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Design of a Youth Electoral Audit

by

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A THESIS

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Abstract

The voter turnout of Canadian youth ages 18 to 34 is estimated to be 20% lower than those born between 1945 and 1959. Young adults were more than twice as likely to cast a ballot during the first election in which they were eligible in the 1960s when compared with 2004. Low youth voter turnout is concerning because electoral participation is an indicator of the legitimacy and health of democratic systems. Further, voting and abstention behaviours are habit forming, which means citizens who begin adulthood as non-voters are likely to stay that way. While a number of best and promising practices to improve youth voter turnout have been identified, no central means for evaluating the implementation of these practices in Canadian municipal government elections currently exists. This thesis describes the design process for the Youth Electoral Audit, an audit methodology intended to fill this gap. Apathy is Boring (AiB), a Canadian non-governmental organization, conducted a pilot Youth Electoral Audit during the 2013 municipal election in Grande Prairie, Alberta. The Youth Electoral Audit was found to be a practical methodology for evaluating Canadian municipal election practices and facilitating concrete recommendations for improving youth electoral participation.

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Dedication

In memory of Lawrence Hong

1986 – 2014

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Design of a Youth Electoral Audit

Designers seek to construct new, contextually appropriate solutions to real-world problems (Pahl, Beitz, Feldhusen, & Grote, 2007, p. 1). Unlike most scholarly research, the design approach is by definition normative (N. Cross, 2006, p. 8), or based on judgments of what “should” be rather than observations of what is. Though often associated with a physical output like a building or a piece of furniture, design is also applicable to social problems (McCann, 1983). “Designers, are exploring concrete integrations of knowledge that will combine theory with practice for new productive purposes” (Buchanan, 1992, p. 6).

Designers face different constraints than those conducting typical scholarly research. Cross (2006) notes that,

The designer is constrained to produce a practicable result within a specific time limit, whereas the scientist and scholar are both able, and often required, to suspend their judgements and decisions until more is known – “further research is needed” is always a justifiable conclusion for them. (p. 7)

Cross further notes that the practical constraints of design result from the “wicked” – complex, confounding, and indeterminate – nature of design problems. Exhaustive information on these problems cannot be collected and the outcome of a “correct” solution cannot be guaranteed.

In this thesis, I present the problem of low voter turnout among youth aged 18 to 34¹ in Canada. Low youth voter turnout is “wicked” on a number of fronts. Firstly, the problem of low youth voter turnout in Canada is indeterminate and highly complex, with cultural, economic, historical, and other roots. Second, low youth voter turnout is confounding in that the elected officials who gained power under the current system are also those who have the power to change it, yet they may not be motivated to do so. Finally, solutions to the problem of low youth voter turnout in Canada involve many players, including individuals, media, and government. Their conflicting goals make a clearly “right” answer for all difficult to imagine.

Purpose

The purpose of my research was to design a methodologically sound, practically applicable tool for evaluating Canadian municipal election practices that impact youth voter turnout. I examined low youth voter turnout in Canada and generated a design response in the form of a Youth Electoral Audit methodology for municipal elections. This audit is not a panacea to low youth voter turnout, but it is intended to provide a straightforward methodology to evaluate and compare current Canadian municipal election practices.

Presently, many strategies for improving youth voter turnout have been identified (Howe, 2007, p. 36). However, no systematic account of where these practices have been

¹ For the purposes of this paper, youth voters will be defined as those aged 18 to 34. This definition is based on the first two age groups reported by Elections Canada—18 to 24 and 25 to 34—when describing voter turnout by age.

applied in Canada has been undertaken to date. I designed the Youth Electoral Audit to fill this gap by providing a methodology for cataloguing and evaluating the current election practices of Canadian municipalities.

Project partners

The Youth Electoral Audit project began as a partnership in April 2013 between two Canadian non-governmental organizations (NGOs): the Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership (Chumir Foundation) and Apathy is Boring (AiB). During the design phase and the pilot of the methodology, I was employed by the Chumir Foundation and led the design of the Youth Electoral Audit. I gathered input from AiB when I was designing the audit methodology and advised them during the pilot audit. AiB will be responsible for implementing audits with this methodology on an ongoing basis.

Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership

The Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership (Chumir Foundation) is a non-profit foundation based in Calgary, Alberta that seeks to foster policies and actions by individuals, organizations and governments that best contribute to a fair, productive and harmonious society. Prior to becoming involved in the Youth Electoral Audit project, the Chumir Foundation hosted events on democratic institutions and published commentary related to democratic participation. The foundation's role was to perform the background research to inform the Youth Electoral Audit and to design the methodology with input from representatives of AiB. As the lead on this project, I interviewed key informants,

reviewed the literature, and analyzed the resulting data to develop a first draft of the audit methodology. After receiving feedback from AiB on their experience of conducting the pilot audit, I revised the audit methodology and compiled a guide for auditors.

At the outset of the project, the desired outcomes for the Chumir Foundation were

- a review and report of democratic principles for voter participation (a formal written report was later deemed unnecessary),
- increased capacity of a Canadian NGO dedicated to youth electoral engagement, and
- regular publication of commentary on Canadian election practices to catalyze continued discussion on the topic of low youth voter turnout.

In addition to providing my staff time to support this project, the Chumir Foundation also provided funding to cover the travel costs for conducting the pilot audit.

Apathy is Boring

Apathy is Boring (AiB) is an NGO based in Montreal, Québec, that aims to use art and technology to educate Canadian youth about democracy. AiB conducts youth outreach and voter education through election campaigns, concerts, and events. Prior to starting the Youth Electoral Audit project, AiB had experience conducting Youth Friendly audits for Canadian businesses and organizations. The role of AiB was to provide input to the Chumir Foundation with regard to the Youth Electoral Audit content. AiB then tested the Youth Electoral Audit during the 2013 Grande Prairie municipal election and provided feedback on the methodology. AiB intends to continue conducting audits for Canadian municipalities.

For Apathy is Boring, the desired outcome was development of

- a sound audit methodology for gauging Canadian municipal practices for electoral engagement and participation of youth ages 18 to 34,
- a vehicle for developing and delivering concrete feedback to municipal officials who seek to improve their practices for youth electoral engagement and participation, and
- a comprehensive service to offer to Canadian municipalities that would also function as a revenue generator for their organization.

Ultimately, AiB intends to provide Canadian youth with an online resource that allows them to view and compare the practices of their own municipality with others across Canada.

AiB contributed staff time to advise on the design of the audit methodology and sent one auditor and one audit assistant to Grande Prairie, Alberta for three weeks in October 2013 to complete the pilot audit. AiB plans for one or two staff members to complete future audits.

Project goals

With the roles and goals of each organization in mind, goals of the project were articulated. The goal of the Youth Electoral Audit project was to design a methodology to

- evaluate Canadian municipal implementation of best and promising practices for improving electoral participation of youth aged 18 to 34,
- offer a practical means of comparison between the election practices of Canadian municipalities, and

- provide a user-friendly framework for developing and delivering concrete feedback to municipalities about how to improve their practices to facilitate youth voter turnout.

We sought to develop a Youth Electoral Audit to meet these goals while operating with the limited resources afforded by the two NGOs.

Of equal importance was articulating what the Youth Electoral Audit was not intended to be. First, it was not intended to evaluate whether basic democratic structures are in place. For example, it was deemed unnecessary to evaluate whether the vote is secret. Instead of including an indicator about voting screens, I assumed that this element of basic electoral process would be in place in all participating municipalities. Further, the audit was not meant to evaluate whether any illegal activity had taken place. I assumed that audited municipalities would have a functioning election administration, law enforcement, and judicial system in place to address instances where the law is violated. These limits were drawn because other mechanisms for examining basic democratic functions (e.g. www.worldaudit.org) consistently give Canada high marks and omitting these elements would allow more space for examining the nuance of current Canadian electoral practice. Finally—and critically—the audit was not designed to predict voter turnout. While each of the elements included in the audit is thought to encourage youth voter turnout, a perfect score was not meant to guarantee 100% turnout.

Thesis structure

The purpose of my thesis is to describe the design process for the Youth Electoral Audit and to outline the next steps for this project. This document is an attempt to bring a

logical structure to a complex, iterative design process. To begin, the first chapter provides an introduction.

In Chapter 2, I describe the problem of low youth voter turnout. In this section, I contrast the current state of youth voter turnout in Canada with an ideal state. As well, I summarize some of the theories of voting behaviour in an attempt to better understand what drives voter participation and non-participation. Finally, I identify known obstacles to voting in an attempt to understand why this problem has worsened over the past few years and why attempts to mitigate the issue have not been successful.

Chapter 3 provides a rationale for my design response to low youth voter turnout that culminated in the creation of the Youth Electoral Audit. In this chapter I describe the reasons why an audit was chosen and outline precedents for this approach.

Chapter 4 is an overview of the design process of the Youth Electoral Audit. This chapter includes a summary of parameters the audit needed to fall within to satisfy the needs of AiB. Additionally, the methods I used for gathering and analysing the data that informed the development of the audit are outlined. In this section, I also describe the iterative process of designing the Youth Electoral Audit, including the test and revision of the preliminary audit methodology.

In Chapter 5, I outline highlights of the resulting Youth Electoral Audit and gesture toward next steps for better understanding the role that municipal election practices play in youth electoral turnout in Canada. This chapter also includes a discussion of the limitations of the Youth Electoral Audit and identifies future research that would strengthen and improve the audit methodology.

Chapter 6 concludes and provides reflections on the future of the Youth Electoral Audit.

CHAPTER 2: PROBLEM FRAMING

Problem framing

Designers begin the design process by identifying, scoping and framing the problem they will address (N. Cross, 2001, pp. 78–81). Pahl, Wallace, and Blessing (2007, p. 45) identified three aspects that all problems have: the current state (which is necessarily undesirable or less than ideal), an ideal state, and an obstacle that prevents the current state from converting to the ideal state. These three features provide structure to the exploration of low youth voter turnout that follows.²

The problem that the Youth Electoral Audit is intended to address—low youth voter turnout in Canadian elections—was defined by the partner organization AiB prior to the start of the project. However, I completed further work on framing the problem before a design response was generated.

The current state: Low youth voter turnout in Canada

Current youth voter turnout

Voter turnout is the percentage of eligible voters who cast ballots during a particular election.³ Currently, voter turnout among younger Canadians (those born since

² While municipal election practices in Canada are not conducted in secret, little attention is paid to them relative to elections at higher levels of government (Cutler & Matthews, 2005, p. 359). Most of the studies I encountered in my research on turnout and election practices in Canada have generally been focused on the federal level. Globally too, there is disproportionately more information available about national elections than local ones. As a result, the literature presented in this chapter is primarily composed of general commentary on the state of Canadian elections with limited discussion of elections at the municipal level.

³ Voter turnout is often calculated as the percentage of registered voters who cast a ballot during a particular election. However, when analyzing youth voter turnout, Elections Canada calculates the percentage of the estimated of the total number eligible voters who voted. The youth voter turnout would be overestimated if the registered voter population was used, because youth are less likely to be registered to vote than the general population (Barnes & Virgint, 2013, p. 4; Block et al., 2012, p. 14). As such,

1970) is estimated to be 20% lower than those born between 1945 and 1959 (C. D. Anderson & Goodyear-Grant, 2008). In the 1960s, as young adults became eligible to vote in their first election, more than two-thirds of them would cast a ballot. By 2004, that figure had dropped to less than one third (Blais & Loewen, 2011, p. 12).

Voter turnout has been declining in Canada since the 1970s, with sharper decreases since the 1990s (Block, Larrivée, & Warner, 2012, p. 4; Pammett & LeDuc, 2003, p. 4). Similar declines in voter turnout have been observed worldwide in other advanced democracies (Blais & Rubenson, 2013).

At present, voter turnout among youth tends to be much lower than the rest of the Canadian population. In the 2011 general federal election, voter turnout was 38.8% of the estimated eligible elector population aged 18–24, the lowest among all age cohorts. In the same election, there was an overall turnout of 58.5% of the estimated eligible elector population. In the 2011 general federal election, voter turnout increased steadily with age, until peaking at 75.1% for those ages 65–74—nearly double that of the youngest age group (Block et al., 2012). The phenomenon of comparatively low youth voter turnouts has also been observed at the provincial and municipal levels in Canada (Ménard, 2010), as well as in other mature democracies (Blais & Rubenson, 2013).

Brief history of the vote in Canada

Eligibility to vote has evolved significantly since Confederation.⁴ Today's near-universal franchise of adults was not the norm throughout history (Elections Canada, 2007). At Confederation, control of the federal franchise was a contentious issue. This power was transferred back and forth between the provinces and the federal government until 1920, when it settled in federal hands (Elections Canada, 2007, p. 40). For 10 of the 13 general elections between 1867 and 1920, eligibility was determined provincially and Canadians faced different requirements to vote depending on the part of the country they lived (Robertson & Spano, 2008, p. 7).

At that time, a relatively narrow group of people was entitled to vote. The basic requirements, regardless of province, were being male, at least 21 years of age, and a British subject. The provinces imposed further limits based on property ownership or income level, and many working class men were not entitled to vote. Women were categorically excluded, and racial exclusions, either direct or indirect, were widespread. Exclusions based on occupation were also in place, barring many government employees from casting a ballot (Courtney, 2010, pp. 120–121). Turnout in the 1867 general election was 73.1% of the registered electors. Turnouts in general elections until the turn of the century hovered around 70%. It is important, however, to keep in mind that while the population of Canada in 1867 was 3.2 million, only 361,028 people were on the list of electors. Turnout was calculated based on the percentage of people on the list who cast a

⁴ Municipal laws and practices vary and it would be impractical to provide a review of the vote at the municipal level. As such, this section focuses on the evolution of the vote at the federal level.

vote (Elections Canada, 2013). During this period, the franchise was limited to an elite few.

Corruption, intimidation, fraud, and violence were present at that time, in part due to questionable election practices. For example, though standard practice now, the secret vote was not in place consistently across Canada until 1874. Further, lists of electors were not prepared impartially and were not kept up to date (Elections Canada, 2007, pp. 42–45). Enfranchisement rules were devised to benefit the party in power (Elections Canada, 2007, pp. 58–61).

Women gained the right to vote in piecemeal fashion. Prior to Confederation, women voted in some jurisdictions. Before 1800, only New Brunswick had legislation expressly prohibiting women from voting. Universal suffrage of women across the country was included in law in 1920. However, prior to this, specific groups of women were permitted to vote federally because of their army service or the army service of a male relative. Men under age 21 who were serving in the army also had the right to vote under these military-related rules. The first general election implementing suffrage for men and women aged 21-and-over took place in 1921 (Elections Canada, 2007, pp. 61–63)

While so-called “universal” suffrage was implemented in 1920, many people still had limited access to the vote or were excluded entirely on the basis of race, religion, and language. While not expressly excluded from the vote, First Nations people were required to give up their status if they wanted access to the vote until 1960 (Uppal & LaRochelle-Côté, 2012). Though not legally excluded from the franchise, many other Canadians continued to be denied access to the vote. For example, women in Québec faced

additional registration requirements because they were not included on the provincial voter lists (women did not gain the right to the provincial vote in Québec until 1940). As well, registration requirements were more restrictive for urban voters than rural ones (Elections Canada, 2007, pp. 73–74).

In addition to permitting women to vote, other reforms to the voting system were introduced after World War I. Advanced voting was introduced for people whose jobs took them away from their home ridings on election day. Workers were legally afforded time off to vote. Those living in public housing also received the right to vote in 1929 (Elections Canada, 2007, pp. 77–78).

Turnout in the 1921 general election was 67.7% and stayed consistent through the 1920s before climbing as World War II approached. All-time highs in turnout were seen in the late 1950s and early 1960s at just under 80% (Elections Canada, 2013).

In 1970, the voting age was reduced from 21 to 18. At the time there were doubts that 18-year-olds possessed the maturity to vote (Robertson & Spano, 2008, p. 7). When the change was implemented, two million 18-, 19-, and 20-year-olds were enfranchised (Courtney, 2010, p. 121).

In 1982, *The Charter of Rights and Freedoms* laid out voting as a fundamental democratic right of all Canadian citizens rather than a privilege extended to selected classes of people. With the advent of the *Charter*, the voter landscape began to resemble the current state. The democratic rights included in the *Charter* cannot be overridden by other legislatures and apply to all Canadians. In the years following the assent of the *Charter*, accessibility to the polls was improved, both by ensuring access for people with disabilities and by expanding the polling hours and options for voting for all electors.

Exclusions for people with disabilities, prisoners, and judges were also eventually overturned as a result of the *Charter* (Elections Canada, 2007, p. 95; Robertson & Spano, 2008, pp. 7–8).

A steady decline in turnout has been occurring since the late 1980s. Turnout fell from 75.3% in 1988 to an all time low of 58.8% in 2008. Turnout rose slightly in 2011 to 61.1% (Elections Canada, 2013).

The ideal state: Widespread electoral participation

From the history of the vote in Canada outlined above, it is clear that the Canadian franchise has changed significantly over time. It is also apparent that voter turnouts have been declining in recent years. As a “wicked” problem, low youth voter turnout is indeterminate; currently, we are unable to quantify what a good voter turnout would be. In fact, it is difficult to say if quantifying voter turnout is even a useful means to determine whether we have reached the ideal state. What we do know is that there are a number of reasons why declining voter turnouts sound the alarm for democracy.⁵

Democratic principles and rights

At the most fundamental level, low youth voter turnout is concerning for the foundational principles of democracy. Two principles are at the core of democracy:

⁵ It is important to note that while widespread voter participation would be ideal for a number of reasons, it is unclear if increased participation would lead to different election outcomes (Rubenson, Blais, Fournier, Gidengil, & Nevitte, 2007). However, low voter participation has many other negative consequences other than just altering the outcome of elections (Roksa & Conley, n.d., p. 18) that will be outlined in this section.

popular control and political equality (Beetham, Carvalho, Landman, & Weir, 2008).

Youth voter turnout is important to both of these principles.

At its heart, democracy describes a system of governance where the people have control over public decisions or the decision makers who are elected to act on their behalf. Practically speaking, it is impossible on the societal level for each and every person to have direct control over public decisions. As such, pure popular control is difficult or impossible to achieve, at least at the level where thousands or millions of citizens are grouped together in cities, regions, and countries. Popular control in democracies commonly manifests itself as a representative system in which the people elect representatives to act as decision makers on their behalf (Beetham et al., 2008, p. 21).

With the second democratic principle, political equality, each person should have an equal say in the decision-making process within the government. Allotting each person an equal say is meant to ensure public decisions benefit citizens generally, rather than an elite few. As with popular control, the ideal of pure political equality is difficult or impossible to produce in the real world and is instead manifested in ways that are more or less true to its intention (Dahl, 2006).

Decline in voter turnout, particularly among a specific group of citizens (such as youth) has implications related to both principles. It is easy to see how popular control requires the participation of the people in decision-making processes. If representatives are selected through a popular vote and a particular group of citizens does not participate, the popular control principle is eroded.

Political equality also requires extensive participation to ensure that the needs of the many and the rights of minorities are protected. When few people vote, the votes of those who do participate carry undue weight and those people have disproportionate influence over decisions (Basehart et al., 2006, p. 23). For instance, seniors tend to have disproportionate influence because they are more likely to vote than young people (Konzelmann, Wagner, & Rattinger, 2012, p. 251). If abstaining citizens were randomly distributed in society, it would be much less concerning than the current situation where non-participation is linked to youth, low income, and low education levels (Gidengil, Nadeau, Nevitte, & Blais, 2010, pp. 98–99)

Low youth electoral participation is seen as a major factor driving the general decline in voter turnouts overall in Canada. While voter turnout does tend to rise with age, youth voter turnout today is significantly lower than in previous generations. In the past 50 years, the electoral participation of new cohorts of voters (those who are eligible to vote for the first time) has declined from over 60% to approximately 30%. Because the starting levels of voter participation among youth are so low, overall voter turnout is expected to continue its decline (Blais & Loewen, 2011). Low youth voter participation has a negative effect on voter turnout overall and a number of other consequences including the lack of representation of youth voice and viewpoints, a lack of buy-in to democracy by youth, and a lack of important political socialization for the next generation of voters. Both youth and society overall would benefit from improving youth electoral participation (Capaccio et al., 1999, pp. 13–14).

The opportunity to participate in choosing a government democratically is important not only on the level of principle; it is a right enshrined in the *Universal*

Declaration of Human Rights (1948). In addition to outlining a set of basic rights that should be afforded to all people, including freedom of speech and property rights, the *Declaration* affirms democratic rights:

The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures. (General Assembly of the United Nations, 1948, 21(3))

Democratic rights have been further codified by the United Nations in the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (General Assembly of the United Nations, 1976) and detailed in the *CCPR General Comment No. 25: Article 25 (Participation in Public Affairs and the Right to Vote)* *The Right to Participate in Public Affairs, Voting Rights and the Right of Equal Access to Public Service* (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1996).

Turnout as an indicator of democratic legitimacy and health

In addition to being important on the level of principle, voter turnouts are also an important indicator of democratic legitimacy and health (Topf, 1995, p. 27). By measuring the voter turnout in an election, one can start to get a sense of how well the democracy is working.

Some argue that low voter turnouts are a sign that citizens are content with their government. From this viewpoint, citizens who do not vote are passively lending their support to the existing order (O'Toole, Lister, Marsh, Jones, & McDonagh, 2003, pp. 54–

55). However, this passive behaviour has also been interpreted as a dangerous apathy (Russell, Fieldhouse, Purdham, & Kaira, 2002, p. 14).

Reasonable voter turnouts⁶ can be seen as an indicator of democratic legitimacy (Cafley, Conway, Burron, & Lapp, 2012). Democracy is decision-making by the people, and if leaders are elected by only a few, the legitimacy of the decision can and should come into question. Substantial voter turnouts are seen as a sign of legitimacy and legitimacy is essential to government authority to make decisions on behalf of citizens (Ménard, 2010).

It is, however, important to note that while low voter turnouts indicate low quality democratic opportunities for citizens, high voter turnouts are not necessarily a sign that the democratic system is healthy. High voter turnouts may also be a sign of an institutional practice in place to encourage high voter turnouts, such as compulsory voting (Birch, 2010). By way of example, while compulsory voting certainly results in higher turnouts, it is unclear if this system leads voters to be more highly informed (Loewen, Milner, & Hicks, 2008, p. 666).

