

To: Center for Technology and Civic Life

From:

Date: 8/18/20

Re: Funding Request for Election Systems for November General Election

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### Overview

Fulton County faces significant challenges in executing the November 3, 2020 general election. As the June 9 primary revealed, in November, the county will essentially have to run two elections, at the same time, on an unprecedented scale: one via absentee ballots; and a second at in-person polling places. In addition to the general election, we held a runoff election on August 11, and are holding a special election in parts of the county on September 29, which will undoubtedly put additional pressure on our office. For the general election, the number of **total registered voters is expected to be between 823,000 and 850,000**, potentially casting ballots split between the two modes of voting, which will each entail special challenges. This document offers an assessment of resources needed for Fulton Co. to safely and thoroughly prepare for the general election.

In these extraordinary circumstances, to deliver a smooth voting process and a satisfactory voting experience for Fulton County's approximately 900,000 eligible voters will require a concerted and collaborative effort. Meeting this challenge will also require additional resources to Fulton County for election implementation.

A preliminary budget overview estimate on top of what is already available to the County is as follows:

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| Absentee Ballot Assembly and Processing Equipment  | \$1,448,026        |
| Early Voting Sites and Ballot Drop-off Options     | \$937,710          |
| In-person Voting at Polling Places on Election Day | \$3,923,700        |
| <b>Total</b>                                       | <b>\$6,309,436</b> |

### Needs Assessment & Costs

The following sections outline initial details of the mail house-type processing operation, installation of drop boxes, personnel needs, and the costs associated with each:

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#### **Absentee Ballot Processing and Equipment Necessary for Operations**

For the November elections, we anticipate absentee-by-mail turnout to be somewhere around 40%, which would lead to more than 300,000 ballots cast through that mode of voting.

Automation will be critical to efficiently and accurately manage hundreds of thousands of ballot envelopes and ballots in weeks leading up to Election Day and in the canvassing process afterwards and help report results faster. To that end, the following equipment and personnel are needed:

- **High-speed industrial Printer:** Printers will be used to print absentee ballots. During the primary, Fulton Co. struggled to keep up with demand. High-speed Oki-900 series industrial printers capable would greatly reduce the time between application approval and a voter's ballot entering the mail stream. This is particularly important around the application deadline. **Cost: \$37,000 for 3 Oki 900 printers.**
- **Absentee Ballot Application Equipment and Personnel for Processing:** We are going to receive an unprecedented number of absentee-by-mail applications for the November election. We need to staff a second call center/processing center. Additionally, we will need an additional 60 laptops for data entry purposes. **Estimated Cost: laptop purchases, \$59,400; and labor \$307,200. Total Cost: \$192,000, plus \$115,200 for overtime for a total cost of \$307,200.**
- **Extractors:** The process of physically removing ballots from envelopes is time consuming and diverts staff away from other activities that cannot be automated. Seven extractors will eliminate the need for any envelope opening by hand and open all anticipated ballots in a timely manner. **Estimated cost = \$175,000**
- **Personnel for absentee ballot tabulation:** We currently have an additional 32 full-time employees hired to process voter registration applications, absentee-by-mail ballot applications, separate from the call center described above, and to staff our early voting call center. For September, November, December and January we will need an additional number of staff for each election to process received ballots and to scan them. **Estimated cost = \$420,000**
- **Absentee Ballot Outreach Materials:** To promote absentee by mail and early voting ahead of the November election by sending a flyer to every household. The mailer will also include information on early voting opportunities. To promote the absentee by mail portal ahead of the November election in a second mailer to every household. **Cost: \$419,426**
- **Signature Verification Software:** Required to add to our Bluecrest mailing equipment. **Cost: \$30,000.**

|                  | <u>Total cost</u> | <u>Units</u> | <u>Unit costs</u> |
|------------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Oki 900 Printers | \$37,000          | 3            | \$12,333          |
| Laptops          | \$59,400          | 60           | \$990             |
| Extractors       | \$175,000         | 7            | \$25,000          |

|                               |                    |   |           |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|---|-----------|
| <b>Absentee by Mail</b>       |                    |   |           |
| Processing Call Center        | \$307,200          |   |           |
| <b>Absentee by Mail</b>       | \$420,000          |   |           |
| Tabulation Personnel          |                    |   |           |
| <b>Signature Verification</b> |                    |   |           |
| Software                      | \$30,000           | 1 | \$30,000  |
| Outreach materials            | \$419,426          | 2 | \$209,713 |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                  | <b>\$1,448,026</b> |   |           |

### **Early Voting Sites and Ballot Drop-off Options**

Fulton County plans to have 30 full-time early voting locations, 13 outreach locations, and two mobile voting precincts (buses) for November. Early voting is historically popular in the county, with 59 percent early voting turnout in 2016.

