



A-Z about elections in your country and the world.

What Does It Take to Run for Office In Nigeria?

August 2020
Review

Introduction

In Nigeria, the process of becoming an elected official begins with being a registered member of a political party approved by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), for no less than 2 years. There are currently 18 of these parties cut down from the over 70 political parties that contested the 2019 polls. Beyond being a card-carrying member of a political party, to run for office in Nigeria, certain requirements must be met.

The person;

- 1. Must be a citizen of Nigeria who holds citizenship in no other country,*
- 2. Must be within the age bracket requirement for the office they intend to run as stipulated by the constitution (as amended),*
- 3. Must be a registered member of a political party sponsored by the party to run for the office, not be within the employ of the Federation or the State at least 30 days before the elections,*
- 4. Must have the minimum educational/certificate level requirement for the office they intend to run for - School Certificate Level for Senators, State House of Assembly Members and Local Government Councilors; Higher National Diploma (HND) or its equivalent for State Governors or the President.*
- 5. Must not be declared to have an unsound mind,*
- 6. Must not have been sentenced to death, imprisonment or fine for any offence involving fraud or dishonesty,*
- 7. Must not have been declared bankrupt under any law in any part of Nigeria,*
- 8. Must not have a Federal or State Government accepted indictment for fraud or embezzlement by the Judicial Commission of Inquiry or an Administrative Panel of Inquiry or Tribunal set up under any Federal or State law in their records,*
- 9. Must not present forged certificates to the Independence National Electoral Commission (INEC) and*
- 10. Must not be members of secret societies.*

Nigeria's population is estimated to be about 200 million, yet every election season, the same crop of politicians remain as the only options for political leaders

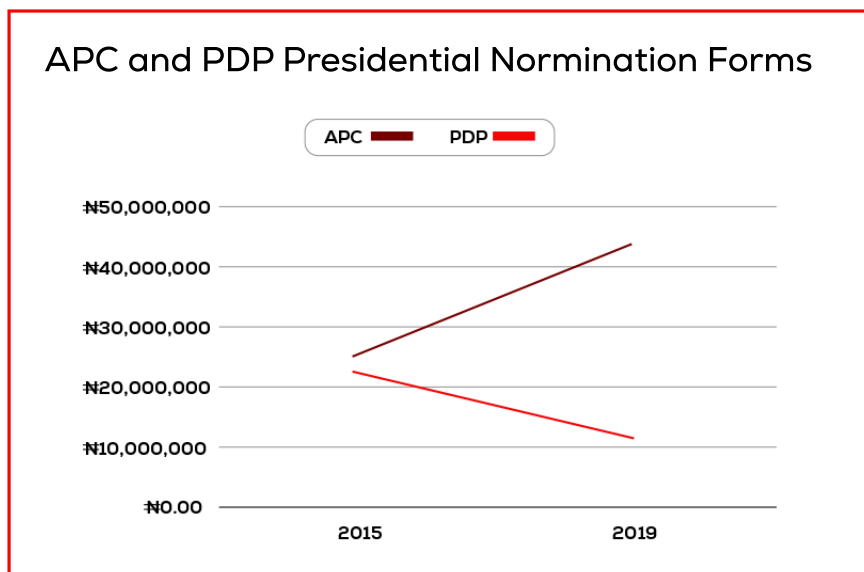
The Current Situation

Section 87 of the Electoral Act (2010) contains guidelines on how political parties should nominate their candidates for elections. All parties are mandated to conduct primaries for aspirants of elective offices, however, there are two procedure options for the nomination of candidates; Direct and Indirect Primaries. The Direct Method involves all the members of the party getting equal opportunities to vote for the aspirants, while the Indirect Method assigns the power to vote to a group of people within the party who will be called, 'Delegates'. While this process appears seamless, becoming an aspirant in Nigeria comes at a huge price.



The Cost of Getting A Party Nomination Form

A person must pay a bill for Expression of Interest and purchase the nomination form for the office that they aspire to occupy to be recognised as an Aspirant. For women who want to contest primaries for the office of the president in APC, the nomination form cost is cut off by 50%. In the People's Democratic Party, Nigeria's foremost opposition party, nomination forms are completely free for women. The graph below shows the cost of the presidential ticket in Nigeria's two biggest political parties; All Progressive Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the last two general elections:



Source: AllAfrica

US\$61,000 = N22 million

US\$33,000 = N12 million

US\$76,000 = N27.5 million

US\$125,000 = N45 million

We take a further look at cost of nomination forms for different levels of office as of 2019:

