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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Elections Department Business Plan

Fiscal Years: 2013-14 and 2014-15
(10/01/2013 through 9/30/2015)

Approved by:

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Alina T. Hudak, Deputy Mayor

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Delivering Excellence Every Day



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DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

Department Mission

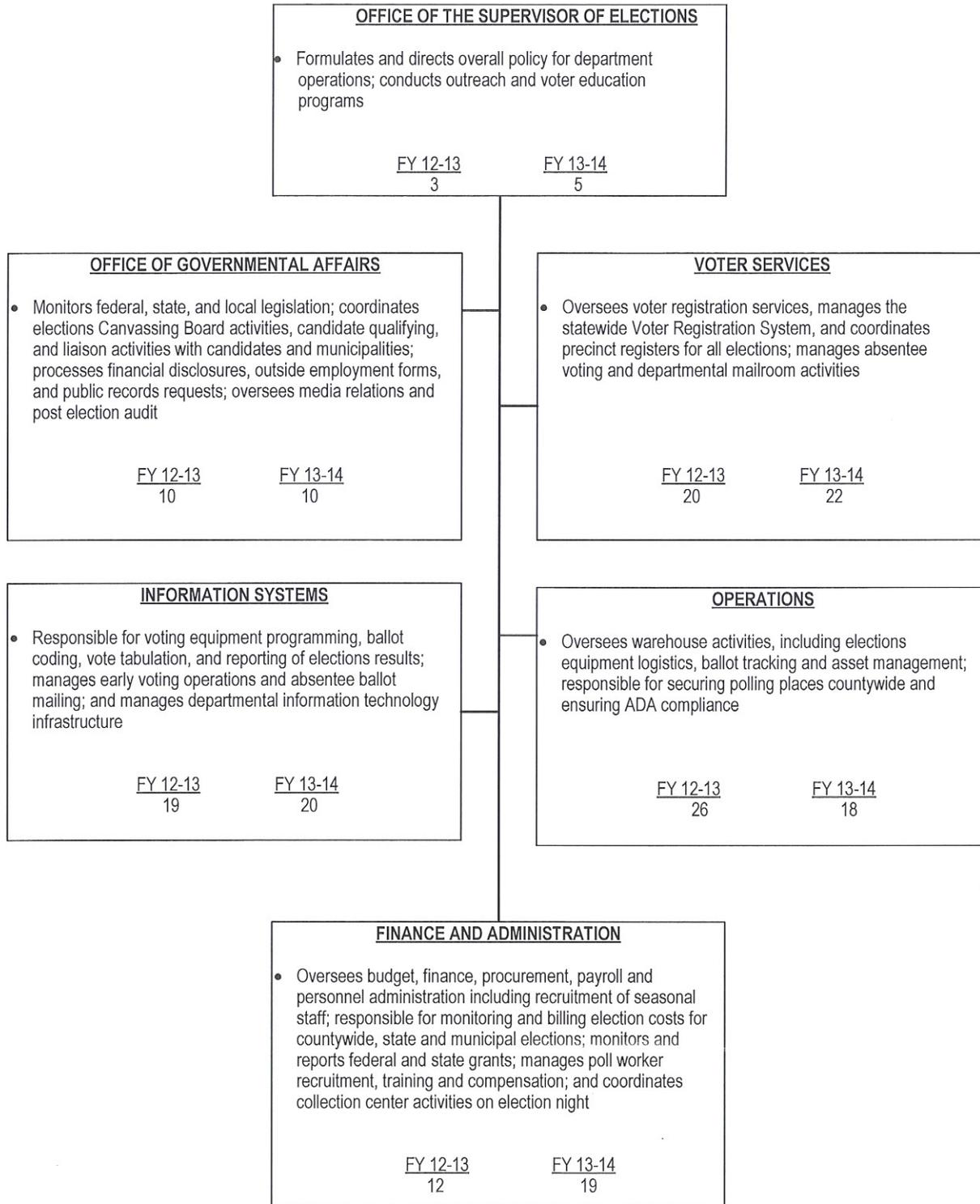
The mission of the Elections Department is to ensure that elections are free, fair, accurate, convenient, transparent, and accessible to all voters throughout Miami-Dade County.

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: GS1 and GS3 records retention schedules); and providing services to registered and potential voters in Miami-Dade County as well as County candidates and political committees, third-party agencies, and community leaders.



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Table of Organization



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 calendar, voting precinct, voter demographics and registration statistics, election results, candidate reporting, poll worker information and more
 - Continue outreach efforts to promote election services and address customer needs through the development of the knowledge base system with 311, the County's web portal, publications, online newsletters, and social media
- *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
 - Continue to research opportunities to reduce voter wait times and improve overall voting experience at Early Voting Sites
 - Implement an online application to order and fulfill public records requests
- *Foster a positive image of County government (GG1-3)*
 - Conduct customer service training for staff through the Internal Services Department (ISD)
 - Track and respond to all communications from customers in a timely manner
 - Continue to collaborate with other County departments to improve voting wait times and ensure a smooth voting experience for customers during General Elections
 - Implement new check-in process through the use of Electronic Voting Identification System (EVIDS) elections equipment to expedite check-in process at all Election Day voting locations
 - Continue to work closely with the Florida Assisted Living Facilities Association (FALA) and its member facilities within Miami-Dade County to improve accessibility and a better voting experience for the elderly



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- Continue to work in conjunction with the Mayor's Elections Advisory Board to identify ways to further improve the voting experience in Miami-Dade County through legislation, operations, and administrative solutions
- *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
 - Engage community organizations, educational institutions, and government agencies to augment the poll worker force to support the increased number of polling locations after re-precincting and the implementation of electronic poll books
 - Campaign to increase the presence of municipal employees as poll workers in municipal and countywide elections and continue working with the Miami-Dade County Municipal Clerks Association towards achieving this goal
 - Complete survey of similar size warehouse/logistics operations for "best practice" analysis, focusing on other elections department in large municipalities in the Country
 - Implement the use of two high speed Absentee Ballot Sorters to increase absentee ballot processing productivity and ensure timely reporting of election results

Excellent, engaged workforce (GG2)

- *Attract and hire new talent (GG2-1)*
 - Work with the Human Resources Department and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to fill vacancies with the most qualified candidates
 - Perform outreach efforts throughout the community to recruit new poll workers
 - Retain and develop competent seasonal trainers to support poll worker education
- *Develop and retain excellent employees and leaders (GG2-2)*
 - Develop Elections Department staff skills and knowledge via cross-training
 - Continue to provide internal and external professional development training opportunities for all staff
 - Continue upgrading technical skills of staff through specialized training



Free, fair and accessible elections (GG7)

- *Provide eligible voters with convenient opportunities to vote (GG7-1)*
 - Continue to provide Early Voting at convenient locations and adjust the number of sites based on type of election
 - 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
 - Finalize the implementation of the re-precincting project as a result of local and congressional re-districting to enhance voter accessibility and convenience
 - Continue to secure the most convenient facilities that can serve as polling places for voters
 - Continue to identify and secure a suitable facility for the absentee ballot operations to allow the hiring of sufficient seasonal staff to handle the volume of absentee ballot requests and customer service needs during General Elections
 - Identify and secure additional polling facilities that meet the established criteria to serve as voting locations needed to meet the operational demands of re-precincting
 - Implement recommendations of the Elections Advisory Group
 - 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
 - Implement Countywide Election Day Electronic Poll Books “Evids” for a more efficient voter check-in process
 - Consistent with new State Law, promote the availability for voters to request sample ballots via email
- *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 feasibly possible
- 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, 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 County candidates, political party representatives, and committees regarding updated legislative requirements and procedures for submitting required campaign reports
 - Continue to provide updated information to and about County candidates through email notifications, postal mailings and posting on the Elections website regarding requirements for candidate qualification by petitions or by fee

Our Customer

In the implementation of its core mission, the Elections Department serves several customer groups including the County's 1.3 million registered voters, potential voters, municipalities, poll workers, as well as County candidates, political 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 fair, accurate, convenient, transparent, and accessible voting experiences. The cyclical nature of elections drives up the demand from customers in even numbered 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
- 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 voting system to include the introduction of voting enhancements in 2014

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 in the tabulation of its results. 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 ensures that 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.

The Management Team focuses on the importance of redundancy and completing quality assurance checks in all of its operations is shared by Supervisors and front-line staff.

Weaknesses - While the Department has met and exceeded State deadlines for certifying results during all elections, there is a public perception that Florida, and in particular Miami-Dade County is delayed in certifying results in a timely manner for presidential elections.

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. 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 poll worker database system that integrates with the current Poll Worker Module to 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 by the department 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.

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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 introduction of technology enhancements, such as Election Day electronic poll books and absentee ballot processing equipment with signature verification capability, will improve elections operations and process management, as well as public perception, and will be implemented for the 2014 Elections cycle.

In addition, the Department has an opportunity to correct voter perception of not certifying results in a timely manner for presidential elections by engaging in voter education to demonstrate that Miami-Dade County meets and exceeds deadlines for certifying results, regardless of the type of election, particularly in General Elections. Other outreach initiatives during this period will focus on poll worker recruitment, ensuring voters know where to vote on Election Day, the three ways to vote, and the importance of voter participation.

The ability to revise precinct boundaries to correct the affects of 2012 federal, state and local redistricting presents a unique opportunity to equitably distribute voters among precincts and polling places countywide. Reprecincting will create 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; an extension of the number of days that Supervisors of Elections are permitted to canvass ballots up to 28 days prior to an election; the removal of the Executive Committeeman and Committeewoman races from the Primary Election ballot during a presidential year; the ability to conduct Community Development District (CDD) Elections via mail ballot as opposed to inclusion in the General Election; and pursue state rebranding of an “absentee ballot” to “vote by mail” to better describe the voting method used by voters.

The increasing demands on elections administration including enhancing voter convenience and accessibility, reducing wait times and lines, and decongestion of polling facilities, threatens the Department’s ability to procure and maintain adequate amounts of voting equipment inventories in a centralized and efficient manner. Current warehousing space is inadequate and the ability to efficiently and effectively store, repair and stage voting equipment and supplies is constantly being stressed. The Department will work with OMB and ISD to address the space needs of the warehouse operations. All options, including leasing a new facility, architectural retrofitting and storage options to maximize existing space will be explored.



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 processing; absentee ballot signature verification; and election-day voter check-in with the implementation of Electronic Poll Books during the Primary and General Elections in 2014.
- 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 to aging signature differences.
- The increasing interest and convenience of vote by mail has attracted many voters to the Department's online option for requesting absentee ballots. The increased activities poses security concerns which have caused the Department to institute internal security protocols and engage the vendor to enhance the software application to prevent fraudulent attempts that compromise the integrity of the Absentee Ballot Request process. Enhanced vigilance is necessary to protect voters rights.
- Implement an Election Ready Campaign in 2014 to educate voters on the state-mandated countywide reprecincting effort and secure knowledgeable, technical savvy poll workers to assist with the implementation of the new Electronic Voting Identification System (EVIDS) technology.
- 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 2014 that will target a maximum of 2,500 voters per location. The Department will revisit its proposed re-precincting plan for presentation to the Board of County Commissioners in FY 2014-2015.
- 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. Also, the Department will seek to develop a new campaign financing online application, to

include inventory of candidates and committees registered, forms and reports filed, and candidate history to manage this function more effectively.

- 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. With the introduction of new Electronic Poll Books and the completion of the re-precincting project, it is anticipated that there will be a significant number of additional polling places which will require intensified outreach activities to support poll workers' recruitment. Also, follow through on the Mayor's initiative to include permanent County staff at all voting locations will continue.
- The Department has developed a comprehensive, tiered training curriculum specifically designed to ensure poll workers become proficient in the use of Electronic Poll Books. All poll workers will be trained on the new equipment, tested for competency, and offered the opportunity to practice at their convenience at Elections headquarters and training sites around the County with the assistance of Elections Department personnel.
- Poll worker satisfaction surveys will be provided to all poll workers at the completion of each training session assessing the performance of all trainers.
- 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.
- Continue review and upgrade of technical infrastructure to identify obsolete systems and opportunities to introduce new technologies to improve the delivery of existing services and offer new services.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

The State has mandated that all iVotronic voting machines be eliminated by 2020. This will require that the County procure a new voting system for voters. 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. The new firmware has been certified by the State and will allow for much more efficient processing of ballots, as well as

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many enhancements to the existing DS200. However, the current high speed scanners are not compatible with the new firmware which will require the County to purchase newer models of the high speed scanners. The Department will continue to stay in close communication with the vendor to anticipate any budgetary impacts.

The Department will be enhancing the convenience of Early Voting (EV) during General Elections by adding additional sites. This will shorten the wait time for the voter to cast his/her ballot. The Department will explore our needs for equipment and staffing resources to support this initiative.

