



CENTER FOR
TECH AND
CIVIC LIFE

Working with the Media

June 16, 2022

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OVERVIEW

Public confidence in elections is essential to the functioning of U.S. democracy. But the people who tirelessly work to administer our elections continue to face a barrage of false information about voting. It's hard for voters to know how to navigate the election system. And worse, some are unsure whether they should trust it at all—even as election officials like you administer the most secure elections, with the most voters, in US history.

Voters aren't the only ones trying to make sense of elections. Even influential leaders like journalists and public officials don't always have the accurate information they need to do their jobs. The result can be less informative media coverage and legislation that may not accommodate how election administrators actually serve voters.



Resources you'll need for this training

- A pen and paper to take notes and doodle



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www.techandcivicliflife.org/courses.



INSTRUCTOR(S)



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Yangmee Lore is a Community Outreach Coordinator for the Clerk and Recorder's office in Adams County, Colorado. She created the first intercultural guide for Adams County about the Hmong since Hmong is one of the top five languages spoken in the County. Recently, she completed the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies (APAICS) National Leadership Academy.

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OUTLINE

- Election officials and the media
- Starting your list
- Building working relationships
- Key terms
- Misinformation and the media
- Additional resources
- Wrap up



OBJECTIVES

By completing this course, you will:

- Develop productive relationships with credible journalists
- Make the most of media coverage to educate voters
- Counter misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation in the press

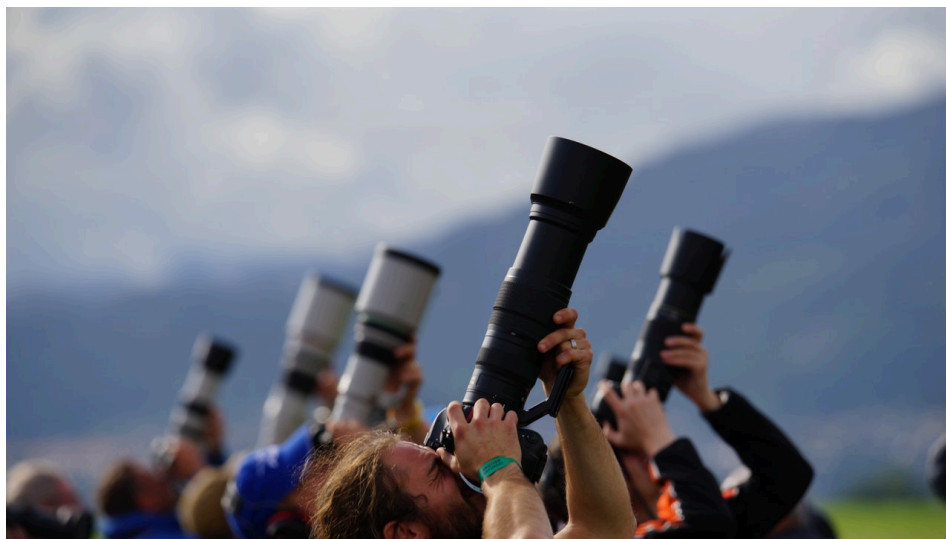


ELECTION OFFICIALS AND THE MEDIA

This section covers the importance of working with the media as an elections expert to help best serve your voters.

How do you feel about working with the media?

Take a moment to reflect on how you feel about the media. Feel free to write down any of your thoughts.



One thing we often hear in election administration: a successful election means staying out of the media. Basically, if you're talking to the media, you're in damage control mode because something has gone wrong enough that reporters are asking questions. It makes sense to be wary of the press when you only see them, if ever, on your most stressful days.

When you think of "the media," you might picture something like the photo above -- a mob of unknown people, with unknown intentions, focusing their attention on you like you're a bird, a plane, or whatever these folks are taking pictures of. Not exactly the first people you want to work with, or partners you can trust.



Of course, this isn't how people in the media see themselves. For the most part, journalists see themselves as serving the same group of people you do: the people in your area, your voters. While your jobs are different, you're both working towards the same goal: an informed public that trusts and participates in the democratic process.

One goal in this training is moving away from the image of the media above to one that is focused on individual working relationships that are long term and built on some mutual trust.

Why work with the media?

Let's get even more specific about the goals you share with most journalists.

Both election officials and the media want to:

- Convey accurate election information to voters, helping them participate in elections
- Address misinformation and disinformation
- Build trust in democratic practices
- Reach lots of people (either to spread the truth, engage voters, or sell papers!)

Convey accurate election information

As election laws keep changing, the media is important for keeping voters updated. In South Carolina, Keyshawn Gascey at the Post and Courier is publishing articles so voters know what to expect now that a big new set of election reforms has passed the legislature.

Early voting hours to change with August election

Similarly, Steve Bohnel in Maryland alerts voters that proposed reforms didn't pass, and that they should expect some races will not be able to be called on Election Night.



Close races likely won't be called on primary Election Day, county election official says

Gov. Hogan vetoed bill allowing for mail-in ballots to be counted prior to July 19 election

And, many papers publish basic pages on their websites with all the facts about how to vote and perhaps even links to your website. It's especially helpful when these articles are outside of a paywall.

Address misinformation

NEWS

SOE addresses voters' frequent misconceptions

The Daytona Beach News-Journal

Published 10:03 a.m. ET Feb. 16, 2022

In Florida, Katie Lenhart, the Supervisor of Elections in Flagler County has built a relationship with the team at the Daytona Beach News-Journal. They offer Katie a regular column that explicitly addresses mis- and dis-information she hears about, ensuring voters know the facts.



