# Logo: Electoral Commission Te Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri

# Information on becoming a candidate

Before you stand in an election, you need to learn the rules for nominations, campaigning, advertising, expenses, expense limits, and donations.

The following is a summary of what you need to know if you want to stand in an election.

These rules are the same for everyone who intends to stand, regardless of if you are applying for funding from the Election Access Fund. The processes for the Election Access Fund are separate to the processes outlined in this document. You can find out about the Election Access Fund processes here: elections.nz/getting-involved/election-access-fund/.

If you require more information about dates, rules and processes we will share this information with you as it can change for each election.

## Key terms

**Advance vote:** Voters can cast their vote in the advance voting period set by the Electoral Commission (12 days for 2023) before election day.

**Advertising expense limit:** The limit that a candidate or political party can spend on election advertising published during the regulated period.

**By-Election:** By-elections happen when a member of Parliament representing an electorate leaves their role before a general election so their area (electorate) votes on who will replace them.

**Election day:** (Polling day) is the last voting day to elect a new member of Parliament for each electoral district and a party, or coalition of parties to form a government. Voters can vote between 9am and 7pm. You can't campaign on election day.

**Electorate:** New Zealand is divided into voting areas called electorates. Voters of Māori descent can choose which electoral roll to be on – the general roll or the Māori roll. Those on the Māori roll vote in a Māori electorate. During a general election or a by-election, voters choose a candidate to represent their electorate in Parliament. The candidate who wins the most votes becomes the local member of Parliament.

**Nomination:**  The process for formally submitting candidates so they can appear on the voting paper or a party list.

**Nomination day:** This is the last day an individual nomination application will be accepted by the Electoral Commission (at midday) – about a month prior to election day. For bulk nominations and party lists, the deadline is midday the day before nomination day.

**Nomination form:** This is the form you and your nominators will need to complete if you are doing an individual nomination. You will be able to download this from elections.nz. If you are a candidate being bulk nominated by your political party you do not need to fill out this form, you will need to fill out a consent to nomination form. The Electoral Commission gives consent to nomination forms to the political parties directly and they will pass them on.

**Registered party:** Party registered by the Electoral Commission that can contest the party vote and is subject to rules about expenses, donations and loans.

**Returning Officer (operational title is the Electorate Manager):** Person responsible for the management of voting in an electorate.

**Scrutineer:** Person who observes the conduct of the election on behalf of candidates and parties.

## Candidate eligibility

For a general election, there are two types of candidates:

* electorate candidates become members of Parliament (MPs) by winning electorate votes;
* list candidates are on registered party lists and can become MPs through the party vote.

You can be an electorate candidate, a list candidate or both.

In a by-election, you can only be an electorate candidate. The list candidate process is not used in a by-election.

To be a candidate in any parliamentary election, you must be enrolled to vote and a New Zealand citizen and be 18 years old by nomination day.

If you were born overseas, you will be asked to provide evidence with your nomination that you are a New Zealand citizen.

In a general election, you can contest an electorate and be on a party list at the same election. You can only contest one electorate and be on one party list for each election.

## About the nomination process for a general election or a by-election

Voters and political parties can nominate candidates to contest an election. Getting nominated is the process for formally submitting candidates so they can appear on the voting paper or a party list.

There are two different ways to be nominated to run as an electorate candidate. These are either as an individual electorate candidate or if you are with a registered political party, as part of its bulk nomination processes.

These processes are outlined below. These processes are the same for everyone, regardless of if you are using the Election Access Fund. To find out more about the Election Access Fund processes, visit this link: elections.nz/getting-involved/election-access-fund/

In a by-election, the individual nomination process is used for everyone.

## About individual electorate candidate nominations

Individual nominations are made for:

* independent candidates;
* candidates for unregistered parties and;
* candidates for registered parties not making a bulk nomination.

Two voters enrolled in the electorate to be contested must nominate a candidate. You cannot nominate yourself.

Your nominators must complete their part of your individual nomination form and then you need to email it to [nominations@elections.govt.nz](mailto:nominations@elections.govt.nz) with any relevant supporting information.

You can direct questions on this process to the Election Access Fund team or there is more information in the Candidate Handbook.

