



Strategic Plan

2018-2022

U.S. Election
Assistance
Commission



Executive Summary

Mission Statement

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission helps election officials improve the administration of elections and helps Americans participate in the voting process.

Vision Statement

A trusted, proactive, and responsive federal agency that helps election officials administer and voters participate in elections.

FY18-FY19 Agency Priority Goals

1. Contribute to the cyber-resilience of the American election administration system.
2. Assist voters with disabilities as they participate in the 2018 midterms.
3. Adopt a new version of the EAC's Voluntary Voting System Guidelines and educate EAC stakeholders on the implementation of the new version.
4. Actively engage stakeholders and the stakeholder groups that represent them.

The above Agency Priority Goals were designed to focus the agency's work on certain priorities while working towards the Strategic Goals listed on the following page. These Priority Goals are subject to change on an annual basis, per the priority and objectives of each chairperson.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

For the years of 2018 to 2022, the EAC has four strategic goals and 13 strategic objectives.



Strategic Goal 1 Analyze: Expand the nation's comprehensive understanding of American election administration.

Objective 1.1

Continue to expand the EAC's existing in-depth understanding of the administration of American elections.

Objective 1.2

Help others contribute to the nation's understanding of American election administration.

Objective 1.3

Leverage the EAC's research to guide agency decision-making.



Strategic Goal 2 Build: Proactively and responsively create products that help election officials improve the administration of elections and help voters more easily participate in elections.

Objective 2.1

Continually create resources that help election officials improve the administration of elections and help voters participate in elections.

Objective 2.2

Responsively create resources that respond to newly arising needs of election officials and voters.



Strategic Goal 3 Distribute: Help election officials improve the administration of American elections through the distribution of EAC assistance and products.

Objective 3.1

Effectively and efficiently distribute federal resources to EAC stakeholders.

Objective 3.2

Serve as an expert on the administration of American elections.

Objective 3.3

Regularly distribute EAC products on timelines that align with stakeholder needs.

Objective 3.4

Distribute EAC assistance through methods designed to facilitate stakeholder use.



Strategic Goal 4 Operate: Ensure continued effective operation of the EAC in order to achieve its goals while acting as good stewards of public funds.

Objective 4.1

Contribute positively and effectively to the federal government through active contribution and compliance.

Objective 4.2

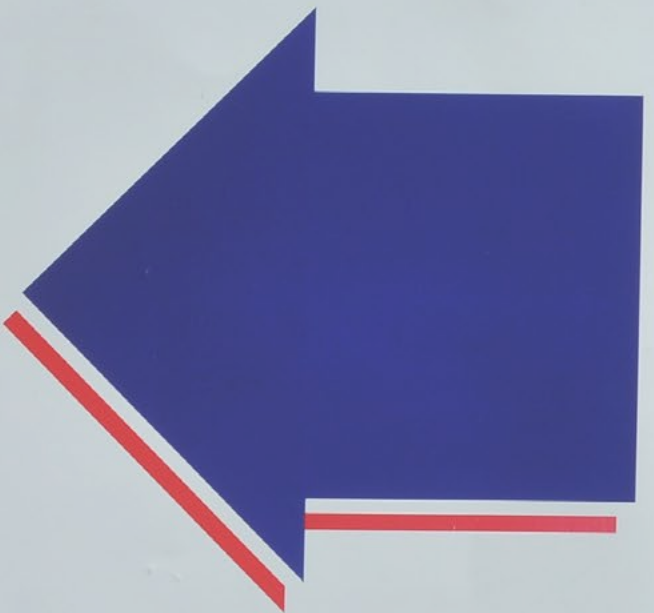
Continue to build a skilled, diverse, and effective workforce that ensures the EAC has the human capital needed to achieve its mission.

Objective 4.3

Develop and continue to manage internal structures and tools that produce a culture of innovation and a driven workforce.

Objective 4.4

Institutionalize an increased level of strategic and cross-agency thinking.



VOTE

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Introduction

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) was created to help improve American election administration. Congress charged the EAC with a set of wide-ranging, yet distinct, duties that have since been expanded through subsequent legislation. In its earliest days, the agency's work focused on helping states transition from punch-card and lever voting machines to more modern electronic vote tabulation systems. This work included disbursing and auditing more than \$3 billion in federal funds and payments to states, establishing national voluntary voting system guidelines and a voting system testing program, creating a new national clearinghouse for election administration, and conducting research on election administration.

Much has changed since the agency was created, and the EAC's mission remains relevant and critical. Today, election technology is more advanced and complex. Election systems face cyber and physical threats from both nation-state actors and individuals. Election officials must be prepared to defend their systems against a broad spectrum of potential threats, as well as navigate the complexities that stem from other factors such as social media, increasing media attention, and increasingly fluctuating populations.

Today, the EAC carries its charge to assist and to support the nation's election officials and the voters they serve. This work is essential to elections, which are the cornerstone of American democracy.

Agency Structure

The EAC is a legislatively created independent federal Commission. It consists of four Commissioners, EAC professional staff, and the EAC's Inspector General. The agency also has three federal advisory committees: the EAC Board of Advisors, the EAC Standards Board, and the EAC Technical Guidelines Development Committee. The EAC has two Congressional Oversight Committees, the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on House Administration and the U.S. Senate Rules and Administration Committee.

The EAC's four Commissioners are Presidential appointees selected upon recommendation of Congressional leadership and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. The agency's chartering legislation, the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), provides for appointment of two Commissioners by the majority party and two Commissioners by the minority party. This helps to ensure the agency works to achieve its mission in a bi-partisan manner.

The EAC's professional staff members possess expertise in election administration, election technology, management, communications, law, federal compliance, federal grant management, and finance. The size of the EAC's professional staff has varied since the agency's inception. At the time of this plan's drafting, the EAC's professional staff consisted of 28 full time staff members.

