7 TIPS

To Strengthen Voter Education Programs

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission has collaborated with local election officials to develop a series of helpful tips for election management. This series provides tips and suggests best practices to help you run efficient and effective elections.

Voter education programs impact voter turnout. Well-planned programs can motivate and encourage citizens to participate in the voting process. Try these seven tips to help strengthen your voter education efforts.

1 Understand Your Voters

Use data to guide your approach to planning voter education efforts. The more you know about your voters, the more effective your approach will be.

Gain insight into voters by gathering and reviewing data from past elections on:

- Undervotes.
- Spoiled ballots.
- Errors on provisional ballots.
- Absentee voting by precinct.

REMEMBER

Different voters have different learning styles. Understand how to best reach your voting public—

- Web site.
- Social media.
- Print.
- Radio.
- TV.
- In person.

Quick Clicks

Voter satisfaction survey example:
www.bernco.gov/clerk/

Voter education Web site example:
http://vote.minneapolismn.gov

2 Keep Your Web Site Current

Review and evaluate your Web site frequently. Keep it fresh and accessible.

Elements that can make Web sites user friendly:

- Create a clean, simple, visually appealing presentation. Avoid crowding content with too many graphics and photographs.
- Write in plain language.
- Create a prominent front-page link to frequently asked questions (FAQs).
- Highlight the FAQs of most interest to voters.

Tip 2 *continued*

- Include registration requirements, polling locations, and early and absentee voting in the FAQ section.

- Highlight any new laws or information that affect voters.

- Post a simple version of your operations calendar that includes deadlines and dates of specific interest to voters.

- Link to sites that offer thorough explanations about complex topics specific to various types of voters.

- Include a directory of election officials.

- Provide contact information for your help desk.

- Link to candidate and political party Web sites if your statutes permit doing so.

- Ask nonpartisan civic and advocacy groups, schools, and colleges or universities to link to your Web site.

- Create a "press kit" for media. Include press releases, social media posts, stock photos, and any videos you have about election preparation activities.

- Link to historical data on turnout trends and on registration.

- Publicize your voter education activities. Invite the media to attend.

- Use adaptive communications tools, such as enhanced fonts and audio formats of all materials for visually impaired voters.

- Create TTY formats of all materials for hearing-impaired voters.

- Make all information on your Web site available to minority language groups in your jurisdictions and provide written and audio translations.

- Consider hiring a Web design firm to evaluate your site's usability.

Quick Clicks

Online voter pamphlet example:
www.votescount.com

FAQ examples:
http://elect.hamiltontn.gov/citizen/default.htm

www.santafecountynm.gov/clerk

www.elections.saccounty.net

Additional information about the effective use of Web sites:
www.ocvote.com

http://jackson.mi.us/countyclerksoffice/

www.hendryelections.org

Online voter data request example:
www.electionsonthe.net/oh/clark/

Example press kit:
www.browardsoe.org

Example links to candidate information:
www.madisonvotes.com/candidates.shtml

www.bayvotes.org

Links to proposed voter legislation:
www.bentonelections.com

Minority language accessibility on the Web example:
www.harrisvotes.com

Historical election data examples:
www.washoecounty.us/voters/election04info.htm

www.co.benton.or.us/elections/archives.php

REMEMBER ⬇

Update your Web site frequently. Assign a knowledgeable staff member to be your online manager.

3 Try Social Media As an Education Tool

Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, mobile apps, and e-mail can help you reach young and first-time voters.

Tips for using social media:

- An effective social media site requires a significant time commitment from staff but offers substantial cost savings over traditional media methods.

- Dedicate knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff to listen and respond appropriately to direct voter questions and comments.

- Develop an electronic "I Voted" sticker for Facebook pages. Encourage followers to use it and contact their followers on election day.

- Ask nonpartisan civic and advocacy groups, schools, and colleges or universities to include a link on their Web sites to follow your office on Facebook and Twitter.

REMEMBER ⬇

A recent Pew Research Center survey found that 92 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds use social media and networking sites regularly and actively. The numbers will go up for all age groups.

4 Rely On a Variety of Media

Many voters will retain information best when it comes from print, TV, radio, or advertising.

