



Center for Civic Design

# 2024 Annual Report



# Message from our Executive Director

There is so much to be proud of in 2024. Our work was guided by 4 strategies: Reimagining elections, inviting participation, supporting innovation, and sharing best practices.

All eyes were on election officials during this presidential election, and they more than came through. We are proud of our work to help officials tackle design challenges and to reimagine elections through voter education and civic design.

We're also investing more deeply in ways to invite participation by exploring the information gaps that affect voters with disabilities, new citizens, and multilingual communities. We continue to find ways to collaborate with community organizations to design impactful voter education. A current project in Houston is one example.

The best innovations in elections build trust, support transparency, and improve turnout. Sometimes this means focusing on the nuts and bolts of design for implementing new policies. We are excited to continue work on the new Michigan Voting Dashboard in 2025 to share live election data and to continue working with state legislatures to make ballot questions easy for voters to understand.

2024 was a year of developing our organizational capacity and building our senior leadership to scale and excel. I'm thrilled to introduce Sean Wang as our first Deputy Director. He is focused on communications and development along with our operations (think cybersecurity and other risks).

Structure was our internal watchword for 2024, which kept our skills and practices sharp as we grow. We created new team leads for different areas of our work: Andrea Miranda Salas (research), Emma Werowinski (information design) and Tasmin Swanson (program lead for the U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence). Their project journey map and tools give us robust information design and usability research processes.

Looking ahead to 2025, 2 top concerns are digging into accessibility and language, and incorporating access requirements into all our templates.

I'm looking forward to the next chapter in our adventure in democracy as a (civic) design problem.



Whitney Quesenbery  
Executive Director

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Cover:  
The homepage of the Michigan Voting Dashboard, which went live in 2024, makes public election data easy to access and understand





# Election excellence in the 2024 presidential election

## Reimagining election administration

This year, election administrators stepped up to the task of running a nearly perfect election, even with challenges like lawsuits that changed procedures right up to election day. We're proud of our work to support election heroes across the country with voter education, provisional and mail-in voting forms, and last-minute messaging for voters on election day.



The CCD team brainstormed design solutions during our 2024 summer off-site in **New York City**



The EAC social media templates include many instructional illustrations to help communicate information to voters

**“Making official sources of information more user-friendly, more accessible, and easier to understand also makes them more useful. It prebunks misinformation and builds trust in our elections.”**

— Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson

## Customizable bite, snack, and meal-sized education

We paired Elections 101 information with easy-to-adapt templates to reimagine how to create great-looking voter communications. The **Election Assistance Commission** launched our Voter Education Design Toolkit this year. It brings everything we know about plain language and information design into a set of social media and flyer templates. Every election office can adapt and design these materials to meet voters’ needs.

## Data on voter turnout in Michigan in 2 minutes or less

Voters, campaigns, and journalists all want accurate information about how Michiganders voted. With over 1,600 counties and townships, that information can be hard to find.

CCD worked with the elections and technology teams at the **Michigan Department of State** to bring Secretary Benson’s vision to life before the 2024 election. The **Michigan Voting Dashboard** had over 340,000 views (and 183,000 visitors) since launching in October. They stayed on the site for an average of 2 minutes, gathering stats, following trends, and reading mini-explainers about election data. We’re looking forward to seeing the dashboard foster trust in Michigan’s elections in 2025.

## Counting more mail-in ballots

As voting by mail keeps growing, it was another year for designing envelopes to reduce rejected ballots. In **Washoe County, Nevada**, we redesigned their envelopes to incorporate new, longer instructions in English and Spanish. The result was that only 989 ballots needed a signature cure, and only 170 of them were missing signatures — a very low number compared to the 264,333 votes cast.

In **Pennsylvania**, **redesigning the mail-in ballot envelopes** to include the year 2024 in the date next to the voter signature reduced the rejected ballots by 62% between the 2024 General Election and the 2024 Primary election.

