

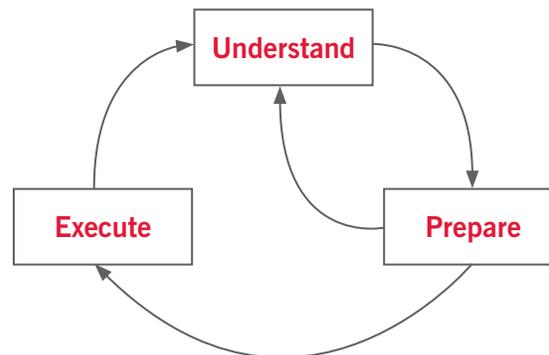
Implementing Vote Centers: A Model Checklist



Vote Centers are defined in Indiana (IC 3-5-2-49.9) as “a polling place where a voter who resides in the county in which the Vote Center is located may vote without regard to the precinct in which the voter resides.” The concept of Vote Centers is an emerging idea among election officials in this country, most of whom conduct their elections using the traditional precinct-based model. Vote Centers have proven to be very effective where they are appropriate, where adequate preparation has occurred, and where effective organization is in place. IC 3-5-2-49.8, passed during the 2011 session of the General Assembly, now makes Vote Centers an option for any Indiana County.

To support election officials considering using Vote Centers, we have collected and organized background information, examples, statistics, implementation guidelines, and best practices into a repository to be a resource for people who are evaluating, planning, and using Vote Centers. This section introduces and sets forth a checklist for election officials to use if they are planning on adopting Vote Centers. The information and material in this section will be posted on the website of the Bowen Center for Public Affairs at Ball State University. The website will be periodically updated with additional Vote Center information as that information becomes available.

The checklist focuses on usability and is understood in the following framework:



Understanding Vote Centers:

This section is designed to assist election officials in learning about Vote Centers so as to inform their decision to proceed toward adopting them. Topics covered include learning about Vote Centers, how to anticipate costs and benefits, and elements that drive the decision to adopt Vote Centers. Those wanting to consult Indiana legal requirements for establishing Vote Centers can consult sections 3-11-18 and 3-5-2-49.8 of the Indiana code as well as the new Vote Center website maintained by the Secretary of State describing Vote Centers at www.in.gov/sos/elections/3574.htm.

Preparing for Vote Centers:

This section is designed to assist election administrators in properly planning the installation of Vote Centers, including preparing their staff members, other organizations, the election infrastructure, and the general public.

Executing Vote Centers:

This section provides a checklist to assist in implementing the preparations in order to conduct elections under the new Vote Center model.

This framework is not designed as a full-blown structured methodology for conducting elections using Vote Centers. Such an elaborate model is impossible given the varying characteristics and needs of jurisdictions. Our intent is to create a resource for election officials that is comprised of a variety of content to use as is most appropriate in their situation.



A: Understanding Vote Centers

Deciding whether to use Vote Centers requires an understanding of the full-range of requirements and decisions that must be made to implement the Vote Center concept. Notable among these requirements are:

- more people visit a Vote Center than a traditional polling place on Election Day;
- turnout is likely to be less predictable, for the day as a whole and for any hour of the day because of the larger volume of voters using each Vote Center, particularly in the more urbanized areas of the county;
 - In order to accommodate voters at fewer sites, it will be necessary to utilize Vote Centers as early voting sites prior to election day;
- computer technology is needed, as are the skills to support and use the computers;
- use of computers and the higher utilization of resources integral to Vote Centers demand more efficient, predictable processes and more engaged management;
- voters new to Vote Centers need information and may require assistance.

In short, Vote Centers are more complex than traditional polling places and require more planning and preparation to execute effectively. There is some evidence that changing polling place locations can impact voter turnout and that moving a polling place can affect the decision to vote. In the switchover from traditional precincts to Vote Centers it is important to bear this in mind, but many old precinct locations will probably serve as suitable facilities for the new Vote Centers. Moreover, the added convenience of being able to cast one's ballot at any Vote Center in the county will help offset any site changes from the traditional precinct polling places.

The Vote Center concept was pioneered by Larimer County, Colorado, in 2003. Larimer County established twenty-two Vote Centers to replace 143 precincts. Since then, Vote Centers have spread to other states, including Indiana, where three counties have used Vote Centers as part of the pilot program authorized by the Indiana General Assembly.

Experience has shown that there are certain key concepts and considerations one must understand and take into account before adopting Vote Centers:

1. The Challenge of More Voters per Location. While traditional polling places rarely serve more than a thousand Election Day voters (often considerably fewer) it is not unreasonable for a well-placed Vote Center to provide the opportunity to vote for 200-300 people per hour. For example, if the average voter spends 10 minutes in the Vote Center (i.e., minimal wait time) a Vote Center that sees 300 people in an hour will always have an average of 50 voters in it, in addition to poll workers and observers. Vehicles for all of these individuals will be parked outside.