Early voting offices will be open and fully staffed until the deadline to apply for an absentee ballot, thereafter through Election Day they will remain open as ballot drop-off locations. They must also be sufficiently staffed with permanent staff with \$100 hazard pay to limit worker turnover, handle a surge in voters before polls open, and manage sites in a pandemic environment.

**It will cost \$901,710 to cover the Covid-19 hazard pay, which will be paid to staffers at all early voting locations.**

We want to offer a second mega site for early voting at the Georgia International Conference Center in College Park to reduce lines in southern Fulton County. Rental fees for GICC are going to **cost \$36,000** for 23 days of rental.

### **Polling Place COVID Decontamination Post Election**

In June we lost 45 polling locations because of the COVID pandemic. We were down to 164 polling locations. In order to retain and attract new polling locations for the September through January election cycle we have had to offer COVID decontamination to polling locations to increase our number of polling places to at least 210 locations. **Total Cost \$610,000**

### **In-person Voting at Polling Places on Election Day**

The Fulton County Board of Elections is committed to working to secure many fully-staffed polling places on election day. In the June primary, we lost 45 Election Day polling locations of 198 planned locations, which led to decreased turnout on election day. In the General, we are committed to securing between **210 – 240 in person polling locations on Election Day.**

In order to staff these locations with people committed to working in a pandemic and to avoid a repeat of June we want to pay a \$150 stipend on election day, **or \$1,402,800 for all election workers during the September, November, December and January elections.**

Additionally, the county will buy 1,000 sneeze guards for polling locations at a **total cost of \$157,490.** The county will also purchase 300 more KnowInk Poll Pads, plus a CacheBox to aid with transferring the Bulk File, which are used for voter check in at polling places. **These items are \$233,000 in total.**

Technical personnel are needed at early voting locations to ensure smooth operations with this new voting system. We had to hire technical personnel to staff polling locations in August. We learned much about how to make September through January successful in that election. We will have at least one trained technician in each polling place on Election Day and throughout early voting. **Total cost is \$1,520,000.**

**Total staffing costs for the November election will cost \$3,824,510.**

|  | <u>Total cost</u>  | <u>Units</u> | <u>Unit costs</u>     |
|--|--------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Poll Worker Hazard Pay                 | \$1,402,800        | 2,100        | \$150 per poll worker |
| Poll Worker PPE                        | \$157,490          | 1,000        | \$157.49              |
| Early Voting Personnel Costs           | \$901,710          | N/A          | \$100 per poll worker |
| KnowInk PollPads                       | \$233,000          | 300          | \$700                 |
| COVID Polling Place Decontamination    | \$610,000          |              |                       |
| Early voting mega site in south Fulton | \$36,000           | 1            | \$36,000              |
| Technical personnel For EV and EDay    | \$1,520,00         |              |                       |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                           | <b>\$4,861,410</b> |              |                       |

## **Conclusion**

The investments outlined above will allow Fulton County to reduce the risk of exposure to coronavirus for voters, election staff and poll workers; identify best practices; innovate to efficiently and effectively educate our residents about how to exercise their right to vote; be intentional and strategic in reaching our historically disenfranchised residents and communities; and, above all, ensure the right to vote in a diversity of communities throughout the county. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this request.



CENTER FOR  
TECH AND  
CIVIC LIFE

September 2, 2020

Fulton County  
Board of Commissioners  
141 Pryor St SW #10  
Atlanta, GA 30303

Dear Chair Pitts,

I am pleased to inform you that the Center for Tech and Civic Life ("CTCL") has awarded Fulton County a grant to support its work in connection with the safe administration of elections in 2020.

The following is a description of the grant:

**AMOUNT OF GRANT:** Six million, four hundred and sixty thousand, three hundred eighty US dollars (USD \$6,309,436)

**PURPOSE:** The grant funds must be used exclusively for the public purpose of planning and operationalizing safe and secure election administration in Fulton County in accordance with the attached Fulton County 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 on behalf of Fulton County you confirm and agree to the following:

1. Fulton County 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. Fulton County shall not use any part of this grant to give a grant to another organization unless CTCL agrees to the specific sub-recipient in advance, in writing.

4. Fulton County 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 ("the Plan"). The Plan is attached to this agreement. The County shall expend the amount of this grant for purposes contained in the Plan by December 31, 2020
5. Fulton County shall produce a report documenting how this grant has been expended in support of the activities described in paragraph 4. This report shall be provided to CTCL by January 31, 2021.
6. Fulton County shall not reduce or otherwise modify planned spending on election administration, including the budget of the Fulton County Board of Elections and Registration ("the Board"), or fail to appropriate or provide previously budgeted funds to the Board 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 of 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 Fulton County sign below, and return a scanned copy of this letter to us by email at [grants@techandcivicle.org](mailto:grants@techandcivicle.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

FULTON COUNTY, GEORGIA

By: *Robert L. Pitts*

Title: ROBERT L. PITTS  
CHAIRMAN

Date: 9/16/2020



*Tonya R. Grier*

TONYA R. GRIER  
CLERK TO THE COMMISSION