



Justin F. Roebuck,
Ottawa County Clerk |
Register of Deeds

Elections Division

Steven R. Daitch
Elections Coordinator
616-994-4535
sdaitch@miottawa.org

#OttawaVotes Voter Information Campaign

Submission for 2020 EAC Clearinghouse Awards
December 23, 2020

Introduction

The fifth annual EAC Clearinghouse Awards honors outstanding achievements in the field of Election Administration. I am honored to submit our #OttawaVotes project under the categories of Outstanding Innovations in Elections and Outstanding Innovation in Election Cybersecurity and Technology.

Beginning in 2019, our team has spent the last year and a half developing and perfecting our voter engagement strategy. This journey involved a great deal of planning and preparation, both procuring useful technology and navigating the murky waters of social media verification. The end result of this project was a dramatic increase in voter engagement, providing clear, accurate, and timely information to our voters.

Project Scope

After the 2016 Presidential Election, elections administrators started thinking about election information in dramatically different ways. For the first time, voter outreach was about more than doing our civic duty - getting accurate information into the hands of voters was a matter of national security. Our office, like others across the country, spent the next four years developing social media plans and verifying our social media accounts. Despite little to no initial budget and a small staff, we began a concerted effort to provide accurate, proactive communications to our voters.

For **accurate**
election info,
go to the
source.



www.miOttawa.org/elections



Text "OTTAWA VOTES"
to 468311



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An example of signage placed on digital billboards throughout Ottawa County, Michigan



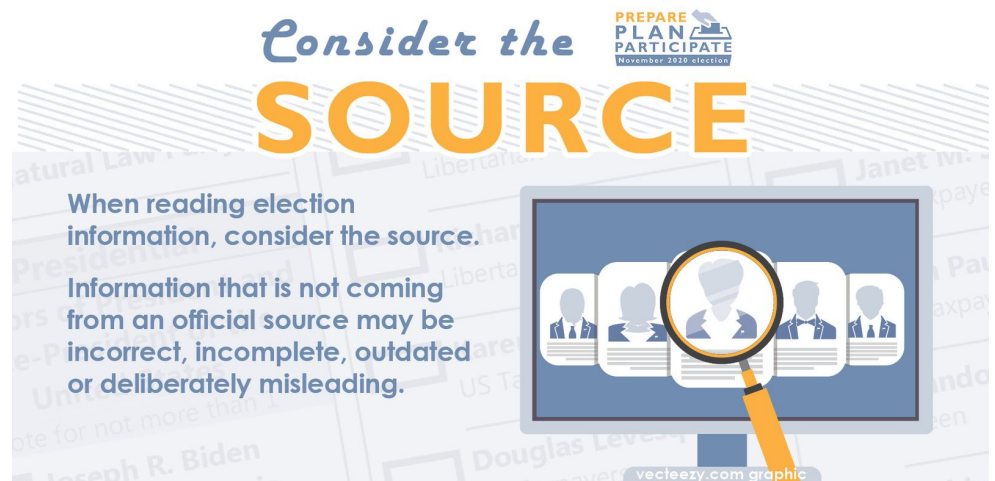
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We knew the for this project to be successful, we need to be *proactive, not reactive*



Voter education, like in the graphic above, was a critical piece of our campaign

Information as Election Security

Early on, we knew to communicate with our voters on social media for every important date and deadline. However, we knew that if we were going to encourage our voters to trust our office, we had to meet our voters' information needs - before they could be met by someone else.

In order for voters to trust our information, our information needed to be trustworthy. To meet this goal, the #OttawaVotes campaign:

- Verified our Facebook and Twitter accounts
- Acquired software platforms for producing professional-looking content, including Visme for infographics and Vyond for animated videos
- Developed a consistent brand for the campaign, including logos, colors, and language that allowed voters to recognize information that was coming from our office, even if the information itself was new
- Paid for advertising on Facebook, Twitter, and Google, with the goal of providing proactive information based on our social media and election season calendar

