★ VIRGINIA ★
DEPARTMENT *of* ELECTIONS

VERIS RFP Project
Site Visit and Interview Notes

Contents

VERIS RFP Project
Site Visit and Interview Notes

VERIS RFP Project
Site Visit and Interview Notes

General Information

Pain points

GIS

The locality doesn't have access to GIS, yet, but has already forbidden the GRs to access the future system. The GRs would appreciate ELECT stepping in and pushing the locality agencies with elections-adjacent services—such as GIS—to share access to the resources. The GRs believe the county administration should willingly share services like GIS as it improves county operations.

The system has trouble with voter registration assignment without the use of GIS. Some voters that live along the border of another locality are flagged by VERIS as living in that bordering locality.

Contact information

Both the DMV and the Citizen Portal should capture some form of contact information—e.g. phone, email—from the registrant. This information would make investigating incomplete voter registration and absentee ballot applications easier.

Duplicate matching

The process of matching duplicate voters is too naïve. An all-caps name is not flagged as a duplicate and requires being processed the by GRs. It would be nice to have a way to flag the record as a missed Administrative Duplicate Registration Match (ADRM) or to simply disregard it. There is no drop down menu option to disregard. Currently, the GRs have to print and process the application, and sometimes that creates a new voter card which confuses the voter.

Citizen Portal

Voters often get their locality information incorrect. They'll sometimes choose the neighboring locality rather than their own. This information should be surfaced a different way rather than requested from the voter. The locality that the voter is assigned should be aligned with GIS and redistricted lines.

VERIS RFP Project
Site Visit and Interview Notes

Communication

ELECT

The GRs find it hard to know who to call to answer a question. Commissioner of Elections serves at the pleasure of the Governor, which the GRs feel is a political perception problem. The registrars largely depend on each other.

Liaison system

The GRs feel the liaison system serves little purpose. The liaisons have limited availability and their base of knowledge varies from liaison to liaison. The GRs noted that they've received wrong answers in the past.

Registrar to registrar

The GRs lack their own system of communication that is free of ELECT staff or others. To combat this, the GRs talk on the phone or try to coordinate meeting in-person, but it's difficult with work requirements and limited staff/resources.

Contradictory information

There are different interpretations of the Commonwealth elections code in the General Registrar Election Book (GREB), by ELECT, and by the other registrars. The GRs feel they need to make a judgement call rather than have a hard-and-fast answer.

Unfunded mandates

The GRs feel that the majority of the mandates from the state are unfunded.

Voter registration

Updates

In order to verify local addresses, the GRs call the 911 or the USPS office to validate some physical addresses because sometimes they're not recognized by VERIS. Sometimes the USPS and 911 office contradict each other. Without GIS, the GRs have to guess.

VERIS RFP Project
Site Visit and Interview Notes

Voter registration ID card

The GRs recognize that most other localities no longer issue voter registration card. While the cards require a particular paper stock with perforations, the template exists within VERIS and they print them in batch for registered voters. The GRs still use them because they act as a receipt, it's convenient for the voters to carry, and there are forms on the back to fill out a change of address and voter registration update (e.g. name change) and the GRs have a surplus of stock of these specialized forms.

Current voter registration form design

The form design prevents the voter from providing the correct information. The UOCAVA voter option being the first reason for supplying a mailing address makes some voters think the entire mailing address section probably doesn't apply to them. The form also compresses the felon and mental adjudication questions into one yes-no question, which is problematic since those two options have very different resolution paths.

Absentee

Current absentee request form design

The form design prevents the voter from providing the correct information. The reason codes are on the back of the form and voters often miss providing the required information for the reason code. The in-person absentee application no longer has a separate section for a "mail my ballot to," which captures a mailing address. While the form says "in person," the GRs have a number of voters who take the form with them to send back to us or fax for us to mail their ballot. Not all voters can complete their application online. Some voters lack internet access—many still have dial-up—a driver's license, and/or a printer.

Voter credit

The GRs have been unable to get the pollbook export process to work. The export from Advocate is supposed to go into the Pollbook Administration Manager (PAM) to be transformed as an acceptable import into VERIS. When imported into VERIS, this translated file should provide voter credit to every voter on the pollbook. The GRs haven't been able to use a pollbook for in-person absentee voters like some other localities.

VERIS RFP Project
Site Visit and Interview Notes

Document scanning

Unlabeled records

The documents attached to voter records by other localities that have had all of their alphas scanned and saved are unlabeled, so it's difficult to verify which document is the original, complete application. This lack of classification tags makes it difficult to find the correct record that has the completed validation questions and a signature. Each file has to be opened and evaluated until the correct document is located.

Process of attaching scans to records

The GRs haven't started scanning, yet, because they don't understand the process of how to attach the scans. The instructions in VERIS don't make sense. It is unclear how to go about it. The GRs are still mailing original alphas to other localities.

Reports

Purpose of reports

If a GR is looking for a particular report, there is no real way to figure out what a particular report does because it lacks a description.

Number of reports

The other issue with reporting is the sheer volume of reports. Even with descriptions, there are too many reports to sort through. The GRs don't use the majority of report functions and the ones they do need are difficult to find. VERIS should have a "frequently used" reports page or a feature to allow the GRs to "save" frequently-used reports.

Election night results

Process

The process for submitting election night results is duplicative and finicky. When the form in VERIS is updated, it may or may not update the state's result site. They sometimes have to enter the information multiple times. The provisional ballots have to be entered in multiple places.

VERIS RFP Project
Site Visit and Interview Notes

Addresses

Address validation

As with many other localities, the address validation process is error-prone. For example, "South Poes Rd" is changed to "S Poes Rd," which is incorrect as the "South" is not an address directional. "FT Francis Road" is changed to "Fort Francis Road," even though the "FT" is the initials of someone's name.

Election management

Ballot setup

After the qualification deadline, candidates have to be qualified and certified within VERIS. These are two different functions in two different places. The GR then generates from VERIS a Certification of Candidates Report, which contains the candidates in qualification order, for every contest/office on the ballot. Then, the Director of Elections emails as a PDF to ELECT and the voting vendor. The vendor knows the order of the contests on the ballot as it's based on Virginia code.

The vendor then sends the proofs of the ballot styles to the GRs and the GRs upload them to FormSite and ELECT puts the ballots through two reviewers. Once the approval is over, the vendor sends it to a printer who then prints an official proof that includes the seal. The GRs feel they have to guess at the number of ballots to be printed. There's no report in VERIS to do forecasting for this and no report that clearly indicates the turnout for the last time this specific race was conducted (i.e. 4 years ago).

Candidates

Candidate qualifications

VERIS doesn't have required fields to prevent data entry issues. For example, middle names are required for all candidates and the GRs shouldn't be allowed to submit these records without the middle names. VERIS should print letters to qualified candidates that contain rules for conducting campaigns to help the candidates understand their obligations.

VERIS RFP Project
Site Visit and Interview Notes

Provisional ballots

At polling location

Aside from the situation where a voter fails to provide a photo id, the Chiefs are told to call the GRs before issuing provisional ballots. This seemingly simple request is difficult in all of the polling locations because there is no cell service. The Chiefs have to use a local land line and may inadvertently annoy another service agency like the fire dept. When a Chief calls in, the GRs communicate to the Chief what they find in VERIS, which may result in finding the voter in the pollbook—due to an incorrect voter lookup—and issuing a regular ballot. The Chief may also issue a provisional ballot, or, if the information from the GR was that the voter is registered in another locality, informing the voter which precinct/locality they should be voting in. Even if the voter is directed to vote in their registered locality, some may still request a provisional ballot. The provisional ballots are put in a special envelope. The Chief Officers record every incident that happens at the polling location. At the end of the day, they put all ballots in the vault.

Canvass
The Electoral Board comes to the GR's office for canvass. The GRs go through provisional ballot with supporting documentation to the Electoral Board. The decision to accept each provisional ballot by the Electoral Board is recorded on the provisional ballot log, which has a list of every provisional ballot issued from the polling location. The GRs use a paper matrix—candidates along the top, precincts down the side—to tally the votes per candidate for each of the precincts. That information is entered into VERIS. The rejections get letters. Both approvals and rejections get voter credit.

Future state

Chat feature
The GRs feel that it would be helpful to have a chat feature within VERIS that would allow them to chat with other GRs logged into VERIS about a specific feature or a record. In some ways, it could be a support feature, but in other ways it could be a way to speed problem resolution like records with duplicate social security numbers.

Pollworker management
The GRs would really like to manage pollworkers in VERIS.