



THE  
ELECTIONS  
GROUP

# **Guide to Ballot Drop Boxes**

Issued by The Elections Group



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# Overview

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Ballot drop boxes offer a secure, convenient alternative for voters to cast their completed mail ballots. They save money for voters in jurisdictions where return postage is not prepaid, and they can reduce costs for election authorities where postage is paid.

Voters like ballot drop boxes. In jurisdictions where vote-by-mail is prevalent, as many as 80 percent of voters choose to return their ballot at a ballot drop box.

A ballot drop box program can help build public trust in the election process. Ballot drop boxes can reassure voters who mistrust the postal system because of lost or delayed mail, or who worry about someone potentially tampering with their ballot. Ballot drop boxes also provide a solution for voters who are concerned about their signature being exposed to anyone outside of their local election office.

For election officials, ballot drop boxes ensure ballots are received in time to be processed. This is critical since many voters wait until Election Day to return their ballots.

This guide is divided into three sections.

- **Planning** will help election officials decide the type, location, equipment and staffing for three types of ballot drop boxes.
- **Voter Outreach and Communication** contains suggestions for promoting ballot drop box convenience and availability, and to publicize your request and return deadlines.
- **Execution** includes sample forms that can be used separate from this guide to train temporary staff and used as a daily checklists and chain of custody logs, including a section for Election Night.

As you review this guide, keep in mind accommodations for COVID-19 and social distancing requirements. For example, asking two unrelated workers to share a car ride may be a challenge. COVID-related considerations are addressed in the Planning section.

# Planning

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## How Many Ballot Drop Boxes Do I Need?

Estimating an adequate number of ballot drop boxes can be challenging when you don't know how many voters will use them. And determining how many to obtain will be constrained by your budget, purchasing process, and ability to deploy multiple boxes before Election Day.

Hiring enough temporary workers to staff ballot security teams is another critical factor. To maintain public trust you should have bipartisan, two-person teams picking up ballots from each drop box on a daily basis. You will need more frequent pick-ups in the days leading up to and including Election Day. Early on, some busy locations may also require frequent pick-ups, perhaps multiple times a day.

The benefits to deploying as many ballot drop boxes as possible include:

- Providing greater access to the election process
- Keeping voters out of busy and stressful polling places on Election Day
- Receiving voted ballots back faster than USPS delivery

A rule of thumb to consider is one drop box for every 10,000-15,000 voters; that is a common requirement in states where mail ballots are the primary voting method. Your geography should also inform how many drop boxes to place. For example, rural, sparsely populated areas may require more drop boxes per capita than densely populated urban areas.

Fewer drop boxes will yield fewer benefits. An overflowing, unstaffed 24-hour ballot drop box can become a serious public relations and voter trust issue. If mailing out ballots is a temporary pandemic alternative, or if you don't have an adequate budget, temporary indoor ballot drop boxes at staffed locations can provide an adequate solution.

## Scaling Up

Ballot drop boxes should be available to voters as soon as ballots are mailed and remain available through the close of polls on Election Day (or as the statute in your state provides). Unstaffed drop boxes are usually available 24 hours per day. Staffed drop boxes or drive-up options are

typically offered on a more limited schedule, such as during business hours and full polling hours on Election Day.

If adequate staffing is a problem, consider starting with fewer drop boxes and scaling up to the full number you need closer to Election Day. Note that scaling up over time presents P.R. challenges. You will need to clearly publicize drop box locations, plus the dates and times that each location is available.

## Where Do I Place Them?

To choose ballot drop box locations, election officials should consider these factors at a minimum:

- Concentrations of population
- Concentrations of historically higher mail-voting populations
- Geographic distance and features
- Voter convenience
- Proximity to public transportation
- Community-based locations
- Security, including lighting, visibility, and security cameras

The Center for Tech and Civic Life (CTCL) created a [Ballot Drop-off Location Criteria Planner](#) to help jurisdictions evaluate potential ballot drop-off locations. The planner is located in Appendix B.

Unless prohibited by law, a staffed ballot drop box should be provided at every polling location. This will require separate drop boxes for mail ballots and in-person paper ballots (when not scanned at the polling location).

Additional locations for staffed drop boxes may include, but are not limited to: city offices, public libraries, county offices, assisted living facilities, senior living communities, college campuses, local businesses and shopping centers, and offices of community organizations. At these locations, the voter may need to leave their vehicle and enter the building. A drive-up option could allow voters to deposit their ballots and remain in their vehicles.

## ADA Accessibility

Election officials should ensure that ballot drop box locations are accessible to voters with disabilities. Consider the following when implementing drop box plans.

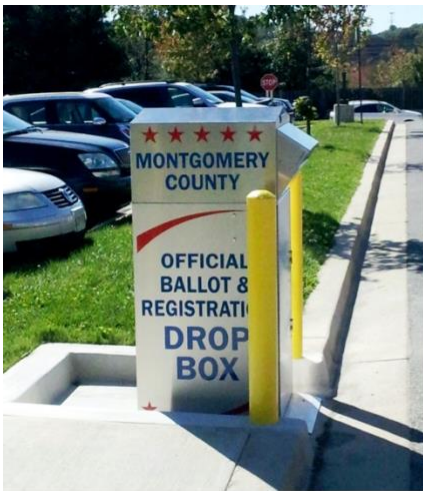
1. If a location has only one drop box, the design and placement of that drop box should meet accessibility requirements.
2. If a location has more than one drop box, at least one of the drop boxes should meet accessibility requirements. Any inaccessible drop box at a facility should have a sign with directions to the nearest accessible drop box.
3. A drop box should be placed along an accessible path connected to the nearest ADA parking space, or nearest the passenger drop-off zone, and if applicable, the nearest public transportation stop.
4. If there is no accessible pathway from the parking lot, there should be signs directing the voter to the nearest accessible drop box.
5. Drop box locations inside of buildings should be assessed for accessibility as if they were polling places. For more information, please see the [ADA Checklist for Polling Places](#).

