COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF STATE

STRATEGIC PLAN

FY 2025-2026

Jena Griswold

Secretary of State

LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY

Dear Coloradans,

It is an honor to serve Colorado as Secretary of State. The Department of State continues to set the standard for excellent customer service for Colorado's businesses, charities and nonprofits, and exceeds national guidelines for election accessibility and security. The dedicated public servants in my office go above and beyond to make sure our state government works for the people and supports each Coloradan's American dream.

In 2024, my office oversaw the 2024 Presidential Primary, State Primary and General Election, Colorado's first congressional vacancy election in a generation, and reported the highest number of registered active voters in Colorado's history. We awarded over $2.5 million to County Clerk and Recorders to support physical and cybersecurity improvements, oversaw the successful statewide rollout of Colorado's jail-based voting program, and celebrated 99% of voters choosing to return their mail ballot in two of Colorado's statewide elections last year.

In the last year, we have made huge strides in combating business fraud and are innovating to make our business services even more accessible to the public. I am pleased to share that since the launch of our online business fraud reporting tool in early 2023, we have resolved nearly 2,400 complaints. Last year the Secretary of State's Office was awarded the International Association of Commercial Administrators Merit Award for the 8th time for this innovative business fraud reporting process.

It has been a privilege to work across the state to support Colorado's economy and democracy. Every member of the Office works hard to ensure that our four divisions best serve Coloradans all across the state.
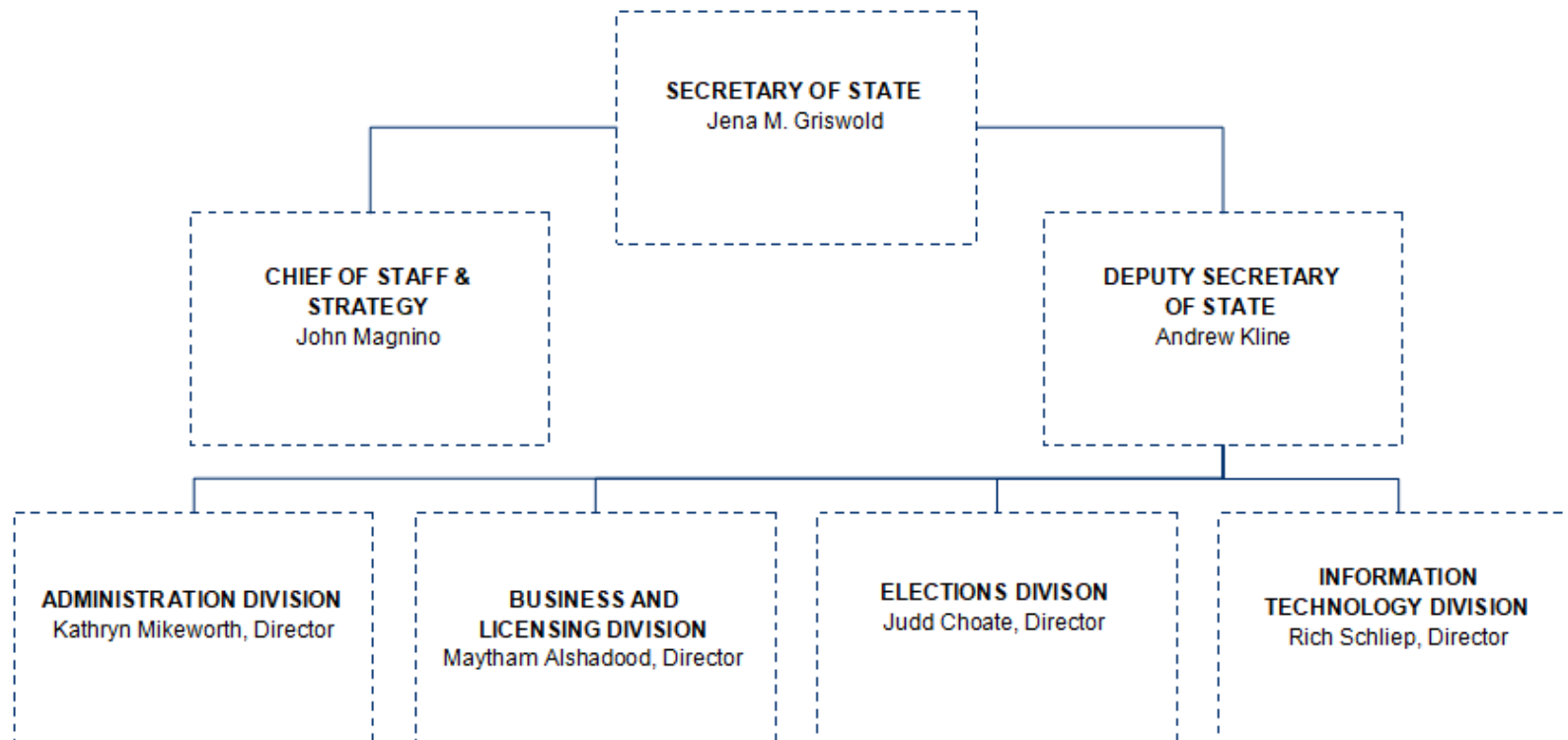
Sincerely,

