

## Introduction

Congratulations! Your cause has been selected as a top 200 cause. **This toolkit is a guide you/your cause can use to help get votes.** From October 26 to November 4, the community will vote on the top 200 causes from **State Farm Neighborhood Assist®**, a crowd-sourced, philanthropic program. The 40 causes with the most votes will be announced on November 30 and each will win a \$25,000 grant from State Farm. Now it's up to you to encourage your community to get online and vote!

Things to remember as you begin to drive awareness towards your project:

- On Oct. 26, the voting phase of State Farm Neighborhood Assist will be live at [www.neighborhoodassist.com](http://www.neighborhoodassist.com).
- People can vote up to 10 times per day. Encourage your supporters to vote all 10 times while they're on the site!
- You have received a unique, cause specific URL that you can share with people within your networks to help directly garner votes.
- The voting phase lasts 10 days – use every day possible! Voting ends on Nov. 4 at 11:59:59 P.M. ET.

To help out during the voting phase, we have assigned State Farm Community and Media Specialists to you based upon your geographic location. They act as consultants, and are NOT to be relied upon to drive your project's votes! They will assist you with any specific questions that you may have during the voting process, but they are focused more generally on the overall voting campaign than specific projects themselves. They have knowledge of your projects as well as the program, so don't hesitate to contact them with ANY questions you have! Your local contacts can be found at the links below:

<https://newsroom.statefarm.com/community-contacts>

<https://newsroom.statefarm.com/media-contacts>

Thank you and good luck!

# 2016 Voting Tool Kit Contents

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## Program Overview

State Farm Neighborhood Assist® is a crowd-sourced philanthropic initiative that lets communities determine where grant funding is awarded. This initiative utilizes the State Farm Youth Advisory Board (YAB) to vet submissions for causes and allows the community to vote for the final 40 grant winners.

People were given the opportunity to submit causes in early September at [www.neighborhoodassist.com](http://www.neighborhoodassist.com).

The YAB narrowed all submissions down to the top 200 causes. The voting process begins on Oct. 26. Anyone with a valid email address can vote up to 10 times per day.

The 40 causes earning the highest number of votes by 11:59:59 P.M. ET, on Nov. 4, 2016 will be designated the winners of a “Neighborhood Assist” grant, at \$25,000 each. Submitters of the winning causes will be notified via their e-mail account no later than November 30, 2016.

For the complete Rules and Regulations please visit: [www.neighborhoodassist.com/pages/neighborhoodassist/rules](http://www.neighborhoodassist.com/pages/neighborhoodassist/rules).

## Social Media Tips

Keep the following dates in mind while promoting your cause so you can remind your audiences to vote at the key times:

- Voting Phase (Oct. 26-Nov. 4)
  - First day to vote: Oct. 26
  - Halfway point: Oct. 30
  - Last day to vote: Nov. 4 at 11:59:59 P.M. ET
- Announcement of Winners (Nov. 30)

Since the 40 winning causes will be selected by popular vote, you need to spread the word. In addition to campaigning for your cause via word-of-mouth, social media can be a valuable tool in generating attention for your submission and drumming up votes. Below are some considerations to take when promoting your entry through your social media channels. There are also sample posts and tweets that will help you get started.

### Facebook

- Notify your friends through status updates that you need support for your entry.

- Include the unique URL to link directly to your cause so supporters can easily vote.
- Include the title of your cause when you are directing people to vote.
- Encourage your friends and family to share your cause information through their Facebook page.
- Include key information in your posts – the grant total amount, why people should vote for you, what the grant money will go toward, and that people can vote up to 10 times per day from Oct. 26-Nov. 4.
- Post regularly to stay top of mind and remember to interact with anyone who votes for you to thank them and keep them engaged.
- For example:
  - We submitted one of 2,000 causes to improve our community and are now one of the 200 finalists! Help us assist our neighborhood and win a \$25,000 grant. Vote here for our cause *[Insert cause Title]: [Unique cause URL\*]*
  - The voting period for State Farm Neighborhood Assist is halfway over. Thanks for all your support so far but we still need those votes! Vote here for our cause *[Insert cause Title]: [Unique cause URL\*]*
  - Vote for our cause and we could win \$25K to **[FILL IN YOUR CAUSE DETAILS HERE]** thanks to the State Farm Neighborhood Assist program. Vote here for our cause *[Insert cause Title]: [Unique cause URL\*]*
  - Do you think **[FILL IN YOUR CAUSE DETAILS HERE]** needs **[FILL IN YOUR CAUSE DETAILS HERE]**? We do too! That's why we submitted a cause to State Farm Neighborhood Assist. Vote here for our cause entitled *[Insert cause Title]: [Unique cause URL\*]*
  - We think our community needs some extra funding to make **[FILL IN YOUR CAUSE DETAILS HERE]** happen. \$25,000 should do it! With your help, we could make it a reality. With one click to vote you can help us make a difference in our community! Vote here for our *[Insert Cause Title]: [Unique cause URL\*]*
  - Think of all the great work we could do if we win one of the State Farm Neighborhood Assist \$25K grants! It just takes one click to vote. It's that easy and everyone in our neighborhood will benefit! Vote here for *[Insert cause Title]: [Unique cause URL\*]*

