



Enhancing Election Security

THROUGH PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

May 2024

Contents

Executive Summary	3
Developing a Public Communications Plan	4
Introduction: Why Public Communications Matter	4
Message: What to Communicate.....	4
Audience and Format: How to Communicate	6
Timing: When to Communicate.....	8
Partners: Who to Engage.....	8
Team: Who Does What.....	10
Prepare: Incident Response Communications	10
Review: Identify and Apply Lessons Learned.....	12
Appendix: Planning Worksheets	13
Public Communications Plan	13
Message	14
Audience and Format	15
Timing.....	16
Partners.....	18
Team.....	20
Prepare.....	21
Review	23

Executive Summary

State, local, tribal, and territorial election officials are the primary sources of official information about elections. Election officials routinely communicate with the public about their work, including:

- Election dates and deadlines
- Voter registration information
- Candidate filing information
- Voting locations
- Election worker recruitment
- Election security and integrity measures
- Observation opportunities
- Publishing preliminary and final election results

In addition to providing key dates and information about election administration, communicating proactively with the public can help reduce uncertainty and confusion about elections. Alternatively, ineffective communication about election laws, policies, and procedures may undermine public confidence in election security and amplify risks to election infrastructure. Having a plan for communicating is even more important when the public is looking for official information after an incident occurs.

Election officials can mitigate risk to election infrastructure and operations by developing a public communications plan that conveys accurate information about how they administer and secure elections and by preparing their teams to communicate effectively during incident response. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) developed this guide in partnership with the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to help election officials apply communication best practices to election infrastructure security. It builds on guidance developed jointly by the Election Infrastructure Subsector Government Coordinating Council and Election

Infrastructure Subsector Coordinating Council for ensuring voters have access to accurate information about election administration and election security.

This guidance is supported by customizable planning worksheets to help state and local election officials think through elements of their plan, including:

- **Message:** Identify what information to share with voters.
- **Audience and Format:** Recognize and assess different audience groups and how to engage them effectively.
- **Timing:** Explore effective scheduling for communication activities, including key dates and deadlines.
- **Partners:** Work with other trusted voices in the community to validate and amplify messaging.
- **Team:** Document and assign communication responsibilities.
- **Prepare:** Ensure staff are ready to share information when an incident occurs.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to planning public communications. The structure, scope, and level of detail required vary based on available resources and other factors. With proper planning and coordination, all election officials can effectively communicate accurate information, including those in small and midsize jurisdictions that may rely on partners to augment their public communications. Election officials are encouraged to consult with their privacy, civil rights and civil liberties offices and with their legal counsel to ensure that plans are compliant with state and jurisdiction laws and policies, including those related to creating and maintaining lists with personally identifiable information.

Developing a Public Communications Plan



Introduction: Why Public Communications Matter

A lack of public understanding about elections can undermine confidence in election security, increase risks to cybersecurity and physical security of election infrastructure, and potentially lead to disruption of election operations. As the official source of information about their jurisdiction's elections, election officials can mitigate these risks through regular and consistent public communication, especially during incident response when there is often increased interest and sometimes confusion among the public. By demonstrating transparency and communicating effectively, officials can provide voters with the information necessary to have confidence that an election has been administered securely.

An effective communications plan will include multiple communication activities that engage a variety of voters. These could include hosting town halls, sending an email newsletter, and maintaining an up-to-date and easy-to-use website. (It is recommended that the website uses a .gov web domain to help the public recognize it as an official state or local government site). Each communication activity should be defined by specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives. For example, SMART objectives could include increasing the number of visits to the election office's website during a defined timeframe or seeing a decrease in the number of questions received about a particular topic after the office has provided publicly available information about the topic.

The following guidance and supporting worksheets are created to help election officials design communication activities that achieve their objectives. Each section helps answer a different question about the plan, including what to communicate, who their audience is, and how to reach them through effective methods, partners, and timing, as well as provides additional guidance for incident response communications where clear and transparent communication is especially important.



