

# Election



GUIDE FOR

## Community Relations Officers





# Guide for Community Relations Officers



## Revision Record



The *Revision Record* lists changes made only to the electronic copy of the *Version* listed below. Please print only the pages described under *Comments*, and substitute them in your manual to ensure that it remains current. The *Date Published* appears at the bottom of new or changed pages.

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## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1 – Message from Elections Canada .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 2 – General Guidelines .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 Goal of the Community Relations Officer Program .....	3
2.2 Job Description and Statement of Qualifications .....	4
2.3 Reporting Relationships .....	4
2.4 The Local Elections Canada Office .....	5
2.5 The Roles of the Community Relations Officer .....	7
2.6 Reaching All Members of the Community .....	7
2.7 In Brief .....	8
<b>Chapter 3 – Outreach Activities .....</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1 Action Planning .....	9
3.2 Using Resources in the Community .....	10
3.3 Working Behind the Scenes .....	12
3.4 Setting Up Information Kiosks .....	13
3.5 Handling Media Requests .....	14
3.6 Using Promotional Materials .....	15
3.7 Monitoring the Media .....	16
3.8 Assisting with Registration and Targeted Revision .....	16
3.9 Voting Other than on Election Day .....	17
3.10 Accessibility of Electoral Facilities .....	18
<b>Chapter 4 – Information Specific to Each Category of Community Relations Officer.....</b>	<b>19</b>
4.1 Aboriginal Community Relations Officers .....	19
4.2 Youth Community Relations Officers.....	21
4.3 Ethnocultural Community Relations Officers .....	22
4.4 Community Relations Officers for the Homeless .....	23
4.5 In Conclusion .....	24
<b>Appendix A – Examples of Outreach Activities .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Appendix B – Information Kiosk Request .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Appendix C – Information Kiosk Worksheet .....</b>	<b>35</b>



The masculine gender is used throughout this manual without bias, in the interest of simplicity and ease of reading.





## Chapter 1 – Message from Elections Canada

You are about to play a very important role in the next general election. We wish to thank you for accepting the challenge of serving as a community relations officer.

Our democracy is based on the right of all citizens to participate in making the decisions that affect them and the rules by which they agree to live together. This fundamental right finds full meaning only when citizens participate as actively as possible in various forms of public life, including voting.

On behalf of Elections Canada, it will be your job to develop key contacts that will help you reach out to populations who may encounter barriers to voting, whether they be young Canadians, members of Aboriginal or ethnocultural communities, the homeless, or others. You need to ensure that these groups are aware of their right to vote and how to exercise it. Our research shows that, on average, certain members of these groups tend to vote in federal elections at a lower rate than other Canadians or that they may have other special needs as electors.

You are not alone in your efforts as a community relations officer. We offer you support through your returning officer, who will work in conjunction with the field liaison officer and Elections Canada to ensure that you have the tools and training you need to conduct outreach activities that complement our initiatives. For example, we have developed a Web site with interactive content to inform young Canadians about the electoral system and democracy. We also partner with organizations to promote elector education and engagement on a variety of projects, including parallel student elections and online activities.

The registration of young electors remains a priority for Elections Canada. We send out regular mailings to young Canadians between the ages of 18 and 24, reminding them of the significance of their right to vote and to ensure they are listed in the National Register of Electors. During the next election, Elections Canada plans to write to young individuals who have not responded to previous registration initiatives to encourage them to register to vote by contacting their local Elections Canada office. We did this with some 171,000 youth during the 39<sup>th</sup> general election.

Elections Canada is also taking steps to make the federal electoral process more welcoming to First Nations, Métis and Inuit people. We have expanded the Community Relations Officer Program, launched in 2000, as well as the Aboriginal Elder and Youth Program. During the 39<sup>th</sup> general election, we hired 240 Elders and 225 youth under this program in 64 electoral districts and 157 Aboriginal community relations officers in 123 electoral districts. We also hired more Aboriginal people as election officers and worked with a number of friendship centres. We have been consulting leaders and young people from national Aboriginal associations, and we are developing additional initiatives in collaboration with some of them. The Elections Canada Web site also dedicates a section for Aboriginal electors.

In addition, Elections Canada strives to facilitate voting for homeless electors; one such initiative is providing an *Attestation of Residence* template (EC 50053) for shelter administrators to sign as satisfactory proof of identity and address for those who do not have a permanent address.

Elections Canada has prepared information and advertising campaigns to appeal to Aboriginal people, ethnocultural populations and young Canadians. We will distribute information kits to national ethnocultural associations and place advertisements in ethnic daily and weekly newspapers and radio stations. You will have access to posters and other Elections Canada promotional material to help you carry out your tasks and engage all electors in your electoral district.

As a community relations officer, you can make a significant contribution to Elections Canada's outreach initiatives. We appreciate your efforts and invite your suggestions to improve the Community Relations Officer Program. In fact, this revised guide is one of many improvements that we have made to the program based on feedback from returning officers and community relation officers. We will incorporate more suggestions as the program evolves during and between elections. We trust that this guide will assist you in carrying out your responsibilities, and wish you success in your work.

## Chapter 2 – General Guidelines

Congratulations on your appointment to the position of community relations officer. Your job is to communicate with members of all communities located in your electoral district to:

- increase election awareness;
- provide elector information: how, when and where to register and vote;
- explain the importance of registering and voting;
- make voting as accessible as possible for the community in which you will work.

In doing this, you will play an important role in Elections Canada's expanded outreach programs.

This guide outlines your general responsibilities and is based on best practices as well as on feedback from returning officers and community relations officers.

Please note that this guide is an overview of several electoral processes, and is not meant to duplicate or replace manuals for other positions. The returning officer will give you more specific training and access to the other manuals should you need more information on one of the topics covered in the guide, such as revision or satisfactory proof of identity and address.

### 2.1 Goal of the Community Relations Officer Program

The goal of Elections Canada's Community Relations Officer Program is to increase awareness of the right to vote, and how to exercise this right, among the following four communities:

- Aboriginal people;
- ethnocultural communities;
- youth;
- homeless individuals.

