

CVD plan for Prop A implementation

October 30, 2002

This contains:

- I. A quick overview of CVD steps in Prop A implementation
- II. A short list of contingencies,
- III. A two-page implementation plan
- IV. A three-page outline of the voter outreach proposal (this lacks significant details, especially a detailed budget)

I. CVD steps

1. Nov 13 event: educate and identify community partners
2. Nov 15 or so Rules Committee hearing: determine where vendor, dept, election commission are at
3. Stay in touch with Mendelson and Stowers, Arntz, Moll and ES&S about technical side
4. Try to arrange to be technical consultants to Dept but either way push for sensible policies and procedures re: voter errors, ballot design, tabulation, release of results, etc
5. Shop voter ed proposal to City and local foundations.
6. Do as much voter outreach as we get paid to do.

II. Contingencies

1. If ESS doesn't agree to retrofit eagles, we've got to work with the Dept to do central scanning (preferable),
2. Or an RFP process (bad),
3. Or prepare to do a handcount (very bad)
4. Voter success will largely be determined by the ballot design, information available to voters in absentee ballots and the voter guide, and posters and FAQs in the precincts, so that's what we need to focus on.
5. Outreach targeted at low income, communities of colors will be determined by funding and largely outsourced, ideally by having a different organization hire someone.

The big questions are what to do if the Dept utterly fails to prepare a technical solution. Do we go to court, threaten a lawsuit, organize grassroots pressure, work inside, etc? Impossible to predict ahead of time what is needed.

Other question is what to do about voter outreach if the city isn't spending any money and we don't get any money. I think we are agreed that we don't do anything.

III. CVD Prop A/IRV Implementation Plan

October 11, 2002

The basic approach is to push as hard as possible to finalize the hardware solution, and then work to make it as smooth as possible by addressing technical and voter education challenges.

If ES&S does not respond affirmatively to Julie Moll's letter, everything goes out the window, as the city has to embark on an RFP process (or get ES&S to do central scanning, which is easier than an RFP process but changes the logistics of the election).

And if none of this happens, CVD needs to take more drastic measures.

Component 1: Technical assistance to the Dept, Commission and Vendor

I think CVD could be retained as a consultant to do all of this for \$25-40K. This would involve actually writing policies and procedures, developing staff training materials, etc.

Step 1. Nail down hardware solution.

Make sure vendor provides a hardware solution and applies for certification in a timely manner. Go to contingency plan concerning RFP, new vendor if ES&S punts.

Step 2. Settle on policies and procedures.

Key ones to consider (from most important to least important):

- Release of 1st choice results (presumably exactly the same as current election reports)
- Release of complete data files (recommendation: 1 file for early absentees, 1 for election night precincts and then one each day thereafter at end of day of counting absentee and provisional)
- Handling ballots that rank the same candidate #1 and #2 (rec: intent of voter, counts for 1st choice)
- When to apply IRV algorithm (not important as long as complete data files are available to the public, but if only first choices are reported, there should be at least 1 IRV tally per day)
- Handling of ballots with errors (presumably these go into compartment 2 with write-ins and overvotes and then get manually inspected)
- Does Dept. make publicly available the rules for interpreting and counting IRV ballots (recommendation: YES!)

Transparency is the directive: we make all the rules and results as transparent and publicly available as possible.

Step 3. Nail down ballot design: ballot format and wording.

Step 4. Finalize training to be provided to Dept. staff and election officers (pollworkers, FEDs)

Contingencies

If Julie Moll's letter telling ES&S to retrofit the Eagles has gone out and ES&S responds in a timely manner, things are looking good.

If this doesn't happen, we're in a tough spot, so we need to plan for that contingency.

This means that ES&S refuses to retrofit the Eagles (or provide another precinct-scanning solution). In this case, we have to initiate a very difficult RFP process for a precinct scanning solution that will integrate with San Francisco's election management software, which I believe is called DIMS. This probably means going with Sequoia or Diebold, and it really screws things up because it involves a whole new technology, new ballot design, etc.

On the other hand, it might be possible to convince Arntz that the easiest short-term solution is to do central scanning with the IV-C (or more modern 650). This would not change the ballot, and it would just mean that at the precinct, voters put their ballots in a sealed cardboard box rather than into the scanner. Then ballots get delivered to a number of central scanning sites, and ballots get scanned and uplinked from there. This would slow down election reporting, but it would substantially decrease cost, since the city would not need to keep leasing the Optech Eagles.

If ES&S won't produce a precinct scanning solution, then the City will have to bring in a new vendor, and this process needs to be started as soon as possible. Therefore it's essential that ES&S respond as quickly as possible, given the Nov election, so that the Dept and City Attorney can start the RFP process in early December at the latest.

Component 2: Vote education (\$400-500K)

Step 1: Develop the proposal for voter outreach.

Step 2: Submit it to the City and to Bay Area foundations.

Step 3: November 13 workshop: "The November 2003 election, instant runoff voting and your community." Train the trainers, reach out and identify potential partners for voter education, create the buzz and momentum for serious voter outreach.

Step 4: Execute as much of the plan we can get paid to do.

The plan would largely entail hiring vendors (print, video, mail, public relations) to produce mail pieces, video and audio PSAs and earn media coverage, especially from ethnic and neighborhood media. We would also do as much paid media as the budget allows.

