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# Elections Department Business Plan

**Fiscal Years: 2013 and 2014**  
(10/1/13 through 9/30/14)

Approved by:

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Penelope Townsley, Department Director

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Alina T. Hudak, Deputy Mayor

Plan Date:  
Segment 1  
December 2012



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## DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

### DEPARTMENT MISSION

The mission of the Elections Department is to ensure that elections are free, fair, accurate, convenient, transparent, and accessible to all voters throughout Miami-Dade County.

The Elections Department, under the direction of the Supervisor of Elections, administers, prepares, conducts and tabulates in a correct, uniform and impartial manner all federal, state, county and municipal elections in accordance with Florida Statutes. The Department also provides election services and assistance to municipalities, School Districts, Special Taxing Districts, Community Council Districts, and Community Development Districts of Miami-Dade County. In addition, the Department is charged with proper handling of election records (per State of Florida: General Records Schedule GS3); and providing services to registered and potential voters in Miami-Dade County as well as Political Action Committees (PAC), third-party agencies, and community leaders.

### TABLE OF ORGANIZATION



**Elections Department  
Proposed Functional Table of Organization  
FY 2013-14**

**Office of the Supervisor of Elections**

- Formulates and directs overall policy for departmental operations

FY 12-13  
3

FY 13-14  
3

**Office of Governmental Affairs**

- Monitors federal, state, and local legislative activities; coordinates elections Canvassing Board, candidate qualifying, and liaison activities with candidates and municipalities; processes financial disclosures, outside employment forms, and public records requests; oversees media relations, and post election audit

FY 12-13  
10

FY 13-14  
10

**Voter Services**

- Oversees voter registration services, manages the statewide Voter Registration System, and coordinates precinct registers for all elections; manages absentee voting, and departmental mailroom activities

FY 12-13  
20

FY 13-14  
21

**Information Systems**

- Responsible for voting equipment programming, ballot coding, vote tabulation, and reporting of elections results; manages early voting operations; and departmental information technology infrastructure

FY 12-13  
19

FY 13-14  
20

**Operations**

- Oversees warehouse activities, including elections equipment logistics, ballot tracking and asset management; responsible for budget, finance, procurement, and human resource activities including recruitment of seasonal staff; and responsible for securing polling places countywide ensuring ADA compliance

FY 12-13  
26

FY 13-14  
26

**Community Outreach & Training**

- Conducts outreach and voter education programs, recruits and trains poll workers, and coordinates collection center activities to ensure return of items on Election Night

FY 12-13  
13

FY 13-14  
14

## STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SUMMARY

The Department's efforts align with the following Miami-Dade County Strategic Plan Goals:

### **Friendly Government (GG1)**

- *Provide easy access to information and services (GG1-1)*
  - Continue to update website with links to information that customers can use to request services (voter registration, absentee ballot request) and important information such as the election schedule, voting precinct, election results, candidate reporting, and more
  - Continue to work with the Community Information and Outreach in promoting election services and addressing customer needs through the development of the knowledge base system with 311
- *Develop a customer-oriented organization (GG1-2)*
  - Continue to survey customers to solicit customer feedback
  - Implement an automated database to track responses to customer feedback
- *Foster a positive image of County government (GG1-3)*
  - Conduct customer service training for staff through the Internal Services Department
  - Track and respond to all communications from customers in a timely manner
  - Continue to collaborate with other County departments to ensure a smooth voting experience for customers
- *Improve relations between communities and governments (GG1-4)*
  - Collaborate with community groups to conduct outreach events in an effort to reach existing and potential voters in preparation for the 2014 election cycle

### **Excellent, engaged workforce (GG2)**

- *Attract and hire new talent (GG2-1)*
  - Work with Internal Services Department and the Office of Management and Budget to fill vacancies with the most qualified candidates
  - Perform outreach efforts in high schools and special events to recruitment new poll workers
- *Develop and retain excellent employees and leaders (GG2-2)*
  - Develop Election Department staff skills and knowledge via cross-training
  - Continue to provide internal and external professional development training opportunities for all staff
  - Continue participation in the County's mentorship and succession planning program

### **Free, fair and accessible elections (GG7)**

- *Provide eligible voters with convenient opportunities to vote (GG7-1)*
  - Continue to provide Early Voting at convenient locations
  - Continue to provide online access to request an absentee ballot, and provide timely mailing and processing of all requests
  - Continue to maintain ADA compliance at all polling places
  - Continue to maintain an accurate Voter Registration System



- Implement re-precincting project as a result of local and congressional re-districting, to ensure that voters are eligible to vote in their home precinct
  - Continue to recruit the most convenient facilities that can serve as polling places for voters
  - Continue to promote three ways to vote including early voting, absentee voting, and election day voting
  - Promote online voter registration on the Elections website to provide easy access to voter registration and increase the number of voters in Miami-Dade County
- *Maintain the integrity and availability of election results and other public records (GG7-2)*
    - Ensure timely coding of ballots for all countywide, municipal, and special elections
    - Ensure timely tabulation and availability of all election results
    - Continue to efficiently process statistical requests for voter information, providing as much information online as possible and feasible
    - Continue to further streamline the financial disclosure process to ensure accurate and up to date information is available to the public in a timely manner.
    - Continue to improve the public records storage and retention process, to improve record retrieval and response times to the public
  - *Qualify candidates and petitions in accordance with the law (GG7-3)*
    - Continue to provide information and training for candidates and political party representatives regarding updated legislative requirements and procedures for submitting required campaign reports
    - Continue to provide updated information to and about candidates through mailings and postings on the Elections website regarding requirements for candidate qualification by petition or by fee

## OUR CUSTOMER

In the implementation of its core mission, the Elections Department serves several customer groups primarily including the County's 1.3 million registered voters, potential voters, political candidates, municipalities, poll workers, as well as political action committees and third party voter organizations. The most important needs of the Department's primary customer, registered voters, are to be educated and Election Ready- and to be provided a fair, accurate, convenient, transparent, and accessible voting experience. The cyclical nature of elections drives up the demand from customers in even years when state and federal countywide elections are held.

Satisfaction is measured differently among the different customer groups.

- Municipalities are surveyed after the Department conducts their local elections; the results are distributed to senior staff and tracked on the Department's scorecard.
- Poll workers are asked to complete an evaluation form after each training session and after each countywide election. After major elections, focus groups are held with key poll workers to solicit in-person feedback and discuss strategies for improvement.

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- Poll workers rate each other after each election, and this information is captured in the poll worker database and utilized to determine training needs and strengths.
- Feedback from poll worker focus groups is distributed to senior staff for discussion of necessary changes.
- The last voter satisfaction survey was conducted in 2006 under a different voting system. When resources are available, this survey will be repeated for voters under the current optical scan voting system.

## KEY ISSUES

In consideration of the significant factors critical to the Department's successful implementation of the business plan, the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats are identified in the current and next fiscal years.

**Strengths** – The Department has a reputation for integrity and reliability. This is accomplished through a systems perspective to ensure the integrity, reliability, accuracy, timeliness, security, and confidentiality of data, information, and knowledge. Detailed, written procedures that the workforce follows ensure data collected during elections is indisputable. This is accomplished by following specific procedures outlined in a Procedures Manual that is consistent with federal and state laws.

The Department maintains an agile and results-oriented business focus through workforce management systems designed to accomplish the highest levels of productivity and address changing business needs. Microsoft Project and several quality assurance checklists are used within each division to assist in coordinating the workforce through each election cycle, ensuring all necessary steps of an election are performed according to a defined set of standards.

**Weaknesses** - The Department continues to struggle with declining employee morale, as many County departments do in light of fiscal restraints and employee layoffs. Managers are encouraged to do more to focus on employees and identify needs that can be met with minimal fiscal impact.

The morale of staff who serve as poll workers on Election Day is also low, especially following the presidential election where poll workers worked longer hours than they are accustomed to. Many requests for additional compensation were received by the Department following the election, but resources were not identified to satisfy their requests. Other ideas for rewarding good performance are being sought, such as forums and surveys of poll worker feedback, as well as the purchase of a system that will better track poll worker dependability and performance.

While the Department responds promptly and appropriately to all customer complaints, there is no uniform and systematic method to track or determine various customer requirements or trends. A customer feedback database will be developed to track customer complaints and internal responses, giving the Department a broader view of the major issues in order to continue improving direct service to customers.

A countywide voter survey has not been conducted since 2006; the funding for this type of survey instrument will be requested following the implementation of electronic check-in technology at Election Day polling places.

**Opportunities-** Due to the challenges stemming from the 2012 Presidential Election, the Department has the opportunity to update processes and procedures that would make elections in Miami-Dade County a model for the country.

The opportunity to introduce technology enhancements to improve elections operations and process management will be researched for implementation prior to the 2014

The ability to revise precinct boundaries that were affected by local and state re-districting presents an opportunity to equitably allocate polling places countywide, creating a more convenient and efficient voting experience.

**Threats** - State and federal legislative changes remain a threat to the business environment of elections. The Department will continue to closely monitor legislative changes, and advocate for legislative priorities including the expansion of allowable facilities eligible for use as early voting sites; an increased number of Early Voting days; the limitation of ballot language for constitutional amendments to a maximum of 15 words for title and 75 words for ballot summary; an extension of the number of days that Supervisors of Elections are permitted to canvass ballots; the removal of the Executive Committeeman and Committeewoman races from the Primary Election ballot during a presidential year; and the ability to conduct Community Development District (CDD) Elections via mail ballot as opposed to inclusion in the General Election.

## PRIORITY INITIATIVES

- To improve operations and process management, the Elections Department will be undertaking several priority technology enhancement initiatives as detailed in the 2012 Presidential Election After-Action Report. Specific process improvements through the use of technology will be implemented in the areas of absentee ballot system processing, absentee ballot signature verification; and election day voter check-in.

The number of voters who choose to vote by mail (absentee voting) has increased in each election since 2000, yet many have not updated their signature since registering to vote many years before. Since voting by mail requires comparing the signature on the voter's record with the signature on the mail ballot envelope, the Department will embark upon a comprehensive campaign to encourage all voters to update their signatures every two to four years to mitigate the effects of mail ballots being invalidated due aging signature differences.

- The 2012 re-precincting project scheduled to take place after re-districting was postponed to limit voter disruption and confusion in the Primary and General elections. The Department will undertake a comprehensive review of existing and potential polling places across the County in FY 12-13 that will target a maximum of 2500 voters per location. The Department will revisit its proposed re-precincting plan for presentation to the Board of County Commissioners in 2013.

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- Senior staff will be working more directly in an effort to engage all employees in the implementation of the Department's business plan. The document will be posted on the Department's intranet site, which is a popular location for internal Departmental information, and individual divisions will hold focus sessions with staff to ensure employees at all levels are aware of the Priority Initiatives and plan for implementation. Any feedback from staff will be provided to the Director's office and addressed at a Department level.
- The Department will be working with the elections systems vendor to ensure compliance with legislative changes that become effective this fiscal year. Specifically, effective December 31, 2013, all voting systems must be able to accommodate full text of constitutional amendments, including underlines and strike-throughs. This legislative change has the potential to significantly impact the length of the ballot containing constitutional amendments.
- Poll worker recruitment and training are priority initiatives. It is required by law that poll workers are trained prior to each election, and the Department continues to recruit new poll workers to help keep polling places sufficiently staffed. A new approach to poll Worker recruitment and retention will be developed, together with the procurement of a system to better track the performance and dependability of poll workers. The new approach to recruitment will more closely mirror the selection process for employees, wherein poll workers are interviewed and selected based on their experience and test scores. This will help to improve the management of polling places and the experience of voters on Election Day.
- Revisions to Implementing Order 4-76 Election Board and Support Personnel Compensation Schedule will be recommended in the upcoming fiscal year, in order to incorporate direction from the Mayor's Elections Advisory Group to expand the use of County employees in management positions during countywide elections, and to identify solutions for improving poll worker morale.

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## FUTURE OUTLOOK

The state has mandated that all iVotronic voting machines be eliminated by 2016. This will require that the County procure a new voting system for voters with disabilities at an estimated cost of \$7 million. Since there is only one system certified by the State Division of Elections for procurement at this time, the department will continue working with the Florida State Association of Supervisors of Election for more options for the voting community with disabilities. The Department will continue to monitor this process and advocate for equipment that has the highest levels of integrity and functionality for Miami-Dade County's voters with disabilities.

The Department has learned that our election equipment vendor is in the process of requesting certification from the state for a new version of firmware that may impact the high-speed scanners used to tabulate absentee ballots in the next three to four years. There are currently six scanners that are used regularly for all elections. If the new firmware is certified by the state, it will allow for much more efficient processing of ballots, as well as many enhancements to the existing DS200. However, the current scanners may not be compatible with the new firmware which will require the County to purchase newer models of the high speed scanners. It is unknown at this time whether the state will allow both election systems to be certified; if not then counties will be required to purchase the new equipment that will be compatible with the new firmware. The Department will continue to stay in close communication with the vendor to anticipate any budgetary impacts. The Department will be exploring options for technology enhancements and legislative changes increasing the number of days and type of locations for conducting Early Voting.

The technical enhancement the department will be implementing in Early Voting will focus on adding more equipment (Ballot-on-Demand units and EVIDs) which will increase the efficiency at the sites as well as shortened the wait time for the voter to cast his/her ballot.

These initiatives could have substantial fiscal impacts that are being reviewed. The Department will also be exploring the acquisition of 1024 Election Day EVIDs along with 2 new Reliavote sorters. The cost of the EVIDs are approximately \$1.6 million and the sorters are approximately \$1.2 million. EVID is a brand name for electronic poll book technology that is currently being used at most large elections departments around the State

