
Returning Officer
Position Description

Position Title: Returning Officer
Division: Operations - Field
Reports To: Chief Operating Officer
Classification: Manager 2
Location: Assigned Electoral District

This position description has been reviewed and is confirmed as correct by: Chief Operating Officer

Print Name

Signature

Date

Position Summary

The Returning Officer (RO) is appointed via an Order in Council (OIC) and reports to the Chief Operating Officer and/or delegate. The RO manages the preparation, development, implementation and delivery of general elections, by-elections and referenda in their assigned electoral district within Ontario. This includes oversight of the infrastructure, deliveries, recruitment, administration and financial management strategies as well as the maintenance, use, dissemination and tracking of elector, geographic and address data and products.

The RO plays a key role in maintaining public trust in the electoral process and with Elections Ontario (EO) to ensure democracy is upheld by delivering fair and consistent elections. The RO works to ensure the provisions of the *Election Act (EA)*, the *Election Finances Act (EFA)*, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*, the *Ontario Employment Standards Act (ESA)*, the *Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC)* and the *French Language Services Act (FLSA)*, and all other relevant statutes are observed.

Responsibilities

The Returning Officer has the following responsibilities:

Planning

- Understands and implements all programs, policies and procedures set by Elections Ontario Headquarters (EOHQ).
- Plans and implements electoral event delivery strategies covering all aspects of election resources/poll officials' activities. This includes reviewing the returning office's event plans for adequacy of staffing, contingency plans, numbers, qualifications and levels of staff, event delivery infrastructure, logistical and administrative set-up activities, while meeting established performance standards, benchmarks, reporting and measurement processes.
- Identifies opportunities for the continuous improvement of electoral event delivery functions, processes and procedures.
- Supports the integrity and confidentiality of the Permanent List of Electors for Ontario (PREO) by safeguarding the PREO products and working with EOHQ and electors in identifying updates to the PREO and electoral district (ED) maps.
- Participates in the preparation for electoral events through various assignments, including identification and inspection of returning office/training and logistics office, satellite office (as required), identification and inspection of voting locations, maintenance of polling divisions, and targeted elector registration.
- Maintains the **List of Electors (F0313)** for their ED during electoral events in accordance with the requirements of the EA and the processes and guidelines developed by EO.

Privacy and Security

- Protects the privacy of the information obtained from the **List of Electors (F0313)** in paper or electronic format, generated or used in their ED.
- Protects the privacy of the personal information of key staff, field staff employees and personnel who apply to work for EO.
- Safeguards software application login credentials (user IDs and passwords), elections equipment and materials including mobile devices such as cellular phones, tablets, computers, tabulators, ePoll books and office hardware from losses, damages or breaches of security in accordance with EO's Computer and Technology Acceptable Use Policy.
- Responsible for reporting privacy and/or security breaches and unauthorized access to information to the Chief Privacy Officer of EO and assisting with privacy and/or security breach containment, investigation and remediation.
- Ensures all processes, policies and guidelines developed by EO regarding the privacy, confidentiality and security of elector information are being communicated to and followed by all field staff.
- Ensures the privacy of all PREO products provided to candidates and the completion of the secure destruction of election materials in accordance with the *Elections Act* and EO Guidelines for the Use of Electoral Products.

Event Management

- Implements electoral event delivery infrastructure strategies and plans covering all aspects of returning office activity set-up, organization and operation in the delivery of electoral events.
- Follows standards and structures to support returning office logistical and administrative management of statutory and assigned activities; monitors activity to ensure legislative compliance and full integration with corporate facilities and materials management functions.
- Executes the planning, implementation and management of the returning office logistics and set-up. This includes the design and management of processes and procedures to negotiate and manage the contracts and service agreements for the returning office and voting locations with landlords, complying with the advice and support provided by EO staff, as required.
- Manages the work of the returning office, training and logistics office, satellite office (if applicable) and voting locations staff by providing policy, operational and functional guidance, conducts performance evaluations and provides constructive feedback. Establishes and manages project teams and projects with variable number of team members and is responsible for coordinating staff participation in projects.
- Executes the planning, implementation and delivery of all voting channels, which include advance poll, special ballot and polling day voting.

