

# SONOMA COUNTY REGISTRAR OF VOTERS



## ELECTION ADMINISTRATION PLAN NOVEMBER 2021

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## **SECTION 1: VOTER EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PLAN**

### **I. OVERVIEW**

The California Voter's Choice Act (VCA) requires the County to develop a Voter Education and Outreach Plan that provides transparency and informs voters on all aspects of the VCA. This includes the services and information available at Vote Center and Ballot Drop Box locations, and information specific to voters with disabilities and language minority voters.

Public meetings will be held with community organizations and individuals that advocate on behalf of, or provide services to, the disability and language minority communities. The Sonoma County Registrar of Voters (ROV) will hold multiple public education workshops. All public events hosted by the County will be virtual, due to the continued threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, and will be Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible. Content and messaging of events will be developed with input from the LAAC and VAAC committees.

This plan will highlight ROV's outreach goals to be ready to utilize the VCA voting model for appropriate special elections in 2021, and going forward. A list of upcoming events is published on the [ROV website](#). For additional events, ideas for outreach opportunities, or recommendations to improve this Election Administration Plan, please email [rov-info@sonoma-county.org](mailto:rov-info@sonoma-county.org). This plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State's office for review and ultimate approval. However, feedback regarding this plan and future ROV efforts will be accepted at any time.

## II. VOTER & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

### A. 2022 Messaging

The ROV has established the following messaging points that will be prevalent in all outreach and education materials:

*2022 Special Elections (date(s) TBD)*

- Vote early to avoid the lines
- Postage is now paid on Vote by Mail ballot return envelopes
- Sign up to track your ballot at [wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov](https://wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov)
- Find the list of polling places, and the voting dates and times, as well as ballot drop-boxes on our website at [sonomacounty.ca.gov/vote](https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/vote)
- Check your registration status
- Use the accessible online Voter Information Guide (VIG) to review your materials and reference ballot

*June 7, 2022 Gubernatorial Primary Election:*

- Vote early to avoid the lines
- Postage is now paid on Vote by Mail ballot return envelopes
- The 2022 Gubernatorial Primary has been moved to June
- Sign up to track your ballot at [wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov](https://wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov)
- Find the list of polling places, and the voting dates and times, as well as ballot drop-boxes on our website at [sonomacounty.ca.gov/vote](https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/vote)
- Check your registration status
- Use the accessible online Voter Information Guide (VIG) to review your materials and reference ballot

*November 8, 2022 Consolidated Election:*

- Vote early to avoid the lines
- Postage is now paid on Vote by Mail ballot return envelopes
- Sign up to track your ballot at [wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov](https://wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov)
- Find the list of polling places, and the voting dates and times, as well as ballot drop-boxes on our website at [sonomacounty.ca.gov/vote](https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/vote)
- Check your registration status
- Use the accessible Voter Information Guide (VIG) to review your materials and reference ballot

These points will be disseminated through social media, partners, in our communication with the public, and on our flyers and informational handouts. The ROV will continue consistent efforts to ensure that the public is aware of how to register to vote and participate in upcoming elections, and services available at

Ballot Drop Box and Vote Center locations.

Additional messaging will be determined by the ROV after review of voter questions and calls, community meetings, and Vote Center Experience Survey results after the first VCA election is conducted.

The ROV will work in partnership with community organizations, government agencies, schools and other groups to raise awareness of the Vote Center model. This will be combined with a broad media campaign using direct mailings, news media, radio, social media, public access media, and public service announcements (PSA). The campaign will promote the toll-free voter assistance hotline, inform voters with disabilities how to obtain their ballot in an accessible format, and provide multilingual services to language minority voters.

The ROV will partner with community organizations to attend community events and provide education and outreach opportunities to voters.

A general timeline for the ROV's Communication Action Plan can be found in Appendix F.

## **B. Community Partners**

The ROV will provide information about the Vote Center model to community partners to assist in voter outreach. The ROV will attend community events, make presentations to organizations, and train interested individuals and groups to assist with education and outreach. A list of community partners can be found in Appendix A.

Community partners and the general public may assist in various ways such as:

- Sharing accurate, non-partisan election information on social media
- Posting election information and links to our website [sonomacounty.ca.gov/vote](https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/vote) in a community newsletter or website
- Placing flyers and handouts in offices or locations the public may frequent
- Assist in distributing information, materials and brochures, including the election specific messaging points
- Participating in virtual community outreach events. Participating in advisory meetings on messaging, concerns or common questions from the public
- Invite an election representative from The ROV to present non-partisan election information to clients, customers, members, or residents.

An online toolkit will be created and made available for download on the ROV website at [sonomacounty.ca.gov/vote](https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/vote). This toolkit will include graphics, flyers, brochures, and a VCA presentation. Printed materials may be provided to a group or organization free of charge. Please contact [rov-info@sonoma-county.org](mailto:rov-info@sonoma-county.org) for more details.

### **C. High Schools & Higher Education**

The ROV will perform outreach to local high schools upon request, to educate students about the election process. The ROV will continue to partner with local colleges throughout the County to provide information and resources about the election process, the Vote Center model, and upcoming elections through presentations, campus events, and registration drives.

### **D. Individual Voter Network**

Outreach and education activities are not limited to organizations. Individual voters may serve as part of a support network to inform the Sonoma County ROV of barriers to voting and help provide solutions to ensure widespread awareness of the Vote Center model. The ROV will provide Voter Experience Survey cards at Vote Centers to receive comments about voters' experiences. Survey questions include access to the Vote Center and use of language services among other questions.

Questions or comments from the public may be shared at any time by emailing [rov-info@sonoma-county.org](mailto:rov-info@sonoma-county.org).

### **E. Direct Voter Contacts**

ROV will mail two direct postcards to each registered Sonoma County voter to inform them about the changes under the VCA voting model. The general purpose of these direct contact postcards is to provide information on the upcoming election, the availability of the ROV's toll-free voter assistance hotline, and voting options.

- *First Postcard:* The first mailing will be sent approximately 55 days before each election, reminding voters to watch for their Vote by Mail ballot and to check their status and make sure they are registered correctly to ensure they get their ballot in the mail.
- *Second Postcard:* The second mailing will be sent approximately 22 days before the election to remind voters when Vote Centers open, options for returning their ballot, including a reminder to sign their envelope, and to vote early and avoid lines on Election Day.

