

The Government Transition Advisory Committee
Voter/Candidate Education and Outreach Subcommittee
October 2024 Report

Overview

In September 2023, the Government Transition Advisory Committee (GTAC), voted to create the Voter/Candidate Education & Outreach Subcommittee (the Subcommittee).

The Subcommittee met monthly, holding 11 meetings from November 2023 to October 2024. Brief overviews of the meetings can be found below. At the first meeting, the Subcommittee approved its [charter](#).

Members included Amy Wood, Bill Kinsey, Destiny Magana-Pablo, Fred Neal, Jane DeMarco, Jose Gamero-Georgeson, Juanita Santana, Leah Benson, Terry Harris, and Zach Kearn. Chairs included Bill Kinsey, Leah Benson, and Jane DeMarco.

The Subcommittee was supported by the GTAC staff: Julia Meier and June Reyes; and the City's voter education team: Sofia Alvarez-Castro, Jennifer Chang, Francisca Garfia, and Katie Gavares from the City's Transition Team and James Eccles from the City's Elections Office. Multnomah County Elections, both Director Tim Scott and Leah Benson, also lent their expertise to the Subcommittee.

Subcommittee Meetings

All Subcommittee meetings are recorded and available on the [Portland.gov/transition/events](https://portland.gov/transition/events). A brief overview is provided below.

1. November 7, 2023. [Meeting summary](#). Key topics: subcommittee charter; train-the-trainer presented by Multnomah County Elections, Democracy Rising and Portland United for Change.
2. November 29, 2023. [Meeting summary](#). Key topics: Appoint co-chairs; follow-up from train-the-trainer session; voter education plan and budget; discussion with Portland United for Change on hard-to-reach voter contract.
3. January 9, 2024. [Meeting summary](#). Key topics: first candidate learning session; public feedback about RCV; discussion about the hard-to-reach voter contract with the City Attorney; Subcommittee considered and rejected a motion to recommend an amendment to the hard-to-reach voter contract that would eliminate direct voter contact in the get out of the vote portion of the plan and redirect those resources to earlier efforts.
4. February 13, 2024. [Meeting summary](#). Key topics: appoint new co-chair; public feedback about RCV; Multnomah County Elections Director spoke on the tabulation system; “bite, snack, meal” approach to voter education; debrief candidate learning sessions; feedback on voter education website and mock election platform; media plan.
5. March 4, 2024. [Meeting summary](#). Key topics: new public feedback about RCV; website review; RCV outreach and messaging before the May primary + intensive voter education beginning after the May primary; subgrant outreach; discussion about use of GTAC title in endorsements of candidates and ballot measures.
6. April 2, 2024. [Meeting summary](#). Key topics: new public feedback about RCV; subgrant applications open; internship program; material review – paid media plan and educational comic.

7. May 28, 2024. [Meeting summary](#). Key topics: subgrant process; GTAC's role in voter education moving forward including summer presentations and tabling; mock election platform; feedback on recent activities: RCV workshop, elections public tour; new public feedback on RCV.
8. June 27, 2024. [Meeting summary](#). Key topics: broad voter education – ballot mailer and insert, ad placements; hard-to-reach voters – subgrant awardees, focus group findings; candidate education – learning session debrief; GTAC's presentation and tabling.
9. July 31, 2024. [Meeting summary](#). Key topics: broad voter education – ballot insert, paid media, intern report, upcoming townhalls; hard-to-reach voters – Hearts & Minds Communications; candidate education – survey; new public feedback on RCV.
10. September 9, 2024. Meeting summary. Key topics: broad voter education – townhalls, ballot package; hard-to-reach voters – Grace Ramsey from Democracy Rising; candidate education – upcoming candidate session; new public feedback on RCV.

Areas of Work

Major tasks for the Subcommittee were defined in the [GTAC's Workplan](#).

