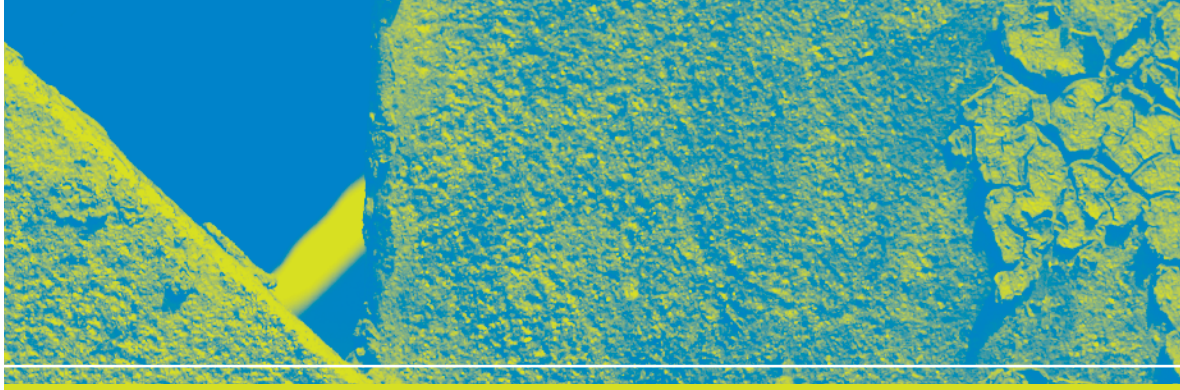
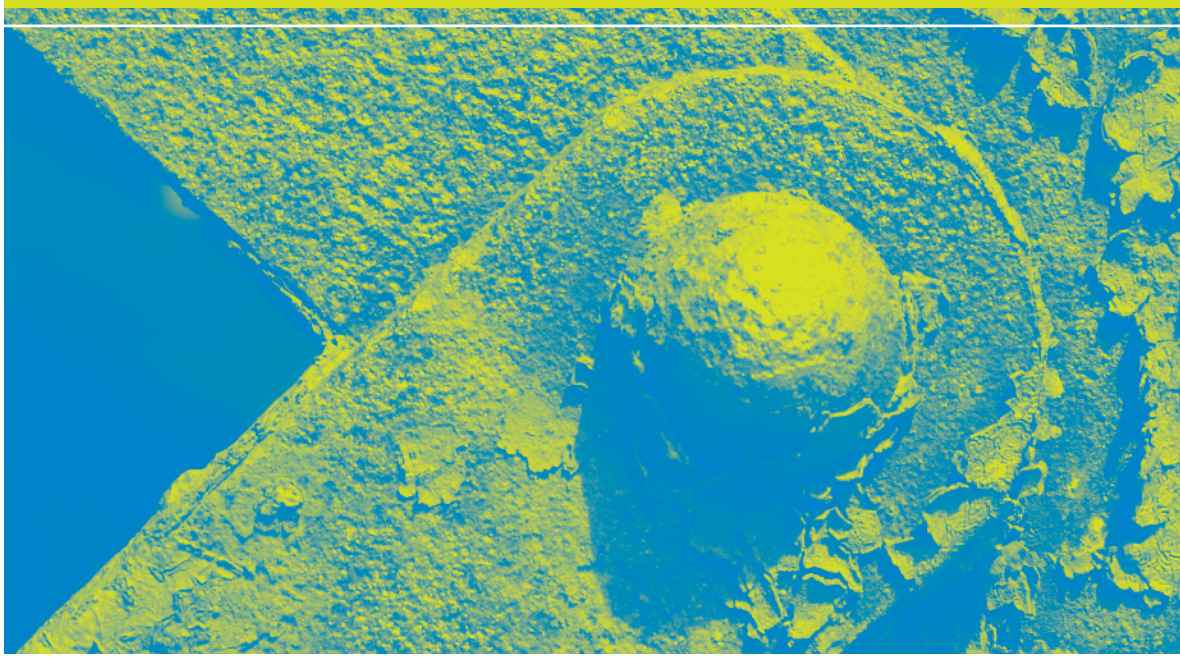


ASCE STATE & REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT CARDS



ASCE

A Guide to Grading Your Community's Infrastructure

www.infrastructurereportcard.org

ASCE GUIDEBOOK FOR INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT CARDS

519/2015

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW FROM STARTING TO SHARING YOUR REPORT

Staff Contact: Brittney Kohler

Manager, Infrastructure Initiatives

American Society of Civil Engineers

101 Constitution Avenue, NW, Suite 375 East

Washington, DC 20001

O: 202-789-7854 / 800-548-ASCE (2723) ext. 7854

C: 912-659-0778

bkohler@asce.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROCEDURES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL REPORT CARDS 2

1. Notification Form 2
2. Methodology 3
3. Communication and Grading Assistance 3
4. Review and Approval 3
5. Release and Outreach 4

INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT CARD NOTIFICATION FORM 5

REPORT CARDS ASSISTANCE FROM ASCE NATIONAL 6

1. ASCE State and Regional Report Card Guidebook 6
2. Advisory Committee 6
3. State Report Card ASCE Staff Contact 6
4. Tools and Data Resources 6
5. Visibility on the ASCE Report Card Website 7
6. Media Relations ASCE Staff Contact 7
7. State Report Card Templates Package 7
8. Outreach Planning 8
9. Additional ASCE Resources 8

State Public Affairs Grants 8
ASCE Government Relations (GR) Training 8
ASCE Public Relations (PR) University 8
State Government Relations Support 8
State Legislation Tracking Service 9

10. Help Is a Click or Call Away 9

REPORT CARD PROCESS: TIMELINE AND ACTIVITIES 10

GETTING STARTED 10
RESEARCH & RELEASE PREPARATION (9 to 12 Months) 10
Schedule a Report Card Kickoff 10
Begin Research 11
Writing Preliminary Drafts 11
Initial Findings Meeting to Inform Messaging 11
Begin Release Preparations 11
Final Drafts Milestone 12
ASCE Advisory Review & Finalization 12
RELEASE (1 Big Day + 3 Months) 12
Prepare for Release Day 12
Release Day! 13
Directly After the Release 14
OUTREACH (3+ Months) 14

LEADING A REPORT CARD EFFORT: GUIDANCE FOR THE CHAIR 15
PLANNING 15
BUILDING YOUR TEAM 16
MANAGING EXPECTATIONS 17

RESEARCH & GRADING: GUIDANCE FOR THE COMMITTEE 18
Goal of the Report Card 18
Committee Responsibilities 18
Research Process 18
Data Collection 19
Research Outputs 19
Suggested Section Structure 20

GRADING YOUR COMMUNITY'S INFRASTRUCTURE 21
History of Report Card Grades 21
Purpose of ASCE Report Card Grades 21
Grading Key Criteria 22
Grading Scale 22
Grading Descriptions 23
Calculating the Grade Point Average (G.P.A.) 24
CREATING A GRADING BACKGROUND 24
HOW TO CREATE RECOMMENDATIONS 25
Report Card Overall Recommendations 25
Section Recommendations 26

RELEASING YOUR REPORT CARD: PROMOTION AND MEDIA RELATIONS 28
ASCE State Media Assistance 28
How Does the Media Process Work? 30
How to Hold a Media-Oriented Launch Event 30
Release Event Logistics 31
Developing Media Tools 31
Steps to Successful Report Card Communications 32

OUTREACH: MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR REPORT CARD 33
Outreach is the Most Important Part of Your Report Card Effort 33
Get an Outreach Team Onboard 33
Your Outreach Audience 33
How the All ASCE Members Can Help 34

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS AVAILABLE FROM ASCE 35

ASCE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS STAFF CONTACTS 36

ASCE Guidebook for Infrastructure Report Cards

A MESSAGE FROM ASCE AS YOU GET STARTED

Congratulations on beginning the process of creating a Report Card that matters to you and your community!

ASCE's Report Card Program exists because of volunteers like you. We are grateful to have ASCE members who take time to create these Report Cards to raise their community's awareness on infrastructure issues.

The Committee for America's Infrastructure and ASCE National's staff look forward to working with you throughout the process. In this Guidebook, you will find the "recipe" for a successful Report Card—including how we can help you as well as best practices and tips from the experiences of over 75 state and local Infrastructure Report Cards.

Why Infrastructure Report Cards?

1. INFRASTRUCTURE IS ONE OF ASCE'S THREE KEY STRATEGIC INITIATIVES
2. REPORT CARDS REACH POLICY MAKERS AND THE PUBLIC WITH A CLEAR MESSAGE
3. REPORT CARDS ARE HIGHLY EFFECTIVE AND REINFORCE ASCE'S REPUTATION AS A CREDIBLE EXPERT RESOURCE

ASCE's quadrennial *Report Card for America's Infrastructure* and ASCE's State and Local Infrastructure Report Cards are authoritative assessments of our nation's infrastructure. ASCE has been involved in producing Infrastructure Report Cards since 1998, and with each subsequent Report Card, we continue to refine how to best help our members create these reports and, by doing so, raise awareness among Congress, local elected leaders, and the public.