We would either hire an outreach person or re-grant funds to a partner organization to hire such a person, perhaps full-time starting in March or April, or as soon as funds become available. This person would be responsible for working with community organizations, especially with language and ethnic minorities.

IV. A Proposal to the City and County of San Francisco and Bay Area Foundations for a Total of \$500,000 to Conduct Voter Education for the November 2003 Instant Runoff Election

Center for Voting and Democracy

San Francisco voters passed Proposition A by a 55%-45% vote in March 2002. Proposition A implements instant runoff voting for all city offices. It will take effect in November 2003 for races for mayor, district attorney and sheriff. Prop A also mandates voter education “to familiarize voters with the ranked-choice or “instant runoff” method of voting.”

This proposal details a comprehensive voter education plan designed:

- To ensure a successful implementation of instant runoff voting;
- To maximize public acceptance of the system; and
- To minimize disparities in voter success across neighborhoods, levels of voter turnout, ethnic and language groups, education levels, political ideology and class.

The role of the voter in an instant runoff election is to indicate the voter’s 1st choice, 2nd choice and 3rd choice.

Specific goals of the voter education program is for voters to understand:

1. That they are able to rank candidates in certain races; and
2. How to indicate 1st, 2nd and 3rd choices.

To achieve these goals, the voter education program should have several components:

1. A well-designed ballot
2. The Voter Information Pamphlet
3. A mailing to all registered voters
4. Large posters for display in polling sites that show voters how to fill out the ballot
5. Frequently Asked Questions flyers in multiple languages for pollworkers to give to voters who have questions about instant runoff voting.
6. Pollworker training: how to respond to common questions, concerns, situations
7. Paid outreach: PSAs, paid advertising, earned media, placement of columns and op-eds in newspapers, newsletters, weeklies, etc
8. Community outreach: training of trainers, presentations and demonstrations to community groups, etc.

The follow sections describes each component of voter education.

1. A well-designed ballot

The Department has already prepared such a sample ballot, but there remain several question about ballot formatting, graphics, wording and layout. Political scientists have long documented

the ability of voters to follow instructions if the instructions are clear and the ballot format is easy to follow. The butterfly ballot was a classic case of a poorly designed ballot: whether voters were picking one candidate, 5 candidates or ranking candidates with that ballot, there would have been high levels of voter error. Conversely, with a well-designed ballot, voters can follow whatever instructions they are given.

A clear ballot will largely accomplish goals 1 and 2 above.

2. Voter Information Pamphlet

The VIP is mailed to all registered voters before the election and includes a sample ballot. We will design a two- or four-page spread that explains how voters vote in an instant runoff election, that listing 2nd and 3rd choices is optional, and that voters have incentive to list a 2nd choice if they wish to support another candidate in case their 1st choice loses.

This would include a short explanation of Proposition A (“Proposition A, passed by the voters in March 2002, implements an instant runoff system for certain races. Instant runoff voting determines the candidate supported by a majority of the voters without holding a separate runoff election. The role of the voter is to indicate a first choice candidate, a second choice candidate and a third choice candidate ...”).

The FAQ would address common questions:

- Do I have to list a 2nd choice candidate?
- Can my 2nd choice candidate defeat my first choice candidate?
- What if I skip a ranking?
- What if I vote for the same candidates 1st, 2nd and 3rd?
- And so forth.

3. Mailing to all registered voters

This mailing would be timed to arrive before the VIP and absentee ballots are mailed out. It would inform voters that they get to pick a 1st, 2nd and 3rd choice for mayor, district attorney and sheriff, and it would show how to do this.

4. Large posters for polling sites.

The next step in the voter education program would be the preparation of large posters showing a ranked ballot and how to fill it out. These would ideally be as graphical as possible, so that people of low literacy and non-English speakers could understand them. These would be posted in polling sites, Department of Elections and other public locations. The goal would be to allow a voter to properly fill out the ballot simply by looking at the poster.

5. Frequently Asked Questions

Polling sites would also be supplied with a flyer that answers common questions, explains the instant runoff system and answers common questions. When voters have questions about the system, they will be able to look at the posters and request additional literature from pollworkers.

6. Additional pollworker training

This would consist of, at minimum, explanation that the system applies only to races for mayor, DA and sheriff; a reminder of the importance of posting the educational posters and providing the FAQ to voters who request; and instruction on responding to questions and situations that come up about the system: “Indicate your first choice, your second choice and your third choice” and then give the voter the FAQ.

7. Paid outreach (see proposal outline below)

It will be important to conduct as much public outreach through media and civic groups as resources permit. This will include video and audio PSAs for local TV and radio stations, paid advertising, and as much earned media and placed columns and op-eds in local media outlets, including neighborhood association newsletters, neighborhood newspapers, ethnic media, etc. The City of Oakland conducted a voter education program for a special election to fill a vacancy on city council last April. This program included 2 mailings to every voters and professional development of both video and audio PSA in three languages. The total cost of this outreach for a district containing 27,000 voters was \$30,000. It would probably be reasonable to spend \$100,000 on a mailing to all voters plus video and audio tri-lingual PSAs.

8. Community outreach (see proposal outline below)

We will hire an outreach coordinator who will work with community groups, make presentations, perform demonstrations, etc.