Jena M. Griswold
Secretary of State

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BACKGROUND

The Department of State performs several critical functions, ranging from registering businesses to overseeing elections. **The Business and Licensing Division** receives filings such as business and nonprofit registrations, trade names, secured liens, notary public applications, and bingo and raffle reports. Additionally, the Division licenses durable medical equipment providers, promotes availability of government data, and makes performing rights society information accessible. Most filings are submitted electronically, and the Division disseminates this information to the public through its website.

The Elections Division oversees state elections and has responsibility for campaign finance disclosure and enforcement, statewide ballot initiative certification, and lobbyist registration. Two other divisions in the Department, **Administration** and **Information Technology**, support the Department's programs. Cash funds generated by business and other filings support nearly all of the Department's activities. Federal grants provide the remainder of elections funding.

NOTABLE PRIOR YEAR LEGISLATION

The Colorado Voting Rights Act (SB25-001 - Senator Gonzalez, Representatives Bacon, Joseph) – Codifies various federal anti-discrimination protections found in the National Voting Rights Act into Colorado State law. Specifically creates prohibitions and remedies relating to voter suppression and vote dilution as a result of election practices in political subdivisions. Expands existing requirements to municipalities for providing multilingual ballots to voters who do not speak English proficiently. Requires the Secretary of State to make data related to elections publicly available and requires political subdivisions to send election-related information to the Secretary.

Vacancies in the General Assembly (HB25-1315 – Representatives Sirota, Pugliese, Senators Weissman, Kirkmeyer) & County Commissioner Vacancies (HB25-1319 – Representatives Pugliese, Duran, Senators Kirkmeyer, Rodriguez) – The acts modify the process for filling vacancies in an unexpired term in the General Assembly or county commissioner for seats affiliated with a major political party. Creates a new election that is conducted as part of an odd-year coordinated election to fill a vacancy in the general assembly or County Commissioner. Also creates new campaign finance reporting requirements for candidates participating in the vacancy process.

First Responder Voter Registration Record Confidentiality (HB25-1195 – Representatives Johnson, Martinez, Senators Mullica, Baisley) – The act updates the requirements related to becoming a confidential voter. Permits "First Responders" to request to become a confidential voter without attesting to any specific fear of threat. Additionally removes the $5 filing fee and the requirement for a voter to appear at their clerk's office in person and instead allows forms to be submitted electronically.

Freedom from Intimidation in Elections Act (HB25-1225 – Representatives Woodrow, Velasco, Senators Hinrichsen, Daugherty) – Prohibits an individual from intimidating, threatening, or coercing any individual for engaging in certain election-related activities and creates a civil cause of action for victims of intimidation.

