Ballot-to-Flippable Race Matching Strategy

Strategic Question: How do we identify which upcoming races match our historical flippable patterns?

The Core Concept

Every election cycle, we face new ballots with different contests. But **historical data tells us which types of races are winnable** and in which precincts. By systematically matching upcoming ballot contests to our historical flippable race patterns, we can:

1. **Focus candidate recruitment** on the most winnable races
2. **Allocate resources efficiently** to proven opportunities
3. **Build targeted voter lists** based on past DVA patterns
4. **Predict which contests** will be most responsive to our strategies

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The Matching Process

Step 1: Know What's on the Ballot

Before we can match anything, we need to know what races voters will see: - What elections are coming up? (Municipal, Primary, General) - What specific contests are on the ballot? (Mayor, Commissioner, School Board, etc.) - Which precincts/districts will vote on each race?

Example - November 2025: - Winston-Salem Municipal Election → Mayor, City Council At-Large, Ward Representatives - Kernersville Municipal Election → Mayor, Board of Aldermen

Step 2: Match Contest Types to History

Look at our historical flippable race data and ask: - Have we seen **this type of race** flip or nearly flip before? - What were the **vote gaps** in those races? - How much **DVA activation** was needed? - Which **precincts** showed the most promise?

Example Matches: - **Upcoming:** Winston-Salem City Council Race - **Historical:** 3 flippable city council races in Winston-Salem precincts (2020-2024) - **Pattern:** Average DVA needed was 12%, vote gaps under 4% - **Insight:** This race type is HIGHLY WINNABLE with DVA activation

Step 3: Identify Geographic Overlap

Not all precincts are equal. Some have proven track records: - Which precincts had **multiple flippable races** historically? - Are those same precincts voting in the upcoming election? - What was the **DVA voter pool** in those precincts?

Example: - Precinct 74 had 8 flippable races (2020-2024) - Precinct 74 votes in the 2026 County Commissioner race - **Action:** This is a HIGH PRIORITY precinct for commissioner recruitment

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Candidate Recruitment Strategy

The Right Race in the Right Place

Question: Where should we recruit Democratic candidates?

Answer: Match candidate recruitment to proven patterns:

1. **Ultra-Competitive + Low DVA** = RECRUIT IMMEDIATELY

- Historical vote gap under 3%
- DVA needed under 12%
- Example: School Board in Precinct 45 (historically needed 10% DVA)
2. **Highly Competitive + Moderate DVA** = HIGH PRIORITY
     - Historical vote gap 3-5%
     - DVA needed 12-20%
     - Example: County Commissioner in Precinct 74
3. **Competitive + Higher DVA** = STRONG CANDIDATE NEEDED
     - Historical vote gap 5-8%
     - DVA needed 20-30%
     - Requires both candidate quality AND field operation

Recruiting Candidates Who've Run Before

Special Opportunity: The Rematch Advantage

Some of the best candidates are those who've already run—and nearly won. Our historical flippable race data now tracks **candidate names**, which opens a powerful recruitment strategy:

The Pattern: - Candidate runs in 2020 → Loses by 3% - Candidate runs again in 2022 → Loses by 2% - **Insight:** This candidate is getting stronger, building name recognition, learning the ropes

Why This Matters:

1. **Built-In Motivation**
     - They've tasted defeat by narrow vote gaps
     - They KNOW they can win with just a little more support
     - Our ballot matching data shows them exactly what's needed
2. **Proven Track Record**
     - They've already built a donor base
     - Voters know their name
     - They understand the contest type
     - Infrastructure exists from previous races
3. **Strategic Repositioning**
     - Lost for School Board in District A? Run for Commissioner in overlapping district
     - Lost for Clerk in 2020? Run for School Board in 2026 (easier race type)
     - Lost countywide? Focus on precinct-specific race where they performed best

Candidate Matching Scenarios:

Scenario 1: Same Race, Different Year - **2020:** Jane Smith runs for School Board → Loses by 180 votes (3.2%) - **2022:** Jane Smith sits out - **2024:** Jane Smith runs again → Loses by 95 votes (1.8%) - **2026 Strategy:** - Our data shows: Margin shrinking, name recognition growing - DVA needed: Only 11% to flip - **Recruit Jane immediately** - she's on the cusp of winning

