# How Newsrooms Can Address Election-Related Disinformation

## A JOURNALIST CHECKLIST FROM FREE PRESS

**Journalists and newsroom leaders play a critical role in combating electoral mis- and disinformation. Here are some strategies you can adopt:**

- ☐ **Make a plan.** Gather newsroom staff and create a plan for how to address disinformation and false reports about elections. Plan how you will fact-check; build relationships with county, state and federal election officials; and engage community groups providing election information. Assess your capacity and discuss how to foster potential journalism collaborations to combat disinformation.

- ☐ **Participate in training sessions.** Learn how to spot election disinformation, including deepfakes. Get trained on how to verify election-related tips your newsrooms receive and learn how to evaluate stories circulating on social media, group chats and message boards.

- ☐ **Establish a fact-checking process.** Commit to fact-checking across every team pre- and post-election. Staff who are fact-checking should monitor social-media posts, investigate tips that come in, consult with election authorities, verify video and audio content, and/or create a text or email hotline for the public to send rumors that need fact-checking.

- ☐ **Network with election officials and election-security task forces.** Introduce your newsroom to at least one local election office in your county or state so you have authoritative points of contact on election and voting information. These people can verify information, serve as expert sources in your reporting, and alert you to false stories and disinformation circulating in your community.

- ☐ **Engage your community on election and voting issues.** Host listening sessions, town halls, forums with election officials, digital AMAs ("ask me anything") with journalists or 1:1s with community leaders. These kinds of strategies will help your newsroom better understand the public's information needs regarding elections and voting — and to learn where misinformation is proliferating.

- ☐ **Proactively create content addressing disinformation and contested elections.** Create content that debunks disinformation and election-related myths, guides your audiences in how to spot disinformation and verify sources, and informs people about electoral processes. Also, prepare people for the possibility that results won't be available on election night and explain how vote-counting works.

- ☐ **Prepare for and counter likely/anticipated election-related disinformation narratives, including:**
  - False localized information about changes to voting dates, polling locations, etc.
  - Efforts to sow distrust in electoral processes, such as false stories about rampant voter fraud
  - False claims and harassment designed to undermine the credibility of election officials
  - Targeting of specific communities with narratives about their identities or cultural backgrounds
  - Disinformation about voting laws or crimes

Free Press created a database for newsrooms, journalists and other media professionals that features more than 100 resources on covering elections. This database can be found here.

*Free Press does not support or oppose any candidate for public office. Free Press is a nonpartisan organization. We fight for equitable access to technology, diverse and independent ownership of media platforms, and journalism that holds leaders accountable and tells people what's actually happening in their communities.*

Free Press