



Organization of
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Quality Management Systems in Electoral Authorities in Latin America

Secretariat for Political Affairs(SPA)

Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO)

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American States

**General Secretariat
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*“Quality Management Systems (QMS) in Electoral Authorities in
Latin America”*

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**General Secretariat
Organization of American States**

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Factors such as globalization and increasing advances in technology have undoubtedly elevated the role of **quality** as a determining factor in both manufacturing and services. It is therefore imperative that organizations at all levels, in both the private and public sectors, are continually up to date in the newest and most efficient strategies for managing their processes.

Much like other state institutions, Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs), as guarantors of democracy, cannot afford to bypass the modernizing tendency or the search for new and better tools to improve the services that they offer to citizens. On the contrary, they must commit themselves to the continual improvement of the ways in which they organize and manage electoral processes.

In this context the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States, (GS/OAS), along with the electoral authorities of the region, has been making inroads since 2006 in the area of **quality management**, a tool which allows these institutions to improve and revise their institutional objectives.

The technical cooperation offered and knowledge acquired by the GS/OAS through these experiences has served as the catalyst for a new initiative: the creation of an international **ISO electoral** standard, which will be employed to certify electoral authorities not only in Latin America but worldwide.

This document, published thanks to financial support from the Spanish Agency for International Development (AECID) discusses the experiences in quality management from the perspective of a variety of countries with the aim of promoting such systems as standard practice for electoral authorities in the region.

II. INTRODUCTION

The period of regional democratic consolidation in the 1980s in Latin America led to a series of political reforms establishing specialized and autonomous¹ electoral authorities that were given the responsibility of organizing and administering electoral processes in the region.

These wide-ranging political reforms were brought about largely in response to the emerging consensus on the duty of states to safeguard the electoral process. Such reforms provided the catalyst for the eventual establishment of autonomous EMBs with wide ranging powers and responsibilities, in particular the effective provision of quality services and the timely delivery of free, fair, and transparent electoral processes.

The establishment of specialized EMBs in the early 1990s generated the need for internal consolidation; these institutions lacked the institutional structure and the necessary capacity to efficiently carry out their mandate. It is precisely in this context where international organizations have played a predominant role in the last couple of decades, accompanying EMBs in processes of institutional consolidation while also offering support to the development and implementation of tools for the strengthening of electoral processes.

The collaborative efforts between electoral authorities and international organizations in favor of quality and continuous improvement have placed EMBs in the region at the forefront of process modernization. As a result, we can now affirm that there are electoral bodies in the region with high levels of institutional development that are ready to begin on the path to quality.

The OAS Department of Electoral Corporation and Observation (DECO) has accompanied these processes to modernize and improve the services offered by electoral bodies in the region, through the implementation of cooperation projects. The majority of these projects have been geared towards building institutional capacity and promoting the professionalism and legitimacy of electoral authorities.

1. The majority of Latin American democracies have adopted or are moving towards models of electoral administration that are permanent, independent and multi-partisan in nature.

Since 2006, DECO has been working in the area of Quality Control in response to the clear demand of OAS Member States and to an internal analysis that reinforced the potential benefits of applying this instrument to electoral bodies.

“Quality Management,” though it originated in the private sector and is thus a relatively new concept for the public sphere, is being implemented by more and more government agencies and public institutions. In the case of electoral management bodies, quality management systems are geared towards the improvement of internal processes and procedures, including the management of information in decision-making, and the promotion of an organizational culture oriented towards continual improvement in the services provided to citizens. One of the key advantages of implementing a Quality Management System (QMS) in an electoral context is that it allows international organizations to harmonize the criteria with which they evaluate performance while also engendering a level of transparency that generates greater levels of confidence in the electoral process among both political parties and citizens.

III. QMS AND ACCREDITATION UNDER ISO NORMS

Quality control is a concept that has evolved significantly over time. In the 1950s, quality assurance was the idea in vogue, as manufacturers realized that it was more efficient to verify quality during, as supposed to after, the production process.

Starting in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the rudimentary principles of what would later become known as “Total Quality” began to emerge. At the time, however, the concept of quality control focused on fixing problems rather than preventing them. By the end of 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, the concept of quality control spread to the business and service sectors. Companies realized that it was not enough to provide high-quality products at a reasonable price; they also needed to provide their customers with excellent service. The most competitive enterprises packaged their products around seamless delivery and customer support; the concept of Total Quality was born.

Reductions in productivity and rising costs motivated companies to focus on the implementation of Quality Management Systems as a way to increase efficiency. This change in the ways in which products were manufactured necessitated the involvement of the entire organization as well as the efficient use of money and of time.

