

Candidate Forum Toolkit

Plan an event for neighbors to engage with candidates for elected office!
It's easy, fun and important for your community!

Educate Candidates About Housing Needs in Your Community.

Housing is essential infrastructure for our communities. But Minnesota does not have sufficient housing to support working families, and a thriving and growing economy. Let candidates know why housing is important to you and ask them to make housing a policy priority.

Get data on your local housing needs:
bit.ly/SOTS2019

Ready, Set, Plan Your Event!

Who are your planning partners?

Identifying partners early in the process, whether they are individuals or organizations, helps broaden buy-in to your event, brings more hands to help with planning ideas, and helps with outreach to neighbors.

What are your goals for the event?

Determining your goals with your planning partners helps ensure they are achieved. Goals can range from meeting and getting to know candidates, to raising the public profile of an issue you care about, to ensuring candidates answer particular questions important to you.

Continued on
next page.

What can you accomplish?



Learn more about candidates and their public policy positions



Build relationships with candidates that may last beyond your event



Educate candidates about community issues



Raise public awareness of issues you care about



Build partnerships within community, through organizing your event

What is the format for your event?

Some ideas include candidate forums, informal social gatherings, and tours of important community locations.

What are special considerations for planning a candidate forum?

If you choose a candidate forum, your goals for the event may drive some of your choices, such as: Who will moderate your forum? What is the format? Will there be opening and closing statements? Will you have set questions, take audience questions, or a combination of both? Will you allow questions at an open mic or collect written suggestions for the moderator to read?

Will more organizations and individuals join you in promoting and planning your event?

Bringing more partners to the table will help bring attention to your event and increase participation through attendance.

What location for your event?

What locations fit your event format, budget, and the audience you want to attract? How can you accommodate audience needs? For instance, if you want your event to be family friendly, how would you ensure kids are welcome? Other considerations include mobility issues and ADA accessibility, language interpretation, and refreshments.

When do you want your event to occur?

Consider when you want your event to happen. Research potential dates to avoid conflicts such as competing community events or religious holidays.

Invite the candidates!

Assign a planning team member to be responsible to invite the candidates, answer questions, and communicate important event details. Ensure you invite all candidates who filed for office.

How will you get the word out and encourage neighbors to attend?

Ask planning partners to bring neighbors to the event. Consider other ways to advertise including social media, flyers, door knocking, and personal outreach.

How will you develop a plan for your event, including assigning roles and responsibilities?

Work together to develop an event plan. Pay special attention to the number of volunteers needed.

Are there special guests you want to invite to your event?

Depending on the goals of the event, you may have unique guests to invite. You may want to ensure that people connected with your host location receive a special invitation to attend. And, don't forget to invite the media!

How will you record the event?

With Facebook Live and other recording options, many neighbors may want to participate in the event via social media. Photos are important for promoting the event online before and after it occurs. And, you may want to ensure questions and candidate answers are documented for future reference.

How will you share information about the event after it happens?

Be creative! Use social media, write a letter to the editor, and more to help your event receive attention.

Helpful links

Searching for candidates who have filed for office? Find this information, filing deadlines, and more at the Minnesota Secretary of State's website: candidates.sos.state.mn.us/

Voter engagement guide for nonprofit organizations: www.nonprofitvote.org/resource-library/candidate-engagement-2/

Non-partisan voter and candidate engagement on housing issues: www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/

Find who represents you! bit.ly/MyRepsMN19

Looking for a nonpartisan experienced moderator? Check with your local chapter of the League of Women Voters! www.lww.org