

Civic Data, Election Officials / October 7, 2024

Early Report on 2024 Rural and Nonmetro Election Infrastructure Grant Program

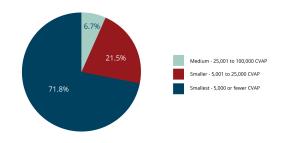
Limited Federal Funding Leads to Funding Gaps Around Staffing, Security and ADA Access

In August, the Center for Tech and Civic Life launched the nonpartisan Rural and Nonmetro Election Infrastructure Grant Program to support election officials in operationalizing secure and reliable elections in rural and nonmetro communities. The program has helped election officials modernize outdated voting technology; improve access to voting for rural voters, seniors, and veterans; and make much-needed infrastructure updates to enhance election security and make voting smoother for all voters.

With strong interest and hundreds of applications for the grant program from local election officials across the country, CTCL has moved to a waitlist for the remainder of the election cycle.

More than 70 percent of applicants to the program represented election officials working in the nation's smallest jurisdictions – those with 5,000 voters or less. More than 60 percent of the smallest offices in the grant program – those receiving \$5,000 grants – said their grants would have a "massive" impact on their program this year. That a grant of this size could have such an impact is a sign that the funding environment for local election offices remains very challenging.

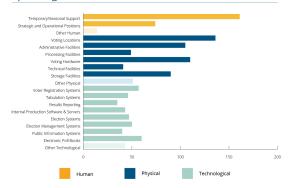
Grantees by Jurisdiction Size



Early feedback from applicants shows that funding for staffing, security and even basic needs like ADA access remain critical pain points for election offices around the country. Despite the challenges election officials are facing this cycle, they are committed to delivering a good voting experience. The top reason offices reported seeking more funding is because they could "get by with the bare minimum, but want to do better" for their voters. Other reasons included:

- · They have one-time costs that they do not expect to have again.
- They need to purchase a big-ticket item.
- They cannot afford some of the basic necessities because their local government lacks funding.
- · They have unfunded mandates.

Spending Patterns



In March, NBC news reported that rural election offices were struggling to implement security upgrades recommended by federal officials. CTCL launched the Rural and Nonmetro Election

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Infrastructure Grant Program after Congress cut Help America Vote Act funding last year to just \$55 million nationwide in the FY24 budget.

Applications opened starting Aug. 2 and grants were available to eligible election offices in 20 states — Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Vermont, Washington and Wyoming — as well as the U.S. territories. Learn more about the grant program here.

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