Voting and abstention are habit forming

Voting and abstention are habit forming and these habits persist throughout a citizen's lifetime (Condon & Holleque, 2013, p. 167). As such, low youth voter turnouts are a cause for concern because habits established in young adulthood "set a course" for

⁶ A particular threshold for voter turnout that is "high enough" has not been identified. Rather than being concerned about turnouts below an particular value, concerns about Canadian electoral participation stem from the steady decline in participation that has been observed over the past few decades.

voting behaviour later in life (C. D. Anderson & Goodyear-Grant, 2008). Given that voting and abstention are habit-forming, addressing the root causes of low youth voter turnouts to ensure youth establish the habit of voting early may have a positive effect on the sustainability of voter turnout over time.

Youth disengaged from elections but not disengaged from society overall

Interestingly, low youth voter turnouts do not translate to an overall lack of interest in society on the part of youth. Young people participate in society in ways other than voting. For example, youth are more likely to volunteer than the general population (Fox, Korris, Palmer, Blackwell, & Gibbons, 2012, p. 38; Jacobsen & Linkow, 2012, p. 10).

In a study of the ways that Canadians are political, the NGO Samara found that Canadian youth aged 18 to 34 perform on average six of the 20 political activities identified in their study. Canadians over age 35 perform, on average, only five. For instance, Canadian youth are less likely to be involved in formal political activities such as contacting an elected official, but nonetheless participate in greater numbers of discussions about politics both on and offline (K. Anderson, Hilderman, & Loat, 2013).

Youth have an interest in broad political issues such as “sustainability, equality and global poverty” and an orientation toward “doing change” rather than voting for it (Farthing, 2010, p. 189). Those who vote motivate politicians and as a result, the omission of youth issues from the political dialogue and low youth voter turnout form a downward spiral.

If young people do not vote, politicians are less likely to take their interests seriously, so that young people are likely to become the victims rather than the benefactors of public policy. This is particularly true in a time of financial austerity, creating a vicious circle as young people—in turn—become (even more) disillusioned with the political system. (Sloam, 2012, p. 5)

In short, contemporary youth civic participation differs from that of previous generations of youth and from adults today. Instead of getting involved in political parties, youth directly support specific causes about which they feel passionate. This different pattern of participation signals a generational difference rather than a lack of interest overall and does not justify the exclusion of youth from politics (Print, Saha, & Edwards, 2004, p. 23).

Other aspects of the ideal beyond the scope of this project

The ideal state of democracy goes far beyond widespread electoral participation on the part of Canadian citizens in free and fair elections. Among other things, in the ideal manifestation of democracy the entire democratic system would be inclusive, participatory and responsive (W. Cross, 2010a) and the rights of minority groups would be respected and afforded some voice in the political dialogue (Lijphart, 2012). These aspects of the ideal are not unrelated to youth voter turnout. However, they are beyond the direct scope of this project and will not be discussed directly in this thesis except where relevant to the design of the Youth Electoral Audit.

The obstacles: Theories of voting behaviour and barriers to participation

To better understand why turnouts may have decreased over time, theories of voting and known barriers to participation behaviour are outlined in the following section.

Theories of voting behaviour

As mentioned, to a certain extent voting behaviour is habitual. Key, then, to understanding voter turnout is understanding what might trigger this shift from being a habitual non-voter to a habitual voter (Plutzer, 2002). One way of examining this shift is to look at certain personal and societal effects on voter behaviour. Three effects commonly cited in the contemporary literature are: life-cycle/life event, cohort, and time (Konzelmann et al., 2012).

Life-cycle/life event effects

With life-cycle effects, later stages of the life-cycle bring about a different set of “structural, social, moral and economic circumstances” that make voting more likely to occur (Barnes & Virgint, 2013, p. 6). In essence, according to the life-cycle effect theory, as individuals age, they are more likely to be voters than they were when they were young. Low youth voter turnout is not a major concern under this paradigm as young people are expected to “catch up” with previous generations as they age (Blais & Loewen, 2011, p. 16). Life-cycle effects however, fail to account for shrinking voter turnouts. If anything, with the aging population in contemporary Canada, voter turnouts

should go up rather than down under this model. As such, it is an incomplete explanation of voting behaviour.

In a slight variation from the notion of life-cycle effects, the life events theory states that certain experiences or circumstances can improve or decrease the chances of a person becoming a habitual voter. These life events include receiving post-secondary education, being married, or having a young child in the home (Plutzer, 2002). Many of these life events are directly linked to assuming adult roles but only loosely correlated with age, both because people are maturing later and because life paths are not universal. Currently, the existing data makes it difficult to fully assess the difference between life events and life-cycle effects (Smets, 2012, pp. 424–425).

Cohort effects

The notion of cohort effects holds that each generation is culturally distinct and it is unrealistic to expect that new generations will behave in the same way as previous ones. According to this explanation, attitudinal or cultural factors have led the current generation of young adults to vote less than previous cohorts. As such, this cohort cannot be expected to “catch up” with the previous generation merely with life-cycle progression, because their attitudes and culture are different from those who grew up in another time (Blais & Loewen, 2011, p. 26).

The decline in voter turnout in Canada is not uniform across different age cohorts. Instead, youth are less likely to vote than older Canadians. We also know there have been some important cultural changes that explain why youth might be less likely to vote than adults, such as no longer regarding voting as a moral duty (Blais, Gidengil, Nevitte, &

Nadeau, 2004, p. 229). However, there is still significant work to be done to understand why different cohorts present different electoral behaviours (Blais & Loewen, 2011, p. 19).

Time effects

The time or context effects model states that the characteristics of elections in recent years have changed to be less appealing to voters, leading to lower turnouts. Unlike cohort effects, which affect only those from the cohort in question, time has an impact on all individuals regardless of age (Blais & Loewen, 2011, p. 26). One example of a potential change that could be present over time would be if elections were less competitive. With this example, some basis was found for the assertion that people are less likely to vote if the election is viewed as less competitive. However, like the life-cycle model, there is little evidence that younger people are disproportionately influenced by this lack of competitiveness or other characteristics of the time (Blais & Rubenson, 2013). As such, the time model is an incomplete explanation for low youth voter turnout.

Conclusions on theories of voting behaviour

None of the theories of voting behaviour described above fully explain the decline in youth voter turnout. However, each casts some light on the type of factors that may influence youth to vote less than those of previous generations. While firm conclusions cannot be drawn, according to Blais and Loewen (2011), it does seem that low youth voter turnout is “more the outcome of changes in youths’ socio-demographic situation and/or values and attitudes than in changes in the electoral landscape” (p. 17).

Barriers to voting

Also key to understanding why youth voter turnouts have been declining are the reasons people do not vote. In the *2011 National Youth Survey Report* (R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2011), two major barriers to youth voter participation were identified: access and motivation.

Access barriers prevent people who want to participate from casting their vote. These barriers include lack of knowledge of the electoral process, personal circumstances and administrative barriers. Motivational barriers prevent people from voting for reasons other than access. These obstacles are attributable to many factors including negative attitudes, low interest and lack of political knowledge. In the *2011 National Youth Survey Report*, 64% of non-voters cited access barriers as the main reason they didn't vote. However, the researchers performed a regression analysis and found that access and motivation barriers had approximately equal impact on the likelihood that youth would vote (R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2011). As such, it seems important to give attention to both access and motivation barriers through the Youth Electoral Audit.

While barriers can be divided into the two categories of access and motivation, this distinction is somewhat artificial. In reality barriers are much more complex. For example, while the belief that "voting in a federal election was not easy or convenient" (R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2011) was cited as an access barrier, there is likely a

motivational aspect to this barrier as well. Nevertheless, these categories are useful for understanding the barriers to electoral participation faced by youth.⁷

Access

Access barriers may be those that jump to mind first when thinking of reasons people stay home on election day. Some aspects of access that municipalities have direct control over include poll location, poll hours, election advertisements, poll configuration and services for people with disabilities, and language of both voting instructions and election advertisements. If these sorts of elements of an election are poorly designed or implemented, people who would otherwise vote are unable to do so.

The *2011 National Youth Survey Report* (R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2011) notes that many of the access barriers between youth and voting are related to personal circumstances. These personal circumstances include conflicts between voting and work, personal responsibilities such as child care, or time. Other access barriers include a lack of knowledge about when and where to vote and administrative barriers. The most commonly cited access barriers included

- not knowing where or when to vote (25% and 26% of non-voters, respectively, versus 3% and 2% of voters),

⁷ In addition to the theories of why people do not vote presented here, it is important to note that the potential of concerted attempts to keep people away from the polls exist. Voter suppression in the form of underhanded and sometimes illegal behaviour by candidates and other parties is a reality in Canada. However, the focus of this section is on structural barriers to participation. While voter suppression is not addressed expressly in the Youth Electoral Audit, auditors would nonetheless be encouraged to report any illegal or questionable activity that took place during the election campaign or on election day that may have affected turnout.

- personal circumstances (46% of non-voters reported having difficulty getting to the polling station as an influence on their decision),
- Administrative barriers, including difficulty in providing ID, were identified by 15% of non-voters (versus 2% of voters), and
- not thinking that voting in a federal election was easy or convenient (18% of non-voters versus 2% of voters). (R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2011, p. ii)

In the *2011 National Youth Survey Report*, findings were analysed generally and also in association with five subgroups: Aboriginal youth, unemployed youth, youth with disabilities, ethnocultural youth, youth living in rural areas. Youth who fell into one or more of these subpopulations were more likely to face access barriers than youth from the general population. The authors note some of these access barriers may be within the scope of influence of the election authority.

Motivation

R. A. Malatest & Associates (2011) defined motivational barriers as obstacles that prevent those who are otherwise able to vote from casting a ballot. Addressing barriers to motivation can be more challenging than addressing access barriers. Some access barriers can be removed quickly, but mitigating motivation barriers requires long-term strategies around communication and education. There are four major categories of motivational barriers for youth: negative attitudes towards politics, lack of interest in politics, lack of political influencers, and low political knowledge (p. 12). Similar to the access barriers,

youth within the five subgroups studied also faced more motivational barriers than the general population of youth.

Conclusions on youth voter turnout

Low youth voter turnout has been a topic of concern and study in many established democracies (Topf, 1995) and a good deal of research has been undertaken on the topic of declining voter turnouts. The Government of Canada has undertaken research to study the phenomenon and to propose potential institutional responses. Many academics have also studied the application of various strategies for improving youth voter turnout. Scholars have tested various approaches to encouraging people to vote and have begun to assess which are more effective.

These efforts have resulted in the identification of a number of best and promising practices that could reverse the trend of declining youth voter turnout. However, while a number of effective strategies have been identified, there is no central means of determining which of these best and promising practices have been implemented at lower levels of government, including municipal government. In short, no transferable evaluation system for Canadian municipal election practices aimed at improving youth voter turnout is presently known.

What we do know, however, is low voter turnout does not have a single solution (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003, p. 8). Instead, the solution is likely to lie in a number of changes that together make the electoral system fit the needs and interests of youth better. Rather than proposing and testing a particular approach to deal with one aspect of low youth voter turnout, this project takes the approach of providing an audit methodology for

examining the array of current practices of municipal governments with regard to youth voter turnout. By providing a picture of where we should be and an assessment of where we are, it is hoped the path to improvement might become more obvious.

CHAPTER 3: DESIGN RESPONSE

The Chumir Foundation and AiB arranged a collaborative partnership to address the problem of low youth voter turnout and the lack of a transferable evaluation system for Canadian municipal election practices. The following chapter presents the rationale for the resulting design response: the Youth Electoral Audit.

Why an audit?

The choice to design an audit was informed by a number of factors. Auditing is an established way to assess the strength and health of current practices (Fox et al., 2012, p. 7) and democratic audits in particular have an established history as a method for assessing democratic practices and institutions (W. Cross, 2010b, pp. 3–4). Furthermore, the audit approach lends itself to comprehensive, systematic, and rigorous assessment of the democratic process (Beetham, 1999, p. 569). Democratic audits also provide the potential for comparability, both between jurisdictions and over time (Beetham, 1999, p. 579). Finally, AiB has some experience conducting Youth Friendly audits for Canadian organizations.⁸

Audit precedents

A number of precedents for democratic audits exist. However, while democracy is a “universal value and aspiration,” it is also an “inherently local political process that

⁸ While AiB does have this existing audit methodology, the Youth Electoral Audit was not developed to mirror the Youth Friendly Audits. Instead, the methodology for the Youth Electoral Audit was developed independently in order to develop a structure that fits the context of municipal elections.

must be supported through context-sensitive approaches that are anchored in local leadership and local ownership of democracy-building processes” (Beetham et al., 2008, p. 8). Democratic governance is a common ambition, but the process of building, strengthening, and maintaining democracy varies. As such, even with a rich history of democratic audits, it was necessary to design a Youth Electoral Audit to fit the context of Canadian municipal elections. Reviewing democratic audit precedents proved to be useful in designing the Youth Electoral Audit because they provided examples of successful frameworks and in some cases provided cues for potential audit themes and indicators.

Canadian Democratic Audit

A ten volume series on *Auditing Canadian Democracy* (W. Cross, 2010a) chronicled the findings of the Canadian Democratic Audit. This audit focused on three benchmarks of democracy: participation, inclusiveness, and responsiveness. The audit was of Canadian democracy overall, including, but not limited to elections.

The Canadian Democratic Audit did not rely upon checklists or strict democratic criteria. Instead, the audit provides a framework to assess whether the democratic performance aligns with the three benchmarks listed above on the basis of three standards:

How well the institution or practice meets the democratic needs of contemporary Canada, whether positive change has occurred over time, and where applicable, how Canadian practice compares to that in other Western democracies. (W. Cross, 2010b, p. 10)

A number of benefits to this approach over a static checklist were cited, particularly that it does not dictate one view of democracy or a single normative standard that would be necessary to construct such a list. The format, length and depth of this audit allowed space for the voices of the many researchers who worked on the project, representing some of the diverse views of the democratic process in Canada (W. Cross, 2010b, pp. 9–10).

From its name, it may be assumed that the Canadian Democratic Audit would align with the Youth Electoral Audit. However, while the approach of the Canadian Democratic Audit holds a great deal of value and provides a nuanced, full discussion of democracy in Canada, a similar approach would have been inappropriate for the Youth Electoral Audit. The Canadian Democratic Audit was conducted by a large group of experts (W. Cross, 2010b, p. 10). In contrast, a small group of staff from AiB needed to be able to conduct the Youth Electoral Audit. These staff would be expected to have good awareness of youth voter turnout, but would not necessarily be skilled researchers. As such, we opted for a more structured approach for the Youth Electoral Audit.

International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) provides a framework for assessing the quality of democracy based on two fundamental principles and several mediating values. Beetham et al. (2008) selected auditing as their methodology because “a crucial element in mapping, explaining and encouraging this growth in democracy has been the need for valid, meaningful and reliable ways to assess democratic progress and the quality of democracy itself” (p. 6).

The democratic principles used in the framework are popular control and political equality. The mediating values are participation, authorization, representation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and solidarity (p. 23).

International IDEA sets out an approach for democracy assessment that aims to spur public awareness and debate while outlining priorities for reform. The approach involves assessment on a broad set of criteria derived from democratic principles. The benchmarks for assessment are not specified in the methodology and should be based on the country's history, regional practice, and international norms. By leaving the development of the benchmarks to those conducting the audit, the International IDEA approach is meant to provide a universal assessment framework that is appropriate for both old and new democracies. To further the sense of contextual appropriateness, the audit is intended to be conducted independent from the government by citizens of the country being examined (Beetham et al., 2008).

The four main pillars of the International IDEA democracy assessments are

- citizenship, law and rights,
- representative and accountable government,
- civil society and popular participation, and
- democracy beyond the state. (Beetham et al., 2008, p. 26)

Like the scope of the Canadian Democratic Audit, these pillars are far broader than the Youth Electoral Audit, which focuses on the election and voter preparation. By specifying the particular pillars of democracy to be examined, this approach is more prescriptive than the Canadian Democracy Audit, yet still leaves room for contextual adaptations. Unlike the Youth Electoral Audit, which is only meant to be applied in the

specific context of Canadian municipal elections, the International IDEA framework is necessarily broad because it is meant to accommodate the needs of many different national contexts.

Audit of Democracy in the UK

The Audit of Democracy in the UK was the audit on which the International IDEA framework was based. However, the Audit of Democracy in the UK methodology was developed specifically for the British context while the International IDEA methodology is general and meant to be adapted to the local context.

The UK audit is described in a way that is perhaps most analogous to the goals of the Youth Electoral Audit:

It is a comprehensive and systematic assessment of a country's political life against the key democratic principles of popular control over decision-making, and political equality in the exercise of that control. It is a kind of “health check” on the state of a country’s democracy, using a broad-ranging framework which covers all the main areas of our democratic life (Wilks-heeg, Blick, & Crone, 2012, p. 3).

Like the International IDEA framework, the Audit of Democracy in the UK also relies upon the democratic principles of popular control and political equality. From these two principles, the audit then evaluates 15 core aspects of democracy on the basis of between 3 and 8 “search questions” each. The 15 core aspects are taken from the four core principles of democracy listed in the IDEA framework: citizenship, law and rights; representative and accountable government; civil society and popular participation; and

democracy beyond the state. The search questions are not a checklist, but they do guide the research conducted for the audit.

The search questions utilized in the Audit of Democracy in the UK closely resemble the approach taken in the Youth Electoral Audit in that they specify certain questions that should be answered during the audit process. They do not, however, provide the same level of detail or specific measures provided by the Youth Electoral Audit. Similar to the assessment of Canadian Democratic Audit, the UK example is conducted by expert auditors with subject matter expertise. As such, the prescriptive approach of the Youth Electoral Audit is meant to bring some consistency to an inconsistent set of auditors with varying skill levels.

Key take-aways regarding auditing methodology

Some aspects of the auditing methodologies above are similar to the approach utilized in the Youth Electoral Audit, while others are different. The Youth Electoral Audit uses a similar approach to the one used in the Canadian Democratic Audit in that it evaluates institutional practices. However, in the case of the Youth Electoral Audit, the institutions being evaluated (the election authority, the education authority, the media, etc.) include a much narrower scope than that of the Canadian Democratic Audit. Another similarity is the defined criteria of the Audit of Democracy in the UK and the Youth Electoral Audit checklist.

The Youth Electoral Audit also differs from its precedents in a number of ways. It focuses on a particular demographic (youth), rather than democratic performance overall and is meant to be conducted by a staff member of AiB, who is likely to be a Canadian

citizen, but an outsider to the local community. This approach was chosen because it allows for municipalities with limited capacity for auditing to harness the youth engagement expertise provided by AiB. Using an auditor who is not a member of the local community differs from the International IDEA framework for democratic assessment, which stipulates that citizens of the country should conduct audits.

In addition to the structural differences between the approaches, the resources available for the Youth Electoral Audit were significantly less than those afforded for the precedent audits. For example, the Canadian Democratic Audit was lead by an advisory group of 6 academics and authored by 13 experts in Canadian democracy—significantly more staff resources than the Chumir Foundation and AiB were able to provide. Given the constraint of limited resources, not all methodological aspects of the audit precedents were appropriate for the Youth Electoral Audit.

Why municipal government elections?

The initial parameters for the Youth Electoral Audit did not specify a particular level of government. In fact, we were optimistic that we could design a tool that could provide comparisons between different levels of government. However, after some investigation it became evident that elections at each level of government in Canada are quite different. Declining voter turnout and low youth voter turnout could have been studied at any level of government. However, the municipal level was selected for the Youth Electoral Audit because it seemed to make practical and theoretical sense.

While voter turnout generally, and youth voter turnout specifically, is a concern at all levels of government in established democracies, the lowest voter turnouts are seen at

the municipal level (Cutler & Matthews, 2005, p. 363). Turnouts at the municipal level are estimated to be about half that of national level elections (Hajnal & Lewis, 2003, p. 646). Although municipalities within a given province are subject to the same laws, AiB observed that youth voter turnouts and the actual practices of Canadian municipalities seemed to vary widely.

Even though municipal voter turnouts tend to be the lowest of all levels of government, the decisions made at this local level have direct impacts on those who live within the municipality. Municipal issues such as snow removal and utilities may not be glamorous, but they represent the day-to-day government responsibilities that citizens encounter. More weighty issues, such as funding for education and provision of social services also have municipal links (Hajnal & Lewis, 2003, p. 646).

Due to the low voter turnouts at the municipal level, these elections have garnered some special provisions. For example, in Norway, the voting age in selected municipal elections was lowered to age sixteen (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, 2011) because turnout is higher among 16- and 17-year-olds than older first-time voters (Zeglovits, 2013, p. 253).

On a practical level, auditing at the municipal government level also makes sense. For AiB, municipalities are the most manageable size government both for partnerships and for conducting audits. Second, because municipal election and education laws fall under provincial jurisdiction, a potential exists for realizing economies of scale by auditing more than one municipality in a province during an election period.

CHAPTER 4: DESIGN PROCESS

Following the lead of the Canadian Democratic Audit, some of the first steps for the audit design process were “defining the scope of the Audit, identifying appropriate benchmarks for assessment of contemporary Canadian democracy, and agreeing upon the best measurements of these benchmarks” (W. Cross, 2010b, p. 5). Because the design of the audit was a collaborative partnership between two organizations, it was important to define the roles of each partner. This chapter outlines these processes.

Negotiation of roles and project charter

The division of roles between the Chumir Foundation and AiB was established early on in a way that was collaborative and mutually beneficial. The Chumir Foundation took a more theoretical and creative role in the process as designer of the audit methodology and guide. AiB occupied the practical role of auditor.

A project charter was drawn up collaboratively to set out goals for the project, formalize the roles of each organization, and to set out timelines. A copy of the project charter can be found in Appendix A: Project Charter.

Design method

The purpose of research is “to understand the world we live in and develop insights, theories and models to explain the observed phenomena” (Wallace, 2011, p. 242). However, there is often a missing link of knowledge transfer between design practice in industry and design research knowledge in academia (Wallace, 2011, p. 241). This project attempts to bridge the gap between existing academic knowledge and

municipal election systems by providing a methodology for assessing the implementation of best and promising practices for youth voter participation.