Scenario 2: Different Race, Same Skills - **2020:** John Doe runs for County Commissioner → Loses by 4.5% - **2026 Opportunity:** School Board race in same precincts - **Match:** - Same voter universe (geographic overlap) - School Board = easier race type (higher DVA, lower vote gaps historically) - John's existing name recognition + easier race = WIN - **Pitch:** "You almost won Commissioner. School Board data shows you'd win"

Scenario 3: Geographic Strength - **2022:** Maria Lopez runs for Judge countywide → Loses overall - **But:** She WON in Precincts 12, 34, 45, 74 - **2026 Opportunity:** District race covering those specific precincts - **Strategy:** - Match her geographic strength to district boundaries - She already has base in those precincts - **Recruit for district-specific race** where she's already proven

How to Use Candidate Name Data:

1. **Query Historical Candidates:**
     - Pull all flippable races from 2020-2024
     - Identify Democratic candidates who lost narrowly (≤5%)
     - Check if they've run multiple times (improving margins)

- Look for name matches across different contests
2. **Build "Almost Winners" Database:**
     - Track candidates with ≤3% vote gaps
     - Note which race types they've run for
     - Map their geographic strength (which precincts)
     - Calculate improvement trajectory if they've run multiple times
3. **Recruitment Pitch:**
     - "You lost by X votes in 2022. Our data shows that race was flippable."
     - "With Y% DVA activation, you would have won. We can deliver that."
     - "Here's the exact number of voters we need to reach: Z"
     - "We've identified the specific precincts where you performed best"
4. **Strategic Redeployment:**
     - Lost for one office? Find a better match based on data
     - Strong in certain precincts? Target precinct-specific races
     - Improving margins over time? Time to win is NOW

Real-World Example:

"Sarah ran for School Board in 2020 and lost by 215 votes in District 3. She didn't run in 2022, but stayed active in the community. Now it's 2025, and we're looking at the 2026 ballot. Our flippable race data shows:

  - *District 3 School Board: Flippable in 2020, 2022, 2024 (different candidates)*
  - *Average DVA needed: 13%*
  - *Historical vote gaps: 2.8%, 3.1%, 2.4%*
  - *Sarah's 2020 result: 3.5% vote gap = SLIGHTLY worse than average*

Recruitment Strategy: - Contact Sarah: "You were close in 2020. We now have data showing this race IS winnable." - Show her the DVA analysis: "We need to activate just 13% of Dems who voted governor but skipped School Board." - Provide target list: "Here are the 847 voters in your district who did exactly that." - Make the case: "With our field operation + your existing name recognition + voter targeting = WIN"

Result: Sarah runs again in 2026, wins by 120 votes. Now we have a School Board member who understands data and knows how to win."

Tracking Republican Candidate Movement

The Opposition Research Advantage

Just as we track our own candidates, tracking **Republican candidate movement** across flippable races reveals critical strategic intelligence:

Why Track Republican Candidates:

1. **Vulnerability Patterns**
     - If a Republican won by only 2% in one race, they're vulnerable
     - If they move to a different race, they might be EASIER to beat
     - "Winning ugly" in the past = weakness to exploit
2. **Strategic Overreach**
     - Republican moves from County Commissioner → State Representative
     - Their old seat is now OPEN and historically flippable
     - **Opportunity:** We know exactly what it takes to flip that seat
3. **Name Recognition Can Cut Both Ways**
     - Candidate who barely won School Board → Runs for Commissioner
     - Voters remember their controversial votes or scandals
     - Their baggage follows them to new race
4. **Resource Allocation Intelligence**
     - If strong Republican moves to different district, their old district weakens

- We can redeploy resources to the newly vulnerable seat
- Track GOP talent drain from winnable races

Republican Movement Scenarios:

Scenario A: The Ambitious Republican - **2020:** Bob Johnson (R) wins County Commissioner by 2.1% (flippable vote gap) - **2024:** Bob runs for State House, leaves Commissioner seat - **2026 Analysis:** - Commissioner seat now OPEN - Historically flippable (Bob barely won) - No Republican incumbent advantage - **Action:** PRIORITY RECRUITMENT - open seat with proven flippability

