

Election Access Fund

Application Guidelines

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About the Election Access Fund

What is the Election Access Fund

The Election Access Fund (the Fund) supports disabled people to stand as candidates in parliamentary general elections and by-elections.

The purpose of the Fund is to reduce cost barriers by covering disability-related costs which non-disabled candidates do not face.

How is the Fund administered

The Electoral Commission / Te Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri (the Commission) administers the Fund. You can find out more about the Commission and the Election Access Fund here:

- [The Electoral Commission](#)
- [Election Access Fund](#)

Who can apply

You can apply to the Fund if you meet the following eligibility criteria:

1. You are a disabled person, with a long-term (lasting or expected to last 6 months or more) physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairment which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder your full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.
2. You are seeking to be a candidate, or to be selected as a candidate, in a parliamentary general election or by-election and you face barriers to doing so, as a consequence of your disability, and which non-disabled individuals do not face.
3. You meet the requirements to be a candidate under the Electoral Act 1993, at the time of application, including being:
 - a New Zealand citizen
 - currently registered as an elector if aged 18 years old or over; and
 - not otherwise disqualified for registration as an elector under that Act.
4. You are seeking to be a candidate in a by-election, and you will be 18 years of age by nomination day for the by-election, or

5. You are seeking to be a candidate in the general election, and you will be 18 years of age by nomination day for the general election or, until nomination day is known, by the day the current Parliament expires.

To confirm that you are eligible you will need to:

- sign a legal declaration in the application form that says you meet the eligibility criteria
- send us a copy of either an email or letter to your party secretary saying that you are seeking selection, or your public announcement that you are standing as a candidate.

When can I apply?

You can apply at any time for selection activity (working to get chosen by your party as a candidate) **and** for election activity (campaigning to get elected by voters)

- **selection** funding is available until nomination day
- **election** funding will be available approximately 15 months after the last election. Please refer to the Election Access Fund [website](#) for more specific dates

What the Fund can be used for

The Fund can be used for selection and campaigning activity costs related to your disability and which non-disabled individuals do not face.

Examples of selection and campaigning activities

Selection activities you need help with could include:

- filling in forms
- being interviewed
- going to party events to meet party members
- going to party and branch meetings – in person and online
- going to party conferences
- attending training provided by the party.

Campaigning activities you need help with could include:

- participating in “meet the candidate” public meetings
- participating in candidate fundraising events
- attending events including meeting cultural requirements
- giving speeches, debating, answering questions
- sending emails, writing social media posts
- knocking on doors and meeting residents
- making phone calls
- posting fliers in letter boxes
- meeting people on a street corner, at a shopping mall, an event like at a farmers' market, or anywhere the public gathers
- putting up election hoardings (signs).

Like all candidates, you may need volunteers or paid staff to do some activities like leaflet drops and phone calling. If you are expected to do some of this work yourself, the Fund may be able to pay someone to complete the part of the work you are unable to do.

Examples of disability-related costs

The Fund can cover additional disability-related activity costs you may have, not incurred by people without a disability. This may include items in the following list, or it might be something not listed. If you are unsure, please ask us or include it in your application.

Equipment and technology:

- adaptive equipment, such as Braille readers and aids for processing sound
- special computer software, such as speech to text and spell checking
- voice recorders
- modified seating if standing for long periods is challenging
- equipment for venues with limited accessibility, such as portable ramps and mobile hoists.

Communication:

- New Zealand Sign Language interpreter
- translation of material into an alternate format, for example, when a community group sends a list of questions for candidates to answer. Material from your political party is not funded (refer to “What costs are not funded”).

Personal assistance:

- A person or people to help with:
 - personal care related to your disability that is needed to undertake campaign activities
 - getting around (for example, a driver)
 - reading and/ or writing
 - note taking
 - understanding written material or explaining what is being said at meetings
- travel, accommodation, and expenses for a personal assistant to accompany you.

Travel, accommodation, and venues:

- accessible taxis to events or meetings
- extra costs of accessible accommodation
- accommodations for service animals
- site assessments to check venue accessibility.

