State of New Mexico

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Technical Approach and Justification

1. *Executive Summary*

This application is presented by State of New Mexico to request funding in support of our acquisition and implementation of an electronic ballot delivery system for use by county election officials to serve our military and overseas citizens. Our goal is to provide greater access to online tools in order to make the voting process easier and simpler for our UOCAVA voters.

The State of New Mexico recognizes that UOCAVA voters traditionally have a lower voting percentage than domestic voters. The MOVE Act was passed to narrow the gap between UOCAVA and domestic voters. Allowing County Clerks to use an electronic registration and ballot delivery system will ensure that our State will be in full compliance with the MOVE Act while eliminating the gap between UOCAVA and domestic voters.

New Mexico has not preselected a vendor for this grant. The state has previewed a number of electronic programs and will seek requests for proposals from qualified vendors to develop and deploy a comprehensive set of Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee voting Act (UOCAVA) voter services for New Mexico. The selected vendor will be requested to extend existing technologies for online identification of our voters, classification of voters under current New Mexico election law, voter registration assistance, and logging the voter usage of online voter services.

The resulting solution will enable New Mexico to provide complete voter services to our UOCAVA voters. County clerks will be able to provided full services to voters such as voter registration links, absentee ballot notifications, ballot delivery, and ballot tracking. The State and individual Counties will be able to provide complete usage data and reporting of each voter service.

The State of New Mexico is grateful for the opportunity to apply for the EASE Grant. We look forward to working with the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) and contributing to FVAP's one-stop portal for millions of UOCAVA voters. It is our desire to join with the FVAP to ensure our military and overseas voters are able to cast their ballot, and have it counted, from anywhere in the world as easily as if they were voting in person at a polling place.

2. *Goals and Objectives*

New Mexico will seek a robust and reliable solution that will not only meet our immediate MOVE Act requirements, but will deliver a long term solution capable of expanding to meet our current and future goals and objectives.

The primary goals of this project are to increase New Mexico's UOCAVA voter participation base, as well as gather and provide comprehensive data detailing UOCAVA voter activities. More specifically;

- Develop and deploy new technology that will not only integrate with the existing voter database systems, but will also allow complete electronic voter services for our UOCAVA voters. Our goal is to deliver an electronic system which will include, but is not limited to, voter registration links, ballot request, ballot delivery, and ballot tracking.
- Develop and deploy innovative data tools to provide comprehensive statistics gathering of the UOCAVA voter services and activities for each election
- Reduce our overall long term costs of managing and supporting MOVE ACT compliance and UOCAVA services.

Key objectives for this project include:

- Provide tools for citizens of New Mexico to register to vote, determine their UOCAVA eligibility, complete an absentee ballot application and complete an absentee ballot if eligible.
- Improve ballot access for New Mexico's UOCAVA voters, while at the same time, providing a positive solution/experience for the local election officials.
- Provide a solution that New Mexico can build upon in the future as legislation catches up with the available technology.
- Provide an overall long term cost-effective solution for New Mexico elections.
- Provide analytical information regarding the usage of the solution.

To successfully meet the above stated goals and objectives for New Mexico the resulting solution must offer:

- A Reliable, Proven System
- Improve the Voting Experience for Our Voters
- Reduce the Failure Rates of UOCAVA Voters

This proposal has the specific goal to increase the success rates for our UOCAVA population at each stage of the absentee voting process. The key areas of focus are:

- Voter Registration
- Ballot Delivery
- Ballot Return

Historically, the biggest challenge in UOCAVA participation is slow ballot delivery and return. This grant will enable us to deliver new initiatives and technologies to meet our goal of eliminating the gap between our domestic absentee and UOCAVA voters.

Grant funding will allow us to provide voters with an intuitive process to electronically register and receive notification of ballot availability. In addition it will greatly improve the speed by which ballots are delivered to and from our UOCAVA voters. Streamlining this process will reduce the failure rates of UOCAVA voters.

Provide a UOCAVA Solution Capable of Advancing with Technology

Save on Costs and Overhead

We expect not to need to acquire additional IT personnel, purchase or maintain any server equipment, spend time developing and testing software, or worry about managing updates. Additionally, when an election drives heavy voter traffic, we expect not to encounter limitations due to pricing plans or server resources, nor incur extra charges due to high bandwidth usage.