2. The Challenge of Forecasting Turnout. Since Vote Centers are not precinct-based, they are open to the broader voting population. This makes forecasting turnout of voters at any center difficult. Experience with Indiana Vote Centers indicates that voter turnout at similarly-located centers can vary widely from one election to the next and across hours of the day – busy in the afternoon one election, then more voters in the morning for the next. When considering how many Vote Centers to use and where to locate them, election planners must understand they should prepare to accommodate the busiest hour of the day at any facility. Unlike traditional polling places, the larger facilities needed to host a Vote Center can be difficult to locate and reserve for Election Day. Schools, for example, are appealing facilities, but often will not tolerate the disruptions that come with such a significant commitment.

State laws may dictate a minimum number of Vote Centers for a county. For example, the states of Colorado and Indiana both require at least one Vote Center for every 10,000 active registered voters. Beyond the legal requirements, turnout forecasting must take into account the likelihood that well-funded campaigns and competitive races on the ballot may swell turnout over previous elections. This makes it particularly important to make several Vote Center sites available for early voters. This will limit congestion on election day. Turnout data from previous years must be collected and analyzed. The Indiana evidence shows that the mere presence of Vote Centers does not, by itself, spur turnout. However, when Vote Centers are used for early voting and are positioned properly, more voters will take advantage of the early voting period, thereby relieving pressure on Vote Centers on Election Day.

¹Moshe Haspel and H. Gibbs Knotts. 2005. "Location, Location, Location: Precinct Placement and Costs of Voting." *Journal of Politics*. 67:2. Pp. 560-573.



- 3. More Computer Technology Required.** Vote Centers require significant use of computer technology to interrogate a centralized database to validate voters' registration and to record that each voter has voted. A reliable network (typically Internet) connection is needed, with sufficient bandwidth and, if possible, some backup connection capability. Electrical power requirements at these facilities can also be significant—Vote Centers require more voting machines than traditional polling places, to which computers, printers, and often ballot card encoding machines must be added. If a facility is not equipped to support the total power requirements of all the computers and voting equipment needed to support peak voter arrival rates, blown circuits will severely handicap Vote Center operations, up to the point of closing the Vote Center until computer connections can be restored.
- 4. High Efficiency Required for Cost Savings.** The principal advantages of Vote Centers are greater efficiency and overall cost-savings. In general, savings result from greater utilization of workers and equipment, which means more voters are processed per poll worker. The challenge is to understand that Vote Center processes must be highly efficient. If the Vote Center is designed to accommodate many more voters per hour and the process breaks down, lines of waiting voters can grow quickly. Reasons why processes can fail should be anticipated, identified clearly, and back-up procedures should be developed. For this reason, Vote Centers typically require that the person in the Supervisor role devote a significant portion of their time to operational management on Election Day.
- 5. New Training Materials Required.** Vote Centers require more specialized computer skills for some workers and more training for all workers. Some new positions will be created, such as “greeters,” and these individuals will require training. Training for all workers is imperative since keeping voters flowing efficiently through the voting facility is essential to realizing the potential of Vote Centers. Revising training materials to incorporate information on the new computer technology and the differing functions of some of the vote stations will not require extensive time or effort. Moreover, the costs incurred in creating new training modules can be largely offset by having to maintain a smaller pool of skilled and reliable workers.
- 6. Large-scale Public Information Campaign Required.** Fewer voting places will require a large-scale public information campaign to alert and inform voters of the new polling places and explain why the Vote Centers are being implemented. Costs will be incurred to reach citizens with this information. The largest new cost in the Indiana counties was the printing and mailing of postcards to all registered voters. The postcards informed the voters of the Vote Center locations and requested that voters bring the postcard with them when they vote. Each postcard was bar-coded and, when scanned, was an efficient method of verifying the voter's eligibility. The postcard communication with voters was accompanied by public service announcements on local media and by news coverage by media outlets.
- 7. The Challenge of Forecasting Costs.** This report contains examples of election expenses from multiple counties, both using Vote Centers and using precinct-based polling places. Analysis of the cost of elections in light of the Vote Center concept merits significant further examination. Unusual expenses associated with the transition to Vote Centers may be significant, such as acquisition of computer technology (to accommodate the check-in process) and voting equipment (to support ballot-on-demand) and development of new processes, each likely to require updates to documentation and training materials. Expect that fewer voting machines will be required than were for precinct-based polling places, which may create opportunities for redeployment to other jurisdictions. Start-up costs associated with first use of Vote Centers include comprehensive communication with the community, such as use of various media and printing of postcards to mail to registered voters. Direct costs will shift, largely based on the use of different technology (notably, printing expenses) and people and equipment can be better utilized (more voters per worker and per piece of equipment), driving down Election Day cost per voter.



