



# Introduction to Operational Planning

---

A Guide for Election  
Management Bodies

WHITE PAPER | AUGUST 2022

# Introduction to Operational Planning

## A Guide for Election Management Bodies

Joanne McCallum



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



International Foundation  
for Electoral Systems



## Introduction to Operational Planning

### A Guide for Election Management Bodies

WHITE PAPER | AUGUST 2022

# Introduction to Operational Planning: A Guide for Election Management Bodies

Operational planning is a key element of electoral management that is critical for the implementation of sustainable and credible elections.

This introductory guide is intended to support election management bodies (EMBs) to conduct effective operational planning across the electoral cycle by providing a resource for electoral practitioners.

The guide presents operational planning concepts and methodologies and practical information on how to develop key operational planning outputs, as well as

monitoring, communicating and adjusting operational planning in response to changing circumstances. This planning guide is supplemented with an operational planning curriculum enabling EMBs and other stakeholders to appreciate the critical components of operational planning and its importance to delivering credible elections.

---

Introduction to Operational Planning: A Guide for Election Management Bodies

Copyright © 2022 International Foundation for Electoral Systems. All rights reserved.

Permission Statement: No part of this work may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system without the written permission of IFES.

Requests for permission should include the following information:

- A description of the material for which permission to copy is desired.
- The purpose for which the copied material will be used and the manner in which it will be used.
- Your name, title, company or organization name, telephone number, fax number, e-mail address and mailing address.

Please send all requests for permission to:

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

2011 Crystal Drive, Floor 10

Arlington, VA, U.S.A. 22202

Email: [media@ifes.org](mailto:media@ifes.org)

Phone: 202.350.6700

*This report is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States State Department. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. State Department or the United States Government.*



# About IFES

---

IFES advances democracy for a better future. We collaborate with civil society, public institutions and the private sector to build resilient democracies that deliver for everyone. As a global leader in the promotion and protection of democracy, our technical assistance and applied research develops trusted electoral bodies capable of conducting credible elections; effective and accountable governing institutions; civic and political processes in which all people can safely and equally participate; and innovative ways in which technology and data can positively serve elections and democracy. Since 1987, IFES has worked in more than 145 countries, from developing to mature democracies. IFES is a global, nonpartisan organization based in Arlington, Virginia, USA, and registered as a non-profit organization [501(c)(3)] under the United States tax code.

## IFES By The Numbers



**Reached 25M+**  
people with  
civic and voter  
education in 2021



**Supported 30**  
elections in 2021,  
training 300K+  
election officials



**Worked across 58**  
countries in 2021

# Table of Contents



- Acknowledgements .....iii
- Acronyms..... iv
- Foreword ..... v
- Preface ..... vi
  - About This Guide ..... vi
  - Content Overview ..... vi
- Chapter 1: Introduction to Operational Planning ..... 1
  - What Is Operational Planning? ..... 1
  - Why Operational Planning Is Important ..... 1
  - Relationship to Strategic Planning ..... 2
  - When Should Operational Planning Take Place? ..... 3
  - Core and Supporting Electoral Processes ..... 4
- Chapter 2: Considerations for Effective Operational Planning ..... 6
  - Leadership and Ownership ..... 6
  - Internal Collaboration ..... 6
  - Involve Key External Stakeholders ..... 7
  - Balancing Quality, Time and Cost ..... 8
  - Gender Equality and Social Inclusion ..... 9
  - Environmental Considerations in Operational Planning ..... 10
  - Key Outputs of Operational Planning ..... 11
  - Anticipating and Responding to Challenges throughout Operational Planning ..... 12
- Chapter 3: Implementing Operational Planning ..... 15
  - Operational Planning Cycle ..... 15
  - Step 1: Initiation of the Operational Planning Process ..... 15



Step 2: Planning and Information Gathering.....	16
Step 3: Developing the Concept of Operations.....	19
Step 4: Developing the Operational Plan and Budget Refinement.....	25
Step 5: Developing the Operational Plan Schedule.....	33
Step 6: Monitoring Implementation, Updating and Communicating.....	36
Step 7: Evaluation.....	38
Annex A: When to Start Operational Planning: Considerations for Different Types of Elections.....	39
Annex B: Resources: Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Elections.....	41
Annex C: GESI and the Electoral Cycle.....	42
Annex D: Greening Elections.....	44
Annex E: Supporting Electoral Processes: Sub-plans.....	46
Operational Planning Considerations.....	46
Annex F: Sample Operational Planning Communication Tools.....	50
Annex G: References.....	53

## Acknowledgements

The author would like to sincerely thank Staffan Darnolf, IFES Senior Global Advisor, Electoral Operations and Administration; Fernanda Buriel, IFES Deputy Director, Center for Applied Research and Learning; Erica Shein, IFES Director, Center for Applied Research and Learning; Peter Erben, IFES Principal Advisor and Senior Country Director for Ukraine; Anne-Sofie Gerhard, Technical Adviser and Project Manager, Vanuatu Electoral Environment Project, United Nations Development Programme; Panto Letic, Chief Electoral Advisor, United Nations Support Mission in Libya; Virginia Atkinson, IFES Senior Global Advisor, Inclusion; Gina Chirillo, IFES Gender Specialist; Vasu Mohan, IFES Senior Global Advisor, Conflict, Displacement and Minority Rights; and Iurie Ciocan, Former Chairperson of the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Moldova, for their thoughtful peer reviews and invaluable contributions to this guide.

## Acronyms

BRIDGE	Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EDR	Electoral Dispute Resolution
EMB	Election Management Body
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer



## Foreword

Dear colleagues:

A state can be considered democratic when the political will of its citizens is fairly reflected in the institutions of state power. The delegation of sovereign power from citizens to its elected representatives occurs through elections. The organization and conduct of free and fair elections is a very complex and difficult exercise. Election management bodies in most countries are permanent and independent public institutions equipped with specialized staff and unique resource demands. The work of professional election management bodies has become systematic, based on clearly defined objectives, plans and budgets.

Citizens in the modern world have wide-ranging access to information and are aware of their rights, creating high demand for the professional conduct of elections. Under these conditions, citizens will not trust or accept chaotic management of electoral events and demand that election management bodies operate professionally and transparently.

This Introduction to Operational Planning was designed to help election management bodies conduct effective planning processes. It provides operational planning guidelines for processes focused on specific electoral events. The beneficiaries of these guidelines are not just the senior management representatives of election management bodies, but also every individual electoral official who plans his or her own daily activities and contributes to the development of an operational plan for the entire institution. The actions described in the guide are presented in order of implementation based on operational best practices accumulated by IFES, which works closely with election management bodies around the world.

This introductory guide will help election management bodies structure their objectives and determine the resources necessary to achieve them. It is important to mention that the guide not only shows what should be done, but describes in step-by-step detail each phase of operational planning. An important element is that this guide, through its instructions, helps those who organize elections to standardize procedures, develop the long-term capacity of staff responsible for operational planning and hence help increase the quality of services delivered to all stakeholders — voters, political parties, civil society organizations, state institutions and many others.

*Introduction to Operational Planning – A Guide for Election Management Bodies* is a complex, multi-dimensional roadmap that approaches practically the entire range of actions and responsibilities that election management bodies need to carefully plan, budget, implement, verify and evaluate to organize and conduct elections. The guide is recommended to all election management bodies as well as civil society institutions monitoring the activities of election bodies.

Lurie Ciocan, Ph.D. (Political Science)

Former Chairperson of the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Moldova

# Preface

## About This Guide

Operational planning is a key element of electoral management that is critical for the implementation of sustainable and credible elections. This introductory guide is intended to support election management bodies (EMBs) to conduct operational planning across the electoral cycle by providing a general tool for electoral practitioners with responsibility for operational planning.

This guide is intended to complement an excellent training module on operational planning across the electoral cycle developed by the Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) consortium, of which IFES is a founding member.<sup>1</sup> This publication is also intended as a companion to the IFES *Strategic Planning for Effective Electoral Management Guide*, as operational planning should aim to go hand-in-hand with an EMB's strategic plan.

Operational planning is a dynamic and complex endeavor that involves planning all core and supporting electoral processes throughout the electoral cycle. This introductory guide articulates the concepts and methodologies of operational planning. It also provides guidance for EMBs on developing key operational planning outputs (concept of operations, operational plan, operational plan schedule) and monitoring, communicating and adjusting operational planning in response to changing circumstances. IFES is developing further resources, tools, templates and relevant examples to support operational planning exercises to support these efforts.

Operational planning involves all parts of an EMB. In practical terms, however, one part of an EMB will have responsibility for managing the operational planning process and for producing the key operational planning outputs, while other EMB work units will manage specific core and supporting electoral processes. This guide is intended to inform a whole-of-organization understanding of operational planning and provide specific guidance for those responsible for managing operational planning and producing key outputs. [Annex E](#) discusses considerations for the next tier of operational planning for the supporting electoral processes of procurement, logistics, public outreach, recruitment and staffing, procedures and training and security.

The guide is intended to be used by election management practitioners to support implementing an operational planning process. As operational planning takes place over time, the guide is structured to facilitate reading in full, as well as reading chapters individually at the time of starting each part of the operational planning process.

## Content Overview

**[Chapter 1: Introduction to Operational Planning.](#)** Chapter 1 introduces operational planning for all core and supporting electoral processes. It describes why operational planning is important; details the risks of failing to conduct comprehensive operational planning; explains the relationship between strategic planning and operational planning; and describes when operational planning should take place. Chapter 1 concludes with a

---

<sup>1</sup> See more about BRIDGE at <https://bridge-project.org/implementing-bridge/bridge-curriculum/>

discussion of how core and supporting electoral processes can provide a framework for structuring operational planning.

**Chapter 2: Considerations for Effective Operational Planning.** This chapter introduces the dynamic and ongoing nature of operational planning, emphasizing that this activity requires ongoing monitoring and updating. It discusses the important role of senior leadership in operational planning and collaboration with internal EMB stakeholders at headquarters and in the field. Chapter 2 also introduces the different categories of external stakeholders with which the EMB should engage during operational planning via a two-way exchange of information and highlights the importance of balancing the triple constraints of quality, time and cost. It then provides guidance on applying a gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) lens to operational planning.

Chapter 2 also introduces three key operational planning outputs: the concept of operations, the operational plan (including a revised budget) and the operational plan schedule. Chapter 2 concludes with a discussion of potential challenges due to the complex nature of electoral management and the need for planning flexibility within the confines of the legal framework.

**Chapter 3: Implementing Operational Planning.** Chapter 3, the core section of the guide, introduces the operational planning cycle and describes a proposed methodology and steps in the operational planning process to produce the key operational planning outputs. The methodology consists of seven sequential steps shown in [Figure 1](#). Chapter 3 also presents suggested structures and content for the key operational planning outputs.

**FIGURE 1: Operational Planning Cycle**



**Annexes.** The guide concludes with seven annexes:

- [Annex A](#) presents operational planning considerations for scheduled, unscheduled and post-conflict elections.

- [Annex B](#) provides a list of resources and operational planning tools to assist EMBs to apply a GESI lens to operational planning.
- [Annex C](#) presents two graphics depicting elements of GESI within the context of the electoral cycle.
- [Annex D](#) provides further information on environmental considerations for election operational planning
- [Annex E](#) presents a summary of operational planning considerations in relation to the supporting electoral processes of procurement, logistics, public outreach, recruitment and staffing, procedures and training and security.
- [Annex F](#) presents samples of tools used to communicate operational planning to internal and external stakeholders.
- [Annex G](#) is a list of references, including the works cited in footnotes throughout this guide.

# Chapter 1: Introduction to Operational Planning

## What Is Operational Planning?

Operational planning is a key step in the electoral process. It is critical to the implementation of credible elections and sustainable election administration capacity.

Operational planning is the **process** of mapping all core and supporting electoral processes in an integrated manner to develop a coherent and flexible overarching plan of action. It involves reflecting on the electoral context and lessons learned in previous elections; assessing resource requirements; identifying legal, operational and administrative priorities; developing a timeline; allocating responsibilities; managing risks; and developing a schedule of activities.

Operational planning has several **outputs**, including the operational plan — a narrative plan of action for the entire electoral operation and budget. Other outputs that support the operational plan include a concept of operations; an operational plan schedule; sub-plans focused on specific areas such as logistics, voter registration or procedures and training; unit work plans; and monitoring and communication tools. Each EMB will ultimately determine the number and breadth of these supporting documents based on its priorities and capacity.

Operational planning is broader than merely planning for polling and counting operations (which can be described as Election Day planning). Operational planning should cover all electoral processes, such as voter registration; candidate nomination and campaigning; training of poll workers, observers and party agents; procurement and logistics; polling; counting; results tabulation; electoral dispute resolution (EDR)<sup>2</sup>; and voter education, as well as any special voting arrangements (such as out-of-country voting,<sup>3</sup> out-of-constituency voting, postal voting<sup>4</sup> or advance voting) and the provision of assistive devices or other support for people with disabilities.

Importantly, as election management is a dynamic and complex endeavor, operational planning is an ongoing process that requires regular monitoring and review to support flexible and proactive management. It should involve a range of relevant stakeholders to support comprehensiveness and acceptance by external stakeholders such as other state institutions, political parties and voters.

## Why Operational Planning Is Important

While most EMBs appreciate the importance of planning for their elections, not all of them engage in comprehensive, transparent and integrated operational planning.

---

<sup>2</sup> EDR refers to “the rules, institutions, arbiters and processes...to resolve electoral disputes and violations.” Effective EDR plays an increasingly important role in election credibility and the acceptance of election results through procedural justice for the individuals involved in the dispute and *open justice* for the public at large. For information on EDR, see Ellena, K., Vickery, C. and Reppell, L. (2018).

<sup>3</sup> For information on out-of-country voting, see Erben, P., Goldsmith, B. and Shujaat, A. (2012).

<sup>4</sup> For information on paper-based distance voting, see Wally, M. (2020).

“A comprehensive, well-structured operational plan, developed concurrently with budget and resource management processes, supports accountability, inclusiveness, cost-effectiveness and ultimately leads to more effectively managed — and therefore credible — elections.” - Iurie Ciocan, Former Chairperson of the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Moldova

Insufficient operational planning can result in higher costs, the inability to build institutional memory, lack of transparency and, in the worst-case scenario, undermining of a country’s electoral process and political stability through loss of credibility. While operational planning requires an investment in time and resources in the immediate term, a robust operational planning process will reduce financial costs in the long term and support the preservation of trust and confidence in the EMB (see text box).

**Barriers to comprehensive operational planning** can include lack of knowledge about how to conduct it; underestimation of the work involved; limited resources; competing demands; a concern that operational plans may become outdated and therefore irrelevant; or a belief that, because past elections have been conducted without such planning, it is not necessary.

Elections are often described as the largest logistical events a country undertakes during peacetime. They are time-bound and highly regulated. The process and its outputs provide a shared framework for stakeholders to understand key activities and the timeline and to help identify risks that can be managed throughout the election management cycle.

While elections are highly regulated, legal frameworks often provide some flexibility regarding when they are held and how they are administered.<sup>5</sup> Comprehensive operational planning provides a robust framework for EMBs to consider relevant operational factors when an election date is being determined (see text box).

**Operational planning to model an election date**

While most elections are held within narrow legally mandated timeframes, operational planning may be needed to determine options across a longer timeframe. The referendum on the Autonomous Region of Bougainville’s future political status was to be held between 10 and 15 years after the election of the first Bougainville government in 2005, after two pre-conditions were met. The Bougainville Referendum Commission conducted comprehensive operational planning to develop several operational models and advise on the timeframes required to deliver a legally compliant and credible referendum.

By engaging in operational planning, EMBs can better position themselves to deliver an election through proactive and measured management and avoid taking a reactive position in the face of unanticipated issues and potential crises.

## Relationship to Strategic Planning

Operational planning is different from strategic planning, but the two are linked. Operational planning is the process of comprehensively planning all electoral processes to deliver a specific election. Strategic planning, on the other hand, is systematic planning to institutionalize a culture of continuous improvement at all levels of an organization and to articulate organizational purpose and values.

---

<sup>5</sup> For information on implementing legal frameworks for elections, see Clegg, M., Ellena, K., Ennis, D. and Vickery, C. (2016).

A key output of strategic planning is the strategic plan. Without going into significant detail in this guide, strategic plans generally identify an EMB's mission, vision, guiding principles and strategic pillars (priority areas), supported by specific goals and a plan of action to achieve them. For more information on strategic planning for EMBs, see IFES' *Strategic Planning for Effective Electoral Management* (Figure 2).<sup>6</sup>

If an EMB has a strategic plan, an operational plan should align with it by providing the detail needed to govern the electoral cycle in a manner consistent with the EMB's goals. Although establishing a strategic plan is recommended for all EMBs, operational planning can (and should) proceed in the absence of such a plan.