All registered voters will receive an English postcard. If a voter wishes to receive materials in Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese or Khmer, they can contact our office to request the translated materials.

Draft Sample postcards are included in Appendix B.

### **F. Advisory Committees**

The ROV is establishing two committees to assist in the creation and implementation of the Election Administration Plan outreach and education efforts:

- Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC) goals, agendas, and

meeting minutes are located on the VAAC webpage.

- Language Accessibility Advisory Committee (LAAC) goals, agendas, and meeting minutes are located on the LAAC webpage.

These committees will assist with accessibility, language, and community needs and advise the ROV on various aspects of the Voter Education and Outreach Plan.

For more information on any of the committees, please email [rov-info@sonoma-county.org](mailto:rov-info@sonoma-county.org).

### **G. Public Service Announcements (PSAs) & Media**

The ROV will use PSAs in visual and audio formats to inform voters of the upcoming election and the toll-free voter assistance hotline. The PSAs will be distributed through television, radio, newspapers, and social media in order to reach all voters, including voters with disabilities and language minority voters. The LAAC, and VAAC will provide assistance with developing the PSA content. The PSAs will be provided to the outlets listed in Appendix C. A general timeline for PSAs and contact with other media outlets is located in Appendix F.

## **III. VOTER SERVICES**

### **A. Services for Limited English Proficient Voters**

Sonoma County currently has no requirement to provide translated election materials under The Voting Rights Act of 1965. However, state law requires the County to provide language assistance and translated copies of the official ballot in the following languages: Spanish, Vietnamese, Tagalog, and Khmer, in specific precincts.

#### *1. Identifying Language Minority Voters §4005(a)(10)(I)(i)(V)*

The ROV identifies voters' language preferences as indicated by the voter in the "Optional Voter Information" section on voter registration forms. Minority language voters may also email or call the ROV to provide their language preference. The ROV enters and stores this data in our EMS. Furthermore, the ROV receives information about language minority communities from the United States Census Bureau.

#### *2. Language Accessibility Advisory Committee*

The ROV has established the LAAC as a citizen advisory committee to make recommendations for improving language access to voting and election materials. The LAAC will be designed to advise and assist in meeting state mandated language requirements. The ROV will work with LAAC members and community partners to provide information to voters with language needs.

#### *3. Education Workshops*

As part of its outreach efforts, the ROV will continue its outreach to language minority voters. The ROV will work with LAAC members and community

partners to provide voters with language assistance at educational workshops. Workshops will be scheduled as needed. Invites to these workshops will be submitted via email to various people and organizations already contacted regarding potential membership in our LAAC and VAAC, on our FB page, and with assistance from our County Administrator's Office Communications Team. At these workshops the ROV will provide:

- Examples of translated facsimile ballots with voter instructions, also known as Ballot Translation Guides.
- Translated VCA materials in all state required languages for Sonoma County.

#### 4. *Media/Advertising*

Press releases distributed throughout Sonoma County will announce the toll-free voter assistance hotline which provides assistance in English. Press releases will also be distributed to various Spanish media outlets including Latino Service Providers, El Patron Radio, KBBF, Sonoma Media Investments and La Voz Newspaper. We will also have available a telephone interpreter service offered through the Secretary of State's Office that can provide translation in not only our State mandated languages of Spanish, Vietnamese, Tagalog and Khmer, but multiple other languages, as well. Additionally, media advertisements in Spanish, Vietnamese, Tagalog, and Khmer will be purchased to promote the telephone-based interpreter service, as available within the County. The full list of media partners is included in Appendix C.

#### 5. *Materials in Alternate Languages*

Every registered Sonoma County voter will be mailed a Vote by Mail (VBM) ballot beginning 29 days before Election Day. All official ballots are monolingual in English. A return envelope is provided in English. The County Voter Information Guide and Vote Center and Drop Box publications will all be in English.

Facsimile copies of official ballots, referred to as "Ballot Translation Guides" in Sonoma County, are translated into Spanish, Vietnamese, Tagalog, and Khmer. Under California Election Code 14201, facsimile ballots must be posted at Vote Centers in specified languages if it has been determined that 3% or more of the language minority group in or around that precinct have limited English proficiency. Facsimile ballots are mailed to voters that request a facsimile ballot in that respective language and live within the determined precincts. Voters outside of determined precincts may also contact the ROV to request a facsimile ballot to be mailed to them by emailing [rov-absentee@sonoma-county.org](mailto:rov-absentee@sonoma-county.org) or calling (707) 565-6800. In addition, the Ballot Translation Guides will be available at every Vote Center and additional copies can be requested and provided by Field Support Officers as needed.

Any voter may request a replacement ballot by telephone at (707) 565-6800 or

(800) 750-8683, by emailing a request to [rov-absentee@sonoma-county.org](mailto:rov-absentee@sonoma-county.org), by faxing a request to (707) 565-6843, by appearing at a Vote Center, at the ROV office, or through the online Remote Accessible Vote by Mail (RAVBM) system which is available in English.

6. *Bilingual Assistance at Vote Centers*

Under California Election Code 12303, a reasonable effort must be made to staff bilingual Election Officers at designated locations throughout Sonoma County where 3% or more of the voting age population have limited English proficiency. Each county in California has their own specific method for determining which precincts require a bilingual Election Officer. Voter file information such as birthplace, surname, and language preference is used to identify areas where bilingual assistance may be needed. Census and American Community Survey information, as it applies to Election Codes 14201 and 12303, is used to identify precincts that meet the 3% threshold.

- Advisory Groups: The ROV will consider feedback and suggestions on areas that may need additional language assistance from advisory groups such as Sonoma County's LAAC.
- Advocacy Groups: The ROV will consult with various community groups and organizations that advocate for language access throughout Sonoma County. We anticipate these groups will assist the ROV in defining the language minority populations in Sonoma County.

Vote Centers which require language assistance have been identified by the California Secretary of State through U.S. Census data. A list of language assistance available at each Vote Center will be printed in the County Voter Information Guide (CVIG) and available on the ROV website. Additional need for language assistance will be considered through the public input process, including input provided by the County's LAAC.