B: Preparing for Vote Centers

This section of the framework is for election officials who have decided to use Vote Centers. It is intended to assist them in developing and organizing their capabilities, planning for effective implementation, and gaining confidence in their ability to use Vote Centers effectively. The following points are essential to proper planning.

1. Total Confidence in the Statewide Voter Registration System and Its Use. Vote Centers are made possible because of the electronic database that each state maintains. To ensure the efficient operation of Vote Centers, election administrators must be convinced that the electronic voter registration database is up-to-date and easily accessible to the election workers who are charged with accessing and maintaining the data. This is the most important step in preparing for the inaugural run of Vote Centers. If the election administrators are unsure of the data in the electronic file, or uncertain of its accessibility and reliability, then the installation of Vote Centers should be delayed to a future election cycle to assure these uncertainties can be resolved.

One Indiana jurisdiction was uncertain about the operation of the statewide voter registration system (SVRS) on Election Day and operated a redundant check-in system to ensure that no mistakes would be made. This decision caused longer lines because of two check-in stations that replicated one another, thereby defeating one of the big advantages of Vote Centers: efficient processing of voters. The county resolved this uncertainty in the next election by eliminating the second check-in station.

2. Accurate Turnout Forecasts. Accurately forecasting turnout has perplexed experts for decades. Factors associated with surging turnout include highly competitive election contests and strong voter mobilization efforts undertaken by candidates and political parties. Several structural impediments to voting, such as restrictive voter registration requirements have been lessened or removed in recent years through actions such as the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (Motor Voter). The best indicator of voter turnout is what has happened in recent previous elections. Election administrators are very familiar with many patterns that are visible in previous elections. For example, presidential election years will result in a much higher turnout than the off-year elections. If municipal elections are held in an odd year, turnout will be the lowest in that odd year. Another factor affecting turnout is if the county has an area that is rapidly increasing in population, or for a municipality, if there have been recent annexations.

Tippecanoe County, Indiana, was advantaged in forecasting turnout for the 2008 primary election by being able to examine turnout in other states that had earlier primaries. These statistics—in a presidential year with a hotly-contested Democratic Party nomination fight—guided the turnout estimates. But even by inflating their turnout expectations, their forecasts were low, with about 10,000 more voters showing up at the polls than was predicted. Fortunately, the use of early Voting Centers accommodated this surge and the Election Day turnout was handled efficiently. It is very important to be prepared for a higher turnout than even that which is forecast.

It is also advisable to anticipate voter turnout levels by Vote Center. Knowing that 80 percent of the voters will cast their ballot at the Vote Center closest to their household allows administrators to accurately forecast turnout in each Vote Center. These figures can then be used to provision each Vote Center with the proper number of voting machines and back-up workers.

3. Determine Number of Vote Centers. State law may dictate the number of Vote Centers that each county must establish. Indiana law (IC 3-11-18-6) specifies that one Vote Center must be provided for each 10,000 “active voters,” and “for any fraction” of 10,000 voters. An “active voter” is one who has registered/voted in any election in the prior four years at the address on their registration or has responded in writing within thirty days to a notice of address confirmation. In the absence of a state imposed minimum number of Vote Centers, it is imperative that accurate turnout forecasts be calculated.

It is also vitally important that a number of Vote Centers are made available for early voters. Since there are fewer Vote Centers than precincts, each Vote Center will experience higher turnout on election day. Providing early voting opportunities will reduce congestion on election day.



4. Determine Vote Center Sites. Determining Vote Center sites rests on four major factors:

- a) over 80 percent of the voters will cast their ballots at the Vote Center closest to their household;
- b) rural areas will be served by Vote Centers that will not experience much more traffic than usual under the old traditional precinct system;
- c) public transportation (where available) should be in close proximity to Vote Centers and adequate parking must be available; and,
- d) internet access must be available at the facility.

If your county has access to a GPS system, the addresses of all registered voters can be entered into the database and geographic sites can be pinpointed that will best serve the citizens. Knowing that slightly more than 80 percent of the registered voters will vote at the Vote Center closest to their households, the system can identify the best placement for the Vote Centers. Such precision is not always certain because a suitable facility may not be in close proximity to the target location. Vote Centers in larger towns and cities should be close to a public transportation station and sufficient parking spaces must be available. Assumptions as to the number of parking spaces needed can be based on past experience, but a calculation can be made on the basis of peak arrival rates at the Vote Center. The following two examples serve to illustrate how to calculate the number of parking spaces needed.

