Questions and Answers (1) to HQ0034-FVAP-11-BAA-0001

1. Would you explain a little more about it? If we were to be awarded funds, what would they be used for etc.
   Answer: Provided in the grant announcement are some broad ideas for possible projects, but one of the benefits of the grant process is that it allows applicants to propose new ideas themselves. We encourage States and localities to be creative in developing solutions that work for their voters and their circumstances.

2. Collaborative (Factor 7) This is the extent to which the grant application demonstrates collaboration of effort from more than one jurisdiction.
   Solutions developed collaboratively by multiple jurisdictions will likely be more exportable to other jurisdictions:

   If two or more states have essentially the same hypotheses they want to test and want to propose similar technology to test the hypotheses, will FVAP fund both grants? Or does each State have to submit unique hypotheses and unique technologies?
   Answer: This is a research grant and the data collected from Applicants with similar hypotheses will enrich the research data value. There is no requirement that proposals be unique.

3. I have a small business that is creating a unique platform for county and federal elections, bringing concise unbiased information to voters. I could see this platform as being a great way to bring unbiased information to absentees that is all in one place, allows them to log in securely, select the candidate and position on amendments based on this information, and either print off or send in their ballot in a secure way. Too often, voters do not even know who all the condidates are or even what the positions do (what does a state probate court judge do?) I believe this would allow people who are not involved in the day to day political space of their county or state to obtain the information they need to make an informed vote.

   Would a small business be allowed to apply for this grant? We would partner with county and state elections departments.
   Answer: Please refer to PART II, Section III (A) for eligibility information. All applicants must be States or local governments.

4. Is it acceptable in the grant application to provide a high level estimate of the total budget for grant competition purposes and provide detailed breakdown of budget information after selection of a vendor?
   Answer: Yes, we understand that contracting laws prevent some States and localities from contracting prior to receiving a commitment of funds. Provide your best estimate and as much detail as you can about how you came to that estimate of what you expect your costs to be.

Questions and Answers (2) to BAA HQ0034-FVAP-11-BAA-0001

(Superseded by BAA H98210-BAA-11-0001)

1.

Q. I see that states participating in EASE will have reporting requirements at least annually. Will there also be financial audits of the states?

A. As indicated in Attachment A "Independent Audit". Applicants must submit one (1) copy of its most recent independent audit.

There are no additional audit requirements in this grant program beyond what is required for all federal grants. All audits will be in accordance with OMB A-133 (Grantees and sub grantees are responsible for obtaining audits in accordance with the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996 and OMB Circular A-133. An independent auditor in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards covering financial audits shall make the audits). Please refer specifically to Subpart B—Audits (a) Audit required, for additional information.

2.

Q. I am writing to ask whether you are maintaining a consultants list for potential applicants for the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) grant. By this I mean a list of expert consultants that potential applicants can review if they need to find people to include in their proposed project.

A. WHS/AD and FVAP do not currently maintain vendor support lists

3.
Q. What is UOCAVA?

A. UOCAVA is the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986. The full announcement contains definitions for all terms.

4.
Q. Please let me know if you will be responding to the questions in a certain timeframe and if the answers will be posted on the grants.gov site.

A. It is the intent of WHS/AD to answer all questions in a timely manner. All questions are due by 05/31/2011 and answers to all questions will be posted on grants.gov as soon as practicable.

5.
Q. The solicitation is not clear as to whether it allows electronic "voted ballot" return over the Internet. In other words, is it acceptable to propose Internet Voting solutions which propose

online voted ballot return as opposed to paper ballot return? Page two under IV. Background states "transmit absentee ballots electronically".

A. As noted in the Announcement under the definition of innovation: The electronic transmission of voted ballots in an actual election will not be funded through these grants. However, FVAP will consider applications that propose demonstration projects that test the electronic transmission of voted ballots to analyze the security and reliability of online voted ballot transmission systems in environments other than actual elections. However, nothing in this grant would prohibit grantees from developing and deploying, at the grantee's own expense, systems which transmit voted ballots in actual elections, even if such systems are integrated with systems developed under a grant award.