Build trust in democratic practices

Poll worker shares her experience working elections



And in Georgia, WTOC covered a poll worker's presentation to a local Rotary Club. That poll worker, Mackie McIntosh, was there to confirm the credibility of the elections system. She said, "I figured the only way to find out what was really going on was to be a part of it." What she found, unsurprisingly, was a well run operation she could trust.

The TV identified that the conversation about trust in elections was important, and highlighted how the community was responding. And, importantly, the story makes the case that voters should feel confident in how elections are run.

Why work with the media?

There's other reasons for your office to work with the media -- they can help you reach your goals.



Here's a list of shared resources that they provide:

- Large audiences
- Trained storytellers
- Help identify and research new falsehoods early

Fact check No. 2: No one can vote more than once

McKenzie said the voter registration system is statewide, which allows them to catch duplicate registrations.

Additionally, he said Utah is one of about 30 states that participates in the Electronic Registration Information Center, a nonprofit which allows states to compare voter registration systems with the intent of identifying duplicate records.

Another safeguard against duplicate ballots is the unique barcode assigned to each envelope. If someone were to request a new ballot — maybe they lost or damaged their original one — they delete that person's barcode from their system and issue them a brand new number.

Another scenario: If someone were to photocopy their ballot and submit it 10 times, the barcode would ensure that their vote was only counted once.

The message-boosting capacity of the media is truly a powerful opportunity for your election department. For instance, above is a clipping from an election fact checking article by [LINDSAY AERTS](#) for KSL News-Radio in Utah. It's reaching a much bigger audience than the local election official may be able to gather themselves. You don't have a radio station like KSL in your department itself, but you likely have a radio station in your community that helps you get the word out.



Another asset that journalists can bring is their professional storytelling skills. Even if you're a strong communicator, your primary responsibility is probably to run elections, so you likely need to focus on that. But for journalists, finding and telling compelling stories is a core skill and something they're always focused on. Their audience comes back day after day because they're engaged by what they see, read, or hear.

'We're Rolling With It': Election Workers Scramble To Adjust To Changing Voting Rules

September 18, 2020 · 5:00 AM ET
Heard on [Morning Edition](#)

PAM FESSLER



4-Minute Listen

+ PLAYLIST



In this case, journalist Pam Fessler spent a day at the Lehigh County, Pennsylvania election offices. During her time there, Pam was able to identify key stories and themes which she conveyed to a national audience of millions. In particular, this article did a powerful job describing just how hard it was to run elections in Fall 2020.



Hoax Image of Immigration Officers Arresting Voters Is Making Rounds on Social Media

Jessica Huseman, ProPublica and Rachel Glickhouse, Univision News, Oct. 29, 2016, 2 a.m. EDT

This post was co-published with Univision. [Lea en español.](#)

An image has begun circulating on Twitter that appears to show an immigration officer arresting someone in line to vote. The image is a hoax, as is the accompanying threatening language directed at Hispanic voters.

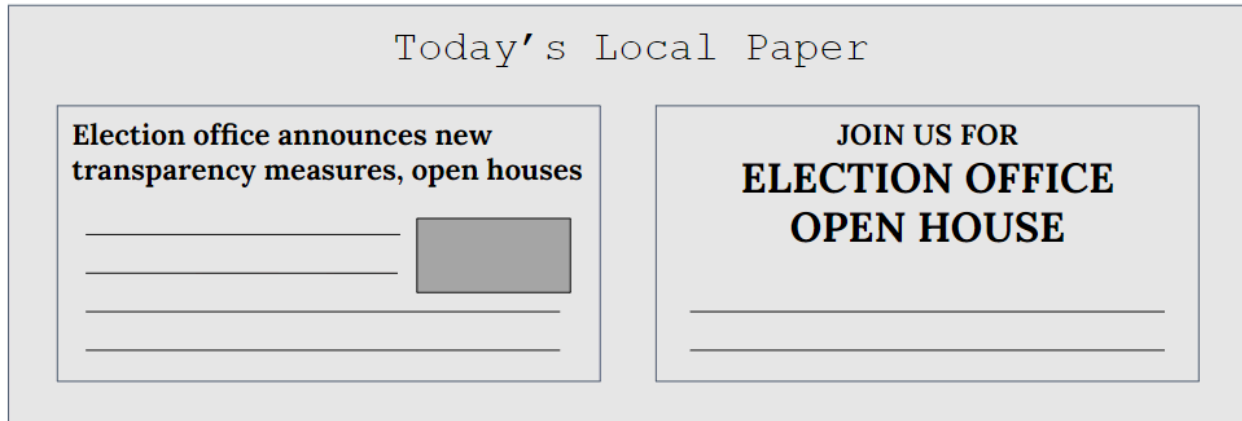
In addition, reporters can support your work as information gatherers and community liaisons. Because of their broad connections in the community, reporters can also be the first to spot and respond to disinformation. For instance in 2016, a fake image began circulating showing immigration law enforcement arresting people in line at the polls. Jessica Huseman partnered with the Spanish-language network Univision to quickly investigate and get the word out about the disinformation.

When you hear new disinformation coming into your office, you can also reach out to journalists and ask them to get to the bottom of who is spreading and where. That can help stop the spread -- and limit the number of confused or angry voters calling your office because of a fake story.

Earned vs. paid media

The last benefit we're highlighting is that most media coverage is essentially free to your office.