Assume the number of vehicles per voter is .8 and the peak arrival rate at the Vote Center is 248 voters per hour with the average voting time being 12 minutes (0.2 hours), which includes walking to and from the facility. The number of parking spots needed is:

$$248 \times 0.8 \times 0.2 = 40$$

As waiting time swells, so does the number of needed parking spots. Assume an average total voting time of 36 minutes, then the number of parking spots would swell:

$$248 \times 0.8 \times 0.6 = 118$$

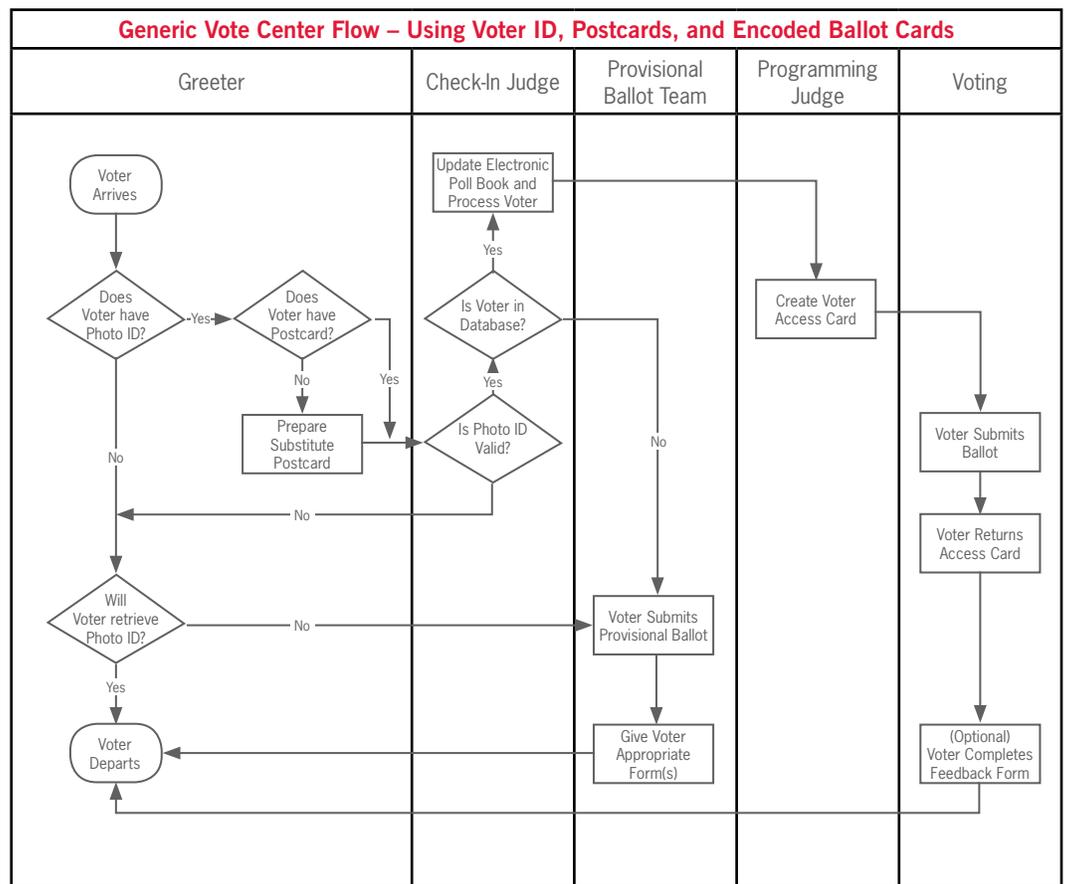
These examples demonstrate that parking can become a problem if the Vote Center experiences longer waiting times. Clearly, any flaw that complicates the efficient processing of voters within the facility will have a ripple effect on other Vote Center decisions, including the number of parking spaces needed. Consequently, election planners must build in some “slack” for erratic developments, such as a sudden rush of voters due to carpooling, or computer breakdowns, or if problems are encountered with one or more voters at one of the stations. Vote Centers offer the opportunity to realize savings in election administration, but planners must resist the temptation to run too lean.

A constant problem is finding sites in small towns that can provide reliable high speed internet service. A related problem is to be sure all sites meet the accessibility requirements for people with disabilities as mandated by federal laws. Some extra costs may be incurred to ensure reliable internet access. Election administrators are very familiar with the accessibility requirements and no extra costs should be needed to meet these regulations.



5. Promoting Efficiencies through Layout and Training. Although the shape and size of the physical facility that houses the Vote Center will vary, it is important to have a standard layout to use in order to optimize efficiency in processing voters. A diagram of a generic Vote Center is shown below and is a slight variation on the layout used by Tippecanoe County, Indiana, in 2008. The diagram depicts a simple Vote Center process using voter identification, postcards, and encoded ballot cards to tell voting machines which ballot a voter is to receive. In this variation of the Vote Center process, voters are required to provide identification to check-in. Postcards may be mailed to voters, which is one of the optional steps that election planners may use in their process and to facilitate communication before an election. These cards can be used to help poll workers look up voters in the statewide voter registration system and to capture signatures. In this case, if a voter does not bring their postcard, a substitute card can be printed at the Vote Center.