Plan It Out: Use the [Public Communications Plan worksheet](#) in the appendix to outline communication activities.



Message: What to Communicate

While election officials know the ins and outs of elections, most voters are not election experts and may not understand what happens before and after they vote. **Tell voters a clear, consistent, and transparent story of the election process, supported by examples, to help them understand.**



Help Voters Understand Their Role in Elections

A communications plan should include foundational information for voters to understand their role in the election process, including when, where, and how to cast their ballots, as well as information about opportunities to observe election processes and becoming a poll worker. These types of messages are already a common feature of election official communications and serve a critical role in equipping voters to participate in the process.



Identify Questions, Concerns, and Confusion

Understand what topics are confusing or unclear to voters, such as complex election processes or new voting laws and policies. Start by tracking the topics that voters most frequently contact the office about; then, ask staff, community leaders, and election officials in other jurisdictions what voters are asking them about. Address these priority topics in public communications to improve voter understanding.


 **Provide Examples of Secure Practices**

Explain to voters the steps taken to ensure the accuracy and security of elections, especially focusing on topics that are confusing or unclear. The “Three Ts” (tracking, testing, and telling) can help identify examples to share:

Security and Administration Steps	Examples to Share
<p>Track: Document cyber, physical, and operational security processes and procedures to ensure that safeguards are implemented.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mail ballot processing procedures ▪ Voter verification and signature verification procedures ▪ List maintenance procedures ▪ Equipment testing and security procedures
<p>Test: Verify and audit election processes and the functioning of election equipment and software.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Compliance audits (e.g., standard operating procedures, security, chain-of-custody) ▪ Pre- and post-election logic & accuracy test results ▪ Ballot reconciliation logs and forms ▪ Ballot manifests ▪ Post-election tabulation audit results
<p>Tell: Provide additional data and information to help voters understand election laws, policies, and procedures and to set realistic expectations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Important dates and deadlines ▪ Historical turnout data ▪ Voter registration trends ▪ Difference between processing and counting early ballots and when the counting of early and Election Day ballots begins ▪ Results release schedule including both unofficial and official results (while also providing an explanation around the differences)

 **Develop Talking Points**

Before giving an interview, press conference, or other verbal communication, election officials should distill their message into a few short and simple talking points. Talking points can help maintain consistency across multiple communication activities and can be tailored for different audiences. Talking points can also help identify the most important information to share with the public. Practice delivering talking points to someone unfamiliar with elections; if they express confusion, revise the talking points for clarity.

 **Plan It Out:** Use the [Message worksheet](#) in the appendix to outline key messages and develop talking points to explain them.



Audience and Format: How to Communicate

Different people receive information in different ways, especially in a diverse and dynamic media environment. **Determine how to effectively engage voters by identifying different audience groups, exploring the formats and approaches that are most likely to resonate with the intended group, and making sure that voters recognize the election office as a secure, official source of regular information.**



Know the Audience

Demographic differences impact how voters receive information and the sources they trust. These differences include age, residence, occupation, languages spoken, and culture, as well as the types of questions and concerns a voter may have about elections. Identify different audience groups present among voters in the community.



Choose the Right Format

The format of a communication activity influences how the audience receives the communication and what information they take from it. Communicating through traditional media will likely reach different audience groups than those shared through digital and social media. Similarly, timing and location can impact which audience groups engage with a given in-person event. Consider a variety of approaches to engage voters, such as those in the following table.

