



KANSAS LEGISLATIVE  
**DIVISION** *of*  
**POST AUDIT**

The Rundown podcast transcript for Performance Audit report titled **Grants Received by Local Election Officials** – Released August 2021

**Brad Hoff, Host and Recruiting and Training Manager:** [00:00]

Welcome to The Rundown, your source for the latest news and updates from the Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit, featuring LPA staff talking about recently released audit reports and discussing findings key takeaways and why it matters. I'm Brad Hoff. In August 2021, LPA released a limited-scope performance audit reviewing the amount received and what if any obligations were associated with the Center for Technology and Civic Life grants awarded to Kansas counties. I'm with Macie Smith, an auditor at Legislative Post Audit, who supervised the audit. Welcome back to The Rundown, Macie.

**Macie Smith, Supervisor and Auditor:** [00:41]

Thank you so much for having me.

**Brad Hoff, Host and Recruiting and Training Manager:** [00:43]

So, before we begin discussing the audit findings, tell our listeners who the Center for Technology and Civic Life is and what its objectives are.

**Macie Smith, Supervisor and Auditor:** [00:54]

The Center for Technology and Civic Life or CTCL for short is a non-profit organization. They have two objectives. One, they provide civic information for voters. They do this by collecting civic datasets. This would be information like how to contact an elected official or what's on a ballot. Their second objective is that CTCL provides tools and training for election officials. They offer different trainings to election officials. Some are online and some are at professional conferences. They also have a website with free tools. A couple examples of those tools are website templates and then a calculator to help decrease voter wait times.

**Brad Hoff, Host and Recruiting and Training Manager:** [01:45]

In 2020, the Center for Technology and Civic Life or CTCL made election grants available to local election offices throughout the United States. Now specifically in Kansas, 25 Kansas counties applied and received grants totaling \$2.3 million. Talk about how it was determined and the amount of grant funds each county received.

**Macie Smith, Supervisor and Auditor:** [02:13]

So, just as a little bit of background. In 2020, CTCL received a donation of \$350 million from Mark Zuckerberg and Priscilla Chan. They are the co-founders of the

Chan Zuckerberg Initiative. That donation was redistributed by CTCL as election grants. CTCL reported that all legitimate grant applicants received at least \$5,000 in grant funds. So, in Kansas, amounts counties received ranged from \$5,000 to \$856,000. Listeners can look at our report online to see what received grants and how much was granted in each county. So, to answer your question, the counties did not apply for a specific amount. Instead, the CTCL application asked applicants for different demographic information, like the number of registered voters in their county and the size of their election budget. CTCL said they used a formula that considered voting age population and other demographic data from each jurisdiction to determine the amounts.

**Brad Hoff, Host and Recruiting and Training Manager:** [03:37]

What did county officials spend their grant money on?

**Macie Smith, Supervisor and Auditor:** [03:41]

We looked at reports that each county filed with the Center for Tech and Civic Life. As of January 31st, 2020, at that time, in total counties reported using 92% of the \$2.3 million awarded to them. Most of those dollars went to election equipment staffing and real estate expenses. Some examples of the election equipment purchases included social distancing floor decals, poll pads for voter check-in, and a trailer for hauling election equipment. Then examples of staffing expenditures would be hazard pay for those working the election or temporary office help. Then real estate costs included disinfecting at polling locations or renting facilities with space for social distancing. Some of the other uses were related to voting during the COVID-19 pandemic. Those expenses included personal protective equipment like face masks or a parking lot alert system where COVID positive voters signaled their need for assistance.

**Brad Hoff, Host and Recruiting and Training Manager:** [04:56]

By accepting these grants, do counties have any obligations such as matching funds or paying back the grant award?

**Macie Smith, Supervisor and Auditor:** [05:04]

No. We reviewed grant agreements and there were not any obligations. Counties did not need to provide matching funds. They did not need to pay back grant dollars they spent. We also visited with some of the county clerks for the counties where grants were distributed. They reported that there were no strings attached to the funds. Additionally, one clerk told us that CTCL did not direct them how to use the funds and did not suggest vendors.

**Brad Hoff, Host and Recruiting and Training Manager:** [05:36]

Now beginning on July 1st, 2021, the acceptance of private grant money to facilitate or administer any election is prohibited. Talk about this new state law.

**Macie Smith, Supervisor and Auditor:** [05:50]

So, during the 2021 legislative session, that new law was passed. It makes it a felony for officials to accept or spend money to facilitate or administer an election. And that money would be from any person either directly or indirectly. So, under this new

state law, if these grants were offered, now, counties would not be able to accept them.

**Brad Hoff, Host and Recruiting and Training Manager:** [06:17]

What is the main takeaway of the report?

**Macie Smith, Supervisor and Auditor:** [06:21]

The main takeaway is that 25 counties in Kansas accepted grant dollars from the Center for Technology and Civic Life and they used those grants to pay for election related expenses.

**Brad Hoff, Host and Recruiting and Training Manager:** [06:35]

Macie Smith is an auditor at Legislative Post Audit and she recently completed a limited-scope performance audit reviewing the amount received and what, if any, obligations were associated with the Center for Technology and Civic Life grants awarded to Kansas counties. Macie, thanks for joining me today.

**Macie Smith, Supervisor and Auditor:** [06:54]

Thank you for having me.

**Brad Hoff, Host and Recruiting and Training Manager:** [06:55]

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