Consider two equal sized sections on the cover of your local paper.

Article 1:

- The article on the left covers a new practice at your office -- hosting open houses -- and lists the dates and times for the upcoming events, where participants can tour your office, ask questions, and apply to be poll workers

Article 2:

- The article on the right is an ad placed by your office announcing the open houses and providing the same information.

Which one is better?

There may be reasons to place your own ad -- including ensuring voters are hearing directly from you, on your schedule. You certainly have more control. But in this case, the article written by a local journalist is helpful, too -- it conveys everything your ad does, but it does that for free. That's called **earned media** -- essentially, any coverage on platforms where you didn't have to pay directly.

Ads, a type of **paid media**, are expensive to produce and place, so pursuing earned media can save you money, as long as you have a bit of time to invest working with a reporter.



Sources

Steve Bohnel: "Close races likely won't be called on primary Election Day, county election official says"

<https://bethesdamagazine.com/2022/06/09/close-races-likely-wont-be-called-on-primary-election-day-county-election-official-says/>

Keyshawn Gascey: "Early voting in SC starts Tuesday: What's new and what to know"

https://www.postandcourier.com/politics/early-in-person-voting-in-sc-starts-tuesday-whats-new-and-what-to-know/article_d52d414e-d842-11ec-9201-b79b55cda566.html

Daytona Beach News-Journal: "SOE addresses voters' frequent misconceptions"

<https://www.news-journalonline.com/story/news/2022/02/16/soe-addresses-voters-frequent-misconceptions/6751444001/>

Sean Evans: "Poll worker shares her experience working elections"

<https://www.wtoc.com/2022/05/03/poll-worker-shares-her-experience-with-rotary-meeting/>

John Franchi: "Davis County clerk invites residents to look at election integrity"

<https://www.fox13now.com/news/local-news/davis-county-clerk-invites-residents-to-look-at-election-integrity>

KSL Newsradio: "Lindsay Aerts" <https://kslnewsradio.com/author/laerts/>

KSL Newsradio: "Follow the Ballot: How Utah ballots are tabulated and audited"

<https://kslnewsradio.com/1964619/follow-the-ballot-how-utahs-ballots-are-tabulated-and-audited/>

David Greene: "We're Rolling With It': Election Workers Scramble To Adjust To Changing Voting Rules" <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/913968659>



Jessica Huseman, ProPublica and Rachel Glickhouse, and Univision News: “Hoax Image of Immigration Officers Arresting Voters Is Making Rounds on Social Media”

<https://www.propublica.org/article/hoax-image-of-immigration-officers-arresting-voters-is-making-rounds-on-social-media>

Jenn Chen: “What is earned media? 5 Tips for a successful earned media strategy”

<https://sproutsocial.com/insights/earned-media-strategy/>



STARTING YOUR LIST

This section will cover tangible action steps that you can take to start working with the media.

Working with the media: quantity vs. quality

A media list is a solid foundation for working with the media -- basically, it compiles every journalist or newsroom you want to interact with in your area. Some government offices have media lists with hundreds and hundreds of names, and use paid services to ensure they don't miss a single reporter in their area. Others have much smaller lists, even by preference or because there are just a few media organizations in their area.

Having a large list:

- Makes it really easy to send out a press release to all of them. That doesn't hurt, and some might pick up the news and run with it.

Having a shortlist:

- Helps for stories that take time and care, where a journalist will need to work with you to get it right. That involves a deeper relationship with a journalist and personalized outreach.
- Facilitates focusing on building relationships with a handful of journalists. This is both a good place to start and crucial to any good media relations operation.

So, while mass sending press releases can be helpful, we're focusing on a media shortlist of reporters you work with again and again.

Key takeaways to remember:

- It's important to balance quantity and quality
- This depends on your preference



- When in doubt, focus on quality

Types of media to focus on

The types of media shouldn't surprise you:

- Newspapers and news sites
- Radio
- TV
- Other, depending on your community

Note: There also may be alternative forms of media -- podcasts, livestreams on social media, and others -- that are popular in your area.

Newspapers

Newspapers are perfect for:

- more complex stories about elections that might take longer to report.

Tip: News sites often post voting info on a page of their website that stays up throughout the election season. You can make the case for a newspaper to offer election content like this, and to put it in front of their paywall so it's accessible to everyone.

Radio

Radio is perfect for:

- shorter stories with lots of interesting voices and audio. Radio can feel a lot more personal than the written word since you're hearing people in their own voices. Their emotions and experiences can feel more real.



Tip: keep in mind that radio states often offer free public service announcement segments, either 15 or 30 seconds long. You can work with the station to produce these PSAs on a number of voting topics.

Note: Sometimes people can steer away from radio interviews because they're afraid they won't sound smart or polished. A lot of us feel embarrassed by hearing our own voices played back.

There's another tip: if you're being interviewed on the radio, they'll probably conduct a pre-interview with you, asking all the same questions, so they can get a sense of how the conversation will unfold live. This also means you'll be prepared for what you need to say, so you'll be a lot less likely to come across as unpolished. Once you're on the air a few times, you can usually skip this step.

TV

TV is perfect for:

- shorter stories with engaging images. TV is great when you want to not only *tell* something but also *show* something.

Have you ever noticed how, after a TV reporter starts talking, the screen will show a camera panning around the setting of the story while the reporter continues talking? Maybe it's people walking by, or a construction team at work, or a politician shaking hands. That's called b-roll -- the silent footage the TV news plays to make a story more visually interesting.

