

Building a Resiliency Network:

A toolkit for building community
resilience during a contentious
election cycle

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About this Toolkit

As we enter into the most contentious election cycle in recent memory, set against the backdrop of an already tumultuous year, leaders from all walks of life will play a central role in building communities resilient to election violence – communities that are able to prevent, mitigate, and respond in the face of increased risk. As leaders prepare for this critical moment, we offer this toolkit to the broader toolbox of approaches for preventing election violence.

These tools take a preventative, resilience-based approach. They reflect an understanding that inter-personal and inter-organizational **relationships built on trust and coordinated, proactive action by leaders from across a community are the ultimate fortification against violence and other forms of harm.**

This toolkit offers simple, step-by-step guidance and worksheets for leaders seeking to take decisive steps to create resilience to violence in their communities. The tools included range from how to build or expand a community-wide network of leaders, to how to monitor increasing tensions, respond in a crisis, and take proactive action that undermines conflict dynamics.

For groups who are already organized and active, this toolkit offers tools and tips for expanding your network, additional insights on building crisis monitoring and response systems, and practical advice on topics such as correcting misinformation, and setting positive norms.

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Introduction

Risk Factors for Election Violence in the U.S.

Political violence is a pervasive, if often forgotten, feature of America's national story. Election violence, a type of political violence, in particular, has been a consistent feature of our democratic history.¹ Election violence in the U.S. has mostly occurred within the context of wider social upheaval and conflict— a symptom of and an outlet for society-wide conflict dynamics. It has often been aimed at suppressing the vote of marginalized groups, from Louisville's **Bloody Monday** in 1855 to the 1873 **Colfax Massacre** in Louisiana to Florida's 1920 **Ocoee Massacre** to 1965's **Bloody Sunday** during the Selma to Montgomery marches.*

As we enter the 2020 election cycle, our country is at yet another critical juncture, marked by a sense of heightened tension and pressure. This year alone, the U.S. has weathered a deadly pandemic; large-scale natural disasters, from hurricanes to wildfires; and a devastating economic downturn. In the face of widespread civic mobilization for racial justice, we have seen government forces (from police to federal forces) take violent, militarized action against civilians and the acceleration and emboldening of white supremacist, anti-government, extremist groups.

Underlying Vulnerabilities for Political Violence in the U.S.

Over the past five years, the U.S. has seen a marked increase in political violence — from an uptick in hate crimes nationally,⁴ to the

We define political violence as violence aimed at political ends – controlling or changing who benefits from, and participates fully in, U.S. political, economic and socio-cultural life.²

The International Foundation for Election Systems defines electoral violence as “any harm, or threat of harm, to any persons or property involved in the election process, or the election process itself, during the election period.”³

* More on these examples on pg. 6.

attempted assassinations of leading political figures,⁵ to the growing threats of violence against female politicians from both parties.⁶ Four factors that are commonly used as risk indicators for political violence internationally, have, at different rates, significantly deteriorated⁷ over the past five years in the U.S.* These are:

- 1. High levels of elite factionalization:** ‘Elite factionalization’ refers to when a country’s political elites and parties engage in zero-sum, winner-takes-all politics to advance their own group’s interest at the expense of the collective’s.⁸
- 2. High levels of societal polarization, particularly affective polarization:** ‘Affective societal polarization’ — the kind we are witnessing in the U.S. — refers to when political disagreements stem from how people feel about those on the other side of the political aisle, rather than a particular issue or policy.⁹
- 3. A rise in hate and dangerous rhetoric:** Hateful and dangerous rhetoric divides societies into an “us” in need of protection and a threatening “them” and targets groups that are already marginalized. Exposure to such rhetoric not only impacts extreme segments of society, but influences perceptions of what is acceptable among society at-large.¹⁰
- 4. Weakening institutions:** Countries that are characterized as “partial democracies” (rather than full democracies or autocracies) are at the highest risk of violence. Backsliding in democratic institutions and norms, as well as decreased legitimacy and trust for democratic institutions increase the risk of violence.¹¹

Research has shown, for example, that U.S. Congress is the most factionalized it has been since the Reconstruction period following the Civil War.¹² What’s more, public trust in the government and media has recently hit historic lows.¹³ This political disillusionment corresponds to support for other forms of rule: two decades ago only one in 16 Americans believed “army rule” was a good system of government. Now this number has risen to one in six.¹⁴

* It is worth noting that while the U.S. has declined rapidly in regards to these indicators, it still remains a relatively “healthy” society when looking at indicators for resilience, institutional strength, economic strength, etc. This broader picture tells us that we are well-situated to take preventative action to slow further deterioration.

Collectively, these risk factors drive U.S. society to become increasingly accepting – or even demanding – of zero-sum policies and political actions that further weaken the United States’ resilience to violence.

A Brief Look at Historical Examples

Bloody Monday: In 1855, armed local members of the Know-Nothing party, a xenophobic, nativist political movement partial to dangerous rhetoric, descended upon voting booths, targeting recent German and Irish immigrants. Before long, intimidation turned to outright violence that left 22 people dead and many more injured.¹⁵

The Colfax Massacre: In 1873, still in the midst of Reconstruction, a mob of white insurgents attacked the courthouse in Grant Parish, Louisiana, in an attempt to overturn the recent Republican gubernatorial victory. The mob targeted the Black population of Colfax, who had organized in defense of the courthouse (and thus the election results) after learning of the mob. Nearly two weeks of violence resulted in an estimated 62-150 fatalities among the besieged Black residents and three fatalities among participants in the white mob.¹⁶

Ocoee Massacre: In 1920, a white mob murdered between 30 and 35 Black people in Ocoee, Florida. July Perry, a Black man and leader in local efforts to register Black residents to vote, was turned away when he went to vote and was chased by a white mob. Violence from the mob quickly escalated to target other members of the Black community, and the mob was joined by Klan members from neighboring towns. Ultimately, the entire northern quarter — where most of the Black community lived — was destroyed and between 30 and 35 Black residents murdered.¹⁷

Bloody Sunday: On March 7, 1965, at the height of the decade’s Civil Rights Movement, over 500 protesters took to the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. The march, part of the Selma to Montgomery marches organized to call for equal voting rights for Black Americans, was met with horrific violence perpetrated by local law enforcement and recently deputized white locals.¹⁸

Election-Specific Risks

How, exactly, do these risk factors and tensions manifest as risks of violence during the election cycle? In a polarized society increasingly rife with “us” vs. “them” narratives and zero-sum mentalities, such as the U.S. in 2020, elections to determine who holds power at the highest levels of government can easily become the proverbial straw that breaks the camel’s back — a flashpoint for increased division, tensions, violence, and decreasing trust and buy-in to democratic norms and processes.*

Contentious election cycles can exacerbate existing societal fractures and faultlines, further entrenching zero-sum mentalities. They can trigger, accelerate, and expand violence and can undermine faith in democratic institutions and processes, a type of trust that is hard to regain. These risks pose threats not only to our democracy at large, but to communities around the country as these national-level dynamics play out on a local level.

Layered onto the macro risk factors described above, recent events deepen the challenges and risks we must manage in this election cycle. More proximate indicators of concern for this election specifically include:

- The militarized state response to racial justice protests has increasingly normalized violence and created an atmosphere of intimidation.¹⁹
- Armed protests have already shut down a state legislature.²⁰
- Changes to election procedures necessitated by COVID-19 (e.g., mail-in voting, longer lines, social distancing requirements, etc.) have already been politicized. Absent significant voter education efforts, they can lead

* It’s critical to note that when discussing risks for violence, specifically targeting people for violence based on their identities, within a society, the society’s power structure is a critical variable. Groups who are in power (holding political power, resources, etc), are more equipped to mobilize for large-scale violence than groups who have been historically marginalized. Therefore, when looking at risks for violence, it is of central importance to consider histories and capacities of mobilizing for violence when assessing risk.

to public confusion, mis- and disinformation, and ultimately increase the potential for contestation.

- Technical challenges (e.g., inadequate staffing) with managing elections amidst COVID-19 may fuel contestation and claims of illegitimacy.
- The waiting period between election day and the results announcement (to which Americans are unaccustomed) increases the potential for fraud, interference with counting, and preemptive declarations of victory.
- Voter suppression efforts could be further fueled by narratives of blame and othering, which have gained momentum during COVID-19.²¹
- Quarantine and the economic downturn have been a major recruitment opportunity for extremist groups, as individuals are home with negative emotions and more time on their hands.²²
- An economic downturn could increase a scarcity mindset through which the election feels even more high stakes.

What election violence looks like

Around the world, the majority of election violence happens before and after election day, taking a variety of forms — from physical violence to threats and intimidation — and may be perpetrated by a number of actors — including federal or local state forces, vigilante or paramilitary groups or mobs, or individuals. Further, it can have a range of targets, including elected politicians, candidates (including candidates in local races), polling locations and other key parts of the election process, and voters or potential voters.

The graphic below illustrates the types of violence risk for each stage of the election cycle.

CATEGORIES:	BEFORE	DURING	COUNTING AND ANNOUNCEMENT	AFTER RESULTS ARE ANNOUNCED
Intimidation, harassment and targeted violence	[Red line spanning all stages]			
Violence targeting political parties	[Blue line spanning all stages]			
Attempts to target the process	[Orange line spanning BEFORE, DURING, and COUNTING AND ANNOUNCEMENT]			
Clashes at rallies or campaign events		[Green line spanning DURING, COUNTING AND ANNOUNCEMENT, and AFTER RESULTS ARE ANNOUNCED]		
Violence and clashes to dispute results		[Red line spanning DURING, COUNTING AND ANNOUNCEMENT, and AFTER RESULTS ARE ANNOUNCED]		
State-sanctioned violence	[Blue line spanning all stages]			
Victory violence				[Orange line spanning AFTER RESULTS ARE ANNOUNCED]

Note: Once violence emerges, it can spiral into cycles of retaliation, where new violence is justified as revenge or retaliation for past violence. Managing and preventing this potential to spiral can be a core impact of resiliency networks.

TIMELINE EXPLAINED:

Before voting, violence seeks to manipulate the election itself - for example, by intimidating voters (influencing who will turn out to vote) or candidates. We can also see clashes between competing groups.

During voting, violence or threats of violence can be used.

Counting and announcement of results, especially with a waiting period, can be a time of increased tensions especially if leaders begin to preemptively declare victory and fraud; we can also see mobilization of armed actors and networks.

After results are announced, violence can be used to dispute the results - whether through clashes between opposing parties at protests or state violence against protestors. Victory violence, where the winner expresses dominance over the perceived loser (political opponents or other groups), can also emerge at this time.

