INDEPENDENT NATIONAL
ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Policy on Election Technology Acquisition and Deployment (PETAD)

INEC Policy Number:
01/2025

Effective Date:
25/09/2025

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Purpose

This policy provides the framework to streamline the development, acquisition and deployment of election technologies by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (hereinafter the Commission) to ensure maximum benefits for both the Commission and the public from the application of digital technologies to election administration and the management of the electoral process.

Authority

Section 160 (1) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) empowers the Commission, by rules or otherwise, to regulate its own procedure or confer powers and impose duties on any officer or authority for the purpose of discharging its functions.

Section 148 of the Electoral Act 2022, vests power on the Commission to make Regulations, Guidelines, or Manuals for the purpose of giving effect to the provisions of the Act and for its administration. Sections 41(1), 47(2) 50(2), 60(5) and 62(2) of the Act also authorize the Commission to deploy technologies for accreditation and other sundry purposes in carrying out its functions.

Scope

This policy shall apply to Members and Staff, Departments, Directorates and Units of the Commission, as well as to Technology Service Providers, Vendors and Other Partners of the Commission.

Responsible Party

The Commission, its Technology Service Providers, vendors and other Partners.

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Commission is committed to the measured development, acquisition and deployment of election technologies that are home-grown, cost-effective, controlled and owned by the Commission. This is in recognition of the extensive benefits that election technologies hold for election management in Nigeria. However, the Commission is also not oblivious to the challenges and threats that could arise from unregulated use of such technologies. This policy sets out the fundamental framework to guide the Commission in designing, developing, acquiring and deploying technology in line with its mandate and functions as well as in accordance with international best practices.

2. PRINCIPLES

The following principles shall guide the design, development, acquisition and deployment of technology in election management by the Commission:

a) **Bespoke** – Except in exceptional cases, all technologies designed, developed and deployed by the Commission shall be customized for its use with secure copyright and intellectual property rights owned exclusively by the Commission which shall suite the needs and circumstances of the Commission in the management of elections.

b) **Cost-efficiency** – election technologies used by the Commission shall give maximum value for money, be cost-effective without compromising on quality and functionality.

c) **Security** – The security of systems and users shall conform to the highest national and global standards of digital security.

d) **Homegrown** – As much as practicable, the design, development and testing of the Commission's technologies shall be done by the Commission and its staff. Where developed by external persons, agencies, or vendors, such technologies shall be domesticated before deployment.

e) **Sustainability** – election technologies deployed by the Commission shall be sustainable, both in terms of cost and staff capacity and shall continue to be deployed and modified whenever necessary.

f) **Transparency** – in the deployment and utilization of election technologies, the Commission shall uphold the principle of transparency, by providing for public information, its Regulations, Guidelines and Manuals.

g) **Accountability**–All operators of the Commission's election technologies shall be held accountable for their actions.

h) **Accessibility** – as much as practicable, the Commission shall ensure that any technology designed, developed and deployed that requires the involvement of citizens, shall be simple, non-discriminatory and widely accessible by applying the principle of equality and equity of access.

i) **Confidentiality and Privacy** – the Commission in accordance with the law and current best practices, shall maintain the confidentiality and privacy of any information arising from the use of its technologies in a fair, lawful and accountable manner.

3. Requirements and Conditions

Based on the foregoing principles, all election technologies used by the Commission, whether regular software, artificial intelligence, or hardware, shall meet the following requirements as applicable:

A. ***Needs Assessment and Justification***

i. *Comprehensive Analysis:* Every technology initiative shall begin with a thorough needs assessment that clearly defines the operational problem or opportunity, evaluates alternative solutions, and justifies the selected approach.

B. ***Inter-Departmental Collaboration and Governance***

i. The design, development, procurement, and deployment processes

shall involve coordinated efforts among User Departments.

ii. Inputs from User Departments shall be incorporated to ensure that requirements are realistic and the proposed solution aligns with the overall electoral strategy.

iii. Implementation teams shall be structured to prevent monopolizing critical system knowledge, thereby ensuring operational sustainability.

iv. Deployment should be carried out by joint teams from ICT and User Departments with the ICT department providing ongoing support, updates, and patches.

v. Maintenance and operational audits shall be conducted periodically.

C. ***Customization and Homegrown Development***

i. *Tailored Solutions:* Technologies to be acquired shall be specifically customized to address the Commission's legal and operational needs, including Nigeria's environmental, infrastructural, and social conditions

ii. **Homegrown and Domestication:** Whenever feasible, the design, development, and testing shall be undertaken internally or with Technology Sevice Providers, Vendors and Other Partners, and where external development is necessary, adaptations ("domestication") shall align the technology with the Commission's requirements.

D. ***Legal and Regulatory Compliance***

i. *National Laws and International Standards:* The technology acquired/ deployed shall comply with national laws (incuding the Constitution, the Electoral Act, Data Protection Act and Procurement Act), Commission's Regulations and Guidelines, as well as international standards such as ISO/IEC 27001 on Cybersecurity and ISO/ IEC25010 on software quality.

ii. *Legal Instruments:* The technology shall comply with copyright, trademark, and patent laws.

iii. *Regulatory Alignment:* Full legal ownership of all technology, including source codes, user

manuals, technical specifications, and design architecture shall be transferred to and maintained by the Commission.

iv. *Review of Regulations:* Relevant Regulations, Guidelines, and Manuals shall be continually reviewed and updated to reflect the deployment of new technologies, ensuring public accountability.