1. Quality Management Systems

A Quality Management System (QMS) is comprised of a series of interconnected activities, all of which are aimed at continually improving the effectiveness of an organization, in terms of the creation of its products or services. All Quality Management Systems are supported by a system of documentation that specifies responsibilities, processes, inputs and results. This documentation system allows individual organizations to identify, monitor, and quantify their processes.

Principles of Quality Management:

Quality management is based on the following eight guiding principles:

- 1) *Client Orientation:* organizations should understand and satisfy the needs of their clients.
- 2) *Leadership:* leaders should create and maintain an environment in which people can become fully involved in achieving organizational objectives.
- 3) *Involvement of Staff:* the staff represents the essence of an organization and their full involvement enables their abilities to be used for the benefit of the organization.
- 4) *Process-Based Approach:* desired results are achieved more efficiently when activities and related resources are managed as a process.
- 5) *A Systemic Approach to Management:* identifying, understanding, and managing inter-related processes as a system contributes to the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization in the achievement of its objectives.

- 6) *Continual Improvement*: the continual improvement of overall performance should be a permanent objective of an organization.
- 7) *A Factual Approach to Decision-Making*: efficient decisions are based on the analysis of data and information.
- 8) *Mutually Beneficial Supplier Relationships*: an interdependent and mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and its supplier enhances the ability of both to create value.

In this sense, QMS combines the relationship between organizational structure, the structure of responsibilities within that organization, and all of the procedures, processes and resources involved. Relating the distinct elements of a business, or of an organization, leads to a QMS whose purpose is satisfying beneficiaries.

Quality management implies an organizational mentality open to change, that is capable of adapting to more efficient internal processes with the goal of increasing the satisfaction of its respective clients.

2. Principal advantages associated with the implementation of QMS

The advantages that can be acquired by implementing QMS can vary. Generally speaking, however, QMS provides the following benefits:

- A structure that promotes high-quality management of an organization's activities. This structure analyzes the efforts of an organization from a holistic vantage point while looking for improvement opportunities.
- A simple and integrated organization of work, divided into processes.
- The promotion of continual improvement.
- Innovation of new products and services. In some cases, the improvement is incremental and based on illuminating deficiencies or weaknesses in products and services.

es. In other cases, improvement is based on the use of new technologies or the substitution of old for new technologies. Such innovation not only applies to products and services, but to all activities of the organization.

The Benefits of QMS implementation in the electoral arena:

The implementation of a quality management system can facilitate the regulation of areas as diverse as procurement, training, logistics, the formation of polling places, citizen outreach, manuals, and electoral and civil registries. The regulation of each process and procedure can lead to a higher level of accountability, generating further institutional development and minimizing the potential for undue influence by individual personnel.

The management and certification of quality has a direct impact on the transparency and the modernization of an electoral authority, given that certification demonstrates the firm commitment of the electoral management body to improve, to achieve the highest standards of quality and to offer an excellent level of management. Such efforts constitute a significant step in the strengthening of each institution.

Additional benefits of quality management² related to electoral processes and procedures include:

With respect to transparency and accountability:

- Improvement of the internal procedures and processes within the institution

Quality management systems allow for the detection of irregularities, promoting the introduction of improvements, which, when implemented correctly, guarantee continuous improvement for the institution.

Based on diagnostics of the specifications of each institution, QMS provide a clear frame of reference through which electoral authorities can better and more efficiently carry out their functions, responsibilities, management structures and citizen services.

With better documentation and supervision of processes it is possible to achieve stability in management and a reduction in the number of actions that do not provide value.

2. Application of ISO 9000 Standards in Local Government and Other Public Sector Organizations, United Nations, New York, 2001.

- Better flow of information in the management of decision-making

A quality management system allows objectives to be disseminated to those areas that have direct contact with citizens, providing a better flow of information and more visibility for the administration, integrating processes to achieve a better provision of services and higher levels of citizen satisfaction.

- Generation of a culture of continuous improvement

QMS facilitates the continuous improvement of both internal and external structures, demanding certain levels of quality in management systems as well as products and services. The application of a quality management focus provides the opportunity to simultaneously improve various processes in a holistic fashion, instead of solving them in an individual way.

The priority for those organizations developing Quality Management Systems is to revise and improve the electoral authority's capacity to comply with client requirements.

- Building citizen confidence

The audits that are part of the certification process demonstrate the clear willingness of the government to be evaluated by an external entity. Furthermore, the certification process itself engenders trust among citizens and political parties. In similar fashion, the external audits provide a visible display of the institution's compliance with pre-established quality norms.

With respect to modernization:

- Satisfying citizen demand

The implementation of quality management systems represents the most effective way to modernize electoral management bodies. The objective is to guarantee continuous improvement, which must be accompanied by efficacy, efficiency, transparency, credibility and equity. As a result, this system needs to focus on management in keeping with the needs and expectations of citizens/clients, who are

the principal beneficiaries. The system should also focus on the directives of those institutions that are responsible for implementing the measures standardized by international organizations, which have been adapted to local needs.

