Broadening Our Thinking: going beyond voting systems & including our UOCAVA voters

Federal Voting Assistance Program

Technical Guidance Development Committee (TGDC)
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FVAP’s renewed focus

“Deciding what not to do is as important as deciding what to do.”

- Steve Jobs
The electronic voting demonstration project was repealed.

FVAP returned to its focused on providing customer service for UOCAVA voters.

UOCAVA blank ballot delivery systems remain a means to an end for compliance.

While we see progress, we see challenges as well in serving the unique characteristics of the UOCAVA population.
Challenges

- Mobility
- Complexity
- Disconnected from Voting Community
- Communication

DELIVER THE “WOW” PHILOSOPHY
Challenges

- Mobility
- Complexity
- Disconnected from Voting Community
- Communication
FVAP facing challenges in a new way

- Look to the Data
- New Outreach Efforts
- Cooperative Solutions:
  - Council of State Governments
    - PCEA Report
    - Technology
  - EAC/FVAP Survey
  - EAC/FVAP/MPSA/USPS Mail Emphasis
Personas

- Effective way to translate research data

- Based on data analyses using:
  - 2012 Post-Election Survey of Active Duty Military (ADM)
  - 2012 Post-Election Survey of Spouses of ADM
  - Survey of Overseas Citizens
  - Google Analytics for FVAP.gov
  - 2014 Status of Forces Survey of ADM (SOFS-A)
Persona 1: George, Older Overseas Citizen Voter

- Media Use and Behavior:
  - Uses email, does some online shopping, not generally tech-savvy, uses personal computer

- FVAP User Behavior:
  - Likely to visit website directly based on voting experience

- Voting Experience:
  - Registration Likelihood: HIGH
  - Ballot Return Likelihood: HIGH
  - Feels voting is an opportunity to express American pride and maintain connection to U.S.
  - Main sources of voting info: State and LEOs, other ex-pats

- Challenges:
  - Assumes FVAP is for military voters and is unaware of services available for overseas civilians
  - Sends and receives voting materials in paper form and is not aware of online registration and ballot delivery options

- Needs:
  - A convenient, centralized one-stop shop for current voting information, deadlines, forms
  - Timely reminders of registration, ballot request and ballot return deadlines
  - Feedback from LEO about the status of his registration, ballot request and returned ballot
Persona 2: Andrea, Unaware Overseas Citizen Voter

- **Media Use and Behavior:**
  - Tech-savvy and heavy social media user; accesses Internet on her cell phone and personal laptop

- **FVAP User Behavior:**
  - Likely to be referred from another source (Dept of State); likely to use online assistant to complete FPCA

- **Voting Experience:**
  - Registration Likelihood: LOW
  - Ballot Return Likelihood: LOW
  - Voted in U.S. no experience with absentee; perceives voting as a way to stay connected
  - Main sources of voting info: family and friends, other ex-pats

- **Challenges:**
  - Unaware of right to vote from overseas; unfamiliar with process; unlikely to seek out information independently
  - Confusion about what State she should vote in; might decide not to participate if she feels process is hard or overwhelming

- **Needs:**
  - Detailed info about right to vote and process
  - Information about voting assistance resources
  - Help identifying her State and its requirements
  - Timely reminders of registration, ballot request and ballot return deadlines
Persona 3: Johnny, Young ADM Voter

- Media Use and Behavior:
  - Tech-savvy and heavy social media user; accesses Internet on his cell phone

- FVAP User Behavior:
  - Likely to directly visit FVAP.gov based on word of mouth and VAO outreach

- Voting Experience:
  - Registration Likelihood: MODERATE
  - Ballot Return Likelihood: LOW
  - First-time voter with no experience or knowledge of absentee process; views voting as important right but ambivalent about participating
  - Main sources of voting info: DoD resources, family and friends, VAO

- Challenges:
  - Voting is not a priority, has little motivation to seek out info independently; might decide not to participate if she feels process is hard or overwhelming
  - Likely to register but might fail to return ballot without follow-up prompting
  - Unstable mailing address due to frequent moves

- Needs:
  - Step-by-step info of the process; assistance filling out FPCA
  - Proactive engagement by VAO; support from Commander
  - Electronic registration options
Persona 4: Davis, Senior Enlisted ADM

Media Use and Behavior:
- Internet access mostly limited to time in ship/computer lab; uses Internet and social media regularly to communicate with family while deployed