Some voting machines that support “ballots on demand” use encoded ballot cards to indicate to the machine the precinct in which the voter resides and this is represented in the diagram. Below is a representation of how a Vote Center may be organized. In this case, using a separate entrance and exit for the facility is used to smooth traffic flow. Ballot encode machines are located after the check-in stations, but may also be integrated with the check-in step—a choice for election planners to consider.

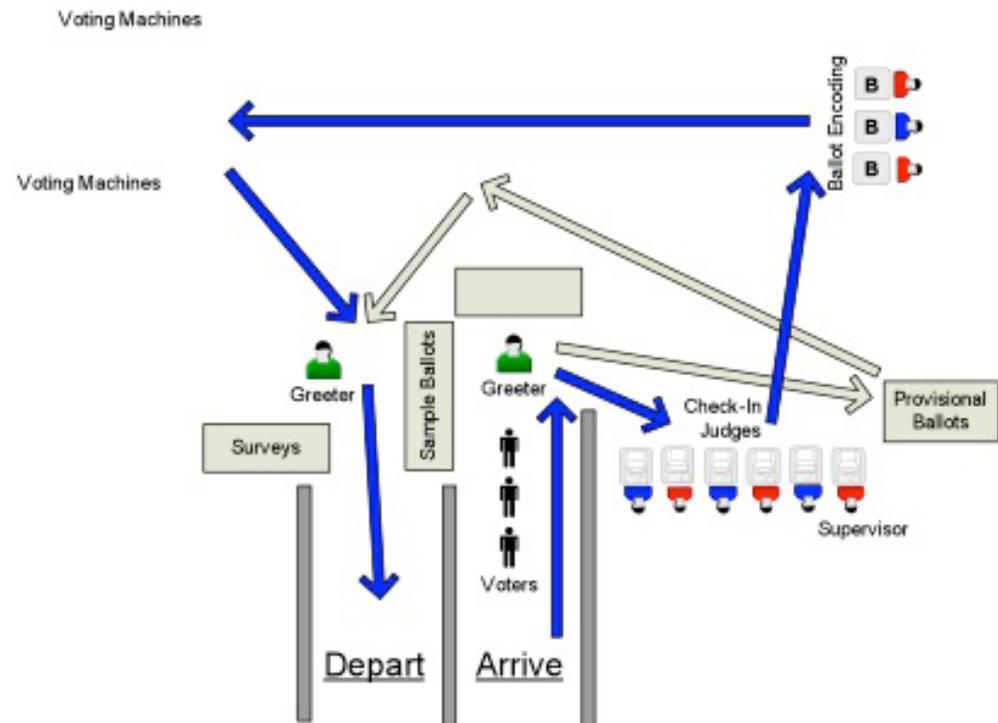




The diagram's blue arrows show the standard path a voter follows, while the gray arrows indicate an alternate path, most often used if a provisional ballot is required.

Each step in the Vote Center process requires well-trained staff members. There is an abundance of training materials available on the web to assist election administrators in revising their current training programs to incorporate the added skills needed for Vote Centers. A major difference in training between Vote Centers and traditional precincts is the expertise needed in operating the computer equipment that accesses the statewide voter registration system (SVRS). The technicians will be located at each Vote Center while voting is underway (both early voting and on Election Day), and a technician will be needed at the central administrative headquarters, as well, in order to trouble shoot any problems that might arise in the field.

Generic Vote Center Layout – Using Ballot Encoding Equipment



The position of “Greeter” is also new. The Greeter is responsible for welcoming the voter and determining if he or she has the needed documentation (such as a photo ID, if required, or the postcard that was mailed to them). The Greeter directs the voter to the appropriate queue. In low turnout elections, the position of the “Greeter” may not be needed if adequate signage is available and well-placed.

An example of training materials for these positions can be obtained from the Tippecanoe County Board of Election and Registration. These training materials were created specifically for Vote Centers. The material is entitled “Election Manual, Vote Center Edition.”

One cost advantage for Vote Centers is that fewer workers are required at the central election headquarters on Election Day. Fewer staff members are needed to answer phone inquiries from voters asking which precinct they are in and where their precinct polling place is located. Moreover, if the Vote Centers are properly provisioned there is virtually no need for central staffers to run additional forms to polling places because forms and documents are printed at the Vote Centers.



6. Provisioning Vote Centers for Expected Workload. Election officials have considerable latitude in how they implement Vote Centers, for example with regard to the number of voters they plan to serve with any voting facility. Because Vote Centers permit voters to choose the location at which they vote, the turnout at a single facility (or for any hour of the day) is less predictable than it is with traditional precinct-based polling places. If Vote Centers are deployed in a generally consistent way over multiple elections, local officials will build a basis for forecasting turnout on a facility-by-facility basis, though our observations indicate that turnout by facility (or by hour of the day) can vary surprisingly from one election to the next.

Once turnout by facility is forecasted with reasonable confidence, election planners can determine the number of check-in computers, ballot encoding stations, and voting machines that are needed in each Vote Center. Note that since one premise of Vote Centers is that they use equipment and poll workers more efficiently (i.e., more voters/machine and more voters/worker), underestimating turnout can quickly result in congested facilities and substantial voter wait times.

