

VCA Debrief Notes

Section 1: Public Education

How can we better promote early voting?

- San Mateo had a huge success with their 29-day vote center at a local YMCA. People could drop off their ballot as they worked out/dropped kids off etc.
 - Interest in promoting early voting at convenient vote centers like these in the future.
- Do a social media campaign that highlights the idea of #whywaitinline
- Have signage outside vote centers in advance; “Vote from __ to November 8th”
- Establish vote centers in accessible areas such as supermarkets so it’s easier to reach people and encourage them to vote earlier.
- Advocates should figure out incentives for messaging around early voting. As an example, they could talk about how voting early will remove you from campaign mailers and calls.
- People should avoid giving the impression that votes by mail, provisional, or CVR ballots won’t be counted.
- Another incentive to vote or return your ballot early could be having your vote reported in the first vote totals of the night.
- “What’s your plan to cast your vote?” is great messaging and should take center stage for November.

How can we better utilize social media?

- Social media training for all county elections offices, teach them how to use the platforms, but also give them ideas for culturally relevant content – people aren’t going to respond to a boring piece of content.
- Create Facebook and Instagram ads that include some kind of an action for people to take: fill out a volunteer poll worker form, register to vote online, submit ideas for voter center locations, etc.
- Actively manage Instagram accounts by following local influencers and commenting on other page’s content.
- Enlist the help of college students and let them have a bit of creative freedom: elections should be presented in a fun, funny, and culturally relevant way so more people can relate to the message and be open to participating.
- San Mateo mentioned that they had a hard time securing PSA’s on local radio stations in San Mateo County.
- Nevada County focused on print and radio advertisements.
- Focus on op-eds in local newspapers to drive media coverage.
- San Mateo is creating a new website with resources just for the November Election called smc.vote which they will link to on their website.

- This website will have simple, basic, easy to understand info about how elections have changed and what to expect for November.
- Nevada likes this idea and wants to do the same.
- Big takeaways from this question were increasing radio & TV coverage and expanding social media outreach efforts.
- Shouldn't depend on one social media platform. For better results and greater exposure it is best if multiple are used.
- Social media may be over-emphasized as a way to reach voters. It's probably grasstops at best, and more realistically is just filled with insiders. Breaking through to the population on social media will take a lot more effort.

How can we improve education for voters with traditionally low participation rates?

- First identify communities that have low rates of engagement (by age, race, ethnicity etc.).
- Create public service announcements.
- Update websites with information regularly.
- Create social media campaigns that have a personal relatable narrative.
- Partner with trusted organizations (ex: make sure ballots aren't just translated in another language, but that they make sense).
- Putting up advertisements in paratransit shuttles and educating the staff.
- Also putting up flyers in accessibility shuttles to reach out to parts of the population that may not have easy access to information.
- Consider distributing information by a trusted source & in the voter's language
 - ei. Planned Parenthood.
 - they had posted flyers, and handed out rack sheets when patients checked in.
- place of worship is another trusted source of information
- Workshops
 - **issue**
 - those who participated were not from the county
 - extremely low turn out
 - don't work
 - Suggestions
 - attending already established events
 - Tabling or doing a short presentation (with a local community figure that people trust).
 - Elections office provides the materials and information to local community organizations that will in turn be doing the outreach to the community.
- target schools and afterschool programs
 - educate students about elections
 - mock elections
 - city partnerships with student body

- Counties should promote VCA education based on their needs, what is most effective for that county, but should still somewhat follow a unified message. The state should take the lead and become involved. Other types of information:
 - Postcards
 - Flyers
 - Apps
 - Mass text messages to registered or all voters
 - Opt-in or Non-opt in
- Establish an Education Advisory Committee in all VCA counties. Similar to VAAC and LAAC.

How can we improve our messaging?

- People looking for information about how to register to vote, how to vote, and for candidate information should also be able to easily find information about the VCA. We should get information about VCA onto pages where these other things are happening.
- Better eye catching posters that move away from the VCA, CVR, VRC etc., and start doing posters and flyers that are specific to certain ways of voting: “do you vote by in person? There are changes and this is what you should know!”
- Be sure to mention that polling places have been replaced by Vote Centers.
- The saying early voting needs to be changed to weekend voting or extended voting because some people might hear the original phrase and won’t want to come in and vote because they believe they need more time.
- Work/partner with local community based organizations to get their input on outreach and event ideas.
- Host events in the community where people more naturally congregate: parks, community centers, sports fields.
 - Doing a better job of targeting young voters and high school students by going into schools and pre-registering students more often
 - Giving kids materials to give to their parents about voting
 - Digital Adds.
 - consider which platforms reach different audiences
 - ei, Snap chat for younger audiences
- Keep language simple and to the point
- Idea for messaging: “Do you have questions about voting? Here are some answers...”
- Idea: #WhyWaitInLine?
- Texting to get out the word.
- Pinpointing local influencers in each county.
- Government websites need to be more accessible
 - some are in dire need of updates
 - difficult to find information (again one must consider the mindset of the voter)
- Host focus groups to figure out what resonates with the voter.