Tip: if you have a slow week, invite local tv stations to come in and shoot b-roll in your office so that they can have ready for elections stories this fall. Show off machines, marking a ballot, those sorts of things. Logic and accuracy testing, poll worker training -- these are also visually interesting places to record b-roll for later.

Note: you might wonder why you should care if a TV station has b-roll from your office or not. Why do you need to provide them with material? One reason is that if an outlet doesn't have



local b-roll, they'll often turn to stock footage. That means that when watching a story about elections in your county, your voters may actually be seeing footage from another county or another state, and that could be confusing. Local election b-roll is relevant election b-roll.

Find your contacts

Now that we've covered the basics, it's time to start your media shortlist. Take a moment now to select 2-3 media organizations each for newspapers, radio, and TV, and as a next step, you can get started finding contact information. This shortlist will help you target your outreach and focus on just a few reporters to build relationships with.

If this sounds like old news, so to speak, use this time to refer back to your existing media list. Who are your top contacts -- and when did you last contact them? You may find that auditing that list reminds you of missed connections, gaps in your list, or ideas for reaching out.

Tip: Most news websites will have a "contact us" section you can find on the bottom of the site.

| | | Newsroom or station | Contact name | Email | Phone | Notes and plan to reach out |
|-----------|---|---------------------|--------------|-------|-------|-----------------------------|
| Newspaper | 1 | | | | | |
| | 2 | | | | | |
| Radio | 1 | | | | | |
| | 2 | | | | | |
| TV | 1 | | | | | |
| | 2 | | | | | |



If you're just starting out or your media list needs a refresh, we have a simple template available that you can download here: <https://www.techandcivicliflife.org/download/4112/>

Debrief

Take a moment to reflect on these questions after that activity:

- Was it easy or challenging?
- Were there types of media organizations that were easier or harder to identify?
- Did you include media that your voters can read in their preferred language?

Now, as you move forward, something that's important to reflect on is how you chose the media outlets on your list. Chances are good that you chose them because they're the biggest outlets or the ones that you personally use. That makes sense, but you should keep in mind that there are probably other media outlets that you might not personally be familiar with but that still may be important targets for your message because they serve smaller communities or underrepresented groups.

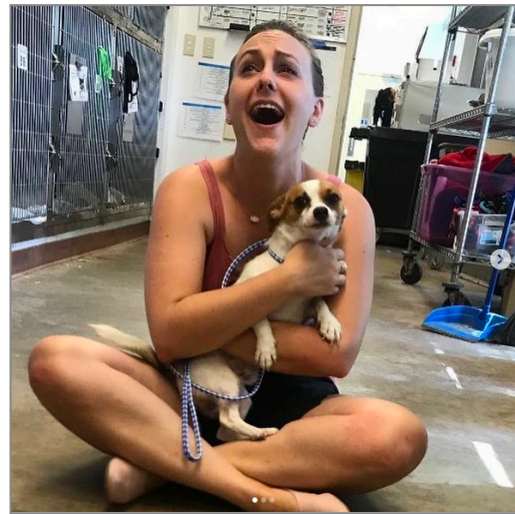
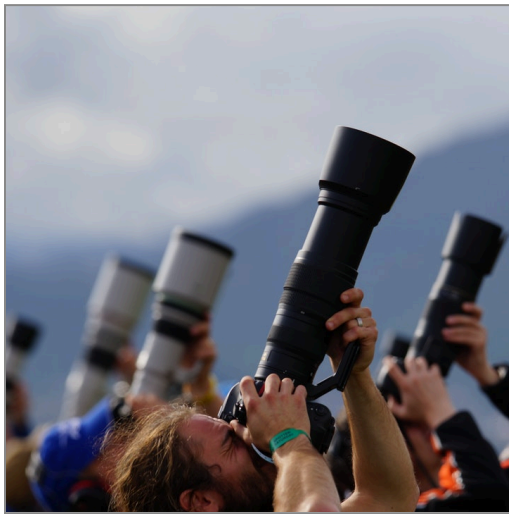
So, as you refine your list of media, keep in mind that if you only reach out to the biggest or most obvious media platforms, you may miss audiences that could benefit greatly from your message.



BUILDING WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Whether it's two minutes old or been around much longer, everyone now has the start of a media list. Congrats! The next step is reaching out to those potential contacts.

But, keep in mind: just like you wouldn't necessarily want to work with anyone who showed up at your door, journalists will want to get to know you. This section is about building a rapport with potential contacts, so they always want to pick up your call -- or call you directly when they have a question about how your elections work.



Let's start with that image of the media from earlier -- the anonymous mob with unknown intentions. That's on the left. On the right is an actual journalist -- Jessica Huseman -- adopting their dog, Walter Cronkite. The first thing to remember about working with journalists is that they are human, like you.

Of course, boundaries and a little skepticism are still important. But it may be easier to talk to a journalist if you remember you're talking to an actual person.



The first phone call (or email)

So, how do you reach out to journalists? Usually a quick phone call or email will do the trick, using the contact info you've already gathered. Consider these steps:

- **Start with the basics:** who you are, your title, that you run the elections in your jurisdiction. No surprises there.
- **Offer your help:** A perfect question might start out like, "There's been a lot of information flying around about how we run elections here. What do you want to know? I'm here to answer your questions." You can also jog their memory with a question like, "Is there anything you saw last year that you didn't understand?" That way, you'll be clearing up misconceptions right from the start.

With these questions, you're getting to know the reporter, opening the lines of communication, and building a new relationship.

