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Notice of Funding Availability for Voting Access for Individuals with Disabilities Grant Program

Introduction:

The Texas Secretary of State (SOS) announces the availability of federal funds for counties to make polling places accessible and provide the same opportunity for access and participation to individuals with disabilities.

Authority:

The availability of funds is authorized by Title II, Subtitle D, Section 261 of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) (42 U.S.C. 15461).

Eligible Applicants:

All Texas counties.

Use of Funds:

Polling Places Accessibility

1. Making pathways more accessible by building or repaving sidewalks.
2. Construction or repair of ramps and threshold ramps.
3. Constructing curb cuts and adding handrails.
4. Establishing accessible parking spaces closer to the accessible entrance.
5. Providing adequate signage showing where accessible parking and entrances are located and indicating that service animals are welcome.
6. Purchasing hardware that will make it easy for persons with limited mobility or grasping ability to open doors.
7. Other expenditures that improve polling place accessibility deemed reasonable and necessary by the SOS.

Opportunity for Access and Participation to Individuals with Disabilities

1. Magnifiers.
2. Signature guides.
3. Accessible voting booths or tables.
4. Seats to accommodate persons who have difficulty standing for long periods of time.
5. Telephones in order to allow the use of all Relay Texas services including speech-to-speech relay.
6. Informational material to be written in large print and in Braille.
7. Other expenditures that provide the same opportunity for access and participation to individuals with disabilities deemed reasonable and necessary by the SOS.

Funding Restrictions:

Funds used for permanent improvements such as repaving sidewalks and curb cuts may only be applied to county owned property utilized for a polling location used during a federal election.

Available Funding:

Polling Places Accessibility

Funding requests may not exceed \$50,000. The SOS will make every effort to accommodate all eligible requests, but if the proposals received exceed the total available funding, the SOS may make awards based on pro rata reductions or via an assessment of need. The SOS will negotiate with the applicants if the full request cannot be accommodated.

Opportunity for Access and Participation to Individuals with Disabilities

Funding requests may not exceed \$25,000. The SOS will make every effort to accommodate all eligible requests, but if the proposals received exceed the total available funding, the SOS may make awards based on pro rata reductions or via an assessment of need. The SOS will negotiate with the applicants if the full request cannot be accommodated.

Funding Period:

Obligations for eligible expenditures must be incurred during the following time period:

August 1, 2012 through July 31, 2013

Funding Requirements:

Funding requests must identify: 1) the area(s) outlined in the "Use of Funds" that the project will address, 2) a justification demonstrating the need for the project, 3) the range of coverage (e.g. one facility, multiple facilities, etc...), and 4) a detailed budget.

A copy of the "Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Checklist for Polling Places" must be completed and kept on file with the County Clerk or Election Administrator for the county. A copy of the checklist can be found at <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/votingek.htm>.

All Texas counties must be in compliance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations, including the terms and conditions set forth in the acceptance of the grant. The terms and conditions can be viewed at <http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/hava/funding.shtml> under the bullets labeled "Making Polling Places Accessible Terms and Conditions of Grant Funding" and "Provide the Same Opportunity for Access and Participation to Individuals with Disabilities Terms and Conditions of Grant Funding."

Requesting the Application:

The county judge, as chief executive officer for the county, must submit a budget via the Texas HAVA online grant system (<http://hava.tamu.edu/>) and be approved by the Secretary of State's Office. The county judge will use the same user ID and password that was used for previous HAVA funding requests (e.g., voting system acquisition funding). For inquiries, contact the Elections Funds Management team, toll-free at 1.800.252.2216 (select 3 from the voice menu), or email efmadmin@sos.state.tx.us.

Budget Submission Deadline:

Budgets may be submitted via the Texas HAVA online grant system effective immediately and will be accepted through August 31, 2012. Counties are reminded that obligations may be incurred effective August 1, 2012; however, counties are advised that any obligations must include a contingency that the commitment is subject to change based on available funding.