Visual and Information Design Research:

Designing impactful and culturally responsive voter education

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By

Andrea Miranda Salas
Research Practice Lead

Emma Werowinski
Design Practice Lead

Center for Civic Design

We are grateful to the many people who made this project possible.

This work was supported by our general operations funding, which allows us to pursue timely and relevant research as part of our mission to improve democracy as a design problem. In particular, we are grateful to the Joyce Foundation for funding work in the Great Lakes region.

We are also grateful to members of the Ohio Voting Rights Coalition (OVRC) who allowed us to learn more about the challenges of voter education and nonpartisan get-out-the-vote (GOTV) activities in the midst of a contested special election. The 5 groups who hosted our research were critical to our ability to reach voters from communities across Ohio.

And most of all, we thank the 62 individual voters who spent time with us, showing us what they want in a voter guide and election information.

Thank you all.

You can learn more about our work at civicdesign.org

From September 2023 to January 2024, we conducted a qualitative research project to learn how to design voter education for multilingual communities of voters.

This research started with a big question: how can visual design and the use of design elements with cultural relevance make voter education material more effective in engaging and informing voters?

The study was conducted in Ohio, working in partnership with community-based and voter advocacy groups that encourage civic participation. Focusing our research in one place gave us the opportunity to take advantage of 2 special elections and to work with several groups in the same election context, gaining a deeper understanding of how to create impactful design for multiple communities.

The first use of what we learned in this research was to create a resource for those involved in educating and communicating basic voter information to Ohio voters.

But we believe it has a wider reach and will be useful for people creating civic education across the country.

As a companion to this report, we created a toolkit with practical guidance for how to create engaging, accessible, and action-oriented voter education materials. The toolkit contains customizable templates, design assets, and guidance and recommendations about effectively engaging voters from diverse, multilingual communities.

The toolkit can be found at bit.ly/CCDOhioToolkit

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Impactful and culturally responsive voter education

The idea for this project had been on our list of research for several years, but we did not have a good location where we could work with local community-based organizations during an election cycle.

In 2023, a change in election laws in Ohio presented an opportunity to work with the Ohio Voting Rights Coalition (OVRC) community members to create voter education for a special election in August and a general election in November. We were able to build on relationships with community-based organizations and use the education materials we created as the basis for this research.

What we wanted to learn

We have long known how important it is to create voter education materials that speak directly to voters. Plain language, one of the core skills for civic design, addresses the choice of words, and how to make information about elections easy to find, easy to understand, and ultimately helps people take action to be a voter. We use information design principles to present election details in a way that helps voters navigate a page, booklet, or website effectively. But we wanted to understand how design elements like color, images, and presentation or layout can make information more effective in appealing to—and informing—voters from diverse communities.

Much of the Center for Civic Design's work has been with election offices, which need to present accurate information to all voters. But with this research, we chose to focus on work happening outside of election offices, driven instead by community-based organizations. We decided to create a study to look at the effectiveness, attractiveness/desirability, and usability of varied levels of color and imagery in communication materials. We wanted to know how design could affect voter perceptions, and whether they have the potential to instill trust in elections for community members.

In other words, we wanted to dig into the details of what it means to be "culturally responsive" in communicating with voters. We were particularly interested in people who historically turn out in lower numbers, suggesting that there may be information barriers or civic literacy gaps that keep them from becoming voters.

To accomplish this, we partnered with OVRC and 6 community-based organizations in Ohio to design and test voter education materials with Ohio voters. The research was conducted on-site at community centers in 3 metro areas in Ohio during October 2023 and January 2024.

We hoped that our discoveries would lead to practical recommendations that could be incorporated into a toolkit with guidelines for designing effective and culturally responsive voter education for Ohio—and which could be adapted to other locations.

Ohio 2023 context

In January 2023, Ohio House Bill 458 brought stricter photo ID laws and other changes to Ohio's election administration. The changes included 4 that affected voters and voter education:

- Reducing the photo IDs accepted to vote in person (an Ohio driver's license, an Ohio-issued state identification card, a passport, or military identification). This eliminated many other IDs commonly in use.
- Limiting the number of ballot drop boxes to 1 per county.
- Eliminating early voting on the Monday before Election Day.
- Shortening the deadline to apply for a mail-in ballot.

Many advocacy organizations were concerned that these changes would create confusion and result in barriers to voting for people who have historically been disenfranchised, such as young people, the elderly, Black and people of color, unhoused, and military/overseas voters.

> "As it gets harder and harder to vote, it becomes harder and harder to communicate to people that it's easy to vote and important."
> -- Ohio Voting Rights Coalition (OVRC) Steering Committee member

Organizations began working to create voter education tailored to the needs of impacted voters. For example, the new ID requirement meant that college students from other states needed to get an Ohio ID to vote because student IDs are no longer accepted for in-person voting. Changing your driver's license, however, can have consequences for financial aid or tuition status.

Instead, students were encouraged to vote by mail using the last 4 digits of their social security number. However, the multiple steps of mail-in voting can be a harder process for students who are not familiar with it. One of the challenges to educating students effectively is breaking down the information so that each person can find the right solution for their personal circumstances.

Another communication challenge concerned ballot questions. In all of the Center for Civic Design's past research with voters, deciding how to vote on a ballot question so their

choice matched their intent was often a top source of both confusion and mistrust, so we anticipated that ballot questions would cause confusion in Ohio as well. But it was made even more challenging by 2 factors. First, special elections have historically had low turnout, especially when a ballot question is the only statewide contest, as it was in August—a seemingly technical proposal to change the Ohio Constitution to raise the winning threshold to 60% from the previous majority threshold. Second, both the August special election and the November general election featured a ballot question known as "Issue 1."

All of these factors meant that communication and voter outreach would be critical. In the end, both elections had high turnout and Ohioans were able to have their voices heard on these issues.

In this context, starting in June 2023, the Center for Civic Design collaborated with OVRC to create voter education about the changes to Ohio's voter ID law and voting deadlines. We updated a presentation to teach GOTV leaders about the law so they could communicate it to their community members clearly. We also designed a printable pocket guide and signage that could be incorporated into their voter outreach work. Those materials were the starting point for our research into how to design impactful and culturally responsive voter education.

About this project

While GOTV campaigns frequently make toolkits as part of their voter education efforts, we saw a lack of research about how to create effective voter information that is accurate, informative, and culturally responsive for voters from diverse communities. Current guidance on creating toolkits takes the form of broad suggestions about using color and images that are appropriate to the target communities, reaching voters through trusted relationships, and speaking directly to voters so they understand their options and the actions needed to vote.

Those suggestions are based on good instincts, but we wanted to explore them through research in order to develop a clear set of best practices for what design elements are most effective, and what we mean by being responsive to local cultures. There is simply no set of principles that guide an election office or community-based organization in designing a specific piece of voter education. This research aims to address that gap.

Research goals

Our goal was to use the context in Ohio to test materials with culturally and linguistically diverse communities to:

- Gain a baseline understanding of the needs, perceptions, and challenges experienced by diverse communities in the information design of voter communication materials.
- Develop a set of culturally responsive principles for voter education and GOTV materials based on insights from the research.

Our research was designed to study voter experience and preferences through interactive, participatory activities through which we could:

- **Assess gaps, successes, and challenges** in voter information and educational materials.
- **Discover preferences and perceptions** of official voting communications versus educational communications relating to visual and information design to determine or define what level of design is appropriate for each.
- **Identify design that builds trust** through culturally responsive visual elements, information, and content design for diverse communities.

- **Identify pain points for organizations serving diverse needs** by understanding the historical context of the communities they serve and gaps in voter communication material explicitly focused on the needs of their constituents.

Our hypothesis was that when elements of design are intentionally chosen to be culturally responsive, design can attract and build trust among diverse voters.

Specifically, we started with a short list of research questions to explore:

- What information do voters want included in (or left out of) their voter education and outreach materials?
- What makes content helpful or actionable?
- What visual elements grab and hold voters' attention?
- What aspects of visual elements (such as imagery, color, and layout) appeal to voters?
- How can design drive trust?
- Does tailoring voter materials in a culturally responsive way make them more credible?

Research methods

We used qualitative and participatory research methods to understand the various ways in which voters perceive visual and information design:

Expert interviews. We conducted 4 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with OVRC's Steering Committee Members to learn about their existing material creation process, communications ecosystem, and high-level view of the communities' sentiments and challenges.

Listening sessions. We conducted 6 listening sessions with the partner organizations. In these discussions, we learned about the organizations' existing voter efforts and pain points and walked through their process for creating voter materials. What we learned guided our user research recruitment efforts.

Design audit. We conducted a design audit and analysis of the organizations' 2023 voting outreach materials to gather examples of visual style and content. Materials included campaign material kits, voter guides, and social media posts.

User research. We conducted in-person usability sessions with 62 participants that included both a semi-structured interview and a creative participatory activity. To learn about participants' design-related preferences, we asked them to engage in an activity to

create their own design for voting information. We provided them with samples that they could cut up and reassemble in a collage. This activity allowed them to express themselves in their own terms. Instead of just reacting to materials we presented, they were able to show us what they preferred, tell us about what they disliked, and—most importantly— voice what they valued and felt strongly about.

Participants using collage to design their own voter guides during sessions held at The Freedom Bloc in Akron, OH

Partnering organizations and recruiting strategies

Members of OVRC connected us with local voting advocacy organizations that work directly to serve communities and geographic areas representing different cultural communities. These organizations had existing voter education programs and events to inform their constituents about voting.

We worked with 5 organizations in the Columbus and Cleveland metro areas, shown in the list below. In addition, the Ohio Coalition on Black Civic Participation participated in the listening sessions.