From planning, research, writing, release, and outreach, the Report Card creation is a comprehensive yet efficient process, and this Guidebook will help you every step of the way. Serving on a Report Card Committee is a unique professional leadership experience, and we look forward to working with you!

We look forward to working with you!

ASCE's Committee for America's Infrastructure & ASCE's Government Relations Staff

PROCEDURES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL REPORT CARDS

In the 15 years since the first report was issued, the ***Report Card for America's Infrastructure*** has become a well-respected and authoritative assessment of the nation's infrastructure. Policymakers, the media, partner organizations, and the general public have come to trust and rely on ASCE's national and local Report Cards to provide them with the Society's expert opinion on the condition of the nation's infrastructure and ways to improve it.

To further the reach of ASCE's messages about the importance of infrastructure, **Sections, Branches and Councils are strongly encouraged to consider preparing their own local Report Cards.** By producing these local Report Cards, ASCE groups help state and community leaders establish infrastructure grades using the national Report Card and process. Due to the reputation of the national report, all state and local Report Cards are held to the same high standard in the eyes of the public. The effort put into these local reports, combined with the work of **ASCE's Committee for America's Infrastructure (CAI)** and Government Relations staff, has led to a great pool of experience captured in this Guide that can be drawn upon by other Sections, Branches or Councils looking to ensure that their local Report Card is thorough, objective, and consistent with the national Report Card methodology.

To facilitate a Section, Branch or Council's access to that wealth of information, all state and local Report Cards will be assigned a staff liaison to serve as the day-to-day point of contact. Additionally, the ASCE CAI comprised of members who led the *2013 Report Card for America's Infrastructure,* chairs of past state and local Report Cards, and other experts will serve as an advisory body and is available to provide insight and input on any local Report Card efforts. **While the local Report Card committee is responsible for research, data collection, analysis and writing, the CAI and ASCE staff will be available to provide guidance and feedback throughout the planning, development, and release of any local Report Card to ensure success.**

To safeguard the integrity of ASCE's Infrastructure Report Card Program, ASCE has taken appropriate steps to protect the name and reputation of the Report Card brand. **The *Report Card for America's Infrastructure* is a registered trademark of ASCE,** and all other names, logos, and materials associated with ASCE's Infrastructure Report Card Program are protected by a variety of state and federal copyright, trademark, and intellectual property laws. ASCE and its Sections, Branches and Councils benefit from the positive reputation of the Report Card, and by working together to ensure that all local Report Cards carrying this trademark consistently meet the same criteria, we further strengthen its value to the profession and the public. The following procedures have been developed to help ensure that all reports carrying the Report Card trademark meet the criteria:

1. **Notification Form**: All Sections and Branches are asked to submit the ASCE Report Card Notification Form to ASCE (included in this guide on page 5) to officially launch a local Report Card effort and to demonstrate that reasonable support, funding, and leadership are committed to the effort. In general, the Notification Form and project schedule should be filed at least 12 months prior to the expected release date of the local Report Card. Even if the local committee does not have all the answers to the questions on the Notification Form,

please submit it and provide updates as needed. If the local committee needs help to complete the form, ASCE's Government Relations staff can provide assistance. Once a notification form has been submitted, a staff liaison will be assigned to coordinate its review by the CAI. Within two weeks of notification, a conference call will be scheduled with the chair of the state or local Report Card committee, ASCE staff, and select members of the CAI when available. Staff and CAI members will provide feedback on information provided on the notification form and offer guidance for the first stages of local Report Card development. If the Notification Form was not complete at the initial submittal, staff and CAI members will use this opportunity to work through those problem areas.

2. **Methodology**: The purpose of ASCE's Report Card Program is to inform the public of the current condition of America's infrastructure and to deliver the information in the concise and easily accessible format of a school report card. Each infrastructure category should be assessed using ASCE established grading criteria, which have been carefully refined since the program's inception. This Guide and the CAI provide direction on the ASCE Report Card methodology and grading. In order to ensure consistency across the Program, all ASCE Report Cards should follow this Guide.

3. **Communication and Grading Assistance**: While the local Report Card committee is responsible for developing the bulk of the local Report Card, the CAI and ASCE staff will be available throughout the development process to provide valuable feedback and guidance (e.g., suggesting data sources, reviewing early drafts, explaining the grading process, etc.). The CAI and staff will act as an extension of the local Report Card committee and be a helpful resource at every stage in the process. The success of this interaction with the CAI and staff can be greatly enhanced by having the local committee chair provide regular updates and reports to staff or by including staff in the local committee communication calls or meetings.

4. **Review and Approval**: To ensure that CAI and staff members are able to provide a timely review, the local Report Card committee is asked to submit the final draft of grades and supporting material to the staff liaison no later than two months prior to the planned print deadline of the Report Card. The liaison will coordinate staff and CAI-review and provide comments to the local Report Card committee to make modifications. The liaison will coordinate discussion or further reviews if necessary while making every effort to keep the release on schedule. When satisfied that the final product is consistent with the standards of the Report Card Program, the CAI will give permission to use the ASCE logo.

5. **Release and Outreach**: Just as important as researching and writing a great Report Card is the task of preparing an effective outreach plan for its release and promotion. At the start of the local Report Card process, either the Chair or a designated person (e.g. Section Government Relations contact, Public Relations contact, etc.) should begin outlining a plan for a media release event and plans for further outreach. An ASCE media contact will be designated to assist throughout the planning of a release event and subsequent outreach and promotion. Once the Report Card draft has been sent to the CAI for review, the local Report Card committee should begin to finalize their release and outreach plan. This plan should be shared with CAI, staff, the full local Report Card committee, as well as Section, Branch, or Council leadership so that each of these groups can plan to assist in promoting the local Report Card.

We sincerely hope that the information included in this guide helps in the development of a local Report Card. For additional information or assistance, please contact ASCE Government Relations at reportcard@asce.org or 202-789-7850.

INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT CARD NOTIFICATION FORM

The ASCE Board of Direction requires the completion of this form at the beginning of the ASCE Report Card process. While some details may change, please complete this form to the best of your ability and return it to reportcard@asce.org. If you have questions, please email reportcard@asce.org or call 202-789-7850.

1. **State or Region Covered by this Report Card:**_____
2. **ASCE Entity Sponsoring Report Card:**_____
3. **Funding Plans:** Please explain your funding plans including Section, Branch, or Council funds, SPAG funding, or external/matching funding.

   _____

   _____

4. **Infrastructure Report Card Committee:** Please identify your Report Card chair and Public Relations and or Government Relations contacts. Also, please provide a chart of your full Committee and their responsibilities in a separate document.

   Report Card Committee Chair:

   Name _____

   Email _____ Phone _____

   Section, Branch, or Council Public Relations/Media Contact:

   Name _____

   Email _____ Phone _____

   Section, Branch, or Council Government Relations Contact:

   Name _____

   Email _____ Phone _____

5. **Infrastructure Categories:** Please select the infrastructure categories to be covered.

☐ Aviation	☐ Inland Waterways	☐ Schools
☐ Bridges	☐ Levees	☐ Solid Waste
☐ Dams	☐ Ports	☐ Transit
☐ Drinking Water	☐ Public Parks and Recreation	☐ Wastewater
☐ Energy	☐ Rail	☐ Stormwater
☐ Hazardous Waste	☐ Roads	☐ _____

6. **Project Timeline:**
   a. ***Project Schedule:*** Please provide a proposed monthly project schedule for your Committee in a separate document even if it is tentative; include these phases: Research &Writing, Release, and Outreach.
   b. ***Estimated Release Month and Year:*** _____
   c. ***Release Rationale:*** Please describe your rationale for this release date (e.g. legislative session beginning, annual Section Legislative Day, etc.)_____

      _____

REPORT CARDS ASSISTANCE FROM ASCE NATIONAL

ASCE is committed to working with you to produce a successful State and Regional Report Cards. Staff will be available to provide assistance, advice, and direction throughout the process. ASCE provides assistance in several ways:

1. ASCE State and Regional Report Card Guidebook

To help develop and release Report Cards, ASCE has created this Guidebook. On the following pages, you will find guidance on how to:

- Organize a successful Report Card development effort;
- Research and grade your area's infrastructure; and
- Release and promote local findings to elected leaders and the public.

2. Advisory Committee

The Committee on America's Infrastructure (CAI), which is comprised of infrastructure experts and former Report Card chairs, and ASCE staff will provide your team insight and input on your Report Card effort. Their role is to accept and review your nomination form, review your Report Card and provide recommendations for improvements, as well as provide approval on behalf of ASCE to release your Report Card.

