

Electoral Integrity Framework: Description

Background

Elections Canada is the independent, non-partisan agency responsible for conducting federal elections, by-elections and referendums, and for administering federal electoral [legislation](#). The agency ensures that Canadians can exercise their democratic rights to vote and be a candidate. Its strategic vision, as stated in the [Strategic Plan 2020-2028](#), is to uphold an electoral democracy that serves all Canadians and that Canadians trust; this is done in a manner that seeks to anticipate and respond to societal changes, technological and communications innovations, public health and environmental challenges, and the evolving needs of electors and political entities. Elections Canada is committed to listening to and engaging with Canadians, sharing information, collaborating to expand its capacity, and effectively managing its resources.

Purpose



Electoral Integrity Framework

Recognizing that electoral integrity is core to Elections Canada's vision and operations, and that “electoral integrity by design” is inherent in all the agency does, the Executive Committee endorsed the [Electoral Integrity Framework](#) in December 2020. The framework defines the electoral integrity principles against which Elections Canada's programs and services can be measured and helps structure analysis and decision making to support the consistent and rigorous application of the *Canada Elections Act* (CEA) provisions and achieve the agency's

strategic vision. The principles of electoral integrity are accessibility, fairness, independence, reliability, security and transparency.

The objectives of the Electoral Integrity Framework are to:

- Make explicit and transparent Elections Canada's conceptualization of electoral integrity — how it is defined, what it seeks to achieve and how it is assessed.
- Provide a framework for reflection to remind electoral officials to consider electoral integrity in the conduct of their duties and to guide Elections Canada's regulatory function and the development of regulatory policies and other administrative measures.
- Facilitate electoral integrity by design by acting as a tool to structure decision making and analysis about programs, services and systems within Elections Canada.
- Communicate to Canadians about how Elections Canada defines and promotes electoral integrity.

Context: The regulatory function

At Elections Canada, the regulatory function is the use of administrative measures to promote electoral integrity, consistent with the CEA and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. These measures include education, instructions, guidelines, regulatory policies, compliance and enforcement, and recommendations to Parliament on ways to improve the administration of the electoral process.