The process used to provision Vote Centers for Election Day is equally applicable to facilities used to support early-in-person voting.

The overall voting transaction at Vote Centers has three main activities or phases, each of which may be preceded by wait time:

Check In	Judge locates and records the voter in the electronic poll book (paper poll book at precinct-based polling places);
Get Ballot	Judge encodes the ballot card for insertion into a voting machine (not relevant for precinct-based polling places);
Vote	Voter uses the voting machine to cast their ballot

Note that the “Get Ballot” step can be substantially different from one Vote Center to the next, depending on the process used and on the characteristics of the equipment. Note also that we assume that at any Vote Center, voters form a single line to check-in, then obtain their ballot, then vote. If your Vote Center uses multiple lines into the facility, you will need to adjust the variables, such as likely expected hourly turnout, accordingly.

For any single phase, you will need to estimate the number of voters you expect will arrive in an hour (i.e., the busiest hour) and the average processing capability of a single station, expressed in minutes. For example, your average poll worker may be able to use your check-in software and process to check in an average voter in one minute and fifteen seconds or 1.25 minutes. Based on that throughput, a qualified poll worker can check in 48 voters per hour, assuming they are 100% busy (taking no breaks). Once you’ve estimated how many voters will arrive and you know how many voters an hour can be checked in at one station, you can estimate how many check-in stations you need at the facility. The challenge is that efficiency drops as utilization increases—especially as it approaches capacity—resulting in more wait time for voters entering the phase of the voting process that you are assessing.

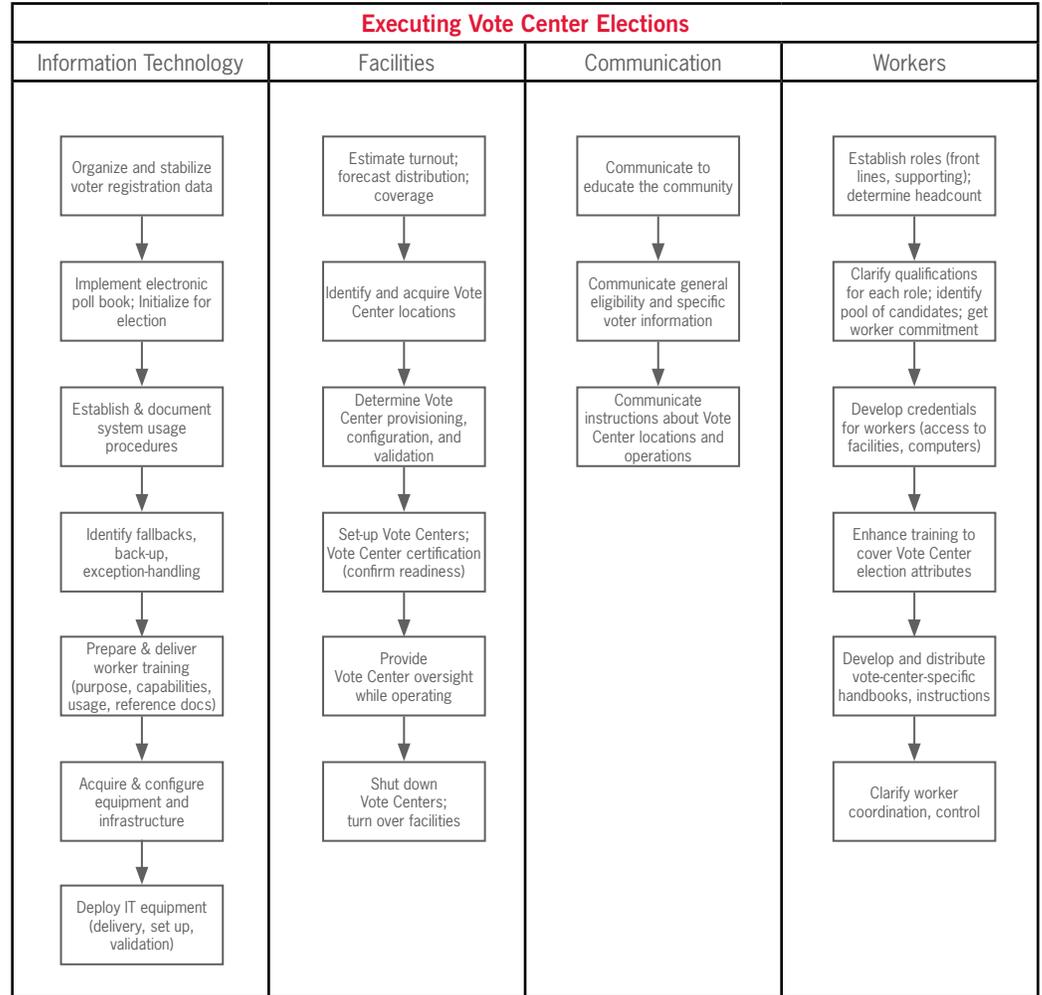
We recommend that election officials overestimate turnout until they are confident with their Vote Center experience. Understand that other “choke points” may exist in a Vote Center, such as if there is a single door to enter the facility or if there are too few Greeters to shepherd voters through the voting process. This can be particularly challenging for Vote Centers that process hundreds of voters per hour. The model can be used for the greeting process just as it can for check-in or voting. The model assumes that everything else in the Vote Center is working flawlessly. If voters are arriving at a rate of 150 every hour, but on buses with 50 people at a time, those people should expect to wait in line. If voters linger in the Vote Center between steps or if they are confused about where to go next, the model does not take that into account. We have observed a Vote Center provisioned to support 250 voters an hour that had an entrance that could not accommodate that volume, which resulted in long lines at the facility.