## When Should Operational Planning Take Place?

Operational planning should commence in the pre-election period of the electoral cycle,<sup>7</sup> (Figure 3) be monitored throughout the pre-election and election periods and be evaluated in the post-election period. Precisely when to start operational planning depends on the unique circumstances of each EMB and may be affected by several factors that can be considered enablers, or pre-conditions. The most important pre-conditions are:

- An electoral **legal framework** (note: a government may be considering amendments to the legal framework, but operational planning can proceed during this period; however, operational planning should anticipate the implications of the acceptance or rejection of amendments);
- An **established EMB** (note: when a temporary EMB is established for a specific electoral event, for example to administer a one-off event such as a referendum, operational planning may need to commence while the EMB is being fully established and staffed; however, the EMB's scope and structure should be known to inform operational planning); and
- A **budget** (note: sufficient funds are required to undertake the planning process, initial funds to commence implementation should be available and further refinement of the budget should occur as part of operational planning).<sup>8</sup>

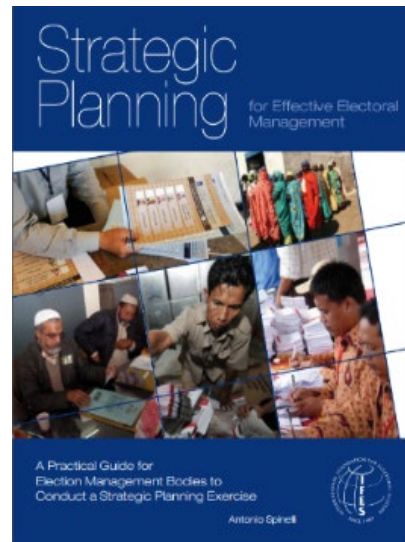


FIGURE 2: IFES' Strategic Planning for Effective Electoral Management guide

<sup>6</sup> IFES' Strategic Planning for Effective Electoral Management can be found at [https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/strategic\\_planning\\_guide\\_2011\\_0.pdf](https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/strategic_planning_guide_2011_0.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> The electoral cycle is "a visual planning and training tool designed to assist development agencies, electoral assistance providers and electoral officials in partner countries to understand the cyclical nature of the various challenges faced in electoral processes...developed by the European Commission (EC), the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)..." (ACE Project, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> To improve the accessibility of comparative data regarding election administration costs, IFES developed the Pricing in Election Database, intended for the use of EMBs, academics, donors, international and domestic non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations seeking to understand the costs of high- and low-tech approaches to improving the inclusivity and integrity of election processes. <https://www.pricinginelections.org/ExploreTheData>

FIGURE 3: The Electoral Cycle



The type of election (e.g., scheduled, unscheduled or post-conflict) will affect both the timing and the components of operational planning. Regardless of the type of election, operational planning is a significant and complex undertaking, and EMBs should give themselves as much time as possible. For scheduled elections with no major reforms to be undertaken (the most common type that EMBs administer), it is recommended that operational planning start around 18 to 24 months prior to the election. More information on factors influencing when operational planning may start for the different types of elections appears in [Annex A](#).

### Core and Supporting Electoral Processes

Operational planning is the process of planning all core and supporting electoral processes in an integrated manner.

**Core electoral processes** are the primary thematic areas of activity required to deliver a credible election. Core electoral processes generally include or focus on voter registration, boundary delimitation,<sup>9</sup> observers (international and domestic),<sup>10</sup> candidates, polling, counting, results management and EDR. Depending on the EMB’s mandate there may be additional core electoral processes, such as political party registration.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Omit boundary delimitation when working in countries where the EMB does not have responsibility for this.  
<sup>10</sup> Omit observers from operational planning processes when working in countries where observers are not normally present.  
<sup>11</sup> EMBs may choose to combine polling and counting into a single category, particularly when counting is performed at the polling station by the polling team. However, in contexts where counting occurs at dedicated counting centers and is conducted by different personnel, EMBs may choose to treat polling and counting separately. This guide presents this second approach. Alternatively,

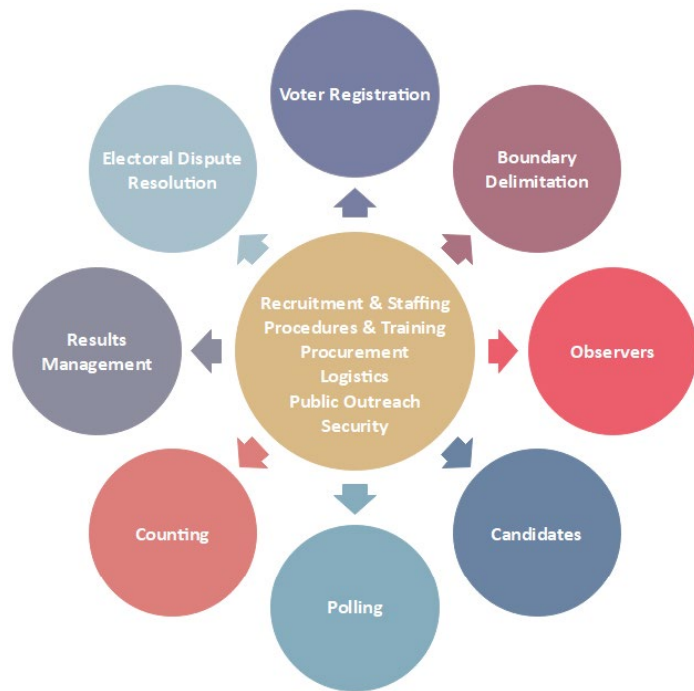


**Supporting electoral processes** enable the delivery of core electoral processes. Often, each supporting electoral process will intersect with all of the core electoral processes. While called *supporting* electoral processes, this does not mean they are of lesser importance; core electoral processes cannot be performed without them. Supporting electoral processes generally include recruitment and staffing; procurement; logistics; procedures and training; security, including physical and information and communications technology (ICT) or cyber-security; and public outreach, including voter education, public communications and media).

Operational planning works best when it seeks to identify the supporting electoral processes and relates them to core electoral processes.

While it is necessary to develop a logical sequence of activities as part of operational planning, it is also important to highlight interdependencies. To provide structure and coherence to operational planning, and to support collaboration across different work units, EMBs may wish to structure their operational planning by core electoral processes and relating each supporting electoral process to these (as shown in [Figure 4](#)). Structuring operational planning in this way provides a framework to show the relationships and interdependencies between processes and work units and helps avoid disconnected planning. This framework is utilized throughout this guide.

**FIGURE 4: Core and Supporting Electoral Processes**




---

EMBs may wish to combine counting and results into a single category. For special voting (e.g., out-of-country voting, out-of-constituency voting, advance voting or postal voting), some EMBs may wish to identify special voting as a separate core electoral process while others may include it as a sub-topic under other core electoral processes. This guide presents this second approach.

## Chapter 2: Considerations for Effective Operational Planning

Operational planning is an ongoing process that involves regular review of progress and ongoing risk management. While it may produce specific operational planning outputs (e.g., concept of operations, operational plan, operational plan schedule and sub-plans), operational planning should not be seen as an activity that is performed once and then given no further attention.

### Leadership and Ownership

Operational planning involves all parts of an EMB, across headquarters and the field,<sup>12</sup> so it is important that senior executives fully support and promote this activity.<sup>13</sup> Operational planning can benefit from an EMB appointing a senior person with overall responsibility for the process (this may be, for example, the head of an EMB division, such the director of operations or a deputy chief electoral officer) who in turn assigns specific staff to develop and maintain the EMB's operational plan and other supporting tools, such as the operational plan schedule. EMBs should determine which senior officer will lead the operational planning process. Selection should be based on who is best positioned to perform the role, which requires connecting strategy with operations as well as close and regular oversight. Information gathering and sharing, working across internal and external institutional boundaries, communicating, solving problems creatively and developing the capacities of EMB staff. These elements of electoral leadership will contribute positively to operational planning.<sup>14</sup>

It is also important that the EMB take ownership of the process and outputs. It should always lead the process, although it may benefit from the support of external electoral assistance providers at different stages. Operational planning without EMB ownership is unlikely to lead to sustainability and may not garner the ongoing buy-in that is necessary.

### Internal Collaboration

Internal stakeholders from all EMB work units and senior field staff should not only be consulted but also actively involved in operational planning to share their expertise and provide inputs. This is important because stakeholder

---

<sup>12</sup> Not all EMBs have permanent field structures, and this should be taken into consideration during operational planning. For example, there may be no field staff with whom to engage at the start of operational planning; however, the work unit that will have operational oversight of field staff should be consulted to provide input from a field perspective and, as field structures are established, field staff should be brought into the operational planning process.

<sup>13</sup> There are, broadly, three models of electoral management: independent, governmental and mixed. Under the independent model, "elections are organized and managed by an EMB that is institutionally independent and autonomous from the executive branch of government; its members are outside the executive." EMBs in this model report to an electoral commissioner and/or a board. Under the government model, "elections are organized and managed by the executive branch through a ministry (such as the Ministry of the Interior) and/or through local authorities. Where EMBs under this model exist at the national level, they are led by a minister or civil servant and are answerable to a cabinet minister." The mixed model incorporates elements of both models. (ACE Project, 2020, *Who Organizes Elections?*, accessed August 3, 2020. <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/em/ema/ema01>). The majority of EMBs adhere to the independent model. This guide is broadly applicable to EMBs operating under all models, noting that consultation and decision-making processes will vary depending on the model involved (e.g., reporting to a board versus reporting to a cabinet minister).

<sup>14</sup> Electoral leadership involves planning for and addressing external and internal challenges, beyond the technical, operational and logistical aspects of an election. For information on electoral leadership and electoral leadership skills development, see IFES' Executive Curriculum in Electoral Leadership. <https://www.ifes.org/iEXCEL>

engagement helps to engender a shared sense of ownership in the operational planning process and its outputs, and each work unit is best placed to advise on the activities, priorities and dependencies for which they are responsible.

Work units and senior field staff can draw on their expertise to anticipate the amount of effort and lead times required to complete activities. For example, the EMB staff responsible for securing materials for an election are best placed to consider the effort and lead times required to identify material and transportation requirements in consultation with the relevant EMB work units; develop procurement documentation; approach the market; assess bids; issue contracts; have materials produced and delivered to the EMB; and make payments.

Staff responsible for the operational planning process are well-placed to identify interdependencies and facilitate greater information sharing across work units and field offices. This type of engagement will help prevent disconnected planning in which activities do not link together efficiently and ultimately cause delays. While internal stakeholder engagement can take time, it is always the most efficient way to engage in realistic and comprehensive operational planning.

### **Involve Key External Stakeholders**

Engaging with external stakeholders is an important element of operational planning, and two-way exchanges should be encouraged. External stakeholders can be grouped into different categories, and EMBs can engage with them for operational planning in many ways. The appropriate strategies will depend on existing mechanisms and relationships. [Figure 5](#) lists engagement strategies for various types of stakeholders.

**FIGURE 5: External Stakeholders and Engagement Strategies**

Stakeholder Category		Engagement Strategies
<b>Voters</b>	Eligible voters	Consultative forums, information sessions, public communications, voter awareness
<b>State/official</b>	Security forces; registrar of political parties; ministries of: foreign affairs, finance, justice/attorney-general, community government, women, health, and education; the judiciary; and national councils: disability, youth, human rights	EMB chaired coordination meetings. Direct meetings between EMB and specific official/state stakeholder
<b>Political Participation</b>	Candidates, political parties, candidate agents	Workshops, consultative meetings and/or information sessions
<b>Civil society</b>	Women's civil society organizations (CSOs), disabled people's organizations (DPOs), youth-led organizations, religious, tribal, and traditional leaders, and domestic observers	Workshops, consultative meetings and/or information sessions
<b>For profit</b>	Vendors and suppliers	Information/briefing sessions
<b>Media</b>	Local and international news, radio and television agencies, and social media	Information/briefing sessions
<b>International</b>	Donors, international election observers, and international/regional organizations	Donor coordination mechanisms or bilateral meetings

It is important for stakeholders to have opportunities to provide input and feedback. This benefits the operational planning process to ensure different perspectives are incorporated and can have the additional benefit of building trust that will be helpful during the electoral period.

### Balancing Quality, Time and Cost

Operational planning is always bound by certain constraints, which fall broadly into three categories: quality (standards), time (schedule) and cost (budget). Effective operational planning continually seeks to balance these interrelated constraints (depicted in [Figure 6](#)) because they affect the success of operational planning and administering elections. A change to one constraint will have an effect on the others; and if one or more constraint is fixed, then the ability to achieve another will vary.

**FIGURE 6: The Project Triangle**



**Quality** considerations for electoral operations can include a range of values and indicators including, for example, adherence to the legal framework, voter enfranchisement, level of participation, consistency,

transparency, fairness, peaceful elections and acceptance of results. Operational planning can have greater influence over some quality indicators than others.

**Time** considerations include adherence to the timeframes in the legal framework and implementation in accordance with the public schedule. The more time allocated for operational planning and implementation, the more likely that higher quality processes and outputs will be delivered.

**Cost** considerations include fixed and constrained budgets (common), timeliness of disbursements, accountability for the use of public and donor funds and value for money. With sufficient funds (which must be estimated accurately as part of budgeting), EMBs can recruit more staff, provide stable staff payments, deliver higher-quality procedures and training, procure higher-quality materials and equipment, engage higher-quality and more reliable vendors and faster and more reliable transportation services, provide additional security measures and offer broader and more frequent public outreach activities.

Elections can be considered a highly constrained type of project. Time and cost are often greatly restricted (if not entirely fixed), and quality is also constrained as part of the delivery of credible elections to ensure important principles and standards are met. A proper balance of quality, time and cost requires close attention from the start of operational planning. An operational plan that is not informed by a balance of these three considerations cannot be implemented successfully, as it will describe activities that cannot be delivered within the constraints. Continually monitoring for changes to quality, time or cost is essential, as a change to one or more of these in one area of operations will likely result in a change to another area. One leg of the triangle cannot be changed without affecting at least one other leg.

## Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

The full participation of women; men; young people; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people; people with disabilities; older people; internally displaced people; Indigenous populations; ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities; and other marginalized groups as voters, candidates, elected officials and electoral workers is crucial. It is important to apply a GESI lens to operational planning to support full and equal access to voting, candidate nomination and election administration.

EMBs should seek to mainstream GESI considerations into their operational planning for all core and supporting electoral processes. An EMB can draw on an established GESI plan, if it has one, to support this process. However, if there is no GESI plan, the EMB can still mainstream GESI considerations into operational planning to ensure an inclusive voting process that is accessible for all eligible voters. The questions below will serve as a starting point to incorporate GESI considerations into operational planning in the absence of a GESI plan.

- Has the EMB undertaken a GESI analysis? If not, will it? If it has, what priorities are identified?
- Does the EMB have a gender unit or directorate? Does this department have a budget allocated to it?
- Does the EMB have a GESI policy and/or a GESI action plan?
- What does the EMB know about different levels of access to different electoral activities (e.g., voter registration, candidacy, observation, voting, election administration) for different groups in society (men, women, youth, LGBTQ, people with disabilities, older people, other marginalized groups)?

- What strategies could the EMB implement to ensure inclusivity?<sup>15</sup>

Several resources that provide useful information on GESI in elections are listed in [Annex B](#). IFES has also produced Gender Inclusion and Disability Inclusion versions of the Electoral Cycle diagram to assist EMBs in mainstreaming GESI considerations into their operational planning (see [Annex C](#)).

## Environmental Considerations in Operational Planning

As responsible public service institutions, it is important that EMBs consider the environmental footprint of routine functions as well as the environmental impact of election processes. This can also be called “greening elections” and EMBs should be at the forefront of this endeavor. EMBs should seek to mainstream environmental considerations throughout the electoral cycle and in their operational planning by considering whether their plans, policies, procurement and practices are environmentally sensitive. Such considerations may relate to the transport of people/materials, sustainable procurements, waste handling, information technology, printing and communication, office space and warehousing and life cycle of products and services.

EMBs should also consider the effect of the environment on elections. Environmental challenges such as fires, droughts, floods, hurricanes and rising sea levels intensified by climate change are affecting elections, displacing people, and hindering their ability to exercise their voting rights. Destruction of electoral property, curtailment of campaigns, postponement of elections and deaths of electoral participants are also ways in which environmental disasters can affect elections.

Examples of how EMBs may incorporate environmental considerations into their operational planning are provided throughout this introductory guide, with further information on “greening elections” provided in [Annex D](#). Some examples include:

- Establishing or improving mechanisms for displaced persons to vote and run as candidates.
- Establishing or reviewing public outreach mechanisms for people affected by disasters and/or internally displaced persons.
- Engaging with agencies responsible for disaster risk mapping and developing contingency plans to prevent disruption of electoral activities by disasters.
- Procuring materials made from recycled and/or biodegradable materials.
- Developing waste-management plans, particularly for well-known pollutants (heavy metals and plastics).
- Reviewing training plans and logistics plans to reduce transportation distances for personnel and election materials.

---

<sup>15</sup> For example, activities relating to EMB recruitment and training policies; accessibility of venues; dedicated registration/polling locations and/or queues; times at which voter education sessions are scheduled; collecting and analyzing GESI-disaggregated data on electoral activities subject to assessment of potential risks; inclusive representation in voter education material; production of voter education material in minority languages and accessible formats such as sign language, braille and easy-to-read; specific engagement with stakeholders representing different groups; and design of materials in a manner that does not discriminate against voters with low or no literacy, or voters with disabilities.

## Key Outputs of Operational Planning

Several key outputs should be produced throughout the operational planning process. These will provide progressively more detailed information on the operational pathway for delivering an election.

### The Concept of Operations

An early output of operational planning is the *concept of operations*. It outlines, at a high level, the EMB's objectives and strategy for delivering the election; that is, it focuses on the "what" and the "why," with less focus on the "how." A concept of operations is a narrative document (usually 10 to 25 pages long) that summarizes the operational links to the EMB's strategic plan; key information on the electoral context; electoral timeline; key legal and policy requirements; and assumptions relating to the core and supporting electoral processes, key stakeholders, budget, resources and risks. A concept of operations essentially describes operational needs and expectations that will serve as the foundation for a shared vision of how the election will be delivered. See [Step 3: Developing the Concept of Operations](#) for further information on developing a concept of operations that will, in turn, inform the operational plan.

