



TOWN OF GREENWICH

REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

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REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

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MEMORANDUM

To: RTM Members

From: Greenwich Registrars of Voters

Subject: RTM Call Items 10 & 11

Greenwich's Registrars of Voters will make every effort to be present at your district meeting but given the logistics of attending 12 meetings in two nights we may not make it to all districts. We have prepared this Q&A document to address questions we have been asked about the grants. We have received questions because of our outreach to every RTM District Chair and the Committee Chairs who took up this item. Please feel free to call us or email us if you have additional questions.

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Q1: Tell me more about the granting organization, the Center for Tech and Civic Life (CTCL).

A: In the field of election administration, CTCL is a leading non-partisan, non-profit organization. You can learn more at CTCL's website <https://www.techandcivicle.org/> To maintain its status as a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization, CTCL cannot and does not act as a partisan organization. From CTCL's website: CTCL "recognized an opportunity to lift up innovations and tackle challenges [facing election administrators] on a nationwide level — by highlighting best practices, creating easy to use resources for administrators, and developing infrastructure to better deliver information about elections."

You can review their federal filings at: <https://www.techandcivicle.org/key-funders-and-partners/990s/>

You can review their rating by Charity Navigator at <https://www.charitynavigator.org/ein/472158694>

Q2: How did you hear of the grantor?

A: CTCL first learned about Greenwich's ROVs. In 2017, CTCL read a local news story about a new initiative being undertaken by the Greenwich Registrars to visualize voter demographic data. They

published their own story in their newsletter for election administrators (<https://www.techandcivillife.org/greenwich-connecticut/>). After learning about this resource, the Greenwich Registrars examined some of the tools available on their website for resource planning and subscribed to their newsletter.

Q3: Is this the first grant received by the Town of Greenwich for election administration?

A: No. The RTM approved a grant from the grantor in 2020 which was used for expenses associated with absentee ballots processing. This grant was requested by the former Town Clerk. There was no requirement beyond safe and secure elections as to how the money was spent.

Q4: Did you apply for the grants in Item 10 and Item 11?

A: The Registrars were not aware of the offer of grants at the time they applied to be a Center of Excellence. The primary purpose of membership in the Alliance for Election Excellence (a project of the grantor) is sharing of best practices between high-performing election offices around the country. The other jurisdictions deemed to be a Center of Excellence are:

Contra Costa County, CA - <https://www.contracostavote.gov/>

Shasta County, CA - <https://www.elections.co.shasta.ca.us/>

Kane County, IL - <https://www.kanecountyclerk.org/Elections>

Macoupin County, IL - <https://www.macoupinvotes.gov/>

Ottawa County, MI - <https://www.miottawa.org/Departments/CountyClerk/Elections/>

Clark County, NV - <https://www.clarkcountynv.gov/government/departments/elections/>

Brunswick County, NC - <https://www.brunswickcountync.gov/elections/>

Forsyth County, NC - <https://www.forsyth.cc/Elections/>

Madison, WI - <https://www.cityofmadison.com/clerk/elections-voting>

The number of registered voters in a jurisdiction range from 32,000 to 1.3 million. A copy of the application we submitted is attached to this document.

Q5: Is it a concern for the grants in Item 10 and Item 11 that Mark Zuckerberg donated a large sum to the grantor in 2020?

A: In 2020, the grantor distributed funds to approximately 2500 election jurisdiction in 49 states “to support the administration of public elections during the COVID 19 pandemic.” All jurisdictions who applied for grants received them including 59 towns in Connecticut one of which was the Town of Greenwich. The recipients determined how best to spend the grant money without any outside influence.

Q6: Is a recent Texas AG investigation of CTCL's 2020 grant program of concern?

A: A detailed discussion of post 2020 challenges to the CTCL grant program can be found at <https://www.techandcivicliflife.org/2020covidsupport>.

Although more than a dozen lawsuits were filed to challenge the CTCL COVID-19 Response Grants Program "every judge – conservative, liberal, and two Republican appointed Supreme Court Justices – rejected these challenges."

The bi-partisan Federal Election Commission, which is evenly divided in its membership between the major political parties, dismissed a complaint against the organization:

https://www.fec.gov/files/legal/murs/7946/7946_23.pdf

There are editorials, blog posts, and articles aplenty online for anyone across the political spectrum to find material on these issues. The focus of the Registrars of Voters is to ensure that any funds which are accepted are spent in an impartial and productive manner.

