



THE
PEW
CHARITABLE TRUSTS

MAKE VOTING WORK

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: NEW DIAGNOSTICS AND NEW SOLUTIONS

Proposals due 5:30 p.m. EST on June 4, 2007

www.PewCenterontheStates.org

The Pew Charitable Trusts' Make Voting Work (MVW) initiative seeks proposals for research and pilot projects aimed at gauging and improving accuracy, convenience, efficiency and security in U.S. elections. In partnership with the JEHT Foundation, MVW is issuing this Request for Proposals as its initial contribution to the field. MVW will fund 1) research to develop new measures diagnosing the health of the U.S. election system and 2) planning grants to develop and evaluate pilot projects that offer solutions to election problems. Proposals are encouraged from an array of organizations, individuals and teams, including election officials, academic researchers (from any discipline), private-sector companies, non-profits and non-governmental organizations.

The U.S. election system continues to experience problems. While there may be no consensus over which problems are most pressing, few would contend that the system works to its potential.

But there are also solutions. Many state and local election officials are undertaking innovative experiments, often in partnerships with leading academic institutions and experts new to the field, and the Election Assistance Commission is beginning to compile reports on best practices.

The path to identifying effective solutions and achieving sustained improvement starts by isolating the most pressing problems through a thorough and objective diagnosis of the system. Once the problems are identified and understood, solutions can be carefully evaluated through rigorous experimentation and analysis and decision makers can independently and accurately weigh the costs and benefits of adopting them.

The Trusts' Make Voting Work (MVW) initiative is based upon the belief that any reform must be measured against its impact on the following four critical aspects of elections:

- **ACCURACY** in voting to ensure that vote totals reflect votes cast;
- **CONVENIENCE** of the process for the ultimate end-user: the eligible voter;
- **EFFICIENCY** of the overall system to ensure that scarce public resources are spent effectively and that the overall system performs optimally; and
- **SECURITY** of the process to ensure that election results are beyond reproach and that the privacy of the voter is protected.

The projects funded in response to this request for proposals (RFP) will be the first in a series of projects funded by MVW. This initial round seeks two types of projects. First, MVW seeks studies that will develop new measures of the health of the election system. These diagnostics should have the capacity to measure accurately and assess key elections processes and outcomes. The projects should apply these measures to data from the 2006 elections or similar data from elections in 2007 and beyond.

Second, MVW seeks proposals for planning grants to develop and evaluate pilot projects offering new solutions for the election process. Planning grants can cover the work needed

to design fully new pilot projects as well as to design an evaluation of new or existing election system reforms. MVW expects to fund the implementation and evaluation of one or more of these pilot projects at a later date.

Organizations both inside and outside the elections community are strongly encouraged to submit proposals. Specifically, we seek to draw on the expertise of election officials and academics currently studying elections issues—but we also seek to identify new partners from diverse academic disciplines (e.g., computer science, economics, engineering, human factors and design, information, operations and management, mathematics), private-sector companies with applicable expertise, non-profits and non-governmental organizations. Although not a requirement, bidders are encouraged to leverage their proposed project by identifying other potential sources of support.

ABOUT MAKE VOTING WORK

Make Voting Work is an ambitious initiative funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts and launched in December 2006. The mandate of MVW is to foster an election system that achieves the highest standards of accuracy, convenience, efficiency and security in the service of nonpartisan administration of our elections. To do this, MVW will promote policies, practices and technologies that address the key challenges facing the election process.

Specific objectives of MVW to support change in policy and practice include:

- rigorously diagnosing the current problems in U.S. elections;
- evaluating state and local innovations in election reform;
- promoting new linkages among research disciplines, fields of technical expertise, election stakeholders and geographic areas in a way that promotes discourse and creativity in the search for solutions;
- reaching out to the business, high-tech and international election communities to tap their expertise and develop pilot innovations in election administration;
- disseminating best practices and other analyses to policy makers, election officials, advocates and the public; and
- evaluating measures of election performance and providing reference points for the public and policy makers, who now rely on anecdotal evidence, poorly-grounded news headlines or partisan conjecture.

Along the path to election reform, MVW seeks to promote an environment where experimentation is encouraged and reasonable levels of risk are tolerated as part of creating a state-of-the-art election system.

MVW works directly with stakeholders in the election process. For over a year preceding the launch of MVW, The Pew Charitable Trusts consulted election officials, policy advocates, researchers, technologists and others to help guide the Trusts' commitment to election modernization. MVW also works closely with *electionline.org*, the Trusts' signature

investment in the field. As a trusted source for news and analysis of election reform, *electionline.org* will help inform and disseminate the research conducted through these and other projects.

