



THE CENTER FOR  
**Election**Science

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We make **democracy** smart.

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2021

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## **Introduction & Summary**

This strategic plan is a living document originally created near the end of 2018. This document is intended to provide organizational guidance as well as to communicate our efforts and vision to potential supporters.

As we look through the 2018 year, this was the first year we had a budget that permitted multiple staff, thanks to a large grant from the Open Philanthropy Project. Our executive director was able to work just for CES rather than split his time between multiple organizations. Key staff were also brought on including a Director of Operations and Programs and a Director of Philanthropy. This was also the first year our organization was able to push the direct implementation of approval voting where we hired a local contractor for our Educational Campaign Coordinator in our target city of Fargo, ND. This person worked with a local group to bring awareness to approval voting and help them pass the initiative.

Our website has long been a wealth of electoral system information. This 2018 year, we have been able to professionally update our site to fit with modern standards. Our intent is that this upgrade will help with educational outreach, increase advocacy and implementation for better methods, and bolster support for CES.

This document also lays out our plans in upcoming years. This includes strategies for increasing and diversifying our revenue. This helps us to increase capacity and implement more exciting programs. As in our last strategic plan, our long-term goal is to be the main resource on electoral systems for the public and private sector and to increase implementation of smarter voting methods on a large scale. This includes additional hiring as well as ancillary outreach efforts including research, software, and further advertising.

## **Organizational Description, History, & Problem/Solution Statement**

The Center for Election Science is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that works to improve the electoral systems that drive our group decision making, whether it be in civic groups, business, or government. We advance this mission by providing resources to conduct better elections, educate the public, and advocate for better voting methods.

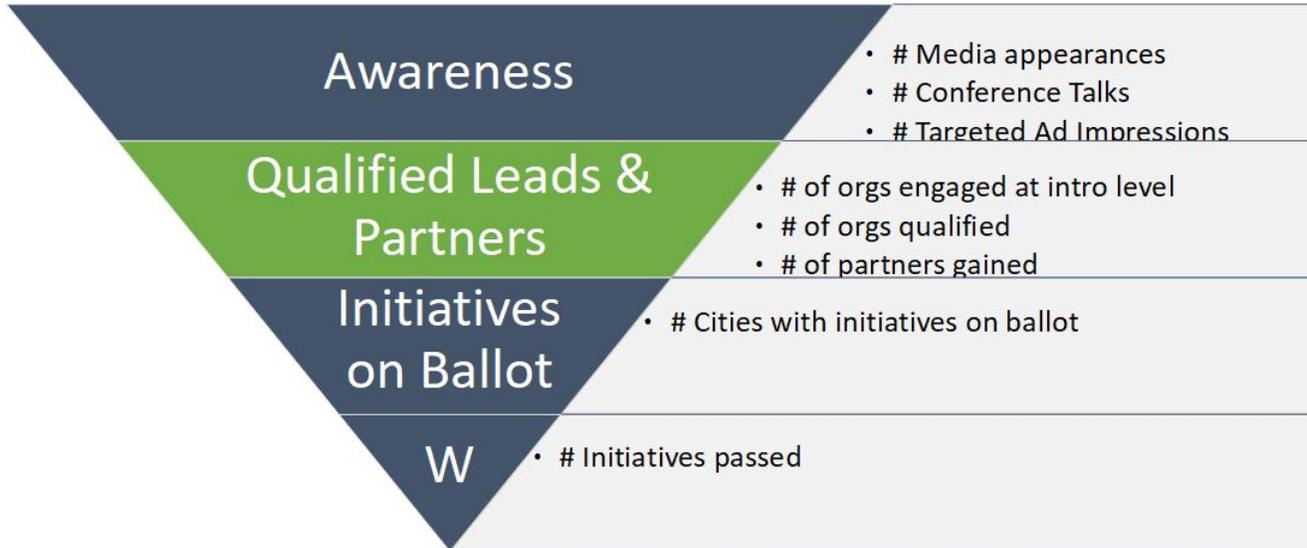
We originated from online advocates with backgrounds including mathematics, political science, engineering, and law. Years'-long participants from an online forum on voting methods merged together with co-founders from The Center for Range Voting. Once organized, a board was formed and we incorporated in 2011 as The Center for Election Science. CES continued building information on its website, attending events, coordinating with other orgs, and completing small projects. In mid-2013, CES moved its then board president and co-founder to the executive director role, creating the first staff position—though at 20-25 hours/week. In 2014, CES added an advisory board filled with leaders in the field of game theory and political science. At the end of 2017, CES achieved a grant of nearly \$600K, which allowed for its ED to focus more time on CES. In 2018, additional staff were brought on board. That same year, CES also began targeting its first US city to change its voting method.

