



“EAC Grants: Expanding the Body of Knowledge of Election Administration – Reflections and Future Directions”

EAC Roundtable Discussion

Wednesday, September 3, 2014

EAC Offices
First Floor Conference Room
1335 East West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Participate

Live webcast at www.eac.gov

Twitter: @EACgov #EACvote

Submit questions & comments via Twitter and webcast

Agenda

1:00 – 2:30pm

2:30 – 2:45pm - Break

2:45 – 4:00pm

Participants

Alice P. Miller, EAC Chief Operating Officer and Acting Executive Director

Merle King, Roundtable Moderator; Executive Director, Georgia’s Center for Election Systems, Kennesaw State University

Monica Holman Evans, EAC Director of Grants Management

Panel

- Ruth Brannon, Director, Research and Sciences Division, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U. S. Department of Education
- Dana Chisnell, Director, Center for Civic Design
- Dean Logan, Los Angeles County Registrar

- Nate Persily, Senior Research Director for the President’s 2013 Commission on Election Administration
- Casey Sjolund, Elections HAVA Specialist, Montana Secretary of State
- Philip B. Stark, Professor and Chair, Department of Statistics, University of California, Berkley
- Charles Stewart III, Kenan Sahin Distinguished Professor of Political Science MIT

Background

The EAC administers federal funding to improve the administration of U.S. elections as authorized by the Help America Vote Act. The Commission also funds discretionary, competitive grant programs authorized by HAVA, including the HAVA College Program to recruit college students to serve as poll workers and the HAVA Mock Election Program, which supports activities to educate secondary students in the electoral process. Additionally, EAC awarded Election Data Collection grants to implement programs to improve the collection of data related to the 2008 Federal general election, a Military Heroes grant to provide assistance needed for recently injured military personnel to participate in federal elections, Pre-Election Logic and Accuracy Testing and Post-Election Audit Initiative grants to support the research, development, documentation, and dissemination of a range of procedures and processes used in managing and conducting high-quality L&A testing and post-election audit activities; and Accessible Voting Technology Initiative grants to support research on transformative technologies and approaches to meet the critical challenge of making voting more accessible to all eligible voters.

The Presidential Commission on Election Administration’s report “The American Voting Experience”, made several recommendations to improve the practice of election administration. Among the areas addressed were poll worker training, election data collection and dissemination, and improvements in accessibility – all areas in which research has been funded by EAC grants. Other areas of the report that align with EAC efforts include, logic and accuracy testing, voting accessibility for people with disabilities and language access needs and the various forms of data collection and dissemination to further elections analysis.

Specific recommendations from the PCEA Report that support EAC grants activities include:

- Jurisdictions should recruit public and private sector employees, as well as high school and college students, to become poll workers.
- Election authorities should establish advisory groups for voters with disabilities and for those with limited English proficiency.
- States and localities must adopt comprehensive management practices to assure accessible polling places.
- States should provide ballots and registration materials to military and overseas voters via their websites.
- Audits of voting equipment must be conducted after each election, as part of a comprehensive audit program, and data concerning machine performance must be publicly disclosed in a common data format.

This roundtable discussion will explore past successes and future directions of the EAC grants program.

Discussion Questions

1. Give a brief overview of your grant and the specific area of election administration it addresses. Consider the following for inclusion in your discussion:

- a. Needs assessment – How did you identify and assess the need for research?
 - b. Provide an overview of the design of your research including data collection methods.
 - c. Dissemination of results – How did you share the results of your research?
 - d. Impact of research – How has it changed/improved election administration.
2. The National Institute of Disability and Rehabilitation Research has a long tradition of funding research, some of it dealing with election administration and voting technologies. Does NIDRR (or other funding organizations) have best-practices recommendations for improving the quality of proposal and the impact of deliverables?
 3. Given the challenges that face election officials, is there a need for basic research grants, in addition to applied research? How can funding sources and researchers support strategies that emphasis both research and development of applicable technologies/solutions? Are there best practices of transitioning research to pilot projects?
 4. Leveraging existing research to identify new research opportunities is a common strategy in academic disciplines. Is this being done in election administration research? Do we have good practices of mining prior research for further research?
 5. Collaborations with other researchers/teams/organizations can bring differing perspectives as well as skills and resources . Is EA a research area that lends its self to cross-disciplinary/multi-disciplinary research methods?
 6. Because of the secrecy of the ballot, certain data collection techniques cannot be used in election administration research. Are there workarounds for this? Can researchers – especially those who do research in voter behavior – approach data collection in different ways that can produce meaningful results?
 7. Are there sufficient venues to support the publication of election administration research? Faculty researchers are often reluctant to initiate a research program with no clear venue at which to present/publish results. What alternatives might researchers explore?
 8. Do stakeholders of election administration have sufficient input into the identification and prioritization of research programs? Do they have adequate access to the research products and findings?
 9. Should the EAC pursue a push (the EAC identifies needed research areas and solicits research proposals to support development in this area) or a pull (the researchers submit unsolicited proposals which may or may not be within scope of the EAC’s research agenda) strategy? Are there benefits to both?
 10. Is there sufficient research infrastructure to support the kinds of research needed to advance election administration and voting technologies? Should the EAC find collaborative ways to expand and develop this infrastructure? Is this area sufficiently attractive to new and emerging researchers?