E. ***Technical Specifications, Interoperability and Open Architecture***

i. *Adherence to Specifications:* Technology acquistion shall conform to technical and operational specifications approved and validated by the Commission.

ii. *Seamless Integration:* Proposed systems shall be interoperable with the existing Commission's infrastructure such that, data standards and connectivity protocols shall be harmonized to ensure smooth data exchange and consistency across platforms.

iii. *Preference to Open Standards:* Solutions shall be built on open-source platforms or adhere to open architecture principles to support transparency and mitigate recurring licensing fees.

F. ***Data Sovereignty, Security, Auditability and Protection***

i. All data shall reside on Commission-owned infrastructure with full encryption and protection.

ii. Technologies deployed shall support traceable system logging, role-based access control, audit trails**,** and secure authentication.

iv. Failover and Recovery systems shall include backup and disaster recovery mechanisms.

G. ***Infrastructure Residency, Control and Sustainability***

i. All systems and data shall reside on Commission-owned infrastructure. Cloud-based or third-party systems are permitted only with the approval of the Commisison.

ii. Software (OS and apps) shall be factory-installed, open-source preferred, and free of recurrent licensing fees.

H. ***Testing, Piloting and Stabilization***

i. *Pilot Testing:* Technologies shall be tested in real electoral environments before deployment.

ii. *Debugging and Evaluation:* Testing shall include system stabilization, issue logging and evaluation.

iii. *Approval:* A formal post-pilot report shall be submitted to and approved by the Commission before national rollout.

I. ***Documentation, Knowledge Transfer and Training***

i. *Technical Documentation:* Every system shall include user manuals, deployment guides and schematics.

ii. *Knowledge Transfer:* Source codes and details shall be securely handed over to the Commission.

iii. *Staff Training:* Structured capacity-building sessions shall be conducted with trainee proficiency certified by the Commission.

J. ***Implementation, Maintenance and Support***

i. *Collaborative Teams:* Deployments should be carried out by joint teams from ICT and User Departments.

ii. *Technical Support:* The ICT department shall provide ongoing support, updates, and patches.

iii. *Maintenance Reviews:* Periodic maintenance and operational audits shall be conducted.

K. ***Procurement and Vendor Management***

i. *Vendor Qualification:* Only licensed and top-tier Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) may be engaged.

ii. *Transparent Procurement:* Public Procurement Act provisions shall be strictly followed.

iii. *Contracts:* All contracts shall include IP transfer clauses, technical support, and audit requirements.

iv. *OEM Software and Third-Party Applications:* All software acquisitions, including OEM software and third-party applications, shall comply with licensing agreements, security standards, and interoperability requirements. Preference shall be given to solutions that align with the Commission's technical and operational specifications, ensuring sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

L. ***Accessibility, Inclusivity, Equity and Transperancy***

i. *Universal Design:* Technology acquired shall conform with universal usability and language simplicity to accommodate Persons with Disability (PwDs), low-literacy users and underserved communities

ii. *Equity in Access:* In order to address digital exclusion, no group shall be disadvantaged in using electoral technology.

iii. *Public Engagement:* The Commission shall communicate to all stakeholders (such as political parties, civil society, staff, and the public) on the use of technology.

iv. *Awareness Campaigns:* Manuals, audit findings, and guidelines shall be published regularly.

v. *Clarity for Public-Use Systems:* The Commission shall have a strong system of public communication and information, as well as provide manuals and guidelines to clearly explain usage.

M. ***Monitoring, Evaluation and Continuous Improvement***

i. *Performance Metrics:* There shall be clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to continuously monitor technical performance, user satisfaction, and compliance with set standards.

ii. *Feedback Mechanisms:* There shall be feedback loops to capture user experiences and lessons learnt, ensuring that insights are systematically used to improve future developments and deployments.

iii. *Regular Policy Reviews:* There shall be continuous evaluation and periodic policy reviews to update the framework in response to technological advancements and evolving electoral needs.

N. ***Risk Management***

i. *Risk identification:* Identify risks at each lifecycle stage

ii. *Mitigation Plans*: Establish mitigation plans fallback procedures.

O. ***Implementation Oversight***

i. *Policy Oversight Committee:* The Information Technology Voter Registry (ITVRC) Committee of the Commission shall oversight the implementation of the Policy to monitor adherence, milestones, and report to the Commission.

P. ***Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use and Deployment in Elections***

i. *Ethical and Transparent Use:* AI technologies deployed shall adhere to ethical AI principles, ensuring fairness, accountability and transparency in electoral processes.

ii. *Regulatory Compliance:* All AI-driven applications shall comply with national laws and international standards, including data protection regulations, cybersecurity protocols, and digital governance frameworks.

iii. *Operational Reliability:* AI systems used for voter accreditation, election monitoring, and result collation shall undergo rigorous testing to ensure accuracy, integrity, and resilience against threats.

iv. *Human Oversight:* AI technology shall complement human decision-making rather than replace or supplant it. Human verification mechanisms shall be embedded to prevent automated errors from impacting on the electoral process and outcomes.

v. *Bias Mitigation:* AI models shall be periodically reviewed and audited to eliminate biases that may disadvantage any voting group or electoral stakeholder.

vi. *Security and Data Privacy:* AI systems handling election-related data shall integrate robust encryption, authentication measures, and access controls to prevent unauthorized manipulation or breaches.

vii. *Continuous Improvement:* AI applications shall be subjected to ongoing evaluation, with enhancements informed by post-election assessments, stakeholder feedback, and evolving technological trends.

Dated in Abuja this 25th day of September 2025

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