



Dean C. Logan
Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk

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TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chair
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich
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FROM: Dean C. Logan, Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk

VSAP Quarterly Report- 1st Quarter 2014

The following is the first quarterly update report of 2014, detailing project activities and accomplishments during the period of December 1, 2013 - February 28, 2014. These reports are provided to inform your Board and the public on the progress of the Voting Systems Assessment Project (VSAP). This series of quarterly reports is in response to the motion adopted by your Board on September 7, 2010.

During the reporting period, the VSAP has achieved a great milestone. Utilizing a human centered iterative design process to identify the ideal voting device for the County, we designed a ballot marking device concept (a key component to a new voting system model for the County). The design addresses a number of the project's core General Voting System Principles. Over the course of this year, the project will further refine the ballot marking device concept and develop detailed specifications for hardware and software components and functionality.

Initial design and conceptualization work has also begun for the new tabulation component of the future voting system. The tabulation system supports the voting system by reading, tabulating and aggregating the votes cast in the election. The project has initiated exploratory discussions with current election tally staff within the Department. The discussions are helping to identify core operational requirements and needs for the future system. In 2014, we seek to work with staff and our VSAP Technical Advisory Committee to complete general system specifications and requirements.

To address the resources that will be needed to pursue systems development, we are closely monitoring the implementation of new reforms brought about by SB 360. Specifically, the use of Voting Modernization Bond Act (Prop 41) funds for the research and development of the county system. Once a process for funding requests is adopted, the Department intends to seek funding for the development of specifications and manufacturing of prototypes for both the ballot marking device and tabulation system.

Completion of IDEO System Design Contract

The Department has continued progress in the development of a new voting system model for the County. Using a human-centered design process, we have arrived at a ballot marking device concept that will be further tested, developed and engineered for implementation in the County. As part of this process, we developed a “looks like” prototype which provides the Department and stakeholders a clear idea of what the final system design may look like. The concept takes into consideration the diverse needs and preferences of voters, operational considerations of the department, and technical feasibility. The design attributes of the proposed ballot marking device feature a device that is accessible, robust, and will be easy to store and transport.

Our next step is to frame the steps for the development of system requirements and specifications necessary for the manufacturing of the system. This process will include continuous stakeholder feedback as we further refine the system and develop the system requirements and specifications. We are currently working on developing the best approach for this process, including drafting a statement of work and meeting with County Counsel to determine the most appropriate consultant contracting options.

Focus Group Research

As part of our ongoing efforts to collect user information about needs and preferences with regard to the voting experience, the Department conducted a series of focus groups with voters and pollworkers. The goal of the focus groups was to provide the Department with insight concerning voter and pollworker perceptions of proposed elements for a new voting model.

The qualitative study included 10 focus groups, each composed of 8-10 registered voters. Focus groups were conducted in the period from January 27 to February 1, 2014. The groups included the following population segments of the County’s electorate: mixed general population voters, pollworkers, permanent vote by mail voters, young voters (under 30 years old) and limited English proficiency voters (Spanish, Korean, and Chinese).

The data gathered from these focus groups will help inform our ongoing efforts to assess the needs and opinions of voters and develop effective strategies to address needs with design and voter education efforts.

Stakeholder Engagement

The Department continues to meet with voters, regulators, experts, and other stakeholders with the intent of keeping them informed and engaged in the process as well as gathering data and information that beneficial to our assessment and voting systems changes. During this period, the Department’s project staff met with the Community Voter Outreach Committee, the Quality and Productivity Commission, Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee and participated in webinars on voting accessibility and technology.

Furthermore, VSAP staff remains in constant communication with the VSAP Advisory Committee as well as the VSAP Technical Advisory Committee. We are currently in the process of planning a two-day workshop with the VSAP Technical Advisory Committee. The workshop will take place April 8-9, 2014 at our office in Norwalk. The goal of this workshop is to obtain member feedback on technical aspects of our proposed ballot marking device concept as well as discuss possible ballot specifications.

Stakeholder Engagement (Cont'd)

1. Webinar- Voting Technology- January 10, 2014
VSAP staff attended a webinar focusing on pilot studies in assistive voting technology. This webinar showcased findings from various research institutions in their use of assistive technology.
2. Community Voter Outreach Committee (CVOC)- January 15, 2014
VSAP staff attended the quarterly CVOC meeting. At this meeting, staff provided a status update on VSAP efforts and invited members to visit our website for more detailed information on the project.
3. Webinar- Voter Accessibility Technology- January 23, 2014
VSAP staff attended a webinar focusing on accessibility for disabled voters and new innovative technologies to assist voters. This webinar focused on pollworkers and the use of assistive technology in elections.
4. Quality and Productivity Commission- January 27, 2014
Executive and VSAP staff met with the Commission to provide an update on the progress of the project and present the system prototype. In August 2012, the Q&P provided the VSAP program with \$470k in funding (\$235k loan/ \$235 grant) to begin the development and system design phase.
5. Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting-February 25, 2014
VSAP staff attended the VAAC meeting and presented progress updates to the committee. Particular attention was paid to our work with individuals with cerebral palsy and our continued commitment to accessibility for people with disabilities as our program progresses towards implementation.

About the VSAP

Launched in September 2009, the Voting Systems Assessment Project (VSAP) was developed by the Department in response to the growing voting system needs and challenges faced by the County. While the County's current voting system has served the voters of Los Angeles County with accuracy and integrity, the design of these systems and the age of their technology do not offer the technical and functional elasticity necessary to continue to accommodate the growing and increasingly diverse electorate.

The size and diversity of Los Angeles County and the limited voting systems market, however, make it almost impossible to reasonably consider a commercial off-the-shelf voting system solution. Any voting system solution will entail a significant development or customization process in order to satisfy the County's needs, General Voting System Principles and technical requirements.

In response to these needs and challenges, the VSAP takes an unprecedented and comprehensive approach at modernizing the County's voting system. The vision of the project is to implement a voting system through a transparent process that takes into account the needs and expectations of current and future Los Angeles County voters. The VSAP aims at achieving three goals in this process: 1) give current and future Los Angeles County voters an unprecedented opportunity to participate in the assessment and development process; 2) increase voter confidence in the electoral process through the participatory structure of the project; 3) synthesize public input and research to acquire or develop a new voting system for the County.

Stay Connected

More information regarding the Voting System Assessment Project (VSAP) is available to the public online at www.lavote.net/voter/vsap and on the project's Facebook page. The pages on our website and on Facebook are frequently updated with news and information and are a great way to stay connected with the progress of the project between quarterly reports. We strongly encourage public input throughout the process and look forward to continuing to work with your Board on this critical project. If you have any questions please contact Monica Flores, VSAP Project Coordinator at (562) 345-8372 or via email at mflores@rrcc.lacounty.gov.