## Deadlines for the individual candidate nominations

For the individual candidate nominations, we will start accepting these nominations about three weeks before nomination day, which will be about seven weeks before election day.

The deadline for individual nominations of electorate candidates is noon on nomination day.

Get your nomination in as soon as possible so we have time to check your nomination to make sure we can accept it.

You must pay a deposit of $300 with your individual nomination. The deposit can be paid by direct credit or in cash if you cannot use the online process.

## About the bulk nomination of electorate candidates by registered parties

Only registered parties can make a bulk nomination of electorate candidates.

This is where the party secretary nominates all the electorate candidates representing the party, at a general election, by lodging a bulk nomination schedule with the Electoral Commission.

Your party secretary will give you a form to sign that gives your consent to be an electorate candidate. Your party secretary will include your consent form with the bulk nomination.

Your party secretary must send us a deposit of $300 for every candidate on their schedule.

## About being a list candidate

Only registered parties can have list candidates and contest the party vote.

If you are a list candidate your party secretary will include your details on the party list.

Your party secretary will give you a form to sign that gives your consent to be a list candidate. Your party secretary will include your consent form with the party list.

## Deadlines for the bulk nomination of electorate candidates by registered parties and party lists

Nominations open for parties about four weeks before nomination day. This is also about two months before election day.

If you are a candidate for a registered party, your party secretary will manage your nomination – liaise with your party secretary.

The deadline for bulk nominations of electorate candidates and party lists is noon on the day before nomination day.

Key dates for the above nomination processes will be confirmed when an election date is announced.

## Other information on becoming a candidate for a general election or a by-election

### Your name on the ballot paper

You can choose any of the following names to appear on the ballot paper:

* the name on your birth certificate;
* the name an adoption order gave you;
* a name you've adopted by deed poll;
* a name you've commonly been known by for the last 12 months.

You can't use any titles or honorifics on the ballot paper. For example, you do not use Dr. Ms, Mr etc.

### You can contest any electorate

You can contest any electorate, even if it’s not the one you’re enrolled in. You can contest either a Māori or a general electorate no matter your race or ethnicity.

### Order of ballot paper

The names of the electorate candidates appear alphabetically by surname on the right-hand side of the ballot paper. If you represent a party, your party’s name will appear under your name. If your party is a registered party with a registered logo, the logo will appear to the right of your name.

If your party is contesting the party vote, we’ll print the name of your party opposite your name on the left-hand side of the ballot paper.

If you’re an independent candidate, we’ll leave the space blank on the party vote side opposite your name.

### After you have been nominated

Once we have processed all the nominations and party lists, we’ll publish the names of all candidates on our website: www.vote.nz

We don’t publish biographical information, policies, phone numbers or email addresses.

The media often ask us for candidates’ contact details such as a telephone number or email. We may also get requests for candidate contact details from others for candidate related purposes, for example to organise a meet the candidate evening. We’ll release phone and email details for candidates on request for the purpose of your candidacy unless you have told us in advance not to release them.

### You can appoint scrutineers

If you’re an electorate candidate, you can appoint Scrutineers. Scrutineers observe the conduct of the election and throughout the voting process.

We have a scrutineer handbook which has all the rules and regulations a scrutineer must follow. In this handbook you will find an appointment and declaration form.

You can find this and other resources here: [For candidates | Elections](https://elections.nz/guidance-and-rules/for-candidates/) (<https://tinyurl.com/ys77mjne>)

## Advertising and campaigning

If you are an electorate candidate, you can advertise and campaign to encourage people to vote for you. Different rules apply depending on who the advertisement is promoting and the medium it is in. You can learn more about the rules in the Candidate Handbook, or by contacting the Electoral Commission.

As a candidate, you are also responsible for staying within your advertising expense limit, keeping a record of your expenses and donations and reporting them to us after the election.

Many things, like transport or venue hire, are not advertising expenses. Any costs funded by the Election Access Fund is also not counted as an advertising or election expense.

### What is an election advertisement?

An election advertisement is an advertisement that may reasonably be regarded as encouraging or persuading voters to vote or not vote for a:

* candidate;
* party;
* type of candidate or party the advertisement describes by referencing views they do or don’t hold.