You have been hired to work with one of these communities. Your task is to help remove barriers to registration and voting that members may face and to increase dialogue about the electoral process.

The barriers to registration and voting can include feeling excluded from the electoral process, lacking information about federal elections, having difficulty finding or getting to a polling station and apprehension about being on the list of electors.

You will be working with communities and groups of people who generally participate in federal elections at a lower rate than the general population, even though they may be politically active at other elections or at the grassroots level. The program aims not to force people to vote, but rather to inform them about the electoral process (such as the location of polling sites and how to vote) and to ensure that they have the opportunity to vote if they wish to do so. It is essential that you respect the wishes of the community and that you remain impartial while carrying out your duties.

## **2.2 Job Description and Statement of Qualifications**

The returning officer for your electoral district will give you a detailed job description and statement of qualifications, which you should review before starting your job. He will ask you to complete some or all of the tasks in the job description depending on the needs of the community you will be working with. If you have any concerns or questions, speak to your returning officer immediately.

Be certain to review your *Oath of Appointment*, which you and your returning officer will sign. Keep this document with you as it is your authority to do the job of community relations officer.

## **2.3 Reporting Relationships**

You report directly to the returning officer, who will assign your tasks and determine the number of hours required to complete each one. The returning officer will review and approve any initiatives that you will undertake. He will also help you complete the forms that Elections Canada needs to put you on the payroll.

It is your responsibility to maintain contact with the office of the returning officer as well as with the target communities in the electoral district. You must always keep the returning officer informed about the progress of your initiatives, problems that arise and the number of hours you work. Unless the returning officer directs you otherwise, it is recommended that you provide him with a brief written update at least twice a week, and more frequently when you are helping with particular activities, such as setting up information kiosks. You may even be asked to attend meetings in the office of the returning officer to give an update on your progress and discuss any challenges you are encountering.

At the end of your term, you will be expected to submit to the returning officer a final report on your activities and to complete a short survey for Elections Canada.

## 2.4 The Local Elections Canada Office

The local Elections Canada office will be filled with activity during the election period (a minimum of 36 days). The electoral calendar will be posted there, giving a countdown to election day: Day 0 is election day, Day 7 is one week before election day, Day 14 is two weeks before election day and so on. This calendar is an important source of information listing key activities for each day. You should consult it regularly.

The team in the office will include, at a minimum, the returning officer, assistant returning officer, automation coordinator, revising agents, revision supervisor, special ballot coordinator, receptionist and training officer. In electoral districts with larger populations, the team may be larger. In electoral districts that are geographically larger, there may be one or more additional offices to serve electors in outlying communities. These additional offices are referred to as additional assistant returning officer (AARO) offices.

The local Elections Canada office will have space where you can work. But if your electoral district is large, the returning officer may prefer that you work out of an AARO office or other location. Regardless of where you work, it is your responsibility to report your activities regularly to the returning officer.

All team members, including the community relations officer, play important roles in ensuring that an election runs smoothly. You should attempt to understand their roles, as they may be able to provide you with information that will be valuable in carrying out your duties.

### Election Officers and Staff

Election officers and staff at the office of the returning officer carry out different roles, each requiring unique skills and abilities. Some positions begin before an election is called, while others begin at different points during the election period. Some positions have flexible hours; others require a more fixed schedule.

Each returning officer has been instructed to ensure that the staff he hires is representative of Canada's population. An extra emphasis is being placed on hiring people from Aboriginal and ethnocultural populations, as well as youth.

The returning officer must contact the registered **political parties** whose candidates finished first and second in the last election to provide a list of names of suitable persons for revising agents. The returning officer must solicit names from the **candidates** of the registered parties who finished first and second in the last election to provide names for registration officers, deputy returning officers and poll clerks. If the parties or candidates are unable to provide a sufficient number of names, you may be asked to help the recruitment officer and training officer select, hire and train community members to fill these positions.

The *Canada Elections Act* specifies the eligibility of an election officer, and you should discuss this with the returning officer. Generally speaking, an election officer must be an eligible elector in the electoral district (that is, at least 18 years of age by election day, a Canadian citizen and ordinarily resident in the electoral district in which he performs his duties). Election officers must take an oath and be sworn in before they begin work.

There are certain positions that the returning officer can fill without having to consult the political parties or candidates. Most of these positions do not require the person to be a qualified elector or to reside in the electoral district. (Discuss the qualifications of each position with your returning officer.) Positions filled directly by the returning officer include:

- receptionist;
- clerk;
- community relations officer;
- Aboriginal Elder and Youth Program staff;
- revision supervisor;
- special ballot coordinator;
- recruitment officer;
- training officer;
- central poll supervisor (must be a qualified elector);
- financial officer;
- automation coordinator;
- information officer (must be a qualified elector and, if possible, a resident of the electoral district).

If the returning officer is unable to recruit enough election-day workers, he can work with the field liaison officer for that region to advertise in local newspapers. In this case, and **only if instructed by the returning officer**, you can try to recruit members of your community by sending copies of the advertisement to community resources, such as friendship centres, community centres, student employment centres, and college and university newspapers.

Contacting French immersion schools or second language programs can be a good way to involve young people and offer services in both official languages. Elections Canada does not use recruitment or personnel agencies, so it will not pay for any fee-for-service recruitment requests.

The *Canada Elections Act* states that if a returning officer is unable to appoint an election officer who meets all the requirements, he may, **with the approval of the Chief Electoral Officer**, appoint:

- a Canadian citizen who is 16 years of age or older and who resides in the electoral district, or
- a person who is qualified as an elector but does not reside in the electoral district.

As you may participate in the recruitment process, your returning officer will let you know when he seeks this approval and whether it is granted.

## 2.5 The Roles of the Community Relations Officer

The Community Relations Officer Program aims to reach all members of your community; awareness of the electoral process is not only for those eligible to vote but for everyone in your electoral district.