Media	Example Activities
Print	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write a guest essay for a local newspaper or magazine explaining election processes. Mail information directly to registered voters Distribute flyers, posters, stickers, or other materials to advertise where voters can access election information Have your principal offer to be interviewed by local newspaper reporters on election processes, deadlines, etc.
Broadcast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share press releases, public service announcements, and other reminders/information with local television and radio news programs Give an interview or facility tour describing key election processes Host a brief for broadcast reporters on the basics of election information, what to expect on Election Day and give a tour of the office and voting locations if possible.
Digital and Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly update the elections website and social media accounts with key information, such as answers to frequently asked questions Send newsletters and reminders by email Record educational videos and develop infographics and other visual representations of election processes Livestream election activities, such as tabulation and audits Distribute recordings of in-person events and a digital version of informational materials Establish and monitor a general email account to answer questions

- Phone**
- Establish call centers to answer questions
 - Conduct calls and send text message reminders to share information directly with voters

- In Person**
- Encourage in-person observation of election processes
 - Conduct community town halls, including question and answer sessions
 - Offer election facility tours, including an explanation of processes
 - Conduct a demo of election equipment
 - Attend community events and distribute information
 - Participate in roundtable discussions with community leaders



Keep It Short and Simple

Stick to the key message when developing communication content, utilizing talking points to ensure consistency and clarity. Break down complex information into shorter pieces, such as a series of videos or infographics focusing on specific topics of interest. Also, avoid using acronyms and jargon whenever possible.



Use Humor and Local References

Content that is appealing or relatable to an audience often receives more engagement. Using humor, such as memes and jokes, and local references, such as community events or a local sports team, can make the office seem more familiar, approachable, and accessible to voters. Please use careful discretion when taking this approach.



Leverage Existing Resources

Election officials do not have to develop a library of communication content on their own. Consider incorporating resources developed by trusted third parties or collaborating with neighboring jurisdictions to develop shared content. By linking to additional resources, election officials can focus on the key message while helping voters who are interested access more information.



Establish Credibility

Whether they have encountered false or misleading information or are just looking for information when news of election-related incident spreads, it is important that voters can recognize election officials as the official source of trusted information online. Consider adopting a .gov web domain to identify the election office website as an official source of government information and regularly sharing information about high-interest election topics, such as through a frequently asked questions (FAQ) webpage.



Secure Communication Channels

Practice strong cyber hygiene to secure official digital and social media accounts against the risk of hacking or other manipulation efforts that might seek to undermine voters' confidence in elections.

- Adopt the .gov web domain for the elections office website and email, which provides many security benefits, including requiring multifactor authentication for associated accounts and providing a secure connection for websites that helps ensure that information appears as published.
- Implement strong access control for all accounts, including changing passwords when personnel depart and requiring multifactor authentication for logins to all official accounts.
- Provide cyber hygiene training for staff and educate on how to recognize and report phishing attempts.

- Encourage staff to verify or strengthen their social media privacy settings. Foreign malign actors have used personal information, including pictures, to impersonate individuals or lend the appearance of credibility to their manipulation efforts.
- Consider use of document and image watermarking technologies to further validate authenticity and security of media that the election office shares.



Plan It Out: Use the [Audience and Format worksheet](#) in the appendix to identify different audience groups and evaluate considerations for engaging them effectively.



Timing: When to Communicate

Year-round public communication establishes election officials as a consistent source of accurate and timely information that voters can turn to even during periods of uncertainty. During the election period, public communication ensures that voters know about key deadlines, while communication in the months before voting begins can make voters aware of any changes to voting laws, policies, or procedures. Communicating consistently throughout the year and building credibility with voters also positions election officials to effectively share information if an incident occurs.



Know Key Dates and Deadlines

Identify significant dates that will inform a public communications plan, including:

- Election dates and deadlines, such as voter registration deadlines, the window for early voting, and the audit dates;
- Holidays that could inspire creative communication campaigns; and
- Events that could provide opportunities for engaging the public, such as local festivals or city council meetings.