Other:

- extra costs to get back on track when things go wrong, such as fixing or replacing equipment that fails, paying for a replacement assistant, or sign language interpreter if someone is sick.

A note on funding

You are required to provide the Commission with a budget based on actual and reasonable costs. Your application and budget are reviewed by a panel who assist the Commission to make funding decisions.

The Commission can assist you with the application process and give you guidance on what is reasonable for common items like accommodation, travel, and food allowances for traveling assistants.

What the Fund doesn't cover

General costs

The Fund will not cover general costs that non-disabled people standing for election have, such as:

- nomination deposits
- designing and publishing advertising
- having professional photos taken
- printing leaflets
- hiring venues
- postage costs
- survey costs
- paid skills training such as media training, planning, budgeting
- hiring an accountant, campaign manager or other professional services
- loss of regular income while campaigning
- personal living costs, including healthcare or therapy
- standard travel and accommodation (if there are *extra* costs directly relating to your disability these can be covered).

Political party costs

The Fund does not cover political party costs that parties should be expected to cover, such as:

- producing information that can be read by screen readers
- disability or inclusiveness training for staff and members
- providing accessible campaign material for electors
- providing accessible venues for conferences and events. Where it is not possible to get an accessible venue, for example, if none are available in a remote rural area, extra costs like portable ramps can be covered.

The Fund will not cover other party activities that are not about selection and your candidacy. This includes special campaigns, volunteering, petitions and general party fundraising and social events that do not have a candidacy focus.

Costs covered by another agency

The Fund will not pay for disability-related costs that are already covered by another agency such as the Ministry of Social Development (Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora) or ACC (Te Kaporeihana Āwhina Hunga Whara).

Application process

There are six main steps in the application process:

1. Check you are eligible
2. Collect the documents you need to support your application
3. Apply
4. Receive funding decision
5. Receive and sign formal agreement
6. Receive payment and prepare reporting

1. Check you are eligible

Check whether you meet the eligibility criteria detailed under the [Who can apply](#) section of these guidelines or visit the Election Access Fund website.

2. Collect the documents you need to support your application

Before you complete your application, you will need to:

- have your best estimates or get quotes for the equipment, services and supports you are applying to have funded
- read the Budget guidelines and fill in the Budget template. We recommend using the Word or Excel budget form if you are using a screen reader
- send us a copy of either an email or letter to your party secretary saying that you are seeking selection, or your public announcement that you are standing as a candidate, if you are applying for funding for selection activities
- get evidence of your intention to stand as candidate if you are applying for funding for election activities,. This could include a copy of an email or letter to your party, or a copy of your public announcement stating you are standing as candidate.

3. Apply

You can apply using the online application form. Please note, if you apply online, you cannot save your application part-way through and return to it later. It needs to be completed in one session.

Alternatively, you can email electionaccessfund@elections.govt.nz or phone us on 0800 36 76 56 to say you want to apply. We will send you an application pack and ask if you need any help to put your application together.

If you want to meet with a member of our team, we can meet with you online using Zoom or Microsoft Teams, or by phone. Please let us know:

- what you would like help with
- if a support person, family or whānau member(s) will attend the meeting with you
- if you have any disability-related needs for the meeting - we may be able to arrange and pay for these.
- if you have any cultural needs
- if you would like us to contact your political party to seek information about party activities.

4. Receive funding decision

Your application will be considered by the Applications Panel (the Panel). The Panel has community members on it with lived experience of disability and election experience. Their job is to advise whether they think applications meet the criteria and if costs are fair and reasonable.

To protect your privacy your personal details will be removed before your application goes to the panel.

We will inform you about the outcome of your application usually within two weeks. We will contact you if there are any delays.

If we cannot approve your application, we will contact you to explain why and how to appeal our decision.

5. Receive and sign formal agreement

If your application is approved, we will prepare a written agreement between you and the Electoral Commission. This will state the amount to be paid, what it is to be used for, and how it will be paid. It will also outline reporting requirements and dates.

