



**Celebrating 48
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2018 Achievement Awards

Increasing Voter Access Through Community Partners

King County, WA

Submitted by:

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Abstract

In a 2016 pilot program, King County Elections and the Seattle Foundation teamed up to increase voter access in historically marginalized communities. The partnership provided \$224,000 in funding for 22 community-based organizations (CBOs) to do voter engagement in limited English-speaking (LES) communities. Collectively, they reached about 27,000 LES voters in 30 languages across the county.

In addition to the CBOs, four community ambassadors were hired to engage voters and potential voters among the county's limited English-speaking populations. Together they reached about 400 to 500 of their community members and provided technical assistance about the voting process.

Background

The King County Council in 2015 passed legislation to promote access to elections for historically underrepresented citizens. New activities included full translation services for Korean and Spanish-speaking voters and targeted community outreach for the county's limited English-speaking (LES) communities. In order to maximize impact, King County Elections (KCE) partnered with the Seattle Foundation, a widely respected community philanthropy and charity organization, to invest in community engagement activities to help citizens with voter registration, increased access to voting materials and voting education. The approach was predicated on King County's Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan and the philosophy that government should invest in the community organizations that are already extremely effective at civic engagement and capacity building.

Voter Engagement Pilot Launched

In early 2016 KCE and the Seattle Foundation joined forces to increase voter access in historically marginalized communities. The partnership provided \$224,000 in funding for 22 community-based organizations (CBOs) to do voter engagement. The CBOs were each required to develop a field outreach plan for how they intended to engage voters in their communities. Over the course of several months, they provided voter education through educational workshops, candidate and ballot forums, voter registration drives and other community events. In the two months leading up to the General Election, the CBOs organized 20 different events to educate community members about what was on the ballot. Collectively, they reached about 27,000 LES voters in 30 languages across King County.

In addition to the pilot program, KCE hired four community ambassadors to engage voters and potential voters among the county's limited English-speaking populations. The ambassadors were from the following communities: 1) Ethiopian (Amharic), 2) Filipino (Tagalog), 3) Russian and Ukrainian and 4) Samoan. KCE chose to recruit community ambassadors from the above communities based on an assessment of high language needs in the county and where there were potential service gaps among community partners.



A presidential town hall with LES voters.

The community ambassadors provided voter education through outreach activities such as workshops or ballot demonstration events. They also provided technical assistance on how to complete a voter registration form, how to update voter information, and where to find a ballot drop box. Together they reached about 400 to 500 of their community members and provided technical assistance about the voting process.

A 62% Increase in Requests for Translated Voting Materials

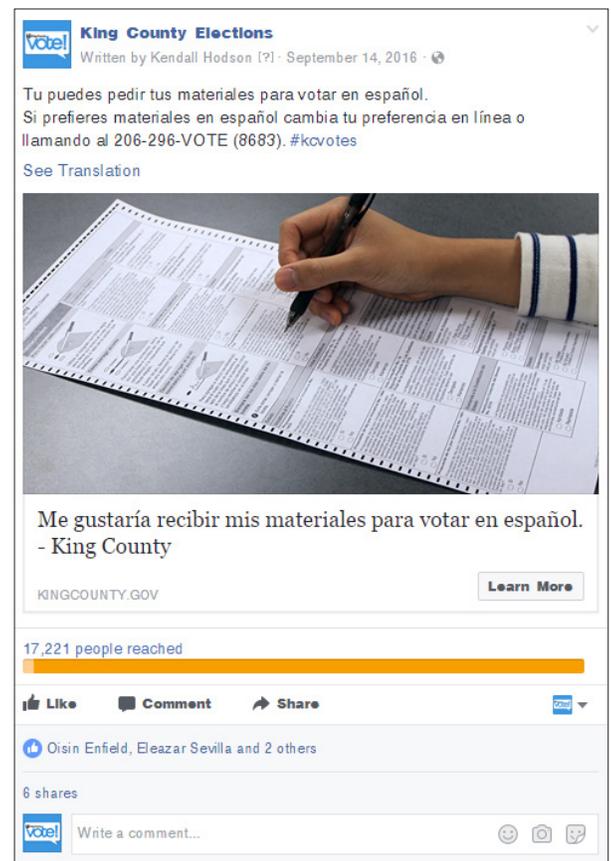
To support the pilot program, KCE reached out to LES voters about the availability of translated voting materials. KCE deployed the following methods to reach voters:

1. A language preference postcard was distributed by community partners and through King County facilities.
2. KCE emailed customized, translated emails with a link to an online request form on the department's website for voters to request their language preference. Emails were targeted based on the most popular surnames among Chinese, Korean, Latino and Vietnamese voters.
3. Using the same list of most popular surnames KCE mailed a translated postcard to voters' home addresses. (See Supplement)
4. KCE posted customized, translated social media announcements with a link to the online request form on sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and blog posts.
5. When sending voter registration cards to new voters, KCE provided an opportunity for them to update their language preference.
6. Print ads were placed in Asian, Latino, Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean newspapers.
7. KCE ran Pandora Radio ads in Spanish promoting the option to receive your ballot materials in Spanish.
8. Members of KCE's language services team were covered by non-English television outlets such as KO-AM TV and Univision.

