

1. EAC-CARES Progress Narrative Report Login

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

2. Not a Bot Verification

reCAPTCHA answered

3. EAC CARES Progress Narrative Report

1. State:

Enter the name of the state or territory that received the grant and is submitting this report.

Wisconsin

2. Grant Number:

Enter the grant agreement number from the notice of grant award.

3. Report:

Semi-Annual, while 20% match is not met, as applicable. Reports will be due for the periods ending March 31 and September 30 on May 15 and November 15 respectively.

4. DUNS/UEI:

Enter the recipient organization's Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number or System for Award Management (SAM) extended DUNS Number or the Unique Entity Identifier.

5. EIN:

Enter the recipient organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) provided by the Internal Revenue Services.

6. Recipient Organization:

Enter the name of the recipient organization and address, including zip code.

Organization Name

Wisconsin Elections Commission

Street Address

212 East Washington Avenue, 3rd Floor, Po Box 7984

City

Madison

State

WI

Zip

53707-7984

7. Progress Narrative:**Progress During Reporting Period**

The CARES Act requires states to submit a report after each primary and general election that includes a "full accounting of the State's uses of the payment and an explanation of how such uses allowed the State to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus." Please provide a narrative report that describes how you used the funds to address the pandemic, the challenges you faced in responding to it and how you are meeting the state match requirement. Describe the major issues you faced in dealing with the pandemic in the election cycle and how you made funds available to local jurisdictions. Complete the cost table below describing your major expenditures under the grant. Add additional cost areas as needed that do not fit into the other categories.

2020 HAVA CARES Act Grant
Analysis & Description of Activities Funded
January 20, 2020 – April 7, 2020

On behalf of the Wisconsin Elections Commission, I am submitting a preliminary report regarding the agency's expenditures and obligations under the 2020 Cares Act grant.

On April 7, 2020 Wisconsin held its Presidential Preference Primary amid the COVID-19 crisis. According to grant award guidance documents we are required to submit a report 20-days after the Presidential Preference primary, which covers COVID expenses from January 20, 2020 – April 7, 2020.

The April 7 Presidential Preference primary and Spring Election was by all definitions unprecedented. Wisconsin was the only state thus far to conduct a statewide election in the midst of a COVID-19 pandemic "stay at home" order. Wisconsin is also the most decentralized state for election administration, meaning that 1,850 municipal election officials and 72 county election officials had to adapt to significant changes from court rulings, public health guidance, and voter behavior shifts towards vote by mail. This report summarizes a very high-level overview of election preparations that were made capturing the major efforts Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) staff responded to and implemented for the April 7, 2020 election.

1. Sanitation Supplies and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Because of the nationwide shortage of sanitation supplies and PPE, local election officials relayed to WEC in early March that they were unable to procure supplies needed for in-person voting. WEC staff then sent a survey to all local election officials asking them to detail their need for supplies to support safe, in-person voting. The local election officials were able to work with their county health departments and through their own procurement channels while WEC simultaneously looked for opportunities to purchase supplies for distribution to local election officials. WEC experienced the same difficulty in finding or procuring supplies either in the state or around the nation. A ticket for supplies was also entered into the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) based on clerk needs. Ultimately, WEC worked with SEOC and state procurement to send the supplies needed to all polling places in Wisconsin. Wisconsin's 72 county clerks played a key role in distributing supplies to more than 2,000 polling places. Supplies that were distributed include:

- Over 8,000-liter bottles of liquid 70% ethyl alcohol solution that was used as a hand and surface sanitizer. The solution was sourced from a local distillery as all other state and national supply chain options were exhausted
- Over 10,000 16oz plastic spray bottles and printed labels for the bottles for the liquid alcohol solution
- 500,000 isopropyl alcohol wipes for use on voting equipment and electronic touchscreens.
- 23,600 surgical masks for poll workers

- 31,800 nitrile gloves for poll workers
- 1.5 million ballpoint pens so that each voter would have their own to sign the poll book and mark their ballot
- ~2,000 rolls of painter's tape to facilitate social distancing
- 10,000+ social distancing and public health signs

The Wisconsin National Guard helped with the packaging and distribution of supplies from the stockpile in Madison to regional facilities around the state. The counties then drove to the regional facilities, or coordinated pick up in vehicles large enough, to bring the supplies back to the county office for further distribution to the municipalities and/or each polling place. WEC did not know until all the individual procurements were complete and the distribution and packaging was complete how many of each supply would be provided to each polling place. Some of the items were found by the SEOC in the day before distribution so the exact make-up of the supplies was unknown until they arrived at the polls. Jurisdictions reported having adequate supplies for election day to accomplish practices prescribed in elections specific public health guidance. Voters have also reported to our office that they felt safe in polling places and that there were adequate sanitation supplies. Some jurisdictions reported having excess supplies which we are now in the process of redistributing to the 7th Congressional District for their May 12 election.

