



Healthy Choices for All

COMMUNITY/CANDIDATE FORUMS

Guide to Organizing a Successful Event

Welcome

Community/Candidate Forums are an exciting and unique experience to educate the public and candidates for office about public health issues. The forums can be a very effective tool to bring groups together and raise the profile of health issues. The forums also should encourage community members to become more involved, informed voters.

This guide serves as a comprehensive tool for event coordinators, volunteers and participants. We hope you'll use this document and supporting tools to help you plan successful, effective forums. If you have questions or need help troubleshooting challenges as they arise, please don't hesitate to contact Health First Wisconsin at 608-268-2620.

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Forum Overview

Purpose of Forums:

The purpose of a Community/Candidate Forum is to educate advocates, the public, the media and legislative candidates about supporting healthy communities and the importance of prevention. This effort could include discussion about community health issues such as binge drinking, physical activity and nutrition, and the continued importance of tobacco control and prevention. The discussion could include the benefits of reducing the economic and social costs of smoking, obesity and alcohol misuse.

Objectives: Why and for Whom

Successful Community/Candidate Forums serve several functions:

- To create media opportunities on the health, economic and environmental issues related to healthy communities.
- To offer an opportunity for citizens and advocates to meet and learn more about legislative candidates.
- To offer an opportunity for state and local allied organizations to collaborate on a project in order to advance healthy communities.
- To educate and engage community members toward carrying out the health-improvement goals of each community.
- To highlight the effects of community health issues, the benefits of funding prevention and control, and the associated health, economic and environmental issues, as priority issues that the public supports and cares about and that deserve attention from elected officials and the media.
- To encourage more individuals to vote, register to vote, and engage current supporters.

Community Criteria: Forum Location

The ideal setting for a forum meets some or all of these criteria:

- Significant legislative district or pivotal legislator
- History of existing advocacy base
- Electoral situation creates unique education opportunity
- Geographical diversity to help affect all areas of the state

Forum Format:

This format has proven to be effective: *1.5 hours, day and time determined by community*

Community Education (30 minutes)

- Suggested featured speakers:
 - Person affected by tobacco-, alcohol-, or obesity- related disease
 - Health or policy expert (e.g., tobacco control expert)

Legislative Candidate Forum Presentations (30 minutes)

- Moderator welcomes, reviews format and introduces candidates
- Candidates have two to three minutes (depending on number of candidates) of introduction time

Open forum (Q&A on community issues) (30 minutes)

- Theme is healthy communities and other specific health issues (e.g., tobacco, physical activity, nutrition, alcohol misuse)
- Moderator reads from comment/question cards submitted by audience
- Candidates have one minute to respond to questions
- Candidates get one minute for closing comments

Organization: Who Does What

- Each Community Candidate Forum will be organized locally by a committee of concerned citizens and state partners. Each community will have a lead contact who connects the local organizing committee and partners. Partners serve as the central coordinating body to help ensure that each local organizing committee has access to the necessary information, materials and technical support to plan a successful event
- The primary audience for the event includes:
 - Supporters of healthy communities and tobacco control;
 - Supporters of partner member organizations;
 - Candidates for the state legislature; and
 - Members of the media.
- Lead organizations will:
 - Establish the date of the forum;
 - Secure the facility;
 - Contact the candidates; and
 - Secure a moderator.

Rules to Remember: Nonpartisan Candidate Forums

501(c) (3) nonprofit organizations are permitted to sponsor candidate forums as long as they do not endorse, support, or oppose candidates or political parties.

Other Key Criteria – Candidate Forums shall:

- Include questions and discussion on a broad range of health issues.
- Invite all viable candidates. Objective criteria must be used for exclusion (i.e., not belonging to major parties).
- Pose only unbiased questions to candidates.
- Avoid promoting one candidate or political party over another.
- Use an impartial moderator, possibly someone from another community.
- Invite and involve an unbiased audience, and make the event open to the public.
- Use fair rules that candidates understand in advance and that treat all candidates similarly.
- Ensure that each candidate has an equal opportunity to present his or her views.

* Forum organizers can encourage people to ask specific, unbiased questions of candidates and can provide sample unbiased questions to audience members.

Proposed Ground Rules for Forum:

- Candidate speaking order will be drawn by number. Order will rotate.
- No campaign signs will be allowed.
- Campaign literature can be placed on information table.
- All questions will be addressed to all candidates.
- Rebuttals will not be allowed.
- Ask moderator to give preference to shorter, clearer questions.
- End as close to the intended time as possible.

Local Organizing Checklist

Logistics:

Choose a date wisely. Consult local calendars and consider allowing sufficient time for your local news outlets to publish a potential story on your forum prior to the election.

