

ISSUE:

The Youth Education and Outreach Project will engage youth in Minneapolis to address voter apathy and to lay the groundwork for a more active, educated electorate.

BACKGROUND:

Approved by voters in 2006, Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) replaced the “first past the post” process in Minneapolis’ 2009 municipal election. RCV’s inaugural year saw the lowest turnout in a Minneapolis municipal election in nearly a century. Twenty percent of Minneapolitans cast votes in 2009, a tiny ratio compared to other non-municipal election years. 2009 is an extreme example of voters’ indifference toward involvement in a non-Presidential election year, and of the discomfort that comes with a new ballot. Especially in the wake of RCV reform, an education and outreach plan is an essential and efficient way to offset voter apathy.

Given the disappointing 2009 turnout, it is clear Minneapolis voters aren’t sufficiently educated or engaged in non-Presidential election years. Voting and political participation are patterned behaviors that, if started early, last a lifetime. The Minneapolis Youth Education and Outreach Project will, via effective, educational messaging, motivate consistent voting habits among Minneapolis youth. Along with Kids Voting Minneapolis, a non-profit partner, the Youth Education and Outreach Project will integrate youth’s existing educational, professional, and social networks to best resonate with kids, families and communities.

The project plan will cover the development of permanent, youth-centered materials and messaging. The design and distribution of a “Vote Minneapolis” activity book, “Happy 18th Birthday” registration mailers, and “Future Voter” stickers will fall under the project’s scope. We plan to partner with Kids Voting Minneapolis in implementing the Kids Voting U.S.A. curriculum in the Minneapolis Public Schools, particularly schools in neighborhoods with historically low voter turnout. Also, the project plan will explain how we will partner with Kids Voting to extend its influence to reach kids at the Minneapolis parks and at every polling place. Likewise, we plan to partner with entities already engaged in civics-centered education, like YMCA Youth in Government and the City’s own STEP-UP program.

The Minneapolis Youth Education and Outreach Project will give Minneapolis youth an answer to the question, “Why vote?” and especially, “Why vote in a municipal election?” Low voter turnout, especially in municipal election years, is a problem that is most fixable early on. The Minneapolis Youth Education and Outreach Project will target youth most “at risk” for civic disengagement, that is, youth in areas with historically low voter turnout. A locally-focused plan will educate and engage Minneapolis youth, guaranteeing kids’ eventual engagement.

The Minneapolis Youth Education and Outreach Project key objectives:

- Groundwork laid for a more educated, active Minneapolis electorate so that voter turnout is increased;
- Youth engaged in City politics so that the civic engagement of Minneapolis youth is guaranteed;
- Youth engaged from areas with historically low voter turnout so that electoral equality among Minneapolis neighborhoods is ensured;
- Clear, measurable benchmarks created to quantify the success of our objectives;
- Minneapolis youth given a clear answer to the question, “Why vote?” and especially, “Why vote in a municipal election?”

BENEFITS TO THE CITY:

The City, its organizational partners, and all contributing departments will benefit from a better educated electorate. Disengaged residents are less likely to take part in the civic process, especially in municipal election years. Youth-focused outreach will help prevent Minneapolitans' disengagement, and protect local democracy. Also, an uneducated voter is an unnecessary drain on the Election and Voter Services Unit's time and money, especially on Election Day. An uninformed voter jeopardizes Election Day efficiency by taking time away from Election Judges and stalling poll lines. An educated voter is more inclined to vote, fill out his or her ballot correctly, and vote for candidates in smaller offices (i.e. Park and Recreation Board and Board of Estimate and Tax). If every Minneapolis voter is prepared on Election Day, the City will see a better turnout, save time, and safeguard voter equality.

