

A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR
ELECTIONS SASKATCHEWAN

2017 - 2022



SUSTAINING. LEADING. MODERNIZING.

ADVANCING ELECTORAL
EXCELLENCE IN SASKATCHEWAN



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A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR ELECTIONS SASKATCHEWAN - 2017-2022 (V1.0)

A Message from the Chief Electoral Officer

I am very pleased to present *Sustaining. Leading. Modernizing: Advancing Electoral Excellence in Saskatchewan: A Strategic Plan for Elections Saskatchewan 2017-2022*.

The strategic plan presented in this document represents a new level of institutional maturity for Elections Saskatchewan. It is a deliberate effort to sustain the systemic improvements that have been made to Saskatchewan's electoral processes over the past four years while at the same time targeting important modernization consistent with what is taking place across the country. It is truly about leading this province towards electoral excellence while serving as one contributor to a healthy democracy.

Our previous plan entitled, *A Path for Renewal*, focused on three priorities¹: professionalizing Elections Saskatchewan; Improving the delivery of electoral events; and renewing the province's focus on democratic stewardship.

It is imperative that we reap the benefits of the work that has taken place over the past several years but not rest on our laurels. There is much more for Elections Saskatchewan to achieve on its journey to becoming a leader in best practices in election management.



Dr. Michael Boda has been Chief Electoral Officer since June 1, 2012.

“[This strategic plan] is a deliberate effort to sustain the systemic improvements that have been made to Saskatchewan’s electoral processes over the past four years while at the same time targeting important modernization consistent with what is taking place across the country.”

- Dr. Michael Boda, Chief Electoral Officer

¹ *Elections Saskatchewan. A Strategic Plan for Saskatchewan's Election Management Body, 2014 – 2016 (Regina: Elections Saskatchewan, January 2014).*



We have consciously selected the words “*advancing electoral excellence*” to serve as part of the title of our plan. As a team, we are united in building on the successes of our last strategic plan in order to intentionally pursue electoral excellence in a way that is consistent with democratic jurisdictions across our country and around the world.

This plan represents the collective inputs, discussion and consensus of the entire team at Elections Saskatchewan. This includes all head office staff as well as representatives from our Field Leadership Team. In taking this approach, it is meant to guide and define our work over the next five years.

To be successful, an organization needs a roadmap that points the way to success. This plan will serve as that roadmap for Elections Saskatchewan and help to ensure the institution has clear direction. Through the steady execution of this strategic plan, we will ensure that energy, resources and time are allocated to a defined vision all working towards a set of common goals and priorities.

We have the right team in place to make a difference. The next five years will be exciting for Elections Saskatchewan and our stakeholders, including the voting public. As you review this document, I hope you see a clear, underlying commitment that Elections Saskatchewan is making to lead this province towards electoral excellence.

Michael D. Boda, D. Phil., Ph.D.
Chief Electoral Officer
Province of Saskatchewan

Regina, Saskatchewan
December 1, 2017

PART A: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

SUSTAINABILITY AND MODERNIZATION

Elections Saskatchewan has made great strides since adopting its *2014-2016 Strategic Plan – A Path for Renewal*. Under new leadership, that plan set out to professionalize Saskatchewan's election management body, improve the delivery of events, and renew the province's focus on democratic stewardship.

During this period, Saskatchewan's provincial election management body successfully assembled a field leadership team spread out across 61 constituencies, launched a new permanent register of voters delivered a general election, and began to lay the foundations for the province's next election. Each of these opportunities was used to advance the refinement and efficiency of electoral processes in order to enhance the institution's effectiveness.

With a team that is strong, experienced and prepared for the coming challenges, Elections Saskatchewan is ready to enter a new chapter in its history. The institution's 2017-2022 strategic imperative is one that requires balance—*sustaining* the electoral best practice and the key electoral initiatives of the past electoral cycle while *modernizing* a system of voting that has remained static since Saskatchewan's founding in 1905.

In Fall 2016, the Elections Saskatchewan team gathered to develop a plan to support this five-year imperative. This plan was developed using a balanced scorecard methodology. The resulting strategic plan is a leadership document detailing the desired future of election management in Saskatchewan and the path to attaining this vision.

STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholder

A person, group or organization who affects or can be affected by the organization's actions.