UOCAVA Improvement Projections

We project that by fully deploying new technology, we will dramatically streamline and speed the balloting process for our UOCAVA voting population, as well as the save significant staff time complying with the new mandates of the MOVE Act.

- We anticipate our ballot return rate will improve by well over 50% with the goal of eliminating the ballot return gap between UOCAVA and domestic voters.
- We anticipate UOCAVA voter registration will increase by over 35%
- We anticipate that our UOCAVA voter participation rate will increase by over 35%
- We anticipate the percent of ballots delivered to ballots received will climb by over 40%.
- We anticipate voter confirmation (ballot tracking) will climb by over 75%
- We anticipate that our UOCAVA statistical reporting metrics and data aggregation tools will dramatically improve, thus enhancing our overall data metric reporting by over 75%.
- We anticipate that our staff time complying with the new MOVE Act requirements will fall by over 60%.

Ballot return rates are estimated to be similar to the national ballot return rates listed below:

Absentee Ballot Return Rates:

- 91%= General Population
- 67%= UOCAVA voters

The key metric for this State is to improve the ballot return rate for UOCAVA voters by at least 50% over the next election cycle, and moving towards future goal of a zero gap between UOCAVA voters and domestic voters by 2016.

The Proposed New Mexico UOCAVA System

The FVAP funding will ensure New Mexico is able to offer a seamless process to register electronically, receive notification of ballot availability, access the ballot electronically, and dramatically improve the ballot return rate.

Summarized below is an overview of our proposed system and its key features which offer us the specific tools to meet our goals and objectives for this grant.

– *Voter Specific, On-Demand Ballot Lookup*

The system should offer an electronic voter specific ballot lookup. Voters from anywhere in the world can access their specific ballot electronically. This is expected to eliminate the need for our staff to manually send paper ballots individually to each registered UOCAVA voter.

– *Online Federal Postcard Application (FPCA)*

The system should feature options for a voter to electronically complete and submit the FPCA registration forms to ensure the UOCAVA voter successfully registers and can vote a qualified absentee ballot.

– *Interfaces to External Systems*

The system should easily interface with external systems.

– *Data Import/Export Interface*

The system should support customization and existing unique data structures to allows delivery to these types of customizations to localities without compromising the core foundation of the application.

– *Customizable Ballot Packages*

The system should delivers a voter's ballot in a return package along with relevant and required documents such as instructions, oath of voter, and return envelopes. Customizable return packages will enable the Counties to meet federal, state, and local delivery requirements.

– *Flexible Ballot Display and Print Capability*

Voters should have the option to print a blank PDF ballot to be marked by hand. Ballots should be downloadable to the voter's computer in a standard PDF format and are sized to print on any home printer.

– *Ballot Tracker Module*

UOCAVA voters should be able to return to a website to monitor the status of their ballot. The system should provide the ability to include multiple tracking dates and/or messages in our voter registration file. It should displays voter specific tracking information from our voter registration file. Absentee ballot request, ballot access, and returned ballot dates are examples of some of the tracking dates that we may choose to display to the voter.

– *Accessibility Qualifications*

The system should be federally reviewed and approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Section 508 reviewed and approved. It should meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 specifications where possible.

– *Multilingual Support*

The system employed should allow for multi-lingual or single language ballot displays. Ballot data and on-screen instructions should be managed by a translation system.

The system should track voter events to offer a number of valuable statistical reports. It should track the number of visitors and other statistics for our jurisdiction.

– *Ballot Delivery*

The system should provide options for ballot delivery to our voters, including mail, fax and email ballot return packages that include all of our required documents.

– *Auto-Duplication and Direct Tabulation Ready*

We expect to see a significant increase in returned ballots from our UOCAVA voters due to the availability of the proposed system to all of the state's election jurisdictions.

– *Protect our voter's privacy and information*

The security of voter information and election data is one of our most important concerns and will expect the vendor to understand that as well, by protecting the voter's privacy, as well as our election data.

The system must comply with federal and state elections laws and continue to meet the laws of federal and state elections rules.

