

November 30, 2022

Memorandum for County Auditors & Election Officials

Subject: Information Security Grant

Purpose: To provide county auditors and election officials with information and funding to support election security efforts at the county level.

Background: The Washington State Legislature in 2022 provided funding to support the Office of the Secretary of State's (OSOS) efforts to protect our election systems. Since a significant amount of work to secure our elections resides at the county level, I believe it is prudent to provide some of these funds to the counties. Therefore, using the authority vested in my office, I have directed the distribution of up to \$80,000 annually in the form of grants to each county to support their efforts.

Grant Requirements: Counties interested in participating in this program must meet the following requirements.

- a. Counties must have an Albert sensor that is installed, operational, and monitoring the network for cyber threats and attacks.
- b. Submit written notification to the Executive Director – Elections & Cybersecurity by December 31, 2022, on the county's intent to participate in the grant program. Information will follow explaining the process a county will use to secure the funding, thereby ensuring the distribution of funds meet the legislative intent of the appropriation.
- c. Funds distributed to the county must be expended no later than June 30, 2023.
- d. Funds distributed must go toward efforts to identify, mitigate, and protect the county election network and its peripheral systems from cybersecurity threats to enable the integrity of the election process.
- e. Counties will provide a summary of their efforts, as well as documentation such as invoices or contracts, to highlight how the funds were used. Suspense for this documentation is June 30, 2023.
- f. It is understood in most cases, the county auditor or election official does not manage or control the network or polices related to placing endpoints on the network. It is also acknowledged that the county network has a direct impact on the day-to-day efforts of election officials. Therefore, funds can go toward efforts that support the county at large if it has a direct benefit to election security.

Examples of Appropriate Use of Funds: The following are a few examples of how funds could be used that would meet the intent of the appropriation.

a. Endpoint Security Services (ESS) – The Center for Internet Security (CIS), in collaboration with CrowdStrike, provides a solution for endpoint devices that identify, detect, respond to, and remediate security incidents and alerts. These funds would allow the entire county to implement ESS since the auditor’s networks are typically managed by the county information technology (IT) department. Additional information on ESS is located at <https://www.cisecurity.org/services/endpoint-security-services>.

b. Transition to a .gov Domain – While the .gov domain is available at no cost to all election offices and qualifying entities, the transition can be tedious and complicated. Therefore, it would be appropriate to hire a short-term IT project manager or professional to manage the transition to the new domain. Additional information on how to register and transition to a .gov domain is located at <https://home.dotgov.gov/>.

c. Personnel Hire – County auditors or election officials could use the funds to hire an IT security professional to support their office and election security efforts. This individual(s) must be dedicated 100% to this effort.

d. Network Security Subscription – The county auditor or election officials could use the funds to purchase annual subscriptions for security software to protect auditor and county computers.

e. Physical Security Improvements Related to Election Systems – The county auditor or election official could use the funds to improve areas that support or house elections systems to mitigate the impact of cyber-attacks, natural disasters, structural failures, or human intervention.

Miscellaneous Information: The following information is provided to help clarify questions related to the grant.

a. The OSOS is funded to receive appropriations to support this grant program through June 30, 2025. Therefore, counties that participate in the program are assured the \$80,000 grant until that date. Future availability of funds is determined by the appropriations approved by the state legislature.

b. The point of contact for the grant program is Kevin McMahan, Executive Director – Elections & Cybersecurity, at kevin.mcmahan@sos.wa.gov or (360) 902-4188.



Steve Hobbs
Secretary of State