



Clearinghouse Awards Program Toolkit



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Contents

- Introduction**..... 2
 - What are the Clearinghouse Awards? 2
 - About this Document 2
- Awards Program Goals**..... 2
 - Guiding Questions..... 2
 - Example..... 2
- Contest Rules**..... 3
 - Guiding Questions..... 3
 - Sample Contest Rules 3
- Program Categories**..... 4
 - Guiding Questions..... 4
 - Sample Program Categories..... 5
- Judging the Competition** 6
 - Recruiting Judges 6
 - Creating a Scoring Rubric 7
 - Determining the Winners 7
- Recognizing Winners**..... 7
 - Sample Social Media Graphics 8
 - Sample Press Release 9
 - Sample Winners Toolkit 12

Introduction

What are the Clearinghouse Awards?

Each year, the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) invites submissions for its national Clearinghouse Awards. Under the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), the EAC is charged with serving as a clearinghouse for election administration information. By celebrating innovative efforts from state and local election offices, the Clearies help the EAC fulfill this important mission. The Clearinghouse Awards program encourages election officials to consider entering any deserving program, no matter the size of the jurisdiction or the scope of the project.

About this Document

This document is intended to be used by states or state professional associations to develop and implement their own program to recognize elections offices and share best practices. The guidance below provides a broad overview, but individual programs may have additional considerations.

The following sections include:

- Awards Program Goals
- Contest Rules
- Program Categories
- Timing of the Competition
- Engaging Judges
- Scoring
- Recognition of Winners
- Sharing Best Practices

Awards Program Goals

Before developing an awards program, it's important to set clear goals. First, consider the main purpose of the program. Is the main goal to provide recognition to election officials, or is it to encourage idea-sharing and collaboration among colleagues? Thinking about the preferred outcome of the program will help develop contest rules that best lead to the stated outcomes.

Guiding Questions

- What are the preferred goals of the program?
- What principles should be considered when setting program rules, policies, and processes?

Example

- **Goals:**
 - Encourage sharing resources and best practices among election officials across the state.
 - Recognize election officials for their creativity and innovation.

Quick Tip: Program Goals

- ✓ Set goals that are clear, measurable, and achievable 
- ✓ Check contest rules and policies to ensure they align with your stated goals
- ✓ Evaluate your goals at the end of the program

- **Principles:**
 - *Information Sharing* – Program rules and features should incentivize and facilitate better sharing of information and resources across traditional boundaries, including jurisdictional lines.
 - *Recognition of Participants* – Program rules and features should encourage public recognition of the work of participating jurisdictions.

Contest Rules

The awards program rules can help you achieve your program goals and encourage participation. For example, if your program is intended to recognize the work of elections offices, you may want to allow external organizations to nominate offices for their work. If your goal is to maximize information sharing, you may need contest rules that clarify that any entries in the program will be shared among other election officials. Additionally, elections offices are more likely to participate if the contest rules are clear and easy to follow.

Guiding Questions

Consider the following questions that your program participants are likely to have:

- Who is eligible to participate in the competition?
- Who is eligible to nominate a program?
- How many programs may be entered in the competition?
- What is the time period in which eligible programs may be developed, implemented, or operational?
- What are the required components of an eligible submission, including required documentation, file formats, or any other specifics required to judge program entries adequately?
- What types of programs are eligible for consideration?
- How many programs will be recognized with an award?
- What will participants receive in exchange for participating in the competition?
- What issues, if any, would disqualify a program, including conflicts of interest, ongoing legal disputes, or other considerations?

Quick Tip: Contest Rules

- ✓ Include contest rules that further the intended goals of your program.
- ✓ Your contest rules can help anticipate and answer questions you are likely to hear from program participants.



Sample Contest Rules

This sample set of contest rules includes many of the considerations listed in the guiding questions above. These rules can be adapted and changed based on the needs of your program. Any text **highlighted in yellow** is intended to be edited with specific program details.