RECOMMENDATION:

A. Key Deliverables

18th Birthday Mailers

Description: The 18th birthday mailers will include a letter, a mailing envelope, and a return envelope. The letter will be printed on white, 8.5" x 11" paper, and will be printed in black and white ink. One side of the letter will feature a voter registration form. The opposite side of the letter will contain information on how to fill out the voter registration form, as well as a brief "happy birthday" message from the City of Minneapolis. The mailing envelope will be of standard #10 envelope size. The return envelope will be #9 envelope size, and it will not include postage. Mailers will be sent to each Minneapolis resident in the month of their 18th birthday through a partnership between Hennepin County Elections and the Minnesota Driver and Vehicle Services (DVS). The DVS and Hennepin County will coordinate a data sharing agreement for the exchange of DVS information (i.e., age, address, etc.) necessary to facilitate the 18th birthday mailer program. This type of data sharing agreement is permitted under the Driver's Privacy Protection Act (DPPA), Title 18, Section 2721¹.

Purpose: The purpose of the 18th birthday mailer is to increase the number of registered voters in the City of Minneapolis. By focusing on Minneapolitans who have recently turned eighteen years of age, the City is taking an active role in engaging eligible voters at the earliest possible opportunity. Civic engagement, including voting, is a patterned behavior. The City must encourage and involve its youngest voters in order to attain a long-term increase in Minneapolis' overall voter turnout.

Timeline: The 18th birthday mailers will begin distribution in January 2014. All design and product creation aspects of the mailers are in place. However, coordinating a data sharing agreement between DVS and Hennepin County may take a couple of months to complete.

Scalability: This key deliverable can be scaled down to include only eighteen year-olds residing in Minneapolis neighborhoods with historically low voter turnout.

¹ The Driver's Privacy Protection Act (DPPA), Title 18, Section 2721, permits the release of certain personal information from State motor vehicle records "for use by any government agency, including any court or law enforcement agency, in carrying out its functions, or any private person or entity acting on behalf of a Federal, State, or local agency" (<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2011-title18/pdf/USCODE-2011-title18-partI-chap123-sec2721.pdf>).

Price: PRICE ESTIMATES FOR 18th BIRTHDAY MAILERS – One week notice for printing

Item	Paper/Envelope Size	Cost
2-sided letter, black and white ink (including paper and printing)	8.5" x 11"	\$0.10
Mailing envelope	#10 envelope	\$0.10
Return envelope	#9 envelope	\$0.08
Postage		\$0.384
Total Cost / Birthday Mailer		\$0.664

Mock-up: See Appendix Exhibit A.

Activity Book

Description: The final product will be a 16 page activity book printed in black and white ink on standard weight paper, with a cover printed in color ink on medium weight cardstock. The activity book will be comprised of the following components: a cover page, a message from the City of Minneapolis, a table of contents, a ballot box coloring sheet, a crossword puzzle, a City seal coloring sheet, a word search puzzle, "Vote Mpls" coloring sheet, a Minneapolis precinct map, a "Vote Here" coloring contest sheet, a list of ways to get involved, answers to the crossword puzzle and word search puzzle, and a bookmark. The completed "Vote Here" coloring contest sheets will be collected and reviewed by the Minneapolis Elections and Voter Services Unit. Selected entries will then be placed at the entrant's polling place or in City Hall.

Purpose: The purpose of the "Vote Minneapolis Activity Book" is to introduce youth ages 5-11 to the civic process. Research shows that civic engagement is a patterned behavior. Establishing a base of civically engaged youth in our city will lead to an active electorate. The activity book is also intended to be used as a vehicle for adults (parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc.) and youth to engage in a civic process-based learning activity together – i.e. adults helping youth complete the crossword puzzle, youth showing adults their coloring sheets, etc. In this way, the activity book is intended to spark multi-generational interest in civic engagement. It can be both a starting point for adults to converse with youth about the civic process, as well as a reminder to adults to stay civically involved. Additionally, since the entries for the "Vote Here" coloring contest will be placed in the entrant's polling place, the coloring contest will increase youth interest in visiting their polling place on Election Day.