– *Help Desk and Support Statistics*

The vendor chosen should provide 24/7 support during elections and be available for assistance when needed.

Schedule and Milestones

The phases of this project would consist of documenting our requirements to allow for the configuring of the ballot delivery system. During this phase, the vendor will perform the following tasks that allow us to identify our business requirements as they pertain to electronic balloting:

Requirements Gathering

- Provide demonstrations of the ballot delivery tools
- document our business and technical requirements
- Identify any election file import requirements
- Identify any onscreen instruction requirements
- Identify user roles and associated permissions for the ballot delivery and return tools
- Identify Return Ballot Packages and custom ballot package form requirements
- Identify requirements for election set-up and county inheritance of statewide data, when applicable

The Planning/Development phase consists of the following activities:

- Analyze the results from requirements gathering and determine configuration
- Configure the tools to address election file import requirements
- Develop onscreen instruction requirements based on requirements
- Setup user roles and associated permissions based on identified requirements
- Create Return Ballot Packages and custom ballot package forms
- Setup the tool to support statewide elections set-up and county inheritance of statewide data (as appropriate)

The testing phase will consist of performing the following activities:

- Conduct a test pilot in the production environment of the system
- Conduct acceptance testing procedures to ensure that the requirements identified in the requirements phase are satisfied
- Perform remediation configuration activities on the system to address any issues/problems uncovered during the pilot test exercise
- Develop a Test Report that documents Acceptance Test procedures and resulting using the pilot test users

Project Phase / Milestone

- Initial Meetings
    - Request for Information
    - Determine point of contact and escalation (roles/responsibilities)

- Formalize Requirements
- Sign-off of Requirements Documents

- Configuration (and Customization)
  - Administration Configuration
  - Setup jurisdiction contact information
  - Core Configuration
  - Online Ballot Instructions
  - Ballot Package (Mail, Fax, Email) Completed
- Email Notification to Voter
  - Discuss and verify email notification process
  - Define PIN Generation Process
  - Discuss Email Reporting (what and when)
  - Formalize notification workflow
- Discovery and Analysis (import data)
  - Upload VR Data
  - Upload and Import Election Data
  - Analyze data for completeness
  - Proof Election Data Mapping
- Internal Testing
  - Verify election ballot data
  - Verify ballot delivery settings
  - Verify county page content and links
- Initial UAT
  - Conduct UAT Prep Meeting
  - Conduct Initial UAT Requirements and Functionality Walk-through
  - Send UAT results and issue tracking XLS
  - Get UAT results confirmation and acceptance
  - Address initial UAT gaps
- Final UAT
  - Schedule Final UAT Meeting
  - Conduct Final UAT Requirements and Functionality Walk-through
  - Send Final UAT results and issue tracking XLS
  - Get Final UAT results confirmation and acceptance
- Go-Live
- Exercise Support Process
- Conduct Final Walkthroughs and Data Validation
- Execute Workflows (e.g. Notification)

3. *Reports*

This grant will allow us to develop and deploy a wide range of detailed reports specific to our UOCAVA Enhancement Project. Previously we had neither the tools nor resources necessary to fully implement a UOCAVA reporting system. With this grant we expect to implement the following reporting capabilities:

- UOCAVA Enhancement Cost Tracker
  - Tracks time spent preparing deploying electronic ballots for our UOCAVA voters.
- UOCAVA One-time and Annual Payments to our selected vendor
- UOCAVA Enhancement Trend Analysis
  - Measures the rate of improvement for each of the following metrics:
    - Voter Registration
    - Ballot Delivery
    - Ballot Return
    - Time Spent on the Site
    - Voter Access vs. Downloads
    - Voter Registration to Download Trends
    - Voter Access by Geography

Management Approach

Our management approach represents a proven development approach that provides for well-defined phases that take into account development of requirements, architectural design, detailed software design, software development, system testing, and managed release cycles.

Phases for the solution approach that are involved in this project are shown below:

- Envisioning: Envisioning involves creating a business vision and defining an approach to bring the vision to reality.
- Planning and Development: Planning continues through the development of functional requirements and a project plan for the project.
- Stabilization: Our team in cooperation with the vendor will test the solution and make modifications as needed.
- Deployment: The Deployment phase includes deployment of the solution and final testing.

