

2024 - 2026 IT Strategic Plan

Agency: 132 Department of Elections (ELECT)

Date: 11/20/2023

Current IT State

In this section, describe the high-level strategy the agency will use to manage existing operational IT investments over the next year to 5 years. This section should align with identified Business Requirements for Existing Technology (BRsTs). At minimum, please address the following questions in your description of your agency,s strategy for managing existing operational IT investments:

Are there existing IT investments that will require additional funding over the next year to 5 years, such as license renewals, re-competition of current IT contracts, or system enhancements required by the Agency Strategic Plan?

If there are systems that will no longer support the agency,s business needs, either through poor performance or excessive cost, how does IT leadership in the agency plan to address the issues?

If the agency does not have the staff or funding to meet increasing demand for IT services, how will IT leadership fulfill the requests?

The Virginia Department of Elections promotes and supports accurate, fair, open and secure elections for the citizens of the Commonwealth.

The Department's main areas of focus are election security, proper administration of elections, and focusing efforts to secure and stabilize our voter registration database, while implementing the new replacement voter system to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness which will result in cost-savings and increased customer service experiences.

Specifically, the Department's goals include the following:

- Improve and increase the delivery of training to both internal agency staff and the elections community as a whole
- Ensuring regular and timely reviews of all agency documents, policies, and regulations
- Maintain the current voter registration database known as the Virginia Election Registration Information System (VERIS)
- Implementation of the new Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) and planning for archival of the existing system VERIS following successful completion of the SVRS project.

The Department of Elections (ELECT) operates these primary applications: the statewide Virginia Election and Registration Information System (VERIS), the electronic pollbook program (EPB), the statewide campaign finance disclosure application, known as Committee Electronic Tracking (COMET), the Voter List Maintenance and the Citizen Portal used for online voter registration. There are additional applications which support the operations of these primary applications and other administrative needs of the agency.

Over the prior biennium, the Department embarked on several significant initiatives to address key issues in these systems and improve elections in the Commonwealth. These efforts share a common approach of bringing control of core solutions within the agency in order to better support, maintain and improve these critical systems. VERIS Enhancements and Support – VERIS is a 15-year-old system which was procured from an outside vendor who originally built and maintained the system. ELECT has since successfully maintained and enhanced VERIS in-house, with the agency supporting the solution going forward. Additionally ELECT has increased its efforts to minimize costs related to support. Relationships have been cultivated with vendors who provide

competitive rates for skilled IT workers. Furthermore, ELECT's in-house support team has addressed significant VERIS system deficiencies. Further, updates to VERIS related to legislative changes were implemented in alignment with the corresponding law effective dates. The past year has brought the need for additional changes within this system in order to comply with a number of legislative requirements prior to the general elections. The most important of these enhancements were (a) Same Day Voter Registration (Register and vote on the same day), (b) Pre-Registration of 16-year-olds and (c) reporting absentee ballots by precinct. Finally, there have been significant improvements of the VERIS infrastructure, including upgrading windows servers and SQL databases and moving the entire platform to VITA's Azure environment in the cloud (lift and shift migration.)

Electronic Pollbooks – ELECT's IT staff continues to maintain this solution, thus, enabling the agency to more easily, cost-effectively and rapidly modify the solution as needed to meet the requirements of new laws and court rulings.

Voter List Maintenance – ELECT strives to make Virginia a national leader in the practices of voter list maintenance. This requires ongoing cooperation with many other states by sharing list information and voter registration data via memorandums of understanding. In addition, ELECT makes updates to the voter list related to out-of-state and in-state-movers, deaths, felonies, restoration of rights, and non-citizens using data received from state and federal agencies including DMV, SSA, VDH, VSP, the courts and the Secretary of the Commonwealth. The following is a link to the latest Annual List Maintenance Reports released by the agency: <http://www.elections.virginia.gov/resultsreports/maintenance-reports>.

Citizen Portal – the agency implemented improvements to make the process easier and more intuitive for the citizens and added multi-language support.

