



“Reforming the Testing and Certification Process”

EAC Roundtable Discussion

Thursday, June 12, 2014

EAC Offices
First Floor Conference Room
1335 East West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Participate

Live webcast at www.eac.gov

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Agenda

9:00am – 10:30am

10:30am – 10:45am - Break

10:45am – 12:30pm

Participants

Alice P. Miller, EAC Chief Operating Officer and Acting Executive Director

Merle King, Roundtable Moderator; Executive Director, Georgia’s Center for Election Systems, Kennesaw State University

Panel

- Jack Cobb, Lab Director, Pro V&V
- Dana Debeauvoir, County Clerk, Travis County, Texas
- Juan E. Gilbert, Ph.D., Preeminence Endowed Chair, Associate Chair of Research, University of Florida
- Trey Grayson, Former Member, President’s Commission on Elections
- Neal Kelley, Registrar of Voters, Orange County, California
- Matt Masterson, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Ohio Secretary of State
- Ann McGeehan, Former Member, President’s Commission on Elections
- Ed Smith, Director, Supply Chain Management, Dominion Voting Systems Corp.

Background

“...the current standards and certification process must be reformed to allow for innovation in voting technologies, faster and less-costly certification of new products, and the certification of component (customizable and interchangeable) products and voting systems...”

- *The American Voting Experience: Report and Recommendations of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration, 2014, page 65.*

The testing and certification of voting systems is perceived as a bottleneck to the development of new voting and election technologies as well as an impediment to the cost effective maintenance of deployed systems. The existing model for testing and certification was defined by the *Help America Vote Act* (2002) and phased into use, starting in 2007. Existing and emerging challenges to the design, verification, deployment and maintenance of voting systems and an aging inventory of fielded voting systems, have contributed to a growing concern that the current model of voting system testing and certification is not sustainable and must be reformed to better meet the needs of state and local jurisdictions

There is general agreement in the election community that the standards development process needs to become more nimble and more inclusive of the interests of all stakeholders. The process and resulting work products should flow both upward and downward and not be developed in theoretical isolation of the pragmatic concerns of election officials. The existing testing standards as articulated in the Voluntary Voting Systems Guidelines (VVSG) have become *de facto* design standards, limiting innovation and options for voting system manufacturers and their customers.

Discussion Questions

1. HAVA defined the process by which voting system standards would be proposed, vetted, and maintained. What is your understanding of the current standards development process? How would you evaluate its effectiveness? Is the process intelligible and transparent to its constituents? Is its adaptive capacity and flexibility well-matched to other processes that depend upon its work products?
2. Process improvement typically seeks to “do things right”, assuming the fundamental question of “are we doing the right thing?” has already been answered. In regards to the voting system testing and certification process, are we doing the right things? Has the scope of voting system functionality and attributes changed fundamentally since the charter for the testing process was written? Have stakeholder expectations changed? Have these changes been effectively responded to by the testing and certification program?
3. Organizations that serve a constituency must be able to define who they serve, how they serve them, and what the expectations of the constituents of those services are. Who are the constituents of the testing and certification program? What are their expectations of service? Are those expectations being met?
4. Organizations have both external (constituent) and internal goals. Have the testing and certification internal goals been met? Are there potential gaps between the external and internal goals? How have the goals and objectives of the program changed since its inception?
5. In simple terms, what are the deficiencies of the current program? Are processes missing? Broken? Poorly designed? Can you provide examples to illustrate the deficiencies?

6. What are the best attributes of the existing program? What works, and what works best? How have these attributes added value to deployed voting systems?
7. Programs are evolutionary and the EAC testing and certification program has evolved to address the challenges of the testing voting systems as those systems and constituent expectations have changed. Responsibility for strategic level programmatic decisions remains the purview of the Commissioners, while the responsibility for routine decisions has been assigned to the Director of the program. Is the current model effective? How can this partitioning of responsibilities be improved to make the program more robust? Are there emerging considerations that can better inform this process and improve the responsiveness of the program?
8. Electronic Pollbooks are a good example of an innovation that was not initially envisioned in the VVSG, yet have become one of the most widely adopted ancillary technologies to the voting system. Are e-pollbooks living up to their potential? Should e-pollbooks be certified? Certified as part of the voting system or as a stand-alone technology? How can the testing of e-pollbooks be improved? Are there best practices to be shared?
9. Predicting the future is risky, but it can help galvanize planning and action. If the current standards development process is not changed, what is its future? The testing and certification program?
10. Reform and change must have goals. What should the amended goals for the testing and certification program include? For the standards development process? How could these goals be prioritized? Are these goals measurable?
11. What are the recommended next steps in reforming the testing and certification process? For the EAC? For vendors? For states? For other stakeholders?