Timeline: The Vote Minneapolis Activity Books will be launched in September 2013.

Scalability: For their pilot launch, the Vote Minneapolis Activity Books will be distributed at the 13 public libraries currently operating in the City of Minneapolis. The number of activity books to be distributed is scalable. Below, there are price estimates for distributing 100, 150, 200, or 500 activity books to each of the Minneapolis Public Libraries. In future years, the Project Team suggests distributing the activity books to other locations (i.e. Minneapolis parks, community centers, etc.).

Price: PRICE ESTIMATES FOR ACTIVITY BOOKS – One week notice for printing

Item	Paper/Envelope Size	Cost
3 sheets of plain paper, black and white ink	11" x 17"	
1 heavyweight paper cover, color ink	11" x 17"	
3 staples		
Total Cost / Activity Book		\$0.87

Hennepin County currently operates 13 public libraries in the City of Minneapolis: East Lake, Franklin, Hosmer, Linden Hills, Minneapolis Central, Nokomis, North Regional, Northeast, Pierre Bottineau, Roosevelt, Southeast, Sumner, and Washburn. The following estimates provide a scalable outreach option based on available funds:

# of Libraries	# of Activity Books / Library	Cost / Activity Book	Total Cost
13	100	\$0.87	\$1,131
13	150	\$0.87	\$1,696.50
13	200	\$0.87	\$2,262
13	500	\$0.87	\$5,655

Mock-Up: See Appendix Exhibit B.

“Future Voter” Stickers

Description: The final product will be a circular sticker that is 1.5 inches in diameter. The background of the sticker will be red, and the text will be white. The main text will read, “Future Voter.” The City of Minneapolis elections website (vote.minneapolismn.gov) will also be featured in smaller print on the sticker. The font used for all text on the sticker will be Bodoni MT.

Purpose: The purpose of the “Future Voter” stickers is to interest youth in civic engagement. It is a soft commitment to vote when eligible. It also raises awareness about voting, and serves as a conversation starter about civic engagement.

Timeline: As firm partnerships are established with local organizations, the “Future Voter” stickers may be distributed at community events and with other materials (i.e. activity books).

Price: PRICE ESTIMATES FOR “FUTURE VOTER” STICKERS

Number of Stickers	Total Cost (including shipping)
2,000 stickers	\$216.62
5,000 stickers	\$251.09
10,00 stickers	\$319.30
25,000 stickers	479.17

The following information was used to estimate pricing:

Vendor: Uprinting.com
Application: Campaign/Political Stickers
Shape: Circle
Size: 1.5” x 1.5”
Material: White Premium Sticker Paper
Lamination/Coating: Gloss Indoor Laminate

Mock-Up: See Appendix Exhibit C.

B. Organizational Partnerships

Kids Voting

Kids Voting USA, a nonpartisan non-profit, is a youth-focused group working to, “foster an educated and engaged electorate” in Minneapolis.² Kids Voting works in schools and on Election Day to engage and educate youth via voting, outreach, and a civics-centered curriculum. In 2012, over 14,000 votes were cast by kids via Kids Voting Minneapolis, meaning that, according to 2010 census data, 25 percent of Minneapolis kids (K-12) cast a vote that November.³ Kids Voting has a massive reach, and to best resonate with youth, families, and communities, the Urban Scholar team recommends that the City make Kids Voting Minneapolis a permanent partner.

Each Election Day, Kids Voting Minneapolis orchestrates a mock election. Each child has, like their parent, a chance to cast a ballot for the candidate of their choice. The idea is that, by simulating an actual election, kids will learn how and why to vote. But, because of obstacles inherent in Ranked Choice Voting tabulation, Kids Voting will not organize an election this year. The Urban Scholar team recommends that the City collaborate with Kids Voting to ensure that there is an election every year, and at every Minneapolis precinct. To do this, we recommend that:

- The City of Minneapolis use its staff to teach Kids Voting volunteers the Minneapolis Method of counting ballots;
- Work with Kids Voting to accommodate them at each precinct;
- Collaborate to create extra Election Day events at each school that doubles as a polling place (i.e. an “Election Night” party, voter registration drives, etc.).