6.
Q. Section A. Additional Information: there are several factors listed. One of these is Innovation. Last year, in response to the FVAP's efforts, many new technology systems were developed. Much of this is still brand new innovation that is not widely implemented and could go much further. For states and counties that have virtually no automation of the UOCAVA voting processes, these are young innovations that could be put to use. Many states do not have the basic UOCAVA services. Expecting them to execute brand new 'innovation' on top of first-time automation is a very high bar.

A. Innovation will be evaluated against both the current industry standards and the existing systems in place with the applicant election jurisdiction. FVAP is looking for technological initiatives that specifically address outstanding service issues for UOCAVA voters that can be applied to the development of new processes, products and techniques. Innovation is one of the eight criteria, but there is no requirement that every grant application be unique or propose a completely new solution. There are numerous stages of the absentee voting process for UOCAVA voters. It is our intent to receive data from the use of various tools and systems to gain a better understanding of:
- **Where the greatest issues are;**
- **the best way to approach these issues;**
- **and the most cost efficient manner in which to assist the UOCAVA voter.**

7.
Q. What qualifies for innovation? Is it something that is innovative for the STATE, or for the FVAP? (i.e.) Who are we designing for? If a state is implementing technologies for the first time, do they also have to be newly developed technologies created just for this grant to qualify – or can an innovation be seen as an effective use of state-of-the-art technologies that up-levels the entire state's UOCAVA voting process?

A. Innovation will be evaluated against both the current industry standards and the existing systems in place with the applicant election jurisdiction. There is no requirement that every grant application be unique or proposes a completely new solution. FVAP anticipates the use of tools that will monitor and assess the voting experience for UOCAVA voters in far greater detail than current methods, expand usage of these tools by UOCAVA voters, and offer comparative data for FVAP to determine the efficiency of various

technologies. Grant applicants are not required to implement newly-developed technologies in order to be eligible, and are free to propose innovative uses of existing technology.

8.
Q. The grant makes no mention of, nor does it include in the evaluation criteria, several exceedingly important characteristics that one would expect to be of consideration in any development projects having to do with elections, namely: system security, transparency, ballot integrity, protection from tampering, and election audit ability. How will these crucial attributes be considered? I am sure this grant is not meant to create opaque election systems – how does it assure us of that?

A. System security, transparency, ballot integrity, protection from tampering, and election audit ability are universal election system characteristics, and not unique to UOCAVA voting solutions. As such, defining those standards is the responsibility of the State and local election official to ensure that adequate security and transparency procedures are in place.

However, one of the eight criteria listed is strategic approach. While not specifically outlined within the explanation of these criteria, it is necessary to demonstrate that the hypothesis is well defined and contains an appropriate plan in order to test the hypothesis. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that their proposal outlines the most appropriate measures to ensure and maintain security or test the security of a new system or procedure.

Last, many of those universal election system characteristics identified in the question are specific measures applicants can propose as risk reduction and mitigation tools for proposed projects. Such measures could also apply under the Innovation factor and the Cost Benefit Analysis factor.

9.
Q. Our application would be for the production of an instructional and educational video on how to apply and vote an absentee ballot on our existing user-friendly on-line website.

This video would be posted to our website which can be viewed by the general public. It would be specifically for military and oversea voters.

Would it be necessary to give detail information on our already existing electronic system or just the cost involved with the production?

A. There should be enough information included in an application to support the need for funding of the proposed project. If you believe it would be useful to the selection team to include the additional information feel free to do so, but there is no requirement that you provide detailed information about existing systems.

10.

Q. How detailed should our application be about the existing electronic system?

A. If you believe it would be useful to the selection team to include information about existing electronic systems, feel free to do so, but there is no requirement that you provide such information.

11.
Q. Are state universities eligible? This would make life easy because we are well-equipped to prepare and submit grant applications and to manage awards if received.

