

# ***Final Abridged Report***

## ***IEC Vision 2018 Study***

*Report Prepared for*

### **Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC)**

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## Acronyms and abbreviations

CEO	Chief Electoral Officer
CERKM	Civic Education, Research and Knowledge Management
DGSD	Democracy Governance and Service Delivery
EMB	Election Management Body
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IEC	Electoral Commission of South Africa
MANCO	Management Committee
NDP	National Development Plan
NPE	National and Provincial Elections
REC	Research Ethics Committee
SASAS	South African Social Attitude Survey
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals

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## **1. Introduction**

In July 2012, the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) presented its new organisational strategic vision known as Vision 2018. This Vision 2018 laid out the new mission and values for the organisation as well as how these would facilitate the realisation of the IEC's legal mandate. Furthermore, Vision 2018 outlined the IEC's Vision strategic objectives.

A number of internal and external organisational factors, including the end of term for three members of the 2011 Commission in November 2018, created an opportunity to review the IEC's Vision 2018 document. The Civic Education, Research and Knowledge Management (CERKM) Department of the IEC was thus mandated to assess employee perceptions of the Vision 2018 document. Specifically, the IEC wanted to understand whether employees believed that the IEC's Vision 2018 document needed revision in lieu of new internal organisational developments and socio-political changes in South Africa's political landscape since 2011 as well as global challenges, when Vision 2018 was developed.

Employee alignment with an organisation's strategic vision has a positive effect on organisational performance and Chapter 9 institutions are no exception. If there is a high degree of employee buy-in to a strategic vision, productivity improves and creativity increases, facilitating increased organisational efficiency to realise the organisation's goals and objectives. It is in this context that the IEC appointed the HSRC's DGSD programme to assess employee perceptions of Vision 2018.

A central objective of this study is to understand employees' perceptions of Vision 2018, and whether there is a perceived need to revise this vision, and, if so, in what way. This consultative exercise was important to ensure that the Vision document remains relevant and reflects the ideals employees believe are important for the IEC to strive towards in achieving its strategic objectives. More importantly, the Vision is a long-term plan with a number of goals that outlines the path for of an organisation's future. In other words, the Vision is not time-bound but a tool to guide the development of the strategic plan with defined objectives and actions necessary to achieve the goals spelled out in the Vision.

### **1.1 Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the internal Vision 2018 review are to:

- Understand the level of employee knowledge and awareness of Vision 2018
- Evaluate the extent to which organisational experiences align with the guiding vision, values and strategic priorities embedded in Vision 2018
- Determine whether there is a perceived need to revise the Vision 2018 document, and, if so, in what way
- Produce a short report that highlights key findings on employee attitudes towards Vision 2018, including relevant graphics to highlight the main findings
- Contribute to the IEC's new strategic vision

This study uses a mix-method research design to achieve the stated research objectives. The research methodology draws on a literature review and both quantitative and qualitative methods and techniques. An online questionnaire measured perceptions of IEC staff, and

drew on quantitative data collection and analysis techniques. The qualitative component consisted of a high-level panel discussion with members of IEC's Management Committee (MANCO), and key informant interviews with Commissioners, and the Chief Electoral Office (CEO).

## **1.2 Overview of report**

The Introduction Section 1 begins with a brief background of vision studies to contextualize the study.

Section 2 presents an outline of the Research Methodology of this study, which includes a description of online vision survey method and the demographic characteristics of the staff that participated in the study. Section 2 also outlines the methodology of the in-depth interviews with the Commissioners' and CEO, and the high-level panel discussion methodology with members of MANCO.

In Section 3, we present the findings according to the various core thematic themes of the study. The first thematic area focuses on the Familiarity with and Importance of Vision 2018. The second thematic area summarises the study participants' views on the Organisational Vision, Mission, and Values. The third thematic area focuses on the participants' views on the Strategic Objectives included in Vision 2018, while the fourth thematic area concentrates on views of the Key Priorities within each Vision 2018 Strategic Objective. The fifth thematic area examines the alignment between the Strategic Plan, Vision 2018, and the Country's Long-Term Vision as well as whether employees feel that Vision 2018 needs revision and what Contextual Factors impact on Vision 2018.

The final sections of the report consist of the Recommendations Section and Conclusion Section.

## **1.3 Background to the research**

Globally, the predominant political system is that of liberal democracy. The centrality of elections in a liberal democracy presupposes the importance of impartial electoral administration. Electoral Management Bodies (EMB) are a reliable tool to administer elections in a democratic country. The definition of an electoral administration as the organisation and conduct of elections to elective public (political) office by an electoral body subsume two things: a structure and a process (Jinadu, 1997: 2). This encompasses the bureaucracy that is set up or established to organise and conduct elections as well as agencies or institutions supporting electoral operations (structure), and the rules, procedures, and activities from the pre- to post-electoral operations (process). The structure and the process should contribute to set up an independent and autonomous institution for fair and transparent elections.

As institutionalists argue, electoral institutions are neither neutral nor simple intervening variables, but rather canvasses of action and mechanisms for producing political results (Gazibo, 2006). Generally, institutions are characterised by self-reinforcing processes and lock-in effects (Pierson, 2000). This means that institutions are characterised by self-

reinforcing or positive feedback in a political system. Once created, an institution has formidable capacity for its reproduction across time and tends to buttress its power and persevere over time. An institution is also resistant to change generated by pre-existing institutional structures and interests that are crystallised within them (lock-in effects) (Pierson, 2000; Gazibo, 2006). The effectiveness of an electoral commission depends on its autonomy, which is guaranteed through formal and legal means and often codified in constitutions and legislation. The constitutional guarantee of institutional autonomy is premised on the notion that the more autonomous an EMB is, the greater the country's chances for free and fair elections. This, in turn, consolidates electoral integrity, and by default, formal democracy in a country. This autonomy can be guaranteed by continually adapting the structure and processes of the EMB to the ever-changing socio-political and socio-economic environment. It is thus important to assess the dynamics in the structures and the processes of electoral administration in the context of democratic maturity, increasing the participation of minorities, and technological innovation (e.g. increasing use of E-voting).

The Vision 2018 project in South Africa exemplifies organisational self-reflection of processes and potential areas of institutional lock-in effects within the IEC in order to adjust internal structure and the process for organisational renewal in the context of changing socio-political and socio-economic dynamics. This justifies the request of the CEO through the Civic Education, Research and Knowledge Management (CERKM) Department of the IEC to assess employees' perceptions of its Vision 2018 document for possible revision and organisational renewal for long-term planning.

### **Mission and vision statements and organisational performance**

Mission and vision statements determine the organisational goals and direction, the rationale for the organisation's existence, and set strategic goals for organisational development and successful implementation (Wang & Lin, 2011). Vision and mission statements are an essential component of strategic management processes in all organisations, including private or public, profit or non-profit, and multi-national or small, medium and large-scale enterprises (Darbi, 2012). The success of strategic planning depends largely on the proper identification and formulation of the vision and mission statements given that these form the crux of an organisation's identity (Ozdem, 2011:1888).

Mission statements guide all processes of strategic planning and explain what organisations want to be and whom they serve (Ozdem, 2011; Pearce and David, 1987). Sufi and Howard (2003: 257) argue that mission statements serve as a useful tool for communication within the organisation (for employees) and with external stakeholders (such as investors, customers etc.) It helps employees distinguish between activities that correspond to institutional imperatives and those that do not (Morphew & Matthew, 2006: 457). A vision is a mental picture of a compelling future situation towards which an organisation strives. It originates from creative imagination, the act or power of perceiving imaginative mental images or foresightedness (Abolaji 2010). Organisational visions have been described and defined as an idealised goal state, a set of blueprints for the future, a map for members to follow, and an image of what needs to be achieved (Keeling, 2013). It may include both long-term, future-oriented goals and emotional appeals embedded in a set of values; it is focused on change

and depicts a future that is credible, realistic, attractive, inspiring, and better than the status quo (O'Connell et al, 2011). The vision creates a picture of an organisation's destination and provides a rationale for going there, a roadmap of the future. It contributes to identify the future based on present facts and realities, hopes, strengths and weaknesses, dreams, threats and opportunities (Taiwo et al, 2016: 128). A strong vision helps an organisation to map future events, prepare for changes and innovations in the broader and organisational environment, to forecast changes in the demands of customers and to boost employee efficiency (Powers, 2012).

Organisational vision and mission statements portray an organisation's image and uniqueness (Odzem, 2011), communicating the public image of the organisation to important stakeholders and groups. Internally mission and vision statements communicate desirable attitudes, work ethic, cultures, and values that employees should operationalize in their choice of actions and inactions (Darbi, 2012: 97).

When considering the benefits of introducing a mission statement into an organisation, Forbes and Seena (2006) highlight the inadequacy of only examining senior management's opinions. They found that a mission statement can have an impact throughout all levels of the organisation, and that all employee perceptions of mission and vision statements are important. Most of the earlier empirical works assessing perceptions of vision and mission statements concentrated on senior executives and managers. Previous scholarship focused on the formulation of vision and mission statements, the comprehensiveness of mission statements, and how these may affect organisational and employee performance. The perspective of the employee and, therefore, the larger work force has remained relatively neglected in the literature.

Increasingly, it is accepted that mission and vision statements tend to motivate, shape employee behaviours, cultivate high levels of commitment and ultimately impact positively on employee performance (Bart *et al*, 2001, Darbi, 2012). When vision and mission statements are properly crafted and implemented, they could influence the employee in their day-to-day activities and assist in achieving organisational goals with the mission and vision as the proverbial guiding light (Taiwo et al, 2016). Mission statements can serve to harness employees' energies and focus company resources when they are well developed and communicated. When employees feel the "heat of the mission" or have a "sense of mission", they execute their tasks with passion and resolve, thus working towards the implementation of the organisation's strategic mission (Bart et al, 2001: 33).

Yet, Bart and Tabone (1998) (cited in Darbi 2012) found that almost 40 percent of employees do not know or understand their organisation's mission and vision. Findings from recent studies on mission and vision statements and their potential impact on employee behaviour and attitudes highlight that most employees have first-hand knowledge of the mission and vision statements though this information may be difficult to come by. Additionally, the level of knowledge of the components/contents and perceptions about ownership of the organisational mission and vision are low. Employees regard ownership of an organisation's vision and mission as a prerequisite for the statements to impact on their behaviours and attitudes at work (Darbi, 2012). There are limited studies on how employees in African organisations perceive their organisational missions and visions and how these perceptions

relate to other organisational attitudes and behaviours (satisfaction, employee turnover). Key areas of study relate to the employees' awareness, understood as how salient is the mission in employees' minds. This will capture employees' level of awareness and knowledge of the organisational mission and vision statements and its components. Employees' organisational values should ideally align with the organisational mission and vision statements for it to have meaningful impact within the organisation. Therefore, a focus is also important on whether employees feel a sense of value ownership of is important.

## **2. Research Methodology**

The IEC's Vision 2018 Study employs a mixed-methods design that consists of both quantitative and qualitative research techniques. The quantitative component consisted of an online survey that targeted all staff members. The qualitative component included a literature review, in-depth interviews with the Commissioners and the CEO as well as a high-level panel discussion with some MANCO members.

The DGSD secured research ethics clearance from the HSRC Research Ethics Committee before commencing the study. The ethics approval is an important requirement because the research detailed in this report involves human subjects, meaning that ethical protocols must be strictly adhered to in order to ensure participants in the study do not experience undue harm. The ethics clearance received for the research project denotes that the study complies with the South African National Research Ethics Guidelines (2004), South African National Good Clinical Practice Guidelines (2006), and with the HSRC REC ethics requirements as contained in the HSRC REC Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures.<sup>1</sup>

All study participants signed the consent forms before we proceeded with the fieldwork. The consent forms informed those participants that should they have any complaints or ethical concerns about the research they participated in, they had the right to contact the HSRC REC Administrator or call the HSRC's toll-free ethics hotline (0800 212 123 or email [research.ethics@hsrc.ac.za](mailto:research.ethics@hsrc.ac.za)). In addition, participants were informed about the aim of the study and the voluntary nature of their participation, as well as their ability to withdraw from the study at any time.