Given that the concept of quality encompasses the provision of goods and services, taking into account the satisfaction of citizen demands, its implementation is a useful tool for the promotion of the full exercise of political rights.

With respect to the professionalizing of the public service:

The implementation of QMS standards can foster the professionalization of EMB staff and engender an improved performance in electoral authorities by introducing incentives that positively affect the service provided to citizens. Employees in every institution represent a key component of services and client satisfaction. As a result, their links to institutional goals are strategic elements that influence the quality of service.

The implementation of a QMS leads to the professionalization of the civil service, by allowing:

- Every public servant to have a clearly defined role within the chain of command so that managers exercise greater control over the quality of his or her work.

Through the empowerment of employees through training, the alignment of processes and procedures and the provision of tools, greater control is achieved over work and organizational capacity. These processes also foment a change in attitude amongst personnel.

In this way, EMBs like the State Electoral Commission of Nuevo Leon (CEENL, in Spanish) in Mexico, which have broad experience in the implementation of quality management systems, have affirmed that quality management leads to attitude changes

amongst personnel, who acquire more clarity regarding the procedures that keep the organization running.

On the other hand, other electoral authorities such as the Electoral Tribunal of Panama have used clear descriptions and profiles for employee positions, procedures and instructions as well as work and employee evaluations to achieve significant improvements in employee performance.

3. The certification process under ISO guidelines

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is a non-governmental entity with global expertise in the creation and publication of international norms and quality standards. The principal function of ISO is to promote the standardization of norms for manufacturing and service products across the globe. Consequently, ISO comprises national standards authorities from 159 countries as well as the Organization's Central Secretariat that coordinates the system. While some national standards authorities form part of the governmental structure of their country, others have roots exclusively in the private sector, having been created by national industrial associations. ISO acts as a bridge between the public and private sectors by promoting the adaptation of norms to the needs and requirements of both sectors.

ISO quality norms contain the technical specifications or precise criteria with which products, services and processes must comply in order to be certified. The norms regulate the implementation of quality systems on a variety of levels. These specifications have been successfully applied across various organizations with the goal of improving client satisfaction while simultaneously promoting accountability, the efficient use of resources, management of responsibilities and provision of services.

The ISO 9000 standard combines a series of international norms and quality guides, which have garnered an international reputation as the basis for QMS. As part of this family of standards, ISO 9001 has been successfully applied in a variety

of organizations over the years. The certification of an organization under ISO 9001 demonstrates compliance with all requirements related to the quality of a product and also with the quality of client service.

ISO 9001:2008³ sets out a series of standardized requirements for a quality management system with which any organization must comply, independent of the purpose of an organization, its size, or whether it belongs to the public or private sector. It is the only standard in the family with which an organization can be certified in quality management.⁴

Actors involved in the certification process:

Four types of organizations participate in the quality certification process:

1. *Accreditation bodies:* which are charged with evaluating the competence of certifying organisms. They also supervise accredited certifying organisms, coordinate with governmental bodies on the functioning of accreditations and promote the use of national accreditation systems.
2. *Certifying bodies:* are those bodies whose function is certifying that a product, process, or service complies with the requirements specified in the applicable norms, laws, and regulations.
3. *Consulting firms:* provide services to those organizations that want to obtain certification. These firms design and implement strategies for the implementation of quality management systems with an eye towards certification.
4. *Organizations wishing to be certified:* are the organizations or firms (electoral authorities) that use the services of the three entities mentioned above, with the goal of being certified.

IV. OAS TECHNICAL COOPERATION IN THE CONTEXT OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS: CASE STUDIES

In terms of the modernization of electoral processes, the GS/OAS has been an important participant in the development and evolution of several regional EMBs over the last few years. Through the

3. Since its first publication 20 years ago, ISO 9001:2008 has become the most successful quality control system worldwide.

4. www.iso.org

experience of implementing electoral technical cooperation projects, the General Secretariat has been able to keep itself at the forefront of the latest tendencies and tools designed to strengthen the capacity of these institutions to organize free, fair, and transparent elections.

Beginning in 2007 and based on the requests of Member States, the GS/OAS began its involvement in the field of electoral quality, providing technical accompaniment to those countries that so requested through the implementation of quality management and certification systems under ISO norms. Since that initiative, the GS/OAS has become a pioneer in the fascinating and challenging field of electoral quality. Going down this path requires an immense level of institutional maturity as well as a degree of openness and flexibility.

In 2008, the first “Inter-American Forum on Quality Management Systems in Electoral Authorities” was held in Nuevo Leon, Mexico. The principal objective of this meeting was to promote the exchange of knowledge and experiences amongst regional EMBs with respect to quality management and certification under ISO norms. These discussions resulted in the design of tools designed to achieve higher levels of confidence, transparency, and modernization in the context of election administration, thus opening a space for the implementation of electoral quality management systems in more EMBs in the region, with the technical accompaniment of the GS/OAS.

