

# 2012 Annual Report



King County Elections

*Accessible | Accurate | Accountable*

# Setting Records

## A number of records were set in the 2012 General Election

More than 1.17 million registered voters (67,000 of those registered after June 1).

993,908 ballots were returned, with nearly 750,000 by election day.

556,083 ballots processed and reported in the election night count (the largest election night count on record).

More than 40,000 voters were assisted by the Elections phone bank staff, with nearly 5,500 calls on election day alone.

Achieved 100% accountability and reconciliation of every ballot returned to King County Elections, thereby helping to ensure compliance with the SIX SIGMA discrepancy standard for 12 consecutive elections.

On Cover  
Ballot Opening staff.

Above  
Director Huff visits Accessible Voting Center.



### From the Director

*King County Elections, the largest vote-by-mail county in the nation with over 1.17 million voters, concluded 2012 with every ballot accounted for and a very successful presidential election. Wrapping up four years of voting by mail, the November General Election brought unprecedented levels of customer demands in terms of voter registrations, overseas voting, mail ballot returns, ballot drop box usage, and call center contacts.*

*Anticipating such high levels of demand, we began planning and preparing for this general election more than a year in advance, instituting innovative process improvements and facilities upgrades, forming strategic partnerships and launching a creative, targeted voter education campaign to help manage the expected impacts of a projected voter turnout of over 80 percent.*

*Not only was 2012 a presidential election year, but it was also a year that required redistricting of the entire state. In the course of the redistricting project, King County altered 267 precincts and 1,394 precincts changed districts affecting more than 600,000 voters.*

*In conjunction with our dedication and commitment to the administration of accurate, secure and accessible elections, the Elections Department, in accordance with the King County Strategic Plan, works to advance the goals it reflects.*

*I am very proud of the work that the Elections team has accomplished in 2012 and the standard of continual improvement and excellence that guides our work. Our report reflects the contributions we have made toward advancing the vision for King County.*

Sherril Huff, Director of Elections

# 2012 Achievements

## 1 Identify and meet changing customer requirements to support voter awareness and enhanced opportunity to participate in elections.

- Increased options for voters through an electronic ballot delivery system. Electronic ballot delivery alleviates concerns of ballots arriving late for military and overseas voters, provides alternatives for voters with disabilities, and offers last minute convenience for local voters needing replacement ballots. About 20,000 voters used electronic methods to obtain their ballots in the November election. On Election day, about 3,000 voters obtained online ballots for greater convenience, reducing on-site visits by 50%.
- Increased voter registration by 9% in 2012. That is 100,000 new voters in King County!
- Conducted a comprehensive county-wide voter survey that assessed voter opinions, process knowledge, and attitudes associated with administering elections in King County. This survey documented the high level of voter satisfaction (86%) and confidence (83%) with elections services. It also assessed the positive impact of outreach activities and established a baseline for future evaluations.
- Simplified the voter registration process for citizens by registering voters online and eliminating paper waste and additional processing.
- Improved the oversight of ballot insertion and created monitoring controls to ensure that all eligible voters receive a ballot.
- Extended hours and weekend service to increase opportunities for citizens to register to vote in the 2012 Presidential year elections.
- Received over 30,000 voter registrations through increased voter education and outreach efforts that included staff attendance at naturalization ceremonies and over 40 events around King County.



2011 Voter Opinion Survey  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Communicating and implementing complex new elections laws and connecting with voters to identify their needs are important facets of elections administration.

Reaching out to new citizens, translating elections materials into mandated languages, staffing booths at a diverse array of community events, and harnessing the benefits of technology and social media are some of the activities that KCE regularly conducts.

*Executive Summary of past year's voter survey.*

*New citizens at swearing in ceremony.*

This year, KCE formed a variety of strategic and innovative partnerships that expanded our resources, reach, and coordination of services to inform the public, register voters, and administer elections under some of the highest levels of demand experienced to date.

## 2 Encourage and expand the use of strategic partnerships to leverage resources, achieve efficiencies and reduce costs.

- Recruited about 80 volunteers from various community and non-profit service organizations and used temporary employees from other county departments to supplement our paid staff for peak voting periods.
- Contracted with eight local non-profit organizations to provide election day voter support services at 12 ballot drop boxes.
- Partnered with the Secretary of State's Office and Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap Counties to leverage media ad buys to enhance public information, share costs, and coordinate important voter messaging.
- Established 533 partnerships with individuals, groups and non-profit organizations to register voters and educate citizens about the voting process, supporting the county's equity and social justice goals.
- Partnered with community law enforcement, traffic experts and private vendors to provide security, traffic control and enhanced safety measures to the more than 230,000 voters who sought in-person election services during the general election.