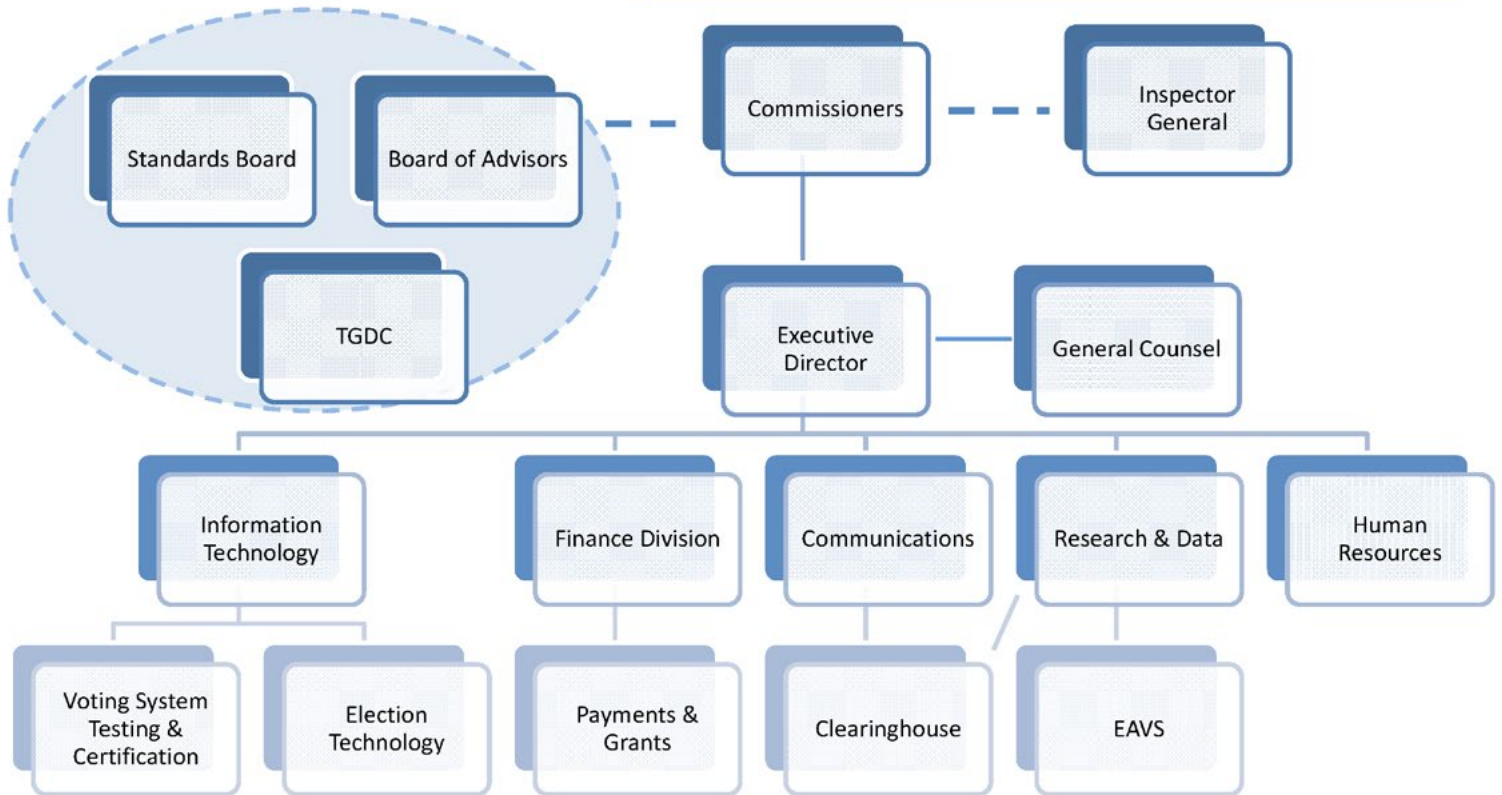
The EAC's three advisory boards represent a broad set of EAC stakeholders, and each board makes distinct, statutorily mandated contributions to the EAC's work. The EAC Standards Board consists of 55 state elections officials selected by their respective chief state election official and 55 local election officials selected through a process supervised by the chief state election official. The EAC Board of Advisors consists of 35¹ members who represent specific interests in the field of elections. The EAC Technical Guidelines Development Committee (TGDC) assists the EAC in developing its Voluntary Voting System Guidelines. It is composed of 14 members, selected for their technical and subject matter expertise.

The EAC's organizational chart is located on the following page.

¹ HAVA prescribes 37 members to constitute the Board of Advisors. However, two member organizations merged in 2016 resulting in a revised membership of 35.

Agency Organizational Chart

U.S. Election Assistance Commission



Performance Management Framework

This strategic plan includes four strategic goals designed to drive the agency toward achieving its mission. Each strategic goal has been assigned one or two goal leads. The goal leads are Director-or-above-level EAC professional staff members who are charged with leading the agency's efforts toward achieving an assigned strategic goal. The goal leads are selected based on commonality between the activities contained within a goal, the purpose of a goal, and the focus of the goal lead's day-to-day work.

The goal leads are charged with implementing agency strategies, coordinating processes, and working across divisions in order to achieve strategic goals. EAC leadership will support and manage through the goal leads to ensure achievement of the strategic objectives. Goal leads are provided flexibility to leverage their individual expertise in pursuing each strategy. EAC leadership's role is to ensure appropriate progress is made and the necessary resources are provided to ensure success. As necessary, EAC leadership will work with goal leads to modify components of this plan to ensure the agency is consistently achieving its mission.

Implementation and Operation of This Plan

The EAC will implement this plan in four stages. First, the agency will continue its current operations while building the new processes, procedures, and plans set forth in this document. Second, the agency will implement these new processes, procedures, and plans and begin to operate using these tools. Third, the agency will evaluate its processes, procedures, and the overall plan on an ongoing basis to measure effectiveness and efficiency. Fourth, the agency will make changes to the agency's programs, processes, procedures, and this strategic plan when necessary.

Strategic Goal 1

Analyze

Expand the nation's comprehensive understanding of American election administration.