The role of the community relations officer varies from one electoral district to another depending on the needs of the area and its geography and demographics. In addition, it will depend on the specific duties your returning officer assigns to you and the target population you serve.

Depending on the location of your electoral district, your returning officer may suggest that you work with community relations officers and/or staff in neighbouring districts. The returning officer will make the initial contact with these districts and the field liaison officer to coordinate an outreach planning meeting. The meeting should be scheduled as early as possible to avoid overlap in outreach activities. Though you may work with other electoral districts, your returning officer will remain responsible for approving your action plan and pay requests.

## 2.6 Reaching All Members of the Community

It is essential to remember that not all members of the community you serve are alike.

Reaching the majority of community members requires looking beyond the normal channels of communication.

For instance, you need to consider that not every young person is in school; not every Aboriginal person lives on a First Nations reserve or in a Métis settlement or Inuit hamlet; not every member of an ethnocultural community uses community resource centres or services for new Canadians; not every homeless person uses the services of, or sleeps at, a shelter.

In addition, promoting electoral awareness in schools targets children who will eventually reach voting age, which also encourages dialogue between students and their parents or guardians.

With this in mind, you must plan ways to reach as many members of your community as possible.

Remember, to be entitled to vote in an electoral district, a person must:

- be at least 18 years of age on election day;
- be a Canadian citizen;
- have a place of ordinary residence in the electoral district;
- have satisfactory proof of identity and address.

**The following are satisfactory proof of identity and address:**

1. one original piece of identification issued by a Canadian government or government agency that contains a photograph of the elector and his name and address; **OR**
2. two original pieces of identification authorized by the Chief Electoral Officer (each must establish the elector's name and at least one must establish the elector's address).

If an elector does not have satisfactory proof of identification, he may be able to have someone vouch for him. Vouching is described further in this guide.

At a by-election, an elector must reside in your electoral district from the first day of the revision period until election day.

## **2.7 In Brief**

As a community relations officer, you conduct outreach activities to engage all members of your community in the voting process. You are working with election staff, community contacts and a variety of organizations. You need to understand the history, culture and needs of the population you serve.

Remember that you represent Elections Canada. It is essential that you remain politically neutral (impartial) and respect the wishes of the communities in your electoral district.



## Chapter 3 – Outreach Activities

### 3.1 Action Planning

To make the best use of your allotted hours, you must prepare an action plan of the activities you will carry out during the election period. Your returning officer must review and approve each initiative you plan to undertake.

Your action plan is based on the tasks that your returning officer assigns to you, and it should:

- outline the needs of your community and the steps you will take to reach its members;
- describe how you plan to meet these needs and by which date in the electoral calendar you anticipate completing your outreach activities;
- include a list of key contacts.

The action plan will allow you and your returning officer to evaluate whether your work is on track and to make any necessary modifications while you are conducting the outreach initiatives. You should always keep the returning officer informed about the progress of your initiatives, problems that arise and the number of hours you work.



Elections Canada is an independent body set up by Parliament. Any activity you undertake must be politically neutral and fair to all candidates and parties.

You will not be able to start most of your tasks until the writ is issued (that is, until the election is called). This means that you can begin planning and making preliminary contacts, but you must wait for the election to be called before you start any outreach initiatives, such as making presentations or organizing information kiosks. If required, your returning officer may also ask you to identify potential employees, but they cannot be hired until the election is called. Your returning officer will give you more instructions about which additional tasks, if any, you are to perform before the election is called.

As the date of the next election is not known, you need to plan your outreach initiatives based on the activities of your community. During the summer, for example, some Aboriginal populations may move to seasonal locations, many students return to the electoral districts where their families reside, homeless persons may be less likely to use shelters and transient workers may no longer reside in the electoral district.

The returning officer will provide you with the action plan template. Once again, your returning officer is responsible for approving any outreach initiatives; if he is unsure about any activities you propose, he will contact the field liaison officer and Elections Canada in Ottawa. For a quick reference of outreach activities, see [Appendix A – Examples of Outreach Activities](#).

## 3.2 Using Resources in the Community

### Identifying Key Contacts

To make the best use of your time, identify key contacts in your community. These contacts will refer you to other contacts, who, in turn, will refer you to others. Each contact will have his own insights into how to make the vote more accessible. This will enable you to develop a much broader approach to increasing election awareness and to maximize your outreach coverage in as short a time as possible.

Contact persons can include a band leader, band council, Elder on a reserve or leaders at a friendship centre or in a Métis settlement; community leaders in an ethnocultural population or people who work with new Canadians; heads of student councils, administrators of post-secondary institutions or school principals; and administrators at shelters, soup kitchens or hostels offering services to the homeless. You should also seek alternative contacts such as youth group organizers, social clubs and other non-traditional sources to contact members of the community who may be more difficult to reach.

Your returning officer may have a list of community contacts prepared by previous community relations officers. If not, the returning officer or staff in the office of the returning officer may be able to refer you to contacts in the community.

When you are travelling in your electoral district and meeting members of your community, always have pen and paper ready, and make notes about your discussions. Taking down this information may not seem pertinent at the time, but it could save you valuable time later. For example, you may need to contact building managers to obtain permission to set up information kiosks or hang posters, or you may need to ask various centres or services for access to space where you can make presentations or hand out information.

Once you have drawn up a list of contact persons, you should submit it to the returning officer to ensure that there is no overlap with other outreach activities in the electoral district. The returning officer will also want to keep a copy of your list for future reference. It will strengthen relationships with community groups and leaders.

### Establishing Professional Relationships

Your role is to build a professional relationship with key contacts in your community, so it is essential that you establish good working relationships with them. When you meet a contact in person or talk to someone on the telephone, you must create an atmosphere of professional courtesy and respect. For example:

- Always identify yourself and give your title.
- Ask if this is an appropriate time, or whether he would like you to call back later and at what time.
- Briefly explain your role and the mandate of the program. (Being prepared with this information is a must.)

