



CENTER FOR
TECH AND
CIVIC LIFE

September 11, 2020

City of Ann Arbor
Office of the City Clerk
Larcom City Hall, Second Floor
301 E. Huron St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

To whom it may concern:

I am pleased to inform you that the Center for Tech and Civic Life (“CTCL”) has decided to award you a grant to support the work of the City of Ann Arbor.

The following is a description of the grant:

AMOUNT OF GRANT: Four hundred seventeen thousand, two hundred sixty-eight (USD \$417,268).

PURPOSE: The grant funds must be used exclusively for the public purpose of planning and operationalizing safe and secure election administration in the City of Ann Arbor in accordance with the attached Ann Arbor Safe Voting Plan 2020

Before we transmit these funds, we ask that you sign this agreement promising to use the grant funds in compliance with United States tax laws. Specifically, by signing this letter you agree to the following:

1. The City of Ann Arbor is a local government unit or political subdivision in the meaning of 26 USC 170(c)(1).

2. This grant shall be used *only* for the public purpose described above, and for no other purposes.
3. The City of Ann Arbor shall not use any part of this grant to give a grant to another organization unless CTCL agrees to the specific grant in writing.
4. The City of Ann Arbor has produced a plan for safe and secure election administration in 2020, including an assessment of election administration needs, budget estimates for such assessment, and an assessment of the impact of the plan on voters. This plan is attached to this agreement. The City shall expend the amount of this grant for purposes contained in this plan by December 31, 2020.
5. The City of Ann Arbor shall produce a report documenting how this grant has been expended in support of the activities described in paragraph 4. This report shall be written and sent to CTCL by January 31, 2021 or in any other format approved by CTCL.
6. The City of Ann Arbor shall not reduce the budget of the City Clerk of Ann Arbor (“the Clerk”) or fail to appropriate or provide previously budgeted funds to the Clerk for the term of this grant. Any amount reduced or not provided in contravention of this paragraph shall be repaid to CTCL up to the total amount of this grant.
7. CTCL may discontinue, modify, withhold part of, or ask for the return all or part of the grant funds if it determines, in its sole judgment, that (a) any of the above conditions have not been met or (b) it must do so to comply with applicable laws or regulations.
8. The grant project period of June 15, 2020 through December 31, 2020 represents the dates between which covered costs may be applied to the grant.

Your acceptance of these agreements should be indicated below. Please have an authorized representative of The City of Ann Arbor sign below, and return a scanned copy of this letter to us by email at grants@techandciviclife.org

On behalf of CTCL, I extend my best wishes in your work.

Sincerely,

Tiana Epps Johnson



Executive Director
Center for Tech and Civic Life

CITY OF ANN ARBOR
A Michigan Municipal Corporation

By: _____

Tom Crawford, City Administrator

Date: _____

Approved as to form

By: _____

Stephen Postema, City Attorney

Date: _____



City of Ann Arbor, Michigan

Safe Voting Plan Application

To Center for Technology and Civic Life

Ann Arbor City Clerk Jacqueline Beaudry is working collaboratively with city leadership and Mayor and Council on the November 2020 election to: reduce the risk of exposure to coronavirus for our residents as well as our election staff and poll workers; identify best practices for safe and healthy voting; innovate to efficiently and effectively educate our residents about how to exercise their right to vote during this time of COVID-19; be intentional and strategic in helping historically disenfranchised residents and communities safely vote during unprecedented times; and, above all, ensure the right to healthy voting in our dense and diverse communities.

Michigan 2020 Election Administration Climate

Michigan municipalities are faced with conducting two expensive elections in November. First, Michigan election law requires every precinct to be open on election day for in-person voting regardless of the number of voters who cast ballots by mail. Staffing Ann Arbor's 53 precincts has historically been the largest election expense. Second, the expected skyrocketing volume of mail ballots driven by the COVID-19 pandemic will incur costs for staffing and equipment that will rival typical election day expenses.

Michigan election officials typically conduct presidential elections with 25 – 30% of the voters casting ballots by mail and 70 – 75% casting them in-person on election day. It now appears that mail balloting may account for 65 – 70% of the turnout. This trend is breaking municipal election budgets beginning with the higher-than-expected mail turnout in the August Primary that will continue through the November General Election.

Federal CARES ACT funding does not begin to meet the need of cash-strapped municipal election budgets. These funds disbursed by the Secretary of State have been used to issue August Primary mail ballot applications to all voters and to provide PPE and equipment to election officials. Both Ann Arbor and Michigan's budgets have been hard hit by the resulting economic downturn making additional funding of the city's election preparations unlikely.

