

Introduction

Recruiting, training and fielding an effective and confident workforce of Election Day workers – who in Maryland are called “Election Judges” - is a tremendous challenge. The Montgomery County Board of Elections is always looking for ways to improve its program. Over the last few elections, we have evolved a Precinct Performance Report that delivers the following benefits:

- Provides clear feedback and accountability for precinct teams on what they did well and where they need to improve;
- Communicates the importance of accurate performance and the Board of Elections’ commitment to meeting high standards;
- Informs election judges of how their precinct’s performance compared to their peers;
- Identifies opportunities of improvement in each precinct;
- Specifically identifies precincts where recruiters need to focus their attention;
- Highlights opportunities for global improvement in the training curriculum;
- Eliminates assumptions about precincts’ weakness and strengths and illustrates where the source of an issue may be found;
- Provides information to all workers, not just those in a leadership role in each precinct, giving all workers the information necessary to understand the importance of their roles and the overall performance of their entire team.

Evolution of the Program

The Montgomery County Board of Elections trains more than 4,000 Election Judges who work at more than 280 polling places on Election Day. In 2008, we re-engineered our training program, hiring more temporary staff to serve as trainers, and moved away from strict lecture style classes to hands-on proficiency classes with multiple trainers at each training session. It was readily apparent that these changes increased the overall skill level of our Election Judges and reduced errors. However, to supplement and increase the knowledge of the training staff and to measure the effectiveness of the training, we tasked our training staff with assisting the warehouse personnel in unpacking the precinct supplies after the election. During this process the training staff noted any abnormalities, such as documents not completed, not completed properly, or returned in the wrong location. The results were used internally to tweak the training presentations and materials.

Following the 2010 general election, although overall performance had increased, we still saw patterns of problems in specific precincts. Typically, the judges in these precincts had worked for multiple elections and were successfully completing training, but there were gaps in their knowledge or perception of what they were supposed to do that were hindering their success on Election Day.

To develop a comprehensive picture of each precinct’s Election Day performance, we formalized our review procedure and created the Precinct Performance Report. This assessment was intended to provide critical data so that we could better document and visualize which precincts need attention and those areas where multiple precincts are underperforming, to improve our training program.

The Precinct Performance Report charts each precinct’s success or failure at meeting established performance standards and goals. Since the data is precinct-specific, it clearly distinguishes between issues that face all or most precincts and those issues that are specific to one or a few precincts. The report is also a great motivational tool as judges use the data to improve their precinct rating each successive election.

The report is compiled in two phases which takes a team of six trainers two weeks to complete. During the first phase, the training staff gather data during the unpacking of the precinct supplies from a variety of reports and logs related to the voting equipment, provisional voting, and other paperwork that must be completed on Election Day. During the second phase, the trainers prepare a detailed

assessment on each precinct based on that data, a review of the precinct's Roamer Report and an appraisal of any other complaints or feedback. Each precinct receives a ranking based on the number of errors (out of a total of 36 assessment areas listed on the report):

- Outstanding (0 errors)
- Excellent (1-4)
- Good (5-8)
- Fair (9-11)
- Needs Improvement (12-15) and
- Unsatisfactory (15+).

In addition, we prepare a Precinct Performance Summary Report that shows overall rankings for each precinct. After the election has been certified and both reports have been completed – approximately eight weeks after the election – each Election Judge is mailed copies of both reports. This provides feedback to all workers, not just those in a leadership role in each precinct, to understand how their precinct performed and how their performance rated in comparison with others in the county.

Although we provide the information to all Election Judges, we hold the Chief Judges – Maryland law requires two for each precinct, each with a different political party affiliation – responsible for their precinct's rating. Those whose precincts receive a rating of Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory are not permitted to serve as Chief Judges again, unless they successfully complete a remedial training class where they meet individually with a trainer and discuss their precinct's performance issues. When a precinct receives a ranking of Outstanding, they are recognized at our annual Election Judge appreciation event, receive a certificate from the County Executive and are featured on our website.

Results

The Precinct Performance Report is an invaluable tool to evaluate and develop election judge performance and to ultimately improve the voters' experience at the polls. As a result of the data we've gathered, we have developed specialized and targeted training for Chief Judges in poorly performing precincts to assist them in recognizing and correcting mistakes. We have also changed our training program where we have identified errors across several precincts or identified that Chief Election Judges who attended a particular class or type of training share a common weakness. Recruiters also find that the report is helpful, used along with peer evaluations and voter feedback, to evaluate the performance of individual Election Judges. The information is used to identify issues for further investigation, for future assignments, and to assign workers to remedial training classes where appropriate, to ensure that each team is staffed with a knowledgeable and well prepared team.

As we have gathered consistent data from election to election, we have also begun comparing performance from election to election and tracking the effects of staffing and training changes. The information also assists us in looking further into the specific circumstances where problems occur, including looking beyond staffing and training into other factors in the polling place such as changes in voting demographics, a change in the peak turn-out times or a new polling place layout.

It has also improved awareness among the Election Judges of what we expect of them and improved their capabilities and their confidence, which is known to also have a positive effect on voter confidence. Election Judges, who did not previously receive clear feedback on their precinct's overall election success or failure, are now able to use the report to improve their performance for the next election. They are now able to identify specific areas that require improvement, so that they can pay more attention to those areas in training and perform better for the next election.

Copies of a Precinct Performance Report, an Election Summary Report and a comparison of summary reports for recent elections are attached to this submission.