### **2.1 Data Collection**

Once the research instruments were finalised and ethics approval granted, the DGSD researchers started with the fieldwork preparation. The DGSD team conducted the fieldwork in two phases. Phase 1 was completed before the 2019 National and Provincial Elections and involved the IEC staff online survey as well as the high-level panel discussion with senior staff (MANCO) of the IEC.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: <http://www.hsrc.ac.za/index.php?module=pagesetter&func=viewpub&tid=132&pid=167>

### 2.2.1. Phase 1: Online Vision Survey

The fieldwork for Phase 1 involved some procedures, including the digitisation of the paper-based survey. The HSRC data analyst was responsible for the finalisation of the web-based survey instrument as well as creating the survey link. Below is an example of the survey link.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dJHZ9KcdFCC\\_EyhTkyjDbGAm6QN4qRRugYRB4bWE\\_aE/viewform?edit\\_requested=true](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dJHZ9KcdFCC_EyhTkyjDbGAm6QN4qRRugYRB4bWE_aE/viewform?edit_requested=true)

The IEC's IT Department was responsible for the email distribution of the survey link to the target sample. Staff was requested to click on the link which took them to the survey questionnaire. They were next asked to follow the instructions carefully and to complete the survey. The online started on 16 November 2018 and closed on 11 February 2019. DGSD circulated the survey to 1048 participants and 405 employees completed the survey.<sup>2</sup> This represents a response rate of 38.64%. The response rate is adequate if we consider the short turnaround time and the December 2018 holiday period, as well as the many other priorities related to the 2019 National and Provincial Elections that the staff had during the data collection period. There is no international comparative data on this kind of survey but available industry standard response rate for an internet/email-based survey of this nature normally ranges between 10% and 15% (Fryrear, 2015). It is important to indicate survey aimed to include most staff that work for the IEC during the survey period. In specific, all permanent staff, those on a fixed-term contract and IT contract and permanent staff were included in the survey.

Our review of the data shows that the majority of the questionnaires were completed in KwaZulu-Natal (20.2%; N=82). This is somewhat surprising since more than two hundred (230) staff members are working at the National Office in Tshwane. Table 1 shows that 16.3% (N=66) of the IEC's staff members from the National Office participated in the survey. A large proportion of the participants were based in the Eastern Cape (11.1%; N=45), while Gauteng (9.9%; N=40) was also reasonably represented. However, Mpumalanga (3.0%; N=12) staff were less well represented in the survey. North West (6.2%; N=25) and Northern Cape (7.4%; N=30) were among the provinces with low staff participation in the survey.

The survey also assessed the number of years that staff members have worked at the IEC. We found that the results vary from less than one year to more than 20 years. Only seven staff members at the time of the survey have been with the IEC for one year or less. The largest proportion (N=91) has been with the IEC between 1 and 3 years. Another significant proportion (N=90) of the participants have been with the IEC for 5 to 10 years, while fewer (N=81) have been working at the IEC for between 15 and 20 years. Very few (N=4) of the participants have been with the IEC for more than 20 years. Age distribution of the survey participants shows that most of the staff are between 31 and 40 years (N=141) as well as 41 and 50 years (N=142) old. Very few of the staff are 30 years and younger (N=38). Even much lower are 61 years and older (N=15).

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to indicate that survey include most staff that worked for the IEC during the survey period. In specific, all permanent staff, those on a fixed-term contract and IT contract and permanent staff were included in survey.

**Table 1: Number of staff that completed the survey by province (N = 405)**

	Responses Received (N)	Total Staff	Percent Complete
Eastern Cape	45	174	11,1
Free State	38	58	9,4
Gauteng	40	75	9,9
KwaZulu-Natal	82	145	20,2
Limpopo	31	98	7,7
Mpumalanga	12	60	3,0
National office (Tshwane)	66	230	16,3
North West	25	77	6,2
Northern Cape	30	58	7,4
Western Cape	36	73	8,9
Total	405	1048	100,0

**Table 2: Vision survey participant characteristics (number of participants)**

Sex	Male			Female			
		204			201		
Population group	Black African		Coloured	Indian / Asian		White	
	320		42	10		26	
Programme at IEC	Corporate services		Electoral Services	Outreach		Other (Commission services, PEOs', Internal Audit, Office of CEO	
	74		219	80		32	
Years worked at IEC	1yr and under	Above 1 up to 3yrs	Above 3 up to 5yrs	Above 5 up to 10yrs	Above 10 up to 15yrs	Above 15 up to 20yrs	Above 20yrs
	7	91	60	90	71	81	4
Age	30yrs & below	31-40yrs	41-50yrs	51-60yrs		61yrs and up	
	38	141	142	69		15	

### 2.2.2. Phase 2: Key informant interviews with Commissioners and panel discussion with MANCO Members

In Phase 2 DGSD liaised with the personal assistants (PAs) of the commissioners and the CEO to set up the key informant interviews. An email invitation followed up the initial contact informing the Commissioners and the CEO that the DGSD had identified them as key stakeholders to participate in the Vision 2018 review. Their input would make a significant contribution to help understand Vision 2018 and the necessary changes the IEC would need to make to ensure relevance with the organisations' priorities as well as South Africa's national priorities. The DGSD conducted these interviews with the commissioners in Pretoria in early June (13 and 14 June) and the rest in Hermanus in late June (23 and 24 June).

The high-level MANCO discussions took place on 4 July 2019 in Centurion at the IEC’s National Office. Four DGSD researchers and nine participants from the IEC participated in the panel discussion. The DGSD project leader facilitated the discussion and started with a brief presentation of the key findings from the online vision survey. The demographic characteristics of the panel discussion with MANCO members reveal that two males and seven females participated in the discussion. The participants came from Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and North West. The National Office participants mostly worked in HR, IT, Finance and Audit and Communications.

### 3. Integrated Discussion: Staff, MANCO Members, and Commissioners

This study employed a mixed-method design drawing on quantitative methods (online survey with IEC staff members) and qualitative techniques that included a literature review, in-depth interviews with the commissioners and CEO as well as a high-level panel discussion with MANCO members.

This section presents the research around the identified core themes. The first thematic area focuses on the Familiarity and Importance of Vision 2018. The second thematic area summarises the study participants’ views on the Organisational Vision, Mission, and Values. The third thematic area focuses on the participants’ views on the Strategic Objectives included in Vision 2018, while the fourth thematic area concentrates on the views of the Key Priorities within each Vision 2018 Strategic Objective. The fifth thematic area examines the alignment between the Strategic Plan, Vision 2018, and the Country’s Long-Term Vision. Next, we establish whether employees feel that Vision 2018 needs revision and what Contextual Factors impact on Vision 2018. Finally, we examine the Strengths and Weaknesses of Vision 2018.

#### 3.1. Familiarity and Importance of Vision 2018

The online vision survey revealed that about nine out of ten employees are familiar with the 2018 Vision document, while about eight out of ten think the content of Vision 2018 is critically important (Table 3 and Table 4). There is very little difference among the various programme participants on how they view the importance of a long-term Vision document. The survey found that the largest proportion of participants from Corporate Services (91.9%) indicated that it is very important when compared to 88.8% for Outreach, 87.7% for Electoral Operations and 87.5% for the Commission Services.

**Table 3: Level of knowledge regarding the content of the E's Vision 2018 document**

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Very knowledgeable	191	47.2
Somewhat knowledgeable	182	44.9
Not very knowledgeable	26	6.4
Not at all knowledgeable	3	0.7
(Don't know)	3	0.7
Total	405	100.0

**Table 4: Level of satisfaction with the current content of the Vision 2018 document**

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Very satisfied	172	42.5
Satisfied	170	42.0
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	41	10.1
Dissatisfied	6	1.5
Very dissatisfied	1	0.2
(Don't know)	15	3.7
Total	405	100.0

The interviews with the Commissioners and CEO demonstrated a high level of knowledge and awareness of the Vision 2018 document among all of them. Some of the Commissioners indicated that they had been intimately involved in the development of Vision 2018. For example, one Commissioner indicated: *“I was at the heart of the evolution of the vision when it was first developed and the strategic thrust behind it. When we were drafting the document, we wanted the organisation to adopt a new thinking in meeting [our] statutory mandates.”*

All the Commissioners and CEO stress the importance of having a vision document. Some felt that there is need for a long-term vision as it provides a road-map of where the institution needs to be in the future. The Vision 2018 thus creates a basis to measure progress towards the future vision of the organisation. Commissioners also highlighted that a vision document provides a coherent approach to deal with most institutional challenges and aligns the IEC’s activities across various sectors.

MANCO members who participated in the panel discussion were all aware of the Vision 2018 document. For them, awareness of the vision document was important, especially to carry out their responsibilities. One of the MANCO panel discussion participants observed *“Within the HR context, Vision 2018 is used as a framework to guide and/or correct the behaviour of employees and instil principles of impartiality, etc.”*

The same participant valued the participatory nature of the development of the Vision 2018 document and remembered how in 2012 Cape Town, a general meeting was held with representatives from all spheres of the IEC in attendance where staff members had the opportunity to discuss freely and contribute to the creation of the vision.

Although there were high levels of awareness of Vision 2018, MANCO members flagged a concern that awareness of the Vision 2018 was inconsistent within the organisation. This was partly due to how Vision 2018 is presented to staff at all levels. Panellists highlighted that there is a need to instil a spirit of ownership in staff so that they carry out responsibilities with a participatory attitude. For example, a sense of ownership would include sentiments like *“I own this, I am part of this”*. Staff should adopt a spirit of proactive accountability going forward that entrenches staff ownership of the vision as a core value. There was consensus among the panel participants that having a vision document was important for the organisation. For example, *“We need to have something that we are working towards. It is necessary for the institution to have a long-term vision, which should be built into the strategic planning processes. Every strategic planning session should make reference to the vision.”*

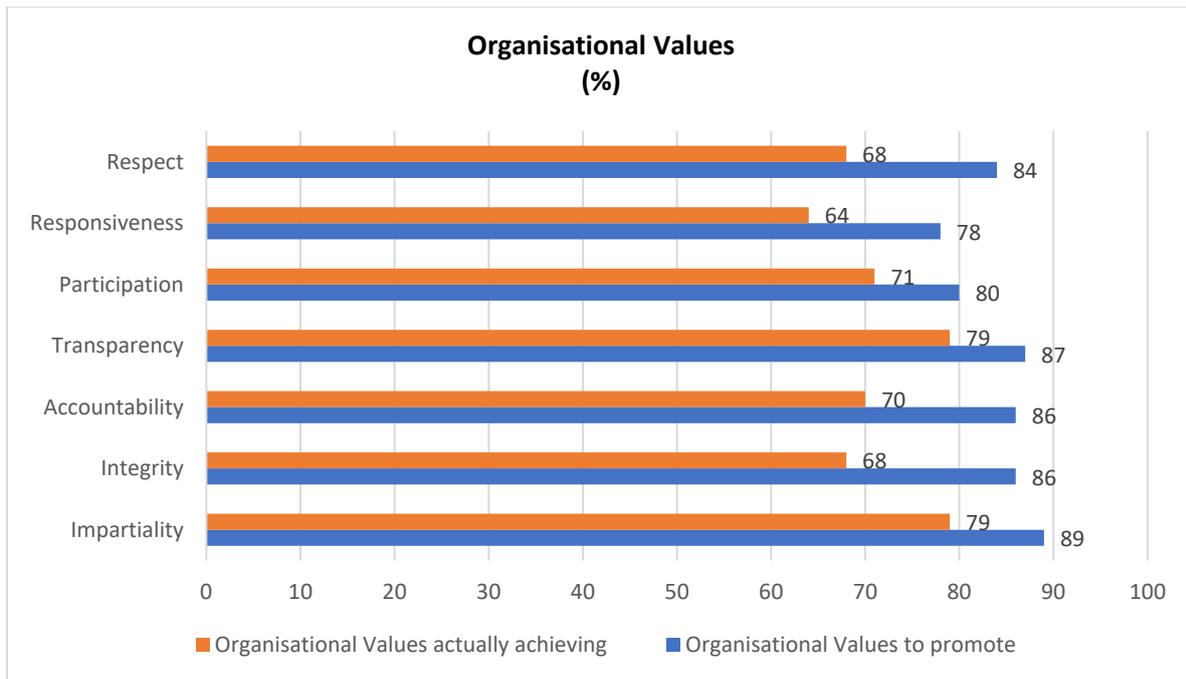
It was evident that all IEC staff members, including the Commissioners and CEO were very familiar with Vision 2018. Most considered it as an important document. However, the

MANCO members were particularly concerned that the level of knowledge and awareness of the Vision and Mission 2018 is uneven throughout the organisation. Consequently, the IEC must promote and present the Vision 2018 widely across all provinces and all staff levels.

