# 2017 iGO INNOVATOR AWARD

## CLERK'S DIVISION

DAVID ORR

COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS

![INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS — Representing the finest clerks, recorders, election officials & treasurers.]

# 2017 iGO Innovator Award – Submission:

# RUNNING FOR OFFICE – STARTER KIT

# Cook County, Illinois



**Submitted by**: **Cook County Clerk David Orr**
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## ABSTRACT

Cook County Clerk David Orr's office serves more than 1.5 million voters in 126 municipalities, making it one of the largest jurisdiction in the country.

In October 2016, Cook County Clerk David Orr launched a new and free web-based tool designed to help anyone interested in running for office: the Running for Office Starter Kit (RFO). Within minutes, the RFO enables anyone living in suburban Cook County 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.

## IDENTIFIED PROBLEM:

Potential candidates understanding election requirements, collecting the necessary paperwork and navigating the Running for Office process can find the process daunting, difficult and time-consuming – especially for novices. Since taking office more than two decades ago, Clerk Orr has seen candidates thrown off the ballot for the smallest errors – such as failing to staple petitions or notarize particular pages.

Also, reflective of much of the country, participation in local elections has decreased in recent years. More than 63 percent of the 699 races in suburban Cook County were uncontested in 2015. The Clerk believes this is partly the case because getting on the ballot is complex, creating less interest in local elections.

Cook County Clerk David Orr sought to simplify the running for office process while easing the burdens associated with becoming a candidate by creating an online tool to help navigate the overall process.
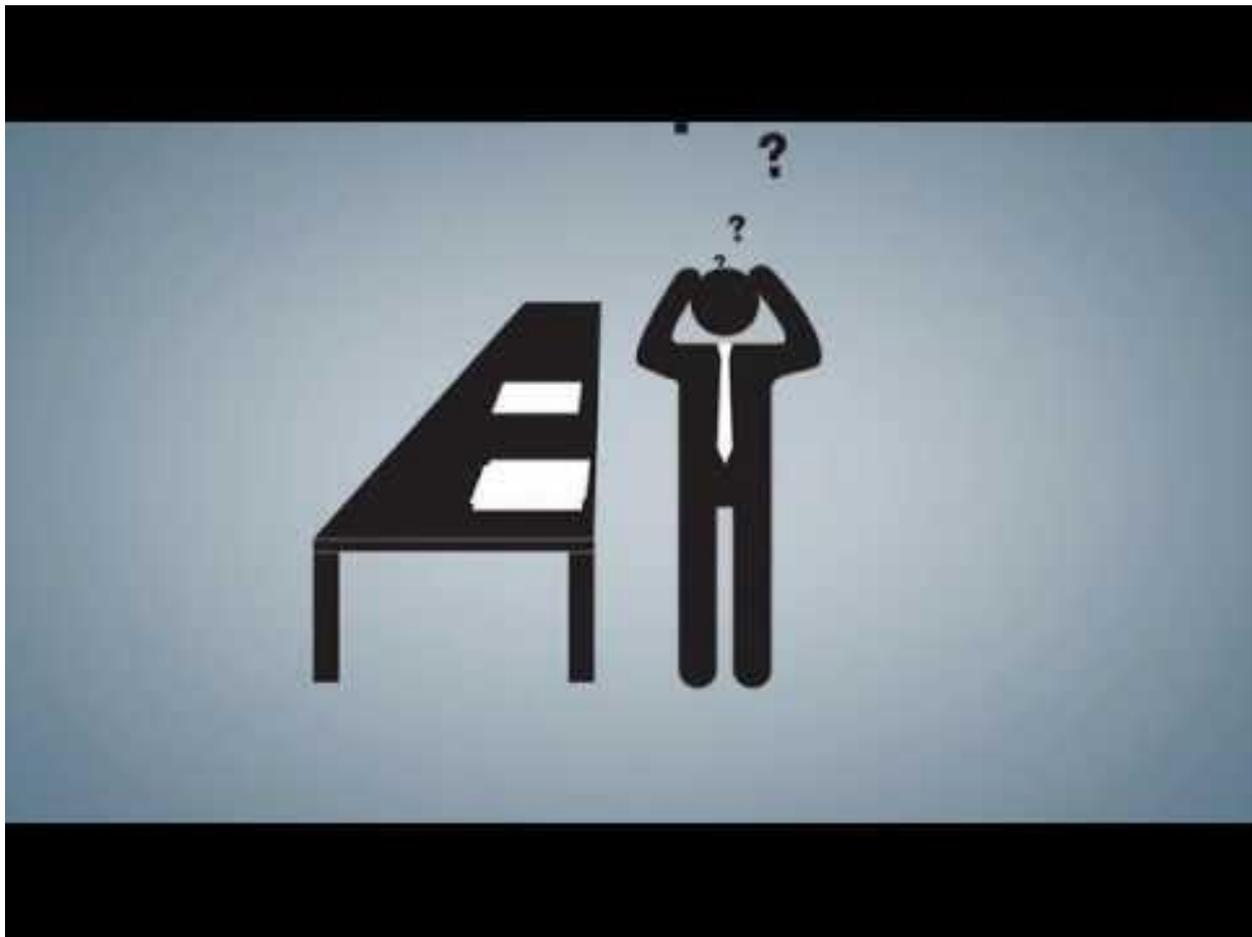
## DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM / HOW IT WORKS:

