

Nevada

Effective Absentee System for Elections

Technical Proposal

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TECHNICAL APPROACH and JUSTIFICATION

Executive Summary

The State of Nevada is home to approximately 50,000 UOCAVA voters. In 2012, approximately 6,500 ballots were sent out and 5,300 returned, resulting in an 82% return rate. The Nevada Secretary of State's Office is committed to maximizing UOCAVA voters' participation in elections and believes that more can be done. These statistics are evidence of two issues facing UOCAVA voters: (1) that a large number of Nevada UOCAVA eligible citizens are not participating in the electoral process; and (2) that those that are attempting to participate are experiencing difficulties which translate into an unacceptably high ballot non-return rate. This project will address these issues through the implementation of an online delivery system and a proactive educational effort that will increase UOCAVA voters' rate of participation and reduce ballot non-return rates.

Nevada has only permitted the electronic transmission of election materials for UOCAVA voters since the passage of the MOVE Act and feedback from the 2012 election cycle indicated that many UOCAVA voters are not aware of the provisions afforded to them by state and federal law. To overcome this lack of awareness about the resources and provisions available for UOCAVA voters, this project also proposes the development of educational materials and conducting targeted outreach activities.

The project will provide for the Secretary of State to develop the necessary materials and expand current outreach efforts to include military-overseas specific events. As part of the educational effort and understanding the important role that the administration of elections plays in the UOCAVA voting process, the Secretary of State will develop resources and conduct trainings for local election officials. Although most of the resources will be educational, the key resource for voters and local election officials will be the online ballot delivery system.

The core component of Nevada's proposed project is the development of a uniform statewide UOCAVA ballot delivery system. Designed to be a completely electronic "one stop" shop, the Effective Absentee System for Elections (EASE) seamlessly integrates all parts of the UOCAVA process (voter registration, ballot request, and online ballot marking) into a single online system.

Currently, eligible UOCAVA voters are required to know the requirements of multiple processes (registration, update, request, and return) in order to exercise their right to vote. The core component of Nevada's project, the EASE application, is designed to eliminate the need for a UOCAVA voter to know his or her current voter registration information or to know the requirements of each process. The proposed system will link data in state databases to determine whether a UOCAVA voter needs to register to vote, update, or confirm his or her existing voter registration information. Using existing information or new information provided by the voter, the system will provide users with their markable full ballot, as well as prefill, pre-address, and allow them to electronically sign any additional documents including an FPCA.

In addition to well-executed outreach activities, the "one stop" EASE application will allow UOCAVA voters to complete the process in minutes with minimal knowledge about registration information or process requirements. As a result, it is anticipated that the streamlined process will increase UOCAVA participation and reduce ballot non-return rates.

Goals and Objectives

Goal #1: Increase Participation for UOCAVA Eligible Voters

Objective 1 – Develop a statewide system for UOCAVA voters to access resources to register to vote, update existing voter registration information, and request absentee balloting materials. Performance Measures: Implement the Effective Absentee System for Elections in all of Nevada’s counties for the 2014 election cycle. Track and review system use. Analyze feedback on the usability of the statewide system. The proposed system does not return marked ballots.

Objective 2 – Provide online ballot delivery and seamlessly integrate applications to register to vote, update voter registration information, and absentee ballot request forms into the process. Performance Measures: Compare the amount of communication between UOCAVA voters using and not using the system. Analyze feedback on the usability of the system.

Objective 3 – Provide UOCAVA voters with the ability to use digital and electronic signatures to sign applications to register to vote, applications for military-overseas ballots and military-overseas ballots.

Performance Measures: Compare the number of applications to register to vote, applications for military-overseas ballots and military-overseas ballots signed with a digital or electronic signature. Analyze feedback regarding the use of digital and electronic signatures.

Objective 4 – Distribute UOCAVA Voter Guides and attend outreach activities.

Performance Measures: Compare current and previous publication distribution records. Compare current and previous outreach event attendance. Record the number of registrations and customers serviced at outreach events. Analyze feedback received from publication and outreach activities.

Goal #2: Decrease the Non-Return Rate for UOCAVA Voters

Objective 1 – Reduce multiple applications and communications by providing UOCAVA voters with a single “one stop” system.

Performance Measures: Compare current and previous return and non-return rates. Analyze EASE usage. Analyze feedback on the usability of the online system. Collect and analyze feedback provided to county clerks.

Objective 2 – Identify a single contact for UOCAVA voters to return registration and balloting materials into EASE.

Performance Measures: Compare current and previous return and non-return rates. Collect feedback from county clerks regarding incorrect materials received. Analyze feedback provided by users on the system survey.

Objective 3 – Distribute UOCAVA Voter Guides and attend outreach activities.

Performance Measures: Compare current and previous return and non-return rates. Compare feedback received from publication and outreach activities with feedback received.

Objective 4 – Reduce FPCA rejection rates.

Performance Measures: Compare current and previous rejection rates for illegibility and incompleteness.

Objective 5 – Reduce total ballot transmission time.

