

How to bring credibility to your elections coverage

Not all things done in the name of political journalism are responsible and accurate. It is exhausting for news consumers to try to sort reliable information from the unreliable. Help them out by making it easier to see what makes your election reporting trustworthy by addressing these questions.

'How does the audience know?'

- **Sourcing: How does the audience know who you rely on for information?**
 - What will you say in the story to [make it clear what office or official the information is coming from, and why you chose that source?](#)
- **Goals: How does the audience know why you are covering this story?**
 - What will you include to explain how publishing this story [meets your mission and benefits your audience?](#)
 - What will you say about [where the idea for the story originated?](#)
- **Fairness: How does the audience know whether your approach is consistent? How would the audience know you strive for balance?**
 - What policies or processes will you point to relating to [how you cover candidates and other political campaigns?](#)
 - If [other candidates received similar coverage](#), where can you include links?
- **Ethics: How does the audience know whether you separate your personal political beliefs from coverage decisions?**
 - Where will you include a link to your [ethics code](#) or conflict of interest policy?
 - How can you credit the variety of people involved who ensured you didn't let your political preferences influence how the story was crafted?
- **Opinion: How does the audience know it's opinion content and not news? How does the audience know opinion content is created separately from the newsroom?**
 - Are you using clear language in the headline, above or within the story to explain that a separation between news decisions and opinion content exists?
 - When shared on other platforms (social, newsletters), does the language also specify that this piece was produced differently and separately than a news story?

Two more considerations for elections:

- **How would the audience know how to participate in and follow the election?**
 - How will your audience quickly find answers to their most basic voting questions?
 - How will you explain what to expect while voting, and while waiting for results?
- **Are you ready to fight back against bad-faith actors?**
 - When will you respond when your integrity or credibility are questioned?
 - What will it look like to defend your work? What can you prepare in advance?

For examples and more on this topic, please review [this slide deck](#).