want as many people as possible to see your Tweet.</p>
<p>Website clicks or conversions You want people to visit and take an action on your website (e.g. download a paper or make a purchase).</p>	<p>In-stream video views (pre-roll) You want to pair your videos with premium content.</p>	<p>Followers You want to build an engaged audience to amplify your message, on and off Twitter.</p>



Twitter allows ads for election offices. You must create a business account by going to ads.twitter.com. [Then you can apply to be certified as a cause-based advertiser, with this simple online form.](#)

On Facebook, there are several steps to be able to run ads on elections. As an advertiser you must turn on two-factor authentication, submit a valid US ID, and provide a residential US address where a letter will be mailed.

The letter will include a code. Facebook will ask you to confirm this code before you are approved to run ads. [You can find more information on becoming an advertiser on Facebook on their website.](#)

There is no set time for how long this will take so it is a good idea to start the process early.

RUNNING A TWITTER CAMPAIGN

For our purposes, a Twitter campaign is a planned set of activities over a defined period of time with a specific goal. For example, you might plan a Twitter campaign with a goal of registering new voters in the 15 days leading up to the registration deadline.

Or you might plan a Twitter campaign to educate voters about how a new law will impact the voting process in the weeks leading up to its implementation. While each of these campaigns have different objectives, the planning process should be the same.

NOTE: Twitter calls activities a “campaign” if you buy Twitter ads to promote your activities. While Twitter ads might be useful for your campaign, they are not necessary to run a campaign.

Step 1: Define your goal

The first step in running a successful social media campaign is defining your goals.

First, define what you are trying to accomplish. In the examples above the goals were registering new voters or raising awareness about a law change. You might also be trying to recruit new poll workers or educating your voters about new equipment.



Also take this time to define the time period of your campaign.

Step 2: Choose appropriate metrics

Now that you've defined the goal of your campaign, you should choose the appropriate metrics to track to understand if you're achieving your goals. Here are a few suggested behaviors to measure based on common goals of Twitter campaigns (adapted from [Neil Patel](#)):

If you want to measure **awareness**, then use metrics like:

- Volume - the number of times you Tweet
- Impressions - the number of people who see your Tweets
- Amplification - the number of Retweets

These will help to understand how far your message is spreading. If you want to measure **engagement**, then use metrics like:

- Retweets
- Replies - the number of people responding to your Tweets
- Engagements - the total number of Retweets, replies, likes, follows, and clicks on a given Tweet
- Engagement rate - total number of engagements divided by the total number of impressions

If your goal is to **drive traffic** to your website, then track:

- Click through rates
- Conversions - the number of times a person clicks a link you've shared and completes the action you've asked of them. For example, if your Tweet is encouraging someone to sign up to be a poll worker, conversions would be the number of people who click on your link via Twitter and actually sign up through your form. [You can track conversions using the Twitter Analytics Dashboard if you create an ad.](#)



Step 3: Measure

Once you've decided what you're going to measure, use the Twitter Activity Dashboard to track the activities of each Tweet in your campaign on a daily basis. It may make sense to set up a simple Excel spreadsheet or document to record these numbers throughout your campaign.

Step 4: Evaluate

At intervals throughout your campaign you should evaluate your progress. How do your numbers compare to what you expected? What content has been most popular? How does this particular campaign compare to similar ones you've run in the past or similar campaigns a comparable jurisdiction has run? Are there changes you'd make to timing or content in the future?

Step 5: Adjust and do it again!

The final step is to assess your evaluation framework. Determine whether, in the future, you'd use the same metrics for a campaign with the same goal, what you would add, and what metrics were not useful to track.

Now plan another campaign!

Breakout: create a social media campaign!

Ready to do some brainstorming and practice what we've been talking about? Great!

Start by referring to the **Twitter Campaign Plan** handout that we've provided for this breakout. Using the handout, take 5 minutes and choose an event to build a campaign around. It could be an election day, a registration deadline, a community event, or anything you like.

1. You'll need to:
2. Define your goals and target audience
3. Choose your metrics



4. Draft 2-3 Tweets, including 1 that incorporates a current event
5. Decide when you will send each Tweet

TWEET	DATE & TIME

Need some inspiration? Check out the sample Tweets we're providing below.

SAMPLE TWEETS FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS

To get you started, we've drafted a few election-related Tweets for you.