2. WisVote Database

The WisVote database is the system used by almost 3,000 local election officials to administer elections. While WisVote and the WEC do not issue ballots, the clerks use WisVote to record when they send and receive absentee ballots, to enter voter registrations, and to record voter participation. The system was built by the WEC team and launched in 2016. The system was built based on the way Wisconsin conducts elections, which involves mostly voting in-person at the polls and registering to vote at the polls on election day. By-mail voting and registration options are certainly accounted for in the system, but most municipalities had never received a large volume of absentee requests for a specific election prior to this election. Clerk activity in WisVote prior to the election was much higher than any prior election because clerks were all entering and issuing record numbers of absentee requests at the same time. The system performed very well but required round the clock monitoring and auditing to handle this unique and unprecedented user behavior and traffic.

The system required a number of updates to accommodate extended deadlines for absentee requests and online voter registration in response to court decisions. These extensions meant changing automation in the system to assign voter records and requests to new deadlines and elections. WEC staff also monitored capacity of the system to ensure memory space. Multiple increases of memory were needed to keep pace with absentee requests and attached photo ID's. WEC staff also created two significant new processes to assist local election officials with the new volume of absentee requests. One change was to create an absentee ballot request report that documents when a voter submits a request that includes a photo ID. This change was significant because it allowed WisVote to capture and store photo files of photo ID. This process is usually completed by email. Photo files are very large, therefore the storage and capacity in WisVote had to be significantly adjusted. WEC staff also created "poll book" reports or pages so that jurisdictions with consolidated polling places could use the WisVote system to check in voters, produce and print an individual poll book page for them, and record new registrations and participation in real time on election day. Again, these were not processes that had been conceptualized previously and required significant development and testing.

3. MyVote Website

MyVote is the public facing website where voters can interact with their records and their data in the WisVote system. On the MyVote website, voters can request an absentee ballot, track when their ballot was sent and received by their clerk, register to vote online, find their polling place, view a sample ballot, view their voting history, and more. The site was built by WEC staff with extensive usability studies conducted with hundreds of voters to learn how they use the site. Based on historical data, most voters went to MyVote to find their polling place or to view a sample ballot. Site analytics show this to be true in February 2020, where traffic to the polling place look up tool reached a new record high. Features like requesting an absentee ballot were previously used by voters, but never at the rate they were utilized in the lead up to the April 2020 election. Deadlines for online voter registration and for absentee requests were extended multiple times by court actions prior to this election and deadlines for ballots to be returned and witness requirements were also changed.

Deadlines and dates are all currently hardcoded in the MyVote system and in the data exchange with the WisVote database. Therefore, each change required extensive development and testing to avoid unintended consequences. WEC staff also

engaged in extensive load testing prior to the election and up to election day to ensure that the site could handle record breaking traffic. Increasing capacity as it was needed required around the clock monitoring of the site. Additionally, as will be further addressed below, the pandemic necessitated the consolidation of polling places which caused numerous updates to MyVote to try to provide accurate, current-time information on available polling places. Certainly there were unique challenges and obstacles for some voters at the election, but the work of WEC program and IT staff in maintaining and modifying MyVote, as well as the performance of the website itself, was a key factor in accommodating a significant level of voter turnout, second only to the record turnout for the 2016 Spring Election and Presidential Primary.

