



Wisconsin Elections Commission

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DATE: June 17, 2020

TO: Wisconsin Municipal Clerks
City of Milwaukee Election Commission
Wisconsin County Clerks
Milwaukee County Election Commission

FROM: Meagan Wolfe
Administrator

SUBJECT: WEC CARES Subgrant Program Announcement

1. **SUMMARY.** Under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) was awarded funds on April 6th to help “prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus, domestically or internationally, for the 2020 Federal election cycle.” The WEC produced a plan to distribute a majority of these funds to municipalities through the WEC CARES Subgrant program to help them prepare for the remainder of the 2020 election year.
2. **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION.** The Elections Commission authorized a \$4.1 million WEC CARES subgrant program for municipalities to offset pandemic-related elections costs. The approved WEC CARES Subgrant program provides a \$200 base amount plus an additional \$1.10/per registered voter. This means that if a municipality has 100 registered voters, the municipality will receive the base \$200 plus \$1.10/per those 100 registered voters. That total amount the municipality would receive is \$310.00.
3. **AUTHORIZED USES.** The WEC CARES Subgrant is for pandemic-related expenditures for the 2020 elections. The following are the allowable uses under the WEC CARES Subgrant:
 - (1) **ADDITIONAL BALLOT SUPPLIES, PRINTING, AND POSTAGE COSTS** for higher levels of absentee or vote by mail processes, including printers, scanners, and envelope openers costing less than \$5000 per unit.
 - (2) **ADDITIONAL CLEANING SUPPLIES, CLEANING SERVICES AND PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT** including additional disinfectants, wipes, paper towels, deep cleaning services for polling places pre- and post-election, masks, gloves, gowns, face shields, plexiglass, thermometers and other equipment for staff and poll workers’ virus protection for in-person absentee voting sites, election day polling places and absentee central-count locations.
 - (3) **ADDITIONAL STAFFING** for processing of higher levels of absentee ballot requests and absentee ballot tabulation, resulting in expanded hours, overtime, and associated benefits costs

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for election staff and poll workers or unbudgeted temporary election staff or poll workers and for additional staffing for cleaning polling locations and creating other protective measures.

- (4) **ADDITIONAL MAILINGS FOR PUBLIC COMMUNICATION** of changes in registration, absentee ballot request options, or voting procedures, including information on coronavirus precautions being implemented during the voting process.
- (5) **ADDITIONAL ABSENTEE DROP-BOXES**, installation, and security.
- (6) **ADDITIONAL SPACE LEASING** for new polling places when existing sites are closed or relocated due to the pandemic.
- (7) **ACQUISITION OF ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT** necessary to process the higher volume of absentee ballots. This includes new automated letter opening equipment, paper folding machines, high speed or central count tabulators, and mobile IT equipment. (This "Equipment" category defined as costing equal or greater than \$5000 per unit. Equipment costs less than \$5000 should instead be reported under the applicable category above, most likely Additional Ballot Supplies. Additional reporting and documentation are required for allowable equipment purchases as outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 2 section 200.33. (2 CFR § 200.33)

4. **DOCUMENTATION & REPORTING.** Municipalities are asked to document all election pandemic-related expenses from January 20, 2020 to November 30, 2020 that fall under the seven categories above. These expenses can be tracked on the WEC CARES Expenditure Tracking template that will be provided by WEC Staff. Documentation includes anything that provides information on the purchase, such as receipts, invoices, payroll reports, etc. and explanations and justifications of how claimed expenditures qualify as pandemic related.

There will be a required check-in for municipalities between the August and November elections due on September 15, 2020. For this check-in, the WEC financial staff requires all municipalities that accepted funds to return a copy of the WEC CARES Expenditures Reporting template to elections.finance@wi.gov. This report will cover all claimed expenses under the four above categories from January 20th, 2020 to September 1st, 2020. The check-in report is to help clerks receive any guidance or ask any questions as it will relates to the final report due December 1st, 2020. WEC staff wants to ensure that clerks feel comfortable tracking expenditures and with the reporting requirements before the final deadline.

The final report due to the WEC will consist of an updated and complete WEC CARES Expenditures Reporting template from the September 15th check-in. The completed report will cover the entire January 20th, 2020 to November 30th, 2020 time period and is due December 1, 2020. This is an important deadline. If a report is not received by December 1, 2020, the jurisdiction may be required to return all subgrant funds received. Only the completed WEC CARES Expenditure Report template needs to be submitted; all receipts, invoices, and other documentation should not be submitted but must be maintained on file until December 30th, 2024.

5. **WHAT IF I NEED SOMETHING ELSE?** The WEC CARES Subgrant is a one-time subgrant award to help offset the additional costs that have been and will be incurred as they prepare for elections impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Please note that the State of Wisconsin will supply municipalities with cleaning supplies and protective equipment ahead of the August and November elections. If municipalities still have election related costs in those categories, those can be submitted to FEMA or Routes to Recovery for further reimbursement. As well, we have worked with the Department of Administration to understand their Routes to Recovery subgrant to ensure our subgrant compliments theirs and provides municipalities with the maximum access to available funds. Our recommendation is to focus your WEC CARES Subgrant funds toward preparing for the August and November elections as these are funds received immediately after the signed WEC CARES Agreement has been received by the WEC. As well, the WEC CARES Subgrant will cover all election-related pandemic expenditures until November 30, 2020, even if they have not been paid out by December 1, 2020. Per DOA guidance, the Routes to Recovery Grant will be a reimbursement of expenses already paid through October 30, 2020. For further information on the Routes to Recovery grant please go to <https://doa.wi.gov/Pages/LocalGovtsGrants/COVID-Grants.aspx>.

6. **HOW DO JURISDICTIONS APPLY?** Clerks must read, sign, and return the WEC CARES Subgrant Agreement and Certification form to elections.finance@wi.gov. These agreements need to be returned to WEC no later than September 1st, 2020. Subgrant awards will be issued as signed agreements are received. If you require a paper agreement be mailed to you, please contact the WEC Helpdesk at (608)261-2028.

7. **IMPORTANT DATES?** Below is a table of the important deadlines to remember:

Date	Description
January 20, 2020	Reporting period begins
September 1, 2020	Deadline for agreement
September 15, 2020	Check-In Due to WEC
November 30, 2020	Reporting Period Ends
December 1, 2020	Final WEC CARES Expenditure Report Due to WEC

8. **QUESTIONS?** If you have any questions or concerns please email the WEC Financial Team at elections.finance@wi.gov or call the WEC Helpdesk at (608)261-2028.