

Proposal for Research Collaboration:

What are the Effects of Token Incentives & Gratitude Expression on Governance Participation?

Snapshot's Boost tool for programmable voting rewards is ready to launch and test in Q1 of 2024. We aim to experimentally study its effectiveness in incentivizing governance participation. Of course, we welcome discussion on how this proposed intervention can be adapted to your team's priorities and goals.

Question:

Does providing token “thank-you” rewards for voting increase subsequent participation?

Motivation:

Broadening participation is an important goal in decentralized governance for a variety of reasons, including building a credibly neutral platform that prevents one bad actor from unilaterally exerting control over a system. Although most DAOs experience low levels of participation with voting influence concentrated in a few wallets, there have been few randomized interventions to systematically assess which incentives most effectively sustain participation in web3.

Voting poses a collective action problem – participation requires that voters pay a personal cost (time, effort) to promote a collective cause (representative democracy, system security). In such situations, the level of private effort typically falls far short of what is collectively beneficial. Behavioral scientists and political economists interested in promoting participation have focused on trying to understand the psychological underpinnings of voting behavior in order to develop strategies to overcome the collective action problem. This work includes documenting the effects of both negative emotions (e.g., [public shame](#) for not voting) or positive emotions (e.g., [pride](#) or [gratitude](#)). We extend this scholarship to the web3 setting and study the effects of demonstrating gratitude for voting by offering monetary “thank-you” rewards on subsequent voting behavior. Web3 allows us to combine an expression of gratitude with a token reward which offers monetary and community stake incentives, strengthening the treatment.

Treatment intervention:

We will randomly award X% of voters with a token reward for voting, randomly selecting the treatment group from a list of wallets who participate in the proposal of interest. To prevent sybil attacks (where voting tokens are spread across multiple accounts), we will weight the likelihood of receiving a reward by token amount using a simple linear weight.

Those who have been selected to receive a reward will see a message on the Snapshot user interface that says the following:

“Thank you for taking the time to vote on this proposal! 🙏 To show our appreciation for your civic engagement, here’s a token reward that you can claim below. Thanks again and look forward to your continued involvement! 📦”

The wallets not randomly selected for treatment will comprise the control group and will receive no token reward and no thank-you message.

Outcome:

We will measure the effect of the treatment by calculating the difference in aggregate turnout rates of the treatment and control groups on the *subsequent* (post-treatment) proposal. The random assignment of treatment allows us to estimate the causal effects of treatment on subsequent voting.

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