The ROV will endeavor to recruit at least one Spanish-speaking Election Officer for each Vote Center to provide language assistance. If a Vote Center is in, or adjacent to, a precinct with language requirements in Vietnamese, Tagalog or Khmer, the ROV will make every effort to recruit Election Officers fluent in that language. The ROV will also provide the Telephone Interpreter Service offered through the California Secretary of State which Election Officers can utilize to call in and speak with a live translator to assist in communicating with voters in many other languages, as well. The accessible ballot marking device only contains ballot content and audio in English.

**B. Voters with Disabilities**

The ROV is committed to working with voters with disabilities to increase accessibility in the democratic process. The ROV website provides general information about these efforts and the resources available to voters with disabilities, including the Remote Accessible Vote by Mail system, disability

services available at Vote Centers, and the availability of election materials in alternate format. Voters are encouraged to contact the ROV with specific requests for assistance by emailing [rov-info@sonoma-county.org](mailto:rov-info@sonoma-county.org). A full listing of accessible voting options and assistance is located on the [ROV website](#). The county also provides an accessible online Voter Information Guide which includes a reference ballot a voter with disabilities can access to review and print their sample ballot.

1. *Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee*

The ROV will be establishing the VAAC as a citizen advisory committee to make recommendations for improving access to voting and election materials while helping to identify and eliminate barriers. The VAAC is designed to advise and assist in ensuring all voters in Sonoma County can vote independently and privately. The ROV will work with VAAC members and community partners to provide information and alternative voting options to voters with disabilities.

2. *Education Workshops*

Workshops will feature a demonstration of the ROV's accessible voting options, including the Remote Accessible Vote by Mail (RAVBM) system and the accessible ballot marking device at the Vote Centers (Dominion's ICX). Workshops will be scheduled as needed. Advertising of these workshops will be done on social media, with assistance from the County Administrator's Office communications team, and through trusted community partners. At these workshops the ROV will provide:

- Remote Accessible Vote by Mail Application (for a link emailed to the voter)
- A demonstration of the RAVBM interface and audio
- A demonstration of the ICX Ballot Marking Device, with a mock ballot
- Discussion on availability of materials in alternate formats (large print, audio measures, accessible County Voter Information Guide, and availability of alternate formats for state election materials).

3. *Media/Advertising*

Press releases will be distributed throughout Sonoma County to announce the toll-free voter assistance hotline which provides assistance in English with the ability to connect voters with disabilities with TTY (Text Telephone), allowing voters who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-impaired to use the telephone to communicate with the ROV staff. Future press releases will state that the voter assistance hotline has TTY abilities.

Main print and online media outlets such as the Sonoma Media Investments (covers multiple print and online platforms throughout the County, including the Press Democrat), Kenwood Press, Bodega Bay Navigator, Bay Area News Group, Sonoma West Times as well as radio stations that cover the County such as Amaturo Sonoma Media Group, Sonoma Valley Communications and Redwood Empire Sterocasters will be utilized as much as possible for press

release distribution. Sonoma County has no dedicated TV news outlet, but will provide press releases to the TV media outlets that the County Communications Team typically works with including ABC7, KGO, KPIX, KRON, KSRO, KSVY and KTVU.

Printed materials, such as the second direct postcard will advise voters of accessible ballot options.

The ROV could use assistance and recommendations on how best to reach voters with disabilities. Please email [rov-info@sonoma-county.org](mailto:rov-info@sonoma-county.org) with media ideas.

4. *Materials in Alternate Formats*

Voters with disabilities have several accessible voting options. The ROV prepares a County Voter Information Guide (CVIG) for each election which contains information on the Vote by Mail process as well as instructions for using the RAVBM system. The CVIG is available in large-print, an online PDF, and a screen reader accessible option using the ROV Voter Look-up Tool, which includes access to a reference ballot. Measures are available in accessible format with a screen reader. Large-print CVIGs and audio measures can be requested by emailing [rov-info@sonoma-county.org](mailto:rov-info@sonoma-county.org) or calling the ROV at (707) 565- 6800.

A full list of how to access information in alternate formats is located on the [ROV website](#).

5. *Remote Accessible Vote by Mail (RAVBM)*

All counties are required to provide an accessible Vote by Mail option for voters with disabilities. This system allows for voters to access their correct ballot online and mark their choices using their own assistive technology. Once the ballot choices have been marked, the voter is required to print out the selections and return it by mail, or at a Ballot Drop Box, a Vote Center, or the ROV office. Information regarding the RAVBM process is available on the [ROV website](#).

A voter with a disability may request a vote by mail ballot in an accessible format by returning the postage-paid application on the back cover of the County Voter Information Guide.

Voters that choose to use this system must affirm they have a disability, must have an internet connection, and must have a printer to print out their ballot selections. As all voters receive a ballot in the mail, a voter using the RAVBM system may use the blue envelope they received in the mail to return the ballot, they may also download an envelope template from the RAVBM system, or they may pick-up a replacement envelope at any Vote Center or the ROV Office. The blue envelopes mailed to every voter have a space under the

envelope flap where the voter should sign.

All envelopes must be signed or marked with an identifying mark by the voter before the ballot is counted. If the envelope is not signed, or if the signature does not match what is on the voter file, the ROV will mail the voter a letter with instructions and the deadline for curing the situation.

To verify the ROV has received a ballot, a voter may visit the California Secretary of State's website and click [My Voter Status](#)

#### 6. *Vote Center Accessibility*

Vote Centers and Ballot Drop Box locations are selected using ADA guidelines from the Polling Place Accessibility Checklist. These checklists are used to identify accessible locations. If a barrier is found that may keep a person from entering a Vote Center or using a Ballot Drop Box, the ROV will make changes on or before Election Day by using additional equipment and signs. Any questions regarding physical access to a Vote Center or Ballot Drop Box location can be directed to the ROV Office by emailing [rov-info@sonoma-county.org](mailto:rov-info@sonoma-county.org) or calling (707) 565-6800.

