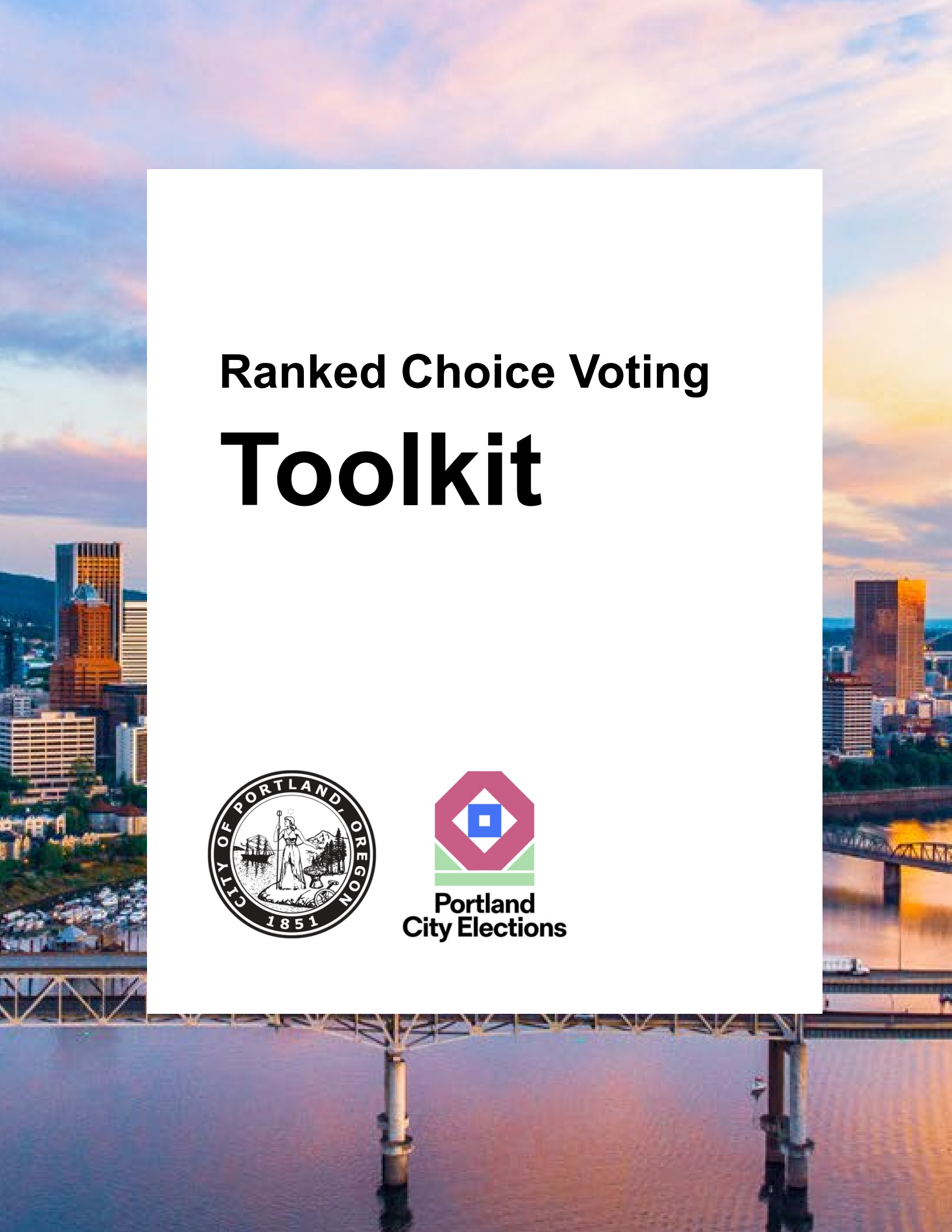

Ranked Choice Voting

Toolkit

Portland
City Elections

About this toolkit

Whether you're hosting a workshop, staffing a community event, sharing information online or answering questions one-on-one, every interaction can help people prepare for Portland's upcoming election.

This toolkit was created to support those efforts by providing practical resources, ready-to-use materials and ideas you can adapt for your community. Inside, you'll find tools to help you explain how ranked choice voting works, answer common questions and support voter education ahead of Election Day.

We hope these resources make it easier to meet people where they are, encourage questions and help voters feel prepared when it's time to complete their ballot.

If you have questions or want additional support, please reach out to the Portland City Elections team at elections@portlandoregon.gov or call (503) 823-4022.

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Speaking with voters

No matter how you're reaching voters, conversations are an important part of helping people become more familiar with ranked choice voting. This section includes resources to help you explain how the voting process works, respond to common questions and create opportunities for hands-on learning.

Talking points

Whether you're answering a quick question at a community event or leading a longer workshop, these talking points can help guide the conversation. Use them as they are or adapt them to fit your audience. The goal isn't to memorize a script; it's to help voters understand how to complete their ballot using clear, accurate and neutral information.