Modify Statewide Ballot Measure Processes (HB25-1327 - Representatives Sirota, Senators Froelich, Kipp) – Requires proponents of citizen-initiated ballot measures (initiatives) to submit a chart describing or otherwise visually demonstrating the differences between their initiatives when they submit 5 or more versions of an initiative to the title board within the same initiative cycle, with at least one of the same designated representatives of proponents, and on the same subject matter. Requires petition circulators to notify the Secretary of State when a petition has received 75% of the required number of signatures.

HOT TOPICS

Four Elections in 2024. 2024 had four elections overseen by the Department of State: the 2024 Presidential Primary, the 2024 Statewide Primary, a first-in-a-generation Congressional Vacancy Election in Congressional District 4, and the 2024 General Election. In the 2024 Presidential and Statewide Primaries, 99% of Coloradans who voted returned their mail ballot. Colorado continues to rank highly for state voter turnout, with participation rates well above the national average. The Colorado Election Model is among the most accessible and secure election systems in the country, so every Coloradan can have their voice heard.

Statewide rollout of jail-based voting program. The 2024 General Election was also the first in which every eligible confined Coloradan was able to make their voice heard from Colorado's jails. 2,584 eligible incarcerated individuals cast a ballot from jail or a detention center, either in-person or voting a mail ballot – accounting for almost 49% of the total population of average daily incarcerated individuals, according to Department of Correction Data. According to the Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition, 231 incarcerated individuals voted in the 2022 General Election; 2024 saw an over 1000% increase in votes cast from jail from that time.

Know your voting rights. In October 2024, Secretary Griswold announced a first-in-the-state "Know Your Voting Rights" booklet so that voters could have a quick reference guide to their rights under the law ahead of the 2024 General Election. A digital version of the booklet is available on www.GoVoteColorado.gov.

$2.5 million in HAVA funds awarded to counties. In 2024, 42 counties were awarded federal HAVA dollars from the Colorado Department of State to enhance physical and cyber security in County Clerk and Recorder offices.

$2.6 million awarded to counties by the Electronic Recording Technology Board in FY24-25. 18 counties have already received or will soon receive funds in 2025 to upgrade systems and preserve and index documents for greater access by the public.

The department was awarded the prestigious IACA Merit Award. The International Association of Commercial Administrators (IACA) recognized the Department with the Merit Award for our innovative business fraud complaints process. The process uses an online tool so that consumers and business owners, as well as law enforcement, can report suspected fraud for investigation. This award marks the Colorado Secretary of State's 8th IACA Merit Award since 2011. The business fraud complaints process marked two years in operation in February of 2025 and nearly 2,400 complaints have already been resolved.

INTRODUCTION

The Department of State primarily receives and makes information publicly available. Internet-based electronic filing and retrieval of information with the Department is favored by the general public, and in many cases, is mandatory. The Department is continually web-enabling documents and information for its customers.

Even though each Division within the Department has its own unique functions, some functions are consistent across programs, with the common thread being electronic information. For example:

Electronic Filings. Most of the records filed with the Department are filed electronically, including business filings, voter registrations, campaign finance disclosure, administrative rules, lobbyist reports, and charitable organization reports.

In addition to serving as the "keeper of records," the Secretary of State is the chief election official of the state, charged with administering statutes that relate directly or indirectly to the conduct of elections for the State of Colorado.

Licensing/Registering. Businesses, charitable organizations, fundraisers, voter registration drives, lobbyists, and durable medical equipment providers register with the Department. Bingo-raffle organizations are licensed, and notaries public receive commissions from the State through the Department.

Communicating/Educating. Each division devotes significant time to communicating with and assisting its constituents, the public, the private sector, governmental bodies, media, and others who require information regarding the Department's programs.