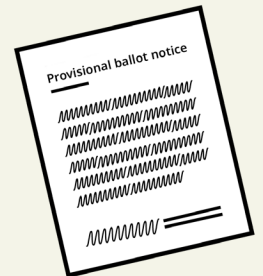
## Helping voters navigate the unexpected

When a change in voter ID policy in **Ohio** resulted in the number of provisional ballots for missing IDs jumping from 8% in 2022 to 28% in 2023, we worked with local election officials to imagine a better way to **support provisional voting**.

Voters needed guidance to navigate the complexities of the new law. We created a handout to tell voters the next steps after voting provisionally. Receiving information about an unexpected process increased voter confidence. We also redesigned the form for use in 2025.

**“It’s always challenging to determine causality, but I think what we have here is clear and reliable data indicating that there was a decrease in ballots being rejected because of the issues the Department of State sought to address with the redesign of the secrecy envelope and the declaration envelope.”**

— Pennsylvania Secretary of State Al Schmidt



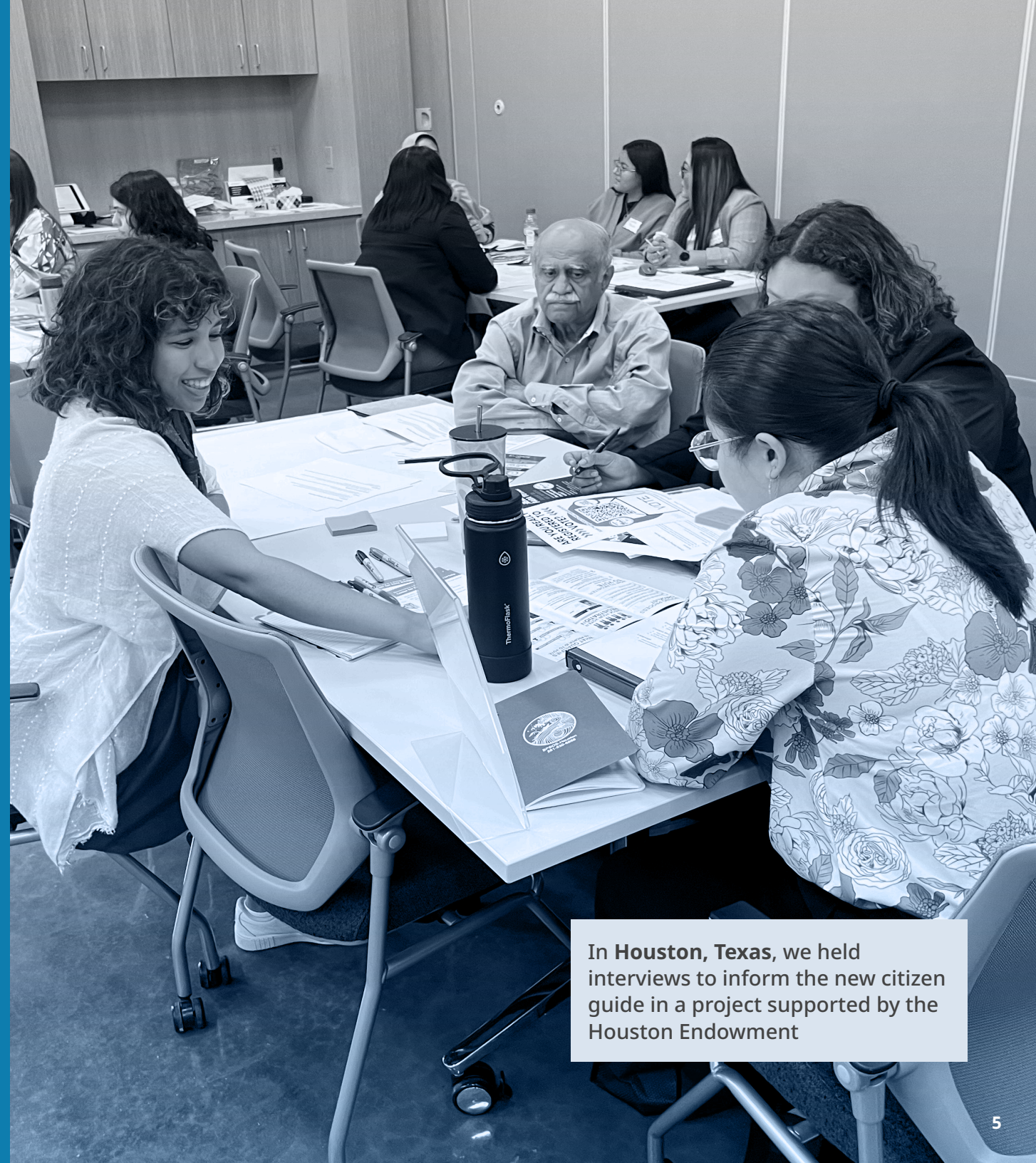
A handout for provisional voters that clearly explains next steps helps them feel confident in the process