Prepare for Increased Public and Media Interest

Ensure communication systems are set up to handle an increase in public inquiries in the weeks immediately before and after election day. For public inquiries, these systems may include a shared email inbox or phone hotline that allows multiple staff members to share the responsibility. Talking points and standard operating procedures (SOPs) can help staff respond consistently to frequently asked questions, while a spreadsheet or other tracker can ensure that each inquiry is logged and answered appropriately. For media inquiries, have a designated staff member ready to assist in coordinating responses and arranging statements, interviews, etc. as needed.



Find What Works for the Audience

The timing of communication can influence what audiences it reaches. For example, a town hall held on a Saturday morning may attract a different audience than one held on a Tuesday evening. Explore different options and evaluate the activity's success against its SMART objectives, such as hosting similar events on different days or reposting social media content at different times.



Plan It Out: Use the [Timing worksheet](#) in the appendix to identify scheduling considerations, including election dates, holidays, and events.



Partners: Who to Engage

It is important for election officials to build a broad network of other trusted voices in the community that can help share and amplify accurate and reliable information with voters, whether it is regular communications about how, when, and where they can vote or releasing timely, official information

following an incident. **Develop relationships with external validators and community partners who can help share and amplify communication to a wide range of voters.**

☑ Engage Trusted Voices

Election officials do not have to go at it alone. A diverse partner network can provide several benefits to their public communications, such as amplifying a message by sharing it with their own audience (e.g., a community organization reposting information on their own social media profiles), lending additional credibility to a message based on how they are perceived by the target audience (e.g., media coverage by a trusted outlet), or providing relevant authority on the topic in question (e.g., local IT department validating messaging about the security of the voter registration database). Consider the partners listed in the following table.

Type	Example Partners
Media Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Newspapers ▪ Television programs ▪ Radio programs ▪ Podcasts
Community Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local community service and advocacy organizations ▪ Faith-based organizations ▪ High schools, colleges, and universities ▪ Service industries (e.g. barber shops, salons, laundry mats)
Government Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ State and local law enforcement ▪ State and local IT departments ▪ State and local public information officers ▪ State and local emergency management ▪ Federal partners (e.g., CISA, EAC, FBI) ▪ Elected officials
Election Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Election workers ▪ Election vendors ▪ State and regional election associations ▪ National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), National Association of State Election Directors (NASSED), Election Center, International Association of Government Officials (iGO), and National Association of Counties (NACo) ▪ Election Infrastructure Subsector Government Coordinating Council (GCC) ▪ Election Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EI-ISAC) ▪ Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center (MS-ISAC)

 **Build Relationships**

Strong partnerships are not built overnight. Establish relationships with partner organizations in advance of the next election, including clear communication channels and mutual points of contact. Invite a representative to learn more about elections and discuss opportunities for collaboration. When managed effectively, these relationships can increase awareness of election information and resources while setting the stage for future rapid-response communication.



Plan It Out: Use the [Partners worksheet](#) to map potential partners and their contact information to amplify, validate, or coordinate messaging.

**Team: Who Does What**

Establish and prepare the communications team by documenting key procedures for communicating with the public and who is responsible for executing them. Designate a lead to oversee public communication activities.

 **Delegate Responsibilities**

Identify the functions necessary to execute the public communications plan, such as graphic design or video production, online engagement, briefing news media, responding to public inquiries, and community engagement. Assign each one to an individual team member. Specific responsibilities will vary depending on the office's needs and capabilities.

 **Identify Additional Support**

Consider opportunities to augment existing staff with outside support, as allowable under the jurisdiction's laws and policies. For example, borrow staff from other government agencies who have a relevant communications skill set, especially during periods near Election Day, or consider partnering with a neighboring jurisdiction to designate a mutual liaison to outlets in a shared media market.

 **Develop Communication SOPs**

SOPs clearly define expectations and instructions for executing each communication activity, reducing the risk of errors and ad hoc decision-making. They may cover processes like tracking voter inquiries, answering frequently asked questions, and updating the website. Paired with talking points, SOPs can equip new, seasonal, or part-time personnel to support public communications.



Plan It Out: Use the [Team worksheet](#) in the appendix to define and delegate public communication responsibilities.

