



# **Strengthening the Election Workforce**



***Opportunities to Enhance  
Capacity and Readiness***

## Executive Summary

Election officials across the United States carry out their responsibilities with professionalism and dedication. The recommendations in this report are intended to strengthen the current and future workforce, bolster resilience to structural pressures, and help prepare the next generation to enter this critically important field.

Drawing on national data and multidisciplinary research contracted by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) during the 2024 presidential election, this report identifies structural challenges affecting the election workforce, including capacity constraints, development gaps, and misalignment in classification and compensation.

National trends underscore these pressures: Turnover among local election officials reached 40.9% in 2024, with more than half of chief local election officials having assumed their roles within the past five years.<sup>1</sup> This level of attrition erodes institutional knowledge, increases recruitment and training demands, and complicates election offices' ability to maintain operational continuity while administering increasingly complex elections.

To strengthen workforce capacity and readiness, the report identifies two complementary opportunities for federal support:

- 1. Sustain and expand the EAC's voluntary national professional training program.**
- 2. Develop a voluntary National Election Workforce Classification Framework.**

This report was initiated in response to input from state and local election officials, including members of the EAC's Federal Advisory Committees, who have identified workforce pressures as a growing structural challenge. These challenges require coordination that no single state, professional association, or local jurisdiction is structured to provide independently. The EAC is uniquely positioned to support this work at the federal level.

Under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), the EAC serves as a national clearinghouse for election administration information and best practices. Through its training programs, partnerships, and workforce initiatives — and with state and local officials participating directly in its Federal Advisory Committees — the Commission is well positioned to provide voluntary, non-regulatory support that expands professional development opportunities and advances a shared workforce framework while respecting state and local authority and avoiding additional costs for election offices.

This report proceeds in four sections:

- ✓ **Part 1** outlines the structure of the election workforce and the core operational functions that every election office must perform.
- ✓ **Part 2** identifies the workforce capacity challenges facing election administration.
- ✓ **Part 3** explains that there are clear opportunities for federal coordination and support to help mitigate challenges.
- ✓ **Part 4** presents these initiatives as two recommendations for congressional authorization and appropriations consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> Bipartisan Policy Center, [Election Official Turnover Rates from 2000-2024](#) (2025).



## Part 1: The Structure and Role of the Election Workforce

Modern election administration requires a workforce that possesses a wide range of technical and managerial competencies, reflecting the increasing complexity of election systems, legal requirements, and operational logistics. Election officials must coordinate large-scale operational processes, implement consistently evolving statutory requirements, manage technology systems, safeguard election infrastructure, and deliver accurate and timely results under strict statutory deadlines.

As the operational environment surrounding elections has evolved, the workforce responsible for administering elections has faced increasing pressure to keep pace. Rising attrition in many election offices has created additional recruitment and training demands, placing added capacity pressures on election offices as they work to maintain continuity of operations while recruiting, onboarding, and training new personnel.

These dynamics affect a workforce operating within one of the most decentralized administrative systems in American government.

### A National Profession in a Decentralized System

Election administration in the United States is decentralized. In most states, day-to-day operational responsibilities are delegated to the county or municipal level, in accordance with state and federal law, with wide variation in institutional authority, organizational structure, and staffing models across election offices.

Some local election offices rely on a single election official supported by minimal — or no — staff; others operate large, specialized departments serving hundreds of thousands of voters. Hybrid arrangements are common, with responsibilities distributed among state agencies, county offices, boards, commissions, and municipal officials.

State election administration structures also vary considerably: some states rely on a chief state election official operating through a centralized state office, while others distribute responsibilities among independent boards, commissions, or multiple agencies working in coordination with local election officials.

This decentralized and varied structure promotes local control and adaptability. It also requires every state and local jurisdiction, regardless of size, to independently build and sustain a workforce capable of executing highly complex, deadline-driven operations, often without sufficient human resource infrastructure, training budgets, or professional development pathways.

Because workforce capacity is built locally within this system, state and local election jurisdictions must independently develop or pursue training, create staffing models, and build operational expertise.