1. OAS methodology for the implementation of electoral QMS

The decision to implement a quality management system is purely voluntary. Such a decision demonstrates an organizational mentality that is open to change as well as the commitment of upper management and their capability of spreading this motivation to all organizational personnel.

Individual EMBs from across the region operate with different levels of institutional development, which affect advances and achievements in the quality model adopted by each organization. It is important to emphasize that the internal

structure of each EMB as well as the internal processes and procedures adopted within each body, correspond to sovereign decisions made by each state. Nonetheless, the goal in each case is the organization of free and transparent elections.

In this sense, and with the aim of providing a prompt response to requests by member states relating to the implementation of Quality Management Systems, the GS/OAS has designed its own eight-step methodology. The times involved as well as the way in which each of these steps is completed can vary, depending on the size, structure, scope and level of institutional development of each organization.

- Step No.1- Diagnostic of key processes:

Throughout the diagnostic period, an evaluation is conducted of the activities, sub-processes and documentation of key processes. A sampling and interviews are conducted to identify the gaps between current practice and ISO 9001 standards.

-Step No. 2- Meeting with senior managers:

A meeting with upper management is conducted to explain the role played by the firm charged with carrying out the implementation of a quality management system as well as the ways in which its implementation can improve EMB performance.

-Step No.3- Training

The stage in which a series of training and capacity-building sessions are held to foster awareness, as well as basic and advanced knowledge of quality management systems for specialized staff involved in specific areas.

- Step No.4- Deployment, dissemination, and alignment of strategic plans

This stage involves the deployment and adaptation of strategic plans, timelines, implementation proposals, work plans for closing gaps as well as the definition of specific roles, conflict management, and the establishment of responsibilities for projects staff, the organization, and the work team.

-Step No.5- Designing and structuring the quality management system:

This stage involves the conceptualization and design of the structure of the electoral quality management system, through the elaboration of a preliminary framework of the QMS Quality Manual. Maps of key processes are developed.

The methodology applied involves a systematic focus based on the identification of organizational practices on a macro level so as to generate a clearer understanding of the organization's global vision.

The ultimate aim is to arrive at a greater level of detail regarding the ways in which each process can be further broken down into sub-processes and specific activities.

-Step No.6- Drafting and implementation of electoral QMS documentation:

In this step in the QMS design, documents, the quality manual, operative procedures, working plans, and forms are designed in accordance with the ISO standard and with the requirements accepted by each EMB.

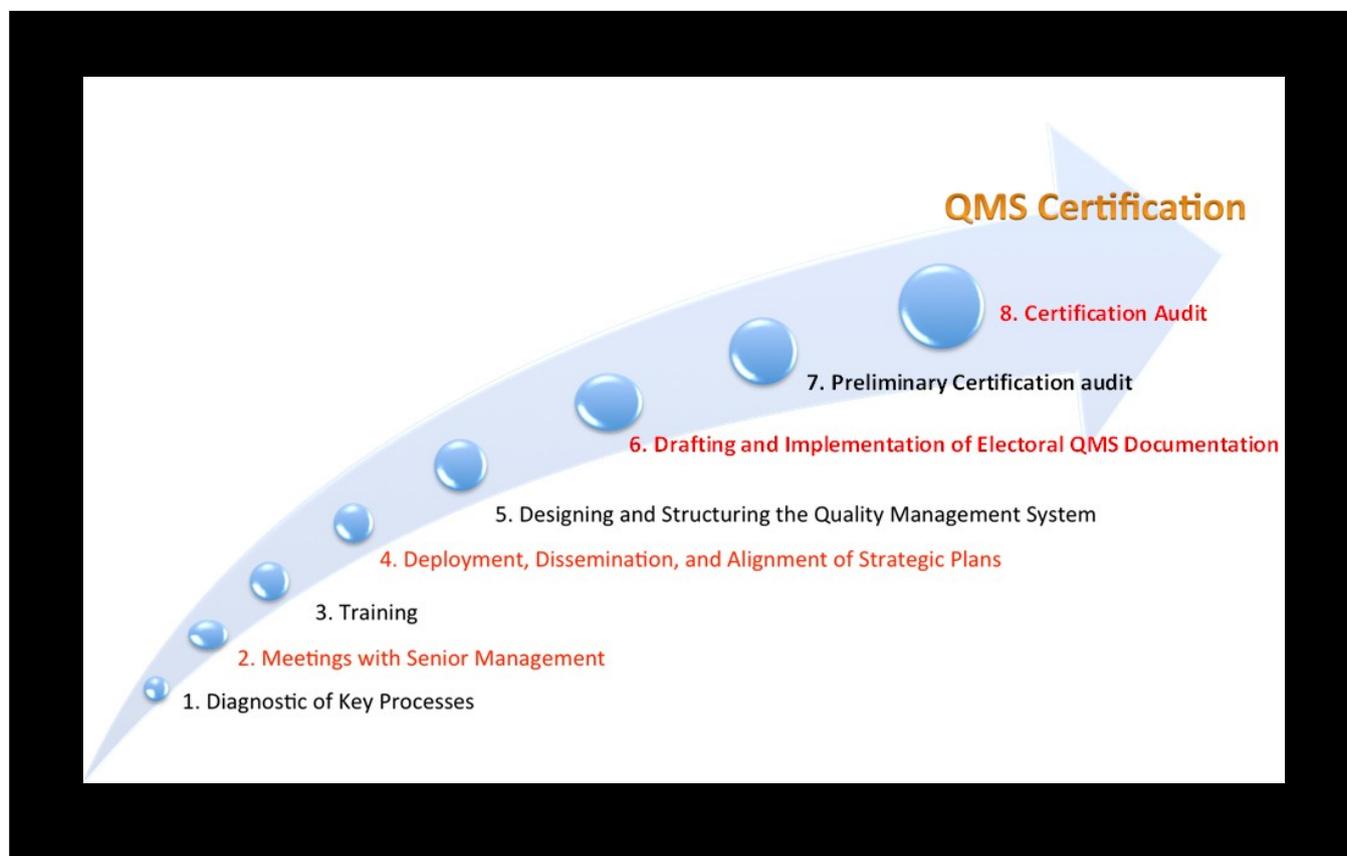
-Step No.7- Preliminary Certification audit:

When an electoral authority decides to conduct a certification process, a process known as a pre-audit is carried out in order to, establish findings to suggest the implementation of a certain amount of modifications that must be completed before the electoral organ can be certified.

-Step No.8- Certification audit:

The audit process involved in the certification of the electoral body

Figure 1: GS/OAS Methodology for the Implementation of Electoral QMS



Source: Prepared by OAS/DECO

2. Case studies:

PANAMA:

- The Electoral Tribunal of Panama

In early 2007 the Electoral Tribunal of Panama, the electoral management body in the country with exclusive jurisdiction over electoral organization, requested technical cooperation in the implementation of a quality management system and certification under ISO norms.

This complex process, which lasted over three years, began in February 2007 and came to a close in May 2010 when the Tribunal received its formal ISO certification. This certification placed the Tribunal as the first national EMB in the Americas to implement QMS within its internal organization. It was also the first body to be certified.

The scope of the QMS implementation and the certification of the electoral management body applied to a total of four areas: 1) the Civil Registry, 2) the Area Responsible for Distribution of Identity Cards, 3) Electoral Organization, and 4) Information Technology.

Figure 2: Panama Tribunal - Areas and Processes Certified

Principal Area	Core Processes
Civil Registry Direction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vital Facts (Births) 2. Legal Acts 3. Vital Facts (Deaths)
Distribution of Identity Cards	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ID Tasks 2. Acquiring ID Information 3. Production of IDs 4. Distribution of IDs
Electoral Organization	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supervision of Registration on Electoral Registry 2. Updating of Electoral Residence 3. Creation and Distribution of Electoral Maps
Information Technology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Design and Management Support of information Technology 2. Management of incidents and problems

The certification of the four areas in quality management systems was carried out according to a system of quality management known as “multi-site evaluation.”

This type of system involves determining the level of compliance with the quality management system against a non-statistical sample of required records, relating not just to the standard being audited but also to the management system being implemented. The purpose is to find evidence of process control, of compliance with the norm, and of continuous improvement.

During the implementation stage of the project, a QMS was designed and structured for everyone involved in the applicable process areas, including those relating to support. Minimum requirements for each process were established (Process mapping.) Furthermore, clearer job responsibilities and functions of each of the area's personnel were established as was the level of interdepartmental coordination. The final result was the elaboration of four Quality Manuals, one per each area.

Additionally, a series of trainings for institutional personnel were held, with the objective of building internal capacity in the area of quality management. A total of 100 courses were carried out, in which 1600 people participated.

This project that ended successfully with the certification of the electoral management body ended up being instructive. From the beginning, there were important challenges such as the initial fear amongst staff members of the changes that the implementation of a quality management system might entail.

Today the Tribunal operates with a clear and precise chain of command among its different areas. Through a process of audits and the application of corrective and preventive measures, the electoral management body has been able to strengthen its QMS.

The achievements of the project are directly reflected in greater levels of satisfaction in the primary beneficiary of the Tribunal, citizens. Some of the services that were certified directly affect the population, such as the issuance by the Civil Registry of identification and other documents. The functions of this area exert an impact on every Panamanian citizen, from birth until death. Furthermore, the benefits and lessons learned from this project are being applied in other areas of the institution.