CATEGORIES EXPLAINED:

- 1. Intimidation, harassment and targeted violence** (e.g., targeting specific groups based on their identity, targeting candidates including those running in lower races, targeting people showing up to vote) — this can be perpetrated by state forces, paramilitary groups (such as militias), or other non-state actors
- 2. Violence targeting political parties** (e.g., campaign offices)
- 3. Attempts to target the process** (e.g., polling stations, polling locations, counting locations, electors, key decision-makers, etc.)
- 4. Clashes at rallies or campaign events** (e.g., between supporters of different parties, supporters and armed groups, supporters and security forces; the targeting of candidates)
- 5. Violence and clashes to dispute results** (e.g., between protestors supporting different parties, security forces and protestors, protestors and armed groups like militias, etc.)
- 6. State-sanctioned violence:** Violence by state forces (e.g., local police, national guard, federal forces) against civilians (often during protests); any violence by state forces against civilians can serve as intimidation against civic engagement throughout the election cycle
- 7. Victory violence:** Violence where the winner expresses dominance over the perceived loser (whether members of a political party or marginalized group)

As with any type of violence, the underlying conflict dynamics are both fuel for and fueled by different narratives. Election violence, specifically, is often fueled by certain types of narratives. These narratives are often planted in the pre-election period and mobilized throughout the election cycle. They include narratives that seek to:

1. Coerce or manipulate people not to vote (including threats and intimidation, as well as targeted mis- and disinformation spreading incorrect information about registration deadlines, identification requirements, and voting procedures).
2. Undermine election legitimacy. This includes sowing confusion about processes and procedures. Broad preemptive declarations of victory and/or unfounded claims of fraud are particularly worrisome, especially if these come alongside calls for violent action by supporters, or calls to stop the process (e.g. stop further counting).
3. Portray different groups as threats (targeting marginalized as well as political opponents).
4. Reinforce zero-sum, winner-takes-all mentalities.
5. Dehumanize specific groups (including political opponents and marginalized groups).
6. Directly call for violence, reducing or removing agency (i.e. “we have no other choice”).
7. Valorize or celebrate acts of violence throughout the election cycle.²³

Preventing election violence by building more resilient communities

In the face of these risks, international and domestic experience have shown us time and again that building resilient communities through an infrastructure of relationships is the most effective fortification against election violence.²⁴ We call this infrastructure a “resiliency network”. When made up of the right actors and committed to taking ongoing, thoughtful action, resiliency networks can:

- 1. Address existing forms of ongoing violence:** Resiliency networks offer a platform for leaders from diverse stakeholder groups to share their

experiences handling ongoing violence and other types of harm. Through a shared forum with coordinating capacity, leaders from across stakeholder groups are then able to build coordinated responses in support of affected communities.

2. Respond to triggers and escalating events to reduce the potential for violence:

By building monitoring and response infrastructures and plans, leaders are positioned to respond to potential triggers and escalations in real time. This can also prevent acts of violence from escalating (turning into cycles of revenge and retaliation, where violence is used to justify more violence).

3. Mitigate and address the impact of violence:

If violence does occur, resiliency networks are able to mobilize and leverage existing relationships and trust in real time. A diverse network from across a community can also ensure that support gets channeled to those directly affected by violence and that violence doesn't deepen and entrench existing marginalization and divisions. The network can also inform mitigation and response efforts.

The exact priorities and actions of a resiliency network should be tailored to the context in which it is operating. During an election cycle, a resiliency network can accomplish the goals listed above by focusing on several key priorities:

CATEGORIES:	BEFORE	DURING	COUNTING AND ANNOUNCEMENT	AFTER RESULTS ARE ANNOUNCED
Intimidation, harassment and targeted violence				
Violence targeting political parties				
Attempts to target the process				
Clashes at rallies or campaign events				
Violence and clashes to dispute results				
State-sanctioned violence				
Victory violence				
CATEGORIES:	BEFORE	DURING	COUNTING AND ANNOUNCEMENT	AFTER RESULTS ARE ANNOUNCED
Build or expand your network				
Analyze risk and resilience factors				
Develop a communication infrastructure				
Map network resources				
Develop a risk monitoring and crisis coordination response plan				
Monitor events using your monitoring plan				
Employ strategic crisis response actions and messages				
Proactively set narratives				

TIMELINE EXPLAINED:

Before voting, the goal is to build and prepare your network, set proactive narratives to reduce the risk of violence, and begin monitoring and responding to issues that emerge, address harms, support communities that experience violence or intimidation, prevent escalation, and ensure that everyone feels safe voting.

During voting, the goal is to reduce confusion, walk people through the process, and monitor and respond to issues that emerge to prevent escalation and harm, support communities that experience violence or intimidation, and ensure that everyone feels safe voting.

Counting and announcement of results, especially with a waiting period, is a time to focus on providing clear and accurate information in response to your monitoring of tensions and confusion and to continue monitoring and responding to signs of tension and violence.

After results are announced, the goal is to provide clear information about dispute resolution processes and work to prevent violence between different stakeholders, including opposing political groups, targeted groups, armed actors, and state forces.

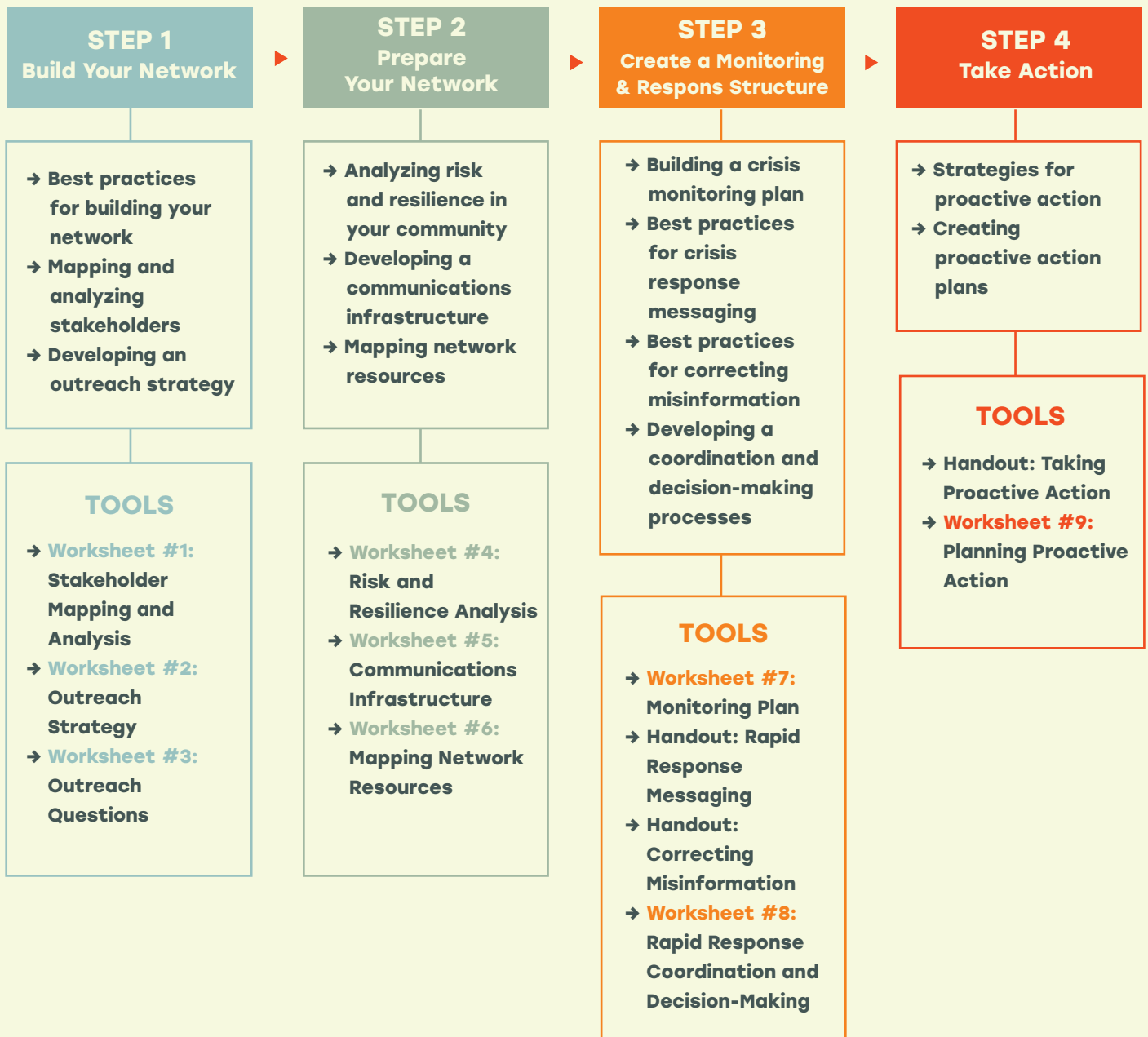
CATEGORIES EXPLAINED:

1. Build or expand your network
2. Analyze risk and resilience factors
3. Develop a communication infrastructure
4. Map network resources
5. Develop a risk monitoring and crisis coordination response plan
6. Monitor events using your monitoring plan
7. Employ strategic crisis response actions and messages
8. Proactively set narratives
 - a. Build and strengthen unifying identities
 - b. Set positive norms
 - c. Encourage and support action
 - d. Proactively communicate accurate information and correct misinformation
 - e. Build trust within and between communities

In light of all the risk factors outlined above, there is an urgent need to build these networks where they do not exist and expand them where they do. While the need for these networks is urgent at this moment, once in place, resiliency networks can and should be an integral part of ongoing community-based resilience strategies.

Contents of this toolkit

In this toolkit, we walk through each step in building, preparing, mobilizing, and taking proactive action with a resiliency network, with practical tips, tools, and exercises at each step. The toolkit is laid out in a sequenced way, with each step building on the last. With that said, each exercise and handout is designed so that it can also be used as a standalone piece. The toolkit is laid out as follows:



STEP ONE:

Build your network

The first step is to build your network (this can also mean expanding an existing network). For a resiliency network to be effective, it must include leaders representing as many stakeholder groups in a community as possible – particularly those groups most likely to be affected by violence. In this section we...

1. Share best practices for building a resiliency network
2. Guide you through a stakeholder mapping exercise as a starting point for network outreach
3. Guide you through building an outreach strategy
4. Guide you through initial conversations with potential network members as you do outreach

Tools in this section are:

- Worksheet #1 : Stakeholder Mapping and Analysis
- Worksheet #2 : Outreach Strategy
- Worksheet #3 : Outreach Questions

Note: Even if you already have a network, you can review these worksheets to check if there are other leaders, groups, communities, or networks you can connect with to be as effective as possible.

Keep in Mind: There may already be networks or groups doing relevant work that you can support or join – especially where groups have already experienced violence and worked to create a response. This is a chance to map what you know and then work to expand your understanding of your community by connecting with different groups.



Local stakeholder mapping and analysis

In order to build or expand your network, you can start with a mapping and analysis of stakeholder groups.

Use the “**Stakeholder Mapping**” worksheet to start mapping and brainstorming relevant stakeholder groups in your community. Make sure you are considering different types of stakeholders: local leaders, organizations doing relevant work, groups most likely to be affected by violence, and people central to the broader communication ecosystem (such as people with large platforms).

Once you’ve filled in the worksheet, identify leaders and potential partners from the mapped groups.

Once you’ve done this mapping, we’ll walk you through outreach conversations.

WORKSHEET #1: Stakeholder Mapping

Use this worksheet to map out different stakeholder groups in your community. Once you have mapped stakeholders, use the second part of this worksheet to analyze your connections to these groups and identify where there are gaps.

STEP ONE: MAP STAKEHOLDERS

Fill in the circles on the following page with as many stakeholders as you can think of. Consider bringing in additional perspectives during this initial mapping to create as complete of a picture as possible. Don't forget to put yourself on the map, which will be important when you begin your analysis. Also remember that this process should be ongoing and build on itself as your network grows.

Note: You can add as many additional circles as you need and/or do this mapping on a poster board or flipchart paper for more space.

You can begin thinking through the different stakeholder groups in your community with the following prompts:

- What types of formal organizations exist in your community (e.g. trade unions, civic organizations, volunteer organizations, advocacy organizations, mutual aid societies)?
- What types of informal organizations exist in your community (e.g. Facebook groups for parents, sports teams, gardening clubs)?
- Which faith communities are present in your community?
- Who are groups that are likely to be directly affected by election violence?
- Who are groups who have been disproportionately affected by violence in the past?
- Who are groups that have been and/or are currently scapegoated, targeted, or otherwise marginalized?
- Who are influential groups in your community? Who do people listen to? Who has a large platform?
- Who are information spreaders in your community (e.g. bartenders, postal workers, Facebook group moderators)?