Select and schedule facility.

- Try to book a facility that does not charge a rental fee (e.g., community center or library).
- Make sure the facility is handicap accessible.
- Hire an interpreter (sign or bilingual) or ask one to donate his or her services.

Identify lead contact person for facility arrangements.

Arrange to have the following equipment and materials:

- Easel (for local co-sponsor sign)
- Chairs for candidates and audience
- Long table for candidates
- Podium for moderator. It is best to have the podium set up to the front and side of the candidates. The moderator should be able to see all of the candidates' name cards.
- Microphones
- Water for candidates and moderator
- Note pads and pens for candidates and moderators
- Name tags and tent cards for candidates and moderator. On candidate nametags, put the district that they are running for. *Be prepared: Candidates will show up without telling you that they are coming. Print name tags and tent cards for all candidates just in case.*
- Name tags for volunteers and staff. Include organization name on tag.
- Stopwatch for timekeeper. Make sure timekeepers can be seen by all candidates.
- Time cards (e.g., 2 minutes, 1 minute, 30 seconds)
- Index cards and pencils for audience questions
- Brief audience survey/evaluation forms (to distribute and collect)
- Long table to display literature from co-sponsors and for sign-in sheets. Put the registration table in an obvious place. The intent is to introduce attendees to co-sponsors and to collect contact information from each attendee for follow-up.
- A table for voter registration information. This is a perfect opportunity to remind people to vote and to encourage more people to vote. You can obtain information on voter registration by contacting the Government Accountability Board (608-266-8005 or <https://myvote.wi.gov/>), or the local chapter of League of Women Voters (<http://www.lwvwi.org>). Also include absentee voter applications, which are available to download at <http://gab.wi.gov/forms/gab-121-english>.
- Forum program
- Flags for the stage: United States and Wisconsin (optional)
- Camera
- Refreshments (if allowed)

Resources:

Sample Sign-up Sheet
Sample Forum Program

Recruitment & Promotion:

- Create a team.** Successful turnout is much more attainable if the work is shared. Recruit 3-5 people that you can count on to help recruit attendees.
- Set a turnout goal.** Your turnout goal can help you prioritize and focus, and will help you determine whether you need more people on your team. For these Candidate Forums, good turnout would be 50 people. To get 50 people to come, you should have at least 100 commit to attending. You can use people who commit to attending to do some of the work by asking them to commit to bringing a friend along. *A good goal is to invite at least 500 people.*
- Brainstorm a list of possible audiences.** An audience should be made up of people who might come to the forum. Examples include:
 - Staff, supporters and volunteers of health advocacy organizations including American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, and Health First Wisconsin
 - Local coalitions in tobacco control, alcohol and obesity
 - Developmental Disabilities Council members
 - Alcohol- and drug-free organizations, treatment groups
 - Mental health advocacy and provider groups
 - Hospital staff networks
 - Health care providers such as physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, addiction counselors, respiratory therapists, and related associations or organizations
 - Physician specialty practices (pulmonary, cardiology, oncology)
 - Health care worker unions
 - Public health staff and consumers
 - Local chapters or members of statewide co-sponsoring organizations
 - Faith communities and associations
 - Ethnic groups (Hmong, Hispanic organizations, etc)
 - Community of color networks
 - School administrators, teachers, school boards members
 - Early childhood professionals and child care providers
 - YMCAs, YWCAs
 - Chambers of Commerce, business groups
 - Law Enforcement officials and groups
 - 4-H clubs and other youth groups
 - Soccer, baseball and other youth sporting clubs
 - Senior citizen organizations
 - Neighborhood associations
 - Parks & Recreation departments and community education classes
 - League of Women Voters members
 - AARP members
 - Service clubs
 - Republican and Democratic Parties for your county
 - Your friends, neighbors and family members and those of the rest of the planning team
- Call contact people for each group on the list.** Building and leveraging personal connections is the key to good turnout. Your brainstorm list can be the foundation of your outreach. The easiest way to do this is to divide the list amongst the group. If

your group is small, you may need to prioritize so the groups you expect the biggest response from are highest on the list. Use talking points to guide your conversation.