Organizations we partnered with

Organization	Location	Community and types of voters
Mobilize the Vote NEO	Cuyahoga County East Cleveland	Black senior community in rental/Low-income housing Older Adults & Seniors (aged 50 - 65+) **Mix of low propensity & avid voters**
Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates (NOVA)	Cuyahoga County Cleveland	CSU college students Young adults (18-24) **New voters & low propensity voters**
Freedom BLOC	Summit County Akron	Black community Young adults aged (18 - 29) **First-time & sometimes voters**
OPAWL - Building AAPI Feminist Leadership	Franklin County Columbus	Nepali Bhutanese community Mixed ages **New citizen voters**
Young Latino Network	Cuyahoga County Cleveland	Puerto Rican community Mixed ages **Mix of low propensity & avid voters**

We recruited our participants through community outreach with our partnering organizations, using their existing programs and community member relationships. Some sessions were scheduled in advance; other participants were recruited on location through intercepts.

All participants were compensated for their time with a small cash honorarium.

How we conducted multilingual research

CCD regularly conducts multilingual research. Our practice includes creating translated materials and working with local bilingual moderators to conduct the research sessions. Our goal is to be able to accommodate multilingual participants and individuals with varying levels of fluency in both languages.

For this project, all our testing materials were translated into Spanish and Nepali through a trusted language translation organization. Then, Spanish-speaking and Nepali-speaking staff from our partnering organizations reviewed all materials in their respective languages to ensure they were culturally relevant and linguistically accurate before we tested with participants.

When working with the Nepali-speaking community in Columbus, we collaborated with a Nepali community member who was also the Civic Engagement Lead of our partnering organization. With their help, we were able to include Nepali-speaking participants by providing in-person interpretation services during our interviews. For interviews conducted primarily in English, our bilingual partners provided support for participants who were fluent in English but preferred to express themselves in Nepali on some topics.

For our Spanish-speaking community in Cleveland, we trained a bilingual program manager from our partnering organization to moderator the Spanish interviews. The training consisted of walking through our approach to user research and facilitation style and contextualizing our research goals for the interviews. A bilingual CCD staff member moderated the English sessions.

Pocket guides to voting in Nepali

Participant demographics

Total participants

63

Registration status

- Registered to vote (55)
- Not registered (6)
- Not sure (1)

Age

- 🔴 18-25 years old **(16)**
- 🟢 25-29 years old **(9)**
- 🟣 30-39 years old **(6)**
- 🔵 40-64 years old **(19)**
- 🟠 65+ years old **(12)**

Pie chart: 25.8%, 14.5%, 9.7%, 30.6%, 19.4%
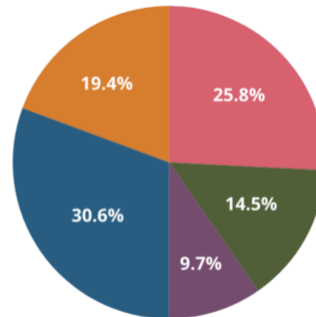
Race/Ethnicity

- 🟢 Hispanic or Latino/a/x **(13)**
- 🔵 Black or African American **(35)**
- 🔴 Middle Eastern/North African **(1)**
- 🟣 South Asian **(11)**
- 🟠 Mixed race **(1)**
- 🔴 White **(1)**

Pie chart: 21%, 56.5%, 17.7%
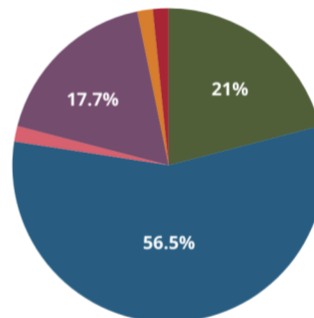
Voter habits

- 🔴 First time voter **(4)**
  Voted for the first time in 2023
- 🟤 New voter **(10)**
  Became eligible to vote within the past 4 years
- 🟢 New citizen voter **(9)**
  Naturalized and eligible to vote within the last 10 years
- 🟠 Returning citizen voter **(2)**
- ⚫ Non voter **(2)**
- 🟣 Low propensity voter **(13)**
- 🔴 Sometimes voter **(3)**
- 🔵 Avid voter **(19)**

Donut chart: 4.8%, 31%, 21%, 16%, 14.5%, 6.5%
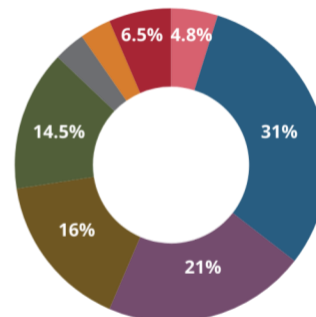
What we learned from the listening sessions

Key insights from our partnering advocacy organizations

How voter education materials are created

Community-based organizations play a significant role in civic engagement and voter education, especially for multilingual voters. From prior research, we have learned that sharing voter education materials out into a community is a group effort involving multiple players in the voter education communication ecosystem.

During our listening sessions with our partnering organizations, we identified 3 common approaches: some organizations directly use materials from trusted sources, some adapt existing materials, and others create their own.

Reusing materials developed by others. Some advocacy organizations have limited capacity, with only a small team to design or adapt materials. As a result, they often use printed and social media materials provided by the local or state elections office or other trusted organizations for voter outreach and education.

Adapting templates from their network. It is common practice for state coalitions and community-based organizations to create templates and toolkits for voter outreach. These templates are made available on Canva or other networks so local organizations can customize them by changing the specifics to local information and adding their own brand identity to the shared content. This saves time for smaller organizations and ensures consistency in communications to voters.

Organizations without a dedicated communications team often adapt information from the Ohio Secretary of State's office and their local Board of Elections to include their own messaging.

Developing and testing their own materials. A few organizations use statewide coalition talking points as a foundation to determine what the messaging and talking points should be for their community. They gather feedback and concerns and test these talking points with community members at community meetings and during canvassing and door-to-door conversations. They then share what they hear with their internal communications team or committees. This approach generates rich data that inform the messaging and content so that it incorporates the community's needs and concerns.

Challenges in the communication process

Community-based organizations, especially those that do voter outreach as part of a larger mission, face several challenges in creating communication materials.

Materials are often created from scratch for each election, adjusting to the issues at the forefront at the time. For organizations with a small or all-volunteer staff, this work can take time away from their outreach mission.

Groups that serve diverse language or cultural communities face 2 additional challenges in adapting general election information and creating translations:

Lack of materials adapted for their communities. For organizations that serve specific diverse communities, there are few (if any) culturally competent materials about voting provided by the election office. For example, we heard from an organizer that there isn't any voter education information targeting the specific needs of the Nepali/Bhutanese community. This leaves the organization to fill those gaps providing outreach and civic education for these voters.

Resources for accurate translation. The work of translation also often falls on under-resourced organizations. Translations add time—for creating the translation, checking it, and then putting each language into the publication format. In a fast-paced election season, needing to create translations on a tight schedule can mean that translations are done poorly or not done at all.

The accuracy of translations can also have a broader and historical context. For example, frequent incorrect translations of Nepali from the city, public health, and other government entities have caused confusion and distrust among voters from the community. That distrust spills over into election information, making it harder to engage those voters.

Organizations serving all Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) communities face an extra challenge because many cultures and languages are grouped together under the AAPI umbrella. This means that they have to address the distinct language and cultural needs of multiple communities.

Despite these challenges, the organizations we spoke with recognize the importance of accurate translations and culturally relevant materials to ensure that every member of the community can access the information they need.

Challenges in voter outreach

The challenges in creating outreach materials spill over into the voter outreach process.

Lack of multilingual volunteers and translated materials creates significant barriers to outreach efforts. Identity and cultural context are important factors when it comes to effectively engaging a community. White-led advocacy groups told us that their volunteers were predominately white, not representative of the communities they wanted to engage. They also struggle to recruit multilingual volunteers, particularly in Spanish. The resulting lack of representation in their outreach and the lack of resources for translations limits their ability to serve multilingual communities. It is also a factor in the historical lack of culturally relevant voter education for voters in those communities.

Creating stronger relationships with election offices can be difficult. Building strong relationships with election offices and community-based organizations is crucial for strengthening voter engagement. However, community-based organizations have varied relationships with election offices.

- Some advocacy organizations do not engage with Board of Elections (BOE) offices at all or very little. Instead, they rely on support from their core partnering organizations and partners with similar missions and civic programs. These organizations exchange knowledge, review and oversee materials, and stay up to date on voting changes.
- Some organizations have had strained relationships and, at worst, encountered negative treatment. We heard of situations where community members were not treated well when visiting election offices. These experiences significantly impact not only the relationship with the organization but also the community's perception and willingness to engage with election offices in the future.

  "This is an example of culturally competent work that is not happening."
  –Staff member at a community-based organization sharing a story about poor reception received at an election office

  "It's kind of tricky, they are aggravated by us."
  – Executive Director of a community-based organization describing their relationship with an election office

- We also spoke with organizations that have a positive relationship with their election offices. To cultivate these relationships, organizations have gained exposure by participating in BOE initiatives or attending board meetings. They emphasized the importance of dropping off completed voter registration forms, as this provides an opportunity to become familiar with—and visible to—election

officials. They are dedicated to high-quality work, such as registering voters with very few errors. Their proven usefulness has established trust amongst election offices.

Both election offices and community-based organizations prioritize quality assurance and share the common goal of engaging and educating voters, which presents an opportunity to strengthen their relationship.

