EAC Toolkits

To assist election officials in developing materials about a wide variety of topics that affect their operations, education, and outreach, the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) aims to provide toolkits that can be used by elections offices. Many of the resources in the toolkit below are customizable to various degrees, depending on what the elections office needs.

Using the Communications 101 Toolkit

Elections are highly local, decentralized activities, with varying laws and rules in every state. Election officials throughout the nation continue to be the ultimate authority on the election administration process ensuring voters and candidates know how to successfully participate. However, traditional news outlets and staff are shrinking, and social media platforms have benefits as well as challenges as local election officials compete for voters' attention in this digital informational environment. By actively providing factual information, election officials can help mitigate false narratives and give the public the information they need to maintain confidence in the credibility of electoral systems.

Elections are in the spotlight more than ever, and the public receives information about the election process from multiple outlets. In today's climate, effective communication is particularly necessary to clarify misconceptions about elections. Managing and preparing for any election requires election officials to pursue continuous communication efforts, rather than one-off attempts. The EAC created this toolkit to provide guidance to election officials when developing their communication and public relation strategies.

The Communications 101 Toolkit includes:

- Communications 101 Booklet
- Social Media Calendar Template
- Example Press Releases
- EAC Resources

Creating a communications plan is an essential undertaking for every election office. While these efforts take time and resources, an effective communications plan will save voters and election officials time during critical points in the election cycle. This efficiency in messaging provides voters with better customer service and helps voters to participate in the electoral process.

Communication fosters transparency and allows election officials to educate the public about voting requirements, important dates and deadlines, polling locations, and more. Election officials play a critical role in dispelling rumors or misleading information that may undermine public trust in the electoral process. It is important that officials maintain continuous communications to build trust and recognition of their offices as trusted messengers to the public.

Communication 101 Booklet

A well-planned communication strategy can help election officials proactively share accurate election information, important deadlines, procedures, and any potential challenges or changes that may arise with the public. The Communication 101 Booklet includes sections on the following areas of developing a communications strategy:

- Why do we Need PR?
- PR Tactics
- Why Planning is Critical
- What Makes News?
- Finding the Right Journalist
- Rules for Engaging with the Media
- Importance of Consistent Branding and Messaging
- Tailoring Messages to Your Community
- Exploring Avenues Beyond Traditional Media for PR and Marketing
- Running Events
- How to Use Data
- Budgeting
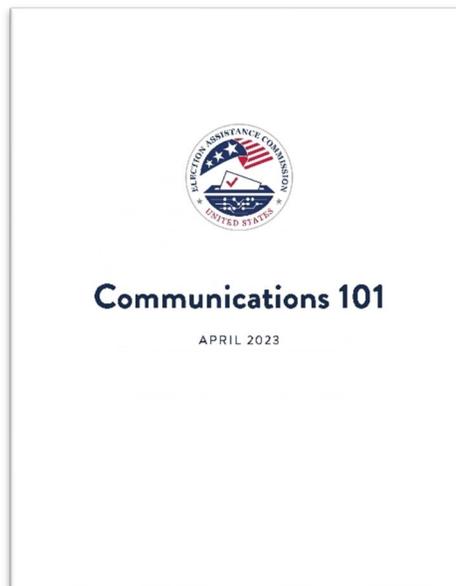
Cover of Communications 101 Guidebook

The strategies in this guidebook can assist election officials to be better prepared to quickly disseminate accurate information, address concerns, and provide guidance to voters and the public. The Communication 101 Guidebook can be found on the EAC website at: https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/toolkits

Social Media Calendar Template

A social media calendar provides a framework for election officials to strategically plan their social media content and activities throughout an election cycle. By planning ahead, election officials can ensure well-thought-out content, foster meaningful engagement with the public and allocate resources effectively.

The Social Media Calendar Template includes, a downloadable Excel social media calendar with direct links to customizable graphic templates in Canva, with example post text, and associated alt-text. The Social Media Calendar Template, and associated images, can be found on the EAC website at: https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/toolkits

Example of the downloadable Excel Social Media Calendar

Example of a customizable image and alt-text.