3. State Report Card ASCE Staff Contact

All local ASCE Report Card Committees are provided an ASCE staff liaison to serve as your primary point of contact during the development of a Report Card. While Sections, Branches or Councils are responsible for the research, data collection, analysis and writing, the ASCE staff will provide guidance and feedback throughout the process to ensure the project's success.

4. Tools and Data Resources

ASCE National can help you get started with potential data sources, and we are always looking for tools which can help your Committee work efficiently. Since we are constantly finding new cost-effective tools, please email reportcard@asce.org to get the most current list of resources. The list will include tools such as:

- **ASCE eRoom**: ASCE can set up an electronic eRoom for the Committee to collaborate and share information and drafts.
- **Low cost tools**: There are a variety of low cost tools that include conference lines to photos to news compiling tools that will make building your Report Card easier.
- **Webinars service**: Many Committees may find they need to do a webinar to hold a kickoff presentation or present their findings.

5. Visibility on the ASCE Report Card Website

Before your State Report Card is released, ASCE's Government Relations Staff will assist in the promotion of your Report Card by publishing your state's information on your release day on the ASCE Report Card website on your state's page at www.infrastructurereportcard.org. Additionally, your Report Card will be added in the national Report Card tablet and phone apps when they are updated.

6. Media Relations ASCE Staff Contact

An important part of your Report Card effort will be to engage the media in telling the story. To improve the chances that the media will cover the release of the Report Card, local groups will have support from an ASCE media relations specialist to :

- Assist you with your media strategy for your release event,
- Help to edit and distribute your media advisory and press release, and
- Serve as a liaison between the media and your Committee.

If the Section, Branch or Council has a Public Relations or Communications position or if the Section hires a local public relations consultant for the Report Card, ASCE National will coordinate the media strategy and provide support as necessary after the release.

7. State Report Card Templates Package

Many Report Card groups choose to hire a marketing or PR firm to produce a state-specific design for their Report Card as well as build supporting assets like brochures, ads, and powerpoints. However, ASCE has also built a set of easy-to-use templates that can quickly give your Report Card a professional look if your budget does not allow for the use of a designer. The template set is available for the Microsoft Suite as well as the Adobe InDesign Suite.

What's in the Templates Package?

- Formal Report
- Cover options
- Stock images
- Summary document
- Brochure
- Powerpoint
- Approved Logos

8. Outreach Planning

After a Report Card is released, ASCE's Government Relations Staff will assist Sections and Branches with building a **Report Card Outreach Plan** to roadmap outreach efforts and make the most of the Report Card. The release of the Report Card is really the beginning of the effort to educate policy makers about the need for infrastructure investment. An Outreach Plan should be created and supported by the Section or Branch leadership.

9. Additional ASCE Resources

State Public Affairs Grants

ASCE's competitive State Public Affairs Grants (SPAG) program provides grants to Section and Branches to work on projects that enhance the image of civil engineers as leaders and to encourage advocacy on ASCE priority issues. By applying for a SPAG grant, your Report Card can leverage current Section funding for a new initiative, add a new component to your existing work, or fund an innovative idea for outreach. Any Section, Branch or Council can apply for SPAG grants for government activities – including Report Cards, outreach to the public and to state legislators, and much more. Find out more about the SPAG grant application process at www.asce.org/SPAG.

ASCE Government Relations (GR) Training

ASCE's Government Relations staff is available to provide your Section or Branch with an in-person or remote GR training session that can amplify your group's understanding of how to effectively engage with your elected officials and how to strategically plan to use your Report Card when it's released. Request to hold a training session in your area by emailing govrel@asce.org.

ASCE Public Relations (PR) University

ASCE can assist in preparing the Report Card team to talk with the media by hosting a one-day "Public Relations University." The session covers how to work with the media, how to make your events and reports media-worthy, and how to handle tough interview questions. If the Section or Branch can provide the meeting room and details, the cost for staff leading this training is free to the Section. Apply to have this program in your area by emailing reportcard@asce.org.

State Government Relations Support

ASCE's State Government Relations team can assist you in a variety of ways in your Report Card effort; these include but aren't limited to:

- Determine how your release might coincide with the legislative schedule most effectively;
- Discuss pending legislation and key issues that your authors should be aware of;
- Advise on your Report Card's recommendations for action by the legislature;
- Providing a briefing on your state's legislature and how ASCE has worked with them in the past;
- Explain and assist with setting up legislative activities, like a State Drive-In to your meet with your legislature or a letter campaign to them; or

- Arrange for a Key Contact email to ASCE members in your area to ask them to contact their legislator about your Report Card or a specific issue.

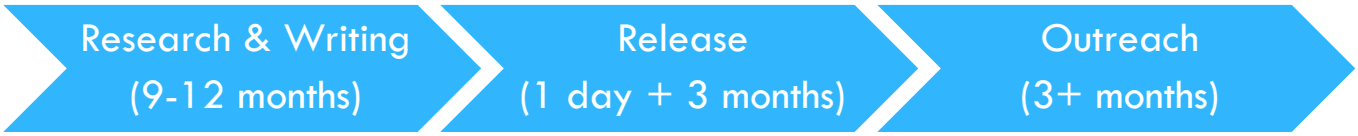
State Legislation Tracking Service

Through ASCE's website, our state legislative tracking service is available to all members. Just login into ASCE's website and go to: www.asce.org/multistate. This tool can send you a weekly briefing on the bills of interest to you and the ones ASCE is tracking in your state. As you are developing recommendation for action in your Report Card, it is extremely helpful to have an understanding about what legislative options are already being considered. If you need assistance logging in, please email govwash@asce.org.

10. Help Is an Email or Call Away

For additional information or assistance, please know all you have to do is ask ASCE Government Relations at reportcard@asce.org or call 202-789-7850. We will help you with any and all questions!

REPORT CARD PROCESS: TIMELINE AND ACTIVITIES



The process to develop an ASCE Report Card requires three project stages: **Research and Writing, Release, and Outreach.** When developing a Report Card, plan for your Committee to have:

- 9 to 12 months to complete the research and writing,
- I day + 3 months to finalize the Report Card and prepare for the release, and
- 3+ months dedicated to promotion and outreach after the release.

These stages may overlap slightly, and it is important to **start your Report Card with the end goal in mind – a concise and easily understandable information piece that informs the public of the current condition of America's infrastructure.**

GETTING STARTED

- **Start communication with ASCE National:** Submit the ASCE Notification Form and hold introductory call with ASCE's staff.
- **Form a committee and identify leadership:** The Section leadership should identify a chair to lead the effort and for a Report Card Committee and seek volunteers from the entire Section membership.
- **Prepare to kick-off a great Report Card effort:** Read this Guidebook and ask questions; determine a timeline and budget for the Report Card; and consider applying for SPAG funding or other funding.

RESEARCH & RELEASE PREPARATION (9 to 12 Months)

Schedule a Report Card Kickoff

- Set up a central electronic sharing space for the Committee.
- Schedule a Report Card Committee kickoff meeting either in-person or teleconference.
- Discuss a proposed schedule for research, release, and outreach.
    - Set and agree to important milestones for the Committee.
    - Set up a recurring check-in call based on the Committee's availability.
- Talk to ASCE's state government relations group and likeminded associations with professional lobbyists/media experts and get their input on

About Kickoff Meetings

- Remember this meeting will set the tone for the project so be prepared and positive!
- Consider holding the kickoff on a weekend so everyone can attend in person or plan to have an in-person meeting
- ASCE staff can be available to join you for this meeting and help with materials – just ask!

timing of release, legislative schedule, and how to maximize the opportunity for the selected audience.

Begin Research

- Ask ASCE staff for the latest list of data resources and suggested data points to use in the Report Card.
- Review ASCE policy statements that relate to the infrastructure categories being reviewed.
- Perform a literature review of available state or local data sources and relevant authorities to contact for additional data.
- Hold meetings with agencies, infrastructure owners, and other key stakeholders to inform them of the Report Card, explain the concept, and request their assistance with additional data.
- Send any questions or requests for meeting set up assistance to reportcard@asce.org.
- Place research and drafts in the shared space; discuss status and key needs with Committee and ASCE at check-in; agree upon preliminary drafts deadline.

Writing Preliminary Drafts

- Agree to a common writing outline as a committee with a desired length of no more than 2 to 5 pages per category.
- Hold a webinar for the committee to discuss best practices for writing your Report Card with ASCE's staff assistance.
- Place preliminary drafts in the shared space and finalize category drafts with a peer review by the Chair, Committee, or an Advisory group.
- Add 3 to 5 specific recommendations to "Raise the Grades" for each section of the Report Card.

Initial Findings Meeting to Inform Messaging

- Discuss the overall themes and data sources found.
- Present a preliminary grade and findings to the Committee.
- Start identifying examples of good and bad trends from their research as well as compelling visuals and graphics for their section.
- Provide an update to the Section Board on progress and bring Section GR/PR representative into the planning process.

