

**Election Assistance Commission Work Products Evaluation
Focus Group Protocol
Local Election Officials**

Focus Group Date and Time: _____

Focus Group Location: _____

Focus Group Lead Moderator: _____

Focus Group Secondary Moderator: _____

Number of Participants: _____

Note: Set up/find a table to display the products, or, if possible, distribute a set or products to each participant.¹ As individuals arrive, encourage them to look over the products if they are not already familiar with them.

Introduction:

My name is _____. I am a [job title here] with the Human Resources Research Organization (known as HumRRO). This is _____, who is also with HumRRO. For your information, HumRRO is a small, non-profit research firm headquartered in Alexandria, VA. We were hired by the United States Election Assistance Commission to do an evaluation of the products the Commission has developed to aid election officials at the state and local level in the administration of Federal elections. The EAC was created as part of the *Help America Vote Act* of 2002. In part, the Commission was charged with identifying best practices in election administration and disseminating that information to those on the front lines of the election process. Towards that end, they created the various products you see here today with the input of local election officials such as yourselves, and based on research, legislative guidelines, and design principals. The Commission funded the project you are taking part in today to determine the degree to which election officials are aware of the products the EAC has created, the extent to which they have been used by election officials, and the impact they have had. There is also interest in how the existing products could be improved, and what additional areas could be effectively addressed by future publications.

Working with the commission, HumRRO developed a survey of local election officials and another for officials at the state level to obtain input on these questions. You all should have received an invitation to participate in the survey,

¹ For the purposes of the remainder of this protocol, we will assume that each participant will be given a set of products.

and if you responded we appreciate it greatly. The purpose of conducting these focus groups is to obtain more detailed responses about the products, both specifically and overall. We'd also like to hear from those of you who may have used the products; in what ways you put the information or recommendations to use and what the outcomes were. Finally, even if you weren't aware of the products until today, we'd still like to get your impressions and thoughts as you look over them.

Confidentiality

We want you to know that anything that is said in the context of this focus group is confidential. No statements made will be attributed to the person who makes them. With your permission, we will be recording the discussion with an audio recording device. The recording will be transcribed, and the contents will be summarized and combined with the other focus groups before presenting the results to the EAC. We also have Privacy Act Statements which we will be asking you to sign.

Before we begin, we would also like you to complete this sheet asking for some background information. There are no personal identifiers on the form, we would simply like to have some basic information about the people who are participating in the focus groups.

Privacy Act Statement

In accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-579), this notice informs you of the purpose of this research and how the findings will be used.

The Elections Assistance Commission (EAC) may collect the information requested in these focus groups under the authority of Public Law 93-537, the *Help America Vote Act* of 2002.

The purpose of this research is to obtain feedback from election officials on the work products produced by the EAC. The information you provide today will help the EAC more effectively distribute its products, as well as revise existing documents and create new ones so as to provide the greatest assistance to elected officials at all levels.

Providing information as part of this research is voluntary. Failure to respond to a particular question will not result in a penalty of any kind. All your responses will be kept confidential. No identifying information will be collected. As part of this research, we will record this discussion so that we can more accurately capture the information you provide us.

I have read the Privacy Act Statement above and agree to participate in this study. I understand that my responses will be held in strictest confidence.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Shelly Anderson Deputy Research Director for the Election Assistance Commission at (202) 566-3100 or sanderson@eac.gov.

Printed Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Background Information Form

1. How long have you served as a Local Election Official (all locations)?

_____ years

2. How long have you served as a Local Election Official at your current location?

_____ years

3. Approximately how many registered voters are there in your jurisdiction?

4. About how many full-time staff do you have in your office?

5. How much freedom do you have to establish or revise procedures related to the conduct of elections in your jurisdiction (e.g., purchasing voting technology, utilizing voter center, ballot design)?

- A great deal
- Some
- A minimal amount
- None

6. Prior to coming here today, how familiar were you with the Election Assistance Commission work products?

- Very familiar (i.e., I read one or more of the products and used the information in them)
- Somewhat familiar (i.e., I obtained one or more of the products but did not take action on them)
- Minimally familiar (i.e., I knew they existed)
- Not at all familiar (i.e., I didn't know they existed)

Protocol for Local Election Official Focus Groups

Background

We'd like to start by getting a feel for who you all are and the types of experience you have had as local election officials. We asked for some of this information on the short survey, but it would help put our conversation in context to be familiar with your current situation.

1. So, if we could just go around the room and have each of you tell us how many years of service you have had in administering elections, both as the chief election official in your jurisdiction and in other capacities. Also, tell us a little about the jurisdiction in which you currently serve.
2. Now we'd like to spend a few minutes talking about the most common challenges you face in administering elections. What, if any, are the recurring issues that arise that you have to address? Do you have issues with things like ballot design, provisional voting, finding poll workers, that sort of thing?