Elections Saskatchewan believes there is a broad and diverse set of stakeholders in election management, including:

- Voters and prospective voters;
- Registered political parties (including chief official agents, political party staff and volunteers);
- Candidates for election (including their business managers);
- Elected Members of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan;
- Members of the Legislature's Board of Internal Economy;
- Constituency associations of registered political parties;
- Unregistered political parties, external organizations and advocacy groups;
- Media representatives, reporters, columnists, bloggers and contributors;
- Other Canadian Chief Electoral Officers and their institutions;
- Urban and rural municipality election officials;
- External data providers;
- Service organizations, vendors and contractors;
- Academic researchers and political analysts;
- Other independent officers of the Legislative Assembly; and
- Electoral boundary commissions.

Addressing the needs and concerns of these stakeholders is critical to the success of Saskatchewan's election management body. For this reason, Elections Saskatchewan has centred its 2017-2022 plan on stakeholder impact, on advancing the idea of electoral excellence and becoming a national leader in electoral best

practice. Elections Saskatchewan will continue consulting with its stakeholders to assess how well it is meeting their needs. It aims to identify clear opportunities for improvement and modernization of services.

Finding fiscally responsible, effective, and transparent methods for obtaining meaningful stakeholder input is necessary to define current and emerging needs that Elections Saskatchewan is expected to meet.

2017 – 2022 STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The *2017-2022 Elections Saskatchewan Strategic Plan* is a document informed by Elections Saskatchewan's head office and field leadership teams. Building this plan involved a dedication of time at all levels of the organization. Head office and field leadership staff participated in several sessions to determine how to develop and achieve a trajectory for the institution now and into 2022.

Following broad input from head office and field leadership teams, the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Saskatchewan's management team evolved the plan into a defined set of organizational activities, with the overarching focus being on facilitating change. Recognizing that day-to-day activities are critical and consume the majority of organizational resources, the team chose to focus the plan on those items that will evolve and change the organization toward a new and desired future for Elections Saskatchewan.

A BALANCED APPROACH

Elections Saskatchewan has adopted a balanced scorecard methodology in the development and design of the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan. Within the context of this approach, there are several key attributes to the plan.

Strategic Imperative

A strategic imperative can be defined as those changes that are required within a defined period to achieve a new desired organizational state. This plan focuses on the changes, projects, and initiatives planned for 2017 to 2022. Business as usual is not detailed in the plan unless there is specific need to modify an existing process or system.

Stakeholder Impact

The Strategy is driven and ultimately measured by the desired impact on institutional stakeholders. Elections Saskatchewan has carefully focused on the desired impact it wishes to have on a broad set of key stakeholders. This impact is outlined clearly in the plan and supported with an array of initiatives in order to achieve the intended goal.

Balanced Approach

The Strategy seeks to balance four important perspectives of organizational management: stakeholder impact; financial management and accountability; processes/operations; and, organizational learning. Focusing on these four perspectives ensures organizational attention and resources are not overly allocated to one perspective over another.



Strategy Map

The Strategy is communicated by means of a one-page synopsis outlining the vision, mission, values, strategic imperative, and priorities within each of four organizational management perspectives. This Map allows Elections Saskatchewan to present its strategic agenda clearly and concisely. It also communicates important linkages that exist between the four perspectives outlined with the aim of achieving the desired impact among Elections Saskatchewan's stakeholders.

Elections Saskatchewan's strategy map can be found on pages 10 and 11.

Measurement

Elections Saskatchewan will advance its strategic planning methods through enhancing measurement processes over the life of the strategic plan. Outcomes level measures have been applied to the top level of its Strategy Map: Our Stakeholders. The impact of its activities on stakeholders will be understood through deliberate and strategic measurement. Activity-based measures will be applied to both operations and planned strategies designed to advance organizational maturity.

Reporting on measures will be provided by means of Elections Saskatchewan's Annual Report as it pertains to activity-based measures. Impact measures are longer term and will be reported on at the end of the election cycle.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING

The strategic planning process revealed numerous issues and challenges affecting election management in Saskatchewan. A number of these are summarized below.

Trends in Election Management

Modernization

Globally, election administration has witnessed significant change in recent years. While much attention has been given to the introduction of technology to a variety of facets of electoral events and the systems that support them, electoral processes have also seen refinements that hold true to democratic standards while introducing greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Comparatively, Canada's 14 federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions have seen relatively limited modernization. In some instances, particularly at the municipal level, technology such as online voting has been rapidly adopted and then, at times, abandoned. Overall, however, electoral events in Canada continue to be conducted using methods that have been in place since Confederation. At the same time, voters have increasingly questioned the approaches used to administer elections within these jurisdictions, leading to calls for modernization.

Public Participation

Generally speaking, public participation in elections across Canada has been on a downward trend for many decades. Federally, voter turnout peaked in 1957 and reached its lowest levels during the last few general elections.

