

Country: Canada

Theme: Voter Education for Informed and Ethical Voting

Title of The Best Practice / Case Study: Voter Education for Inclusive, Informed & Ethical Participation (See attached for full version of Elections Canada's Short Paper)

Area of Coverage: 338 Electoral Districts in 10 provinces and 3 territories

Period of implementation: 2015

Background: One of Elections Canada's (EC) key roles is to communicate effectively and clearly to Canadians about the electoral process, registration procedures, qualifications to be eligible to vote, and requirements to be entitled to vote. In addition, EC provides information on alternative voting methods and the accessibility of voting sites while encouraging Canadians to be vigilant and proactive in bringing matters of concern to the agency's attention. Elections Canada also has a mandate to make the electoral process better known to students at the primary and secondary levels.

Brief Description of Best Practice: A Voter Education: When an election is called, Elections Canada launches a comprehensive, multimedia communication campaign: the Electoral Reminder Program. The program provides information to both the general population of electors and specific groups of electors who may face barriers to voting, about voter identification requirements, registration and when, where and ways to register and vote. In addition, the agency has established partnerships with over 50 national and regional organizations serving identified target groups of electors. For the 2015 general election (GE), the organizations disseminated Elections Canada's information products electronically as well as through in person briefings prior to and during the general election. Also for the 2015 GE, online channels emerged in line with Canadian's growing preference to communicate with Elections Canada through social media and the agency's website. While the main source of information about the electoral process remained the voter identification card (VIC) and traditional media (e.g. television, radio and newspapers), EC was active on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, in both official languages. Additionally, a 2015 GE-specific website was active from the drop of the writ until shortly after the GE, focusing on elector services and transactions. Furthermore, in February 2015, in consultation with its Advisory Group for Disability Issues (AGDI), Elections Canada released its Accessibility Policy and Service Offering for people with disabilities, which provided details about the tools and services available for the 2015 general election. B. Civic Education Elections Canada runs an annual civic education initiative, Canada's Democracy Week (CDW), dedicated to engaging Canadians with their democracy. CDW informs, engages and connects Canadians with the democratic process through a week's long series of in- person and online activities as well as through resources and programming for teachers to use in their school. Additionally, in April 2014, Elections Canada launched Inspire

Democracy, an initiative that included a new website with research and tools to encourage youth civic engagement in Canada, a quarterly newsletter, and a series of workshops across the country. The initiative focused in particular on building a community of youth's serving organizations knowledgeable about the issue of declining youth voter turnout and committed to helping EC provide voter information to young people. C. Canadians Communicating with Elections Canada At the outset of the 2015 General Election, Elections Canada encouraged Canadians to be vigilant and proactive in bringing matters of concerns to E's attention. To improve its risk awareness and ability to respond accordingly, Elections Canada sought to provide more ways for electors to interact with the agency for the 2015 GE. As such, EC expanded its elector's feedback framework, which included introducing online channels, centralizing its complaints management structure and widely promoting how electors could communicate with Elections Canada. D. Post-Election Assessment After every federal election, Elections Canada conducts and commissions surveys, studies and post-mortems to evaluate its main activities and programs. Over the past decade, efforts have been made to systematize post-election evaluations to allow the agency to better identify trends and thus gain a deeper understanding of the feedback provided by returning officers and political parties following the election, as well as of the views and challenges facing electors, candidates and election officers. Other evaluations measure the effectiveness of the agency's communications program and its impact on electoral awareness. Elections Canada uses this information to continually improve its services in order to keep pace with the changing needs and expectations of Canadians.

Challenges: EC must continue to ensure Canadians are aware of their registration and voting options. To do so the agency must maintain a focus on: more effectively responding to the informational needs of Canadians when it comes to voting (specifically the different ways to vote, ID requirements, accessibility tools and services, among others); comprehensive multi-media communications campaigns directed at all Canadians including those who face barriers to the electoral process; and Civic Education programming for youth.

Outcome: EC made significant progress toward achieving its objectives for the 2015 GE. Electors knew when, where and the ways to register and vote. They perceived Elections Canada as the most trusted source of election information, and they did not hesitate to communicate with the agency via a number of channels - including social media - to share their questions, experiences, concerns and complaints.