What's on your ballot

- Learn who and what is on your ballot. Visit → www.url.gov
- Getting ready for the [specific] election. Ballots arrived today! (include pic of ballots)
- Nerdy is cool again. Get educated about what's on your ballot here: www.url.gov

Voter registration

- Are you registered to vote? Find out here: www.url.gov
- Voter registration deadline is coming up in XX days. Are you registered? www.url.gov
- Did you procrastinate & forget to register to vote? Don't worry! You can register & vote on the same day in [STATE]. Find where here: www.url.gov



- Did you know that you can register to vote online? Register from the comfort of your couch here: www.url.gov
- Think zombies are scary? Try telling your mom you're not registered to vote. Ahhhhh! Register today: www.url.gov
- Wondering why everyone is talking about Miley Cyrus? We are too. But We Can't Stop *supporting voters OR printing ballots OR registering voters OR something else*. Learn more here: www.url.gov
- Overwhelmed by your to do list? Shorten that list and check registering to vote off today: www.url.gov

Vote-by-Mail

- The deadline to request an absentee ballot is XX days away. Have you requested one? www.url.gov
- Tired of all the political calls? Vote early or absentee to end the nagging. Find our more here: www.url.gov

Early voting

- Early Voting starts today/is open. Be an early bird & cast your ballot today! Find where here: www.url.gov
- Grab your ID (or your friend?) & come on down to vote early today! Find where here: www.url.gov
- Tired of all the political calls? Vote early or absentee to end the nagging. Find our more here: www.url.gov

Poll workers

- We hire [#] poll workers every election. Join the ranks! Learn more: www.url.gov
- Upset by all the craziness in Congress? Take control of your government today and sign up to be a poll worker. www.url.gov



New laws/ general voter information

- Confused by all the voting law changes? We got you covered. Visit our site for updates on the latest requirements www.url.gov
- Friends don't let friends forget to vote. Get all the info you need to be a good friend here: www.url.gov
- My favorite thing about voting is the "I voted" sticker. What's your favorite part of Democracy? Get informed here: www.url.gov



SOURCES

- Facebook Help Center: “What is a verified Page or profile?”
<https://www.facebook.com/help/196050490547892>
- Twitter Help Center: “Verified account FAQs” <https://help.twitter.com/en/managing-your-account/twitter-verified-accounts>
- Search Engine Watch: “Twitter Reveals Which Tweets Get the Most Engagement”
<https://www.searchenginewatch.com/2014/03/20/twitter-reveals-which-tweets-get-the-most-engagement-study/>
- Neil Patel: “The 5 Easy Steps to Measure Your Social Media Campaigns”
<https://neilpatel.com/blog/social-media-measurement/>
- Institute for Local Government: “Sample Social Media Policies” <https://www.ca-ilg.org/post/sample-social-media-policies>
- Twitter Business: “Cause-based advertising FAQs”
<https://business.twitter.com/en/help/ads-policies/restricted-content-policies/cause-based-advertising/cause-based-advertising-faqs.html>
- Facebook for Business: “Ads About Social Issues, Elections or Politics”
<https://www.facebook.com/business/help/208949576550051?id=288762101909005>
- Neil Patel: “Is There a Generic Best Time to Post On Social Media Platforms?”
<https://neilpatel.com/blog/is-there-a-generic-best-time-to-post-on-social-media-platforms/>



DESIGNING ENGAGING CONTENT

Design is important so you can communicate important information effectively. Your office can design engaging content that you can use on social media.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

We process visual information 60,000 times more quickly than we process written text. When thinking about a way to effectively convey an educational message about elections, visuals can be incredibly helpful.

Graphic design is the art of visual communication with combined words, symbols, and images to represent ideas and emphasize messages. Design serves a purpose; it solves a problem. Everything else is decoration.

Think about design like this: Decoration is adding stuff. Design is taking stuff away. So, what makes a good design?

A good design clearly conveys information and ideas. It emphasizes a message.



What makes a bad design?

A bad design can be overwhelming and make it hard to find important information.



What are the basic principles of basic design?

1. Contrast
2. Repetition
3. Alignment
4. Proximity





Contrast

Contrast emphasizes what is important. It adds interest by embracing the idea that every element within a design does not look exactly the same. Contrast makes something eye-catching and memorable.

