Center for
Community Media

2021 City Elections Initiative Guide

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Introduction: About the Initiative

The 2021 City Elections Initiative is a pilot program at the Center for Community Media at CUNY's Newmark J-School in New York City. The objective of the program is to support community-based media in the city in deepening and expanding their coverage of the 2021 local and citywide elections, and to inform prospective advertisers in political campaigns and voter education organizations about the trusted news sources of the voters they need to reach.

In this guide, we are pleased to share resources for the many stakeholders in keeping New Yorkers informed and engaged in local elections:

- Publishers and journalists in community media serving immigrants, communities of color, and neighborhoods across all five boroughs;

- Political candidates for a range of elected offices, and their campaign staff responsible for advertising and outreach to marginalized communities;
- Firms and organizations that advise and fundraise for political campaigns;
- City and state government agencies that oversee elections and keep voters informed.

This guide exists to assist New York City community media members in receiving advertising. The 2021 City Elections Initiative will serve as an "ambassador" between the campaigns and community media outlets in New York. The initiative is not a sales force. It will be the efforts of the publishers that result in selling city election advertising.

The initiative's objective is to increase awareness among the target audiences we have identified, resulting in increased revenue for community media. Ultimately, candidates decide the direction and spending of their campaigns. Publishers will need to reach out to them directly.

Our Program Manager

David Keisman, former publisher of The Bronx Times Reporter, Manhattan Times, and The Bronx Free Press, is managing the City Elections Initiative. If you have questions about the initiative or any of the resources in this guide, please email David at davidkeisman@gmail.com.

When to Contact David Keisman

- If you are a community media publisher and have any questions or want to know more about this initiative.
- If you want to receive feedback about your outlet's media kit, or if your outlet needs to create a new media kit. CCM is putting together a repository of media kits, so please send it to David Keisman.
- If you want to be informed about upcoming CCM activities and trainings linked to this initiative.
- If your outlet is not in the community media directory.

What You Need to Know

Tips on How Publishers Should be Prepared

Media outlets should start by matching candidates/districts to their corresponding news outlet. Many papers and digital sites have readership across the city but there are geographic concentrations for many outlets. This information is important to campaigns which need that targeting information.

Publishers must be able to present their news organization by micro target areas. Doing so will be more useful to the hundreds of council candidates running and key to selling ads. This information is included in our mapping and database tools.

The Five Potential Markets/Target Audiences

The initiative has identified five target markets which will be spending millions of dollars on advertising.

The five target markets are:

- Political Consultants
- Independent Expenditure Committees
- Advocacy Groups -- Unions/PACS
- New York City Agencies
- Board of Elections and Campaign Finance Board

Approximately 500 candidates are running for these offices in 2021:

- Mayor
- Public Advocate
- Comptroller
- Borough Presidents – 5 campaigns (Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Staten Island, Queens)
- District Attorney – 2 campaigns (Manhattan, Brooklyn)
- City Council – 33 open seats, 51 seats have candidates that have filed with CFB

Identify the Candidates

Use the database to identify the local candidates who are running in the neighborhoods your outlets have the greatest penetration. Many media outlets say, “We have citywide circulation”, which is true, but it doesn't make the argument as to why a local council candidate should advertise with you. This is a good time to think about zoned pricing advertising and new/ad flips for newspapers.

Marketing Materials/Presentation

You must ensure that every candidate and consultant is receiving a copy/subscription of your news product. Media kits are important but do not allow the lack of one to be a “blocker.” A sophisticated media kit, however, does help and you should have one. You need a simple “who we are, where we circulate, how much we cost” sheet. Tell the campaigns what benefits your outlets offer to them.

> CCM offers media kit creation assistance. Please contact us at ccm@journalism.cuny.edu if you are interested in this assistance.

Programming to Support Community Media in Covering Local Elections

New York City community media are an essential and trusted news source for many communities that are often underserved in the electoral process. The 2021 election season comes as a number of crises converge on the city, disproportionately claiming the lives, jobs, and resources of Black, Latinx, Asian, immigrant, and poor New Yorkers, and is also the first time New Yorkers will be using ranked-choice voting.