Election advertisements about electorate candidates are called candidate advertisements, and election advertisements about parties are called party advertisements.

An election advertisement’s encouragement or persuasion can be direct or indirect. It can also be in any medium, can be unpaid, and does not need to name a candidate or party. The rules and expense limits only apply to advertisements that have been published or brought to others’ attention.

If you are a list candidate and not an electorate candidate, your election advertising is only counted as an expense for your party, and you must get your party secretary’s authorisation. Contact your party secretary for more information.

## Promoter statement

All your election advertisements must include a promoter statement, even advertisements you publish before the regulated period. A promoter statement shows the name and address of the person promoting the advertisement.

Your promoter statements must be easy to see or hear. You must clearly display the promoter statement in your advertisements.

We recommend you word your promoter statements like this:

* Promoted or authorised by [your name],
* Provide your full street address.

# Spending

If you’re an electorate candidate, there’s a limit to how much you can spend on election advertising published during the regulated period. The regulated period depends on the election date but is usually around the 3 months until election day.

We will publish the expense limit once the date of the election is known.

Expenses include the cost of creating, producing and publishing election advertising. This includes the value of materials for advertisements that are published.

Expenses include the cost of creation and the value of materials for advertisements that are published. Advertising you run during the regulated period counts towards your expense limit.

If someone you approve promotes you as a candidate, this will also count toward your candidate expense limit.

If you’re representing a registered party, stay in touch with your party secretary about advertising. If part of an election advertisement promotes the party as well as yourself, then a fair share needs to be counted under both the party and candidate expense limits.

Keep a record of what you spend on advertising as you spend it.

You’ll need to report your candidate expenses to us after the election. You must keep invoices and receipts for all election expenses of $50 or more for 3 years after you’ve reported your expenses to us.

### Donations and loans

A donation can be money, goods or services that you get for free or below market value to use in your campaign.

If a donation is given for your party, you must send it to your party secretary. If you are a list candidate, all donations you receive will be for the party and you must send it to the party secretary.

When you get a donation, it is important you know whether it’s meant for you or your party. Ask the donor if you are not sure, especially if they sent the donation through a party electorate committee or a third party (called a ‘transmitter’).

If someone gives or pays for something that would otherwise be an election expense, it counts towards your expense limit as well as being a donation.

Record the following details about donations as you get them:

* The donor’s name and address.
* The amount you got.
* The date you got the donation.
* Whether they are an overseas person.

You’ll need to report all donations, and contributions to donations, of more than $1,500 (including GST) to us after the election in your return of expenses, donations and loans. You must also report a series of donations one person makes if they add up to more than $1,500. You also need to report contributions to donations from an overseas person if it is more than $50.

Take all reasonable steps to keep records of all the donations you get, even if they’re less than $1,500.

Subject to the passing of the Electoral Amendment Bill (2022) all candidates will also need to report any loans, from January 1, 2023. We will give you guidance on this.

You can learn more about the rules in the Candidate Handbook, or by contacting the Electoral Commission.

## Illegal activities

There may be penalties for offences against the rules above. In addition, it's a criminal offence to do anything that can influence voters:

* in an advance voting place, or
* within 10 metres of an advance voting place, or
* anywhere on election day.

This includes advertising, public statements, processions, and speeches, as well as displaying candidate and party names, emblems, slogans or logos. Please refer to the Candidate Handbook for more information.

Remove all your election advertising that’s visible from a public place before election day.

You can wear a party badge or rosette on your lapel at any time, including while voting and on election day.

## More information

To find out more about running as a candidate visit this site: [For candidates | Elections](https://elections.nz/guidance-and-rules/for-candidates/) (https://tinyurl.com/ys77mjne/)

You can also call 0800 36 76 56 or email [enquires@elections.govt.nz](mailto:enquires@elections.govt.nz)

To find out more about the Election Access Fund, visit here: [Election Access Fund | Elections](https://elections.nz/getting-involved/election-access-fund/) (<https://tinyurl.com/2p8kjscx>)

If you are interested in applying for the Election Access Fund or want more information, email [electionaccessfund@elections.govt.nz](mailto:electionaccessfund@elections.govt.nz)

Or call 0800 36 76 56.

**End of: Information about becoming a candidate**