

About the Quick Start Guides: The EAC's Quick Start Guides are intended to familiarize local election officials with various topics they will likely encounter in election administration. The guides are a starting point to identify areas of concern and give officials a broad idea of factors they should consider in approaching a given topic.

What does "public relations" mean for an elections office?

Voting information is time-sensitive, with legal deadlines to participate in the election process. Election officials work directly with the public and rely on the media to help inform voters of critical information that all constituents need (or want) to know. In many cases, the most efficient way to communicate with voters is through local media. Local newspapers, television stations, radio stations, and social media pages are important sources of voter information. Making a public relations plan to communicate with voters proactively provides better public service and saves staff time by answering voters' questions before an election cycle.

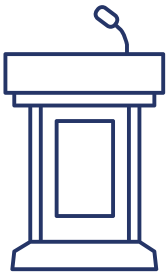


Step 1: Assess Media Environment



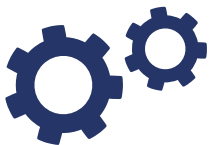
- **Create** a list of the newspapers, television stations, radio stations, and other outlets in your media market.
- **Collaborate** with local government, Chambers of Commerce, and other agencies to build a list of media contacts and email addresses for sending press releases.
- **Find** trusted sources of information in your community.
 - Ask yourself where you would look for information about your community. Where would you look for information about an important city council decision? Where would you post information if you found a lost pet? These are the same places voters will turn to when they have questions.
- **Identify** the social media platforms that are most widely used in your community.
 - Are there any influential groups or individuals who could assist with sharing official information?

Step 2: Identify Internal Capacity



- **Define** staff roles for communicating with the media.
 - Who is authorized to speak to the press in an official capacity?
 - Who will represent the organization in media interviews and press conferences?
- **Make** a plan for writing and distributing press releases.
 - Who is responsible for writing press releases?
 - How will press releases be edited or reviewed before being distributed to local media?
- **Identify** which social media platforms your office can utilize.
 - Have social media accounts been verified?
 - Who will be responsible for posting official content?
 - Who will be responsible for responding to constituent questions?

Step 3: Build Communication Resources



- **Gather** key facts about your community in a quick reference guide that can be provided to media outlets. These items could include your community's total registered voters, average turnout by election type, total polling places, total precincts, and where to find past election results.
- **Provide** links to the media for online resources that will be regularly updated throughout the election cycle, including candidate listings, sample ballots, and election results.
- **Create** a social media calendar for each of your active social media accounts. Social media posts should occur frequently enough to remain active, but they should also be relevant to the needs of your voters.