- Always treat the person with courtesy and respect and use appropriate language.
- Be clear about how the contact can assist you. Ask for suggestions on how you can reach members of the community.
- Ask for additional contact names and telephone numbers.
- Leave a telephone number where you can be reached in case the contact requires further information or wishes to follow up.
- Even if you do not receive the response you hoped for, always thank the person for his time and collaboration.



Your safety is paramount to Elections Canada. Should you feel uncomfortable visiting a building or neighbourhood, or carrying out other specific tasks, you may refuse to do so. Should this situation arise, you must still explain to the returning officer, without fear of recourse, that you will not be doing these tasks. For further details, the procedures on the *Right to Refuse Dangerous Work* will be available through your returning officer.

A professional relationship with a contact will smooth the way for co-operation and may lead to further communication. Building trust and respect with these contacts is essential as they will help you in your task of conducting community outreach.

### Using Help Offered by Contacts

Each community and group will have differing resources available, so it is important to communicate with a variety of organizations. Make sure you ask for suggestions on how to contact the targeted populations; they will increase your opportunities to network. When and where possible, attend inter-agency meetings, where you can address more than one organization at a time; this will maximize your time and the effects of your outreach activities.

In addition to using inter-agency groups in the community, you should contact the community relations officers in neighbouring electoral districts, where possible, to ensure that there is no overlap in your outreach activities. This is especially important in urban settings, where community resources may offer services in more than one electoral district. The returning officer and the field liaison officer can help you coordinate this type of meeting.

The following are a few examples of resources used by other community relations officers:

- Aboriginal community relations officers have found friendship centres and Native Health Centres to be useful in connecting with Aboriginal populations. They have reported that contacting band leaders and various community leaders was an important first step in understanding the needs of each community.
- Youth community relations officers have reported that they used resources at student associations and student employment centres; they also contacted resources for homeless youth and drop-in centres for young people.

- Ethnocultural community relations officers have said that they were able to contact target populations by attending citizenship ceremonies, social club meetings and classes in English or French as a Second Language. When planning ways to contact ethnocultural communities and groups, remember that although outreach is intended for all members of our society, only Canadian citizens can vote in federal elections.
- Returning officers and community relations officers have reported interacting with various agencies, such as housing and social services, to ensure that homeless electors are aware of their eligibility and options to vote.

### 3.3 Working Behind the Scenes

Encouraging dialogue between the members of your community is an ongoing part of your outreach efforts. However, it is possible to achieve this without being at the forefront of all activities. Several community relations officers have noted that they were able to effectively encourage participation from behind the scenes.

For example:

- Aboriginal community relations officers encouraged bands to hold round-table discussions.
- Youth community relations officers encouraged young people or group leaders to talk about the election process.
- Ethnocultural community relations officers encouraged teachers of French or English as a Second Language to review Elections Canada materials with their classes.
- Community relations officers for the homeless provided information to administrators and agencies who offer services to the homeless, and they, in turn, informed homeless electors of the eligibility requirements, registration procedures and options for voting.

Community relations officers also arranged for sports announcers at college and university sports games, and announcers in malls, to remind people about voting on election day.

When communicating with contacts, ask them whether they have a plan to encourage participation in the election. You can then judge how to help them – for example, by providing information, setting up kiosks or making a presentation. Quite often, a small effort on your part can enable contacts to conduct their own activities for raising the awareness of potential electors. Instead of organizing community meetings, you can attend them as a special guest to describe the practical aspects of voting and the electoral process.



If you attend meetings or organize kiosks, you must never be present during any political debate or make comments about any political viewpoint.

Before you accept an invitation to a meeting, you must ask the organizers whether any candidates will be present. If so, the returning officer must be informed, and he will consult the field liaison officer about whether you may accept the invitation. As a general rule, community relations officers should never attend meetings where one or more candidates may be present.

Community relations officers must not contact political parties or candidates. Band councils or student unions may approach you, wanting to get in touch with parties or candidates. In such cases, you may provide a list of **all candidates** running for election since this is information readily available to the general public at the local Elections Canada office. If you provide this information before the close of nominations, let the recipient know that there may be changes to the list. You may also refer your contacts to the Elections Canada Web site.

### 3.4 Setting Up Information Kiosks

Community relations officers have found information kiosks to be efficient and effective tools to reach their communities. Several officers have found low-cost or no-cost locations for setting up information kiosks. Some examples of good locations include friendship centres, community centres, shopping centres, secondary schools, university or college centres, and community events.

Before taking the necessary steps to set up an information kiosk, you must obtain permission from your returning officer, who will consult the Electoral Coordination Help Desk at Elections Canada in Ottawa.

As a community relations officer, you should plan for the activity by taking into consideration the following points:

- Detailed description of the location. (Is the site a politically neutral or publicly acceptable site? Avoid sites such as malls that might contain political party offices.)
- Type of event.
- Number of days the kiosk will be set up.
- Hours of operation. (Does the kiosk need to be open all day or only during the morning rush hour and lunchtime? On weekends?)
- Cost. (Is this a cost-effective way of contacting the community?)
- Political party involvement. (Will any political parties be present? Remember that the kiosk must remain impartial.)
- Number of people expected to visit.
- Back-up plan. (If the kiosk will be set up outdoors, what is your plan in case of rain or snow? Have you set an alternate date? Will fees be reimbursed?)
- Plan for delivering and picking up material.
- Any banner, chairs, tables, etc. provided.

- Whether the kiosk will be in an area where the neighbouring community relations officer(s) should be invited. (Do you have basic information about neighbouring electoral districts in case you are asked? Or should one or more neighbouring community relations officers be present?)
- Access to electricity, if needed.
- Potential liability issues that may raise concern.
- How the kiosk helps meet the goals of your action plan.
- Additional relevant information.

The returning officer will need to submit the *Information Kiosk Request* form, which can be found in [Appendix B – Information Kiosk Request](#), and complete all other necessary paperwork, such as the kiosk lease. This will ensure that everything is in place and that the information kiosk is a successful outreach activity.