## Twitter

- Keep your tweets short and aim for 120 characters if you'd like to leave room for those who want to retweet your message and help spread the word.

- Include @StateFarm in your posts, so State Farm can engage with your Twitter account.
- Include the hashtag #SFNeighborhoodAssist to make it easier for people to find your tweet.
- Include the unique URL to your cause.
- Encourage your friends and family to link to your cause information through their Twitter accounts.
- Include key information in your tweets (mix it up as every detail won't fit in a single tweet) – the grant total amount, why people should vote for you, what the grant money will go toward, and that people can vote up to 10 times per day from Oct. 26-Nov. 4.
- Tweet regularly to stay top of mind and interact with anyone who votes for you to thank them and keep them engaged.
- Tweet information on your cause to local media outlets. Twitter handles (@cnn, @abc7, etc.)
- For example:
  - Vote for our *[Insert cause Title]* cause to make a change in our neighborhood & we could earn a \$25K #SFNeighborhoodAssist grant! *[Unique cause URL\*]*
  - Let's make a change in our neighborhood. Help us make it happen w/a \$25K #SFNeighborhoodAssist grant. Vote for our *[Insert cause Title]* *[Unique cause URL\*]*
  - With one click to vote you can help us make a difference in our community by voting for *[Insert cause Title]* #SFNeighborhoodAssist *[Unique cause URL\*]*
  - We submitted a local issue that's important to us. A \$25K #SFNeighborhoodAssist is on the line. Vote for *[Unique cause URL\*]*
  - We have a chance to make a BIG impact. We just need your help to get a \$25K grant from #SFNeighborhoodAssist *[Unique cause URL\*]*
  - We are trying to earn a \$25K #SFNeighborhoodAssist grant for our area! Help us by voting for *[Insert cause Title]* *[Specific cause URL\*]*
  - Help us win a \$25K #SFNeighborhoodAssist grant. Vote for *[Insert cause Title]* *[Specific cause URL\*]*

\*Utilize your cause URL by copying and pasting it into the designated areas in this communication, along with all other means of communication you're leveraging to drive voting for the program.

## Key Messages/Q&A

The following is an informational resource to help educate those affiliated with the 200 causes selected as finalists in the State Farm Neighborhood Assist program. It is not intended for distribution to reporters, media outlets or other external audiences.

### Key Messages

- *[Insert cause name/organization]* has the chance to build a safer, stronger, and smarter community with a \$25,000 grant from the State Farm Neighborhood Assist program.
- As one of the 200 finalists in State Farm Neighborhood Assist, we have a chance at winning a \$25,000 grant to *[explain Cause here]*. I'm encouraging everyone who's passionate about *[cause focus]* to visit [www.neighborhoodassist.com](http://www.neighborhoodassist.com) and vote for our cause; *[insert Cause title here]*.
- Today, more and more people are coming together to creatively solve local problems and improve communities. State Farm Neighborhood Assist is designed to shine a spotlight on, and encourage even more of, those creative partnerships. By going to [www.neighborhoodassist.com](http://www.neighborhoodassist.com) and voting, you are helping us come together to get our neighborhood the assistance it needs.

## Q&A

### What is Neighborhood Assist?

- State Farm Neighborhood Assist empowers people to identify problems in their community and provides an opportunity for communities to receive funding to make a positive impact in their neighborhood. Causes were submitted at [www.neighborhoodassist.com](http://www.neighborhoodassist.com) in early September.
- In alignment with the State Farm commitment of building safer, stronger and smarter communities, any Neighborhood Assist cause must fall into one of three categories – safety, education or community development – to be considered.
- The State Farm Youth Advisory Board reviewed the submissions and identified the finalists based on a scoring rubric created specifically for the program. The rubric is available to the general public as part of the program's Official Rules and Regulations which can be found at: [www.neighborhoodassist.com/pages/neighborhoodassist/rules](http://www.neighborhoodassist.com/pages/neighborhoodassist/rules).