Also, the Urban Scholar team recommends that the City work with Kids Voting, the Minneapolis School Board, and local principals to implement the Kids Voting curriculum in Minneapolis schools. As of now,

² Kids Voting Minneapolis. Web. 28 July 2013. <http://www.kidsvotingminneapolis.org/index.html>.

³ "Minneapolis QuickFacts from the US Census Bureau." Web. 28 July 2013. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/27/2743000.html>.

the Kids Voting curriculum is not being used by Minneapolis teachers. Students aren't getting an answer to the question, "Why vote?" and especially, "Why vote in a municipal election?" We recommend that the City collaborate with Kids Voting so that:

- Within 3 years, the Kids Voting curriculum is integrated into every elementary school in areas with voter turnout historically lower than the city-wide average;
- Within 5 years, the Kids Voting curriculum is integrated into every elementary and middle school in areas with voter turnout historically lower than the city-wide average;
- Within 10 years, the Kids Voting curriculum is integrated into every elementary and middle school in Minneapolis.

Kids Voting has the potential to leave a lasting impact in Minneapolis, and we recommend that the City commit itself to help Kids Voting meet its goals.

STEP-UP

STEP-UP, a summer jobs program run by the Community Planning and Economic Development Department's Employment and Training Assistance Division, gives Minneapolis youth an opportunity to intern at local, public and private businesses. Each year, STEP-UP places nearly 1,000 capable youth in jobs where they're able to do real, meaningful work. The Urban Scholar team recommends that the City of Minneapolis utilize this untapped resource to reach youth involved in STEP-UP and their peers. STEP-UP staff and interns will act as ambassadors for the City, helping with voter and education and outreach. The Urban Scholar team asks that the City engage STEP-UP in one or all of the following ways:

- Provide STEP-UP staff and interns with a presentation explaining Ranked Choice Voting (RCV), the ballot, and RCV tabulation. STEP-UP Director, Tammy Dickinson, has asked for a formal explanation of RCV for STEP-UP interns and staff at the end-of-summer celebration. This is an opportunity to reach a large subset of youth, and to institute a friendship between STEP-UP and the Election and Voter Services Unit.
- Recruit STEP-UP interns to act as Voter Ambassadors. The Urban Scholar team recommends that the City advertise the Voter Ambassador Program at this year's end-of-summer celebration, at STEP-UP orientation in June, and at other STEP-UP events. STEP-UP participants are intelligent and interested in making an impact, qualities the City wants in a Voter Ambassador. We recommend that the City take advantage of the youth in STEP-UP to further the Voter Ambassador Program and to add to education and outreach efforts.
- Partner with STEP-UP to design civics-centered activities for interns placed at the City of Minneapolis. Interns involved in the activities would act as ambassadors in their communities, providing family and friends with voting and RCV information. STEP-UP interns may "host" an election night event, a "game night" focused on local government and its impact, or staff tables at festivals and/or community events.

YMCA Youth in Government

YMCA Youth in Government, began in 1946, is a local program that gives youth an opportunity to take part in a mock assembly that mirrors real government. The program aims to, "develop personal growth and encourage life-long, responsible citizenship by providing experiential learning for young people and by providing public forums to recognize the abilities and capabilities of youth."⁴ The Minnesota YMCA Model Assembly draws over 1,600 youth, grades 8-12 to its annual program. Students act as legislators,

⁴ "YMCA Youth in Government, Mission." YMCA Twin Cities. Web. 29 July 2013.

attorneys, lobbyists and journalists to simulate an actual assembly of the state legislature and other branches of state government. The Model Assembly session is a unique, hands-on way for Minnesota youth to learn about government and its function.

