



Election Access Fund: Consultation survey questions

Introduction

The Electoral Commission is establishing a new fund, called the Election Access Fund, to support disabled people to stand as candidates in parliamentary general elections and by-elections.

The purpose of the fund is to reduce cost barriers faced by disabled people by covering disability related costs which non-disabled candidates do not face. The fund covers both seeking selection to be a candidate, and then campaigning as a candidate at the 2023 General Election (and subsequent elections) and by-elections.

The Fund will enable the Commission to pay for additional costs that candidates incur as a result of their disability when organising and preparing to stand for Parliamentary elections.

There will be one million dollars in the Fund for people to apply to use. The Electoral Commission is responsible for setting up and running the fund.

We are seeking input from disabled people, disabled people's organisations, political parties, and other interested people and organisations about who should be able to apply to the fund, what sort of expenses the fund could cover and how it should be accessed.

What is the Electoral Commission?

The Electoral Commission is responsible for running New Zealand's parliamentary elections and keeping the electoral rolls up to date. We are an independent Crown Entity which means we work independently from government. We administer the Electoral Act 1993 which provides the rules for parliamentary elections and the electoral roll.

We run every part of parliamentary elections. This includes general elections where all people who can vote in New Zealand vote on who they want to be in government. We also run by-elections which happen when a member of parliament needs to leave their role before a general election, so their area votes on who will replace them.

Some of our main responsibilities include registering political parties and helping candidates to understand the rules, helping the public to understand how to enrol and vote, running voting places and counting and processing votes.

To keep confidence in the electoral system, we stay neutral, uphold and follow electoral law and work independently from government.

What is the role of the Electoral Commission in the Election Access Fund?

The Electoral Commission is required by law to design, set up, and run the Election Access Fund.

This includes consulting widely and making all of the decisions needed on how the Fund will work and what funding applicants can get. The Commission is also responsible for making the Fund available before each general election and by-election, and for welcoming and processing applications.

How will we set up the Election Access Fund?

The Electoral Commission is currently running a project to set up the Election Access Fund. This includes developing policies and processes, consultation, raising awareness, providing information in alternate formats, and setting up processes for ongoing administration of the Fund, including receiving and assessing applications.

The project has a Steering Group responsible for the overall direction and management of how the Fund will be set up. The Steering Group is made up of senior staff from the Electoral Commission, an advisor from the Office for Disability Issues and a member from the DPO (Disabled People's Organisations) Coalition.

We want your input

We are consulting with disabled people, disabled people's organisations, political parties, and other interested people and organisations. We are seeking input on who should be able to apply to the fund, what sort of expenses the fund could cover and how it should be accessed.

Having the input of the disability community throughout the process to design and develop the fund is critical in order to ensure that the fund will work well in practice and serve to reduce cost barriers. It is also a requirement under the Act. The project Steering Group includes people from the disability community.

We are reaching out to you to request your input and feedback on a number of proposals that we expect will change following consultation. You can fill in the survey online, through this link (www.elections.nz/election-access-fund/survey). Or, you can send us an e-mail of you responding via audio or video, or by downloading and filling in the survey.

It is also available in alternate formats.

How can I send in my views?

On the following pages we have a series of questions. The first ones are about you, either as an organisation or an individual responding to this survey. We then ask you questions about how you think the Fund should work.

You can fill in the survey online, through this link (elections.nz/election-access-fund/survey). Or you can send us an e-mail of you responding via audio or video, or by downloading and filling in the survey.

You can send your response to electionaccessfund@elections.govt.nz

If you would like to be posted a hardcopy of this survey please call 0800 36 76 56 or 027 232 2019 or email electionaccessfund@elections.govt.nz to be sent a copy in the mail.

If you want to post your response, send it to: The Election Access Fund, PO Box 3220, Wellington, 6140

Any questions about the consultation process should be directed to Stacey Knott on electionaccessfund@elections.govt.nz. Or call 0800 36 76 56 or 027 232 2019

If you would like to respond in NZSL you can do so through this website:
www.seeflow.co.nz/direct

The consultation will begin on Monday, July 18, 2022 and close on Sunday, August 14, 2022.

What happens after consultation?

Once consultation is closed, all feedback will be collated and considered. We will send you a summary of the collated feedback.

The Electoral Commission will use the feedback to help create the rules and processes for accessing the Fund. In this way your input will make a difference to how we design and deliver the Fund.

When the Fund is open for applicants, the Electoral Commission will advertise the Fund and a panel of experts will be in place to consider and decide on applications.

After the next general election, the effectiveness of the fund will be reviewed to see if any improvements can be made.

Survey questions

About you

The first set of questions collects some personal information to give us a general understanding of the survey participants and how widely our consultation reached.

All information will be anonymised and combined into a summary of the participants.

All information you give the Electoral Commission will be accessed, collected, held, used, disclosed and disposed in accordance with the Privacy Act 2020 and the Public Records Act 2005.

We are collecting the information below so we can send you feedback on the survey findings and information about the Election Access Fund once it opens for applications.

Name of individual or group answering this survey:

Name of contact person (for group)

Position:

Email address:

1: Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of a group or organisation?

