



**2017
EXCELLENCE IN
INNOVATION
Awards Program**



Recognizes Buncombe County Election Services for development and implementation of What's the Wait?: An Integrated Technology Early Voting Wait Map



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Project Summary

For the 2016 Presidential Election, Buncombe County created an online map to display the number of voters in line at each of 20 early voting locations. Previous efforts to provide information to voters about when and where to vote early had not been significantly effective. Radio advertising, signs, and social media conveying information about which early voting locations had the least wait were not producing the desired results. This Early Voting Wait Map helped voters choose when and where to vote, showed them how to get to their chosen destination, aided in spreading voters more evenly across voting locations, and helped election staff provide faster and more efficient service. Buncombe served over 100,000 voters during the period. The map received nearly 32,000 views and abundant media attention. Most importantly, the Buncombe early voting program operated for 2 weeks with NO complaint-worthy lines and NO significant administrative errors. Additionally, without the long lines which are the norm for Presidential Elections, the last day of early voting was able to close at the predesignated hour.

The simple, user friendly map included a driving directions feature. A texting service was used to report and store data. The live map (updated on our website every 15 minutes) proved useful not only to voters but also in-house for alerting staff to sites with growing lines where additional support could be dispatched. The map attracted significant media attention which aided in advertising early voting.

The map saved 133 hours of phone time, returning \$2,800 to the county. Without the automated service, the task would have required an additional worker for the early voting period; the labor involved would have cost \$1723. The combined amount of labor savings is almost 7 weeks of work time! The need for less poll workers, shorter hours for temporary office workers, and a reduction in preprinted ballots saved nearly \$19,000. The efficiency increase took pressure off staff giving them extra time to provide voters with better service when they did need help. It also made for a less hectic working environment leading to fewer mistakes, a time savings in itself that saves thousands