4. Envelopes and Postage

In all previous elections, the majority of Wisconsin voters cast their ballots in-person at the polls on election day. Some voters typically cast an in-person absentee ballot but less than 10% of voters typically vote using an absentee ballot by mail. In the April 7, 2020 election more than 80% of voters who participated did so by casting an absentee ballot by mail. Unofficial and incomplete data indicate the total absentee voting, including in-person absentee voting, ballooned to 1.27 million absentee ballots being issued by municipal clerks. Clerks had already purchased absentee ballots and absentee ballot envelopes based on historic need. Therefore, clerks had only prepared and budgeted for 10-15% absentee by mail, including costs for by mail ballot envelopes and required postage. This significant and unplanned shift meant that clerks quickly ran out of the required outer "election mail" transmission envelopes, and the return "certificate" envelopes required by statute for the absentee process. Further, shortages in the paper supply chain were reported by local election officials meaning they were unable to purchase additional supplies. WEC staff was able to work with paper and print vendors in the state to source enough paper stock and have envelopes printed. The SEOC also played a key role in the procurement and distribution of the envelopes to municipalities. For our farthest distributions for St. Croix and Douglas counties, SEOC used the DOA aircraft to efficiently transport the needed envelopes. The number of absentee ballot envelopes printed were 2,200,000, for a full 1,100,000 sets of additional envelopes

5. Poll Workers

In a large election there are between 20,000-30,000 poll workers needed statewide. With the COVID-19 crisis, many poll workers in a more vulnerable health demographic were unable to serve in that role for the April 7 election. In recent statewide surveys, it has been reported that the majority of poll workers are over the age of 60. Many are also over the age of 70 or 80. At the start of the crisis, clerks began reporting to WEC they had a shortage of poll workers and that many clerks were unable to serve in-person processes because they were also in a vulnerable demographic. WEC then sent a survey to all municipal clerks asking them to identify their poll worker shortages. Based on the survey, municipalities reported a shortage of more than 7,000 poll workers. 111 jurisdictions described their shortages as critical, defined as not being able to staff any polling places. 126 jurisdictions described their need as severe, meaning they could not fully staff all polling places. Based on this need, WEC immediately put in a ticket for poll worker personnel at the SEOC.

Because clerks need time to train poll workers, WEC urged state decision makers to exercise authority to assign state personnel as poll workers to fill critical gaps. WEC staff also put out numerous press releases and held press events to encourage Wisconsinites who were able to serve as poll workers. Recruitment materials were also created for local election officials including draft press releases and draft recruitment letters that clerks could send to other municipal and county employees, school districts, and private industry.

WEC also created a "become a poll worker" feature on the MyVote website where residents could contact their clerk to become a poll worker. This new feature was used by local election officials and by partners of the SEOC such as the United Way for recruitment efforts. Municipal clerks have a statutory role to train poll workers and historically WEC has not produced or prescribed poll worker training. Because of the anticipation of new, first time poll workers, WEC staff quickly produced a full curriculum of online, video-based poll worker training that local jurisdictions could use to train new poll workers remotely with limited notice. Ultimately in the days prior to the election the Governor authorized the National Guard to serve in plain clothes as citizen poll workers in their home communities.

6. Guidance and Communications for Clerks

In every election communicating to 1,850 local election officials and 72 counties can be a challenge. Because of the unprecedented health crisis and continual changes resulting from court decisions communication with WEC local election partners was critical leading up to the April 7 election. Throughout the process, the deadlines for absentee voting and voter

registration changed. The requirements for witness signatures and absentee ballot return deadlines and terms changed multiple times, requiring WEC staff to communicate new changes which occurred within 24 hours. All traditional in-person voting practices had to be re-visited and re-constructed in light of the COVID-19 crisis.

Between March 12 and April 7 WEC staff sent more than 50 communications and guidance documents to clerks. In the weeks prior to a typical election WEC staff, in keeping with a communications policy developed with the clerks, send an average of 10 communications and attempt to avoid issuing new communications to clerks within the week prior to the election. Many of the communications created were developed with a State of Wisconsin public health official assigned to our agency for a very brief time to review documents from a public health prospective. WEC staff created more than 20 election specific public health documents, an entirely new perspective for the agency, using the high level guidance provided by the public health official which can be found here <https://elections.wi.gov/covid-19>. WEC staff also held numerous webinars in the weeks leading to the election to present this guidance and answer clerk questions. Many webinars were held live up to three times in a day so that clerks would all have training opportunities that met their schedule.

WEC staff received very positive responses from our local election partners about the communications during this crisis. While the volume of information was difficult to keep pace with, all matters communicated were of a critical nature. The recently instituted RAVE alert system was also used on multiple occasions to alert clerks on their phone and emails if there was a critical communication that needed their attention. Opportunities to provide information during live webinars were also an important option. While the recordings of the webinars were also posted, live webinars, at various times throughout the day allowed clerks to be able to directly participate and ask questions. The WEC was assigned a public health official to help structure guidance for only 24 hours in the week before the election. A more extended time period may have allowed for more consolidated guidance to be produced at the beginning of the planning process.