ELECT provides an online application for candidates and political committees to file campaign finance reports, known as COMET which stands for Committee Electronic Tracking. We continue to support and enhance this system which is provided free of charge.

Factors Impacting the Current IT

In this section, the agency will describe the changes in their business environment that will require or mandate changes to the agency's current IT investments. These are requirements and mandates from external sources, such as other agencies or business partners, the agency's customer base, product and service providers, or new federal or state legislation or regulations. The agency must identify the business value of the change, any important deadlines that must be met, and the consequences if the deadlines are not met. In your discussion, be sure to note whether the proposed enhancements are funded or not. If the agency's existing current IT investments will not need enhancement due to requirements or mandates from external sources in the foreseeable future, the agency should enter the following text rather than leave the Factors Impacting the Current IT section blank

For each mandated change, summarize your agency's response from your Agency Strategic Plan, and is it the opinion of agency IT leadership that the IT portion of the response is adequately funded?

Do the mandated changes effect IT in other Commonwealth agencies, or in other states? If so, how?

ELECT faces unique challenges as compared to other state agencies with a similar relative size and mission that have a significant impact on the agency's ability to support, maintain and improve key elections IT systems. In general, the agency's IT budget and corresponding staffing make-up is not sufficient or built to accommodate new requirements every year. New legislation impacts IT operations – laws relating to elections are in a constant state of flux, thereby impacting the IT investments of this agency. Each year, approximately 10% of the proposed legislation introduced by the General Assembly impacts the agency. ELECT is committed to ensuring that fiscal impact statements are as accurate as possible and include funding requirements for the ongoing operational needs to support the proposed legislative changes. Special elections require significant IT operational support – although the name suggests otherwise, special elections are a regular occurrence throughout the year. Like standard elections, special elections comprise a cycle of activities across approximately a 60-day period leading up to and following Election Day. The Governor, the General Assembly and various courts can call special

elections at any time to fill needed office vacancies. ELECT is often not consulted on the scheduling of special elections and has limited time to prepare. Given the frequency and unpredictable timing of special elections, these factors create a substantial strain on IT staff to support the administration of the full election cycle.

In addition, third-party requests present substantial disruption to normal agency operations. The agency's IT organization is tasked with numerous unforeseen requests from external, third-party entities for system functionality, reports, data extracts, litigation discovery requests, and FOIA requests to name the most common examples. These requests often come with heavy pressure that oftentimes results in reprioritization, and delays to timelines for critical, in-progress IT projects.

However, ELECT IT staff are often leveraged to provide technical support for local technology and emergency response support related to the ever-increasing security issues and concerns with voting infrastructure. The Department of Homeland Security has included the Department of Elections (ELECT) in its nationwide designation of a Critical Infrastructure organizations. As such, ELECT is subject to the many mandates and requirements set forth by Homeland Security as a result of this status. This status will continue to require that ELECT dedicate financial and human resources towards heightened security measures, high availability as well as disaster recovery and continuity planning. Elections has been reliant on State funding, since federal funds allocated under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) beginning after FY18 could only be designated to improve security, the agency requires regularly sustained investment in non-security related agency IT resources by the General Assembly, in order to: 1) proceed with in-progress work, 2) improve voter registration and election management in the Commonwealth, and 3) provide a modern, maintainable, cost-effective election IT infrastructure.

Proposed IT Solutions

In this section, describe the high-level strategy the agency will use to initiate new IT investments over the next year to 5 years in support of the agency strategic objectives documented in your Agency Strategic Plan. The agency does not need to consider specific technologies at this time, however, the strategy should identify how the IT implementation will provide business value to the organization. This section should align with identified Business Requirements for New Technology (BRnTs). At minimum, please address the following questions in your description of your agency's strategy for initiating new IT investments:

What are the most important solutions, based on the priority assigned to the requirements by the business sponsors in your agency, and what is the approach to achieving these priority solutions?

If any new IT initiatives will be started in the upcoming budget biennium, is it the opinion of agency IT leadership that it is adequately funded?

