

Considerations and support as we face an historic federal election in the US

As the elections draw closer, many leaders are faced with questions about how to handle the corresponding increase in stress of their teams. While there is certainly no “one-size-fits-all-approach” to how to support your people and mission, history has taught us a lot.

First, be prepared for multiple outcomes on election night including the very likely scenario that we will not know the results of the Presidential race for a few days, possibly longer. [This piece from FiveThirtyEight](#) offers some great analysis of what to expect and why.

While there isn't a perfect solution to all the situations and feelings the elections will bring, embracing your shared values and sense of purpose can build community.

Finally, there are different phases to election season and each offers unique opportunities to address the needs of your people, your program, and your finances.

Tips and considerations in the lead-up to election day

People

- [Prepare managers](#) and consider developing an elections response team.
- Depending on your work, a deep dive on election outcome scenario planning may be helpful. This [election scenario diagnostic tool](#) provides detailed information and resources.
- Consider, and respect, that not all your staff may feel and vote the same way. Why? If nothing else, because [43 percent of Americans don't identify with either party](#).
- Develop clear boundaries and guidance for what is, and isn't, appropriate to bring into your work space. [Model what is appropriate in an email](#) to staff and board.
- Don't schedule critical or time-sensitive work right before or after the election.
- Make sure staff know and [are supported to vote](#). Remember that voters in under-resourced communities often face longer travel to polls and longer lines once there.
- For staff engaged in things like voter registration or get out the vote initiatives, create and clarify time off to recharge.
- Consider the impact of each outcome on your program team, volunteer recruitment, and fundraising. Whose work gets easier? Whose gets harder?

Program

- Seize the opportunity each outcome provides with a prepared comms plan.
- Consider your unique audiences: who may be happy in each outcome, who disappointed, who angry, and who might be genuinely scared?
- Customize your communications: which messages will connect with whom? Who might it be appropriate to ask to take action and whom should you offer support to?
- If you work in culturally and politically diverse spaces, [TREC's webinar on Staying True to Your Values While Reaching Across the Divide](#) may be helpful.

- If the election results are delayed, there is still an opportunity for your organization to message and respond about the impact on your issues.
- Coordinate with your fundraisers on all communications plans!

Fundraising

- All the same opportunity and thinking above applies. Which of your audiences will be ripe for which ask, based on which outcomes?
- Reviewing [TREC's Fundraising in Times of Uncertainty](#) may be helpful.
- Analyze historical data and go through your major donor list. Prepare communications for key individuals and set up important meetings in advance.

Election day until results are known

- Consider grounding your team by offering an [election day mindfulness exercise](#).
- Provide all options and spaces for where people are in the moment.
- If election results aren't clear on election night, implement your communications and outreach plans for that scenario.

After the election results are clear

People

- Implement communication and outreach plans for the relevant scenario.
- Consider hosting a [staff debrief](#) for those ready and interested.
- Allow those ready to run and give the rest time to get there.

Program

- Embrace short-term planning over long-term strategic planning until after the inauguration and important agency appointments are made.
- Consider how identity may be impacting people. For example, women's rights are a key issue, and hate speech and crimes targeting specific groups may spike. Are there members of your staff, your coalitions, or community feeling threatened?

Fundraising

- Carefully consider the challenges and new opportunities that exist.
- If you don't already have a [healthy reserve](#), how can you use the current situation to [build an adequate](#) one for the future?
- Meet with all your important funders and donors to learn how the results may impact their giving generally, as well as to your organization specifically.