Performance Measure: Compare total ballot transit time for ballots delivered online to ballot delivered by mail, email, and fax.

Objective 6 – Decrease ballot return time.

Performance Measures: Compare percentage of ballots returned by method of ballot delivery, e.g. online, email, mail, and fax.

Objective 7 – Reduce the number of spoiled votes.

Performance Measures: Compare rate of spoiled votes (over-voted) and spoiled ballots (extraneous marks, illegal marks) for ballots marked online versus ballots marked by hand.

Objective 8 – Enable voters to track the status of their submitted ballot

Performance Measures: Number of voters who utilize ballot tracking service. Collect feedback regarding the number of inquiries received regarding the status of a UOCAVA ballot.

Goal #3: Improve Utilization of County Election Resources

Objective 1 – Improve county processing time and level of effort.

Performance Measures: Compare processing time for transactions replaced by online system. Compare data entry time between bar-coded and non-bar-coded FPCAs. Compare error rate between scanned data entry and manual data entry. Compare error rate between scanned ballots and manually transcribed ballots.

Objective 2 – Provide training and state resources for county election staffs

Performance Measures: Monitor feedback provided by UOCAVA voters in their respective county. Track questions asked by county officials and staff regarding UOCAVA processes.

Objective 3 – Ensure UOCAVA ballots are processed and tracking mechanisms are updated in a timely manner.

Performance Measures: Compare EASE reports and state ballot tracking resources.

Goal #4: Increase State Assistance and Resources

Objective 1 – Develop and implement statewide UOCAVA procedures and resources.

Performance Measures: Review status of EASE implementation, outreach efforts, and state compliance with UOCAVA regulations.

Objective 2 – Provide resources and training to counties and UOCAVA voters.

Performance Measures: FPCA, FWAB, and ballot acceptance and rejection rates by county. Review feedback submitted by counties and UOCAVA voters.

Objective 3 – Track data needed to measure progress towards Nevada's strategic goals.

Performance Measures: UOCAVA voter participation rate, ballot return rate, number of ballots counted, and voter satisfaction feedback.

Objective 4 – Report data needed to evaluate effectiveness of various elements of the project.

Performance Measures: Utilization rates for various tools and services. The change in the number of FPCAs received, rejected, and accepted. The change in the number of ballots delivered, received, spoiled, and counted. Compare the 2014 and previous voter participation rates.

Task 1: Develop and Implement the Effective Absentee System for Elections

The online ballot delivery and seamless registration and absentee ballot request system must support the following features:

- 508 compliant
- Capable of supporting multiple languages and font sizes
- Providing the user with correct full ballot selections
- Provides for mandatory ballot presentation, e.g. candidate rotation, etc.
- Online ballot delivery and marking (The proposed system does not return marked ballots)
- Ensures no vote selection data is retained on the voters computer
- Prevents overvoting, provides undervote warning
- Allow users to apply or sign using a digital or electronic signature
- Prepopulates voter registration information found in state databases
- Provides for seamless integration of the Federal Post Card Application
- Generates a confirmation email to the user and county election office
- Collects data on the system utilization, voter experience, and system performance

This development will include the development of an electronic database importing and mapping tool and enhancements to Nevada's online voter registration system. The system will go through state and county acceptance testing before it will be used in an election to ensure proper performance.

Task 2: Create Resources and Conduct County Training Activities

Training local elections officials and staff on the use of the EASE system and developing strategies for adapting to it will include the following:

- Develop training materials such as online presentations and technical manuals
- Set up training sessions in the form of conferences
- Establish an online training program presentation
- Integrate a help feature into EASE to provide guidance for both elections administrators and users (UOCAVA voters)

The importance of training local election officials on the use of EASE and the benefits it brings to the covered voter population will be a key element to the success of the EASE system.

Task 3: Define and Implement the UOCAVA Outreach Activities

The Nevada Secretary of State's Office will carry out the following activities in order to reach out to UOCAVA voters:

- Develop online and print materials
- Distribute printed materials to military offices, military recruitment offices and events
- Attend and distribute printed materials at recruitment events
- Reach out and provide materials to organizations advocating for military voters
- Reach out to individual counties and provide them with printed materials to distribute to registered or registering UOCAVA voters

These activities will have the effect of informing individual UOCAVA voters and advocate organizations of the availability of the new EASE system and its benefits to military and non-military UOCAVA voters.

Task 4: Administer the System for the 2014 Primary Election

The 2014 primary election can serve as a major test of the online system and can be a great opportunity to identify areas of improvement. Using the data collection features built into the system we will be to determine the effectiveness of the system and identify areas in need of improvement.

- Track the number of voters using the new system for voter registration
- Track the number of successful and unsuccessful transactions
- Track the number of returned ballots from voters who registered using the new system
- Track the number of returned ballots from voters using the traditional process
- Measure ballot transmission time
- Collect feedback from local elections officials regarding the system's effectiveness
- Collect local elections officials' suggestions for improvements
- Identify areas in need of improvement and make the necessary modifications for implementation for the general election

The evaluation of these and other parameters during the primary election will help identify areas of improvement. Subsequently and based on this assessment, the system can be enhanced for the general election in November.