Name of Party	Political Office	Party Nomination Form	Expression of Interest	Total	Total (US\$)
APC	President	₦40,000,000	₦5,000,000	₦45,000,000	125,000
	Governor	₦20,000,000	₦2,500,000	₦22,500,000	62,500.00
	Senate	₦6,000,000	₦1,000,000	₦7,000,000	19,444.44
	House of Representative	₦3,500,000	₦350,000	₦3,850,000	10694.44
	House of Assembly	₦750,000	₦100,000	₦850,000	2361.11
PDP	President	₦10,000,000	₦2,000,000	₦12,000,000	33,333.33
	Governor	₦5,000,000	₦1,000,000	₦6,000,000	16,666.66
	Senate	₦3,500,000	₦500,000	₦4,000,000	11,111.11
	House of Representative	₦1,000,000	₦500,000	₦1,500,000	4,166.67
	House of Assembly	₦500,000	₦100,000	₦600,000	1,666.67

Source: Premium Times, Legit. Westminster Foundation for Democracy

The Cost of Campaigning

Campaigning also constitutes a major cost in running for elections. The Lagos state gubernatorial elections in 2019 saw the posters of the then APC aspirant, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, plastered on most billboards and street light poles in the state. The governor even had a snap chat filter dedicated for his campaign. Apart from making posters for road advertisement, and TV/radio campaigns (which are mostly cost-intensive), Nigeria has gradually evolved into creating online and other forms of media campaigns for elections. This became an important channel for politicking as data from the Nigerian Communications Commission showed there were 122.7 million active internet users in Nigeria as of July 2019, and as of January 2019, 24 million Nigerians were active on social media (12% of the population) with 78% of this population active on Facebook and 85% of this population active on WhatsApp. Another cash-guzzler in Nigeria's election season is the sharing of non-cash items and/or cash to the masses. This activity is targeted at grassroots community members in mapped out strategic communities and is often carried out a few weeks to the election day.

Do Regulations Exist?

While limits on campaign spending are included in electoral laws, these limits apply only to individuals not their parties. Section 91 states clearly what the limitations are to money spent on elections by candidates and Section 92 gives guidelines for the election expenses of political parties. Under this law, parties would be able to sponsor any candidate s with any amount they deem fit.

Limits to how much an individual running for an elective office can spend:

Elective Office	Candidate's Expense Limit
President	₦1,000,000,000
State Governor	₦200,000,000
Senator	₦40,000,000
House of Representative	₦20,000,000
State House of Assembly	₦10,000,000
Local Government Area Chairman	₦10,000,000
Area Council Councillor	₦1,000,000

Source: PLAC

For donations, Section 91 (9) states, “No individual or other entity shall donate more than N1, 000,000 to any candidate”. In contradiction, 93 (2)(b) states, “A political party shall keep an account and asset book into which shall be recorded; the name and address of any person or entity that contributes any money or assets which exceeds N1,000,000”. Section 93 (3) also states, “A political party shall not accept any monetary or other contribution exceeding N1,000,000 unless it can identify the source of the money or other contribution to the Commission”.

Lessons from Kenya

6 laws directly govern elections in Kenya; The constitution of Kenya (2010), The Elections Act (2011), The Election Laws (Amendment) Act (2016), The Political Parties Act (2011), The Elections Offences Act (2016) and the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission Act (2011).

Among the 24 requirements for a Kenyan intending to run for the office of the President via a political party platform, and the 5 other requirements for independent candidates, an aspirant will require a document (printed and electronic) that shows at least 2000 voters/supporters from every majority of the country in a prescribed form, and pay KSh200,000 (US\$1845.46) or KSh100,000 (US\$922.78) for a person who is a youth (below 35 years old), or a woman or a person with a disability. Governorship aspirants who are youths, women, and/or people with disabilities pay KSh25,000 (US\$230.80), while other aspirants pay KSh50,000. These monies are fixed by and paid to the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, Kenya’s independent regulatory agency for elections and boundaries.

Just like Nigeria, Kenya runs a multiple party system yet there are two main parties; Jubilee Party and Orange Democratic Movement (ODM). Apart from the registration fees paid to IEBC, aspirants are expected to pay nomination fees at party level. Here’s a table that shows the party level nomination fees for all the elective offices as at 2017 when the most recent general elections were held:



Name of Party	Political Office	Party Nomination Fee (KSh)	Total (US\$) as at 2017*
Jubilee Party	President	N/A	
	Governor	400,000	3854.68
	Senate	250,000	2409.17
	Members of Parliament	250,000	2409.17
	Members of County Assemblies (MCAs)	30,000	289.10
Orange Democratic Movement (ODM)	President	1,000,000	9636.70
	Governor	500,000	4818.35
	Senate	250,000	2409.17
	Members of Parliament	250,000	2409.17
	Members of County Assemblies (MCAs)	25,000	240.92

*Source: Nation (Jubilee), Nation (ODM)
Exchange rate in 2017(US\$ 1 = Ksh 103.77)

For the Jubilee Party, apart from the parliamentary women representatives, all youths, women and people with disabilities are to pay 50% of the stipulated fees for all the elective offices. This is the same for Orange Democratic Movement Party, only that when this same group aspire to be Members of County Assemblies, they pay KSh 15,000