- Create a social media team that is in charge of disseminating proper voting information, voting opportunities, and announcing when the vote gets certified.
- Use PSA videos to clarify the differences amongst vote by mail, drop box, and vote centers. There also needs to be increased communication amongst the counties and a more unified message.
- Community groups could use additional information about timelines surrounding the election.

How can we improve education for voters with disabilities?

- Contact disability organizations or human/health services, and learn how they interact with this population.
- Create partnerships with these organizations.
- Improving voting experience: using technology at vote centers (through Inclusion Solutions).
- RAVB?? What is that? We need to oversimplify our acronyms.

How can we improve our educational materials?

- Get people to have a say in the materials that are sent out to them.
- Materials should be more engaging.
- Less text and more visuals/images to express information.
- Make wording more inviting and decipherable.

How can coordinate and track each other's activities?

- Work with neighboring and bordering counties
- SOS should have a centralized set of documents that can later be disseminated to counties for them to use (counties will just have to change name etc.).
 - These already can be accessed at SOS VCA website.
- Tailor messages to certain communities.

Section 2: Vote Center and Drop Box Experience

How can we improve the experience of voters dropping off their ballot?

- Nevada had a lot of success with dropboxes stationed at grocery stores. They chained the box outside and had it under camera surveillance. Plus, all grocery stores are ADA accessible so they recommend expanding dropbox locations at grocery stores.
- Wondering if SOS could reach out to more grocery store chains to place dropboxes outside as they had difficulties doing this.

- Need to extend dropbox hours to 8 p.m. instead of 5 p.m. especially for Sacramento County.
- Want dropboxes to be available 24/7.
- *[Issue]* voters do not read signs; we need to make them bigger and brighter for Dropboxes.
- Vote Center Drive-through
- Control the way the line move.
- Understand that check-in was a *Bottle-Neck* at vote centers.
 - Improve the training.
 - Have 3 different check –ins that do the whole process in a single place, rather than having different VC worker handling different processes for the same voter:
 - e.i. One person checks voter in, one person verifies, one person prints the ballot, one person hands out the ballot, etc. One person should be doing everything for a single voter.

How can we streamline the flow of voters?

- Signage
 - improve visibility of posters so rather than having the sign flat on the table poll workers can prop the signs up so that it is standing
 - include multiple languages
- Assign a greeter or line monitor
 - consider having someone who is solely responsible for collecting the ballots which eliminates the possibility that people are in line just to turn in their ballot
- Different lines for CVR, Drop-off, and Voting
- Bilingual Services
- Colorado had greeters posted at their vote centers. Drop boxes were placed outside of vote centers to avoid people getting in line just to drop a ballot. The density of the population correlated strongly to the line length in CO.
- Voter registration list maintenance was also the single most import task that reduced line for Colorado. If the list was up to date it made check-in at vote centers significantly faster.
- There seemed to be long lines due to misunderstandings of voters about where to go to drop off ballots at vote centers and this clogged the lines for people who were there to cast their ballots.
- Have single day vote center workers/volunteers that are bilingual and can direct traffic.

How can we improve the experience of in-person voters?

- Solicit feedback from voters on Election Day and ask them what we can do to make the vote center more accessible

- Madera wants to create a “Super Vote Center” at their highest traffic location with extra staff and materials.
- Biggest takeaway from this section was staggering vote center staff and building up staff on Election Day.
- Need to increase staff on Election Day.
- Madera had great success with pre-printing out ballots in the three languages of their county and having them available for voters who needed them.
- Most signage was in English.
- Need to increase the number of bilingual workers.
- Confusion over the time of vote centers and how long they would be open needs to be addressed.
- Times at drop box locations need to be uniform and if possible 24 hour drop-box locations.
- There needs to be more vote centers and drop box locations for minorities such as family centers.
- Drop box location that are effective:
 - Grocery Stores (Nevada County): Also a source of advertisement as the grocery store gave out flyers to customers
 - Use libraries in all counties.
- Have adequate parking and professional staff.
- Workers that are bilingual should be more clearly marked.

