

Steps to Take After a Bond Issue or Tax is Defeated

Why This Matters

Making sense of election results helps equip you to understand community needs. Resist the natural urge to step away; now is the time to gather critical information.



When to Act

Do not wait. Gather data immediately to understand what occurred. Use facts, not emotion, to decide what will be done differently in the future.

Step One	Step Two	Step Three	Step Four	Step Five	Step Six	Step Seven
Content Analysis	Analyze Opposition	Focus Groups	Working Hypothesis	Survey Calibration	Check Core Constituency (for schools)	Scripted Response
First, do a “content analysis” to determine what information voters might have heard, including social media posts, news articles, and fliers. Re-examine your external communications to determine whether they were too narrowly focused for the general public.	If there has been organized opposition, have a comprehensive understanding of what kinds of strategies & tactics they used. Such groups tend to follow the same tactics, once they believe they have a recipe for success. By knowing what to expect, you can often times thwart opposition with pre-emptive actions.	Conduct an informal focus group among citizens and voters you don’t necessarily associate with, so you can ask frank questions about what they thought the election was about and why they think other people – not themselves – voted against the issue.	Formulate a working hypothesis about why the issue was rejected. Many local governments are “repeat offenders,” that make the same mistakes in successive efforts and consequently reinforce the very notions that may be undermining their support and standing in the community.	If you conducted a survey, compare the demographics of it with an overview of the actual voting population, (especially if it utilized self-selection, which happens with most online survey services). You can calibrate the data to determine if there was a non-response or coverage error that may have affected the accuracy.	Check voting records to find out if parents turned out to vote in proportion to their percentage of the electorate. If needed, use age statistics from the election board to determine if voters 25 to 45 years old turned out to vote. Also, compare the precincts with those of older voters to assess parent support.	If returning to the ballot, formulate a carefully scripted response to answer why... especially if the subsequent issue is similar to the previous one that was rejected. Sometimes, thoughtless off-the-cuff comments to the media can doom such efforts before the first ballot is ever printed!

If you would like to get more information or clarification on any of the suggestions herein, or just chat informally to discuss the race, feel free to contact Paul Fallon.

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