**Prepare: Incident Response Communications**

Election officials face additional challenges communicating during incidents where full information is not yet available or when circumstances are changing rapidly. Election officials communicating early and transparently with the public when an incident occurs is critical for maintaining public confidence in the security and resilience of the elections process. Election officials will often need to make their first public statement before they have all information regarding the incident – and that's okay! Election officials should be clear and transparent with the public about what they know and what they are still working to confirm via a holding statement. **Develop incident response communication procedures and practice them with the team so they are prepared to provide information even during periods of uncertainty or confusion.**

✓ Prepare for Incidents

Incorporate public communication procedures into existing incident response protocols, including drafting communication in response to various incident types, coordinating messaging and information-sharing with partners, and reporting threats. Consider preparing statements in advance of Election Day that can be adapted quickly if an incident occurs. Practice public communication activities through exercises; like other incident response activities, refine procedures based on lessons learned.

✓ Plan for Communication Resilience

The same incidents that impact elections can impact the ability to communicate with voters and partners when they most need information. Internet or cellular outages, loss of power, and cyberattacks – among other risks – can impact the availability of communication systems. Develop a PACE (Primary, Alternate, Contingency, and Emergency) plan that accounts for backup methods of communication. These methods may include internet-, cellular-, and radio-based methods for sharing information. Practice using each method when testing incident response procedures; when one fails, turn to the next one.

✓ Work with Partners

In addition to coordinating with local law enforcement and first responders to develop and practice incident response measures, election officials should ensure that they have updated contact information for all partners who may be involved in incident response. This preparation will enable swift information-sharing when it matters most and allow election officials to coordinate with appropriate partners to provide relevant updates to the public.

✓ Establish Response Criteria

Incidents can introduce uncertainty and confusion, requiring election officials to share information even while all the facts of the situation may not yet be available. Election officials should establish criteria for determining when their team has evidence, expertise, and authority to respond to inaccurate information; when it is appropriate to execute crisis communication procedures; and when it is appropriate to leverage external advocates to amplify and validate messaging. Establishing these criteria before an incident occurs will help speed up decision-making and response times.

✓ Lead with Facts, Support with Sources

Accurate information should be front and center in any response. Avoid repeating false or misleading information. Direct voters to other, credible sources for more information, including linking to past content that the election office has shared on the topic. Be clear and use plain language, leveraging relevant talking points and visuals where appropriate.

✓ Know How to Report Threats and Incidents

Direct any immediate threats of physical harm to local law enforcement and report it to the FBI Election Crimes Coordinator as well as any other entity required under the law. Train election workers to recognize indicators of potential threats, including suspicious behavior at election facilities or suspicious characteristics of mail associated with criminal activity, and practice appropriate incident response, such as contacting local law enforcement, first responders, and emergency medical services. Work with the appropriate authorities to determine what, if any, information should be shared publicly.

For election security related incidents, contact the jurisdiction's CISA regional field representative or report to CISA Central at report@cisa.gov or (888) 282-0870.



Plan It Out: Use the [Prepare worksheet](#) in the appendix to identify key activities for preparing incident response communications.



Review: Identify and Apply Lessons Learned

Evaluate each communication activity based on its SMART objectives to determine which activities were successful and which failed to resonate with their intended audience. Identify opportunities to apply successful approaches to other communication activities, such as repeating an event with a community partner or adapting a successful infographic to address a different topic. Establish a regular cadence for revisiting talking points, staff responsibilities, SOPs, and partner contact information to ensure that planning is up to date.



Plan It Out: Use the [Review worksheet](#) to evaluate communication activities, focusing on what succeeded and what could be changed.

Appendix: Planning Worksheets

The following worksheets can help users develop a public communications plan. The first worksheet offers a structure for organizing communication activities, followed by supporting worksheets for thinking through the individual components of the larger plan. Worksheets are fully customizable. Refer to the previous sections for additional guidance and considerations.