# Purchasing Considerations

The type of ballot drop box(es) you use will depend on your plan and budget. Drop boxes come in several sizes, types, and different construction materials to with stand vandalism and inclement weather and to prevent removal. The following section will cover three types of ballot boxes: a 24-hour permanent box, a temporary indoor box and a temporary drive-through ballot drop-off.

## 24-Hour Unstaffed Ballot Drop Box

A 24-hour ballot drop box mimics a USPS blue mailbox. It is a permanent metal structure accessible by vehicle or on foot in the public right-of-way, and should be well-secured to the ground. Styles vary. These can be installed on your jurisdiction’s property, or you can arrange to install one at a partnering public agency (see list in previous section.) This usually means securing a written agreement with property owners to locate and secure these drop boxes on their property before you purchase them. A list of drop box vendors is located in Appendix A.





Some things to consider when purchasing 24-hour, unstaffed ballot drop boxes:

- The drop box should be a permanent fixture or a temporary structure that is secured in place to prevent removal or tampering.
- Ensure that the ballot drop box has robust locking mechanisms for both the ballot slot(s) and storage compartment. Ensure that ballots cannot be tampered with while in the drop box, nor removed by anyone other than your authorized ballot retrieval team.
- The opening slot should be large enough to deposit ballot envelopes and designed to keep anyone from pouring liquid into the drop box, or for rainwater to seep into it.
- Drop boxes should be easily recognizable by voters. Plan to purchase or produce permanent, large, weather-proof decals to label the drop boxes with at least your agency name, logo, phone number and the words *Official Ballot Drop Box*. Use consistent decals on all 24-hour boxes. Additional language may include:
  - *No Postage Required*
  - *Closes at 7 p.m. on Election Day* (or relevant time)
  - *This Box Under Video Surveillance* (if applicable)
  - If required, list any statutory language, such as the number of ballots that can be dropped off by one person in any election.
- Find out how many ballot envelopes each different brand or style of drop box can hold. Ballot return projections will help you to determine the drop box size you will need.
- Consider whether your jurisdiction can or must monitor the ballot drop box with 24/7 video surveillance, where the camera will be mounted, and how footage will be stored. If the drop box is located at another agency's facility, include mounting and access requirements in the agreement.
- If the ballot drop box is accessible by vehicle, consider whether you can safely locate it on the driver's side. This can ensure safety by letting the driver cast their ballot without exiting the vehicle. "One-Way" streets/thoroughfares are ideal for installing a box on the driver's side.
- When planning to receive a shipment of drop boxes, consider multiple important factors.
  - These drop boxes will arrive on pallets and are large and heavy.
  - They should be shipped to a warehouse.

- Installation may not take place immediately and you may need space to store them.
- A forklift may be needed to move them.
- While drop boxes have few moving parts, it is crucial that you verify the locks and doors are functioning properly and that all ballot slots are unobstructed before acceptance.

To install drop boxes you may need an agreement or permit from the local governing body before installing a drop box. Once an agreement and/or permit is secured, you may need to coordinate work with other offices to complete installation. Some items to consider:

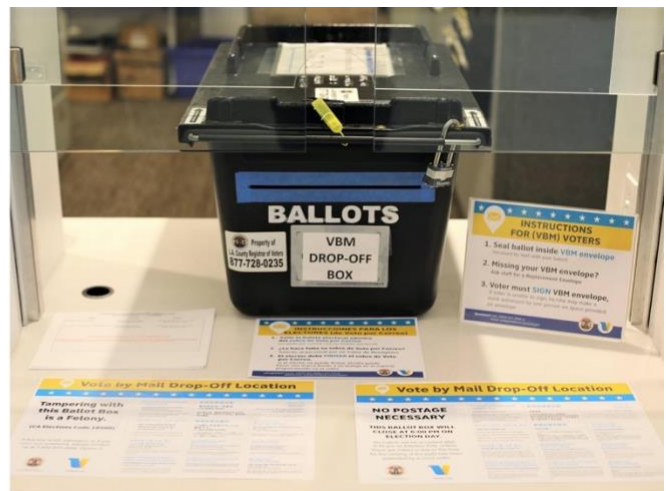
- New concrete may need to be poured, which may extend the timeline for the boxes to be safe and fully functional.
- Consider drop box weight and bulk before shipping them out for installation. Consider which staff and vehicles are appropriate, and how the boxes will move in and out of the vehicle cargo area.
- Securing the boxes will require tradespeople whose schedules may not be flexible if shipment is delayed.
- Early and regular communications will help keep the team working together .

## Temporary Ballot Drop Boxes — Indoors

Temporary indoor ballot drop boxes or bags are portable and much smaller than 24-hour drop boxes. Smaller options have handles on the side for carrying and are small enough to rest on a table. Larger options can hold more ballots and are on wheels. Bipartisan teams of two election workers usually monitor these drop boxes or bags.

Ideally, these drop boxes or bags should be available inside every polling place, to offer voters the greatest convenience for dropping off mail ballots. Ballot drop boxes placed inside the polling location may be serviced and staffed by poll workers rather than separate ballot collection teams.