Q7: Does the grantor have any influence on what the Town can do with the grants in Item 10 and Item 11?

A: No. The grants are unrestricted beyond the basic requirement that the funds be spent on election affiliated items of a physical, technological, or human resource-based need. To illustrate the broad nature of the grant, and to make sure there were no "strings" attached the Registrars sent a series of examples to the grantor to make certain these items were all considered within the mission of the grant. Again, the intent of the correspondence below was to illustrate the broad possibilities. It should not be construed as any sort of "to-do" list.

Below is the list submitted to the grantor:

1. Engaging external entities (non-Town of Greenwich employees) such as marketing consultants to prepare physical and electronic materials for the purpose of poll worker recruitment, retention, and recognition including but not limited to graphic design, written copy, videos, website, printed materials, and displays.
2. Engaging external entities (non-Town of Greenwich employees) to produce a new or enhance an existing website which displays demographic information about the voting population in the Town of Greenwich.
3. Engaging external entities (non-Town of Greenwich employees) to produce a new or enhance an existing website which displays historical voting results for the Town of Greenwich, including graphic visualizations and geographic representations of results.
4. Engaging external entities (non-Town of Greenwich employees) to produce video instructions on best practices for completing an absentee ballot application, filling out an absentee ballot, and/or requesting to be on the permanent absentee ballot list.

5. Engaging external (non-Town of Greenwich employees) entities to produce a new or enhance an existing website which displays information about wait times at polling locations in the Town.

6. Purchase of equipment to create real-time video communication between the election office and polling locations.

7. Purchase of security measurements such as enhanced locking mechanisms which electronically record access of secure storage areas. Mechanisms would be tied into existing equipment owned and managed by the Town of Greenwich.

8. Additional work performed by Town employees in other departments (such as construction of secure storage areas, transport of equipment, installation of video displays, etc.) which would require a journal voucher for payment of these services. These would be new projects funded from the grant, not payments for existing services performed by departments.

9. Transportation, meals, and lodging associated with travel to conferences or to visit other jurisdictions for the purpose of observing and documenting best practices in election administration.

10. Overtime for existing employees who are being asked to assist with projects being funded by this grant, and therefore requiring additional time beyond their normal duties. No overtime would be paid to the Registrars of Voters who are charged with directing the grant funds.

11. Payment for temporary employees during the term of the grant to assist with the administration of projects being funded by the grant.

12. Payment for de minimus promotional materials (ex. shirts, mugs, seat cushions) and food and venue for events (“poll worker recruitment day”, “poll worker appreciation day”) for the purpose of recruiting, retaining, and rewarding poll workers.

13. Purchase of portable equipment to assist disabled voters in accessing polling places (ex. Big button doorbell, temporary ramps)

14. Sponsored construction of permanent equipment to assist disabled voters in accessing polling places (ex. automatic door opener)

15. Sponsorship of a speaker at a symposium on election administration. Honoraria not to exceed \$500 for speakers at symposia on election administration. Reimbursement for travel and lodging expenses for speakers at symposia on election administration.

16. Legal fees associated with establishment of trademarks, service marks, and copyrights for materials produced through grant funds.

The response from the grantor was: “So long as the funds are spent for the public purpose of supporting election infrastructure, we view that as consistent with the grant agreement and defer to grantees regarding the specific use of the funds.”

All grant agreements were immediately submitted to the Town Attorney’s office for their review when we received them.

Q8: Does the grantor get any special access to Town data, or other physical or technological access? If the grant is used for security enhancements, does the grantor get a key? Can they make changes or re-program things?

A: No. Absolutely not. No one beyond the Registrars, their Deputies, and their Assistants has access to the State of CT Voter Registration System, and the Election Results Reporting System. Not even the IT Department.

Q9: Who are the partnering organizations in the Alliance for Election Excellence?

A: Below are links to websites of partnering organizations and some of the tools and resources offered to election administrators. The Registrars have previously used tools found on some of their websites, and several of the organizations listed are regular presenters at conferences sponsored by the National Association of Election Officials.

Center for Civic Design - <https://www.electiontools.org/> and <https://civicdesign.org/>

The ROVs regularly look at [electiontools.org](https://www.electiontools.org/) and have utilized tools such as their Polling Place Resource Planner - <https://www.electiontools.org/tool/polling-place-resource-planner>

The Elections Group - <https://www.electionsgroup.com/resources-for-election-officials>

An example of the services provided by this organization includes re-design of signage to make it more understandable for voters, observers, and poll workers.

