



Training for Election Officials: A 50-State Analysis

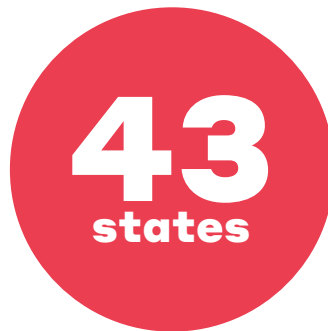
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Executive Summary

Election officials learn to carry out their duties by participating in training at the national, state, and local levels. State-level training is a particularly valuable source for best practices and information on the state laws, policies, and procedures that election officials must follow – especially because election administration is largely run, funded, and managed at the state level. This report examines state-level training across the country and offers five recommendations and six considerations for states and officials looking to build or improve their training.

Election officials have access to state-level training in:



of those states:

42 | offer training to both chief local election officials and their staff

22 | offer specific training to new election officials

State-level training is offered in different modalities, on different schedules, and under different legal and logistical frameworks. There is no singular best practice; trainers should make strategic decisions about the location, modality, and design of training offerings to best meet the needs of election officials in their states.

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Introduction

Secure, accessible, and trustworthy elections are the cornerstone of representative government, and tens of thousands of election officials around the country administer elections with skill and integrity.

Training is the foundation of successful election administration. Election officials—the tens of thousands of local government officials elected, appointed, and hired to administer elections—participate in training programs to improve their knowledge, learn best practices in the field, and build relationships with peers. Training equips them with the skills to administer elections securely and accurately and promotes a more professional, skilled, and prepared workforce.

Election officials' duties have become increasingly complex, and they must build new competencies to effectively meet these growing demands. From navigating new laws, evolving technologies, and cybersecurity risks to managing political pressures, a heightened threat environment, and turnover within the field, training is a crucial avenue through which officials develop new competencies that are essential for safe, secure, and trustworthy election administration.

Although election officials are well prepared to administer elections, officials and states should continually strive to improve training opportunities. This report examines the existing training available to election officials in every state and lays out recommendations and considerations based on best practices to build thorough, high-quality training programs for election officials nationwide.

Election Workforce Advisory Council

The report’s methodology, content, and recommendations have been endorsed by BPC’s [Election Workforce Advisory Council](#).

The Election Workforce Advisory Council is an effort to enhance and innovate recruitment, retention, and training within election administration. We are dedicated to fostering a sustainable talent pipeline and preserving institutional knowledge; improving job performance, safety, and satisfaction; and ensuring that elections continue to be run by experienced professionals.

The Election Workforce Advisory Council is a joint project of the Bipartisan Policy Center and [The Elections Group](#). The council’s collective expertise will provide a holistic perspective to inform research, generate new solutions, and serve as a central convening ground for this critical work.

This project is supported by the [Election Trust Initiative](#), a nonpartisan grant-making organization working to strengthen the field of election administration, guided by the principle that America’s election systems must be secure, transparent, accurate, and convenient.

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Scope

Election officials receive training from a number of sources. We divide these training options into three levels: national, state, and local.

This report focuses on state-level training for election officials. We explore the state-level training available to election officials in all 50 states and Washington, DC. In almost every state, all local election officials have the opportunity to attend state-specific training through a state office, association of election officials, or local university. We make recommendations and outline other considerations for these programs.

State-level training covers the laws, policies, and procedures particular to that state. Because states set most election laws and procedures, state-level training is the best way to ensure that local election officials are prepared to administer elections in that state. Some state-level training also covers other elements of election administration, such as communications, election security, and leadership.

OTHER LEVELS OF TRAINING

Although this report does not focus on national and local training, election officials do have access—in some cases—to this training. In a best-case scenario, the national, state, and local training would focus on different components of training and professional development to avoid duplication, while providing election officials with holistic guidance and ample opportunities for learning and professional development.

National Training

Several organizations, including the [Election Center](#) (also known as the National Association of Election Officials) and the University of Minnesota's [Humphrey School of Public Affairs](#),¹ offer training to election officials across the country. These programs examine the context and history of election administration as well as provide professional development. They focus on elements of election administration that are common across states, including election security, design principles, voter outreach, management, leadership, ethics, and communications. Because election officials do not have access to high quality state-level training programs in every state, national

¹ For a more comprehensive examination of national organizations engaged in election official training, see Kathleen Hale, Mitchell Brown, et al., "Election Official and Poll Worker Recruitment, Training, and Retention: Best Practices and New Areas for Research," Election Lab, MIT, 2023. Available at: https://electionlab.mit.edu/sites/default/files/2023-10/election-officials-poll-workers_MEAES.pdf.

programs have stepped in to provide training on the procedural aspects of election administration.

National training should ideally center on professional development opportunities that improve election officials' skills, offer career advancement, and foster relationships with others in the field. It should not replace broadly accessible, state-specific training on law, policy, and procedure. However, not all election officials—especially those with fewer resources for travel and classes—have access to national training programs.

Local Training

Many local election officials receive training within their own office.² This training can provide hands-on learning on the particular procedures and day-to-day operations of that office, and staff can easily participate.

Local training also has limitations, however. Jurisdictions with more resources—including time, money, space, and staff—can provide training more easily than other places. Local training can create disparities in which election officials across a state do not all receive the same quality and frequency of training. This disparity becomes particularly acute as laws, policies, and procedures change and evolve; less well-resourced jurisdictions cannot always provide comprehensive training on new practices and procedures.

² Paul Gronke and Paul Manson, "EVIC 2023 Local Election Official Survey Crosstabs," EVIC, October 9, 2023. Available at: https://evic.reed.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/crosstabs.html#Training_Sources_and_Evaluations.

Methods

Our data comes from publicly available online sources (e.g., training program websites, state laws, and state election manuals). We made a concerted effort to contact election officials in every state to supplement, clarify, and fact check the data from online sources. We conducted interviews with election officials and others in the elections field in 50 states and the District of Columbia, and we interviewed multiple officials in 15 states. In one state, we relied exclusively on information available online. Most data collection took place in the spring and summer of 2024.