This collaborative and partnership-based approach to research resembles action research in some respects. “Action research is an iterative process in which researchers and practitioners act together in the context of an identified problem to discover and effect positive change within a mutually acceptable ethical framework” (Lingard, Albert, & Levinson, 2008, p. 461). By starting from a societal problem (Creswell, 2003, p. 11) – low youth voter turnout – this project took an action-oriented position from the start. The normative approach to the societal problem (Cunningham & Leighninger, 2010) also resembles action research. However, the lack of widespread inclusion of the community in the research process distinguishes this approach from pure action research.

Design is a “knowledge processing activity” that relies on known facts, specialist knowledge, and personal knowledge and experience (Wallace, 2011, p. 241). In the case of low youth voter turnouts, a great deal of knowledge already exists concerning the magnitude of the problem, probable causes, and possible solutions. However, systematic evaluation of whether the potential solutions—best or promising practices for youth electoral participation—have been implemented in any given Canadian municipality is not easily achievable.

Rather than approaching the problem of low youth voter turnout through a standard research methodology or a purely creative process, I used design to help guide the development of the Youth Electoral Audit. Design methodology “enables an appropriate, controlled and verifiable procedure to obtain resilient results” and should be

more efficient and effective than an “experience-based, creative approach” (Birkhofer, 2011, p. 4).

While Wallace (2011, p. 243) argues, “the field has expanded rapidly but as [of] yet there is no agreed design research methodology, taxonomy and terminology,” I opted to use a widely known methodology. This project was approached using a modified version of the general problem solving process described by Pahl, Wallace, and Blessing (2007). In this case, the design approach can be understood as “a prescriptive plan by which a class of design tasks can be tackled” (Wallace, 2011, p. 242).

The prescriptive plan of the general problem solving process is confrontation, information, definition, creation, evaluation, and decision (Pahl et al., 2007, p. 127). An important aspect of this approach is that each of the steps of the plan allow for and even encourage iteration to ensure the result is satisfactory.

Contextual modifications to design methodology are acceptable and even desirable as, “all methods should be adapted to the context and applied flexibly” (Wallace, 2011, p. 242). “Design research [is] aimed at improving practices and this will frequently involve proposing improved design methods” (Wallace, 2011, p. 243). As such, to ensure the methods fit the problem, I opted to modify the general problem solving process slightly. The problem had already been confronted and some information had already been gathered by AiB. Thus, those two aspects of the plan were reduced in depth and breadth from the outset. Conversely, the information gathering, creation, and evaluation aspects of this project were emphasized. As per the general decision making process outlined by Pahl et al. (2007, p. 127), the decision phase of the process has been

to confirm that the preliminary results of the project were satisfactory and to proceed with planning for future work.

Audit parameters

The Youth Electoral Audit was first and foremost required to be user-friendly, practical, and cost-effective in nature. One auditor and one audit assistant needed to be able to gather the necessary data during a two or three week trip to the municipality. As well, audits would conceivably be undertaken by a variety of auditors so the methodology needed to be generally easy to learn and understand.

In addition to these practical considerations, a number of audit parameters were defined by AiB and/or indicated by the literature and experts. These parameters were discussed, clarified, and compiled before I began drafting the first attempt at an audit methodology. In order to be methodologically sound and practically useful, it was important for the audit methodology I designed to fall within all of the defined parameters that were provided. These parameters are outlined below.

An evaluation of institutional practices that promote voter turnout

There are many factors that can impact voter turnout. Some of these factors are individual and some are institutional. The goal of the Youth Electoral Audit is primarily to audit institutional factors. W. Cross (2010b, pp. 5–6) notes that when constructing the Canadian Democratic Audit, the designers were faced with the challenge of what to include and exclude from the audit scope because attempting to audit all spheres of democratic life would be unmanageable. Similar to the approach of the Youth Electoral

Audit, this group also decided to focus on institutions rather than individuals. It is important to acknowledge that many individual factors, such as income, do have systemic roots. However, merely measuring household incomes in a particular municipality tells little about how voter turnout can be improved. Instead, this project focuses on factors that are more or less clearly systemic, in an effort to identify areas where systemic change could result in meaningful increases to youth voter turnout.

Based on specific indicators

The approach of an audit based on specific indicators was decided early on, for a number of reasons. AiB perceived an audit based on specific indicators to be an easier means for providing feedback to municipalities. By assigning a numerical score, comparisons could be drawn between municipalities. Specific indicators were also thought to make the task of completing the audit less daunting for an inexperienced auditor.

With this decision, a major task of designing the Youth Electoral Audit was to compile the list of indicators. Criteria for including an indicator were devised from the audit parameters. Each of the indicators needed to be clearly articulated to ensure a variety of auditors would be able to conduct audits. Each of the included indicators also had to be supported by the literature or expert opinion.

Straightforward scoring system

AiB stated their intention to conduct multiple audits per year, with a variety of auditors of varying skill. As such, they required an easy-to-understand, straightforward

scoring system to keep the training process manageable. A three-point scale of measures for each indicator was selected because the broad categories leave less room for inconsistency. While a 5- or 7-point scale would have provided more precision, scales with a lower number of choices are suitable when the person completing the scale has less measurement sensitivity (Spector, 1992, p. 21).

Each indicator was assigned measures that represented three points on a spectrum:

- 0 points: inadequate practices,
- 1 point: adequate practices, and
- 2 points: excellent practices. (Ing, 2014, p. 4)

In the Youth Electoral Audit guide, specific criteria for the thresholds between each of the three points are provided for each indicator. In an effort to ensure the scoring process was straightforward for auditors, the thresholds between the measures were designed to be as specific and unambiguous as possible. Further, clear instructions were provided to auditors to score the lowest or highest number of points applicable in cases that were potentially discretionary. Auditors are instructed to assign scores for all indicators unless the option of not applicable (N/A) is provided. This instruction is meant to differentiate between situations where a practices is not in place (0 points) and where a practice cannot be implemented due to prohibitive law or infrastructure (N/A). These instructions were intended to minimize confusion for auditors.

Practical measures

When developing measures for each indicator, an important consideration was to create indicators that were measurable. For an indicator to be considered measurable the

required data had to be generally readily available for auditors or be relatively easy for the auditor to collect. In the Youth Electoral Audit guide, after the description of each indicator and the measures are outlined, a list of potential data sources is provided. As the indicators were being developed, potential data sources were brainstormed. If no available data sources were applicable and data collection by AiB was impractical, the measures were adjusted slightly to be more practical or existing data sources were reimagined.

During the process of design, we recognized that developing measures that rely upon existing data sources might have embedded a bias toward the status quo. To mitigate this possibility, the audit methodology was meant to use existing data in creative ways when necessary. For example, the lists of candidates and elected officials suggested as data sources in indicator “2.2.3: Youth are represented as candidates and/or elected officials of the municipal government” (Ing, 2014, p. 16) might not ever have been examined on the basis of age before. Auditors were expected to take this existing data and to analyze it in ways that are useful for the audit, regardless of whether this sort of analysis had been done before.

Ready in time for the 2013 municipal elections in Alberta

The Youth Electoral Audit project was first devised in the winter of 2013, and the pilot version of the audit tool needed to be ready in time to conduct an audit of the October 21, 2013 municipal elections in Alberta. Time to design the audit methodology was, therefore, limited and elaborate designs that would require more time to develop or execute were impractical.

Data gathering

AiB has significant practical experience stimulating youth voter turnout in Canada. However, the purpose of this project was to go beyond the anecdotal evidence they had gathered to approaches that are broadly accepted to be best, or at least promising, practices. As such, information on best and promising practices for raising youth voter turnout was obtained from two sources: key-informant interviews and the literature.

The purpose of the key-informant interviews was to develop a list of best and promising practices for youth democratic participation and to attempt to find some consensus on the most salient principles at hand for improving voter turnout. The purpose of the literature review was to provide ideas for additional indicators that did not flow from the interviews and to confirm the ideas presented by the experts who were interviewed. The key-informant interviews and the literature review were analyzed and a list of best and promising practices for youth electoral participation was drafted. From this list, I developed a list of potential indicators for inclusion in the audit tool.

Key-informant interviews

I conducted semi-structured key-informant interviews with 14 experts during the spring and summer of 2013. The expert interview participants represent some of the foremost thinkers on the topic of electoral participation in Canada. Access to these experts that might otherwise have been impossible was afforded by AiB. I compiled a list of potential interview participants from existing contacts of the Chumir Foundation and

AiB, including members the Council on Youth Electoral Engagement (CYEE). Members of Parliament (MPs) responsible for the democratic reform portfolio were also included. Due to budgetary constraints, Calgary, Alberta; Montreal, Québec; and Ottawa, Ontario were selected as interview sites based on convenience. I distributed invitations to participate in an interview to MPs, CYEE members and Chumir Foundation contacts who lived at least part-time in Calgary, Montreal, or Ottawa. I conducted interviews with all experts who indicated interest in participating.

The experts were academics in the field of political science and democratic studies, current and former politicians, current and former political party insiders, current government employees, and current employees of democracy-oriented think tanks and policy institutes. The participants were as follows:

- André Blais, Canada Research Chair in Electoral Studies, Université de Montréal
- Jenna Burke, Cultural Connections for Aboriginal Youth project coordinator, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples
- Julie Cafley, Vice President, Public Policy Forum
- Penny Collenette, party insider and former candidate, Liberal Party of Canada
- Ilona Dougherty, former Executive Director, Apathy is Boring
- Elizabeth Gidengil, former Director, Centre for the Study of Democratic Citizenship
- Jean Pierre Kingsley, former Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, Elections Canada
- Paul Martin, former Prime Minister, Liberal Party of Canada
- Craig Scott, Member of Parliament and Official Opposition Critic for Democratic and Parliamentary Reform, New Democratic Party of Canada

- Deitland Stolle, Director, Centre for the Study of Democratic Citizenship
- Michel Venne, Director, Institut du Nouveau Monde

In addition, three interview participants chose to remain anonymous. One anonymous participant was from Alberta, one was from Québec, and one was from Ontario. Two of the anonymous interview participants were affiliated with the Conservative Party of Canada and one was employed by an election authority.

The experts were a necessarily narrow group who all have an interest in improving youth electoral engagement. Due to the normative nature of this project, contrary opinions (those that would see improving youth electoral engagement as a neutral or negative outcome) were not consulted. In terms of subject area expertise, each of the interview participants was a generalist or expert in federal electoral participation in Canada.

I contacted the potential participants by email or phone and provided them with a recruitment letter by email (see Appendix B: Recruitment letter). The experts were offered an opportunity to participate in an interview at a location of their choice in Calgary, Montreal or Ottawa. Participants were told interviews were expected to take between 30 minutes and one hour, depending on the level of detail provided. I provided those who were interested in participating in an interview with a copy of the consent form (see Appendix C: Interview consent form) and interview questions (see Appendix D: Interview guide) in advance of the interview, if requested.

Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations for this project were relatively uncomplicated. Each of the experts regularly considers electoral participation as a part of their employment or social position. Most make comments publicly on electoral participation in Canada on a regular basis, though a few did not have clearance to speak publicly from their employers. Each participant was given the choice of participating anonymously or using their own name. Three participants chose to remain anonymous. None of the experts were deemed to be vulnerable.

Before commencing each interview, I gave participants an opportunity to review the consent form and interview questions. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions about the consent form at this time. After all questions were answered, participants provided either written consent or explicit oral consent.

Each participant was informed they had the opportunity to end the interview at any time and that they had seven days from the date of the interview to withdraw from the study or alter their comments. No participant ended an interview early, withdrew from the study, or altered their comments. I asked for permission from each participant to audio record the interview; all consented. I also took written notes during each interview to record any insights or important points that arose. Upon conclusion of the interviews, I provided each participant with my contact information in case they wanted to provide follow-up information or to withdraw from the study. The participants did not receive any compensation for participating in the key-informant interviews.

Literature review

In addition to the key-informant interviews, I conducted a review of the literature to identify precedents of democratic and election evaluations. The results of this precedent review were recounted in Chapter 3. I also recorded a list of best and promising practices for increasing youth voter turnout from the literature. This list served two functions: first, it provided ideas for additional best and promising practices that were not identified in the interviews. Second, it provided a means to support the ideas presented by the experts in the key-informant interviews.

I conducted a general literature review by searching keywords related to youth voter turnout in the University of Calgary online database. Search terms included “youth,” “voter turnout,” and “Canada.” In addition to this general search, I carried out a purposive literature search by searching each of the best and promising practices identified by the expert interview participants. I deposited the literature identified through the searches in a database for analysis. Ultimately, the findings of the literature review were included in the audit guide as the references for each indicator.

Data analysis

To analyze the data collected, I listened to the interview recordings and noted all potential practices for improving youth voter turnout that were presented. Full transcriptions of the interviews were not taken. During the interviews, I noticed many of the experts suggested identical or similar practices. Because there was significant overlap between ideas presented by the experts, I gathered a list of all of the practices suggested by the experts. From this list I completed a count of how many experts recommended

each practice. I then checked each of the suggested practices against the literature. I eliminated practices that were not supported by the literature, paying special attention to those practices that were recommended by only one or two experts. None of the suggested practices were entirely undocumented in the literature, so I was able to evaluate each of them. To avoid repetition, I combined very similar items.

AiB expressed concern that some practices for improving low youth voter turnout are entirely outside of the influence of the municipality. Because the purpose of the tool is to evaluate municipal practices with the goal of providing concrete feedback to municipalities, we focused the audit on practices that municipalities have control over either directly or indirectly. As such, I coded the remaining practices according to who had influence over them:

1. The elector or their family/friends,
2. NGOs,
3. The government,
4. A candidate or political party,
5. The education authority, or
6. The elections authority.

Some potential practices were potentially influenced by more than one of the six influencers listed above and were coded to multiple categories. The results of this coding can be found in Appendix E: Data matrix.

Practices coded to the first and fourth influencers (the elector and their family/friends and a candidate or political party) were eliminated. While these influencers may have great impacts on youth voter turnout, these influencers were deemed by AiB to

be too far removed from the direct influence of the municipal election authority to be relevant to this project. Practices coded to the remaining influencers were retained. Even though the municipality does not have control over all aspects of these influencers, AiB felt municipalities generally have sufficient influence in these areas to justify their inclusion.

The remaining best and promising practices were retained and I rephrased each of them into concrete statements about municipal practices. These statements constituted the basis for the first draft of audit indicators. At this stage, if an item could not be conceptualized as a concrete municipal practice, it was eliminated. A flow chart summarizing the data analysis process can be found in Appendix F: Data analysis flow chart.

With the first draft of audit indicators in place, I then drafted corresponding measures representing 0, 1, and 2 points. Practices assigned 0 points are considered inadequate, practices assigned 1 point are considered adequate, and practices assigned 2 points are considered excellent. For indicators with a quantitative measures, the thresholds for 0, 1, and 2 points were initially set to less than half, more than half, and more than 80 percent respectively. These thresholds were based on evaluation standards typically used in educational settings and elsewhere, with the knowledge that they might need to be adjusted in the future. I paid close attention to the wording of the measures with the intention of wording the thresholds between 0, 1, and 2 points as clearly and unambiguously as possible.

I composed the measures keeping in mind the potential data sources that auditors would likely have access to. A list of suggested data sources were provided for each

indicator. If no available data sources were applicable, the measures were adjusted to be more measurable or a method for collecting the necessary data was developed.

Preliminary audit methodology

Once the list of indicators was drafted, I grouped it thematically for the purposes of convenience and clarity. The intention behind the categories was to group indicators that had similar themes and data sources together. For example, all indicators related to civic education were grouped together. This set of grouped indicators formed the first draft of the Youth Electoral Audit. The process of defining and refining the thematic categories for the audit was iterative. I designed these categories to give the audit structure and to simplify the audit process conceptually for auditors. The final thematic categories were civic education, democratic culture, media and communications, and the election.

To facilitate consistency with the auditing process, I drafted an audit guide with instructions for auditors (see Appendix G: Youth Electoral Audit: Guide to municipal elections). A staff person at AiB reviewed the first draft of the Youth Electoral Audit guide and made suggestions, primarily around easier and more practical ways to measure the intended indicators during an actual audit. Based on feedback from AiB, I made minor revisions to the initial audit guide before the pilot audit was conducted.

Pilot audit

Two AiB employees—one auditor and one audit assistant—travelled to Grande Prairie, Alberta to conduct the pilot audit in October 2013. Once in Grande Prairie, the

auditor also hired a number of local youth to conduct “street team surveys”—intercept surveys carried out in public places with youth aged 18 to 34. In addition to gathering data for the purposes of the audit, AiB conducted outreach through the street teams during the election period. This outreach consisted of providing youth with non-partisan information about the upcoming election period, including instructions on how and when to vote. While AiB is unsure if all municipalities requesting audits will also opt to engage their services for voter outreach as well, they will continue to offer this service in tandem with the audit in the future.

Evaluation and refinement of preliminary audit

Though the specific results of the first audit are outside the scope of this thesis, the testing process brought about a number of insights that were important for the iterative refinement of the Youth Electoral Audit. After the test audit was completed, the auditor’s primary task was to report on the findings of the pilot audit to their client, The City of Grande Prairie. However, the auditor also took the time to provide me with feedback on each of the indicators. The auditor also provided comments on how the practical instructions for conducting the audit were in line with, or differed from the actual practices used to conduct the audit.

To begin the process of evaluation and refinement of the Youth Electoral Audit, the auditor and I discussed each indicator in sequence. The auditor found that a few of the indicators had caused some confusion and needed to be clarified. Additionally, some of the thresholds assigned to the measures were deemed to be unrealistic and were adjusted. The auditor also provided comments on the accessibility and usefulness of the data

sources suggested in the audit guide. I noted these comments and addressed each of them in the final audit guide. The auditor also provided general recommendations and tips for a successful audit. I rephrased these practical tips and compiled them into a list for inclusion in the final audit guide (Ing, 2014, p. 6) in an effort to retain the practical knowledge acquired during the audit testing phase.

With the feedback from audit staff, I revised the Youth Electoral Audit guide to produce the final product. Ultimately, a number of changes were made to the audit guide to make the auditing process more user-friendly and effective, including combining two repetitive indicators, changing the order in which the indicators appear in the audit guide for ease of reading, and adjusting the thresholds between the measures for 0, 1, and 2 points for some indicators to better fit the reality of Canadian municipalities.

In January 2014, AiB produced a draft report for The City of Grande Prairie, outlining the results from the pilot audit. Grande Prairie scored 57 out of 100 on the audit. A report outlining the audit team's findings, as well as commendations and recommendations, will be provided to The City of Grande Prairie by AiB in Spring 2014. I expect that The City of Grande Prairie will also make a summary of this report available to the public.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

Youth Electoral Audit

Audit structure and audit guide

The Youth Electoral Audit is comprised of 45 indicators and evaluates four major areas: civic education, democratic culture, media and communications, and the election. Each of the four major areas is described in an audit guide (Appendix G: Youth Electoral Audit: Guide to municipal elections). The sections in the audit guide contain indicators that have concrete measures associated with them. The audit guide also contains a number of appendices with helpful tools for auditors including an audit checklist and scoring worksheet, interview guides, and a street team survey. The audit guide is intended to be user-friendly and is written in plain language.

Indicators and measures

The 45 indicators included in the Youth Electoral Audit are based on best and promising practices for youth electoral participation. Each indicator consists of a heading, a brief description, and three measures. The measures provide a clear framework for each of the three possible scores: 0, 1, and 2 points. Scores of 0 indicate that the municipality's practices are inadequate. Scores of 1 indicate that the municipality's practices are adequate. Scores of 2 indicate that the municipality's practices are excellent. A description of each of the indicator including the relevant supporting information (from interviews, the literature, or both) is provided in the audit guide.

Audit sections

There are four sections of scored indicators in the Youth Electoral Audit. In addition, there is one section of unscored indicators. A description of each of the audit sections follows.

Civic education

Civic education plays a role in being informed and promoting democratic participation (Glaeser, Ponzetto, & Shleifer, 2007). In a study of voting during referenda, Lassen (2005) found that being informed translates to a much greater propensity to vote. The effect of being informed is strongest for people who do not typically vote in local elections (pp. 115-116).

The civic education section of the audit examines what public schools do to teach civic participation and political literacy. It also examines the opportunities public schools provide for students to practice democratic decision making in the school environment (Ing, 2014, p. 7). Post-secondary institutions are also included in this section, with indicators for politician's involvement in post-secondary institutions, political clubs, and opportunities to receive credit for civic participation. The indicators for post-secondary institutions provide the option for a score of "not applicable" (N/A) in the case of municipalities that do not have a post-secondary institution within their boundaries (Ing, 2014, pp. 11–12). There are a total of 11 indicators for civic education in the Youth Electoral Audit. Three of these indicators provide the option for a score of "N/A."

Democratic culture

The social context of home, school, and neighbourhood affect how likely youth are to vote (Pacheco, 2008). A robust democratic culture is important for democracy because it functions to complement the work of some formal institutions. For instance, people who are engaged in a democratic culture might discuss voting with their friends and family, augmenting formal efforts for educating the voting public and communicating about the specific election campaign (R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2011).

Two aspects of the democratic culture of the municipality are evaluated in the Youth Electoral Audit. The first is culture of civic engagement in the municipality. The second is the municipal democratic culture and the opportunities for citizens to be involved in the democratic process at the municipal level (Ing, 2014, pp. 13–16). There are a total of 10 indicators for democratic culture in the Youth Electoral Audit.

Media and communications

Media and communications are a critical means by which people learn about election campaigns. Media and communications play an essential role in creating an informed public (Gidengil et al., 2010). While informal communications such as word of mouth are also important, formal communications are something that the municipality has direct control over and are particularly salient to this audit because direct feedback to the municipality can both be provided and be acted upon.

The communications section of the audit included communications from both the municipal election authority and the candidates. Communications from these bodies are evaluated on the volume of information provided and the specificity to youth (Ing, 2014,

pp. 17–20). There are a total of nine indicators for communications in the Youth Electoral Audit. One of these indicators provides the option for a score of “N/A.”

The election

The election is an important aspect of the audit because even if the policies and supporting infrastructure (outlined in the previous three sections) are in line with the best and promising practices, it is still possible that the election day itself could be less than ideal. Including a section on the election gives auditors the tools to assess practices related to the particular election that is underway during the audit.

