

FIVE STEPS TO TRIBAL GOVERNMENT COORDINATION

Election officials and law enforcement often work with other government agencies and community stakeholders to ensure that elections are administered safely and securely. For many officials, this includes collaborating with Tribal governments.

Election officials across the country face increased threats, harassment, and intimidation.¹ In this climate, the task of keeping voters and election workers on Tribal lands safe may require expansion of strategic cooperation and coordination, to include Tribal officials.

As different Tribal communities have different historical experiences and perspectives on non-Tribal law enforcement, local election officials and law enforcement should consider consulting with Tribal leaders to discuss potential cooperation, along with shared goals and boundaries.

An important purpose of this document is to support election officials and law enforcement in establishing respectful and collaborative partnerships with Tribal governments. Best practices for government-to-government coordination with Tribal Nations include transparency, and ongoing, timely and meaningful communication, and allowing Tribal governments an opportunity to influence planning and shape outcomes.

This resource suggests five actions that election officials and law enforcement can take in partnership with Tribal Nations to improve election security.

¹ Brennan Center for Justice. (2025, July 10) Local Election Officials Survey - July 2025. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/local-election-officials-survey-july-2025>.



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**Committee for
SAFE AND SECURE
ELECTIONS**

1

MEET

Meet to coordinate on responses

2

SHARE

Share information and perspectives

3

AGREE

Agree on rules to guide response

4

PLAN

Plan preventive action, incident response and communications

5

PRACTICE

Practice all aspects of emergency response, including communications

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1

MEET

- Bring Tribal leaders, state and/or local election officials and law enforcement, and community stakeholders together to build relationships
- Discuss the need for election security planning with stakeholders
- Recognize Tribal sovereignty and Tribal leaders as official government-to-government partners by using formal consultation processes with designated Tribal leaders
- Be respectful of Tribal cultural practices and languages by asking Tribal leaders about preferred titles, pronunciations, and protocols before meetings and events

2

SHARE

The primary goals of the initial meeting include:

- Discuss the current elections threat landscape to establish the need for cooperation
- Recognize that Tribal jurisdictions might overlap multiple counties and states which may have different laws
- Set expectations and boundaries, within legal and policy frameworks, and keep in mind the importance of reinforcing public trust
- Communicate jurisdictional authorities and limitations of each participating government
- Share election administration planning details, such as calendars, voting locations, usual processes, etc.
 - Share contact information of liaisons, key staff, and community stakeholder groups

3

AGREE

Tribal leaders, local election officials, and law enforcement should consider agreeing to:

- Routine communication with defined goals and outcomes related to security of election operations
- Statutory duties such as transport of secure materials
- Assessment of and recommendations for physical security
- Rules of engagement, especially where voters are present
- Regular meetings to discuss new incidents and operational adjustments
- Engage with other Tribal governments, state governments, or federal agencies as needed
- Draft and/or implement any current agreements with Tribal governments that outline jurisdictional authority and agency roles and responsibilities

4

PLAN

- Develop collaborative incident response and crisis communication plans with Tribal government leadership, election officials, and law enforcement
- Plan for incident response to facilitate smooth operations:
 - Share security intelligence and resources
 - Determine the scope and risk of any incident
 - Respond appropriately
 - Take protective measures for staff
 - Take preventive measures to ensure no recurrence of disturbance
- Plan crisis communications to create awareness and to deter further incidents
 - Outline communication protocols and identify chain of command for major incidents and emergencies - include internal and external stakeholders
- Map a path forward

5

PRACTICE

- Conduct a tabletop exercise to role-play election security scenarios, establish best practices, and identify operational gaps.
 - Practice all aspects of emergency response, including communications
 - Ensure exercises and response planning reflect Tribal history and cultural considerations
- Continue to practice and update election security responses during election and non-election years
 - Periodic assessments can identify security gaps and improve future planning



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