

FEDERAL FINANCIAL REPORT

(Follow form instructions)

1. Federal Agency and Organizational Element to Which Report is Submitted ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION				2. Federal Grant or Other Identifying Number Assigned by Federal Agency (To report multiple grants, use FFR Attachment) ND20101CARES				
3. Recipient Organization (Name and complete address including Zip code) SECRETARY OF STATE, NORTH DAKOTA OFFICE OF THE 600 E Boulevard Ave #108, Bismarck, ND 585050602								
4a. DUNS Number	4b. EIN	5. Recipient Account Number or Identifying Number (To report multiple grants, use FFR Attachment)		6. Report Type	7. Basis of Accounting			
				<input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly <input type="checkbox"/> Semi-Annual <input type="checkbox"/> Annual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Final	<input type="checkbox"/> Cash <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accrual			
8. Project/Grant Period (Month, Day, Year) From: March 28, 2020				9. Reporting Period End Date (Month, Day, Year) December 31, 2020				
To: December 31, 2020								
10. Transactions					Cumulative			
<i>(Use lines a-c for single or combined multiple grant reporting)</i>								
Federal Cash (To report multiple grants separately, also use FFR Attachment):								
a. Cash Receipts					\$3,000,000.00			
b. Cash Disbursements					\$3,000,000.00			
c. Cash on Hand (line a minus b)					\$0.00			
<i>(Use lines d-o for single grant reporting)</i>								
Federal Expenditures and Unobligated Balance:								
d. Total Federal funds authorized					\$3,000,000.00			
e. Federal share of expenditures					\$3,000,000.00			
f. Federal share of unliquidated obligations					\$0.00			
g. Total Federal share (sum of lines e and f)					\$3,000,000.00			
h. Unobligated balance of Federal funds (line d minus g)					\$0.00			
Recipient Share:								
i. Total recipient share required					\$600,000.00			
j. Recipient share of expenditures					\$711,208.83			
k. Remaining recipient share to be provided (line i minus j)					\$0.00			
Program Income:								
l. Total Federal share of program income earned					\$1,776.16			
m. Program income expended in accordance with the deduction alternative					\$0.00			
n. Program income expended in accordance with the addition alternative					\$1,776.16			
o. Unexpended program income (line l minus line m and line n)					\$0.00			
11. Indirect Expense	a. Type	b. Rate	c. Period From	Period To	d. Base	e. Amount Charged	f. Federal Share	
g. Totals:					\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
12. Remarks: Attach any explanations deemed necessary or information required by Federal sponsoring agency in compliance with governing legislation: State Interest Earned: \$0								
13. Certification: By signing this report, I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that the report is true, complete, and accurate, and the expenditures, disbursements and cash receipts are for the purposes and intent set forth in the award documents. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent information may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties. (U.S. Code, Title 18, Section 1001)								
a. Typed or Printed Name and Title of Authorized Certifying Official Silrum, Jim Deputy Secretary of State					c. Telephone (Area code, number, and extension)			
					d. Email Address			
b. Signature of Authorized Certifying Official Silrum, Jim					e. Date Report Submitted (Month, Day, Year) April 22, 2021			

Standard Form 425
OMB Approval Number: 4040-0014
Expiration Date: 02/28/2022

Paperwork Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act, as amended, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB Control Number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 4040-0014. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. If you have comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate(s) or suggestions for improving this form, please write to: US Department of Health & Human Services, OS/OCIO/PRA, 200 Independence Ave, SW, Suite 336-E, Washington DC 20201. Attention: PRA Reports Clearance Officer

FEDERAL FINANCIAL REPORT

(Additional Page)

Federal Agency & Organization : ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

Federal Grant ID : ND20101CARES

Recipient Organization : SECRETARY OF STATE, NORTH DAKOTA OFFICE OF THE
600 E Boulevard Ave #108, Bismarck, ND 585050602

DUNS Number :

DUNS Status when Certified :

EIN :

Reporting Period End Date : December 31, 2020

Status : Awarding Agency Approval

Remarks : State Interest Earned: \$0
State Interest Expended: \$0
Program Income Earned: \$0
Program Income Earned Breakdown: \$0
Program Income Expended: \$0

Federal Agency Review

Reviewer Name

Phone #

Email

Review Date

Review Comments

EAC Progress Report

Response ID:220 Data

1. Login

Please enter your userword and password to begin the Progress Narrative. If you require assistance or have any questions, please contact grants@eac.gov

2. Verification

3. EAC Progress Report

1. State or Territory:

North Dakota

2. Grant Number:

ND20201CARES

3. Report:

Final (Start of Grant - End)

4. Grant:

Please select only one.