Does the agency's current IT staff have the appropriate skill set needed to support future agency technologies? If not, what skill sets need to be acquired?

If the agency will be engaged in multiple new IT initiatives, how will agency IT staff and agency subject matter experts be used across the initiatives?

Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) - In collaboration with ELECT, the selected vendor from a resultant procurement, The Canton Group, are actively replacing the existing VERIS application, which is a 15-year-old solution, by implementing a new technology framework operating on newer, scalable technology with the ability to reduce performance degradation and increase availability. The project effort will result in the full replacement of the existing elections system, VERIS.

The SVRS application will support the Commonwealth's electoral process by providing improved technology and security as well as streamlined workflows and processes for voters, election officials, and department staff within an integrated system. Features of the new system will include: expanded candidate management tools, enhanced features for absentee voting, streamlined voter registration workflows (including Pre-Registration of 16 year old's and Same Day Registration enhancements), improved functionality for election night reporting (including reporting by precinct), ballot proofing, ranked choice voting elections and ballot administration (excludes tabulator), GIS capabilities, ability to manage poll workers, more robust correspondence and reporting

functions, as well as increased capabilities for election security.

The implementation of the new voter registration system (SVRS), which is underway, is projected to go-live in February of 2025. This includes development, customization, configuration, data conversion, delivery, installation, implementation, integration, testing and acceptance of all products and services necessary to implement the system, as well as user training, and mock elections for a primary and a general election. The Virginia Department of Elections (ELECT) is partnering with local general registrars to evaluate and review new functionality as it is developed and implemented.

Also noted are the ongoing maintenance and operational activities for the VERIS application, existing COTS applications, as well as List Maintenance and Enhanced Results applications and integrations. ELECT will begin the process of planning the replacement of the existing COMET application to be completed near the end of the biennium with a project and procurement targeted for completion the following biennium.

In parallel, until which time SVRS goes live, ELECT will be required to continue to operate and maintain VERIS and its peripheral systems for the next two election cycles, including the 2024 Presidential Election. There is a list of pending enhancements and bug fixes in the current VERIS backlog, which means that the ELECT IT team will be fully engaged with dual focus on both the SVRS project and daily operational work addressing technical debt, as well as supporting VERIS. Preparation and planning work that is currently underway include: list maintenance processes, system integrations, GIS file conversions, cleaning/prepping of data stores in order to successfully migrate to SVRS to name a few.

Furthermore, we will be continuing to maintain/upgrade, as necessary, our COTS systems to ensure they are within the N-1 framework to address technical debt. The COTS systems include but are not limited to: Atlassian's Jira and Confluence, ESRI's ArcGIS, Splunk and Tableau.

ELECT implemented Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) for local elections in Arlington County who used RCV for their June primary in 2023 for Board of Supervisors' races. This brought about a significant shift in Election result tabulation as voters can rank candidates in order of preference instead of selecting a candidate. The new SVRS system will include the RCV functionality, however ELECT's legacy VERIS and ENR systems would require significant complex upgrades in order to meet this RCV requirement. To fulfill this gap, ELECT selected an outside vendor for this solution. Enhanced Voting (EV) is the vendor and the solution is called Enhanced Results (ER). ELECT already has an existing contract with EV for the Enhanced Ballot solution which is used by localities to create their ballots. The new ER solution will replace our in-house ENR solution and will be able to display the RCV results in addition to all other functionality currently in ENR including the latest Absentee Ballot by precinct. With this as an interim solution, the ER capabilities are targeted to migrate to the new SVRS solution.