We drew on data, analyses, and advice from election administration researchers and practitioners to collect the data and develop recommendations for this report. Members of BPC’s [Election Workforce Advisory Council](#) and [Task Force on Elections](#) provided data on their states’ training programs, as well as feedback on our recommendations and considerations.

In 23 states, more than one independent authority has some responsibility for election administration in each jurisdiction. In order to capture the most accurate and cross-comparative information about each state, we limited our research to the training available for the authority most responsible for election administration in each state’s typical jurisdiction. We relied on a forthcoming analysis by Joshua Ferrer and Igor Geyn to determine which authority was typically most responsible for election administration for each state.³

[Electionline](#), the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#), and the [MIT Election Data and Science Lab](#) have studied the state-level training available to election officials over the past 20 years. Their data, sourcing, and analyses were an invaluable foundation for our research.

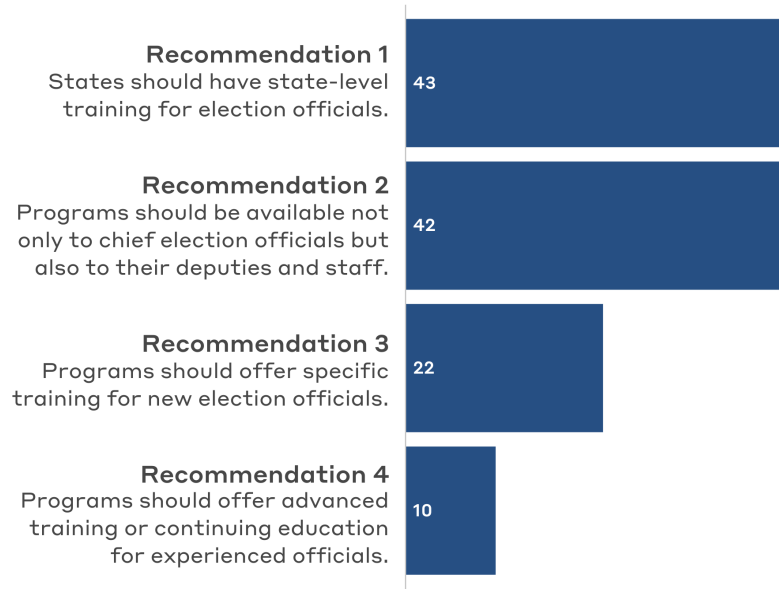
3 Joshua Ferrer and Igor Geyn, “Electing America’s Election Officials,” in *The Frontline of Democracy: How Local Election Administrators Support, Staff, and Defend American Elections*, ed. Paul Gronke, David Kimball, et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025). Available at: <https://www.joshuaferreer.com/publication/electing-america-election-officials/electing-america-election-officials.pdf>. In Arkansas, we depart from Ferrer and Geyn’s categorization and analyze training available to election commissioners based on information from state election officials.

Recommendations



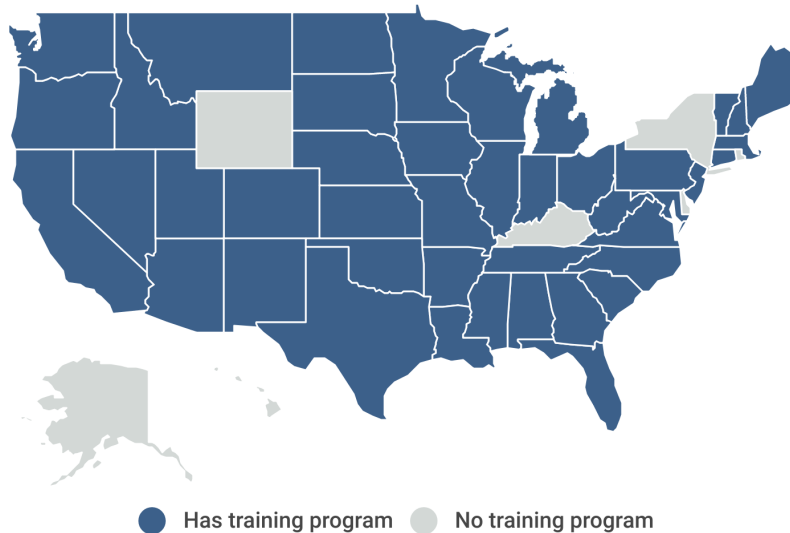
We identify five recommendations for state-level training programs that reflect best practices in election administration and adult education that can be implemented by each state. We also highlight key findings from our analysis of each training program.

How Many States Meet our Training Recommendations?



RECOMMENDATION 1:

States should have state-level training programs for election officials.



Forty-three states have state-level programs to educate election officials on the laws, policies, and procedures they need to know to run elections. For many election officials, the programs also serve as a crucial forum to share best practices and to network with peers in their field.

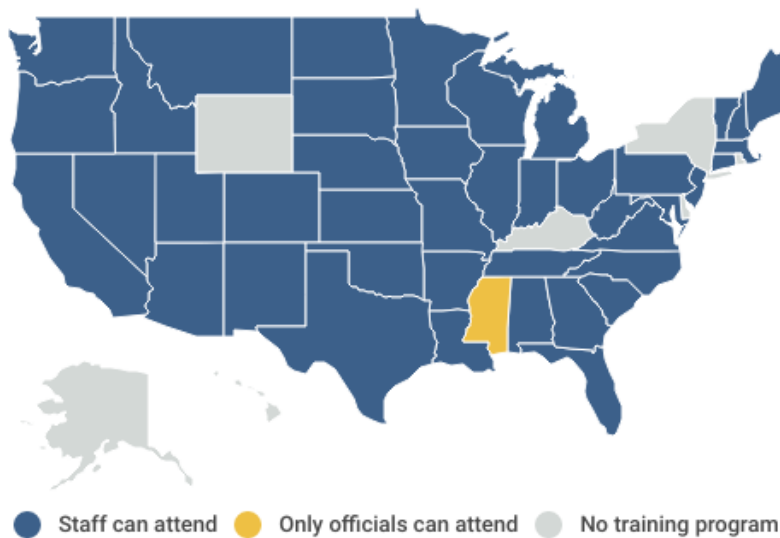
Training programs can also improve local election officials' confidence in their own abilities and provide them with formal qualifications. Rhode Island Deputy Secretary of State Rob Rock described the "morale boost" that comes with being a certified election official and noted that training makes local officials more confident talking about—as well as running—elections.

