Editor’s note: The following letter can be used if an independent districting or redistricting commission will conduct the districting or redistricting process or if an existing governmental body, i.e. a city council, school board, or special district, will conduct the process. It is intended for whatever governmental body sets the budget for the line-drawers (it may be the line-drawers themselves). It outlines the substantial costs involved with districting and redistricting and advocates for adequate funds.

[[Address]]

[[Date]]

Dear Members of the [[body funding the line-drawing body]]:  

[[I/We]] write today to highlight the resource-intense nature of many of the activities that will be required in the [[districting/redistricting]] process. All of the activities below contribute to an inclusive and participatory process that residents of the [[city/county/school district/special district]] can have faith in. We urge you to discuss the budget and staffing needs of the [[districting/redistricting]] process at your upcoming meeting on [[date]].

**Activities Required in a Successful [[Districting/Redistricting]] Process**

- **The [[line-drawing body]] should hold a large number of hearings and take actions to facilitate public input.**

  In order to ensure all residents are able to participate in the [[districting/redistricting]] process, the [[line-drawing body]] must hold a large number of hearings before the release of draft maps and after the release of draft maps but before the release of a final map. Large numbers of residents will want to make their views heard at hearings, but also via phone calls, emails, and written submissions. The [[line-drawing body]] will have to consider operating a [[districting/redistricting]] hotline, enabling the submission of written comments via email, and creating a website for the public to view and create draft maps. A website may also serve as a resource for community members seeking information about [[districting/redistricting]].

- **The [[line-drawing body]] should be prepared to create and translate outreach materials.**

  A successful districting or redistricting carefully balances the needs of all communities and neighborhoods within a [[city/county/school district/special district’s]] limits. Doing that requires hearing from all of those communities and neighborhoods, regardless of their language abilities, resources, or typical levels of engagement in local politics. The [[line-drawing body]] will have to prepare outreach materials and disseminate them widely, in newspapers, via email lists, in utility bills, at meetings of local community groups, on school marquees, and so on, so all communities and neighborhoods are aware of the [[districting/redistricting]] process. The [[line-drawing body]] should also disseminate information about how residents can educate themselves about [[districting/redistricting]] before the [[line-drawing body’s]] hearings begin. Some line-drawing bodies hire outreach firms on a contract basis to do the outreach described here.
The [[line-drawing body]] should prepare its outreach materials in a variety of languages. At a minimum, the [[line-drawing body]] should be prepared to meet the language needs of the very substantial [[identify most commonly spoken languages other than English]-speaking communities in the [[city/county/school district/special district]]. The [[line-drawing body]] must consider whether to use staff to translate and disseminate these documents or contract with translators.

- The [[line-drawing body]] should be prepared to provide simultaneous translation at public hearings.

In order to ensure the [[line-drawing body’s]] hearings are accessible to all language communities, the [[line-drawing body]] will need to provide simultaneous translation at hearings. Hearing attendees may have American Sign Language needs as well. The [[line-drawing body]] must consider whether it can use staff for these services or if it must contract with translators and a sign language interpreter.

- The [[line-drawing body]] should be prepared to offer the public diverse hearing locations.

In order to ensure that residents from all neighborhoods have an opportunity to participate in the [[districting/redistricting]] process, the [[line-drawing body]] will need to select meeting sites that are in geographically diverse locations, ADA-compliant, and accessible by public transit. The [[line-drawing body]] must consider whether it can use staff to scout and secure locations that meet these criteria or hire a contractor to do the same.

- The [[line-drawing body]] should be prepared to offer the public diverse hearing days and times.

In order to ensure that residents with a variety of professions and family commitments are able to participate in the [[districting/redistricting]] process, the [[line-drawing body]] will have to hold hearings on weekends in addition to weekday evenings. As a result, the staff of the [[line-drawing body]] may need to be compensated for overtime work.

- The [[line-drawing body]] must hire a demographer that will provide the [[line-drawing body]] with needed data and demographic information and will draw the actual district lines.