Records Disclosure. Through its website, the Department's divisions make available information about businesses in Colorado, disclosure information of political candidates and committees, and the disclosure reports filed by registered charitable organizations.

Legal Authority: The position of Secretary of State is created in Article IV of the Colorado Constitution. Statutory duties for the Department of State are found in Title 24, Article 21, Colorado Revised Statutes.

CDOS MISSION, VISION & VALUES

MISSION: We make government easy and accessible for people in order to further democracy, support economic opportunity for all Coloradans, and demonstrate a standard of integrity and excellence.

VISION: Our vision is to ensure all Coloradans have a voice in our future, help Coloradans and their businesses thrive, and be the best at what we do.

VALUES:

We serve: We strive to put the customer first and be responsive to their needs. We believe in government meeting Coloradans where they are.

We act with integrity: We put honesty and public service at the forefront of everything we do.

We continuously innovate: We work collaboratively to improve what we do.

We strive for excellence: We take pride in setting high standards and aren't satisfied with the status quo.

We are inclusive: We believe in being accessible, empowering all people, and ensuring that everyone's voice is heard.

CDOS PRIORITIES AND GOALS

Empowering our Employees

➢ Goal: Enhance Department performance and increase the knowledge and skill level of all employees.

Serving Our Customers

➢ Goal: Provide expanded and comprehensive support to our customers & stakeholders through enhancements to systems, products, and resources.

Innovation And Technology

➢ Goal: Streamline and modernize current technology to better serve the user and reduce costs and technical debt.

Communication, Accessibility, And Visibility

➢ Goal: Foster connection with the public and customers through transparency, accessibility, efficiency and communication.

EMPOWERING OUR EMPLOYEES

Goal: Enhance Department performance and increase the knowledge and skill level of all employees.

FY	Objectives
25-26	• Expand use of educational tools and resources throughout the divisions, focusing on establishing best practices. • Continue professional development with focus on cloud and more advanced cybersecurity controls. • Oversee an effective and efficient performance evaluation cycle. • Continue professional development with a focus on election official certification through the National Association of Election Officials.
26-27	• Utilize best practices and lessons learned to establish baseline (road map) coursework specific to roles for new hires to use as career path guidance. • Continue professional development with focus on cloud and more advanced cybersecurity controls. • Oversee an effective and efficient performance evaluation cycle. • Continue professional development with a focus on election official certification through the National Association of Election Officials.
27-28	• Create role-specific curriculum that ties directly to division and department-level performance mechanisms to reinforce employee growth. • Oversee an effective and efficient performance evaluation cycle evaluating practices and policies for improvement. • Continue professional development with a focus on election official certification through the National Association of Election Officials.

Key Strategies:

- Assign coursework as part of staff performance plans.
- Participate in conferences, events, and networking events specific to program disciplines.
- Increase participation of division staff in conferences, events, outreach, and networking.
- Provide a list of all the training required for staff on a quarterly basis.

- Provide a list of required training for specific technologies and applications.
- Ensure all supervisors are trained and knowledgeable about the performance review process and what is expected from them.
- Provide opportunities for employees to see the value they bring by tying their work to the Department's mission statement.
- Provide space for continuous and ongoing feedback between employees and their supervisors.
- Prioritize continuing education, conference attendance, and encourage staff to complete election official certification through the National Association of Election Officials and maintain other professional certifications.

Performance Measures:

- No less than 20% of division staff participate in conferences, events, outreach, development opportunities, networking events, etc.
- Provide a list of all required training to staff by end of quarter 1.
- Provide an approved software list along with required training for 2 software platforms by end of quarter 2.
- Provide required training for 2 additional software platforms by end of quarter 3.
- Provide the required training for 2 additional software platforms by end of quarter 4.
- Build a template that staff and managers will use to track training and use in reviews by end of quarter 1.
- Provide one supervisor training around performance management topics before June 30, 2026.
- Provide supervisors with clear instructions and dates for completing the performance review cycle prior to final review deadline.
- At least two staff complete election official certification through the National Association of Election Officials, and at least one staff begins process by January 1, 2026.

