

Voter Education & Contract Questions

January 30, 2024

What is the City of Portland's approach to voter education?

The City of Portland Charter Transition team (Transition Team), in collaboration with Multnomah County, the City of Portland's Elections Office and other voter education partners, are committed to offering an education campaign that ensures that every voter, regardless of background or circumstance, has access to the information and resources needed to exercise their right to vote. Non-partisan voter education is a critical component to ensure the successful implementation of ranked-choice voting. Voters need to feel confident in casting their vote and that their votes will be tabulated in the ways that they intended.

The City Transition team has been collaborating with the City Election's Office and the Multnomah County Elections Division to ensure voter education efforts are accessible and coordinated. Additionally, the City and County have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish shared roles and responsibilities regarding voter education.

What is the City's voter education plan?

The City, in coordination with our partners, is implementing a three-pronged approach to voter education:

1. **Broad voter education utilizing existing channels.** The City and Multnomah County will partner to coordinate a broad public education campaign using existing government communication systems already established. Under this prong, the city staff are developing and coordinating the following activities, including a: citywide mailer, ballot insert, paid media strategy, educational video, educational comic, children's activity sheet, factsheets, FAQ document, website, mock elections platform, social media content, online briefings, online presentations, community townhalls, election dashboard and intern program to support voter education outreach activities.
2. **Expand the City's capacity and educate candidates to ensure they are trained and informed on the changes.** We know that candidates running for office are deeply engaged and in communications with voters more than anyone else. Educating candidates and providing them with the right tools is one of the most effective ways to reach voters. Under this prong, the City's Elections Office released two candidate guides and provided robust candidate trainings in January 2024. The City will provide additional candidate trainings in Spring 2024. The Jan. 10, 2024 informational session was hybrid and the [recording of this is on our website](#).
3. **Sub-granting funds to community partners to reach voters the City has a hard time reaching.** The City launched a competitive recruitment process to select a partner to work with the City and County to create and coordinate a voter education plan specifically focused on educating harder-to-reach voters. Under this prong, the contractor will subgrant \$210,000 to community partners to support non-partisan voter education and spend \$300,000 in development of educational material and a paid media strategy.

What is the City's voter education budget?

The majority of the City's voter education budget comes out from the City's Transition budget. The voter education budget does not include programmatic cost associated with running voter education programs and activities. For example, the voter education budget does not include costs to run the program, meaning, the costs of online services and city staff time to work on this project, which includes a full-time project manager, communications staff, City Elections Office staff, and administrative staff. These programmatic costs are not assumed in the specific voter education budget line items. Additionally, the voter education budgets do not include expenditures outside the transition budget. The budget does not include the costs related to candidate education and informational sessions, those cost are included in the city Auditor's budget. The cost associated with the counties' voter education and administration activities are also not in the transition budget, those costs are managed by the counties (Multnomah, Clackamas, Washington).

Not encompassing the programmatic cost mentioned above, the Transition Team Fiscal Year 2023-2024 (FY23-24) budget for voter education totals \$875,000. The City is making an additional voter education budget request of \$150,000 for the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 (FY24-25), and those funds will be allocated directly toward the voter education activities outlined above (broad voter education).

Of the \$875,000 budget, \$200,000 is allocated to develop voter education materials to be used in FY23-24, and any funds remaining are to be rolled over to the FY24-25. The remaining \$675,000 is allocated in a three-year hard-to-reach voter contract (July 2023- Jan 2025), of which \$210,000 is being used for subgrants for community partners and \$300,000 in materials development and paid media.

How was the voter education contract awarded and who are the partners?

The Transition Team, in collaboration with the City's Elections Office and Multnomah County, collaboratively drafted a [Request for Proposals \(RFP\)](#). The RFP was reviewed by the City Attorney's Office and released for an open and competitive process through the City's procurement services. In July 2023, the competitive procurement process was completed, and the contract was awarded to United Way of the Columbia-Willamette, a 501c3 organization, for a collaborative project with Democracy Rising, Portland United for Change (a fiscally sponsored project of the United Way), and Brink Communications.

In August 2023, Brink Communications ceased operations. To resolve this matter, United Way began looking for a replacement firm to take on Brink's scope of work. Through that process, Hearts & Minds Communications LLC was selected, and the City began a process to amend the contract. In January 2024, the contract was amended to include Hearts & Minds Communications LLC.

The United Way of the Columbia-Willamette and the collaborative partners are working with the City and County to create and coordinate a voter education plan specifically focused on educating harder-to-reach voters. United Way of the Columbia-Willamette, Democracy Rising, Portland United for Change, and Hearts & Minds Communication will not be directly engaging voters, but rather helping coordinate and plan for voter education efforts.

- **United Way of the Columbia-Willamette:** UWCW is the sole legal entity awarded the contract and has oversight over the contract. UWCW administers services agreements, subgrant awards,

contracts with subgrant recipients, and payments to the rest of the contract partners. UWCW served as the fiscal agent and backbone for the Census Equity Funders Committee of Oregon (CEFCO) and the affiliated Oregon Census Equity Fund (OCEF). The Oregon Census Equity Fund was a private-public pooled fund of \$9.6 million to support Oregon's Hard-to-Count Campaign, We Count Oregon. The We Count Oregon Campaign designed a multi-pronged strategy, in partnership with existing community-based organizations and community ambassadors.

