

Voter Engagement Democracy Brief

Voter engagement is a cornerstone of a healthy democracy, ensuring that citizens actively participate in shaping the policies and decisions that impact their communities. While voter turnout in national elections often garners significant attention, local and city government elections are equally, if not more, crucial. These elections directly influence local issues such as education, infrastructure, public safety, and community development. To enhance voter engagement at the local level, strategic initiatives can be implemented to empower citizens, raise awareness, and simplify the voting process.

Strategies:

Cities and local governments can implement various tactics to improve voter engagement and encourage higher voter turnout. Here are some effective strategies:

1. Conduct Voter Education and Outreach: Launch comprehensive voter education campaigns to inform residents about the voting process, important election dates, and voter registration requirements. Conduct outreach efforts through community events, local media, social media platforms, and partnerships with community organizations.



2. Provide Voter Registration Assistance: Simplify the voter registration process by offering online registration options and providing registration assistance at community centers, libraries, schools, and other accessible locations. Collaborate with community organizations to conduct voter registration drives.

3. Increase Voter Access: Take steps to expand access to the polls, such as extending early voting periods, implementing no-excuse absentee voting, establishing polling locations in easily accessible areas, and ensuring adequate language assistance and accommodations for voters with disabilities.

4. Mobilize Voters: Engage in targeted voter mobilization efforts to encourage eligible voters to vote. This can involve door-to-door canvassing, phone banking, and text messaging campaigns to remind residents about upcoming elections and the importance of voting.

This may be done in a number of ways, including:

- Branch.Vote — [Branch](#) is an interactive website that walks voters through their unique ballot before they go to vote.
- Turbo Vote — [TurboVote](#) is a non-profit website that seeks to increase voter turnout by helping its users register to vote, find polling places, and research election issues.

5. Partner with Community Organizations: Collaborate with community organizations and nonprofits to promote voter engagement. These partnerships can help reach underserved communities and encourage voter participation through targeted outreach and information dissemination. Such organizations include:

- [National Voter Registration Day](#) -- National Voter Registration Day (September 19th) is a nonpartisan civic holiday celebrating our democracy. Sign up to become a partner [here](#).
- [Vote Early Day](#) -- Vote Early Day (October 26th) is a nonpartisan movement working to ensure all Americans have the tools to vote early. Sign up to be a partner [here](#).



6. Implement Civic Education: Work with local schools to incorporate civic education into the curriculum, teaching students about the importance of voting, democratic processes, and the responsibilities of citizenship. For example, in an effort to provide civic education for the community, [the City of Lancaster offers the Neighborhood Leaders Academy](#)---a six-week civic training and grant program for community leaders looking to expand their knowledge of Lancaster’s city government and learn community-building skills.

7. Recruit Poll Workers: Actively recruit diverse and representative poll workers to create a welcoming and inclusive voting environment. Encourage young people and members of underrepresented communities to serve as poll workers, fostering a sense of ownership and engagement in the electoral process.

How does recruiting young people as Poll Workers improve youth voter turnout?

Recent [research](#) conducted by [CIRCLE](#) in partnership with the Minneapolis Elections & Voter Services office, the YMCA of the North’s Center for Youth Voice, Auburn University, and young leaders highlights the positive impact of young people serving as poll workers on youth civic engagement. The Minneapolis Election Judge Project aimed to understand the experiences and benefits of young poll workers, explore the potential role of youth poll worker programs in fostering a more equitable electorate, and provide recommendations for other communities interested in implementing similar programs.

These research findings show:

- **Young people serving as poll workers facilitates civic education:** Serving as poll workers exposes young people to the electoral process, increasing their knowledge and understanding of how elections work. Youth become more informed about voter registration, ballot casting, and counting procedures, which empowers them to educate their peers and promote civic awareness.
- **Increased Youth Turnout:** The presence of young people as poll workers can positively influence overall youth voter turnout. Their peers may feel more encouraged and inspired to participate in elections when they see individuals their age actively involved in the process. Young poll workers can engage with their peers, share information about voting rights, and encourage them to exercise their democratic right to vote.

8. Promote Language Accessibility: Local governments can (and some already do) provide translated voting materials, multilingual assistance, and language access services to ensure that language barriers do not hinder voter engagement. Where appropriate they can also work to train poll workers to effectively assist voters with limited English proficiency. Some examples of cities improving language accessibility include:

- [*Philadelphia Is About to Triple the Number of Languages It Supports in Elections \(2022\)*](#);
- [*New Colorado Election Laws Expand Multilingual Voting Access \(2021\)*](#).

9. Ensure Election Information Availability: Ensure that election information, including sample ballots, polling locations, and candidate information, is readily available and easily accessible through multiple channels, such as websites, hotlines, and printed materials.

10. Implement Transparent and Trustworthy Elections: Foster trust in the electoral process by ensuring transparency, accountability, and security in elections. Communicate and address concerns regarding voter suppression, fraud prevention, and fair redistricting practices to build confidence among voters.

Costs Associated with Voter Engagement Strategies

The costs to implement voter engagement tactics on behalf of local governments and cities can vary widely based on the scope of the engagement campaign, the strategies used, the size of the jurisdiction, the resources available, and the specific goals of the campaign. Voter engagement tactics aim to increase voter turnout, educate citizens about elections, and encourage participation in the democratic process.

Here are some cost considerations to keep in mind:

- **Voter Education Materials-** Costs for creating and distributing informational materials such as voter guides, brochures, flyers, and educational videos that provide information about the election process, candidates, and ballot measures;
- **Community Outreach and Events-** Budget for hosting voter education events, town hall meetings, candidate forums, and workshops to engage citizens and provide opportunities for direct interaction with candidates and officials;
- **Digital and Social Media Campaigns-** Costs associated with creating and promoting online content, social media campaigns, targeted ads, and webinars to reach a broader audience and encourage voter participation.

Given the range of factors involved, there isn't a one-size-fits-all estimate for the cost of implementing voter engagement tactics. If you're planning to undertake voter engagement efforts, it's advisable to consult with experts in communication, public relations, or community engagement, and to conduct a detailed cost analysis based on your specific circumstances and goals. Additionally, seeking partnerships and leveraging available resources can help offset some of the costs associated with voter engagement campaigns.