

Minnesota Campaign Timeline Overview

Version 2.0



Campaign Timeline Overview

Every political campaign has basic resources: money, people and time. Only time is finite – Election Day is the key date! Learning to utilize your time efficiently can help you make the largest impact on voters. Every decision on where to spend your time – from deploying volunteers to ‘dialing for dollars’ to meeting with constituents – means you are saying no to something else. Vote Run Lead is here to make sure you are in the driver’s seat with your time, your race, and your well-being.

Timeline Basics

Fundamentals to keep in mind as you begin to create your timeline.

- Remember to work backward from Election Day. There is nothing too small to include, just make sure you use the format that works best for you and your team (monthly calendar, weekly timeline, etc.).
 - Use the excel sheet template, a Google calendar, or start with sticky notes.
- Official Deadlines are **hard** deadlines. They are for everyone, and they cannot be changed. Deadlines are sacred. But there’s a difference between official and campaign deadlines.
- Timeline benchmarks – both set by you and externally – also allow you to access the health of a campaign. Did you reach your fundraising goal by the campaign report filing deadline? Did you call the number of voters you wanted to by the early voting deadline? Do you have enough volunteers to get out the vote before the Primary?
- Campaigns are marathons, not sprints. Timelines allow you to pace the campaign and hit your peak when you are supposed to. Peaks - spending the most money, activating the most volunteers, and touching the most voters - include the beginning of early voting and Get Out The Vote efforts just before Election Day.

There is an art and a science to campaigns and planning and timeline are things that fall under the science. Making campaign deadlines helps to break your campaign into digestible pieces!

Planning Around Financial Deadlines

- Financial deadlines can help or hurt your campaign. These are external deadlines that require detailed attention and occur quarterly. You can build fundraising tactics to create momentum. On the other hand, you can miss a deadline and it results in a fine. Both can be reported in the paper.

- When developing your timeline, become very familiar with Minnesota's Campaign Finance Board and their [calendar of disclosure deadlines](#). There are dates to file your reporting by and also dates when you can last count contributions for each report. These reports are scrutinized by others to determine the health of your campaign - plan around these dates to create momentum for your campaign and to secure donations from supporters.

- Be mindful of the date to accept [Public Subsidy](#) which will allow you to utilize the [Political Contribution Refund Program](#). The Public Subsidy allows you to get direct payments from the state to help pay for your campaign (state legislature and constitutional offices). It allows you to issue political contribution refund receipts (first \$50 someone contributes per year). By accepting this it does put certain spending and contribution limits in place for your campaign but can drastically increase the amount of donations you receive.

NOTE: You can fundraise in a non-election year. You simply need to submit a year end report by January 31 of the next year. There is a combined contribution total allowed, so taking advantage of the extra calendar year to garner additional funds can provide a real advantage to your campaign.

Planning Your Field and Voter Contact Strategy

Planning your field and voter contact strategy will help you determine where on the campaign calendar to leverage your friends, family, and supporters. It will also help you develop an understanding of the capacity needed of the candidate, campaign staff, and surrogates to reach everyone you want to reach with your campaign message. Developing internal deadlines will help you hold yourself and campaign staff accountable for completing important tasks to help you win. It will also help you adjust when things –inevitably - change!

The table below includes key components to be placed on your timeline.

Important Dates	Goals	Campaign Operation
Date you will have access to voter files	Date to hire field staff (include number needed for hire)	When to open an office
Date to begin and end voter identification	Date for volunteer recruitment (include number needed for hire)	When staff meetings will be held
First day yard signs can be displayed	Dates of local or regional parades, events, or other gatherings of importance.	When staff and volunteer trainings will occur
Date early voting begins in the state	Dates related to organizational endorsements (union, business, community)	When the campaign will administer payroll, pay bills, and other cash flow pieces
Date ballots are mailed to mail-only precincts	Date for campaign mailings (general voter engagement and GOTV)	When the campaign will celebrate milestones reached

NOTE: There are many stages of a campaign that need to be won to continue forward. For example, if you are abiding by an endorsement, you need to win the party endorsement fight in May or you will not be on the ballot in November. The [party caucuses, local unit conventions, and State convention dates](#) are really important to plan toward. Make sure you are educating your supporters so that they understand these early deadlines and know when to join the fight.

Planning For Communications

Planning communication deadlines will give you plenty of time to design and edit content and influence fundraising goals to ensure the campaign will have a budget that meets its needs. Set time early to [articulate why you are running and write it down](#). This is the touchstone of your campaign. Revisit this throughout your planning process and while campaigning.

Ask yourself the following when deciding what communications components to include on your timeline. Once you have decided your tactics, map them on your calendar.

- When can you go live with your website?
- When, how many, and on what platform will you host social media campaigns
 - PRO-TIP: You do not have to do all of them and you do NOT have to post every day. Be realistic and thoughtful rather than posting for the sake of posting.

- When will you do bulk mailings for voter education, registration, and get out the vote?
- What are the deadlines for local media ads, letters to the editor, and guest columns?
- What is a target date to have content developed for each of these pieces?
- When are editorial board visits and other endorsement components due to sponsoring organizations?
- What holidays and celebrations do you want to honor and/or are important to your community?
- What is the best time to release a policy idea or announce an endorsement to maximize its impact?

NOTE: It is important to be nimble and respond to new issues as they arise in your community. Keep in mind there are low- to no-cost options for communications. Press releases and statements from you - the candidates - can go far. Social media posts and letters to the editor are excellent options to share to a wide array of audiences. Don't forget to research community needs, your opponent, and yourself when planning for content throughout your campaign.

Planning For Self-Care

Campaigning will put a lot of demands on your time. Being honest with your family, friends, and yourself while you are developing a timeline can alleviate potential conflicts once the campaign is in full swing. Take time to consider your needs and those of your family while developing your campaign timeline. And revisit why you are running for office often to help when times get tough.

Ask yourself:

- What do I need to do to stay healthy mentally and physically throughout the campaign?
- What cadence or rhythm do I need for these things to happen (such as morning walk, a daily meditation, a weekly appointment with your therapist or Sunday dinner with my family)?
- What are events or activities that I must do or be at in order to have a healthy family life?
- What do I need in order to bring my best self to the campaign and to ensure I am healthy when I take office?

Map those out on your calendar so that staff know well in advance not to schedule events during those times. Set rules: Maybe school drop-off is sacred! It is okay to designate a certain night of the week that you want to eat dinner with your kids. Name the dealbreakers now: Your Dad's 80th birthday party, high holy days for your religion, or your best friend's wedding. Be honest, be mindful and plan ahead around these non-negotiable priorities.

NOTE: *Prioritizing is Key:* Where does the candidate need to be and where might there be opportunities for others – like ambassadors or surrogates to attend or take the lead? The candidate cannot be in two places at once or knock every door in their district. Maybe you can send a recorded message, a surrogate can attend, or stay at an event for a limited time. Candidates should talk to as many voters as possible but planning your fundraising, field, and communications efforts can help your campaign team prioritize where you need to be when.

Important Links

Vote Run Lead Tools

- [Timeline Templates](#)
- [Minnesota State Legislature Campaign Deadlines](#)
- [Story, Power & Persuasion](#)

MN Secretary of State

- [How to Become a Candidate](#)
- [Campaigning](#)
- [General Elections and Voting Resources](#)

Minnesota Campaign Finance Board

- [Campaign Finance Overview](#)
- <https://cfb.mn.gov/reports/#/public-subsidy-agreement/>
- [2022 Disclosure Calendar for Candidates Running for Senate, House, and District Court](#)