



Virginia Department of Elections

# Strategic Plan 2018-2020

## Introduction

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Strategic planning is a process that creates focus for an organization and allows the organization to respond to change while remaining dedicated to its mission and vision. The process itself may have as much value to the organization as the final plan, since so much can be learned from examining both the status of the organization and the state of the environment in which the organization operates.

The Department of Elections strategic plan defines the goals we want to achieve over the next two years, the actions we will undertake to achieve them and how we will measure our progress. The plan will help us function successfully as we work together to accomplish those goals. Each month, the leadership team will conduct a progress review for one of the four goals and its associated objectives, strategies and measures. To ensure that the strategic plan remains relevant and current, the leadership team will conduct a comprehensive plan review on an annual basis and make adjustments as significant changes arise.

During the development of this plan, we were able to gather input from nearly 200 individuals, including general registrars, members of local electoral boards, agency staff and members of the State Board of Elections. Thank you to all who took time to provide your insights and ideas.

## Department of Elections Mission & Vision

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A mission statement defines the purpose of an organization, while a vision statement focuses on what the organization hopes to achieve when operating in an ideal state.

### MISSION

The Department of Elections promotes and supports secure, accurate, fair and open elections for the citizens of the Commonwealth.

### VISION

The Department of Elections envisions a highly modern, efficient and professional electoral process that is secure, trustworthy and uniform at all levels and engages Virginia's diverse citizenry in exercising their right to vote.

## Summary of Strategic Goals

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**Continue to strengthen the security posture of the Commonwealth's election systems.**

**Continually enhance and streamline elections operations and voter experiences.**

**Strengthen partnerships with the elections community.**

**Ensure continuity of internal operations.**

## Goal 1: Continue to strengthen the security posture of the Commonwealth's election systems.

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*While the Commonwealth's elections are secure, bad actors continue to evolve their techniques to disrupt electoral processes. Although new technologies bring opportunities, they also bring new threats. Thus, diligence is required to maintain the security of the election systems.*

### OBJECTIVE 1A

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#### Identify, assess and mitigate external threats and internal vulnerabilities.

*Information system vulnerability is an ongoing issue that requires periodic re-evaluations of system security. Only through commitment and vigilance can the Department manage the challenges and potential threats associated with maintaining data security and adopt effective measures that can reassure voters that their information and their votes are secure.*

#### Responsibility

Chief Information Officer

#### Strategies

- Collaborate with strategic partners on cybersecurity.
- Harden access points to systems.
- Secure the Department's elections infrastructure.

### OBJECTIVE 1B

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#### Promote public awareness to enhance voter confidence.

*Timely communication to citizens can quickly increase public awareness of election-related information and issues and can serve as an effective tool to build and maintain voter confidence in elections and encourage voter participation.*

#### Responsibility

Director of Community Relations and Compliance Support

#### Strategies

- Conduct meaningful, post-election audits.
- Effectively communicate elections security actions taken in the Commonwealth.

### OBJECTIVE 1C

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#### Implement industry best standards at the state and local level.

*Election professionals across the country are making great strides in modernizing and improving their election systems by investing in relevant technologies and implementing the most effective security strategies. Analyzing and adopting these best practices in Virginia can help our electoral processes remain effective and resilient to emerging challenges.*

#### Responsibility

Chief Information Officer

#### Strategy

- Manage Department and third-party compliance with Virginia Information Technologies Agency security policies and Center for Internet Security best practices.

## Goal 2: Continually enhance and streamline elections operations and voter experiences.

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*Virginia currently ranks third in the nation in the Pew Charitable Trust's Elections Performance Index. We want to continue Virginia's leadership role in elections by making elections more accessible and making the voting process easier. We want voters to feel that their continued participation in our electoral process is important and makes a difference.*

### OBJECTIVE 2A

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#### Expand access to elections.

*Voting is one of the most basic and important rights in a democratic society. When voters make their voices heard, they are able to change the course of their communities and society as a whole. To increase civic participation, it is important to make the voting process more streamlined and accessible to a wider audience of voters.*

#### Responsibility

Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner

#### Strategy

- Work with the General Assembly and the elections community to explore ways to expand access to elections.

### OBJECTIVE 2B

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#### Utilize new technologies and methodologies to support election administration.