### The Operational Plan

The operational plan is the primary output of operational planning. It provides a shared and detailed narrative plan of action for the entire electoral operation. The operational plan builds on the concept of operations but provides significantly more detail with respect to the "how." It details, among other things:

- **Context:** The electoral environment (e.g., electoral system, voting districts, size and composition of the electorate, participation rates); the institutional framework and composition of the EMB; the roles of key external stakeholders; the social, economic, security and political context; and GESI considerations.
- **Budget and resource management:** The budget and relevant issues related to financial management and constraints (such as budget autonomy).
- **Timeline:** The electoral timeline (key legal, operational and administrative dates).
- **Core and supporting electoral processes:** Information on how each core electoral process and its associated supporting electoral processes will be delivered, together with the GESI actions to be incorporated and any assumptions indicating where legal or policy decisions remain pending.
- **Post-electoral activities:** The activities that will be conducted and the outputs that will be produced after the election to evaluate lessons learned, and a plan for the return, storage or disposal of materials.
- **Preliminary risk assessment:** To identify electoral risks and proposed mitigation strategies.
- **Supporting resources:** A list of supporting documentation to be developed and the work units responsible for them.

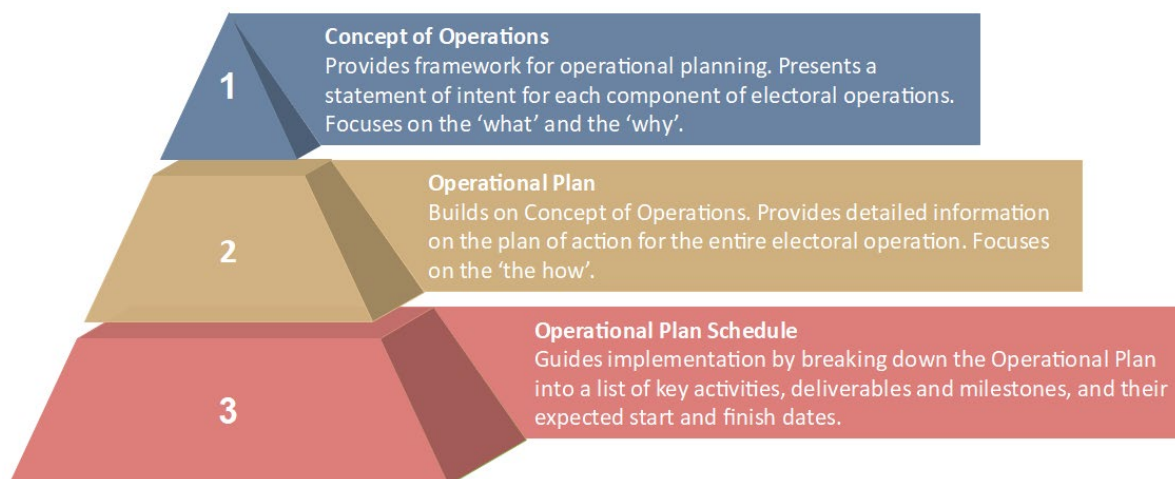
An operational plan can be structured in different ways to reflect the EMB's priorities; however, it can be useful to present broader contextual information first and then add information by each core electoral process and its associated supporting processes (see [Operational Plan Sample Structure](#)). Once the operational plan is well advanced, it is useful to refine the budget to alignment it with the operational plan.

The EMB should review and update the operational plan throughout the pre-election period as decisions are made or circumstances change; the budget should also be updated accordingly. Both are and should be treated as living documents.<sup>16</sup> The amount of detail in the first iteration of the operational plan will be determined by the time and resources available, as well as the status of various legal, policy and operational decisions that will affect the delivery of the election.

## The Operational Plan Schedule

The operational plan schedule guides implementation by breaking down activities and identifying milestones and deliverables with timeframes aligned to the operational plan. This may be referred to as an implementation plan, implementation schedule, project plan, operational work plan, timeline or another name. An officer should be assigned responsibility for developing and updating the schedule — preferably someone who has been significantly involved in the development of the operational plan. [Step 5: Developing the Operational Plan Schedule](#) in Chapter 3 provides information on how to develop an operational plan schedule. [Figure 7](#) depicts the relationships among the concept of operations, operational plan and operational plan schedule.

**FIGURE 7: Hierarchy: Concept of Operations, Operational Plan, Operational Plan Schedule**



## Anticipating and Responding to Challenges throughout Operational Planning

Operational planning will encounter challenges arising from the dynamic and complex nature of election management. When EMBs accept this and the resultant need for flexibility within the confines of the legal framework – and anticipate the types of challenges that may arise, and their implications – they can navigate challenges in operational planning. Anticipating and responding effectively to challenges is an important part of risk management;<sup>17</sup> however, unanticipated challenges may arise. An operational plan should be flexible, and monitored frequently, to accommodate the necessary changes that arise from both anticipated and unanticipated

<sup>16</sup> Due to the need to continually balance quality, cost and time, budgets should be regularly reviewed and adjusted if required to align with operational planning, in accordance with the applicable financial management rules.

<sup>17</sup> "Electoral risk management is a systematic effort undertaken to improve knowledge about and situational awareness of both internal and external risks to electoral processes, in order to initiate timely preventive and mitigating action." (International IDEA 2016, Policy Paper No. 14, p. 10).



challenges. An illustrative list of types of challenges appears below. Internal challenges generally relate to “legal, technical, operational, financial or other risks involved in implementing electoral activities.” External challenges may relate to “the environmental or social contexts in which elections take place.”<sup>18</sup>

Internal	External
Change to electoral system (e.g., from first-past-the-post to limited preferential voting)	Conflict
Changes to legal framework less than 12 months before an election	Internal displacement due to violence or disasters (sudden and slow onset disasters)
Insufficient funding and/or delayed disbursements	Gender-based discrimination and violence
Introduction of new technologies (e.g., biometric voter registration, electronic voting)	Health epidemics (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic, Ebola)
Technological problems (e.g., with voter registration, electronic voting and/or results transmission systems)	Denial of access for electoral officials to specific populations (e.g., by non-state actors unresponsive of election)
Low turnout for voter registration	Politicized security sector actors
Inadequate coordination with, or action by, state institutional stakeholders	Arbitrary arrests and lack of due processes
Late demands to change employment terms or conditions	Sudden political developments (e.g., mass civil unrest targeting public sector offices, constitutional crises)
Demands to alter the number and/or locations of polling stations	
Problems with electoral materials (e.g., delays, inferior quality, insufficient quantity, inadequate storage)	Environmental (e.g., adverse weather and climate disasters including storm, flooding, wildfire)
Loss or destruction of election materials or facilities	Inaccurate or biased media reporting
Transport problems (e.g., inability of service providers to fulfil contracts, incorrect tasking of transport providers)	Disinformation campaigns
	Human rights violations
Large number of electoral disputes	Difficulty accessing materials (e.g., loss of access to international markets due to pandemic or trade barriers)
Unpaid service providers from previous elections	

Not all challenges will require changing the operational plan; monitoring and/or revising an EMB unit's work plan may be sufficient. However, deviating from a previously established operational plan, or revising a current one, will likely be necessary when the response to a challenge will significantly affect quality (standards), time (schedule) or cost (budget), or will have a significant effect on other activities.

How operational planning can respond flexibly will depend on the challenges encountered. Some challenges will have been identified earlier and mitigation strategies articulated via the risk management process. However, an identified mitigation strategy may become less effective when several challenges occur simultaneously, while in other cases a challenge may be unanticipated.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

Operational planning considerations associated with two very different challenges appear below. The first, a global pandemic, is an immediate challenge to which EMBs must find and deploy immediate solutions. The second, introducing new technology, is a challenge that EMBs increasingly face. Both scenarios significantly affect quality, time and cost considerations and therefore would justify deviating from a previous operational plan or revising a current one.

COVID-19 Pandemic <sup>19</sup>	Introducing New Technology <sup>20</sup>
Review legal framework regarding possible deferral; consider political and social risks; ensure decisions are transparent, consultative and inclusive. <sup>21</sup>	Clearly articulate the problem that the technology is intended to solve.
Establish coordination mechanisms that include the health ministry. <sup>22</sup>	Assess the scope of legal amendments required to introduce the technology.
Review and assess the legal and operational feasibility of extending the availability of special voting services, such as absentee and advance voting.	Conduct a robust feasibility study that assesses opportunities and risks relating to cost, participation, efficiency, trust and security.
Review training delivery to meet social distancing requirement. Consider the viability of online training and of negotiation with stakeholders to facilitate free or low-cost data for polling and counting officials to access online training materials.	Consult with external stakeholders including parties, candidates, voters and CSOs.
Revise polling station layouts and polling and counting procedures to mitigate transmission risks by ensuring social distancing, use of personal protective equipment and cleaning protocols.	Assess potential effects of the new technology on transparency and observation.
Quantify additional materials required per polling team, polling station and counting location (e.g., masks, hand sanitizer, disinfectant, tissues, trash bins).	Assess foundational infrastructure that may be required for the successful introduction of a new technology, such as a long-established e-governance eco-system.
Identify materials that cannot be sourced from usual markets and identify alternative procurement via markets that remain accessible.	Assess levels of public trust in public institutions and technology.
Liaise with suppliers for guidance on appropriate mechanisms to sanitize or disinfect materials.	Identify EMB data and system ownership needs.
Identify cost implications and seek additional funding, reallocate existing funding and/or engage with stakeholders to access additional materials.	Assess technological literacy within a population and the training and voter education requirements associated with the introduction of the technology.
Conduct mock polling exercises, with health ministry observers providing feedback.	Consider the GESI implications of introducing the technology, such as potential adverse effects on particular groups of people.
Enhance monitoring of misinformation, disinformation and hate speech.	Articulate a development and implementation plan, including possible phased introduction to mitigate risks of rushing the introduction of a new technology.
Develop new voter information messages and information channels.	Develop robust integrity, security and audit mechanisms.
	Develop procedures and training materials.
	Test the technology on a small constituency before deploying to scale.

<sup>19</sup> For information on electoral management in the context of COVID-19, see the IFES 2020 *COVID-19 Briefing Series: Safeguarding Health and Elections* available at <https://www.ifes.org/ifes-covid-19-briefing-series>

<sup>20</sup> For information on internet voting, see Applegate, M., Chanussot, T. and Basysty, V. (2020).

<sup>21</sup> Ellena, K. (2020).

<sup>22</sup> Buriel, F., Darnolf, S. and Aseresa, M. (2020).

## Chapter 3: Implementing Operational Planning

This chapter outlines the step-by-step process for implementing the full operational planning cycle, including the concept, the methodology and stages of the cycle. Under each step is a description of the purpose and scope; structure; and consultation, development and endorsement process that EMBs can implement.

### Operational Planning Cycle

Similar to the electoral cycle, the methodology used for operational planning is based on a cyclical process, shown in [Figure 8](#). Each step relies heavily upon the completion of the preceding one.

**FIGURE 8: Operational Planning Cycle**



### Step 1: Initiation of the Operational Planning Process

Operational planning should commence during the pre-election period of the electoral cycle; the precise timing will depend on several factors. To initiate operational planning, an appointed senior officer should have overall responsibility for operational planning. Internal processes will determine how this appointment occurs and who is appointed; however, it is recommended that the EMB appoint an officer such as a deputy electoral commissioner for operations or a director of operations. The senior officer should then assign a staff member to facilitate and coordinate operational planning and lead development of the concept of operations, operational plan and operational plan schedule.

**Operational planning initiation briefing note.** The senior officer responsible for operational planning should formalize the start of the planning process. As internal buy-in and ownership are critical to the success of the

process, ideally this would occur via an internal briefing note or memo that gains the endorsement of the EMB's executive management and is communicated to the heads of all EMB work units. A suggested scope and structure of the briefing note appears below.

<b>Operational Planning Initiation Briefing Note</b>	
What it is and why it should be done	The purpose and importance of the operational planning process for the election.
What will be produced	The expected outputs (e.g., concept of operations, operational plan, operational plan schedule, electoral timeline and anticipated thematic sub-plans that may be required).
Who will lead	The member of the senior executive team with overall responsibility for the operational planning process and the work unit head who will be responsible for conducting the operational planning.
Stakeholder consultation	The importance of engaging with all EMB work units throughout the operational planning process, and that external stakeholders will need to be consulted at certain stages.
Who will deliver outputs	The work units responsible for producing the expected outputs.
Timeframes	The expected timeframes for the work units to produce the expected outputs.
Monitoring	That information updates will be provided to the executive management team and their expected frequency, with the nature and scope articulated as operational planning continues.

It is useful to acknowledge in the operational planning initiation briefing note that some flexibility will be required to accommodate new information, additional priorities that the EMB's executive management may articulate, or organizational capacity at particular times. The briefing note is intended to be succinct (perhaps two pages) to formalize the start of the process, noting that expected outputs and timeframes are indicative and may change.

## Step 2: Planning and Information Gathering

The EMB staff member assigned to facilitate and coordinate operational planning should initiate a planning and information gathering phase. While information gathering should be an ongoing element of operational planning, it is useful to start to identify important information and baseline data, consult existing sources and begin to collate that information to inform operational planning and develop the operational planning outputs. Useful sources may include:

- The EMB strategic plan;
- Lessons learned from previous elections (e.g., EMB internal reviews);
- Reports from domestic and international observers;
- The country's legal framework (e.g., Constitution, acts, regulations);
- Legislative and regulatory reforms since the last election;
- Operational plans, operational plan schedules and electoral timelines from previous elections;
- Budgets and budget submissions for the current and/or previous election;

- Pre- or post-election reports from civil society organizations (CSOs); and
- The EMB GESI plan or other relevant gender analyses conducted by external stakeholders.

Information from these sources can be used to analyze the context in which the EMB is operating, and how this may affect operational planning for an election. The findings can in turn inform the concept of operations and operational plan. The table below provides examples of information that could inform operational planning.

Informing Operational Planning	
Strategic	Reviews of the EMB's strategic and policy priorities, including reform priorities, and identification of key elements that should be reflected in operational planning and implementation. For example, the Myanmar Union Election Commission's <i>National Strategic Plan 2019-2022</i> referred to strategic objectives, such as "Designate polling stations that can be more accessible to all, guided by the recommendations from disabled persons organizations...and laws"; "Develop a comprehensive electoral budget, differentiating between institutional and operational expenses..."; and "Establish effective communication between the [Election Commission and...field offices] to improve the supervision and flow of information." These would be relevant considerations for operational planning. <sup>23</sup>
Lessons	Reflections on lessons learned (such as those from EMB reviews of elections, observer reports or pre- or post-election reports from CSOs), identifying challenges from previous elections and priorities for the future.
Legal	Identification of key elements of the legal framework that are relevant to operational planning, such as legal deadlines, prescribed activities, responsibilities of the EMB and other stakeholders, fees and penalties and electoral dispute resolution.
Operational Planning	Reviews of operational planning documentation from previous elections to identify what was done in the past, by whom and when, and to draw on models that may inform current planning.
Budget	Identification of the budget, available resources and mechanisms to ensure that the budget reflects changes identified via operational planning.
Timelines	Development of an understanding of key electoral timelines, including prescribed timeframes as well as operational and administrative timeframes, primarily sourced from the legal framework and previous operational planning.
Electoral Context	Identification of important elements of the electoral context; the security, social and political context; the media and social media context; and the environmental context (e.g., weather and terrain) that will affect operational planning.
GESI	Reviews of the EMB's GESI plan (if available) or gender analyses by external stakeholders to mainstream GESI considerations into operational planning.
Reforms	Identification of reforms and innovations to introduce for the election. Such information may be sourced from trials conducted for other electoral events, the EMB's policy priorities and public commitments.

<sup>23</sup> Union Election Commission Myanmar (2019).

## Baseline Data and Assumptions

It is also important to identify baseline data and assumptions to inform operational planning. These data and assumptions can inform development of operational planning models and will often be informed by previous elections. The table below presents a sample, presented thematically by electoral process.

Sample Baseline Data and Assumptions	
Voter Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The likelihood that a new voter list or updated voter list will be developed</li> <li>• Estimated number of voters</li> <li>• Estimated number of new and transferred voter registrations</li> </ul>
Boundary Delimitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anticipated boundary changes</li> <li>• Expected number of voting districts/constituencies</li> </ul>
Observers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of accredited observer groups in previous election</li> <li>• Number of accredited individual observers in previous election</li> </ul>
Candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of registered parties that contested the previous election</li> <li>• Number of candidates that contested the previous election</li> <li>• Number of candidate agents accredited in previous election</li> </ul>
Polling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation rate from previous election disaggregated by sex, age and disability</li> <li>• Assumed categories of special voting services</li> <li>• Estimated number of voters to be processed per polling station</li> <li>• Estimated number of polling stations</li> <li>• Estimated number of polling teams</li> <li>• Estimated number of staff per team</li> <li>• Expected materials and equipment per polling team</li> <li>• Estimated lead times for procurement and delivery of materials</li> </ul>
Counting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Estimated number of ballots to count, informed by previous participation rate</li> <li>• Estimated number of counting venues</li> <li>• Estimated number of counting staff per venue</li> <li>• Expected materials and equipment per counting venue</li> <li>• Estimated lead times for procurement and delivery of materials</li> <li>• Estimated duration of counting</li> </ul>
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expected materials and equipment for transmission and aggregation of results</li> <li>• Estimated duration of results tabulation</li> </ul>
EDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electoral disputes arising in previous election</li> <li>• Anticipated administrative and legal avenues for EDR</li> </ul>
Supporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether technical assistance is expected to be provided to the EMB</li> <li>• Expected field structure</li> <li>• Actual cost of previous election</li> <li>• Expected security provider</li> </ul>

## Legal Timeframes

It can be helpful at this stage of operational planning to begin to develop an understanding of key legal timeframes, record those timeframes and seek legal unit review and confirmation of the content. The table below provides a hypothetical example for illustrative purposes.