WORKSHEET #1: Stakeholder Mapping

A 4x4 grid of 16 empty circles, arranged in four rows and four columns. Each circle is a light teal outline, intended for mapping stakeholders.

WORKSHEET #1: Stakeholder Mapping

STEP TWO: ANALYZE STAKEHOLDER MAP

Now that you have mapped these stakeholder groups, you can begin to analyze them.

1. First, draw lines between different stakeholder groups that are connected to one another. You can go a step further by writing a brief description of the nature of that connection above the line or in a note below.

2. Second, list any leaders that you either know directly or know of within each stakeholder community. These leaders may not serve in an elected or otherwise official capacity; they may run a block club, a service organization, organize mutual aid, etc. You can write the names of these leaders next to the circle or create a list below.

3. For stakeholder groups you don't have a direct connection to, think about whether you know anyone who can connect you. This is especially important if you do not have a direct connection to communities most likely to be affected by violence.

4. *You should now have:*

- A map of stakeholder groups, with connections between various groups illustrated (including your own connection to each group)
- A list of leaders within each stakeholder group
- A list of people who can connect you to additional leaders and groups

» *Now it's time to use this mapping to plan outreach!* »

Stakeholder outreach

Once you have mapped stakeholder groups and identified leaders and potential partners, you can begin reaching out to new stakeholders. It is important to remember that this outreach should not be transactional but rather aimed at building deep relationships built on mutual trust. Outreach should therefore begin with learning about potential network members – their experiences, priorities, needs, etc.

Building relationships and coalitions can be a complex process. It is critical to approach this process from a place of curiosity, humility, and patience. This means:

1. Focus on listening and learning from other members of your network, particularly those from communities most likely to be affected by violence.
2. Remember that people have different experiences in the same community. Again, approach learning about others' experiences from a place of curiosity and humility.
3. Remember trust-building can be a long process that requires sustained interaction. Be open to learning about barriers to building trust- whether that is unintended harm you have caused or wider community dynamics.

You can use the **“Outreach Strategy”** worksheet to plan outreach to potential partners, and the **“Outreach Questions”** worksheet to start thinking about questions for listening and learning.

Note: You may be building new connections with a shorter than ideal timeframe – keep this in mind and be realistic with your asks and requests. At the very least, it is helpful to know who is out there and make sure they know your interest and intentions with this work – even this basic level of connection can help with coordination in moments of crisis.

WORKSHEET #2: Outreach Strategy

Now that you have mapped and analyzed the different stakeholders in your community, you can start reaching out to people in your existing network as well as new contacts to broaden your network and connections to different groups and leaders. It's good to plan outreach up front to make sure you're connected to a diverse set of stakeholders, but you should also keep revisiting: are there more people you should be reaching out to? Ask yourself this regularly as you continue to build, broaden, and deepen the relationships and diversity of your network.

STEP ONE: OUTREACH TO EXISTING CONNECTIONS

Referring back to your stakeholder map and analysis, list all the leaders you are connected to and can reach out to directly. Next to their name, write how you will contact them (telephone, email, social media, etc.).

Stakeholder	Contact(s)	Method of contact	Person responsible

WORKSHEET #2: Outreach Strategy

STEP TWO: OUTREACH TO NEW CONNECTIONS

Continuing to draw on your stakeholder map and analysis, now list leaders and groups that you are not directly connected to. Again, revisit which connections you share. Next to the name of each group or leader write down your strategy for contacting them. If you don't know where to begin in contacting them, consider doing this exercise with other people in your network who may have additional connections and/or ideas.

Group or individual	Strategy for contacting

Keep revisiting and updating this exercise as you expand your network.

WORKSHEET #3: Outreach Questions

It's key to begin conducting your outreach in a way that is collaborative and designed to build long-term trust. You can begin your conversations with potential partners or network members by outlining your concerns and reasons for organizing a resiliency network. Then, you can refer to the goals of a resiliency network and/or the information provided about risks and election violence as is useful.

Approach initial conversations slowly and with flexibility. Think of this as a time to learn about people's needs, concerns, priorities, etc. You can use this worksheet to guide these initial conversations.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. Listen to learn. Remember that one of the benefits of a diverse network is that people bring complementary knowledge and insights.
2. It's important to respect people's time and boundaries. If someone says they don't have the bandwidth to be involved, ask them if they know someone else who may want to get involved.
3. Building trust is an ongoing process and it may be best to wait to ask more sensitive questions, particularly with groups with a history of being marginalized or targeted with violence.
4. Transparency is critical. Be transparent with people about your goals, the process ahead, what they can and can't expect from you, etc.

WORKSHEET #3: Outreach Questions

QUESTIONS FOR POTENTIAL RESILIENCY NETWORK MEMBERS

Once you've discussed the goals of a resiliency network and the potential partner's interest, consider asking the below questions to better understand their interests, needs, experiences, and potential role in the network:

1. What groups do you currently work in and identify with? What's your role in these groups?
2. What are your long-term goals for making our community more resilient? Do you see your goals as in alignment with other members of the groups you just mentioned?
3. Keeping these long-term goals in mind, how are you viewing this current election cycle in terms of its effect on our community? In what ways does it feel risky? In what ways does it feel like an opportunity? Do any specific risks or opportunities come to mind?
4. What underlying strengths do you think our community has to face these risks and make the most of these opportunities?
5. What underlying weaknesses do you think our community has that could exacerbate these risks?
6. With these risks and opportunities in mind, what do you think our priorities should be — as a community — during this election cycle? How can we work together on these? What actions are you prepared to engage in?
7. What skills, perspectives, and experiences do you bring to this network? What are you most excited about bringing to the table?
8. What are your concerns and expectations for working within a network like this? How do you hope this network can support you or help further your goals and priorities?

Remember:
Building trust is foundational to this work. To build trust and credibility, make sure you set accurate expectations for your work with new groups and that you live up to them. Listen to peoples' experiences and recognize what they are bringing to the table, as well as any needs they identify. Find ways to show that you are listening and that you want to learn about their experiences and them as people.

Now you have:

- Built or expanded your network
- Learned more about the needs, interests, and experiences of the people in your network

What's next?

» THE NEXT STEP IS TO PREPARE YOUR NETWORK »

STEP TWO:

Prepare your network

Once you have taken steps to build your network, it's important to build a collective understanding of current and historical risks, incidents, and sources of resilience. It's also important to take stock of the network's collective capacities, knowledge, and resources – this will inform the types of response and proactive action you plan for in the following steps. In this section we...

1. Outline a step-by-step process for mobilizing your resiliency network, then guide you through each step
2. Guide you through analyzing risks and resiliencies with your fellow network members
3. Explain the concept of a “communications infrastructure” and walk you through developing one with your network
4. Guide you through taking stock of your network's resources and identifying resource gaps

Tools in this section are:

- Worksheet # 4: Risk and Resilience Analysis
- Worksheet # 5: Communications Infrastructure
- Worksheet # 6: Mapping Network Resources

Analyze risk and resilience factors

The first step in preparing a resiliency network for action is analyzing existing risks and resiliencies. This involves identifying historical and current tensions within your community, as well as structures for and experiences of mutual cooperation and aid.

Use the “**Risk and Resilience Analysis**” worksheet as a tool for discussion and analysis with your network.

Note: If you are working with a network that has already been in discussion about risks and histories of violence, you can consider combining this exercise with Worksheet 7 to consider current risks, possible scenarios, and how you can monitor them all at the same time.

WORKSHEET #4: Risk and Resilience Analysis

In order to prepare your network for action, you can start by pooling your knowledge and experiences to build a collective understanding of the different sources of risk and resilience in your community. This is a chance to bring together the diverse knowledge and experiences within your network to lay the foundation for your collective efforts. Further, this type of exercise can help you identify how specific actions might backfire or cause unintended harm, and can position you to identify, strengthen, leverage, and ultimately build upon local capacities for resilience.

This exercise can be done collectively or you can provide prompts to people to think through individually then discuss them together. The key here is to make sure this is a collaborative process where everyone's voice is heard, taking full advantage of the diversity of experiences and knowledge in your network. This exercise will allow you to (1) identify risk factors, (2) identify resilience factors, and (3) identify remaining gaps in knowledge. This exercise will also build understanding and trust among the network.

You can use the prompts on the following pages to guide your risk and resilience analysis. Please use them as a starting point for conversation and add questions you feel are important for your community!

The prompts are organized into the following broad categories:

1. Examining the broader (historical and current) context of conflict and cooperation
2. Charting the communication landscape
3. Considering the different people and groups involved
4. Geographic analysis: mapping your community

As you go through these discussions, remember that different people within your network will likely have different perspectives and experiences. Many groups have already experienced discrimination, marginalization and violence, and it's particularly important to recognize and learn from their experience.

WORKSHEET #4: Risk and Resilience Analysis

Examining the broader context of conflict and cooperation: Examining the historical and current experiences of your community can provide insights on existing risks, sources of resilience that you can build on and strengthen, and lessons learned. Further, it can help create more of a shared understanding of the experiences of different community members and groups.

RISK	RESILIENCE
<p>What is the history of tension, conflict, or violence in your community?</p> <p>» Who was impacted by violence and in what ways? What are the common narratives or stories about this history? Is this history a point of contention?</p>	<p>What is the history of organizing and cooperation in your community?</p> <p>» Is there a history of people or groups responding to violence or other crisis events? What are the different narratives or stories about this history?</p>
<p>Which groups have been historically marginalized in your community? Which groups are currently being marginalized or excluded from different spaces or institutions?</p> <p>» How has this happened historically? How is it happening right now?</p>	<p>Have there been responses to the marginalization of different groups in your community (by the groups being marginalized and/or with other groups or stakeholders)?</p> <p>» How has this happened? How is it happening right now?</p>
<p>What are other tensions at play (e.g. job loss, COVID-19 impact, school closures, etc.)?</p>	<p>Have different groups supported one another in the face of other challenges (e.g. job loss, COVID impact, school closing, etc.), violence, or tensions?</p>
<p>Capture key takeaways (including any gaps in your collective knowledge):</p>	

WORKSHEET #4: Risk and Resilience Analysis

Charting the communication landscape: You won't be communicating into a vacuum: understanding the existing narratives and how they're spread through your community can help you build a stronger foundation and communicate well in a crisis.

RISK	RESILIENCE
<p>What are the narratives that contribute to division, conflict, tension, or other harms in your community?</p> <p>» Are any of these particularly strong or prevalent right now? Are any particular rumors or misinformation especially prevalent right now?</p>	<p>What are the common narratives about cooperation, unity, and resilience in your community?</p> <p>» Are any of these particularly strong or prevalent right now?</p>
<p>Are there any common or emerging narratives about risks for violence and/or other harm in your community during the upcoming election cycle?</p>	<p>Are there any common or emerging narratives about ensuring a free, fair, safe election cycle in your community?</p>
<p>How are divisive narratives/rhetoric spread or shared in your community?</p> <p>» Who are the speakers/messengers (e.g. a news anchor, a community leader)? » What channels are used to spread these messages (e.g. emails, TV, Facebook, phone calls)? » Who are the different audiences listening to these messengers and channels?</p>	<p>How are these unifying narratives spread in your community?</p> <p>» Who are the speakers/messengers (e.g. a news anchor, a community leader)? » What channels are used to spread these messages (e.g. emails, TV, Facebook, phone calls)? » Who are the different audiences listening to these messengers and channels?</p>
<p>Capture key takeaways (including any gaps in your collective knowledge):</p>	

WORKSHEET #4: Risk and Resilience Analysis

Considering the different people and groups involved: To supplement your stakeholder analysis, it can be helpful to think more deeply about the different actors (groups and individuals) at the center of different risks and sources of resilience in your community.