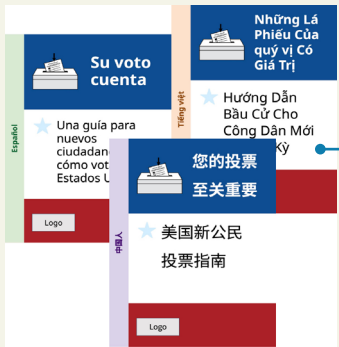
# Making civic participation easier

Inviting new and existing voters to confidently vote

Trust is a vital component in encouraging election participation. Information that is clear and easy to understand helps voters trust elections. This year we focused on creating material that resonates with voters through a new citizen's pocket guide, a resource for voters with disabilities, and new signage for polling locations.



In Houston, Texas, we held interviews to inform the new citizen guide in a project supported by the Houston Endowment



Covers of the new pocket guide in Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese

## Pocket guides that help new voters navigate elections

This year, we developed a **pocket guide** that helps new voters navigate new rights and new voting processes. Becoming a citizen is a milestone achievement, but actively participating as a citizen can be far from smooth sailing. The project was the result of a community convening in Houston and our partners distributed the pocket guide throughout the **Houston, Texas**, metro area.

## Polling signage to engage and inform voters

**New signage** for **Madison, Wisconsin**, and **Greenwich, Connecticut**, helped voters move confidently through the polling place. Using information design and language access skills, we created signs that both informed voters of where to go and anticipated their needs to make them feel welcome in the polling location. Madison decided to include 4 common languages, going above and beyond their Section 230 language access requirements.

This work served as a foundation for a polling signage toolkit that will be launched in 2025 for any office in the country to use. Madison and Greenwich were collaborators for developing this toolkit that will help election officials

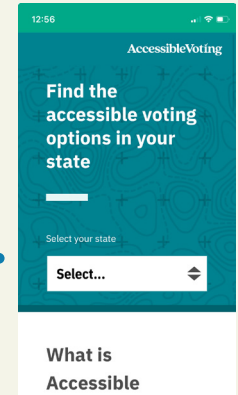
quickly create great signs that guide voters through the polling place and that poll workers can accurately place.

## Providing information for voters with disabilities

In preparation for the 2024 election, we expanded **AccessibleVoting.net's** core offerings to better serve election officials. This included adding the National Coalition of Accessible Voting (NCAV) Voting Access Guide for Election Officials that helps election officials address barriers in their early planning process. Centralizing information helps advocacy organizations share information voters with disabilities need to vote more easily. In the 2 years since the website was published, we've seen the website grow to be a resource for voter advocates and voters.

“AccessibleVoting.net is a tangible, proactive step to dismantling barriers for both voters with disabilities and the election officials who serve them.”

— Rylin Rodgers, Disability Policy Advisor on Microsoft Democracy Forward and Accessibility.



