

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.

Operational Planning Initiation Briefing Note	
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. ²³
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.

²³ 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"> • The likelihood that a new voter list or updated voter list will be developed • Estimated number of voters • Estimated number of new and transferred voter registrations
Boundary Delimitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipated boundary changes • Expected number of voting districts/constituencies
Observers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of accredited observer groups in previous election • Number of accredited individual observers in previous election
Candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of registered parties that contested the previous election • Number of candidates that contested the previous election • Number of candidate agents accredited in previous election
Polling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation rate from previous election disaggregated by sex, age and disability • Assumed categories of special voting services • Estimated number of voters to be processed per polling station • Estimated number of polling stations • Estimated number of polling teams • Estimated number of staff per team • Expected materials and equipment per polling team • Estimated lead times for procurement and delivery of materials
Counting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimated number of ballots to count, informed by previous participation rate • Estimated number of counting venues • Estimated number of counting staff per venue • Expected materials and equipment per counting venue • Estimated lead times for procurement and delivery of materials • Estimated duration of counting
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expected materials and equipment for transmission and aggregation of results • Estimated duration of results tabulation
EDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electoral disputes arising in previous election • Anticipated administrative and legal avenues for EDR
Supporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether technical assistance is expected to be provided to the EMB • Expected field structure • Actual cost of previous election • Expected security provider

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.

Part 1: Introduction	
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"> • Voter registration services should be made widely available and clearly communicated so that those eligible to register will be able to; • The voting process should be clearly communicated, easy to follow, well-run and inclusive; • The counting and results aggregation processes should be communicated clearly and be transparent; • All candidates and their agents are to be treated equitably; and • Planning will be undertaken to mitigate risks and efficiently manage expenditure.
Part 2: Lessons Learned	
Lessons Learned	Identify key lessons learned from previous elections that the EMB intends to prioritize for the current operational planning cycle. ²⁴
Part 3: Context	
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,

²⁴ 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 Involve Key External Stakeholders).
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.
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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.
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Part 6: Electoral Operations

Voter Registration	<p>For each core electoral process (one section per process), identify:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The purpose of the core electoral process and what success might look like; 2. Key planning considerations, including elements of the legal framework, constraints and assumptions (specific planning considerations for each core electoral process appear below); 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; 4. Anticipated GESI considerations; 5. Anticipated environmental considerations; 6. Any key changes from what has been done in the past, and why; and 7. Expected key external stakeholders.
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"> • Sensitive and non-sensitive material: requirements, procurement, receipt, storage, distribution and return; • Ballot paper designs and printing; • Other printing (e.g., voter list, polling schedule, forms, manuals); • 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; • Ordinary and special voting models; • Security; • Polling procedures, manuals, guides and forms; • Polling simulations to test procedures and voter processing times; • Public outreach; • Field staff and poll worker recruitment; • Field staff and poll worker training; • Election Day movement and transport planning; and • Election Day communications infrastructure requirements (e.g., radios, mobile phones, mobile data). <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"> • Sensitive and non-sensitive material: requirements, procurement, receipt, storage, distribution and return; • Selection and security for counting centers, and their hours of operation; • Counting procedures, manuals, guides and forms; • Counting simulations to test procedures and processing times; • Public outreach; • Counting staff recruitment; • Field staff and counting staff training; • Communications infrastructure requirements (e.g., radios, mobile phones, mobile data, etc.); • Movement/transport planning; and • Printing (e.g., counting forms). <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 resolution²⁵ 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>
Part 7: Post-Electoral Activities	
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>
Part 8: Risk Identification	
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>

²⁵ 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.
Part 9: Expected Operational Planning Outputs	
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.
Part 10: Assumptions and Decisions	
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.

Part 1: Introduction	
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.
Part 2: Lessons Learned	
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.
Part 3: Context	
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>GESI considerations: 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>Potential challenges: 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>GESI considerations: 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>GESI considerations: 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.	GESI considerations: 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.	GESI considerations: Budget for GESI activities and reasonable accessibility accommodations.	Potential challenges: 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.
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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.		
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Part 6: Electoral Operations

Voter Registration	For each core electoral process, address:		
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Boundary Delimitation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The purpose and objectives of the core electoral process; 2. Legal requirements (regarding how the process should be implemented, timeframes and requirements for the process to align with other events); 3. Key differences from what has been done in the past, and reasons; 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); 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; 6. GESI measures that will be implemented, and when and how; 7. Environmental initiatives that will be implemented, and when and how; and 8. Which sub-plans will be developed.
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>GESI considerations: Consult CSOs.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Potential challenges: 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>

²⁶ 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>GESI considerations: 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>Potential challenges: 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>GESI considerations: GESI-specific observation questions; encourage CSOs to participate as accredited observers.</p> <p>Potential challenges: 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"> • Development of a polling services plan (i.e., an Election Day plan); • Materials (sensitive and non-sensitive material requirements, procurement, receipt, storage, distribution, return, transportation); • Ballot paper designs and printing; 	<p>GESI considerations: 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"> • Selecting and securing accessible polling places and polling schedule development, including the voter processing model; • Ordinary and special voting models; • Security; • Polling procedures, manuals, guides and forms; • Polling simulations to test procedures and voter processing times; • Public outreach; • Field staff and poll worker recruitment; • Field staff and poll worker training; • Election Day movement planning; • Election Day communications infrastructure planning (e.g., radio, mobile phones, mobile data); and • Printing (e.g., voter roll, polling schedule, forms, manuals). <div data-bbox="839 241 1394 734" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Potential challenges: 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>Environmental considerations: 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"> • Development of a counting plan; • Sensitive and non-sensitive material: requirements, procurement, receipt, storage, distribution, and return; • Selecting and securing counting centers; • Counting center security; • Counting procedures, manuals, guides and forms; • Counting simulations to test procedures and processing times; • Public outreach; • Counting staff recruitment; <div data-bbox="852 1160 1401 1384" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>GESI considerations: 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>Potential challenges: 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"> • Field staff and counting staff training; • Communications infrastructure requirements (e.g., radio, mobile phones, mobile data); • Movement/transport planning; and • Printing (e.g., counting forms).
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>GESI considerations: 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>Potential challenges: 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>GESI considerations: 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>Potential challenges: Limited EMB capacity (e.g., legal, investigation, mediation skills); inadequate ICT infrastructure; high number of disputes; misinformation; disinformation campaigns.</p> </div>
<p>Part 7: Post-Electoral Activities</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>GESI considerations: 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>Environmental considerations: 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>Part 8: Risk Management</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).
Part 9: Supporting Resources	
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 Annex E: Supporting Electoral Processes: Sub-plans .
Part 10: Assumptions and Decisions	
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.

