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Public Participation in the Voter's Choice Act: Other Ways to Engage the Public

While public meetings are an effective (and mandatory) means of learning from the public, there are many other ways election officials can cultivate public participation while implementing the Voter's Choice Act (VCA). The following engagement methods can help you collect important input from a diverse cross section of your electorate outside of official and informal meetings with the public. It is excerpted from [Public Participation: A Guide for Election Officials Implementing the Voter's Choice Act](#).

- **Your website:** Dedicate a page on your website to explaining the new voting process in your county. On that page, provide residents with the opportunity to engage. This might include a comment form, survey questions, or sample social media messages they can share.
- **Surveys:** As noted under “soliciting active participation” in section three of this guide, surveys are an excellent way to collect input from your electorate. Links to your survey can be shared widely through social media, on the websites of other government agencies, and via community organizations and leaders. You can also use the introduction of a survey to generate media stories.
- **Advisory votes:** Consider asking county voters to weigh in on very specific decisions, such as:
 - Would you rather have a dropbox at the gas station, the library, or the grocery store?

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- Would you rather vote near where you live, work, attend school, run errands, or spend time on the weekends?
- **Social media:** As noted under “social media” section three, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram can be used to engage and educate your electorate—those who are unable to attend the meeting as well as those in the room. Use these platforms to ask voters questions and encourage them to provide feedback. Depending on the resources available to your organization, there are several approaches you can take:

If you have a dedicated social media point person: Create a robust social media plan that includes communication before, during, and after the meeting. Consider creating a location specific #hashtag to ask questions, monitor posts, and respond to comments across platforms. Here a few platform-specific recommendations:

- **Twitter:** Advertise the hashtag before and during the meeting to encourage participants to follow the conversations and submit questions in real-time. Live tweet from the meeting. Write a Twitter poll and encourage its dissemination. Respond to the questions and comments that are tweeted before, during, and after the meeting in real-time.
- **Facebook:** Ask voters questions and encourage them to provide feedback. Consider Facebook Live as an easy way to live stream the meeting for those who are unable to attend.
- **Instagram:** Ask voters to post images of where they want to vote or where their community congregates. Consider sponsoring a contest to tap into people’s creativity.

If you have limited resources for social media: If you do not have a dedicated staff member for social media, decide on which platform you have the most community members engaged and focus your efforts there. Use that platform to educate your electorate and promote meeting attendance.

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- **Twitter:** Promote the meeting using a location-specific hashtag. Ask questions and respond to posts in a timely fashion. Consider writing a Twitter poll and encourage its dissemination.
- **Facebook:** Advertise the meeting. Ask voters questions and encourage them to provide feedback.

Sample social media posts: Below are some sample social media posts you can use and encourage people to share. With each one, try to insert a URL where voters can find more information. Don't forget to create your own hashtag (#). Reference your county to minimize confusion with non-VCA counties.

- You decide where you vote. You decide when you vote. You decide how you vote. The **#VotersChoiceAct** is coming to **#NevadaCounty**.
 - In 2018, **#SanMateoVoters** will get to vote at any vote center in the county. Where should we put them? Help us decide.
 - In 2018, all **#NapaVoters** will receive ballots in the mail. How do we prepare your community for the new system? Tell us here: xxx
 - Every vote counts. What would make it easier for YOU to vote? Tell us how we can design the best voting experience for all of our voters. **#MaderaVotes**
 - **#SacramentoCounty** is redesigning its elections process. We need your input. Participate in our meetings.
 - Thank you to all of our meeting participants last night! Did you think of any additional ways to improve our voting system? Tell us here. **#SutterVotes**
 - If a voting center were at XX location, would that make it easier for you to vote? **#NevadaElections**.
- **Traditional/ethnic media:** Don't forget to reach out to traditional and ethnic media to pitch stories about the changes ahead and how they will affect local residents. These

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stories can be used as education tools and to recruit public input. Ask media outlets to link to your surveys, public comment forms, etc. VCC expects to develop sample media

advisories you can use. We may also be able to recommend ethnic media contacts in your community.

- **Individual conversations:** One of the most reliable sources of input is the organic conversations you and your staff will have with local leaders and individuals. Consider how to capture that input, such as sharing a tracking spreadsheet that is updated regularly. Think about how to weight the comments so that underrepresented communities have an equal voice.

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