A. No, only States, U.S. Territories or local governments may apply. Please refer to section III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

12.
Q. Are Local Elections Officials eligible? That is, can the LEO submit themselves or must the application come from, say, the county commission?

 A. Yes, States, U.S. Territories and local governments may apply for this grant. Whether you need approval from a county commission to apply would depend upon your local laws, rules and practices.

13.
Q. An extension until Jul 15, 2001 is requested to allow adequate time in this high tempo time.

A. The deadline will be extended until July 11, 2011 at 5:00pm (EDT)

14.
Q. If using a third party company to develop software to perform voting accessibility for UOCAVA voters, would that company be listed as the Contractor, or, would the State Election Commission be listed as the contractor and the third party company be listed as a sub contractor?

A. The applicant (state, local government, US territories) would be the grant recipient. Any contractor (3rd party) utilized by the applicant could be referred to as a sub recipient (or as a contractor to the grant recipient). Regardless of the terminology you use, the relationship between the recipient and sub-recipient/contractor must be described in a manner that is clear and understandable to the selection team.

15.
Q. Would staff of a third party company used to develop software be considered consultants and their information be reported as consulting costs in the Itemized Budget under Section f) Consultants"

A. Those individuals that are directly employed by a third party will be considered that company's employees. That company should identify labor associated with those individuals as direct labor not consultants.

16.
Q. I understand there is an opportunity to ask for extensions to the deadline to apply for the most current FVAP grant?

A.
The deadline will be extended until July 11, 2011 at 5:00pm (EDT)

17. It would seem to us that any proposals for a collaborative effort would involve cost sharing. Can you please provide clarification on:

      1) What is considered "cost sharing" for the purposes of the grant?

      2) How collaborative proposals are independent of cost sharing; and

      3) How grant applications should be developed by multiple applying entities in support of a collaborative proposal to ensure these two requirements are not compromised.

A. 1) Cost sharing means the value of the third party in-kind contributions and the portion of the costs of a federally assisted project or program not borne by the Federal Government.
2) If cost sharing is required then the applicant must provide the required amount of funding throughout the grant period. For collaborative proposals, applicants shall clearly identify roles and responsibilities of each participant, and how the technical aspects of a project will be handled. In addition budget proposal must clearly identify how funds will be allocated. Further, the technical proposal must clearly communicate the benefits of the collaborative proposal, how money will be allocated and the reporting structure of each participant.
3) In the event a collaborative proposal will be selected for award, the award will be made to ONE entity. That entity must identify each participant as a sub-awardee with respective budgets.

18.
Q. In the event that applications by multiple jurisdictions in support of a single collaborative effort or efforts are successful, what will the process be for those states to do the regular progress reporting (i.e., one jurisdiction reporting on behalf of all, each reporting on a component of the project, other) and how will such progress be evaluated (i.e., comprehensively or by individual jurisdiction)?

A. For each reporting period only one report will be required. Each report must be complete and account for all participating jurisdictions. Each report must be detailed and a true account of current program status (e.g. itemized reporting information for all participants, financial information for the reporting time period.)

19.
Q. Please clarify what is meant in Part IV, Application and Submission Information, Section A, #3, iv - Management Approach, 1 by "applicants are required to provide information on all current and pending support for ongoing projects and proposals, including subsequent funding in the case of continuing contracts, grants, and other assistance agreements." Is information being sought specifically on efforts related directly or peripherally to UOCAVA or EASE; to projects that are being supported by funding other than the agency's own; or more comprehensively in order to assess any and all projects that an organization may be involved in?

A. FVAP wants to know if the applicant has the same and/or similar proposals or projects with other federal agencies.

20.
Q. Could out-year costs can be front-loaded in the funding request. For example, costs for out-year licensing to pay vendors for continued support of the systems being researched and evaluated. That these costs can be added to the costs associated with initial testing setup.