The Pew Charitable Trusts

The Pew Charitable Trusts serves the public interest by providing information, advancing policy solutions and supporting civic life. Based in Philadelphia, with an office in Washington, D.C., the Trusts will invest \$248 million in fiscal year 2007 to provide organizations and citizens with fact-based research and practical solutions for challenging issues.

The Trusts is an independent nonprofit—the sole beneficiary of seven individual charitable funds, with assets of \$4.9 billion at the end of March 2006—established between 1948 and 1979 by two sons and two daughters of Sun Oil Company founder Joseph N. Pew and his wife, Mary Anderson Pew.

Pew Center on the States

The Pew Center on the States (PCS), a division of The Pew Charitable Trusts, examines effective policy approaches to critical issues facing states. PCS conducts highly credible research, brings together diverse perspectives, analyzes states' experiences to determine what works and what doesn't and collaborates with other funders and organizations to shine a spotlight on nonpartisan, pragmatic solutions. The Pew Center on the States will work closely with MVW to design and disseminate research on election reform.

STATEMENT OF WORK: NEW DIAGNOSTICS AND NEW SOLUTIONS

In partnership with the JEHT Foundation, MVW seeks to fund two types of projects through this initial proposal process: (1) research to develop new measures diagnosing the health of the U.S. election system, and (2) planning grants to develop and evaluate pilot projects that offer solutions to election problems. While Make Voting Work will only fund new research, individuals are invited to submit completed studies that could be incorporated in one or more major meetings Make Voting Work anticipates convening as early as September 2007.

New Diagnostics – Research into Methods

There is a clear need for new diagnostics of the election process. While many decry the poor state of the election system, few can back their claims with consistent, rigorous and generally accepted indicators. This leads to a laundry list of problems with no clear sense of scope or priority. Even for those problems that are widely acknowledged, the lack of diagnostics leads to a poor understanding of their severity and complexity.

Make Voting Work seeks proposals for new diagnostic measures of one or more components of the election system. Measures should help to answer core questions, like:

- How well are voters being serviced by the current state of election administration and to what extent are voters well-informed?
- How accurate are voter registration lists and election results and what are the causes of disparities across jurisdictions?
- How secure are elections? What is the impact of new technologies and emerging reforms including early voting, vote centers, expanded government registration efforts, voting by mail, shortened registration deadlines, voter identification requirements and others?
- How efficient is the current system and where can policies and procedures be altered or resources redirected to attain higher levels of accuracy, convenience and security?

Examples of often mentioned focal points for diagnostics include:

- Voter turnout
- Voter registration
- Election accuracy
- Voter-list quality
- Early voting
- Absentee voting
- Voting by mail
- Provisional voting
- Voting system adoption and performance
- Voter convenience
- Election administration costs/ government efficiency and performance
- Accessibility
- Voter satisfaction

New and experimental measures are encouraged.

Proposals can vary in terms of the number of measures developed. The proposed measures should meet the following three criteria:

- (1) **Rigor.** The methods for generating the measure should be rigorous, such that most individuals knowledgeable about election issues would view the measures as objective, independent and accurate;
- (2) **Relevance.** The measures should relate to one or more of the four key attributes of a working election system: accuracy, convenience, efficiency and security; and
- (3) **Replicability.** While MVW will fund projects that develop measures for a limited number of states or jurisdictions, the measures should be replicable across jurisdictions and states and over time.

All proposals must include a plan for applying these new measures to elections data. For some measures, data from the 2006 election cycle may be available. If so, bidders should explain what the data are, how they would acquire the data and how they would derive the new measures from these data.

For other measures, sufficient data may not have been collected in the 2006 election cycle. If so, proposals should include a detailed plan for collecting the necessary data at the local, state or national level during elections in 2007 or 2008 and beyond. Bidders should explain what data are needed and how they will be collected in a representative fashion. Bidders should also explain how they will derive the new measures from these data.

New Solutions – Planning Grants for Pilot Projects

MVW seeks to identify effective solutions to the problems facing the election system. While we contend that the diagnostic tools for measuring problems in the election system are inadequate, we also believe there are some widely-accepted challenges facing the field. For example:

- The process of voting can be inconvenient, especially when compared with the level of service individuals receive in other more service-oriented fields;
- The election system is too often inefficient, with states and localities using outdated and labor-intensive procedures to register voters and process votes;
- Innovation in election technology is stifled by “market failure,” as exhibited by entry barriers facing potential vendors, a lack of transparency, uneven purchaser information and uncertain certification regimes; and
- Elections and election systems too often appear inaccurate and susceptible to failure.

Make Voting Work seeks to identify solutions that address these and other problems. Some experiments and pilot projects are currently being developed by states and localities, while others are simply in the idea stage.

