

Observer Qualifications and Application Process

About Election Observation



Amentum SPEO recruits, deploys, and supports U.S. citizens on behalf of the U.S. Department of State to support OSCE elections initiatives. Short-Term and Long-Term Observers monitor a wide range of aspects of an election. Short- and Long-Term Observers receive a per diem to cover daily expenses during the deployment period.

Amentum SPEO routinely recruits and deploys observers under tight deadlines, providing air travel, visas, insurance, per diem, pre-deployment information and support throughout each deployment. In order to accommodate the high level of interest among qualified election observers, Amentum SPEO very rarely deploys the same person to more than one election observation mission per year.

American citizens wishing to serve as an observer may create an Online Application at any time. To apply to deploy to a specific Election Observation Mission, applicants must enter the specific Election Code in the online application.

Short-Term Election Observers

Qualified applicants are selected and briefed by Amentum SPEO and deployed to the host country. Upon arrival, STOs receive an in-depth briefing and relevant background materials, typically four to seven days before an election. STOs are deployed in multi-national teams of two (plus local interpreter and driver) to locations throughout the host country to assess opening, voting, closing, and counting procedures on Election Day. Observers may be asked to observe the close of the electoral campaign or may be invited to return to observe run-off elections.

STO draft structured observation reports on various aspects of the electoral process in their area of responsibility. The information forms the basis of the final election report prepared at the end of the observation mission.

Long-Term Election Observers

Qualified applicants are selected and briefed by Amentum SPEO and deployed to the host country. Upon arrival, LTOs receive an in-depth briefing and relevant background materials upon arrival, typically four to six weeks before an election. LTOs are deployed in multi-national teams

of two (plus local interpreter and driver) throughout the host country, assessing the entire election cycle and gaining an in-depth knowledge of the political environment and the election campaign in their regions of deployment prior to the vote. In certain circumstances, LTOs may be retained to observe run-off elections.

LTOs draft region-specific reports for the OSCE Election Core Team on a number of topics, such as preparedness of election administration, political party/candidate campaign activities, involvement of civil society, and inclusion of women and ethnic minorities in the electoral process. These reports track trends and developments and contribute to OSCE/ODIHR's interim and final election reports.

LTOs make logistical preparations for STOs: locating polling centers, devising election day deployment plans, recruiting and hiring STO drivers and interpreters, identifying suitable STO accommodations, and preparing STO briefings. On election day, LTOs coordinate STO reporting and compile region-specific reports for the OSCE Election Core Team.

Minimum Qualifications for Short- and Long-Term Observers

Short-Term (STO) and Long-Term Observers (LTOs) must have:

- Prior experience observing or administering elections, which may include working or volunteering in a polling station as either an observer or administrator.
- **In addition, LTOs must have** completed a minimum of three international observation or supervision missions in at least two different countries. At least one of the three assignments should have been an [OSCE/ODIHR Election Observer](#). LTOs should also have prior experience in elections management and logistics.
- Proven ability to demonstrate cultural understanding and sensitivity and to exercise sound, independent judgment in politically sensitive environments.
- Excellent health.
- Ability to work in a stressful environment under field conditions, including long hours over extended periods (day and night).
- Freedom from concurrent commitments that could produce conflict of interest with the election observation mission.
- Preparedness to read briefing materials, understand procedural instructions and complete election observation forms accurately.
- Written and spoken English language fluency; knowledge of the host-country language is desirable.
- Knowledge of the host-country region is desirable.

Due to the challenging and complex nature of international election observation, applicants are less likely to be deployed as an observer without direct election observation experience. To gain the required experience, Amentum SPEO recommends that applicants volunteer for local, state or general elections in the districts where they are registered to vote. Local and county election authorities welcome new volunteers and free training is usually provided. To maintain the fact and appearance of impartiality, observers are not selected to observe in a country of which they are citizens or with which they have extensive ties.

All observers must abide by the OSCE/ODIHR Code of Conduct and national laws. Amentum SPEO and OSCE/ODIHR reserve the right to withdraw the accreditation of observers. To learn more about the duties and qualifications of election observers, visit "About election observation" at OSCE/ODIHR's Election Observation website.

Process of Becoming an Election Observer

To apply for a Short- or Long-Term Election Observation mission:

1. You can complete an [Online Application](#) at any time.
2. To apply for a specific vacancy, you must enter the specific Election Code in your Online Application. Election Codes must appear in the following format: SUKR117. Improperly entered Election Codes may not be recognized. Amentum SPEO recommends that you save, exit and re-open your application to verify that the Election Code was entered and saved correctly.
3. Short-listed applicants receive an e-mail from Amentum SPEO outlining the terms of the assignment. Amentum SPEO interviews applicants, finalizes the short-list and nominates applicants electronically.
4. Prior to deployment, all observers must vouch that they are in good health, review pre-deployment materials, and pass the relevant portions of the U.S. Institute of Peace online training. All three Tier 1 modules of the USIP online training are mandatory; they consist of general information about the OSCE. Only the region-specific module in Tier 2 must be taken. For example, Secondees deploying to Tajikistan are required to complete the three Tier 1 modules and the Central Asia module of Tier 2. Tests may be completed in advance. A username, password and link to the tests are found on the first page of your Online Application.