In fact, the success of the project was translated into greater levels of citizen satisfaction as expressed by a 15% increase in the issuance of civil registry certifications and a 10% percent increase in the pace with which change of address information was updated.

PERU:

- *Peru's National Elections Board (in Spanish, Jurado Nacional de Elecciones (JNE)*

Beginning in 2010, Peru's National Elections Board (JNE), the electoral management body in Peru with judicial authority, requested the technical support of the GS/OAS with the aim of certifying four of its functions under ISO 9001:2008: 1. Auditing/oversight, 2. Citizen Services, 3. Civic Education and Citizen Training, 4. Registry of Political Organizations and 5. Regulatory Functions.

Figure 3: Five Key Processes Certified by the National Electoral Board of Peru (JNE)

Processes	Sub-processes
Auditing/ Oversight of Electoral Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electoral Registry • General, Andean Parliament, Regional, Municipal, Referendum and Recall Elections • Internal Democracy • Election of civil society representatives to the CCD, CCLP, CCLD • Other electoral processes • Partisan committees • Election of Municipal Authorities in Populated Centers
Citizen Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence Dispatch • Dispensation • Citizen Orientation • Registration in Registry of Political Organizations (ROP) • Central Archives

Citizen Education and Citizen Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Citizen Education • Continuing Citizen Education • Women and Citizenship • Electoral Museum • Electoral Documentation Center
Registry of Political Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration of Political Organizations • Attention to Requests and Updating of ROP Files • Registration Cancellations • ROP File
Regulatory Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of Reports • Normative Systematization • Elaboration of JNE Legal Reforms

Likewise, the following additional processes were certified: Logistics, Human Resources, Technological Development and Statistics. The JNE also carried out processes of direction and improvement directed at planning, innovation and development.

An exhaustive evaluation was also carried out of the sub-processes, activities, documentation and the registries of key processes, as well as the processes involved in direction, support and improvement. Through staff interviews and a sampling of required records, the JNE was able to analyze the gaps and inconsistencies between the practices of the organization and the ISO 9001:2008 standard.

Maps of key support processes were also developed. The methodology applied began with the identification of organizational processes on a macro level, defining the main performance indicators in order to later divide them into smaller processes that form the basis for the definition of procedures and activities.

Based on the internal necessities of the JNE identified in the diagnostic, a total of nine workshops were designed to train personnel in issues of quality management such as the management of

processes and the quality of service and communication oriented towards the citizenry. The JNE was able to train a total of 1,157 staff members.

This project represented an important challenge due to the initially low levels of compliance with each one of the five key processes mentioned in the ISO norm. Despite these limitations, the results proved very positive once the process was complete.

Figure 4: Courses and Topics Taught in the JNE

Course-Workshop	Programmed Events
Executive Analysis of Impact of ISO Standard 9001:2008 on the Organizations	1
Foundations of ISO 9001:2008 and general methodology for its implementation	10
Process-Based Management	10
Process Mapping and Deployment of Organizational Objectives	10
Management of effectiveness indicators (Results)	10
Development of documentation and process to control documents and registries of ISO 9001:2008 Quality Management System	10
Tools for quality and continual improvement	10
Training of internal auditors for the auditing of ISO 9001:2008/ ISO 19011:2002 Quality Management Systems	3
Quality in service and client-oriented communication	10

This process also resulted in the creation of a quality policy, which continues to regulate the processes and services of the JNE.

Figure 5: JNE Peru Quality Policy

QUALITY POLICY

The national board of elections, conscious of its responsibility as an autonomous constitutional body and rector of the Peruvian electoral system commits itself to:

- Directing its actions to the defense of democratic and ethical principals, within the framework of the Constitution and its Laws, to guarantee compliance with the popular will.
- Contributing to civic-electoral education as well as the strengthening of democracy with the aim of training a population that is aware and committed to future generations.
- Contributing to the strengthening of democracy through legislative proposals in the electoral arena.
- Guaranteeing the rights of Political Organizations and of citizens as an expression of political pluralism.
- Overseeing the legality of the exercise of popular suffrage
- Resolving the issues that the laws bestow on the JNE with equity and transparency
- Promoting the participation and identification of staff with the institutional vision, mission and strategic objectives
- Continually improving staff performance with the aim of achieving citizen satisfaction



