

Broadway West

Los Angeles Ballot Viability Research

FROM: Benenson Strategy Group
TO: Marcus Lovingood, Patti Berman, Broadway West
RE: 2022 Los Angeles Ballot Proposition Viability Research

Thank you

for inviting Benenson Strategy Group to submit this research proposal. We believe in the widespread benefits your work brings to the community, and we are eager to help Broadway West at this step in the process of revitalizing the historic theaters of LA as this issue is quite literally “close to home” for our Los Angeles-based team.

Many industries have been hit hard by the widespread economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially the arts and live entertainment. Over the past year, with productions stalled, dance studios closed, and theatres unable to welcome audiences, performing artists— and all the people that help bring the productions they are part of to life—have been mostly out of work. And unfortunately in times of economic stress, support for the arts often falls away from the public’s priorities.

However, with dine-in restaurants, clubs and movie theaters all closed to the public, our “new normal” of solitary TV and movie consumption has left Angelenos with a deep desire to gather and appreciate arts together again. We see evidence of this in the constant stream of sold-out drive-in events, from comedy in Hollywood to drag shows at the Rose Bowl to pop-up parking lot theaters and light shows all over the county.

Given that, as well as the huge potential economic benefit of a pedestrian-only street in downtown, we see now as an opportune time to leverage the new-found appreciation of artists, entertainers, and cultural workers to establish a lasting public investment in arts funding through a City of Los Angeles ballot measure. It will always be a challenge to pass any measure with a significant financial impact, but we feel confident that there’s a strong storyline to be built around this particular effort.

Below I have laid out our approach to quantitative research, as well as my recommendation for this specific project.



Our Approach

Ballot initiatives have to be strategic endeavors in order to earn the two-thirds' majority that passage of these types of ballots typically require. In San Francisco, Proposition E (a ballot measure similar to what we might be doing here) passed with a strong majority in 2018, but only after the group behind it had put up an unsuccessful measure in 2016. We know this ballot measure is just one step in Broadway West's long-term plan, and we want to make sure we form the most effective possible campaign the first time around.

At BSG, we are particularly proud of our work with ballot initiative campaigns that have had a profound impact on people's lives through direct democracy. After helping expand Medicaid in Maine in 2017, we joined teams in Utah, Idaho, and Nebraska to do the same in 2018, and Oklahoma and Missouri in 2020. We also led the polling for successful 2018 campaigns to raise the minimum wage in Missouri and Arkansas, expand voting rights in Michigan, and crack down on payday lenders in Colorado. In the 2020 cycle we helped the team put a cap on interest rates for payday lenders in Nebraska. We are looking forward to applying our political expertise to arts advocacy.

Through our experience conducting viability testing for ballot measures, BSG has developed a rigorous approach to viability testing from continually reassessing our techniques to ensure they are as precise as possible. Our viability polls:

- **Explore how the debate around a measure would play out in the real world.** When deciding between multiple variations of a ballot to move forward with, the stakes are too high to rely on self-reported comparisons between the different versions – especially when the ballot language is complicated and takes some time for a voter to process.

In our polls, we split test different versions of a ballot so that each voter only sees one, and we replicate the polling booth (or mail ballot) experience to get a more realistic read on how each ballot version would fare. Ideally we'll have a draft of expected ballot language from you (even if it's not final) so that our test conditions are as accurate as possible.

We also think it's important to understand how competing war-chests might impact success, and we often craft innovative setups to test different funding levels depending on the expected resources of the campaign.

- **Evaluate multiple turnout scenarios.** While our "default" assumptions tend to lean towards a slightly smaller electorate (i.e. we don't bank on any huge surge of voters based on purely self-reported excitement) – especially not this far out – so we will also weight and analyze more "optimistic" or "doomsday" scenarios. As a result, we can understand the full landscape when making a decision – and understand how critical turnout is to victory. We've seen ballots where it's surprisingly irrelevant. We've all seen the polling error caused by turnout assumptions – and anyone claiming to know for sure what 2022 turnout will look like at this point is misguided.
- **Develop best-in-class methodology.** In the past, we've spent significant time and resources developing our hybrid methodology and the best way to utilize it with ballot viability specifically, pushing to understand:
 - How – and when – to combine phone, SMS, and online samples
 - The best way to ask the actual yes/no question and test the intensity behind the answers
 - The right ways to assess undecideds
 - The value of a "simplified ask" – i.e. the ballot in everyday language

Research Design

In order to make this a cost-effective and successful undertaking we would keep the research focused on the following three goals:

- ✓ Determine which funding mechanism (bond measure, sales tax increase, or diversion of funds) makes the overall ballot most likely to pass, and map out a path to victory for that option
- ✓ Focus the story with a key frame that can tie together all communications
 - i.e. Is the argument more cultural: making LA a hub of the performing arts and theatre to rival New York? Or is it more economic: about revitalizing the downtown area, adding jobs and tax revenues as part of a large, overarching COVID-recovery plan? Or is it advocacy based: that arts funding, in general, is an important part of a city's culture and identity?
- ✓ Create a plan for coalition-building
 - Whose endorsements are worth seeking out? Are there any that might cause backlash?
 - Who is in our base, and what types of voters would be the most effective targets for persuasion?

Recommendation: 12-minute hybrid phone-online-SMS poll with n=900 likely 2022 voters in Los Angeles. This base size will give us a margin of error of $\pm 3.3\%$ overall, and allow us to use an experimental setup to test different ballot versions.

Methodology: For our voter research, BSG uses a hybrid methodology, reaching voters via cell phones (both through calls and SMS), landlines, and online. Using multiple modes allows us to reach voters when and where they want to be reached, which helps us build a more representative audience. The reality is that there's no one perfect method for voter contact. Response rates on phone calls (the traditional method of polling) are so low that, at this point, it should no longer be considered a truly random sample. Our hybrid polling approach helps us counterbalance the weaknesses of each individual mode—ensuring younger and more transient voters can be found online, without undercounting senior or lower-income populations and certain communities of color that are better reached on the phone (including mobile). Psychographic and demographic data, as well as voter list-based analysis, ensures that data from each mode are combined and weighted to be fully representative of the voter universe.

We also regularly and extensively reassess these methodologies individually and in combination to ensure best practices.

Price & Timing: \$40,300

This encompasses all costs of research, including sample, fieldwork, and deliverables.

The deliverables would include:

- ✓ Topline data the day after fielding wraps up
- ✓ Crosstabs
- ✓ A full strategy report
- ✓ A 'highlights' memo for donors, possible public release, or other interested parties
- ✓ Ongoing campaign consultation

We are ready to begin work on this project as soon as it is approved. The full process from kickoff to final report usually takes about 4 weeks.

About BSG

Benenson Strategy Group is a strategic research firm whose consultants have decades of experience developing long-term strategies for clients in the political, non-profit, and corporate worlds. We deliver game-changing strategies that help our clients navigate tough issues and develop winning campaigns. Using innovative and provocative techniques, we probe deeply on core beliefs, attitudes and emotions to uncover the hidden architecture of opinion and provide actionable recommendations for our clients to deliver clear and resonate messaging that breaks through all the noise.

We've advised political leaders like former President Barack Obama, Senator Bob Menendez, Secretary of the Interior nominee Deb Haaland and Representative Nanette Barragán through groundbreaking campaigns. We've helped institutions like ACLU, AARP, EMILY's LIST and SEIU-UHW navigate through tough cultural issues. And we've taken our expertise from the war room to the board room to deliver strategies that corporations like Toyota, Revlon, Weight Watchers and Bank of America need to stay ahead of the curve.