- Create event on Facebook or other social media sites.** By doing this, you are able to reach many more people in a short amount of time. It also gives people a place to easily obtain details on the forum easily. In your event make sure to include the purpose for the forum, what issues will be discussed, which candidates will attend and when and where the forum will be held. Encourage those who RSVP as “attending” to promote the event and invite other friends via Facebook. Candidates can be encouraged to promote the event too but they should post it and use Health First’s description of the event, not editorialize.
- Mail out or email promotional flyers.** As much as possible, target your mailing to those audiences you most want to attend. Think strategically about posting flyers where interested community members will see them (e.g., physician clinics).
- Send supporting materials to allies.** Provide sample text for a newsletter or listserv promotion and some talking points to all contacts who agreed to help spread the word. This will make it easy for them to drop it into their newsletter, email update, or remarks at the beginning or end of a training or event. Try to get them to commit to a deadline date (send the email by x date) if possible. Know the mail dates of their newsletters. Thank them for their help.
- Build and obtain lists.** Keep an RSVP list to keep track of the people who agree to attend the forum, and the people who agree to personally recruit others to attend. If possible, get membership and volunteer lists from allies.
- Make confirmation calls.** Contact everyone who committed to attend and/or help spread the word; again, divvy up the list with your team.
- Make recruitment calls.** If you obtained lists of names and phone numbers, consider calling through them to ask them to attend the forum. A group of three to eight people with a script and a few phones can make up to 200 calls in a two-hour period. This can greatly increase your chances of high turnout because people respond best to personal contact.
If you didn’t obtain lists, recruit your family members, friends, and neighbors to attend the forum. In many cases, you will find that the same “pitch” you would use on a stranger will work on people you know.
- Mail reminder postcards or send emails and Facebook messages.** Multiple reminders greatly increase the chances that people will follow through, particularly those who’ve agreed to attend the forum or recruit others. Don’t leave friends or family members out of reminders; they may know you personally, but they still have busy lives. Be sure to follow remind everyone the forum is coming up.
- Contact local cable stations.** See if they will tape and broadcast the forum. Generally, these stations are looking for material and will run the tape multiple times.

Resources:

Sample Forum Promotional Flyer

Sample Forum Newsletter/Listserv Text

Recruiting Volunteers by Phone: Strategies for Success

Sample Phone Script: Recruiting Attendees for Candidate Forums

Sample Phone Script: Confirmation and Reminder Calls

Speaker Preparation:

The Moderator

- Identify and invite moderator.**
Suggested moderators: media representatives, reporters, League of Women Voters
- Meet with moderator.** The moderator is very important to setting the tone and flow of the event. Make sure they are fully prepared. Walk through ground rules, procedures and expectations.

Resources:

Forum Scripts for Lead Local Organization and Moderator
Moderator Tips and Ground Rules

The Candidates

- Invite all major party candidates for State Assembly and Senate in your area.**
Lists of candidate in your Senate and Assembly Districts are available from the Lead Partner Committee.
- Call the candidate and/or his or her campaign.** Invite the candidate by phone or email and let him or her know that you'll be sending a formal written invitation in the mail or by email. Give information, but don't stop there—ask for a commitment.
- Send a written invitation.** Provide information about the event, the expected turnout, the press that's been invited, your coalition and allied groups, and all event logistics. A sample letter is included on p. 23.
- Connect with the candidate's campaign.** Try to find someone on your planning team who has a connection to someone on the candidate's campaign committee, such as the campaign manager. Have them call their contact and ask for their help in ensuring that the candidate participates.
- Make a follow up call.** A week after the written invitation, call the candidate to get—or confirm—a commitment. In the call, emphasize that you are conducting intense outreach and that there will be a crowd at the event.
- Continue crowd-building.** As you work on the candidate, stay focused on your turnout plan. Keep calling the candidate until you get their commitment, and give the candidate information that reinforces the message that they will have access to many voters if they participate.
- Confirm.** Once the candidate has committed, send a confirmation letter with a summary of the event details. Thank them in advance for participating.
- Thank them again.** Send a thank you to the candidates after the event.

Resources:

Sample Candidate Invite Letter
Sample Candidate Follow-Up Letter
Candidate Briefing Outline

Media Relations:

- Identify all media venues in the community or region.** Lists can be obtained from the lead partner organization.
- Invite the Wisconsin Eye** to cover your event (contact: Claudia.Looze@wiseye.org)
- Place forums on community calendars.** This includes print, broadcast, cable and city notice boards.
- Help identify local spokespersons** (e.g., ACS volunteers, physicians) willing to be trained to be interviewed by the media and/or speak at your event.
- Identify & train featured speakers from community.** Media like to hear from individuals impacted by the issues at hand. If any impacted speakers are willing to meet with media before the forum it will help to attract media to the actual event.
- Submit opinion columns and letters to the editor.** Help identify local people (e.g., AHA volunteers, nurses, physicians) who are willing to write and submit opinion columns and letters to the editor.
- Email press release and media advisory.**
- Create press packets to distribute at the event.** Packets could include: event overview and program, press release, fact sheets that include citations, contact information for event organizers, partners and local spokespersons.
- Make follow up calls to the media** to make sure the press has received the press release and advisory, answer questions, encourage them to attend, etc.