Achievement Award Worthiness

As a result of the pilot program and KCE's outreach to LES communities, 2,300 LES voters requested translated election materials in Chinese, Korean, Spanish or Vietnamese. That's a 62 percent increase in overall requests for translated voting materials since the first language –Chinese –was implemented in 2002.

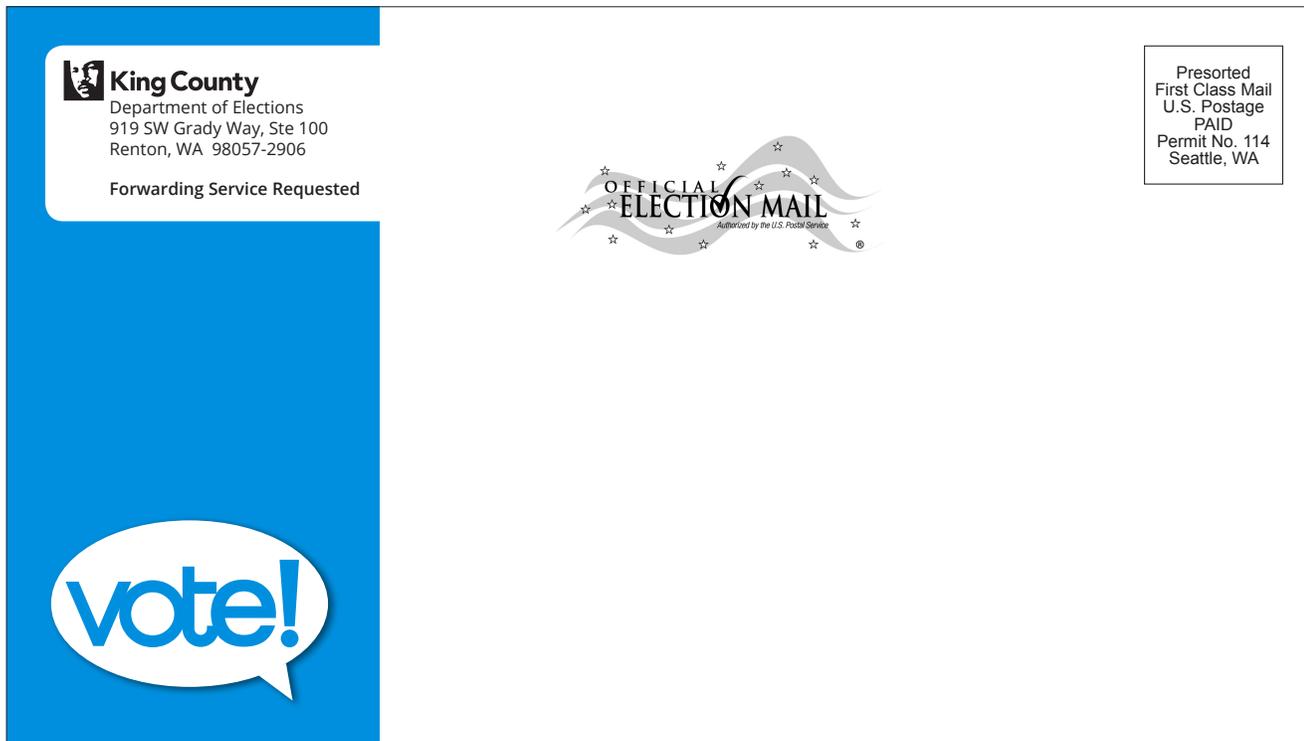
In total, about 5,400 translated ballots were issued for the 2016 General Election.



Facebook posting in Spanish.

The exciting and measurable increase of participation by our LES customer base cemented the partnership between King County Elections and the Seattle Foundation. With momentum from the 2016 Pilot - we funded 30 CBOs in 2017 and as of the writing of this submission, we are reviewing the 2018 applicants and have \$460,000 in grants to be awarded in April to increase voter engagement in underserved communities. Once again, we are breaking down barriers, filling service gaps and enhancing the level of our citizen participation.

Postcard sent for surname mailing



Contact us to receive your voting materials in Chinese, Korean, Spanish or Vietnamese.

如需獲取您的中文投票資訊，請聯絡金郡選舉部。

Comuníquese con nosotros para recibir sus materiales de votación en Español.

한국어로 투표자료를 받으시려면 저희에게 연락하세요.

Xin vui lòng liên lạc với Bộ Bầu cử Quận King để nhận tài liệu bầu cử bằng tiếng Việt.

vote!

投票!

ivota!

투표하세요!

bỏ phiếu!

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