Begin Release Preparations

- Identify a release date based on an updated schedule clearly showing the review process and printing time. Share this timeline with all involved.
- Research and place a hold on a location for the release event and identify who you might invite to speak.
- If an editor or designer is being used, initiate discussions and clarify timing and expectations.
- Price out potential printers for any materials that will be printed.
- Identify spokespeople for the Report Card; if they have not received media training, ask ASCE to organize this with them.

Final Drafts Milestone

- Write an introduction and/or executive summary for the Report Card.
- Ask the Committee to write short executive summary paragraphs for each category.
- Place edited and now **final drafts** in the shared space and request ASCE Review.
- If possible, have a volunteer editor review all the final category sections as one complete Report Card.

ASCE Advisory Review & Finalization

- Provide Drafts to ASCE for CAI review no later than two month prior to the release date.
- Incorporate Advisory Council comments into the category drafts
- Finalize changes recommended by Advisory Council and grades. Place final Report Card sections into the shared space.
- Allow designer to access and place final Report Card into the Report Card template or your unique Report Card design.
- Send final Report Card to printer and confirm your pick up schedule.
- Build any additional materials needed including a brochure, 1-2 page summary, powerpoint of key findings.

RELEASE (1 Big Day + 3 Months)

Are You Ready to Release?

- ☐ Summary for each area with grades
- ☐ Would your neighbor understand it?
- ☐ Has national reviewed it?
- ☐ Does it have one voice?
- ☐ Have you checked the summary facts?
- ☐ How will it be publically available on release day?

Prepare for Release Day

- Confirm location for the release event.
- Invite and confirm speakers for release event such as elected officials, agency officials, head of coalitions, etc.
- Begin promoting the release event to ASCE membership and other infrastructure stakeholder groups.
- Ask the Committee to return to key agencies and stakeholders to inform them about the release.
- Finalize release date, location, and other event logistics (e.g. rental equipment, speakers, host policies, catering).
- Work with ASCE staff to create a press release and other media materials including a media advisory, talking points, and press packets.
- Schedule a PR University press training with ASCE for your key spokespeople to review key talking points and prepare for tough media questions.
- Confirm what needs to be on the Section website and when.
- Define a social media.
- Prepare letters to elected officials about the Report Card.
- Promote the release event through invitations and personal emails
- Finalize and assemble the press kits.

Release Day!

- Websites goes live and press release is distributed.
- Provide the final Report Card to the Committee and Section leadership with a thank you email and request to share it broadly.
- Send an email to ASCE members in the state or region announcing the Report Card
- Arrive and prepare for your release event.
- Work with your media strategy and be prepared to take calls and emails from the media; keep your cell phone on!

Directly After the Release

- Monitor and share media coverage of the Report Card release.
- Send letters to elected officials at all levels of government and ask for their support on specific legislative priorities by the Section with the help of local or regional government relations contact.
- Contact ASCE's state media contact to draft an op-ed for a newspaper that presents the issues highlighted in the Report Card

Take a Breath! You Earned It! ☺

OUTREACH (3+ Months)

- Make a list of local organizations that would be interested in the Report Card, and define an outreach plan with the help of ASCE's Government Relations staff.
- Monitor opportunities to send letters to the editor and write Op-Eds.
- Look for likeminded state or local coalitions that the Section can participate in to further the group's outreach.
- Schedule a legislative day at the state capitol with the Section or Branch and present the Report Card to legislators.
- Consider new and innovative ways to reach the public and legislators.
- Begin to transition outreach activities to the Section or Branch government relations contact to incorporate into their activities.

Outreach Makes It All Worthwhile!

While the research stage will take a good amount of time, the release and outreach stages make the time spent worthwhile so pace yourself and your team for the final push or add additional team members to help with the outreach stage.

LEADING A REPORT CARD EFFORT: GUIDANCE FOR THE CHAIR

The Report Card Chair (Chair) serves as the project manager of a significant volunteer effort and leads the Committee through the research, release, and outreach phases of the Report Card. The Chair is responsible for:

Chair Responsibilities

- **Primary Contact**
- **Project Manager**
- **Chief Encourager**
- **Spokesperson**

- Serving as the primary contact and project manager of the Report Card effort,
- Recruiting and leading a Report Card Committee of volunteer experts,
- Serving as a spokesperson for the effort or recruiting appropriate ASCE leaders to serve in this capacity,
- Holding regular Committee check-ins and communicating with ASCE National,
- Working with ASCE leadership on the release and outreach plans (particularly the government relations contact and media contact),
- Building talking points and media materials with assistance from ASCE;
- Coordinating an event to release the Report Card;
- Starting outreach with the Report Card to key audiences after the release.

PLANNING

Scope of the Report Card: Your Section, Branch or Council's Report Card should cover an easily identifiable geographic area (e.g., a state or county). Much of the data you find will come from state agencies (or federal agencies that track information by state); however, metropolitan areas or counties can also work. ASCE covers 16 categories nationally, but your group may decide that only 6 or 8 infrastructure systems in your area are of particular concern and focus only on those.

Leadership & Buy-In: Ask for the support and assistance of your Section, Branch or Council and those whose area is covered by your Report Card– to find the Committee, to help with funding, and to delegate tasks so that others feel a part of the effort. By keeping your Section, Branch or Council up to date, you may be able to gain assistance, support, and buy-in from other members.

Funding: While much of the work will be done by volunteers, some expenses are associated with developing and promoting your Report Card. The most significant are typically printing of the Report Cards, design and/or PR

Tips for Managing Report Card Volunteers

- "Thank you" is powerful – use the phrase often!
- Ask for agreement on deadlines; keep clear action items and dates.
- Use conference calls and webinars rather than in person meetings to ease the time burden.
- Reminders and clear action items help keep everyone on track.
- Have preliminary draft deadlines to catch issues early.
- Find ways to make the project fun and build relationships where possible.

services, and release event needs. Most ASCE groups allot funds for things like meeting expenses, printing and design costs, space rental for the release event, etc. ASCE State Public Affairs Grants (SPAG) can also be a source of some funding for Report Card efforts.

Project Timeline: Like any project, it's best to start with a schedule to organize the effort and create milestones. Some suggested timelines were in the previous section of this Guidebook. Please make sure you indicate these important milestones in your timeline:

- **Preliminary Drafts**
- **Final Drafts**
- **Final Report Sent to Printer**
- **Release Date**
- **Key Outreach Activity After the Release**

How to Pick a Release Date

Try to schedule the release during your state's legislative session or another time when the people you most want to hear your message are easiest to reach.

- Check your state legislature's schedule
- Identify when budgeting decisions are discussed and made
- Identify a common travel congestion period
- The media is most likely to attend events on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday in the mid-morning to early afternoon

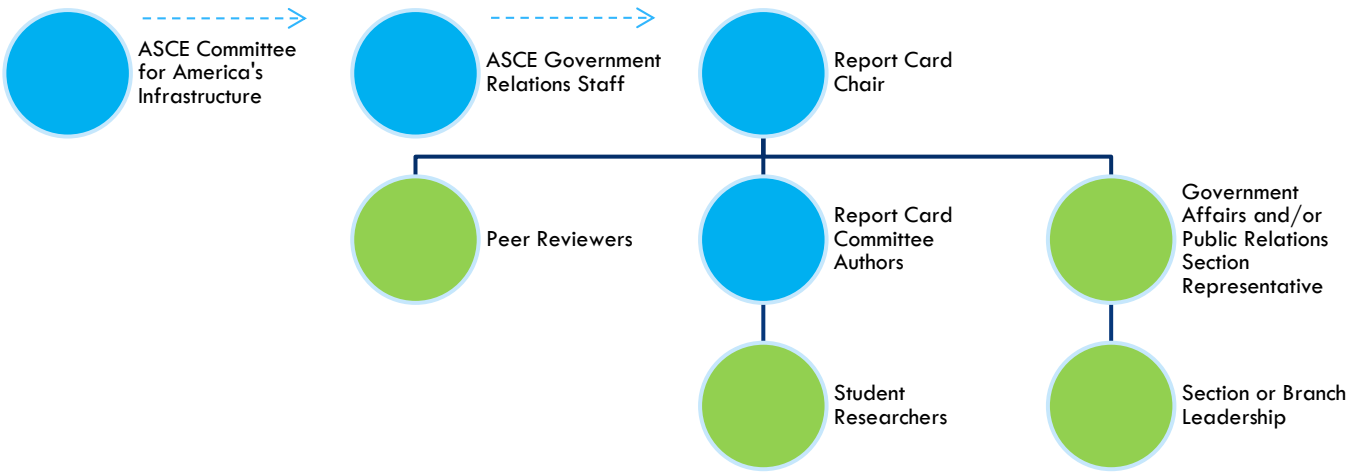
BUILDING YOUR TEAM

The core of the Report Card team will be: the Chair, the Committee, and Section Leadership with support from ASCE's Committee on America's Infrastructure and Government Relations staff.