7. Conduct a “Dry Run” or Pilot Operation. A “dry run” or pilot operation should be undertaken prior to the start of early voting. A “mock” Vote Center should be established and workers should be trained. To reduce costs, the pilot operation can be operated simultaneously with any required public testing of the voting machines. The pilot operation should be planned so as to anticipate all the various links in the chain of the voting process. A team of Vote Center workers and election administrators should assess the performance of the pilot operation after a set amount of time and any corrective actions, if needed, should be incorporated into the voting process and tested.

C: Executing Vote Centers

This section displays a flow chart and commentary to assist in implementing the preparations under the new Vote Center model. We assume election officials are experienced and have generic election processes in place. Note that steps and flows will vary based on local statute.





Information Technology

The election officials responsible for operating and overseeing the use of the voting technology are crucial to the successful operation of the Vote Centers. Their duties extend from organizing the databases to establishing system usage procedures and configuring and setting up the computer and voting equipment.

The SVRS and the EPB. The individuals responsible for the technology used in the Vote Center operations must have complete confidence in the accuracy and reliability of the statewide voter registration system (SVRS). The ability to quickly access the database and update it is the heart of the Vote Center. Without the accessible SVRS Vote Centers would not be possible. Directly correlated with the SVRS is the electronic poll book (EPB). This must be initialized for each election.

Identify fallbacks and troubleshooting. There will be information technology operators in each Vote Center, but it is imperative that these individuals be linked by phone to other information technology personnel at a central location. Often minor glitches can be resolved by telephone, but a major problem, such as internet interruption, will require traveling to the affected Vote Center. Sufficient central office personnel must be available for the troubleshooting, with a rule-of-thumb being one person for every 15 Vote Centers.

Facilities

Forecasting Turnout: Considerations. As previously indicated, the best way to forecast voter turnout is to examine turnout in past elections. In doing so, take into account which type of election was held in what year. There are four basic types of elections:

- Presidential (every four years)
- Off-year (congressional elections in non-presidential years)
- Municipal (off-off years; non-presidential/non-congressional)
- Special (includes congressional vacancy elections; recall elections; referenda, etc.)

The presidential year elections draw the heaviest turnout. Generally speaking, off-year congressional elections draw the second highest turnout, and the electorate will shrink anywhere from twenty to thirty percent from the presidential year. A handful of states hold gubernatorial elections in the off-off years, (i.e., 2005, 2009, 2013). Some states hold municipal elections in the other off-off years (i.e., 2003, 2007, 2011). Special elections can usually be counted on as having the lowest turnout.

Two other elements belong on a checklist for forecasting turnout. First, is there a highly competitive race for one of the higher offices on the ballot? This was the case in 2008, both in the Democratic primaries and in the November election. The presence of a highly competitive race for a highly visible office will increase turnout. Second, is there a well-funded, well-publicized get-out-the-vote program on the behalf of a particular candidate or political party? If so, this will likely increase turnout as well.

Determining the Number and Sites of Vote Centers: Considerations. The first consideration in determining the number of Vote Centers needed in a county is to consult the state law or regulations that permit Vote Centers to be established. In Indiana and Colorado, the state law requires a Vote Center to be established for every 10,000 active voters or portion of 10,000. This sets the minimum number of Vote Centers. The following elements should be considered in establishing the number of Vote Centers beyond the minimum required by law, or in the absence of any legal guideline.

- In rural areas and small towns, the traditional precincts will serve as a Vote Center, but experience has shown that turnout will not differ in any meaningful way from past turnout under the precinct model. Plan on keeping most, if not all, the rural precincts as Vote Centers.
- In more densely populated areas, utilize GPS methodology to pinpoint Vote Center locations that will accommodate 100 percent of the registered voters. Local universities and colleges will have access to GPS programs if the governmental jurisdiction does not. The guideline is that 80 percent of the voters will cast their ballot at the Vote Center that is closest to their household.
- To determine the number of parking spaces needed at a Vote Center you can refer to the calculations provided on page 5, in number 4 under "Preparing for Vote Centers."



