Combatting Erosion of Voter Confidence with innovations of election administration

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Center for Homeland Defense and Security Master’s Degree Program

a DHS/FEMA program at the Naval Postgraduate School

Monterey, CA and DC area campuses

18 months of study

Application Deadlines: May 1 & Dec 1

https://www.chds.us/c/academic-programs/masters/
Research Processes

Extensive Literature Review
(Pew, Gallup, Academic, International)

Interviews: County poll worker trainers

Focus Group: First-time 2020 poll workers

Case Study Reviews – Tech Deployment
(Iowa Caucus App 2016 vs 2020)
Significant Findings: VE/VC Drivers

• Voter Experience is a key driver in Voter Confidence

• Poll workers are the key front-line factor in VE/VC

• Voters with greater understanding = fewer interactions

• Voter Education = Poll worker training content
Voter Confidence Path

Voter correctly understands the voting system / process

Voter interacts with poll worker.

Poll worker actions AGREE with voter’s understanding of the process.

Poll worker provides an explanation.

Explanation matches observations.

Voter interacts with poll worker.

Poll worker actions DO NOT AGREE with voter’s understanding of the process.

Poll worker provides an explanation.

Explanation DOES NOT match observations.

Impacted by Voter Education

Voter believes they understand, but is NOT correctly informed

Voter does NOT understand the voting system / process

Voter asks Poll Worker for an explanation.

Poll Worker DOES NOT provide an explanation.

Explanation DOES NOT match observations.

Impacted by Poll Worker Training

Voter has minimal interaction & casts vote successfully.

Voter interacts with poll worker.

Poll worker actions AGREE with voter’s understanding of the process.

Poll worker provides an explanation.

Explanation matches observations.

Voter interacts with poll worker.

Poll worker actions DO NOT AGREE with voter’s understanding of the process.

Poll worker provides an explanation.

Explanation DOES NOT match observations.

HIGHER rated voter experience

Voter does NOT understand the voting system / process

Voter does NOT ask questions.

Voter asks Poll Worker for an explanation.

Poll Worker DOES NOT provide an explanation.

Explanation DOES NOT match observations.

LOWER rated voter experience

Impact of Voter Education

≈ 160M voters

Impact of Poll Worker Training

≈ 1M poll workers

Positive experience enhances and rebuilds voter confidence

Negative experience leads to distrust & erosion of voter confidence

≈ 160M voters

≈ 1M poll workers
Significant Findings: Technology

• Three Constraints Theory – Scope v. Cost v. Time
  • Project: Training a poll worker to train the voter

• Typical Training – Policy, Procedure, Norms
  • TRAIN INSTEAD for lack of technical assistance

• Visual Differentiation → Stratified Expectations
  • Enables gamification, reward motivators

• Short Windows of Training require fast uptakes
  • Recruit QUALITY over QUANTITY. Success breeds same
Additional Recommendations

• Standardize to a baseline, Test for comprehension

• Gamify and differentiate to motivate quality

• Create Comprehensive Voter Education Plan

• Properly Prepare Poll workers to Teach Tech
Pragmatic Preparation + Concise Communication
THANK YOU

Any questions?

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