

# Community Relationships

For each Standard you are seeking certification in, you'll be given a questionnaire specific to that Standard to fill out. Most questionnaires will also request that you upload nonconfidential materials, such as examples of reports you have published or your standard operating procedures documents. This guide has tips to keep in mind when preparing for and filling out the Community Relationships questionnaire so that your office has a more seamless experience.

## The Standard

Your election office builds and maintains strong relationships in your community that foster trust in the election process. To achieve this standard:

- You build relationships in your local government and with community partners that represent a range of voter demographics.
- You maintain community contacts and ensure that relationships continue through staffing changes.
- You solicit, document, and act on relevant feedback from voters and partners in your local community.
- You leverage your community relationships to identify misconceptions about elections and craft an accurate, timely response.

## Glossary

We've tried to keep jargon to a minimum, but some is unavoidable. Since many offices use different terminology, here are some terms used in the standard or questionnaire that may be unfamiliar or you may use in a different way:

- **Community partners:** Specific organizations, entities, and/or people within your defined community with whom your office intentionally collaborates.

## Who to include

You will get more out of the certification process and be able to complete the questionnaire more quickly if you involve the right staff in the process. Here are some suggestions for who to include for this standard:

- Staff who manage outreach to community groups and maintain relationships with community partners.
- Staff who establish and maintain relationships with other local government departments and entities.
- Staff who manage communications strategy for your office.

## Materials requested

The questionnaire will request the following materials:

- Documentation of feedback that your office has received from community members.

You may not have documents with these titles or you may have reasons that you don't use some of these types of materials. In those cases, you can provide other documents that you use in these processes, or provide explanations for what you do instead.

Please provide only the versions or portions of these (or similar) documents that would be subject to public records requests in your jurisdiction. Do not provide any confidential documents or information. We encourage you to consult with your local counsel if you have questions about whether a document can be shared.

## Example questions

Here are some examples of questions found in the certification questionnaire, to give you an idea of what you will be asked about:

- Please describe one strong relationship and one weak/developing relationship your office holds with organizations in your community. In doing so, please choose 2 different organizations, representative of different demographic groups.
- How does your office ensure that community contacts and relationships remain intact through staffing changes?
- How often does your office solicit, document, and act on relevant feedback from community members within a 12 months (1 year) period? How does this change during off-cycle election time periods vs. on-cycle election time periods, if at all?

## Resources addressing this standard

If you are looking for ways to improve your processes in this area before applying for certification or to implement feedback you received about how to meet the standard, these publicly available, nonpartisan resources may help.

- [Communicating Trusted Election Information](#): A series of courses on all kinds of communications for election offices. For this Standard, the course "Educating and Persuading Public Officials" is especially relevant for how to build relationships with other local government officials.
- [Planning language access workbook](#): This set of nonpartisan resources is primarily aimed at improving the accessibility of materials, which has some intrinsic uses for building community relationships, but it also has a section specifically on how to bring community groups into the process.

Using or reviewing these resources is not required for your office to be certified: certification is based on achieving the standard, not on using specific materials. These nonpartisan resources are provided for informational and educational purposes only.

## Certification program information

For information on the certification program as a whole, as well as general advice on how to get the most out of the certification process, consult these resources:

- Our [guide](#) to the certification process
- [FAQs](#) about the Alliance certification program
- Go to [CertifyExcellence.org](https://certifyexcellence.org) to apply