There are many challenges to opening polling places in a pandemic and processing a historically high volume of mail ballots. The time that remains between now and the November Election provides an opportunity to plan for the highest possible voter turnouts in the safest possible ways.

Supplemental Election Administration Needs for 2020

Through careful analysis, we have concluded that crucial, supplemental programs will assist Ann Arbor voters in fully participating in the presidential election. We are requesting a **\$417,268** grant to meet Ann Arbor's election administration needs for the remainder of this year as specified in the four strategic recommendations.

Recommendation I: Encourage and Increase Absentee Voting (By Mail and Early, In-Person)

1. Provide assistance to help voters safely request absentee ballots.
2. Expand in-person early voting opportunities.

3. Utilize secure drop-boxes to facilitate return of absentee ballots.
4. Deploy additional technology and resources to expedite and improve accuracy of mail ballot process

Recommendation II: Ensure Safe Election Day Voting

Recommendation III: Expand Strategic Voter Education & Outreach Efforts

Recommendation IV: Launch Poll Worker Recruitment & Training.

Recommendation I: Encourage and Increase Absentee Voting (By Mail and Early, In-Person)

Overview of Mail Voting in Michigan

In 2018, Michigan voters amended the state constitution to provide a series of voting rights to Michigan citizens. Central to the amendment is no reason absentee voting, which is a significant change that eliminated the reasons that entitled a voter to vote absentee. Voters must still apply by application to receive an absentee ballot and they may request both a primary ballot and a general election ballot with a single request, which is commonly referred to as a ‘dual’ application. Further, the amendment entitles citizens who are not registered by the 15th day before the election to register in-person in a clerk’s office during the 14 days prior to an election and on election day – Michigan now has Election Day Registration.

Under the amendment, election officials have authority to add satellite offices to register voters and issue absentee ballots. The legislative body of the jurisdiction must approve any satellite office under Michigan election law. All satellite offices must be published at least 30 days before an election.

Historically, absentee voting has been costly as clerks must send applications to voters, receive and verify the completed applications, issue and mail absentee ballots, receive voted ballots and verify the voters’ signatures, and finally tabulate ballots beginning on election day. Each of these processes must still be done under mail balloting, requiring a significant number of staff and, as the volume increases, more sophisticated equipment to efficiently process the large amount of paperwork.

The back and forth nature of Michigan’s mail balloting processes places a heavy burden on voters to learn how to apply for a mail ballot, be aware of the election calendar and apply for a ballot early enough to receive, vote and return the ballot by election day and understand the delays built into the United State Postal Service delivery timelines.

In the 2016 November Presidential Election, Ann Arbor received 14,287 mail ballots (23% of total vote). Projections are that between 43,000 and 50,000 mail ballots will be received in November. In fact, Ann Arbor exceeded the 2016 General Election total of mail ballots in the August primary this year.

To avoid the city clerk’s office being inundated with applications to the point of compromising the processing of applications and ballots, we require the grant resources to facilitate our proposals outlined below.

Ann Arbor will assist as many residents as possible with casting ballots before Election Day, serving as the great opportunity to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in our community. We have identified four distinct strategies to help voters overcome barriers to successful mail voting.

1. Provide assistance to voters with mail ballot requests

Directly mail applications to active file Ann Arbor voters who did not request a dual application in the August primary. This is the best way to start the mail balloting process for voters who did not return a 'dual' application in the primary. Placing an application in the hands of voters early in the process results in earlier filing of the applications for a mail election. Those voters who did submit a dual application with automatically receive a ballot for the General Election. Printing cost \$11,523; mailing cost \$7,956: total **\$19,479**

The Department of State will reimburse Ann Arbor for postage for mail ballot return envelopes, which frees voters from finding stamps to mail their ballots back to the clerk's office. To participate in the program the necessary postage paid designation must be printed on return envelopes: **\$7,275**.

Subtotal: \$26,754

2. Expand in-person early mail voting opportunities

Currently, the city is using the clerk's office downtown to take mail ballot applications, issue mail applications and receive voted mail ballots. The office will offer extended hours until 7 p.m. during the week on Wednesdays in October and will be open on Saturdays – October 17, 24 & 31. Temporary staff to extend hours is **\$1,360**.

