



Local Election Early Voting Survey 411

Office of the State Auditor, Division of Local Mandates

April 9, 2025

Information as of April 9, 2025, and subject to change. For general informational purposes only; it does not constitute legal or other professional advice.

FY 2025 Local Election Early Voting Cost Certification Survey

- Covers early voting expenses for **non-coinciding** local elections held **July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025**
- For local elections **coinciding** with Fall 2024 state elections, covers early voting expenses **exclusive** to the local elections
 - E.g., production and postage costs for local ballots
 - All other expenses were required to be reported in the Fall 2024 state elections survey.

Deadlines for Survey Submissions

Estimated Launch: April 2025

- **For completed local elections:**
 - 2 weeks after survey launch
- **For local elections after survey launch through April 30, 2025:**
 - 2 weeks after scheduled election
- **For May 2025 local elections:**
 - 1 week after scheduled election
- **For June 2025 elections:**
 - Please contact DLM to coordinate a timely submission.

Updated Processes for Survey Submissions

To facilitate timely submissions before the close of FY 2025, DLM will be scheduling meetings/teleconferences with clerks with May and June local elections to review and finalize survey responses.

Please submit survey responses as early as possible.

In-Person Early Voting Expenses for Local Elections

- Generally, in-person early voting for non-coinciding local elections is **not mandated**.
- However, based on FY 2025 budget language, DLM will certify certain in-person early voting expenses for non-coinciding local elections during a municipality's **regular business hours** if in-person early voting was authorized by vote of the municipal governing body.
- Additional hours may be considered if specifically included in the municipal vote authorizing in-person early voting.

Retrieving Turnout Data

- The Secretary of the Commonwealth provided all clerks and local election officials with instructions on how to retrieve vote-by-mail and in-person early voting turnout data.
- **To retrieve the most accurate data, please retrieve reports and extracts as close to elections as possible.**
- VRIS data is not a substitute for your own records; however, DLM refers to the data in analyzing discrepancies.

Ballot Production Expenses

- Municipalities will be asked to provide:
 - the total number of **absentee** and **early voting** ballots **produced**
 - the total **cost** to **produce** absentee and early voting ballots, together with an **invoice**
 - the number of **absentee** ballots **mailed**
 - the number of **vote-by-mail** ballots **mailed**
 - the number of **in-person** early voting ballots **cast**
- The costs of producing ballots for local elections will be certified to the extent the costs are allocable to early voting.
- Costs to produce vote-by-mail applications are not eligible for certification.

Postage

- Costs of mailing vote-by-mail ballots will be certified at the current USPS **letter rate**, not at the rate applicable to large envelopes/flats.
- Additional postage attributable to a municipality's decision to use large envelopes/flats will **not** be certified.
- Additional postage will be certified **if**:
 - A municipality's election requires multiple ballots cards
 - A municipality is required to provide bilingual ballots

Additional Compensation

- Reminder: documentation must be provided for additional compensation paid to salaried employees.
- The **additional compensation** must be for **hours in excess of the employee's regular hours**, directly and primarily to implement **early voting**.
- DLM cannot provide legal advice as to the terms of any agreement between a municipality and its employees. Clerks and elections officials should confer with their city or town attorney or outside counsel.

Additional Compensation Continued

- See current FAQ 27. DLM will consider documentation specific to the employee(s) in question that includes:
 - Confirmation that the hours worked were **in excess** of the employee's regular hours
 - Confirmation that the additional hours were to implement **early** voting
 - Confirmation that the additional compensation is **attributable** to those hours
 - The **amount** of the additional compensation and the calculation of the additional compensation if at an hourly rate
 - Confirmation that the additional compensation has been **paid**

Additional Compensation: Actual Examples – Example 1

- A letter from the Mayor was provided stating:
 - “**additional compensation** [was] paid to XXX as a stipend”
 - “stipend was paid to XXX for **additional hours** worked relative to **early voting** procedures during the **2024 State Primary and State Election**”
 - “XXX was **paid** the stipend as a lump sum payment in the **amount of XXX**, which is noted in the attached payroll warrant”
- A copy of the payroll warrant was provided.
- The compensation was certified.

Additional Compensation: Actual Examples – Example 2

- An update to a bargaining agreement was provided stating:
 - “The **additional** compensation is ... for ... implementing **early voting**...”
 - “The [municipality] agrees to pay the [clerk] a stipend equal to forty (40) hours of the [clerk’s] regular pay ... for additional work performed... [A]dditional work above the forty (40) hour stipend shall not be monetarily compensated...”
 - “The [clerk] shall document all **additional hours worked** during each election cycle...”
- The hours worked in excess of the employee’s regular hours specific to early voting for the elections covered by the survey and confirmation of payment were provided.
- The compensation was certified.

Additional Compensation: Actual Examples – Example 3

- An attested copy of a municipal vote was provided stating:
 - “The [municipality] voted ... to **increase the set salary** for the [clerk] by XXX to provide additional compensation for early voting in ... state and local elections for 2024 and 2025.”
- The compensation was **not** certified.
- The compensation was a present and future increase in salary **not contingent** on hours worked in excess of the employee’s regular hours specific to early voting for the elections covered by the survey.

Additional Compensation: Actual Examples – Example 4

- A human resources letter was provided stating:
 - The clerk has “been approved for ... an election stipend of XXX effective date of hire...”
- The compensation was **not** certified.
- The compensation was a component of a salary and benefits package **not contingent** on hours worked in excess of the employee’s regular hours specific to early voting for the elections covered by the survey.

Early Voting Cost Certification FAQS

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/early-voting-cost-certification-faqs>

FAQs are continuously updated.

**Link provided in the chat.
Please bookmark!**

Next Webinar

Please join us:

**Wednesday, May 14, 2025,
12PM – 12:45PM**

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Contact Us

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