The Benefits of Voting In Local Elections
Agenda

● The benefits of voting & voter engagement
● The impact of nonprofits engaging voters in local elections
● How nonprofits are mobilizing voters locally
  ● Guest Speaker: Alex McHenry, Community Resource Center
What are the benefits of voting?
Benefits for voters

- Social Connections
- Personal Agency
- Foster Community Leadership
Benefits for nonprofits

Build power & influence

Boost Advocacy

Expand Reach
What nonprofits said

“We were pleased with the traction we received on social media. This will likely lead to long-term engagement in our organization's work through these platforms, so we consider this a win-win!”
What nonprofits said

“Volunteer opportunities created help people facing social isolation be able to connect with others.”
What nonprofits said

“We distributed voting guide emails intended to keep staff informed so they could pass along information to clients and residents, but many employees shared that the info was helpful for their reference when voting in this election.”
What motivates your organization to engage voters?

I VOTE BECAUSE

I am FREE

AAPCHO

Nonprofit VOTE
Why is local election turnout low?

- Limited media coverage
- Local government seems obscure
- Skepticism about the system
- Less connection to city for the highly mobile
- The voting process itself

- “Random” election dates
- Primaries can be confusing
- Limited options like early voting
- Limited outreach from election offices
- Fewer campaign resources = less voter outreach
Nonprofits Can Have a Significant Impact in Local Election Cycles
Zig When Others Zag

- Off-cycle elections draw a fraction of the interest one sees in presidential and midterm elections.
- Third-party voter engagement efforts are far fewer in these off-cycle elections, as is media coverage.

A silver lining?

Nonprofits can engage without worry of saturation or being duplicative of other efforts.
Higher “Net” Registration Rates

Previous study in off-cycle election:
51% net new registration rate of nonprofits doing voter registration
Compares favorably to 27 to 29% net new registration rates for other field programs
Analyzing the Impact in Off-Cycle Elections

In 2019, Nonprofit VOTE ran a modest field program. We matched data from this program with the voter file to assess demographics reached and impact on voter turnout.

- 50 nonprofits across Ohio, Colorado, North Carolina, and Mississippi
- 3,000 voter records analyzed
Demographics Reached

Relative to registered voters in the same communities, those engaged at the nonprofits were:

- 1.3x as likely to have an income of less than $30k
- 2.1x as likely to be 18-24 year old
- 1.3x as likely to be Black
- 4.1x as likely to be Latino
- About a third as likely to be White
4.5 pp Turnout Advantage

Relative turnout in 2019
- 32.3% of Nonprofit Voters (engaged at nonprofit sites)
- 27.8% of Comparable Voter (demographically comparable registered voters)

Relative to demographically comparable voters, nonprofit voters had a **4.5 percentage point (pp) turnout advantage**.
Young voters had the biggest positive impact on turnout when engaged by a nonprofit.

Young voters (<35) engaged by nonprofits had a 9.9 pp turnout advantage over comparable voters.
Black voters and people of color broadly saw the biggest gains in turnout after being engaged by nonprofits.

People of color (inclusive of Black voters) voters had a 6.6 pp turnout advantage over comparable PoC. Black voters had a 8.8 pp turnout advantage.
Closing Participation Gaps – Education

Those without college degrees benefitted the most from being engaged by nonprofits.

Likely non-college voters engaged by a nonprofit had a 5.5 pp turnout advantage over comparable non-college voters.
But Local Elections are Different...

Research on barriers specific to local elections suggests that lower turnout is frequently a result of:

- a lack of awareness of the candidates and issues and
- a lack of understanding of the functions of local elected officials and their impacts on daily life.

- National Civic League

Nonprofit VOTE
Registering Voters is Not Enough

Even when registered, voters often don’t participate in local elections.

Those that do voter are whiter and older than voters during other election cycles.

Lack of awareness and information is a core barrier to participation in off-cycle elections... even for registered voters.