Overview

When the EAC was created, it inherited the long-standing duty of analyzing American election administration in order to facilitate the federal government's efforts to both help election officials better administer elections and help voters participate in elections. This is no small task. America does not have one singular election administration system. Instead, it has thousands of semi-autonomous, independently acting election jurisdictions, each with their own processes and procedures. To understand American election administration, one must understand the thousands of moving components, including the many items measured and tracked by the EAC.

Today, the EAC's analysis produces a number of different research products. Most notable is the Election Administration & Voting Survey (EAVS). The EAC's EAVS is the most comprehensive survey of American election administration information, data, and practices in the country. The EAC publishes a new survey every two years following federal general elections. It contains more than one million data points, and it provides a national insight into how American elections are administered.

In Goal 1 the EAC plans to conduct essential election administration research and to increase the value that the agency and its stakeholders receive from the EAVS by making the data more accessible and easy to use.

The EAC also recognizes the need to engage others in studying election administration. The EAC will work with outside researchers to ensure their work contributes to and expands both the federal government's and the election administration community's understanding of how elections are administered.

In the past the EAC has worked alongside public and private researchers to produce research and tools for election officials. In today’s time of expanded access to data and data processing power, the EAC will engage and partner with others to help the nation better understand its own elections. More detailed information about this objective and its strategies is listed in Objective 1.2 below.

The agency will also use the EAVS and other research to inform its strategic planning and to produce innovative products for election officials and voters. The EAVS was first administered in 2004 and has been conducted every two years since then. Each time the EAVS is completed, the agency gains more complete and accurate data, which allows it to track trends over a growing period of time and provide more insights into election administration. This work is discussed in greater detail in objective 1.3.

<p>Objective 1.1</p> <p>Continue to expand the EAC’s existing in-depth understanding of the administration of American elections.</p>	<p>Objective 1.2</p> <p>Help others contribute to the nation’s understanding of American election administration.</p>	<p>Objective 1.3</p> <p>Leverage the EAC’s research to guide agency decision-making.</p>
<p>Goal Lead</p> <p>Director of EAC’s Research & Data Division</p> <p>Contributing Divisions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Information Technology <p>Contributing Products and Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EAC Election Administration and Voting Survey • EAC’s Voting System Testing & Certification Program • Ongoing research of election administration best practices 		<p>Indicators of Success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of EAVS data that produces insights into U.S. election administration • Successfully create tools to make both responding to the EAVS and analyzing EAVS data easier • Increases in the number of entities providing information, research, and data related to American election administration • Improvement in the quality of data collected related to American election administration • Ability to use EAC research to better design EAC assistance

Objective 1.1

Continue to expand the EAC's existing in-depth understanding of the administration of American elections.

Congress mandates the EAC collect data relating to a number of election administration practices and research a variety of election administration issues. The EAC's principle product in this area is the above-mentioned EAVS, first administered in 2004 and every two years since. It has improved in quality over time. Both the quality of data and the number of jurisdictions responding to the survey improved. This increase in quality has now begun to allow for trend analysis. The EAC published its most recent EAVS report in 2017.

Congress also mandates the EAC administer a national clearinghouse of election administration practices and information. To administer this clearinghouse, the agency researches and collects information about practices of election officials and the needs of voters. This information often includes best practices, quick-start guides, and educational documents. The EAC then uses its website and other communications portals to publish and promote this information.

Through Objective 1.1, the EAC plans to continue this research and contribute to the nation's understanding of the administration of American elections.

Examples of contributing EAC Tactics and Programs

- Leveraging EAVS data for subsequent research
- Collecting and analyzing best practices for administering elections

Strategy for achieving objective 1.1

To achieve this objective, the EAC will continue to conduct its congressionally mandated research, increase the extent that it capitalizes on existing research programs and products, and generate opportunities for new EAC-led research.

The EAC has recently improved its capacity to leverage its existing research. This capacity will allow the agency to expand its ability to develop and produce new trend analysis. The Commission will then use this analysis to provide increasingly robust tools and guidance to election officials and voters as they administer and participate in the nation's elections.

The EAC will also conduct non-EAVS research, which includes understanding best practices in election administration, the needs of voters, and methods for better serving election officials and voters. This information is regularly used by stakeholders.

The last prong of the EAC's strategy for this objective is to regularly evaluate the state of the EAC's research to determine if the agency is conducting the most relevant research needed to achieve its mission. When necessary, evaluations can spur the creation of new research initiatives. In conducting this analysis and by responding to it through research plans, the EAC will help to ensure that the agency is collecting the data it needs to provide quality assistance to election officials, voters, and the federal government.

Objective 1.2

Help others contribute to the nation's understanding of American election administration.

Objective 1.2 is designed to drive the agency to increase the number of people and organizations that are able to conduct ongoing research about and contribute to the research of election administration.

The EAC has worked with public and private institutions to help others better understand election administration data and to produce cybersecurity readiness tools for election officials. The EAC also works with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to support research on election system usability and accessibility. This objective takes this work one step further. Through Objective 1.2, the EAC plans to help others actively contribute to the national understanding through the provision of data, alignment of data formats, and easing the reporting burden on stakeholders.

Strategy for achieving objective 1.2

To achieve Objective 1.2, the EAC plans to (1) build, maintain, and employ strategic partnerships with governmental and non-governmental entities and (2) make it easier for election officials to research and report meaningful election administration data on an ongoing basis.

Developing and maintaining partnerships is a crucial component of working with others to contribute to the national understanding of elections. Through these partnerships, the agency can coordinate research efforts, capitalize on its national perspective, and use its relationships with election officials to help the research community produce more analysis.

The EAC also plans to help election officials find easier and more efficient ways to collect and report data. Potential tactics for this work include the use of common data formats, as well as the building and deployment of tools that make it easier to report data. These tools may include an online portal for collecting EAVS information or linked systems that automatically report EAVS data.

Objective 1.3

Leverage the EAC's research to guide agency decision-making.

Through this objective, the EAC will regularly communicate with its stakeholders and employ the EAVS and other research to identify trends in stakeholders' needs and activities. The EAC will use these trends to inform the agency's strategic planning and product development decision-making, as well as better forecast needs of election officials and voters.

