

# LOCAL ELECTION OFFICIAL'S GUIDE TO FEDERAL RESOURCES FOR THE PROTECTION OF ELECTION OFFICES & PERSONNEL

In today's challenging landscape, it is critically important for local election officials to prioritize physical security in their offices and keep themselves, their staff, and their voters safe. Local election officials may not be aware of the federal grant opportunities or federal agency resources that can help local election jurisdictions implement these safeguards. Identifying these resources can be overwhelming.

The Committee for Safe & Secure Elections ([www.safeelections.org](http://www.safeelections.org)) created this guide to serve as a convenient reference for local election officials to learn more about federal grant opportunities and various federal services, tools, and resource materials that can help strengthen the physical security of their offices and help keep election officials safe.

## 1 – FEDERAL GRANT OPPORTUNITY HAVA ELECTION SECURITY GRANT

Administered by the Election Assistance Commission ([EAC](http://www.eac.gov)), the [HAVA Election Security Grant program](#) provides states with additional resources to improve the administration of elections for federal office, including for enhancements to election technology and upgrades to cyber and physical security. Following the designation of election infrastructure as critical infrastructure in 2017, Congress appropriated funding for these grants in 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2023.

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### HOW THE GRANTS ARE AWARDED

Currently, the grant is awarded directly to state officials. The state may then **re-grant/distribute funds to local election offices**. Local election officials should consider initiating conversations with their state's chief election official as early in the grant process as possible to communicate their distinct physical security needs, to help ensure that their requests can be considered in the state's proposal.

You can find additional information about these grants, including state-specific allocation figures, guidance on fund management, and other helpful resources, such as FAQs, webinars, and program particulars on EAC's [Election Security Grant](#) page.

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### HOW THE FUNDS MAY BE USED

HAVA Election Security Grant funds [may be used](#) to improve the administration of elections, including to enhance election technology and make election security improvements, such as:

- Replacing outdated voting equipment;
- Implementing a post-election audit system;

- Upgrading election-related computer systems to address cyber vulnerabilities;
- Facilitating cybersecurity trainings for state and local election officials;
- Purchasing, installing, and maintaining security equipment.

The EAC has also [issued recent guidance](#) clarifying that HAVA Election Security grants can be used for physical security services and social media threat monitoring, so long as the expenses are allowable, allocable, reasonable, and necessary.

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### SOURCE AND OTHER HELPFUL LINKS

- EAC: <https://www.eac.gov>
- EAC Election Security Grant Program: <https://www.eac.gov/payments-and-grants/election-security-funds>
- Allowable Use of Funds - Physical Security Services and Social Media Threat Monitoring:



## 2 – FEDERAL GRANT OPPORTUNITY: HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT PROGRAM (HSGP)

Administered by the [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\)](#), the [Homeland Security Grant Program \(HSGP\)](#) is designed to help fund state and local officials working to “prepare the Nation [for threats and hazards](#) that pose the greatest risk to the security of the United States.” The HSGP is comprised of two main grant programs that may be helpful to election security:

- State Homeland Security Program (SHSP), which provides funding to enhance security and preparedness efforts at the state, local, tribal, and territorial level.
- Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), which provides additional funding for [40 jurisdictions](#) in high-density urban areas to enhance their regional preparedness to address these threats.

While jurisdictions largely retain flexibility over how to spend funds received, DHS has identified National Priorities Areas (NPAs) to help guide some of the funds towards key areas. In 2023, [DHS identified “election security” as one of the NPAs](#) and required recipients to spend at least 3% of the grant funds on election security.

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### HOW THE GRANTS ARE AWARDED

The State Administrative Agency (SAA) is the only entity eligible to submit HSGP [applications to FEMA](#), including those applications submitted on behalf of UASI... applicants.” The submitted applications are based on requests from eligible state and local governments to the SAA. As the intrastate process to communicate requests to the SAA varies by state, local election officials should contact their SAA to identify options for pursuing HSGP funding of their election security projects.

Neither state nor local election officials can directly apply to FEMA apply for these grants. However, the FY 2023 HSGP grant terms require the SAA to “include their [State’s Chief Election Official for all projects and matters related to the election security National Priority Area.](#)” FEMA awards the grant money to the SAA, who then has the authority and responsibility to [“pass-through” at least 80% of SHSP and UASI funding](#) to local or tribal government, including local election jurisdictions.