Timeframe	Legal Milestone	Comment
Election Day minus 11 weeks	Earliest date for issue of election writs or proclamations	Include reference to, or excerpt of, relevant clauses in the legal framework
Election Day minus 8 weeks	Latest date for issue of election writs or proclamations	Include reference to, or excerpt of, relevant clauses in the legal framework
Same-day writs or proclamations are issued	Voter registry closes to new voter registrations	Include reference to, or excerpt of, relevant clauses in the legal framework
Same-day writs or proclamations are issued	Candidate nominations open	Include reference to, or excerpt of, relevant clauses in the legal framework
Writs or proclamations issued plus 1 week	Candidate nominations close	Include reference to, or excerpt of, relevant clauses in the legal framework
Election Day minus 3 weeks	Publication of polling schedule	Include reference to, or excerpt of, relevant clauses in the legal framework
Election Day minus 1 week	First voting day for special voting arrangements	Include reference to, or excerpt of, relevant clauses in the legal framework
Election Day	Polling starts and ends	If legal framework specifies a fixed date or date range, include it. Include reference to, or excerpt of, relevant clauses in the legal framework
Election Day	Counting period starts	Include reference to, or excerpt of, relevant clauses in the legal framework
Election Day plus 2 weeks	Latest date for conclusion of counting and aggregation of results	Include reference to, or excerpt of, relevant clauses in the legal framework
Election Day plus 2 weeks	Election results must be finalized and submitted to the competent authority	Include reference to, or excerpt of, relevant clauses in the legal framework
Declaration of results	Post-election legal petitions period starts	Include reference to, or excerpt of, relevant clauses in the legal framework
Declaration of results plus 6 weeks	Deadline for submitting post-election legal petitions	Include reference to, or excerpt of, relevant clauses in the legal framework

## Work Plan

It is also beneficial at this time to develop a work plan for operational planning staff. The work plan should consist of a schedule of expected tasks to develop the operational planning outputs.

## Step 3: Developing the Concept of Operations

After gathering the initial information described in [Step 2](#), EMB staff responsible for leading the development of operational planning outputs are ready to draft the concept of operations.

**Purpose and scope.** The concept of operations provides a high-level framework for operational planning that includes planning assumptions to support a consistent direction for future planning. Focusing on the “what” and the “why,” the concept of operations can be understood as high-level statements of intent for each component of electoral operations. Many policy and operational decisions must be made throughout operational planning. However, as this document is developed early in the process, a concept of operations cannot capture the outcomes of all decisions that will be made later. Instead, it should identify the legal requirements, scope, key planning considerations and assumptions and anticipated resources. It should also identify areas where decisions will need to be made, together with information on any known factors that may inform those decisions. A concept of operations provides a platform, endorsed by the EMB executive management, for moving forward and developing the implementation models that will be described in the operational plan and schedule.

**Structure.** As the framework for operational planning, the structure of the concept of operations should be similar to the operational plan. Content for each section should be kept at a high level and be as brief as possible. The operational plan will present more detailed information once further planning has taken place. A [sample concept of operations structure](#) appears in the next section.

**Consultation, development and endorsement.** The concept of operations should be developed in consultation with stakeholders (primarily internal) via a bottom-up approach. The finalized concept of operations should be submitted to the EMB’s executive management for endorsement.

The consultation process can be structured in different ways. One approach is to meet with representatives of each work unit (separately or jointly), collate and synthesize their inputs to develop a draft concept of operations, circulate a draft to each work unit for comments and then incorporate the feedback. This approach is suggested to ensure the views and priorities of each work unit are represented in the first draft to encourage a shared sense of ownership.

During internal consultations, the operational planning coordinator should explain the purpose and components of the operational planning process. The provision of expected timeframes for each component of the process is also recommended. When engaging with stakeholders, explain that an operational plan will be developed after the concept of operations has been endorsed. This plan will need to provide more detailed information on the plan of action for delivering each aspect of the electoral operation and, therefore, further contributions will be sought.

The EMB’s executive management will be asked to provide feedback on and endorse the concept of operations. Thus, the concept of operations should seek to reflect accurately the scope, intent, assumptions and key decision points identified by each work unit. This can best be achieved by consulting work units early and reflecting their input in the concept of operations.

### Sample Concept of Operations Structure

The table below provides a suggested structure, scope and content for a concept of operations. EMBs should modify these to reflect their context and priorities.



<b>Part 1: Introduction</b>	
Purpose and Scope	Introductory text to describe the purpose and structure of the concept of operations. State the scope of the election (e.g., synchronized elections for national and provincial legislatures, election for the national legislature only, etc.).
Strategic Context	The objectives, principles and goals of the EMB.
Guiding Principles	<p>Guiding principles can take several forms, such as a single overarching statement of intent for the election such as a goal statement or a list of key principles on which the EMB will rely to guide its decisions and actions.</p> <p>Guiding principles should reflect elements of the strategic context; best practice and international standards regarding credibility, accessibility, inclusion, transparency and the secrecy of the vote; and sound public administration principles. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voter registration services should be made widely available and clearly communicated so that those eligible to register will be able to;</li> <li>• The voting process should be clearly communicated, easy to follow, well-run and inclusive;</li> <li>• The counting and results aggregation processes should be communicated clearly and be transparent;</li> <li>• All candidates and their agents are to be treated equitably; and</li> <li>• Planning will be undertaken to mitigate risks and efficiently manage expenditure.</li> </ul>
<b>Part 2: Lessons Learned</b>	
Lessons Learned	Identify key lessons learned from previous elections that the EMB intends to prioritize for the current operational planning cycle. <sup>24</sup>
<b>Part 3: Context</b>	
Legal Framework	List, by title, the components of the domestic legal framework that govern electoral operations (e.g., Constitution, Electoral Act, Electoral Regulations).
Electoral Context	Identify key features of the electoral context, such as the applicable electoral system(s) (e.g., first-past-the-post, preferential, proportional system and, for synchronized elections, whether different systems apply to each); whether it is a single-round or a two-round voting system (i.e., with a run-off election); pre-determined or expected voting districts; the size and composition of the electorate based on the previous election; participation rates for previous elections (disaggregated by sex, age and disability status, if possible); number of candidates in the previous election (by party affiliation and sex, if possible); and percentage of candidates returned in previous elections. Identify any significant changes to the electoral context since the previous election.
Organizational Context	Describe the EMB's structure (headquarters and field) and its mandate under the legal framework. List any relevant formal internal or external committees and their thematic areas of responsibility. Identify any organizational capacity gaps to be addressed and, if known,

<sup>24</sup> Lessons may be sourced, for example, from internal EMB reviews, domestic and international observer reports and pre- or post-election reports by CSOs. This should not be a list of every observation and recommendation but instead identify the lessons that the EMB is prioritizing at this time, for this election.

	how they will be addressed (e.g., recruitment and staffing, training, facilities, ICT security). Identify any assumptions or pending decisions.
Key External Stakeholders	Identify key external stakeholders that the EMB should engage with throughout its operational planning (see <a href="#">Involve Key External Stakeholders</a> ).
GESI	Provide a statement of intent regarding the mainstreaming of GESI considerations into operational planning to ensure the integration of youth, all genders, LGBTQ people, persons with disabilities, low-literacy populations, older people and other marginalized groups in all aspects of electoral planning and management and to ensure an inclusive voting process that is accessible by all enfranchised voters. Identify any assumptions or pending decisions.

**Part 4: Budget and Resources**

Budget and Resources	Present information on the status of the budget, whether funding has been approved, the timeframe that the budget covers and whether it is based on actual past costs for delivering specific outputs. Note how it compares to previous budgets, whether there were overruns and, if so, whether the current budget must cover outstanding payments. Identify any assumed costs that other stakeholders will bear. Identify any assumptions or pending decisions. Note that the budget will be reviewed in parallel with development of the operational plan.
----------------------	---

**Part 5: Timeline**

Electoral Timeline/ Calendar	Present key dates that are known at the time the concept of operations is developed. At a minimum, the timeline should include legal timeframes (e.g., for candidate nominations, voter registration, issuing of writs or proclamations, campaign, polling, counting and EDR). Identify any assumptions or pending decisions.
------------------------------	---

**Part 6: Electoral Operations**

Voter Registration	<p>For each core electoral process (one section per process), identify:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The purpose of the core electoral process and what success might look like;</li> <li>2. Key planning considerations, including elements of the legal framework, constraints and assumptions (specific planning considerations for each core electoral process appear below);</li> <li>3. The anticipated supporting electoral processes most critical for success, such as: a) recruitment and staffing, b) public outreach, c) procedures and training, d) security, e) procurement and f) logistics;</li> <li>4. Anticipated GESI considerations;</li> <li>5. Anticipated environmental considerations;</li> <li>6. Any key changes from what has been done in the past, and why; and</li> <li>7. Expected key external stakeholders.</li> </ol>
Boundary Delimitation	
Candidates	
Observers	
Polling	
Counting	
Results	
EDR	
Voter Registration	Planning considerations may include whether the registration model has been determined or the EMB will consider several options for voter registration; if a voter registration plan is likely to be developed; if the EMB is wholly responsible for developing the voter list or is required to utilize existing civic registration data; and if there are likely to be key target groups. Other considerations may include anticipated integrity risks that may affect the model; potential political sensitivities related to voter registration; or topics that need further

	development, such as voter registration arrangements for special voting services and infrastructure requirements (e.g., technologies, facilities).
Boundary Delimitation	Planning considerations may include basic principles that underlie a credible and acceptable process of boundary delimitation; intended processes for determining quotas for and allocation of seats; population and mapping data requirements; whether specific delimitation technology is likely to be required; and the expected scope of external stakeholder consultation.
Candidates	Planning considerations may include legal requirements regarding the bodies responsible for party registration and for candidate nominations; the campaign period; whether codes of conduct will be developed; processes for the appointment of agents; and management of nomination fees.
Observers	Planning considerations may include the agency responsible for inviting observer groups and for accrediting observers and observer organizations; the number of observers and observer organizations accredited for the previous election; recommended timeframes for inviting and accrediting observer groups; and any expectation that the EMB or other stakeholder will deliver observer group orientations, briefings and/or conduct information sharing.
Polling	<p>Planning considerations may include identifying the main activities that will need to be planned for polling, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitive and non-sensitive material: requirements, procurement, receipt, storage, distribution and return;</li> <li>• Ballot paper designs and printing;</li> <li>• Other printing (e.g., voter list, polling schedule, forms, manuals);</li> <li>• Polling place identification (criteria and quantity, including modeling of the number of voters to be processed per polling station) and polling schedule development and publication;</li> <li>• Ordinary and special voting models;</li> <li>• Security;</li> <li>• Polling procedures, manuals, guides and forms;</li> <li>• Polling simulations to test procedures and voter processing times;</li> <li>• Public outreach;</li> <li>• Field staff and poll worker recruitment;</li> <li>• Field staff and poll worker training;</li> <li>• Election Day movement and transport planning; and</li> <li>• Election Day communications infrastructure requirements (e.g., radios, mobile phones, mobile data).</li> </ul> <p>Planning considerations may also include whether there is a two-round voting system, with any differences between rounds; whether a polling services plan (Election Day plan) will be developed; and any activities that may require significant lead times, such as procurement of materials. Note that the concept of operations does not describe in detail how these activities will be implemented to deliver the polling model; this information is described in the operational plan and sub-plans.</p>

Counting	<p>Planning considerations may include identifying the main activities that will need to be planned for counting, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitive and non-sensitive material: requirements, procurement, receipt, storage, distribution and return;</li> <li>• Selection and security for counting centers, and their hours of operation;</li> <li>• Counting procedures, manuals, guides and forms;</li> <li>• Counting simulations to test procedures and processing times;</li> <li>• Public outreach;</li> <li>• Counting staff recruitment;</li> <li>• Field staff and counting staff training;</li> <li>• Communications infrastructure requirements (e.g., radios, mobile phones, mobile data, etc.);</li> <li>• Movement/transport planning; and</li> <li>• Printing (e.g., counting forms).</li> </ul> <p>Planning considerations may also include whether there is a two-round voting system, any differences between rounds and whether a counting plan will be developed. Note that the concept of operations does not describe in detail how these activities will be implemented to deliver the counting model; this information is described in the operational plan and sub-plans.</p>
Results	<p>Planning considerations may include lessons from previous elections; whether there is a need for a particular results tabulation model; assumed results tabulation model (if a two-round system, articulate proposed model for both rounds); whether a results plan will be developed; anticipated technological requirements (including ICT security requirements); transmission of results from polling stations to central count center, release of results processes; any sensitivities regarding the announcement of results.</p>
EDR	<p>Planning considerations may include EDR, including alternative dispute resolution<sup>25</sup> mechanisms utilized previously, and anticipated mechanisms for the current election (e.g., EMB complaints mechanism, mediation committees, judicial); scope of the EMB’s internal legal capacity and whether support from other state agencies may be required; legal requirements for EDR; whether the EMB has an established EDR case management process; anticipated training needs (e.g., for arbitration, mediation, investigation).</p>
<b>Part 7: Post-Electoral Activities</b>	
Post-electoral Activities	<p>Present information on expected post-election activities, such as a post-election review or evaluation; whether and under what circumstances audits will be performed; and the return, storage and disposal of materials and relevant environmental considerations.</p>
<b>Part 8: Risk Identification</b>	
Risk Identification	<p>Present a high-level overview of existing risk categories, such as delays, damage or loss of materials; potential for conflict; security risks that may impede delivery of public outreach, polling, counting or results; potential for the non-acceptance of results; weather and</p>

<sup>25</sup> Alternative dispute resolution refers to any “method that parties to a dispute might use to reach an agreement, short of formal adjudication through the courts.” (ACE Project, 2021).

	geographical risks; internal vulnerabilities (such as budget, staffing levels, legal risks or technological issues); cyber-security issues; and fraud across electoral processes.
<b>Part 9: Expected Operational Planning Outputs</b>	
Expected Outputs	List expected outputs, such as operational plan and schedule, thematic sub-plans (such as for voter registration, polling services, special voting, counting, results, procurement, logistics, procedures and training, recruitment and staffing, public outreach and security plan) and whether EMB unit work plans will be developed.
<b>Part 10: Assumptions and Decisions</b>	
Assumptions and Decisions	Collate the assumptions and pending decisions in a summary list for ease of reference.

## Step 4: Developing the Operational Plan and Budget Refinement

After the EMB's executive management team has endorsed the concept of operations, it is time to develop the operational plan and refine the budget.

### Step 4.1: Developing the Operational Plan

**Purpose and scope.** The operational plan builds on the concept of operations to provide detailed information on the plan of action for the entire electoral operation. While the concept of operations focuses on the “what” and the “why,” identifying planning considerations and assumptions, the operational plan provides detailed information on the “how” and is thus more focused on the measures to be taken to deliver the election. For example, the voter registration section of a concept of operations may reveal that ghost names and duplicate records continue to present an integrity risk that will be prioritized, without providing significant detail on how this will be addressed. In contrast, the operational plan describes the implementation strategies to address this planning consideration.

**Structure.** The structure of the concept of operations and the operational plan should be similar, providing consistency and streamlining the drafting process. However, both a concept of operations and an operational plan are standalone documents. For efficiency, much of the contextual information presented in the concept of operations can be reproduced, with modest expansion of content. However, the information specific to this election (i.e., parts 4 to 9 in the [operational plan sample structure](#) that begins on the following page) should provide significantly more detail on the strategies that will be used to deliver the election, including a description of what will be done to achieve the intended outcomes articulated in the concept of operations.

**Consultation, development and endorsement.** The operational plan should be developed in consultation with internal and external stakeholders. Generally speaking, the staff who draft the operational plan should engage with internal stakeholders, who should in turn liaise with external stakeholders relevant to their areas of responsibility. It is important that staff developing the operational plan do not dilute the authority of EMB work units by engaging with external stakeholders without their involvement.

The operational plan must comply with the requirements of the legal framework. Therefore, the EMB's legal team should be consulted while developing the operational plan and should review the draft plan before it is finalized and submitted for endorsement.

EMB’s executive management will be asked to endorse the operational plan, which should accurately reflect the strategies that will be implemented to deliver the election.

## OPERATIONAL PLAN SAMPLE STRUCTURE

The table below provides a suggested structure, scope and content for an operational plan, which EMBs should modify to reflect their context and priorities. The sample structure includes several GESI considerations and potential planning challenges.

