RESEARCH & EXPERIMENTATION

CURRENT LANDSCAPE AND NEW FRONTIERS
TODAY’S SESSION

- What testing and experiments have taught us thus far
- Current landscape of research and experiments in the field
- Trends and new frontiers
- Discussion
• Research and experimentation is a BROAD topic
  • Data analysis
    • Report on impact of election administration changes
  • Public opinion research, polling, surveys
    • Messages to motivate voters to turn out
  • Landscape assessment
    • Research projects funded by FCCP members
  • Randomized controlled experiments
    • Measuring impact of GOTV
  • Analysis of field tactics
    • Activist recruitment and development
WHAT DO WE KNOW?

• Portfolio of voter engagement research is large and growing

However, segment of the electorate where most research is focused

Activists/Volunteers
High propensity voters
Medium propensity voters
Low propensity voters
Nonvoters/disengaged
WHAT DO WE KNOW?

1. It’s hard to break through a cluttered environment
   - Larger impacts in low-salience (i.e. school board vs. US Senate) elections
   - Competitive electoral climates drive turnout
   - Non-partisan programs are less impactful in Presidential elections

2. Best Practices continue to test well and maximize investment
   - Social pressure and plan-making for GOTV
   - Voter registration continues to be cheapest when done through sophisticated mail programs
WHAT DO WE KNOW?

3. Diminishing returns
   - More doesn’t generally mean more impact
   - Multiple social pressure program increases turnout, but each program has diminishing returns

4. Quality matters
   - The cheapest tactics tend to have the lowest effect (i.e. robocalls)
   - Chatty GOTV phone calls > rushed conversations
   - New & different can perform better than the same ol’ (i.e. mail programs)
WHAT DO WE KNOW?

5. Impacts are small
   - Most tested tactics will improve efficacy by a few % points
   - Ballot measures have more impact than candidate persuasion
   - Be wary of lasting effects

6. There’s a lot we don’t know
   - Persuasion and opinion change are less-studied than GOTV/voter engagement
   - People change and so does what they respond to
   - More research is always needed!
• **Thank you** to those who participated in the FCCP Research and Experimentation survey!

• Results were aggregated and anonymized to produce a scan of the current funding landscape.
CURRENT LANDSCAPE

- Program evaluation
  - Evaluation of progressive infrastructure: what’s working and what’s not
  - Progress on money in politics
CURRENT LANDSCAPE

• 2016 Polling and messaging
  • Specific messages (and modes) to increase voter turnout – broadly targeted and focusing on specific sub-groups
  • Youth voting: motivation and the voting experience
  • Voting rights messaging: proactive and defensive

• Data analysis & Reports
  • Election administration: How polling place lines effect turnout
  • Media coverage impact on public conversation of political and social issues
  • Political engagement of American Muslims
CURRENT LANDSCAPE

- Voter Registration Experiments
  - Site-based
  - C3 vs C4 messaging when doing Latino voter registration
  - Cost benefits of paperless registration

- Activism
  - Effective strategies and tactics to build volunteers/activists
  - Modeling for potential activists
CURRENT LANDSCAPE

• GOTV experiments
  • Messengers: canvassers of color, women talking to voters
  • Digital video ads
  • Social pressure versus cultural-specific messaging to immigrant communities
  • Organization follow up versus generic GOTV
  • Household and workplace spillover
  • Impact of Election Day registration on increasing turnout

• Deep canvass
  • Current projects on climate change, vaccines, transgender non-discrimination and racial prejudice
TRENDS AND NEW FRONTIERS
TRENDS AND NEW FRONTIERS

- Election administration
  - Many states are passing pro-active election administration legislation: How will it impact voter turnout? Voter registration rates? Perceptions of the electoral experience?
TRENDS & NEW FRONTIERS

Activism/Leadership Development

Opinion change, Deep canvass

Does IVE move people?

Engaging non-voters, voter reg

Activists/Volunteers

High propensity voters

Medium propensity voters

Low propensity voters

Nonvoters/disengaged
• Integrated Voter Engagement
  • In the survey, this was the largest mismatch between funder interest and current research projects
  • Does voter engagement lead to engagement in other issue campaigns? Or should it be the other way around?
  • Challenges to define and get projects to scale

• Longitudinal
  • Multiple cycles of experiments – can that be aggregated to look at aggregated program activity and impact?
TRENDS & NEW FRONTIERS

• Non-voters
  • Narrowing a voter engagement focus to specific constituencies and messengers
  • Much more targeted approaches versus blanketed campaigns
  • Messaging and communications targeted at people outside the political process
  • Optimize voter registration and continue to make it more cost effective.
TRENDS & NEW FRONTIERS

• Leadership & Activism
  • Methodology to measure impact on smaller scale
    • Multi-state?

• Opinion change
  • Deep canvass is a promising tactic on lasting impact to reduce transgender discrimination.
    • Other applications on more deeply seated issue opinions or political interventions?
  • Message development
    • Use social science concepts to inform – i.e. “modeling the journey” on marriage equality