This will need to be signed by you and the Electoral Commission.

6. Receive payment and prepare reporting

We pay you the agreed amount.

You organise the equipment, supports or services you need and pay for them.

Keep a record and collect proof of your spending (for example, receipts and tickets).

We will send you a simple report template for you to complete and return by the due dates in your agreement with your proof of spending.

When your selection or campaign activities are finished, or you are no longer a candidate, you will need to pay back any funding that has not been used.

Privacy

The Electoral Commission will ensure your personal information is kept safe and your privacy is upheld.

We will do so in compliance with the Privacy Act 2020, the Health Information Privacy Code 2020, the Election Access Fund Act 2020, and other applicable legislation. We have provided the following information, to help you understand how we protect your privacy.

Collection

We collect some personal information to administer the Election Access Fund. The information you provide is voluntary, however if you do choose to apply for access to the fund, we will require the following to process your application:

- your name and date of birth
- your contact information including your address
- whether you are intending to stand independently or for a political party
- information about barriers to your participation in election activities
- information about the services, support and equipment you would like funding for and how these will support or contribute to your participation
- whether any of these services, supports and equipment might also be funded by other Government agencies
- and, if access is given to the fund, financial information needed to pay for the services, supports and equipment funded.

We collect this personal information so that we can:

- assess your eligibility to apply for and receive funding for support in election activities
- use your information to provide the fund's services to you, including the payment of services, supports and equipment
- contact you about your application or access to the fund.

We may also ask for information about your ethnicity or cultural identity, and disability type/s, so we can report on equity and our Te Tiriti obligations.

Storage and security

We will hold your information and keep it safe by restricting who can access it. Only people who need to, will have access to your information, and only the information necessary for their roles. These people are:

- Employees at the Electoral Commission, that require access to your information, to manage the Election Access Fund
- Members of the Application Panel, who will receive de-personalised applications to consider funding
- Providers of goods and services that are funded under the Election Access Fund
- The Ministry of Justice, who receive de-personalised reporting on the fund, as required by legislation.

We take all reasonable and practicable measures, to keep the personal information we hold about you safe from loss, from access, use, modification, or disclosure that is not authorised, and from any other forms of misuse. We do so by ensuring access to our systems of record are appropriately restricted, and our IT infrastructure is kept secure from external attack or unauthorised access.

Use, disclosure and accuracy

We will only use your personal information for the purposes we collected it. We will work with you to ensure that your information is not disclosed without your consent, and that your personal information is kept up-to-date and accurate.

Retention

We keep your information for a period following a General Election until final reporting obligations are met. At this point we securely destroy it by permanently deleting the information from our systems of record. However, if you ask us to, we

will keep the information you give us for any applications at the next general election.

Your rights

You have the right to ask for a copy of any personal information we hold about you, and to ask for it to be corrected if you think it is wrong. If you'd like to ask for a copy of your information, or to have it corrected, please contact us at enquiries@elections.govt.nz, or 0800 367656, or PO Box 3220, Wellington 6140.

Complaints and disputes

Complaints made that relate to the health information the Commission holds about you, will be responded to in line with our requirements under the Health Information Privacy Code 2020.

If you are unhappy with the process or outcome of the decision, first talk to someone in the Election Access Fund team, as they may be able to resolve the issue.

If you're still not happy afterwards, you can make a complaint to the Electoral Commission. You can make a complaint in person, by writing, or by telephone. You can call the Commission free on 0800 36 76 56 or you can email electionaccessfund@elections.govt.nz

The Commission will acknowledge your complaint as soon as possible within 5 working days.

Common questions

Application Questions

Can I get assistance to apply?

Yes. Your political party, support person, friend or whānau member can help you fill in your application form and supporting documents. You can also contact us and we can help you.

Let us know what assistance you need and we may be able to help. For example, if you need a sign language interpreter to assist you at your meeting with us, we can arrange and pay for that.

What if I pull out or don't get selected or nominated?

You don't need to repay any money already spent, if it was used for the agreed purposes. You will need to pay back any money you haven't spent.

