



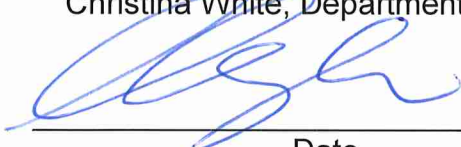
# Elections Department Business Plan

**Fiscal Years: 2019 and 2020**


(10/1/2018 through 9/30/2020)

Approved by:

Christina White, Department Director

  
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Date

Alina T. Hudak, Deputy Mayor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date **2/14/19**

Plan Date: February 11, 2019

*Delivering Excellence Every Day*



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                 |                    |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW</b>      | <b>Page 2</b>      |
| Departmental Mission            |                    |
| Table of Organization           |                    |
| Strategic Alignment Summary     |                    |
| Our Customer                    |                    |
| <br><b>KEY ISSUES</b>           | <br><b>Page 8</b>  |
| <br><b>PRIORITY INITIATIVES</b> | <br><b>Page 10</b> |
| <br><b>FUTURE OUTLOOK</b>       | <br><b>Page 11</b> |
| <br><b>ATTACHMENT 1</b>         | <br><b>Page 12</b> |
| <b>BUSINESS PLAN REPORT</b>     |                    |



## DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

### Department Mission

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

The Elections Department, under the direction of the Supervisor of Elections, 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 thirty-four municipalities and various Special Taxing Districts. In addition, the Department is charged with proper handling of election records (per State of Florida: GS1 and GS3 records retention schedules), providing services to registered and potential voters in Miami-Dade County, as well as County candidates, political committees, third-party organizations, and the community at large.

The most prominent Departmental achievement in FY 16-17 was the impressive milestone of serving almost one million voters (998,605, over 72% voter turnout) during the conduct of a successful, efficient, and nearly flawless Presidential Election.

In FY 17-18, the Department focused on ensuring voters had a convenient and pleasant voting experience with minimal wait times during the 2018 Primary Election.

In FY 18-19 the Department will focus its efforts on maintaining the aspirational goal of voters waiting no more than one hour to vote during the 2018 General Election by promoting Vote-by-Mail, expanding the number of Early Voting sites from 20 to 28; and implement a multi-faceted media and outreach campaign focusing efforts on "Know Your Ballot" due to the heavy ballot content in Miami-Dade County to ensure voters are *Election Ready* in 2018. The most prominent achievement in FY18-19 was the accurate and timely completion of 3 statewide recounts.

