

Iterative Project Report for Programs & Multi-Year Phased Projects

Submitted to Large Project Oversight on 05/22/2023

GENERAL INFORMATION

Program/Project Name: SOS Elections Program

Agency Name: North Dakota Office of the Secretary of State (SOS)

Project Sponsor: Sandra McMerty

Project Manager: Aaron Kielhack

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This program is comprised of two projects:

- 1) Voting System Replacement (VSR) project will replace the statewide voting system that is nearing its end of life
- 2) Electronic Poll Book (EPB) project will implement electronic poll books statewide for all counties

There are currently 425 precincts among the state's 53 counties with at least one polling place per precinct. A Request for Proposal (RFP) will be released for each project and funding was requested during the 2019 Legislative Session. SOS received \$3 million in funding from the federal government for the program, and \$8.2 million from the state legislature.

BUSINESS NEEDS AND PROBLEMS

The mission of the SOS is to execute with integrity the duties required by the North Dakota Constitution and the North Dakota Century Code. As the chief election official for the state of ND the SOS has a vested interest in the successful administration of elections. The SOS has the statutory authority to state how elections operate in the state and is responsible to certify ND voting systems.

1. The optical scan precinct tabulators, central count optical scan tabulators, and assistive ballot marking devices in use are entering their end-of-life phase. Maintenance is becoming more difficult every year due to aging equipment, shortage of parts, and vendor's reduced ability to support a product that is no longer produced. Hardware issues make conducting elections unacceptably risky in future elections. Additionally, the current system runs on a 64-bit Windows 7 operating system, which will no longer be supported beginning in January of 2020.
2. Currently, eight (8) of the fifty-three (53) counties use electronic poll books. Those eight counties are split across two separate products, with two completely different architectures. The remaining counties use paper poll books. The counties with electronic poll books have information for their own counties only. To provide accurate and timely information to voters, election officials, candidates, and other stakeholders as well as to prevent intentional or unintentional voter fraud, a statewide electronic solution is imperative.

PROGRAM/PROJECT FORMAT

Program/Project Start Date: 06/28/2019 for VSR and

Budget Allocation at Time of Initial Start Date: \$11.2 million

How Many Phases Expected at Time of Initial Start Date: One project - VSR

Phase Approach Description: The two projects may run in parallel.

Estimated End Date for All Phases Known at Time of Initial Start Date: 01/20/2020 (VSR)

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PROGRAM/PROJECT ROAD MAP

The program road map shows the high-level plan or vision for the program/projects/phases. It is intended to offer a picture of the lifespan of all the effort that is expected to be required to achieve the business objectives.

Project/Phase	Title	Scope Statement	Estimated Months Duration	Estimated Budget
VSR	Voting Systems Replacement (VSR)	New statewide elections/voting system	6 months	\$6,628,516
EPB	EPollBook (EPB)	Statewide electronic poll book implementation	4 months	\$2,500,000

Notes:

PROJECT BASELINES

The baselines below are entered for only those projects or phases that have been planned. At the completion of a project or phase a new planning effort will occur to baseline the next project/phase and any known actual finish dates and costs for completed projects/phases will be recorded. The iterative report will be submitted again with the new information.

Project/Phase	Program/Project Start Date	Baseline Execution Start Date	Baseline End Date	Baseline Budget	Actual Finish Date	Schedule Variance	Actual Cost	Cost Variance
VSR	05/02/18	06/28/19	04/06/20	\$7,192,282	04/06/20	0 days	\$7,129,297	0.8% Under Budget
EPB	05/02/18	01/17/20	06/06/23	\$2,093,144	05/10/2023	1.4% Ahead	\$2,082,563	0.5% Under

Notes: VSR is wrapping up the Execution phase of the project and is expected to enter the Closeout phase at the end of April 2020.

VSR completed the Execution phase and implementation of the voting system as scheduled.

VSR had seven contract amendments that added additional scope, cost, and time to the project. Three of the contract amendments occurred after the project closing.

VSR closeout meeting was held on April 30, 2020, with SOS and ES&S in attendance.

As of December 21, 2020, the final contract amount was \$9,861,972 (this included all support-maintenance costs going forward).

