



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ELECTIONS

Christopher E. "Chris" Piper
Commissioner

Jessica N. Bowman
Deputy Commissioner

April 22, 2020

Mona Harrington
Acting Executive Director
U.S. Election Assistance Commission
1335 East West Highway, Suite 4300
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Ms. Harrington:

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (Public Law 116-93) provided \$425,000,000 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 \$10,175,711 that requires a state 20 percent match of \$2,035,142. This narrative explains how Virginia intends to use these funds to "improve the administration of federal elections" through the update of its state central voter registration and election system.

The Virginia General Assembly tasked the Department of Elections (Department) to use the federal HAVA funding to develop a new central voter registration and election system to replace the current system developed in 2007. The Department spending plan focuses on modernizing and providing additional security updates to the Virginia Election and Registration Information System (VERIS), the state's current central voter registration election system. Technology and security best practices for voter registration systems and other applications have advanced significantly since VERIS' initial development in 2007.

Pre-2020 Election Project Initiatives

Virginia's 2018 HAVA funds are enhancing the election infrastructure and security systems at the Department and the 133 cities and counties of the Commonwealth. 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 provided by the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA), the Center for Internet Security (CIS), and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

VITA provides a comprehensive set of information security policies, standards, and guidelines for all executive branch agencies in the Commonwealth. Based on the NIST security standards, these documents serve as the basis for determining how to secure technology through the identification and mitigation of risks. CIS provides global standards and best practices for securing technology systems and data against the most pervasive attacks. Additionally, CIS is

home to the Elections Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EI-ISAC) and the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center (MS-ISAC), which are the primary resources for cyber threat monitoring, prevention, and response for the states. The Department is utilizing the 2018 HAVA funds to leverage the standards and tools provided by VITA and CIS to identify and mitigate risks to Virginia's elections systems and community.

Another major initiative supported by the 2018 HAVA funds is the deployment of a Risk Limiting Audits (RLA) tool kit that can be used by all cities and counties of the state. The tool kit has been custom tailored to the Virginia election system through a series of audit pilots conducted across the Commonwealth.

Post-2020 Election Project Initiatives

In 2019, the Department was directed by the legislature to produce a draft Request for Proposal (RFP) in order to assess whether to 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 and the costs associated with maintaining/modernizing the functionality and security of the system.

The Department is currently in the process of producing a Request for Information (RFI) to determine current available products, vendors available to supply, and to establish approximate cost. Due to Virginia's unique statutory and regulatory election administration requirements, it would be difficult to find a commercial off the shelf (COTS) product that would not need substantial customization. This RFI will help the Department determine if it is possible to replace VERIS with a COTS product with specified enhancements or if a more customized product is required.

The Department has assembled a blended team of internal staff and external consultants/subject matter experts to begin the process of drafting an RFI. The team is funded by both state and 2018/2020 HAVA funds. These funds will also be allocated for the eventual replacement of VERIS.

The modernization of the state central voter registration and election system will allow the Department to take full advantage of new technologies that will improve both functionality and cybersecurity posture. The new system will offer easier updating and enhancement capabilities that are more cost effective and secure.

Sincerely,



Christopher E. Piper
Commissioner

Attachment: Department of Elections 2020 HAVA Budget