Once the sites have been selected it is important to configure each facility with the various stations that are required for the efficient operation of the various voting steps. Once each facility is configured with the appropriate number of stations and provisioned, election officials should confirm among themselves that the facility is ready for operation.

Communication

A Public Information Program: Considerations. There are several elements to a successful public information program to introduce Vote Centers. The purpose is to disseminate all pertinent information to the general public, including the rationale for switching from traditional precincts to Vote Centers. The Indiana experience shows that the most successful element in the public information campaign is the postcard that is mailed to every registered voter in the county.

The Postcard. Approximately ten days prior to Election Day each registered voter is mailed a postcard that shows their name and address, along with the precinct in which they live. The front of the postcard, under the “return address” is a statement similar to the following: “You are a registered voter in the election to be held on [date and time polls are open]. You may vote at any Vote Center listed on the back of this card. Please bring this card with you to the polls.” This last sentence is also repeated on the back of the card where a list of all the Vote Centers, with addresses, is provided. The front of the card also includes a bar code that incorporates the name, address and precinct of the voter.

Printing and mailing the postcards is expensive. However, the Indiana experience validates the benefits of this expense. The vast majority of voters bring the postcard with them, and the bar code on the postcard streamlines the voting process at the first check-in station. Moreover, the postcard is part of the public information program that informs voters of the Vote Center locations.

The cost of preparing, printing, and mailing the postcards can eventually be phased out as voters become more accustomed to Vote Center locations and operation.

Public Service Announcements. A successful public information program depends on news media personnel to carry the message to the citizens. Working back from Election Day, a series of news releases should be prepared for the local media. The early news releases should provide information and explanations as to why the county is switching to Vote Centers from precincts. As the early voting opens, the news releases should focus on the opportunities citizens have for voting early at the new Vote Centers. Finally, as Election Day approaches voters should be informed that they will be receiving postcards in the mail. It is imperative that election administrators make themselves available for interviews with reporters and editors and for editorial board meetings. Television stations should receive special attention by way of providing video announcements. A sample video public service announcement is available for viewing on the Larimer County, Colorado, website at www.larimer.org/elections/votecenters.

The communications program does not end with Election Day. Officials should be prepared to provide testimony to reporters on the operations of the Vote Centers on Election Day. There will be some glitches on Election Day, regardless of the model used for voting, and officials should be forthright in addressing any problems that occurred. Finally, a report on the Vote Center implementation and operation should be prepared as soon as possible after the election and disseminated to the media and placed on the county web page for public reference.



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Workers

Staffing a Vote Center: A Checklist of Positions.

The basic responsibilities of each poll worker at a Vote Center are very similar to a conventional precinct, but there are differences in the ways in which specific tasks are accomplished. For positions that are substantially different from precinct-based positions, some additional training will be needed. The following is a brief description of each position in a Vote Center.

- 1. Vote Center Supervisor/Inspector.** This person fulfills most of the functions of an inspector or supervisor at a precinct polling place. He or she is the person in charge. This person has had more training and likely has more election experience than other personnel in the Vote Center. This person is expected to work the entire Election Day.
- 2. Entry Greeters.** This person greets voters as they enter the Vote Center and asks if the voter has brought their mailed postcard with them. If state law requires additional identification, the entry greeter will ask to see the document. Depending on the answers provided by the prospective voter, the Entry Greeter will direct the voter to the correct station in the Vote Center. At Vote Centers where turnout forecasts are high, there should be more than one Entry Greeter. In Vote Centers (usually in small towns and rural areas) there may not be a need for an Entry Greeter because turnout will be close to the traditional turnout in the old precinct.
- 3. Exit Greeter.** This person collects the voter access card after a voter has voted. This person also may affix an "I Voted" sticker on the voter, if that is provided. This position may not be used at all elections or at all Vote Centers.
- 4. Check-In Judges.** This person will operate the computer and check-in voters. The number of these individuals will vary by election and by Vote Center, depending on turnout forecasts.
- 5. Programming Judges.** This person will program the voter access card so that the voting machine brings up the correct ballot style and precinct for that voter. The number of these individuals will vary by election and Vote Center.
- 6. Provisional Team Member.** These individuals have received extra training so that they are an expert in the process of providing provisional ballots. They will assist voters who do not appear on the poll list. These individuals can serve as check-in judges or programming judges if they are needed.
- 7. Reserve Team Members.** These individuals are not assigned to a specific Vote Center but are sent to the sites that are experiencing heavy voter turnout, or have poll workers who did not show for work. Reserve Team Members receive training in all positions and functions.
- 8. Machine Technicians.** These individuals are at the central election headquarters and are available by phone to answer questions and trouble shoot any computer related questions or voting machine problems. They may be dispatched to a Vote Center site if needed.