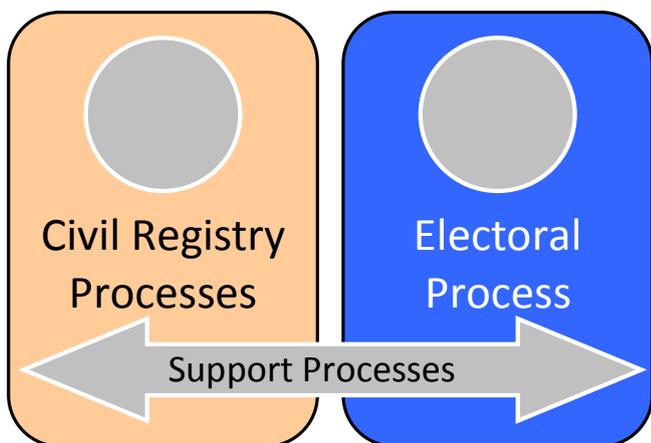
The implementation of a quality management system inside the JNE did not only allow the institution to improve its services, but also to identify which of these services could be outsourced in order to improve efficiency.

COSTA RICA:

- Electoral Tribunal (TE) of Costa Rica

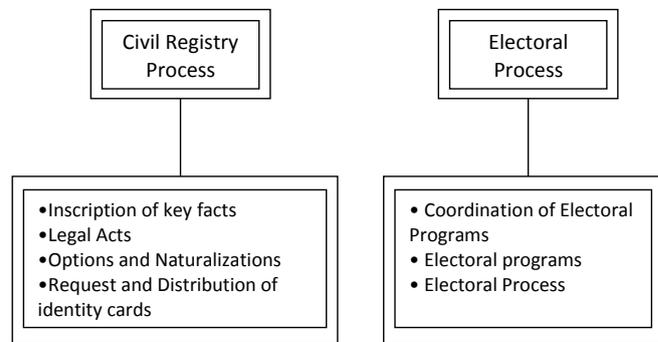
In 2008, the OAS began assisting the Electoral Tribunal of Costa Rica in a diagnostic relating the documentation, implementation and certification of two its key functions: 1) the Civil Registry and 2) the Electoral Process.

Figure 6: Objective and Scope of the Diagnostic: Two Key Process of the Costa Rica Electoral Tribunal



Each of these two processes was broken down into a series of sub-processes that came to form the backbone of the diagnosis, which is explained in more detail below. For example, the Tribunal's Civil Registry functions can be broken down into the following sub-processes:

Figure 7: Sub-Processes – Costa Rica Electoral Tribunal



The accompaniment provided by the OAS led to the identification of the pertinent requirements and steps to achieve the normalization of these processes in conformance with ISO norms. Among the products delivered by the GS/OAS as part of the diagnostic, and resulting from the OAS methodology, was a strategic plan, a feasibility study, a an analysis of performance gaps and a detailed work plan.

In addition, the OAS helped with an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) currently facing the Costa Rican EMB as well as an analysis of the Tribunal's organizational structure and a map of its key processes.

Thanks to this diagnostic, the Costa Rican Tribunal now operates with a tool that will allow it to implement the changes necessary to obtain a quality management system in the future.

V. ISO INTERNATIONAL ELECTORAL STANDARD TO CERTIFY ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BODIES ON A GLOBAL SCALE

Thanks to the continuous efforts of electoral authorities in the improvement of their organization and based on the inherent advantages of applying quality management systems in the electoral arena, the GS/OAS came up with the idea of creating an **ISO electoral**⁵ standard under which electoral authorities in our region and across the world could be certified.

This new norm, developed primarily by a joint working group of representatives from regional EMBs, provides a valuable guide for the design and implementation of quality management systems in electoral authorities. The standard also establishes the minimum requirements for its implementation, providing a standardized baseline for the evaluation of electoral processes.

1. Processes Incorporated in the ISO Norm

a) *Voter Registry:*

The voter registration process establishes the eligibility of individuals to vote. Voter registration is the process by which a person is incorporated into the voter's list.

The main activities carried out in the voter registration process are the receipt and review of identification documentation; verification of information; drawing of electoral boundaries; updating and maintenance of the voter's list; the generation and publication of the voter registry; submission and receipt of complaints; and the preparation of the final registry.

b) *Registration of political organizations and candidates*

The registration of political organizations and candidates is the process through which a political organization and/or a candidate gains legal recogni-

tion and is entitled to participate in an electoral process.

The main activities conducted by the electoral body for the registration of political organizations and/or candidates include the receipt and review of documentation; verification of documentation against legal requirements; registration and notification of the political organization; receipt and review of candidate challenges; and the registration and notification of candidates.

c) *Electoral logistics*

This process establishes the steps needed to organize and conduct an election. Electoral logistics processes comprise a group of activities conducted by the electoral body, including:

- a) Printing and preparation of ballots,
- b) Printing of records (including quality control materials),
- c) Development, procurement, and preparation of electoral materials,
- d) Designation and training of officials (e.g. poll workers),
- e) Establishment of polling stations,
- f) Protection and distribution of materials,
- g) Development and maintenance of electoral maps,
- h) Voting,
- i) Vote counting and declaration of results,
- j) Civic and electoral education,
- k) Oversight of political financing.

d) *Vote Casting*

Vote casting is the process through which a person expresses a preference for a candidate for public office or for a

5. The ISO 176 committee, charged with evaluating and approving the standard has denominated the new electoral standard as No.17582.

particular political proposal. Vote casting is secret, universal, and personal.

