



9 TIPS

To Manage the Voting Process Better

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.

How you manage the voting process directly impacts how easily voters in your district can cast their ballots. The voting process begins months before the first ballot is cast. Here are nine tips to help you improve the process.



1 Develop an Operations Calendar

Your operations calendar is an essential tool in managing each election.

What to include on your calendar:

- Federal and State statutory deadlines.
- Deadlines for administrative tasks such as ballot proofing and document filing.
- Deadlines for staff responsibilities.
- Deadlines that impact other departments involved with elections in your jurisdiction such as information technology and polling place managers.
- Deadlines affecting the vendors of your voting systems, ballot-printing equipment, and e-poll books.
- Deadlines for recruiting poll workers—including minority language speakers and other skill sets necessary for the particular type of election.
- Dates for your training schedule and training locations.
- Dates affecting your voter education efforts, such as updating your Web page, using social media to educate, or meeting print media deadlines.
- Dates for collecting election data.

Be sure to allow for contingencies caused by litigation.

REMEMBER



Recent changes to the voting process offer administrators more opportunities to—

- Observe voting patterns.
- Evaluate polling locations.
- Collect data to improve voting administration.
- Expand the elective franchise in the community.

Quick Clicks

Operations calendar example:
<http://www.nmclerks.org/>

Checklist example:
<http://electioncenter.org/checklists.html>

Military and overseas deadlines:
<http://fvap.gov>






2 Collect, Analyze, and Harness Statistics

Statistical data can help you plan and manage elections.

Suggestions for using voter turnout and other types of election data:

- Estimate your need for ballots, provisional ballots, and supplies based on previous voting patterns.
- Determine the number and expertise of staff needed for each polling place.
- Predict turnout at early voting sites, vote centers, election day polling places, and consolidated polling places. Use GIS (Geographic Information System) data on traffic, public transportation, and population to evaluate polling sites.
- Set benchmarks for expected performance and evaluate areas that need more attention.
- Use absentee voting data to evaluate your daily absentee ballot process.
- Evaluate the length of the ballot, multipage ballots, and the type of voting system used. Also consider the number of questions and offices on your ballot. Use these data to determine how long it takes voters to complete their ballots.

REMEMBER 

For each type of election, collect data on per-vote costs and use that data to obtain funding.

Quick Clicks

How to write instructions:
<http://civicdesigning.org/fieldguides/>

Accessible voting information:
<http://www.accessiblevoting.org/>

- Data from e-poll books and voting systems can help determine the number of voters processed per minute, per hour, and per day.
- Incident report data and poll worker feedback from previous elections can help you determine where staffing and other problems might occur.

3 Meet With Stakeholders


Regular meetings with stakeholders make everyone's voice heard.

Stakeholders can provide valuable information:

- To accommodate voters with disabilities, involve disability advocacy organizations to help evaluate polling places to ensure they are set up to meet ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requirements.
- Updates about get-out-the-vote activities that can affect voter flow at polling places may be

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Disability etiquette guide:
<http://www.unitedspinal.org/pdf/DisabilityEtiquette.pdf>

REMEMBER 

You can ensure the better allocation of resources when you plan and coordinate with other government departments and with the vendors of your voting systems.

available from political parties, candidates, and nonpartisan voter advocacy groups.

- Assistance with multilingual translations at polling places may be available from representatives of minority language-speaking organizations.
- To streamline traffic control during peak voting ask for assistance from local law enforcement.

4 Develop Site Selection Checklists

Checklists minimize oversights.

Suggestions for checklist items:

- Availability of adequate parking.
- Polling place accessibility (emphasize ADA requirements).
- Directional sign placement to aid voters.
- Voter access to public transportation.
- Road construction or repairs planned on voting days.
- Adequate electrical outlets, Internet access points, heating and cooling, entrances and exits, lighting, and restrooms at the polling place.



Tip 4 *continued*

REMEMBER



Contact the proprietors of all potential polling locations. Determine their availability for a full election cycle.

- The security of voting systems, preprinted ballots, and other supplies.
- Access to polling place for advance testing of e-poll books, computers, and printers.
- Scheduling of equipment delivery and pickup to/from polling places.

5 Create Voter Flow Diagrams

Preplanning creates efficient voter flow at polling places.