### **3.2. Views on the Organisational Vision, Mission, and Values**

The Vision 2018 document outlines seven organisational values to guide the work of the IEC, both internally and in meeting the needs of external stakeholders (such as the electorate, political parties, the media, civil society organisations, and election staff). The values are 1) impartiality, 2) integrity, 3) accountability, 4) transparency, 5) participation, 6) responsiveness, and 7) respect. The online vision survey participants rated impartiality (89%) as most important value to promote, followed by transparency (87%), accountability (86%) and integrity (86%) (Figure 1). Fewer respondents mentioned responsiveness (78%), participation (80%) and respect (84%) as key values to promote. We also examined what values employees think the IEC is achieving in relation to what values it should promote. Respondents have a lower perception of the values the IEC is achieving when compared to what values they should promote. For example, although most of the respondents indicated that, the IEC should promote impartiality (98%); fewer respondents believe that they are achieving impartiality (79%). This trend is consistent for all the values. It is interesting to note that online survey respondents rated the value of responsiveness (64%) the lowest in terms of organisational achievement.

Similarly, interviews with the Commissioners and CEO revealed that there is a need for the IEC to be, *“responsive to our stakeholders but in particular, we need to be responsive to the needs of voters. Fundamentally, we need to represent the hopes and aspirations of our people. We should look at future through opportunities created by our Constitution. How do we realise the hopes and aspirations of South Africans and how do we help those who are disengaged? It is not a question of we want numbers (those eligible to register) for the sake of numbers.”* In essence, both the staff and Commissioners and CEO rated all organisational values as very important. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that staff felt the IEC is performing relatively poorly with regard to the values of responsiveness (64%), respect (68%) and integrity (68%).



**Figure 1: Organisational values important to promote compared to values the IEC is achieving**

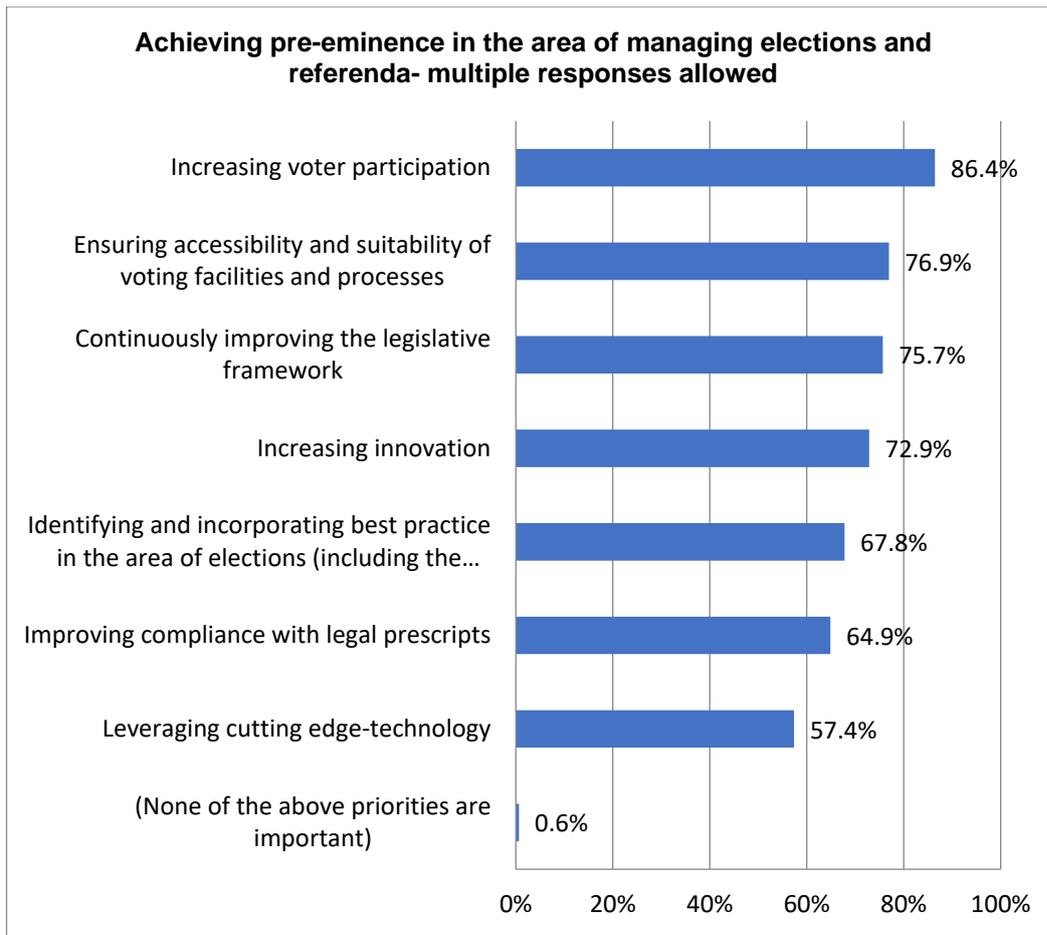
*Note: The numbers provided in Figure 1 and reported on in the text are % of responses rather than % of cases because respondents were allowed to provide multiple responses. As such, the numbers indicate what % of the total responses were in each category instead of the % of cases that mentioned each category. Consequently, these percentages do not add up to 100 percent.*

### **3.3. Views on the Strategic Objectives included in Vision 2018**

Vision 2018 identified five key strategic objectives, namely 1) achieving pre-eminence in the area of managing elections and referenda, 2) strengthening electoral democracy, 3) strengthening a cooperative relationship with political parties, 4) strengthening institutional excellence and professionalism at all levels of the organisation, and 5) strengthening institutional governance. Each of the strategic objectives consists of a number of key priorities. The IEC’s strategic objectives give effect to its vision and quest for continuous organisational development.

#### **3.3.1. Strategic Objective 1: Achieving pre-eminence in the area of managing elections and referenda**

When we examine strategic objective one (“achieving pre-eminence in the area of managing elections and referenda”) the online survey reveals that the IEC staff wanted to “increase[ing] voter participation” the most. This was followed by “ensuring accessibility and suitability of voting facilities and processes”; and “continuously improving the legislative framework” as important activities to achieve Vision 2018’s strategic objective 1. Leveraging cutting edge-technology was least preferred to remain as a priority (Figure 2).



**Figure 2: Achieving pre-eminence in the area of managing elections and referenda**

*Note: The numbers provided in Figure 8 and reported on in the text are % of responses rather than % of cases because respondents were allowed to provide multiple responses. As such, the numbers indicate what % of the total responses were in each category instead of the % of cases that mentioned each category. Consequently, these percentages do not add up to 100 percent*

All the Commissioners felt that “managing elections” is a very important objective and one of the Commissioner said it is the “*creed of the institution.*” There were two key reasons for this: 1) if we are to realise the vision of entrenching electoral democracy in the country, “it is central that the IEC occupies that space with a measure of public confidence in the institution, its processes, etc.”; and, 2) the IEC has a singular function, which is to manage elections, and its reputation is “*as good as the election that was held most recently.*”

Although most Commissioners and the CEO agreed managing the elections is probably the most important strategic objective, some indicated the value of this strategic objective is deeper than merely managing elections. Commissioners highlighted that pre-eminence is about “*engaging with the electorate around the importance of elections and to ensure that there is confidence in the process of participation in the election by as many people as possible.*” Furthermore, the Commissioners reasoned that “*the IEC must be a pre-eminent and world class institution that wants to entrench electoral democracy in the country. However, to be a pre-eminent and world class institution you need competent, professional staff and technological innovation.*”

MANCO members were more critical of the organisation’s performance in achieving Vision 2018 strategic objective 1. They highlighted that the IEC experienced some challenges with regard to performance in this area:

- Some participants suggested that the organisation is falling short, especially with the use of archaic systems and, thus, there is a need to be more innovative. *“We have become complacent and we have been overtaken by technology.”*
- There is a lack of evaluation processes to assess progress made. No strategic organisational performance monitoring and evaluation had been conducted since 2013.
- The IEC has conducted successful elections since 1994. Many international observers have recognised the great work by the IEC. However, the study participants felt that the high level of public trust in the IEC contributed to the complacency.
- The IEC must consider strategic objectives that include inspiring a voting attitude in the public so that they register to vote, most prominently, this should focus on the youth population.

It is evident that the area of election management is a central strategic objective of the IEC. It is important to emphasize that the Commissioners and CEO felt that this objective impacts on trust, confidence, reputation, and credibility, factors that affect election management (Figure 3). It is therefore important that the IEC continue to build trust within the organisation because this will foster confidence among staff and South Africans in general about the IEC’s ability to act on its mandate. Furthermore, the trust and confidence dividends will increase the IEC’s reputation and credibility as a leader in managing elections and referenda.

