

## Running for Office Starter Kit – FAQ

### **Q: Why did the Clerk's office create the Running for Office Starter Kit (RFO)?**

**A:** In IL, and Cook County in particular, we've continually worked to make it easier for people to register and vote. It shouldn't be any different when it comes to running for office - Government must do whatever it can to make the preparation work of running for office as simple and painless as it can.

Running for public office can feel like a daunting task. Finding all the right forms and knowing how to handle them can seem impossible. The Clerk's office has created this starter kit to help potential candidates easily navigate the process of running for office.

### **Q: What does the Running for Office Starter Kit do?**

**A:** The "Running for Office Starter Kit," is an online tool that allows suburban Cook County residents to view the elected offices they are eligible to run for and receive the necessary information and documentation to complete the process of running for office.

Users simply enter basic information such as their name, birthdate and address to view available offices, filing dates and signature requirements.

Not only does the starter kit display all available contests and relevant information, it also generates a candidate packet complete with forms prepopulated with the user's information – saving time, money and costly mistakes that often bump prospective candidates off the ballot.

### **Q: Who can use the RFO?**

**A:** Any registered voter living in suburban Cook County can use the tool.

### **Q: Is the RFO available for races in the November 2016 Presidential Election?**

**A:** No. The RFO will aid those running for seats in the 2017 Consolidated Election.

### **Q: What elected offices does the Running for Office Starter Kit provide assistance for?**

**A:** The RFOST currently provides assistance for the following offices:

- Township & Municipal Boards
- Elementary School District Board
- High School District Board
- Community College School District Board
- Park District Board
- Library District Board
- Fire Protection District Board

**Q: Why is it only available for Suburban Cook County?**

**A:** The Cook County Clerk's Office only administers elections in suburban Cook County. Residents living in the City of Chicago or outside of Cook County should contact their respective local election authorities for information about running for office.

**Q: Will offices at other levels (State, Chicago, U.S.) be available in future elections?**

**A:** The RFO is currently available for candidates interested in running for local office in 2017. Further changes and improvements to the tool will be assessed after April 2017.

**Q. How much does the starter kit cost?**

**A:** The RFO is a free service provided by Cook County Clerk David Orr's office.

**Q: Is the Running for Office Starter Kit available in languages other than English?**

**A:** At the moment, the tool is only available in English.

**Q: What are the next steps after a candidate packet has been generated?**

**A:** Once a packet has been generated, potential candidates should review their nomination packet to ensure that each and every part is completed in full. For example, all forms in the candidate packet need to be notarized. Also, the candidate packet only contains one copy of the original petition sheet. Potential candidates will need to print multiple copies of the petition sheet to gather enough signatures.

Most successful candidates gather three or four times the minimum number of signatures of registered voters in their district in case the signatures are challenged and not counted towards the minimum number. Potential candidates should visit the Cook County Clerk's website to download and complete the Statement of Economic Interests form, which is also a required filing for all candidates.

After all the forms are completed and signatures have been gathered, potential candidates will need to file their nomination papers with the proper election authority. Candidates for school districts *may* file their nomination papers with the Cook County Clerk's Office.

Nomination papers may be filed with the County Clerk's principal office in Chicago located at 69 W. Washington St., on the 5<sup>th</sup> Floor in Chicago, Illinois 60602 or at one of its satellite locations, which will be posted on the Clerk's website at [www.cookcountyclerk.com](http://www.cookcountyclerk.com) before the filing period. Please consult with legal counsel to determine if your school district files with the Clerk's Office. Candidates for other offices file their nomination papers with their Local Election Official. Generally that will

be the Clerk or Secretary of the local governing body. Please check with them to get information on their filing locations and times.

**Q: Should users seek outside legal counsel when running for office?**

**A:** The information provided by RFOST is not legal advice. You are encouraged to consult with legal counsel, particularly if you have any doubts as to these matters:

(1) Your legal qualifications to hold office; (2) The qualifications of the people who sign your petition and circulate your petition; (3) The appropriate method for completing the petition forms with respect to the office for which you wish to run; (4) The minimum number of signatures required for that office; and (5) Whether you file your nomination papers with your election authority (e.g., County Clerk) or a local election official (e.g., Village or Township Clerk).

The Clerk's Office cannot recommend an attorney or provide legal advice to potential candidates but the Chicago Bar Association has an election law committee and may be able to assist you.

If you are running for School Districts, Park Districts, Library Districts or Fire Protection Districts: be aware that if your candidacy is objected to, the objection will be heard and decided by the Cook County Officers Electoral Board. This Board is a separate entity from the Cook County Clerk's office and is not bound by any representations made by the Clerk's Office on its website.

An explainer video that walks a potential candidate, step-by-step through the process on how to use the new Running for Office Starter Kit, can be viewed by clicking [here](#).