EAC Products

3. Now we'd like to turn to the Election Assistance Commission products. Again, we asked for this information on the background survey, but I'd like to get a sense of how aware you all were of the products before today. Had you heard of them? Had you read them? Did you take any actions based on the guidance provided?
4. Now let's talk about specific products. Please take out Election Management Guidelines and take a couple of minutes to review the table of contents. As you can see, it presents information on a variety of topics, including: certification; system security, and physical security; acceptance testing; uniformed and overseas citizens; developing an audit trail; and ballot building.
 - a. First I'd like to ask, as you scan the contents of the Guidelines, are any of these areas where you have faced challenges in the past and, if so, what were the kind of issues you had to deal with?
 - b. [If anyone indicated they implemented recommendations or guidance from Election Management Guidelines:] You/Some of you said you implemented guidance from these Guidelines. What guidance specifically, and what was the impact?

- c. For those of you who may be seeing the Guidelines for the first time, based on your quick review, is there information in this volume that you think you could put to use?
 - d. Finally, just off the top of your heads, are there other issues that you would have expected to see covered in a document like this, or that you would like to see addressed?
5. Now let's pull out the Quick Start Guides. These were designed to highlight and summarize the information contained in the Election Management Guidelines. Many of the same topics are addressed, although there is typically less detail and they are designed to be scanned for information that may be useful. Since the Management Guidelines were introduced, Quick Start Guides have been developed to cover topics not addressed in the Guidelines, including serving voters in long-term care facilities, provisional ballots, canvassing and certifying an election, conducting a recount, and media and public relations.
- a. First I'd like to ask, as you look through the various Quick Start Guides, do any of them address areas, not already discussed, where you have faced challenges in the past. If so, what were the kind of issues you had to deal with?
 - b. [If anyone indicated they implemented recommendations or guidance from the Quick Start Guides:] You/Some of you said you implemented guidance from one or more of the Quick Start Guides. Which ones, specifically? What guidance did you take under consideration, and what was the impact?
 - c. For those of you who may be seeing the Quick Start Guides for the first time, based on your quick review, is there information in them that you think you could put to use?
 - d. Finally, just off the top of your heads, are there other issues that you would have expected to see covered in guides like these, or that you would like to see addressed?
6. Now let's turn to Effective Designs for the Administration of Federal Elections. As you can see, this volume provides detailed guidance on the design of voter information such as polling place signage, and voting instructions. It also contains specific recommendations on the design of various types of ballots. Finally, it reports the outcomes from research that was conducted to test the implementation of the designs. The EAC made templates available on its website and on CD that allow election officials to download and modify the designs presented to fit their own use.

- a. First I'd like to ask, as you scan the contents of the Design Guidelines, do any of them address issues you have faced in the past regarding such things as effective voting signage and information or ballot design? And, if so, what were the kind of issues you had to deal with?
 - b. [If anyone indicated they implemented recommendations or guidance from Effective Designs:] You/Some of you said you implemented guidance from Effective Designs. Which of the design guidelines did you use? Did you find them helpful? Do you think they had a positive impact?
 - c. For those of you who may be seeing these design guidelines for the first time, based on your quick review, do you think they would be helpful to you in creating signage and other voter information materials? Do you think you could use the information presented regarding ballot design?
 - d. Finally, just off the top of your heads, is there other documentation or voter information you produce where you think you could gain from having design guidance such as this?
7. Now let's turn to Successful Practices for Poll Worker Recruitment, Training, and Retention. As you can see, this volume contains guidance and recommendations on recruiting poll workers from different segments of the community, such as colleges and businesses. It also gives tips on developing and evaluating poll worker training programs, as well as evaluating poll worker performance and retaining workers over time. Finally, it talks about managing poll workers and provides sample recruiting material.
- a. First I'd like to ask if poll worker recruitment, training, and retention has posed a challenge to any of you in the past, and what specifically were those challenges?
 - b. [If anyone indicated they implemented recommendations or guidance from Successful Practices:] You/Some of you said you implemented guidance from Poll Worker, Recruitment, Training, and Retention. Which aspects of the advice did you follow? Did you find the advice helpful? Do you think following it had a positive impact?
 - c. For those of you who may be seeing this document for the first time, based on your quick review, do you think it would be helpful to you in recruiting, training, and/or retaining poll workers?
 - d. Finally, just off the top of your heads, are there other issues with poll workers where you think you could gain from having advice such as this?