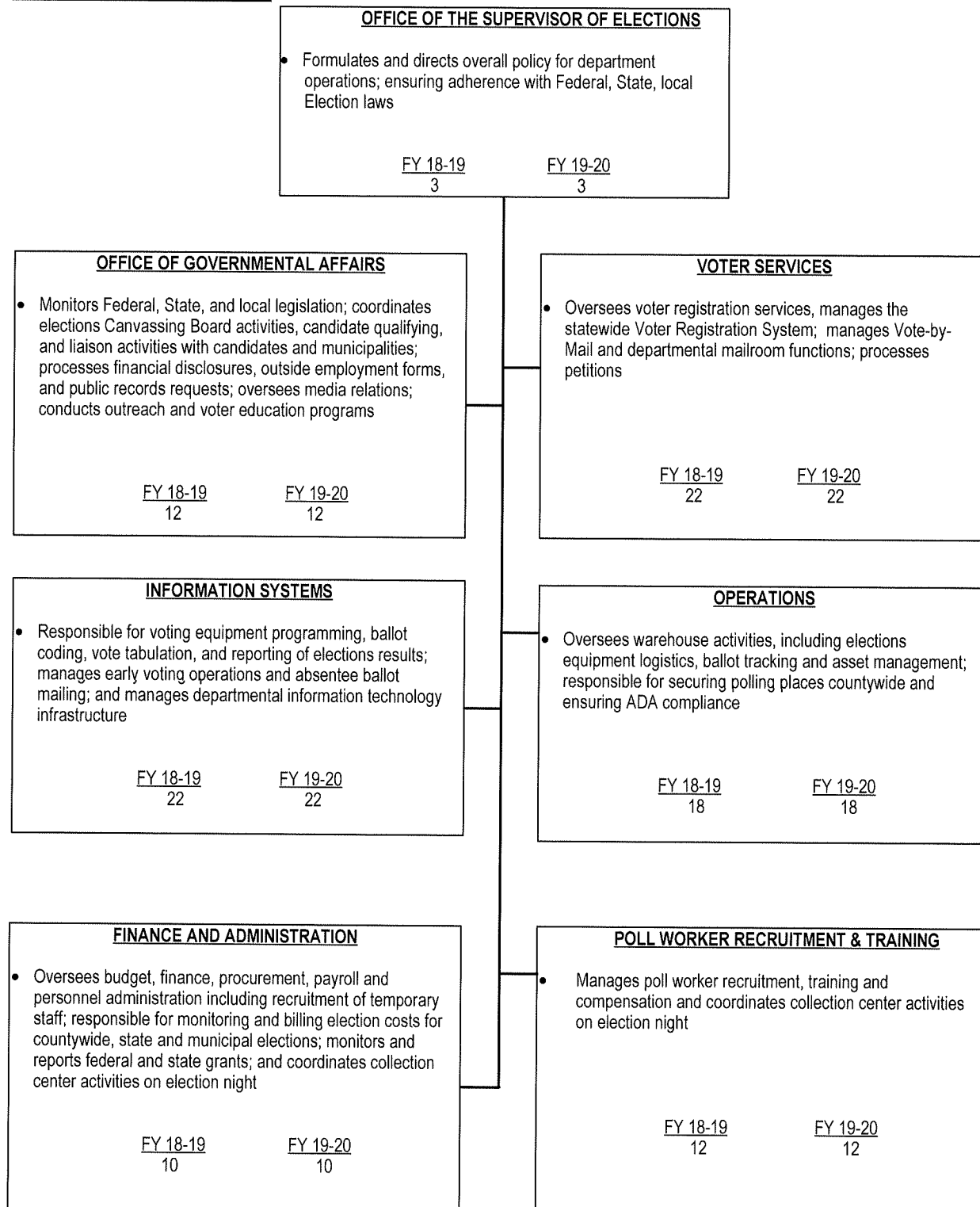
The Department will embark upon the state-mandated ADA equipment upgrade in the second half of 18-19 to ensure compliance with F.S. 101. 56075 by January 2020.

Looking ahead to FY 19-20, continue to implement a more methodical approach to staffing and resource allocation; poll worker efforts will be expanded to include a focus on retention including supplemental training of precinct leadership (e.g. Clerk, Assistant Clerk). This is as a complement to the ongoing recruitment of new poll workers via the annual Poll Worker Recruitment Campaign. The department must remain flexible to shifting trends in voting and ensure resources are allocated appropriately. There is also a critical need to analyze space and develop a long-term solution.



**Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**  
**Department Name: Elections Department**  
**FY2018-19 & FY2019-20**

**Table of Organization**



### **Strategic Alignment Summary**

The Department's efforts for the remainder of FY 18-19 and looking ahead to FY 19-20 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 information that customers can use to request services (voter registration, Vote-by-Mail request) and important information such as the election calendar, election results, voters' precinct, voter demographics and registration statistics, candidate qualifying documents and campaign finance reporting, poll worker information and more
  - Continue outreach efforts to promote voter education and participation, address customer needs through the 311-knowledge base system, publications, newsletters, social media, and attendance at community events
  - Continue to provide voters with the opportunity to access our services through the Voter Information Center (satellite office) during countywide elections
- *Develop a customer-oriented organization (GG1-2)*
  - Continue to implement policies that keep voter wait times minimal and improve the overall voting experience on Election Day and at Early Voting sites
  - Continue to survey customers to solicit feedback inclusive of voters and poll workers (county and non-county)
  - The Department will continue to promote Online Voter Registration (OVR) as another option for voter registration and updates to existing records
  - Ensure voters calling the Department are on hold minimally and questions/concerns handled professionally and courteously
- *Foster a positive image of County government (GG1-3)*
  - Conduct every election in a manner that fosters voter confidence and free of error
  - Continue to ensure a smooth voting experience for all customers during General Elections
  - Conduct customer service training for staff through the Internal Services Department (ISD)
  - Respond to all communications from customers in a timely manner
  - Continue to work with Assisted Living facilities within Miami-Dade County to provide accessibility to voting for the elderly and disabled community through the Supervised Voting Program
  - Continue to promote the positive and important work of the Department via social media outlets, attendance at community outreach events, and other promotional opportunities

**Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**  
**Department Name: Elections Department**  
**FY2018-19 & FY2019-20**

- *Improve relations between communities and governments (GG1-4)*
  - Continue working with the Miami-Dade County Municipal Clerks Association to ensure collaboration during the planning and execution of their elections
  - ⊕ Continue to engage community organizations, area colleges and universities, and municipal/county-affiliated partners to advance poll worker recruitment initiative and support the County's election day polling locations
  - Collaborate with community groups and attend outreach events to accomplish the common goal of educating existing and potential voters leading up to the 2019-20 election cycle
  - Continue collaborating with the Miami-Dade Public School Board to make the 2020 Primary and General Election dates observed holidays so that schools can continue to be utilized as voting locations with little interruption
  - Continue to promote the convenience and integrity of voting in Miami-Dade County to increase voter confidence in the electoral process

**Excellent, engaged workforce (GG2)**

- *Attract and hire new talent (GG2-1)*
  - Work with the Human Resources Department and the Office of Management and Budget to fill vacancies with the most qualified candidates
  - Work with temporary agencies to recruit and train qualified temporary workers to support election operations
  - Focus more on employee recognition and team building with the Department as a whole.
  - ⊕ Continue collaboration with County's Communication Department in launching annual Poll Worker Recruitment Campaign across the County to recruit qualified poll workers
- *Develop and retain excellent employees and leaders (GG2-2)*
  - Develop Elections Department staff skills and knowledge via the department mentorship program
  - Provide internal and external professional development training opportunities for all staff
  - Continue upgrading technical skills of staff through specialized training
  - Sponsor department-wide Employee Appreciation activities and recognize employees' outstanding efforts
  - Foster a team-centric organization where employees work towards the good of the Department as a whole
  - Provide supplemental training opportunities to current poll workers for the purpose(s) of succession planning and retention



**Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**  
**Department Name: Elections Department**  
**FY2018-19 & FY2019-20**

**Fair and accessible elections (GG7)**

- *Provide eligible voters with convenient opportunities to vote (GG7-1)*
  - Efficiently and accurately integrate new voting technology that provides a paper trail for voters with a disability
  - Continue to provide Early Voting at convenient locations, adjusting the number of sites and allocated resources based on type of election
  - Continue to provide online access to request a Vote-by-Mail ballot, and provide timely mailing and processing of all requests
  - Promote the ability for voters to cure their ballot if they omit their signature or if it differs from the signature on file, allowing an additional opportunity for their ballot to be counted
  - Continue to maintain ADA compliance at all polling places
  - Continue to maintain an accurate Voter Registration System by removing newly ineligible voters in a timely manner
  - Continue to secure the most convenient facilities to serve as polling places for voters
  - Continue to promote voter participation via the “three ways to vote” - Early Voting, Vote-by-Mail, and on Election Day
  - Continue extensive poll worker training well beyond state minimum standards to provide an efficient voting experience
  - Continue to promote the availability for voters to request sample ballots via email, so that voters can prepare in advance of voting
  - Continue to monitor potentially invalid Vote-by-Mail ballot requests through the automated process
- *Maintain the integrity of the election and availability of election results and other public records (GG7-2)*
  - Conduct a space study of the Elections building and work with ISD to reconfigure the existing floorplan to better suit growing administrative needs
  - Ensure the availability of a suitable additional facility for Vote-by-Mail operations for countywide elections in order to promptly and effectively serve voters as the volume of Vote-by-Mail requests and customer service needs continue to increase
  - Additional warehouse space for countywide elections to accommodate the additional equipment that is necessary to quickly serve voters as turnout increases during General Elections
  - Ensure timely coding of ballots for all countywide, municipal, and special elections
  - Ensure timely tabulation and availability of election results on the Department's website



**Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**  
**Department Name: Elections Department**  
**FY2018-19 & FY2019-20**

- Continue to efficiently process statistical requests for voter information, posting 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 for prompt record retrieval and response times to the public
- Explore a delivery/pick-up routing system to streamline how voting equipment is deployed
- Explore solutions that can make the post-election audit and recounts a more efficient process
- Research the availability of voting equipment to ensure that all Early Voting sites will have redundancy in case of equipment failure and to reduce voter wait times
- *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 documentation
  - Continue to provide updated information to County candidates through email notifications, postal mailings and posting on the Elections website regarding requirements for candidate qualification by petitions or by fee
  - Continue to ensure timely and accurate verification of candidate and initiative petitions in accordance with federal, state, and local laws
  - Explore a software that can expedite the accounting of petitions, provide seamless signature verification, and produce detailed information for reporting purposes

**Our Customer**

In the implementation of its core mission, the Elections Department serves various customer groups including the County's 1.4 million registered voters, potential voters, County candidates, political committees, third party voter organizations, and the municipalities we serve. 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, convenient, transparent, accurate, and accessible voting experience. The cyclical nature of elections drives up the demand from customers in even numbered years when state and federal countywide elections are held and in odd years during countywide special elections and municipal elections.

Satisfaction is measured differently among the different customer groups:

- After major elections, poll workers are surveyed via online platform regarding their expertise with poll worker training and their election day duties
- Before and after major elections, the Supervisor of Elections meets with various community groups, local political parties, and other stakeholders to solicit feedback and discuss elections logistics





**Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**  
**Department Name: Elections Department**  
**FY2018-19 & FY2019-20**

- Municipalities are surveyed after the Department conducts their local elections; the results are distributed to senior staff and tracked on the Department's scorecard
- Explore the feasibility of conducting voter and candidate satisfaction surveys upon the conclusion of major elections

## **KEY ISSUES**

There are several significant factors critical to the Department's successful implementation of the business plan. The following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats have been identified:

Strengths - The Department has a reputation for integrity and accountability in the conduct of every election regardless of size or scope. This is accomplished through conducting error free elections, doing as much public outreach as possible and communicating key messages and successes through social media and traditional media outlets. This was particularly evident upon the conclusion of the historic 2018 recount. A comprehensive review of procedures with staff prior to each election ensures the integrity, reliability, accuracy, timeliness, security, and confidentiality of data, information, and knowledge. Detailed, written procedures are followed by our workforce to ensure 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 to accomplish the highest levels of productivity and address changing business needs. This is a high priority, since election laws are continuously changing and impacting operational policies and procedures. Microsoft Projects and multi-layered quality assurance checklists are used within each division to synchronize 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 its operations. This is a culture that is instilled department-wide.

The Department's ability to adapt to ever-changing circumstances is a major strength. Early Voting availability, number of polling places, staffing needs and equipment allocation must be reviewed and modified depending on the size and scope of the election. In addition, there is a constant need to keep up with changing technology and security measures.

The poll worker database has been strengthened by the introduction of an annual Poll Worker Recruitment Campaign. In order to maintain a robust, viable database, the campaign will continue in successive years.

The permanent work force of this Department is highly goal oriented and takes a tremendous amount of pride in their work. Since an engaged work force is paramount to success, this is considered one of the biggest strengths of the Department.

Weaknesses – In light of the Department's vacancies and the dependence on a large temporary workforce, managers are forced to focus on streamlining business processes, incorporating technology, identifying needs that can be met with minimal fiscal impact, and sustaining employee morale.



**Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**  
**Department Name: Elections Department**  
**FY2018-19 & FY2019-20**

Voter convenience is a top priority for the Department and with that comes, the aspirational goal of minimal wait times for elections. To that end, the Department has taken a more analytical approach to resource allocation. In addition, the registered voter count at polling places has been more evenly distributed, and the voter check-in process has been greatly expedited. These are major improvements that will go a long way in managing wait times. However, there are so many external variables that impact wait times, such as the length of the ballot, voters' preparation and knowledge of ballot content, education of the process or their registration status, and time in which voters arrive at the polls. These make it difficult to predict and consider for planning purposes. To combat these factors, the Department focuses heavily on voter education.