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### HOW THE FUNDS MAY BE USED

These grants may be used to fund various security upgrades in election offices, bolstering the integrity and resilience of electoral processes. [For example](#), the funds may be used to:

- Enhance the security of election offices or other physical election sites by installing more secure locks, shatterproof glass, or alarm systems;

- Provide for physical security planning;
- Conduct cyber & physical security risk assessments;
- Conduct security training;
- Transition to “.gov” internet domains.

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### SOURCE AND OTHER HELPFUL LINKS

- **DHS Homeland Security Grant Program:** <https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/homeland-security>
- **Fact Sheet:** <https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/homeland-security/fy-23-fact-sheet>
- **FAQs:** <https://www.fema.gov/fact-sheet/fiscal-year-2022-homeland-security-grant-program-frequently-asked-questions>
- **The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Fiscal Year 2023 Homeland Security Grant Program:** [https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema\\_gpd-fy-23-hsgp-nofo.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_gpd-fy-23-hsgp-nofo.pdf)
- **DHS Announces \$2 Billion in Preparedness Grants:** <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2023/02/27/dhs-announces-2-billion-preparedness-grants>
- **List of State Administrative Agency (SAA) contacts who oversee how state(s) use grant funding:** <https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/about/state-administrative-agency-contacts>

## 3 – FEDERAL GRANT OPPORTUNITY:

### EDWARD BYRNE MEMORIAL JUSTICE ASSISTANCE GRANT (BYRNE-JAG)

Administered by the United States Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) Program is a federal initiative that provides funding nationwide to enhance public safety and address a wide range of criminal justice priorities. The grant program is the leading federal source of criminal justice funding to state and local jurisdictions to help fill gaps in their criminal justice systems.

The program has 9 broad statutory programs, including law enforcement, prosecution, courts, crime prevention and education, and crime victim and witness initiatives. In 2022, the Department of Justice (DOJ) [issued guidance](#) clarifying that “broad criminal justice purposes supported by the JAG Program permit JAG funds to be used to deter, detect, and protect against threats of violence against election workers, administrators, officials, and others associated with the electoral process.”

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#### HOW THE GRANTS ARE AWARDED

There are two types of awards under the Byrne JAG program, the JAG state awards and the JAG local awards. JAG state funds are made available to each designated State Administering Agency for distribution within the state. The JAG local awards are only issued to [eligible units](#) of local governments. **Election officials cannot directly receive these funds**; however, they can collaborate with their state and local law enforcement to explore cooperative ways these funds can be used by law enforcement or other eligible recipients to strengthen the security of election offices and safeguard election workers against potential threats.

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#### HOW THE FUNDS MAY BE USED

Byrne JAG [funds](#) may be used to provide additional personnel, equipment, supplies, contractual support, training, technical assistance, and information systems for law enforcement and criminal justice programs. Local election officials are encouraged to communicate their security needs with their state and local law enforcement partners. Their law enforcement partners can leverage the Byrne JAG [funds](#) to:

- Improve the physical security of the elections office through installing improved locks, cameras, and security systems;
- Provide overtime compensation to sheriff’s deputies for extra patrols on and around Election Day to protect election workers and voters;
- Cover additional costs associated with investigating threats to election officials or poll workers.

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#### SOURCE AND OTHER HELPFUL LINKS

- DOJ Bryne Jag Grant Program: <https://bj.a.ojp.gov/program/jag/overview>
- Fact Sheet: 
- FAQs: 
- Purposes for Which Funds May be Used: 
- US DOJ Memo: 
- EAC Memo on the use of Byrne JAG Funds to Protect Election Workers: 
- List of State Administering Agencies (SAA) that oversee how state(s) use Byrne JAG funding: <https://www.ojp.gov/funding/state-administering-agencies/overview>

## 4 – FEDERAL AGENCY SUPPORT: THE ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

The Election Assistance Commission ([EAC](https://www.eac.gov)) serves as a key federal agency, established as an independent, bipartisan commission whose mission is to help election officials improve the administration of elections and help Americans participate in the voting process. The EAC offers informative and comprehensive resources on election administration, available at: <https://www.eac.gov/election-officials>.

