

ITIF ACCESSIBLE VOTING TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE

2012 CALL FOR PROPOSALS

PROPOSAL DEADLINE: JUNE 1, 2012



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BACKGROUND

The Information Technology and Innovation Foundation (ITIF) Accessible Voting Technology Initiative (AVTI) is a project funded by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to make voting processes and technology more accessible. In addition to conducting a set of research activities aimed at developing a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities for accessible voting, the ITIF AVTI is also awarding sub-grants for accessible voting technology research and development.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

DESCRIPTION

Americans with disabilities face many obstacles to voting including physical, cultural, economic, educational and political barriers. Although much has been done to increase voting accessibility, more progress is needed. ITIF seeks proposals to develop, test and integrate innovative technology to address barriers to accessible voting.

Examples of potential proposals include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Proposals to develop and test voting technology, interfaces and processes that address specific accessibility needs identified by prior research.
- Proposals to develop and test technology, interfaces and processes that target disabilities which have received less attention in prior research.
- Proposals to research security technologies needed to implement accessible design concepts.
- Proposals to develop and test accessible technology that can be integrated into existing voting systems.
- Proposals to pilot test innovative accessible voting solutions in elections.
- Proposals to develop emerging technology that will have a substantial impact on voting accessibility in the future (e.g. research on mobile voting technology, interactive voice-response systems, and accessibility for end-to-end cryptographic voting systems).

EXPECTATIONS AND DELIVERABLES

All proposals should incorporate a research evaluation plan to assess the accessibility and usability of the technology, interfaces or processes developed as part of the project. Grant recipients will be expected to work with ITIF and its partners to develop and use consistent assessment criteria to facilitate cross-study comparisons.

Recipients should produce a final report documenting their work that includes at least one paper ready for submission to a conference or journal.

USE AND ACCESSIBILITY OF MATERIALS

The recipient must submit copies of all publications and materials developed under this grant to ITIF. To ensure that materials generated with funding from this grant are available to the public and readily accessible to others, ITIF and EAC reserve a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to obtain, use, modify, reproduce, publish, or disseminate publications and materials produced under the agreement, including data, and to authorize others to do so. The recipient must agree to make such publications and materials available to the public at no cost or at

the cost of reproduction through the EAC's clearinghouse. All materials developed by funds from this grant must be accessible to individuals with disabilities to the extent required by law.

TOTAL AWARDS

The ITIF AVTI will award up to approximately \$750,000 in grant funds for research programs and pilot projects. Applicants may request funding up to \$500,000 in total costs over a period of 6 to 18 months. ITIF expects to make between five to ten awards in the range of \$20,000 to \$200,000; however, ITIF may deviate from the planned number of awards and award amounts at its discretion.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Preference will be given to applicants that are public or private institutions of higher education. Others, including businesses, independent researchers, non-profit organizations, and state and local government agencies, who are interested in applying for grant funds are encouraged to collaborate with a college or university as the primary recipient. Applicant organizations must be based in the United States.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Research Program (60%)
 - Does this proposal demonstrate a significant potential to improve the accessibility of elections?
 - Does this proposal present an innovative, relevant and feasible approach to an unmet need?
 - Does this proposal develop or capitalize on state-of-the-art technologies, methods, tools, or resources or address important underexplored or unexplored areas of election accessibility?
 - Does this proposal have a sound conceptual framework, design and methodology?
 - Does this proposal have an effective plan for testing and evaluating program outputs?
 - Does the proposal have a clearly defined plan for translating research findings to real-world contexts?
- Organizational Capacity (20%)
 - Does the research team demonstrate the required creativity, expertise, experience, and accomplishments necessary to make a significant contribution?
 - Has the research team demonstrated its ability to manage grant funds and collaborate across disciplines?
- Cost Effectiveness (20%)
 - How cost-effective is this proposal for the given activities?

EVALUATION AND MONITORING

COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION

All recipients must agree to work closely with ITIF, EAC, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and other grant and sub-grant recipients in a collegial manner and share findings that may be relevant to other researchers.

Recipients may be required to participate in a design review with ITIF or its partners. ITIF also reserves the right to conduct project progress reviews either virtually or in-person.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

All human subjects research requires review and approval by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). Applicants must include a plan for such approval. IRB approval must be readily attainable within eight weeks of informal notification of recommendation for award to ensure continued processing for funding. IRB approval must be provided to ITIF before research commences.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Recipients must identify the critical outcomes of their work, indicators of success in this work, and how progress can be judged or measured. The recipient will be required to report quarterly on agreed upon performance measures. In addition, recipients will be responsible for submitting monthly invoices and progress reports that must include:

- Budget report for the completed budget period;
- Narrative analysis of the budget report, explaining differences between budgeted and actual activities and costs by funding source;
- Achievements as related to performance measurements; and
- Discussion of any problems observed or experienced and solutions implemented.