Key Activities during the project will include the following:

- Kick-off and Vision and Scope meeting
- Define roles and responsibilities
- Outline key information needed to complete the project
- Confirm project approach
- Build and confirm project plan.

Eight Criteria Areas

The State of New Mexico endorses the eight criteria areas that are used to measure and evaluate this new UOCAVA program. Those areas are:

Significance/Impact

This Grant Request has the specific goal to increase the success rates for our UOCAVA population at each stage of the absentee voting process. The key areas and metrics that we focus on are:

- Voter Registration
- Ballot Delivery
- Ballot Return

Historically, the biggest challenge for the UOCAVA voter population has been in "ballot return". The chosen system will help meet the goal of eliminating the gap between domestic absentee voters and UOCAVA voters in all the key metrics, especially ballot return.

In addition, the FVAP grant will be allow us to ensure that all voters, regardless of deployment within, or outside of the U.S. will always have a reliable method to register, access, and return their ballot. The State of New Mexico has over 1.16 million registered voters and we are an increasingly mobile population with a growing rate of military personnel. There is no way of knowing who or when a voter may be out of the country or mobilized. The system we will select must be capable of addressing the mobility needs of every voter in our voter registration system.

Strategic goals

The State of New Mexico considers the UOCAVA project a highly strategic opportunity to dramatically ease the process of balloting for overseas and military voters. In addition this project will secure the tools necessary to ensure any of the registered voters in the counties are able to easily register and become an eligible UOCAVA voter, when necessary.

Key strategic goals for this project are as follows:

- Improve ballot access for UOCAVA voters, while at the same time, providing a positive solution/experience for the local election officials.
- Provide a solution that can build upon in the future as legislation catches up with the available technology.
- Provide an overall long term cost-effective solution for our elections.
- Provide analytical information regarding the usage of the solution.

Our working hypothesis for this project states:

- Complete lifecycle electronically -delivered UOCAVA voter services
  - Reduce barriers to UOCAVA voter access
  - Increase voter participation
  - Decrease errors that have the potential to disenfranchise.
- Comprehensive data collection
  - Demonstrate effectiveness
  - Enable comparison both over time, and between jurisdictions.
- Use of common data formats
  - Data mining of statistics from many jurisdictions.

In summary, our strategy is to offer our UOCAVA voters a one-stop, electronic ballot and registration tool that offers a dynamic and flexible platform that will reflect our current and future electronic ballot requirements. The end result will be significantly easier access to awareness, registration, online ballot marking, return, and tracking of the ballot for all eligible UOCAVA voters.

Long-term strategy may involve expanding the system as a multi-platform, electronic ballot application that is available via Facebook, mobile phone, Google, Bing or any number of emerging platforms, beyond our website or county websites.

Sustainability

Our elections offices are generally understaffed and under-resourced. Accordingly, New Mexico has designed this project to meet the following criteria:

- Low long-term costs – The vendor's payment model should offer an option where the State only pays for what we use. For example, beyond the grant years, our jurisdiction will only expect to pay based on the number of ballots actually downloaded.
- Significantly lower server and hosting costs.
- To ensure long-term sustainability, we will pursue applications that can be deployed to ensure our UOCAVAvotersare getting a broad-based level of use.

Innovation

The chosen system will be innovative for our state and provide:

Web-based, interactive accessible voter information guide.

Electronic ballot access and sample ballots specific to each voter.

Comprehensive ballot tracking system.

These tools will be integrated into our proposed MOVE Act solution and utilized at the discretion of individual county clerks.

Scalability

Scalability, security and stability are the key elements of the system to be implemented. The system chosen must be scalable to accommodate the needs of both the largest population counties in New Mexico, as well as the rural counties with much smaller populations.

Collaboration

A key objective for New Mexico is to offer a seamless, integrated solution for each of the thirty-three election jurisdictions in New Mexico. The County Clerks' Affiliate of the New Mexico Association of Counties has the extended benefit of sharing innovative ideas and providing for cross-county communication and state-county communication on best practices and procedures while offering a similar balloting experience to each jurisdiction's UOCAVA voters.

