Request for Information ("RFI") - Statewide Inbound Mail Processing Equipment

May 15, 2020

INTRODUCTION

The S.C. State Election Commission ("SEC") is seeking information and estimated costs for a uniformed inbound mail processing equipment system, to help facilitate timely and accurate reporting.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The state of South Carolina, utilizing the ES&S ExpressVote voting system statewide, serves nearly 3.4 million registered voters within 46 counties and 2200+ precincts. All voters are required to sign the outer envelope of inbound ballots; that signature is used to verify the voter's identity before opening and processing. Counties currently utilize various methods and equipment in the sorting and verifying of mail; however, as a result of COVID-19, a more uniformed system and method is needed due to an anticipated significant increase in absentee ballots. We expect the process to exceed 500,000 absentee voters for the 2020 General Election. See the attached spreadsheet for absentee ballot, precinct, current, and previous year(s) voter registration totals.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this RFI is to generate information in order to potentially contract with a qualified vendor for necessary equipment that can: process incoming ballot envelopes and other election related mail; sort envelopes to varying categories; capture images of envelopes; read and interpret information on the envelope face; interface with the statewide Voter Registration Election Management System ("VREMS") to track and produce election specific voter registration; imprint information on the envelope; verify expected contents; and open the envelope. The implementation deadline would be no later than October 1, 2020. Vendors should respond with their best proposed solution along with possibilities for potential enhancements.

SCOPE OF WORK

The new solution must meet all listed minimum requirements as well as offer enhanced services to help efficiently process incoming ballot envelopes and other election related mail.

Minimum System Requirements:

1) System must have the ability to upload information into the voter registration system (VREMS) including, but not limited to, return date, batch number, voter ID, and election ID.
2) Vendor shall propose an automated envelope sorting system that is scalable with "sorting pockets" or equivalent function or feature.
3) System must have the ability to sort out—into variable "pockets"—ballot envelopes that have been marked as challenged or rejected.
4) System shall provide an accurate count of processed mail pieces.
5) System must scan and capture the image in the signature block area.
6) System must have the ability to identify and sort out automatically—into a different pocket—envelopes that have not been signed by the voter.
7) System must identify ballot return envelopes that may not contain all contents expected to be returned and sort such envelopes to a pocket. This ability must be customizable for each election as ballot size and envelope contents may change.
8) System must be able to open (mill) envelopes without damaging the contents. The milling area will have the ability to keep the area clean of all debris.
9) System shall store envelope images, voter data, and reports in a directory that can be accessible to the operator. All information shall be date/time stamped and archivable.
10) Vendor shall provide standard support as well as extended support during election periods (including weekend, holiday, and after-hours support).
11) Vendor shall provide training on new equipment, manuals and documentation, as well as ongoing support and maintenance services.
12) All system upgrades shall be performed on-site in consultation with SEC staff.

SUBMISSIONS:

All submissions should include, at a minimum, all aforementioned requirements and are due by 5:00pm Eastern Standard Time on **Tuesday, May 26, 2020.** Please ensure your submission provides an itemized listing of equipment and pricing by county.

Any questions concerning this RFI may be sent to: Howard Knapp, Director of Voter Services, at hknapp@elections.sc.gov no later than Monday, May 25, 2020. Answers to questions received, if any, will be posted on the SCVOTES website as an addendum to this RFI. It is the responsibility of all interested parties to download the request and check SCVOTES for answers to questions. If technical assistance is required to download, please contact Brian Leach, Information Technology Manager, at bleach@elections.sc.gov.

Submit responses electronically to: Howard Knapp, Director of Voter Services at hknapp@elections.sc.gov and Viola Faust, Director of Administration, at vfaust@elections.sc.gov.