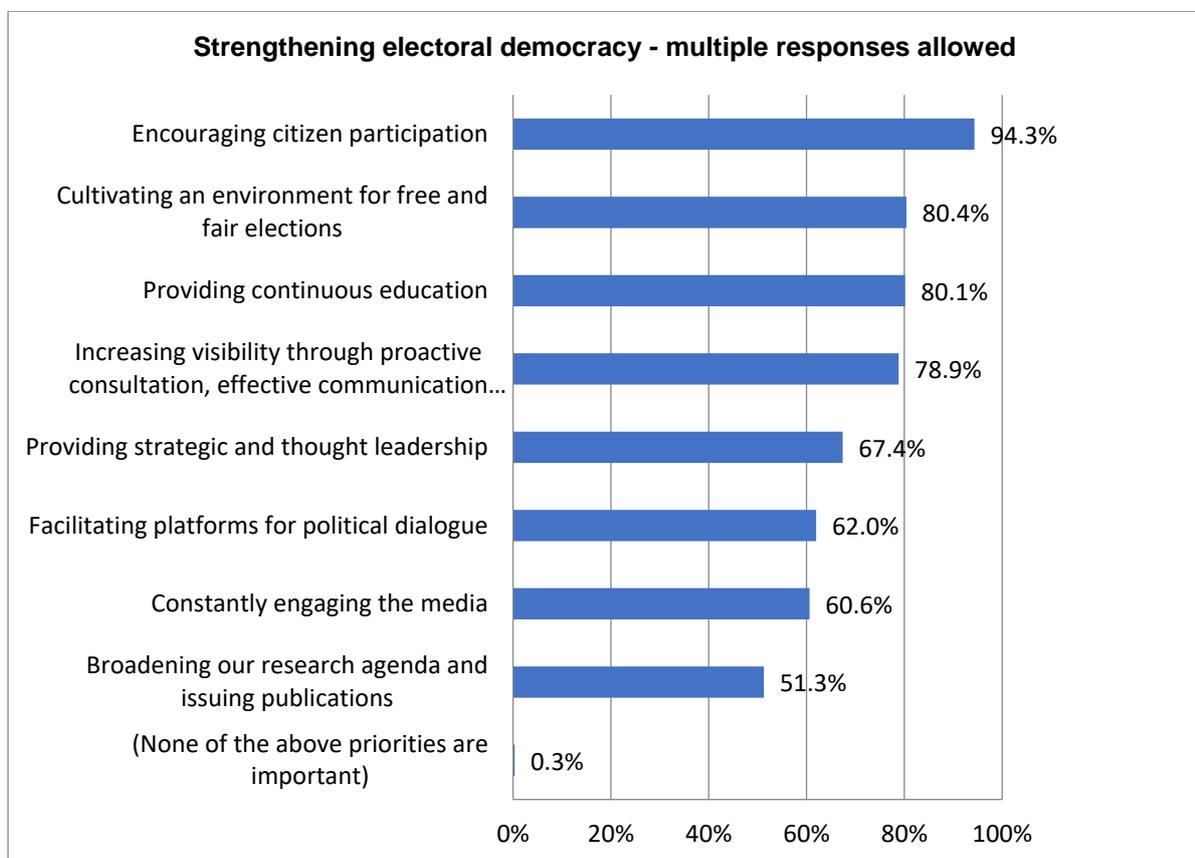


Figure 3: Interviewee perspectives on IEC Vision 2018 Strategic Objective 1

### 3.3.2. Strategic Objective 2: Strengthening electoral democracy

This strategic objective speaks to the core function of the IEC, most notably in the area of ensuring that the minimum requirements for a working democracy are met.

The Online Vision Survey asked staff to share their views on eight key priorities. “Strengthening electoral democracy” was the most mentioned response along with “encouraging citizen participation”. These two priorities are followed by “cultivating an environment for free and fair elections”; “providing continuous education” and “increasing visibility through proactive consultation, effective communication and presence”. However, the least mentioned to remain as a priority is “broadening our research agenda and issuing publications” (Figure 4).



**Figure 4: Strengthening electoral democracy**

*Note: The numbers provided in Figure 9 and reported on in the text are % of responses rather than % of cases because respondents were allowed to provide multiple responses. As such, the numbers indicate what % of the total responses were in each category instead of the % of cases that mentioned each category. Consequently, these percentages do not add up to 100 percent.*

All the Commissioners and CEO indicated that this strategic objective “remains very strongly embedded in the practices of the institution and it is well recognised by our peers.” Some Commissioners also emphasized that “if we have failed elections, we won’t be able to constitute legislative bodies, Parliament, provisional Legislatures and so on, and if we are

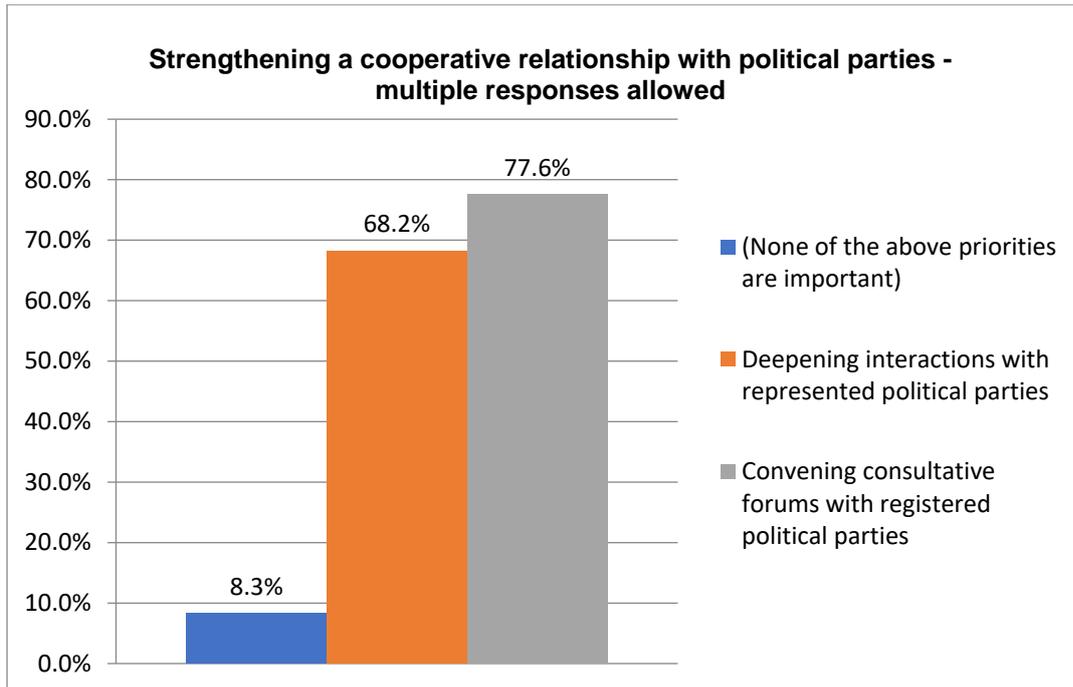
*unable to constitute legislative provisional bodies we will not be able to elect those who serve in the Executive.*” Commissioners and the CEO also indicated that the IEC is doing extremely well in terms of political party liaison mechanisms, which is key to strengthening the South African democracy. However, Commissioners and the CEO flagged that the IEC has challenges in relation to technological innovation and digitisation, refining rules and regulations that guide electoral conduct of stakeholders, strengthening voter and civic education, engaging in legislative review, most notably around party funding, and increasing voter participation.

MANCO members reiterated that all staff members must become the champions of this strategic objective. It is not just for the Outreach and Communications Department to build momentum. One of the MANCO members in the panel discussion strongly felt there needs to be an open debate about what *“strengthening electoral democracy”* really means. This was primarily because he or she felt that some Commissioners see the IEC as just an election management body. The IEC’s constitutional mandate is to strengthen constitutional democracy. In this regard, the MANCO members in the panel discussion indicated that *“the founding provisions of the Constitution should be considered as part of the IEC’s mandate – special reference is made to 1(d). The IEC is lacking on the issue of accountability. The IEC should have a stronger/leading voice in terms of accountability.”* The panel also felt that the IEC must deepen democracy by holding political parties accountable, specifically in relation to allocated resources and illicit party funding, as this directly impacts on the quality of elections. A key recommendation in this regard was that the new party funding act should be a new separate strategic objective. MANCO members in the panel discussion also recommended that the IEC take its outreach mandate and activities seriously and not consider it as the *“the step-child”* of the IEC: *“it is under-resourced and there is no priority for this objective.”*

### **3.3.3. Strategic Objective 3: Strengthening a cooperative relationship with political parties**

Strategic objective 3 of the IEC’s Vision 2018 specifically flags stakeholder engagement with political parties. This is an important objective because it seeks to facilitate mutually cooperative relationships to build trust for successful dispute resolution between political parties and the IEC. However, the Commissioners and CEO pointed out that the IEC has other stakeholders besides political parties. One Commissioner emphasised that Vision 2018 is not vocal enough about the role of independent stakeholders. Furthermore, the IEC cooperates well with old registered parties but less so with the newer or smaller parties.

Staff who participated in the online vision survey demonstrated a preference for *“convening consultative forums with registered political parties”* the most and *“deepening interactions with represented political parties”* less. Only a minority indicated that none of these two should remain as a priority (Figure 5).



**Figure 5: Strengthening a cooperative relationship with political parties**

*Note: The numbers provided in Figure 10 and reported on in the text are % of responses rather than % of cases because respondents were allowed to provide multiple responses. As such, the numbers indicate what % of the total responses were in each category instead of the % of cases that mentioned each category. Consequently, these percentages do not add up to 100 percent.*

MANCO members questioned the relevance and location of this objective. For example, one panellist stated that this “objective is not *necessary, there is already an established structure for this, and it should therefore be moved*” (Figure 6). Another MANCO Member pointed out that “*in the strategic planning exercise this objective was removed as a single objective.*” There was consensus that this strategic objective should be merged with strategic objective two (strengthening electoral democracy). The MANCO members of the panel discussion pointed to weaknesses in achieving this objective. For instance, one panel member suggested that “*on the engagement with political parties, liaisons with political parties can go further than the usual ‘PLC’ (political liaison committee) meetings. Previously, seminars were held with political parties on the use of electronic voting – the advantages and disadvantages thereof.*”

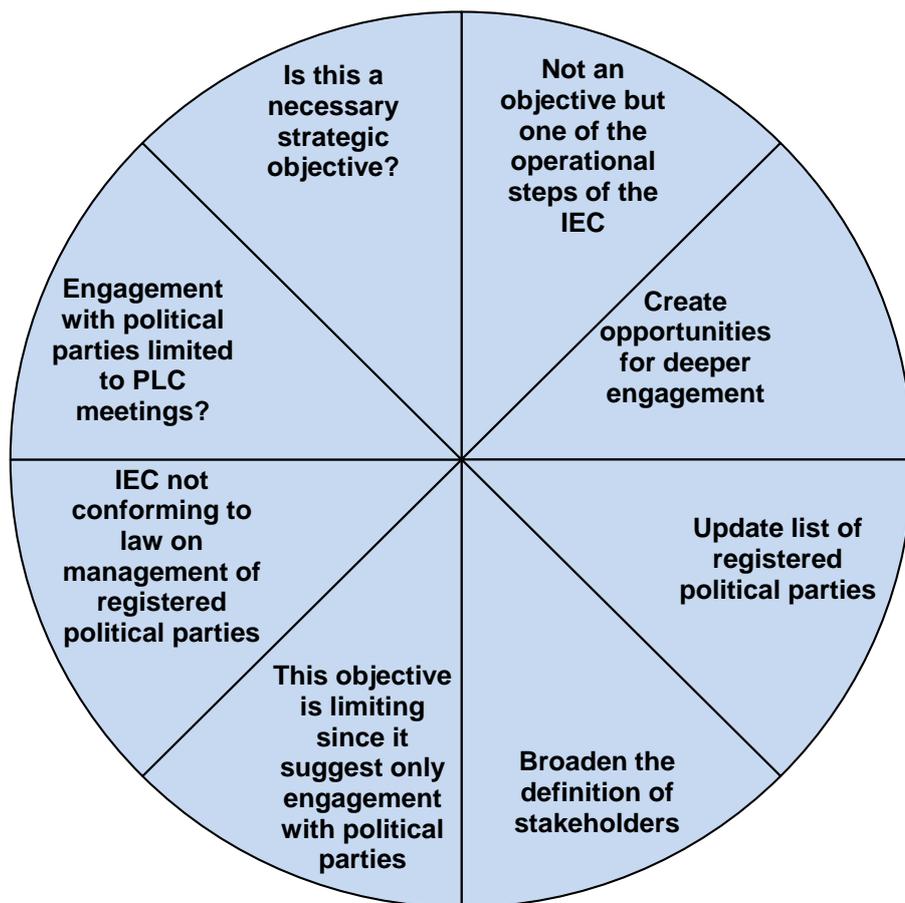


Figure 6: Views on strengthening a cooperative relationship with political parties

#### 3.3.4. Strategic Objective 4: Strengthening institutional excellence and professionalism at all levels of the organisation

Online survey participants, Commissioners and CEO held a mixed view of this particular objective. Some felt that the IEC must revise this objective because it is not performing well in this area, while others felt that there has been improvement. For instance, survey respondents were mostly in favour of “strengthening institutional excellence and professionalism at all levels of the organisation” to remain as a key activity. Survey respondents also felt that “striving for excellence at voting station level” and “strengthening our presence and effectiveness at local level” should remain as key activities. Survey respondents were less optimistic about “managing financial and human resources well and strengthening risk management”, “expanding human capital development”, “maintaining sound industrial relations”, “striving to comply with national climate change policies” (Figure 7). This seems to indicate that staff who participated in the online survey are less satisfied with the IEC performance in dealing with internal labour and human resource issues. It is therefore not surprising that the interviews with Commissioners and CEO identified the following areas of concern: technological innovation, skills development, institutional memory and continuity, staff capacity, effective internal cooperation, and cost effectiveness and efficiency.