SERVING OUR CUSTOMERS

Goal: Provide expanded and comprehensive support to our customers & stakeholders through enhancements to systems, products, and resources.

FY	Objectives
25-26	• Maintain accessibility standards in all eLearning courses and apply standards to new courses researching and implementing any new best practice standards. • Enhance, modernize, and promote eLearning library content to accommodate customer needs and feedback based upon prior year's review of existing content and the completed needs assessment. • Continued professionalization of elections administration, including new and updated online and in-person courses and advanced training options for seasoned election administrators. • Improve software development lifecycle with automation and artificial intelligence.
26-27	• Maintain accessibility standards in all eLearning courses and apply standards to new courses researching and implementing any new best practice standards. • Assess prior year's interventions and actions' impact on website usability and customer experience through the use of eLearning offerings and other customer touchpoints. • Continued professionalization of elections administration, including evaluation of courses and advanced training options. • Continued improvements to software development lifecycles with automation and artificial intelligence.
27-28	• Implement industry-leading technology to modernize courses with the latest eLearning authoring tools and standards. • Review existing and emerging technologies to identify opportunities to improve website usability and constituent experience with division services. • Continued professionalization of elections administration, including developing additional recertification courses for seasoned election officials. • Continued Improvements to software development lifecycles with automation and artificial intelligence.

Strategies:

- Continue to develop interactive eLearning courses to solve Department training needs.
- Continue to develop short video tutorials to address single learning objectives.
- Use assorted delivery methods to directly meet the learning needs of both internal and external customers.
- Analyze feedback to improve customer experience.
- Leverage resources at OIT and Cornerstone to improve Learning Management System user experience.
- Conduct an inventory of available technologies that can be incorporated into our systems to improve usability and constituent experience.
- In consultation with partners identify pain points and preferred technologies to interact with our office.
- In consultation with intra-jurisdictional colleagues, identify new technologies that have been successfully deployed for consideration within our office.
- Identify and develop online or in-person training courses focused on skills ancillary to elections to meet the needs of seasoned county clerks and staff.
- Improve the Software Development pipeline with code analysis, automated feedback, and continual automated security review.
- Utilize contractors and cross-training to accelerate development, security, and operational projects.

Performance Measures:

- Develop and present at least one advanced course by February 1, 2026
- Complete one contract engagement to assist with development practices utilizing Artificial Intelligence or development best practices.

INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY

Goal: Streamline and modernize current technology in order to better serve the user and reduce costs and technical debt.

FY	Objectives
25-26	• Continue to modernize online services to improve overall user experience including continued work on the office's business systems rewrite. • Continue to improve the Risk Limiting Audit ("RLA") process to create efficiency, reduce erroneous discrepancies, and increase public transparency. • Eliminate technical debt and migrate to newer technologies. • Continue buildout of knowledge base and standard operating procedures to ensure efficient and effective knowledge sharing.
26-27	• Continue modernization efforts of system to provide improved customer experience by identifying the priority level of enhancements to be completed. • Evaluate RLA software and develop enhancements to improve usability, continue process improvement. • Complete buildout of knowledge base and standard operating procedures and conduct post-completion evaluation and determine next steps.
27-28	• Continue modernization efforts of system to provide improved customer experience by identifying the priority level of enhancements to be completed. • Coordinate with the Department of Local Affairs to implement a demographics analysis and develop process to collect election results and precinct boundary information. • Build Azure VMWare Services infrastructure to provide cloud infrastructure support, improved redundancy, and resiliency. • Build knowledge base articles, standard operating procedures, and governance repository policy documents.

Strategies:

- Utilize "Scrum" methodology to drive development of enhanced user experience.
- Maintain cadence of user accessibility testing to match development and QA build releases.
- Utilize best practices for release planning (including comms/train/press, etc.)