Partners will provide:

- Template press release and media advisory
- Sample opinion column, letter to the editor templates, and other materials as needed

Lead Local Organization:

- Assist partners with identifying local media.
- Email press release and media advisory. Partners can provide email lists if necessary.
- Assist partners with follow-up media calls after press release and media advisory sent.
- Identify local physician to submit opinion column.
- Identify local volunteers or advocates to submit letters to the editor.

Resources:

Sample Press Release
Sample Media Advisory

Local Organizing Timeline

Immediate Tasks

Task	Timeline	Person or Group Responsible	Tracking and Follow-Up
Select facility and make scheduling arrangements	Now-6 weeks prior	Local Lead Organization	Facility issues – contact Lead State Partner
Identify and recruit local organizations as possible co-sponsors	Now-6 weeks prior	Local Committee Lead State Partner	Sponsors agree to use of name and help publicize event
Invite all local major party candidates for State Assembly and Senate	4-6 weeks prior; anytime after the filing deadline of June 2, 2014	Local Lead Organization	List of registered candidates provided by State Lead Partner to committee

One Month Before Event

Task	Timeline	Person or Group Responsible	Tracking and Follow-Up
Identify and invite moderator	6 weeks prior	Local Lead Organization	Moderator script provided by State Lead Partner (in this guide)
Mail/email invitation to all possible local contacts	4 weeks prior	Lead State Partner	Local Committee mail/email to local lists
Place forums on Community Calendars (print, broadcast, cable, city notice boards)	1 month out	Local Committee	State Lead Partner provide template (in this guide)

Two Weeks Before Event

Task	Timeline	Person or Group Responsible	Tracking and Follow-Up
Email press release announcing upcoming forum	2 weeks prior	Local Committee	State Lead Partner provide template (in this guide)
Follow up calls to local media to ensure they will print or broadcast information about forum	2 weeks prior	Local Committee	Discuss media response with State Lead Partner
Follow up with candidates to ensure participation and answer questions	2 weeks prior	Local Committee	Discuss any difficulties with State Lead Partner
Send reminder postcard to local contacts	1-2 weeks prior	Local Committee	State Lead Partner mail to local lists
Prepare media packets	1 week prior	Local Committee	
Contact local newspapers and submit opinion column	Call editor of paper 10 days before to ask about submission; submit at least one week before	Local Committee	Lead State Partner provide template
Send letters to the editor promoting event	Week before event	Local Committee	Lead State Partner provide template

Week of the Event

Task	Timeline	Person or Group Responsible	Tracking and Follow-Up
Calls to local contacts invited via direct mail/email	2-4 days prior	Lead State Partner	Phone Bank reminder calls
Email or fax media alert to press	2 days prior	Local Committee	Lead State Partner provide template (in this guide)
Follow up calls to press	1 day prior	Local Committee	

Day of the Event

Task	Timeline	Person or Group Responsible	Tracking and Follow-Up
Set up facility (see checklist)	Day of Event	Local Committee	
Take photos (share on social media and with local and state partners)	Day of Event	Local Committee	
Hand out press packets to media representatives	Day of Event	Local Committee	
Sign in Sheet	Day of Event	Local Committee	
Track: candidates who attended, number of attendees, and number/names of media representatives	Day of Event	Local Committee	
Distribute & Collect survey forms to attendees and organizers.	Day of Event	Local Committee	

After the Event

Task	Timeline	Person or Group Responsible	Tracking and Follow-Up
Compile news stories and coverage of your event to share with local and state partners.	Day of – 1 Week After	Local Committee	Local Committee Lead State Partner
Letters to the editor	Week before (as promo) and week after as follow-up	Local Committee	Lead State Partner provide template
Thank you notes to participating candidates, local sponsors, others	Week after	Local Committee	
Hold a debrief meeting. Discuss what worked, what didn't work, what you learned from the evaluations and lessons for future events. Report back your successes, challenges and tips.	1-2 weeks after event	Local Committee	Local Committee Lead State Partner

Community/Candidate Forums

Resources

For Local Community Organizing

Resources – Table of Contents

[Click here to download editable word documents:](#) Select document, click “Open”, go to “File”, go to “Download As...” and select “Microsoft Word”.

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Recruiting Volunteers by Phone: Strategies for Success

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TOWN MEETING

6:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Prior to each candidate forum, there will be a town meeting at which experts will discuss some of the most pressing health-related issues facing our legislature: Healthy Choices for All and *(include any desired, additional topics here)*.

A SPECIAL THANKS TO...

Thank you to all the staff and volunteers who worked very hard to organize and promote this Community Forum.

Your time and energy is greatly appreciated!

Thank you to all who came and participated in the Community Forum. Your support is important in improving the health of Wisconsin.