Scenario B: The Vulnerable Incumbent Moves Up - **2022:** Karen White (R) wins School Board by 180 votes - **2024:** Karen announces run for County Commissioner - **2026 Strategy:** - Karen is vulnerable (narrow past win) - She's leaving a known flippable School Board seat - She's moving to a HARDER race (Commissioner vs. School Board) - **Two-pronged attack:** 1. Recruit strong Dem for open School Board seat (easier flip) 2. Target Karen in Commissioner race (she's vulnerable + overreaching)

Scenario C: Serial Close-Race Winner - **2018:** Mike Brown (R) wins Clerk of Court by 1.8% - **2020:** Mike Brown (R) wins Sheriff by 3.2% - **2024:** Mike Brown (R) runs for County Commissioner - **Pattern Recognition:** - Mike keeps winning narrowly across different races - Never builds strong margins - always vulnerable - Voters support position, not person (marginal wins) - **Strategy:** Mike is beatable in Commissioner race - His history shows he maxes out around 51-52% - Our DVA activation strategy can flip this

Scenario D: The Wounded Winner - **2020:** Tom Davis (R) wins by 5% - solid win - **2022:** Tom Davis (R) barely wins re-election by 1.2% - something changed - **2024:** Tom moves to different race - **Analysis:** - His margin collapsed from 5% → 1.2% - Scandal? Demographics shifting? Lost support? - Whatever caused the collapse likely follows him - **Opportunity:** He's weaker than he appears

How to Use Republican Candidate Tracking:

1. Identify Vulnerable Winners:

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Query flippable races where Republican won by ≤3%
→ These Republicans are vulnerable
→ Track where they run next
→ If they move races, that's intelligence
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2. Map Career Trajectories:

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Same Republican candidate across multiple elections:
- 2018: Wins Race A by 4%
- 2020: Wins Race B by 2%
- 2022: Wins Race C by 3%

Pattern: Never builds strong support, always marginal wins
Action: Target them wherever they run - they're perpetually vulnerable
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3. Find Open Seat Opportunities:

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When vulnerable Republican leaves for higher office:
- Their old seat is now open
- We KNOW it's flippable (they barely won it)
- No incumbent advantage to overcome
- HIGHEST PRIORITY recruitment target
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4. Opposition Research Shortcuts:

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Republican ran in flippable race before?
→ Pull their vote totals by precinct
→ Find where they were weakest
→ Target those precincts in new race
→ "You lost Precinct 74 by 200 votes in 2020. We'll make sure you lose it by 300 in 2026."
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Real-World Intelligence Example:

"Our flippable race database shows that County Commissioner District 2 has been flippable in 2020, 2022, and 2024. Republican incumbent Mike Thompson won all three times, but with shrinking margins: 4.2% → 2.8% → 1.5%.

Now it's 2025, and Mike announces he's running for State Senate in 2026, leaving his Commissioner seat open.

Strategic Intelligence: - Commissioner District 2: PROVEN flippable (three consecutive close races) - Margins trending Democratic (Mike's wins getting narrower) - Now OPEN SEAT (no incumbent advantage) - Our DVA data shows: 9% activation would have flipped it in 2024

Recruitment Strategy: 1. IMMEDIATE PRIORITY: Recruit strong Democrat for this open seat 2. Pitch: "This seat has been close for 6 years. Now it's open. Data shows we win with 9% DVA activation." 3. Bonus: Mike's leaving = Republicans have to find new candidate 4. Their new candidate lacks Mike's name recognition (such as it was) 5. We have historical data on every precinct in this district

Action: Recruit by January 2026, file by March, deploy field operation by October, WIN in November."

The Strategic Matrix: Tracking Both Sides

Democratic Candidate History	Republican Candidate History	Strategic Action
Dem lost by 2% in 2022	Same Republican won by 2%	**REMATCH** - Recruit Dem for round 2, target Rep's weaknesses
No Dem ran previously	Republican won by 1.5%, now leaving	**OPEN SEAT** - Priority recruitment, proven flippable
Dem lost Race A by 4%	Republican won Race B by 2%, moving to Race C	**REDISTRIBUTION** - Recruit Dem for now-open Race B
Dem ran twice, improving margins	Republican ran twice, declining margins	**MOMENTUM FLIP** - Trends favor Dem, time to win
Strong Dem lost countywide	Republican won district race narrowly	**GEOGRAPHIC TARGETING** - Recruit Dem for district where they're strong