General reminders

- The election is Tuesday, November 3.
    - Portland's next election is on Tuesday, November 3. If it's been a while since you've voted in a City election, now is a great time to become familiar with the ballot.
    - Make sure to register to vote by October 13th to vote in this election.
- Portland and Multnomah County use ranked choice voting elect candidates.
    - Portland voters use ranked choice voting to elect local offices. If you're new to the process or just need a refresher, we're here to help.
    - In Portland, ranked choice voting is used to elect the mayor, auditor and three city councilors in each district.
    - In Multnomah, ranked choice voting is used to elect the county chair, commissioners, sheriff, and auditor.

Completing your ballot

- Rank candidates in order of preference.
    - Think of it as making a list of your first choice, second choice, third choice and so on. Just remember: one candidate per row and one per column
- You don't have to use every ranking.
    - You can rank up to six candidates, but you don't have to rank six candidates if you don't want to.
    - We recommend only ranking the candidates you would want to see elected. If there's a candidate whose positions you don't support, don't rank them on your ballot.
- You can only rank a candidate once.

    - Once you've ranked a candidate, choose someone different for your next ranking.

Single-winner and multi-winner races

- Some races elect one winner, while others elect more than one.
    - Your ballot may include both single-winner and multi-winner races. The instructions for ranking candidates are the same in both cases: rank candidates in order of preference.
- The ballot works the same way.
    - Whether a race is electing one person or several, you'll complete your ballot the same way: rank candidates in order of preference, with only one candidate per row and one per column.
- Take your time.
    - If you're unsure about a particular race, take a moment to read the instructions on your ballot or ask a question. We're happy to help explain how to complete the ballot.

Common questions

- What happens if my first-choice candidate is eliminated?
    - If your highest-ranked candidate is no longer in the running, your vote moves to the next candidate on your ballot who hasn't been eliminated.
- What if I make a mistake?
    - Mistakes happen. If you need to change a selection, simply cross out the oval you filled in by mistake and fill in your intended selection.

Building confidence

- It's okay if this feels new.
    - Many voters are still becoming familiar with ranked choice voting. Trying out a sample ballot can help you learn the do’s and don’t’s of filling in a ballot, see how results are counted and feel more prepared before Election Day.
- Practice can help.
    - If you'd like, we can walk through a sample ballot together. I’d be happy to talk you through how to fill it out and verbally call out mistakes to avoid. While this doesn’t provide an easy way to see the results tabulated, you can always try a mock election on Portland.gov/rcv to see the tabulation process.

Staying neutral

When talking with voters:

- Start with focusing on how to complete the ballot rather than why ranked choice voting is used.
    - If the voter appears skeptical about the change to ranked choice voting, it can be helpful to discuss some key talking points about why the switch was made and why it might benefit the voter:
        - This is a change we made to our elections following a vote by Portlanders in 2022.
        - This change is meant to help you vote for the candidate you want instead of feeling the need for strategic votes or "voting for the lesser of two evils."
        - Ranked choice voting allows us to do away with low turnout primaries that sometimes resulted in electing leaders with just a portion of the turnout we see in a General Election.
- Stick to factual, nonpartisan information.
- If you're unsure about an answer, refer people to the City's official voter education resources.

Roleplaying script

One of the best ways to prepare for community outreach is to practice the conversations you may have with voters. Role-playing can help staff and volunteers become more comfortable answering questions, explaining how to complete a ranked choice ballot and guiding people to additional resources when needed.

The sample conversation below is designed to be a starting point. Every interaction will be a little different, so think of it as a guide rather than a script. Listen first, answer the questions that come up and focus on helping people understand how to complete their ballot using accurate, neutral information.

Question #1: Have you voted in a Portland election using ranked choice voting before?

If no (or they're not sure):

- No problem! Let's walk through how the ballot works.

Question #2: Are you familiar with how to rank candidates on a ranked choice ballot?

If needed, explain:

- A helpful way to remember how to rank candidates is you can only select one candidate per row and one ranking per column.
- You can only rank a candidate once.
- You can rank up to six candidates, but you don't have to use every ranking. It's okay to rank fewer if you choose.

Question #3: Do you have any questions about how ranked choice voting works?

Common questions might include:

- Do I have to rank all six candidates?
- What happens if my first-choice candidate is eliminated?
- Can I skip rankings?
- Can I rank the same candidate more than once?

(Use the toolkit's talking points or the City's FAQ to answer questions as they come up.)

Question #4: Do you know what to do if you make a mistake on your ballot?

If needed, explain:

- Mistakes happen! If you need to change a selection, simply cross out the oval you filled in by mistake and fill in your intended selection.