- Load test upgraded code in a local election ahead of the 2025 Coordinated Election.
- Develop and test any needed enhancements and develop backup plan for the 2025 Coordinated Election.
- Setup secure cloud virtualization services for core functions.

Performance Measures:

- Four Business rewrite releases (transactions to be determined based off of roadmap in development) by June 30, 2026.
- Conduct Risk Limiting Audit of the 2025 coordinated election with integrated instant run-off voting audit tool.
- Setup secure cloud virtualization services for a core function by end of quarter 3.
- 15 new knowledge base articles.

COMMUNICATION, ACCESSIBILITY AND VISIBILITY

Goal: Foster connection with the public and customers through transparency, accessibility, efficiency and communication.

FY	Objectives
25-26	• Continue expanding and maintaining partnerships to continue improving the accessibility and usability of voter resources. • Communicate effectively with news media, community groups, the public, and other stakeholders on the execution of the 2025 Coordinated Election and 2026 State Primary Election. • Evaluate and improve both public and internal communications and interfaces to increase accessibility and remove barriers. • Continue to foster collaboration with underserved communities, partner organizations, and other government agencies/entities, in an effort to increase accessibility of Division resources for community.
26-27	• Continue expanding and maintaining partnerships to continue improving the accessibility and usability of voter resources. • Communicate effectively with news media, community groups, the public, and other stakeholders on the execution of the 2026 General Election. • Evaluate and improve both public and internal communications and interfaces to promote accessibility and remove barriers. • Assess benefits and impact of public engagement efforts. Improve policies, services and activities as informed by solicited feedback from outreach staff, partners, and the community gained through these engagements.
27-28	• Continue expanding and maintaining partnerships to improve the accessibility and usability of voter resources. • Communicate effectively with news media, community groups, the public, and other stakeholders on the execution of the 2027 Coordinated Election, the 2028 Presidential Primary Election, the 2028 Statewide Primary Election, and begin communicating about the 2028 General Election. • Evaluate and improve both public and internal communications and interfaces to promote accessibility and remove barriers. • Review existing and emerging outreach practices and strategies as they are used in the field by other state agencies or partner jurisdictions ahead of the implementation phase in the following year, adding to our existing outreach tools. • Continue accessibility improvements for internal applications and systems. Ensure accessibility improvements are included with new custom developed software applications.

Strategies:

- Create a comprehensive, public-facing communications and media plan to ensure eligible Coloradans have the resources and information they need to cast a ballot for upcoming elections. Ensure Coloradans know their rights when casting a ballot.
- Track voter turnout and compare to previous years.
- Complete CORA requests in a timely manner.
- Make the CORA process more accessible by continuing to upgrade search capabilities, upgrading the CORA logging system, adding information for those requiring accommodation, and promoting transparency.
- Maintain a highly efficient and impartial growing administrative hearing office that ensures fair and timely resolution of disputes and enhances public trust and satisfaction in the administrative adjudication process.
- Train new staff on accessibility improvements.
- Host or participate in events (e.g., consultation programs) by various division programs to engage with and better educate their respective constituencies.
- Engage in regular information-sharing with partner agencies and other organizations to identify best practices to better serve our shared constituents.
- Review internal applications for accessibility improvements.
- Review internal Intranet sites for accessibility improvements.

Performance Measures:

- Roll out enhancements to the online ballot delivery system for the 2025 Coordinated Election to implement feedback on building and reviewing accessible documents.
- Host or participate in 10 community engagement, training sessions, or outreach events by June 30, 2026.
- Identify a list of best practices based on information-sharing conducted with partner agencies and other organizations by June 20, 2026.
- Ensure accessibility training is included in staff training plans by the end of each quarter.
- Review 1 internal custom developed application for accessibility improvements by end of each quarter.
- Review 1 internal SharePoint site for accessibility improvements by the end of each quarter.