How to get the most out of your voter flow diagrams:

- Train your poll workers to use the diagrams. Supply copies to troubleshooters, maintenance personnel, and site proprietors.
- Identify locations for voter entry and exit, greeters, check-in, supplies, and storage.
- Plan for overflow parking during peak voting hours. Provide adequate signage and areas for passenger dropoff and pickup.

REMEMBER



Use easy-to-read signage inside and outside the facility to direct voters.

- Evaluate parking areas, sidewalks, and walkways for ADA compliance. Consider alternate entrances for disabled voters.
- Include adequate areas for special needs and provisional voting stations.
- Designate seating areas for active and waiting voters, particularly disabled and elderly voters.

Quick Clicks

Polling place layout diagram example: <https://sos.iowa.gov/elections/pdf/peo/AppendixA.pdf>
 Line optimization and poll worker management toolkit: <http://web.mit.edu/vtp>

6 Plan for Emergencies

Contingency planning helps you handle the unexpected.

Suggestions for your emergency plan:

- Have emergency contact information for all the major print media, television, and radio stations in your area.
- Keep up-to-date emergency contact information for emergency management personnel, election staff, poll workers, State election officials, law enforcement, staff attorneys, IT staff, voting system vendors, utility companies, polling place maintenance staff, and site proprietors.
- Plan for power failures.
- Keep 24-hour contact information for judges on hand in case court orders are needed.

Quick Clicks

Contingency planning recommendations: <http://www.nass.org/reports/surveys-a-reports>
<http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/Resources/files/EmergencyPlanningGuide.pdf>

- Consider the possibility of wide-area (even jurisdictionwide) natural disasters.
- Account for potential disruptions in postal service delivery.
- Establish alternate election office locations in the event of an evacuation.

REMEMBER



Keep your emergency relocation plan up to date with State statutes.

7 Provide Checklists for Poll Workers

Easy-to-follow checklists give poll workers less to worry about.

Types of checklists that can help your poll workers:

- How to set up and take down voting systems, signs, equipment, and furnishings.
- How to help voters with disabilities, seniors, and provisional voters.
- Dos and don'ts of customer service and line management.

Tip 7 continued

REMEMBER

Checklists should be easy to follow and written in plain language. Make instructions even easier by pairing them with diagrams, graphic elements, and other visual aids.

- Beginning- and end-of-day accounting procedures.
- Handling potential security, legal, and technology issues.

Quick Click

Checklist recommendations:
http://www.acgov.org/rov/documents/polling_place_checklists.pdf

8 Maintain Voter Education Efforts

Informed voters have more confidence when they get to the polls.

Suggestions to maximize voter reach:

- Use your Web page and social, print, and television media to inform voters of key dates, requirements, and options.
- Prepare and distribute printed material with the same information to reach voters who prefer handouts.

- Include printed voter information brochures with routine mailings from your office.
- Provide driving maps and public transportation routes to polling places online, with links to mapping sites.
- Consider mobile apps to advertise wait times at polling places and to redirect voters to nearby sites that have quicker voter flows (if allowed).
- Post sample ballots and voting instructions, including demonstrations, on your Web page.
- Ask nonpartisan advocacy groups to link to your Web page.
- Request that local media cover your voter education activities.

REMEMBER

Make voter education materials available to minority language groups and visually impaired voters.

9 Elections Differ. So Do the Planning Tasks

What works for one election won't necessarily work for all of them.

Use different techniques for different types of elections:

- Voter postcard mailings are helpful to explain why precincts

have been consolidated and polling places have been changed—e.g. elections with lower estimated voter turnout and/or fewer eligible voters.

- When using preprinted ballots in vote centers and/or consolidated polling places (where different ballot styles are available), always use “the two person rule” when issuing ballots to avoid errors.
- A ballot-on-demand printer is another option, if available in your jurisdiction.
- Create maps of polling places and vote centers in your jurisdiction for each type of election.
- Consider uploading records of eligible voters to an e-poll book or laptop computer so you can direct voters to the correct polling place.
- When using paper rosters in consolidated-precinct elections, organize them in a logical manner, bind them together in manageable sizes, and provide demonstration copies at poll worker training sessions.
- Develop specialized checklists for poll workers operating in consolidated-precinct elections.

REMEMBER

Data from previous elections can help predict turnout and, in turn, determine number of polling places and staffing levels at each location for each election.