RISK	RESILIENCE
<p>Who are people or groups who may participate in violence?</p> <p>» Are these people or groups organized? If yes, how so? Are there existing armed groups in your community who may mobilize during potential trigger events? Are there outside groups who may come into your community during a violent or potentially violent event?</p>	<p>Who are people or groups who may actively participate in preventing or de-escalate violence?</p> <p>» Are these people or groups organized? Are there other existing networks in your community who may mobilize during a crisis?</p>
<p>Who are people or groups that might encourage violence or other harms (through messaging, behind the scenes coordination, etc.)?</p> <p>» What is driving them to encourage violence?</p>	<p>Who are people or groups that might speak out against violence or other harms (in addition to those directly participating)?</p> <p>» What is driving them to speak out against violence?</p>
<p>Capture key takeaways (including any gaps in your collective knowledge). For this section, specifically consider whether there are any stakeholders you missed in your initial mapping, and whether there are ways you might support or plug into existing efforts.</p>	

WORKSHEET #4: Risk and Resilience Analysis

Geographic analysis: mapping your community: Think about key places that came up in your conversations. Draw a map of your community pointing to these key places. Consider specifically drawing up a list of:

- **Flashpoints:** Are there places that are likely to serve as flashpoints for violence (places where violence or an event that escalates tension happens first and spreads from)?
- **Hot spots:** Are there places where violence is likely to be the most intense?
- **Safe spaces:** Are there places that are likely to be safe places even if violence happens?

Drawing:



Building a communications infrastructure

Once you've analyzed risk and resilience factors, you can begin building your communications infrastructure: the messengers and channels you will use to monitor events and provide ongoing real-time communication to key audiences in your community. Building this infrastructure, like building the network itself, should be an ongoing process with regular updates and additions. The **"Communications Infrastructure"** worksheet walks you through the process for developing this infrastructure through identifying your existing messengers and channels. You can complete this collaboratively (in-person, via Zoom, or a shared document) with other members of your network.

WORKSHEET #5: Communications Infrastructure

This worksheet is designed to guide you through building a communications infrastructure. While your stakeholder mapping and analysis served as a jumping off point for network outreach (and, again, should be ongoing), these exercises dig deeper into members' respective networks, allowing you to build a detailed understanding of the exact audiences, messengers, and channels you will use to gather and disseminate information in your community. If meeting in person is not an option, this exercise can also be done via Zoom or in a collective document (in Dropbox or Google Docs).

STEP ONE: INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

To begin, each member should analyze their role in the broader information ecosystem. Have each member answer the following questions, which you can then use in your group planning.

Which groups can you reach?

How do these groups get information (through what channels — e.g. Facebook, television, radio, phone calls with friends, etc.)?

What channels do you use to communicate with them (e.g. phone calls, social media, a regular Zoom meeting, etc.)?

Who do you wish you could reach?

WORKSHEET #5: Communications Infrastructure

STEP TWO: LIST AUDIENCES & HOW YOU CAN REACH THEM

After each member analyzes their role as a speaker, have them fill out the chart below, outlining the audiences they are able to reach, any specific contacts they have within those audiences, and the channels they would use to reach them. The more specific the better.

Member	Audience	Specific Contact(s)	Channel(s)

WORKSHEET #5: Communications Infrastructure

STEP THREE: POOL INFORMATION FROM THE NETWORK

Once each member has filled out their chart individually, pool your charts as a group. Where there is overlap in the target audiences to be reached, see if you can get more specific in your breakdown to see if you have access to different sub-groups within a broader audience. If you can't, can you separate out by different contacts and channels? Perhaps multiple group members have access to the same group but some have closer or stronger contacts than others. Remember to get as specific as possible with methods of contact (e.g. phone call, Facebook message, email). This is your infrastructure.

Member	Audience	Specific Contact(s)	Channel(s)

WORKSHEET #5: Communications Infrastructure

STEP FOUR: IDENTIFY GAPS

Now that you have built your infrastructure (remember, like your network, this is an ongoing process—to be added to and updated regularly), you and your network can work to identify gaps in your infrastructure. As a group, list out the audiences that are currently not being reached. You can use the initial stakeholder mapping you did at the beginning of the process (on page 19) as a starting point.

STEP FIVE: PLAN HOW YOU CAN FILL GAPS

For each of the audiences identified as currently out of reach, answer the following questions:

Who in your network is ruled out as a contact person (who wouldn't be seen as credible, or might be immediately dismissed by the audience)?

Who in your network "knows someone who knows someone" who could connect you to the audiences not currently being reached?

Who in your network could potentially reach out without any existing connections to the group?

Which channels does this audience reliably use?
Which channels do they not use?

WORKSHEET #5: Communications Infrastructure

STEP SIX: PLAN OUTREACH TO NEW CONNECTIONS

Next, chart your follow-up steps for outreach to new people and groups. You can use the below chart to list the new stakeholder you'll reach out to, the person who's responsible for taking the lead, and the action step. Make sure that each person has a list of their own action steps and someone keeps the full chart for the group!

Stakeholder	Person responsible	Action step(s)

Mapping network resources

In addition to mapping your network's communication infrastructure, it's helpful to map the different resources that your network has access to — everything from access and connections to knowledge and skills. Use the “**Mapping Network Resources**” worksheet to map the different resources that your network can access as you plan for crisis response and proactive actions in the following steps.

WORKSHEET #6: Mapping Network Resources

Mobilizing a resiliency network takes resources. Work together with your fellow resiliency network members to brainstorm which resources you have access to and where there are gaps. You can use this list to jumpstart your thinking - add all the resources you can think of that you have access to or might need.

STEP ONE: IDENTIFYING EXISTING RESOURCES

Type of Resource	Who has it? (Fill in any details)
Access & influence (e.g. access to and influence with key leaders and decision-makers)	
Connections to local government	
Connections to key business leaders	
Connections to key faith leaders	
Connections to trusted news sources	
Other:	
Knowledge (e.g., who has particular insight or knowledge about different parts of your community?)	
Local community or faith leaders	
Local news outlets	
Other:	
Skills	
Social media capacity (e.g. ability to create graphics, knowledge of social media metrics/tracking, etc.)	
PR and crisis communications	
Mediation	
Dialogue facilitation	
Legal expertise (including legal observation)	
Other:	

WORKSHEET #6: Mapping Network Resources

Type of Resource	Who has it? (Fill in any details)
Resources	
Financial resources	
Space for emergency meetings or shelter	
Additional in-kind resources (e.g., an advertising space in a local paper, access to printing supplies, etc.)	
Other:	
Platform/ communication connections	
Local community or faith leaders	
Local news outlets	
Social media platform (e.g. a Facebook page with a large following, a regular Zoom meeting someone runs, etc.)	
Connection to local media	
In-person organizing capacity	
Other:	
Miscellaneous	

WORKSHEET #6: Mapping Network Resources

Take a moment to consider resources that you believe you will need but do not already have access to. Work together to develop an initial list, then consider if you have a way to get access to these resources. This could range from each member asking around within their own networks, to doing a Google search, to creating a plan to call local reporters to develop more press contacts. Here is a space where you can capture your thinking:

STEP TWO: SECURING ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Resource	Strategy to get access to it	Point Person	Next Steps

Now you have:

- Built a collective understanding of risks and resiliencies with your network
- Developed an understanding of the communication infrastructure and additional resources that your network has access to

What's next?

» WITH THIS KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING, YOU'RE READY TO
CREATE A CRISIS MONITORING AND RESPONSE SYSTEM »

STEP THREE:

Create a crisis monitoring and response plan

Throughout the election cycle, your resiliency network can monitor and respond to tensions; events that could lead to violence, intimidation, or increased tensions; and other signs of increased risk.

This means developing a plan for coordinated observation, communication, and action.

This section walks you through three steps for building a system for monitoring and response:

1. Thinking through possible scenarios to build into your monitoring plan
2. Getting familiar with best practices for rapid response messaging
3. Developing a system for communication, coordination, and decision-making

Tools in this section are:

- Worksheet #7: Monitoring Plan
- Handout: Rapid Response Messaging
- Worksheet #8 Rapid Response Coordination and Decision-making

Considering scenarios and building a crisis monitoring plan

Considering existing sources of tension and possible scenarios can help you identify what to closely monitor, as well as the types of responses that might be most useful. Use the “**Monitoring Plan**” worksheet to brainstorm scenarios that could escalate, build a list of warning signs to monitor and prepare for, and consider who in your network has access to different knowledge and response capacities.

WORKSHEET #7: Monitoring Plan

STEP ONE: BRAINSTORM SCENARIOS

Start by just brainstorming the situations that you are most worried about. Think, for example, about where existing tensions are currently, and where you've seen tensions or violence emerge in the past. You can also consider the types of election violence and disruption outlined on p. 9 (e.g. intimidation, outside armed presence, confusion about results/voting process, contestation of results).

SCENARIO #1:

SCENARIO #2:

SCENARIO #3:

STEP TWO:

SCENARIO #1: _____

- Who is being targeted or may be impacted by violence, intimidation, etc.?

- Who is involved in escalating the risk (e.g. fanning tensions or perpetrating violence)?

- Who is influential for any of the people or groups involved?

- Who would you want to be able to reach and influence?

- Who would you want to be able to reach in order to learn more?

- Who would you want to be able to support?

Think about, if you faced this scenario today, what you could have done beforehand to better prepare (e.g. what you wish you had known prior, who you wish you were in contact with prior, etc).

WORKSHEET #7: Monitoring Plan

SCENARIO #2: _____

- Who is being targeted or may be impacted by violence, intimidation, etc.?

- Who is involved in escalating the risk (e.g. fanning tensions or perpetrating violence)?

- Who is influential for any of the people or groups involved?

- Who would you want to be able to reach and influence?

- Who would you want to be able to reach in order to learn more?

- Who would you want to be able to support?

Think about, if you faced this scenario today, what you could have done beforehand to better prepare (e.g. what you wish you had known prior, who you wish you were in contact with prior, etc).

SCENARIO #3: _____

- Who is being targeted or may be impacted by violence, intimidation, etc.?

- Who is involved in escalating the risk (e.g. fanning tensions or perpetrating violence)?

- Who is influential for any of the people or groups involved?

- Who would you want to be able to reach and influence?

- Who would you want to be able to reach in order to learn more?

- Who would you want to be able to support?

Think about, if you faced this scenario today, what you could have done beforehand to better prepare (e.g. what you wish you had known prior, who you wish you were in contact with prior, etc).

WORKSHEET #7: Monitoring Plan

STEP THREE: FIGURE OUT MONITORING CAPACITY

Complete the following monitoring chart to consider who would learn key pieces of information about each scenario – the signs of tension, the need for a response – and how they’d learn about this information. Also consider who would be well positioned to respond – who could reach key stakeholders at important moments, for example. Consider the necessary skills, resources, platform, access, etc.:

Note: you can denote whether a person can flag, monitor, or verify with an “f,” “m,” or “v” next to their name.

Warning sign or scenario:			
Who could flag, monitor, or verify?	How?	Who could respond?	With what skills/resources/platform/access/social capital?

Warning sign or scenario:			
Who could flag, monitor, or verify?	How?	Who could respond?	With what skills/resources/platform/access/social capital?