Cost Benefit

The State of New Mexico has over 1.16 million registered voters. The award of this FVAP grant will enable New Mexico to deploy a comprehensive, automated MOVE Act and UOCAVA services tool for years to come. A truly comprehensive MOVE Act and UOCAVA solution must be able to touch each of our registered voters, since any one of them may become UOCAVA eligible at any time.

We expect to offer the proposed system to every UOCAVA voter for every election. We believe that a Uniformed or other eligible voter should have equal access to the ballot, regardless of the size of the election. Therefore, we expect to use this solution for a minimum of three elections per year.

We estimate a minimum of 500 hours of manual staff time to successfully comply with the MOVE Actand UOCAVA assistance per election at a rate of $50 per hour. This total equates to

a 4 year total of $300,000(At three elections per year). Processing and mailing ballots individually is an additional statewide cost of nearly $30,000 per year.

The County anticipates a total UOCAVA and MOVE Act compliance cost of nearly $400,000 over a four year period. As noted in the table below, this grant will enable us to deploy a perpetual system with manageable annual fees that will dramatically lower the twelve year costs by over $140,000 dollars.

	Number of Man Hours Per Year	Cost to State and Localities – 4 Years	Cost to State and Localities – 8 Years	Cost to State and Localities – 12 Years	FVAP Project Cost	12 Year Savings
MOVE ACT Compliance	500	$300,000	$600,000	$900,000		
UOCAVA Registration	100	$60,000	$120,000	$180,000		
Materials – Server, Equipment, paper and postage		$120,000	$240,000	$360,000		
Total	600	$480,000	$960,000	$1,440,000	$550,000	$890,000*

* Not including $1.00 per UOCAVA ballot download fee beginning 2016

The deployment of the proposed solution will eliminate the need for elections staff to manually register a UOCAVA voter application, and send a paper ballot. It should reduce staff time substantially, while fully complying with all the provisions of the MOVE Act.

UOCAVA voters will be able to register online, access and mark their ballot and, print, fax, or email all the required materials, and track their ballot. Staff need only add the voter into their VR system, and send the email notification to the UOCAVA voters of ballot availability. We anticipate a significant impact on our staffing and resources, saving over 60% of time while still fully complying with the MOVE Act.

Analysis and measurement of current processes

We agree with the authors of the MOVE Act that due to logistical, geographical, operational and environmental barriers, military and overseas voters are burdened by many obstacles that impact both the voter registration process and, most importantly, their right to vote. Most critical are problems transmitting balloting materials and not given enough time for ballot delivery.

As the MOVE Act underscores, states clearly play a critical role in addressing these problems and providing appropriate voting solutions.

The State of New Mexico's UOCAVA voter population has expanded over the last decade, due in part to increases in the number of military personnel deployed overseas. We estimate nearly two thirds of our UOCAVA personnel are affiliated with the armed services. In order to serve this growing constituency, we traditionally have deployed a variety of tools to ensure timely access to the ballot. These measures include links to the FPCA and the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB) on our elections home page. Additionally, we mail and email ballots to eligible UOCAVA voters.

While the spirit of the law is well intentioned, we are now faced with the challenges of meeting the new requirements of the MOVE Act, while working with an overburdened election team during the critical days of an election. The MOVE Act law requires electronic ballot delivery 45 days prior to a federal election; this requires staff to spend precious election time just keeping the jurisdiction in compliance with the new law.

Our elections administrators have determined that we have narrowed the gap between our domestic and UOCAVA population in areas of voter registration and voter participation. However, we still have a significant gap in ballots returned in time to be tabulated.Our key success metric is to improve the process of successfully transmitting and receiving ***(return rate)*** the ballot in time to be accepted and counted.

Our current procedure is a labor-intensive process that has been magnified due to the MOVE Act requirements. This grant funding will allow us to acquire new technologies to automate our registration, transmittal and the processing of UOCAVA ballots for our voters, thus significantly increasing our ballot return rate for our military and overseas voters.