8. Now let's turn to the Guidebook for Recruiting College Poll Workers. As you can see, it covers a variety of topics including legal guidelines for college poll worker programs, setting up a college poll worker program, recruiting minority and bilingual students, and training college poll workers.
 - a. First I'd like to ask if any of you have a program for recruiting college students as poll workers, or even use students in this capacity on a regular basis. [If so] Tell us about your experience in this regard. Is it a good source of poll workers? Are they effective in the job?
 - b. [If anyone indicated they implemented recommendations or guidance from Recruiting College Poll Workers:] You/Some of you said you implemented guidance from Recruiting College Poll Workers. Which aspects of the advice did you follow? Did you find the advice helpful? Do you think following it had a positive impact?
 - c. For those of you who may be seeing this document for the first time, based on your quick review, do you think you would be interested in using the advice it contains to recruit college poll workers? If not, why not?
 - d. Finally, just off the top of your heads, do you think the EAC should investigate putting out documents like this targeted at other groups that may be a fruitful source of recruiting efforts? For instance, retired persons or minority groups.
9. Now let's turn to the Compendium of State Poll Worker Requirements. As you can see, it presents detailed information on state regulations regarding such issues as poll worker age and residency requirements, training and term requirements, and restrictions (or lack thereof) placed on individuals such as candidates, elected officials, and prior felons.
 - a. Were any of you familiar with the Compendium before today? Did any of you use it as a resource, and, if so, in what ways?
 - b. Do you feel this is valuable information for persons in your positions? To what use could you put such information in the course of your day-to-day work? Is this a volume you would like to have as a reference, or is the information in it readily available to you from other sources?
10. Now let's turn to the Voter's Guide to Federal Elections. As you can see, it contains straightforward, basic information about registering to vote, absentee and early voting, and getting assistance in voting. It also provides contact information for state election offices.

- a. How many of you were aware of the Voter's Guide before today? Did any of you distribute it or make it available to your constituents? Did you receive any feedback on it and, if so, what was the nature of that feedback?
 - b. Do you or your staff receive inquiries from your constituents concerning the topics addressed in this Guide? Do you think this would be a useful document to be able to distribute to constituents who have questions about voting in Federal elections?
 - c. Off the top of your head, what other types of questions do you receive that may not be addressed in the Guide as it currently stands? What information could be added to make it more comprehensive?
11. Finally, let's turn to the Glossaries of Election Terminology. These grew out of a portion of HAVA that directed the EAC to investigate ways of ensuring the accessibility of registration, polling places, and voting to individuals with limited proficiency in the English language. In response to this mandate, the Commission established the Language Accessibility Program, and they created the glossaries to help local election officials in providing translated election materials that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. Currently there are glossaries in six languages: Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.
- a. First I'd like to ask if any of you represent jurisdictions that are required to provide language assistance under Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act? Even if you are not mandated to do so by law, do any of you have significant numbers of constituents who are limited in their English language abilities? [If no in both cases, state that since this is not an issue for any of the attendees, you can move on. Go to conclusion.]
 - b. Were any of you aware of the glossaries before today? Have any of you or your staff used them to produce election-related materials in other languages or assist voters who have limited English abilities? If so, how did you put them to use? Did you find them to be an effective resource? How could they be structured, and/or what other information could they contain that would increase their value to you?
 - c. For those of you who were not aware of the glossaries, but must provide election-related materials in multiple languages and/or assist voters with limited English proficiencies, do you think the glossaries would be of assistance in that regard? If not, why not? How could they be structured, and/or what other information could they contain that would increase their value to you?

Conclusion

Well, that is all the prepared questions we have for you today. Before we leave, though, I'd like to ask if there are any additional thoughts you have about the products you've seen today, other products you'd like to see, and other ways the EAC might be able to assist you in your work?

We'd like to thank you very much for talking with us today. You've provided valuable feedback and we will be sure that your thoughts and insights are conveyed to those within the EAC who can translate them into action.

END OF SURVEY

THANK YOU FOR RESPONDING TO THIS SURVEY

* This information collection is being requested as part of the EAC's mandate to conduct studies and to carry out other duties and activities to promote the effective administration of Federal elections under HAVA Section 203. Respondent's reply to this information collection is voluntary; respondents include the fifty States, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories. This information will be made publicly available on the EAC website (www.eac.gov). According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is OMB Control No. XXXXX (expires XXXX). The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 40 minutes per online survey response. This estimate includes the time for reviewing the instructions, and completing and submitting the survey. The time required for each focus group is two hours. Comments regarding this burden estimate should be sent the U.S. Election Assistance Commission – Product Evaluation, 1225 New York Avenue, Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20005.