The section on the election includes the aspects of the audit that are specific to the particular election being audited. The subcategories are the election campaign, voter registration, and voting (Ing, 2014, pp. 21–27). There are a total of 15 indicators for the election in the Youth Electoral Audit. One of these indicators provides the option for a score of “N/A”.

Unscored indicators

In addition to the four sections outlined above, the audit contains a fifth section of unscored indicators. This section contains a description of new, innovative, or controversial approaches to raising youth voter turnout. These indicators represent practices that are either questionable in their ability to raise youth voter turnout or approaches that have not yet been implemented in a Canadian context. For instance, indicator 5.1.2: Voting is compulsory (Ing, 2014, p. 28) refers to a practice that is in place in some other advanced democracies, yet is controversial and lacks public acceptance in

Canada (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003, p. 48). Even though compulsory voting leads to significant increases in voter turnout particularly at the municipal level (Loewen et al., 2008, p. 656), it would be impractical to include a scored indicator about compulsory voting in the Youth Electoral Audit because this practice has neither basis in Canadian law nor public support.

The purpose of including the unscored indicators in the Youth Electoral Audit was to strike a balance between acknowledging and working within the existing electoral landscape (W. Cross, 2010b) and providing insights into electoral practices that may one day be implemented in Canadian municipal elections. There are a total of six unscored indicators in the Youth Electoral Audit.

Audit data sources

AiB has a goal of eventually conducting up to 10 audits per year with limited staff resources. Accessibility of data necessary to conduct the audits was a concern during the design process as “even the best methodology is meaningless if the data required for the indicators is not available” (Wilde, Narang, Laberge, & Moretto, 2008). As such, with the final audit methodology, ensuring that the indicators could be measured with data that was readily available or easily collected was important. A good portion of the data for the audits is collected from a review of existing information such as local legislation and curriculum. Auditors then collect primary data from observations, through a street team survey, and from interviews with experts and key informants. Each indicator includes a list of potential data sources.

Street team surveys

Some data required for completing the Youth Electoral Audit is unlikely to be available from the municipality or another pre-existing source such as census data or policy documents. In particular, local, youth-specific data does not typically exist at the municipal level. As such, collecting data directly from local youth through intercept—“street team”—surveys is necessary to complete the audit. The street team surveys were designed to be conducted by local youth in the month before the election at locations frequented by youth including post-secondary campuses, malls, and community centres. The surveys can also be conducted online, but from the anecdotal experience of the auditors in Grande Prairie, we believe the response rate is significantly higher with the in-person, intercept method.

In the pilot audit, in-person survey participants were provided with a clipboard and given the option to complete the survey themselves on paper. As an alternative, participants were given the option to complete the survey verbally with a street team member. During the pilot audit surveys took approximately 5 minutes to complete.

The data collected from the street team surveys is not representative, but it does provide a way to include information about local youth in the audit while staying within the practical constraints of limited time and financial resources. In order to ensure that the data collected is as high-quality as possible, auditors are instructed to ensure that street team members are trained in proper data collection techniques (Ing, 2014, p. 41). In many cases, the audit guide lists street team surveys as only one of many data sources for the indicator.

Asking people about whether they will vote in the upcoming election may stimulate them to cast a ballot by conveying a social expectation that they should vote (Capaccio et al., 1999). While the impact of these street team surveys on youth voter turnout has not yet been studied, I hope that a secondary benefit of the surveys is to increase voter turnout among participants. In an attempt to further capitalize on the potential of pre-election surveys to stimulate voter turnout, the audit guide includes a recommendation that street team members provide participants with non-partisan information about when, where, and how to vote upon completion of the survey (Ing, 2014, p. 41).

Interviews

In addition to gathering local data through the street team surveys, auditors are also instructed to conduct interviews with teachers, election officials, candidates, and prominent youth in the community. These key-informant interviews are intended to provide insights into the education context, the election system, and the youth culture of the municipality. Instructions and interview guides for each type of participant are provided for the auditors in the audit guide (Ing, 2014, pp. 46–50).

Scoring the audit

After scores have been assigned for each of the indicators, an overall score for the municipality is calculated by dividing the score by the maximum possible points and multiplying this figure by 100. A worksheet for calculating the score is provided in the audit guide (Ing, 2014, p. 39). Following the lead of the creators of the *Canadian Index of*

Wellbeing (Michalos et al., 2011), the indicators in the Youth Electoral Audit are unweighted. Utilizing Laplace's *Principle of Nonsufficient Reason*, Michalos et al. chose to assign equal value to all indicators in the absence of a good reason to weight them. Similar to this approach, while it is not appropriate at this time, a reason to assign weights to the indicators may appear later in the process.

Interpreting the scores

The initial audit methodology instructed auditors to report scores as a percentage. However, percentage scores evoke a sense of “grades,” which was concerning to AiB as they do not want to send a message of “passing” or “failing.” The Youth Electoral Audit is intended to encourage better municipal practices, yet the percentage scoring could be interpreted as punitive or judgmental. To address this concern, the final audit guide instructs auditors to convert results to a score from 0 to 100 (Ing, 2014, pp. 33, 39). As well, a guide to interpreting the scores was provided for auditors. Unlike school grades where a score of less than 50 would be failing, scores of 0 to 20 are considered inadequate, 21 to 40 are considered acceptable, 41 to 60 are considered good, 61 to 80 are considered very good, and 81 to 100 are considered excellent (Ing, 2014, p. 5). This framework for interpreting the scores provides five clear divisions and allows for municipalities to progress from one division to the next if they improve their practices.

As mentioned previously, The City of Grande Prairie scored 57 out of 100 on the pilot audit, which translates to a “good” score. Overall, the audit reported that Grande Prairie's electoral practices are reasonably good, and that going through the process of the audit gestures to a few areas where obvious improvements could be made.

Reporting audit findings

In addition to providing instructions on how to conduct the audit, the audit guide provides guidelines for auditors for reporting the results of the audit. At minimum, auditors are instructed to provide narrative comments on the basic details of the municipality, the numerical findings of the audit, the electoral system in place in the municipality, and the accessibility of data. In addition to providing a narrative on the auditor's general impression of the municipal election that is the focus of the audit, the auditor should also provide concrete recommendations for the municipality. The auditors are not necessarily experts in municipal governance, but are youth and citizens who gain insight into municipal election practices and can provide an important perspective into the election practices. Auditors are likely to gain insight into particularly troubling practices that should be discontinued. As well, auditors are likely to identify effective practices that should be continued or expanded, particularly if they have had the opportunity to conduct audits in multiple municipalities (Ing, 2014, p. 5).

Observations

Challenges

I experienced a number of challenges while completing this design project. In particular, navigating the varying needs and goals of the two partner organizations was a complex process.

Coordinating with partner organizations

I found coordinating work between two partner organizations was challenging at times, particularly due to the tight timelines of the project. Maintaining communication, particularly at critical decision-making junctures, was essential yet sometimes proved difficult. Additionally, the fact that AiB was located in Montreal, two time zones away from Calgary, posed some challenge with communication between project partners at the beginning or end of the workday.

To manage challenges of collaboration, it was important to establish a division of labour (Pahl et al., 2007, p. 61). Responsibility for decision-making and the work of completing particular tasks was clearly defined and formalized through a project charter (see Appendix A: Project Charter). The project charter was useful for both delegating tasks and determining who had the final decision-making power on key issues. While the collaborative working environment added an additional layer of complexity to the logistics of completing the project, it also provided important insights and resources that I would not have had access to on my own. In particular, I found the insights from AiB around the application of the audit methodology highly useful for considering the practical realities of the project.

Distinguishing political activity from partisan activity

The Canada Revenue Agency divides the activities a charity can undertake into three categories: charitable, political, and partisan. Charitable activities, including public awareness campaigns that help citizens make informed decisions about decisions related to the work of the charity, are permitted without limits. In addition to these charitable

activities, under the rules of the Canada Revenue Agency, up to 10% of a charity's activities may be political. These political activities may never be partisan (promoting or opposing a particular candidate or party), but they may promote a particular stance on a law, policy, or decision (Canada Revenue Agency, 2012).

With these limitations in mind, it was important to keep the audit within the bounds of charitable and political activity. As a registered Canadian charity AiB is bound to rules about political and partisan activity set out by the Canada Revenue Agency. In addition, AiB voluntarily holds itself to a higher standard of non-partisanship similar to that of Elections Canada employees. Some aspects of the audit were necessarily political (taking a stance on a law, policy, or decision), but it was essential to ensure they were not partisan and that the political goals they related to were based on the goal of increasing youth voter turnout.

One area of difficulty that arose was regarding the unscored indicators. AiB was concerned that some of the unscored indicators are a part of some party platforms. For instance, "5.1.5: The voting age is lowered to 16" is similar to a Green Party of Alberta policy (Green Party of Alberta, n.d.) and is also included as an unscored indicator in the audit (Ing, 2014, p. 29). Ultimately, it was determined that the format of the Youth Electoral Audit was informational and non-partisan, but the reticence on the part of the partner organization to include these indicators was evident.

Balancing depth of information with ease of collecting data

One of the major challenges in designing the Youth Electoral Audit was balancing the depth of information the tool could collect while keeping the tool to a manageable

length with minimal complexity. Because the tool was designed for use by a particular NGO, AiB, the organizational capacity was known. Thus, the audit methodology was developed for use by a full-time staff person who would travel to the municipality during the election period and conduct the audit. During the pilot audit, AiB also sent an assistant to support the auditor, but it is unclear if resources will permit for two staff to attend all audits in the future. If the organizational capacity had been higher or lower, adjusting the depth of information collected to match the capacity would have been necessary. Though adjustments to the depth of information collected may be necessary in the future, in the case of the pilot audit in Grande Prairie, Alberta, the auditor was able to gather the information for completing the audit during the election period.

Negotiating between conventional wisdom and innovation

At times AiB showed considerable resistance to challenging the status quo of electoral practices in Canada. This is not surprising because as auditors providing a paid service to a client municipality, they are in the difficult position of providing feedback to entities that they rely on for funding. With indicators that challenged the status quo, it was necessary to take time to explain the reasons for including them to AiB to ensure the buy-in of the auditors.

As an example, AiB was very hesitant to include the unscored indicator “5.1.1: Votes can be cast remotely through the internet” because the practice is only in place in a few Canadian municipalities, and those municipalities are engaging in online voting only on an experimental basis (Goodman, Pammett, & DeBardeleben, n.d.). I decided it was nonetheless important to include this indicator in the unscored section for two reasons:

1. Because online voting is frequently cited as an example of a practice that would be more youth-friendly than the way that elections are currently conducted (Kyranakis & Nurvala, 2013, p. 267; Russell et al., 2002, p. 40), and
2. Because Canadian municipalities are experimenting with online voting as way to make casting a ballot more accessible (Goodman et al., n.d.).

Even so, AiB was initially uncomfortable with including this indicator because they did not want to come across as judging municipalities for not having online voting in place.

Successes

In addition to the challenges that emerged during the design of the Youth Electoral Audit, a number of successes were also apparent. Like the challenges I experienced, the success were also closely related to the collaborative nature of this project.

High profile interviewees

Due to the connections provided by AiB, I was able to interview some of the foremost thinkers in the field of electoral participation in Canada. Many of the interview participants expressed an interest in the Youth Electoral Audit project and asked to be kept up-to-date on its status and outcomes. These interview participants were already champions of the importance of addressing low youth voter turnouts, and I speculate that some of them may become advocates for the continued implementation and improvement of the Youth Electoral Audit.

Early uptake by the City of Grande Prairie

Before the audit methodology had been finalized, AiB was successful in securing the City of Grande Prairie to be audited with the methodology on a pilot basis. This early uptake was useful for two reasons. First, it provided the opportunity for live testing of the audit methodology before it was finalized, which was important for an iterative, design-based approach. Second, it validated that there is some interest on the part of municipalities for participating in audits. While it is premature to determine whether Grande Prairie will participate in a second Youth Electoral Audit in the 2017 Alberta municipal elections, AiB indicated they seemed generally enthusiastic and optimistic about the Youth Electoral Audit.

Enthusiasm for more audits

AiB speculated that one of the major challenges for the Youth Electoral Audit will be recruiting municipal participants. Because participation is not only voluntary, but also funded at least in part by the municipality being audited, securing interest and enthusiasm of the municipalities is essential. At the time of writing, three municipalities have expressed interest in participating in an audit during the 2014 Ontario municipal elections. AiB is working on formalizing their commitment and recruiting at least two more Ontario municipalities to maximize efficiency of the auditing process.

Potential additional benefits to youth engagement with an audit

In addition to assessing a municipality's practices for youth electoral participation, there is the potential for other positive impacts to flow from use of the

Youth Electoral Audit. The first is the potential for harnessing the power of those conducting surveys with local youth—the street team members. In addition to assisting with data collection to complete the Youth Electoral Audit, these street team workers could simultaneously conduct formal youth engagement and voter education. Conceivably, as street team interviewers conduct surveys with local youth, they could also distribute non-partisan voter information materials to survey participants and other local youth. Further, the very act of hiring local youth to form street teams for gathering data (and potentially conducting non-partisan voter outreach) engages local youth in the electoral process and encourages them to take ownership in the democratic process.

In the case of Grande Prairie, local media took an interest in the project and reported on the Youth Electoral Audit specifically and youth voter turnout generally. This type of coverage has the potential to raise the profile of the problem of low youth voter turnout while providing citizens with the information that an audit is taking place. This way, citizens know they should expect both a report and action on the part of their municipal representatives on the issue of youth voter turnout in the future. Finally, the formal recommendations stemming from the audit have the potential to influence and inform further action in the municipality.

Limitations

In addition to the challenges and successes of the project, the resulting Youth Electoral Audit has a number of potential limitations.

Does not predict voter turnout

Though the Youth Electoral Audit does evaluate municipalities for the presence of best and promising practices for youth electoral participation, high scores on the audit do not necessarily signal relatively high youth voter turnouts. Testing has not yet been conducted to determine if there is a positive correlation between high audit scores and high youth voter turnout.

It may seem logical to assume that municipalities that receive a high score on the Youth Electoral Audit have relatively high youth voter turnout because they would have implemented many of the identified best and promising practices for youth electoral participation. However, this connection is not as straightforward as it might seem on the surface for two reasons: First, while each of the indicators included in the audit are backed by an empirical study or theory, the ways each of the indicators operate together has not been studied. It is possible that multiple practices operating in the same municipality might have unforeseen consequences (positive or negative) on youth voter turnout. Second, some of the practices identified in the audit indicators might require an extended period of time or an association with another practice to have a meaningful impact on youth electoral participation. For instance, civic education practices for primary and secondary education must be in place for a number of years before those who are educated under this practice reach voting age. Merely because a practice is in place does not guarantee an immediate increase in youth voter turnout

Lack of municipal examples for some indicators

While each of the indicators in the Youth Electoral Audit are linked back to best and promising practices highlighted by the experts or in the literature, most are not supported by municipal election studies. Finding examples specific to municipal elections to support the indicators in the Youth Electoral Audit proved difficult for a number of reasons: First, it appears that municipal election practices are not a popular topic of research when compared with Canadian election practices generally (Cutler & Matthews, 2005, p. 359). Second, because the legal and cultural context varies between municipalities, generalizing findings from one Canadian municipality to all Canadian municipal elections would be difficult. The Youth Electoral Audit would be strengthened if more municipal election-specific sources were available.

Lack of youth examples for some indicators

Just as municipal election-specific studies were difficult to find, so were those specifically referring to youth. It is possible that practices that work with the general population may not perform in the same way with youth. As such, the Youth Electoral Audit would be strengthened if more youth-specific sources were available.

Interview participants were generalists or experts at federal level

The experts who participated in the key-informant interviews were very well versed in the theories regarding youth voter turnout. However, each of the participants was either a generalist or an expert in the area of federal politics. As such, it is possible that some municipal election-specific practices might not have been identified during the

interviews. Follow-up interviews with experts in municipal government would strengthen the Youth Electoral Audit.

Future plans

Continued audits of Canadian municipal elections

AiB plans to continue auditing Canadian municipal elections. During the 2014 municipal elections in Ontario, they hope to audit approximately five municipalities. Ultimately, they plan to conduct approximately 10 audits per year. Canadian municipalities and other sponsors will provide funding for the audits.

Interactive website

AiB aims to eventually develop an interactive website to share the results of the audits. The website would ideally allow the public to make comparisons between municipalities and to track the progress of a single municipality over time. In addition to providing easy access to audit findings, the interactive website would outline the audit methodology to the public. While the public will not have access to the full audit guide, this general overview would provide people with a means to informally evaluate the function of their electoral system. AiB will continue to offer the audits as a paid service to municipalities, but citizens and civil society groups will have access to the underlying principles that form the basis for the audit. I hope that exposure to the audit framework will get people thinking about best and promising practices for youth electoral participation. A potential outcome of the Youth Electoral Audit is for people to become

more knowledgeable about their municipal election system and push for changes to improve its function.

Future youth electoral audit research

Carmines and Zellers (1979) note that one of the key challenges in a project that seeks to use theory to measure real-world phenomena is to “determine the extent to which a particular empirical indicator (or a set of empirical indicators) represents a given theoretical concept” (p. 11). In the case of the Youth Electoral Audit, there is the potential for error between the findings of the literature review and interviews, the indicators, and the actual municipal practices. Through refinements to the list of indicators and adjustments to the thresholds between the measures, improvements could be made to the audit methodology.

The consistency of the Youth Electoral Audit methodology could be evaluated with reliability testing. “*Reliability* concerns the extent to which an experiment, test, or any measuring procedure yields the same results on repeated trials” (Carmines & Zeller, 1979, p. 11, original emphasis). Reliability of an instrument is primarily undermined by random error. Just as the name suggests, random error originates from chance factors resulting in the fluctuation of the measurement of a phenomenon over time. An effective instrument eliminates most sources of random error through its design (Carmines & Zeller, 1979, pp. 13–14).

In addition to determining whether an indicator consistently yields similar results when applied repeatedly to the same phenomenon, Carmines & Zeller (1979) note it is also necessary to determine whether an indicator is valid, or measures what it is intended

to measure. “While reliability focuses on a particular property of empirical indicators—the extent to which they provide consistent results across repeated measurements—validity concerns the crucial relationship between concept and indicator” (p. 12). Validity is primarily undermined by nonrandom error, or flaws in the instrument that result in it not measuring the theoretical concept intended (p. 14).

Achieving a perfectly valid and reliable tool is an unrealistic goal. However, it is useful to examine reliability and validity the instrument to facilitate the minimization of random and nonrandom error, as well as to understand how much weight to give its findings (Carmines & Zeller, 1979, p. 16). The following section outlines potential tests for reliability and validity that could be conducted on the Youth Electoral Audit methodology.

Reliability testing

The Youth Electoral Audit could be tested for two types of reliability: retest reliability and interrater reliability. There would be benefit to conducting both tests as retest reliability testing is not likely to be sufficient to establish reliability on its own.

Retest reliability

Retest reliability refers to the extent to which the same instrument administered to the same participant on two or more occasions nets similar results (Carmines & Zeller, 1979, p. 37). Evaluating the Youth Electoral Audit methodology for retest reliability would ensure that the same auditor would come to a similar conclusion when using the audit tool on the same municipality at two different times.

Retest reliability testing alone will not likely be sufficient to determine the reliability for the Youth Electoral Audit for two reasons. First, municipal election systems are dynamic and during the time between tests; thus, significant change may occur within the electoral system. As such, it is important to remember that a low test-retest correlation may indicate that change has occurred within the system, rather than a low reliability of the tool (Carmines & Zeller, 1979, p. 39). Second, Carmines and Zeller note that the system itself may be reactive to the process of evaluation. In the case of the Youth Electoral Audit, it is reasonable to assume that municipalities might change their practices in reaction to the process of being audited because they are reminded of the importance of youth electoral participation in the municipality. The phenomenon of reactivity is further complicated by the fact that municipalities are hiring AiB as a consultant rather than having the Youth Electoral Audit imposed upon them. It may be likely that participating municipalities will be biased toward those whose elected officials and/or administration believe low youth electoral participation is an important issue facing their municipality and as such, might be more keen than average to start implementing change based on ideas that arise from the auditing process.

Interrater reliability

Interrater reliability testing is useful in the case of a new tool to determine if it is “working” properly (Stemler & Tsai, 2008, p. 30). By having more than one rater complete the same audit, interrater reliability testing illustrates whether two different auditors would come to a similar conclusion when using the audit tool on the same municipality.

There are a number of different tests for interrater reliability (Stemler & Tsai, 2008). In the case of the Youth Electoral Audit, a measure of consensus between different raters would be the most useful. By determining the percent of agreement between raters, it would be possible to identify the indicators that are either described in an unclear way or have imprecise measures associated with them. Ultimately, given that over time the Youth Electoral Audit will be conducted by a variety of auditors, establishing interrater reliability is important.

Validity testing

To determine whether the data gathered with the Youth Electoral Audit can indeed be used to interpret how well a municipality is doing at implementing best and promising practices for youth electoral participation, validity testing could be conducted.

Perhaps the most important aspect of validity for the Youth Electoral Audit would be construct validity. When construct validity is evaluated, researchers ask whether the measure relates well to other measures consistent with theory (Carmines & Zeller, 1979, pp. 22–26). In the case of the Youth Electoral Audit, a theoretical relationship between each indicator and theory or an empirical study has already been established. The remaining test for construct validity is to evaluate whether the expected empirical relationship between each of the indicators and the actual election practices or the municipality exists. It may also be useful to conduct an assessment of content validity on the Youth Electoral Audit in the future to determine if the content of the methodology covers the full breadth of the known factors that influence youth electoral participation.

In addition to confirming whether the Youth Electoral Audit is a valid means of evaluating whether municipalities have implemented known best and promising practices for youth electoral participation, it is possible that further validity testing might begin to establish a relationship between the implementation of these practices and the actual youth voter turnout. It would lend significant credibility to the Youth Electoral Audit tool if high scores correlate not only with high uptake of best and promising practices, but also higher actual youth voter turnouts.