The Department must continue to invest additional monies in technology to ensure statutory compliance and technological advancement. The lack of reinvesting in technology may lead to the Department's inability to comply with federal and state law as well as conduct operations efficiently. The Department is working with existing vendors and partners to upgrade to state-mandated ADA equipment to ensure compliance with F.S. 101. 56075. In the second half of 18-19 the Department is also looking to replace an antiquated VBM ballot inserter. This will ensure reliable technology during peak times and provide much needed redundancy as this is a growing voting method and a technological failure could be catastrophic. The Department is looking to create a web-based poll worker scheduling application that would automate the scheduling of training classes and eliminate the time-consuming phone call communications.

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 voter satisfaction survey will be explored by the Department to track customer complaints and internal responses, giving the Department a broader view of the issues in order to continue improving direct service to customers.

Opportunities – By all accounts, the 2018 election cycle was a success for Miami-Dade County. Legislative, technological, and operational enhancements resulted in a well-organized and effective election where voter convenience, accessibility, and reliability were top priorities. As the County prepares for state-wide and national media coverage in 2020, the Department is offered the opportunity to provide a pleasant voting experience to all Miami-Dade County voters with minimal wait times. To that end, staff will continue to review Election Day processes and other advances to further enhance the Department's productivity.

The Department will continue to engage in voter education and outreach initiatives to ensure that voters are well versed in the three convenient ways to vote and are aware of the many tools available on the Department's website to assist them with "Knowing Their Ballot" and the voting process.

The Department will also focus on:

- Training internal staff and poll workers on the use of the new ADA equipment (summer 2019)
- Supplementing current poll worker training to include a retention and succession planning component for the purpose of expanding poll workers in the leadership ranks (Clerks, Assistant Clerk) for election day
- A study on the current use of space and parking at the Department's headquarters
- Replace aging technology

Threats – State 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



**Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**  
**Department Name: Elections Department**  
**FY2018-19 & FY2019-20**

and hope to educate the Legislature on the negative operational impacts of certain proposed legislative changes.

In recent years, there has been a spike in last minute legal action resulting in court orders in the midst of elections. This strains the Department's planned operations, causes unforeseen operational impacts, and results in budgetary implications as we are forced to adjust resource needs.

The increasing demands on elections administration including enhancing voter convenience and accessibility; reducing wait times and line management; and decongestion of polling facilities, threatens the Department's ability to work within the confines of the existing building. At the height of a countywide election, the Department operates out of headquarters, an auxiliary administrative space and an additional warehouse. Current warehousing space is inadequate and the ability to efficiently and effectively store, repair, test and stage voting equipment and supplies is constantly being stressed. Since this is only cyclical in nature, leasing warehouse space when needed was sufficient, so long as this space was identified and dedicated when needed. As was the case with administrative space working with ISD. However, in recent Election cycles this has become troubling.

The Department would like to address this by working with ISD to maximize the existing space. The need for additional administrative space is crucial to the growing demands of Vote-by-Mail Operations as the voter interest by mail continues to increase steadily. Parking is always a challenge due to temps, Early Voting, and visitors a long-term strategy is required.

In addition, space and facilities for training of poll workers is at a premium. Given the number of days/weeks needed at each polling location, securing training space is generally difficult. Neither the number of polling locations nor poll workers needed for countywide election is expected to diminish and thus the Department will continue to strategize ongoing training space concerns with ISD and other County partners to better solidify training locations year to year.

Within recent Election cycles the number of Special Elections has grown. This poses a possible threat as overlapping dates and resource allocations are spread thin to accommodate an unplanned election.