IT Strategic Plan Budget Tables

Agency:	132 Department of Elections (ELECT)			
Date:	11/20/2023			
Current IT Services				
	Costs Year 1		Costs Year 2	
Category	GF	NGF	GF	NGF
Projected Service Fees	\$2,566,302.14		\$2,643,291.21	
VITA Infrastructure Changes				
Estimated VITA Infrastructure	\$2,566,302.14	\$0.00	\$2,643,291.21	\$0.00
Specialized Infrastructure				
Agency IT Staff	\$4,256,967.00		\$4,469,815.00	
Non-agency IT Staff	\$1,300,000.00		\$1,365,000.00	
Cloud Computing Service				
Other Application Costs	\$804,549.00		\$804,549.00	
Total:	\$8,927,818.14	\$0.00	\$9,282,655.21	\$0.00
Proposed IT Investments				
	Costs Year 1		Costs Year 2	
Category	GF	NGF	GF	NGF
Major IT Projects:	\$8,502,745.00		\$4,336,478.00	
Non-Major IT Projects:				
Agency-Level IT Projects:				
Major Stand Alone IT Procurements:	\$8,386,752.00		\$7,000,000.00	
Non-Major Stand Alone IT Procurements:	\$586,000.00		\$586,000.00	
Agency-Level Stand Alone IT Procurements:				
Procurement Adjustment for Staffing:				
Total:	\$17,475,497.00	\$0.00	\$11,922,478.00	\$0.00
Projected Total IT Budget				

Category	Costs Year 1		Costs Year 2	
	GF	NGF	GF	NGF
Current IT Services	\$8,927,818.14	\$0.00	\$9,282,655.21	\$0.00
Proposed IT Investments	\$17,475,497.00	\$0.00	\$11,922,478.00	\$0.00
Total	\$26,403,315.14	\$0.00	\$21,205,133.21	\$0.00

Business Requirements For Technology

Agency:	132 Department of Elections
Date:	11/20/2023
132 ELECT BReT - Akamai	
BRT Type:	Business Requirement for Existing Technology
Requested Start:	8/18/2023
Mandate:	
Mission Critical:	
Description:	
Akamai renewal.	
<p>ELECT has an increasing need to actively monitor and intervene in perceived risk and threat identification. In addition, the tools and services offered by Akamai assist the ELECT teams in its planning for increased traffic to its websites and servers.</p> <p>This is a requirement adds an additional safeguarding layer to the ELECT security posture. This tool allows ELECT to have proactive monitoring and feedback of potential threats that are specific to our borders. It also allows us to be proactive in our planning for increased traffic to our public websites and other troubleshooting efforts.</p>	
132 ELECT BReT - Tableau	
BRT Type:	Business Requirement for Existing Technology
Requested Start:	8/16/2023
Mandate:	
Mission Critical:	
Description:	
Yearly Renewal of Tableau software	
132 ELECT BReT - Voter Regist & Election Mgmt	
BRT Type:	Business Requirement for Existing Technology

Requested Start:	8/16/2023
Mandate:	
Mission Critical:	
Description:	
ELECT is required to maintain a statewide voter registration system on behalf of the localities. The current system will continue to be maintained and improved while at the same time, we will build a new SVRS which is scheduled to go live in 2025.	
132 ELECT BReT – Staff Augmentation	
BRT Type:	Business Requirement for Existing Technology
Requested Start:	8/16/2023
Mandate:	
Mission Critical:	
Description:	
Augment IT Support Staff in order to support the implementation of the new SVRS.	
132 ELECT BRnT - Replacement of COMET	
BRT Type:	Business Requirement for New Technology
Requested Start:	7/1/2025
Mandate:	
Mission Critical:	
Description:	
COMET is the application provided by the Virginia Department of Elections, as required by § 24.2-946.1. of the Code of Virginia, to allow for committees to file their reports electronically, so they are in compliance with § 24.2-947.5. of the Code of Virginia. COMET was initially developed in 2010-2011 and went live in early 2012. It has been updated multiple times to add functionality and improve its operation. Due to the age of the system and increased functional demands, COMET will need to be replaced. The Department is currently working to implement a new Statewide Voter Registration System for early 2025. The replacement of COMET will follow the SVRS go live.	

ELECT SD-WAN Upgrade**BRT Type:** Business Requirement for Existing Technology**Requested Start:** 3/1/2023**Mandate:** Yes**Mission Critical:** Yes**Description:**

Configure existing routers to support SD-WAN capability across all agency locations. This approach prepares agency location(s) with the ability to add additional network capabilities (multiprotocol label switching (MPLS), broadband, wireless (i.e., Cradlepoint)) to take advantage of application -aware routing over private and public networks.