"Because of our due diligence, we are in their good graces."
– Executive Director of a community-based organization referring to their relationship with election officials

What we learned in the research sessions with voters

How we ran the research sessions

During our session, we had participants review multiple voter information fliers, each with slight design and content variations. We asked them which fliers they preferred, which they felt were made with them in mind, and why. Equally valuable, we discussed aspects of the fliers they disliked. Many participants preferred colorful fliers that grabbed their attention, saying that they found the imagery engaging. Many emphasized the importance of the level of information and the visual breakdown of information.
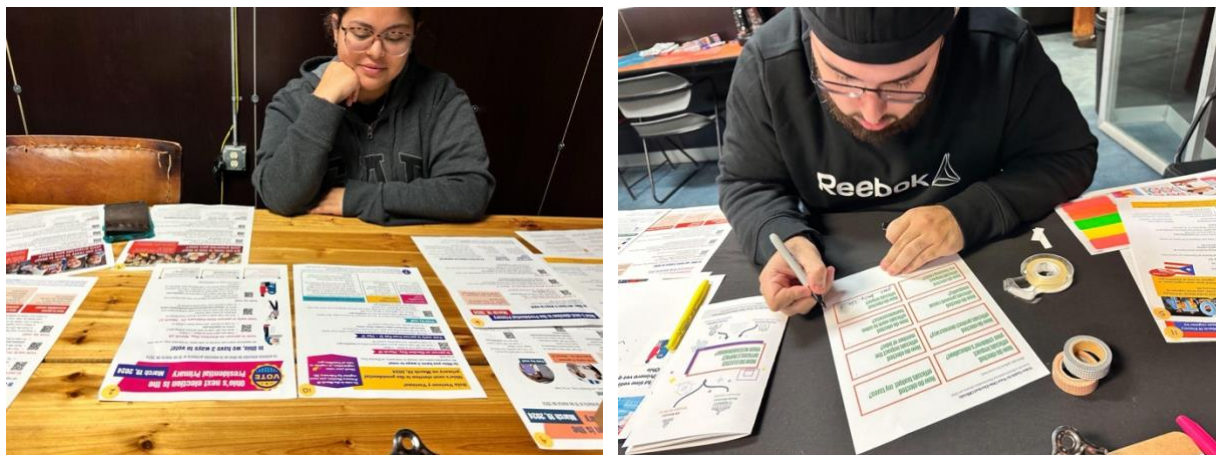
Participants using collage to design their own voter guides during sessions held at Young Latino Network in Cleveland, OH

To gather deeper insights into participants' perceptions and beliefs about voting, we conducted a participatory activity in which they were asked to create their own designs. They were given pre-printed materials, including illustrations, imagery, and text, to choose from to cut and paste onto their flyers. They were also encouraged to draw their own visuals or write their own headlines. When creating their own designs, we noticed participants were able to digest the information more closely, carefully selecting a combination of text and visuals to cater to their needs. This gave us an opportunity to gain a richer context as they shared stories of their relationship to voting in general.

To learn more about participants' knowledge and level of comfort with different methods of voting, we asked them to walk us through their voting plan. They told us which methods they were familiar with and shared past pain points and distrust of some of the methods.

During our research, we conducted 2 phases of testing. In the first phase, we learned that voters needed additional information, such as an explanation of issues on the ballots,

additional nonpartisan resources, and candidate information to be included in voter information.

As a result, in our second phase, where we tested with Spanish speakers, we designed and tested bilingual civic education materials that included Ohio's elected officials' roles and functions. We asked participants to review and mark up the voter guide. From this research activity, we learned:

- Participants gained an understanding of the elected roles they would be voting for as Ohio residents, had a mental model of the relationship between federal, state, and local officials, and saw gaps in their own knowledge.
- The guide provided an opportunity for learning, especially for new voters. Some learned new information about the responsibility of each of these roles and how they affect them directly.
- Overall we learned that voters found this type of civic information helpful and felt more prepared to vote as a result. Participants mentioned that many did not know where to start, but having the voter guide made it easier for them to get started.

  "Because I could've voted when I started when I was of age but I didn't. And it was because I didn't understand who anybody was and what I was voting for. Nobody told me that."
  – Puerto Rican male, returning citizen voter

The materials we tested

We tested voter education materials, which we designed. The content was based on CCD's past research about what information voters want, and information from a presentation with voting facts in Ohio written by OVRC. It covered key voting information about:

- Ways to vote (in-person early voting, mail-in/absentee voting, in-person on Election Day)
- Voter registration deadlines
- Sample ballot access
- Voter ID requirements
- Accessible in-person voting
- Voting rights with a felony conviction

The sample materials we used were then designed in a variety of formats and visual designs so we could test reactions to these design elements. The materials also varied in the depth of information, so they were appropriate for different levels of attention: a "bite"

of social media; a quick "snack" for flyers, postcards and pocket guides; and a longer "meal-size" civics guide.

See images of all the materials we tested in **[Appendix A: Test Materials](#)**. 3 examples are shown below:
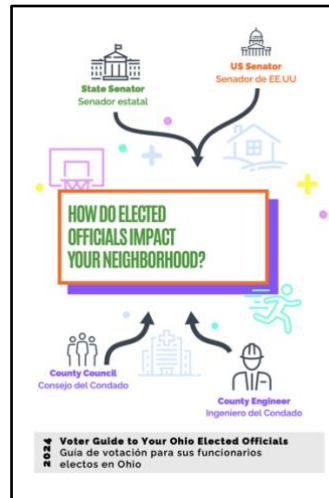
Participants looked at a range of materials including these flyers and social media post

Summary of the test materials

Design element we varied	Variations we created
Layouts for bilingual materials	- English - Nepali/English: Double sided - Spanish/English: Double Sided. Bilingual headers on both sides. - Spanish/English: Side-by-side bilingual
Visual design styles and color schemes	- Black & white - Graphic colorful text - Traditional red/white/blue - Cultural imagery - Simple icons/illustrations - Complex illustrations - Photos of people - Illustrations of people - Cultural colors
Formats and depth of information	30 "snack-sized" flyers 6 "snack-sized" postcards

- 2 "snack-sized" pocket guides
- 5 "bite-sized" social media posts
- 1 "meal-sized" civics guide to elected official job descriptions

The designs were all created in Canva. We chose this platform because it is used by many nonprofits and elections offices. This allowed us to explore the experience of the audience for this research and toolkit, rather than relying on our own professional tools and libraries of images. For example, most of the images came from Canva's free image collection.

Insights from the research

As we analyzed what we learned from the listening sessions, the sessions with voters, and the initial work to create voter education materials, we focused on how to be "culturally responsive" in communicating with voters.

Some aspects go beyond a narrow view of 'design,' touching on the resources available to reach diverse communities and the challenges in improving them. Others confirm our initial hypothesis that adapting the approach to design can help any organization create voter education and outreach that is both impactful and effectively culturally responsive.

In this section, we lay out the insights from the research with examples and stories that illustrate them. They are organized into 3 broad themes:

- Design has an impact on voter engagement and trust
- Visual language of layout, images, and color can invite participation
- Digital tools can benefit or create barriers to reaching a community

As a companion to this report, we created a toolkit with practical guidance for how to create engaging, accessible, and action-oriented voter education materials. The toolkit contains customizable templates, design assets, and guidance and recommendations about effectively engaging voters from diverse multilingual communities.

The toolkit can be found at bit.ly/CCDOhioToolkit

Design has an impact on voter engagement and trust

Insight 01

Voters trust engaging, well-designed, professional-looking materials.

When testing materials with voters, we included examples of GOTV flyers similar to those provided by election offices. These flyers had heavy text, black and white or toned-down colors, and lacked imagery. Most participants associated this type of visual language with city and government communications, perceiving it as "official." However, they also found it less engaging due to its plain and bureaucratic appearance.

We noticed a recurring theme among participants, with many emphasizing the importance of a "professional" appearance in their preferred flyers. According to their feedback, "professional" entailed a balanced layout, intentional use of color, a clear information hierarchy, and concise, informative content.

When we delved deeper into what might make these types of materials more trustworthy, voters told us that the addition of a logo, QR codes, and government website links helped them gain trust. While the plain visual language of city communication holds significance for voters and is seen as "official," voters want educational materials that are not only informative and credible but also visually appealing and appear "professional" in order to establish trust and credibility.

Insight 02

Voters want to know why they should vote

After learning the basic methods of voting and logistical information, voters were left with even more questions:

- Voters want to understand what they would be voting on, including local issues and candidates.
- Voters want a thorough explanation of the issues on the ballot to help them feel prepared.
- Experienced and avid voters want nonpartisan resources where they can find complete information to follow up on and research on their own.

These questions all reveal a desire for more general civic knowledge. However, the lack of civic educational materials leads to lower voter engagement and a break in the overall voter experience. Advocacy organizations confirmed this, sharing with us the challenges of following up with voters during outreach and canvassing due to the lack of time and resources to create or obtain civic materials. As a result, advocacy organizations find it difficult to keep their base voters engaged throughout the year.

Insight 03

Voter information has to fill civic literacy gaps.

Our research surfaced 3 learning gaps that were shared by voters and potential voters when seeking voter information materials—regardless of prior voting habits, demographics, or preferred language.

Awareness of the availability of sample ballots. Most participants, including experienced voters, were unaware they could view their sample ballot online. Once informed of this option, they expressed a strong interest in viewing their ballot before casting their vote because it would provide them with a greater sense of confidence and

security. The ability to see their sample ballot helps voters to be well-prepared when casting their vote.

Lack of awareness of options on how to vote. Some voters were unaware of early voting or vote-by-mail options, while others believed that these methods were only reserved for people with special circumstances or requirements. Ohio currently does not require an excuse to vote by mail. This lack of awareness prevented them from taking advantage of these voting methods, which could have made it easier for them to cast their vote.

Knowledge gaps about voting by mail. Most participants we spoke to preferred voting in person on election day because they found the experience gratifying. It was reassuring to feel that their vote counted in a concrete and tangible way. Voters' most significant and consistent knowledge gap was regarding voting by mail, which has substantial barriers.

- **Drop box terminology.** Many participants—including both avid voters and new voters—did not know what a ballot drop box is. When asked, they believed it referred to the USPS postal mailbox. This leads us to understand that the issue is not based on voting experience but instead a lack of familiarity with election terminology.
- **Lack of trust in the process of voting by mail.** Participants cited past occasions when they felt that vote-by-mail ballots were not counted. This lack of trust made them hesitant to use the vote-by-mail process. To gain more confidence, they expressed a need for clarity on the mail-in ballot process and reassurance that they could track their ballot.
- **Ballot return timeline.** Participants found the multi-step vote by mail process confusing. They wanted additional information about each step, and especially wanted to see the due dates for each return method (mail, drop box, and in-person drop-off). We heard from avid voters who missed ballot return deadline dates due to the shortening of the return window.
- **Inconvenience.** Many voters face difficulties in requesting a vote by mail ballot because they found the process inconvenient. In order to request a ballot by mail, they have to complete an application form which needs to be printed and mailed. This creates an extra step for most participants, especially those who do not own a printer. Additionally, some voters who don't frequently use the postal system do not have stamps readily available. We also heard from a senior voter with a disability who would ideally prefer to vote by mail. However, the process proved to be more challenging because they needed to arrange for transportation to buy stamps in

order to mail back their application to request a mail-in ballot. These extra steps can create significant barriers for voters, making it harder for them to cast their vote.