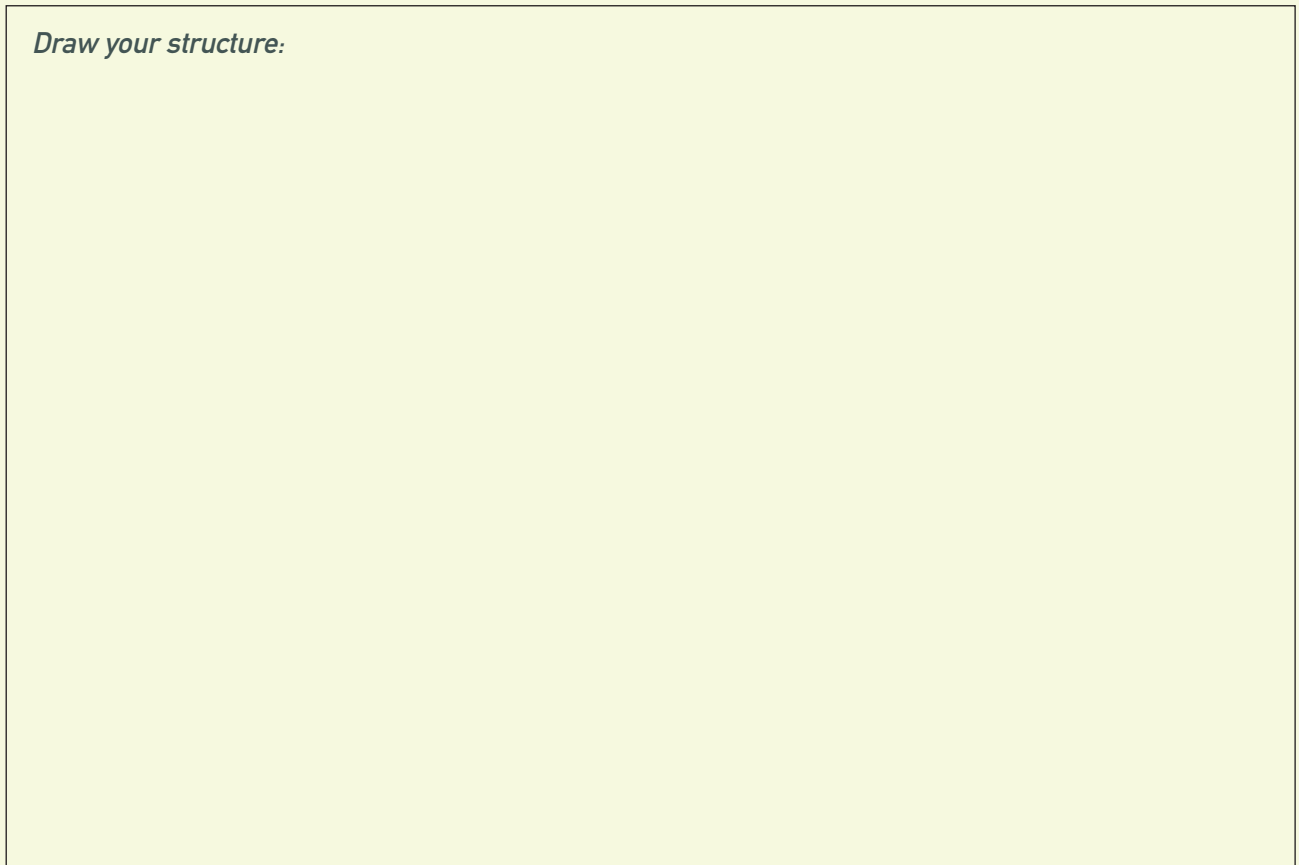
Warning sign or scenario:			
Who could flag, monitor, or verify?	How?	Who could respond?	With what skills/resources/platform/access/social capital?

WORKSHEET #7: Monitoring Plan

STEP FOUR:

Using the previous charted insights, decide on a communication system for risk monitoring. Will you have regular check-ins? A phone tree when tensions are escalating? A Facebook group? A Google group? All of the above? The exact structure of your monitoring program should be tailored to what is most appropriate for your context and the members of your network.

Draw your structure:



Considering and planning for different types of crisis response

When tensions, increased risk, disruption, chaos or even instances of violence emerge, different types of response might be needed. In some cases, coordination with legal support, dialogue, and mediation, may be necessary.

Across all scenarios, how you do – or don't – communicate will have an important impact. Communication will give meaning to the events that unfold and signal to people what's expected of them (e.g., that they be patient and wait, voice their opposition to intimidation or harassment, stand together across dividing lines against attempts to stoke conflict, etc.). We know that expectations – norms – strongly influence peoples' behavior (sometimes even more than beliefs or attitudes). Note that a lack of proactive communication also sends an important signal, and can create the space for problematic narratives and expectations to be set. What you do, and how you tell the story of your community, can also serve as a model and inspiration for others facing similar risks of escalation.

Further, as your network considers whether to act and how, it will be important to assess risk – to ensure that your actions do not inadvertently cause harm by, for example, raising the profile of a violent action or increasing the notoriety of a group or individual promoting violence.

To help guide the communication-based components of your response, the “**Crisis Response Communication**” handout outlines different types of communication-based responses. It provides a set of Do's (general response priorities) and Don'ts (considerations to ensure that your response doesn't inadvertently cause harm), and How-to's (examples of what responses can look like).

Rapid Response Messaging

Here we offer Do's and Don'ts for rapid response communications. While this sheet offers general considerations and best practices, it's important to note that messaging strategy and content will ultimately depend on the dynamics within your particular context. As you read these guidelines, consider how you might tailor and operationalize them in your community.

DO'S:

Listen to and consult with targeted communities before acting

Set and model positive norms

Tell people "who we are", rather than "who we're not"

Emphasize agency

Model or showcase empathy

Offer a concrete path forward for grievances

Be careful and specific when sharing information about violence or other related events

Ensure that you don't dehumanize

Undermine biases that emerge in conflict

Use best practices for correcting mis- and dis-information

ALWAYS analyze for risk

Anticipate and prepare

DON'TS:

Don't call for peace without offering a way to address the underlying issues

Don't be vague or dishonest

Don't call-out violence or tensions without also addressing the underlying issues that gave rise to it

Don't dehumanize

Don't signal negative norms

Don't feed narratives of "collective blame"

Don't raise the profile or notoriety of violent actors

Don't repeat misinformation or rumors.

Don't emphasize or create chaos or confusion

Don't buy into a zero-sum frame

Read more about these "Do's" on the following page and more about these "Don'ts" on pg 57

- 1. Listen to and consult with targeted communities before acting:** Where specific groups or communities are targeted for violence, listen to them first to learn their needs, ideas, and preferences for public statements and actions.
- 2. Set and model positive norms:** Show that the vast majority of people in your community do not support and will not participate in violence – especially and even in the face of escalating tensions or incidents of violence.
 - Emphasize the unifying, local identity of your community and draw on relevant community narratives and values for protecting the dignity and rights of all residents.
 - Use “we” framing to set positive expectations. “We, as the [CITY/TOWN] community, will/are/are committed to [VALUE/ACTION].” Then provide evidence that shows that this is true.
 - Stress the importance of working together across groups to be a national model for addressing hard issues, rather than serving as fodder in national electoral politics.
 - Show in addition to telling. Model these positive norms. Share stories or highlight actions that showcase the norms you are trying to set for your communities in the face of strains, escalation or trigger events. Show the specific actions that you as leaders are taking; show how many people in your community support these positive norms and are taking positive action. This provides “social proof” that the values and actions you are encouraging are possible and prevalent throughout your community.²⁵
 - > Listen to the people and communities affected by the violence. Learn about their needs and channel your resources (public platform, financial resources, in-kind support, etc.) accordingly.
- 3. Tell people “who we are”, rather than “who we’re not”:** Define your community or group in positive, inclusive terms and use the community’s own words and examples. Themes likely to resonate include inclusivity, diversity, unity, agency, hope, good will, a focus on safety (e.g. everyone should feel safe voting).²⁶
 - **Why?** Asserting who we are not actually strengthens the association between “we” (our community or other group) and the very actions we are seeking to avoid. Further, in times of uncertainty, people are drawn to leaders who can define a clear identity and set of values for their group – “this is who we are and this is what we care about”.²⁷

- 4. Emphasize agency:** In uncertain or tense moments, people can feel a loss of agency in deciding how they will act - especially because narratives that seek to move people towards violence often portray it as the only option (“to protect our group,” “secure our future,” etc.²⁸). This can create strong social pressures and a feeling that someone has no choice but to support violence or just stay quiet. It’s important to emphasize that people have a choice choice in how they act -- and that their values and common goals dictate that they will resist violence. This can be framed through the lens of the broader community’s commitment to resisting violence, or a particular group (e.g. a faith community, a community organization, etc.).
- 5. Model empathy**

 - **Toward targeted communities:** When communities are targeted with violence and you seek to share stories from targeted communities (with their permission), model empathy toward those communities. Rather than just sharing content meant to generate empathy among audiences, modeling this empathy yourself may more powerfully generate empathy among your audience.
 - **Toward your audience:** Demonstrate that you care about them and that you understand this is a difficult and confusing time. Recognize their emotions and show a path forward.
- 6. Offer a concrete path forward for grievances:** Provide clear channels and processes for addressing grievances and violence in real-time. Acknowledge any grievances that do arise, and help people understand the different options for addressing these grievances. For example, if disputes arise around the election, or if there are issues with voting (e.g. technical or procedural issues to be addressed), provide people with specific information about different options for addressing these grievances, and keep them updated on the different procedures. Note: as grievances arise, people may use many means to address them – from filing legal challenges to protest. It’s important not to discourage people from addressing grievances, but instead to help make people aware of, and encourage, ways of doing so.
- 7. Be careful and specific when sharing information about violence or other related events.** If violence does happen, it’s important to be careful and specific when discussing it. In addition to the other recommendations, keep in mind the following :

 - When specific communities are targeted with violence you should be sure to listen to them before taking any action, including communicating. Learn about their needs and channel your resources (public platform, financial support, in-kind support, etc.) accordingly.
 - When sharing information about violence, it’s important to remember that violence

can be used as a coercive tool to intimidate and silence entire communities who fear further violence and targeting. It's essential not to fuel fear and intimidation of these communities, and to instead show how many people stand in support of them and against violence.

- Sometimes, language around violence can fuel unequal narratives between groups – or simply be inaccurate. For example, saying “violence erupted at a protest” if the violence being described is police firing teargas on protestors, is inaccurate in that it implies a spontaneous eruption of violence, likely from protestors. Being specific about exactly what happened, including not using broad passive phrasing about violence, is important for accuracy, for preventing unequal descriptions of groups relating to violence, and to ensure that you don't create a vague and broad feeling about violence and its prevalence.

- 8. Ensure that you don't dehumanize:** there are many dehumanizing narratives that portray groups as less than fully human, or with words and metaphors that prime images of animals or pests. Be careful of the words you use when describing people or events – for example, using the phrase “people swarmed onto the streets” uses a verb (swarmed) that is typically used to describe insects.²⁹ Also avoid victimizing language and imagery that shows people targeted with violence as helpless. Finally, if you're talking about any group, but especially groups that are in any way marginalized or discriminated against, be sure to showcase their warmth (caring for others, empathy) and their competence (responsibility, complex emotions like concern or hope, etc.). This is because dehumanizing narratives between groups often paint members of a group as a whole as lacking either warmth or competence.³⁰
- 9. Undermine biases that emerge in conflict:** Once groups begin to have conflict with each other, certain biases and narratives can emerge. For example, we tend to think “we are acting out of love – wanting to protect our own group” while “they are acting out of hate.”³¹ Of course there is a mixture of motivations in any group, but this asymmetry between how we think of our own group and others can help cement conflict. Be sure not to feed into this narrative.
- 10. Use best practices for correcting mis- and dis-information:** It can be easy to accidentally fuel misinformation when you're trying to correct. To avoid simple mistakes, like increasing exposure to misinformation, use the “**Correcting Misinformation**” handout on pg. 59] to familiarize yourself with best practices.