Task 5: Review Primary Election Functionality and Apply Enhancements

For data collected during the primary election, the system will be reviewed for areas of improvement. Based on this assessment we will be able make system improvements which can be implemented in time for the general election.

- Review site functionality
- Assess overall functionality of the system/process
- Collect feedback and recommendations from local jurisdictions
- Develop system enhancements based on this analysis
- Implement enhancements

Task 6: Continue UOCAVA Outreach Activities

The primary election will be the best opportunity to evaluate and assess the effectiveness of the outreach efforts employed. This will serve as the basis to develop improvement strategies or develop new strategies altogether if necessary. The following are the steps that will be taken in order to carry out such assessment:

- Assess overall effectiveness of previous strategies and activities as a whole
- Review the effect of individual outreach activities
- Develop new strategies or activities to enhance previous outreach efforts
- Continue outreach efforts as necessary

This will serve as an opportunity to identify and develop new outreach activities and strategies to increase UOCAVA voter participation.

Task 7: Administer the System for the 2014 General Election

After building on the experience of the primary election, the general election will be another opportunity to put into practice and test the improvements made. This is also another opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the EASE system and the process as a whole. The following steps will help carry out such assessment:

- Track the number of voters using the new system for voter registration
- Track the number of successful and unsuccessful transactions
- Track the number of returned ballots from voters who registered using the new system
- Track the number of returned ballots from voters using the traditional process
- Measure ballot transmission time
- Collect feedback from counties regarding the effectiveness of the system
- Collect suggestions for improvements from the local jurisdictions

After the general election and having identified areas in need of additional improvement and having implemented such improvements, we expect the EASE system will be at an optimum level of performance.

Task 8: Project Evaluation

The online system will track information for each user session. Data collected for each session will include information about the user, as well as page and system analytics. The system will collect comprehensive data for each user's transaction including information used to identify the user and the analytics for each webpage visited. The system will not retain information relating to a user's ballot selections.

The evaluation and report will cover the primary election in June and the general election in November and issue a comprehensive report illustrating findings specific to each election and the election cycle. The project evaluation and report will be prepared by internal staff specializing in UOCAVA administration and compliance.

SCHEDULE and MILESTONES

The following outlines the proposed timeline and progress milestones for the project:

June – August 2013

Develop technical proposal, system business rules, and programming framework.

September – December 2013

Continue working closely with information technology staff during programming and testing.

January – March 2014

Begin system quality acceptance testing and site optimization. Create training and outreach materials and documentation.

April 2014

Conduct primary election test run and final system acceptance. Finalize training and outreach materials. Implement system for the 2014 election cycle. Begin outreach efforts. State staff will monitor daily activity and feedback.

May – June 2014

State staff will continue to monitor daily system activity and work with county, programming staff, and voter to resolve any problems. Balloting option is taken offline when polls close.

July – August 2014

Review system performance with information technology staff and determine the need for any functionality changes. Analyze impact of outreach efforts and compare usage results with previous findings. Implement system enhancements for the general election.

