



# Election Office Workflow Innovation Using Microsoft 365

**2025 EAC Clearinghouse Award Submission**

*Category: Innovations or New Practices in Election Administration*

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**Submitted by:**

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## Background and Overview

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Douglas County, Kansas is home to 84,000 registered voters and ranks as the fifth largest county in the state. Though considered a small-to-medium-sized election jurisdiction by national standards, Douglas County presents a diverse administrative landscape: it is simultaneously rural and urban, and serves as home to the University of Kansas, Haskell Indian Nations University, and Baker University.

Kansas law permits no-excuse advance voting but requires voters to submit a mail ballot application for each individual election. Douglas County historically receives a substantial volume of such requests, and the associated administrative workload can be significant. During the 2024 Presidential Election, Douglas County received 13,899 requests and 12,952 ballots were returned, this was almost 22% of the votes cast. For the 2025 City/School General Election, 7,678 requests were received and 5,268 ballots returned, this was 25% of the total ballots cast. For most voters, the process runs smoothly. However, when an application contains an error—or when a returned ballot envelope has a signature deficiency—

resolving the issue demands a considerable investment of staff time and careful documentation. Without a centralized tracking system, requests risk being misplaced during high-volume election periods.

A variety of software tools exist that address portions of this workflow, but none offer a comprehensive solution. Because each jurisdiction differs in workflow, budget, staffing, and legal requirements, building narrowly tailored electronic solutions is often expensive and technically demanding. Reliance on outside vendors frequently creates additional coordination burdens for already-stretched IT staff. Faced with limited resources, Douglas County sought a solution that would minimize cost, leverage existing software, and meaningfully improve administrative processes.

## Identified Challenges

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After carefully reviewing office operations, staff identified four areas where errors, backlogs, and administrative bottlenecks most frequently occurred: ballot requests, voter corrections, provisional mail ballots, and return ballot curing.

### Ballot Requests

Managing mail ballot requests presents multiple operational challenges. Required tracking tasks—such as logging when a voter was contacted and by what method—are time-intensive and prone to error. Although notes can be written on physical documents, there is often no reliable record confirming their preservation beyond the required retention period. Because multiple staff members, including temporary employees, may be assigned follow-up duties on any given day, the potential for confusion or missed tracking increases considerably.

Phone outreach is often unsuccessful, making email and written correspondence essential. Even when templates exist, composing individualized letters or emails requires verifying names, addresses, and template language; retrieving prior correspondence; confirming contact information; and sending the message—all steps that multiply the time burden per voter.

Without a centralized coordination system, voter applications can be overlooked or, conversely, receive duplicate communication, wasting staff time and undermining voter confidence. Physical storage of applications and ballots adds further complexity when attempting to resolve deficiencies. Given today's election administration environment, detailed chain-of-custody documentation is also expected by the public and may be required to defend office actions in legal proceedings.

### Voter Corrections

When an application or returned ballot requires correction, voters may need to submit additional information through a variety of channels—by phone, in person, by mail, or electronically. As election-related communication increasingly moves online, email has become a common and convenient option for voters. During large elections, however, email traffic to the office can be overwhelming, and staff distraction can result in missed messages. Missed voter communication may mean a voter misses a cure deadline, while also creating the perception that the office is disorganized—directly affecting public trust. Previous attempts to implement centralized tracking systems proved overly complex, heavily dependent on manual input, and still susceptible to human error.

### Provisional Mail Ballots

The assembly and tracking of provisional mail ballots—required for voters with incomplete applications or documented address or name changes—is among the most labor-intensive tasks in the mailing process. This workflow requires additional tracking that is incompatible with most statewide voter database systems. Although safeguards exist to prevent duplicate provisional ballots from being counted, any situation in which a voter could plausibly receive two provisional ballots poses a meaningful risk to public confidence in election integrity.

### Return Ballot Curing

Curing deficiencies on returned ballots is the most consequential part of the process: an uncured ballot may ultimately not be counted. Effective curing requires an orderly system capable of tracking who has been contacted, who has responded, and how each ballot has been processed. Outreach relies primarily on phone and email, and the process is inherently time-sensitive, often requiring voter responses before hard acceptance deadlines. The physical organization and security of returned but uncured ballots must be maintained throughout. During peak election periods, some curing tasks risk being overlooked under the weight of competing priorities.

## Development and Solution

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Beginning in 2023, Ed Healy, Deputy County Clerk–Elections, undertook a project to address these challenges using existing software tools. The goals were clear: save staff time, make use of resources already available to the office, minimize financial outlay, improve the voter experience, enhance internal communication, and create a more reliable system for documenting outreach.