11. ALWAYS analyze for risk. Even well-intentioned efforts may backfire and cause unintended harm. It's critical to consider how your effort may interact with the surrounding context to amplify or defuse risks for violence or further tensions.

- **For more information on how to conduct a risk analysis, see the worksheet on page 62**

12. Anticipate and prepare: Use your scenario planning to think about specific messages you want to prepare in advance.

For example:

- In anticipation of tensions during the counting period, since mail-in ballots will take longer to count and the results will not be known for some time after the election, you could prepare messages celebrating the community for patiently waiting, reinforcing common identities, and keeping a sense of calm. Once counting has begun, messages should provide status updates and reinforce that this longer wait-time is expected. Throughout, continue providing procedural updates and encourage calm and the use of official channels to address any disputes. Being prepared with this type of messaging in advance can help you mobilize quickly if people are impatient or rumors about the counting process have started (or if candidates declare victory before the count has been completed!).
- As you think about messaging to keep people calm and ensure they have information throughout the voting and counting processes, be ready to amplify updates from non-partisan or bi-partisan coalitions or monitors who are observing the election.
- You can also think about specific messaging for any of the scenarios you've come up with. You may not use it word for word, but having thought through messages and even having a draft to start from can help you respond in a crises moment!

DON'TS

1. **Don't be vague or dishonest.** Be clear in your messaging and acknowledge when you don't know something. It's important not to squander trust with your audience, particularly in tense moments.
2. **Don't speak about violence without also addressing the larger context and its short and long-term impacts.** For instance, the larger context may include histories of anti-Black violence, racism, voter suppression, distrust, division, etc.
3. **Don't dehumanize** or use words or metaphors that signal connections to animals.³² Instead, **emphasize communities' warmth and competency**³³ (see above).
4. **Don't signal negative norms** when drawing attention to negative behaviors (e.g., violence has overtaken this community).³⁴ Instead, emphasize how the community is committed to finding a peaceful solution.
5. **Don't feed narratives of "collective blame."**³⁵ If you are talking about violence, be specific and clear when describing who is committing violence and how it fits into the broader context. Broad language describing violence tied to a group can fuel an associations of that group with violence, especially where stereotypes already exist.
6. **Don't raise the profile or notoriety of violent actors.**
7. **Don't repeat misinformation or rumors.** If you have to in order to provide corrective information, provide a warning that the information is incorrect first.³⁶
8. **Don't emphasize or create chaos or confusion.** Instead, if there are tensions, confusion, or a feeling of chaos provide clarifying information on what is happening and why, as well as steps being taken to calm things down. This also means that you should not use sensationalist or alarmist language, or engage in speculation about things that might happen. This is particularly important to remember as you and your network discuss possible risks and scenarios – this should be done for the purposes of planning and preparing to help your community prevent violence; messaging about these risks or speculating on how they might happen in broad public messages can actually at fuel to the fire!

DON'TS

9. **Don't buy into a zero-sum frame.** Instead emphasize common goals and possibilities for cooperation.

HOW DO YOU SPREAD THESE MESSAGES EFFECTIVELY?

Use your communications infrastructure for rapid response communications. Always ensure that you:

1. **Use your communications infrastructure planning for rapid response.**
Mobilize effective messengers: consider which audiences you want to reach for rapid response messaging. Promote a combination of leaders from within your network that can reach the most important audiences – and tailor messaging to those audiences. Also consider joint messaging and statements to send a unifying message. Select channels– from phone calls to joint statements or Facebook posts – that can reach people in the particular situation.
2. **Using the resource mapping you've done for your network, consider rapid response actions that you can try to mobilize people towards or that you can take and share as stories.**

For example: Depending on the situation, you might want to model unity via a joint statement from your network urging people to take certain actions, while also supporting network members to individually message to key stakeholders through their own platforms. If there is a high-risk event, you might want to mobilize respected leaders to show up and create a barrier – serving as “buffers,” or provide shelter. If there is confusion and tensions are escalating, you may want to create and disseminate messaging urging patience. If a community has been targeted with violence or directly threatened, you might mobilize a presence (e.g. in a circle around a place of worship) and outpouring of public support under a common banner (while still recognizing the targeted group's unique experience).

Correcting Misinformation

Correcting misinformation can be tricky, particularly because the more we hear a piece of information (even if it is being disputed), the more likely we are to believe it. Luckily, research and practice have shown us that there are effective ways to correct misinformation without reinforcing it. We outline best practices³⁷ in this handout.

1. Correct misinformation as quickly as possible. The more that people hear or see misinformation, the more they are likely to believe it.
2. Use positive framing. For example, if John has been accused of being a thief, the best correction will re-focus attention on what John is (e.g., “John is an honest person who is always sharing”) rather than what he is not (e.g., “John is NOT a thief.”) Why? Repeating the original accusation can strengthen the very association you are trying to undercut (John and thief).
3. Try not to repeat the misinformation, but if you have to, give a warning before you repeat it (not after!). As misinformation is repeated, it becomes more familiar and believable to people. By warning listeners in advance of repeating the association, you activate their critical thinking skills to prevent the association from unknowingly taking hold.
4. Make sure your correction comes from a source (whether an individual, institution, or news outlet) that people find credible and that represents their interests and values.
5. Prompt people to question sources of mis- and dis-information. Encourage people to consider the motive of the source: why would someone spread false or misleading information (e.g., is it clickbait that would help them earn money)? Research has shown that critical thinking and deliberation can reduce the influence of misinformation.³⁸
6. If possible, provide an alternative explanation for the evidence underlying the incorrect claim. Misinformation is more influential when people infer a causal relationship from the evidence and subsequent event (e.g., between the presence of flammable materials and a subsequent fire). A correction that simply disputes that the materials caused the fire will be less effective than one that explains the fire resulted from arson.³⁹
7. Keep your corrections simple and easy to understand. If possible, use clear and simple visualizations.
8. Consider the underlying narratives that the mis- or dis-information is tapping into. Why would someone believe the misinformation? What emotions, identities, or experiences are attached? What sense of truth or existing belief is it resonating with? Understanding this can allow you to identify the larger narratives, ideas, and beliefs you will need to tackle.

Developing a system for internal communication, coordination, and decision-making

The next step is to get practical and actually map out the details of how you'll coordinate and make real-time decisions within your network. Throughout this process, you'll consider all your ideas about types of responses, who would do what, and who has access to key information.

Use the **"Rapid Response Coordination and Decision-making"** worksheet to build out a plan for coordination and decision-making to guide your response.

Remember the continued importance of internal communication and coordination throughout your network. When violence, confusion, and tensions emerge, they can be experienced differently by different stakeholders. This is where the diversity of your network is so important: it will enable you to understand the challenges you face from multiple perspectives and take action that addresses these varied experiences. It's particularly important to pay attention to the knowledge and perspectives of any group within your community that is targeted with violence, and not to take action on their behalf without consultation. Work together to strategize on engaging those who might support violence and promoting norms that strongly discourage and condemn violence.

WORKSHEET #8:

Rapid Response Coordination & Decision-making

To prepare your network to effectively respond to events in realtime, the first thing to do is to determine how you will communicate and make decisions.

STEP ONE: DECIDE ON STRUCTURE

We suggest agreeing on a clear structure — for example, is there a committee of three people who lead and are each responsible for soliciting input and approvals from a different piece of the network? Ensuring that there is a designated group that is responsible for gathering inputs and responsive decision-making will ensure you are able to respond quickly. Note that it's very important that the network agrees on that group and that it's diverse and representative of the broader network.

- To build this structure, refer back to your crisis monitoring process. You already created a mechanism for coordinating communication to flag risks and escalation. Can this be a starting point for coordinating response?
- Make sure you have a clear process for coordination - all the way down to who will call one another. A phone tree can be a great tool for this.

Draw your structure:

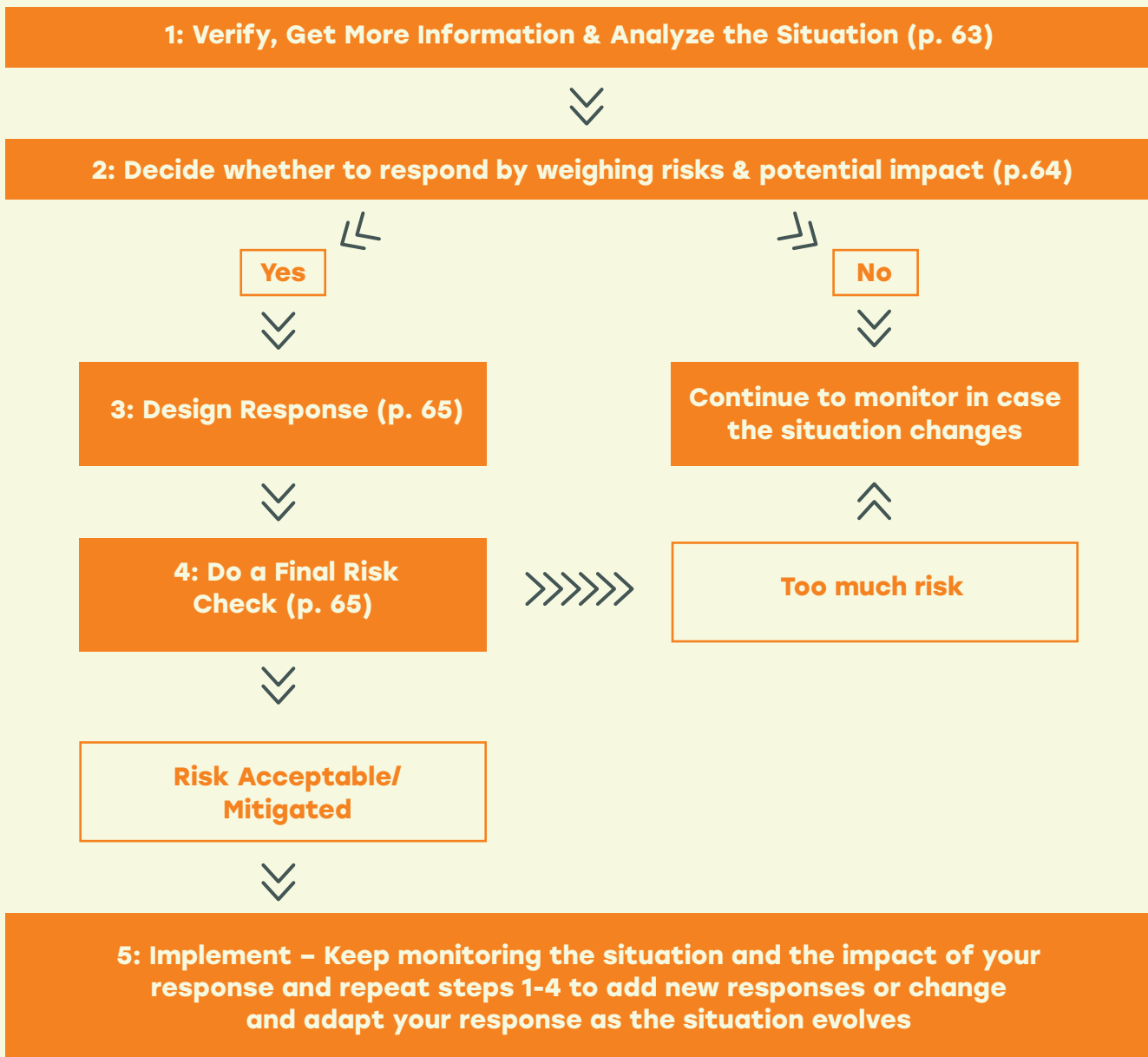
» Once you've agreed on a structure for decision-making, you can be as prepared as possible by agreeing on some general guidance and process for deciding whether to respond »

It will also be important to agree on some general guidance and process for deciding whether to respond. You can use the below worksheet as a starting point for response considerations and guidance:

WORKSHEET #8: Rapid Response Coordination & Decision-making

STEP TWO: SET UP A PROCESS

There are important questions to consider as you decide whether or not to respond to a particular event and design your response. This includes verifying and analyzing the event in question, weighing potential risks as well as the potential for your response to have an impact, considerations for designing your response, and a final risk check before implementation. Having these questions in place beforehand can help you work quickly as events arise. This flowchart illustrates a decision-making process. On the pages indicated, you can find questions to consider for each step:



WORKSHEET #8:

Rapid Response Coordination & Decision-making

PHASE ONE: VERIFY, GET MORE INFORMATION & ANALYZE THE SITUATION

To verify, collect more information, and analyze the situation, consider the following questions:

Verification & information collection questions:

- How do we know about this event (or sign that things might be escalating)? Who is the source? Are there other sources? Is it first-hand or second-hand information?
- Who else might have information that could corroborate or clarify what we are hearing?
- What information are we missing? Who might have access to that information?