**Figure 7: Strengthening institutional excellence and professionalism at all levels of the organisation**

*Note: The numbers provided in Figure 11 and reported on in the text are % of responses rather than % of cases because respondents were allowed to provide multiple responses. As such, the numbers indicate what % of the total responses were in each category instead of the % of cases that mentioned each category. Percentages therefore do not add up to 100 percent.*

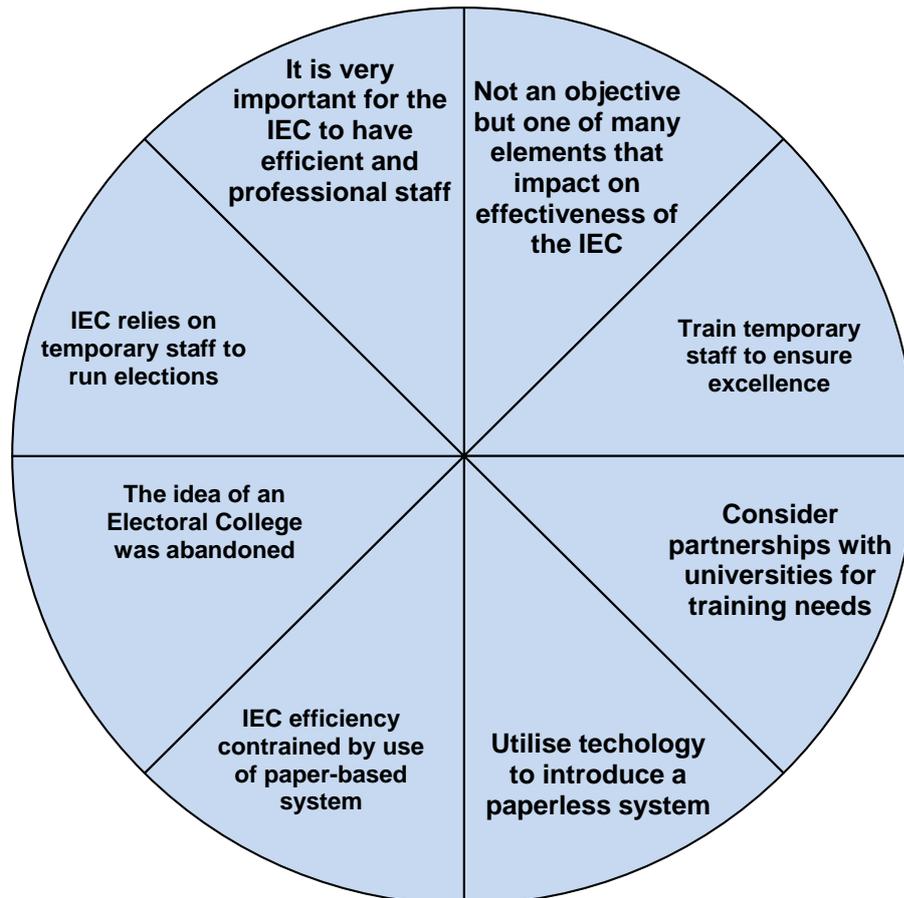
It is recommended that the IEC invest in skills and capacity development. One of the Commissioners observed, *“it takes a lot of skills to make voting successful. One of the weaknesses is that the IEC use contract staff [who] are poorly trained because of time constraints and this influences excellence and professionalism.”* The IEC need to focus on technical skills, IT, skills training, and election management and logistics. Training and capacity building in these areas should be continuous to ensure that IEC staff have the appropriate level of skill and capacity.

MANCO members held similar views to that of the Commissioners and survey participants. For them excellence and professionalism are critical objectives for the IEC and should not be removed. However, some panel members felt that the priority *“striving for excellence at voting station level”*, should be moved to Strategic Objective 1, which deals with election management as *“Strategic Objective 4 focus more towards the inward organisational issues such as permanent staff and the infrastructure.”* The panel members therefore highlighted that this is a clear weakness of Vision 2018 (Figure 8).

To ensure excellence and professionalism the MANCO members suggested that the IEC consider a different model for acquiring voting station staff. One recommendation was that the *“IEC must think about an academy that trains officials or linking up with institutions to assist during the interim periods between elections to find graduate professionals and train them in the process of election management. The IEC should not be judged if they refuse to*

*make use of unemployed people and instead want to employ a skilled body of individuals to run an election.”*

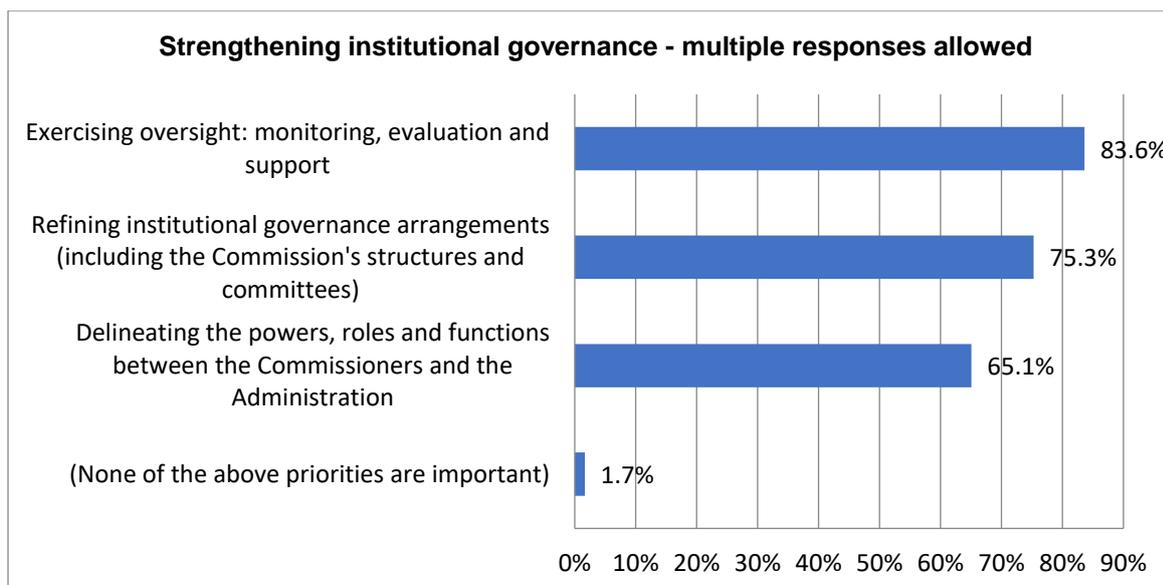
There is a close link between technology and the performance of this objective. One MANCO member that participated in the panel discussion, for example stressed the *“need for a shift from a paper-based environment to a paper-less environment. The IEC must take advantage of technology to introduce efficiency if the commission is serious about excellence at the voting station level.”*



**Figure 8: Views on strengthening institutional excellence and professionalism**

### **3.3.5. Strategic Objective 5: Strengthening institutional governance**

Online survey participants indicated that “strengthening institutional governance” was critically important and should remain a priority for the organisation. In comparison, “Exercising oversight: monitoring, evaluation and support” was seen as less important and “delineating the powers, roles and functions between the Commissioners and the Administration” the least important (Figure 9).



**Figure 9: Strengthening institutional governance**

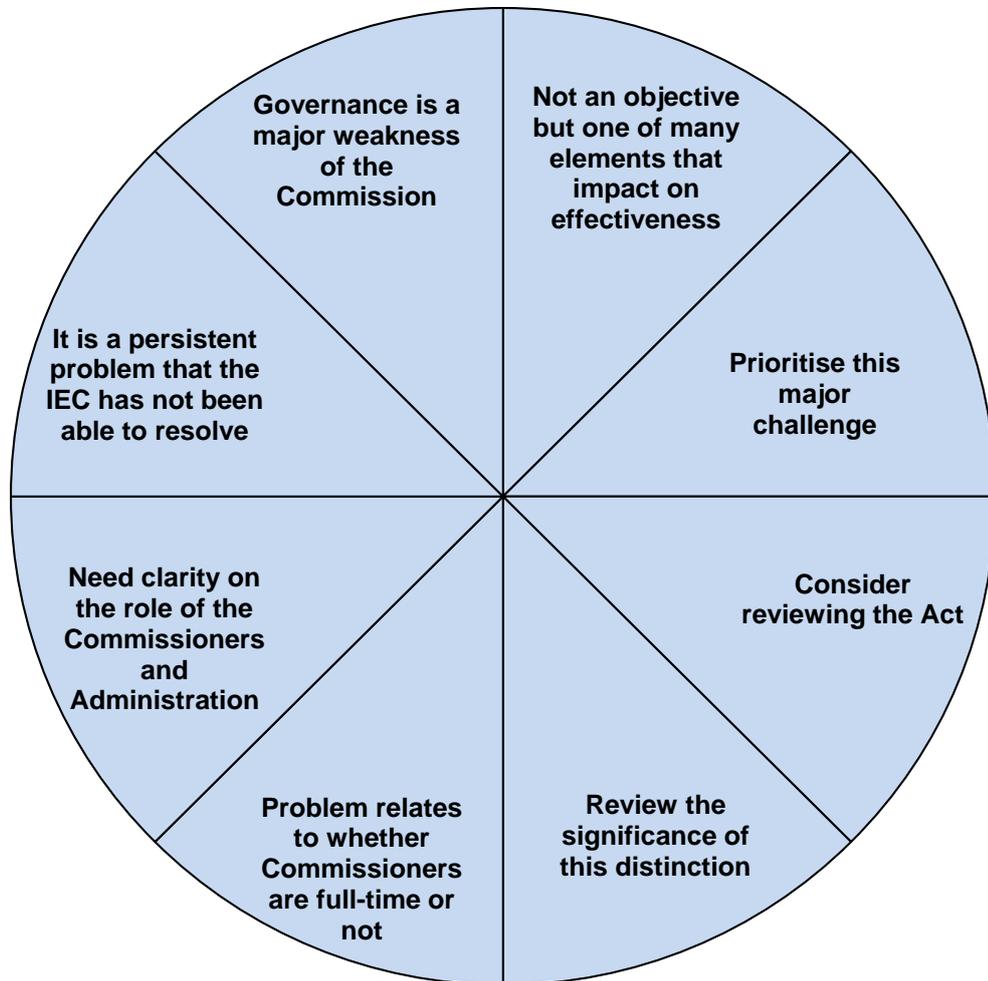
*Note: The numbers provided in Figure 12 and reported on in the text are % of responses rather than % of cases because respondents were allowed to provide multiple responses. As such, the numbers indicate what % of the total responses were in each category instead of the % of cases that mentioned each category. Percentages therefore do not add up to 100 percent.*

Commissioners highlighted that “governance between the Commissioners and the administration” was a weak area in terms of organisational performance. For example, staff from the survey as well as MANCO members indicated that “*the governance architecture doesn’t work because of the individual leaders or personalities involved*”. Furthermore, the study found that the MANCO members as well as the Commissioners and CEO indicated concern around transparency and trust.

