



**25th Annual
National Conference
San Diego, California**

2009 Professional Practices Program

***Rewards & Recognition Project for
Election Day Judges***

Bexar County, Texas

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Action Plan Implemented: *Reward & Recognition Project for Election Day Judges*

The quality and performance of an Election Day Judge (EDJ) is measured by three important points:

- 1) Quality of training and materials offered throughout the year and before every major election by the election department of each county.
- 2) Ability (intellectual & physical) of the EDJ to recognize election policies, procedures and set-up instructions for their poll site.
- 3) Types of recognition the EDJ receives for efforts to create a successful poll site experience for all voters.

As the Training Coordinator for the Bexar County Elections Department, my job is to offer and create the highest quality of training. This includes certification classes, review sessions and developing materials for potential election workers. Currently I am identifying all low-cost to no-cost county endeavors that will bring a higher visibility, esteem and recognition to EDJs offering the public one of the most significant rights in our American democracy; the right to vote. This project of *Reward & Recognition Project for Election Day Judges* and which will be advertised mainly through our bi-yearly *Voting Record Newsletter* is the focus of this *Professional Practices Program*.

Specific Action Plan Items:

Items recommended for project include:

- Initial Feedback from EDJs
- Offering Other Volunteer Opportunities
- Mentoring Newly Certified EDJs
- Celebrations & Recognitions
- Attend Election Conferences
- Advisory Board Membership
- Advertising EDJs' Services
- Research & Publications
- Rewards Card

Description of Each Action Plan Item:

1) Initial Feedback from EDJs:

- a) Why do they want to become an EDJ?
- b) What does EDJ expect from working at a poll site?
- c) What does EDJ expect from the election department?
- d) What are EDJs willing to offer the voter?
- e) Feedback kept on file for each EDJ.

2) Offering Other Volunteer Opportunities

- a) Majority of EDJs are retired and have time to volunteer.
- b) Through the *Voting Record Newsletter*, EDJs are made aware of other governmental agencies and non-for-profit groups that need help with community-based projects.
- c) Constant notices from these agencies will help expand the interest and options for EDJs beyond our department and assist in being part of their intellectual growth.

3) Mentoring Newly Certified EDJs

- a) All EDJs have significant life, educational & professional experiences and backgrounds.
- b) Paired-up with newly certified EDJs helps to provide advice and guidelines when needed.
- c) More significant perspective coming from other EDJs than elections department as they share the same poll site experience.

4) Celebrations & Recognitions

- a) Birth Announcements, Weddings would be noted in the *Voting Record Newsletter*.
- c) Birthdays would be noticed through signed cards created in-office and sent to EDJs having a birthday for every month.
- d) EDJs having worked 5, 10 or 15 years would receive special county certificate or pin during election meetings.

5) Attend Election Conferences

- a) Election conferences for staff could include invitations to EDJs.
- b) Exceptional EDJs from county could facilitate a class to provide valuable feedback and ideas about their experiences at the poll site and ways to improve the process.
- c) Training with EDJs gives significant education on training to staff for continuing improvements during elections.

6) Advisory Board Membership

- a) EDJs chosen from pool of exceptional officials are invited to form committees.
- b) Meetings would be four times a year to bring forth valuable ideas and plans for improvement in the areas of training, technology, recruitment and rewards for EDJs.

7) Advertising EDJs' Services

- a) The Voting Record Newsletter, which is distributed to over 900 people, including governmental and legislative agencies, could advertise skills, services or businesses belonging to EDJs for their peers.

8) Research & Publications

- a) Current research underway for on-line training and how it improves performance of election officials at poll sites.
- b) Results of research help improve training materials for better Election Day performance.
- c) Publication of research findings demonstrates to EDJs a serious commitment to their success and validates their work to the academic world and the voting community as a whole.

9) Rewards Card

- a) EDJs receive a Certification Card recognizing their hard earned position.
- b) Cards can be valued more if local businesses offer discounts upon presenting them.
- c) Demonstrates that local business value the efforts that EDJs give for the good of a community's election.

Benefits of Action Plan:

The *Reward & Recognition Project for Election Day Judges* demonstrates a significantly high level of focus from the county, the elections department and the voters that EDJs are very important. Celebrating EDJs milestones, rewarding their efforts and finding ways to use their experience wisely greatly affects their attitude in running a successful election which helps to reduce the possibility of errors made at poll sites, possible lawsuits and strained election results. Time spent making this project a success will be worth the effort as it benefits the entire department in terms of having more harmonious elections.

Measuring Action Plan Over Time:

This project will be measured based on various criteria such as a higher level of motivation on the part of the EDJ, noting higher motivation creates the opportunity to encourage other staff at the poll site to perform better on Election Day, greater communication from EDJs and staff to bring needed improvements or changes and a significant feeling that EDJs will recognize themselves as a true part of the elections department staff.

Challenge & Limitations for Action Plan:

The greatest challenge posing a significant threat to the success of this project and the items listed is the time needed to create such rewards and recognitions. This project is developed by the Training Coordinator with no staff and is being administered by her in between an average of 3 to 5 elections each year. Also, considerable demands are required from training and review courses, reappointment and recertification assignments of current EDJs and helping in other parts of the department.

Summary & Future of Action Plan:

As EDJs continue to give of their time and effort to help complete the task of running an election, the further success of this project would depend on continuing these efforts to other counties within the state and eventually that rest of the nation. We as a department cannot function without EDJs and it behooves us to continuously validate their importance and see clearly that our objective of a perfect election depends greatly on them.