Committee: The Committee should consist of ASCE members who are regarded as experts in the infrastructure area(s) that will be analyzed with ideally 2 to 3 Committee members working on each category. Some volunteers will be able to contribute to multiple categories, but try to have at least one volunteer dedicated to lead each category and manage the work.

Supporting Members: The Committee can also be supported by younger members or student members who assist in the research. Also, some groups have an advisory panel of experts can be created to review the research and the proposed letter grades. An advisory panel may lend credibility to the project and panelists should be listed on the Report Card materials.

Suggested Report Card Committee Structure



Note: Not every Report Card Committee must be organized in this way. Your group may opt for a different model to achieve the goal, based on your schedule, workload, etc.

Communications/Public Relations: It is important to identify a public relations/communication contact to assist with the project. This person can be responsible for working with the graphic designer, managing the print schedule, or planning and executing the release event for the report. This person can also help manage media outreach and respond to media inquiries about the Report Card after it is released.

Questions to Consider as Chair

- How will the Committee be organized?
- How often will the Committee meet?
- Are there any key events that should be considered when timing the Report Card release?
- Does the timeline allow for some buffer time should the schedule lag?
- How long is needed for groups to review the Report Card?
- What time needed to produce collateral materials and print the Report?
- Who can you ask to help with certain tasks?

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

Here's some advice from some previous local Report Card chairs:

- The Report Card is a volunteer effort; everyone has a day job so time is precious.
- Don't be afraid to send reminders to your Committee… It will help everyone.
- The schedule can change, if needed, at any time as long as the linked activities are considered and timelines are adjusted. Work with ASCE as a sounding board to make these decisions.
- Leaning on others and delegating will be necessary, not optional. Ask for help from others.
- Never underestimate how much time the review process will take… or the printer!
- This can be a tremendous growth opportunity for any engineer – managing a large project, working with the media and legislators, and creating a message for the public. These can all significantly expand your marketable skills.

RESEARCH & GRADING: GUIDANCE FOR THE COMMITTEE

Goal of the Report Card

The intention of a Report Card to render all the technical and relevant facts about the local infrastructure into a brief fact-based summary based on the ASCE methodology that non-engineers can easily understand accompanied by an A to F letter grade like a school report card indicating how the infrastructure is doing. While the goal of this Report Card seems simple, the most difficult task is to effectively summarize all the technical information into a clear, compelling summary and assign a letter grade.

What the Report Card Should Be

- A brochure or high-level summary showing the key facts
- An indicator of current conditions and future challenges
- Written in a way your family or friends would understand easily

What the Report Card is NOT

- A technical report
- A compendium of all infrastructure sources ever produced in the state
- An indictment of the work of a state agency or private owner

Committee Responsibilities

The Committee is responsible for collecting the data, using the ASCE methodology to use to assign grades, writing the fact sheets, and promoting the results. Among the specific tasks that Committee members will be responsible for are:

- Researching and contacting government agencies for the appropriate infrastructure data;
- Compiling the data for each infrastructure category in an organized and easy-to-read format;
- Confirming grades based on the data;
- Writing summary materials, talking points, and the text for the Report Card;
- Assisting with an event to release the Report Card;
- Promoting the Report Card on release week; and
- Reaching out to share the Report Card with key audiences.

Research Process

1. **Review and analyze the available data, surveys, and reports for each category in order to:**
    - Identify the scope and current condition of infrastructure (e.g. number of bridges, miles of pipe);
    - Review current budgeted expenditures for maintenance and replacements;
    - Identify investment needed to upgrade infrastructure to meet current and future capacity needs.
2. **Interview infrastructure stakeholders and industry leaders to discuss the available data, trends, and needs of infrastructure.**
    - Identify all available data sources;
    - Examine current trends and developments.

3. **Develop a summary report citing the condition, capacity, and trends relating to the grading criteria that includes but is not limited to:**
    - Existing and future needs as well as current funding levels;
    - Progress made in that infrastructure category from previous Report Card;
    - Consequences of inaction.
4. **Establish a grading framework based on the ASCE grading criteria using the traditional letter-grade scale, as outlined below.**

Data Collection

Data collection will probably be the most time intensive task of the Report Card; however, good data will produce good Report Card. Various government agencies and organizations routinely collect information on infrastructure that may include conditions, performance, capacity, and funding levels. ASCE keeps several data resources list and resources so please request them by emailing reportcard@asce.org

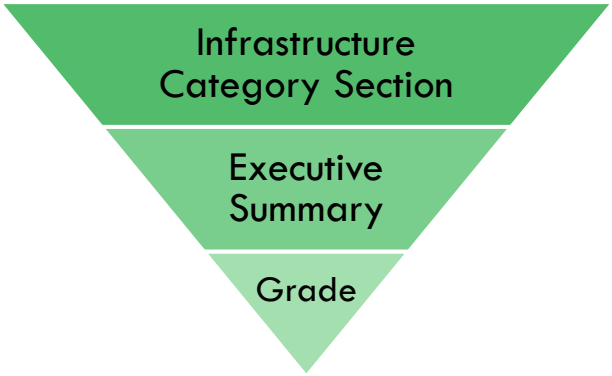
Where to Start Your Research

- 2013 Report Card for America's Infrastructure, www.infrastructurereportcard.org
- State Agency Reports & Budgets
- Federal Reports with State Breakouts (GAO, EPA, DOT, USACE, etc.)
- Economic Impact Reports (Federal, State, etc.)
- Policy Reports (Eno Center, The Road Information Project TRIP, Bipartisan Policy Center)
- Non-profits or think tank reports and analysis
- Newspapers

At the federal level, this data may be broken down by state, making the compilation of a statewide Report Card easier. However, if you are working on a region, county or citywide Report Card, you will need to determine which agency in your area is the best source for information. Look to Section members to find civil engineers who have a connection with an organization or government agency that collects the data. Check with the state's department of transportation to see if it compiles local or for recommendations on other organizations that do. If you are focusing on a citywide or regional Report Card, check with the local public works office or the chamber of commerce to see if it has infrastructure data.

Research Outputs

While it may seem like a large task, writing for the Report Card can be a fairly easy if you start knowing that you really only need to create three products:



1. **Infrastructure Category Section**: This should be only 2 to 5 pages of content about each category that reflects the key data points.
2. **Executive Summary**: It's only 3-5 sentences, has the most compelling facts, and can be created after the section is written. Consider this the "elevator speech" of your Report Card section – it must be concise but effective. Here is an example executive summary:

Louisiana has more than 15.4 million square feet of bridge deck which is more than 50 times the square feet of the Superdome, yet Louisiana ranks in the bottom third of federal funding for bridge maintenance, repair and replacement. Federal and state transportation officials have classified almost 29% of Louisiana's 13,361 bridges as either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. The number of deficient bridges in Louisiana is more than the total number of bridges in 10 other states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, and the situation is certain to worsen in the next several years as thousands of Louisiana bridges approach the end of their design lives. Louisiana needs substantial increases in revenue to fund improvements to its deteriorating bridge infrastructure.

3. **Grade**: The grade should be based on the issues found based on the 8 Key Criteria. More information is found in the grading section of the Guide (page 21).

Suggested Section Structure

While every Report Card should have an introduction, infrastructure category sections with grades, an overall grade point average (GPA), and recommendations, these can be structured in different outlines depending on the format and intentions of the Committee. However, here is an example structure from one Report Card that is very easy for a non-engineer to read:

Title	Functions As…
What You Need To Know About [state]'s [infrastructure category]	INTRODUCTION - Highlight key facts associated with the infrastructure including basics facts about how much there is and how it works and why it matters to the state.
Issues Facing [state]'s [infrastructure category]	ANALYSIS - should review all of the 8 Key Criteria in this area – condition, capacity, funding, future need, O&M, public safety, resilience, and innovation.
[state]'s [infrastructure category] Success Stories	SIDE BAR - Highlight one to two projects in the appropriate category that are good examples of infrastructure renewal and planning. Show what is possible with investment
Let's Raise [state]'s [category] Grade	RECOMMENDATIONS – Make 3 to 5 recommendations to fix the issues identified even if it's simple
Find Out More	RESOURCES – Give your sources with a year and website links,

GRADING YOUR COMMUNITY'S INFRASTRUCTURE

The heart of the Report Card is the grades. So, how exactly do you grade? ASCE's Committee on America's Infrastructure assigns grades based on ASCE's Report Card methodology that has been refined over time and represents the best practice of over 75 Report Card efforts and thousands of engineers across the country.

