

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 are recounts, and why are they necessary?

Especially in local contests, it is common for a handful of votes to determine the outcome of the election. The recount procedures are statutorily driven and may be overseen by electoral boards, canvass boards, or judicial bodies, depending on state policy. A recount is an additional count of the votes cast to ensure that ballots cast were counted accurately initially and that the correct candidates or ballot issues won. Depending on local laws and procedures, election officials may conduct this process using ballot tabulation equipment or by hand. The policies and procedures for conducting recounts and election contests are tied closely to the specific ballot media and design. As states can use hand-marked paper ballots, ballot marking devices, or DRE voting machines created by different companies, it is challenging to determine a consistent best practice standard for all recounts and election contests across the country.

What you need to know

<p><u>Timelines</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State law or regulation often dictates when the recount must begin and end. • Be aware of statutory deadlines for when candidates take office so that recounts are finalized prior to those dates. 	<p><u>Supplies & Templates</u></p> <p>Depending on the number of ballots to be re-tabulated, additional supplies may be needed, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security seals • Chain of custody logs • Tally sheets <p>Prepare press release templates and legal notices in advance and fill in details later.</p>	<p><u>Training</u></p> <p>All training materials should be made available to the public in advance. The training sessions should be comprehensive regarding the policies and procedures for conducting the recount, the chain of custody, and should provide information about the rules for observers, media, and candidates.</p>
<p><u>Staff</u></p> <p>The total number of staff and additional personnel needed to conduct a recount depends on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of ballots • The type of voting system • The method of recount • The budget <p>Consider recruiting stand-by staff in the event of cancellations during the recount process.</p>	<p><u>Location</u></p> <p>Many jurisdictions can conduct a recount within the elections office. However, another location may need to be secured to allow for additional transparency. Consider filming and/or livestreaming the proceedings.</p> <p>The recount room, all election materials, and the chain of custody should be secured throughout the process, and there should be enough room to allow the observation of the process. Consider hiring security staff, if needed.</p>	<p><u>Cost</u></p> <p>Typically, when not required by law or with results within a statutorily defined margin, the cost of a recount is billed to the requestor of the recount. Consider all budget impacts, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-time & temporary staff salaries • Location rental • Legal expenses • Vendor support • Security • Additional supplies <p>Billing and collection policies should be understood in advance.</p>

Transparency

Before each election, election officials should make the public aware of the timeline, methodology, scope, and effect on final outcomes of election results in the event discrepancies are revealed between original election results and the recounted election results. Recount materials should include the 'who, what, and when' of the recount process. A "Frequently Asked Questions" page can ask and answer:

- Are recounts mandatory?
- Who can call for a recount?
- Will the recount establish a winner?
- How long will the recount last?
- How much does a recount cost?
- Who pays for the recount?
- Who can handle election materials?
- Can the public view the recount?
- Can the results be challenged?

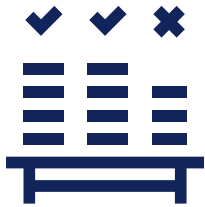
Initiating the Recount



Each state has its own laws regarding what may trigger a recount, and they usually fall within the following general categories:

- Automatically initiated based on a vote margin
- Candidate initiated
- Voter initiated
- Court-ordered

Conducting the Recount



- **Conduct** a kick-off briefing for all participants in the recount, and describe the process, workflow, state laws and regulations, and overall procedures for managing the recount.
- **Review** state-mandated deadlines and determine staffing needs based on these deadlines.
- **Reinforce** the “team of two” concept throughout the process, preferably bipartisan. Assign team leaders to each component of the recount workflow.
- **Provide** an overview of the policies and procedures for media and observers of the recount.
- **Distribute** copies of your security plan to everyone involved in the process.
- **Implement** a process for managing the flow of information to the recount board, the media, candidates, and political parties.
- **Conduct** periodic media briefings to answer all questions during a designated time.

Finalizing the Recount



Collect and organize all recount documentation—tally sheets, batch sheets, and ballots. The results of the recount can be challenged in court; therefore, election officials should store detailed documentation of each decision made and action taken during the recount process in a secured area.

- **Prepare** a cost analysis for the recount. This report should be provided to the budget department staff or billed to the appropriate party.
- **Conduct** a full staff debriefing; review lessons learned and gather input for changes to recount procedures.
- **Update** recount procedures based on feedback.

Examples

HAND RECOUNT: During the recount, three or four-person teams receive ballots. For each ballot, one team member reads aloud the name of the candidate receiving the vote. Another team member records the vote on a tally sheet. The third and fourth members verify both of the other team members' work. When an entire bundle of ballots is recounted, the totals from the tally sheet are recorded on a batch sheet and attached to the bundle of voted ballots. To ensure accuracy, team members may switch roles and count each bundle of ballots twice before attaching the batch sheet to the ballots.

ELECTRONIC RECOUNT: Before starting the recount, conduct a logic and accuracy test to ensure the tabulation equipment is functioning properly. Working in teams of two, rescan optical scan ballots or reload memory cards and balance the returns in the same manner as the official results. For example, for ballots cast at polling places, recount the ballots and balance to the end-of-day report from the corresponding precinct scanner or DRE. Central count ballots should be recounted in the original batches with the recounted results compared to the given batch's returns. After each central count batch or polling locations' ballots are tabulated and balanced, aggregate the results until all ballots are recounted.