You may give only factual information when dealing with the public (for example, the number of electoral districts in Canada, how to obtain information on the location of polling stations, the name of the returning officer or the address of the local Elections Canada office). **Never** offer opinions on any topic (such as what could be done to increase youth voting, or which candidate best suits the needs of the target population). Remember, you are there to explain the technical aspects of the voting process.

Elections Canada is legally responsible for ensuring that every Canadian is able to obtain service in either official language, English or French. If you do not understand the official language used by an elector you are dealing with, you must refer him to the local Elections Canada office or Elections Canada in Ottawa. *Bilingual Service Cards* (EC 10045) have been prepared by Elections Canada to assist you in carrying out your duties. You should always have one of these cards with you while working in the field.

### 3.5 Handling Media Requests

Media requests are handled by the field liaison officer, the regional media advisor or Elections Canada in Ottawa. The process for addressing a media request is to direct journalists to our toll-free media line. This number will be given to you by the returning officer. The media advisor is specially trained in Elections Canada operations, and in elections in general, and should therefore be the main source of information for interviews.

If one of the media is present at an activity you are attending, make a note of the type of activity, the date, the time, the name of the newspaper or radio or television station, and any additional information you may have. Should you be asked for an interview, explain that you are not the contact person for Elections Canada; instead, offer the toll-free number of the media line. This line will automatically go to the appropriate media advisor, based on the area code they are calling from. The regional media advisor will be better able to answer the interviewer's questions. If requested, you may take a message and relay the information to your returning

officer who will then send it to the regional media advisor. Once the activity has ended, submit a report to your returning officer; he will send copies to the field liaison officer, the media advisor and the Manager, Community Relations Officer Program, at Elections Canada.

### 3.6 Using Promotional Materials

Community relations officers may use only the promotional material provided by Elections Canada; **they must not create their own material**. Elections Canada weighs several factors carefully when preparing promotional material for an election. They include:

- Political neutrality. Elections Canada chooses wording and colour so they are not misinterpreted as supporting one party or candidate over another.
- Public reaction. Elections Canada uses focus groups to help evaluate the acceptability of its documents.
- Legislative requirements. For example, it complies with the *Official Languages Act*.
- Technical accuracy. The facts must be presented in accordance with the *Canada Elections Act* and the *Federal Elections Fees Tariff* (commonly known as the “Tariff of Fees”).
- Writing style. All Elections Canada publications must follow the same rules of spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc.

Creating promotional material may seem to be a relatively straightforward task, but it is, in fact, a complicated process requiring months of preparation and evaluation. Elections Canada’s material has been carefully reviewed and approved by its Communications Directorate. Key materials are available in alternative formats, and all materials are available in both official languages. Most of the materials will be available on the Elections Canada Web site. The site is updated regularly during an election as new documents become available.

Elections Canada will send a communications calendar to returning officers after the election is called. You may find this calendar useful in carrying out your tasks because it includes all of the advertising activities carried out during the election period, the timing of which could be important in setting deadlines for your activities.

Many community relations officers have found *Electoral Insight* to be a valuable source of information. Elections Canada launched this magazine in June 1999 as a forum for discussion about the electoral process and related matters. In-depth articles by leading scholars and other interested observers of the democratic process explore electoral legislation and experiences in Canada and other countries. Issues of *Electoral Insight* have focused on the participation of Aboriginal peoples, youth, ethnocultural communities, persons with disabilities and international electoral co-operation. Electronic copies of *Electoral Insight* are available on the Elections Canada Web site, or your returning officer can order printed copies for you.



### 3.7 Monitoring the Media

One of your tasks may be to monitor the media targeting your community. You can do this informally. For example, you may be an Aboriginal community relations officer or ethnocultural community relations officer listening to radio programs in your first language, and you may hear information directed at your community. If you know of any such media information, give a summary of it to your returning officer to forward to Elections Canada.

### 3.8 Assisting with Registration and Targeted Revision

For a person to vote in a federal election or by-election, his name must be on the list of electors (also called the voters list) for your electoral district; the list is produced from the National Register of Electors. The list of electors contains each elector's name, address and gender. As of April 22, 2008, it will also include dates of birth and unique identifiers. An elector can have his name added to the list, or have the information corrected, during the revision period, at an advance poll or on polling day.

#### During the Revision Period

During targeted revision, the list of electors is updated by revising agents going door to door to contact residents, particularly in areas with high mobility, long-term care facilities, new housing developments and Aboriginal reserves. You may be asked to suggest areas in your electoral district where targeted revision can be carried out.

To encourage young people to participate in federal elections, it is highly recommended that areas with high concentrations of students be identified. Returning officers are instructed to conduct targeted revision in student residences and encouraged to do so in neighbourhoods surrounding university and college campuses, where many students reside.



The list of electors must not be used for any purpose that is not related to elections. Candidates in your electoral district may request copies of the list to help them canvass electors; only the office of the returning officer may comply with such a request.

#### Before or on Election Day

As you proceed with your outreach tasks, you may encounter people whose names are not on the list of electors or who are registered at a previous address. Electors have the option of registering **before** election day or at the polls.

Whenever possible, encourage electors to register in advance to save time on election day. Registration before election day normally begins on Day 33 of the electoral calendar and ends on Day 6 at 6:00 p.m.



An elector can register before election day by:

- visiting the local Elections Canada office;
- telephoning, mailing or faxing the local Elections Canada office and requesting a registration form.

An elector can request a registration form for himself or herself or on behalf of a relative or friend. You should inform an elector that to be registered at the polls, he must present satisfactory proof of identity and address. If such documentation is not available, another registered elector from the same polling division can **vouch** for the person at the polls.

**Vouching** is a process by which an elector, whose name is on the voters list and who has satisfactory proof of identity and address, takes an oath (vouches) that an elector from the **same** polling division, who is not on the voters list, is eligible to vote. An elector who has been vouched for cannot subsequently vouch for another elector. Please note that an elector can vouch for only one person and that vouching is possible on election day and at advance polls.

Your returning officer can provide you with further details about registration options.