How long does it take to approve an application?

A funding decision is usually made within 2-3 weeks.

Once we have received your application, it is considered by an applications panel, and the Electoral Commission makes a funding decision.

Can I apply if I have a disability but not a formal diagnosis?

Yes - You do not need to have a formal diagnosis. When you apply, you will need to sign a legal declaration saying you meet the eligibility criteria for funding, - including that you have a disability.

Can I apply if I am not living in New Zealand right now?

Yes. You will need to explain your situation in your application. We may come back to you if we need any additional information.

Funding Questions

Is there a funding limit?

There is a limit of \$50,000 total funding for a person, per election or by-election. For very high-cost applications we may ask for additional supporting information.

Do I have to repay any of the funds I have received?

You don't have to repay any money already spent on agreed services, equipment, or support. However, you do need to pay back any unspent money you were granted.

Can I apply for more funding if additional needs arise?

Yes, you can apply for more funding if additional needs arise. However, there is some contingency within your agreement so that if unexpected things arise, they

can be covered. This can only be used for similar support as detailed in your agreement. For example, it could be used for an unplanned candidate meeting.

Contact us as soon as possible. Depending on what it is, we may be able to adjust your agreement, or we may need to go back to the panel to discuss it further.

Can I pay for things I need and be reimbursed?

No. If your funding is getting low and you know things are coming up, contact us so that additional funding can be considered.

Do I, or does my party, need to declare what I have received from the Fund? Is a return required?

No. You don't have to file a public return for this funding, and it doesn't need to be included in a party or candidate's expense return. You do have to report on how you spent the money, but we won't publish it.

What if my circumstances make it harder or more expensive to get what I need?

Funding decisions will be based on your reported unique circumstances. This could include additional costs of living in large and rural areas. Consider all your disability-related needs and include them in your application and supporting documents. This could include quotes or estimates for:

- travel for both you and any people who are assisting you, to get to and from venues
- additional shipping costs for equipment being supplied outside your area.

Can I apply again for future elections or by-elections?

There is no limit on how often you can access the Fund. You will need to apply again for each election or by-election. You can ask us to keep your supporting information for the next election so you can apply again.

Will the fund pay for my disability-related needs if I get into Parliament?

No, the fund covers only your disability-related needs before an election. If you become a member of Parliament, a relationship manager from Parliamentary Service will be in contact with you just after the General Election. You will be able to discuss your needs with them to ensure you have the support you need.

Equipment Questions

When can I get the equipment and support I need?

You can start sourcing your equipment and/or support when your funding agreement is signed.

How do I get the equipment I need?

You are responsible for purchasing the equipment and services you have applied for.

We have a database of services and equipment providers we can share with you, however, you can also choose providers that are not on our list.

Can I use the equipment or services I get through the Fund for other purposes?

No. You should only use the equipment and services for selection or campaigning as detailed in your agreement with us.

It is important that funding is not spent on anything that gives you an unfair political advantage.

Can I keep the equipment I have purchased after the election?

Your agreement will say if you can keep the equipment after election day or if it needs to be returned to us.

What if my equipment needs to be repaired or replaced?

You will need to gather information on what needs to be done and the estimated cost. You will also need to contact us so that additional funding can be considered.

Services and Support Questions

Can a family member be my assistant or support person?

Yes – if they meet your requirements. The hourly rate needs to be reasonable – we can provide you with guidance on this. Your assistant / support person will need to keep good records of their service.

What if I go to an event and the host already has the assistance I need (like a NZSL interpreter)?

Check before events what assistance is available. If you need to cancel a booking you have made, you might still have to pay. This will come from your funding, so it is best you know ahead of time.

Will the Fund pay for help to prepare my report to show how I have spent the money?

Yes, this can only be funded if it is a disability-related need. For example, if you need a reader or writer. Please detail this within your application or contact us if you are unsure.

How do I get the services and support I need?

You are responsible for sourcing the services and support you have applied for.

We have a database of services and equipment providers we can share with you; however, you can also choose providers that are not on our list.