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## **2014 Professional Practices Program**

# **Problem Solving Solutions Making Experts of Us All**

**Davis County, Utah**

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Problem Solving Solutions – Making Experts of Us All  
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Have you ever had a problem with your computer, or other device that you couldn't fix? Have you called for technical help only to be placed on hold until an experienced technician becomes available? Does this ever happen to your poll workers when they have called in because not all of your staff is trained on your voting machines or your electronic poll books. This was the common experience our poll workers had a number of years ago. Within the County Clerk's Office, election administration is just one of the many hats we wear. Many of our staff have little involvement in elections throughout the year and although they do receive training, it is simply not possible for them to remember all the details of our equipment and procedures when they are only exposed to it a couple of times a year. When the phones would light up on Election Day it was these staff members that would handle the overflow from our call center. They would do their best to answer the questions, but unfortunately they just did not have the expertise to resolve many of the situations they were asked to deal with. We recognized that in order to improve our support to our poll workers, we needed to provide a tool that would be easy and quick to use, requiring little or no training, and would empower all of our staff to become experts on the technical challenges facing our poll workers. In 2010 we developed our first version of Problem Solving Solutions.

**What is Problem Solving Solutions?** It is basically an interactive PowerPoint slide show presentation set up with hyperlinks. The user opens the presentation and is presented with a menu to choose from indicating the problem they are trying to solve. As the user clicks on different buttons, they will be prompted to ask questions to the poll worker which will help narrow down possible scenarios and find the solution to the problem. The slides include photographs and are linked together with the hyperlinks which allow the user to move forward through the scenario. You can compare it to a maze where at each turn you are faced with a question, the end of your path depends on your answer. More than just a simple computer program, Problem Solving Solutions is a combination of knowledge and experiences of our staff, who are experts in these areas, and is now shared with every staff member. No longer do our poll workers need to be placed on hold until an available technician becomes available.

**How has Problem Solving Solutions improved efficiency and accuracy?** The most obvious answer to this question is that we now have additional staff that is capable of resolving so many of the common issues we face on Election Day. Problem Solving Solutions has standardized our approaches to solving problems which makes it easier for the poll worker to understand and to follow verbal instructions over the phone. An unforeseen benefit that we have found is that by following the methodical process in Problem Solving Solutions, our staff has been more accurate in the diagnosis of the problem and this has expedited the resolution.

**How has Problem Solving Solutions changed over the years?** As the saying goes, the only thing constant is change. For those of us in election administration there are few statements truer than this. As our laws, procedures, and technology have changed, so to have the problems we face. A great benefit of Problem Solving Solutions is that it is easy to update and change, it has been and will continue to be an

ever evolving application. We also continue to add additional features that provide quick references to answer questions to the public as well, such as ID requirements and polling location lists.

Problem Solving Solutions is a great example of how to use a simple program that most offices already have, to make our job easier, more accurate, and more efficient. Davis County uses Problem Solving Solutions in each election to help solve the problems and answer questions faced by our poll workers, our voters and our staff.