"Do I have to provide a stamp? If I have to provide a stamp now, that's another hurdle."
– Black senior male, avid voter with vision impairment

"It's counterintuitive. Why would I scan a QR code to go online to print a form when it should probably just take me to that form and fill it out and press enter?"
– Puerto Rican male, low propensity voter

Insight 04

Voters are wary when materials mix advocating for how to vote on a ballot question and basic voting information.

What may seem like minor design elements can significantly impact the effectiveness of the communication. When learning about how to vote, people want clear distinctions between advocacy and nonpartisan GOTV communication.

Flyers prominently displaying ballot issues elicited strong reactions from participants. This is especially true for controversial issues on the ballot, such as Issue 1 (Reproductive Decisions) and Issue 2 (Legalizing Marijuana), which were on the ballot in Ohio's general election.

Many participants said that when the ballot issue was mentioned prominently on the flyer, such as in the title or one of the main headings, it made the flyer appear biased and they felt it was swaying them to vote in favor of the issues on the ballot.

While this encouraged some voters who were in favor of the issues, it alienated undecided voters and those who opposed the issues on the ballot based on their political views, creating distrust. To these participants, even minor design elements, like a slightly uneven alignment of the ballot issues headings, made it look aggressive and drew more attention to the issues.

"It's what it says and how it says it."
-- Black female, avid voter from East Cleveland commenting on heading for ballot issues on a flyer

"I don't do drugs, so this one turns me off."
-- Black senior male, low propensity voter from Cleveland referring to Ballot Issue 2 on the top of the flyer

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Story share One participant, after reviewing several of the flyers, expressed her immediate dislike of a particular flyer that had both ballot issues listed at the top of the flyer in a bright color text block because she told us she "didn't support legalizing marijuana." To her, the flyer seemed biased, leading her to believe it was intended to influence her vote. As a result, she became suspicious of the information on the flyers and their source, which led her to feel a sense of distrust.

The visual language of design can invite participation

Insight 05

Voters notice when headlines and callouts address issues they care about.

Inclusive headlines and callouts have the potential to make non-voters feel included.

But headlines and call-outs directed at potential voters provide more than just informational purposes. Headlines such as "Ohio college students have the right to vote in Ohio elections" and call-outs boxes that emphasize circumstances such as accessibility needs or ID requirements, are design elements that can specifically target people who have already established that they don't or can't vote.

This approach directly invites those who have sworn off voting and can be useful in changing their mindset and encouraging participation.

> **Story share** When speaking with a young Black voter, they told us that seeing the felony conviction callout box was important to them, sharing that this information directly impacts a close family member. Community organizers we spoke with noted this approach is especially helpful in countering people's responses when they mistakenly believe they can't vote because of past felony charges.

Insight 06

Color can help structure the information to capture and direct voters' attention.

Our participants overwhelmingly preferred colorful flyers over black and white ones, especially in materials with a lot of text. Color, combined with good information design, helps them focus on essential information and skim the material quickly. Participants appreciated the combination of color and white space as it made the information stand out, providing clarity and making the materials easier to read.

We received feedback from 3 groups who found color particularly useful: college students, seniors with low vision, and people who had difficulty focusing.

College students mentioned that color is a must-have for them. It helps to catch their attention and break through the noise of the content, especially given the overwhelming amount of information they are exposed to daily.

> "These 3 bold colors help me see the information"
> *– White male, new voter, student at Cleveland State University*

> "The color blocks on the headline make the words more obvious."
> *– Black female, nonvoter, student at Cleveland State University*

For some seniors with low vision or visual impairment, we heard that color helped improve reading legibility.

> "Color brings my eye to the paper. Color is helpful to bring attention to the most important point. If there isn't anything to bolden the point then it all blends in together."
> *– Black senior female, avid voter referring to the use of color to indicate the importance of the date*

> "They contrast each other nicely this solid color. But the 2 colors and both of them being such a bold color brings your attention right to it. You can pick out the words out of it without reading the whole thing."
> *– Black senior female from East Cleveland, voting advocate*

The use of color also helped people who told us they had difficulty concentrating. It helped ground them, making it easier to navigate the information without feeling overwhelmed.

> "I can see it highlighted, like, oh, okay, I can mentally just see right, visually and mentally logged November 7."
> *– Black female, avid voter, voting advocate for her senior community*

> "They [my friends] also have bad attention span so I think these color blocks would help them as well."
> *– White male, first time voter, student at Cleveland State University*

Insight 07

Bilingual layouts can invite new voters with varying levels of English fluency.

In our conversations with voters, most of them found the illustrations and images of the voting process in GOTV materials very useful in understanding the different voting methods available. The addition of imagery helps multilingual voters to understand the topic quickly and effectively, as it provides a visual representation of the information being conveyed. In addition, a bilingual layout that shows both languages side-by-side is especially helpful for bilingual voters who speak 2 languages but have different levels of fluency in each language.

Using imagery and a bilingual layout can offer learning opportunities for voters with varying levels of language fluency to familiarize themselves with and learn specific election terminology. This helps make the voting process more accessible to multilingual voters.

> ".. people might think the whole Spanglish thing kind of helps also because there's some words in Spanish that I only know them in Spanish. And vice versa. And then there's people in my family who only speak one or the other language. So something like that can help."
> *– Young woman, new voter, bilingual Spanish and English speaker*

> "So if I take this to someone that's a little older, that's Spanish dominant. You know, I really don't have to explain much to them. They already know what it's talking about."
> *– Puerto Rican male, avid voter*

> " I still think that there is always going to be the issue that people might have questions and having it next to each other, you could learn a little about the different things and words that are important"
> *– Puerto Rican male, avid voter, bilingual Spanish and English speaker referring to the bilingual layout on a flyer*

Story share A participant wasn't familiar with the word "ballot" when he saw it on the flyer. Later, he mentioned that he was in fact familiar with the concept of a ballot as he had previously voted but didn't know the technical word in English was "ballot."

Insight 08

Images are impactful and engaging but require careful selection.

We learned that incorporating imagery in GOTV communication materials is highly impactful and effective for voters. It may be a more challenging approach to implement effectively as it requires more careful consideration. However, with proper attention, images of people can offer a relatable perspective that can attract voters, humanize the voting process, motivate, and create a positive emotional response.

Voting-related imagery. Images of people engaged in voting or voting-related activities are seen as more credible, while images of people representing their community in non-voting-related activities are viewed as inauthentic and pandering.

Positive emotions. Images of people expressing positive emotions such as smiling, excitement, and enthusiasm resonate with voters and elicit a similar emotional response.

Illustrations. Graphics and illustrations can represent various ethnicities and races, giving participants "a place to put themselves" and making them feel represented.

Aspirational Imagery. Images depicting young people and/or students are perceived as aspirational to older voters, even though these images do not represent their age group. To senior voters, these images symbolize a promising future, instill hope, and provide assurance that the younger generation is actively voting and participating in the decision-making process.

"This right here, I love this picture on here, because it gave new voters privacy like you're going to be able to vote is going to be private and nobody is going you know, I'm saying it gives a good idea of voting."
– Black woman, commenting on images of people voting

"To me it means that we are using the right to vote. We have this right and it's important."
– Nepali/Bhurmese woman, new citizen voter commenting on what the images on a flyer symbolize to her

"I felt like more effort was put into these, especially the ones with the pictures. Because a lot of people are visual. And a lot of people will look at things at a glance. Adding pictures just shows that they are actually putting effort into just getting the message out in different ways outside of just using words."

Insight 09

Voters want to see racially and ethnically diverse communities represented in images.

The majority of voters from all backgrounds preferred GOTV materials that contained imagery of people.

In particular, BIPOC voters expressed a strong desire to see themselves and their community represented in images on voting communication materials. The majority of participants prefer images of racially and ethnically diverse groups of people, as they are usually a more accurate representation of their community and make the information more credible. We heard that such images represented unity and made them feel more united on the issues. Nepalese/Bhurmese new citizen voters, in particular, told us that images of multiculturalism represent what America means to them.

"For me personally, because it's aimed for my community that I am closely related to and understand so it shows that you prioritizing my community in terms of helping us get the knowledge about voting."
– Puerto Rican male, avid voter commenting on images of Puerto Rican people on a flyer

"It counters the narrative that different races and ethnicities are not together when in fact there is unity and commonalities amongst other groups of people. We are all in this together."
– Black male, avid voter commenting on images of multiracial people on a flyer

"It's community-oriented, this is what I see in my community everyday."
– Black male, low propensity voter commenting on images of multiracial people on a flyer

Insight 10

Images depicting people of only one race made many Black voters feel targeted.

We heard from many Black voters that they felt targeted and singled out when a flyer featured images of only Black people. This is especially true if the issues on the ballots are

controversial. Because of this, some participants were skeptical of image usage altogether and preferred imageless flyers, which they perceived as being less biased and more straightforward.

Understanding this is crucial, as some of our partnering organizations communicated that they—as predominantly white-led volunteer groups—feel unequipped to engage with BIPOC communities.

"We respond to more than ourselves you don't have to present us with a warp mirror, we will respond to the society around this world we live in. This just feels very like you're not counting on me to be smart. You're counting on me to be emotional."
–Black woman, avid voter from East Cleveland

"This one to me is straight out racist. I know a lot of white people that are pro marijuana and pro abortion."
–Young Black woman, new voter, student at Cleveland State University

Insight 11
When used carelessly, cultural imagery and language can make communities feel targeted or create division.

Using cultural imagery and language on headlines meant to address specific groups on GOTV materials can make voters feel as if they are being singled out.