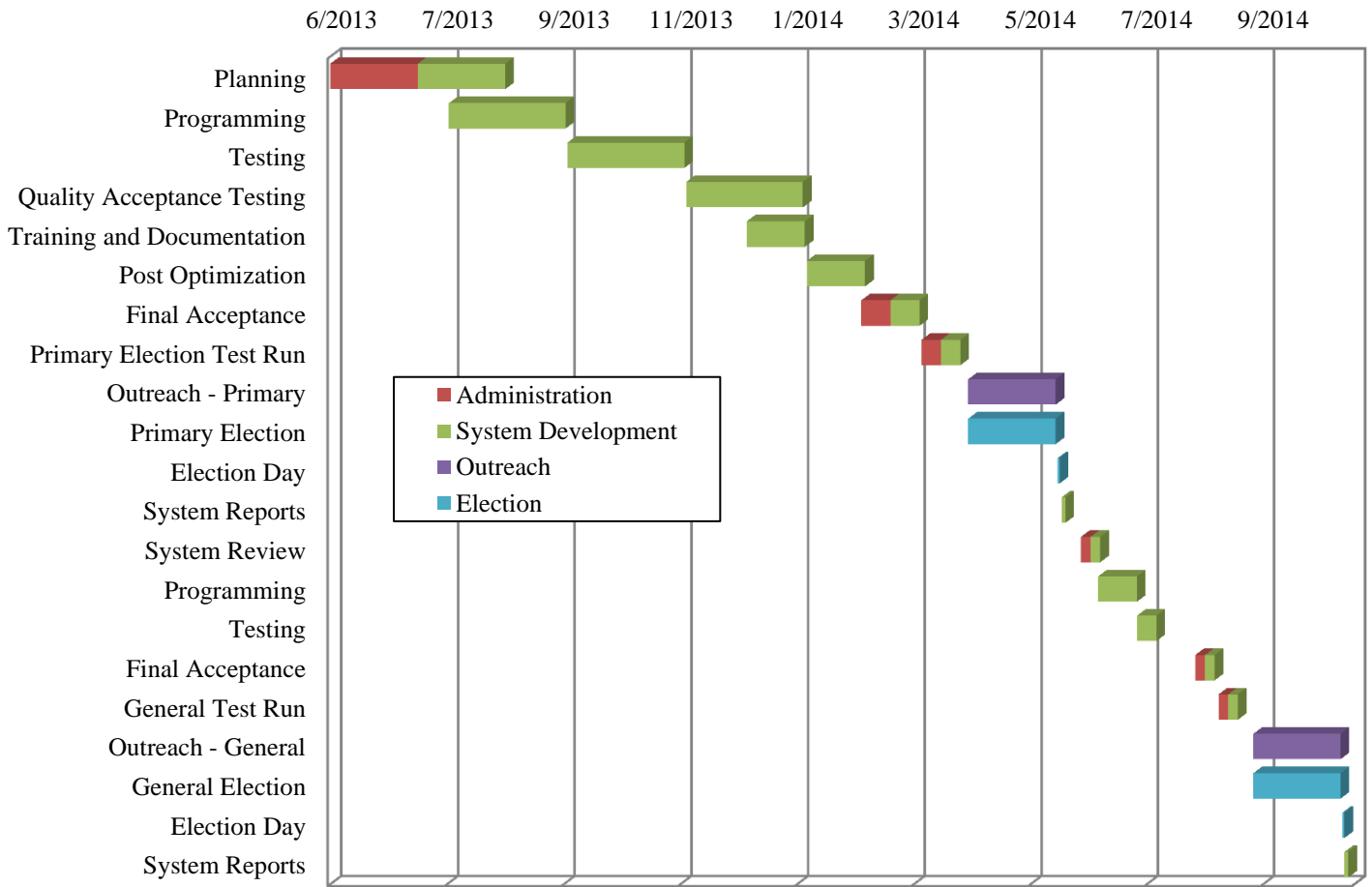
September – October 2014

Conduct general election test run and system acceptance testing. Finalize training and outreach materials. Disseminate training materials to counties and follow-up with questions. Implement system for general election and begin outreach efforts.

November – December 2014

State staff continues to monitor daily system activity and work with county, information technology staff and voters to resolve issues. Balloting option is taken offline when polls close. State creates analysis and usage reports. State analyzes impact of outreach efforts and compares usage results with previous findings. System is evaluated for effectiveness and whether program milestones were met.

2013-2014 EASE Schedule and Milestones



Reports

The following describes the administrative and technical reports that will be prepared.

Programmatic and Financial Progress Reports

- Before Launch (Weekly)
 - Current Subject of Design and Program
 - Current Difficulties and Successes
 - Testing Results
- After Launch (Weekly)
 - Traffic Analytics-daily and to date
 - site usage
 - bounce rate
 - page views
 - direct traffic
 - referring sites
 - countries (name & number and percentage of users)
 - search engines
 - pages per user
 - average time on site
 - new visits
 - unique page views
 - average time on each page
 - exit percentage
- Error Reports (within 24 hours of occurrence)
- Financial Reports (Quarterly or upon request)
 - Costs Incurred and Expended
- Ongoing Reports
 - 2014 – 2016 Federal Election Cycle reports will be reported on the same schedule as the 2014 cycle. Future reports will include the same information and additional information as necessary.

Data Collection Points Reports

List of data and date of collection: (relative to primary and general elections)

- Address Range Database – as necessary
- County Electronic Databases – as necessary
- 48 days before election day – County ballot delivery status
- 45 days before – County ballot delivery confirmation
- Upon Request (45 thru Election Day) – list of UOCAVA voters
- Upon Request (45 thru Election Day) – weekly and when necessary usage rates
- Day after Election Day – EASE use statistics

Final Reports

Progress Reports

- Performance Reports (Annually)
 - Performance indicators measuring achievements
 - Success and failure rates
 - Return on investment analysis
- Financial (Annually)
 - Detailed financial cash flow and activities

The system will provide statistics and the following reports after each election:

- Detailed use statistics (successful and failed attempts and reason)
- User type (military, spouse, dependent, or overseas)
- User physical location (state/county)
- Completed and uncompleted documents (FPCA, ballot, etc.)
- Return methods used (email, fax and standard mail)
- Anonymous Satisfaction survey responses
 - First-time users
 - Ease of use
 - Preference for continued online availability
 - Additional comments
- Website traffic analytics

MANAGEMENT APPROACH

Strategic Goals

Nevada's strategic goals for UOCAVA voting are to:

- 1) increase participation for UOCAVA eligible voters
- 2) decrease the non-return rate for UOCAVA ballots
- 3) improve utilization of county election resources
- 4) increase state assistance and resources to covered voters and counties

Nevada has a number of objectives pursuant to these goals: 1) to implement a uniform statewide ballot delivery system for UOCAVA voters with seamless integration of applications to register to vote, update existing voter registration information, and request absentee ballots and balloting materials; 2) to enable UOCAVA voters to use electronic and digital signatures to sign applications to register to vote, update existing voter registration information, and military-overseas ballots and balloting materials; 3) to educate UOCAVA voters about available resources and their rights; and 4) to increase county and state assistance for UOCAVA voters.

