

# CIVIC AND VOTER EMPOWERMENT ACTION PLAN

Guidelines



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**STUDENTS VOTE PROJECT**  
CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE

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# Program Overview

## California Students Vote Project (SVP)

Established in 2016, the California Secretary of State (SOS) Students Vote Project (SVP) is a statewide nonpartisan program that elevates college student voices and promotes civic engagement efforts to help build a more inclusive democracy. Through the creation of the Students Vote Project, California was the first state in the nation to build partnerships across the state's major higher education systems to empower students to participate in the democratic process. Program objectives include increasing college student voter education, voter registration and outreach. The SVP achieves these objectives by hosting civic engagement events, creating educational resources and partnering with campuses and outreach organizations.

One civic engagement event that occurs during statewide election years is the **California University and College Ballot Bowl**. Created in 2018, the Ballot Bowl is a friendly competition where all California higher education systems can compete to register the most students to vote.

## The Student Civic and Voter Empowerment Act (SCVEA)

The Student Civic and Voter Empowerment Act (**California Education Code §66850-66852; California Elections Code §2148.5**) was implemented in 2020 and requires each California State University and California Community College to submit a Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan (CVEAP) to the California Secretary of State. In addition, each of these campuses must appoint an individual on campus to be its Civic and Voter Empowerment Coordinator (CVEC).

The CVEC drafts a CVEAP for the upcoming two academic years. The updated CVEAP is required to be submitted to the California Secretary of State Students Vote Project via email to **caststudentsvote@sos.ca.gov** by midnight on October 1 of each even-numbered year. While the University of California (UC) and the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU) are not required to provide a CVEAP, they continue to be strong participants and supporters of student civic engagement.



# Getting Started

## Acknowledgements

The California Secretary of State's Student Vote Project's Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan (CVEAP) Guidelines are inspired by the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge's (ALL IN) Strengthening American Democracy Guide (SADG) and Rubric, which were jointly developed by ALL IN and the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition (SLSV). ALL IN and SLSV are two separate national nonpartisan programs that empower colleges and universities across the United States to excel in nonpartisan college student democratic engagement and voter participation.

California's colleges and universities are encouraged to participate in the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge to receive additional support, resources and national recognition. Notably, the CVEAP developed for the California Secretary of State can be used for participation in the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge.

For more information on how to participate in the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, please visit <https://allinchallenge.org>.

## Introduction

These guidelines serve as a template for creating a Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan (CVEAP) and ensures all essential components outlined in the Student Civic and Voter Empowerment Act are covered. While these guidelines outline the key elements a CVEAP should contain, campuses have the flexibility to include additional information based on their needs.

A CVEAP should be regarded as a living document, updated and submitted to the California Secretary of State Students Vote Project by midnight on October 1 of each even-numbered year. Updates should outline specific initiatives and strategies each campus intends to undertake in the two upcoming academic years.

## Campus Coalitions

Each campus's Civic and Voter Empowerment Coordinator is encouraged to form a campus coalition comprised of student clubs, faculty members, student life members, local election offices and other organizations to collaborate on civic engagement efforts on campus. Campus coalitions are encouraged to meet on a regular basis to ensure ongoing coordination, communication, collective decision making and input to the biennial CVEAP.

## Timeline

To ensure a campus has enough time to draft an effective CVEAP, the California Secretary of State Students Vote Project recommends beginning initial CVEAP planning by fall of odd-numbered years. California Community Colleges and California State Universities are required to have three civic engagement events each academic year and an event within the final 30 days preceding a statewide primary and statewide general election during even-numbered years.

***Please see a sample timeline for composing a CVEAP on page 12.***



# Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan Template

## Executive Summary

This section should be a summary of your campus's action plan and what it seeks to accomplish and should include:

- An opening statement and/or executive summary about the campus's commitment to promoting civic engagement and the importance of this work.
- An explanation how the action plan will be implemented, including the unit/office/division who will be facilitating the effort.
- A description of the strategies that will be used to ensure the plan is equitable.

## Leadership

This section should describe the team responsible for developing the CVEAP and should include a brief description of their responsibilities and contributions.

- Identify and list the name(s) and contact information for the individual(s)/group(s)/department(s) that worked on the CVEAP. Parties may include, but are not limited to:
  - Student organizations.
  - Faculty members.
  - Community partners.
  - Local election officials.
- Specify how often the coalition met and describe the strategies used to keep campus coalition members engaged. Address turnover if applicable.
- Indicate individual support of upper administration if applicable.



# Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan Template *(Continued)*

## Landscape

Outline your campus' voting data to analyze whether or not your campus is reaching its civic engagement goals.

If your campus does not collect such data, identify strategies your campus will implement to collect this data in the immediate future.

