# Quick Start Guide

Election Results Reporting

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.

Election Results Reporting

Voters look to election officials for trusted information about election results. The public anticipates a timely and efficient count of ballots. How election officials display and report election results can play a key role in facilitating public confidence in election outcomes. The security and operation of the election night reporting system are vital to prevent interference with reporting of unofficial results or system operation failure from negatively impacting voter confidence. The practices described in this guide can help election officials to provide election results to the public effectively.
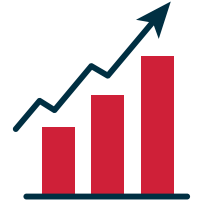
Website Features

Sample Website Text

Election results are unofficial until canvassed. The purpose of the canvass is to account for every voted ballot and ensure that each valid vote is included in the official results.

After the canvass is completed, the results of the election will be audited. This audit will review voted ballots to confirm that the election results are accurate before they are certified as official.

- **Provide Clear, Concise Information.** Explain the election reporting process in plain language. Describe how ballots are tabulated and steps taken to ensure the security, integrity, and accuracy of the initially reported unofficial results.
- **Display Election Information Visually.** Charts and graphs can quickly convey key information about the election and make the results easier to understand. Ensure that all visual information is section 508 compliant so that all voters can access the information.
- **Define Key Terms.** Providing a glossary of election terms helps to clarify information for the public.
- **Display Report Timestamps.** Each results report should clearly show the date and time the report was last updated.
- **Make Data Easy to Download.** When possible, election results should be available to download in common data formats. Many election systems provide detailed results as .csv or .xml files.
- **Make the Data Easily Shareable.** Help the public find your information by sharing your election results on social media with links to help voters share your information.

Best Practices

- **Include** information about which ballots (i.e., early voting, by-mail and absentee, election day, provisional, write-in votes) are included in each report and a general timeline of when to expect the next updates.
- **Display** the approximate number of uncounted ballots each day from election night until the final results are certified.
- **Plan** for unexpected power outages, website failures, security challenges, or technical problems so that voters, the media, and candidates know how to find results if they cannot be posted on the elections website.
- **Be consistent** in reporting order if possible. Changing the order of contests or candidates can create confusion.
- **Be transparent** when reporting errors occur by providing written information on websites and in press releases about differences in vote totals. For example, if a number was transposed and the error corrected, explain what happened and which reports were in error.

Examples of Key Terms

Times Cast: The number of valid ballots cast and counted in each contest.

Registration: The number of citizens who were registered and eligible to vote in the election by the deadline.

Turnout: The total number of voters who cast a ballot divided by the total number of registered voters.