The problem we seek to solve is our broken electoral system, the very way we make collective decisions within our organizations and government. We seek to improve multiple aspects of our electoral system, but we focus on its most destructive current feature: plurality voting, our choose-one voting method. This voting method often causes the wrong winner to prevail and gives an inaccurate reflection of support for the remaining candidates. This voting method also discourages new ideas because it causes people to fear wasting their vote. The consequences of this method's use pervade not only our civic organizations, but our own government. Our current voting method can cause us to pursue policies that don't reflect the will of the electorate while also hampering innovative policies from being raised.

Our solution to our choose-one voting method is to replace it with better single-winner methods or, where appropriate, multi-winner proportional methods. When looking at alternatives, we consider factors including expected utility gain for voters, proportionality (when applicable), simplicity, practicality, the effect on election behavior, the effect of tactical voting, and other issues.

## Key Performance Indicators & Three-Year Outcomes

### *Key Performance Indicator Funnel*



W = WIN!

### *Outcomes by Year*

2019:

- 1-2 passed ballot initiatives in cities with population 50-150K.
- Identify and poll on  $\geq 3$  elections.
- Director of Campaigns hired
- Director of Research hired
- Budget: \$1.1M

2020

- $\geq 1$  ballot initiatives with at least one city having a population over 200K.
- Identify and poll on  $> 3$  elections.
- Budget:  $> \$1M$

2021

- $\geq 1$  ballot initiatives with at least one city having a population over 200K.
- Identify and poll on  $> 3$  elections.
- Budget:  $> \$1M$

*Main Target Outcomes by 2022*

Win Scenario: 5 cities with at least 50k population implementing approval voting by 2022

How We Do It. CES :

- educates the public about the benefits of approval voting
- recruits existing advocacy organizations to pass local reforms
- supports local ballot initiatives with funds, staff, planning, and materials

**Environmental Analysis**

*Internal Environment*

With recent funding being attained, CES is in a growing period for its capacity. This means an urgency for CES to diversify its income as well as sustainably scale up its staff and operations. CES has three full-time staff as of 2018.

We have low visibility online, which should change with the added focus of resource to our website and digital outreach. We also do in-person outreach at 5-10 annual events across the country. Our draw tends to be our unique and evidence-based viewpoint on voting methods.

*External Environment*

Our barriers include attempting to change the voting methods of a system that is entrenched, both in culture and current law. A status-quo bias and the public’s current failure to appreciate voting methods are serious obstacles to overcome. There is a large base of misinformation on voting methods that makes much of our work difficult. Some of this stems from the counterintuitive nature of voting theory and nuances within the subject area. Consequently, voting methods—despite being the most important area—is often the last to get attention. There appears to be a recent positive shift for this focus. While good, it also means the activity space for reform is crowded in some geographies.