To better understand your campus's civic engagement levels and campus voting data, the California Secretary of State's Office recommends enrolling in the [\*\*National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement \(NSLVE\)\*\*](#). NSLVE is a study conducted by Tufts University that allows campuses to gain insight about student political learning, institutional voter registration rates, campus demographics and provides information that can help coalitions make informed decisions regarding civic engagement.

- If you chose to participate in the NSLVE study, please provide an overview of your college's NSLVE report.
  - [\*\*View a sample NSLVE report\*\*](#)

## Reflection

Reflect on the civic engagement work your campus performed during the past two academic years. Provide a summary of the details.

- Assess the number of voter registrations accumulated from events your campus has executed during the past two academic years.
- Evaluate if your campus was able to conduct all civic engagement events planned during the past two academic years.
- Identify any civic engagement barriers your campus faced during the past two academic years and explain how your campus plans to overcome these barriers in the future.
- Share any lessons learned or best practices your campus will continue to implement in the future.

Describe previous partnerships and/or collaboration efforts with internal and external partners.

- Examples of internal organizations include, but are not limited to:
  - Campus coalitions.
  - Student governments.
  - Student life.

# Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan Template *(Continued)*

## Reflection *(Continued)*

- Examples of external organizations include, but are not limited to:
  - Local election offices.
  - Independent voter advocacy groups.
  - The California Secretary of State Agency.

## Goals

Provide an overview of your campus's civic engagement short and long-term goals.

### Short-term (2-year)

- List your campus's civic education and voter engagement two-year goals or benchmarks and describe in detail how your campus will achieve these goals.
- Explain how your campus will continue to expand or begin forming a campus coalition.
- Highlight any other civic engagement initiatives your campus would like to participate in during this two-year period.

### Long-term (5-year)

- Identify the goals your campus would like to achieve in the next five years.
  - Highlight your campus's long-term goals for student voter registration, student civic engagement, student voter turnout and other desired long-term campus goals.
  - Evaluate your campus's progress toward these goals.
- Provide evidence of the campus's impact promoting civic engagement, such as voter registration rates or civic achievements.
- Evaluate the strength of your campus coalition and how it will play a role in your campus's long-term goals.

# Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan Template *(Continued)*

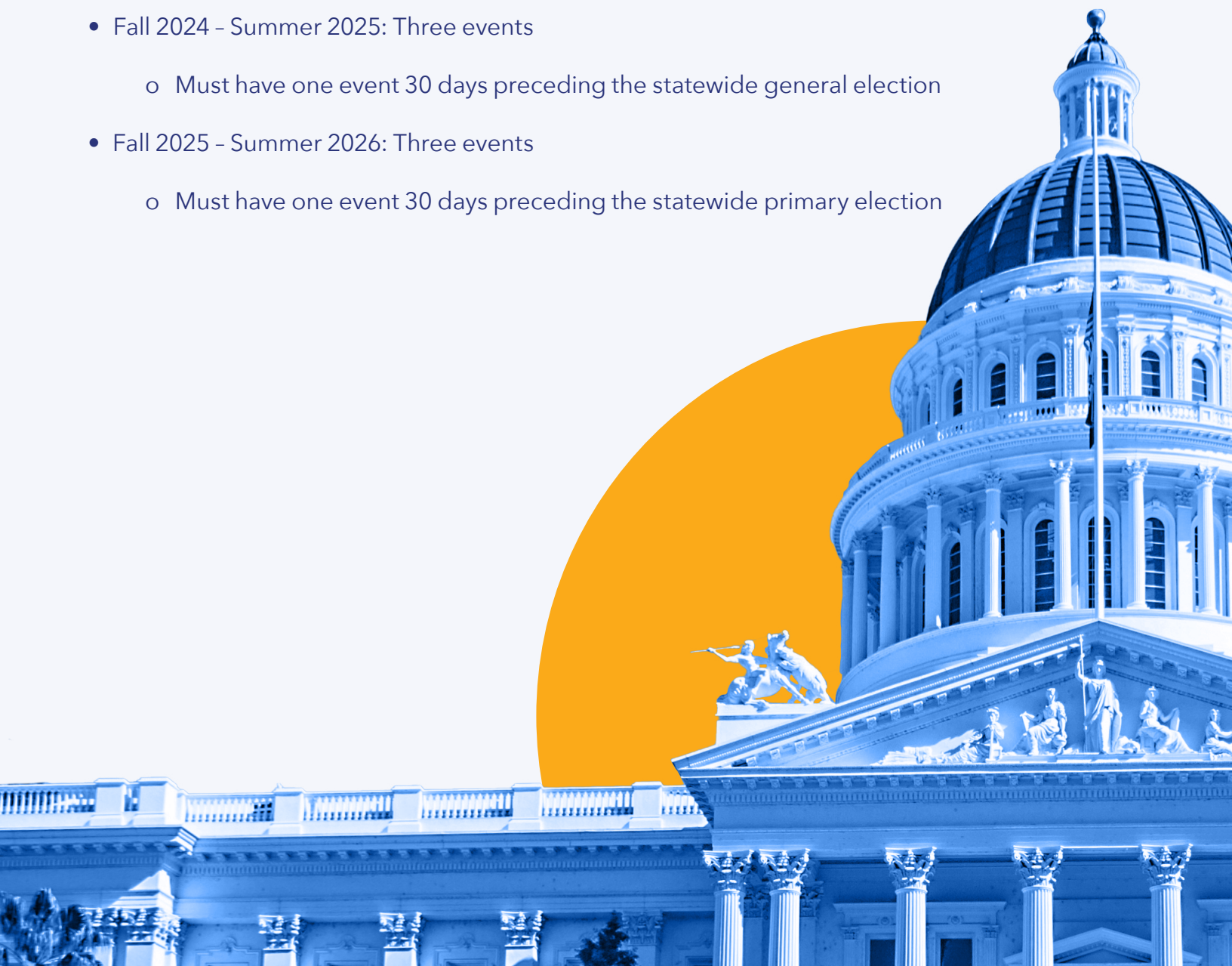
## Event Requirements

The SCVEA states a campus is required to have a minimum of three civic engagement events within an academic year. For every even-numbered year, there must be an event within the final 30 days preceding a statewide primary election and a general election.

- Provide a summary of at least three events your campus plans to execute during the next two academic years. This equals a minimum of six events total. We encourage more events when possible, especially during statewide election cycles.

### Example:

- Fall 2024 – Summer 2025: Three events
  - Must have one event 30 days preceding the statewide general election
- Fall 2025 – Summer 2026: Three events
  - Must have one event 30 days preceding the statewide primary election



# Effective Outreach Events & Strategies

The following information provides examples of events that your campus can implement to help meet the requirements of The Student Civic and Voter Empowerment Act (SCVEA). It also includes a list of suggested strategies aimed at enhancing civic engagement on your campus.

## Event Planning Reminders

- When planning an event, keep the following information in mind:
  - Date and time: Choose a suitable date and time for the event.
  - Reach and promotion: Ensure there is effective outreach and promotion.
  - Voter registration and election information: Provide opportunities for voter registration and share information about the upcoming statewide election.
    - ▶ Keep track of voter registration obtained from events to measure the success of your campus's events. You may use this information in the reflection section of the CVEAP.

## Sample Outreach Events

- Civic Holidays
  - **Election Hero Day**
    - ▶ Educate students on the key individuals involved in elections, such as local election officials, poll workers, and election clerks.
  - **National Voter Education Week**
    - ▶ Promote student understanding of the voting process by organizing activities around voter registration, understanding contents on the ballot and creating a plan to vote.
  - **National Voter Registration Day**
    - ▶ Celebrate this day by actively engaging students in voter registration initiatives. Campuses can organize voter registration booths in populated areas on campus.
  - **Vote Early Day**
    - ▶ Utilize email and social media platforms to raise awareness about the benefits of creating a plan to vote. Promote the importance of voting early and emphasize how early voting helps ensure maximum participation in the electoral process.



# Effective Outreach Events & Strategies (Continued)

## Creative Events

- Host a creative design contest.
  - Students can create stickers, t-shirts and posters around civic engagement.
  - Campus highlight:
    - ▶ California College of the Arts hosted a **“Get out the Vote” sticker design contest** where students created stickers with different voting slogans. The winners had their sticker printed and distributed across campus.
- Host a festival centered around civic engagement.
  - Campuses can host festivals around music, art and cultural observances.
  - Campus highlight:
    - ▶ UC Berkeley organizes VoteChella, a free civic engagement music festival aimed at registering students to vote and promoting civic involvement.
- To learn more about how the Associated Students of the University of California hosted this event, please view the **2022 VOICE Project Report**. This report describes how UC Berkeley was able to execute this event, overall expenses and lessons learned.

## Suggested Strategies

- Incorporate voter registration at the beginning of each semester/quarter.
  - Compose an email to all students with voter registration information and include the following link to register to vote: <https://registertovote.ca.gov/?t=s>.
- Have a succession plan in place to ensure that your campus’s CVEC or the individual responsible for civic engagement activities is in a long-term role.
  - This strategy will improve communication with all your campus’s partners.
- Create a campus coalition to include students, faculty, county election officials and community groups.
  - Schedule regular meetings to discuss event planning, share resources and coordinate initiatives.
  - Explore creative incentives for students who actively participate in the coalition, encouraging sustained involvement and recognizing their contributions.