- The top 200 causes will be live at [www.neighborhoodassist.com](http://www.neighborhoodassist.com) on Oct. 26 and anyone with a valid email address can vote up to 10 times per day for their favorite cause.
- Of the 200 finalists, the top 40 vote-receiving causes each will receive a \$25,000 grant. Submitters of the winning causes will be notified via their e-mail account no later than Nov. 30, 2016.

## **Where can I find more information on the program?**

- Through your computer or mobile device, please visit [www.neighborhoodassist.com](http://www.neighborhoodassist.com).

## **What types of issues or problems are eligible to be submitted in the SFNA program?**

- In staying true to the State Farm commitment of building safer, stronger and smarter communities, any cause submitted should fall into one of three categories – safety, education and community development – to be considered.

## **Who ultimately receives the grant money and how does a winning cause get addressed?**

- A nonprofit will receive the grant money. Upon submitting a cause, people can suggest their own nonprofit or select, “I don’t know.” For each of the 40 winners, State Farm will go to the user-suggested nonprofit if one was submitted. If a nonprofit name was not submitted, State Farm will work to find a suitable nonprofit partner in that particular community.

## **How is State Farm funding the grants that will be provided through the Neighborhood Assist program?**

- The State Farm Youth Advisory Board will fund the 40 State Farm Neighborhood Assist grants of \$25,000 each with \$1 Million from its overall budget for 2016.

## **Why is State Farm executing the Neighborhood Assist program and making philanthropic donations to support individual causes in the community?**

- Our mission is to help people manage the risks of everyday life, recover from the unexpected, and realize their dreams. We achieve that mission through the products and services we offer and through our involvement in and commitment to the communities where we live and do business. Together, you and State Farm can make a positive impact in your community.

## Why does State Farm make philanthropic donations overall?

- Giving back to our communities is both a business and a social responsibility – State Farm’s mission is to help people manage the risks of everyday life, recover from the unexpected, and realize their dreams. We achieve our mission through the products and services we offer and through our involvement in and commitment to the communities where we live and do business.
- By helping build safer, stronger, and smarter communities, we can create:
  - Viable neighborhoods that our associates and customers want to live in.
  - Stronger markets for our business.

## What is the State Farm Youth Advisory Board?

- The Youth Advisory Board is comprised of 30 students, ages 17-20, from across the United States who are passionate about social responsibility.

## How does the Youth Advisory Board determine which causes are chosen as the 200 finalists?

The Youth Advisory Board has created the below rubric for scoring. Each of these questions will be scored with equal weighting on a 7 point scale, to determine a complete perfect score of 21.

- How much does your “Cause” focus on an unmet need in this community?
- Why do you feel the \$25,000 would address the unmet need?
- How much of a lasting impact on this community would the proposal have?

For more information, please visit [www.neighborhoodassist.com](http://www.neighborhoodassist.com).

## State Farm Neighborhood Assist Logo





## E-Newsletter Template

The following article can be used in your organization's e-newsletter for employees, community members, network, volunteers, etc... Customize the copy with information about your cause, organization, or facts and statistics that would resonate with your audience and drive them to vote. Be sure to include the direct URL address to link to the cause you are supporting.

### What is the State Farm Youth Advisory Board?

[Organization/Cause] has been selected as one of 200 finalists in the State Farm Neighborhood Assist® program! Our submission, along with the other finalists, are live at [www.neighborhoodassist.com](http://www.neighborhoodassist.com) and anyone with a valid email address can logon and vote for our cause. The 40 causes that receive the most votes will be announced on Nov. 30 and a \$25,000 grant will be awarded to the affiliated nonprofits to implement the solution.

[Insert Title of cause, brief explanation of cause, what the money would mean for the community and the partner organization]. Our organization strives to improve the lives and welfare of people in our community, and we can further that mission by rallying together and encouraging others to join us in support by voting.

To support [Organization/Cause] and vote, click here [ENTER cause URL HERE\*] to show your support for [Enter cause Name Here] The voting phase is open from **Oct. 26-Nov.4** and anyone with a valid email address is eligible to vote up to **10 times per day**.

State Farm Neighborhood Assist is a crowd-sourced philanthropic initiative that lets communities determine where grant funding is awarded. The initiative utilizes the State Farm Youth Advisory Board to vet submissions for causes and empowers the community to vote for the final 40 grant winners. The program has been inspired by the incredible number of neighborhoods that are coming together to solve a problem or improve their community.

