



# EAC Election Data Collection Grant Program Evaluation



# Presentation Overview

- **The Election Data Collection Grant Program**
- **Evaluation team**
- **Evaluation approach**
  - Logic model
  - Research questions
  - Data collection
- **Key Findings**
  - 2008 EDS
  - Program design features
- **Recommendations**

# The Election Data Collection Grant Program

- \$2M per grantee
- 5 grantees (Illinois, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin)
- 13 months, May 2008 to June 2009
- Goals
  - Improve data collection process
  - Enhance States' and their jurisdictions' capacity to collect accurate, complete data
  - Develop, document administrative, procedural best practices for replication by other states
- Key deliverable
  - 2008 EDS data at the precinct level for core data items by March 2009

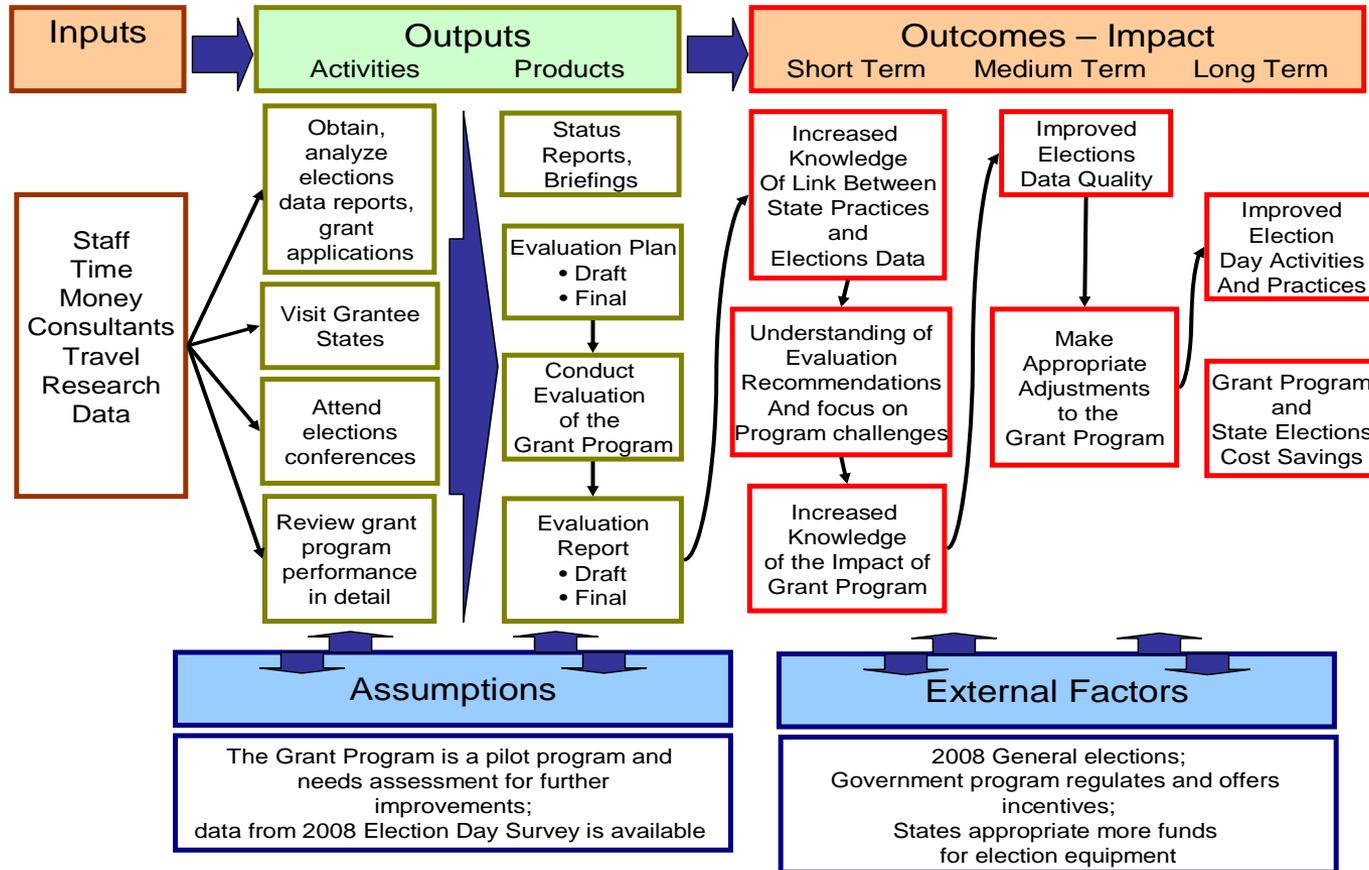
# Evaluation Team

- Director: Diana Davis, Ph.D., ICF
- Deputy Director: Boris Rachev, M.P.A., ICF
- Election Data Collection Expert: Charles H. Stewart, Ph.D., MIT
- Abhishek Saurav, M.A., ICF
- Daniel Fien-Helfman, B.A., ICF

# Evaluation Approach

- Focus on processes and outcomes
- Use as much existing data as possible
- Limit contact with grantees during the run-up to the November 4, 2008 Federal election due to their busy schedules at this time
- Visit each grantee once for a face-to-face presentation of progress
- Grantees' responses to the 2008 Election Administration & Voting Survey, commonly called the Election Day Survey (EDS) are the critical grant outcome
- Measure EDS participation using a "pre-post" model
- Assess each grantee's progress as a unique situation, yet look for synergies, aspects that would benefit other states

# Evaluation Logic Model



# Research Questions

- 1. To what extent are states able to meet their goals given the resources available under the grant, i.e. time between grant award and Election Day, the amount of the award, other available funds to leverage, the state's level of readiness, and so forth?
- 2. What are states' key achievements and most significant challenges in meeting their goals under the grant?
- 3. What are the main lessons learned by the states during implementation of grant activities?
- 4. Do significant lessons learned differ by state or category of states (e.g. Election Day registration states versus those without Election Day registration)?
- 5. Are there lessons learned by the grantees in improving states' ability to report federal elections data at the precinct level that can be applied by other states or categories of states?
- 6. Under what conditions do the states find technical assistance most useful and least useful?
- 7. In what areas do the states need more guidance from the EAC?
- 8. From the grantees' perspective, how effective was their planned allocation of grant funds?
- 9. How does technology design of data collection vary across grantee States and do some data collection mechanisms illustrate comparative advantages independent of local settings?