Consider what you know about what exactly is happening, who is involved, how it's being communicated or interpreted, where it is happening, when it happened or is happening (e.g. if it's a rally, is it planned for a specific time? Are you worried about a particular place after dark? A house of worship during worship time?), and anything you know about how it came to be.

Analysis questions:

- What is the potential for escalation? What would escalation look like?
- What is the likely immediate impact? Medium-long-term impact?
- Who are stakeholders and actors involved? Who else could become involved?
- What narratives does this event feed into (for example, framing a group as a threat, or a feeling amongst a group that they will be at risk if they participate in the election)? Are these narratives deeply ingrained in your community?
- How do the people targeted by the event or narrative interpret its significance and impact?

What other questions do you want to ask?

WORKSHEET #8:

Rapid Response Coordination & Decision-making

PHASE TWO: DECIDE WHETHER TO RESPOND BY WEIGHING RISKS & POTENTIAL IMPACT

Before responding, it's important to weight the potential risks and impact of a response. You can consider the following questions:

- What would likely happen if we did/said nothing?
- Who would be aware of this event if we did/said nothing?
- Are there ways doing something could inadvertently make the situation worse?

What other questions do you want to ask to assess risk and potential impact of responding?

Once you've thought through the above questions, think about specific guidance for your response based on your analysis:

- Based on the risks you've identified, are there particular actions or statements that are more likely to amplify risks? In other words, are there specific types of actions or statements that your response should avoid?
- Consider the type of response that mitigates or avoids these risks. Consider how public this response should be. For example, what are the potential benefits of a public statement? Behind the scenes advocacy? Direct support to a targeted community? Showing up in person as a buffer? Consider which combination of approaches would be most impactful and least risky.

It's important to note that many responses will carry both risks and benefits. Use your best judgment and work with affected communities to weigh risk vs. impact.

WORKSHEET #8:

Rapid Response Coordination & Decision-making

PHASE THREE: DESIGN RESPONSE

Using the guidance you developed in Phase Two, design your response!

- Think about your different response options. Consult within the network with communities who are directly affected by the incident or who have other specific insights.
- Think about how you'd implement your most promising response options: Which audiences do you need to reach, how do you want to impact them, and which messengers and channels will you activate to do so?
- Refer back to your communications infrastructure and resource mapping: what parts of your communications infrastructure and the resources available to your network could help you be effective in your response?
- Use the best practices from the Rapid Response Messaging handout to help design your communication approach.
- Consider whether anyone could face consequences or risks by participating in the response. Make sure they are aware and able to make a fully informed decision about whether or not to participate.

PHASE FOUR: DO A FINAL RISK CHECK

Look at the risks you identified in the prior exercises. Are there additional risks based on the specific actions you've decided to take?

Then, for each risk, consider (1) how likely is it that this will happen? (2) if it happens, how much harm will be done? And (3) are there things we can do to mitigate the harm?

You can use the chart on the next page if it's helpful to capture your list of risks and answers to these questions.

Once you've done this, weigh the risks and decide whether to proceed. If you decide to go ahead, your next step will be to implement your response! As you do, **keep monitoring the situation and the impact of your response and repeat steps 1-4 to add new responses or change and adapt your response as the situation evolves.**

WORKSHEET #8: Rapid Response Coordination & Decision-making

Use this chart if helpful to list out risks and evaluate them:

Risk	How likely (High, Medium, Low)	What impact? (High, Medium, Low)	Steps that can be taken to mitigate

PHASE FIVE:

As you respond, monitor how it goes - see what impact you have, and afterwards review with the network to keep learning and improving your work together.

Now you have:

- Considered scenarios and built a crisis monitoring plan
- Become familiar with best practices for rapid response communication
- Developed a coordination and decision-making process or guidance for your network to be able to respond quickly in moments of crisis

What's next?

» WITH THIS CRISIS RESPONSE PREPARATION IN PLACE,
YOU'RE READY TO START TAKING ACTION! »

STEP FOUR:

Take action

Creating resilience to risks for electoral violence requires proactive action. Merely responding to risks as they emerge means playing a game of “whack-a-mole” as trigger events unfold and tensions escalate. Taking proactive action positions you to address the underlying dynamics that can foment violence around an election, and seed the ground for effective rapid response messaging.

Tools in this section are:

- Handout: Taking Proactive Action
- Worksheet #9: Planning Proactive Action

BUILD YOUR NETWORK

PREPARE YOUR NETWORK

CREATE A MONITORING AND RESPONSE STRUCTURE

TAKE ACTION

Taking proactive action

There are several core communication priorities that can set helpful frames for both communication and actions. These communication priorities can help build resilience, set frames that you can return to in your rapid response communications, and bring the different groups in your network together to start coordinating and collaborating now rather than waiting for a crisis. As you consider possible proactive actions to take together, use the “**Taking Proactive Action**” handout to think about potential strategies for your network.

Taking Proactive Action

To avoid playing “whack a mole” in countering negative messaging only as it arises, you can consider priorities for proactive communication that help reduce the resonance of harmful messaging and set the stage for rapid response*. Here are a few core communication priorities that you can use right away (with tips on how to use each priority on the page indicated). Use these ideas as a starting point – you may have more!

A: Build and strengthening unifying identities.....71

Building and strengthening identities that cut across lines of conflict in your community can help undermine us versus them dynamics.



B: Set positive norms.....73

Setting and maintaining strong positive norms can steer people towards positive actions (and away from harmful actions), especially in contentious and uncertain situations.



C: Encourage and support action.....76

You can build a foundation for positive engagement by encouraging and supporting people to take positive actions.



D: Proactively communicate accurate information and correct misinformation.....77

In the face of attempts to spread mis and disinformation about the election, it’s important to be proactive in ensuring that people have correct information and expectations. There are several predictable priorities for communicating accurate information.



E: Build trust within your community and between communities.....78

As a network, you can work to collectively build trust across and between different groups and audiences in your community.

Note: You can decide how public-facing you want your network to be, versus how much of a behind-the-scenes coordinating mechanism. Either way, you can collaborate and coordinate together towards these messaging priorities.

* In fact, many of these priorities overlap with rapid response communication priorities, since they set the foundational narratives that rapid response communication can build upon.

A: Tips for building and strengthening unifying identities

As conflict divisions harden, certain parts of our identity (for instance, partisan identities) can become more and more salient while other identities, including those that cut across conflict lines (e.g., being a parent or a resident of a town) recede. As these divisions harden, us versus them mentalities can take hold, and the pressure to go along with our group, even if it means supporting violence, increase.⁴⁰ **Building and strengthening unifying identities is a core priority to undermine this type of singular “us vs. them” dynamic in your community.**

Because we are often influenced by the groups that we are part of, activating these multiple identities can also be a powerful way to mobilize people and help them take positive action.

1. Strengthen existing identities, or build new, cross-cutting and overarching identities.

Because it can be scary for people to use their voices in ways that go against their group, and because there are high levels of partisan division and zero-sum narratives, bolstering a new identity that subsumes dividing lines makes speaking out feel safer: While acting alone is very hard, it becomes easier as part of a group that also provides belonging, recognition, and a sense of pride.⁴¹ Cross-cutting identities can be reinforced or built around movements, brands, or geographic identities.

Showcase a broad and inclusive “we” that cuts across lines of division in your community. Think about what different identities or groups exist in your community that you can highlight and make more salient. For instance, is it your local city or town identity? The local sports team? Family identities (e.g. being parents)? A local campaign or slogan that people from all backgrounds have gotten behind? What other groups that cut across lines of division can be mobilized in your community (e.g. people working in a particular industry, a core set of local values)? There are likely multiple overlapping and intersecting identities that can be activate in the midst of deep division to bolster cross-cutting ties and build multiple inclusive versions of “we.” To resonate, “we” should be characterized by interdependence and common goals and aspirations. Rather than pushing us into singular identities, this keeps multiple aspects of our identity active and challenges us/them divides that may be taking hold.

2. Ascribe positive values and tie positive actions to different identities.

Underscore that all members within a given community – regardless of their partisan, religious, racial, ethnic, etc. identity – have common interests and concerns. For instance, all community members want better schools for their children, to avoid further deaths from the coronavirus.

A: Tips for building and strengthening unifying identities (continued)

to ensure the election does not bring violence to the neighborhood. Emphasizing common goals or aspirations for a community imbues a sense of “we’re all in this together” while undercutting us/them divides that might otherwise take hold.

3. Tell stories that highlight shared identities and cooperation

Stories and images act as “social proof” for the narrative or cause you are advancing – highlighting that diverse groups have and can work together. For instance, consider the powerful message from reading about the large-scale interfaith COVID-19 food relief efforts in North Carolina that resulted in 20,000 pounds of food being distributed in Durham alone.⁴² Such stories can model the larger “we” while undercutting negative perceptions between groups and making it harder for people to activate divisive identities.

Note: Once you’ve figured out the different unifying identities you can use to reach people, you can also leverage these identities in your rapid response communication – for example, framing the responses you’re promoting through these identities (“this is how we, as [moms/residents of Town/Tigers fans] are responding to these events – look at the positive actions we are taking and what we will do together.”).

B: Tips for setting positive norms

Perceived social norms – what we think all or most people like us are doing or approve of – powerfully shape peoples’ actions, sometimes even more than our privately-held beliefs.⁴³

Perceived norms are especially influential in uncertain or high-threat situations, such as contentious election cycles.

It’s important to note that our perceptions of norms aren’t always accurate, and a few loud voices can make extreme positions seem more prevalent or expected than they are – for example, the voices of those promoting division or hate can serve to create the impression that most people support division and hate even if that’s not the case. Even well intentioned messaging can inadvertently contribute to negative norm perceptions, unintentionally promoting the very ideas it is meant to counter.⁴⁴ Proactively and carefully setting positive norms for your community can help ensure that people feel supported in standing up against violence and hate – and can help prevent division, hate, and support for violence from being perceived as the norm.