How can we recruit bilingual workers?

- Using temp agency to find people with both language skills and basic tech savvy skills.
- Using paid ads.
- Use/ hand out pamphlets.
- Work with college students (ex: integrate as part of their curriculum, get them to volunteer).
- Meet with people in person to help them get through the application process.
- Ask High school students and churches to volunteer
- Must be done by leaders or groups from the community who have no political agenda and are trusted by the people
 - ex: Urban league
 - the people they serve do not trust the government but they do trust the organization

How can we promote same day registration?

- Make same-day registration its own message.
- Instead of looping it within the vote center language, give same day registration its own flyer and explanation.
- Also, simplify the language around same day registration; avoid using CVR so voters can easily understand.

- Use colleges for vote centers and create advertisements for same day registration

How can we improve voter awareness of early voting locations and drop boxes?

- Signage, large feather signs
- Having donuts and coffee for morning early voters
- Google Maps notifications and icons for early voting locations and drop box locations. Google can send a banner notification to all people who have the app to let them know that they can find their early voting location and drop off sites easily.
- Extend vote center hours on weekends and have vote centers in populated, non-intimidating areas
- Putting up a list of nearby vote centers at vote centers in case there are lines/someone forgot their ballot.
- Disseminate information to neighborhoods/community vote centers in the immediate area.
- SOS should consider a statutory change to the VCA to make it the mandatory voting system for all counties in order to reduce confusion for voters
- Better communication with community organization in developing new vote centers.
- Reminding people they can vote at any vote center location is something that should be focused on since this is a new concept for people.
- Highlighting where people are comfortable going to increase turn out of the vote centers
 - city hall (some people are comfortable while others are intimidated by the building)
 - ideal locations are places people already frequent
 - community centers
 - Libraries
 - urban centers

How can we better utilize signage inside vote centers?

- Have clear signage that indicates the different services that are offered so lines don't get long
- Make sure poll workers talk to everyone that's waiting in line so they can direct them to the proper service

How can we better utilize signage outside of vote centers?

- Big, bright feather style signs outside of vote centers
- One group from San Mateo reported that they went to former polling places and put up posters with the addresses of vote centers. They believe this was well received and encouraged this to happen in other counties.

Section 3: Community Collaboration

How can we collaborate for more resources?

- Create coalitions and work together.
- Work on translation activities.
- Within coalitions, have subcommittees
- Collaborate with other VCA counties, and use each other's resources (share materials).
- Want a best practices database to pull messaging and materials from.
- Need to redesign flyers with easier to understand messaging.
- Want more consistent messaging across the board.
- Nevada County needs to build stronger ties with the community for education and outreach.
- Use partnerships with other organizations to reach out to different groups and organization like AARP.
- Create hubs of local leaders who can promote voting during the election period
- Ensure the resources on government websites are up to date
- Attending events and doing a presentation or tabling.
- Share information and best practices more regularly between counties.
- Suggested that there be a community survey about vote center location, usability, and convenience. Could cross reference this to usage data.
- There could be voting parties, especially with youth and young adult focus.

How can we improve LAAC's/VAAC's

- Active membership
- Assign co-chairs
- Send out agenda ahead of time. To allow members to make any changes if necessary. Community groups can also create an agenda of topics they would like to address and send them to the committee.
- Creating a joint calendar.
- *[issue]* Inconsistent attendance from community organizations.
- Invite other groups instead of expecting them to come and show up.
- Penetrate smaller communities and increase awareness of LAAC's.
- Have a glossary or document of words to use for VCA flyers.
- Run Facebook ads in different languages.
- Host cultural events to get more people to participate in order to build a relationship with the community.

How can we promote Adopt-A-Vote Center?

- Include the task force in the Adopt a VC project to communicate and work together.
- Need to establish a clear set of rules.
 - Example: Host must be non-partisan.
- In collaboration with counties, the SOS can identify other organizations and clubhouses.
- Use of billboards to let voters know that they are a vote center.
- Using community colleges as voter centers.
- Reach out to community organizations such as churches or local parks.
- Maybe consider a different messaging, not “adopting” a vote center. Maybe “promoting” a location? Also, really consider avoiding partisan affiliated groups.
- California Association of Non-Profits has great guides on how groups, even those not focused on civic engagement, can incorporate voting messaging into their mission without risking mission creep.
- Majority of attendees demonstrated interest in seeing the guidelines for the adopt-a-center program.
- May need to be sensitive to messaging of this program to groups that feel like they are already stretched for resources.