The Bottom Line on Tracking Republican Candidates:

Every Republican who barely won a flippable race is giving us intelligence: - **Where they're vulnerable** (which precincts they lost or won narrowly) - **How vulnerable they are** (shrinking vs. growing margins over time) - **When to strike** (if they move races, their old seat opens) - **What works against them** (which messages, which voters, which geography)

Our ballot matching strategy isn't just about finding Democrats to recruit—it's about **knowing the battlefield** and striking when Republicans expose weakness by moving between races.

Contest Type Priorities

Based on historical flippability, prioritize recruitment for:

HIGHEST PRIORITY (Easiest to Flip): - **Judicial races** - Extremely high DVA, voters skip these consistently - **School Board** - Low information, non-partisan, high DVA - **Clerk of Court** - Administrative, low voter knowledge

MEDIUM PRIORITY (Competitive with Work): - **County Commissioner** - Local focus, ticket-splitting possible - **Sheriff** - Name recognition matters, but winnable with strong candidate

BUILD FOR LONG-TERM: - Highly partisan races in difficult territory - Races requiring demographic shifts, not just turnout

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Voter Mobilization Targeting

Building the Right Voter Universe

Question: Who do we contact for each race?

Answer: Use historical DVA patterns to build precise lists:

1. **Identify DVA Voters in Target Precincts**
   - Voters who voted for governor but skipped down-ballot races
   - Currently registered Democrats in historically flippable precincts
   - Focus on the specific geography where that race type flipped before
2. **Match Voters to Specific Contests**
   - School Board race? → Contact voters who skipped education races before
   - Judicial race? → Contact voters who skipped judge races before
   - Commissioner race? → Contact voters who skipped local races before
3. **Calculate Activation Targets**
   - If historical data shows 12% DVA activation needed
   - And we have 1,000 DVA voters in target precincts
   - We need to activate 120 voters to flip the race
   - That's 120 conversations, 120 doors, 120 texts

Practical Examples

Example 1: November 2025 Winston-Salem City Council

The Match: - **Upcoming:** City Council At-Large race - **Historical:** 2 flippable council races in Winston-Salem (2020-2024) - **Margins:** 2.8% and 3.5% - **DVA Needed:** 11% and 14% - **Best Precincts:** 12, 34, 74

Strategic Actions: 1. **Recruit** a strong Democratic candidate for council 2. **Target** voters in Precincts 12, 34, 74 who voted for governor but skipped council 3. **Message:** "You voted for [top ticket]. Don't leave city council blank!" 4. **Goal:** Activate 12-13% of DVA voters in those precincts 5. **Timeline:** Start recruitment now, field campaign in October 2025

Example 2: 2026 Forsyth County Commissioner

The Match: - **Upcoming:** 3 County Commissioner seats up in 2026 - **Historical:** 4 flippable commissioner races (2020-2024) - **Margins:** 1.9%, 3.2%, 4.1%, 5.8% - **DVA Needed:** 8%, 13%, 17%, 22% - **Best Precincts:** 74, 45, 88, 103

Strategic Actions: 1. **Recruit early** (2025) for all 3 seats - focus on districts overlapping best precincts 2. **Build infrastructure** in Precincts 74, 45, 88, 103 throughout 2025 3. **Test messaging** in 2025 municipal races, refine for 2026 4. **Target universe:** ~3,500 DVA voters in target precincts 5. **Activation goal:** 10-15% = 350-525 additional down-ballot votes 6. **Resource allocation:** Maximum investment - proven flippable race type

Example 3: 2026 School Board Races

The Match: - **Upcoming:** 5 School Board seats - **Historical:** 12 flippable school board races across NC - **Margins:** Consistently narrow (2-6%) - **DVA Needed:** Consistently low (8-18%) - **Pattern:** High DVA, low information, non-partisan labels

Strategic Actions: 1. **Highest recruitment priority** - easiest race type to flip 2. **DVA-focused campaign exclusively** - don't waste resources on persuasion 3. **Message simplicity:** "These are the Democrats running for school board" 4. **Sample ballot cards** at early voting sites 5. **Geographic targeting:** Precincts with historically flippable school board races 6. **Expected ROI:** VERY HIGH - small investment, big results

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The Decision Framework

For Every Upcoming Election

Step 1: List the Ballot - What races are voters deciding?

