

ElectionGuard

Introduction and Frequently Asked Questions

What is ElectionGuard?

ElectionGuard is a software development kit developed by Microsoft with the intention to increase voter confidence that their ballot counted. It operates by encrypting a voted ballot at the point where it is recorded in the tally. When the ballot is counted and encrypted, the voter receives a printed tracking number and instructions for how to confirm their vote was counted when the election closes.

What are we asking you to do?

Microsoft and the Wisconsin Elections Commission is looking to test the ElectionGuard system in a real election. The pilot would include asking voters to vote using accessible tablet-based ballot marking devices (BMDs), tallying ballots on an optical scan ballot scanner outfitted with the ElectionGuard software, and uploading the results to be available online so that voters can confirm their ballot counted and so that the results could be interrogated for accuracy.

Why are we asking you to pilot ElectionGuard?

To determine if ElectionGuard increases voter confidence in election results, the system must be tested in real life, Election Day scenarios. Microsoft worked with the Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) and Rock County to identify the 2020 Spring Primary in the Town of Fulton as the best time and location where we believe the pilot can be successful.

What support would you receive as a pilot participant?

Microsoft will provide the hardware required to run the election using ElectionGuard and support from their staff on and before Election Day. They will also provide financial assistance to cover the costs associated with preparing a contingency plan. The WEC would provide support in developing training materials, working with Microsoft, and providing staff support at trainings and on Election Day. If other assistance would be helpful, both Microsoft and the WEC are open to the conversation.

ElectionGuard Project Timeline

If the board approves the pilot, the WEC and Microsoft will schedule and support a mock election for the week of December 16. Poll workers and members of the community will be invited to receive an introduction to the project, familiarize themselves with the new hardware, and review the flow through the polling place on Election Day. After gathering feedback from the mock election, training materials would be developed and made available to the voting public ahead of February 1, 2020. In early February, poll workers would be formally trained on the ElectionGuard system.

On Election Day, February 18, 2020, WEC staff and Microsoft would be available to support the poll workers and voters who may have questions or concerns throughout the day. WEC staff would assist in hand counting the ballots at the end of the night which would provide the official results tally.