U.S. Digital Response - <https://www.usdigitalresponse.org/program-areas/election-management> and <https://usdigitalresponse.org>

The partners listed above offer consulting services through the alliance. There is no requirement to use any of the partners above for any purpose. Their billable consulting rate will range from approximately \$75/hour to approximately \$200/hour for one-on-one consulting, depending on which personnel are involved in the consulting services.

The remaining partners offer educational opportunities and are anticipated to be speakers at joint learning events of the Alliance.

Institute for Responsive Government & Center for Secure and Modern Elections - <https://modernelections.org/>

Hasso Plattner Institute of Design (the d.school) at Stanford University - <https://engineering.stanford.edu/get-involved/give/hasso-plattner-institute-design>

Prototyping Systems Lab of the University of California at Davis - <https://prototypingsystems.org>

Q10: Is participation in the Alliance for Election Excellence, and retention of the designation of being a Center of Election Excellence, in any way contingent upon the Town of Greenwich accepting a grant?

A: No. The eligibility to receive a grant isn't contingent on Alliance membership, and vice versa.

Q11: What are you going to do with the money?

A: The ROVs were notified of the offer of a grant in December. Both Registrars agree that grant expenditures should be made for items which will benefit the Town in the medium and long term and will not create a commitment for continued Town funding beyond the two-year grant term. Items under discussion to date include:

1. Adding electronic locks with RFID card keys to our storage areas so we can track access.
2. Adding climate control to the "dungeon" storage area below Town Hall where we store certain equipment, some of which is electronic.
3. Bulk replacement of the uninterruptible power supplies which power the tabulators in every polling location as part of every election.
4. Additional fireproof cabinets.
5. New locked bins for the transport and storage of absentee and polling place ballots.
6. Replacing/re-building the front counter in our office to enhance accessibility, security, and storage.
7. Creating an expanded program for recruiting and retaining poll workers.
8. Creating web-based visualizations based on historical election results. See <https://electionhistory.ct.gov/eng/>. Integrating GIS data to into these visualizations.
9. Additional educational opportunities for ROV staff through the National Association of Election Officials.
10. Replacement of transport bins to accommodate next generation of tabulation equipment when approved (see picture).
11. Creating online self-paced interactive training videos for poll workers with testing capability so that training is not just attending lectures.
12. Replacement of our electronic pollbooks (these are notebook PCs) which are now in their 8th year of use.
13. Additional temporary (portable) equipment to help enhance handicapped access at polling places.
14. Funding of the equipment (printers, security totes, election PCs, additional accessible voting equipment) to comply with whatever the legislature passes on early voting. News reports and discussions with the Secretary of the State indicate the legislature plans on requiring implementation of early voting for the 2024 Presidential Election. See <https://ctmirror.org/2022/11/17/ct-early-voting-approved-secretary-state/>

15. We also expect that there will be a new Centralized Voter Registration System implemented statewide in the next two years. The RFP went out in 2022. These newer voter registration systems have the ability to store electronic images. If the timing is right, we would be able to use some of this money to fund the digitizing of the voter registration cards for our 40,000 active and 9,000 inactive and "off" voters. We estimate there are about 100-120,000 cards, as many voters have multiple cards due to moves within town, party changes, etc.

The grants in Item 10 and Item 11 provide funding for addressing practical problems such as reconfiguring workspaces, opportunities to exchange ideas with other Centers of Election Excellence and creating innovative programs to attract and train poll workers. But the Registrars are crystal clear that no funds will go to funding of elections themselves. In Connecticut, the Secretary of the State and the State Legislature dictate how elections are to be conducted in each of the 169 towns. The voting equipment to be used is determined by the Secretary of the State. The grants in Items 10 and 11 have no bearing at all on this fundamental election infrastructure.

Q12: Does this double the size of the department?

A: No. There is no consideration of requesting any additional permanent or full-time staff. Further, as stated elsewhere, the vast majority items being considered are all items of a physical nature or which would have *de minimus* extra costs to the town (such as electricity to power electronic door locks or security cameras).

Q13: So do you get to spend it as you want?

