



**King County Elections**

# **Strategic Plan**

**2014 - 2018**



# Introduction

With more than five years of successful vote-by-mail experience, King County Elections (KCE) continues to innovate, identify and implement efficiencies and successfully administer elections in the country's largest vote-by-mail county. At the same time, the department serves a county facing many challenges and opportunities. King County's population, now 1.9 million, continues to grow and become more diverse. Increasing numbers of voting-age people speak languages other than English, with more than 170 different languages spoken in King County. Home to a number of world-renowned technology corporations, citizens in King County increasingly look for government information and services to keep pace with private sector services and make them available online. To ensure that King County Elections continues to address the needs of the citizens we serve, given the dynamic environment we operate within, we developed a five-year department strategic plan that functions in consort with the overarching King County strategic plan.

## Comprehensive input

A Strategic Plan Committee (SPC) comprised of the department director and a portion of the management team was formed and tasked with framing, developing, and producing a five-year strategic plan. The SPC began by seeking comprehensive engagement and input from all department employees and key stakeholders. The foundation element of the plan was formed by employees, working together in teams, who identified and prioritized organizational values.

External stakeholders, representing 13 of the groups that govern, receive services and interact with King County Elections, built upon these values and added insight to the department's past performance, role, and future vision, goals, and service needs. Members of the SPC met with stakeholders (legislators, county councilmembers, mayors, Citizens' Election Oversight Committee members, and more) either in person or by phone to ask them each a series of consistent questions. Topics ranged from how they believe voters will cast a ballot in the future to KCE's role in increasing voter turnout. The interviews provided critical insights into the elections-related priorities and values of stakeholders.

Collectively, the input gathered from all of the engagement exercises was reviewed and analyzed by the SPC and integrated into the formation of an updated mission statement, nine core values and seven directional or "Departmental Goals" to guide the work of defining the specific elements of the strategic plan.

# **Mission Statement** (updated October, 2013)

*With integrity and a commitment to innovation, we provide all citizens the opportunity to participate in and protect the democratic process.*

## **Core Values**

**Integrity**

**Resolute**

**Innovation**

**Transparency**

**Accuracy**

**Excellence**

**Teamwork**

**Fairness**

**Respect**

*“employees, working together in teams . . . identified and prioritized organizational values.”*

# Departmental Goals

## Environmental Sustainability

*Safeguard and enhance the environment by minimizing our operational environmental footprint.*

## Financial Stewardship

*Exercise sound financial management to address our future operational needs.*

## Health and Human Potential

*Support individuals and communities to influence their present and shape their future.*

## Public Engagement

*Provide comprehensive public engagement to inform, educate and involve people and communities.*

## Justice and Safety

*Provide fair and accessible voting opportunities for all citizens.*

## Quality Workforce

*Develop and empower our most valuable asset, our employees.*

## Service Excellence

*Deliver effective services that are responsive to community needs.*

# Smart goals & strategies

Equipped with both internal and external input, the SPC recruited all Elections Department managers to facilitate small group meetings that engaged all department teams to develop "SMART" goals (those which are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) and related strategies that in turn support each of the identified "big goals." Input from external stakeholders was identified and assigned a high priority to address during this exercise. Initially, 97 SMART goals were identified along with 240 supporting strategies.

The entire management team was subsequently engaged in a series of meetings to augment, evaluate, refine, and prioritize all of these goals and strategies to produce a final, five-year plan.

The resulting plan identifies 19 SMART goals and 34 supporting strategies that have been placed on a timeline, assigning a starting point for each strategy.

## Notable outcomes

Not surprisingly, the resulting strategic plan is an ambitious one that involves a schedule that will be adjusted as work gets underway and conditions and technologies evolve. The team identified several large-scale projects, including developing a plan to advance online/alternative voting methods, culminating in an electronic voting demonstration in 2017. The team also noted “must-do” activities associated with mandates or assumptions identified by the management team such as:

- developing a replacement plan for equipment and technology
- delivering and maintaining a sustainable Limited English Proficiency (LEP) program for all LEP communities
- assigning staff to research, monitor and seek grant opportunities and partner with other Elections agencies to pursue and implement grants and pilot projects

Some SMART goals and strategies represented in the plan are of initial smaller scale, but have the prospect of lasting and cumulative larger impacts, such as expanding recycling opportunities and discontinuing the use of the ballot stub.

