6 TIPS

To Employ Effective Poll Workers

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.

Quality poll workers are crucial to every election. These six tips can help you recruit, train, and assign capable poll workers.

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1 Recruit From a Variety of External Agencies

Agencies, community organizations, and schools can be gateways to workers with varied skill sets.

Consider recruiting from these agencies:

- Local government agencies can encourage their employees to join the election team. Reach out to staffers savvy with technology. They could be effective troubleshooters or rovers on election day.

- Fundraising organizations can encourage their members to serve as poll workers. If permitted by State and county law, consider designating a team leader from each fundraising group to recruit poll workers. Money the workers earn can be donated back to the organization in a single check.

- High schools, colleges, and universities can encourage their students to serve as poll workers. Work with high schools to develop an election management curriculum. Provide community service credit, class credit, or wages to participating students.

- Community and neighborhood associations can recruit bilingual poll workers for their neighborhood polling places. Use voter outreach initiatives and speaking engagements to promote the need for a diverse team of poll workers to serve individual neighborhoods.

- Existing poll workers can be recruiters for your office. Develop an incentive program to recognize their efforts.

REMEMBER

After each election, issue news releases and photographs acknowledging the special efforts of any groups or organizations that helped recruit poll workers.

Quick Clicks

Examples of adopt-a-polling-place programs:

http://www.ocfelections.com/adoptaprecinct.aspx

http://www.jocoelection.org/workers/AdoptPollingPlace.htm

Sample government poll worker program:

http://www.ocvote.com/volunteer/poll-worker-resource-center/

Tip 1 *continued* Sample student poll worker programs:

http://www.stlelections.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Parent-Guardian-Consent-Form-on-Ltrhd-10-10-12.pdf

http://www.ocvote.com/volunteer/student-poll-worker-program/

http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Elections/FutureVote/Register.html

http://vote.minneapolismn.gov/student/student-judge

2 Use Technology To Connect

Technology is a powerful and cost-effective tool for recruiting and staying in touch with current and potential poll workers.

Recruit and communicate with poll workers on line:

- Collect e-mail addresses and cell phone numbers for current and future poll workers. Ask if they prefer to communicate via e-mail or text messaging.

- Use Facebook and Twitter as a recruitment and communication tool. Post information on training sessions and important dates on your social media sites.

REMEMBER

Election officials report that students are more likely to respond to text messaging than e-mails.

- Encourage neighborhood associations, civic groups, and community groups to follow your office on Facebook and Twitter.

- Encourage poll workers to post their experiences on Facebook and Twitter. Ask them to encourage their followers to join the team on election day.

- Use your Web site to explain how to become a poll worker. Post an online application.

- Post job descriptions and training material on your Web site. Encourage poll workers to review this information before election day.

- Consider a poll worker blog or newsletter to share success stories and to keep in touch with poll workers throughout the year.

Quick Clicks

Online poll worker information examples:

http://www.sos.state.oh.us/SOS/elections/PEO/PEOToolkit.aspx

http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Elections/ElectionJudge/Overview.html

http://www.dcboee.org/election_info/election_day_worker/general.asp

Poll worker newsletter samples:

http://vote.minneapolismn.gov/judges/election-judges-news

http://www.ocvote.com/poll-worker-insights/

http://www.jocoelection.org/PDF/ElectionWorkerNews/Spring%20Vol%2036.pdf

http://www.ocvote.com/stayconnected/news/election-newsfeeds/?testid=682

3 Offer Training That Fits

Poll workers' responsibilities and skill sets vary. Consider the specific training needs of each individual, job, and jurisdiction.

Match the training to the trainees:

- Tailor training sessions to the assignment, experience level, and skill set of the individual.

- Develop training programs on all aspects of a position, including various hands-on sessions that simulate actual election day scenarios.

- Develop specific training for unique positions like troubleshooters, rovers, and early voting staff.

- Develop training for polling place supervisors and presiding officials. Include voter flow, conflict, and crisis management and accessibility requirements.

- Send full-time staff, such as help desk personnel, to poll worker training.

- Schedule training sessions in various locations throughout your jurisdiction and at various times (days, nights, and weekends). Consider using large auditoriums, movie theaters, or community centers for these sessions.

REMEMBER

Maintain a database of all staff and poll workers, including their names, skill sets, tenure, positions worked, and performance evaluations. Update these data after each election cycle.

Tip 3 *continued*

- Provide refresher training for tenured, experienced poll workers.

- Supplement refresher courses with online tutorials on specific changes in law, forms, and procedures.