Through this proposal process, MVW will provide planning grants to organizations and partnerships to help set the stage for the implementation and evaluation of pilot projects and support objective nonpartisan implementation of election administration. This includes work designing new pilots as well as work designing evaluations of new or existing election system reforms. Ultimately, we intend to evaluate initiatives that are tested in the 2007 and 2008 election cycles.

Planning grants can cover the costs of fully developing the operational details of an election reform pilot project. The grants also can cover the costs of designing an evaluation, including designing any data collection activities and potential estimation procedures. Evaluations should include a comparison group design, combined with an in-depth case study. Finally, the planning grants can cover the costs of developing a detailed budget and timeline for implementing the pilot and conducting the evaluation.

Planning grant proposals must demonstrate an established or likely commitment from state and/or local jurisdictions needed to implement the pilot. Similarly, preference will be given to proposals that reflect partnerships among two or more types of stakeholders, including government agencies, research organizations and private-sector companies.

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

MVW plans to invest over \$2 million in projects identified through this competition. The total number of projects funded will depend on the budget of the winning projects. Individual proposals must demonstrate and justify all anticipated costs. As guidance, we expect that grants will range from \$25,000 to \$200,000 but MVW may fund projects that have budgets above or below these levels.

Application Process

Proposals should be no longer than 15 pages (single spaced) for projects to develop new diagnostics and no longer than 10 pages (single spaced) for planning grants (page limitations exclude resumes and data tables). Each proposal should include:

- A brief abstract (no more than 150 words) summarizing the work being proposed;
- A statement of research questions to be addressed, including a discussion of why those questions are important and a discussion of any previous research aimed at answering those questions;
- A description of the approach -
 - For research proposals to develop new diagnostics, this should include a discussion of the data to be used, a discussion of how the data will be acquired and a discussion of the methods for measuring and analyzing outcomes;
 - For planning grant proposals, this should include a description of the pilot project, a discussion of the location(s) for implementing that experiment, a discussion of the steps needed to fully design the pilot (if relevant) and a discussion of the likely evaluation procedures;
- A work plan delineating the tasks to be conducted and a timeline for completing those tasks;
- A staffing plan indicating the key staff that will perform each task. The staffing plan should include a short bio for each key staff member (full resumes can be included as an appendix); and
- A budget showing costs by task; for each task, the budget should include separate line items for labor costs, fringe-benefit costs, other direct costs, indirect costs and travel. The Trusts will pay no more than 10 percent of indirect costs.

The cover page for the proposal should include the name and contact information for a single point of contact for correspondence about the proposal. The cover page should also include the total amount of funding being requested.

Proposals should be submitted electronically (in PDF or Microsoft Word document format) to Scott Cody, Project Director for Research, Pew Center on the States, SCody@PewCenterontheStates.org. Proposals must be received by 5:30 p.m. EST on June 4, 2007. Bidders who do not receive confirmation of receipt of their proposal before that deadline should not assume the proposal has been received and should resubmit.

Questions concerning the application process should be submitted to Scott Cody at SCody@PewCenterontheStates.org no later than April 30, 2007. Responses to questions will be posted on the Pew Center on the States Web site (www.pewcenteronthestates.org) by May 9, 2007.

Potential respondents seeking partners should contact MVW via [email](#) and provide their background, contact information and a short description of a topic area of interest. MVW will post a description of responses on the [Pew Center on the States](#) website and seek to connect potential respondents with partners.

Evaluation Criteria

All evaluations will be assessed on their relevance to the objectives stated in this RFP. Specifically, proposals should:

- (1) be responsive to the goals of promoting an election system that is accurate, convenient, efficient and secure;
- (2) be grounded in rigorous research; and
- (3) offer practical applications to the elections field.

Bidders should ensure that their proposal clearly articulates the research objectives as well as the research approach. Preferences will be given to proposals that reflect new and innovative ideas and represent partnerships among researchers, elections officials and the private sector.

Proposals that meet these overall goals will be further assessed on three specific evaluation criteria:

- (1) Methodological Approach.** Proposals to develop new diagnostics will be assessed on the suitability of the analytical methods, the appropriateness of the data sources and the likelihood the proposed data can be acquired. Proposals for planning grants will be evaluated on the approach for designing the pilot and/or evaluation, the demonstrated need for the planning grant and the likelihood that the proposed reform can be implemented.
- (2) Work Plan and Budget.** Proposals will be assessed on whether the tasks delineated in the work plan are adequately described and are both reasonable and sufficient to carry out the proposed project. Reviewers also will examine whether the budget proposed is appropriate for the work being conducted.

(3) Personnel. Proposals will be assessed on the qualifications of key persons who will conduct the project.

The primary metric for assessing proposals will be the extent to which they address the core goals of Make Voting Work. Qualifying proposals will then be evaluated on the basis of proposed methodological approach, the work plan and budget and personnel, respectively.