Reliability and validity of the street team survey instrument

The Youth Electoral Audit guide provides a number of tools for auditors because it is hoped that supplying these tools will simplify the data collection process for auditors and to increase the uniformity of data between audits. Of the tools provided, the street team survey in particular would benefit from reliability and validity testing. In addition to testing the reliability of the Youth Electoral Audit overall, the reliability of the street team survey instrument should also be evaluated to determine whether it consistently and accurately measures the various attitudes and voting behaviours of youth in the municipality.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Low youth voter turnout is a “wicked” problem that likely requires a complex, multifaceted solution. The Youth Electoral Audit does not present a complete solution to this problem, but rather allows us to better understand current municipal elections practices that may have an effect on youth voter turnout. The interest generated following the Youth Electoral Audit in Grande Prairie, Alberta proves some appetite among Canadian municipalities to engage in audits to evaluate their municipal election practices. The coming years will show whether AiB is successful in establishing the Youth Electoral Audit as a part of the Canadian municipal election landscape. As more municipalities are audited, it may be possible to begin to make comparisons between the results from different municipalities across the country. As well, if the City of Grande Prairie or other municipalities participate in the Youth Electoral Audit during more than once, AiB may be able to track of their progress longitudinally.

While no literature was identified that links municipal participation in an audit to higher voter turnouts, it is known that participation in surveys or other research around an election leads participants to be more likely to vote, likely due to increased awareness (Capaccio et al., 1999). I hope that a similar effect might be observed in participating municipalities, where the act of participating in an audit might encourage more youth to vote.

Work lies ahead to refine the Youth Electoral Audit methodology. As more audits are conducted in Canadian municipalities, necessary adjustments to the methodology may become apparent. At the moment, the list of indicators errs on the side of too many indicators rather than too few. This approach was based on the notion that “it is always

preferable to construct too many items rather than too few; inadequate items can always be eliminated, but one is rarely in a position to add ‘good’ items at a later stage in the research when the original pool of such items is inadequate” (Carmines & Zeller, 1979, p. 21).

Ultimately, the Youth Electoral Audit was intended to provide a user-friendly, practical, and cost-effective methodology for evaluating Canadian municipal implementation of best and promising practices for improving electoral participation of youth aged 18 to 34. The pilot audit conducted by AiB in Grande Prairie, Alberta was completed successfully and resulted in a report containing recommendations for the municipality. Determining the long-term effectiveness of the Youth Electoral Audit, including its capacity for delivering results comparable between municipalities and over time, will require further implementation and study.

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APPENDIX A: PROJECT CHARTER

Project Charter: Youth Electoral Audit

The following is a charter for a collaborative project to be undertaken by Apathy is Boring (AiB) and the Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership (SCF) in 2013.

Project Purpose & Goals

The purpose of this project is to inform policymakers about best practices for youth involvement in the electoral process, to prepare elections officials and policy makers for youth electoral participation, and to increase youth voter turnout in the future. To realize this purpose, AiB and SCF will partner to create a youth electoral audit tool. Subsequently, the youth electoral audit tool will be piloted and tested in the context of the 2013 Calgary municipal election and the results of this pilot will be documented in a report.

The goals of this project are threefold:

1. To develop a methodology for a youth electoral audit that can be applied to jurisdictions in Canada at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels;
2. To pilot and test the audit methodology during the 2013 Calgary municipal election;
3. To report the findings and recommendations from the audit in Calgary and encourage action by policymakers on the issue of youth electoral participation.

Partner Roles

The SCF's role in the project will be to provide the conceptual background, develop the audit criteria, and recommend the audit methods. SCF will work on developing the auditing methodology with the support of AiB's Elections and Research Coordinator and Youth Friendly Coordinator ensuring that AiB's knowledge around youth electoral engagement is adapted in a relevant manner. SCF will draw upon AiB's contacts when identifying expert participants for key informant interviews during the data gathering phase of the project.

AiB's primary role in the project will be to conduct the audit of the 2013 Calgary municipal election with local support from the SCF. With the support of SCF, AiB will then evaluate the audit methods and will report on the audit findings.

Project Activities

Following from the goals outlined above, there would be three project components:

1. Development of Auditing Methodology

A methodology and specific set of procedures must be developed in order to conduct the audit. The development process will include research and a review of the existing literature in this area, as well as consultations with experts in the field through key informant interviews. The goal will be to develop a rigorous auditing methodology that accurately gauges existing structures that facilitate or inhibit youth electoral participation. The methodology should be defined enough to allow tracking of a jurisdiction's progress over time and flexible enough to be applied in a variety of different contexts at all three levels of government. The goal is to create an audit tool that would allow for comparisons between different jurisdictions.

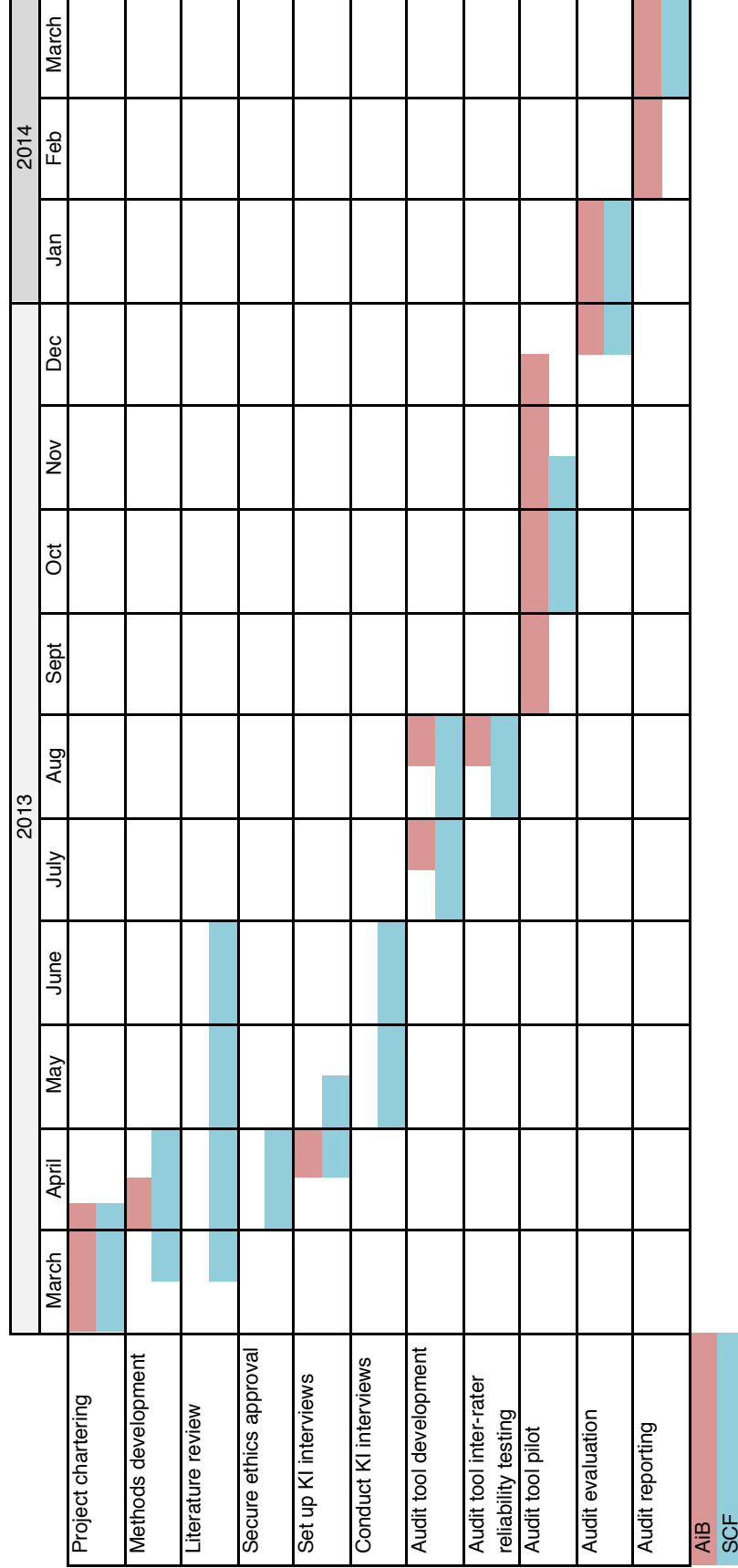
2. Pilot Audit of Calgary Municipal Election

Once a methodology and procedures are developed, they will be piloted by auditing the 2013 Calgary municipal election, taking place on October 21, 2013. This first audit will not only gather data, but also allow the project partners to evaluate the auditing methodology and make any necessary changes or improvements.

3. Reporting of Audit Findings

The data collected as part of the first audit in Calgary will be compiled and analyzed. At least one report outlining the findings will be produced.

Project Timeline



APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT LETTER

Date

Participant Name

Participant Address

Participant Province & Postal Code

Dear _____,

RE: Youth Electoral Audit Tool (YEAT) Development

Consistently low youth voter turnouts have been an area of concern in Canada for some time. In response, the Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership and Apathy is Boring have partnered to develop a Youth Electoral Audit Tool (YEAT).

The YEAT will provide a mechanism to evaluate a jurisdiction's policies and practices for youth voter participation. Intended to be applicable at all levels of government in a Canadian context, the YEAT will potentially allow for tracking of a jurisdiction's progress over time and for comparison between jurisdictions across Canada. It is our plan to pilot the YEAT during the 2013 Calgary Municipal Election, with a goal of eventually conducting audits of elections on a regular basis in Canada.

To ensure we choose meaningful measures for the YEAT, the tool content will be informed by interviews with experts in Canadian electoral and the best practices for youth electoral participation as outlined in the literature. I am currently in the process of scheduling interviews in Ontario and Quebec.

I would like to extend an invitation for you to participate in an interview. Depending on your availability, I can schedule a brief 30 minute interview or a more in-depth 60 minute interview.

I will be in Ottawa on April 30 to May 1, 2013 and in Montreal from May 3 to May 8, 2013. I can schedule an interview at a time and location convenient to you on any of those dates. If you are unavailable to participate in an interview during the dates mentioned above but would still like to participate in this project, I would be happy to schedule an interview over the telephone at another time.

I look forward to meeting you and discussing ways to increase youth electoral participation.

Sincerely,

Jasmine Ing

Research Assistant

Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

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Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Jasmine Ing, Faculty of Environmental Design, 403-462-1663, jfing@ucalgary.ca

Supervisor:

Noel Keough, Faculty of Environmental Design, 403-220-8588, nkeough@ucalgary.ca

Title of Project:

Design of a Youth Electoral Audit Tool: Measuring the implementation of strategies for increasing youth electoral participation

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to develop a comprehensive Youth Electoral Audit Tool (YEAT) that will gauge a jurisdiction's efforts to increase youth electoral participation. The data collected will be used to develop the YEAT and inform a student master's degree project. You have been selected for an interview because of your expertise in electoral participation.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

You will be asked to participate in an interview lasting between 30 and 60 minutes. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time during the interview. As well, you have 7 days after this interview to revise your comments or to withdraw from this study. If you withdraw, none of your comments will be used in this project.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

Should you agree to participate, your name and contact information will be noted with your responses. As well, for ease of documenting your responses, I would like to audio record our conversation.

You have the option to make your comments anonymously or to use your own name. Please note that even if we do not associate your name with your comments, there is a chance you could be identified given the unique nature of your comments and the relatively small number of experts in this field.

I grant permission to be audio taped:

Yes: ___ No: ___

I grant permission to have my company's name used:

Yes: ___ No: ___

I wish to remain anonymous:

Yes: ___ No: ___

You may quote me and use my name:

Yes: ___ No: ___

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

If you choose to be quoted with your name, there is a risk you could face loss of privacy or damage to your reputation. As noted above, you may withdraw or revise your comments within 7 days of the interview.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

Participation is completely voluntary. You are free to discontinue participation at any time during the interview and for 7 days afterwards. If you withdraw, none of your comments will be used in this project. No one except the researcher and her supervisor will be allowed to see or hear any of the answers to the questionnaire or the interview tape. The interview data will be stored for five years on a computer disk, at which time, it will be permanently erased.

Signatures (written consent)

Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate as a research subject.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print) _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

*Dr. Noel Keough
Faculty of Environmental Design
403-220-8588, nkeough@ucalgary.ca*

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Senior Ethics Resource Officer, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 220-3782; email rburrows@ucalgary.ca.

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Youth Electoral Audit Tool Interview guide

My name is Jasmine Ing and I'm a research assistant with the Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Our conversation today will take approximately 30 (60) minutes.

The data collected from these interviews will be used in conjunction with information from the literature to develop a Youth Electoral Audit Tool (YEAT). The YEAT will provide a mechanism to evaluate a jurisdiction's policies and practices for youth voter participation. Intended to be applicable at all levels of government in a Canadian context, the YEAT will potentially allow for tracking of a jurisdiction's progress over time and for comparison between jurisdictions across Canada. It is our plan to pilot the YEAT during the 2013 Calgary Municipal Election, with a goal of eventually conducting audits of elections on a regular basis in Canada.

Before we get to the research questions, I'd like to explain what your involvement in this study will look like. Your comments will be used to inform the development of the YEAT and may also be used in reports and publications related to the YEAT. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time during this interview. As well, you have 7 days after this interview to revise your comments or to withdraw from this study. If you withdraw, none of your comments will be used in this project.

To help me document our conversation, I will be using an audio recorder. The recording will be used for data verification purposes only and will not be shared beyond the research team. Do I have your permission to record our conversation? YES/NO

You have the option to make your comments anonymously or to use your own name. Which do you prefer? Please note that even if we do not associate your name with your comments, there is a chance you could be identified given the unique nature of your comments and the relatively small number of experts in this field.

ANONYMOUS/OWN NAME

Do you have any questions?

Do you agree to participate in this interview? YES/NO

Interview Questions:

1. What are the factors that contribute to low youth voter turnouts in Canada?
2. What factors increase youth voter turnout in Canada? Worldwide?
3. What are the most promising policies to increase youth voter turnout?
4. Are there any policies aimed at increasing youth voter turnout that have been proven ineffective and should be abandoned?
5. In your opinion, what is the single most important change that Canadian elections authorities could make to increase youth voter turnout?

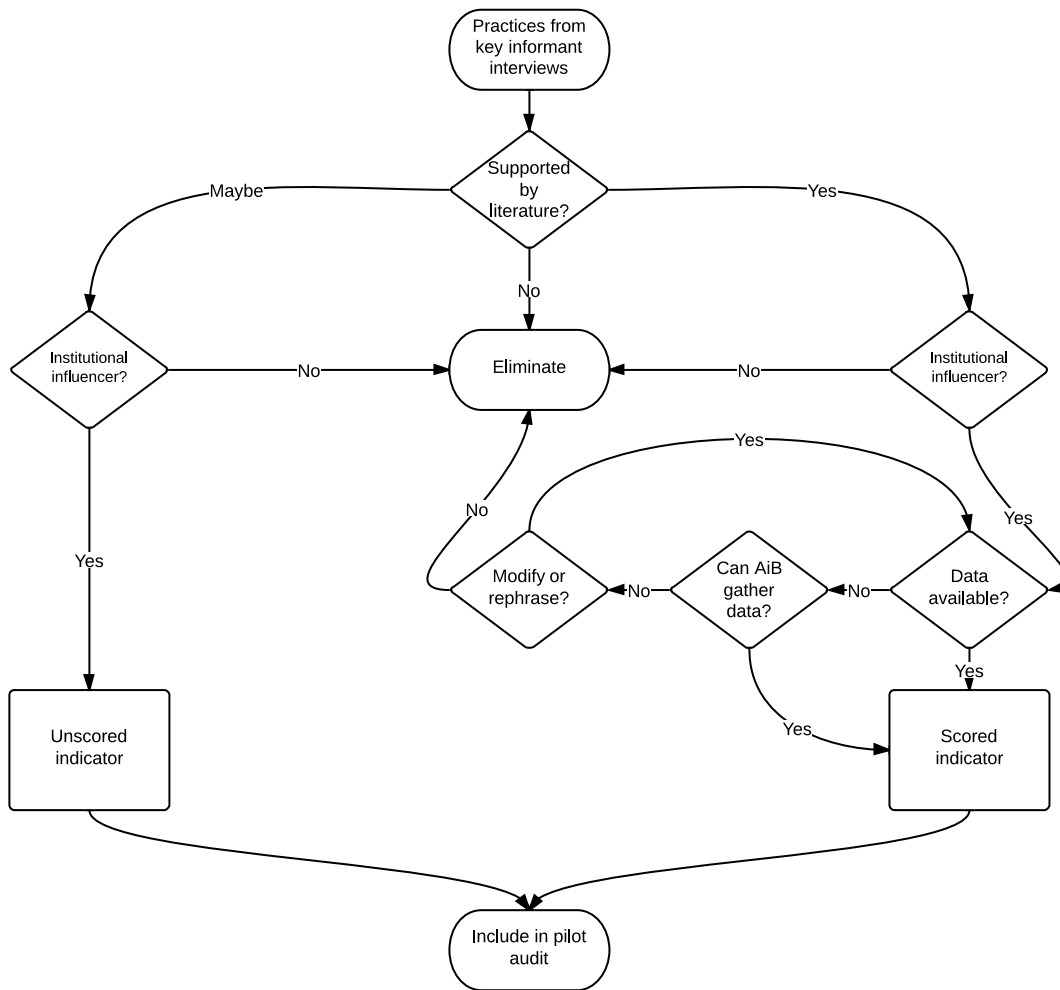
APPENDIX E: DATA MATRIX

		Code					
	# experts	1	2	3	4	5	6
Cultural conditions that contribute to low youth voter turnouts							
Values shifting away from voting as a civic duty	3	x					
Young people less likely to be regular voters (may vote in some elections but not others)	1	x					
Neoliberalism; shrinking role of the public	1	x					
Many young people do not know why they don't vote	1	x					
Parties may not have an interest in increasing turnout	1				x		
Factors that encourage youth to vote							
Being asked to vote by a political influencer (peer, friend, family, party, or candidate)	7	x		x	x		
Political parties and candidates taking an interest in young voters	7				x		
Charismatic party leader/candidate	6				x		
Linking politics to individual and day-to-day life	4	x	x	x	x	x	x
Idealistic or visionary election campaigning or issues	4		x		x		
Early experience with politics	3	x		x		x	x
Discussions about politics in community or home	3	x	x	x			
Involvement in student politics	3				x	x	
Attainment of higher education	2	x				x	
Having at least one parent who votes	2	x					
Being contacted by a door-to-door canvasser	2		x		x		x
Clear issues on which candidates disagree/clear difference between candidates	2				x		
Compulsory voting	2			x			x
Appearance of youth involvement in political campaign	2		x		x		x
Competitiveness of election	2				x		
Regarding voting as important milestone	1	x	x	x	x	x	x
Feelings of trust in politics and democracy between elections	1	x		x	x		x
Opposing an existing leader	1	x			x		
Interest in politics	1	x				x	
Knowledge of the political process	1	x		x		x	x
Committing to vote (e.g. signing something saying they will vote)	1	x	x	x			
Political engagement between elections	1	x	x	x	x	x	x
Involvement in other civic participation (e.g. volunteering)	1	x	x		x	x	
Salient issue (e.g. conscription)	1	x	x		x		
Party platforms that address youth concerns	1		x		x		
Electoral bodies engaging youth	1					x	x
Factors that discourage youth from voting							
Negative perception of or disinterest in politicians and politics	7	x		x	x		
Policy and platforms cater to people who already vote (not youth)	7			x	x		
First past the post system	5			x			x
Cynicism	4	x					
Feeling uninformed	3	x	x	x	x	x	x
Perception that vote doesn't count	2	x		x			

	# experts	Code					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
Not being registered to vote, not receiving a voter information card	2	x					x
Lack of interest in politics	2	x					
Party structure – hierarchical, segregates youth to youth wing	2				x		
Difficulty registering to vote, voter ID requirements (caused by youth mobility)	2						x
Lack of support from employers/lack of knowledge about entitlement for time off to vote	1	x					
History of Aboriginal disenfranchisement	1	x					
No culture of voting	1	x					
Voting a social act and more young people are living alone	1	x					
Unemployment	1	x					
Leaving home	1	x					
Not being invited to participate	1	x	x		x	x	x
Belief that all parties are the same	1	x			x		
Elected officials who do not follow the will of the people	1			x	x		
Negative political campaigning	1			x	x		
Not being able to vote on campus	1					x	x
Voting system not tailored to youth	1						x
Use of paper ballots (looks old-fashioned)	1						x
There are no real barriers	1						
Existing approaches to increasing voter turnouts							
Online voting (mixed opinions)	7						x
Compulsory voting in Australia (generally negative perception of this from participants)	6						x
Engaging youth in design and evaluation of engagement mechanisms	3		x		x	x	x
Polling stations in places where youth feel comfortable; multi-district polling	3						x
Media coverage of elections initiatives that involve youth	2	x					
PEI example	2						
Radicalized or engaged youth in Europe	1	x					
Rock the Vote US	1		x				
Edemocracy/egovernment (doesn't necessarily increase voter turnout)	1			x			
Voting guides in many languages (see David Brock for example where Northern languages were not printed)	1						x
Write letter to all youth who turn 18 to remind them to register	1						x
Embarrassment; publicly publishing the names of people who do not vote	1						x
Civics education							
Politicians in school or at youth events	3				x	x	
During K-6 education	3					x	
Mock elections	3					x	x
Democratic classroom environment	2					x	

	# experts	Code					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
Formal part of curriculum	1				x		
Credit for political campaigning	1				x		
Civics education linked to teaching of history and democracy development	1				x		
At high school level	1				x		
Discuss voting in schools	1				x		
Ongoing	1				x		
Compulsory	1				x		
Interactive	1				x		
Encourage all types of civic participation (not just voting)	1				x		
New or innovative approaches to increasing voter turnouts							
Social media	5	x	x	x	x		x
Target young people who are not students	2		x		x		
Desjardins using debit cards for voting in caisse elections	1	x					
More direct participation? (e.x. like referenda)	1	x					x
Youth-only polling stations with food, music, etc.	1		x				x
Phone call from non-partisan organization at 3pm on election day if you have not voted	1		x				
NGO endorsing a party based on their issues	1		x				
Vote compass tool for youth	1		x				
Publicize the low voter turnout problem	1		x		x		x
Quotas for youth representation in politics	1			x	x		
Improving quality of political debates to make them more interesting	1				x		x
Engaging youth in the university wings of political parties ("farm system")	1				x		
Involve youth in political parties beyond the youth wing	1				x		
Employing youth as poll workers (e.g. 40% target for youth poll workers?)	1						x
Birthday cards from elections authority to 18 year olds	1						x
Voter registration online	1						x
Incentives for political parties and candidates to engage youth (e.g. linking funding to educational outreach)	1						x
Disincentives for negative political campaigning	1						x
Reinstating per-vote subsidy	1						x
Special poll for mail-in ballots at campuses	1						x
Raise voting age	1						x
Modernize the way Elections Canada communicates with electors	1						x
Show friends who voted on facebook	1						

