

Vote Wise Nebraska Voter Guide Program Full Evaluation

1. Program Overview

In Spring 2024, our organization implemented a pilot voter guide program to test the effectiveness of a nonpartisan, comprehensive guide in improving voter awareness, confidence, and participation. From a pool of 99,830 registered voters in Lincoln, Nebraska, we randomly selected 20,000 voters to receive the printed guide. Of those, 4,150 were selected to receive a follow-up survey to assess the program's impact.

Our goals were threefold:

1. To equip voters with clear, nonpartisan information on candidates, ballot measures, and voting logistics.
 2. To test and refine our outreach, printing, and survey methodology.
 3. To evaluate the scalability of this model for broader county- or statewide use.
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2. Survey & Analysis

We received 248 completed surveys (a strong response rate for a physical mail survey), which we weighted using R to correct for nonresponse and sampling bias. The final results closely reflect the demographics of the full 99,830-voter population by age and political party. Gender and race/ethnicity were self-reported.

Key Findings:

- **Usefulness:**
 - 51% rated the guide as *extremely helpful*
 - 35% rated it *somewhat helpful*
- **Engagement:**
 - 78% read *most or all* of the guide
 - 87% used the guide to prepare for voting
- **Accessibility & Quality:**
 - 69% found the guide *very easy to understand*

- 87% received it *before the election*
 - 87% would *recommend it* to others
 - Only 4% found parts of the guide confusing
- **Content Usefulness:**
 - 82% valued the candidate section
 - 77% found the ballot measure content useful
 - 73% found the voting process overview helpful
- **Overall Satisfaction:**
 - 79% said the guide met or exceeded expectations

This feedback confirms that voters across age, gender, and political affiliation appreciated and utilized the guide.

3. Objectives & Outcomes

What We Set Out to Improve (and How We Performed):

- **Proofreading & Fact-Checking:**

We had hoped to fund professional proofreading and fact-checking. While we were unable to secure proofreading services, we did successfully partner with the election commission for fact-checking, which enhanced the accuracy of ballot and voting information.
 - **Candidate & Party Statements:**

We collected more candidate statements than ever before, despite a compressed election timeline. We are now evaluating the removal of political party statements in future guides to streamline content.
 - **Survey Execution & Analysis:**

Our partnerships with printers and postal services allowed us to improve logistics dramatically. We were also able to carry out a professionally designed survey with weighted data analysis, albeit through a private researcher instead of our preferred partner (Bureau of Sociological Research at UNL).
 - **Financial Planning & Cost Modeling:**

We scaled up beyond our original scope, allowing us to gather more robust cost data. We now better understand how unit prices shift with scale and will use this to guide future budgeting and pricing negotiations.
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4. Lessons Learned & Improvements Needed

A. Funding Shortfall

We were approximately \$4,000 short of our initial fundraising goal, limiting our ability to contract with preferred research and proofreading partners. This underscores the importance of building new grant relationships for future growth.

B. Judicial Candidate Profiles

Many respondents expressed interest in learning more about judicial candidates. We were advised by an Assistant Attorney General to pursue inclusion of the Nebraska Bar Association's judicial poll data, pending consent. We intend to follow through on that recommendation in future editions.

C. Survey Scope and Content

Our 4,150-person survey was informative, but we hope to expand to 6,000–8,000 surveyed voters in future guides to increase statistical significance and include more in-depth commentary and suggestion data.

D. Research & Data Validation

We originally planned to partner with the Bureau of Sociological Research at UNL, but budget constraints made this impossible. While our independent analyst provided a robust weighted analysis, we hope to raise sufficient funds in the future to contract professional research institutions for design, analysis, and reporting.

5. Sustainable Practices to Retain

Based on survey results and internal evaluation, we intend to keep the following practices in future programs:

- **Guide Layout & Design:** Highly rated by users; will remain largely unchanged.
- **Content Approach:** Candidate statements will remain short and factual; official information will be sourced for all ballot content and election process sections.
- **Survey Logistics:** We now have strong relationships with mail providers, printers, and the USPS, giving us the ability to quickly execute future survey mailings.
- **Production & Vendor Relations:** Our current printer/distributor has performed well, though we are exploring Omaha-based options to reduce freight costs.

6. Future Plans & Funding Needs

Our next major initiative is to conduct a full **Lancaster County-wide voter guide program**, which would involve mailing guides to every registered voter in the county.

Estimated Costs:

- **Printing & Mailing (County-Wide):** \$75,000
(Excludes freight and post-election survey)
- **Survey Expansion:** \$8,000–\$12,000 (including postage, design, data entry, analysis)
- **Proofreading & Fact-Checking:** \$2,000–\$3,500
- **Judicial Data Integration:** TBD (pending Bar Association collaboration)

We anticipate significant **unit cost reductions** if we reach scale:

- **50,000+ copies:** Reduced unit shipping costs
- **100,000+ copies:** Substantial savings on printing and materials

7. Conclusion

This program proved that voters are eager to receive clear, trustworthy, and nonpartisan election information through printed voter guides. With strong engagement, proven usefulness, and meaningful survey data, we are confident that this model is both scalable and impactful.

Continued and growing support would help us meet our next benchmarks—expanding reach, increasing rigor, and improving the information environment for Nebraska voters.