Every districting and redistricting body hires a demographer on contract to supply the data needed to draw or redraw district lines and to actually draw the district lines via mapping software under the direction of the line-drawing body. The demographer can sometimes assist with community outreach, education of community members, and/or education of the line-drawers themselves. In a small jurisdiction, the services of a demographer can cost between $50,000 and $75,000 and may compose one-third to one-half of the total costs of the districting or redistricting process.

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The [[line-drawing body]] must be adequately funded and staffed to create an inclusive process and to ultimately draw districts that meet the needs of [[city/county/school district/special district’s]] diverse
communities. We hope that the list of activities presented here will factor into your financial planning. Below, we have provided two examples of the activities pursued by local jurisdictions, one a districting and the other a redistricting, along with information about costs. [I/We] look forward to working with you as the process moves forward. Thank you for your consideration of these issues.

Sincerely,
Cost of Districting and Redistricting Commissions in California Municipalities

- City of Escondido

The City of Escondido completed a transition from at-large City Council elections to district-based elections in 2013 following a Consent Decree from a local court.¹ Escondido has a population of roughly 145,000 people, which needed to be split into four City Council districts. The Escondido Districting Commission held 19 meetings: six hearings to receive comments from the public before the drawing of draft maps, two meetings in which the Districting Commission drew draft maps in front of the public with the assistance of a hired demographer, three hearings to receive comments from the public after the drawing of draft maps, and eight public meetings throughout the process in which the Commission conducted other business, such as setting a budget, evaluating demographer bids, and hiring contractors for translation services.² Hearings were held in diverse locations around Escondido and were held on weeknights and on weekends.

The Escondido Districting Commission relied heavily on a small staff of city employees, including an assistant city attorney, two employees of the City Clerk’s office, one bilingual staff person assigned to do translations, and a member of maintenance staff used to set up equipment during meetings. A contractor was used to translate handouts, presentations, and other materials.

The Consent Decree created a tight timeline for the Escondido Districting Commission’s work. As a result, the City did little by way of outreach. Examples of outreach done by the City Clerk’s office included English and Spanish robo-calls to residents and information about hearings placed on digital marquees at local schools. Given that the city was unable to hold presentations/workshops/trainings for community members, outreach of this kind was largely led by third-party nonprofit groups.

The total cost of the Escondido districting process was $107,000.

- City of San Diego

San Diego City Council underwent a decennial redistricting in 2011. The City of San Diego is home to 1.35 million people, split into nine City Council districts. The SDRC convened a total of 45 public hearings. Hearings were held in diverse locations and were held on both weeknights and weekends. The SDRC held 35 public hearings before the drawing of draft maps, including one widely publicized pre-mapping hearing in each City Council district. The SDRC then held nine hearings after the drawing of draft maps.³

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¹ Gomez v. City of Escondido (San Diego Superior Court Case No. 37-2011-0060480-CU-CR-NC)
² “Recommended Districting Plan of the Escondido Independent Districting Commission,” Escondido City Council Agenda Item No. 12, Dec. 4, 2013 (includes staff report on the districting process).
The SDRC routinely translated documents into Spanish and translated documents into other languages as the needs of a specific community or neighborhood so demanded. The SDRC contracted with an outreach firm that created translated outreach materials and disseminated them to community groups, local leaders, and members of the public. The SDRC provided simultaneous interpretation in Spanish at some hearings and made an American Sign Language interpreter available upon request.

The City Attorney’s office of San Diego provided a number of trainings to the members of the SDRC in open hearings and contracted with outside counsel to do the same. Outside counsel also evaluated the final district maps. A commissioner on the SDRC reported afterward that the SDRC felt outside counsel was necessary because the City Attorney was an elected, partisan position.

The SDRC had substantial staff. It hired an Executive Director, contracted with outside counsel, contracted with third parties for translation services, and contracted with a firm to do both public outreach and location-hunting for meetings.

The San Diego Redistricting Commission (SDRC) was given a budget of $1 million and used roughly half that sum.