*SWOT Analysis*

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Leader on voting methods, able to explain voting topics to a general audience.	Funding diversity
Large pool of academic talent, including leading voting theorists.	Small e-mail base (<2,000).
Large potential impact of reform.	Replicable win still needed
Current supporters very passionate (interest) + well-off (capacity)	De-facto mission & approval voting not prioritized in public eye
	Emotional appeals in fundraising, which are necessary for a larger, broader, more generalized audience of supporters
	Lack of brand awareness

Opportunities	Threats
Software on group decisions & polling, more resources for elections, giving talks, spreading alternative methods to groups, networking with similar orgs	Unclear & decreased geographic space for voting reform targets
Spreading smarter voting methods to new cities Become go-to resource for voting info and tools.	Competition of other inferior alternative voting methods
Increase donations from current supporter base that still has lots of capacity for increased giving	Misleading claims on approval voting.
Leverage current supporter base that works in tech to reach new supporters w/ tech & math background and who have higher incomes	
Invest in infrastructure to automate user/donor journeys for more personalized experiences	
Research opportunities studying competitive elections, particularly when alternative voting methods are used	

*Gap Analysis*

Engagement

Website

Current: Transitioning to professionally-designed modern wordpress platform, 3K views/month, e-mail capture

Desired: Utilize analytic data, integrate merchandise, 25K+views/month

Social Media

Current: 2K+ followers, moderate engagement

Desired: Cohesive social media campaign with greater following

Public Relations

Current: Some radio, niche publications, occasional popular media

Desired: Recognized and frequently sought as experts from popular media

E-mail List

Current: <2K subscribers, general list

Desired: Build list and differentiate based on categories of interest

Fundraising

Donor Engagement

Current: Little Green Light, semi-automated, beginning to implement personalized, higher “cost” engagement (phone calls, handwritten cards) for high-value prospects

Desired: Differentiated donor engagement based on current giving levels and future capacity. Leverage Director of Philanthropy, Executive Director, and board for higher value prospects, and invest in a more robust CRM that allows for smarter automation, including automated engagement with lower value prospects and automated assignments of duties for higher value prospects.

#### Merchandise

Current: Absent

Desired: Educational bumper stickers, high-quality apparel (to increase likelihood of wear), and high-use items (reusable water bottles), et cetera

#### Grants

Current: One large grantor with other small grants

Desired: Secure other large and prestigious grants to draw in new major donors, with an emphasis on unrestricted funding

#### Advocacy

#### Civic

Current: Wins with mid-size organizations (Webbies, RLC, Freedom Fest), basic resources on site

Desired: Wins within larger organizations with broader targeting, expand electoral resources through site

#### Government

Current: Targeted initial campaign

Desired: Design & implement larger plan for additional major cities.

## **Strategy**

### *Vision*

The Center for Election Science's vision is to replace problematic voting methods across all government and civic elections with methods that produce greater social benefit.

### *Mission*

The Center for Election Science advances smarter electoral systems to improve social good in the public and private sectors by providing scholarship, election-related resources, and informed advocacy.

Strategic Objectives

Messaging, Engagement, & Outreach				
Project Area & KPI	Resources	Actions	Measurables	Timeline
Blog & Article Creation (Awareness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ED hours</li> <li>- Guest bloggers</li> <li>- Staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Write pieces</li> <li>- Edit &amp; share</li> <li>- Recruit &amp; utilize existing guest writers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 24 blogs/year</li> </ul>	2019 Year (Repeating)
Public Relations (Awareness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ED Hours</li> <li>- Staff</li> <li>- Support tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Apply PR Plan</li> <li>- Identify &amp; Target Outlets</li> <li>- Perform Interviews</li> <li>- Strategic Press Releases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 5+ major media</li> <li>- 10+ niche media</li> </ul>	2019 Year (Repeating)
Conference & Public Speaking Engagement (Awareness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ED hours</li> <li>- Transportation, lodging, food, &amp; attendance cost</li> <li>- Printed materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monitor opportunities</li> <li>- Prepare &amp; give presentation</li> <li>- Prepare necessary materials</li> <li>- Cultivate for speaking opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2+ major conference presentations</li> <li>- 3+ conference tables</li> <li>- 10+ key network contacts</li> </ul>	2019 Year (Repeating)
Newsletter (Awareness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff hours</li> <li>- Consulting for advanced list techniques &amp; best practices</li> <li>- MailChimp Fees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Write &amp; send newsletters</li> <li>- Implement best practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 12 newsletters</li> <li>- Targeted e-mails as appropriate</li> </ul>	2019 Year (Repeating)

<b>Advocacy, Research, &amp; Enablement</b>				
<u>Project Area</u>	<u>Resources</u>	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Measurables</u>	<u>Timeline</u>
Electoral Consulting - Passive focus with large client outreach only  (Awareness)	- ED hours - Volunteer hours - Possible expert support	- Identify & contact potential large clients - Consulting - Coordinate media teams - Solicit donation	- Enact better voting method for 2+ large organizations	2019 Year (Repeating)
Polling Projects  (Awareness)	- ED hours - Staff - Polling agency  - Collaborating org	- Design poll & methodology - Contract poll - Write-up & Press - Publication	- Polling result - Publication - National Press - 2+ projects	by 2021
Online Electoral Resources  (Awareness)	- ED hours - Staff - Expert support	- Design & implement applications for running internal elections  - Host	- Applications for cardinal-based single and multi-winner elections  - 100 uses/year	by 2020 Year (Repeating use goal)
Implement Alternative Voting Method for Local Government Offices  (Qualified Partners, Initiatives & Wins)	- ED & staff - New director of campaigns position - Collaborating organization - Potential c4 arm - Expert Consulting - Campaign Strategy	- Identify strategic target(s) - Develop pre-existing support structure - On-ground volunteer coordination - Advocacy campaign	- Locality using approval voting - Local and national press	2019 Year (Repeating)

<b>Fundraising &amp; Revenue Building</b>				
<u>Project Area</u>	<u>Resources</u>	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Measurables</u>	<u>Timeline</u>
Donation Management & Donor Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ED hours</li> <li>- Staff hours</li> <li>- Volunteer/contractors</li> <li>- Specialized tools/software</li> <li>- Significant Research</li> <li>- Donor Relations Written Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Execute existing fundraising plan</li> <li>- Pair board members with donors</li> <li>- Continued donor management design &amp; record keeping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- &gt;25% increase in donations/year</li> </ul>	2019 Year (Repeating)
Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ED hours</li> <li>- Staff hours</li> <li>- Volunteer/contractors</li> <li>- Specialized tools/software</li> <li>- Significant research</li> <li>- Grants plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Execute plan from ID, LOI, proposal, &amp; record keeping</li> <li>- ID and pair key contacts</li> <li>- Record keeping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 24 LOI's/year (may focus after initial year)</li> </ul>	2019 Year (Repeating)
Sellable merch (Awareness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ED hours</li> <li>- Staff</li> <li>- Contractor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ID and use contractor</li> <li>- Design merch</li> <li>- Choose &amp; set up platform</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sell \$500-\$1K in merch (exceed \$1K if merch is educational)</li> </ul>	2019 Year (Repeating)

## **Existing Wins & Activity**

### *Messaging, Engagement*

#### *Social Media & E-mail*

- >65K unique website visitors/year
- >1,075 Twitter followers
- >2,273 Facebook followers
- >490 YouTube subscribers
- >170k YouTube views
- >1.5K newsletter subscribers

#### *Additional Communications*

- >15 published videos including approval voting explainer
- Branded print messaging
- >60 blog articles
- >20 reference articles

#### *Internal Projects*

- Basic approval voting app
- 2016 presidential polling project comparing alternative voting methods

#### *Presentations & Reports*

#### *Conferences & Events*

- |  |                |
|--|----------------|
| - Left Forum   | - FreedomFest  |
| - Equal Vote Conference  | - Science Cafe |
| - Voting Methods & Election Integrity Symposium (Free & Equal) | - Politicon    |
| - Republican Liberty Caucus Convention                         |                |

#### *Organizations*

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| - <i>National Green Party</i>      | - Harvey Milk Democratic Club            |
| - <i>Republican Liberty Caucus</i> | - Lansing, MI; Ohio; Florida LWV         |
| - Votenet                          | - Maryland Montgomery County Green Party |
| - Potrero Hill Democratic Club     | - League of Women Voters of Torrance, CA |
| - Log Cabin Club of San Francisco  |  |