<b>Part 1: Introduction</b>	
Purpose and Scope	Introductory text to describe the purpose of the operational plan and how it is structured.
Strategic Context	The objectives, principles and goals of the EMB.
Guiding Principles	As per the concept of operations, including any that have been updated.
<b>Part 2: Lessons Learned</b>	
Lessons Learned	As per the concept of operations. Identify key lessons learned from previous elections that the EMB intends to prioritize for the current election.
<b>Part 3: Context</b>	
Legal Framework	<p>Summarize which components of the domestic legal framework govern which aspects of the electoral operation. Note legal provisions relating to exceptional circumstances that may apply to emergencies occurring during the planning and delivery of the election. Ensure the components of the legal framework have been updated to reflect new developments (e.g., amendments or regulations passed since the concept of operations was endorsed).</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>GESI considerations:</b> Assess inclusivity and barriers to political participation; identify international or regional instruments for inclusion signed by the government; establish GESI-sensitive EDR.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>Potential challenges:</b> Ambiguous legal framework; highly prescriptive legal framework limiting policy flexibility; introduction of legal changes less than 12 months before an election.</p> </div>
Electoral Context	<p>As per the concept of operations. Identify key features of the electoral context. Identify any significant changes to the electoral context since the previous election.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>GESI considerations:</b> Collect and analyze GESI- disaggregated data on electoral activities subject to assessment of potential risks.</p> </div>
Organizational Context	<p>As per the concept of operations, updated to reflect any changes since the concept of operations — particularly decisions affecting field structure. Identify how any organizational capacity gaps will be addressed.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>GESI considerations:</b> Establish GESI unit/focal point; establish GESI policy; describe equal opportunity recruitment and promotion; conduct GESI analysis.</p> </div>

Key External Stakeholders	Identify key external stakeholders with which the EMB has engaged in developing the operational plan, as well as any with which the EMB should engage throughout operational planning, and their roles.	<b>GESI considerations:</b> Engage with stakeholders representing different social groups.
GESI	Identify measures that have been and will be taken to mainstream GESI considerations into operational planning to ensure integration into all aspects of electoral planning and management of youth, people of all gender identities, LGBTQ people, people with disabilities, low-literacy populations, older people and other marginalized groups and to ensure an inclusive voting process that is accessible for all enfranchised voters. Those measures should identify how specific groups will be engaged through public outreach, how assistive devices and services will be provided during voter registration and polling and whether materials will be produced in minority languages.	

**Part 4: Budget and Resources**

Budget and Resources	Building on the concept of operations, identify any updates and describe how the budget was developed (i.e., based on previous budget or a new budget based on expected costs and outputs). Explain whether the budget identifies funding sources for activities or if some costs may be borne directly by other public service stakeholders. Comment on whether the budget separates ordinary ongoing costs (those incurred regardless of elections) from variable costs (those associated with the conduct of elections). If funding has been approved, note whether it matches the requested budget. If it is a reduction, note how the budget has been updated and implications for operational planning. Describe the disbursement cycle. Describe whether the EMB has immediate access to and control of the funds or if it relies on actions of external stakeholders. Acknowledge that the budget will be refined to reflect the operational plan and provide updated line-item costings.	<b>GESI considerations:</b> Budget for GESI activities and reasonable accessibility accommodations.	<b>Potential challenges:</b> Approved budget less than requested; disbursement delays; reliance on external stakeholders to release funds; costs of external stakeholders to be drawn without advance notice from EMB budget; additional requirements (voting services, materials, etc.) without increased funding.
----------------------	---	---	---

**Part 5: Timeline**

Electoral Timeline/ Calendar	Present an updated timeline. In addition to the key (mostly legal) dates listed in the concept of operations, provide more information on operational planning milestones, such as procurement of sensitive and non-sensitive materials (highlighting items with considerable lead times such as those procured overseas); voter registration; ballot paper printing; distribution of polling and counting materials; training of polling and counting staff; and delivery of voter education. Note that operational planning milestones are indicative and will be further refined in the operational plan schedule. Identify any assumptions or pending decisions.	
------------------------------	--	--

**Part 6: Electoral Operations**

Voter Registration	For each core electoral process, address:	
--------------------	---	--

Boundary Delimitation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The purpose and objectives of the core electoral process;</li> <li>2. Legal requirements (regarding how the process should be implemented, timeframes and requirements for the process to align with other events);</li> <li>3. Key differences from what has been done in the past, and reasons;</li> <li>4. How the electoral process will be implemented and by which stakeholders, indicative timeframes, known constraints and remaining assumptions (specific considerations for each core electoral process appear below);</li> <li>5. Supporting electoral processes to be implemented to enable delivery of the core electoral process, by which stakeholders, and indicative timeframes such as a) recruitment and staffing, b) public outreach, c) procedures and training, d) security, e) procurement and f) logistics;</li> <li>6. GESI measures that will be implemented, and when and how;</li> <li>7. Environmental initiatives that will be implemented, and when and how; and</li> <li>8. Which sub-plans will be developed.</li> </ol>
Candidates	
Observers	
Polling	
Counting	
Results	
EDR	
Voter Registration	
Boundary Delimitation	<p>Describe the boundary delimitation process to be implemented and mechanisms to ensure that legal, data and technological requirements will be met. Describe the processes to be implemented to ensure boundaries are drawn transparently. Describe how necessary population and mapping data requirements will be met. Describe the role of stakeholders in ensuring transparency and supporting acceptance of delimitation processes.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>GESI considerations:</b> Consult CSOs.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Potential challenges:</b> Poor or outdated population data; highly mobile populations; internally displaced persons; ensuring independence and non-partisanship in delimiting boundaries; lack of a population tolerance limit; lack of mandatory time interval for delimitation; ambiguous delimitation criteria limiting the ability to incorporate geographically based communities of interest.</p> </div>

<sup>26</sup> Elements of inclusive voter education may include scheduling sessions to accommodate the social responsibilities of members of different groups; disseminating GESI-sensitive and representative voter education materials; implementing inclusive recruitment and training of voter education officers; and conducting voter education in minority languages and accessible formats such as braille or easy-to-read for low-literacy voters.



<p>Candidates</p>	<p>Describe how the candidate eligibility, nominations and fee management processes will be implemented. Describe how agents will be appointed. Note whether, and how, a code of conduct for candidates and/or agents will be developed. Outline any transport and security arrangements for candidates and agents. Describe information that the EMB will provide to candidates and agents on the polling, counting and results processes, and information delivery mechanisms.</p>	<p><b>GESI considerations:</b> Host GESI dialogues with political parties; involve CSOs in developing codes of conduct; prepare a gender breakdown of current elected officials; assess inclusivity and barriers to the nominations process.</p> <p><b>Potential challenges:</b> Additional candidate vetting requirements for post-conflict elections; limited availability of proof of identify documentation; internally displaced persons; low public awareness of party registration timeframes; highly contentious political contexts; limited public awareness of eligibility requirements; legal challenges to alter eligibility less than 12 months before the election.</p>
<p>Observers</p>	<p>Describe how, when and by whom observer groups will be invited and the observer accreditation process will be implemented. Describe the process for ensuring that observers are sufficiently briefed on the voter registration, polling, counting and results processes. Describe how the principles of unimpeded access and freedom of movement for observer groups will be supported.</p>	<p><b>GESI considerations:</b> GESI-specific observation questions; encourage CSOs to participate as accredited observers.</p> <p><b>Potential challenges:</b> Long lead times for international observer groups to authorize missions; coordinating diverse groups of international and domestic observers to observe pre-election, election and post-election periods; balancing safety and security with principles of unimpeded access and freedom of movement.</p>
<p>Polling</p>	<p>Describe how each of the following main groups of activity will be implemented — processes to be put in place, their indicative timeframes and which stakeholders are responsible for them. If a two-round voting system is in place, note separate activities for both rounds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a polling services plan (i.e., an Election Day plan);</li> <li>• Materials (sensitive and non-sensitive material requirements, procurement, receipt, storage, distribution, return, transportation);</li> <li>• Ballot paper designs and printing;</li> </ul>	<p><b>GESI considerations:</b> Accessible polling venues; GESI-sensitive voter education; inclusive design and procurement of materials in a manner that does not discriminate against voters with low or no literacy or those with disabilities (e.g., tactile ballot guide, large-grip pens, voting booths accessible to wheelchair users, tactile stickers for ballot boxes); GESI-sensitive security and logistics plan; inclusive poll worker recruitment and training; GESI topics included in poll worker manual and training; security forces sensitized to GESI considerations; media trained to disseminate information in accessible formats.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selecting and securing accessible polling places and polling schedule development, including the voter processing model;</li> <li>• Ordinary and special voting models;</li> <li>• Security;</li> <li>• Polling procedures, manuals, guides and forms;</li> <li>• Polling simulations to test procedures and voter processing times;</li> <li>• Public outreach;</li> <li>• Field staff and poll worker recruitment;</li> <li>• Field staff and poll worker training;</li> <li>• Election Day movement planning;</li> <li>• Election Day communications infrastructure planning (e.g., radio, mobile phones, mobile data); and</li> <li>• Printing (e.g., voter roll, polling schedule, forms, manuals).</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="839 241 1394 734" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Potential challenges:</b> Long lead times for procurement and delivery of materials; adverse weather; rapid onset climate disaster; health emergency; insecurity; service provider failures; transport disruptions; low voter engagement; poor or disrupted field communications infrastructure; late changes to policies and methodologies (e.g., number and/or location of polling places, number and/or size of polling teams, availability of different voting services); complex procedural requirements; allegations of partisan recruitment; disruptions to training delivery; late changes to confirmed candidates; frivolous objections; misinformation; disinformation campaigns.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="839 797 1394 1003" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Environmental considerations:</b> Recycled paper for printed materials; procurement and retrieval of reusable items; procurement of biodegradable single-use items; delivering additional training sessions to reduce participant travel.</p> </div>
<p>Counting</p>	<p>Describe how each of the following main groups of activity will be implemented — what processes will be put in place, their indicative timeframes, and which stakeholders are responsible for them. If a two-round voting system is in place, note separate activities for both rounds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a counting plan;</li> <li>• Sensitive and non-sensitive material: requirements, procurement, receipt, storage, distribution, and return;</li> <li>• Selecting and securing counting centers;</li> <li>• Counting center security;</li> <li>• Counting procedures, manuals, guides and forms;</li> <li>• Counting simulations to test procedures and processing times;</li> <li>• Public outreach;</li> <li>• Counting staff recruitment;</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="852 1160 1401 1384" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>GESI considerations:</b> Inclusive counting worker recruitment and training; accessible venues; GESI-sensitive voter education; GESI-sensitive security and logistics plan; security forces sensitized to GESI considerations; media trained to disseminate information in accessible formats.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="852 1406 1401 1729" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Potential challenges:</b> Materials procurement and delivery lead times; adverse weather; insecurity; service provider failures; transport disruptions; poor or disrupted field communications infrastructure; late changes to policies and procedures; complex procedural requirements; allegations of partisan recruitment; disruptions to training delivery; frivolous objections, misinformation; disinformation campaigns.</p> </div>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field staff and counting staff training;</li> <li>• Communications infrastructure requirements (e.g., radio, mobile phones, mobile data);</li> <li>• Movement/transport planning; and</li> <li>• Printing (e.g., counting forms).</li> </ul>
Results	<p>Describe the model for results tabulation, including technological and ICT security requirements and how these will be met; the model that will be implemented; and the process for the release of results. Describe accessibility measures to be implemented (e.g., radio, sign language etc.). If a two-round voting system, note the results processes for both rounds. Note whether a results plan will be developed.</p> <div data-bbox="847 405 1407 495" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>GESI considerations:</b> Disaggregate results by sex; announce results in accessible formats.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="847 517 1407 719" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Potential challenges:</b> ICT infrastructure inadequate or inappropriate; technological failure of implemented systems; late changes to system requirements; disruptions to training delivery; misinformation; disinformation campaigns; non-acceptance of results.</p> </div>
EDR	<p>Describe the EDR system, including how and with whom complaints or disputes can be raised, how they will be investigated, the adjudication process, how decisions will be communicated, the appeals process, whether there are filing costs and how cases will be tracked and monitored. Identify the stakeholders responsible for dispute resolution and describe how they will be trained to perform their roles (e.g., training sessions, handbooks, rules of procedure).</p> <div data-bbox="847 846 1407 969" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>GESI considerations:</b> Inclusive access to EDR; GESI-disaggregated data collected via case management system.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="847 992 1407 1167" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Potential challenges:</b> Limited EMB capacity (e.g., legal, investigation, mediation skills); inadequate ICT infrastructure; high number of disputes; misinformation; disinformation campaigns.</p> </div>
<p><b>Part 7: Post-Electoral Activities</b></p>	
Post-electoral Activities	<p>Describe the activities that will be conducted in the post-election period following announcement of results. Describe how a post-election evaluation will be performed and how its findings will be captured and communicated. Discuss whether, and under what circumstances, audits will be conducted. Describe how a plan for closing field operations and returning, storing and disposing of materials will be developed. Describe post-election initiatives to minimize environmental impact and to implement appropriate waste management.</p> <div data-bbox="847 1339 1407 1637" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>GESI considerations:</b> Assess post-election GESI results and EMB GESI mainstreaming; involve CSOs in post-election review; assess legal barriers to inclusive political participation; CSO capacity building; GESI-sensitive review of EMB strategic plan; and research into political participation, technology gaps, EDR/violence, quotas and inclusion of marginalized groups in decision-making.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="847 1659 1407 1861" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Environmental considerations:</b> Retrieval and sorting of waste for recycling; quantifying reusable versus single-use materials for performance tracking over time; retrieval of reusable materials and equipment; equipment refurbishment where possible.</p> </div>
<p><b>Part 8: Risk Management</b></p>	

Risk Management	Present a preliminary risk analysis of the risks identified in the concept of operations and any additional risks identified since the concept of operations was endorsed. Describe the likelihood and impact of the risks. Describe contingency measures to be put in place to monitor and mitigate electoral risks. It can be useful to present the analysis by cross-project risks (those that could emerge at any phase of the electoral operations) and by each core electoral process (those that are specific to a particular core electoral process).
<b>Part 9: Supporting Resources</b>	
Supporting Resources	List the resources that will be developed to support the operational plan, the work units responsible for them and their expected timeframes for completion. Supporting resources may include operational plan schedule and sub-plans. Sub-plans provide more detailed information on specific core and supporting processes, and they are developed by the EMB work units with overall responsibility for the specific processes. Core electoral process sub-plans may include those for voter registration, polling services (Election Day plan), special voting, counting and results. Supporting electoral process sub-plans may include those for procurement, logistics, procedures and training, recruitment and staffing, public outreach and security. For more information on supporting electoral processes sub-plans, see <a href="#">Annex E: Supporting Electoral Processes: Sub-plans</a> .
<b>Part 10: Assumptions and Decisions</b>	
Assumptions and Decisions	There may still be several assumptions or issues that will require decisions by the EMB's executive management and/or board. These will have been noted in the relevant section of the operational plan; collate them into a summary list for ease of reference.

## Step 4.2: Refining the Budget

**Purpose and scope.** As the operational plan is being developed, it is likely that the initial budget will require adjustment to provide more detailed line-item costings and expected timeframes for expenditure.

**Structure.** EMBs generally operate within an existing financial management and budgeting framework to which the structure of the budget must conform. It can be useful to consider structuring the budget in a manner similar to the operational plan, with sections divided across the EMB administration and core electoral processes, with individual line-item costings for the elements of each process.

**Consultation, development and endorsement.** To develop accurate and consistent budget estimates, the preparation of the revised budget should involve close consultation among operational planning staff, the finance work unit and the work units responsible for the various processes.

Refining the budget to reflect current operational planning may reveal that the scope of some activities in the draft operational plan may exceed funding availability. Likewise, this process may highlight challenges associated with the disbursement cycle. Such matters should be escalated to the EMB's senior management for consideration of options such as revising the scope of certain activities to reduce costs while meeting minimum required standards for quality and timeliness, reallocating funding across line items, seeking adjustments to the disbursement cycle and/or seeking an increase to the EMB's budget.

As with the concept of operations and the operational plan, the EMB's executive management will be asked to endorse the revised budget. It is imperative that the revised budget accurately reflect the estimated costs of activities, and this can best be achieved through consultation.

## Step 5: Developing the Operational Plan Schedule

After the operational plan has been developed, it is time to develop the operational plan schedule.

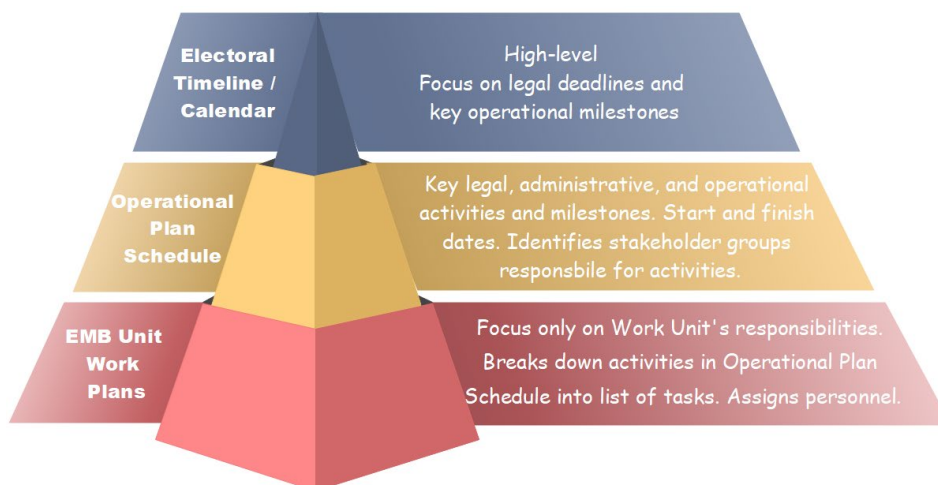
**Purpose and scope.** The operational plan schedule guides implementation by dividing the operational plan into a list of key activities, deliverables and milestones with their expected start and end dates. It is essentially a detailed activity list that expands the electoral timeline/calendar presented in the operational plan by 1) including start and end dates for a broad range of legal, administrative and operational activities, in sequential order; 2) identifying the dependencies and relationships among activities; and 3) identifying the stakeholders with overall responsible for each activity.

