



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF ELECTIONS

Susan J. Beals
Commissioner

February 21, 2023

Steven M. Frid, Executive Director
U.S. Election Assistance Commission
633 3rd Street, NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20001

Mr. Frid:

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 provided \$75,000,000 in Help America Vote Act (HAVA) money to improve the administration of U.S. elections. Virginia's share of this appropriation, funded through the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) is \$1,567,743 which requires a state 20 percent match of \$313,549. This letter serves as the narrative for the state of Virginia as it relates to the expenditure of 2023 HAVA Election Security Grant. The narrative serves as a guide for how the election security grants may be used to "improve the administration of federal elections" by the continued strengthening of the election's security posture of the Virginia's Department of Elections and its 133 local election offices.

The Department of Election's (Department) spending plan allows the Department to modernize and provide additional security for the existing state voter registration and election administration system, known as the Virginia Election and Registration Information System (VERIS), which was developed in 2008. The Department has and will continue to implement additional security updates to VERIS to protect voter registration information as the development of a new modern system is executed.

The Virginia General Assembly directed the Department to use the federal HAVA funding to develop and implement a new central election system to replace the current system. The technology and best practices have changed dramatically since 2008. The costs for the new system will include development and implementation in addition to best practices for security.

Pre-2020 Election Project Initiatives

Virginia used the 2018 HAVA funds to enhance the election infrastructure and security systems at the Department and the 133 cities and counties of the state.

The Department has substantially increased the security posture of the election infrastructure used in the Commonwealth of Virginia through cost-effective implementation of standards, policies and best practices developed by Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA) and the Center for Internet Security (CIS). Some of the key elements that were accomplished were a thorough risk assessment, two factor authentication, Intrusion Detection System and cyber user training.

Another major implementation of the 2018 HAVA funds was the deployment of a Risk Limiting Audit (RLA) tool kit that could be used by all cities and counties of the state.

Post-2020 Election Project Initiatives

Virginia's use of the 2020 HAVA Election Security Grant was in one of the seven major categories: Voting Registration Systems and Management.

In 2019 the Department was instructed by the legislature to produce a draft Request for Proposal (RFP) with a recommendation to either upgrade or replace VERIS. The report was completed and issued on December 1, 2019, with the recommendation to replace the current system due to its age, cost associated with maintaining and modernizing it, and the level of effort needed to ensure the security of the system.

The Department issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) and received several qualified proposals. A vendor was selected and awarded a contract in the fourth quarter of calendar year 2022. The Department anticipates it will take 18 to 24-month for full implementation of a new Voter Registration System. This would mean a planned first use of the new system during the 2025 election cycle or thereafter.

The modernization of the State Voter Registration System will allow the Department to take full advantage of new technologies in both security and functionality. The new system will offer easier updating and enhanced capabilities that are more cost effective and secure.

The 2022 HAVA funds will be used to continue to build on security improvements that were made with the 2018 HAVA funds. The 2022 funds will be used to address gaps identified by security efforts paid for with the 2018 funds. ELECT will continue to mitigate risks using best practices developed by the Virginia Information Technologies Agency and the Center for Internet Security.

The Department will use 2022/2023 HAVA funds to improve and develop risk limiting audit software, locality tracking software, expand monitoring software with additional threat intelligence. Continuing to upgrade and supplement existing security resources purchase with prior HAVA funding.

Funds will continue to be utilized to create, maintain and train local elections officials to have compliant Security Awareness Programs. This will be accomplished through various means to meet new security standards. The goal of the additional services will be to provide a comprehensive enough awareness program that security becomes part of the culture and everyday mindset of the users. The additional training will enhance the protection of Commonwealth voters' information. The training will be provided through software, partnerships and temporary contract personnel.

HAVA funds will be used to continue to purchase other software that has or will improved the security position of ELECT.

State Match

Virginia has available the required **\$313,549** to match the federal allocation of the 2023 HAVA grant.

Sincerely,


Susan Beals
Commissioner