If a voter expresses concerns or skepticism about ranked choice voting

Some conversations may include questions or concerns about ranked choice voting itself. You don't need to persuade someone to feel differently and you don't need to have every answer. If a question goes beyond what you're prepared to answer, it's okay to direct the voter to the City's official resources.

- **Voter: Ranked choice voting is really confusing. Why does voting have to be so complicated?**
    - You aren't alone in finding it overwhelming the first time. But the good news is that most people tell us once they've tried it out a time or two it starts to seem pretty straightforward.
    - Here are the three most important things to remember when filling out your ballot:
        - Rank candidates in order of preference.

        - You can rank up to six candidates but you don't have to use every ranking. We don't recommend ranking candidates you wouldn't want to see elected.
        - Only select one candidate per row and one per column.
    - Would you be interested in trying a practice ballot together?
- **Voter: I don't understand how my vote is counted. Does my first choice still matter?**
    - Yes, your first choice still matters. Your ballot is first counted using your first-choice candidate. If that candidate is eliminated during the vote counting process, your vote moves to the next candidate you have ranked on your ballot.
- **Voter: That sounds like I get more than one vote.**
    - I can see how it might appear that way, but you still only have one vote per contest in ranked choice voting. Your rankings simply tell us the order in which you want your vote to move if a higher-ranked candidate is eliminated.

Educational activities

One of the best ways to help people become more familiar with ranked choice voting is to give them an opportunity to experience it. Interactive activities encourage participation, spark conversations and give voters a chance to practice completing a ranked choice ballot before Election Day.

The activities in this section are designed to be flexible. Whether you're staffing a community event, leading a workshop or hosting a presentation, they can be adapted to fit your audience, time and setting. Use them as they are or modify them to support your specific outreach efforts.

Ballot Challenge

Goal: Help participants become more familiar with how to correctly complete a ranked choice ballot by reviewing examples of valid and invalid ballots.

How it works:

1. Divide participants into pairs or small groups.
2. Give each group a set of completed sample ballots.
3. Ask participants to decide for each ballot:
    - Is it correctly filled out or not?
    - Why?

4. After everyone has finished, review the answers together and discuss why each ballot is correct or incorrect and what would happen to the votes on the incorrect ballots.

Tips:

- Include a mix of correct and incorrectly filled out ballots to encourage discussion.
- Examples of correctly filled out ballots might include:
    - A ballot with all rankings completed
    - A ballot with only some rankings completed
    - A ballot with a corrected mistake
- Examples of incorrectly filled out ballots might include:
    - Ranking two candidates in the same column
    - Ranking the same candidate more than once
    - A ballot with skipped rankings