The solution was built entirely within Microsoft 365—software already in use across the office—by refining and expanding the capabilities of tools already available within the suite. Critically, this approach is adaptable: because workflows are built on configurable, widely used applications, they can be tailored to the specific legal requirements and operational realities of any election jurisdiction. The system integrates SharePoint, Power Automate, Microsoft Lists, and Microsoft Teams to create a seamless, largely automated workflow that tracks applications, generates personalized communications, and resolves issues with minimal manual intervention.

The attached workflow diagram illustrates how the system is constructed and operates in practice. A central feature of the workflow is a ticketing process that triggers downstream actions automatically—without requiring manual staff intervention at each step.

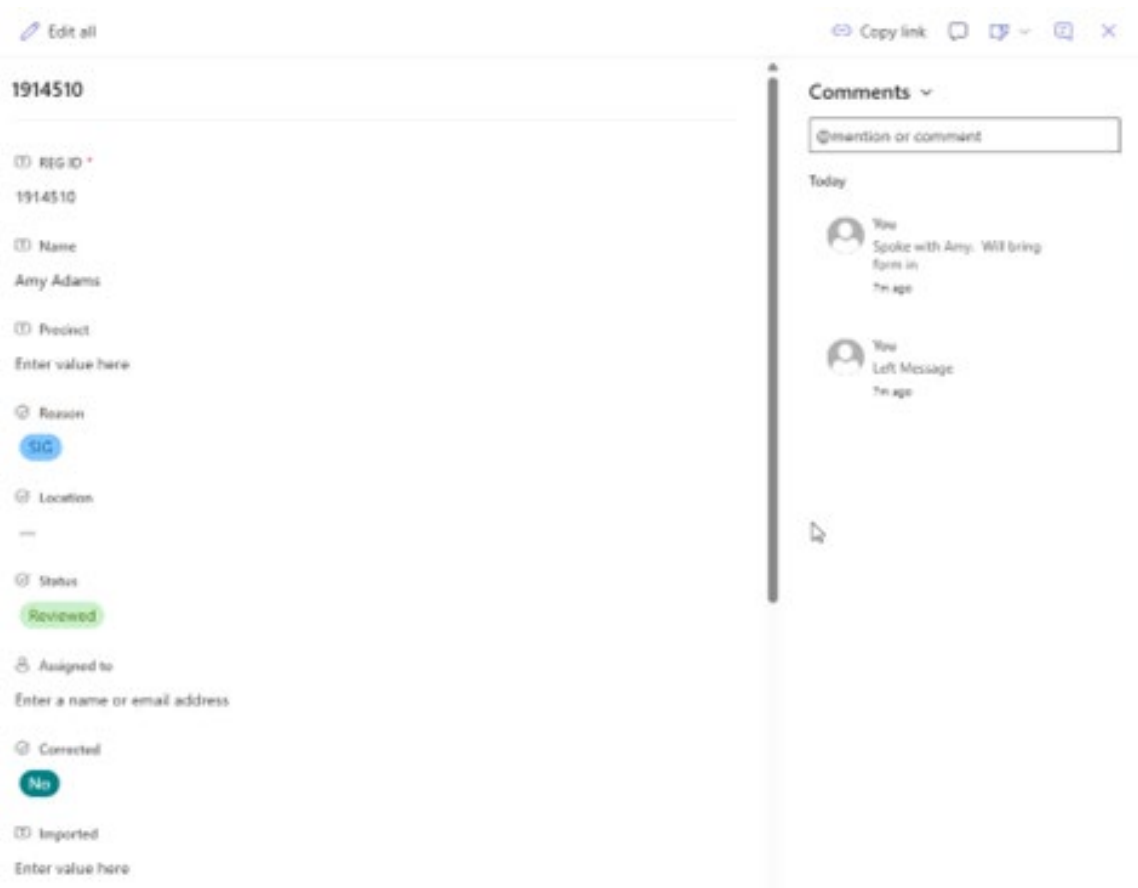
### Step 1 — Problem Identified

When a ballot application is flagged, it is scanned, assigned a standardized file name encoding the voter ID, voter name, and problem type (e.g., missing signature, incorrect date, wrong address), and placed into a shared folder. This action automatically creates a new item in a shared list (List #1), populated with the voter's ID, name, email address (if available), and a problem code that drives subsequent automated outreach. All team members receive an automatic notification that new flagged applications have been added to the queue.