Three step process:

Remote internetwork operating system (IOS) software upgrade on the router.

Remote SD-WAN deployment

Circuit deployment as needed

ELECT Website Modernization**BRT Type:** Business Requirement for New Technology**Requested Start:** 6/15/2023**Mandate:****Mission Critical:** Yes**Description:**

The primary objective of the COV Website Modernization and the CMS Virginia.gov projects are to ensure all state sites are on a single common platform and are following required VITA, COV and 508 standards

Commonwealth Projects >= \$250,000.00

Agency:	132 Department of Elections (ELECT)	
Date:	11/20/2023	
Primary Election System - Project		
Category 1	Project Initiation Approval	
<p>In collaboration with ELECT, the selected vendor will deliver all functionality using a hybrid agile/waterfall project methodology. Development cycles will be done in sprints, following agile best practices. Final deliverable approvals and project milestones will follow a more traditional waterfall approach.</p> <p>The Project effort will result in the full replacement of the existing elections system, VERIS.</p> <p>Key delivery areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Initiation • Gap Validation, Requirements Validation, and System Specification • Configuration and Data Conversion • Software Integration Testing (SIT) • Training • User Acceptance Testing (UAT) • Implementation and Go Live • Maintenance • Plan for and decommission of VERIS <p>Benefits</p> <p>All stakeholders will benefit from replacing a technology framework that is reaching end-of-support and end-of-life with a system running on newer, scalable technology with the ability to reduce performance degradation and increase availability. Improvements from the new SVRS include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voters and Department staff will have an enhanced Voter Registration system that will streamline workflows and processes including Pre-registration of 16 year olds, Same Day Registration (SDR), increased scanning capabilities • Election officials will have improved Election Administration features including expanded candidate management, the addition of candidate scanning capabilities, the ability to manage election officials (poll workers) within the system • Election Officials will have improved capabilities for Election Preparation including ballot proofing and rank choice voting (RCV) • Election Officials will have enhanced features for Absentee Voting including streamlined workflows and processes, increased scanning and vote by mail capabilities • All Stakeholders will benefit from improved Election Results & Certification capabilities that will streamline workflows and processes including CAP (Central Absentee Precinct) reporting by precinct for in-person early voting, mailed absentee ballots processed through Election Day, and mailed absentee ballots received by the deadline and processed after Election Day • Department Staff will have enhanced features for Election Security including increased capabilities for 		

auditing and protective scans

- Election Officials and Department Staff will have improved capabilities to Maintain Geographic Data that will streamline processes for redistricting and reprecincting efforts
- Election officials and Department staff have the ability to work more efficiently utilizing a system that supports multiple browsers

Project Start Date	5/31/2021	Project End Date	1/30/2026
Estimated Costs:	Total	General Fund	Non-General Fund
Project Cost	\$22,654,375.00	\$61,779,687.00	\$20,220,313.00
Estimated first year of biennium:	\$8,000,000.00	\$8,000,000.00	\$0.00
Estimated second year of biennium:	\$12,000,000.00	\$2,000,000.00	\$10,000,000.00

Project Related Procurements

Primary Election System - Procurement

Commonwealth Procurements >= \$250,000.00

Agency:	132 Department of Elections (ELECT)
Date:	11/20/2023
Stand Alone Procurements:	
Procurement Name:	Primary Election System - Procurement
Procurement Date	3/31/2021
Procurement Description:	VERIS, our existing system, no longer offers the robustness of newer systems. Virginia election law requires that our systems be agile enough to quickly adhere to legal and legislative changes in our system. VERIS is not very flexible to change, modifications require much attention and time. Additionally, there are improved software features in some of the newer vendor software platforms along with easier compatibility with third party software. The 2020 session of the general assembly in HB2019 directed ELECT to release an RFI to seek information on the replacement of VERIS and report on the options and potential costs. An RFP will be released to further evaluate, score and select the VERIS replacement solution.