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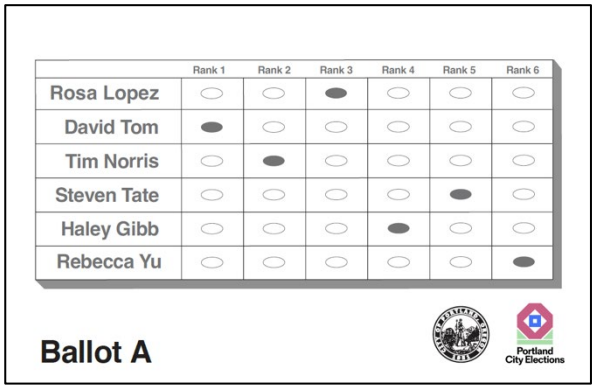
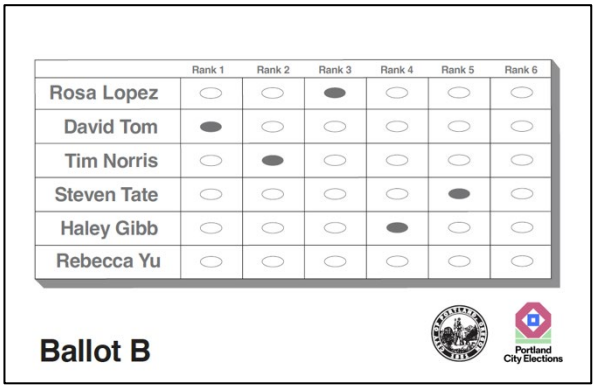
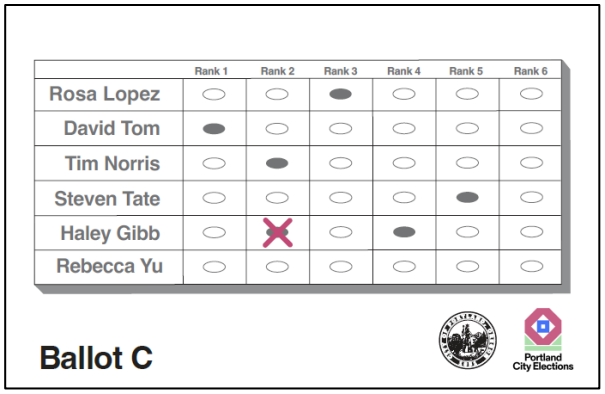
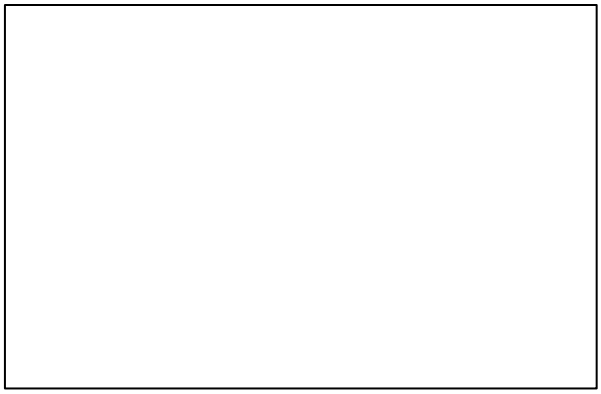
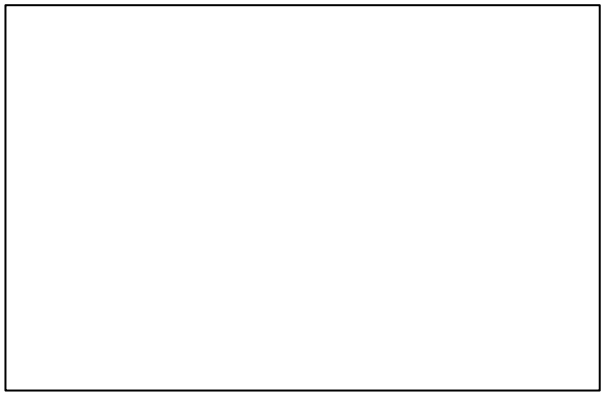
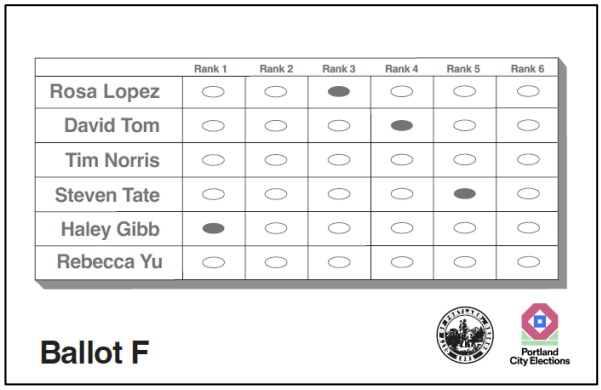





Rank 1
Rank 2
Rank 3
Rank 4
Rank 5
Rank 6
Rosa Lopez
David Tom
Tim Norris
Steven Tate
Haley Gibb
Rebecca Yu
Ballot C
Portland City Elections






Rank 1
Rank 2
Rank 3
Rank 4
Rank 5
Rank 6
Rosa Lopez
David Tom
Tim Norris
Steven Tate
Haley Gibb
Rebecca Yu
Ballot F
Portland City Elections

Match the Question

Goal: Address common questions, clear up misconceptions and help participants better understand how ranked choice voting works.

How it works:

1. Set up a board or open space with two columns labeled Yes and No.
2. Use the provided question cards and invite participants to place each question in the column they think contains the correct answer. This can be done individually as people arrive or as a group activity.
3. Review each question together, discuss the correct answer and explain why.

Tips:

- The toolkit includes blank cards you can customize for your audience or event.
- Encourage participants to ask additional questions as they come up. The discussion is often just as valuable as the activity itself.

DOWNLOAD MATERIALS

RCV Bingo or Checklist

Goal: Encourage participants to explore different aspects of ranked choice voting through a fun, self-guided activity.

How it works:

1. Hand out the provided RCV Bingo cards or checklists as participants arrive.
2. Invite participants to complete the activities by visiting different stations, participating in demonstrations or talking with event staff.
3. If you're using the Bingo format, consider offering a small prize to participants who get a bingo or to the first few participants who complete one.
4. If you're using the checklist, encourage participants to complete as many activities as they can before they leave. The checklist can also serve as a guide to help participants explore your event and make sure they don't miss any educational opportunities.
5. At the end of the activity, invite participants to ask any remaining questions or visit stations they may have missed.

Tips:

- The toolkit includes both a Bingo card and a checklist version, so you can choose the format that works best for your event.
- The provided Bingo card and checklist can be adapted to fit your event. Update the activities to reflect your agenda, educational stations or outreach goals.