Thanks to the candidates who demonstrated their interest in addressing Wisconsin's health concerns through legislative means.

Thanks to our moderator for providing an interesting and informative Forum.

Thank you to the facility that hosted our Community Forum and provided a wonderful space to hold this important discussion.

Healthy Choices for All

TOWN MEETING & CANDIDATE FORUM

[DATE]

[TIME]

[LOCATION]

MODERATOR: [NAME]

SPONSORED BY Healthy Choices for All

Thanks to the sponsoring member organizations

Candidate Forums are educational events that are designed to inform the public about several critical health issues being addressed during this election cycle. The forums, content and conduct are strictly neutral, and no endorsement of any candidate by the sponsoring organizations is intended or to be inferred.

CANDIDATES

[CANDIDATE]

[CITY]

[DISTRICT]

PURPOSE OF THIS COMMUNITY FORUM

This Forum will let you, the voter, ask questions of candidates in a moderated forum.

Questions on a broad range of health issues are encouraged.

Please submit your questions on the index cards provided at the registration table.

As many questions as possible will be presented in the hour-long forum.

Sample Promotional Flyer

[PRINT ON INITIATIVE LETTERHEAD]

**[CITY] Town Meeting *and* Candidate
Forum**

Healthy Choices for All
VOTE 2014

[DATE & LOCATION]

[Time] – Town Meeting

Attend an educational town meeting for information about Wisconsin's leading health problems.

[Time] – Candidate Forum

Find out how your candidates stand on the health, environmental and economic issues related to creating healthy communities. The forums will let you, the voter, ask questions of candidates in a moderated forum.

If you plan on attending, please RSVP to [Phone #]

LIST SPONSORS HERE:

Candidate Forums are educational events that are designed to inform the public about a broad range of health issues being addressed during this election cycle. The forums, content and conduct are strictly neutral, and no endorsement of any candidate by the sponsoring organizations is intended or to be inferred.

More information about the Town Meetings and Candidate Forums is available online at: www.healthfirstwi.org.

Recruiting Volunteers by Phone: Strategies for Success

This handout gives you some tips for successful phone recruitment.

1. **Use the phone script** provided, or write your own. Go over the phone script and practice a few times. Have your materials at your fingertips: answers to frequently asked questions, contact information, blank paper, a pen, your script and names and addresses of the people you're going to call.
2. **Work in questions** you know they'll agree with. The first question should come early, and be followed by one or two more. This establishes a base level of agreement between you, and helps you avoid talking for a long time without gauging their response. The sample phone scripts in this packet are written this way.
3. **Ask questions with a tone that implies agreement.** Don't let your voice convey uncertainty.
4. **Be yourself.** Keep it simple and conversational. As much as possible, make the phone script fit your style.
5. **Tell them why it's important.** Don't leave them with the feeling that recruiting volunteers is an end unto itself. Tell them specifically why you need them.
6. **Ask.** Many people actually make the call, but never come out and ask people for a commitment. You must ask—specifically! —in order to get the answer.
7. **Be prepared for roadblocks.** "I don't have time" is a common response. Reiterate the importance of the event.
8. **Make it personal.** Describe why it's important to you, and, if you know the person, why you think it should matter to them to get involved.
9. **Try to leave the door open.** If you get a sense that somebody is undecided but you can't get them to commit at that time, ask if you can check in with them in a few days. Send some follow-up material, and call them back.
10. **Follow up.** If somebody says "yes," make sure that you follow up with him or her within a few days. Send written information that confirms their commitment. Make a reminder call a day or two before the event.

Sample Phone Script: Recruiting Attendees for Candidate Forums

This handout can guide your phone calls to community members whom you want to attend the candidate forum.

Earned media, flyers, brochures, newsletter articles, and email alerts are all good ways to get the word out about an event like a candidate forum. However, successful turnout relies most heavily on personal contact. This often means lots of phone calls to friends, colleagues, family members, membership lists, and volunteer lists to ask people to attend. One way to make those phone calls easier is to use a phone script that incorporates your basic talking points into a specific call to action.

A sample phone script follows:

“Hello, I am [first name] and I am calling from [name of group or organization]. I am not calling to ask for money. Do have a minute to talk with me?”

[If no, ask for a more convenient time]

“We’re teaming up with ‘Healthy Choices for All’ to host a town meeting and candidate forum in [state location]. This election year gives us a chance to find out where our candidates for the state legislature stand on the health issues we care about and ask them directly about these issues. The unique format of our town hall meeting and forum will also give us a chance to help inform candidates about the issue we care about. I’m sure you’d agree that it’s important that candidates know about our issues, right?”