For example, the Puerto Rican community we spoke to preferred being addressed within a broader community of Spanish-speaking populations to ensure a sense of unity when voting. The use of cultural imagery such as the Puerto Rican flag, resonated and evoked a strong sense of pride and identity for Puerto Ricans. However, when shown flyers with specific Puerto Rican cultural imagery, most voters were suspicious of why only Puerto Ricans were singled out instead of the larger Latino/a/x population in Ohio. We heard from participants that they wanted a sense of unity with other Spanish-speaking communities when it came to voting, suggesting the addition of imagery of flags of Spanish-speaking Latin American countries.

Similarly, during our testing, we learned that specific headlines to encourage certain groups to participate in the voting process, such as "Cleveland Boricuas" or "New to Voting in Mainland US," were not well received. These headlines were perceived as divisive and led

to questions about how people identified themselves. While some Puerto Ricans may have been born in Ohio or elsewhere, they still identify as Puerto Rican and consider it to be one culture. Therefore, the use of headings that address them specifically created a false division between those who were born and raised on the island versus those who were born or raised elsewhere.

> "I think that when you read something if it's for a broader group, it shouldn't be just like, they wouldn't say, oh, white people come and vote. So it should be united like everybody should vote any type of ethnicity group."
> *– Puerto Rican woman, avid voter, bilingual Spanish and English speaker*

> "Yeah, I mean, this is grasping attention to, I would say, Puerto Ricans, people who recognize these colors on this paper. When I feel like we should be targeting everyone, and not just Puerto Ricans."
> *– Puerto Rican young woman, new voter, bilingual Spanish and English speaker*

> "In my eyes it segregates us when in reality, we are one. We're fighting for the same things, we want the same things."
> *– Puerto Rican male, avid voter in response to the Cleveland Boricuas headline*

> "I am offended by the red, black, and green on an issue that is around reproductive rights and legalizing marijuana. The graphic shows African Americans as if this issue only affects them or maybe it's targeted to the community, but it just feels exploitative. It makes me very uncomfortable."
> *– Black woman, avid voter*

Using color

Insight 12

Culturally significant colors and images have impact, but are more effective when used by a familiar organization than by an "outsider."

During our sessions, many Puerto Rican voters felt that a vibrant color palette reminded them of their beloved Island and served as a visual language reminding them of their culture and sense of community. However, they were quick to ask who was behind the information presented to them.

We also learned that the red, black, and green color palette used on flyers resonated well with many Black voters, particularly politically aware individuals who associate these colors

with African liberation. Young voters also associated these colors with the Black Lives Matter movement, which they support.

However, we learned that the effectiveness of these design choices depends on who is sharing the information. If the source is a familiar organization that primarily works with Black or Latino/a/x communities, it can foster a sense of community. If the source is a wider government office, voters told us they were more skeptical and distrustful of its color and imagery choice. A participant made a comparison between one of the fliers shown to the marketing of a particular product that used culturally appropriated and co-opted imagery and colors.

> "We couldn't even vote for the longest time. The government co-opted our colors knowing it's our colors! I would think it is BS information before even reading the information."
> *– Young woman, low propensity voter referring to the Black cultural imagery on a flyer*

Story share During an interview with a Black participant, when asked about his confidence in the information on the handout, he told us that the red, black, and green color used made him feel as if it was intended for him. He quickly turned to the interviewer and responded: "maybe if you were Black I would trust this but I don't think you are, so I'm not so sure." The interviewer in fact, was not Black, and as a result, the participant couldn't fully trust the information on the voter education material.

Insight 13
The use of red, white, and blue and patriotic imagery can discourage young voters.

Most of the participants we spoke to across demographics expressed a strong preference for colorful palettes on GOTV materials. However, we heard a difference between young and older voters. Some older voters told us they prefer traditional voting colors such as red, white, and blue because they associate these colors with voting. They also found bright

colors and playful graphics off-putting because they didn't convey the seriousness of voting.

While some may prefer traditional voting colors, which are familiar and easily identifiable, we found that bright and colorful materials can be effective for young voters.

When we spoke to young people, we found that overly political imagery and traditional red, white, and blue colors can be intimidating for young college students new to politics.

The majority of young Black participants stated that the American flag does not resonate with them as a symbol of freedom and justice. Although they are familiar with the patriotic colors of red, white, and blue, the history and overly political imagery associated with them can be divisive. It may discourage young voters who are not interested in politics.

By being mindful of voters and their unique perspectives on political imagery and color use, voting materials can invite and encourage participation from all voters.

> "I don't know how a lot of people feel about it. Personally, I don't really like images of the American flag. The American flag is supposed to stand for equality of justice. That's not like, that's not what happens in the United States of America. ...Some people may feel triggered by it."
> *– Black woman, new voter*
>
> "It looks non-political and that's good because I'm not into politics. I don't really know politics."
> *– Black young woman, new voter, student at Cleveland State University talking about a colorful flyer*

Digital tools can help or create barriers to reaching a community

Insight 14

Voters have varying relationships to digital and online voter information, depending on age, access, and language.

While younger voters welcome digital and online voter information, new citizen voters and seniors have significant barriers. Below are two extremes we heard:

College students who rely on tech for academic and social needs assumed voting could be conducted online. Due to their fluency and dependency on technology for their academic and social needs, several participants assumed they could cast their ballot online or through email.

> **Story share** During an interview, a young student, when asked to walk us through her voting plan, continuously conflated mail with email. While that might take us by surprise when speaking with young voters, we learned that email as a mode of communication is seen as very formal by young people. So it's no wonder that this young person thought it appropriate to be able to email the Board of Elections with her ballot. Mailing feels foreign to young people.

Seniors and new citizen voters we spoke with are not moving from print to digital voter education and therefore not benefiting from online voter information. Although some seniors are known to be digitally savvy, the majority of seniors we spoke with didn't have smartphones and were unfamiliar with QR codes and written website URL links on printed voter education materials. This makes some of the digital shortcuts like QR codes less likely to be used. Those participants also found written URLs on printed materials were not helpful as it was difficult to type long URLs. Even the seniors who did have smartphones had limited knowledge of using the Internet and were less likely to use it for voter education purposes.

Story share During our interviews with new citizen voters from the Nepali community, we found that most of them did not recognize the URL as a website link. When we asked further, they assumed that the URL must be related to the government but didn't quite make the connection that it was in fact a website address. Seniors and new citizen voters are not benefiting from access to online voter information—such as seeing a sample ballot, which is an example of a critical piece of information these voters didn't know they could have access to.

Resources and supplementary materials

Appendix A:
Test Materials

All Test Materials

Each material we tested is tagged by the language we formatted and tested it in, and the visual design styles.

Test materials were formatted in 3 languages:
- English
- Nepali/English: Double sided
- Spanish/English: Double Sided. Bilingual headers on both sides.
- Spanish/English: Side-by-side bilingual.

Test materials were designed with different visual design styles:
- Black & White
- Graphic colorful text
- Traditional Red/White/Blue
- Cultural imagery
- Simple Icons/Illustrations
- Complex Illustrations
- Photos of people
- Illustrations of people
- Cultural colors

Flyer — "Snack"

Languages: English, Nepali/English

Visual Design Style: Black & White, Simple Icons/Illustrations

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Black & White, Photos of people

Languages: English, Nepali/English

Visual Design Style: Traditional Red/White/Blue, Simple Icons/Illustrations

Languages: English, Nepali/English

Visual Design Style: Traditional Red/White/Blue, Simple Icons/Illustrations

Languages: English, Nepali/English

Visual Design Style: Traditional Red/White/Blue, Photos of people, Simple Icons/Illustrations

Languages: English, Nepali/English

Visual Design Style: Traditional Red/White/Blue, Illustrations of people

Languages: English, Nepali/English, Spanish/English

Visual Design Style: Graphic colorful text, Photos of people

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Graphic colorful text, Photos of people

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Graphic colorful text, Simple Icons/Illustrations

Languages: English, Nepali/English

Visual Design Style: Graphic colorful text, Photos of people, Cultural colors

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Cultural colors, Photos of people

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Cultural colors, Photos of people, Simple Icons/Illustrations

Languages: English, Nepali/English

Visual Design Style: Cultural colors, Photos of people, Simple Icons/Illustrations

Languages: English, Nepali/English

Visual Design Style: Cultural colors, Photos of people

Languages: English, Nepali/English, Spanish/English

Visual Design Style: Graphic colorful text

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Graphic colorful text, Photos of people

Languages: English, Nepali/English

Visual Design Style: Cultural colors, Photos of people, Simple Icons/Illustrations

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Graphic colorful text

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Cultural imagery, Photos of people

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Graphic colorful text

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Complex illustrations

Languages: Spanish/English

Visual Design Style: Graphic colorful text, Traditional Red/White/Blue

Languages: Spanish/English

Visual Design Style: Graphic colorful text

Languages: Spanish/English

Visual Design Style: Traditional Red/White/Blue, Photos of people

Languages: Spanish/English

Visual Design Style: Cultural colors, Photos of people, Simple icons/illustrations

Languages: Spanish/English

Visual Design Style: Cultural imagery, Photos of people, Traditional Red/White/Blue

Languages: Spanish/English

Visual Design Style: Cultural imagery, Photos of people

Languages: Spanish/English

Visual Design Style: Graphic colorful text, Complex illustrations

Languages: Spanish/English

Visual Design Style: Cultural colors, Simple icons/illustrations

Languages: Spanish/English

Visual Design Style: Graphic colorful text, Simple Icons/ Illustrations

Postcard — "Snack"

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Traditional Red/White/Blue, Simple Icons/Illustrations

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Cultural colors, Simple Icons/Illustrations

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Graphic colorful text, Simple Icons/Illustrations

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Graphic colorful text, Simple Icons/Illustrations

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Cultural colors, Simple Icons/Illustrations

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Graphic colorful text, Simple Icons/Illustrations