A. We anticipate that the EASE grant program is a one-time event and have included sustainability as a factor to be considered. A proposal that demonstrates that it can be sustained beyond one election cycle, through whatever means, will be rated higher in terms of sustainability than one that is for one election cycle.

21.
Q. In looking over the RFP, I did not see instructions or requirements regarding the following:
- Register with grants.gov.
- Register with the Central Contract Registration (CCR) if you have not done so.
- Designate and E-Business point of contact (EBiz-POC)
- Obtain a special password "MPIN"
- Obtain a DUNS Number (must have before completing CCR registration)
- CAGE code (if you do not have one, one will be assigned as part of the CCR registration)
- One copy of most recent Independent Audit to be included in the application
- Budget Forms SF-424

A. WHS/AD does not oversee registration process through CCR.gov, Grants.gov, etc. In order to register please visit the respective sites for their registration information.

Applicant organizations must complete the following registrations as described in the SF 424 Application Guide to be eligible to apply for or receive an award. Applicants must have a valid Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number in order to begin each of the following registrations. Please see <u>http://grants.gov/assets/OrgRegUserGuide.pdf</u> for additional information

- **<u>Central Contractor Registration (CCR)</u> – must maintain an active registration, to be renewed at least annually**

- **Grants.gov**

All registrations must be completed by the application due date. Applicant organizations are strongly encouraged to start the registration process at least four (4) weeks prior to the application due date.

22.
Q. Must all vendors be specifically named in the grant application? i.e. do we need to select our vendors prior to submission of our application or can we submit an application that describes our plan and then go out and bid our vendors?

A. Vendors do not need to be specifically named, only those which are cost associated with the proposal.   Grant applicants are not required to obtain and name all vendors before submitting grant applications. Vendors who are known and whose costs will be part of the proposal must be named. Anticipated costs relating to potential vendors must be estimated and identified accordingly.

5. This morning's grant announcement from FVAP appears to be missing a   link to the full announcement.
Answer: Please refer to the "Full Announcement" Tab on Grants.Gov, where you will be able to download the most current version of the solicitation.

6. Are U.S. Territories Eligible to apply for this grant opportunity?
Answer: Yes, please refer to PART II, Section III (A).

7. Are there minimums/maximums for the grants? Is there a target goal for how many you will hand out? I do not know if the goal/hope with the $15 million is to have 15 projects or 150.
Answer: No, there are no minimums and there are no maximums. We want to tap into the expertise the States and localities have in running elections, leverage their best practices and ideas in using electronic systems to better support military and overseas voters, and allow the latitude necessary to best integrate with the current State and local election systems.

8. Q. Is there a projected award date? I see when the applications close, but I don't know how quickly money will be given out?
Answer: It is the intention of the Government to award the grants as soon as possible so that States can build their proposed solutions into their 2012 election systems.

9. Q. Are the projects meant to have impact for the 2012 election, or is it not tied to any timeline?
Answer: Yes, FVAP wants these tools to be developed in time to be utilized for the 2012 general election and if possible for the 2012 primaries.

10. Q. Does the agency have any examples or targets for the grants (or is that the sort of thing that can undermine the process)? I don't know if you will be looking specifically at online tools, or prefer fax-based applications, or if there are any more ideas on the kind of projects, we will see beyond the broad language laid out in the grant instructions?
Answer: In the grant announcement, some broad ideas for possible projects were provided, but one of the benefits of the grant process is that it lets applicants propose new ideas themselves. Given there are over 7,800 election jurisdictions nationwide, we don't want to suppress good ideas that can better help the military and overseas voter.

11. **Q. I see that there is an amendment to the Grant Announcement. What is the difference between the two documents?**
Answer: There are two significant differences:

1. **The funding level has increased to $16 million.**
2. **Clarification of proposal limitation: The electronic transmission of voted ballots in an actual election will not be funded through these grants. However, FVAP will consider applications that propose demonstration projects that test the electronic transmission of voted ballots to analyze the security and reliability of online voted ballot transmission systems in environments other than actual elections.**