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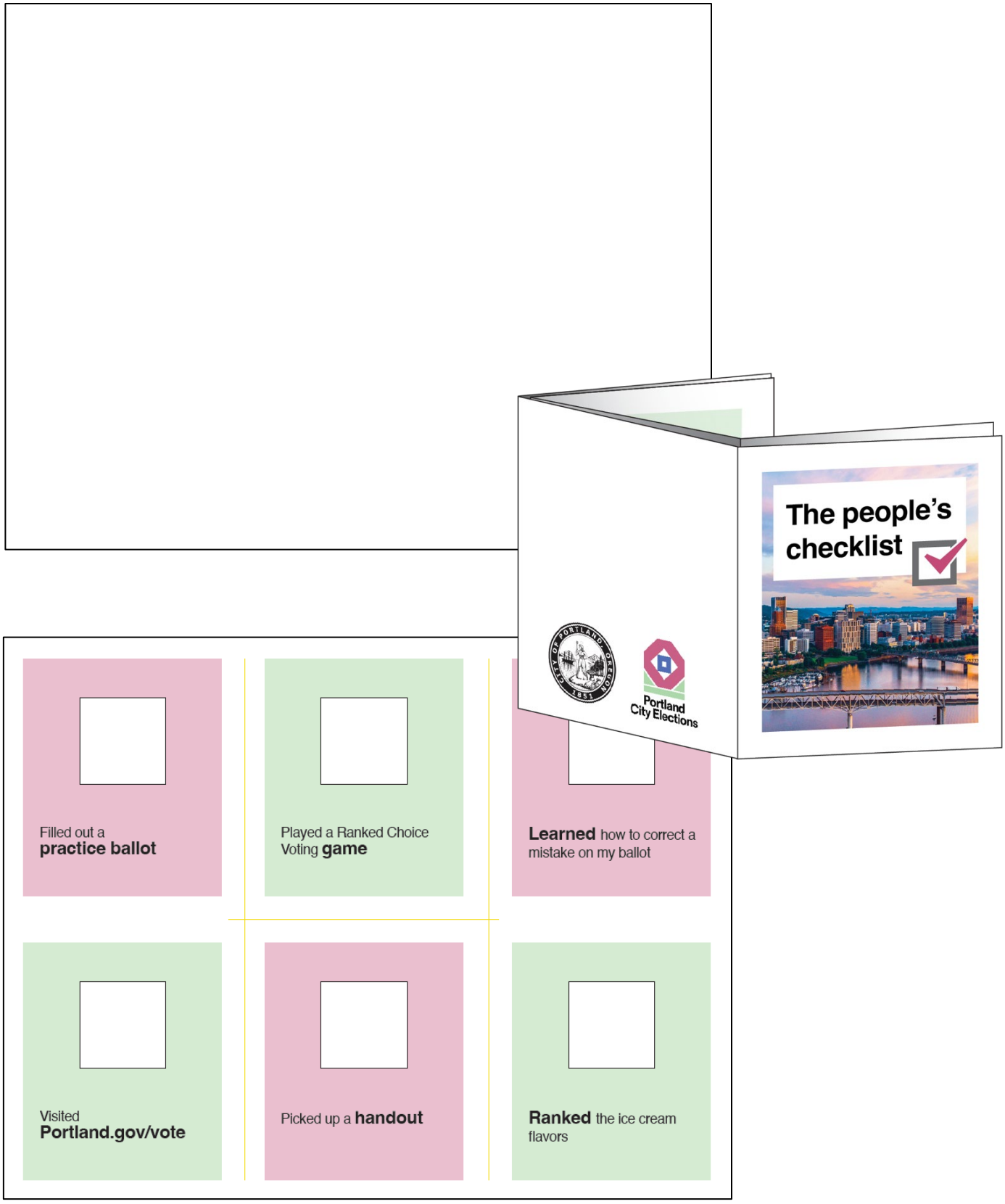

The people's checklist
Portland City Elections
Filled out a **practice ballot**
Played a Ranked Choice Voting **game**
Learned how to correct a mistake on my ballot
Visited **Portland.gov/vote**
Picked up a **handout**
Ranked the ice cream flavors

Carry On

Goal: Demonstrate how votes are counted across multiple rounds and show what happens when a voter's candidate is eliminated.

How it works:

1. Give participants a fictional ballot with five candidates and ask them to rank the candidates in order of preference.
2. Collect the ballots and sort them into piles based on each voter's first-choice candidate. This can be done using whiteboards, sticky notes, index cards or another method that makes it easy to move votes between candidates.
3. Count the first-choice votes and identify the candidate with the fewest votes.
4. Eliminate that candidate and move each affected ballot to the next highest-ranked candidate who is still in the running.
5. Repeat the process until one candidate remains or another predetermined stopping point is reached.

Tips:

- Pause after each round to explain why ballots moved (or didn't move) and answer questions before continuing.
- Use fictional candidates or lighthearted themes, such as favorite foods local landmarks, to keep the focus on learning the tabulation process rather than the candidates themselves.

Remind participants that this is a simplified demonstration designed to illustrate the basics of tabulation. The City's educational materials provide additional information about how votes are tabulated in Portland elections.

