

Director

San Francisco Department of Elections Outreach Summary Report for the November 2, 2004 Consolidated General Election

In this summary we will review the Department of Elections outreach objectives, identify the target audience, describe elements of the strategy used and outline some of our future outreach plans.

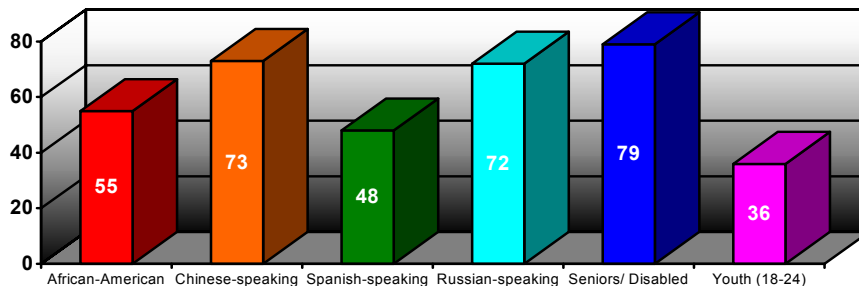
Objectives

Leading up to the November 2, 2004 election, major objectives were: To educate San Francisco voters about the new ranked-choice voting method and laws established in the Help America Vote Act in addition to general voting information. To provide voter education to communities protected by the Voting Rights Act, communities with low voter turnout, and the elderly. Encourage and empower community organizations to educate their own communities of voters. Continue to track outreach efforts comprehensively to assess applied strategies. Strengthen our presence among San Francisco community based organizations by gathering feedback and increasing communication.

Target Audience

In conjunction with 11 ranked-choice voting grant-recipient community based organizations,¹ the Department focused time and resources on providing outreach to African-American, Spanish-speaking, Chinese-speaking, Russian-speaking, Vietnamese-speaking, Elderly, Youth (age 18-24), and Disabled communities in addition to areas of the city with historically low voter turnout. The graph below shows the number of presentations conducted by the Department leading up to the November 2, 2004 Election according to the target audience.

Presentations by Target Audience



¹A complete report on presentations conducted by ranked-choice voting grant-recipients is available upon request.

Outreach Strategy

The Department identified a number of venues and strategies for reaching targeted audiences. These strategies included: registration drives, ranked-choice voting demonstrations, canvassing, partnership with student volunteers, one-on-one voter education, hands-on voting machine practice sessions with the Eagle optical scanner voting machine, ranked-choice voting election simulations, corporate distribution of election material, advertisements on the internet, collaboration with city offices and local media. Elements of these strategies are described below.

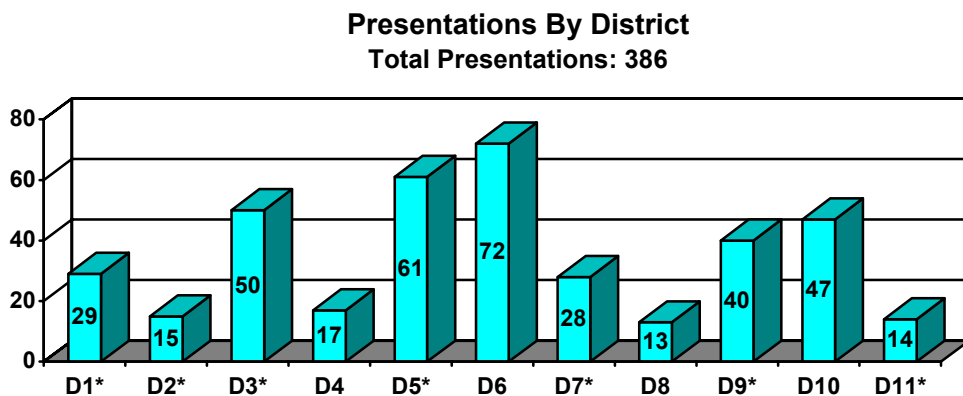
Identifying Outreach Venues

An ongoing effort was made to find and create new events that would facilitate opportunities for voter education. The Department conducted outreach at a variety of venues, such as: churches, food distribution centers, supermarkets, neighborhood and charity events, entertainment venues, schools, colleges, childcare centers, libraries, hospitals, clinics, galleries, senior centers, retirement homes, and organization meetings.