- Ensures accuracy in numbers of ballots, candidate information, timeliness of delivery, and the accuracy and timely delivery of results on polling night.
- Monitors field's progress towards completing deliverables via computer applications provided by EOHQ, such as EMS, VoterView and DOMO.
- During electoral events, prepares, distributes and tracks **List of Electors (F0313)** and other election-related data and cartographic products in accordance with the requirements of the *Election Act*.
- Executes processes and procedures for all returning office materials, goods and services acquisitions through appropriate sourcing strategies and procurement instruments. This includes supplier quotations and other tender documents and complies with EO's recommendations on appropriate methods/mechanisms.

Staffing

- Manages the planning, administration and delivery of key staff and field staff workforce planning and recruitment to administer electoral events.
- Identifies and capitalizes on new opportunities to build and foster relationships with existing and future potential recruits through strong professional ethics, leadership and responsive approaches to electoral event delivery.
- Implements and maintains workforce planning and recruitment strategies to create and implement new and innovative ways to reach new recruits while ensuring outreach and recruitment and selection strategies are barrier-free, fair, equitable, open and transparent. This is to support EO's strategic plan, including identifying organizational, policy and electoral event-related needs, and implements recruitment and management initiatives to address those needs.
- Ensures all staff and poll officials understand and follow the guidelines set out by the AODA, EA, EFA, , EO's Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy, Mutual Respect in the Workplace Policy, Travel Meals and Hospitality Directive, Compensation and Fees Policy, ESA and all other relevant policies.

Stakeholder Relations

- Develops and manages relationships between EO and its stakeholders, within a critical network of contacts, working to develop and maintain positive relationships in the development of workforce planning and recruitment initiatives and services.
- Leads the establishment and management of stakeholder relationships with a range of special interest groups, including candidates, electors, Indigenous, accessibility, homeless, incarcerated, student and media, ensuring their needs and requirements are met and that EO is in compliance with the EA, AODA and OHRC.
- Builds and manages relationships with suppliers of necessary election services, ensuring services, supplies and up-to-date contact information are available and easily distributed in the event of an election/electoral event.

- Executes processes and procedures for all returning office materials, goods and services acquisitions through appropriate sourcing strategies and procurement instruments, including supplier quotations and other tender documents and complies with EO's recommendations on appropriate methods/mechanisms.
- Works alongside EO sanctioned external vendors in the returning office such as trainers and field technicians, to support election technology.

Fiscal Responsibility

- Manages the returning office budget and complies with standards and administrative structures to support budgeting and expenditure management for assigned activities both in support of electoral events to ensure taxpayer dollars are used prudently and responsibly.
- Monitors activities to ensure adherence with corporate financial policies and compliance with the regulated **Schedule of Compensation (F0164)**, and takes appropriate corrective action as required.
- Manages efficient scheduling of staff to minimize costs including overtime by following the staffing guidelines provided by EOHQ as much as possible.
- Payroll must be in compliance with ESA and financial documents must be processed in a timely basis. Ensuring staff payroll related data is complete and accurate and is submitted to EOHQ on a timely basis to meet ESA requirements.
- Manages the Electoral District (ED) accounts payable invoices and voting location payment files to ensure submission to EOHQ for timely payment.
- Follows the principles of Travel, Meal and Hospitality Directive when approving expenses to ensure taxpayer dollars are used prudently with a focus on accountability and transparency.

Special Projects

- Manages special projects of varying size and complexity, fulfills requirements and secures resources and prepares required deliverables according to established structures and standards.
- Establishes plans, acquires and manages project teams, manages budget and approves expenditures within assigned financial authority. Monitors project team activity against plans, and resolves issues of complex or significant matters as required.
- During periods leading up to and during electoral event activity, may be temporarily managing and/or reporting to an alternative team/project to support the delivery of an electoral event, including own unit's staff resources.