History of Report Card Grades

The concept of a report card to grade the nation's infrastructure originated in 1988 with the congressionally chartered National Council on Public Works Improvement report, *Fragile Foundations: A Report on America's Public Works*. In 1988, when *Fragile Foundations* was released, the nation's infrastructure earned a "C," representing an average grade based on the performance and capacity of existing public works. Among the problems identified within *Fragile Foundations* were increasing congestion and deferred maintenance and age of the system; the authors of the report worried that fiscal investment was inadequate to meet the current operations costs and future demands on the system.

When the federal government indicated they would not be updating the report after a decade, ASCE used the approach and adapted the methodology to publish the first *Report Card on America's Infrastructure* in 1998. With each new national Report Card in 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013 and the growing number of State Report Cards, the methodology of the Report Card has been rigorously assessed and improved to take into consideration changing elements that affect America's infrastructure. In order to broaden the dialogue on infrastructure, ASCE encourages Sections and Branches to develop and promote Infrastructure Report Cards for their states or regions using the national methodology.

Purpose of ASCE Report Card Grades

The purpose of the State and Regional Infrastructure Report Cards is to inform the public of the current condition of their infrastructure and to deliver the information in as concise and accessible manner as possible. Using an easily understood school report card format, each of the categories of infrastructure covered in a Report Card is assessed using **8 Key Criteria** and the most recent data sources available to provide a comprehensive assessment of a state or area's infrastructure assets. ASCE's Committee on America's Infrastructure oversees the local Report Card Program and in that role, reviews and approves the final prepared draft Report Cards before being released.

Grading Key Criteria

To develop the Report Card grades, a quantitative and qualitative approach to each of the eight fundamental criteria should be used. Each author is expected to review and assess all relevant data and reports, consult with technical and industry experts, and assign grades according to the following eight criteria:

Capacity	Evaluate the infrastructure's capacity to meet current and future demands.
Condition	Evaluate the infrastructure's existing or near future physical condition.
Funding	Evaluate the current level of funding (from all levels of government and the private sector) for the infrastructure category and compare it to the estimated funding need.
Future Need	Evaluate the cost to improve the infrastructure and determine if future funding prospects will be able to meet the need.
Operation and Maintenance	Evaluate the owners' ability to operate and maintain the infrastructure properly and determine that the infrastructure is in compliance with government regulations.
Public Safety	Evaluate to what extent the public's safety is jeopardized by the condition of the infrastructure and what the consequences of failure may be.
Resilience	Evaluate the infrastructure system's capability to prevent or protect against significant multihazard events and the ability to expeditiously recover and resume critical services with minimum disruption to public safety and health, the economy, and national security.
Innovation	Evaluate the implementation and strategic use of innovative techniques and delivery methods.

Many of these criteria have standardized statistics that represent them easily, but some infrastructure categories require individual analysis and innovative strategies to ensure that each criterion is reviewed and confirmed with available data. The CAI is available to assist you and can offer suggestions and guidance on how to assess these.

Grading Scale

Grading for an ASCE Report Card uses a 100 point scale and can also be represented as a percentage. Points should be allocated in balanced manner across the 8 Key Criteria to arrive at the number of earned points of the possible 100 points. Authors should start with a balance among the 8 key criteria and then use their expertise and discretion to determine if key criteria that may impact the category significantly should be weighted more substantially. However, no one criterion should represent a majority of the grade. The percentage earned is then translated into a letter grade based on the following scale:

A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 51-69

F = 50 or lower

Grading Descriptions

The following grade descriptions have been defined as part of ASCE's Report Card methodology.

A EXCEPTIONAL: FIT FOR THE FUTURE

The infrastructure in the system or network is generally in excellent condition, typically new or recently rehabilitated, and meets capacity needs for the future. A few elements show signs of general deterioration that require attention. Facilities meet modern standards for functionality and resilient to withstand most disasters and severe weather events.

B GOOD: ADEQUATE FOR NOW

The infrastructure in the system or network is in good to excellent condition; some elements show signs of general deterioration that require attention. A few elements exhibit significant deficiencies. Safe and reliable with minimal capacity issues and minimal risk.

Can We Give A Good Grade? YES!

If your data shows that your community is doing well in one area, give it the appropriate grade. It will lend credibility to the more critical assessments in other areas. Similarly, it is important not to grade the infrastructure higher than the data can support. The goal of the Report Card is to draw attention to the condition of your state or community's infrastructure –whether good or bad!

C MEDIOCRE: REQUIRES ATTENTION

The infrastructure in the system or network is in fair to good condition; it shows general signs of deterioration and requires attention. Some elements exhibit significant deficiencies in conditions and functionality, with increasing vulnerability to risk.

D POOR: AT RISK

The infrastructure is in poor to fair condition and mostly below standard, with many elements approaching the end of their service life. A large portion of the system exhibits significant deterioration. Condition and capacity are of significant concern with strong risk of failure.

F FAILING/CRITICAL: UNFIT FOR PURPOSE

The infrastructure in the system is in unacceptable condition with widespread advanced signs of deterioration. Many of the components of the system exhibit signs of imminent failure.

Calculating the Grade Point Average (G.P.A.)

To determine your Report Card's cumulative grade, submit your final category grades to your ASCE Report Card contact, and they will confirm your Grade Point Average (G.P.A.) for your Report Card. To do this, they will calculate a non-weighted average of the individual infrastructure category grades based on two methods to confirm the final grade. Your G.P.A. is final once ASCE has confirmed it.

CREATING A GRADING BACKGROUND

While we do not include the grading background documents in the Report Card or to the public, ASCE does recommend creating a grading background document as a reference to outline your reasoning in grading for the Committee and also for future authors to understand how, for example, how Drinking Water was assessed in 2015 as they grade in 2019. Here is a sample format for you to consider using that is included in the appendix of this Guidebook.

State Report Card Category Grading Sheet Example

Grading Criterion	Key Indicator Facts	Earned Points	Available Points	
Capacity		8	10	
	Fact 1			Note: Authors should start with a balance among the 8 criteria (12.5 points for 8 criteria) and then use their expertise and discretion to determine if key criteria that may impact the category significantly should be weighted more substantially. However, no one criterion should represent a majority of the grade.
	Fact 2			
	Fact 3			
	Fact 4			
	Fact 5			
Condition		10	15	
	Fact 1			
	Fact 2			
	Fact 3			
	Fact 4			
	Fact 5			
Operations and Maintenance		8	10	
	Fact 1			
	Fact 2			
	Fact 3			
	Fact 4			
	Fact 5			
Public Safety		14	15	
	Fact 1			
	Fact 2			
	Fact 3			
	Fact 4			
	Fact 5			
Funding		8	15	
	Fact 1			
	Fact 2			
	Fact 3			
	Fact 4			
	Fact 5			
Future Need		5	12	
	Fact 1			
	Fact 2			
	Fact 3			
	Fact 4			
	Fact 5			
Resilience		8	13	
	Fact 1			
	Fact 2			
	Fact 3			
	Fact 4			
	Fact 5			Points should be allocated in balanced manner across the 8 Key Criteria to arrive at the number of earned points of the possible 100 points.
Innovation		9	10	
	Fact 1			
	Fact 2			
	Fact 3			
	Fact 4			
	Fact 5			
Final Grade		**70**	**100**	
			GRADE: 70% = C	

HOW TO CREATE RECOMMENDATIONS

Report Card Overall Recommendations

While the Report Cards and the attention they received have been effective in building public understanding of why infrastructure renewal is needed, civil engineers must also continue to lead the discussion on viable solutions. Consider adding 3 to 5 points of action in your Report Card for either the public or legislators to read as the key take-away points of your Report Card.

As an example, in the 2013 Report Card, ASCE outlines a vision and solutions on how to "Raise the Grades."

ASCE's VISION TO RAISE THE GRADES

1. Increase Leadership in Infrastructure Renewal

America's infrastructure needs bold leadership and a compelling vision at the national level. During the 20th century, the federal government led the way in building our nation's greatest infrastructure systems from the New Deal programs to the Interstate Highway System and the Clean Water Act. Since that time, federal leadership has decreased, and the condition of the nation's infrastructure has suffered. Currently, most infrastructure investment decisions are made without the benefit of a national vision. That strong national vision must originate with strong leadership at all levels of government and the private sector. Without embracing a strong national vision, the infrastructure will continue to deteriorate.

2. Promote Sustainability and Resilience

America's infrastructure must meet the ongoing needs for natural resources, industrial products, energy, food, transportation, shelter, and effective waste management, and at the same time protect and improve environmental quality. Sustainability, resiliency, and ongoing maintenance must be an integral part of improving the nation's infrastructure. Today's transportation systems, water treatment systems, and flood control systems must be able to withstand both current and future challenges. As infrastructure is built or rehabilitated, life-cycle cost analysis should be performed for all infrastructure systems to account for initial construction, operation, maintenance, environmental, safety, and other costs reasonably anticipated during the life of the project, such as recovery after disruption by natural or manmade hazards. Both structural and non-structural methods must be applied to meet challenges. Infrastructure systems must be designed to protect the natural environment and withstand both natural and man-made hazards, using sustainable practices, to ensure that future generations can use and enjoy what we build today, as we have benefited from past generations. Additionally, research and development should be funded at the federal level to develop new, more efficient methods and materials for building and maintaining the nation's infrastructure.