You can apply the principles of contrast with:

- Shapes—instead of using all squares and rectangles, try a circle
- Size — the most important visual should be the largest and draw the eye
- Fonts — use two fonts that complement each other but are noticeably different from one another
- Colors — use more than one color

Repetition

Repetition is achieved by repeating elements throughout a design. It creates consistency and shows how different things are related.

You can apply the principles of repetition with:

- Fonts — use a maximum of three
- Colors — limit the number of colors and patterns you use



- Images — keep the style of images, icons, and graphics the same. If using a photo filter, use the same filter for every image

Alignment

Alignment is connecting every element via an invisible line. When you think about alignment, imagine the justified edges of your content. Aligning all of your elements will give your design a sense of order. Be sure to mind the margins. If it's important for the audience see the whole element, it should never actually touch the edges.

You can apply the principle of alignment with:

- Vertical axis – align to the top, center, or bottom
- Horizontal axis – align to the left, center, or right

Note: Use the “Rule of Thirds” or a grid to help balance your photos.

Proximity

Proximity is achieved by grouping things together that are related to one another. It forms visual units that are easy to understand. Empty space, or white space, is your friend. By creating space in your design, you draw attention to groups of elements and create visual cues for your readers.

You can apply the principle of proximity with:

- Text – group a list of items into categories
- Images – organize images that are related to each other

ACCESSIBLE GRAPHICS

Graphics on different social platforms

The image size specifications for platforms like Twitter and Facebook are frequently changing. We recommend searching online for the latest specs. For today's training, we refer to the sizes published by <https://blog.hubspot.com/>.



Note: Canva will automatically size your graphic based on the platform where you want to publish it. Thanks, Canva!

Making graphics accessible

Section 508 compliance is critical when you are publishing government information. Social media and graphics are no exception. When you are posting graphics on your website or in an email newsletter, you must include alt text, just as you would include alt text for an image.

Elements to consider when making your graphics accessible:

- Write in plain language whenever possible
- Use contrasting colors and easy-to-read fonts

Posting images on Twitter increases potential Retweets. When you post images on Twitter, you have the option to compose an image description, or alt text, so the content is accessible to Twitter users who are visually impaired.

Tips for making your Tweets more accessible:

- Include an image description. Instructions for enabling this feature for your account can be found here: <https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/picture-descriptions>
- Keep it simple. Good design and good content are more likely to be accessible content.
- Write in plain language whenever possible.
- Use camelcase hashtags (i.e., capitalize first letters of compound words, as in #CivicDuty or #GamePlan17).
- When including visuals, make your Tweet text act as a descriptive caption so it provides context for your graphic or image.

On Facebook, alt text is automatically created for images. But, you should still edit these descriptions to ensure they are accurate. You can find instructions on how to do that here: <https://www.facebook.com/help/214124458607871>



Want to learn more about making graphics and images accessible? Refer to the helpful collection of resources here:

Section 508 checklist

- <http://webaim.org/standards/508/checklist>

Alt text resources

- <http://www.slideshare.net/whitneyq/writing-great-alt-text-38937551>
- <http://accessibility.psu.edu/images/>
- <http://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/>
- <https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/picture-descriptions>
- <https://www.facebook.com/help/214124458607871>

Colors and fonts resources:

- <http://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>
- <http://contrastchecker.com/>
- <http://accessibility.psu.edu/color/contrasthtml/>
- <http://webaim.org/techniques/fonts/>
- <http://accessibility.psu.edu/legibility/fontface/>

Social media accessibility resources:

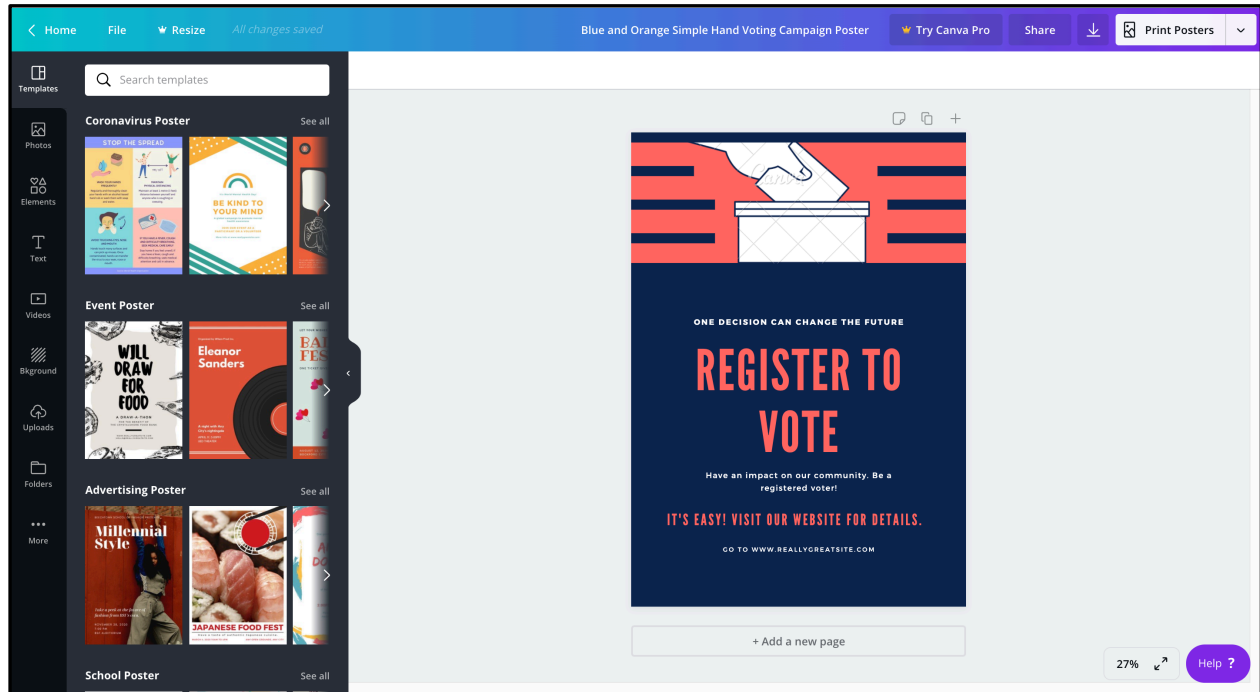
- <https://18f.gsa.gov/2015/03/24/making-twitter-images-more-accessible>
- <https://digital.gov/resources/improving-the-accessibility-of-social-media-in-government/>

RESOURCES FOR DESIGN

You may be wondering how you can apply these principles and ideas.



We recommend the use of Canva, a free online graphic design platform. You can use templates and elements to create designs for the web and for print, including social media posts and flyers for your election office.



Our Election Toolkit provides great resources to walk you through the process of creating visuals yourself.

First, our **Voter outreach graphics** tool. This tool provides you with a guide on how to use, Canva. It also includes a sample of election visuals that were created on Canva, which you can request if you choose to use it for your own office. This is a simple, free way to include more visuals in all your social media. You can see more at <https://electiontools.org/tool/voter-outreach-graphics/>.



Voter outreach graphics



REQUEST AN ABSENTEE BALLOT
AT [MNVOTES.ORG](https://mnvotes.org)

The other tool is our Civic Icons and Images tool contains dozens of civic icons that you can download, upload to Canva, and use in your social media graphics. They're simple, elegant, and illustrate things really effectively. You can see more at <https://electiontools.org/tool/civic-icons-and-images/>.

Note: Check out www.unsplash.com and www.pexels.com for beautiful stock images that you can use for free without attribution.





If you work with Canva and do your best, but find yourself really struggling with something, don't be afraid to get in touch with us, and we'll try to steer you in the right direction.

We challenge you to take 90 minutes over the next 2 weeks and create a graphic for one of your Tweets. You can email us the graphic for feedback or even Tweet at us!

If you want to learn more advanced ways to use Canva, try using the Canva Design School tutorials and learning materials: <https://designschool.canva.com/>.



SOURCES

- Web Design Ledger: "Twitter Now Offers Accessible Images For Everyone"
<https://webdesignledger.com/twitter-accessible-images/>
- ALHS Design with Miss Buhl: "Good Design is Just C.R.A.P"
<https://alhsdesign.weebly.com/assignments5/previous/2>
- Twitter Help Center: "How to make images accessible for people"
<https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/picture-descriptions>
- Facebook Help Center: "How do I edit the alternative text for photo on Facebook?"
<https://www.facebook.com/help/214124458607871>



GROUP DISCUSSION

As the final part of our course, we want to chat with you about your ideas and plans regarding post-election audits. What resonated? What are your next steps? What questions do you have for us?

Have questions after the course is over? You can email us at courses@techandcivicliflife.org.