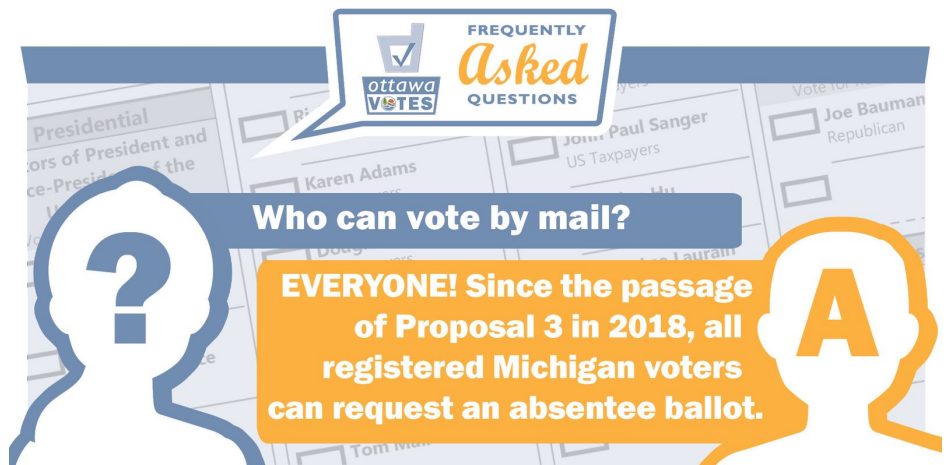
Grant funding from the Center for Tech and Civic Life (CTCL) allowed us to take this campaign to the next level



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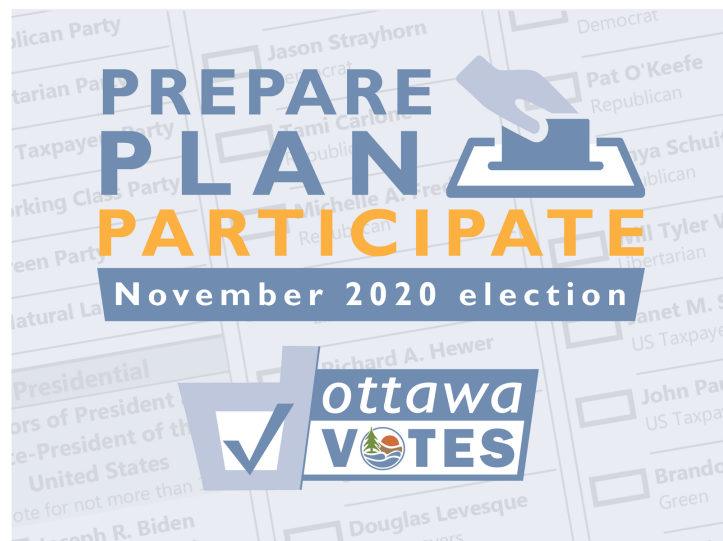
One of nine FAQ graphics that were posted at key points in the election cycle

Campaign Budget

When our office began planning our social media efforts, we expected to have little more than a shoestring budget. We had been able to acquire infographic and video software for a few hundred dollars, which we had been able to include in our regular office budget. We were also able to allocate staff time to this project, even though this put a strain on other operations.

When CTCL announced the availability of grant funding for elections offices, we jumped at the opportunity, knowing that we would be able to put any funding to immediate use.

Our office received approximately \$30,000 to spend in about 30 days. Immediately upon receiving notification of this award, we knew we would need help. We were able to use this funding to bring on a temporary freelance graphic designer, Rich Lakeberg, who was able to take our materials to the next level. With Rich helping on the design front, the rest of the team was able to write radio ads, develop video content, and create messaging to help voters Prepare, Plan, and Participate in the November 2020 election.



With additional funding, we expanded our outreach effort to include messaging on how voters could Prepare, Plan and Participate in the upcoming election



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The need for election officials to provide high-quality, proactive information is just beginning

Program Evaluation and Next Steps

With the help of grant funding from CTCL, our office was able to purchase \$4,300 in advertising on Facebook. Our county has over 220,000 registered voters, so this cost represents approximately two cents per registered voter. This small amount of funding allowed us to reach unprecedented levels of voter engagement. In total, our office published 44 posts on Facebook between September 20 and November 6, 2020. These posts were seen over 500,000 times, or more than two times per registered voter.

Facebook Statistics September 20 - November 6, 2020

Media	Number of Posts	Total Reach (first time views)	Total Impressions	Lifetime Engaged Users
All Facebook Posts	44	386,479	509,363	4,648
Facebook Videos Only	13	183,923	255,869	(N/A)

While more research is needed in this area, we believe that the communication provided by our office led directly to increased trust among members of the public in the conduct of the election. At the very least, we believe that this amount of voter engagement is far more valuable than the costs involved. Based on the success of the #OttawaVotes campaign, we will be continuing our social media efforts into the future in order to fulfil our office mission of "Helping our customers, and encouraging their trust in government."

Additional Information

For additional information, and to see more examples of our efforts, please follow us on Facebook @OCclerkRegister and Twitter @OttawaElections.

You can also find our work on our website www.miottawa.org/elections, as well as a dedicated page for election security at www.miottawa.org/securingthevote.