Implementing these objectives will simplify the voter registration and ballot marking process for UOCAVA voters. Nevada's proposed system development and educational efforts target improvements for the beginning-to-end process, supporting UOCAVA voters from initial voter registration through ballot tabulation. The projected outcome is an increase in UOCAVA voter participation and a reduction in UOCAVA ballot non-return rates.

Personnel, Contractors, and Resources

The executive sponsor for the State of Nevada will be Scott Gilles, Deputy Secretary for Elections, Office of the Nevada Secretary of State. Mr. Gilles will be supported by a team of professionals with substantial experience in developing online applications and administering federal election programs. Two staff members are dedicated to ensuring compliance with federal election law, including UOCAVA, and conducting outreach efforts.

The Secretary of State's office has a great working relationship with Nevada's local election officials and has successfully implemented several statewide technology applications, including online voter registration. The Secretary of State's office has also proactively engaged in collaborative efforts with other states and private entities to improve access to the administration of Nevada's elections. Nevada is one of the founding states for the Electronic Registration Information Project formed by a consortium of states to improve voter registration data maintenance and outreach using the latest technology. The Secretary of State has also partnered with private entities and utilized social media applications to provide voter's with cutting-edge election resources.

Financial management will be the responsibility of the Secretary of State's office. The funds will be tracked by expenditure and aggregated for reporting requirements as required by FVAP. Financial reports will be submitted quarterly and 30 days after the reporting period, or at intervals specified by FVAP.

The development of the proposed system takes advantage of existing in-house personnel. However, the project proposes using the EASE application for the 2014 federal election cycle and Nevada proposes hiring contract technical resources to provide short-term programming expertise in order to meet this goal.

Nevada's decision to use internal resources to develop and maintain the proposed system is based on experience that it will be more cost-effective to maintain over the system's life cycle and that modifications can be made quickly and efficiently. Because the existing election systems that the EASE application will be dependent on were developed and are maintained internally, in-house staff have the knowledge and experience necessary to develop and maintain the application proposed in this project.

When considering various approaches for the implementation and maintenance of the online ballot delivery system for UOCAVA voters, it became clear that the most cost-effective solution was to develop and maintain the system internally. This translates into a reduction in the overall cost of the project. The anticipated cost savings include:

- Developing, hosting, and managing the system internally reduces the ongoing cost of a vendor-supported product. As described in the previous section, Nevada expects to reduce the cost by utilizing in-house resources and eliminating overhead expenses usually associated with external vendors.

- Using innovative processes and technology in the absentee voting process will reduce the staff time required by county election staff. This means less wages and salary cost for county staff, which previously engaged in multiple communications with UOCAVA voters and hand entered application information.

- Functioning as a single point of contact for UOCAVA resources the online EASE application provides UOCAVA voters with everything they need to complete every part of the process. If users have questions, Secretary of State staff members specializing in federal election administration are available to assist. Additionally, the EASE application automatically provides users with direct information to reach their respective county UOCAVA voting specialist.

- Improving state resources available and conducting UOCAVA training for county election staff will increase the uniformity and efficiency of the UOCAVA process statewide.

Existing and Proposed UOCAVA Absentee Ballot Process

Nevada has some of the most restrictive election deadlines in the country. Applications to register to vote that are submitted by mail must be postmarked no later than 31 days preceding election day. Applications to register to vote online must be submitted no later than 21 days preceding election day. Applications requesting an absentee ballot must be received no later than seven calendar days prior to the election. In addition, the MOVE Act requires UOCAVA voters to reaffirm their eligibility annually. Because UOCAVA voters are often absent from their voting residence and are not as easily reached by public service announcements, and other election and campaign reminders, these voters are often unaware of and miss critical deadlines required to participate in the election process.

While there are more transmission options for UOCAVA voters, challenges still exist. If UOCAVA voters receive or obtain forms and ballots electronically, they must have access to certain technology (printer, scanner, or fax machine) to submit the completed documents in a timely manner.

An online system will provide UOCAVA voters with a uniform single point for resources necessary to receive and complete applications to register to vote, update existing voter registration information, and request military-overseas absentee ballots. The key features of Nevada's proposed "one stop" system are:

- real-time access into existing databases to provide every user, registered or not, with the appropriate documents and ballot contests;
- online ballot delivery and marking;
- seamless integration of voter registration, update, and absentee ballot request forms;
- utilization of digital and electronic signatures for a completely electronic process;
- document creation confirmation emails for the user and county election office;
- technology (barcoded documents) to improve the county data entry process; and
- comprehensive tracking components for the state to monitor system, user, and county activity.

