

Guidance for Engaging with Candidates

The Consortium is providing various nonpartisan resources that can help you engage with candidates and others on climate, health, and equity. The guidance below should be helpful in using the candidate questions, voter issue guide, policy brief, and other materials. When utilizing the candidate questions guide, consider which climate and health issues are most salient to your candidates and jurisdiction and adjust if needed.

How to Participate in a Candidate Forum or Town Hall

Step 1: To find an event, here are several avenues:

- Google search “Candidate Town Hall” or “Candidate Forum” and your city, county and/or state; or
- Visit the Town Hall Project website; or
- Visit the website of your local candidates
- Visit the websites of your county or state political parties

Step 2: Follow links to webpages and look for events under menu tabs such as “Calendar”, “News & Events”, or “Contact”.

Step 3: Identify the sponsor of the event(s). Sponsors could include a candidate’s campaign, your local political party, or a nonpartisan group such as the League of Women Voters, the NAACP, or the League of Conservation Voters. Consider the context and adjust questions if needed; your questions will be more impactful if they are salient in your community or more relevant to the work of the sponsors.

Step 4: Read about the event to determine whether sign-up is required, whether the event allows questions from the audience, and if so, if you must submit questions beforehand. While there, you may want to get on the mailing list. On a candidate webpage, sign-up for their email *and* call list to be notified of events.

Note: Platforms for events vary and include Zoom or Facebook Live. Many candidates are holding town hall events over the phone and you may receive an automated notification to join the call.

Step 5: Submit your question or questions in advance, or join the event at the appointed time and submit them then if this is requested. Have your question ready to read in case the event accepts verbal questions.

Step 6: Get colleagues to join the same event and submit the same or additional questions. The more questions about climate and health, the greater will be the likelihood that a question will be included.

Step 7: If you’re participating on behalf of a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, make sure you review the legal guidance beforehand. Bolder Advocacy provides many informative resources. Start [here](#).

How to Host a Nonpartisan Candidate Forum

Step 1: Assess the need and resources you have available for a dedicated candidate forum. Consider questions such as: are candidates from each party likely to attend? Are there other local organizations that would be interested in helping? Virtual forums are a much lower lift than planning an in-person event, but will still require considerable coordination and recruitment of an audience.

Step 2: There are various resources available to help you understand the process of putting together a forum. We recommend starting with these:

- [Video and toolkit](#) from Community Food Strategies on hosting a virtual forum
- [Legal guidelines](#) for 501(c)(3)s from Bolder Advocacy

Step 3: Determine a platform. Zoom and Facebook Live are effective avenues. See if you can access a Zoom Webinar license through a partner, which allows for streaming to Facebook Live and YouTube.

Step 4: Send invites to all candidates running as early as possible to get confirmation. Proceed with planning after confirmation utilizing the above resources and any other assistance we can provide.

Write an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor

In addition to candidate forums, opinion pieces submitted to your local media outlet are an effective way to educate. Consider using one or several of the candidate questions to frame your opinion piece; refer to the various writing guidelines and templates on our [website here](#), and feel free to send to us for review. [Here](#) is another helpful resource from Harvard.

Direct Contact

If none of these options are available to you, consider emailing the questions directly to your candidates' offices. Ensure that you email them to all candidates running in every party to remain nonpartisan and align with legal 501(c)(3) guidelines.

For guidance or questions, contact Colin at cnackerm@gmu.edu