An additional outcome that was repeatedly noted was the inherent “goodwill” created by the ascertainment element of the project. Both external stakeholders and department employees who were involved in the early engagement exercises as well as subsequent follow-up communications experienced a greater sense of connection to the goals of the department and offered new opportunities for expanded interaction and support.

## Next steps

The Elections Department’s commitment to strategic planning goes beyond the creation of a list of projects/programs to undertake. The next steps in this process involve developing work programs to address getting underway, reviewing our organizational structure and determining potential changes (if any) that offer better support for achieving our goals, and identifying a process for monitoring and evaluating work to ensure that course corrections are timely and progress is accounted for.

*“ An additional outcome that was repeatedly noted was the inherent ‘goodwill’ created by the ascertainment element of the project.”*



# King County Elections Strategic Plan - at a glance

Project Launch

2014 2015 2016 2017 2018

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

### Reduce paper waste by 25%

- Reduce paper use in ballot packets
- Evaluate the feasibility of eliminating the security sleeve
- Pursue the development of an online-only voters' pamphlet

### Recycle 90% of all possible office materials

- Expand recycling opportunities at the King County Elections facility

### Reduce election costs to jurisdictions by 3% over three years

- Conduct a financial analysis of costs and identify opportunities for reduction

### Achieve 10% greater efficiency from our workforce

- Define, formalize and implement Lean
- Evaluate and determine feasibility of automated signature verification to reduce staff needs and save costs

### Develop a five-year capital improvement plan for technology

- Analyze and evaluate technology/equipment requirements to sustain operations and address future needs/opportunities
- Seek and tie grant funding to address technology needs

### Secure at least \$50,000/year in grants to support pilot programs to advance our Strategic Plan

- Assign staff to research/seek grants. Partner with other agencies to pursue and implement grants/pilot programs

## FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

## HEALTH & HUMAN POTENTIAL

### Increase awareness/ civics education regarding elections

- Create a program that emphasizes the historical importance of voting and the impact each person's vote has
- Increase partnerships with the education system to provide a civics curriculum that includes voting

### Develop a plan to advance online/ alternative voting methods

- Form an electronic voting team
- Conduct an electronic voting demonstration

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

### Sustain and increase voter awareness of top line key messages to at least 75%

- Launch or refresh major voter marketing campaign with a targeted minority component

### Improve awareness of Elections in King County

- Conduct an Elections summit with stakeholders
- Establish legislative agenda that connects voter perceptions to Strategic Plan goals

## JUSTICE & SAFETY

### **Broaden access and opportunities to vote for all eligible citizens**

- Conduct a full assessment of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) community's barriers to voting and related solutions/opportunities for minimizing them
- Conduct a full assessment of barriers to voting for those with disabilities, aging and other social factors and the related solutions and opportunities to minimize the impacts
- Evaluate (in conjunction with legislative action) the requirement to provide in-person voter registration

### **Provide all services in a safe environment**

- Pursue an alternate facility agreement
- Assess, monitor and evaluate safety programs and systems

### **Attract and retain a talented workforce, maintaining a full-time employee vacancy rate of less than 5%**

- Identify new and alternative recruitment resources to attract an ever-changing temporary workforce
- Identify and evaluate equipment/systems to support employee health and well-being
- Determine skill sets for each position, examine classifications and standardize the recruitment process

### **Promote employee development by dedicating at least 5% of staff time to training**

- Develop, manage and track training plans to meet staff professional development goals and the department's needs
- Formalize the Agile employee initiative

## QUALITY WORKFORCE

### **Respond to information requests within one business day**

- Obtain a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to guide and track voter contacts through a consistent solution/process

### **Decrease ballot processing time to an average of one day**

- Increase processing capacity through focused voter education, targeted staff training and continuous improvement

### **Offer Elections services online**

- Increase self-service and subscription options on the web site
- Pursue alternate signature methods for all Elections forms

### **Ensure 100% departmental awareness of voter perceptions**

- Establish a statistically valid ongoing attitude and awareness survey with a regular defined cycle of administration
- Create opportunities for the public to participate in annual, self-selected Elections Department surveys

### **Develop a five-year technology plan**

- Form a technology governance team to identify and analyze technology needs and opportunities

## SERVICE EXCELLENCE



**King County**  
Elections

[www.kingcounty.gov/elections](http://www.kingcounty.gov/elections)

**(206) 296-VOTE (8683)**

03/31/2014