### Core Functions of Election Administration

Election offices structure their operations to reflect their voter population, geography, legal environment, and organizational structure. Many rely on cross-departmental coordination to conduct elections drawing on information technology, facilities, procurement, law enforcement, and communications partners in service of their mission.

The result is a system that embodies federalism in action: independently administered yet bound together by shared legal requirements, professional standards, and a common set of responsibilities that election offices in every state must fulfill.

Despite wide variation in office size and structure, the core functions of election administration are consistent nationwide. A single-person office in a small town and a department of hundreds in a large county must both accomplish the same essential tasks, albeit at different scales.



While state and local election officials share a common mission and certain foundational competencies, their responsibilities are not interchangeable. In most states, core operational functions such as ballot preparation and the operation of voting locations are carried out at the county or municipal level. State election offices play a distinct supporting and oversight role, described below.

**Core functions performed by local election offices include:**

- **Voter registration and list maintenance**, including data accuracy, list updates, and compliance with federal requirements.
- **Ballot preparation**, including ballot design, proofing, logic and accuracy testing, and vendor coordination.
- **Logistics and voting location operations**, including site selection, equipment and materials deployment, and warehouse and supply management.
- **Personnel management**, including recruiting, hiring, training, supervising, evaluating, and coaching permanent and temporary election office staff responsible for election administration, operational planning, and program management.
- **Poll worker administration**, including recruitment, training, scheduling, deployment, and communication with seasonal, temporary election workers.
- **Physical security and cybersecurity safeguards**, including voter registration system security, chain-of-custody procedures, personal safety, equipment testing, and coordination with state and federal partners.
- **Vote counting and post-election processes**, including ballot processing, reconciliation, certification, and conducting recounts and post-election audits.
- **Compliance with federal and state law**, including data collection and implementation of statutory requirements, administrative rules, and court decisions governing election administration, including accessibility, voter eligibility, voting procedures, records management, and election security.
- **Public communication and voter outreach**, including dissemination of accurate, accessible and timely election information to voters, media, and stakeholders.

**State election offices support, oversee, or interact with local election offices in various ways, depending on state law. They fulfill a distinct set of statewide responsibilities that include:**

- **Rulemaking and procedural guidance** governing local election administration.
- **Certification** of election results and approval of voting systems for use statewide.
- **Legal guidance** on federal and state election law and oversight of compliance.
- **Distribution of state and federal election funds** to local jurisdictions.
- **Oversight of the statewide voter registration database**, including data integrity and intergovernmental data sharing.
- **Training, technical assistance, and operational support** for local election offices.



The consistent functions carried out by election offices require a common set of competencies, forming the foundation of a recognizable national profession despite differences in administrative structure and organization. Because election offices must develop and sustain similar operational capabilities regardless of size, governance structure, or staffing model, this shared foundation creates opportunities to strengthen workforce support through common standards, professional development pathways, and competency frameworks.

As the operational complexity of election administration has expanded, the workforce responsible for executing these functions faces structural capacity challenges.

## Part 2: Structural Workforce Capacity Challenges

While the core functions of election administration have remained consistent, the operational environment has changed significantly. Although responsibilities vary across state and local election offices, many workforce pressures are shared across the profession. Evolving voting policy and statutory requirements, heightened public scrutiny, and increasing physical and cybersecurity risks have broadened operational expectations and intensified coordination demands. Election delivery now requires year-round collaboration across departments and partner agencies integrating legal compliance, technology management, logistics, communications, and public engagement into ongoing operations.

**In practice, this means election offices must operate as complex, continuously functioning public service organizations — not episodic event managers.**

These expanding demands require specialized knowledge. The modern election workforce must combine technical expertise, executive judgment, operational precision, and legal compliance within compressed timelines while subject to intense public scrutiny.

The EAC contracted a multidisciplinary research team that examined election staffing during the 2024 presidential election through field observations, interviews, and analysis of job descriptions and organizational charts. Their findings are consistent with EAC internal research, national survey data, and a growing body of published research documenting that the profession is under sustained and growing pressure across several dimensions:

### 1. Workforce Structure Constraints

Election offices operate within a rigid election calendar that compresses large volumes of complex work into short timeframes. Ongoing challenges in recruiting, retaining, and training personnel further intensify these operational pressures.

