

Law, Legislative Services and Security Briefing to

Regular Meeting of Council

2023 November 28

ISC: UNRESTRICTED

C2023-1209

Equity in Service Delivery Fund - Voting Equity Research Project

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING

The purpose of this briefing is to provide an update to Council on the Voting Equity Research Project (VERP) that was funded through the City of Calgary Equity in Service Delivery Fund.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

In 2022, Elections Calgary led the Voting Equity Research Project (VERP). The goal of the VERP is to provide data-driven recommendations to reduce barriers and improve participation among immigrant Calgarians in the 2025 General Election. This is in line with the Equity Action and Resourcing Plan and the Equity in Service Delivery Fund grant to identify barriers in Calgary's municipal elections, and to increase accessibility for historically marginalized groups.

Recent Canadian research suggests that new Canadians are substantially less likely than others to be interested, feel engaged and participate in municipal elections.

VERP utilized a mixed methods approach in the data gathering phase, which consisted of focus groups, in-depth interviews with cultural and community leaders, and through online surveys. This approach was beneficial because it helped to get a contextual understanding from immigrant Calgarians, while also being able to generalize about Calgary's broader immigrant population from the survey data.

The research confirmed what Elections Calgary is doing well to engage Calgarians, while it also showed a need for more engagement and education in an easily accessible way for people to feel empowered to vote. Elections Calgary will focus on three areas:

Elections Calgary will be focusing on three areas:

1. **Civic engagement** – All the data collected in VERP concluded that immigrant Calgarians have less knowledge on municipal government and elections, when compared to provincial and federal government. This is despite immigrant Calgarians overwhelmingly stating that they are highly interested in all levels of government. In preparation for the 2025 General Election, Elections Calgary will provide informational materials and tools about the role of local government, including what councillors, school board trustees, and the mayor do, the role of other levels of government, and how to participate.
2. **Candidate engagement** – The desire to 'know' candidates better not only helps to create a more personal relationship with potential voters, but also gives them a chance to learn more about their candidates. Elections Calgary will explore opportunities through civic partners and community organizations, such as the Calgary Public Library, to allow residents to learn about their councillor, school board trustee and mayoral candidates.
3. **Voter engagement** – Elections Calgary will improve information and resources on where to vote, how to vote and why your vote is important to Calgary's future.

In addition, a post research survey was conducted, and most participants agreed that their survey experience was positive. They found it interesting, easy to understand and complete, was a reasonable time investment, and that they felt their contribution was sufficiently valued and feel optimistic about improvements.

Detailed information about the VERP project is available here: [Voting equity \(calgary.ca\)](https://www.calgary.ca/voting-equity)

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