# 2008 EDS Core Data Items

for the 2008 Federal election

- Total number of registered voters
- Totals for active and inactive registered voters
- Total number of persons who voted in the election
- Number of provisional ballots: cast; counted; rejected
- Number of votes cast by type: at polling places; via absentee ballot; at early vote centers; via provisional ballots; and total votes cast
- Total votes cast for Federal offices: President, Senators, House of Representative Members

# Comparison Group States

- Iowa, Massachusetts, New York, Oklahoma, Virginia
- Each matches a grantee on several characteristics:
  - % 2006 EDS data reported (not missing)
  - Number of election jurisdictions
  - Population size
  - Election Day registration state or not

# Evaluation Data Collection Approach

- Process and Outcome data
- Input from the grantees and RTI
- Sources
  - Grant Application
  - State websites
  - Site Visit
    - One day per grantee
    - General agenda, with input from state and local levels
  - E-mail and telephone follow-up
  - Information from RTI on Technical Assistance provided
  - 2008 EDS Data provided to RTI
    - As processed by late April, 2009

# Key Findings

## 2008 EDS core data

- **Compared grantees**
  - With their own 2006\* reporting
  - Within the group of 5 grantees
  - To a comparison group of 5 non-grantees
  - To all other EDS participants

\* for 2006 all reporting was at the County/Municipality level, so comparisons are at this level, not precinct-level (which is new for 2008)

# EDS core data comparisons

- Together the grantees reported an average of 88%\* of core data in 2008 compared to 47% in 2006
- Among the grantees, Minnesota reported 100% of 2008 core EDS data, Pennsylvania, 99%, Wisconsin 94%, Ohio 90%, Illinois, 43%\*\*
- Overall the grantees reported 88% of 2008 EDS core data, the comparison states reported 71%

\*Using the most inclusive assumptions about county data, that if any precinct in a county reported the county is counted as reporting

\*\* Due to complexities in the data file submitted to RTI, some of these data are still being processed

## EDS core data comparisons, cont'd

- Changes in core EDS reporting levels between 2006 and 2008
  - States reporting no core data: 7 in 2006 and 2 in 2008
  - States reporting 100% of core data: 0 in 2006 and 12 in 2008
- Grantee ranks in reporting 2006 and 2008

<b>Grantee</b>	<b>2006</b> (36 ranks)	<b>2008</b> (22 ranks)
IL	19th	13th
MN	28th	1st
OH	4th	4th
PA	30th	8th
WI	36th	7th

# Key Findings

## Program Design Features

- **Timing and Schedule**
  - States need the required EDS data elements 12 to 18 months prior to the election, due to tabulation vendors' programming schedules and local election schedules
  - (Grant) Program schedules vary based on the complexity of tasks, 24 months may be needed
  
- **Involving Stakeholders**
  - Local election officials, who typically feel a strong sense of ownership regarding their election information, are the key to election data collection success whether the State's election administration is organized centrally or is decentralized
  - Local election officials can help to prioritize system improvements; they are familiar with system gaps and shortcomings that may not be obvious to system designers and senior election officials
  - Data users and good governance organizations have a keen interest in election data and how they are collected and reported and can make useful suggestions during design and testing phases

# Program Design Features, cont'd.

- Pilot Projects and Pretesting
  - Pilot projects allow system designers to evaluate usability and efficiency and find flaws in assumptions and processes
  - Stakeholder feedback can focus system designers on critical concerns from the user's perspective
  - Pretesting training materials ensures that they are clear from the student's perspective
  
- Training System Users
  - Training builds confidence
  - Training exposes user concerns and designer rationale

# Recommendations

- Heighten the EAC's visibility among state and local election officials
  - The “champion” of effective and efficient election data collection
  - Disseminate Lessons Learned
  
- Support states and local jurisdictions with less sophisticated systems
  - For some states reporting 100% of core EDS data may be a goal for beyond the 2010 Federal election
  - Not every local jurisdiction has the resources to report election data electronically
  
- Facilitate Dialogue
  - Information exchange among the grantees
  - Information exchange among groups of states on approaches to collecting and reporting EDS data

# Recommendations, cont'd.

- Continue to address the need for national election data reporting standards
  - Nationally, and within decentralized states, locally, vocabulary, data formats, processes and procedures are not standardized, severely inhibiting data gathering and reporting
  
- Extend future grant periods
  - The grantees had 5 months to design, test, and implement system changes between grant award and the November election and 13 months in the grant timeline overall
  - Four of the five would have benefitted significantly from a longer lead time prior to the election for which EDS data were required

The logo features the letters 'ICF' in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. Above the letters is a dark blue horizontal bar that tapers to a point on the right side. The background is a light blue grid pattern with a darker blue diagonal band on the right side.

**ICF**

**INTERNATIONAL**

**Passion. Expertise. Results.**