APPENDIX F: DATA ANALYSIS FLOW CHART



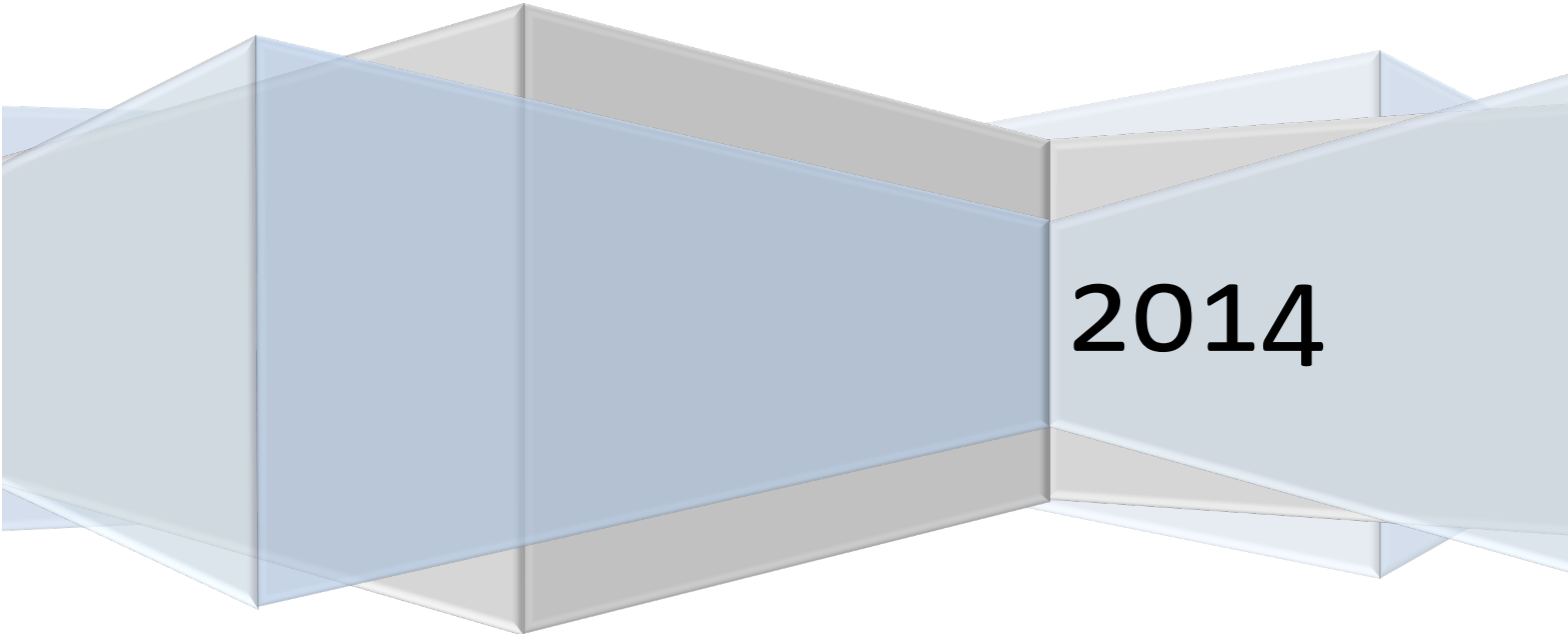
**APPENDIX G: YOUTH ELECTORAL AUDIT: GUIDE TO MUNICIPAL
ELECTIONS**

Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership
Apathy is Boring

Youth Electoral Audit

Guide to Municipal Elections

Jasmine Ing



2014

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INTRODUCTION

The problem of low youth voter turnouts in Canada

Voter turnout amongst youth tends to be much lower than the rest of the Canadian population. For example, voter turnout was 38.8% of the estimated eligible elector population aged 18–24 in the 2011 general federal election, the lowest amongst the population¹. This is compared with an overall turnout of 58.5% of the estimated eligible elector population. In the 2011 general federal election, voter turnout increased steadily with age, until peaking at 75.1% for those ages 65–74 – nearly double that of the youngest age group (Block, Larrivée, & Warner, 2012).

Voter turnout is an important component of democratic legitimacy (Cafley, Conway, Burron, & Lapp, 2012). Further, two principles are at the core of democracy:

- popular control: the people have control over public decisions or decision makers, and
- political equality: each person has an equal say (Beetham, Carvalho, Landman, & Weir, 2008).

Widespread abstention, particularly of a single group of citizens, sounds the alarm on both fronts. Without widespread participation, popular control of public decisions cannot be achieved. Further, when few people vote, those who do participate receive a disproportionately large say in the decision making process.

On a more practical level, low youth electoral participation is considered to be a major factor driving the general decline in voter turnouts overall in Canada. While voter turnout does tend to rise with age, youth voter turnouts are significantly lower than previous generations. In the past 50 years, the electoral participation of new cohorts of voters (those who are eligible to vote for the first time) has declined from over 60% to approximately 30%. Because the starting levels of voter participation amongst youth are so low, overall voter turnout is expected to decline (Blais & Loewen, 2011).

In addition to the impact low youth voter participation has on voter turnout overall, a number of other consequences have been identified as well, including the lack of representation of youth voice and viewpoints, a lack of buy-in to democracy from youth, and a lack of important political socialization for the next generation of voters. It is in the interest of both youth themselves and society overall for youth to vote (Capaccio et al., 1999).

¹ Voter turnouts are typically reported as the percentage of registered voters who cast a vote. However, because youth are less likely than the general population to be registered to vote, this method of reporting tends to inflate the youth voter turnout. As such, whenever possible turnouts for this project will be reported as the percentage of the estimated eligible elector population, regardless of registration status.

Low voter turnout is a serious democratic problem of our time. The phenomenon of comparatively low youth voter turnouts has also been observed at the provincial and municipal levels in Canada, as well in other mature democracies. Declining voter turnouts have a significant impact on the future of democracy because “governments need a minimum level of legitimacy in order to make decisions that have a major impact on the lives of Canadians” (Ménard, 2010).

Youth electoral audit

There have been many studies to examine strategies for improving youth voter turnout. The recommendations that flow from these studies range from simple to complex solutions. It seems, however, that up to this point there has not been a consolidated method of evaluating how many of these practices are actually in place.

In response, the Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership and Apathy is Boring developed a Youth Electoral Audit Tool (YEAT). To develop this audit tool, we spoke with Canadian elections experts and consulted the literature. This tool is intended to facilitate a comprehensive evaluation of the existing municipal electoral system and compares that system to best and promising practices for youth electoral participation.

Predictors of whether individuals will vote, such as the educational attainment or socio-economic status, have been excluded from this audit. Instead, we have chosen to focus on public policy that affects access to society’s opportunities. As such, it is important to note this audit tool is not meant to predict voter turnout in a particular election. Instead, this tool is intended to provide a way to objectively assess conditions at the municipal level that may impact youth voter turnouts and to identify potential changes that may lead to higher turnouts in the future.

Ultimately, the municipality will receive a score in each of four focus areas: Civic Education and Democratic Participation, Democratic Culture, Communications, and The Election. Municipalities that reflect the best practices of the literature will be given full marks and municipalities that have an incomplete implementation of these best and promising practices will receive partial marks. Ultimately, upon completion of the audit, the auditors should have a sense of areas where the municipality excels and areas where there is room for improvement.

It is our hope that a comprehensive review of the current state of affairs might allow municipal elections authorities to gain some inspiration for new approaches to increasing youth voter turnout.

Intended outcomes

This audit tool was created because we envision a world where youth are informed and participate in the electoral process. We focused in on Canadian municipal elections because municipal politics are the closest to home and perhaps provide the best opportunity for youth to

see the effects of their votes in action. Municipal elections are also frequently subject to the lowest voter turnouts of any level of government in Canada (Hajnal & Lewis, 2003, p. 646).

Completing the audit should provide a picture of the areas where the municipal practices contribute to youth voter turnout and areas where they detract from it.

In addition to having an evaluation of the municipal practices, we hope that conducting an audit may have the impact of putting the issue of youth voter turnouts on the radar of people in the municipality.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Conducting the audit

The audit tool is divided into four major areas: Civic Education and Democratic Preparation, Democratic Culture, Communications, and The Election. Within these major areas, there are sections that contain indicators of areas that are evaluated, and within those areas are specific measures.

A fifth section at the end of the audit tool outlines a number of indicators new, innovative, or controversial approaches to raising youth voter turnout. These indicators are not scored but have been included so auditors can examine whether the conditions to support one or more of these approaches might exist in the audited municipality. The measures are meant to be clear cut and unambiguous: upon examining the municipal practice that corresponds with a particular indicator, you should be able to quickly assign a score based on the measures provided. Scores can be tracked using the chart in APPENDIX A: AUDIT CHECKLIST. Once the data has been collected and a score has been assigned for each indicator a tally can be calculated and a score assigned using the scoring sheet at the end of the checklist.

This audit tool was designed to use a variety of data sources including many that municipalities make available publicly. Depending on the size of the municipality, the number of candidates may seem overwhelming. As such, it may be easiest to track the data collected from candidates on a sheet like the one supplied in APPENDIX B: CANDIDATE DATA SHEET.

Additionally, to collect information about youth in the municipality, it is necessary to conduct a set of Street Team Surveys. The survey instrument itself and instructions for conducting the surveys can be found in APPENDIX C: STREET TEAM SURVEY.

Finally, it is important to speak with candidates, teachers and principals, young leaders, and municipal officials to get a full picture of the election. Instructions and sample questions can be found in APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDES.

Data sources

The availability of data was a major consideration in developing the indicators for the youth electoral audit. “Even the best methodology is meaningless if the data required for the indicators is not available” (Wilde, Narang, Laberge, & Moretto, 2008).

Throughout the audit guide, we have included a list of suggested data sources after the description of each measure. If you are having trouble finding the data necessary to answer the audit questions, you may be able to contact your municipality to access other data that has not been published. Because Canadian municipalities vary widely, the suggested data sources may not be appropriate in all instances.

Whenever possible, data should be collected during the election period.

Observations during the audit process

When gathering data for the audit, auditors should monitor the process as a whole. Some questions for auditors to ask themselves while they are conducting the audit include:

- How easy is it to get in touch with the municipality?
- How easy is it to get your questions answered?
- How easy is it to find things on the web?
- How easy is it to get information by phone?
- How easy is it to get information in person?

When writing up the results of the audit, answers to these questions can be useful in order to provide an overall impression of how the municipality communicates with citizens.

Rating the indicators

Rating each indicator consistently is an important aspect of the audit. Each indicator is associated with three measures representing 0, 1, and 2 points to simplify the rating process. Scores of 0 indicate inadequate practices, scores of 1 indicate adequate practices and scores of 2 indicate excellent practices. These measures are intended to be clear and unambiguous, so that the rating of similarly performing municipalities will be the same.

One of the goals of the audit is to gather data from Canadian municipalities for the purposes of comparison between jurisdictions. To ensure similar data is collected from each location and scoring is consistent between different municipalities, each of the indicators should be rated based only on the measures provided. If auditors are aware of other information that contradicts the score assigned based on the provided measures, the score should remain the same and a note can be provided in the report to explain the discrepancy.

In the same way every indicator should be rated with the measures provided, it is important that every indicator receive a rating. If data absolutely cannot be found for a particular indicator, please assign a score of 0 and provide commentary for why the item could not be scored. The exception to this rule is cases where an N/A option is provided and the municipality its criteria. N/A indicates that it is expected that some municipalities will not have the particular service in place.

Scoring the audit

Once scores have been assigned for all indicators, the municipality's score should be tallied. A template for the audit score is provided for auditors on the last page of APPENDIX A: AUDIT CHECKLIST.

To score the audit, first tally each of the four scored sections. Then, calculate the number of points assigned and the maximum possible points, using the worksheet provided. Finally, divide the number of points assigned by the maximum possible points to determine the municipality's score. The lowest possible score is 0 and the highest possible score is 100. Scores can be interpreted as such:

- 0-20: inadequate
- 21-40: acceptable
- 41-60: good
- 61-80: very good
- 81-100: excellent

Reporting audit findings

As noted above, scoring the audit should be based only on the measures provide. However, the report of audit findings can include commentary beyond the indicators. In particular, municipalities benefit from recommendations provided by auditors for practices they should continue or change.

While it is up to the individual auditors to determine what to report and not to report, we do suggest that auditors provide comments on how easy or hard it was to gather data. As well, it is suggested that auditors outline basic background on municipality including the population, number of seats, and the number of candidates. Auditors can also note whether elections are for ward seats, where councillors represent a particular area of the municipality, or in an at-large system, where are certain number of councillors represent the municipality together.

Limitations of this tool

There are a number of limitations of this audit tool.

The audit tool does not predict voter turnout or measure individual predictors of voting. Instead, it measures only a municipality's uptake of best and promising practices for improving youth voter turnout.

This tool is applicable only in Canada and should only be used at the level of municipal elections.

This tool measures only factors that contribute to youth voter turnout. It does not measure basic democratic structures (e.g. the secrecy of the vote).

10 tips for a successful audit

- External auditors should have local partners.
- Local partners can be an invaluable resource for identifying experts to interview.
- Authorization is often necessary to conduct street team surveys at malls, universities and colleges, community centres, and other private places. Give yourself a few weeks before you plan to start conducting street team surveys to obtain the necessary permission.
- There is a lot of information to collect during the election period, so make a schedule to make sure you are able to get it all on time.
- Depending on the labour market in the municipality, it may be difficult to find short-term employees to conduct street team surveys. Prepare a locally-appropriate job posting and post it well before the election period. The job boards at local universities and colleges is a good place to start.
- Provide all workers and volunteers with job descriptions and clear expectations.
- Have a communications and social media strategy for the audit. Let the public know you will be conducting an audit by hosting a press conference or launch event.
- If possible, input data from the street team surveys as you collect it by using laptops or tablet computers.
- The bigger the municipality being audited, the more resources are needed.
- If you are seeking funding from a municipality or other funder to conduct an audit, be sure to apply before the city budgets are set for the fiscal year the election will occur in

1. CIVIC EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

Civic education is an important part of our education system. It promotes good citizenship and serves the interests of children, parents, and the state (Soutphommasane, 2011). Civic education is thought to encourage students to become engaged citizens (Gidengil, Nadeau, Nevitte, & Blais, 2010). Voting habits are best established early on, before adulthood, and public education provides a near-universal platform for ensuring future citizens understand democratic participation (Gidengil et al., 2010).

A lack of effective civic education may also have negative impacts on voter turnout. Feeling uninformed was one of the common reasons cited for choosing not to vote during our expert interviews; higher levels of political knowledge equate to a higher likelihood of voting (Gidengil et al., 2010). In this section, civic education opportunities in the municipality are examined, with particular attention to the learning about democratic participation.

1.1 Civic participation

Civic education is an important part of our democratic system. Civic education can teach children about many aspects of society, including democratic participation. Voting is one form of civic participation, but children should learn others as well. Learning about civic participation moves the lesson from what democracy is and why it's important to how children and adults can participate meaningfully in Canadian society.

This section presupposes a civic education curriculum is already in place for primary and secondary public school students. If no such curriculum exists, score an automatic 0 in this section and proceed to the Political Literacy section.

Children learn in many different ways, both formally and informally. As well, in any given municipality, there may be many different school systems in place. The constant across almost all municipalities in Canada is the existence of a public school authority. As such, please evaluate the public school system and the provincial curriculum only.

1.1.1 Public school students learn about civic participation

Students of all ages should learn about civic participation. Students in junior and senior high are approaching voting age and may also begin to participate in formal democratic institutions like political parties. However, starting learning about civic participation should not wait until high school. The experts we interviewed noted that this learning should begin early and be reinforced throughout a child's compulsory education. Note that learning how to participate in democracy is different than practicing democratic behaviour through mock elections and other means, covered in another section.

- 0 points: There is no civic participation curriculum
- 1 point: Civic participation is mentioned in the curriculum, but specific expectations around understanding or skill are not laid out
- 2 points: Civic participation is included in the curriculum and students are expected to demonstrate competence in this area

Data source(s): curriculum review; interviews with school principals; interviews with curriculum experts

1.1.2 Young adults remember learning about civic participation in school

Learning about civic participation is important, but for this learning to translate into voter turnout, young adults must also remember what they learned after they leave school.

- 0 points: Less than half of young adults surveyed remember learning about civic participation in elementary or secondary school
- 1 point: More than half of young adults surveyed remember learning about civic participation, but most cannot remember discussing any specific ways to participate
- 2 points: More than half of young adults surveyed remember learning about civic participation and can name at least one specific way to participate that was learned in school

Data source(s): street team surveys

1.1.3 The municipality is involved in teaching civic participation to public school students

While education is a provincial responsibility, the municipality can still foster a democratic and participatory culture through involvement with the public school authority. This could take the form of school tours of the government facilities, a program or workshop on civic participation, etc.

- 0 points: The municipality has no role in teaching civic participation
- 1 point: The municipality helps teach civic participation, but only to a limited number of classes
- 2 points: The municipality helps teach democratic participation with most or all students or the municipality has another major input into the civic education curriculum

Data source(s): statistics from municipality; interviews with school principals

1.2 Political literacy

R. A. Malatest and Associates (R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2011) found a clear positive relationship between political knowledge and voting behaviour; that is, in their survey of Canadian youth, it was noted that those youth who were able to correctly answer basic political knowledge questions were much more likely to vote than those who did not have basic political knowledge.

This section presupposes a civic education curriculum is already in place for primary and secondary public school students. If no such curriculum exists, score an automatic 0 in this section and proceed to the Practicing Democracy section.

As with the Civic Participation section, please evaluate the public school system and the provincial curriculum only.

1.2.1 Officials and/or candidates are present in public school classrooms

We heard repeatedly from the experts that officials (elected or not) and political candidates should interact with young Canadians. This sentiment is echoed in the *Report of the Roundtable on Youth Voter Engagement* conducted by the Public Policy Forum and Elections Canada (Cafley et al., 2012).

- 0 points: Officials and/or candidates do not visit school classrooms
- 1 point: Officials and/or candidates have visited a few public school classrooms OR elected officials and/or candidates visit a few schools occasionally and do not have ongoing relationships with local young people through the school system
- 2 points: Officials and/or candidates are present in most public school classrooms OR elected officials and/or candidates visit a few schools regularly to build ongoing relationships with local young people through the school system

Data source(s): statistics from elected officials; statistics from candidates; interviews with school principals

1.2.2 Young adults feel that public education prepared them to vote

One factor that influences whether youth vote is confidence. When citizens feel they do not know enough to make an informed vote, they stay home on election day (Pero, Nelson, & CIRCLE Staff, 2012). As such, we have an interest in nurturing citizens who both are competent to vote and who believe they can.

- 0 points: Less than half of young adults surveyed say that public education prepared them to vote
- 1 points: More than half of young adults surveyed say that public education prepared them to vote
- 2 points: More than eighty percent of young adults surveyed say that public education prepared them to vote

Data source(s): Street team surveys

1.3 Practicing democracy

In addition to learning the theory behind democracy, having the opportunity to practice democratic behaviours can be very valuable for students. Participate in activities that contribute to or emulate democratic decision making brings democracy to life.

As with the other sections, please evaluate the public school system and the provincial curriculum only.

1.3.1 Secondary school students have the opportunity to receive school credit for civic participation activities

Civic participation is thought to be linked to citizenship behaviours (Saha, Print, & Edwards, 2005). Providing school credit for volunteer activities or political participation encourages students to get involved in their communities and practice civic participation.

- 0 points: Civic participation is not a part of the secondary school curriculum
- 1 point: Civic participation is an optional part of the secondary school curriculum
- 2 points: Civic participation is a mandatory part of the secondary school curriculum

Data source(s): curriculum review; interviews with secondary school principals; interviews with curriculum experts

1.3.2 Secondary schools have student government

Student councils and other forms of student government are a concrete way for students to take part in a democratic system by electing representatives and by seeing the decisions the elected members make on their behalf. Participation in student government has been associated with voting behaviour later in life (Saha et al., 2005).

- 0 points: No secondary schools have student councils
- 1 point: Up to half of secondary schools in the municipality have student councils
- 2 points: More than half of secondary schools in the municipality have students councils

Data source(s): statistics from local association for student councils (<http://www.aasca.org/> in Alberta); interviews with school principals

1.3.3 Students participate in mock elections or mock democratic institutions

Mock elections allow students to feel the excitement of an election and to practice participating in democracy through voting. Mock democratic institutions allow students to experience the feeling of making tough decisions in the format of a city council, legislature, House of Commons, or international body like the United Nations. Mock elections can be modeled after an election campaign that is underway, if applicable (Capaccio et al., 1999).

Mock elections and mock democratic institutions are distinct from student councils in that they are modeled after adult institutions but do not have decision making power. Student councils, discussed below, may or may not resemble existing adult institutions but do have decision making power within the school.

- 0 points: Mock elections do not take place and no mock democratic institutions exist
- 1 point: Mock elections take place in up to half of schools and/or a mock democratic institution exists and a few students take part
- 2 points: Mock elections take place at more than half of schools and/or most or all students take part in a mock democratic institution

Data source(s): interviews with school principals

1.4 Civic Education in Post-Secondary Education

Learning about democracy should not stop at the end of public school. Young adults, including those who do not attend post-secondary, should have opportunities to continue to learn about democracy.

Civic education beyond public school differs from public awareness and education campaigns around where, when and how to vote during a particular election period. These campaigns are discussed in the Media and Communications section of the audit tool.

1.4.1 Officials and/or candidates are present in local post-secondary institutions

We heard repeatedly from the experts that officials (elected or not) and political candidates should interact with young Canadians. This sentiment is echoed in the *Report of the Roundtable on Youth Voter Engagement* conducted by the Public Policy Forum and Elections Canada (Cafley et al., 2012).