A: No department can spend more than what is appropriated to its budget. Funds will be requested of the BET with appropriate backup documentation and if approved will then be placed in the appropriate line items. Only then can the money be spent. All expenditures must also follow the guidelines of the Town of Greenwich Purchasing Manual, which outlines the process for requesting bids, etc. on larger items.

Q14: If the grants are accepted what oversight of appropriations from the grants will be in place?

A: Following established Town procedures, the Registrars' proposed appropriations will be presented to the BET to be reviewed and voted upon.

Another aspect of oversight is Connecticut law which mandates that every town in Connecticut must have a Democratic and a Republican Registrar of Voters. In Greenwich we are considered co-Department Heads. Greenwich's elected election officials, the Registrars of Voters, must agree on all expenditures.

Q15: Should there be policies established for acceptance of grants by the Registrars of Voters?

A: The procedures we are following including this review by the RTM provide a valuable opportunity for issues to be raised and concerns to be addressed related to accepting the grants in Item 10 and Item 11. As Town Department Heads we have a fiduciary duty to bring this offer of a grant forward. We respect the Town Charter and leave the policy considerations to the body charged with making those decisions on behalf of the Town.



Get Involved!

Name	Fred DeCaro
Email	fred.decaro@greenwichct.org
How would you like to get involved? (Check all that apply)	Explore whether my election office would be a good fit for this program.
Your state:	Connecticut
Your jurisdiction:	Town of Greenwich, CT
Your job title:	Registrar of Voters
For a federal election, how big is your elections team?	5 staff, 300 poll workers.
What most excites you about the Center for Election Excellence program?	<p>On the receiving side, support for piloting new programs.</p> <p>On the giving side, sharing some of our innovative ideas. For instance we were in ELECTricity newsletter about 5 years ago for our use of Tabeau for visualization of voter demographic data.</p>
Tell us about something your office accomplished last year that you are proud of.	<p>Published all training materials online to provide transparency for special interests, and convenience for poll workers. (2018)</p> <p>Created a video on how to vote using a special voting machine which can assist some disabled voters. Produced full closed-captioning to enhance accessiblility. (2018)</p> <p>Created the Town of Greenwich Turnout Trophy to spur competition between districts to get more people to vote. (2019)</p> <p>Investigated absentee ballots returned late to the Town Clerk, and issued press releases educating voters about the due dates, encouraging people to mail earlier. (2019)</p> <p>Created a relationship with TurboVote to automatically send reminders to voters 30 days before every election (voters opt-in to use the service).</p> <p>Produced instructional videos on how to fill out your absentee ballots, and how to avoid making common errors. (2020)</p> <p>Built an absentee ballot status lookup into the Town of Greenwich voter lookup tool. (2020)</p> <p>Created a virtual Poll Worker Appreciation Day to celebrate our poll workers during COVID. Brought together Governor Ned Lamont, Secretary of the State Denise Merrill,</p>

Congressman Jim Himes, State Senator Alex Kasser, and State Representatives Olivia Floren, Stephen Meskers, and Harry Arora to show appreciation for the hundreds of people who helped out during COVID. (2021)

What's one example of an improvement you'd like to make in your office? How are you approaching making that improvement?

We have two new initiatives. One is exploring ways to expand our pool of poll workers. We've had good outreach with students, but in this affluent area most kids go away to college so we only get them for 2 years. We are now (and could use some help) looking to create a public-private partnership where local businesses (banks, retail) would partner and pay their employees for a day of service. In addition to the stipend our office pays, this would make being a poll worker a great-paying day. We would love help on the marketing for this.

A second initiative is to revisit all the YouTube classes we have posted and break them into smaller pieces and insert into a learning management system (LMS) which would better track participation but also provide better testing opportunities to make sure poll workers are retaining the knowledge.

How does your office currently learn from other election offices?

I serve as County Chair for the Registrar of Voters Association of CT. Which also puts me on their board of directors. We have "sharing sessions" among local officials to show off forms we have designed, or training materials. I also teach at the semi-annual ROVAC conferences.

We learn new things by participating in the UMN Humphrey School Certificate program (2020 graduate), and am now also enrolled in Election Center courses.

I would say we tend to learn nationally, and teach/share more locally, as many of our towns do not have the time or funding to take all the classes my partner and I take.

Are there any questions, comments, or concerns you would like to share?

My colleague and I are excited about the possibility of being selected and are already discussing how we can leverage the program to receive information, as well as to share our own experiences.