Strategy for achieving objective 1.3

To achieve this objective, the EAC will learn about its stakeholders in four ways and then use this knowledge to inform the agency's decision-making. First, the EAC plans to utilize its internal expertise of election administration, as well as its engagement with external stakeholders, to forecast likely stakeholder needs.

Through its human capital planning efforts, the EAC has and will continue to recruit employees with experience in administering elections. The agency plans to draw on this resource and work to use its human capital planning efforts to ensure this competency is sustained and further developed. Recognizing that election administration is ever-changing, the EAC also plans to supplement its internal knowledge by continuing its active stakeholder engagement strategy.

Second, the EAC will work with its three advisory boards to gather information about its stakeholders' needs. The advisory boards are comprised of election officials, representatives of organizations that reflect stakeholder interests, and technical experts from fields relating to election administration and technology.

Third, the EAC will further its efforts to engage its stakeholders in person. Upon their appointment, the current EAC Commissioners made it a top priority to embark on a national listening tour to understand the needs of election officials and voters around the country. The EAC will engage with and listen to its stakeholders to obtain a true understanding of their needs.

Fourth, the EAC will apply its ability to analyze trends in the EAVS survey and employ new research tools to understand stakeholder needs and inform the agency's strategic and operational planning. This understanding will inform the agency of the likely needs of its stakeholders, which products the agency should produce and share, and where the agency should deploy resources.

The EAC will use the knowledge of its stakeholders and their needs to align the agency's processes and planning efforts in a way that helps the agency produce assistance that responds to stakeholder needs. One tactic the agency started in 2017 was to create a monthly thematic focus for the agency's public-facing work aligned with election officials' activities and current needs. For example, the agency plans to help with poll worker recruitment. Election officials must continually recruit and train poll workers, and they generally do this in the spring months in advance of a general or mid-term federal election. Because election officials will administer a midterm election in 2018, the EAC will produce revised guidance for election officials that provides them with best practices in poll worker recruitment and training in April of 2018.

While some topics lend themselves to a "monthly" focus, there are other issues that trend throughout an election year. For example, cybersecurity is currently at the forefront of much of the work that the EAC does for its stakeholders and an agency Priority Goal for FY 2018 – FY 2019. In 2016, election officials faced a new adversary. Under this plan, the EAC plans to emphasize cybersecurity across its programmatic activities so long as it is a pressing need of its stakeholders.

Strategic Goal 2

Build

Proactively and responsively create products that help election officials improve the administration of elections and help voters more easily participate in elections

Overview

Through HAVA, Congress charged the EAC with serving its stakeholders through four activities: (1) creating and managing the nation's clearinghouse of information on election administration data and practices, (2) creating national guidelines for voting systems, (3) creating and administering a testing program through which manufacturers may have their voting systems tested, certified, and de-certified to those guidelines, and (4) researching election administration practices and information. While these efforts are congressionally mandated, the EAC understands that its work is most impactful when it is designed with specific stakeholders and their use of the products in mind. Strategic Goal 2 reflects the agency's dedication to continually achieving its mission by producing assistance that measurably helps to improve America's elections.

The EAC will provide this assistance through four types of products for its stakeholders: (1) updated voluntary voting system guidelines (VVSG) that meet the needs of both elections officials and voters; (2) a voting system testing program that provides assurance and confidence that all voting systems that receive EAC certification conform to the applicable version of the VVSG; (3) research products that help election officials improve the administration of their elections through data, information, and best-practices; and (4) a national voter registration form for registering to vote in federal elections. Each category aims to meet a unique EAC stakeholder need in a way that adds value and improves the election process.

HAVA mandates that the EAC produce the VVSG and certify voting systems that conform to these standards and decertify voting systems that

no longer meet these standards. Voting systems are used to define ballots, cast and count votes, report or display election results, and maintain and produce any audit trail information. Voters expect and election officials must provide voting systems that are accurate, auditable, secure, usable, and accessible regardless of an individual voter's abilities or English proficiency. While the EAC's voting system testing and certification program is a voluntary program, most states use it or the VVSG in some way prior to procuring a voting system. More information about this program and how the EAC plans to use it in the coming years is found in Objective 2.1 and Objective 2.1's strategy.

The EAC's third type of product - the agency's work to find commonality, identify best practices, anticipate needs, and drill down on policies and procedures that data show improve elections - gives jurisdictions access to a robust clearinghouse of election administration information and ideas. These resources aim to make it unnecessary for election officials to "reinvent the wheel" as they research the best ways to serve their voters.

EAC products address two types of stakeholder needs, predictable and unforeseen. Predictable needs are needs that election officials and voters experience on a recurring basis. Examples include poll worker management and voter registration list management. These needs are generally consistent for EAC stakeholders. The Commission will use the understanding it develops under Strategic Goal 1 to identify these needs and produce helpful products in advance of their occurrence. These products are discussed in more detail under Objective 2.1.

EAC stakeholders also have unforeseen needs that cannot be forecasted by analyzing trends in data. Examples of unforeseen needs are responses to natural disasters and requirements created by new legislation. To address these needs and help assure EAC stakeholders that the agency will help them when these needs arise, the EAC will create and follow repeatable procedures for creating products that meet these needs. In this way, a stakeholder can have confidence that when an unpredicted event affects American election administration, the EAC will be able to help stakeholders navigate the situation using assistance that is available on a predictable timeline.

Objective 2.1

Continually create resources that help election officials improve the administration of elections and help voters participate in elections.

Objective 2.2

Responsively create resources that respond to newly arising needs of election officials and voters.