Workload intensity illustrates how workforce capacity constraints can affect operational capacity. Election offices must meet significant demands, with 60-hour or longer workweeks common during peak election periods that can extend for months.<sup>2</sup> Research across multiple industries indicates that sustained overtime at this level can reduce productivity and increase the likelihood of operational errors<sup>3</sup> — an important concern in an environment where mistakes carry public consequences and cannot be reversed after the fact.

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<sup>2</sup> Gronke, Manson & Shafer, [Today's Election Administration Landscape: Findings from the 2024 EVIC Local Election Official Survey](#) (February 2025).

<sup>3</sup> Gronke, Manson & Shafer, [Today's Election Administration Landscape: Findings from the 2024 EVIC Local Election Official Survey](#) (February 2025).



## 2. Classification and Compensation Misalignment

Structural features of public-sector workforce systems also limit election offices' ability to recruit and retain election personnel.

Election administration is not widely recognized as a distinct occupation within government workforce systems. Officials and staff are frequently classified alongside administrative support roles despite carrying executive-level responsibility. This misclassification suppresses compensation and limits the ability for election offices to attract specialized talent. Illustrating this challenge, research finds that local election officials earn an average of \$50,000 annually, well below the \$70,000 median for comparable public-sector executive roles.<sup>4</sup>

Compensation figures cited here reflect research focused on local election officials. Salary structures for state election officials differ significantly, although stakeholder feedback indicates similar concerns about classification and compensation at the state level.

## 3. Workforce Development Gaps

Today's election workforce must exercise executive-level judgment, manage complex operational systems, and execute interdependent processes with little margin for error. A training and professional development ecosystem has emerged to support these responsibilities.

Forty-three states provide some form of training for local election officials, and 22 offer programs specifically designed for newly appointed officials.<sup>5</sup> National certification programs offered through professional associations provide additional opportunities for professional development and peer learning.

Most formal election administration training programs are designed to support local election officials, although state officials are not precluded from participating. State election offices frequently develop, host, or mandate training for local officials, rather than training aimed at building state specific operational capacity.

Despite these resources, significant gaps remain. Major certification programs can exceed \$5,000 in registration fees<sup>6</sup> with additional travel and membership costs typically incurred by local election offices — expenses that fall disproportionately on smaller jurisdictions with limited resources. The broader training landscape also remains fragmented. No existing program spans the full range of election functions and career stages or operates within a shared national framework defining work roles, tasks, and the knowledge, skills, and abilities required across the profession.

This fragmentation is reflected in the uneven structure of training opportunities across the country. Participation requirements, continuing education opportunities, training frequency, and access to specialized or ongoing instruction vary considerably among programs and states. Alignment with workforce turnover, onboarding needs, and evolving operational demands is often inconsistent, and participation may depend heavily on the discretion, capacity, and resources of individual training programs or election offices.

Field research further illustrates the implications of this fragmentation for workforce capacity. Election offices consistently report difficulty recruiting or developing personnel with competencies in areas such as project management, crisis management, data analysis, financial management, legal interpretation, geographic

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<sup>4</sup> Manson, Adona, & Gronke, [Staffing the Stewards of Democracy: The Demographic and Professional Profile of America's Local Election Officials](#) (January 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Klinefelter, Adler & Orey, [Training for Election Officials: A 50-State Analysis](#) (January 2025).

<sup>6</sup> EAC internal research: In 2025, the National Association of Election Officials (Election Center) Certified Elections/Registration Administrator (CERA) program required registration fees of \$5,508 to complete.



information systems (GIS), and election-specific software. These findings illustrate workforce development gaps in areas where existing training programs do not yet fully address emerging skill demands.

State election offices face distinct workforce development needs, such as legal analysis, policy development, system oversight, and intergovernmental coordination that are not always addressed by training programs focused on local election operations.

### **Part 3: Federal Opportunities for Capacity-Building**

Taken together, these findings point to structural workforce challenges that extend beyond the capacity of individual jurisdictions to resolve independently and highlight opportunities for additional coordination and support at the federal level. Under its mandate in the Help America Vote Act, the EAC is well positioned to provide voluntary, capacity-building resources that strengthen the profession while respecting state and local authority.