CARES

5. Reporting Period Start Date

04/06/2020

6. Reporting Period End Date

12/31/2020

7. Recipient Organization:

Organization Name

North Dakota Secretary Of State

Street Address

600 E Boulevard Ave., Department 108

City

Bismarck

State

ND

Zip

58505

4. Progress and Narrative

Final Progress Report:

The final report is your opportunity to share the significant features of your project and present information about the results your project achieved.

It should be written as if the reader has no previous knowledge of your project's activities. The report should cover the entire period of performance.

Review and Self-Assessment:

Review and highlight all activities that occurred during the implementation of the project, including an assessment of your performance.

Despite the host of challenges that the State of North Dakota saw in conducting elections in 2020, North Dakota operated its two federal elections as scheduled and without disruption. Both elections saw participation much greater than in 2016. The State is most pleased that voters entered 2020 with two election dates, that those election dates were maintained (while many states postponed elections in the first half of the year) and that participation levels were at record or near-record numbers.

8. CARES Grant Specific:

Describe in detail how you used the funds to address the pandemic and explain how you implemented the approved grant activities.

North Dakota addressed the pandemic in the June and November elections in two different manners.

First, as the pandemic unfolded in March 2020, Governor Doug Burgum issued an Executive Order waiving requirements for a polling location to be open in each county, leaving the decision to conduct the June election completely through ballots by mail to each of the 53 counties. Each county commission, in fact, voted to conduct the election without polling places, and the June 9 election did not suffer a scheduling disruption.

For November, counties sought to offer early voting in person, advance voting by mail, and in-person voting. Polling place and election worker availability were impacted by the pandemic, but the State utilized CARE funds to support the counties with an outreach effort to encourage voters to review their voting options and prepare accordingly.

An overwhelming majority of voters cast ballots in advance, leading to additional costs related to ballots by mail. Polling places were reduced because of facility and worker availability, and there was uncertainty leading to election day about the viability of any location being open. For this reason, the State purchased electronic pollbooks and rapidly deployed them to be prepared for any polling place change.

9. Describe the major issues you faced in dealing with the pandemic and how you addressed or resolved those issues.

What was hoped to be a backdrop only in North Dakota's June 9 primary election, the COVID-19 pandemic remained front

and center as a planning issue for the November general election.

While North Dakota's June 9 election by mail was considered successful, the State and counties recognized that elections are best conducted in manners that meets voters where they are—making voting as easy as possible, given the conditions, with as many alternative methods of casting a ballot as possible, including voting by mail, in-person early, in-person on election day, and, for overseas and military, through electronic ballot delivery. There remained a great unknown for November, and the State planned appropriately.

Now looking back at two successful elections, it's easy for election officials to applaud the results. Phrases such as "in history" and "of all time" have been commonly used at a national level since November.

North Dakota is proud of the work by its 53 county auditors, being exemplary public servants in the face of tremendous obstacles. The CARES Funding allowed the state to provide more mail-ballot scanners, Personal Protective Equipment, outreach and awareness of the changes brought about by COVID, and provide postage and mailings of vote-by-mail applications, among other activities mentioned in the previous reports.

However, it is worth stressing that 2020 exposed service level flaws in the United States Postal System, and these flaws were not insignificant. These are mentioned here simply as a "lessons learned" item, as requested by the EAC.

North Dakota had an excellent relationship with the USPS, but the fact remains that the USPS occasionally missed service delivery standards, and it appears that these experiences were seen nationwide. USPS' delivery performance of 96 percent, when every vote matters, is not acceptable. Our experience with the USPS, and our voters' experience, does not suggest that vote-by-mail is a sustainable method of voting.

The June and November elections saw the occasional occurrence of voters not having their votes counted because of USPS failures, with county election officials left accountable for USPS' service failures.

Vote-by-mail is a viable option—part of an overall mix of options—but it cannot be relied upon in the future the way it was in 2020. In fact, had communities not utilized drop-boxes (thus, taking the return load substantially away from the USPS), the service levels would have been much worse.

In addition, there was entirely too much friction provided by social media companies' involvement in elections. Much discussion had centered on misinformation, but much disinformation occurred on the part of the social media companies, despite our requests that they simply send voters to the North Dakota's election official websites. These companies' attempts at combatting misinformation, impacting user accounts, also was raised frequently as a concern by voters and, overall, the social media companies provided an unnecessary distraction of our resources. The introduction of private grant funding also has been a great concern raised by voters and the legislature in North Dakota.

Lastly, the declaration, driven by CISA--signed off by only a handful of people but attributed to the entire Elections Infrastructure Governing Coordinating and Sector Coordinating Councils--that the election was proven to be the most secure in history, has created long-term damage to election administration credibility with voters who had questions about the election.