ABSENTEE BALLOT, PRECINCT AND VOTER REGISTRATION TOTALS

	Absentee Ballots Mailed 2016 General	Absentee Ballots Mailed 2018 General	Absentee Ballots Mailed 2020 General	Absentee Ballots Returned 2016 General	Absentee Ballots Returned 2018 General	Precincts	Total Registered Voters
Abbeville County	2,902	1,598	85	2712	1505	15 Precincts	15522
Aiken County	18,452	10,152	1,845	17039	9065	84 Precincts	115724
Allendale County	1,494	1,634	34	1421	1424	8 Precincts	5787
Anderson County	15,786	8,821	1,675	14359	7944	80 Precincts	121206
Bamberg County	1,658	1,021	248	1506	926	13 Precincts	9486
Barnwell County	2,117	1,306	306	1985	1236	15 Precincts	13665
Beaufort County	24,636	19,686	5,078	22210	18011	92 Precincts	129639
Berkeley County	18,345	12,363	4,748	16045	10638	94 Precincts	131600
Calhoun County	1,900	1,198	108	1787	1117	12 Precincts	10543
Charleston County	66,024	44,554	15,938	60132	40226	182 Precincts	290849
Cherokee County	4,446	2,453	135	4269	2323	29 Precincts	32853
Chester County	4,590	2,215	199	4413	2086	21 Precincts	20408
Chesterfield County	3,200	1,599	69	3019	1486	25 Precincts	25973
Clarendon County	6,415	3,674	813	6106	3450	26 Precincts	24500
Colleton County	5,689	3,349	726	5418	3144	32 Precincts	24996
Darlington County	7,918	5,006	1,142	7485	4738	32 Precincts	43111
Dillon County	2,293	1,676	851	1942	1214	19 Precincts	18658
Dorchester County	17,254	10,795	2,775	15282	9631	90 Precincts	124198
Edgefield County	3,185	2,027	357	2994	1859	12 Precincts	17131
Fairfield County	3,186	2,015	388	3027	1916	22 Precincts	15559
Florence County	18,939	10,861	1,353	16466	10214	63 Precincts	87827
Georgetown County	10,025	5,515	1,676	9286	5052	34 Precincts	44148
Greenville County	35,426	22,850	5,011	30616	19481	154 Precincts	330981
Greenwood County	7,547	4,429	815	6944	4020	50 Precincts	40823
Hampton County	2,657	1,951	480	2448	1582	18 Precincts	12769
Horry County	22,978	13,505	6,072	19446	11380	127 Precincts	238990
Jasper County	3,081	2,049	829	2838	1912	15 Precincts	20043
Kershaw County	7,969	4,824	558	7192	4483	34 Precincts	42100
Lancaster County	11,233	6,469	1,317	10459	5779	36 Precincts	62452
Laurens County	4,806	2,571	434	4430	2363	34 Precincts	39571
Lee County	2,029	1,126	61	1889	1086	22 Precincts	11580
Lexington County	30,558	16,427	3,567	26879	14468	100 Precincts	194455
McCormick County	2,210	1,428	125	2120	1362	11 Precincts	7324
Marion County	4,096	2,270	1,529	3567	2033	17 Precincts	20955
Marlboro County	5,198	3,475	976	4552	3146	15 Precincts	17812
Newberry County	3,831	2,231	288	3592	2094	30 Precincts	23524
Oconee County	9,865	6,109	1,706	9327	5656	31 Precincts	52021
Orangeburg County	11,744	6,678	2,666	11054	5941	55 Precincts	61973
Pickens County	8,258	4,336	896	7279	3768	63 Precincts	76514
Richland County	61,014	30,135	8,683	55450	26425	153 Precincts	270218
Saluda County	1,357	830	83	1270	774	19 Precincts	12287
Spartanburg County	30,517	15,186	2,304	28232	13677	100 Precincts	195353
Sumter County	15,863	8,589	2,251	13532	7842	59 Precincts	71148
Union County	2,143	1,161	29	2034	1092	23 Precincts	16390
Williamsburg County	3,428	2,273	302	3205	2125	28 Precincts	21514
York County	30,528	13,835	3,596	28061	11915	96 Precincts	182087
Total:	**558,790**	**328,255**	**85,127**	**505319**	**293609**	**2290 Precincts**	**3346267**