

Project: 2013 VOTER OUTREACH & EDUCATION CAMPAIGN PLAN FOCUSED ON IMMIGRANT & NEW AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

ISSUE:

There is a noticeable disconnect between the City of Minneapolis and immigrant communities when it comes to establishing civic engagement/participation. This is especially noticeable when election time comes around. We want to be able to reach out to immigrant communities, especially those that are bilingual or multilingual, and make them aware of upcoming municipal elections, educate them about the voting process (including in 2013 Ranked Choice Voting), and explain the importance of voting in the municipal elections. The goal is to create a sustainable plan that will keep these communities engaged and informed about City elections in the hopes that it will increase voter turnout.

BACKGROUND:

We want to be able to promote voter education so that people are both aware of the election and able to understand how to vote. We are hoping that by explaining the importance of voting in the municipal election that more people from within the immigrant community will participate in civic engagement. This will then lead to an increase in opportunities for representation of underrepresented communities (immigrants). The direct outcome that we want is a higher voter turnout especially from the Somali, Latino, and Hmong communities to help expand equal representation of voters on Election Day.

We have been in communication with external partners including Minnesota Voice and Fair Vote Minnesota, as well as the City's Neighborhood and Community Relations Department to help in the implementation of our outreach campaign. As our external partners, Minnesota Voice and Fair Vote's main goals are to empower and engage different communities to promote civic engagement in order for their voices to be heard. The Neighborhood and Community Relations Access and Outreach Division is a key internal resource that we've used to reach out to the Hmong, Somali, and Latino communities.

Along with these resources, the Ambassador Program is a key component of our voter outreach proposal as well. Headed by Anissa Hollingshead as part of the City's overall Voter Outreach and Education campaign in 2013, the goal of the Voter Ambassador program is to create a network of community volunteers who are equipped to provide resources and information about the upcoming election to their friends, neighbors, and civic circles. Ambassadors will be trained in election law fundamentals, information about the importance of voting, the specifics of the November 5th General Municipal Election, voting procedures, and the Ranked Choice Voting methodology that will be used this year. To complement this program, we created a spreadsheet consisting of different community organizations within Minneapolis that represent the Somali, Hmong, and Latino community, and listed why these communities should be engaged. Depending on how successful the outreach effort is this year, we also listed additional community organizations within the Hmong, Laotian, Korean, Oromo, Togolese, and Guyanese communities to be considered for future outreach efforts. In addition to reaching out to community organizations, we were able to connect with Hmong Times newspaper. Hmong Times is a widely read newspaper among the Twin Cities' Hmong community. They published an article in mid-July about the Urban Scholars program, including the work being done on an immigrant-specific voter outreach plan. In the article, they included a section with Ka Vang's contact information for those interested in voter outreach. Listed below are organizations and events we came up with:

Hmong, Laotian, Korean

- Hmong American partnership

- Lao Family Community of MN
- Hmong Minnesota Student Association (University of Minnesota)
- Lao Assistance Center
- Korean Elder center
- CAPI
- SE Asian Community Council
- Hmong American Mutual Assistance Association

Latino

- Holy Rosary Church
- Urban Ventures
- Saint Stephen's Church
- Centro: El Zocalo
- La Oportunidad, Inc.
- Latino Economic Development Center

Somali

- Confederation of Somali Community
- Center for Somali Solutions of Minnesota
- Franklin Library
- Somali Youth Development Organization in MN (Somali Mai Community of Minnesota)
- Trinity Lutheran Safeplace Homework Help
- African Development Center
- Augsburg Students/Staff
- Brian Coyle Center
- Somali Education Center

Oromo

- Oromo Community Center
- Our Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church

Togo

- Togolese Community of Minnesota (TCM)
- Togolese Youth Soccer Team
- Lutheran Church of Christ the Redeemer

Guyanese/Caribbean

- Guyanese Association of MN

After communicating with the community organizations, we've listed some community and cultural events where the City can plan on engaging and providing material about upcoming elections and how to vote. Although many of these events have passed this year, they will be important in outreach efforts in future years in building this plan. With the use of translated material, we hope to expand on voter registration efforts and deal with FAQs (Frequently asked questions) and common messaging as well.

- Hmong Freedom Celebration (Independence weekend—Como Park)

- Hmong New Year (November —River center)
- Hmong Resource Fair (October)
- Latino Carnivals
- Festivities (Cinco de Mayo, Mexican Independence, Ecuadorian Independence)
- Churches (church fairs/announcements)
- Weekend Soccer Tournaments (June-Aug Sat & Sun)
- Urban Ventures Latino
- Iftar (only during Ramadan—Brian Coyle Center)
- Eid Celebration
- Somali Independence Day (Summer)
- Oromo Soccer Tournament (Summer)
- Togolese Independence day (Spring)
- Togolese Soccer Tournament (July)
- Carifest (July)
- National Night Out (August)

List of Suggested Community Organizations and Events: See Appendix Exhibit E.

