The Path of Federal Elections Funding

In 2018 and 2020, Congress appropriated a total of $805 million in federal election funding in the form of HAVA Election Security Grants. 52% of the funds have been spent by states.*

Following federal funding from the halls of Congress to local election offices

1. Funds are appropriated by Congress and signed into law by the President.
2. The EAC makes funds available to states.
3. States have three months to gather materials and apply for funds.
4. The EAC processes grant requests within 5 business days.
State appropriates funds to local jurisdictions.
State distributes funds between the state and local levels.
State cannot spend funds.
State spends funding at the state level.

Why aren't funds being spent right away?

1. Legislative Barriers
Various political incentives have created legislative barriers for the use of federal funds for elections in some states.

2. Lack of Matching Funding
Some states have struggled to find money in the state budget to match the federal funds.

3. Slow Spend Rate
The infrequency and irregularity of appropriations makes it rational for states to slow the spend rate.

4. Budgeting for Large Expenses
Large expenses, like new voter registration systems, take years to plan for.

*as of March 2022