Individual

Group/Organisation

If you are responding on behalf of a group

2: Is your group a:

- Political party
- Disability advocacy group
- Disability services provider
- Advocacy group
- Community group
- Other: please state

3: If your organisation is disability related, please tick the type of impairment(s) represented (optional)

- Chronic condition or health problem
- Psychiatric/psychological
- Speaking
- Neurological
- Hearing
- Vision
- Learning
- Physical impairment/physical disability
- Other: please state

- Not applicable
- Prefer not to say

If you are responding as an individual

4: If you are an individual – do you have an impairment? (optional)

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

5: Please tick the type of impairment(s) represented (optional)

- Chronic condition or health problem
- Psychiatric/psychological
- Speaking
- Neurological
- Hearing
- Vision
- Learning
- Physical impairment/physical disability
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Interest in applying

6: Question: Are you, or someone from your group interested in applying to this fund? (This will help give us an idea of numbers that might apply)

- Yes
- No

Any comments?

Questions about the Election Access Fund

Application Process

In order to apply to the Election Access Fund, applicants will be required to briefly explain who they are and why they are applying. They will then be invited to a one-on-one meeting with someone from the Electoral Commission who will work with them to complete a detailed application, which will go to a panel for decision.

This process is designed to ensure that applicants are fully aware of the support they can apply for, that all the information needed is gathered, and that we accommodate the person's needs in the application process.

7: Question: Do you agree with this approach?

Yes

No

Any comments?

Eligibility criteria

In order to access the Election Access Fund, the law says an applicant must be:

- either standing as a candidate in the general election or a by-election, or seeking selection as a candidate,
- And be a disabled person,
- And be facing barriers that non-disabled people do not face in seeking selection or running as a candidate.

The Electoral Commission needs to develop an approach that gives effect to the law. People who meet the additional rules we decide to use, will progress to the next stage of the application process.

Criteria 1: Candidate or seeking selection.

The Electoral Commission’s proposed approach to “seeking selection” is when the person has notified their party secretary that they intend to do so (this can be done in confidence).

Our proposed definition of a “candidate” is a person who has publicly declared themselves a candidate or a party has declared them a candidate. They would also need to meet the legal requirements to become a candidate (must be a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident, over 18 and eligible to enrol).

8: Question: Do you agree with this?

Yes

No

Any comments?

Criteria 2: Disabled person

We are proposing we use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) definition of a “disabled person” to include “those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others...” (Article 1)”

9: Question: Do you agree with this?

Yes

No

Any comments?

Determining eligibility for the fund

Applicants for the Fund could make a legal declaration that they are eligible because they are facing barriers that non-disabled people do not face in seeking selection or running as a candidate. We are interested in views on whether further evidence should be required, like providing a letter, reference or recent invoice from a support service, advocacy group or organisation.

10: Question: Which of these is your preferred option?

- A legal declaration is enough evidence
- Further evidence should be required

Any comments?

Should third parties (e.g., occupational therapist, support provider) be involved in providing information about support needs?

11: Question: Do you agree with this?

- Yes
- No

Any Comments?

How would this be helpful/not helpful? Should it be required, or just an option for you?

Fund timing

To allocate funding to applicants, the Commission is proposing two rounds of funding. The first round would be in September/October 2022, the second in February/March 2023:

- Round 1 is to support people in the process of seeking selection as candidates for registered political parties.
- Round 2 is for candidates seeking funding for election campaigning activities (including candidates of registered parties, unregistered parties and independents).

12: Question: Do you agree with this approach?

Yes

No

Any comments?

Types of support available

The purpose of funding under the Election Access Fund is to remove or reduce cost barriers to standing as a candidate in a general election or a by-election faced by individuals as a consequence of their disability and which non-disabled individuals do not face. The Fund will enable the Commission to pay for additional costs that candidates incur as a result of their disability when organising and preparing to stand for Parliamentary elections.

This means funding will **not** include costs that all candidates have to pay, like designing advertising, printing leaflets, or venue hire. It may not cover all costs that political parties are required to provide in order to support candidates, for example the cost of providing accessible venues.

Funding could cover costs for reducing barriers faced as a consequence of a disability in relation to these activities:

- For selection, taking part in formal party activities needed to get yourself known and then seek selection (e.g., party committees, branch meetings, pre-selection party meetings, selection events and conferences)
- For campaigning, all candidate activities needed to promote yourself to voters (e.g., candidate meetings, transport, and campaigning)

Supports could include:

1. Technological support – e.g., specialist equipment, software, spell checking, speech to text, voice recorders (most will need to be hired and returned)
2. Communications support – alternate formats e.g., easy read translation, New Zealand sign language interpreters
3. Assistance – e.g., training, personal assistant support, note takers
4. Transport and accommodation – e.g., accessible transport to events or meetings

13: Question: Any comments?

Is there anything else you can think of that is not on this list?

How to receive funding

Once an applicant is confirmed eligible to receive funding, the Commission needs to be able to get funding to the applicant so they can access the services or provisions they need.

The Commission’s proposed approach is to tailor payment methods to suit an applicant’s needs. This could mean a combination of payment methods, including

- paying invoices directly to suppliers of goods and services,
- paying up front,
- providing a payment card, with funds pre-loaded for paying for smaller, regular costs (e.g., transport)
- reimbursing an applicant after they pay for an expense.

For all these methods, an applicant will need to gather and provide invoices and or receipts to the Commission and give back unspent money.

14: Question: Do you agree with this approach?

Any comments or preferences?

Involvement of political parties

This fund is only for candidates who want to run in parliamentary general elections or by-elections. Many candidates will be members of political parties.

Parties may be able to offer information about what will be required to seek selection and what campaigning is likely to look like.

Not everyone will want to involve their party.

15: Question: Do you think we should talk to an applicant's political party when assessing applications or tailoring support?

Yes

No

Any comments?

Ensuring public money is spent as intended

It is important to have assurance and accountability for how the Fund is spent.

16: Do you have any comments on how this could work?
