CALIFORNIA
VOTER'S CHOICE ACT

QUICK

START

GUIDE

About

This quick start guide is designed to be a supplement to the Voter's Choice Act (VCA) Starter Kit developed by the Secretary of State's Voter's Choice Act Team. This quick starter kit is intended to be used as a starting point for county elections administrators that are considering adopting the Voter's Choice Act model for election administration in their county.

The Voter's Choice Act is an exciting new model for elections administration. This new model seeks to make participation in democracy easier for the voter and simplify the election administration process in certain ways. It also brings new challenges and requires additional levels of community input about election administration. The Voter's Choice Act covers 10 pages in the California Elections Code, introduces numerous new concepts and requirements, and this can make the planning process seem complicated. Luckily, the Secretary of State worked closely with the five counties that implemented the VCA for the 2018 election and developed a number of tools and materials that should lessen the burden for the next set of administrators seeking to make voting easier and more convenient.

This quick start guide should be used as a starting point to begin the planning process for VCA implementation. County officials should consider the questions in each of the four sections of this guide. After working through each of the sections county staff should be prepared to begin planning the next steps. This is when the VCA Starter Kit will become the most useful. The tools, materials, and examples available in the Starter Kit will help provide additional context and opportunities to learn from past practices. The Starter Kit covers a wide range of planning, logistical, technical, and outreach tools and examples that are meant to provide in-depth opportunities for analysis.

1 Voting Technology

A. Do you know how your EMS will look up a voter from anywhere in the county at any vote center location?

B. Can you produce a ballot for any voter at any vote center location?

C. Do you already have a remote accessible vote by mail system (RAVBM)?

2 Budget

A. Do you need Board approval of your budget?

B. Do you know how you will recruit and pay for vote center workers and vote center locations?

C. Do you already have a budget for public outreach in your current budget?

3 Vote Center and Drop Box Siting Process

A. Do you know how you will consider the fourteen criteria when looking at where vote centers will be placed?

B. Do you know how you will recruit locations to host vote centers, including site surveys?

C. Do you have a plan for securing drop box locations (interior or exterior)?

4 Community Outreach Planning

A. Do you already have a LAAC and VAAC?

B. What offices and organizations will support your efforts?

C. What types of outreach activities will be part of your plan?

Voting Technology

Goal: Consider the key functions that are required in a voting system in order to properly administer an election using the Voter's Choice Act.

Pre-clearance: Systems that meet the California Voting System Standards (CVSS) are certified to have the capabilities to run VCA elections. For more information about all systems certified under CVSS contact SOS OVSTA (details at end of the guide).

Questions to consider:
1. How will you look up and update a voter record in near real time at any vote center location? Will you use a paper roster, laptops, or e-pollbooks?
2. Can you produce all ballot styles for a voter at any vote center location?
3. Will you need to acquire a connectivity solution to provide secure data connections from vote centers to the central office?
4. Can you administer conditional voter registration at any vote center location in the county?
5. Do you have a remote accessible vote by mail system?
6. What changes will need to be made to your emergency backup plan?
7. What support will your vendor(s) provide as you transition?

Resources:
- Your EMS vendor may have tools that would be useful for implementing vote centers already in your current set up.
- Sacramento County produced a request for proposal (RFP) and a copy of this RFP is available in the full VCA Starter Kit.
- Some state money is available for counties to purchase or lease equipment. Contact OVSTA at the Secretary of State's office for additional details about state funds for voting systems. The systems authorized for reimbursement under this program all meet current CVSS requirements.

List of Possible Equipment Needs:
- Ballot on Demand (BoD)
- RAVBM system
- Additional/New Mail Sorter and warehouse room for many more VBM ballots
- Signature Verification System
- New Voting System
- Equipment for Manual Tally process
- Ability to produce online voter index (walk lists) subscription

Budgets

Goal: Consider the budgeting process in your county and determine resources are available to administer an election using the Voter's Choice Act.

Questions to consider:
1. What is the deadline for preparing the 2020 budget proposal?
2. Does the budget include acquiring new election equipment?
3. Will you need to purchase additional drop boxes?
4. Will you need additional money for tech support?
5. What will your maximum daily budget to lease space for a vote center be?
6. How will vote center workers be compensated and will this require any special human resource processes by the county?
7. What is your budget for public education and outreach? Does this include the cost of two direct contacts to voters (usually by mail)?
8. Are there processes, materials, or agreements for which you are paying now that won't be needed for a VCA election?