Identification of each process and the elements that are related to the process

Our UOCAVA voter population has expanded over the last decade. In order to serve this growing constituency, our current process is as follows:

- Voters apply to vote as a UOCAVA voter using the Federal Post Card Absentee Application
- Once registered and in the system, we mail and or email a physical ballot to the voter. Over the past few years we have emailed a ballot and the requisite balloting information to those voters on file with a valid email address.
- Our goal has been to send our registered UOCAVA voters a ballot at least 45 days in advance of an election.
- The ballot is returned by the voter, along with the signed affidavit attesting to their validity as a registered, eligible voter.
- Emailed ballot are hand tallied.

Identification of potential risks and mitigating strategies

We believe the rewards of implementing a fully compliant MOVE Act solution greatly outweighs the risks associated with deploying a new technology. However, any successful project must understand that there are risks associated with initial deployments. These risks entail:

- Newer technology in the early part of the life cycle
- Lack of voter awareness of new electronic balloting tools

In order to mitigate the above listed risks we plan to deploy the following risk mitigation strategies:

- We will conduct a test pilot in the production environment using the new technologies.
- We will conduct acceptance testing procedures to ensure that the requirements identified in the Envisioning Phase are satisfied.
- Perform remediation configuration activities on the electronic ballot tools to address any issues/problems uncovered during the pilot test exercise
- We will develop a Test Report that documents Acceptance Test procedures and resulting using the pilot test users.
- Revise and refine our back end processes to handle the expected increase in UOCAVA ballots.

The deployment phase will consist of the following activities:

- Execute operational test procedures to ensure the technology is functioning properly
- Provide our team access to the tool to allow execution of administrative procedures and to run reports
- Provide operational support during an election to ensure the electronic ballot solution is made available to our voters

The following general procedure will be used to manage project issues and risks:

- Identify and document
- Assess impact and prioritize
- Assign responsibility
- Monitor and report progress
- Communicate issue resolution

A mutually agreed upon issue escalation process will be defined at the outset of the project.

Formalization of performance indicators for each process

It is critical for us to be able to manage and compile reports for each of our key performance metrics. These metrics include a wide array of measurables, including detailed statistical reports on the voter registration, balloting activity and cost tracking.

Justification for the modification to the existing processes

Our current UOCAVA process is a labor-intensive, manual environment in which our elections staff must spend a disproportionate amount of time. We believe that every eligible voter should have equal access to the ballot. Therefore, regardless of the time it takes, our staff will ensure the ballots gets delivered and processed. Our key objective is to narrow the gap between

domestic ballot return and UOCAVA ballot return. By automating the process with the proposed system, our UOCAVA voters will be able to register to vote, access, mark their ballot, and track the status of their ballot. In addition, automating the MOVE Act compliance requirements will free up our staff to do other necessary elections critical activities that relate to all our voters, domestic and abroad.

We are confident that the proposed solution will greatly narrow the gap between UOCAVA and domestic voters, while reducing the costs associated with a manual process. By deploying an electronic system we can offer voter registration, ballot access and ballot return at nearly a 60% quicker rate than our tradition manual process. We expect that a least 50% less man-hours will be spent on UOCAVA related voter registration, ballot delivery, ballot processing and ballot duplication.

Every eligible UOCAVA voter will have access to their ballot, where and when they want it.

Measurements of performance

Our objective is to continually assess, measure, and track our improvement relating to our UOCAVA population. The technology we choose will offer an array of reporting tools to ensure we are able to performance measure what we are managing. The reporting tools include, but are not limited to:

- Number of voters requesting a ballot
- Number of visitors viewing a ballot
- Number of ballots downloaded
- Delivery method requested/downloaded
- Ballot sent to ballot received ratio
- Ballot sent to ballot downloaded ratio
- Locality and Region of voter activity
- UOCAVA Enhancement Cost Tracker
- UOCAVA Enhancement Trend Analysis

An annual final report will summarize the entirety of the data and financial reports. This is the report that is to be made available to FVAP by the 15th of February for each of the grant-supported years, but at least through 2016.

1. *Current and Pending Project Proposal Submissions*

We currently have no current or pending projects that overlap with this initiative. We have been in strategy discussions about the various balloting tools that are available to assist not only our UOCAVA voters, but also ways to assist our disabled population. However, we have no current or pending program or proposal developed or planned at this time.

2. *Qualifications*

The chosen vendor must demonstrate successful deployment of innovative voting assistance products to empower voters and has met the requirements of the MOVE Act.