Improving Your Election Website

Communicating Trusted Election Information
May 7, 2020
#TrustedInfo2020
Housekeeping

- Take notes using the **Participant Guide**
- **Captioned recordings** will be available
- Use the **chat panel** to say hello, chat with other attendees, participate in breakouts, and ask questions
Today’s objectives

- Identify the top civic information people are looking for online
- Apply principles of plain language and design to your website
- Prioritize methods for building trust with your voters online
Today’s agenda

- Introduction (5 minutes)
- Prioritizing key election information (15 minutes)
- Making election information usable (45 minutes)
- Building trust online (10 minutes)
- Q&A (10 minutes)
- Course survey (3 minutes)
PRIORITIZING KEY ELECTION INFORMATION

How to address your community’s needs
What are voters’ top 5 questions in a typical election?

Take 1 minute to write down your ideas, then we’ll share what the research shows.
Top questions from voters

1. What is on the ballot?
2. How do I get an absentee ballot, and when is it due?
3. Where do I vote?
4. Who is in office now?
5. How do I register to vote?

Top question from non-voters

1. How do I participate in an election?
Let’s experiment

What’s it like to search for information on a county election website?
#1 What is on the ballot?
Registered Voters as of 08/20/2018 (Includes Active and Inactive Voters)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
<th>NPA</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>135,535</td>
<td>137,696</td>
<td>117,812</td>
<td>2,956</td>
<td>393,999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Register to Vote  | Vote by Mail Request  | Precinct Locator  | Contact Us
Voter Status      | Vote by Mail Status   | Provisional Status | Translate

Avoid the Rush...

What is a Closed Primary Election?

Be Election Ready!

Order a Vote-by-Mail Ballot Today!

Sample Ballot

Primary Election
August 28, 2018 - Sample Ballot
Elección Primaria
28 de agosto 2018 - Papeleta de Muestra

2018 Proposed Constitutional Amendments & Information

News & Updates

2018 Canvassing Board Information
#2 How do I get an absentee ballot, and when is it due?
Election Information

VOTE AND THE CHOICE IS YOURS

Don’t vote ... and the choice is theirs. Register ... or you have no choice.

- CLICK HERE TO VOTE ELECTION DAY REQUIREMENTS
- CLICK HERE FOR VOTER REGISTRATION
- CLICK HERE FOR EARLY VOTING INFORMATION
# Early Voting

Click the Locations Below to see the Dates and Times of Operation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locations</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>view</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iron County Courthouse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68 S 100 E, Parowan Utah</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedar City Council Chambers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 N Main St, Cedar City</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enoch City Offices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900 E Midvalley Rd, Enoch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Click here for Absentee Voting Info]

[Click here for Voter Registration]

[Click here for Election Day Requirements]
#3 How do I register to vote?
CLERK'S OFFICE

Phone: 785-742-2581    Fax: 785-742-7705

Melissa Gormley
County Clerk

Deputy: Dawn Boyles
Clerk: Barb Grabhorn

Duties of the Office:
- Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners
Brown County Kansas

Clerk's Office
Phone: 785-742-2581 Fax: 785-742-7705

Melissa Gormley
County Clerk

Deputy: Dawn Boyles
Clerk: Barb Grabhorn

Duties of the Office:
- Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners

Election Info
- Voting Locations
- Early Voting
- Sample Ballots
- Forms

Advance Ballot Application
Federal Post Card Application
 Voter Registration
 Provisional Ballot Counting
Notices
Election Results
Recap

• Was it easy to find what you needed?
• Did the sites remind you of your own website?
• What suggestions do you have to improve the sites?
Putting plain language and plain design to work

MAKING ELECTION INFORMATION USABLE
Design → usability
Voter Registration and Elections

The Office of the City Clerk conducts and preserves the integrity of all local, state and national elections held in Manchester, New Hampshire. The next scheduled local elections will feature the State Primary Election on September 11, 2018, followed by the State General Election on November 6, 2018. The elections will be held between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. across all twelve city wards.

To view all upcoming ballots view our Sample Ballot page to see your choices as the ballots become available.

If you are unsure of the correct location for you to vote on Election Day, select the "Where do I vote?" option below.

Absentee Ballot applications for the upcoming elections can be printed using the link below and completed in the convenience of your home. As a registered Manchester voter, you may mail, e-mail (cityclerk@manchesternh.gov), fax, or hand deliver your completed application to the Office of the City Clerk, One City Hall Plaza, Manchester, NH 03101.

Absentee Ballot Application - State Primary and/or General Elections (9/11/18 & 11/6/18)
Elections

Take part in our democracy

Voters
- Prepare to vote
- Absentee voting
- Election results
- Election judge sign-up

Candidates
- File for office
- Campaign finance
- Election results

Clerks
- Clerk training materials
- Election day forms
Please note, as of March 17, the Inyo County Election's office is closed to all walk-in traffic, until the Covid-19 health emergency has been lifted.

- Election results
- Next election: November 3, 2020
- What's on the ballot
- Did you get my ballot?
What is plain design?

When you publish content using plain design, readers can quickly and easily find the information they need.
Plain design guidelines

• Include white space to make content manageable
• Use menus and headings effectively
• Use lists where appropriate
• Align content to the left of the page
• Use a sans serif font that is at least 12 point size
• Use strong contrast between text color and background
Beautiful & interesting
Plain & helpful
What is plain language?

Plain language is writing designed to ensure the reader understands as quickly, easily, and completely as possible.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plain_language
Why is plain language important?

