



**U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION**  
**1225 New York Ave. NW – Suite 1100**  
**Washington, DC 20005**

### **2009 Accessible Voting Technology Initiative**

This document outlines the plan and funding parameters for the development of the Election Assistance Commission's (EAC's) *Accessible Voting Technology Initiative*, which will fund research to identify and develop technological and administrative solutions that ensure all citizens can vote privately and independently, a requirement of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 (42 U.S.C. §15441). This document includes the criteria that will be used to select grantees and the expected timing of the competition.

This document will guide development of the Notice of Funds Availability (*Notice*) and may be subject to change pending additional input from stakeholders and final EAC Commissioner review and approval.

Competitive grants for this initiative will be issued under the Help America Vote Act of 2002 funded by the Omnibus Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2009 (Public Law 111-8).

#### **Purpose of Competition**

This initiative will fund research and technology adoption to make voting systems (including paper ballots) more accessible to all voters and make the entire election process more welcoming and accessible to individuals with disabilities<sup>1</sup>. EAC will hold a competition to identify a national partner(s) to work closely with EAC and National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to craft and implement a high-quality research agenda with broad stakeholder input on the direction and type of research to be conducted. This initiative will support research to increase the accessibility of new, existing, and emerging technological solutions in such areas as assistive technologies, interoperability, and design of voting systems.

This initiative will model other effective federally sponsored research initiatives including the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Centers (RERCs) funded by the U.S. Department of Education to lead the development of methods and devices that will benefit individuals with disabilities, and the Manufacturing Extension Program (MEP) financed by NIST to support advanced technology adoption in the private sector.

The successful applicant(s) will have knowledge of and expertise regarding the challenges facing voters with different types of disabilities and a track record of high quality, cost-effective administration of comparable research grants. The successful applicant(s) will propose to conduct research through sub-grants and contracts to organizations and individuals with specialized research skills.

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<sup>1</sup> The purpose of competition is described in the Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-8)



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EAC will work with NIST to identify the types of research that will be supported through this initiative, which will be outlined in the final *Notice* developed from processes outlined in this document. The grantee(s) will work in three primary areas:

### **1. Applied Research**

Successful applicant(s) will analyze the complex policy considerations, election administration challenges and technological issues associated with making voting systems accessible. Applicants must describe how advanced technology, scientific achievement, and cultural knowledge supported by this initiative will systemically address the issues of accessibility, security, and usability. To make the entire election process as accessible as possible, applicants should show how election administrators and poll workers will have input on development of the research agenda.

### **2. Development, Technical Assistance and Dissemination**

Successful applicant(s) will describe how their approach will support research development and technology transfer of the most promising research by:

- increasing the number and level of expertise of people working to make voting systems more accessible through the use of technology and to local and state election officials using the accessible technology in polling places;
- moving innovations into the field in the form of non-proprietary technologies, best practices in administrative and non-technological solutions and commercial products; and,
- providing useful information from the research to the voting system manufacturing industry, consumers, state and local election officials, and policymakers to support making the entire election process welcoming and accessible to people with disabilities.

### **3. Policy Development**

Successful applicant(s) will describe their process for seeking stakeholder input into the development of the research agenda and the policies and procedures needed to administer elections, and educate election officials, poll workers and voters in the use of innovations identified through this initiative. Work in this area will also include developing consensus around how the Voluntary Voting System Guidelines (VVSG) will be used to ensure that developed technologies are fully accessible.

**Eligible Applicants:** National Non-Profit Organizations and Institutions of Higher Education.



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**Award Details:**

Total Funding Available: up to \$5,000,000

Anticipated Awards: 1-3

Award Size: Up to \$5,000,000

**Projected Timeline:**

Funding Notice Published: October 29, 2009

Application Due Date: February 19, 2010

Anticipated Award Date: April 17, 2010

**Performance Period:** Six years with one-year, annually-renewable cooperative agreement(s) subject to availability of funding and continued satisfactory performance.

**Matching funds:** Matching funds not required, but allowable.

**Grants Administration:** Awards under this program shall be subject to all federal regulations and Commission policies, and procedures applicable to federal assistance awards including applicable OMB Cost Principles (2 CFR part 220 or 230)([www.whitehouse.gov/OMB/circulars/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/OMB/circulars/)).

**Pre-Publication Outreach:** Prior to publication of the *Notice*, EAC will solicit additional input on the development of the *Notice* by:

1. Asking the public to review and comment on possible activities that may be supported by this grant through input at [www.eac.gov](http://www.eac.gov).
2. Soliciting extensive review and input from the disability community through an EAC Public Hearing scheduled for July 14, 2009 and a follow-up roundtable discussion.
3. Reaching out to other federal entities that support federal research and development projects.
4. Continuing collaboration with NIST, EAC's Technical Guidelines Development Committee, and other stakeholders.

**Proposed Selection Criteria:**

**1. Program Design/Strategy**

EAC will consider the quality of the proposed design including but not limited to:

- a) The soundness, relevance, and innovation of the applicant's initial 2-year project plan;
- b) The applicant's approach and strategy to reaching out to multiple stakeholders, including development of partnerships to clarify and advance the research agenda; and,
- c) Strategy for applying research results to successful outcomes in the marketplace and throughout all aspects of the voting process.



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## **2. Organizational Capacity**

EAC will consider the capacity of the applicant to deliver the proposed services based on:

- a) Demonstrated ability to manage a complex research agenda in close partnership with a cognizant federal agency;
- b) Expertise and experience working with a broad range of accessibility and disability organizations and individuals;
- c) Demonstrated ability to manage a federal grant/cooperative agreement in an efficient, cost-effective manner; and,
- d) Experience of the organization and staff in developing and advancing critical solutions to complex research issues.

## **3. Budget/Cost Effectiveness**

EAC will evaluate the budget based on:

- a) Percentage of cost for administration of the research fund (not to exceed 20 percent of funds awarded);
- b) Clarity and completeness of the budget and budget narrative; and,
- c) Non-mandatory cost sharing identified by the applicant.

**Application Procedure:** The final *Notice* will be posted on the EAC website and broadly distributed to potential applicants through distribution lists and electronic channels. Applications will be reviewed by a panel of outside experts and EAC and NIST staff.

**Reporting:** Applicants will be required to submit annual financial status and progress reports per HAVA section 272.