“I’m calling today to encourage you to attend the forum on [date] at [time]. It’s important to have lots of people at the forums, because high turnout demonstrates to candidates that health issues are a high priority to us voters. Can I count on you to come to the forum?”

If yes:

Thank you so much! Can you also bring two people with you to the forum? Maybe a couple of family members, friends or neighbors?

“Thank you for your help. I’ll be sending you some information about the forum. I’d like to confirm your contact information.”

Get phone number, mailing address and email address.

“Again, thanks for your help. Someone will call to remind you [state amount of time] before the event.”

If no or not sure:

“Perhaps I could send you some information on the event? May I verify your contact information?” Get phone number, mailing address and email address.

End call.

Sample Phone Script: Confirmation and Reminder Calls

This handout can guide your reminder calls to committed attendees.

The confirmation and reminder call is the most important call that you can make. Be sure to set aside time in the few days prior to the event to make reminder calls to those who've told you they'll attend.

“Hello. This is [name], and I’m with [state organization]. I’m calling to remind you about the Community Candidate Forum that you are attending this coming [day, date, and time]. We are counting on your being there!”

It’s important that we have a lot of people at the forum so that the candidates understand that health issues are important to our community. Thanks for helping us educate and inform our candidates for office about these issues. In addition to your presence, we are hoping to have even more people come to the forum. Can you bring two friends with you?”

If yes: ***“Thank you. That will make an even bigger impact.”***

If no: ***“Your presence will really have an impact.”***

The forum is located at [location]. Do you have any questions for me about the time or location?

If yes: Answer questions.

Can we count on you to be there on [day of event]?

If yes: Great!

If no with some flexibility in the reason: ***I hope you’ll reconsider. This is a great opportunity to have a lively dialogue with the candidates about these issues.***

If no with no flexibility: ***I hope you’ll encourage a family member or friend to go for you instead. Can you do that?***

If yes: ***Thank you so much.***

If no: ***Thank you for your time.***

If you need more information, [give contact information].

Thanks again! End call.

Candidate Forum Scripts

LEAD LOCAL ORGANIZATION SCRIPT

Introduction or call to order:

Hello, my name is (name) and I am with the (organization) in (city). Welcome to (city) candidate forum – **Healthy Choices for All**. We are very pleased to be providing you, the voters, a forum where you can hear from your legislative candidates on the health issues that are most important to you. Before I introduce (moderator name), our moderator this evening, I would like to take this opportunity to thank a few people:

- First, I would like to thank all of our sponsoring organizations that helped make tonight possible – (list local sponsors).
- Next, I would like to thank all of the candidates for taking time out of their busy schedules to be with us this evening.
- I want to personally thank (moderator name) for moderating tonight's forum, and
- Lastly, thanks to all of you for coming out tonight and making this event successful through your participation.

I would like to introduce our moderator. (Moderator name) is insert bio (a few facts about the moderator – career highlights, family, where born, where they went to school etc.).

MODERATOR SCRIPT

--Introduction--

Hello, and welcome to the forum. I will begin by explaining how we will be proceeding for the next hour and then I will introduce our candidates. Soon volunteers will be collecting your question cards. Please write your questions related to healthy communities, prevention, and tobacco on the index card that was handed to you as you entered. I will try and get through as many questions as possible in the short amount of time that we have.

Now, I would like to briefly outline the forum format. We will begin by asking each candidate to make an introductory statement. At the end of the evening, each candidate will be given time to make closing remarks. I will pose the questions to all candidates. Answers will be limited to one minute. I would like to remind everyone this is not a debate so there will not be any rebuttals. With that, let me introduce you to our first candidate.

Insert candidate names and brief biographies.

--Conclusion at the end of the forum--

Repeat thank you's:

- Thank the candidates
- Thank the audience for attending

We hope that you enjoyed tonight's forum and please remember to exercise your right to vote on November 4th.

Moderator Tips and Ground Rules

- **Disclaimer:** The moderator should be fully informed that this event is a 501(c) (3) activity.
 - The moderator needs to be neutral.
 - Questions need to be posed in a neutral format.
 - Each candidate should be treated equally and be given equal time
 - Candidates are not allowed to campaign (mention endorsements, hand out stickers or campaign literature, raise funds, etc.), although campaign literature can be available on a resource table if not actively distributed.
 - The forum needs to cover a broad range of health issues and cannot focus singularly on one topic (e.g., tobacco, alcohol or obesity).

- **Candidate Briefing Meeting:** The moderator should gather all of the candidates for a pre-forum meeting at [time]. Ideally this meeting should be held in a room that is separate from where the town hall meeting is being held. This meeting is the time for the moderator to inform the candidates of the ground rules and answer questions.