The University of Michigan will provide a location on the main campus for a satellite office during the 40 days before and on election day. The satellite will be a full-service office offering voter registration and mail ballot applications and issuing and receiving mail ballots. The office will focus on student population, especially new students. The analysis of the March 10 election day registration program shows the vast majority of registrations came from the campus community. The staff costs for operating the satellite office is **\$8,024**.

Subtotal: \$9,384

3. Utilize secure drop-boxes to facilitate return of absentee

Ann Arbor voters, like those across Michigan, will be encouraged to return their mail ballots in-person rather than using USPS, particularly in the last two weeks before the election. USPS is going to be stressed with increased election related mail, as evidenced by recent announcements that some service

deterioration is going to occur. Drop boxes, especially drive through boxes, allow voters to easily drop off their voted ballots regardless of where they happen to be in the city.

A drop box, surveillance camera and installation costs: **\$32,000.**

An added security measure is staff time to collect ballots from the boxes each day: **\$1,500.**

Subtotal: \$33,500

4. Deploy additional technology and resources to expedite and improve accuracy of mail ballot process

The expected increased volume of mail ballots requires additional staff to review applications and issue mail ballots. In the August primary, nine temporary Voter Participation Specialist were utilized. Ten additional Voter Participation Specialist will be hired for 60 days to handle the increased workload: **\$122,400.**

With a large increase in mail ballots, the city requires a commensurate increase in tabulation capacity to complete the count in a reasonable time after the polls close on November 3. Ann Arbor has the Hart InterCivic voting system and is improving their mail counting process by purchasing a high-speed tabulator, Verity Central Scanner. One additional client and scanner along with training and election day support would make ballot tabulations more efficient. **\$37,230.**

Subtotal: \$159,630

Recommendation II: Ensure Safe Election Day Voting

Election day workers who administer elections in the 53 precincts are often referred to as the frontline or face of democracy. These workers are asked to work a very long day for a small stipend. They are often referred to as volunteers. This year they face the hazard of COVID-19 as they serve hundreds of voters throughout the day. The average age of our poll workers is in the age group considered at high risk to the virus. Ann Arbor is having a similar experience as communities across the nation of large numbers of our older workers declining to work this election year. And yet the City of Ann Arbor is committed to opening the same number precincts on election day that the city has opened in recent years. To meet that commitment, the city must enhance its recruitment and retention strategy, including by seeking workers who have not served as poll workers in the past by offering a financial incentive.

The city will hire 550 poll workers to work in the precincts and the mail ballot counting board. A \$100 per worker incentive would be helpful in retaining workers and recruiting new workers: **\$55,000.**

PPE and additional supplies to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are necessary for November. The Department of State is providing a portion of the needs. The city's portion of the PPE cost: **\$3,000.**

Subtotal: \$58,000

Recommendation III: Expand Strategic Voter Education & Outreach Efforts.

As noted above, the voters play a critical role to a successfully administered election in November. By applying early for mail ballots, voters will distribute the city clerk's workload across September and October. Normally, voters wait until early to mid-October to apply for a mail ballot, which jams up the process as applications flood the clerk's office, resulting in longer turnaround times before ballots are issued. To avoid this, voters will be encouraged through a variety of outreach to apply early and vote early.

The city's voter outreach and education plans encourage mail balloting utilizing earned media, paid print media, and messaging through social media. Outreach plans include a partnership with the University of Michigan School of Art and Design to promote voting on campus at our new satellite office. The effort will also inform voters of the drop box locations and important steps to ensure their ballots will be counted. To serve the large Chinese-speaking population on the northeast side of Ann Arbor, there will be translated messaging on drop boxes as well as paid advertisements and social media posts in alternative languages. The clerk will conduct a virtual town hall meeting, tested in July, to address new voting rights and opportunities for residents to participate in the process: **\$10,000.**

Subtotal \$10,000

Recommendation IV: Launch Poll Worker Recruitment & Training

There is an ongoing program to recruit poll worker for precincts and mail ballot counting. The anticipated need is 500 – 550 workers. Regular inspectors are paid \$13 per hour and chairpersons and receiving board members are paid \$17 per hour: **\$110,000.**

Ann Arbor traditionally offers in-house training for all election day workers. Due to the pandemic, training was switched to an online platform for the August primary. Attempts will be made to do some in-person training, but online training will also be available. Printed material for training is needed: **\$10,000.**

Subtotal: \$120,000

TOTAL REQUESTED RESOURCES: \$417,268