Sample Contest Rules

1. Only local government elections offices are eligible to be recognized as part of the awards program.
2. Eligible elections offices may nominate their own programs for the competition. Other organizations or members of the public may also nominate an eligible program; however, only eligible offices may receive an award.
3. Each elections office may submit one program per category per year for a maximum number of (X) submissions per year.
4. All programs must have been developed, implemented, or active during the previous two-year state or federal election cycle.
5. Eligible programs may include any project or task that has improved an office's ability to administer elections, and they must conform to the requirements of the contest categories in which they are entered.
6. Each category of the competition will be judged separately. The judges will select up to three winners per category. Individual entries may be recognized as an Honorable Mention based on the final determination of the judges.
7. Eligible programs must fully complete the competition entry form, and any additional documentation must conform to the competition's formatting requirements.
8. All entries will be judged by a panel of current or former election officials.
9. Winning programs may not be re-entered in any subsequent year's competition.
10. Honorable Mentions and/or entries that are not recognized with an award may be resubmitted for consideration in future years, provided that the program is still actively in use.
11. Winning entries will be officially recognized by the (sponsoring agency or organization) and may be featured in press releases, work products, and events. All other entries and Honorable Mentions may be published or otherwise be made available by the (sponsoring agency or organization).
12. Jurisdictions or individual programs may be disqualified for consideration in the competition if submitting a program for an award exhibits a conflict of interest or at the discretion of the (sponsoring agency or organization).

Program Categories

The Program Categories are a critical part of the competition. Program categories determine which types of projects the competition will be highlighting, and categories provide important guidance to participants on which types of projects to enter. Each category should:

- Highlight skills, practices, or competencies that the sponsoring organization aims to highlight or improve.
- Contain specific content requirements to help guide participants on which category of the competition their projects qualify for.

Quick Tip: Program Categories

- ✓ Consider which types of activities your program should incentivize and create categories around those activities.



Guiding Questions

Use the following questions to help determine which categories your program should include:

- How many categories can your program support?

- Does your organization have any goals that could be highlighted by a particular category?
- Is the category broad enough to receive an adequate number of entries?
- Is the category specific enough to receive entries that clearly qualify for that category?
- Are the categories sufficiently different from each other?
- Are the categories well-defined and clear to all participants?

Sample Program Categories

The list of program categories below are intended to help guide discussions about which categories make the most sense for your program. Each category consists of a Category Title, Full Category Name, and Qualification Requirements.

Sample Program Categories

- **Category Title:** Accessibility



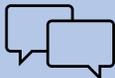
- **Full Name:** Best Practices for Improving Accessibility for Voters with Disabilities
- **Qualification Requirements:** Entries must directly improve service to voters with disabilities. Qualifying programs may include poll worker training improvements, physical accessibility improvements, improvements in accessible communications, or other programs that directly serve voters in the disability community.

- **Category Title:** Accuracy



- **Full Name:** Best Practices for Improving the Accuracy, Reliability, and Auditability of Election Administration
- **Qualification Requirements:** Entries must highlight programs that improve the accuracy, reliability, and auditability of election administration activities. These activities may include ballot production, testing and certification of voting systems, post-election audits, checklists for critical processes, process improvement programs, etc.

- **Category Title:** Communications



- **Full Name:** Best Practices for Voter Education and Communications
- **Qualification Requirements:** Entries must highlight programs that improve voter education and communications activities. Qualifying programs may include direct communications with voters, online communications, collaborations with local media, collaborations with local schools or other educational organizations, improvements in the design of voter-facing printed materials, or other programs to help voters better understand the election process.

Sample Program Categories, Continued

- **Category Title:** Contingency Planning



- **Full Name:** Best Practices for Contingency Planning and Emergency Response
- **Qualification Requirements:** Entries must highlight contingency planning operations and/or the responses of election officials to emergencies that affect election administration. Qualifying programs may include tabletop exercises (TTXs), Continuity of Operations Plans (COOPs), responses to natural disasters or other disruptions in the voting process, engagement with local emergency management offices and other stakeholders, or other programs that advance the preparedness of elections offices.

- **Category Title:** Poll Workers



- **Full Name:** Best Practices in Recruiting, Retaining, and Training Poll Workers
- **Qualification Requirements:** Entries must highlight improvements to poll worker operations, including recruitment, retention, and training operations. Qualifying programs may include poll worker outreach and recruitment events, programs that emphasize poll worker job satisfaction, administrative processes that improve behind-the-scenes aspects of managing poll workers, poll worker training programs, or other programs that improve activities related to poll workers.

- **Category Title:** Security



- **Full Name:** Best Practices for Physical and Cyber Security
- **Qualification Requirements:** Entries must highlight programs that improve the security of elections, including both physical and cybersecurity threats. Additional consideration will be provided to programs that leverage state or federal grant funding to improve their office's security posture. Qualifying programs may include building security upgrades, programs that improve the security of poll workers and election officials, cybersecurity improvements, and other projects dedicated to the safety and security of the voting process.