- **Candidate Ground Rules:** The moderator should inform the candidates of the following:
 - This is not a debate. There are no rebuttals allowed.
 - Questions will be posed in a neutral format.
 - Candidates will receive equal treatment and equal time to respond to questions. (Timekeepers with signs will be sitting in the front row to help candidates).
 - The forum will be covering a broad range of health topics. Members of the audience will submit questions.
 - No campaigning will be allowed.
 - Candidates will be given time for an opening and closing statement.

- **Forum Process:** *The following is the recommended process. However, feel free to tailor it to your specific forum.*
 - Seat candidates in alphabetical order at the head table, not by legislative race.
 - After the call to order and introduction of the moderator (by lead local organization), the moderator should do a brief introduction of the candidates (name, seat they are running for, and a few points of interest from the bio that they submit).
 - Next, the candidates will have up to three minutes (depending on the number of candidates at the forum) to introduce themselves to the audience.
 - There will be a volunteer sorting through and grouping audience questions and then handing them to the moderator.
 - Candidates should answer the first question in alphabetical order. Subsequent questions should be answered by starting with the second candidate and continue to rotate through. It is important that the same candidate does not always answer first.
 - The moderator will give the candidates one minute each to make closing remarks.

Sample Candidate Invitation Letter

[DATE]

[NAME]
[ADDRESS]
[ADDRESS]

Date

Dear (candidate name):

Healthy Choices for All, a coalition representing state and local health organizations, is pleased to invite you to participate in a town hall meeting and candidates' forum on (day of week and date) at (place).

The focus of town hall meeting and forum will be on health-related issues, including (specific issue areas). We are particularly interested in your positions on funding, priorities and solutions to these critical and pressing issues.

A town hall meeting, at which the audience will get an overview of the issues from expert presenters, will run from (time) to (time). You are cordially invited to attend.

The forum will begin at (time). We will have a non-partisan moderator. The format for the forum will be as follows:

- Each candidate will have two to three minutes for an opening statement.
- The moderator will read written questions from the audience and direct each question to each candidate. There will be one minute for each response.
- Each candidate will have up to 90 seconds for a closing statement.

We expect an audience of about 100 people including health care providers, people with disabilities, seniors, advocates, parents, direct support workers, nurses, hospital staff and other health care professionals.

We have contacted print and web journalists, local cable access stations and others about this event. We are seeking the widest exposure possible.

We know how busy campaigns are and how many requests you receive. We salute you for running for elected office and we appreciate you taking the time to be a part of the **Healthy Choices for All** community forum.

If you have any questions, or if I can provide more information, please feel free to call me. It would be most helpful if you could confirm your participation by (time on date). Thank you again.

Sincerely,
Name
Contact info

Sample Candidate Follow-Up Letter

Date

Name
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear (Name):

We are very pleased that you will be able to join us on DATE for the "**Healthy Choices for All**" community candidate forum being held at the LOCATION.

I thought I might pass along some information regarding the agenda for the evening. Prior to the actual candidate forum, a community education session on health issues will take place from **[time, at place]**. During this time we will meet briefly with all candidates to review the process for the evening, so you and the other candidates are a little more at ease. The candidate forum, which is on health-related issues, is scheduled from **[time]**. We will have a non-partisan moderator. The format for the forum will be as follows:

- Each candidate will have two to three minutes for an opening statement.
- The moderator will read written questions from the audience and direct each question to each candidate. There will be one minute for each response.
- Each candidate will have up to 90 seconds for a closing statement.

So that the correct and pertinent information is given about you during the candidate introductions, will you please send me by letter, fax or email the following information that you would like used about yourself-keeping in mind that the introductions will only be about 30 seconds:

- * Your name
- * Your party
- * City of residence
- * Seat you are running for (also list current seat, if applicable)
- * Educational background (e.g., degree, college attended)
- * Community-related info. (e.g., belong to XXX church, member of XXX, participates in XXX, profession is XXX)
- * Other info of your choice (e.g., married with two children, hobbies, etc.)

On the night of the forum please pick up your nametag at the registration table. Forum organizers will also be wearing nametags so that you may identify them if you have any questions. Finally, please let me know if you require any special accommodations. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. My contact information is below.

Sincerely,

Name
Contact info

Candidate Briefing Outline

This is an outline of what to cover during the candidate briefing. The meeting should include the moderator, the lead local organization and the candidates. The lead local organization representative should conduct the briefing. The meeting should take place 15 minutes before the start of the forum.