This year we added information, recommendations, and checklists on accessibility for every stage of the voting process to the website



# Changing elections on a larger scale

Supporting election offices in adopting innovation

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This year, we've worked to rethink the vision for large-scale election processes, tackling challenges like the planning for change and streamlining the delivery of forms and notices that elections offices use to communicate with voters. We also took a step back from the day-to-day to make space for innovative ways to address long-term election challenges, in partnership with the U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence



We participated in a mock hand count as **Portland, Oregon**, prepared for their first ranked choice voting election



## Running a post-election debrief workshop

Planning and facilitation guide

November 2024

hello@civicdesign.org  
civicdesign.org  
@civicdesign

Check out the 3 resources in the post-election debrief toolkit on [civicdesign.org](https://civicdesign.org)

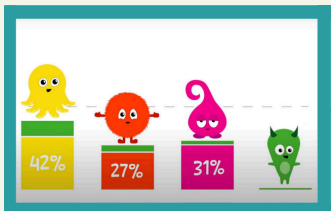
## Giving election offices tools to plan for long-term success

Our **post-election debrief toolkit** helps election offices capture learnings in the critical post-election period, and develop plans for long-term success that unlock potential for better elections in the future. Upcoming resources will cover prioritization, implementation, and sustaining success over time. These resources will be published with the U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence.

## Exploring how voters read (and trust) RCV election results

As **Portland, Oregon**, prepared to **introduce Proportional (multi-winner) Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) to voters**, we supported the transition to make sure the change was clearly explained to voters.

A research project in **Portland and Arlington, Virginia**, explored mental models that offices can use to help people understand RCV and what factors in displays make people trust the results. The guidelines based on this research will expand our RCV resources.



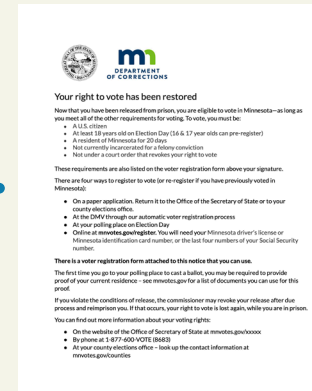
We used different images during testing to help learn how participants would understand RCV

## Making voter registration seamless

Voter registration is a crucial step in many states' voter journeys, but the process can often confuse voters. In 2024, we worked with the Institute for Responsive Government and other partners on innovative types of automatic voter registration (AVR) and **restoration of rights for people with felony convictions**.

New features need new interactive forms and letters to voters. In **Minnesota**, our version of the letter informing people leaving prison about their voting rights was adopted by the Department of Corrections, which worked with the Secretary of State to pass legislation incorporating the new text.

We are proud to be part of a task force giving input to [vote.gov](https://vote.gov), the federal website for information about voter registration. A major update, launched for National Voter Registration Day, has excellent accessibility, supports all federally required languages, and links to the first interactive version of the National Voter Registration Form.



The bullet points and short sentences help make this restoration of rights letter easier to read

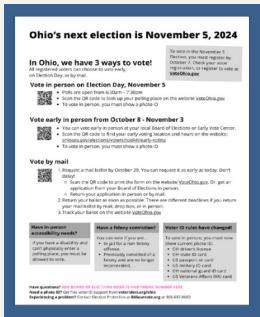
# Best practices for better elections

## Giving election offices the tools they need to succeed

Election officials design elections. From creating voting communication materials to preparing a polling location, design decisions are a major part of how every election is run. This year, we published more tools and training that help election offices do their best work.



We supported the U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence in launching new standards for elections excellence in 2024



This “snack” template in the How To Design Impactful Voter Education Materials Toolkit is a handout covering critical information most voters need to vote

## Creating culturally responsive voter materials with design

Last year, we worked with advocacy groups in **Ohio** to research what makes visual information culturally resonant. This year we turned these findings into a **toolkit to support organizations** across the country in creating voter outreach materials with that resonate with their community.

## Advanced civic design core skill training for election officials

After over a decade of teaching civic design, we’ve been excited by how many offices are owning these skills and are coming back to learn advanced training. Through **presentations and workshops** for offices and community partners across the country, we taught everything from designing better voter materials to accessibility in elections. We’ve spoken at a state conference, a community-based organization, a monthly gathering of county-level administrators, a state certification training course, a national webinar, and more.



One of the topics we cover in our design workshops is how to organize information on a page so that it’s easy to read

“This was really fascinating and informative and I 100% expect to use this information and those tools in our work.”

— Workshop participant

“So many folks stopped me in the halls to say how much they learned from and appreciated your session. This was such a great hands-on follow-up from the Huddle. Thanks for delivering! Reaffirms why I’m such a CCD fan!”

