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2009 Professional Practices Program

Raising the Bar – Trainers & Trainees

AKA –
Poll Workers Training Poll Workers

Davis County Utah

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We have complete control of our election process, until Election Day; then it’s basically out of our hands. Regardless of the careful planning and all the preparations we have made, we have to sit back, cross our fingers, and hope and pray that everything goes smoothly – because we have turned our entire process over to a bunch of temporary workers.

Like every other election official we have difficulty and a great deal of stress regarding our poll workers. Whether the poll workers know it or not, they have great power because they can make or break an election.

We knew we had to “Raise the Bar” and get better qualified poll workers. But for them to be better qualified we had to “Raise Our Bar” and provide better trainers and training.

With the age of electronic voting equipment and budget cuts, we faced the challenge of having the needed resources to effectively train our poll workers. With all the election preparations, we didn’t have enough regular staff to do the training so we hired a professional training company; but they didn’t understand the overall election process and were not as effective as we desired.

To “Raise Our Bar”, we decided to have smaller training sessions and use the hands-on breakout group method. But now we had a greater dilemma as we needed even more trainers to do the breakout groups. To get trainers who knew the election process was a challenge in itself. We asked ourselves this question:

**Question:** Who knows better than anyone else what the poll workers need and what goes on at the polls?

**ANSWER:** Poll Workers!

**PLAN:** Recruit poll workers to be our poll worker trainers

**IMPLEMENTATION:**
- Recruited poll workers to be our trainers
  - Sent out letters and e-mails
- Provided training and materials for the applicants to do a “test teach”
- Applicants demonstrated their training skills to a panel of election department staff
  - Rated and scored on:
    - Knowledge of material
    - Presentation appearance and skills
    - Ability to handle unplanned questions and situations
- Selected head trainers and breakout group trainers

**TRAINER’S TRAINING:**
- Conducted “Train the Trainer” training
  - Provided training material to the trainers
    - Poll Worker Handbook
    - PowerPoint presentations
    - Hands-on election supplies
    - Poll Worker evaluations (tests)
- Assigned head trainers to oversee the session and coordinate breakout groups
  - Note: Head trainers knew the entire process and were able to teach any breakout group if needed
- Assigned specific topics to the breakout trainers
  - Note: Breakout trainers were able to teach more than one topic

**POLL WORKER’S TRAINING:**
- Training Sessions:
  - Class size ranged from 16 – 20 people
  - Classes were specific to the poll worker positions – Poll Manager, Clerks, etc.
    - Overview of the whole polling location process, but the majority of training was specific and covered full details of the particular position
General training – applied to all poll workers – conducted by the head trainer:
   - PowerPoint Presentation – 30 minutes
     - What to expect at the training, what time to be at the polls, disability training,
       electioneering, poll watcher and exit polls, emergency plan and procedures, etc.

Breakout groups – conducted by breakout trainers:
   - Classes were divided into 4 groups of 4 or 5 people
   - Each breakout – 20 minutes, and then rotated to the next topic
   - Sample topics:
     - Processing Voters
     - Provisional ballots
     - Opening and Closing Polls
     - Ballot Reconciliation
     - Supplies
     - Troubleshooting
   - Personal level of training
     - Breakout trainers were better able to evaluate the poll worker’s skills and
       competency
   - Simulated election day with role playing voter scenarios
     - Hands-on supplies
       - Poll workers processed voters using all the supplies and tools they would use
         on Election Day.
         - Official Register/Poll books, provisional ballots, reconciliation
           forms, etc.
         - Supplies are laminated – allowed for multiple use
         - Dry erase markers were used write on the books and forms

EVALUATION (TEST):
   - Written test at the conclusion of the training session
     - Test specific to position and training information
     - Answer sheet sent home with each worker
     - Election staff correct test
   - Breakout trainers noted any concerns
   - Helped to evaluate the effectiveness of the trainer and training materials

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT:
   - The head and breakout trainers conducted the open house style practice sessions
   - Invitations were given to every poll worker
     - All encouraged to attend
       - Came when they wanted, stayed as long as they wanted, practiced what they wanted
   - Required to attend Practice Makes Perfect:
     - Missed more than 5 questions on test
     - Breakout leader recommendation

POST ELECTION ANALYSIS:
   - Post election poll worker survey
     - Survey sent to very poll worker
       - Training critique
         - Overwhelming positive feedback
         - Asked for more role play scenarios
   - Additional expense for breakout trainers
     - Determined the benefits far outweighed the added costs
   - Continue with training format

We felt this training was one of the most successful programs we had ever implemented. Our poll workers loved it! They knew the trainers understood their needs. They knew their jobs better than ever before. They knew the voting process. And their supplies and reports were nearly perfect. Confidence in the training process eliminated a great deal of Election Day stress for us and the poll workers. We accomplished what we set out to do and we met the challenge of “Raising the Bar”.
Lead Trainer
Opening – General Training

VOTER REGISTRATION

- Eligible to Vote Early:
  - Registered 30 days prior to election
  - Actual registration: postmarked 30 days prior
  - Registered in County Clerk's Office
  - Registration forms allowed to County Clerk’s Office
  - Polling Place: August 17th

- Not eligible to Vote Early, but eligible to vote on Election Day:
  - Register in person in County Clerk’s Office up until 2 hours before the election
  - Polling Place: August 17th

Registration deadlines create challenges for ensuring that official records are accurate.