Public Communications Plan

Outline communication activities to share information with the public. Remember to set SMART objectives! Completing the following worksheets can help shape each activity to meet its objective.

Message	Audience	Format	Timing	Partners	Team
<i>Example: The following rows demonstrates a hypothetical use of the template.</i>					
<i>Mail-in ballots are protected by safeguards and compensating controls.</i>	<i>Voters new to the state and registered voters</i>	<i>Videos explaining mail-in voting processes, posted on the election website</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Thurs., 10/5 at 2:00 p.m.</i> ▪ <i>Thurs., 10/12 at 4:00 p.m.</i> ▪ <i>Thurs. 10/19 at 6:00 p.m.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Society of Engaged Voters</i> 	<i>John Doe</i>
<i>New election law passed that changes voting options available.</i>	<i>Registered voters</i>	<i>Digital infographic overviewing different methods, requirements, and dates for voting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>First day of mail-in voting request window</i> ▪ <i>Weekly during in-person early voting period</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Society of Engaged Voters</i> ▪ <i>Neighborhood civic leagues</i> ▪ <i>City council members</i> 	<i>Courtney Johnson</i>
<i>[Insert text]</i>	<i>[Insert text]</i>	<i>[Insert text]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>[Insert text]</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>[Insert text]</i> 	<i>[Insert text]</i>

Message

Identify the key message to share with voters about priority topics, such as frequently asked questions. Develop short, simple, and clear talking points to communicate the key message.



Check It Out: The following resources may be helpful resources for crafting messaging around election security. CISA’s election security resources include assessments of risk and mitigations during key election processes, including the [Election Infrastructure Cyber Risk Assessment](#), [Mail-In Voting Risk Assessment and Infographic](#), and [Election Results Reporting Risk and Mitigations Infographic](#).

The EAC’s [Voting System Security Measures](#) guide outlines some of the best practices election officials employ to secure voting systems through an election cycle.

Key Message	Talking Points
<i>Example: The following rows demonstrates a hypothetical use of the template.</i>	

Voter registration data is stored in a secure database.

- Multifactor authentication, which requires users to provide at least two forms of credentials to verify their identity, ensures only authorized individuals can access the voter registration database. Multifactor authentication can block over 99.9% of account compromise attacks, according to Microsoft.¹
- Users must receive security training before they are allowed to access voter registration data.
- Systems are in place to look for known signs of common cyber intrusions. As soon as this system detects abnormal activity, it alerts election officials so they can respond immediately.

Safeguards ensure that voting can continue safely and that election assets are secured if a polling place is evacuated and moved to an alternate location, such as due to loss of electricity during a storm.

- County officials provide emergency management and other first responders the address of each voting location to ensure a swift response and voter safety in case of such an incident.
- Ballots and equipment are tracked under strict chain-of-custody procedures to ensure that there has been no improper access while moving assets.

[Describe process]

- [Insert talking point]

¹ [One simple action you can take to prevent 99.9 percent of attacks on your accounts | Microsoft](#)

Audience and Format

Identify different audiences and how best to engage them. Consider how responses may differ depending on the target audience group.



Check It Out: Visit [#TrustedInfo | NASS](#) to learn about how other states are educating voters about voter registration, voting methods, election security, post-election procedures, and much more through the National Association of Secretaries of State’s [#TrustedInfo2024](#) public education effort.

The EAC’s [Communicating Election and Post-Election Processes Toolkit](#) can help create educational materials about pre- and post-election processes that observers and the public can understand. Election officials in any size jurisdiction can adapt this toolkit to fit their observer and voter education needs.

Consideration	Notes
What different audience segments exist in the community?	[Insert text]
What information does the audience need?	[Insert text]
How do different audience segments receive their information?	[Insert text]
What types of events are the target audience likely to attend?	[Insert text]
What messengers do the target audience trust?	[Insert text]
[Add consideration]	[Insert text]

Timing

Consider key dates and deadlines to target communication, including those related to elections as well as events that can support the communication plan.