FVAP User Behavior:
- Likely to directly visit FVAP.gov, though referrals are helpful; likely to use paper forms

Voting Experience:
- Registration Likelihood: HIGH
- Ballot Return Likelihood: MODERATE
- Has voted in the past and generally understands absentee process; believes if he doesn’t vote, can’t complain
- Main sources of voting info: DoD resources, spouse, VAO

Challenges:
- Has experienced difficulties voting in the past, skeptical his vote will count
- Likely to register but may fail to return ballot without reminders/encouragement
- Speed and quality of mail system, limited time and Internet access; unfamiliar with FWAB

Needs:
- Accurate info about voting rights and reassurance vote will be counted; support from Commander
- Timely reminders of registration, ballot request and ballot return deadlines
- Feedback from LEO about the status of his registration, ballot request and returned ballot
Persona 5: Arlo, Military Officer

- **Media Use and Behavior:**
  - Internet access primarily through personal computer; uses email and Facebook to communicate with family/friends

- **FVAP User Behavior:**
  - Likely to directly visit FVAP.gov without referrals

- **Voting Experience:**
  - Registration Likelihood: HIGH
  - Ballot Return Likelihood: HIGH
  - Extensive experience voting absentee; views voting as civic duty and takes it very seriously
  - Main sources of voting info: DoD resources, spouse, VAO

- **Challenges:**
  - Has experienced difficulties voting in the past, including not getting ballot on time; sometimes unsure whether ballot was counted
  - Feels unprepared to assist Service members who look to him for guidance about voting; struggles to discuss voting without discussing politics

- **Needs:**
  - Reliable, up-to-date information about the voting assistance resources available that he can share with subordinates
  - Timely reminders of registration, ballot request and ballot return deadlines
  - Feedback from LEO about the status of his registration, ballot request and returned ballot
Persona 6: Hanna, Military Spouse

**Media Use and Behavior:**
- Uses Internet and social media to communicate with family/friends; use cell phone and personal computer

**FVAP User Behavior:**
- Likely to be referred to FVAP.gov by online sources or through independent search

**Voting Experience:**
- Registration Likelihood: MODERATE
- Ballot Return Likelihood: MODERATE
- Sometimes voted in home jurisdiction but unfamiliar with absentee process; recognizes voting as an important right
- Main sources of voting info: DoD voting assistance resources, spouse and other military families, VAO

**Challenges:**
- Would like to vote but has little knowledge of process; limited time/energy to figure out process
- Often receives inaccurate information through social network of military families and is unsure who can be trusted as a source of reliable information

**Needs:**
- Step-by-step info of the process and available resources
- Timely reminders of registration, ballot request and ballot return deadlines
- Assistance communicating important info to spouse
The complex election framework

- Since 2010, FVAP witnessed a growing complexity to the election landscape
  - States vary in the accepted methods of receipt for applications and ballots (mail, online and fax)
  - States vary in the corresponding deadlines based on mode of transmissions
  - Procedures remain focused on comparing wet signatures
    - Ballot application to ballot
    - Voter registration application to ballot
  - UOCAVA tailored systems vary significantly with each jurisdiction
    - “Push” versus “pull” systems of emails versus downloads
What contributes to complexities?

- Cost for UOCAVA specific systems
  - Smaller jurisdictions will seek lowest cost options

- Interplay between State laws and translation into technical processes
  - State laws have to be reapplied and interpreted for new technologies

- Lack of understanding with technical complexities for electronic transmission
  - State and local election officials are not experts in cyber policy

- The existing Information Assurance security posture for federal agencies, DoD and the Internet
  - The underlying security policies for agencies has an impact on the success of the military to receive messages

- One size does not fit all
  - Trying to force technical solutions may lead to unintended consequences
What can the TGDC do?

- Set aside the security of electronic ballot return as a separate issue
- Embrace the fact that electronic ballot delivery systems are here
- Offer best practices and recommendations that fit the various types of systems and embrace principles of usability for the current technology
- Reconcile Information Assurance policies and issue best practices for structuring communication based on the current environment
- Change the mindset from one of certification to one of usability and “how to”

SERVICE ALL VOTERS
VOTER EXPERIENCE BECOMES PRIORITY
Let’s all do this together

Capture the existing, look to the future

AND..........

BE
IN
THE
BUSINESS
OF
BEING
AWESOME.