Resources:
- 2018 VCA counties reported that the cost of the election remained similar to that of a polling place model election. However, the costs were distributed across different program areas, with outreach and education taking up a larger portion of the budget. Several county budgets are available in the VCA Starter Kit for reference.
- Some cost savings may be realized through using existing resources developed by the SOS, VCA Working Group, the Future of California Elections, and others. These resources include design, messaging, video and audio resources, and other voter facing material.

Vote Center Siting Process Development

<u>Goal:</u> Establish the process by which the Elections office will consider the criteria for vote center placement and communicate their findings with the community.

<u>Data:</u> What is the minimum number of vote centers and drop boxes that will be required? (Dropbox = 1 per 15,000 voters, 11-day = 1 per 50,000, 4-day = 1 per 10,000)

Additionally, will you need any special permissions or county processes in order to enter into lease agreements for vote center locations?

<u>Considerations (the fourteen criteria in code to be considered):</u>

- ☐ Proximity to public transit
- ☐ Proximity to communities with historically low vote by mail usage
- ☐ Proximity to population centers
- ☐ Proximity to language minority communities
- ☐ Proximity to voters with disabilities
- ☐ Proximity to communities with low rates of vehicle ownership
- ☐ Proximity to low-income communities
- ☐ Proximity to communities of eligible voters that are not registered
- ☐ Proximity to geographically isolated populations (i.e. Native Reservations)
- ☐ Access to free parking
- ☐ Time and distance a voter must travel to reach a location
- ☐ The need for alternate voting method for voters with disabilities
- ☐ Traffic patterns
- ☐ The need for mobile vote centers in addition to those established by 450

Community Engagement:

Vote Center site selection should be a process of gathering public input. The elections office should be able to clearly and easily explain how the process will work to community members and how public input will be considered. People need to understand their role in the decision making process in order to feel confident their opinions will be taken into account. You will also need to prepare an explanation of instances where you make decisions between two or more possible locations.

Resources:

The California Civic Engagement Project developed a tool to help counties consider vote center location needs in 2018. You can see their data and resources at http://ccep.usc.edu/vote-center-siting-tool. Reach out to the 2018 VCA Counties to hear more about their processes, including GiS Heat Mapping (used in Sacramento).

Community Outreach Planning

Goal: Establish a framework for the community outreach and engagement work that is needed to ensure voters are educated about the switch to the Voter's Choice Act model.

Questions to consider:
1. Does the Elections office have a LAAC and VAAC established (Deadling October 1, 2019)? If not, planning to create these should be the top community outreach priority as it is a requirement in the Elections Code.
2. Does the Elections office already have contacts with local non-profit community organizations, local government, and school groups?
3. How will you reach voters with disabilities, language minority groups, and other disadvantaged communities?
4. How will you expand your network of community partners?
5. What materials will you create? Include ideas for written, online, Radio/TV, and earned media.

Things to ask for in partnership:
- Ask the group to make presentations to other organizations around the county
- Ask the group to host a forum of local leaders to present the issue to leaders from across the county.
- Distribution of Election office materials at events.
- Collaborate on shared messaging to ensure all materials are accurate and easy to understand.
- If interest in collaboration is coming from lots of organizations and local governments, suggest they establish a coalition to allow for information sharing. This will also enable the Elections office to spend less time in meetings with many different groups.
- Elections office flyer distributed to their network.
- Joint creation of materials aimed at the organizations target audience.

Ideas for types of groups to approach:
- Organizations that serve voters with disabilities and language minority communities.
- Local governments, school boards, neighborhood associations, and libraries.
- Local Assembly, State Senate, and Congressional district offices.
- Philanthropic service organizations, clubs, business groups, and others that host meetings where information can be presented.
- Churches, coalitions, and other communities of interest in your county.

Contacts

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Voter's Choice Act Program		
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Office of Voting System Technology and Assessment (OVSTA)		
Todd Ross	916-695-1658	Tross1@sos.ca.gov
Nakesha Robinson	916-695-1635	nrobinson@sos.ca.gov
Rodney Rodriguez	916-695-1447	Rrodriguez2@sos.ca.gov
2018 Voter's Choice Act Counties		
Madera	559-675-7720	electionsinfo@co.madera.ca.gov
Napa	707-253-4321	elections@countyofnapa.org
Nevada	530-265-1298	Elections.mail@co.nevada.ca.us
Sacramento	916-875-6451	voterinfo@saccounty.net
San Mateo	650-312-5222	registrar@smcacre.org

Resources:

- The Secretary of State VCA Team is able and willing to support efforts to identify organizations and groups that could be approached to expand your local community networks.
- Local government officials are also a great resource for identifying local groups and can often provide an introduction to help facilitate an initial conversation.