**Please forward this note on to friends, family, and neighbors! Thank you!**

\*Utilize your unique URL by copying and pasting it into the designated areas in this communication, along with all other means of communication you're leveraging to drive voting for the program.

## Email Template

The following email can be used as a brief email blast to employees, volunteers, organization and community members or family and friends. Customize the copy with information about your cause and drive them to vote. Be sure to include the unique URL address to link to your cause.

**TO:** Target Internal and External Audiences

**FROM:** First, Last Name, [Organization/Affiliation if applicable]

**SUBJECT:** State Farm Neighborhood Assist - Please Help Us Bring \$25,000 to Our Community!

[ENTER CAUSE/ORGANIZATION INFORMATION HERE] is one of the top 200 finalists in State Farm Neighborhood Assist™. We need you to rally behind our cause, cast your vote and help us win! Here's how: click here [**ENTER Cause URL HERE\***] and vote for [Enter Cause Name Here].

The voting phase is open **now until Nov. 4** and you can vote up to **10 times per day EVERYDAY** for our cause. Winner announcements are Nov. 30. Please forward this to your colleagues, friends and family to vote and help spread the word.

Thanks in advance for your support  
[Personal Signature]

\*Utilize your your unique URL by copying and pasting it into the designated areas in this communication, along with all other means of communication you're leveraging to drive voting for the program.

## Engaging the Media

### The Basics

Media coverage can be a very powerful tool for your organization. Think traditional mainstream media (TV, radio, print) and new and emerging media (i.e. social media, blogs, niche online communities, etc.); both media are incredibly important to effectively share your story.

With State Farm Neighborhood Assist®, every vote counts. First, connect with your local State Farm Public Affairs specialist and discuss media outreach.

<https://newsroom.statefarm.com/community-contacts>

<https://newsroom.statefarm.com/media-contacts>

Utilize local media and bloggers to get the word out about your cause and how it will improve the community. Pitch relevant local reporters and bloggers about the program and how, with their support, your cause could win \$25,000 to benefit the community.

## **How Do You Become a Good Media Relations Person?**

Establishing a good media relations program involves more than sending an occasional news release. It requires:

- A commitment to reading and consuming media regularly.
- A dedicated effort to establish relationships with the media.
- An awareness of what makes news.
- A willingness to meet reporters'/bloggers' needs.
- An awareness of what's being said about your organization through tools like Google News Alerts and Twitter search.

## **A good media relations person needs to do three things:**

- Give reporters information in a way that is valuable and meaningful to them.
- Be familiar with the tools that are available to meet the media relations objectives.
- Know how to communicate messages when reporters show interest.

## **A good media relations person needs to do three things:**

1. The media industry, as a whole, continues to face challenges and an uncertain future. The immediate consequences have been shrinking newsrooms, high turnover and a decrease in resources, forcing reporters to cover multiple beat assignments.

2. Competition is stiff. What makes news one day may get minor attention or be omitted another day.
3. Media people have the power to decide what is news.
4. Stories that aren't visual will get limited attention or be ignored by TV news.

## Social Media

Blogs. Twitter. Vine. Digg. Facebook. YouTube. Instagram. Pinterest. LinkedIn. In today's ever-changing media landscape, it is increasingly important that you consider social media in your media relations programs. It's also important to realize the impact social media can have – both positively and negatively – on your organization. Here are a couple of helpful tips for effectively engaging the social mediasphere as it relates to media relations:

- Don't email-blast bloggers. Instead, start reading their posts regularly and become a part of the community by commenting on posts you find interesting. Read "About Me" posts to determine if a blogger is open to pitches. If so, customize your pitch to suit their interests.
- Find out how traditional media engage with social networking tools. Search for and follow local reporters on Twitter. Retweet stories they publish that are relevant to your organization and your followers. Subscribe to RSS feeds for those that maintain blogs. If they're receptive, find ways to engage them in the social media realm (e.g. pitch a reporter your story in less than 140 characters on Twitter).

## The Pitch Email

Like most professionals, the media will respond favorably to a customized, compelling and very concise email message.

A strong pitch email contains a subject line written like a headline that will be interesting to the outlets' viewers, readers or listeners. It should be no more than two paragraphs outlining the story opportunity. Consider using bullets to showcase interesting visuals and resources available to the reporter.

If you are pitching local media/bloggers to rally support for your cause, include the local angle in your headline or first sentence to grab their interest. Emphasize the human interest angle to your cause and organization. Identify and offer any person who will benefit from the cause potentially winning. A real person directly impacted by the cause would be the ideal spokesperson for media to tell the human interest story. Also consider working with the cause submitter.

