

## CERTIFICATION QUICK START GUIDE

# Tabulation Audits

For each Standard you are seeking certification in, you'll be given a questionnaire specific to that Standard to fill out. Most questionnaires will also request that you upload nonconfidential materials, such as examples of reports you have published or your standard operating procedures documents. This guide has tips to keep in mind when preparing for and filling out the Tabulation Audits questionnaire so that your office has a more seamless experience.

## The Standard

Your election office conducts tabulation audits on your voting equipment prior to certification to ensure the results are accurate. To achieve this standard:

- Your audits have clearly defined objectives, processes, and timelines.
- Your audit process includes training to equip those conducting audits with a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
- Your audit samples are randomly drawn from across all precincts and voting methods.
- Your audits maintain independence between the initial ballot processing and the audit process.
- Your audits are conducted in a team to increase confidence in audit results.
- You use learnings from audits to make corrections and improve your processes and training.
- You educate voters on the audit process and audit results to promote transparency.

## Glossary

We've tried to keep jargon to a minimum, but some is unavoidable. Since many offices use different terminology, here are some terms used in the standard or questionnaire that may be unfamiliar or you may use in a different way:

- **Tabulation audit:** post-election tests to ensure that voting/tabulation equipment and related processes used during an election accurately counted votes.
- **Ballot manifest:** a list of all ballot batches with the following information: the number of ballots in the batch, the storage container ID number, and the tabulator ID number.
- **Ballot reconciliation:** the process by which the number of ballots are matched up with the number of voters.

## Who to include

You will get more out of the certification process and be able to complete the questionnaire more quickly if you involve the right staff in the process. Here are some suggestions for who to include for this standard:

- Staff who manage and conduct ballot management and audit processes
- Staff who train audit teams
- Staff who produce audit reports and public education materials

## Materials requested

The questionnaire will request the following materials:

- Blank or Sample Ballot manifests
- Blank or Sample Ballot reconciliation reports
- Blank or Sample Tally sheets
- Current Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- Current Instructions or training material for auditors
- Post-audit reports (technical and for the public)

You may not have documents with these titles or you may have reasons that you don't use some of these types of materials. In those cases, you can provide other documents that you use in these processes, or provide explanations for what you do instead.

Please provide only the versions or portions of these (or similar) documents that would be subject to public records requests in your jurisdiction. Do not provide any confidential documents or information. We encourage you to consult with your local counsel if you have questions about whether a document can be shared.

## Example questions

Here are some examples of questions found in the certification questionnaire, to give you an idea of what you will be asked about:

Please describe your office's procedures for concluding the audit. Please include at least the following:

- How you confirm that all ballots or batches selected have been audited?
- How you determine if the audit is complete or if additional rounds of auditing are necessary?

Please describe your office's trainings for those conducting audits. Please include at least the following:

- Topics covered
- Frequency
- Who attends

Please describe how your voter education on the audit process and audit results promotes transparency.

## Resources addressing this standard

If you are looking for ways to improve your processes in this area before applying for certification or to implement feedback you received about how to meet the standard, these publicly available, nonpartisan resources may help.

- [Audit Report Toolkit](#): Templates and slide decks for clear, professional audit reports
- [The Elections Group audit resources](#): a wide range of resources for election audits of all kinds, with many focusing specifically on tabulation audits

Using or reviewing these resources is not required for your office to be certified: certification is based on achieving the standard, not on using specific materials. These nonpartisan resources are provided for informational and educational purposes only.

## Certification program information

For information on the certification program as a whole, as well as general advice on how to get the most out of the certification process, consult these resources:

- Our [guide](#) to the certification process
- [FAQs](#) about the Alliance certification program
- Go to [CertifyExcellence.org](https://certifyexcellence.org) to apply