Nevada's proposed system is simple – use existing information to analyze and provide UOCAVA voters instant access to their full ballot, as well as applicable registration, update and ballot request documents. Eliminating the requirement that UOCAVA voters need to know the status and content of his or her voter registration information simplifies the process by reducing communication with a county election office and reduces the estimated user participation time to minutes. The proposed system does not return marked ballots.

Linking the proposed system with existing databases provides users with significant advantages. During the first step, users affirm their UOCAVA eligibility or they are directed absentee resources for regular voters. Users that have affirmed their eligibility to vote a UOCAVA ballot are asked to provide basic information about themselves on step two. The system uses the basic information provided by the user to identify additional information in a county or state database.

If the system is able to identify an existing voter registration record the user is asked to verify or update any or all of the information, including his or her electronic signature. Based on the verified or updated information, the system will pre-fill a FPCA and provide the user his or her ballot selections. After the user marks and confirms his or her ballot selections, the system will provide the user with a PDF document. The uniform PDF document will contain: (i) a pre-addressed return cover sheet based on the selected return method (email, fax, mail); (ii) a FPCA prefilled with the user's information and electronic signature; and (iii) the user's marked ballot. Because the user must return the PDF document to the county, the system requires that the user affirm his or her understanding of the requirement to return this document to the pre-addressed county. When a user creates a downloadable document, the system will send a confirmation email to the user and corresponding county with return instructions, contact information, and ballot tracking information.

If the system is unable to identify additional information about the user in a county or DMV database, the system requires the user to provide the additional information necessary to complete the FPCA and determine the correct ballot style/contests to provide the user. Other than requiring the user to provide the additional information, the system functions and provides the same process for a voter with an existing registration record.

Nevada's proposed system makes use of two key innovations: (i) seamless integration of voter documents; (ii) and electronic/digital signatures. Seamless integration of voter documents

eliminates the requirement for UOCAVA voters to access multiple systems to register to vote, update voter registration information, or request, receive, or mark the military-overseas ballot. Not only does this reduce the time and communication that voters and county election staff must devote to the process, but it reduces the possibility for errors and missed deadlines due to the timeliness of the transmission. The ability to electronically sign documents has a similar effect.

The ability for UOCAVA voters to electronically sign voter registration and balloting materials was signed into law during the 2013 Nevada legislative session. Because Nevada law requires voter registration and balloting materials to be signed, UOCAVA voters must have access to a printer and scanner to sign by hand and return their documents electronically. The use of digital and electronic signatures for signing applications to register to vote, updating voter registration information, and requesting military-overseas ballots and balloting materials will eliminate the need to print and mark documents by hand. This is expected to significantly reduce the non-return rate and increase participation among UOCAVA voters.

The EASE system is designed to provide a UOCAVA voter with everything necessary to submit their military-overseas ballot without prior submission of an absentee ballot request to their county election office. Because the system is able to provide a UOCAVA voter with their military-overseas ballot, it will not be necessary for a county to transmit it to the voter. This process will provide the county with all of the registration/update and balloting documents necessary to retroactively process the voter's ballot. When a county receives a military-overseas ballot generated by the EASE application they will process and record the ballot in their election management system the same way a regular absentee ballot is processed and tracked. The same safeguards exist for military-overseas ballots generated by the EASE application. These steps include checking each document generated by the EASE application against the same voter registration, absentee ballot request, and ballot tabulation process as a regular voter or absentee ballot is subject to.

Research and System Evaluation

The system will track comprehensive data for each user. Secretary of State staff will use this data to analyze every aspect of the system's performance and user satisfaction. Such data may be used to identify and follow up with users that may have encountered a problem or not completed the process. Other data points will help identify system pages or requirements that might hinder a user's experience and can be reviewed to improve clarity and reduce the average time a user spends using the EASE application.

Potential Risks and Mitigation Strategies

The risks associated with the current processes for registering to vote and requesting an absentee ballot as well as the inability to mitigate these risks adequately in the existing process have been identified. Implementing the proposed system provides new risks. The risks and proposed mitigation strategies that may be associated with the proposed system are:

RISK: A system the EASE application is dependent upon is not functioning properly and UOCAVA voters are unable to verify existing information, if any.

RESOLUTION: The proposed system will automatically prompt the user to provide the additional information that would otherwise be pre-populated by information from another system.

RISK: The EASE application is not functioning properly and UOCAVA voters are unable to access the system.

RESOLUTION: Because the proposed system is an additional resource for UOCAVA voters the system will direct the user to existing state and county resources.

RISK: Information or ballot selections do not accurately reflect the information provided by the user.

RESOLUTION: The proposed system requires the user to confirm and verify information and ballot selections at various points within the system and provides a viewable PDF document that can be reviewed prior to being returned to the county election office.

RISK: The EASE application is accessed by a user who is not an eligible UOCAVA voter or by a user utilizing false identity.