Office visits

When the reporter asks you questions, don't just give them an answer on the phone. If you can, invite them to see for themselves. Consider these steps:

- Based on the questions you receive, invite the journalist to come in and see for themselves.
- Give them a tour, let them try out machines, and field their questions.

If a journalist is not interested in visiting, see if you can meet them for coffee or tea. The goal here is to keep the conversation going and stay on the top of journalists' minds. We're always moving fast and covering lots of stories -- when you reach out, you bring our focus back to elections.



Consistency

You'll want to bring their focus back to elections (and your office) again and again. Your goal is consistent outreach with each of the contacts on your media shortlist.

As the months go by, keep yourself on track. You're an election official! How do you manage all of your time sensitive tasks throughout the year? Try adding media outreach to your system. For instance, if it's reminders in your Outlook calendar, add a few the week before major milestones to remind yourself to send journalists a note.

Here's a sample message:

- *"The first mail ballots are going out on Monday. Are you covering this? Here if you have questions."*

Mark your calendars

If you're anything like many election officials we know, you're never too far away from your election calendar. The good news is, your calendar can help you stay in touch with your media shortlist, meaning voters will end up seeing a steady stream of election content.

| Event | Date |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Poll worker training begins | Monday, September 19, 2022 |
| Pre-election machine testing (open to the public) | Tuesday, October 4, 2022 |
| Last day to register to vote for general election | Tuesday, October 11, 2022 |
| Advance ballots for the general election begin mailing | Wednesday, October 14, 2022 |
| In-person, early voting begins | Monday, October 19, 2022 |



| | |
|--|---|
| Election Day | Monday, October 19, 2022 Tuesday, November 3, 2022 Polls open 7 am – 7 pm |
| Voter registration re-opens | Wednesday, November 4, 2022 |
| Post-election audit (open to the public) | Monday, November 8, 2022 |
| Canvass of general election (tentative date) | Wednesday, November 16, 2022 |

Take a look at this sample election calendar. If you go down the list, almost everything is a good excuse to reach out to the media. That's especially true for big events or milestones.

| Event | Date |
|--|---|
| Poll worker training begins | Monday, September 19, 2022 |
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| Last day to register to vote for general election | Tuesday, October 11, 2022 |
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Here's what we highlighted. See? Plenty of options. Each highlighted line represents potential stories that provide accurate information to voters. This is how you start to push back against the rise of false info reaching your community: a steady current of trusted elections stories.

Common stories

To put a final point on it, here's a list of common stories covered by local reporters that keep your voters up to speed on all things elections. Reporters can cover:

- Audits (pre-election and post-election)
- Community partnerships, like working with a high school to register voters
- Events, like open houses
- New equipment or processes
- Poll worker training, or
- Mail ballot preparation

They can also:

- Conduct interviews with you or your staff
- Spotighting staff and poll workers, and
- Write explainer stories that pull back the curtain on how elections work. "Here's what happens to your ballot once you cast it" is a great example.

Each of those is a chance to remind voters of key dates and deadlines, and that they can trust elections in your community.

Remember: reporters aren't likely to cover these topics without a push from a partner like you. And while they might not jump at everything you think they should cover, they will write about some of these topics.



Update your election calendar

If you have it handy, pull out your election calendar. Pick a handful of events (or more!) on your calendar or that you know are coming up. Then, decide when and how to invite your new set of media contacts to cover them.

| Event | Date |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Reach out to press list about poll worker training | Monday, September 12, 2022 |
| Poll worker training begins | Monday, September 19, 2022 |

Here's a snippet of the sample election calendar from a minute ago. You can see we identified poll worker training as something a reporter might want to cover, then added a new item to our calendar, a week before the training, about nudging our media list. Of course, this addition would just be internal and not part of a public election calendar.

Take a few minutes to do that now.



KEY TERMS

Now that we've built a short media list and started to strategize about reaching out, let's cover what comes next: that ongoing working relationship with journalists. To make the most of these connections, it's helpful to speak their language.

Exclusives

The first term is exclusives.

Exclusives: Offering a particular media contact the first opportunity to report a story.

Reporters really like exclusives. This is kind of the opposite of a press conference or press release, which allows multiple journalists to get the information at the same time. Offering an exclusive is a common media relations tactic. It makes a journalist much more likely to cover the story.

You typically have a lot of latitude when it comes to giving exclusives. For example:

- you can call up someone on your media list and offer them an exclusive on your upcoming logic and accuracy testing. That means they'd be the only journalist there and would be the only one with content like pictures from the event.

Remember that it's always good to have a reason for doing what you do, in case someone asks. If you want to offer more exclusives to increase the chance that your election stories get covered, you can pick media contacts for their specific skills and strengths. Perhaps someone has a history of getting detailed stories right, or they have the largest audience.

Primary document / primary source

Exclusives are useful, but this next term is like gold to journalists.



Primary documents: Are the real materials from your office that help explain or verify the important details in a news story.

These documents can include:

- Chain of custody logs
- standard operating procedures
- reports generated by cybersecurity software.

Note: While these documents may be available through open records rules, that process can take time for both you and a journalist, and they might really appreciate your making the process easier for them by just providing the materials.

Let's say a journalist has a question about how poll workers are trained or equipment is set up. You can spend half an hour on the phone walking them through it, or wait and process my records request. Or, you can send them an email or refer them to a link on your website and you can both move on with our days.

The North Carolina State Board of Elections really excels at this. Their site provides a nearly comprehensive library of documentation about how elections are run in their state.