The Urban Scholar team recommends that the City of Minneapolis partner with YMCA Youth in government's local chapter to reach the 1,600 youth it recruits, especially those students from the multiple delegations from within the city of Minneapolis. Model Assembly participants are already engaged in politics, and could act as Voter Ambassadors and/or Student Election Judges. Long-term, the Urban Scholar team recommends that the City form its own program modeled after YMCA Youth in Government on a municipal level. Like the Urban Scholar program, a youth-run Minneapolis Model Assembly would engage interested youth and recruit new City employees.

Other Community Partners as Organizational Ambassadors

The Urban Scholar team recommends that the City of Minneapolis partner with organizations in neighborhoods with historically low voter turnout. We reached out to several sought-after, youth-focused organizations in each area, inviting them to partner with the City. The response was overwhelmingly positive, and of the twelve we chose, three have already agreed to host educational events, distribute materials, or simply spread the word. Phyllis Wheatley Community Center, Oak Park Center, and Project for Pride in Living, Inc. (PPL) showed the most interest, but we recommend that the City reach out all twelve organizations:

- Phyllis Wheatley Community Center
- Oak Park Center
- Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ)
- University of Minnesota Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC)
- The North Community YMCA Youth & Teen Enrichment Center
- Brian Coyle Center
- Riverside Plaza Tenants Association
- Project for Pride in Living, Inc. (PPL)
- Cedar Riverside Art Zone for Youth (CRAZY)
- Cedar Riverside Community School (CRCS)
- Confederation of Somali Community
- East Side Neighborhood Services

Phyllis Wheatley Community Center, Oak Park Center, and Project for Pride in Living, Inc. all expressed an interest in the Youth Education and Outreach Project. Like STEP-UP, each organization asked for an educational presentation on Ranked Choice Voting, the ballot, and RCV tabulation. If the City commits to train each organization's staff, that staff will train the people they serve. The Urban Scholar team recommends that the City take advantage of this interest to reach voters in targeted Minneapolis communities.

C. Measuring Success

The Urban Scholar team recommends that, to measure the Youth Education and Outreach project’s success, its executors should consider measures of quantity, quality, and impact as described below. The Urban Scholar team suggests that, to validate the project’s progress, its executors refer to the diagram below.

<p style="text-align: center;">Quantity <i>How much did we do?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Number of parents reached ➤ Number of kids reached ➤ Number of “deliverables” ➤ Number of schools partnering with Kids Voting Minneapolis ➤ Number of polling places partnering with Kids Voting Minneapolis ➤ Number of votes cast via Kids Voting Minneapolis 	<p style="text-align: center;">Quality <i>How well did we do it?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Percentage of activity book users respond to coloring contest ➤ Percentage of voters register via 18th birthday mailers ➤ Percentage of satisfied parents, kids and teachers
<p>Impact <i>Is anyone better off?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Number of program participants who vote at 18 ➤ Number of program participants who act as an Election Judge ➤ Number of voters in Minneapolis, compared to data in similarly sized cities without a youth-centered project plan ➤ Number of voters in Minneapolis, compared to data from past election cycles 	

Consideration of the Youth Education and Outreach project’s measures for quantity and quality should occur annually. Depending upon the results of the “quality” measurables, the Urban Scholar team recommends adjustment of inputs to the “quantity” measurables to suit the percent satisfied and/or dissatisfied. All parts of “impact” won’t be measurable in the first year, but we recommend the number of voters in Minneapolis, compared to data in similarly sized cities without a youth-centered program, be evaluated to help answer the question, “Is anyone better off?”

D. Future Election Cycles

The Youth Education and Outreach Project will, via educational messaging, materials, and organizational partnerships, engage Minneapolis youth to promote and protect local democracy. Each initiative is sustainable, and has the potential to be a permanent program or partnership. The Urban Scholar team recommends that this project be a long-term effort, and one that is continually evolving and expanding.