Other Duties

- Performs other related activities, as required. Keeps current on related skills development in order to use new technologies or processes, as required.

Job Requirements

The Returning Officer position has the following job requirements.

Training/Knowledge

The position requires knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- Strategic planning and management principles, theories, policies and practices, along with a detailed knowledge of and experience in project management and managing operational planning, performance measurement and project delivery activities in a decentralized environment to ensure effective electoral event resource preparation and delivery for the prescribed electoral district.
- Budgeting, financial management and accounting principles, practices and processes to manage and administer the returning office budget, to follow the established financial framework/ processes/policies for electoral event delivery, to implement electoral event infrastructure delivery systems, and manage the procurement and return of office materials, goods and service acquisitions.
- Government staffing and recruitment practices, policies, standards and governing legislation to manage the planning, administration, payroll and delivery of program-focused workforce planning and recruitment strategies for election staff.
- Acquisition/procurement management principles, theories, policies and practices for the acquisition of all materials, goods and services for the operation of the returning office.
- Principles of facilities management, building access controls and the regulations and legislation governing workplaces to ensure appropriate accommodations are secured for the returning office and the safety and security of facilities and staff.
- Risk management principles, quality assurance standards and business performance measures to implement electoral event delivery strategies and plans, while meeting established performance standards, benchmarks, reporting and measurement processes and to identify opportunities for the continuous improvement of electoral event delivery functions, processes and procedures.
- Requirements and provisions of the EA ,EFA, AODA, ESA, OHRC, FLSA and other relevant statutes relating to electoral event delivery and the activities of election officials, operation and administrative requirements/business needs, to provide effective management to support electoral and referenda events and ensure the requirements of these Acts are met.
- EO operations, mandate, directives, goals and objectives, as well as relevant policies, guidelines, programs and initiatives to ensure project/electoral event delivery program strategies and plans align with organizational directions and goals, as well as to assess the impact of electoral event delivery activities programs/projects and initiatives on organizational objectives.

- Research, analytical and problem-solving skills to identify issues and contribute to and manage election officials and their environment for the delivery of electoral events.
- Issues management, relationship management, leadership/management, decision making, negotiation, organizational and administrative skills to manage day-to-day activities, provide operational and functional guidance and prioritize work.
- Computer technology systems and various software applications/database to utilize programs and electronic resources in the performance of job tasks.
- Address standards in place and under development nationally, and their relationship to physical geography to ensure consistent products and to maintain data sharing capacity.
- Understanding and requirement of providing excellent and accessible customer service to electors, in accordance with AODA.
- Privacy legislation related to the protection of personal information.

Judgement

The position works under the general direction of the Chief Operating Officer and within the framework and scope of Ontario's electoral legislation and EO's mandate, policies and practices.

Judgement is exercised in the following areas:

- Planning, implementing workforce planning, recruitment strategies, implementing electoral event delivery strategies and solutions to execute electoral and referenda events in their assigned electoral district and that can be integrated with current electoral event delivery policy and legislative directions to meet the changing needs and requirements of electoral event delivery program /projects.
- Defining requirements and implementing strategies and plans covering all aspects of the recruitment and management of election staff and in managing effective communication and issues management strategies and plans to support staff in preparation for electoral event delivery.
- Managing projects that support the attainment of electoral event delivery program goals and objectives for the returning office and in overseeing modifications to existing electoral event delivery programs to reflect changes in program strategy/direction, legislation and stakeholder needs.
- Defining requirements and developing strategies and plans covering all aspects of returning office activity set-up, organization and operation, and managing a range of processes, procedures and standards.
- Developing and managing relationships with election staff and key stakeholders and coordinating activities that support election programs, initiatives and services.

- Participating in the establishment and implementation of performance standards, benchmarks, reporting and measurement processes, identifying specific best practices and financial efficiencies and in identifying opportunities for the continuous improvement of electoral event delivery functions, processes and procedures.