AUDIT REQUIREMENTS

Applicants selected for funding must comply with the requirements of the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996 (31 U.S.C. § 7501-07), if the applicant expends \$500,000 or more in Federal awards in its most recent fiscal year. Documentation must include certification that the applicant maintains internal controls over Federal awards; complies with applicable laws; regulations and contract or grant provisions; and prepares appropriate financial statements; or submits the most recent audit by the applicant's independent public accountant.

USE OF GRANT FUNDS

GENERAL RESTRICTIONS ON FUNDS

The EAC has imposed a number of restrictions on the grant funds that we will award to recipients.¹ These include the following:

- Recipients may not use any part of the grant to fund religious instruction, worship or proselytizing, voter registration, voting, get out the vote (GOTV) drives or other political activities that could be construed as lobbying. Project funds must be used for tasks and activities carried out without partisan bias and without promoting any particular political point of view regarding any election issue or candidates. Pre-award

¹ See "Notice of Funds Available, 2010 Voting Technology and Accessibility Research—Accessible Voting Technology Initiative," U.S. Election Assistance Commission, n.d., http://www.eac.gov/assets/1/AssetManager/Voting%20Technology%20and%20Accessibility%20Research--Accessible%20Voting%20Technology%20Initiative_FINAL.pdf.

costs can be requested by applicants approved for funding under this Call for Proposals, but are subject to approval. Expenditures for building construction are not allowed.

- Recipients may recover indirect costs under this grant up to 5 percent of the grant. If an applicant has an approved Federal indirect cost rate, the remainder of the indirect costs can be used as a matching contribution. Applicants without an approved indirect rate may not claim indirect costs as a matching contribution. Matching funds are not required, but are encouraged.
- The availability of funds is contingent upon appropriations by Congress and authorization by the EAC.
- All recipients must abide by the Office of Management and Budget uniform administrative requirements and cost principles applicable to the organization that receives the funds.

RESTRICTION ON LOBBYING

Any organization described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(4) that engages in lobbying activities is not eligible to apply.

HOW TO APPLY

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Grant proposals must be submitted electronically by email to grants@itif.org by the submission deadline. Late applications will not be accepted. File size of attachments is limited to 25 MB. Submissions should be accessible and viewable in either Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat Reader. Please use a 10 point Helvetica or Arial font.

Components of the application should include the following:

- **Abstract:** The abstract should not exceed 300 words.
- **Proposal Narrative:** The proposal narrative should provide a clear and detailed description of the proposed research plan. Components of the proposal narrative should include objectives, research design and methodology, research evaluation plan, and an overview of related work. The proposal narrative should not exceed 3,000 words.
- **Key Project Personnel:** This section should describe the key personnel for the project, the experience of the organization and staff biographies, and the proposed responsibilities of the staff members. Limit one page per organization or staff member.
- **Budget and Budget Justification:** Clearly indicate the amount of funds requested. The budget should be sufficient to perform the tasks described in the proposal narrative for the entire grant period. Do not include unexplained amounts, miscellaneous, contingency costs, or unallowable expenses such as entertainment costs. Round all figures to the nearest dollar. The budget justification should include a list of the names of all personnel who will be involved in the project, regardless of whether a salary is requested. This should include the principal investigator (and all co- and collaborating investigators), individuals in training, and support staff. Provide a clear explanation for all personnel by position and describe the role that they will be playing on the project and their level of effort.
- **Contact Information and DUNS number:** Applications must include contact information, including project performance location, and a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number.

No additional information beyond what is requested in this announcement will be accepted. Applications that are found to be incomplete or exceeding the word limits will not be considered.

KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

Friday, June 1, 2012 (4:00 PM EST): Submission deadline for receipt of full proposals.

Friday, June 29, 2012: Finalists notified.

August 1, 2012: Funding initiated.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For further information about this Call for Proposals, please contact Daniel Castro by email at grants@itif.org or by phone at (202) 449-1351.

Updates about the Call for Proposals will be posted online at <http://elections.itif.org>. Additional information about the ITIF AVTI can also be found on this website.