Judging the Competition

Once your competition categories and rules are set, it's time to consider how to score each of the entries. A few things to consider include:

- Who will be responsible for judging the competition?
- What criteria will be used to score each entry?
- How will winners be determined?

Recruiting Judges

Before recruiting judges, determine the number of judges needed to score each program. This may vary depending on the number of categories or the number of entries per category. Once you've determined the number of judges needed, decide whether you will be scoring these entries within your organization or if you will

Quick Tip: Recruiting Judges

Once you determine how many judges are needed, consider recruiting judges who are:

- ✓ Current or Former Election Officials
- ✓ Poll workers
- ✓ Voters
- ✓ Future Voters (High School Civics Classes)



need volunteers to help with the competition. Recruiting volunteer judges may take time, so starting this process early is important.

Creating a Scoring Rubric

Each judge will have a different approach to scoring the competition, so it’s important to provide a clear grading rubric to make sure that the judge’s scores are as objective as possible. This scoring rubric should reflect the contest rules and the requirements for each category. The rubric should also be aligned with the overall goals of the competition.

Sample Rubric					
Criteria	Poor (1 point)	Fair (2 points)	Good (3 points)	Excellent (4 points)	Score
Creativity and Innovation		ü			2
Can Be Replicated By Other Offices			ü		3
Meets Category Requirements				ü	4
Improves the Voting Experience			ü		3
Total Score					12

In addition to the scoring rubric, you may want to allow judges to provide additional comments about each of the programs. These comments may be helpful for improving future versions of the competition and may also spark ideas about how programs could be improved in the future.

Determining the Winners

Once the scoring is complete, the entries can be ranked by score, with the top entries being determined to be the winners. Depending on the contest rules, more than one winner may be allowed per category. While not every entry can win, it may be beneficial for the judges in each category to select one or two of the other entries to receive an Honorable Mention. Whether to recognize an honorable mention can be left up to the discretion of the judges. This also allows for greater flexibility if there are a significant number of excellent entries in a particular category.

Recognizing Winners

The culmination of the awards competition should shine a spotlight on winning programs. This provides the winners with an opportunity to promote their offices and helps others in the field find information about these best practices. Competition sponsors should consider promoting winning entries with the following:

- Social media posts
- Press releases
- Certificates or Awards

In addition to the sponsoring organization promoting these materials, the winning entries should receive the tools they need to promote their winning programs. The images below are taken from the EAC’s Clearinghouse Awards as examples of what the EAC has used to promote Clearinghouse Awards winners.

Sample Social Media Graphics



Sample Press Release

24 Election Offices Across the Country Recognized for Excellence in Election Administration

U.S. Election Assistance Commission Announces Winners of 7th Annual Clearinghouse Awards

WASHINGTON, DC— Today, the [U.S. Election Assistance Commission](#) (EAC) announced the 24 winners of the [Clearinghouse Awards](#), recognizing best practices in election administration. Also known as the “Clearies,” the awards program celebrates the hard work of election offices across the country for programs that took place during the 2022 midterms. Awardees include jurisdictions of varying sizes, from states with 6.5 million registered voters to counties with about 80,000 registered voters.

“The spotlight on U.S. elections has never been brighter, and the EAC is pleased to honor the work of these offices to make elections more secure, technologically advanced, and accessible to voters,” said EAC Chairwoman Christy McCormick, Vice Chair Ben Hovland, Commissioner Donald Palmer, and Commissioner Thomas Hicks in a joint statement. “Especially as election administrators prepare for the 2024 presidential election, we encourage them to review the great work of these Clearie Award-winning jurisdictions for ideas they may want to replicate in their communities. This includes best practices to recruit and train poll workers, which we recognize has been challenging for many election offices nationwide.”

The Clearies play an essential role in fulfilling the EAC’s mission to serve as a clearinghouse for election administration information under the [Help America Vote Act](#). Submissions were judged on innovation, sustainability, outreach, cost-effectiveness, replicability, and the generation of positive results. This year’s [award categories and winners](#) include:

- **[Outstanding Use of HAVA Grants in Elections Modernization](#)**
 - Maricopa County Elections Department (AZ) – Ballot Tabulation Center Security Upgrades
 - New Jersey Secretary of State's Office Elections Division – HAVA Funds & Election Security
- **[Outstanding Election Official State Association Program or Local Office](#)**
 - Seminole County Supervisor of Elections Office (FL) – Informing Voters with Facebook Voting Alerts
- **[Outstanding Innovation in Election Cybersecurity and Technology](#)**
 - Anne Arundel County Board of Elections (MD) – Mail-in Ballot Sorting, Scanning, and Timestamping Project
 - Iowa Secretary of State – Vulnerability Disclosure and Bug Bounty program
- **[Improving Accessibility for Voters with Disabilities](#)**
 - Dubuque County Auditor's Office (IA) – Strategic Partnership with Dubuque County Disabilities Council

- Franklin County Board of Elections (OH) – Voting with Ease: Increased Accessibility in the Early Vote Center
- **Outstanding Innovations in Elections – Large Jurisdictions**
 - Duval County Supervisor of Elections Office (FL) – Innovative Strategies in Voter Education Messaging and Poll Worker Recruitment
 - Hamilton County Board of Elections (OH) – Behind the Ballot Tours
 - Hillsborough County Supervisor of Elections (FL) – Election Night Unofficial Results Application
 - Palm Beach County Supervisor of Elections (FL) – Promoting Effectualness by Minimizing Lines and Wait Times: First County in the Country to Use the No Wait Inside Appointment System for Elections
 - South Carolina Election Commission – “South Carolina Election Response Guide” – Crisis Communication for Election Officials
 - St. Louis County Board of Elections (MO) – Love Your Ballot Educational Campaign
- **Outstanding Innovations in Elections – Small/Medium Jurisdictions**
 - Brevard County Supervisor of Elections (FL) – SigView
 - Douglas County Clerk/Elections (KS) – RFID Technology in Election Management
 - Durham County Board of Elections (NC) – BOE Poll Count and Audit Application
 - Paulding County Board of Elections and Voter Registration (GA) – Voter Education Guide
- **Best Practices in Recruiting, Retaining, and Training Poll Workers**
 - Charleston County Board of Elections and Voter Registration (SC) – Partnerships at the Polls
 - Columbia County Supervisor of Elections (FL) – Bubble It In!
 - Guam Election Commission – A Win-Win for the Guam Election Commission and the University of Guam – Poll Workers
 - Martin County Supervisor of Elections (FL) – Sensitivity Training for Elections Worker!
- **Creative and Original “I Voted” Stickers**
 - City of Traverse City Clerk's Office – Multi-year voting sticker design contests
 - Louisiana Department of State – Louisiana State of Mind
 - South Carolina Election Commission – South Carolina's Iconic “I Voted” Sticker Redesign

In addition to the Clearie winners, 16 election offices were recognized with [Clearie Honorable Mention](#) awards.

Winners were selected by independent panels of current and former election officials, EAC Commissioners, and members of the [EAC's advisory boards](#). Judges were not eligible to score any entries from their own jurisdictions. Judges included:

- Nancy Boren, Director, Muscogee County Board of Elections and Registration, GA
- Diane Coenen, City Clerk, City of Oconomowoc, WI
- Batina Dodge, County Clerk, Scotland County, MO
- Lauren Eanes, General Registrar, Madison County, VA
- Ricky Hatch, Weber County Clerk/Auditor, Weber County, UT
- Elizabeth Howard, Senior Counsel, EAC Board of Advisors, DC
- Shelly Jackson, Deputy Director of Elections, State Lt. Governor's Office, UT
- Howard Knapp, Executive Director, State Election Commission, SC
- Ruie Lavoie, Director, Baltimore County Board of Elections, MD
- Clela Mitchell, Senior Legal Fellow, Conservative Partnership Institute, EAC Board of Advisors, NC
- Sherry Poland, Director, Hamilton County Board of Elections, OH
- Michael Stalberger, Property and Environmental Resources Director, Blue Earth County, MN
- Philip Stark, Distinguished Professor of Statistics, EAC Board of Advisors, CA
- Claire M. Steen, Deputy Registrar, Surry County, VA
- Lorena Stottler, Clerk-Treasurer, City of Janesville, WI
- Patty Weeks, County Clerk, Nez Perce County, ID

More information on the Clearies and each awardee is available on the [EAC's website](#).

###

The [U.S. Election Assistance Commission](#) (EAC) was established by the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA). It is an independent, bipartisan commission charged with ensuring secure, accurate, and accessible elections by developing guidance to meet HAVA requirements, adopting voluntary voting system guidelines, and serving as a national clearinghouse of information on election administration. The EAC also accredits testing laboratories and certifies voting systems, as well as administers the use of HAVA funds. For more information, visit www.eac.gov.