- 0 points: Officials and/or candidates do not visit post-secondary campuses
- 1 point: Officials and/or candidates have visited post-secondary campuses but do not have ongoing relationships with local young people through the school system
- 2 points: Officials and/or candidates are present in most public school classrooms OR elected officials and/or candidates build ongoing relationships with local young people through the school system
- N/A: no post-secondary institution within municipal limits

Data source(s): statistics from elected officials; statistics from candidates; interview with university or college clubs' coordinator

1.4.2 Post-secondary institutions have student clubs or other organizations representing political parties or movements

According to the experts we spoke to, political clubs at universities and colleges are an important entry point for many politically active Canadians. These clubs or organizations can be linked to particular political parties and movements or they can represent mock democratic institutions.

This indicator presupposes a general students' union or association is already in place in the local post-secondary institution(s). If there is a post-secondary institution in the municipality where no such group exists, score an automatic 0 on this indicator.

- 0 points: The local post-secondary institution(s) does not have student clubs or other organizations representing political parties or movements
- 2 points: The local post-secondary institution(s) has student clubs or other organizations representing political parties or movements
- N/A: no post-secondary institution within municipal limits

Data source(s): interview with university or college clubs' coordinator

1.4.3 Post-secondary students have the opportunity to receive credit for civic participation activities

Civic participation can become part of post-secondary life. Providing school credit for volunteer activities or political participation encourages students to get involved in their communities and practice civic participation (Elias & Drea, 2013).

- 0 points: Post-secondary students do not receive credit for civic participation activities
- 1 point: Post-secondary students may receive written recognition for civic participation activities (co-curricular record/transcript or similar)
- 2 points: Civic participation is a mandatory for students at the local post-secondary institution(s)
- N/A: no post-secondary institution within municipal limits

Data source(s): interviews with post-secondary representatives

2. DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

While many factors influence democratic participation, the experts indicated that many aspects of participation are influenced by culture. This section measures the general attitudes toward democracy in the municipality. Specific attitudes towards the current municipal election are measured in THE ELECTION.

2.1 Culture of Civic Engagement

Elections Canada identifies two main barriers to voting: motivational and access. Access barriers affect people who want to vote but are unable to. Motivation barriers affect people who can vote but don't want to. Motivation is a complex issue, and a culture of civic engagement is one aspect.

2.1.1 Young adults volunteer

Though youth volunteer rates are not directly linked to higher voter turnout (in fact, some youth may be volunteering *in lieu* of voting), volunteering is nonetheless a sign of civic engagement (Orr & Hoover, n.d.). Street team surveys are the source of this data because volunteerism rates are not widely or consistently recorded at the municipal level.

- 0 points: Less than half of young adults surveyed volunteered in the past year
- 1 point: More than half of young adults surveyed volunteered in the past year
- 2 points: More than eighty percent of young adults surveyed volunteered in the past year

Data source(s): Street team survey

2.1.2 Young adults remember their parents talking to them about and exposing them to the political process

Parents play an important role in exposing children to democracy. Their “political involvement can provide both behaviour to model and campaign-relevant information that children rarely get from formal schooling” (Plutzer, 2002). Parental influence is strongest before young adults leave home (Bhatti & Hansen, 2012). In particular, making the polling stations child-friendly and encouraging parents to take their children to vote can both expose children to the electoral process and mitigate access barriers for parents (R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2011).

- 0 points: Less than a third of young adults surveyed remember talking to their parents about politics or being taken to the polls when they were children
- 1 points: More than a third of young adults surveyed remember talking to their parents about politics or being taken to the polls when they were children
- 2 points: More than two thirds of young adults surveyed remember talking to their parents about politics or being taken to the polls when they were children

Data source(s): street team survey

2.1.3 Young adults read the news

The news helps youth to acquire knowledge about politics. Reading the news in particular, either online or in the newspaper, is linked with higher youth electoral participation (Ménard, 2010).

- 0 points: Less than half of young adults surveyed reported reading the news on at least a weekly basis
- 1 point: More than half of young adults surveyed reported reading the news on at least a weekly basis
- 2 points: More than eighty percent of young adults surveyed reported reading the news on at least a weekly basis

Data source(s): Street team surveys

2.1.4 Political conversations such as debates, roundtable discussions, and town halls are conducted during and outside of election times

Political conversations such as debates, roundtable discussions, and town halls provide citizens with the opportunity to learn more about the issues faced in their community. While the direct impact of these political conversations on youth voter turnout is uncertain (Rudny, Dougherty, Blais, Delia, & Loewen, 2011), these conversations nonetheless serve to support a culture of civic engagement and facilitate informed votes amongst participants.

- 0 points: No political conversations have taken place in the past year
- 1 point: Political conversations have taken place in the past year AND less than thirty percent of young adults surveyed had attended at least one
- 2 points: Political conversations have taken place in the past year AND more than thirty percent of young adults surveyed had attended at least one

Data source(s): statistics from elected officials; statistics from candidates; statistics from NGOs; street team survey

2.1.5 Young adults believe their vote can make a difference

Young adults who vote are more likely than non-voters to think their votes makes a difference (R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2011). When young adults doubt they can make a difference by casting their votes, they may stay home on election day (Ménard, 2010).

- 0 points: Less than half of young adults surveyed think their vote makes a difference
- 1 points: More than half of young adults surveyed think their vote makes a difference
- 2 points: More than eighty percent of young adults surveyed think their vote makes a difference

Data source(s): Street team surveys

2.2 Municipal democratic culture

In addition to the general culture of civic engagement, attitudes toward democracy at the local level in the municipality are important. This municipal democratic culture includes whether young adults are aware of the role the municipal government plays in their lives and the impact elections have on the community.

Further, who is currently voting and participating has an impact. The ranks of voters and democratic institutions should reflect the diversity of our society (Cross, 2010).

2.2.1 Young adults can link the actions of the municipal government to their everyday lives

While government plays an important role in society, this role is not always obvious and visible. Linking politics and government with everyday life is essential to motivating young people to vote (Stein & Vonnahme, 2008).

- 0 points: Less than half of young adults can name one or more ways the municipal government impacts their everyday life
- 1 points: More than half of young adults can name one or more ways the municipal government impacts their everyday life
- 2 points: More than eighty percent of young adults can name one or more ways the municipal government impacts their everyday life

Data source(s): Street team surveys

2.2.2 The municipal government has an active youth advisory council

Some municipalities take youth input seriously and strike a youth advisory council or similar body to provide feedback to elected officials on policy that impacts youth. These advisory councils may be composed of youth who are too young to vote.

- 0 points: No youth advisory council is active at this time
- 2 points: A youth advisory council is active at this time

Data source(s): scan on internet; interview with municipal representative

2.2.3 Youth are represented as candidates and/or elected officials of the municipal government

Approximately 30% of voting age Canadians are between the ages of 18 and 34 (Statistics Canada, 2012). Candidates and elected officials should reflect the population they represent (White, 2010).

- 0 points: There are no candidates or elected officials age 34 or less
- 1 points: At least one candidate or elected official is age 34 or less, but fewer than one third of candidates are age 34 or less
- 2 points: one third or more of candidates or elected officials are age 34 or less

Data source(s): Review of candidates; review of elected officials before election; review of election results

2.2.4 The municipal voter turnout is generally rising over time

Since municipal elections fall under provincial jurisdiction in Canada, many structural factors are consistent between different municipalities in the same province. As such, voter turnouts that are consistently higher than the provincial average suggest a strong municipal democratic culture. To measure this indicator, please consider the turnout from three previous elections AND the current election.

- 0 points: The municipal voter turnout has generally declined
- 1 points: The municipal voter turnout has generally stayed the same
- 2 points: The municipal voter turnout has generally been rising

Data source(s): statistics from the municipality and the province

2.2.5 Municipal elections result in changes to the group of elected officials

The opportunity for periodic change through elections is an important foundation of our democratic system (Beetham et al., 2008). We look to the most recent election because it is the one young voters are most likely to remember.

- 0 points: The municipal election resulted in all incumbents being re-elected
- 1 points: The municipal election resulted in all but one or two incumbents being re-elected
- 2 points: The municipal election resulted in three or more changes

Data source(s): comparison of list of candidates and incumbents to election results

3. MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

Media and communications play an integral role in creating an informed citizenry generally (Gidengil et al., 2010), and their role in informing youth is not different. In this section, both the municipal communications and candidate communications are examined.

3.1 Municipal media and communications

Communications from the municipal election authority are essential to spreading the word about where, when, and how to vote in a non-partisan way.

3.1.1 The municipal election authority produces communications materials specifically for youth

The experts we spoke to indicated that communications materials are more useful if they are youth-specific. Though not measured with this indicator, it is important to note that longer term, a youth-specific elections communications strategy is useful (R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2011).

- 0 points: No communications materials about the election specifically for youth are produced
- 2 points: Communications materials specifically for youth voters are produced

Data source(s): review of municipal communications; interview with government representative

3.1.2 Youth were consulted when designing the communications materials for the election

Young people sometime feel shut out of the political process because they feel they have not been consulted (O'Toole, Lister, Marsh, Jones, & McDonagh, 2003). The experts noted the best way to ensure that communications materials are youth friendly is to involve youth in their design.

- 0 points: Youth were not consulted when designing communications materials for the election
- 2 points: Youth were consulted when designing communications materials for the election

Data source(s): interview with municipal government representative

3.1.3 Young adults notice the communications materials produced by the municipal elections authority

Youth are less likely than other groups to notice that there is an election campaign going on (Russell, Fieldhouse, Purdham, & Kaira, 2002). Communications materials are most useful if youth are consulted to ensure the proposed materials actually reach and impact the audience they target (Dyer, 2011).

- 0 points: Less one third of young adults surveyed had noticed communications materials produced by the municipal elections authority
- 1 points: More than one third of young adults surveyed had noticed communications materials produced by the municipal elections authority
- 2 points: More than two thirds of young adults surveyed had noticed communications materials produced by the municipal elections authority

Data source: street team surveys

3.1.4 The municipality or municipal election authority communicates about the election through social media

Social media allows users to not only be the receivers of information, but also to generate and share their own ideas with others. Social media is an effective way to communicate, particularly with youth (Macnamara, Sakinofsky, & Beattie, 2012).

Note to auditors: if the municipal election authority does not have a website, score an automatic 0 on this indicator.

- 0 points: Less than one third of young adults surveyed who were social media users follow the municipality or municipal election authority
- 1 points: More than one third of young adults surveyed who were social media users follow the municipality or municipal election authority
- 2 points: More than two thirds of young adults surveyed who were social media users follow the municipality or municipal election authority

Data source(s): Street team survey

3.1.5 The local media covers the election

The media plays an important role democracy by providing information to voters about policies and candidates platforms. The media can also act as a watchdog for government and candidate actions (Meyer-Ohlendorf & Davis-Roberts, 2012). By reporting on the election, the local media can help ensure that the election is part of the local news landscape.

- 0 points: The local media reports on the election less than half of the days of the election period
- 1 points: The local media reports on the election more than half of the days of the election period
- 2 points: The local media reports on the election more than eighty percent of the days of the election period
- N/A: no local media outlet within municipal limits

Data source(s): Canadian newsstand database (accessible through most public libraries)

3.1.6 Organizations encourage citizens to vote

Municipal election authorities, NGOs, and political organizations can formally attempt to increase voter turnouts by encouraging citizens to vote. Further, citizens who formally commit to vote (by signing a pledge or similar) are more likely to actually vote on election day (Orr & Hoover, n.d.).

- 0 points: The municipality or other organizations does not conduct a campaign to encourage citizens to vote
- 1 point: The municipality or another organization conducts a campaign to encourage citizens to vote
- 2 points: The municipality or another organization conducts a campaign to encourage citizens to vote AND there is a formalized process in place to ask citizens to commit to vote

Data source(s): review of municipal election materials; interviews with municipal election officials; review of activities by local democracy NGOs

3.2 Candidate media and communications

Communications from the candidates are necessarily partisan and help spread the word about campaign platforms and the issues. Candidate communications can help voters decide who to vote for. Campaign advertising can increase voter turnouts (Franz, Freedman, Goldstein, & Ridout, 2008)

3.2.1 Candidates produce youth-specific campaign materials

The experts we spoke to indicated that communications materials are more useful if they are youth-specific. Campaign materials are considered to be youth-specific if they either specifically and overtly address a youth audience (Fitzgerald, 2003) or if they are in a format that is fun such as stickers, buttons, or apps.

- 0 points: Less than half of candidates have youth-specific campaign materials
- 1 points: More than half candidates have youth-specific campaign materials
- 2 points: More than eighty percent of candidates have youth-specific campaign materials

Data source(s): Review of candidate campaign materials

3.2.2 Candidates publish platforms

Publishing a platform is a clear way for candidates to communicate what they stand for. Platforms provide voters with basic information about candidates so they can decide who to vote for (Wilks-heeg, Blick, & Crone, 2012). While platforms are common at the provincial and federal level, fewer candidates release platforms at the municipal level.

- 0 points: less than half of candidates publish a platform during the election campaign
- 1 points: more than half of candidates publish a platform during the election campaign
- 2 points: more than eighty percent of candidates publish a platform during the election campaign

Data source(s): review of candidate campaign materials

3.2.3 Candidates communicate online and with social media

Websites are an important way for candidates to share basic information about themselves. Social media can be an effective way to communicate with hard-to-reach youth (Cafley et al., 2012). Social media allows communication that is more irreverent and colloquial than other forms of media (Macnamara et al., 2012).

- 0 points: Less than eighty percent of candidates communicate online
- 1 points: More than eighty percent of candidates communicate online
- 2 points: More than eighty percent of candidates communicate online AND more than half of candidates use social media for two-way communication

Data source(s): internet search of all candidates

4. THE ELECTION

Many things take place during the election campaign and on election day itself that can impact whether it is easy and desirable for youth to cast a vote. For example, voter ID requirements can be difficult for some citizens to meet, particularly university students, people with disabilities, homeless individuals, and rural people (Courtney, 2010). In this section, we examine aspects of the election campaign, voter registration, and the polls that may help or hinder the youth vote.

4.1 Election campaign

The election campaign showcases the issues that are at stake during the election.

4.1.1 The election campaign is competitive

Competition is a major motivating factor for voters, including youth (Capaccio et al., 1999). When a large number of positions are assigned through acclamation, elections seem less competitive.

Note to auditors: score the lowest number of points applicable.

- 0 points: Two or more candidates are acclaimed OR in a system where councillors are at-large, there is only one more candidate than there is seats OR the mayor is acclaimed
- 1 points: One candidate is acclaimed OR there are only two candidates for mayor OR in a system where councillors are at-large, there are only two more candidates than there are seats
- 2 points: No candidates are acclaimed OR in a system where councillors are at-large, there are at least three more candidates than there are seats AND there are at least three candidates for mayor

Data source(s): Review of candidates

4.1.2 Young adults are interested in the elections issues

The issues that comprise elections are of interest to young adults. However, these issues can only drive voter turnout if youth understand the issues at play and are able to link their own concerns to the issues (Ménard, 2010).

- 0 points: Less than half of young adults surveyed were interested in the election issues
- 1 points: More than half of young adults surveyed were interested in the election issues
- 2 points: More than eighty percent of young adults surveyed were interested in the election issues

Data source(s): Street team surveys

4.1.3 Youth are involved as candidates' campaign volunteers

While Canadian youth relatively unlikely to be involved in political campaigns (Rudny et al., 2011), the experts noted that involving youth as campaign volunteers can be beneficial. Youth who campaign are exposed to the political process and how politics works from the inside (Anderson, Hilderman, & Loat, 2013). Further, civic participation norms are instilled in youth who participate in campaigning and ultimately, these youth may be more likely to vote (Pero et al., 2012).

- 0 points: Less than half of candidates have youth involved in their campaign
- 1 points: More than half of candidates have youth involved in their campaign
- 2 points: More than eighty percent candidates have youth involved in their campaign

Data source(s): information from candidates or campaign managers

4.2 Voter registration

Young people often need to register to vote because they have never voted before or because they have moved recently (Archer, 2003). Depending on local rules, voter registration may take place in advance of election, on election, or both. Voter registration can prove to be a barrier for some voters if it is difficult or time consuming (Cherry, 2012).

In the USA, while youth voter turnouts are low, turnout amongst youth who are registered to vote is much higher (Cherry, 2012).

4.2.1 The municipality keeps or prepares a voters list

Perhaps the easiest way to register to vote is to be included on the list of electors. When municipalities use a list of electors, voters list, or register of electors, the process for voters at the polls is easier because those on the list do not have to register on election day. Voters lists can be permanently maintained or prepared specifically for an election.

- 0 points: Voters are not enumerated and a list of electors is not prepared
- 2 points: A list of electors is prepared or the municipality draws from a permanent list of electors maintained by the province

Data source(s): review of policy/law; interview with municipal election authority

4.2.2 Voters can register at any time during the election period

Opportunities for voter registration vary. In some jurisdictions, voters can preregister, while in others voter registration must take place at the poll. Online voter registration would provide opportunities for more youth to register to vote (Ménard, 2010).

- 0 points: Voter registration can only take place at the poll OR must take place before polling day
- 1 points: Voter registration takes place at only a few locations leading up to election day (excluding online) and also takes place at the poll
- 2 points: Voter registration takes place at multiple locations leading up to election day (potentially including online registration) and also takes place at the poll

Data source(s): review of policy/law; interview with municipal election authority

4.2.3 The identification requirements for voter registration are easy for young electors to meet

In most provinces a driver's license is the only form of photo identification available, and only about 85% of Canadians have a driver's license (Courtney, 2010).

- 0 points: Voters must produce photo identification to register to vote
- 1 points: Voters must produce identification to register to vote, but many forms of identification are acceptable
- 2 points: Electors who do not meet the identification requirements may swear an oath in lieu

Data source(s): review of identification requirements for registration; statistics on youth identification; interview with municipal election authority

4.2.4 The voter registration process operates smoothly

In addition to having the conditions in place that make it as easy as possible for voters to participate, it is important for the voter registration process to operate smoothly. A registrant may become discouraged if they attempt to register and find the process to be unreasonably difficult or time consuming.

Minor difficulties are those that inconvenience a small number of voters. Major difficulties inconvenience a large number of voters and/or prevent voters from being able to cast a ballot.

- 0 points: There were reports of major difficulties with voter registration
- 1 points: There were no reports of major difficulties with voter registration and minor issues were dealt with quickly
- 2 points: There were no reports of difficulties with voter registration

Data source(s): observation; interviews with poll workers; interviews with election authority after the election

4.3 The polls

Access to be able to vote in the election is extremely important.

4.3.1 The municipality employs youth as poll workers

Hiring youth as poll workers may help raise youth voter turnout in two ways. First, the individual youth who are employed as poll workers will be exposed to the political process and the excitement of election day (Cherry, 2012). Given they have taken the time to work at the poll, it seems likely they would vote in the election. Second, youth poll workers provide a youthful face for young voters to relate to on election day.

Note to auditors: score the lowest number of points applicable.

- 0 points: Less than half of polling stations have a poll worker who is age 34 or less OR by law poll workers must be at least 18 years old
- 1 point: More than half of polling stations have a poll worker who is age 34 or less AND the law allows for 16 and 17 year old poll workers
- 2 points: More than eighty percent of polling stations have a poll worker who is age 34 or less AND the law allows for 16 and 17 year old poll workers

Data source(s): Review of applicable law; review of municipal poll worker recruitment materials; observation

4.3.2 The polls are accessible to voters with disabilities

At the Canadian federal government level, voter participation by youth with disabilities is lower than the general youth population (R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2011). Further, youth with disabilities are less likely to say they would feel welcome at a polling station (R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2011). While improving accessibility is not the complete solution to low turnout voter amongst youth with disabilities, it does address one barrier.

- 0 points: The polls are not accessible to voters with disabilities
- 1 point: Only advanced polls or specific locations are accessible to voters with disabilities
- 2 points: All polls are accessible to voters with disabilities

Data source(s): review of policy/law; interview with municipal election authority

4.3.3 Young adults know when and where to vote

One strategy to ensure voters know when and where to vote is to use Voter Information Cards (VICs) that provide all of the necessary information about where, when, and how to vote based on the voter's address, though young adults are less likely than the rest of the population to receive a VIC, likely because they are more transient and less likely to be registered to vote than the rest of the population (R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2011). Regardless of what strategy is used, it is essential for voters to know when and where to vote.

The "how" of voting is covered in the civic education section of this tool.

- 0 points: Less than half of young adults surveyed knew when and where to vote
- 1 points: More than half of young adults surveyed knew when and where to vote
- 2 points: More than eighty percent of young adults surveyed knew when and where to vote

Data source(s): street team surveys

4.3.4 Young adults are aware of advanced poll, mail-in ballot or other special voting arrangements that are available

Youth who are not aware of advanced poll, mail-in ballot or other special voting arrangements vote at lower rates than the general youth population. Further, in a national random sample of Canadian youth, those who were able to identify all of the different available voting options were much more likely to vote than the general youth population (R.A. Malatest & Associates, 2011).

Note to auditors: if no advanced, mail-in, or other special voting arrangements are available, score an automatic 0 for this indicator.

- 0 points: Less than half of young adults surveyed were aware of advanced poll, mail-in, or other special voting arrangements that are available
- 1 points: More than half of young adults surveyed were aware of advanced poll, mail-in, or other special voting arrangements that are available
- 2 points: More than eighty percent of young adults surveyed were aware of advanced poll, mail-in, or other special voting arrangements that are available

Data source(s): Street team surveys

4.3.5 The municipality utilizes multi-district polls

Multi-district polls allow voters who live in a variety of locations to vote a central poll located in a convenient location like a shopping centre, post-secondary institution, or workplace. Research from Colorado showed that multi-district polls located at vote centres positively impacted voter turnout amongst infrequent voters, particularly benefiting young and inexperienced voters (Stein & Vonnahme, 2008).