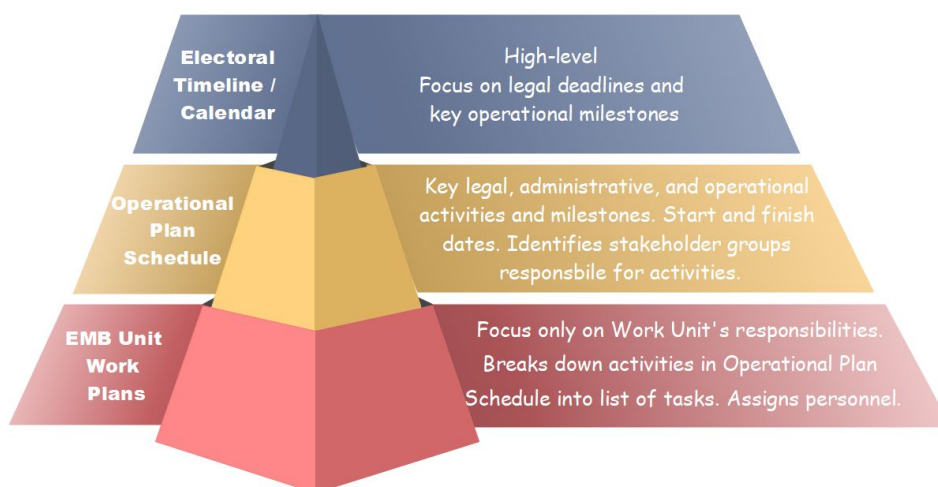
Purpose and scope. The operational plan schedule guides implementation by dividing the operational plan into a list of key activities, deliverables and milestones with their expected start and end dates. It is essentially a detailed activity list that expands the electoral timeline/calendar presented 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](#).

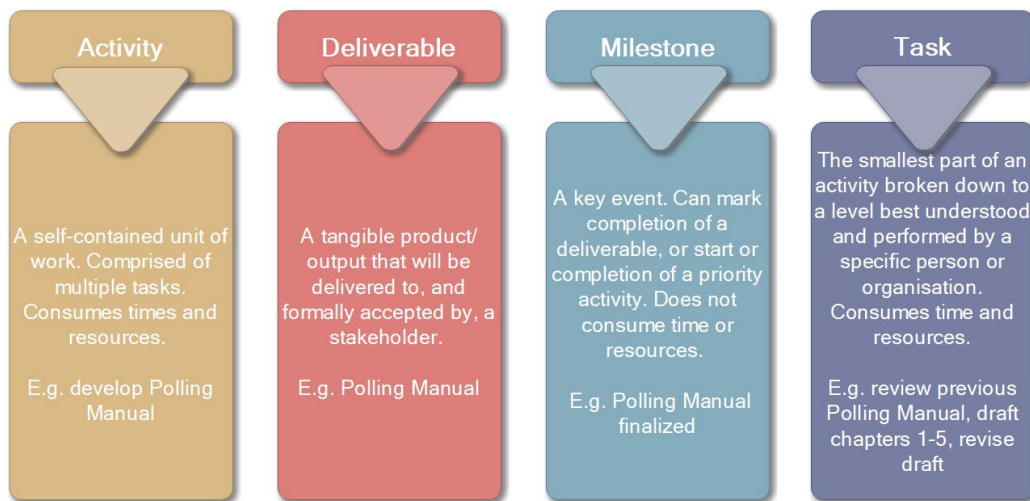
FIGURE 9: Hierarchy: Timeline, Schedule, Work Plans



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.

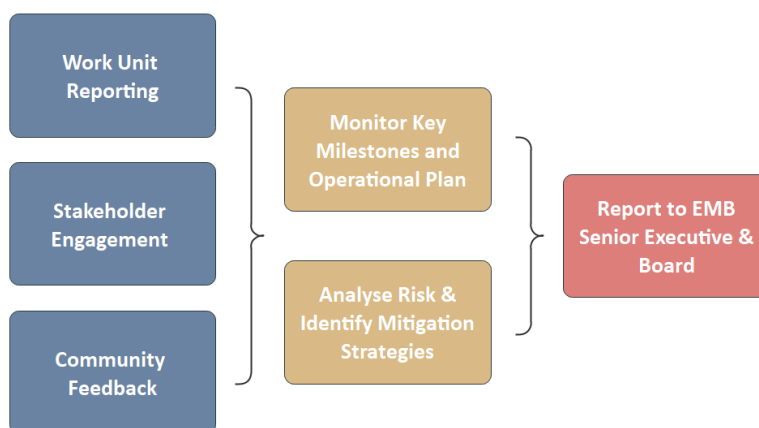
Step 6: Monitoring Implementation, Updating and Communicating

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.