Goal Leads

- Director of EAC's Research & Data Division
- Director of EAC's Testing and Certification Program

Contributing Divisions

- Communications
- Finance
- Information Technology

Indicators of Success

- The production of designed assistance products created to fulfill specific needs of EAC stakeholders
- Feedback from stakeholders indicating ease of use and implementation
- Rates of use for products by the stakeholder group that the product was intended to serve

Examples of Contributing Products and Programs:

- EAC's Voting System Testing & Certification Program
- EAC's Voluntary Voting System Guidelines
- EAC's Election Administration Clearinghouse
- EAC's Election Administration and Voting Survey
- EAC's Election Officials as IT manager classes
- EAC's guidance products for managing election technology.
- National Voter Registration Form
- EAC's Payments & Grants Program

Objective 2.1

Continually create resources that help election officials improve the administration of elections and help voters participate in elections.

Some of the EAC's stakeholders' needs are reasonably predictable. Since federal elections generally follow consistent cycles, the EAC can look to its research and stakeholders to identify these needs in advance. An example is the above mentioned poll worker recruitment and management as a consistent need of election officials. Other predictable needs include maintenance of voter rolls, procurement of election technology, cybersecurity, and voter registration. Voters also have consistent needs, such as knowledge of the voter registration process, understanding of accessibility laws, contact information for their local and state election officials, and education on the voting process. The EAC has long provided support on these topics through its congressional mandates. This has included election administration guidance documents, roundtable discussions about best practices, webinars, publication of research on election administration, and dissemination of voting rights information cards to voters.

The EAC also provides a critical service to the nation's election officials by providing resources that assist with the procurement and deployment of election systems, which is one of the most consistent needs of American elections officials. This assistance is driven by the EAC's Testing and Certification Program, including the EAC's VVSG, testing laboratory accreditation process, and the voting system testing and certification program.

The VVSG is the only national set of government guidelines for testing and certifying voting systems. It sets minimum standards for voting system functionality, security, usability and accessibility. Manufacturers build voting systems to these standards and then submit them to EAC accredited labs for testing. The labs test the systems against the requirements of the VVSG to ensure that submitted systems conform to the VVSG. The EAC oversees this testing process and ultimately certifies voting systems that meet the guidelines.

Through the agency's pursuit of Objective 2.1, the EAC plans to consistently produce assistance for its stakeholders as they meet their recurring needs.

Examples of relevant EAC Products and Programs

- EAC's Voting System Testing & Certification
- Critical Infrastructure Educational Information
- Introduction to Information Technology for Election Officials Classes

Strategy for achieving objective 2.1

To achieve Objective 2.1, the EAC will employ the insight that it generates under Objective 1.3 to help identify products that will be needed by EAC stakeholders. Next, the agency will use this information to build products that will help its stakeholders administer and participate in elections. The types of products for voters and election officials are detailed below.

Products for Voters

The EAC plans to continue to assist voters, including those facing unique challenges such as voters with disabilities, voters with limited English proficiency, and voters who are in the military or who live overseas. In fact, the EAC has made serving voters with disabilities one of its Agency Priority Goals for FY 2018 – FY 2019. In the past, the EAC has produced cards that list the rights of voters with disabilities in braille and other accessible formats, created forums for voters with disabilities to voice their needs and contribute to the voluntary voting system guidelines, and conducted language access summits where the EAC convened experts in accessibility for voters with limited English proficiency.

Products for Election Officials

The EAC will continue to create products that help election officials administer their elections. While stakeholder engagement and data-driven decision making, detailed in Objective 1.3, will guide the products produced by the EAC for election officials, the agency plans to focus on:

- Voting system testing;
- Operational and planning guidance for election officials;
- Cybersecurity;
- Highlighting best practices using the EAC's Clearies Awards;
- Leveraging EAVS data to create more products;
- Improving quality of and increasing the number of products related to voter-facing election information;

- Exploring the possibility of integrating outside datasets into the EAC's work products;
- Improving the usability and accessibility of EAVS data;
- Producing Quality Management Audit reports on the voting system manufacturing and testing processes;
- Producing Test Plans, Test Reports, and Certificate of Conformance for voting systems that conform to the applicable version of the VVSG;
- Producing election system user guides and training materials for election officials and voters to better understand the technology used in election administration; and
- Producing best practices on election technology management, including procurement, security, and critical infrastructure.

Cybersecurity Further Detailed

As mentioned above, the EAC identifies cybersecurity readiness as a predictable and consistent need and an Agency Priority Goal for FY 2018 – FY 2019. The EAC plans to emphasize it across its programmatic activities. Among the agency's planned activities to meet this need are creating and distributing cybersecurity best practices, continuing to participate in and lead the Department of Homeland Security's Critical Infrastructure Government Coordinating Council, ensuring cybersecurity's representation in the EAC's VVSG, and facilitating cybersecurity information sharing.

Voting System Testing and Certification Further Detailed

As the agency looks to the next four years, it will continue providing its voting system testing and certification program. The EAC also will work to update and improve the VVSG to ensure that it provides a modern set of principles and guidelines that are reflective of the current state of technology and needs of election officials. Updating the VVSG is one of the EAC's Agency Priority Goals for FY 2018 – FY 2019.

In 2017, the EAC submitted the draft VVSG 2.0, the newest version of the VVSG, to the agency's advisory boards. The structure and the content of this set of guidelines are reflective of the ever-changing nature of technology. The next step is for the EAC advisory boards and the public to provide comment on the draft VVSG 2.0. Once this process is completed, the Commissioners will vote on the new guidelines. If approved, the EAC will shift resources to educating election officials and voting system manufacturers about the contents of the VVSG requirements, as well as re-accrediting labs to test voting systems against VVSG 2.0. This educational effort will be on-going as manufacturers develop new systems to the new standard and then submit their voting systems for testing. Guidelines

flexible enough to allow for technological innovation are crucial for allowing advancements in technology to filter down into election systems, and the EAC is dedicated to ensuring its Testing and Certification Program promotes innovation.

Objective 2.2

Responsively create resources that respond to newly arising needs of election officials and voters.

Election administration is a fast-moving field with strict deadlines. Elections happen on statutorily mandated timelines, and the EAC's election official stakeholders must meet these deadlines regardless of outside events that may impact their operations. For example, when Hurricane Sandy hit the Northeast in 2012, election officials still needed to administer their elections and were allotted no flexibility in scheduling the election. In circumstances such as this, the EAC must be able to support its stakeholders in a predictable manner so that they can have a trusted, federal resource on their side.