Summarized below are a few guides and resources on physical security for election infrastructure, workers and voters:

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### ELECTION MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

The Election Management Guidelines (<https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/election-management-guidelines>) serves as a comprehensive guide designed to aid state and local election officials in the efficient management and administration of elections. **Chapter 7** focuses on physical security standards, procedures, and recommended actions that can be undertaken to safeguard election personnel, voting systems, facilities, and equipment against potential threats.

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### OTHER HELPFUL LINKS

The EAC has hosted virtual panels to discuss various topics, including protecting election officials. Check out these EAC panels that included members of the Committee for Safe & Secure Elections:

- **Election Official Security – Commissioner Tom Hicks Interview with Sheriff Peter Koutoujian, Chris Harvey, and Neal Kelley (July 14, 2022):** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8JNmccuUVE>
- **Election Official Security – Commissioner Tom Hicks’ Interview with Veronica Degraffenreid, Tina Barton and Justin Smith (March 2, 2023):** <https://youtu.be/YVpnCzMB878?si=XhWwL4ptGBDcqFlx>

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### CHECKLISTS

As part of their *60-Second Security* series, the EAC has developed a set of checklists with information on various types of security enhancements that election officials can implement to bolster the security of election personnel, assets, and processes. These checklists provide actionable information that enables election officials to effectively identify and address potential security concerns.

- **EAC Personal Security Checklist:**



- **EAC Building Access Checklist:**



- **EAC Deploying Assets Checklist:**



## 5 – FEDERAL AGENCY SUPPORT:

### CYBERSECURITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE SECURITY AGENCY (CISA)

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency ([CISA](#)) is a federal agency tasked with leading the effort to understand, manage and reduce the risks to the **cyber and physical** infrastructure of our nation’s critical infrastructure sectors. In 2017, the DHS Secretary designated election infrastructure as “critical infrastructure.” This designation allows CISA to work closely with state and local election officials to enhance the security and resilience of the electoral process. **CISA provides free services to state and local election officials.** Resources and publications offering expertise, technical assistance, and guidance on security best practices, risk assessment, incident response, and threat mitigation can be found on CISA’s Election Security page, <https://www.cisa.gov/topics/election-security>. Below are a few of CISA’s resources that support physical election security:

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#### SECURITY ADVISORS

CISA has an array of local and regional [security advisors](#) that provide various risk management and response services to local election officials. These advisors are subject matter experts in physical, cyber, emergency communications and chemical security. In July 2023, CISA [announced](#) the establishment of new regional election security advisors who will be positioned in each of the 10 CISA regions to partner with the other security advisors, to raise awareness of CISA’s tools and resources and better support the needs of election jurisdictions. According to [CISA](#),

[t]hese election security advisors will work . . . with our cybersecurity and protective security advisors to ensure CISA’s capabilities and services are being optimally employed to meet the unique needs of each state or locality. Importantly, election security advisors will be experts in the infrastructure, jurisdictional requirements, and operating environments unique to their regions to offer more tailored guidance and support.

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#### SECURITY RESOURCES FOR THE ELECTION INFRASTRUCTURE SUBSECTOR

CISA partnered with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to develop a summary of resources from various federal agencies that are available to assist state and local election officials in effectively addressing threats to personnel and assessing and mitigating risks to physical assets.

Scan this QR code to view this summary, entitled *Security Resources for the Election Infrastructure Subsector*.



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#### ELECTION SECURITY SERVICES

Through their [Election Security Services](#), CISA can provide local election officials with expertise and resources to help safeguard their election infrastructure. These services are rendered at **no cost**, are entirely voluntary, and available upon request. Key service areas include physical assessments; cybersecurity assessments; detection and prevention services; tabletop exercises; incident response and analysis; information sharing and awareness; and security trainings:

- **Protective Security Assessments:**



- **Critical Infrastructure Assessments:**



## OTHER HELPFUL LINKS

- Active Shooter Preparedness (ASP) Training: <https://www.cisa.gov/active-shooter-preparedness>
- Non-confrontational Techniques for Election Workers Training: <https://youtu.be/rCWt7gDwEPc?si=InGdp-mR9eYeC5T5>
- De-Escalation Series for Critical Infrastructure: <https://www.cisa.gov/de-escalation-series>
- Insider Threat Mitigation Program: 
- Election Infrastructure Insider Threat Mitigation Guide: 
- Tabletop Exercise Packages: <https://www.cisa.gov/cisa-tabletop-exercises-packages>
- Response to Suspicious Behaviors and Items (RSBI) Training: <https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-03/AWR-335%20Fact%20Sheet%20508%20V2.1.pdf>
- Introduction to Bomb Threat Management Training: <https://www.cisa.gov/bombing-prevention-training-courses>
- Insight on Mitigating the Impacts of Doxing on Critical Infrastructure: 

