



CENTER FOR  
TECH AND  
CIVIC LIFE

September 24, 2020

Hidalgo County, Texas  
Elections Administrator  
PO Box 659  
Edinburg, Texas 78540-0659

Dear Richard Cortez,

I am pleased to inform you that based on and in reliance upon the information and materials provided by Hidalgo County, and the special circumstances Hidalgo County faces administering elections in 2020, the Center for Tech and Civic Life (“CTCL”), a nonprofit organization tax-exempt under Internal Revenue Code (“IRC”) section 501(c)(3), has decided to award a grant to support the work of the Hidalgo Elections Administrator (“Grantee”).

The following is a description of the grant:

**AMOUNT OF GRANT:** \$ 196,500.00 USD

**PURPOSE:** The grant funds must be used exclusively for the public purpose of planning and operationalizing safe and secure election administration in Hidalgo County in 2020 (“Purpose”).

Before CTCL transmits these funds to Grantee, CTCL requires that Grantee review and sign this agreement (“Grant Agreement”) and agree to use the grant funds in compliance with the Grant Agreement and with United States tax laws and the laws and regulations of your state and jurisdiction (“Applicable Laws”). Specifically, by signing this letter Grantee certifies and agrees to the following:

1. Grantee is a local government unit or political subdivision within the meaning of IRC section 170(c)(1).
2. This grant shall be used only for the Purpose described above, and for no other purposes.

3. Due to special circumstances Grantee faces administering elections in 2020, Grantee has produced a plan for safe and secure election administration in 2020, including an assessment of election administration needs and budget estimates for such assessment (“Safe Voting Plan”). The Safe Voting Plan is attached to this agreement. Grantee shall expend the total amount of grant funds listed in the Safe Voting Plan as detailed in the Safe Voting Plan, but may reallocate funds between budget items listed in the Safe Voting Plan or to any other permissible public purpose listed in the online grant application with notice by electronic mail to CTCL. Such reallocation does not require the permission of CTCL.
4. Grantee shall not use any part of this grant to make a grant to another organization, except in the case where the organization is a local government unit or political subdivision within the meaning of IRC section 170(c)(1) or a nonprofit organization tax-exempt under IRC section 501(c)(3), and the subgrant is intended to accomplish the Purpose of this grant. Grantee shall take reasonable steps to ensure that any such subgrant is used in a manner consistent with the terms and conditions of this Grant Agreement, including requiring that subgrantee agrees in writing to comply with the terms and conditions of this Grant Agreement.
5. 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. The Grantee shall expend the amount of this grant for the Purpose by December 31, 2020.
6. Grantee is authorized to receive this grant from CTCL and certifies that (a) the receipt of these grant funds does not violate any Applicable Laws, and (b) Grantee has taken all required, reasonable and necessary steps to receive, accept and expend the grant in accordance with the Purpose and Applicable Law.
7. The Grantee shall produce a brief report explaining and documenting how grant funds have been expended in support of the activities described in paragraph 3. This report shall be sent to CTCL no later than January 31, 2021 in a format approved by CTCL and shall include with the report a signed certification by Grantee that it has complied with all terms and conditions of this Grant Agreement.
8. This grant may not supplant previously appropriated funds. The Grantee shall not reduce the budget of the Elections Administrator (“the Election Department”) or fail to appropriate or provide previously budgeted funds to the Election Department for the term of this grant. Any amount supplanted, reduced or not provided in contravention of this paragraph shall be repaid to CTCL up to the total amount of this grant.
9. 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 terms and conditions of this grant have not been met, or (b) CTCL is required to do so to comply with applicable laws or regulations.



10. The grant project period of June 15, 2020 through December 31, 2020 represents the dates between which covered costs for the Purpose may be applied to the grant.

Your acceptance of and agreement to these terms and conditions and this Grant Agreement is indicated by your signature below on behalf of Grantee. Please have an authorized representative of Grantee sign below, and return a scanned copy of this letter to us by email at [grants@techandcivicliflife.org](mailto:grants@techandcivicliflife.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

GRANTEE

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**To: Center for Technology and Civic Life**  
**From: Yvonne Ramon**  
**Date: September 22, 2020**  
**Re: Hidalgo County Safe Voting Plan**

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**Overview**

Hidalgo County faces significant challenges in executing the November 3, 2020 general election.

Specifically Hidalgo County faced a shortage of voting equipment and supplies due to the extended time that the primary runoff and now the general election is facing. This extended time has now required additional spending which was not foreseen or budgeted. An increase of poll workers and additional costs for PPEs and for cleaning and disinfecting supplies have strained our budgets. Curbside voting, due to this pandemic, requires additional voting equipment and supplies plus an increase in ballot by mail has added additional costs that we were not prepared to spend. Space for processing the increase of mail ballots is also an issue, and this process requires additional employees and additional security space and work space.

For the general election, the number of **total registered voters is expected to be between 386,500 to 388,000 # of registered voters, as we are receiving an average of 200 applications per day**. This document offers an assessment of resources needed for Hidalgo County to safely and thoroughly prepare for the general election.

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

Absentee Ballot Assembly, Processing Equipment & Rental of Space	\$56,000
Early Voting Sites and Ballot Drop-off Equipment	\$23,000
Payroll costs for additional poll workers & temporary employees	\$90,000
Poll Worker Management Software, technology & training equipment	\$27,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$196,500</b>

**Needs Assessment & Costs**

The following sections outline initial details of the operation and costs associated with each of the aforementioned categories.

### **Absentee Ballot Assembly and Processing Equipment**

For the November elections, we anticipate absentee-by-mail mail out to be somewhere around 72,000 ballots. Automation will be critical to efficiently and accurately manage ballot envelopes and ballots in weeks leading up to Election Day and in the canvassing process afterwards. To that end, the following is needed:

- **Personnel:** We currently have 4 staff members hired to tabulate absentee-by-mail ballots. Due to the number of ballots we anticipate receiving for the November general election, we will need to hire an additional 10 temporary employees.
- **Processing Equipment:** To process absentee by mail ballot, we request work space to process mail ballots and to have space for the additional Ballot board members. We need to rent the additional space at approximately \$1.25 per square foot. We have two buildings in mind that would be at around \$10,000 to \$15,000 monthly lease.

	<u>Total cost</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Unit costs</u>
<b>Personnel</b>	\$70,000	10	\$7,000
<b>Equipment/Rental</b>	\$20,000	2 mths	\$10,000
	\$10,000	20	\$500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>	12	

### **Early Voting Sites and Election Day Sites**

Hidalgo County plans to have 31 full-time early voting locations and 74 Election Day locations for November.

These must be sufficiently staffed with an average of 15 staff per polling site with an increase of \$2.00 per hour hazard pay to each Judge to limit Judge worker turnover to handle a surge in voters before polls open, and manage sites in a pandemic environment. **It will cost \$20,000 to cover the increase cost of Judge per hour pay.**

### **Conclusion**

The investments outlined above will allow Hidalgo 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.