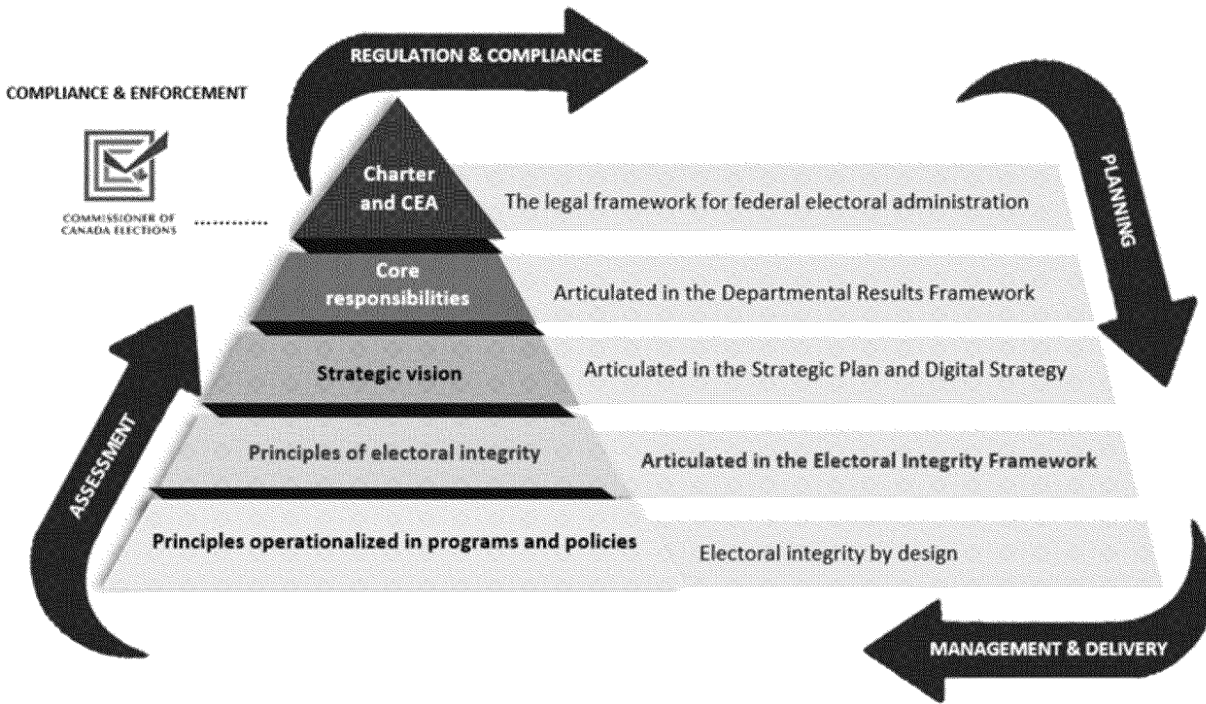
Application and integration

The Electoral Integrity Framework applies to all activities undertaken by Elections Canada to plan and deliver electoral services and provide corporate support that is essential to the agency's operations. It was developed in consultation with officials representing all business lines, both program and corporate, is aligned with the legal framework, and reflects the agency's strategic vision and operational priorities.

The Commissioner of Canada Elections, who is responsible for ensuring compliance with and enforcement of the CEA, plays a distinct role in the electoral process and acts independently of the Chief Electoral Officer in the performance of his or her compliance and enforcement mandate. The Commissioner recognizes the Electoral Integrity Framework for the purpose of ensuring a consistent interpretation of the CEA and approach to compliance with the CEA that is effective, predictable and coherent, as set out in the document entitled, *Relationship between the Chief Electoral Officer and the Commissioner of Canada Elections: Key Guiding Principles*.

The following visual illustrates the integration and alignment of the electoral integrity principles with the legal framework (the CEA and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*), the

Departmental Results Framework and the Strategic Plan, providing the foundation for electoral integrity by design in electoral management and delivery.



Key considerations

The following key considerations have guided the development of the Electoral Integrity Framework:

- The **principles** were defined — timeless, enduring, high-level principles that are consistent with the CEA. While they may evolve over time, it is understood that these principles will remain essential to the conduct of free and fair elections.
- For each principle, the **objectives** were identified, allowing for a clear and specific description of what each principle looks like in practice.
- Examples of Elections Canada's **actions** were provided to help achieve or maintain each objective, demonstrating how electoral integrity by design is already engrained in the agency's programs, policies and business practices.

Principles of Electoral Integrity

The framework is composed of six principles of electoral integrity. Based on its role, Elections Canada advocates for and upholds these principles, which are consistent with the CEA and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and enshrined in our electoral democracy and social fabric.

Accessibility

An accessible electoral process is inclusive and meets the needs of Canadians so that they can exercise their democratic rights to vote and be a candidate, equitably and without undue barriers or interference.

Fairness

Fair electoral administration means that regulated political entities are — and are perceived to be — treated equitably and impartially, and can compete on a level playing field.

Independence

Independence means that the electoral process is administered and regulated without undue influence from the government or partisan entities and interests. While Parliament sets electoral legislation, Elections Canada remains functionally independent from the government, due in part to its statutory authority to draw funds required to conduct federal elections and referendums.

Reliability

A reliable electoral administration is one where the administrative and regulatory functions are carried out predictably and consistently, election officials and staff act professionally and comply with the law, and elections are delivered according to sound management principles, all so that Canadians can trust elections and election results.

Security

A secure electoral process is designed and administered to protect it against persons or entities who would attempt to interfere with its processes, people, assets or data. A secure electoral process requires safeguards to prevent, detect, mitigate and penalize election offences and other interference.

Transparency

A transparent electoral process is administered and regulated in a manner such that it is observable, features oversight and is described in detail publicly.