7. Polling Place Consolidation

Some jurisdictions chose to consolidate their polling places, a process by which multiple wards are combined into the same polling place. In 2020, jurisdictions reported consolidation was required due to the unknown in-person turnout and shortage of poll workers. Other jurisdictions consolidated because their original polling places became unavailable due to the evolving health crisis. WEC issued guidance to jurisdictions regarding consolidation and ensuring that the correct ballots were issued to the correct voter and on using the newly developed WisVote process to check in voters and print individual poll book pages. In larger jurisdictions that chose significant consolidations, long voter lines were reported throughout election day.

In most elections, polling place consolidations and location changes occur at least 30 days before an election. This allows time to provide notice to voters. There are also emergency provisions in the law to change polling places on election day. Because of the evolving health crisis and other factors jurisdictions made changes to their election day polling place plans after March 7. The first COVID-19 executive order was issued on March 11 changing many jurisdictions' election day plans. The Commission's decision to authorize municipal clerks to consolidate or relocate polling places within 30 days of the election greatly simplified this process.

8. National Guard as Poll Workers

Starting in March and with the emerging crisis WEC staff worked with local election officials to understand their need for poll workers, as is outlined above. WEC put in a ticket at the SEOC and had had many conversations about the need for poll worker personnel including the possibility of using the Wisconsin National Guard (WING). On April 2, 2020 WEC was notified that the National Guard would be activated to serve as poll workers in their local counties of residence. On that same day, WEC staff began working with municipal and county election officials to ensure their previous requests for personnel were still accurate. On Friday, April 4 WING put out a call for Service Members (SM) to serve as poll workers in their county of residence. On Saturday, April 5 WEC and WING personnel held a conference call with all 72 county clerks and large municipalities to discuss deployment plans. WEC staff also continued to develop online poll worker and election public health training for the SM to complete.

Nearly 2,500 Wisconsin National Guard Service Members were put on active duty on April 6 to begin the intake and health screening process. On the afternoon of April 6, the SM completed the WEC-created training on poll worker duties, voter registration, chief inspector training, and election public health training. On Monday, April 6 the requested number of SM reported to county clerks to be deployed to municipalities in need to do polling place specific training. In some counties, there

was a reserve number of SM who stayed with the County on Monday for additional training and to be on standby in case there were un-forecasted shortages on Election Day. The WING service members served in regular poll worker roles, in plain clothes and most in their home municipality or county of residence.

Municipalities who used WING personnel report the experience as a very positive one that helped them to be successful on election day. Many jurisdictions are hopeful that the service members will continue to serve as volunteer poll workers in their home communities in the future. Some jurisdictions stated that additional time would have been useful to know how many service members would be assigned to them sooner. Jurisdictions also expressed that it would have been helpful to train the service members earlier in the process. Only the Governor has the authority to activate the state's National Guard. Once the order was made and the call was made by WING for volunteers, WING was able to provide the number of requested volunteers in each county to WEC and subsequently to county and municipal election officials. Municipal, county and state election officials all wish to express their gratitude for the WING personnel who served their community on election day. The National Guard organized and facilitated its largest ever statewide activation, but its Service Members served in the capacity of civilian poll workers under the supervision of municipal clerks and chief election inspectors.

Conclusion

The Wisconsin Elections Commission spent significant time and attention over the past 3 years focusing on election security challenges related to foreign interference in campaigns and elections. While that effort sharpened the ability of the WEC and local election officials to develop contingency plans and train for adjusting to fast-moving developments, the rapid onset of the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic quickly and dramatically shifted the focus of emergency planning and responses. Two months prior to the election there were only emerging hints of the impact of the public health impacts on the election. One month before the election it was considered unlikely that over one million absentee ballots would be issued. One week before the election there was no guarantee that all polling places in Wisconsin would be adequately staffed. The normal intensive work of both the WEC and local election officials prior to an election were impacted significantly, swiftly and repeatedly by circumstances beyond our control. Multiple lawsuits and court decisions required frequent Commission meetings and decisions and adjustments by election officials and voters.

