2018 EAVS Newsletter

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Have a question about the 2018 EAVS? Ask it here and have it answered in an upcoming webinar!

Validating EAVS Data

The EAC seeks to collect the most accurate election data with the EAVS. Because this data is closely tracked by Congress, the public, the media, and other stakeholders, it is critical to ensure that data submissions are correct and complete. This is one of the reasons EAVS validation checks are included during data entry and prior to final data certification. Improving the validation process and making it easier to identify and address potential data issues has been a major goal for 2018.

Both data collection templates for 2018—the Online Template and the Excel Aggregation Template—have numerous validation checks which will flag potential errors as data is entered. In addition, once your initial data is submitted by February 1, we will review the data and send a memo highlighting any potential issues and work with you to correct them before your data is certified on March 1.

Types of Validations

The following are the types of validations you will find in the 2018 EAVS:

- Sum validations: Many items in EAVS ask for a total number and a breakdown of that total into subcategories. In these cases, the validation will highlight when the subcategories do not sum to the total. For example, the total number of voters participating in the 2018 election reported in F1a should match the sum of the number of voters who used different modes of voting (items F1b to F1h).
- Logic validations: An alert will appear if a value is incompatible with a response previously entered in the survey. For example, the number of domestic civilian by-mail votes counted, as reported in C3a, should not exceed the number of domestic civilian by-mail ballots returned by voters, as reported in C1b.
- Confirmation validations: When completing the survey, an alert will appear when items are missing or could have been reported incorrectly. These alerts will help you select the appropriate response among these options:
  - Zeroes: Zeroes should only be reported when your jurisdiction collects data, but the numerical value of zero is the accurate response (e.g., state law allows for provisional balloting, but no voters submitted a provisional ballot, so "0" should be reported for E1a). Zeroes should not be reported when "Does Not Apply" or "Data Not Available" represent a more accurate response.
  - Does Not Apply: This option should only be selected when a question does not apply to your state or jurisdiction (e.g., your state does not allow for online voter registration, so "Does Not Apply" should be selected as the response to A4c).
  - Data Not Available: This option should only be selected when the item is applicable to your jurisdiction but you do not have the data necessary to provide an answer (e.g.

your jurisdiction uses DRE w/o VVPAT but did not track the number of these machines deployed in the election, so "Data Not Available" should be selected as the response to F5c).

- o <u>Blank Responses:</u> Except for comment boxes and "Other" subcategories, all items in the survey require a response. An alert will appear if a response to a required item is not provided. Instead of leaving items blank when you do not have a response to provide, use "Does Not Apply" or "Data Not Available" as appropriate.

Validation Alerts

The appearance of the validation alerts will depend on which data collection template you use. Both templates will highlight items for you to review and give you an opportunity to edit your responses if appropriate.

Excel Aggregation Template

This template will run validations every time the "Error Check" button is clicked in the data entry tab. This will color-code the cells in the data entry tab according to validation type. Additionally, a report containing a list of all identified validation alerts will be generated in a separate tab. This provides users multiple ways to easily identify and address potential issues in their EAVS data.

Online Survey

The online survey will run error checks each time users click the "Continue" button at the bottom of the screen. Any item containing an invalid value or needing further review will be highlighted and a message explaining the error will appear at the top of the page. If multiple errors have been identified on the page, items will be numbered accordingly.

Data Checks After Submission

Additional data checks will occur once you submit your responses on February 1. Some issues we highlight may be false positives and your data may be accurate as you have initially reported it. In other cases, the errors will identify instances where the submitted data doesn't match the required validations or is inconsistent with the data that would be expected:

- Non-addressed data issues: When validation alerts from the data templates are not fully addressed (as discussed below), these will be flagged for further review.
- Missing data: Required items that were left blank will be flagged for further review.
- Policy inconsistencies: If EAVS responses conflict with the information provided in the 2018 Election Administration Policy Survey (Policy Survey) completed by state election offices as a component of the EAVS, these responses will be flagged for review. This will help ensure you are reporting your data in the correct categories. For example, if you indicated in the Policy Survey that your state has no form of same-day voter registration but you provide a numerical response to A2a (same-day registrations), you will be asked to review these responses.
- Trend inconsistencies: Your EAVS responses will be compared to your previous EAVS data and to responses from jurisdictions of similar sizes and population characteristics to help identify data entry errors. If your responses are significantly different from your 2014 data or from responses submitted by similar jurisdictions, they will be flagged for further review.

Ten business days after the February 1 data submission deadline, you will receive a report with a list of data to review. In response to the issues flagged in this report, you may wish to correct your responses or provide further context to explain why your initial responses were correct. Your responses and final data submission are due on March 1.

How to Address Validation Messages

We encourage you to carefully review every validation message you receive. When corrections are warranted, make them directly in the template. If your data submissions are correct but the template still displays a validation message, use the comments boxes appended to each question to explain. This will help the EAC assess and report your data accurately.

This validation process is an essential part of ensuring the 2018 EAVS is the most accurate, complete, and authoritative data source on election administration in the United States. We appreciate the effort that all states and jurisdictions put into providing data.

More EAVS Information Coming Soon

With the 2018 general elections behind us, the EAC is turning its attention to providing support for the EAVS. Keep an eye on the EAVS Portal (https://eavsportal.com/) for documents and videos that will help you prepare to complete this year's survey.