This training takes a wide range of forms; some states hold annual training conferences while others have substantial, years-long training programs. Most states have something in between.

As discussed, election officials have access to national- and local-level training options; however, state-level programs are particularly well positioned to offer training on the election administration practices specific to their state. Election laws, policies, and procedures vary widely between states, but because states set and enforce the laws, they are typically consistent across jurisdictions within a state. A state-level training program therefore accomplishes two goals: It promotes consistency among localities within a state, and it enables officials to learn about the specific laws, policies, and procedures under which they will administer elections.

State-level training also takes pressure off local officials. When a state organization—which might be the Secretary of State or state election board office, a state professional association, a local college or university, or other third-party administrative organization, as we discuss below—creates and runs the training program, it lessens the burden on local election officials, including some of the time and costs of producing training materials, procuring space (physical or online), scheduling, and teaching.

RECOMMENDATION 2:
Programs should be available not only to chief election officials but also to their deputies and staff.



One state—Mississippi—permits only chief election officials to attend training, while 42 states open training to non-chief officials, including deputies, delegates, or staff members who perform election-related duties. A few states also make training materials available to the public.

When non-chief election staff are permitted to attend training, both the staff and their jurisdictions benefit. They gain experience, knowledge, and skills; form relationships with other election administrators; and stay up to date on developments in their field and state—just as chief election officials do. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many local election officials encourage or even require their staff to attend training.

Training non-chief staff can mitigate the effects of turnover among election officials. BPC’s report on election official turnover found that turnover rates have been rising steadily since 2000.⁴ Data from the 2023 EVIC Survey of Local Election Officials indicates that many chief election officials come into their jobs with previous experience as deputies or staff members in election offices.⁵ Opening training to these non-chief staff members ensures that they are as prepared as possible to do their jobs and to advance in their field. Staff participation in training is also a component of succession planning: It enables election officials to better prepare deputies and staff to assume their responsibilities if needed.

Opening training to staff members increases the resource challenges of training, both for trainers and participants. Trainers may need more resources—materials, instructors, and time—to include staff in training. Additionally, some small election offices do not have the staffing or resources to cover operations while others attend training, which limits their ability to train staff outside the office. In many states, election offices have non-elections responsibilities, which further inhibit those offices’ ability to send staff to elections-specific training.

Case Study: North Carolina

The North Carolina State Board of Elections (NCSBE) offers training to county election directors, their staff, and members of county boards of elections. New county election directors and board members are required by law to attend a training program at the state capital and obtain certification.⁶ The NCSBE also holds a statewide training conference before every election and regular online training sessions.

Election staff in North Carolina can participate in all of the state-level training opportunities that their county election directors attend. For in-person training, county boards of commissioners pay the costs associated with attendance. Opening training to staff provides them with the opportunity to learn and to improve on the skills they need to run elections well.

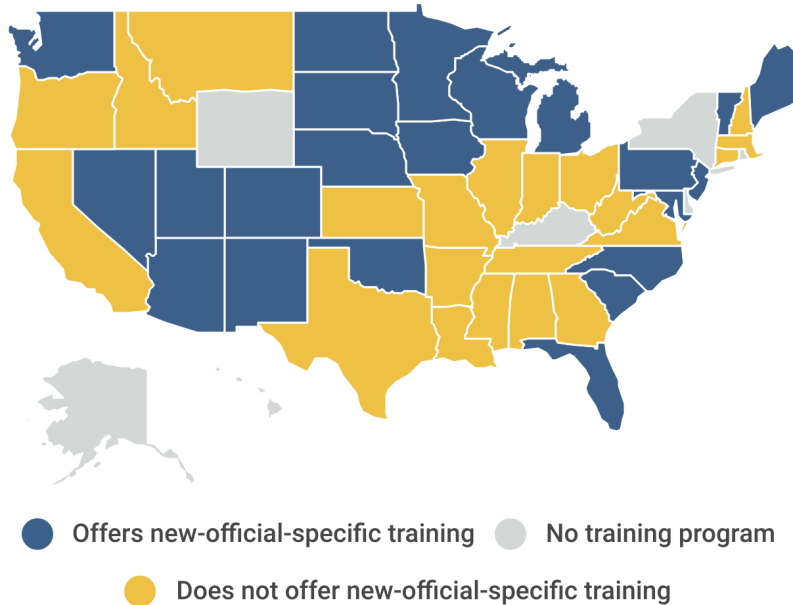
4 Joshua Ferrer, Daniel M. Thompson, and Rachel Orey, “Election Official Turnover Rates from 2000–2024,” Bipartisan Policy Center, April 9, 2024. Available at: <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/report/election-official-turnover-rates-from-2000-2024>.

5 Paul Gronke and Paul Manson, “Today’s Election Administration Landscape,” EVIC, November 16, 2023. Available at: https://evic.reed.edu/2023_leo_survey_report.

6 Statewide training and certification for election officials. North Carolina G.S. 163-82.24. Available at: https://www.ncleg.gov/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_163/GS_163-82.24.pdf.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Programs should offer training specific to new election officials.