It is therefore not surprising that the Commissioners, CEO and MANCO Members felt that the IEC must review the roles and responsibilities of the Commissioners and IEC leadership (particularly the role and responsibilities of the Commissioners versus the CEO). This is important because the powers of the CEO and Commissioners are clear in Chapter 3 of the Electoral Commission Act 51. The Act clearly stipulates that the CEO a) shall be the head of the administration of the Commission; b) shall be the accounting officer of the Commission; and c) may exercise all such powers and shall perform all such duties and functions as may be entrusted or assigned to him or her by the Commission or this Actor any law (Election Legislation, 2019).

MANCO members also agreed that the IEC must address this situation because it influences the organisation on various fronts. To this effect, all panel participants agreed that “*the Act must be reviewed or amended, even if it means taking a direct instruction from Parliament to create a Commission of Inquiry into the governance issues of the IEC*”. It is clear from all the discussions that this critical issue is top of the list in terms of revision or amendment. While strong sentiments were expressed in the discussions with the MANCO members, it is emphasised that clarification is needed about the role and responsibilities of the CEO and the Commissioners rather than changing the Electoral Commission Act altogether (Figure 10).

Another challenge Commissioners and the CEO flagged was that the broader public does not necessarily draw a distinction between them (the Commissioners) and the IEC as an organisation.

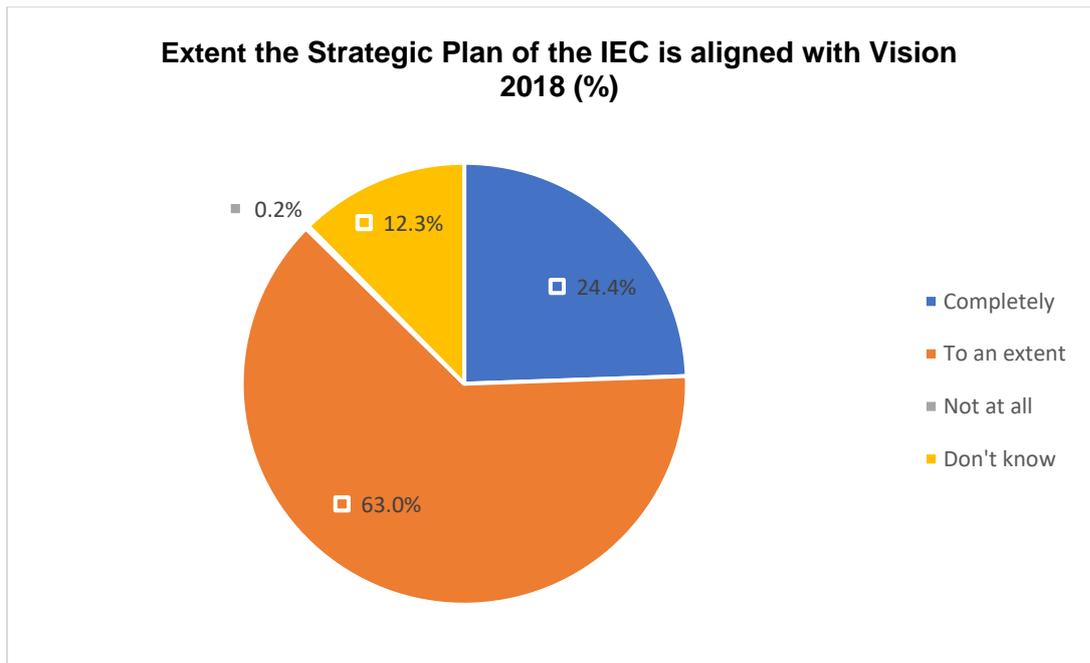


**Figure 10: Views on strengthening institutional governance**

### **3.4. Alignment between the Strategic Plan, Vision 2018, and the Country’s Long-Term Vision**

#### *Alignment between the Strategic Plan and Vision 2018*

The study also examined participants’ opinions with regard to the alignment of the Strategic Plan with the Vision 2018 document. The findings are not conclusive. For instance, a majority of online survey participants (six out of ten) felt that the IEC’s Strategic Plan is “to some extent” or “to a small extent” aligned with Vision 2018. A smaller proportion (two out of ten) felt that the IEC’s Strategic Plan was aligned with Vision 2018 “to a large extent” or “completely”. Approximately one out of ten said they “don’t know”. Thus, few staff members feel that the Strategic Plan and Vision 2018 is coherently aligned (Figure 11).

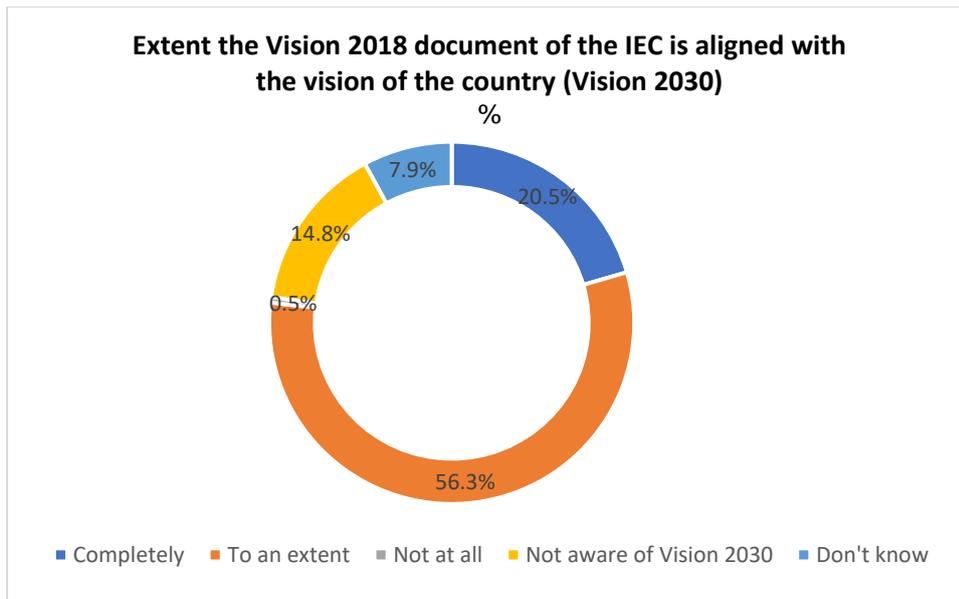


**Figure 11: Strategic Plan alignment with Vision 2018**

Commissioners and the CEO were more positive in their assessment of the alignment between the IEC’s Strategic Plan and Vision 2018. Most felt that there was strong alignment between the three objectives in the strategic plan and the five of the vision. One Commissioner even indicated that about 80% of the strategic plan is aligned to the Vision 2018 document. However, one Commissioner indicated that the manner in which strategic documents are crafted, or “the extent to which the plan speaks to what’s planned and what’s done” and how it fits into the organisational intricacies and impact also needs additional work.

*Alignment between Vision 2018 and the Country’s Long-Term Vision*

The online survey found mixed views on the alignment of Vision 2018 and the country’s long-term vision. Just more than half of the participants indicated that Vision 2018 is to “some extent” or to “a small extent” aligned with the vision of the country as a whole. Approximately two tenths of the survey participants felt that Vision 2018 and the vision of the country as a whole is aligned to a “large extent” or “completely”. Most staff therefore do not see a clear correlation between the long-term vision of the country and the organisation’s Vision 2018 (Figure 12).



**Figure 12: Alignment of Vision 2018 with the vision of the country**

A MANCO member observed,

*“the IEC’s mandate is directly aligned with the National Development Plan’s vision of building a capable developmental state, and an active and engaged citizenry. There should be emphasis on the link between the NDP, and what the IEC try to achieve. For instance, the IEC must emphasize the building of partnerships with governmental departments and entities in relation to training and educational programmes and infrastructure for schools that we use as voting stations.”*

### **3.5. Vision 2018 needs revision**

We asked the online survey respondents if they “think the Vision 2018 document should be completely changed, partially changed, or not changed at all?” The results show that more than half of the respondents indicated that the Vision 2018 document should be "partially changed," while less than four in ten said it should "not change at all". Less than one in ten of respondents indicated that it should "change completely" (Figure 13). The feedback from the MANCO panel discussion shows that the majority of the panel participants indicated that the IEC should partially change its Vision 2018 document. This was primarily because of implementation challenges as opposed to the contents of Vision 2018 needing change.

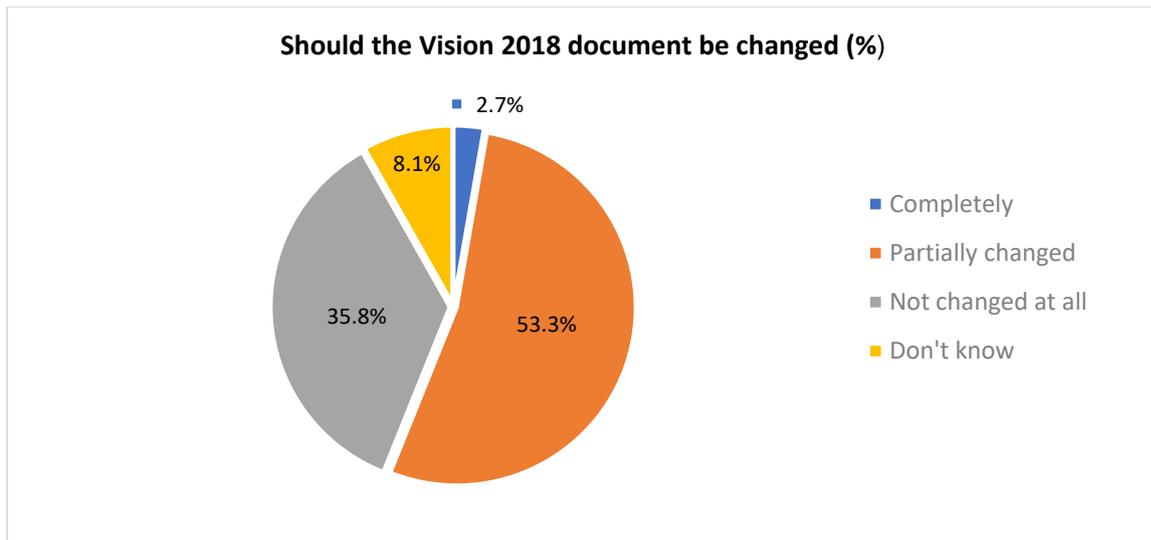


Figure 13: Should the Vision 2018 document be changed (%)

### Influence of Contextual Factors on Vision 2018

With regard to contextual factors that impact on Vision 2018, our findings focus on respondents' views on the external changes and internal challenges that have been overlooked. The online survey participants indicated that the political climate, 2) technology and 3) the shift in political dynamics emerged as critical areas that impacted on achieving Vision 2018. Respondents felt that the large numbers of political parties in an election, narrower winning margins between parties and the rise of radical parties require the IEC to examine a variety of approaches to effectively deal with these changes. Respondents also highlighted that the emergence of new forms of media, especially social media, and its impact on electoral democracy as essential factors that the IEC had to consider and make use of in order to be a progressive voice in electoral democracy.

Survey respondents were asked to reflect on specific challenges that the IEC faced since 2011 that they feel are not addressed in the Vision 2018 document. A majority of respondents flagged voters' addresses as an issue and the many court cases that the IEC has been dealing with in this regard. This issue must be resolved as a matter of urgency since it impacts on the organisation's internal and external reputation. Another concern respondents flagged related to is workplace challenges. These challenges have a negative impact and lower staff morale. Accordingly, some recommended the need for team building.