Throughout the public health crisis and election preparations, the WEC staff and clerks overcame numerous challenges in order to serve Wisconsin voters, recognizing their roles as administrators of an election with parameters and characteristics beyond their control. This report reflects an initial attempt to document the issues which arose, and steps taken to address those issues. This report should also acknowledge that the changes and additional responsibilities needed due to COVID-19 were in addition to the high volume of work it normally takes all Wisconsin election officials to conduct a statewide election. As with each initiative of the WEC and local election officials, the ultimate focus is on the experience of each individual voter and their ability and opportunities to participate in democracy.

While the election was certainly imperfect in some respects, there can be no doubt that WEC staff and its many partners made extraordinary efforts to assist in the administration of the Spring Election and Presidential Primary. County and municipal clerks across the state showed amazing flexibility and dedication to ensure resources could be used in the most efficient manner, while considering the health and safety of voters and election officials. The WEC appreciates the assistance and cooperation of its partner agencies at the federal and state levels, the Wisconsin National Guard and State Emergency Operations Center, county and municipal clerks, poll workers and voters who made the election a reality in the face of uncertainty. With these partners the WEC will continue to evaluate lessons learned and to research and implement additional measures to improve the administration of future elections.

Even though we have done an extensive amount of work, the agency has not yet been billed for many of these supplies and services. At this time, it is unclear whether some of these costs will be covered by Wisconsin Emergency Management funds or through other federal grants. Therefore, we are providing our best guesstimate at this time as to how much we think these resources may cost.

FINAL PROGRESS NARRATIVE REPORT

PROGRESS DURING REPORTING PERIOD

The CARES Act requires states to submit a report after each primary and general election that includes a "full accounting of the State's uses of the payment and an explanation of how such uses allowed the State to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus." Please provide a narrative report that describes how you used the funds to address the pandemic, the challenges you faced in responding to it and how you are meeting the state match requirement. Describe the major issues you faced in dealing with the pandemic in the election cycle and how you made funds available to local jurisdictions. Complete the cost table below describing your major expenditures under the grant. Add additional cost areas as needed that do not fit into the other categories.

The final report is your opportunity to share the significant features of your activities and present information about the results you achieved. The document should be written as if the reader has no previous knowledge of your activities. EAC would like to share the final reports with all states. The report should cover the entire period of performance. Review and highlight all activities that occurred during the period of the grant. Include the table of expenditures with cumulative expenditures for the entire project period.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summarize your entire project and the lessons learned during its implementation. Include a review of your successes and an assessment of how your activities addressed the pandemic. What did you learn about dealing with and preparing for a major crisis during an election year that can be helpful to other states? Did you make permanent changes to your processes? Were there unexpected benefits? Shortfalls?

8. 2020 HAVA CARES GRANTS

Current Period Amount Expended and Unliquidated Obligations

PANDEMIC GRANT COST CATEGORIES

	Federal	Match
Voting Processes, including additional costs for printing and mailing ballots, ballot tracking software, high speed scanners and letter opening equipment, mail drop boxes, hardware and software associated with signature comparison of returned ballots	\$1,144,974.00	\$556.00
Staffing: Additional poll workers, election office staff diverted to pandemic response, temporary staff	\$32,497.00	\$100,742.00
Security and Training: Security for additional absentee or mail drop-boxes, pre- and post-election cleaning of polling places, staff and poll worker training on prevention processes		
Communications: Notifying public of changes in registration, ballot request options, precautions or voting procedures)	\$9,857.00	
Supplies: Additional laptops, mobile IT equipment, cleaning supplies, masks	\$72,604.00	\$179,228.00
Additional County/Municipality estimated expenditures \$214,313 as possible match	\$0.00	
WING poll workers, estm \$1,854,960, unsure how funded	\$0.00	
500,000 isopropyl wipes, 23,600 surgical masks, 31,800 nitrile gloves, unsure of cost	\$0.00	

If you need additional rows for the summary table, please upload an Excel document with the same layout.

4. Certification

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

First Name

Sharrie

Last Name

Hauge

Title

Chief Administrative Officer

Phone Number

608-266-0404

Email Address

sharrie.hauge@wi.gov

2. Signature of Certifying Official:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharrie Hauge". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and flourishes.

Signature of: Sharrie Hauge

5. Report Submitted to EAC

CARES Funding Progress Narrative Submission

Apr 27, 2020 19:30:45 Success: Email Sent to: sharrie.hauge@wi.gov