Provincial elections in Saskatchewan have followed a similar trend. Participation of eligible voters in 1982 stood at nearly 80 percent. A relative freefall was observed in 1995,

however, with turnout dropping to just over 57 percent. Since then, the overall participation rates have continued to decline. For more than two decades now, just over half of Saskatchewan's eligible voters have been choosing who will make decisions on behalf of all voters.²

Heightened Expectations

Across Canada, the administration of elections has come under increasing scrutiny in recent years, with political parties, candidates, the media and others placing a microscope on the conduct of elections, particularly in instances where votes between a winner and loser is very close. For Canadians, the 2011 federal election was perhaps a turning point in this regard, when a narrow electoral contest in the District of Etobicoke Centre led to a Supreme Court decision in *Opitz v. Wrzesnewskyj* that overturned a lower court decision to set aside 79 votes due to errors in conducting that election. Within that decision, election administrators were warned that serious administrative errors are not acceptable in a modern democracy.

Elections across Canada and in many Western democracies have traditionally been conducted within the civil society sector and without heightened expectations that arise when the courts become involved. Expectations are changing, however, and election management bodies are increasingly professionalizing. The idea of electoral excellence is necessary both to effectively serve stakeholders but also to uphold heightened legal expectations.

Privacy

As in many jurisdictions, Elections Saskatchewan has managed a voters list since shortly after the founding of the province. In the early days, personal data was publicly posted on telephone

polls and bulletin boards in communities around the province in the days before an election. This allowed voters to review their own information but also gave them access to their neighbour's personal data.

Expectations for privacy have evolved dramatically in recent years, however, with citizens wanting to ensure that their personal information remains protected and private. This has had a significant impact on how election management bodies prepare for and conduct elections. Privacy breaches can erode trust in a public institution and trust is central to the work of an effective election management body.

Legislation

While not all currently face this challenge, a number of Canadian jurisdictions, particularly where legislation has not been modernized, are directed by highly prescriptive legislation. Such Acts set out in minute details the structure of election management and the tasks which election officials are expected to perform.

The level of prescriptiveness in Saskatchewan's *Election Act, 1996* may well reflect an historical attitude which viewed it desirable for complete details to be included in laws and regulations. Such an approach has the disadvantage that even the most minor of changes, lacking partisan consequences, requires legislative change. In a modern environment, where the public expects election administrators to respond with speed and agility to new challenges and opportunities, prescriptive legislation proves highly challenging.

² For more information on voter turnout, visit the Resource Centre of Elections Saskatchewan's website, <http://www.elections.sk.ca>.



Elections Saskatchewan Strengths and Challenges

High Performance Team and Culture

Elections Saskatchewan has built a highly effective team of qualified professionals committed to fostering professional election management in Saskatchewan. The Chief Electoral Officer, management team, head office staff, and field leadership team have provided solid leadership and administration resulting in significant institutional development and evolution over the last four years. Entrenching the work of this team to ensure institutional continuity is now the challenge. Elections Saskatchewan must ensure that internal capacity is sufficient to maintain a pace that allows it to be successful during times of turnover and also during the intense times that come with organizing and conducting electoral events. Its structure must also allow for information to flow quickly, accurately and securely across the various organizational units and geographic locations.

Demands, Pace and Flexibility

Election management is about delivering accurate results within time-constrained environments while meeting the ongoing and changing needs of stakeholders. Elections Saskatchewan is meeting this challenge with greater success than ever before. To maintain this reputation, the institution must entrench systems and processes and continue to build expertise in project management, prioritizing and planning. Being ready to respond to electoral events with highly refined and dependable core systems and processes is imperative.

Information Management

Information management, data integrity and privacy are critical in election management. Elections Saskatchewan is continuing to build best-in-class systems and processes. This work is ongoing and must be supported by necessary expertise and a superior information technology infrastructure.

STRATEGY MAP

The following schematic provides a visual overview of the *Elections Saskatchewan 2017- 2022 Strategic Plan*.

It is important to note the four perspectives of the balanced scorecard are presented on the Map as a set of building blocks.

- At the bottom of the map is the *learning and growth perspective*. This communicates that nothing is possible without a competent institution with a clear and purposeful culture.
- Built on top of the learning and growth perspective is the *processes and operations perspective*. The message communicated here is that processes and operations can be built and improved if the institution is strong.
- The *finance perspective* lies above processes indicating that is processes and operations are sound, financial goals can be achieved.
- Finally, the *stakeholder perspective* tops the four perspectives signifying that the desired impact will be achieved is all is working well within the institution.