# Effective Outreach Events & Strategies *(Continued)*

## Suggested Strategies *(Continued)*

- Encourage professors to discuss voter education and civic engagement with their students.
  - Professors can share SVP resources and important election information with students.
  - Incentivize students who participate in voter registration drives, assisting at the polls or tabling.
- Collaborate with the county election officials.
  - Establish a partnership and maintain regular communication with your county election officials. They can provide election support and answer questions as needed.
- Take advantage of available toolkits and resources provided by the California Secretary of State.
  - SVP has a wide range of resources and toolkits covering voter education, action plans, outreach materials and election resources.
  - Visit the [SVP resources page](#).



# Submission Instructions

- Submit to [caststudentsvote@sos.ca.gov](mailto:caststudentsvote@sos.ca.gov) on October 1 by midnight of an even-numbered year.
- Please title your CVEAP with the following structure:
  - Campus name, year of CVEAP submission
    - ▶ E.g. California Secretary of State, 2024 - 2026 Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan
- We encourage campuses to submit a draft of a CVEAP before the October 1 deadline to the California Secretary of State Students Vote Project for additional feedback and support. You may also schedule a meeting for review using SVP Office Hours at <https://calendar.app.google/NTa8ynPEyjh73w6k8>.

## Transparency

Once submitted, each CVEAP is made public to the California Legislature, becomes public information and may be subject to further review and analysis by interested parties.

## Contact Us

### SVP Email

For any questions regarding SVP, please email us at [caststudentsvote@sos.ca.gov](mailto:caststudentsvote@sos.ca.gov).

### SVP Office Hours

Office Hours are a designated time when the SVP team is available to provide support, guidance, and resources. Office Hours are currently held on Thursdays from 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM PT.

- Schedule a time: <https://calendar.app.google/NTa8ynPEyjh73w6k8>
- To meet outside Office Hours, email us at [caststudentsvote@sos.ca.gov](mailto:caststudentsvote@sos.ca.gov) to schedule an alternative time.

### SVP Website



View our latest resources and updates on our website at <https://studentsvoteproject.sos.ca.gov> or scan the QR code.

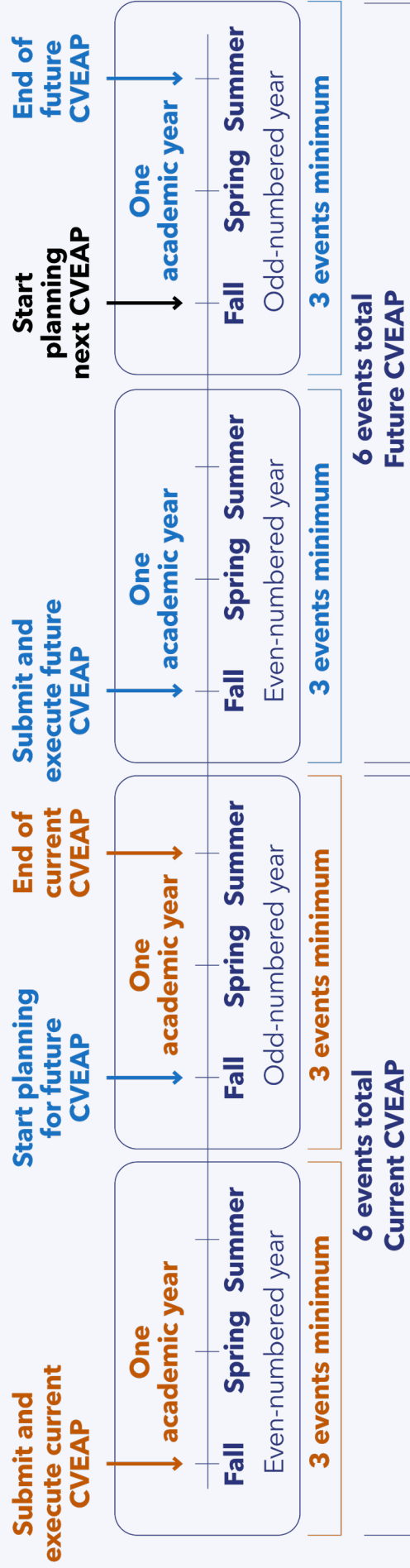
## Subscribe for Updates

To receive updates, [subscribe to our email list](#).

# Sample CVEAP Timeline

Below is an illustrated timeline of how to draft and submit your CVEAP to the California Secretary of State. The current CVEAP is submitted during the fall semester of an even-numbered year. We recommend preparing for a future CVEAP during the fall semester of an odd numbered year to allow enough time to plan.

**Reminder:** California Community Colleges and California State University campuses are required to host a minimum of three civic engagement events per academic year. For every even-numbered year, there must be an event within the final 30 days preceding a statewide primary election and a general election.



**Key:**

- Current CVEAP
- Future CVEAP
- Each box represents one academic year