- 0 points: The municipality does not utilize multi-district polls
- 1 point: The municipality utilizes multi-district polls only during the advanced vote OR on election day
- 2 points: The municipality utilizes multi-district polls during the advanced vote AND on election day

Data source(s): review of policy/law; interview with municipal election authority

4.3.6 Electors who are on the voters list do not need to produce identification to vote

The requirement for people who are the voters list to produce identification is relatively new in Canada – it was introduced in 2007 for federal elections. While it is important to ensure that each person who cast a vote is eligible to do so, “throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, there have been few instances in Canada of electoral fraud in the form of electoral impersonation or of voting by non-eligible individuals” (Courtney, 2010). The potential for voter fraud is much smaller than the potential for eligible voters to forget their identification on election day (Overton, 2007). As such, this requirement has more potential to reduce voter turnout than it does to prevent electoral fraud (Courtney, 2010).

- 0 points: all electors must produce identification to vote even if they are on the voters list
- 1 point: All electors must produce identification to vote even if they are on the voters list and elector’s who do not have ID may swear an oath
- 2 points: Electors who are on the voters list do not need to produce identification to vote
- N/A: No voters list is prepared

Data source(s): review of policy/law; interview with municipal election authority

4.3.7 Voting instructions are available in many different languages

While access to voting materials in both English and French is guaranteed at the federal level in Canada, not all municipalities provide a similar guarantee. Municipalities also vary as to whether they provide voting instructions in non-official languages. While improving providing voting instructions in languages spoken by the municipal population is not the complete solution to low turnout voter amongst minority language speakers, it does address one barrier.

Note to auditor: score the highest number of points applicable

- 0 points: Voting instructions are available in only one language
- 1 point: Voting instructions are available in 2 or more languages
- 2 points: Voting instructions are available in all languages spoken by over 5% of the municipal population

Data source(s): review of voting instruction materials; interview with municipal election authority

4.3.8 The voting process operates smoothly

In addition to having the conditions in place that make it as easy as possible for voters to participate, it is important for the voting process to operate smoothly. A voter may become discouraged if they attempt to vote and find the process to be unreasonably difficult or time consuming.

Minor difficulties are those that inconvenience a small number of voters. Major difficulties inconvenience a large number of voters and/or prevent voters from being able to cast a ballot.

- 0 points: There were reports of major difficulties with voting
- 1 points: There were no reports of major difficulties with voting and minor issues were dealt with quickly
- 2 points: There were no reports of difficulties with voting

Data source(s): observation; interviews with poll workers; interviews with election authority after the election

5. UNSCORED INDICATORS

Each of the unscored indicators represents a new or controversial approach to increasing voter turnout. A description is provided for each of these approaches and auditors are encouraged to consider whether each of these approaches is in place in the municipality, but municipalities will not be scored on in relation to them.

5.1.1 Votes can be cast remotely through the internet

Remote voting through the internet is often cited as a possible way to make voting more accessible, particularly for youth. Other argument in favour of internet voting include greater secrecy for voters with disabilities (who might otherwise require assistance in the voting booth), faster vote counting, reduced administration costs, and reduced use of paper. Some of the concerns about online voting include the potential of outages, the potential for fraud, the inability of the election authority to monitor the secrecy of the vote, the resources that would be required for educating voters about the new method, the potential for a private firm to be engaged in delivering this essential public democratic service, and the degradation of social networks that form around voting in-person (Goodman, Pammett, & DeBardeleben, n.d.).

5.1.2 Voting is compulsory

Making it the law for citizens to vote is perhaps the most direct means of raising voter turnout. “Compulsory voting increases turnout in national election on average by some 10 to 15 percentage points—and even more in regional and local elections” (Loewen, Milner, & Hicks, 2008, p. 656). However, while compulsory voting would almost certainly increase voter turnout, it may not have a positive impact on whether voters are informed (Loewen et al., 2008).

Compulsory voting is in place in a number of mature democracies around the world. It is also very controversial. Some scholars write it off outright, at least in a Canadian context (Gidengil et al., 2010).

Some people view compulsory voting as an infringement of personal liberty (Capaccio et al., 1999). However, in a case heard by the European Court of Human Rights, the option to cast a blank ballot once behind the voter screen allows citizens to effectively choose not to vote if they prefer (Meyer-Ohlendorf & Davis-Roberts, 2012). Compulsory voting is an effective means of raising turnout, though it is unclear if sanctions or financial incentives are necessary to realize the benefits of compulsory voting (Blais, 2006).

An alternative approach to raising voter turnouts is to make *voter registration* compulsory while *voting* remains optional, as is the case in New Zealand (Gibson, Kim, Stillman, & Boe-Gibson, 2012).

5.1.3 Municipal election dates coincide with provincial or federal elections

In Canada, many provinces hold elections for school trustee on the same day as their municipal elections. Presumably, this is intended to decrease election costs and increase turnout for smaller races that typically garner less attention.

In an examination of California municipalities, Hajnal & Lewis concluded that holding municipal elections on the same date as a state or federal had the potential to double voter turnout over the existing rates (Hajnal & Lewis, 2003).

5.1.4 Election day is a Saturday, Sunday, or special local holiday

In Canada, election day is a non-holiday weekday (typically a Monday). However, in some European countries and in New Zealand, polls are held on weekends in an effort to make the polls more accessible. However, the actual effect of weekend/holiday voting on turnout remains unclear (Blais, 2006).

5.1.5 The voting age is lowered to 16

By lowering the voting age, political socialization takes place at an earlier age. Further, by lowering the voting age, voting behaviour is established while youth are a captive audience in the stable environment of high school, rather than when they have completed their secondary education (Capaccio et al., 1999).

In an example from Hannover, Germany, 16- and 17-year-olds were eligible to vote in local elections and had a higher turnout than young adults between the ages of 18 and 35 (Capaccio et al., 1999).

Conversely, some evidence does support the assertion that lowering the voting age from 21 to 18 actually had the effect of *lowering* voter turnout because youth now learn to vote while they are transitioning into the adult world (Franklin, 2004). Further lowering the voting age may result in even lower turnouts than we currently have.

5.1.6 The municipal election authority contacts youth when they turn 18 to inform them about voting

Election authorities can take the proactive step of contacting newly eligible voters to encourage them to register and to share practical information about how to vote (Capaccio et al., 1999).

In one example from Australia, citizens receive birthday cards from the electoral authority when they turn 17 informing them they can register on the provisional list of electors. These cards had the impact of increasing voter registration of 17 and 18 year olds by approximately 10% (Archer, 2003).

Direct mailing young electors requires access to motor vehicle, tax, or other registry information, which may prove challenging depending on the applicable privacy legislation (Capaccio et al., 1999).

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APPENDIX A: AUDIT CHECKLIST

An audit checklist has been provided to make scoring the Youth Electoral Audit easier.

Rate each of the indicators with the measures in the audit guide. Once a rating has been assigned, mark an “X” in the appropriate space on the checklist.

Please note: all indicators, except the ones that provide an option for “N/A”, should be scored. If the conditions for at least one point do not exist in the municipality and the “N/A” option is greyed-out, assign a score of 0.

Once ratings have been assigned for all indicators, add up the number of 0s, 1s, 2s, and N/As assigned and write the totals in the tally line for each of the four audit areas.

To calculate the municipality’s raw score, transfer the tallies for each of the audit areas to the last page of the audit checklist. Next, add up the number of 0s, 1s, 2s, and N/As assigned and write the totals in the tally line for the audit. This number is the municipality’s raw score.

To determine the maximum possible score, count the number of indicators that were scored and multiply that number by 2.

Finally, to determine the Youth Electoral Audit score of the municipality, divide the raw score by the maximum possible score and multiply by 100.

1 CIVIC EDUCATION AND DEMOCRATIC PREPARATION		p.	Score		
1.1	Civic participation		0	1	2
1.1.1	Public school students learn about civic participation	7			
1.1.2	Young adults remember learning about civic participation in school	8			
1.1.3	The municipality is involved in teaching civic participation to public school students	8			
1.2	Political literacy		0	1	2
1.2.1	Officials and/or candidates are present in public school classrooms	9			
1.2.2	Young adults feel that public education prepared them to vote	9			
1.3	Practicing democracy		0	1	2
1.3.1	Secondary school students have the opportunity to receive school credit for civic participation activities	10			
1.3.2	Secondary schools have student government	10			
1.3.3	Students participate in mock elections or mock democratic institutions	10			
1.4	Civic education in post-secondary education		0	1	2
1.4.1	Officials and/or candidates are present in local post-secondary institutions	11			
1.4.2	Post-secondary institutions have student clubs or other organizations representing political parties or movements	11			
1.4.3	Post-secondary students are recognized for their civic participation activities	12			
CIVIC EDUCATION AND DEMOCRATIC PREPARATION TALLY			0	1	2

2 DEMOCRATIC CULTURE		p.	Score			
			0	1	2	
2.1	Culture of civic engagement					N/A
2.1.1	Young adults volunteer	13				
2.1.2	Young adults remember their parents talking to them about and exposing them to the political process	13				
2.1.3	Young adults read the news	14				
2.1.4	Political conversations such as debates, roundtable discussions, and town halls are conducted during and outside of election times	14				
2.1.5	Young adults believe their vote can make a difference	14				
2.2	Municipal democratic culture		0	1	2	N/A
2.2.1	Young adults can link the actions of the municipal government to their everyday lives	15				
2.2.2	The municipal government has an active youth advisory council	15				
2.2.3	Youth are represented as candidates and/or elected official of the municipal government	16				
2.2.4	The municipal government turnout is generally rising over time	16				
2.2.5	Municipal elections result in changes to the group of elected officials	16				
DEMOCRATIC CULTURE TALLY			0	1	2	N/A

3 MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS		p.	Score		
3.1	Municipal media and communications		0	1	2
					N/A
3.1.1	The municipal election authority produces communications materials specifically for youth	17			
3.1.2	Youth were consulted when designing the communications materials for the election	17			
3.1.3	Young adults notice the communications materials produced by the municipal elections authority	17			
3.1.4	The municipality or municipal election authority communicates about the election through social media	18			
3.1.5	The local media covers the election	18			
3.1.6	Organizations encourage citizens to vote	19			
3.2	Candidate media and communications		0	1	2
					N/A
3.2.1	Candidates produce youth-specific campaign materials	19			
3.2.2	Candidates publish platforms	19			
3.2.3	Candidates communicate online and with social media	20			
COMMUNICATIONS TALLY			0	1	2
					N/A

4 THE ELECTION		p.	Score			
4.1	Election campaign		0	1	2	N/A
4.1.1	The election campaign is competitive	21				
4.1.2	Young adults are interested in the election issues	21				
4.1.3	Youth are involved as candidates' campaign volunteers	22				
4.2	Voter registration		0	1	2	N/A
4.2.1	The municipality keeps or prepares a voters list	22				
4.2.2	Voters can register at any time during the election period	23				
4.2.3	The identification requirements for voter registration are easy for young electors to meet	23				
4.2.4	The voter registration process operates smoothly	23				
4.3	The polls		0	1	2	N/A
4.3.1	The municipality employs youth as poll workers	24				
4.3.2	The polls are accessible to voters with disabilities	24				
4.3.3	Young adults know when and where to vote	25				
4.3.4	Young adults are aware of advanced poll, mail-in ballot or other special voting arrangements that are available	25				
4.3.5	The municipality utilizes multi-district polls	26				
4.3.6	Electors who are on the voters list do not need to produce identification to vote	26				
4.3.7	Voting instructions are available in many different languages	27				
4.3.8	The voting process operates smoothly	27				
THE ELECTION TALLY			0	1	2	N/A

5 UNSCORED INDICATORS		p.
5.1.1	Votes can be cast remotely through the internet	28
5.1.2	Voting is compulsory	28
5.1.3	Municipal election dates coincide with provincial or federal elections	29
5.1.4	Election day is a Saturday, Sunday, or special local holiday	29
5.1.5	The voting age is lowered to 16	29
5.1.6	The municipal election authority contacts youth when they turn 18 to inform them about voting	29

AUDIT SCORE					Score		
TALLIES					0	1	2
Civic Education and Democratic Preparation tally							N/A
Democratic Culture tally							
Communications tally							
The Election tally							
AUDIT TALLY					0	1	2
							N/A

(Total number of 0s

X

0

=

)

+ (Total number of 1s

X

1

=

)

+ (Total number of 2s

X

2

=

)

Raw score

(Total number of 0s

X

2

=

)

+ (Total number of 1s

X

2

=

)

+ (Total number of 2s

X

2

=

)

Maximum possible score

Raw score

/ Maximum possible points

X

100

Youth Electoral Audit score

APPENDIX B: CANDIDATE DATA SHEET

Candidates	Youth campaign material	Publishes platform	Website	Uses social media	Youth campaign volunteers
Candidate 1					
Candidate 2					
Candidate 3					
Candidate 4					
Candidate 5					

APPENDIX C: STREET TEAM SURVEY

Some data required for completing the Youth Electoral Audit is unlikely to be available from the municipality or another pre-existing source. As such, street team surveys conducted with local youth are necessary.

A secondary impact of conducting street team surveys may be to increase voter turnout amongst participants. Asking people about voting and whether they will vote in the upcoming election may convey a social expectation that they should go vote and may stimulate them to vote (Capaccio et al., 1999).

The street team surveys should be conducted by local youth and carried out during the month before the election. Street team members should be trained in proper data collection techniques.

Surveys can be administered online and at locations frequented by youth including post-secondary campuses, malls, and community centres. Street team members may need to get permission from property owners or administrators before promoting the survey in-person.

In-person survey participants should be provided with a clipboard and given the option to complete the survey themselves on paper. Alternatively, in-person participants should be given the option to complete the survey verbally with a street team member.

When recruiting participants, street team members should clearly identify themselves and explain they are administering surveys on the topic of youth voter participation. Street team members should provide survey to anyone interested in participating who appears to be a young adult without asking them their age or citizenship status. If potential participants ask about eligibility, street team members should explain the survey is intended for people between 18 and 34 years of age and eligible to vote in the upcoming municipal.

The surveys are anonymous. As such, the signed consent form on the front page of the survey should be separated from the subsequent questionnaire when the survey is returned.

In an attempt to capitalize on the potential of pre-election surveys to stimulate voter turnout, it is recommended that street team members provide participants with non-partisan information about when, where, and how to vote upon completion of the survey.

When analyzing the surveys, only questionnaires completed by people aged 18 to 34 who are eligible to vote in the upcoming municipal election should be included. When interpreting the results, auditors should be aware that the survey results are not representative and should be used with caution.

Hi,

We're inviting you to participate in a research project about the upcoming municipal election on (Date). The goal of our research is to provide the (City/Town/Village) of (Municipality) with a picture of how youth feel about local politics and why they choose to vote or not. We're hoping to ask you a few questions about your democratic experiences and civic engagement. Thank you for your help. This survey will only take 5-6 minutes to complete.

Your answers are confidential and your name will not be associated with any of your responses. The survey results will only be used for our study, which will be submitted for publication in the form of an audit report. You may decline to answer certain questions or stop the survey at any time.

By participating, you can help us understand the current election and give us ideas to enhance the youth voter turnout.

Thank you very much for your time!

Sincerely,

(Representative of auditing organization)

I agree to participate in this survey:

Signature

Date: _____

First, some questions about you:

1. What is your gender ? ☐ Male ☐ Female Or self-identify here: _____

2. What is your age: _____

3. What was your first spoken language?

☐ French ☐ English ☐ Other, specify: _____

4. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

☐ Less than high school

☐ Some high school

☐ High school diploma

☐ Trade/vocational diploma

☐ Undergraduate

☐ Graduate

☐ Not sure

5. What is your current employment status?

☐ Employed for wages

☐ Self-employed

☐ Out of work and looking for work

☐ Out of work but not currently looking for work

☐ A homemaker

☐ A student

☐ Military

☐ Retired

☐ Unable to work

6. What is your ethnic background? (you may select more than one)

☐ White

☐ Black

☐ Asian

☐ First Nations

☐ Inuit

☐ Metis

☐ Other - Specify: _____

7. In general, how interested would you say you are in politics and social issues?

☐ Very interested ☐ Somewhat interested ☐ Not very interested ☐ Not interested at all

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I feel that I can influence where our society is going.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Elected officials lose touch with people once they get elected.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. People like me don't have any say about what the city does.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I trust elected officials in my municipality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. My vote makes a difference.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Next, some questions about your engagement background:

13. Did you vote in the last provincial election in (province) in (month) (year) when (current Premier) was elected Premier?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I was not eligible ☐ I do not remember
14. Did you vote in the last federal election in Canada in (month) (year) when (current Prime Minister) was elected Prime Minister?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I was not eligible ☐ I do not remember
15. Are you a member of a political party?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
16. Have you volunteered in the past year?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
- a. If Yes, which area(s) did you contribute to? (check all that apply)
☐ Health ☐ Social services ☐ Sports & recreation
☐ Religion ☐ Environment ☐ Education & research
☐ Arts/culture ☐ Law, advocacy, politics (including political parties)
17. Do you remember learning in school about how to participate in democracy?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
18. Do you feel that public education prepared you to vote?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
19. When you were growing up, did your parents bring you with them to vote?
☐ Yes, always ☐ Sometimes ☐ No ☐ I do not remember
20. When you were growing up, did your parents talk to you about politics?
☐ Yes, often ☐ Yes, occasionally ☐ No ☐ I do not remember
21. Have you ever attended a debate, roundtable discussion, town hall meeting, or similar political conversation on a city issue?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
22. Have you ever been engaged in a local issue in your community?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
- a. If Yes, what was the issue? _____
23. Have you checked the (name of municipality) website to learn more about an issue or service that interests you?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I do not remember
- a. If Yes, was it easy to find what you were looking for?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
24. Do you use social media? (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
- a. If Yes, do you follow the (name of municipality) on Facebook or on Twitter?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
25. What city services affect your daily life? (you may list more than one)
-

Finally, some questions about the (location) Municipal Election:

26. Are you eligible to vote in the upcoming municipal election?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
27. Do you intend to vote in this upcoming municipal election?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure yet
- a. If NO, what is the main reason for why you will not vote? _____
- b. If NO, what is the second reason for why you will not vote? _____
- c. If YES, what is the main reason for why you will vote? _____
- d. If YES, what is the second reason for why you will vote? _____
28. Do you know when to vote in the upcoming municipal election?
☐ Yes ☐ No, I'm not sure
29. Do you know where to vote in the upcoming municipal election?
☐ Yes ☐ No, I'm not sure
30. Is it the first time you will vote in an election?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
31. Did you know you can vote before the election on advance voting days?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
32. Did you know that there are special mail-in and at-home ballots available?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
33. Have you noticed any ads from the **(name of municipality)** about the election?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
- a. If Yes, where? (check all that apply) (insert relevant examples from municipality)
- ☐ In the mail ☐ On billboards ☐ In public buildings (city hall, etc.)
- ☐ On TV ☐ On the internet ☐ On the radio
34. Have you noticed any ads from **candidates** for mayor or city councillor about the election?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
- a. If Yes, where? (check all that apply) (insert relevant examples from municipality)
- ☐ In the mail ☐ On billboards ☐ On TV ☐ On the internet
35. Have any election **candidates** contacted you to ask you to vote?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
36. Are you interested in any issues that are being addressed in this election?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
- a. If Yes, what issues interest you? _____
37. In your opinion, the tone of the current election campaign is:
☐ Positive ☐ Neutral ☐ Negative
38. What would make you more interested in politics?

39. During the election period, do you think (name of municipality) has been youth friendly?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

Thank you for taking the time to complete our survey.

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDES

Some data required for completing the Youth Electoral Audit is unlikely to be available from the municipality or another pre-existing source. Interviews with candidates, teachers and principals, young leaders, and municipal officials are necessary.

The interviews should be conducted by the auditor and carried out during the month before the election. Auditors should pay closer attention to proper data collection techniques. In particular, auditors can use the attached interview guides to ensure that similar, non-leading questions are asked to all interview participants.

When recruiting interview participants, auditors should clearly identify themselves and explain they are conducting interviews on the topic of youth voter participation. Auditors should be careful to conduct interviews with people who are experts in the local municipal context.

To assist with recruiting interview participants, auditors may want to ask the people they contact and interview throughout the audit period if there is anyone else they should be interviewing.

Candidates

Use this guide with candidates. Try to interview at least 5 individuals with this guide.

Before beginning the interview, explain that the you are interested in candidate behaviour related to the upcoming municipality election. Define youth as age 34 and under.

- What things, if any, have you done to engage youth in your campaign?
- Do you think your campaign materials are youth-friendly?
- Do you have any youth volunteering on your campaign?
- Have you been using social media for your campaign?
- Do you think there is a link between school and politics?
- If yes, do you think it should be made more obvious?
- Have you visited any school classrooms before or during this election campaign?

Teachers and principals

Use this interview guide with teachers and principals. Try to interview at least 5 individuals with this guide.

- Please describe your civic education program
- Do students at your school learn about civic participation? Civic participation focuses in on the ways we can participate in society, and is narrower than general civic education.
 - If yes, how?
 - If yes, do students participate every year? In certain grades?
- Do students at your school participate in mock election?
 - If yes, do students participate every year? In certain grades? Only during election years?
- Do students at your school participate in other mock democratic institutions? (e.g. Model UN)
 - If yes, do all students participate or only those who sign up?
- Is your municipal government involved in any way in teaching civic participation?
 - Has the mayor visited your school in the past year?
 - Have any city councillors visited in the past year?
 - Have your students been on a field trip to city hall?
 - Have any candidates visited?
- Is civic participation a part of everyday school life? Examples of civic participation include volunteering in your community, canvassing for a candidates, and writing a letter to the editor.
 - Are students recognized for these activities?
 - Are these activities mandatory?
- If you had to guess, what percentage of students would you say undertakes at least one civic participation activity per year?
- Does your school have a student council?
- Does your school have students clubs that are chapters of a political party or a civil society organization? (e.g. Young Conservatives, Amnesty International, etc.) (do not include clubs based on religious affiliation)

Young leaders

Use this interview guide with young leaders in the community. Try to interview at least 5 individuals with this guide.

- What is your role in the electoral process?
- Do you generally vote? Why or why not?
- Do you vote in municipal elections? Why or why not?
- What influences you to vote? Who influences you to vote?
- What discourages you from voting?

Municipal officials

Use this interview guide with municipal officials whose work connects them to the election. Try to interview at least 5 individuals with this guide.

- What is your role in the electoral process?
- What aspects of your municipality's electoral system facilitate youth votes?
- What aspects of your municipality's electoral system limit youth votes?
- Does your municipality engage in any unique activities to encourage civic participation?
- Does your municipality engage in any unique activities to try to raise voter turnouts?