Relevant EAC Divisions and Programs

- EAC's Voting System Testing & Certification Program
- Introduction to Information Technology for Election Officials Classes

Strategy for achieving objective 2.2

To achieve this objective, the EAC plans to supply predictable support through repeatable procedures and processes. The EAC will create and follow these procedures and processes when addressing an unpredicted need. Election officials will be able to have confidence that the EAC can and will address arising issues within a predictable time period after a need occurs and will provide valuable assistance.

To create the process, the agency will weigh its operational capacity, the consistent financial and human capital requirements of ongoing activities, and the typical stakeholder need for expedience in these situations. After weighing this information, the EAC will design a process that it can use to produce assistance when responding to newly arising and unpredictable needs. Then the EAC will create assistance products using this process. The agency will regularly analyze the efficacy of this approach and adapt the process when feedback indicates that improvement could be made to better serve the agency's stakeholders.

Strategic Goal 3

Distribute

Help election officials improve the administration of American elections through the distribution of EAC assistance and products.

Overview

When the EAC was created, grant disbursement was one of the Commission's most impactful programs. Today, the agency still administers, manages, and audits grants and payments to the states, and the agency also distributes the resources that are produced under Strategic Goal 2 to its stakeholders. In addition, the agency is seen as a federal authority on American elections by the media, other components of the federal government, EAC stakeholders, and international election organizations. In this role, the agency uses its expertise to bring data-driven analysis to conversations about issues affecting elections and the products produced under Strategic Goal 2 to its stakeholders.

To meet this goal, the EAC plans to analyze its stakeholders' preferred mediums and methods for receiving information and resources. The EAC will then use this information to guide and design the agency's products, identified in Strategic Goal 2. Success is achieved when the format of the EAC's products matches the preferences of the EAC's stakeholders, who are able to use these resources to improve the administration of elections or their own voter experience.

In order to accomplish effective distribution of EAC assistance, there are four objectives that the EAC plans to pursue. First, the EAC will effectively and efficiently distribute existing federal resources to its stakeholders. Second, the EAC will continue to serve as an expert in the administration of American elections in order to facilitate the distribution of EAC assistance. Third, the EAC will continually distribute EAC assistance products on timelines that align with stakeholder needs. Fourth, the EAC plans to

distribute assistance through methods designed to facilitate stakeholder uses.

Distribution of assistance is core to the mission of the EAC, and it will long be a significant portion of the agency’s activities. Through the pursuit of these four objectives and Strategic Goal 3, the agency plans to improve the efficacy of this long-standing responsibility of the agency and bring more value to election officials and voters.

Objective 3.1

Effectively and efficiently distribute federal resources to EAC stakeholders.

Objective 3.2

Serve as an expert on the administration of American elections.

Objective 3.3

Regularly distribute EAC products on timelines that align with stakeholders’ needs.

Objective 3.4

Distribute EAC assistance through methods designed to facilitate stakeholder use.

Goal Lead

Director of EAC’s Communications Division

Contributing Divisions

- Research & Data
- Information Technology
- Finance

Contributing Products and Programs

- EAC’s Voting System Testing & Certification Program
- EAC’s Election Administration Clearinghouse
- EAC’s Payments & Grants Program

Indicators of Success

- Usage of EAC assistance - Identifiable through feedback from EAC stakeholders
- Ability to design and distribute EAC products - Identifiable through feedback from EAC staff and self-surveying metrics
- Ability of the Communications and Public Affairs Division to provide front-end guidance regarding the design of EAC products in Strategic Goal 2 programs - Identifiable through feedback and self-surveying metrics
- Increased rates of reception of EAC products through designed distribution mediums

Objective 3.1

Effectively and efficiently distribute federal resources to EAC stakeholders.

The EAC's mission requires it to distribute a broad spectrum of resources to stakeholders on an ongoing basis. This distribution has historically been one of the most impactful EAC activities. Through Strategic Goal 3 and Objective 3.1, the EAC commits to continuing this distribution and conducting it in an effective and efficient manner. The EAC will consistently distribute available federal funding for the administration of elections, assistance products designed and built under Strategic Goal 2, resources produced by other federal entities that may help EAC stakeholders, current research and information regarding election administration, and information about the EAC as an agency that works to improve election administration in the United States.

Examples of contributing EAC Tactics and Programs

- EAC Clearinghouse Program
- EAC Payments & Grants Program
- EAC.gov
- EAC blogs and white papers

Strategy for achieving objective 3.1

The EAC plans to distribute resources to its stakeholders both directly and indirectly. The EAC's direct distribution of resources to stakeholders will focus primarily on two types of federal resources. The first is federally allocated grants and payments to states for the administration of elections. The second is EAC assistance products designed to help the agency's stakeholders understand and improve the administration of elections in the U.S.

For the first type of resource, the EAC plans to continue to use its existing Grants

Division to disburse the federal funds to states. This division has a history of successful disbursement and auditing of these funds, and the agency plans to continue its past efforts and methodologies.

To distribute the EAC's assistance products, the EAC plans to distribute messages and products directly to its stakeholders. The EAC will provide election officials and voters with an opportunity to sign-up for a newsletter, mailing list, or alert notifications. Through these channels, the EAC will distribute updates and new resources by means that allow the agency to measure open rates and impact. As always, in its role as the nation's clearinghouse on election administration, the EAC will also distribute assistance, prior conducted research, and help the agency's stakeholders upon their request.

To indirectly distribute EAC resources to agency stakeholders, the agency plans to use channels that the stakeholders prefer. The majority of the tactics for fulfilling this strategy will involve the use of technology, the press, and the agency's advisory boards. The EAC will post new products to its website in order to provide a central clearinghouse of EAC's information as required in HAVA. The agency will seek to distribute these products on other platforms, such as a listserve for local election officials or via an outside group. The EAC will also disseminate resources to its advisory board members, who represent a large portion of American election administration interests. This will enable the board members to voluntarily pass the resources along to their networks and serve as key validators for the agency, enhancing the Commission's ability to penetrate local markets that may be skeptical of federal assistance. The goal is to identify key audiences, figure out where they prefer to get their information, and tap into that channel as a key method of distributing agency resources.