EPB went into Planning in Q3 2019

EPB went into Execution on January 13, 2020

EPB development work was delayed in February 2020 due to the vendor focusing on other clients during the 2020 primaries and their original project manager quit the project in March 2020

COVID-19 restrictions moved the North Dakota June 2020 primary elections to vote by mail and EPB was not used as a result

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Continued delays and issues (including demands for payment on uncompleted deliverables) with the vendor put the entire project and electronic poll pad system in doubt right up to the November 3, 2020, general elections, which consisted of vote by mail, early voting in person and Election Day voting in North Dakota (with fewer polling locations).

Despite several defects discovered with the system, it was used during the 2020 election for in-person voting with success that owed considerable gratitude from the NDIT, SOS, BPro and KNOWiNK team

As of February 2021, the project is still in progress and in the process of re-planning to finish up several remaining items

Work continued with EPB throughout 2021 and 2022- a Corrective Action Plan was created for the project to complete the necessary testing work.

A SOC2 Type II audit of KNOWiNK (a required component of the Final Acceptance Deliverable) completed in late 2022.

Project entered Closeout phase in Q2 2023.

OBJECTIVES

Project/Phase	Business Objective	Measurement Description	Met/Not Met	Measurement Outcome
VSR	Replace all tabulation, assistive ballot marking, express vote and election management system equipment, and election staff trained in all 53 counties	Successful delivery, testing, setup of voting equipment, completion of training for all 53 counties	Met	The project team successfully delivered, tested and setup the voting system equipment in all 53 counties. Training was also completed 100% for all 53 counties. All 26 project deliverables were completed 100% on schedule and slightly under budget.
EPB	Implement a statewide electronic poll book solution	Successful delivery, testing, setup of the solution and completion of training for all 53 counties	Met	All ePoll books in all 53 counties of North Dakota were able to synchronize during the last two election cycles.

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POST-IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

Post-Implementation Reports are to be performed after each project or phase is completed. A “PIR” is a process that utilizes surveys and meetings to determine what happened in the project/phase and identifies actions for improvement going forward. Typical PIR findings include, “What did we do well?” “What did we learn?” “What should we do differently next time?”

Project/Phase	Lesson Learned, Success Story, Idea for Next Time, Etc.
VSR	Open communications between ES&S and SOS throughout the different phases of the project have helped to make it a successful project.
VSR	The cooperation between the team and working well together since the beginning have made it an “easy” project.
VSR	All phases went well even with personnel changes (project sponsor and ES&S project manager), all the amendments and the COVID-19 pandemic at the end of the project.
VSR	Time spent in the warehouse both ES&S and SOS doing the testing and other work for sending out the equipment to the counties should be replicated for future projects
VSR	Training for counties in person – how the elections happen will decide the final answer on the training
EPB	More time needed to be spent on requirements gathering, vetting and analysis both during procurement and planning phases
EPB	Incorporate security/risk during procurement and planning – this is already happening with new projects
EPB	Coordinate often and early with local IT and elections officials to make sure there are no issues – centralize point of contact for issues if they do arise – all levels, SOS, counties, NDIT and KNOWiNK.
EPB	The use of single tenant instead of multi-tenant for ePulse was a lifesaver for the project team
EPB	Throughout all the challenges such as staffing changes, COVID, weather, the core team continued to work together well
EPB	Successfully used the system for the 2022 elections
EPB	While the project did not meet the overall projected timeline it was a learning process on both sides. the overall product is one the state can feel proud about and could be improved upon from election to election. Excited about the continued partnership moving forward and await the next challenge
EPB	Training and refresher training during the state’s elections conference were helpful

KEY CONSTRAINTS AND/OR RISKS

VSR:

- State can make reasonable programming changes to ND VOICES for the solution
- The state’s voting system is a critical piece of infrastructure
- The Elections unit staff will be available for the project as needed
- The voting system has federal standards that must be met
- SOS must be able to certify the voting system

EPB:

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- State can make reasonable programming changes to ND VOICES for the solution
- The state's voting system is a critical piece of infrastructure
- The Elections unit staff will be available for the project as needed
- A SOC 2 Type II security audit must be completed, reviewed and approved by the State in order release the Final Acceptance and closeout the project