### 3.9 Voting Other than on Election Day

Electors who prefer not to vote on election day can vote at an advance poll, or by special ballot under the Special Voting Rules (SVR).

Advance polls are held on Days 10, 9 and 7. Your returning officer will inform you of the locations.

Special ballot (SVR) provisions ensure access to the vote for:

- electors in their electoral district who do not wish to vote at advance polls or ordinary polls;
- electors in Canada but away from their home districts on election day;
- electors outside Canada;
- incarcerated electors;
- members of the Canadian Forces;
- electors with a physical disability.

It is important for you to know and understand all of the options for voting so that you can explain to the members of your community that they are convenient ways to vote. To learn more about these options, ask your returning officer or special ballot coordinator, or visit the Elections Canada Web site.

### 3.10 Accessibility of Electoral Facilities

The electoral system must be open and available to all electors regardless of the obstacles they may face, be that prejudice or physical or intellectual barriers.

Your returning officer is responsible for ensuring that all facilities used during the election have level access. Information about polling site accessibility is printed on the voter information card, and it is available on the Elections Canada Web site and at the office of the returning officer.

If a polling station is not accessible, an elector with a disability may request a transfer certificate allowing him to vote at a polling station that is accessible.

Elections Canada supports providing respectful assistance to electors who request it. Here are examples of such assistance:

- An elector who is visually impaired and has to sign a form may be given a device, such as a ruler or card, to help sign his name.
- An elector who is visually impaired may use a template, provided by the deputy returning officer, to help him mark the ballot.
- If an elector uses a language other than French or English and is not understood, an interpreter may be appointed.
- If an elector is hearing impaired, an interpreter may be appointed.
- Guide dogs may be admitted to any building and must not be disturbed while they are carrying out their duties.
- Teletypewriter (TTY) services are available on the Elections Canada Web site for electors who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech-impaired.

For your information, mobile polls travel from institution to institution (for example, long-term care facilities, such as nursing homes) at predetermined times to allow electors living there to vote. Your returning officer can give you details about mobile poll initiatives in your electoral district.

Elections Canada is committed to creating a barrier-free electoral system and is dedicated to working with outside partners to improve the system.

## Chapter 4 – Information Specific to Each Category of Community Relations Officer

### 4.1 Aboriginal Community Relations Officers

Members of Aboriginal communities may face unique barriers to exercising their democratic right to vote. As an Aboriginal community relations officer, your role is primarily to ensure that Aboriginal electors have the information they need and have access to the electoral process if they wish to vote.

If your electoral district includes rural areas and reserves, you should contact band leaders, band councils and/or Elders. In the past, a limited number of First Nations have been reluctant to work with Elections Canada. It is essential that you respect the wishes of the community while still exploring options for placing polls on or near reserves, recruiting staff for various positions and undertaking other activities.

If you are in an urban centre, you should contact every friendship centre in the electoral district. Once again, it is essential to establish a working relationship based on professional courtesy and respect with the leaders of such centres and with other organizations in the community.

Aboriginal electors can refer to the Elections Canada Web site for information specific to them.

#### Key Contacts

Key contacts in the community may be able to help you carry out your duties. Examples of locations where you can make contact with Aboriginal peoples include:

- Aboriginal community and resource centres;
- friendship centres;
- Aboriginal education and learning services;
- Aboriginal employment services centres;
- Aboriginal resource centres;
- Métis confederations;
- band offices;
- colleges, universities and other training facilities;
- housing authorities;
- health centres.

### **Friendship Centres**

Elections Canada has provided your returning officer with a list of friendship centres across Canada. The centres are excellent channels for disseminating information and recruiting personnel.

If your electoral district contains one or more centres, the Chief Electoral Officer has stated that you or your returning officer **must** contact their leaders, explain your role and ask for their help in engaging the Aboriginal population in the community. You must also distribute Elections Canada's promotional material to the centres. This will give you an added opportunity to meet the staff, and it will open the door for further discussion about your outreach tasks.

The National Association of Friendship Centres has expressed interest in working with Elections Canada.

### **Aboriginal Elder and Youth Program**

The Aboriginal Elder and Youth Program provides for one Elder and one youth to be appointed to work at any polling station that serves mainly Aboriginal electors, and to be present during voting hours. Their presence may make the voting process more inviting to Aboriginal electors. The Elder and youth will offer interpreter services as required, help explain the voting process and answer general questions.

Your returning officer may ask you to help identify and recruit staff for the program. When possible, you should seek input from the community and proceed by consensus before recommending individuals for these positions.

As with all employees during the election period, program staff are not permitted to canvass on behalf of a political party or candidate, or to try to influence how electors vote. They must take an oath before they begin their work, remain non-partisan and agree to guard the secrecy of the vote.

Since polling stations are open for 12 hours on polling day, the Elder and youth should take turns being present throughout the 12 hours. Your returning officer will arrange their work hours to meet their needs and those of the community.

The returning officer can tell you the current rate of pay for these positions as well as further details about your involvement. For further information about the program, please consult the *Information Sheet for Elders and Youth* (EC 10046).

### **Locating Polling Sites**

The returning officer may ask you to help establish polling sites on reserves, in hamlets or settlements, or in friendship centres or other community centres. A polling site in any of these locations helps make the election process more accessible and visible. Identifying contacts and establishing a professional relationship with the community leaders will make this task easier.

The returning officer will give you more specific guidelines if you are asked to perform this task.

## 4.2 Youth Community Relations Officers

As a youth community relations officer, your role is to raise awareness among young people at various educational levels about the federal electoral process, thereby making voting as accessible to them as possible.

Another responsibility is identifying areas that have a high concentration of students, such as student neighbourhoods. In addition, you need to identify people who occupy key positions in youth communities and make contact with them to help you broaden your approach to locating youth communities and increasing election awareness.

With the approval of your returning officer, you will establish information kiosks, lead forums and seminars, and make presentations. These are effective approaches to informing and educating young people about the federal electoral process and what they need to do to vote.