*The electoral process relies on a variety of technologies. Ensuring the ongoing functionality of the technology infrastructure is vital to the process. The Department of Elections will employ proven methods to identify, prioritize and successfully implement information technology projects.*

#### Responsibility

Chief Information Officer

#### Strategies

- Prioritize information technology resources using the Information Technology Investment Management (ITIM) portfolio.
- Implement the Software Development Life Cycle (SDLC) process.

### OBJECTIVE 2C

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#### Ensure voter experiences are consistent across the Commonwealth.

*Consistency in the way elections are administered across the Commonwealth ensures fairness in voting. Today's voters have a right to expect that voting processes are consistent and fair across all of Virginia's localities.*

#### Responsibility

Election Services Director

#### Strategies

- Standardize protocols and procedures in elections operations.
- Conduct an annual review of the elections code to identify areas for improvement.
- Establish protocols for conveying election-related information to the public and the press.

## **Goal 3: Strengthen partnerships with the elections community.**

*Having secure, accurate, fair and open elections requires the work of many people throughout the Commonwealth. Effective collaboration between the Department of Elections and the election officials who work in each of Virginia's localities is vital for success.*

### **OBJECTIVE 3A**

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#### **Expand and enhance delivery of learning opportunities to elections officials.**

*The elections process is constantly changing due to new legislation, changes in technology and changes in the people who administer elections. Developing new ways to deliver training to the elections community will keep them at the forefront of legal and technological developments.*

##### **Responsibility**

Election Services Director

##### **Strategies**

- Explore alternative training methods and locations.
- Standardize training.
- Develop training targeted to specific issues.

### **OBJECTIVE 3B**

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#### **Strengthen collaboration and mutual accountability between the Department and local election officials.**

*Collaborative work between the Department and local election officials is necessary to address unique challenges that may arise in Virginia's election system. These efforts can also produce specific recommendations to legislators that can help them work to benefit their constituents.*

##### **Responsibility**

Commissioner

##### **Strategies**

- Apply the findings from the Virginia Elections Benchmark Index Workgroup to better measure what a successful election looks like.
- Provide timely and accurate communications and customer service.

## Goal 4: Ensure continuity of internal operations.

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*Although changes in leadership and staff are a natural part of any organization, these changes should not cause disruption. To minimize disruption of internal operations when these changes occur, the Department will maintain documented procedures and protocols and ensure institutional knowledge is shared among staff.*

### OBJECTIVE 4A

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#### Maintain a focus on priorities.

*There are times when day-to-day operations can be interrupted by unexpected challenges. It is important that Elections staff members are able to maintain their focus on our mission and prioritize critical operational functions as challenging circumstances arise.*

#### Responsibility

Commissioner

#### Strategy

- Conduct scheduled reviews of agency operations.

### OBJECTIVE 4B

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#### Preserve and share institutional knowledge.

*Elections benefit from institutional knowledge, so the Department of Elections must build and maintain a system where institutional knowledge is carried on, despite staffing changes. Cross-training will be used by the Department to encourage uniformity and consistency in job functions.*

#### Responsibility

Department Leaders

#### Strategies

- Document and maintain procedures.
- Develop and provide cross training.
- Assess the knowledge, skills and abilities of staff.

### OBJECTIVE 4C

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#### Ensure adequate resources and staffing levels.

*The productivity of an organization depends significantly on having adequate funding and on the effective recruitment and maintenance of talented people to perform the work. Voters need to trust that their tax dollars are being used responsibly. Successful management of resources requires identifying and addressing the needs of an organization, while simultaneously avoiding and reducing waste.*

#### Responsibility

Business Manager

#### Strategies

- Acquire, train and retain talent.
- Establish a process to periodically assess long-term agency needs.

## Measures

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The following measures will be used to monitor progress in achieving the objectives and goals outlined in this strategic plan. The measures address a broad range of topics from election security to training for Department staff and election officials. The Benchmark Index, combined with measures 5 and 6, will address the effectiveness of key steps in the electoral process.

Measures	Linked to Objectives:
1. % of locality cybersecurity plans submitted and approved by the Department of Elections	1A
2. % of localities participating in post-election audits	1B
3. % compliance with Center for Internet Security Elections Infrastructure Security Best Practices	1C
4. % of approved service requests with a priority rating assigned within one Governance Team meeting cycle	2B
5. % of provisional ballots rejected	2C
6. Number of voter registrations denied for incomplete information	2C
7. Number of learning events offered to local election officials online	3A
8. Benchmark Index results	3B
9. Average annual training hours/employee	4B
10. Agency employee retention rate	4C