— Karen Brinson Bell North Carolina State Board of Elections Executive Director

## Empowering poll workers on election day with clear manuals

This year we published a set of resources to help election officials design better poll worker manuals. The **best practices and templates** make it simple for offices to make changes to an otherwise overwhelming document. The guide was used by offices across the country and we were happy to learn that the updates were easy to make.



One of the poll worker manual resources we launched this year was a guide to creating a manual in Microsoft Word



# Designing democratic ideals into elections

In 2025, we're making elections more transparent, trustworthy, and inviting

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Our 4 strategies for democracy as a design problem weave through all of our work, improving election administration, collaborating with community groups, partnering with innovators, and sharing resources that make election administration easier.

*Reimagining elections*

## How can election offices reach voters more effectively?

We love nothing more than reimagining even the most basic election interactions, like finding new ways to let everyone follow the progress of the election with the Michigan Voting Dashboard. Or designing new ways to guide voters through a polling place with great signage. Or testing the details of multilingual voter education and explaining election results. We sweat the small stuff so election offices can run great elections.

*Inviting participation*

## How do we use civic design principles to improve access to voting?

From the beginning, CCD has used design to make democracy more inviting. This year, we're diving into research on the disability voting experience and making forms more accessible. We're working with multilingual communities on shared glossaries and translated basic voter information so they can focus on their outreach mission. And we're basing it all on our bite-snack-meal approach to explaining the complexities of elections so that everyone from first-time voters to election nerds gets all the details they need.

*Supporting innovation*

## How do we tackle large issues in elections with long-term solutions?

We're proud of our work on innovations like automatic voter registration, ranked choice voting, ElectionGuard, and ballot design. In 2025, we'll be doing more of that: Looking at how to design ideas like proportional representation. Working on formats for ballot questions that help voters feel engaged, not tricked. And designing the interactions and forms for new ways to help everyone register to vote.

*Introducing best practices*

## How do we scale best practices to solve election challenges?

We like to say that everyone is a designer. We want to make them great ones. We're teaching elections offices across the country the core skills of civic design — plain language, information design, usability testing, accessibility, and language access. And we're building toolkits and templates for notices, forms, signage, and websites that are clear, inviting, and accessible. Look for new collaborations and toolkits in 2025 to scale our designs to more places.

# Projects

Each election challenge requires its own solution. We work at the local, state, and national level to address a diverse range of election challenges. Our goal is always to widen voter participation.

## Tools

*We synthesize what we've learned in order to create tools such as templates and best practices that are easy for election officials to use.*


### Hybrid forms and notices


Templates and guidance for dual-purpose form notices (both letters and postcard formats)

 Randy, Sean

### Post-Election Debrief Toolkit

A toolkit to help election offices plan better elections

 Evie, Allyson, Misty, Emma, Tasmin, Andrea

 [civicdesign.org/fieldguides/post-election-debrief-toolkit/](https://civicdesign.org/fieldguides/post-election-debrief-toolkit/)

### Polling signage toolkit

A toolkit, including templates and guidance for polling place signage

 Randy

### AccessibleVoting

Collaboration with REV UP to create excellent and useful information for voters with disabilities

 Croix, Misty, Whitney

 [AccessibleVoting.net](https://AccessibleVoting.net)

### Designing manuals for poll workers

A guide for offices on how to build better poll worker manuals with concrete instructions on how to use Microsoft Word


 Evie, Tasmin

 [civicdesign.org/fieldguides/designing-manuals-for-poll-workers/](https://civicdesign.org/fieldguides/designing-manuals-for-poll-workers/)

### Toolkit to design impactful voter education materials

A design toolkit for community advocates

 Emma, Allyson, Andrea

 [civicdesign.org/fieldguides/how-to-design-impactful-voter-education-materials/](https://civicdesign.org/fieldguides/how-to-design-impactful-voter-education-materials/)

### EAC Voter Education Toolkit

A toolkit to help election offices engage voters through civic education

 Kimberly, Isabelle, Allyson

 [eac.gov/election-officials/voter-education-design-toolkit](https://eac.gov/election-officials/voter-education-design-toolkit)

