Streamlining the inbound ballot process

COVID-19 and Election Administration: Approaches for Election Officials
June 18, 2020
Housekeeping

- Be gracious about **work-from-home setups**
- **Restart Zoom** if needed
- Slides **and captioned recordings** will be available on the registration page
- Use the **chat panel** to say hello, chat with other attendees, and ask questions
Today’s objectives

● Use simple tools to estimate ballot volume, processing time, and resource needs
● Plan for time-intensive processes like ballot remakes and spoiled ballots
● **Update guidelines** for tracking, reconciling, adjudicating, and securing more mail ballots
Today’s agenda

- Introduction (5 minutes)
- Overview of inbound ballot processing (10 minutes)
- Inbound ballot processing in practice (10 minutes)
- Steps to prepare (15 minutes)
- Q&A (15 minutes)
- Wrapping up and course survey (5 minutes)
Hello, there!

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Center for Tech and Civic Life (CTCL)

Harnessing the promise of technology to modernize the American voting experience

@helloCTCL
www.techandciviclife.org
Federal resources

- Set of documents provide guidance for state, local, tribal, and territorial election officials

- Written by the Joint COVID-19 Working Group
  - Cyber Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)
  - Elections Infrastructure Government Coordinating Council (GCC)
  - Elections Infrastructure Sector Coordinating Council’s (SCC)

- https://www.cisa.gov/protect2020
Keep in mind

1. This is tough!
2. One size doesn’t fit all
3. Things will change
4. Preparation and flexibility > certainty
5. A supportive team > a solo mission
6. Your work *matters*, and it’s hugely appreciated
OVERVIEW OF INBOUND BALLOT PROCESSING

What is involved in processing? What are important considerations?
Receiving

Verification

Preparation

Scanning

Tabulation

Post-election audits
Ballot receiving

- Ballots are received from USPS and drop boxes
- Hand count or weigh ballots to estimate total
- Have a plan for undeliverable ballots
Ballot verification

- Record information in the voter registration database
- Signatures are reviewed
- Envelopes are opened and ballots are grouped into batches
Ballot preparation

- Ballots are removed from envelopes
- Run a zip tie through the envelopes to avoid missing a ballot
- The most space-intensive step
Ballot scanning

- Scanners read the marks on ballots
- Requires ballot duplication and adjudication
Ballot tabulation

- follow normal procedures for tabulation
Post-election audit

- Ensures accuracy of results and process
- Risk-limiting audits
What steps should you take to prepare?

INBOUND BALLOT PROCESSING IN PRACTICE
Streamlining the inbound ballot process

- How many absentee ballots are you expecting to receive?
- What is your timeline to process the AV ballots?
- How many workers/election inspectors do you need to hire?
- Will you be prepared for a post-election audit(s) (RLA)?
Increase in absentee voting

- No-reason absentee
- Same day voter registration
- AV Lean Process Improvement
- Impact of COVID-19
Timeline to process AV ballots

- Election day processing – 7am to 8pm
- Receiving/Organization of AV ballots
- Reconciling ballots
- Be present!
Increase the number of workers

- Office staff / AVCB workers
- Time your AVCB teams
- Impacts of COVID-19
  - Social distancing
  - Training
  - Retaining / recruiting election workers
Post-election audits

- Organization of processed ballots
- Storage of AV envelopes and applications
- Post-election audit checklist
- Risk limiting audit (RLA)
Inbound ballot processing
Key principles

- Chain of custody
- Ability to research backwards
- Dual handling and supervision
- Let technology do the work
Batch reconciliation form

- Batch size (50/250)
- Unique batch #
- Unique to year/election (reduce handwriting)
- Initials master sheet
- Subtract, don’t recount
- Use technology (scanner, slicer, folding machine, scale, etc)
### Approximate error rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effort Expended</th>
<th>Batch Size:</th>
<th>50</th>
<th>250</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less: Envelope rejects (1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less: Sig Ver reviews (4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less: Examination remakes (1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less: Scanning remake issues (1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Approximately 7% of ballots will need extra attention
Remake process
How can your office proactively plan for this process?

STEPS TO PREPARE
Who, why, and how

Helping jurisdictions adapt in a year of rapid, forced change to voting processes by integrating your local knowledge with best practices and expert advice from a wide range of sources.

- broad circle of advisors
- adapting to rapid, forced change
- integrating expert advice with local knowledge
Inbound mail ballot processing guide

Inbound Ballot Processing Guide

This guidance is general in nature and may not apply exactly as written to your local jurisdiction. It is meant to provide a baseline for ramping up your inbound mail processes. It is built from best practices around the country but will need to be adjusted for your own situation.
Uniqueness of the guide

- customized
- modular, with zoomable focus
- decision trees
Creating the guide

- Interview
- Choosing 2-3 models
- Writing the guide
- Superhero feedback
- State/local feedback
The superhero model

- Partnering with a superhero
- Series of calls or emergency advice
- Agenda-driven
Michigan AV processing time calculator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time assumptions</th>
<th>Each day prior to and including election day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Receive, date, and time stamp ballot:</td>
<td>10 seconds per ballot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Verify signature and check in:</td>
<td>137 seconds per ballot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2a) Percent of ballots that need extra attention on receipt:</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average time required for extra attention:</td>
<td>300 seconds each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Daily balancing count:</td>
<td>45 seconds per ballot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Secure one day’s ballots:</td>
<td>5 minutes each day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Getting started: inputs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction data</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voters who would be eligible to receive a ballot by mail if requested (and if an applicable excuse applies)</td>
<td>32,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballot request deadline, in days before Election Day</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of days available for canvassing</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of ballot pages</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Time and effort data

| Fraction of mail ballots expected to require duplication        | 2%     |
| Number of ballot styles in use                                 | 2      |
| Voter registrations processed                                   | 45     |
| Ballot requests processed                                      | 45     |
| Ballot packets prepared                                        | 50     |
| Inbound ballots sorted                                         | 30     |
| Signatures verified                                            | 60     |
| Ballots extracted                                              | 1000   |
| Ballots scanned                                                | 1500   |
| Ballots duplicated                                             | 6      |
### Return ballot handling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended staff</th>
<th>Person-hours per time period</th>
<th>more than 12</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All-mail</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promoted VBM</td>
<td>255.4</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-promoted VBM</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>301.3</td>
<td>98.9</td>
<td>89.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Ballot tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended staff</th>
<th>Person-hours per activity</th>
<th>Extraction</th>
<th>Scanning</th>
<th>Duplication</th>
<th>Total person-hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All-mail</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>87.4</td>
<td>131.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promoted VBM</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>60.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-promoted VBM</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>154.2</td>
<td>223.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Return ballot processing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Return ballot processing</th>
<th>Minimum baseline (in sq ft)</th>
<th>Additional sq ft per 1000 ballots</th>
<th>Recommended facility space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All mail</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoted VBM</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-promoted VBM</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conduct a practice run

Source: Alysoun McLaughlin
Social distancing

Source: Colorado County Clerks Association
Cross train election workers

- Signature verifiers
- Ballot scanners
- Adjudication teams
Ballot tracking processes
Share your thoughts

- What resonate with you from today’s webinar? (Any “ah-ha” moments)?
- What are your next steps?
- What questions do you have about what we covered today?
- What questions do you have about what we didn’t cover today?
As more questions come up...

- Reach out to CTCL
  - We’ll help out, or
  - We’ll find someone for you who can

hello@techandciviclife.org
We’ve covered a lot of ground

WRAPPING UP
Today’s resources

● Post-Election Audits
techandciviclife.org/course/post-election-audits

● Elections Group
ryan@electionsgroup.com

● 2020 Election Resource Planning
electionresourceplans.org

● Vulnerability scan and remote penetration test,
Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency
Send email to CISAServiceDesk@cisa.dhs.gov
Timeline considerations (138 Days out)

Resource allocation – May 22
- Analyze space and staffing needs (165 days)

Equipment needs – July 19
- Procure and install envelope sorting equipment, if expecting >75,000 returned ballots (107 days)
- Procure high-speed scanner (107 days)

Documentation – July 26
- Document procedures including training, setup, secure transfer of ballots and storage (100 days)
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.
See you soon!

- Supporting election officials (Thursday, May 21)
- Planning 2020 workload and resource allocation (Tuesday, May 26)
- Ensuring access, equity, and inclusion (Thursday, May 28)
- Educating voters about their options (Thursday, June 4)
- Maintaining voter lists (Tuesday, June 9)
- Managing mail ballot request forms (Thursday, June 11)
- Organizing ballot dropoff locations (Tuesday, June 16)
- Streamlining the inbound ballot process (Thursday, June 18)
- Verifying and curing signatures (Tuesday, June 23)
- Recruiting and training election workers (Thursday, June 25)
- Implementing public health guidelines for voting locations (Tuesday, June 30)

[techandciviclife.org/covid-19-webinars/](https://techandciviclife.org/covid-19-webinars/)
Thanks!

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