Distribution of assistance is critical to the EAC's mission because the EAC cannot assist with the improvement of American election administration if its resources are not utilized. In pursuing Objective 3.1, the EAC will distribute resources that help American election administrators and voters, and it will identify distribution methods that enhance stakeholder reach and receptivity to these products.

Objective 3.2

Serve as an expert on the administration of American elections.

Objective 3.2 is designed to drive the agency to exercise its expertise more efficiently to reach its stakeholders. Speaking opportunities are one of the best ways to do this. Beyond media interviews and other publicity, the EAC seeks to have a meaningful presence at election-focused and non-election focused conferences. The agency's stakeholders are naturally drawn to these venues and are therefore a captive audience for the agency's experts. The agency will use these opportunities to gain feedback from its stakeholders, as well as to highlight available agency resources.

The EAC will also further its work to have a consistent presence in media outlets, opinion pages, and other mediums known to shape the perceptions and knowledge of stakeholders. The EAC will seek creative opportunities to expand the agency's reach, including the dissemination of guest blogs authored by external experts and the publication of academic journal articles that can inform research on election issues.

Indicators of Objective 3.2 Success

- Increases in the numbers of invitations for EAC Commissioners and staff to speak at and participate in venues and mediums where the agency's stakeholders are.
- Increases in the number of times the EAC or EAC materials are featured in media outlets that agency stakeholders use.

Strategy for achieving objective 3.2

The strategy for achieving Objective 3.2 is two-fold. First, the agency will seek to understand its stakeholders' preferred mediums and venues for consuming information. In order to generate this understanding, the EAC will employ its

existing research capacity, identified under Strategic Goal 1, and it will generate new research as necessary.

After the agency has generated this understanding, the EAC's Communications Division will deploy a coordinated and consistent communications plan that targets those who control content for these mediums. When issues arise that are relevant to the agency, this department will work through the relationships generated under the new plan to distribute accurate and timely information. In addition, when the EAC believes it can add value to other organizations' work, its communications and public affairs team will evaluate those opportunities and mobilize internal resources to maximize the agency's potential contributions.

Objective 3.3

Regularly distribute EAC products on timelines that align with stakeholders needs.

The timely distribution of EAC products is essential to achieving the agency's mission. For predictable resources, the EAC will be guided by the elections calendar and anticipated needs identified under Goal 2. For agency products designed to meet unpredicted and newly arising needs, work will be carried out in a method consistent with rapid-response efforts. The agency is confident that coupling well-timed distribution with efficient and impactful communications that succinctly convey necessary assistance will help EAC stakeholders.

Strategy for achieving objective 3.3

The EAC's Communications Division will lead work to achieve this objective based on the following directives:

- Analyze the landscape of how stakeholders consume information and their preferred mediums
- Produce and release materials based on the predictable election cycle calendar and in consultation with EAC researchers
- Deploy "rapid response" materials to meet arising, unpredictable needs

Objective 3.4

Distribute EAC assistance through methods designed to facilitate stakeholder use.

The thousands of election officials and millions of voters that constitute the EAC's stakeholders are best assisted when they are not viewed as monoliths. Election officials and voters vary in location as much as they vary in needs and preferences. To best communicate with and distribute EAC resources to its stakeholders, the Commission plans to segment its audiences, craft products to meet their specific, diverse needs, as well as distribute agency products using each segment's preferred medium.

Indicators of Objective 3.4 Success

- Stakeholder feedback
- Metrics driven consumption analysis

Strategy for achieving objective 3.4

The strategy for achieving Objective 3.4 is as follows. First, the EAC will evaluate its current research capacity and resources to determine if the agency's current understanding of its stakeholders provides sufficient insight for these decisions. Second, the agency will determine what additional resources, if any, are needed to accurately make this decision on an ongoing basis and secure these resources. Then, as part of the agency's normal operating processes, the EAC will actively use this understanding to design an outreach and distribution strategy for each assistance product. Each strategy will be designed to reach the stakeholder group that a product was designed to assist, and the agency plans to iteratively improve its distribution as it continually learns about its stakeholders' preferences.

Strategic Goal 4



Operate

Ensure continued effective operation of the EAC in order to achieve its goals while acting as good stewards of public funds.

Overview

Through Strategic Goal 4, the agency reaffirms its dedication to being good stewards of public funds, contributing positively to the federal government, and continuing to build and operate an agency that is diverse and impactful.

Objective 4.1

Contribute positively and effectively to the federal government through active contribution and compliance.

Objective 4.2

Continue to build a skilled, diverse, and effective workforce that ensures the EAC has the human capital needed to achieve its mission.

Objective 4.3

Develop and continue to manage internal structures and tools that produce a culture of innovation and a driven workforce where thought leaders thrive.

Objective 4.4

Institutionalize an increased level of strategic and cross-agency thinking.

Goal Lead

EAC's Executive Director

Contributing Divisions

- All EAC Divisions

Contributing EAC Programs and Tactics

- EAC's Payments & Grants Program
- EAC's ongoing compliance with federal requirements and mandates
- EAC's inter-agency efforts and programs
- EAC's Staff Associate Program

Indicators of Success

- New inter-agency programs that provide unique value or generate efficiencies
- Continuing compliance with federal regulations and mandates
- Internal strategic planning capacity development at the division and programmatic level

Objective 4.1

Contribute positively and effectively to the federal government through active contribution and compliance.

The EAC abides by two key tenets: (1) a dedication to contributing to its federal counterparts as the experts in election administration, and (2) continuously complying with the federal regulations and requirements that apply to the agency.