## **PRIORITY INITIATIVES**

- Embark upon the state-mandated ADA equipment upgrade to ensure compliance with F.S. 101.56075 by January 2020.
- In the second half of 18-19 the Department is also looking to replace an antiquated VBM ballot inserter.
- The Department depends on a large temporary workforce, which are hired through Temporary Employment Agencies. This method will continue to be monitored to ensure vendors are able to meet the needs of the department.
- Ensure voters have a convenient and pleasant voting experience with minimal wait times during the 2020 Election cycle by aligning Early Voting availability with the type of election; implementing a methodical approach to staffing and resource allocation; and utilizing polling locations that suit growing population.



**Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**  
**Department Name: Elections Department**  
**FY2018-19 & FY2019-20**

- The Poll Worker Recruitment Campaign will remain an annual campaign in preparation for the 2020 Presidential Election cycle. The Department will work with County Departments in establishing a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for all County staff serving on election day
- Enhance the asset management tracking system to maximize capability.
- Implement a multi-faceted media and outreach campaign focusing efforts on “Three Ways to Vote” due to the anticipated record voter turnout in the 2020 Election Cycle.
- Vote-by-Mail continues to increase. The Department continues to mail renewal notices to voters whose request for a ballot has expired. This will ensure voters who wish to vote using this convenient voting method will have their request on file when ballots are mailed. The Department monitors the website requests to ensure it continues to be a safe and easy way for our voters to request their ballots. We remain vigilant by working with the Vendor’s automated enhancement feature to prevent fraudulent attempts.
- Explore using a third-party vendor to augment Vote-by-Mail processing should the volume warrant it. The Department mailed over 420,000 Vote-by-Mail ballots in 2018 and this will grow in 2020. Should the Department’s current maximum capacity be exceeded we may need to engage a third-party vendor to mail the remaining ballots.
- The Department will continue working with the elections systems vendor to ensure compliance with legislative changes that became effective this fiscal year.
- The Department will review its training curriculum and materials to ensure poll workers are well-versed in poll worker procedure, voting equipment and any/all relevant equipment conversions
- Revisions to Implementing Order 4-76 Election Board and Support Personnel Compensation Schedule will be updated in the upcoming fiscal year in order to refine poll workers’ responsibilities, and available incentives and provide an increase in poll worker compensation.
- Senior staff will work more directly to engage all employees in the implementation of the Department’s business plan. Each division 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 the Department level.

## **FUTURE OUTLOOK**

The Department has been very successful in improving voter confidence and convenience and looks forward to continuing the staffing and resource levels at voting locations in a manner that sustains it into the future.

The biggest change occurring in the elections field is the impending state mandate that the current voting machines used for voters with disabilities (iVotronics) be replaced with units that provide a paper trail by 2020. This will require the County to make a capital purchase for new ADA equipment and implement for smaller municipal elections in 2019 in order to be ready for the PPP in 2020.



**Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**  
**Department Name: Elections Department**  
**FY2018-19 & FY2019-20**

**New Firmware/Software Upgrades:** The Department has identified a new firmware/software solution to be used for voters with disabilities. As a full suite, the Department will start acquisition and implementation during FY 18-19. This implementation will replace the ADA units and replace the high-speed scanners used to tabulate Vote-by-Mail ballots as the current scanners are not compatible with the new firmware.

With a record number of voters turning out in the 2018 General Election and the anticipation of the 2020 Election cycle, poll worker recruitment and performance continue to be at forefront of the department's outlook. Poll workers recruitment, performance and retention continue to be topline priorities for the Department.

The Department's process to track and report wait times at all polling locations on Election Day will continue to be used to enhance the Department's distribution of voting equipment, staff, and any other resources needed to mitigate voter wait times.

The original Vote-by-Mail ballot inserter was purchased in 2006 and is aging technology. A second inserter was purchased in 2014 as a recommendation by the Mayor's Elections Advisory Group with the express intent of having complete redundancy for this technology since it is the fastest growing voting method.

The Department anticipates mailing over 450,000 Vote-by-Mail ballots for the Presidential election. As such, it is imperative that both inserters are functioning at optimal performance levels in order to meet statutory deadlines. If this aging equipment fails, we will be in jeopardy of violating State requirements.

In order to ensure redundancy, the Department will be requesting this purchase in early FY 19-20 for use during the 2020 Presidential election cycle.