RESOLUTION: The proposed system relies on the existing county review process and is the same as that for a non-UOCAVA voter submitting a registration/update, request, or marked absentee ballot by mail. County staff will process each document according to existing checks and requirements. If malicious intent is suspected, corresponding documents and system tracking information will be available to investigate.

RISK: If the use of technology to improve efficiencies and reduce human error is not functioning properly.

RESOLUTION: If the system is unable to process voter registration or update information automatically, the same information is provided on the FPCA and can be manually reviewed and entered into a county database. If a QR barcode is provided on the completed PDF documents, the document can be manually reviewed and entered or duplicated.

Nevada expects that streamlining and simplifying the process will help to eliminate many of the hurdles encountered by UOCAVA voters and county election offices during the registration, ballot request, and ballot submission processes. Existing online systems and feedback from other states with systems similar to the EASE application indicate a low likelihood for experiencing the potential risks noted above.

Milestones and Performance Indicators

Significant milestones for the development of the EASE application and educational efforts include but are not limited to the following:

-Analysis of current process and development of the proposed system: The benefits and deficiencies of the current process are documented and well known. The proposed system has been designed to simplify the process and education efforts are planned to provide resources and training to UOCAVA voters and county election staff.

-Completion of the EASE application. The Secretary of State anticipates utilizing the online system for the 2014 election cycle. In-house staff availability and resources have been analyzed and the addition of temporary project resources is proposed in order to provide the system for the 2014 election cycle. Once functional, the proposed system will provide Nevada's UOCAVA voters a completely electronic process for: (i) accessing and marking the full ballot online; (ii) seamlessly accessing applications to register or update voter registration information; and (iii) requesting military-overseas ballots.

-Completion of the 2014 primary and general elections. The comprehensive system data collection points, county transmission statistics, and user feedback will be analyzed for possible enhancements to the online system after each election. Desired enhancements will be made to the system after the primary election and prior to the availability of military-overseas ballots for the November general election.

-Educational efforts will include the development of a UOCAVA voter guide, attendance at events or activities to inform potential UOCAVA voters about available resources and their voting rights, and training for county election staff. Educational and outreach efforts will take place throughout the 2014 midterm election cycle. Training activities will take place prior to the 2014 primary election and at other times as needed.

Projections and Measurements for Effectiveness and Performance

With a fully implemented project, Nevada anticipates an increase in participation in the military-overseas process. This will be measured by the number of individuals registering as a UOCAVA voter, and the number of users requesting and returning a military-overseas ballot. The online system will be measured by the number of users and their success rates. Overall, users will be tracked by ballot submission methods, types of users in order to determine overall effectiveness and performance of the system and educational efforts.

Current and Pending Project Proposal Submissions

None

Evaluation Criteria Compliance

Impact

- The primary goal of this proposal is to increase participation for UOCAVA eligible voters.
- In the 2010 and 2012 general election, only a few thousand UOCAVA ballots were returned. The Secretary of State is committed to increasing turnout among FVAP's estimate of over 50,000 UOCAVA voters to a rate comparable to the general population.
- This project also serves as the single point of contact for all of Nevada's election jurisdictions, including Clark County, the nation's 12th largest election jurisdiction. The project not only provides additional resources available from the Secretary of State's office, but also the EASE application provides a single source for all Nevada UOCAVA voters to register, request, receive and mark their ballot online.

Sustainability

- The Secretary of State proposes administering and maintaining the system in-house to reduce ongoing cost and to ensure availability for future election cycles.
- The Secretary of State will continue to collect and provide research data for FVAP and other inquires for future requests.

Scalability

- The proposed system design allows expansion to unlimited users with minimal or no program modification. This allows the system to provide services to other states, election jurisdictions, or voters.

Strategic

- Potential challenges are identified and minimal. Because the necessary legislation and access to existing system data is currently available, no significant barriers have been identified.
- Alternative strategies are addressed in the proposal. The Secretary of State's office will continue to review alternative strategies for viability.
- Significant benchmarks for success are addressed as completion of the EASE application, postelection review, and review of outreach activities.

Collaborative

- EASE application will be utilized by all Nevada's election jurisdictions.
- Research regarding innovative methods will benefit other states and jurisdictions.
 - Linking existing systems to create a one stop application
 - Seamless integration of additional documents
 - Electronic and digital signatures
- EASE application programming will be made available to other states and jurisdictions as applicable.

Attachment A - Nevada Effective Absentee System for Elections

BUDGET PROPOSAL

The following budget proposal and justification describes the overall Effective Absentee System for Elections (EASE), including Secretary of State, and contract proposals. The overall budget for the project is \$386,500.00. The itemized budget is provided on the following page.

The Itemized Budget contains a high level description of the technical tasks and the hours of work required by Secretary of State staff. These estimates are for the required time internal staff will need to interact and work with contractors to implement the system.