- [Advise on the voter education strategy](#). The Subcommittee advised on the City's Voter Education Plan between November 2023 and its adoption in January 2024. The subcommittee helped the voter education team identify and highlight potential gaps in voter education plan, and specifically helped refine and shape the broad voter education strategy. Additionally, the Subcommittee helped the voter education strategy become more transparent as they gave us staff the opportunity to openly discuss overall voter education strategy.
- [Advise on voter education budget](#). The Subcommittee advised on the fiscal year 2024-2025 voter education budget between December 2023 and February 2024. The Subcommittee helped the voter education team better communicate how voter education budget resources were invested.
- [Review, share, and utilize educational materials](#). The Subcommittee reviewed City educational materials and engagement strategies before they were finalized. The Subcommittee reviewed draft educational materials providing important community feedback on how best to depict information. For example, the Subcommittee reviewed the draft paid media plan and provided feedback on what media outlets to prioritize. The Subcommittee's review of draft materials and strategies allowed the voter education to create materials that were more accessible and responsive to the needs of diverse communities. Subcommittee members also used their own networks to amplify voter education materials, helping further reach Portlanders, and helped staff voter education events such as community town halls. Types of materials reviewed included the City's voter education website, the mock election platform, the educational comic, paid media plan, and the mailer.
- [Share and utilize educational materials \(aka voter education\)](#). Two ideas are key to understanding the voter education efforts of the Subcommittee: (1) the “bite, snack, meal” approach to voter education – “snack” or “meal” versions provide a deeper dive into RCV, and the GTAC created different community presentations to align with the approach; and (2) distinguishing between pre-primary work focused on clear communications and outreach and post-primary work focused on intensive education efforts. Subcommittee members provided direct voter education through community briefings and presentations, event tabling, and community town halls. Through September 2024, the GTAC

conducted 118 community presentations that included ranked-choice voting education. Of those, 13% offered “meal” size presentations on RCV. In summer 2024, members educated voters through tabling at 11 summer events. GTAC members also participated in the City-hosted community voter education townhalls.

- Recommend approaches for candidate training. The Subcommittee helped the City plan for the handful of candidate learning sessions and participated in debriefing the sessions.
- Report feedback from the public about ranked choice voting. Beginning in January 2024, every Subcommittee meeting held time for members to share what they are hearing from community about RCV. Report feedback from the public was recognized by staff as a significant role for the GTAC and that the feedback shapes the voter education materials used by the City. A summary of the feedback is below.
 - Many Portlanders aren’t aware of the coming changes to either the form of government or elections system
 - Lots of interest in understanding ranked-choice voting
 - Recognize that different parts of our community have different voter education needs, e.g. seniors vs. high school students who are accustomed to ranking their choices
 - Importance of practicing ranked-choice voting and the utility of the mock election platform
 - Educate about skipped ranking, overvotes, and repeat rankings
 - Use positive messaging to encourage voter participation and understanding
 - Increase education efforts closer to the election
 - People need to know what they are voting on, not just how
 - Some people ask about vote tabulation, some don’t
 - Concerns include potential voter confusion, potential ballot spoilage, digital divide
 - Difficulty describing the proportional redistribution of surplus votes
 - The state RCV ballot measure and potential for voter confusion
 - In the multi-winner district election, there’s a misunderstanding of how multi-winner works - People are losing track of the single transferable vote and feeling they’re getting to vote for more than three, but it’s really a single vote
- Advise on updates to the elections code. The GTAC’s workplan included assigning the Subcommittee to advise the City on any updates to the elections code. In April 2023, the City updated the elections code to implement ranked choice voting as approved by voters in Portland Measure 26-228. No additional updates occurred during the Subcommittee’s work.

Lessons Learned

Subcommittee members and staff will be asked to identify lessons learned at the October 31st Subcommittee meeting. A brainstorm of some lessons is below.

- Importance of ensuring City-funded voter education is distinct from candidate work.
- Benefits of having community organizations spearhead voter education efforts with hard-to-reach voters and communities that are historically underrepresented in City Hall decisions.
- “Bite, snack, meal” approach to voter education so that community members get the education they want.

- Starting intensive voter education efforts after the May 2024 primary to not create voter confusion.
- Sharing what community members are thinking about RCV helps the City and County improve their voter education strategies by proactively addressing feedback.
- Touring Multnomah County Elections Building to instill confidence in the security of our elections.
- Having outside reviewers of educational materials to ensure materials inform non-experts.
- Nothing is better than presenting and tabling in community to educate voters about how to fill out a ranked-choice ballot.

Next Steps

- Debrief the historic November 2024 election with the City and County Elections Offices (full GTAC meeting, December 11, 2024).
- Review evaluation data and information, finalize lessons learned, and identify recommendations for future City voter education campaigns (Subcommittee meeting, early February 2025).
- Receive any final election reporting from the City and County Elections Offices (full GTAC meeting, February 11, 2024).