

# SANTA FE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

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### **Santa Fe County Clerk Katharine E. Clark Receives 2026 EVN Innovation Award for Election Verification System**

**Santa Fe County, NM** – The Election Verification Network (EVN) has named Santa Fe County Clerk Katharine E. Clark the recipient of the 2026 EVN Innovation Award, recognizing the Clerk's Office for developing an innovative machine-assisted hand tally system that strengthens election verification and auditing.

The EVN Innovation Award recognizes path-breaking approaches that improve the accuracy, transparency, and integrity of election processes. The Santa Fe County Clerk's Office was selected for its work modernizing one of the most error-prone and resource-intensive aspects of election administration: manually counting ballots that cannot be read by tabulation machines. Under Clerk Clark's leadership, the Santa Fe County Clerk's Office developed and piloted a standardized, digital hand tally workflow in technical partnership with ROBIS. The system was first implemented during the 2024 General Election and later used again during the 2025 Regular Local Election.

The system incorporates digital data entry, unique ballot identifiers, and a two-step bipartisan verification process. One team enters each ballot, a second independent team independently re-enters the same ballot, and the system automatically compares the results to flag discrepancies in real time. This creates a fully auditable record and allows errors to be corrected within the workflow, rather than later during canvass.

Beyond improving routine hand tally processes, the system also strengthens operational resilience. In the event tabulation equipment is unavailable for any reason — including equipment failure, certification issues, or emergency contingencies — Santa Fe County is now prepared to accurately hand tabulate all ballots at scale using a standardized, auditable workflow. This ensures continuity of election operations and protects the County's ability to complete accurate counts under a wide range of scenarios.

During the 2024 General Election, 1,214 ballots were processed using the system. The two-step verification process reduced error rates from approximately four percent under traditional hand tally methods to zero percent, while also significantly reducing staff overtime and post-election error correction work. The system also demonstrated operational resilience during the 2024

election, allowing staff to be replaced mid-process due to a COVID-19 outbreak without disrupting accuracy or continuity.

“Santa Fe County needed a solution that improved accuracy, transparency, and efficiency within existing constraints,” said Katharine E. Clark, Santa Fe County Clerk. “This award reflects the hard work of our elections staff and our commitment to strengthening public trust in election processes. We’re proud to share a model that can be useful to other jurisdictions facing similar challenges.”

Clerk Clark will receive the award in person at the Election Verification Network Conference in Washington, D.C. this week.

The EVN Innovation Award highlights Santa Fe County’s leadership in election administration and its commitment to continuous improvement, even within the legal, staffing, and resource constraints faced by local election offices nationwide.

For more information about election administration in Santa Fe County, visit [SantaFe.vote](https://SantaFe.vote).

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