Election Observation: Linking with Academics for Feedback and Data

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Why observe and report on elections?

• Human dimension of security
• Demonstration of support for the process and improving the process
• Therefore, election observation can play an important role in promoting transparency and accountability, as well as enhancing public confidence in an electoral process.
Election Evaluation: Based on Performance Based Management

1. Determine the purpose of the performance measurement process. (build better elections)
2. Identity the organizations mission and customers being served. (fair elections, serve voters, candidates, parties)
3. Identify outcomes important to the organization. (obey the law in implementation and practice -consistent)
4. Identify the outcomes important to the customers of the service. (integrity, security, low costs for voting, filing, etc in the election process)
5. Select appropriate performance metrics that measure the outcomes. (inside, outside VCC; procedures, equipment)
6. Identify sources of data and how these data can be collected. (voters, poll workers, data can be collected through observation, surveys, etc)
Performance based management in NM with academic team since 2006

- Every federal election since 2006, total of 6 federal elections including 2016
- Overtime data to examine change
- Learn about legal environment and institutional setting (paper ballots, minimal voter id, training methods)
- Establish functional long term relationships with Bernalillo County to better serve election customers
Underlying Assumption of Performance based management is Quality Data

• Good quality data is important because it allows for a conversation about what happened this election relative to what happened last election based upon good information and can be used to:
  – Determine how effective a program is (e.g. line app, new training videos)
  – Identify ways to improve a program (e.g. train poll workers differently, add privacy sleeves, line processing, circular flow of polling location)
  – How to make claims for additional government resources (e.g. need for new machines)
What kinds of data?

• Data are everywhere:
  – Election Observation
  – Election forensics (analysis of ballot – butterfly ballot, placement of judges)
  – Roll off/residual votes - how much of the ballot do people fill out, where are the problems?
  – Post election audits
  – Voter Survey
  – Poll worker surveys
  – Incident reports
Election Observation

• What is election observation?
  – Election observation involves gathering information and making an informed judgment

• What is election observation not? Election monitoring.
  – Election monitoring involves the authority to observe an election process and to intervene in that process if relevant laws or standard procedures are being violated or ignored;
Questions observers need to answer?

• What am I looking for?
  – Well run election.
  – Evaluate the Polling location
    • Outside the polling location
    • Inside the polling location
    • Procedure implementation and voter experience
    • Equipment
Outside the polling location observational metrics?

- Was the voting location easy to find?
- How difficult was it to find parking?
- Were campaign materials outside the voting location in compliance with the law (NM: 100 feet from polling location)
- Was it handicapped accessible?
- Was there only one entrance to the voting location?
Inside the polling location metrics

• How easy was it to find the polling place inside the building?
• Were there greeters to help guide you?
• What workers were present? (poll workers, IT folks, County employees)
• Did organization of VCC enable a circular flow?
• Was it well lit? Temperature okay? Noisy?
• Was the ballot marking and other signs available to voters (voter rights, etc)
Procedures and Voter Experience Metrics

• Were poll workers following the law (voter id? Noting assisted voting)
• Cell phones in voting booths, photos?
• Did voters have privacy in the voting booth or when they inserted their ballots into the machine?
• Was there conflict between poll workers?
• Was anyone bilingual?
• Rate the overall quality.
Equipment Metrics

• Number of ballot printers, booths, counting machines. Were there enough?

• Any reported problems with equipment?
  – Tabulators
  – Automark system? Did it work?
  – Printers
  – Signature Pad
  – Internet connectivity
  – Line App -- how long were people waiting in line? What did the app say?
What do you need to do to prepare?

• Identify the number of team members you need?
  – How many locations are there?
  – How many locations do you want to visit? Early and ED?
  – What are the resources that limit my teams?
  – How long do teams need to stay at each location?
• Voting locations/maps/contact information for LEO
• Credentials
• Include in poll worker training information about observers and how to treat them and what they can and cannot do – create support for the observation
• Attend poll worker training/Review training tapes
• Review the laws
• Train election observers
What kind of access do you need?

• Standard for auditing is that used by the US government for performance based auditing.
  – Full, unfettered access to polling locations throughout the day
    • Arrive any time we like, stay as long as we like, arrive and return again if we like
What questions do you answer?

• Where are problems in training?
• How can polling places be better managed?
• How can we better serve voters?
• Over time, was the 2016 election better managed than the 2014 or 2012? Variety of metrics used.
• Were the changes made to policies, training, and procedures implemented last time successful?
What do you get

- A report on the process its strengths and weaknesses –where you’re succeeding and failing
Example: Voter ID

• Minimum
  – Voter ID is choice of voter
    • Verbal: name, address, and birth year
    • Sam’s Club card, utility bill
    • Driver’s license, tribal ID
Voter ID Data from Election Observation

Voter ID Compliance

- 2008
- 2010
- 2012
- 2014
Voter Confidence Over Time: Voter Survey Data

% Very Confident Bernalillo County

- 2006
- 2008
- 2010
- 2012
- 2014

Percentage

Very Confident
Election observation provides

• Good quality data
  – Data is key to assess the democratic process
  – Election reforms should be based upon facts and evidence
  – Data should be used to evaluate the election ecosystem

• Goal is the systematic study of elections to improve the mechanics, administration and implementation of our democracy
Who can argue with that?

Thank you!
## Improvements through the Study

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<tr>
<th>Election Evaluation Team</th>
<th>Bernalillo County</th>
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<tr>
<td>Develop measures of evaluation of each VCC/polling location across a variety of dimensions and actors</td>
<td>Better training of poll workers (Hands on, scenario based, specific job duties, etc.)</td>
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<td>Pre and Post Election Surveys of poll workers –perceptions of training before and after</td>
<td>Move to VCC allows better oversight of PW, better locations, create better flow</td>
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<td>Linkage of poll worker, voter and observation monitoring data</td>
<td>Follow the data (test equipment, work with vendors, calculate the data, reflect, change accordingly)</td>
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<td>Measure voter reactions to change</td>
<td>Innovate, adapt, (improvement in consistency of applications of laws and rules, online training, design polling locations)</td>
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<td>Think about the system, what needs to be changed/cleaned up at the state level,local level</td>
<td>Use the data gathered to improve to advocate for policy change, Clean Up Election Bill, at all levels</td>
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