- Welcome
- Introductions
- Guidelines
 - Time limitations, watch for signs
 - Candidates seated alphabetically
 - Rotating order of responses
 - Each question will be presented to all candidates
- Body of Forum
 - Introduction of Moderator, Moderator welcome
 - Each Candidate receives the floor for two to three minutes for an introduction or opening statement.
 - Q/A period: The goal is to get through four or five questions.
 - Conclusion: Would you be willing to stay for one extra question at the end, until [time]?
 - Each candidate will have 90 seconds for closing remarks.
- Questions
- Thank you

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date

Contact: Name of local contact, phone number
Name of Coalition media contact, phone number

Race for (name of office) Heats Up
Candidates to Forum at Town Hall Meeting on Health Issues

(Name of candidate) and (name of candidate) will discuss their positions on local health topics at a town hall meeting and forum on (day of week, date) at (place). The town hall meeting begins at (time) and the forum begins at (time).

The town hall meeting and forum is being sponsored by Healthy Choices for All, a coalition of state and local health organizations in Wisconsin. Sponsoring organizations include (put sponsors' names here).

"All across Wisconsin communities are facing serious health challenges that threaten the health of our kids, neighborhoods and businesses," said Maureen Busalacchi, representing **Healthy Choices for All**. "This election season, voters face some very important choices. At this unique event, community members will be able to hear directly from candidates about their priorities and what solutions they will offer for supporting healthy choices in our communities."

The town hall meeting and forum is being co-sponsored by (name of local organization) which (organization's short mission statement here). "We expect a number of advocates, community volunteers, health care professionals and parents to attend," said (name of local spokesperson). "How we ensure our kids, families and local businesses can thrive and how we invest in prevention programs are key issues for us here in (name of community). We are looking forward to asking tough questions of our candidates to learn where they stand and we invite members of the public to join us for this important forum."

After the town hall meeting, at which expert presenters will provide an overview of the issues, audience members will have the opportunity to ask their questions of the candidates in a moderated question and answer format.

Healthy Choices for All is coordinating (X number) of town hall meetings and forums before the November 6 elections. The other forums are being held in (name of other locations here).

###

Sample Media Advisory

NEWS ADVISORY

Date

Contact: Name of Contact and phone number

Voters to Question Candidates for (Office) at Unique Town Hall Meeting and Forum on (Day of Week and Date)

WHAT: Candidates for (name of office) will answer questions posed by voters at a Candidate Forum focusing on health issues. A town hall meeting at which experts will discuss the issues will be held prior to the forum. Candidates who have agreed to participate include: [List each candidate's name, party affiliation and district.]

WHEN: [DATE]
Time – Town Hall Meeting
Time – Candidate Forum

WHERE: [LOCATION – INCLUDE DIRECTIONS IF NECESSARY]

MORE INFO: The sixth, biennial community/candidate forum is being sponsored by **Healthy Choices for All**, a coalition of state and local health organizations in Wisconsin. The forums are an opportunity for candidates to hear which health care issues are most important to voters. The meetings encourage informative discussions and engage the community. Sponsoring organizations include (list any sponsors here).

###

Sample Text for Partner Newsletters/Listservs

Voters to Question Candidates for (Office) at Unique Town Hall Meeting and Forum on Health on (Day of Week and Date)

Join (names of organizations) for a community Candidate Forum focusing on health issues on (date) at (location). Candidates for (name of office) will answer questions posed by voters. A town hall meeting at which experts will discuss the issues will be held prior to the forum, at (time). Candidates who have agreed to participate include: [List each candidate's name, party affiliation and district.] For more information, contact (contact person).

Sample Debrief Tool

Event Debrief Tool

Organizing MJC(s) / Network(s):		
Event type:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Town hall meeting	<input type="checkbox"/> Candidate forum	<input type="checkbox"/> Legislative breakfast
<input type="checkbox"/> Women of Influence	<input type="checkbox"/> Meet and greet	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
Brief description of event goal(s):		

Event Details: Did the date/time/location/room set-up meet your needs? Why? Why not?	
Event date:	Day of the week:
Event time:	Event length:
Community:	Venue:
List any concerns you had with the date/time/location/floor plan:	

Audience: Who did you want to attend? Did they attend? Why? Why not?
overall attendance:
key target group in attendance (i.e. elected officials, grass tops, youth):
staff/key coalition leaders:
less active members/supporters:
new individuals:
Key turn-out strategies used:
1.
2.
3.

Which turn-out strategies were most effective? Least effective?

Presentation: Did people understand the main message(s)? Will they take action? Why? Why not?

Strategies used to communicate information and/or motivate action:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Which strategies were most effective? Least effective?

Media: Did you get the media coverage you wanted? Why? Why not?

#/Type of media coverage:

Key media strategies used:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Which media strategies were most effective? Least effective?

Future events: What should you do again next time? What would you change?

Strengths of the event:

Suggestions/Improvements for future events: