

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: The Power of the RQI Voter Engagement Strategy

The Right Question Institute has developed a range of voter engagement tools that have been tested in different election cycles. These are representative responses from **participants who had never voted before**:

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“ It’s at the welfare office that we learn our voice doesn’t count. But [after the Right Question Institute’s workshop], I see that our voices do count ... and we need to vote. ”

- Angie, Concord, New Hampshire

“ I see that if I don’t vote, then other people are going to keep on making decisions for me. This gives me a chance to have a say in who’s going to be making those decisions. ”

- Adult learner, Indiana

Educators in adult literacy programs have used the Right Question Strategy and observed changes in their adult learners:

“ I don't think I have ever had a student who has voted before ... After doing the workshop many students ... actually voted. They come back really proud. They went to the county elections and voted for the school board. It actually makes a difference. ”

- Lori, adult education teacher, Pennsylvania

“ [After the workshop], everybody who could vote in my class voted. Everybody who was allowed to be registered did it. 'How many would have voted before?' Probably a third if that many. Very few were registered. I have some in their forties who have not been registered in their whole life ... I probably got 20 people to vote that never voted in their lives. The women said they learned more than ever: 'I never thought voting was important but you really showed me how important it was. I never ever registered and now I'm so excited to vote.' ”

- Sheila, adult education teacher for incarcerated populations, Indiana

Staff at organizations beginning to use the “Why Vote?” Tool recognize its unique value:

“ The 'Why Vote?' Tool allows people to have the light-bulb-going-off moment, rather than being spoon-fed information. ”

- Anthony Ramos, associate director of national programs at Esperanza, Pennsylvania

(Esperanza is a community-based multi-service agency working with the Latino community in Philadelphia. Ramos is planning to share the tool with student ambassadors who will then use the tool as part of their message when engaging peers to vote.)

“ The cool thing about the 'Why Vote?' Tool is that it's so simple. I can see a clear pathway that does not require me to sit for hours to figure out a way to use it. It's accessible, it's practical, and actually, it does have a big impact. The tool allows you to quickly see the big picture. ”

- Jennifer Ferrigno, co-director, National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, California

“ It makes [people] think more deeply about exactly what government services are provided to them, or not being provided to them. It helps them identify what the priorities are ... It's a democratic, interactive activity. ”

- Heidi Ziemer, outreach and digital services coordinator, Western New York Library Resources Council

(Ziemer is working on a state-wide initiative for libraries to engage people to participate in the census.)