Twenty-two states offer training targeted toward new election officials. This training can take several forms: Some states have training and certification programs designed for new officials, while others build introductory classes into existing programs, conduct one-on-one training with new local election officials, or build curricula to apply to both new and experienced clerks.

New election officials need training the most. To effectively administer elections, they must learn the laws, policies, procedures, and responsibilities governing their new roles. Many of these officials have prior experience, either as staff members in election offices or as election officials in other jurisdictions.⁷ But new officials still need training on their responsibilities and the realities of election administration in their states.

Case Study: Washington State

[Washington's Election Administrator Certification](#) is an example of one approach to training new election officials. To become certified, they must attend a two-day orientation class called Elections 101, pass an exam,⁸ pursue

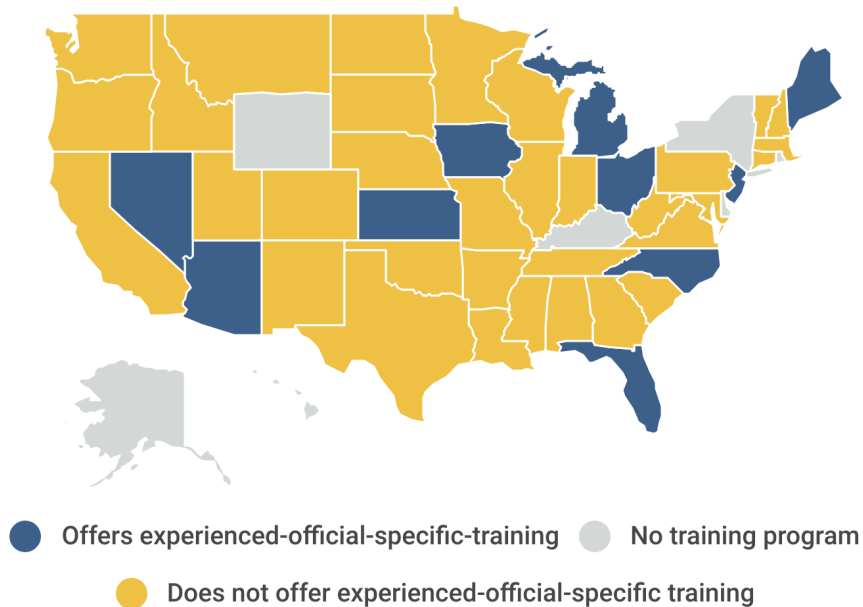
7 Joshua Ferrer, Daniel M. Thompson, and Rachel Orey, "Election Official Turnover Rates from 2000–2024," Bipartisan Policy Center, April 9, 2024. Available at: <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/report/election-official-turnover-rates-from-2000-2024>.

8 Washington Secretary of State Elections Division, "Election Administrator Certification Exam," April 15, 2022. Available at: <https://www.sos.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/ElectionAdminCertExam.pdf>.

40 hours of additional education, and serve in an election office for two years.⁹ Two staff members in each county must be certified.

Elections 101 covers voter registration, candidate filing, ballot format, security, ballot processing, canvassing boards, certification, recounts, and the state’s voter registration and ballot management portal.¹⁰ Chief officials and staff usually take the class soon after they begin their jobs. The class covers foundational information and procedures that all election administrators in the state need to know. Because the rest of the certification process can take years—administrators have five years from the completion of Elections 101 to complete the rest of the certification requirements—an introductory class ensures that all election officials have the information they need to run elections successfully, even those early in their tenures.

RECOMMENDATION 4:
Programs should offer advanced training or continuing education for experienced officials.



Ten states offer advanced training or continuing education opportunities for experienced election officials. As with new officials’ training, advanced training takes several forms, including recertification requirements, continuing education hours, and advanced classes.

9 Election Review Process and Certification of Election Administrators, WAC 434-260-220. Available at: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=434-260-220>.
10 Washington Secretary of State Elections Division, “The Path to Becoming a Certified Elections Administrator,” June 2020. Available at: <https://www.sos.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/PathToBecomingAdministrator.pdf>.

Regardless of the form, advanced training helps election officials stay up to date on changes to laws, policies, procedures, and technologies. Advanced training can cover a wider variety of topics in more depth and detail than introductory training. It can also support election officials with the management skills needed to run an office, including grant applications, budgeting, hiring decisions, leadership, and communications.

Advanced training provides opportunities for experienced officials to get to know their fellow officials around the state and to build the relationships many local election officials rely on for peer learning and information exchanges.

Especially as new technologies make election administration more complex and as election officials face new challenges, ongoing advanced training can keep officials prepared to administer elections in a constantly evolving environment.

Case Study: Ohio

Ohio's [Registered Election Official Certification](#) program, a project of The Ohio State University and the Ohio Association of Election Officials, offers three kinds of courses: core courses, elective courses, and graduate courses. Election officials must take four core courses and four elective courses to achieve certification. To maintain certification, officials must take one graduate course every three years.

The program offers graduate courses on public budgeting, the history of election administration and litigation, leadership, and redistricting. Because the courses are only open to election officials who have completed certification, they can cover topics in more depth and focus on professional development in addition to the procedures necessary for conducting an election.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Training programs should collect feedback and evaluate the efficacy of training at regular intervals.

Literature on both academic and corporate adult education recommends that training and education programs incorporate mechanisms to solicit feedback from attendees and to evaluate courses. Receiving feedback and evaluating the efficacy of training allows instructors and programs to improve the design, content, and learner experience in future training.

[Academic course evaluations](#) offer one model in adult education contexts. Students generally fill out evaluations at the end of a course that assess the course's design, content, and instruction. Colleges and universities have

extensive experience collecting student feedback and evaluating programs, and many have [sample evaluations and questions](#) available. Election official training programs conducted in partnership with universities—including those in Connecticut, Florida, Ohio, and Utah—offer a model for using existing program evaluation structures to improve training.