BENEFITS TO THE CITY:

The benefits of this voter outreach and education project will be the further development of an informed and engaged electorate within immigrant and new American communities. More residents will choose to vote with a chance that their vote will make a difference in the outcome of the elections and gain the satisfaction from performing their duty as an American citizen. They will have a clear understanding of how the process works and how to complete a RCV ballot. This will result in more residents having a direct impact on how the government makes laws, policies, and regulations for that matter. They will see how their vote has an impact on how the government implements policies that affect them and their family.

If this project is not completed, there will be continued disparities in voter turnout amongst immigrant/new American communities in the city, and less familiarity and comfort with how to fill out a Ranked Choice Voting ballot. Also awareness of municipal elections among diversified communities will continue to be an issue and will prevent the opportunity to expand voter education.

RECOMMENDATION:

Key Deliverables

- Establish relationships with Fair Vote Minnesota, Minnesota Voice, the department of Neighborhood and Community Relations' Access and Outreach team , and organizations within the immigrant community
- Sample Ballots, Voter Guide Instructions, (RCV Video)
 - Some of the material will be translated and we will incorporate a “how to vote” RCV video, which was done by the Urban Scholars this summer, as a tool for our voter outreach program. This will also include instructions/guide for what first time voters can expect at a polling place. To designate who we will reach out to, we created a

spreadsheet of contacts for community organizations, and added some key scheduled events. We also are asking that there be a set priority to get some multilingual speakers from different back-grounds to help solve the language barrier that exists with people whose first language isn't English.

Plan of Work

We have been in talks with the Fair Vote Outreach Director (Josh) and also with the Minnesota Voice Outreach Specialist (Kelly Beadle). They are interested in teaming up with the City and its outreach efforts with Community organizations when it comes to community and cultural events. After talking with some of the community organizations, we found out that most of their key annual events are held near June and July. The goal, especially in future years when the timing for many of these major events can be accommodated, will be to have City staff and ambassadors to go attend these community events in order to bring about interaction with potential voters and promote participation in possibly becoming an election judge or a part of the ambassador program. At these events, voter education material will be distributed. Along with this, we will distribute out voter pledge cards to document how many people will go out and vote and more importantly why. It's engaging and necessary to educate voters about understanding why they should vote, and to share more information regarding the Ambassador Program and being an Election Judge. Communicating and sharing information with representatives from community organizations will allow them to inform others about the municipal election.

Voter Pledge Card Mock-up: See Appendix Exhibit F.

Scheduling in 2013 and Future Years

- **Early May-Sept.:** Ambassadors recruitment
- **Late June-Nov:** Conversation and training with Ambassadors to build support
- **Early July-Sept.:** Ambassadors RCV and voter education training
- **August-Early November:** Knocking on doors, talking to neighbors, and attending community events. Ambassadors are there to make sure people are registered to vote and ready to turn out on Election day

Resources and Funding

- Resources: (such as access to people or venues, materials, etc.) Materials are being produced by the Minneapolis Elections and Voter Services Division, with assistance from the Communications Department as well as the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department for translation services. Cooperation with external partners including Fair Vote Minnesota and Minnesota Voice is another source of resources relating to accessing people and venues.

Dependencies

Below are listed some of the key sources we need for the Immigrant/New American part of the outreach project. These are the main sources we have utilized this summer and have realized will be needed for the long term goals to be accomplished.

- Fair Vote Minnesota
 - Scheduled events they are attending and volunteer capacity

- Minnesota Voice
 - Existing partners with other organizations, particularly those focused on immigrant communities
- Neighborhood and Community Relations Access and Outreach team
- Voter education materials prepared by the Elections and Voter Services Division
- Community Events
 - We made a calendar dated from May all the way to Election Day that illustrates important events that the City should consider to target for its outreach campaign.
- Other City of Minneapolis Resources
 - Elections, Ambassador Program

Risk and Mitigation

- Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) message not understood:
 - Ambassadors must be fully educated on the RCV process so they are able to clearly explain to others.
- Importance of municipal voting not stressed:
 - Share information demonstrating their vote counts because it's their city and they are the beneficiaries of the decisions made by elected officials.
- Unequal representation of voters on election day:
 - Reach out to all new American/immigrant communities consistently and stress the importance of voting in city elections.

Training

Ambassadors will need training on elections basics and the Ranked Choice voting process, as well as voter education materials so they are able to educate others within the community. Trainings are held frequently to the days leading up to the election and have been scheduled for the months of August and September this year. Anissa Hollingshead is the go to person regarding the Ambassador program in 2013 and will provide the essential tools needed for the program. Depending on availability, Minnesota Voice and Fair Vote will be a part of the collaborative process in educating potential voters as well.

Sustainability

On top of providing training on the election process and Ranked Choice Voting, sustaining and further developing this plan of outreach will require staying in contact with community organizations to build upon their relationship with the City of Minneapolis. Ambassadors will need to be utilized in order to ensure there is consistency in attending community events. Keeping in contact with Fair Vote Minnesota, Minnesota Voice, and other external partners will be key in not only sustaining this program but also in expanding it for future years.