

Interference in the Information Environment: Mitigation and Response

Throughout 2020, the Paris Call Community for Countering Election Interference—led by the Alliance for Securing Democracy (ASD), the Government of Canada, and Microsoft in support of the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace—convened a series of multi-stakeholder workshops, each addressing a critical topic related to preventing interference in the electoral process. The outcomes below are a first glimpse at some of the key observations made by practitioners during these workshops. A more in-depth overview of best practices is planned for early 2021.

Protecting democracies from foreign election interference is a shared responsibility—when you see something, say something. Government, news media, social media platforms, academia and civil society all have important roles to play. Here are some best practices we heard from stakeholders across government, industry, the media, and civil society on speaking up in the face of disinformation.



Civil Society - Media

- **Offer news and information that are useful** – Tell the stories and issues that are identified by the community.
- **Maintain the mantle of ‘journalistic arbiter of truth’** – Identify biases and blind spots; however do not create false dichotomies as not everything has two sides. Maintain impartiality and avoid an advocacy role.
- **Ask the right questions** – Am I being manipulated? Who benefits from this story? Is the newsworthiness worth amplifying disinformation?
- **Consider sharing** – Pool resources to quickly fact-check and avoid duplication.



Industry – Social media platforms

- **Recognize the value of partnerships** – Consider sharing data and other resources with experts; those with the raw data might need others to help mine it.
- **Be transparent** – Have your efforts to deal with disinformation checked or “peer-reviewed” by other stakeholders.



Government

- **Create a high threshold for intervention during election** – Repeated government interventions could undermine people’s confidence in the legitimacy of the election.
- **Have the right people respond to electoral interference** – It is important to be non-partisan and to have a clear mandate when reacting to election interference.
- **Ensure access to real-time information** – Include both classified and non-classified information.
- **Develop communication strategies** – Consider the purpose of the communication, the type of information threat, whom it was directed at, when it occurred, and where it occurred; communicate threats in accessible and non-partisan way; and convey to citizens what is being done to protect the system.
- **Don’t exchange business cards during a hurricane** – establish ongoing relationships with other parts of the electoral ecosystem before any crisis hits; build a large tent for an all of government response which includes non-traditional groups.