Another feedback and evaluation model comes from other fields. Many sectors of the workforce, including [health care](#) and [education](#), offer professional training, and researchers and practitioners have developed a variety of ways to assess the efficacy of their training and improve upon it.

Case Study: Nevada

The Nevada Secretary of State’s office is developing an election official training program, which will be required for county and city election officials and open to staff. The training will include both online and in-person components.

The training program will contain four mechanisms for feedback from participants and evaluation of the program.

The first mechanism evaluates the instructors and instructional design. A group of participants will receive anonymous feedback forms with questions about teaching style, effectiveness, the ability of instructors to answer questions, and other elements of the instruction. The second is a feedback form distributed to all participants at the end of every day of training.

The third mechanism is a focus group of clerks and staff members who convene immediately after in-person training has been completed. The focus group will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the training and recommend changes and new topics for the next training session.

The fourth is an anonymous survey distributed to all participants after the training, which asks about logistical and design elements and has a longer deadline so that participants can provide feedback once they have reflected on the training and their experiences.

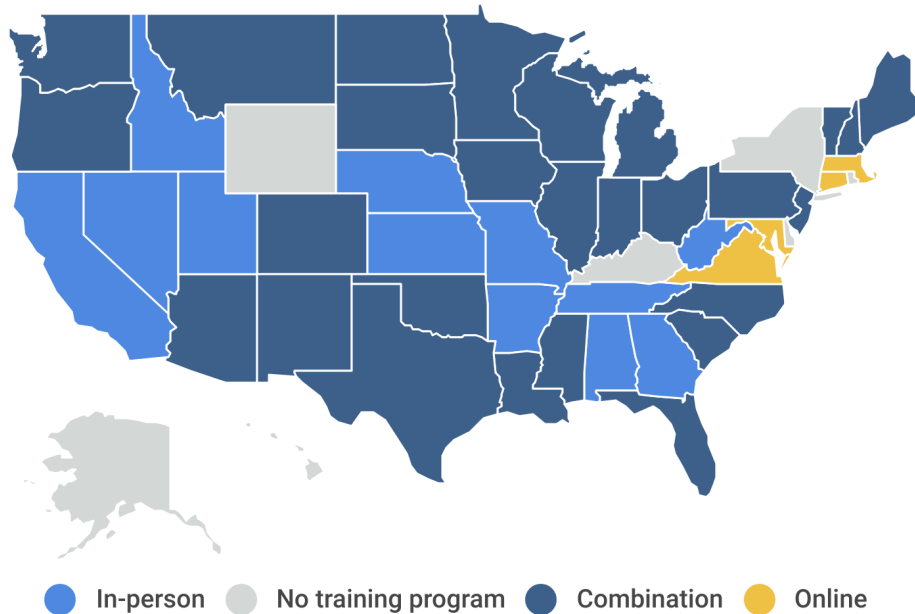
Considerations

Because states have different election administration practices, laws, and circumstances, many components of training cannot be generalized to all 50 states. Instead, we highlight six considerations that states should consider. We also evaluate the existing options available to states.

CONSIDERATION 1:

Should training be in-person, online, or a combination of the two?

One central consideration in election official training programs is the mode of training: online, in-person, or a combination. Four states conduct training exclusively online, while 12 states conduct training exclusively in person. Twenty-seven states use a combination of online and in-person training.



In-person training gives election officials the opportunity to receive interactive, hands-on training that is difficult to replicate online. Election officials cited tabletop exercises, practice using election equipment and systems, workshops, and discussions between election officials as training activities that work better in person.

In-person training also enables election officials to engage in formal and informal networking and peer learning, which studies of other professional training environments suggest are difficult to replicate online.¹¹ Officials and trainers have highlighted the importance of in-person training for networking, peer education, and providing officials with opportunities to ask questions.

“We’ve found in-person trainings are the most beneficial—getting election administrators in a room together,” said Washington state Director of Elections Stuart Holmes. “Getting election administrators together so they

11 Claudia Fernandez, Melissa Green, et al., “Training ‘Pivots’ from the Pandemic: Lessons Learned Transitioning from In-Person to Virtual Synchronous Training in the Clinical Scholars Leadership Program,” *Journal of Healthcare Leadership*, February 2021. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.2147/JHL.S282881>.

can share ideas, talk about what’s happening, that’s the most important part of this process.”

In-person training has its drawbacks, however. It is less accessible to local election officials, especially those in small jurisdictions whose offices may not be able to afford travel and hotel expenses. Travel burdens are increased in large states because officials often have to travel greater distances for classes. Nebraska, for example, holds some training with their election systems vendor in Omaha on the state’s eastern border. For officials in western Nebraska who cannot drive as many as seven hours to Omaha for training, the Secretary of State’s office holds regional or individual training on the same subject matters.

Election officials in small jurisdictions can also find it difficult to staff the office while the chief local official (and possibly staff members) are away for training. To reduce the time and financial burdens for local officials, some states conduct one-on-one or small-group training at various locations around the state.

Online training removes many of the barriers to entry for election officials. Participants do not have to travel to attend virtual training, which saves time and can enable more officials and staff to participate. Virtual training is often—although not always—less expensive for election officials than in-person training because officials do not have to pay for travel and hotels, and trainers do not have to pay for space, instructor travel, and other costs of holding an in-person gathering.

Virtual training can also help states sidestep state-specific logistical challenges of in-person training. For example, states that administer elections at the municipal level can have hundreds to thousands of election officials. Some of these states, including Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Wisconsin, conduct training exclusively or partially online, in part because of the large number of election officials who need training. As Michelle Tassinari, director and legal counsel at the Massachusetts Division of Elections, put it: “Having 351 local election officials, as well as their boards of registrars, attend in-person trainings just isn’t feasible.”

Online training permits trainers to push information out to local election officials quickly and to respond to new developments in election administration. Several states combine structured training sessions with videos, webinars, guidance, and virtual meetings for election officials on an as-needed basis. Officials can also quickly disseminate those training materials to staff and even volunteer poll workers.