On the record

The next term is on the record.

On the record: The default agreement between you and a reporter.

On the record means the journalist can use your name and quote you in their reporting. In other words, you have no confidentiality when you're on the record.

Again, this is the default. Unless you and the journalist agree otherwise, you are on the record and quoting you is fair game.



On background

If you prefer confidentiality, you can choose to speak on the background.

On background: Agreed on in advance when there is a real threat to your job or safety, this relationship allows you to share quotes, documents, and other info while not being named directly.

It's important to note that this mode of communication is less common. However, if a journalist agrees to it, you won't be named directly. For instance, you might be referenced as, "A local election official," or something similar.

Why speak on background?

- It's not about trying to be secretive. It's about avoiding real threats to your job or safety that might come from your name being published with your information. There can be risks to having ideas and information attributed to you, and those risks can come from both outside and inside your organization.

As mentioned, speaking on background is uncommon, but it's *always* agreed upon beforehand by both you *and* the journalist. Remember that unless you both explicitly agree in advance to be on background, you're on the record.

Off the record

Speaking "off the record" provides the greatest degree of confidentiality, but it's the least common option that journalists will permit.

Off the record: Agreed on in advance when there is a real threat to your job or safety, this relationship allows you to suggest ideas or topics that a reporter may want to follow up on without attributing those suggestions to you in any way.

Why bother with speaking off the record?



- This is a way to give reporters additional context on a story or suggest where more sourcing might be useful. In general, reporters want to attribute their sources, so be aware they'll only allow this option when the information they want can't be gotten any other way.

One more reminder – unless you and the reporter agree ahead of time, you're *on* the record, not *off* the record. If you say something you regret on the record, you can't retroactively claim it was off the record.

It's tough to keep these straight, so we put together a simple chart for reference.

| Conversation | What it means | Common? | When? |
|---------------------|---|--------------------|---|
| On the record | You can use my information and my name <i>"Local election official Ben Franklin said..."</i> | Common and default | Any typical conversation with a journalist |
| On background | You can use my information but not my name <i>"A local election said..."</i> | Less common | Actual threat to your job or safety |
| Off the record | You cannot use my name or my information [Not included in article, but helps a reporter understand a situation.] | Rare | Actual threat to your job or safety that is especially severe |



Note: both you and the journalist you're talking to can choose not to agree. You can choose not to speak to a reporter on the record about a particular topic, or a reporter can choose not to let you speak on background in the same way. The downside is just that it will be harder to get a story covered if you and a journalist can't come to an agreement.

Bad actors or bad faith actors

Bad actors isn't necessarily an official term, but it's an important one to cover in this context.

Bad actors: People who pretend to be credible journalists to advance anti-democratic goals.

In particular, some election officials may receive calls from "journalists" at publications that spread disinformation about the election system and actively promote false narratives about the 2020 election. They aren't working in voters' best interests and may be actively misrepresenting who they are and what they want.

In situations like these, many officials will choose not to respond or ask for an email address and respond in writing to avoid being misquoted.

Assessing bad actors

If someone reaches out to you who you're skeptical about, take a minute to do some research. Here are some tips:

- Ask questions
 - Where do you work and who funds your work?
 - Who are your readers?
- Google them
 - Can you find them in a credible publication?
 - Do they or their colleagues publish articles with election lies?
- Take a moment



- If you need a second opinion, take their information and check with a colleague

Weeding out bad actors can help limit the spread of disinformation.

Sources

University of Missouri Libraries: "Journalism - Resources for Journalism Graduate Students"
<https://libraryguides.missouri.edu/journalismgradstudents/primary>

North Carolina State Board of Elections: <https://www.ncsbe.gov/>



MISINFORMATION AND THE MEDIA

There's a lot to say about misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation in the media. (We'll use misinformation as a general term in this section to refer to all three, but we know they all have specific meanings.)

So, we're going to touch on how to prepare the media to report on your elections accurately and how to reach out when you start to see new falsehoods emerge.

Prepping the media

Misinformation can be hard to predict, but here are a few helpful tips:

- Pay attention to stories that pop up every year.
- To prepare for the unknown, the best approach is to ensure local media has a clear understanding of how your elections operate so they can identify and bat down misinformation on their own, or with only a little help from you. It's useful to pull all of this information into a media guide for each election.

In one county where Jessica has lived, it's vote flipping misinformation about voting machines -- every election, every time, and so far it's pretty much never accurate. Whether it's vote flipping, sharpies bleeding through ballots, or something else: when you know it's coming, you can prepare local media ahead of time with the facts.

Media guide

A media guide is an election-specific reference document that keeps you and the media on the same page. In some ways, it's a frequently asked questions list for the media. Here are a few tips:

- Make it available in print and on your website
- Include key facts about your election process:




- Election calendar
- Election equipment
- Contact information
- Where election data returns can be found
- Guidelines for visiting polling locations
- FAQs

Print it out and hand it to journalists when you see them, and send it to them via email. The result is better informed journalists who are set up to provide accurate info to voters -- and not have to call you every ten seconds to do it.

Custom support for writing your media guide

If you would like to access The Election Group's new template -- and even talk it through with some of their experts -- all you need to do is fill out their communication support intake form.



THE ELECTIONS GROUP

Communications Support Intake

We are seeking jurisdictions to which to provide communications assistance ahead of the 2022 General Election. Your request will be reviewed within 72 hours, and a member of our team will contact you to notify you what level of support we will be able to provide.