Pocket Guide — "Snack"
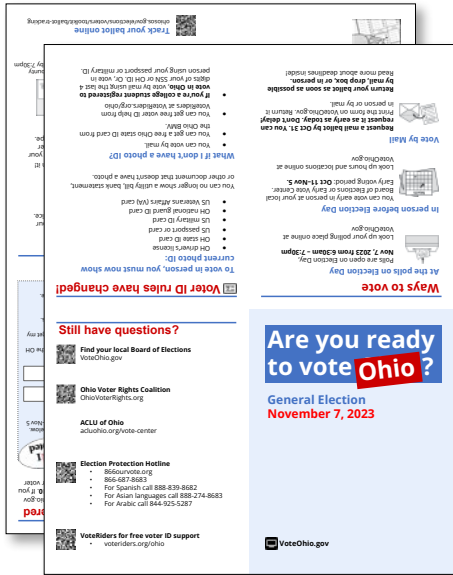
Languages: English, Nepali/English

Visual Design Style: Traditional Red/White/Blue, Simple Icons/Illustrations
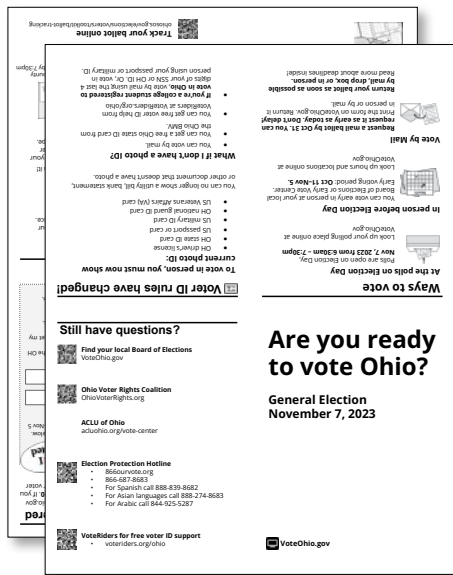
Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Black&White, Simple Icons/Illustrations

Social Media — "Bite"

Voting_in_Ohio Check your voter registration, or register to vote at VoteOhio.gov

To register to vote you must provide:
- Last 4 digits of your social security number or
- Ohio driver's license number or
- Ohio state ID

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Cultural imagery, Cultural colors

Voting_in_Ohio Ballot questions are opportunities to vote directly on proposed changes to your state and local government. If you vote 'yes', you approve of the proposed change. If you vote 'no' you want it to stay the way it is now.

Some voters in Ohio will also vote for local elected representatives.

Find out what's on your ballot by viewing your sample ballot at VoteOhio.gov

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Traditional Red/White/Blue, Complex Illustrations

Voting_in_Ohio In Ohio we have 3 ways to vote!
- At the polls on Election Day November 7, 2023. Polls are open from 6:30am – 7:30pm. Look up your polling place online at VoteOhio.gov
- Early in person from October 11–November 5. You can vote early in person at your local Board of Elections or Early Vote Center. Look up hours and locations online at VoteOhio.gov
- Vote by Mail. Request a mail ballot by October 31. You can request it as early as today. Don't delay! Print the form on VoteOhio.gov. Return it in person or by mail.

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Graphic colorful text, Simple Icons/ Illustrations

Voting_in_Ohio In Ohio we have 3 ways to vote!
- At the polls on Election Day November 7, 2023. Polls are open from 6:30am – 7:30pm. Look up your polling place online at VoteOhio.gov
- Early in person from October 11–November 5. You can vote early in person at your local Board of Elections or Early Vote Center. Look up hours and locations online at VoteOhio.gov
- Vote by Mail. Request a mail ballot by October 31. You can request it as early as today. Don't delay! Print the form on VoteOhio.gov. Return it in person or by mail.

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Photos of people, Cultural colors

Voting_in_Ohio On November 7, 2023 Ohio will vote on 2 statewide ballot questions about reproductive decisions and legalizing marijuana. Ballot questions are opportunities to vote directly on proposed changes to your state and local government. If you vote 'yes', you approve of the proposed change. If you vote 'no' you want it to stay the way it is now.

Some voters in Ohio will also vote for local elected representatives.

All registered voters can choose to vote early, on Election Day, or by mail. Learn about your voting options at VoteOhio.gov

Languages: English

Visual Design Style: Graphic colorful text, Simple Icons/Illustrations

Civics Guide — "Meal"

Languages:
Spanish/English

Visual Design Style:
Graphic colorful text, Simple Icons/Illustrations

"It's thorough, it explains each category separately. Everything is the same format. Very easy to understand."

Back Cover

Have questions?
¿Tiene alguna duda?

Cuyahoga County Board of Elections
clevelandvotes.com
2925 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland OH 44115

Condado de Cuyahoga Junta Electoral
clevelandvotes.com
2925 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland OH 44115

Need a photo ID?
Get free voter ID support from voteriders.org/ohio

Obtenga ayuda gratuita
para el carné de votante en voteriders.org/ohio

Experiencing a problem?
Contact Election Protection at 866ourvote.org or 866-687-8683

¿Tiene algún problema?
Póngase en contacto con Protección Electoral en 866ourvote.org o 888-839-8682

Front Cover

State Senator
Senador estatal

US Senator
Senador de EE.UU

County Council
Consejo del Condado

County Engineer
Ingeniero del Condado

HOW DO ELECTED OFFICIALS IMPACT YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

2024 Voter Guide to Your Ohio Elected Officials
Guía de votación para sus funcionarios electos en Ohio

Voters want to see the connection between elected officials' roles and it's impact in their neighborhood.

How do elected officials impact my life? Participants felt all of these areas are important but it comes down to how they effect every aspect of someones life.

The colors match the content making it easy to navigate.

Putting each category in a box inside of itself illustrates a hierarchy in the levels of government.

Page 1

What do my elected officials do?
¿Qué hacen mis funcionarios electos?

U.S. elected officials
Los funcionarios electos estadounidenses
- President
- Vice President
- U.S. Senator
- U.S. House Representative
- El Presidente
- El Vicepresidente
- Senador de EE.UU.
- Representante en la Cámara de los EE.UU.

Ohio elected officials
Los funcionarios electos de Ohio
- State Senator
- State House Representative
- State Supreme Court Judge
- District Court of Appeals Judge
- Senador estatal
- Representante en la Cámara de Representantes del Estado
- Juez del Tribunal Supremo del Estado
- Juez del Tribunal de Apelaciones del Distrito

Local elected officials
Los funcionarios electos de mi localidad
- County council
- Common Pleas Court Judge
- Prosecutor
- Treasurer
- School Board
- Coroner
- Engineer
- Recorder
- Sheriff
- Consejo del Condado
- Juez del Tribunal de Causas Comunes
- Fiscal
- Tesorero/a
- Consejo Escolar
- Forense
- Ingeniero
- Registrador/a
- Comisario (Sheriff)

Page 1

Page 2

The people you vote for and elect make decisions that impact you and your community. These decisions impact jobs, housing, healthcare, education, the environment, and more.

People across Ohio will vote for these elected officials in 2024. You might vote for some or all of them, depending on where you live! Find out what's on your ballot by viewing your sample ballot at VoteOhio.gov

Las personas por las que votas y a las que eliges toman decisiones que te afectan a ti y a tu comunidad. Estas decisiones afectan al empleo, la vivienda, la sanidad, la educación, el medio ambiente y mucho más.

Los votantes de Ohio votarán por estos funcionarios electos en 2024. ¡Es posible que vote por algunos o por todos ellos, dependiendo de dónde viva! Averigüe qué hay en su boleta viendo la muestra de boleta en VoteOhio.gov

What do U.S. elected officials do?
¿Qué hacen los funcionarios electos estadounidenses?
Elected officials at the federal level write and vote on laws that apply to everyone in the US.

Los funcionarios electos a nivel federal redactan y votan por las leyes que se aplican a todos los estadounidenses.

What do Ohio elected officials do?
¿Qué hacen los funcionarios electos de Ohio?
Elected officials at the state level write and vote on laws that apply to everyone in Ohio.

Los funcionarios electos a nivel estatal redactan y votan las leyes que se aplican a todos los habitantes de Ohio.

What do my local elected officials do?
¿Qué hacen los funcionarios electos de mi localidad?
Elected officials at the local level write and vote on laws that apply to your town, city, or county.

Los funcionarios electos a nivel local redactan y votan las leyes que se aplican en su localidad, ciudad o condado.

Page 2

Icons should be consistent.

Page 3

What do U.S. elected officials do?
¿Qué hacen los funcionarios electos estadounidenses?

The **President** serves four-year terms. What they do:
- Oversee federal government departments.
- Represent the US when meeting with foreign governments.
- Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.
- Suggest laws to Congress.
- Sign bills into law, and have the power to veto bills.
- Gives pardons and clemencies for federal crimes.

El **Presidente** ejerce su cargo durante cuatro años. Lo que hace:
- Supervisar los departamentos del gobierno federal.
- Representar a EE.UU. en reuniones con gobiernos extranjeros.
- Comandante en Jefe de las fuerzas armadas.
- Proponer leyes al Congreso.
- Firmar proyectos de ley y tiene el derecho de veto.
- Conceder indultos y clemencias por delitos federales.

The **Vice President** serves a four-year term. What they do:
- Advise the President.
- Break tied votes in the Senate.
- Represent the US when meeting with foreign governments.
- Becomes President if the President dies or resigns.
- Act as President if the President is temporarily unable to lead because of a surgery or sickness.

El **Vicepresidente** ejerce su cargo durante cuatro años. Lo que hace:
- Asesorar al Presidente.
- Desempatar votos en el Senado.
- Representar a EEUU en reuniones con gobiernos extranjeros.
- Tomar el cargo de Presidente si el/la Presidente muere o dimite.
- Actuar como Presidente si el/la Presidente está temporalmente incapacitado/a para dirigir debido a una operación o enfermedad

Page 3

Page 4

What do U.S. elected officials do?
¿Qué hacen los funcionarios electos estadounidenses?