Voter outreach

Outreach doesn't begin and end with an event. Sharing clear, timely information through newsletters, social media and printed materials can help people become more familiar with ranked choice voting before they fill out their ballot. This section includes ready-to-use resources you can use to support your outreach efforts and reinforce key messages in your community.

Social media

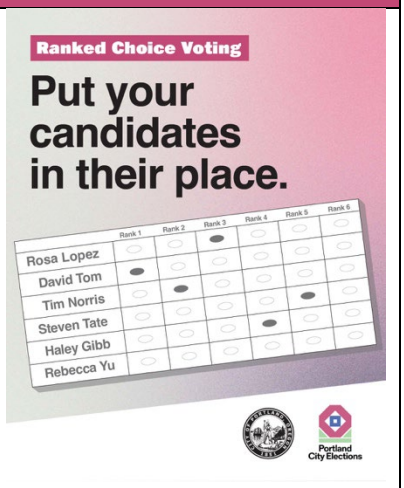
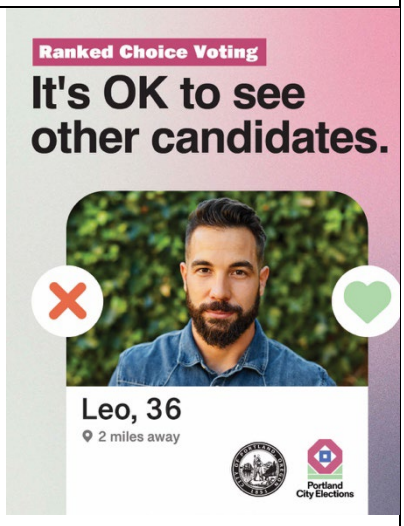
Social media is an easy way to help your community prepare for Election Day and reinforce what people learn through other voter education efforts. Whether you're posting throughout election season or sharing just a few reminders before the election, every post can help people become more familiar with ranked choice voting and where to find additional information.

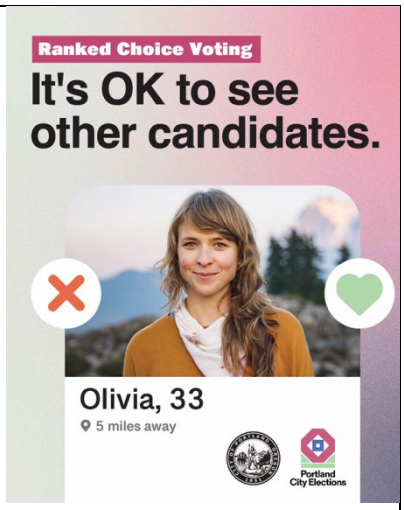
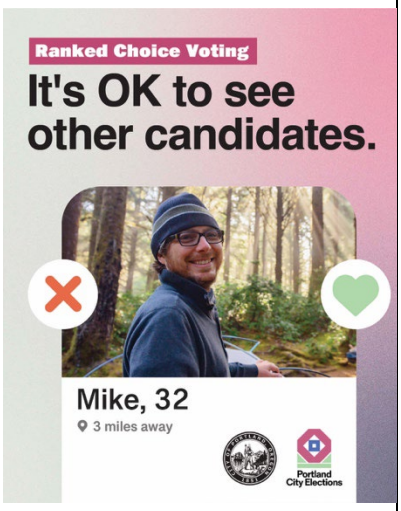
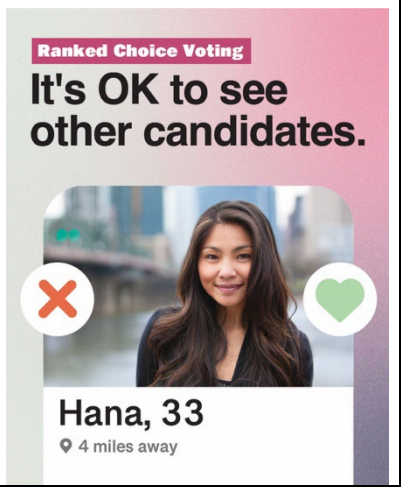
The sample posts below are designed to be a starting point. Feel free to use them as they are or adapt them to better reflect your voice, your audience and what's happening in your community.