Office

Level of government

State

Local

Other



Media guide template and optional support: <https://airtable.com/shr9hTBFgARXldrW0>

Communication goes both ways

When dealing with misinformation and the media, focus on open communication between you and reporters. Remember:

- Reach out to reporters to prep them about upcoming elections and ask them to look into emerging misinformation
- Reporters may reach out for help with stories about misinformation, especially when new misinformation is emerging

Case study: Adams County, CO

Another way to ensure accurate information reaches voters is to make sure it's available in the languages they speak. This section will cover an office in Adams County, CO who have done work to build relationships with media organizations publishing in a variety of languages.

Connecting with in-language media

Here are a few norms when connecting with in-language media:

- The process begins with the community -- not necessarily the publication itself
- Identify key organizations and community leaders and begin outreach there
- Expect a longer term process of getting to know these leaders by staying in contact and showing up to community events
- Strong advocates in the language community can help connect you to media contacts
- Trusted "media" may be word of mouth from community leaders
- Remember that different groups make up a language community, and they may have different interests and concerns



- Overlooking in-language media, community leaders, and in some cases “word of mouth” outreach, leaves communities of foreign language prone to disinformation
- It also misses tremendous opportunities to build inclusive and empowering connections in your community

Language access plan

This work takes time. In Adams County, all of our efforts are based on our long-term Language Access Plan. It builds a solid foundation for getting to know your language groups.

- In particular, the plan provides a space for you to develop a map of who the key persons in a community can be.
- Gets your team on the same page.
- When the communication and supports flows well within your own team then community building will be easier.
- Leadership must be willing to provide space where community members, NPOs and others feel empowered when they reach out to your office. Your office is empowering the communities you work with to make their own decisions.
- Allows you to reflect on where your organization is in regards to diversity and inclusivity - what are your sources and are you making the impact that you envision for your office?



LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

A Resource Guide to Alternative Languages

Elements of an Effective Language Access Plan

Elements that may be helpful in designing an LAP policy or plan:

- Identifying LEP individuals who need language assistance
- Identifying ways in which language assistance will be provided
- Training staff
- Providing notice to LEP individuals
- Monitoring and updating LEP policy

Language Assistance Services

- Oral interpretation services
- Bilingual staff
- Telephone interpreter lines
- Written language services
- Community volunteers

For more information and detailed agency-specific guidance, go to LEP.gov.

Results

These are the results in Adams County, CO:

- They now have 19 Community Partnerships in over 13 different communities and languages, including hard-to-reach groups like the Hmong, Lao, Disability, Native American, Sikh, and growing.
- These partnerships empower communities to make their voices heard in our office, which is critical to Adams County's success.
- They've been able to build partnerships with in-language media.



Resources

As you work on your own plans for in-language media and community engagement, they have included this list of resources:

Xoark, LLC: diversity outreach/cultural broker

<https://xoark.com/>

King County, WA's Education and Outreach guide

<https://kingcounty.gov/depts/elections/education-and-outreach.aspx>

Center for Civic Design: New citizens and voting

<https://civicdesign.org/experiences-of-new-citizens>

EAC: Elections terminology in some languages

www.eac.gov/election-officials/glossaries-election-terminology

Planning language access guide



Here is the planning for language access guide from the Center for Civic Design. Developed based on research with voters and local election offices, it's been used by jurisdictions like



Adams County. While it takes a much broader approach than just media relations, it can help you plan to build community relationships that are central to an in-language media outreach strategy.

Planning language access guide:

<https://civicdesign.org/fieldguides/planning-language-access/>

Sources

Media guide template and optional support:

<https://airtable.com/shr9hTBFgARXldrW0>

Xoark, LLC: diversity outreach/cultural broker

<https://xoark.com/>

King County, WA's Education and Outreach guide

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EAC: Elections terminology in some languages

www.eac.gov/election-officials/glossaries-election-terminology

Planning language access guide:

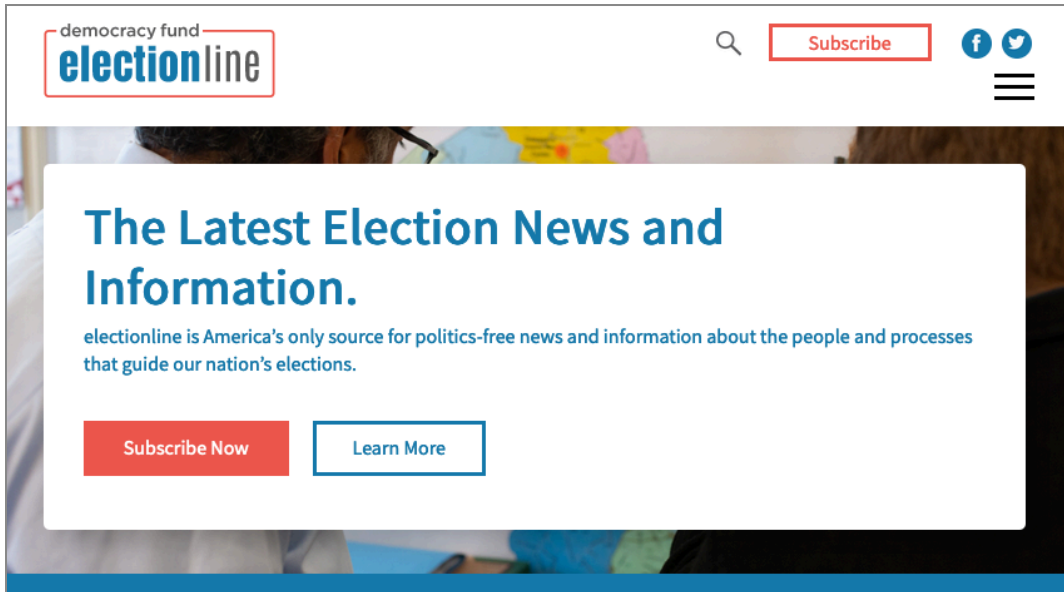
<https://civicdesign.org/fieldguides/planning-language-access/>



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Building off of the previous resources, let's highlight a few more resources for working with the media.