| REG ID  | Name           | Email             | Problem | Reason | Date Reported | Date Corrected | Location | Status       |
|---------|----------------|-------------------|---------|--------|---------------|----------------|----------|--------------|
| 774654  | John Smith     | shedy@spokane.gov |         | SM     |               |                |          | Reviewed     |
| 1914510 | Amy Adams      | shedy@spokane.gov |         | SC     |               |                |          | Not Reviewed |
| 2690278 | Michael Pena   | shedy@spokane.gov |         | SM     |               |                |          | Not Reviewed |
| 2691420 | Michael Jordan | shedy@spokane.gov |         | CSA    |               |                |          | Not Reviewed |
| 2691709 | George Osorio  | shedy@spokane.gov |         | SC     |               |                |          | Not Reviewed |
| 0       | Robert Duvall  | shedy@spokane.gov |         | NS     |               |                |          | Not Reviewed |
| 2694469 | Patric Minon   | shedy@spokane.gov |         | SC     |               |                |          | Not Reviewed |
| 1251671 | Vivie Davis    | shedy@spokane.gov |         | SC     |               |                |          | Not Reviewed |
| 2697910 | Tom Harper     | shedy@spokane.gov |         | SC     |               |                |          | Not Reviewed |
| 2456362 | Jeffrey Wright | shedy@spokane.gov |         | SC     |               |                |          | Not Reviewed |

## Step 2 — Staff Review and Voter Outreach

As staff work through flagged applications and attempt voter contact, they document phone call attempts using the notes function within List #1. When a staff member activates an outreach trigger, the system automatically generates both a personalized email and a print-ready letter corresponding to the specific problem type, including the voter’s name and ID. The email is sent to the voter automatically; the letter can be quickly printed for mailing. Every action—including generated emails and letters—is time-stamped, logged, and saved to both Outlook and a designated Teams folder for future retrieval. Reminder workflows can be configured to trigger automatically on a set schedule or manually by staff as circumstances require.



### Step 3 — Processing Voter Responses

When emails are received that appear to be in response to a correction request, a staff member moves the message into a shared Outlook folder. This action automatically adds the email and any attachments to a centralized ticketing system (List #2), which is used year-round to track all items requiring office action. The staff member then enters the voter's ID into the ticketing system. If that voter ID also appears in List #1, the system automatically links the incoming response to the original flagged application—resolving the application and closing the ticket simultaneously. If the submitted correction resolves the deficiency, an automated confirmation email is sent to the voter. If the deficiency remains unresolved, the workflow proceeds to Step 4.

Status: New x In Progress x

| Issue             | Issue description | Details | Priority | Status | Assigned to | Date reported ↓ | Images | Associated files |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|----------|--------|-------------|-----------------|--------|------------------|
| ehealy@dgcoks.gov | TEST              |         |          | New    |             | 2/18/2026       |        |                  |

