

Access to Elected Office Fund: A Step by Step Guide for Applicants

The purpose of the Fund

The Access to Elected Office Fund exists to remove the barriers that can make it harder for disabled people to stand for election. The Fund provides financial support to cover the additional costs of standing for election that non-disabled candidates would not face. By covering these extra costs, the Fund helps to create a more level playing field so that disabled people have a more equal chance to participate in politics.

Check if you're eligible

To apply for the Fund, you must:

- Self-define as disabled, under the definition used in the Equality Act 2010
- Have stated intention to seek selection for an eligible election covered by the Fund, have been selected or be planning to stand as an independent
- Be eligible as a candidate under the relevant electoral regulations

Types of elections covered: The Fund opens in advance of each election it supports. If you are not sure whether the Fund is currently open for applications, contact Inclusion Scotland for advice.

See what you can claim for

The Fund can cover a wide range of costs linked to your campaign.

Common examples include:

- Assistive technology
- Coaching
- Communication support
- Personal assistance
- Travel costs

If you are unsure whether something would be covered by the Fund, Inclusion Scotland can advise you.

Step 1: Contact Inclusion Scotland

Get in touch with Inclusion Scotland to let us know you want to apply. A member of the Participation team will guide you through the process, answer any questions you may have and arrange a time for your application meeting. You can discuss your access needs, and ask for any adjustments to the process, at any time.

Email: civicparticipation@inclusionscotland.org

Phone: 0131 370 6700

Step 2: Attend Your Application Meeting

You will be invited to a meeting with an Inclusion Scotland staff member via video call or telephone. This will last between 45 minutes to an hour and you are welcome to bring someone with you to support you. This is a chance to:

- Learn more about Inclusion Scotland and the Fund
- Talk through your campaign plans
- Discuss your access needs and barriers to participation
- Think about what support would make the biggest difference to your campaign

You don't need to prepare anything formal, but it's useful to think ahead about the campaigning activities you plan to carry out, the barriers you might face in doing so, and any support that has been effective for you in the past.

After the meeting, you will be sent four forms:

- Data Protection and Equalities Monitoring forms: to be filled in by you.
- Application form: partly filled out during the meeting, with a few sections for you to complete afterwards.

- Recommendations letter: drafted by Inclusion Scotland based on your meeting discussion and sent to you for approval before it goes to the Decision Panel. You can request changes as many times as needed until you are fully comfortable with the support being proposed.

Step 3: Wait for the Decision Panel's Review

Once you have submitted your forms and approved your recommendations letter, your application will be anonymised and sent to the Fund's Decision Panel for review. The panel is made up of a small group of independent disabled volunteers who each bring different perspectives and experiences.

What they consider

The panel will assess your application against agreed criteria, looking at:

- The barriers to campaigning you face
- Whether the support listed in your recommendations letter is reasonable and directly linked to your campaign activities
- How effectively the proposed award would enable you to participate equally in the election

Their role is to make sure that funding decisions are fair, adequate, consistent and in line with the purpose of the Fund.

Step 4: Receive Your Award Outcome

Once the Decision Panel has reviewed your application, you will be contacted with the outcome.

If your application is approved: You will be given details of your award and how it will be set up.

If your application is not approved: You will be told why. If you would still like to pursue funding, you can then make changes to your application - in collaboration with the Inclusion Scotland team - and resubmit it.

Step 5: Use Your Award

How you use your award will depend on the type of support that has been agreed for you. Inclusion Scotland will work with you to make sure your award is set up in a way that is straightforward and meets your needs.

You will also have review meetings with Inclusion Scotland from time to time. The timing of these reviews will be set out in your recommendations. These usually take place every four to six weeks or at the end of campaign blocks. The check-ins are to make sure your award is working well, and that it is both not more than you need and that it is providing enough support.

How types of support are facilitated

Assistive technology: You may be invited to a needs assessment, where a specialist will recommend the most suitable technology. This could be physical equipment, specialist software, or app subscriptions. If you already know what works best for you, the fund can usually provide that directly without the need for an assessment.

Coaching: You may attend coaching sessions with professional providers. These are tailored to help you overcome specific barriers depending on your individual needs.

Communication support: You may be entitled to support from British Sign Language interpreters, electronic notetakers, lipspeakers, or speech-to-text reporters when taking part in meetings, events, or canvassing. Inclusion Scotland can help identify and book the appropriate providers for your needs.

Personal assistance: Personal assistance is usually arranged through the Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living, Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living, or another regional provider. In some cases, applicants may choose to hire their own support, provided the necessary background checks are completed. Inclusion Scotland will support you through this process but will not directly contract Personal Assistants.

Travel costs: Depending on your needs around travel and mobility, a taxi account may be set up with a local company so you do not need to pay up front. Alternatively, you may be given an allowance for public transport, or reimbursed for driving costs at the HMRC mileage rate.

Inclusion Scotland will support you throughout to make sure your award is simple to access, reasonable in scope and tailored to your campaign needs.

Step 6: Take Part in Our Evaluation

Your experience of the Fund is very important. Evaluation helps us understand what works well, what could be improved, and how the Fund is making a difference for disabled candidates in Scotland.

At various stages of your Fund journey, we will invite you to complete short surveys. These are designed to gather your feedback about the support you received and the impact it had on your ability to campaign. You may also be invited to take part in follow-up conversations or other feedback activities. These are always optional, but they give you another chance to share your views and help shape the future of the Fund.

Your feedback helps us make sure the Fund continues to meet the needs of disabled people. It also provides valuable evidence for the Scottish Government about why this kind of support is needed. By sharing your experience, you are helping to strengthen the case for equal access to politics.

Other Resources

Alongside your award, you can find more support on our website. This includes helpful resources on campaigning and links to other organisations that support disabled people to get involved in politics.