At the top of the map lies *Our Hope and Dream for Saskatchewan* as well as our Vision for Elections Saskatchewan. We know that by achieving the work outlined on the map we will achieve progress toward this dream.

STRATEGY MAP

Vision				
<p>Our hope for Saskatchewan: The people of Saskatchewan trust, value and participate in the democratic process</p> <p>Our vision for Elections Saskatchewan We are a leader in establishing best practices in election management</p>				
Mission				
Elections Saskatchewan is an independent office of the Legislative Assembly, created to plan, organize, deliver and regulate provincial electoral events for the people of Saskatchewan.				
Values				
Professionalism We demand the highest standards in our performance.	Impartiality We are objective, fair and non-partisan.	Innovation We seek solutions to propel us toward election modernization.	Service We go above and beyond to meet the needs of our stakeholders and the legislated requirements of election management.	Accountability We earn the trust of the people of Saskatchewan and our stakeholders through commitment to legislation, best practices and standards in election management.
Sustain			Modernize	
Refine and improve our organization for the efficient and effective delivery of election events			Innovate toward best practices in election management	
Stakeholder	1.0 We succeed by ensuring we meet the expectations of our stakeholders:			
	1.1 Voters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the electoral process and have every opportunity to participate 	1.2 Political Parties and Candidates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the electoral process and are supported equitably 		1.3 Other key actors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand and trust electoral processes Enhance the effectiveness of elections management
Finance	2.0 We ensure accountability and sustainability by:			
	2.1 Financial Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial accountability is achieved through sound budgeting and reporting 		2.2 Adaptability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elections Saskatchewan is responsive to the financial pressures of the elections management environment 	
Processes/ Operations	3.0 We strive for operational excellence with specific emphasis in:			
	3.1 Organizational Readiness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core systems and processes allow for ongoing effective operations Electoral systems and processes ensure ongoing readiness for election event management 	3.2 Regulatory Modernization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legislation is modernized to reflect best possible practices and ensure compliance 	3.3 Information Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systems and technology support modernization of election management processes 	3.4 Continuous Improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes are monitored and improved through the application of standards and best practices
Organization Learning	4.0 We strive for organizational excellence with specific emphasis in:			
	4.1 Project Management and Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority initiatives are executed through effective project management and planning processes 	4.2 Capacity Building <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance capacity of head office and field staff Important relationships are built and sustained to enhance the electoral management process 		4.3 Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A culture of excellence aligned with institution's values



PART B: STRATEGIC PLAN

OUR HOPE AND DREAM FOR SASKATCHEWAN

Elections Saskatchewan has built its plan within this context:

Our Hope and Dream for Saskatchewan

The people of Saskatchewan trust, value and participate in their democracy.

Elections Saskatchewan knows that election management impacts everyone in the province and that we play an integral role in ensuring the integrity of democratic processes within the province. It is our duty to contribute to this larger vision in our work and actions.

VISION

A renewed vision for Elections Saskatchewan puts forward a challenge towards continued improvement and recognized leadership in election management:

Vision

We are a leader in establishing and refining best practice in election management.

Elections Saskatchewan's vision supports our desire to ensure that the people of Saskatchewan trust the electoral process. We have earned the respect of our provincial stakeholders, including the voting public, political parties, candidates, the media and others. We are highly regarded by our institutional partners and election management bodies in jurisdictions within and outside the boundaries of Saskatchewan. We now leverage our learning, strengths and capacity toward leadership in election management, enhanced public trust and a push towards electoral excellence.

VALUES

Elections Saskatchewan espouses the following values in all that it does:

Professionalism

We demand the highest standards in our performance.

Impartiality

We are objective, fair and non-partisan.

Innovation

We seek solutions that will propel us toward electoral modernization.

Service

We go above and beyond to meet the needs of our stakeholders and the legislative requirements of election management.

Accountability

We earn the trust of the people of Saskatchewan through commitment to legislation, best practice and standards in election management.

MISSION

The role and mission of Elections Saskatchewan is:

Mission

Elections Saskatchewan is an independent office of the Legislative Assembly, created to plan, organize, deliver and regulate provincial electoral events for the people of Saskatchewan.

Elections Saskatchewan is aware that an election management body exists primarily to prepare, administer, and conduct the full range of electoral events that are defined in provincial election legislation, including general elections, by-elections, referenda, plebiscites, boundary redistributions and voter enumeration. Our mission is clear, concise and contained.

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE

Elections Saskatchewan has established the following strategic imperative for 2017 to 2022:

Sustain

Refine and improve our organization for the efficient and effective delivery of electoral events.

