

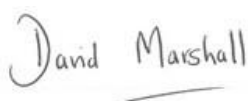
Electoral Office for Northern Ireland

Business Plan

April 2024 – March 2025

Foreword

This Business Plan sets out the work of the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The publication of this Business Plan was delayed by the United Kingdom Parliament General Election on 4 July 2024.



Dr David Marshall
Chief Electoral Officer
21 August 2024

register to vote: www.gov.uk/register-to-vote
Am I Registered: www.eoni.org.uk/Am-I-Registered
web: www.eoni.org.uk

X: @eoni_official

email: info@eoni.org.uk

telephone: 028 9044 6680

mail: Electoral Office for Northern Ireland
St Anne's House
15 Church Street
BELFAST
BT1 1ER

Background

The Electoral Office for Northern Ireland acts to support the Chief Electoral Officer in carrying out his duties. The main duties of the Chief Electoral Officer include:

- maintaining the Electoral Register & working to ensure the Electoral Register is as accurate and complete as possible;
- running all official elections and referendums within Northern Ireland;
- making recommendations to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on the development of policy in relation to electoral law in Northern Ireland;
- implementing any changes coming from Parliamentary and Local Government Boundary Commissions; and
- maintaining public confidence in the electoral service and working to ensure service delivery is free from political interference.

The Electoral Office for Northern Ireland operates from a single office in Belfast and employs just over 20 whole time equivalent staff. At election time the Office uses a temporary workforce of up to 6,000 people.

Over the last fifteen years, the Electoral Office has undergone significant reorganisation in moving to a single location and greater digitisation of processes. This has resulted in staffing and real-term expenditure falling by 50%. Going forward to support our growing, more digitally aware population will require further transformation and digitisation of electoral services.

The Business Plan looks to activities that will be started or completed over the period April 2024 to March 2025 to deliver the Electoral Office's key duties. This Business Plan is available on our website at www.eoni.org.uk, where more detailed information on the work of the Electoral Office can be found.

To help the Electoral Office improve, I welcome all comments or suggestions on this Business Plan – to do so email info@eoni.org.uk. To support transparency, a summary of any written comments received will be published.

Dr David Marshall, Chief Electoral Officer

21 August 2024

Registration (Maintain & Enhance the Register) (Key Duties/Strategic Aims)

- Continue to maintain the Electoral Register
- Work to ensure the Electoral Register is as accurate and complete as possible
- Undertake work packages to enhance accuracy and quality of Electoral Register
- Promote & enhance our digital services through www.gov.uk/register-to-vote & www.eoni.org.uk & www.eoni.org.uk/am-i-registered

Business Objectives (2024-25):

Ongoing throughout the year to continue to process & verify all digital/paper registration applications

Operations

During 2024/25 to manage the additional registration workload the 2024 United Kingdom Parliament General Election brings

All

Ongoing throughout the year to promote the continued uptake of digital applications to register to vote (www.gov.uk/register-to-vote)

All

Ongoing throughout the year to use high quality data from official sources to drive forward improvements in the accuracy and completeness of the Electoral Register

Data Services/Operations

Ongoing throughout the year to process, where possible digitally, persons to be removed from the register via information received from statutory death certificates or other sources

Operations/Data Services

By Winter 2024, complete a review of European Union electors as required by Elections Act 2022 & detailed in Representation of the People (Franchise Amendment and Eligibility Review) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2023

Data Services/Operations

Elections (Readiness & Delivery)

(Key Duties/Strategic Aims)

- Undertake all elections required by law
- Remain prepared to undertake any elections required by law
- Plan for improvements in delivery of all elections (Local Council, Northern Ireland Assembly & United Kingdom Parliament)
- Further develop Contingency Plans and increase election resilience
- Develop capacity to run complex Single Transferable Vote counts
- Develop & deliver changes in processes required under Elections Act 2022

Business Objectives (2024-25):

During 2024/25 deliver work required for a 2024 United Kingdom Parliament General Election and to review its operation

All

Ongoing throughout the year to maintain readiness for other possible election events

All

During 2024/25 to finalise methods to mitigate Digital Registration Number issues found in Electoral Office¹ report published in January 2024

All

By Spring 2025 to have started development of an improved programme for single transferrable vote training and calculation software – this is planned to include improved training & enhanced digital calculation methods

All

Ongoing throughout the year to finalise changes required under Elections Act 2022 – this includes new postal vote handling rules, reduced proxy limits, changes to nomination process and changes to prescribed forms

All

¹ The report “2023 Local Elections - Digital Registration Number review Electoral Office for Northern Ireland - January 2024” – is available at https://www.eoni.org.uk/getmedia/cf355481-2750-4bec-a87b-c20254891e7d/EONI-Digital-Registration-Number-Review-January-2024_1

Corporate Services (Key Duties/Strategic Aims)

- Maintain, upgrade and enhance key Electoral Management IT system
- Deliver and reform Electoral Identity Card service
- Support key staff with Association of Electoral Administrators professional training
- Develop more resilient Electoral Office structure for delivering key services

Business Objectives (2024-25):

Ongoing throughout the year to work with commercial supplier to start implementation of new Election Management Software

All

By Spring 2025 to have identified and started delivering a series of activities to build greater resilience into the work of the Electoral Office

All

By Winter 2024 to have started the implementation of reform of the delivery of the Electoral Identity Card service

Business Support

Ongoing throughout the year to continue to deliver an Electoral Identity Card service

Business Support

By Autumn 2024 to have developed and submitted to the Secretary of State the 2022/23 and 2023/24 Annual Reports of the Chief Electoral Officer

All

By Spring 2025 to have run Association of Electoral Administrators professional training for key Electoral Office staff

All

Ongoing throughout the year to ensure that internal financial, audit, procurement and personnel controls are adhered to

Finance & Logistics

Digital & Data Services

(Key Duties/Strategic Aims)

- Continue to ensure cyber security and protection for Electoral Office data assets
- Drive forward a “Digital First” approach to key electoral services
- Enhance Electoral Office IT infrastructure

Business Objectives (2024-25):

Ongoing throughout the year to maintain security and protection of all Electoral Office data assets – while at the same time delivering training / measures to monitor, enhance and review our data security and Information Governance

All

By Winter 2024 to review and improve the online “Am I Registered” – electoral register check process www.eoni.org.uk/am-i-registered with evidence from the 2024 General Election

Data Services/Operations

Ongoing throughout the year to continue to deliver digital access to electoral register data for external users

Data Services

Ongoing throughout the year to develop, test and trial online form for Electoral Identity Card applications

Data Services/Business Support

By Winter 2024 to have implemented the new Electoral Office website (www.eoni.org.uk)

Business Support/Finance & Logistics

Expenditure

The budget allocation for 2024/25 for the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland is £2.075m.

The expected expenditure is broken down in the table below

Broad Area	Amount
Staffing	£1.00m
Buildings	£0.40m
IT, Legal, Finance, Audit & other Electoral Corporate Services	£0.55m
Other Services e.g. Postage, Printing, Equipment Maintenance	£0.25m
Income from sales of Electoral Register	-£0.13m

A separate capital budget of £0.1m is utilised to maintain Electoral Office equipment (e.g. computer equipment, phones, ballot boxes, polling booths etc...).