### 3.6. The Strengths and Weaknesses of Vision 2018.

A MANCO member observed,

*Vision 2018 document is a sound building block to work from for the next visioning exercise. On the other hand, the weakness is that it does not speak to the lower levels of staff in the organisation. There should be more context to words used without going into too much detail. The same participant said that some successful organisations use short sentences as value statements.*

When asked about the strengths and weaknesses of Vision 2018 the online survey respondents felt that the Vision 2018 is crafted in a clear and concise manner and that the strategic objectives are practical and achievable (Figure 14). The survey participants also emphasised that Vision 2018 makes it clear that the IEC is striving to become a pre-eminent leader in elections.

Respondents also highlighted a number of general weaknesses. Specific weaknesses related to the IEC's ability to internally implement Vision 2018, that the IEC is confronted with budget constraints that hampers internal and external operations, that there is a general lack of accountability, and that there is poor stakeholder engagement, especially with the voting public .

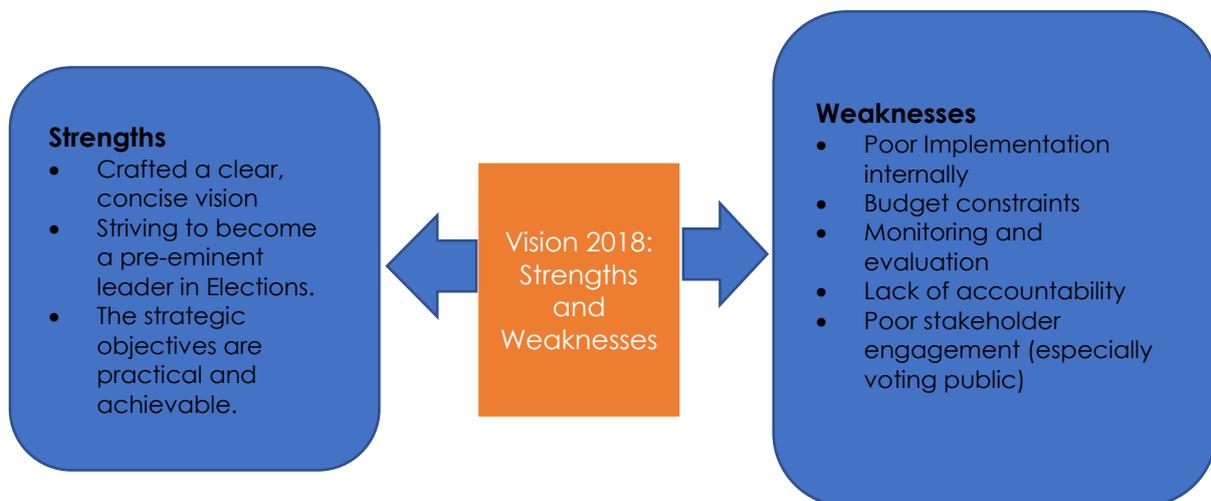


Figure 14: Strengths and weaknesses of the Vision

#### **4. Key recommendations**

The literature review highlighted that the success of strategic planning depends largely on the proper identification and formulation of the vision and mission statements given that these form the crux of an organisation's identity. Thus evaluating Vision 2018 is an important step towards the strategic planning processes of the IEC. Through including the views of all stakeholders, particularly staff at all levels increases organisational and employee performance. A comprehensive and inclusive assessment of Vision 2018 will give employees a sense of ownership, which is necessary for building positive employee behaviour and constructive attitudes for performance at work. It is against this background and based on the findings presented in this study, that we make some key recommendations to improve the IEC's Vision, both in terms of generating staff ownership and reviewing key components of Vision 2018. We also hope that the findings in this study will contribute to a well-constructed and informed Strategic Plan.

##### **4.2. How familiar and knowledgeable are the IEC staff with Vision 2018**

In Section 3.1 we reported that the overwhelming majority of participants indicated that they are familiar with the 2018 Vision document, while about eight out of ten think the content of the Vision 2018 is critically important. However, Corporate Services staff are less knowledgeable about Vision 2018 compared to the other departments within the IEC. Although the Commissioners were very familiar with Vision 2018, MANCO members highlighted a discrepancy in the level of knowledge and awareness of the Vision and Mission 2018 within the organisation.

##### ***Recommendations:***

*1. The IEC must promote and present the Vision more widely across all staff in all provinces and at all levels of employment. One panel member indicated: "that this is extremely important since Audit findings in all nine provinces, over consecutive years, found that there is no actual, physical display of the vision and mission. For instance, the IEC reception areas have no posters or displays of the vision and mission of the commission." The IEC must therefore assess whether all entrances to their buildings display posters of the Vision and Mission of the IEC.*

*2. There is a need for continuous employee engagement on Vision 2018. A MANCO member observed, "We need the ability as an organisation to engage ourselves...we need to start talking more often. There is a need for a more proactive approach to create awareness and an understanding of the Vision that will eventually shape the performance and staff behaviour."*

##### **4.3. Views on the Strategic objectives included in Vision 2018**

Based on our findings from the online survey, we can conclude that IEC employees, in general, have very definite views on the importance of all the Vision 2018 strategic objectives (see Section 3.2 for more detail). In other words, the employees felt that all five strategic objectives are important and as such should be included in the Vision.

#### **4.4. Alignment between the Strategic Plan, Vision 2018, and the Country's Long-Term Vision**

In Section 3.4 we found that perceptions of the alignment between the IEC's Strategic Plan and Vision 2018 were inconclusive. Most staff members felt the two key organisational documents are aligned to some extent or a small extent. One Commissioner indicated that about "80% of the strategic plan is align[ed] to the Vision 2018 document." Despite this the same Commissioner indicated that the "manner in which the plan speaks to what's planned and what's done and how it fits into the intricacies and impact needs additional work."

##### **Recommendation:**

- *As most of IEC staff do not see a clear correlation between the organisation's Strategic Plan and Vision 2018, we recommend revising the Vision to ensure that the strategic plan speaks more directly to Vision 2018. It is important to emphasize that we recommend revising the Vision and not a complete change. In addition, the revised Vision must be well communicated to all staff and implemented according to the Strategic Plan of the IEC.*

#### **4.5. Suggested structural changes of the Vision 2018 document**

We received mixed feedback on whether Vision 2018 should change. A majority of survey participants indicated that Vision 2018 should be partially changed, while a minority preferred a complete review and change of the documents. Some were unsure and indicated that they did not know. However, given the disconnect between the IEC's Strategic Plan and Vision 2018, it is strongly recommended that Vision 2018 be revised to fit with the organisational strategic plan. One MANCO member observed that the "*strategic plan and the vision no longer correlate. There is disharmony between strategic plan and the vision. Should the three objectives remain or revert to the previous five objectives. It is therefore important that the vision document be seen as a living document that should be evaluated periodically.*"

As indicated in the introduction section the Vision is a long-term plan and not time-bound. Furthermore, the vision is a tool to guide the development of the strategic plan with defined objectives and actions necessary to achieve the goals spelled out in the Vision.

##### **Recommendations:**

*1. We recommend that the five strategic objectives outlined in Vision 2018 align with the three objectives in the Strategic Plan. Thus, we recommend that the IEC revise the Vision 2018 document as suggested in Table 3.*

*2. We recommend that the IEC cluster "Strengthening institutional excellence and professionalism at all levels of the organisation" (Objective 4) and "Strengthening institutional governance" (Objective 5) and name it "Strengthening Institutional Effectiveness".*

*We consider both to be subsets of "institutional effectiveness", which in the international literature on effective institutions consists of six elements, including institutional capacity, that has among its subsets the availability of the requisite personnel in terms of number and appropriate skills and appropriate institutional management and governance structures.*

Furthermore, the other five elements of institutional effectiveness – sound financial management, representativeness and inclusivity, transparency, accountability, and institutional integrity – are collectively, together with institutional capacity, crucial for the achievement of institutional effectiveness, and that, at any given moment where any aspects of these elements become major challenges in an institution, they can dramatically affect the ability of the institution to carry out its mandate.

3. We recommend combining “Achieving pre-eminence in the area of managing elections and referenda” (Objective 1) with “Strengthening a cooperative relationship with political parties” (Objective 3). This will be consistent with the objectives of the Strategic Plan to cluster all election-related priorities. However, we strongly recommend against naming it “Managing Elections and Political Parties”. We recommend naming it “Achieving pre-eminence in the area of managing elections and referenda” because all political party priorities are part of “Achieving pre-eminence in the area of managing elections and referenda”. Furthermore, it is perhaps improper for electoral bodies to manage political parties. Instead we recommend it is more about building relationships with political parties to work together towards achieving electoral democracy or “Strengthening electoral democracy”.

4. We also want to note that while we propose “Strengthening electoral democracy” as Objective 3 participants in the study emphasized that it more than elections. It is about improving democracy. One of the panel participants strongly felt there needs to be an open debate about what “Strengthening electoral democracy” really means because even at the level of the Commissioners there are those who see the IEC as just an election management body. It must be clear that the IEC’s mandate within the constitution is to strengthen constitutional democracy. The literature review also indicated that the “notion of electoral democracy is generally built on Dahl’s (1971) conceptualisation of polyarchy, which presents the minimum requirements for a working democracy. For Dahl the essential components of a working democracy are much broader”.

**Table 5: Proposed Objectives for Vision 2025**

<b>Vision 2018 Strategic objectives</b>	<b>Strategic Plan Objectives</b>	<b>Proposed Objectives for IEC Vision</b>
(1) Achieving pre-eminence in the area of managing elections and referenda	(A) Institutional Excellence and Institutional Governance	(I) Strengthening Institutional Effectiveness (Includes Objective 4 and 5 of Vision18) (Corporate and Admin /CEO)
(2) Strengthening electoral democracy	(B) Managing Elections and Political Parties	(II) Achieving pre-eminence in the area of managing elections and referenda Elections (Includes Objective 1 and 3 of Vision 2018) (Electoral Services / Operations)
(3) Strengthening a cooperative relationship with political parties	(C) Electoral Democracy	(III) Strengthening Electoral Democracy (This is objective 2of Vision 2018) (Outreach)
(4) Strengthening institutional excellence and professionalism at all levels of the organization		
(5) Strengthening institutional governance		

Section 4.5 provided views on the new proposed strategic objectives for the Vision of the IEC. In the sections that follow, we highlight further recommendations on the Strategic Objectives for the Vision of the IEC and some recommendations of the priorities listed in each objective.

#### **4.5.1. Strategic Objective 1: Achieving pre-eminence in the area of managing elections and referenda**

All the participants in the study at all levels agreed that “achieving pre-eminence in the areas of managing elections and referenda” is one of the most important objectives of the IEC, and, as one Commissioner noted, the “creed of the institution”.

A review of the priorities within the objective reveal that staff consider “increasing voter participation” as the most important; followed by “ensuring accessibility and suitability of voting facilities and processes”; and “continuously improving the legislative framework”. However, leveraging cutting edge-technology was least preferred to remain as a priority.