Step 2: Check Historical Matches - Have these race types been flippable before? - Where? (Which precincts?) - How? (DVA or vote gap pathway?)

Step 3: Score Opportunities - High Priority: Contest type + precinct both show historical flippability - Medium Priority: One strong match (either contest type OR precinct) - Low Priority: No historical precedent (new race type or new geography)

Step 4: Allocate Resources - **Recruitment:** Focus on high-priority matches first - **Field Operations:** Invest heavily in historically proven precincts - **Messaging:** Tailor to contest type (DVA vs. persuasion) - **Timeline:** Early recruitment for multi-cycle build races

Step 5: Execute with Precision - Build voter lists from historical DVA patterns - Target specific precincts, not entire county - Use proven activation percentages as goals - Measure results to refine future matching

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Why This Matters

From Reactive to Proactive

Old Approach: - Wait for candidates to emerge - Scramble for resources across all races - Hope for the best, guess at targeting - Spread resources thin

New Approach: - **Predict** which races are winnable BEFORE candidate filing - **Recruit strategically** for proven opportunities - **Target precisely** using historical data - **Concentrate resources** where data shows highest ROI

The Multiplier Effect

When you match ballot to historical patterns: 1. **Better Candidates** - Recruitment pitch: "Data shows we can win this" 2. **Smarter Targeting** - Don't waste effort on unwinnable races 3. **Efficient Resources** - 10:1 coverage ratio means less money needed 4. **Measurable Goals** - "Activate 12% DVA" is concrete and achievable 5. **Continuous Improvement** - Each cycle refines the matching algorithm

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Key Principles

1. History Predicts Future Opportunity

If a race type flipped (or nearly flipped) in 2020-2024, it can flip in 2026-2028. Demographics change slowly; voter behavior patterns persist.

2. Geography Is Destiny

Precincts with multiple flippable races aren't random. They have structural characteristics (demographics, political culture, registration trends) that make them competitive. Invest there.

3. Not All Races Are Equal

Some contest types (judicial, school board) are intrinsically more flippable due to high DVA. Others (partisan executive races) require different strategies. Match strategy to race type.

4. Data Drives Decisions

Use matching criteria systematically, not intuitively. The precinct you "feel good about" might have zero historical flippability. Trust the data.

5. Build for Multi-Cycle Success

Matching isn't just for the next election. Build infrastructure in historically flippable precincts NOW, reap rewards across multiple cycles.

Implementation Priorities

Immediate (Before November 2025 Municipal Elections)

- Match Winston-Salem/Kernersville ballot to historical municipal race patterns
- Identify DVA voters in target precincts
- Focused messaging for down-ballot completion

Short-Term (2025-2026)

- Match 2026 primary ballot to flippable patterns
- Recruit candidates for highest-opportunity races
- Build precinct infrastructure in tier 1 locations

Long-Term (2026-2028)

- Refine matching algorithms based on 2025-2026 results
- Expand to all NC counties with sufficient historical data
- Create automated dashboards for election-to-election matching
- Develop predictive models for new race types

Success Metrics

We'll know ballot matching works when:

1. **Recruitment Success Rate** - % of targeted races where we recruit candidates
2. **Win Rate in Matched Races** - Do matched races actually flip?

3. **Resource Efficiency** - Cost per win in matched vs. unmatched races
4. **DVA Activation Accuracy** - Do we hit predicted activation percentages?
5. **Multi-Cycle Validation** - Does 2024 matching predict 2026 results?

The Bottom Line

Every election has hundreds of races. We can't win them all. But we don't need to.

By matching upcoming ballots to historical flippable patterns, we: - **Know where to fight** (proven precincts) - **Know what to fight for** (proven race types) - **Know who to mobilize** (proven DVA voters) - **Know our odds** (proven activation rates)

This isn't guesswork. It's **strategic precision powered by historical data.**

The flippable races of 2020-2024 are the roadmap to victories in 2026-2028.

All we have to do is **match the ballot to the pattern** and execute.

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