Presentations

During the pre-election season, the Department made a total of 386 outreach presentations. In addition to formal presentations, this total includes other outreach formats such as information booths, one-on-one voter education and assistance with the registration process. In-depth ranked-choice voting presentations were conducted weekly at City Hall starting in May in English, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Spanish. A total of 41 of these City Hall presentations were given, all of which were open to the public.

When reviewing this graph, it is important to take into consideration that many presentations were given to audiences from mixed districts, so the location of the presentation does not necessarily reflect the home district of the audience members. In addition, requests for presentations varied across districts.



*Supervisory districts that used ranked-choice voting for 11/02/04 election.

Outreach Strategy (continued)

Registration Drives

To reach populations protected by the Voting Rights Act and the general public, the Department conducted registration drives in high traffic areas in those communities. Department staff stood outside BART stations throughout the city and set up information tables at the Safeway on Church and Market Streets, the Safeway at Webster and Geary Streets, the Albertson's on Alemany Boulevard at St. Charles Avenue and the Main Public Library on Larkin and Grove.

On the day of the registration deadline, Department staff members and community volunteers were spread out around the city in many high-traffic, high-need areas to push the message that it was the last chance to be registered for the November election. Approximately 250 voters were registered as a result of this effort.

Ranked-Choice Voting Demonstrations

At all outreach events, special emphasis was given to ranked-choice voting, with a ranked-choice voting demonstration incorporated into all outreach presentations. These ranked-choice voting demonstrations were designed to familiarize voters with the ranked-choice ballot and how to mark it, as well as give voters an understanding of the candidate elimination and vote transfer process.

At these demonstrations, large-format dry-erase ballots were used as the primary mechanism to explain ranked-choice voting, with the presenter illustrating how a voter would rank different first-, second- and third-choice candidates in each of the three columns. To reinforce this explanation, photocopies of the sample ballot were passed out, and participants were given the opportunity to mark a ranked-choice ballot. Additionally, demonstrations also utilized a large Supervisorial District map to show which San Francisco districts would utilize the ranked-choice voting method for the November 2, 2004 election.

Preliminary findings showed these demonstration techniques proved successful. In a study done by the Public Research Institute at San Francisco State University, researchers found that “the majority of voters appear to have made the transition to Ranked-Choice Voting with little problem” and that “the wide majority of voters came to the polls with knowledge of [ranked-choice voting].”²

Canvassing

Another way that the Department was able to disseminate information about registration deadlines and ranked-choice voting was through canvassing various neighborhoods. Multilingual posters, videos and brochures³ were distributed throughout the city. These

² Francis Neely, Lisel Blash, and Corey Cook, “An Assessment of Ranked-Choice Voting in the San Francisco 2004 Election,” Dec. 2004 <http://pri.sfsu.edu/reports.html>

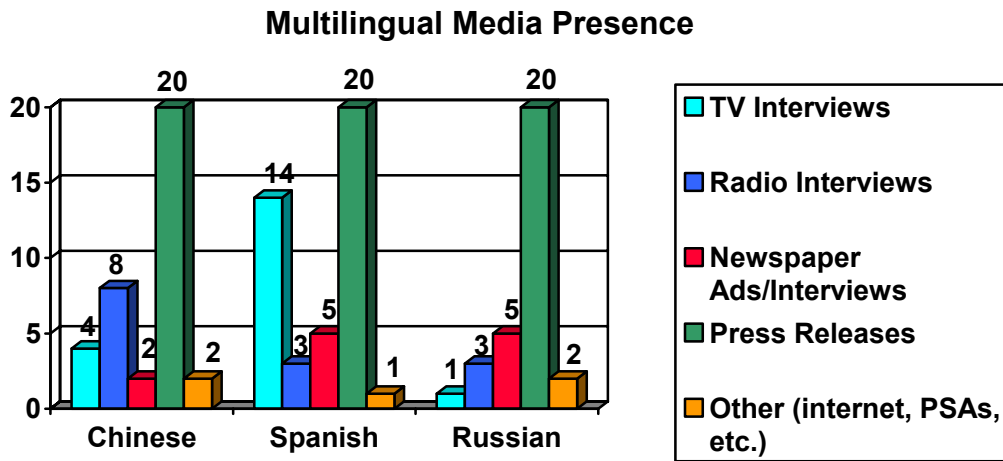
³ Ranked-choice voting brochures were printed in English, Chinese, Russian, Tagalog and Vietnamese.

also contained the contact number for the Department where more information and presentation schedules were made available.