3. Develop and Fund Plans to Maintain and Enhance America's Infrastructure
While infrastructure investment must be increased at all levels, it must also be prioritized and executed according to well-conceived plans that both complement the national vision and focus on systemwide outputs. The goals should center on freight and passenger mobility, intermodality, water use, and environmental stewardship, while encouraging resiliency and sustainability. The plans must reflect a better defined set of federal, state, local, and private sector roles and responsibilities and instill better discipline for setting priorities and focusing funding to solve the most pressing problems. The plans should also complement our broad national goals of economic growth and leadership, public safety, resource conservation, energy independence, and environmental stewardship. Infrastructure plans should be synchronized with regional land use planning and related regulation and incentives to promote non-structural as well as structural solutions to mitigate the growing demand for increased infrastructure capacity.
Finally, the plans must renew the commitment to infrastructure investments in all categories. All available financing options must be explored and debated. Innovative financing programs must be developed and authorized that not only make resources readily available, but also encourage the most effective and efficient use of those resources. Federal investment must be used to complement, encourage, and leverage investment from the state and local government levels as well as from the private sector. In addition, users of the infrastructure must be willing to pay the appropriate price for their use.

Section Recommendations

Each section of the Report Card should provide some recommendations that relate to ASCE's policy statements and the findings of the Report Card. Try to reference language and wording from ASCE's policy statements and national Report Card as a guide to what recommendations may be appropriate for your Report Card. All recommendations can be fairly broad but should be actionable. Typically, 3 to 7 "Raise the Grades Solutions" in each category of the Report Card is helpful. Here are a few examples of recommendations from the *2013 Report Card* for Bridges:

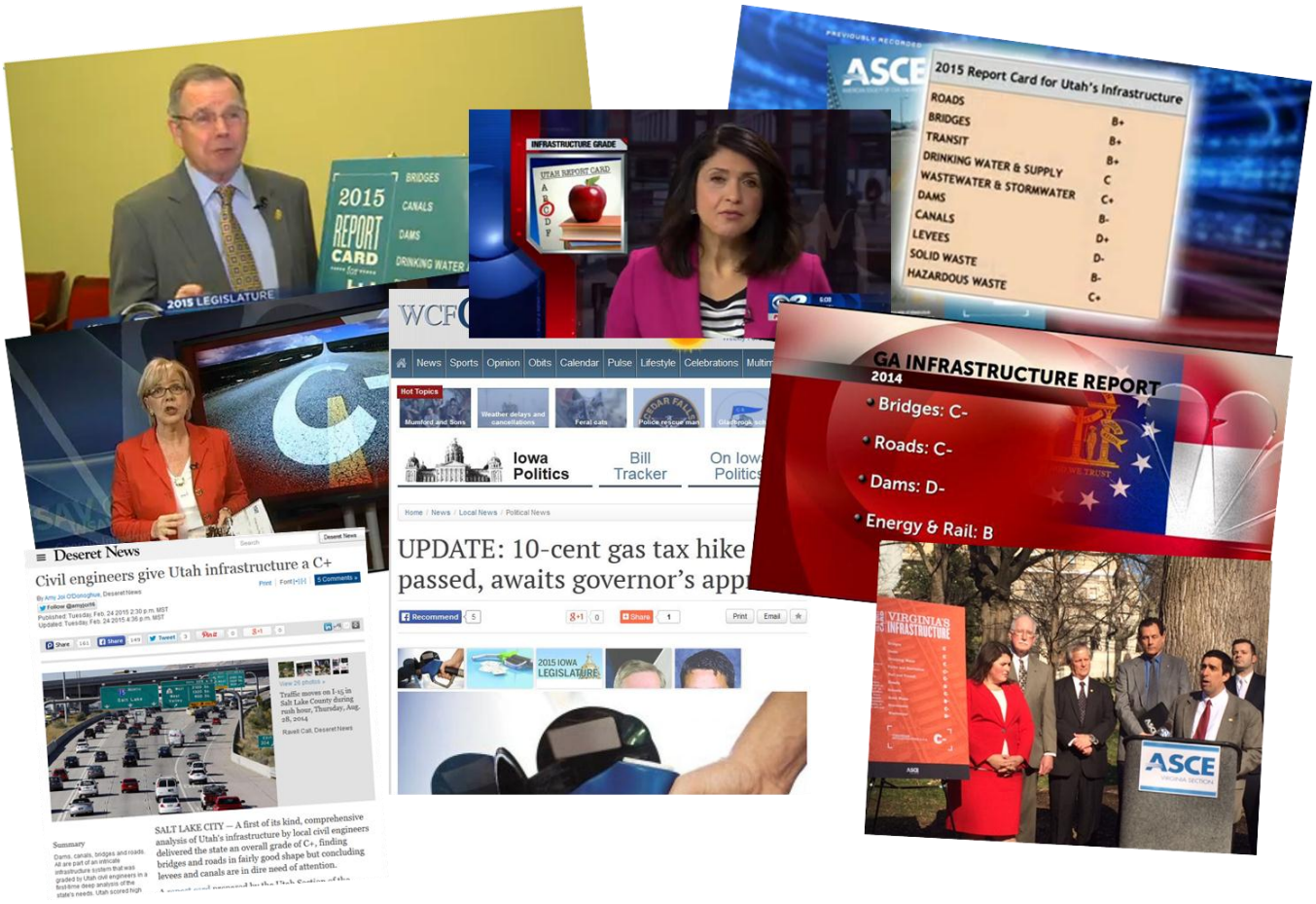
- Make the repair of structurally deficient urban bridges a top national priority through the implementation of a risk-based prioritization model.
- Increase annual investment levels for bridge repair, reconstruction, and renovation by approximately $8 billion annually from all levels of government, to a total annual funding level of $20.5 billion.

- Develop a national strategic plan for addressing the nation's structurally deficient and functionally obsolete bridges in the upcoming decades, including long-term transportation research in order to develop more resilient bridges.
- Set a national goal to decrease the number of just structurally deficient bridges to 8% by 2020 and decrease the percentage of the population driving over all deficient bridges by 75% by 2020.

Each subsequent Report Card can then analyze the impact those recommendations and policies (or lack thereof) had on the grade.

RELEASING YOUR REPORT CARD: PROMOTION AND MEDIA RELATIONS

The Report Card is only as successful as the impact it makes on policy makers, the informed public, and like-minded organizations that are all interested to know their community's infrastructure grade. As an advocacy document, if we fail to promote the Report Card effectively, then the grade becomes obsolete. ASCE and the state Report Card program have had tremendous success in the past, with governors, state legislatures, and high profile media outlets all covering ASCE's newest reports. A few examples:



ASCE State Media Assistance

ASCE staff will assist the Section Report Card Committee in developing an outreach plan aimed at reaching the Report Card's key audiences, including government leaders, opinion leaders, the media and the public. The plan will include:

- **Holding a media-oriented launch event.** The Report Card is a critical news story for your community. The grades and analysis are topical stories that most outlets will want to cover. In order to get the most coverage possible and to inform the public of the grades, we encourage Report Cards to be "launched" at a media-oriented event.
- **Targeting relevant media outlets.** ASCE has the capability to track and find reporters that are interested in infrastructure, transportation, and engineering. ASCE staff will compile a media list of interested reporters, increasing the likelihood of coverage. Staff will work with the Report Card Committee to tailor the media list to community interests.
- **Leveraging supportive groups.** Numerous local organizations/groups will be interested in your Report Card release. The Chamber of Commerce, transportation organizations, and local universities may all take interests in the grades. Leveraging their knowhow and resources allows the launch to expand even further.

Ask Stakeholder Groups to Help

- Statement in support on release day
- Would they submit an op-ed from a significant group or person?
- Provide release event speakers
- State lobbying staff support for legislative items
- Promote the Report Card in emails, link to it on their website, or share it at a meeting?
- Social media promotion

- **Drafting press materials.** A launch event requires a Media Advisory as well as a Press Release. ASCE Staff will help you in creating and distributing both documents. Staff will also assist in creating talking points, tough questions, and promotional materials for the Report Card release.
- **Pitching, releasing, and follow-up of press release.** The average reporter receives hundreds of releases per day. ASCE staff will pitch the Report Card releases, and follow-up with an reporters interested in interviewing ASCE members.

- **Media monitoring.** The Report Card launch serves as a good barometer for measuring your community's interests in infrastructure. By monitoring traditional and social media for Report Card mentions, we can see where there are opportunities for further engagement as well as diagnose any media outlets that may have missed the Report Card story.