### Election Joy

Customizable postcards to thank election officials for their work

 Tasmin, Kimberly

## Research

*Our research is based on interviews and usability testing with real voters and election offices around the country.*

### Multi Winner Ranked Choice Voting Election Results Displays

Research on how to display and explain the results of multi winner RCV displays

 Emma, Isabelle, Evie

### EAC Rutgers Voting Technology

Interviews with accessibility services intermediaries about the voter experience

 Misty

### Article IV - Ranked Choice Voting

Provide analysis and election administration insights to a group working towards RCV for presidential primaries

 Misty, Emma

## NIST Voting Project

A paper on security, usability, and accessibility with an analysis of what burdens security issues have on voters

 Whitney, Lynn

 [civicdesign.org/reports/research-with-nist/](https://civicdesign.org/reports/research-with-nist/)


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## Running elections

*We explore ways to design voter information, forms, and systems to make them usable and accessible.*

## Michigan Election Dashboard

An Election Dashboard that displays state data of the election in a compelling way

 Andrea, Kimberly

 [michigan.gov/votingdashboard](https://michigan.gov/votingdashboard)

## U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence

Partners in collaboration with county-level election offices focusing on non-partisan support for election administration

 Tasmin, Evie, Randy

 [electionexcellence.org](https://electionexcellence.org)

## Texas

Bringing our best toolkits to increase the capacity for great voter education in the Houston Metro Area

 Fernando, Isabelle, Allyson, Kimberly

## Washington

Supported King County in preparing ballot instructions and voter education in multiple languages

 Emma, Fernando, Isabelle

## Michigan Promote the Vote

Support for voter education materials, ballot tracking, cure languages, and more

 Sean, Andrea

## Connecticut

Support to redo signage in Greenwich, including district maps

 Randy

## Louisiana VBM Envelope

Created usable VBM materials for voters and election administrators

 Kimberly, Fernando

## Arizona

Redesign the 90 day letter in Coconino

 Randy

Updating the Voter Registration form

 Kimberly

## Nevada

Work with the NV Department of Elections on an updated voter registration form

 Sean

## Louisiana

VBM materials for voters and election administration

 Kimberly, Fernando

## Ohio

Partnership with the OAEO Working Group to make recommendations to the Ohio SOS to reduce rejections of provisional ballots

 Allyson

## Wisconsin

Redesign of the polling place signage in Madison

 Randy

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## Core Skills

*A few core design skills are at the heart of our work. We've seen that when offices improve one core skill, it carries into many aspects of their work.*

## NY PCFB Plain Language Procedures

A plain language summary of the campaign finance procedures, errors, and notices

 Allyson, Sean



# More leadership and a bigger team

## Our new Deputy Director

Sean Wang joined as our Deputy Director, bringing a background in technology, research, and nonprofit management across 4 continents. He works with the Executive Director and the Board to lead the Center for Civic Design's day-to-day operations, with a particular focus on external affairs and organizational management.

## Design, research and program team leads

Our team has grown and this year we created a new level of organization: Design, research, and program team leads. Our team leads, Andrea Miranda Salas, Emma Werowinski, and Tasmin Swanson, support a larger team so we can take on more complicated projects and so that all of our projects bring the same high level of civic design and research skills CCD is known for.

## Meet our new team members

**Allyson Gill** is an information designer with experience in product design, communications, data, strategy, and operations in government, startup, and non-profit sectors.

**Devon Reid** is the Civic Design Fellow working on exploratory research on civic engagement innovations in small cities.

**Misty Crooks** is a civic design researcher with experience in design research and building strategy with voting rights groups.



The CCD Team during our last weekly meeting of 2024!

## CCD Staff

Whitney Quesenberg  
Allyson Gill  
Andrea Miranda Salas  
Croix Stone  
Emma Werowinski  
Evie Lacroix  
Fernando Sánchez  
Isabelle Yisak  
Kimberly Gail Loseñara  
Leeron Hoory  
Misty Crooks  
Sean Isamu Johnson  
Sean Wang  
Randy Hadzor  
Tasmin Swanson  
Teallary Williams

Devon Reid  
Lynn Baumeister

# Press

In this election year, we provided commentary on critical issues in the news, including trust in elections.

