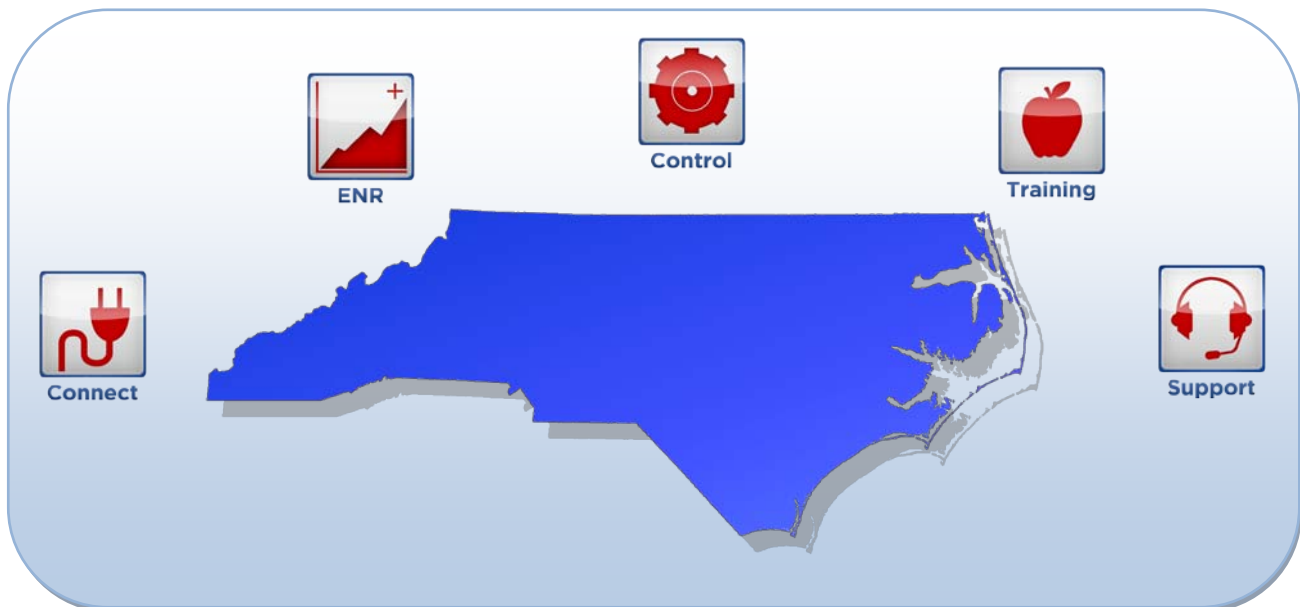


ONLINE ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

A CASE STUDY IN NORTH CAROLINA

Prepared for the NASS Conference
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Prepared by:

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INTRODUCTION

This white paper has been prepared jointly by SOE Software and the North Carolina State of Elections Board as a contribution to the NASS Conference to be held February 10th – 14th, 2011 in Washington, DC. In 2006 North Carolina purchased a single vendor election system for its 100 counties using funding from the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). During the 2004 Presidential Election, North Carolina experienced challenges providing the levels of transparency and immediacy that the public had come to expect after the drama of the 2000 Presidential Election. The state recognized a need to automate critical election administration tasks on a statewide basis to meet these expectations in a consistent and repeatable manner. After an internal evaluation of the State's capabilities and vision into setup procedures they decided that by automating internal processes and providing more content via the web they could reduce costs, improve efficiencies, and better prepare for elections state-wide.

A task force was assembled to look into statewide processes and identify areas where improvements could be made. It was determined that election officials and their staff require tools to optimize election operations, create confidence with the voters and manage all the tasks necessary to conduct a successful statewide election. These tools should leverage the latest advancements in web based technologies to ensure effective communications and enhanced accessibility. The state identified five (5) areas of the election administration process that web-based tools could be implemented to optimize election operations:

- Online Training for Election Officials and Poll Workers
- Enhanced Rebranded Web Presence
- Online Election Night Results Reporting
- Online Election Task Management
- Online Election Support

HIGH LEVEL SOLUTION

In July, 2007 the State of North Carolina released an RFP to vendors specializing in election services with the experience and technology capable of implementing web-based software tools across an entire state of 100 counties using an approved project management approach. The goals required that the implementation of the software tools and training of the State and County election officials be completed in time for the May 2008 Primary Election.