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Email: kmuthig@eac.gov

Sample Winners Toolkit

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

[Insert Title/Office of Winner] Recognized for Excellence in Election Administration with National Clearinghouse Award

One of 24 Programs Honored by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission for Innovation, Sustainability, and Replicability

Dateline—Today, [Title/Office of Winner] announced they were recognized for excellence in election administration with a national [Clearinghouse Award](#) for [insert award category]. Also known as the “Clearies,” the [U.S. Election Assistance Commission](#) (EAC) presents the awards program annually to celebrate the hard work of election offices across the country. Now in its seventh year, this year’s Clearie Awards honored programs that took place during the 2022 midterms.

The [Title/Office of Winner]’s [name of program] was one of 24 programs that were recognized with a Clearie Award. The program [insert summary description or a few sentences about what

[Insert quote from winning office leadership on the importance of this program/what it means to be nationally recognized by winning this award]

The Clearies play an essential role in fulfilling the EAC’s mission to serve as a clearinghouse for election administration information under the [Help America Vote Act](#). [The EAC](#) is an independent, bipartisan federal agency solely focused on election administration. Submissions were judged on innovation, sustainability, outreach, cost-effectiveness, replicability, and the generation of positive results. This year’s awards categories include:

- Outstanding Use of HAVA Grants in Elections Modernization
- Outstanding Election Official State Association Program or Local Office
- Outstanding Innovation in Election Cybersecurity and Technology
- Improving Accessibility for Voters with Disabilities
- Outstanding Innovations in Elections – Large Jurisdictions
- Outstanding Innovations in Elections – Small/Medium Jurisdictions
- Best Practices in Recruiting, Retaining, and Training Poll Workers
- Creative and Original “I Voted” Stickers

“The spotlight on U.S. elections has never been brighter, and the EAC is pleased to honor the work of these offices to make elections more secure, technologically advanced, and accessible to voters,” said EAC Chairwoman Christy McCormick, Vice Chair Ben Hovland, Commissioner Donald Palmer, and Commissioner Thomas Hicks in a joint statement. “Especially as election administrators prepare for the 2024 presidential election, we encourage them to review the great work of these Clearie Award-winning jurisdictions for ideas they may want to replicate in their communities.”

More information on the Clearies and each awardee is available on [eac.gov](#).

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS**Link:** [EAC Clearinghouse Award Winners](#)**Hashtag:** #2022Clearies**Handles:**

- Twitter: [@EACgov](#)
- Facebook: [U.S. Election Assistance Commission](#)
- Instagram: [us.eac](#)

The EAC will also be sharing information about the Clearies. Please feel free to share.**Twitter:**

- We're excited to be recognized by @EACgov with a national 2022 Clearinghouse Award! Our [insert program name] won for [insert category]! The Clearies honor innovative and sustainable election programs nationwide. Learn more: <https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/eac-clearinghouse-award-winners-2022> #2022Clearies
- We've received a national 2022 Clearinghouse Award! Each year, @EACgov recognizes programs that raise the level of election administration. We're pleased to have received this award for [insert category]. Read more: <https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/eac-clearinghouse-award-winners-2022> #2022Clearies
- #ICYMI: We've received a national 2022 Clearinghouse Award for [insert category]! @EACgov honors election administrators for outstanding election programs each year. Learn more and view our fellow winners: <https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/eac-clearinghouse-award-winners-2022> #2022Clearies

Facebook:

- We're honored to be recognized by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission with a national 2022 Clearinghouse Award! Our [insert program name] won for [insert category]. Now in its seventh year, the Clearies recognize programs based on innovation, sustainability, outreach, cost-effectiveness, replicability, and the generation of positive results. We are pleased to be among our colleagues who won this award. Learn more: <https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/eac-clearinghouse-award-winners-2022> #2022Clearies
- We've received a national 2022 Clearinghouse Award! Each year, the U.S. Election Assistance Commission recognizes programs that raise the level of election administration. We're pleased our [insert program name] has won this award for [insert category]. This program does [include a sentence summarizing the program]. Read more: <https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/eac-clearinghouse-award-winners-2022> #2022Clearies
- Have you heard about our [insert winning program name]? This program was recently honored with a 2022 Clearinghouse Award. The goal of this program is to [include info about this program]. Learn more about this and view our fellow winners: <https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/eac-clearinghouse-award-winners-2022> #2022Clearies