#### *Advocacy & Enablement*

*Online Election Resources*

- Sample cardinal-based ballots
- Cardinal-based tallying spreadsheets

*Orgs Assisted to Cardinal Methods*

- TX & OH Green Party
- German Pirate Party
- Harvey Milk Democratic Club
- Young Democrats of San Francisco
- 2015 RLC Straw Poll

*Offered Informational Resources*

- 2014 Colorado HB 1062
- 2013 Colorado SB 65
- 2013 Arizona HB 2518
- Rhode Island Voter Choice Study Commission
- Fargo Voting Methods Task Force
- Oregon Unified Primary Ballot Initiative
- NH Legislators
- Reform Fargo
- Ohio League of Women Voters
- Florida League of Women Voters

● *Media*

*Print & Digital*

- The Washington Examiner
- MSNBC.com
- The Oregonian
- New Citizens Press
- Independent Voter Network
- Deadspin Regressing
- Ballot Access News
- Democracy Chronicles
- Nonprofit Pro
- Popular Mechanics
- USA Today Magazine
- OpEd News
- Mesquite Local News
- Grand Forks Herald
- Policy Forum of Mills College
- Bangor Daily News
- Inside Philanthropy
- Inforum (Fargo, ND)

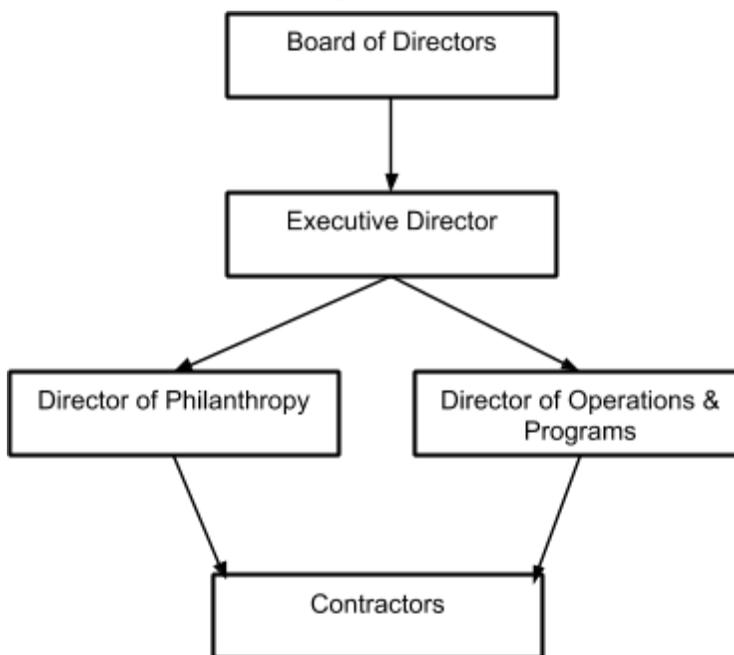
*Radio & Podcast*

- That Was Zen, This is Tao (NPR)
- Hal Ginsberg Morning Show
- WBEL 1380 The Big
- Phil Hullet & Friends
- Free Talk Live
- Jim Brown's Common Sense
- Doug Stephan Morning Show
- Partyline Radio WILO 1570AM
- KGNU Radio
- Ron Placone's Podcast
- It takes 2 with Amy & JJ
- 80,000 Hours Podcast
- Party of Reason and Progress Podcast
- Reason

*Television & Internet Video*

- Free Speech TV
- Free & Equal TV
- Third Candidates Documentary (Episode 3)

**2018 Organization Chart**



**Current Resources**

<i>2018 People &amp; Organization Power</i>	
<i>Staff</i>	
	Executive Director
	Director of Operations & Programs
	Director of Philanthropy
	Education Campaign Coordinator (local contractor)
<i>Boards</i>	
	8-member board of directors
	6-member advisory board
<i>Volunteers</i>	
	10+ volunteer base
<i>Other organizational memberships</i>	
	Bridge Alliance
	National Association of Nonpartisan Reformers

<i>2018 Annual Budget</i>
\$540,000