Students must determine their place of ordinary residence. It is either:

- the place where they live while attending school, be it in residence or at another location (their “address while studying”);
- the address where they live when not attending school (their “family’s or guardian’s address”).

Students who consider their place of ordinary residence to be their address while attending school can vote at the advance or ordinary polls in the polling division in which they reside, or they can vote by special ballot (by mail or at the local Elections Canada office).

Students who consider the address where they live when not attending school as their place of ordinary residence can vote at the advance poll or at the ordinary poll in the polling division designated for their family’s address, or they can vote by special ballot.



In order to be able to vote, a person must be a Canadian citizen, 18 years of age by election day and provide satisfactory proof of identity and address. Registering to vote can be done prior to election day if the individual will be turning 18 on or before election day.

Your returning officer may ask you to help increase youth involvement by assisting the recruitment officer and training officer to select, appoint and train youth as election officers or for staff positions in the office of the returning officer. If the young people are unable to work during the day, let them know that there may be some positions available where they can work evenings or weekends.

Young voters can refer to the Elections Canada Web site for information specific to them.

## **Key Contacts**

Here are some examples of places to make contacts with youth:

- community centres and youth centres;
- colleges, universities and schools (ex: contact principals, teachers and guidance counsellors);
- churches;
- businesses where young people congregate (ex: contact owners, managers and program coordinators);
- student career and employment drop-in services;
- student unions/associations;
- malls, cinemas and youth sports organizations;
- other youth organizations such as cadets.

## **4.3 Ethnocultural Community Relations Officers**

As an ethnocultural community relations officer, your role is to initiate and maintain relations with ethnocultural communities, their leaders and their members to ensure that they are aware of the electoral process, know how to register and know where to vote. Remember, to vote in a federal election, a person must be a Canadian citizen.

Some of your responsibilities will be to identify major ethnocultural groups in the electoral district. Once you have done this, you need to identify key contacts in these communities. Contact places associated with ethnocultural people (such as churches, temples, mosques, ethnocultural restaurants or grocery stores, and immigration service associations), identify yourself and explain your mandate. People there may give you their own opinions on how to make the vote more accessible in their communities, or they may refer you to community leaders or people who work with new Canadians.

When communicating with people from different cultures, it is very important to understand their culture and customs. Many ethnocultural groups have cultural norms that can be easily misinterpreted. For example, in many cultures, it is inappropriate to look someone in the eye while speaking to them. Someone who looks down or away from you while speaking is perhaps showing respect and not disinterest. Pointing at someone may also be considered rude behaviour. Be alert to situations where interactions with others may be affected by cultural differences. Cultural awareness and sensitivity is very important when developing outreach strategies.

With the approval of your returning officer, you will establish information kiosks, lead forums and seminars, and make presentations. These are effective approaches to informing ethnocultural communities about the federal electoral process and what they need to do to vote.

Your returning officer may ask you to assist the recruitment officer and training officer to select, appoint and train individuals as election officers or for staff positions in the office of the returning officer. This can be especially helpful in communities where English or French is not the first language. Remember that many of these positions require a person to be a qualified elector. You may also be asked to identify polling sites where interpreters may be needed.

### Key Contacts

Here are some examples of places to make contacts with ethnocultural communities:

- immigration services;
- welcome centres for immigrants;
- citizenship associations;
- new-citizen groups;
- cultural clubs and centres;
- temples, mosques and churches;
- community centres;
- art associations;
- health centres;
- second-language centres and schools.

## 4.4 Community Relations Officers for the Homeless

As a community relations officer for the homeless, your role is to ensure that homeless persons are aware of their right to vote, how to get on the voters list, and where and when they can vote.

You also need to identify agencies offering services to the homeless population. By communicating with administrators and coordinators at these agencies, you can better inform them about voter registration of homeless electors under the federal system. Be sure to provide them with Elections Canada promotional material and information on registration, identification requirements, residence requirements and advance poll locations. An *Attestation of Residence* form (EC 50053) signed by the administrators of shelters and other service providers is satisfactory proof of address for the homeless.



In order to use the *Attestation of Residence* (EC 50053) to register at the polls and to vote, an additional piece of identification with the elector's name will still be required.

### **Key Contacts**

Examples of places to make contact with homeless people include:

- homeless shelters, hostels and soup kitchens;
- agencies offering services to the homeless population;
- social service agencies;
- city hall.

## **4.5 In Conclusion**

Outreach is an ongoing effort. It covers a variety of approaches to ensure that all eligible electors, especially those who are least likely to vote, have the information and opportunity to vote if they wish to do so. Outreach engages all members of society and is geared toward considering the needs, and respecting the wishes, of each community.

As a community relations officer, you can make a significant contribution to Elections Canada's outreach initiatives. We wish you great success in engaging all members of our society in the electoral process and look forward to your feedback after the election.



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## **Appendix A – Examples of Outreach Activities**

This section lists a number of outreach activities that community relations officers can carry out. This is by no means an exhaustive list of activities; you may be able to think of others. All activities must be approved by your returning officer.



## Informing

### Key Contacts:

- Visit youth and drop-in centres
- Contact school boards and student associations
- Meet with community members at temples, mosques, churches, gurdwaras, mandirs and synagogues
- Offer presentations at primary and secondary schools
- Meet with staff at homeless shelters and soup kitchens to discuss ways to involve the homeless in the election process
- Meet with community and youth leaders to ask how to reach young people
- Contact community and resource centres, social clubs, cultural centres and other associations
- Contact universities, colleges and training facilities to raise awareness of voting options among Aboriginal students and to recruit Aboriginal students
- Contact the administrators of universities, colleges and training facilities
- Approach schools: teachers, principals, student councils and guidance counsellors
- Contact or visit friendship centres and band offices
- Contact second-language classes and welcome centres for new immigrants

