Office of the Secretary of State
Elections Division

2020 HAVA Election Security Grant Narrative | Washington State

Washington State Award: $8,860,638

Washington State Match: $1,772,128

Summary

Washington State is providing a majority of this funding to county elections offices. All 39 counties have gone through security site reviews in 2020 that were conducted by our own Security Operations Center and in some cases agents from Washington's local Department of Homeland Security team. This funding will address critical physical security needs identified in the reviews. Counties will also be able to improve their cybersecurity presence at the local level. The OSOS will use the remaining funds for administration and salary of staff to administer and distribute the grant funds to counties. A total of 75% ($7,974,575) is being sub-awarded to the 39 counties in Washington and the remaining 25% ($2,658,191) is being retained for administration and statewide election security upgrades.

Voting Equipment Replacement and Upgrades

Funding will be used by county election offices to physically secure tabulation systems, and other critical election equipment to prevent tampering, theft, or destruction. Physical security measures could include, but are not limited to, surveillance systems, locks and barriers, and access control for both the election equipment and immediate area surrounding the equipment.

Physical security for county elections systems, which interface with the centralized statewide voting systems is viewed as a critical need. In some cases, counties will improve forms of protection for critical voting systems, including tabulators and elections computers. Any perceived or apparent weakness, at the individual county level opens up all voting systems in Washington to breaches in both security and trust of the voting public.

Access control at the county level is another area that will be expected to be improved, and in some cases implemented.

Cyber Vulnerabilities

Funding will be used by counties to securely back up data, configurations, and any other data necessary to restore election systems back to their original state in the event of a software or hardware failure or as a result of malicious action.

Funding will also be used on equipment and software to protect Elections systems at the county level including enhanced use of encryption for personally identifiable information and other highly sensitive information, data handling tools, modifications to computer systems to make them more physically secure.

Very few counties have backup encrypted laptops available for use in case of emergencies. Funds will be spent on equipment purchases with backup capabilities to be used in emergency situations and at alternate locations. Alternative locations need to be wired for internet, phones (land lines), faxes, computers, copiers etc.

Communication

Funding will be given to counties to improve cyber and physical security communication. Recent security reviews show improvements can be made to Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) communication plans. Some counties will need to establish communication plans, succession plans and points of contact within their organizations. Having a communications plan is a crucial component of an organization's broader incident response plan that provides guidance and direction to these communication efforts.

Activities that will take place prior to the 2020 General Election

Some activity will take place before the 2020 General Election. Washington State is distributing grant agreements in May 2020 and counties will subsequently begin to spend the funds, and procure equipment and services.