Two complementary federal initiatives would address the most significant workforce gaps: expanding scalable national training and establishing a voluntary workforce classification framework.

#### **Opportunity 1: Sustain and Expand the Voluntary EAC Training Program**

The EAC's training program demonstrates that the federal government can deliver voluntary, high-quality workforce support that complements state and local training. It is the only nationally accessible, no-cost professional development resource dedicated exclusively to election administration.

The EAC Learning Lab is an online, on-demand training platform that supports continuing education as well as new staff onboarding. Since the platform's launch in September 2024, more than 1,300 officials have joined, engaging in modules covering voter registration maintenance, cybersecurity, election security practices, communications, accessibility, and post-election processes.

**Through FY2025, EAC on-demand training benefited officials serving more than 80 million voters.<sup>7</sup>**

Complementing the online platform, EAC in-person training delivers interactive, hands-on workshops focused on practical application and peer exchange. In fiscal year 2025, more than 3,400 election officials participated in workshops held at 23 national, regional, and state association events.

In FY25, the program generated an estimated minimum value exceeding \$700,000 for election officials nationwide.<sup>8</sup>

**Additional funding would allow the EAC to expand its support for this proven model by:**

- ✓ **Growing and updating the on-demand catalog.** Supporting the continued development and updates to on-demand content will allow the agency to address emerging operational challenges as election administration evolves alongside changes in technology, law, and public expectations.
- ✓ **Expanding live training reach and depth.** Increasing agency capacity for event facilitation will allow the agency to offer additional workshops, strengthen stakeholder coordination, expand geographic coverage, and create even more immersive learning environments for participants.

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<sup>7</sup> EAC administrative data describing the number of voters within each unique election jurisdiction represented by a user in the on-demand platform.

<sup>8</sup> EAC internal research comparing the cost of Certified Elections/Registration Administrator (CERA) courses with the number of completed on-demand modules and live training participants.



- ✓ **Enhancing on-demand technology.** Enhancements to the on-demand platform would improve user experience, content organization, and navigation enabling users to track progress, generate certification reports, and manage professional development milestones.
- ✓ **Strengthen program evaluation.** Further enhancing data-driven program evaluation and impact measurement enables the EAC to assess learning outcomes, measure knowledge retention, and demonstrate return on investment.
- ✓ **Expand outreach and strategic partnerships.** Professional communication strategies and strategic stakeholder organization partnerships will further expand program reach, establish reciprocal recognition agreements with state and national providers, and reduce duplication across the professional development ecosystem.

With targeted support, the EAC’s training program can evolve from a strong foundation into a fully scaled, nationally accessible workforce development resource.

## Opportunity 2: Create a Voluntary National Election Workforce Classification Framework

A voluntary, function-based classification framework directly addresses misclassification, compensation disparity, and workforce planning gaps while allowing flexibility for differing administrative structures and workforce responsibilities across the country. A shared reference structure would provide common ground for all election offices as well as stakeholders that support them.

Specifically, this initiative would:

- ✓ **Establish common language and professional recognition,** through a shared, function-based classification framework defining work roles, tasks, and associated knowledge and skills, enabling clear communication across election offices of all sizes and supporting more portable, recognizable qualifications across the profession.
- ✓ **Support workforce planning and staffing decisions,** offering a structured tool for workforce assessment, enabling offices to map staff responsibilities to defined roles, identify gaps in critical functions, and guide succession planning and capacity-building decisions.
- ✓ **Align training and professional development investments,** providing a common reference for aligning curricula across state programs, national associations, and academic partners.
- ✓ **Improve classification and compensation benchmarking** by clearly defining responsibilities, enabling election offices and supporting stakeholders to compare similarly situated roles across offices, support compensation studies, assess labor market competitiveness, and inform more consistent pay and classification practices.

### Election Administrator Competencies



- Ongoing
- Election Preparation
- Election Night & Beyond



Other professions offer instructive models. For example, the National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education (NICE) aligns curricula, certifications, hiring practices, and workforce investments around clearly articulated competencies. Frameworks like NICE have strengthened recruitment, professionalism, workforce mobility, and alignment between training and workforce needs through broadly recognized standards and career pathways.

The EAC has completed foundational research identifying the structure, functions, and competency areas necessary to build this framework. Building on the EAC's existing competency framework, or "competency wheel," which defines broad domains of election work, the proposed framework would translate those domains into detailed work roles, task statements, and associated knowledge and skill benchmarks suitable for workforce planning and classification purposes. Under HAVA's authority, the agency is positioned to convene stakeholders and coordinate development.

#### **Additional funding would support:**

- ✓ **Dedicated project management capacity.** Fully developing the framework is a multi-year effort that will require significant personnel resources. Targeted appropriations are essential to staffing this initiative at the level required by its scope.
- ✓ **Structured, multi-stakeholder engagement.** Building a credible, sector-wide framework requires convening election officials, state associations, training providers, academic partners, human resources experts, and federal and local representatives across multiple rounds of discussion.
- ✓ **Pilot-testing.** Finalizing the initial framework will require significant stakeholder engagement and piloting implementation across election offices, along with associated iterative revisions to the framework.
- ✓ **Regular updates over time.** The NICE Framework, a comparable federal model, took four years to fully build and requires ongoing annual investment to remain current. A durable election workforce framework will require multi-year development and sustained investment.

## **Part 4: Recommendations for Congressional Consideration**

Together, these two opportunities — expanding the EAC training program and developing a shared election workforce classification framework — offer a coherent, voluntary federal strategy for building the professional capacity that secure and resilient elections require.

#### **Two formal recommendations follow:**

### **1. Appropriate funds to allow the EAC to sustain and expand state and local election official professional training and workforce development programs.**

The EAC recommends that Congress appropriate funds to sustain and expand efforts to address election workforce professionalization. Pursuant to its mandate under HAVA, the EAC will use these funds to implement in-person and virtual voluntary training for election officials, study workforce development, and recommend programming to address workforce needs.

U.S. election administration is a rapidly evolving and growing field with a workforce that includes tens of thousands of state and local election officials responsible for performing an increasing number of highly complex duties in service of their constituents. As competencies and skills necessary to perform critical election operations change, an aging election workforce needs relief from a new generation of election professionals. Additional funding will enable the EAC to sustain and expand its training and workforce development programs to enhance professionalization within the election workforce and build organizational resiliency in the field of election administration.



## **2. Appropriate funds to support the development of a Voluntary National Election Workforce Classification Framework.**

The EAC recommends that Congress appropriate funds to develop a Voluntary National Election Workforce Classification Framework. Pursuant to its mandate under HAVA, the EAC will use these funds to convene stakeholders, coordinate technical development, and produce a shared, function-based structure defining core election work roles, tasks, knowledge, and skills applicable across election offices of all sizes.

U.S. election administration is a specialized public service profession whose workforce has grown increasingly skilled and sophisticated in response to expanding responsibilities, yet it lacks the shared occupational structure that other complex fields use to align training, inform compensation studies, and guide strategic workforce planning.

A voluntary, function-based approach would shift attention from inconsistent job titles to the essential functions every election office performs, creating a practical and flexible tool to support election workforce planning, training alignment, and classification discussions nationwide.

### **Conclusion**

Election administration in the United States depends on a highly specialized workforce operating within a decentralized system of state and local authority. Although election offices vary widely in size and structure, election administration systems across the country must sustain similar operational capabilities to conduct secure and reliable elections.

Information presented in this report indicates that the profession faces structural challenges, including workforce capacity constraints, development gaps, and classification and compensation misalignment. These challenges are driven by factors such as rising turnover, workload intensity, and fragmented training pathways and they are making it increasingly difficult to recruit, retain, and prepare the personnel required to carry out election responsibilities. Election offices face these pressures without access to the workforce development infrastructure common in other complex public service fields.

Expanding the EAC's voluntary national training program and developing a voluntary election workforce classification framework represent practical, complementary opportunities to strengthen the profession. Together, these initiatives would expand access to professional development, provide shared language for workforce planning, and support recruitment and retention of election professionals across election offices of all sizes.

By strengthening workforce capacity, these efforts can help ensure that election jurisdictions remain prepared to successfully conduct safe and secure elections across the United States.





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