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**New**

**Assigned to**  
Enter a name or email address

**Date reported**  
2/18/2026

**Images**  
Add an image

**NOTES**

**Issue logged by**  
Enter a name or email address

**Advance Problem**  
N

**Email Content**


2697910

2697 I

**Associated files**  
2026 Grant PP.pdf

**Comments** ▾

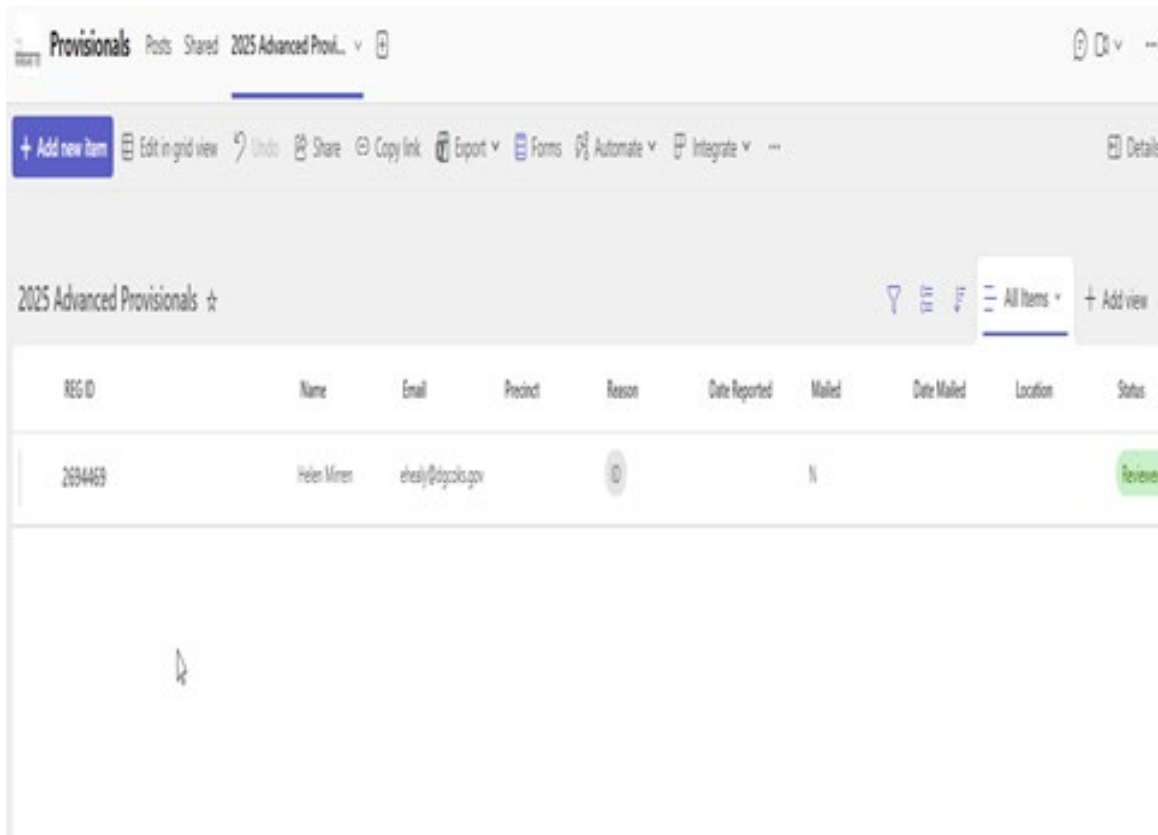
@mention or comment



Be the first one to add a comment

## Step 4 — Provisional Ballot

If a deficiency cannot be resolved through the correction process, staff update the ticket status to “provisional.” This triggers the automatic transfer of the application from List #1 to a dedicated provisional ballot list. A provisional ballot letter is generated, and the entire provisional ballot process is tracked through completion using tickets in that workflow area.



| REG ID  | Name        | Email             | Precinct | Reason | Date Reported | Mailed | Date Mailed | Location | Status                 |
|---------|-------------|-------------------|----------|--------|---------------|--------|-------------|----------|------------------------|
| 2694469 | Helen Miner | hminer@dcpsdc.gov |          |        |               | N      |             |          | <a href="#">Review</a> |

Throughout all stages, automatic notifications alert staff when new items require review or action, keeping the team coordinated without requiring manual communication. Voter outreach is automated while still being fully documented. Letters are generated as individualized, print-ready documents for each voter, whether addressing an application deficiency or providing instructions for completing a provisional mail ballot.

This full four-step workflow has also been replicated in a parallel process for return ballot curing, extending the same organizational benefits to that critical phase of election administration.

## Clearinghouse Award Criteria

### Creativity and Innovation

This program demonstrates genuine creativity by consolidating fragmented, manual mail ballot workflows into a coordinated, largely automated electronic system—using tools that most election offices already have. Rather than relying on specialized or proprietary election software, the approach reimagines the capabilities of Microsoft 365 as a flexible election administration platform, offering a scalable and practical response to longstanding administrative challenges that many jurisdictions share.

### Cost Effectiveness

The workflow is highly cost-effective because it eliminates administrative burden, duplicated effort, and inefficiency without introducing new expenses. By leveraging an existing Microsoft 365 environment, the

program eliminates the need for outside vendors, custom software development, or additional IT staffing. The result is meaningful operational improvement within existing budget constraints. In the 2025 election, our office saved over 22 hours of staff time while increasing outreach contacts by 60% and improving the curing success rate.

## Replicability

The program is explicitly designed for replication. Because it relies on widely available software and emphasizes configurability, the workflow can be adapted to jurisdictions of varying sizes, staffing models, and legal frameworks. With appropriate modifications, it can address the specific circumstances of other election offices while achieving comparable operational improvements.

## Sustainability

This workflow is intended as a long-term operational improvement, not a one-time fix. It can be maintained at its current scale, refined as office processes evolve, and expanded to incorporate additional functions or users over time. Its foundation in existing systems and established staff workflows supports sustained adoption without ongoing vendor dependency.

## Meets Category Requirements

The program directly addresses core election administration functions—mail ballot requests, voter corrections, provisional ballots, and ballot curing—that are central to the category of Innovations or New Practices in Election Administration. Each functional area of the workflow corresponds precisely to the operational challenges identified in this submission.

## Improves Outcomes for Voters and Election Officials

For election staff, the workflow improves organization, task tracking, coordination, and visibility—reducing the likelihood of errors or overlooked items during high-volume periods. For voters, the system improves consistency and timeliness of communications, reduces confusion caused by duplicate outreach or conflicting information, and supports faster and more accurate ballot curing. These improvements produce measurable operational efficiencies and contribute to stronger voter confidence in the integrity and competence of the election office.

