



# Choosing a Candidate for the Iranian Village and City Council Elections

Local elections represent an important opportunity for Iranians to choose the leaders whose policies will affect your daily lives in such important areas as public transportation, garbage collection, street conditions, park spaces, local taxation, budget allocation, culture, public sanitation, air pollution, construction of sports facilities and fire protection services. Local leaders can have a big impact on their communities, so it is important to be strategic in selecting a candidate!

## What strategies can you use to select a candidate?

1. **Decide what matters to you as a voter** Most candidates can be evaluated on their policy positions and platform and on the personal qualities and leadership experience that they would bring to the office. To prepare yourself as a voter, take some time to reflect on the issues that matter most to you and on the qualities or previous experience that you would like your local leaders to possess.
2. **Identify the candidates standing for office in your electoral district** You may be more familiar with candidates who have a connection to your tribe, village or family. However, this should not prevent you from making an effort to learn about all of the candidates on the ballot in your electoral district. You may be surprised to learn that a candidate with whom you are less familiar actually has policy positions or experience that more closely align with your views!
3. **Gather background information about the candidates** Engaged citizens can gather information on candidates from a variety of sources, including: news media, campaign rallies, political party websites and other official campaign literature, candidate speeches, voting records of candidates who have previously held office, and paid campaign advertisements. As you are conducting this research, it is important to be an informed consumer of information and to distill facts from rumors or political propaganda. Common techniques to distort policy positions include: making unrealistic promises, appealing to ethnicity or religion, using catchwords or buzzwords to elicit an emotional reaction from voters and avoid substantive issues, blaming other candidates or parties for issues over which they have no control, and

spreading misinformation.

To distill facts from misinformation, engaged citizens can follow a three-step process:

- **Evaluate the source:** Is the source known to be credible and reliable? Is the source independent and objective or do they have institutional or financial relationships that may provide incentives to misportray the facts?
  - **Evaluate the plausibility:** Do the facts, as portrayed, add up? Does this information make sense?
  - **Compare the information with other reliable sources:** Are other credible sources reporting the same information or does this source claim to have an exclusive scope? Do eye-witness accounts confirm what has been reported?
4. **Assess the positions of each candidate on your priority issues:** As you are reviewing background information on each candidate, note any information that may suggest how they would represent your community with respect to the issues most important to you. Have they referenced these issues in speeches, campaign materials or advertisements? Have they previously held office and voted on policies or laws that would affect this issue?
  5. **Assess the experience and leadership skills of each candidate:** Does the candidate's previous experience suggest that he or she would be open, honest, accountable to the community and able to make important decisions under pressure? Does the candidate accept invitations to debate publicly or to speak in front of many different types of audiences, even those who may not necessarily be sympathetic to his or her views? Are the candidate's campaign materials generally credible and focused on concrete issues?
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