

A MORE The Jewish PERFECT Partnership UNION for Democracy

Free, Fair, Safe, and Accessible Elections Scenario Planning

SCENARIO 1: SOCIAL UNREST AFTER TRUMP VICTORY

Late on Election Night, it becomes apparent that former President Donald Trump has received enough votes to win the election. Republicans are elated; Democrats are in shock. The following day, hundreds of impromptu protests take place spontaneously in cities across the country as Trump's political opponents express their anger and anxiety over the election results. Most protests are peaceful, even as many are met with counter-protests by jubilant Trump supporters.

However, later that evening in Los Angeles, Portland, Chicago, and Philadelphia, several far-left groups engage in property destruction, vandalism, and physical confrontations with far-right groups and law enforcement.

Citing these acts, Texas Governor Greg Abbott bans further protests "as a necessary measure to ensure public safety" and orders law enforcement to bar protesters from demonstrating in Texas. Republican governors in Florida, Oklahoma, and Arkansas quickly follow suit. In a speech to supporters, President-elect Trump calls on Democratic governors to deploy similar tactics to quell protests in their states and says that his first act as President will be to order the National Guard to break up protests in any state where they continue unabated.

SCENARIO 2: MISINFORMATION AND COMMUNITY TENSIONS

In the lead-up to the 2024 election, a surge of mis-, dis-, and malinformation (MDM) overwhelms social media, powered by foreign adversaries, domestic extremists, and generative artificial intelligence. Despite their best efforts, government officials and MDM watchdogs are unable to keep pace with the flood.

On election day itself, two pieces of MDM go viral – one featuring an AI-generated video purportedly showing hundreds of migrants lining up at a voting location in Arizona wearing "Harris for President" pins. It inspires several armed individuals in Arizona to head to voting sites in predominantly Spanish-speaking areas.

Another widespread post is an unverified Facebook post claiming that Jews are being verbally accosted by anti-Israel protestors at polling places in New York and Los Angeles, and urging Jews to "stay safe and stay home!" The post spreads rapidly across social media accounts in Jewish communities across the country.

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SCENARIO 3: ATTEMPTS TO DISRUPT VOTE COUNTING

By all measures, Election Day 2024 is a resounding success – more people vote in this election than in any other election in American history – and except for some minor weather-related issues, the voting process runs smoothly and safely. However, while many states are able to release their results on Election Night, it soon becomes apparent that the race is extraordinarily close. After five days, the nation’s gaze narrows on a few swing counties that will decide the results.

As in 2020, several of the states’ early reports showed former President Trump leading, but as mail-in and absentee ballots in Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Arizona are tallied, his lead has shrunk considerably. In response and without evidence, Trump claims “the steal is on again,” and calls on supporters to “do something before we don’t have a democracy anymore.”

Large crowds gather outside vote counting centers, tussling with law enforcement and harassing election workers. Dozens of election officials face credible threats against their families, leading several to resign. A spate of bomb threats forces several voting locations to close temporarily to allow law enforcement to investigate.

SCENARIO 4: ATTEMPTS TO OVERTURN ELECTION RESULTS

After a few days awaiting final election results, Vice President Kamala Harris is declared the winner of the 2024 presidential election. Democrats are elated; Republicans are in shock. The day after the race is called, hundreds of impromptu protests take place spontaneously in State Houses across the country as Harris’ political opponents express their anger and anxiety over the election results. Most of these protests are peaceful, even as many are met with counter-protests by jubilant Harris supporters.

In the wake of these results, former President Trump and Republican leaders across the country urge their supporters to reject the election results. Some use violent and apocalyptic language, claiming without evidence that “they stole another one” and calling this the start of “Civil War II.”

Behind the scenes, several Republican senators and Trump staffers call Republican state legislators in Arizona and Georgia – which both elected Harris, but where Republicans hold a legislative majority – urging them to switch their state’s Electoral College votes to Trump. Several Republican election officials refuse to certify local elections that went for Harris, claiming without evidence that the results are riddled with voter fraud.

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Planning Worksheet

Use this worksheet during scenario exercises and actual situations to help prepare and respond to election-related incidents.

PRINCIPLES OF RESPONSE

As you consider how you might prepare for and respond, keep in mind the following principles:

- **Uphold Democracy Principles:** When it comes to upholding democracy, the means matter as much as the ends – ensure your responses align with Democracy Principles.
- **Follow best practices:** Listen to the recommendations from experts – you can find lots of best practice resources in the Equip Toolkit.
- **Partner power:** Your impact is greater when you work with partners within and beyond the Jewish community. Be deliberate about finding ways to work in partnership.
- **Prepare, but try not to scare:** Fear can inhibit action. Try to reduce anxiety and help your community feel informed, ready, and equipped to respond productively.