Modernize

Innovate toward best practice in election management.

Our strategic imperative focuses on balancing current efficient and effective delivery of electoral processes with our desire to modernize, innovate and influence electoral best practice. Achieving this is predicated on an exceptionally strong team built over the past four years at Elections Saskatchewan. Our strategic imperative will drive our use of resources over the course of this strategic plan.

GOALS

1.0 Stakeholders

We succeed by ensuring we meet the expectations of our stakeholders:

1.1 Voters:

Understand the electoral process and have every opportunity to participate;

1.2 Political Parties and Candidates:

Understand the electoral process and are supported equitably;

1.3 Other key actors:

Understand and trust electoral processes. Enhance the effectiveness of election management.

2.0 Finance

We ensure accountability and sustainability through:

2.1 Financial Management:

Financial accountability is achieved through sound budgeting and reporting;

2.2 Adaptability:

Elections Saskatchewan is responsive to the financial pressures of the election management environment.

3.0 Processes/Operations

We strive for operational excellence with specific emphasis on:

3.1 Organizational Readiness:

Core systems and processes allow for ongoing effective operations. Electoral systems and processes ensure ongoing readiness for election event management;

3.2 Information Management:

Systems and technology support modernization of election management processes;

3.3 Regulatory Modernization:

Legislation is modernized to reflect best possible practices and ensure compliance;

3.4 Continuous Improvement:

Processes are monitored and improved through the application of standards and best practices.

4.0 Organizational Learning

We strive for organizational excellence with specific emphasis on:

4.1 Project Management and Planning:

Priority initiatives are executed through effective project management and planning processes;

4.2 Capacity Building:

Enhance capacity of head office and field staff; Important relationships are built and sustained to enhance processes of election management;

4.3 Culture:

A culture of excellence aligned with institution's values.

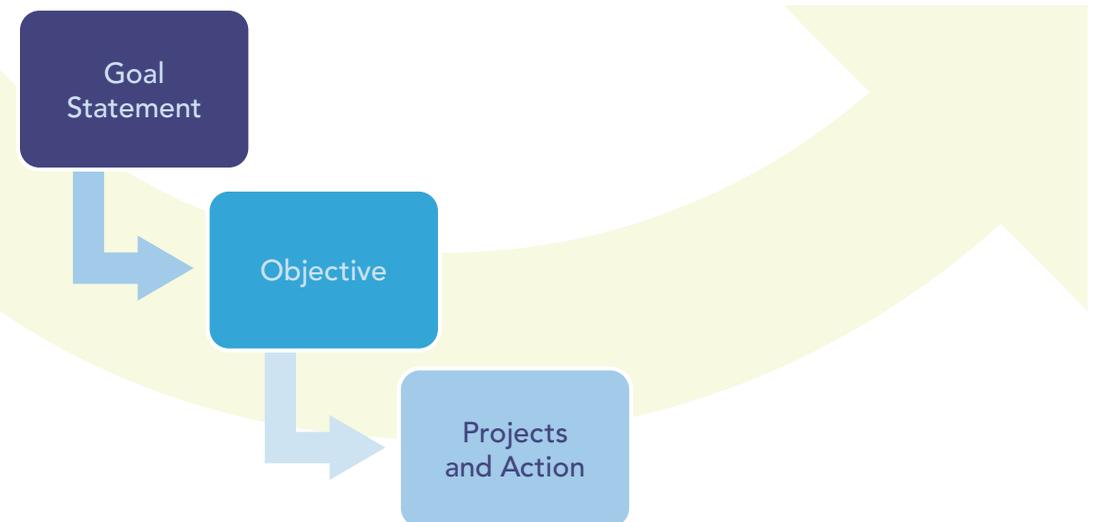
PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Elections Saskatchewan will advance its strategic planning methods through enhancing measurement processes over the life of the strategic plan. Outcomes level measures have been applied to the top level of its Strategy Map: Our Stakeholders. The impact of its activities on stakeholders will be understood through deliberate and strategic measurement. Activity-based measures will be applied to both operations and planned strategies designed to advance organizational maturity.

Reporting on measures will be provided by means of Elections Saskatchewan's Annual Report as it pertains to activity-based measures. Impact measures are longer term and will be reported on at the end of the election cycle.

OBJECTIVES

Within this strategic plan, a set of objectives support each strategic goal. Objectives will be revised on an annual basis based on progress, resources and changing needs. They are supported by a set of actions and projects. Objectives are to be published within the Elections Saskatchewan annual operating plan.





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