

Placer County

Phase 2 -- Project Documentation Plan Staff Report Summary

Phase 2	Amounts
Phase 2: Staff Recommended & County Requested Funding Award Amount	\$315,725.00
Phase 2: Remaining VMB Approved Allocation Amount	\$ 520,860.00
Phase 2: County Match Amount	\$105,242.00
Phase 2: County's Estimated Total System Cost	\$420,967.00
Remaining Initial Formula Allocation	
Remaining Allocation Amount	\$205,135.00
Remaining County 3:1 Match Amount	\$51,283.75

Phase 2 Voting Equipment:

Hardware: Agilis vote by mail sorting/scanning system

Vendor: Runbeck Election Services

Hardware: Sentio ballot printing system

Vendor: Runbeck Election Services

Hardware: Accuvote-OS memory cards

Vendor: Dominion Voting Systems

Acquisition Schedule:

Placer County plans to purchase the Agilis, Sentio, and the memory cards for their voting system in May of this year. Delivery and installation is scheduled for July 2014.

Project Completion Date:

Placer County plans to have the new systems online and fully functional for the November 4, 2014, General Election.

Staff Report:

Placer County's Phase 2 Project Documentation Plan meets the requirements for completeness.

Placer County first purchased an optical scan voting system in 2002. In 2006, Placer County added a touch screen component to meet HAVA Title III voting system requirements.

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Since 2001, the number of voters requesting vote-by-mail (VBM) ballots has more than quadrupled in Placer County. Of the county's 204,000 plus registered voters, 63% have requested permanent VBM status, with a possible additional 5% (depending on the election) residing in an all mail ballot precinct. Placer County maintains that the purchase of ballot sorting system such as the Runbeck Agilis will help it keep up with the increasing number of VBM voters in its county.

Currently Placer County manually processes each returned VBM ballot. This process requires that staff handle every envelope numerous times. First to sort returns to precinct level, then checking signatures on envelopes to determine eligibility, noting receipt in the data managements system, auditing batches for accuracy and transparency, opening envelopes for counting, and duplicating ballots when necessary. Accordingly, Placer County states this time consuming and labor intensive workload has greatly increased its labor costs. Placer County hopes to reduce its VBM labor costs by at least 75% by purchasing the Agilis automated VBM sorting/scanning system from Runbeck Election Services.

The Runbeck Agilis is a third-party combination of hardware and software to support the voting system and does not itself require certification as a voting system for use in California.

Placer County is also hoping to improve the process by which they provide daily vote-by-mail and over-the-counter ballot requests by purchasing two Runbeck Sentio ballot printing systems, also known as ballot on demand printers. Every election requires a different set of ballots; know as "ballot types," which vary according to the combination of federal, state, county, and local district offices that are up for election as well as any measures that have qualified the ballot. During an election year, Placer County can have to 150 different ballot types.

The County must provide a sufficient number of ballots for each voter along with enough overage in each ballot type to allow for newly registered voters, provisional voters, and spoiled or replacement ballots. The number of ballots ordered must also take into account expected voter turnout for a given election.

In addition to the difficulties previously explained, Placer County is also thinking ahead to the potential issues they will face once Chapter 497, Statutes of 2012 goes into effect. This legislation creates conditional voter registration (also referred to as same-day voter registration) in California. Once the VoteCal Statewide Voter Registration System is up and running (currently expected by 2016) voters will be able to register up until the close of the polls on election day, greatly complicating the task of estimating how many ballots, and of what type, to order.

Placer County believes the ballot on demand printers will allow the county to reduce ballot printing costs by an estimated 45%, greatly minimize ballot spoilage, and help manage the issues that will be created by conditional voter registration.

This is the first time a county has come before the Board to request funding for ballot on demand printers. Although not technically a voting system, arguably, this voting equipment can be used to improve the administration of elections. Ballot on demand printers could potentially increase security by eliminating the need to store pre-printed ballots while simultaneously lessening the potential for human error when providing ballots to voters over the counter at the elections office.

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Placer County's attempt to modernize the way they handle both the increasing number of VBM voters and the impending same day registration of voters, while potentially saving taxpayer money, by using ballot on demand printers can certainly be seen as in line with the spirit of the Voting Modernization Bond Act of 2002.

Sentio is certified for use in California as well as specifically certified to print Premier (now Dominion) ballot on demand ballots. Placer County will need to obtain ballot printing and storage certifications from the Secretary of State's Office in order to use the Sentio ballot on demand system.

The third component of Placer County's request for funding is the Dominion non-volatile AccuVote-OS memory card. The non-volatile (no internal battery) memory cards are for use with Placer County's precinct ballot scanners and will eliminate costly battery replacement in the cards each election and will provide a more stable system with reduced equipment failure on election day. Placer County states that fewer equipment failures will provide a more efficient election day for poll workers and permanent staff and greater confidence in the voting experience for the voters of Placer County. The Dominion AccuVote-OS memory cards have been certified for use in California.

Please note that the staff-proposed funding award is based upon allowable reimbursement under Proposition 41 for voting equipment hardware and software only. The extended service maintenance line items listed in the Placer County contracts with Runbeck Election Services would not be covered as a reimbursable claim under Proposition 41.

Also, while recommending the approval of funding for the purchase of two ballot on demand printers, we would like make it clear to the County that the cost for ink or paper for the ballot on demand printers is not a reimbursable expense under Proposition 41.

Placer County will only receive VMB payments once it has submitted detailed invoices for its voting equipment

Staff Recommendation:

It is our recommendation that Placer County's Phase 2 Project Documentation Plan be approved and a Funding Award Letter be issued in the amount of \$315,725.