In one district, where there were fewer presentations venues than in other districts, the Department participated in an event with a high school and sent out 60 chaperoned students to canvass the area with ranked-choice voting information and registration cards. The students went out in small groups to shopping malls, BART stations, commercial streets and high-traffic areas, using their bilingual skills to reach out to non-English-speaking residents. They were able to collect registration cards for over 100 voters.

Media Involvement

As seen in the graph below, considerable effort was made to reach out to ethnic media and notify them of important deadlines and scheduled presentations. Department staff gave a total of 19 television interviews and 14 radio interviews to ethnic media outlets, and had election information appear both as advertisements and in articles in numerous print publications. In addition, 20 press releases were issued to prominent neighborhood publications across San Francisco.



Media partnership was particularly instrumental in making one event extremely successful. The event was planned in collaboration with a community based organization, and an ethnic television station and radio station. The media outlets advertised for several weeks in advance to let the targeted community know that Department staff members were going to be available in their neighborhood with registration cards and an Eagle voting machine. On the day of the drive, Department staff members gave live television interviews and worked with voters in person and viewers at home to familiarize them with San Francisco elections in general, the Eagle voting machine and with ranked-choice voting.

Conclusion

The Department of Elections was successful in meeting its outreach objectives for the November 2, 2004 election season by collaborating with community based organizations and the media, searching persistently for outreach venues and utilizing effective outreach strategies. By combining different strategies the Department was able to provide a higher level of outreach.

With these successes, the Department understands that there is always room for improvement and following the November 2, 2004 election season has developed an understanding of areas that need additional focus for the future. Through collaboration with grant-recipient organizations, it has become clear that the Department needs to better organize communication and the coordination of calendar events. In addition, better techniques for the measurement and assessment of outreach efforts will be developed. The Department would also like to create a stronger, more defined and more consistent outreach message for upcoming elections. This message will be incorporated into outreach materials and presentation content. Finally, the Department's continuing priority is to reach more first time and hard-to-reach voters than we have in the past.

Future Outreach Plans

Looking to the future, the Department of Elections is working towards creative ideas and new projects to enhance the Outreach Division's long-term mission to educate voters in San Francisco. The Department will work toward redesigning a new Outreach Plan for fiscal year 2005/2006 that will help formulate an educational message and address areas of outreach that could use development. Preliminary ideas center around:

- Finding new venues in hard-to-reach districts and communities
- Engaging first-time voters who are unfamiliar with San Francisco's electoral process
- Bringing occasional voters back to the polls more frequently
- Surveying voters at the polling place to elicit feedback on the voting process
- Focusing poll worker training on providing better assistance to voters on election day
- Strengthening relationships with community organizations to gain support and ideas
- Improving the Department's website to include more information about all stages of the electoral process
- Identifying sources of funding to accomplish all the projects mentioned above, and more
- Further develop a database of organizations that will help communication and the sharing of ideas—all of which are instrumental to success in educating the electorate.

The Department plans to hold an outreach advisory forum that would meet frequently to discuss ongoing outreach plans and performance, and to harness the expertise of local organizations to improve connections with voters in their communities.

Thank you for taking time to review this report. To strengthen our partnership, we would appreciate if you would provide us with feedback by completing a questionnaire. It can be completed online by clicking on the following link: <http://sfelections.org/questionnaire/> or downloaded and mailed to the address below. Please submit the questionnaire by Friday March 11, 2005 and be as detailed as possible with your responses.

Mail Questionnaire to: San Francisco Department of Elections-Attn Outreach Division
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place Rm. 48 San Francisco, CA 94102