Some states utilize a combination of online and in-person training. Many of these states hold online training on more introductory-level topics—either synchronously via online classes or asynchronously via modules, quizzes, or readings—and reserve in-person training for interactive sessions like tabletop

exercises. This strategy balances the appealing accessibility of online training with the benefits of in-person sessions.

The dual approach also enables trainers to make the most of the limited time they have for in-person training and to focus on the hands-on training that election officials report is most effective. Isaac Cramer, executive director of the Charleston County, SC, Board of Elections, referred to in-person lecture-style training as “PowerPoint purgatory”; hybrid models with hands-on in-person training help prevent such a learning environment.

The combination of online and in-person training does not totally alleviate the disadvantages of both approaches, however. In-person training can still be prohibitively expensive and time consuming for local officials, and if the bulk of hands-on training happens in person, election officials from smaller jurisdictions with fewer resources can miss out on the most effective training components.

Utilizing a combination of online and in-person training also comes with a caveat: Instruction experts recommend that individual training sessions be either entirely online or in-person. Hybrid sessions with learners both in person and synchronously online are difficult to facilitate effectively and require additional personnel to monitor the virtual component.

Programs can incorporate online and in-person components into training sessions in several other ways. Experts recommend recording in-person sessions for later online viewing, hosting separate sessions for online and in-person learners, and combining online modules with in-person sessions as ways to keep training accessible while maintaining the quality of the learning experience.

Case Study: Utah

In Utah, every elected county clerk and their most senior employee must by law¹² complete the [Olene Walker VOTE Certificate](#) training program, a 10-course program usually completed within two years. All classes are held in person at Weber State University in Ogden. The university holds three sessions of two classes every year, and all sessions require in-person attendance. The state reimburses the two election administrators required to attend for their travel expenses; the counties must pay for any additional employees who wish to attend.

12 Utah Code 20A-1-107. Available at: https://le.utah.gov/xcode/Title20A/Chapter1/20A-1-S107.html?v=C20A-1-S107_2023050320230503.

Case Study: Connecticut

All 338 registrars of voters in Connecticut¹³ are required to complete training, which is done through the state's [Registrar of Voters Training Program](#) at the University of Connecticut School of Public Policy. The training consists of eight sections divided between two classes and a final certification exam. The program is entirely virtual.

The program is also open to deputies, registrars' assistants, staff, and the public. Even though all 338 registrars do not complete their training at the same time, the combined training needs of so many registrars and staff would make an in-person training program difficult to facilitate. Instead, Connecticut opted for a virtual, self-paced training program. The online program allows the state to bypass the logistical complexities that would be involved in assembling 338 registrars and staff—or even the fraction of those who are new to their positions in a given year—for in-person training.

Case Study: Arizona

Like many other states, [Arizona's Election Officer Certification](#) program includes both online and in-person components. Arizona election officers, clerks of boards of supervisors, and county recorders are required to complete 40 hours of initial training and two days of recertification training every other year. Officials must complete their initial training before conducting an election.

The training program begins with two days of online, asynchronous video modules that provide learners with an introductory foundation to elections. Officials must also pass an online test at the end of training to receive or retain certification.

Officials then come together for three days of in-person training. In 2023, the in-person sessions were held in three different counties so that officials could attend the session most convenient to them. These in-person sessions are reserved for hands-on training and role-playing exercises.

Election officials have found that the balance of online and in-person training minimizes the number of employees who have to leave their offices for extended periods of time, making training more convenient for officials and staff.

The use of online modules as foundational training also enables trainers to dedicate in-person time to more engaging hands-on training and create opportunities for networking and relationship building.

13 Connecticut Office of the Secretary of State, "Registrar of Voters List," May 3, 2024. Available at: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sots/electionservices/registrar-of-voters/2024/rov-list-5-3-2024.pdf>.

CONSIDERATION 2:

Where should in-person training take place?

In 24 states, all election officials must go to a central location to receive specific training, such as the state capital, an annual conference, or a university. In 13 states, election officials have multiple locations to choose from.¹⁴

Holding in-person training in one central location enables states to bring all—or at least most—of the election officials in a state together. Officials therefore have the opportunity to network with and learn from more of their peers.

It also decreases the travel burden and accompanying logistical challenges on trainers. In states where trainers' capacity is lower or they have fewer resources at their disposal, centralized training might be the only feasible way to train election officials in person.

When trainers have the capacity and resources to conduct training sessions in multiple locations, election officials benefit from reduced travel times (and expenses). Regional training, especially in geographically large states, is more accessible for attendees because it is generally easier to get to.

Another advantage of spreading training out across multiple locations is that the groups of learners are generally smaller. Election officials have noted that small class sizes lead to better learning outcomes. "They benefit more when it's smaller groups and more hands-on," New Mexico Election Director Mandy Vigil reported.

However, dividing officials into more and smaller groups may diminish attendees' ability to network and build relationships. As this report notes, relationship-building is one of the key benefits of in-person training.

High quality regional training can only happen when training programs have the capacity and resources to recruit sufficient instructors, send those instructors around the state, and find spaces to hold multiple training sessions. The entities responsible for the instruction and logistics must therefore be particularly well funded, which is not the case in every state.

¹⁴ Some states hold training at a central location, but the location moves around. Oregon, for example, holds one training session in the state capital and one in the county of the current president of the Oregon Association of County Clerks. Because all of the officials must come to one location to train, the state's training is centrally located. Other states hold some training regionally but other training at a central location; for instance, Pennsylvania has both regional training conferences and a central training conference. Because officials would miss training opportunities if they did not attend the centrally located training, these states are also "central location" states for our purposes.

Case Study: Idaho

State law requires the Idaho Secretary of State to conduct three training conferences at various “convenient places” around the state.¹⁵ Local election officials must attend one of these three training conferences. In spring 2024, the secretary’s office conducted training in northern, eastern, and southwestern Idaho. Idaho is a geographically large state that benefits from the regional model; training is more accessible to local election officials because the officials can receive training at the location of their choice.