Strategic Framing Questions	
What principles of democracy are relevant to this situation?	
In what ways might this situation affect your organization? Your community?	
What responsibilities do you and your organization have in this moment?	
What are your organization's goals related to this situation? How will you know if you've achieved your goals?	
What are your organization's unique strengths and resources for addressing this situation?	
What are your organization's particular challenges related to this situation?	

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PLANNING

Answer the following questions based on the above scenario, principles of response, and your answers to the framing questions.

- **Internal Coordination/Roles**
 - **Who is the lead decision maker?** Who else should be involved in the organization's response? (Consider the following areas of responsibility: Administrative; Physical security; Cyber security; Communications; Partnerships and external outreach; Community support)
- **Physical Security**
 - **Are there credible physical security threats to your community?**
 - What policies, protocols, and personnel need to be activated?
 - **Is there a *perceived* physical security threat to your community?**
 - How might you inform your community and address their concerns?
- **Cyber Security**
 - **Are there credible cyber security threats to your community?**
 - What policies, protocols, and personnel need to be activated?
 - **Is there a *perceived* cyber security threat to your community?**
 - How might you inform your community and address their concerns?
- **Conflict De-escalation**
 - **Is there potential for conflict *within* your community? What might that look like?**
 - What messaging/action might you engage in to de-escalate this conflict?
 - Who are the trusted messengers who can effectively lead these efforts?
 - **Is there potential for conflict *with others*? What might that look like?**
 - What messaging/action might you engage in to de-escalate this conflict?
 - Who are the trusted messengers who can effectively lead these efforts?
- **Communications**
 - **Who needs to hear from you at this moment?**
 - Who are the best messengers for this outreach?
 - **What do your various audiences need to know? What do they need to do?**
 - What is the proper tone/voice in this moment? What is the best way to get the message to these audiences? When is it most advisable to reach out?
- **Partnership/Outreach**
 - **What communities, groups, and organizations are also affected?**
 - How might you demonstrate support to communities in a time of need?
 - **What communities, groups, and organizations could strengthen your response?**
 - What would meaningful collaboration with partners look like?

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- **Learning and Improvement**

- **Physical and Cyber Security:** What additional policies, protocols, and personnel might better prepare you for similar scenarios in the future?
- **Conflict De-escalation:** Going forward, what messaging and programming could you offer in advance of a similar situation to reduce the likelihood of conflict?
- **Communications:** What practices might you instate to improve internal and external communications going forward?
- **Partnership/Outreach:** What relationships do you wish you had that would have been helpful to lean on? How can you start building those relationships now?

PRIORITIZATION

Based on your answers to the above questions, use this tool to identify the immediate, urgent, important, and long-term tasks that your organization should take following this situation.

Prioritization Planning Tool				
	Immediate (Today)	Urgent (2-3 Days)	Important (4-5 Days)	Long-Term
Administration/ Coordination				
Physical Security				
Cyber Security				
Conflict De-escalation				
Communications				
Partnership/Outreach				

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DIY Scenario Design Guide

INTRODUCTION

Your organization should regularly practice responding to election-related scenarios. Once you consider the four scenarios provided above, you can design additional scenarios that may affect your community.

DESIGN FEATURES

A good scenario includes the following design features:

- **Prepare, not scare:** Scenario planning is about building muscles for keeping your community safe, calm, informed, and engaged. Avoid scenarios that depict worst-case possibilities, which can trigger strong emotions and disrupt effective planning.
- **Realistic:** While it is impossible to predict the exact situations that may occur, focusing on likely scenarios will provide you with a leg up should a similar situation arise.
- **Focus on democracy:** There are a lot of things that might affect your community in the coming weeks and months, and scenario planning is useful for addressing lots of your concerns. For the purposes of this activity, keep your focus on democracy-related issues.
- **Streamline:** Like situations in real life, scenarios can quickly become overcomplicated, which can make scenario planning feel disjointed. Try to address a single issue in each scenario to help maintain focus and build your planning muscles.
- **Nonpartisan:** Threats to democracy can come from across the ideological spectrum - even from those with whom you normally work alongside. While each individual scenario may have a particular focus, in the aggregate scenarios should explore threats to democracy arising from across the political landscape.
- **Relevant to diverse community members:** Great scenarios have a local angle and something for everyone to chew on, regardless of the role they play in your community.

CREATING YOUR SCENARIO

Follow the following steps to create a strong scenario.

1. Identify a concern for your organization or community related to the election or democracy.
2. Envision how that concern might realistically manifest nationally and locally.
3. Based on this, draft a ½-page scenario following the above design features. Be sure to include the who, what, where, when, why and how of the scenario.
4. Ask a colleague to review and make recommendations based on the design features.
5. Share the scenario and [Planning Worksheet](#) with relevant decision-makers.