Developing an operational plan schedule is a significant undertaking. However, it can be initiated with a basic framework that aligns with legal and policy requirements and further developed progressively.

An operational plan schedule does not need to identify every constituent task that leads to the completion of the activities. That level of detail is too much and complicates monitoring and updating. However, there is value in developing local unit work plans that align to the operational plan schedule. Each work unit can use its plan to guide implementation, dividing activities into smaller tasks that it assigns to specific individuals.

Conceptually, the operational plan schedule sits between 1) the high-level electoral timeline/calendar, focused on legal deadlines and key operational milestones, and 2) EMB unit work plans, focused only on activities within a unit's area of responsibility and further dividing the activities into a list of tasks to be completed. This conceptual model appears in [Figure 9](#).

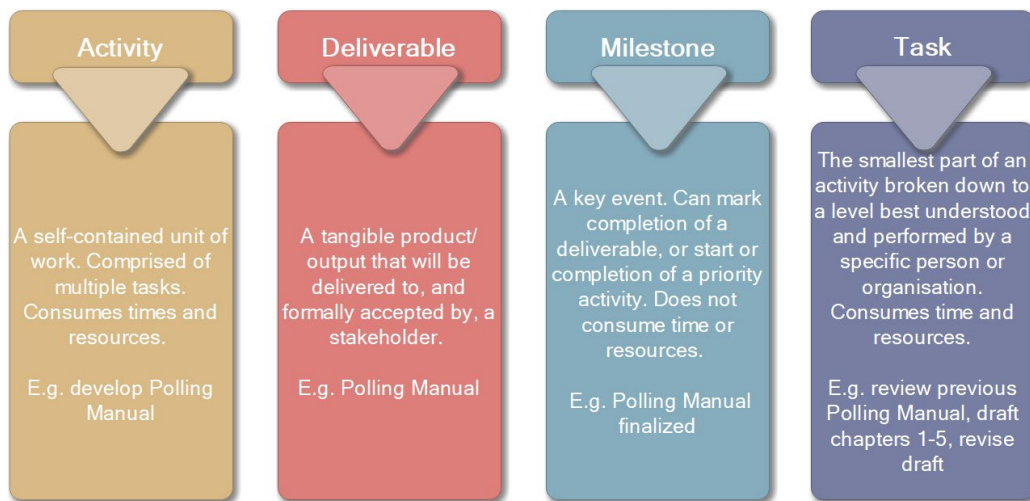
**FIGURE 9: Hierarchy: Timeline, Schedule, Work Plans**



**Terminology.** The term *activities* refers to a group of tasks to be completed (such as “develop polling manual”) in order to produce a *deliverable* (the polling manual), which can be marked by a *milestone* (“polling manual finalized”). [Figure 10](#) depicts the relationship of tasks, deliverables and milestones to an overarching activity. A

*task* is the smallest component of an activity. Several tasks must be performed to complete an activity, and tasks are usually assigned to specific individuals for completion.

**FIGURE 10: Activities, Milestones, Deliverables and Tasks**



**Structure.** Before populating an operational plan schedule, it is helpful to identify the software to be used (such as spreadsheet or project management software) and the overall approach to take regarding the structure. Considerations for selecting software include staff capability and familiarity with it; whether the person who develops the schedule will be responsible for updating it (it is recommended that the same person do both); and processes to ensure that changes to the scheduling of one activity result in updates to the scheduling of linked activities. Project management software has many advantages over spreadsheet software for developing operational plan schedules; however, it generally has a steeper learning curve and may require a higher investment in training and skills retention. It also tends to cost more than spreadsheet software.

In determining the internal structure of the operational plan schedule, it is possible to categorize broadly the two most common approaches, each of which has strengths and weaknesses.

1. **By core electoral process.** The schedule is divided into sections for:

- Project establishment and institutional development (activities such as developing operational planning documents, budget and other activities identified in the context and budget and resources sections of the operational plan);
- Each core electoral process; and
- The post-electoral period.

This model reflects the operational planning process articulated in this guide and is recommended. Activities under each section can be grouped into sub-sections to cover design and development (initial scoping, policy and process design, strategy and plan development for the electoral process); operational preparation (all activities including legal, procurement and logistics procedures and training and public outreach activities involved in preparing to deliver the core electoral process); and delivery (activities involved in delivery of the core electoral process).

This model has the benefit of clearly identifying the interdependencies between work units and electoral processes; ensuring that supporting processes are not overlooked; and illustrating how the sequence of activities leads to the completion of key milestones and, ultimately, to the election. However, as activities may appear under multiple sections (e.g., candidates, polling, counting), it can be more difficult for a work unit to immediately identify all activities for which it is responsible. They can address this challenge by filtering content or generating extracts or reports that list only the activities for which each work unit is responsible.

- 2. By functional area of an EMB.** The schedule is divided into sections that correspond to EMB work units. The activities for which each EMB work unit is responsible are listed in their respective sections. This model has the benefit of making it easier for a work unit to identify its activities. However, the model risks creating an isolating work environment, with EMB management and work units unable to readily see the interdependencies among activities. This in turn can make it more difficult for units to understand how all activities lead to successful project completion. For this reason, Option 1 is recommended over Option 2.

**Consultation, development and endorsement.** As with the concept of operations and the operational plan, the operational plan schedule should be developed in consultation with internal and external stakeholders. The staff member responsible for developing and maintaining the schedule should have been closely involved in developing the operational plan and in earlier consultations with stakeholders. It can be useful to develop a preliminary draft schedule based on the endorsed operational plan, identifying the key legal, administrative and operational activities and milestones and grouping them according to the agreed structure. This can provide a foundation document on which to base consultation. Any dates presented for administrative and operational activities should be indicative. Be cautious in assigning dates for activities before consulting with stakeholders, since those responsible for each activity are best placed to determine the required work effort and scheduling.

Avoid overly optimistic timeframes for an operational plan schedule. Contingency timeframes are recommended to allow capacity to absorb minor delays during implementation. It is not uncommon to consider a best-case scenario for a suggested timeframe, but a schedule should be based on a real-world scenario. To determine whether timeframes are realistic, consider whether they allow for completing the activities in a cost-effective manner with the staffing resources available (less time means higher costs) and whether they facilitate the participation of voters and candidates as well as the effective integration of services provided by external stakeholders.

Following initial consultation with EMB work units, review the draft operational plan schedule for potential areas of duplication and resource conflict. For example, it may become apparent that two activities delivered by the same stakeholder may overlap. If so, re-engage with the relevant stakeholders to resolve the conflict.

Next, review the operational plan schedule to ensure that all key milestones have been clearly identified. Key milestones will generally include all legal deadlines; the start and/or end of activities that involve members of the public and candidates (e.g., voter registration starts, voter registration ends, candidate nominations open, candidate nominations close); critical deadlines for procurement; critical deadlines for logistics; polling start and end; counting start and end; announcement of results; and post-election review. Add other milestones as

appropriate. It is useful to identify key milestones, as this helps to identify important points in time against which to monitor and report progress.

A final draft of the operational plan schedule should be shared with all EMB work units to invite further collaboration and ensure all interdependencies have been correctly identified and scheduled. Once the schedule has been developed in collaboration with stakeholders, it may be considered the baseline schedule and submitted to the senior officer with overall responsibility for operations. The term *baseline schedule* is used because the schedule should be monitored and updated regularly to reflect the completion of activities and incorporate any adjustments to the operational plan. Regular updates from stakeholders should be encouraged.

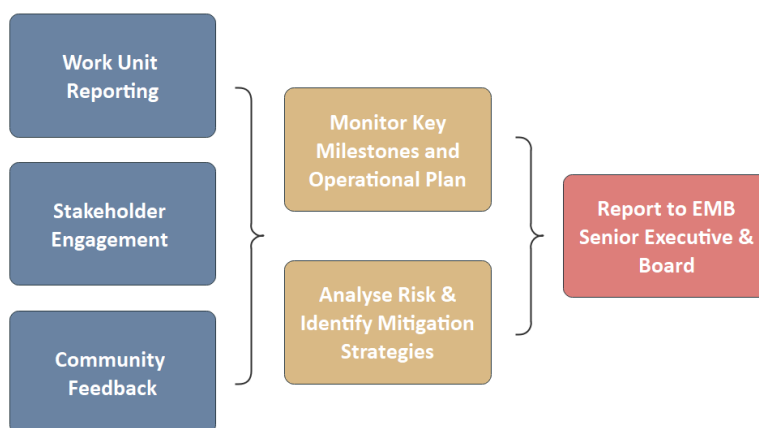
## Step 6: Monitoring Implementation, Updating and Communicating

### Step 6.1: Monitoring Implementation and Updating Key Documents

Monitoring is about collecting data systematically to track progress and provide critical information to inform decision-makers. An operational plan and the operational plan schedule are living documents that should be continually monitored, reviewed and updated to reflect changing circumstances. It is important to monitor progress against the operational plan and schedule to record progress and to identify any potential delays early. The key dates identified in the electoral timeline/calendar and milestones identified in the operational plan schedule can be particularly useful. Early identification of issues provides the most time to make course corrections that will prevent missed milestones.

Monitoring and reporting should be a regular and ongoing process (see [Figure 11](#)). Monitoring must account for the different organizational cultures and structures of different EMBs. The staff responsible for the operational plan and schedule should monitor and update these documents. When seeking updates to inform monitoring, it is important to draw on all available information sources, such as regular verbal or written reports from internal and external stakeholders, community feedback and specific updates in the lead-up to the scheduled start and conclusion of particular activities. In seeking information for monitoring and updating, be mindful of stakeholders' priorities. When proposing updates to the operational plan and schedule, confirm any amendments with the EMB work units responsible for the affected activities.

**FIGURE 11: Monitoring Framework**





The operational plan and schedule provide a shared, detailed plan of action for the entire electoral operation. An out-of-date plan and schedule cannot fulfill this function and may become irrelevant. Therefore, they should be updated to reflect any changes. Unfortunately, this may not occur due to other urgent priorities, or updates may not be circulated to the people who initially received them. This can create problems and lead to misunderstanding of the electoral operations.

To ensure that monitoring and updating are not overlooked, a timetable should be established for reviewing and updating the operational plan and schedule. The times between reviews generally shorten as the pace of work intensifies in the lead-up to an election. However, it may also be necessary to update the operational plan and schedule at other times in response to developments such as changes to the legal framework, violence or political tensions, challenges posed by weather, public demands to change elements of any of the core electoral processes, technological problems, problems with materials or insufficient budget.

### **Step 6.2: Communicating Progress**

An operational plan is a comprehensive and complex living document, and communicating it helps to promote accountability. Therefore, it is important to consider which strategies to employ to communicate the content of the plan and progress against it. As with all communication strategies, it is necessary to consider different audiences and their information needs.

In simple terms, the audiences for an operational plan can be categorized as internal (i.e., members of the EMB's staff and board) or external (stakeholders outside the EMB, such as the public, candidates, other public services agencies, the media and CSOs). Internal and external stakeholders have different information requirements, described below.

**Internal.** EMB executive management and board members should be provided sufficient information, including through regular briefings, to effectively monitor overall progress and issues, make informed decisions and fulfill their reporting obligations. In addition to a picture of overall progress, all EMB work units should have access to information on the activities in progress and those that will begin in the near term. Communicating the interdependencies among activities identified in the operational plan is another important element of internal communications. Regular operational planning meetings to share information across work units and coordinate activities are common and useful communication tools. The EMB can also consider developing other reporting and visual communication tools.

**External.** External stakeholders may include those who have directly contributed to the operational plan (such as other public service agencies or CSOs) as well as the broader public, candidates and the media. EMB executive management should determine the level of information to be communicated publicly and should ensure that the presentation is suitable for specific stakeholders. For example, while it may make sense to circulate the operational plan and/or schedule to stakeholders who are involved in activities, it may not be appropriate to publish them on the EMB website, given they are living documents that may contain assumptions that will change in later stages of the planning process. If the plan and/or schedule are made public, it is important to clarify that they are living documents and to publish updated versions as they become available. Regardless, public communication and engagement are essential for accountability and to support public confidence in the electoral process. The public has a right to know what is planned and to have opportunities to provide feedback.

As part of operational planning, it is recommended that EMBs develop a public outreach plan that includes strategies and frequencies for engaging with external stakeholders to facilitate two-way exchanges of information. EMBs should circulate a public, high-level electoral timeline that lists legal and other fixed dates as well as timeframes for key activities that involve members of the public, candidates, observers and the media. EMBs should also issue regular media releases and updates via appropriate communication channels (e.g., the EMB website and social media accounts). Visual communication tools related to the overall operational plan should also be explored. Information should be communicated in any minority languages and in accessible formats, such as sign language, braille and easy-to-read.

[Annex F](#) presents illustrative samples of operational planning communication tools for internal and external stakeholders.

### Step 7: Evaluation

In the post-election period, EMBs generally produce post-election reports. These can take different forms depending on the requirements of the country; however, they often provide assessments of achievements against stated principles and objectives (which may be sourced from an operational plan), analyses of reasons for the implementation or non-implementation of measures and recommended strategies for the future. An operational plan provides a useful foundation for the development of post-election reports.

Also during the post-election period, a post-election review or evaluation of the entire electoral cycle should occur. As part of this process, an evaluation of operational planning should identify what worked well and what could be done differently for the next election. It is recommended that the work unit responsible for operational planning seek feedback from key stakeholders who participated in the operational planning process, as well as those who used the operational plan and schedule.

As the operational planning cycle occurs over an extended period, it is recommended that the work unit responsible for operational planning keep ongoing records of adjustments that it can consult during the evaluation process. Types of adjustments to note may include changes to the consultation, development and endorsement processes for operational planning outputs, as well as major updates to the content of outputs. This will help identify whether the consultation and engagement processes were effective; whether any significant information gaps should have been addressed earlier; and how effective the monitoring, updating, reporting and communication mechanisms were.

Lessons learned should be recorded as part of the evaluation process so they can be incorporated into the next cycle of operational planning.

## Annex A: When to Start Operational Planning: Considerations for Different Types of Elections

**Scheduled elections.** Scheduled elections are those that occur within the periodic electoral cycle, such as constitutionally scheduled national and provincial elections held at regular intervals. EMBs that administer scheduled elections generally benefit from being established institutions with some level of permanent staffing and budget; the ability to draw on experience; and a well-understood legal framework for elections. An EMB should theoretically commence operational planning once all post-election activities for the previous electoral cycle have been completed. This may not always be possible due to factors such as the availability of resources, buy-in or competing organizational priorities, including when an EMB manages overlapping electoral cycles for unsynchronized elections (e.g., national legislature and provincial legislature elections held 12 months apart). In some circumstances, planning for the current electoral cycle may need to begin while some post-electoral activities for the previous election (such as legal reform) are still being finalized. Notwithstanding this, in the interest of providing indicative timeframes, it is recommended that operational planning commence no later than 18 to 24 months prior to a scheduled election.

Where an EMB has been tasked with implementing a significant program of reform across electoral processes, it would be beneficial to start operational planning earlier. However, when an EMB maintains a certain level of readiness (such as by updating procedures, keeping certain levels of electoral materials in stock and having standing agreements with vendors) a 12- to 18-month timeframe for operational planning may be appropriate. Indeed, operational planning for scheduled elections sometimes starts even closer to an election; while this can make some processes more challenging, it does not make them impossible. Starting later than the recommended timeframe is better than not starting at all.

**Unscheduled or snap elections.** Unscheduled or snap elections occur outside of the “normal” election cycle. They include, for example, by-elections (special elections to fill vacancies), early elections (called before the originally scheduled date or due to the passing of no-confidence motions) and elections that are re-run due to annulment. EMBs administering unscheduled or snap elections can face multiple additional challenges, such as a highly compressed timeframe, a more constrained budget or challenges relating to voter engagement and potentially greater levels of political sensitivity. These may result in greater risks for disinformation and conflict. Operational planning for unscheduled elections may therefore be even more constrained. An EMB will be best placed to respond to unscheduled or snap elections when it maintains a high level of preparedness, can draw on operational planning that is in progress for the next scheduled election and can refer to previous operational plans to expedite planning. In administering an unscheduled election, EMBs should commence operational planning as soon as possible.

**Post-conflict elections.** Post-conflict elections are often elections that are held to mark the end of a transitional period following conflict. However, the term can also be used for subsequent elections in post-conflict societies. Each post-conflict socio-political environment is different; however, EMBs administering elections in these contexts must consider a range of additional factors. For example, an EMB may be newly established to administer the first election since the cessation of hostilities and may not be able to draw on institutional knowledge; it may likely need to engage a broader range of stakeholders; and there may be heightened risks of

election-related conflict. Candidate nomination (vetting) processes are likely to be more complex. So, too, is voter registration in the context of internally displaced persons who may have difficulty meeting documentation and residency requirements. Such requirements may also necessitate changes to the legal framework and the availability of voting services such as absentee voting in a manner that balances enfranchisement and integrity.<sup>27</sup> Additional public outreach activities may also be necessary to help build public confidence. The EMB should also prioritize GESI considerations to support an inclusive and representative electoral process. All of these considerations speak to the need to commence operational planning as early as possible, provided that the pre-conditions (electoral legal framework, budget, established EMB) are in place.

---

<sup>27</sup> For more information on specific considerations relating to electoral participation and internally displaced persons, see Shujaat, A., Roberts, H. and Erben, P. (2016).

