

**About the Quick Start Guides:** The EAC's Quick Start Guides are intended to familiarize local election officials with various topics they will likely encounter in election administration. The guides are a starting point to identify areas of concern and give officials a broad idea of factors they should consider in approaching a given topic.

## What is the canvass?

The canvass is a post-election process that aggregates and confirms that all valid ballots cast in the election are accurately counted and included in the final election results. Through the canvass, election officials determine whether to count provisional ballots, resolve ballot marking errors, adjudicate voter intent, and reconcile the number of ballots cast with the number of people who voted. The process allows election officials to verify that staff and poll workers followed procedures (e.g., confirming voter eligibility and documenting chain of custody) throughout early, absentee, by mail, and Election Day voting.



## Prepare



- **Review** laws, policies and regulations that pertain to the canvass.
- **Develop** written canvass procedures and include important dates and deadlines on your election calendar.
- **Plan** the layout of the physical space where the canvass will be conducted. Include an area for observers that allows them to view the process but maintains voter privacy.
- **Prepare** rules of conduct and identification badges for all observers. Consider providing an orientation or information packet for observers and candidates that covers your canvassing procedures and relevant laws or regulations.
- **Determine** if you will use any sub-canvass boards and who will serve on them.
- **Train** staff and canvass board members on procedures, including how to address issues as they arise and how to document the process.

## Canvass



After Election Day, organize all of the materials needed for the canvass, including:

- Electronic printouts from all ballot tabulators (precinct scanners, central count scanners, and/or accessible voting devices)
- Qualified write-in tallies
- All rosters or signature cards from precincts, early voting sites, or vote centers
- Spoiled and challenged ballots
- Provisional ballots
- Documentation for any replacement ballots issued

Provide canvass board members a copy of any rules they may need. For example, a provisional ballot sub-canvass board should have a copy of the rules for counting or rejecting provisional ballots. Record all actions taken by the boards throughout the process.

## Document

After the canvass board completes its review, certify and publish the final election results. Final results may need to be transmitted to the state elections office. Additionally, election officials can use the documentation and information gathered during the canvass process to assess procedures and tell the story of the election. First, review the canvass documentation and identify gaps or areas where procedures were not followed, and additional training may be necessary. Then update procedures and training based on what you have learned from the canvass process. Second, use the data produced in the canvass process to inform the public about the election process. The canvass is more than just the final results. Information about voter reconciliation, the number of provisional ballots counted, chain of custody maintenance, etc., should be publicized as evidence of the integrity of the election. Include problems the canvass board faced, how officials resolved them, and steps officials will take to avoid the same problems in the future.