This declaration was contrary to the typical transparency election administrators espouse. There was no metric or rubric used to compare all presidential elections and draw such a conclusion, certainly so immediately. Further, cybersecurity issues arose after that statement that suggested there were national cyber issues potentially confronting government entities during the election—issues of which CISA appeared unaware at the time of this bold declaration and, as of the writing of this report, are still unfolding.

CISA knows better than any organization that hidden cybersecurity issues generally become a lagging indicator, not a leading or real-time indicator, of cyber threats. After the 2016 election, for example, states were not told of specific foreign targeting until nearly a year after the election. Yet, in 2020, a week after election day while votes were still being counted, CISA declared the election to be the most secure in U.S. history. This has been a damaging blow to voter confidence in elections. The push by CISA to make such a declaration so quickly raised serious concerns with voters and North Dakota legislators, leaving those of us at the local level trying to defend this well-publicized national statement. This was an unnecessary obstacle we faced and will continue to face leading into 2022 and 2024.

10. Provide a description of any security training conducted and the number of participants.

Otherwise enter - no security training conducted during this period.

The pandemic was the security issue of the 2020 election. Training related to processes to allow for physical security were provided on weekly calls with county auditors. Cyber training was a feature of in-person training at counties throughout the early months of 2020 before the pandemic stopped all travel. Before that travel stop, county auditors came to an annual meeting with the Secretary of State and North Dakota's IT department, for in-person training. Once virtual, the training shifted to securely accessing the Central Voter File through dedicated computers and multi-factor authentication. Training also was conducted throughout the state, virtually, related to electronic pollbooks.

11. Subgrants (if applicable):

Describe how you made funds available to local jurisdictions.

Provide a description of the major categories of subgrant activities local voting districts will accomplish with the funds.

Otherwise enter N/A.

N/A

12. Match (if applicable):

Describe how you are meeting the matching requirement.

Otherwise enter - match not required.

Much of the match was met with in-kind expenditures by counties as they were forced to move to an all mail-ballot June 9 election. The applications mailed to voters for the June 9 election allowed for voters to request mail-ballots for both the June and November 2020 elections, and this resulted in by-mail turnout of more than 50 percent in the November 2020 election. Larger counties utilized mailing services to print and mail ballots. In-kind contributions also included outreach efforts by the North Dakota Association of Counties.

13. Impact:

Write an assessment of how your project has impacted the problems you were trying to solve. Were there unexpected benefits? Shortfalls? *

North Dakota utilized CARES funds to ensure maximum participation for all voters in the Central Voter File in the June election, and provided education and resources to help the counties manage voter flow in the November election. The result of these efforts, combined with the outstanding work of the 53 county auditors, were elections that were conducted as scheduled, without disruption, and at participation levels that were at record or near-record numbers.

14. Lessons Learned:

Provide a review of your successes and suggest ways that your experience may be helpful to others. Did you make permanent changes to your processes?

The entire group of election activities served as a proof-point for the value of counties and the State working together to meet voter needs. The counties and the State conferred often, through weekly calls and other trainings, to ensure that the supplies, equipment, and processes were available to provide outstanding service to voters. These weekly calls and training served as the foundation for communications success, and the resulting success in elections, during this pandemic. Presidential elections often identify stress cracks in the foundation of election administration that must be addressed before they become bigger issues. 2020's election provided validation of lessons previously learned, rather than new lessons. Specifically, the foundation of elections is built on transparency. Nationwide, there are millions of voters who do not feel 2020's election reflected that value of transparency. While there has been much talk of misinformation, as election officials, our primary mission has to involve demonstrating to voters and elected officials the process we undertake. Too often, at least in the opinion of the author of this report, the process was explained, not demonstrated, in 2020. Some "trusted sources" actively stoked the discord through social media. As election officials, all of us might benefit from considering how actions we each could have taken in 2020 might have lowered the tenor of discord. We are constantly engaging in that self-reflection in North Dakota as we prepare for future elections.

5. Expenditures

21. Current Period Amount Expended and Unliquidated Obligations

CARES COST CATEGORIES

	Federal	Match
Voting Processes:	\$684,268.23	\$706,794.45
Staffing:		
Security and Training:		
Communications:	\$721,006.94	\$4,414.38
Supplies:	\$66,113.99	
Total	\$3,001,776.16	\$711,208.83
Additional Scanning Equipment and Electronic Pollbooks	\$1,088,362.00	
On-Site Election Day Support	\$442,025.00	

6. Certification

Name and Contact of the authorized certifying official of the recipient.

First Name

Brian

Last Name

Newby

Title

State Election Director

Phone Number

Email Address

Signature of Certifying Official:



Signature of: Brian Newby

7. Report Submitted to EAC



Thank you, your progress report has been submitted to EAC. Please keep the PDF download of your submission as grant record.