Marion County Election Board
VOTER EXPERIENCE PROJECT

POLLING LOCATIONS & ACCESSIBILITY

AGENDA
1. WELCOME
2. FOLLOW-UP FROM LAST MEETING
3. POLLING LOCATIONS
4. ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS
5. DISCUSSION

May 6, 2013 | Module 3

Welcome

MARION COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY
MARION COUNTY REPUBLICAN PARTY
MARION COUNTY LIBERTARIAN PARTY
MARION COUNTY BOARD OF VOTER REGISTRATION
INDIANAPOLIS-MARION COUNTY CITY-COUNTY COUNCIL
MARION COUNTY OFFICE OF FINANCE & MANAGEMENT
MARION COUNTY INFORMATION SERVICES AGENCY
GREATER INDIANAPOLIS NAACP
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF INDIANAPOLIS
CENTRAL INDIANA COUNCIL ON AGING
BALL STATE UNIVERSITY BOWEN CENTER ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Follow-Up from Last Meeting

POLL WORKER FEEDBACK

ABSENTEE BALLOT PROCESSING FEEDBACK

TOPICS NEEDING FURTHER DISCUSSION

Poll Worker Feedback

• Precinct-based model
  - Positives
    - Familiar
    - Neighborhood-based
    - Cost effective
    - Good checks & balances
  - Improvements/Negatives
    - Extended voting time
    - Better technology
    - ePollbooks

Absentee Ballot Processing Feedback

• Precinct Count
  - Positives
    - Vote totals available quickly; timely counting
  - Negatives
    - Concerns about ballot security; too time consuming; costs more

• Central Count
  - Positives
    - Faster process; ease of sorting and securing ballots at a site
  - Negatives
    - Delay in results; costs more; current technology not designed for this system
### Topics Needing Further Discussion

- **Costs**
  - Information to be covered in module 6

- **Security & Types of Voting Technology**
  - Information to be covered in module 4/5

- **Conversation with other jurisdictions**
  - Working toward a roundtable as part of module 6

- **Companies/vendors currently under consideration**
  - Final report from study group will help the Board shape its RFP process for new equipment
    - Any vendor can participate, but none are under consideration at this time

- **Why would we need 600 precincts in a vote center model?**
  - Do we need 600? Maybe not BUT Indiana law requires counties to be carved into precincts of about 1200 registered voters
    - Election Board doesn’t decide precincts – county executive does
    - Tells us what legislative districts you live in, what candidates appear on your ballot, and whether or not you meet voter registration requirements
  - All vote centers do is take away the need for an assigned precinct polling location on Election Day
    - Voter can’t vote in every legislative district in the county; must have a ballot specific to their precinct

### Polling Locations

**LEGAL LOCATION REQUIREMENTS**

**OTHER SITE SELECTION FACTORS**

**HANDOUT: CURRENT POLLING PLACE CONTRACT**

*Presenter: Andy Mallon, Election Board Attorney*

*Guest Speaker: Amy Waggoner, Deputy Chief of Staff to Mayor Ballard*

- **Precinct-Based Elections**
  - County executive selects the sites
    - Indianapolis Mayor serves this role due to UniGov
    - List of sites must be certified to the Election Board no later than 29 days before each election
  - Polling locations must be located inside the precinct UNLESS a suitable, accessible location cannot be found THEN
    - A polling site can be located up to 5 miles from the closest boundary of the precinct for which the site serves as a polling location OR
    - A polling site can be located in the same township as the same precinct that does not have an accessible facility (IC 3-11-8-3)

- **Precincts can be co-located in the same polling location**
- **Some polling locations are compensated for the use of their facility**
  - Public buildings are NOT compensated
  - All others receive $40 for each election
- **Polling locations are subject to change in each election**

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Marion County had 301 polling locations in 2012 General Election
Legal Location Requirements

- Additional outreach for polling location notice:
  - View polling location & find driving directions at indy.gov/VIP
  - Phone-based polling place locator available a few weeks before Election Day at (317) 327-VOTE
  - Post signs on locations not used from the previous election, directing voters to their new polling place

Mayor’s Office Perspective

Guest Speaker: Amy Waggoner, Deputy Chief of Staff to Mayor Ballard

- Overview
  - 597 voting precincts
  - Number of Individual Locations by Year (General Elections)
    - 2010 – 332
    - 2011 – 330
    - 2012 – 301
  - 2011 Re-Precincting