The nature of the EAC's work and its congressional mandates often require the agency to work with other federal agencies. This work includes working with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), the General Services Administration (GSA), and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), to achieve the Commission's mission. For example, the EAC partnered with DHS in 2016 and 2017 to distribute cybersecurity information to election officials as they prepared to defend their election systems against cyber-threats from foreign actors, and the EAC has also helped DHS establish a core component of its critical infrastructure operations, the Elections Subsector Government Coordinating Council. As the EAC looks to the next four years, it will work with its federal partners to best serve the agency's stakeholders and achieve its mission.

As to compliance with federal requirements, reporting and otherwise, the EAC views these requirements as mechanisms through which the federal government manages itself as a broader entity. As the EAC builds its own planning and management capacities, it looks forward to contributing to the broader government's efforts through compliance with federal regulations and mandates.

Indicators of Objective 4.1 Success

- The generation of new opportunities for inter-agency programs that add value or create efficiencies
- Successfully meeting applicable congressional reporting deadlines

Strategy for achieving objective 4.1

The EAC's activities are statutorily and functionally linked with other agencies' activities. The EAC works with NIST to draft the VVSG, and the EAC is working with DHS to help election officials and voters understand the impact of DHS's designation of elections as critical infrastructure. In addition to continuing the agency's current partnerships, the EAC plans to continually seek out new opportunities for contributing to the broader federal government and generate cross-government efficiencies. The EAC also plans to ensure that meeting federal deadlines and requirements are part of its internal structures and processes so that the agency is in compliance with the applicable regulations.

Objective 4.2

Continue to build a skilled, diverse, and effective workforce that ensures the EAC has the human capital needed to achieve its mission.

Maintaining a skilled, diverse, and effective workforce is essential to the successful functioning of the EAC. The agency must be diverse in order to ensure that it has a variety of perspectives involved in decision making. Its workforce also needs professional talents that ensure the Commission can serve its stakeholders. These employees must also be good stewards of public funds. These three pillars – diversity, professional talents, and trusted stewardship – will support and guide the agency over the next four years.

Additionally, the field of election administration is ever-changing. Technological progress, social shifts, and population fluctuations are all drivers of change. As a service agency, when stakeholders' needs change, so do the agency's needs. The EAC will work to ensure that its workforce is responsive to its mission.

Indicators of Objective 4.2 Success

- Recurring human capital planning aligned with the agency's strategic and operational plans

Strategy for achieving objective 4.2

In order to achieve Objective 4.2, the EAC will plan, work through, and regularly re-evaluate its human capital strategy. The agency will assess the agency's workforce to identify potential gap areas and unfulfilled competencies, and it will build these competencies as needed. The EAC will continually work to ensure that its competencies match its needs.

Efforts are also underway to improve the hiring and on-boarding processes and outcomes, with a continued emphasis on assuring diversity and inclusion within the workforce. There are plans to improve the effectiveness of employee skills assessments, training, delivery methods, and individual development plans to support agency succession planning, closing skills gaps, and workforce development through FY 2018. Employee accountability will be addressed through employee performance plans and organizational action plans. Efforts will continue in FY 2018 to improve employee perceptions, engagement, and performance through the implementation of action items based on the annual employee survey results. The EAC will also explore using its Staff Associate Program as a talent pipeline to fill vacancies as they occur.

Objective 4.3

Develop and continue to manage internal structures and tools that produce a culture of innovation and a driven workforce.

The EAC's culture is a significant part of how the agency plans to manage itself over the next four years. The EAC will strive to maintain a culture of innovation that is driven by staff leaders and will continually seek to improve upon itself.

Strategy for achieving objective 4.3

The EAC obtained new leadership in 2015 and, since then, it has worked to build a culture of public servants who are as dedicated to the agency's mission as they are driven to innovate. The EAC will use tools such as an employee engagement committee, training sessions, and existing federal services to help it assess and re-evaluate the agency's culture.

Prior to the drafting of this document, the EAC took steps to improve its employee engagement. The agency surveyed its employees in 2017. The agency then created an employee engagement committee to improve the areas identified as potentials for improvement in the survey. The employee engagement committee now operates throughout the year to recognize strengths and rectify arising needs. The EAC plans to work through this committee to further improve employee engagement as the agency moves through the next four years.

The agency has also partnered with the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to review its organizational structure and positions. The result of this partnership will assist EAC in reshaping its workforce to be a more effective and efficient agency. A clear mission can inspire employee engagement and be an asset in the improvement of agency performance.

Objective 4.4

Institutionalize an increased level of strategic and cross-agency thinking.

A unique facet of the EAC's congressional mandates is that they often overlap with one another. For example, while the EAC collects and distributes election administration best practices, the EAC is also charged with collecting data about the state of American election administration. Interestingly the people from whom the agency collects best practices are often the same people from whom the agency collects data on the state of election administration. As another example, the EAC is charged with creating and administering the nation's voluntary program for voluntary voting system guidelines, and the EAC is charged with disbursing funds to states so that they can procure voting systems for the administration of elections.

As the EAC looks to the next four years, it will institutionalize strategic and cross-agency thinking to help its divisions and programs work together to achieve the agency's mission. Under this plan, strategic thinking will not be something found only at leadership levels. The agency will encourage its employees on the divisional and programmatic levels to think strategically and will facilitate cross-agency implementation of the programs and improvements generated by this thinking. The EAC plans to arrive in 2022 as a team, walking in lockstep and operating in sync.

Contributing Programs and Divisions

- EAC Leadership
- All EAC Divisions and Programs

Strategy for achieving objective 4.4

First, the EAC plans to build a new annual strategic planning process that engages EAC Commissioners, EAC leadership, and EAC staff generally. In building this planning process, EAC staff will be given the opportunity to plan with each other and generate new ideas that will improve the agency.

Second, the EAC plans to continue its Staff Associate Program. This is a rotational program in which staff associates work within a division or program learning its operations and contributing to its output. Once they become familiar with how the division or program works, they are asked to build a new product, initiate a new project, or find a solution for that division or program. Every four months they rotate to a new division or program. This rotation helps to generate a staff that is generally aware of the operational functions and procedures across the agency. It also facilitates inter-division problem solving by training an innovative workforce and instilling it with knowledge of multiple divisions.

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U.S. Election
Assistance
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Strategic Plan