PLEJ | PARTNERSHIP FOR LARGE ELECTION JURISDICTIONS

ISSUE GUIDE

Public Records Stories

Local election officials (LEOs) possess a wealth of stories within their collection of public records and present opportunities for media engagement and earned media coverage. Here is a 'Roadmap' for public records storytelling:



R RECORDS TELL A STORY

From voting trends, to voter participation, to historical changes within a community, public records have the power to shine a light on a society. For LEOs, the goal is to identify newsworthy stories – stories only a local election office would have.

O OPEN THE VAULT

Examine the categories of public records your office possesses and look for stories buried in them. Records can reveal throughlines: trends, context and analysis about elections and voting in your community. They can provide valuable, newsworthy insight.

A ASSESS VISUAL STORYTELLING

Public records stories don't have to be dry stories! Always think about how to make a public records story visual. Once you identify a story, craft how to tell it visually.

D DATA WOVEN THROUGHOUT

Imagine you're writing a short story about a trend, context, or analysis you found in the public records. You'd focus on narrative structure, a compelling beginning and cogent summary. For public records stories, use data to buttress your conclusion and theme.

M MAKE A MEDIA RELEASE PLAN

The goal is to get media coverage for your public records management story, so plan how to release it and in what medium. Assemble an electronic press kit you'll give to reporters with the elements they'll need to tell a compelling story to their audience. Also use the opportunity to make a public case to your stakeholders (i.e. elected officials, municipality administrators, lawmakers) for why publicly accessible data is a vital government interest.

A ASK CREATIVE PARTNERS FOR HELP

Does your jurisdiction have a Canva whiz? A data charting guru? A flowchart maven? Utilize all creative partners within a jurisdiction – not just the elections office – to design the visual elements needed for your release plan.

P PRESENT TO THE MEDIA

Determine how best to share this story with trusted media partners. A plain news release should be a last resort. Think about ways to make the announcement visual, engaging and must-cover. Creating a presentation plan will also help you communicate or advocate with other constituencies: elected officials, government partners and the public.

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