Current Process

- Contact Schools & Fire Departments
- Contact Remaining Facilities
- Identify Needed Changes
  - Anywhere from 0-10 locations may be unavailable each election
- Review Complaints from Prior Election
- Initial Assignment
- Contracts Mailed Out
- Contracts Returned
- Re-assess Available Locations
- Follow-Up on Contracts Still Not Returned
- Finalize List
- Review List with Mayor
- Submit to the State

Challenges

- Unavailable Locations
- Unwillingness To Host
  - Private Buildings
  - Schools
- Complaints
  - Open Late
  - Inconvenient Set Up
  - Not Well Marked
  - Crowding
  - Damage to Buildings – Lack of Respect for Property
- Accessibility Issues
  - Often lacking marked parking near entrance

Opportunities

- Off Year Advancements
- Changing Contract Structure
- Require More Information
  - Floor Plans
  - Designate Ingress & Egress Points
  - Accessibility Parking Location
  - Large Turnout Line Locations
  - Designate Back-Up Contact for EDay Operations
- Better Information for Inspectors

“Super” Precincts

- Multiple precincts are combined at one polling location for Election Day voting, but only 5 poll workers staff the entire site (IC 3-11-8-4.3)
  - NOT the same as co-locating multiple precincts at one polling location where each precinct has up to 5 poll workers
  - Requires unanimous vote of Election Board
  - Requires staff to process voters in the proper poll book AND keep voted and unvoted ballots
  - Only logistically possible if ePollbooks permitted
Legal Location Requirements

- **Vote Center**
  - Required to have a minimum of 1 vote center for every 10,000 registered ACTIVE voters
  - Using 2012 general election registration numbers, Marion County would have 64 vote centers
  - 640,575 total registered voters; 637,820 active voters

- **Vote Center**
  - Locations are selected by the Election Board in its vote center plan, which requires a unanimous vote to approve
  - State law does NOT set minimum or maximum geographic requirements for the location of each vote center
  - Contrast with precinct-based elections where site selection is strictly outlined
  - Notice requirements the same as precinct-based elections
    - Remember, locations can change but only if Board unanimously agrees to amend its Vote Center Plan

Other Site Selection Factors

- **Parking challenges**
  - Vote centers and precinct polling locations need to have enough parking spaces for a large influx of voters
  - Need accessible parking spaces for voters AND poll workers
  - Often those spaces aren’t near the entrance of the polls or have a curb, which makes it difficult for wheelchair or scooter users

- **Polling locations are under contract to meet specific requirements that may not comply with their policies**
  - Example: Many private businesses and churches don’t want campaign materials passed out, but contract requires them to do so

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Discussion (completed during meeting)

**What do you think about super precincts?**

- Could be an efficient choice
  - Current technology may limit efficiency
- Might work for special circumstances
  - Turnout for ‘normal’ elections at precinct may preclude their use
- Would require ‘super’ poll workers
- Q: Are you limited to 2? No restriction in state law
  - Reservation in implemented would be anticipated volume of total voters at a site

**What do you like about voting at an assigned precinct?**

- Familiarity of location
- Ability to walk to polling site
- Knowing your poll workers
- Get to see everyone in the neighborhood – social experience
- Political divisions respond to geography; precinct helps to solidly define who represents them
- Accountability of results
If the county ever moves to vote centers, what requirements should the Board consider when making a site selection? Geographical? Accessible? On bus line?

- All of the above – geographical, accessible, on bus line
- Plentiful parking
- Site needs to be available to Election Board for an extended period of time
- Need internet access
- Need large square footage (example of a fire station – pulling truck out to be able to vote works for precinct, may not for vote center)
- Need improved access to early voting opportunities
- Should they be walkable? Can they be walkable? Will limit the number of sites that can be used if so
- Favorable traffic patterns

What out-of-the-box polling locations should be considered?

- Fireworks stands
- Mall
- Libraries
- Virtual site?
- Mobile (RV) site
- Hospitals
- Bus terminal/airport
- Funeral homes

What obstacles/problems might arise from selecting these creative locations?