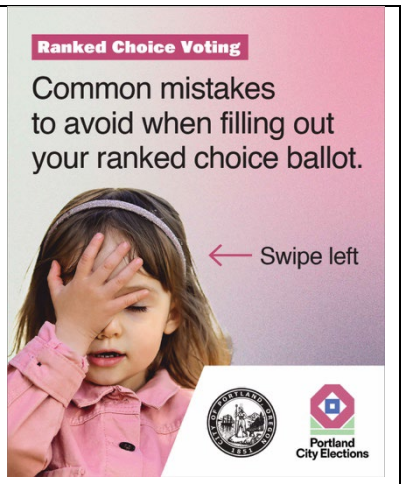
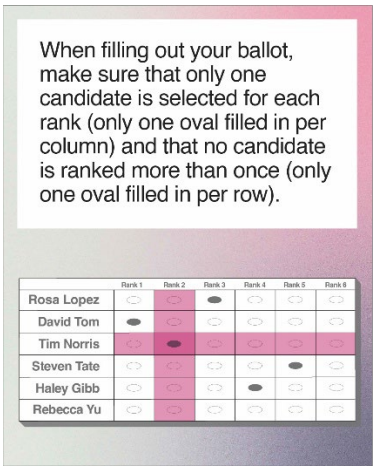
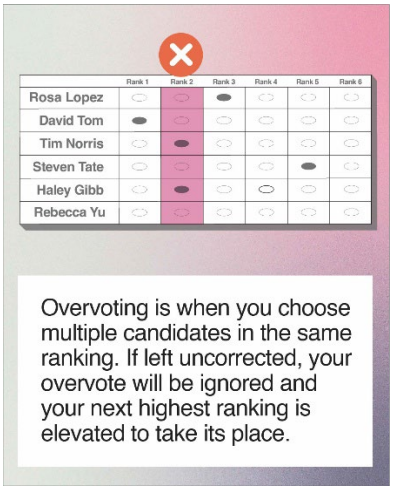
When posting on social media, here are some best practices and tips to consider:

- Tag organizations whenever relevant (use the @ symbol and then type out their name or Instagram handle)
- If a link is too long or messy, you can shorten it using bit.ly
- You don’t have to use the image that is auto-populated from a link you’re using. We recommend using one of the photos we’ve provided.
- It can be tough to keep up with posting throughout the month. It’s easier to schedule everything all at once at the start.

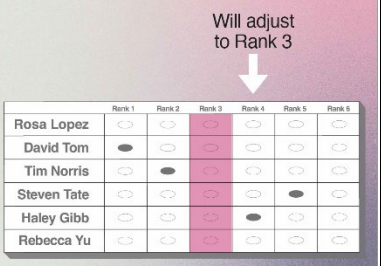
DOWNLOAD MATERIALS

Post (copy)	Link	Visual
Ready to rank? 📥 Ranked choice voting allows you to rank candidates in the order you prefer—starting with your favorite as #1. Just remember: one candidate per row, one per column. Learn more at www.portland.gov/vote/ranked-choice-voting	www.portland.gov/vote/ranked-choice-voting	
Some things are better when you can pick more than one. With ranked choice voting, your first choice is always counted first, and ranking additional candidates won't hurt your top choice. Learn how it works before election day: www.portland.gov/vote/ranked-choice-voting	www.portland.gov/vote/ranked-choice-voting	
Finding your favorite doesn't mean you can't have a backup ❤️ Ranked choice voting gives you more options if your higher-ranked candidates are eliminated. Wondering how it works? Learn more at www.portland.gov/vote/ranked-choice-voting		

	www.portland.gov/vote/ranked-choice-voting	  

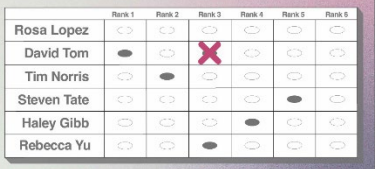
In a ranked choice voting system, voters have the option to rank candidates in order of preference instead of selecting only one candidate. Swipe left to learn more about how to cast your vote and what you can do to correct a mistake if you make one. www.portland.gov/vote/ranked-choice-voting	www.portland.gov/vote/ranked-choice-voting	  

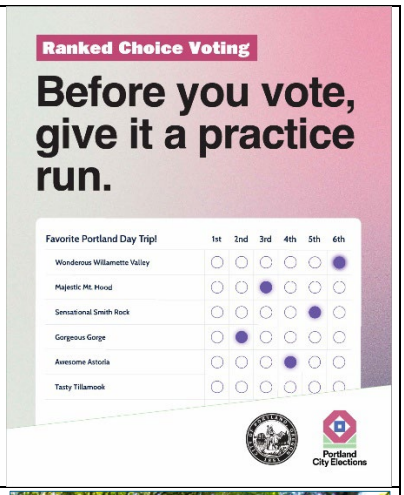
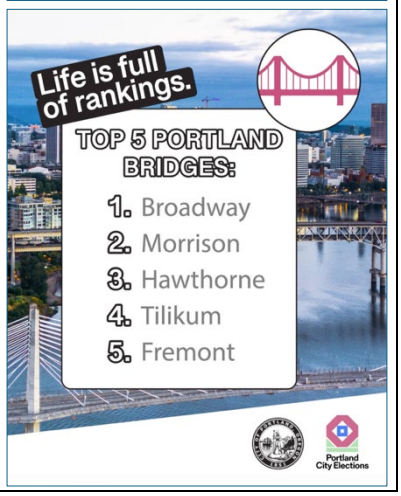
When filling out your ballot, if you skip any ranking, the next highest ranking will be elevated to take its place in the counting process.