Case Study: Georgia

The Georgia Association of Voter Registration and Election Officials (GAVREO) holds centrally located in-person training every year at its conference. Election officials must complete 12 hours of training annually, and the conference fulfills the entire training requirement. As a professional association, GAVREO does not have the same resources or capacity as a government agency; holding training in a central location allows the association to bring election officials together for in-person training without exceeding its capacity.

CONSIDERATION 3: How frequently should training be held?

Some states hold training sessions once or more each year, while others hold training only every two or more years. Some states also offer training on an as-needed basis instead of scheduling it at regular intervals. A few states make all of their training available online in response to demand. The frequency of training depends on the state’s election calendar, whether training is in-person or virtual, and the structure of the program.

In the states that hold training sessions once or more each year, programs must work around the state’s election calendar and make sure they are not interfering with officials’ election duties.

States that hold training only every two or more years take one of two approaches. The first is to hold election-related training during election years, usually before statewide primary or general elections. This approach prioritizes training election officials immediately before they put their training into action. It ensures officials are up to date on laws, policies, and procedures, especially those related to presidential elections when voter turnout is higher.

The second approach is to hold training during odd-numbered years when federal elections are not held. Election officials are usually less busy with

15 Conferences with County Clerks on Administration of Election Laws, Idaho Statute 34-204. Available at: <https://legislature.idaho.gov/statutesrules/idstat/title34/t34ch2/sect34-204>.

election-related duties in odd-numbered years; although they may be running local elections, they mostly do not have federal- and state-level elections to contend with.¹⁶ Officials often have more time to dedicate to training, especially in-person training, which may involve a substantial time commitment.

Many states offer some training to election officials on an as-needed basis throughout the election cycle. The as-needed classes permit trainers to push information—including changes to law and policy and suggested responses to emerging issues—to local election officials as it develops.

Some states hold all training on an as-needed basis or on a schedule that varies year to year. While this approach is flexible, it can make attending training, especially in-person training, difficult for election officials to plan for in advance.

Some states make online components of their training available on demand. On-demand training can be very convenient for officials, but it is inherently asynchronous, so election officials do not have the opportunity to interact with peers and trainers. Some online training programs are entirely asynchronous and on demand, while others pair asynchronous virtual training with synchronous virtual or in-person training.

Case Study: Colorado

All Colorado election officials and staff are required to complete the Colorado Election Official Certification Program. Chief local election officials must complete the program within six months of taking office; staff members have one year to complete the program. The program consists of 13 online courses and one in-person course.

The online courses are all available on demand. The in-person course is held twice per year in the spring and fall at four regional training sessions. Election officials must complete four additional courses every year and attend one in-person course every two years for recertification.

Case Study: Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Secretary of State's office runs the state's election official training, which is mandatory for local election officials. The office conducts training for officials a few times each year at Massachusetts Town Clerks Association conferences, fulfilling officials' legal training requirements. Since 2020, the office has also offered weekly online training in the months leading up to state primary and general elections.

¹⁶ Only four states – Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey, and Virginia – hold statewide elections in odd-numbered years. See Adam Kuckuk, “Odd Ones Out: Just 4 States Hold Off-Year Elections,” National Conference of State Legislatures, October 25, 2023. Available at: <https://www.ncsl.org/state-legislatures-news/details/odd-ones-out-just-4-states-hold-off-year-elections>.

CONSIDERATION 4:

How much should training cost? Who should pay?

The costs of training are a substantial barrier for local election officials: 31.5% of officials in the 2023 EVIC survey reported that due to their office's budget, they could not afford professional development opportunities.¹⁷

Training costs vary depending on the modality and location of training; the length and frequency of sessions; the instructors and materials needed; the authorities responsible for training; and numerous other factors.

In-person training can be more expensive to facilitate due to the costs of classroom space, travel, lodging, and materials, among other expenses. More frequent training can increase those costs. Partnering with a university, enlisting another third-party administrative support organization, or hiring external instructors can be more expensive than training organized and conducted by a government authority. Some models, such as association dues, can better account for differences in election office budgets and charge smaller jurisdictions less to receive training.

In some states, local election offices or governments are entirely responsible for funding local officials' training; in others, a state authority covers the cost. Many states take a cost-sharing approach through which the training organization and the election official participants each pay some of the expenses.

Election officials and trainers employ several strategies to pay for training. These strategies depend on which authority runs the training, associated legal requirements, and the costs of the training.

In some states where the state election authority conducts training, counties or localities are required to pay for the costs associated with training. In other states, the Secretary of State or other state election authority covers the costs. States with association-run training can use association dues to pay for training. Some programs charge participants or their offices for each course they take.

Who pays ultimately depends on state laws and the capacity of the trainers and election officials. Trainers should prioritize making training accessible while recognizing their own financial limitations. To maximize local election officials' ability to participate in training, state laws around training costs should reflect the recommendations and needs of these officials.

17 Paul Gronke and Paul Manson, "EVIC 2023 Local Election Official Survey Crosstabs," EVIC, October 9, 2023. Available at: https://evic.reed.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/crosstabs.html#Training_Sources_and_Evaluations.

Twenty-seven states require election officials to participate in training programs. Some state laws require certification, some require a certain number of courses or hours, and some simply mandate a training requirement and leave the details of implementation to a government agency or professional association.

Three states do not require training but provide a financial incentive for election officials to complete training by supplementing officials' salaries upon completion of training. In 13 states, training is available but optional for election officials.

Election officials agree on the importance of mandatory training. In the 2023 EVIC survey, 85.3% of local election officials surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed that it is important for a state to mandate initial training for election officials when they begin their jobs; 84.7% agreed or strongly agreed that it is important that a state mandate ongoing training for election officials.