- Parking may be difficult at a hospital especially navigating around emergency vehicles
- Cost to park
- Liability issues between city and private entities
- Location could bias the outcome of election/participation

Voter Accessibility

**HELP AMERICA VOTE ACT (HAVA) & THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)**

**POLLING LOCATION ACCESSIBILITY**

Presenter: Greg Fehribach, Ball State University's Roosevelt Center on Public Affairs

**HAVA & the ADA**

- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)
  - Title II protects people with disabilities from being excluded from participating or receiving benefits of the services, programs or activities of a public entity OR being subject to discrimination of such entity
  - Only a "qualified individual with a disability" protected by Title II
  - Defined as "an individual with a disability who, with or without reasonable modification to rules, policies or practices, the removal of architectural, communication or transportation barriers, or the provision of auxiliary aids and services, meets the essential eligibility requirements for the receipt of services or the participation in programs or activities provided by a public entity"

- Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA)
  - Created new minimum standards for states to follow
  - Implemented new programs & procedures like:
    - Provisional voting
    - Updated & upgraded voting equipment
    - Statewide voter registration databases
    - Administrative complaint procedures
  - HAVA complements the ADA
  - Ensures all voting systems are accessible for people with disabilities, including non-visual accessibility for the blind and visually impaired, in a manner that provides the same opportunity for access and participation as for other voters
HAVA & the ADA

- Local Advisory Council for Polling Place Accessibility
  - Part of Indiana’s HAVA plan includes the formation of local advisory councils composed in part of voters with disabilities and elderly voters to advise local officials on polling place accessibility and site selection
  - Plan requires county executive to appoint members
    - Indiana’s full HAVA plan: http://www.in.gov/gpcpd/files/CountyAccessguidetovoting.doc

  - Approximately 46% of surveyed voting locations present potential challenges for voters using wheelchairs, despite the implementation of accessible voting systems
    - Majority of these impediments occurred outside or at the entrance of the polling location, particularly in the path from the parking area to the polling location entrance

Setting Priorities

- Getting voters in the door
- Providing access to the areas where you provide voting accessibility
- Providing access to the restroom facilities that are provided for public use
- Eliminate any physical barriers

Getting Voters in the Door

- Accessible Route
  - Path a person takes, starting from the sidewalk or parking lot and going where a polling site provides access to voting
    - Parking lot must have identified spaces for voters AND poll workers with disabilities
    - Spaces should also be compliant for van accessible needs
    - Site must have an accessible entrance:
      - Should be in closest proximity as possible to accessible parking
      - Provide compliant ramps or elevators when necessary for access

Inside the Polling Location

- Rearrange tables, chairs, voting machines and other furniture to create adequate maneuvering space
  - See next slide
- Voting booths & equipment should be accessible to voters with disabilities
  - Currently, poll workers instructed to have at least one wheelchair accessible station for paper ballot users
  - Current electronic voting equipment (iVotronic) can be removed from its stand and placed on a table or tray

Example Site Layout
Inside the Polling Location

- Accessible equipment must be maintained and in good working order and be available to all voters
  - If equipment is temporarily out of service, a polling site should find alternative ways to service voters with disabilities
    - Call Election Day hotline immediately if equipment is out of service
- Different voters need different solutions
  - Service animals are allowed inside the polling location
  - Poll workers should be flexible, courteous
    - It’s OK to ask a voter how best to accommodate their needs

Provide Access to Restrooms

- If restroom facilities are provided for public use, they should be accessible:
  - Look for grab bars in toilet stalls
  - Evaluate sinks and paper towel dispensers for ease of access
  - Look for full length bathroom mirror
  - Extra space important for maneuverability

Eliminate Physical Barriers

- When accessible features are blocked or broken, your polling place is no longer accessible!
  - Make sure there are curb cuts at sidewalks and entrances to help voters with mobility issues
  - Rearrange tables, chairs and other furniture to create adequate maneuvering space
  - Elevators or lifts should be unlocked and in good working order

Discussion (completed during meeting)

If you were building an accessibility checklist for polling locations, what would be on it?