The RFO (found here) fully envisioned, created and designed by Cook County Clerk David Orr's office, allows suburban Cook County residents to immediately go online and 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.

Suburban Cook County users simply need to enter their address to begin. A list of information pertaining to the user's address will quickly appear, including elected offices they are eligible for. If an office sparks interest, the user can read detailed information about the office, data about the district, and review the filing requirements. For park, school, and library offices, the user can create a candidate packet. For municipal and township offices, there are links to access candidate materials from the relevant authority. The RFO generates a candidate packet complete with the required documents including: Statement of Candidacy, Loyalty Oath and Petition for Nomination forms prepopulated with the user's information.

There is no known candidate tool of its kind in Illinois – or nationally – that takes the step of providing pertinent information regarding a potential elected office and then generating a unique candidate packet tailored to the user.

Cook County Clerk David Orr's office also created a short visual guide to walk RFO applicants through the process:



The Running for Office Starter Kit is currently available for offices within the following suburban Cook County districts:

- Township & Municipal Districts
- Elementary School Districts
- High School Districts
- Community College Districts
- Park Districts

Additionally, the Clerk will be making the source code available at no charge for any jurisdiction to use as a template to create their own local RFO starter kit.

# MEASUREABLE RESULTS/IMPACT – BY THE NUMBERS

From October 2016 to December 2016, 376 individuals created one or more candidate packets using our Running for Office Starter Kit.

There were 248 RFO candidates on the April 4th Consolidated Election ballot. Of those:

- o Male: **129 (52%)**
- o Female: **119 (48%)**
- o Youngest RFO Candidate: **22**
- o Oldest RFO Candidate: **76**
- o Municipalities Represented: **80**
- o Townships Represented: **26**

There were 129 races containing RFO candidates, 73 of which were contested races.

An additional 43 races would have been uncontested if not for RFO candidates.

An additional 27 races would have no candidates at all if not for RFO candidates.

Without the RFO candidates, the 32.4 percent of contested races would have dropped to just 28.2 percent in the April 4, 2017 Consolidated Election.

- Districts RFO candidates ran for:
    - o Elementary: **152 (61.3%)**
    - o High School: **43 (17.3%)**
    - o Park: **26 (10.5%)**
    - o Library: **21 (8.5%)**
    - o Fire Protection: **2 (0.80%)**
    - o Community College: **2 (0.80%)**
    - o Unit School: **1 (0.40%)**
    - o Township School Trustee: **1 (0.40%)**

## TESTIMONIALS:

**Barbara Kain**
School Board Member, Community Consolidated District 15
barb.cochonourkain@gmail.com
Voter City: Palatine
Voter Township: Palatine

*"For a political novice like me, it was wonderful to see that such a tool exists.  I found it very helpful as it walked me through the questions step-by-step, and I really loved that it provided ready-to-use paperwork.  I think it's a tremendously useful tool."*

*"As a first-time candidate, I wasn't even sure where to begin website-wise prior to finding your tool."*

**Carla Owen**
School Board Member, Maine Township HS 207
carlaowen26@gmail.com
Voter City: Park Ridge
Voter Township: Maine

*"I was amazed at how easy it was to produce the documents that were needed to run for office.  This was my second time running, and it was a lot easier to get the paperwork completed the second time around because of the starter kit.  I encouraged another candidate to run, and told her that the paperwork would be a snap because of the starter kit."*