How Does the Media Process Work?

How to Hold a Media-Oriented Launch Event

The press event releasing the Report Card should reflect the months of hard work your Section, Branch or Council invested in researching and developing the Report Card. The event should serve as a catalyst for action to improve or salute your community's infrastructure. Because the release is an excellent opportunity to deliver ASCE's message of revitalizing our nation's infrastructure, the Section, Branch or Council *must* begin to plan the event while the Report Card is still in development.

The event itself can be a number of things, as long as it is media friendly and reaches your audience. Suggestions for an appropriate event include:

- Releasing the Report Card at a road, intersection, bridge or some other infrastructure project;
- Presenting the Report Card on the steps of the state Capitol and then meeting with key representatives; or
- Releasing the Report Card at a breakfast meeting for state legislative representatives.

Release Event Logistics

Time and Location:

- Television and print reporters are more likely to attend an event if it is held mid-morning since most of their deadlines are in the afternoon.
- Hold your event in the middle of the week. Avoid Mondays and Fridays.
- Locate the event within close proximity to prominent local media outlets.

Made for TV:

- The media, particularly television, prefer covering events that have strong visual components. For example, releasing the Report Card at the local press club or hotel meeting room may be convenient, but unveiling it at a road that has been closed because it is in poor condition helps tell your story.
- When planning an event, keep in mind that every detail conveys your message. Consider creating an oversized Report Card and have it on display during your event.
- Keep in mind that you will need to make arrangements for audiovisual equipment such as microphones, podiums and a power supply, regardless of whether your event is held at the press club, a hotel or other location.

Invite Newsmakers to Participate:

- ASCE is not—in and of itself—a media draw.
- Inviting a governor, mayor, state legislator to participate in your event offers instant recognition and helps set your event apart from others that are competing for media coverage.

Make it Brief:

- When planning the news conference portion of your event, make sure that it lasts no longer than 20 minutes. Much like the general public, the media has a very short attention span.
- For television and print media, the news conference allows them to get the sound bite quotes they need for their story, so the information needs to be concise and direct. The bulk of the background should be contained in press packets
- If you are having more than one speaker address the audience, their remarks should be short, to the point and coordinated so as not to be repetitive.

Developing Media Tools

ASCE's state media staff will help you with developing media outreach tools. These tools can include media advisories, press releases, fact sheets, op-eds and press kits.

- **Media Advisory.** A media advisory is an invite to the launch event sent to relevant media. It contains the Who, What, Where, When and Why for the event and is no longer than one page. ASCE

What Goes in a Media Kit?

- Media Advisory
- Media Release
- Full copy of the Report Card
- Event Speaker Bios
- About ASCE and ASCE Section
- Report Card Spokespeople and Contact Information
- Optional: Elected Officials' Contact Press Information

National will work with the Section/Branch to create media lists, distribute the release, and promote the event.

- **Press Release.** A press release is issued the day of the event. It includes all of the information a reporter would want in any news story. ASCE staff will work with the Section/Branch to write, distribute and promote the release.
- **Op-eds.** An op-ed allows ASCE members to continue to the Report Card message by writing pointed, informed commentary to targeted outlets. Particularly, if there is an urgent community issue that is related to the Report Card, op-eds are a great way to use the Report Card launch as an advocacy tool.
- **Press Kits.** Packets of information distributed at a news conference. The packet typically consists of a news release, the complete Report Card, and spokesperson bios.

Steps to Successful Report Card Communications

Unfortunately, ASCE does not control the news cycle. As such, ASCE staff has a robust media monitoring effort that allows them to track media coverage of the Report Card, infrastructure issues, and state legislation. Using these monitoring tools, ASCE staff can find opportunities for further engagement and promote the Report Card long after its release. However, there are a number of things you can do at the local level to stay informed:

Read the newspaper, news websites, and monitor social media in your community. ASCE staff are simply not as connected to the community as Section members. If there are opportunities for engagement and Report Card promotion, please let ASCE staff know and we'll provide assitance.

Follow local legislation and policy. If transportation legislation is introduced, or your mayor is seeking funds for a new wastewater treatment plant—these are perfect opportunities to promote the Report Card.

Become a Key Contact. The Key Contact program is ASCE's advocacy network of members willing to engage with elected leaders on critical issues in government that affect civil engineers. ASCE members can sign up to be a Key Contact, and receive up-to-date information and key alerts on pending legislation in your community.

Pre-Release Day Musts

- Keep your Section and Region leadership in the loop on your plans!!!!
- Meet with the most important officials who worked with you just before the release to:
  1. Remind them the Report Card they helped with is coming,
  2. Share a confidential copy (without grades!) and
  3. Ask for their support with the media
- Remind your team to save the date and send a big THANK YOU on release day
- Draft an email with the Report Card to your family and friends to send on release day

OUTREACH: MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR REPORT CARD

Outreach is the Most Important Part of Your Report Card Effort

The Report Card is only as successful as the impact it makes. While great research and a successful release event are critical accomplishments, these achievements only last as long as the daily news cycle. In order for the Report Card to truly be deemed a success, ASCE Sections/Branches must reach out to public leaders and encourage action on local infrastructure issues.

Why Is Outreach So Important?

If no one knows about the Report Card, how can it be effective? By telling someone about the Report Card, you share that there's a problem, and most reasonable people will then ask you – **how can we solve this?** If we don't reach out to legislators and the public, they may not know there's an infrastructure problem they need to

Get an Outreach Team Onboard

In order to have an effective Report Card, your Section or Branch must put a plan in place to promote the Report Card and have a dedicated group of members who can help with outreach after the Report Card release.

- Send a copy of the Report Card to the governor, mayor, state legislators, planning commissions, local council members (city or county), and other government officials along with a legislative letter explaining the results.
- Invite your local elected officials to a Section, Branch or Council meeting to discuss your findings and the infrastructure needs in your area.
- Set up meetings with individual legislators, particularly those who are on the relevant state legislative Committees to openly discuss your findings.
- Write "issue briefs" — one- to two-page summaries of your findings — on each infrastructure area that was graded in your Report Card and distribute them along with the Report Card to government officials as well as to the media.
- Ask your legislator to write an op-ed on the Report Card highlighting the findings and offer to help him or her draft it.

Your Outreach Audience

Outreach should be targeted towards those who are not necessarily familiar with infrastructure and who can help influence current events. Here are several groups that should be considered:

- Media
- State Legislative Leadership
- Federal Legislative Leadership
- Local Leadership
- Business Leaders
- Opinion Leaders
- Public at Large
- Voters

- Volunteer Leaders

How the All ASCE Members Can Help

While the Report Card Committee has done the majority of the work to put the Report Card together, **outreach is the job of every member of the Section**. Outreach can be done by any ASCE member once they've read the Report Card and have some instructions. Here are the three basic outreach tasks that every local ASCE member should be asked to do:

1. Sending out an announcement email to colleagues about the Report Card with the link or hosting a brownbag session at their office; the Report Card committee can provide a base announcement that can be personalize and sending this email shouldn't take more than half an hour.
2. Using the ASCE Key Contact alerts send the Report Card to your federal and state elected officials; it only takes 5 minutes.
3. Attend the ASCE or coalition state or local legislative day to help promote legislation that will raise the grades; this is usually one day per year.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS AVAILABLE FROM ASCE

- **Budget Guidance Document**
- **Design Templates Package**
- **Sample Report Card Media Materials**
- **Release Event Supply List**
- **PR University Application**
- **Sample Outreach Materials**
- **Key Preparation Questions for the Report Card Media Contact**
- **Template Letter for Requesting a Meeting with a State Agency**
- **Outreach Plan Template**

Don't see what you're looking for? We may have something similar so just ask!

ASCE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS STAFF CONTACTS

Below are a series of contacts that can help you with various aspects of your Report Card.

Brittney Kohler –Infrastructure Initiatives
- bkohler@asce.org
- 202-789-7854

Emily Feenstra – Infrastructure Initiatives
- efeenstra@asce.org
- 202-789-7851

Aaron Castelo - State Legislative Activities
- acastelo@asce.org
- 202-789-7855

Maria Matthews – State Legislative Activities
- mmatthews@asce.org
- 202-789-7845

Becky Moylan – State Media
- bmoylan@asce.org
- 202-789-7853

Download the full Report Card to
your tablet and smartphone at
www.infrastructurereportcard.org

ASCE
AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS

World Headquarters
1801 Alexander Bell Drive
Reston, Virginia 20191

Washington Office
101 Constitution Avenue, NW
Suite 375 East
Washington, DC 20001

202/789-7850
202/789-7859 FAX

reportcard@asce.org
www.infrastructurereportcard.org

ASCE Social Media

www.facebook.com/SaveUSAInfrastructure

www.twitter.com/ASCEGovRel

http://blogs.asce.org/govrel