Confidentiality

- Responsible for working with the Chief Operating Officer to implement policies and prepare event-delivery strategies and plans covering all aspects of the returning office's activities, where confidentiality is protected until such time as it is ready for public consumption, however, position may disclose confidential policy information to subordinate staff, within established policies that safeguard information.
- Has access to and may disclose performance and financial information about and related to individual returning office and poll official staff to Operational and Administrative Cluster managers and staff, where discretion and care must be taken to safeguard information.
- Must exercise care and discretion in ensuring the protection and confidentiality of personal information and determining what information can be disclosed, as directed by the *Election Act* and the Guidelines for the Use of Electoral Products, when providing access to information.
- Responsible for safeguarding the integrity and security of personal information contained in the List of Electors for their assigned ED.
- Approves and submits for payment event-related expenditures.
- Responsible for ensuring the confidentiality of personal information and the accurate data entry of payroll and for taking payroll corrective actions when required.

Impact

- Managing the planning, implementation, administration and delivery of workforce management and recruitment, event delivery infrastructure, administrative and issues management strategies and plans to support their staff across their electoral district in the preparation and delivery of electoral events. These support new governmental policy directions and legislative initiatives and improvement in election processes, in support of EO's strategic plan.
- Managing the planning, development, administration and delivery of focused projects on electoral event infrastructure for the management and operation of all voting locations across their electoral district.
- Ensuring compliance with the provisions and requirements of EA, EFA, AODA, ESA, OHRC, FLSA and other relevant statutes as they relate to the management, preparation, development, implementation of electoral event delivery and related activities within their assigned electoral district.
- Providing leadership management to monitor and improve service quality and for overseeing modifications to existing event delivery programs to reflect changes in program strategy/direction, legislation, and stakeholder requirements.

- Ensuring the establishment, maintenance and use of elector, geographic and address database and other electoral products required to plan and conduct electoral and referenda events.
- Managing the returning office financial environment ensuring appropriate accountability and reporting.
- Implementing approved EO strategies, policies, programs and processes to ensure accurate, efficient, and quality use of human resources.
- Ensuring accuracy and timely submission of payroll in compliance with the ESA.
- Poor management of the preparation, development, implementation and delivery of general elections, by-elections and referenda in their assigned electoral district within Ontario could have a significantly negative impact on the credibility and accountability of an electoral event, resulting in a contested election in one or more electoral districts, a loss of Election Ontario credibility within the Legislative Assembly and with the Electoral Administrations in other jurisdictions.

Contacts

- Wide range of contacts with internal EO management in the preparation, execution and close-out of events, as well as in the management and execution of specific assignments.
- Develops and maintains strong working relationships with EO management and staff, other Returning Officers, Election Clerks and Regional Liaison Officers, to support the successful delivery of electoral events.
- Has a contact with external stakeholders, including electors, outreach groups, political candidates, landlords, suppliers/vendors, internal and external stakeholders and special interest groups to provide detailed information, explanation and interpretation of electoral event legislation, policies and procedures.

Supervision

- Direct supervisory responsibility for staff in the returning office, satellite offices (if applicable) and all voting locations, and is responsible for managing recruitment, performance reviews, training and development and employee relations.
- Responsible for leading project teams of varying size to support the administration of electoral events and related assignments.

Working Environment

- Operates keyboard normally throughout the day to update the database, prepare documents, memos, reports, etc.
- Requires a high level of concentration to research, analyze and determine design and structure of the operational framework of the delivery of election resources projects, activities, initiatives, and for determining appropriate performance standards, associated measurement and reporting tools, solutions and support,

where deadlines and predictable peaks are expected. A high level of concentration must be exercised during electoral events where unanticipated issues and problems in the returning office must be resolved immediately.

- Requires a high level of concentration to implement appropriate strategies, policies, programs and procedures.
- Works in a high stress level office environment during electoral events.
- Requires occasional travel within assigned electoral district and access to a reliable means of transportation to conduct voting location visits, suppliers' meetings and other assignments as required.