Event	Date
VOTER DATES/DEADLINES	
Voter Registration Deadline	[Insert date]
Absentee Ballot Request Deadline	[Insert date]
Absentee Ballot Return Deadline	[Insert date]
In-Person Absentee Voting Begins	[Insert date]
In-Person Absentee Voting Ends	[Insert date]
Election Day Polls Open / Close	[Insert date and times]
Voters Who Cast Provisional Ballot Must Provide Acceptable Identification	[Insert date]
[Add other]	[Insert date]
ELECTION PROCESS DATES	
Logic and Accuracy Testing	[Insert date(s)]
Canvass of Votes Conducted	[Insert date(s)]
Mail-In Ballot Processing Period	[Insert date(s)]
Tabulation Period	[Insert date(s)]
Unofficial Results Posted	[Insert date(s)]
Canvass Process	[Insert date(s)]
Cure Process	[Insert date(s)]
Provisional Ballot Adjudication	[Insert date(s)]

Post-Election Audits	[Insert date(s)]
Certification of Results	[Insert date(s)]
Recount	[Insert date(s)]
[Add other]	[Insert date(s)]
HOLIDAYS	
New Year’s Day	[Insert date]
Valentine’s Day	[Insert date]
Memorial Day	[Insert date]
Independence Day	[Insert date]
Labor Day	[Insert date]
Veterans Day	[Insert date]
Thanksgiving	[Insert date]
Christmas	[Insert date]
[Add other]	[Insert date]
LOCAL EVENTS	
City Council Meetings	[Insert date(s)]
County Fair	[Insert date(s)]
College/University Move-In Weekend	[Insert date(s)]
[Add other]	[Insert date(s)]

Partners

Record the contact information for organizations that can help amplify or validate messaging or that can help coordinate rapid-response communication during an incident.



Check It Out: The [Cyber Incident Detection and Notification Planning Guide for Election Officials](#) provides guidance and customizable templates for recording stakeholder contact information and developing notification plans.

Partner	Partner POC	Election POC
MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS		
[Local Newspaper]	[Insert name and contact information]	[Insert name and contact information]
[Local Television Channel]	[Insert name and contact information]	[Insert name and contact information]
[Local Radio Show]	[Insert name and contact information]	[Insert name and contact information]
[Add other]	[Insert name and contact information]	[Insert name and contact information]
COMMUNITY PARTNERS		
[Business or Trade Associations]	[Insert name and contact information]	[Insert name and contact information]
[Affinity Groups]	[Insert name and contact information]	[Insert name and contact information]
[Faith-Based Organizations]	[Insert name and contact information]	[Insert name and contact information]
[Add other]	[Insert name and contact information]	[Insert name and contact information]
STATE and LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTNERS		
[Elected Officials]	[Insert name and contact information]	[Insert name and contact information]
[Local IT]	[Insert name and contact information]	[Insert name and contact information]

[Local CISO]	[Insert name and contact information]	[Insert name and contact information]
[Legal Counsel]	[Insert name and contact information]	[Insert name and contact information]
[Local Law Enforcement]	[Insert name and contact information]	[Insert name and contact information]
[State Chief Election Official]	[Insert name and contact information]	[Insert name and contact information]
Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center (MS-ISAC)	[Insert name and contact information]	[Insert name and contact information]
[Add other]	[Insert name and contact information]	[Insert name and contact information]
NATIONAL/FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PARTNERS		
Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)	[Insert name and contact information]	[Insert name and contact information]
Elections Infrastructure Information Sharing & Analysis Center (EI-ISAC)	[Insert name and contact information]	[Insert name and contact information]
FBI Field Office	[Insert name and contact information]	[Insert name and contact information]
[Other]	[Insert name and contact information]	[Insert name and contact information]

Team

Identify what public communications responsibilities you need filled and build a team with every individual having a clear role and responsibilities.