We also served on Votebeat’s Expert Desk, an initiative to provide over 550 journalists with accurate information about elections.

📄 Visit our press page on [civicdesign.org](https://civicdesign.org)



For **News10 ABC**, we spoke about rewriting ballot questions for readability.

“The Center for Civic Design also proposed edits for a ‘plain language version of the proposition. Their analysis shows that using specific language—‘abortion’ versus ‘reproductive healthcare,’ for example, or ‘LGBT’ versus ‘gender identity’—goes a long way in clarifying the meaning.”



**Kera News** included our opinion in a story about several changes to election administration in **Tarrant County, Texas**.



Whitney spoke on the **Article 19 podcast**, joining Alexia Kemmerling from REV UP and Rylin Rodgers from Microsoft for an episode called Casting a Ballot for Accessible Voting.



We spoke at **AIGA’s design conference** about our reserach in Ohio on how visual design and cultural relevance impact voter engagement.



We spoke to **Share America** about how multilingual ballots can encourage more people to vote and lead to greater turnout.

“Ballots typically include choices for more than one office, from president to congressional representatives to statewide or local offices. They might ask voters to weigh in on complicated ballot initiatives too, says Quesenbery, whose nonprofit Center for Civic Design seeks to improve democracy through design improvements. ‘There’s a big difference between everyday communication and understanding ballots for elections,’ she says.”



We spoke to **LAist** about undervoting and what it means for elections.

# Funders and partners

## Funders

We are grateful for the support of foundations and individual donors.

- Bernard and Anne Spitzer Charitable Trust
- Center for Tech and Civic Life
- The David and Lucille Packard Foundation
- Democracy Fund
- Hopewell Fund Civic (Re)Solve
- Houston Endowment
- Institute for Responsive Government
- John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
- The Joyce Foundation
- Kelson Foundation
- Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors
- William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

## Project partners

Our partnerships make our work stronger.

- Article IV
- The Elections Group
- Engineering for Democracy Institute, University of Rhode Island
- Microsoft Democracy Forward and Accessibility
- National Institute of Standards and Technology
- National Coalition for Accessible Voting
- New York State Public Campaign Finance Board
- Ohio Voting Rights Coalition
- Oxide Design
- Program for Disability Research, Rutgers University
- Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center
- REV UP
- U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence
- U.S. Election Assistance Commission

## Election offices

Lastly, we want to thank the election officials who we have partnered with and learned from this year.

### State elections offices in

- Arizona
- Colorado
- Louisiana
- Maryland
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Nevada
- North Carolina
- Ohio
- Pennsylvania
- Wisconsin

### Election administrators in

- Arlington, VA
- Contra Costa County, CA
- Coconino County, AZ
- Jefferson County, CO
- Town of Greenwich, CT
- King County, WA
- Madison, WI
- Multnomah County, OR
- Washoe County, NV

### Election associations

- California Association of Clerks and Elections Officials
- Election Center
- Missouri Association of County Clerks and Elections Offices

- Ohio Association of Election Officials
- Partnership for Large Election Jurisdictions
- Registrars of Voters Association of Connecticut
- Utah VOTE
- International Institute of Municipal Clerks

## Community partners

Community partnerships are an essential part of the work and research we do.

### Texas

- Boat People SOS
- Bonding Against Adversity
- Chinese Community Center
- Houston Food Bank
- League of Women Voters Cy-Fair
- League of Women Voters Fort Bend
- League of Women Voters Houston
- League of Women Voters Texas
- OCA Houston
- Woori Juntos

And thank you to all of the voters who took part in usability testing and other research.

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Center for  
Civic Design

# Thank you!

## Follow us year round

[civicdesign.org](http://civicdesign.org)

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410-921-6811

@civicdesign

[Civic Designing](#)

Practical tips and civic design research

[Civic Design Irregulars](#)

News for friends interested in civic design

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Pari Sabety

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*Executive director/Board secretary*

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Sam Novey

Tammy Patrick

Whitney May