Voter registration still have value, but it should be complemented with voter education and GOTV work.
Increase Voter Education and GOTV

- What races are taking place – mayor, school board, etc.
- Issues that are impacted – schools, police, transportation, etc.
- Key dates, options for voting, and polling locations
- GOTV and election reminders
Voter Engagement for Local Elections

Presented by:

Alex McHenry (She/Her)
Senior Program Manager
Voter Engagement for Local Elections

Presented by:

Alex McHenry (She/Her)
Senior Program Manager
Community Resource Center creates opportunities, tools and strategies to develop nonprofits and community groups to strengthen Colorado.
Our Voter Engagement Program

Guides, trains, and supports human service nonprofits in their nonpartisan civic engagement efforts.
Why Voter Engagement?

Policies and political priorities often don’t reflect the will, needs, or priorities of disenfranchised communities and those most affected by those policies and priorities.
Voter engagement is associated with:

- Empowerment
- Inclusivity
- Community engagement
- Health
- Employment

And creates positive impact for individuals, communities, and your organization.

Participation Project

- Voter Registration
- Pledge to Vote cards
- Voter Education
- Get Out the Vote (GOTV)
Staying Nonpartisan

We cannot support or oppose candidates/political parties.

We cannot tell someone which party to register with.
Listen First
Why would YOU want to vote and have a say in who is making decisions about those services?

What questions do YOU have about being able to vote in the next election?
Connect to the Service Provided
Elected Officials Impact Our Lives

- They **create and shape laws** that can improve, or harm, the current and future nutrition, health, economic security, and education of children and families.

- They decide how funding is distributed across programs supporting education, healthcare, housing, food access and more.

- They decide if and how to respond to natural, man-made, and humanitarian disasters that impact children and families.
Ballot Guides

KEY POINTERS TO UNDERSTAND YOUR BALLOT

VOTING DOWN THE BALLOT

Our ballots are more than a list of measures. They’re outcomes that affect our lives, the lives of those we care about, and our communities. Your vote is your voice and it matters on every issue on the ballot.

HOW DID IT GET ON THE BALLOT?

- CITIZEN INITIATED
  A statute or constitutional amendment that makes the ballot by collecting enough registered voter signatures across the state in favor of putting it up for a statewide vote. They are the numbered measures and amendments on the ballot.

- REFERRED
  A statute or constitutional amendment put on the ballot by the Colorado legislature. They are the lettered measures and amendments on the ballot. To get on the ballot, referred amendments must receive two-thirds majority support in both the state Senate and state House. Referred measures that create new laws only require a simple majority in both chambers to get on the ballot.

- REFERENDUM PETITION
  A statute or constitutional amendment that is brought to the ballot by gathering signatures from registered Colorado voters in an attempt to have a bill that was passed by the legislature placed on the ballot as a statewide ballot issue.

*Any constitutional amendment on the ballot that does not simply remove language from the constitution requires a supermajority vote of 55% to pass.*
Are You Vote Ready?

- Yes, I:
  - [ ] Am registered at my current address
  - [ ] Know the key dates and deadlines
  - [ ] Plan to vote because: ____________________________

- I want to be reminded by:  
  - [ ] Call
  - [ ] Text*

- My preferred language is: ____________________________

- [ ] I would be willing to be contacted about my voter registration experience via my contact information provided.
2021 Program

Pledge to Vote

For staff use only:
In addition to completing this pledge, this voter also:

☐ Registered to vote today or updated their registration.
☐ Received a postcard with key dates and resources.
☐ Discussed ballot measures and other items.
☐ Completed the Why Vote? Tool
☐ Discussed their plan to vote (either by mail, in-person, or at a drop box) and either on or before Election Day.
Thank You!
QUESTIONS?

Alex McHenry
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303-623-1540 ext. 160
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It’s More than *Just* Voting

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**Key Pointers to Understand Your Ballot**

- **Voting Down the Ballot**
  
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- **Referendum Petition**
  
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2021 Program

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