

# YOUR VOICE OHIO

Public Recommendations  
for News Media

# Strategy Recommendations for Local Media

- 1. Engage all demographics to identify the most important issues to the community and use their input to frame media coverage.** There is a great diversity of stories and interests in our community and they deserve to be heard. The inclusion of underrepresented individuals in this process is essential. Opening this dialogue helps articulate community needs and demonstrates the media's value of these communities, which will in turn enhance the trust between the community and the media. This helps the community feel more engaged/empowered in the news/media, influencing them to become involved in the election.
- 2. Clearly organize accurate information in a way that is easily accessible and researchable to people.** Providing easy access to accurate information helps the media earn the trust of the public. This allows a greater variety of people to make more informed decisions and establishes trust between readers and media.
- 3. Fact check statements by candidates and others.** The media can support informing citizens by providing high-quality analyses of voting records, statements about current pertinent issues and potential conflicts of interest. Citizens cannot make informed decisions based off of inaccurate information, and must be able to trust that the information they consume is truthful.
- 4. Use interactive engagement, such as quizzes, to engage readers and test their knowledge.** Journalists can use interactive engagement to understand knowledge deficits in the community and use that information to shape coverage; as well as compelling the audience to see what they do and don't know, in order to encourage them to become more informed on the issues at hand.
- 5. Leverage text-based engagement to for news,** to reach a younger, larger audience at low cost in a convenient and quick way.
- 6. Explore news as a conversation between readers and journalists.** It empowers readers to become more involved in the process and shapes media coverage to be more relevant, interesting, and engaging.

# Election Coverage Recommendations for Local Media

1. **Hold candidates accountable to their campaign promises** once elected. Compare promises with real-world outcomes. Discuss the impact of candidates' policies on Ohio after elected.
2. **Compare the concerns of the public (identified through public polling) to the promises of candidates** in their campaign communications.
3. Present campaign ideas and positions, and **ask candidates to outline a plan for implementation** once elected (including plan for working with Congress).
4. **Analyze the impact and results of existing policies candidates have already implemented or advocated for** in their career or political experience.
5. **Present the track records and accomplishments of candidates** in a comparative format (such as a table or chart).
6. **Create customized election coverage hubs** tailored to areas of interest (veterans, Millennials, older adults, other communities of interest) presented in an ongoing format where new stories and candidate info is updated daily/weekly and targeted towards specific demographics/communities/issues.
7. **Outline the potential impact of candidates' policies on Ohio.**
8. **Combine "sensational" headlines with factual reports and data.** Sensational may sell newspapers, but readers want and need long-term, in-depth, informative coverage.
9. **Use in-person and online forums to allow citizens to generate questions** for media to ask of candidates or campaign staff throughout campaign.
10. **Assess the personal qualities and characteristics of the candidates.**

# Tool Recommendations for Local Media

**Infographics** help present complex information in a short, visual format. Infographics may be useful in helping people understand a complicated issue or lots of statistics more quickly.

## *Benefits*

- Accessible and can be easily shared on social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Help make difficult information simple, can help digest in-depth articles and analyze statistics, and allow audience or reader to make decisions based on facts
- Unbiased

**Community events** can help journalists identify important community themes and priorities; uncover new stories and sources; build new relationships with a broader community; bring together diverse groups in the community; educate community members or build awareness of an issue; generate ideas from community members; and/or raise revenue.

## *Benefits*

- A better understanding of the community
- Additional revenue to support the sustainability of the news organization, by raising money directly or consulting with other organizations about hosting community events
- Serving as a model for other communities, institutions, and groups to host productive community engagement events
- Identify themes and priorities for investigation and research
- Hear directly from community members of different backgrounds as well as community leaders
- Transparency in priority-setting can build trust, clarity, familiarity, and ultimately foster community
- Communities are strengthened by in-person interaction which allows people to meet their neighbors
- Organizing in-person events provides another way to demonstrate the media's commitment to the community
- Holding live events creates an additional opportunity for the community to discuss problems, solutions, and actions that will improve the community

# Tool Recommendations for Local Media

**Solutions Journalism** encourages journalists to write about the most promising solutions to issues the community faces based on evidence and compelling data, without advocating for any specific solution.

## *Benefits*

- A powerful antidote to negativity and apathy, combating the reality that people feel desensitized to problems and bad news
- Citizens will focus more on taking ownership of and solving problems in their community
- The community will have more knowledge of ideas, solutions, and sources for help on challenging issues
- Informs citizens of possible actions they can take to solve problems, and empowers them to take those actions
- Opens up discussion of challenging and/or sensitive topics within the community
- Can unite communities together to face a challenging issue
- Provides a sense of hope to the community in dealing with the problem

**Training citizen journalists** occurs when community members are trained by journalists to report on local issues, particularly in areas or neighborhoods where coverage is limited, lacking, non-inclusive or misrepresenting the community.

## *Benefits*

- People with local knowledge and expertise can support journalists and build capacity which can improve accuracy, build relationships, generate empathy, and improve trust
- Citizens can see themselves and their community involved in solving problems
- The ability to explore issues and stories professional journalists aren't able to cover
- Individuals that receive training may become professional journalists, diversifying the makeup of a news organization; these individuals may also go on to take other leadership roles in their community
- Individuals may see citizen reporting as more legitimate and more trustworthy because the journalist comes from their same community, encouraging individuals to be more honest and open when engaging with citizen journalists

# Who We Are

The recommendations in this report were drafted by exclusively by Ohio citizens, with minor edits for grammar.



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Your Voice Ohio is a collaboration of various local Ohio media organizations (newspapers, TV, and radio) working to engage and support communities across Ohio. Funding for this effort is provided by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the Democracy Fund.



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