METHODOLOGY

The project's primary focus was to ensure full roll out prior to the May 2008 Primary. In order to meet the deadline successfully, the vendor would be required to work hand in hand with the State implementation team to ensure that mutually agreed upon project goals and timelines were met. Training for the 100 counties was conducted using online training sessions in small work groups of 15 or less users. The State implementation team conducted in-person local training sessions in support of the on-line training webinars. The project was tracked using approved project management tools and weekly conference calls to communicate the status of the project.

The dedicated effort resulted in the following web-based tools being fully implemented in time for the election:



Online Election Training for Poll Workers

- Consistent statewide training
- Assessment tools reinforce and refresh trainees
- Online or offline capability
- Assists in Poll Worker recruitment
- 3,500 Poll Workers trained



Election Content Management

- Award winning state election website
- Voter Registration summary
- Searchable voter statistics
- Voter lookups
- Sample Ballots



Online Election Night Results Reporting

- Easy to understand results with graphical displays
- Provides for County uploads and publishing
- Single location for all election night results for State and Counties
- Secure and powerful
- Detailed reporting tools



Election Task Management

- Task management for all 100 counties
- Election Calendar of events
- State visibility to identify potential problems



Online Election Support

- County help desk
- Escalation to the State level
- Knowledge base for quick solutions
- Comprehensive history reports

During the 2008 General Election, North Carolina was a focus of national attention due to the nature of the Presidential contest and the close outcome in the State. The internet traffic to

BENEFITS TO NORTH CAROLINA

The State of North Carolina has made tremendous progress in streamlining the election process and providing 100 counties with tools to automate and track the progress of each procedure in the election cycle. These comprehensive tools also allow the State to monitor the progress of each jurisdiction and be proactive in making corrections as necessary to insure the elections are conducted fairly and in a timely manner. This oversight has resulted in more comprehensive audit capabilities and the development of "institutional memory", by documenting for the first time what is required and when it is required in the election process.

*In 2007, the
State of
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experience
and
technology
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implementing
web-based
software
tools across*

The tools also assure that the education of the poll workers and information available to the voting public is accurate and current. This additional resource, supplemented by State and County classroom training, allows County and State officials to track progress of training and adjust from election to election based on where improvements are warranted.

By fully embracing the internet as a powerful communications tool to get our message to the people of the State of North Carolina, the Elections Division has made huge strides in improving transparency and availability of public data. The candidates, news service and general public now have available at one website, up-to-date, graphical information as the election results are being reported.

During the 2008 General Election, North Carolina was a focus of national attention due to the nature of the Presidential contest and the close outcome in the State. The internet traffic to the State's website to monitor election results was **10 times more** than the previous Presidential Election in 2004. The additional training and the more robust hosting infrastructure resulted in a significant value as the State met all service levels established for both website "up time" and expected response time of the election night results web presentation.

CONCLUSION

The decision to leverage technology to fill in holes in North Carolina's election administration did not come without a thorough self-evaluation. The group of people accepting the implementation of technology far exceeded the people that resisted change. Election jurisdictions that are faced with oversight responsibilities will discover that online tools will enhance their ability to insure election processes are on schedule, fully supported, and uniformly administered. Online tools provide a method for voters to register to vote, confirm their registration, polling location and review their sample ballot. Online tools provide the voting public and candidates a uniform reporting system that is readily available, easy to comprehend and provides downloadable reporting formats. Additionally, all of the solutions implemented were 100% accessible (508 / ADA Compliant) and allowed for growth and configuration to accommodate changes in policy, process, or procedures downstream.