- Reaches people with low literacy
- Increases accessibility
- Avoids misunderstandings
- Creates transparency
- Builds trust between you and the public
Before

If that oval is not marked, your vote cannot be counted for the candidate.

After

You must fill in the oval for your vote to count.

Source: Center for Civic Design
### Simple word substitutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of:</th>
<th>Try:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utilize</td>
<td>Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist</td>
<td>Help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement</td>
<td>Start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the event of</td>
<td>If</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disclose</td>
<td>Show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verify</td>
<td>Make sure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plain language guidelines

• Write in the positive
• Use active rather than passive voice
• Address the reader directly
• Use short words, short sentences, and short sections
• Use the words voters will be looking for, and avoid jargon
Let’s practice writing in plain language

Take 3 minutes to improve the following text, then we’ll share what we came up with.
If you are unable to locate your voter registration information but think you are registered to vote and you have not moved outside of your county of prior registration, you may be eligible to cast a provisional ballot during in-person absentee voting period at an appropriate early voting location or the county board of elections, or on Election Day at the correct polling place for your current address that may be counted.
Instead of:

If you are unable to locate your voter registration information but think you are registered to vote and you have not moved outside of your county of prior registration, you may be eligible to cast a provisional ballot during in person absentee voting period at an appropriate early voting location or the county board of elections, or on Election Day at the correct polling place for your current address that may be counted.

Try:

Please make sure your name and address for your voter registration are up-to-date.

If your information is not current, you may be asked to vote a provisional ballot.

Contact our election office so we can help you create a smooth voting plan for the next election!
Why use plain design and plain language on your election website?

Make it easy for people to **find** information

Make it easy for people to **understand** information
STEPS TO BOOST TRUST IN YOUR WEBSITE

New technical considerations
Add HTTPS

Adding Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure (HTTPS) protects visitors to your website.
Get started with HTTPS

• Partner with your county IT or website vendor
• Obtain security certificate for about $100 per year
• Visit https://https.cio.gov/ for more information
Move to .gov domain

https://www.countyelections.org
https://www.countyelections.gov

Moving to .gov helps your website visitors identify your site as official and trusted.
Get started with .gov domain

- Partner with your county IT or website vendor
- Complete required domain registration documents
- Obtain domain registration for $400 per year
- Visit [https://home.dotgov.gov/](https://home.dotgov.gov/) for more information
Test mobile friendliness
Get started with mobile friendliness

- Test on mobile devices
- Partner with your county IT or website vendor
- Visit https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly for more information
6 TIPS FOR IMPROVING YOUR ELECTION WEBSITE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board of Selectmen</th>
<th>Meetings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leonard Assard - First Selectman</td>
<td>First Tuesday - 7:00 PM - Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Deakin - Selectman</td>
<td>Third Tuesday - 7:00 PM - Town Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Butkus Jr. - Selectman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Town of Bethlehem operates under the Selectman-Board of Finance-Town Meeting form of government. The Selectmen have limited legislative powers; they convene the town meeting and assist in drafting ordinances which the town meeting adopts; they are the principal administrative officials of the town; they are responsible for the building and maintenance of roads; they keep the town's financial records; they are responsible for the administration of the town welfare services; and they appoint people to administrative boards and commissions. The duties and responsibilities of the Selectmen are varied and wide-ranging. While most of the day-to-day work is done through managers who report to the First Selectman, policy and procedural matters are handled by the board, sitting in public meetings (generally held the first and third Tuesday evenings of each month). The meetings start at 7:00 PM, and always include time during which concerns of the public may be voiced.
Let your menu do the work
Cut redundant content
Use clear terminology
Answer voters’ top questions
Boost trust

https
.gov
Additional support to improve your election website

ELECTION WEBSITE RESOURCES
Center for Civic Design field guide

https://civicdesign.org/fieldguides/
Build your own site using our template

Election website template

A template to create a straightforward election website that answers voters’ top questions

https://electiontools.org/tool/election-website-template
Usability testing kit

A collection of guidelines and templates to help you check the usability of election materials

🔒 https://electiontools.org/tool/usability-testing-kit
DISCUSSION
Discussion questions

• What resonated with you from today’s course? Any “ah-ha” moments?
• What are your next steps?
Discussion questions

• What questions do you have about what we covered today?
• What questions do you have about what we didn’t cover today?
We’ve covered a lot of ground

WRAPPING UP
Today’s objectives

- Identify the top civic information people are looking for online
- Apply principles of plain language and design to your website
- Prioritize methods for building trust with your voters online
Communicating Trusted Election Information

Accessible Communications for Election Offices
Tuesday, May 12th | 2pm EST

Social Media for Voter Engagement
Thursday, May 14th | 2pm EST

Later this summer...
Combating Election Misinformation
Thursday, July 30th | 2pm EST

technandciviclife.org/course/trusted-info/
Free COVID-19 Webinars for Election Officials

• May 19 – June 30
• 2 webinars per week (except June 2)
• 60 minutes each, with plenty of time for Q&A
• Sessions are stand-alone: register for what’s useful to you
• We’ll post the captioned recordings and slides after each webinar

[Link to website] techandciviclife.org/covid-19-webinars/
What was your experience with today’s course?

• A brief survey is linked in the chat box.
• Please complete the survey now to provide feedback and improve the course for future participants.
Thank you!

Email: hello@techandciviclife.org
Twitter: @HelloCTCL
Website: www.techandciviclife.org
#TrustedInfo2020