The voting process registers all of the votes cast by each voter in an electoral process whether in electronic, paper or other form. Voting procedures depend on the legal, regulatory, and policy framework in the particular country. All persons registered to vote have the right to vote, irrespective of their geographic location, gender, class, literacy level, occupation, or physical condition.

The activities conducted and supervised by the electoral institution during this process include the opening of polling stations and voter identification verification.

e) *Vote Counting and Declaration of Results*

The law in each country establishes the way in which votes are counted. Regardless, the vote counting process should consist of several steps, including:

- a) Registration of null votes,
- b) Determining the total number of voters who voted according to the voters list,
- c) Opening of the ballot box,
- d) Verification and reconciliation of the ballots, grouping of ballots to according to the different political choices,
- e) Counting of the votes,
- f) Setting aside of challenged ballots and determination whether to accept or reject challenged ballots according to the established rules,
- g) Compilation of the results sheets or statements of poll,
- h) The tabulation and announcement of the results.

Votes can be counted manually, mechanically, or electronically. By the end of the vote counting process, each polling station should be able to determine:

- 1) The number of electors who voted,
- 2) Number of rejected ballots,
- 3) Number of valid ballots,
- 4) Number of votes for each party and candidate, and
- 5) Number of challenged ballots

The electoral body is the only institution that has the authority to announce the official election results. Preliminary election results, exit polls and the announcement of other unofficial results should be handled according to the laws of each country.

f) *Electoral Education:*

Electoral education refers to the process of informing citizens of their democratic rights, election procedures (such as dates, times and places of voting, registration requirements, and voting mechanisms), candidates and other issues relating to the electoral process.

The process of electoral education should be carried out by the electoral management body. The main objective is to raise awareness of registration procedures, information about candidates/political organizations as well as to encourage voters to participate.

g) *Campaign-finance oversight*

This process analyzes the legal framework and enforcement mechanisms for campaign financing within an electoral process. Activities for the oversight of campaign financing include verifying the right to receive financing, the monitoring of public and private sources of funding and media access.

Campaign finance oversight aims to:

- 1) Deter corruption, the undue influence of special interests, the abuse of state resources, vote buying, and other forms of electoral fraud;
- 2) Ensure equity and impartiality in the access to financial resources granted to candidates and parties;
- 3) Promote competition between parties and candidates;
- 4) Limit overall spending on electoral campaigns and political party activity; and
- 5) Encourage transparency and public access to information about campaign finance by establishing financial reporting requirements.

h) Resolution of Electoral Disputes

The process of electoral dispute resolution is the mechanism through which the electoral body receives complaints, prepares the necessary documentation, resolves the problem and communicates the decision of all disputes which arise in the electoral process.

The main activities associated with electoral dispute resolution include the reception and revision of documentation; the guarantee of compliance with all of the procedures required by law, both before and after the resolution; and the adoption of the resolution.

2. Applicability and general benefits of the ISO Electoral Standard

This new standard provides electoral authorities with a tool that will improve public management and whose ultimate aim is the generation of electoral management that is more transparent, more efficient and more aligned with organizational objectives. This new standard will undoubtedly have a considerable impact on

the confidence of citizens, political parties, candidates, political organisms and other political bodies in the electoral authority.

The electoral standard is completely voluntary in its use and application and may be used by both permanent and temporal electoral authorities.

All of its requirements are generic. It is applicable to electoral processes for all levels of government, on a local, regional and national level.

The electoral standard specifies the “what” but not the “how” in the sense that it purposely does not detract from the jurisdictional functions of electoral authorities nor their administrative capacities granted by the laws of each country.

The adoption of a quality management system by an electoral authority constitutes a strategic decision, creating conditions for change, growth and social progress. In that process, directors play a fundamental role in the application of those changes. Such changes require a commitment to implementation and monitoring, and the active participation of staff in a team effort.

As a result, the incorporation of QMS in public administration, especially at the level of electoral management bodies, allows these institutions to achieve the objectives laid out in their strategic plans. The ultimate objective of this process is to increase citizen satisfaction through the organization of clean and transparent elections. Furthermore, the institution will modernize due to the fact that the concept of quality is established as an intrinsic element in the provision of goods and services, in which the focal point is the satisfaction of the population. Meanwhile, improvisation is reduced and management is professionalized. In this way, the concept of quality management is introduced throughout the organization, producing positive effects in the organization and holding of elections.



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