If you choose, you can work with a State Farm media specialist to create a custom news release to help support your cause. Your press release can be pasted into your pitch email following your brief introduction. Keep in mind that attaching documents to an email is never advisable as it will take up unnecessary space in a reporter's inbox. Only send attachments upon request. Also, be sure to remove logos and images when sending your news release via email.

The same pitch may be sent to more than one reporter at a media outlet, but it's best to customize pitches for specific reporters. They will appreciate the fact that you've taken the time to tailor your outreach for them individually.

## **The News Release (announcing your news)**

A news release outlines the story for a reporter and allows small news organizations to repurpose content as needed. Reporters could write an entire story based on some news releases.

All news releases answer the five “W” questions: who, what, where, when and why; and the one “H” question: how. We highly encourage you to work directly with a State Farm Media Specialist to create a customized press release to fit your organization and cause. For more information about a news release to use to assist in the promotion of your cause, please reach out to your local media or community specialist using the information contained in the links below.

<https://newsroom.statefarm.com/community-contacts>

<https://newsroom.statefarm.com/media-contacts>

## **The Follow-up Call**

After you send your pitch or news release, make a follow-up call to everyone who received it. Here are some tips for making successful follow-up calls with media contacts:

- Never call a television station or a print reporter late in the day. Everyone in the newsroom is on deadline and no one will have time to talk to you. Make your calls in the morning before everyone gets too busy. Avoid calling television news rooms during their morning meeting (typically at 9 a.m.).
- Realize that you are competing with all the other people calling the media with their own story ideas.
- Think twice about calling on breaking news days. If another major news event is taking place that day, postpone your follow-up until the news cycle has ended.
- Accept the fact that your call will be answered by a rushed person who believes he/she has no time to talk to you about your idea. You have about 10 seconds to capture their interest.
- Before making the call, practice the two to three sentences that summarize why your story is important. Leave yourself a practice voicemail or write out some talking points.
- Avoid asking yes or no questions. Don't ask if your information was received. Instead, ask what they thought of your idea.

- Do not call repeatedly; you'll only annoy the person you are calling. If your first call is not returned, take the hint.
- Remember reporters are human, too. It's okay to be conversational during your pitch.

## How to Create Your Media List

### Media List Development Basics

- **Be a media consumer.** This is the fun part! When watching television, reading newspapers and magazines, listening to the radio and browsing through news apps on your mobile phone, you must actively look and listen for “news holes.” These are segments, sections, columns, etc. where your story might be a fit. Keep track of these articles and reporter’s names so you can easily find their contact information.
- **Consider your audience.** Whom are you trying to reach? What does this audience read/watch/listen to?
- **Consider your story.** What are its strengths/weaknesses? Is it visual enough for television? Do you have a great spokesperson that could advocate for your cause and would be perfect for radio interviews?
- **Consider how the two match up.** What are the best communication vehicles to reach your target audience?
- **Research.** Figure out who’s going to listen to your pitch. Sources? Media directories, publications themselves, receptionist, assignment desk, website.

## Creating Smarter Media Lists

### The Problem

It’s frustrating to spend hours creating a media list only to find out that most of those contacts weren’t the right people for your story idea. The problem isn’t your idea; it’s your media list. Misdirected story ideas only confirm the media’s stereotype that communications staffs don’t understand the media.

### Some Solutions

A little extra effort before a pitch goes out will save you a lot of unreturned voicemails and rejections. Here are some tips:

- **Don’t rely solely on directories.**

- **Check out a media outlet's website.** Newspaper sites are particularly helpful. If you're pitching a human interest story, acquaint yourself with writers and figure out which one would likely be most receptive to your pitch. TV stations' websites often contain information about specific newscasts, like whether the show has a guest segment.
- **Relationship-building will get you everywhere with a producer or reporter.** If you've read their work or watched their newscasts, share genuine positive feedback. Start your pitch with something like, "I was listening to your radio show the other morning and noticed you covered such-and-such topic. I think I might have a story idea that relates to that."

## Final thoughts

As a nonprofit, many radio stations will provide free PSA tapings and airings. Look into this possibility. Radio is still a powerful medium; reach out to local hosts, especially those whose shows are live from 7-9 am and 4-6 pm. Think big; utilize all the different communication mediums (print, TV, radio, social media, etc.). Try posting on media outlets' Facebook and Twitter accounts. Every vote counts!