# Annex B: Resources: Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Elections

## GESI and COVID-19

IFES 2020, COVID-19 Briefing Series: Inclusion and Meaningful Political Participation

## Gender

UN Women and United Nations Development Programme 2015, Inclusive electoral processes: A guide for electoral management bodies on promoting gender equality and women's participation

IFES 2014, Gender Equality and Election Management Bodies: A Best Practice Guide

ACE Project 2020, Gender and Elections

## Persons with Disabilities

IFES and National Democratic Institute 2014, Equal Access: How to Include Persons with Disabilities in Elections and Political Processes

ACE Project 2020, Elections and Disability

ElectionAccess.org, Voter Education and Assistive Devices

## Youth

European Commission and United Nations Development Programme 2017, Youth Participation in Electoral Processes: Handbook for Electoral Management Bodies

ACE Project 2020, Youth and Elections

United Nations Development Programme 2015, Enhancing Youth Political Participation throughout the Electoral Cycle

# Annex C: GESI and the Electoral Cycle

FIGURE 12: Gender Activities and the Electoral Cycle

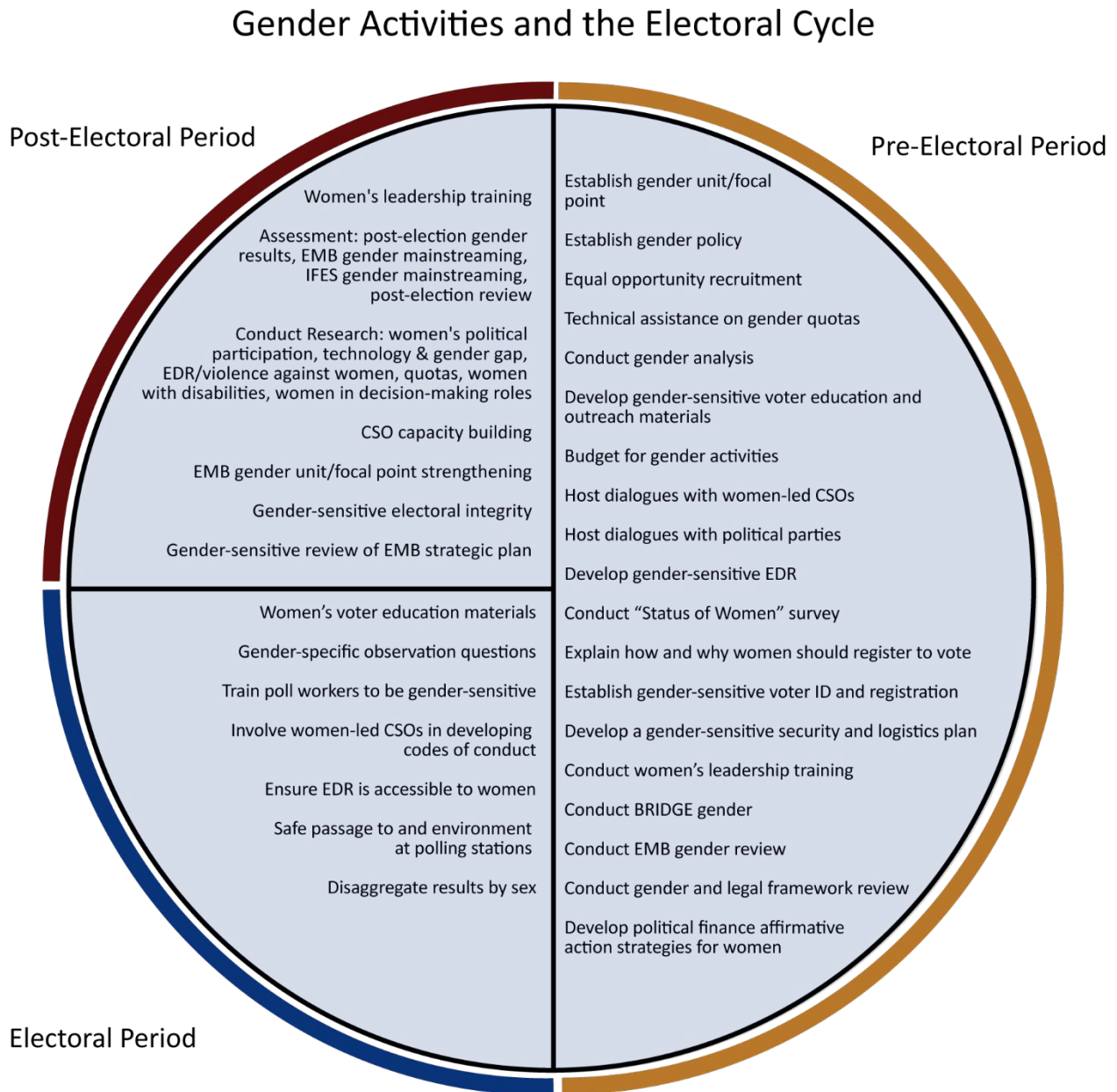
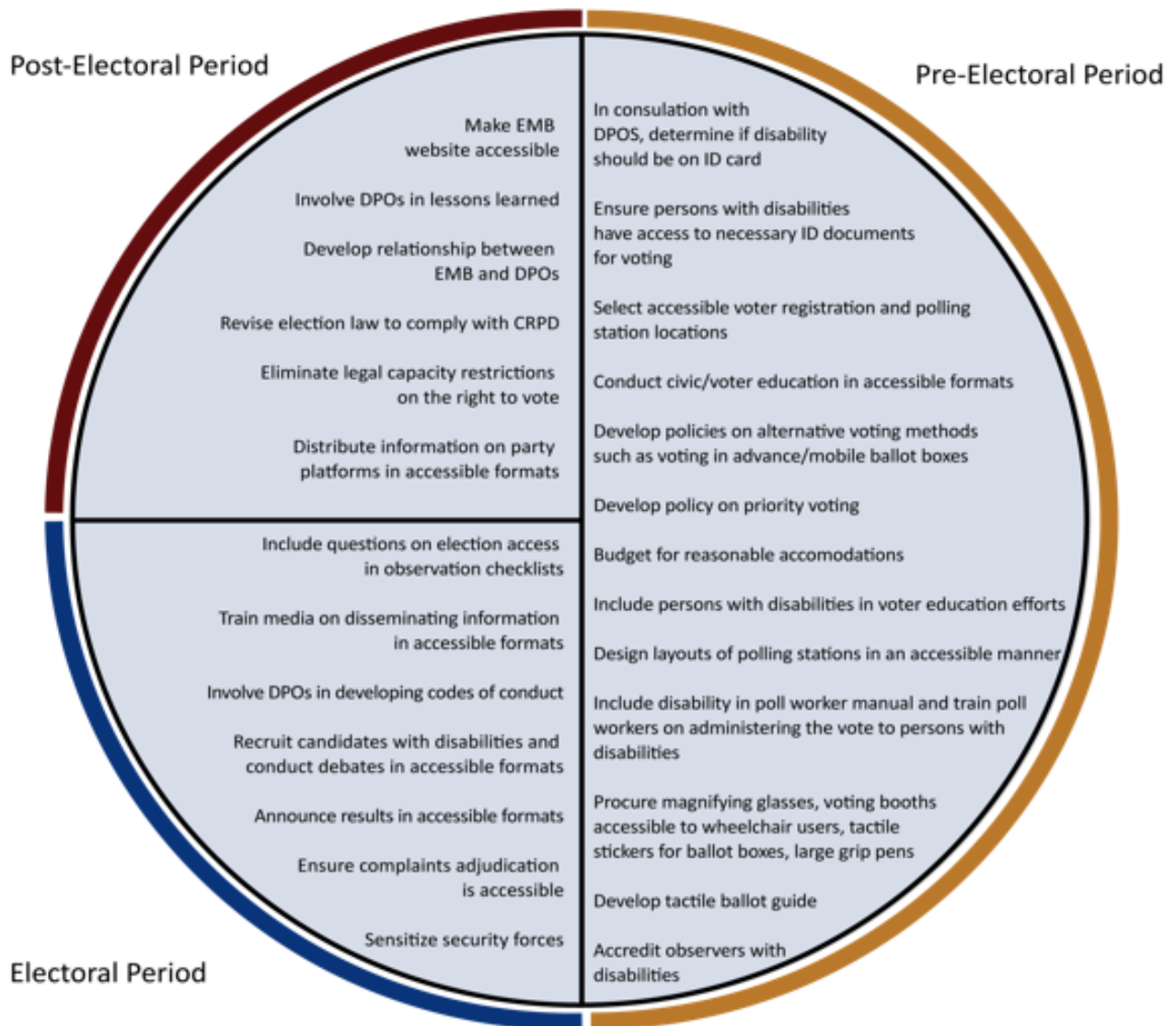


FIGURE 13: Disability-Inclusive Activities in the Electoral Cycle



Source: Atkinson, V, Azelton, A. and Fogg, K. (2014).

## Annex D: Greening Elections

As responsible public service institutions, it is important that EMBs consider the environmental footprint of their institution's routine functions as well as the environmental impact of election processes, often the largest peacetime civic exercises in which a country engages. EMBs should consider whether their plans, policies, procurement and practices are environmentally sensitive. Such considerations might relate, for example, to the transport of people/materials, sustainable procurement, waste handling, information technology, printing and communication, office space and warehousing and the life cycle of products and services.

IFES believes that EMBs have a role to play in reducing environmental degradation and adapting processes to account for the effects of the climate crisis. To become effective champions, EMBs might need to adjust their internal practices and proactively engage other state institutions, civil society and private sector to meet these new challenges.

"Greening elections" refers to implementing environmentally conscious decisions, policies and processes throughout the electoral cycle. These could include a range of steps, from analyzing the environmental impact of the election budget and implementing sustainable/environmentally conscious green procurement policies especially in the transport, electricity source and use, IT infrastructure, printing and publication.

In addition to considering the environmental impact of elections, EMBs should also consider the effect of the environment on elections. Environmental challenges such as fires, droughts, floods, hurricanes and rising sea levels intensified by climate change are affecting elections and electoral rights of vast numbers of people each year. Displacement is a large-scale environmental impact on elections, although not the only one. Destruction of electoral property, curtailment of campaigns, postponement of elections and deaths of electoral participants are also ways in which environmental disasters could affect elections.

Displacement is a particularly relevant challenge. There has been a dramatic rise in numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs), as well as externally (cross-border) displaced persons in over the past decade. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 59.1 million people were internally displaced across the world at the end of 2021, 53.2 million due to conflict and violence and 5.9 million due to disasters. Disasters triggered more than 60 percent of the internal displacements recorded worldwide in 2021. More than 94 percent of these were the result of weather-related hazards such as storms and floods.<sup>28</sup> According to the World Bank, unless concerted action is taken at national and international levels, sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America may have to "cope with more than 143 million internal climate migrants by 2050."<sup>29</sup>

International agreements and institutions such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights emphasize the importance of ensuring that those affected by environmental challenges maintain their fundamental human rights and are involved in decision-making.<sup>30</sup> One of the most effective ways for

---

<sup>28</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, [Global Report on Internal Displacement \(GRID\), 2022](#).

<sup>29</sup> Rigaud, K.K., de Sherbinin, A., Jones, B.R., Bergmann, J.S., et al. (2018). [Groundswell: preparing for internal climate migration \(Vol. 2\)](#): Main report (English). Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group.

<sup>30</sup> Analytical study on the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of climate change: Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.



environmentally affected persons to be involved in decision-making is through electoral participation. Those affected by environmental problems need to be able to vote, run for office and engage with candidates and elected representatives to influence agendas, challenge policies and hold governments accountable in an inclusive and safe manner. EMBs have a significant role to play in ensuring electoral rights are protected for all people. For an in-depth discussion of this topic, see IFES' [Electoral Rights of Environmentally Displaced Persons](#).<sup>31</sup>

Environmental challenges can exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities, including marginalization. Widely ratified international treaties and resolutions obligate the state to provide accessible electoral processes, including special measures for women, persons with disabilities, youth, Indigenous peoples and minorities who may be at increased risk of marginalization as well as be critical agents to address the consequences of climate change.

Electoral operational planning should incorporate the environmental effects of organizing elections as well as how climate change will affect elections of the country in question systematically. Climate-proofing elections will require a clear commitment by the EMB in its strategic plan with additional detail in the EMB's operational plan. Planning may need to consider special modalities for displaced persons to vote and run as candidates. These may require changes in legislation and in registration processes, for example. EMBs may also need to proactively undertake research on possible modalities for election participation by displaced persons, including their respective advantages, risks and costs; and establish an early warning mechanism within the EMB to assess and/or map risks and threats posed by climate disasters to support early preparedness and maximize resources. EMBs could also consider establishing a focal point or an internal unit to promote communication and consultation on environmental disaster and displacement issues and needs of different EMB departments, as well as to liaise appropriately with other ministries.

---

<sup>31</sup> Mohan, V., Roberts, H., (2021). [Electoral Rights of Environmentally Displaced Persons](#). International Foundation for Electoral Systems.

# Annex E: Supporting Electoral Processes: Sub-plans

The development of sub-plans that canvass the range of supporting electoral processes is recommended. It is beyond the scope of this introductory guide to provide detailed information on how to develop each type of sub-plan. However, to support the visible inclusion of supporting electoral processes in operational planning, Annex E provides a summary of operational planning considerations for procurement, logistics, public outreach, recruitment and staffing, procedures and training and security.

## Operational Planning Considerations

### Procurement

Every electoral process has a range of associated procurement tasks that should be integrated properly into operational planning. Quality and timely procurement is essential for successful elections, and a plan to articulate this activity is recommended. Procurement may occur via a standalone procurement plan or a combined procurement and logistics plan.

To facilitate quality and timely procurement, public sector and EMB procurement guidelines should be followed and communicated to all EMB work units. It is often necessary for several work units to collaborate early to identify the types and quantities of materials required for all core and supporting electoral processes (e.g., election administration, voter registration, voter education, polling activities, counting activities and results tabulation). Procurement of assistive devices (e.g., tactile ballot guides) and personal protective equipment (hand sanitizer, masks, etc.) may also be required. Electoral procurement is likely to include highly specialized items that may require special transportation and storage and that may need to be obtained from outside the country. There can be significant lead times for procurement and, for overseas purchases, additional timeframes for customs clearance. Additionally, procurement is an important area where an EMB can make decisions to reduce the environmental impact of an election. For example, procuring printed materials on recycled paper, reusable items and biodegradable single-use items.

EMBs are responsible for public funds, and procurements often account for a sizable portion of the overall operational budget. Since costs tend to increase as procurement timelines shorten, it is imperative to prioritize procurement in operational planning.

### Logistics

Logistics is a diverse and essential supporting electoral process, and it is recommended to develop a logistics plan. Logistics planning involves ensuring that materials, equipment, staff and communications infrastructure are in place in time for the successful conduct of elections and that all election material is transported and stored afterwards in accordance with the procedures. Logistics planning may include:

- Advance logistics (the activities required to set up or establish a plan for logistics activities to occur);

- Procurement logistics (necessitating close work with the work units responsible for procurement and the range of core and supporting electoral processes to assess material requirements);
- Inbound logistics (arranging for the movement of materials and equipment into the warehouse);
- Distribution logistics (distribution planning and packing); and
- Movement logistics (transportation and retrieval of materials and equipment, materials storage and environmentally responsible materials disposal and movement of personnel, taking into consideration geographic specificities).

Logistics planning must be flexible and include contingency planning. It is important that logistical requirements (information needs, timeframes, procedures, etc.) be articulated and communicated across all work units. Operational planning also plays a role in ensuring that work units understand that any delay in completing the activities they are responsible for is likely to have an adverse effect on the ability to meet logistical targets within budget and/or on schedule.

### **Public Outreach (Voter Education, Media and Stakeholders)**

Effective public outreach provides important information to the public on electoral processes, increases transparency and informs key stakeholders about their roles. A public outreach plan should be a key activity considered in the operational plan. Alternatively, EMBs may wish to divide these elements into separate plans (such as a voter education plan and a liaison and external relations plan). A public outreach plan needs to consider the role of tailored and well-timed public outreach activities to support all core electoral processes. Important considerations for public outreach planning include objectives; audiences (target audiences and goals for each audience); public outreach key messages, activities and responsibilities; budget and resource management; and risk management.

The free flow of information is an essential element of credible elections, and the media (traditional, new and social media) is an important channel through which to disseminate electoral information. Media management is important for effective public outreach. Considerations may include:

- Media management training needs for the EMB (traditional, new and social media);
- Who is authorized to speak to the media and engage on social media platforms on behalf of the EMB;
- Accreditation processes for media presence during polling, counting and results tabulation;
- Briefing and training on electoral processes for the media; and
- Media engagement and information dissemination strategies to be implemented.

Public outreach planning should aim to facilitate proactive public communications and engagement, anticipate and proactively counter misinformation and disinformation, as well as provide a framework for crisis communications.

### **Recruitment and Staffing**

Elections require the recruitment of many staff (often temporary) who are seconded from other agencies or engaged directly via external recruitment. Having the right number of staff who are broadly representative of the

community and recruited at the right time is essential for successful elections. It is also important that staff are seen as politically neutral; this affects decisions about from where to recruit temporary staff (e.g., teachers may be seen as politically neutral, unlike public servants from central government agencies). Recruitment planning is also an important area through which EMBs can implement their commitment to GESI considerations.