The proposed budget does not include a request for funding to cover administrative, clerical, or consultants. These levels of support as well as materials, supplies, or indirect costs are not significantly more than routine levels and are not included in this proposal. Because Secretary of State Tech staff's involvement will be critical for project oversight and management to ensure compatibility with existing infrastructure and systems, SOS Tech staff resources are listed under Direct Labor. Costs for SOS Tech staff will be absorbed by the Secretary of State.

Nevada's election information technology staff has a proven history for developing, implementing, and maintaining electronic election databases and resources. Due to recent legislative mandates, availability of internal programming and project staff is nonexistent for projects such as the proposed EASE application. The proposed budget includes a request for FVAP funding for the Secretary of State to hire short-term contract staff to augment in-house staff availability. Due to the expedited schedule for completion ahead of the 2014 federal election cycle, the Secretary of State estimates approximately 7,000 project hours will need to be contracted through the state's Master Service Agreement process.

The contracted project staff will conduct a majority of the programming development and system testing needs. The contractors will also document workflow and network architecture; develop specifications document and test plan; develop user cases; and transfer knowledge necessary for Secretary of State Information Technology staff to perform ongoing system maintenance.

Return on Investment

Implementation of innovative technologies and process improvements will benefit Nevada UOCAVA voters in a number of ways such as improving awareness, increasing access, and reducing failure rates in every stage of the military-overseas voting process. Further, county efficiencies will improve with the addition of the resources proposed in this application.

Although true qualitatively and quantitatively returns on investment cannot be accurately calculated, anticipated effects and expected outcomes resulting from receiving grant funding are listed below.

- An immediate increase in UOCAVA voter participation rates
- An overall increase in the number of UOCAVA ballots successfully returned
- A significant long-term cost savings
- Improved utilization of county election resources
- Immediate availability of UOCAVA materials and resources available at outreach events, military installations, online, and county and state election offices.

With online availability of military-overseas ballots counties anticipate immediate improvements to quality of the data and significant long-term cost savings. State law requires counties to pay for absentee ballot return postage and after factoring in printing costs and staff time to prepare a paper or email ballot, counties estimate the average military-overseas ballot to cost around \$10. By linking the EASE application to existing election databases to create a one stop resource for UOCAVA voters, counties will be able to receive all of the documents necessary to process the UOCAVA voter’s ballot and reduce the county staff time necessary to manually process each request or follow up with the voter for additional information. The completely electronic process and the use of digital and electronic signatures eliminates the requirement for a UOCAVA voter to print, mark by hand, and scan necessary documents before being able to return them electronically. Counties will also realize the benefit of a completely electronic process as data is available electronically and does not require manual handwriting interpretations.

The following chart displays the historical and future (speculated) ballot transmission rates. The chart also speculates on the increased participation rates among the estimated number of UOCAVA voters.

As illustrated in the higher than 100% return rate, the EASE system is designed to act as a “one stop” shop and will provide a UOCAVA voter with everything necessary to submit their ballot prior to contacting a county election office. Because the system is able to provide a UOCAVA voter with their military-overseas ballot, it will not be necessary for a county to transmit it to the voter. This process will provide the county with all of the registration/update and balloting documents necessary to retroactively process the voter’s ballot. When a county receives a military-overseas ballots generated by the EASE application they will process and record the ballot in their election management system the same way a regular absentee ballot is process and tracked. The same safeguards exist for military-overseas ballots generated by the EASE application. These steps include checking each document generated by the EASE application against the same voter registration, absentee ballot request, and ballot tabulation process as a regular voter or absentee ballot is subject to.

UOCAVA Ballots	2010	2012	2014	2016
Transmitted	2,140	6,449	2,600	7,000
Returned	1,737	5,293	3,000	10,000
Return Rate	81.17%	82.07%	115.00%	143.00%
UOCAVA Population				
2012 FVAP <i>Est.</i>	53,000	53,000	53,000	53,000
Participation rate	4.04%	12.17%	6.00%	19.00%

Itemized Budget

The estimated time to complete the online system is approximately 7,000 project hours.

Direct Labor

Secretary of State Staff: \$ 0.00

- System Programming, DBA, Development, Testing and Deployment
- Estimated 1000 Hrs. to be provided by SOS inhouse technical resources
- Involvement will be intrical for project oversight and management to ensure system compatibility with existing infrastructure and systems

Administrative and Clerical Labor

None \$ 0.00

Fringe Benefits and Indirect Costs

None \$ 0.00

Consultants

None \$ 0.00

Materials and Supplies

None \$ 0.00

Other Direct Costs**

Contract/External Staff: \$386,500.00

- System Development & Programming (Oct. 2013 - Oct. 2014)
 - \$150,500.00
- Project Manager / Business Analyst (Oct. 2013 - Oct. 2014)
 - \$150,000.00
- System Administrator build out of Dev./Test/UAT/Prod environments
 - \$85,000.00

Total Request \$386,500.00

** The rates used are estimated to be between \$40-\$100 per hour and are dependent on the skills and expertise necessary to complete the scope of work. Contract rates will be negotiated under Nevada's master service agreement contacts. Upon approval of this proposal, definition of the scope of work and necessary resources will be finalized.