All Vote Centers will have a least two accessible voting booths for a chair or wheelchair, magnifying glasses, and pen grips. There will be at least three accessible ballot marking devices that can accommodate a chair or wheelchair. At a Vote Center, any voter may utilize these accessible ballot marking devices to mark their ballot independently and privately. After checking in with the Election Officer, voters are provided with a Voter Access Card that populates the accessible device with their ballot. The ballot can be marked using the touch screen display, the provided audio tactile device with braille, or their own assistive technology. Key features include:

- A Touchscreen tablet, with the option to change text size and contrast on the tablet
- An Audio Tactile Interface (ATI) keypad with Braille
- Headphones and audio instructions in English
- A Privacy mask, for voters with low vision to ensure their votes are kept private as they use the audio instructions
- The ability for voters to use their own Paddle or Sip and Puff assistive device

This machine does not tabulate or count any votes. Upon completion of marking their ballot, the voter must print out their selections and place the printed ballot in the ballot box. No voter information is stored on any ballot marking device, ensuring all ballots are kept confidential and private.

Any voter who cannot physically access a Vote Center has the option to request curbside voting. Voters can either call the Vote Center at the number on the

call-box at the Vote Center, or have a passenger or friend enter the Vote Center and make the request. Vote Center staff will bring a replacement ballot to their vehicle. To request curbside voting at the ROV, voters may contact the ROV at [rov-info@sonoma-county.org](mailto:rov-info@sonoma-county.org) or calling (707) 565-6800. The ROV office, located at 435 Fiscal Drive, in Santa Rosa, will have an accessible ballot marking device available for use beginning 29 days before Election Day, as well as curbside voting options.

7. *Ballot Pick-up Options*

Every registered Sonoma County voter will be mailed a Vote by Mail (VBM) ballot no later than 29 days before Election Day. Any voter may request a replacement ballot by telephone at (707) 565-6800 or (800) 750-8683, by emailing a request to [rov-absentee@sonoma-county.org](mailto:rov-absentee@sonoma-county.org), by faxing a request to (707) 565-6843, by appearing at a Vote Center, or at the ROV office.

If a voter does not receive their Vote by Mail packet, they may call the office at (707) 565-6800 for a replacement packet, visit the ROV office, or visit any Vote Center when open. A voter's Vote by Mail packet may be picked up by a friend or relative if the voter completes an Emergency Authorization for Ballot Pick-up form that is available on the California Secretary of State's [website](#).

8. *Emergency Vote by Mail Ballots*

If in the final 7 days before Election Day a voter finds they are unable to vote in person due to illness or disability resulting from confinement to a hospital or nursing home, or if a voter is confined to their home, or otherwise absent from their voting precinct on Election Day, a voter may request an Emergency Vote by Mail Ballot. The voter must make request in writing, signed under penalty of perjury, authorizing a representative to pick up the voter's ballot, and return the ballot to the voter. The voter's authorized representative will receive the voter's ballot after presenting the signed statement to the Sonoma County Registrar of Voters Office at 435 Fiscal Drive in Santa Rosa, during normal business hours of 8a.m.-5p.m., Pacific Time.

The voter shall mark the ballot, place it in the identification envelope, fill out and sign the envelope and return the ballot, personally or through the authorized representative, to the Registrar of Voters Office or to any polling place or vote center within Sonoma County before the close of the polls.

Voters with questions about Emergency Vote by Mail Ballots, may contact our office at (707) 565-6800, or email [rov-absentee@sonoma-county.org](mailto:rov-absentee@sonoma-county.org).

#### **IV. ADDRESSING GAPS IN PARTICIPATION**

It is the goal of the ROV and the County of Sonoma to ensure equal access to the ballot box for all eligible citizens, as defined by law. The ROV makes every effort to attend events, offer presentations, and provide information in areas of historically low voter turnout, upon request. The ROV will provide election information to care homes, hospitals, the Sonoma County Mental Health Department, the Sonoma County Sheriff's Department, Military offices and Passport offices. Materials will be sent by email, and will include information about how to request voter registration forms, and other information, the link to our website to review our EAP, and our contact information should they or their clients have any questions.

##### **A. Registering to Vote**

Eligible Sonoma County residents may register to vote online directly at the Secretary of State's website: <https://registertovote.ca.gov/>, or access the state voter registration website through a link from the [ROV's website](#). Residents may also pick up a voter registration form at the ROV office, City Halls, libraries, post offices, and most government offices throughout the County. Sonoma County agencies serving low-income households and individuals with disabilities provide voter registration forms to their clients. The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and Secretary of State (SOS) have established a California Motor Voter Program as defined by AB 1461. During DMV transactions, this new program, will automatically register any person who is qualified to vote unless that person opts out of registration. The ROV will also mail a registration form upon request.

The ROV provides National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) resources and training to County agencies serving low-income residents and individuals with disabilities, upon request. The ROV will provide additional materials, information, and training on request to coordinators and staff at County agencies.

##### **B. Data Collection & Review**

Following each election conducted under the VCA, the ROV will review comments received from voters and will solicit input from the LAAC, VAAC, and community partners on data collected in compliance with California Election Code 4005. The ROV will make reasonable efforts to address significant disparities identified on an item by item basis.

In order to address identified gaps in voter participation, the ROV is committed to:

- Recruiting and surveying potential locations in the community that can host an accessible Vote Center
- Meet with the agencies that provide services to the community, including but not limited to Becoming Independent, Disability Services and Legal Center, Council on Aging, YM/YWCA to provide voter information, voter registration forms, and flyers/posters for the 2022 elections

- Conduct a registration drive prior to each election

Additionally, the ROV will work to identify different areas in Sonoma County where the voter participation turnout is below the average for the County. This data will be used by the ROV to increase the level of advertising in specific areas, as well as other community hubs to help advertise and disseminate election information.

## **V. BUDGET**

The VCA requires extensive voter education and outreach about the Vote Center model voting process. The ROV's goal is to increase voter registration, participation, and turnout.

The ROV provides in-house support for the preparation of outreach materials, public presentations and community outreach events. The budget has not included the purchase of advertisements in television, radio, newspapers, and social media in the past, but will need to be included for outreach regarding the transition to VCA. There will be printing and postage costs for direct mailings to registered voters.

The budget information for education and outreach can be found in Appendix D. If additional money is provided for voter education and outreach efforts, the Appendix will be updated to reflect any changes or additions.