A social media calendar can help stay on top of important dates to ensure that information is shared timely during an election cycle. It can also foster meaningful engagement with voters, and help clarify misconceptions in real time, should they occur.
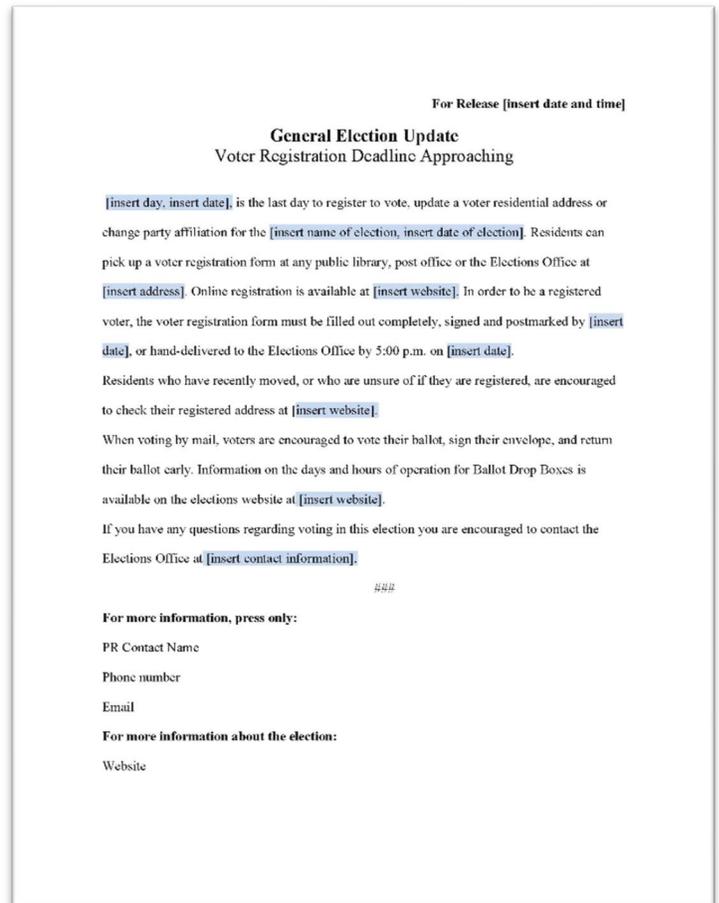
Example Press Releases

Press releases announce important developments to the public and can ensure noteworthy updates gain recognition. These official and authoritative documents emphasize facts and detailed information. Press releases can also increase the likelihood of media coverage and accurate reporting of important election information.

Some best practices regarding press releases, include:

- Title the press release with an engaging headline.
- Start the press release with a clear hook that tells the reader what the release is about.
- Plain language works better than technical jargon and overwriting.
- Choose direct wording and phrasing that clearly communicates your message without confusion.
- Consider your specific objective, audience, and tactics when creating content.
- Stay on message and keep it consistent.
- It is important to have consistent branding and messaging, including letterhead.
- Tell the reader where they can find more information.
- While implementing consistent branding and messaging will ensure you reflect effective national practices, you can maximize the effectiveness of your messages by targeting them toward your unique community.

Example Press Release

Press releases can help election officials engage proactively with their communities, and serve as a record of official information for the public. Press releases also give election officials an opportunity to address concerns, dispel misleading or false information, and reinforce the integrity and fairness of the election process. Press Release Templates can be found on the EAC website at:
https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/toolkits

Resources

Communicating Election and Post-Election Processes Toolkit

https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/communicating-election-and-post-election-processes-toolkit

This toolkit can be used to 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.

Election Management Guidelines

https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/election-management-guidelines

The Election Management Guidelines (EMG) was created to assist state and local election officials in effectively managing and administering elections. Chapters include Contingency Planning, Building Community Partnerships, Communicating with the Public, and more.

National Poll Worker Recruitment Day and Help America Vote Day Toolkits

https://www.eac.gov/help-america-vote#section-resources

The EAC has compiled a variety of resources election officials can use as they recruit poll workers and plan for Election Day including social media graphics, videos, and more.

Best Practices: FAQs for Election Officials

https://www.eac.gov/best-practices-faqs-election-officials

One of the best ways to educate the public is for election officials to proactively and consistently provide accurate and timely information to voters. The purpose of this toolkit is to provide election officials with messaging guidance, infographic facts sheets, social media graphics, social media text, and example FAQs, that can easily be shared on websites and social media platforms to inform voters about important election procedures.

How to Work with State Legislatures: A Guide for Local Election Officials

https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/electionofficials/How_to_Work_With_State_Legislators_FINAL.pdf

Local election officials are each state's election experts, and their perspectives can be instrumental in crafting effective, administrable election legislation. This brief guide, from the EAC and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), outlines five key principles to empower local election officials to embrace an educational mindset and engage with legislators and the legislative process.

Voting 101: Election Information for New Voters

https://www.eac.gov/voters/voting-101-election-information-new-voters

This is a customizable printable resource intended to cover the basic questions new voters have and to share resources to find out more information. The logo and contact information section can be edited on either the front or back cover to be specific to your election's office or agency. These resources are also available in 20 languages.