### Promotional Material:

- Distribute promotional material provided by Elections Canada
- Distribute handouts (pamphlets and brochures in the preferred language) door to door
- Give information to Civics teachers that they can hand out in their classes
- Distribute *I Can Vote!* booklets and copies of *Electoral Insight* magazine
- Distribute electoral information across campuses
- Print Elections Canada material (e.g. voter information guides) in the languages of the ethnocultural groups in your electoral district
- Use and/or distribute the “Seekers!” DVD
- Post promotional material on public bulletin boards and in other high-traffic areas
- Help disseminate e-bulletins

### Information Kiosks:

- Set up information kiosks in homeless shelters, soup kitchens and drop-in centres
- Set up information kiosks on or near campuses and First Nations reserves
- Set up information kiosks in ethnocultural centres, health centres and other suitable locations in the community

*Presentations, Seminars, Forums and Round Table Discussions:*

- Conduct voter information sessions at the local Elections Canada office
- Organize presentations, forums, seminars and/or round table discussions at universities, colleges and secondary schools
- Ask announcers at schools and sporting events to broadcast a reminder of election day as it approaches
- Organize election simulations at primary and secondary schools; offer election material as well
- Promote Student Vote initiative
- Attend Aboriginal cultural events (consult band offices first), school assemblies and citizenship ceremonies
- Offer presentations to homeless electors

*Other Activities:*

- After an activity, send each organization a letter, thanking them for their assistance

**Registering and Voting**

*Recruitment and Training:*

- Help recruit office staff who are representative of the community
- Help recruit staff for the Aboriginal Elder and Youth Program as well as people from the community to work as poll officials
- Identify and recruit eligible youth to work at polling stations and/or in the local Elections Canada office

- Contact or visit youth job centres to recruit young people
- Help to recruit youth as office staff (if they attend school, they can work weekends and/or evenings)
- Identify Aboriginal workers from each reserve to work as revising agents and to accompany the revising agent during targeted revision
- Make sure that deputy returning officers, poll clerks, Aboriginal Elder and Youth Program staff and information officers attend training sessions
- Make staff aware of Elections Canada's telephone translation service

*Targeted Revision:*

- Identify areas in your electoral district where targeted revision should be conducted
- Contact student residences and student unions to facilitate targeted revision on campuses
- Help establish revision desks on campuses (with Elections Canada approval)
- Help implement targeted revision plans on reserves
- Help establish revision desks in or near community centres (with Elections Canada approval)
- Help organize registration events at band offices
- Assist revising agent at homeless shelters

*Accessibility:*

- Identify polling sites where interpreters are needed
- Ensure that translation and interpretation services are available to electors who request them
- Contact Aboriginal health offices to determine ways to make election day easier for electors with disabilities
- Ask advocacy groups for suggestions about how to make election day more accessible for people with disabilities
- Explain voting options to persons with disabilities
- Contact homeless shelters to explain how the *Attestation of Residence* form (EC 50053) helps register homeless electors
- Obtain and distribute material for visually impaired electors
- Help establish polling stations in or near ethnocultural community centres
- Help establish polling stations in or near homeless shelters



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## Appendix B – Information Kiosk Request

You will find on the next page the *Information Kiosk Request* form that you will need to complete and have signed by the returning officer.

You must obtain permission from Electoral Coordination before setting up an information kiosk.

Please fax the completed form to Elections Canada to the Manager, Community Relations Officer Program, at: **1-800-267-8549**.





## Information Kiosk Request

Name of community relations officer: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone number of local Elections Canada office: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Electoral district name: \_\_\_\_\_ Electoral district number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Target group(s):  Aboriginal  Ethnocultural  Youth  Homeless

Question	Response
1. Provide a detailed description of the location of the proposed kiosk (address and type of venue).	
2. At what type of event do you propose the kiosk be located?	
3. How many days will the kiosk be held, and what will the hours of operation be?	
4. If the kiosk is to be in an area where a neighbouring community relations officer should visit, will you be involving him or her in the activity?	
5. Provide a breakdown of the costs associated with the kiosk and what they cover (i.e. furniture, facility space rental, other equipment).	
6. If applicable, describe any political party involvement.	
<b>Additional comments</b>	

I hereby confirm that this activity will be politically neutral, and  
 I recommend that this activity take place in this electoral district.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 (Returning officer's signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 (Date)



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## Appendix C – Information Kiosk Worksheet

On the worksheet on the following page, note where the kiosk is located, the type of location and the number of visitors. In the column heading in the table, indicate the date(s) that the kiosk was in operation.

Various types of inquiries are listed. Write in the number of times that you received inquiries in or similar to each category. If no similar category is listed, enter the inquiry under “Additional comments”. The number of inquiries may exceed the “Number of visitors to the kiosk” because some visitors will have more than one question.

This worksheet will allow Elections Canada to better evaluate the needs of your community.

Submit the worksheet to your returning officer and fax a copy to the Manager, Community Relations Officer Program, at **1-800-267-8549**.



## Information Kiosk Worksheet

Name of community relations officer: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Electoral district: \_\_\_\_\_ Electoral district number: \_\_\_\_\_

Target group:       Aboriginal       Ethnocultural       Youth       Homeless

Location of kiosk: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of location (friendship centre, mall, school, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Type of public inquiry/question	Date →				Total Number
What is Elections Canada (e.g. mandate, location)?					
Election day – When and where do I vote?					
I'm going to be away on election day. How do I vote?					
Advance polls – When/where and who can vote in advance?					
Special ballots – What is the process and who can use them?					
Students living away from home – How and where can I vote?					
How can my elderly relative vote from home?					
Voters list – How do I know whether I'm on it/how do I get on it?					
What do I do if I don't receive a <i>Voter Information Card</i> ?					
Where is the office of the returning officer located?					
How do I apply for a job working in the office of the returning officer or at the polls on election day?					
Name or boundaries of the electoral district					
Information about other districts					
Requested information for school projects					
Who are the candidates running in my district?					
Other (please provide details – use extra sheet if required)					
<b>Total number of inquiries</b>					
Number of visitors to the kiosk					
Number of times you informed electors that languages other than English or French will be spoken at the polls					
Number of inquiries asked in a language other than French or English					
<b>Additional comments:</b>   					