They can also be located inside government buildings, libraries, community centers, and other high traffic areas. Your agency could secure an agreement to have staff from these partnering agencies monitor the drop box during their business hour and during polling hours on Election Day. The agreement should ensure access for your ballot retrieval team to pick up the ballot drop box or bag at scheduled times.



Factors to consider when purchasing temporary, indoor ballot drop boxes or bags:

- Consider durability, weight and sizing options, and which would be a better solution for your facility—a smaller, tabletop box, a bag, or a larger box on wheels.
- Determine how many ballots each drop box or bag can hold and your requirements for replacing or emptying it. Ballot drop boxes fill up quickly, especially approaching and on Election Day.
- Ensure that the drop box or bag cannot be opened or moved by unauthorized persons. It should have a lock to protect ballot envelopes, and ideally should be secured to an immovable object with a padlock or chain lock (such as a bicycle lock).
- Ensure that there is a place on the drop box or bag for a zip-tie style security seal for chain of custody.
- The drop box or bag should be easily recognizable by voters. Plan to purchase or produce decals to label it with your agency name, branding, the purpose of the drop box and useful information (see the section on Voter Outreach and Communication).

## Temporary Ballot Drop Boxes — Drive Through

A drive-through ballot drop box is staffed by bipartisan teams of two election workers on a street or in a parking lot. These workers safely approach a vehicle, accept the voted ballot envelope from the voter, and deposit it into a ballot drop box while the voter observes. At minimum, these workers are equipped with safety vests and badges, a canopy tent for shelter, a table and chairs and locked ballot boxes. This option is usually only deployed on the last few days of the election, including Election Day.

Drive-through locations can be very convenient for voters as they do not need to park or exit their vehicles. They also offer greater operational efficiency for election administrators because they can absorb some of the traffic from high-demand, 24-hour ballot drop boxes on Election Day.



To avoid long lines of cars potentially blocking roadways and/or parking lots, ensure that you have enough staff and ballot drop boxes to move traffic through quickly. Also, some jurisdictions provide “I Voted” stickers at drive-through locations. While this can be a fun idea, it has the potential to slow the pace of cars through the process, creating longer lines. Be sure to consider this impact in your planning.

Some things to consider for temporary, drive-through drop off locations:

- To maximize safety and efficiency, provide instructions and maps to set-up teams. These should map out exactly where set-up should take place and how traffic should flow well in advance of deployment.

- Pop-up tents, tables, chairs, safety cones, and portable space heaters can often be borrowed from other government agencies (Sheriff's Office, Public Works, Parks & Recreation, Facilities or Fleet) or rented from a party or restaurant supply company.

Additional supplies are necessary for staff working outdoors, such as spotlights and flashlights for working in the dark, and apparel for inclement weather.



# What Other Resources Will I Need?

## Additional Supplies and Equipment for All Types of Ballot Drop Boxes

**Bipartisan ballot retrieval teams**

*(Enough teams to ensure each drop box is closed/locked at “close of polls” on Election Night)*

**Phone tree to reach bipartisan teams while in the field**

*(May need to provide mobile phones for those who do not want to use their personal phones)*

**Rental cars or fleet vehicles**

**Chain of custody logs**

**Security seals**

**Portable ballot drop boxes or bags for transport**

**High-visibility vests for workers**

**Personal protective equipment such as gloves, masks, and hand sanitizer**

**Accessibility, directional, and electioneering signs (if applicable)**

Temporary Indoor	Temporary Drive-Through	Permanent 24-Hour
Table(s)	Table(s)	Extra keys made
Chairs	Chairs	Large mail bin placed inside
Cable or bike lock	Pop-up canopy	Flashlights
	Road signs	
	Orange cones	
	Lanterns	
	Flashlights	
	Weather appropriate support such as propane heater and rain gear	

# How Do We Secure Ballot Boxes?

The location and type of drop box can affect the security measures needed to ensure both actual and perceived security.

## Locking Requirements

All drop boxes shall be secured by a lock and a tamper-evident seal. Only an election official and a designated ballot retriever shall have access to the keys and/or combination of the lock. If your drop box(es) are secured by a key lock, be sure to make copies of each key and store them securely at your election facility.

## Video Requirements

If feasible, both temporary and 24-hour drop boxes should be monitored by a video security surveillance system, or an internal camera that can capture digital images and/or video.

A video security surveillance system is especially critical for unstaffed, 24-hour boxes and can include existing systems on county, city, or private buildings. The video system should be robust enough to capture and store video for the full time the ballot drop box(es) are open to receive ballots during an election. These videos may be considered an election record, and thus may need to be retained for a certain period of time after each election, depending on your state laws.

The easiest way to provide video surveillance is to position your ballot drop box within view of an existing video surveillance system. If you need to install your own system, work with your city/county IT, facilities, or law enforcement division to see if there are similar systems used throughout the city/county. Chances are your jurisdiction already has a vendor set up for this type of equipment.

## Bipartisan Election Workers (drive-through locations)

Drive-through ballot drop boxes must be monitored very closely by election workers to ensure that someone does not drive-off with a ballot drop box.



## Other Safety and Security Measures

**Unstaffed** drop boxes placed outdoors should be securely fastened to prevent moving or tampering. For example, fasten the drop box to concrete or an immovable object. This will prevent unauthorized removal of the drop box.

**Staffed** drop boxes have several options, but all options should take into consideration additional security measures when the ballot drop site is not staffed. Safeguarding the drop box during unstaffed hours could mean the drop box is inaccessible to the public when not in use. The box should be secured in a locked room, sealed with a tamper-evident seal, and if possible, under video surveillance. Staffed drop boxes should be securely fastened to a stationary surface or to an immovable object, and/or placed behind a counter, and/or portable so they can be transported to a curbside area or a mobile voting area. When in use, these drop boxes should be constantly monitored by election officials or other designated representatives.

Work with law enforcement to include frequent patrols of unstaffed drop boxes. In some communities, it might also be appropriate to develop a network of citizens willing to regularly patrol unstaffed drop boxes.

Work with the public works department and law enforcement to make drive through locations safe and secure.

## Ballot Retrieval

### Driving Routes, Frequency, and Staffing Needs

Once the locations of your ballot drop boxes are set, you should begin planning daily routes for ballot retrieval. This includes sending teams to visit all ballot drop boxes - permanent and temporary. The frequency of pickups may vary in the beginning, every other day versus every day, and become more frequent - multiple times per day - the closer you get to Election Day.

The time it takes to retrieve ballots will depend on the type of ballot drop box used. Ballot retrieval teams will be able to park close to most permanent, 24-hour drop boxes. They will need to transfer the contents of the drop boxes to portable bags or boxes, seal the boxes, complete their chain of custody paperwork, and load the portable boxes into a vehicle.

Temporary, staffed ballot drop boxes are usually located inside a building. This means ballot retrieval teams will need to park and walk into the building to the room where the temporary ballot drop box is located. Most often, they will switch out the full ballot drop box for an empty

drop box, complete the chain of custody paperwork, and carry the full drop box or bag back to their vehicle. The process for temporary drive-through locations will be similar.

## Driving Routes

The process of retrieving ballots will be most efficient if retrieval teams are able to follow pre-planned driving routes. This can be made easier with mapping technology. Some election offices use commercial software such as Routific and Esri Workforce. Google Maps is a free option that most staff will be familiar with and find easy to use.

When using Google Maps, begin by mapping out a route that you think can be completed in four hours. Identify each location, including the starting and ending location (typically the election office). Assume that the necessary steps at each location will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Adjust the number of drop boxes on the route until you are able to achieve a route that can be completed in roughly four hours. Be sure to map it during the same times your retrieval team members will be on the road to account for daily traffic patterns. Also consider adding in break times as needed for your retrieval teams.

Consider using mobile phone tracking applications or GPS spot trackers as a way to ensure the assigned route is followed without deviation and that your retrieval team is on time. This may also help document your chain of custody.

## Frequency of Retrieval

The frequency with which you retrieve ballots from each ballot drop box depends on multiple factors, including:

- Timing (How close to Election Day is it?)
- Projected and actual voter turnout
- The number of ballot boxes you have
- How many ballots each box can hold
- The geography of your jurisdiction and distance retrieval teams have to travel

Generally, it is important to retrieve ballots at least once per day from the first day ballots may be returned. This will ensure ballot security and the ballots can enter your processing operation as quickly as possible. From there, structure your retrieval plan around a slowly building stream of ballots. Jurisdictions have seen as few as 20% of ballots cast by mail deposited in drop boxes during the first two weeks and as many as 55%–60% of ballots deposited during the last two days

of the election, including 40% of ballots cast on Election Day. You will need to retrieve ballots multiple times per day from your busier ballot drop boxes the closer you get to and on Election Day.

Other important items to consider when creating your retrieval plan:

- Your plan needs to be flexible. If voter turnout is higher than anticipated, you may need to retrieve ballots multiple times per day sooner than you had planned to scale up.
- On the Monday evening before Election Day, you must retrieve ballots from all drop boxes at the end of the day so they do not fill overnight and to maximize the number of ballots you can count on Election Day.
- On Election Night, you must close all drop boxes simultaneously with closing the polls. This will take significant staffing and coordination.
- It is important to track as much data about this process as possible. Retain it for future planning, including how many ballots you retrieve from each drop box each day and how many retrieval runs were needed to each drop box each day. This data can be obtained from ballot logs and reviewed after the election.

## Staffing Needs

Use the mapped driving routes and frequency of retrieval to determine how many teams and vehicles you will need and for how long. For example, in the first few weeks after ballots are mailed out you might only need three teams of two (six temporary workers) and three vehicles. That number might increase significantly or even double as you start the week leading up to Election Day.

The biggest staffing challenge for ballot retrieval will be at the close of polls on Election Night. You will need bipartisan teams to close and seal each ballot drop box right at the close of polls (or as the statute in your state provides). Many jurisdictions recruit staff from sister agencies, since drop box closing teams do not require full poll worker training. Remember, these ballot retrieval teams will need to be bipartisan, even those staff recruited from other agencies, and may need to be sworn in as election workers.

As mentioned in the overview, accommodations for COVID-19 and the need for social distancing will affect your staffing decisions. Asking two unrelated workers to drive together in the same car may be a challenge. You will need to accommodate any retrieval team member requests to travel in separate cars in tandem. The steps for setup and the daily retrieval of ballots should also follow the six-foot distancing requirements.

# Voter Outreach and Communication

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Promoting the use and availability of ballot drop boxes is essential to their success. Use all of the communication tools and resources at your disposal as soon as practical to publicize ballot drop box locations, hours and notable accessibility features.

For example, use your regular print and electronic materials, website, social media, video, and news releases to announce ballot drop box locations and share a link to a comprehensive list and/or map of ballot drop boxes.

You can also include a list of ballot drop-off locations in your **mail ballot instructions**, **voter information guide** and **sample ballot publications**. Depending on how many locations you have, you may be able to print them on the mail ballot envelope as well. If there are too many locations to fit, perhaps include a link or QR code on the envelope to direct voters to your list of locations.