##### **Recommendations:**

*1. All respondents indicated that the IEC experienced a high-level public trust over the last few years despite some internal challenges. However, some MANCO members felt that the high-level of public trust contributed to complacency. The IEC is therefore encouraged to improve their monitoring and evaluation processes and to include a wide spectrum of staff when this takes place.*

*2. In spite of major efforts by the IEC we noted a concern around voter participation, most notably among the youth population in South Africa. Nevertheless, some MANCO members were of the view that it is not the IEC’s mandate to increase voter participation, but rather to increase voter registration as the IEC cannot control external factors that impact on actual voter participation. To improve voter participation the IEC must focus on increasing the number of registered voters. We also recommend that the IEC must consider an objective related to inspiring a voting attitude, especially in the South African youth, to facilitate an increase in voter registration. MANCO panel members also suggested that the IEC, as an independent body with no political affiliations, should be able to approach institutions such as churches, and address congregants to encourage them to register.*

*3. The findings show that although the IEC performs well in terms of technology, there is room for improvement. A staff member observed, “our systems need to be jacked up because the reality has overtaken the rules. For example, there are some systems that fell through the cracks in the last elections such as the ink and barcode (ID); the ID scanning device (also called zip-zip) also didn’t function optimally during the last election.” Similarly, a panel participant also emphasized that “...we need to explore opportunities for technology on voting and counting”. There is a need to use new technology to collect addresses, ensure accuracy in terms of counting; reconciling, auditing, transmission and announcement of election results. Improving technology will help to contribute to “achieving pre-eminence in the area of managing elections” but it will also assist the IEC to “strengthen institutional excellence and*

*professionalism at all levels". Thus, technology is a crosscutting issue that also benefits the staff of the IEC.*

#### **4.5.2. Strategic Objective 2: Strengthening electoral democracy**

The study found that overall participants felt that the IEC was faring relatively well in terms of strengthening electoral democracy in South Africa. However, they also flagged key issues that will need intervention to ensure that the IEC retains its good reputation for strengthening electoral democracy.

#### **Recommendations:**

*1. Views on "strengthening electoral democracy" show that most survey participants indicated that "encouraging citizen participation" is a critical objective that should remain part of the Vision. It is against this background that we recommend that the IEC must strengthen voter and civic education. MANCO members reiterated that all staff members must become the champions of this strategic objective and in particular voter and civic education. It is not just for the Outreach and Communications to build momentum.*

*2. The online survey established that staff felt strongly that "cultivating an environment for free and fair elections"; "providing continuous education" and "increasing visibility through proactive consultation, effective communication and presence" should remain as priorities. However, "broadening our research agenda and issuing publications" was not perceived as a key priority. It therefore worth exploring as to why staff do not see research and publications as a major priority. Research and publication should be a priority to inform for example voter and civic education initiatives.*

*3. Study participants felt that the IEC must improve technological innovation and digitisation to refine rules and regulations that guide electoral conduct of stakeholders.*

*4. The IEC must engage in legislative review processes, most notably around party funding. Compare in this instance the view of the panel members "that the IEC must deepen democracy by holding political parties accountable regarding the resources allocated as well as issues of illicit funds that have a direct impact on democracy. Some even suggested that the new party funding act should be a new separate objective."*

*5. The IEC must take note and respond to the declining levels of trust and confidence in democracy and the value of elections. The IEC must remain vigilant and be the harshest critics of themselves because that is the only way they can continue to come up with innovations and improvements in all their business processes of strengthening the democracy. In other, monitoring and evaluation as well as impact assessments must be an important priority.*

#### **4.5.3. Strategic Objective 3: Strengthening a cooperative relationship with political parties**

##### **Recommendations:**

- 1. The Commissioners and CEO felt that the IEC is doing extremely well in terms of political party liaison mechanisms and this is key to strengthening of our democracy. This is also one of the reasons why staff indicated that this strategic objective should be merged with strategic objective two (strengthening electoral democracy).*
- 2. It worth noting that the staff who participated in the online vision survey felt that they prefer “convening consultative forums with registered political parties” the most and “deepening interactions with represented political parties” less. Nevertheless, very few online staff participants indicated that none of these two should remain as a priority. The IEC must therefore continue to engage with political parties and convene consultative forums.*
- 3. The Commissioners and CEO pointed out that the IEC has other stakeholders besides political parties. Consequently, we recommend that the IEC also engage with other stakeholders such as Civil Society Organisation besides political parties.*
- 4. In addition, the IEC must note that there is a perception among all participants that the IEC needs to cooperate better with smaller parties.*
- 5. Related to the above, the staff felt that liaisons with political parties “can go further than the usual ‘PLC’ (political liaison committee) meetings. They therefore suggested seminars (which were held with political parties on the use of electronic voting – the advantages and disadvantages thereof.”*

#### **4.5.4. Strategic Objective 4: Strengthening institutional excellence and professionalism at all levels of the organisation**

The online survey participants and the interviews with the Commissioners and CEO demonstrated a mixed view of this particular objective. The study indicated that some Commissioners felt that this objective should be revised because the IEC is not performing well. Nevertheless, the interviewees with the Commissioners and CEO as well as with the MANCO panel members revealed that most regarded this objective as important, especially in relation to the core business of the IEC and building a capable state that is able to execute the mandate of electoral democracy.

##### **Recommendations:**

- 1. The IEC must therefore ensure that they have skilled and competent staff at all levels. One Commissioner, for instance, indicated that the IEC must make sure that at the operational level they have skilled and experienced staff who manage the process efficiently and keep focus.*

2. *Related to the above the interviews with Commissioners and CEO identified the following areas of concern: technological innovation, skills development, institutional memory and continuity, staff capacity, effective internal cooperation, and cost effectiveness and efficiency. The MANCO panel discussion participants also indicated that the following areas need bolstering: technical skills, IT, training, election management and logistics.*
3. *The MANCO panel participants also recommended that the IEC strengthen the use of technology for programme project management that will enhance our professionalism by eliminating human error.*
4. *We mentioned that technology is a crosscutting issue that benefits the staff of the IEC as well as the voters. The IEC must therefore improve technology to create an environment that is conducive for people to work productively, professionally and for them to discharge their duties optimally for the institution.*
5. *Another MANCO panel member suggested that here is a need for a shift from a paper-based environment to a paper-less environment.*
6. *From the above it evident that staff members, Commissioners and the CEO felt that the skills and capacity constraints influence the level of excellence and professionalism of the institution. It therefore recommended that the IEC must invest in skills training and capacity development.*
7. *To ensure excellence and professionalism the panel members suggested that the IEC must consider a different model for acquiring voting station staff. One MANCO panel recommended that the “IEC must think about an academy that trains officials or linking up with institutions to assist during the interim periods between elections to find graduate professionals and train them in the process of election management.*
8. *The lack of skills at voting station influences the image of the IEC. The IEC must therefore examine the process of recruiting and training voting station staff. Participants of MANCO panel discussion indicated that “permanent staff are never seen by the public. Individuals are appointed as temporary staff members: they are brought in, trained for two days and then expected to work at voting stations. The performance of frontline, temporary staff (presiding officers and voting officials) becomes a reflection on the IEC.*
9. *The participants in the MANCO panel discussion strongly felt that the “IEC should not be judged if they refuse to make use of unemployed people. One panel member indicated that “In ’98/99, the IEC was ‘given’ civil servants as officials. Although the IEC experienced problems, it was the most efficient method to use civils servants such as teachers. The IEC must therefore not give into pressure about whom they prefer to employ since their performance and the organisations level of excellence and professionalism depend on it.*
10. *Discussion about the appropriateness of the location “Striving for excellence at voting station level” within Objective 4 of Vision 2018 revealed that participants of the panel*

*discussion felt that it must move to Objective 1 of Vision 2018. One MANCO panel participant indicated that ‘Striving for excellence at voting station level’ deals with election management, while Objective 4 is more towards the inward-looking objective, which deals with permanent staff and the infrastructure. This is where the current weaknesses are of the IEC.”*

#### **4.5.5. Strategic objective 5: Strengthening institutional governance**

The interviews with the Commissioners and CEO as well as the discussion with participants of the MANCO panel revealed that “governance between the Commissioners and the administration” was a weak area in terms of organisational performance. One MANCO member for example indicated that “*the governance architecture doesn’t work because of the individual leaders or personalities involved*”.

#### **Recommendations:**

- 1. The IEC must review the governance structure between the Commissioners and the leadership of the IEC. Another challenge is that the broader public does not necessarily draw a distinction between the Commissioners and the IEC administration.*
- 2. There is a need to get clarity about the roles and responsibilities of the Commissioners and IEC leadership (particularly the role and responsibilities of the Commissioners versus the CEO). The IEC must request staff and the leadership in particular to regular familiarize themselves with the Electoral Commission Act 51 and to adhere to the law as stipulated. We believe that adherence to the policies will assist in facilitating collegial and cooperative relationships built on mutual trust and founded on a common mandate to strengthen electoral democracy in the country. However, in extreme situations the IEC can implement a deadlock mechanism to deal with disputes among staff.*
- 3. Some participants felt that the “The Electoral Commission Act must be reviewed or amended. However, as stated above, there is rather a need for staff to familiarize themselves with the Electoral Commission Act to gain a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the CEO and Commissioners, among other.*

## 5. Conclusion

In the Introduction Section, we demonstrated that mission and vision statements determine the organisational goals and direction, the rationale for the organisation's existence, and set strategic goals for organisational development and successful implementation. It is therefore important that an organisation to review its Vision and Mission to determine if change or adjustments are necessary. The IEC Vision 2018 project is an excellent example of organisational self-reflection of processes to examine institutional challenges and the accompanying adjustments for organisational renewal in the context of changing socio-political and socio-economic dynamics. It is against this background that we present a revised configuration of the Vision of the IEC (See below).

### **Revised Strategic priorities of the IEC Vision**

To give effect to its vision and the quest for continuous development and improvements in its actions and operations the Commission, over the term of its office, will give priority to the following strategic objectives.

#### **1. Strengthening institutional effectiveness**

##### **Institutional excellence and professionalism at all levels of the organisation**

- Building institutional capacity
- Strengthening our presence and effectiveness at local level
- Expanding human capital development
- Adhering to performance standards
- Becoming people-centred
- Managing financial and human resources well and strengthening risk management
- Maintaining sound industrial relations
- Striving to comply with national climate change policies (preserving the environment)
- Building institutional memory

##### **Strengthening institutional governance**

- Refining institutional governance arrangements (including the Commission's structures and committees)
- Delineating the powers, roles and functions between the Commissioners and the Administration
- Exercising oversight: monitoring, evaluation and support

## **2. Achieving pre-eminence in the area of managing elections and referenda**

- Increasing innovation
- Leveraging cutting-edge technology
- Ensuring accessibility and suitability of voting facilities and processes
- Increasing voter participation
- Striving for excellence at voting station level
- Identifying and incorporating best practice in the area of elections (including the area of electoral justice)
- Enhancing the credibility of the voters' roll
- Improving compliance with legal prescripts
- Continuously improving the legislative framework
- Deepening interactions with represented political parties
- Convening consultative forums with registered political parties

## **3. Strengthening electoral democracy**

- Encouraging citizen participation
- Providing strategic and thought leadership
- Broadening our research agenda and issuing publications
- Increasing visibility through proactive consultation, effective communication and presence
- Providing continuous education
- Facilitating platforms for political dialogue
- Cultivating an environment for free and fair elections
- Constantly engaging the media

In sum, the Civic Education, Research and Knowledge Management (CERKM) Department of the IEC initiative to assess employees' perceptions of its Vision 2018 document for possible revision and organisational renewal for long-term planning is therefore justified within this context.

The mission statement can have an impact throughout all levels of the organisation that is why all employee perceptions of mission and vision statements are important. Furthermore,

mission and vision statements can motivate, shape employee behaviours, cultivate high levels of commitment and ultimately influence positively on employee performance. In other words, employees' organisational values should ideally align with the organisational mission and vision statements for it to have meaningful impact within the organisation.

The present study therefore employed a mixed-methods design that consisted of a quantitative component (online survey with IEC staff members) and a qualitative component that included a literature review, in-depth interviews with the IEC Commissioners and electoral experts, and a high-level panel discussion with senior management staff of the IEC. The main objective of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of the IEC employees' perceptions of Vision 2018, and whether there is a perceived need to revise this vision, and, if so, in what way. This consultative exercise was important to ensure that the Vision document remains relevant and reflects the ideals employees believe are important for the IEC to strive towards achieving its strategic objectives. If adopted, the IEC need to promote the revised Vision among all staff members on a continuous basis to ensure that staff are always cognisant of achieving the objectives of the organisation.

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