Electionline



Electionline publishes daily and weekly news clippings about election administration from across the country, alongside guest columns, event information, and more. It's a great tool for staying on top of media coverage, and we hope you'll sign up.

Electionline: <https://electionline.org/subscribe/>



Votebeat



FROM VOTEBEAT ARIZONA

This Republican bastion of Arizona loves ballot drop boxes – the far right's latest target

Yavapai County voted overwhelmingly for Trump, and most voters there used ballot drop boxes. "2000 Mules" is energizing the movement to ban them.

By Jen Fifield | June 3

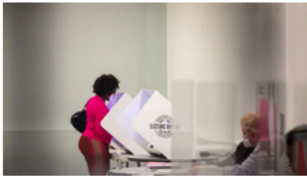


FROM VOTEBEAT ARIZONA

Maricopa County to double voting locations, citing COVID and misinformation

Arizona election officials prep for surge in in-person voting during August primary. The state has had mail voting for decades.

By Jen Fifield | June 1



VOTING ACCESS

Georgia's and Texas's successful elections don't mean voting is easy

New voting laws brought challenges, and high turnout doesn't suggest otherwise.

By Jessica Huseman | May 28

Votebeat has a weekly newsletter that covers all things election administration and voting.

Votebeat: <https://www.votebeat.org/newsletters>

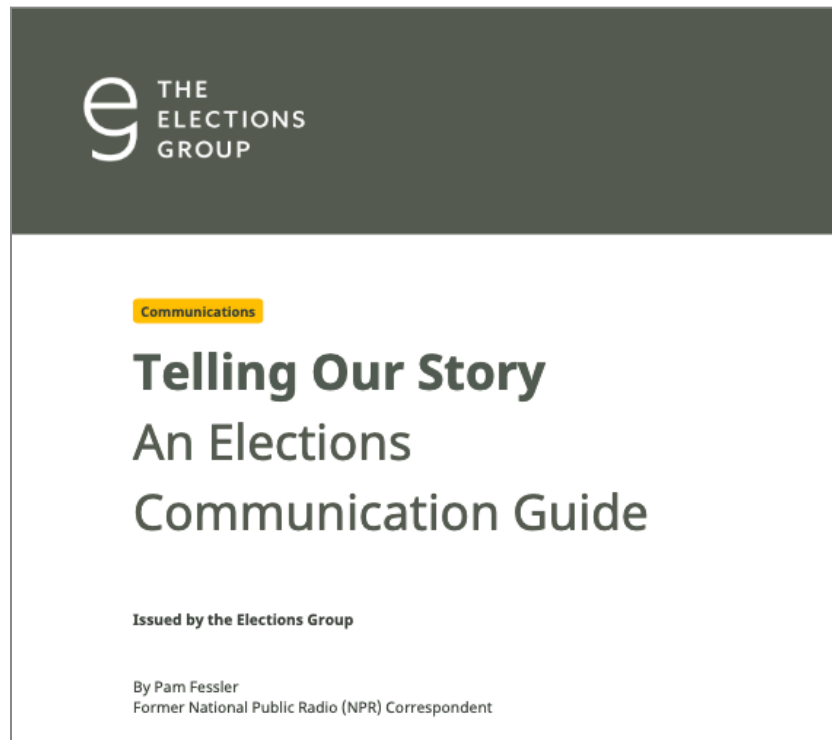


Center for Tech & Civic Life

Hello@TechAndCivicLife.org

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Telling Our Story: An Elections Communication Guide




This training pulls a number of stories and best practices from *Telling Our Story: An Elections Communication Guide* by former NPR journalist Pam Fessler, published by Elections Group. If you're thinking about how to tell the story of your elections office across a variety of mediums, spend some time with this guide.

Telling Our Story - An Elections Communication Guide:
<https://www.electionsgroup.com/telling-our-story-guide>



Custom support for writing your media guide



**THE
ELECTIONS
GROUP**

Communications Support Intake

We are seeking jurisdictions to which to provide communications assistance ahead of the 2022 General Election. Your request will be reviewed within 72 hours, and a member of our team will contact you to notify you what level of support we will be able to provide.

The Elections Group is also behind the media guide template we discussed a few minutes back. And, they're offering free support to election officials using that template.

Media guide support from The Elections Group: <https://airtable.com/shr9hTBFgARXldrW0>



Communicating Trusted Election Information



And of course, this session is part of a larger training series for state and local election offices called *Communicating Trusted Election Information*. Keep an eye on the series' page. It includes videos and materials from the first four courses. All of the content is free and covers websites, accessible communication, social media, misinformation, and more.

Free series on Communicating Trusted Election Information:

<https://www.techandciviclifef.org/course/trusted-info/>



WRAPPING UP

This concludes this training session. We hope you have found the information useful. As questions come up for you don't hesitate to reach out at hello@techandcivicliflife.org.