Your election website will be the optimal resource for voters to find a ballot drop-off location. Create a **web page for Ballot Drop-Off Locations**. Include a list of all location names, addresses, hours and embed a link to a Google map for each. If there is a change to the ballot drop box plan, it should be noted on your official website within 24 hours.

You can also create and embed a **map of all ballot box locations** using Google My Maps. First, create a list of locations as a .csv file, with separate columns for location name, address, city, state and zip code, hours, and type of ballot drop box. Then visit [www.google.com/mymaps](http://www.google.com/mymaps) and follow instructions to import the map. You'll need to create a Google account if you don't already have one.

Issue a **news release and photos** if you have installed one or more new 24-hour ballot drop boxes in your community. Share it with your own employee news channels, local news media, as well as jurisdictions for newsletters and public television news shows.

Ask the clerk or communications team in your local cities and towns if you can submit a **contributed article** for their newsletter, blog or website regarding the election. Be sure to request a deadline and word count. Describe options for voters and indicate where citizens within your jurisdiction can find their nearest ballot drop box and polling place. You can also ask them to embed your election page link on their own webpages.

Another creative idea is to develop a **'Find My Nearest' web-based tool** to help voters find the ballot drop box that is closest to them. A user will type in an address or allow the tool to use their device's 'location services' to identify their current location. The tool would then populate with a map and list of the nearest three or four ballot drop off locations. This will require knowledge of ArcGIS or Google Maps, and will likely require support from your IT department to create.

# Execution

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## Opening and Setup

Whether you are setting up a temporary ballot drop box or a 24-hour location, you will need to plan for a ballot retrieval team to set up, open, and secure the drop boxes for voters to deposit their voted ballots.

### Temporary Ballot Drop Boxes

Supplies:

- Locked and sealed ballot drop boxes or bags
- Tamper-evident seals (if replacements are needed)
- Chain of custody logs
- Phone numbers to call for support/emergencies
- Cable or bike lock
- Applicable signage
- Tables and chairs (if necessary)
- “I Voted” stickers (optional)
- Voter information sheet (optional)
- Voter Registration forms (optional)

Voter information sheets, “I Voted” stickers, and other voting related information may be placed near the drop box.

### Drive-Through Ballot Drop Boxes

Drive-through ballot drop boxes might be set up in a parking lot or on the street depending on the location. For all street-related setups, there should be a law enforcement officer present to guide the setup and maintain safety throughout the day.

When setting up in a parking lot, consider the use of “no parking” signs. These signs can be left out overnight to ensure no vehicles park in the area to be used for the drive-through location.

Supplies should be delivered, including:

- Locked and sealed ballot drop boxes or bags
- Tamper-evident seals
- Chain of custody logs
- Phone numbers to call for support/emergencies
- Set-up maps/documentation
- Pop-up tent
- Road signs
- Orange cones
- Table and chairs
- “I Voted” stickers (optional)
- Propane heater (optional during cold weather months)
- Flashlights or lanterns

Bipartisan teams should:

1. Position road signs and cones according to provided map or instructions.
2. Set up the tent and position according to the provided map or instructions.
3. Set up the folding table and chairs.
4. Place the ballot drop box on the table.
5. Set up the heater and propane tank if needed

## 24-Hour Ballot Drop Boxes

Permanent, 24-hour drop boxes should be available for voters to use as soon as ballots are mailed. This requires staff or ballot retrieval teams to inspect, clean, and open the ballot drop slot on each drop box. An assigned route for opening should be created along with a checklist or log to ensure all ballot drop boxes have been opened.

Each retrieval team will need:

- Slot key
- Access door key
- Phone numbers to call for support/emergencies
- Cleaning supplies
- Silicone spray (for locks)
- Flashlight
- Inspection checklist or chain of custody form

For setup and opening of 24-hour ballot drop boxes, retrieval teams will:

<b>1</b> <b>Unlock</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Open the ballot slot, using the slot key. <input type="checkbox"/> Open the access door, using the access door key.
<b>2</b> <b>Inspect and Clean</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Visually inspect the drop box and surrounding areas. <input type="checkbox"/> If there is any graffiti or wrap damage, the retrieval team will clean or repair as best they can. <i>If unable to clean or repair it thoroughly, use mobile phone to take pictures and note the damage on the chain of custody form</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Wipe down the exterior, top and slot area of the drop box. <input type="checkbox"/> Spray the locks with silicone spray and ensure they can be easily locked and unlocked. <input type="checkbox"/> Both retrieval team members visually inspect the drop box interior for ballots or any type of debris. <input type="checkbox"/> Use a mobile phone to take a picture as time-stamped proof the ballot drop box is empty.
<b>3</b> <b>Seal and Record</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Close and lock the access door using the access door key. <input type="checkbox"/> Place a security seal on the access door and record seal number on a chain of custody form. <input type="checkbox"/> Complete and sign the retrieval form or chain of custody form.

# Daily Collection of Ballot Drop Boxes

- Only designated bipartisan ballot retrieval teams should remove ballots from drop boxes. This is done in teams of two.
- All designated ballot retrieval team members should wear badges or vests that readily identify them as designated ballot retrievers or election officials.
- Each team of two will be provided a route each day.
- Ballots must be picked up in designated order.
- A separate chain of custody form should be completed at every stop (both for 24-hour drop boxes and temporary drop boxes or bags).
- The ballot retrieval log and checklist should be completed at the beginning of the route, at each stop, and after returning to the election office.
- Visually inspect the drop box and surrounding area at each visit. If there are any signs of tampering or vandalism, take pictures, clean or repair the drop box as best you can, and report in the notes section of the chain of custody form.

















## Instructions for Completing Ballot Retrieval Log

- On the front, record the date and time and check off all supplies that have been retrieved.
- On the back, record the route number, date, and names of both ballot retrievers.
- After ballots have been retrieved at each stop, record:
  - Column A: Name/ID/location of the ballot drop box
  - Column B: Seal number on the door (24-hour drop box) when you arrived (should be affixed to custody log) or the security seal on the temporary drop box you are retrieving
  - Column C: Seal number attached to each transfer box or bag (only for 24-hour drop box)
  - Column D: New seal number put on the door (24-hour drop box) or the seal number for the replacement temporary box or bag
  - Column E: Current time of day
  - Column F: Initials of each ballot retrieval team member.



- At the conclusion of each route, the bottom portion of the form should be completed. Consider using the same visual checklist of supplies to indicate all supplies and equipment have been returned to the election office.

# Ballot Retrieval Team Daily Log *(front)*

Date: _____				Route Departure Time: _____ : _____ <input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM			
 <p><input type="checkbox"/> Access door or padlock keys</p>	 <p><input type="checkbox"/> Empty, portable ballot box(es)</p>	 <p><input type="checkbox"/> Flashlight</p>	 <p><input type="checkbox"/> High-visibility vests</p>				
 <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning supplies</p>	 <p><input type="checkbox"/> Gloves</p>	 <p><input type="checkbox"/> Masks</p>	 <p><input type="checkbox"/> Hand sanitizer</p>				
 <p><input type="checkbox"/> Chain of custody logs</p>	 <p><input type="checkbox"/> Driving route and map</p>	 <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pens</p>	 <p><input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle keys</p>				
 <p><input type="checkbox"/> Clipboard</p>	 <p><input type="checkbox"/> 24-hour drop box security seals</p>	 <p><input type="checkbox"/> Transfer ballot box or bag security seals</p>	 <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mobile phone and charger</p>				
<p>Route Return Time: _____ : _____ <input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM <input type="checkbox"/> Supplies <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle Keys</p>							

# Ballot Retrieval Team Daily Log *(back)*

Route ID# \_\_\_\_\_

Date: _____		Retriever 1: _____		Retriever 2: _____		
A	B	C	D	E	F	
Drop Box Name/ID	Existing Seal ID	Transfer Box/Bag Seal	New Seal ID	Collection Time	Team Initials	

# Ballot Retrieval Team Chain of Custody Record

<b>Ballot Drop Box Name/#:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Retrieval Team Member 1:</b>	<b>Retrieval Team Member 2:</b>
Transfer Box/ Bag #:	Additional Transfer Box/Bag #:

<b>Time of Arrival:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM	<b>Initials:</b>	<b>PLACE USED SECURITY SEAL</b>
<b>Security Seal Intact:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<b>Initials:</b>	
<b>Remove security seal and record seal #:</b>		

<input type="checkbox"/> Inspect ballot drop box for any signs of tampering or vandalism. <input type="checkbox"/> Unlock the access door and remove ballots. <input type="checkbox"/> Transfer ballots to ballot transfer box or bag. <input type="checkbox"/> Inspect inside of drop box for ballots that might be leaning against or stuck to the wall. <input type="checkbox"/> Inspect drop box area to ensure no ballots have fallen on the ground. <input type="checkbox"/> Seal the ballot transfer box or bag. <input type="checkbox"/> Record the transfer box or bag seal number(s). Seal #: _____ Seal #: _____ Seal #: _____ Seal #: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Verify access door is closed and locked (checked by both team members). <input type="checkbox"/> Place new security seal on door. <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Record new security seal placed on door:</b> Seal #: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Load transfer containers into vehicle. <input type="checkbox"/> Record new door security seal and transfer security seal numbers on the ballot retrieval log.

<b>All procedures completed and recorded:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<b>Initials:</b>
<b>Service Required?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<b>Notes:</b>
<b>Time of Departure:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM	<b>Initials:</b>

# Election Night Closing

All ballot drop boxes, temporary and permanent, need to be collected or closed at the time the polls close. The process outlined below is focused on permanent, 24-hour drop boxes, but the same general principles can be applied to temporary ballot drop boxes. These instructions can be supplemented with the Election Night Closing Checklist that follows.

Station a bipartisan retrieval team at each drop box 15 minutes before the polls close. They will lock drop boxes as soon as the polls close and retrieve ballots.

- Consider asking other jurisdictions' employees to assist, since this process does not require a great deal of training. Provide each retrieval team with the necessary supplies and checklist as detailed in this guide. In addition to those supplies, these retrieval teams will also need the following:
  - Map with driving directions and approximate time it will take to arrive at their location. This ensures they leave the election facility with enough time to arrive 15 minutes before the close of the election.
  - "Last Voter in Line" card
  - Extra transfer ballot box or bag to collect ballots cast after the polls close. These ballots will not be counted. These are ballots from voters not in line at the time polls close, but who approach the box as the retrieval team is transferring ballots.
  - Checklist with instructions for completing a full sweep of the drop box with a flashlight along with instructions for locking, sealing, recording, transferring ballots to a temporary box, taking a photo and returning to HQ.
- You may have a line of people, or cars, at close of polls with people waiting to cast their ballot in the drop box. As with in-person voting, have one person walk to the end of the line of people and/or cars and hand the last voter in line at close of polls the "Last Voter In Line" card to ensure everyone in line at close of polls may cast their ballot.
- Instructions for how to handle a line of cars (if 24-hour drop box or drive-through ballot drop-off) or a line of people (if temporary indoor drop box). This should include a "Last Voter in Line" card and potentially coordinating with local law enforcement for traffic control.

- Recommend teams take pictures of:
  - Locked ballot slot
  - Inside of the 24-hour boxes once emptied after the close of polls to show that no ballots are left in the box.

It is highly recommended to have your daily ballot retrieval team visit all ballot drop boxes the day after the election to double-check that all ballots were collected.

# Election Night Closing Checklist

<b>Ballot Drop Box Name/#:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Retrieval Team Member 1:</b>	<b>Retrieval Team Member 2:</b>

- Ensure you have necessary supplies and chain of custody logs before leaving for your designated drop box.
- Ensure you take enough transfer boxes or bags to completely empty the drop box.
- Arrive at your assigned ballot drop box at least 15 minutes early.
- If there is a line before polls close, one retrieval team member must find the "Last Voter In Line" card and go to the end of the line.
- At the close of polls, announce "Polls are closed" and lock the door to the drop box. If there is a line, the team member at the end of the line should give the Last Voter In Line card to the last person or car in line at the close of polls. Once the card is given out, return immediately to help empty the drop box.
- If any voter should try and cast their ballot after the close of polls, put their ballot in the box/bag designated for late ballots.
- Unlock the access door and remove all ballots, placing them in a transfer box or bag.
- Using a flashlight, inspect the inside of the drop box for ballots that might be leaning against or stuck to the wall.
- Once all ballots are removed from the drop box, take a picture of the inside of the empty drop box using your phone.
- Inspect the drop box area to ensure no ballots have fallen on the ground.
- Seal the ballot transfer box(es)/bag(s).
- Verify the access door of the drop box is closed and locked.
- Close the ballot slot using the slot key.
- Complete Chain of Custody log(s) for the transfer box(es) or bag(s).
- Load transfer containers and all supplies into vehicle.
- Head directly back to counting facility.

<b>All procedures completed and recorded:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Initials:
<b>Time of Departure:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM	Initials:

# Common Mistakes and How to Prevent Them

**Problem:** Drop boxes left unsealed or unlocked

**Solution:** Checklist that is signed or initialed for each drop box and verified at the end of every shift

**Problem:** 24-hour drop boxes left open or unlocked

**Solution:** Checklist that is signed or initialed for each drop box and verified at the end of every shift

**Problem:** Drop boxes are full before Election Day and voters are leaving ballots on top, calling news media, etc.

**Solution:** Increase the number of pickup times as you get closer to Election Day

**Problem:** Drop boxes not closed at 7 p.m.

**Solution:** Send retrieval teams out to sweep boxes the day after the election to ensure no ballots are left behind (perhaps take photos)



# Appendix A: Drop Box Vendors

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This list was compiled by the [Center for Tech and Civic Life](#).

## Laserfab, Inc/Vote Armor

[www.laserfabusa.com](http://www.laserfabusa.com)

### Models:

- VA-3630 is the most popular
- The largest model, the VA-5038, is used by larger counties
- A third model exists, but no model number was provided

**Approximate pricing:** The 3630 model runs in between \$3000 and \$3500, depending on quantity.

**Timeline:** 6-8 weeks from order

## American Security Cabinets

[www.ballotdrops.com](http://www.ballotdrops.com)

### Models:

- 7 different sizes and styles: <https://ballotdrops.com/product-category/cabinets/>

**Approximate pricing:** Please inquire

**Timeline:** Please inquire

## Fort Knox Mailbox

[www.fortknoxmailbox.com](http://www.fortknoxmailbox.com)

**Models:** [High Security Mailboxes - Fort Knox Mailbox, LLC](#).

- 3 different sizes: <https://www.fortknoxmailbox.com/ballot-boxes/>

**Approximate pricing:** \$1,300 - \$3,000 each, depending on model

**Timeline:** Please inquire

## Inclusion Solutions

[www.inclusionsolutions.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/IScatalog2019v8.pdf](http://www.inclusionsolutions.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/IScatalog2019v8.pdf) (pages 12-13)

### Models:

- Fortress 400 ideal for indoor use, holds 400 ballots
- Fortress 800 ideal for indoor use, holds 800 ballots
- Fortress 1000 can transition to indoor & outdoor, holds 1,000 ballots

**Approximate pricing:** Fortress 400 is \$130, Fortress 800 is \$209, call for info about Fortress 1000

**Timeline:** Please inquire

## Charnstrom

[www.charnstrom.com](http://www.charnstrom.com)

**Models:** Four models of “payment cabinets” and “Mail Collection boxes”, ranging in size.

- Small: \$420 - Commercial/Residential Curbside Mailbox (13”W x 18” D x 20”H)
- Large: \$3,608 - Mail Room/Office Mailing Walk or Drive up Box. Holds “hundreds of envelopes and magazines”. (24”W x 29.5” D x 53” H)

**Pricing:** \$400 to \$4000

**Timeline:** Please inquire

## Global Industrial

[www.globalindustrial.com](http://www.globalindustrial.com)

**Models:** Mail & Parcel Drop Boxes

- Drop Box Locker: \$450 - \$1,513 (12”W x 12”D x 16.5”H)
- Supreme Letter Locker: \$475 - \$2,283 (12”W x 23”D x 24-36”H)
- Extra Large Mailbox & Parcel Post Vault: \$883 (19”W x 19”D x 52”H)
- Curbside Courier & Collection Box: \$759 - \$967 (20”W x 26”D x 49”H)

**Pricing:** \$350 to \$2,300 depending on model

**Timeline:** UPS Next Day, UPS 2nd Day, UPS or Truck 3-8 days shipping

## U. S. Mail Supply

[www.USMailSupply.com](http://www.USMailSupply.com)

**Models:** Some examples

- [Small Versatile Pedestal Hopper Collection Box](#) \$1,175 (17.75" L x 18.75"W x 59" H)
- [Courier Drop Box](#) \$780 (20"W x 49"H x 26"D)
- [All Weather Sealed Outdoor Collection Box](#) \$1,065 (22-1/4"W x 22-1/4"D x 47"H)

**Pricing:** Varies, depending on model

**Timeline:** Please inquire

# Appendix B: Site Feasibility Planner

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*See following pages.*



## Ballot Dropoff Location Planner: Site Feasibility

This document is based on a report by King County, Washington. It can be found here:  
<https://kingcounty.gov/~media/depts/elections/about-us/reports/bdol-expansion-plan.ashx?la=en>.

This planning tool can help you study, plan, and justify ballot dropoff locations in your jurisdiction. While the scoring and criteria can be adjusted to specifically fit your jurisdiction's needs, this document outlines a number of major considerations for planning your dropoff locations and provides some outlines for a scoring rubric.

### Proposed Location:

Criteria	Score	Description	Your score & notes
<b>Equity</b>			
<b>Serves isolated communities</b>  Does the location serve a geographically isolated area or serve a particular, culturally distinct community?	10	This site serves an isolated or distinct community	
	0	Site does not serve an isolated or distinct community.	
<b>Provide equitable services</b>  Does the location sit in a community with demographic characteristics that warrant considerations? (e.g. displaced voters, hard to reach voters, voters w/disabilities, language barriers)	0-10	Note: You may need develop your own scoring criteria based on your jurisdictions.	

<b>Disparities in voter participation</b>  Is the site located in an area that has lower than average voter registration rates?	8	Adjacent to census tract with lower than average voter registration rates.	
	4	Lower than average voter participation rates.	
	0	Average or higher than average voter registration rates.	
<b>Operations</b>			
<b>Pick-up and box closing</b>  Does the site support an effective, safe and secure ballot pick-up and box closing process? Examples: stairs or inclines to/from, potential to place location in close proximity to parking, etc.	10	Site conditions present no challenges to the daily ballot pick-up or box closing process.	
	5	Site conditions may present a challenge to the daily ballot pick-up or closing process but can be mitigated.	
	0	Site conditions do not support an effective daily ballot pick-up or box closing process.	
<b>Security</b>  Is the location monitored live or by video surveillance? If outside, is the location well lit at night?	5	The location is monitored live or by video surveillance and is well lit.	
	2.5	The location has nearby surveillance and is lit.	
	0	The location has no security measures and is not lit at night.	
<b>Site owner input</b>	5	There are no site owner concerns	



<p>Are there site owner concerns regarding increased traffic flow that would negatively affect existing site tenant(s)? Are there known or planned construction projects on site (or near) that might impact the accessibility or feasibility of the site?</p>	2.5	There are site owner concerns that can be mitigated	
	0	Site owner concerns or site conditions do not support an effective ballot drop-off location.	
<p><b>Drive-up option</b></p> <p>Do site conditions support both walk-up and drive-up ballot deposit options for voters? Drive-up options offer more convenience to voters.</p>	5	Site conditions, as they presently exist, can support a drive-up option.	
	2.5	Site conditions could support a drive-up option but might impact host property.	
	0	Site conditions do not support a drive-up option.	
<p><b>End-of-line</b></p> <p>Does the site support effective control of traffic (both vehicular and pedestrian) to establish “on-time” and “end-of line” status at the voting deadline? Examples: size of the usable area adjacent to the box (to establish orderly queuing), the ability to limit the number of clear paths to the box.</p>	5	Site conditions present no challenges to establishing end-of-line status.	
	2.5	Site conditions present some challenges to establishing end-of-line status	
	0	Site conditions do not support an effective end-of-line establishment process.	
<p><b>Accessibility</b></p>			



<b>Visibility</b>  Does the site allow for placement of a box that is readily visible and easy to locate by voters? Conditions include: lighting, a clear line of sight from street and/or parking	5	Voters can easily locate the box on site; is fully visible from multiple directions.
	2.5	Some voters may be challenged to find the box without extra signage or lighting.
	0	There may be challenges in finding the box on site due to placement or visibility.
<b>Access to Public Transit</b>  Can voters visit the location via public transit? Conditions evaluated include: the number of modes of public transit available at the site and distance from public transit stops/stations.	5	Served by multiple bus lines or modes of public transit; transit stops within 1000 ft
	2.5	Served by one bus line or mode of public transit or stop/station is >1000 ft away.
	0	The site is not served by public transit.
<b>Parking</b>  Does the site possess adequate parking for voters? Example: number of parking spots, dedicated parking vs shared parking spots, distance from parking to box and off-street parking in dense locations.	5	Adequate parking option.
	2.5	One or more challenge(s) to parking (< 20 parking spots, limited load/unload options, distance to box exceeds 100ft).
	0	Inadequate parking (pay parking, no load/unload, distance to box exceeds 200ft).





<b>ADA factors</b>  Does the site possess all accessible features possible? Conditions evaluated include: parking lot slope, turning radius adjacent to box placement, curb cuts, number of ADA parking spots, unimpeded path to box from ADA parking.	5	Site conditions support 100% accessibility.	
	2.5	Adequate with some mitigation.	
	0	Site does not support accessibility.	
<b>Continuity</b>			
<b>Location History</b>  Does the location have a history of serving as a voting location (in-person or drop box)?	10	Site has previously served as a voting location.	
	0	All other sites.	

**Final Score:**

