Physical Security: Deploying Assets

The 60 Second Security Series is intended to help election officials quickly identify, and address, potential security issues. Each topic includes a brief description, a list of security measures, and potential funding sources for making these improvements. More information about election security can be found at www.eac.gov.

About Deploying Assets

Election administration requires deploying critical systems within the elections office, as well as in the field at polling locations, satellite offices, or mobile voting units. Election officials use many strategies to keep track of their assets before, during, and after the voting period. This may include chain of custody logs, proper handling procedures, and securing long-term storage facilities. Some security measures and tools may be funded through federal grant programs that are administered by the states. More information about grant funding for election security can be found at the end of this guide.

Definition: Critical Infrastructure

The physical and cyber systems and assets that are so vital to the United States that their incapacity or destruction would have a debilitating impact on our physical or economic security or public health or safety. Election systems and facilities have been considered critical infrastructure by the Department of Homeland Security since 2017.

Security Measures

To address security concerns related to deploying assets, consider the following:

Policies

○ **Facility Access:**
Before accessing an office or facility, elections staff should be required to have a name badge, ID, or other credential that shows they are authorized to enter the facility. Any visitors to the office should be required to sign in before entering the facility, and they should be identified as visitors with a name badge or other credential. This allows law enforcement to confirm the identity of visitors that may create a disturbance or engage in inappropriate behavior. All visitors should always be escorted by a credentialed staff member, and staff members should not allow anyone inside a facility unless they have been given official access.

○ **Chain of Custody:**
Chain of custody is essential to a transparent and trustworthy election. Every election office should have written chain of custody procedures available for public inspection prior to every election. Voting equipment may be in the possession of many individuals throughout the voting process, making the chain of custody a critical aspect of ensuring election integrity. Since materials must be transferred multiple times (i.e., to polling places/voting locations, to voters, or to elections offices), most election materials require at least two witnesses when being transferred, and often these witnesses must declare themselves as members of opposing political parties. For more information about chain of custody procedures and best practices, go to www.eac.gov/election-officials/chain-custody-best-practices.

○ **Security Presence:**
Some facilities may require additional security. Consider working with local law enforcement to provide extra security patrols at highly sensitive facilities, or during critical times. These may include the elections office, an equipment warehouse, or polling locations during voting hours.

○ **Legal Penalties:**
Tampering with voting systems is a serious offense and may come with steep penalties; however, laws vary by state. Check with your state elections office for more information.

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Tools

◯ **Asset Management System:**

Voting equipment is among the most critical assets owned by a unit of government. The integrity of all voting equipment, and any related hardware or software, must be maintained at all times. When voting systems are compromised or damaged, they must be replaced, and this process can be both expensive and time-consuming. Asset management systems can help election officials keep track of their inventory of critical equipment and systems. These systems can track the physical location of equipment, which is especially important for any materials that are deployed in the field. However, they can also help election officials keep track of other information, including:

- Serial numbers
- Purchase date
- Purchase cost
- Warranty start and end dates
- Maintenance costs
- Dates of any service, maintenance, or software updates

These records provide essential documentation that election officials can use in case of equipment failure, natural disasters, or a security breach. This information can also help election officials to better understand the full cost of their voting systems, which can inform future budgeting decisions.

◯ **Alarm Systems:**

Alarm systems can deter vandalization and alert elections staff and law enforcement of unauthorized access to a facility. Consider adding security cameras, keycard access systems, and other security measures to ensure that facilities have not been improperly accessed between election cycles.

Funding Opportunities

HAVA Election Security Funding

Since 2018, Congress has appropriated $955 million in HAVA Election Security grant funds to the states for the administration of elections, including cybersecurity enhancements, and many local elections offices have been able to use these funds to reimburse the cost of security improvements. Check with your state elections office to find out how to apply for HAVA grant funding in your state. Additionally, the EAC has published FAQs and other information about how HAVA grant funding may be used. Allowable expenses may include costs associated with the purchase, installation, and maintenance of security equipment, provided they are benefiting elections. Physical security services and social media threat monitoring may also be allowed if these services are necessary for the protection and security of election facilities and personnel. Any non-election benefit may be allocated accordingly to non-HAVA sources. States can reach out to the EAC Office of Grants Management via email to clarify any concerns about allowability and allocability for specific activities and costs. For more information about the EAC Office of Grants Management and HAVA Election Security funds, go to https://www.eac.gov/payments-and-grants/election-security-funds or email grants@eac.gov.

Other Federal Grant Programs

Other federal grant funds may be available to improve election security. Grants through the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) may be used by election officials or partner agencies to provide security services for election officials and improve the security of election infrastructure. More information about these programs can be found here: www.eac.gov/other-federal-grants.

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