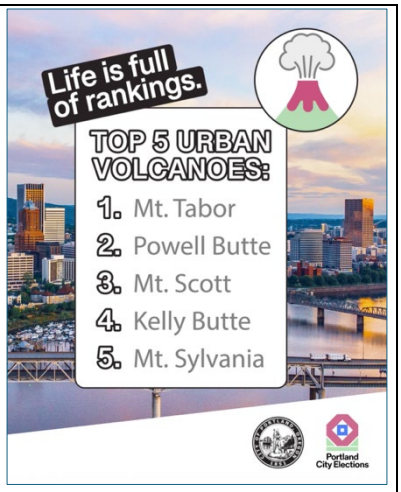


If you rank a single candidate multiple times, the highest ranking is accepted and each lower ranking for the same candidate is ignored as if you had skipped that ranking.

If you make a mistake on your ballot, you can correct it. Be sure to make your choice obvious because election workers will inspect each ballot to make sure voter intent is understood.



Whether you're new to ranked choice voting, or just need a refresher, try a mock ballot before Election Day. A practice ballot is a simple way to get comfortable ranking candidates, so you'll know exactly what to expect when it's time to vote. Try it out at www.portland.gov/vote/ballot	www.portland.gov/vote/ballot	
You're already great at ranking because you rank things every day. Ranked choice voting works the same way. Start with your favorite, then rank your next choices in order. Learn more at www.portland.gov/vote/ranked-choice-voting	www.portland.gov/vote/ranked-choice-voting	 

Sample newsletter

Newsletters are an easy way to keep your community informed and help people prepare for Election Day. Whether you're reaching out to employees, community members or volunteers a short reminder can encourage voters to become more familiar with ranked choice voting before they fill out their ballot.

The sample newsletter below is designed to be a starting point. Use it as it is or adapt it to reflect your organization, audience or any voter education activities you're planning.

Subject line: A quick reminder before Portland's November 3 election

Election Day is coming up on Tuesday, November 3, and Portland voters will once again use ranked choice voting to select local candidates.

If it's been a while since you've voted in a City election, or you're just looking for a refresher, now is a great time to get familiar with the ballot before Election Day.

Here are a few things to keep in mind when looking at your City ballot:

- You can rank as many or as few candidates as you'd like.
- Only rank one candidate per column and one per row.
- If you make a mistake, don't worry. Follow these instructions to make a correction.

If you'd like to learn more, practice filling out a sample ballot or find additional voter education resources, visit Portland.gov/vote.

Here at **[organization]**, we're also **[hosting a workshop/tabling at an event/sharing voter education resources]** to help our community get ready for Election Day. We hope you'll join us!

Printable materials

A well-placed flyer, handout or sticker can help keep the conversation going long after an event is over. These printed materials are designed to support your voter education efforts and give community members a simple way to learn more about ranked choice voting.

Below, you'll find flyers, door hangers and event stickers that can be used at workshops, community events and other outreach opportunities. Use them as they are or adapt them to fit your audience and outreach goals.

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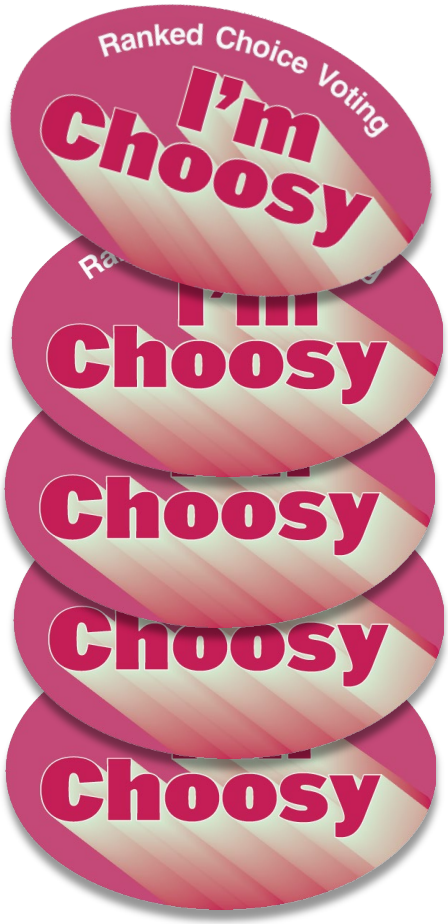

Additional resources

- For more educational voter materials, visit Portland.gov/vote/rcv-trainer-kit. Additional materials include:
    - Ranked choice voting comic
    - Train the Trainer presentation
    - Sample RCV ballot (2024)
- For more information on related subjects, visit our general voter resources or contact Portland City Elections at elections@portlandoregon.gov or (503)823-4022.