



# Post-Election Tabulation Audits

## A Brief Overview



### What is an audit?

An audit is a routine quality control process used in many industries and situations. Audits involve examining some, but not all, of the documentation about a process and comparing what we see to our expectations. For example, audits could be used to check:

- Financial reports: Do the receipts support the financial statements submitted?
- Manufacturing processes: Does the product on the factory line have all the right parts?
- Swimming pool maintenance: Is the chlorine level in the pool too high or too low?

Elections have many processes that can be audited, including the election results. One way to check the results is a post-election tabulation audit, where auditors review a sample of ballots to see if the votes from the sample align with the original count. These audits can provide additional evidence that the election results are trustworthy.

### Why audit election results?

Post-election audits help ensure election outcomes are correct and build trust in the voting process.

A strong audit can:

- Defend against errors, malfunctions, or manipulation
- Remove the need to implicitly trust machines or people
- Provide quality control and transparency

### What is needed to audit election results?

Audits rely on trustworthy records and secure chain of custody.

Before they audit, election officials:

- Collect trustworthy evidence of each voter's intent (ballots)
- Preserve and protect election evidence (secure chain of custody)

### How are audits different than recounts?

- Recounts and audits are different procedures with differing goals, but both look at cast ballots to check the outcome or identify irregularities.
- Recounts usually review all the ballots in a contest, while audits examine only some of the ballots.
- Recounts validate the exact vote totals, while audits provide evidence about the outcome of the election.