- Good floor plan, flowing space regardless of number of ppl there
- Prepared poll workers
- Accessible equipment to vote
- Parking amenities/availability
- Minimize distance between parking & PPL entrance and then to the voting area
- Make sure restrooms are accessible
- Supportive & compliant host site (site managers, contact, etc)
- Impediments to accessing the voting sites may keep voters from participating on Election Day – “bias” the outcome
  - Technology may be able to provide greater access to system for all – not just people w disabilities, but also those with difficult work schedules, lack of transportation, etc.

Best Practices

- Sites should be larger and more visible
- More parking spaces, voting machines & poll workers reduce voting time
- More poll workers allow for specialization of certain tasks like checking in voters, assisting them with ballots, etc to improve the ‘service’ experience
  - Availability of experienced and knowledgeable poll workers to assist people with new or unfamiliar technologies enhances the voter’s experience and reduces voter errors

“Where, when and how we vote...does it matter?” Robert Stein, Greg Vonnahme; Social Science Quarterly – September 2012
Other Jurisdictions

- Larimer County, Colorado (Fort Collins)
  - Pioneered the vote center concept, first used in 2003 elections
  - Legal Requirements:
    - Vote Centers have secure electronic connection to ePollbook
    - Requires Vote Centers to comply with federal law
    - Sets population requirement of one Vote Center for every 10,000 active registered voters
    - Requires consultation with major and minor political parties during site selection

Other Jurisdictions

- Austin, Texas
  - 207 vote centers (total 247 precincts) in 2012 presidential election
    - Used all former precinct polling places, added a few extra sites and turned them all into vote centers
    - Determined this would limit voter confusion as voters adapt to the new ‘vote anywhere’ model
    - Will review data over time to consolidate or move vote centers
- Lubbock County, Texas
  - When first implemented in 2011, went from 69 polling places to 33 vote centers
  - Decided to increase to 50 vote centers in 2012 presidential election to meet demand and prevent long lines

Administrative Perspective

- Precinct-based model
  - Largely uniform number of voters per precinct (about 1,200)
  - Turnout can be reasonably predicted at each polling location using historic data
  - While more sites needed, may be easier to find accessible locations because you need to meet smaller demand
  - Poll workers are familiar with voters
  - Voters likely know the polling place; have experienced being there
  - May be more accessible for voters lacking transportation or using mobility devices like scooters or electronic wheelchairs

Other Practical Considerations

- Vote Center model
  - Historic precinct data not reliable in predicting where voters will vote on Election Day, since they have more choices
    - Marion County is a consolidated city; most vote center counties have several city centers making it easier to spread out and predict turnout
  - To meet minimum requirements, each site needs to accommodate up to 10,000 voters
  - Difficult to determine equipment/poll worker needs per site because turnout is unknown
  - Voters may be less familiar with poll workers or facility
Sizing Up the Sites

# voters = fn[time(space + personnel + technology)]

- Size of polling location puts a constraint on the number of voters it can reasonably process in 12-hours
  - Precinct-based voting easier to predict – about 1,200 voters assigned to 1 precinct and established history helps identify low and high turnout locations
  - Vote Centers need to accommodate up to 10,000 voters but difficult to determine what sites will be busy or not – turnout will not be equally distributed across the county

Early Voting in the Clerk’s Office/Rm 118 in November ‘12
- Processed 3,927 voters in 12 hours (9A to 8P)
- Site accommodations:
  - Paid street parking; two side lots reimbursing parking fees for early voters
  - Building largely accessible
  - Sheriff Deputies assisting with crowd control
  - Election Board Staffing
    - 10 staff processing voters into statewide voter registration system
    - 5 staff pulling pre-printed ballots
    - 6 teams (12 ppl) of bi-partisan judges initialing ballots/greeting voters
    - 6 teams (24 ppl) of bi-partisan judges receiving ballots
    - 12 people from Clerk’s Office management team and other Election Board personnel to fill-in gaps

Site accommodations, con’t:
- Technology
  - 25 laptops with Dymo label printers
  - Assistance from ISA to set-up and troubleshoot
  - Used pre-printed ballots as previous experience noted a bottleneck at the ballot on demand printers (usually 2-3 per site)
  - 2 iVotronics
- 50 voting booths including ADA-compliant booths
- 6 gray ballot box to store paper ballots sealed in security envelopes
- 3 in use; 3 as back-up

On Sunday, November 4, it took most voters about 1.5 hours to go through the entire process – waiting in line, processing & voting.