

DEFENDING DIGITAL DEMOCRACY PROJECT

ELECTIONS BATTLE STAFF COMMUNICATIONS TOP TAKEAWAYS

Your Election Battle Staff Communications Planning: [D3P's Election Battle Staff Playbook](#) shares recommendations for maximizing coordination. Whether you're actively preparing for the election period or in the middle of it, ensuring your team can communicate reliably, efficiently, and seamlessly is critical to ensuring your election runs smoothly.

Elections offices have seen power outages, network outages, fire alarms, storms knocking down telecommunications equipment and power lines go down, all during the election period in past elections. Mobile devices often run out of battery. Popular communications software is subject to occasional service outages and cyberattacks. Mis/Disinformation can interject confusion necessitating a quick response.

Especially when teams are unable to rely on physical co-location during a pandemic, it is important to have contingency plans in place. **Ahead of election day, make sure you have a back-up plan to keep communications going.** Choose reliable communication methods and prioritize them in terms of effectiveness and ease of use. Doing a “communications check” is something you can do up to election day.

Who?

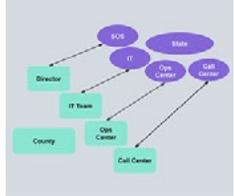
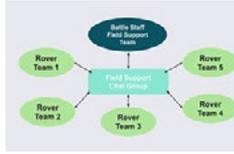
From the typical and unforeseen scenarios that occur in the process of election administration to addressing cyber or mis and disinformation incidents. *Who* you need to communicate with is important to plan for ahead of time. You can think of a communication path as a connection between people focused on the same purpose and issues. *What communications paths exist in your election ecosystem? What groups are there? Who needs to communicate with whom?*

Battle Staff Coordination: Communication Paths + Who? (pg. 17)

- What type of group? (*Every group represents a needed communication path.*)
- Who is in it? (*This can be as few as two people or as large as multiple counties.*)
- What purpose does the group communication/ chat serve?

Tip: Draw a diagram to help you plan.

Examples of What, Who, Purpose and Diagram, [D3P Election Battle Staff Playbook](#), pg.18.

Group Type	Purpose	Communications Path Diagram
What: Individual County-to-State Chat Groups Who: County and State Offices	Point-to-point vertical comms between county offices and the state-level counterparts to inform and discuss issues that it may need assistance with resolving to include deployment of state-level resources the county may not be aware of. Provides an opportunity for the state and county to respond cohesively to issues that may affect one another.	
What: Field Support Chat Group Who: All Rovers and Battle Staff Field Support Team	Allows for fast and consistent information and situational awareness across the county from the Battle Staff to the Rovers who then relay to voting locations.	

Cyber/ Influence Operation Communications Coordination:

Incident Response Teams

Make sure you've identified your team members who will be a part of responding to cyber and mis/disinformation incidents.

- See [D3P Incident Communications | Top Takeaways](#)
- Examples include a list of your [cyber incident response team \(pg. 17-21\)](#) and a Mis/Disinformation [incident response team \(pg. 4-7\)](#)

Set your lists and distribute them to your team.

How?

How do your teams communicate? What is your primary method of communication? What is your backup method? The method may depend on the purpose of the group (using chat tools, text groups or calls). Ideas for methods ([pg. 19](#)).

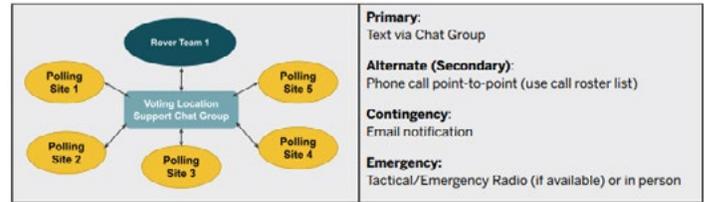
A **PACE** plan will help make sure you know how communications will continue despite any issue. ([pg. 22](#)). **Before Election Day, make sure your have a PACE plan for all of your communication path groups, especially those serving a vital election administration function or those you're tracking for communication on election day.**

Step 1: Communication plans (aka PACE plans)

Primary:	_____
Secondary (A lternate):	_____
Tertiary (C ontingency):	_____
Quaternary (E mergency):	_____

Various communication flows may have different communication methods based on the function. For example, communications between rovers and precinct captains may require different communication methods than communications between rovers and election staff. *As you set up methods for communication, be mindful of best practices and relevant laws around encryption, storing records, etc.*

Example of a PACE Plan, [D3P Election Battle Staff Playbook, pg.20.](#)



Step 2: Test your plan

- Test that everyone on your team can log in, including 2FA, if applicable.
- Ensure you have the appropriate power equipment (e.g. *charging cables, spare batteries*).
- Ensure everyone knows the sequence of communication options for their respective work (e.g. *what does PACE look like?*).
- Ensure the contact information for each communication option is accessible (e.g. *phone numbers, usernames*).
- Test that key communication channels for groups are set up and well understood (e.g. *list of communication groups and methods, radio frequencies*).
- Assure any new updates are applied to existing communication applications.
- Confirm and test settings to assure chat history and back-up log to comply with any regulatory requirements.

When?

With your groups mapped, you can decide when to begin a communication path with each:

- **Schedule Information—expected and known communication.** Scheduling set “check in” times with each group throughout election day, will set a tempo of streamlining information sharing and increase awareness across your team.
- **Unscheduled Information—for unpredictable events.** Detail for your groups, what is helpful for you to know with any unscheduled yet critical updates. (*Who?, What?, When?, Where?, Why?*)

Where?

Although your team (and broader battle staff) are communicating by various methods, your operation center is a place where your *core team* is overseeing and responding to all of the moving pieces. Your core team involves those responsible for overseeing election operations. Your operations center may also include *liaisons*, representatives you coordinate with, but are not involved in election administration responsibilities. Operations centers come in all shapes and sizes. COVID-19 may not allow you all to be in one room together, but consider virtual integration at scheduled times.

Example of an Election Operations Center ([p. 14](#)).