## 6 – FEDERAL AGENCY SUPPORT: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (DOJ)

The United States Department of Justice or “DOJ” ([www.justice.gov](http://www.justice.gov)) launched the [Elections Threat Task Force](#) in 2021 to address the rise in threats against election workers, administrators, officials, and others associated with the electoral process. Election officials can report suspected threats or violent acts to the FBI at 1-800-CALL-FBI (225-5324) or file an online tip at: <https://tips.fbi.gov>. Further, the FBI has assigned **Election Crime Coordinators** or “ECCs” to local **field offices** ([www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices](http://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices)). An ECC is an FBI Special Agent who can assist election officials with any incident related to an election crime. Election officials can report incidents of threats, intimidation, and harassment to their ECC. Find your nearest ECC by contacting your local FBI field office.

Additionally, DOJ has assigned an Election Community Liaison, Aaron Jennen ([aaron.jennen2@usdoj.gov](mailto:aaron.jennen2@usdoj.gov)), to focus on engaging with the election community and local, state, and federal law enforcement.

## 7 – FEDERAL AGENCY SUPPORT: U.S. POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE

The United States Postal Inspection Service (<https://www.uspis.gov/about/what-we-do>) is the law enforcement agency responsible for protecting the United States mail, including postal facilities, mail receptacles, and postal employees. The agency responds “[to suspicious mailings, including suspicious substances, suspicious items, and suspected explosive devices](#).” They can also conduct investigations into threatening communications to government officials. In fact, the agency strives to make mail security a [top priority](#) during each election cycle. The U.S. Postal Service (USPS), like elections, is considered critical infrastructure, and works closely with other federal partners as one of the partners in the [election infrastructure subsector](#). As the [law enforcement](#) arm of USPS, the Postal Inspection Service works to “prevent, identify and resolve any issues” involving U.S. mail, including election mail. Election officials may report suspicious mail and election mail-related security or criminal incidents by calling the Postal Inspection Service’s 24-hour communications center at 1-877-876-2455 or submitting a report online at <https://www.uspis.gov/report>.

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### OTHER HELPFUL LINKS

The EAC has hosted virtual panels to discuss various topics, including protecting election officials. Check out these EAC panels that included members of the Committee for Safe & Secure Elections:

- **Guide to Mail Center Security:** <https://about.usps.com/publications/pub166.pdf>

## 8 – CENTER FOR INTERNET SECURITY (CIS) AND EI-ISAC

Although not a federal agency, the [Center for Internet Security](#) or “CIS” ([www.cisecurity.org](http://www.cisecurity.org)) administers the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center ([MS-ISAC](#)), a trusted resource for cyber threat prevention, protection, response, and recovery for U.S. State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial government entities; and the Elections Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center ([EI-ISAC](#)) which supports the cybersecurity needs of U.S. elections offices. An “information sharing and analysis center” is a membership group for entities in a critical infrastructure sector that collects, analyzes and disseminates actionable threat information to its members and also provides them with tools to mitigate risks and support resiliency. Local election officials may join the EI-ISAC and will then automatically become a member of the MS-ISAC. Both the MS-ISAC and the EI-ISAC are funded by CISA.

CIS and the EI-ISAC have put together an [Essential Guide to Election Security](#). The Guide is collection of resources from multiple agencies and organizations intended to help the bolster security of our elections, including a section on *Addressing Physical Threats*, available at [https://docs.cisecurity.org/en/latest/bp/physical\\_threats.html](https://docs.cisecurity.org/en/latest/bp/physical_threats.html).

Local election officials may join the EI-ISAC for free to stay abreast of potential and active threats to elections, no-cost security solutions and security best practices and standards. Election officials may also use the EI-ISAC to be informed about security-related election incidents or even report security-related occurrences occurring in their own jurisdiction.