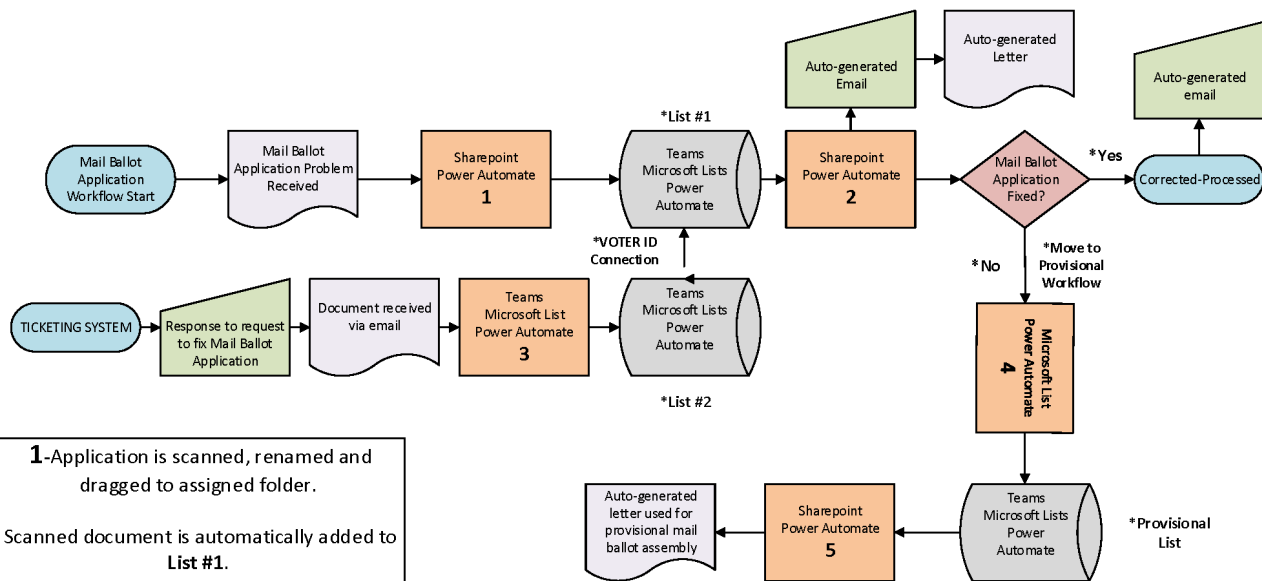
## Conclusion

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This workflow has been deployed in both large and small elections throughout 2024 and 2025, and the results have been transformative. Staff have found the system intuitive and easy to navigate. Voters have responded positively to the consistency and clarity of office communications. Tracking and documentation have improved exponentially. The automation of voter outreach has been among the most impactful changes to office operations in recent memory.

Looking ahead, the office is actively exploring how to apply the same applications and workflow logic to other administrative functions. The system required a significant initial investment of time from its architect, Ed Healy, and successful implementation does involve a learning curve for tools such as Power Automate, Microsoft Lists, Microsoft Teams, and SharePoint. That investment, however, has delivered lasting returns.

As the election administrator who oversees this office, I am proud of what our team accomplished by looking critically at the tools already at our fingertips and finding innovative ways to use them. This project is a model for how election offices—regardless of size or budget—can modernize their operations, strengthen accountability, and better serve their voters.



**1-**Application is scanned, renamed and dragged to assigned folder.  
Scanned document is automatically added to **List #1**.  
All team members automatically notified of new additions to **List #1**

**2-**Staff evaluates and documents contact in **List #1**.  
When trigger is applied, email is automatically sent and physical letter is created.  
Content of email and letter correspond to the exact issue application presents and provides solution.  
All actions time stamped.

**3-**When emails are received that could be responsive to outgoing requests, emails can be moved to a specific folder in shared outlook folder.  
Email and any attachments automatically added to separate shared **List #2**, which is connected to **List #1** by voter ID.  
Staff reviews, identifies voter and adds voter ID in **List #2**.  
If advance problem is present in **List #1**, **List #2** will notify staff of existing problem.  
This connection allows both the application to be resolved and the ticket to be completed simultaneously

**4-**If application problem is not resolved, staff will select list item and change status to Provisional.  
Application is automatically removed from **List #1**

**5-**Application removed from **List #1** is automatically added to **Provisional List**.  
Once evaluated, staff approves for mail provisional ballot.  
Trigger automatically creates customized provisional letter with specific instructions on completing and returning provisional.