

# Covid-19 Contingencies

## Countering Election Interference in a Pandemic Environment

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.

A pandemic can worsen concerns about election interference due to increased potential for disinformation, fears about safety around voting, and the potential for understaffing for processes and teams essential to voting. Here are some best practices we heard from stakeholders across government, industry, the media, and civil society, on countering interference in a pandemic.



### Balance Competing Priorities

- Ensure that cybersecurity does not get sidelined because of other pandemic-related issues.



### Inoculate the Public

- To counter pandemic-related uncertainties that could be exploited by bad actors, all stakeholders should work together to build awareness of voting processes and possible delays in result reporting.
- Stakeholders should also engage and train trusted local partners to support this awareness-building. This is especially important for vulnerable groups, which can grow in number during a pandemic.



### Leverage Voting Technologies, but Thoughtfully

- Governments should invest in voting technologies that help protect voter participation and increase voter trust in crises like pandemics.
- These technologies should be widely accessible, secure, and supplemented by paper backups if not auditable.



### Adopt Tailored, Hybrid Voting Approaches

- Governments should adopt voting approaches tailored to their communities, potentially with combinations of in-person voting, voting by mail, and portable voting. It need not be a “one size fits all” approach.



### Plan for Contingencies

- Election management bodies should have a comprehensive and quickly implementable communication plan for situations in which an element of the election system is compromised. Also they should have a ready-to-deploy “plan B”.



### Assess Impact

- All stakeholders, particularly civil society, should support or conduct research to help measure the impact of efforts at countering interference in a pandemic environment.