Staffing costs are often a significant proportion of electoral budgets, and the process needs to be managed effectively. Operational planning for recruitment and staffing should consider:

- The anticipated number of staff required at headquarters and in the field for each core and supporting electoral process, across all phases of the election;
- How staff can be engaged across all sexes and gender identities, abilities and social and cultural groups;
- Appropriate training, equipment and supervision for staff to fulfill their roles successfully;
- Qualifications and experience levels needed, which should be listed in position descriptions;
- Transparent, consistent and documented terms of employment and employment agreements that adhere to relevant legislation and government policies;
- Development of staffing registers to support recruitment for future elections;
- A code of conduct that all staff (permanent, temporary, headquarters and field) must follow and that reflects the EMB's guiding principles, ethics and values, as well as international best practice<sup>32</sup>; and
- Payment systems.

### Procedures and Training

Elections are time-bound and highly regulated, requiring detailed and clear procedures for, and delivery of training to, different groups of people for different aspects of the operation. Procedures and training are required for a range of activities — not just for poll workers and counting staff but also for staff involved in voter registration, public outreach, logistics and other activities. This should be included in the operational plan and schedule and, ideally, supported by a procedures and training plan.

The effectiveness of procedures and training is essential to the way staff perform their duties and affects the credibility of an election. Operational planning for procedures and training should consider:

- The activities and audiences for which procedures and training will be developed;
- The types of procedures documentation and resources to be developed for each activity and timeframes for their development;
- The training methodologies to be implemented (options might include a single tier of direct training sufficient for activities other than polling and counting, a traditional cascade training model for polling and counting, or a modified model;<sup>33</sup> engaging a group of core trainers; training delivered on a “just in time” basis, etc.);

---

<sup>32</sup> For a sample code of conduct, see International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) (1996).

<sup>33</sup> A cascade model involves training small groups of people in content and training techniques; they, in turn, train small groups of people in the same content and training techniques. The process continues until the content (functional skills) has cascaded to the lowest staff level (ACE Project, 2020).

- Training locations, including consideration of transportation requirements and implications (cost and environmental);
- Training materials to be developed, with consideration for the skills and capabilities of trainers, facilitators and participants and the infrastructure available at training locations; and
- Tools to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of procedures and trainings.

### **Security**

Safe and secure electoral operations are essential to ensuring an electoral outcome that is trusted by the community, stakeholders and the international community. Because an EMB often shares its security responsibilities with external stakeholders, such as security agencies, coordination is essential for successful electoral security. Security management is an important element of operational planning, and the development of a security plan that assesses risks, and treatments for them, is recommended.

Operational planning for security generally focuses, at a minimum, on the physical security of premises and materials; the personal security of voters, candidates, party officials, electoral officials and the general community; and the security of election information, communication and technology systems. It should focus on security across three distinct phases of the election: pre-election, during voting and after voting. Key considerations include:

- Security risk assessments;
- Security coordination and information sharing mechanisms;
- Physical security requirements for premises, equipment and materials;
- Mechanisms to support the personal security of stakeholders;
- Security and backup for ICT systems and infrastructure;
- Scenario planning for emergencies, including escalation and response protocols;
- Briefings or trainings for security personnel on electoral operations and GESI sensitization;
- Communications protocols and equipment for staff at headquarters and in the field; and
- Incident reporting.

# Annex F: Sample Operational Planning

## Communication Tools

The samples below illustrate some possible ways to present different types of information to communicate progress against the EMB’s operational plan.

**Internal.** To support internally communicating the overall operational plan and progress, consider: breaking the operational plan and operational plan schedule into distinct periods of time, as in [Figure 14](#); providing a progressively updated listing of the status of key milestones, as in [Figure 15](#); or facilitating a view of progress against key milestones by administrative unit (e.g., constituency, province, etc.) via traffic light reporting, as in [Figure 16](#).

**FIGURE 14: Quarterly Milestones — Chevrons**

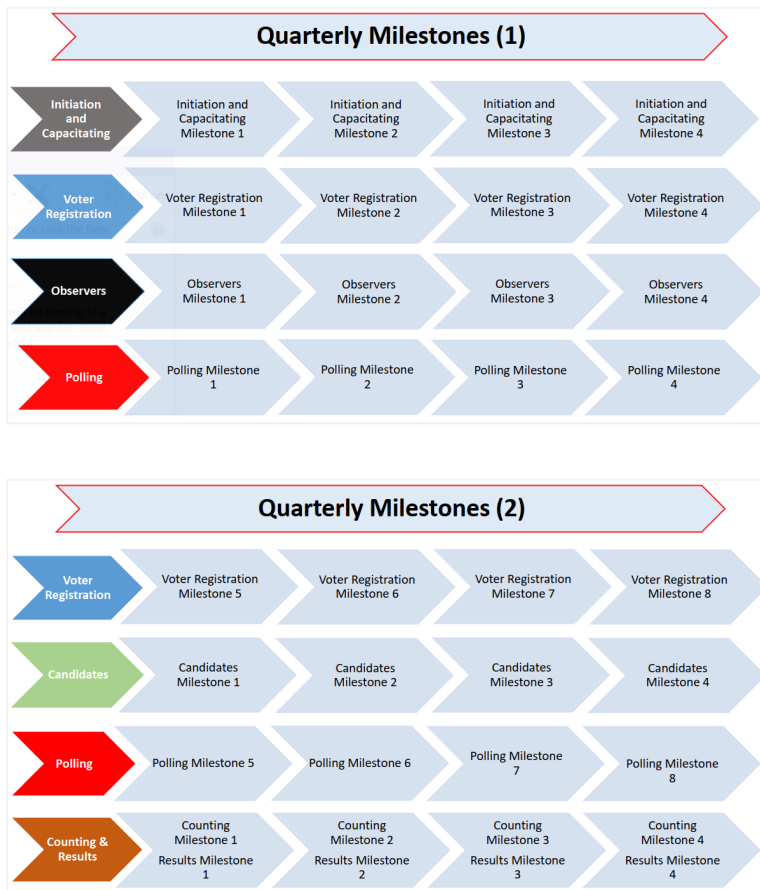


FIGURE 15: Milestone Progress Reporting – List

No.	Quarter	Key Milestones	Status / Target Date	Lead
<b>COMPLETED</b>				
1	Quarter 2	Voter Registration Milestone	Completed	External Relations
2	Quarter 2	Voter Registration Milestone	Completed	Enrolment
3	Quarter 2	Candidates Milestone	Completed	Legal
4	Quarter 2	Polling Milestone	Completed	Procedures & Training
5	Quarter 2	Polling Milestone	Completed	Operations
6	Quarter 3	Voter Registration Milestone	Completed	Enrolment
7	Quarter 3	Voter Registration Milestone	Completed	Logistics
8	Quarter 3	Voter Registration Milestone	Completed	Field Operations
<b>PENDING</b>				
9	Quarter 3	Candidates Milestone	Date	Operations
10	Quarter 3	Polling Milestone	Date	Logistics
11	Quarter 4	Polling Milestone	Date	Voter Education
12	Quarter 4	Counting Milestone	Date	Procedures & Training
13	Quarter 4	Counting Milestone	Date	Logistics
14	Quarter 4	Polling Milestone	Date	Field Operations
15	Quarter 4	Candidates Milestone	Date	External Relations

FIGURE 16: Monitoring Traffic Light Report by Administrative Unit

Ad	Administrative Unit	No. of Wards	Registered Voters Previous Election	Registered Voters Current Election	Voter Registration Activity (e.g. enrolment)	Voter Registration Activity (e.g. voter education)	Candidate Activity (e.g. nominations)	Polling Activity (e.g. recruitment of poll workers)	Polling Activity (e.g. display of Polling Schedule)	Polling Activity (e.g. voter education)	Polling Activity (e.g. distribution of polling & counting materials)	Polling Activity (e.g. train poll workers)	Counting Activity (e.g. counting centres established)
					DD Mon - DD Mon	DD Mon - DD Mon	DD Mon - DD Mon	DD Mon - DD Mon	DD Mon - DD Mon	DD Mon - DD Mon	DD Mon - DD Mon	DD Mon - DD Mon	DD Mon - DD Mon
<b>REGION 1</b>													
<b>PROVINCE 1</b>													
1	Constituency 1				Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	In Progress	Completed	Modest Delay	Pending
<b>PROVINCE 2</b>													
2	Constituency 2				Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	In Progress	Completed	Completed	Pending
<b>PROVINCE 3</b>													
3	Constituency 3				Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	In Progress	Modest Delay	In Progress	Pending
4	Constituency 4				Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	In Progress	Major Delay	In Progress	Pending
5	Constituency 5				Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	In Progress	Modest Delay	In Progress	Pending
<b>REGION 2</b>													
<b>PROVINCE 4</b>													
6	Constituency 6				Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	In Progress	Completed	In Progress	Pending
7	Constituency 7				Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	In Progress	Completed	In Progress	Pending
<b>PROVINCE 5</b>													
8	Constituency 8				Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	In Progress	Completed	In Progress	Pending
9	Constituency 9				Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	In Progress	Completed	In Progress	Pending
<b>REGION 3</b>													
<b>PROVINCE 6</b>													
10	Constituency 10				Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	In Progress	Completed	In Progress	Pending
11	Constituency 11				Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	In Progress	Completed	In Progress	Pending
<b>PROVINCE 7</b>													
12	Constituency 12				Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	In Progress	Completed	In Progress	Pending
13	Constituency 13				Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	In Progress	Completed	In Progress	Pending
<b>REGION 4</b>													
<b>PROVINCE 8</b>													
14	Constituency 14				Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	In Progress	Completed	In Progress	Pending
15	Constituency 15				Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	In Progress	Completed	In Progress	Pending
16	Constituency 16				Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	In Progress	Completed	In Progress	Pending
<b>PROVINCE 9</b>													
17	Constituency 17				Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	In Progress	Completed	In Progress	Pending
18	Constituency 18				Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	In Progress	Major Delay	In Progress	Pending
<b>TOTALS</b>													
<b>COMPLETION RATE</b>					100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%	78%	6%	0%

**External.** Publicly released information is likely to be of a higher level to communicate a picture of the overall electoral operation. The samples below are an electoral operations roadmap from the 2019 Bougainville Referendum (Figure 17) and a high-level public timeline (Figure 18).

FIGURE 17: Bougainville Referendum Roadmap

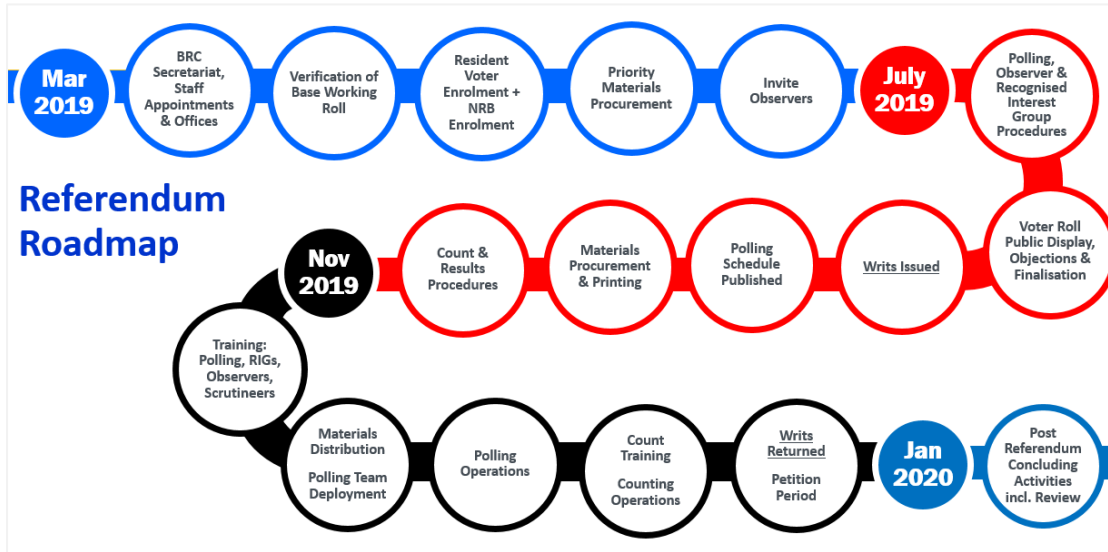


FIGURE 18: Public Electoral Timeline

**Election Timeline<sup>1</sup>**

Voter Registration Voter Education	DD Month to DD Month
Voter Registration	DD Month to DD Month
Preliminary Voter List Public Display	DD Month to DD Month
<b>Issue Writ/Proclamation / Voter List Closes</b>	<b>DD Month</b>
Candidate Nominations	DD Month to DD Month
Confirmed Candidates Announced	DD Month to DD Month
Polling Schedule Public Display	DD Month to DD Month
Candidate Agent Registration	DD Month to DD Month
Media Accreditation	DD Month to DD Month
<b>Election Day</b>	<b>DD Month</b>
<b>Count Starts</b>	<b>DD Month</b>
Results Declaration & Return of the Writ/Formal Publication of Results	<b>DD Month</b>
<b>Petition Period</b>	For a period of X days following the Return of the Writ/Formal Publication of Results

<sup>1</sup> These dates are preliminary and may be subject to change.

Current as at DD Month YYYY



## Annex G: References

- ACE Project Alternative Dispute Resolution — Legal Framework* (2021). Retrieved from <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/lf/lfb12/lfb12a/lfb12a05>
- ACE Project Electoral Cycle* (2020). Retrieved from [https://aceproject.org/electoral-advice/electoral-assistance/electoral-cycle#\\_ftn1](https://aceproject.org/electoral-advice/electoral-assistance/electoral-cycle#_ftn1)
- ACE Project Recruitment and Training of Voting Staff: Training Methodology* (2020). Retrieved from <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/vo/voe/voe04/voe04b/default>
- ACE Project Who Organizes Elections* (2020). Retrieved from <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/em/ema/ema01>
- Applegate, M., Chanussot, T. and Basysty, V. (2020). *Considerations on Internet Voting: An Overview for Electoral Decision-Makers*, IFES. Retrieved from: [https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/considerations\\_on\\_internet\\_voting\\_an\\_overview\\_for\\_electoral\\_decision-makers.pdf](https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/considerations_on_internet_voting_an_overview_for_electoral_decision-makers.pdf)
- Atkinson, V, Azelton, A. and Fogg, K. (2014). *Equal Access: How to Include Persons with Disabilities in Elections and Political Processes*, IFES and National Democratic Institute. Retrieved from [https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/equal\\_access\\_how\\_to\\_include\\_persons\\_with\\_disabilities\\_in\\_elections\\_and\\_political\\_processes\\_2.pdf](https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/equal_access_how_to_include_persons_with_disabilities_in_elections_and_political_processes_2.pdf)
- Building Resources in Democracy, Governance, and Elections — Operational Planning Module* (2016).
- Buril, F., Darnolf, S., Aseresa, M. (2020). *Safeguarding Health and Elections*, IFES. Retrieved from: [https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes\\_covid19\\_briefing\\_series\\_safeguarding\\_health\\_and\\_elections\\_may\\_2020.pdf](https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes_covid19_briefing_series_safeguarding_health_and_elections_may_2020.pdf)
- Ellena, K. (2020). *Legal Considerations When Delaying or Adapting Elections*, IFES. Retrieved from [https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes\\_covid-19\\_briefing\\_series\\_legal\\_considerations\\_when\\_delaying\\_or\\_adapting\\_elections\\_june\\_2020.pdf](https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes_covid-19_briefing_series_legal_considerations_when_delaying_or_adapting_elections_june_2020.pdf)
- Ellena, K., Vickery, C. and Reppell, L. (2018). *Elections on Trial: The Effective Management of Election Disputes and Violation*. IFES. Retrieved from <https://electionjudgments.org/api/files/15619907197252bkyj3is48o.pdf>
- Erben, P., Goldsmith, B. and Shujaat, A. (2012). *Out-of-Country Voting: A Brief Overview*, IFES. Retrieved from [https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes\\_ocv\\_erben\\_goldsmith\\_shujat\\_2012.pdf](https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes_ocv_erben_goldsmith_shujat_2012.pdf)
- IFES' Executive Curriculum in Electoral Leadership. <https://www.ifes.org/iEXCEL>
- IFES' Strategic Planning for Effective Electoral Management. [https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/strategic\\_planning\\_guide\\_2011\\_0.pdf](https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/strategic_planning_guide_2011_0.pdf)
- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) 1996, *Code of Conduct for the Ethical and Professional Administration of Elections*. <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/code-of-conduct-for-ethical-and-professional-administration-of-elections.pdf>
- Risk Management in Elections* (2016). Policy Paper No. 14. International IDEA. Retrieved from <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/risk-management-in-elections.pdf>
- Shujaat, A., Roberts, H. and Erben, P. (2016). *Internally Displaced Persons and Electoral Participation: A Brief Overview*, IFES. Retrieved from <https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/idps-electoral-participation-october-2016.pdf>

- Union Election Commission Myanmar (2019), *UEC Strategic Plan 2019-2022*. Retrieved from [https://merin.org.mm/sites/merin.org.mm/files/publication/07032019\\_uec\\_national\\_strategic\\_plan\\_2019\\_2022\\_english\\_version.pdf](https://merin.org.mm/sites/merin.org.mm/files/publication/07032019_uec_national_strategic_plan_2019_2022_english_version.pdf)
- Wally, M. (2020) *Vote by Mail: International Practice During COVID-19*. IFES. Retrieved from [https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes\\_vote\\_by\\_mail\\_international\\_practice\\_during\\_covid-19\\_october\\_2020.pdf](https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes_vote_by_mail_international_practice_during_covid-19_october_2020.pdf)



HQ | 2011 Crystal Drive | Arlington, VA 22202 | USA

 [www.IFES.org](http://www.IFES.org)