4 Offer Training That Works

Training experts indicate that lectures and presentations are not enough. Poll workers need interaction and hands-on scenarios.

Make your training practices more effective:

- Study adult learning techniques. Structure training sessions to reach the trainees at various levels: reading, listening, and doing.

- Develop and review your training curriculum with partners inside and outside of government. Examples include the human resources department and disability advocacy groups.

- Partner with your jurisdiction's human resources department to conduct poll worker training sessions.

- Organize your training manual chronologically. Start with the day before election day, and move on to opening the polls, processing voters, handling special situations, and closing the polls.

- Incorporate into your training manual easy-to-read checklists for all aspects of election day preparations that guide poll workers through their tasks.

- Include a glossary of terms, job descriptions, and election day emergency procedures in the manual.

- Poll workers give high marks to photo guidebooks and diagrams for certain election day tasks, such as voting machine and polling place setup. On election day, visuals will be more quickly understood than written words.

- Train poll workers to use polling place layouts to set up each voting location on election day. Solicit feedback and update the layouts, if needed.

- Incorporate actual election day scenarios throughout the curriculum. Provide hands-on training checking in voters, working with voting equipment, and filling out paperwork.

- Encourage poll workers to practice on voting equipment regularly, until they are comfortable with the technology.

REMEMBER

Display contact information for your help desk on the cover of your training manual. List other contact information where poll workers can get help, if needed, on election day.

- Provide a take-home quiz, containing actual voter scenarios, for trainees to periodically remind themselves of what to do in different situations.

- Make training materials, Power-Point presentations, and frequently asked questions easily accessible on your Web site. Consider creating YouTube training videos.

- Solicit feedback about what worked and what did not in your training program. Review the responses and implement changes for future training sessions.

Quick Clicks

Example poll worker training manuals:

http://mi.learnport.org/elections (Requires login)

http://vote.minneapolismn.gov/judges/WCMS1P-115318

http://www.sos.state.oh.us/SOS/elections/PEO/materials.aspx

http://www.ocvote.com/uploads/training/OpManualNov2012_web.pdf

Example poll worker training videos:

http://www.youtube.com/user/MigovBOE/featured

http://www.gab.wi.gov/publications/videos

Example online poll worker training:

http://www.ohioelectionstraining.sos.state.oh.us/

http://www.ocfelections.com/training.aspx

5 Determine Staffing Needs

Knowing the per-person capacity of each polling place and correctly predicting voter turnout allow you to deploy poll workers where and when they are needed.

Examples of information to collect:

- Determine the maximum capacity (number of people per voting area; number of parking spaces), line management requirements, accessibility needs, and electrical and equipment requirements of each polling place based on estimated voter turnout.

- Monitor the turnout at each polling place throughout election day to determine peak voting times per location for each type of election.

- Use data from previous elections to perform a statistical analysis of each polling place before election day. Compare that analysis to the actual turnout data collected on election day. Use the results to plan for future election cycles.

- Encourage poll worker feedback and evaluations of training and polling place operation. Survey Monkey is an easy online survey tool that some jurisdictions use.

Quick Clicks

Example site data spreadsheet:

http://vote.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@clerk/documents/webcontent/wcms1p-101225.pdf

Example online survey tool:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/

REMEMBER

In busier locations, consider assigning one or more trained supervisors to manage the overall voting process at the polling place.

REMEMBER

Conduct a thorough assessment of each polling place after the election. Include:

- Completion of forms.
- Timeliness of opening and closing.
- Processing of voters.
- Functionality of equipment.

Communicate the results to the poll workers assigned to each location.

6 Mobilize Your Poll Workers

After your poll workers are recruited, trained, and assessed, they need to be sent to the right place at the right time.

Tips for deploying poll workers:

- Consider each precinct's language and accessibility needs when assigning poll workers.

- Consider individual team assignments as opposed to rotating assignments. Determine the skill sets of each poll worker in a team and assign teams to locations where the need matches those skill sets.

- Assign one management-level government employee to each polling place late in the day to handle closing documentation and procedures.

- Assign technology-savvy staffers as troubleshooters or rovers to support more than one polling place in a region.

- Schedule at least one student worker at each polling place. The student will benefit from being around more experienced workers, and more experienced workers will benefit from the technological savvy of a younger team member.

- Consider a mentoring program in which an experienced, tenured poll worker mentors a new poll worker on election day.

- Provide bilingual lapel buttons to identify poll workers who can provide assistance in languages other than English.

- Many large jurisdictions use the training location, already known to that jurisdiction's poll workers, as the pickup and dropoff location for election day supplies.