Keys to reaching voters who rely on more traditional outlets:

- Encourage local media to devote prominent coverage to your voter education events. Issue frequent press releases and ask local newspapers to print your voter guide as an insert.

- Contact your local radio, television, and public broadcast stations to arrange public service announcements on timely topics of interest to voters.

- Consider using educational billboards or partnering with public transportation officials to place signs on public transportation.

- Consult local utility companies and government offices about placing voter education inserts into their regular mailings.

- Issue routine mailings in several languages of voter informational brochures, palm cards, or bookmarks.

- Solicit advice from your state's disability advocacy office and from organizations that represent disabled citizens about how best to reach disabled citizens.

REMEMBER

A comprehensive and effective voter education effort reaches rural voters, senior citizens, and minority language speakers.

- Get input from tribal governors and from minority voter and minority language advocacy groups on appropriate methods for providing voter education in culturally relevant formats.

5 Give Voters Personal Attention

Keep current on all election laws, dates, and procedures to best help voters who contact your office directly.

How to assist voters with personal interactions:

- Assign knowledgeable staff members to help voters who visit your office in person.

- Keep voter education brochures, palm cards, and bookmarks updated, available, and prominently displayed in your office.

- Establish a community outreach program for civic groups, senior centers, and retirement homes.

- Arrange to visit senior centers with registration forms, educational brochures, election calendars, and voting system demonstrations.

- Develop programs at long-term care facilities that help the residents remain engaged and keep their voter registration information current.

- Partner with local business and trade organizations, government offices, and nonpartisan advocacy groups.

- Update your operations calendar and review your procedures continuously.

REMEMBER

Reach out to organizations early in the election cycle.

- Intensify voter education efforts in the months before an election.
- Contact groups and offer to attend meetings as a guest speaker.

- Offer to help schools, colleges, and universities conduct mock elections.

- Volunteer as a guest speaker during voter registration drives. Offer your voting equipment, privacy booths, and troubleshooters for demonstrations.

- Partner with nonpartisan voter groups to sponsor voter education events at your office.

- Consider temporary satellite offices that offer voter information and services in the weeks before registration closes.

- Use a mobile office to visit high-traffic areas such as shopping malls, senior centers, libraries, and colleges before each election.

6 Create a Voter "Toolkit"

Toolkits contain essential information for voters in your jurisdiction.

What to include in the voter toolkit:

- Information on how to register and deadlines.

- Voter identification requirements.

Tip 6 *continued*

- Voting dates, hours, and times.
- Sample ballots.
- A voter guide.
- Absentee and vote-by-mail options.
- Assistance available to voters at the polls.
- Contact information for your help desk and staff.
- Your Web site address.
- Your Facebook and Twitter account names.

REMEMBER ⬇

Each election is unique. In your toolkit, account for consolidated-precinct, local, state, and national elections.

Quick Click

Voter toolkit example:
www.miamidade.gov/elections/

7 Coordinate Education Across Platforms

You can deliver many voter education tools in several different formats.

Tips for reaching as many voters as possible:

- Provide your voter toolkit on-line and in brochure format.
- Deliver regular newsletters featuring timely articles and voter-relevant deadlines via print, e-mail, social media, and mobile app.
- Remind voters of upcoming dates via e-mail, Twitter and Facebook posts, and mailings.
- Provide electoral district maps and maps with driving directions to polling places on your Web site through mobile apps. Link to mapping software on all plat-forms.
- Offer demonstration or educa-tional videos on how to vote, how to use technology, and how your office makes the election results secure and accurate. Upload these presen-tations to YouTube and other electronic outlets.

Quick Clicks

Election app example:
http://www.longbeach.gov/cityclerk/elections/

Facebook, Twitter, and e-newsletter example:
www.hernandovotes.com

Voting system and paper ballot demonstrations on the Web:
www.mohavecounty.us/ContentPage.aspx?id=118

www.hancockboardofelections.com

www.scottcountyiowa.com/auditor/your_ballot.php

Previous EAC Quick Start Guides:
http://www.eac.gov/assets/1/workflow_staging/Page/247.PDF

http://www.eac.gov/assets/1/AssetManager/Quick%20Start-Serving%20Voters%20in%20Long-Term%20Care%20Facilities.pdf

REMEMBER ⬇

Use mobile apps to announce wait times at vote centers and early voting sites.