U.S. Senator
Ohio has 2 U.S. senators. They serve six-year terms. What they do:
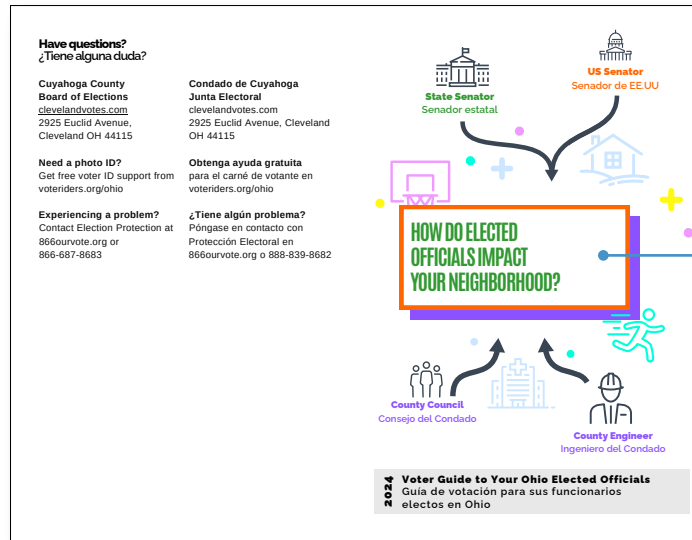- Write and vote on federal laws.
- Confirm Presidential appointments including members of the cabinet, Supreme Court justices, and federal judges.
- Oversee all branches of government.

Senador de EE.UU.
Ohio tiene 2 senadores. Su mandato es de 6 años. Lo que hacen:
- Redactar y votar leyes federales.
- Confirmar los nombramientos presidenciales, incluidos los miembros del gabinete, los jueces del Tribunal Supremo y los jueces federales.
- Supervisar todas las ramas del gobierno federal.

U.S. Representative
Ohio has 15 U.S. House Representatives. They serve two-year terms. What they do:
- Write and vote on federal laws.
- Oversee all branches of government.
- Help people in their district navigate and access federal government services and benefits.

Representante en la Cámara de los EE.UU.
Ohio tiene 15 representantes en la Cámara de Representantes. Su mandato es de 2 años. Lo que hacen:
- Redactar y votar leyes federales.
- Supervisar todas las ramas del gobierno federal.
- Ayudar a los residentes de su distrito a navegar y acceder a los servicios y prestaciones del gobierno federal.

Page 4

After reading guide, some participants felt more informed and that they could educate others on how to vote.

Civic Guide — "Meal"

It helps to see there are two levels of representatives. This would be important for those coming from Puerto Rico given that Puerto Rico only has a state level of reps.

Being able to vote for judges was surprising when she moved to Ohio from Puerto Rico.

"I didn't know I can elect my state judge."

State Senator
Ohio has 33 state senators. They serve four-year terms. Their job is to:
- Listen to the concerns of people in Ohio.
- Propose, write, and vote on Ohio laws.
- Help people in their district navigate and access government services and benefits.
- Approves state spending levels.

Senador estatal
Ohio tiene 33 senadores estatales. Su mandato es de 4 años. Su trabajo consiste en:
- Escuchar las preocupaciones de la población de Ohio.
- Proponer, redactar y votar las leyes de Ohio.
- Ayudar a la gente de su distrito a navegar y acceder a los servicios y prestaciones del gobierno.
- Aprobar los niveles de gasto del Estado.

State House Representative
Ohio has 99 state representatives. They serve two-year terms. Their job is to:
- Listen to the concerns of people in Ohio.
- Propose, write, and vote on Ohio laws.
- Help people in their district navigate and access government services and benefits.
- Approves state spending levels.

Representante en la Cámara de Representantes del Estado
Ohio tiene 99 representantes estatales. Su mandato es de 2 años. Su trabajo consiste en:
- Escuchar las preocupaciones de la población de Ohio.
- Proponer, redactar y votar las leyes de Ohio.
- Ayudar a la gente de su distrito a navegar y acceder a los servicios y prestaciones del gobierno.
- Aprobar los gastos del Estado.

Page 5

State Supreme Court Judge
Ohio has 7 Supreme Court Justices. They serve six-year terms. Their job is to:
- Hear and decide on appeals to decisions from Common Pleas, Municipal and County Courts.
- Hear and decide on death penalty cases.

Juez del Tribunal Supremo del Estado
Ohio tiene 7 jueces del Tribunal Supremo. Su mandato es de 6 años. Su trabajo consiste en:
- Escuchar y decidir las apelaciones a las decisiones de Causas Comunes, Tribunales Municipales y del Condado.
- Escuchar y tomar decisiones en casos de pena de muerte.

District Court of Appeals Judge
What they do:
- Hear and decide on appeals to decisions from Common Pleas, Municipal and County Courts.

Juez del Tribunal de Apelaciones del Distrito
Lo que hacen:
- Escuchan y deciden sobre apelaciones a decisiones de Causas Comunes, Tribunales Municipales y del Condado.

Page 6

"I didn't know many of these positions were elected."

Participants shared they were familiar with the name of each position but didn't know the responsibilities of each local elected role.

Many participants considered state or federal roles, such as lawmaking and decision-making, more impactful to their daily life than local roles.

County council
County council members serve four-year terms. What they do:
- Listen to your concerns.
- Propose, write, and vote on local laws.
- Review and approve the county budget.

Consejo del Condado
Los miembros del consejo tienen mandatos de 4 años. Lo que hacen:
- Escuchan sus preocupaciones.
- Proponen, redactan y votan leyes locales.
- Revisan y aprueban el presupuesto del condado.

Treasurer
Treasurers serve a four-year term. What they do:
- Collect local taxes.
- Write and manage the local budget to use taxpayer money effectively and efficiently.

Tesorero/a
Los Tesoreros tienen un mandato de 4 años. Lo que hacen:
- Recaudar impuestos locales.
- Redactar y gestionar el presupuesto local para utilizar el dinero de los contribuyentes de forma eficaz y eficiente.

School Board
School board members serve a four-year term. What they do:
- Write and vote on education policy and goals with the school district superintendent and treasurer.
- Hire the school district superintendent and treasurer.

Consejo Escolar
Los miembros del Consejo Escolar tienen un mandato de 4 años. Lo qué hacen:
- Redactar y votar la póliza y objetivos educativos con el superintendente y el tesorero del distrito escolar
- Contratar al superintendente del distrito escolar y el tesorero.

Page 7

Common Pleas Court Judge
Each county in Ohio has a Court of Common Pleas. Judges serve six-year terms. What they do:
- Hear and decide on civil and criminal court cases.

Juez del Tribunal de Causas Comunes
Cada condado de Ohio tiene un Tribunal de Causas Comunes. Los jueces tienen mandatos de 6 años. Lo qué hacen:
- Escuchar y decidir sobre casos judiciales civiles y penales.

Prosecutor
Prosecutors serve a four-year term. What they do:
- Guide victims of crime through the criminal justice process.
- Represent the U.S. government in court for local criminal cases by recommending sentencing, initiating further investigations, and presenting cases against a suspected lawbreaker.

Fiscal
Los Fiscales tienen un mandato de 4 años. Lo qué hacen:
- Guiar a las víctimas de delitos a través del proceso de justicia penal.
- Representar al gobierno de EE.UU. ante los tribunales en casos penales locales recomendando sentencias, iniciar investigaciones adicionales, y presentar casos contra un presunto infractor de la ley.

Recorder
Recorders serve a four-year term. What they do:
- Maintain land records and documents so they are easily accessible.

Registrador/a
Los Registradores tienen un mandato de 4 años. Lo qué hacen:
- Mantener los registros y documentos de terrenos y propiedades para que sean fácilmente accesibles.

Page 8

Sheriff
Sheriffs serve a four-year term. What they do:
- Provide security at courts.
- Run the county jail system.
- Provide security and crowd control for county events.
- Enforce traffic laws.
- Investigate car crashes.
- Serve evictions, summonses, subpoenas, and lawsuits.

Comisario (Sheriff)
Los Comisarios tienen un mandato de 4 años. Lo qué hacen:
- Proporcionar seguridad en los tribunales.
- Dirigir el sistema penitenciario del condado.
- Proporcionar seguridad y control de multitudes para eventos del condado.
- Hacer cumplir las leyes de tráfico.
- Investigar accidentes de tráfico.
- Servir desalojos, citaciones, emplazamientos y demandas..

Coroner
Coroners serve a four-year term. What they do:
- Maintain a record of all deaths in the county.
- Investigate sudden or suspicious deaths.

Forense
El mandato de los médicos forenses dura 4 años. Lo qué hacen:
- Mantienen un registro de todas las muertes en el condado.
- Investigan las muertes repentinas o sospechosas.

Engineer
Engineers serve a four-year term. What they do:
- Build and maintain bridges and highways in the county.
- Advise township trustees on maintaining township highways.

Ingeniero
Los Ingenieros tienen un mandato de 4 años. Lo qué hacen:
- Construir y mantener los puentes y las carreteras en el condado.
- Asesorar a los administradores municipales sobre el mantenimiento de las carreteras municipales.

Page 9

Ballot questions are opportunities to vote directly on proposed changes to your state and local government. If you vote 'yes', you approve of the proposed change. If you vote 'no' you want it to stay the way it is now.

Las preguntas contenidas en la boleta son una oportunidad para votar directamente sobre los cambios propuestos en su gobierno estatal y local. Si vota "sí", aprueba el cambio propuesto. Si vota "no", quiere que siga siendo como es ahora.

Page 10

Top 3 preferred flyers from English Language group

The images shows that "We are all in this together."

"I see more of myself in these, most people in here look like me.

Information is very effective and well organized.

Bold color blocks are used as a "visual aid" to navigate her through the information.

Information is laid out and broken down.

Call outs are helpful.

Top graphic illustration tells voters what the flyer is about and who it is addressing quickly.

These are important because they directly address students, people who feel they can't vote because they don't speak English, and people with felony convictions.

Color and graphics, illustrations make it easier to read.

Top 3 preferred flyers from Nepali & English Language group (front and back layout)

Important details such as dates are highlighted which makes it easier to read.