1. Identify norm-setters.

Leaders can set expectations that violence or hateful rhetoric targeting different groups is neither expected nor acceptable behavior. To do this, identify who in your network is a “norm setter.” Norm setters are people who are in some ways reference points for a particular group or audience – they might have influence in some way as an official leader, be seen as influential in a less formal way, have a large platform and reach, or a large number of social connections, for example. In some way, they are seen as representative (or leading) in the norms for the group. Depending on the audience you want to reach, this can be anyone from a sports coach to a faith leader, the local mayor, or a student activist. You can also figure out if anyone in your network has access to other norm-setters in your community and work with them.

These are your messengers, and they can “show” as well as “tell” by doing things that demonstrate positive norms, and then sharing those stories. You can support them, for example, to post positive messages on social media, showcasing themselves standing up against negative actions, or writing op-eds in publications the target audience finds credible – all actions that model the desired behaviors for their particular group while undercutting narratives that violence and negative behaviors are prevalent.

Because norm setters need to be credible for different audiences, your resiliency network can be well-positioned to identify and bolster norm setters that can reach deeply and widely within your community. These will also be important messengers when it comes to rapid response!

B: Tips for setting positive norms (continued)

2. Set norms modeling positive behaviors through messaging and action.

Set positive norms by sharing stories that model positive behaviors. Show people taking positive action, and talk about participation in the election, patience through the process, and making sure everyone is able to vote safely are core priorities. Show what you are doing, and what others are doing. Make it clear that the expectation for your community is helping ensure that everyone can vote safely, feels safely voting, and that as a community you are committed to caring about one another and addressing local issues no matter the outcome of the election, for example.

3. Tie norms to identities that resonate with people when possible – and promote norms that activate or reinforce cross-cutting identities

Because people are particularly sensitive to norms for groups they are a part of – whether that’s their partisan political group, their faith community, or a clique in a high school cafeteria – it can be important to tie normative messaging to different groups that people are part of. For example, you can tie normative messaging to the unifying identities, use “we” framing, and include a positive expectation. For example: “as moms, we are working hard to make sure everyone in our community is able to vote safely in this election!” or “as Tigers fans, we are helping make sure everyone has the information they need about how to participate this election!” ...” or “as proud Michiganders here in Lansing, we are working to make sure that everyone feels safe voting.”

You can also send a message through the messengers you choose. For example, if you can ensure that messages based in unifying identities showcases diverse groups – for example, a group of moms of many backgrounds speaking –you can also show a norm of diversity, respect, and collective support in your community.

4. When calling out harmful dynamics or actions, be careful not to inadvertently signal a negative norm.

When harmful things happen – whether that’s a hate crime, harmful rhetoric from a local leader, or any other type of violence, it’s important to be ready to assert positive norms while also drawing attention to the issue. Sometimes well-intentioned messaging meant to address negative dynamics can actually send a signal that those negative dynamics are more common than they actually are.

B: Tips for setting positive norms (continued)

For example, students on college campuses tend to overestimate how much their peers binge drink – and therefore, binge drink more. Campaigns to reduce binge drinking were successful when they corrected these overestimations – once people thought their peers binge drank less, they in turn drank less. Conversely, a campaign that simply talked about how binge drinking is a problem on college campuses could be expected to drive up binge drinking by making it seem more common.⁴⁵

The same broad consideration – of how to bring attention to a harmful issue without making it worse – applies when talking about hate and violence. Consider the message “hate is everywhere and growing” – it’s meant to dissuade individuals from spreading hate speech or joining extremist movements, but it also signals that those things are normal and acceptable – and this messaging can in turn potentially make people less sensitive, and more likely to accept them. Instead, craft messages that make clear that most people DO NOT approve of violence or other negative behaviors. Even if negative behaviors are growing more prevalent, make sure that when you draw attention to it you also focus on a story or statistic that reinforces the positive norm you seek to bolster – that most people disapprove of violence and hateful rhetoric, or are supporting efforts to ensure a peaceful and credible election. To return to the example of talking about hate, one could create messaging that talks about a recent increase in hate crimes locally being met with enormous public disapproval and talk specifically about the actions being taken to address the issue and how leaders from targeted communities are responding. The headline, rather than “hate is everywhere and it’s increasing” would read, “community members condemn recent hate crimes and mount a response.”

5. Develop messaging that outlines “who we are” rather than only “who we are not.”

Particularly in times of uncertainty, people gravitate toward leaders who can define “who we are” over those who purely focus on “who we are not.” Rather than pointing out the flaws in others, define your audience in positive, inclusive terms and using the community’s own words and examples. Themes likely to resonate include inclusivity, diversity, unity, agency, hope, good will, a focus on safety and security, competency and effectiveness.⁴⁶

C: Tips for encouraging and supporting action

You can build a foundation for engagement by encouraging and supporting people to take positive actions. Here are some pointers:

1. Communicate clear action steps people can take to bolster community resilience.

In addition to promoting a vision for community resilience, identify and explain clear steps individuals and the community can take to build this resilience. This should include specific tasks and responsibilities for different actors involved in the effort. Research shows behavior change and group actions are more likely to materialize when there's a clear roadmap for how it will happen.⁴⁷ You can plug people into immediate proactive actions and begin to think about things that will help prepare them for the risks and scenarios you've considered.

Think about clear simple things people can do, even simply sharing information with their friends and neighbors, or posting a slogan or statement you come up with alongside a personal story.

2. Provide messages of gratitude for engaging in positive behavior (such as helping behavior).

Reinforce positive behaviors through thanking individuals for their work. As part of this, reiterate how their efforts have contributed to creating resilience and advancing the community's larger goals.

D: Tips for proactively communicating accurate information and correcting misinformation

There are already attempts to spread mis and disinformation about the election, including preemptive and unfounded declarations of fraud, misleading information meant to prevent people from voting, and the politicization of changes to election procedures necessitated by COVID-19. Misinformation can be difficult to effectively correct after the fact, so it's important to get out in front of misleading narratives. One way to do this is through anticipating potential topics of misinformation and proactively spreading correct information. Here are some priorities. Note that you should identify accurate sources and relationships with people who have knowledge on voting procedures in your state to craft these messages:

1. Reiterate civic education messages about procedures that remain unchanged from prior elections.
2. Proactively tell people what to expect regarding any procedural changes. Such messages can, for example, prepare people for any changes in polling locations, times, and absentee procedures.
3. Create messages affirming the constitutional imperative for everyone to have a chance to vote. This message might be couched in terms of community values – our community votes and supports one another in voting. This can also activate cross-cutting identities to depict voting as something we are all doing, even if we are voting in different ways.
4. Since election results will take longer to find out than they have in recent elections due to the need to count mail-in ballots, you can talk about the importance of voting and then of being patient while waiting for the results. This should be done in a way that isn't speculative or alarmist – messages should be simple and calm.
5. Encourage community-members to share credible voting information throughout their networks, including with their friends and families. Note that it can be important to identify credible sources in advance - who has the most up to date and reliable information about voting processes, procedures, and updates?

E: Build trust within your community and between communities

While each member of your network will have built trust with different groups and audiences in your community as individuals, you can also take steps to build trust as a collective and to build and deepen trust across different groups.

1. Set realistic expectations of what your network can and cannot do and meet them. Be clear in communicating what resources and capacity you have and follow through on the commitments you make.
2. Be visible in your work with different community leaders. While the majority of your coordination will likely be behind-the-scenes, showing different community leaders working together can help build trust between communities (and for the network members). (Note: you can decide to do all of your work behind the scenes rather than have a public-facing network, but showing different network members doing things together even informally can help boost trust).
3. Listen to people's concerns, grievances, needs, and priorities. You can do this through existing channels or forums or develop a new one (such as a moderated Facebook group). Whatever the mechanism, be sure to be transparent about the best ways to communicate with your network. If you do establish a more formal channel for this, develop a clear process for moderation and, again, be transparent about that process.
4. Show up for groups being targeted with harm. This could mean releasing a statement or physically showing up to a vigil or rally. Be sure to check in with targeted groups about the types of actions that can best address their needs and priorities – do this regularly to remain up-to-date as the context evolves.
5. Amplify voices and stories from affected communities. Be sure to get permission for sharing personal stories from groups or individuals.
6. Organize resources and provide support for targeted communities. Again, be sure to check in with targeted communities about their needs and priorities.
7. Circulate reliable information to your community. This can be directly related to the election or other helpful resources and information (e.g., information about mutual aid networks, community relief resources, statements from city government, voting procedures, road closures on voting day, etc.).

Note: In addition to election-specific messaging to get out ahead of misinformation, get familiar with best practices for correcting misinformation more generally, and use them as needed in your communications. This is described on [pg. 59](#)

Planning proactive action

Once you've thought through the different types of actions you could take to reduce risk and build helpful narrative frames, use the "Planning Proactive Action" worksheet to decide what you'll do and plan your next steps!

WORKSHEET #9: Planning Proactive Action

SELECT PRIORITIES TO FOCUS ON:

After reviewing the “**Taking Proactive Action**” handout, think with your network about which priorities you’d like to focus on. You can use the checklist below to mark which you’d like to focus on and make notes. You can also brainstorm any other action priorities you think are important but aren’t in this list; write them down at the bottom of the list.

- A: Build unifying identities
- B: Set positive norms
- C: Proactively develop prosocial messaging
- D: Proactively communicate accurate information and correct misinformation
- E: Learn and use best practices for correcting mis- and disinformation
- F: Build trust within your community and between communities

» Turn to the next page to brainstorm details and write your action plan! »

WORKSHEET #9: Planning Proactive Action

Now plan how you'll take action! You can use the below chart to write ideas for each priority you selected on the last page, designate a point person (or group of people) to coordinate and move that priority forward, and list everyone who will be involved and the role's they'll play. Refer back to your communications infrastructure and network resource mapping to think about what resources and communication capacity and reach the network can bring to bear on each strategy!

Strategy: (e.g. "Build Unifying Identities")	
Describe what you'll do or brainstorm ideas for action that a point person can build on:	
Point person responsible for coordinating/organizing?	
Other people involved & their roles?	

Strategy:	
Describe what you'll do or brainstorm ideas for action that a point person can build on:	
Point person responsible for coordinating/organizing?	
Other people involved & their roles?	

Strategy:	
Describe what you'll do or brainstorm ideas for action that a point person can build on:	
Point person responsible for coordinating/organizing?	
Other people involved & their roles?	

WORKSHEET #9: Planning Proactive Action

Strategy:	
Describe what you'll do or brainstorm ideas for action that a point person can build on:	
Point person responsible for coordinating/organizing?	
Other people involved & their roles?	

Strategy:	
Describe what you'll do or brainstorm ideas for action that a point person can build on:	
Point person responsible for coordinating/organizing?	
Other people involved & their roles?	

Strategy:	
Describe what you'll do or brainstorm ideas for action that a point person can build on:	
Point person responsible for coordinating/organizing?	
Other people involved & their roles?	

Now you have:

- Become familiar with different proactive actions you can take to address risk, set the narrative, and practice coordination within your network
- Made a plan for action

What's next?

» IT'S TIME TO GET TO WORK! START TAKING PROACTIVE ACTION WITH YOUR NETWORK. CONTINUE TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS, EXPAND YOUR NETWORK, AND MONITOR AND RESPOND TO ISSUES THAT ARISE. AS YOU DO, KEEP CHECKING IN, EVALUATING LEARNINGS FROM YOUR ACTIONS (BOTH ABOUT THE NETWORK'S INTERNAL FUNCTIONING AND THE TYPES OF ACTIONS THAT ARE MOST EFFECTIVE)! »

Endnotes

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