*Elections staff register new voters after they took the oath of citizenship.*

*Officer assists with closing a ballot drop box.*

*KCE partnered with the City of Renton to manage traffic during November election.*



# 3 Manage capital, human, information and technology resources to improve services and information sharing.

- Continued the department's Agile Workforce Initiative by having 112 people working in 2 or more positions throughout the election year, reducing recruitment, hiring and administrative costs and increasing operational efficiency.
- Ballot Processing staff participated in two Lean events which led to increasing processing capacity by 30%, allowing for our largest-ever election-night results reporting in a vote-by-mail environment.
- Technology improvements, Lean efficiencies, and agile staff deployment resulted in 200,000 more ballots processed (over last large election) while hiring only 23 additional short term staff, substantially reducing the anticipated number hired.
- Used tablet computers and other line management techniques to pre-process voters and streamline customer service. Reduced peak wait time to vote at an Accessible Voting Center from 4 hours (2010 General) to less than 30 minutes and reduced in-person voter registration processing time by 50%.
- Identified, developed and launched, in conjunction with Elections and KC Technical Services teams, new "Elections-on-the-go" mobile-optimized website to provide quick access to information about ballot drop box locations, results and more. The new website had almost 7,000 views during the Election Day week and served up results even when the main county site was too busy to accommodate all visitors.
- Developed and launched an external mapping application ("Find My District") to aid citizens, parties and external agencies in determining their new Congressional, Legislative, and County Council districts.



Creative use of technology has streamlined ballot processing, improved customer service delivery and expanded communications channels to improve connections with voters.

*Staff at the Election Service Center greets and assists voters.*

*New mobile website expands voters' access to KCE information.*



Improving voter education, making more services available online, and encouraging voters to take actions that support greater efficiency have all contributed to greater cost savings.

The department's regular staffing of 69 employees, who have all received specialized elections training, was augmented by up to 500 temporary staff during the peak times of conducting elections.

Our commitment to equity and social justice initiatives that apply to our workforce as well as the citizens we serve has been strengthened through training and resource commitments.

*KCE staff with guest trainer in preparation for general election.*

*Ballot Review staff inspect ballots to ensure voter choices are clear.*

## 4 Exercise responsible stewardship of county resources to contain costs of services.

- Temporary staffing of vote-by-mail elections has been reduced by nearly 50% as a result of applying Lean review, targeted use of technology, and implementing process improvements.
- Reduced paper (over 25,000 pieces) and processing time (approximately 3,000 hours) by implementing a new technology application that streamlined the process for receiving updates and ballot requests from voters by phone.
- Reduced temporary employment from 1,105 employees in the 2008 General Election to 567 employees for the 2012 General Election – a 48.6% reduction in staffing which does NOT include the reduction of several thousand temporary poll workers.

## 5 Maintain and enhance a highly skilled, productive and healthy workforce reflecting the diverse community we serve.

- Aggressively pursuing cross training of staff and launching the Agile Workforce Initiative has expanded employee skills, improved retention, and reduced training and administration costs.
- Augmented employee recruitment efforts to include multiple Latino Fairs, Black Heritage events, veteran recruiting events, and several Vietnamese and Chinese community events recruiting employees in conjunction with the voter registration activities.
- Achieved broad staff participation in King County's wellness programs and held supplementary sessions at KCE to address the pressures of the Presidential Election including training for stress management, healthy eating, conflict resolution, and access to local walking trails. We also had presentations on KC Employee Assistance Program, Healthy Incentives Program and gardening.
- 2012's King County Employee Survey indicated that KCE staff lead all County departments when self rating their connection to missions and goals, and customer service. KCE staff issued a higher degree of positive ratings than all other county staff in all main categories surveyed.





*Dennis Bounds and Jean Enersen, KING 5 TV news.*

*Tina Thompson and Katie Smith, Seattle Storm.*

*Thach Nguyen, real estate agent and advocate for the homeless.*



# 6

## Increase voter outreach and education.

- Created easy to understand “how to” videos for registering to vote, signature matters, and voting by mail that are on the website and also available in Chinese, Vietnamese, and sign language versions.
- Recruited area celebrities for a creative campaign to deliver voting tips to build stronger awareness and retention of Elections Department key messages. This campaign connected:
  - More than 24 million times with King County voting-age citizens via TV, radio and online channels and reached 190,000 targeted Chinese- and Vietnamese-speaking voters.
  - The number of ballots returned too late was reduced by more than 84% (as compared to previous year’s general election).
  - More than 19% of all voters returned their ballots earlier than projected (based on previous years’ statistics) which translates into process efficiencies and the largest election night results report on record.
  - Boosted voter registration among Vietnamese-speaking voters by seven-fold, and by Chinese-speaking voters by six percent.

Ensuring that voters know when and how to vote is an essential component of elections administration. Helping voters understand that following instructions supports their vote being counted while keeping elections costs down has contributed to other important goals. Developing creative and memorable communications pieces has elevated our messaging and yielded measurable results.

# What's Ahead?

The Department will build on the successful programs and practices introduced in 2012 including expanding Lean practices to additional functional areas of Elections, ongoing work of building sustainable partnerships for voter education and outreach efforts, and cross training investments for agile workforce development.



*Candidates at KCE for in-person candidate filing.*

*King County Elections Team.*

- Development of a department strategic plan that will help guide our work and align it with the County's strategic plan.
- Completion of a continuity of operations plan to prepare us for emergencies.
- Director's participation at the national level with the nation's twenty largest election jurisdictions in PEW sponsored forums to address emerging issues such as standardization of select areas of election administration, ongoing discussion of voter registration database expansion, barriers to voter participation in national elections, technology advances to update election administration practices across the country, and the future of mail voting.
- Research and evaluate technology solutions to address the impacts of aging systems and be prepared for a growing population.