Mandating training is not necessarily straightforward to do—it generally requires state legislatures to change state law. Nor is it burden-free. Training requirements should be paired with measures to make training accessible to local election officials.

Case Study: Iowa

The Iowa State Election Administrators Training, which is run by the State Association of County Auditors, is optional for all election officials. The program incorporates both online and in-person components, and it includes additional continuing education requirements.

Case Study: Missouri

Missouri state law ties \$2,000 of local election officials' salaries to the completion of 20 hours of training per year approved by the Missouri Association of County Clerks and Election Authorities (MACCEA).¹⁸ MACCEA provides this training through its annual conference, and the content varies yearly.

The \$2,000 of salary tied to training is more vital in small jurisdictions where clerks' pay is lower.¹⁹ The incentive is therefore especially effective in smaller, less well-resourced jurisdictions.

18 Compensation of certain county clerks — training program, attendance required, when, expenses, compensation — certain fees may be retained (second-, third-, and fourth-class class counties). Missouri Revised Statutes 51.281. Available at: <https://revisor.mo.gov/main/OneSection.aspx?section=51.281>.

19 County clerks' compensation is tied by statute to the assessed valuation of the county, except in the 13 counties with the highest valuations. Missouri Revised Statutes 51.281. Available at: <https://revisor.mo.gov/main/OneSection.aspx?section=51.281>.

Case Study: Washington State

In Washington, two election administrators in every county are required to be certified through the [Election Administrator Certification](#) program. The training consists of an introductory class, an exam, 40 hours of continuing education, and two years of service in elections. To maintain certification, election administrators must complete 40 hours of continuing education every two years.

Election officials have leveraged the state law requiring training to advocate for more resources. Because election officials must complete training and continuing education—which costs money—local officials have been able to charge their county or city for training as a legally mandated expense.

CONSIDERATION 6: **Who should own and administer training?**

The central entity or entities with sufficient expertise, resources, and capacity to own and administer an election official training program varies by state.

The entity with ownership of a training program is responsible for decisions about the form, content, and requirements of training. The administrator oversees delivery and logistics, including teaching classes, providing some resources and training materials, and organizing content delivery online or in person. In most states, the owner and administrator are the same entity.

Thirty-three²⁰ states' training programs are owned by the office of the chief election official, generally the Secretary of State, or the state governmental body in charge of elections, such as a state elections board or commission.

State professional associations of election officials own 10 programs. In most states, local election officials are clerks, auditors, recorders, or other county or municipal officials with responsibilities other than elections. As a result, association members' work includes non-election duties, and association training reflects the range of jobs that fall under the members' purview.

Colleges and universities own three programs but administer six. In three states, associations or government offices own the programs and are ultimately responsible for their content and structure, but universities manage the details of content delivery and provide some of the trainers.

²⁰ Several programs are co-owned or co-administered by multiple organizations or state offices. As a result, the sum of the number of programs owned and administered by state governments, state associations, universities, and the Election Center exceeds the total number of programs.

The Election Center, the national professional association of election officials, operates a training program called the [State Registered Election Official](#) certification program. The three states that use the Election Center’s REO program jointly own and administer the program, which provides state-specific training.

When nongovernmental organizations, universities, and associations own and operate training programs, they generally work with the state election office to ensure that training complies with and reflects state laws. State election offices give presentations at training sessions in many states.

The entity that should be in charge of training is the one with adequate time, money, and expertise, as well as the best relationship with local election offices. State-run programs promote consistency within a state and have more authority to require election officials to attend. Associations allow for more organic programs crafted by local officials and give these officials more decision-making power over the content of their training.

Even in states where one entity owns and operates the entire election official training program, officials often receive state-specific training from several sources or through a number of different venues. This model can be effective—a state can pair state office-run training on law, policy, and procedures with association-run training on management, leadership, and other professional development. The case studies below highlight the system of collaborative efforts between government agencies, professional associations, and educational institutions that train election officials.

Case Study: Vermont

The Vermont Secretary of State Elections Division owns and administers the state’s election official training. It also conducts training at conferences and trainings organized by the Vermont Municipal Clerks’ and Treasurers’ Association and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. Training on voting equipment, such as tabulators and accessible voting systems, is conducted in collaboration with equipment vendors.

Case Study: Maryland

The Maryland State Board of Elections owns and administers the state’s Election Administration Education Program, which the state restarted in 2024. The board runs its own online training; it also conducts in-person training at conferences, including those of the Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO). The board is also working with MAEO to develop training specifically for new election officials.

Case Study: Illinois

The Illinois Association of County Clerks and Recorders (IACCR) owns and administers the state's [Training Curriculum](#) dedicated to election administration. The classes occur during conferences of the IACCR and the Illinois Association of County Officials.

Case Study: Connecticut

The Connecticut Secretary of State owns the state's [Registrar of Voters Training Program](#), which the University of Connecticut School of Public Policy administers. The Secretary of State's office is responsible for the program's content, and the university hires instructors, maintains the website, provides learning management software, and supports program users.

Case Study: California

The Election Center and the California Association of Clerks and Election Officials (CACEO) co-own and administer California's election official training program through the Election Center's REO program.

The program, called the [California Professional Election Administrator Credential Program](#), consists of 10 classes. These classes are offered at CACEO conferences and taught by Election Center instructors. The program is optional for California election officials and open to all officials and staff who are CACEO members.

Conclusion

Training for election officials is the foundation of both a professional election administration workforce and well-run elections. In 43 states, election officials have access to state-level training, which equips them with critical knowledge of election law, policy, and procedures. The five recommendations and six considerations in this report offer a framework for every state to develop and improve its training and ensure that every election official receives the training they need.

States must invest in training to guarantee that every election official receives high quality guidance. Election officials at the local and state level need resources to build and maintain quality training, and states must provide that critical funding so that officials can continue administering secure, accessible, and trustworthy elections.



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