Sonoma County utilized a VCA-like voting model for the November, 2020 Presidential Election, due to legislation enacted specific to that election. This allowed the ROV to utilize a grant to purchase Mobile Ballot Printers (MBPs), transport carts for them, label printers for use in creating the completed combined roster of voters, and Cradlepoint routers that are isolated from the internet to ensure connectivity to the voter database to cover 30 Vote Centers. For the voter check-in or roster laptops, the ROV utilized laptops already purchased for the Assessor's DMP which were loaned to us for the November 2020 Election. The ROV will need to purchase 70-80 new laptops for the voter check-ins going forward, which will be dedicated to the ROV. The ROV will also need to purchase equipment for at least one more Vote Center, due to increased registration, and back-up equipment to ensure replacement equipment can be deployed as needed, if any equipment would fail during any election. The ROV estimates there will be no cost savings moving to the VCA model due to anticipated cost of outreach, mailings, Vote Center support and overtime for temporary employees instead of Poll Worker stipends, IT support and connectivity for Vote Centers, and temporary staff to service Ballot Drop Boxes.

## **SECTION 2: ELECTION ADMINISTRATION PLAN**

### **I. OVERVIEW**

The California Voter's Choice Act (VCA) requires a County to submit an Election Administration Plan (EAP) to the public that conveys how the Sonoma County ROV will administer elections under the VCA.

Sonoma County was able to utilize a VCA-like voting model for conducting the 2020 November Presidential Election, and had the highest turnout in the State. We were able to provide voters convenience and offer safe voting during the pandemic by mailing every voter a ballot which they had the option of using and returning, or instead voting in-person, if that was their preference. Rather than being tied to a specific polling place, the VCA-like model offered voters the ability to choose the polling place most convenient to them, and also provided extra days of voting prior to Election Day, to ensure plenty of opportunity for voters to cast their ballot. Voting in-person was still popular on Election Day throughout the County, where 30 Vote Centers had plentiful staff to assist voters and ensure a safe voting experience; few locations had lines or long delays on Election Day. The ROV's main office utilized the QLess system to allow voters to get "in line" electronically, and allowed them to wait in their vehicle until their number was called, and they came into the ROV Office for assistance. This allowed for safe voting and ensured proper social distancing for those waiting for assistance. The ROV is making continuous improvements to process the large number of returned Vote by Mail ballots and to the in-person voting experience.

This plan will outline the events that take place to administer an election under the VCA.

Questions or Concerns:

ROV main office (707) 565-6800

Toll-free (800) 750-8683

[Rov-info@sonoma-county.org](mailto:Rov-info@sonoma-county.org)

### **II. PRE-ELECTION ACTIVITIES**

#### **A. 2020 Election Review**

Various methods of data collection were done during the 2020 implementation of the VCA-like voting model for the November 2020 Election in Sonoma County to help the ROV improve the voting experience for future elections. These methods will also be used during future election cycles.

##### *1. CRA-IT*

The CRA-IT hired temporary field technicians through Nelson Technology and AppleOne to visit the Vote Centers during all days of voting to troubleshoot problems, and provide feedback to the ROV office of equipment that might

need to be secured and deployed to locations to ensure locations could provide the most efficient voter experience as possible. ROV learned that some polling locations had high volume, and suggested deployment of additional roster laptops and Mobile Ballot Printers, to address the issue. These roving technicians also addressed technical issues when poll workers improperly set up equipment, and were able to resolve the issue and inform the poll workers of proper setup for remaining days of voting.

## 2. *VCA Model Experience Survey*

A survey was created for poll workers, field support and IT support to let the ROV know about their experience utilizing the VCA-like voting model. The survey consisted of questions related to poll worker training, polling place instructional material, supplies provided, and overall satisfaction levels with the Vote Center model or specific location, and Vote Center staff. The surveys will be used by the ROV to improve Vote Center Staff training, and pinpoint specific issues related to each Vote Center location, like parking concerns, and equipment issues. This will assist in preparing for future Elections.

## **B. Advisory Bodies**

Once the Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC) and the Language Accessibility Advisory Committee (LAAC) are established, the ROV will hold at minimum quarterly meetings of each committee to discuss general election topics, such as official election materials, education and outreach efforts, cybersecurity concerns, and questions or concerns from the general public. This committee will provide feedback about ways to improve the VCA model in Sonoma County, suggest website improvements, and provide valuable feedback for outreach materials. These advisory committees will continue to meet regularly during the future election cycles and will include members of the public, advocates, and community based organizations. Anyone who wishes to participate will need to complete and submit an application to join.

## **C. Vote Center & Ballot Drop Box Projection**

Election Code 4005 (Voter's Choice Act) requires that the number of Vote Centers and Ballot Drop Boxes be based on voter registration totals for the County 88 days before the Election. In order to ensure an adequate selection of Vote Centers and Ballot Drop boxes, surveys of potential locations were conducted in the summer and fall of 2020, and 30 facility confirmations were received. The ROV anticipates the transition to VCA will assist with securing long-term Vote Center locations.

Increases in voter registration partly due to automatic voter registration through the DMV will need to be monitored, to ensure we increase Vote Center locations and ballot drop-boxes, when the registration numbers meet certain thresholds. At the current registration of over 303,000, the requirements are:

- 31 Vote Center locations (1 per every 10,000 registered voters)
- 21 Ballot Drop Box locations (1 per every 15,000 registered voters)

Election Code 4005 also requires counties to consider certain criteria when locating Vote Centers for the community.

The criteria to consider are:

- Vote center and ballot drop-box location proximity to public transportation.
- Vote center and ballot drop-box location proximity to communities with historically low vote by mail usage.
- Vote center and ballot drop-box location proximity to population centers.
- Vote center and ballot drop-box location proximity to language minority communities.
- Vote center and ballot drop-box location proximity to voters with disabilities.
- Vote center and ballot drop-box location proximity to communities with low rates of household vehicle ownership.
- Vote center and ballot drop-box location proximity to low-income communities.
- Vote center and ballot drop-box location proximity to communities of eligible voters who are not registered to vote and may need access to same day voter registration.
- Vote center and ballot drop-box location proximity to geographically isolated populations, including Native American reservations.
- Access to accessible and free parking at vote centers and ballot drop-box locations.
- The distance and time a voter must travel by car or public transportation to a vote center and ballot drop-box location.
- The need for alternate methods for voters with disabilities for whom vote by mail ballots are not accessible to cast a ballot.
- Traffic patterns near vote centers and ballot drop-box locations.
- The need for mobile vote centers in addition to the number of vote centers established.
- Vote center location on a public or private university or college campus.

Prior to the November 2020 election, the ROV did an analysis on the VCA criteria with the County GIS and created a VCA criteria layering map. The ROV utilized the data to reach out to potential locations to request their participation as a Vote Center, and to do wi-fi connectivity testing to ensure locations could utilize the electronic roster solution to 1) provide the correct ballot for every voter, regardless of the Vote Center they chose to visit, and 2) ensure the poll workers could determine if the voter had already returned a VBM ballot to our office, or had already voted at another Vote Center during the voting period. This same data was reviewed to determine for the most convenient Ballot Drop Box locations.

A complete list of Vote Center minimum requirements and evaluation information is located in Appendix G. A complete list of Ballot Drop Box minimum requirements and evaluation information is located in Appendix H.

#### **D. Equipment & Security**

To ensure all locations have enough voting equipment, the ROV had backup equipment available to deploy via Field Support Officer (FSO) delivery, or Clerk-Recorder Assessor IT (CRA-IT) field tech delivery. The CRA-IT field techs or FSOs reported to the ROV if a location needed additional laptop rosters, or Mobile Ballot Printers, so they could quickly be deployed as needed.

In addition to ensuring there is adequate equipment, there is also the need to ensure all equipment is secured. The ROV requested feedback from and reviewed the EAPs of other VCA Counties to see what they learned and what practices they put in place. The ROV makes continuous updates to all software and equipment as allowed by state law, and at the direction and assistance from our Elections System vendor, Dominion. In addition, more security cameras have been installed in areas of ballot processing. Preventative maintenance has also been performed on voting equipment in accordance with the equipment use procedures.

The preparation of the voting equipment is conducted by the ROV Department Information Systems Coordinator, the Department Information Specialist Technician, the Lead Storekeeper aka Warehouse Manager, and Extra Help staff. The delivery of equipment is coordinated between the ROV Chief Deputy, the Lead Storekeeper, and a drayage company, who will be contracted to securely deliver voting equipment and materials to the Vote Centers for the ROV.

The delivery of voting equipment and supplies is arranged between the drayage company, and the Vote Center location, and in time for the early voting to open, which happens 10 or 3 days before Election Day.

The equipment is stored at the Vote Center location in an area prearranged between the drayage company and the Vote Center location, and all equipment has serialized locks on all material bags, carts, or containers, that are recorded and checked against the security log for the polling place by the poll worker who opens the polls on the first day of early voting.

All equipment is secured by the poll workers with new serialized and assigned locks between days of voting, and confirmed present and secure at the opening of the polls on the subsequent days of voting.

#### **E. Outreach & Education**

The ROV will continue education and outreach to different communities regarding voting options under the VCA. This plan can be found on pages 4 and 5 of this document.

### **III. ELECTION ACTIVITIES & SUPPORT**

#### **A. Logic & Accuracy Testing**

All equipment will be configured by the ROV Department Information Services Coordinator, the Department Information Specialist Technician, the Lead Storekeeper, and Extra Help staff for each election, after the certified list of candidates is received from the Secretary of State (for Statewide elections), and the list of candidates has been prepared by ROV staff for local elections. Logic & Accuracy testing will be done in accordance with state law for all voting equipment, including the ballot printers, accessible ballot marking devices, and tabulators. A media release will be sent prior to the start of Logic & Accuracy Testing. This process is open to the public.

#### **B. Election Materials & Resources**

##### *1. County Voter Information Guide*

The ROV's County Voter Information Guide (CVIG) will contain sample ballot images for each voter's specific ballot type for each election. This guide will also have detailed information on the Vote by Mail process and options for requesting a replacement VBM ballot and for returning a VBM ballot, including a full list of Vote Center and Ballot Drop Box locations. The Guide is available in both large-print and on-line formats.

An accessible County Voter Information Guide is available on the ROV's website starting 45 days before Election Day. To access the State Voter Information Guide that contains information on state-wide candidates and propositions, visit <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/>.

##### *2. Vote by Mail Ballot Packet*

Every registered voter in Sonoma County will receive a Vote by Mail packet in the mail. This packet will include the voter's official ballot, voting instructions, a blue ballot return envelope, a list of all Ballot Drop Box and Vote Center locations, and an "I Voted" sticker. Election materials, like official ballots, are not forwarded by the US Postal Service (Election Code 3008(b)). They are returned to the ROV for processing.

##### *3. Voter Postcards*

All registered voters will receive two postcards informing voters of the upcoming election and contact information. The first postcard will be mailed to voters before the County Voter Information Guides, and the second postcard will be mailed to voters before the 11 Day Vote Centers open.

##### *4. ROV Website*

Beginning 29 days before Election Day, the ROV website will be updated with the following information:

- a. [Voter Lookup Tool](#) that allows any Sonoma County voter to:

- Verify their voter registration information
  - Verify their voted ballot has been received by Sonoma County
  - Find the nearest Vote Center to their residence
  - Access their County Voter Information Guide and
- b. Vote Center and Ballot Drop Box locations sorted by City, with hours of operations, and directions to any location through Google Maps.
  - c. Interactive Election Results
  - d. Online toolkit for outreach materials and publications relating to the Voter's Choice Act
  - e. Information on [Accessible Voting Options](#), including information on what is available at a Vote Center, Curbside Voting, Accessible Vote by Mail, and Materials in Accessible Formats.

## C. Voting Options & Ballot Access

### 1. *Vote by Mail*

Voters may choose to vote their official ballot that arrives in their Vote by Mail packet starting 29 days before Election Day. They may return the ballot through the mail, at any Ballot Drop Box starting 29 days before Election Day or at any Vote Center. Replacement ballots are available at the ROV office and any Vote Center.

If a voter does not receive their Vote by Mail packet, they may call the office at (707) 565-6800, or toll free at (800) 750-8683 to request a replacement packet, or visit the ROV office. A voter's Vote by Mail packet may be picked up at the ROV office by a friend or relative if the voter completes an Emergency Authorization for Ballot Pick-up form that is available on the California Secretary of State's [website](#).

Vote by Mail ballots may be returned by mail (postage paid), at any Vote Center, or any Ballot Drop Box until 8:00 p.m. Election Day. If a voter forgets to sign their return Vote by Mail ballot, or if their signature they provided on the return envelope does not match their voter file, the ROV will mail the voter a letter which includes instructions on how to correct the issue, and the deadline to cure the situation. Eligible ballots postmarked on or before Election Day and received in the ROV office within the allowed legal time-frame after the day of the election, will be counted and added to the official results.

Vote Centers are open from 9:00a.m. to 5:00p.m. during all days of early voting. Voters may verify voting hours and locations prior to visiting by reviewing their County Voter Information Guide, Vote by Mail packet, calling (707) 565-6800, or on the ROV's website. All Vote Centers are open 7:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. on Election Day. All Ballot Drop Box locations are opened 28 days before each election, are open 24-hours leading up to Election Day, and are locked at 8p.m. on Election Day.

Once ballots are returned to the ROV office, signature checking of the official ballots will begin, as early as 28 days before Election Day. Every returned Vote by Mail ballot is signature checked against the voter's signature on their voter registration and any supporting documents. The Vote by Mail ballot does not continue to be extracted or processed until the ROV deems the signature is a match. All challenged Vote by Mail ballots, such as mismatched signature, require Management review. If the voter has not provided their signature, or if their signature does not match, the voter will be contacted by mail to correct the issue prior to certification of the election.

## 2. *Accessible Vote by Mail*

Voters with disabilities may access the online Remote Accessible Vote by Mail (RAVBM) ballot marking program by completing the application on the [ROV website](#) or by completing the application on the back of the County Voter Information Guide. Once voters complete and submit an application, the ROV will send the voter information file to Dominion Voting System who hosts the ROV RAVBM platform, and the voter will receive an email instructing the voter how to proceed. Voters will then be directed in the email how to obtain their ballot packet, based on their residential address, and can navigate the electronic ballot using a keyboard, mouse, touchscreen, or their own assistive devices. Once a voter has completed marking their ballot, they will have an option to review their choices. Once their choices are final, the voter must print out the ballot and send it in using their blue return envelope that was mailed to them, a replacement envelope that is available at the ROV Office, or at any Vote Center, or a printable envelope template available online, included in the instructions.

## 3. *Vote Centers*

Any eligible resident of Sonoma County may visit any Vote Center starting 10 days before Election Day to:

- Vote in-person
- Pick-up a replacement ballot for themselves or someone else (additional authorization pick-up form required and available at the ROV Office, or can be emailed to the voter, or signed statement from the voter) The official replacement ballot is printed using a Mobile Ballot Printer, certified by the Secretary of State.
- Drop off voted VBM ballot
- Use accessible ballot marking device called ImageCast X (ICX), that includes a touch screen, braille keypad, audio in English, and input for use of assistive technology device such as paddles or sip and puffs (voter must provide own assistive technology).
- Receive assistance in languages other than English
- Register to vote for the first time, or update a voter registration using Conditional Voter Registration (CVR). All voted CVR ballots are placed in the pink ballot envelope to be processed at the ROV office during the canvass period.

Voters are able to visit any location to obtain their correct ballot type. Vote Centers are all open a minimum of 8 hours per day during early voting, from 9:00a.m. to 5:00p.m., and all Vote Centers are open 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Election Day.

Voters are checked-in by the poll workers through a secured portal to access the voter file. If a voter has already returned a ballot (signature checked as “good”), they will be unable to obtain a replacement ballot. If a ballot has not been returned, or returned as “challenged”, a voter may obtain a replacement ballot, which would then void any other ballot that was issued to that voter. Once a ballot is returned by any means, in person or the use of their Vote by Mail ballot, any other ballot is automatically voided.

Most voters will not have to provide identification when they vote in-person. Please visit the [Secretary of State’s website](#) for more information, including a list of acceptable identification.

All voting conducted at Vote Centers follows the Secretary of State's security standards, the ROV's security procedures, and regulations in the California Elections Code and the California Voting System Use Procedures. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring all equipment at the Vote Center is sealed, stored, delivered and used in compliance with these regulations. In addition, our current procedures require the majority of the election workers be present when the site is open.

All voted ballots are returned nightly to the ROV office, along with roster sheets that contain voter signatures and spoiled ballots. Blank ballot paper is stored securely overnight at the Vote Center.

All tabulation is done at the ROV office. There are no tabulators at any Vote Centers. All voters must cast a printed, paper ballot.

Under California voting system requirements, all certified equipment must run on battery power in the event of a power outage. All locations will have a cell phone. Law Enforcement will receive a list of all Vote Center locations. Each Vote Center will be provided with emergency procedures and be provided with an instruction manual for the operation of a Vote Center and processing voters.

The ROV will immediately work to resolve any disruption at a Vote Center, and each disruption will have its own response. Generally, if a single Vote Center is disrupted, the ROV will immediately have the staff redirect voters to other Vote Centers, and will inform local police, the Secretary of State’s office, and provide media updates to ensure voters are informed. If there is a natural disaster or other disturbance occurs that affects a Vote Center or Ballot Drop Box site’s physical location, additional notifications, signage and staff will be

available to direct voters to an alternate location. Should all activities at a Vote Center be ceased, staff will immediately secure that Vote Center's voting equipment and account for all voting materials in accordance with California Election Code and the Ballot Manufacturing and Finishing guidelines. The ROV will attempt to open a replacement Vote Center and use all resources appropriate to make public notice of the change.

If any equipment is stolen or appears to have been tampered with at any Vote Center, replacement equipment will be deployed. Stolen equipment would be a financial loss to Sonoma County but would not jeopardize the integrity of the election. No voter information is left on any check-in laptops and multi-factor authentication is required to make any changes to the accessible ballot marking device or the mobile ballot printer.

Layout guidelines will be used to ensure voting booths and accessible ballot marking devices are placed in a manner that allows a voter to mark their ballot independently and privately. Layouts will be sensitive to accessibility needs of voters, and will be adjusted to accommodate the varying shapes and room sizes of each location. A sample layout can be found in Appendix E.

The ROV has evaluated the need of Mobile Vote Centers, and in the event of a natural disaster such as a fire or flood, would work with Emergency Management to secure tents, if necessary. The ROV has purchased through a grant, backup generators that can power a temporary or emergency Vote Center location, if necessary. The ROV will continue to support the return of Vote by Mail ballots, drop boxes, technical support, triage Vote Center challenges, and provide customer service in-office during each election.

A list of confirmed Vote Center locations with hours of operation may be found in Appendix G. Vote Center maps may be located in Appendix I.

More information on the ROV and Vote Center security can be found in the Election Security and Action Plan (to be drafted once locations have been secured).

#### *4. Ballot Drop Boxes*

Any voter throughout the state may drop off their voted ballot at any Ballot Drop Box location in the state during their published hours of operation. Replacement ballots are not available at Ballot Drop Boxes. Voters are only able to return ballots to these locations during the locations hours of operations, as published in the County Voter Information Guide, Vote by Mail packet, and on the ROV website. A 24 hour drive-thru ballot box is available at the ROV's office at 435 Fiscal Drive, in Santa Rosa.

A list of confirmed Ballot Drop Box locations with hours of operation may be found in Appendix H. Ballot Drop Box maps may be located in Appendix I.

#### **D. Vote Center Staff (Poll Worker) Training**

All staff, including those working at Vote Centers, and those providing technical and compliance support, will attend training on the operation of the voting equipment, setting up a Vote Center, assisting and processing voters, securing sensitive equipment each voting night, and the proper procedures in case of an emergency.

The ROV conducted training online to poll workers for the November 2020 election, as well as for the March 2, 2021 special election, and found the online training a successful tool for training poll workers, and may consider conducting the bulk of training online in future elections.

### **IV. POST-ELECTION ACTIVITIES – Public may observe any election process**

#### **A. Canvass – Vote by Mail**

The ROV will begin processing returned Vote by Mail ballots, which includes the extraction and review of the official ballot from the Vote by Mail envelope, and duplicating damaged ballots, as necessary, as soon as allowable by law. Ballots returned and validated before the Friday prior to Election Day are included in the initial election night results released shortly after 8:00 pm.

Each returned Vote by Mail ballot envelope is processed through a mail sorter which starts the signature verification process. This process takes a picture of the envelope, with the voter's signature for staff to compare the envelope signature to the signature on a voter's registration or other supporting documentation. If a voter forgets to sign their return envelope or a signature does not match a voter file, a letter and form are sent to the voter requesting an updated signature.

Once a signature is deemed valid, the voter's status is updated and available on the [Vote by Mail Ballot Lookup](#). The ballot envelopes are then taken to the on site warehouse where staff extract the ballots from the identification envelopes using an automated process, maximizing voter privacy. After extraction, ballots are moved to the processing room where teams review the ballots for damage and prepare them for tabulation. Damaged ballots that will not run through the tabulators are reproduced by teams of two. They are marked sequentially as "duplicate ballot #X" and "original ballot #X" and maintained with the other election materials for the required retention period.

After processing, ballot cards are then sent through the tabulators. Scanned images of the ballot may be sent to adjudication where teams of two people analyze the ballot images to determine voter intent by reviewing ambiguous marks, ovals not filled properly, mistakes, and write-ins. Any qualified write-in candidates are entered into the adjudication program prior to the start of ballot processing/adjudication and will reflect in a drop-down box for selection of the appropriate candidate by the adjudication team. If there is a question on a

particular ballot that requires a higher review level, the adjudication team will “quarantine” the ballot. Quarantined ballots are then reviewed by the Department Information Systems Coordinator for final decision.

After tabulation, the paper ballots are stored in a secured room under 24 hour surveillance cameras and may be reviewed at any time during the certification or recount period.

*The ROV works diligently to protect the integrity of the voting process while ensuring accuracy and voter privacy. It takes time to ensure every eligible citizen casts one ballot per election; results are updated periodically throughout the canvass period. Voters may check their ballot status on the [My Voter Status Lookup](#) webpage or sign up for ballot tracking at [wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov](#).*

## **B. Canvass - Vote Centers**

Each night, Vote Center staff will return designated materials to their assigned Receiving Center. Receiving Center staff will collect materials from the poll workers, and ensure that everything is accounted for. Receiving Center staff will then return materials from their assigned Vote Centers to the ROV Office. All blue-labeled bags that contain returned Vote by Mail ballots, the A-box that contains in-person ballots, the pink-labeled bag that contains Conditional Voter Registration and Provisional ballots (pink envelopes), the yellow-labeled bag that contains spoiled ballots and surrendered VBM ballots, and the white-labeled bag that contains all daily rosters, supplemental rosters and curbside voting rosters and any completed voter registration cards are checked in by ROV staff, and recorded as accounted for. Any bag that is missing will be reported to the Lead Storekeeper. Included with the Vote Center voted ballots in the A box is a completed Certificate of Packaging and Sealing to verify chain of custody. No voter’s personal information is left at the Vote Centers overnight.

Each Night, the ROV will process all in-person ballots from the Vote Centers. If a Vote Center should report that their regular in-person ballot box is getting overly full, a Field Support Officer will deliver an extra ballot box and serialized lock to the Vote Center, to ensure all in-person voted ballots are secure.

Conditional Voter Registration ballots and provisional ballots voted at a Vote Center or the ROV office are initially processed by confirming a voter’s eligibility. Once confirmed, the voter’s registration is updated, the ballot is extracted, processed and tabulated like all other ballots. These ballots are included in the final official results.

## **C. 1% Manual Tally**

To ensure that the ballot scanners are tabulating correctly, the ROV conducts a manual tally on 1% of all voting precincts in Sonoma County. Precincts are selected randomly the day after Election Day. The manual tally is conducted for

both Vote by Mail and Vote Center ballots tabulated through Election Day. The ROV is also researching the process and feasibility of utilizing risk limiting audits as a future option, instead of the 1% Manual Tally.