Check It Out: The EAC has developed a [Communications 101](#) guide that can help election officials identify responsibilities for communicating with the public based on best practices.

The [Elections CISA Tabletop Exercise Packages \(CTEPS\)](#) scenarios can increase a team’s awareness of election security threats, evaluate its overall preparedness, and clarify roles and responsibilities during an incident.

Responsibility	Team Member
Oversee day-to-day communications operations, including supervising and ensuring coordination for responsive communication.	[Insert name]
Review and approve external communications.	[Insert name]
Maintain relationships with media organizations, including developing press releases and preparing for interviews.	[Insert name]
Maintain relationships with community organizations, including coordinating messaging.	[Insert name]
Oversee online content development and management.	[Insert name]
Produce graphics and other multimedia content.	[Insert name]
[Describe responsibility]	[Insert name]

Prepare

Take proactive steps to prepare incident response communications, ensuring that voters know where to access accurate information.



Check It Out: The EACs [Election Technology Best Practices](#) guide outline key topics that can be conveyed to the public to explain each security measure in detail, including during incidents. Properly communicating with the public will help election officials more quickly mitigate logistical issues while also providing voters with the information they need to successfully participate in the election.

CISA’s [Last Mile products](#) are customizable resources based on security best practices and industry standards to help secure election infrastructure nationwide.

Ranging from informational posters to pocket cards, products can support planning for emergency response and notification.

Office Communications

- Register the election website for a .gov domain. ([Home](#) | [get.gov](#))
- Transition official email accounts to a .gov ([Home](#) | [get.gov](#))
- Make sure all official communications accounts have the highest security settings, such as using multifactor authentication, and undergo regular access review.
- Develop a list of common topics related to election security or election administration that are vulnerable to or likely targeted by foreign influence operations and disinformation.
- Establish an [FAQ webpage](#) to provide accurate information that relates to the security of election infrastructure and operations.
- Ensure communication systems are set up to handle incoming questions, including considerations for sharing responsibilities among team members.
- Engage with counsel and, if applicable, the privacy office to ensure protection of constitutional rights and privacy.
- [Add checklist item]

Incident Response

- Identify the state’s regional CISA representative or know how to report election security incidents to CISA Central at report@cisa.gov or (888) 282-0870.

- Identify the state’s FBI Election Crimes Coordinator at the local FBI office and know how to report potential criminal activity related to elections, to include public communications that intend to mislead voters about the time, place, or manner of an election, threats to public safety, or threats to national security.
- Determine roles and responsibilities for incident response.
- Designate an individual to oversee the incident response process.
- Plan for potential weather events or cyberattacks that could impact election operations.
- Develop talking points in advance that address the most likely incident scenarios the office may encounter
- [Add checklist item]

Review

Use the below planning worksheet to conduct an evaluation of individual communication activities, identifying what worked well (successes) and what could be improved (opportunities).

Activity	Success	Opportunities
<i>Example: The following row demonstrates a hypothetical use of the worksheet.</i>		
Mail-In Voting Explainer Video Series	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▮ Received 200+ impressions on social media ▮ Office directed voters to the videos to help answer frequently asked questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▮ Voters commented that it would be helpful to have a visual in addition to the talk track. ▮ Revisit talking points to clarify messaging
Press Release About Ballot Shortages at Polling Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▮ Proactively preparing a draft statement for this incident allowed us to share an update on social media and our website within 30 minutes. ▮ Coordination with local news helped amplify updates about backup procedures and expected wait time for replacement ballots. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▮ Commenters expressed confusion about the use and validation of provisional ballots. Consider developing an FAQ entry about provisional ballots and linking to it in future incidents.
[Add other]	[Add text]	[Add text]



CYBERSECURITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE SECURITY AGENCY
ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION