



June 29, 2020

### **Outreach Plan for the November 3, 2020, Election**

To provide election services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department has developed a three-prong outreach plan designed to reach San Francisco residents with a wide range of multilingual, multi-format information about the November 3 election. Although the current health guidelines prohibiting large gatherings have required the Department to postpone its participation in live outreach events, the Department intends to reach City residents, focusing on the most vulnerable communities, using mostly no-contact outreach strategies and partnerships with city departments—in particular the Office of Racial Equity and the Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs—local agencies, and community-based organizations.

First, over the course of the next four months, the Department intends to send City residents several mailings and digital notices, each of which will highlight key information about the November 3 election, including expanded vote-by-mail service for all registered voters, in-person voting options, and the recently introduced ranked-choice voting ballot format that allows voters to rank up to 10 candidates in a given contest. These informational mailings and notices will include: i) a language preference notice, ii) a voting options notice, iii) notices with information relevant to military and overseas voters, college student voters, and unhoused voters, iv) a digital resources notice, v) a Voter Information Pamphlet, vi) “Your Ballot is on its Way” notice, vii) vote-by-mail instructions, and viii) address verification notices.

Second, the Department is developing a myriad of multimedia tools and resources, including digital flyers, online slideshows and trainings, social media feeds, and digital newsletters. The Department will also update its website to highlight information about voting options in the November 3 election and key election dates. To help voters maintain the most current information in their registration records and learn about essential election topics, the Department will offer several online self-help tools, including the Voter Portal, My Election Navigator, and a ranked-choice voting practice ballot.

Third, the Department continues to leverage its partnerships with other city departments, community-based organizations, local media, schools, hospitals, employment centers, and local businesses to effectively distribute digital outreach and registration materials. Many of the Department’s partners work with the general public as well as members of vulnerable or hard-to-reach populations, including voters who are elderly, first-time voters, voters living in low-income communities, members of the City’s language minority groups, voters with disabilities, and voters experiencing homelessness.

Using the three-prong outreach approach of sending voter notices, offering comprehensive digital resources that are based on principles of accessibility, cultural relevancy, and user-friendliness, and extending its reach through local partnerships, the Department intends to saturate the City with key information about the November 3 election.

#### **i. Mailings and Digital Communications**

Serving as the first part of its three-prong, mostly no-contact approach to outreach for this fall's election, the Department intends to increase its communication with voters and prospective registrants via mailing a series of multilingual notices and sending digital notices to voters who provided email addresses as part of their registration records. All of these notices are described in this subsection.

### **(a) Voting Options Notices**

To inform voters about expanded vote-by-mail services and in-person voting options in the November 3 election, the Department intends to send multilingual notices to each of the 374,446 households in San Francisco this summer and fall. These notices will provide key information about voting by mail, in-person voting options, and available accessible and language services.

Voting Options notices will encourage voters to "Take action today!" to ensure timely delivery of their ballots this fall by checking their residential and mailing addresses in their registration records via the Secretary of State's website at [voterstatus.sos.ca.gov](http://voterstatus.sos.ca.gov) or by contacting the Department of Elections at (415) 554-4375 or [svote@sfgov.org](mailto:svote@sfgov.org). Further, the notices will advise voters to sign up to receive automatic notifications on the status of their mailed ballots via email, SMS (text), or voice message at [wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov](http://wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov).

The Department will also send digital versions of the Voting Options notice to nearly 250,000 voters who provided email addresses as part of their registration records.

### **(b) Language Preference Notices**

For the November 3 election, the Department will provide official bilingual ballots and sample ballots in English and Chinese, Spanish, and Filipino, official monolingual Voter Information Pamphlets in English, Chinese, Spanish, and Filipino, and bilingual facsimile ballots in English and Burmese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, and Vietnamese. Voters may select a language preference for election materials and ballots when registering to vote, by contacting the Department, or using the Department's online request form.

In a proactive effort to inform voters about availability of translated election materials, on June 12, the Department sent nearly 20,000 language preference mailers to City voters born in Chinese, Spanish, Filipino, Burmese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, or Vietnamese-speaking countries with no language preference in their registration records as well as voters who did not provide their birthplace when registering to vote. These mailers include bilingual information about official and facsimile ballots available in several languages and options for selecting a language preference. Voters may select their language preferences on the notices and return the notices, postage-paid, to the Department. Department staff will process returned notices by entering voters' stated language preferences into the registration database and use this information for mailing the official and facsimile ballots, and Voter Information Pamphlets this fall.

On June 5, the Department also sent a digital version of the notice to nearly 7,000 voters in this group who have email addresses in their registration records.

In an effort to reach new voter registrants, who register after the initial mailings are sent, the Department will continue sending notices on a rolling basis up through the mailing of vote-by-mail packets in October.

### **(c) Tailored Notices to Military and Overseas Voters, College Student Voters, and Unhoused Voters**

The Department will send notices with additional tailored guidance to voters serving in the military or residing overseas, college student voters, as well as voters whose registration records indicate they may be experiencing homelessness.

While all California voters are entitled to receive their ballots in person or via mail, voters serving in the military or residing abroad are also entitled to receive their ballot by email or fax. One consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic has been a slowdown of international mail delivery times. On June 19, the Department sent an email notice to nearly 3,000 military and overseas voters, encouraging them to consider updating their ballot delivery preferences to email or fax to avoid potential issues with mail delays. The Department mailed postal letters with similar content to approximately 600 military and overseas voters without email addresses in their registration records.

In an effort to reach college students whose residences in the fall may be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, in August, the Department will send an email notice to voters registered at residence halls and dormitories associated with San Francisco State University, University of California, Hastings College of the Law, and University of San Francisco. The notices will provide key information about the upcoming election and options for updating voter registration information, including residential and mailing addresses.

Also in August, the Department will attempt to contact all voters who may be experiencing homelessness as indicated by their voter registration at cross streets, asking such voters to provide or update their mailing addresses where they receive mail. These notices will also explain other voting options available to San Francisco voters, such as picking up ballots at early voting locations or visiting one of the City's in-person voting sites.

### **(d) Digital Resources Notice**

This summer, the Department will send emails describing digital election resources to 250,000 San Francisco voters who provided email addresses as part of their registration records. These digital notices will outline online voter tools and resources, including online registration, digital versions of the Voter Information Pamphlet, and online accessible vote-by-mail system. The notices will also encourage voters to use the Department's Voter Portal to check their registration details, track their vote-by-mail ballots, and find the locations of in-person voting sites as well as announce the launch of My Election Navigator, a new online tool that provides voters with personalized election information in one easy-to access place.

### **(e) Voter Information Pamphlet**

Prior to each election, the Department produces a Voter Information Pamphlet and Sample Ballot (VIP) in English, Chinese, Filipino, and Spanish. The VIP is available in PDF, HTML, XML, large-print, MP3, USB flash drive, CD, and National Library Service (NLS) cartridge formats. The VIP provides information about candidates and local ballot measures, voting options and key election dates, and a sample ballot matching the voter's ballot type.

The VIP for the November 3 election, which the Department will send to City voters in October, will include several pages dedicated to voting options, highlighting the mailing of ballots to all registered voters, in-person voting options, and the availability of language and accessibility resources.

#### **(f) “Your Ballot is on its Way” Notices**

A few days before vote-by-mail ballots begin arriving in San Francisco mailboxes, the Department will send notices to voters with email addresses in their registration records, advising voters that their ballots should arrive shortly. There will be two versions of this message: one tailored to those who traditionally vote by mail and the other to those who voted at polling places in previous elections and who may not expect to receive a ballot in the mail, despite the Department’s previous outreach on the subject. These emails will not only serve to remind voters to expect their vote-by-mail ballot packets soon, but to reiterate ballot language and accessible format choices, as well as in-person voting options.

#### **(g) Vote-by-Mail Instructions**

The Department will send a vote-by-mail packet with a ballot for the November 3 election, along with an instructional insert and a postage-paid return envelope to all City voters. In an effort to educate voters who are new to voting by mail, the instructional insert will include step-by-step illustrated instructions and information on how to properly fill out the return envelope, how to request a replacement ballot, and ballot return options and deadlines. The instructions will also provide information on how voters may request large-print ballots, and ballots in different languages, and access their ballots through the online accessible vote-by-mail system. Vote-by-mail packets will also include “I Voted!” stickers, so voters who vote by mail can express their enthusiasm for participating in the election.

#### **(h) Address Verification Notices**

When voters move without updating their voter registration information, the United States Postal Service will return mailed correspondence to the Department. Upon return of election mail, the Department will attempt to contact the voters again using address verification postcards, as well as by email when email addresses are available. These follow-up communications will likely increase the number of ballots delivered in a timely manner to those who have moved within the City.

### **ii. Digital Outreach**

Serving as the second part of its three-prong outreach plan, the Department will bolster its efforts to connect with voters using digital channels. Such efforts include updating the Department’s website, *sfelections.org*, to highlight the availability of digital tools and resources, including online registration, ranked-choice voting practice ballot, and the accessible vote-by-mail system; expanding the Department’s repository of outreach materials and trainings published in digital formats, including flyers, brochures, and presentations; and increasing engagement across social media channels. All of these projects are described in this subsection.

## **(a) Website**

The Department's website, *sfelections.org*, features essential information about registration and voting and self-help voter tools, all available in multiple languages and presented with key accessibility functions, including screen-reader compatibility, high contrast and adjustable font size, and Alt text for images. The website also includes pages dedicated to language and accessibility resources, as well as information on registering and voting in special circumstances.

To alert voters to election changes, including the mailing of ballots to all registered voters, access to the online Accessible Vote-by-Mail system for all voters, and safe in-person voting opportunities, the Department will prominently feature voting options in the November 3 election on its homepage. To expand the reach of its website, the Department will encourage its community partners and city departments to feature a link to *sfelections.org* on their websites.

### **1. Voter Portal**

The Department provides an online Voter Portal to facilitate convenient access to individualized registration and election information. After logging in, Voter Portal users can review the data in their registration records, view sample ballots, find their elected officials, opt in or out of paper Voter Information Pamphlet mailings, track their ballots from ballot assembly through delivery, verification, and counting, and request a replacement ballot. To ensure that voters receive their ballots at the correct address and in their preferred language, all voters will be encouraged to double-check information in their registration records, including current address and language preference for election materials.

### **2. My Election Navigator**

In an effort to provide voters with personalized election information in one easy-to access place, the Department will launch a new online tool, My Election Navigator. This tool is intended to help voters choose their preferred voting method after presenting users with three simple questions and generating customized responses.

The first question is, "Are you registered to vote in San Francisco?" After the voter selects a response, the tool provides information about registering to vote to those who need it, and encourages all voters, including those who are already registered, to keep their registration information current.

The second question, "Have you decided how you will vote in the upcoming election?" helps voters who have already decided how they will vote (by mail or in person) navigate to specific content regarding their chosen voting method, and helps those who are still deciding understand the different voting options available.

The third question, "Are you familiar with ranked-choice voting in San Francisco that allows voters to rank up to ten candidates in local contests?" allows the Department to provide targeted education to voters unfamiliar with the expanded RCV ballot format. Those unfamiliar with RCV will be invited to read more about the subject and to practice marking an online ballot with immediate feedback on common RCV ballot-marking errors.

Voters seeking specific information can skip the questionnaire and navigate directly to the topics that interest them using the tool's repository of election-related links and resources, which include answers to common questions, such as how to provide

a temporary mailing address, how to find out what's on the ballot, how to request a replacement ballot, and ways to get involved with the election process.

By providing flexible navigation to election topics, My Election Navigator will serve as a useful resource for all types of voters, ranging from first-time voters who are unfamiliar with the voting process to voters seeking detailed information about voting options in the November 3 election. This new tool will soon be available from the homepage of the Department's website as well as from the sidebar of all landing pages.

### **(b) Outreach Materials in Digital Formats**

For the November 3 election, the Department will develop multi-format informational materials covering a variety of election-related topics and transition many of its multilingual outreach presentations and educational materials that would normally be presented in person, to digital formats. The development of such materials will be guided by the key criteria that meet the following equity baseline thresholds for engaging in and with vulnerable communities: (1) accessibility, language, and cultural relevancy, and (2) user-friendliness/user-legibility.

Voters and other interested parties will be able to download these resources from *sfelections.org* or request CD or USB copies via postal mail. In addition, the Department will provide outreach trainings to local partners via teleconferencing technology such as Zoom. Teleconference topics will range from best practices in voter registration drives to understanding how to assist residents voting by mail for the first time.

### **(c) Social Media and Digital News**

Throughout the November 3 election cycle, the Department will post updates on social media sites, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Next Door, publishing "bite-sized" bits of important information on changes to voting options and other key election information. Many of these posts will include links to detailed informational pages and voter tools on the Department's website.

For City residents who prefer more traditional news formats, the Department will issue press releases and news articles for redistribution by local media outlets and community partners. The publications, which will be made available on the Department's website and distributed directly to the Department's contacts, will focus on voting options in the November 3 election and other key information.

### **iii. Local Partnerships**

Serving as the third part of its three-prong, mostly no-contact approach to outreach for this fall's election, the Department has begun collaborating remotely with its local partners. These partners include nearly 250 nonprofit, community-based and private sector organizations, advisory committees, local businesses, hospitals and care facilities, colleges, and other city departments and government agencies.

In lieu of conducting in-person presentations and meetings with its community partners at various City venues, the Department will offer various outreach materials and presentations on YouTube, through its website, and in CD and USB formats. Through new multilingual digital presentations, webinars, and newsletters the Department intends to explain pertinent election topics to its partners who can in turn provide election information to members of the City electorate.

The Department will intend to supplement its outreach efforts about the November 3 election to members of populations likely to benefit from additional, focused outreach through a grant program with local nonprofit and community-based organizations. Focus populations include unhoused or housing insecure residents, residents of neighborhoods with turnout below the City average, seniors and people with disabilities, members of the City's minority language communities, and first-time voters.

Outreach partnerships will focus on disseminating essential election information such as what has changed for this election, how to register online or by mail, how to vote by mail or in person, how to utilize curbside voting, how to schedule ballot pick-up, and how to request emergency ballot delivery services.

#### **(a) City Departments, Agencies, and Community-Based Organizations**

The Department will collaborate with the City's Emergency Operation Center (EOC) outreach team to distribute election information to the City's most vulnerable populations. The Department will supply EOC outreach team with several thousands of multilingual posters with key election information for distribution to local merchants and door hanger flyers for reaching residents in the following neighborhoods: Civic Center/Downtown, South of Market, Bayview/Hunters Point, Visitacion Valley, Chinatown, Western Addition, Excelsior/Outer Mission, and Ingleside.

The Department will continue its partnership with the Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) to engage San Francisco residents who are immigrants and/or Low English Proficiency (LEP). Collaborating remotely when possible, the Department will work with the multilingual OCEIA Community Ambassador Street Team to distribute election information to populations who may not receive election messages via mainstream channels.

The Department will also continue to provide services and information to City voters in jail through a collaborative effort with the Sheriff's Department and its Prisoner Legal Services Unit (PLS). Working closely with PLS, the Department will administer the Incarcerated Person Voting Program to provide election services, such as tailored outreach and materials, registration forms, and ballot delivery, to voters and potential registrants currently in county jail or otherwise involved in the justice system.

The Department will continue to collaborate with the San Francisco Library for the Blind and Print Disabled and the San Francisco In-Home Supportive Services Public Authority to reach the people served by these agencies and to distribute digital election materials to their constituents.

Similarly, the Department will collaborate with city departments and local agencies, such as the Office of Racial Equity, the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, and the San Francisco Housing Authority, and organizations such as Project Homeless Connect, Swords to Plowshares, the Homeless Prenatal Project, Episcopal Community Services, Catholic Charities, Five Keys, and many other community partners that provide services to vulnerable populations. Through the



channels established by such departments and organizations, the Department intends to reach residents living in low-income communities, voters with disabilities, and voters experiencing homelessness.

The Department will work with staff at local shelters and navigation centers to assist voters experiencing homelessness in receiving their election materials. The Department has begun developing materials for shelter staff and other people who work with voters who may be experiencing homelessness, that explain the importance of distributing vote-by-mail ballots and other election mail to voters registered at shelters or navigation centers. The Department is simultaneously developing a guide designed for direct use by voters experiencing homelessness. This guide will explain voting options in the November 3 election, how to complete the residential fields of a registration affidavit using cross streets or a shelter address, how to complete the mailing address fields using general delivery, shelter, or other temporary address, and how to select a language preference for election materials.

To supplement its outreach efforts, on June 9, the Department issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking to identify partners willing and able to assist in disseminating information about the November 3 election using effective and engaging outreach strategies. The Department will collaborate with and provide funding to local nonprofit and community-based organizations who can assist in educating members of the City's vulnerable or hard-to-reach populations about how they can participate in the November 3 election, providing information about voter registration, voting by mail and other voting options, language and accessibility resources, key dates and deadlines, and other election topics.

The Department will organize training for grantees selected through this RFP and will provide grantees with a variety of ready-to-use, multilingual, multi-format, outreach materials, including posters, brochures, digital presentations, and videos on topics such as voter registration and voting options, ranked-choice voting, poll worker recruitment, and general election information. Grantees will be expected to begin outreach activities on August 24 through Election Day.

### **(b) Advisory Committees**

The Department will continue working with the Language Accessibility Advisory Committee (LAAC), a Department networking group comprised of language access leaders and members of the public, to reach and disseminate election information to voters from minority communities and improve language-related services and materials offered by the Department. Similarly, the Department will continue its collaboration with the Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC), a Department networking group comprised of accessibility experts and members of the public, to improve its materials and services for voters with disabilities and seniors. To facilitate input from the LAAC and the VAAC, the Department plans to transition its in-person meetings with the committees to virtual formats.

### **(c) Hospitals and Schools**

Prior to every election, the Department works closely with many care facilities and hospitals throughout San Francisco to provide election-related services to people in such facilities. This summer, the Department will reach out to nearly 135 hospital and care facilities to provide resources designed to help patients and residents register to vote and participate in the election while observing health guidelines. Through this partnership, approximately two weeks before the election up until Election



Day, the Department will facilitate ballot pick up and delivery for voters who are homebound, in a hospital or residential care facility, or otherwise find themselves unable to use another voting option.

The Department will also work with colleges and universities located in San Francisco to disseminate digital election information and materials. Communicating remotely with student advocates, professors, and school administrators, the Department will provide these resources to all interested parties and encourage the distribution of election-related messages through student communication channels, and for campuses that will be open in the fall, in classrooms and campus bulletins.

#### **(d) Employment Centers and Local Businesses**

The Department intends to expand its connections to job training and vocational service providers this election cycle, especially those who serve residents of neighborhoods with below-average voter turnout. In addition to providing election materials, the Department will create and distribute materials designed to inform program participants about temporary and short-term employment opportunities with the Department and serving as a poll worker.

To increase the visibility of election-related materials at locations that provide essential goods and services to City residents, the Department will work with merchants to display elections-related posters in their storefronts, with particular focus on businesses in neighborhoods with below-average city turnout. Poster topics will focus on voting options, language and accessibility options, and the opportunity to serve as a poll worker.

#### **Conclusion**

The Department's proposed outreach plan for the November 3 election demonstrates its ongoing commitment to providing a full array of equitable voter outreach and resources to San Francisco residents. Additionally, the current plan will allow the Department to maintain its dedication to providing election services to members of vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations, seniors and voters with disabilities, members of the language minority groups, voters who are experiencing homelessness, and residents of neighborhoods with turnout below the City average.