- **Democracy Rising (DR):** DR is the national expert on ranked-choice voting. DR is a fiscally sponsored project of the NEO Philanthropy, a 501c(3). DR has worked on voter education efforts across the nation, including 23 cities across the state of Utah, and in four states (Alaska, Kansas, Hawaii, and Wyoming) where the Democratic party used ranked ballots for their 2020 presidential primaries.
- **Hearts & Minds Communication LLC:** Hearts & Minds will lead material development and paid media strategy. Hearts & Minds is a collective of communicators, designers, creatives, and strategists dedicated to working on the most pressing issues in community. The specific project team brings a wealth of lived and professional experience to this work, including account strategy and creative leads who have history of supporting culturally resonant, multilingual campaigns for government agencies and nonprofits.
- **Portland United for Change:** Portland United for Change will lead the day-to-day management of contract activities and deliverables, and support grant recipients who are working to implement the education and outreach for harder-to-reach voters. Portland United for Change is a project that grew out of the campaign for Measure #26-228, and is a fiscally sponsored project of the United Way of the Columbia-Willamette. Portland United for Change is operating on a 501(c)3 basis and is not recruiting or championing candidates or otherwise campaigning/electioneering.

Is there a Portland United for Change PAC?

The PAC from the campaign era, named "Portland United for Change," is organized as a measure PAC with the specific purpose of supporting Measure #26-228 in the 2022 general election. The PAC cannot be used for any other purpose and cannot be converted to a PAC that engages with candidates. The PAC cannot be used for supporting or opposing candidates, and never has been. There is a similarly named PAC, which is not affiliated, and which does engage with candidates called Portland United PAC. They are not related to Portland United for Change and have separate leadership and priorities.

What is the purpose of the voter education contract and what types of partners will be awarded the voter education subgrantees?

The focus of this funding opportunity is reaching hard-to-reach voters by forming a coalition of, and sub-granting opportunities with, local non-profit and community-based organizations who can assist in disseminating this vital information through trusted mediums to members of populations who traditionally lacked access to inclusive voter education and are most likely to benefit from focused, supplemental outreach.

As outlined in the RFP and contract, harder-to-reach voters have been defined as Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color; immigrants and refugees; seniors; people with disabilities; members of the

Portland's minority language communities; unhoused and housing insecure residents; communities with limited digital access; and residents of neighborhoods with turnout below the city average. The City of Portland recognizes that other Portland residents may also benefit from focused outreach, and therefore encourages applicants to identify other potentially vulnerable or hard-to-reach populations in their proposals in addition to, or instead of, the populations specified in this paragraph.

What is the process of awarding subgrants to community partners?

As outlined in the contract, the Transition Team, City Elections Office, Multnomah County Elections Division, and the Contractor will collaboratively draft a Request for Proposals that all potential subgrantee recipients will be required to respond to. All potential subgrantee recipients will be required to submit a proposal that details proposed activities, defines the communities they will be educating, timelines, signed agreements, and reporting deadlines. This subgrant RFP process is slated to open in February 2024 and proposals due in April 2024. Subgrant recipients are expected to be named in late May or June 2024.

Information on how to apply, the application, requirements and timelines will be available on the city's new voter education website: www.portland.gov/vote2024

How will subgrants recipients be selected and who will be responsible for the selection?

The Request for Proposals will include an evaluation criteria section. This criterion will help the subgrantee determine if they are able to meet the requirements to remain compliant and understand the subgrant's expectations of this work. When all proposals are submitted, the selection of subgrant recipients will be determined by an evaluation committee composed of the City Transition Team, City Elections office, Multnomah County Elections Division, and Contractor.

What is the communications plan for communicating with the public about the contract?

The Transition Team plans to continue to share future contract and subgrant opportunities and activities widely through the monthly transition newsletter, transition website, and the new voter education website. We will also ask our colleagues such as bureau offices, Civic Life, and council offices to share our opportunities with their networks and constituents. We plan to direct all future outreach related to voter education to the new website, www.portland.gov/vote2024.

What mechanism are in place to ensure the contract activities remain nonpartisan?

The City of Portland has a legally binding contract with United Way of the Columbia-Willamette. Within the contract, there are different layers of protection in place to ensure the contractor(s) complete the performed activities as outlined in the contract. Additionally, the following has been outlined in the contract:

- All materials that come out of this contract will be nonpartisan and must be reviewed and approved by Transition Team, City Elections office, and Multnomah County Elections Division. Subgrant recipients will only use pre-approved materials in outreach and education activities.
- All subgrant recipients will be required to sign legal agreements reviewed by the City Attorney's Office stating that they understand and accept the requirement to separate ranked-choice voter

education efforts from any 501(c)(4) permissible work. The City's project manager will be required to approve the legal agreement template before execution.

- All subgrant recipients will be trained on separation of 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) permissible activities.

Endorsement of candidates with City of Portland funding is strictly prohibited and will lead to termination of any voter education contract or subcontract.

The City's project manager is responsible for overseeing all voter education contract materials and activities, including subgrantee activities. During the subgrantee voter education activities, the City's project manager will continue to meet with contractor to oversee planned activities, review and approve deliverables, materials, voter education activities and address any questions on the part of the subcontractors or contractors.

The Contractor outlined they will have Get Out the Vote phase, what will that entail?

During the *Get Out the Vote* phase of contract activities, subgrantee recipients will directly engage voters in the final weeks before the election to answer any lingering questions on process. No partisan activity is planned or allowed during get out the vote activities (or any contract activities). They will focus solely on when and how to vote, clarifying facts such as the deadline to turn in ballots, how a ballot will be counted once filled out, and answering questions about the function of districts or ranked-choice voting.