Participant likes the image of people of all different races, it represents "America the great nation" to him.

"I see more of myself in these , most ppl in here look like me."

Logo resembles the voting sticker you get after you vote.

"To me it means that we are using the right to vote. We have this right and it's important"
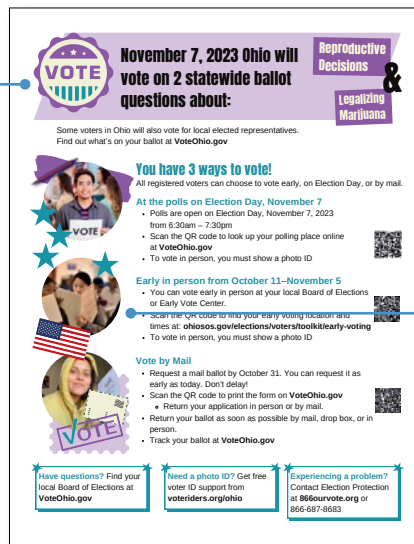
Images visually explain how to vote, especially helpful for seniors in their community.

"As a family man I like that there is representation of women because it shows equality" They can vote too.

Illustration tells voters what the flyer is about and who it is addressing quickly.
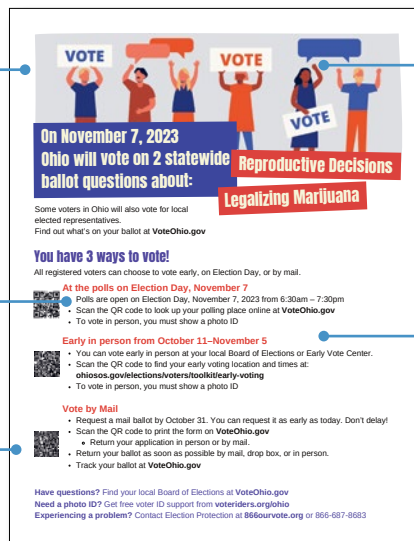
Illustrations depict voting very quickly and effectively. For his community that doesn't speak English, they would understand quickly that it is about voting.

Details such as dates are highlighted, which makes it easier to read.

Seems like there is less text to read.

QR codes are helpful!

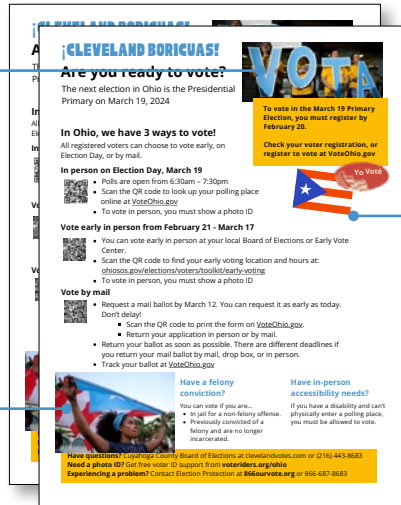# Top 3 preferred flyers from Spanish Language group

"As a bilingual person I knew it was about voting."
— referring to the VOTA imagery

Subcontext of imagery shown: The sky blue color in the Puerto Rican flag represents a pro-independence stance. Including this flag could cause people who disagree to dismiss it.

Many Puerto Rican participants were attracted to the image of the flag and the colors, which represent their culture.

"It shows that you prioritizing my community in terms of helping us get the knowledge about voting."

Participants suggested including other Spanish speaking country flags to broaden the audience.

"These pastel colors are very Puerto Rican."

"So if I take this to someone that's a little older, that's Spanish dominant. You know, I really don't have to explain much to them. They already know what it's talking about."
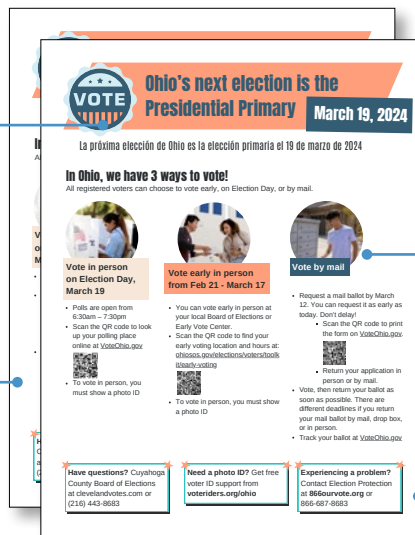
"Adding pictures shows that they are putting effort into getting the message out in different ways instead of just words."

"Visuals help a lot for me."The layout is clean and spacious and

not cluttered making it easier to read.

Colorful but not overwhelming because it has plenty of white space.

The icons and illustrations help to digest the information.

"It's the icons that kind of help you visualize what exactly is going on."
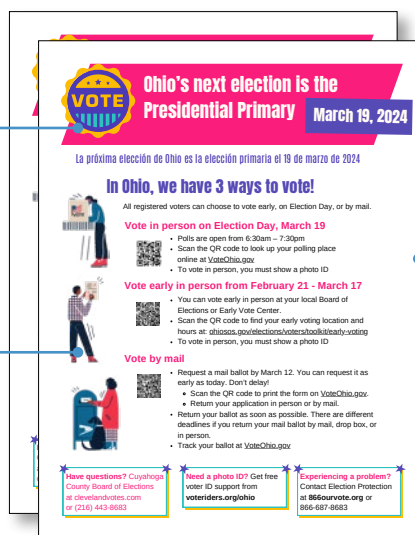
"I'm big into futuristic ways or more modern ways on distributing this information. So QR codes are a huge help."

Appendix B:

Gallery of responses from participatory research activity

Participatory activities during session (1/2)

We conducted a participatory activity in which participants were asked to create their own GOTV materials using a range of pre-printed materials, including illustrations, imagery, and text. Appendix pages 14-15 show 4 examples of the findings from this activity.

Vota imagery and bilingual headline invites Cleveland Latino/a/x voters.
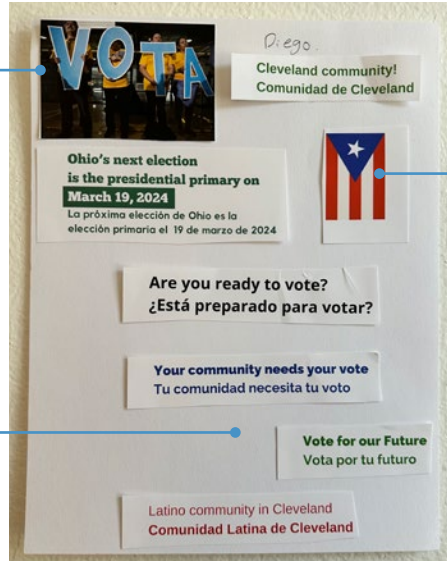
Included the Puerto Rican Flag but would prefer to broader the message to all Spanish speaking voters by adding a border of flags from Latin American countries.

Providing a reason to vote is an important motivating factor.

Design your own flyer
Artifact 1

These civic images and colors are what we envision when we think of voting day. It's fun while getting the message across.

"When it comes to information about voting, or candidates takes itself a little too seriously. And for me, that is what has turned me off."

Date and reason for flyer is prominent because it's crucial information.

Prefers imagery for each call of action to support multilingual new voters.

Design your own flyer
Artifact 2

Participatory activities during session (2/2)

We conducted a participatory activity in which participants were asked to create their own GOTV materials using a range of pre-printed materials, including illustrations, imagery, and text. Appendix pages 14-15 show 4 examples of the findings from this activity.

Made the date prominent. "Many people don't know there's an election coming up."

The addition of icons helped to visually explain the issues on the ballot.

Design your own flyer
Artifact 3
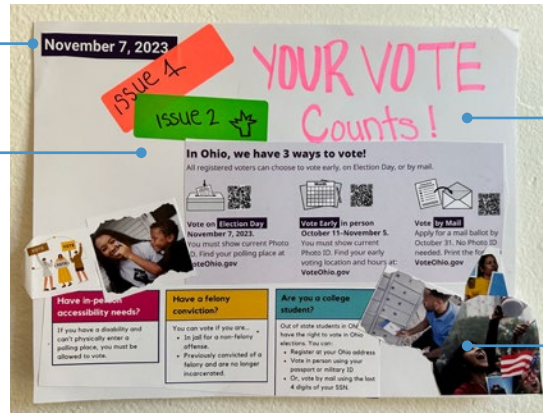
Headline "your vote counts"" to counter apathy - many people tell her that it just doesn't matter.

Selected graphics and photographs of diverse ethnic and racial groups so everyone knows they can vote "If you're white, black hispanic you can vote — not only white people."

"Many people with felonies don't know they can vote."

Added the heading because there is a large immigrant population in their community and wants to have all people represented and feel included.

Design your own flyer
Artifact 4
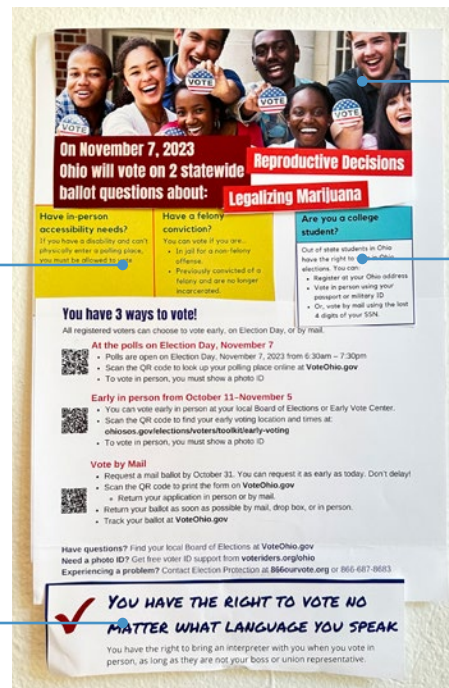
Included images of multiracial and multiethnic people because he sees himself in it.

Color and images help visually impaired older folks with reading legibility challenges — suggests a difference in color for each block so it can help people highlight each call out.

"Colors catch my attention and then I can read what is written. And you if you are challenged by languageor have difficulty reading. The pictures do all of that."