The City Elections Initiative is offering a number of programs to support community media in expanding and deepening their coverage of local elections, and in doing so, to improve civic engagement in marginalized communities and demonstrate their value to prospective advertisers in political and public information campaigns.

- CCM is hosting a series of **Mayoral Candidate Forums** exclusively for community-based journalists, to ensure that they are able to ask the questions that are relevant to their audience.

- The **2021 City Elections Reporting Fellowship**, funded by the Revson Foundation**,** offers a $1,000 stipend to 30 community-based journalists to produce four in-depth reports on local and citywide elections. These can include reportage, investigations, or detailed explainers on how to register and vote in local elections. Learn more about the fellowship here, and meet the inaugural class of fellows here.

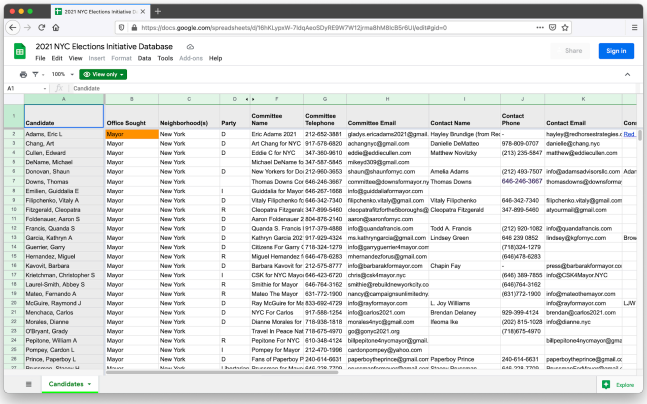
- Fellows and other members of New York City community media will also be able to participate in specialized training programs such as **How to Cover Local Elections**, **How to Create an Explainer with Graphics, and Ethics and Political Advertising**. To receive alerts and invitations to training opportunities in the City Elections Initiative, sign up here.

- CCM has also launched a partnership with The City's Civic Newsroom Project to help publishers solicit questions from their audiences for candidates for various elected offices.

Resources and Tools for Community Media Publishers and Prospective Advertisers

2021 City Elections Initiative Database

The City Election Initiative has created a **database** as a tool for media outlets to coordinate their campaigns, news coverage and advertising. Organized by office sought and candidate, it includes contact information and campaign links – specifically, where available, candidates' website and social media links, contact information for the campaign, campaign consultant, and communications manager, and the amount of money raised and on hand as of the last filing.

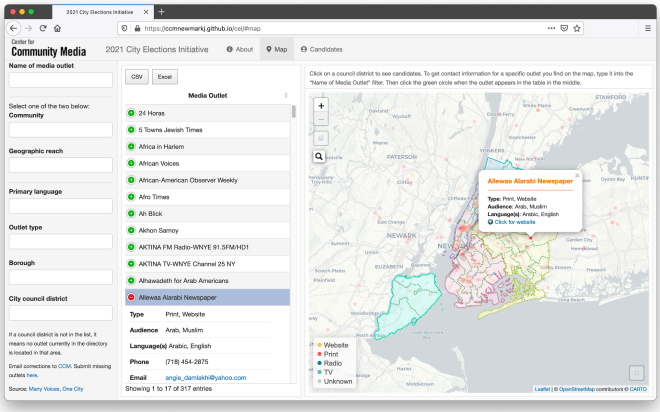


The CCM City Election Initiative is acting as an ambassador to the political markets. The initiative is reaching out to candidates and other groups to trumpet the benefits of advertising in our community news outlets.

VISIT THE DATABASE

New York City Media Map

In addition, the 2021 City Elections Initiative has developed an **original interactive map** of the New York City metro area's community media ecosystem, which can be sorted by community, geographic reach, language, borough, and city council district.



Political candidates, campaign staffers, and advertisers in city government and voter education organizations are welcome to explore the map to find the outlets serving the communities and voters they'd like to reach.

Visit **Many Voices, One City**, CCM's directory of more than 300 New York City metro area community media outlets. This directory is updated continually. Please contact ccm@journalism.cuny.edu if your organization is not listed.

VISIT THE MAP