

EAC CARES Progress Narrative Report

Response ID:259 Data

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.

WI20101CARES

3. Report:

November 23 after general election

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
August 12, 2020 – November 3, 2020

On behalf of the Wisconsin Elections Commission, we are submitting a preliminary report regarding the agency's expenditures and obligations under the 2020 Cares Act grant. The reported financials are cumulative amounts.

On November 3, 2020 Wisconsin held its 2020 General and Presidential Election amid the COVID-19 crisis. According to grant award guidance documents we are required to submit a report 20-days after any federal election, which covers COVID expenses.

The November 3 General and Presidential Election was the fourth election the State of Wisconsin held in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The General and Presidential Election is conducted by the state's 72 counties and 1,850 municipalities, which have had to adapt to significant changes from court rulings, public health guidance, and voter behavior shifts towards voting absentee 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 November 3, 2020 election.

1. Sanitation Supplies and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

As of May 20, 2020, the Commission had directed Commission staff to procure critical cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE) in support of both the August and November statewide elections. The Commission allocated \$500,000 of federal CARES Act grant funds to be used to procure these supplies on behalf of local jurisdictions. Ultimately, the Commission staff submitted a request for assistance to the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) and Department of Health Services (DHS) and together they were able to fulfill all the supply requests for both the August and November elections. Most of the core supplies for both elections were distributed in July to jurisdictions that had requested them. Throughout the month of September, with partnership of the Civil Air Patrol, delivery of the supplemental supplies was delivered to counties in support of the November election.

In total, the following supplemental supplies have been requested and subsequently distributed to municipalities in support of the November election:

- 60,000 procedural masks
- 9,000 pairs of gloves
- 500 liters of surface disinfectant
- 1,100 bottles of hand sanitizer

- 200 empty plastic spray bottles for the liquid disinfectant
- 3,500 rolls of paper towel
- 1,300 packages of multi-purpose alcohol wipes
- 3,000 ballpoint pens so that each voter would have their own to sign the poll book and mark their ballot
- 800 rolls of painter's tape to mark floors to facilitate social distancing
- 15,000+ packets containing social distancing and public health signs

This project was an enormous undertaking by Commission staff and was ultimately made possible through the generous assistance, adaptability, and dedication of the county and municipal clerks, the state procurement team, the SEOC/DHS warehouse staff, the Wisconsin National Guard, the Civil Air Patrol, and other partners. With their support, clerks have reported relief and gratitude to having ample reserves of critical cleaning supplies and PPE for in-person absentee voting, processing of absentees, election day, tallying, and canvassing well in advance of the November 3 election.

2. Subgrant to Municipalities

On June 17, 2020, WEC released the WEC CARES Subgrant program for pandemic relief to our 1,850 municipalities. The WEC CARES Subgrant provides funds to municipalities to offset costs related to administering the 2020 federal elections during the COVID-19 pandemic. These costs may include additional absentee ballot supplies, printing, and postage, cleaning in-person absentee and election day polling locations and additional protective equipment including plexiglass, additional staffing for processing absentee ballot requests, cleaning, or directing the public, absentee ballot drop-box purchase and installation, additional leasing of space for voting and equipment necessary to confront the challenges of administering elections during a pandemic. As of November 23, 2020, 1,265 municipalities have applied for this subgrant and WEC has disbursed \$3,545,823.00 to the municipalities.

By the terms of the WEC CARES Subgrant, municipalities are required to provide a final report that categorizes their use of their subgrant award. The categories under which they will report are 1. Ballot Supplies, Printing, and Postage, 2. Cleaning and Protective Equipment, 3. Additional Staffing, 4. Public Communications, 5. Absentee Ballot Drop-Boxes, 6. Additional Space Leasing, and 7. Equipment Costs Equal to or Greater than \$5,000 per unit. Any unused funds are to be returned to WEC on or before December 15, 2020.

3. Subgrant to Counties

On November 9, 2020, WEC released the County CARES for Elections Subgrant Reimbursement Program. Each of Wisconsin's 72 counties is eligible for reimbursement of up to \$10,000.00 per county to cover unbudgeted 2020 federal election costs that are due to the pandemic. The deadline for reimbursement requests is December 11, 2020. As of November 23, 2020, eight counties have submitted requests for reimbursement, and we have disbursed \$50,523.24 to those counties via this subgrant program. An additional \$640,000 is earmarked for the counties that have not yet requested reimbursement.

4. Absentee Voting Information Program (Absentee Mailing)

On May 27, 2020, the Commission directed Commission staff to prepare a mailing to registered voters to inform them about their three options for voting in the November election – in person at the polls, in-person absentee in their clerk's office, or absentee by mail. The mailing also included an absentee ballot request form and return envelope for voters who were unable to use Wisconsin's online request service at <https://myvote.wi.gov>. Based on experiences in March and April, voters new to the absentee process often had difficulty understanding how to request, complete, and return an absentee ballot. In addition, many organizations – both partisan and non-partisan – often sent Wisconsin voters incomplete or misleading information about the absentee voting process. While Commission staff had no mandate, or desire, to promote one form of voting over another, staff anticipated that the COVID-19 crisis may continue to generate interest in the absentee voting process through the November General Election.

On September 1, 2020, the Wisconsin Elections Commission sent the informational mailer regarding voting options to 2.6 million registered voters across the state. The mailer was unanimously approved by the bipartisan Commission and they directed staff to carry out the creating, printing, and distribution of the mailer. The Commission determined that all registered

voters who did not have an active request on file for the November General Election would receive the mailer. The mailer contained both an information sheet on all three ways a voter could cast their ballot for November and a blank absentee ballot request form.

As a result of the mailing WEC staff received 49,642 paper absentee ballot application forms that were scanned, entered, and routed to the municipal clerks for review and approval. Historically, less than 10% of the voting population requests to vote absentee by mail, while for the November election alone 45% requested an absentee ballot by mail. As a result of the high volume of paper absentee application requests, WEC hired more than 100 temporary staff, including State of Wisconsin agency interchange employees, to assist with the intake and processing of the application forms which are typically done at the local level. This project was extremely labor-intensive, requiring extreme flexibility and coordination amongst WEC staff, agency interchange staff and their agencies, as well as the municipal clerks to ensure all requests were timely processed.

Conclusion

The Wisconsin Elections Commission spent significant time and attention over the past three 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 prepare for fast-moving developments, the rapid onset of the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic quickly and dramatically shifted the focus of emergency planning and responses.

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 some factors 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 are in addition to the high volume of work it normally takes to conduct an 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 2020 federal elections cycle. 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 continued 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 still 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 estimate 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	\$15,072.82	\$270,195.73
Staffing: Additional poll workers, election office staff diverted to pandemic response, temporary staff	\$315,661.48	\$320,909.64
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)	\$2,239,752.87	\$44,330.43
Supplies: Additional laptops, mobile IT equipment, cleaning supplies, masks	\$1,737.96	\$25,755.08
Subgrants to Municipalities	\$3,541,089.10	
Subgrants to Counties	\$50,523.24	
10% de minimis indirect cost allocation		\$652,713.02

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

Julia

Last Name

Billingham

Title

WEC Senior Accountant

Phone Number

608-266-2094

Email Address

julia.billingham@wi.gov

2. Signature of Certifying Official:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Billingham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "B".

Signature of: Julia Billingham

5. Report Submitted to EAC

CARES Funding Progress Narrative Submission

Nov 23, 2020 18:25:46 Success: Email Sent to: julia.billingham@wi.gov